

Promising Practices

A Promising Model in Juvenile Reentry: Café Momentum

Ensuring the success of youth returning to their communities from juvenile detention facilities requires a comprehensive approach. [One key reentry element](#) for justice-involved youth revolves around vocational or job training programs, which often include other components such as assistance with educational attainment and access to gainful employment.

One promising program that incorporates paid employment, job training, access to a well-rounded support system and the opportunity to meet educational goals is [Café Momentum](#).

In 2008, Chad Houser, already the owner of a successful restaurant in Dallas, Texas, received the opportunity to teach eight young men returning from juvenile detention how to make ice cream. The experience was so impactful that Houser decided to open a nonprofit restaurant, Café Momentum, which would provide a fine dining experience, paid internship program and offer wrap-around services for justice-involved youth in Dallas.



About Café Momentum and its Intern Support

Since 2015, Café Momentum has served over 1,000 youth through its paid internship program, with approximately 60–80 young men and women participating each year. The 12-month paid internship includes a rotation through all sectors of the restaurant, learning on-the-job practicalities and social skills. Interns, aged 15–19, receive a [SafeServ certification](#) and are connected with case managers shortly after orientation into the program; case managers provide assistance with educational attainment, career and goal exploration, financial education, and issues such as anger management and trauma recovery.

Café Momentum is entirely staffed by justice-involved youth who have returned to the community from Dallas County juvenile justice detention facilities. The restaurant and its training program are made possible through community support and corporate and foundation funding. One key partner in the success of Café Momentum, both as a flagship restaurant in Dallas and as a

nationally recognized juvenile justice model, is the [Stand Together Foundation](#), a philanthropic community that has invested over \$2.9 million in Café Momentum since 2018. In addition to funding, the Stand Together Foundation helped create the Momentum Advisory Collective, a capacity-building organization focused on expanding the Café Momentum model to additional markets; provided publicity and communications for the restaurant; and facilitated partnerships between Café Momentum and both the National Football League (NFL) and the Players Coalition.

Setting justice-involved youth up for success is the key component of the Café Momentum model. After successful completion of the internship program, participants are placed in either an externship or a paid job with one of the restaurant's community partners. They are free to continue in a restaurant career or work in another capacity with partners such as Amazon, Virgin Hotels and Starbucks. An additional opportunity available to internship graduates is a fellowship with [Ruthie's Food Truck](#), which provides additional learning and professional development opportunities.



Program Success and the Future of Café Momentum

For youth who have been detained in a juvenile justice facility, the [rate of re-arrest is as high as 75 percent](#). In stark contrast, based on data one year after the program's start, none of Café Momentum's graduates were adjudicated or reconvicted. [Some additional successes](#) after the first year of the program included:

- 100 percent of program graduates had a bank account, enabling greater financial flexibility and opportunity, compared to only 25 percent of interns who had a bank account upon entering the program.
- 77 percent of participants chose to participate in counseling and 100 percent of interns entering the program had at least one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE).
- Almost 89 percent of participants were enrolled in high school, had graduated from high school or had achieved their GED.

Café Momentum has fought to become a national model of juvenile justice reform and opportunity, focused on a holistic approach to reducing recidivism and ensuring justice-involved youth are set up for success with job training and case management support. The program has a goal of expanding into 10 additional markets over a five-year period and 50 markets in the next 25 years. In 2021, Café Momentum launched expansions into Nashville, TN and Pittsburgh, PA.

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from your jurisdiction you
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