Conceptualizing Juvenile Justice Reform:
Integrating Public Health, Social-Ecological, and Restorative Justice Models

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Racial and Ethnic Disparities

• RED pervades the JJ system and occurs at every decision-making point
  • Youth of color more disproportionately represented the deeper they move within the JJ system

• Reforms in CT have effectively reduced front end and deep end justice involvement, but rates of disproportionately for youth of color remain high
  • Youth of color make up 20% of CT’s population, but 80% of JJ system

• Disproportionate rates of justice system contact and involvement set youth of color up for poorer outcomes
RED Workgroup

• Established to help further the Strategic Plan goal of reducing racial and ethnic disparities within CT’s JJ system
• Tasked with collecting, reviewing, and reporting RED data at each point of contact in the JJ system and developing recommendations to effectively address inequities within the JJ system
• Strives to ensure that RED data and strategies to address disparities are interpreted in partnership with communities of color
Current Challenges

• Schools continue to be a key entry point for youth in JJ system
  • Many children with untreated behavioral and emotional disorders end up in JJ system
• Youth offending may be function of unmet basic and social needs
• YSBs and JRBs function differently across counties and communities
• Little is known about pre-arrest decision making and what interventions/services youth receive
Models of Intervention – Public Health

- Conceptualizes youth entry into JJ system as reflection of risks, failure of prevention, and lack of community-based alternatives
- Youth offending has implications for individual, community, and society health
- Goal of prevention is to reduce new occurrences of targeted problem (i.e., offending) to promote greater community health
  - Intervenes at three tiers of risk

High-risk individuals
- Youth in contact with the JJ system:
  - Detained
  - Arrested
  - Diverted

Subgroups with risk factors
- Behavioral/emotional disorders
  - School problems
  - Family disruption
  - Poverty

The entire population
- Community-based prevention programs
  - School-based mental health enhancement programs
  - PSA campaigns
Models of Intervention – Socioecological

• Socioecological Model—views youth offending through lens of relationships and systems within which offending takes place. Offending reflects disorder/disruption in systems and/or relationships
  • Individual, Interpersonal, Organizational, Community, and Public Policy Systems
• Interventions focus on positive development of youth, building relationships and strengthening youths’ competence, character, connection, confidence, and caring
Models of Intervention – Restorative Justice

- Restorative Justice Model—youth offending indicates a break in relationship between youth and community.
  - Brings together victims, offenders, and community stakeholders to discuss how an offense has affected all parties and collaboratively develop modes of redress
- Interventions are community-based approaches focusing on accountability, public safety, and community healing
Goal

• To discuss how to **integrate** three theoretical models
  • Aim: to determine how the integration of these theoretical models can and do impact practices and can lead to a more comprehensive and effective approach to JJ reform in Connecticut
Why the Need for an Integrated Model?

• Understanding of the risks and realities of lives of justice-involved youth support the need for an integrated model
  • Young people come into the justice system with varied levels of public health risks that reflect disorder within their socioecological systems, which can be addressed through restorative justice practices
  • At each level of public health intervention (universal, selected, indicated) there are ecological impacts (individual, family, community, society) that play a role in determining the types of restorative justice approaches that should be used (victim reparation, community reconciliation, offender responsibility)

• Targeting youths’ multifaceted needs may help to reduce RED
Applied Example: Car Thefts in Connecticut
Universal Level

Universal

Society
Community
Family
Individual

Victim Reparation
Community Reconciliation
Offender Responsibility
Universal Socio-Ecological Restorative Justice

- Prevention efforts designed to target all individuals, regardless of risk factors, through the use of restorative justice practices with a lens toward the social contexts in which one lives
  - Prioritizes increasing one’s sense of belonging in their community
  - Builds relationships by promoting trust and stability in one’s environment
  - Fosters investment in the well-being of one’s community, neighbors, and resources
Integrated Approach to JJ Intervention

**Universal**

**Society** — PSAs re: methods to reduce theft

**Community** — individual responsibility to reduce opportunities

**Interpersonal** — national conversations with kids; parents asking Q’s and listening to kids’ views

**Individual** — “we are our community’s keeper”
Selective Level

- Victim Reparation
- Community Reconciliation
- Offender Responsibility

Selective

- Society
- Community
- Family
- Individual
Selective Socio-Ecological Restorative Justice

- Restorative justice prevention/intervention strategies targeted toward youth identified as at risk
  - Provides resources and support within community to promote prosocial activities & relationships
  - Helps bolster family unit through provision of environment-specific and targeted services
  - Equips systems/providers within community with training and capacity to best support at-risk youth
  - Tasks community with providing youth with skills to promote positive youth development
Integrated Approach to JJ Intervention

Selective

Society – Campaigns targeted to specific communities

Community – provision of alternatives to engage youth in prosocial activities

Interpersonal – Familial responsibility to monitor activities & promote understanding of community relationship

Individual – youth understand how these offenses impact all in their community
Indicated Level

Victim Reparation
Community Reconciliation
Offender Responsibility

Indicated
Society
Community
Family
Individual
Indicated Socio-Ecological Restorative Justice

- Ecologically informed interventions targeted at individuals who have engaged in risky behaviors leading to justice system contact
  - Prioritizes helping youth establish or rebuild relationships with community through accountability and capacity building
  - Tasks community stakeholders to determine youths’ needs and provide responsive services
  - Allows youth opportunities to make their needs known and learn how their actions impact their communities, families, neighbors, and themselves
Integrated Approach to JJ Intervention

- **Indicated**
  - Society – providing resources to offset youth’s needs
  - Community – JJ stakeholders asking what youth need
  - Interpersonal – parents communicating impact to youth
  - Individual – youth engage in RJ process with victims, family, and JJ stakeholders
Considerations...

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<th>How do we measure whether these initiatives are effective?</th>
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<td>• Implementation science?</td>
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<th>How can the model be best applied?</th>
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<td>• Are there potential challenges that may be experienced by specific systems?</td>
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<th>How can we move toward more system integration and collaboration?</th>
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<td>• Will agencies/departments need to engage in culture shifts?</td>
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Call to Action

• How can the JJPOC apply this model?
  • How can workgroups and sub-committees utilize this?
• How can you think of this as you propose recommendations?
• At what level of the model is your work situated?
Thank You!

- Questions?
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