Planning and Implementing Status Offense System Change

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Presentation Outline

• Background
• What System Change Looks Like
• Planning and Implementing System Change
  • Key Steps
  • Experiences from the Field – CT and KY
• Q & A

Background
What are status offenses?

- **Status Offenses**: Non-criminal behaviors prohibited by law only because of an individual’s status as a minor
  - Common status offenses across the country: running away, truancy, ungovernability, liquor law violations, and curfew violations
- States use varying terminology for youth who are charged with status offenses:
  - Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS)
  - Children in Need of Services (CHINS)
  - Conduct Indicating a Need for Supervision (CINS)
  - Families with Service Needs (FWSN)
  - Families in Need of Services (FINS)

Why Status Offense Reform

- In 2010, juvenile courts across the country processed 137,000 status offense cases.
- In 36% of these cases, the most serious allegation was truancy – that’s nearly 50,000 kids taken to court for skipping school.
- Despite the noncriminal nature of these behaviors, youth in approximately 10,400 cases spent time in detention.
- In 6,100 cases, the court disposition was a longer-term placement in a residential facility.

Why Status Offense Reform

- Courts often over-burdened
- Lack of immediate and appropriate crisis response
- High financial and social cost of the juvenile justice system, particularly for non-criminal behavior
- More effective alternatives
What System Change Looks Like

A new paradigm has been emerging in many jurisdictions:

- Connect struggling families with social services in their communities, instead of turning to courts.
- The MacArthur Foundation supported and encouraged this shift in its Models for Change initiative.
- Vera has provided technical assistance and research support to more than 30 jurisdictions across the country in this area since 2001.

What does system change look like?

5 Features of Effective Community-Based Responses to Status Offenses:

- Diversion from court
- An immediate response
- Accessible and effective services
- A process to triage cases
- Internal assessment
Highlights of System Reform Outcomes

- **Florida:** Courts now handle only 4% of status offense referrals, resulting in a $160 million cost avoidance.
- **New York State:** 70% decrease in court petitions between 2003 and 2012.
- **Calcasieu Parish, LA:** Courts now handle only 1% of status offense referrals.
- **Clark County, WA:** In a 3-year period, the proportion of truancy referrals resulting in court involvement decreased from 40% to 10%.

Guidance on *How* to Bring About Change

- **Vera’s Status Offense Reform Center (SORC)**
  - Funded and supported by the MacArthur Foundation, as part of the Resource Center Partnership

  **Mission**
  - To help policymakers and practitioners create effective, community-based responses for keeping youth who commit status offenses out of the juvenile justice system and safely in their homes and communities.

  **What does SORC provide?**
  - A range of tools, resources, and information to help guide system transformation

Featured Resource: A Toolkit for Status Offense System Reform

- Step-by-step guide outlining how to undertake a status offense reform effort
  - Module 1: Structuring System Change
  - Module 2: Using Local Information to Guide System Change
  - Module 3: Planning and Implementing System Change
  - Module 4: Monitoring and Sustaining System Change (coming soon)
Planning and Implementing System Change

Key Steps to Guide Planning and Implementation

• Step 1: Look to Promising Practices Across the Country
• Step 2: Prioritize Areas of Reform
• Step 3: Articulate Your Aspirations for Local Change
• Step 4: Design the Reform
• Step 5: Implement the Reform

Important Operational Questions

• What is your method of change?
• Who are you trying to help?
• How will you screen and assess your target population?
• What community-based services will you provide?
• How will you manage and monitor cases?
• Who is responsible?
• How will you pay for your reform?
• How will you measure success?
CT: Rethinking FWSN Cases

What prompted change?
- No out-of-court mechanisms for serving Families With Service Needs (FWSN), leading to many youth on probation and in detention
- 2005: Legislature prohibits detention of FWSN youth
- 2006: Legislatively-mandated advisory board created

Who propelled change?
- FWSN Advisory Board members (including judiciary) were instrumental in developing comprehensive changes to the system

CT: An Overview of Reform Approach

- Risk/needs assessment conducted to match youth’s risk to appropriate intervention
- Created Family Support Centers (FSCs), one-stop service center for youth and families needing intensive services
  - Immediate Access / Intake / Service
  - Cognitive Behavioral Groups
  - Educational Advocacy
  - Family Mediation and EBP Referrals
- Schools must take steps before referring youth to court on truancy
- Probation Supervisors can reject referrals to SCJM

FSC Design Considerations

- Risk / needs assessment
  - Target population is the neediest third
  - Expansion of scope beginning FY 14/15
- Data systems
  - CMIS, CDCS, CCAS
- Outcome measurement
  - Referrals with intakes
  - Completions
  - New FWSN referrals
  - New arrests
- Referrals to other community-based contracts
Implementation Strategies

- State run system where prescribed contracted services are procured by Judicial Branch
  - Quality Assurance of contracts
- JB CSSD Center for Best Practices
- Strong relationship with advocacy community
- Investment in staff and training
- Liaison with Department of Children and Families
- Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework
- Legislative updates, annual meetings and other forums for demonstrating outcomes

FWSN Referrals for Completers by Year – All Age Groups

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New Arrest Rate for Completers by Year – All Age Groups

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Court Intake Reduction

Juvenile Court Intake
FY 2008-2013

Detention Admission Reduction

Commitment Reduction

Commitments 2003 - 2013

Staffing 2003 - 2013
Recidivism Reduction

Other Comparison Reports

Campbell County, KY: Rethinking court diversion
Campbell County

What did the reform look like?

- Developed protocols for status offense referrals to ensure those referred meet the state definition of youth who commit status offenses
- CDW makes "warm handoff" to service provider and arranges transportation for youth and family to services
- Site Review Team establishes a comprehensive action plan for youth and family if initial service plan is unsuccessful

Design Considerations

Key discussions

- Selection and articulation of the target population
- Range of community-based services?
- Management and monitoring of cases
  - Both case by case and large picture issues through the Change Agent Team
- Paying for reform
- Measuring success

Implementation Strategies

How did Campbell County make this work?

- Selected the right Stakeholders
- Emphasize fiscal responsibility
- Engage judicial leadership
- Don’t forget to engage the frontline folks
Outcomes: Where Campbell County Stands Now

- Status Offense cases referred to Court are down by over 50%
- Services are getting initiated in a more timely manner
- Resources for parents are identified much earlier
- More attention is focused on family needs
- Legislation recently passed that will take the Campbell County model statewide starting July 2015

Outcomes: Where Campbell County, KY Stands Now

- 50% decrease in status offense court petitions from 2011 to 2012, from 174 to 84 petitions
- 29% decrease in status offense detentions from 2010 to 2012, from 85 to 60 youth

Additional Resources from the Status Offense Reform Center

- SORC Products
  - Accompanying resources for the Toolkit for Status Offense System Reform
  - Notes from the Field
  - Research Briefs
- Library
  - Central repository of information related to status offense behaviors, system responses, and reform efforts
- Other Features
  - Webinars
  - Podcasts/Videos
  - Blogs
Questions?

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