

*Juvenile Justice GPS (Geography, Policy, Practice, Statistics) is a project to develop an online repository providing state policy makers and system stakeholders with a clear understanding of the juvenile justice landscape in the states. The site layers the most relevant national and state level statistics with information on state laws and practice and charts juvenile justice system change. In a landscape that is highly decentralized and ever-shifting, JJGPS provides an invaluable resource for those wanting to improve the juvenile justice system. We hope that the information will be used as a platform for inspiring change and finding solutions that have been applied in other places.*

## Systems Integration: Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice

### Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Integration has Emerged as a Reform Area

Ten years ago, the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) published *When Systems Collide: Improving Court Practices and Programs in Dual Jurisdiction Cases*.<sup>1</sup> This 2004 publication was among the first systematic national research efforts to identify promising practices to address the challenges posed by dual-status youth with involvement in child welfare and juvenile justice systems. While a select number of promising practices were identified, the authors concluded that “a relatively small number of courts, probation departments, and child welfare agencies [had] instituted special court practices and/or comprehensive programs specifically for dual jurisdiction cases.”

Since 2004, efforts intended to improve services in cases involving dual-status youth have gained considerable momentum. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the MacArthur Foundation are co-sponsoring systems integration demonstration sites through the Robert F. Kennedy Children’s Action Corps and the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University (CJJR) is annually educating a new generation of leaders in week-long, intensive certificate programs that prepare leaders to develop a plan for

system reform.<sup>2</sup> Collectively, these two efforts have reached well over 100 jurisdictions with dual-status youth systems integration education and technical assistance.

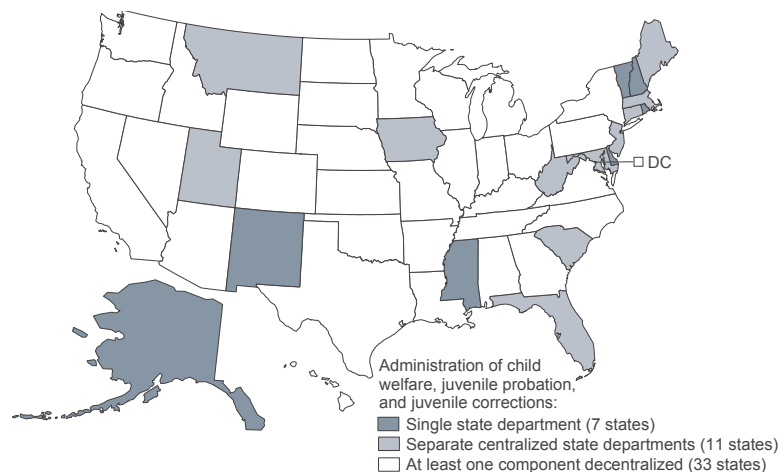
Research establishing the correlation between child maltreatment and subsequent delinquency also continues to grow with academia exploring additional facets of the issue.<sup>3</sup> More and more states are trying to answer basic research questions about their own delinquent and dependent populations.<sup>4</sup> Finally, access to policy guidance and information sharing technology continues to evolve and become more accessible to public agencies with dual-status caseloads.<sup>5</sup>

With increased focus on the challenges and complexities surrounding

how the juvenile justice and child welfare systems intervene in matters involving dual-status youth and mounting evidence concerning the cost of fragmentation of services, one would expect the policy and practice landscape to have changed on this issue since *When Systems Collide* was published. In this scan we explore the current national environment on this subject, how many states are coordinating state data sources to share information across systems and how many provide a framework for coordinated policy and practice to improve case outcomes.

By identifying state-level activities that address the challenge of systems integration for youth with dual-status in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems this JJGPS StateScan provides

### Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice State Agency Integration



Note: See page 2 for details on state agency integration.

## How are Dual-Status Youth Issues Coordinated at the State Level?

State	Data sharing	Committees or advisory groups	Formal interagency MOUs	Informal interagency agreements	Statute and/or court rules
Number of states	26	20	17	17	15
<b>Single state department</b>					
Alaska	■		■		
Delaware	■	■			
Mississippi				■	
New Hampshire	■			■	■
New Mexico	■			■	
Rhode Island	■		■		
Vermont	■	■			
<b>Separate centralized state departments</b>					
Connecticut	■	■	■	■	■
Florida	■	■	■	■	■
Iowa		■			
Maine	■		■		■
Maryland	■		■		
Massachusetts					
Montana					■
New Jersey					
South Carolina					
Utah	■	■	■		
West Virginia					
<b>At least one component decentralized</b>					
Alabama					■
Arizona	■	■	■		■
Arkansas	■	■	■	■	■
California		■			■
Colorado	■	■	■	■	■
Dist. of Columbia					
Georgia	■		■	■	
Hawaii					
Idaho	■	■	■	■	■
Illinois	■			■	
Indiana	■	■			
Kansas					
Kentucky		■	■		
Louisiana				■	■
Michigan					
Minnesota	■		■		
Missouri					
Nebraska					■
Nevada					
New York					
North Carolina					
North Dakota	■			■	
Ohio		■			
Oklahoma	■	■	■	■	
Oregon		■			
Pennsylvania					
South Dakota	■	■	■	■	
Tennessee	■				
Texas					
Virginia	■	■			
Washington	■	■	■	■	■
Wisconsin	■			■	■
Wyoming		■		■	

Note: The District of Columbia did not provide information for this survey.

a broad overview of policies and practices regarding this juvenile justice reform topic. The JJGPS project will continue to track state progress over time. Additional information, including individual state summaries and statistical overlays, will be available on the JJGPS website ([www.jjgps.org](http://www.jjgps.org)) in the summer of 2014.

## Organization of Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare

The way states organize the administration of child welfare and juvenile justice varies widely across the country and may influence a state's ability to coordinate services between the two systems. When states centralize administration of child welfare and juvenile justice through a single state-level agency, structural barriers to coordination may be reduced. For example, information sharing can be facilitated through an integrated state-level data system, state statutes or mandates may increase the pace of statewide change, and local practices may be subject to greater oversight. Seven states (Alaska, Delaware, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Vermont) have such centralized arrangements. In most, child welfare and juvenile justice are integrated in a single agency, but in Alaska and Mississippi they are separate divisions within an umbrella agency.

Some states (11) administer child welfare and juvenile justice through separate centralized state-level agencies. This approach may also facilitate the collection, comparison, and sharing of data at the state level but relies heavily on shared goals and communication between agency leaders. Development of data sharing agreements, automated case linking routines, shared funding arrangements, and case coordination protocols primarily involved consensus among two state-level agencies but were less likely to be complicated by local variations than decentralized arrangements.

In the majority of states (33), the administration of either child welfare and/or juvenile justice services

is decentralized and organized at the local level. These states may be completely fragmented or have locally run offices with state oversight. While communication across local jurisdictions may present challenges in decentralized states, local administration can provide needed flexibility to tailor service coordination on a case-by-case basis. This approach may also result in local innovations in ways to better serve dual-status youth.

Although centralized or semi-centralized administration may reduce structural barriers, it does not guarantee coordination. This research did not delve into practice fidelity or departmental mission, culture, or leadership, all of which influence the coordination of services for youth involved in both systems. No one administration style ensures seamless integration, however, states from each type of organization that have been successful in integrating their child welfare and juvenile justice systems may serve as exemplars to similar states looking to improve their own integration efforts.

### State-Level Systems Integration

Several key strategies are used by states to coordinate services for dual-status youth at the state level including data sharing, committees or advisory groups focused on dual-status youth issues, formal and informal inter-agency collaborative agreements or memoranda of understanding (MOUs), and statute and/or court rules.

Currently, some degree of state-level data sharing about dual-status youth occurs in half of all states. Although the extent to which data are used to inform case planning, decision making, and policy is unknown, at a minimum this is a promising indication that information about dual-status youth is available for these purposes.

Six of seven states with centralized administration of child welfare and juvenile justice in a single state-level agency report data sharing at the state-level. Data sharing is facilitated through the use of statewide information

systems. Some states, including Delaware, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Vermont, have a single automated information system which houses both child welfare and juvenile justice data allowing for consistent data sharing between systems. In contrast, fewer than half of decentralized or semi-centralized states reported state-level data sharing. Other states, including Arizona, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin, have one statewide automated data system for child welfare and another for juvenile justice but grant access to staff with specific roles in the other system or respond to requests for information from the other system. Alaska also operates this way; although its administration is a single state agency, child welfare and juvenile justice are in separate divisions.

Another common coordination strategy is the existence of a state-

level committee or advisory group that focuses on dual-status youth issues. These multidisciplinary groups, reported in 20 states, often have regularly scheduled meetings to brainstorm ways to improve systems integration. This is relatively more common in decentralized states. Of the 33 states where child welfare and/or juvenile justice services are decentralized, 14 reported having a multidisciplinary group or advisory committee, suggesting that this is a strategy other decentralized states may want to consider to improve systems integration efforts.

Twenty-five states reported having either formal or informal interagency collaborative agreements or MOUs in place to guide systems integration efforts. Of those, nine reported having both formal and informal agreements. Informal agreements are commonly based on historical practice, mutual trust, and recognition of the need to

#### **The RFK National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice, led by the RFK (Robert F. Kennedy) Children's Action Corps**

The RFK National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice is part of a national juvenile justice technical assistance collaborative created by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to advance solutions to key systems reform areas. RFK provides assistance to jurisdictions that are committed to reform on behalf of improving outcomes for dual-system youth and juvenile probation practice. The Center's executive director is John Tuell, who is among the most recognized national experts on improving outcomes for dual-status youth and information sharing. Mr. Tuell and his team at the RFK National Resource Center have developed a range of technical assistance guides that are informed by their ever-expanding experience working with jurisdictions on the complex issues presented by youth with dual-status in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Useful guides and tools for sharing information and coordinating practice are available for download on the RFK National Resource Center website at [www.rfknrcjj.org/](http://www.rfknrcjj.org/), including: a [Guidebook for Juvenile Justice & Child Welfare System Coordination and Integration: A Framework for Improved Outcomes, 3rd Edition](#); [Dual Status Youth – Technical Assistance Workbook](#); and an [Information Sharing Tool Kit](#). The website also provides current news and procedural manuals based on the experience of four long-term dual-status youth reform demonstration sites funded through a public/private partnership between the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the MacArthur Foundation.

The RFK National Resource Center is one of four national technical assistance resource centers combined in a single Resource Center Partnership. Additional information concerning the MacArthur Foundation's Resource Center Collaborative is available at [www.modelsforchange.net/about/resource-centers.html](http://www.modelsforchange.net/about/resource-centers.html).

collaborate in order to serve dual-status youth. Examples include unwritten agreements to notify members of the other system when a dual-status youth is identified, unwritten agreements for social workers and probation officers to attend both dependency and delinquency hearings involving youth on their caseloads, and collaboration during multidisciplinary case planning meetings. Almost half of the 33 states with decentralized services for either child welfare or juvenile justice have formal or informal agreements in place, suggesting another successful strategy.

The use of a state statute or court rule to mandate systems integration efforts is currently present in 15 states. This was less likely in states with administration of child welfare and juvenile justice centralized in one state agency. Among decentralized and semi-centralized states, at least one-third had statutes and/or court rules requiring coordination. For example, in Arkansas two statute sections define responsibilities for coordination. One requires concurrent child welfare and juvenile justice cases to defer to the court with child welfare jurisdiction for any placement decisions, while the second requires that youth released from juvenile justice custody without a home, relative, or kin to return to be opened as a child welfare case to plan for substitute care and transitional living services. This is a good example of how coordination efforts increase the chances that children's needs are addressed.

## Absence of State-Level Systems Integration

Of the 24 of states that do not currently share data on dual-status youth at the state level, over half reported examples of systems integration sites at the local level. In many cases these local integration sites receive technical assistance and support from national organizations, most commonly Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps or CJJR.

## Conclusions

The authors of *When Systems Collide* concluded that a small number of probation departments and child welfare agencies had implemented reform on behalf of dual-status youth and that interest on the subject was growing. This JIGPS StateScan focused on state-level activities and suggests considerable progress in practice and policy across the country. It also overlays how much built-in opportunity for integration exists simply based on structural differences. While not a requirement for effective integration, the amount of centralization of agency administration can influence the emergence and sustainability of systems integration in handling dual-status cases and is an issue worth further exploration.

Additional state details, including some highlights of prominent local projects in the states, will be published on the JIGPS website during the summer of 2014. A companion systems integration publication in the fall of 2014 that explores more detailed case studies.

## Methods

State-level juvenile justice and child welfare professionals were interviewed using a semi-structured interview framework. We defined dual-status youth as youth with either current or past involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Respondents were also interviewed about local pilot projects or activities. In addition to surveying state officials, NCJJ documented the organization and administration of juvenile justice services and child welfare in an effort to provide a strategic structural overlay.

The National Center for Juvenile Justice ([www.ncjj.org](http://www.ncjj.org)) is a non-profit organization that conducts research (statistical, legal, and applied) on a broad range of juvenile justice topics and provides technical assistance to the field. NCJJ is the research division of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

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<sup>1</sup> Siegel, G., and Lord, R. (2004) *When Systems Collide: Improving Court Practices and Programs in Dual Jurisdiction Cases*. Pittsburgh, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice. Available for download at: [www.ncjj.org/publication/When-Systems-Collide-Improving-Court-Practices-and-Programs-in-Dual-Jurisdiction-Cases.aspx](http://www.ncjj.org/publication/When-Systems-Collide-Improving-Court-Practices-and-Programs-in-Dual-Jurisdiction-Cases.aspx).

<sup>2</sup> Department of Justice, MacArthur Foundation Provide \$2 Million to Support Juvenile Justice Reform, January 26, 2012, [www.ojdp.gov/enews/12juvjust/120126.html](http://www.ojdp.gov/enews/12juvjust/120126.html). Georgetown University, Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, Crossover Youth Practice Model, [cjjr.georgetown.edu/pm/practicemodel.html](http://cjjr.georgetown.edu/pm/practicemodel.html).

<sup>3</sup> Ryan, J.P., et al. (2010) *Child Welfare and Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) in Juvenile Justice*, Children and Family Research Center, School of Social Work, University of Illinois at Urbana – Champaign. Ryan, J.P., et al. (2013) *Adolescent Neglect, Juvenile Delinquency and the Risk of Recidivism*, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 42: 454–465.

<sup>4</sup> Juvenile Justice Coalition of Minnesota, [www.jjcmn.com/resources](http://www.jjcmn.com/resources). *Doorways to Delinquency, Multi-System Involvement of Delinquent Youth in King County (Seattle, WA)*, [www.ncjj.org/pdf/MFC/Doorways\\_to\\_Delinquency\\_2011.pdf](http://www.ncjj.org/pdf/MFC/Doorways_to_Delinquency_2011.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> National Center for State Courts, *Court Technology Bulletin* (online newsletter), [courtechbulletin.blogspot.com](http://courtechbulletin.blogspot.com), can be filtered on the topic of information sharing and provides a range of examples where systems are integrating data and the policy and software languages and interface tools they are applying.