NJJEC Bulletin

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.

What’s Going On at NJJEC?

On February 19th, NJJEC and OJJDP’s National Training and Technical Assistance Center (NTTAC) hosted a webinar titled, Implementing Risk Assessment Tools and Measuring Outcomes. Dr. Gina Vincent of the National Youth Screening and Assessment Partners (NYSAP) gave a broad overview of risk assessment tools and highlighted key principles to facilitate successful implementation of such tools. Kelly Clement of Louisiana’s Office of Juvenile Justice presented on the steps Louisiana took to implement a risk assessment tool statewide at the dispositional stage, and explained how they use data to inform risk assessment practices and policies. The recorded webinar will be available on the NJJEC and the NTTAC website in the next few weeks.

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

Upcoming Events of Interest

Juvenile Services Training Institute – 2015
The National Partnership for Juvenile Services will be hosting a Juvenile Services Training Institute to be held in Portland, Oregon. Workshops include such topics as trauma-responsive custody, adolescent brain research, positive youth development strategies, and behavior management techniques. More details and registration information are available online.

Coalition on Juvenile Justice Annual Conference
June 10th – 13th, 2015
Coalition on Juvenile Justice (CJJ) will hold its annual conference in Washington DC, June 10th – 13th. This year’s conference is titled “At the Forefront: Emerging Challenges and Solutions to Reforming Juvenile Justice”. More details and registration information are available online.

2015 Juvenile Justice Youth Summit
July 23rd – 24th, 2015
CJJ and OJJDP will co-host
the 2015 Juvenile Justice Youth Summit titled: The Time is Now: Creating Change with Young Emerging Leaders. More details and registration information are available online.

Juvenile Probation Reform Academy for Probation and Parole Professionals  
July 13th – 15th, 2015  
The American Probation and Parole Association (APPA), the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, and the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice have partnered to establish a Juvenile Probation Reform Academy for juvenile probation and parole leaders and managers. The program will be held at the 40th annual APPA training institute in Los Angeles. More details and registration information are available online.

Featured Resources: Publications

A recent publication, SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, has important implications for practitioners and policymakers interested in implementing a trauma-informed approach to juvenile justice. Pulling from several years of research in the field of trauma the SAMHSA guide highlights six key principles of a trauma-informed approach which include: 1) safety; 2) trustworthiness and transparency; 3) peer support; 4) collaboration and mutuality; 5) empowerment, voice and choice; 6) cultural, historical and gender issues. The guide also recommends ten domains of organizational change in which to integrate the six key principles of a trauma-informed approach. The domains include screening, assessment and treatment services, as well as domains of leadership, policy, quality assurance, evaluation, training and workforce development. The SAMHSA guide presents a useful framework for incorporating a trauma-informed approach into organizational structure and culture.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) in collaboration with OJJDP has released an online brief, The Effects of Adolescent Development on Policing. This brief provides an overview of the science of adolescent development in order to help law enforcement better understand the characteristics of adolescent thinking and behavior. Most importantly, the brief uses the developmental knowledge to highlight strategies to improve law enforcement interactions with youth, which can be integrated into routine practices and procedures.

Pathways to Desistance is a large longitudinal study of serious adolescent offenders as they transition into young adulthood. Several Issue Briefs have recently been published that summarize many of the Pathway study’s key findings. Not only do these briefs translate the science into language more accessible to a lay audience, but they also highlight the significance of their findings for practitioners and policymakers. These briefs underscore the importance of: 1) institutional environments; 2) positive youth development opportunities; 3) substance abuse treatment; 4) aftercare service; 5) ongoing risk and needs assessments; 6) natural desistance processes. Click here for access to all the Pathways to Desistance Issue Briefs.
Featured Resources: Online

Juvenile Justice Geography, Policy, Practice & Statistics is a website that has been recently developed to track juvenile justice system reform. In the past few weeks the website added a section on Juvenile Justice Services. Through an interactive map the site now provides practitioners and policymakers with an overview on how each state structures their juvenile justice services, and the extent to which evidence-based practices are a required part of the continuum of services provided to youth in the juvenile justice system. Other sections of the site are devoted to an overview of jurisdictional boundaries and juvenile defense issues by state, and an overview of the level of integration between child welfare and juvenile justice systems in each state. Sections of the website that are still in development pertain to racial/ethnic fairness and status offense issues. An overview of these topics by state is anticipated to come online in the late spring of 2015.

A new section has just been added to the Juvenile Justice Resource Hub, an online resource for the latest policies and practices developed to promote juvenile justice system reform. In March, the Resource Hub was updated to include a section on Re-Entry and Aftercare. This new section includes information on the latest research and best practices, as well as models for the provision of re-entry and aftercare services for justice-involved youth. The Resource Hub has other sections devoted to such topics as evidence-based practices, community-based alternatives, juvenile indigent defense, mental health and substance abuse, racial/ethnic fairness.

Featured Evaluation: Closer to Home: An analysis of the State and Local Impact of the Texas Juvenile Justice Reforms

The Council of State Governments, Justice Center, in collaboration with the Texas A & M University, Public Policy Research Institute, recently released a report on a study designed to evaluate the impact of juvenile justice reform legislation enacted between 2007 and 2011 in the state of Texas. (An executive summary of the report is also available online.)

In response to several scandals related to the abuse of youth held in Texas’s state-run juvenile correctional facilities, state leaders implemented several policy reforms intended to decrease the number of youth in state-run facilities. Among those reforms was legislation passed in 2007 prohibiting youth who committed misdemeanors from being committed to state-run facilities. The state also lowered its age of jurisdiction over youth in state-run facilities from 21 years old to 19 years old. Additionally, the legislature provided individual counties with financial incentives in the form of grants to encourage local probation departments to retain young offenders locally on community supervision. State leaders made concrete efforts to both decrease commitments to state-run facilities and reallocate funds back to individual counties.

In order to determine the impact of Texas’s juvenile justice policy reforms, researchers constructed a large dataset of individual records merged from 3 state agencies. The dataset consisted of youth who were disposed between 2005 and 2012, and included information about youth’s criminal offense history, treatment needs, admissions to state-
run facilities and program participation while in state-run correctional facilities, as well as on probation or parole. Recidivism was defined as a re-arrest or re-incarceration for a misdemeanor or felony, in a juvenile or adult state-run correctional facility or jail.

Multiple findings were reported, but only a few are highlighted here. Between 2007 and 2012 researchers reported a 66% decline in juvenile incarceration. Through an analysis of pre and post-reform trends in admissions to state-run correctional facilities, researchers could not pinpoint the 66% decline as being “caused” by the policy reforms. However, they suggest that the reforms were likely a contributing factor in the declining rate of juvenile incarceration in Texas. Additionally, researchers did not find evidence that declining incarceration rates negatively impacted public safety. Subsequent analyses revealed a 33% decline in arrest rates from 2007 to 2012.

Another important finding centered on a comparison of youth who were sent to state-run facilities and those youth who were eligible for commitment, but remained under community supervision. Controlling for several factors, including age, offense history and treatment needs, researchers found that those youth released from state-run facilities were 21% more likely to be rearrested than youth who remained under community supervision with their local probation departments. Based on such findings, researchers suggests that the state is not only saving money by maintaining youth under local probation supervision, but also seeing better outcomes for youth.

One final finding that is of particular interest is that for those youth under the supervision of their local probation departments, no significant differences were found in rearrest rates based on the type of treatment program. Controlling for several variables, rearrest rates did not significantly vary for those youth who were in residential treatment programs in comparison to those youth who were in non-residential treatment, skill-based, and/or surveillance programs. Based on these results, researchers suggest that local juvenile probation departments should invest in improving the quality of programming in local communities.

In summary, the report on the impact of juvenile justice policy reforms in Texas provides important information not only for Texas policy-makers, but for policy-makers nationally. As juvenile incarcerations decline across the nation, this study provides valuable insight to policy-makers seeking to understand such trends.