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?

Thank you to all who attended our webinar, Demystifying Survey Data Collection, on September 5! Panelists discussed the basics of survey data collection and reporting, including how to translate paper survey data into a spreadsheet for analysis. The presentation incorporated brief video clips explaining data analysis skills such as computing averages, data tabulation, constructing charts and graphs, and calculating change.

The archived webinar, including videos, will be available shortly on the NJJEC Trainings page and the OJJDP NTTAC website. The video clips are available under the Data Demos heading on the NJJEC Skill-Building page.

NJJEC staff are creating a second narrated slideshow for our Hiring and Working with an Evaluator series. Part II: Translating Evaluation Results into Action! will explain ways to leverage program data for improvement and sustainability.

Upcoming Events of Interest

2013 Bi-Annual Adult and Juvenile Female Offenders Conference
October 6-10

The 15th Bi-Annual Adult and Juvenile Female Offenders (ADFO) conference will be held October 6 through 10 in Portland, Maine. The conference facilitates training and networking among practitioners, researchers, and administrators working with female adult and juvenile offenders. Check the conference website for the agenda and registration information!

19th National Symposium on Juvenile Services
October 20-24

The National Partnership for Juvenile Services will host its National Symposium on Juvenile Services October 20 through 24 in Louisville, Kentucky. Goals of the symposium include sharing best practices and building partnerships to improve youth services. Practitioners and policymakers can find more information on the symposium online!
8th Global Youth Justice Training
December 3-5

Registration is open for the 8th Global Youth Justice training to be held December 3 through 5 in Las Vegas, Nevada. This training will focus on establishing, enhancing, and/or expanding youth courts, and topics include program evaluation/satisfaction, implementation of programmatic elements, and grant writing. Check Global Youth Justice’s Training Institutes page for more information!

8th Annual Models for Change National Conference

The MacArthur Foundation will host its 8th Annual Models for Change National Conference December 16 and 17 in Washington, DC. See the conference website for details, and review the Call for Workshop Presentations to learn more about key audiences and workshop topics.

Featured Resource:
Juvenile Justice Resource Hub

The Juvenile Justice Resource Hub is a new project of the Juvenile Justice Information Exchange sponsored by the MacArthur Foundation and the National Juvenile Justice Network. The Hub provides a centralized location for juvenile justice information, including research studies, journalism, data, and resources for practitioners and policymakers.

Each topic area includes a summary of the topic, key issues in the area (for example, “Who are these youth?” and “When should screening and assessment tools be used?”), reform efforts, resources, and a list of expert individuals and organizations working on that topic.

Two topics are currently available. Mental Health and Substance Abuse resources include an article highlighting some states’ successes in the use of evidence-based practices to address mental health and substance abuse issues for youth; a glossary of key concepts, effective screening tools, and relevant decision making points in the juvenile justice system; and a set of resources that includes information about funding mental health and substance abuse treatment and legal rights of youth.

Community-Based Alternatives resources include information about key issues such as youth eligibility and funding for these programs, reform trends such as the removal of zero tolerance policies, and resources on a number of important topics including potential negative effects of diversion such as net-widening.

Upcoming topics include Juvenile Indigent Defense, Evidence-Based Practices, Aftercare, and Racial-Ethnic Fairness.

Evaluation Feature:
AEBP’s Assessment of State Progress Implementing Proven Programs

The Association for the Advancement of Evidence-Based Practice conducted a study of states’ use of evidence-based programs and practices (EBP) in juvenile justice and delinquency prevention. The results of the study are presented in Implementing Proven Programs for Juvenile Offenders: Assessing State Progress.
The authors examined the use of family-based therapy for youth as an indicator of the use of best practices, including “name brand” evidence-based programs such as Functional Family Therapy (FFT), Multisystemic Therapy (MST), Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC), and the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program. The report includes a discussion of strategies and characteristics the most successful states have in common, as well as some of the common challenges.

The five states leading in availability of family-based therapy programs are Connecticut, New Mexico, Maine, Hawaii, and Pennsylvania. The report describes the processes of evidence-based practice implementation in each state.

The authors describe the steps necessary to successfully implement EBP, including adequate identification of the specific problem and target population, appropriate selection of a program that is both effective and cost-beneficial, and appropriate intervention.

The authors note that three of the five leading states had been sued by the Department of Justice for juvenile confinement conditions prior to initiating their efforts in the area of family based treatment, which created a climate favorable to change in these states. In addition, there was strong political support for changes to the juvenile justice systems in the other two states, particularly with regard to criteria for confinement.

Most of the states benefited from the engagement of strong leadership to start the movement towards implementing evidence-based prevention and intervention programs. Four of the five pilot tested programs before extending their efforts statewide. Technical assistance and funding support, particularly during start-up and implementation, were also critical to the success of these programs.

The report also highlights some of the obstacles to implementing evidence-based programs (in this case, family-based therapy). These obstacles included financial limitations, particularly constraints that result from the county-based funding systems of most juvenile justice services; legacy programs that retained longstanding funding, thereby diverting funds from proven programs; and difficulty coordinating efforts between multiple agencies and systems to refer youth to appropriate interventions.

The report concludes by summarizing seven distinct “lessons” learned from the study. These lessons include the importance of collaboration, active involvement of key stakeholders in the implementation process, and the value of technical assistance in supporting evidence-based programs.

State Spotlight: Missouri

For decades, the Missouri juvenile justice system has been moving away from a correctional model to a rehabilitative and therapeutic model. The state has found success in its approach, as Missouri’s system-involved youth have exhibited achievement in educational attainment, employment and recidivism.

Tim Decker, Director of the Missouri Division of Youth Services, recently delivered a presentation on the Missouri Approach at the National Criminal Justice Association’s 2013 National Forum in Chicago, Illinois. In a session entitled Embedding Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) in Local Programs, Mr. Decker discussed the treatment-oriented, trauma-
informed approach of the Missouri Division of Youth Services (DYS).

The agency employs a youth development perspective to address a variety of risk factors, including educational disabilities, mental health problems, substance abuse, and prior system contact. This strategy is employed across all levels of system involvement—prevention, intervention, and response to “deep end” youth.

One of the underlying changes necessary to fully integrate this approach was a switch in philosophy from correctional to rehabilitative and therapeutic. This reduces “culture conflict” within the system, and aligns the views of policymakers, managers, and program staff in support of the same mission—providing responsive, dynamic, and comprehensive services that improve outcomes for youth holistically, rather than mimicking practices in adult corrections.

One of the key components of Missouri’s plan for working with youth is the adaptability of programming and services to meet the specific needs of each youth and his or her family, rather than expecting youth adaptation to services offered.

Mr. Decker’s presentation also included some of the important leadership characteristics needed to support evidence-based programming for youth. These include a constant focus on “what works;” dedication to gaining buy-in from all stakeholders, including youth and their families; strong accountability for results; and the need to approach programming as a developmental, evolving process.

Building support and aligning resources have been some of the key challenges for Missouri in implementing, scaling-up, and sustaining this approach. Additional challenges included accountability for youth outcomes and embedding this approach into each agency and organization interacting with Missouri’s system-involved youth.

Mr. Decker noted that the approach was evidence-based before the term “evidence-based practice” became popular. Missouri DYS uses data to assess its effectiveness, and Mr. Decker noted the need to emphasize measurement of components critical to affecting outcomes.

You can view the slides from Mr. Decker’s presentation on the NCJA Forum website, and check out www.MissouriApproach.org for more information!