

# THE LINK

CONNECTING JUVENILE JUSTICE AND CHILD WELFARE

## A Community's Response to the Sex Trafficking of Children

By Nancy A. Boxill and Deborah J. Richardson

*Twelve-year-old Monica (fictitious name) ran away, thinking the streets would be a better alternative to the abuse she was experiencing at home. At a bus stop, she was lured into a waiting car and forced into the trunk. She was driven around town, raped at gunpoint, and eventually left naked in a hotel room. The pimps who kidnapped her sold the key to the room for \$5. She was beaten, slapped, starved, forced to take drugs, and traded for sex. She was subsequently sold to a succession of pimps and drug dealers. (Taken from a Fulton County Juvenile Court case file.)*

### The Problem

In 2001, Dr. Richard J. Estes and N.A. Warner released *The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children*. Their report found that "child sexual exploitation is the most hidden form of child abuse in the United States today," and "the nation's least recognized epidemic." This report confirmed what child welfare workers, juvenile justice professionals, and law enforcement officials have known intuitively, if not empirically, for years.

As early as 1992, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children found child prostitution exists in cities nationwide, garnering little notice and minimal public outcry. The Estes report estimated that more than 250,000 American-born youth are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation each year.

It is difficult, however, to gather concrete data on the number of children being prostituted because law enforcement, juvenile justice, and child welfare agencies view the issue through varying lenses. And as a result, these children don't receive needed services.

Local police departments often view child prostitution as a nuisance crime or status offense, and there is little consistency among individual police about whether to deal with these youth as offenders or victims. Rarely are there clear departmental policies and procedures governing the response to a prostituted child.

Child welfare and juvenile justice agencies place more emphasis on responding to cases where the evidence of abuse and victimization is undisputed. But because of an assumption of complicity, a prostituted adolescent is often not clearly identified as a victim of abuse. There is often neither a formal protocol among agencies regarding how child sexual exploitation is identified, nor a shared interagency response to service delivery.

Juvenile detention facilities in many communities are not equipped or staffed to provide the mental or physical health assessment that will substantiate the exploitation or provide the next step assessment for children who have been exploited. Emergency shelters operated by child welfare agencies may provide the assessment and therapeutic services, but they do not provide the required safety and security, and there are few residential programs or short-term facilities designed to address the specific needs of prostituted children.

see *Community*, page 3

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

<i>Director's Message</i> .....	2
<i>Juvenile Court</i> .....	5
<i>Juvenile Justice News and Resources</i> . . . .	7
<i>Public Policy Update</i> .....	11

# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The last several weeks have been a unique experience for our country. The large voter turnout on Election Day tells us that Americans want to be sure their voices are heard. They want to stand up and be counted. We have all learned that every voice counts and every vote matters.

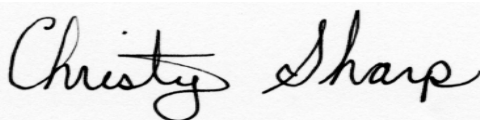
As we look ahead to the next four years, our reactions may be very different. Some feel hopeful and optimistic, others defeated and uncertain. Regardless of your political view, we can all agree that children and families need more. We must continue to be a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves. We know what is missing. Let's work together to find a way to "make children a national priority."

This issue of *The LINK* focuses on an important component of juvenile justice: gender-responsive programming and assessment. Angela's House is a residential program in Atlanta, Georgia, that works with young female offenders who are also victims of child sexual exploitation. Until recently, Atlanta considered these girls and young women to be delinquents only. Angela's House acknowledges them as victims too and provides an opportunity for treatment and healing.

A comprehensive assessment of youth coming into the juvenile justice system helps practitioners make informed decisions and recommendations about disposition and treatment. The Global Risk Assessment Device is a tool developed and used in Ohio to help juvenile courts, juvenile justice workers, and public providers improve outcomes for youth.

Both of these articles highlight the importance of not simply focusing on the behavior or delinquent act of a youth, but looking deeper to the cause of problems and providing appropriate interventions and support. It is the best way to empower children and families to make the best decisions.

Let's continue to come together and discover new ways to educate legislators, policymakers, and the public about the most effective ways to prevent and intervene in juvenile delinquency. Let's empower them to make the best decisions for all the children, youth, and families of this country.



Christy Sharp  
Director, Juvenile Justice

## THE LINK CONNECTING JUVENILE JUSTICE AND CHILD WELFARE

© 2005 CWLA. For more information about *The Link* or CWLA's Juvenile Justice Division, contact Dodd White at 202/639-4959, or e-mail [juvjus@cwla.org](mailto:juvjus@cwla.org).

### **Christy Sharp**

DIRECTOR  
JUVENILE JUSTICE DIVISION

### **Dodd White**

PROGRAM MANAGER  
JUVENILE JUSTICE DIVISION

### **Danielle Mole**

PROGRAM COORDINATOR  
JUVENILE JUSTICE DIVISION

### **John Tuell**

DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR  
PROGRAM LEADERSHIP



#### HEADQUARTERS

440 First Street NW, Third Floor  
Washington, DC 20001-2085  
202/638-2952  
Fax 202/638-4004  
[www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org)

The Child Welfare League of America is the nation's oldest and largest membership-based child welfare organization. We are committed to engaging people everywhere in promoting the well-being of children, youth, and their families, and protecting every child from harm.

A list of staff in CWLA service areas is available online at [www.cwla.org/whowhat/serviceareas.asp](http://www.cwla.org/whowhat/serviceareas.asp).

### **Shay Bilchik**

PRESIDENT/CEO

### **Eve Malakoff-Klein**

DIRECTOR OF PUBLICATIONS

### **Steven S. Boehm**

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF  
PUBLICATIONS

In Atlanta, a group of concerned women explored the crisis of young girls being prostituted on the streets of their city and began to look for solutions to the problem of inadequate services for the victims. In a matter of months, the group opened Angela's House, a secure facility that provides gender-specific therapeutic services for the female victims of child sexual exploitation.

### **Child Sexual Exploitation**

The circumstances involving the prostitution of males often differ from those surrounding the prostitution of females. According to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) of the U.S. Department of Justice (June 2004), young males involved in prostitution are more likely to be older, acting alone, and working in public places. Juvenile girls are often younger, under the influence of a pimp, and not as likely to be "strolling along a street track." The average age of a female child in prostitution is 14 years. Even in instances where the child appears to be willingly engaged in performing sex for remuneration, juveniles lack the knowledge, maturity, and awareness to understand the consequences of their actions and make such choices. Further, investigations often find the child is acting out of fear and guilt resulting from severe physical abuse, torture, and threats, along with psychological brainwashing by the adult offender.

The race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic level of children lured into prostitution mirror those of the local community, but youth who are runaways and homeless are at highest risk for sexual exploitation. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates as many as 80,000 children each year are served in shelters for runaway youth; however, the actual number of runaway youth in any one year may exceed 400,000, or five times the number served in shelters. These runaways are often trying to escape dysfunctional families, where they have experienced physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, and they are more likely to engage in sexual acts for survival and are more vulnerable to recruitment by pimps.

### **The Problem in Atlanta**

For a child running away from home, a large city has the lure of anonymity and perceived options for survival. These same factors foster an environment in which a pimp or trafficker can operate, often unchecked.

Atlanta unwittingly provides a venue for child sexual exploitation. The city is a transportation center—providing convenient ways for an exploiter to traffic children in and out of the city—and it has a revolving market of customers who travel through and to the city for business and sporting events.

Four years ago, professionals charged with the care and protection of children were often unaware of the problem and unsure of how to address the needs of the victims of sexual exploitation. School social workers were reporting trancies and runaways, and teachers were observing older men picking up girls from middle and high school doorsteps without thinking of the possibility that prostitution could be involved. Parents whose children were missing for days and weeks or who were noticing markedly changed behavior were not aware their children could be caught in a web of illegal activity.

As early as 1997, the Fulton County Juvenile Court began thinking about ways to address the growing challenge of young girls who were appearing before the court as perpetrators of juvenile crimes but were in fact victims of prostitution. The early conversations among law enforcement and criminal justice officials heightened awareness within the juvenile justice system but did not stem the rising number of girls who were having their childhoods stolen. There appeared to be no public will or interest in spending scarce resources on a group of girls who, in the mind of the general public and many in law enforcement, seemed to be the perpetrators rather than the victims of crimes.

In 1999, then Chief Judge of the Fulton County Juvenile Court Nina Hickson, accompanied by Director of Programs for Juvenile Court Deborah Richardson, visited with Fulton County Commissioner Nancy Boxill. The visit was to inform Boxill about the problem of young girls being prostituted. Judge Hickson was adjudicating an average of 30 such cases each month. Most of the presenting cases were for status offenses such as unruly conduct, curfew violation, or school truancy. Some were for the delinquent offense of prostitution. The legal charges reflected the insult the girls had ostensibly perpetrated against the community, but they did not tell the whole story. Hickson and Richardson recounted the horrifying and tragic stories of the kidnapping, assault, torture, and pimping of young girls.

As a juvenile court judge, Hickson felt the choices she had when faced with these cases were limited

and inappropriate. She could find these child victims guilty of prostitution and sentence them to a detention facility, place them under court supervision based on the status charges, or set them free to return to the streets. The Atlanta community had no treatment programs designed to tackle this horror. Nor was there a law to protect the girls from their predators. In 2000, the only law to punish those who preyed upon, abused, and raped these girls was the misdemeanor offense of pandering, punishable by a \$50 fine.

### **The Work Begins**

After this initial meeting, Boxill gathered the executive director of the Atlanta Women's Foundation, Stephanie Davis, Judge Hickson, Richardson, and Susan May, a longtime community advocate, to work on the problem. Involving the Atlanta Women's Foundation was a key part of this first meeting because of its human and financial resources.

The group set three goals: to tell the women in Atlanta about this horror, to change the pandering law from a misdemeanor to a felony, and to raise money to provide an appropriate treatment facility for the girls as an alternative to incarceration.

Within eight months, a galvanized group of women successfully secured passage of a state statute making the pandering of children a felony punishable by up to 20 years in prison and a \$20,000 fine. They also raised sufficient funds to purchase a secure treatment facility for the victims. Sixteen months after their first meeting, Angela's House opened.

### **Angela's House**

Data suggest an overwhelming number of girls caught in the juvenile justice system are remanded to programs designed for boys. Research and professional conversations about the value and content of gender-specific programming is emerging, though not widely actualized.

The commitment to gender-specific programming and attention to girlness in treatment were cornerstones in developing the philosophy, goals, daily schedule, volunteer recruitment, and staff training for Angela's House.

### **Delinquents or Just Plain Girls?**

The philosophical underpinning of Angela's House is simple and singular: The girls living at Angela's

House are not delinquent girls. Rather, they are girls whose childhoods have been stolen. The program's goals and approaches to treatment are therefore designed to provide opportunities for girls to reclaim their childhoods; reconnect to their ability and enthusiasm for questioning, exploring, and imagining the world; establish trusting relationships with the larger world and at least one adult; and feel protected.

### **Key Program Components**

Angela's House looks like a neighborhood home and is far from the major roads to isolate the girls in a safe and secure environment. Immediately upon their arrival at the house, every girl receives a colorful comforter, pillow, girly bedclothes, and a stuffed animal. All of these items are hers to take when she leaves the house. The items can serve as tangible connections to safety, and they are intended to communicate that this is a different place: Here you will have a space and place of your own.

Every effort is made to ensure that female professionals conduct psychological, cognitive, social, and familial assessments, and particular care is taken to ensure women provide all medical and dental care.

Since the girls are confined in the home during their stay, they receive periodic opportunities to go to movies, bowling, or skating, or attend cultural events. The young women are also encouraged to use a running track down the street and attend biweekly workouts made available through a wonderful collaboration with Cirque du Monde. (For more on Cirque du Monde's work in Atlanta, see "Agency Briefs", *Children's Voice Magazine*, May/June 2004.)

After an initial assessment of each girl's current educational needs, the girls at Angela's House are home-schooled by a certified teacher. The program takes care to provide opportunities for every girl to experience success rather than focus on her deficits. A caring, retired teacher holds weekly book club sessions with the girls, using books written by or about women who overcame great odds.

During the initial evaluation, the staff also perform a family assessment and inform family members that they too must attend semi-monthly family counseling sessions while their daughter is in Angela's House. Once a month, the daughter joins the family counseling session. When a girl returns to her home, family counseling is available for up to six months. The most successful next step is the referral of a girl and

see *Community*, page 9

# When the Juvenile Court Becomes a Mental Health Emergency Room:

## How Assessment of Global Risk and Needs Factors Can Impact Proper Service Referrals

By Stephen M. Gavazzi, Courtney M. Yarcheck, David K. Edelblute & Cynthia M. Webb

In the last 20 years, there has been a sharp increase in the use of risk/needs assessment instruments for juvenile offenders. These instruments are used with juveniles primarily as case management tools that enhance decisionmaking about the supervision of youth who come into contact with the juvenile court or to identify singular risk factors that are believed to be related to court involvement. In this latter case, courts historically focus on issues concerning mental health and substance abuse.

Unfortunately, although the juvenile justice field seems to be on the right track conceptually, adopting the assessment informs intervention approach used in other youth- and family-serving fields, some major limitations in actual practice still remain. For instance, the development of these instruments typically has not coincided with the creation of literature providing important information about their reliability and validity. This makes it extremely difficult for juvenile justice professionals to make informed decisions about the use of these instruments based on their relative merits.

Further, the development of assessment tools for the juvenile justice system has been complicated by the fact that many questions surrounding an instrument's utility have remained focused on that tool's ability to either predict recidivism or to generate information about mental health and substance abuse issues. This rather narrow concentration flies in the face of a large body of literature that calls for the assessment of a more global and comprehensive set of issues that affect the life of a juvenile offender. Finally, the few instruments that do have corresponding reports of reliability and validity evidence or have made an effort to go beyond the narrow predic-

tion of reoffense typically have trickled down from adult criminology literature and are centered on an adult offender population that may look very different from offenders in the juvenile justice system.

In turn, the modification of instruments initially developed for adult offenders has contributed to the debate over whether juvenile justice professionals should even consider many of the extralegal factors at the core of many assessment tools used to assess risk in other areas of adolescent development and well-being. Examples of these factors include behaviors that may be more directly related to exposure to traumatic events and interpersonal difficulties within the family. Because many researchers contend that such extralegal factors are not necessary to predict adult recidivism rates, such variables often are pushed to the margins of the juvenile justice system even as studies of adolescent offenders generate more evidence that juvenile justice professionals must adequately assess and subsequently make appropriate referrals for psychological distress and family-related concerns.

What, then, will help the juvenile justice field to focus greater attention on proper assessment of youth coming to the attention of the juvenile court? One part of the answer seems to lie in the advancement of reliable and valid knowledge about who these youth are, in large part through the use of well-developed instruments that are built specifically for juvenile offender populations. A second part of the answer rests in further understanding how such knowledge helps to determine the delivery of effective services that these youth are referred to as part of the case management process.

### The Global Risk Assessment Device

The Global Risk Assessment Device (GRAD) is an Internet-based instrument developed to provide a valid, reliable tool for juvenile justice professionals. There were three compelling reasons for creating it:

- Juvenile courts would benefit from quick, easy-to-use information-gathering tools that were standardized and able to take into account the distinctive characteristics of the local culture.
- The work of juvenile justice professionals would be enhanced by a tool that linked assessment data to the delivery of direct services.

see *Referrals*, page 8

**SAVE THE DATE**

# 2005 Juvenile Justice National Symposium: *Joining Forces for Better Outcomes*

CWLA invites you to the 2005 Juvenile Justice National Symposium: Joining Forces for Better Outcomes. The symposium will focus on the integration and coordination of the juvenile justice and child welfare systems to better serve our nations children.

Providing a unique cross-system opportunity for information sharing, networking, and collective learning, the symposium will highlight juvenile justice and child welfare system integration and the connection between child maltreatment and juvenile delinquency. Topics will include:

- Examples of state or local reform leading to more effective coordination between child welfare and juvenile justice.
- Jurisdictional coordination of community-based services for abused and neglected youth populations involved or at risk for involvement with the juvenile justice system.
- Legal and policy analysis of barriers to more effective coordination between juvenile justice and child welfare.
- Integrated and coordinated funding streams to better serve shared populations of children, youth, and families.
- Efforts to reduce the detention bias for foster care populations.

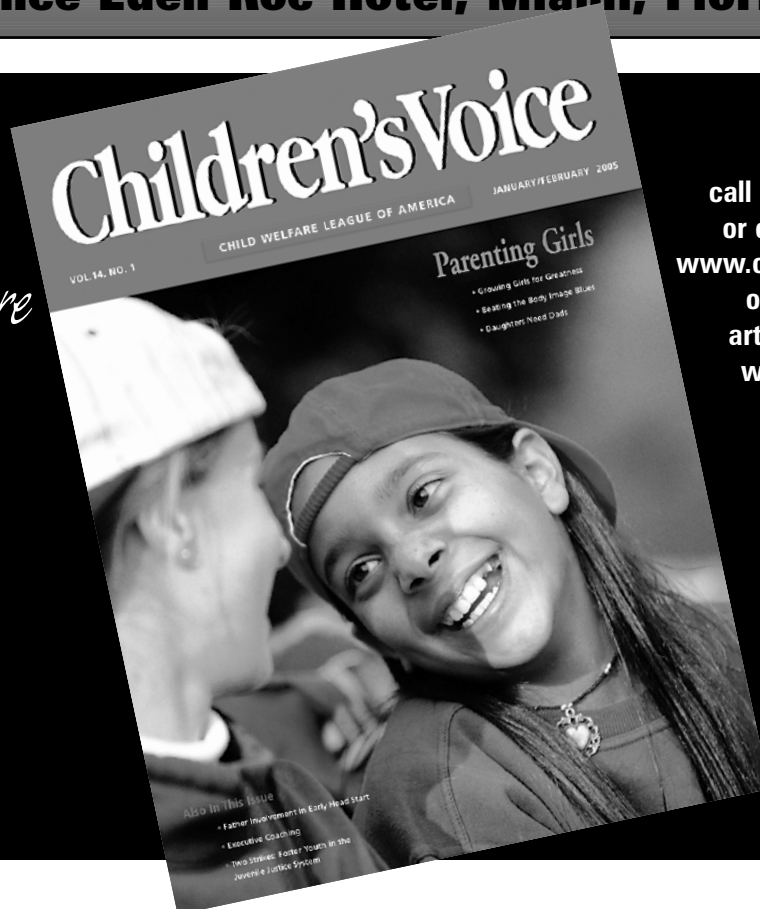
In addition, the symposium will focus on traditional juvenile justice issues such as mental health and juvenile delinquency, alternatives to incarceration, girls in juvenile justice, transfer and waiver, disproportionate minority representation, zero tolerance, juvenile death penalty, delinquency prevention, evidenced-based practice, and restorative justice.

For more information, contact Dodd White at [dwhite@cwla.org](mailto:dwhite@cwla.org) or 202/639-4959. For information about the Renaissance Eden Roc Hotel, visit [www.edenroccresort.com](http://www.edenroccresort.com).

## June 1-3, 2005

**Renaissance Eden Roc Hotel, Miami, Florida**

*For more on meeting the special needs of girls in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, see the January-February 2005 issue of Children's Voice magazine.*



To purchase or subscribe, call 800/407-6273, or order online at [www.cwla.org/pubs](http://www.cwla.org/pubs); or see selected articles online at [www.cwla.org/articles](http://www.cwla.org/articles).

# JUVENILE JUSTICE NEWS AND RESOURCES

## **Assessing the Mental Health Status of Youth in Juvenile Justice Settings.**

---

*Ko, S.J., McReynolds, L.S., Wasserman, G.A. (2004). Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).*

Reports the results of a study that used the Voice DISC, a computerized, self-administered version of the Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children (DISC) to screen for psychiatric disorders in youth newly admitted to juvenile assessment centers. The Voice DISC offers the following advantages for use in the juvenile justice system: minimal staff support requirements, immediate scoring that generates provisional diagnoses, and privacy that increases the likelihood of disclosure of sensitive personal information.

## **Disproportionate Minority Confinement: 2002 Update.**

---

*Bridges, G., Hsia, H., McHale, R. (2004). Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, OJJDP.*

Describes developments in addressing disproportionate minority confinement (DMC) at the national, state, and local levels. This OJJDP summary begins with a brief review of the most recent data, followed by an outline of national efforts by OJJDP and others during the past five years to address the challenge of DMC. It then presents an update of state activities, including a status report on state compliance with the DMC core requirements, highlights from state DMC assessment research and intervention initiatives, and an outline of remaining challenges. The summary concludes with a look at the implications of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act's broadening of DMC to encompass disproportionate minority contact.

## **Effects of and Interventions for Childhood Trauma From Infancy Through Adolescence: Pain Unspeakable**

---

*Hutchinson, S. (2004). Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press.*

Explores an array of trauma-related topics pertaining to children of all ages from a variety of cultures and countries. This vital tool covers the various ego stages of child development and addresses how

each one is affected by traumatic experiences. It also provides an extensive list of organizations and crisis hotline numbers, as well as recommended reading, video, and curricula resources. This easy-to-read resource serves as a readily available reference for caregivers—professional or otherwise—who work with or encounter a child who has been traumatized.

## **Juvenile Arrests 2002.**

---

*Snyder, H. (2004). Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, OJJDP.*

Summarizes and analyzes national and state juvenile arrest data presented in the FBI's report *Crime in the United States 2002*. As reported in this bulletin, juvenile violent crime arrests increased substantially from the late 1980s through 1994, then decreased for eight consecutive years. In 2002, the juvenile arrest rate for violent crime was 47% below its 1994 peak, reaching its lowest level since 1980. The juvenile arrest rate for each of the offenses tracked in the FBI's Violent Crime Index (murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) has been declining steadily since the mid-1990s; and for murder, the rate fell 72% from its 1993 peak through 2002.

## **Juvenile Justice Journal, Vol. IX, No. 1 (Causes and Correlates Issue)**

---

*(2004). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, OJJDP.*

This journal focuses on research that assesses how and why children become delinquent, and evaluates the research's value in preventing and combating delinquency. The first article in this issue of the journal outlines OJJDP's Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency, a series of studies that has tracked the experiences of large samples of high-risk youth throughout their developmental years. The second article's authors discuss how communities can use risk factor research to address gang problems. The In Brief section includes an overview of how three communities made measurable inroads against delinquency by addressing risk factors and also reviews relevant publications.

see *Justice*, page 10

- Service providers and court-based professionals alike would stand to gain from the use of an assessment tool that simultaneously generated evaluation data.

The main purpose of GRAD is to generate user-friendly information about the many needs of court-involved youth and their families. The simplicity and ease of GRAD's use in juvenile courts to date are due to several important features.

First, a user registration process protects access to the court's database. In addition, cut-off scores can classify youth as low, moderate, or high risk in each risk domain, and these cut-offs are based on the specific characteristics of the youth being seen by courts using GRAD.

Also, these risk scores are linked to important demographic information collected on each youth who is assessed, and all of that information is systematically aggregated and available to the user for reporting purposes (weekly census figures, monthly case contact reports, etc.).

Further, a case management-tracking page collects information on referrals and subsequent service provision, and the database has been constructed to facilitate collection of information from multiple perspectives (youth, parent, professional) throughout the case management process. Finally, GRAD can insert a given county's specific matrix of youth-serving programs into the database, creating the opportunity to collect location-specific referral information.

Recent research studies using GRAD have generated support for its use in assessing potential threats to the wide-ranging developmental needs of adolescents who come into contact with the juvenile justice system. GRAD is being used by professionals within a number of juvenile courts to make recommendations and referrals based on reliable, valid information about risk factors and needs in a variety of relevant domains, including prior offenses, family and parenting issues, peer relationships, substance abuse, mental health symptoms, accountability, education and vocational issues, exposure to traumatic events, and health-related risks.

### **Urban Pilot Counties Involved with GRAD**

As noted, GRAD sprang out of the assessment needs of direct service providers. Originally, the items were developed as part of a telephone interview that served as an intake tool for a family-based diversion

program for unruly youth coming into contact with the juvenile court in Franklin County, Ohio. Subsequently, Franklin became one of three Ohio counties involved in the pilot of the web-based GRAD.

Franklin County is a large urban center that is home to both the state capital and Ohio State University (the home academic institution of the GRAD Project). Subsequently, GRAD was piloted as an assessment tool for this court's intake/diversion department. The primary use of GRAD in Franklin County continues to be centered on streamlining the assessment process of incorrigible/unruly youth and first-time misdemeanor offenders, while allowing court administrators to monitor services to these youth as the result of referrals made by professionals using GRAD scores. Information about the needs of this court are largely represented in the findings of the first three studies concerned with the reliability and validity evidence of this instrument.

The second court to become involved in the GRAD pilot use of the GRAD was in Cuyahoga County, Ohio. This is Ohio's largest juvenile court and serves its most populous county. This court's initial motivation to become involved with the GRAD arose from the need to comply with the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention regulations about holding status or unruly offenders in secure detention pending court action. GRAD was used as the front-end assessment tool for this court as it developed and refined a program for repeat status offenders who were not amenable to the court's usual dispositional alternatives and did not involve the use of secure detention.

The third court in the pilot was in Licking County, Ohio, Juvenile Court. Licking County is a mid-size suburban/agrarian county with a population of 150,000. It is one of the fastest growing counties in the state. Although filings are currently on a downward trend in most parts of the state and country, the Licking County Juvenile Court has seen a tremendous growth in cases in recent years, with an average of 1,220 delinquency filings a year for the past six years. In turn, as many of its families are new to the community and do not have traditional comprehensive support systems, there has been an emerging gap in services within this county's social support system. One of the results of this service gap is the increased demand for the court to deal with the extralegal factors of these youth. As such, these juvenile justice

her family to Multisystemic Therapy (MST). The intensity of the MST model has proven effective in facilitating the return of the child into the family, as well as in other family life issues.

## Staffing

Research on the attitudes and practices of staff who work with girls in juvenile justice residential treatment facilities is sparse. In the Atlanta area, most who apply for such jobs believe their role is to maintain order and ensure rules are followed. Having heard those beliefs and intentions repeatedly in employment interviews, Angela's House designed a training program that would give staff both the permission and the skills to help the girls imagine who they could be and ultimately claim who they will be. The training program emphasizes theories of female child and adolescent development, options for encouraging appropriate behavior, limit setting, and conversations about what it's like to live in a family. The responsibilities of staff sounded familiar to the new hires, but the actual expectations push them beyond old and familiar tasks and roles. To minimize staff reverting to a detention mode of interaction, staff training is intense and ongoing.

To date, more than 70 girls have lived in Angela's House, and all but 7 were successfully discharged to a next step placement. Sixty percent of those placements have been back with family or a close relative. The rest have been placed in a group home, foster care setting, or additional therapeutic residential treatment.

An independent study by the Carl Vinson Institute of the University of Georgia documented that three-fourths of the girls served by Angela's House are avoiding recidivism. The study concludes, "The work of Angela's House is innovative and groundbreaking. Services for this population are practically nonexistent. For this reason, interest in the program is keen among professional who work with juveniles."

## Funding

From its inception, Angela's House has been equally supported by public and private sources. A successful female entrepreneur purchased the home, foundations and civic groups contributed to make capital improvements, and women's social and professional groups provided all of the furniture and furnishings.

The state provides half of the operational budget. The remaining portion is from the contributions of individuals, faith-based organizations, and foundations.

The grassroots advocacy campaign continues to pay dividends in fundraising efforts. Rarely does Angela's House approach an individual or foundation program officer who is unaware of the facility's mission. Community-wide support also spawned a number of innovative, low-overhead, highly effective fundraising efforts. The final critical component of funding has been the in-kind support of sister nonprofit providers that are not only providing services but also taking on the burden of raising funds to cover their expenses. The New Learning Center provided the first two years of mental health services and now focuses on family counseling. The Advanced Community Practice Nurses, a group of female nurse practitioners, provide both in-home clinical care and ongoing health education. These two organizations alone have contributed more than \$200,000 of in-kind support.

## Ongoing Challenges

Angela's House faces ongoing challenges in both service delivery and operations, including:

- Lack of coordination and communication among the many agencies and people involved in the case of any young woman served at Angela's house. One agency but not the other may accept a recommendation for the next step treatment team at Angela's House. Or one professional may attend the weekly staffings, whereas another may not.
- Professionals who view Angela's House as a 90-day program only and who may not support extended family counseling.
- Budget cuts have left Medicaid as the only consistent source of public funding to support ongoing mental health services and family counseling.

The women of Atlanta have come a long way. They have named the problem and focused their energy. But because the practice of prostituting young girls continues, so too do the efforts of the women of Atlanta and of Angela's House to stop it.

*Nancy A. Boxill PhD is a faculty member at Union Institute and University and a member of the Fulton County Board of Commissioners. Deborah J. Richardson is Vice President of Programs and Strategic Initiatives for the Atlanta Women's Foundation.*

---

## **Juvenile Justice: Redeeming Our Children**

*Krisberg, B. (August 2004). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.*

Addresses myths that need to be debunked about juvenile justice to achieve an ideal system that would protect vulnerable children and help build safer communities.

Juvenile justice policies historically have been built on a foundation of myths and misconceptions. Fear of young, drug-addicted superpredators, concerns about immigrants and gangs, claims of gender bias, and race hostilities have all influenced the public's views and, consequently, the evolution of juvenile justice. These myths have repeatedly confused the process of rational policy development for the juvenile justice system.

Author Barry Krisberg assembles broad, up-to-date research, statistical data, and theories on the U.S. juvenile justice system to encourage effective responses to youth crime. This book gives an historical context to the ongoing quest for the juvenile justice ideal and examines how the current system of law, policies, and practices came into place.

---

## **Overcoming Barriers to School Reentry**

*Roy-Stevens, C. (2004). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, OJJDP.*

Describes a model for overcoming barriers to school reentry developed by the Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services (CASES) in New York City. For youth leaving custody, a return to school is integral to successful reentry into the community. It details how three CASES programs—the Committee on Court-Involved Students, the School Connection Center, and the Community Prep High School—are helping court-involved youth continue their education and reenter the community.

---

## **Psychological Trauma and the Developing Brain: Neurologically Based Interventions for Troubled Children**

*Stein, P. and Kendall, J. (2003). Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press.*

Written in jargon-free prose, this book specifically shows how positive early experiences enhance brain development and how traumatic life experiences, especially child abuse and neglect, can affect a child's brain and behavior.

---

## **Preventing and Reducing Juvenile Delinquency: A Comprehensive Framework**

*Howell, J. (2003). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.*

Presents the latest research and most effective programs for understanding, preventing, and controlling juvenile delinquency. James C. Howell examines key myths about juvenile violence and the ability of the juvenile justice system to handle modern-day juvenile delinquents. Reviewing the history of current juvenile justice system policies and practices, Howell provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing and responding to juvenile crime.

---

## **What Is Community Justice?: Case Studies of Restorative Justice and Community Supervision**

*Karp, D. and Clear, T. (2002). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.*

Presents six case studies of probation programs that represent a practical side of the community justice ideal. What emerges is a provocative and enlightening new approach to the problems of probation and parole.

professionals increasingly have referred to their court as the county's "mental health emergency room."

Fortunately, this court's philosophy is to not only address the current reasons for court involvement, but also to address the underlying issues that have brought the youth, and subsequently the family, to the court's attention. The court believes that addressing the underlying issues affecting youth necessitates examining all of their environments, including their family, school, community, and peer relations.

In addition to the basic functions of processing cases, the Licking County Juvenile Court is fortunate enough to have departments associated with probation, diversion, restitution and community services, and treatment. The treatment department, known as Family Intervention Services, comprises clinicians and a contracted psychologist who provide forensic and family-based treatment services. The department also manages several mediation and family conferencing services. In addition to court-provided services, Licking County has contracted with a variety of community treatment providers that offer a range of interventions for families and youth involved with the juvenile justice system.

In an ideal world, the court would be able to connect appropriate youth and families to a menu of proven effective interventions that exist within the community. Although the court has a qualified, talented staff, many times youth are referred or ordered into services that are available but not necessarily effective. Like most jurisdictions, the court must work with

what is available. Furthermore, court officials do not know which interventions are the most effective with which type of youth or family.

GRAD gives these court professionals a tool that informs decisionmaking regarding the distinct risks and needs of each individual youth within this diverse community. Unlike other risk instruments that rather narrowly predict risk of reoffense and assist in classification for supervision purposes, GRAD provides information about risks and needs in a comprehensive list of domains that affect the youth and his or her social context. In turn, GRAD also identifies which practical interventions are most appropriate to address these varying levels of risk.

Second, the administrative and judicial staff wanted to better understand their youth population. The GRAD generates reliable and valid data on the individual youth and provides important aggregate data about all youth in the court's database at literally the touch of a button. In turn, because the instrument is web-based, data is uniform, readily available, and easily manipulated. GRAD allows the court to review the continuum of interventions used by the court, compare the interventions with the needs of the overall population, identify gaps in programs and services, and develop strategies to fill those gaps with more effective programs.

GRAD has become the primary structure for program assessment and evaluation for the court as it

see *Referrals*, page 12

## PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE:

In the November 2 election, Republicans maintained control of the U.S. House of Representatives and increased their majority in the Senate. Although both developments, along with the reelection of President Bush, mean a continuation of the Republican party's control of Congress, some of the key congressional committees will experience important changes. The key Senate committee that deals with juvenile justice, the Senate Judiciary Committee, will have a new chair, as Senator Orin Hatch (R-UT) will be stepping down. The new chair will be Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA). The chairs of the Senate and House Appropriations Committees will change, with both Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK) and Representative C.W. Bill Young (R-FL) facing term limits. The new chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee is expected to be Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS). Not clear is who will be the new chair of the House Appropriations Committee.

Federal funding for Juvenile Justice programs will increase 13% in FY 2005 over FY 2004 levels. This was surprisingly good news considering the Bush Administration had proposed a 40% cut in this part of the budget. The increase was due mostly to an increase of \$22.6 million for earmarks under Part E Demonstration Projects, \$14.9 million in funding for the Juvenile Mentoring Program (where none had been approved in the previous two years), and an increase in funding for Part D Research and Evaluation to \$9.9 million, up from \$2.5 million. Funding for the Title V Local Delinquency Prevention Grant program saw a slight increase to \$79.4 million from \$79.2 million, and the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant was cut to \$54.6 million, down from \$59.4 million.

approaches its third pilot year. The use of the instrument to track referrals and measure outcomes will generate data on overall program effectiveness and better clarify which youth are more successful with which types of specific interventions. Providers will be able to input outcome data for individuals into a central database from the convenience of their offices via GRAD's website.

### **Linking to Other Risk Assessment Instruments**

The administrative and judicial staff of the Licking County Juvenile Court implemented a strategic planning process to use the data collected on the GRAD website to compare program content to program outcomes. Among other things, the analysis of such data will allow the court to identify and communicate to providers the components and characteristics of effective programs across various levels of care.

The Licking County service community feels it offers effective programs, and providers work to apply best practice principles, but few of these programs have undergone the kind of rigorous scientific research that would provide sufficient evidence of effectiveness to receive the label of model or promising program. And most of these providers do not have the resources to conduct such methodical scientific research. Hence, the court wanted to employ a tool that would identify to what extent effective program characteristics were actually being implemented by the programs offered by service providers.

This led to the development of a program that rated the degree to which specific program characteristics were emphasized in actual practice. Program characteristics were categorized into five areas: program implementation and leadership, assessment, interventions, evaluation, and staff characteristics. The program characteristics were developed from best-practice principles covered in the criminal justice and mental health fields. This program evaluation tool was designed first and foremost as a self-evaluation effort, as program staff will rate their program's adherence to specific examples of these best-practice principles.

Along with specific program evaluation tools, GRAD complements other measurement instruments, including those that more intensively tap into certain domains of risk and needs. Studies discussed above have used GRAD alongside such measures as Johns Hopkins's Brief Symptom Inventory (mental health),

the Center for Disease Control's At-Risk Survey (substance use), and the Oregon Social Learning Center's Unpleasant Family Events Scale (family environment). In addition, all of the pilot counties have used GRAD alongside the Youth Level of Service Inventory developed by Canadian researchers Don Andrews and James Bonta.

Because GRAD only takes 20–25 minutes to complete, it can be used as a relatively efficient assessment tool for court professionals who may not have the time to do more extensive evaluations of the youth they are serving. In related fashion, GRAD may be conceptualized as a front-end assessment that triggers the use of other instruments through indications of moderate or high risk in various domains contained within this measure.

This latter point is being emphasized in communities seeking to facilitate cross-systems collaboration. In essence, one of the main sticking points in such ventures is the sharing of information across agencies and professional fields. As the GRAD database contains information that is connected to specific youth and families through unique identifiers known only to GRAD users (who are admitted to the site through a passcode-protected system), the system creates instantaneous record access to professionals at any site that has access to the Internet. GRAD also captures at least some information that can be shared by all social service systems, allowing an agency or organization to conduct any further assessment that is of interest.

One of the best examples of GRAD's potential to facilitate intersystem collaboration has come through its use in a truancy prevention initiative known as the SMART Program in Franklin County, Ohio. Within this program, school attendance personnel can register a youth in the GRAD database, supplying demographic data alongside important school-related information. In related fashion, school guidance counselors can use a customized page on the GRAD website to document all classroom accommodations and services provided by the school system before making a court truancy referral. In turn, the court has the information already supplied by school personnel to use for assessment and case planning.

### **Lifting the Mental Health Emergency Room Mantle**

Throughout this article, we have examined how the

juvenile justice field can focus greater attention on the proper assessment of youth coming to the attention of the juvenile court. We first noted that part of the solution would lie in knowing more about the reliability and validity of instruments built specifically for juvenile populations. The second component would involve further understanding the connection between the use of such assessment tools and the subsequent referral to and delivery of effective treatment interventions for these youth and their families.

The final question is the extent to which this body of knowledge helps the juvenile court move beyond the mental health emergency room mantle. Certain future directions will make a significant contribution to this transcendence. First, although saying that information is power is self-evident, the court's increased ability to connect risks and needs to program effectiveness data translates into an enhanced ability to make informed decisions about the court's provision of financial support to programs. This means the courts will have the capacity to support effective existing programs, reduce or eliminate support for less effective programs, and redirect dollars to programs that address service gaps.

Second, courts that participate in the generation of such assessment and evaluation data can empower the community they serve. Although courts usually are influential, the move toward collecting sophisticated data on risks, needs, and outcomes can coincide with the courts, not only guiding program accountability efforts, but also enhancing cross-systems collaboration efforts by assuming leadership in information-sharing.

Finally, the court can lead by paying more than lip service to the idea of building on strengths. Certainly, good programming is based on good information about risks and needs, but future work inevitably must also include the generation of asset-based information. In this last regard, the GRAD Project is now involved in creating and testing an asset inventory that, over time, will have the same effort placed on generating reliable and valid information about its use within juvenile justice populations.

### **The Pilot Sites and Beyond**

All three pilot sites are now entering their third year of operation. In this upcoming year for the pilot counties, significantly more attention will be paid to GRAD's potential as a program evaluation device.

In the meantime, additional courts in Ohio and beyond have become involved in the GRAD Project. Particularly noteworthy are the Central South Dakota Teen Court System and the Summit County, Ohio, Juvenile Court.

The Central South Dakota Teen Court is a promising example of how GRAD can be used to promote cross-systems collaboration among court personnel, schools, law enforcement, and social service agencies within the emerging format of "specialized dockets" that seek to meet the more specific risks and needs of juvenile offenders by a system that is spread out geographically.

In turn, the Summit County Juvenile Court is using an experimental version of a new subscale within GRAD—the "public safety" domain—that is meant to help the bench make "hold-no hold" decisions on youth coming to the attention of the detention facility.

The GRAD Project is currently being folded into Ohio State University's Center for Family Research. Interested parties may visit the GRAD homepage at <http://projectgrad.osu.edu> for more information about the tool and its use in juvenile courts. Following a review of the introductory material, prospective users are invited to contact GRAD Project Director Courtney Yarcheck at [yarcheck.1@osu.edu](mailto:yarcheck.1@osu.edu) or 614/220-8576.

*Stephen M. Gavazzi is Codirector of the Center for Family Research and Professor, Ohio State University. Courtney M. Yarcheck is Project Director for Global Risk Assessment Device Project, Ohio State University. David K. Edelblute is a Court Administrator at the Licking County Probate-Juvenile Court. Cynthia M. Webb, MSSA, LISW is Director of Programs and Treatment Services, Licking County Probate-Juvenile Court.*