

ModelsforChange

Systems Reform in Juvenile Justice

Measurable Progress

A Summary of Illinois Juvenile Justice Reforms

2014 Updates

2014 UPDATES

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I. PREFACE

This report summarizes some of the key changes in juvenile justice law, policy and practice that have taken place in Illinois in 2014. These advancements would not have been possible without the support of the MacArthur Foundation's *Models for Change* initiative and the collective vision and commitment of juvenile justice partners around the state, including prosecutors, law enforcement officials, judges, probation officers, defenders, service providers, agency leaders, and youth, community and family advocates.

Although Illinois has made tremendous progress in recent years in moving the state closer to a model juvenile justice system, that goal has not yet been fully achieved. To aid in that effort, Illinois has established new and strengthened leadership structures to steward the course of juvenile justice progress going forward. These include the Illinois Juvenile Justice Leadership Council, the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission, the Illinois Juvenile Justice Research and Information Consortium, and the Illinois Association of Juvenile Justice Councils. Much of the progress detailed in this update is a result of the work carried out by members of these leadership structures and by the many engaged juvenile justice stakeholders in local jurisdictions across the state.

II. SUMMARY OF ILLINOIS LAW, POLICY AND PRACTICE CHANGES: 2014

ADJUDICATION AND SENTENCING

***Miller v. Alabama* Ruled Retroactive in Illinois**

In the wake of the US Supreme Court's holding in *Miller v. Alabama* that mandatory sentencing of youth to life without possibility of parole violates the 8th Amendment's cruel and unusual punishment clause, the Illinois Supreme Court in *People v. Davis*, Ill. 2d , N.E.3d , 2014 IL 115595 (2014), ruled that the *Miller* decision applies retroactively in Illinois.

Judges Required to Make No Less Restrictive Alternative Findings Prior to Commitment to IDJJ

In 2012, the Illinois General Assembly adopted legislation (H.B. 83, codified in [705 ILCS 405/5-750\(1\)\(b\)](#)) requiring judges to make a finding of no less restrictive alternatives before sentencing a youth to the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice in all cases except murder. In *In re Henry P.*, 12 N.E.3d 852 (1st Dist. 2014), the First District Appellate Court reversed the trial judge's commitment of a youth to IDJJ on grounds that the judge failed to affirmatively make statutorily-required findings even if such findings could be inferred from the record.

In another opinion interpreting this legislation, *In re Raheem M.*, 376 Ill. Dec. 753, 1 N.E.3d 86 (4th Dist. 2013), the Appellate Court reversed a youth's commitment to IDJJ in the absence of evidence of efforts made to find less restrictive alternatives. But see *In re Austin D.*, 2014 IL App (4th) 140063-U, distinguishing *Raheem* and finding no error where the record demonstrated that reasonable efforts to find alternatives to commitment for a repeat offender were considered by the sentencing judge. Accord: *In re Ashley C.*, 380 Ill. Dec. 608, 8 N.E.3d 1142 (4th Dis. 2014).

AFTERCARE AND REENTRY

Statewide Aftercare Services for Youth Leaving Secure Custody

First piloted in Cook County in 2012, IDJJ began rolling out specialized youth aftercare strategies statewide in January 2014 and is currently on track to transfer all youth off IDOC parole caseloads and onto IDJJ aftercare caseloads by early 2015. IDJJ's aftercare program implements Public Act 98-0558, which institutionalized the recommendations of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission in its *Youth Reentry Improvement* report to create a youth-focused aftercare system to provide appropriate supervision and support to young people on parole, rather than assign them to IDOC parole agents supervising large caseloads of adults, with limited support or resources to successfully transition youth to their communities.

Reentry Improvement Projects

The Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission funded two community-based service providers (one in Cook County; one in St. Clair County) to develop and demonstrate effective aftercare models for youth leaving the state's juvenile prisons, as a strategy to implement the recommendations of its 2011 *Youth Reentry Improvement* study. In 2014, the three year programs began winding down their grant-based activities and began synthesizing successful policies, practices and services to assist the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice in taking its aftercare program statewide. With Commission support, the providers are collaborating with the University of Chicago, Chapin Hall to document and share lessons learned with the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice in early 2015, as the final cohort of new youth aftercare specialists are activated by IDJJ.

BALANCED AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Bringing Restorative Resources to Illinois Detention Facilities

The Illinois Balanced and Restorative Justice Initiative received a Juvenile Accountability Block Grant in State Fiscal Year 2015 from the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission to provide comprehensive training and technical assistance on the use of restorative justice approaches in Illinois detention centers. These resources are designed to assist detention leaders and staff in preventing and addressing crises in detention facilities and to help equip young people to resolve conflicts appropriately and successfully exit the juvenile justice system.

COMMUNITY-BASED ALTERNATIVES

Increased Crisis Intervention Funding

Following advocacy by the juvenile justice reform community, the state's Comprehensive Community-Based Youth Services programs (CCBYS) received \$1.2 million in additional funding to support round-the-clock crisis intervention services which prevent youth arrest and detention in State Fiscal Year 2015. CCBYS is a statewide network of service providers who receive referrals from schools, police agencies and families and provide immediate crisis response, respite care and supportive services.

JABG Grants to Local Justice Systems

In State Fiscal Year 2015, the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission utilized the state's Juvenile Accountability Block Grant Funds to support to state and local projects serving youth and families involved in the justice system. Eighteen local programs received JABG funding in State Fiscal Year 2015, including programs preparing youth for successful employment, victim-offender conferencing and other restorative justice programs, training for probation officers, prosecutors and defenders and support for diversion programs operated by police and justice system agencies. At the state level, JABG funds support system improvement efforts of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice, the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts and the Illinois Balanced and Restorative Justice Project.

Replicating Strategies to Support Families in Crisis

DuPage County Models for Change partners and the creators of the Washington Step Up program conducted implementation training for Illinois practitioners at the Reconnecting Pathways conference in June 2014. Step Up is a cognitive-behavioral program that assists young people and adults in addressing family conflict that results in youth contact with the justice system. DuPage County has successfully integrated the Step Up program into the continuum of services available (through their local CCBYS provider) to probation officers working with these families. The training session was part of an ongoing effort to diffuse the effective "adolescent domestic battery" practice models developed by Models for Change sites.

Get in Chicago: Innovative Public / Private Partnerships to Reduce Violence

Get in Chicago is a public-private partnership designed to engage Chicago's civic and business communities in violence prevention efforts in the city's most vulnerable neighborhoods. The programs provide cognitive-behavioral supports to youth, parent engagement and support and structured mentoring in school or community settings. Get in Chicago focuses on strategies which can be documented, measured and evaluated, with the goal of establishing a catalogue of successful youth violence prevention strategies for public and private funders to consider when allocating resources in Chicago and beyond. The first Get in Chicago programs were launched in 2013, with grants totaling \$1.9 million to 11 agencies serving 7 Chicago communities. A second round of Get In Chicago programs launch in January 2015, with the award of new grants in November 2014.

DATA AND INFORMATION

Research Consortium Holds Forum, Implements Work Plan, and Continues Research Brief Series

Established in 2013, the Illinois Research and Information Consortium (Research Consortium) works to identify Illinois juvenile justice system data and research needs, support research that is policy and practice relevant, and disseminate information about research and data to Illinois juvenile justice stakeholders. The Consortium includes state agencies, research institutions, and individual researchers who collectively have the experience and expertise needed to provide high quality juvenile justice data and research to policy-makers, justice-system stakeholders, and the public. In February, 2014, the Research Consortium hosted its second annual statewide forum. In addition to national and state presentations on current juvenile justice research activities, findings and methodologies, Consortium

members identified priorities for research and data work in Illinois in the coming year. The current status of work identified as priorities by the group is described in more detail in the entries below. In addition, the Research Consortium continued its effort to provide timely, accurate and useful information to Illinois researchers and data analysts through publication of a brief on transfer data in Illinois and an updated brief on the screening, assessment and caseplanning tools in use at various decision points in the Illinois juvenile justice system. Research Consortium Briefs are available on the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission website, <http://ijc.illinois.gov/publications/commission-resources>. The Research Consortium's next annual forum is scheduled for February 2015.

Statewide Detention Data

The Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission has prepared a comprehensive data report on the use of secure detention in Illinois, to be issued in January 2015. This report renews the Commission's historical practices of publishing an annual detention report, with the goal of providing current data and trends analysis to assist policy makers, practitioners and the public in understanding detention usage, identifying emerging issues and monitoring the state's implementation of "raise the age" legislation. The report has been produced through collaboration among the Commission, the Center for Prevention Research and Development at the University of Illinois and the Research Consortium (Loyola University Civitas ChildLaw Center). The report will be available on the Commission's website, at <http://ijc.illinois.gov/>.

IDJJ Population Profiles and Trends

A new online report provides policy makers and the public with current data on youth committed to the custody of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice. The on-line report utilizes IDJJ's monthly population statistics to illustrate trends in commitment of youth to IDJJ custody and the reincarceration of youth for parole violations. It is intended to provide timely information to the public, IDJJ's advisory board, the Juvenile Justice Leadership Council, Redeploy Illinois Oversight Board, the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission and policy makers. The report template was produced by the Commission, IDJJ, the Center for Prevention Research and Development at the University of Illinois and the Research Consortium (Loyola University Civitas ChildLaw Center). The report is available at <https://www.illinois.gov/idjj/Documents/DATA%20SNAPSHOT%20final%209-8-14.pdf>.

Statewide Data Snapshot

The Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission has partnered with the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority to produce and release a current, statewide juvenile justice data profile in Spring 2015. This report will inform and complement the state's three-year plan for federal juvenile justice funds and will include current data and trends data at key juvenile justice system decision points (arrest, delinquency petitions, delinquency adjudications, detention admissions, IDJJ commitments). The Commission has provided resources for production of this report in its State Fiscal Year 2015 contract with the Authority. The report will be available on the Commission's website, at <http://ijc.illinois.gov/>.

Standardized Local Data Template

With the acquisition of JABG administration, the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission identified an opportunity to standardize the data reports required of all grantees receiving federal juvenile justice funding support and, in turn, to provide technical assistance to grantees in gathering and using this

information effectively. A standardized Illinois juvenile justice data reporting template was developed, adapted from the W. Haywood Burns Institute data reporting template, and is being piloted by local juvenile justice councils receiving Commission support. The project is a collaborative effort of the Commission, the Center for Prevention Research and Development at the University of Illinois and Loyola University Civitas ChildLaw Center.

Redeploy Illinois Data Collection

The Redeploy Illinois program developed a uniform grant / data reporting system in 2014, in collaboration with program sites and leaders, using the E-Cornerstone data system of the Illinois Department of Human Services. This system will allow Redeploy sites to provide comprehensive data and positive youth outcome measures.

DETENTION

Detention Standards Updates

The Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice is statutorily-mandated to promulgate and monitor compliance with statewide standards for the state's county-based secure juvenile detention facilities. The Commission relies upon the standards and IDJJ's monitoring to help ensure compliance with the core requirements of the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. The Department and the Commission have co-convened a working group charged with developing updated standards (last revised more than two decades ago) in alignment with current mandates and best practices for youth safety, staff safety and positive youth development principles. Updated standards are expected to be ready for promulgation in State Fiscal Year 15.

Detention Transportation Study

Many of Illinois' 17 secure juvenile detention facilities have contracts or informal agreements to securely detain youth from other counties who do not operate their own secure facilities. The Spring 2014 legislative session raised questions and concerns regarding the resources used to transport youth to and from these detention centers to court hearings, particularly over long distances. In anticipation of a possible legislative mandate to the Commission to study this issue, the Commission has begun legal and data analysis regarding the transportation of detained youth to inform the development of policy and procedure on the care and transport of youth.

Detention Self-Assessment and Review

In June 2014, with the support of the Annie E. Casey's JDAI initiative, the Youth Law Center and the Center for Children's Law and Policy released updated guidelines and protocols to ensure humane and appropriate detention conditions to equip detention leaders and staff in examining and strengthening all aspects of facility policies, practices and programs. With this protocol, local teams conduct assessments and develop comprehensive reports on their findings and, if necessary, corrective action plans to improve facility policy and operations. The Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission has convened an in-state working group and is piloting implementation of the new standards, with the technical assistance of CCLP and YLC.

Detention Screening Tool Updates

The Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, with the support of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission, will contract with the Vera Center on Youth Justice to research, revise and study implementation of a standardized detention screening instrument in State Fiscal Year 2015. The project will utilize technical assistance from the Vera Center to examine Illinois' current detention screening tool (promulgated more than a decade ago) and develop an updated, uniform detention screening tool in alignment with current research and evidence-based practice on the use of secure detention for youth.

DIVERSION

Redeploy Illinois

As of spring 2014, the Juvenile Redeploy program has twelve sites in 40 counties, has diverted over 1,500 youth from commitment to the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice, and has avoided potential costs to the State of \$19 million. As a deep-end diversion program, it has demonstrated results that have allowed IDJJ to decrease its population from nearly 1100 to 750 youth.

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

Evidence-Based Assessment at IDJJ

The Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice is implementing use of the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) to drive individualized caseplans for the youth in their custody with resources from a federal Second Chance grant. The YASI utilizes a series of structured questions and assimilates a variety of information from independent secondary sources (such as school records, police reports, family interviews, etc.) in ten "domains" and provides a profile of each youth's *risk* levels, particular areas of *need* and specific *protective factors* which promote positive youth outcomes and resiliency. YASI planning and implementation began in November 2014, with an accelerated time table in place for utilization of the tool for case planning and reassessment in 2015.

Adolescent Domestic Battery "Typology" Tool Validation

Illinois Models for Change leaders in DuPage and Cook County and the National Youth Screening and Assessment Project continued multi-state validation of the "typology" tool developed for use with families in contact with the justice system. The tool – and the cross-state validation work – will assist crisis responders, probation officers and others in diverting families experiencing ADB from the justice system, when possible, reducing unnecessary detention and incarceration and better responding to the needs of victims and families. To develop more informed, individualized responses to families experiencing ADB, site leaders worked closely with the National Center for Juvenile Justice Technical Assistance providers to map the dynamics and characteristics of families experiencing ADB and establish a "typologies" tool to aid in case management, treatment planning, training and development of a continuum of services for youth and families in crisis. This typology matrix relies on several key historic, emotional, behavioral, situational and other factors present in families experiencing ADB, and includes five distinct categories, with a guide to interventions most appropriate for each category. NYSAP

worked with participating sites throughout 2014 to gather case-level data, with initial analysis expected in early 2015.

EXPUNGEMENT

Streamlining Records Expungement for Eligible Youth

In recent years, Illinois has taken incremental steps to better protect the life chances of youth by allowing their juvenile records to be expunged. In 2014, the state took another step toward this goal with passage of “clean slate” juvenile expungement legislation. The new law, which takes effect in January, 2015, provides for automatic clearing of a youth’s arrest records in most non-violent offense cases upon turning 18. The law does not apply to certain serious felony arrests, sex offenses, and those occurring within the previous six months.

FAMILY AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Engaging Youth in Systemic Improvement

The Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission launched the IJJC Youth Advisory Board – the first in the history of the State Advisory Group – to engage young people affected by the state’s juvenile justice system in system improvement efforts and to empower youth to tell their stories, select priorities and pursue reforms. Comprised of youth members of the Commission as well as a larger network of youth leaders, the Board has begun to organize a statewide coalition of youth and has presented its work to the Coalition for Juvenile Justice in 2013. In the first quarter of 2015, the Board will award and manage “mini-grants” for youth-focused projects, on behalf of the Commission.

Statewide Youth Circle

The 2014 Reconnecting Pathways statewide conference featured a youth-planned and youth-led pre-conference session entitled *Youth Led Intergenerational Peace Circle: Harnessing the Transformative Power of Art through Youth Voice*. This session brought together young people from across the state to discuss their experiences in the juvenile justice system and the ways in which youth leadership could accelerate progress toward a more effective system. The Illinois Collaboration on Youth and the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission provided resources to support youth planning and participation.

Youth / Law Enforcement Partnerships

The Chicago YMCA has launched a pilot project to bring together young people and police officers in communities most affected by racial and ethnic disparities in justice system contact to encourage communication and partnership in diverting youth from unnecessary arrest and justice system involvement. The YMCA convenes and hosts the project, in collaboration with the Illinois Collaboration on Youth and the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission. Based on models in use in other jurisdictions, the goal of the project is to foster understanding of adolescent development and conflict prevention techniques among police and to build mutual respect and communication between young people and the police who serve their communities.

INDIGENT DEFENSE

Settlement Requires Legal Representation at Youth Parole Revocation Hearings

The State of Illinois has agreed to a settlement in *M.H. v. Monreal*, a class action federal law suit filed by the Roderick MacArthur Justice Center at Northwestern University Law School on behalf of youth on parole or who will go before the Illinois Prisoner Review Board (IPRB). The IPRB is charged with making release decisions for youth in the custody of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice and with deciding whether a youth has violated parole. The lawsuit charged IPRB with systematically depriving juvenile parolees of their rights to a fair hearing, legal representation and other violations of the U.S. Constitution. The settlement requires the IPRB to provide state-funded attorneys to represent youth for alleged parole violations and to abide by other procedural rights in compliance with state and federal law. The lawsuit grew out of a legislatively-mandated report by the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission on Illinois's youth aftercare system. The report, YOUTH REENTRY IMPROVEMENT REPORT, is available at <http://ijjc.illinois.gov/reentryimprovementreport>.

JUVENILE SEX OFFENSES

Improving Responses to Sexual Offenses Committed by Youth

The Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission issued *Improving Illinois' Response To Sexual Offenses Committed by Youth* in March 2014. This legislatively-mandated report presented findings regarding the low recidivism risks presented by most youth who have committed a sexual offense, the efficacy of community-based and evidence-based treatments, and the policy changes needed to dismantle barriers to positive outcomes for youth, victims of sexual abuse and communities. The report was presented to the Governor and Illinois General Assembly. Following release, the Commission conducted structured presentations to the Illinois Association of Child Advocacy Centers, the Illinois Probation and Court Services Association, Illinois Sex Offender Management Board statewide trainings and the national Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abuse. In 2015, the Commission will continue its focus on effectively communicating these findings and recommendations, strategic dialogue with policy makers, advocates, service providers and communities and planning for implementation of the report recommendations. The report is available at <http://ijjc.illinois.gov/youthsexualoffenses>.

JUVENILE COURT JURISDICTION AND TRANSFER

New Report on Automatic Transfer in Cook County

In April 2014, the Illinois Juvenile Justice Initiative published a report on automatic transfer of youth to adult court in Cook County between the years 2010 – 2012. The report reviewed 257 cases during this time period and found that 83% of transferred youth were African-American and 16 % were Latino. The study also found that 54% of those who were required by law to be tried in adult court later pleaded guilty to a lesser charge that would not have been subject to automatic transfer. Based on these and other findings, the report recommended that automatic transfer be eliminated and that all transfer decisions be made after individualized hearings by a juvenile court judge. Legislation consistent with this recommendation is scheduled to be introduced in the Illinois General Assembly during its upcoming

session. The JJI Report, AUTOMATIC ADULT PROSECUTION OF CHILDREN IN COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS 2010 – 2012 is available at <http://jjustice.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Automatic-Adult-Prosecution-of-Children-in-Cook-County-IL.pdf>.

Illinois Courts Uphold Automatic Transfer Law But Urges Legislative Reconsideration

In *People v. Patterson*, 2014 IL 115102 (2014), the Illinois Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Illinois' mandatory transfer of certain minors from juvenile court to adult criminal court against claims that the law violates provisions in the U.S. and Illinois Constitutions, including the due process clause, the Eighth Amendment, and the Illinois proportionate penalties clause. At the same time, the majority opinion expressed concern over the absence of judicial discretion under Illinois' automatic transfer law and "strongly" urged the General Assembly to reconsider the law in light of emerging research on the developmental status and needs of justice-involved youth. A dissenting opinion asserted that the U.S. Supreme Court's opinions in *Roper*, *Graham* and *Miller* required a finding of unconstitutionality.

JHA Report Gives Voice to the Experience of Transferred Youth

In an effort to capture the experience of young offenders who are sentenced as adults for serious offenses, the John Howard Association compiled a report in which six offenders recounted their journey through Illinois's criminal justice system. Based on these experiences, the report makes several recommendations for improving the fairness and effectiveness of Illinois' justice system, including empowering judges to decide whether youth should be tried as juveniles or adults and establishing specialized facilities and programming for youth and young adults who in prison. A copy of the report, IN THEIR OWN WORDS: YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF ITS LEGITIMACY, can be found at <http://thejha.org/sites/default/files/JHAIInTheirOwnWords.pdf>.

MENTAL HEALTH

Children's Mental Health System Upgrades

As a result of the Affordable Care Act, new Illinois Medicaid reform legislation and a class action lawsuit by Medicaid-eligible youths (*N.B. V. Hamos*), intense efforts are underway to reform the state's children's mental health system, including justice-involved youth. Additional information is available from the Governor's Office of Health Innovation and Transformation (GOHIT) at <https://www2.illinois.gov/gov/healthcarereform/Pages/GOHIT.aspx>.

PROBATION

Probation Self-Assessment and Review

Three Illinois probation departments (encompassing 14 counties) are piloting the self-assessment and systemic improvement model developed by the Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corp (RFK) with Models for Change support. The projects will provide assistance to probation and court services departments in analyzing their policies and day-to-day practices to assure alignment with the

department's mission and evidence-based practice. The projects are funded by the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission, with technical assistance by RFK and Loyola University Civitas ChildLaw Center.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISPARITIES

Reducing Disparities through Local Leadership

Illinois has received a federal Community and Strategic Planning (CASP) grant to assist communities in reducing racial and ethnic disparities in local juvenile justice systems. To implement the Illinois CASP project, the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission has partnered with and provided funding to local juvenile justice councils in Macon and Peoria Counties in central Illinois. CASP resources will assist the councils in gathering and analyzing local juvenile justice data, identifying policies and practices which may contribute to disparities, fostering collaboration among justice system stakeholders and the community to address these disparities, measuring the impact of these efforts and documenting change in a way that encourages replication of successful strategies.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Strategic Oversight of Federal Funding

The Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission assumed full administration of the state's Juvenile Accountability Block Grant funds in State Fiscal Year 2014. Previously, the Commission was charged with administration of Illinois' JJDP Act funds, while JABG funds were overseen in another state agency. Based upon the demonstrated capacity of the Commission, the Governor transferred JABG administration to the Commission, to allow strategic planning and coordinated use of the state's federal juvenile justice resources. In SFY 2014, the Commission strengthened communication and planning efforts with JABG grantees to maximize the impact of the funds at the state and local level.

SECURE CONFINEMENT

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

The Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice has accelerated implementation of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system in all IDJJ facilities, with funding support from the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission. PBIS is a structured, system-wide approach to creating and reinforcing positive culture and behaviors among youth and adults in IDJJ facilities, with the goal of preventing behavioral crises and improving problem solving skills and behavior among incarcerated youth. The JABG grant to IDJJ provides training resources, data collection and evaluation tools and collaborative opportunities within Illinois' PBIS network.

Protecting the Rights of Youth in Custody

Illinois has joined a growing number of states with juvenile ombudsman programs intended to help protect the rights of youth in custody. Passed by overwhelming majorities in both chambers of the Illinois General Assembly, Governor Quinn signed Senate Bill 2352 in August 2014 to create the Office of Independent Juvenile Ombudsman within the state's youth prison system. The duties of the

Independent Juvenile Ombudsman include reviewing and monitoring Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice operations, advocating for the rights of youth and helping them obtain needed services, and investigating and resolving complaints made by or on behalf of youth in state youth prisons and those youth released on aftercare before final discharge. The ombudsman is required to make annual reports and recommendations for improvements to the governor and General Assembly. The governor will appoint the ombudsman, subject to Senate confirmation. The independent ombudsman will serve a four-year term and can only be removed for malfeasance, neglect of duty or conviction of a felony.

ACLU Suit Files; Experts Tapped to Develop Remedial Plan

The Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice and the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois have agreed upon a remedial plan in a federal class action suit to improve conditions and services for young people confined at state-run juvenile justice facilities across Illinois. The remedial plan, approved by the court in April 2014, calls for improved conditions in five areas: (1) mental health services; (2) educational services – including general education, special education, and services for youth with a high school diploma or a GED; (3) the use of confinement; (4) safety of young people inside the facilities from violence by staff and other youth; and (5) continued commitment of youth beyond their release dates solely for lack of a community placement. Three independent court-appointed experts will monitor the Department’s progress in implementing the plan and to submit reports to the court documenting their findings.

STATUS OFFENDERS/TRUANCY

Progress in Addressing Chronic Truancy in Chicago Public Schools

In 2013, the General Assembly created a new multidisciplinary body to provide policy guidance on truancy in the Chicago Public Schools. In July, 2014 the Truancy Task Force published its final report. Recommendations included hiring attendance coordinators and updating the system’s truancy tracking system to provide real-time data to principals. CPS reports it has begun to implement many of the Task Force’s ideas and that, as a result, chronic absenteeism rates have shown meaningful declines. A full copy of the report can be found at <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/tcpstf/pdf/tcpstf-final-report.pdf>.

SYSTEM COLLABORATION AND GOVERNANCE

Supporting Effective Juvenile Justice Councils

Based in part on the models of effective local governance and accountability highlighted by the Models for Change initiative, the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission has dedicated funds to support local juvenile justice councils and support data-driven, local juvenile justice plans which can, in turn, inform state-level juvenile justice policy and practice. The Commission’s support includes grants to 11 local councils, spanning 18 counties. In addition to the council grants, the Commission is providing training resources, technical assistance and opportunities for cross-site collaboration.

Reconnecting Pathways

Nearly 400 state and local juvenile justice leaders, practitioners and partners met for Illinois’ first statewide juvenile justice conference in seven years in Springfield in June 2014. Convened by Illinois Models for Change, Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission, Illinois Association of Juvenile Justice Councils,

Illinois Juvenile Justice Leadership Council and Illinois Collaboration on Youth, the conference featured plenary sessions and workshops on a wide variety of programs, policies and practices which have been effective in producing positive youth outcomes, public safety and community well-being.

Illinois Association of Juvenile Justice Councils

The Illinois Association of Juvenile Justice Councils tapped new leadership in 2014 and renewed efforts to support the creation and efficacy of juvenile justice councils across the state. The IAJJC conducted a comprehensive statewide survey of existing councils and convened a statewide meeting of council leaders in November, in collaboration with the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission, to identify resource needs and strategies to empower and enable juvenile justice councils to fulfill their statutory mission under the Illinois Juvenile Court Act.

Leadership Council Establishes Priorities and Focused Workgroups

The Illinois Juvenile Justice Leadership Council was launched in July 2012 with Models for Change support to create a sustainable locus of leadership and collaboration among a key group of juvenile justice thought-leaders and decision-makers. The Council met quarterly in the second half of 2012 to begin to connect juvenile justice stakeholders with one another, promote communication, identify research and information needs, set system improvement priorities, and evaluate the state's progress toward a fair, rational and effective juvenile justice system. In January 2013, the Council identified four priorities (and four corresponding workgroups) for maintaining and enhancing system improvement momentum: data, youth and family engagement, behavioral health and diversion. Each workgroup has identified priorities and key strategies to guide its work through 2014. The JJLC website was launched in Spring 2014 as a mechanism for Council members expand their knowledge base of juvenile justice issues, reform efforts, and funding opportunities. The Council is co-chaired by two Illinois Supreme Court Justices and the Director of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice.