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?

In response to feedback we have received through the needs assessment and past webinars, NJJEC is developing two sustainability toolkits to assist juvenile justice practitioners in maintaining their successful programs. One toolkit is geared towards grant-making or administering agencies, while the other is designed to assist grant recipients working directly with youth or in a component of the juvenile justice system. The toolkits will be made available on the NJJEC website this fall.

NJJEC staff will participate in the August meeting of the Federal Advisory Commission on Juvenile Justice (FACJJ) on August 10 at 3:00 p.m. EDT. An NJJEC staff member will present about the work of the Center, and consult the FACJJ on ways the project can address knowledge gaps and some of the priorities of the Commission. The webinar meeting is open to the public, but all attendees must register on the FACJJ website in advance. Tune in to hear about the work of the FACJJ and NJJEC!

Upcoming Events of Interest

U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Healthy Students
August 2012
The Office of Safe and Healthy Students will hold its National Conference, “Meeting the Challenge: Building and Sustaining Capacity to Improve Conditions for Learning” in Washington, DC August 8-9. The conference will include topics like gender-based violence and bullying that impact youths’ school performance. Check the conference website for more information and to register!

Center for Juvenile Justice Reform
October 2012
The Center for Juvenile Justice Reform will hold a certificate program entitled, “Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare: Multi-System Integration Certificate Program for Public Sector Leaders” October 10-17 in Washington, DC. The purpose of the program is to increase knowledge about programs and practices that address the problems of adolescents involved in a multitude of youth services. Check the CJJR website for more information about the application process.
Featured Resources: Using Evidence-Based Practices from Non-Justice Fields

As we have discussed in past issues of the Bulletin, there are a number of resources available to the juvenile justice community offering information about effective prevention and intervention practices. These resources gauge the state of the evidence on a particular topic, and rate the quality of support available for a program or practice. They might be called systematic reviews, databases, or program guides. These reviews are helpful to juvenile justice professionals because they translate research into a usable, easy-to-understand format.

We assume many of our readers are familiar with OJP-sponsored evidence-based practice resources such as CrimeSolutions.gov, the Model Programs Guide, and Blueprints for Violence Prevention that offer information on best practices in juvenile justice. You might be less familiar with some of the youth-related resources available in other fields, such as education, social services, and mental health. This information on evidence-based practices in other fields can be applied to both prevention and intervention efforts in juvenile justice. Here are a few of these resources:

HEALTH: Community Preventive Services Task Force. The Task Force is an independent, group of public health and prevention experts appointed by the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The purpose of the task force is to provide evidence-based recommendations about community preventive services, programs, and policies that are effective in saving lives, increasing longevity, and improving Americans’ quality of life. With oversight from the Task Force, scientists and subject matter experts from the CDC conduct reviews in collaboration with a wide range of government, academic, policy, and practice-based partners. The compilation of all Task Force findings, along with the systematic reviews on which they are based, is known as the Guide to Community Preventive Services (Community Guide; www.thecommunityguide.org).

The Community Preventive Services Task Force classifies its findings into three categories: recommended, recommended against, and insufficient evidence, and explains the meaning behind these labels on the website. The Task Force has published violence prevention reviews for early childhood home visitation, firearms laws, reducing psychological harm from traumatic events, school-based violence prevention programs, therapeutic foster care, and youth transfer to adult criminal system.

EDUCATION: Doing What Works (DWW). The U.S. Department of Education’s Doing What Works: Research-Based Education Practices Online provides resources available for a variety of education-related topics, including literacy, math and science instruction, and quality teaching practices. DWW provides lists of recommended practices for each topic, state and district tools for practitioners to use in assessing their strategies for approaching these issues and implementing interventions, and short interviews with subject matter experts. The DWW Comprehensive Support section includes evidence-based practices in dropout prevention and reducing behavior problems in elementary school. The dropout prevention resources include a section on using data to identify high-risk students and appropriate interventions for these students.

PSYCHOLOGY: Evidence-Based Mental Health Treatment for Children and Adolescents. Created by the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT) and the Society of Clinical Child and
Adolescent Psychology (SCCAP), the Evidence-Based Mental Health Treatment for Children and Adolescents online resource provides information on best practices in psychology for both technical and non-technical audiences. Specific courses of treatment are rated as “well-established,” “probably efficacious,” and “possibly efficacious,” with definitions for each of these categories that explain the methodology and strength of the evidence supporting these practices. Topics that are of interest to juvenile justice practitioners include school refusal behaviors, disruptive behavior problems, and substance abuse. The site also provides definitions for evidence-based practice (EBT) and empirically supported treatments (EST), and an informative discussion of myths related to these types of practices.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY: The Campbell Library. The Campbell Collaboration Library of Systematic Reviews includes reviews from a variety of fields relevant to juvenile justice practitioners. Youth-related topics include dropout prevention, youth empowerment programs, cognitive behavioral therapy, and cyber abuse interventions. Each systematic review explains the criteria for studies to be reviewed and the specific methodology used to find and examine the research, as well as the specific type of outcome for which the intervention has been demonstrated effective. In addition, C2 systematic reviews identify knowledge gaps where further study is needed.

Evaluation Feature: Moving Innovation to Evidence-Based Practice

While there are established evidence-based practices (EBP) addressing a variety of issues in juvenile justice, an EBP is not always available that perfectly suits the target population, problem, or local conditions. Many practitioners face the challenge of wanting to use evidence-based or data-driven approaches, but are unable to find a program or practice that exactly meets their needs.

An innovative program, practice, or policy is one that is grounded in research or evidence-based practice, but has not yet been thoroughly evaluated. For example, changes might be made to an existing EBP to increase its appropriateness for teenage youth when it was previously used only for younger adolescents. An EBP might be adapted to meet specific cultural needs, or to be more appropriate for girls instead of boys. Use of innovative programs and practices is an important part of expanding the evidence-base of practices that are effective for different populations, problems, and conditions.

One of the most critical concerns of innovation is proper measurement of implementation. It is important to collect information on innovative program characteristics and processes, so that the program can eventually be evaluated and replicated.

A recent survey conducted by researchers from the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice is a good example of collecting process data about an innovative program. The researchers collected information on juvenile
mental health courts and the youth being served by these courts. While there are several types of adult specialty courts for which there is evidence of effectiveness, applying the concept to youth is a relatively new practice that has yet to be evaluated.

The authors collected information on critical elements of specialty courts, such as the organizations responsible for and involved with the court, the referral process, funding sources, the agencies and organizations involved in treatment, and the length of participation required by youth. They also collected demographic information about participants, and the offenses and mental illnesses of court admissions. In addition, the survey included questions about exclusions from the court—for example, many will not accept sex offenders or youth with gang-related charges—as well as the plea requirements of court participants.

This information is critical because any of these elements might impact the effectiveness of the courts—that is, the ability to improve outcomes for youth who participate in mental health court. The survey also provides information for others wishing to implement a juvenile mental health court in a new jurisdiction.

**State Spotlight: Idaho**

One of the challenges faced by state agencies that administer grant funds is to allow local jurisdictions to address the needs of their communities, while at the same time maintaining uniform, clearly defined goals and expectations of these jurisdictions.

The Idaho Juvenile Justice Commission (IJJC) is a state agency that focuses on data-driven strategies to address the core priorities of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA). The IJJC works with seven District Councils and a Tribal Council in planning and facilitate best practices in juvenile justice in their own jurisdictions. The Councils comprise community representatives who work to develop an Action Plan for juvenile justice programs and initiatives in their local area.

Idaho’s 3-Year Plan for Juvenile Justice 2012-2015: Action Plan Guidelines for Juvenile Justice Councils outlines the need for plans to include data to define local needs and substantiate the program plan, the plan for reporting to outside stakeholders, and the specific priorities and recommendations of the Councils. The Action Plan Template, available for viewing on the Plan Tools page of IJJC’s website, provides an outline for program planning that includes sections for demonstrating program goals, objectives, and related activities, and includes a field for the JJDPA area addressed by the program. These resources provide a standardized format while still allowing individual Councils to determine their needs and the best approaches to resolve these needs in their local contexts.