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CONNECTING JUVENILE JUSTICE AND CHILD WELFARE

Deviant Peer Contagion: *Findings from the Duke Executive Sessions on Deviant Peer Contagion*

By Joel Rosch

The typical, dominant response to adolescent deviant behavior by public agencies—juvenile justice, education, mental health, and parts of the child welfare system—is to separate these youth from their families, schools, and communities and place them in programs that increase their contact youth who show similar problems. A growing body of research shows these kinds of placements may actually make children worse.

Deviant behavior seems to be contagious, spreading rapidly among adolescents when they associate with other deviant youth, especially in early adolescence. Public policy continues to put deviant peers together, however, despite of increasing evidence that doing so contributes to the growth of antisocial behavior among adolescents. The implications of this paradox are especially important for the juvenile justice system, the system of last resort for juveniles who fail at home, at school, and in their communities.

The good news is that we are becoming more aware of this phenomenon, and there are often workable alternatives. Effective programs can be used instead of grouping deviant peers. When no alternatives are available, or when policy and practice demand we group deviant peers, there are ways to mitigate the negative peer influences.

Before policymakers and practitioners can address these issues we need a better understanding of why, how, and when deviant peer influences work. The Duke University Executive Sessions on Deviant Peer Contagion brought together leading social scientists, government officials, journalists, and a judge to examine and analyze the issue of deviant peer influences.¹ The Executive Sessions, which met six times between 2002 and 2006, conducted a thorough review and discussion of research that might shed light on deviant peer influence, visited programs

that brought deviant peers together, conducted focus groups with program professionals, and conducted a meta-analysis of previous research with new questions about deviant peer influence. The group also identified and analyzed juvenile justice, mental health, education, and child welfare programs as alternatives to ones that aggregate deviant peers, and examined the legal and organizational structures necessary for these kinds of programs to work effectively. Finally, the group examined the functions served by aggregating deviant youth and the ethical issues involved in policies that may help some children by placing others at greater risk.

The papers, including the analytic essays and literature reviews, resulting from the sessions were published in 2006 by Guilford Press as *Deviant Peer Influences in Programs for Youth*, edited by Kenneth A. Dodge, Thomas J. Dishion, and Jennifer E. Lansford. The same authors published a report in the Society for Research on Child Development (SRCD) journal, *Social Policy Report*, synthesizing the ideas generated by the sessions in the article “Deviant Peer Influences in Intervention and Public Policy for Youth.”²

Following is an overview of the findings and recommendations of the Executive Sessions to a broader audience of policy analysts and advocates concerned with child welfare and juvenile justice issues.

What We Know

While common sense tells us that vulnerable adolescents are likely to become more deviant when their peer groups

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1. A list of participants and a description of the project is available online at www.pubpol.duke.edu/centers/child/research_projects/Deviantsocial.html.
2. The SRCD report is available online at www.srcd.org/documents/publications/SPR/spr20-1.pdf.

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

I have the opportunity to return to this space and scribe some thoughts for this message while the CWLA Juvenile Justice Division finalizes the process of hiring our now vacant Director position. We are in the final stages of the interview and selection process and I hope that the next message in this space comes from our new Director. In the interim, I am pleased to offer a few thoughts about our continuing work with our members and the field.

With the assistance of Kerrin Sweet, Program Coordinator, we have been working with key members of our National Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice (NACJJ) to reshape and adopt a charter that defines the mission and goals of the CWLA Juvenile Justice Division. By the time this edition goes to print, we should have the final charter posted on the website. This will provide a renewed focus for the work of the division and frame our cooperative arrangement with NACJJ.

I hope you have noticed the monthly messages through our JJPollnet listserv. Our membership in that listserv has increased dramatically in the past several months, and we invite you to contact Kerrin (ksweet@cwla.org) to be added to this list. Kerrin has filled these messages with outstanding information and timely notice of important upcoming events in the fields of child welfare and juvenile justice.

Our technical assistance and consultation in the field has markedly increased and now involves Juvenile Justice—Child Welfare Systems Integration Initiatives in King County, Washington (ongoing since 2004); Los Angeles County, California (ongoing since 2005); South Dakota (legal analysis); Florida (Building Bridges to Better Outcomes Project, sponsored by a grant from the DuPont Fund); and new efforts in Arizona and Colorado. We are working with the expanded efforts of the MacArthur Foundation Models for Change: Systems Reform in Juvenile Justice Initiative (MfC) in Pennsylvania (ongoing) and Illinois (ongoing), with newly minted commitments in Louisiana and Washington. I invite you to inquire about the detail of these efforts by emailing me at jtuell@cwla.org. We are grateful to the MacArthur Foundation for its support and leadership in the field of juvenile justice and youth systems reform.

We are also privileged to collaborate with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) in addressing the maltreatment-delinquency connection and the requirements of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 2002 as we cohost a meeting of the state Juvenile Justice Specialists in September in New Orleans. This meeting continues the smaller-scale meeting conducted at the close of our CWLA National Juvenile Justice Symposium in San Francisco earlier this year.

These are busy, challenging times for our Juvenile Justice Division and our friends and colleagues in the field, and we welcome your connection with us as we endeavor to make a positive change in the lives of your state or local jurisdictions' children, youth, and families and the systems that serve them.

I also hope that you will find the information contained in this edition of the Link to be helpful and informative. Thank you again for your commitment to making a change in the lives of our nation's youth and families.

Sincerely,



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comprise other deviant youth, strong evidence from studies by developmental psychologists suggests that peer influences are among the most potent factors in the development of antisocial behavior and that this increase in deviancy is more than just deviant youth seeking out deviant peer groups. The process of bringing these adolescents together makes them more likely to engage in antisocial behavior, and this process can trump attempts by adults to use these groupings to improve adolescent behavior.

Often these groupings are the direct result of public policies that place youth at risk for antisocial behavior into settings that are populated predominately by other deviant youth. Whether they are well-intended “scared straight” programs, afterschool programs designed for at-risk youth, or group counseling for substance abuse offenders, programs designed to reduce the likelihood of future crime and violence often result in the opposite outcome. These programs may actually be making things worse rather than better.

How Often Do We Place Deviant Peers Together in Group Setting?

Placing vulnerable youth in deviant groups is the most common and most costly of all public policy responses to deviant behavior in education, mental health, and juvenile justice settings (Dodge & Dishion, 2006). The reasons for these placements are financial (the assumption it is cheaper to work with children in groups) and political (the public prefers these youth be segregated to prevent disruption or danger to community classrooms), but the long-term consequences of these programs show greater costs and less total safety. The amount of public dollars used to segregate deviant youth from mainstream peers and place them with other deviant youth is staggering.

Juvenile Justice

Of the 1.6 million youth brought into the juvenile justice system in 2000, about 20% were placed into facilities such as training schools, detention centers, day treatment centers, and other residential facilities, where these youth were grouped with other offending youth. This represented almost 93% of the \$5 billion spent in the juvenile justice system that year. The remaining 7% was spent on parole, probation, and other community

programs, some of which included programs that also bring deviant youth together in groups (Dodge et al., 2006b).

Grouping deviant youth is happening even though for almost a decade the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has been encouraging state and local governments to use evidence-based programs that usually avoid bringing deviant peers together in groups.³

Mental Health

Of the approximately 55 million children in the United States served by the mental health system in 1998, about 15% were treated in groups, but estimates are that they consumed a little more than 50% of the total costs for the treatment. About \$6 billion was spent on group treatments, including residential therapies, day treatment programs, group homes, group therapies, and group social skills training (Dodge et al., 2006b). The growing consensus is that these treatments are generally less effective than individual treatments.

Education, Suspension, and Alternative Schools

More than 3 million students were suspended and 87,000 expelled from school in 1998. Cut off from normative peers and age-appropriate institutions, suspended students are more likely to associate with each other in unsupervised settings. Whatever other functions are served, students with histories of suspension are 2.2 times more likely to be incarcerated as adults than are students with no such histories. After a series of highly publicized school shootings, federally mandated zero-tolerance policies led to an unprecedented increase in long-term suspension and expulsion of students for deviant behavior (Dodge et al., 2006b).

Although most alternative schools were originally designed for youth who had difficulty learning in regular school settings, and not for deviant youth, in recent years many of these programs have been modified to accommodate students with conduct problems. In 2000, more than 613,000 students nationwide were enrolled in alternative learning programs or alternative schools where they were grouped with other deviant youth. One state’s estimate is that \$15 billion dollars, or 3% of the \$501.3 billion spent on K–12 education in 2003–2004, was spent on alternative education for deviant students (Dodge et al., 2006b).

A number of other education policies increase the likelihood of bringing deviant peers together in groups. Taking disruptive students out of mainstream classroom and placing them in alternate settings with other disruptive students is common practice. Academic tracking groups students with low academic achievement, which is correlated with disruptive behavior, leading low-tracked children to associate more with each other and to grow distant from high-tracked, usually better behaved, peers.

3. For examples of these recommendations see www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/204273.pdf, and www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints.

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The use of grade retention, which has increased under No Child Left Behind, also separates deviant youth from high-achieving same-age peers, increasing the likelihood they will seek associations with other retained youth.

Community Programs

A number of different kinds of community programs aggregate deviant youth in group settings. An estimated 3.6 million youth attend afterschool programs, many of which focus on at-risk youth. Early evaluations of afterschool programs that target at-risk youth show adverse effects on behavior (Dodge et al., 2006a, pp. 221–223, 388).

The 21st Century Community Learning Center Program is a major federal initiative that established afterschool programs at schools with large populations of at-risk youth. A number of different well-intended community programs, youth development programs, and community centers are designed to keep at-risk youth off the streets by bringing them together, often with little structure. If deviancy can be contagious, these programs have the potential to do more harm than good.

In addition, several million children live in public housing, which are often concentrated communities of low-income families, where high-risk youth come together in ways that may increase their risk for deviant behavior.

Although at-risk youth participate in an array of community programs designed to reduce problem behaviors, few of these programs have been evaluated using randomized control designs. When community and school programs are analyzed through randomized control trials, a surprising number actually produce adverse effects, with children getting worse rather than better⁴ (Dodge et al., 2006b, p. 6).

Understanding Deviant Peer Effects in Interventions

When looking at peer effects, one should consider at least four points to consider when deciding whether an intervention or placement will be effective.

1. Ample evidence exists from meta-analyses of randomized control trials that family and individualized juvenile justice prevention and treatment programs and individualized child psychotherapy programs are associated with positive outcomes. A number of evidence-based individual and family treatment programs shown in Tables 1–4 can and do reduce deviant behavior.
2. When prevention and treatment programs are administered in a group context, effects are still generally positive, but less so than in individualized and family programs. This may be because the dose each individual receives is smaller

within the group nature of the programs, and therefore the positive effects appear to be smaller. Although interventions are generally less effective when administered in a group rather than individually, from a cost-benefit perspective this reduction of effectiveness might be offset by program savings if group interventions cost less and more youth can be served.

3. When prevention and treatment programs are administered in ways that place deviant youth with deviant peers, programs are more likely to have adverse effects—the conduct of adolescents in these programs often worsens. This may be due to the processes of labeling, communication and acquisition of cultural norms, reinforcement, and deviancy training.
4. An array of moderating factors, such as age of the children in the program, the program's duration, the experience level of program staff, and the structure of the program, may either exacerbate or minimize the adverse effects of interaction with deviant peers. Because the possibility of deviant peer effects has rarely been the explicit focus of rigorous academic research, there is much we do not know.

Mechanisms of Deviant Peer Influence

The grouping of deviant peers may increase deviant behavior through a number of mechanisms. One is labeling, by which the adolescent comes to self identify with other deviant youth, and others come to expect the adolescent to act like his or her peers. This often leads to self-fulfilling prophecies. Labeling theory is well-established in both the juvenile justice and education literature.

Deviant peers also increase the opportunity for deviance, especially crime. Not only are they more likely to provoke each other, but also to increase access to drugs, weapons, and information about location of targets of robbery. They help identify new enemies in rival gangs or authorities, and provide a “team” that increases the probability of success through deviant behavior. Peers also influence what youth perceive to be group norms, with deviant peers positively reinforcing the idea that deviant behavior is normative (Osgood & Briddell, 2006).

Thomas Dishion, one of the conveners of the Duke University Executive Sessions, has developed a general theory of *deviancy training* that describes the power of deviant peers to teach other youth to become more deviant and trump the positive effects expected from group therapies. Dishion has observed deviancy training even in adult-led interventions designed to reduce deviant behavior with adults.

Deviancy training occurs when a peer displays antisocial behavior or talks about it and other peers positively reinforce that behavior by smiling or giving

4. See also Lansford in Dodge et al., 2006a for a more complete analysis.

verbal approval and high status to the first peer. A youth observes this norm and then engages in similar talk or behavior, which is also reinforced. Soon, the youth is drawn into the peer culture and becomes more deviant. (Dodge et al., 2006b)

Often, adult leaders do not see this deviancy training. Dishion and his colleagues have found deviancy training before and after intervention group sessions, and during breaks, as well as during the programs designed to reduce deviant behavior. Follow-up studies show the effects of deviancy training persist for up to three years (Dodge & Dishion, 2006).

Evidence also suggests that young adolescents are most susceptible to deviant peer influence, and the effects are most severe for youth with modest levels of delinquency. On the other hand, evidence suggests that group culture may be engineered to optimize the probability of establishing prosocial cultural norms as opposed to antisocial norms—for example, the Montessori Program with young children, which integrates new children into the group gradually. Likewise, program leaders can have an impact on what happens in groups, and a high degree of structure in groups can dampen deviant peer effects (Dodge et al., 2006b).

The State of the Evidence

Deviant Peer Effects and Solutions in Juvenile Justice

Although few rigorous studies directly test hypotheses about deviant peer effects, much can be learned by analyzing existing research.⁵ Many random-assignment experiments, case studies, and meta-analyses show a number of successful interventions that can reduce

juvenile delinquency; however, they also show programs that group deviant peers are less successful than those that do not, and often have adverse effects.

Mark Lipsey's meta-analysis shows that, when compared, programs that group deviant peers are 30% less effective than are individual treatment prevention programs. In addition, 42% of group-administered prevention interventions and 22% of group-administered probation interventions actually had adverse effects—participant behavior worsened (Lipsey, 2006).

Several effective juvenile justice interventions do not rely on placing deviant youth in groups with other deviant youth. The best known of these programs include Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and Multisystemic Therapy (MST).⁶ These programs focus on enhancing parents' monitoring of youth and behavioral management skills, and rigorous evaluation shows they produce beneficial effects.

In cases where juveniles must be removed from their home, rigorous evaluation of Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) has shown a reduction of delinquency and recidivism. MTFC involves training foster parents to set clear rules for acceptable behavior and to closely monitor the youths' activities. It includes explicit strategies to limit interaction with deviant peers. All three programs are also cost effective, especially compared with group programs.

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- 5. A more complete review of the evidence can be found in Dodge et al., 2006a.
- 6. Each of the programs named throughout this document are described in more detail in Dodge et al., 2006a.

Table 1. Deviant Peer Effects and Solutions in Juvenile Justice

<i>Types of Juvenile Justice Programs and Policies that Aggregate Deviant Peers and Sometimes have Harmful Effects</i>	<i>Effective Programs that Offer Viable Alternatives to Aggregating Deviant Peers</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Group incarceration 2. Military-style boot camps and wilderness challenges (brat camps) 3. Incarceration placement with other offenders who committed the same crime 4. Custodial residential placement in training schools 5. Three strikes-mandated long prison terms 6. Scared Straight 7. Group counseling by probation officer 8. Guided Group Interaction 9. Positive Peer Culture 10. Institutional or group foster care 11. Bringing younger delinquents together in groups 12. Vocational training <p>(Dodge et al., 2006b)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Functional Family Therapy 2. Multisystemic Therapy 3. Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care 4. Intensive Protective Supervision 5. Teaching Family Home Model 6. Sending delinquent youth to programs that serve the general population of youth in their neighborhoods (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs) 7. Community rather than custodial settings 8. Interpersonal skills training 9. Individual counseling 10. Treatment administered by mental health professionals 11. Early diversion programs 12. Victim-Offender Mediation 13. Teen Court programs 14. Therapeutic Jurisprudence 15. Community Commitment Orders 16. Psychiatric Advance Directives

Bringing Youth Voices into Juvenile Justice Reform

By Tina Chiu

Promoting youth involvement in decision-making and public policy development is a subject of growing interest among state and local governments nationwide. That young people are capable of making well-informed decisions, can make meaningful contributions to their communities, and deserve a voice in the decisions that affect their lives are concepts being supported and implemented in a variety of ways.

Youth summits and conferences gather input and ideas from young people and amplify their voices on specific topics of concern. Youth participate on mayors' councils and local boards and committees, sometimes serving as voting members. And commissions, councils, or cabinets comprising of young people have been established in states like New Mexico and Maine and cities like San Francisco with the explicit purpose of advising policymakers on issues of importance to youth.

More input from young people is sought on issues like education, employment, substance abuse, and foster care, and in areas that are not traditionally viewed as youth-focused, such as land use planning and transportation. In the area of juvenile justice, however, practitioners' and policymakers' interest in bringing youth to the table has been slow to emerge.

Bringing youth into the policymaking process can be difficult, whether or not they have been involved in the juvenile justice system. Recruitment and retention of participants can be persistent problems. Getting youth to attend meetings regularly can be hard, given their transportation needs and busy schedules, which may include school, work, and family obligations. To contribute effectively, youth need adequate preparation, training, and support in substantive matters, like understanding how detention decisions are made, in addition to the development of skills, like time management and working in teams.

Both young people and adults need assistance and support to learn how to work cooperatively and collaboratively, to listen to one another, and to be open to and respectful of the perspectives and insights each brings to the table. And stereotypes that professionals may hold of young people as being apathetic, impulsive, naïve, idealistic, and lacking in knowledge and experience reduce the likelihood that they will take young people's opinions and perspectives seriously.

Given these challenges, little discussion has taken place about how the voices of youth can be used to improve the juvenile justice system. Young people—particularly those who have been or are court-involved—are more often seen as troublemakers rather than potential problem solvers, as risks to public safety rather than resources. But many jurisdictions have used a variety of approaches to involve young people in shaping and influencing juvenile justice reform initiatives, policies, and programs.

Promising Approaches to Engaging Youth Voices

Cook County's Juvenile Advisory Council

In 2002, the Juvenile Probation Department of Cook County, Illinois, which includes the city of Chicago, began an innovative project. Over the previous six years, the department had developed and maintained a continuum of programs, services, and activities as part of its successful juvenile detention reform initiative.

Although the department actively evaluated its programs, staff realized they were overlooking an important perspective—that of their own clients. Deputy Chief Probation Officer Steven Eiseman defined the problem: "We rarely know what our clients actually think about our involvement in their lives. Neither do we know with any certainty what impression we make with our words, our services, or our supervision." (Eiseman, 2002)

The department created Juvenile Advisory Council (JAC) as a forum for youth to help the department assess the effectiveness of its present supervision and services, better understand the needs of its clients and enhance its programming to meet those needs, and incorporate youth perspectives within programs and policies.

JAC is a partnership between juvenile probation staff and youth representatives, young men and women who were former court clients. JAC is a concerted effort to improve the probation experience by treating clients as a resource and taking a fresh look at probation from the standpoint of young people.

JAC started with six youth representatives, one of which became a probation officer. JAC currently has roughly 15 youth representatives. They are considered equal partners with the adult probation staff on the council. Youth representatives receive stipends for attending and participating in planning meetings and training workshops

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

To keep up with the latest juvenile justice news, information, and policy developments, as well as the events, publications, and of the CWLA Juvenile Justice Division, e-mail ksweet@cwla.org and sign up for jjpolnet, the CWLA Juvenile Justice Division listserv.

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and for leading special programs, whereas probation staff receive compensatory time.

Youth representatives' opinions are not binding on the council but receive strong consideration and often form the basis for JAC's decisions. Probation officers help recruit youth representatives and are encouraged to refer clients who have exhibited leadership skills, an interest in giving back to other young people and to the community, or who have gone through a life-changing moment while on probation.

The council's first project was to conduct a series of court-wide probation focus groups. The goal of the focus groups was to give the department a general sense of how youth who had recently completed probation felt about their experience—what they regarded as its benefits and drawbacks, and the effect probation had on their lives.

One of the focus groups' findings was that the understanding of how probation operates—what the rules and conditions placed on a youth actually mean—could vary widely from client to client. As a response to this problem, the council set up the Probation Orientation Program (POP), an introduction to probation for newly adjudicated youth and their parents. The orientation program supplements a probation officer's own explanation to the client of court expectations and probation services.

The program was designed and is facilitated by JAC's youth representatives to be interactive and engaging to young people. POP's components include an ice breaker exercise, a pretest survey of young people's knowledge of probation, a role-playing sketch where new probationers act as judges and probation officers, a *Jeopardy* style quiz, question and answer sessions, and a posttest.

The program helps to clarify probation's rules and expectations, explain the consequences for noncompliance, describe services and opportunities, and promote compliance with court-ordered conditions and reduce technical violations of probation. Preliminary figures show that violation of probation filings have been decreasing—youth who go through POP are half as likely to violate probation than youth who do not participate in the orientation.

The initial focus groups also illustrated that client feedback, while critical, could be difficult to get. Consequently, the council developed the Exit Interview Program as an opportunity for youth completing probation to share their thoughts and experiences. The Exit Interview Program includes an icebreaker exercise, survey, and small group discussion. JAC's youth representatives conduct all activities, with staff serving as note takers. The youth representatives can interact with participants as their peers and elicit open, meaningful responses in ways that would be difficult for probation officers to achieve. Discussion questions include:

- What were the one or two things that happened while you were on probation that made the biggest impression on you?

- If you had been your own probation officer, what would you have done to reach you?
- What is the one thing you'd like to tell all probation officers to help them do their jobs better?

The exit interviews do not identify probation officers by name and are not meant as critiques of any individual officer's performance. The exit interviews also serve as a recruitment opportunity for JAC; youth may check a box on the survey form to indicate if they are interested in participating.

In 2005, JAC put together its first position paper, based on the results of its 2004 Exit Interview Program. The 130 young men and women who participated in the surveys and small group discussions had generally positive impressions of their experiences on probation and of their probation officers, but they also raised some common concerns, including ongoing needs in the areas of education and employment or job training, and issues with their privacy being compromised by probation officers' school visits (Cook County Juvenile Advisory Council, 2005).

Probation staff and youth representatives on the council worked together to formulate a series of recommendations to address these and other issues. For instance, JAC suggested expanding the department's education and job readiness opportunities through an in-house GED preparatory program and preemployment skills program. It also recommended the department's school visitation policy be reviewed to help maximize client privacy by having probation officers put away their badges or IDs, once they gain access to the premises, when making school visits.

As a result of JAC's position paper, the department's Educational Task Force endorsed the recommendation about school visits but stopped short of establishing a new policy, and the GED prep and preemployment programs were instituted.

The JAC's work illustrates that providing young people with an opportunity to not only voice their opinions but also to engage in decision-making can have a positive effect on juvenile justice policies and practices.

The District of Columbia's Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services

The District of Columbia formed the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS), a cabinet-level department, in 2004 to replace the ailing Youth Services Administration (YSA), then part of the Department of Human Services. YSA had been sued for unconstitutional conditions and for more than two decades had a new administrator almost every year. Its Oak Hill Youth Center, which houses young people up to age 21 convicted of crimes from sexual assault to murder, suffered from mismanagement, abuse, overcrowding, escapes, violence, and lack of rehabilitation.

The first DYRS director was confirmed in 2005. Currently, the new administration is working to transform the District's juvenile justice system to one based on positive youth development principles, rather than the traditional approaches based on a punitive law-enforcement/corrections model or a needs-based medical/mental-illness model. Under a positive youth development framework, youth are active participants in changing their lives. Engaging young people, building on their strengths, and connecting them to resources can help them become responsible, productive members of their communities.

One of the department's guiding philosophies, congruent with the positive youth development framework, is that youth must be at the table and involved in decision-making, from youth family team meetings to agency policies. This philosophy has been put into practice at the Oak Hill facility in several ways.

First, young people participated in interviewing for key staff positions in the new department, including the deputy director, the director of behavioral health, the special assistant to the director, and the public information officer. Before an interview, youth would meet with staff and receive a packet of information about the candidate along with a list of suggested questions for the interview; afterward, the youth would get together, discuss the candidates, and provide feedback to staff.

Other methods have been developed for youth to be at the table and to have their voices heard. Meetings have been convened for young people to meet the director and present their key needs, both within the facility and in the community. Oak Hill residents have met with new youth correctional officers to discuss misconceptions about detained youth that they want to dispel, along with their expectations of how officers should treat them (for example, get to know them as human beings). The facility also has a number of improvement teams—charged with making recommendations to the director on subjects as varied as developing services for Latino youth and improving the quality of food—that involve youth.

Lastly, the Justice 4 DC Youth! Coalition (JDCY), a partnership of local youth advocacy and youth-led organizations, is opening a chapter within Oak Hill. According to DYRS, this will be the first youth advocacy program in the country to operate inside a youth correctional facility.

JDCY is modifying an existing six-week curriculum for use within the facility. Youth will receive training on youth organizing, choose among issues of concern, and then develop and implement a specific project.

JDCY is also working on a reentry component that would provide paid organizing opportunities for youth who complete the training at Oak Hill and then return to the community. By learning to advocate for themselves, their peers, and their communities, young people can become more active participants in setting policies that affect their lives (Ryan, 2006).

Although the juvenile justice reforms initiated by DYRS are still in their early phases, the department is working with researchers at the Chapin Hall Center for Children to develop measures of positive youth development, with youth voice and advocacy as specific domains of interest.

Santa Cruz County, California

Santa Cruz County reformed its juvenile detention practices in the late 1990s and has become a model site for the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI). As part of its reform effort, the Santa Cruz Probation Department, the lead agent in JDAI, has established strong relationships with community-based organizations that provide alternatives to detention and services—including drug treatment, job training, and work programs—to young people. These community providers have been instrumental in bringing the perspective of youth to bear on juvenile justice practices to identify areas that need improvement and to provide input on programs (MacDonald, 2006).

In 2002, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation launched the Reclaiming Futures Initiative and selected Santa Cruz as one of its implementation sites. A five-year initiative, Reclaiming Futures brought together problem-solving courts and systems of care to focus on substance-abusing youth in the juvenile justice system. Attempts were made at getting youth involved in the initiative, but, according to a job developer at Youth Community Restoration Corporation (YCORP) who spent more than six years in the California Youth Authority, it was hard to get young people interested in "sitting at a two hour meeting" where they "didn't know the acronyms" and jargon being thrown around by people from different agencies (Gomez, 2006).

As an alternative to dragging youth to meetings where they could be perceived as just tokens, Santa Cruz developed a series of youth summits. The first summit was held in early 2004; three summits a year have been conducted since. These summits or focus groups provide an opportunity for young people to voice their thoughts on various topics in a less structured or formal environment than a business meeting; adults are not invited.

Youth summits are held in different parts of the county, and food is provided for participants. Young people—typically on staff at a community-based organization or part of the youth leadership group Reforming Education, Advocating for Leadership—organize and facilitate a summit, record the results, and debrief other system stakeholders. Organizers are learning to develop databases to capture the data collected from the summits, and they have hired a professional evaluator to train them on how to translate the qualitative information acquired through the summits into quantitative information to which government officials may be more responsive.

Youth summits have been helpful in highlighting promising practices and opening lines of communication. One summit focused on a community scan of drug treatment services. Another asked young people to define what

PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

Update on Federal Funding for Juvenile Justice

Juvenile Justice funds are cut in both the Senate and House appropriations bills for fiscal year 2007, as they emerged from committee in the past few weeks. Both the House and Senate rejected much deeper cuts proposed by President Bush, however. The President's proposed budget would have cut juvenile justice by 43%, to \$176 million. The Senate legislation calls for funding to be set at \$270 million, down from \$309 million, a cut of 13%. The House appropriations bill is \$15 million lower than the Senate funding.

Two specific aspects of the House bill are preferable to the Senate bill. The House bill does not include a \$9 million earmark in the Title II Part B State Formula Grants. The earmark would provide assistance to nongovernment and not-for-profit organizations applying for government grants. This is not an appropriate use of these scarce dollars. These grants provide essential support for public agencies to develop and strengthen juvenile justice systems to prevent delinquency, reduce youth crime, and keep our communities safe. The earmark takes resources away from already strained state juvenile justice efforts.

State Formula Grants provide necessary support to states to operate their juvenile justice systems and to meet vital protection requirements contained in the law. Beginning in FY 2004, the formula grants funded several new focus areas, including programs to provide follow-up post-placement services to juveniles; to provide counseling, mentoring, and training opportunities for juveniles; and to expand the use of probation officers to allow nonviolent offenders to remain in the community. Cuts in funding in recent years have seriously inhibited states' abilities to meet these objectives. An additional cut as a result of this earmark would further strain these systems.

The House appropriations legislation also includes first-time funding for the Delinquency Prevention Block Grant (DPBG). The House legislation includes \$5 million in funding for DPBG initiatives aimed at keeping at-risk youth on track toward a successful transition to adulthood. DPBG funds activities designed to prevent and reduce juvenile crime, including projects that provide treatment to juvenile offenders and juveniles at risk of becoming offenders. Eligible recipients include community-based organizations, law enforcement agencies, local education authorities, local governments, social service providers, and other entities with a demonstrated history of involvement in juvenile delinquency prevention.

The next step to set funding levels is for a conference committee to negotiate a final bill. We expect this will take place in the fall. We will urge Congress to adequately fund juvenile justice and specifically to not include the earmark in funding for the formula grants, and to include \$5 million for DPBG as in the House bill.

For further information, contact Tim Briceland-Betts, CWLA Government Affairs Division, 202/942-0256, or bricebet@cwla.org.

success means to them. One issue was of great importance: "Why wasn't their success staying off drugs seen as a positive factor; why was the emphasis placed on getting 'dinged' for dirty urines?" The youth wanted the court to consider as indicators of their success the number of negative urine screens, as well as the cumulative time they'd spent off drugs.

This information was brought up to the Reclaiming Futures steering committee, which included the district attorney, chief of probation, head of mental health, and community representatives. A policy was then enacted to require mental health and probation officials to report negative urine analyses in juvenile court hearings (Gomez, 2006).

Although the Reclaiming Futures initiative is drawing to a close, these regularly held youth summits have become accepted in the county as a model for information sharing and for increasing youth voice and participation.

The Youth Justice Board

The Center for Court Innovation, in New York City, launched the Youth Justice Board in 2004 to train and empower youth to become credible resources on juvenile justice policies. Each year, 15–20 youth are selected from a pool of applicants from throughout New York City to study a public safety issue affecting young people in the city. Youth Justice Board members receive a \$1,000 stipend and public transportation fare for participating in the program, which requires a time commitment of two hours a day for two days a week, over 10 months, along with four full-day Saturday workshops. Private foundations and local and federal funding support the program (Hack, 2005).

The program consists of three phases: training, investigation, and policy recommendations. In the first phase, youth receive intensive training, starting with a weekend retreat to help them cohere as a team and learn how to

see *Youth Voices*, page 13

JUVENILE JUSTICE NEWS AND RESOURCES

Cultural Competence Training (Train-the-Trainers)

By C. Burgess Consulting & Associates

"Taking a personal journey toward multicultural competence."

This training focuses on defined outcomes and improving how people think about, organize, and perform work in their organizations as it pertains to cultural competence. Participants must work together as colleagues and share responsibility with the workshop leader or facilitator for the success of the training.

The training has seven units; each contains an activity or set of activities. Each activity provides the objectives, materials, preparation, and suggested process for the trainer to follow. Related handouts, overheads, and worksheets follow each activity.

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Eighth National Conference on Preventing Crime: Helping Build Safer Communities

National Conference on Preventing Crime is accepting workshop proposals for the Eighth National Conference on Preventing Crime to be held October 3–5, 2007, in Atlanta. Workshop proposals can be submitted online at www.ncpc.org/training/National_Conference.php until October 2, 2006.

Online registrations receive a \$10 discount. Register by August 1, 2007, for a chance to win round-trip airfare to the conference, three nights lodging at the Hilton Atlanta, and dinner at South City Kitchen.

E-Tool Assists in Implementing Juvenile Graduated Sanctions

Developed under a cooperative agreement between the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, *Effective Program Services and Models Associated with Five Graduated Sanction and Intervention Levels for Juvenile Justice* is a valuable online resource for those concerned with juvenile graduated sanctions.

This e-tool presents programs and intervention strategies that work within each of the following sanctioning levels:

- immediate,
- intermediate,

- community confinement,
- secure confinement, and
- aftercare.

Detailed program descriptions and contact information enable users to connect juveniles and their families to the services they need.

To access this juvenile graduated sanctions e-tool, visit www.ncjfcj.org/content/view/752/456.

International Conference To Explore Juvenile Justice in Europe

October 24–25, 2006, in Bruxelles, Belgium, the International Juvenile Justice Observatory will hold the conference *Juvenile Justice in Europe: A Framework for the Integration*. Register before September 30 for a reduced registration fee.

For further information about the conference, and to register online, visit www.oijj.org/plantilla.php?pag=090000.

Conference Features Juvenile Services

On October 15–18, 2006, in Las Vegas, the National Partnership for Juvenile Services (NPJS) will hold its annual Joint Conference on Juvenile Services, *Representing America's Youth*.

Workshops will address topics of particular interest to JUVJUST subscribers, including

- juvenile detention services,
- juvenile corrections/institutions,
- education of youth in confinement,
- mental health issues in juvenile justice, and
- health care issues in managing juvenile populations.

Additional information is available online at www.npjs.org/Events/joint.html. E-mail questions to npjs@eku.edu. For further information about the National Partnership for Juvenile Services, visit www.npjs.org.

New Grantmakers for Children, Youth, and Families Partner Page

Promising Practices announces the launch of the Partner Page for Grantmakers for Children, Youth, and Families (GCYF), a Promising Practice Network Member. GCYF is an association of grantmaking institutions whose mission is to increase the ability of organized philanthropy to improve the well-being of children, youth, and families. GCYF's Partner Page provides information and resources on family support, early childhood, youth, and healthy children, youth, and families.

See the GCYF Partner Page online at www.promisingpractices.net/partners_gcyf.asp.

Court Urged to Overturn Teenager's Life Without Parole Sentence

The Juvenile Law Center and the Defender Association of Philadelphia coauthored and filed an amicus brief in the Pennsylvania Superior Court urging the court to overturn a sentence of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole for a teenager convicted of second degree murder. Juveniles do not have the same judgment, understanding, maturation, and abilities as adults. For these reasons the U.S. Supreme Court in *Roper v. Simmons*, 543 U.S. 551 (2005), struck down as unconstitutional the imposition on children of an adult punishment—in that case, the death penalty. For precisely the same reasons, a teenager's sentence of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole must similarly be struck down as violating the federal and Pennsylvania Constitutions' bar against cruel punishments. Read the Amicus Brief online at www.jlc.org.

JLC Urges Court to Strike Direct File Statute

The Juvenile Law Center, joined by six other child advocacy organizations, authored and filed an amicus brief urging the Colorado Supreme Court to strike down a state statute that required a 16-year-old youth, Gary Flakes, to be sentenced as an adult following conviction for a crime that would not itself have made him eligible for adult prosecution. Colorado appears to stand alone in providing for unfettered and unreviewable prosecutorial discretion in deciding where and how teenage offenders—like Flakes—shall be prosecuted, and in providing for certain teenage offenders to receive adult sentences based on that initial prosecutorial decision. In short, the statute required Flakes be sentenced as an adult simply because a prosecutor charged him with more serious offenses in adult court. JLC argued that Colorado's "direct file" statute violates equal protection guarantees in both the U.S. and Colorado Constitutions, contravenes separation of powers principles, and denies Flakes and other similarly situated youth due process. Read the Amicus Brief at www.jlc.org.

Summary Provides National Youth Gang Survey Data

OJJDP announces the availability of the *National Youth Gang Survey: 1999–2001*. This 80-page summary was written by Arlen Egley Jr., James C. Howell, and Aline K. Major of the National Youth Gang Center. The National Youth Gang Survey, administered by OJJDP's National Youth Gang Center, collects data from a representative sample of law enforcement agencies nationwide. The summary provides results from the 1999, 2000, and 2001 surveys and, when available, preliminary results from the 2002 survey. According to the summary, an estimated 731,500 gang members and more than 21,500 gangs were active in the United States in 2002.

National Youth Gang Survey: 1999–2001 is available online through a search at <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/publications/PubAbstract.asp>.

NIJ Report Presents Drug Court Research Findings

The Office of Justice Program's National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has released *Drug Courts: The Second Decade*. The report presents findings from recent studies that address concerns of policymakers and practitioners about effective drug court programs. Topics include the effects of target populations and participant attributes on outcomes, the role of the drug court judge in advancing participant success, treatment issues, drug court interventions for juveniles, and cost-benefit analyses.

Drug Courts: The Second Decade is available online at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/211081.htm.

Journal Seeks to Bridge Research and Practice in Youth Development

The National Association of Extension 4-H Agents has announced the creation of the *Journal of Youth Development—Bridging Research and Practice*. This multidisciplinary journal, published three times a year, will focus on the development of school-age youth through the transition to adulthood. The journal is intended to further the mission of the youth development profession by facilitating the transfer and application of research-based knowledge in an easy-to-access online format. Professionals in youth development or related fields of study are invited to submit articles for consideration.

To view the inaugural issue, visit www.nae4ha.org/directory/jyd/current_issue.aspx.

Three New WSIPP Program Evaluations

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) has posted a number of new studies on its website, among them, readers may find of interest: *Recidivism Findings for the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration's Dialectical Behavior Therapy Program: Final Report*; *Recidivism Findings for the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration's Mentoring Program: Final Report*; and *The Effects of Parole on Recidivism: Juvenile Offenders Released from Washington State Institutions: Final Report*.

For more on these evaluations, see www.wsipp.wa.gov/intro.asp.

NCCD Study Finds Florida Justice System Harsh to Underage Girls

A study conducted by National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) has found that Florida's juvenile

justice system locks up a higher percentage of underage girls than 46 other states, hands out stiffer punishment to girls than boys, and does not provide the kind of treatment girls need.

For more information visit www.nccd-crc.org/nccd/n_new_pop_flagirls.html.

Brief Highlights Key Indicators of Children's Well-Being

The Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics has released *America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2006*.

Each year since 1997, the Forum has published *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being*, a report that includes detailed information on the welfare of children and families. The Forum alternates publishing this comprehensive report with a condensed version that highlights selected indicators, as is the case with the 2006 brief. The first section of the brief addresses population and family characteristics, describing the context in which children live. The following sections focus on indicators of child well-being in four key areas: economic security, health, behavior and social environment, and education.

America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2006 is available online at www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/index.asp.

Bulletin Describes Juvenile Residential Facility Census

Juvenile Residential Facility Census, 2002: Selected Findings (NCJ 211080) provides statistics on facilities and offenders by state and type of facility. It also provides national data on confinement, overcrowding, suicide, mental health screening, and deaths in custody. This bulletin is part of OJJDP's National Report Series.

Juvenile Residential Facility Census, 2002: Selected Findings is online at www.nccd-crc.org/nccd/n_reform_yvmain.html.

NCVC 2006 Training Institute

The National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC) announces two 2006 training institutes that offer the best in high-quality training for victim service providers, law enforcement professionals, mental health professionals, youth workers, and others involved in supporting victims of crime.

The Training Institute is coming to Seattle, September 25–27 and Cincinnati, October 3–5.

The Training Institute has been approved by the National Board of Certified Counselors for continuing education units for professional counselors. Registration is \$180 for National Center members and \$235 for nonmembers.

The Training Institute in Seattle is cosponsored by the U.S. Attorney's Office Western District of Washington. The session will have a special focus on trauma and victims of violent crime and include the following presenters:

- Lucy Berliner, Crime Victims and PTSD;
- Edward K. Rynearson, Trauma and Resilience; and
- Jon R. Conte, Vicarious Trauma.

16 additional workshops will include:

- identity theft,
- human trafficking,
- stalking,
- communicating in difficult situations,
- youth dating violence,
- property and financial crime, and
- cultural competence.

The Training Session in Cincinnati will focus on supporting victimized youth and include the following presenters:

- Cordelia Anderson, Normalization of Sexual Harm: The Process, Impact and Action Needed;
- Rallying Youth Organizers Together Against Rape youth ensemble, Sociodrama: Educational Theater for Social Change; and
- Michael Kaiser and Mitru Ciarlante, Building a Framework for Understanding Teen Victims.

16 additional workshops will include:

- child victims' rights in the criminal and juvenile justice systems,
- effective advocacy for children and teens, and
- stalking, and stalking and technology.

If you have questions regarding the National Center Training Institute or registration, contact Victoria Attfield at 202/467-8700 or traininginstitute@ncvc.org.

For more information, and to register online, visit www.ncvc.org/ncvc/main.aspx?dbID=DB_TrainingInstitute104.

Statistical Briefing Book Offers Easy Access to State and County Court Data

OJJDP's *Statistical Briefing Book* has been updated to provide users with quick access to the latest available state and county juvenile court case counts for delinquency, status offense, and dependency cases. The *Statistical Briefing Book* provides online information about juvenile crime and victimization and youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

To access state and county court data, visit <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb.ezaco>.

Cognitive Relaxation Coping Skills Program Shows Promise in Reducing Anger, Anxiety, Depression, and Deviant Behavior

The Cognitive Relaxation Coping Skills (CRCS) program has been adapted for middle school students to help increase emotional control. Participants learn methods for relaxation and attitude change and how to use those skills to control feelings of anger in frustrating situations. Evaluations show the program is effective at reducing a range of negative outcomes, including anger, anxiety, depression, general deviance, and deviant behavior at school.

Read more about the CRCS program online at www.promisingpractices.net/program.asp?programid=150.

Report Provides Insights into Effects of Mentoring High-Risk Youth

Public/Private Ventures has released *Positive Support: Mentoring and Depression Among High-Risk Youth*.

Funded through a cooperative agreement between Public/Private Ventures and the OJJDP, the report addresses the question: Can mentoring deter high-risk youth from risky behaviors? and examines the benefits of matching high-risk youth with faith-based mentors. It describes findings from the National Faith-Based Initiative, in which mentored youth were less likely to show signs of depression than youth who were not mentored.

Positive Support: Mentoring and Depression Among High-Risk Youth is available at www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/202_publication.pdf.

from *Youth Voices*, page 9

work together. Members then move on to training in critical thinking skills, research, interviewing skills, public speaking, consensus building, and basic civics to understand the process of policy development and implementation.

In the investigation or field work phase, which lasts four to five months, members research best practices, conduct interviews and focus groups with subject matter experts and young people affected by the issue being explored, and meet with juvenile justice officials and other stakeholders. In the last phase, board members hone in key problem areas they want to address, weigh policy options, and craft a series of recommendations based on the information collected and analyzed. The process is run and facilitated by adult staff, but the decisions are made by the youth. The Youth Justice Board then presents its findings directly to juvenile justice policymakers and officials and issues a written report.

In its first year of operation, the Youth Justice Board focused on juvenile reentry. In 2005, members tackled the issue of school safety, interviewing officials at the New York City Department of Education, Police Department, and Department of Probation; members of the City Council; and principals, assistant principals, deans, school safety agents, teachers, students, and counselors at 15 high schools throughout the city. They also conducted focus groups with girls, students who had been suspended, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth.

The board developed 10 recommendations in three action areas—making positive relationships a school safety priority, expanding responses to conflict and negative behavior, and giving students a bigger voice in shaping school safety policies. The Youth Justice Board presented their work to policymakers in the Mayor's Office, Department of Education, and Police Department. The Youth Justice Board is currently working with five schools to implement some of its ideas.

By providing intensive training to its members and helping them increase their knowledge of public safety issues and public policy development, the Youth Justice Board program enables young people to formulate substantive, concrete, and realistic reforms that build on their own insights and perspectives.

Overcoming the Challenges to Promoting and Sustaining Youth Voice

The programs and activities outlined here demonstrate that the challenges to promote and sustain meaningful youth participation in juvenile justice reform, although substantial, can be met. Obstacles to recruitment and retention of youth, meeting logistics, and training and preparation of youth can be overcome with commitment and strategic planning by all stakeholders.

The programs use a variety of methods for recruitment, often relying on more than one source of referrals. The Youth Justice Board uses an application process but also works with community-based organizations, partner organizations, and schools to identify and recruit candidates. Santa Cruz County also reaches out to youth through its network of community-based partners. DYRS in DC recruits participants at Oak Hill through the facility's student council and through staff recommendations; recruitment, however, may not be that difficult, given the relative dearth of programming and recreation options at the facility. Cook County's JAC also relies on suggestions from staff and current youth representatives to identify other youth to join the council; in addition, youth completing probation can indicate in their exit interview whether they would like to participate on the council.

One recommendation to retain young men and women in ongoing initiatives is to keep things interesting by continually offering youth opportunities for new experiences and learning. For instance, JAC, in response to interest from its youth representatives in having more interaction with other young people, recently embarked on a new

initiative—a peer jury program to work with youth who are being diverted from court. In addition, youth representatives have the chance to speak at probation management meetings and at public engagements, including conferences and trainings. Another retention tool is providing youth with stipends for participation.

The logistics of organizing and facilitating a meeting are important. Helpful tips include providing transportation or fares for public transit, scheduling meetings so they do not conflict with school or work, keeping meetings brief, and, often cited as very significant, always supplying food. Organizers of the youth summits in Santa Cruz reduce barriers to participation by holding their meetings in different communities around the county.

The sites profiled show the importance of preparation, training, and support for young people to their meaningful participation in discussions of juvenile justice reform. Each program invests in young people's skills in public speaking, research and analysis, interviewing, working both independently and in teams, and leadership. The Youth Justice Board program, for instance, is built explicitly around both skills development and increasing participants' knowledge about the policy process and specific juvenile justice and public safety topics.

In Santa Cruz, young people who have been involved in the system are hired as entry-level staff at community-based organizations partnering with government agencies. These staff often serve as youth summit facilitators and are working with a professional evaluator to improve their ability to communicate focus group findings to juvenile justice officials.

Probation officers on JAC work with youth representatives to cultivate their skills so they can lead sessions in POP and the Exit Interview Program. More senior youth representatives on the council also help newer representatives in honing their abilities to present in front of large audiences and facilitate small group discussions.

Through the Justice for DC Youth! Coalition, DYRS will offer training in youth organizing and advocacy. The department currently runs leadership training through the Prudential Youth Leadership Institute, in which youth plan and execute a community service project as part of an intensive curriculum that emphasizes goal setting, planning, and teamwork.

By investing in training and support, these initiatives build on the strengths and assets of young men and women and work to dispel the stereotypes that government officials and other juvenile justice professionals may hold about the capabilities and motivation of young people. Those who want to promote youth voice in policymaking, however, may still need to argue for meaningful youth involvement. In Santa Cruz, Cook County, and DC, senior officials support the concept and practice of incorporating youth voice in juvenile justice reforms.

Marketing and emphasizing the benefits to staff of listening to youth must occur on a regular basis. In DC, for instance, DYRS needs to get a buy in from all 600 employees to reform its system to one based on a positive youth development model, the philosophy which underlies the various activities that involve youth participation in decision-making. The department therefore wants to expand training to staff on adult-youth partnerships and on advancing youth development so that even correctional officers will become youth development specialists.

In Cook County, JAC can point to data that indicate that POP contributes to the reduction of violation of probation filings. This finding helps make the case that a program conceived and designed by young people can have a positive effect both on the work of probation officers and on the success of their clients. JAC activities and new programming are broadcast to all probation staff through memos and newsletters, and youth representatives make presentations at probation management meetings to explain their work firsthand.

The programs and activities described here display how the insights of young people who have been involved in the system can help improve service delivery, create innovative programs, and inform policymaking in the realm of juvenile justice. These approaches to involve young people in shaping and influencing juvenile justice reform initiatives, policies, and programs go well beyond the lip service typically paid to the concept of bringing in youth voice.

With the right investments in training and support, young men and women can fully demonstrate they are capable of effecting positive change in their own lives and making meaningful contributions to their families, communities, other court-involved youth, and the juvenile justice system.

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- Tina Chiu is a senior program associate at the Vera Institute of Justice. She can be reached at tchiu@vera.org.*

Deviant Peer Effects and Solutions in Education

In studies where randomized designs in school settings found that when interventions designed to reduce deviant behavior aggregated high-risk students, there were increases in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and oppositional defiant disorder, and greater likelihood of using alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco.

Using the randomness of college roommate assignment, a study of college students found that males who had been drinkers in high school, and who had been randomly assigned a college roommate who had been a binge drinker in high school were more likely to engage in binge drinking than were similar males who had been assigned a roommate who did not drink.

A recent study of retention finds that increasing the density of retained adolescents increases the rates of conduct problems among both their retained and nonretained peers.⁷ Growing evidence supports that school policies that aggregate deviant youth—including academic tracking, retention, self-contained classrooms for children with emotional or behavioral disorders, and disciplinary practices that involve suspension, expulsion, or placement into alternative schools—exacerbate deviant behavior among those youth (Dodge et al., 2006b).

Effective schoolwide behavior management policies such as the Good Behavior Game and School-Wide Positive Behavior Support, which emphasize effective schoolwide behavior management practices, appear to reduce the need for separate programs for deviant youth. Rigorous studies show better teacher training in behavior management practices, and when schools adopt evidence-based programs, such as Adolescent Transitions Program, Linking the Interests of Families and Teachers (LIFT), and the Seattle Social Development Project, decrease problem behaviors without grouping deviant youth.

The empirical evidence also suggests that when possible, schools should reduce the routine practices of tracking low-performing youth into isolated classrooms, mandatory grade retention, self-contained classrooms for unruly students in special education, group in-school suspension, placement into alternative schools, and expulsion.

Table 2. Alternatives Aggregating Deviant Peer in Education

<i>Education Programs That Offer Viable Alternatives to Aggregating Deviant Peers</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Universal, environment-centered programs that focus on schoolwide reform• Universal classroom programs that build social competence• Positive Behavior Support• Individual behavior support plan for each student• Improved training in behavior management practices for classroom teachers• Incredible Years Teacher Training• Good Behavior Game• Consultation and support for classroom teachers• Family-Based Adolescent Transitions Program• Matching deviant youth with well-adjusted peers• Multimodal programs (such as LIFT, Fast Track, Seattle Social Development Project)• Proactive prevention programs that shape student morals and encourage responsible decision-making <p>(Dodge et al., 2006b)</p>

Deviant Peer Effects and Solutions in Mental Health

Even though the potential risks of treating deviant peers in groups are well-documented in mental health programs, group therapy remains the treatment of choice in many contexts. Meta-analysis finds group-administered psychotherapy for youth is 26% less effective than individually administered therapy. Although social skills training for children with conduct problems is generally effective, it appears to lose about a third of its effect when the intervention is administered in a context consisting solely of deviant peers. Although the effects of grouping deviant peers in mental health treatment are not often examined experimentally because deviant peer influence is usually not the focus of academic or clinical research, when it has been examined results often show an adverse impact.

Dishion and colleagues analyzed a peer-group substance abuse intervention using cognitive behavioral techniques to regulate behavior. Subjects were randomly assigned to parent or peer group settings. One year after treatment, teacher reports of conduct problems and self-reports of tobacco use were significantly higher for youth who had been assigned to one of the two peer-group intervention conditions than to those assigned to other conditions. The effects persisted in the two- and three-year follow-ups.⁸

7. See www.pubpol.duke.edu/centers/child/Prevention/Presentations/SSS_Abstract.doc.

8. All of these results and others are discussed in more detail in Dodge et al., 2006a.

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Individual programs that emphasize behavior management skills for parents and interpersonal skills for children have demonstrated the strongest effectiveness in reducing conduct problems. Family-centered programs targeted to individual children, especially programs that use behavioral principles, seem successful at reducing emotional and behavior problems in children and adolescents. When there is no way to avoid grouping deviant adolescents, it is critical to provide substantial supervision, to be sensitive to opportunities for deviancy training, and to evaluate the potential of deviant peer contagion.

Table 3. Alternatives Aggregating Deviant Peer in Mental Health

Effective Mental Health Programs that Offer Viable Alternatives to Aggregating Deviant Peers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individually administered treatment • Family-based interventions • Adolescent Transitions Program • Linking the Interests of Families and Teachers (LIFT) • Iowa Strengthening Families Program • Familias Unidas • Mentoring programs such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters <p style="text-align: right;">(Dodge et al., 2006b)</p>

Deviant Peer Effects and Solutions in Community Programs

Despite evidence that they may produce adverse effects, community programs that aggregate high-risk youth continue to have public support. A recent study of the widely popular 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program revealed that although the programs had a positive effect on parental employment and their feelings of safety for their children, these programs actually had an adverse effect on children. Looking at more than 1,000 children, mostly from low-income and high-risk backgrounds, who were either randomly assigned to afterschool groups or placed on a waiting list, youth assigned to the afterschool programs had higher rates of deviant behavior, school suspensions, and disciplinary actions than those not in the program.

Community programs are often used to reduce the impact of street gangs. Street gangs are an example of deviant peer groups that appear to increase delinquency (Dodge et al. 2006b). A number of these interventions, however, such as assigning community workers to work with gangs, increase gang cohesion and appear to increase delinquency instead of reducing it (Klein, 2006). Community programs that reduce gang cohesion are more likely to be successful.

Community programs that combine high- and low-risk youth such as sports, music clubs, scouts, and church activities reduce deviant peer influences. Providing more structure, teaching social skills, and creating opportunities for at-risk youth to interact with adults in positive settings, as opposed to simply providing a place for youth to hang out, appear to make community programs more effective. The most effective community programs are those that succeed at linking at-risk youth with prosocial mentors and work to build social networks between deviant youth and prosocial peers.

Legal and Organizational Structures

Many of the programs that avoid placing deviant peers in groups involve keeping adolescents in their homes, in their schools, and in their communities. Making these programs work and acceptable to the public will require appropriate legal and organizational structures that can assure the public we can control deviant adolescents in community settings.

Various kinds of therapeutic or problem-solving courts, including drug courts, mental health courts, and family courts, can support community interventions because they allow judges to keep jurisdiction and monitor clients in the community. Likewise a number of states are adopting new legal tools such as community commitment orders and psychiatric advanced directives, which also provide new ways to control behavior in community settings (Rosch and Lederman, 2006).

Table 4. Ways to Avoid Aggregating Deviant Peer in Community Programs

Community Programs that Offer Viable Alternatives to Aggregating Deviant Peers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal, environment-centered programs that focus on schoolwide reform • Public or private organizations that are open to all youth, regardless of risk status, and that provide structure and adult involvement (e.g., religious groups, service clubs, Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs) • School-based extracurricular activities • Encouragement of commitments outside of gangs (e.g., to jobs, family roles, military service, mentors) • Early childhood interventions such as the Perry Preschool program • Job Corps • Policing programs that target high-crime neighborhoods where high-risk youth congregate • Community efforts to reduce marginalization of specific groups of youth <p style="text-align: right;">(Dodge et al., 2006b)</p>

Many of the most cost-effective community and family-based programs that are recommended in this article are complex, with juveniles crossing between different social service systems. Although many of these programs are less expensive than traditional programs, they often rely on blending funding from multiple sources. Despite numerous U.S. Government Accounting Office reports recommending that money follow children, and despite the President's New Freedom Commission Report on Mental Health and countless other reports, legal barriers often block using federal and state funds to effectively serve juveniles as they move between systems. Also unclear is whether federal, and often state, service definitions will allow payment for the kinds of networked community-based services called for by federal policy directives and recommended in this article.

These kinds of programs also require new models of cooperation between agencies. Agencies often claim they cannot share the information to make these programs work because of federal privacy rules. Although each of these could be a major impediment to adopting the kinds of programs recommended in this article, states and communities are moving forward and adopting programs that avoid aggregating deviant youth. Changing the structure of programs that serve adolescents is possible. Juvenile programs can always use more money, but the greatest challenge is to find ways to use what is known in order to change what is done.

Summary Recommendations of the Duke University Executive Sessions on Deviant Peer Contagion

- Ineffective programs, placements, and treatments that aggregate deviant peers listed should be avoided whenever possible.
- Effective alternatives to deviant peer-group placement should be encouraged.
- When placement with deviant peers is unavoidable, specific measures should be implemented to minimize deviant peer influence. These include avoiding placing highly susceptible youth (slightly delinquent early adolescents); avoiding placing deviant youth with older, more deviant peers; employing experienced leaders; creating highly structured environments and closely monitoring behavior and "hot spots"; using positive reward structures; trying to create a prosocial culture; using behavioral approaches; and making the duration of group programs as short as possible.
- Practitioners, programs, and policymakers should document placements and rigorously evaluate effects of those placements. This should include a description of placement

environment and a description of those placed in the program.

- Scholars should develop a scientific consensus on both the methods and the set of variables to be measured in evaluating interventions and should encourage evaluation reports to include these measured variables.⁹

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9. All recommendations are discussed in greater detail in Part III of Dodge et al. 2006a.