Promoting Positive Policy: Connecting Juvenile and Criminal Justice Policy to Healthy Transitions Initiative

Simon Gonsoulin, American Institutes for Research
James Sawyer, National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health
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When youth age out of the foster care and juvenile justice system without supports and resources, “society incurs exponentially greater costs in the form of wasted potential, welfare dependency, homelessness, child abuse, delinquency, crime, victimization, illness, and untold sorrow” (Strangler, 2005).
According to Cutler, “if the youth aging out of foster care in a single year were only involved in the criminal justice system at the much lower rate of the general population, it would produce savings in excess of $4 billion over their lifetimes”.

Research to Consider
Large number of youth in the JJ system are experiencing mental health disorders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NCMHJJ (2006)</td>
<td>70.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teplin et al. (2002)</td>
<td>69.0 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wasserman et al. (2002)</td>
<td>68.5 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wasserman, Ko, McReynolds (2004)</td>
<td>67.2 %</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Types of Disorders by Gender (n=1437) -- NCMHJJ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disorder</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any Disorder</td>
<td>70.4%</td>
<td>81.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety Disorder</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood Disorders</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruptive Disorder</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse Disorder</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
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</table>
Many of these youth experience multiple and severe disorders:

- More than half (55.6%) of youth met criteria for at least two diagnoses.
- 60.8% of youth with a mental disorder also had a substance use disorder.
- About 27% of justice-involved youth have disorders that are serious enough to require immediate and significant treatment.
Many of these youth appear to be inappropriately and unnecessarily involved in the JJ system

- 67% of incarcerated youth with high mental health needs were committed for non-violent offenses (Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, 2003)
- 2/3 of juvenile detention facilities hold youth unnecessarily because of lack of available mental health services (congressional Committee on Government Reform, 2004)
Young adults today require supports far beyond the age of 18 so that they may attain the education, vocational skills and emotional maturity required for success in an increasingly competitive and global economy.
Adolescence and young adulthood is a period of gradual cerebral maturation that is not complete until a youth is about 25 years of age.
The prefrontal cortex, which governs reasoning and impulse control, is the last part of the brain to reach full development.
Connected by 25 has come to be accepted as a common yardstick or metric.

- Convergence of full brain development,
- Completion of college and other postsecondary education,
- Connection to employment, further education, child-rearing or other pursuits is in large measure established.
Four subgroups at very high risk:

High school dropouts, teen parents, youth emerging from the foster care system, and youth involved with the juvenile justice and sometimes adult correctional systems.
Skills needed to attain connection by 25:

- The ability to establish relationships, including romantic relationships;
- Education and training for a high level of literacy, numeracy skills, financial literacy and management of adult challenges in modern society;
- Occupational and employment skills relevant to the labor force in the 21st century’s increasing global markets;
- And ability to contribute to the well-being of others, in neighborhoods and communities.
Supports and resources that are needed so that young people attain these skills

- Family supports and connections, services to address childhood trauma and deprivation, and services to strengthen relationships with parent and other caregivers;
- Success in school, opportunities to learn basic life skills, reduction in the exposure to and risk of engaging in illegal activities and residential stability;
- Job opportunities and connections to those who can provide connections, exposure to the universe of employment paths and mentors to promote a focus on the future;
- Social opportunities and successes that promote a culture of being a contributor rather than a victim;
- And health care.
“The distinction between youth and adults is not simply one of age, but one of motivation, impulse control, judgment, culpability and physiological maturation.”

(Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 2006)
“The success of youth who are neglected, delinquent or at risk relies on effective systems.”

(Leone, Quinn, and Osher, 2002)
Collaboration is a prerequisite to the sustainability of interagency programs: (Perkins, 2002)
Stages of Collaboration:

- Coexistence
- Communication
- Cooperation
- Coordination
- Coalition
- True collaboration
Philosophical barriers between systems---different goals and missions

Structural barriers---separate agencies with separate funding streams and management structures, information-sharing challenges, desire to protect one’s turf

Language and communication barriers---lots of jargon in all agencies, different ways of speaking about youth and families, lack of mechanism to allow systems to routinely communicate with one another

Staff resistance barriers---collaboration can be threatening to staff, staff may feel out of their element if forced to think and act differently, reluctant to work with young adult offenders
Strategies to address the collaboration barriers:

- Acknowledge legitimate system concerns, ensure that the JJ/CJ systems are at the table from the beginning, demonstrate the efficiencies and resource savings that result from collaboration.
- Co-locate staff, institutionalize collaborative practices by developing written policies and procedures, blend or pool funding, initiate joint service planning, use independent consultant to facilitate strategic planning.
- Recognize and reduce jargon, cross-training of staff, develop written materials that define common acronyms, terminology, service approaches and case flow for each system to share.
Strategies to address the collaboration barriers continued:

- Involve staff in decision making from the beginning, provide training to staff, regularly share results with staff.
- Take advantage of a crisis, engage high level representatives, like judges and other court personnel, remain open-minded and listen to others, build consensus on priorities, consider pilot projects—start small and build on your success, meet regularly and keep the communication flowing.
- Recognizing where the systems have fallen short in the past will help agency leaders and policymakers craft improvements for the future.
Supporting Youth in Transition to Adulthood: Lessons Learned from Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice

Paper presented at the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform—Georgetown Public Policy Institute---authored by David Altschuler
Supporting Youth in Transition to Adulthood

- Promote policies and practices that address family relationships and permanency
- Engage young adult to work with their case managers in formulating a plan that includes the goals they wish to achieve by age 25
Supporting Youth in Transition to Adulthood

- Ensure that the services available to youth are developmentally appropriate
- Use Federal funding to create programs for older youth and track their outcomes
- Develop policies and practices that support prevention and development of the specific skills and competencies necessary for adulthood
Supporting Youth in Transition to Adulthood

- Strengthen collaboration between the JJ and CW systems to efficiently target services provision and improve outcomes for crossover youth
- Engage with the community to create broad support systems for transitioning youth
Mission of the Allegheny County Juvenile Probation Department

- To reduce and prevent juvenile crime
- Promote and maintain safe communities
- Improve the welfare of youth and families who are served by the court
Balanced and Restorative Justice

- Community protection
- Offender accountability
- Competency development
Balanced and Restorative Justice Goals Defined

- **Community Protection**: Citizens have a right to safe and secure communities.
- **Accountability/Victim Awareness**: Juvenile offenders incur an obligation to the victim and community.
- **Competency Development**: Juveniles should leave the system more capable of being responsible and productive members of their communities.
Simon Gonsoulin
sgonsoulin@air.org

James Sawyer
JSawyer@ffcmh.org