The NJJEC Bulletin

NJJEC Bulletin
March 2014

What’s Going On at NJJEC?

Thank you to all who attended our February 6 webinar, *Drilling Down: An Analytical Look at EBP Resources!* The archived webinar is available on the NJJEC and NTTAC websites.

On March 20, NJJEC and OJJDP’s National Training and Technical Assistance Center (NTTAC) hosted a webinar on a recent evaluation of 19 juvenile diversion programs supported by Title II funds through the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice (CDCJ). Meg Williams of CDCJ and Dr. Jean Denious from the OMNI Institute’s evaluation team highlighted the steps necessary to work with an external evaluator, and some of the challenges associated with multi-site program evaluation.

The diversion evaluation report and related materials are available online. The archived webinar will be available in the next few weeks on the NJJEC and NTTAC websites.

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

Upcoming Events of Interest

Friends for Youth Annual Mentoring Conference
April 24-25

Friends for Youth will host its 15th Annual Mentoring Conference April 24 through 25 in Santa Clara, California. Conference sessions will focus on effective mentoring practices of interest to mentoring and youth development professionals, including volunteer recruitment and training. Check the [conference website](#) for more information and to [register](#)!

19th National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN)
April 30-May 2

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families will convene its 19th National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN) April 30 through May 2 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The conference will provide useful sessions on child abuse and neglect for a range of child service practitioners and
policymakers, including those in education, therapy, substance abuse and mental health treatment, and public health agencies. Register and find more information on the conference website.

**Boys and Girls Clubs of America National Conference**
**May 1-3**

Registration is available online for the National Conference for the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. The conference will be held in San Francisco, California May 1 through May 3. The agenda includes networking opportunities and discussions about youth development programs and techniques.

**NCCD Conference on Children, Youth, and Families**
**May 14-16**

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency will host its Conference on Children, Youth, and Families May 14 through 16 in San Diego, California. The conference is designed for all youth-oriented service systems, including child welfare, juvenile justice, and education. The conference website includes registration information and the schedule of events.

**NCA Leadership Conference**
**June 1-4**

The National Children’s Alliance will host a Leadership Conference June 1 through 4 in Washington, DC. Leaders in the Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) movement will learn about CAC efforts in areas such as child pornography, human trafficking, child abuse and sexual exploitation. The conference website provides a detailed agenda and registration information.

**Featured Resource:**

Administration for Children and Families

Roadmap for Evaluation in Tribal Communities

The United States Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families Children’s Bureau recently released a Roadmap for Collaborative and Effective Evaluation in Tribal Communities. The publication addresses the sources of resistance to evaluation in tribal communities, many of which can also be found in non-tribal communities. Fear of judgment, distrust of evaluation methods, a lack of understanding of local contexts and past community trauma are some of the barriers to conducting program evaluation in these communities.

The Roadmap outlines seven values that must be incorporated in tribal evaluation: Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Respect for Tribal Sovereignty, Strengths Focus, Cultural and Scientific Rigor, Community Engagement, Ethical Practices, and Knowledge Sharing. It emphasizes the need to increase the capacity of tribal communities to collect and assess their own data, and to meet the standards of rigorous research in these communities while maintaining respect for their history and cultural uniqueness. This is turn encourages participation in evaluation, as the work is not externally imposed or conducted without appropriate cultural context and considerations.

The report includes a graphic of the key players in the evaluation of child welfare programs in tribal communities, including tribal leaders, policy makers, community members, and universities, and notes the need to incorporate cultural values and historical context in any evaluation effort.
Evaluation Feature: 
NIJ-Funded Study
Pathways to Desistance

The National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) recently released *Pathways to Desistance*, a report funded by the National Institute of Justice.

Researchers used baseline and multiple follow-up interviews with more than 1,000 serious juvenile offenders from Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania and Maricopa County, Arizona to determine factors that led them away from delinquency and antisocial behavior. The sites were selected based on the occurrence of serious juvenile offending; sufficient representation of offending youth across gender, race, and ethnicity; and differences in juvenile justice system operations, specifically with regard to treatment availability.

The interviews included questions about education, employment, attitudes, family and friend relationships, and the communities in which they lived. Interview data collected during the follow-up sessions was compared to the initial data from the same youth to assess changes, and determine some of the reasons youth had moved away from offending. The researchers also used data from other sources such as the courts, FBI, child welfare systems, and Medicaid.

While most of the youth (74%) were rearrested at some point during the follow-up period, the frequency of offending declined for most of the youth over time. One of the most important findings included in the report is that there were different ways youth desisted from offending, indicating that “one-size-fits-all” responses to juvenile offending are likely to be ineffective. For example, substance abuse was strongly associated with offending patterns, indicating that diagnosis and treatment of substance abuse problems and disorders is an important component of desistance. In addition, maturity and attitudes about delinquent behavior were associated with changes in offending. Further, youth who did not fear risks from offending itself were less likely to be responsive to the threat of being arrested or punished. These findings indicate that behavioral treatment promoting emotional development and attitudinal change about the legal system might contribute to reductions in reoffending.


State Spotlight: 
New Jersey

The New Jersey Parents’ Caucus, Inc (NJPC) is a family-driven coalition that has received funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and the New Jersey Department of Human Services.

NJPC’s purpose is to educate caregivers across the state about available services and supports, and engage parents in addressing the complex emotional and behavioral needs of children and youth involved in the juvenile justice, mental health and child welfare systems.

NJPC offers a myriad of family strengthening strategies and programs for families raising children at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. Programs include NJPC’s Professional Parent Advocacy Training
for parents and family members raising justice-involved youth. The training comprises 15+ curricula including Understanding Childhood Mental Health Challenges and the DSM 5, Understanding the Juvenile Justice System in New Jersey, Navigating the Special Education System and the IEP Process, Cultural Competency and Multiculturalism in the Child-Serving Community, and Infusing Family Involvement in the Child Welfare System. NJPC has also produced *Navigating the Juvenile Justice System: A Family Guide*, a comprehensive guide for parents and family members whose children are involved in the juvenile justice system in both English and Spanish; and training and technical assistance programs such as *Strengthening Family Engagement in the Juvenile Justice System* for caregivers and *Engaging Parents & Family Members of Justice-Involved Youth Training* for juvenile justice professionals.

NJPC’s Advocacy and Informal Support provides parents and caregivers with parent advocate volunteers who accompany them to court and related social service appointments. NJPC’s Community Outreach includes an Annual Outreach RV Tour in the most high-crime cities of New Jersey, disseminating bulletins and brochures to assist caregivers in navigating the juvenile justice system, as well as understand the services and resources that are available to system-involved youth.

Through the support of OJJDP, NJPC has conducted extensive program data collection that spans more than 20,000 training hours delivered to caregivers of more than 5,000 New Jersey children. Caregiver knowledge and system involvement are assessed before participation in the program and at one year after completion. Types of data include demographic information, caregivers’ system knowledge before and after participating in training, caregiver satisfaction with the usefulness of training, child mental and behavioral health diagnoses, number of system agencies with which children are involved, and self-report information regarding parental empowerment to seek and retain services for their children.

The data show improvements in utilization of mental health, special education, and developmental disability services, and declines in the involvement of children and youth in the juvenile justice system. Analysis also demonstrated reductions in family involvement in the child welfare system.

NJPC program reports are available online. For additional information, contact Kathy Wright, Executive Director of the New Jersey Parent Caucus, Inc.

*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.*