

Transitional Plan

Juvenile Justice Reform

Division of Youth Services

Department of Human Services

November, 2008

The Division of Youth Services is embarking on a comprehensive strategic planning process that will revolutionize the juvenile justice system in Arkansas. The chart below summarizes the direction and scope of the system changes envisioned with the strategic plan.

Indicators	Our Past	Our Future
Concept of public safety	Incarcerating and committing offenders	Creating and restoring healthy families
Role of DYS	Responding to juvenile crime	Preventing juvenile delinquency
Response to youth in system	Many in secure confinement	Most in community-based services
Primary focus	Youth in trouble	Family systems - working with strengths
Budgets	Spiraling costs of incarceration	Money re-allocated to treatment
Method of operation	Independent bureaucracy	Responsive and agile network
Basis for decision-making	Tradition and precedent	Practices proved effective and evidence-based
DYS employees	High stress and turnover	Highly trained and professional
Data system on youth	Fragmented and incomplete	Interactive, integrated and useful
Evaluation of providers	Compliance with contract	Positive outcomes for youth
Relationships with schools and courts	Independent efforts	Partners in prevention
Relationships with corrections	Increasing feeder for prisons	Reverses trend of adult crime
National reputation	Behind national progress	Leader in reform

The strategic planning process began with the creation of a 50-member task force of stakeholders who identified issues and worked in small groups on action plans. Shortly after the creation of the task force, the department commissioned a comprehensive review of Arkansas’s juvenile justice system by outside consultants Pat Arthur and Tim Roche. The consultant review was funded by the JEHT Foundation and was released in 2008. Director Ron Angel initiated a strategic planning process to respond to the conclusions and recommendations of the consultant report. The first step of the planning process was a three-day retreat of key stakeholders to develop a vision for the juvenile justice system in the state, and to develop long-term goals. The retreat was facilitated by Dr. Angela Laird Brenton, Dean of the College of Professional Studies at the University of

Arkansas at Little Rock. Results from the retreat were presented to the 50-member task force for review and comment. The result is this transition plan. It details actions that DYS should undertake in the next 1-2 years to lay the foundation for fundamental system reform of the juvenile justice system.

Throughout the process the hundreds of people who have given time, expertise, and funding have been motivated by one common goal expressed by Director Angel when he described why he accepted the job as Director of DYS after his federal retirement, “We’re doing it for the kids.” All of the participants have realized that the youth of Arkansas are our future. We cannot afford to fail them. A brighter future for all the children of Arkansas will contribute to a stronger state.

Even before the strategic planning process was completed, DYS has put into motion a number of progressive initiatives including:

Contracting with UAMS to provide a mobile assessment team to assess the mental, physical, and emotional status of youth who have been committed to DYS. The team has provided helpful information to judges, has reduced the time youth spend in detention facilities awaiting placement with a community service provider and has promoted more effective treatment for assessed needs.

Developing risk assessment procedures for judges to use in deliberating whether a youth should be committed to DYS;

Launching a regional pilot in Northwest Arkansas to encourage more community resources so youth committed to DYS can stay close to home in receiving services to meet their needs and assure that they become more functional and contributing members of their communities.

Hiring a consultant to further develop Rite Track, a comprehensive data system which will ultimately help the department in tracking youth in all their interactions with state agencies, determine most effective methods of intervening with youth and families, and assure accountability to citizens and policy makers.

Reduction in dependence on juvenile detention centers (JDCs) based on efforts to speed up the intake process to move youth more quickly from commitment to placement.

This transition plan has four parts: 1) a divisional mission statement; 2) a vision statement of the ultimate goals of juvenile justice reform; 3) a prioritized set of goals; and 4) short-term actions we propose to take toward the goals to create a foundation for juvenile justice reform. The comprehensive planning process is on-going and will involve a variety of stakeholder groups across the state over the next few months.

Mission

The mission of the Division of Youth Services is to implement policies and high-quality programs to give opportunities for success to families and children in Arkansas through effective prevention, intervention and treatment to ensure public safety.

Vision

Children and families in Arkansas are safe and have the resources they need in their communities to help them succeed.

What this would look like:

Sustainable juvenile justice system reform in Arkansas through broad consensus and shared responsibility among stakeholders.

Empowering and effective services to youth and families focusing on strengths and skill building.

Treating children, youth, and families by providing appropriate services close to home with the outcomes of reduced secure confinement and assuring the safety of Arkansas communities.

Secure facilities used to confine and treat youth are safe and humane and provide genuine opportunity for youth to succeed and to make educational progress.

Programs for early identification and intervention to prevent juvenile delinquency, including cooperative partnerships with schools.

No more racial disparities in the juvenile justice system.

Stronger system of quality assurance and accountability to ensure that resources are producing measurable outcomes for children, youth, and families.

Collecting and analyzing more data to determine needs of children, youth, families and communities and using results to improve the system.

Cultural sensitivity and services to meet needs of special populations such as females, non-native English speakers, children and youth with mental illness, sexual offenders, and youth with substance abuse issues.

Funding for expanded community services from savings from reduced confinement and new sources of federal, state, and private funding.

Long-term goals

The vision outlined above logically leads to a set of goals for juvenile justice reform. They are listed in order of priority of the stakeholders who created them.

1. Create sustainable system changes in juvenile justice in Arkansas through broad consensus and shared responsibility among stakeholders.
2. Treat children, youth, and families by providing appropriate services close to home with the effects of reducing secure confinement of youth and ensuring public safety.

3. Provide empowering and effective services for youth and families that focus on strength and skill building.
4. Develop programs for early identification and intervention to prevent juvenile delinquency, including cooperative programs with schools.
5. Collect and analyze more data to determine needs of children, youth, families and communities and use the results to improve the system.
6. Develop the capacity of the system for cultural sensitivity and services to meet needs of special populations such as females, non-native English speakers, children and youth with mental illness, sexual offenders, and youth with substance abuse issues.
7. Ensure that secure facilities used to confine and treat youth are safe and humane and provide genuine opportunity for youth to succeed and to make educational progress.
8. Eliminate racial disparities in the juvenile justice system.
9. Develop a stronger system of quality assurance and accountability to ensure that resources are producing measurable outcomes for children, youth, and families.
10. Develop new sources of funding to support reforms including shifting funding from secure confinement to community services, seeking foundation funding, and making changes to be eligible for enhanced federal funding.

Transitional goals and strategies

In this transitional plan we focus on the top five priority goals from the list above, and develop objectives and strategies that can be achieved in the next two years to lay a foundation for fundamental system reform of the juvenile justice system in Arkansas. Other actions will be occurring on all ten goal areas above, but we hope to have measurable action completed on the top five priority areas within the next two years.

Goal One: Create sustainable system changes in juvenile justice in Arkansas through broad consensus and shared responsibility among stakeholders.

Objective one: Complete a comprehensive five-year plan with input and buy-in from broad stakeholder groups across the state.

Strategies:

1. Create a draft plan in consultation with the 50-member Juvenile Justice Reform Task force by March 2009.

2. Discuss the plan with judges in every judicial district.
3. Gain buy-in from community service providers on system reform.
4. Hold public hearings in each region of the state to gain input from youth, families, educators, and the general public.

Outcome: Completed comprehensive five-year plan by the end of 2009.

Objective two: Increase training capacity within DYS and throughout the juvenile justice system on effective treatment methods for children, youth, and families.

Strategies:

1. Seek technical assistance from federal agencies and private foundations to provide training on effective interventions and best treatment practices.
2. Create a training bureau within DYS to provide training in effective treatment practices.
3. Continuously monitor the results of the training to determine training modifications and re-training needs.

Outcomes:

1. Training unit developed within DYS by January 2010.
2. Technical assistance obtained from OJJDP and other federal agencies and private foundations by January 2010.
3. At least six training sessions completed for community service providers by October 2010.

Objective three: Develop agreements with DDS, DBHS, and AOC and implement memoranda of agreement with DCFS to share data and work cooperatively in early identification of problems in children and families and interventions to create stronger family structures.

Strategies:

1. Share data between DCFS, DYS and System of Care to determine the number of children involved in DCFS in abuse and neglect cases or foster care who go on to juvenile delinquency and/or DYS commitments.
2. Share data among other related state agencies to form a related data base that will allow more comprehensive research on children and families in the state.
3. Develop joint strategies for working to strengthen families and prevent problem behavior in children and youth.

Outcomes:

1. Shared or linked data base by December 2010.
2. Cooperative strategies on strengthening families by December 2009.

Objective four: Conduct a public information campaign on the need for juvenile justice reform.

Strategies:

1. Develop and refine messages about the human and financial costs of secure confinement for youth who pose no risk to themselves and others.
2. Develop information about the effectiveness of community-based treatment strategies for children, youth, and families.
3. Distribute messages through public service announcements on the media, news conferences, presentations to civic organizations and PTAs, and by networking with professional organizations.
4. Develop an interactive web page to distribute information on juvenile justice reform effort and to gain input about the plan.

Outcomes:

1. Shifts in public opinions on juvenile justice as measured by public opinion surveys.
2. Enhanced support for reform efforts.

Objective five: Develop and begin to implement outcome-based measures for the programs administered by DYS to monitor effectiveness.

Strategies:

1. Work with service providers to identify appropriate outcome measures for youth and families in their care.
2. Begin including outcome measures in all new service provider contracts.

Outcomes:

1. Developing accountability for providers to document youth and family outcomes.
2. A growing body of data on effective practices with Arkansas youth and families.

Goals Two through Four:

Treat children, youth, and families by providing appropriate services close to home with the effects of reducing secure confinement of youth and ensuring public safety.

Provide empowering and effective services for youth and families that focus on strength and skill building.

Develop programs for early identification and intervention to prevent juvenile delinquency, including cooperative programs with schools.

Objective one: Complete a regional pilot program in northwest Arkansas to provide comprehensive services for youth in the region to keep youth committed to DYS from Northwest Arkansas closer to home.

Strategies:

1. Work with community service providers in northwest Arkansas to promote a broader continuum of services for youth in the region.
2. Implement principles from Systems of Care to provide comprehensive services for families, children, and youth.
3. Develop at least one school district from the region to partner with prevention initiatives to reduce the number of court-involved youth in the region.
4. Use a standardized intake risk assessment in all judicial districts in the region.
5. Place as many youth as possible committed to DYS by judges in northwest Arkansas to treatment facilities in northwest Arkansas.

Outcomes:

1. 25% more youth placed within their own region for treatment.
2. Decrease secure confinement by 5% a year for two years within the region.

Objective two: Fund three competitively-selected pilot projects in high-need areas of the state to demonstrate the effectiveness of community treatment or prevention programs for children, family and youth.

Strategies:

1. Issue a Request for Proposals by February 2009 for community-based treatment or prevention programs.
 - a. Applicants must document community needs, available programs, and service gaps.
 - b. Youth and families must be involved in project planning.
 - c. Applicants must use a treatment or prevention methods proven effective to serve children, youth, and families in their communities.
 - d. Approaches demonstrated effective for outpatient juvenile substance abuse treatment (such as Matrix), family interventions by professionals (MST or IFT), enhancing the role of para-professionals (like YAP), and school programs (truancy, after-school programs and mentoring) will be especially encouraged.
 - e. Applicants must commit to outcome measures for the effectiveness of their programs.
2. Award up to three grants for two-year demonstration projects.
3. Assess and publicize results of the programs.

Outcomes:

1. Results from the pilot programs can provide the rationale and documentation for other successful community programs across the state.
2. Cost savings in reduced secure confinement attributable to the programs can lead to continued funding.

Objective three: Work with the Department of Human Services to suspend rather than terminate Medicaid eligibility of youth committed to DYS in order to ease transition to after-care services upon leaving DYS.

Outcomes: New procedure in place by June 2009.

Objective four: Roll out risk assessment procedures and tools statewide.

Strategies:

1. Develop a standardized tool for statewide use by juvenile judges.
2. Expand the UAMS mobile assessment team.

Outcome: Better predictive data on risk, resulting in fewer commitments and more diversion to community programs.

Goal Five: Collect and analyze more data to determine needs of children, youth, families and communities and use the results to improve the system.

Objective one: Develop a memorandum of agreement with the Administrative Office of the Courts for sharing information about juvenile diversion, FINS, and delinquency.

Strategies:

1. Determine information needs such as information on juveniles placed on probation or pre-adjudication diversion.
2. Find ways to provide data by individuals rather than in aggregate statistical formats to be able to track individual youth as they move through the system.
3. Develop ways to protect confidentiality while sharing data.
4. Develop ways to share data between Rite Track and the AOC database.

Outcome: More comprehensive and integrated database concerning juvenile justice.

Objective two: Complete a data flow analysis report on information on juvenile justice in the state.

Strategies:

1. Seek a qualified specialist to complete the work.
2. Seek grant funding to support the project.
3. Report would summarize gaps, discontinuities, and uses of information on youth in the state and make recommendations for how the system could be improved to provide information to judges, community service providers, researchers, educators, and divisional personnel.

Outcome: Consultant report completed by December 2009 with recommendations on improving the data base.

Objective three: Map community and regional resources available to assist families, children, and youth in the state of Arkansas.

Strategies:

1. Coordinate with the Division of County Operations to create a resource directory available in print and on-line.
2. Participate in joint meetings with System of Care around the state to learn of community resources and programs.
3. Work with ACE Coalition, courts and county judges, CASSP regional councils, United Way, DHS E-source directory, Arkansas Youth Development Collaborative, Regional Prevention Resource Centers, and faith-based alliances in collecting information about community and regional programs for families, children, and youth.
4. Determine all state-funded programs through cooperation with other state agencies.

Outcome: On-line map of community resources and identification of regional gaps by December 2010.