**JUSTICE RESEARCH AND STATISTICS ASSOCIATION**
**JUVENILE JUSTICE EVALUATION CENTER**

# Evaluation Strategies for
# State Juvenile Justice Programs

## Case Studies from Washington and Pennsylvania

**January 2003**

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

# Project Background

Evaluation of programs is a critical planning tool for State-level juvenile justice administrators and policymakers who are responsible for the planning and distribution of grant awards to local programs and the monitoring of local program development and implementation. Once a program is given an award, State planners are then responsible for determining if that program is effective, and, therefore, if it should be funded for additional years, replicated in other locations, or modified to improve its effectiveness. These are important decisions that are best made with program information that is objective, systematic, and reliable.

Evaluation is also a critical tool for local juvenile justice program managers who are responsible for program development and management. Information from evaluation studies can be used by program managers to determine how their programs are operating, what results they are producing, and if changes are necessary to improve program effectiveness.

The Justice Research and Statistics Association (JRSA) has been working with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) on the Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center (JJEC) project to develop and enhance juvenile justice evaluation capacity in the States. (For general information on program evaluation, see the JJEC publication, *Juvenile Justice Program Evaluation: An Overview,* which is available online at www.jrsa/jjec.org.) A number of State juvenile justice administrators and policymakers have identified the need for assistance in developing a State evaluation strategy that consists of more comprehensive, standardized, and useful evaluation policies and practices. In an effort to respond to this need, JRSA conducted case studies in Washington and Pennsylvania over the course of several months to document two very different evaluation strategies being used to assess the effectiveness of programs and initiatives funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Formula Grants Program.

The Washington State Advisory Group, known as the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee, requires every program, regardless of size, to be evaluated by an external evaluator. In contrast, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Committee (the State Advisory Group) of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), the State agency that administers the juvenile justice grant awards, has a State planning process to strategically determine which programs merit a formal evaluation study. Projects that are considered for evaluation include those that are particularly innovative, controversial, or potentially dramatic in impact; those whose operations and management could benefit by constructive evaluation; and those representing a substantial investment of funds.

It is not the intent of this report to suggest that all States implement either Washington's or Pennsylvania's evaluation strategy. Obviously every State is different; there is no one "right" strategy for evaluating every program. The purpose of this bulletin is to share ideas and provide information and assistance for States that are in the process of reviewing their own evaluation practices. Each State's juvenile justice policymakers must assess their own policies and procedures to determine if any component of Washington's or Pennsylvania's strategies would be useful for their State.

# Washington State: The Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee's Evaluation Strategy

The Washington State Advisory Group (SAG), known as the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (GJJAC), is the state agency responsible for promoting delinquency prevention and improving the juvenile justice system.  To carry out its mission, the GJJAC advises the Governor, the Legislature, and Washington's citizens about juvenile justice issues.  The GJJAC develops and implements Washington State's annual juvenile justice plan, which sets priorities for awarding federal and State funds, and for monitoring the state's compliance with the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act.  The GJJAC provides advice through its annual report, which presents current juvenile justice data and problems and describes how funds are awarded, and by taking positions on state-proposed juvenile justice bills and budget issues.

GJJAC awards both federal and State juvenile justice funds to demonstration projects that are selected through a competitive process.  Projects may be funded through five different grant programs (three from the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, one from the Byrne Youth Violence Prevention and Intervention Grant, and one from the State Juvenile Violence Prevention Grant).  Each GJJAC direct service project is required to have an objective, independent evaluation to determine its effectiveness.  GJJAC commissions cross-site evaluations to determine if a grant program is meeting its objectives.  GJJAC also funds research on juvenile justice topics and technical assistance and training for juvenile justice system professionals.

The GJJAC has a multifaceted strategy for evaluating juvenile justice programs.  Members of the GJJAC describe their system as a "research-based and rational approach to public policy."  Evaluation is viewed as a continuum of program development activities, beginning with how well the program articulates its evaluation plan during the grant application process and ending with the final evaluation report.  The monitoring process is considered as important as any information learned from the final report.  It is the ongoing collection of information during program operation that informs the committee's decisionmaking processes.

The most innovative component of GJJAC's evaluation strategy is the policy that requires all juvenile justice programs funded by the State to have an objective, independent evaluation to determine their effectiveness.  Grant proposals must earmark 7% of the budget for hiring an outside evaluator.  JRSA conducted interviews and focus group sessions with a variety of people to determine how this policy is incorporated into the grant application process, program reporting requirements, and State monitoring practices.  Those interviewed included : 1) the State juvenile justice specialist; 2) three local evaluators; 3) three of the GJJAC members, including the chairperson; 4) eight local program administrators; and 5) two elected State officials.  The following sections describe GJJAC's evaluation policy, implementation requirements, the evaluation reports

that are produced, how the information is used, and the advantages and disadvantages of the policy.

## The Evaluation Policy

The GJJAC evaluation policy consists of three related requirements: 1) that every local program be evaluated; 2) that every program set aside a minimum amount of its funding for the evaluation; and 3) that every program hire and work with an independent evaluator to complete the evaluation.  In addition, the GJJAC also commissions larger, more sophisticated research studies that focus on specific issues.  For example, the GJJAC determined that Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) was a priority program area and specifically earmarked funds to give awards to local organizations implementing BARJ-related programs.  Seven programs conducting a variety of activities including victim-offender mediation, community education, and victim impact panels were given awards.  The evaluation studies produced from each of the seven BARJ programs indicated that the principles of restorative justice were being interpreted very differently.  In response, GJJAC commissioned the BARJ study, a cross-site, large-scale evaluation that would identify common process and outcome variables across the funded projects, relative to the principles and practices of restorative justice, and assess the extent to which the restorative justice model was being implemented in those communities.  After the cross-site study was completed, GJJAC once again chose restorative justice-based programs as a priority area for funding and incorporated the lessons learned into the program selection process.  Findings from studies such as these are used along with the findings of the individual, independent program evaluations to help GJJAC identify future program areas that should be given funding priority.

The GJJAC evaluation policy requiring all programs to have an independent evaluation was implemented in the late 1970s upon the recommendation of the juvenile justice specialist and the committee.  When the policy was originally implemented, programs were required to set aside a minimum of 5% of the grant award to hire an independent evaluator.  A few years ago, the set-aside requirement was raised to the current 7% minimum.  Although grantees may choose to exceed the 7% set-aside amount, most grantees allocate the 7% minimum funds.

A standing subcommittee on Evaluation and Technical Assistance was added to the GJJAC in 2002 to improve the quality and usefulness of evaluations.  Based on the recommendations of the subcommittee, the GJJAC now requires that grant applications include a logic model.  The GJJAC is considering how logic models can be incorporated into monitoring reports.

In 1999, the GJJAC received just under $4 million in federal funds from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention through the Title II Formula Grants Program, the State Challenge Grants, and the Title V Delinquency Prevention Grant Program.  The average award given to local programs that are required to have an independent evaluation was between $57,000 and $80,000. Each program is awarded funding for one year, which can be renewed for no longer than a total of three years.  Therefore, if the program did not contribute any additional funding for evaluation, the average evaluation study for each year cost approximately $4,000 – $6,000.

# Formal Policy Implementation Requirements

The GJJAC evaluation policy is reinforced through multiple State reports and monitoring processes. Below is a list of the formal requirements in the granting process and program monitoring procedures that substantiate and enforce the evaluation policy.

## Requests for Proposals

All GJJAC-sponsored Requests for Proposals have an evaluation component that requires potential programs to:

- Describe the type of data to be collected to evaluate the project,
- State how the data collected will measure objectives,
- State how the methods of analysis will be used to evaluate the project,
- Provide a plan for hiring a qualified, outside evaluator (The outside evaluator must be hired and the final evaluation design submitted within 45 days of the grant award.), and
- Develop a logic model of the proposed program.

## Funding Selection Criteria

The GJJAC reviews all proposals and rates them on six elements, one of which is the strength of the evaluation. The GJJAC uses the following criteria to assess the proposed evaluation design:

- Does it relate specifically to the stated goals and objectives?
- Are the data and methods specified?
- Are the data and methods adequate to measure objectives?
- Can results be measured (outcomes)?
- Is there an indication that a qualified evaluator will be hired?

Potential programs whose proposals are well received are invited to complete a full grant application. As part of this process, applicants are required to make an in-person presentation to the GJJAC. During the presentation, they must be able to respond to basic questions about their proposed evaluation plan.

## Final Evaluation Plan

Once local programs receive the grant award, they have 45 days to submit their final evaluation plan, along with a copy of their contract with an outside evaluator. The State Office of Juvenile Justice must approve the final evaluation plan. The evaluation

plan is generally a three-year design with the first year focusing on process measures and program implementation.

## State Monitoring Visits

The State Office of Juvenile Justice staff conduct two on-site monitoring visits annually for new programs. The first visit occurs within 60 days after the program receives its award. The implementation of the evaluation is one of the components assessed during this visit. If the monitoring visit reveals serious problems in achieving compliance with the grant terms, a copy of the monitoring report will be submitted and discussed at the next GJJAC meeting. The project must prepare responses to the problems discussed, which are provided to the GJJAC. The second on-site monitoring report also has a formal category for assessing the status of the evaluation.

## Final Evaluation Report

At the end of the first year of funding (the grants are generally funded for up to three years), the local program is required to submit a final evaluation report for that year, including a two-page executive summary, to the State Office of Juvenile Justice. Since the evaluations generally have a three-year design, the first-year report usually focuses on program implementation issues and process measures to assess if the program is doing what was planned. The second- and third-year reports include more detailed information about the achievement of program goals, objectives, and outcomes. The executive summaries are provided to the members of the GJJAC, and the complete report is available upon request. JRSA's review of sample final program evaluation reports and executive summaries submitted to the GJJAC found that the typical local program evaluation report includes the following components: 1) basic program description and problem identification; 2) program goals and objectives; 3) process evaluation information, including a description of participant characteristics and service delivery statistics; 4) limitations of the study; and 5) recommendations. Some of the studies also include outcome evaluation results, such as the change in youth behavior over time or the differences between a treatment and a comparison group. One might wonder how this can be accomplished given the limited resources earmarked for evaluation. Below is a discussion of some of the strategies used by the local evaluators to produce useful, but also economical evaluation studies.

# Evaluation Strategies

The evaluators interviewed suggested the following strategies for conducting practitioner-oriented, limited-resource evaluation studies:

- Narrow the focus of the study and limit the outcomes to a few key performance indicators.

- Use existing data systems, such as court records, school records, or other social service tracking systems, to measure program outcomes.

- Gain the cooperation of court administrators and other juvenile justice practitioners who can assist with obtaining data and access to files.

- Draw on the existing resources of the university system, including students, libraries, and the advice/experience of other researchers.

- Involve local program staff in the evaluation design and data collection process.

Another critical element in implementing these strategies is the process for identifying potential evaluators. Not all evaluators would choose to be involved with small projects that are, by design, less rigorous than large-scale research and evaluation projects. Over the years, Washington has developed a list of approximately 25-30 recommended evaluators. The State Office of Juvenile Justice provides the list to local program administrators who are having difficulty finding a local evaluator. The local evaluators and program administrators interviewed identified some characteristics of researchers best able to conduct small-scale local program evaluations. Those evaluators are more likely to:

- *have experience as a juvenile justice practitioner.*
  One evaluator summarized the value of experience in the following way: "The people who do well know their areas well and they bring to that evaluation skills. What I see happening is people coming with technical skills, but they don't have the substantive knowledge. I think that you are not going to be asked by juvenile court administrators or State judges to come and speak if your basic knowledge is in methodology and you don't know the subject area."

- *value research that has real world applications and work directly with programs rather than conducting research that focuses on testing academic theories.*

- *possess strong communication and social skills.*
  These skills are necessary to effectively interact with multiple constituency groups including local program administrators, advisory groups, State legislators, and other special interest groups.

- *be independent consultants who live in the community and who often have other sources of income, such as teaching at a local college.*

- *have extensive experience evaluating juvenile justice programs.*
  Evaluators who are able to draw on existing research instruments and earlier projects are able to be more efficient with their time. One evaluator commented, "I bring the tools with me and go in for a two-hour meeting and set everything into place. I know exactly when to monitor and the questions to ask. I am extremely efficient. There is no way a person without experience could do it."

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- *view their efforts to evaluate small community-based projects as a form of community service.*

- *find working with disadvantaged youth and local social service agencies to be intrinsically rewarding.*

## Uses for the Evaluation Findings

A frequently expressed concern of local programs and nonprofit organizations considering allocating money to evaluation is that the information will not actually be used by policymakers and government agencies. The GJJAC members reported using the results of local evaluation studies to assist them with their State planning efforts and their grant awards. Specifically, they reported using evaluation findings in the following ways:

- to determine the Priority Program Areas selected for Formula Grant Funding;

- to provide recommendations to the governor about specific juvenile justice issues or initiatives;

- to increase knowledge about what programs and strategies are more likely to work;

- to testify before the State legislature regarding the development of juvenile justice priorities on Statewide policy issues; and

- to support local communities in their efforts to obtain sustainable continuation funding through other public or private sources.

An example of how GJJAC has used evaluation findings to influence their programming can be seen in their position on mentoring programs. Recent well-publicized national campaigns have supported the implementation of mentoring programs. Evaluation studies and monitoring reports of local mentoring programs that GJJAC funded in the past, however, consistently demonstrated that mentoring programs are very difficult to implement. Specifically, the studies indicated that the mentoring programs had difficulties meeting their mentor recruitment goals and finding matches for older youths. As a result of this information, GJJAC is now unlikely to make mentoring a program priority area. If a grant application is received to fund a mentoring program, the committee will be able to make informed decisions regarding the feasibility of the project.

# Advantages and Disadvantages of the GJJAC Evaluation Policy

As stated earlier, the GJJAC evaluation policy consists of three related requirements: 1) that every program be evaluated; 2) that every program set aside a minimum amount of its funding for the evaluation; and 3) that every program hire and work with an independent evaluator to complete the evaluation. In addition, the GJJAC commissions more sophisticated, larger research studies that focus on specific issues or larger projects. Although their assessment of specific elements of the policy varied depending upon the stakeholder groups' roles and responsibilities in the evaluation process, the members of the GJJAC, local evaluators, and program administrators reported satisfaction with the existing policy.

## GJJAC Members

Members of the GJJAC recognized that there are advantages and disadvantages associated with a policy that requires every program to conduct an independent evaluation. Since carefully designed outcome studies would likely be beyond the resources of any local program, the main limitation is that the evaluations being conducted do not meet all the rigorous standards of academic research. Despite this limitation, the GJJAC members agreed that the evaluations provide them with sufficient information. Studies often focus on just one or two main questions. For example, if the program has a school violence prevention curriculum, the study may focus just on school discipline incidents or recidivism. As one GJJAC member stated, "They (evaluators) are not doing a huge scope of work. It forces them to think about what they can do for that small amount of money." Although the local program evaluations are small in scale, collectively they identify issues within the Statewide juvenile justice system that are frequently studied in larger GJJAC-sponsored policy-oriented research initiatives. Finally, the GJJAC members believed that requiring small, local program evaluations supports the development and accountability of community-driven, grass-roots projects.

## Local Evaluators

The local evaluators also acknowledged that limited funding may restrict the number of long-term outcome evaluations or sophisticated research designs. However, the consensus of the group was that requiring independent evaluations improves the potential effectiveness of new programs. The local evaluators reiterated the GJJAC members' belief that the strategy to conduct statewide comprehensive, policy-oriented research projects addresses the need for more sophisticated, scientific studies. Finally, the evaluators thought that an essential advantage of a policy requiring every local program to have an independent evaluation is that evaluation becomes a component of program planning from the beginning in the request for proposal (RFP) process (The evaluation elements of the GJJAC RFP are discussed on page 6 of this report. This benefits local programs because thinking through the evaluation plan and the process of developing a program logic model that specifies the logical connections between program

goals, objectives, and activities forces potential program administrators to be more realistic about their program activities since they know the activities will be measured.

## Program Administrators

Local program administrators agreed that the resources invested in a local evaluation contribute to their programs' success and sustainability. Administrators also acknowledged that the evaluation requirements of the granting process help programs identify more realistic and achievable goals. They did indicate, however, that program administrators who lack evaluation knowledge might struggle with the evaluation process. One administrator remarked, "Evaluation is a component that you don't necessarily know much about when you're going into it. You hope you ask the right questions, but if you don't, you may subsequently lose out to the competition."

Being required to have an evaluation design completed and approved within the first 45 days of program operation posed challenges for some local programs. As indicated by the evaluators, program staff are often very involved in the evaluation process in order to reduce the cost of the evaluation. One of the responsibilities that frequently falls to the program administrator is the development and maintenance of a program database. Although the administrators recognized that having a database was valuable and would contribute to their ability to gain funds in the future, they reported that it required a great deal of time, and, in some cases, financial resources.

On the other hand, administrators said they benefited from the early development of the evaluation data system because it provided immediate feedback about their service delivery, allowing potential problems to be quickly resolved. For example, one administrator described the following situation:

> We hired an evaluator to help establish intake standards for secure detention admissions, and our focus was on determining if there was a racial disproportionality in bookings and detention. Instead, during the first six months, the evaluation data showed gender disproportionality in terms of which module of the alternatives-to-detention program we were putting people into. We were showing a greater proportion of females on electronic monitoring than outside work crews. Because of that information, we were able to more quickly recognize the problem and make changes to ensure that girls were also on the work crews.

Regardless of the additional effort associated with an outside evaluation, the administrators agreed that the resources they put into applying for the grant and developing reporting systems were beneficial because an objective evaluation report enabled them to obtain future funding. In fact, seven of the eight administrators participating in the focus group reported that they had success obtaining funding from another source once their funding from the GJJAC ended. These funding sources included counties, State agencies, and private foundations. The program administrators agreed that having evidence of their programs' effectiveness in the form of an objective evaluation report was a critical factor in successfully obtaining continuation funding.

# State Factors That Support the Evaluation Policy

## Expert and Experienced Staff

The consensus of the GJJAC members, evaluators, and program administrators was that the implementation of the evaluation policy would not be possible without the qualified and experienced Office of Juvenile Justice staff, who ensure evaluations are completed through reporting requirements and monitoring efforts. When the policy was originally implemented over 20 years ago, the juvenile justice specialist had a Ph.D. with a strong research background and was located in the Research and Planning Division of the State Department of Social and Health Services. Currently, the Office of Juvenile Justice has a staff of one half-time and three full-time professionals and one administrative assistant. The qualifications for the professional positions generally include a master's degree and/or five or more years of experience. The experience of the current juvenile justice specialist, who has been in her position for 15 years, also contributes to the stability and quality of the evaluation procedures.

In addition to its grant administration responsibilities, the Office of Juvenile Justice continues to focus on research and planning. For example, the staff produce the annual *GJJAC Juvenile Justice Report*, which summarizes the responsibilities of the GJJAC, describes the projects funded, identifies problem areas within the juvenile justice system, and analyzes the Statewide juvenile justice system on risk factors associated with delinquency. The evaluators interviewed agreed that the State Office of Juvenile Justice "provides research support and data describing the juvenile justice system that is reliable and consistent, and serves as a repository of information that people use and trust."

## Organizational Support for Evaluation

The GJJAC's support for evaluation was identified by all of the stakeholder groups as a critical factor for the successful implementation of this policy. As stated earlier, evaluation is viewed as a continuum of program development activities, beginning with how well the program articulates its evaluation plan during the grant application process and ending with the final evaluation report. One member commented that, "The process of ongoing monitoring by staff needs to be brought to the surface and honored, because the evaluation report just comes at the end."

One of the implications of this evaluation philosophy for GJJAC members is that program problems are not viewed negatively. Committee members reported that they want to assist small projects that are struggling and not simply remove their funding when they are experiencing difficulties. They believe that having a local evaluator allows programs to receive assistance from a person they know and trust.

Finally, the GJJAC members interviewed noted that a key element in the implementation of the evaluation policy was the support the GJJAC receives from the Governor's office. The fact that the GJJAC operates independently but receives support from the Governor allows it to be flexible in grantmaking and in the oversight of the programs it funds. In exchange for this support, evaluators are encouraged to work with

State officials who are frequently the consumers of the research. As a result, conversations and dialogues between State and elected officials and evaluators have, as one evaluator explained, "increased the political usefulness of the research."

## Lessons Learned

As noted above, JRSA interviewed and held focus groups with key stakeholders in Washington State to get a better understanding of its program evaluation strategy, which requires that all juvenile justice programs have an independent evaluation of its effectiveness. Below are some of the  lessons JRSA learned from this visit that States considering implementing a policy similar to Washington State should take into account.

- State Advisory Group members, State juvenile justice staff, and local program administrators must understand and act on the fact that evaluation is important and that it is a collaborative and developmental process.

- State agencies and State Advisory Groups should have realistic expectations regarding the type of evaluation information that can be collected given the amount of resources allocated.

- Evaluation should be considered not an end in itself but part of a system of continuous program development and improvement that benefits program administrators.

- Effective evaluation policies must be supported by the grant application process, reporting requirements, and State monitoring procedures.

- In addition to grant administration experience, the State juvenile justice staff should have, or be provided with, knowledge and skills in research, evaluation, and planning.

- State Advisory Group members who use evaluation findings and local program administrators who are responsible for contracting for the evaluations should have, or should be provided with, a basic knowledge of evaluation through training and technical assistance.

- The State juvenile justice administrative agency must identify and foster relationships with local evaluators and assist local programs by providing them with lists of qualified evaluators.

# Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency:
# State Justice Evaluation Strategy

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) is the State agency that oversees all criminal and juvenile justice initiatives in Pennsylvania. To collect information on the research and evaluation strategy employed by the PCCD, JRSA conducted a focus group session with the following people: 1) PCCD staff, including the executive director, the juvenile justice specialist, the senior evaluation analyst, and the director of evaluation research and statistics; 2) the chair of the State Advisory Group (known as the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Committee, or JJDPC); and 3) the chair of the Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC), who is also a member of JJDPC. The organizational structure of PCCD, the State justice evaluation strategy, and the State factors that support this strategy are discussed below.

## Commission Structure

*"PCCD provides the Commonwealth with a central source of planning, statistical analysis and program development for the improvement of the State's justice system."*

PCCD was statutorily created in 1978 (Act 1978-274) as an administrative commission within the Governor's Executive Offices to serve as a catalyst for the prevention and reduction of crime and delinquency within the Commonwealth. The Governor appoints the Chairman, Executive Director and 35-member board. The PCCD is dedicated to assisting Pennsylvania's criminal and juvenile justice systems to function more productively. Specifically, the PCCD: 1) supports local efforts to improve the apprehension and prosecution of crimes; 2) promotes the use of technology to enhance operational effectiveness in local criminal and juvenile justice agencies; 3) promotes fair treatment of victims and witnesses of crime; 4) assists victims of crime through support for direct services and by alleviating the financial burdens resulting from commission of a crime; 5) fosters community-based initiatives in the areas of crime prevention, drug abuse resistance education and juvenile delinquency prevention; and 6) addresses areas in the criminal/juvenile justice systems that are not clearly designated as the responsibility of other agencies/organizations. Agency policy is established by a semi-independent, broad-based, nonpartisan Commission appointed by the Governor and Leadership of the Legislature. All criminal justice cabinet officers, plus representatives of local criminal justice and victim service agencies, legislators, and private citizens constitute the statutory membership of the Commission.

The PCCD works to improve the criminal and juvenile justice systems by examining problems, proposing solutions, and monitoring and evaluating the impact of those solutions; provides information for policy development and analyses of legislative issues; encourages sound practices in monitoring and treatment of offenders in the community; promotes interagency coordination and cooperation; provides mandatory

basic and in-service training for deputy sheriffs and constables; and provides training to enhance the skills of all professionals providing crime victim compensation claim assistance to victims and survivors.  State and federal funds administered by the PCCD are a key resource in helping to enhance the effectiveness of the Commonwealth's juvenile justice system and to prevent delinquency, violence, and other problem behaviors among Pennsylvania's children.

Advisory boards/ committees provide advice and recommendations in specified areas.  The PCCD has a current complement of 122 full-time staff that provide staff support for the work of these various advisory boards and committees—and whose general functions include: 1) administering federal and State grants and victim compensation funds; 2) conducting and contracting for research that provides information for policy development and legislative issues; and 3) coordinating and providing technical assistance for localities.

## Advisory Committees

PCCD has eight advisory committees that provide oversight to agency efforts related to their specified area of responsibility and advise the board as it develops grant funding priorities and strategies.  Staff are assigned to coordinate each committee.  The advisory committees include: 1) Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Committee; 2) Law Enforcement Advisory Committee; 3) Technology and Automation Advisory Committee; 4) Evaluation Advisory Committee; 5) Local Corrections Advisory Committee; 6) Victims' Services Advisory Committee; 7) Senior Citizen Advisory Committee and 8) Targeted Community Revitalization and Crime Prevention Advisory Committee.

The Commission holds an annual retreat/planning meeting for the chairs of all the advisory committees to promote a centralized and holistic approach to justice planning. The purpose of the retreat is to break down barriers between committees and focus jointly on the mission/goals of PCCD.  This process enhances communication among committees and expands the base of expertise from which each committee can draw. Although the Commission has final decisionmaking authority over grant awards, the retreat format is an opportunity for members to agree upon and share ownership in a spending plan for the upcoming fiscal year.

Each advisory committee has a distinct focus; however, the issues they address and the initiatives that they sponsor often intersect with the interests and work of other committees.  For example, the Law Enforcement Advisory Committee is responsible for the PCCD school resource officer (SRO) initiative, but a member of JJDPC serves on the subcommittee that oversees it because the program is targeted for juveniles.  The overlap in committee membership and the cooperation among PCCD staff fosters communication between the different advisory committees and creates opportunities for learning.  If JJDPC proposes funding a community supervision program for youthful offenders, the committee can call on and benefit from the experience of the adult community supervision program, which is overseen by another advisory committee.  As a result of this cooperative approach, the participants in the justice planning process, including committee members and staff, are more knowledgeable about the entire State justice system.

<u>Evaluation Advisory Committee and Juvenile Justice And Delinquency Prevention Committee</u>

The cooperation between two advisory committees, the JJDPC and the Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC), directly influences decisions related to the evaluation of juvenile justice programs and initiatives.  The JJDPC serves as the official juvenile justice planning, coordinating, and policy-setting agency under the administration of the Governor.  It is responsible for developing long-range plans and setting funding priorities for juvenile justice projects.  The juvenile justice specialist is the PCCD staff person assigned to coordinate JJDPC.  EAC manages federal grant awards to evaluate programs funded by PCCD.  As a resource for all the advisory committees, EAC provides research expertise, advice, and recommendations to assist the committees with funding decisions.  A PCCD senior evaluation analyst staffs the EAC.  The strong relationship between JJDPC and EAC is the result of a number of factors:

- *Membership of the two committees overlaps.*
  Both the current and the former chair of EAC also serve as members of the JJDPC.

- *PCCD staff foster the committees' interconnectedness by maintaining strong relations with the staff who have expertise in different fields.*
  For example, if the juvenile justice specialist is developing an RFP and needs an evaluation perspective, she works with the staff member assigned to EAC to inform the process.

- *The needs of JJDPC influence the research and evaluation award decisions made by EAC.*
  EAC formally surveys advisory committees to assess their evaluation needs. The survey findings are used to prioritize the research and evaluation grant awards. For instance, when EAC commissioned a number of literature reviews from a university, specific topics/programs ideas were solicited from the advisory committee members and PCCD staff.

- *JJDPC shares EAC's commitment to research and evaluation.*
  This commitment is illustrated by one of the guiding principals of JJDPC that states: "Timely and accurate information is crucial to the design and operation of an effective juvenile justice system.  Sufficient data collection, data management and research capabilities are crucial to system coordination, program monitoring, evaluation and proactive planning to meet the needs of the future."

Although a coordinated and interconnected approach to justice planning is a benefit of a centralized State justice agency, there are also limitations.  This approach is dependent on a frequent and considerable amount of communication, which is the responsibility of the committees' staff liaisons.  PCCD staff carry out the tasks necessary for implementation of initiatives with the appropriate advisory committees or members of

committees who have been directed to participate by the committee. They are also responsible for keeping committees that are not directly involved with a project, but who may benefit from the information, informed. Because there are no clear boundaries between committees or a reference manual identifying procedures to ensure that all the appropriate participants have been included in a project, the staff has a difficult task.

PCCD staff efforts to maintain an integrated justice planning approach are becoming more difficult with the growth of the commission. PCCD currently administers over 1300 grants in excess of $150 million, which is four times the number of grants they were administering five years ago. The staff has grown, but not proportionately. Therefore, a critical component to maintaining this coordinated approach is PCCD's experienced and knowledgeable staff. For example, the juvenile justice specialist has been in her position for almost 25 years.

# Research and Evaluation Strategy

*"Projects that are considered for evaluation include those that are particularly innovative, controversial, or potentially dramatic in impact; those whose operations and management could benefit by constructive evaluation; and those representing a substantial investment of funds."*

Over the last eight years, PCCD's research and evaluation strategy has been strengthened as the result of organizational and financial support. In 1992, the budget for research and evaluation was approximately $100,000, which was increased to a budget of $1.7 million for fiscal year 2002. Funding for research and evaluation projects comes from a number of sources including federal programs such as the Byrne Formula Grant Program, Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities, and the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grants. Additionally, in 1996, the decision was made to add EAC as a separate committee responsible for PCCD's research efforts. As of August 2000, EAC was administering 12 ongoing subgrants for research and evaluation projects, four of which were related to juvenile justice. Although the staff completes some research projects, the budget is generally used to commission studies. PCCD's research and evaluation approach is based on some general practices listed below.

## Prioritize Evaluation Studies

Not all programs funded by PCCD are formally evaluated, which raises the question: how does the commission determine which programs/initiatives merit being studied? In August of 2000, EAC was involved in four studies of juvenile justice initiatives including: 1) an implementation evaluation of the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grants Program Statewide initiative; 2) a process and outcome evaluation of the Communities That Care initiative in 22 counties; 3) an evaluation of the School Resource Officer (SRO) initiative in six pilot sites; and 4) an evaluation of Pennsylvania's Student Assistance Program. Although PCCD's research and evaluation staff conduct some research projects, the majority of the evaluation studies are

commissioned projects that are competitively awarded. EAC uses the following practices to prioritize which programs and initiatives merit being studied.

- *Identify the evaluation needs of the advisory committees.*
  The EAC conducts a formal survey of the advisory committees to determine their funding priorities and evaluation needs. They use the survey findings to help committees determine if research exists that identifies best practices in a program area. For example, if the committee identified a need for community-based diversion programs, the EAC would refer them to literature that addresses the effectiveness of diversion programs with specific populations.

- *Give priority to programs receiving large grant awards*.
  Major initiatives or multisite programs receiving large grant awards are given more consideration. Often the program solicitation states that participating in the evaluation is a grant requirement. The results of the evaluation of the pilot studies are used to determine if the program should be replicated in other sites. As discussed above, PCCD commissioned a study of the School Resource Officer (SRO) initiative because it was implemented in multiple sites; therefore the program received more resources.

- *Distinguish between innovative programs and initiatives*.
  EAC makes a distinction between initiatives based on validated proven models (such as the Blueprints for Violence Prevention programs or the Communities That Care [CTC] Initiative) and innovative programs, which creates two tracks for evaluation. *Innovative programs* are defined as demonstration projects that have not previously been evaluated. They are considered more appropriate for large-scale outcome evaluations because they may have implications for other projects and replication. With *initiatives*, defined as programs based on models that have already been extensively evaluated, the presumption is that an outcome evaluation is not necessary and a process evaluation is sufficient.

- *Write prescriptive proposal requests.*
  The announcements for proposals to conduct a research or evaluation study often describe the scope of the project in very specific terms. For example, an announcement may ask for proposals to conduct a statewide survey of student drug use in Pennsylvania during April/March 2000 using the Generation at Risk Survey.

Although the strategy outlined above emphasizes large programs, all PCCD-sponsored RFPs have an evaluation component referred to as the Project Assessment Plan that asks the applicant to identify: 1) the project objective; 2) the anticipated impact(s) of the project that can be quantified; 3) the process for measuring the impacts; and 4) the source of the information. The Assessment Plan is formally assessed during the proposal process and is worth 10 or 15 points out of a possible 100. This assessment plan forms the basis of subsequent quarterly reporting on the attainment of project objectives.

## Build Relationships that Support Research and Evaluation

   The PCCD staff, specifically the research and evaluation division, identify and foster relationships with other producers and consumers of justice research within the broader research community, including other State agencies, universities, research organizations, and independent consultants.

- *Foster the support of key State leaders.*
  The JJDPC is currently preparing a comprehensive juvenile justice and delinquency prevention plan, outlining critical issues and recommendations for addressing these issues.  This plan will be made available to the new administration under Governor Edward G. Rendell, who was inaugurated on January 21, 2003.  Members of the transition team for Governor Rendell and the newly appointed Director of the Governor's Policy Office have expressed interest in this plan and the specific recommendations contained therein.

- *Promote cooperation among committees within the agency.*
  As discussed above, the relationship among JJDPC, EAC, and PCCD staff is especially important to the evaluation of juvenile justice initiatives.

- *Develop relationships with other youth-serving agencies.*
  The cooperative approach extends beyond PCCD to partnerships with other State agencies.  For example, $10 million of State money was earmarked to fund Research-Based Delinquency and Violence Prevention Programs through PCCD's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.  PCCD worked with the Partnership to earmark the funds for Blueprints for Violence Prevention programs, (identified by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence) and the Communities That Care (CTC) Delinquency Prevention Initiative (identified by Developmental Research and Programs, Inc.).  The Partnership staff and the JJDPC reviewed the grant applications from the localities.  The Partnership commissioned Pennsylvania State University to evaluate these initiatives.  Although PCCD is not funding the study, they provided input to develop the contract and they receive copies of all reports.

- *Make connections with the broader research community.*
  PCCD promotes and fosters relationships with the research community, which includes universities and nonprofit research organizations such as the National Council on Crime and Delinquency.  Some of the strategies for developing these relationships include networking at conferences, guest lecturing for university classes, requesting researchers to serve on advisory committees, and organizing an annual research and evaluation conference.

## Incorporate Research into Planning

PCCD is committed to the ongoing education of staff and committee members about current justice research findings.  The planning process incorporates research and evaluation findings through the strategies listed below:

- *Use research to inform programming decisions.*
  EAC works with advisory committees to identify service gaps/needs in the system and refer committees to specific literature to determine if there are best practices in the program area being considered.  This practice allows the committees to make more informed decisions about how to allocate program money.

- *Allocate funds for research that will improve planning*.
  For example, JJDPC has a technical assistance contract with the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) under which publications related to juvenile justice issues and research are summarized in the newsletter *Pennsylvania Progress*.  This nationally distributed letter gives the committee members a stronger knowledge base and provides a service that the limited PCCD juvenile justice/ delinquency prevention staff are not able to provide due to heavy workloads.  EAC also has a contract with a State university to write literature reviews on topics relevant to the advisory committees.

- *Promote the funding of research-based programs.*
  PCCD has a strong history of earmarking funding for research-based initiatives such as the Blueprints Programs and the Communities That Care model.

During the planning process, the advisory committees rely on this information as they determine which programs/initiatives will be given funding priority.  Research findings are also critical to the planning efforts of EAC, which earmarks funds to evaluate specific projects.

## Disseminate Study Findings

PCCD recognizes that evaluation findings must be shared with other agencies, policymakers, and program managers to ensure that the information will be used to help make future program implementation and funding decisions.  Below are some of the dissemination strategies.

- *Distribute final research and evaluation reports to relevant audiences*.
  When an evaluation is completed on a juvenile-related project, JJDPC receives copies of the report.  Copies are also provided to other youth-serving agencies and interested legislators.

- *Publish briefs that summarize the findings*.

Evaluation studies are published as 8-18 page reports in PCCD's *Justice Analyst Series*, which is targeted at State policymakers, State and local agencies, and justice practitioners.

- *Present findings at conferences.*
  PCCD sponsors an Annual Criminal Justice Research and Evaluation Conference, at which it requires the research grant recipients to present their findings in a panel session or conduct a workshop. Research and evaluation studies commissioned by PCCD also receive national attention when the principal researchers present at national conferences. For example, five projects funded by PCCD were on the agenda for the 1999 annual conference for the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences.

## Lessons Learned

Below are some of the key lessons JRSA learned from this case study that States considering implementing practices similar to Pennsylvania should consider.

- State justice staff must take the lead in fostering relationships and communication among the staff of other advisory committees in order for a centralized planning process to be effective. This requires hiring and retaining qualified staff who are trained in evaluation.

- State justice staff and advisory committee members must share the belief that research and evaluation grant award decisions are best made by a separate advisory committee with evaluation expertise.

- State justice staff should have, or be provided with, basic knowledge and skills in research, evaluation, and planning.

- Advisory committee members who use evaluation should have, or should be provided with, a basic knowledge of evaluation through training and technical assistance.

- The State must earmark significant financial resources to commission large-scale research and evaluation studies.

- The State justice staff must identify and foster relationships with the broader research community including other State agencies, universities, research organizations, and independent consultants.

# Evaluation Strategies in Washington and Pennsylvania: Summary and Conclusions

Any State that wants to evaluate its juvenile justice programs must develop its own assessment system that takes into account the organizational opportunities and barriers within the State. This report has presented two different State strategies for evaluating juvenile justice programs. Despite the differences, the States share some critical factors in their approach to evaluation.

- *Experienced and managerial-level juvenile justice specialists.*
  In both Washington and Pennsylvania, the person who holds the juvenile justice specialist position has been in the position for well over 10 years, and they have management responsibilities. This consistency and the authority that the position is given in these States were critical to the implementation of an evaluation strategy that benefits the juvenile justice system.

- *SAG members who are knowledgeable about research and evaluation.*
  The SAG in each State is responsible for reviewing and establishing programs and policies for the Formula Grants Program. In both States, a number of the SAG members are either university-based researchers or independent consultants who have research experience. As "informed consumers" of the evaluation studies, they are better able to use objective research as part of the planning process and to prioritize program areas that should be given funding.

- *Support for research and evaluation from the SAG, State staff, and State leadership.*
  Implementation of formal State evaluation policies and practices requires that all levels of the State infrastructure that influence the administration of juvenile justice grant awards agree that evaluation is important. Because key stakeholders in Washington and Pennsylvania believe that research and evaluation studies give them the information they need to determine which programs work, both States are motivated to continue improving their evaluation practices.

- *Financial commitment to research and evaluation.*
  Whether a State chooses to require local programs to earmark funds, as in Washington, or has a separate research and evaluation budget, as in Pennsylvania, the implementation of a State evaluation strategy requires a plan for how studies will be funded.

- *Strong relationships with the research community.*
  Neither the Washington nor the Pennsylvania agencies responsible for administering juvenile justice grant awards have enough resources to conduct all of the evaluation studies in-house. They both foster relationships with and draw on the expertise of other State agencies, universities, smaller research firms, and independent consultants involved in justice research.

Interviews with key staff in Washington and Pennsylvania indicated that these characteristics were essential to the development of successful evaluation strategies within their states. Regardless of the particular policies and practices developed to evaluate programs, States can learn from the experiences of Washington and Pennsylvania in developing and enhancing their juvenile justice evaluation strategies.