

Excerpt from: Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice Systems Integration Initiative: A Promising Progress Report (by John A. Tuell) (retrieved from: <http://www.cwla.org/programs/juvenilejustice/jjprogressreport.htm>)

The United States Virgin Islands

In St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, 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. Work began with the Law Enforcement Planning Commission (LEPC) funded U.S. Virgin Islands Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Symposium held in June 2006, which initiated a dialogue on systems integration through the keynote address provided by CWLA. A follow-up meeting was hosted on September 20, 2006 by the Chief Family Court Judge, with key stakeholders and facilitated by the current Assistant Commissioner for the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services (DHS). At this meeting, the participants agreed to form a coalition and an initial meeting of the leadership coalition for this initiative was convened on March 29, 2007. The St. Croix Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems Integration Initiative is a collaboration of public and private agencies and organizations that have come together to examine and make improvements in coordinated and integrated program and policy development and service delivery for children, youth and families served by juvenile justice and child welfare systems, and critical affiliated youth serving institutions such as education, mental health, and substance abuse. The initiative is supported by the United States Virgin Islands (USVI) DHS vision to provide a seamless system of a continuum of quality care for our children and families. It is important to note the USVI DHS has oversight and direct responsibility for juvenile services, child protective services, and foster care services and existing units and service divisions to handle these mandated responsibilities. CWLA was contracted to assist in the facilitation and utilization of the four phase framework detailed previously in this bulletin. At this writing – barely 6 months into the process - the committees formed to examine data, information management and sharing, and legal and policy issues have produced remarkable results. Of particular note in this jurisdiction is the commitment that the collaboration has made to develop a

remarkable data profile of the dual jurisdiction youth population. Using a core data and information elements grid developed by CWLA, the USVI data subcommittee selected a point in time approach to collection of the data and information. To date, this approach has yielded the following:

- DHS had 347 unduplicated youth were reported to have open cases as of 6/29/07.
- Of the 347 open cases, 123 cases had youth who had entered the juvenile justice system, representing 35.7% of all open DHS cases
- A total of 66 of these 123 cases were found to have a history of maltreatment, representing 53.7% of all juvenile justice system cases.
- 25 youth had both a history of maltreatment and were *simultaneously* involved in the juvenile justice system, representing 20.3% of all juvenile justice system cases
- Additional findings included mental health (~50%) and educational (over 90%) deficiencies within the dual jurisdiction population

As a result of this work, committee members were able to identify specific issues which would need to be resolved to ensure that future data and information scans were more reliable and credible in the information yield. One such example has involved development of a method to understand which of these youth that while not simultaneously involved in juvenile and protective services, nonetheless have a history of involvement in both systems. Additionally, using the specific data and information elements component of the grid, which provides an inventory of necessary information points from multiple systems (i.e. juvenile, child protective, education, etc.), the committee has collected information on all 347 unduplicated youth and completed a comprehensive strengths and needs profile. This profile captures a comprehensive service history, family situation, offense profile, behavioral health involvement, and educational assessment for the dual jurisdiction population. Combined with the efforts of the other subcommittees currently engaged in the legal and policy analysis and resource inventory (including programs, services and workforce), the USVI is well positioned to implement effective reforms to improve the outcomes for their multi-system youth and families.