

County Concerns:

DUAL STATUS YOUTH

Counties spend more than \$70 billion a year on justice and public safety systems, and spend more than \$2.6 billion on child welfare systems.¹ As the primary local provider of these services, county agencies are well aware of the fiscal and human costs that occur when youth are involved in these systems. What may be surprising, however, is the sheer volume of crossover that occurs between the juvenile justice and child welfare populations.

WHY SHOULD MY COUNTY BE CONCERNED ABOUT DUAL STATUS YOUTH?

Child abuse or neglect and delinquency are deeply connected and each amplifies the negative effects on youth. A child who suffers abuse or neglect is 59 percent more likely to be arrested as a juvenile, 28 percent more likely to be arrested as an adult, and 30 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime.²

Dual status youth are those children who are involved with both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems.

Dual status youth return to the justice system twice as often as their peers. Once they are back in the system, they spend more time in detention than youth without involvement in the child welfare system.³ Maltreated children are younger at the time of their first

arrest, commit nearly twice as many offenses and are arrested more frequently.⁴ They are at increased risk for mental health issues, educational problems, unemployment and substance use disorders.

As youth who start in child welfare have their lives disrupted by justice involvement, the cycle continues as they become further involved in child welfare and dependency systems. These youth straddle two systems but are often underserved by both. Their experiences are also surprisingly common. In King County, Wash., for example, 67 percent of youth referred to the juvenile justice system had at least some history of involvement with the child welfare agency. Newton County, Ga., found that 56 percent of its youth with new juvenile justice referrals had some involvement with child welfare.⁵

WHAT CAN MY COUNTY DO?

Counties across the country are recognizing that collaboration is essential between the systems that serve dual status youth. Meaningful communication and coordination between juvenile justice and child welfare systems provide greater opportunities to prevent the entry or continued movement of a child through

the justice system, and in the long term can divert youth from future involvement in the adult criminal justice system and reliance on public health systems. When the systems that serve dual status youth work together they can create continuums of care, develop early warning systems for at-risk youth and pool services for youth and families, all of which produce positive outcomes.⁶

Without collaboration, these youth are caught between multiple systems but served well by none. A child may see different judges, be represented by different attorneys, and have different therapists and service providers. His probation officer and child protection worker may not communicate, or even know of the other's existence. These cases are complex and require thoughtful use of limited county and court resources. When counties identify and prevent duplication of services and coordinate goals of all parties involved, they will save money and improve outcomes.

EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

- In **Hampden County, Mass.**, the Department of Youth Services and the Department of Children and Family Services signed a memorandum of understanding that outlines a framework that those agencies use to work together to reduce the unnecessary use of pretrial detention.⁷
- **Newton County, Ga.**, developed a cross-system “match” process through which court intake and local Division of Family and Children Services staff can identify target population youth.⁸
- **Outagamie County, Wis.**, brought together staff from its child welfare, juvenile justice and police department to develop

a protocol for intra-familial sex abuse cases “to ensure a seamless process of both investigating and responding and doing so in a manner that is coordinated, trauma-informed and decreased likelihood of subsequent abuse.”⁹

RESOURCES AND MORE INFORMATION

▪ Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice | www.rfknrcjj.org

The RFK National Resource Center provides consultation, technical assistance and training to serve local, state and national leaders, practitioners and youth-serving agencies to improve system performance and outcomes for youth involved with the juvenile justice system.

▪ Models for Change Website | www.modelsforchange.net/reform-areas/dual-status-youth/index.html

Funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, *Models for Change* supports coordinated, multi-system interventions to improve outcomes for youth in the juvenile justice system. This site provides effective tools, research, knowledge and innovations to promote reform.

▪ Guidebook for Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare System Coordination and Integration: Framework for Improved Outcomes | www.rfknrcjj.org/images/PDFs/Guidebook-for-JJ-and-CW-System-Coordination-and-Integration-Cover.pdf

This guidebook is offered to the field as the centerpiece of a library of publications and resource documents that enable state and local jurisdictions to implement enhanced multi-system practices that improve outcomes for youth and their families.

END NOTES

1. Center for Law and Social Policy, *Child Welfare in the United States*. 2010. <http://www.childrendefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/state-data-repository/cvfi/2010/child-welfare-financing-united-states-2010.pdf>
2. Cathy S. Widom & Michael G. Maxfield. An Update on the “Cycle of Violence.” National Institute of Justice: Research in Brief, 2001. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/184894.pdf>.
3. Jessica Heldman & Hon. Sheri Roberts, *Dependency and Delinquency in SYNC*. <http://www.rfknrcjj.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Dependency-and-Delinquency-in-SYNC.pdf>.
4. Janet K. Wiig & John A. Tuell, *Guidebook for Juvenile Justice & Child Welfare System Coordination and Integration*. 2013. <http://www.rfknrcjj.org/images/PDFs/Guidebook-for-JJ-and-CW-System-Coordination-and-Integration-Cover.pdf>.
5. Jessica Heldman & Hon. Sheri Roberts, *Dependency and Delinquency in SYNC*. <http://www.rfknrcjj.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Dependency-and-Delinquency-in-SYNC.pdf>.
6. Denise Herz, Philip Lee, et al., *Addressing the Needs of Multi-System Youth: Strengthening the Connection between Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice*. 2012. <http://cjr.georgetown.edu/pdfs/msy/AddressingtheNeedsofMultiSystemYouth.pdf>
7. Hampden County Massachusetts: *Dual Status Youth Initiative - Site Manual*. 2013. <http://www.rfknrcjj.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Hampden-County-MA-DSY-Manual.pdf>.

8. Janet K. Wiig & John A. Tuell, *Guidebook for Juvenile Justice & Child Welfare System Coordination and Integration*. 2013. <http://www.rfknrcjj.org/images/PDFs/Guidebook-for-JJ-and-CW-System-Coordination-and-Integration-Cover.pdf>.

9. Janet K. Wiig & John A. Tuell, *Guidebook for Juvenile Justice & Child Welfare System Coordination and Integration*. 2013. <http://www.rfknrcjj.org/images/PDFs/Guidebook-for-JJ-and-CW-System-Coordination-and-Integration-Cover.pdf>.

NACo is a proud partner of the Resource Center Partnership, sponsored by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. We would like to thank the Foundation for its assistance in producing this publication and its continued support in helping to educate county officials about opportunities to improve their juvenile justice systems. For more information about this publication or the Models for Change initiative and the Resource Center Partnership, please contact Kathy Rowings, NACo Justice Program Manager, at krowings@naco.org or 202.942.4279.
