Implementing Family Engagement in the Juvenile Justice System

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Objectives

• Explain what is meant by “family engagement”
• Identify barriers to family engagement
• Provide recommended steps at state and local levels
• Provide an overview of Cowley County’s efforts
What is Family Engagement?

• There is no universal term
• Family “engagement” and “involvement” are sometimes used interchangeably
• Family engagement is empowering families, based on their strengths, to have an active role in their child’s disposition and treatment
• Family engagement involves establishing a collaborative relationship
Who are Families?

- Parents and/or other adults caregivers
  - Biological or step parents
  - Legal guardians and foster parents
  - Grandparents, uncles, aunts, siblings
  - Kinships

- Noncustodial parents
Why Involve Families?

• Leads to better outcomes for youth
• Leads to better outcomes for the community
  – Families are the experts on their youth
  – Families have influence over youth
Why Involve Families? (cont)

• Involving parents is a best practice principle
  – Reduces behavior problems
  – Promotes school success
  – Provide greater supervision
  – Reduces recidivism
Family Barriers to Family Engagement

• The family
  – Does not trust the system
  – Feels betrayed by the system
  – Is frustrated
  – Feels degraded by the system
  – Is confused/does not understand the system
  – Feels powerless
  – Feels ashamed
  – Is uncooperative
Family Barriers (cont)

- Financial barriers
- Time barriers
- Transportation issues
- Multiple barriers
System Barriers to Family Engagement

- System design
- Fiscal challenges
- Lack of cultural competence
- Lack of training
- Conflicting goals
- Stereotypes
- “Us” vs. “Them”
Commitment to Change

• There is agreement among Juvenile Justice professionals that family engagement is a major need

• However, implementation of systematic steps to improve family engagement is limited

• There has to be a real and lasting Commitment to change
Recommended Steps at the State Level

• Develop common concepts and measurements of family engagement
• Develop fiscal strategy to fund family engagement
• Develop a basic guide for families
  – To find examples guides go to: http://modelsforchange.net/publications/436
  – More on the guide on upcoming slides
Recommended Steps at State Level (cont)

Developing a Family Guide (1/3)

- Family Advocates and Juvenile Justice System should collaborate to develop the Guide

- Family Guide should include:
  - Description of the Juvenile Justice System
    - What does that mean?
    - What is happening?
    - Who are these people?
  - Rights and responsibilities for all stakeholders
  - Explanation of how the Juvenile Justice System differs from the adult system
Recommended Steps at State Level (cont) Developing a Family Guide (2/3)

• Other things to include in the Family Guide:
  – How to be an advocate
  – Juvenile Justice flow chart
  – Advocacy resources

• Make Guide available in multiple languages

• Provide a video presentation

• Post on-line and make available in hard copy
Recommended Steps at State Level (cont)
Developing a Family Guide (3/3)

Example Flow Chart

- OFFENSE
  - INTAKE
    - NO ACTION
      - Case Ends
    - FORMAL CHARGES
    - DIVERSION
      - Informal Action
        - COMMUNITY SERVICE
        - COUNSELLING
        - RESTITUTION TO VICTIMS
        - ACADEMIC PROGRAMS
  - DETENTION HEARING
    - CONTINUE DETENTION
    - RELEASE UNTIL HEARING
      - TRANSFER HEARING
      - TRANSFER TO ADULT COURT
  - PRELIMINARY HEARING
  - ADJUDICATORY HEARING
    - FOUND NOT TO HAVE COMMITTED OFFENSE
    - FOUND TO HAVE COMMITTED OFFENSE
      - DISPOSITIONAL HEARING
        - PROBATION SUPERVISION
        - RESIDENTIAL AND NON RESIDENTIAL SERVICES
        - JUVENILE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY
Recommended Steps at State and Local Levels

• Provide training for Juvenile Justice professionals, including:
  – How to interact with families
  – Cross cultural representation

• Implement performance based standards

• Implement research-based models of improving family involvement
Recommended Steps at State and Local Levels (cont)

• Integrate parent advocates into the Juvenile Justice system
• Identify existing family support organizations and initiatives
• Implement Parent Education programing
Recommended Steps at State and Local Levels (cont)

- Adopt family-friendly sentencing options
- Incorporate strategies to improve family involvement in out-of-home placements
Recommended Steps Local Level

• Have dedicated staff persons with each agency to coordinate family engagement efforts and activities
• Establish a foundation of mutual respect
• Identify and promote family engagement practices and processes, which support communication between families and juvenile justice system
Recommended Steps Local Level (cont)

• Review current policy and procedures to identify where opportunity for family engagement can be strengthened

• Engage existing groups that support family engagement to assist them in identifying, adapting and or developing materials for families
Cowley County Youth Services
Family Engagement Program

• Purpose of the program
  – Involve families in the juvenile justice process
  – Reduce responsivity factors
  – Ensure successful rehabilitation
  – Sustain reintegration into the community
Cowley County Youth Services
Family Engagement (cont)

• First steps
  – Hire a family collaboration coordinator
  – Cross-train family collaboration coordinator

• Family Engagement Caseload
  • Court ordered
  • On supervision
  • Score high to moderate risk on the YLS/CMI
  • Immediate Intervention after referral to multi-disciplinary team (MDT)
Cowley County Youth Services
Family Engagement (cont)

• Responsibilities of the coordinator:
  – Remind parents of upcoming court dates
  – Attend court hearings
  – Attend supervision planning meetings
  – Assist in finding resources for family
    • Counseling
    • Legal services (Eagles Nest)
    • Food banks
    • Education
    • Insurance
Cowley County Youth Services
Family Engagement (cont)

• Responsibilities of the coordinator (cont):
  – Offer emotional support
  – Collaborate with parents to reduce the “us vs. them” mentality
  – Meet with the families a minimum of once a month – twice a month
  – Offer assistance in keeping parents on track with probation goals.
  – Attend the Parent Project® parenting class (more info on following slides)
Parent Project®

• Two programs available:
  – Parent Project Sr. (parents of adolescents)
  – Parent Project Jr. (parents of children 5 -10)
• Focuses on difficult children, but is both a prevention and intervention program
• Behavioral approach: lots of love and affection, clear rules; consistent consequences, structure, and active supervision
• Skill building workshop with added emotional and practical support for parents
Parent Project® (cont)

• 16 week program

• Part I: Skill Building
  – Promote love and affection (influence vs. control); increase positive behavior (school attendance & performance); handle negative behavior, promote active supervision, identify risk factors

• Part II: Build Self Help Support Group + Skill Refinement:
  – Finding help, communicating values/ standards, family unity, building positive self concepts

• Part III: Parent Led Support Groups:
  – On-Going, Parent Led Support Groups
Parent Project® (cont)

• Examples
  – Parent Survey
  – Stories
Parent Project® (cont)

• 6 Key Elements of Parent Projects’ Success:
  1. Solution-focused
  2. Deals with even the most difficult acting-out adolescent behaviors
  3. Activity-based
  4. Community collaborative approach
  5. Provides parents information, skill training, encouragement, & practical/emotional support
  6. Developed as a compilation of answers to parents’ questions (MOST unique component)
Discussion

• What are some ways your district or agency has implemented family engagement?
• What thoughts or ideas do you have about next steps that are needed?
For More Information

- Feel free to contact Melody Pappan, mpappan@cowleycounty.org
- Consult the following materials used for developing this presentation:
  - Models for Change: “Family Involvement in Pennsylvania’s Juvenile Justice System”
  - The National Reentry Resource Center: “Effectively Implementing Family Engagement and Involvement Practices for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System”
  - National Institute of Mental Health/MacArthur Foundation: “The Challenge and Opportunity of Parental Involvement in Juvenile Justice Services”
  - Vera Institute of Justice “Identifying, Engaging and Empowering Families: A charge for Juvenile Justice Agencies”
  - Campaign for Youth Justice: “Family Comes First”