



Crossover Youth: How to Define, Understand, and Support

The Big Picture

What do we mean by “crossover youth?”

In a general sense, crossover youth refers to youth that are involved in both the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system. The issue with this definition is the lack of standardization. Therefore, not every system has the same way of defining crossover youth which prohibits getting the true number and information of these youth.

There are other terms commonly used including:

- Dual Status/Dual System: Crossover youth with prior or current involvement in both the juvenile justice system and the child welfare system
- Dual-contact: Youth who’s contact in both systems is nonconcurrent
- Dually-Involved: Youth that are involved in both the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system concurrently.
- Dually Adjudicated: Youth who are currently involved in the child welfare system and adjudicated in the juvenile justice system
- Dually identified: Youth currently involved in the juvenile justice system and have a history in the child welfare system, but no current involvement
- Multisystem-involved: Youth who are concurrently involved in the child welfare, behavioral health, and/or juvenile justice system

An Overview of Pathways Leading to Identification as a Dually-Involved Youth

| | Starting Point | Occurrence | Result |
|------------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| Pathway 1 | Youth has an open child welfare case | → Youth is arrested | → Youth enters the delinquency system |
| Pathway 2 | Youth is arrested | → Youth has a previously closed child welfare case | → Referral is made to child welfare |
| Pathway 3 | Youth is arrested—no previous contact with child welfare | → Upon investigation, maltreatment is discovered | → Referral is made to child welfare |
| Pathway 4 | Youth is arrested, adjudicated, and placed in a correctional placement | → Time in correctional placement ends, but there is no safe home to return to | → Referral to child welfare |

From Denise Herz, Philip Lee, Lorrie Lutz, Macon Stewart, et. al., "Addressing the Needs of Multi-System Youth: Strengthening the Connection between Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice" (Washington, DC: Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and the Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps, March 2012), 3, <http://bit.ly/1jmO3mg>. Used with permission.

Common Aspects

While there is no concrete definition of Crossover/Dual system youth, there are several commonalities. Crossover youth are more likely to be:

- African American
- Native American
- Female
- LGBTQAI+
- High levels of mental health needs
- High levels of recidivism
- Deeper end of both systems

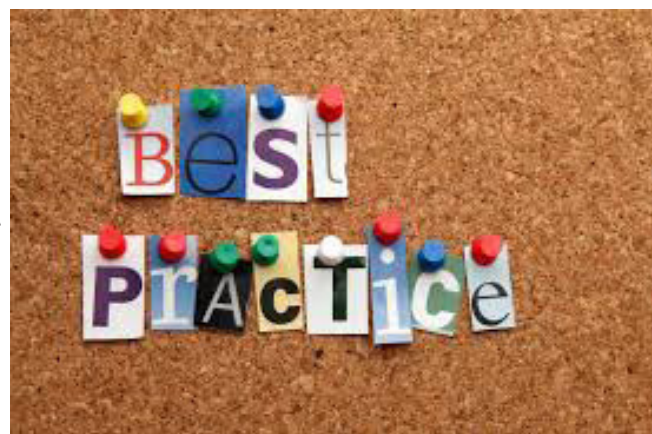
In addition, there are several barriers and issues that are common when talking about crossover youth, including:

- Lack of Universal Definition
- Cross System Communication
- Data & Information Sharing/Collection
- Youth & Family Engagement

Best Practices

Although there are so many holes in our understanding of crossover youth and their needs, best practices have emerged that should be highlighted. In addition to developing a standard definition, the following have led to some successes in developing services and processes for crossover youth:

- Interagency collaboration
- Judicial and Child Welfare System leadership
- Information sharing



- Data collection
- Training
- Identification of dual system youth
- Assessment process
- Programs and Interventions

Promising Approaches

There are several treatment/service approaches that have shown to be effective in meeting the needs of these youth:

- System Integrative Initiative (SII)
- Crossover Youth Practice Model *
- Family Centered Engagement *
- Coordinated Case Planning *
- MDT (Multi-Disciplinary Teams)*
- TF-CBT (Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) *

Looking to Other States

Connecticut has been a leader in looking at reform that treat children like children and meeting the needs of youth so they can lead a more successful life. One of the ways this has been possible is by looking at the work happening in other states. These are a few models that were reviewed as this work develops:

- North Dakota – Dual-Status Youth Initiative
- Los Angeles County – Pre-trial Multi-Disciplinary Team Meeting
- New York City - Cross-System Practice Model



Key Takeaways

What we know is needed to help serve crossover youth effectively includes:

- Improved data collection and data sharing
Information Sharing Guides
Data and Information Sharing Agreements
Protecting Youth Against Self-Incrimination
- Need for universal standard definition
Create Legislative Terms and Definitions
Educate Leaders and Staff on the terminology
- Improved cross agency communication
Cross-System Training
Service Integration
Cross Agency Casework

Opportunities for Partnership

Tow Youth Justice Institute (TYJI) stands ready to be the collaborative engine to partnership with

committees at the state level looking to better serve crossover youth, including:

- Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC)
- Transforming Children’s Behavioral Health Policy and Planning Committee (TCB)
- Other committees and organizations

To ensure a truly collaborative approach the following should remain an active participant in the work:

- Department of Children and Families
- Judicial Branch- Juvenile Matters
- Court Support Services Division- Juvenile & Adult Probation Departments
- State Department of Education
- Department of Correction
- Community Partner Organizations



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The Tow Youth Justice Institute is a university, state and private partnership established to lead the way in juvenile justice reform through collaborative planning, training, research and advocacy.

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