



TARRANT COUNTY JUVENILE SERVICES

Assessment of Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System

The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center issued a report July 2014 titled Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System. This report provides guidance on how to improve outcomes for youth in the juvenile justice system.

Tarrant County Juvenile Services is committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for our youth and our community. For the first time in the history of the juvenile justice system quality and comprehensive data is now available to drive system decisions. TCJS is dedicated to conducting a comprehensive review at each point of the system for adherence to the Core Principles document and consideration of key policy and practice changes to impact recidivism and youth outcomes.

This work supports and coincides with the Department's 5- year Strategic Plan ("Moving Forward" 2013-2018)

Principle 1: Base supervision, service, and resource-allocation decisions on the results of validated risk and needs assessments

Recommendation A: Minimize juvenile justice system supervision and services for youth who are at a low risk of reoffending.

What has Been Accomplished:

- Adopted policy allows for LEAs to provide First Offender Program without referral to JPD
- Utilizing Victim-offender mediation, CSR & drug court diversion programs
- Entered into collaborations with schools to prevent youth from entering JJ system
- Implemented early intervention/collaboration with shared youth in CPS system
- Created a resource development position to engage more local resources for diversion of low risk youth
- Increased percentage of low risk youth diverted annually since FY 2008 (In FY 2014 91% of youth diverted were low risk)

Continued Work to be Done:

- Improve alignment of low risk youth with supervision decisions and services
- Enhance community based resources for low risk youth
- Evaluate annual recidivism rates for low risk youth
- Provide regular updates to judges, prosecutors, and other stakeholders on research and outcomes

Recommendation B: Maximize the impact and value of system resources by prioritizing services for youth most likely to reoffend and by minimizing the use of confinement.

What has Been Accomplished:

- Diverting a higher percentage of low risk youth since implementing the PACT
- Diverting a high percentage of youth referred at intake (e.g., FY2014 - 35%)
- Reduced the number of youth in out-of-home placement by 30% since 2009
- Reduced the number of youth committed to TJJD by 50% since 2009
- Basing the detention of youth on set criteria including seriousness of offense, community safety & best interest of the youth
- Committing youth of all races to secure confinement at a similar rate

Continued Work to be Done:

- Review and consider adoption of a validated detention screening instrument
- Analyze detention admission data for trends and determine if there is a need to revise the detention admission policy to support the diversion of youth
- Evaluate use & outcomes of out-of-home placement

Recommendation C: Use validated assessments to identify the primary causes of a youth's delinquent behaviors and focus system interventions and resources on addressing these causes

What has Been Accomplished:

- Implemented the PACT Pre-Screen and Full-Screen in FY 2009 to identify dynamic risk and need factors of youth
- Adopted policy on frequency of administering & updating a youth's assessment
- Established policy & practice for case plan development to address youth risk, needs and responsibility
- Established process for inter-rater reliability on administration of the PACT for quality improvement and adherence to protocols
- Utilizing assessment data to determine service gaps and better align resources

Continued Work to be Done:

- Clearly define the risk and criminogenic need each program & service addresses
- Train, monitor & hold staff accountable for case plans focusing primarily on services aligned with youth risk and criminogenic need
- Expand gender responsiveness specifically for female youth
- Test PACT validation and revalidate as necessary
- Review assessment process to ensure maximum benefit

Recommendation D: Use specialized, validated screenings and assessments to identify youth with mental health and substance use treatment needs and match them to services, minimizing juvenile justice intervention when appropriate.

What has Been Accomplished:

- Administering the MAYSI-2 screening instrument on all youth formally referred. Youth with high risk scores are referred for more in-depth MH assessment
- In 2014 the Tarrant County community adopted and is utilizing Reaching Teens which guides staff to strength-based, resilience-building, and trauma-informed strategies
- Developed MH resources at all points of the juvenile system including providing parents resource information, accessing the YES Waiver, & specialized caseloads
- Participating in the JJ-Trials initiative to implement best practice & improve services for youth with substance abuse issues

Continued Work to be Done:

- Review policy & practice to ensure it supports youth who are low to low/moderate risk of reoffending receive minimal supervision or services
- Consider adopting a validated substance use screening tool and expanded MH assessment tools
- Enhance MH and substance abuse intervention strategies for appropriate youth

Principle 2: *Adopt and effectively implement programs and services demonstrated to reduce recidivism and improve other youth outcomes, and use data to evaluate system performance and direct system improvements.*

Recommendation A: *Eliminate the use of programs and practices that do not reduce recidivism or improve other key youth outcomes.*

What has Been Accomplished:

- ☞ Designed an evaluation methodology for existing programs. Evaluation of programs will be conducted on both internal and contracted programs
- ☞ Initiated a review of programs & practices for their impact on recidivism
- ☞ Utilized program outcome data to eliminate some programs & services

Continued Work to be Done:

- ☞ Fully implement the program evaluation design model
- ☞ Phase out programs & policies that are proven ineffective
- ☞ Review principles outlined by the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform & implement best practices

Recommendation B: *Support and fund services shown to reduce recidivism and improve other youth outcomes.*

What has Been Accomplished:

- ☞ Adopted agency policy promoting youth positive development & family/community centric approaches
- ☞ Migrating to programs that are evidence &/or therapeutically based, including: Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Functional Family Therapy, Cross-Systems Collaborations, Youth Advocacy, Aggression Replacement Therapy, & Victim-Offender Mediation
- ☞ Providing staff training initiatives that support positive youth outcomes & family engagement, including: Motivational Interviewing, Family Engagement, Reaching Teens and cultural & linguistic competency
- ☞ Designed & awarded Request for Proposals to require evidence/research based design & fidelity
- ☞ Initiated program referral process and eligibility criteria to ensure youth are appropriately matched for best outcomes
- ☞ Defined treatment goals are utilized to determine length of participation in programs, services & residential placement

Continued Work to be Done:

- ☞ Expand use and implementation of research supported programs and practices
- ☞ Enhance referral process to ensure youth receive the most appropriate services based on risk and need
- ☞ Develop resource manual for use by JPOs, Juvenile Judges and prosecutors that clearly defines each program, appropriate risk level served and criminogenic need addressed
- ☞ Ensure programs with demonstrated effectiveness are available to address top 5 identified criminogenic needs of overall clientele
- ☞ Ensure contract provider services are monitored for outcomes and continued funding is contingent on demonstrated effectiveness

Recommendation C: *Evaluate recidivism and other youth outcomes, and use this data to guide policy, practice, and resource allocation.*

What has Been Accomplished:

- ☞ Incorporated outcome measures into each contracted program & service
- ☞ Sharing program outcome data with contractors during the bi-annual contract monitoring process
- ☞ Reviewed program recidivism data by program and risk level. Began utilizing data to facilitate policy change on youth placement in programs
- ☞ Initiated conversations to educate local juvenile justice system decision makers on the Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism document & sharing outcome data with all stakeholders

Continued Work to be Done:

- ☞ Utilize program outcome data during contract renewals and RFP proposal evaluation
- ☞ Incorporate principles of evidence based principles into RFP process
- ☞ Implement plan for educating system stakeholders on Core Principles and sharing recidivism data
- ☞ Ensure timely & up-to-date data is available by working with TJJD to obtain recidivism data
- ☞ Conduct an evaluation to determine if JCMS provides needed data for program assessment
- ☞ Determine process for need/feasibility of quarterly program status/stat reports to be shared with program administrators
- ☞ Review need for additional resources to conduct necessary research, evaluation, and statistical analysis

Principle 3: *Employ a coordinated approach across service systems to address youth's needs.*

Recommendation A: *Partner the juvenile justice system with the other key service systems in which youth are or should be involved in order to assess and effectively address their needs.*

What has Been Accomplished:

- ☞ Partnering with 13 youth-serving organizations (including mental health, healthcare, education, child welfare & criminal justice systems) to implement the Reaching Teens Model, a staff development model focusing on strength-based, trauma-informed principles designed to building resilience in youth
- ☞ Providing a certified parent engagement specialist at an elementary alternative school to deliver early intervention and intense case management services daily, targeting services to minority children most in need
- ☞ Participated in the Georgetown Crossover Youth Model –Tarrant County model identifies and intervenes in cases of youth crossing over/into both systems to keep the families from penetrating further into either system
- ☞ Providing support for a child protective services liaison located at TCJS to allow for the identification of cross system youth, court preparation and service provision
- ☞ Providing support for a MHMR liaison located at TCJS for identification of youth with historical & on-going mental health needs, & coordination of service delivery
- ☞ Participating in the Mental Health Connection of Tarrant County, a collaboration of public and private agencies, and individuals who need mental health services and their caregivers. Designed to develop long-term change, address key issues & promote immediate solutions in the mental health service system in Tarrant County
- ☞ Partnering with two major school districts to engage in delinquency/truancy prevention and intervention services
- ☞ Maintaining multiple contacts with behavior health systems for screening, assessment and treatment of youth with behavioral health needs
- ☞ Providing & participating in frequent cross-system training opportunities with other youth serving organizations
- ☞ Supporting the continuity of care of youth returning from out-of-home placement by reestablishing a youth's Medicaid eligibility, providing information to the receiving school & connection to needed community resources
- ☞ Reviewed and working to strengthen protocols with the public hospital & local mental health authority for “fit-to-proceed” cases

Continued Work to be Done:

- ☞ Continue improving cross-system coordination and collaboration
- ☞ Strengthen youth transitioning back to school from out-of-home placement, detention or juvenile justice alternative education program
- ☞ Streamline processes for accessing inpatient services for youth in need of crises intervention
- ☞ Enhance work with Child Protective Services
- ☞ Grow partnership with the foster care provider, coordinate joint training & enhance communication strategies on shared youth
- ☞ Improve processes to address competency restoration requirements with local resources through policy changes & seek funding avenues

Principle 4: *Tailor system policies, programs, and supervision to reflect the distinct development needs of adolescents.*

Recommendation A: *Engage families and other supportive adults in major system decisions and processes.*

Recommendation B: *Employ a developmentally appropriate approach to system supervision by focusing resources on promoting positive behavior change and using a graduated response to violations.*

Recommendation C: *Hold youth accountable for their actions in ways that address the harm caused to victims and communities and that support positive behavior change.*

Recommendation D: *Promote youth's respect for and compliance with the law by engaging them in system decisions and processes and by addressing system bias and the disparate treatment of youth of color and other groups that are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system.*

What has Been Accomplished:

- Employing practices of engaging youth & families in PACT Assessment & Case Planning
- Family group meetings are utilized by specialized caseload officers
- Developed plainly written Conditions of Supervision that are reviewed with youth & parent(s)
- Implemented methods to encourage family engagement, including parent orientation sessions & parenting-skills development
- Designed youth advocate program to engage families, build positive relationships with community mentors & build on youth strengths
- Implemented customer satisfaction survey taken by parents of youth upon completion of supervision

What has Been Accomplished:

- Employing strategies to engage youth and their families
- Adopted policy emphasizing youth and family centered services
- Repositioned the role of JPO's to be less about monitoring compliance, reduced caseloads & stressing family engagement
- Emphasizing training of probation staff in Motivational Interviewing, Trauma Informed Care & Family Engagement

What has Been Accomplished:

- Employing concepts of restorative justice that include victim-offender mediation, victim impact panels, community service & monetary restitution
- Restorative justice concepts are imbedded in treatment outcomes of community partners and is part of the philosophical platform utilized by the department
- Interventions are tailored to individual youth needs. TCJS utilizes an individualized resource staffing process for JPOs to seek individual case assistance

What has Been Accomplished:

- Completed first phase of OJJDP DMC model
- Engaging in community events and share DMC data
- Providing staff training to address system bias, cultural and linguistic competency
- Established a TEAM Committee (Training Employees to Achieve Multi-cultural Competence)
- Conducted review for last two years of proportionality of youth at key decision points
- Requiring culturally-competent services as part of any contract for services

Continued Work to be Done:

- Expand use of Family Strategy Sessions
- Consider adopting protocols that formalize family and youth engagement
- Consider instituting a parent/peer led support group

Continued Work to be Done:

- Train, coach, support & provide feedback to probation staff in skills development
- Consider creating a sanction grid for VOCO's supported by the courts & prosecutors
- Increase methods of providing positive reinforcement techniques

Continued Work to be Done:

- Evaluate the need for and consider adopting a graduated response model

Continued Work to be Done:

- Complete Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Juvenile Justice Certificate Program at Georgetown University with community partners
- Educate stakeholders on implicit bias & procedural justice