



Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

INDEPENDENT PRACTITIONER REPORT

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Overview

- Under the statute in JJDP, the Practitioner members of the Council are charged with writing an independent report to Congress.
- Focus is on opportunities for federal agencies to strengthen youth outcomes through collaboration and partnership.
- Practitioner Report has four (4) sections:
 - Current Needs of Youth Who Are At-risk of Becoming or are Justice Involved
 - Effective & Promising Approaches
 - Adopting & Strengthening the Continuum of Care
 - Future Opportunities to Support Youth Across the Continuum

Current Needs of Youth

- **Youth Well-Being**

- Anxiety, depression and suicide
- Learning loss and post-pandemic school reintegration
- Police in schools and unstable housing = disproportionate arrests.

- **Juvenile Justice System Involvement:**

- Overall decline in youth crime
- Majority of youth who touch JJ
 - Only once and for low level offenses
 - involved in other systems.

- **Out of Home Placement:**

- Youth incarceration has fallen dramatically since 1997 while also removing youth from adult facilities

- **Re-entry:**

- Youth coming home to high rates of homelessness, incomplete education, and increased trauma.

Effective & Promising Approaches

- Youth have stronger outcomes when they are supported in the community with caring adults.
- Interventions should be based in adolescent development, and as early as possible.
- More punishment and severe treatment does not lead to improved public safety. Most youth will simply “age out of” or desist from crime as they age.
- Restorative practices provide developmentally appropriate off-ramps that address harm more effectively than punishment.
- The US continues to be a global outlier in terms of their punitive approach to young people (particularly very young children under the age of 14).

Continuum of Care

- Addressing child well-being take cooperation among all care-systems. JJ system should be the last resort.
- All wedges of the continuum of care are not, nor should they be, the same size. Prevention should be largest. After that, focus of federal agency resources and strategies should be diversion and deflection.
- Currently most resources are placed into the least effective wedge of the continuum—out of home placement. The federal government should support opportunities and approaches that ensure this becomes the smallest wedge in the Continuum of Care.
- Many children are in multiple wedges at one time—which calls on us to coordinate, learn and respond as systems to tend to the needs of these youth and their families. “No wrong doors” to intervention.

Future Opportunities

The federal government through its agencies and collaboration should ensure that strategies that address our young people are developmentally appropriate, trauma informed, community-based and culturally responsive.

- Prevention Opportunities
- Diversion and Intervention Opportunities
- Out of Home Placement Opportunities
- Re-entry Opportunities
- Workforce Opportunities

Examples

Prevention Opportunities

- Support families in caring for their children and youth so they can keep custody of them by including access to stable and safe housing, quality childcare, healthy food, and access to health care.
- Incentivize States and localities to remove police from schools by increasing funding for alternatives to promote school safety.

Diversion and Intervention Opportunities

- Issue joint guidance on best practices to minimize # of youth detained/incarcerated due to their homelessness, and to prevent homelessness of youth once released from detention/incarceration.
- Provide funding through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) to jurisdictions to develop and implement diversion programs specifically targeted at youth who come into contact with police in large part because the youth are experiencing homelessness.

Examples

Out of Home Placement Opportunities

- Keep youth with disabilities out of secure facilities by exploring alternatives.
- Fund a Protection and Advocacy program specifically for JJ-involved youth to ensure that that youth with disabilities are not unfairly and disproportionately placed due to unmet needs related to their disabilities.

Reentry Opportunities

- Open up opportunities for education and career opportunities for youth who have been justice involved.
- Providing successful supportive living arrangements for youth returning to the community.

Workforce Opportunities

- Provide all youth-serving staff regular, ongoing, and specialized training on adolescent development, the impact of trauma on that development, new interventions, and ways to respectfully engage families and youth as experts in their own needs for support, accountability, and growth.