

Spotlight on the Chiefs/Provider Forum

There was a special agenda for the March 17, 2011 Chiefs/Providers committee meeting. The purpose was to update the provider community on the Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy (JJSES) which was first introduced at the 2010 Pennsylvania Conference on Juvenile Justice. Keith Snyder, Deputy Director, Juvenile Court Judges' Commission was the presenter.

The JJSES grew out of the various initiatives occurring in the state over the last ten years. We continue to keep Balanced and Restorative Justice as our overarching mission and purpose clause of our juvenile justice system. The strategy has three main principles: to employ evidence-based practices at every stage of the juvenile justice process; to collect and analyze the data to measure results; and to improve the quality of our decisions, services and programs.

The numerous initiatives are visually depicted as puzzle pieces. The goal over the next three to five years is to "transform" the pieces into a comprehensive strategy which employs evidence-based practice.

The goals and activities for the next three months include: developing a monograph; working with the Carey Group to refine direction; creating a JJSES workgroup; refining the implementation strategy; and developing infrastructure to support the activities.

The role of service providers will be addressed through the JJSES Provider Workgroup. That group has been meeting since December, 2010 and has identified three initial areas of work: education, curricula, and outcomes. Providers can receive additional technical assistance through the EPISCenter (Penn State University) and the Quality Improvement Initiative (Qii), (National Center for Juvenile Justice). Keith Snyder and Mike Pennington are the co-chairs for that workgroup.

The Chief's council has endorsed the Youth Level of Service (YLS) as the assessment tool which will be used by two thirds of the counties. It measures, risk, needs and strengths based on eight domains. The domains that are the strongest indicators of recidivism are: current and prior history, attitudes/orientation, personality/behavior, peer relations, and family circumstances. Gathering good information is essential to be able to score the instrument accurately. All this leads to the cornerstone of why an assessment is important, the development of a case plan. The case plan should address the top criminogenic needs through targeted interventions. A standardized case plan is currently being developed for use in the counties.

Research and data analysis is the final puzzle piece which will be utilized to continue to improve the quality of decisions, services and programs.