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Programs

CSG Justice Center Provides Roadmap for State and Local Governments to Improve Outcomes for Youth in Juvenile Justice System

July 28, 2014

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, along with the National Reentry Resource Center (NRRC), today released two publications explaining what state and local governments can do to improve outcomes for youth who come into contact with the juvenile justice system.

“Like so many other states now across the country, my state has dramatically reduced the number of youth in confinement,” said Tom Stickrath, head of Ohio’s Bureau of Criminal Investigation and former director of Ohio’s Department of Youth Services. “For that, we owe a huge debt of gratitude to organizations like the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, as well as the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The next step is to make sure that we’re not only lowering the census of our juvenile correctional facilities, but that we produce good outcomes for these kids. These publications take a big step toward helping accomplish that.”

The first publication, “Measuring and Using Juvenile Recidivism Data to Inform Policy, Practice, and Resource Allocation,” surveyed all 50 states’ juvenile correctional agencies and found that 20 percent of those agencies do not track the rates of youth reoffending. Of the 39 states that do track recidivism data, most consider only one type of contact with the justice system, stopping short of determining, for example, whether the youth was later incarcerated in the adult system.

“A fairly good axiom in government is what doesn’t get measured doesn’t get done,” said Vermont State Sen. Richard Sears, who serves on CSG Justice Center Board and chairs his state’s Senate Judiciary Committee. “I’m proud of our efforts to keep youth out of detention facilities, but that, in and of itself, isn’t success. Legislators want user-friendly data explaining how need to know how our youth respond to their supervision and various types of treatment programs, so that we might learn more and ultimately improve how we supervise and support them.”

There has been significant progress in juvenile justice reform, with youth confinement rates cut in half from 1997 to 2011 and juvenile arrest rates at their lowest level in more than 30 years. But as lower-risk youth have successfully been redirected from incarceration, progress is still needed to track, and ultimately improve, the outcomes of those higher-risk youth and others previously under supervision.

“Through our Models for Change initiative, we have seen states and counties across the country improve their juvenile justice systems over the past 15 years through meaningful reforms, but there is much work left to be done,” said Laurie Garduque, director for Justice Reform at the MacArthur Foundation. “These publications push the field to accelerate progress toward more effective, fair, and developmentally appropriate policies and practices that will increase the future life chances of these youth to succeed.”

To ensure states are not only obtaining more data to guide their programs, the CSG Justice Center also released *Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System*, a white paper that offers guiding principles and recommendations based on

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- [Roadmap Released to Improve Outcomes for Youth in Juvenile Justice System \(http://csgjusticecenter.org/youth/posts/reducing-recidivism-and-improving-outcomes-in-the-juvenile-justice-system/\)](http://csgjusticecenter.org/youth/posts/reducing-recidivism-and-improving-outcomes-in-the-juvenile-justice-system/)
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what’s been proven to work to reduce recidivism. Those recommendations, which range from engaging family in decisions regarding a child to moving away from curfew laws and “scared straight” programs, are also offered with concrete examples of states that have succeeded by employing these strategies.

“What’s valuable about this white paper is that it distills a great deal of dense information from journal articles into actionable recommendations,” said Edward Mulvey, director of the Law and Psychiatry Program at the University of Pittsburgh Medical School and principal investigator on the *Pathways to Desistance* study, an investigation of the paths that youth with serious offenses take upon leaving the juvenile justice system.

The CSG Justice Center also announced partnerships with five states to test the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the reports: Utah, Tennessee, Nebraska, Kansas and Pennsylvania.

“We can talk about the programs, services and treatment we provide, but good intentions alone won’t reduce the likelihood of reoffending,” said Susan Burke, director of Utah’s Division of Juvenile Justice Services. “This white paper released today summarizes, in one comprehensive document, the new lens through which we should be viewing each state system. I, for one, am eager to get started.”

Timed to today’s release of the publications and the announcement of the five piloting states, members of Congress will discuss the publications during a briefing at the Russell Senate Office Building at 2:30 p.m.

“State and local government officials need a framework for improving outcomes for youth in their juvenile justice systems, and they need data from their jurisdiction to know whether what they are doing is working,” said Robert Listenbee, administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention. “The CSG Justice Center’s publications will be a great resource to any system hoping to improve how they work with some of our most vulnerable youth.”

Click [here](http://csgjusticecenter.org/youth/posts/reducing-recidivism-and-improving-outcomes-in-the-juvenile-justice-system/) (<http://csgjusticecenter.org/youth/posts/reducing-recidivism-and-improving-outcomes-in-the-juvenile-justice-system/>) to access copies of the reports and a live-stream of today’s Hill briefing. For more information on the CSG Justice Center, visit www.csgjusticecenter.org (<http://www.csgjusticecenter.org>).

About The Council of State Governments Justice Center

The Council of State Governments Justice Center is a national nonprofit organization that serves policymakers at the local, state and federal levels from all branches of government. The Justice Center provides practical, nonpartisan advice and consensus-driven strategies – informed by available evidence – to increase public safety and strengthen communities.

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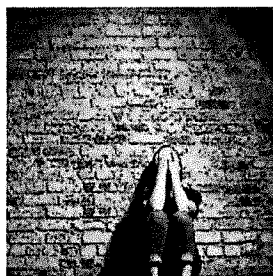
Juvenile Justice

PRESS RELEASE

SAMHSA-MacArthur Select States for Initiative to Aid Youth with Behavioral Health Needs

Published June 20, 2014

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The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and MacArthur announce that Georgia, Indiana, Massachusetts, and Tennessee have been selected to participate in the Improving Diversion Policies and Programs for Justice-Involved Youth with Behavioral Health Disorders: An Integrated Policy Academy-Action Network Initiative.

The presence of behavioral health disorders in youth creates unique challenges for the juvenile justice system at both the policy and program levels. To achieve positive outcomes for these youth, juvenile justice, behavioral health, and other relevant systems must increase collaboration, continuity of care, and access to integrated, evidence-based, or promising-practice screening and treatment

models. This renewed commitment between SAMHSA and the MacArthur Foundation will facilitate implementation of innovative strategies for probation-intake diversion and improved outcomes for justice-involved youth with behavioral health disorders.

"This innovative public-private collaboration will help promote strategies to ensure that fewer at-risk youth get detained in a juvenile justice system that is very often unable to address underlying behavioral health problems," said SAMHSA Administrator Pamela S. Hyde. "This initiative focuses on getting these youth to community-based behavioral health services that can actually turn their lives around for the better."

This Policy Academy-Action Network Initiative integrates two models:

Using SAMHSA's Policy Academy mechanism, state leadership teams will convene to learn about effective interventions and the latest research.

The Foundation's Models for Change Action Network strategy will support and link these state leadership teams to work collaboratively on similar innovations in policy and practice.

Throughout the duration of this initiative, participating states will receive technical assistance to guide the establishment of models and strategies for diverting youth with behavioral health disorders as early as possible from the juvenile justice system to appropriate community-based behavioral health services.

"Through the integration of SAMHSA's and MacArthur's demonstrated strategies for effective training and technical assistance, we will promote broader diffusion and new adaptations of best practices in systems reform," said Laurie Garduque, MacArthur's Director of Justice Reform. "More effective diversion policies and programs will improve public safety, save taxpayer money, and yield better youth and family outcomes. The states selected will have access to leading experts in the field and the latest research and information on front-end diversion policies and programs for youth with varying health needs."

This project is coordinated by the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice at Policy Research Associates, Inc. and the Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc. For more information, please contact Karli Keator at 866-962-6455.

Juvenile Justice, Justice, United States, Youth

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Juvenile Justice

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Districts Re-Evaluate How to Keep Kids in School and Out of Trouble

A recent report seeks to help states and school districts updating their policies to avoid suspending students for bad behavior – a practice studies show makes them more vulnerable to dropping out and getting in trouble with the law.

BY: Kevin Tidmarsh | June 18, 2014

Suspensions are a widespread practice in American public schools. The out of school suspension rate nearly doubled in three decades, climbing from 3.7 percent in 1974 to 6.8 percent in 2006, when data were last collected. This model, however, is coming under fire as states and school districts across the nation look to replace it with one that focuses on preventative measures, citing concerns that suspending students causes more harm than good.

The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice released a report this month that argued that schools should replace the out-of-school suspension model with a model that focuses on looking for problematic behaviors and acting to keep students in the classroom, focusing primarily on addressing the underlying issues that cause bad behavior in students rather than punishing the behavior itself.

The bipartisan report combines statistics with perspectives from experts on behavioral health, law enforcement, and education. It offers a comprehensive perspective on the phenomenon that activist organizations have termed the "school-to-prison pipeline," in which a student who gets suspended or expelled for a discretionary violation is three times more likely to come into contact with the juvenile justice system, according to data from the ACLU.

The authors of the report tie high suspension rates to other adverse outcomes, including low graduation rates and involvement with the juvenile justice system. In the 2009-2010 school year, 83 percent of white students graduated, compared to 71 percent of Hispanic students, 69 percent of American Indian/Alaskan Native students, and 67 percent of black students.

The CSG Justice Center lays out 60 policy recommendations over eight chapters and hundreds of pages, identifying policies to address nationwide trends of school discipline and suspension. States are already reviewing the report to determine how best to institute the CSG Justice Center's findings in their own education systems. For example, Tennessee is conducting a review of the report's findings to determine how best to merge its recommendations with existing state programs aimed at providing resources for at-risk students, according to Tennessee Senate Majority Leader Mark Norris.

Students who are black, Latino, Native American, LGBT, disabled, and/or learning English as a second language are suspended at an above-average rate, according to CSG's report. It also found that students who have been suspended are more likely to drop out of high school and become involved with the juvenile justice system. The combination of these factors leads to lower graduation rates among minority groups that, according to the report's authors, are "nothing short of a crisis."

"Kids that aren't successful in the school system have problems in life with the criminal justice system with a much, much greater frequency." said Darrel Stephens, executive director of the Major Cities Chiefs Association, who acted as a consultant for the report. "Look at our prison system: A substantial number of people there were not successful in the education system."

Darla Edwards, a member of the Virginia Board of Education, said she hoped to address what she called the "vicious circle" of zero-tolerance policies. "As a principal, I know that discipline has a huge impact on student achievement," Edwards added. "When students are expelled from school, it's really difficult for them to make up those learning time they missed."

The Boards of Education in Virginia and Oregon were each awarded \$5,000 grants from the National Association of State Boards of Education to pursue reforms in state discipline policy that are punitive and exclusionary. In Oregon, the Board of Education will convene a task force to develop a policy to limit exclusionary policies, while Virginia will identify ways to prevent student absenteeism. National trends also manifest themselves in Virginia, with a 2013 University of Virginia report finding that black males in Virginia are suspended nearly twice as often as their white counterparts.

Cynthia Cave echoed Edwards' sentiment, citing school policies that punish students for absences rather than checking in to understand why they were truant as a potential target for reform. "Early intervention in any kind of absence is necessary," she said. "A positive school environment would track absences at that school and have conversations about what's contributing to the absences."

Michael Thompson, director of CSG Justice Center, cited California's rules against "willful defiance" as an example of rules that can target certain racial or ethnic groups over others. Section 48900 of the California Education Code states that students can be suspended for having "disrupted school activities or otherwise willfully defied...valid authority." The California Department of Education reports that student suspensions for willful defiance made up 43 percent of all suspensions statewide in the 2012-2013 school year. African-American students, who make up 6 percent of students statewide, were 19 percent of the willful defiance suspensions.

The San Francisco and Los Angeles Unified School Districts have both struck down their willful defiance rules as grounds for suspension, citing concerns that suspensions under this rule disproportionately affect minority students. Instead, they will implement programs that focus on preventative measures and keeping kids in school, similar to measures that are being taken across the nation.

The authors recommend using existing funds for general operation and professional development, as well as seeking grants from private sources and the U.S. Departments of Justice, Education and Health and Human Services, to implement the reforms.

Thompson drew the distinction between letting bad behavior go unpunished and attempting to address behavioral issues at a base level. "No one's talking about being more tolerant of misbehavior," he said. "On the contrary, we're talking about classrooms where everyone wants to learn and everyone's there who's supposed to be there. It's an issue of how to keep all the kids in the classroom."

Norris, the current chairman of CSG, stressed that the reforms suggested in the report can be applied to schools regardless of location or political alliances.

"It's an issue of productivity rather than partisanship," Norris said.

This article was printed from: <http://www.governing.com/topics/education/gov-school-districts-look-to-suspend-their-discipline-programs.html>