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?

Currently, new NJJEC staff is working to continue updating the NJJEC website and develop new webinars for 2015 on evidence-based practices in the juvenile justice system.

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

Upcoming Events of Interest

The Right Responses to Status Offenses – Best Practices for Counties
November 20th, 2014, 2:00 pm – 3:15 pm ET.
The National Association of Counties is sponsoring a webinar on responses to status offenses (e.g., running away, truancy, and curfew violations). This webinar will present information from counties that are successfully handling these cases through community-based services instead of court involvement. Registration information is available online.

9th Annual Models for Change Working Conference
December 15th – 16th, 2014
The McArthur Foundation’s Models for Change initiative will host its 9th annual National Working Conference in Washington DC, December 15th – 16th. Details have yet to be posted, but you can continue to check online for updates.

10th Annual Global Youth Justice Training Institute
December 2nd – 4th, 2014
Global Youth Justice will host its 10th Global Youth Justice Training Institute in Las Vegas, NV from December 2nd – 4th. Participants will learn strategies to establish or enhance local youth justice diversion programs through teen, student, youth, peer courts and peer juries. Registration information is available online.

National Mentoring Summit
January 28th – 30th, 2015
The Mentoring Partnership will hold its annual National Mentoring Summit in Washington DC on January 28th – 30th. More details and registration information are
Featured Resources: Publications

The Council of State Governments, Justice Center recently released a white paper: “Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System.” This paper reviews the research on what works to reduce recidivism for youth under juvenile justice system supervision, and distills the research into four guiding principles. Along with each guiding principle are policy, practice, and resource-allocation recommendations. Much of the research, as well as the practice and policy recommendations, are based on the work of the MacArthur Foundation’s Models for Change and the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative.

The Council of State Governments, Justice Center also recently released a second paper: “Measuring and Using Juvenile Recidivism Data to Inform Policy, Practice, and Resource Allocation.” This paper summarizes the challenges faced when measuring juvenile justice recidivism. Authors offer recommendations for improving the collection and analysis of recidivism data, as well as strategies to use recidivism data to inform practice and policy.

Mark Lipsey, James C. Howell and John J. Wilson recently released (June 2014) a new book, A Handbook for Evidence-Based Juvenile Justice Systems. Drawing from research conducted over the past few decades, as well as more recent efforts to implement the Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP), the authors put forth a comprehensive strategy which includes the use of evidence-based programming in conjunction with comprehensive treatment plans that focus on the needs of youth at most risk to reoffend.

The Age of Opportunity: Lessons from the New Science of Adolescence is a new book (released in September, 2014) by Laurence Steinberg, PhD, an expert who specializes in the psychology of adolescent development. Dr. Steinberg is well-known for outlining the legal implications of his developmental research on adolescence, particularly for the juvenile and criminal justice system. In the Age of Opportunity, Dr. Steinberg reviews the latest neuroscience research on adolescence, highlighting findings that adolescence is “a time of heightened brain plasticity.” In doing so, he seeks to transform our perceptions of adolescence from a developmental stage to be “survived” to a stage in which to “optimize” healthy developmental outcomes. Dr. Steinberg’s review of findings on the malleability of the adolescent brain are followed by several practical recommendations for parents, and several practice and policy recommendations for policymakers in the field of education and juvenile/criminal justice. Although the research reviewed is fairly academic and may be difficult for a layperson to understand, Dr. Steinberg interprets the findings in a manner that is accessible to a broad audience.

Featured Evaluation: South Bronx Community Connections

South Bronx Community Connections (SBCC), a project of the Bronx-based non-
SBCC is designed to focus on youth arrested for misdemeanors who would otherwise be subject to formal juvenile justice processing. Initially the youth targeted for SBCC’s diversion program were those youth who resided in the South Bronx neighborhood of Mott Haven. Over time youth from surrounding neighborhoods were eligible for participation as well. Participation in the program is voluntary, with a requested commitment of 60 days. If youth are able to stay out of trouble during those 60 days their cases are closed and supervision terminated. Youth are given the option to extend participation after the initial 60 day commitment.

SBCC uses a grassroots and positive youth development approach to engage youth in neighborhood improvement projects led by grassroots, faith, and neighborhood organizations. Partner organizations, who have a history of working with youth in their neighborhoods, hired young adults as mentors to lead program youth in neighborhood improvement projects. Current projects have included a neighborhood mural, youth leadership curriculum, youth organized and staffed social activities, a neighborhood talent show, and a small business which grew and sold fresh produce.

The newly released process evaluation reviews the challenges SBCC faced and lessons learned throughout the implementation process. Several of the challenges hampered the ability of evaluators to conduct a rigorous outcome evaluation. For example, SBCC had difficulties in the beginning in securing a management information system. This along with their lack of experience with data collection and data entry impacted how the project was managed. The report concludes that a “well-designed” management information system is critical to successfully managing a project.

Despite the challenges, evaluators cautiously reported the piloted projects’ outcomes. Of the 152 youth referred, 62 were “meaningfully engaged” in the program for a minimum of 60 days. Further analysis compared the 62 youth in the diversion program with a comparison group of youth sampled from the larger community. The results indicate youth in the diversion program were significantly less likely than the comparison group to be rearrested within 1 year, upon completion of the program. However, due to the multiple implementation challenges faced by SBCC, researchers acknowledged that the outcomes for the initial three years were not entirely reliable.

Despite these limitations, researchers note that the evaluation for the first three years of this piloted diversion program still contains valuable information for juvenile justice stakeholders and policy-makers who strive to implement innovative grassroots programming to divert youth from justice.
system involvement.

**National Spotlight:**
**A Developmental Approach to Juvenile Justice**

In 2013, the National Research Council’s (NRC), Committee on Assessing Juvenile Justice Reform released a report entitled, *Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach*. This report reviewed the research on adolescent development and juvenile justice interventions, as well as the status of current juvenile justice reform efforts. Authors recommended a “developmental approach” to juvenile justice system improvements. They proposed that practices and policies at every decision-making point be grounded in the developmental sciences, as well as in research on the impacts of juvenile justice interventions.

Just last month the NRC published a new report, *Implementing Juvenile Justice Reform, the Federal Role*. The report was written by the committee on a *Prioritized Plan to Implement a Developmental Approach in Juvenile Justice Reform*. This new 2014 report on the federal role builds upon the 2013 report. The new report provides guidance to the federal government, specifically OJJDP, on an implementation plan for facilitating juvenile justice reform in state, local and tribal jurisdictions based on a developmental approach. The report proposes a 3-year plan of action and outlines strategies for strengthening the capacity of OJJDP to implement reforms. Also, seven hallmarks of a juvenile justice system grounded in the knowledge of adolescent development are summarized: accountability without criminalization; alternatives to justice system involvement; individualized response based on assessment of needs and risks; confinement only when necessary for public safety; a genuine commitment to fairness; sensitivity to disparate treatment; and family engagement.

 Featured resources and programs are not endorsed 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.