

Information –Sharing Questions & Answers June 2004

What juvenile justice folks reported they needed to know about kids served by both the child welfare & juvenile justice systems:

- prior CPS referrals & the circumstances surrounding these referrals
- level of cooperation of the family in these interventions
- what services have been offered and accepted
- current DCFS worker name and their contact information
- current placement & placement history
- general family history & reason for dependency or placement
- behavioral concerns – aggressive behavior, mental health dx, learning disabilities
- appreciate receiving copies of the ISSPs
- medical alerts
- what services at DSHS the kids are eligible for

When and what do juvenile justice folks share with DCFS folks?

- when the DCFS worker has access to information or services I need or when they call to get information
- charges and court dates
- concerns about the child's safety in general or in DCFS placement

What keeps you from sharing information with DCFS?

- don't know rules about sharing information, afraid to get in trouble
- don't trust that DCFS worker will take action based on the information
- won't share circumstances around charges for fear that DCFS worker will label the child, treat them differently, refuse to provide placement for youth based on *alleged* behavior
- won't share information about treatment/service plan with DCFS for fear that the DCFS worker will simply stop doing their job

General concerns about collaborating with DCFS:

- DCFS workers have a false sense of our power to determine what happens in the courtroom or to the kid by our system
- DCFS workers see detention as a reasonable placement while we get pressure from judges and administration to get kids out of detention asap
- we only get information from DCFS when we know we should call them – sometimes kid or family/guardian cannot tell us who to contact, why they are in placement, or what services they have received
- we never get mental health or substance abuse evaluations or reports when they are done and they would be very helpful and would keep us from duplicating efforts or sending kids to the wrong services
- some belief that DCFS is waiting to see what the court will do until they take action to serve the kid

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- some JPCs and case managers indicated that they are willing to share information with DCFS workers with whom they have a good working relationship or because it is an even trade of information
- JPCs felt great disappointment that they do not get follow up information or outcome information on CPS referrals – this impacts their ability to provide good information to the court or to the supervision JPC
- There is no reliable trigger for information exchange
- DCFS acts as gatekeeper only on CHINS – not as a service for youth and their families

What DCFS folks reported they needed to know about youth being served by juvenile justice and child welfare systems:

- Charges & court dates & court orders
- criminal history
- social history
- probation history
- services being provided by juvenile justice
- mental health, behavioral, substance abuse issues & concerns
- mental health & substance abuse histories
- developmental delays or disabilities
- STDs
- level of supervision required
- ongoing communication with the JPC
- predicted outcome of the case – detention? JRA? release?
- information about parents
- actions taken by detention to locate parent or responsible adult for release
- medical alerts & current medications
- safety concerns about youth

When and what do DCFS folks share with child welfare folks?

- I share information with probation when they call me
- Share school information, drug/alcohol information, family information, risk factors, counseling information, delinquent behaviors, location of parents and/or siblings, youth needs, SAY evaluation and foster home information
- Whatever will help the youth

What keeps you from sharing information?

- I don't know what I can share with them and what I can't
- Don't share information that is not relevant to the youth in question
- Won't share HIV status & information
- Won't share information unless it pertains to the conditions of probation
- Won't share information if the AG advises not to share
- Won't share information if the supervisor advises not to share

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- Won't share HIV/AIDS, sexual molestation history, health issues, information on the parents or siblings unless it was having an effect on the youth in question
- Won't share personal family-type information that has to do with dependencies

General concerns about collaborating with juvenile justice:

- kids don't get out of detention in a timely manner – sometimes have to wait up to 2 hours to get kids released
- we are not informed when a CHINS or dependent youth enter detention
- concerns about detention staff or probation staff allowing inappropriate contact with visitors for dependent or CHINS youth
- concerns that detention staff rarely communicate with DCFS
- releases occur too late in the day
- staff at the court are rude
- concerns about the lack of accountability for delays in releases or mistakes
- appreciate JPC involvement with staffings, IEP meetings, etc
- appreciate JPC access to job training programs for older adolescents
- need warrants issued and UAs done if necessary

General comments from both groups:

- **Participants in both groups talked about how much easier case planning is when information is fully shared and regularly updated.**
- **Participants in both groups felt that sharing information was generally a good and right thing to do.**
- **Participants in both groups indicated frustration over current information-sharing structure, some level of distrust of the other system, lack of knowledge of the other system's requirements and policies, and sketchy understanding of information-sharing rules.**
- **JPCs and At-Risk Youth Program staff were asked about sharing information with schools. Participants agreed that they were highly selective about sharing information with school folks believing that kids would be labeled, information would be misused and families not served.**
- **All participants indicated that they hesitate about sharing information that will get youth in trouble and will defer to a more protective stance.**