Improving family-centered care in Juvenile Justice Institutions

Simons, I.

Chapter 5

Parents' perspectives on family-centered care in juvenile justice institutions

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Abstract

Family-centered care during adolescent detention aims to increase parental participation in an attempt to optimize treatment outcomes. However, little is known about parents' needs in family-centered care. To fill this gap, we interviewed 19 purposefully selected parents of detained adolescents using a semi-structured topic list. Although needs differed between parents, they were generally interested in activities that included spending time with their child. It is important for parents to receive timely information about their child's condition and treatment, detention procedures, and activities in the facility. The outcomes demonstrated that parents expected a two-way communication based on respect and reliability.

Introduction

There are various reasons why involving parents in activities in youth detention centers and in court procedures is beneficial. Most importantly, there is evidence that parental participation contributes to positive outcomes for youths (Burke, Mulvey, Schubert, & Garbin, 2014). More family contact was associated with a reduced risk of recidivism for adjudicated delinquents in residential care (Ryan & Yang, 2005), and more frequent visits of parents were related to depressive symptoms waning faster among incarcerated youth, regardless of the quality of the parent-child relationship (Monahan, Goldweber, & Cauffman, 2011). Second, when an adolescent is detained, this often causes a crisis in the family. Alleviating this crisis may help the adolescent to better endure detention and to better prepare for return to family and society (Church II, MacNeil, Martin, & Nelson-Gardell, 2009). Finally, parents are a unique source of information about their child's needs, strengths, and experiences (Garfinkel, 2010). This information could be helpful for staff in interacting with the adolescent.

As the literature suggests that youth-centered care for the treatment of troubled youths should be supplemented with family-centered care (de Boer, Cameron, & Frensch, 2007; Frensch & Cameron, 2002; Knecht & Hargrave, 2002), youth detention centers in the Netherlands, called Juvenile Justice Institutions (JJIs), decided to adopt a family-centered approach (Sectordirectie Justitiële Jeugdinrichtingen, 2011). To translate this approach into practice, the Academic Workplace Forensic Care for Youth (in Dutch: AWFZJ, www.awrj.nl) developed a program of Family-centered Care (FC). This FC program distinguishes four categories of parental participation (a) informing parents, (b) parents meeting their child, (c) parents meeting staff, and (d) parents taking part in the treatment program (Mos, Breuk, Simons, & Rigter, 2014; Simons, Mulder, et al., 2017). However, family-centered care is hard to achieve in secure residential settings like JJIs (Geurts, Boddy, Noom, & Knorth, 2012; Hendriksen-Favier, Place, & van Wezep, 2010; Sectordirectie Justitiële Jeugdinrichtingen, 2011). This was confirmed in a pilot stage of our study, in which FC was implemented in two so-called living groups in different JJIs (Simons et al., 2016). To improve the rates of parental participation, more insight is needed into the wishes and needs of parents regarding family-centered care in JJIs. The present study served to gain this insight, which potentially will improve FC in practice.

We decided to interview parents, with topics derived from the FC program and from the literature. Unfortunately, to our knowledge, literature on parents' wishes in family-centered care in juvenile detention centers is scarce. Therefore, we also tracked publications on family-centered approaches in non-penitentiary youth residential settings. The literature showed that in general, parents want to be involved in every important decision and action concerning their child. Parents would like to maintain and continue their parent role and have regular contact with their child (Baker & Blacher, 2002; Demmitt & Joanning, 1998; Kruzich, Jivanjee, Robinson, & Friesen, 2003; Spencer & Powell, 2000). Parents expect staff of the institution to inform them, to treat them respectfully, and to provide adequate

aftercare (Church II et al., 2009; de Boer et al., 2007; Demmitt & Joanning, 1998; Spencer & Powell, 2000). Parents want to participate in therapy or training sessions, and expect staff to take initiative in contacting them (Benner, Mooney, & Epstein, 2003; Demmitt & Joanning, 1998; Nickerson, Brooks, Colby, Rickert, & Salamone, 2006; Spencer & Powell, 2000).

Placements in JJIs are involuntarily. When adolescents are suspected of, or adjudicated for, delinquent behavior, a juvenile court can decide that detention in a secure detention facility is warranted. Hence, the setting of JJIs is different from that of non-judicial residential treatment centers. Other types of residential care are not necessary involuntary nor secure. Additionally, characteristics of residents, as well as the length of stay may differ between JJIs and other types of residential care (Simons et al., 2018). Parents' wishes for involvement might differ as well between both types of settings. To fill this gap in knowledge, it is of interest to assess in which ways parents of detained adolescents would like to be involved by the JJI and what they expect from family-centered care. Therefore, the current study aims to gain insight into the perception of parents of detained adolescents about parental participation and family-centered care. Specifically, we aim to answer two main questions: (1) how parents wish to participate during their child's detention and (2) what they expect from contact with the JJI staff. Interviewing parents will provide information from a unique perspective on how to improve family-centered care in practice. We expect this information to help JJI staff to better motivate parents to participate during their child's detention.

Methods

This study is part of a larger study on FC in JJIs, of which the full design including that of the current study, has recently been published (Simons et al., 2016). That paper offers a detailed explanation of the setting of our study, which was carried out in the two JJIs in the Netherlands that participated in the Academic Workplace Forensic Care for Youth (in Dutch:

AWFZJ, www.awrj.nl). The current study took place on five short-term detention groups, where male adolescents reside for a maximum period of 90 days, awaiting the final ruling of the juvenile judge. Two groups recently took the first steps in implementing the FC program and the three other groups worked according to JJI's usual care (Simons et al., 2016).

Recruitment

Parents received a flyer with information about the current study in the information leaflets from the JJI. As part of the practice-based nature of our study, we established exclusion criteria for our qualitative study in close collaboration with the psychologists assigned to the living groups of the youths. Parents were included unless they met the exclusion criteria. The criteria for exclusion were if: (a) their child left the short-term detention group within two weeks, (b) their child was only temporarily transferred to this JJI after an incident in another JJI, (c) parents or their child had severe mental health problems (i.e., psychosis, acute suicidal behaviors, severe mental retardation, autism) as assessed by the JJI's psychologist overseeing the adolescent's treatment, or (d) their child was suspected of having committed a sexual offense.

If parents did not meet the exclusion criteria, we called them to explain the study and asked them if they were willing to be interviewed. Participation was voluntary, and parents were informed that they could withdraw from the interview whenever they wanted, without having to give a reason. If parents agreed to take part, we scheduled an interview at home or in the JJI, as chosen by the parents. Additionally, we followed the respondents' preference regarding individual interviews or interviews with mothers and fathers simultaneously if this made parents more willing to participate.

Participants

We aimed to include a heterogeneous group of parents and/or caregivers (from here on referred to as parents) to obtain a broad spectrum of perspectives of parents whose child was placed in the JJIs. Since parents were excluded if their son stayed less than two weeks in the short-term detention group, all parents already had some experience with the JJI. In total, we interviewed 19 parents in 14 interviews; six mothers, two fathers, one sister who was responsible for parenting her brother, and five pairs of mothers and fathers together (of which one couple were foster parents). One daughter and one daughter-in-law of a respondent served as interpreters for non-Dutch speaking parents. For demographic characteristics of the respondents, see table 1. One father did not fill out the demographic questionnaire, so his data are listed as missing.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the interviewed parents.

Characteristic	**Details**	**Number (*N*)**
JJI	A	13 (10 interviews)
	B	6 (4 interviews)
Marital status	Married/living together	10
	Divorced/separated	7
	Missing	2
Country of birth	Netherlands	6
	Morocco	6
	Other*	6
	Missing	1
Highest education level	Vocational Secondary Education	2

	Lower General Secondary Education	3
	Higher General Secondary Education	1
	Lower Vocational Education	2
	Intermediate Vocational Education	3
	Higher Vocational Education	2
	University	1
	Other (self-cultivation)	1
	Missing	4
Having a paid job	Yes	7
	No, housewife/houseman	3
	No, unemployed	1
	No, incapacitated	5
	Different (school/volunteer work)	2
	Missing	1
Previous family therapy	Yes	4
	No	14
	Missing	1
Total children in family	Range 1-9 (mean 4.06; SD 2.04)	n/a
Age of detained adolescent	Range 14-21 (mean 16.7; SD 1.65)	n/a

*Other: Costa Rica, Cameroon, Indonesia, Pakistan, Surinam, and Turkey

Procedure

The interviews were carried out by three students enrolled in their last year of the Bachelor's program in Social Work or Applied Psychology, under supervision of a Ph.D. candidate, who is a licensed psychologist. Each interviewer received substantial training in

qualitative interviewing techniques and additional training was provided on issues related detention and safety. The supervising Ph.D. candidate either accompanied a student during an interview or was available for support via telephone. After each interview, evaluation meetings were scheduled. Additionally, the interviewers registered reflective notes after each interview and when they had transcribed the interviews verbatim.

The interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were audio-recorded, for which parents were asked for permission. Parents were informed that the recording could be stopped during the interview on request. Respondents of two interviews did not want their interview to be audiotaped. The interviewers wrote down the answers of the respondents as comprehensively as possible.

The interviews were semi-structured, using a topic list. This list was drafted following deductive and inductive strategies. Deductively, we first reviewed literature on parent's wishes in family-centered care in out-of-home facilities as discussed in the introduction. Additionally, the four categories of parental participation as distinguished by the FC program (Mos et al., 2014; Simons, Mulder, et al., 2017) were also added to the topic list. Then, more inductively, we noted experiences of JJI staff and of parents in the pilot phase of our study (Simons et al., 2016). These notes gave input to designing the topic list. Moreover, the topic list was supplemented after a try-out interview with a representative of the Dutch parents association for children with developmental disorders and educational or behavioral problems, whose son had previously been detained. Finally, purely inductively, if new themes arose in the interviews, they were used to supplement the topic list. The key features of the final topic list have been published before (Simons et al., 2016) and the topic list is available upon request from the first author. Although the topics follow a logical order in themes, the topic list was used in a flexible way, guided by the answers of the parents.

At the beginning of the interview, the parents filled out a short questionnaire about demographic background variables. The verbatim-transcribed interviews were imported into

ATLAS.ti. We used a code tree, which represented the themes in the topic list and was supplemented with new themes arising from the interviews. The first author and the students worked in a cyclic process. The first phase of open coding was followed by a second phase of axial coding. In this axial coding phase, codes were further interpreted and reorganized based on the interview fragments they referred to. In this phase, codes got split, were merged, and were combined into more abstract central themes. Code families were constructed for further analysis. In the final phase of selective coding, we found more general patterns in the data using theoretical interpretation. This analytic process enabled us to explain parents' wishes for family-centered care in JJIs.

Results

We will present here the interview findings in relation to the two main research questions: (1) how parents wish to participate during their child's detention and (2) what they expect from contact with the JJI staff.

How parents want to participate

All 19 parents wanted to participate during their child's detention, but not always in the same way and to the same extent. After analyzing parents' answers in the interviews, we distinguished three main themes in their need for participation. First, parents were eager for information about their child and about the JJI and its procedures. Second, they wanted to be part of the discussions about their child. Third, parents wanted to take part in services and activities offered by JJI.

Need for information

"Sometimes I say: 'How does he live there? What is he doing over there?' [cries] You're totally cut off!" (P6)

In all 14 interviews, parents showed an eagerness for information about various aspects of their child's detention. According to our data, parents' needs for information were threefold: to hear about (1) their child, (2) the JJI, and (3) practical issues.

Concerning the first point, the vast majority of parents said they would like to receive regular and timely updates about their child's well-being and their child's progress. These parents are concerned or worried about their child and they want to be informed about their child's behavior; good or bad.

"I am now very satisfied having a fixed contact moment every week. In this way, I am more up to date and have more faith in the institution. If something happens, it has to be passed on to me, to prevent that I hear it first and only from my son. This has not always been the case, so they should pay more attention to this" (P10).

Specifically, about half of these parents felt the need to be reassured that their son was safe. In two interviews, parents explained how they found out quite late about their child's transfer to another living group within the JJI. These parents would have preferred to be informed beforehand of these transfers. Finally, a few parents would like to know what was written in reports about their son so they could learn about his progress and to be able to correct for possible inaccuracies.

Regarding the institution, most parents expressed the desire to learn about the JJI-program, including daily activities and treatment possibilities. They would like to form an idea of how their child is spending his day at the JJI and it is important for parents to understand how the JJI works towards successful resocialization of their child.

"What are they able to do to give him back his social life? Because we can do lots of things, but I am wondering what they are able to do, because it is not a kind of prison like

'you get in, be penalized and that's it, then you'll return'. That's not how it works, I understand that. But I'm really wondering: what are they doing over there, what is happening there? I'm really wondering." (P3)

Over half of the parents mentioned that they would like to know what the living environment in the JJI looks like, which would provide reassurance about their child's living conditions. In addition, most parents wanted to be informed about schooling opportunities in the JJI and about their son's performance at school.

Half of the parents wanted to know which staff member was assigned to be their contact person in the JJI for questions pertaining their child. They explained that they wanted to know who takes care of their son and to understand the various roles and job responsibilities of staff. This would help parents to feel more confident that their child receives adequate care from competent people. Especially, one parent emphasized that she wanted to know if staff members had a certificate of good conduct.

As for practical information, more than half of the parents said they would like to know about rules and procedures in the JJI. This knowledge would better prepare them for visits and would prevent them from accidently violating the rules. These parents emphasized the importance of an information brochure to be sent to them as soon as possible when their child entered the JJI. Parents wanted information on visiting hours, contact possibilities via telephone, route directions, food, care, religious activities, and administrative procedures regarding child support money, transferring money to their child, travel allowance for themselves, and the import of goods into the JJI. Not every parent wanted to be informed about this information in the same way. Whereas some parents would like to receive all this information as soon as possible, even preferably via telephone, other parents described an information overload as too much information at once dazzled them. Some parents suggested JJIs to place procedural information on their websites or to combine the

first visit of parents to the institution with a personal meeting to share much of this information.

"I think that they have to spend more time on the first contact between the institution and parents. Because that is done via telephone. We were at the court and then your child is being arrested and just like that removed from the room and then you've lost your child. And then you don't know anything; only that he is being transported to [the JJI]. And then, it was already nine o'clock at night, we received a call with all the information. Like transferring money and so on. En then you get this all of the sudden poured out over you." (P7)

A final topic that more than half of the parents wanted to be informed about concerns the possibilities for parental participation. They explained that they need this information, as participation is otherwise impossible.

Being part of the discussions about the youth

Besides being informed about their child's well-being and his progress as described above, parents also wanted to inform the JJI about their child. More than half of the parents thought of themselves as a valuable source of information for the JJI on how to interact with their son.

"Feeling the engagement of the institution by contacting parents, approaching them, and asking them questions. Parents know their child so well. This might result in a mutual trusting relationship"'. (I. (P10)

Two parents specified that they would like to exchange views on their child with the staff. This would enable them to see if the adolescent behaved in similar ways in different environments and to compare their views. Most of the parents were eager to discuss their child's well-being and the care provided to their son, including diagnostics, mental health treatment, education, medical treatment, and aftercare. Over half of the parents wished to

participate in planning resocialization interventions, in which they would like JJI staff to take into account family needs and circumstances.

In addition to communicating with staff about their child, two parents described that they wish to keep the parental role in communicating with their son:

"In that case, the parent and the mentor can correct the child about what he [youth] has done, "You shouldn't do that" […], Then you still remain the parent. Because now, it is like it is decided there, done there, there is where everything happens." (P12)

Participating in discussions with staff appeared to be a condition for parents for participating in the decision-making progress regarding their child. Co-deciding cannot occur without participating in a discussion. Although the vast majority of parents wished to be part of the decision-making processes, most found it hard to imagine how this could be realized. Four parents felt being a 'co-decider' was impossible, and the same number of parents could not think of any topic suitable for parents as co-deciders.

"[…] you're actually not able to do anything. Because it concerns their rules, their moments. And we are outside the whole process and everything over there is regulated." (P12)

Topics and issues as mentioned by some parents to co-decide on, were care and treatment interventions, the resocialization plan to avoid recidivism, and types of parental activities. One parent would like to participate in policy-making processes for JJIs at a governmental level.

Participating in services and activities offered by the JJI

All parents were willing to visit the JJI for a variety of activities. Most parents would like to be involved in the care provided to their children. Some parents explained that they would like to participate if an activity benefits the development of their sons. One parent suggested JJIs to use contact with parents to motivate their children for treatment.

All parents said they would visit their son during visiting hours. They made a plea for longer visiting times and more frequent moments to spend time as a family. Half of the parents would like more flexibility in the registering procedure for visiting hours and more flexibility in visiting days and hours.

"Daily. Every moment of the day. It is my child. That's how it was. And he is ripped out of our lives, due to own fault. But we are being punished as well'. (P7)

Besides visiting hours, all parents were interested in other activities as well, especially if the activity involved contact with their child. For example, parents wanted to have more, longer, and more flexible opportunities for communicating with their child on the phone. Some parents said that these calls should not be limited by their child's 'telephone credit rations'. Parents suggested additional options for communicating with their sons: family group texts, Skype, or a communication book handed from youth to parents and back. When parents stayed abroad, they would like the JJI to facilitate telephone contact with their sons.

Almost half of the parents mentioned that they would prefer face-to-face meetings with JJI staff to discuss topics as described before. These meetings could be held in the JJI, for example combined with regular visiting hours as recommended by three parents, but some parents strongly advocate home visits as well. Parents explained that seeing the adolescent's home environment would help finding solutions for the current crisis and home visits would relieve parents.

Interestingly, half of the parents mentioned that they are unaware of possible activities to participate in. Most parents were interested in cooking at the living group, a tour in the institution and its intramural school. Additionally, the majority of parents were interested in parent-support meetings. Regarding the latter, one parent specified to be especially interested if the adolescent's detention would be longer, and one parent emphasized that these meetings should discuss how to support their child's transfers back

home. In two interviews, parents launched the idea of diagonal experience meetings, i.e. previously detained adolescents inform parents about their experiences and how parents can support their children, and experienced parents inform detained adolescents. Additionally, almost half of the parents are interested in a training provided by the JJI. They suggest topics such as recognizing problem behavior, upbringing of the adolescent, processing past events through role playing exercises, transitioning back home, and supporting the adolescent in the future.

"The understanding that parents determine the biggest part of the development of their child. Parents need to have this insight […] Parents have influence on their child, then where did it go wrong? If they know all this, they would have to be motivated, right?!" (P10)

One parent emphasized that training should be provided in parents' native language or otherwise in the presence of interpreters. Another parent suggested the JJI to increase parents' insights and skills in dealing with cultural differences and possible resulting identity forming problems for their children when growing up in two cultures.

Another activity as suggested by some parents is a special moment for parents or other family members on the living group, a so-called 'parent evening' or 'family day'. It would offer the opportunity to see the living group of the adolescent, spend time with him, and to observe his behavior in the JJI.

"In the future, he will return with a part of life of which I do not have knowledge of. Because that door…. Besides on a rare occasion, I'm not passing through that door. I'm not part of the group experience he is going through. I'm not in the action, in the interaction between the youths, or between group workers and youths, about table manners, or how things go. I have no knowledge of those things". (P1)

Another parent specified not to be interested in a parent evening at the living group, but rather to be interested in a parent evening at the intramural school of the JJI since school was considered important for the adolescent's future.

Other activities that were mentioned in only a few interviews, were: help cleaning, crafting, playing music or sports, celebrating birthdays, mother's day or father's day, and sibling activities. In four interviews, parents explained that their desire to participate in activities would increase as the duration of their child's stay in the JJI would increase. Overall, parents differed in their need to attend activities based on personal or previous experiences or attitudes.

For example, one parent said:

"I do not want to be involved in that [activities like dinner or cooking], because you don't want to make him feel like he's in a good place. I don't like coming there". (P13).

Another parent emphasized the importance of tailoring activities for parents towards their needs. Yet another parent underscores how participation should be content-driven instead of rule-driven. If exceptions are necessary, in contact between parents and adolescents or between parents and JJI staff, this should be made possible according to parents.

"See, we all visit our child because we miss our child. But someone might say: 'I would like to talk with a group of parents who are going through the same situation.' Another one might say: 'I would like to cook for the group, then the children will have something else to eat'. We are all different… So I think that it's different to everyone. So they would just have to look at where the parent's interest lies" (P11).

What parents expect from contact with the staff

Most parents felt that JJI staff members should have social skills and be respectful, kind, and sincere. Additionally, one parent emphasized to expect a professional attitude from JJI staff, i.e. neither too distant nor too close.

"Mutual respect, from parents and from them. That seems about right. Don't act haughty like: 'I am the boss around here'. Because you're not. Not in my eyes. It is just a job that you're practicing over there." (P14).

A few added that staff should be open and transparent, and some parents specified that they expected staff to honor agreements or appointments.

"Transparency and contact. If a youth knows that their parents are able to see how they are behaving, I think that it will be easier to control them. If everybody is up to date about everything, then thing go well." (P10)

Overall, parents wished for a two-way communication in a real collaboration with the JJI staff. The majority of the parents said that they expected staff to take more initiative for contact.

"By discussing information from within the institution with the parents. The more involved the institution is with us, the more involved we will be with the institution. This gives me the feeling that I am actually able to be part of the conversation, which causes me to have more faith in the JJI. I could pass on this resulting faith to my child. If I would not do this, he would not have faith anymore either." (P10)

Almost half of the parents wanted staff to be available for them, i.e., for support in difficult times or for reassurance. They would like the staff to answer questions and to address worries about the youth. One parent thought that staff needed more time to work with parents. Another parent wanted to see the same high level of family-centered care amongst all living groups.

"When my son was at [the first living group] there was no communication with me at all. […] Almost always, I had to call them myself in order to find out how my son was doing. I'm sad that there is a difference. There should not be a difference between [the previous living group] and [the current living group]. I mean, at [the current living group]. […] As a

parent, you already feel a degree of mistrust against the institution that detains your child. This isn't helping." (P10)

Almost half of the parents raised the issue of safety, in a wide sense (emotional and physical integrity, preventing drugs from being smuggled into the prison, preventing deviancy learning by peers). For some parents, this also applied to their own safety if they would take part in JJI activities.

The entry staff at the JJI usually has a combined job description for security and reception. While parents valued the security aspects, the experiences in interacting with the entry staff differed between parents. In general, parents would like to feel welcomed and make small talk with entry staff.

"When they wear a uniform, you think: 'Ooh'. But they were just very kind. Friendly. Yes, immediately when entering, very friendly. The contact is nice. And also when we have to move through the gate where we have to take off our things en when it beeps [metal detector]. Not so strict." (P4)

About half of the parents, who were all of non-Dutch origin, stressed that JJI staff should be sensitive to cultural issues. For example, one parent explained how the extended family is essential in their culture and that therefore, she wished that the JJI would involve more family members besides parents. Some parents said that ideally, there should be a match in the cultural background of the family and that of the JJI contact person in the JJI. A few of these parents preferred to talk in their native language, because this would improve understanding and communication. However in another interview, parents disclosed that they expected all parents to speak Dutch and that the JJI should help non-Dutch-speaking parents to learn the language. They additionally expected equal treatment for all parents visiting the JJI.

Almost half of the parents expected JJI staff to take into account and respond to their personal circumstances such as physical illness, volunteer work, or job obligations. For

example, a divorced parent advised JJI staff to be careful in approaching divorced parents, keeping in mind that guardianship matters.

Half of the parents would like to have a regular contact person in the JJI, who is closely connected to their child and who is easy to reach. This regular contact person is usually the adolescent's mentor. Having a mentor would help parents knowing who they can contact in case of questions or worries and who could provide them with information about their child's behavior.

"*I'm happy when they [the mentor] call and tell 'he is doing well' and 'he behaves good and complies with the rules'. This gives me such a nice feeling […], because even if I'm here [at home], my thoughts are there*." (P12)

Almost half of the parents expected the mentor to take initiative in contacting them and about one third would like the mentors to introduce themselves and to explain their role. Some parents desired more face-to-face contact with the mentors and suggested combining this with regular visiting hours. According to some parents wanting to have a regular contact person, this JJI staff member could be a "*spider in the web*". This Dutch expression reflects that parents consider the mentor to be the central contact person between them and the JJI. The mentor attends parents to JJI information of special importance to them, and connects them to colleagues if necessary. Two parents explained that if the mentor would not be present, they wished for an informed colleague to be available for parents. Two parents, who described not to need a regular contact person, said that they did not care who provided them with information about their son, as long as the person who did this, worked closely to him and knew what he or she was talking about.

A few parents stressed the importance of continuity of care, especially by the mentor. The current situation in which their child is transferred to other groups with other mentors as the detention period prolongs, is seen as undesirable as parents described

difficulties with establishing trusting relationships with new mentors again. One parent suggested the mentor to remain connected to the adolescent in case of a transfer.

"When he entered, he was in a different group. And now he is in another group again. And after a few more months, he'll be transferred again. Then I will have another person [mentor] again. I just don't like these things. […] If they are transferred, let them at least keep one mentor. Then at least you know what you're up to and what you're dealing with". (P11)

Discussion

To improve parental participation in FC during adolescents' detention, we need to know (1) how parents wish to participate and (2) what they expect from contact with the JJI staff. Parents themselves offer a unique source of information on these perspectives. Therefore, we interviewed parents whose child was detained in short-term detention groups in two JJIs in the Netherlands.

While all parents in the current study said to be motivated to participate during their child's detention, practice showed that actually involving parents in the pilot phase of implementing FC remained challenging (Simons et al., 2016). Apparently, staff have to bridge the gap between parents' motivation and actual participation.

The current study provides useful tips for JJI staff in bridging this gap. For example, parents were interested in activities in the JJI, especially if those activities offered the opportunity to spend time with their child. So far, this is in line with previous research among residential treatment centers (Demmitt & Joanning, 1998; Kruzich et al., 2003; Spencer & Powell, 2000). However, most of the parents in our sample were unaware of possibilities for activities within the JJI. Hence, providing parents with timely information might improve their participation. Additionally, our study suggests that participation could be optimized if JJIs are more flexible in contact opportunities for parents.

In line with previous findings in residential settings, some parents in our sample also described the wish to fulfill the parent role (Baker & Blacher, 2002). For example, they would like to be involved in decisions concerning their child (Demmitt & Joanning, 1998). Specifically, our study showed that being part of discussions about their child appeared to be a condition for parents to participate in the decision-making process. However, as JJIs are highly structured and regulated, some parents in our sample experienced difficulties in imagining how they could participate in decision-making processes. Being aware of this obstacle might help JJI staff to communicate more clearly which topics they would like parents to co-decide on.

Another important lesson drawn from the present study is that JJIs should tailor activities towards parents' needs. Although parents came up with a variety of activities, not every parent wanted to be involved in the same way. Consequently, the adolescent's mentor (or at least somebody who is closely connected to the adolescent) is expected to actively ask parents about their wishes and try to accommodate those, while being attentive to personal circumstances of parents. A few parents in our study emphasized the importance of continuity of care. Therefore, it is suggested that the mentor remains the contact person for the whole detention period of the adolescent. The mentor is encouraged to engage in a two-way communication with parents, in which the mentor not only discusses all major information pertaining their child with the parents, but also asks parents about their input and benefits from their knowledge of the adolescent.

Similar to research in residential treatment centers, the majority of parents in our sample expected JJI staff to take the initiative in contacting parents (Demmitt & Joanning, 1998; Nickerson et al., 2006). Communication with parents should be respectful, kind, and sincere (de Boer et al., 2007; Demmitt & Joanning, 1998). Additionally, JJI staff would have to honor agreements or appointments with parents, show that they mean well for their child, and sometimes have to overcome parents' mistrust against them. Investing in the

relationship with parents would increase rates of parental participation, according to parents in our study. Besides initiating contact, JJI staff could also visit parents at home, and communicate in the native language of non-Dutch speaking parents.

Notwithstanding the useful implications of our study for practice, it has limitations as well. A first limitation concerns the risk of a sampling bias. Although we strived to include a heterogeneous group of parents, we were only able to interview the parents who were willing to participate in this study. Perhaps this group is generally more motivated for activities compared to other parents. Nevertheless, the suggestion to tailor motivational strategies and activities towards parents' needs and circumstances also applies for possibly less-motivated parents. Secondly, as we conducted a qualitative study, we cannot pretend that our sample is representative for all parents whose child is detained. For example, as the two JJIs in our study only housed boys, we cannot assume that parents of girls have the same wishes and expectations. Therefore, we suggest future research to include parents of detained girls. However, because of our heterogeneous and purposeful sample selection, we expect that our results are also generalizable to other JJIs housing boys, keeping the first limitation in mind.

We also suggest future research to further explore which factors hinder or promote parental participation. Qualitative research would help in understanding which factors parents deem influential. Knowledge of these factors will further help JJI staff to tailor their motivational interventions, which could result in more parental participation.

Our final recommendation concerns the applicability of FC in other fields of residential care and in other countries. Recently, the FC program has been adapted to secure and open residential care facilities in the Netherlands (Simons, van Domburgh, et al., 2017). Currently, the FC program for JJIs is also being translated into English to make the program internationally available. The need for programs stimulating family involvement during adolescent detention is not only of concern in the Netherlands, but is internationally

recognized (Bernstein, Dolan, & Slaughter-Johnson, 2016; Justice for Families DataCenter, 2012). Therefore, the translation of the FC program would provide international professionals working in the field of adolescent detention with a framework of how to involve parents. A summary of the content of the FC program has recently been published and is thereby available for an international audience (Simons, Mulder, et al., 2017).

If JJI staff take into account the suggestions made by parents, and tailor activities towards individual parents' wishes, they would be able to optimize parental participation during their child's detention. By involving parents early on, the gap between the JJI and the family life at home is more likely to be bridged, which will contribute to the improvement of care for detained youth.