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CONNECTING JUVENILE JUSTICE AND CHILD WELFARE

Evidence-Based Practice—
Developing a New Business Model from the Inside Out

By Jeremy Kohomban, Paul Schiller, and Patricia
   O'Gorman

Evidence-based practice (EBP) is the newest and latest direction in mental health, substance abuse, child welfare, juvenile justice and educational programs that links the funding of new initiatives within these systems. And everyone is in on the action. The Governor of New York announced a new initiative for the Office of Mental Health and the Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services requiring that the needs of individuals with co-occurring disorders will be provided treatment according to EBPs. The federal government is tracking of EBPs through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Ser-vices Administration's (SAMHSA) website for the National Registry of Effective Programs and Practices.

EBP is the newest benchmark to be met by agencies in human service programs, one that is effectively changing thinking within organizations as well as having the potential to impact practice overall. This focus on EBP, says Weisz, Sandler, Durlak, and Anton (2005), is leading us on a broader level to even "consider linking both conceptually and empirically, two often separate but clearly complementary approaches to the promotion and protection of youth mental health: prevention and treat-ment" creating a unified framework that will break down this divide resulting in the creation of a new way of approaching problems.

What is EBP? Sackett, Richardson, Rosenberg, Hayes, and Strauss (1996) define EBP as an approach to care based upon "the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of (clients)." From such a seemingly simple concept has come profound changes.

EBPs Impact on Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice

In every way possible EBP is a concept rapidly gaining speed. From the early replication efforts of successful federal grants in the 1980s to the push beginning in 2001 spurred by Institute of Medicine's report (Committee on Quality of Health Care in America, 2001) clearly delineat-ing that the delay in technologies reaching patients was

hurting the nation's health, EBP has come of age as evidenced by county, state, and the federal government's increasing focus on clear outcomes, and accountability, as they seek to know what they are purchasing. This is underscored by burgeoning efforts designed to facilitate the adoption of EBPs from the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare, to Wisconsin developing a research to practice series, and the University of South Florida sponsoring the development of the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN), and to the newly formed Association for Evidence Based Practice.

In no field is the impact of EBPs perhaps more prominent than in juvenile justice which can be credited with pushing the discussion of EBP from a research based conversation into a serious policy conversation concerning how effective programming not just delivers better outcomes, but one that also clearly cuts costs. As early as 2001 Elliott, Mihalic, Fagan, Hansen, Irwin, Michalski reported in the *Blueprints News* that with a true replication effort recidi-vism could be cut by as much as 32%. The same year Mihalic, Irwin, Elliott, Fagan, and Hansen (2001) in the OJJDP's *Juvenile Justice Bulletin* calculated how six selected programs, on a per participant basis, saved both taxpayer and crime victim money, effectively moving the discussion of the importance of EBP from a focus on delivering more effective treatment and prevention to a bottom-line discussion of how effective programs cut costs.

Policymakers began to take notice leading to new sets of demands within this changing marketplace and new

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

In this issue, you will find an article and other references to evidence-based practices for the handling of children and youth in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Evidence-based practice is increasingly the subject of policy and program discussions at public and private agencies. It is also a centerpiece of the MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change initiative to reform juvenile justice, an effort that CWLA has been a part of for the past several years.

What is most important about this quest to make practices evidence-based is that it signals a growing resolve to really focus on improved outcomes for the children and youth who come to the attention of both systems. Legislators, administrators, and practitioners are questioning existing practices and working harder to bring the best practices to the forefront of their systems. That means that it will become increasingly difficult for jurisdictions to fund efforts that do not produce the desired outcomes.

This focus on evidence-based practices also calls into question the resolve to improve the systems' performance measurement and evaluation capacities. Many jurisdictions around the country are working to upgrade both the design of their performance measurement systems and the corresponding technology so that they can demonstrate whether or not they achieved the desired outcomes.

In the upcoming months, I would like to encourage you to share with us at CWLA your efforts to move your work to evidence-based practices and improve your performance measurement systems. The promotion of evidence-based practice and performance measurement has been and will continue to be a priority at CWLA so please send us your experiences and ideas.

On a final note … in this issue … our public policy update … progress on the White House Conference on Children!

Janet K. Wiig
Director, Juvenile Justice Division

challenges within the child welfare and juvenile justice fields. The demand for implementation of EBPs entered into the mix that is altering how youth are entering these systems as seen by fewer referrals to traditional residential care and more to community-based care, increasing competition over these referrals between agencies, and the addition of an increasingly complex array of concerns that youth and caregivers present with, many of whom carry a wide variety of behavioral, mental heath, and developmental challenges. And organizations are taking note as EBPs are being seen as very useful overall, not only as a way for an agency to distinguish itself but also as a way of demonstrating the quality of the products that the agency is selling. Not a bad marketing tool in this age of increasing demands for the effectiveness of treatment, decreasing expenditure, and the call for agency transparency. Providing an EBP, or two, is one way for an agency to distinguish itself from its competition.

But are the increasing demands and resulting tension really just about new treatment and prevention models, and saving money? What is the impact of this new type of thinking and practice on not just the client, and practitioner but also on the organization and the field?

A *New* Business Model

This type of radical change is creating some unforeseen consequences as EBPs are resulting in the generation of new business models. From the practitioner on up, they are transforming how we think, what roles we play, and how we are organized. They are providing a blueprint for how we need to operate, and some would say, for how to stay in business. "This is a new way of thinking, a new way of training, a new way of planning. Once you get used to this approach you begin to see the subtleties not just in the conceptualization of a case, but also in the agency's overall thinking, and overall planning," says Hans Schlange, Vice President of The Children's Village (CV), a child welfare agency located in Westchester County, New York. What you wind up with is a new way of thinking about what your business is, and an opening up to the possibility of a different way of going about accomplishing it. "Look out," he advises "we are just beginning to see the fallout from this and we at Children's Village are seeing this help us create a new business model (H. Schlange, interview, 2008).

The consensus in the field is that it is both exhilarating and daunting to be on the ground floor of this change. Exhilarating because EBP is where the action is. There is so much pressure to create models that work. Our kids and families deserve no less. Daunting because, in essence, this very small rudder of EBP is really what is being asked to steer, and perhaps to save, the whole of the child welfare and juvenile justice.

One group that is tracking the impact of change in the world of EBP is the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN). Here Fixen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman,

and Wallace (2005) point to the change that EBP is making in moving the system, albeit slowly, from reacting usually in response to class action lawsuits to a "more thoughtful style of solving problems" which is based upon implementing research based solutions to identified problems. Revolution may just be the operative word as major changes are beginning to occur.

Creating Change at Many Agency Levels

How to prepare? Even with all the pressure to adopt an EBP, agencies need to be encouraged to go slowly and to be ready for change, at many levels of their operations both those they anticipate and those that they do not. The decision to take on an EBP is an incredible commitment. This is acquiring technology, and even though it is evidence-based there still needs to be an adjustment of the agency to the requirements of the new model. "It is a constant push and pull. Get ready, as the fun begins," advises Schlange (interview, 2008).

The marketplace is both demanding and encouraging the adoption of EBPs. It all looks deceptively simple even with Small, Cooney, Eastman, and O'Connor (2007) cautioning that there is little research about how to go about selecting an EBP. And the steps appear fairly clear-cut.

Gorman-Smith (2006) in her working paper on successful implementation of Evidence-Based Social Program recommends a five-step process:

> Step 1: Select an appropriate evidence-based intervention.
>
> Step 2: Identify resources that can help with successful implementation.
>
> Step 3: Identify appropriate implementation sites.
>
> Step 4: Identify key features of the intervention that must be closely adhered to and monitored.
>
> Step 5: Implement a system to ensure close adherence to these key features.

Very straightforward and detailed but it belies the impact of the EBP world of practice on the industry itself resulting in the creation of a new schema for thinking, one with profound implications.

Figure 1 portrays how the changes in the practitioner's methods and planning lead to changes in the supervision of the practitioner, and, as a result, in the supervisor's planning. This results in change in how problems are defined and how the supervisor develops solutions, what is addressed in supervision, and how this is brought to administration. The end result is a different allocation of resources, more debt in a mission statement, greater deliverables to the stakeholders, and the creation of increasing expectations for other organizational programs as well.

By virtue of this change in what is focused upon at the program level we are finding resulting qualitative

changes at the agency planning level. Instead of change being top down, administratively and policy driven, due to EBP change is very much bottom up driven by practice as we learn more about what we are doing, what works and what does not, and as a result change how we think and what we do. Except, as we know, change is not a static quality but rather one that is dynamic. That literal pebble in the pond analogy is true here, from small changes come big ripples.

Mihalic, Irwin, Elliot, Fagan, and Hansen (2001) predicted some of this as they began to track how early replication efforts were causing administrative tensions—some transient and others that required greater attention—but what we are finding is that when you embrace an EBP change, from subtle to more expansive is becoming the norm.

This is another exciting feature of EBPs—this aspect of creativity that results from the dual levels of a model coming into being which delivers both a lens through which to view our work with clients in new and more effective ways, and a lens that allows us to reflect upon our practice in this and in other sectors of our functioning. Once you begin down this path a whole new series of opportunities open up that enhance practice on many levels, some subtle and others more concrete. For example, CV found that their staff development plans changed for their agency once they embraced their EBP. "One early tangible outgrowth of the treatment planning required of our EBP is that our professional development plans for our staff have become much more comprehensive. What we didn't initially foresee was that once this happened within our EBP, it was only natural for our new system of staff development to spread throughout the agency," says Schlange (interview, 2008).
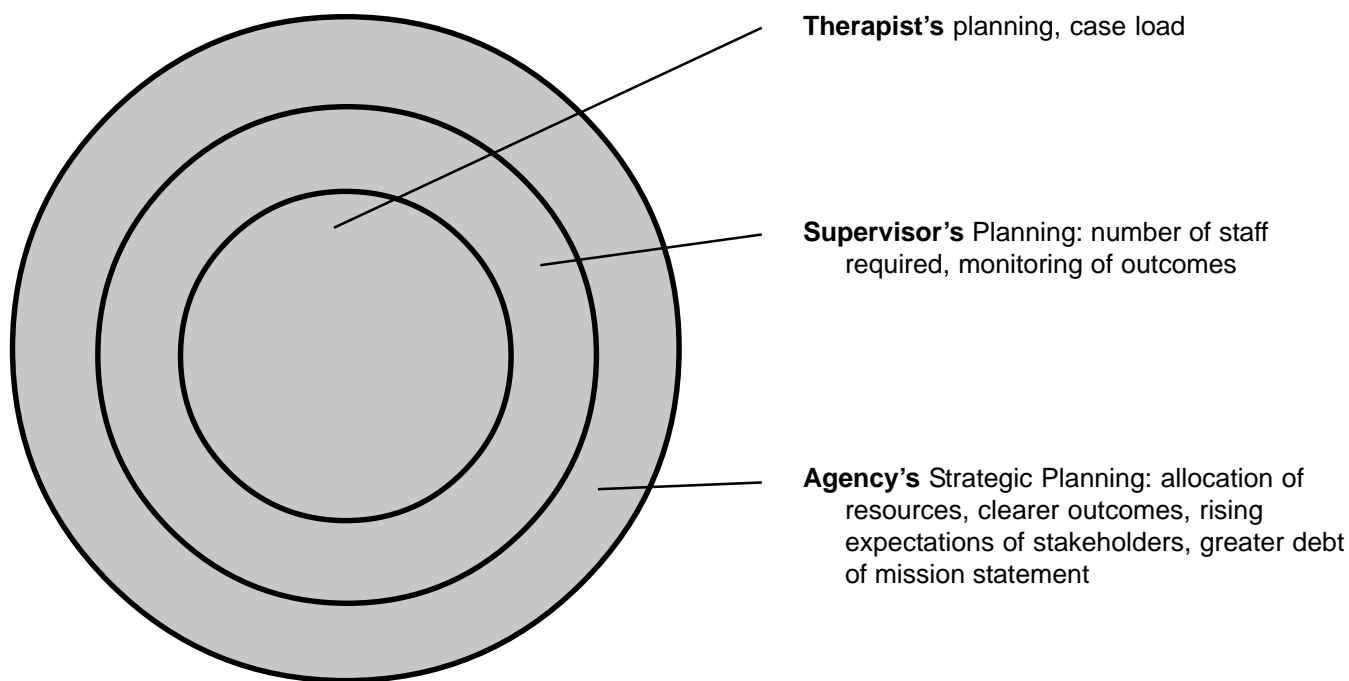
From the subtle and concrete change that EBPs have the potential to create, there is also the potential for their existence to have a major organizational influence. One of the least predicted outcomes that adopting an EBP would have is its' potential to hold an agency together during times of change, times which are becoming increasingly more of the norm, due to its rigorous programming. We are finding that the "staff turnover, personality conflicts, administrative shifts within and between agencies" that Mihalic, Irwin, Elliot, Fagan, and Hansen spoke about in 2001 are just the tip of the iceberg in the field as it deals with new pressures resulting in agency mergers and shifting resources, as we try to serve different populations (Mihalic, et al., 2001). Here the rigor involved in an EBP can provide a calm center to the currently fluid world of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Acting much like a protective factor, spoken of in the resiliency research, EBPs have the potential to mitigate against the flux that results from these major organizational changes. EBPs can be a stabilizing influence as a result of the predictable requirements needed to run a program—committed staff, committed resources, administrative support—all required to generate its promised outcomes. In this way EBPs may serve as an anchor that will allow some agencies to survive the current turbulent time by minimizing just how much can be shifted while still retaining an agency's promised outcomes and mission.

New Set of Worries

But the magnitude of the change can be staggering as are the increasing quantity of cases in EBPs. What does

Figure 1. How Utilizing EBPs is Resulting in a New Business Model

Therapist's planning, case load

Supervisor's Planning: number of staff required, monitoring of outcomes

Agency's Strategic Planning: allocation of resources, clearer outcomes, rising expectations of stakeholders, greater debt of mission statement

it take to run a program with 800 cases a year? "Patience, lots of patience and a clear vision of the importance of what we are trying to achieve," says Schlange (interview, 2008). "There are so many forces that can derail our efforts." And CV should know; as one of the early pioneers in EBP it has been involved in evidence based practices since 1984 when it developed the Work Appreciation for Youth program (WAY), which was the subject of a longitudinal study tracking the long-term outcomes for at risk youth in the program.

This early EBP was replicated in a dozen sites across the country and, in 2000, was selected by the State of New York to increase work force outcomes among incarcerated youth. Funding for this project came from the federal government, which required its use as an evidence-based model. In 2001, CV became part of a pilot program to use Multi-Systematic Therapy (MST), an evidence based practice developed by the MST Institute, to reduce recidivism among youth being released from juvenile justice facilities. CV has since become an MST network partner and the largest provider of MST in New York State, serving approximately 800 families.

As an early pioneer in EBP, CV was amassing a great deal of knowledge and decided to share what they were learning in a more formal process. This resulted with their joining with other organizations to found the Association for Evidence Based Practices. Begun in 2007 to encourage the use of evidence-based models, it also helps other organizations guard against known potential pitfalls. Chief among these is the pressure that many sites feel to compromise the model, most often by going over the recommended caseloads. While not mean-spirited, and encouraged sometimes by administrative forces as a way of stretching resources, most staff around the country involved in EBP feel the need to be constantly vigilant about what they are trying to do and what resources are required to do it. This is creating some interesting and new conversations within administrations that are bringing research center stage.

For example, one challenge as agencies seek to serve an increasing client base is the pressure to expand the model by using it in new settings. While many EBP practitioners would love to expand current operations, they are now knowledgeable enough about the process to ask if they are really ready to take the bruises that getting there will mean. The argument now used in strategic planning meetings is that if we are working within a well-researched area, we just cannot say that if it played well in Yonkers we can export it to rural Minnesota. It needs to be tested. Practitioners and supervisors are now pushing back using the "research" word to slow down enthusiastic growth making it more purposeful and linked to tangible outcomes.

EBP has also energized agency growth and development in new ways, requiring more of an action-orientation that does not always allow for quiet reflection, even if this

results in sometimes, or often, having the cart before the horse. When one is working within an EBP there is a consistent effort to adhere to the model. This is measured, analyzed, and most often the focus of supervision and training. Along with adherence to the model there is a higher sense of accountability on all levels of the EB programs. This not only includes familiar outcomes of placement, school performance, and family functioning, but also engagement and client participation. EB programs are challenged to hold their staff accountable and identify what they can do to promote engagement and participation. One example of this is that clients are not labeled as resistant or noncompliant in these programs, thus changing the old paradigm of blaming the client while also serving to empower the helper.

Maybe Just Saving the Field

Is it worth it? The unanimous answer is yes. For all of their challenges EBPs are not just shaking up the field, they are contributing to stabilizing it while energizing it. Agencies are being pulled into thinking outside of the box, not a bad place to be as child welfare, juvenile justice, among other fields, search for innovative and cost-effective ways of handling the increasingly complex demands of the children and families served. But one thing is clear; with the embracing of EBPs we are no longer the same field, using the same techniques. Change and accountability are the operative words; possible now through the implementation of EBPs and the new business models they are helping to develop.

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LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

The Juvenile Justice Policy Network Listserv (JJPOLNET) is a valuable tool for all Juvenile Justice stakeholders who are interested in or participate in advocacy efforts on behalf of youth and adolescents involved with the Juvenile Justice System. With JJPOLNET it is easy keep up with the latest Juvenile Justice news, information, and policy developments, as well as the events, publications, and work being done by the CWLA Juvenile Justice Division. To sign up for JJPOLNET, the CWLA Juvenile Justice Listserv, e-mail sconcodora@cwla.org.

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The School to Prison Pipeline and Criminalizing Youth:

Costs, Consequences, and Alternatives

By Marsha Weissman

For more than 25 years, the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA) has been working with youth and adults in the juvenile and criminal justice system. CCA's mission is to reduce the use of incarceration and promote reintegrative justice, a concept that relies on community-based alternatives. CCA's work with young people in the juvenile justice system led us to the steps of alternative schools and the "school-to-prison pipeline."

There are likely no more distinct institutions in a society than schools and prisons. One, the school, is considered an institution that builds capacity that can serve as a ticket out of poverty and the gate that opens to a better future. The other, the prison, is used to contain those who society considers a threat to social well-being and cements poverty and diminishes opportunities. For most of the history of the United States schools were celebrated as institutions with open access to all, while prisons were disdained and hidden from view.

By the close of the 20th Century, however, these two institutions had, in some respects, reversed their positions in the social order. Public schools are under attack for being unable to educate children and characterized as bureaucratic, violent, and amoral if not immoral, venues. Charter schools, school vouchers, eroding property tax bases, and general taxpayer revolt challenge the funding for public schools. In contrast, the U. S. prison system is robust, taking up increasing portions of state and federal budgets. By the end of 2005, a record number of 2.2 million people were imprisoned in the United States.

For poor children in the United States, particularly children of color, the view of school as ticket to the future has always been fraught with contradiction. There is no doubt of the correlation between academic achievements (graduation, college, and post baccalaureate degrees) and improved life chances on a range of economic and social well-being measures. Yet poor children of color have less opportunity to benefit from education, as evidenced by disparities in graduation rates and academic diplomas. Conversely, they are more likely to be suspended and subsequently dropout of school.

In the latter part of the 20th Century, for children of color, the absence of a high school diploma did more than relegate someone to the economic margins of society. For youth of color, becoming a high school drop out increases the likelihood of winding up in jail or prison. By the time they reach their early 30s, 52% of young, male, African American high school dropouts have spent some time in jail or prison (Western, Pettit, & Guetzkow, 2002).

The junctures throughout the educational experience that move a child away from education and graduation to incarceration have come to be known as "the school-to-prison pipeline." The pipeline has been constructed through a confluence of policies that encourage exclusion from school, practices that have transformed urban schools into custodial-like facilities, and politics that Jonathan Simon (2006) has termed "governing through crime." The connections between school disciplinary policies and practices and criminal justice system involvement are both direct and indirect. The direct link is the increased presence of police in schools because student misconduct and noncompliance once previously addressed by teachers or school administrators are now the purview of juvenile and criminal justice system. Police presence and criminalization of misdeeds and mischief have resulted in an increase in the number of in-school arrests (Advancement Project, 2005).

The indirect link appears to be school suspensions and expulsions have greatly increased over the past 25 years. The majority of school suspensions are for incidents that involve neither weapons nor violence. The use of suspension varies by school district, schools, and by classrooms and incorporates an eclectic list of misbehavior: truancy, tardiness, forging out-of-school excuses, smoking, drinking, disruptive behavior, uncooperative behavior, as well as more serious fighting and weapons possession (Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Adams, 2000; Advancement Project, 2000).

Criminalizing Our Youth: Policies, Practices, and Politics

The labeling of and responses to student misbehavior increasingly reflect the criminalization of youth behavior. For example, fighting among students is no longer termed a fight but rather a more ominous assault. The arms, hands, and feet involved in the pushes, shoves, slaps, punches, scratches and kicks in school yard fighting are now defined as "personal weapons" (Noonan & Varva, 2007).

Schools have been transformed into jail-like environments through the increase presence of police and the increased use of security devices in response to tragic, but aberrant, events such as Columbine. Data shows that violent incidents in school have declined over the past decade: in 2004, less than 5% of students reported being a victim of a crime at school. Schools remain among the safest public spaces, despite political and media hype

about isolated incidents that have created a sense of schools as dangerous places.

While national data is not available, information from individual cities show an increasing number of arrests of children while in school. For example, in 2003 in Chicago, Illinois, 8,539 students were arrested in public schools, almost 10% of who were children under the age of 12 (Advancement Project, 2005). Black students made up 50% of the student population but were 77% of the students arrested.

In New York City, more than 4,600 police officers work in public schools every day, representing a larger police presence than exists in most cities in the United States (New York Civil Liberties Union, 2007). While New York City has not disclosed the number of arrests made in schools, the New York Civil Liberties Union study shows that increased law enforcement and school security measures are concentrated in the schools whose student body is disproportionately students of color.

In Palm Beach County, Florida, in 2003, black students made up 64% of arrests in school but only 29% of the student population (Advancement Project, 2006). The troubling racial disparity in school arrests is not limited to the largest urban centers: in 2003, according to the Des Moines Register, black students who constituted 15% of Des Moines' high school student population were 33% of arrests in that city's high schools (Deering, Alex, & Blake, 2003).

Many school-based arrests are for noncriminal activity and are carried out without regard for the age of the student or the context of the child's misbehavior. Media accounts of these sorts of arrests abound and have been chronicled by the Advancement Project (2006). Examples include the arrest in St. Petersburg, Florida in 2005, of a five-year-old African American girl who was arrested by police for throwing a tantrum and hitting an assistant principal. Also in that year, in New York City, a sixteen-year-old girl was arrested for shouting an obscenity in the hallway. When the school principal attempted to stop the police from detaining the girl, the principal and a school aide were also arrested.

The increased use of security technology has also transformed schools. On entering schools, students are subjected to metal detectors, wands, electronic identifica-

tion systems, biometric technology (e.g., eye scanning cameras that allow admission to pre-approved students), or fingerprinting students (Cohn, 2006). Private security firms have identified schools as a lucrative market, evidenced by specialty magazines that focus on the sale of school security and vendor marketing at school-related conferences (Casella, 2003).

Pushing Young People Out of School: Suspensions and Expulsions

While the direct path from school to prison is in-school arrests, school suspension policies are the indirect route into the criminal justice system. The 1994 Gun-Free Schools Act, which ties federal government school aid to the adoption of school disciplinary policies known as Zero Tolerance, has played a major role in the increase in school suspensions. The law requires a one-year expulsion for possession of a weapon. Over time, school districts came to apply mandatory expulsion policies to other behaviors including drug possession and fighting, and even lesser offenses such as swearing and violations of dress codes. By 2000, the number of students suspended reached 3 million (6.6%) (Wald & Losen, 2003).

Zero Tolerance and similar policies impact the overall school culture and ways that teachers manage classrooms. Reliance on punitive disciplinary practices thwarts teacher and administrative creativity in developing more constructive and nurturing ways of dealing with behavior issues and classroom conflict.

Much as with arrests in school, a disproportionate number of students suspended from school are African American children. The U.S. Department of Education (Kewal Ramani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007) data shows that African American students were more than 39% of those suspended from school, although they were only 17% of the total U. S. student population. The American Academy of Pediatrics' (2003) study of school suspensions reported that in some areas of the country, African American students were suspended at almost two times the rate of white students.

School suspensions significantly contribute to dropping out of school, and dropping out of school is a significant predictor of incarceration. National Center for Educational Statistics data show that 31% of students who had been suspended three or more times before the spring of their sophomore year dropped out of school, compared to 6% of students who had never been suspended (Livingston, 2006). Dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be incarcerated in their lifetime (Martin & Halperin, 2006) and 68% of state prisoners are dropouts (Harlow, 2003), demonstrating that the pipeline ends at prisons and jails.

Alternative Schools

Many suspended students wind up in alternative schools. It is ironic that these alternative schools, now considered a dumping ground for troubled youth, were initially

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associated with civil rights or counter culture movements to improve and enrich educational opportunities. Freedom Schools were an outgrowth of the civil rights movement and garnered recognition as part of "Mississippi Summer" in l964. Student activists worked with community members to set up schools in an effort to compensate for the state's poor public education system for black children (Payne, 1997; Perlstein, 1990).

Free Schools were also parallel institutions, albeit established by the advantaged, yet discontented white counterculture movement, and focused on enriching and expanding the public education provided to the more privileged children of the upper white middle class. Miller (2002) estimates that between 400 and 800 free schools were set up in the United States between 1967 and the late 1970s.

Alternative schools have now come to symbolize settings that segregate students suspended from mainstream schools. The exclusion of youth from school through suspension and expulsion further fosters an attitude of self-defeat and cynicism on the part of students and isolates the very students most in need of connections with prosocial institutions from those institutions. To counter these harmful effects, CCA introduced the Strategies for Success program.

Strategies for Success:
Alternatives to School Suspension

After many years of working with young people in alternative schools, seeing them cycle in and out of these schools, and often drop out, CCA teamed up with the Syracuse City School District (SCSD) to reduce and prevent school suspensions, reduce the number of students who drop out of school and help marginalized youth avoid the prison track. The SCSD is a mid-sized urban school district in upstate New York that faces problems common to industrial manufacturing cities in the United States: a deteriorating economy, a declining population, and a segregation of poor people of color in the urban core.

The Strategies for Success (SfS) program was developed at a time of emerging concern about the increase in the number of youth sent to alternative schools. The program design takes into consideration the school and community environments that poor, urban, youth of color confront. It also draws upon research on effective programming.

The relationship between social and economic inequality and antisocial and nonproductive behaviors, such as crime, delinquency, and school drop out rates, is well documented. Kostelny & Garbarino (2000) terms these environments "toxic." The under-resourced urban public schools and community conditions of extreme poverty reflect a form of structural violence" (Galtung, 1969) that limit or constrict access to opportunities and the ability to reach one's potential. The Strategies for Success program serves youth who struggle with these harsh and inequitable community conditions.

The program uses a multifaceted, integrated approach in its work with students suspended to an SCSD alternative school. It embeds social supports into the school environment and extending these supports into the community and family. CCA staff work in close collaboration with school principals, teachers, and staff; foster connections to families; and involve youth in developing comprehensive services that keep them engaged in prosocial activities. The program incorporates mentoring and other opportunities for students to develop bonds with one or more caring adults, and opportunities for paid summer internships with local businesses.

The program is introduced when the youth is first placed in the alternative school and continues after return to a mainstream school. CCA staff work with youth and parents/guardians to help them more effectively negotiate the requirements of school and the challenges of the streets. During their stay at alternative school, youth compile portfolios that document their achievements. These portfolios accompany students when they are allowed to return to mainstream school in an effort to accentuate the student's accomplishments and mitigate the stigma of alternative school placement.

Transitional services focus on averting the very high re-suspension rates among alternative students after they return to their mainstream school. Transitional support is a means to help students cope with their placement in an alternative school and successfully re-engage in mainstream school. SfS uses a strength-based, ecologically-oriented approach that identifies and link youth to services and activities that address their needs and interests.

SfS also introduces after school and other youth development activities into an environment with few such positive opportunities. Alternative schools have no extracurricular activities that are often the glue that cements student attachment to school. They have no sports teams, no clubs, and no school newspaper. SfS makes an effort to fill this gap through a range of "youth-centered" activities, designed with input from the youth that give them opportunities to be active leaders and creators.

For example, students suggested that the availability of a sound studio where youth could record hip hop music would entice after school participation even for students who were reluctant to regularly attend school. In keeping with a youth leadership approach that is a core element in our programming, youth established the rules governing the use of the sound studio: lyrics cannot use obscenities, be homophobic or misogynous or promote violence. The material is produced so that it can be used pedagogically by youth serving as peer leaders training other youth in alternatives to violence and behavioral changes to reduce the risk of HIV. To hone their skills as songwriters, students participate in a writing workshop. To qualify as a peer educator, the youth must complete violence prevention and HIV/health education peer educator training. The results are tangible—a CD and

anthology of poetry are produced and previewed at an annual Youth Banquet attended by youth, teachers, parents, and program staff.

The SfS program also engages parents by serving as a liaison between the youth, parent, alternative school, and mainstream school, and by providing support to parents and youth so they can identify and resolve barriers that stand in the way school success. Staff will meet with parents wherever is most convenient, at home, in our offices, in school, and the community. The program hosts monthly parent support groups and special events to show parents their children in active leadership roles. CCA's work with parents is individualized and does not presuppose a negative stereotype. While some parents struggle with their own problems—low education, unemployment, or addiction—many others are working and are very involved in their children's education, despite barriers such as long work hours, two jobs, and economic stress.

Beyond close contact with parents, SfS offers many opportunities for youth to connect with one or more supportive adults. Alternative school students are typically disconnected from youth-serving organizations. The SfS program has tackled alternative school students' lack of prosocial connections by creating a variety of opportunities for social bonding. They have a one-on-one connection with a CCA staff person that starts from the day the student enters the alternative school and continues after return to mainstream school. Other adults are introduced to youth through SfS including instructors who conduct youth development activities that are part of the after school program—a writing/poetry workshop, alternative to violence and health education, leadership skills, martial arts, computer skills, and sound studio production. Teachers often serve as academic consultants providing tutoring and academic supports. Finally, CCA also recruits and matches adults from the community to mentor youth, including business people who provide summer stipend internships.

Program Outcomes

The Strategies for Success program was started in 2000 through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. As part of grant requirements, CCA conducted an outcome evaluation that looked at pre- and post- program suspension rates, attendance rates, and grades for SfS participants and a comparison group of students. The SCSD and the local probation department provided data. We compared the status of the youth at baseline (i.e., entry into alternative school) and two years after program participation.

Students in both the program and the comparison group (students enrolled in the alternative school, but not the SfS program) were predominantly male and African American. They were poor, as measured by their eligibility for free lunch (97% program group; 93% comparison group). The SfS participants were considerably more likely to have been previously suspended (49%) than the

comparison group (14%). Seventy-three percent of the program group had a grade point average below 70, compared to 68% of the comparison group.

The evaluation looked at outcomes for youth who participated in the SfS program (both youth who completed the program and youth who left the program early), youth who completed the program, and the comparison group. With respect to suspensions, the percent of SfS participants who were sent to suspension hearings steadily decreased from 59% during the baseline period to 27% two years following program participation, reflecting a 53% reduction. This decline was even greater for those youth who successfully completed the SfS program - 63%. The comparison group who did not receive program services showed a smaller decrease in suspension hearings (16%).

SfS participation is also associated with a decrease in being returned to an alternative school. The percentage of SfS participants who were subsequently reassigned to an SCSD alternative school decreased by 48% between baseline to year 2 follow-up. SfS completers again showed even greater reductions in alternative school placement, a 64% reduction over the same time period. In contrast, the comparison group showed an 18% increase in replacement in an alternative school.

Attendance rates for SfS participants improved while the attendance rate for the comparison group deteriorated. SfS participants saw a 6% improvement in attendance rates, completers, a 1% improvement, while the attendance rates for the comparison group declined by 6%.

The program had less impact on grade point average, with the average grade points for all students remaining low, below 70. Still, youth who participated in or completed the SfS program saw their grade point averages rise, while the comparison group had a drop in grades. The average grade for SfS participants was 64 at baseline, and increased 7% to 69 at year 2. The SfS completer average grade rose from 66 at baseline to 68 at year 2. In contrast, the average grade point average for the comparison group was 66 at baseline and declined to 60, a 9% decrease.

Finally, SfS participants, and particularly those youth who completed the SfS program, have better criminal justice outcomes. SfS completers were less likely to have a juvenile or criminal justice adjudication/conviction of any sort: 91% of SfS completers, vs. 86% of the comparison group were convicted of a delinquent or criminal offense. Of those youth who were convicted of an offense, SfS completers were less likely to receive a custodial/incarceration sentence (1% of SfS completers compared to 5% of the comparison group).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Strategies for Success program shows promise for reducing school suspensions and improving outcomes for

A White House Conference on Children and Youth has Lift Off!

CWLA is calling on Congress and the new President to convene a White House Conference on Children and Youth in 2010. No conference has been held since 1970. Three decades have passed without the White House bringing the focus of the nation to examine the state of our children. CWLA is calling on the next President to convene a conference in 2010 and once again use the power of the White House to organize a national conference on the welfare of our children and establish national goals for improvement in the subsequent 10 years.

Previous conferences made significant contributions to establishing priorities for protecting and supporting children in need. In 1909 the conference for the first time committed the nation to oppose the institutionalization of dependent children. The 1919 White House Conference on Standards of Child Welfare produced the first significant report on child health and welfare standards. The next conference, in 1929, created the most comprehensive report on the needs of children ever written, and resulted in the issuance of a national Children's Charter.

The 1939 Conference on Children in a Democracy highlighted the democratic values, services, and environment necessary for the welfare of children. The Mid-Century White House Conference held in 1950 focused on healthy personality development, and the Golden Anniversary White House Conference on Children and Youth in 1960 expanded upon this theme to examine ways for children to explore their potential in order to discover creative freedom. The last conference, the 1970 White House Conference on Children and Youth, strived to strengthen the individuality and identity of children through the support of healthy personality development.

What Is It?
A conference that would be held at the White House reestablishing conferences that took place every 10 years from 1910 to 1970. This one would take place in 2010.

Why Wait Until 2010?
There are several reasons. One is to restore the historic tradition of these events taking place at the start of the decade. More importantly, the Conference would really be a two year process with the first year allowing for state and local gatherings and input. In addition, setting this conference for 2010 allows a new President, whose term will not start until January 2009, the time to focus on this as a priority.

How Would It Work?
This conference would function like aging conferences and past children's conferences: funding would be provided to establish a series of events and small conferences throughout the 50 states. This would take place in the year before the national conference. Delegates would be sent to the White House event representing all states including the tribes, territories, and Washington, DC.

What Role Does Congress Have, Isn't This for the President?
Congress has a significant role. First, it would provide authorizing legislation that sets the goals and the requirements. Second, Congress would appropriate the funds. Third, Congress would have an appointment role in regard to some of the policy committee that oversees the Conference and its lead-up.

What's The Status?
Specifically because of CWLA's efforts and leadership, legislation to reinstate a White House Conference on Children and Youth was introduced earlier this year and is off to a strong start. Both the House and the Senate bills have strong bipartisan support that we must continue to build upon in order to pass the legislation.

Many cosponsors were added to the House bill (HR 5461) after receiving visits from CWLA member agencies and State Leaders during Advocacy Day at our national conference. CWLA continues to be contacted by interested members of Congress that were visited by CWLA members on Advocacy Day. Thank you for your effective work on getting Congressional support for a White House Conference!

Cosponsors that signed on within days of your visits from member agencies:

Rep. DeGette, Diana [CO-1] - 2/26/2008	Rep. Jackson-Lee, Sheila [TX-18] - 2/26/2008
Rep. Hare, Phil [IL-17] - 2/26/2008	Rep. McGovern, James P. [MA-3] - 2/26/2008
Rep. Miller, Jeff [FL-1] - 2/27/2008	Rep. DeLauro, Rosa L. [CT-3] - 3/4/2008
Rep. Serrano, Jose E. [NY-16] - 3/4/2008	Rep. Green, Gene [TX-29] - 3/4/2008
Rep. Berman, Howard L. [CA-28] - 3/5/2008	

PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

What's Next?
Legislation would require this White House Conference to be held sometime in 2010, allowing for a 2-year process for state and local gatherings and input. It also offers an opportunity for communities, states, and cities to come together in a dialogue about how to make real change in the lives of vulnerable children and families. Think of hundreds of meetings across the country to deal with your communities' unique challenges. In addition, setting this conference for 2010 allows a new President, who will not start his or her term until January 2009, the time to focus on this as a priority.

What You Can Do to Promote a White House Conference
First and foremost, you can contact your Senators and Representatives in Congress and urge them to support the legislation. Call 202/224-3121 to connect to Congress.

Get Cosponsors!
Call your member of Congress today and ask them to cosponsor this monumental legislation! For a list of current cosponsors, visit www.cwla.org/advocacy/whitehouseconfcosponsors.htm.

Contact the Committee!
The House Education and Labor committee has been assigned this important legislation. If your member of Congress is on this committee, contact them right away and tell them to support a long-overdue White House Conference on Children and Youth! To see a list of committee members, visit http://edworkforce.house.gov/about/members.shtml.

Sign-on in Support!
You will receive regular updates as the campaign progresses, alerts around upcoming key developments, and most importantly you will be part of a movement to make children a national priority!
Visit www.cwla.org/advocacy/whitehouseconf10.htm to join in the campaign!

As you can see, visiting your member of Congress can really make a difference. Keep making phone calls and keep scheduling visits with Congress in Washington and at home!

Announcing MacArthur Foundation Grant Opportunity

The National Juvenile Defender Center is pleased to announce the creation of the Juvenile Indigent Defense Action Network (JIDAN), an initiative to promote change that enhances and strengthens juvenile indigent defense systems.

The Network, funded through the MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change, will respond to the critical need to build the capacity of the juvenile defense bar and to improve access to counsel and quality of representation for youth involved in the justice system. State entities, organizations and collaborations with a designated fiscal agent, law school clinical programs, nonprofit law centers, and other organizations are eligible to apply. Qualified applicants will demonstrate statewide support and the ability to build momentum for reform.

Entities from four new partner states will be selected to join the existing Models for Change states and will together form a structured Network. Participation in JIDAN will yield many significant benefits to the four new partner states including funding of up to $100,000 for one year to support juvenile indigent defense reform efforts (with additional funding likely), structured collaboration with seven other states working on similar issues and access to the latest developments, information, and new training materials.

Please take the opportunity to apply to be a part of this exciting endeavor and to forward this information to interested parties in the 38 eligible states and the District of Columbia.

Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin are already a part of Models for Change, or are in the Disproportional Minority Contact (DMC) or Mental Health Action Network, and as such are not eligible to apply.

The application packet, which includes detailed information about the Network, can be downloaded from the NJDC website by visiting http://njdc.info/jidan.php. The completed application must be **received, by hard copy and in duplicate, no later than Friday, June 6 at 5:00 pm EST.** On-line applications will not be accepted. The application may not be emailed or faxed. Only those entities selected will be notified. NJDC will post the selected grant recipients on its website.

If you have any questions, please contact Rey Banks at rbanks@njdc.info or at 202-452-0010.

Group Homes Appear to Double Delinquency Risk for Foster Kids, Study Says

By Craig Chamberlain

CHAMPAIGN, Ill.—Group homes are generally the placement of last resort for children in foster care, and also one of the most expensive options for state child-welfare agencies.

It appears that group homes also play a significant role in pushing the children they serve toward the juvenile-justice system, according to a new study in Los Angeles County, led by a University of Illinois professor.

"Our results found that kids (mostly adolescents) who enter group home placements are about two-and-a-half times more likely to enter the juvenile-justice system relative to similar kids, with similar backgrounds, who are served in foster-home settings," says Joseph Ryan, a professor in the Children and Family Research Center (CFRC), part of the university's School of Social Work.

What is more, Ryan said, the group-home effect on delinquency appears to be fairly immediate. "The vast majority of (first-time) arrests occur while the adolescent is actually under the supervision of the group home," rather than months or years after they leave, he said.

Keeping foster youth out of the juvenile-justice system is especially important because they have fewer options once there, Ryan said. "We know once child-welfare youth are in the juvenile-justice system, they're less likely to get probation and more likely to get pushed deeper into the juvenile-justice system," he said.

Another concern grows from the fact that African-Americans are overrepresented in the child-welfare system, and in group homes specifically, Ryan said. The group-home effect therefore might be contributing to the even greater overrepresentation of African-Americans in the juvenile-justice system, as well as in prisons, he said.

The study, "Juvenile Delinquency in Child Welfare: Investigating Group Home Effects," has been accepted for publication and posted online (access restricted) by Children and Youth Services Review, a prominent journal for research on child-welfare issues.

Coauthors of the study are Jane Marie Marshall, a doctoral student in social work; Denise Herz, a professor of criminal justice at California State University, Los Angeles; and Pedro Hernandez, a research analyst at the U of I.

The study and its conclusions were made possible by a unique data-sharing agreement that gave researchers access to both child-welfare and juvenile-justice records in Los Angeles County, Ryan said. They were able to track individuals in their movements through both systems, and see connections between the two, he said.

Previous research has shown a connection between foster care and delinquency and other negative outcomes—some of that research even suggesting that children might be better off staying in troubled homes rather than going into foster care, Ryan said. "Those findings might lead one to erroneously believe that all child-welfare placements are problematic, and perhaps equally problematic," he said.

The study of Los Angeles County, he said, shows that different kinds of placements can have dramatically different effects.

As a starting point for the study, researchers had access to administrative records for all children and families involved with the Department of Children and Family Services and the Department of Probation in Los Angeles County, in both cases for the period between 2001 and 2005. From those records, they compiled a sample of all the children between the ages of 7 and 16 who had been placed outside their own home by child welfare at least once.

Children and adolescents placed in group homes, compared with those placed only in foster care family settings, have generally been through more placements, are slightly older, and have more characteristics often associated with delinquency, Ryan said. The authors used econometric methods, known as propensity score matching, to help disentangle the effect of those individual characteristics from the effect associated with group-home placement, he said.

By way of this method, they matched 4,113 youth who had been in group homes with 4,113 with similar characteristics who had only been served in foster family home placements. Twenty percent of the group-home sample experienced at least one arrest, as compared with 8 percent of the matched foster-care sample.

Ryan said he was surprised by the size of the group-home effect, even after controlling for individual differences. He was also surprised by the differences that emerged with regard to the type of offending. Group-home youth were significantly more likely to be arrested for violent and threat-related offenses.

As to why children in group-home settings are more likely to experience arrests and enter the juvenile-justice system, Ryan said he sees two promising areas for research.

One involves the possibility of "peer contagion," in which deviant adolescents influence one another to become

more delinquent than they otherwise would have been. Related, he said, is the common practice of mixing delinquent and nondelinquent youth in congregate or group-home settings.

The other area involves looking at whether group-home policies or procedures cause staff to more readily contact law enforcement in given situations and whether those might contribute to the likelihood of arrest for a given behavior.

"It does raise the question of whether there is a lower threshold in group settings versus other foster-home settings," Ryan said. "Are staff more likely to engage law enforcement to resolve physical and threat-related conflict, which then sets off a chain of negative events?"

Craig Chamberlain is a news editor and staff writer for the News Bureau at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This article is reprinted with permission and available online at www.news.uiuc.edu/news/08/0228grouphomes.html.

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Jeremy Christopher Kohomban PhD is the President and CEO of The Children's Village and The Center for Child Welfare Research at the Children's Village Institute. Prior to The Children's Village, Dr. Kohomban was the Senior Vice President at Easter Seals New York and the President of the Washington, D.C.-based National Association for Family-Based Services. Dr. Kohomban is a noted expert in child welfare and the New York Times, NPR, and industry publications have noted his leadership successes. Dr. Kohomban has served on numerous boards of directors and he currently serves on the Boards of the Child Welfare Watch, New York City's Youth Advocacy Center, and the Child Welfare Organizing Project. He is the author of a number of articles and a nationally recognized speaker on topics of organizational leadership, system reform, and family-focused service delivery.

Paul Schiller MSW is the Division Director of Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST), at The Children's Village. Mr. Schiller is one of the early developers of MST in New York State. For the last seven years, he has developed six different MST programs comprised of 15 MST teams operating in all five boroughs, Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester Counties. Mr. Schiller received his Bachelors of Science from Iona and holds a Masters in Social Work from Fordham University. He is an adjunct professor teaching Social Work at Iona College and The College of New Rochelle.

Patricia O'Gorman PhD, a consultant to Children's Village, is noted for her work in child welfare and sub-stance abuse where she has served in positions ranging from Clinical Director of a child welfare agency to Director of Prevention for NIAAA. She is a psychologist, a nation-ally recognized speaker, and author of numerous articles and books including The Lowdown on Families Who Get High: Successful Parenting for Families Affected by Addiction, *(CWLA, 2004).*

The Children's Village
Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522
914-693-0600

THE LINK

The Growing Toll:

Non-Family Residential Care for Youth Linked to Delinquency; Costing 50 Percent More

Executive Summary
The evidence continues to grow that Maryland is placing more and more abused, neglected and delinquent children in non-family, group residential care, and that overuse of group care is endangering public safety, harming children and wasting money. To achieve Maryland's stated desire to end overuse of group care, the State will need to expand evidence-based services that treat children in their own homes and communities.

Introduction

Abused, neglected and delinquent children in Maryland are often removed from their homes for extended periods of time. They are sometimes placed with relatives or in other family-based settings, including foster homes. With increasing frequency, they are placed in group care—non-family-based settings with a large number of other children.[1]

New Study Links Group Care, Delinquency
For the first time, researchers have linked group home placement to increased delinquency for abused or neglected children. They found that children placed in group care were arrested at *two-and-a-half times* the rate as comparable children in foster homes. The impact was both immediate and long lasting.[2]

This link between group care and delinquency adds to the growing list of negative outcomes associated with unnecessary placement in group care. Children remain in out-of-home care for longer periods of time than children in family-based settings. Delinquent youth in group care are more likely to be rearrested than those served by effective programs in their own communities. This means that children should be in group care only if they cannot be helped in their own homes, with relatives or in family foster homes.

Analysis: Growing Group Care Financial Cost
Contrary to best practice, Maryland has increasingly relied on group care for abused, neglected and delinquent youth. The percentage of child welfare children in group care has doubled from 14 to 29 percent in 10 years and is several times the level recommended by national experts.

The increased use of group care is costing more and more money. Advocates for Children and Youth has calculated this growing cost using the most recent available caseload and cost data, combining placements for abused, neglected and delinquent children.

Just in the past four years, spending on group care has increased by nearly 50 percent, meaning that the State is spending an extra $118 million each year. During this same period, spending on children in family-based settings has remained flat.[3]
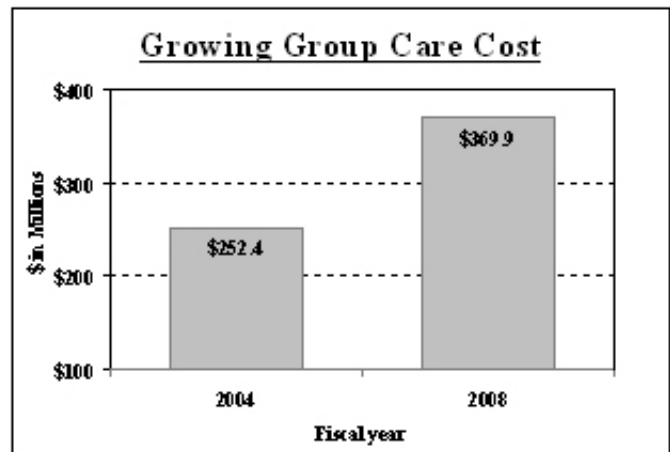
State Seeks To Reduce Group Care
Human Resources Secretary Brenda Donald has set a goal of reducing the number of abused or neglected children in "group homes" from 1,900 down to 1,000. There are an additional 1,000 children in other non-family placements.[4]

Juvenile Services Secretary Donald DeVore wants to serve an additional 129 youth in non-group settings.[5] This is a conservative estimate, and the Department says that its success depends in large part on raising private funds.[6]

Additional Steps Needed
Only by reducing the *need* for group care can Maryland achieve, and even exceed, the laudable goals identified by the Departments of Human Resources and Juvenile Services. Reducing the need will require expanding evidence-based community practices, including:

Family Team Decision Making: In this collaborative approach, child welfare caseworkers partner with families to

Growing Group Care Cost

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3   The analysis combines group care expenditures by the Departments of Juvenile Services (DJS) and Human Resources (DHR). DJS group care expenditures are based on actual data from state budget documents and include contracted residential as well as state-run facilities. DHR group care spending is calculated using caseload data from the Department's monthly management and StateStat reports. Group care costs for FY 2004 are from the *DJS Gap Analysis*, (Dec. 2004). The FY 2008 costs come from Casey Strategic Consulting Group, *Maryland Child Welfare Assessment* (Dec. 2007).

4   Department of Human Resources, *1000 by 10* (2007).

5   Department of Juvenile Services, *DJS Plan To Reduce Out-Of-Home Placement* (2008).

6   See Advocates for Children and Youth, *The Real Need* (Feb. 2008).

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1   Group care means any placement that is not family based, including group homes, residential treatment centers and state-run facilities.

2   Joseph P. Ryan *et al*, "Juvenile Delinquency in Child Welfare: Investigating Group Home Effects" (2008).

help them identify their needs and the best way to address those needs. FTDM has substantially reduced the need to remove children from their homes, increased placements with relatives, and shortened stays in out-of-home placements for those children who are removed. Fewer children entering foster care and remaining there for less time expands the availability of foster homes for children who might otherwise enter or remain in group care.[7]

Support for Foster Parents: Many children have entered group care because of a lack of available foster homes. As Maryland lost thousands of foster homes, the number of children in group care increased. It is essential to do everything possible to retain existing foster parents. Caseworkers play an essential roll by providing the support foster parents need to care for youth, particularly older children and those with special needs. As a result, foster parents remain in the system and can even become strong recruiters of new foster parents.

The Department of Human Resources is taking some important steps to recruit and retain foster parents, including increasing reimbursement rates and restoring child care. However, more strategies are needed to increase substantially the overall number of foster homes.[8]

Multi-Systemic Therapy: In this intervention, youth at risk of removal from the home receive intensive therapy that involves their families and builds a support network to address future needs. MST serves youth who have engaged in delinquent, antisocial, or substance-abusing behaviors. It reduces arrests by up to 70 percent and residential placements by as much as 64%.[9]

Functional Family Therapy: This program provides in-home services to youth who are delinquent or at risk of delinquency. Services are similar to those provided by MST but are somewhat less intensive.[10]

Multi-Dimensional Treatment Foster Care: This program is available for youth who cannot remain with their parents. One or two children are placed in a very structured and professionally supported foster home while intensive efforts are made to engage the family to which the youth will return.[11]

Conclusion

Fortunately, these evidence-based community services are not only more effective, but they also cost less than group care. For example, $8 million for community-based services for delinquent youth will save $20 million in the very same fiscal year.[12] This means that even in a tight state fiscal situation, Maryland can end overuse of group care for abused, neglected and delinquent children.

Voices for Maryland's Children. (2008, March). The growing toll – non-family residential care for youth linked to delinquency; costing 50 percent more. Available online at http://www.acy.org/upimages/ Group_Care_Study.pdf.*Advocates for Children & Youth: Issue Brief, 5*(15).

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7 See Advocates for Children and Youth, *Family Team Decision Making* (Jan. 2008).

8 *See* Advocates for Children and Youth, *Moving the Child Welfare Reform Train Faster* (Jan. 2008).

9 S.W. Henggeler *et al*, Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, *Multi-Systemic Therapy: Blueprints for Violence Prevention* (1998).

10 Maryland Disability Law Center, *Evidence-Based Practices for Delinquent Youth* (Jan. 2007).

11 *Id.*

12 *See* Advocates for Children and Youth & the Maryland Budget & Tax Policy Institute, *Juvenile Services Budget* (Feb. 2008).

youth who would be caught in the school-to-prison pipeline. Students who participated in the program, and most specifically students who successfully completed the program, demonstrate lower suspension rates, reduced placements in alternative schools, improved attendance, better grades and less frequent justice system involvement than the comparison group.

These results notwithstanding, the students suspended to alternative schools remain very much at risk of becoming school dropouts, and if African American, are likely to face incarceration at some time in the future. Young people trapped in this pipeline face larger school district and community wide challenges. Urban districts must balance the need to provide an environment conducive to learning while avoiding the marginalization of the very students for whom education is the only ticket out of a lifetime of poverty and social problems.

There are alternatives to the school-to-prison pipeline as the SfS program demonstrates. These efforts must be widely expanded, however, and fully integrated into a school district approach to educating all of its students. Schoolteachers and administrators need to better understand the context of the lives of urban youth and the dire consequences of our failure to educate these youth. Schools must be provided the resources they need to meet the educational and social needs of an increasingly diverse and complex student body. We simply cannot tolerate conditions that send more African American young men to prison than to college.

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THE LINK

JUVENILE JUSTICE NEWS AND RESOURCES

Aging Out of the Foster Care System to Adulthood: Findings, Challenges, and Recommendation

A report prepared by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Health Policy Institute

To enhance our knowledge about youth who age out of the nation's foster care systems, the Joint Center Health Policy Institute (in collaboration with Black Administrators in Child Welfare Inc.) conducted reconnaissance on the unmet needs of these youth. A literature review, a telephone survey (with 800 social workers), and listening sessions with youth and stakeholders in the foster care systems in three cities (Jacksonville, FL; Houston, TX; and Chicago, IL) were conducted to gather information about youth who age out of foster care.

The full report based on these findings is available for downloading from the Joint Center website at www.jointcenter.org/index.php/ publications_recent_publications. Date Published: December 2007.

The Effects of Childhood Stress on Health Across the Lifespan

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is pleased to announce the availability of *The Effects of Childhood Stress on Health Across the Lifespan.*

Stress is an inevitable part of life. It helps children develop the skills they need to cope with and adapt to new and potentially threatening situations throughout life. The beneficial aspects of stress diminish, however, when it is severe enough to overwhelm a child's ability to cope effectively. Intensive and prolonged stress can lead to a variety of short- and long-term negative health effects. It can disrupt early brain development and compromise functioning of the nervous and immune systems. In addition, childhood stress can lead to health problems later in life including alcoholism, depression, eating disorders, heart disease, cancer, and other chronic diseases.

The Effects of Childhood Stress on Health Across the Lifespan summarizes the research on childhood stress and its implications for adult health and well-being. Of particular interest is the stress caused by child abuse, neglect, and repeated exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV).

The report is available online at www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/pdf/childhood_stress.pdf.

Child Welfare Trauma Training Toolkit (2008)

The *Child Welfare Trauma Training Toolkit* is designed to teach basic knowledge, skills, and values about working with children who are in the child welfare system and who have experienced traumatic stress. It also teaches how to use this knowledge to support children's safety, permanency, and well-being through case analysis and corresponding interventions tailored for them and their biological and resource families.

The toolkit is available online at www.nctsnet.org/nccts/ nav.do?pid=ctr_cwtool.

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*Marsha Weissman is the founder and executive director
of the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA). Since
1981, the Center has worked to reduce the use of
incarceration for juveniles and adults through model
programs, research and policy advocacy. Ms. Weissman
holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the
Maxwell School of Citizenship, Syracuse University and is
completing her PhD. She serves on numerous Boards of
Directors and policy bodies including The Sentencing
Project and the New York State Defenders Association.
Several of Ms. Weissman's publications on issues related
to reducing reliance on incarceration can be found on
CCA's website at www.communityalternatives.org.*