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?

NJJEC has released a pair of Sustainability Toolkits, the first for service providers and the second for funding agencies.

The Sustainability Toolkit for Service Providers is tailored to practitioners working directly with youth. It focuses on increasing and conveying program successes to stakeholders, as well as building up organizational capacity for continuing effective programs. The Sustainability Toolkit for Grantors outlines ways funding agencies can increase resources and work with grantees to ensure the long-term success of their programs. Each toolkit includes a printable checklist that may be useful to juvenile justice practitioners in incorporating sustainability into their day-to-day work.

If you are interested in hearing more about sustainability, check out NJJEC’s webinar December 6th entitled, “Sustainability: A Collaborative Approach.”

NJJEC has also released a Performance Measure Guide that provides basic information about collecting high-quality, useful program data. It includes nine characteristics of high-quality performance measures, and examples are provided for each characteristic. The Guide may be useful both for beginners and as a review for those who already have experience working with data.

Upcoming Events of Interest

Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Quarterly Meeting
December 12

The Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention will hold its quarterly meeting at the Office of Justice Programs in Washington, DC on Wednesday, December 12. The Council’s efforts include a variety of juvenile justice issues, such as detention, delinquency prevention, and missing and exploited children. Registration is free and open to the public. The draft agenda and archives of past meeting are available online.
2013 National Mentoring Summit  
**January 24-25**  
MENTOR will sponsor the 2013 National Mentoring Summit January 24-25 in Washington, DC. The meeting agenda includes a strong focus on evidence-based practices in mentoring and reviews of the most current mentoring research. Register [online](#).

2013 International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment  
**January 26-31**  
The Chadwick Center for Children and Families at Children’s Hospital-San Diego will host the 2013 International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment in San Diego, CA. The conference will highlight best practices in the prevention of and response to child maltreatment. Topics include mental health, investigations, child welfare, and research. Check out the [website](#) for more information about the agenda and to register!

**Featured Resources:**  
**OJJDP’s NTTAC Data Resources**

We frequently receive questions about free and accessible data collection assistance. Many of you are aware of OJJDP’s National Training and Technical Assistance Center (OJJDP NTTAC), which hosts NJJEC’s webinars. You may not realize that OJJDP NTTAC also offers a wide variety of online resources beyond webinars, including data collections tools of interest to those working in the field of juvenile justice.

One example is the [Suitability of Assessment Instruments Webtool](#) for practitioners working with delinquent girls. The OJJDP-funded project reviewed risk assessment and treatment-focused instruments for justice-involved youth to see if they were as effective for female juveniles as male. The Webtool provides a list of instruments and categorizes research about their gender-based performance into four categories: Favorable, Unclear, Unfavorable, and Unknown. This tool is useful for practitioners working with female youth, but might also be helpful for anyone interested in juvenile risk assessment more generally.

A second example of OJJDP NTTAC’s data collection resources is the online [DMC/RRI data entry system](#), designed to assist state Juvenile Justice Specialists and DMC Coordinators working on Disproportionate Minority Contact efforts. The tool includes responses to frequently asked questions, assistance generating state reports and exporting data into OJJDP’s Grant Management System (GMS), and questions about the Relative Rate Index (RRI).

The OJJDP NTTAC website also provides resources to assist users in using data to define a local juvenile-justice related problem. The site links to the [Socioeconomic Mapping and Resources Topography (SMART)](#) system, a free resource that maps the location of crime and delinquency, as well as available interventions used to combat crimes. Juvenile justice practitioners might use this resource not only to demonstrate the level of delinquency in their target areas, but also to show gaps in available services to address delinquency.

**Evaluation Feature:**  
**Overcoming Hurdles To Using Research**

While there is a strong push for state and local juvenile justice practitioners to incorporate research into their grant proposals, many practitioners have a difficult time locating relevant evaluation studies and applying them
to a specific program or policy. In many situations, an evaluation of the exact program plan implemented in the same setting with the same target population is simply not available. In addition, many high-quality juvenile justice evaluations are published in academic journals. Access to these journals can be cost-prohibitive, creating an additional barrier to the use of this research in real-world settings.

Despite these hurdles, it is almost always possible to work research and evaluation into a grant proposal. There is a substantial amount of juvenile justice-related research that is free and accessible from federal agencies such as the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS); non-profit organizations such as the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ); and state agencies such as Statistical Analysis Centers and departments of juvenile justice. Studies relevant to some aspect of your program can be used to provide grounding for your plan of action and support the likelihood that your program or policy will be a success, even if the research does not evaluate the exact policy or program plan you intend to implement.

Relevant research can be used to support the selection of program activities, the degree of change you expect to observe, the amount of time it will take for program activities to affect program youth, and the measures you will use to collect program data. It is also possible (and important!) to incorporate findings from the field for a program that is not yet considered an evidence-based practice, in order to explain and justify program logic.

For example, OJJDP’s Pathways to Desistance Publication Series provides research of interest to juvenile justice practitioners on a range of topics. The Pathways to Desistance data are longitudinal, meaning they measure the same variables over time, and were collected in two locations: Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania and Maricopa County, Arizona.

The purpose of this research was to collect information on adjudicated youth and follow their transitions into adulthood. Research conducted using these data covers a variety of juvenile justice-related issues, including mental health, substance abuse, recidivism, and juvenile incarceration. A juvenile justice practitioner whose work focuses on any of these issues might gain useful information from analyses of the Pathways to Desistance data.

The OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin Substance Use and Delinquent Behavior Among Serious Adolescent Offenders outlines key findings from Pathways to Desistance data analysis in a plain-language summary. One of the key findings is that substance use and serious offending change in the same way over time, suggesting that they are related. The bulletin explicitly notes that no causal relationship was established in this study. In other words, the finding could be used to support the need for substance abuse treatment among serious adolescent offenders, but does not support the idea that addressing substance abuse prevents delinquency. This finding could be used to support programs that offer substance abuse treatment for serious offenders, but could not be used to support the use of substance abuse treatment to prevent serious offending.

The Pathways to Desistance website also offers a codebook for the data, so anyone working with youth can see what types of measures were collected on a given topic. For example, under the topic Offense History, the codebook provides measures such as the number of times a youth has been arrested in his or her lifetime,
the age the first time he or she was arrested, whether or not the youth received a court summons, etc. The codebook also describes the method and frequency of data collection. In the case of Offense History, the data are self-reported by the youth at baseline, meaning each youth provided this information at the point he or she entered the study. Practitioners might use this information, along with codebooks from other similar studies, to support their data collection choices.

It is important to note how the research you use in your proposal relates to your specific situation, and also to acknowledge the caveats. For example, youth included in the Pathways to Desistance data were at least 14 years old at the time they entered the study, and all were adjudicated for a serious offense. Findings from this study may not apply to juveniles under the age of 14, or youth who commit less serious offenses.

Let It Ride● Game Ready 4 Life addresses career planning, family and community contributions of youth, and deterrence from barriers to success including substance use, teen pregnancy, risk behaviors, and violence. At-risk youth ages 14 to 18 participate in a work-based learning and occupational skills program that includes a summer internship. Occupational training focuses on such in-demand positions as camp counseling, park management, creative and business writing, conservation, and graphic design. Program staff collect performance measure data on program participation levels, number of youth with occupational skills training, and outcome data such as the number of youth with paid and unpaid work experience.

Let It Ride● Game Ready 4 Life has a number of community partners, including the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Cleveland Metroparks, the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services, Beck Center of the Arts, and Titan Sports. The program is able to expose participating youth to college curricula through its partnership with Cleveland State University.