DATA IN JUVENILE COURT: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

The juvenile justice should have measurable goals, key principles, and objectives that serve as standards against which system performance is measured, and make an annual justice system "report card." Juvenile justice court staff should regularly collect data for monitoring and managing court performance, and the judiciary and other appropriate court staff should be able to use the system to obtain case tracking and case management data on individual cases as well as manage other operation information needs such as property and evidence. In the juvenile justice system, there are two levels of data – individual case level data and performance measurement data. Each are important in their own right, and it is important that system stakeholders routinely review and discuss the data.

In selecting an area of focus, it will be helpful for you to create a stakeholder group that comes together for the express purpose of improving juvenile court operation. Your stakeholders should be made up of judges, representatives from the district attorney's office, representatives from the defense bar, chief probation, juvenile court management, court administrators, representatives from community service providers, representatives from youth oriented-prosocial activities (like youth sports leagues), youth and their families, and of course the community. Once you've gathered your stakeholders together, there are a number of things your team needs to know about family engagement including:

• How your MIS works in regard to case level data including electronic filing of affidavits and petitions, linking a new filing with any other pending filings and linking information on family groups and case types;

• What information is in the MIS and who is responsible for entering the information;

• What types of reports your MIS can provide;

•What juvenile justice reform goals exist in the state of Nevada and what process your court is taking to implement the reform;

•How to set benchmarks for your court's annual activity and outcomes and how to measure performance to ensure you are meeting your benchmarks. Below are some benchmarks you might consider:

> • The amount of time between each hearing or process step, the total time from affidavit to disposition and from disposition to case closure, aggregately and by judge, to determine if the system is timely;

> • The number of, lengths of time, and reasons for continuances, aggregately and by specific judge, prosecutor, and public defender which are components that determine whether the system is timely;

> • Comparison of detainment and court-ordered dispositions for youth with similar charges and characteristics, aggregately and by detention intake staff and judge to determine whether the system is just;

> • The percentage of cases diverted to informal resources that never return to the court system after completing the diversion intervention; and of those that do return, analysis by type of offending behavior, length of time between completing diversion and return to the system, service intervention, and service provider to determine if diversion is successful and for whom;

> • Who is filing status offenses and for what reasons to determine if the resources of the juvenile justice court are being used appropriately;

• The percentage of youth who are adjudicated on one petition but never return to the juvenile justice court system after completing their court-ordered disposition; and of those who recidivate, analysis by type of offending behavior, length of time between completing disposition and return to the system, and what service interventions and service provider were used to determine if the system is preventing recidivism;

• The percentage of youth brought to juvenile detention but not admitted, who brought them, why they were not admitted, and an analysis of whether those youth eventually ended up in detention prior to completion of the disposition hearing, and if so, why, to determine if resources are being used efficiently;

• Analysis of whether racial and ethnic disparities are occurring at any juvenile justice court decision point to determine if the equitability of system decision-making processes need to be further explored;

• Analysis of the number of offenses by number of offenders to determine the percentage of youth responsible for the majority of offenses and their characteristics to determine where the system's resources are needed most;

• Cohort data on specific groups of youth, for instance, of youth who were eight to 10 years old when they had their first juvenile justice court contact, how many were also abused and neglected, what was their offending behavior, who filed the petition, what was the juvenile justice court's intervention, and the cohort's rate of recidivism to understand the characteristics of the youth the system serves; and

• Comparisons of recidivism by risk of reoffending and disposition intervention to determine what works for whom.

Recommended Resources

The Enhanced Juvenile Justice Guidelines provides sample benchmark and report card data at www.ncjfcj.org.

The Model Data Project is another resource for sample benchmarks and provides an overview of how to analyze court performance. Their developed model measures and analyses to monitor trends and assess the efficiency and effectiveness of juvenile justice systems and to provide guidance to the field on the data elements and coding categories required to calculate the model measures. http://www.ncjj.org/Projects/model_data_project.aspx

The National Youth Screening & Assessment Partners (NYSAP) is a technical assistance and research group, dedicated to helping juvenile justice programs identify youths' needs for behavioral health intervention and risk management. www.nysap.us.

Questions for Discussion

What data do we already collect?

What data do we need to collect?

What will we do to collect it?

How will we analyze our data?

How will we use the findings for court improvement and/or funding?