



**King County Child Welfare/Juvenile Justice  
Systems Integration Initiative**

## **King County Child Welfare/Juvenile Justice Systems Integration Initiative**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Child protection and well-being are no longer viewed as the responsibility of one or two public entities, but rather as a shared responsibility of many agencies, individuals, and institutions (formal and informal) in a community. Similarly, responsibility for guidance and accountability for delinquent youth requires the engagement of many supportive entities. Achievement of desired outcomes for children and youth being served by child welfare and juvenile justice agencies requires concerted effort and communication among many organizations and individuals, and the active engagement and support of their families. Success is more likely when all invest in the common goal and fully carry out their part in meeting it. Expectations should be high, accompanied by the appropriate supports and teamwork to bring about success.

In recent years we have come to understand the undeniable link between child maltreatment and juvenile delinquency. Many youth are served by both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems simultaneously, and many graduate from one to the other. Many also receive or are in need of mental health services. However, in most jurisdictions we are short on the services and supports children/youth and their families need to change the course. To make matters worse, many times services are provided by each of these systems in isolation from the other, without sharing of information and concerted effort in support of their success.

Child welfare and juvenile justice agencies and their community partners are increasingly measuring their achievement in meeting clearly identified outcomes (such as child safety, well-being, community safety, successful transition to adulthood), tracking progress over time, and sharing information with the community as to successes and concerns. These measures are an important part of accountability to the communities the agencies serve, and form the basis for continuous quality improvement efforts.

In King County, Washington, a broad group of community entities concerned about success for children and youth have come together in support of a more integrated system of services and responses for dependent children and youthful offenders. Initially invited by Casey Family Programs to begin a dialogue on systems integration, they have now formed into an enthusiastic coalition intent on examining their client populations, communication and teamwork, and outcomes. This does not mean that the county is devoid of successful collaboration; in fact, there are many fine examples already in existence in the county, upon which to build.

The King County Systems Integration Steering Committee requested the assistance of the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) in examining common service populations, services, teamwork, and outcomes for children and youth. This document outlines the goals and methodology for such a project.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Final goals of the collaboration, along with major project objectives, are reflected in the following goal statement adopted by the partners in the initiative:

- Promote increased cooperation, coordination, and integration at the administrative and service delivery levels for the benefit of children and families within the purview of children in the welfare and juvenile justice systems.
- Through a comprehensive, strategic planning process that embraces and values inclusion of youth, families, and a broad based representation of youth serving agencies and organizations, achieve and institutionalize greater multi-system coordination and integration to improve outcomes for King County children, youth and families.

## METHODOLOGY

CWLA employs an interactive consultation process designed to engage community leaders in the tasks of analysis, design, planning and implementation. Our job as facilitators has been to assist and support, not to supplant the authority, talents, work or actions of leaders within King County. This project will be accomplished with the guidance, active involvement and support of two core groups:

- The **King County Systems Integration Executive Committee** includes Justice Bridge, Judge Clark, Jackie Buchanan, Bruce Knutson, Lois Nicholas, Sheryl Whitney and/or Terry Mark, Mick Moore, Representative Kagi, and Lyman Legters. Others may be added to the Executive group at its discretion.

The Executive Committee will meet at regular intervals with the CWLA Consultants to develop and finalize the collaborative work plan, to determine the composition of the Steering Committee, to discuss relevant expectations and parameters, and to set any other necessary directions for the joint work. The Executive Committee will review progress and project deliverables, and plan and organize the activities of the Steering Committee. The Executive group will have final decision-making authority regarding the work of the collaboration and the CWLA project in support of it.

- A much larger group, the **King County Systems Integration Steering Committee**, (including the Executive Committee members) is a leadership group inclusive of the major agencies, governmental units and community entities who work in support of King County children and youth who are served by the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Members are individuals with decision-making responsibility for their organizations, with authority to enter into agreements and commit resources. The Committee will provide a forum for learning, consensus-building, conflict resolution, and mutual accountability. The CWLA Consultants will assist in setting the agenda for the Steering Committee, and will facilitate its work sessions.

It is expected that the Steering Committee, with its Executive leadership, will form a permanent Systems Integration collaboration into the future. CWLA Consultants will facilitate monthly work sessions over the initial six- to eight-month period. Subcommittee work will be carried out by members, and other personnel as identified and designated by Steering Committee members, between the monthly meetings. It is expected that participating agencies will provide staff support to the work of the Steering Committee.

The CWLA Consultants will assist the Executive and Steering Committees in moving through five phases of activity (documented in *Promoting a Coordinated and Integrated Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice System: An Action Strategy for Improved Outcomes*, by John A. Tuell, CWLA Press 2003) that CWLA believes is necessary to form a permanent collaboration and to meet the goals of the group:

1. Mobilization and Planning, which may include:
  - Identifying and commitment to strategic goals and objectives of the collaboration
  - Identifying and determining means of measuring collective client-oriented outcomes
  - Identifying and addressing sticking points which act as barriers to teamwork
  - Developing a governance structure
2. Data Collection and Analysis, which may include:
  - Identifying and sharing available baseline data
  - Determining county-wide data elements that may inform priorities and action steps of the collaboration; planning for gathering and study
  - Examining King County information against applicable state and national data
  - Common client identification and study
  - Development of capacity for sharing of data between systems
3. Assessment and Inventory, which may include:
  - Inventorying of resources and resource shortage across the continuum
  - Structural analysis of the youth-serving systems
  - Identification of key decision points and decision-makers
  - Conduct an examination of the legal, policy, and procedural mandates unique to each agency/organization in order to make recommendations for changes that will contribute to improved coordination of initial decision-making, case management, and service delivery.
  - Study of funding and funding structures
  - Identification of issues
  - Issue analysis
4. Action Strategy Development, which may include:
  - Identification of broad range of issues
  - Development of prioritized action agenda
  - Consensus involving all partners
  - Planning of action steps

- Development of funding mechanisms necessary to support integrated approaches
5. Implementation, which may include:
- Assignments of leadership responsibility
  - Agreement on timelines, phasing and milestones
  - Outcome evaluation with incremental measurement
  - Process evaluation toward further improving the collaboration

In addition, the partners in the initiative will jointly compile subcommittee reports to produce findings and recommendations for action strategies resulting in youth serving system coordination and integration and jointly produce an implementation strategy with benchmarks and timelines, no later than 120 days from the adoption of the final report.

### **PROJECT TIMELINE**

March, 2004 through December, 2004

### **SUMMARY**

CWLA has provided two senior consultants (John A. Tuell, Deputy Director for the National Center for Program Leadership, and John George, CWLA Senior Consultant) to work together with King County partners in examining and making improvements in services for children and youth who may find themselves receiving services of both Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems. The work is primarily facilitative and consultative with on-site work that has involved one day each month for up to eight months. The agreement also includes preparation and follow-up, some of which has been conducted off-site through conference calls, electronic communication, and dissemination of materials electronically.

CWLA has made available analytical services as agreed with the King County partners, which has included legal, structural, budgetary or other analysis.