

Juvenile Issues in Colorado

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Juvenile Meeting April 10, 2009

Purpose:
To provide information to the
Commission on Criminal and Juvenile
Justice on the critical issues, and most
pressing needs in the juvenile justice
system.

Participants

- **Peter Weir**
- Meg Williams
- Donia Amick
- Katie Wells
- Susan Colling
- Anna Lopez
- **Bill Kilpatrick**
- **Regi Huerter**
- Diane Pasini-Hill
- Kim English
- Brian Boatright
- Kathy Sasak
- Karen Ashby
- **Dean Conder**
- Jeff McDonald
- Germaine Miera
- Paul Herman
- Caren Leaf
- Bob Coulson

Issues

- Big Picture
 - Lack of a shared vision, mission, and strategic plan for juvenile justice
 - The intersect of Juvenile Justice and Human Services
 - Complexity of the system
 - Kids are in multiple systems with multiple system requirements
 - Families are in multiple systems with multiple system requirements
 - Frequently the family systems and juvenile systems do not integrate case management goals and strategies

Issues

- Big Picture
 - Lack of family involvement and support
 - Minority over representation in the juvenile justice system
 - Truancy and school success
 - Seeing juveniles as a priority in the face of the adult system needs
 - Long-term strategic prevention initiatives
 - The unfortunate need for youth to enter the juvenile justice system to receive necessary services
 - Lack of appropriate services and support for 18 -24 yr olds

Issues

- Services
 - Consistent screening and assessment and matching of appropriate services
 - There is a need for early identification of service need with appropriate application of those services
 - Identification of need and application of services should occur without youth having to penetrate the juvenile justice system
 - Services driven by funding source versus client need
 - Need for unified holistic services for families
 - Gaps in behavioral health services
 - Sustainability of evidence based programs

Issues

- Services
 - There is a need for developmentally and culturally appropriate services for youth
 - Lack of transition services by age (under 18) and between systems
 - Availability of medication for youth with mental health problems
 - Understanding of brain development and functional age
 - Creating employable youth
 - Resources in communities vary – thus a need for community involvement

Issues

- Consequences/Process
 - Early identification of youth to manage and divert from the system
 - Lack of immediate consequences
 - Complexity of the system
 - Criminalization of immature behavior – to obtain services – or via legislation
 - Continuity of care varies across the state and damages treatment progress and ability to sustain changes
 - Lengthy stays in jails or detention facilities

Issues

- Consequences/Process
 - Criteria for who decides on direct file cases – lack of statewide consistency
 - Truancy
 - Parts of the children's code is archaic

Issues

- Training
 - Lack of training/capacity to promote evidence based and best practice to obtain the best outcomes for youth
 - Lack of training emphasis and capacity on trauma for youth, families, and professionals
 - Understanding the continuum of youth behaviors

Issues

- Information Sharing
 - Taking advantage of technology to effectively share information among system entities
 - Resolving system and "turf" barriers to the effective exchange of information
 - Understanding how technology is used today by youth and how that impacts the justice and human services systems

Agencies and Major Groups Working on Juvenile Issues in Colorado

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Council * • SB94 Advisory Board (22 counties) * • HB1451 – Collaborative Management (24 counties) * • MISJ Task Force Subcommittee • Models for Change • McArthur Foundation Core Team • Prevention Leadership Council * • Metro Denver Gang Coalition • DYC Provider Council * | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Care (CAFCA) • Children and Youth Info sharing (CYIS) * • IAC (mix) • SOMB (mix) • Adolescent Providers Group • Data sharing and utilization group • LINKS (for mental health and co-occurring disorders) * • Violence Prevention Advisory (VPAC) |
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* Organizations that have strategic plans

Importance and Urgency

- From local law enforcement it is a big issue. It is so complex we don't want to deal with it. We are seeing more violent crimes and younger offenders. It is building to a crisis.
- If we don't want to build 22 more prisons we have to start on the front end – the juvenile issues
- Very few police agencies have a juvenile unit. The same is true with prosecutors and those that have juvenile units – prosecutors fly through the juvenile unit quickly
- No one wants to deal with juveniles – they are not a priority
- From the substance abuse perspective, the use is up at an incredible rate.

Importance and Urgency

- There is a high probability on the return on investment. If you spend dollars on early intervention and treatment, the research shows that juveniles are more amenable to treatment than adults
- Our system is in trouble when a youth asks the question “Why do I have to get knocked up or locked up to get the services I need?”
- More families are asking for their kids to get arrested so their child can get the services they need.
- These are children and we owe a responsibility to our children

Conclusions

- The Commission should look at this in a systemic way. There is no one group that looks at all of these issues
- We should identify our strengths and build upon those strengths
- We should identify our gaps and address those gaps in a systemic way
- There is a need for a shared vision, mission and comprehensive strategic plan to deal with juvenile issues
- There are many agencies and organizations that have devoted their lives to the juvenile issue and the Commission should enlist and engage them in the efforts to establish a Colorado shared vision, mission and strategic plan