

# INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

## Training Curriculum

### *Improving Responses to Youth Charged with Status Offenses*

Based on the Coalition for Juvenile Justice's  
*National Standards for the Care of Youth Charged with Status Offenses*

### ***Module 2: Efforts to Avoid Court Involvement***

## In This Module

### Trainer Notes

- 1 Education, Social Services, Community-Based, Child Welfare, Runaway and Homeless Youth, Mental Health, Law Enforcement, and Juvenile Justice Systems
- 2 Law Enforcement
- 3 Education
- 4 Child Welfare, Juvenile Justice, and Runaway and Homeless Youth Systems
- 5 Court Intake Personnel

# Module 2: Efforts to Avoid Court Involvement

Duration of Instruction: 85 - 110 Minutes

## Trainer Notes

Module 2 of this curriculum, which corresponds to Section 2 of the *National Standards*, discusses key principles and practices that shape how education, social service, community-based, child welfare, runaway and homeless youth, mental health, law enforcement, and juvenile justice systems should first respond to youth and families at risk and in need of immediate assistance. They offer guidance to professionals on how to identify the reason(s) the child and family have been referred to them and select and deliver the best early intervention services to help avoid court involvement.

Module 2 is divided into five parts, based on the systems or type of professionals addressed:

1. Education, social service, community-based, child welfare, runaway and homeless youth, mental health, law enforcement, and juvenile justice systems
2. Law enforcement systems
3. Education systems
4. Child welfare, juvenile justice, and runaway and homeless youth systems
5. Court intake personnel

Instructors should target their training to the audience, focusing more or less on each of these sections depending on whether the targeted system is represented. No matter who is in the audience, all of these recommendations should be touched on at least briefly, since all of these systems must work together to serve status offenders.

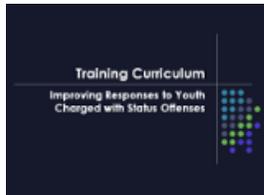
Instructor Cues

## Part 1: Education, Social Service, Community-Based, Child Welfare, Runaway and Homeless Youth, Mental Health, Law Enforcement, and Juvenile Justice Systems

### Principle 1: Voluntary Diversion Services



10-15 minutes



Slide 1-8

Begin by sharing the Standard in full:

**Aim to resolve all status offense matters through the provision of voluntary diversion services.**

Share the following background information:

*Status offense behaviors are low-level "offenses" that would not be an offense but for the child's age. They are often symptomatic of larger issues the child faces in the home, school, or community and may be less a reflection of the child's risky behavior and more an indication of his or her unmet health, mental health, educational, or family needs.*

Key discussion points to include:

- *Youth alleged to have committed status offenses, who are formally processed through the court system, may be more likely to re-enter the justice system and experience other negative individual and family outcomes. This includes increased tension between family members, harmful repercussions to formal education, or unmet mental health needs.*
- *Research has shown that formal justice system processing in and of itself can have a negative impact on youth, increasing the likelihood of future justice system involvement.*
- *Entering the formal court system can have many damaging effects on a child and family that may cause them more harm and/or amplify the issues that brought them into the system. For example, in "incurability" or runaway cases, formal court processing may make the dynamic between parent and child worse and more adversarial.*
- *In cases where the parent is an adverse party, court involvement may cause the child to feel resentment towards his or her parents or to feel abandoned.*
- *If the child has entered the system because of a systemic failure in identifying, for example, a disability or abuse/neglect, being treated as an "offender" may never*

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adequately address the child's or family's needs, while pinning a stigmatizing label – one with collateral consequences – on a youth.

- Studies indicate that diversion programs for low-level delinquency offenders have a more positive effect than formal court involvement and are more cost effective. The same studies indicate that the best outcomes for public safety occur when the least restrictive interventions are offered. When implemented well, voluntary diversion approaches, such as those discussed in Principles 6 and 7 of Module 1, better help families resolve conflicts, increase services to children in need, cost less, and ultimately reduce the likelihood of re-entering the status offense or delinquency court system.
- Stakeholders must take care to prevent information researched in treatment or diversion services (e.g., assessments or evaluations of youth, and statements made by youth in proceedings, services, or meetings) from being used against them in any dependency, delinquency, or criminal proceedings. This is particularly important where such evaluations are conducted, or statements are made, prior to the appointment of counsel.



## Program Example



## Slide 9



## Trainer Prep



## Policy Point

**Program Spotlight:** Share the following example, taken from the Vera Institute of Justice Status Offense Reform Center's *Notes from the Field: New York City* (full citation below):

In New York City, before a petition can be filed in the court, the youth must be referred to the Family Assessment Program for services and assessment, including evidence-based programs. There must be a substantial likelihood that new or additional diversion programs would be of no benefit to the family before the case may proceed to court. Performance-based contracts are used to pay service providers. Out-of-home placements for status offense cases decreased 20% during the program's first two years. Between 2009 and 2012, out-of-home placements decreased 50%.

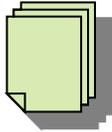
**Trainer Prep:** As part of your preparation for this training, develop a list of diversion programs available in your jurisdiction, along with any relevant state statutes or agency policy. Incorporate this information into the PowerPoint slides for this section or create a handout to distribute and discuss.

**Policy Point:** Share the following policy recommendation from the *National Standards*. If time allows, and depending on the types of professionals present, lead a discussion on how this policy change could be implemented in your jurisdiction.

## Instructor Cues



Slide 10



Resources



Slide 11

State and local authorities should take the position that juvenile court intervention should be avoided or limited in those instances where the young person is alleged to have committed a status offense. Policies in support of this position will eliminate the ability of a family member, school, or other stakeholder to petition status behaviors to the juvenile court. Alternatively, state and local policymakers should establish a continuum of care that is separate and apart from the courts and the juvenile justice system, relying on non-judicial interventions to respond to status behaviors.

**Resources/References/Handouts:**

Status Offense Reform Center. (2013). "Notes from the Field: New York City." Available at: <http://www.statusoffensereform.org/resource/notes-field-new-york-city-ny>.

Status Offense Reform Center. (2013). "From Courts to Communities: The Right Response to Truancy, Running Away, and Other Status Offenses." Available at:

<http://www.statusoffensereform.org/resource/courts-communities-right-response-truancy-running-away-status-offenses>.

Allina Boutilier, Marcia Cohen/Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (2009). "Diversion Literature Review." Available at: <http://www2.dsgonline.com/dso/Diversion.pdf>.

National Juvenile Justice Network. (2012). "The Truth about Consequences—Studies Point towards Sparing Use of Formal Juvenile Justice System Processing and Incarceration." Available at: [http://www.njjn.org/uploads/digital-library/NJJN-Truth-about-Consequences\\_Fact-Sheet-FINAL\\_Jan23-2012.pdf](http://www.njjn.org/uploads/digital-library/NJJN-Truth-about-Consequences_Fact-Sheet-FINAL_Jan23-2012.pdf).

Lourdes Rosado, Riya Shah/Juvenile Law Center. (2007). "Protecting Youth from Self-Incrimination when Undergoing Screening, Assessment and Treatment within the Juvenile Justice System." Available at: [http://www.jlc.org/sites/default/files/publication\\_pdfs/protectingyouth.pdf](http://www.jlc.org/sites/default/files/publication_pdfs/protectingyouth.pdf).

State Training and Technical Assistance Center. (2014). "Civil Citations in Juvenile Justice: An Alternative to Punitive Sanctions" (webinar). Available at: <http://juvjustice.org/2014-webinars>.

## Principle 2: Family Circumstances and Unmet Needs

Begin by sharing the Standard in full:

***Determine the proper course of action by identifying the family circumstances, unmet needs, or other factors that led to contact with the status offense system.***



10-15 minutes

Instructor Cues

Slide 12-16

Share the following background information:

*The status offense process is typically not the best way to serve youth and families with unmet needs. Other formal or informal systems, or processes that could address the youth's issues, include mental health, social service or community-based services, family court (custody), special education, child welfare, emancipation, or civil commitment proceedings.*

Key discussion points to include:

- *While youth charged with status offenses become involved with the justice system because of behaviors that pose little risk to society, they often come from chaotic and even dangerous homes and communities, and may have witnessed or been victims of violence. They or their families may be struggling with trauma, mental health issues, substance abuse, or other challenges.*
- *Youth may also enter the status offense system because of the failure of other systems (e.g., schools, child welfare) to appropriately identify and address their needs.*
- *It is essential that youth who have allegedly committed status offenses receive appropriate screening to identify physical, mental health (including trauma or substance abuse issues), and special education needs, and that their physical and emotional safety is ensured.*



## Action Steps



Slide 17-18

**Action Steps for Change:**

- *Juvenile justice, child welfare, and community-based services should use evidence-based or empirically-supported screening tools to triage institutional responses and assessment tools to identify areas in which a youth may need assistance. (As discussed earlier, however, screening and assessment information should never be collected or shared in such a way that it could be used against the youth.) Instructor's note: The National Standards and the citations therein include additional information about screening and assessment tools, and their use in juvenile justice cases.*
- *Youth-serving systems should make reasonable efforts to provide services and supports for children in their own homes and schools before a child is charged with a status offense. (This recommendation is modeled after the requirements for such efforts in child welfare cases.)*
- *Professionals should avoid increasing youth and family contact with the system solely or primarily for the purpose of*

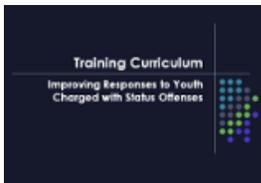
Instructor Cues

accessing services.

- As professionals learn more about a particular youth and family, they should consider (and re-consider as new information comes to light) whether another system or community-based alternative may better respond to the family's or child's needs.
- When youth are working with more than one system provider, or have their case transferred from one system to another, professionals should share and use information effectively, without violating the youth's due process and privacy rights.



## Resource Spotlight



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**Resource Spotlight:** The American Bar Association's *Representing Juvenile Status Offenders* was written for attorneys representing youth in status offense cases, but includes information and guidance that can be used by any professional who works on status offense matters. Its authors suggest that when deciding whether another formal or informal system or services would be more appropriate, professionals should consider:

- What circumstances at home, school, or in the community might the youth be responding or reacting to?
- Which services or systems does the youth prefer to work with?
- What resources or services does the youth need and what course of action will most likely provide what is needed?
- What is the youth's relationship with his or her parents and how willing are the parents to work with the different systems or service providers? (e.g., does the child need to be protected through a child welfare case; would the parents be willing advocates for the child in a special education hearing?)
- What are the legal consequences of system involvement? (e.g., a juvenile court record)
- Which system or community-based provider has the ability to move the child into the best possible placement, if necessary? (e.g., if conflict with a parent is an issue, would a change of custody to a noncustodial parent or relative be more appropriate; if the child needs inpatient mental health services, could those be provided through the mental health system?)



## Resources

**Resources/References/Handouts:**

Hannah Benton, et al./American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law. (2010). "Representing Juvenile Status Offenders."

## Instructor Cues



Slide 20



15-20 minutes



Slide 21-26

Available at: [http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/migrated/child/PublicDocuments/RJSO\\_FINAL.authcheckdam.pdf](http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/migrated/child/PublicDocuments/RJSO_FINAL.authcheckdam.pdf).

Status Offense Reform Center. (2014). "Planning and Implementing System Change: A Toolkit for Status Offense System Reform" (module 3). Available at: [http://www.statusoffensereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/SORC\\_Module3\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.statusoffensereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/SORC_Module3_FINAL.pdf).

### Principle 3: Training for First Responders

Begin by sharing the Standard in full:

***Train professionals who first respond to alleged status offenses about family and community dynamics and other factors that can cause status behaviors, as well as the availability and role of screenings, assessments, and services.***

Share the following background information:

*Training is critical for first responders in the child welfare, education, juvenile justice, law enforcement, social service, mental health, and runaway and homeless youth systems. Educating responders on the various home, community, and school factors that contribute to or cause status behaviors will equip them to contribute to and implement a system that tailors approaches to the specific needs of each child and family.*

Key discussion points to include:

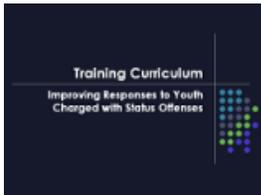
- *Training should give first responders the ability to recognize signs of trauma, disability, and mental health issues, as well as put behavior in the proper cultural and socioeconomic contexts.*
- *Training may include the following, many of which are covered in this training curriculum and in greater detail in the National Standards:*
  - *Research the effect of court involvement and detention on youth.*
  - *Research regarding the factors associated with each type of status offense, including discussions of risk factors in the home, community, and school.*
  - *How systemic failures may lead to status offense system involvement.*
  - *Adolescent development, trauma, and the impact of exposure to violence and victimization.*
  - *Disproportionate minority contact and cultural competence.*
  - *Gender differences and responding to LGBTQ/GNC youth.*

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- *Issues relating to youth with disabilities.*
- *School system policies, including discipline practices, and the role of bullying in truant behavior.*
- *Screening and assessment instruments and services (training should also cover how to access screening and assessment in the community.)*
- *Training should focus on the whole child and family by ensuring first responders are aware of services in a variety of areas that often affect families who enter the status offense system. As a result, providers will be able to identify more quickly where the family or child needs help and link them to the proper assistance without involving the court system (e.g., housing, mental health, education, vocational programs and services)*
- *Whenever possible, cross-training of professionals from different systems and service providers should be offered. This allows professionals in different agencies to address issues in consistent and complementary ways, while reducing costs.*



## Q&amp;A



Slide 27

**Q&A:** Ask participants to share their experiences or their agencies' requirements around training. Questions could include:

- How frequently are professionals in your agency offered training opportunities?
- Are they required to attend trainings?
- What topics are covered?
- Are professionals from different agencies, or different roles within the agency (e.g., attorneys and social workers) trained together? Which groups have you offered or attended trainings with?
- Are impacted families and youth included as presenters or co-trainees?



## Resources



Slide 26

**Resources/References/Handouts:**

International Association of Chiefs of Police. (2011). "Juvenile Justice Training Needs Assessment: A Survey of Law Enforcement." Available at: <http://www.theiacp.org/portals/0/pdfs/2011JuvenileJusticeTrainingNeedsAssessmentofLawEnforcement.pdf>.

Connecticut Office of Policy and Management. (nd). "Effective Police Interactions with Youth Training Curriculum." Available at: <http://www.ct.gov/opm/cwp/view.asp?q=460244>.

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10 minutes



Slide 28-31

## Part 2: Law Enforcement Systems

### Principle 4: Avoiding Charges and Detention

Begin by sharing the Standard in full:

**Law enforcement systems should focus on prevention and intervention by connecting children and families to needed services in lieu of charging or detaining children alleged to have committed status offenses.**

Share the following background information:

Juvenile court involvement should be the last resort for law enforcement and used only after available alternatives have been exhausted. Officers should manage their arrest and custody authority in ways that trigger court involvement only in limited cases where pre-court diversion efforts have been unsuccessful. When safety appears to be a central issue, officers should strongly consider whether another system or community-based provider would provide better protections and services. Officers should not detain youth who have allegedly committed a status offense. (The dangers of detention will be discussed in more detail in Module 3 of this Curriculum.)

Key discussion points to include:

- Pre-court detention can be avoided when officers critically assess whether the child can return home (which may include contacting another first responder, such as a social service agency, to help make this determination) or identify temporary kinship or respite care options for the child, pending the implementation of services or assistance that would allow the child to safely return home.
- Often, a youth's behavior is a function of their perceived options. When dealing with youth engaged in status behaviors, officers should investigate why the youth chose a particular course of action and how his or her environment—school, home, or community—played a role in that choice. Officers should then contact the appropriate informal support system, community-based service provider, or formal service system to further assist the child and family.
- Like all professionals working with youth alleged to have committed status offense, law enforcement officers should seek to uncover the family, community, and youth circumstances underlying the behaviors youth are exhibiting.



Resources

#### **Resources/References/Handouts:**

International Association of Chiefs of Police, Youth Focused Policing Resource Center (website). Available at: <http://www.iacpyouth.org/>. (Includes the Improving Law Enforcement Responses to Youth



Slide 32



15-20 minutes



Slide 33-38

Training and Technical Assistance Project).

Strategies for Youth: Connecting Cops and Kids (website). Available at: <http://strategiesforyouth.org/>.

## Part 3: Education Systems

### Principle 5: Responses to Truancy

Begin by sharing the Standard in full:

**Implement responses to truancy that match the reasons youth are absent from school and that aim to avoid court involvement, school suspension, or expulsion.**

Share the following background information:

*Addressing issues relating to truancy and chronic absenteeism are particularly important because research has shown that missing school is a significant risk factor for later drug use, delinquency, adult criminality, suicide attempts, and employment problems. Early identification and intervention for truant youth can help avoid status offense and/or justice system involvement that may not only harm the young person, but his or her school and community.*

Key discussion points to include:

- *Responding to truancy should always involve working with the youth and family to identify and address the underlying reasons for school absence.*
- *Contributors to truancy can include:*
  - *School factors such as poor identification of special education needs, unsafe environments, inadequate record keeping, and attendance policies.*
  - *Family or community risk factors such as child abuse or neglect, financial or medical needs that require youth to assist the family, violence near school or home, or cultural-based attitudes towards education.*
  - *Factors specific to youth such as being held back, low academic achievement, low self-esteem, and gang involvement.*
- *Minority youth may be more likely to be petitioned to the court for truancy, and although there is no good national data on the prevalence of truancy, dropout rates (often used as a proxy for truancy) are clearly higher for minority youth.*
- *The National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention has said, "research indicates that truancy can be reduced by programs and activities*

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*designed to improve the overall school environment (and its safety), attach children and their families to the school, and enable schools to respond to the different learning styles and cultures of children."*

- *Other research has looked at characteristics of successful truancy reduction programs and found that important commonalities include:*
  - *Implementation of effective and relevant consequences for truancy.*
  - *Motivational strategies used to bolster attendance.*
  - *Truancy reduction services offered in the school and accessible community locations.*
  - *Schools partnering with other social service providers and systems to implement truancy reduction initiatives.*
  - *Families being meaningfully engaged in meetings, services, and other interventions.*



## Action Steps



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**Action Steps for Change:**

The steps that school system professionals should take when presented with truancy charges may vary by the size and resource level of the school district. In general, schools should:

- *Start by contacting the family and following up with a home or school visit.*
- *Meet with the youth and family to identify reasons why the child may be truant.*
- *Once the issues underlying the truancy are identified, make appropriate referrals or identify community or other system partners who can help address identified needs. Develop a plan with the youth and family to resolve the issues.*
- *Monitor and follow up. Make additional referrals if identified services are not helping or new issues arise,*
- *Review the plan if no progress is made and consider involving the school principal, a truancy review board, or a school-based truancy or youth court, if available.*

School districts can also address truancy while avoiding court involvement by:

- *Offering home visits with truancy officers who can work with families and make service referrals*
- *Using truancy review boards.*

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- *Creating school-based truancy or youth courts, if not currently available.*
- *Providing alternative learning environments/programs such as independent study or night school classes.*
- *Using cost-benefit analyses using Average Daily Attendance figures and data on the relationship between attendance and standardized test scores to support hiring or retaining staff able to focus on this issue.*
- *Creating memoranda of understanding or other types of information sharing agreements so systems can work together.*
- *Co-locating services in the schools (e.g., providing space for community mental health providers who can provide services and bill Medicaid, rather than the school).*
- *Cross-training professionals from different systems (see Principle 3 in this module.)*



## Program Example



Slide 41-42

**Program Spotlight:** Share the following examples, both of which were highlighted in the Coalition for Juvenile Justice's *Positive Power: Exercising Judicial Leadership to Prevent Court Involvement and Incarceration of Non-Delinquent Youth*, and in the Status Offense Reform Center's *Notes from the Field* (full citation below):

Benton and Franklin Counties in Washington use a three-pronged approach that focuses on (1) preventing youth from skipping school, (2) retaining youth in schools by providing special services to address their needs, and (3) re-engaging youth who drop out of school by providing a counselor and services. As a result of this program,, contempt-level truancy petitions decreased by 40% between 2007 and 2011.

Clayton County, Georgia, uses a court-wide Truancy Intervention and Other Status Youth Protocol. The protocol mandates that county schools cannot petition a chronically absent student to court until:

- The student has first been referred to a multi-disciplinary child study team.
- The child study team has conducted an assessment and evaluation of the child to determine the underlying causes of his/her truant behavior.
- The child study team has developed an individualized treatment plan for the child.

Under this protocol, a petition for truancy can only be filed if the child or parent refuses to cooperate or a court order is necessary to access services that are otherwise unavailable. Under no

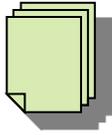
Instructor Cues

circumstances can the student be detained as punishment for not attending school.



## Trainer Prep

**Trainer Prep:** As part of your preparation for this training, develop a list of local programs or services available in your jurisdiction that are designed to address truancy, chronic absenteeism, or underlying causes of truancy, along with any relevant state statutes or agency policy. Incorporate this information into the PowerPoint slides for this section or create a handout to distribute and discuss.



## Resources

**Resources/References/Handouts:**

Coalition for Juvenile Justice. (2012). "Positive Power: Exercising Judicial Leadership to Prevent Court Involvement and Incarceration of Non-Delinquent Youth." Available at:

<http://www.juvjustice.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/Judicial%20Leadership%2007112012%20FINAL.pdf>.



## Slide 43-44

Status Offense Reform Center. (2013). "Notes from the Field: Benton and Franklin Counties, Washington." Available at:

[http://www.statusoffensereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/BentonFranklin\\_Final-correction.pdf](http://www.statusoffensereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/BentonFranklin_Final-correction.pdf).

Status Offense Reform Center. (2014). "Notes from the Field: Clayton County, Georgia." Available at:

[http://www.statusoffensereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Clayton\\_Final.pdf](http://www.statusoffensereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Clayton_Final.pdf).

Status Offense Reform Center. (2013). "Notes from the Field: Spokane County, Washington." Available at:

[http://www.statusoffensereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Spokane\\_Final.pdf](http://www.statusoffensereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Spokane_Final.pdf).

U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (nd). "Model Programs Guide: Truancy Prevention." Available at:

[http://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/Truancy\\_Prevention.pdf](http://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/Truancy_Prevention.pdf).

Coalition for Juvenile Justice. (2014). "Addressing Truancy and Other Status Offenses." Available at:

<http://www.juvjustice.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/Guidance%20For%20Education%20Professionals%20and%20Systems.pdf>.

Status Offense Reform Center. (2013). "Truancy: A Research Brief." Available at:

[http://www.statusoffensereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Truancy\\_Final2.pdf](http://www.statusoffensereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Truancy_Final2.pdf).

Charles Walls/Institute for Urban and Minority Education. (2003). "New Approaches to Truancy Prevention in Urban Schools." Available at:

<http://www.ericdigests.org/2004-2/truancy.html>.

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Attendance Works (website). Available at:  
[www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org).

National Center for School Engagement (website). Available at:  
<http://schoolengagement.org/>.

University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration. (nd).  
"Check & Connect: A Comprehensive Student Engagement  
Intervention" (website). Available at:  
<http://checkandconnect.umn.edu/>.

## Part 4: Child Welfare, Juvenile Justice, and Runaway and Homeless Youth Systems

### Principle 6: Implementing Responses Tailored to the Underlying Issues Families Face



15-20 minutes



Slide 45-49

Begin by sharing the Standard in full:

***Child welfare, juvenile justice, and runaway and homeless youth systems should implement responses to alleged status behaviors that aim to avoid court involvement and are tailored to the reasons the youth and family have been referred to those systems.***

Share the following background information:

*One of the most important things a professional can do when first responding to an alleged status offense is make reasonable efforts to learn the cause of the youth's contact with the agency.*

Key discussion points to include:

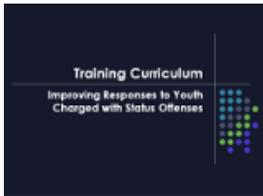
- *Research has shown that running away from home is predicted by greater depression symptoms than peers, lack of parental support, school disengagement, and heavier substance use.*
- *"Ungovernable" behavior may be predicted by poor relational dynamics with parents, mental or physical health problems, or alcohol or drug use. (Some emotional or social problems are developmentally normal for adolescents, however.)*
- *Using valid and reliable screening instruments, and understanding the key risk factors correlated to these behaviors, is critical to helping identify and respond to the behaviors appropriately.*
- *First responder agencies should watch for adolescents who are referred to them because of status behaviors, when in fact the youth is a victim of abuse or neglect. Intake procedures that take sufficient time to assess the reason*

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*behind the referral will help identify abuse or neglect.*



## Action Steps



Slide 50

**Action Steps for Change:**

How child welfare, juvenile justice, and runaway and homeless youth agencies first respond to youth will vary from community to community depending on state laws, agency policies, and available resources. However, all professionals providing an initial response to an alleged status offense should:

- *Seek to identify the reason the youth and family has been referred to the agency, which may include the use of valid and reliable screening or assessment tools.*
- *Consider whether any status offense system involvement is needed or (particularly in first-time, low risk cases) if the family and youth would be better served if the system took no action and simply provided the family with a list of community resources.*
- *Develop a safety and service plan with the child and family that they can implement voluntarily and with which they can reasonably comply.*
- *Utilize the least restrictive alternatives when considering appropriate service or placement referrals, such as in-home services, limited respite care, or a cooling off period, where appropriate.*
- *Keep in mind what the long term goal is for the youth and family when making service referrals or implementing a service or safety plan.*



## Case Study



Slide 51-52

**Case Study:** Vincent's Story

Vincent is a 12-year-old who attends Central Middle School. He was removed from his parents' house because of physical and sexual abuse and placed in a foster home. Vincent did not get along with his foster parents and ran away. He was placed in a different foster home and ran away again, this time attempting to return to his biological family. A biological aunt agreed to be Vincent's relative (kinship) foster placement, until Vincent's mother was approved to care for him.

At the aunt's home, as in his previous foster placements, Vincent exhibited a temper and damaged his aunt's home and property. After three months of this behavior, during which time Vincent saw a therapist once every two weeks, Vincent's aunt decided she could no longer care for Vincent. She called the child welfare agency to ask that he be assigned to a new foster home.

When Vincent found out, he ran away. While the child welfare agency does not know where he has been staying at night, he does attend school most days. One evening a patrolling police officer

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discovered Vincent asleep in an alley in the business district and arrested him. Vincent spent the night in a juvenile detention center because his parents were not sure if they were allowed to take custody of him.

**Questions for Discussion:**

- *What are the underlying issues that led to Vincent's court involvement?*
- *What services, policies, or trainings available in your jurisdiction could have helped Vincent and his family?*
- *What services, policies, or trainings not currently available in your jurisdiction could have helped Vincent and his family?*



## Multimedia



## Resources



## Slide 53

**Multimedia:** Show video of Ohio Judge Linda Tucci Teodosio discussing youth who run away: [https://youtu.be/rzrz35O\\_qfE](https://youtu.be/rzrz35O_qfE).

**Resources/References/Handouts:**

Joan Tucker, et al. (2011). "Running Away From Home: A Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Risk Factors and Young Adult Outcomes." Available at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3021590/>.

Development Services Group. (2009). "Ungovernable/Incorrigible Youth Literature Review. Developed for the Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention." Available at: <http://www2.dsgonline.com/dso/Ungovernable%20Youth%20Literature%20Review.pdf>.

Coalition for Juvenile Justice. (2014). "Ungovernable and Runaway Youth." Available at: <http://www.juvjustice.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/Ungovernable%20and%20Runaway%20Youth%20Guidance.pdf>.

Coalition for Juvenile Justice. (2014). "Running Away: Finding Solutions that Work for Youth and their Communities." Available at: <http://www.juvjustice.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/Runaway%20Emerging%20Issues%20Brief%20FINAL.pdf>.

Vera Institute of Justice. (2013). From Courts to Communities: The Right Response to Truancy, Running Away, and Other Status Offenses. Available at: <http://www.vera.org/sites/default/files/resources/downloads/from-courts-to-communities-response-to-status-offenses-v2.pdf>.

Status Offense Reform Center. (2013). "Runaway Youth: A Research Brief." Available at: [http://www.statusoffensereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Running-Away\\_Final.pdf](http://www.statusoffensereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Running-Away_Final.pdf).

Status Offense Reform Center. (2014). "Planning and Implementing System Change: A Toolkit for Status Offense System Reform" (module

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3). Available at: [http://www.statusoffensereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/SORC\\_Module3\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.statusoffensereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/SORC_Module3_FINAL.pdf).

## Part 5: Court Intake Personnel

### Principle 7: Accepting Jurisdiction over Status Offense Cases



10 minutes



Slide 54-59

Begin by sharing the Standard in full:

***Court intake personnel should not accept jurisdiction over any status offense case until it has been determined that the applicable statutory requirements were met and that the agency that first responded to the claim made reasonable efforts to avoid court involvement by exhausting all available culturally appropriate pre-court assessments, services, entitlements, and treatments.***

Share the following background information:

The juvenile justice system is based on the assumption that courts are capable of responding to youths' needs with resources. This assumption is increasingly unfounded. Overloaded case dockets and the scarcity of services available argue for diverting youth away from the courts and redirecting them to other parts of social service systems' safety nets.

Key discussion points to include:

- Court systems should, consistent with research about the dangers of justice system involvement, make every effort to avoid petitioned status offense cases.
- Courts must critically assess what efforts first responders made to identify the reason the youth was referred to them and to implement a proper course of action that exhausts all available resources to help the child and family resolve their problems outside of court.
- In many instances, the courts' ideal role is to coordinate responses and warn parents of the consequences of failure to address the circumstances and causes of their children's behavior while directing cases into other appropriate systems.
- Courts should develop clear protocols for intake officers to follow for each type of status offense to assure that no case is petitioned before the intake officer has determined that every reasonable effort was made to avoid court involvement.
- For all status offense referrals, intake officers should review pre-court efforts with an emphasis on diversion services, assessments, and treatments that identify the cause of the

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*case referral, enhance the family's capacity to address its own problems, and provide a safe environment for the child.*

- *Intake officers should also ensure that the child and family were able to utilize applicable federal or state entitlement programs that would make formal court processing unnecessary. (These programs will be discussed in more detail in Module 3).*
- *Intake officers must also assess whether the alleged behaviors meet the statutory definition of the status offense and that all statutory prerequisites to court involvement were followed. (For example, many state statutes use terms like "habitual," "without good cause," or "intentional" to describe status behaviors. They may also require education or juvenile justice systems to provide certain services or assistance before they can petition cases to court.) The intake officer should screen out cases that do not meet statutory criteria.*



## Trainer Prep



## Multimedia

**Trainer Prep:** As part of your preparation for this training, develop a description of the relevant intake processes used in your jurisdiction and obtain copies of any relevant forms, statutes, or policies. Incorporate this information into the PowerPoint slides for this section, or create a handout to distribute and discuss.

**Multimedia:** Show video of Ohio Judge Linda Tucci Teodosio discussing the importance of intake officers:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jD3i4Y3k2Oc>.