

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT ARE NOT THE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS APPROVED BY THE FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE (FACJJ). THIS REPORT CONTAINS THE SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED TO THE FULL FACJJ COMMITTEE FOR ITS CONSIDERATION.

**Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice (FACJJ) EVIDENCE---
BASED YOUTH JUSTICE PRACTICE SUBCOMMITTEE
2013 Annual Report to the FACJJ**

Background and Purpose

Certainly the importance of practitioners in the juvenile justice system becoming aware of and utilizing the best research about what works with at---risk and delinquent youth has grown dramatically in recent years. Building on fundamental research in the 1990s about youthful offenders, researchers and practitioners have gradually been building a body of knowledge about specific programs that have proven effective and about the core principles of effective practices. In regards to research about specific program models and more encompassing meta---analyses that help guide policy and practice, the subcommittee recognizes that there is much more that can be done to successfully integrate this research into everyday practice in jurisdictions across the country. Therefore, the question of what the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) can do to support greater use of this research is a timely and important one to be considered.

With that in mind, and following some initial discussions, the subcommittee adopted the following purpose statement (subject to modification as time went on):

The purpose of the Evidence---Based Juvenile Justice Youth Practices subcommittee of the Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice (FACJJ) is to advise the FACJJ on matters related to the study, dissemination, and effective implementation of youth justice---focused programs, policies and practices. The subcommittee will explore the identification and definition of targeted youth outcomes (for example, positive outcomes such as education gains, development of pro---social skills and competencies, and gainful employment) and potential areas where new research might be focused; ease of access to information about programs, policies, and practice with an existing evidence base; processes and opportunities to bridge emerging practice and the research community; issues related to translation of research to effective practice; and strategies, issues, and availability of information related to reinvestment and benefit / cost analyses. In its examination of all areas, the subcommittee will consider how specific populations might be better served and strive to ensure that issues related to equity and diversity are explored and highlighted. The subcommittee will also actively seek to develop and maintain effective communication channels with other bodies currently advising OJJDP and the Department of Justice in this area (such as the Science Advisory Committee).

This statement reflects some of the discussions that the subcommittee had that focused on: (1) the importance of thinking about outcomes—particularly outcomes that go beyond reducing reoffending (recognizing that recidivism will always remain a key outcome)—as we think about what works; (2) the importance of thinking about prevention and positive youth development outcomes that in many ways represent the best hope for long-term reengagement of youth in pro-social activities; (3) the need to find ways to “bridge the gap” between research and practice, improving strategies that can assist practitioners in integrating what works into their daily practice; and (4) the need for system reform and alignment that promotes and supports on-going quality improvement through self-assessment, implementation, data-collection and analysis, and evaluation.

Some Basic Assumptions and Statements about EBP

The breadth of this topic, the richness and diversity of information that is already available, the need for work in this area, and the challenge of meeting the FACJJ timelines for completing our recommendations gradually pushed our group to focus in on more discrete activities and goals. With that in mind, there are some basic assumptions and statements about EBP that we do not have the time or capacity to fully explore but nonetheless have implications for our ultimate recommendations. These include:

1. Unless otherwise noted, our use of the abbreviation EBP reflects both evidence-based **programs** and evidence-based **practices**. We are well aware of the good work that has been done by OJJDP, Blueprints for Violence Prevention, SAMHSA, and others to identify specific program models that have been subject to solid research and proven their effectiveness. Likewise, we recognize and support strategies to implement the research that identifies core principles or characteristics of effective practice with youthful offenders and/or their families. These practices that focus on risk, criminogenic need, responsivity, and quality implementation can be systematically implemented at the “ground level” to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes.
2. We recognize that EBP research will continue to evolve, again both in terms of individual program models that are effective as well as continuing research about system and practice changes that are making a positive impact on preventing delinquent behavior and reducing reoffending. The dynamic nature of this research reinforces the need for OJJDP to maintain the capacity to evaluate and disseminate implementable research to the field.
3. The subcommittee takes note of the varied partners and practitioners that must collaborate in order for the system to be most effective, including school-based staff, law enforcement, social workers/probation staff, community-based providers, attorneys, and judges. While recognizing that parties in the system have a unique perspective and role, we believe that as the field utilizes more evidence-based practice to be more effective, we can meet our common goals of

promoting community safety and giving youth the skills they need to be successful members of our community. Along with youth being held accountable, understanding the impact of their behavior on others and taking steps to repair the harm they have caused, these goals are consistent with the Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) framework, that has been adopted by many states as part of their juvenile statutes. We encourage the integration of EBP into this larger framework that views youth, the community, and those affected by crime as equally important customers of the juvenile justice system.

4. The juvenile justice field has had a difficult time bridging the gap between what we know about effective prevention and positive youth development strategies and effective intervention practices and programs. Differences in how youth are perceived, differences in language, and most importantly huge differences in terms of investments have too often kept prevention practitioners and juvenile justice professionals from working together to build a more complete approach in working with at-risk and system-involved youth. Unlike the medical field in which prevention is considered an integral part of a comprehensive approach, in the juvenile justice field we sometimes view some of the core prevention strategies only apply to “those other youth.” Frameworks like the Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Offenders, Communities That Care, and the Search Institute’s Developmental Assets recognize that there is an important role for prevention work. Recent concepts such as Positive Youth Justice attempt to bridge the gap between prevention and intervention, and the committee affirms that we need to avoid narrowing our overall focus in a way that would exclude consideration of what works in prevention from the overall effort to improve practice.
5. At the same time, the extensive research and frameworks that have developed around EBP in multiple fields of interest can be confusing for practitioners to understand and apply as program developers and practice advocates may be using different language and different strategies driven by their unique perspective. An example of this is the existence of many delinquency assessment tools that all are presented as evidence-based— all relying on some sort of validation study and purporting to focus on risks/needs that are THE most important to focus on. It is a reasonable question (especially from a practitioner level) to wonder if one tool is more appropriate than another to accomplish the basic task of doing a good assessment that will help drive the intervention. While it is not likely that OJJDP can or should endorse a specific assessment tool, continued research and evaluation of the best ways to ensure quality assessment of youth entering the juvenile justice system would be helpful.

Focusing on Outcomes

As noted earlier, a point of early consensus for the committee was that we simply need to address the question of “what works” by learning more about the kinds of outcomes—beyond reducing recidivism—that existing and potential research need to evaluate. Examples of questions raised in discussion included:

1. Is there a common understanding or consensus among researchers about what practices lead to what specific outcomes for youth? If yes, what is it? If not, should there be and/or is there an appropriate role for OJJDP in adopting a consistent framework or definition about desired outcomes?
2. Is there good research about the link between intermediate outcomes that reflect meaningful changes in the behavior, skills, and knowledge of youth and the broader outcomes of reducing reoffending and increasing engagement in pro-social activities?
3. Are there effective and efficient ways to measure these intermediate outcomes that will permit practitioners to evaluate their work on an on-going basis?
4. What do states currently measure as it relates to outcomes? Do states, through their SAGs, focus on evidence-based strategies and outcomes now? If so, what is the framework they use to guide that work?

The committee undertook a number of steps to help answer these questions:

1. OJJDP provided information about the outcome framework(s) that already exist as part of its research agenda. This list proved to be comprehensive and broad-ranging in both scope and application but not necessarily focused enough to add significantly to our ultimate recommendations.
2. The committee reviewed a limited amount of literature about evidence-based practices and took note of existing references and resources that can help inform good practice but did not have sufficient time or resources to integrate that research into a specific or common outcome framework. To an extent, some of this integration has been done by others⁴, but continued efforts to translate research into the juvenile justice system change that needs to occur is necessary.
3. The committee provided outcome-oriented questions to be included on the JRSA survey of SAGs, with the intent of trying to find out to what extent, if

⁴ Some sources reviewed by the subcommittee include:

Lipsey, Mark, James Howell, Marion R. Kelley, Gabrielle Chapman, and Darin Carver. 2010. Juvenile Justice Programs: A New Perspective on Evidence-Based Practice. Center for Juvenile Justice Reform. Georgetown University.

Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy: Achieving our Balanced and Restorative Mission Through Evidence-Based Policy and Practice. 2012. Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

Dickerson, Mary Lou, Kevin Haggerty, and Richard F. Catalano. 2011. The Use of Evidence Based Policy for State and Local Decision-Makers. Social Development Research Group.

Small, Stephen A., Arthur J. Reynolds, Cailin O'Connor, and Siobhan M. Cooney. 2005. What Works Wisconsin: What Science Tells Us About Cost-Effective Programs for Juvenile Delinquency Prevention. University of Wisconsin – Madison Schools of Social Work and Human Ecology. <http://whatworks.uwex.edu/index.html>

Bonnie, Richard, Robert L. Johnson, Betty M. Chemers, and Julie A. Schuck, Editors. 2013. Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach. National Research Council of the National Academies.

National Academies Press. Washington, D.C.

any, they focus on evidence---based practice and definable outcomes beyond recidivism and generic process outcomes.

4. The committee reviewed the three---year plans submitted by states to OJJDP in order to look for information regarding to what extent any state defines outcome measures beyond reoffending and process measures as part of their investment or provided activity. And, when a state had a well---developed set of such outcome measures, the committee conducted a follow up interview with the identified state contact so we could learn more about both the substance and metrics of those outcomes.

Results of SAG Surveys and literature review:

Based on a review of states' Three---Year Plans, the committee noted that few states have or support outcome measures that go beyond reducing recidivism or basic process measures (e.g. number of youth served, number completing a program, whether youth reoffended while in the program, etc.). Note that the lack of specificity in the three---year plan does not necessarily mean that this work is not happening, particularly at the local level. It simply means that activity is not an overt part of the state's three---year plan submission.

Specifically, in response to the Annual FACJJ Request for Information, "...Sixty---three percent (33 responses) indicated that the respondent's state agency or SAG was actively involved in these activities [evaluating and implementing evidence---based practices], while another 25 percent (13 respondents) indicated they were working toward developing evaluation capacity and generating interest in evidence---based programs and practices". That report goes on to provide examples of how states have defined evidence---based practice and a sense of what specific evidence---based programs have been implemented in their state.

Using the maxim "what gets measured is what gets done", the committee suggests that there may be additional opportunities within the grant making and reporting processes to increase the focus on positive youth outcome measures as well as, or even instead of, some of the more basic process measures now used.

Review of OJJDP Role

The committee also reviewed a list and outline of activities through which OJJDP can impact juvenile justice practice. These activities generally fall within four categories, including:

1. Solicitations, grant funding, and grantees. This category includes a range of grant---related activities from administering formula/block grant programs, discretionary grant programs (including research, program models, and data/statistic collection/analysis), monitoring funded projects, making site visits to grantees, and management and evaluation of grantee reports.

2. Training and Technical Assistance. The development of guides/curricula, hosting meetings/trainings/webinars on selected topics, and responding to specific subject area---based requests supported by OJJDP funds, publications such as the Juvenile Justice Journal, statistical reports, fact sheets and newsletters, and more recently the development of evidence based practice libraries (e.g. Crime Solutions and the Model Programs Guide).
3. Meetings, workgroups, conferences, and committees. OJJDP provides leadership and/or plays a strong role in federal interagency workgroups, national and regional conferences, collaborates with relevant associations and non---profit partnerships, and participates in a variety of federal initiatives (e.g. National Forum on Youth Violence, Defending Childhood, etc.).
4. General Policy Leadership. OJJDP implements policy as prescribed by JJDPA and other legislation, acts to manage various budget appropriations, responds to requests for information from Congress and/or outreaches to congressional leadership as may be appropriate, including providing testimony if/when requested.

Each of these roles provide opportunities for OJJDP to support the continued advancement of evidence---based practice research, dissemination of best practice information to practitioners, and support system reform(s) that lead to better outcomes for youth and communities.

Recommendations to the FACJJ:

The EBP Subcommittee believes the FACJJ should consider the following as potential recommendations to OJJDP, Congress, and the Executive Office:

1. Support efforts to identify common outcomes that can be used to assess the effectiveness of programs and practices—in particular those outcomes that include positive youth development and pro-social skill development—in reducing “negative” behaviors.
 - a. OJJDP should host a summit with experts and selected practitioners to develop a limited number of positive youth outcomes that can be integrated into further EBP research, initiatives, and implementation strategies.
 - b. OJJDP should consider additional ways that both positive youth outcome measures and evidence-based practices (not solely programs) can be incorporated in grant solicitations, monitoring, and reporting. This presumes that there will be an ever-increasing partnership between OJJDP and grantees in “give and take” that helps inform OJJDP and the juvenile justice field as to what works best to both prevent offending and to intervene successfully with youthful offenders.

- c. OJJDP should consider the use of a limited number of national outcomes measures related to the principles of “Rare, Fair, and Beneficial.”
- 2. OJJDP should assess current best practice strategies for implementing EBP on a system-wide basis and promote the development of new strategies.
 - a. OJJDP should provide resources (publications, training, technical assistance, funding) that can assist jurisdictions in aligning resources and practices at all levels of contact with youth to be consistent with research about what works with youth and families.
 - b. Guidance must be provided to practitioners to minimize loss of efficacy inherent with inadequate investment in factors such as high-quality and highly trained staff, attention to responsivity factors inherent in a relationship between adults and youth, and development and implementation of on-going quality assurance measures to evaluate success.
 - c. Continue to support research into evidence-based programs as well as meta-analytical research that identifies the characteristics of what works well with youthful offenders. Both specific program models as well as more comprehensive research into core principles and components will continue to move the juvenile justice field forward.
- 3. OJJDP should continue to emphasize juvenile justice practices that are based on solid scientific research and evidence, including programs that are included on registries such as the Model Programs guide or Blueprints for Prevention, and other programs that effectively and comprehensively incorporate Evidence-Based Practices. Furthermore, OJJDP should continue to fund studies of juvenile justice practices and programs that have not yet been conclusively evaluated.
 - a. Special consideration should be given to practices and interactions between providers of service and youth/families that are not easily captured and researched in a “program” model.
 - b. Significant interaction— often greater interaction—with youth occurs outside the “confines” of specific program models, yet evidence-based programs often fail to incorporate these important interactions as part of a comprehensive supervision/intervention plan.
- 4. Continue to collaborate with other federal agencies, national organizations, and others that are focused on needs of youth (e.g. mental health, education, behavioral health, and AODA) and also working to identify and develop evidence-based policies and practices that respond to those need areas. Youth in the juvenile justice system most often demonstrate cross-system needs, yet practitioners in various systems too often operate under different frameworks and use different language.

5. Take special note of racial disparities that exist throughout the juvenile justice system and place greater emphasis on supporting evidence-based practices that can have a positive impact on reducing those disparities.

Summary and Conclusion

This committee would be hard-pressed to in any way attempt to duplicate or encapsulate the extensive work that already exists related to evidence-based practices and program models in the juvenile justice field. There are both academics and practitioners that know far more than we do about EBP and will readily see lack of sophistication in our approach to this topic and the relative lack of expertise we claim to possess. Importantly, we perceive our role differently than those who know much more than we do about evidence-based practice. In particular, we are trying to represent those that need to find ways to take the quality work that has been done by researchers, program designers, and academics and translate it into day-to-day practice, into policy development, into investment decisions, and into juvenile justice system reform and realignment.

We are well aware of program designer's wondering why practitioners have not more fully adopted specific programs, but we are equally aware of the challenges facing local practitioners trying to reform their practices within a juvenile justice framework that may or may not be fully aligned toward the same goals. Yet, we remain optimistic about the leadership that OJJDP can and needs to play in the ongoing reform and improvement of the juvenile justice system, and we urge continued FACJJ support for those efforts.

Respectfully submitted by:

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NOTE: Additional references to materials reviewed can be provided upon request.