

JUVENILE JUSTICE TASK FORCE

RECOMMENDATION PRESENTED TO THE
COLORADO COMMISSION ON CRIMINAL AND JUVENILE JUSTICE
August 8, 2014

FY15-JJ #3 Develop professional juvenile practices via a multi-agency collaborative

Recommendation FY15- JJ #3

The Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice supports agencies within the Executive and Judicial branches of government, and agencies involved in critical decisions of case processing and treatment of juvenile offenders, committing to and participating in the creation of statewide juvenile professional development practices as directed by the state's Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Council. We recommend the following timeline:

- ⊖ **Phase 1** (September 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015): Commit to and participate in the creation of statewide juvenile professional development practices.

DISCUSSION

A deficit of comprehensive professional development strategies for staff that work with justice-involved youth can impede ensuring best outcomes for those youth. Unlike adult offenders, youth are involved in multiple systems with little coordination. As research demonstrates,

...once youth are in multiple systems, they risk being subject to multiple processes by multiple agencies with little or no coordination to achieve optimal case plans. Assessments are often duplicated, little or no attention is given to the integration of findings from the various assessments, and case plans may be duplicative or even contradictory. This lack of a coordinated response is not only unproductive in terms of addressing the youths' needs and criminogenic factors, but it can push youth further into the juvenile justice and other systems (Herz et al, 2012).¹

A number of states have already taken steps to address the deficit in professional development for their juvenile justice workforce and the impact this lack of professional development has on justice-involved youth and their families. For example, Missouri has developed a Juvenile Division Education Committee, whose purpose is to provide education for new and existing juvenile court professional personnel. The committee has identified ten knowledge and skill sets that contribute to well trained, highly effective juvenile and family court professionals. The committee was instrumental in developing curricula that provides fundamental skills in juvenile justice, intermediate and advanced course work and ongoing training.² Florida has institutionalized an Office of Staff Development and Training (SD&T), which provides professional training, development, and support for all Department of Juvenile Justice staff (and private provider staff, as requested) through instructor-led and online courses.³

(As approved)

There are numerous benefits to establishing and adopting statewide professional development standards for professionals working with justice-involved youth, including, but not limited to:

- Improved agency and cross-discipline coordination and consistency.
- Creates common knowledge and framework across professionals when addressing youth and family issues.
- Expanded staff capacity and a more integrated approach to care.
- Reduced likelihood that youth are pushed further into the juvenile justice system and other systems when they fail to meet the requirements of contradictory case plans.
- Reduction of overall system costs and staff training.
- Improved outcomes for youth and families (e.g., reduce recidivism rates of justice-involved youth).

A precedent exists in Colorado of instituting statewide professional standards for those working with children and families involved in child welfare. Colorado set minimum statutorily-defined requirements for those working in child welfare and, subsequently, a comprehensive child welfare training academy has been developed and is currently being expanded upon and strengthened to meet those standards. This affords an opportunity to expand this concept to other youth-serving systems. The training academy created by Senate Bill 164 is intended to ensure “all children in the public welfare system have access to quality services and to professionals with the knowledge, skills and abilities to make decisions that will help keep them safe and secure.”⁴ Establishing core professional developments standards for Colorado professionals who serve justice-involved youth is a natural extension of the work the state has already done to ensure the well-being and safety of system-involved children, youth and families.

Recommended Core Competency Areas
<i>Brain Development:</i> Youth brain development and behavior/decisions.
<i>Effective Case Management:</i> Screening, assessment, effective report writing, case planning, and referral.
<i>Consent, Release of Information, HIPAA, FERPA, 42CFR and Confidentiality:</i> Privacy and confidentiality rights of youth, what and how data information can be shared across agencies.
<i>Effective Communication Strategies:</i> Appropriate, respectful strategies to ensure effective communication between providers, justice-involved youth, and victims and victims’ families.

Recommended Core Competency Areas

Family Engagement: Best practices for involving parents and families in the treatment process of justice-involved youth.

Behavioral Health

- *Trauma-informed response and/ or care:* Best practices for providers in trauma-informed services; an understanding of the high prevalence of traumatic experiences in justice-involved youth and the neurological, biological, psychological and social effects of trauma and violence on youth.
- *Best practices in supporting youth with mental health challenges*
- *Strategies for addressing vicarious trauma in providers working with justice-involved youth*
- *Principles of substance abuse, prevention, treatment and recovery*

End Notes

¹ Herz, D., Lee, P., Lutz, P., Tuell, J. & Wiig, J. (2012) Addressing the Needs of Multi-System Youth: Strengthening the Connection between Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice. Boston, Massachusetts: The Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps. Retrieved from: <http://cjjr.georgetown.edu/pdfs/msy/AddressingtheNeedsofMultiSystemYouth.pdf>

² Retrieved from <https://www.courts.mo.gov/file.jsp?id=29294>

³ Retrieved from <http://www.djj.state.fl.us/services/support/staff-development>

⁴ Retrieved from <http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite%3Fc%3DPage&cid%3D1242738084790&pagename%3DGovRitter%252FGOVRLayout>