

# JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM REGIONAL CONSENSUS-BUILDING MEETING RESULTS (FALL 2012)

Facilitated by the Institute and Supported by the MacArthur Foundation

To guide the state's future work, the Louisiana Legislature passed House Concurrent Resolution No. 120 of the 2011 Louisiana Regular Legislative Session. This resolution commissioned the state's Juvenile Justice Implementation Commission to submit a report to the legislature in January 2013 that would assess the current state of the juvenile justice system, evaluate improvements made over the preceding five years and issue recommendations for a five-year plan of reform. To meet this mandate, the JJIC subsequently requested the LSUHSC's IPHJ, the home for the Louisiana Models for Change effort, manage, initiate and develop the report on behalf of the JJIC, with support from national experts within the MacArthur Models for Change National Resource Bank.

Separate from the report development process, the IPHJ was funded to convene three consensus meetings across the state in September 2011 to share preliminary findings and proposed recommendations with key juvenile justice administrators and leaders. These meetings provided a forum for juvenile justice leadership to discuss recommendations and begin to come to agreement on the key areas that they can jointly and collaboratively prioritize and address going forward.

## Framework and Process of Meetings

The Institute's vision for the consensus building meetings was to discover the common ground for juvenile justice reform. Among the attendees included JJIC members and staff and state and local juvenile justice leaders and administrators from across the state. The meetings were held in three different regions of the state to ensure broad representation from different constituencies: North/Delta, Central/Southwest and Southeast.

Date	Location	Attendees
September 18, 2012	Louisiana Tech Ruston, LA	31
September 20, 2012	IberiaBank Lafayette, LA	37
September 25, 2012	Baton Rouge Area Foundation Baton Rouge, LA	40

The Institute's Director, Debra DePrato, MD, served as the host and moderator for each meeting. As part of their support, the MacArthur Foundation provided national and in-state juvenile justice resources to the Institute to assist with the development and delivery of the consensus meetings. These presenters and facilitators included:

- Debra DePrato, MD, Director, Institute for Public Health and Justice
- John Morris, MSW, Technical Assistance Collaborative
- Stephen Phillippi, PhD, LCSW, Assistant Clinical Professor, LSUHSC School of Public Health
- Patricia Puritz, Executive Director, National Juvenile Defender Center
- Annie Salsich, MSW, Director, Vera Institute's Center on Youth Justice
- Gene Siegel, MA, Senior Research Consultant, National Center for Juvenile Justice



The Institute worked with these resource organizations to develop a presentation for the three half-day meetings. The presentation was divided up into three parts.

- Part one addressed where in the JJ system the youth are located and trends on local and state levels over the past five years. These areas included: Families in Needs of Services (Informal FINS), Detention, and Probation and Post-Dispositional Placement.
- Part two described the services available to youth in the various parts of the system including five-year trends where available, and local/state challenges and advances.
- Part three showcased the data available, or not available, for these points in the systems and for the services.

Since the ultimate goal of the meetings was to discern and build consensus, the Institute devised two feedback mechanisms post-presentation to gather attendee input. First, the attendees were divided into small groups based on their judicial district. The groups were then asked to prioritize their needs and challenges on a state and local level and report their results at the end of the meeting. Second, each attendee was provided with a Rankings Worksheet that listed the priority areas and preliminary recommendations. The attendees were asked to complete the anonymous worksheet with their personal preferences.

### Summary

These consensus-building opportunities from a regional perspective were invaluable in gathering input from a group of front-line professionals in the juvenile justice system and in fostering cohesion between these diverse groups of professionals. Despite their different viewpoints in the juvenile justice system, these meetings show there is a clear agreement from the leaders for priority next steps in juvenile justice reform.

The top priority area was in the area of “services.” In the past, the need was always described as generally “more services.” However, this group helped to further clarify this recommendation by calling for better access to services, timeliness of services, and clear linkages to the right services for certain populations of at-risk youth and juvenile justice youth. In other words, one size does not fit all when it comes to screening, assessment, and effective intervention. The following are the areas of collective agreement from the consensus building meetings in the area of services.

- Improving access to services (clear linkage to the right services for youth in the juvenile justice system; a path to referral that is well known to all participants in the system)
- Greater availability of specialized services for distinct juvenile justice populations (participants were clear that they want the right services for the right youth; that is, services that work and are appropriate for the level of need for the youth and point in the juvenile justice system)
- Creation of services where gaps exist, such as crisis or respite care (clearly there are gaps where youth are not being served, and instead the juvenile justice system is the fall back; these include Informal FINS youth whose family is having a crisis, youth who cannot be at home, but there are no other options than detention or long-term placement, when respite would be more appropriate)



- Ensuring youth with mental health needs are appropriately diverted to the mental health system (Louisiana has traditionally high rates of youth with mental illness in the juvenile justice system, sometimes as a way to access services, and also because there is no clear path for youth to get effective mental health services prior to their involvement with the juvenile justice system; there was a clear desire to correct this problem)
- Work with DCFS to identify “crossover youth” to decrease penetration into the juvenile justice system (concern was raised regarding the number of youth who end up in FINS and delinquency system who were formerly involved in the child abuse system, and a desire to address this issue of “cross-over” youth, so that the reasons are addressed and corrected)

The group heavily endorsed continuing the development of local and state level best practices in the juvenile justice system. In general, participants have seen that local areas of reform have produced good results. They have seen state reform efforts aimed at best practices succeed, such as the post-adjudication best practice assessment process. The group desires to spread proven local reform to other areas of the state, as well as adopt new practices in areas where work has not yet begun, such as a true step down system for youth leaving secure care. Participants realize that it takes technical assistance and partnerships to create these models and hoped for long-term resources to help improve the state, as reform is ongoing. These areas of Juvenile Justice Best Practices were seen as high priorities by all participants.

- Status Offenders System Reform (Informal FINS)
  - Intake and triage process outside of court system for status offenders
  - Immediate family crisis response, availability of respite when needed
- Juvenile Detention Reform inclusive of Alternatives to Juvenile Detention
  - Detention risk and mental health screening at all facilities
  - Alternative to detention interventions state-wide
- Statewide study of Juvenile Detention for overall “fit” in juvenile justice system
- Graduated Sanction Model for Probation and Aftercare (Parole) System
  - Implement a tiered, graduated sanctions-based probation system
  - Case management track for Formal (Adjudicated) FINS
  - Develop and implement an aftercare system that is a gradual and well-planned “step down” process from secure care to structured therapeutic programs
    - *Study for the purpose of a plan for development of an aftercare system with OJJ and key stakeholders*

The group identified the need to establish an infrastructure that would serve as a resource for ongoing juvenile justice reform, much as the Institute has provided the infrastructure to support the reform effort to date through Louisiana Models for Change program.

- The Support of a Sustainable Data, Technical Assistance, Training and Monitoring Resource
  - A juvenile justice data repository to store and utilize data and work with localities and state to improve their systems based on the data
  - A resource for best practices
  - A guide to create partnerships with higher education and the juvenile justice system
  - Perform studies and monitor progress of juvenile justice reform
  - Continued regional consensus building and input sessions