



Overview

The Partnership

Casey Family Programs and the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at the Georgetown University Public Policy Institute (CJJR) have partnered since 2007 to address the unique issues presented by children and youth who are known to both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. These young people, often referred to as “crossover youth,” move between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, or are known to both concurrently. A disproportionate number of them are youth of color and girls, and the population as a whole generally requires a more intense array of services and supports than other youth known to each system individually. While the exact number of crossover youth may vary across jurisdictions, research has established that youth who have been maltreated are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior. A recent study by Chapin Hall has also increased our knowledge about one segment of this population, finding that 10% of all youth who leave the juvenile justice system in Illinois enter the foster care system after their release. The work undertaken in this partnership has been designed to better address the issues these youth present and meet their needs. It also seeks to reduce the number of youth who enter or reenter foster care, the number of youth in foster care who move into institutional placements in the juvenile justice system, and the disproportionate representation of youth of color in each system, particularly in the crossover population.

The Practice Model

Based on this cumulative and growing body of knowledge, CJJR has developed a practice model that describes the specific practices that need to be in place within a jurisdiction in order to reduce the number of youth who crossover between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, the number of youth entering and reentering care, and the length

of stay in out of home care. The Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM) will infuse into this work values and standards; evidence-based practices, policies and procedures; and quality assurance processes. It will provide a template for how states can immediately impact how they serve crossover youth and rapidly impact outcomes.

The practice model creates a nexus between research and the practice learning from the Juvenile Justice & Child Welfare Integration Breakthrough Series Collaborative, jointly conducted in seven jurisdictions by CJJR and Casey Family Programs in 2008 and 2009. It provides a mechanism whereby agencies will strengthen their organizational structure and implement or improve practices that directly affect the outcomes for crossover youth. This will include but is not limited to the following practices: the creation of a process for identifying crossover youth at the point of crossing over, ensuring that workers are exchanging information in a timely manner, including families in all decision-making aspects of the case, ensuring that detention or institutional care bias is not occurring at the point of detention or disposition for crossover youth, and maximizing the services utilized by each system to prevent crossover from occurring.

Participating in the practice model will allow each site to create a seamless process from case opening to case closing that improves outcomes for crossover youth. Implementation of the model will ensure that practices are consistent for all youth within a system and resources are shared between the systems to maximize their impact. The model will emphasize the importance of developing cross systems data capacity and the need to use good data to make program and policy decisions.

Outcomes

The following are the overall goals for the sites participating in the CYPM:

1. A reduction in the number of youth placed in out-of-home care
2. A reduction in the use of congregate care
3. A reduction in the disproportionate representation of children of color
4. A reduction in the number of youth becoming dually-adjudicated

Data collection is a requirement for all sites participating in the practice model. We recognize that collecting shared data sets will present a challenge for many sites. However, those sites participating in the practice model expressed an ability to collect cross systems data electronically or manually, and committed to doing so.

Pre-practice model and post-practice model baseline measures will be collected. These data will reflect the larger spectrum of each system. A limited number of measures will also be collected on each phase of the practice model on a monthly basis. It is our intent to ensure that the collection of these data will not be cumbersome in nature and will build upon information that each system is currently collecting. We will work with each site individually regarding its data capacity and the formation of a data committee.

Target Population

For purposes of the CYPM we will focus on the following population:

Crossover youth who have current and simultaneous involvement in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems in the following ways: 1) youths initially involved in the child welfare system who are subsequently referred to and become involved in the juvenile justice system, and 2) youths who are initially involved in the juvenile justice system and are subsequently referred to and become involved in the child welfare system because of suspicions of abuse/neglect in the home. Youth falling into these categories are dually-involved youth and may be dually-adjudicated youth depending on the level of involvement in both systems.

Implementation of the practice model

The practice model will be implemented in three phases. Implementing the practice model across the sites in phases will result in all jurisdictions working on implementation of the same phase at the same time. The phases will be broken down as reflected in the box below. NOTE: While there are some youth who crossover from the juvenile justice system to the child welfare system, the vast majority crossover from the child welfare to the juvenile justice and as such the practice model is designed predominantly with those youth in mind.

Phase I:

Practice Area I: Arrest, Identification, and Detention

Practice Area II: Decision-making regarding charges

Phase II:

Practice Area III: Case Assignment, Assessment, and Planning

Phase III:

Practice Area IV: Coordinated Case Supervision and Ongoing Assessment

Practice Area V: Planning for Youth Permanency, Transition, and Case Closure

Phase I--Practice Area I: Arrest Identification and Detention

This practice area will address the handling of a case from the point of arrest. It will identify protocols that need to be instituted to ensure that crossover youth are identified and appropriate assessment is occurring following the detention decision. It also emphasizes the early engagement of family and cross-system workers assigned to the family when the arrest occurs.

Phase I--Practice Area II: Decision-making regarding charges

This practice area will address the need for a cross-system team approach when a youth already involved in the child welfare system has been arrested and the decision is being made whether the case should be filed and referred to the court or diverted from the juvenile justice system. It will further emphasize the use of a team approach that includes the family at all decision-points.

Phase II--Practice Area III: Case Assignment, Assessment, and Planning

This practice area has a strong emphasis on a variety of case management functions to be performed in a cross-systems manner, court operations for streamlining judicial oversight, and service delivery including but not limited to the use of evidenced-based practices.

Phase III--Practice Area IV: Coordinated Case Supervision and On-going Assessment

This practice area builds on the capacity created in Phase II (Practice Area III) and also focuses on the entry of youth from the juvenile justice system to the child welfare system. It looks to strengthen the use of a cross-systems approach in working with families, improve educational and behavioral health supports provided across the two systems, and enhance community engagement.

Phase III—Practice Area V: Planning for Youth Permanency, Transition, and Case Closure

This phase focuses on permanency and case closure. It looks to enhance the permanency planning that occurs throughout the case and improving permanency outcomes for crossover youth. It also stresses the importance of engaging community supports in order to ensure a safe transition from the system for all youth.

It is believed that implementation in phases will result in:

- A plan for implementation that is achievable across all sites;
- An opportunity for learning across sites as they implement a common set of practices; including the ability to share forms, tools, training, leadership messaging, etc.;
- A way to organize technical assistance calls across sites –making them as meaningful and relevant as possible; and
- The development of a peer mentoring network of sites facing similar challenges, providing the opportunity for the sharing of successes and failures.

Benefits of Institutionalizing a Practice Model

Nationwide, jurisdictions that have implemented a practice model have found this more effective than other change models for several reasons:

- 1) The prescriptive nature of the practice model provides staff with a road map for what practice should look like - case opening to case closure - and reduces ambiguity about the specific directions the agency needs to take;
- 2) Because practice models include predominantly evidence-based practices, the

approach removes some of the internal tension about whether or not a new practice will actually work, as evidence suggests that it will;

- 3) A strong practice model embeds values and principles into the practice changes – supporting the culture changes that many leaders desire to make in organizations; and
- 4) A practice model involves staff from all levels of the agency in the planning and execution of the work.