

IMPROVING YOUTH OUTCOMES IN THE TEXAS JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Building on Prior Reforms

An Analysis of Statewide Implementation of Core Principles for
Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Youth Outcomes

MARCH 2015



TEXAS
JUVENILE ★ JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT

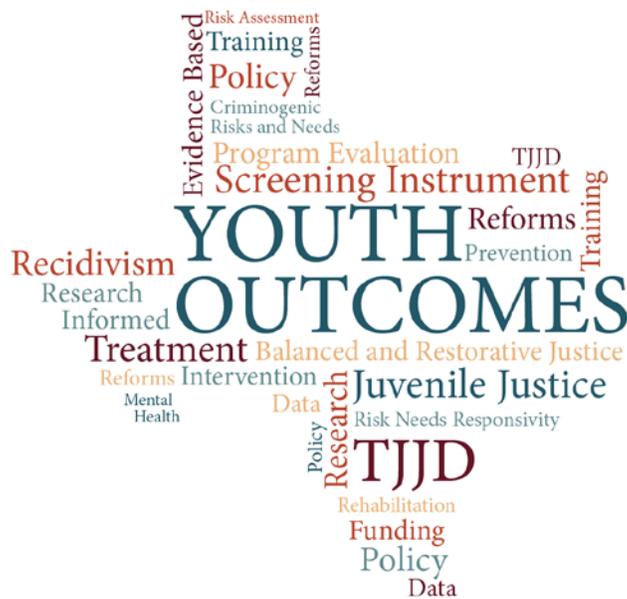
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MARCH 2015



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) and a workgroup of our local partners at juvenile probation departments throughout the state. Through this collaborative effort, the group brought together juvenile justice practitioners from small, medium and large counties who possess a wealth of practical experience. The consensus achieved and the work done was the result of frequent meetings held over the course of several months during the fall of 2014 and early 2015. The workgroup participated in the development of *Part I* of this report which provides information, analyses and recommendations regarding county-operated programs and services.

TJJD would like to thank all workgroup participants who gave generously of their time in helping prepare this report. The workgroup was composed of representatives from the seven regional chief juvenile probation officer associations, the TJJD Advisory Council on Juvenile Services, the eight counties who were the subject of the Council of State Governments Justice Center's *Closer to Home*¹ report discussed herein, and TJJD staff. Additionally, TJJD wishes to thank Deborah Fowler, Executive Director of Texas Appleseed, for her guidance, support and contributions to this report.

¹ *Closer to Home: An Analysis of the State and Local Impact of the Texas Juvenile Justice System Reforms* (Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2015).

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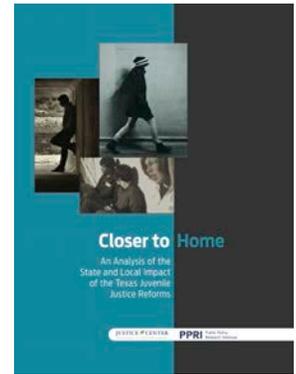
INTRODUCTION



The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center published two white papers in July 2014 that detail core principles for reducing recidivism and improving outcomes for youth in juvenile justice systems nationwide.² The white papers also contain recommendations for measuring and using juvenile recidivism data to inform policy, practice and resource allocation.³ Additionally, in January 2015, CSG released a comprehensive report on recidivism in the Texas juvenile justice system entitled *Closer to Home: An Analysis of the State and Local Impact of the Texas Juvenile Justice System Reforms*.⁴ This most recent report provides an in-depth look at the reforms made to the Texas juvenile justice system starting in 2007 and the impact of these reforms. The report provides opportunities for discussion of the next steps to enhance and build upon the prior reforms by implementing principles to improve youth outcomes and impact recidivism in a positive way.



The Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) and representatives of juvenile probation departments from across the state began meeting to discuss these reports in October of 2014 and have analyzed current practices in the community-based juvenile probation system. The workgroup sought to determine progress counties have made toward implementing the four CSG core principles and to identify opportunities for building on prior reforms. This report contains an analysis of current practices that are consistent with the core principles and also contains recommendations for continued work and improvements. Simultaneously with this workgroup, TJJD staff began a similar exercise internally to identify the



progress state-operated correctional facilities and halfway houses have made toward implementation of the core principles.

The *Executive Summary* provides an overview of this report and the key take away points from this project. The body of the report is organized into four parts. *Part I* focuses on the efforts of county juvenile probation departments statewide in achieving consistency with each of the four core principles. This section provides detail on the diverse accomplishments of juvenile probation departments and also provides recommendations to further enhance adherence to the concepts contained in the core principles. As used in *Part I*, the term *Community-Based Programs and Services* refers to disposition options at the county level provided to youth while under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. These include diversion programs, supervision programs and residential placements available in the local community or elsewhere across the state. *Part II* discusses the overall progress made by state-operated programs and facilities and the additional steps TJJD can take to further enhance the treatment and corresponding outcomes of youth committed to the custody of the state. *Part III* primarily looks at TJJD's efforts to use juvenile recidivism data for program evaluation purposes and suggests ways the agency can use juvenile data to assist stakeholders in their implementation and evaluation of evidence-based and research-informed practices. *Part IV* is a summary of the next steps to enhance the current efforts of counties and TJJD in achieving better youth outcomes. This report provides a roadmap for TJJD and county juvenile probation departments to begin a focused and intentional statewide approach to improve recidivism and youth outcomes.

² Elizabeth Seigle, Nastassia Walsh, and Josh Weber, *Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System* (New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2014). This report provides a comprehensive overview of the research on what works to reduce recidivism and improve youth outcomes by offering four core principles to guide policy makers and local officials.

³ *Measuring and Using Juvenile Recidivism Data to Inform Policy, Practice, and Resource Allocation* (New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2014). This report reviews the results of a 50-state survey of states' current efforts to measure recidivism rates among youth in the state juvenile justice system. The report also provides recommended approaches to improve the measurement, analysis, collection, reporting and use of recidivism data for youth involved with the juvenile justice system.

⁴ *Closer to Home: An Analysis of the State and Local Impact of the Texas Juvenile Justice System Reforms* (Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2015).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council of State Governments' Justice Center has synthesized research from juvenile justice experts nationally and has presented four core principles that inform and guide juvenile justice systems in achieving greater positive youth outcomes. The Texas juvenile justice system has made progress in implementing these core principles but more work remains. This report provides an overview of the progress in Texas and provides recommendations to guide continued systemic reforms.

CORE PRINCIPLE #1

Base supervision, service, and resource-allocation decisions on the results of validated risk and needs assessments.

Accomplishments

- Use of mental health screening instrument statewide for all youth detained.
- Use of risk and needs assessment for all youth referred to juvenile system.
- Use of comprehensive risk and needs assessments for all youth in state custody.
- Diversion of low risk youth from system and diversion of higher risk youth from TJJD.

Continued Work to Be Done

- Study and evaluate the feasibility of using one standard risk and needs assessment statewide to ensure more consistent data collection.
- Provide training and technical assistance to system stakeholders on effectively using risk assessment strategies and matching treatments services to youths' criminogenic needs.
- Enhance and expand diversion programs and services for low risk offenders.

CORE PRINCIPLE #2

Adopt and effectively implement programs and services demonstrated to reduce recidivism and improve other youth outcomes, and use data to evaluate system performance and direct system improvements.

Accomplishments

- Use of evidence-based and research-informed programs at many local juvenile probation departments and state-operated correctional facilities such as *Aggression Replacement Training*[®], *Motivational Interviewing*, *Functional Family Therapy*, *Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy* and *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports*.
- Statewide implementation of the state-of-the-art, web-based *Techshare.Juvenile* and *JCMS.Basic* case management system to collect and report comprehensive youth data.

Continued Work to Be Done

- Provide technical assistance to counties to enhance data collection and implement effective program evaluation strategies and recidivism studies.
- Identify funding strategies to increase implementation of evidence-based and research-informed programming and analyze fidelity to these programs.
- Improve the matching of youth needs to appropriate programs and services.

CORE PRINCIPLE #3

Employ a coordinated approach across service systems to address youth's needs.

Accomplishments

- Participation in a variety of programs partnering with key service systems to effectively address youth needs such as the *Crossover Youth Practice Model* at *Georgetown University*, the *Texas System of Care*, and the *National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice's Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Action Network*.

Continued Work to Be Done

- Facilitate regular collaboration and effective data sharing between youth-serving agencies statewide to effectively address youth risk and needs.
- Encourage the further implementation of crossover practice models for youth who are served concurrently in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

CORE PRINCIPLE #4

Tailor system policies, programs, and supervision to reflect the distinct developmental needs of adolescents.

Accomplishments

- Required training for juvenile probation officers, supervision officers and juvenile corrections officers includes adolescent development, mental health topics, gender-specific programming topics and trauma-informed care.
- Many probation departments utilize youth and family engagement strategies and youth accountability programs.

Continued Work to Be Done

- Enhance stakeholder training on balanced and restorative justice, cultural diversity, gender-specific programming, implicit bias, procedural justice, youth and family engagement and victim restoration.
- Enhance development of additional youth and family engagement strategies.

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IMPROVING YOUTH OUTCOMES IN THE TEXAS JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Building on Prior Reforms

An Analysis of Statewide Implementation of Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Youth Outcomes

The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center published white papers in July 2014 that detail core principles for reducing recidivism and improving outcomes for youth in juvenile justice systems nationwide.⁵ The white papers also contain recommendations for measuring and using juvenile recidivism data to inform policy, practice and resource allocation. These papers are intended to guide government officials, policy makers and system practitioners on how to better leverage existing research and resources to achieve these goals.

The Texas juvenile justice system is a large and very diverse system that includes 166 juvenile probation departments that serve all 254 Texas counties. At the local level, the system is composed of urban juvenile probation departments and many small to medium-sized probation departments that provide a vast array of programs and services for youth. The Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) serves the most serious youth committed to the custody of the state in five high-security juvenile correctional facilities and eight halfway houses located around the state. Overall, the system receives over 60,000 youth referrals on an annual basis, with only one percent of these referrals resulting in commitment to TJJD.

TJJD and our statewide partners at juvenile probation departments along with Texas Appleseed began meeting in the fall of 2014 shortly after the release of the two CSG white papers. The group reviewed and discussed current practices in the community-based juvenile probation system seeking to determine the progress counties have made toward implementing the CSG core principles and to identify opportunities for strengthening and enhancing programs and services. The work concluded with the formulation of key recommendations and strategies applicable to local juvenile probation departments that will continue and enhance implementation of the core principles and appropriate evidence-based or research-informed programs to improve youth outcomes. *Part I* of this document details the work of this group. The accomplishments and needs are organized into four sections based on the four core principles enumerated by the CSG which are referred to in this document simply as the “core principles.”

Concurrently with this workgroup, TJJD staff began a similar exercise internally to determine the progress state-operated correctional facilities and halfway houses have made toward implementation of the core principles. Additionally, the agency reviewed efforts to use juvenile recidivism data for program evaluation purposes and formulated recommendations on how the agency can use juvenile data to assist stakeholders in their implementation and evaluation of evidence-based and research-informed practices.

⁵ Elizabeth Seigle, Nastassia Walsh, and Josh Weber, *Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System* (New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2014); *Measuring and Using Juvenile Recidivism Data to Inform Policy, Practice, and Resource Allocation* (New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2014).

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Part I

COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES⁶

Policies and Practices that Reduce Recidivism and Improve Other Youth Outcomes⁷

CSG CORE PRINCIPLE

01

Base supervision, service, and resource-allocation decisions on the results of validated risk and needs assessments.

CSG RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION A:

Minimize juvenile justice system supervision and services for youth who are at a low risk of reoffending.

RECOMMENDATION B:

Maximize the impact and value of system resources by prioritizing services for youth most likely to reoffend and by minimizing the use of confinement.

RECOMMENDATION C:

Use validated assessments to identify the primary causes of a youth's delinquent behaviors and focus system interventions and resources on addressing these causes.

RECOMMENDATION D:

Use specialized, validated screenings and assessments to identify youth with mental health and substance use treatment needs and match them to services, minimizing juvenile justice intervention when appropriate.

CURRENT PRACTICES

That are Consistent with **CORE PRINCIPLE #1**

- **DIVERSION OF YOUTH TO COUNTY PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.** In 2007, the Texas Family Code was amended to prohibit the commitment to TJJJ of misdemeanor offenders and TJJJ's jurisdiction over youth was lowered from age 21 to age 19. Concurrent with these statutory changes, the legislature appropriated significant dollars to juvenile probation departments statewide to fund diversion efforts. In 2007, probation departments received \$35 million dollars to divert youth from commitment to the state. Using these funds, counties began a comprehensive statewide initiative to divert additional youth from commitment to the custody of the state. In 2009, additional appropriations were received to enhance diversion

New commitments of youth to TJJJ decreased 71% from FY 2006 to FY 2014.

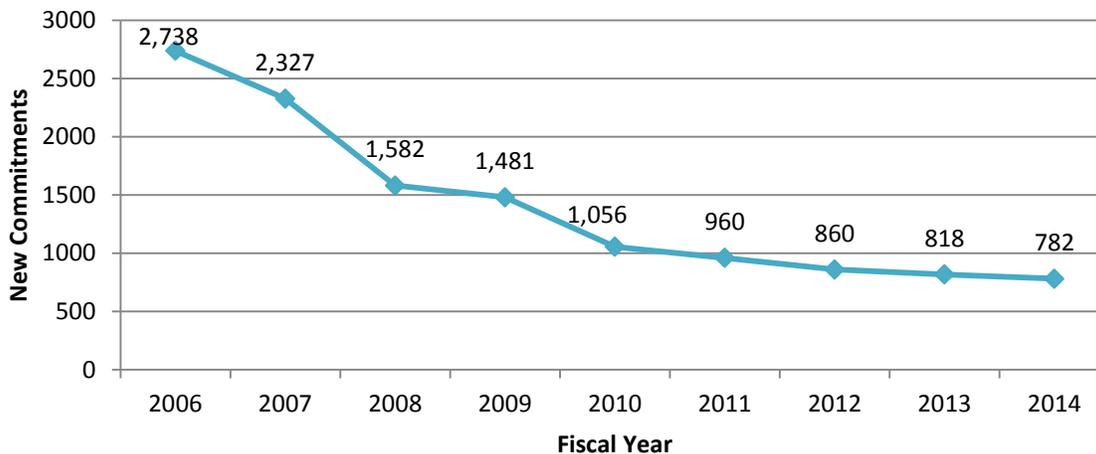
⁶ This section of the report was prepared collaboratively between TJJJ and representatives from juvenile probation departments statewide.

⁷ Elizabeth Seigle, Nastassia Walsh, and Josh Weber, *Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System* (New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2014)

efforts allowing counties to achieve great success with this initiative. Commitments to TJJD have decreased 71% since 2006 as shown in Table 1. The average daily population at TJJD (formerly TYC) was 4,059 in fiscal year 2006. The average daily population for fiscal year 2015 to date (end of second quarter) is 1,018.

TABLE 1

New Commitments to TJJD FY 2006-FY 2014

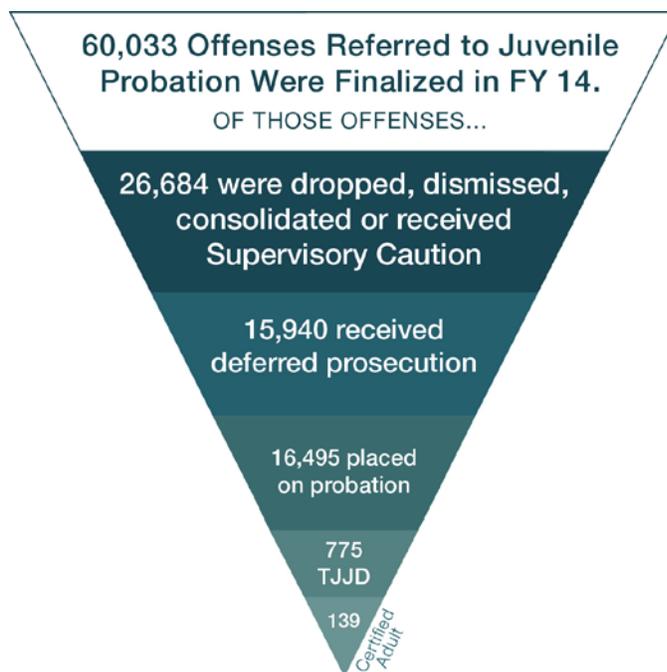


- RANGE OF OPTIONS FOR YOUTH CONDUCT.** The Texas juvenile justice system offers a range of options for responding to a youth’s delinquent behavior. In 2014, there were 60,033 referrals to juvenile probation departments. A referral is conduct by a youth that is either criminal or a status offense where the youth’s case is sent to the juvenile probation department for disposition. One youth may account for multiple referrals. Referrals may be disposed formally via court

Commitments to TJJD in FY 2014 were 1% of total referrals statewide.

proceedings or informally. See Appendix A for a detailed diagram of the disposition options in Texas. Approximately 98% of youth in the Texas

juvenile justice system are provided services through their local probation departments. The most serious offenders who cannot be served in communities are committed to the custody of the state or certified to stand trial as adults. In fiscal year 2014, commitments to TJJD accounted for approximately 1% of total referrals to juvenile probation departments.



- MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING.** Texas has implemented a standard mental health screening for all youth referred to local juvenile probation departments. All youth referred are screened for potential mental health issues using the *Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument, Second Version (MAYSI-2)*, a research-based and validated screening tool. Texas began using the MAYSI in 2001. TJJD has also approved the use of other appropriate mental health screening/evaluation instruments in addition to the MAYSI-2.

- **MANDATORY USE OF YOUTH RISK AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT.** Since 2010, all juvenile probation departments have been required to utilize an approved, validated risk assessment tool for all youth formally referred. The *Risk and Needs Assessment (RANA)* is the tool developed by TJJJ to identify a youth’s risk to reoffend as well as the youth’s need for services. The *RANA* is designed to help departments determine the appropriate level of supervision and services for each youth. While the majority of counties statewide use the *RANA*, TJJJ has also approved other appropriate and more comprehensive risk and needs assessment instruments for use by local jurisdictions such as the *Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT)* and the *Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI)*TM.

RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

In Practices Needed to Achieve Consistency with **CORE PRINCIPLE #1**

CSG Recommendation A: Minimize juvenile justice system supervision and services for youth who are at a low risk of reoffending.

1. To minimize the over-involvement and overtreatment of youth, TJJJ and juvenile probation departments should encourage and enhance the diversion of low-risk offenders through prevention, early intervention, first offender programs, and other service referrals that are designed to address individual risk and needs. TJJJ should provide annual data to counties on their diversion statistics to assist them in matching the level of supervision and services provided to youth whose scores indicate a low risk of reoffending.
2. TJJJ should work with the Legislature to modify the formula used to calculate the appropriation for Basic Supervision grant funding. The current formula does not effectively represent or account for the work done by probation departments during the intake process with youth who receive supervisory caution.⁸ Modifications to the funding formulas should not result in a negative impact on resources for medium-risk and high-risk youth but should support the continued diversion of low-risk youth.
3. TJJJ should conduct ongoing statewide training initiatives for juvenile court judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, law enforcement officials, victim groups and communities on the benefits of diverting low-risk youth from the juvenile justice system.
4. Ensure the mandatory basic training for all juvenile probation officers (JPOs) covers the concepts in the CSG core principles such as the risk-need-responsivity principle,⁹ the use of risk assessments to address criminogenic needs, effective case planning, and the importance of effective and accurate data collection to analyze system outcomes.

Probation departments provide appropriate services to low-risk youth who are not adjudicated.

CSG Recommendation B: Maximize the impact and value of system resources by prioritizing services for youth most likely to reoffend and by minimizing the use of confinement.

1. TJJJ should prioritize **NEW** funding resources to medium-risk and high-risk youth.
2. TJJJ should develop training curriculum and facilitate and/or provide statewide training on the concepts contained in the core principles, including:
 - Principle of *risk-need-responsivity*;

⁸ *Supervisory Caution* is sanction level one of the *Progressive Sanctions Model* in Chapter 59 of the Texas Family Code. Youth who receive this intervention may receive counseling for the youth and family from the probation department and referral of the youth and family to appropriate programs and services in the community. This sanction level diverts low risk youth from the system but links the youth and family to needed services to help ensure the youth does not further penetrate into the system.

⁹ Under the rubric of what Don Andrews, James Bonta, and their colleagues (Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990; Andrews, Zinger, et al., 1990) termed risk-need-responsivity (RNR) theory, they specified how an offender's *criminogenic* characteristics should drive the selection and implementation of correctional services. *Criminogenic* needs are dynamic risk factors that when addressed, affect the offender’s risk for recidivism and are strongly correlated with failure in traditional forms of rehabilitation.

- Diversion of low-risk youth from the juvenile justice system when possible and the provision of appropriate and effective programs and services for low-risk youth;
 - Data on recidivism and positive youth outcomes;
 - Implementation and use of risk and needs assessment instruments; and
 - Development and implementation of evidence-based and research-informed programs.
3. TJJD should conduct statewide and regional training on the effective use and implementation of the *risk-need-responsivity principle* to include cost analysis and outcomes. TJJD and counties should provide annual training for stakeholders (e.g., courts, prosecutors, defense attorneys, law enforcement, victim groups, communities, etc.) on the cost of unneeded incarceration and the corresponding outcomes. TJJD should provide technical assistance to juvenile probation departments regarding how criminogenic risk and needs are matched with appropriate services through research and review of youth data.
 4. TJJD should offer technical assistance on best practices related to detention and confinement of youth (e.g., development of detention screening instruments, policy development, etc.) and provide data on the prevalence of detention of low-risk youth. TJJD should assist juvenile probation departments to divert low-risk youth out of the juvenile justice system where appropriate, and focus resources on youth with medium- and high-risk and needs.
 5. TJJD should facilitate the development, enhancement and sharing of regional resources and infrastructures to increase services to youth who are at risk of commitment to TJJD.

CSG Recommendation C: Use validated assessments to identify the primary causes of a youth’s delinquent behaviors and focus system interventions and resources on addressing these causes.

1. TJJD should study the continued use of multiple risk assessments and determine if it is feasible or recommended to use one standard risk assessment and determine whether using one instrument would promote more consistent data collection across departments thereby enhancing the calculation and comparison of outcomes. Juvenile probation departments in Texas are statutorily required to utilize an approved risk and needs assessment for all youth referred to them. Currently, juvenile probation departments use three primary risk and need assessment instruments that have been approved by TJJD: the *Risk and Needs Assessment (RANA)* developed by TJJD, the *Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT)*, and the *Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI)*TM.
2. Statewide standards should be enhanced to require individualized youth case planning based on the *risk-need-responsivity principle* that matches services based on the youth’s unique criminogenic risks and needs. TJJD should provide training and technical assistance to juvenile probation departments to match treatment services to specific criminogenic needs of youth.

CSG Recommendation D: Use specialized, validated screenings and assessments to identify youth with mental health and substance use treatment needs and match them to services, minimizing juvenile justice intervention when appropriate.

1. Expand the use of specialized mental health funding (i.e., *Mental Health Services Grant*) to allow for expenditures associated with substance abuse screening and assessment in order to effectively identify needs.
2. Require and implement *Mental Health 101 Training*¹⁰ for all current juvenile probation officers (JPOs) and juvenile supervision officers (JSOs) and incorporate the training into basic certification training for new JPOs and JSOs. Allow local probation departments who have the resources and expertise to develop their own curriculum with TJJD approval.

¹⁰ *Mental Health 101 Training* as it is known in Texas is based on the *Mental Health Training Curriculum – Juvenile Justice* as developed by the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice (NCMHJJ) with support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and under the direction of Kathleen R. Skowrya, Associate Director, NCMHJJ, and with support from Joseph J. Coccozza, Ph.D., Director, NCMHJJ, Jennifer Deschamps, Senior Administrative Assistant, NCMHJJ, and Kay S. Peavey, Consultant to the NCMHJJ.

CSG CORE PRINCIPLE

02

Adopt and effectively implement programs and services demonstrated to reduce recidivism and improve other youth outcomes, and use data to evaluate system performance and direct system improvements.

CSG RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION A:

Eliminate the use of programs and practices that do not reduce recidivism or improve other key youth outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION B:

Support and fund services shown to reduce recidivism and improve other youth outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION C:

Evaluate recidivism and other youth outcomes, and use this data to guide policy, practice, and resource allocation decisions.

CURRENT PRACTICES

That are Consistent with **CORE PRINCIPLE #2**

- **EXPANSION OF EVIDENCE-BASED AND RESEARCH-INFORMED PROGRAMS.** Probation departments focus efforts on providing services that have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing youth recidivism. Many departments have implemented evidence-based programs, research-informed practices, or programs/services consistent with evidence-based principles that have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing youth recidivism. Programs such as trauma-informed care, *Functional Family Therapy (FFT)*, *Aggression Replacement Training (ART)*®, *Motivational Interviewing*, family engagement, and cognitive behavioral treatment are all becoming more widely available to youth and families. In fiscal year 2014, TJJJ provided four regional trainings on *Motivational Interviewing* to over 100 participants, provided three regional trainings on trauma-informed care to over 90 participants, and facilitated two trainings for trainers on trauma-informed care to 145 participants. Juvenile probation departments are also actively involved in getting their staff trained locally in trauma-informed care. TJJJ will continue providing trauma-informed care training on a regional basis to ensure compliance with TJJJ's legislative requirement to provide this training and to enhance the holistic approach to improving the overall outcomes of youth.
- **IMPLEMENTATION OF JUVENILE CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (JCMS).** TJJJ's ability to empirically demonstrate which programs are most effective at reducing recidivism requires the statewide implementation of several layers of data management infrastructure. TJJJ has made steady improvement in establishing the statewide architecture necessary to enable this level of valid and reliable analysis. In 2006, the Conference of Urban Counties (CUC) began an initiative called *TechShare*, which is an innovative, non-profit program that brings together governmental entities to share in the cost of development and maintenance of technology solutions. The CUC, in partnership with Bexar, Dallas and Tarrant counties and TJJJ developed a state-of-the-art, web-based data collection and case management system for juvenile probation departments in Texas. This unique state-local collaboration built a comprehensive juvenile case management system that facilitates data sharing statewide between all juvenile probation departments and TJJJ. This comprehensive system includes *Techshare.Juvenile* and *JCMS.Basic*, which are robust systems that contain expansive data collection and reporting capabilities. *Techshare.Juvenile* contains basic data collection capabilities in addition to enhanced workflow capabilities and modules for law enforcement and prosecutors. *JCMS.Basic* provides comprehensive data collection capability and is used by smaller departments. In collaboration with county probation departments, TJJJ has continued to roll out *JCMS.Basic* over the past few years. As of the end of March 2015, TJJJ has implemented *JCMS.Basic* in 146 probation departments serving 226 Texas counties. Implementation of *JCMS.Basic* in 249 counties will be achieved by the end of 2015.
- **STATEWIDE PROGRAM AND SERVICES REGISTRY.** TJJJ maintains the *Program and Services Registry* to collect detailed data on all non-residential programs and services provided by juvenile probation departments. The Registry provides

program-specific information to support evaluations of the effectiveness of individual programs and program components. The data in the Registry complement individual-level data of youth served by probation departments that is available in *Techshare.Juvenile* and *JCMS.Basic*. The combined data from the Registry and *Techshare.Juvenile* and *JCMS.Basic* allow TJJJ to collect comprehensive data for research and evaluation purposes.

- **SPECIALIZED STATEWIDE TRAINING.** During fiscal years 2014 and 2015, the TJJJ Research Division provided comprehensive training in community-based program development, implementation and evaluation. The training focused on several areas, including: (1) incorporating research-informed and evidence-based components/program activities known to reduce offending and recidivism; (2) the importance of implementing and monitoring delivery of the program; (3) defining successful program outcomes; and (4) conducting and using program evaluations. TJJJ also provides local recidivism data at these community-based program trainings.
- **COLLABORATIVE TRAINING PARTNERSHIPS.** TJJJ is working in partnership with the *Correctional Management Institute of Texas (CMIT)* at Sam Houston State University to expand statewide training on the core principles, the principle of risk-need-responsivity, the effective use of risk and needs assessments, the importance of using evidence-based and research-informed programs and other key training topics.
- **CALCULATION OF RECIDIVISM RATES.** To calculate recidivism rates, TJJJ tracks the multiple ways youth may have subsequent contact with the justice system, including re-arrest, re-referral, re-adjudication, re-incarceration, and technical violations, as well as offenses processed by the adult criminal justice system. TJJJ uses data provided by county probation departments, its own data, and data matches with other state agencies (e.g., *Department of Public Safety* and the *Texas Department of Criminal Justice*) in its recidivism calculations. TJJJ examines recidivism rates for programs and provides county probation departments with recidivism rates for designated programs as part of TJJJ's ongoing training sessions.
- **PROGRAM EVALUATION.** Several of the juvenile probation departments with research divisions are beginning program evaluation components to determine effectiveness of programs and services provided to youth.

RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

In Practices Needed to Achieve Consistency with **CORE PRINCIPLE #2**

CSG Recommendation A: Eliminate the use of programs and practices that do not reduce recidivism or improve other key youth outcomes.

1. **PROGRAM EVALUATION.** TJJJ should develop or implement an existing program assessment protocol/tool (e.g., *Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol*) to assist juvenile probation departments in the selection, development, and evaluation of programs. The assessment tool should identify program components and characteristics that research has found to be effective in improving youth outcomes and against which new and existing programs can be compared. The tool should assist juvenile probation departments in evaluating the effectiveness and fidelity of their own programs. Additionally, TJJJ should provide technical assistance in the use of the assessment tool and help departments evaluate their programs and services.
2. **IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PROGRAM AND SERVICES REGISTRY.** Probation departments and TJJJ should define the Registry's elements with specific focus on whether the program or components of the program are evidence based, promising practices or data supported. To improve program evaluation, juvenile probation departments should provide improved program descriptions in the Registry, including a specific focus on which program activities and components are implemented.
3. **COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS.** TJJJ should expand partnerships with universities to enhance statewide training on the core principles, effective use of risk and needs assessments, and other key training topics. TJJJ should finalize a long-term memorandum of understanding with the *Research Division at the Correctional Management Institute of Texas (CMIT)* to work cooperatively to study recidivism and other youth outcomes at the local and state level in an effort to analyze promising programs and services.
4. **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.** TJJJ should support juvenile probation departments in the evaluation of programs and services to determine how to phase out the use of state funds for programs proven to be ineffective.

Comprehensive program evaluation should analyze a variety of positive youth outcomes that impact recidivism.

Effective and varied programs have an impact on positive youth outcomes and recidivism.

CSG Recommendation B: Support and fund services shown to reduce recidivism and improve other youth outcomes.

1. **FUNDING INITIATIVES.**
 - a. TJJJ should collaborate with legislative leadership to identify new funding streams and grant-funding sources and maintain funding levels to: (1) expand community-based probation programs that use evidence-based or research-informed principles; (2) enhance prevention and intervention programs and diversion of low-risk youth; (3) increase use of promising programs involving youth and family engagement; (4) establish statewide training initiatives on evidence-based or research-informed programming and the core principles, and (5) support diversion efforts in small and medium-sized counties to reduce commitment of youth to TJJJ.
 - b. TJJJ should study program models designed to prevent low-risk and moderate-risk youth from commitment to TJJJ and study the feasibility of utilizing regional funding models to facilitate regional collaborations to divert additional youth from state commitment.
 - c. TJJJ should work with legislative leadership to consider modifying the funding formula methodology for Basic Supervision to recognize and support services for all youth referred, including youth at the intake level, and to support the diversion of youth at intake where indicated by a validated risk and needs assessment. Analyze and refocus funding formulas to more accurately address the core principles by conducting a comprehensive review of all funding methodologies in cooperation with the Legislative Budget Board and system stakeholders.

2. TRAINING INITIATIVES.

- a. TJJD should provide training (including training for trainers) on family engagement, trauma-informed care, cultural and linguistic competencies,¹¹ and other skill development for probation staff working directly with youth and families.
- b. TJJD should provide continued training and technical assistance related to reporting requirements, data definitions, accuracy of data, and program development, implementation, and evaluation.

3. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT.

- a. TJJD should provide support systems (e.g., support for regional groups of certified *Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers – MINT*) for departments utilizing *Motivational Interviewing*.
- b. *Statewide Mental Health Administrator*. TJJD should provide an administrator for mental health services to assist probation departments through ongoing training, technical assistance, and administrative oversight for these services on a statewide basis.
- c. TJJD should target technical assistance to small and medium-sized probation departments to enhance their ability to develop, implement and evaluate evidence-based or research-informed programs for youth and families.

4. **HUMAN RESOURCES CODE MANDATE.** Refine and enhance current performance measures for all grants provided to counties through the State Financial Assistance Contract. Enhance collection of comprehensive program data by improving the TJJD Program and Services Registry and by fully implementing the juvenile case management system (*Techshare.Juvenile* and *JCMS.Basic*) statewide. Design and implement a program evaluation strategy and methodology to allocate designated funding based on performance. Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of contract performance measures.

CSG Recommendation C: Evaluate recidivism and other youth outcomes, and use this data to guide policy, practice, and resource-allocation decisions.

1. TJJD should assess its current ability to collect, analyze and report program outcomes and recidivism in a timely manner so results can be used to inform practice and policy in probation departments. TJJD should continue to develop a research infrastructure within TJJD that includes sufficient staffing levels and research/evaluation skills and earmark appropriate financial resources for the Research Division to support effective interventions, programs and services in probation departments. TJJD should also develop and maintain the infrastructure necessary to collect and analyze comprehensive, statewide youth and program data.
2. TJJD should work in collaboration with county juvenile justice leadership and the Legislative Budget Board to broaden the definition of recidivism to better understand the reasons youth recidivate. This definition should be used statewide for purposes of program evaluation. Also, probation departments and TJJD should define and develop a comprehensive set of youth outcome measures in addition to recidivism that should be measured and considered when evaluating the effectiveness of rehabilitative efforts. Research indicates that several variables are associated with recidivism and antisocial behaviors in juveniles.¹² Some of these key variables include:
 - Educational achievement
 - Empathy and prosocial behaviors
 - Mental health functioning
 - Substance use and related disorders
 - Family functioning

¹¹ *Cultural and linguistic competence* is one of the core values of systems of care. *Cultural Competence* is defined as "the integration of knowledge, information, and data about individuals and groups of people into clinical standards, skills, service approaches and supports, policies, measures, and benchmarks that align with the individual's or group's culture and increases the quality, appropriateness, and acceptability of health care and outcomes." (Cross et al., 1989). *Linguistic competence* is "the capacity of an organization and its personnel to communicate effectively, and convey information in a manner that is easily understood by diverse audiences including persons of limited English proficiency, those who have low literacy skills or are not literate, and individuals with disabilities." (Goode & Jones, 2004).

¹² Abrams, Kyounggho, & Anderson-Nathe, 2005; Brendtro & Mitchell, 2011; Calley & Gerber, 2008; Carrera, et al., 2013; Olthof, 2012; Ottoni, Wilhelm & Bekkers, 2010.

3. TJJD should assist juvenile probation departments to further enhance their processes for accurate and timely collection and reporting of key outcome-related youth data. TJJD and probation departments should educate system stakeholders on the core principles and share recidivism and other youth outcome data at the state and local level on an annual basis.

CSG CORE PRINCIPLE

03

Employ a coordinated approach across service systems to address youth's needs.

CSG RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION A:

Partner the juvenile justice system with the other key service systems in which youth are or should be involved in order to assess and effectively address their needs.

CURRENT PRACTICES

That are Consistent with CORE PRINCIPLE #3

STATEWIDE COLLABORATIONS. TJJD and juvenile probation departments across the state have a long history of partnering with other key service systems to more effectively address the needs of youth and families. Some of those partnerships are described below.

- The *Crossover Youth Practice Model* was developed by the *Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University* in an effort to document research and best practices related to improving outcomes for youth who are dually-involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The model pulls this information together in three phases of implementation across five practice areas. The *Center for Juvenile Justice Reform*, in partnership with *Casey Family Programs*, is supporting the implementation of this model in eleven communities across the country. The following Texas counties participate in this initiative: Bexar, Dallas, El Paso, McLennan, Tarrant and Travis.
- The *Special Needs Diversionary Program (SNDP)* was created in 2001 to provide mental health treatment and specialized supervision in order to rehabilitate juvenile offenders and prevent them from penetrating further into the criminal justice system. The program is administered through a collaborative model by TJJD and the *Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical and Mental Impairments*. Juvenile probation officers and professional mental health staff from local mental health centers work together to coordinate intensive, community-based case management services for youth. The program offers mental health services (including individual and group therapy), probation services (such as life skills, anger management, and mentoring), and parental support and education. This program requires frequent contact with the juvenile, involvement with the family, and small specialized caseloads. The following Texas counties participate: Angelina, Bexar, Cameron, Dallas, El Paso, Ft. Bend, Hale, Harris, Hays, Hidalgo, Jefferson, McLennan, Nacogdoches, Nueces, Polk (which also serves San Jacinto), Randall, Tarrant, Tom Green, Travis, Tyler, Williamson, Trinity, and San Patricio (which also serves Aransas, Bee, Live Oak and McMullen Counties).
- TJJD and juvenile probation departments have partnered with the *Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health* at the *University of Texas at Austin* and the *Department of State Health Services* to design, develop, and implement the *Texas Mental Health Juvenile Justice Policy Academy*. This policy academy aims to strengthen coordination between the juvenile justice and mental health systems in local communities.
- TJJD has been a long-standing partner with the *Texas System of Care* initiative along with child-serving agencies in Texas. *Texas System of Care* is under the leadership of the *Texas Department of State Health Services* and the *Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health* at the *University of Texas at Austin*. These two entities work in consultation with the national wraparound initiative and national partners at the *Institute for Innovation and Implementation* at the *University of Maryland School of Social Work*, and the *Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science* at the

University of Washington School of Medicine. A system of care is an organizational philosophy and framework that is designed to create a network of effective community-based services and supports to improve the lives of children who have serious mental health conditions or who are at risk for developing them. Systems of care build meaningful partnerships with families and youth, address cultural and linguistic needs, and use evidence-based and research-informed practices to help children, youth and families function better at home, in school, in the community and throughout life.

- Under the leadership of the *United Ways of Texas* and the *Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute*, TJJJ has participated in discussions with other youth-serving agencies to identify shared outcomes and indicators of success.
- For a decade, TJJJ has facilitated a multi-agency networking and training initiative through a statewide conference. In 2015, the *10th Annual Strengthening Youth and Families Conference* will be held. This conference is supported by multiple youth-serving agencies and targets youth-serving professionals statewide. The conference generally attracts over 300 attendees who come together for several days of networking and professional development.
- Texas was one of eight states that participated in the *National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice's Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Action Network* to create new strategies and models for diverting youth with mental health needs from unnecessary involvement in the juvenile justice system and out-of-home placement. Texas' *Front End Diversion Initiative*, a pre-adjudicatory diversion program for youth available in several probation departments across the state has been designated a "Promising Program" by *CrimeSolutions.gov*, a service of the *Office of Justice Programs* at the *U.S. Department of Justice*. The original Texas sites were Bexar, Dallas, Harris, Lubbock and Travis counties.
- *Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs (JJAEPs)* are available in 33 county probation departments. Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs, which are provided by collaborative efforts of county probation departments and school districts, are offered to students who have been expelled to these programs. Each juvenile board in the 33 counties and approximately 288 independent school districts enter agreements to provide these programs.
- Many probation departments have developed local collaborative innovations with other youth-serving agencies and school districts to provide effective care for youth with cross-agency needs. Some examples include:
 - ✓ *Project Connect*, which is a prevention/intervention program designed to address the needs of youth who are identified as at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system.
 - ✓ Partnerships with *Communities in Schools (CIS)* and local school districts to reduce truancy by helping at-risk students develop skills so they can connect with school, avoid drugs and violence, avoid and decrease delinquent behaviors, and increase daily school attendance.
 - ✓ *The Children Partnership Program*, which is a program targeting youth receiving services through mental health providers, child protective services, juvenile probation, health and human services, and school districts with the goal to reduce out-of-home placements and instead provide community based, in-home services.
 - ✓ Partnerships with local organizations such as *Big Brothers*, *Big Sisters* and *Boys and Girls Clubs*.

RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

In Practices Needed to Achieve Consistency with **CORE PRINCIPLE #3**

CSG Recommendation A: Partner the juvenile justice system with the other key service systems in which youth are or should be involved in order to assess and effectively address their needs.

1. TJJD should seek to expand current efforts to address the needs of youth under the dual jurisdictions of juvenile probation and child protective services. Strategies should be designed and implemented to improve the identification of dual-status youth, avoid duplication of services across the systems, and provide joint recommendations to the court. Encourage the implementation, where appropriate, of the *Crossover Youth Practice Model* developed by the *Center for Juvenile Justice Reform (CJJR) at Georgetown University* for youth who are simultaneously receiving services from both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. *CJJR* has developed a practice model that describes the specific practices that need to be in place within a jurisdiction in order to reduce the number of youth who cross over between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, the number of youth entering and reentering care, and the length of stay in out-of-home care. Counties that have implemented the strengths-based *Crossover Youth Practice Model* advocate its success at improving child outcomes in both systems.
2. TJJD should continue to develop cross-agency training and data sharing efforts. Youth involved in the juvenile justice system often have multiple cross-agency needs. TJJD should work with long-standing partners at the *National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice* and the *University of Texas at Austin's Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health* to adapt the *Mental Health Training Curriculum for Juvenile Justice* for cross-agency training to a blended group of child-serving staff from the child protective, juvenile justice, and mental health systems. Additionally, TJJD should capitalize on discussions with the *Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health* to further the current efforts involving cross-agency data matching. Establishing the infrastructure for data sharing across systems will improve data analysis and data-driven decision making as well as provide the necessary foundation to allow for future pay-for-success models.
3. TJJD should provide training and technical assistance to juvenile probation departments on implementing best practice models such as the *Reclaiming Futures*¹³ model. *Reclaiming Futures* is a model for improving juvenile justice through community integration. This model unites juvenile courts, probation, adolescent substance-abuse treatment providers, and the community to reclaim youth. This model has been proven to save money, reduce recidivism and prevent future drug and alcohol abuse.
4. Facilitate statewide sharing of youth information and data across agencies (e.g., schools, law enforcement agencies, mental health agencies, other health and human service agencies, etc.). Work with legislative leadership to facilitate regular collaboration and effective data sharing between youth-serving agencies statewide (e.g., TJJD, Department of Family and Protective Services, Texas Education Agency, Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services, Department of State Health Services, local probation departments, local mental health authorities, local school districts).
5. Evaluate the continued viability, effectiveness and goals of the *Community Resource Coordination Groups* and make recommendations for improvements to the *Texas Health and Human Services Commission*.
6. Expand the *Texas System of Care Plan*. The goal in Texas is to use a statewide system of care as an approach to plan and deliver services and supports to children with serious mental health concerns and their families. TJJD should continue to seek opportunities to partner with other key service systems to improve services for youth involved in, and at risk of becoming involved in, the juvenile justice system.

¹³ *Reclaiming Futures*, Counties helping teens overcome drugs, alcohol and crime, Copyright © Reclaiming Futures 2002 – 2015, Portland State University, Portland, OR.

CSG CORE PRINCIPLE

04

Tailor system policies, programs, and supervision to reflect the distinct developmental needs of adolescents.

CSG RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION A:

Engage families and other supportive adults in major system decisions and processes.

RECOMMENDATION B:

Employ a developmentally appropriate approach to system supervision by focusing resources on promoting positive behavior change and using a graduated response to violations.

RECOMMENDATION C:

Hold youth accountable for their actions in ways that address the harm caused to victims and communities and that support positive behavior change.

RECOMMENDATION D:

Promote youth's respect for and compliance with the law by engaging them in system decisions and processes and by addressing system bias and the disparate treatment of youth of color and other groups that are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system.

CURRENT PRACTICES

That are Consistent with **CORE PRINCIPLE #4**

1. **SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS.** Several probation departments have developed and implemented programs to better engage families and other supportive adults to assist youth who come to the attention of the juvenile justice system. For example, juvenile probation departments have demonstrated success with community partners at formalizing family and school engagement programs and tailoring services for individual youth who are at increased risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. Youth and their families are linked with an individually designed array of services, supports and resources to facilitate success in the classroom, home and community.
2. **SPECIALIZED TRAINING.** The 40 hours of basic training for juvenile probation officers and juvenile supervision officers includes topics such as adolescent development and working with youth with mental health needs. Additionally, the *Mental Health Training Curriculum for Juvenile Justice* is provided to probation officers who work with youth with mental health needs. Finally, the new training on family engagement *Bringing It Home: How to Engage Families in the Juvenile Justice System* is available to all probation departments.

RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

In Practices Needed to Achieve Consistency with **CORE PRINCIPLE #4**

CSG Recommendation A: Engage families and other supportive adults in major system decisions and processes.

1. **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES.** TJJJ should work with probation departments to enhance youth and family engagement strategies around the *risk-need-responsivity* principle. TJJJ should provide research and training on effective programs that engage youth and families.

2. Each probation department should map its internal processes to identify points of opportunity to engage families, and encourage staff to prioritize full family engagement and participation in all critical decision-making areas involving their youth. Probation department leadership should establish a definition and success criteria for family engagement using best practice models.¹⁴ Departments should use proven, evidenced-based strategies and existing child welfare models.¹⁵ Strategies should include using department philosophy and policy/procedure to foster a climate among all departmental staff that focuses on parent/custodian inclusion. Some examples of this strategy include:
 - ✓ Begin the process of involving parents/supportive adults immediately upon intake;
 - ✓ Engage parental involvement/decision-making where appropriate throughout the pre-court process;
 - ✓ Involve parents/supportive adults in probation orientations and initial case plans;
 - ✓ Obtain family involvement through *Family Preservation Programs*, *Wraparound Programs*, *In-Home Therapy* sessions, and *Parent Training Programs*;
 - ✓ Institute consistent feedback loops throughout the course of youth involvement with probation;
 - ✓ Conduct exit interviews and/or parent surveys to identify successful methods of engagement and areas that need improvement; and
 - ✓ Ensure involvement and input from key stakeholders (e.g., juvenile courts, prosecutors, defense attorneys, law enforcement, schools, etc.).

CSG Recommendation B: Employ a developmentally appropriate approach to system supervision by focusing resources on promoting positive behavior change and using a graduated response to violations.

1. **GRADUATED RESPONSE/SANCTIONS MODEL.** Probation departments should adopt a level-of-supervision model and a graduated-response/sanctions model that allows probation violations to be addressed based on individual developmental needs. The model should allow for positive growth in youth who have varying degrees of severity in their violations and varying developmental factors in their cognitive or maturation status.
2. **TRAINING.** TJJDP and juvenile probation departments should continue and enhance the provision of statewide and local training on existing literature in graduated sanctions using best-practice models such as those from the *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention*. Training in the development and implementation of programs that provide this approach to supervision and graduated responses should focus on several critical components/programs, such as the following:
 - ✓ Case planning and case management practices
 - ✓ Motivational Interviewing
 - ✓ Behavioral modification systems
 - ✓ Home-based supervision
 - ✓ Peer-driven problem solving
 - ✓ Graduated response/sanctions grid
 - ✓ Departmental policy and procedure that promotes these concepts
 - ✓ Rewards and accountability protocol
3. **STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT.** Key stakeholders (e.g., juvenile courts, prosecutors, defense attorneys, etc.) should be partners with juvenile probation departments and participate in the education/training and implementation of graduated sanctions and supervision models that promote positive outcomes in youth development as opposed to reinforcing negative consequences.

Use the least restrictive option available to elicit the desired positive change in behavior.

¹⁴ *Texas System of Care, Annie Casey Foundation, OJJDP Desktop Guide to Good Juvenile Probation Practice, Models for Change, and the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform (Safety, Fairness, Stability: Repositioning Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare to Engage Families and Communities, May 2011).*

¹⁵ *Balanced and Restorative Justice, Principles of Effective Intervention, Family Group Decision Making* and guides such as *Treating the Tough Adolescent, A Family Step-by-Step Guide*, (Sells, 2004) and *Bridges out of Poverty*, (Payne, DeVol, Smith, 2001).

CSG Recommendation C: Hold youth accountable for their actions in ways that address the harm caused to victims and communities and that support positive behavior change.

1. Probation department leadership should consider adopting a culture in their agencies that recognizes, supports and advocates for the victims of juvenile crime. They should adopt and implement *Balanced and Restorative Justice* concepts in their treatment of victims and juvenile offenders. Avenues for victim restoration should be developed if not already established. Conversely, programs and processes should enable youth to accept their accountability to victims, whether these victims are individuals or the community in general. Specific programs such as the following should be developed and implemented:
 - ✓ Community-service restitution
 - ✓ Victim-service restitution
 - ✓ Monetary restitution
 - ✓ Victim-assistance programs
 - ✓ Victim-impact panels
 - ✓ Service-learning projects
2. TJJD should provide statewide and regional training in restorative justice models and the importance of engaging community stakeholders in a holistic approach to addressing the needs of the victims, community and offender/family.

As a part of youth accountability, avenues for victim restoration should be developed.

CSG Recommendation D: Promote youth’s respect for and compliance with the law by engaging them in system decisions and processes and by addressing system bias and the disparate treatment of youth of color and other groups that are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system.

1. TJJD should partner with the *Texas Health and Human Services Commission’s Center for Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities* to develop a strategic goal for the creation of an equity framework for juvenile justice. The center can provide technical assistance in examining data by race/ethnicity and developing data-driven strategies that result in improved outcomes for vulnerable populations. Local jurisdictions should partner with TJJD to jointly embrace a philosophy that discourages and combats system bias or disparate treatment of youth of color by developing strategies and practices that model other programs and best practices that show success with disproportionality and over-representation issues.
2. **Practitioner and Stakeholder Training.** Local jurisdictions should consider implementing an educational strategy with their law enforcement agencies, school districts, prosecutors, and other key stakeholders to frankly discuss the impact that disproportionate minority referrals have on youth, the juvenile justice system and the community at large. TJJD and juvenile probation department leadership should work cooperatively to ensure that practitioners and key stakeholders receive regular training on the disparate treatment of youth of color and alternatives to system penetration. Additionally, all practitioners and stakeholders should be trained on the following topics:
 - ✓ Cultural diversity
 - ✓ Disproportionality¹⁶
 - ✓ Gender-specific programming
 - ✓ Diversion programs and courts for youth of color
 - ✓ Implicit bias¹⁷
 - ✓ Procedural justice¹⁸

¹⁶ See the resources and technical assistance provided through the *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention* (e.g., *DMC Virtual Resource Center, Disproportionate Minority Contact Technical Assistance Manual, 4th Edition, Model Programs Guide* and the *DMC Reduction Best Practices Database*).

¹⁷ See the *National Center for State Courts* principles in their program *Strategies to Reduce the Influence of Implicit Bias*; the work of the *Implicit Bias Task Force 2011-2012, American Bar Association*; *Implicit bias* focuses on how largely unconscious psychological processes can shape authorities’ actions and lead to racially disparate outcomes even where actual racism is not present.

¹⁸ See the work of the *Center for Public Safety and Justice at the University of Illinois (Springfield)*; see also the work of the *U.S. Department of Justice* in the *National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice*, an initiative that will address the tenets of

PART II

STATE-OPERATED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES¹⁹

The Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) welcomes the opportunity to partner with experts in juvenile justice, corrections and research to continue building, implementing and refining an effective rehabilitation model with the best possible outcomes for the youth in our care. Since the beginning of reform efforts in 2007 the agency has made progress to improve youth outcomes implementing many of the core principles. TJJD has reduced the overall rate of re-arrest for violent offenses for youth committed to the agency. The one-year rearrest rate for violent offenses decreased from 10.81% for youth released from secure facilities in fiscal year 2012 to 7.85% for youth released in fiscal year 2013. These youth come to TJJD with more serious, high-risk factors affecting recidivism than ever before in the agency's history. In fiscal year 2014, 99% of the youth admitted to TJJD had at least one specialized treatment need. Additionally, 72% had a need for violent behavior treatment and 82% had a need for alcohol and other drug treatment. Of the new admissions in 2014, there were 54% who presented with at least one psychiatric diagnosis, indicating a need for mental health care. TJJD has also significantly improved specialized treatment enrollment and completion rates. There have been meaningful improvements in several educational areas. TJJD secure facilities are engaging in multiple nationally recognized best-practice programs. See the *2014 Annual Review of Treatment Effectiveness* report for an in-depth discussion of youth outcomes in TJJD treatment programs.²⁰

CURRENT PRACTICES

That are Consistent with **CSG RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT.** TJJD's assessment and placement process strives to adhere to national best practices by utilizing the *risk-need-responsivity* model.²¹ Classification and placement of each youth are monitored at intake and also throughout their stay at multi-disciplinary team meetings. The multi-disciplinary team meets, addresses a youth's progress and assess details such as the suitability of the current housing assignment and facility placement, eligibility for entry/discharge from specialized treatment program(s), transition or release to a less restrictive setting, and/or return to a more restrictive setting. All state-committed youth are assessed with the same instrument, the *Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT)*.²² All placement and treatment plans are ultimately developed from this assessment. Following the intake process, youth with commitment offenses of low or moderate severity may be placed in a non-secure setting, depending on their identified risk assessment factors. In fiscal year 2014, out of the 781 youths committed to TJJD, 100 youths were initially placed at a non-secure setting at the intake process.

procedural justice, reducing implicit bias and facilitation of racial reconciliation. *Procedural justice* focuses on how the characteristics of law enforcement interactions with the public shape the public's views of the police, their willingness to obey the law, and actual crime rates.

¹⁹ This section of the report was prepared solely by TJJD staff and represents an internal review of current agency practices, results and improvements required to more significantly impact youth outcomes and recidivism.

²⁰ See *2014 Annual Review of Treatment Effectiveness*, Texas Juvenile Justice Department; this report can be downloaded from the TJJD website at www.tjjd.texas.gov/Docs/TreatmentEffectivenessReview_2014.pdf

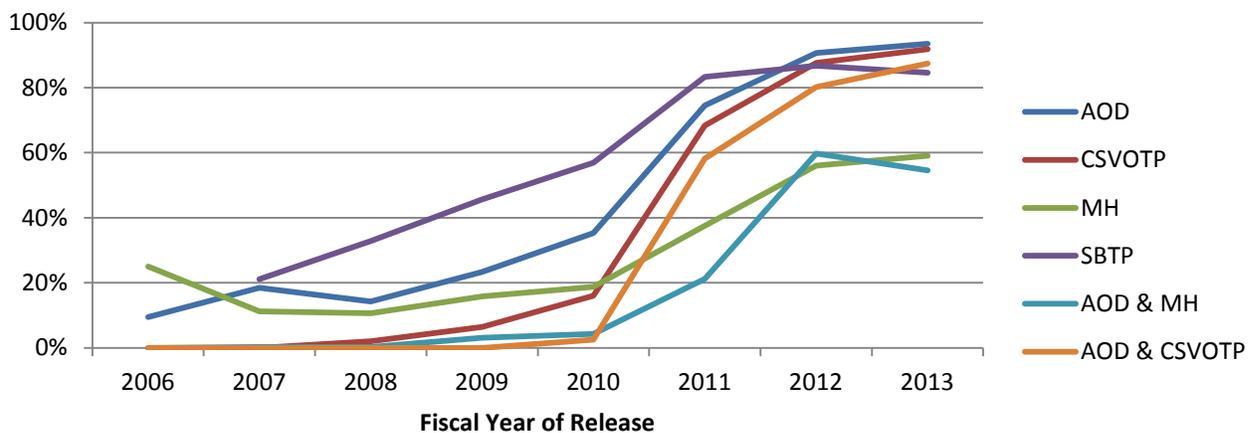
²¹ In 1990, Andrews, Zinger, Hoge, Bonta, Gendreau, and Cullen published what many believe is the state-of-the-art model for the assessment and rehabilitation of offender populations, called the *Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) Model*. The clinical literature supports the belief that treatment can work with offenders, but that some programs are better than others, and that certain basic tenets of treatment should be followed. The literature indicates successful interventions focus on high-risk offenders, target specific criminogenic needs, utilize cognitive and behavioral models for treatment intervention, demonstrate faithful implementation of program design, and maintain program integrity (Lowenkamp and Latessa, 2005).

²² *Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT)* is a comprehensive risk and needs assessment instrument.

- **REHABILITATION.** TJJJ has developed and implemented a comprehensive rehabilitation strategy that is supported by current research regarding effective treatment interventions. This program is stage-progressive and focuses on both learning and demonstrating skills. The TJJJ rehabilitation strategy draws elements from many evidence-based tools, techniques, and therapies and is founded on the eight principles of effective programs.²³
- **SPECIALIZED TREATMENT.** Approximately 98% of new admissions to TJJJ have a need for treatment by a licensed or specially trained provider in the categories of mental health, intellectual disability disorder, sex offending, alcohol or other drug treatment, and/or capital and serious violent offending. TJJJ has increased the provision of specialized treatment services to youth in its care by 81% since 2009. This has been accompanied by significant improvements in the number of youth who complete specialized treatment as shown in Table 2.

98% of new admissions to TJJJ have a specialized treatment need.

**TABLE 2
Percentage of Youth with Specialized Treatment Need Who Complete Treatment²⁴**



- **EVIDENCE- BASED/RESEARCH- SUPPORTED PROGRAMS.** TJJJ has incorporated the use of multiple evidence-based and research-supported programming models to continue moving the agency forward and improving outcomes for youth. These include but are not limited to:
 - **MENTORS.** Statistical analyses demonstrate that mentoring improves outcomes. The agency has dedicated personnel to recruit, screen, supervise, and support quality mentors.
 - **PAWS.** The *Pairing Achievement with Service (PAWS)* program at the Ron Jackson facility for girls provides youth the opportunity to train shelter dogs in the American Kennel Club (AKC) Canine Good Citizen certification program. The program teaches the youth proper handling and care for their dogs and also utilizes the youths’ relationship with their dogs to address risk factors that may be otherwise more difficult for the youth to overcome. With the advent of the *PAWS* program in 2010, several therapists at the Ron Jackson facility have utilized *Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT)* to augment their interventions with youth. This treatment approach is proven to increase the ability of the therapist to connect and more quickly intervene with youth who would be resistant to conventional treatment interventions. The use of *AAT* is especially productive when used with youth who have experienced trauma.

²³ National Institute of Corrections, <http://nicic.gov/theprinciplesofeffectiveinterventions> . These principles include: Assess actuarial risk and needs; Enhance intrinsic motivation; Target intervention (using risk-need-responsivity principle; dosage and treatment principle); Train skills with directed practice; Increase positive reinforcement; Engage ongoing support in natural communities; Measure relevant processes and practices; and Provide measurement feedback.

²⁴ Specialized treatment programs include *Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD)*; *Capital & Serious Violent Offender Treatment Program (CSVOTP)*; *Mental Health (MH)*; *Sexual Behavior Treatment Program (SBTP)*.

- **AGGRESSION REPLACEMENT TRAINING (ART)®.** *Aggression Replacement Training®* is a research-based approach for working with challenging youth. The program focuses on techniques and strategies to help youth develop healthy and appropriate coping skills to deal with anger and aggression. *ART* is a cognitive behavioral intervention program which specifically targets chronically aggressive children and adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 and aims to help improve social skill competence and moral reasoning, manage anger, and reduce aggressive behavior. The program was developed by Arnold P. Goldstein, Barry Glick, and John Gibbs and has been implemented in schools and juvenile delinquency programs across the United States and throughout the world. The program consists of 10 weeks (30 sessions) of intervention training, and is divided into three components—social skills training, anger-control training, and training in moral reasoning. Youth attend a one-hour session in each of these components each week, for a total of three hours of group per week.
- **TRAUMA-FOCUSED COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (TF-CBT).** All state-operated TJJD secure facilities and three halfway houses have staff members trained in *TF-CBT* to provide services to youth who are exhibiting extensive trauma symptoms or who have been identified as victims of abuse. In addition, appropriate referrals for trauma counseling are identified on the youth’s community reentry plan prior to release or discharge. As a part of a joint project with the *University of Texas* and a grant-funded project from the *National Institute of Mental Health*, TJJD staff members are provided with ongoing training, consultation and curriculum to support their work with youth in need of trauma care. This project offers TJJD staff a valuable and unique opportunity to receive supervision from a nationally renowned expert in the field.
- **REDIRECT AND PHOENIX PROGRAMS.** TJJD has established program options for youth with aggressive and assaultive behaviors. The *Redirect* program functions as a means for delivering intensive interventions in a structured environment for youth who have engaged in certain serious rule violations. The *Phoenix* program utilizes the principle components of *Aggression Replacement Training®* to teach youth alternative ways to handle their anger. Early research and outcomes reflect meaningful reductions in serious aggressive and assaultive behavior for a high percentage of youth served in the program. Of the 25 youth who were released from residential care in 2013 and 2014 and who successfully completed *Phoenix* between 2012 and 2014, 84% had a reduction in assaultive behavior.
- **POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS (PBIS).** Since implementation of *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)*, a comprehensive behavior plan mandated in §30.106 of the Texas Education Code, TJJD has seen a decline in behavioral incidents during school hours and an increase in academic achievement. In addition to participating in *PBIS*, all youth are required to participate in a fully accredited education program. TJJD’s general and special education services operate under rules and guidelines of the *Texas Education Agency (TEA)* and include credit recovery, GED preparation, reading improvement programs, high school courses and college classes.
- **OTHER ONGOING EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMMING.** TJJD continues to operate a variety of other evidence-based or research-informed programs including: *Parenting and Paternity Awareness (p.a.p.a)*, workforce development, online college and certification programs, vocational programs, *ACHIEVE*, *Preparation for Adult Living (PAL)*, *Motivational Interviewing*, *Thinking for a Change*, *Why Try*, *Seeking Safety*, *Functional Family Therapy*, *Parenting with Love and Limits®*, gang intervention curriculum, and gender-specific curriculum such as *Girls Circle* and *Boys Council*.
- **RECIDIVISM.** TJJD continues to engage in process and program improvement resulting in meaningful declines in recidivism over time as depicted in *Table 3*. For example, the one-year re-arrest rate for youth released in 2006/2007 was 50%, whereas the one-year re-arrest rate for youth released in 2013 was 44%. The one-year re-arrest rate for violent offenses dropped from 10% to 8% over the same period. This reduction in recidivism has taken place despite an increase in risk factors associated with recidivism for this youth population. In every specialized treatment area, youth committed to TJJD state programs recidivated at rates lower than predicted based on their identified risk factors. These numbers reflect the most recent agency data provided in TJJD’s *Annual*

Recidivism reductions have been achieved at TJJD facilities despite an increase in risk factors associated with this youth population.

TABLE 3
New Admissions on or After 9/1/2005, Released by 9/1/2013

	FISCAL YEAR RELEASED							
	2006 - 2007 ²⁶	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
NUMBER OF RELEASES	2275	2234	1540	1386	1071	862	773	10141
RECIDIVISM								
1-YR REARREST RATE	% 50	53	49	47	49	47	44	49
1-YR REARREST RATE (VIOLENT OFFENSE)	% 10	12	11	11	12	10	8	11
1-YR REINCARCERATION RATE	% 13	19	18	16	15	16	15	16

- **EDUCATIONAL GAINS.** The improvements in overall recidivism are accompanied by significant increases in educational gains for students in state-operated programs as shown in *Table 4*. These gains are shown by a higher number of youth completing GEDs or high school diplomas and significant improvement in overall reading levels.

TABLE 4
Education Gains for Students in State-Operated Facilities

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Percent of Students Age 16+ Earning a Diploma or GED within 90 Days of Release	34.90%	38.72%	41.43%	41.37%	47.51%
Percent of Students Reading at Grade Level at Release	12.70%	14.61%	16.27%	17.04%	17.21%
Industrial Certification Rate	14.21%	14.89%	36.85%	33.64%	28.08%
Percent of Students Making One Month Reading Gain per Month of Instruction	58.39%	58.85%	59.04%	57.47%	62.29%
Percent of Students Making One Month Math Gain per Month of Instruction	51.88%	51.51%	53.26%	48.71%	54.60%

- **PROGRAM EVALUATION.** TJJJ is in the process of partnering with the *Correctional Management Institute at Sam Houston State University* to conduct research on existing programs and services to continue improving and refining services.

²⁵ http://www.tjjd.texas.gov/Docs/TreatmentEffectivenessReview_2014.pdf

²⁶ *2014 Annual Review of Treatment Effectiveness*, Texas Juvenile Justice Department. FY 2006-2007 data includes 132 releases in FY2006 and 2143 in FY2007

RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

In Practices Needed to Achieve Consistency with **CSG RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **NEW REGIONAL MODEL.** TJJJ envisions a regional model for state correctional facilities to improve youth outcomes and lower recidivism. Research shows that successful rehabilitation is more likely when youth stay:
 - closer to home;
 - in smaller facilities;
 - in locations where services are readily available;
 - where family and parental participation in programs and interventions can be maximized; and
 - where transitioning back home can be more effectively accomplished.

TJJJ is committed to working with legislative leadership and other national experts to develop a blueprint for transitioning to a more effective model for Texas that will build on the effectiveness of the prior reforms.

2. **SPECIALIZED TREATMENT.** TJJJ should expand the use of evidence-based specialized treatment services within a variety of contracted programs for youth with multiple and/or complex treatment needs, including youth with mental health issues and youthful offenders (under age 14). Utilization of more national best-practice interventions and services for targeted populations would help improve youth outcomes.

82% of youth committed to TJJJ have 2 or more specialized treatment needs.

3. **MODEL FIDELITY.** TJJJ should work to increase fidelity of *Residential – Positive Achievement Change Tool (RPACT)* assessments to be sure the tool is used as it was designed. The agency should develop sustainability teams at each facility that are accountable for meeting improvement goals. Additionally, the agency must increase targeted training, staff development, coaching, and mentoring to build competency and promote positive staff growth. Additional training and oversight are necessary to ensure inter-rater reliability in ongoing assessment and programming around criminogenic needs.
4. **CROSS-AGENCY INTEGRATION.** Section 244.011 of the Human Resources Code requires TJJJ to accept youth who may be intellectually or developmentally disabled (IDD) and/or mentally ill with the stipulation that such youth (other than determinate sentenced offenders) will be discharged when they have completed their minimum lengths of stay and are unable to progress further in treatment. Better integration of services between TJJJ and the *Department of Family and Protective Services*, the *Department of Aging and Disability Services*, the *Department of State Health Services*, and the *Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services* remains necessary and is ongoing.
5. **TRANSITION AND RE-INTEGRATION.** Since 2009, youth who transitioned from secure facilities to halfway houses have had a lower one-year re-arrest rate than those who were released from a secure facility directly to a parole location. In 2012, the one-year re-arrest rate for youth who transitioned to a halfway house was 44.7% while the rate for youth released directly to a parole location was 58.6%. This information reinforces the need for TJJJ to improve the transition of youth from secure facilities to halfway house placements.

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PART III

Measuring and Using Juvenile Recidivism Data to Inform

POLICY, PRACTICE, AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION²⁷

CSG RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Measure recidivism for youth involved with the juvenile justice system, considering the multiple ways they may have subsequent contact with the justice system.

- Track the distinct ways in which youth can have subsequent contact with the justice system.

Recommendation 2: Analyze recidivism data to account for youth’s risk levels, as well as other key youth characteristics and variables.

- Require recidivism data to account for youth’s assessed risk levels.
- Analyze recidivism data according to other key youth characteristics and variables.

Recommendation 3: Develop and maintain the infrastructure necessary to collect, analyze, and report recidivism data.

- Establish an electronic case management system.
- Develop interagency information-sharing agreements.
- Establish policies and procedures to guide data entry and use.

Recommendation 4: Make recidivism data available to key constituents and the general public.

- Require regular reporting of recidivism data.
- Establish methods for sharing data effectively.

Recommendation 5: Use recidivism data to inform juvenile justice policy, practice, and resource allocation.

- Establish formal processes for reviewing recidivism data.
- Set improvement targets.
- Use recidivism data to promote accountability and the efficient use of resources.
- Track the distinct ways in which youth can have subsequent contact with the justice system.

²⁷ This section of the report analyzes the recommendations found in *Measuring and Using Juvenile Recidivism Data to Inform Policy, Practice, and Resource Allocation* (New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2014). The analysis in this section focuses primarily on data collection, analysis and evaluation practices at TJJJ and efforts that can be made to enhance these practices to more fully support local juvenile probation departments as it relates to improving recidivism and youth outcomes.

CURRENT PRACTICES

That are Consistent with **CSG RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **DATA INFRASTRUCTURE:** *Techshare.Juvenile* and *JCMS.Basic* are two components of the statewide juvenile case management system commonly referred to simply as *JCMS*. This system was developed by the Conference of Urban Counties' *Techshare Program* in collaboration with Bexar County, Tarrant County, Dallas County and TJJJ. This state-of-the-art, web-based system is being implemented statewide.
 - JCMS has the ability to provide statistical data to track:
 - ✓ Youths' risk and need levels
 - ✓ Re-arrests
 - ✓ Re-adjudication and Re-conviction
 - ✓ Re-commitment and Re-incarceration
 - JCMS agreements are in place for 162 of the 166 juvenile probation departments within the state. All JCMS counties will participate in Interagency Information Sharing Agreements by August 2015.
- **DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING.** Since 2000, all probation departments have been required to electronically submit standard juvenile data to TJJJ.
 - Recidivism data is reported to county departments annually and recently has been included as part of Community-Based Programming training.
 - Recidivism data is reported annually in the TJJJ *Annual Report to the Governor and Legislative Budget Board*. This report is available on TJJJ's public website.²⁸
- **DATA AUDITS.** TJJJ audits data at the time of transmission to TJJJ for completeness and consistency with reporting requirements. Each juvenile probation department receives the results of its audit both monthly and quarterly. Additionally, the TJJJ Research Division performs a *Comprehensive Data Audit (CDA)* yearly. The CDA involves a separate check of data accuracy. Department-specific error reports are sent to the departments for correction. Departments then certify they have corrected errors by a certain deadline.
- **RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS.** The TJJJ Research Division provides statewide and county-level statistical data that tracks recidivism in multiple ways, including:
 - ✓ Re-arrests
 - ✓ Re-adjudication/Re-conviction
 - ✓ Re-commitment/Re-incarceration
 - ✓ Technical Violations/Revocations
 - ✓ New offenses processed by the adult criminal justice system
 - ✓ New offenses that occur after a youth is no longer under system supervision
- **TRAINING.** TJJJ conducts training to promote consistency in data entry and data reporting statewide.
 - The TJJJ Research Division hosts an annual *Data Coordinator's Conference*, which communicates policies and procedures for data entry and data use in an interactive setting. In 2014, nearly 250 juvenile justice personnel attended the conference.
 - Monthly hands-on training is provided to new JCMS users. This training teaches standard data entry procedures with a focus on accuracy of data input.
 - Quarterly hands-on training is provided to advanced JCMS users.
- **INTERAGENCY DATA SHARING.** TJJJ has partnered with other agencies to share key data that are essential for the evaluation of recidivism and youth outcomes:
 - Interagency agreements for sharing information about school, arrests, and adult incarceration are in place with the *Texas Education Agency*, the *Department of Public Safety* and the *Texas Department of Criminal Justice*.

²⁸ www.tjjd.texas.gov

RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

In Practices Needed to Achieve Consistency with **CSG RECOMMENDATIONS**

▪ DATA QUALITY AND TRAINING.

1. The data collected from juvenile probation departments is critical to recidivism calculations and evaluation of specific juvenile justice programs and initiatives. TJJJ should work to improve the quality of data by:
 - ✓ Identifying and defining data fields used to calculate recidivism and predicted recidivism rates;
 - ✓ Updating data standards;
 - ✓ Conducting desktop audits of local data with timely communication of findings;
 - ✓ Expanding the data reported monthly by departments to include all risk assessment information;
 - ✓ Improving data collection related to youth risk factors, needs, programming, and services; and
 - ✓ Considering the creation of a daily report (data dashboard) to report recidivism outcomes and rates.
2. TJJJ should work to increase training to juvenile probation staff by:
 - ✓ Conducting webinars to address new mandates and current issues in a timely and economical manner; and
 - ✓ Conducting webinars and trainings regarding definitions, data standards and data accuracy.

▪ DATA AUDITS AND ACCURACY.

1. TJJJ should obtain and maintain a replicated database for JCMS, which will allow TJJJ to conduct more efficient audits of current data without interfering with the operation of the live, production database.

▪ RESEARCH, DATA ANALYSIS AND PROGRAM EVALUATION.

2. TJJJ should work with juvenile probation departments to collect and analyze recidivism data and other outcome data to provide a full and reliable picture of the juvenile justice system's effectiveness. TJJJ should provide juvenile probation departments with timely access to recidivism and other youth outcome data and make such data available to the public.
3. TJJJ should work with local practitioners to develop a biennial recidivism report. The recidivism report may include the following:
 - ✓ Multivariate analyses identifying the key factors contributing to recidivism;
 - ✓ How risk and need levels impact recidivism for specific sub-groups of youth (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, age, etc.); and
 - ✓ New recidivism analyses that separate technical violations of probation from the commission of new offenses and address the role of these violations in continued involvement in the juvenile justice system.
4. TJJJ should conduct evaluations of community-based programs and services to determine their effectiveness. TJJJ should work with counties to develop descriptions of specific programs, program activities/components and intended program outcomes. These program evaluations, in conjunction with recidivism rates, can be used as feedback to counties to improve programs and promote the efficient use of resources.
5. The TJJJ Research Division should approach an academic institution to do a validation study of TJJJ's *Risk and Needs Assessment (RANA)* with respect to its ability to predict recidivism. This study will help determine which risk and needs assessment tool may be recommended for statewide use.
6. TJJJ should periodically report on the results from program evaluations and recidivism analyses.
7. TJJJ should review program evaluation data and determine if cost-benefit analyses can be conducted on specific programs using the principles detailed in the *Cost-Benefit Analysis and Justice Policy Toolkit* from the *Vera Institute of Justice*.²⁹

²⁹ *Cost-Benefit Analysis and Justice Policy Toolkit*, Vera Institute of Justice, Henrichson, Rinaldi (December 2014).

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Part IV

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

A Roadmap for Additional Reforms

The Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) and juvenile probation departments across the state are committed to enhancing statewide implementation of CSG’s recommended core principles for improving recidivism rates and youth outcomes. Along with the commitment of our county partners, TJJD and local officials must take a more prominent leadership role in furthering the implementation of the core principles and strengthening the role of evidence-based and research-informed practices in the Texas juvenile justice system. The reforms discussed in the CSG report *Closer to Home*³⁰ demonstrate the fundamental principle that positive youth outcomes can best be achieved when programs and services are closer to a youth’s home and when those programs are based on research-demonstrated effectiveness. While juvenile probation departments and TJJD have made significant accomplishments in implementing many of the core principles, much work remains to be done. To that end, TJJD will focus its efforts as detailed below.

1. **FUNDING INITIATIVES.** TJJD must work with legislative leadership and juvenile probation departments to:

- Support the efforts of juvenile probation departments in diverting additional and appropriate youth from commitment to the custody of the state;
- Focus financial assistance on small to medium-sized counties to develop alternatives to state commitment for medium- and high-risk youth;
- Prioritize the diversion of low-risk youth while ensuring they receive appropriate interventions and services; Focus the greatest resources on medium- to high-risk youth; and
- Explore performance-based funding alternatives and initiatives to encourage implementation of successful evidence-based and research-informed programming.

Diversion of low-risk youth should include referral of the youth and family to appropriate community services and interventions.

2. **RESEARCH.** TJJD must implement research initiatives that will:

- Evaluate the research data in the *Closer to Home* report and develop short-term and long-term steps to address the findings in the report;
- Study and evaluate the feasibility of utilizing one standard risk and needs assessment instrument statewide by determining if instrument consistency will enhance data collection, research capabilities and youth outcomes; and
- Enhance data collection efforts and produce timely and meaningful reports on program outcomes, recidivism, and program cost-benefit analyses.

3. **TRAINING.** TJJD must coordinate statewide training initiatives to:

- Provide comprehensive education to juvenile justice professionals and system stakeholders on the core principles and the benefit of their implementation in local jurisdictions;
- Provide an overview of the results of research on program effectiveness and the impact of recidivism as detailed in the CSG’s *Closer to Home* report;
- Educate stakeholders³¹ at all levels of the system on the costs and benefits of implementing evidence-based or research-informed programming with fidelity to a model’s design;

³⁰ *Closer to Home: An Analysis of the State and Local Impact of the Texas Juvenile Justice System Reforms* (Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2015).

³¹ Stakeholders include probation department personnel, juvenile court judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, law enforcement, county commissioners courts, victims groups, advocacy groups, community groups, volunteer groups, educators, and others with an interest in the juvenile justice system.

- Emphasize the benefits of using comprehensive risk assessment instruments to determine a youth’s criminogenic needs and using the results of the assessment to drive dispositions;
 - Enhance stakeholder training on balanced and restorative justice, cultural diversity, disproportionality, gender specific programming, implicit bias, procedural justice, youth and family engagement and victim restoration; and
 - Emphasize the benefits of diversion of appropriate low risk youth from the system.
4. **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.** TJJJ must provide comprehensive technical assistance upon request to local jurisdictions to:
- Further reduce the number of youth incarcerated in state-run correctional facilities;
 - Match the type of supervision and programs appropriate to a youth’s needs and risk of reoffending;
 - Increase the effectiveness of current programs and services to improve outcomes for youth;
 - Improve approaches to performance measurement , program evaluation, and data collection;
 - Implement effective program evaluation strategies and recidivism studies;
 - Develop strategies to reduce rates of re-arrest and re-incarceration of youth;
 - Enhance development of additional effective youth and family engagement strategies; and
 - Analyze fidelity to evidence-based and research-informed programs in ways that address the unique needs and resources of specific counties.
5. **SYSTEMS COLLABORATION.** TJJJ must continue working with other agencies serving youth and families to:
- Facilitate regular collaboration and effective data sharing between agencies so youth needs can be more comprehensively addressed; and
 - Enhance and encourage the further implementation of crossover practice models for youth being served concurrently in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.
6. **STATE SECURE FACILITIES.** TJJJ must achieve and maintain greater system stability for the current state-operated correctional facilities by:
- Enhancing facility security through adequate levels of staffing for correctional and treatment personnel;
 - Enhancing fidelity to currently utilized evidence-based practices;
 - Partnering with legislative leadership and national juvenile justice experts to plan for the future of the state correctional facilities by exploring alternative models that maximize treatment in smaller facilities closer to home to reduce recidivism and improve youth outcomes; and
 - Providing ongoing and relevant training for all front-line correctional officers and treatment staff using competency-based models which include effective on-the-job training, coaching and mentoring of new staff; provide leadership and professional development training and opportunities for staff; and encourage continuing education of staff.

TJJJ appreciates the work of all individuals and organizations that contributed to the CSG white papers and the *Closer to Home* report. This research provides an invaluable and unprecedented foundation and roadmap for juvenile justice agencies to reduce recidivism and improve youth outcomes. TJJJ and our stakeholders across the state look forward to the work that lies ahead and anticipate great benefits to the state of Texas and the youth and families we serve.

APPENDIX A:

Flow of a Juvenile Offender's Case in the Texas Juvenile Justice System

