



# The release process from juvenile prison

*“Can family group conferencing, organized during imprisonment, function as a part of the care and aftercare for adolescent prisoners? What are needed organizational and professional elements in preparation, organization, and follow up of the youth and their families and network?”*

# This workshop is in four parts

- Short introduction to the organization of measures towards juvenile delinquency in Norway.
- Short introduction to services professional actors provides during process of releasing and following the release of juveniles from prison
- Short introduction to family group conferencing
- Experiences from a family group conference in the youth unit West, Bjørgvin prison



# The reactions towards crime and conduct disorders in juveniles in Norway

- **Two different systems and applications of law:**
  - Child Welfare system and the child welfare Act
  - Penal system and the penal act
- **The UN childrens convention stands above both**



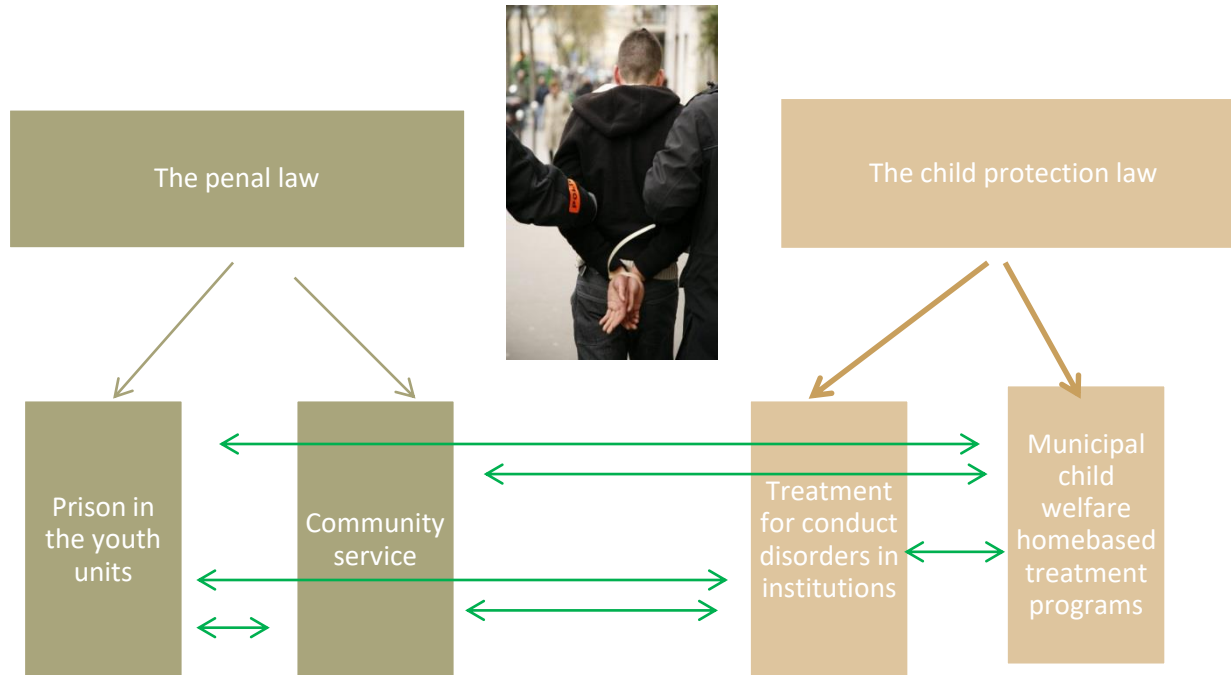
# Four main responses towards juvenile conduct disorders and crime

- Compulsive treatments for conduct disorders in institutions run by the child protective service
- Home based treatment programs run by the child protective service
- Community service in the penal system
- Imprisonment in the youth units (two in Norway)

In some cases two or more different responses have been tried.



# Two different legislations

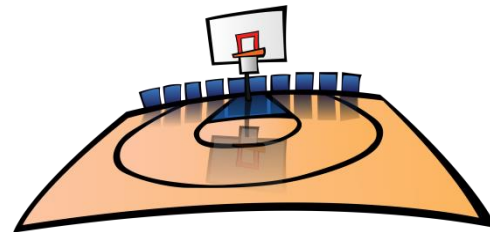


# Two different courts

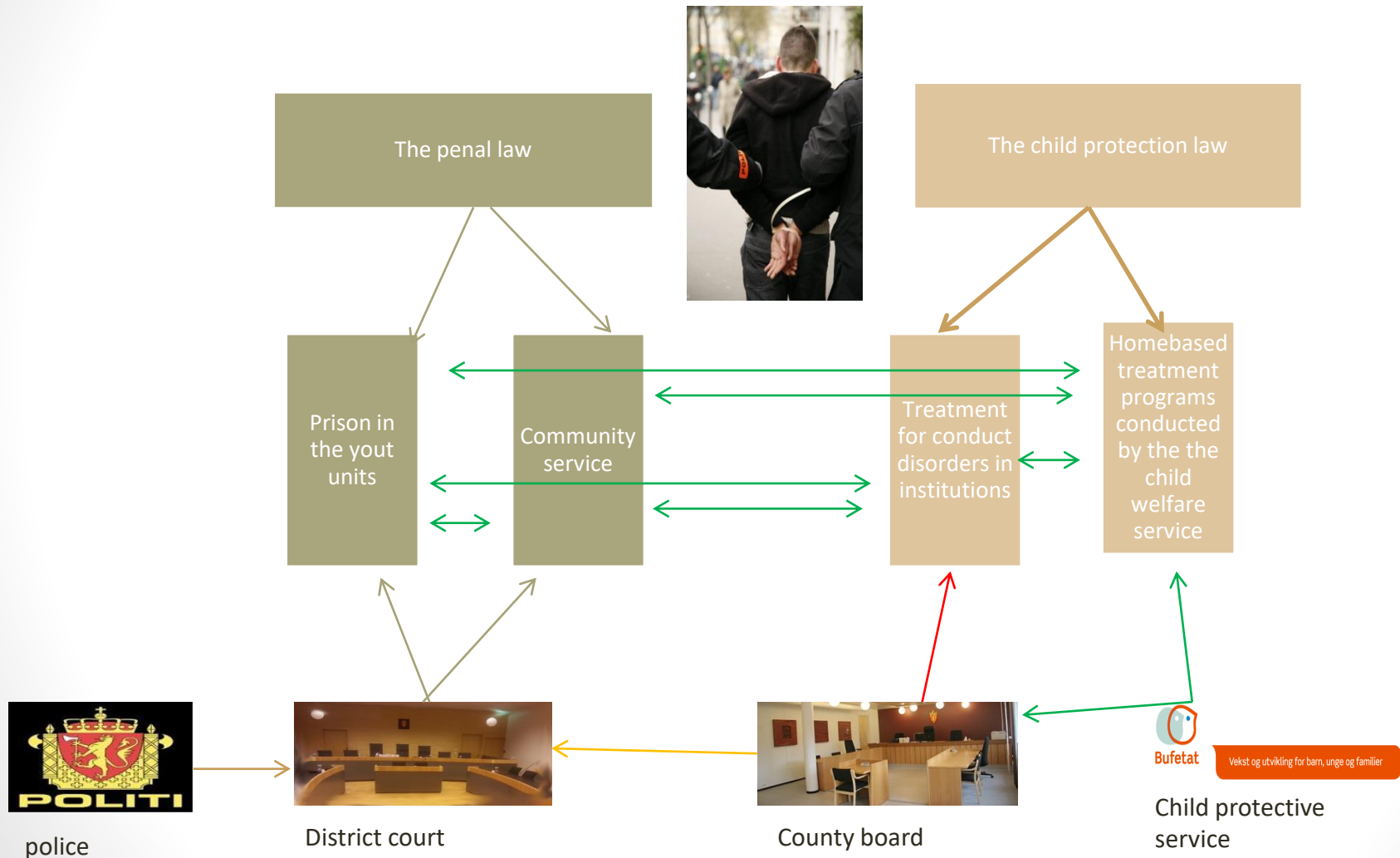
1. District Court
2. County Board for social issues

The District Court is a part of the legal chain and handles both penal and civil legal issues

The County board handles, among, other issues, placement institution based on the child welfare act



# Interactions between the laws



# Two different state authorities

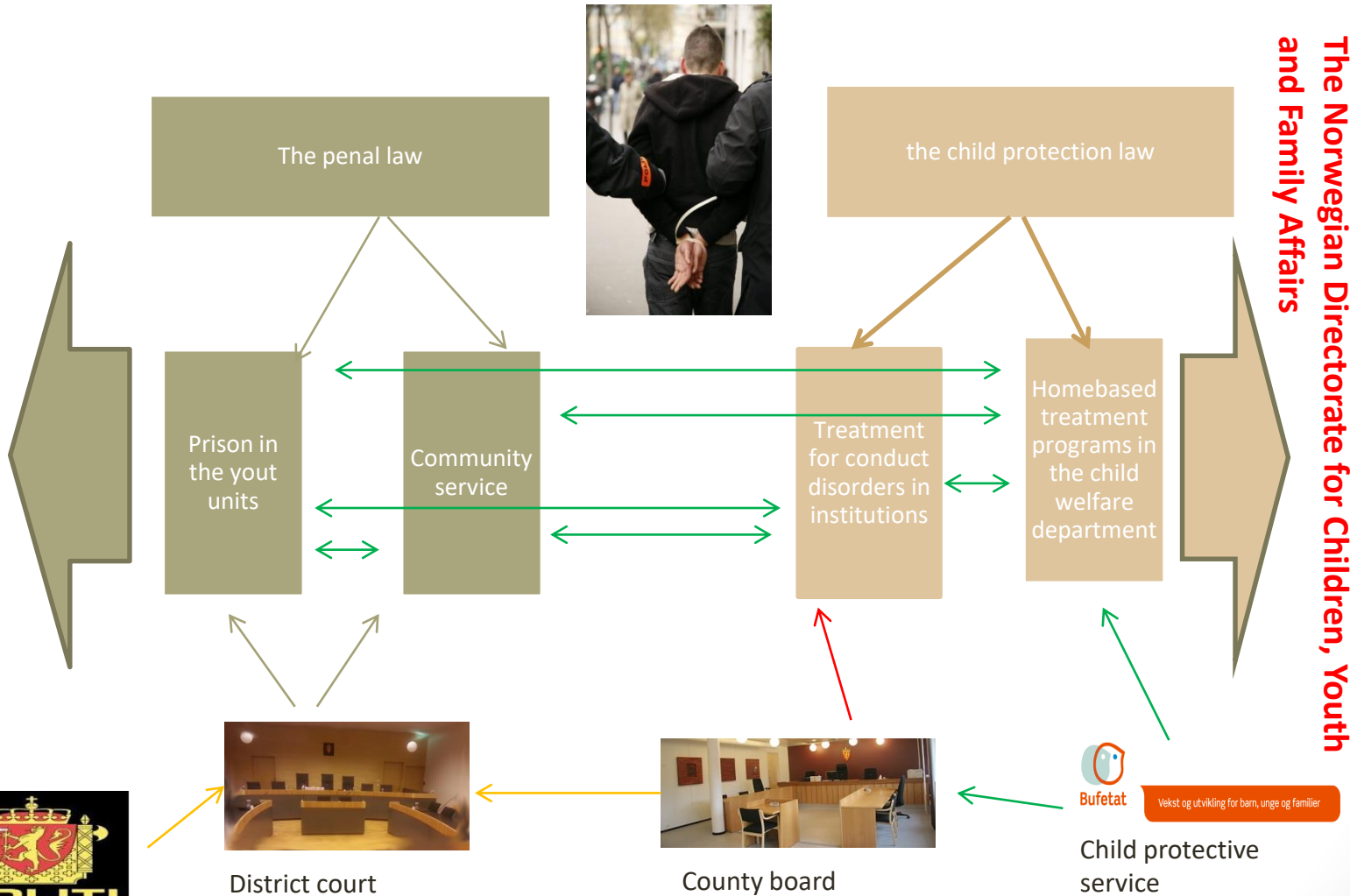
- **Norwegian Directorate for Correctional Services**  
**(under the Ministry of Justice)**
- **The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs**  
**(under the Ministry of Children and Equality)**





# Responsibility

Norwegian Directorate for Correctional Services



Services with professional actors  
can provide during process of  
releasing and following the release  
of juveniles from prison



# The child protective service

- Settlement
- Supervision
- Care
- Economic measures
- Family counselling



# The correctional services

- Shedule for leave from the prison to arrange practical matters, and practice social skills.
- Set the release date
- Counsel and give room for reflection about the release (the prison officers)
- Coordinate the different services (prison officer)



# The educational services

- Facilitate a smooth transition to an ordinary school.
- Help the juvenile with applications, and participate in meetings with the school
- Report to the prison and the probation service on school performance



# The social services

- If the juvenile is over 18 years old, the social service provides accommodation, financial support and employment measures if school is not an alternative



# The probation service

- Set conditions for the release
- Supportive counselling by the probation office (after the release)
- Monitoring by the probation office (after the release)
- Drug testing



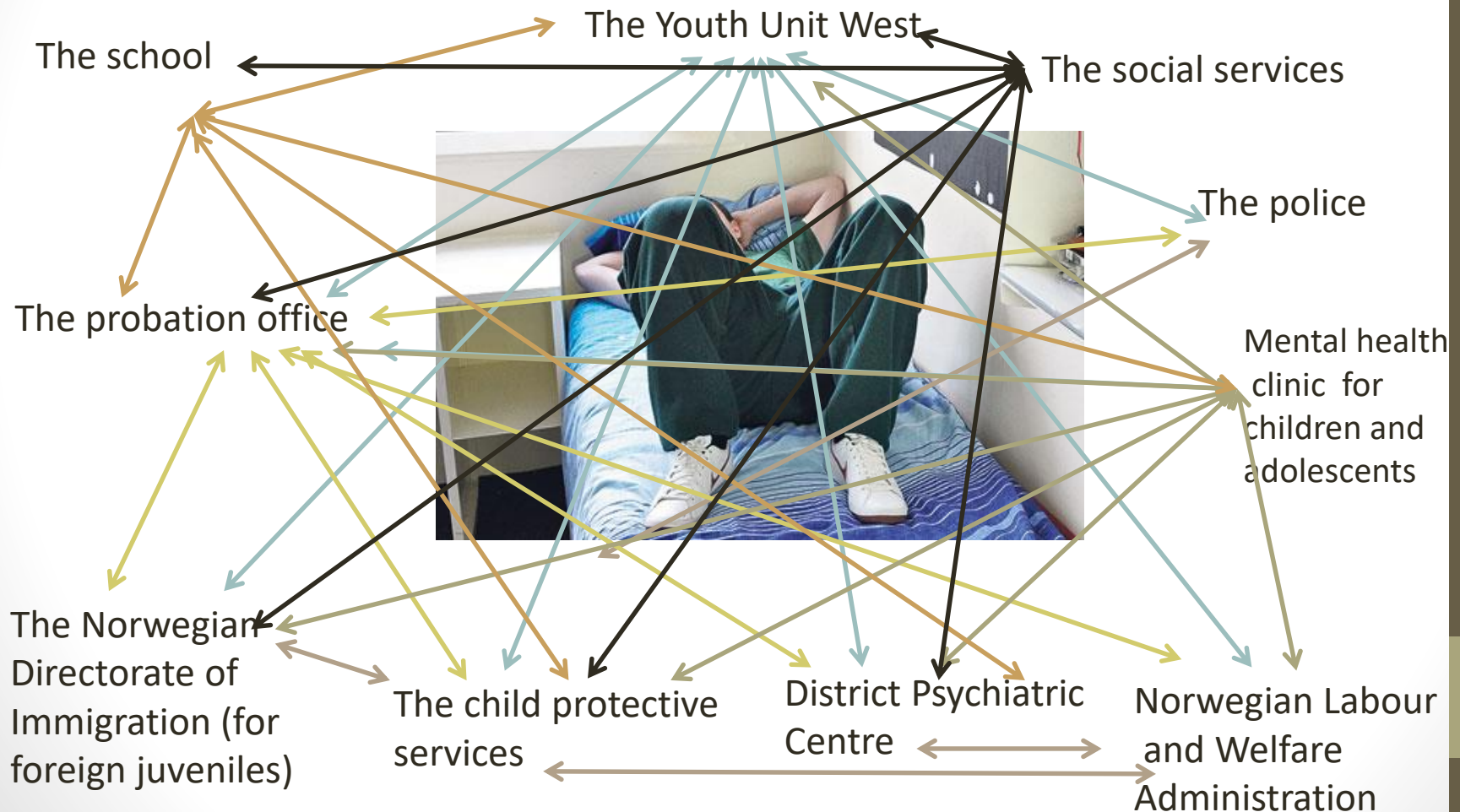
# The mental health services

- The juvenile have a right for treatment from the mental health service while incarcerated.
- After the release, the pshycologists transfer these rights to the Regional Center for Child and Adolescent Mental Health.
- The juvenile can become an patient at the local outpatient clinic.





# The professional actors in the release process



# Family group conference (FGC)

A model for empowerment and restoration of dialogue and justice in the extended family



# FGC – an international model

- Origin: New Zealand
- The 1989 Children, Young Persons and their Families Act
  - Need for a cultural perspective which demonstrated respect for cultural identity
  - Requirement to involve parents and extended family in finding solutions to problems in families

# What is Family group conferencing?

An approach to involve family and close persons in making and carrying out plans to safeguard children and juveniles.



# Who are the participants of a FGC?

- The coordinator
- The juvenile
- The family and close friends of the juvenile, that the juvenile chooses to participate
- A fiduciary for the juvenile

The referrer and the professionals are participants in the beginning of the FGC as informers

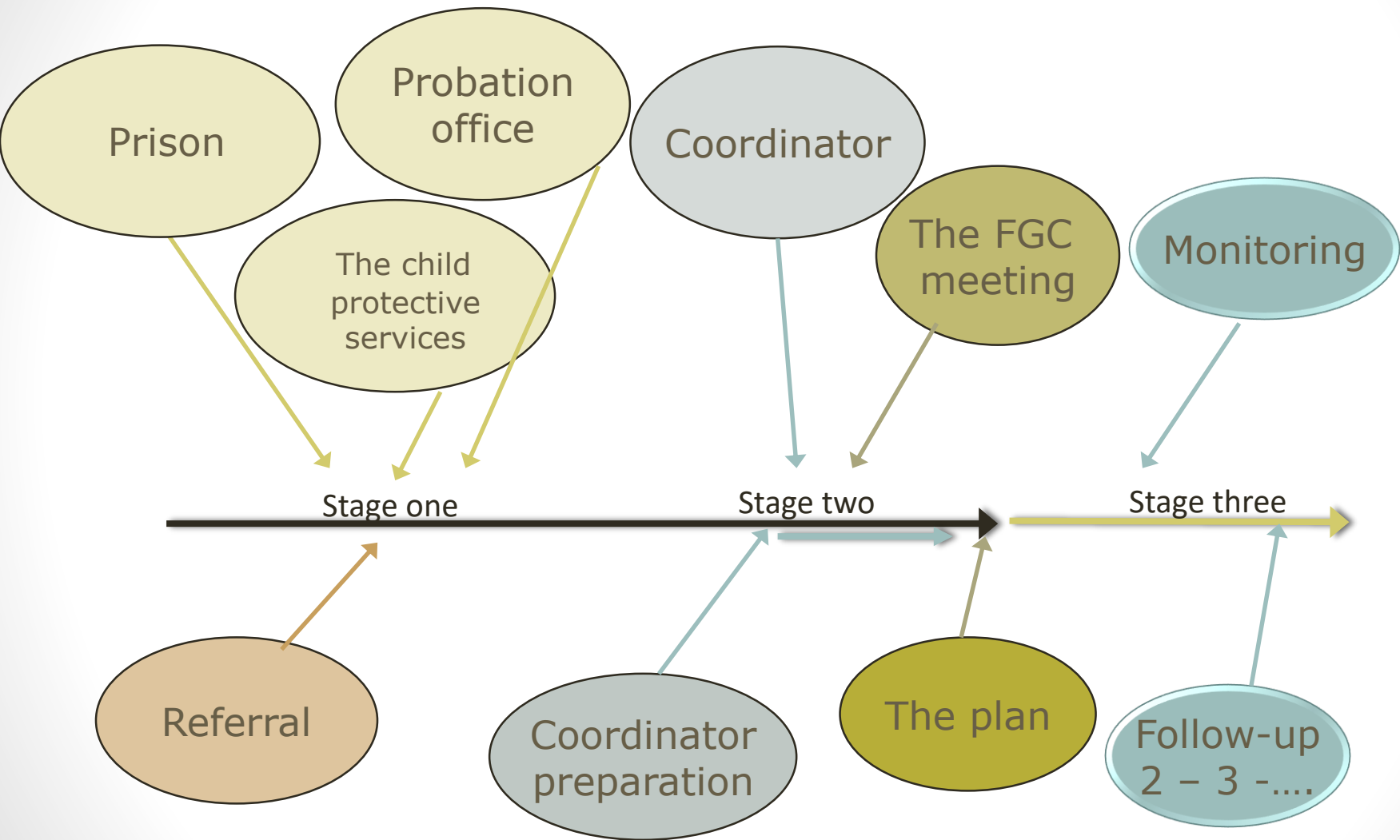
# Stages in FGC

- 1) Preparation:
- Talks between the referral and the coordinator
  - The coordinator interviews the participants
  - The coordinator finds a suitable place for the FGC
  - The coordinator works with the prison to make practical arrangements for the participation of the juvenile

- 2) Conference:
- opening the conference
  - giving information
  - ensuring private time
  - finalizing the plan
  - closing the meeting

- 3) Follow-up
- new FGC, revising the plan

# FGC process



# Principles in FGC

- Coordinator must be confident in his role, and independent in relation to child protective service.
- The juvenile chooses the participants in the family conference
- The extended network of family is mobilized





# Principles in FGC

- The child protective office must demonstrate a positive attitude toward the presented plan
- The family and network must be alone without professionals in stage 2 of the meeting
- The Juvenile should have a fiduciary present



# The juvenile's involvement can be divided in five

- Give general information to their family
- Convey expectations to the family
- Exert influence through forming opinions about the help the family can give
- Get opportunity to communicate its own point of view
- Putting decisions into practice and make new decision



# The family' s participation can be divided in four

- Information to the professionals about their capabilities
- Information to the juvenile about their concerns and their capabilities
- Information to each other about which expectations they have of each other.
- Putting decisions into practice and new decision



# A case

The first family group conference in a Norwegian juvenile prison (some facts are left out, and some are fictitious to help anonymize the juvenile and his family)

# The juvenile

- 16 years old at the time of release
- 15 years old at the time of the offence
- The juvenile had started «trade school» to get an apprenticeship as a plumber, during atonement in prison, and was integrated in an ordinary class in a school outside the prison
- Had an internship in a plumbing company as a part of his training during atonement.



# The family structure consisted of

- Biological mother and father both dead.
- foster care from 6 to 12 years old, he was then adopted by the foster family.
- Adoption parents got divorced when he was 15. and now lived in two different cities
- Foster father in a new relationship
- The foster father`s new partner`s daughter and her partner
- An aunt and an uncle that had a relationship with the juvenile.
- No grandparents



# The crime

- Convicted for rape



# The sentence

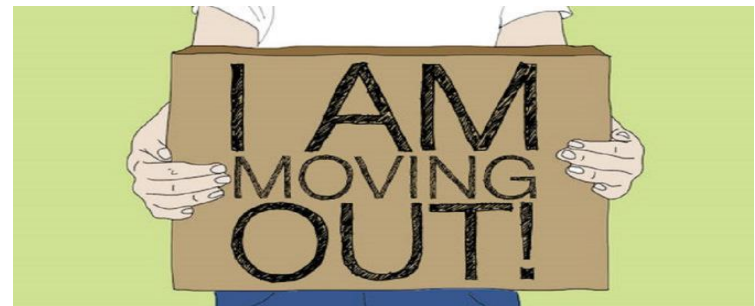
- 15 months unconditional prison
- 12 months conditional prison
- Two years probation
- Release date was set after 12 months of antonement





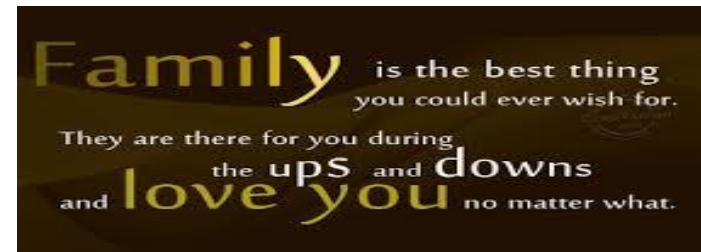
# The Juvenile's wish for the release

- The juvenile wished for his own apartment
- The juvenile wished to remain in the school and the class he was already attending



# The family's wish for the release

- The mother wanted the juvenile to move to her, and start a new school
- The father offered the juvenile to live with him, and his new partner, and remain at school



# The school's wish for the release

- The school advised him to finish the semester, based on his good performance at school.

Me trying to find the motivation to finish this semester



# The CPR's wish for the release

- The child protective service wanted to find a new foster home located in the same city as the mother, against the will of the juvenile

**Discussion:**

What is a Foster Home?

# The Correctional service and police's demands for the release

- The correctional service wanted to ensure that the juvenile didn't commit new crimes after the release
- The needs of the offended party had to be considered



# The process

- Several meetings with the municipal CPS
- Several meetings with the regional CPS, and local foster care services
- Several meetings with the juvenile
- Several meetings with the school.
- Several meetings with the parole office

*All coordinated by the inspector, and the CPS advicer in the youth unit*



# Findings in the prison

1. The juvenile and the school expressed a need for him to finish the school he had attended during atonement
2. The juvenile expressed a wish to move to a flat of his own, without supervision
3. The juvenile expressed a need for measures to prevent isolation and loneliness
4. The juvenile expressed need for help with household and other activities in the daily life (ADL)



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Compromises had to  
be made

# The family group conference (FGC)

- CPS advicer referred the family to FGC at the regional CPS
- A FGC coordinator was appointed
- The FGC coordinator interviewed the Juvenile, who agreed to FGC.
- The coordinator interviewed the family members, requested by juvenile
- The coordinator interviewed the professionals
- The local CPS provided a flat for the juvenile to live in, and employed social workers to assist the juvenile 8 to 15 hours a week
- The probation office and the prison defined the conditions for execution of the rest of his sentence in his home

# The following questions for the FGC was defined based on the interviews

***The overall question was: «How can the juvenile stay out of prison, an crime***

**This question was operationalized into following questions**

1. Where is the juvenile going to live?
2. What will the juvenile do in his spare time? Who can help him, and what can he do himself?
3. Who will help the juvenile to finish school?
4. What is important to get organized when the juvenile moves into his flat?
5. Who can help the juvenile to reject pressure from negative friends, and to keep positive friends?
6. When will the next FGC be arranged

# Arranging the FGC

- The FGC was held in an office independent from all involved parties.

## **The juvenile had chosen the following participants for the FGC:**

(adoptive)mother

(adoptive)father and his new partner(step mother)

An uncle and his wife

A prison officer as his fiduciary.

## **The following actors were summonsed as informers:**

The local CPS

A representative for the social workers

The prison

# The FGC

## Stage one

- Social worker: leisure activities, Help with the household and helping the juvenile in the bureaucracy.
- CPS: founding the flat and the mandatory cooperation with the social workers
- The prison represented by a prison officer: information about the behaviour of the juvenile in the prison, and special concerns for the release, and the conditions for the release

# The FGC

## Stage two

- The coordinator and all the professionals, except the fiduciary left the room, and the family spent about two hours to come up with a plan for the questions.

# The plan

1. The juvenile would live in a flat provided by the CPS, in the same town as his father. -At least until spring break. (this was in January)
2. The juvenile would be responsible for bringing his books to school. His step mother could help him in certain subjects. It would be the juveniles responsibility to ask for help.
3. The juvenile had a wish for a part time job, and the conference asked if the social worker would provide assistance to jobsearch.
4. All the family members would take responsibillity for inviting the juvenile for activities like dinner, cinema etc. in his spare time. The juvenile should be positive to these purposals
5. The juvenile would make a written plan each week. The social workers would help him with this, but his aunt would help him with dinner suggestions etc..
6. The social worker would help the juvenile in role playing and discussing possible scenarios , where the juvenile could find it diffucult saying no.
7. Next FGC in three months

# Did the plan work?

- The second FGC has been held.
- The family reports that the dialouge with the juvenile had improved.
- The juvenile had continued to go to school, and managed to get a diploma from the school.
- The juvenile had kept his new positive friends from school.
- The juvenile had got his driving license
- There had been no breach of the conditions
- The cooperation with the social workers and the juvenile had been good



# What was the main gain in using FGC?

- The family began to communicate again
- The juvenile and the family got time to themselves to discuss their role in all the measures applied by the professionals to the juvenile
- The juvenile got to choose what the family should contribute with in the aftercare.
- The professionals got an arena for expressing their concerns and their conditions for release
- The Juvenile and the family got to have «hands on» in the release process

# A critical view on this case

- Most of the terms was (and had to be) set from the professionals prior to the conference. Did the family actually get to participate in the decision making?
- The juvenile chose the social workers to help him with issues the family would have been able to do. There was a chance the family felt put aside.