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?

Registration is available for our upcoming webinar, Drilling Down: An Analytical Look at EBP Resources. The webinar is sponsored by OJJDP’s National Training and Technical Assistance Center (NTTAC) and will take place on Thursday, February 6 from 2:00-3:30 p.m. EST.

This webinar will review some of the most popular resources on evidence-based programs and practices, including CrimeSolutions.gov and the Model Programs Guide. The material was developed in response to questions we have received about these resources; specifically, how they can best be used to assist the day-to-day work of youth service providers, what the information and ratings mean, and what factors program managers and staff should consider in determining the best fit for their local situations.

The purpose of the webinar is to enable and encourage practitioners to be informed consumers of research and these resources. As always, you can access archived NJJEC webinars on the NJJEC Trainings page and the OJJDP NTTAC website.

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

Upcoming Events of Interest

2014 National Mentoring Summit
January 30-31
In collaboration with the Corporation for National Community Service, the Harvard School of Public Health, the United Way and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the National Mentoring Partnership will host the 2013 National Mentoring Summit January 30 through 31 in Arlington, Virginia. The Summit will focus on best practices and research. Check the conference website for more information and to register!
ACJS 51st Annual Meeting  
February 18-22  
Pre-registration is open for the 51st Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS) Annual Meeting. The conference will be held February 18 through 22 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Featured Resources:  
Children’s Exposure to Violence

Exposure to violence increases the likelihood of substance abuse, poor school performance, psychological trauma, and delinquency in children and youth. Understanding the prevalence, causes, and effects of exposure to violence is an important component of service provision in child welfare and juvenile justice. There are a variety of resources available to the field, including current intervention efforts, research projects and publications, and resource centers.

Federal Initiatives. Attorney General Eric Holder launched the Defending Childhood Initiative in 2010 to support research and intervention in the area of childhood victimization. The Defending Childhood Initiative website provides an overview of the work of the Attorney General’s Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence, as well as research publications in a number of important areas, including bullying, sexual exploitation, and domestic abuse and neglect.

Local Community Projects. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) began the Safe Start program in 1999 to support research and practice in response to childhood victimization. Safe Start programs have been implemented in over 30 sites nationwide since 2000. In addition to providing community services, one of Safe Start’s goals is to conduct high-quality research on the implementation and outcomes of the initiative. A summary of the evaluation results for the first 11 Safe Start communities is available in the online report Communities Working Together to Help Children Exposed to Violence: Findings from Phase I of the Safe Start Initiative. The Safe Start website also provides links to evidence-based programs addressing children’s exposure to violence, via the Office of Justice Programs’ CrimeSolutions.gov website.

Survey Data. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), in conjunction with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), collected data for the National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV) in 2008. The nationwide survey examined violent incidents either experienced or witnessed by youth, as well as delinquent behavior. OJJDP published a research study using the NatSCEV data, Children’s Exposure to Violence and the Intersection between Delinquency and Victimization, in October of 2013. The report examines the relationship between delinquent acts and the extent of victimization separately by gender, and examines implications related to mental health and the age at which intervention might be most effective for girls and boys.

Resource Center. The Crimes Against Children Research Center (CCRC) at the University of New Hampshire provides publicly available research on an array of topics related to child victimization, including bullying, domestic violence, sexual abuse, polyvictimization, and
privacy. The project's website includes a page of additional research-oriented resources specifically for youth service providers.

**Evaluation Feature: Risk Assessment and Evaluation**

Many jurisdictions make use of risk and needs assessment tools to determine appropriate services and supervision for youth. These tools provide an objective, evidence-based method to determine the youth’s level of risk for reoffending, as well as the best way to promote positive outcomes. We discussed screening and assessment resources in the September 2012 edition of the NJJEC Bulletin, including some of the ways to determine which tools should be used and in what ways.

It is critically important that programs using screening and assessment tools adequately implement them and collect data on the instrument’s efficacy—particularly programs that are preparing for or will eventually need to be evaluated. Because risk assessment tools are the basis for intervention and service delivery plans, it is important to know if they are being used correctly, and if the guidance they offer for service delivery actually improves outcomes for youth.

Program managers and staff must ensure that the tool is administered in the same way and in the same setting for each youth being screened—for example, as a face-to-face interview during an initial meeting between a youth and juvenile probation officer, or as a pen-and-paper survey administered in a classroom setting. If a risk assessment tool is not implemented uniformly for all youth (in some cases, across program sites) it will be impossible to determine the relationship between the risk assessment instrument’s use and the program’s results.


The NJJN *Doing it Right* summary provides a brief plain-language explanation of the important components of incorporating risk assessment into daily practice and service provision. Sections of the report include a definition of risk assessment, the advantages of using a risk assessment, how to select an appropriate instrument, the importance of implementation, and the necessity of collecting and analyzing data on any risk assessment tools utilized in service delivery.

**State Spotlight: New York**

The Center for Court Innovation conducted a preliminary evaluation of New York State’s pilot Adolescent Diversion Program (ADP). The program was launched by Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman in 2012. The purpose of the program is to provide an alternative approach to dealing with 16 and 17 year-old offenders who are currently classified as adults in New York’s criminal justice system.

The ADP provides diversion from prosecution for eligible offenders, supports developmentally appropriate service provision to these offenders, and removes any official criminal record for those individuals who complete the requirements of their diversion program plan.
The program was implemented in nine counties including New York City. The Center for Court Innovation’s evaluation, which was funded by the New York Community Trust, examined cases initiated from January to June 2012.

All nine counties used a screening/risk assessment tool to determine program eligibility, appropriate services, and monitoring requirements, though only Nassau County used this screening tool universally (i.e., every 16-17 year-old youth screened). Services varied extensively by county, and many counties required participation in programming prior to case disposition.

More extensive analyses were conducted in six of the nine counties where the ADP was implemented. The authors examined the impact of ADP participation on criminal penalties and recidivism (re-arrests) for six of the nine counties using matched comparison cases. There was no evidence that ADP affected the likelihood of conviction for a misdemeanor or felony. Findings also indicated that ADP was the most effective for high-risk youth—that is, high-risk ADP youth were less likely to be re-arrested than high-risk comparison cases. In contrast, low-risk ADP cases were more likely to be re-arrested than low-risk comparison cases. This finding supports the risk-responsivity principle in juvenile justice: more intensive services should be provided for youth exhibiting higher risk. It also shows that system involvement can result in negative outcomes for low-risk youth.

Only two counties showed differences in the likelihood of a guilty plea—in one county, ADP participation increased the likelihood of a guilty plea while in another, it decreased the likelihood of a guilty plea. ADP cases were less likely to be sentenced to jail in two of the six counties. There were no significant differences in the likelihood of re-arrest six months from arraignment or the time to first re-arrest. However, ADP participants were less likely to be rearrested on felony charges and violent felony charges than those who did not participate in ADP.

The full report is available online.