

FINS Reform: How We Got Here

Judge Patricia Koch
9th Judicial District

Models for Change Goal: Alternatives to Formal Processing

- **Goal:** To expand and improve access to effective community-based programs and services as alternatives to formal processing and out-of-home placement, particularly secure confinement in the juvenile justice system.
- **Outcomes:** Best-practice models for local needs assessment and planning efforts, for interagency collaboration, for information sharing and for funding of community-based services to youth and families.

Transitioning from Practice to Policy

- Elected in 2005, I had the opportunity to start fresh and implement changes.
- The court works closely with the District Attorney's office, law enforcement, service providers and schools – the primary referral sources for youth.
- The system is designed to prevent youth from penetrating deeper into the judicial system.
- Rapides Parish's FINS reform has made it a model system for the state of Louisiana.

Informal FINS

- In 2007, Models for Change awarded Rapides Parish a grant to provide alternatives to formal processing, expand evidence-based practices and address disproportionate minority contact.
- Referral sources began utilizing informal FINS as an alternative to formal processing, resulting in an increase in the number of referrals to informal FINS.
- Data showed informal FINS was being overused as a “quick fix” response to youth and their families.
- Rapides Parish began outreach to educate referral sources on appropriate use of informal FINS.

Neighborhood Accountability Boards

- In 2009, Rapides set up Neighborhood Accountability Boards to take the place of a judge for first-time offenses such as breaking curfew, underage drinking, vandalism, shoplifting and truancy.
- The boards are comprised of former educators and community leaders.
- The boards can hand down “creative sentences” rather than commit the youth to the judicial system.

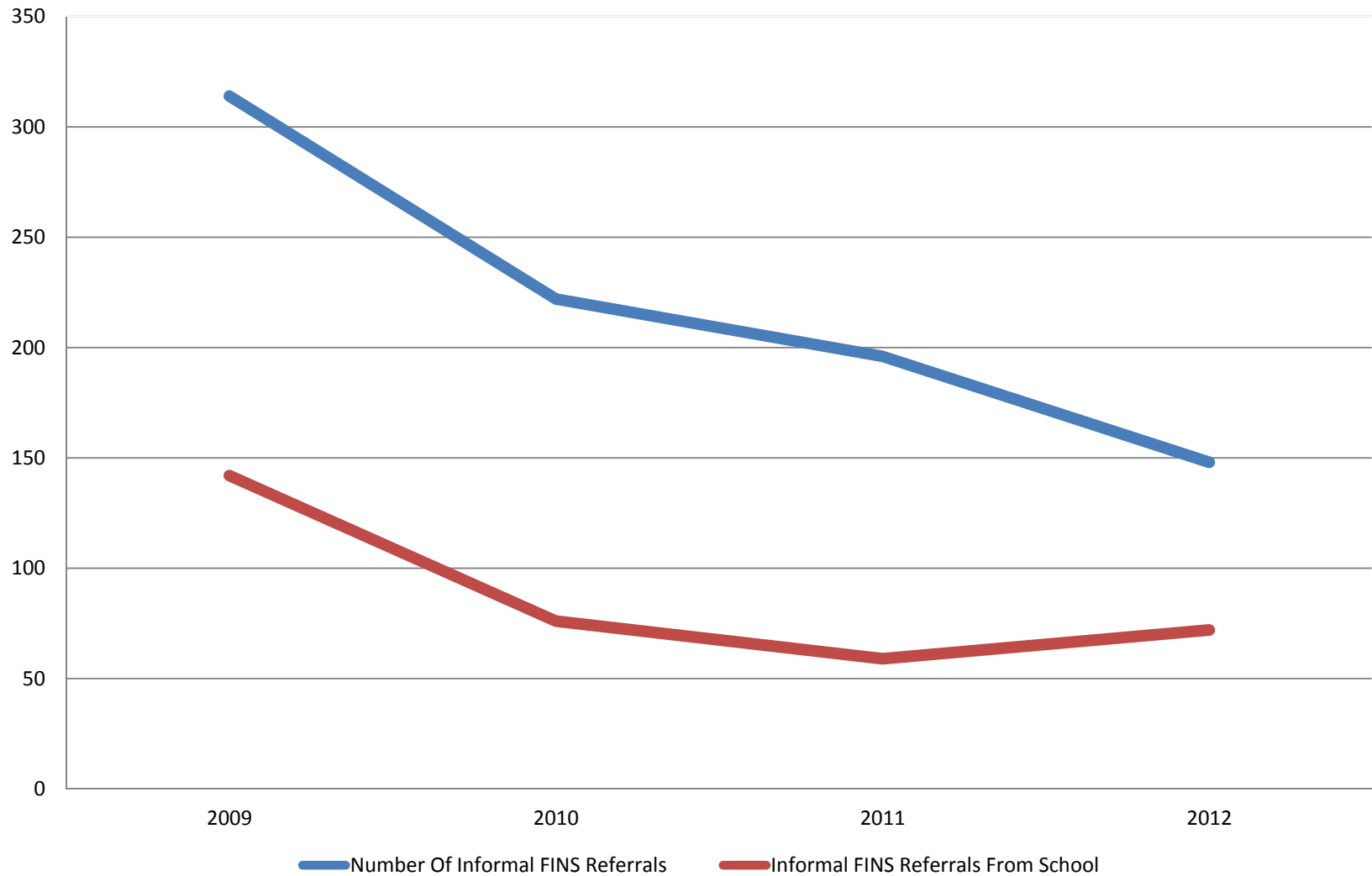
Characteristics of Best Practices for Status Offenders

- Make court the last resort
- Provide immediate crisis response
- Provide services that are tailored, community-based and evidence-based
- Avoid usage of detention
- Track outcome data

Success!

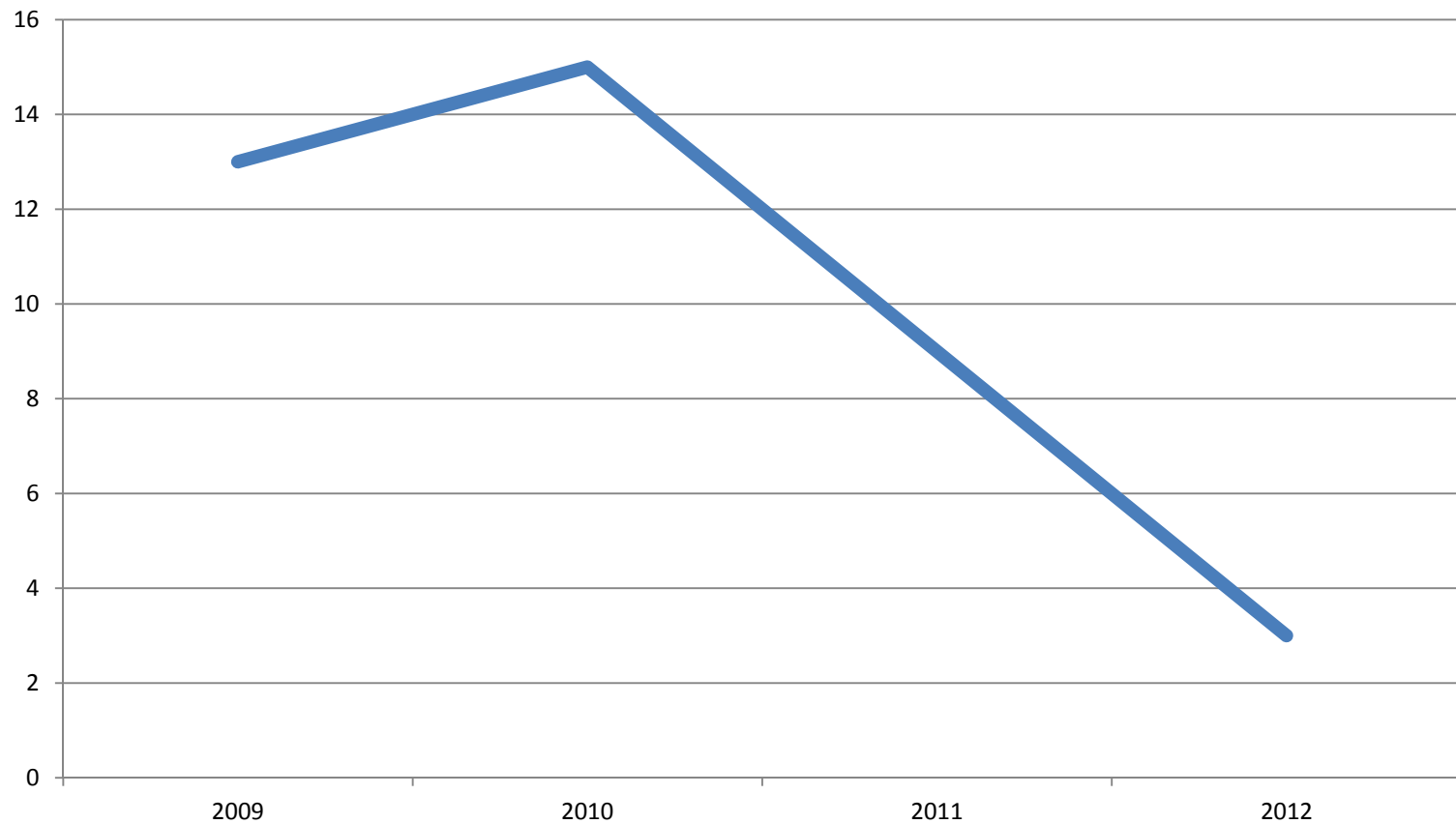
- From 2006 to 2008, Rapides FINS had 1,150 referrals for 1,028 youth.
- 58 percent were referred for ungovernable behavior.
- 61 percent were referred by schools.
- Fifty-seven cases ended in a formal petition to the court.

Success: Reduction in Informal FINS Referrals (Rapides Parish)



Success: Reduction in Formal Processing of Status Offenders (Rapides Parish)

of Informal FINS Cases Petitioned



Success: Reduction in the # of Special Ed. Students Expelled Over the Last 3 yrs (Rapides Parish)

- Rapides Parish was under corrective action for discipline.
- Monitoring was determined by the number of special education students removed from their home zone schools greater than 10 days.
- Decrease in the number of special education students expelled over the last 3 years in Rapides Parish
 - 2007-2008: **148**
 - 2008-2009: **123**
 - 2009-2010: **65**
 - 2010-2011: **28**
 - 2011-2012: **2**

Next Steps

- Exploration of other successful models
- Exploration of policies, statutes and funding sources
- Determination of necessary transitions and partnerships
- Implementation