The NJJEC Bulletin

NJJEC is a project of the Justice Research and Statistics Association funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). NJJEC’s purpose is to improve the evaluation capacity of states, localities, and tribes and facilitate the use of evidence-based programs and practices in juvenile justice. The NJJEC Bulletin is disseminated directly to subscribers and posted on the NJJEC website, and provides information related to juvenile justice evaluation that is of interest to state, local, and tribal juvenile justice professionals.

We welcome your participation! If you would like to submit an article, suggest a news item for the Bulletin, or ask a question about evaluation, e-mail njjec@jrsa.org. For more information about the resources available through the National Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center, visit the NJJEC website.

What’s Going On at NJJEC?

On March 20, NJJEC and OJJDP’s National Training and Technical Assistance Center (NTTAC) will host a webinar with the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice (CDCJ) and an evaluation team from OMNI Institute to highlight a recent evaluation of 19 juvenile diversion programs funded by the CDCJ.

The discussion will focus on the effort to gain stakeholder buy-in, data collection efforts across program sites, and the collaboration between CDCJ, the OMNI evaluation team, and diversion program managers and staff.

Registration will be available in the upcoming weeks on the OJJDP NTTAC website. For a summary of the evaluation and results, check out the Evaluation Feature in this issue of the NJJEC Bulletin!

Registration has reached capacity for our upcoming webinar, Drilling Down: An Analytical Look at EBP Resources. The webinar is sponsored by OJJDP NTTAC and will take place on Thursday, February 6 from 2:00-3:30 p.m. EST. Representatives from OJJDP’s Model Programs Guide and NIJ’s CrimeSolutions.gov will be available to respond to questions specific to those resources. The archived webinar will be made available on the NTTAC website.

Do you have a suggestion for a new webinar topic or resource? Email njjec@jrsa.org!

Upcoming Events of Interest

2014 National Conference on Bullying
February 26-28
The 2014 National Conference on Bullying will be held by Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE) February 26 through 28 in Orlando, Florida. The conference will focus on evidence-based practices for preventing bullying. View the conference website for more information.

2014 National AfterSchool Association Annual Convention
February 28-March 3
The National AfterSchool Association (NAA) will hold its
annual convention February 28 through March 3 in New York, New York. The theme of the conference is Experience Innovation. The agenda includes over 100 workshop sessions on afterschool programs and an “Innovation Stations” poster session.

Check the conference website for more information and to register.

**Featured Resources:**
The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments

The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE) provides resources related to school improvement, including student engagement, safety, and other environmental factors affecting student learning and success. While the Center targets education professionals, a number of its resources might be of use to youth service providers in other fields.

The project is a product of partnership between the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Healthy Students and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The website is operated by the American Institutes for Research (AIR).

Many of the Center’s resources support implementation and measurement of programs affecting student success, and would be useful for practitioners in juvenile justice and child welfare. Many youth service providers would like to make use of surveys to gauge attitudes and behaviors of youth, particularly pre- and post-program surveys that can be used to demonstrate change. The Center’s page on School Climate Measurement provides assessment tools and indicators that measure different elements of school climate. The NCSSLE Survey Webinar Series covers topics such as survey development, administration, analysis of response data, and evaluating survey reliability, which may be of interest to program managers and staff who are developing their own surveys and assessment tools.

The Center’s website also includes a page entitled Innovation Spotlights which highlights successful efforts in school improvement, and include data to support the success of these initiatives.

**Evaluation Feature:**
Colorado and OMNI Institute Juvenile Diversion Program Evaluation

The OMNI Institute, in collaboration with the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Council, which serves as Colorado’s State Advisory Group, and the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice (CDCJ) recently completed an evaluation of 19 programs under its state-funded Juvenile Diversion grant program. The evaluation was funded with OJJDP Title II formula grant funds to facilitate system improvement.

The programs included in the evaluation encompassed a range of sizes—from 175 youth to fewer than 50 youth participating—and services, which were grouped into five categories for analysis: Supervision, Treatment, Accountability, Restorative Justice, and Competency.

The evaluation focused on short-term outcomes such as changes in attitude, as well as long-term outcomes such as reduced...
recidivism. The evaluation team defined recidivism two ways: 1) a filing or filings for a new offense during participation in the program or up to one year after leaving the program (“during and post-program recidivism”), and 2) filing for an offense committed up to one year after they exited the program (“post-program recidivism”).

The analysis of seven short-term outcomes showed significant, positive changes for youth who participated in CDCJ-funded diversion programs. These factors included Connection to Community, Decision Making, Future Aspirations, Self-Esteem, Locus of Control, Sense of Accountability, and Risky Behavioral Intentions. Each was measured by pre- and post-program surveys.

The results showed that youth who demonstrated significant improvements in Self-Esteem, Locus of Control, and Risky Behavioral Intentions were less likely to recidivate, indicating that diversion programs impacting these short-term outcomes also improved long-term outcomes.

In addition, the study found that participation in diversion programming, particularly community service, also reduced recidivism for youth at higher risk of reoffending, including males and youth who had prior contact with the police. Youth who received a diagnostic assessment as part of diversion programming increased the likelihood of significant improvements among outcomes, indicating the importance of having a screening, assessment, and treatment process in place for youth. The evaluation team included recommendations for the CDCJ, summarized below:

1. Maintain core evaluation activities, including pre- and post-program data collection and fidelity measures.
2. Encourage grantees to examine their practices in light of the evaluation findings, and incorporate evaluation findings into future Requests for Proposals.
3. Explore the underrepresentation of non-white youth in diversion programs.
4. Identify ways to increase the use of screening and assessment tools for youth in diversion programs, and collect associated data to determine the best diversion approaches for youth.

Source: Statewide Evaluation of the DCJ Juvenile Diversion Program. OMNI Institute. Submitted to the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, June 2013.

State Spotlight: Maryland

The article below was provided by Thomasina Hiers, Deputy Secretary of Programs for the Maryland Department of Human Resources.

In 2007, the Department of Human Resources (DHR), Maryland’s human services and child welfare agency, launched Place Matters. The initiative demonstrated a deliberate and focused shift in its practice, policy and service delivery to improve the continuum of services for children and families. The program places emphasis on preventing children from coming into care of the child welfare system when possible, and ensures that children are appropriately placed when they enter care. As a result of this work, Maryland has seen significant improvement in outcomes for system-involved youth. There are fewer youth in foster care than at any time in at least 25 years (a reduction of over 10,000 to 6,000 youth in care), and more than 13,000 children in foster care have found permanent homes since the inception of Place Matters.

With the unprecedented success of the program came unintended consequences:
more than half of the youth remaining in foster care are ages 14 and older, and 30% are over the age of 18. Research shows youth who age out of the foster care system face considerable challenges with regard to education, employment, stable housing, permanent connections, and social/emotional well-being.

DHR built upon the work of the Maryland Children’s Cabinet to mobilize services for all older youth with Ready by 21 (RB21), a comprehensive effort that seeks to address educational and employment outcomes; financial stability (through employment, entitlement benefits, established credit and basic identification documents); health and well-being (linkages to health care services); permanent, supportive connections; and safe, affordable, stable housing. DHR’s current RB21 partners include:

- **AIDS Interfaith Residential Services (AIRS):** 35 foster youth in the Baltimore area who are preparing to “age out” receive housing, education, employment, healthcare, financial literacy and mentoring, over a 12 month period; and

- **University of Maryland School of Social Work:** Secured a planning grant from the federal Department of Health and Human Services to develop an intervention for foster youth at-risk of homelessness in five counties and to evaluate the RB21 framework.

RB21 is driven by the core strategies of the Youth Engagement Model (YEM), which ensures that youth are active partners in the decision making process for their futures. A Youth Advisory Board (YAB) provides a forum for current and former foster care youth to discuss how foster care has impacted their lives, school, social situations, and other topics, and promotes leadership development for participating youth.

Maryland’s YEM is designed to address the needs and involve youth (ages 14-21) who are committed to the child welfare system. Soliciting youth input is vital to improving foster care policy and practice, and to improve outcomes for system youth. As experts on their own lives, youth must be considered partners in the child welfare decision making process. Maryland is currently implementing this model statewide, and it will serve as the foundation of all efforts to prepare youth in foster care for the inevitable transition to independent living.

Featured article does not represent an endorsement of the program(s) by the National Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center or the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.