Overview of Kentucky’s Initiative

The aim of the Court Designated Worker (CDW) program in Kentucky is to divert youth, when appropriate, from formal court proceedings to alternative community resources. The goal of this initiative in Kentucky was to integrate Reclaiming Futures, a model for improving juvenile justice through community integration, into Kentucky’s existing pre-court diversion process. By doing so, youth with co-occurring mental and substance use disorders charged with status offenses could receive a pre-complaint conference, screening, and referral to appropriate community-based services. Campbell County was selected as the pilot site for this effort because the county ranks third highest in the state for the number of youth charged with status offenses held in detention. The diversion strategy developed through this initiative will serve as a model for CDW programs throughout the state, with the goal of reducing the number of status offenders that end up in detention with more serious juvenile offenders. Kentucky elected to participate in the cross-site workgroup, Implementing Evidence-Based Practices for Justice-Involved Youth with Co-occurring Mental and Substance Use Disorders.

State Diversion Activities

Process
Kentucky convened a core team of senior-level officials representing state and local juvenile justice, behavioral health, and family advocacy. A Judicial Change Team, as described by Reclaiming Futures, was convened to address services and sustainability, as well as to provide leadership within the community to address system change needs. In addition to regularly scheduled technical assistance calls, onsite technical assistance was provided on the importance of financial mapping and the need for screening and assessment of youth in contact with the juvenile justice system.

Strategy
Prior to taking a status offense complaint, the CDW meets with the youth and his or her family to discuss the reason for the possible complaint and potential alternatives. Upon review, the CDW will decide if filing is in the best interest of the youth and will determine if processing should occur. The CDW administers the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs-Short Screener (GAINS-SS) to determine need and to guide referrals to community-based services. Youth with co-occurring mental and substance use disorders eligible for diversion are referred to a site review team, where a diversion plan can be developed with the family. The site review team uses a multidisciplinary approach to ensure access to necessary services and provides support throughout the term of the agreement. The CDW monitors the case for compliance for six months.

Accomplishments
- Kentucky legislators initiated a task force to look at possible revisions to the 1986 Unified Juvenile Code. Through the experiences of the pilot site, the Kentucky team was able to provide information that enhanced and informed the rewriting of the juvenile code to align with proven frameworks for juvenile justice.
- The core team addressed the State Interagency Council, which is composed of commissioners of youth-serving agencies. Conversations centered on the importance of youth and family engagement in juvenile services, streamlining services, early identification and provisions of services through utilization of standardized screening, and promotion of best practices for appropriate and effective behavioral health services.
- The Kentucky Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental, and Intellectual Disabilities applied for and received SAMHSA funding for the State Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment and Enhancement Cooperative Agreement. Its application built on this initiative’s work on implementing the pre-complaint conferencing, screening, and referrals within the CDW program and improving access to evidence-based practices.
- Cross-system trainings in family engagement and the wraparound process were conducted for CDWs.
A focus group with seven youth and nine parents was held to write a brochure on family engagement. This brochure was used at "Courts and Family Engagement Training" for CDW workers in Campbell County.

Cross-Site Activities

Process
The first activity in the cross-site work was participation in the Action Network meeting on Implementing Evidence-Based Practices for Justice-Involved Youth with Co-occurring Mental and Substance Use Disorders. Kentucky already has the GAIN-SS and the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs-Quick (GAIN-Q) in place and felt that participating in the Action Network on evidence-based practices was most suitable and would best meet its needs. Kentucky focused on later steps of implementing evidence-based practices and built on local capacity and strengths, but also recognized the need to revisit the first steps when gaps were revealed.

Accomplishments
- The team identified Motivational Interviewing as an evidence-based practice for which there was a critical need among staff at the local community social service provider. Trainers were identified and Motivational Interviewing training was provided to clinical staff of the Northkey Comprehensive Care Center and Brighton Center.
- The team provided national speakers who addressed Kentucky’s Circuit Judges College, an educational program for the state’s Circuit Court judges, providing critical information regarding the importance of screening, assessment, and evidence-based interventions, as well as the Reclaiming Futures process. Additionally, judges not participating in this initiative were informed of Campbell County’s experience in this initiative and the experiences of other states using Reclaiming Futures.

Next Steps
- The Judicial Change Team will continue to meet within the local implementation site to build and sustain efforts started through this initiative.
- The Administrative Office of the Courts has requested that the family engagement training be provided to all state CDW workers. Regional trainings are currently being scheduled.
- With the intent to further develop the pre-complaint and Reclaiming Futures process, Kentucky applied for and received a State Adolescent Treatment Enhancement and Dissemination grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Collaboration between juvenile justice and behavioral health will continue.
- The state will continue to work on financial mapping under the State Adolescent Treatment Enhancement grant.

For More Information
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The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration collaborated on an initiative entitled Improving Diversion Policies and Programs for Justice-Involved Youth with Co-occurring Mental and Substance Use Disorders: An Integrated Policy Academy/Action Network Initiative. The goal of this initiative was to increase the number of youth with co-occurring mental and substance use disorders diverted out of the juvenile justice system to appropriate community-based services. Eight states participated in this initiative: Arkansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New York, South Carolina, and Virginia.

Using SAMHSA's Policy Academy model, core teams consisting of senior-level state and local policymakers were convened to learn about the latest research and effective diversion strategies for youth with co-occurring disorders in contact with the juvenile justice system. Individual state teams, consisting of the core team and an expanded home team, then developed and implemented front-end diversion strategies for youth with co-occurring disorders. Ongoing technical assistance was provided to support their efforts.

Using the Foundation’s Action Network model, which supports and links teams working on similar innovations in policy and practice, the states worked to identify and implement effective practices for screening and treating youth with co-occurring disorders. National experts provided guidance and support.

This initiative was coordinated by the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice at Policy Research Associates and the Technical Assistance Collaborative.