



The Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center

September 2004

The Justice Research and Statistics Association (JRSA) and the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) are working together to enhance the ability of states to evaluate the effectiveness of their juvenile justice programs. The goal of this project is to provide useful resources and practical technical assistance that will strengthen the ability of local and state policymakers, program administrators and staff, and evaluators to implement and use evaluation studies and their findings. To further this effort, JRSA and OJJDP created the Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center (JJEC).

The first phase of the project focused on the assessment of the states' and territories' existing evaluation practices and technical assistance needs, especially as they relate to the programs and initiatives funded through the Title II, Part B, State Formula Grants Program. Subsequent project activities are based on this assessment.

Evaluation of States' Needs

Beginning in early 1999, JRSA surveyed three groups of state stakeholders: juvenile justice specialists, Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) directors, and State Advisory Group (SAG) chairs who head the Governor-appointed boards that establish and review programs and policies for OJJDP's Formula Grants program. The assessment is summarized in the report *Juvenile Justice Evaluation Needs in the States: Findings of the Formula Grants Program Evaluation Needs Assessment*, which is available on JRSA's Web site www.jrsa.org/pubs. It found that training and technical assistance should help increase knowledge of evaluation principles and techniques at the state and local levels; develop and improve state infrastructures for supporting systematic evaluation; and foster relationships among state agencies, local

programs, and evaluators. JJEC is currently conducting a follow-up assessment to measure change in evaluation capacity at the state level.

Addressing States' Needs

JJEC has a number of ongoing activities designed to address the needs identified in the assessment.

Training. The JJEC project provides training to Juvenile Justice Specialists and other state staff to enhance their ability to develop and use performance measures to assess program performance. Recent trainings for juvenile justice personnel offered data collection and analysis strategies to improve the quality of data collected by local programs so that findings can be used for state juvenile justice planning and decisionmaking. In 2003, JJEC produced an online evaluation tutorial, *Evaluation: A Tool for Program Improvement*, which provides an introduction to evaluation for juvenile justice professionals.

The JJEC project also works closely with the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) to provide training and evaluation information to SAG members.

Technical Assistance. The project has resources to provide the states with technical assistance, including state-specific consultation, that enhances their capacity to assess their juvenile justice programs and initiatives (funded under the Formula Grants program) and to incorporate evaluation into the program development and planning processes. Technical assistance can be conducted on-site, over the phone, and (or) through the mail. JJEC staff work closely with the SAGs and Juvenile Justice Specialists to ensure that evaluation systems are in place, to develop statewide performance measures for juvenile justice projects, and to provide on-site training to local program managers. JJEC is also a TA provider for OJJDP's Disproportionate Minority Contact initiative. A form for requesting TA from JJEC is available on the JJEC Web site.

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SAC Evaluation Partnership Program. Since 1999, JJEC has provided seed money each year to encourage partnerships between the SACs and SAGs. The goal of these partnerships is to build sustainable relationships that enhance long-term juvenile justice evaluation capacity. Each year a different theme is selected. Recent themes include disproportionate minority contact, gender-specific programming, and detention. Final reports summarizing the activities and findings of these projects are posted on JJEC's Web site www.jrsa.org/jjec under "State Information."

JJEC Online. JJEC Online provides evaluation resources and information specific to juvenile justice programs and initiatives. The Web site offers a dynamic resource in four main areas:

- **JJEC Information** contains links to JJEC staff contact information, JJEC publications, JJEC training activities, and JJEC's calendar of events.
- **Juvenile Justice Evaluation Program Areas** contains information on performance measures, well-designed evaluations using the criteria that JJEC developed to identify excellent juvenile justice evaluations, and links to initiatives and resources for various juvenile justice program areas. JJEC is in the process of revising each program area to include. New program areas are added regularly.
- **Evaluation Resources** includes Internet resources, juvenile justice evaluation related publications, classification tools, evidence-based programs, instruments and scales, and a glossary of evaluation-related terms.
- **State Information** provides SAC Partnership Project reports, resources for states, and examples of Requests for Proposals (RFP) with an evaluation component.

Evaluation Briefings. JJEC produces a series of non-technical briefing papers on juvenile justice evaluation topics that are of interest to program managers and other consumers of evaluation information. Examples of recent briefing topics include: *Approaches to Assessing Juvenile Justice Program Performance* and *Evaluability Assessment: Examining the Readiness of a Program for Evaluation*. These briefings are available on the JJEC Web site www.jrsa.org/jjec/about/jjec-pubs.html.

Evaluation Guidebooks. In addition to the briefings, JJEC produces in-depth guidebooks. The first in this series is *Evaluation Issues in Mental Health Programming in the Juvenile Justice System*. Additionally, JJEC is working on two other guidebooks: *Developing and Evaluating Strategies to Reduce DMC* and *Preventing Delinquency Through Education-Related Interventions: A Guidebook on Understanding Evaluation Issues*.

As always, JJEC helps states measure the effectiveness of justice programs and provides constructive feedback that helps local programs improve their performance. Through these activities, JJEC strengthens the ability of state and local policymakers, program administrators and staff, and evaluators to implement and use evaluation studies in their findings.

JRSA's JJEC project is committed to working with OJJDP and the states to enhance the development and use of evaluation in order to improve juvenile justice programming throughout the country.

For Further Information

For more information about JJEC, contact:

Mary Poulin
Project Manager
Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center
Justice Research and Statistics Association
777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 801
Washington, DC 20002
202- 842-9330
202-842-9329 (fax)
mpoulin@jrsa.org