

Prosocial Reintegration of Justice-Involved Youth in Yibin, China

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Abstract: The support and education of justice-involved youth in China is shifting from episodic correction and administrative control toward graded intervention, specialized services, and collaborative governance. However, local practice continues to face excessive dependence on judicial agencies, uneven professional capacity, fragmented service delivery, weak educational and family continuity, and evaluation systems focused mainly on procedural compliance. This article develops a prosocial-behavior-oriented framework for constructing an integrated support and education system in Yibin, Sichuan Province. It combines historical-institutional analysis, policy and document review, theoretical synthesis, and a city-level analysis of publicly reported local practice. Rather than presenting named bases or individual cases, the study integrates Yibin's initiatives into six functional categories: grassroots education and correction, professional social work, vocational education and skills development, rural and experiential learning, public-interest and community participation, and interregional coordination. The analysis identifies four broad stages in the development of China's approach to justice-involved youth: correction-centered management, institutionalized education and rescue, rights-based diversion and specialized procedure, and graded professional intervention under collaborative governance. Drawing on social learning theory, ecological systems theory, the social development model, developmental criminology, risk-need-responsivity, and prosocial development research, the article treats prosocial behavior as both a mechanism of change and a multidimensional outcome. It proposes a five-domain intervention framework and a seven-stage service process linking referral, assessment, planning, intervention, review, transition, and follow-up. The resulting model moves beyond passive compliance toward durable reintegration in family, school, work, and community life. It also clarifies the institutional roles, ethical safeguards, and evaluation requirements needed to turn a set of local platforms into a coherent citywide system.

Keywords: justice-involved youth; prosocial behavior; juvenile justice; judicial social work; social reintegration; Yibin

1. Introduction

The governance of juvenile delinquency contains an enduring tension because public authorities must respond credibly to harmful conduct and protect victims and communities, even though adolescents are still developing persons whose behavior is shaped by family relationships, school attachment, peer influence, community opportunities, online environments, and a changing sense of identity. Although a response that treats a young person only as an offender may intensify stigma, disrupt education, weaken conventional bonds, and deepen affiliation with delinquent peers, an approach based only on persuasion may understate accountability, victim harm, or persistent risk. Effective support and education must therefore combine clear legal boundaries with developmental protection, professional intervention, and realistic opportunities for social reintegration.

This article uses “justice-involved youth” as a non-stigmatizing umbrella term for minors who display serious harmful behavior, commit unlawful acts, or enter criminal proceedings; although the term preserves legal distinctions among ordinary misbehavior, serious misbehavior, and crime, it avoids turning a temporary legal status into a permanent identity. This usage is consistent with the revised Law of the People's Republic of China on the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, which combines education and protection with early prevention, graded intervention, and correction^[9].

China's policy environment increasingly supports integrated intervention, as illustrated by the revised Law on the Protection of Minors, which distributes responsibility across family, school, society,

cyberspace, government, and judicial protection^[8]. In 2025, the Supreme People's Procuratorate and the Central Social Work Department further emphasized professional social work in social investigation, psychological support, observation and education, behavioral correction, community prevention, and skills development; although these developments create institutional space for judicial social work, legal authorization and administrative coordination do not automatically produce a coherent service system^[13].

Yibin provides a useful setting in which to examine this transition because public materials describe a citywide graded observation and support structure that connects grassroots education and correction with specialized social, vocational, community, rural, and interregional resources^[10-12]. The value of this structure lies not in any single platform but in the possibility of matching different young people with different levels and forms of assistance. At the same time, its central challenge is to move from a collection of activities and sites to a unified theory of change, a standardized professional process, and an evaluation system that captures both public safety and positive development.

Accordingly, this article first asks how the orientation of support and education for justice-involved youth has evolved in China and why local practices remain administratively dependent, professionally uneven, and fragmented despite stronger legal and policy support. It then considers how prosocial behavior can provide the theoretical core for an integrated support and education system in Yibin, with the main contribution being a city-level framework that connects graded legal responses with individualized social work, educational and vocational continuity, family strengthening, responsible participation, and long-term community inclusion.

2. Research Design and Analytical Approach

This study is a conceptual and policy-oriented local systems analysis rather than an outcome evaluation, and it combines four complementary methods. First, historical-institutional analysis identifies major changes in the legal and policy orientation of juvenile support, protection, and correction through a four-stage periodization that represents an analytical interpretation rather than an official classification, while document analysis covers national legislation, international child-justice standards, procuratorial policy materials, and publicly available reports on Yibin's juvenile support practices. Theoretical synthesis then connects prosocial development with social learning theory, ecological systems theory, the social development model, developmental taxonomy, and the risk-need-responsivity framework, while a city-level case analysis examines the organizational design and functional components of Yibin's emerging graded system.

The local unit of analysis is the overall support and education network rather than a named base, project, or individual case, so publicly reported practices are integrated into six functional categories: grassroots education and correction; professional social work and psychological support; vocational education and skills development; rural or experiential learning; public-interest and community participation; and interregional coordination. This typological approach reduces the risk of treating a single initiative as representative of the entire city while directing attention to mechanisms that can be standardized, combined, and evaluated across districts and counties.

The evidence base has important limits because public reports primarily describe organizational arrangements, service activities, and selected aggregate outcomes, without disclosing an individual-level longitudinal dataset, baseline risk distributions, comparison groups, validated measures, or uniform follow-up periods. One report stated that the three-level mechanism had provided targeted intervention to 39 justice-involved youth, with six returning to school, two entering university, and seven completing vocational training^[12]. Although these figures provide useful descriptive evidence of implementation and reach, they cannot establish that the reported outcomes were caused by the intervention; accordingly, this article makes no causal claim about recidivism reduction or program effectiveness.

The analytical objective is instead to reconstruct the system's emerging logic, identify institutional gaps, and formulate a testable model for future field research, with subsequent evaluation combining case-file review, interviews with youth and caregivers, implementation observation, standardized developmental measures, and longitudinal administrative outcomes. Ethical protection is essential throughout because public identification, unnecessary data sharing, or stigmatizing descriptions may themselves undermine reintegration.

3. Historical Development and Contemporary Challenges

3.1. Historical Development: From Control to Collaborative Governance

The development of support for justice-involved youth in China can be understood in four broad stages, beginning with a period of correction-centered management. During this first stage, state agencies assumed primary responsibility for discipline, education, and rescue while behavioral control and public order dominated institutional practice, leaving young people positioned as objects of management and professional social work with little formal space; despite the stated educational purpose, services remained largely standardized and authority-centered.

The second stage institutionalized education, protection, and prevention as laws on the protection of minors and the prevention of juvenile delinquency established clearer legal responsibilities for families, schools, communities, and public agencies. Although the normative orientation expanded beyond punishment toward education, influence, and rescue, implementation often remained campaign-based, administratively driven, and uneven across localities, so the language of coordination did not always produce a shared professional process.

The third stage emphasized rights-based diversion and specialized procedure through juvenile-specific procedures, conditional non-prosecution, record sealing, social investigation, appropriate-adult participation, and community-based observation, all of which enlarged the possibility of avoiding unnecessary detention and formal labeling. International child-justice standards similarly emphasize diversion, proportionality, privacy, reintegration, and deprivation of liberty only as a last resort ^[15], reflecting a growing recognition that procedure has developmental consequences because the handling of a case can either preserve or damage education, identity, family ties, and future opportunity.

The fourth and current stage is oriented toward graded intervention, comprehensive protection, professional participation, and collaborative governance. The 2020 revision of the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency Law distinguishes different levels of harmful behavior and supports differentiated responses ^[9]. The revised Protection of Minors Law broadens the ecology of responsibility and reinforces the principle that judicial protection must connect with family, school, social, governmental, and online protection ^[8]. Recent national policy also recognizes that judicial agencies cannot independently supply all the psychological, family, educational, employment, and community resources needed for reintegration ^[13].

This evolution replaces undifferentiated control with differentiated responsibility by requiring lawful accountability and appropriate safety measures for serious violent conduct, while allowing less serious or developmentally contingent conduct to be addressed through diversion and structured social support. Developmental criminology shows that adolescent antisocial behavior follows heterogeneous pathways, with some behavior concentrated in adolescence and a smaller group demonstrating persistent risks across the life course; treating all youth as equally dangerous may therefore result in over-intervention for some and insufficient intervention for others^[7].

3.2. Contemporary Challenges and Their Institutional Roots

3.2.1. Administrative Dependence and Limited Social Participation

Although leadership by procuratorates, courts, public security organs, and justice-administration agencies is indispensable for legitimacy, lawful referral, and interdepartmental coordination, local programs that depend on these bodies for initiation, funding, referral, and evaluation remain vulnerable. Services may fluctuate with project cycles or personnel changes, social organizations may be reduced to contractors delivering predetermined activities, and procedural deadlines may displace developmental needs, while schools, employers, community organizations, volunteers, and ordinary youth services may enter only after a formal case plan has been set, producing government coordination without a stable social support network.

A sustainable system requires differentiated responsibility, with judicial agencies defining legal boundaries and procedural requirements, party committee social work departments coordinating resources, professional standards, and organizational development, and social workers conducting assessment and case management. Schools, families, communities, vocational institutions, health services, and employers should create ordinary developmental opportunities, but collaboration becomes substantive only when these distinct roles are linked through a shared case formulation and an accountable service plan.

3.2.2. Uneven Professionalization

Although legal lectures, written reflections, public-interest labor, periodic reporting, and moral exhortation may be useful, support that is reduced to these activities does not constitute a complete intervention. Professional practice requires not only assessment of developmental history, offense-related needs, trauma, mental health, family functioning, school attachment, peer networks, digital behavior, substance use, strengths, motivation, and practical barriers, but also informed participation, privacy safeguards, supervision, case documentation, interprofessional referral, and planned termination.

The risk-need-responsivity framework argues that service intensity should correspond to risk, intervention should target changeable needs related to harmful behavior, and methods should match the young person's abilities, motivation, culture, and circumstances^[1]. Meta-analytic research further indicates that therapeutic orientation, appropriate targeting, and implementation quality are central features of effective juvenile intervention, demonstrating that an increase in the number of activities is not equivalent to an improvement in professional quality^[6].

3.2.3. Fragmentation Across Systems and Stages

As justice-involved youth move sequentially through public security, procuratorates, courts, schools, communities, and service organizations, the separate records, language, targets, and timetables of these institutions may turn a referral into a one-time handoff rather than a shared plan. Support may then stop when a legal observation period ends even though school return, employment transition, family conflict, stigma, or mental-health needs remain unresolved. Fragmentation also occurs within services when counseling is disconnected from family work, vocational training is detached from recognized qualifications and employment, or community service is not linked to reflection and belonging.

The remedy is continuous case management organized around the young person's developmental pathway rather than an agency's administrative boundary, with one integrated plan specifying legal obligations, developmental goals, responsible actors, service frequency, review points, safety procedures, and transition arrangements. Information sharing must follow necessity, proportionality, and privacy principles, because participation by multiple organizations does not justify unrestricted circulation of a minor's identity or case history.

3.2.4. A Weak Theoretical Core and Narrow Evaluation

When the goal is defined only as preventing another offense, practice becomes defensive and compliance-centered, even though non-reoffending is a distal outcome shaped by follow-up duration, detection, opportunity, and baseline risk. Short-term indicators such as attendance, completed hours, signed forms, or case closure measure service delivery rather than reintegration and therefore do not explain how change occurred.

While one young person may comply during formal observation yet remain alienated from family, excluded from school, without a credible career pathway, and attached to delinquent peers, another may experience occasional setbacks while making substantial progress in self-control, empathy, school participation, and responsible relationships. Evaluation should therefore include both safety and positive developmental outcomes, with prosocial behavior providing a theoretical core that links intervention activities to observable intermediate change.

4. Prosocial Behavior as the Theoretical Core

Prosocial behavior refers to voluntary action intended to benefit other people or the wider community, including helping, sharing, cooperation, care, responsible participation, and repair of harm, and it should not be equated with superficial obedience. For justice-involved youth, prosocial development means acquiring the motivation, skills, supportive relationships, and legitimate opportunities needed to act responsibly when external supervision is reduced, thereby connecting internal change with social participation and making reintegration observable in daily life.

Social learning theory explains behavior through observation, reinforcement, expectations, and self-efficacy, showing that antisocial conduct is reinforced when aggression, deception, or rule-breaking produces peer status, excitement, or material reward^[2]. Because legal instruction alone rarely changes this reinforcement structure, intervention must provide credible adult and peer models, reinforce incremental success, and allow young people to experience competence through study, work, family

roles, teamwork, and service.

Ecological systems theory places development within interacting environments, including family, school, peer groups, community institutions, and the wider policy context, thereby challenging explanations that locate the problem entirely within the individual ^[3]. Because harmful behavior may be maintained by coercive parenting, school exclusion, deviant peer affiliation, unstructured time, online influence, poverty, or the absence of supportive adults, individual counseling cannot compensate for an unchanged ecology; effective support must strengthen personal capacity while also changing the opportunities, expectations, and relationships surrounding the young person.

The social development model explains how opportunities for involvement, skills for participation, and social reinforcement generate attachment and commitment to either prosocial or antisocial groups, with the practical implication that young people need meaningful access to prosocial settings, the abilities required to succeed in them, recognition for constructive participation, and bonds with adults and peers who support lawful conduct ^[4]. Removing negative peer contact without creating alternative relationships would otherwise produce a social vacuum in which durable prosocial attachment is difficult to establish.

Developmental criminology requires differentiated responses because adolescence-limited harmful conduct, persistent antisocial development, trauma-related reactions, peer-driven behavior, family conflict, school disengagement, and material survival pressures do not present identical intervention needs. The risk-need-responsivity framework translates this insight into service design by matching intensity to risk, targeting changeable needs, and adapting methods to the individual ^[1], while diversion research suggests that community-based alternatives can outperform conventional processing for appropriate youth even though results vary by risk level, program design, and implementation quality ^[16-17].

Prosocial development research highlights empathy, moral emotion, self-regulation, parenting, relationships, and cultural context, while recent research with justice-involved adolescents in China found a positive association between self-concept and prosocial behavior through belief in a just world and self-control ^[5,14]. Although the latter study was cross-sectional and therefore does not prove a universal causal sequence, its findings support the practical importance of identity and self-regulation. A young person repeatedly defined as deviant may protect that identity through defiance, whereas a credible positive identity creates reasons to regulate conduct in accordance with new roles and expectations.

On this basis, the proposed framework contains five connected domains, the first of which is reconstructing self-understanding through strengths assessment, emotional literacy, non-humiliating reflection on harmful conduct, self-control training, and a future-oriented identity. The second domain, strengthening family functioning, encompasses parenting guidance, conflict mediation, communication routines, supervision agreements, and referral for material assistance or protection when necessary, while the third, reconnecting education and career pathways, includes school reintegration, learning support, vocational assessment, certified training, apprenticeships, and realistic employment planning. The fourth domain is cultivating responsibility and social contribution through victim awareness, reflective community service, teamwork, and restorative participation when lawful, safe, and voluntary, whereas the fifth is sustaining community inclusion through mentoring, positive peers, recreation, cultural participation, digital literacy, anti-stigma measures, and continuing support.

These domains form a mechanism rather than a menu because self-understanding supports engagement, family stability provides consistent reinforcement, education and work create legitimate competence, responsible participation converts values into social experience, and community inclusion helps maintain change after formal supervision. Within this integrated logic, prosocial behavior functions as both the linking process and the multidimensional outcome of reintegration.

5. Yibin's Graded Practice and an Integrated Support and Education System

5.1. From Layered Resources to a Coherent Service Ecology

Public information indicates that Yibin is moving beyond isolated initiatives toward a three-level structure in which broad local access, differentiated professional assistance, and city-level vocational support perform complementary functions. At the grassroots level, education and correction provide an entry point for screening, legal education, family guidance, psychological support, and proportionate

behavioral intervention; when the initial assessment identifies more complex needs, young people can then be connected to professional social work, psychological services, structured community participation, experiential learning, or occupational settings. For adolescents whose schooling has been disrupted, the vocational level adds routine, recognized skills, credentials, and a realistic pathway into adult life ^[10-12]. The value of this arrangement therefore lies not in the existence of three administrative tiers as such, but in its capacity to move a young person through an appropriate combination of ordinary and specialized supports without separating legal supervision from developmental assistance.

Seen in this way, the six functions identified in Yibin's practice form an interconnected service ecology in which grassroots education and correction keep the threshold for assistance low, while social work and psychological services translate initial concerns into an individualized case formulation. Educational and vocational resources convert that formulation into opportunities to regain competence and lawful status; experiential learning and community participation create settings in which responsibility, cooperation, reflection, and contribution can be practiced; and interregional coordination preserves the resulting plan when residence, schooling, employment, or case handling crosses jurisdictional boundaries. Because these functions are mutually dependent, assessment without an accessible service pathway produces little change, training without family and emotional support may not be sustained, and community participation without preparation or reflection may become symbolic labor rather than a genuine process of reintegration.

The architecture also makes differentiated intervention more practicable because it allows service combinations to be adjusted to each young person's developmental position and level of need. A young person who remains attached to school may require only brief family work, school coordination, and a community mentor; persistent family conflict or emotional distress may call for sustained case management and specialist referral; and an older adolescent outside education may need accredited vocational learning, work-readiness support, and longer-term mentoring. Public reports suggest that Yibin has begun to connect such institutions and service forms, with one account describing targeted intervention for 39 young people and educational or vocational transitions among some participants, and other accounts documenting cooperation among procuratorial bodies, social work departments, youth and women's organizations, and youth-service providers ^[10-12]. Although these reports demonstrate expanding institutional reach, their aggregate figures remain descriptive and do not establish intervention effects.

5.2. Integration Gaps and Institutional Requirements

The emerging local model is best understood as a continuous pathway from graded referral to professional support, family participation, educational or vocational continuity, and community reintegration, thereby improving on lecture-and-report approaches by locating change within the environments where adolescents actually develop. This orientation also accords with national guidance that assigns judicial social workers substantive roles in social investigation, differentiated intervention, psychological assistance, observation and education, community prevention, and skills development (SPP & Central Social Work Department, 2025). Accordingly, the central question is not whether Yibin possesses a sufficient number of activities or participating organizations, but whether these resources operate through a shared assessment, one coordinated plan, and an explicit theory of change.

At present, three forms of integration require further development, the first of which is professional integration based on a common assessment framework and clearly differentiated responsibilities. Public descriptions do not yet reveal a transparent method for distinguishing low-risk situational cases from those involving persistent harmful behavior, serious victim impact, complex family needs, trauma, substance use, or mental-health concerns; without such a method, service intensity may reflect the referral source or local availability rather than the young person's actual needs. Professional boundaries therefore require further clarification, with prosecutors retaining responsibility for legal decisions while social workers, teachers, psychologists, family educators, and employers contribute distinct forms of assessment, care, education, and opportunity. If responsibilities overlap without clear limits, collaboration can weaken confidentiality, informed participation, and accountability instead of strengthening the intervention.

The second requirement is developmental integration, which means that every specialized activity should contribute to a recognizable change in the young person's daily life and future prospects. Vocational learning should connect to credible certification, apprenticeship, or employment support, while community participation should include preparation and reflection rather than operate as disguised punishment; similarly, family work should respond to violence, neglect, migration,

caregiving burden, and economic hardship instead of assuming that parental instruction alone is sufficient. Psychological services also require referral pathways for clinical conditions beyond the competence of general social-service providers, because without these practical connections a young person may complete numerous activities without gaining a stable relationship, educational place, qualification, or lawful opportunity.

The third requirement is temporal and geographical integration, under which service duration follows developmental need rather than ending automatically with a legal observation period, so that brief intervention remains available for some young people while gradually reduced support continues after formal closure for others. Because differences among districts, counties, and service organizations may produce unequal access or inconsistent quality, a citywide system should preserve local flexibility within minimum standards for assessment, practitioner competence, supervision, documentation, privacy protection, transition planning, and follow-up. Independent evaluation should accompany those standards in order to identify implementation failures and to balance measures of non-reoffending with positive developmental outcomes.

5.3. A Continuous Case-Management Pathway

To connect these requirements, the proposed model organizes practice into seven linked stages—referral, graded assessment, collaborative planning, intervention, periodic review, transition, and follow-up—which should be understood not as separate activities but as parts of a continuous case-management process. Together, the stages form three connected movements consisting of entry and case formulation, coordinated intervention and adjustment, and transition to ordinary social life, while information generated at each point guides the next decision and continuing review allows the plan to change when the initial formulation proves incomplete.

The first movement begins when public security organs, procuratorates, courts, schools, communities, or authorized service agencies make a referral through a common form that records legal status, immediate safety concerns, education or employment, guardian contact, residence, and urgent needs, although the referral source itself should not determine intervention intensity. A qualified social worker should then coordinate a multidimensional assessment that addresses the harmful conduct, developmental history, previous behavior, strengths, motivation, mental health, trauma, family functioning, school attachment, peer relationships, digital environment, substance use, community resources, and victim-related considerations. By integrating these factors more responsibly than intuition alone or automatic scoring, structured professional judgment can produce a concise formulation that distinguishes static history from changeable needs and protective factors, while also explaining what maintains risk, what supports change, and what level of intervention is proportionate.

The second movement translates the formulation into a collaborative plan and modular intervention in which the young person and guardian help define specific, understandable goals, while legal requirements remain clearly distinguished from voluntary therapeutic objectives. A single plan might combine school return, family sessions, emotional-regulation work, vocational learning, supervised recreation, and reflective community contribution, with one lead case manager preserving coherence when several organizations provide the services. Intervention intensity should vary with need: brief family guidance, school coordination, and mentoring may be sufficient for a low-risk case, whereas persistent or complex needs may require structured group work, individual case management, intensive family intervention, specialized mental-health or substance-use treatment, and close coordination with school or employment. In such a graded system, higher levels of need should elicit stronger professional support rather than a simple increase in surveillance.

Periodic review keeps this second movement responsive by requiring a small multidisciplinary team to examine dynamic risk, strengths, engagement, family and school functioning, service fit, and any new harm, while giving the young person an opportunity to explain obstacles and respond to feedback. Activities that prove ineffective should be changed rather than merely repeated, and missed appointments or incomplete requirements should not automatically be interpreted as defiance before transportation, work schedules, family conflict, learning difficulties, and the quality of the helping relationship have been considered.

The third movement begins before formal observation ends, with transition planning designed to secure an education, training, or employment pathway, at least one stable supportive adult, a strategy for high-risk situations, and access to ordinary community resources that do not disclose justice involvement. Follow-up can then shift gradually from active case management to periodic contact

while allowing rapid re-entry when a crisis emerges, and interregional protocols should preserve the service plan when a young person moves, returns to another county, studies elsewhere, or works outside the original jurisdiction.

This pathway requires nested rather than competing institutional roles, with judicial agencies retaining authority over legal decisions, due process, victim protection, and mandatory requirements, while party committee social work departments coordinate resources, standards, and the development of qualified organizations. Education, civil-affairs, health, and human-resources systems contribute continuity in schooling, child protection, material assistance, clinical care, training, and employment, whereas communities and employers provide ordinary settings in which participation can be sustained. Professional social workers then integrate these inputs through case management, maintain ethical boundaries, and keep the young person's developmental pathway—not the administrative boundary of any one agency—at the center of the plan.

Table 1: Prosocial Support Framework for Yibin

Domain	Core intervention	Primary mechanism	Illustrative indicators
Self-understanding	Strengths assessment, emotional regulation, reflective accountability, self-control training	Positive identity, agency, and future orientation	Self-control, problem-solving, future goals, reduced cognitive distortions
Family functioning	Parenting guidance, mediation, supervision planning, resource linkage	Stable attachment and consistent reinforcement	Conflict frequency, communication quality, caregiver efficacy, safety
Education and career	School return, tutoring, vocational assessment, certified training, apprenticeship	Competence and legitimate opportunity	Attendance, retention, qualification, placement stability
Responsibility and contribution	Victim awareness, reflective community service, teamwork, restorative participation where appropriate	Empathy, accountability, and social recognition	Cooperation, empathy, quality of contribution, repair actions
Community inclusion	Mentoring, positive peers, recreation, digital literacy, follow-up	Belonging and maintenance of change	Supportive ties, constructive participation, online safety, sustained engagement

The framework in Table 1 provides a more coherent basis for evaluation because it connects service content, mechanisms of change, and observable outcomes, enabling process indicators to show whether assessment, referral, supervision, plan delivery, and continuity occurred as intended. Intermediate outcomes should capture movement in self-control, empathy, family functioning, school attendance, vocational competence, prosocial relationships, and community participation, while long-term assessment examines sustained education or employment, social stability, reduced harmful conduct, and closure without renewed justice involvement. Measurement at intake, periodic review, closure, and follow-up would make developmental change visible, although any recidivism indicator should still specify the event counted, observation period, legal threshold, and baseline risk.

Evaluation must be embedded in ethical data governance, under which personal identifiers remain separate from evaluation data, access is role-based, and information sharing is limited to what is necessary for the agreed plan. Public communication must neither make a participant identifiable nor use a detailed personal story merely to demonstrate program value, and it should be accompanied by safe channels for youth feedback and independent review of complaints. Privacy, fairness, and dignity are therefore not administrative additions to the model but essential conditions for trust, meaningful participation, and sustained reintegration.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

6.1. Discussion

The proposed framework reframes support and education in three ways, first by shifting the unit of intervention from an isolated individual to the youth-in-environment, which does not excuse harmful conduct but identifies the family, school, peer, community, and institutional mechanisms through which responsibility can become sustainable. Second, it shifts the goal from passive compliance to prosocial reintegration because a young person who complies under supervision but remains excluded from education, family life, work, and community participation has not completed the developmental task of reintegration. Third, it replaces the mere accumulation of participating agencies with coordinated specialization, recognizing that additional organizations do not automatically produce collaboration and that shared assessment, one case plan, explicit roles, and continuing case management are required.

Prosocial behavior is particularly useful because it bridges the vocabularies of child development, social work, education, public safety, and restorative practice, thereby allowing positive outcomes to be measured without abandoning accountability. However, prosociality must not become a moralistic standard used to reward conformity or suppress individual difference, and its goals should remain developmentally appropriate, culturally grounded, and connected to genuine opportunities. Community service without preparation or reflection may feel punitive, vocational training without certification or employment access may reproduce disappointment, and family intervention that ignores violence or neglect may wrongly transfer responsibility to the child; consequently, professional judgment and safeguarding remain indispensable.

Yibin's graded structure offers a practical foundation for implementing this framework because it can connect broad grassroots access with specialized resources and a city-level vocational function. Its next stage should be institutional consolidation: common assessment standards, qualified case managers, minimum service specifications, cross-jurisdictional continuity, ethical data governance, and longitudinal evaluation. Local variation should be preserved where it responds to geographical and community conditions, but variation should occur within a shared professional architecture.

This study has important limitations because public materials do not provide participant characteristics, comparable baseline measures, control groups, standardized outcomes, or consistent long-term follow-up. The proposed model therefore requires empirical testing through future research that compares service pathways across districts and counties, examines which combinations work for which young people, and assesses how funding, workforce competence, organizational supervision, and interagency authority affect implementation. Youth and caregiver perspectives should be central rather than supplementary, while evaluation should also examine unintended effects, including stigma, excessive intervention, coercive participation, privacy breaches, and exclusion from ordinary services.

6.2. Conclusion

Support and education for justice-involved youth in China has evolved toward graded intervention, rights protection, diversion, professional participation, and collaborative governance, so the central contemporary challenge is no longer the absence of policy legitimacy but the translation of policy into a coherent, theory-driven, ethical, and sustainable local system. Administrative dependence, uneven professionalization, fragmented services, and narrow evaluation can be addressed only by aligning lawful authority with social work case management and real developmental opportunities.

Yibin's citywide practice should therefore be understood as an emerging multi-level system rather than as a collection of named cases or sites, and its grassroots, professional, vocational, experiential, community, and interregional functions can be integrated through a seven-stage process and a five-domain prosocial framework. The ultimate measure of success is not simply whether a young person completes an observation period without a recorded offense, but whether that person gains the capacity, relationships, qualifications, and opportunities to participate responsibly in family, school, work, and community life.

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