

Preliminary Report
Resource Inventory and Analysis Subcommittee
King County Systems Integration Initiative
September, 2004

ACTIVITIES

The subcommittee has convened monthly in half-day sessions over several months. The focus of the work thus far has been on cross-system understanding of the mission, mandates, values, decision-making case flow, and services/resources of each of the following entities:

- King County Juvenile Court/Probation
- DSHS Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (JRA)
- DSHS Children's Administration (CA)
- King County Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS)
- Educational systems as initially represented by Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD)

While there are other community entities that contribute, some of them significantly, to the service mix for children/youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, our decision was to initially limit the scope of our study to these five government systems and the resources they represent.

Our initial task was to gather together information regarding the systems, and find the points of intersection, overlaps and gaps in services.

The analysis is not complete, but we believe we have identified some areas needing further attention and planning, which we are ready to share with the Steering Committee for further perspective and direction.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The subcommittee came together around several overarching principles for King County service integration – themes that became stronger and clearer during the course of our deliberations:

- That we should, as much as possible, rely on data for resource decision-making initially and for later course adjustments
- That service integration will require concerted effort over time; a permanent collaboration will be necessary to sustain it
- That prevention and least-restrictive services should be underlying integration philosophies
- That family engagement should be an underlying approach to services
- That we should learn more about which responses bring the best results with which populations, and apply evidence-based practices in all our programs
- That we should, where possible, integrate the use of common assessment instruments
- That the educational systems must be a part of the integration work.

- That we should never give up hope for the young people we serve.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Strengths Supporting Service Integration

While the March, 2004 Steering Committee produced a more extensive list of what participants identified as working well, the following King County conditions are specifically supportive to integrated resource sharing and development:

- Protocols are in place or are in the making between most of the systems, the existence of which provide a solid foundation for further collaborative effort.
- There is good will and a spirit of openness between the leadership of these organizations, demonstrated by their enthusiastic engagement in the work of the subcommittee.
- The current service mix includes a number of evidence-based approaches which subcommittee members feel could be explored for expansion or enhancement.
- Systems of Care has been well accepted here, bringing the systems together based on a common set of practice principles.
- The successful Blended Funding Project has been in existence for a number of years, supporting a narrow band of high-needs multi-system children/youth.

Service Gaps Requiring Cross-System Action

Subcommittee members, in sharing their collective experiences and learning more about each other's systems, identified the following findings of mutual interest or concern:

1. **Adolescents (ages 15-18) raised in or on the edges of our systems (in long-term out-of-home care) do not get the services they need to transition into adulthood without major difficulty and potentially long-term dependency upon public services.**

There is no organized "young adult" system of services and support for them to transition to, and too many are left to chance when our systems close our files. According to subcommittee members, perhaps most face independence without the tools, resources, skills, confidence, acceptance and supportive adult relationships necessary to make their success possible or likely.

RECOMMENDATION: That data regarding the needs of and existing services for youth exiting our systems be collected, shared and analyzed among the involved agencies and that we develop concrete plans as may result from this assessment. This should include collaborative agreement by juvenile probation, JRA, and CA regarding enhanced services to be

developed, and cross-training that will be necessary regarding services accessible through other systems. Examples of services may include transitional housing, programs teaching “independent living skills,” and assistance with GED preparation.

2. Despite the existence of protocols to assist in the effort, community re-entry from county detention and from JRA facilities is a problematic intersection of the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. Youth in this transition are often perceived to be in need of placement and services of the Children’s Administration but are considered ineligible under current law.

If youth are not already dependent, but the juvenile justice system believes they are in need of placement and services upon release from detention or Juvenile Rehabilitation confinement, Children’s Administration completes a family assessment. Often the result is a determination that the youth are not eligible for dependent placement under RCW 13.34 because they are not being abused or neglected and their parents are not incapable of providing care. A frequent scenario is that the parents do not want them home and/or it is felt the community will be safer (from them) if placed. Neither of these conditions is included in 13.34.

Even when youth are considered dependent and therefore eligible, the resources available in the child welfare system are often not appropriate to meet their needs. Services have not been designed with their special needs in mind.

This population creates great tension between the systems, as the juvenile justice system has the expectation they will be placed out-of-home and Children’s Administration struggles to find the legal basis for serving them and/or the resources that will be appropriate.

Many of these youth are said not to have families, or at least not to have families capable of supporting them appropriately into adulthood, but this issue requires further quantitative and qualitative study. These youth may indeed be in need of out-of-home placement, but do not meet the criteria under RCW 13.34.

Because the current array of services are not designed to address their needs, this group of youth, which may be small in number, are so time-consuming for all of our systems that we fear putting other clients at risk for lack of attention.

The subcommittee is determined to fashion a set of services that will be appropriate to the needs of this group. This will need to include a discussion of which systems are in the best position to provide the services required for

youth exiting juvenile justice custody, when the issues are family and community acceptance and community protection rather than abuse, neglect, or parental incapacity.

RECOMMENDATION: That we further define this population and the issues they represent, including the numbers and needs of youth in this cross-system intersection, and design a system and array of supportive services appropriate to them, including the legal structure and an appropriation plan as required to build these services.

These plans should include an emphasis on active engagement of families through the use of empirically-supported models in common across state and county agencies, and least restrictive services appropriate to the developmental needs of the youth. Proven models currently in use in the county should be expanded upon.

3. It is our experience that the cross-system youth of this initiative, not well served by our social systems, are also not appropriately or fully served by our educational systems.

Education is a critical part of the required service mix for children/youth served by the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Educational programming is a vital component for successful placement, normal development and productivity within all systems, and reduction of recidivism.

The social service, juvenile justice and educational systems do not understand each other, and we need to address this. It is a huge but necessary undertaking.

The children and youth we are concerned with are especially vulnerable to rejection by our systems. People do not know what to do with them, may be afraid of them or concerned that they may bring harm to others. These are significant concerns that need to be met head-on. We can no longer push our troubled children and youth out and hope they will somehow manage, or push them onto other systems so that they don't have to be seen and dealt with.

Our children and youth who have multi-system (especially juvenile justice and child welfare) needs are often difficult to educate. At times, schools lack the resources and multi-system support to be successful. When this occurs, the only option may be "home schooling," offering extremely limited tutoring and isolation from the normal educational environment. This choice may be driven by a lack of good alternatives, a sense of this being the only safe option and/or not knowing of any others, given limited resources. Additionally, there may be institutional barriers, such as financial disincentives for schools to fully serve these special-needs youth.

RECOMMENDATION: That we actively engage our educational systems in the integration effort, set a course for ensuring appropriate educational programming for the populations covered in this initiative, and make certain that together we are as effective as we can be in supporting their success.

A task force should be established, including our most expert people in educational programming for special-needs children and youth, with the charter to study the above issue in depth and present plans/recommendations for action.

It is observed that Reclaiming Futures has shown promise for kids coming out of detention and could be a model to expand upon.

4. There is no systematic mechanism for any of the partners of this initiative to determine when a client is receiving services of other partner systems, and therefore to be able to identify when there may be joint or overlapping responsibility.

Because each system has separate records and data systems, there is no established way to determine when case planning and service delivery should be coordinated.

The data systems do not include information that might be known about what other systems are providing services; therefore, the data systems are unable to help us determine how many children/youth have graduated from one system to another or are receiving the services of multiple systems.

Additionally, implementation of the new law requiring that child welfare case records (if applicable) be provided to the court in juvenile criminal proceedings is frustrated by there evidently being no legitimate way for the probation department to determine if there is a prior child welfare history.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop a data-sharing system accessible to all the child-serving systems in this integration initiative, and recommendations for the removal of legal barriers to sharing critical information across systems. Every system must have access to information necessary to ensure that comprehensive and appropriate responses and services are delivered and that case planning is appropriately coordinated.

5. We are not doing enough to engage families in assessment, planning, and services, nor to support and enforce their role and responsibilities as parents.

Family engagement approaches such as Multi-Systemic Therapy, Functional Family Therapy, and Functional Family Parole, have much promise and we

believe are showing results where utilized. These are models which could be expanded.

In addition, we lack in-home counseling approaches for At Risk Youth (ARY) Children in Need of Services (CHINS) and truant youth and their families.

RECOMMENDATION: That this issue be further studied and concrete plans developed to maximize the engagement of families in all of our services, to better respond to the needs of parents as well as children/youth, and to expand family engagement services which are empirically-based. This would include ways to make our systems more family-friendly.

6. The partner agencies of this collaboration, while learning much about each other thus far, still have much yet to offer each other in terms of evidence-based models of practice. In addition, there are opportunities in this integration initiative to develop new approaches together.

Subcommittee members are interested in identifying and developing opportunities for further sharing of information and service experiences, and supporting the development of shared capacities and responsibilities.

RECOMMENDATION: That subcommittees of appropriate staff from the involved agencies be appointed to study evidence-based models in use and make recommendations for other cross-system collaboration projects, including concrete plans for cross-training involving staff at all levels in our organizations.

Other Issues yet to be fully taken up

While the Resource Subcommittee considered most of the issues identified by the March, 2004 session of the Steering Committee and assigned to it, there are a few areas which have not yet been thoroughly-enough examined by the subcommittee to know as yet whether we will want to formulate recommendations regarding them. These include:

- **Mental health services** for youth in the child welfare/juvenile justice systems, which are said to be inadequate to the need, hard to access, and over-reliant on institutional care,
- **Service needs of children in the 8 to 12 age range**, which some have said are not adequately addressed in either the child welfare or juvenile justice systems sufficient to reduce the need for more intensive services later, and
- **Disproportionate representation of children/youth of color** in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, making the connection with work already being undertaken in the county.

Attachments: (to be available September 29)
Service Matrixes
Case Decision Flow Charts