

Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice
Webinar Summary
Monday, August 12, 2013

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) convened a webinar meeting of the Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice (FACJJ) on Monday, August 12, 2013, at 3 PM Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The purpose of the meeting was to hear from Robert Listenbee, the new OJJDP Administrator, to review and discuss draft recommendations to OJJDP from the four FACJJ subcommittees, and to discuss next steps for moving the recommendations forward. Prior to the meeting Michelle Dunhart-Tonge, from OJJDP's National Training and Technical Assistance Center and the host of the webinar, was available to iron out any technical logistical problems.

Call to Order

Kathi Grasso, the OJJDP Designated Federal Official, opened the meeting by welcoming and thanking the FACJJ members for their commitment to the FACJJ. She also thanked Office of Justice Programs (OJP) and OJJDP staff and contractors for their assistance with the Webinar. She noted that several OJJDP staff members also have acted as expert resources to the four subcommittees. Ms. Dunhart-Tonge gave a brief demonstration of the webinar logistics. The webinar was attended by 14 FACJJ members, OJJDP staff, and non-FACJJ members, who listened and viewed the webinar as observers but did not actively participate.

FACJJ chair Reggie Robinson welcomed participants and thanked them for making time for the meeting. He acknowledged those individuals participating from much earlier time zones and thanked them for their commitment to attend the webinar. Mr. Robinson reviewed the agenda, which included hearing from the new OJJDP Administrator, reviewing draft recommendations from the four FACJJ subcommittees, and planning the next steps for the final review of recommendations.

Mr. Robinson then introduced OJJDP Administrator Robert Listenbee, noting that it has been a long time since OJJDP has had a permanent rather than Acting Administrator. Moreover, Mr. Listenbee was a member of the FACJJ before the President tapped him to become OJJDP Administrator. Mr. Robinson thanked him for taking the time to share remarks with the FACJJ.

Remarks from the Administrator

Mr. Listenbee applauded FACJJ members for their efforts to make a positive difference in the lives of children and their families, noting that most of the work and funding for juvenile justice programs comes from the local and state levels. Since becoming administrator, Mr. Listenbee has met with many groups and individuals who have urged him not to delay in implementing OJJDP's vision of a nation of healthy, educated children who are free from violence. If children do come into contact with the juvenile justice system, that contact should be rare, fair, and beneficial to them.

Mr. Listenbee said that the FACJJ plays a vital role in advising the OJJDP Administrator, the Congress and the President. He said FACJJ members provide important insights about the state of the nation outside of Washington and the federal government. He assured the FACJJ that OJJDP will carefully consider every recommendation submitted to the Office. He also expressed a desire to meet personally with FACJJ members in their communities and to meet with State

Advisory Groups (SAGs) to hear directly from those on the front lines about the issues they are facing and the kinds of things that OJJDP should be doing at the national level.

OJJDP Program Highlights

Mr. Listenbee briefly highlighted several U.S. Department of Justice and OJJDP activities that have the potential to influence program development and change the way the nation addresses the needs of children and youth at risk of involvement with the juvenile justice system. OJJDP is focusing its efforts on positive developmental approaches to youth justice and delinquency prevention, including trauma-informed policies and practices. Last December, the Attorney General's (AG's) Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence released its policy recommendations addressing the importance of developing trauma-informed policies and practices throughout the juvenile justice system.

Based on this recommendation, OJJDP is examining how a developmentally-informed juvenile justice system can take into account trauma and victimization. For example, how can the juvenile justice system achieve accountability, fairness, and prevention for a young person if that person's history of victimization is not considered? Mr. Listenbee noted there is a growing understanding about the need to be aware of how violence and context contribute to the likelihood that a young person will come into contact with the juvenile or criminal justice system.

Complementary to the AG's report, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) released "Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach," a report commissioned by OJJDP. This report has been shared with FACJJ members. In addition, the NAS's National Research Council has reviewed recent advances in behavioral and neuroscience research and implications these advances have for juvenile justice reform; assessed the new generation of reform activities around the country; and assessed OJJDP's role in carrying out its statutory mission and its potential role in supporting scientifically-based reform efforts. The Council's broad panel of experts produced a substantial 400-plus-page recommendations report, which OJJDP administrators and staff are still digesting. OJJDP believes the report's findings and recommendations can transform policymakers, practitioners, and researchers to address the needs of children at risk of or currently involved with the juvenile justice system. Mr. Listenbee said OJJDP is considering whether the Office should adopt a developmental approach in juvenile justice reforms, and he will be looking to the FACJJ for input about this issue.

The Administrator then briefly discussed three other activities. As vice chair of the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Coordinating Council), Mr. Listenbee has been meeting with federal agency and practitioner council members to determine how OJJDP can better coordinate with these agencies on juvenile justice issues. One of the suggestions coming from these meetings is the need to engage families and youth more effectively in federal juvenile justice programs. OJJDP continues to work with the U.S. Department of Education on the School Discipline Program, which is examining school discipline policies that have increased detention or incarceration, particularly for minority youth. This White House initiative addresses the school-to-prison pipeline issue.

In response to the AG's Exposure to Violence task force, OJP has created a Task Force on American Indian/Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence. The task force will be established

soon. Mr. Listenbee has also been meeting with members of Congress to discuss juvenile justice issues. He recently participated in a Congressional hearing about “States’ Innovation in Juvenile Justice: Investing in Better Outcomes for Youth.” The hearing informed members of Congress and staff about juvenile justice system reform efforts across the country.

Subcommittee Reports and Discussion

Following Mr. Listenbee’s remarks, FACJJ members moved on to discuss the four subcommittees’ draft recommendations. Prior to the webinar, Mr. Robinson and co-chair Rob Lubitz asked FACJJ members to consider several questions when reviewing subcommittee draft recommendations: Do the recommendations need any clarification? Does the member agree with the recommendations? Do any of the recommendations need to be modified? Are there any issues or gaps that need to be addressed by the subcommittee? The subcommittees then gave the following reports.

Evidence-Based Youth Justice Practices: Subcommittee chair Dalene Dutton discussed the subcommittee’s purpose statement, background issues that had implications for the resulting recommendations, and the decision to address outcomes. Before developing draft recommendations, the subcommittee also reviewed literature and SAG surveys and OJJDP activities that can impact juvenile justice practices such as funding, training and technical assistance, meetings, and policy leadership. Based on these efforts, the subcommittee developed five draft recommendations. Briefly, the subcommittee is asking OJJDP to help identify common outcomes that can be used to assess the effectiveness of programs and practices that go beyond reducing recidivism or other negative behaviors; assess current best practice strategies and develop new strategies for implementing evidence-based programs on a system-wide basis; recognize the potential risks in emphasizing only research-based programs; collaborate with other youth-serving agencies and organizations (mental health, education, child welfare) to identify and develop evidence-based policies and programs that respond to those needs; and support evidence-based practices that can have a positive impact on reducing racial disparities in the juvenile justice system. Comments from FACJJ members included an observation that while programs that have positive youth outcomes are important, it is also important that these programs reduce juvenile delinquency; concern about how small and/or rural jurisdictions can have access to and implement evidence-based programs; and a discussion about the importance of having day-to-day staff improve effectiveness without having to buy an expensive program. Mr. Listenbee asked what OJJDP could do to help rural areas and find and implement evidence-based program. Ms. Dutton and the subcommittee members agreed with the substance of the comments.

Youth Subcommittee: Subcommittee chair Haley Reibold and Symone Sanders summarized this subcommittee’s draft recommendations. The group focused on having youth, especially those with experience in the juvenile justice system, help shape policies and practices at federal and local levels. Their four draft recommendations are designed to help build a foundation for sustainable youth involvement. Before drafting their recommendations, subcommittee members reviewed literature on youth voice and engagement, met with practitioners, experts, and youth-serving organizations, and solicited feedback from young people, including those with juvenile justice experience, and youth members of their SAGs. The subcommittee is recommending to the full FACJJ that OJJDP create consistent and well supported structures for meaningful youth voice and engagement at the federal level and that the Office support state and local jurisdictions

in developing similar structures that view juvenile justice-system involved youth as partners in case planning. The subcommittee is also asking the President, Congress, and OJJDP to increase opportunities for collaboration on youth engagement with other federal agencies, especially through the Coordinating Council, and to amend the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act to include language that strengthens youth voice and engagement at federal and state levels. The subcommittee specifically recommends that the JJDP Act require that at least one-fifth of each SAG and one-fifth of the FACJJ be comprised of young adult members under the age of 28, with at least one of these members having current or prior involvement with the juvenile justice system. Mr. Listenbee said he would give full consideration to the subcommittee's draft recommendations. Haley will be leaving her post as chair of the Youth Subcommittee to return to school and Martha Doyle will serve in her position.

Youth Justice and Schools: In the absence of subcommittee chair Dean Williams, Vi Kohr presented the subcommittee's two recommendations. The group based its efforts on the premise that school discipline issues need to be brought to the forefront for policymakers and the public and that research findings about best practices need to be highlighted in user-friendly formats. Believing that less is more, the subcommittee feels it is important to support school engagement, as well as disengagement, in light of research that shows the school-to-jail pipeline is real. The subcommittee originally hoped to champion a school discipline report from the Council of State Governments, but the Council's report is not yet complete. The subcommittee is recommending that the issue of school engagement be highlighted as a key item in juvenile justice reform and that a road map be developed for schools to use when revising or reforming school discipline policies. The road map document should be straight forward and include tangible steps for implementing best school discipline policies and practices. The subcommittee also posed two poll questions to FACJJ members: Do FACJJ members recognize in their own arenas or jurisdictions the importance of school engagement or disengagement as a juvenile justice reform effort? To what extent do you agree/disagree that a road map for schools is necessary for revising school discipline practices and school engagement policies? The majority of FACJJ members strongly agreed that these are important issues.

Youth Justice and Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC): Subcommittee chair Kenya Lee reported this group focused on ways to help OJJDP identify local efforts and best practices that have resulted in decreasing DMC and to encourage innovation in the area of DMC reduction. The group's draft recommendations center on three areas: law enforcement training, cross-over youth, and family and community engagement. The subcommittee is recommending to the full FACJJ that OJJDP develop training for law enforcement regarding interacting with minorities and youth. The training should include patrol officers, youth officers, and supervisors and should be adopted as part of the law enforcement culture. The group is also recommending that OJJDP study and/or conduct research on disparities within multiple systems (such as child welfare and schools) and their impact on DMC. This recommendation is designed to address cross-over youth—those youth who have been involved with the child welfare system—and youth referred to court for school violations. Finally, the subcommittee will make a recommendation asking OJJDP to develop a fact sheet that discusses how youth are processed through the juvenile system. Many communities and families do not understand the process and consequences that result from referring a youth to juvenile court. FACJJ members suggested that the law enforcement training include the entire agency and that the research examine the relationship between school resource officers and DMC. Mr. Lubitz recommended that FACJJ

members refer to page 17 of the Annual Request for Information summary prepared for the FACJJ by the Justice Research and Statistics Association, for a good discussion of DMC. Mr. Listenbee asked how long the law enforcement training should be, what kind of follow-up is necessary to determine its success, what kind of impact is desired, and how can this training be used to change agency culture. Subcommittee member Tony Smith responded that the subcommittee wants changes in policy and practice to result from the training. He also said the training should include both in-service and annual training as well as an accountability component for law enforcement, the community, and youth. Mr. Listenbee also asked for clarification about the link between cross-over youth and DMC, and requested the subcommittee be more specific about what kind of research questions they would like OJJDP to pose. The Administrator also noted that Miss Lee agreed to serve as a primary member of the FACJJ when he was named to his new position.

Next Steps

Mr. Robinson thanked Mr. Listenbee for staying for the entire webinar and thanked subcommittee members for their very significant contributions. He asked FACJJ members to email any additional comments they may have about the recommendations to him, Ms. Grasso, and subcommittee chairs by Friday, August 23. The four subcommittees will then reconvene to discuss webinar comments and make any necessary refinements to their recommendations. Final recommendations are due to OJJDP by Friday, September 27. OJJDP will distribute the recommendations to the full FACJJ for consideration prior to the fall/winter FACJJ meeting to be held tentatively in October.

Mr. Robinson adjourned the meeting at 3:40 PM EDT.

[The next meeting of the FACJJ is scheduled for Monday and Tuesday (December 9-10, 2013) at OJP headquarters in Washington, DC.]