

LINC Commission Meeting

May 19, 2008



A participant studies her next move at the 8th Annual LINC Chess Tournament at Dobbs Caring Communities in the Hickman Mills School District.



LINC

Local Investment Commission

3100 Broadway, Suite 1100 - Kansas City, MO 64111 - (816) 889-5050 - www.kclinc.org

Local Investment Commission (LINC) Vision

Our Shared Vision

A caring community that builds on its strengths to provide meaningful opportunities for children, families and individuals to achieve self-sufficiency, attain their highest potential, and contribute to the public good.

Our Mission

To provide leadership and influence to engage the Kansas City Community in creating the best service delivery system to support and strengthen children, families and individuals, holding that system accountable, and changing public attitudes towards the system.

Our Guiding Principles

1. **COMPREHENSIVENESS:** Provide ready access to a full array of effective services.
2. **PREVENTION:** Emphasize “front-end” services that enhance development and prevent problems, rather than “back-end” crisis intervention.
3. **OUTCOMES:** Measure system performance by improved outcomes for children and families, not simply by the number and kind of services delivered.
4. **INTENSITY:** Offering services to the needed degree and in the appropriate time.
5. **PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT:** Use the needs, concerns, and opinions of individuals who use the service delivery system to drive improvements in the operation of the system.
6. **NEIGHBORHOODS:** Decentralize services to the places where people live, wherever appropriate, and utilize services to strengthen neighborhood capacity.
7. **FLEXIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS:** Create a delivery system, including programs and reimbursement mechanisms, that are sufficiently flexible and adaptable to respond to the full spectrum of child, family and individual needs.
8. **COLLABORATION:** Connect public, private and community resources to create an integrated service delivery system.
9. **STRONG FAMILIES:** Work to strengthen families, especially the capacity of parents to support and nurture the development of their children.
10. **RESPECT AND DIGNITY:** Treat families, and the staff who work with them, in a respectful and dignified manner.
11. **INTERDEPENDENCE/MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY:** Balance the need for individuals to be accountable and responsible with the obligation of community to enhance the welfare of all citizens.
12. **CULTURAL COMPETENCY:** Demonstrate the belief that diversity in the historical, cultural, religious and spiritual values of different groups is a source of great strength.
13. **CREATIVITY:** Encourage and allow participants and staff to think and act innovatively, to take risks, and to learn from their experiences and mistakes.
14. **COMPASSION:** Display an unconditional regard and a caring, non-judgmental attitude toward participants that recognizes their strengths and empowers them to meet their own needs.
15. **HONESTY:** Encourage and allow honesty among all people in the system.



Monday, May 19, 2008
Kauffman Foundation, 4801 Rockhill Rd.
4 – 6 p.m.
Kansas City, Mo. 64110

Agenda

- I. Welcome, Announcements & Recognitions**
- II. Approvals & Recognitions**
 - a. April minutes (Motion)**
- III. LINC and City of KCMO partnerships**
 - a. Deletta Dean (KCMO) & DeWayne Bright (LINC)
- IV. Urban Issues in Suburban Schools**
 - a. Dr. Marjorie Kaplan
- V. LINC President's Report**
- VI. Missouri Division of Youth Services**
 - a. Tim Decker, Director
- VII. Reports**
 - a. Summer School
 - b. LINC Chess Club
- VIII. Adjournment**



DRAFT MINUTES

THE LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION – APRIL 21, 2008

The Local Investment Commission met at the UMKC Administrative Center Conference Facility, 5115 Oak St., Kansas City, Mo. Chairman **Landon Rowland** presided. Commissioners attending were:

Sharon Cheers
Steve Dunn
Herb Freeman
SuEllen Fried
Rob Givens
Bob Glaser
Bart Hakan
Adele Hall
Richard Hibsichman

Judy Hunt
Rosemary Smith Lowe
Mary Kay McPhee
Richard Morris
David Rock
David Ross
Gene Standifer
Bailus Tate

Rowland announced that **Carson Ross** was elected Blue Springs mayor. A letter from Ross is included in the meeting packet.

Rowland welcomed Sugar Creek Mayor **Stan Salva**. LINC Neighborhood Coordinator **Bill Rogers** reported on the partnership between LINC and the City of Sugar Creek which supports a LINC Caring Communities at city gymnasium. Salva reported that the Sugar Creek City Council is committed to continued partnership with LINC and invited LINC to be the featured program at an upcoming meeting of the Eastern Jackson County Betterment Council.

Gayle A. Hobbs gave the LINC President's Report:

- LINC Neighborhood Coordinator **Rick Bell** reported LINC is working with Swope Corridor Renaissance to provide summer activities at eight locations in Kansas City, Mo. this summer.
- Hobbs has been working with the Eldon County, Mo. community on community responses to child deaths resulting from abuse and neglect.
- Hickman Mills voters approved separate school improvement bond and levy issues in the April elections.
- The Missouri Division of Youth Services was named one of the nation's 50 most innovative government programs by Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.
- Several representatives from LINC will participate in the Coalition for Community Schools National Forum in Portland, OR, April 30-May 2. LINC will present three workshops at the conference.
- A video on community schools produced by LINC for the Portland conference was shown.

Hobbs introduced a presentation on Families and Schools Together (FAST), a program that LINC uses to foster parental involvement at Caring Communities school sites; 18 LINC staff

recently received FAST training. LINC Community Organizer **Lee Bohannon** gave an overview of FAST, which aims to build relationships within families, between families, and between families and schools.

ACE Caring Communities site coordinator **Janis Bankston** introduced **Wesley Cunningham**, ACE Youth Coordinator, and **Janeda Oliver**, ACE Lower Campus Site Administrator, who reported that the FAST training at the ACE Collegium Campus has been effective at bringing families together and has resulted in improved academic performance and decreased disciplinary referrals for students. The staff would like to expand FAST training into the ACE middle and high schools.

Loria Hubbard, an ACE parent who recently graduated from the FAST program, reported that FAST was a positive experience for her and her children.

Discussion followed.

A LINC video about FAST was shown.

Kansas City City Council member **Cindy Circo** gave an update on activities of the Kansas City Foreclosure Task Force. The group is assessing and distributing information on upcoming foreclosures and is working to bring legislation before the city and state while building on the work being done by interested community groups.

Discussion followed.

LINC Treasurer **David Ross** introduced a report by LINC Finance Director **Robin Gierer** on the current LINC budget and budget request for FY 2008-2009.

A motion to approve the FY 2007-2008 budget & the corresponding 3rd quarter financial results, as well as the FY 2008-2009 Community Partnership budget request, was approved unanimously.

A motion to approve the minutes of the Feb. 25, 2008, and March 17, 2008, LINC Commission meetings was approved.

A motion to move to close the meeting to consider matters pertaining to legal actions, causes or action or litigation was approved by all present.

The public meeting was closed.

The public meeting reconvened.

The public meeting was adjourned.

**ESTEEMED EDUCATOR TO LEAD INSTITUTE,
HELP ARIZONA STUDENTS BEAT THE ODDS**

**Shawnee Mission School Superintendent Marjorie Kaplan Named
Director of the Beat the Odds Institute**

PHOENIX (January 15, 2008) — The Center for the Future of Arizona, a Phoenix-based nonprofit, announced today that it has named Dr. Marjorie Kaplan Director of its newly created Beat the Odds Institute. Kaplan's duties include developing and managing the Beat the Odds Institute programs, operations and community relationships.

Upon her retirement July 1, 2008 as superintendent of schools for the Shawnee Mission School District in metropolitan Kansas City, she will assume the position of Beat the Odds Director full-time. In the interim, Kaplan will advise the Institute on key matters.

The Beat the Odds Institute's mission is to provide Arizona K-12 students with opportunities for success in the global economy. Its current focus is the statewide implementation of a research-based education initiative to improve K-12 student achievement in primarily Latino-intensive, low-income schools. Twenty-seven Phoenix-area K-12 schools currently are engaged in the first phase of the implementation program.

The collaborative, school-based initiative is an outgrowth of a nationally acclaimed joint study of the Center for the Future of Arizona and the Morrison Institute for Public Policy at Arizona State University, entitled "Why Some Schools with Latino Children Beat the Odds ... and Others Don't." Jim Collins, author of the *New York Times* bestseller "Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap ... and Others Don't," actively collaborated in the research.

An Esteemed Education Leader

Kaplan worked for 24 years in education in Phoenix prior to moving in 1992 to Kansas City.

She was superintendent of the Paradise Valley School District and the principal of Sunset School, a K-8 school in the Washington School District. During her tenure in the metropolitan Phoenix area, she was named one of the Top 100 Educators in the United States by *Executive Educator* magazine. Kaplan also received the Arizona Superintendent of the Year award from the American Association of School Administrators, and the Outstanding Arizona Superintendent Award from the Arizona School Administrators Association.

As superintendent of the second largest school district in Kansas, she is responsible for 28,158 students, 4,300 employees and an annual budget of nearly 424 million dollars. During her tenure, Shawnee Mission has evolved from a homogenous, English-speaking, middle and upper-middle class district to one in which 22 percent of students qualify for a free or reduced price lunch (an indicator of poverty) and 2,076 of the district's students are identified as English language learners (ELL). Latinos comprise 10.4 percent of the district's student population.

Despite demographic changes and budget challenges, for 16 consecutive years *Expansion Management* magazine has awarded Shawnee Mission School District a gold medal rating, ranking the district among the top four percent of school districts nationally.

"Marjorie is remarkably adept at dealing with the changes that took place—and continue to take place—in the district," commented Fred Logan, Jr., a Kansas City-area attorney and co-chair of the Committee for Excellence, a citizens group devoted to maintaining high-quality education in Shawnee District. "She welcomed the ethnic and socioeconomic changes with open arms."

She will help Arizona schools facing similar challenges in her new role as Director of the Beat the Odds Institute. Latino students are rapidly becoming the majority student population in Arizona K-12 schools. In general, Arizona Latino student achievement scores fall well below the state average. Approximately half of all Arizona Latino students do not graduate high school.

"I'm delighted to have Marjorie Kaplan return to the Valley," commented Dr. Carol Peck, president and CEO of the Rodel Charitable Foundation of Arizona. "She brings a wealth of experience and creativity, which will be a great asset to both the Center for the Future of Arizona and our state."

Funding for the director's position has been made available by the Stardust Foundation.



Dr. Marjorie Kaplan
Director of the Beat the Odds Institute



NEWS RELEASE

Deborah E. Scott
DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 15, 2008

Contact: Sara Anderson
(573) 526-0407

DSS Division among 50 Top Programs Chosen for 2008 Innovations in American Government Award

Jefferson City – The Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS) announced today that its Division of Youth Services (DYS) was chosen as one of the “Top 50 Programs of the 2008 Innovations in American Government Awards” and advances to the next round of competition. The Innovations in American Government Awards selected the 50 best programs from a pool of nearly 1,000 applicants who represent the best in government innovation. The 2008 winners will receive a \$100,000 award towards replication and dissemination of best practices.

“Missouri places the greatest value on our children and young people,” Gov. Blunt said. “Our Division of Youth Services continues to gain national recognition for their work, and I applaud them for answering my call to advance innovative programs that ensure the young people in their care have every chance to succeed.”

“It is an honor to be recognized by this group and chosen to advance in the competition,” said DSS Director Deborah Scott. “We are very proud of DYS and take pride in the successes and accomplishments of our young people, families, community partners, and staff. Although it would be an additional honor to be chosen the most innovative program in the country, our real reward is seeing youth being transformed into the remarkable men and women they become.”

The Missouri DYS is a nationally recognized juvenile justice program. It has one of the lowest recidivism rates in the country with less than 10 percent of youth re-entering the juvenile justice or being incarcerated as adults. The program focuses on rehabilitation and recognizes that treatment and education go hand-in-hand. Through this approach, DYS makes great strides in preparing youth to re-enter society as law abiding, productive citizens who contribute to the communities in which they live. DYS is an accredited school district and is nationally ranked for its educational success of delinquent youth. More than 90 percent of Missouri youth in juvenile corrections or detention earn high school credits, compared to 46 percent nationally. The division also offers the Work Experience Program which allows youth to develop job readiness skills and gain on the job training experience making them more employable upon return to their communities.

“Our ultimate goal is to positively impact the lives of these young people and their families. Our approach is to address the issues that need attention and resolution while youth are in our care. This approach, along with the philosophy that education and job preparation can support the life changes they are making, gives us the model we have today. We are always working to improve what we do to have better outcomes for young people,” said Tim Decker, DYS Director.

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INNOVATIONS IN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

2008 SUPPLEMENTARY APPLICATION

AGENCY DIRECTOR SIGNATURE PAGE

This document is due to the Innovations Office by 3:00 PM EST on THURSDAY, JANUARY 17, 2008

Program Name: Division of Youth Services

Contact Person: Tim Decker

Title: Director

Department/Division: Missouri Department of Social Services, Division of Youth Services

Address (no P.O. Boxes, please): 3418 Knipp Drive, Suite A - 1

City: Jefferson City State: Missouri Zip: 65109

Telephone: (573) 751-3324 Fax: (573) 526-4494

E-Mail: Tim.Decker@dss.mo.gov

Agency Director: Deborah E. Scott

Title: Director

Department/Division: Department of Social Services

Address (no P.O. Boxes, please): 221 West High Street, Broadway State Office Building

City: Jefferson City State: Missouri Zip: 65101

Telephone: (573) 751-4815 Fax: (573) 751-3203

E-Mail: Deborah.E.Scott@dss.mo.gov

I certify that, as represented to me, the information contained in this application is accurate.

Deborah E. Scott
Signature of Agency Director

Jan. 14, 2008
Date

1. Describe your innovation. What problem does it address? How exactly is your program or policy innovative? How has your innovation changed previous practice? Name the program or policy that is closest to yours.

maximum 1

page

To understand how the Missouri Department of Social Services' Division of Youth Services' innovation has changed practice, imagine for just a moment that you're 16 years old. You lie awake in your metal bunk-bed in a large unfurnished barracks-style room. You look around the unit and see 48 other young men in their prison-issued orange jumpsuits, one part of a large secure facility serving 350. You can't help but wonder how your life got out of hand so quickly. You can barely remember the abuse that has scarred you so deeply. You haven't seen your family for months. They live 150 miles away. You gently rub the bruised area around your eye and wonder when your rival will return from his isolation cell. He's spent 3 days there, 23 hours a day, and has to be even angrier. The uniformed guards are across the way with billy-clubs and mace just in case something starts. You can't remember their names, but it really doesn't matter because everyone calls them "officer" or "sir". You've learned to follow their commands, just do your time. You can't help but remember the judge telling you how tired the public is of your criminal activity. Could adult prison really be worse? You'll probably find out, since you have a 50/50 chance of ending up there. Suddenly, you wake up! You've had a nightmare, the same one lived everyday by young people in juvenile justice systems around the country.

Now imagine a different experience. Its morning now and time to get up for breakfast, do chores, and get ready for school and the day's rigorous schedule. You step onto the floor of your group's home-like dormitory and move to your personal closet to pick out clothes for the day. There are just 10 other young men in your group. The staff members wear normal clothes and are addressed by their first names. You call a "circle" to get the group's attention so you can talk about your nightmare. The group quickly assembles and is seated in the group's living room to listen and provide support. The nightmare generated some feelings of fear that you suspect are connected to childhood experiences. The group offers time in the daily group meeting that evening, but also assures you they will be there anytime you need to talk. The group is like family and you know the staff care, almost as if you were their own child. It's off to school, where you'll stay with your group while participating in challenging lessons and receiving individualized help. You never realized how intelligent you were. You now plan to go to college after receiving your diploma from the Division of Youth Services.

You reflect for a moment and remember that you're one of the lucky ones – you live in Missouri. The Training School for Boys has closed and you're in the care of the Division of Youth Services after years of innovation. You're in a small treatment center close to your home, have the same service coordinator as your advocate the entire time, your family is attending family therapy, and you're safe. You are hopeful about the future, knowing that you have a 90% chance of being successful. Your group, staff team, family, and a community liaison council full of caring adults are all there to support you. While many states around the country built youth correctional facilities with barbed wire, guards, and isolation cells; Missouri remembered that you were still a child, a work in progress. They were clear about their principles and moved forward with innovative practices that have now been confirmed by research and practice. They kept trying until they found what works.

2. What is the single most important **achievement** of your program or policy initiative to date? **maximum 1 page**

The single most important achievement of Missouri's Division of Youth Services (DYS) is the development of a system and culture that will endure, achieving exemplary results for years to come. The Missouri approach is more than a program model. While structural changes such as small programs close to home, family-like groups, and least restrictive environments have been vehicles for change, the organizational culture has clearly fueled the change. The culture is like a healthy tree that has roots that run deep and wide. You can see it in the faces of young people.

Missouri's innovative leaders did not set out to create one of the best systems in country, but rather, to do the best possible job of helping young people turn their lives around. The core beliefs and philosophies of Missouri's innovation begin with suspending blame and accepting responsibility. Moving beyond blame is a societal struggle which is perhaps most evident in our juvenile justice systems. As long as young people in the system are viewed as criminals or inmates, leaders may knowingly or unknowingly tolerate and accept unsafe conditions, punitive and oppressive approaches, and intolerable failure rates. The public then must accept the costs of incarceration because of perceptions that it keeps them safe; however, virtually everyone in the system comes back out at some point. The very assumptions on which many youth correctional programs are based are counter to research and experience related to the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional development of adolescents. If we view young people in the system as a product of their past experiences, a work in progress, and a potential resource to others, we are compelled to weave together a system that supports personal development and change, and to continuously work to make it better.

When visitors come to Missouri DYS facilities they are inevitably surprised by the calm and home-like nature of the programs. Tours are always led by the young people themselves, who are friendly, knowledgeable, and articulate. The punitive culture of the early days has been replaced with an intensely warm and therapeutic one. Residential facilities are homey – with regular furniture, comforters and stuffed animals on beds, and artwork on walls. Many have dogs, cats, or fish tanks, as well as beautiful campuses the young people take pride in helping to maintain. Young people spend their days with a very full schedule of school, vocational training, community service, individual and group counseling, and therapeutic recreational activities. Young people are in the constant presence of caring staff, learning first hand what it means to have healthy relationships with peers and adults. Many view the group as a surrogate family.

Safety is maintained through structure, supervision, relationships, and group process. Smaller humane facilities are further divided into groups of 10-12 young people who do everything together – daily chores, school, activities, and group sessions. When a conflict or concern arises, a group circle is called by a group member or staff. Everyone stops what they are doing to share observations, feelings, discuss alternatives, and help each other achieve their goals. Front-line Youth Specialists and Group Leaders provide treatment 24 hours a day/7 days a week, working as a team to support success. As this occurs a powerful culture and system is activated on behalf of young people and families, making Missouri communities safer in the process.

3. What are the three most important **measures** you use to evaluate your program's success? In qualitative or quantitative terms for each measure, please provide the **outcomes** of the last full year of program operation and, if possible, at least one prior year. **maximum 1 page**

Evaluating the success of the Division of Youth Services (DYS) involves first and foremost measuring the Division's ability to transition youth into their home communities as law abiding citizens. In 2007, Missouri's recommitment rate (new juvenile offenses) was 7.3%. Long-term recidivism into the adult system (incarceration within 3 years) was 8.6% for youth discharged in 2003. In 2006, the DHS recommitment rate was 8.6%, and the 2002 long-term adult recidivism rate was 7.2%. When compared to states that count recidivism in similar ways, Missouri's rates are exceptional with Florida (29%), Maryland (30%), and Louisiana (45%) all significantly exceeding Missouri's recommitments and long-term recidivism rates combined (Mendel, 2003).

Secondly, the Division must be able to achieve its primary goal of providing a safe and humane environment for the youth it serves, its employees, and the communities within which it operates. It is the responsibility of the agency to provide a healthy, therapeutic, and nonjudgmental environment within which resistance to change is normalized and genuine change takes place. If a youth's primary need for safety is not being met, he or she will not be comfortable with self-disclosure and personal growth. According to the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives, there were 110 suicides in our nation's juvenile facilities between 1995 and 1999. In Missouri there have been none in the twenty-five years since the State Training School for Boys closed. Substantiated allegations of abuse are very rare, with only three in the past 3 years.

Critical incidents, in which young people are assaulted, isolated, or damage facilities occur much less frequently than in other systems. For example, in 2005 Ohio received 1,884 commitments, compared to 1,205 in Missouri; however, Ohio DHS had 1,192 physical assaults, 41 sexual assaults, used isolation 6,820 times, and had 132 incidents of facility damage. Missouri had 263 physical assaults, 2 sexual assaults, used isolation 12 times, and had 6 incidents of facility damage (Korenstein, 2006). The propensity for violence is substantially diminished by a therapeutic approach.

Finally, the Division must measure our ability to prepare young people to become productive and contributing citizens. Even though approximately 32% of the youth served by the Division have diagnosed educational disabilities, 70% of the students begin closing the achievement gap by learning at a rate faster than their same age peers. In 2007, graduations and GED success rates reached all time highs for young people in the custody of the DHS with 270 students completing their secondary education, including 23.28 percent of all discharges over age 16. Young people actively engaged in school or work is an indicator of successful reintegration. In 2007, 84.2% were "productively involved" at the time of their discharge, meaning they were actively attending school (secondary or college) and/or actively employed. This represented an increase from 83.2% in 2006. The DHS work experience program has been vital; however, local community liaison councils provide service learning opportunities and educational enrichment activities that have been even more important. In addition, local not-for-profit and faith-based groups partner with DHS to involve young in local crime prevention activities or charitable activities such as victim's rights ceremonies, community theatre, Special Olympics, food pantries, and fundraisers. This positions young people in a positive role within the community prior their return.

4. Please describe the **target population** served by your program or policy initiative. How does the program or policy initiative **identify** and **select** its clients or consumers? How many **clients** does your program or policy initiative currently serve? What percentage of the **potential clientele** does this represent? **maximum 1 page**

The Division of Youth Services (DYS) is the state agency charged with the care and treatment of delinquent youth committed to its custody by Missouri's 45 juvenile and family courts circuits. In some cases, at the request of the circuit court, DYS may provide or supplement juvenile court services for young people who have not been committed to the Division of Youth Services and who remain in the community under the supervision of the juvenile court.

During FY 2006, there were 1,214 commitments to the Division of Youth Services. The average age of committed youth was 15.1 years, and they had an average of 9.0 years of schooling at the time of commitment. Over half came from single parent homes and 83.2% are male offenders. Almost 10% of the young people were committed for the most very serious A & B felonies, 42% for other felonies, 38% for misdemeanors and other non-felonies, and 10% for juvenile offenses. The crimes range from very serious crimes against persons such as assaults, forcible robberies, and sex offenses; to drug abuse and crimes against property such as auto theft, burglary, and vandalism; to age-related offenses such as truancy and incorrigibility. Prior mental health services had been provided to 46.1% of the committed youth, and nearly 32% had a diagnosed educational disability prior to commitment.

According to the Missouri Uniform Crime Reporting Program, published by the Missouri State Highway Patrol, in 2005 there were 34,393 juvenile arrests of persons under age 17 for law violations. Of those offenses, 8,840 were identified as Part I Crimes (or crimes selected by the FBI as national crime indicators). The Division of Youth Services considers the juvenile justice system to be working more efficiently and effectively when fewer youth are committed to its care. When law violating youth are successfully served and rehabilitated at the local level, while protecting the safety of Missouri citizens, there is less family disruption and cost for Missourians. Those committed to DYS are among the most serious and chronic offenders in the state who have not been successful in other programs.

Although courts have the option of determinate sentencing a young person to a specific length of time in DYS custody, most youth are committed for an indeterminate sentence. This is largely driven by the credibility of DYS with courts and understanding the importance of ensuring that rehabilitation occurs. Treatment planning is essential to the identification and delivery of services for youth while they are with the DYS. Approximately 88% spend at least some time in our residential care programs before being released to aftercare in the community. Every attempt is made to individualize the treatment program based on the strengths and needs of the young person and their family. The young people that are placed in residential treatment facilities work at an individual pace and are not released until they are assessed as ready to be successful in the community. When they face transitional challenges, they may also be returned to residential care as a preventative intervention. Young people complete aftercare once their service coordinator and family are convinced that they are law-abiding and productive (e.g. attending secondary school, college, working); however, they may be recommitted by the courts if they are involved in new juvenile offenses.

5. What would you characterize as the program's most significant remaining **shortcoming**? **maximum 1 page**

The most significant shortcoming of the Division of Youth Services (DYS) relates the need to strengthen local systems and early intervention so that fewer young people are committed to the care and custody of the Division. The technical assistance role of DHS with communities needs to be strengthened.

From the mid to late 1990's DHS experienced significant increases in commitments, sometimes as much as 5 – 7% per year. In response, DHS expanded its Juvenile Court Diversion grant-in-aid program which began in the 1970's to encourage Juvenile Courts to develop services at the local level, while diverting at-risk youth from being committed to the Division of Youth Services. DHS also provided training to court staff and offered some services such as family therapy to young people prior to commitment. These efforts succeeded in stemming the growth in commitments, which have remained in a range of 1200 to 1300 annually for several years.

DHS currently spends approximately \$4.2 million for Juvenile Court Diversion Programs. Through this funding, the local courts are able to improve local programming for juvenile offenders and keep their communities safe. Through early intervention, many youth are diverted from further advancement or progressive contact with the juvenile justice system. This program needs to be strengthened to ensure a broader community planning process that addresses the root causes of delinquency by engaging additional partners including families, schools, faith-based groups, and neighborhood and community-based organizations. DHS needs to build its capacity to act as a change agent in communities, as well as within state government.

DHS is modeling the high level of collaboration it hopes to see adopted throughout the juvenile justice system and has generated increased interest from state agencies in partnering to enhance services to young people committed to and at risk of being committed to the Division. The Department of Mental Health and DHS are currently exploring means of joining efforts to better serve delinquent youth with serious emotional and mental health conditions. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education continues to provide technical assistance and support to improve academic and vocational programming. DHS works actively with the Department of Public Safety to strengthen early intervention and prevention programs and to enhance the system overall. DHS has maintained a very productive long-standing relationship with the court system, but will have to continue to expand its array of partnerships and strategies in order to both treat and reduce juvenile crime in Missouri.

6. When and how was the program or policy initiative originally **conceived** in your jurisdiction? What individuals or groups are considered the primary **initiators** of your program? Please substantiate the claim that one or more government institutions played a formative role in the program's development. **maximum 1 page**

Missouri was no exception to the problems that still plague many juvenile justice systems around the country. In 1938 the Missouri Reform School for Boys at Boonville, which held as many as 650 youth at a time, was labeled one of the worst juvenile correctional institutions in the nation. In 1969 a federal report condemned Boonville as severely substandard in its efforts to rehabilitate and educate youth. In the 1970s, Missouri officials began to mandate fundamental reform, emphasizing rehabilitation over punishment. A shift in philosophy brought with it development of smaller facilities and commitment to placing kids as close as possible to their families. Young people were gradually transferred to smaller regional facilities and by 1983 both of Missouri's training schools were closed. The reformation movement was clearly motivated by discontent with the system; and the shift to smaller facilities in itself did not create the culture change and practices observed today. This simply created the opportunity for the innovation that followed.

Missouri's transformation was guided by innovative directors and administrators at both the state and regional level. Those initiating and shaping the innovation are far too numerous to name, but for many DYS has become more than a job; it is a movement and life-style. Throughout the process, the guiding force has been a bi-partisan Advisory Board whose members were judges, former legislators, civic leaders and concerned private citizens representing all regions of the state. The Board holds the system accountable, vitalizes it with new thinking, and partners with leadership to solve problems. To this day, it is a crucial part of Missouri's ongoing evolution and sustainability. The support of the Advisory Board provides the protection and support that fosters the courage it takes to continue the culture of innovation. As might be expected, Missouri has both attracted and produced innovative leaders, some of which have gone on to create other innovations within social services, mental health, and the private sector.

While the innovation began as a result of discontent with the system by Missouri public officials, the innovation was largely realized through the work of those on the front-lines of the change effort. It is one thing to have a vision, it is quite another for the vision to become reality and be sustained in the public sector. A statewide Planning and Development (PAD) group continues to be the pivotal planning structure that brings together central office, regional administrators, and others to guide the evolution of the system. Through this structure, field experience is brought together with public policy knowledge to ensure that the innovation continues to evolve. Community Liaison Councils that were developed in the early 1990's have deepened the commitment and given an expanded community voice to the change effort. Continued legislative support is now maintained as much from legislator's local experience with DYS programs and councils as it is with their statewide role.

Although there have been changes in leadership and shifts in power, the vision and direction of the Division of Youth Services has been refined and perfected – but never redirected.

7. Please identify the key **milestones** in program or policy development and implementation and when they occurred (e.g., pilot program authorization enacted by state legislature in June 2004; pilot program accepted first clients, September 2004; expanded program approved by legislature in July 2005). How has the implementation strategy of your program or policy initiative **evolved** over time? **maximum 1 page**

1970's – Systematic agency planning for de-emphasis of large rural institutions and establishment of smaller treatment facilities. Aftercare services expanded.

1971 – DYS Advisory Board reappointed, replacing the Board of Training Schools.

1972 – First Group Homes established. DYS ventures into the community.

1974 – The Omnibus Reorganization Act established DYS within the Missouri Department of Social Services. Age ranges were changed to 12 through 17.

1975 – Scope of responsibility broadened to include prevention services, comprehensive training programs, consultation, and technical assistance to local communities, and a statewide data information system. DYS Advisory Board expanded to 15 members.

1975 – Initial stages of re-organization defined in DYS Five Year Plan. The plan called for the closing of the training schools, expansion of community-based services, delinquency prevention programs, staff development and training, improved quality of programs, better education for youth, and effective research and evaluation. The Department of Elementary Education authorized to set educational standards for DYS. All schools within DYS become accredited.

1980's – Expansion of the regional continuum of treatment, regions work to apply beliefs and philosophies to actual practices. Regional treatment facilities continue to absorb youth and decrease the size of the Training Schools.

1980 – Juvenile Court Diversion program established to divert youth from DYS.

1981 – Family Therapy initiated as part of the spectrum of care.

1981 – Training School for Girls closed.

1983 – Training School for Boys closed.

1986 – Division of Youth Services' educational programs entitled to state aid, providing greater legitimacy to the educational services provided. Local school districts, pay toward the per pupil cost of educational services based on the average sum produced per child by the local tax effort.

1987 – Blue Ribbon Commission recommendations result in greater appropriations for DYS.

1990 & 1991 – Day treatment and intensive case management services begin. Northwest and St. Louis Regions develop and implement expansion training to strengthen treatment practices.

1992 – Community Liaison Councils developed to link facilities to the local community.

1995 – Juvenile Crime Bill included provisions for determinate sentencing to custody, granted DYS the ability to petition for increased stay up to age 21, removed the lower age limit for commitment and provided for the development of dual jurisdiction. As a result of the Crime Bill and the Fourth State Building Bond Issue, a number of new facilities for DYS were authorized.

1997 – Department of Elementary and Secondary Education authorized DYS to graduate high school students who meet all the graduation requirements of the state of Missouri.

1999 – Expansion of residential capacity by 200 beds through new regionally-based facilities.

2003 - National recognition of Missouri's DYS grows, frequent site visits from other states.

2005 – DYS develops and implements Advanced Group Facilitator Certification process.

2007 – High Performance Transformational Coaching is adopted to strengthen teams, develop leaders, and ensure long-term sustainability of the DYS culture and approach.

8. Please describe the most significant **obstacle(s)** encountered thus far by your program. How have they been dealt with? Which ones remain? **maximum ½ page**

The culture change from what was once described as “punitive institutions using a penal-militaristic approach” was probably the greatest challenge for innovative leaders within the Division of Youth Services (DYS). Moving away from punitive approaches was initially perceived as “less control” and “very risky”. Early results were marginal at best, but leaders persisted with the additional modifications and innovations necessary for the new approach to take hold and thrive. Beliefs and philosophies statements such as “people desire to do well and succeed; all behavior has a purpose; we are all special and unique; people always do the best they can with their available resources; families matter; and we are all naturally resistant to change” served as principles that guided every action and decision. Extensive training programs were developed, teaching the new philosophy and approach. On the job coaching helped many successfully make the transition, while others could not and were eventually replaced. Even to this day substantial training, team development, and quality assurance is necessary to maintain program fidelity and prevent drift. The approach is so counter to our societal tendencies to blame and punish. DYS is always “swimming upstream” to some degree. An additional challenge has been navigating policy swings in the state and country, such as the “super-predator” perceptions of the adolescents in the mid-1990s that led to new youth prisons being built nationwide. Due to extensive work by our innovative leaders, Missouri’s 1995 Juvenile Crime Bill left the Missouri approach virtually intact, with additional resources and a dual jurisdiction program as an alternative to adult incarceration.

9. If your innovation is an adaptation or replication of another innovation, please identify the program or policy initiative and jurisdiction originating the innovation. In what ways has your program or policy initiative adapted or improved on the original innovation? **maximum ½ page**

The Missouri approach to juvenile justice represented a generation of innovation that was much more an evolution than it was a revolution. Our philosophy is simple – “if you’re not growing, your dying; if you’re not moving forward, you’re falling back”. Leaders throughout the system searched for practices that could strengthen our approach and results, always mindful of consistency with our beliefs and philosophies and the importance of weaving them into a holistic system. Our cycle of innovation is a very dynamic process that typically involves the innovation being identified at the state or regional level, implementation and stabilization, and expansion to other regions or within our entire system. We’ve pulled promising practices from every possible resource (e.g. books, workshops, experiences, and other states) and integrated into our existing approach. For example, as our residential programs began more fully reflecting our beliefs, philosophies, and treatment approach we began looking at the system in Massachusetts for community care options and case management; and to Kentucky for day treatment. When other states visit, we suggest they think of Missouri as an approach, not a model. We encourage other visiting states to assess how the principles and approach may be adapted to their specific situation. There are variances in systems, structures, and political climates that must be taken into account. Visits have been very beneficial for the Missouri system as well. Young people, staff, and leaders are uplifted by the response of visitors and are reinvigorated by the exchange of ideas.

10. What other **individuals** or **organizations** have been the most significant in (a) program development and (b) on-going implementation and operation? What **roles** have they played? What individuals or organizations are the strongest **supporters** of the program or policy initiative and why? What individuals or organizations are the strongest **critics** of the program or policy initiative and why? What is the nature of their criticism? **maximum 1 page**

The roots of change within the Division of Youth Services (DYS) might be credited to responses of Missouri's leaders about the conditions of juvenile justice in Missouri. What is truly remarkable is the extent and duration of support from all branches of government – executive, legislative, and judicial. Governors have resoundingly supported the system and sought to advance its causes. The system being organized under the Department of Social Services has allowed it to remain focused on treatment and rehabilitation; and the state's educational leaders have continued to support and strengthen DYS education services. The state legislature has provided funding for new facilities, sufficient staffing, and additional programs such as day treatment and family therapy; all the while keeping a watchful eye on the state's juvenile code to ensure it supported rehabilitative approaches. The court system, including judges and juvenile officers around the state, have worked as partners with DYS regarding diversion programs and commitment practices that benefit young people, never forgetting that these are all our children.

DYS maintains a relatively small central office, with most resources concentrated on the front lines. Each of Missouri's five DYS regions has a regional administrator and regional structure. While all regions were engaged in the development of a local continuum of care, implementation of the beliefs and philosophies varied. The decade of the 1980's was largely focused on applying and refining the new approach to achieve some degree of consistency. Along the way, regions retained flexibility to develop new innovations that maximized their strengths and improved results. While one region pioneered educational strategies, another explored transformative therapeutic approaches and level systems, another art and drama programming, and another emphasized adventure-based counseling. The key parameters used to measure all innovations were adherence to the beliefs and philosophies and the results achieved. As residential approaches were refined and solidified, the early 1990's brought innovations in case management, day treatment, family engagement, and community liaison councils. The late 1990's brought the expansion of residential bed spaces and a new dual jurisdiction option as an alternative to adult incarceration, as well as increased emphasis on juvenile court diversion. Recent years have necessitated managing time and attention to balance external requests with maintaining a strong foundation and perpetuating the culture of innovation within the system.

The Missouri approach does have its critics and skeptics. Some visitors wonder aloud where Missouri holds its "serious" offenders; seeing Missouri's young people as somehow different. Others argue that justice should deliver an appropriate degree of punishment, thus the approach is too soft on juvenile offenders and the conditions of confinement are too cozy because of the home-like furniture and dormitory-style sleeping areas. The concern is these conditions may not present a deterrent to juvenile offenders. DYS leaders maintain a genuine concern for public safety and empathy for victims, but also an understanding that what the public really wants is for youthful offenders to change their behavior and become law abiding and contributing citizens.

11. If your program or policy initiative has been formally **evaluated** or **audited** by an **independent organization** or group, please provide the name, address, and telephone number of a contact person from whom the materials are available. Please summarize the principal findings of the independent evaluator(s) and/or auditor(s). If your program has been the **subject** of an article, book, or other publication (including web-based) produced by an **independent organization** or group, please provide a complete citation. **maximum 1 page**

2002 – DYS becomes fully accredited school district. It was re-accredited in 2007. It is unusual for a state agency, such as DYS, to be accredited by the state's lead educational agency (DESE). Most juvenile justice agencies obtain “certification” through entities such as the North Central Association or the Correctional Education Association -- or they remain unaccredited.

2003 – Abrams, Douglas E., *A Very Special Place in Life: The History of Juvenile Justice in Missouri*, Missouri Juvenile Justice Association, 2003. Abrams’ book traces the growth of Missouri’s juvenile courts and examines the Division of Youth Services and Missouri’s new approach to delinquency which has won national acclaim as “a guiding light for reform.”

2003 - Study conducted by Dick Mendel, featured in *ADVOCASEY* magazine identified Missouri's cost and recidivism rates as among the best in the country. Mendel spent a period of time living at a DYS facility, auditing day-to-day operations. See "Small is Beautiful- The Missouri Division of Youth Services" and "Show & Tell: Missouri's Division of Youth Services acts as a national model." *Corrections Today*, February, 2004.

2003 to Present - DYS hosts visits with officials from over 25 states attempting to launch reform efforts based in part on Missouri's approach. Most visits involve extensive 2 – 3 day emersions into DYS programs, led by the young people served by the program.

2004 to 2006 – Osborne, Cynthia, *Frontline Practice in Juvenile Corrections: Lessons from Missouri*. On behalf of the Missouri Project Team at the Casey Strategic Planning Group, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Ms. Osborne traveled the State of Missouri observing programs and interviewing staff, young people, and partners for a publication of a practice guidebook.

2005 - Charton, Scott. Missouri Juvenile Justice Practices Praised, and Copied, as National Model. *Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice*. March 5, 2005.

2006 – Goleman, Daniel, *Social Intelligence, The New Science of Human Relationships*, Chapter 20, pages 285 – 287. The bestselling author of *Emotional Intelligence* features the Missouri Division of Youth Services group treatment process - “Half a dozen times a day the members form into a circle to check in with each other to say how they feel..... They meet for activities that are designed to enhance camaraderie and cooperation, foster empathy and accurate perceptions of each other, and build communication skills and trust. All of that constructs a secure base and provides them with the social abilities they so desperately need.”

2006 - Korenstein, A., A closer look at... the Missouri model. Ohio Department of Youth Services. Report from site visit and follow-up study of Missouri’s DYS system.

12. To what extent do you believe your program or policy initiative is potentially **replicable** within other jurisdictions and why? To your knowledge, have any other jurisdictions or organizations established programs or implemented policies modeled specifically on your own? **maximum 1 page**

The Missouri Department of Social Services' Division of Youth Services (DYS) was very adeptly described as a "guiding light for reform in juvenile justice" by the American Youth Policy Forum. Delegations from over 25 states have visited DYS programs in search for answers to their most perplexing issues, usually having to do with conditions of confinement or unacceptable outcomes of their system. Juvenile justice systems are caught in the cross-hairs of what has become one of society's most perplexing problems – juvenile crime. Adolescents are developmentally immature and lack the capacity to make adult decisions, yet they may display behavior ranging from challenging to very adult-like criminal behavior. This is even more pronounced for young people growing up in fractured families, unsafe communities, and without sufficient supportive relationships and opportunities. Public officials struggle with achieving appropriate balance between prevention, treatment, and public safety. The predominant approach inevitably gravitates to punitive and correctional approaches that very closely resemble the adult prison system and often lead to intolerable conditions and abuse. The public ends up less safe because without treatment young people become "hardened" and continue their criminal lifestyle well into their adult years at a significant future cost to society. The common experience of visitors to DYS is to be both inspired and overwhelmed by what they observe. They doubt it at first. After talking to the young people, they become believers, but often can't imagine how to change the status quo in their systems. Missouri's innovation was systemic and methodical. Through the change process, Missouri experienced resistance and difficulty – but with perseverance and a steadfast belief in its vision, a more humane and effective treatment system was realized.

As the movement to improve conditions and results in the juvenile justice system gains momentum, states are increasingly looking to Missouri for ideas and assistance. Missouri officials host visits, field phone calls, and share ideas with colleagues around the country. Juvenile justice experts have increasingly recognized that the Missouri experience may offer important lessons for those seeking more humane systems and better results. The Annie E. Casey Foundation is publishing a resource book and training video to teach the Missouri approach to other states and jurisdictions. They have supported the establishment of the Missouri Youth Services Institute (MYSI). MYSI is a not-for-profit organization, in operation for almost two years, focused on reform and transformation of the Juvenile Justice System nationwide. MYSI has already provided customized consultation to two state juvenile justice systems (Louisiana, New Mexico), a county system (Santa Clara, CA) and the District of Columbia.

Given that public perceptions of juvenile justice are pivotal in creating and sustaining innovation and change, Missouri's DYS is also assisting a group led by Actor and Director Bill Cosby, who plans to serve as Executive Producer of a full-length documentary for network television telling the stories of young people transformed by Missouri's approach. Building "public will" for change and innovation will provide a clearer pathway for states engaged in reform efforts.

13. What is the program's current operating budget? What are the program's funding sources (e.g., local, state, federal, private)? What percentage of annual income is derived from each? Please provide any other pertinent budget information. **maximum 1 page**

Results achieved by the Division of Youth Services (DYS) over the years led Missouri public officials to sustain their commitment of resources to the agency, even as state revenue fluctuated. The outstanding success rate avoids the high costs of recidivism experienced by other states, leading DYS to be a very efficient and effective steward of state resources. A break-down of the FY 2008 budget for DYS is as follows:

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES **\$2,175,413**

Provides funding for Central Office and five regional offices located across the state. Personnel in this appropriation are responsible for the overall administration of services and programs.

YOUTH TREATMENT PROGRAM **\$55,324,739**

Provides funding for all treatment related services. Youth Treatment Program components include case management, non-residential care, and residential care. The personnel costs, training, and expense and equipment for the day-to-day operation of all residential facilities and day treatment programs are included.

JUVENILE COURT DIVERSION **\$4,267,880**

Provides funding to juvenile courts to be used for local juvenile programs that divert youth from commitment to the Division of Youth Services (DYS).

TOTAL BUDGET – FISCAL YEAR 2008 **\$61,768,032**

REVENUE SOURCES

Revenue supporting the DYS budget comes from State General Revenue (77%) and Federal Funds (23%). Federal funding comes from the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant. In addition, MO HealthNet, Missouri's Medicaid program, provides medical coverage for all young people while they reside in DYS residential care programs.

14. Has the program or policy initiative received any **awards** or other honors? Yes X . No _____.
If yes, please list and describe the awards or honors and the sponsoring organizations. **maximum 1 page**

1994 - National Council on Crime and Delinquency recognizes Missouri's national leadership for Excellence in Adolescent Care.

2001 - American Youth Policy Forum identifies Missouri as a "guiding light for reform", finding treatment and least restrictive care as far more successful than incarceration-oriented programs.

See "Less Cost, More Safety: Guiding Lights for Reform in Juvenile Justice" at www.aypf.org/publications/lesscost/pages/full.pdf

2003 - Study conducted by Dick Mendel, featured in ADVOCASEY magazine identified Missouri's cost and recidivism rates as among the best in the country.

See "Small is Beautiful- The Missouri Division of Youth Services" at www.aecf.org/upload/PublicationFiles/juvenile0/~20justice0/~20at0/~20crossroads.pdf

2003 - Named as a model juvenile justice site by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and the National Council on Crime and Delinquency.

15. Has the program received any press or other media coverage to date? Yes X No _____.
If yes, please list the sources and briefly describe relevant coverage. **maximum 1 page**

Following is a bibliography of the more recent media coverage received by the Missouri Department of Social Services' Division of Youth Services listed in descending order, beginning with the most recent coverage.

Lewan, Todd. Mo. Tries New Approach on Teen Offenders. Kansas City Star. December 29, 2007. This was a national AP story published in newspapers throughout the world.

Ramshaw, Emily. Missouri's Focus on Therapeutic Rehabilitation Amounts to 'unprisonment'. The Dallas Morning News. December 15, 2007.

Gallacher, Andy. New Approach to Treating Young Offenders, BBC-Americas and BBC Worldwide, December 10, 2007.

Lewan, Todd. States Rethinking Trying Youth as Adults. National AP Video Story, December 2, 2007.

Beaubien, Jason. Missouri Sees Teen Offenders as Kids, Not Inmates. National Public Radio, All Things Considered. November 8, 2007. (First of a two part series. Part 2: Crisis Prone Texas Juvenile Facilities Look to Reform)

The Right Model for Juvenile Justice. Editorial. The New York Times. October 28, 2007. (Third of a three part story. Part 1: Ohio's Tack: 'Punish and Warehouse'. Part 2: Model Inmate, a Less than Model 'House'.)

Garcia, Malcom. A Veteran of Trouble Offers Advice, Solace. The Kansas City Star. July 23, 2007.

Virary, Jeremy. Educating Juvenile Offenders. KRCG 13, Columbia, Mo. July 11, 2007.

Missouri Division of Youth Services Sponsors National Crime Victims Rights Week Memorial Walk. Press Release. Kansas City Star. April 26, 2007.

Dissell, Rachel. Missouri's Plan: Treat Troubled Youths. The Plain Dealer. Cleveland, Ohio. January 21, 2007.

Edelman, Marian Wright. Missouri Division of Youth Services: A Model for the Nation. Progressive Resources Catalog, December 28, 2005.

Krueger, Joline Gutierrez. Show us, Missouri!: New Mexico's treatment program borrows from a model of reform success. The Albuquerque Tribune. December 9, 2006

The New York Times

ARTHUR OCHS SULZBERGER JR., *Publisher*

Founded in 1851

ADOLPH S. OCHS
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ARTHUR HAYS SULZBERGER
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MICHAEL ORESKES, *Editor, International Herald Tribune*

The Right Model for Juvenile Justice

With the prisons filled to bursting, state governments are desperate for ways to keep more people from committing crimes and ending up behind bars. Part of the problem lies in the juvenile justice system, which is doing a frighteningly effective job of turning nonviolent childhood offenders into mature, hardened criminals. States that want to change that are increasingly looking to Missouri, which has turned its juvenile justice system into a nationally recognized model of how to deal effectively with troubled children.

The country as a whole went terribly wrong in this area during the 1990s, when high-profile crimes prompted dire predictions of teenage "superpredators" taking over the streets. The monsters never materialized. In fact, juvenile crime declined. But by the close of the decade, four-fifths of the states had made a regular practice of housing children, even those who committed nonviolent crimes, in adult jails. Studies now show that those children were considerably more likely to become serious criminals — and to commit violence — than children handled through the juvenile justice system.

But all juvenile justice systems are not created equal. Most children taken into custody are committed to large, unruly and often dangerous "kiddie prisons" that very much resemble adult prisons. The depravity

and brutality that characterizes these places were underscored in Texas, where allegations of sexual abuse by workers prompted wholesale firings and a reorganization of the state's juvenile justice agency.

Missouri has abandoned mass kiddie prisons in favor of small community-based centers that stress therapy, not punishment. When possible, young people are kept near their homes so their parents can participate in rehabilitation that includes extensive family therapy. It is the first stable, caring environment many of these young people have ever known. Case managers typically handle 15 to 20 children. In other state systems, the case-loads can get much higher.

The oversight does not end with the young person's release. The case managers follow their charges closely for many months and often help with job placement, therapy referrals, school issues and drug or alcohol treatment. After completing the program, officials say, only about 10 percent of their detainees are recommitted to the system by the juvenile courts.

A law-and-order state, Missouri was working against its own nature when it embarked on this project about 25 years ago. But with favorable data piling up and thousands of young lives saved, the state is now showing the way out of the juvenile justice crisis.



November 8, 2007

Nation

Missouri Sees Teen Offenders as Kids, Not Inmates

by Jason Beaubien

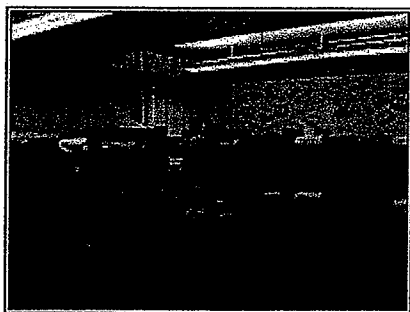
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This is the first in a two-part series.



Jason Beaubien, NPR

Missouri attempts to create a home-like environment for youth in its juvenile facilities. The lobby at the Northwest Regional Youth Center includes a piano and drum set.



Jason Beaubien, NPR

At the Northwest Regional Youth Center boys are grouped into teams and share living quarters together.

Coming up in the Series

Tomorrow, Jason Beaubien explores juvenile facilities in Texas, where the recidivism rate tops 50 percent.

All Things Considered, October 30, 2007 · At the Northwest Regional Youth Center in Kansas City, Mo., a science class is under way with students eagerly discussing botany and roots.

The scene resembles a science classroom at any urban public high school except for the thick screens on the windows.

A tall chain-link fence surrounds the building, but inside there are few signs that these 10 teenagers are confined. They wear regular clothes and the teachers and staff are dressed casually.

The Northwest Regional Youth Center is where Missouri sends some of its most troubled — and troublesome — juvenile offenders. Street thugs from St. Louis mix with gang members from Kansas City and pint-sized, rural car thieves, yet there's a sense of calmness. It's part of Missouri's treatment-oriented approach toward juveniles where lockups are designed to resemble college dorms and offenders are treated firmly, seriously and humanely.

Offenders as Citizens

Tim Decker who runs the Missouri Division of Youth Services, says the goal is for young offenders to turn their lives around and not return. The way to make their criminal behavior stop, he says, is to help them get their lives on track. The result of Missouri's focus on rehabilitation is a 7.3 percent recidivism rate.

"Our first and primary function is public safety. We have young people who've become a problem in our community and that needs to stop," Decker says.

The Northwest Regional Youth Center is an old elementary school that houses 30 teenagers in three "teams" of 10. Each boy spends most of his day with nine other boys. They go to class in the same classroom, play basketball together, bunk in the same room and eat together. In the evening, they attend group therapy and counseling sessions as a group.

Barry Krisberg, president of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, praises Missouri's approach and says states with troubled juvenile corrections systems could learn from its system.



Jason Beaubien, NPR

Bunk beds in a boys dorm at the Evins Regional Juvenile Center in Edinburg, Texas.

"The basic logic of youth corrections is that if you treat young people like inmates, they'll act like prisoners," Krisberg says. "If you treat them like young people capable of being citizens, they'll much more likely act like citizens."

An Innovative Approach

Reggie, 16, came to the center five months ago, but he's been in juvenile detention facilities almost continuously since he was 13. His room, with a dozen bunk beds lining the wall, is festively decorated for Halloween with cardboard cutouts of black bats and orange pumpkins on the walls. He says the worst thing about being at the center is not seeing his family.

"That hurt me more than anything, just knowing that I can't just pick up the phone, call my family — know what they're up to," Reggie says. "I just can't go to the next room and expect my momma to be there or see my sister. Or go downstairs. I can't do any of that."

Reggie says he started stealing cars with his older brother when he was only 9 years old. One of eight children, Reggie was raised by a single mother who often shuttled the family between homeless shelters. He says therapy has made him think about how his chaotic childhood affected his life.

"I didn't have a lot of things that other kids had. I couldn't read, write or spell. I was class clown. That's what led up to me doing crime," Reggie says. "I'm not going to put everything off on that because it's got a lot to do with me making the right decisions, but it also has a lot to do with how I was brought up."

Reggie says he's been treated differently at the center. When he was first arrested, he couldn't read or write. Now Reggie is working toward his GED. Therapy has allowed him to let down his street-tough facade and talk about being angry and hurt. He says he hopes eventually to go to college and become a police officer.

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Monday, Dec 31, 2007

Posted on Sat, Dec. 29, 2007

Mo. tries new approach on teen offenders

By TODD LEWAN
AP National Writer

At age 9, Korey Davis came home from school with gang writing on his arm. At 10, he jacked his first car. At 13, he and some buddies got guns, used them to relieve a man of his Jeep, and later, while trying to outrun a police helicopter, smacked their hot wheels into a fire hydrant.

For his exploits, the tough-talking teen pulled not only a 15-year sentence (the police subsequently connected him to three previous car thefts) but got "certified" as an adult offender and shipped off to the St. Louis City workhouse to inspire a change of heart.

It didn't have the desired effect.

"I wasn't wanting to listen to nobody. If you wasn't my momma, or anybody in my family, I wasn't gonna listen to you, period," says Korey, now 19. "I was very rebellious."

At that stage, most states would have written Korey off and begun shuttling him from one adult prison to the next, where he likely would have sat in sterile cells, joined a gang, and spent his days and nights plotting his next crime.

But this is Missouri, a place where teen offenders are viewed not just as inmates but as works in progress - where troubled kids are rehabilitated in small, homelike settings that stress group therapy and personal development over isolation and punishment.

With prisons around the country filled to bursting, and with states desperate for ways to bring down recidivism rates that rise to 70 and 80 percent, some policymakers are taking a fresh look at treatment-oriented approaches like Missouri's as a way out of America's juvenile justice crisis.

Here, large, prison-style "gladiator schools" have been abandoned in favor of 42 community-based centers spread around the state so that now, even parents of inner-city offenders can easily visit their children and participate in family therapy.

The ratio of staff to kids is low: one-to-five. Wards, referred to as "clients," are grouped in teams of 10, not unlike a scout troop. Barring outbursts, they're rarely separated: They go to classes together, play basketball together, eat together, and bunk in communal "cottages." Evenings, they attend therapy and counseling sessions as a group.

Missouri doesn't set timetables for release; children stay until they demonstrate a fundamental shift in character - a policy that detainees say gives kids an added incentive to take the program seriously.

Those who are let out don't go unwatched: College students or other volunteers who live in the released youths' community track these youths for three years, helping with job placement, therapy referrals, school issues and drug or alcohol treatment.

The results?

-About 8.6 percent of teens who complete Missouri's program are incarcerated in adult prisons within three years of release, according to 2006 figures. (In New York, 75 percent are re-arrested as adults, 42 percent for a violent felony. California's rates are similar.)

-Last year, 7.3 percent of teen offenders released from Missouri's youth facilities were recommitted to juvenile centers for new offenses. Texas, which spends about 20 percent more to keep a child in juvenile corrections, has a recidivism rate that tops 50 percent.

-No Missouri teens have committed suicide while in custody since 1983, when the state began overhauling its system. From 1995 to 1999 alone, at least 110 young people killed themselves in juvenile facilities nationwide, according to figures from the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives.

Does this "law-and-order" state know something others don't?

Hardly, says Mark Steward, who, as director of the state's Division of Youth Services from 1987 to 2005, oversaw the development of what many experts regard as the best juvenile rehabilitation system in America.

"This isn't rocket science," Steward says. "It's about giving young people structure, and love and attention, and not allowing them to hurt themselves or other people. Pretty basic stuff, really. It's just that a lot of these kids haven't gotten the basic stuff."

Take Korey Davis. He didn't meet his dad until he was 5. He and his siblings were raised largely by aunts and uncles. If the judge handling his case had left him in county detention centers until he reached adult age - 17, in Missouri - then had him serve the rest of his sentence in prison, few eyebrows would have been raised.

But a chance to save a life would have been missed. "In jail, I wouldn't never have changed what I always done," Davis says. "There was no treatment at all." He contemplates this for a second, and adds with a near-whisper: "Right now, I'd probably be dead."

In Missouri, judges can keep serious felons in the juvenile system until they are 21. That's what happened with Davis. At 15, he was sent to the Montgomery City Project, where robbers, rapists and the like get one last shot.

At first, he didn't want it.

But a year into his stay, two things knocked him back on his heels: the news that his younger brother had been shot and wounded in a gang fight, and an invitation from a counselor to sit down, after class, to read a book out loud with her.

To a boy accustomed to hiding his illiteracy, the offer felt awkward. But because this woman had given him a chance, he responded, and "when I actually learned how to read, it made everything in the world easier for me."

Three years later, Davis is a group leader - and no softy with his peers, either. "We don't let each other get by with slick stuff, just doing the bare minimum," he says. He reads voraciously (recently, "The Bond," about three fatherless teens in Newark, N.J.). He's been accepted by a community technical college, plans to study carpentry. And, he's proud to say, his kid brother has taken to heart this advice:

"Put the guns down."

Many states are trying to bring down high rates of repeat offending by juveniles.

Wisconsin now treats some repeat offenders with mental health counselors in hospitals, instead of corrections officers in jails.

Illinois offers them drug treatment, job placement - or an expedited return to custody.

And Washington state targets kids at risk of becoming its most serious offenders with early, intensive anger-management, drug and family therapy.

Research guided these approaches. One 2006 study, for example, found that anger-management, foster-care treatment and family group therapy cut recidivism drastically among teens, resulting in taxpayer savings up to \$78,000 per child. Programs that tried to scare kids into living a clean life were money losers, according to the study, conducted by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

Missouri employs similar carrot-and-stick techniques. But it takes rehabilitation one step further by normalizing the environments of children in custody, says Barry Krisberg, president of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, a nonprofit based in Oakland, Calif.

"It's a pretty simple concept: The more normal the environment, the more likely these young people will be able to return home and not be sucked into a criminal subculture," he says.

Montgomery City, built for Missouri's worst juvenile offenders, could be mistaken for a college campus.

In a literature class, students analyze plot lines in "Julius Caesar" and "A Farewell to Arms." In a computer lab, they write resumes and peck out cover letters to employers. In a central courtyard, they celebrate "Victim Empathy Week" by huddling in a circle with lit candles, praying silently for those harmed by their crimes.

The cottages where they sleep resemble college dorms, with one notable difference: These are all immaculate.

Ten teens are assigned to a cottage. Each gets a bed with quilt, pillow, nightstand, and an understood "space." In this space are often collected the precious remnants of a truncated childhood: dream catchers, stuffed animals, Dr. Seuss books.

"When you walk into these facilities and see 17- and 18-year-olds with dolls on their pillows, that's when it hits you: 'Hey,

these really are just kids," says Ned Loughran, executive director of the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators.

Some things you won't see in this detention center: razor wire, barred windows, uniformed guards, billyclubs, or kids in orange jumpsuits with broken noses.

"We're all about creating a safe environment for our kids," Larry Strecker, Missouri's northeastern regional administrator, explains.

Here, boys wear - well, what boys wear: jeans, knee-length Bermudas, an occasional earring, T-shirts. Staff members dress almost as casually.

To the teens, many of whom have done long stretches in adult jails awaiting adjudication, the sight and feel of Montgomery City come as a shock.

It was for Josh Stroder, who at 15 was arrested by a SWAT team in 2004 at his home in Dexter, Mo., and charged with 12 crimes, including terrorism. He confessed to improvising a bomb, which took off the front door of an appellate judge's home. No one was hurt by the blast. Police also found a car bomb in his basement.

The youth was detained in a juvenile center for a year, then sat in the Dexter City jail for 5 months before being sent to Montgomery City.

In a 6-by-9 cell, says Stroder, now 18, "there's really nothing to challenge you, nothing to stimulate you. It becomes easy to succumb to apathy, bitterness, or whatever is boiling in your brain."

He contrasts that with Montgomery City: "Here, you are faced with the possibility of reconciliation with so many people, and forgiveness. I was expecting a treatment program, but not so intense - not the way it is here. I expected maybe to crack the surface of the ice, but not go in so deep."

Treatment comes in "group builders" - sessions in which detainees open up to one another about traumas, crimes and family conflicts that have scarred them. Kids can also call a "circle," in which team members stand and face each other to air grievances, fears, anguish.

Two staff specialists, college graduates in counseling, psychology or social work, sit in on the circles, but the kids generally run them. "Adults lived in a different generation - they can only tell us so much," says Korey Davis.

Teams that interact more are rewarded - day furloughs to visit family, fishing trips, bicycle excursions, an afternoon volunteering at a food bank or a soup kitchen. Those who pull against the program - generally, new arrivals - quickly find themselves pressured by their peers to shape up.

"We know that when we do positive things as a group, we earn things," says Chan Meas, 17. Three years ago, he ran with a gang in Columbia, Mo., smoked dope, broke into people's homes. "Now, I look for positive people that care about others."

Montgomery City is no fairyland. It's a "Level 4" facility, meaning high security. It has isolation rooms, and every door locks automatically. Video cameras in walls and ceilings film everything, everywhere, 24-7. Kids need passes to go from one room to the next.

Kids are trained to restrain peers who threaten the team's safety. Only staff may authorize a restraint, but once they do, team members grab arms and legs and pin their peer to the floor until the child stops resisting.

This practice has its critics, such as Loughran, a former commissioner of the Massachusetts state Department of Youth Services, who called it "very, very dangerous."

"The juveniles have learned violence all their lives, and we're going to use them to control other residents? It's a confusion of roles," he says.

But Tim Decker, Missouri's youth services director, says there's never been a serious injury during a restraint, and rates of injury are markedly lower here than in states that rely on billyclubs and mace.

Besides, he says, the restraint policy reinforces the notion that "everyone in the facility takes responsibility for keeping it safe."

A half hour west of Montgomery City, in the university town of Fulton, there is a house that looks just right for a summer camp. It's brick, with a maple tree out front, a wide lawn and a wrought-iron sign that reads, "Welcome Friends."

Inside are comfy sofas, bookcases holding trophies, vases full of flowers, and 11 girls, ranging in age from 12 to 17, who've been convicted of truancy, assault, drug crimes, theft and forgery - bright kids carrying darkness around inside.

This is the Rosa Parks Center, a detention home on the campus of William Woods University. Here, the girls get counseling, schooling, a feeling of togetherness.

"I had a lot of problems being angry," says Brooklyn Schaller, 15, who was arrested on drug charges and for violating a parental curfew. "I would be aggressive. I didn't care about anyone else, or anything else." But after just a year, even she has noticed a change.

"Last weekend I went home for a furlough, and me and Mom got into an argument, and so I left her alone. I let her have her space, and she came back and I listened to everything she had to say and she listened to me. And that was the most amazing thing, to sit down and talk and have someone listen to you."

What's been the difference?

Good role models help: The girls get to mingle with college students in the campus dining hall and attend campus plays and other cultural events. At the start of the school year they describe their experiences to incoming students during orientation week.

But the biggest plus, Schaller says, is that "you have people to talk to here, you have people who truly do care."

Rosa Parks Center opened in 2001, part of Missouri's response to the notion - resurrected about a decade ago - that it might be worthwhile to punish teen offenders by locking them up in adult prisons or in remote, sprawling juvenile prisons.

In the early '90s, a series of high-profile crimes had prompted dire predictions of teen "superpredators." Legislators across the country backed "scare-kids-straight" approaches.

But Missouri was on a different path by then, and stayed with it.

It had tried the traditional approach: From 1887 to 1983, young offenders from truants to attempted murderers were confined either at the Boonville Training School for Boys, or the Chillicothe Training School for Girls.

Boonville warehoused 650 boys, most of them minorities, in grim, two-story brick structures. There was rape and other brutality by guards, and a solitary confinement room atop the facility's administration building known as "The Hole," until judges demanded its closure.

"You had rural, white staff with inner-city kids of color, thrown in together with kids from all across the state who were disconnected from their families and neighborhoods," recalls Steward, the former director of youth services. "It wasn't a terribly successful formula."

Which is why conservatives such as John Ashcroft, the former Missouri senator and U.S. attorney general, and state Supreme Court Justice Stephen Limbaugh, a cousin of radio commentator Rush Limbaugh, joined with liberals such as the late Gov. Mel Carnahan to stick by systemwide reforms initiated in the late 1970s.

"What is remarkable about Missouri's system is that it has been sustained by conservative and liberal governments," says Krisberg, of the national crime and delinquency council. "They've seen that this is not a left-right issue. In many ways, it's a commonsense issue."

A common-cents issue, too - since it costs states between \$100 and \$300 a day to keep a juvenile in so-called "punitive" correctional facilities, according to a 2005 report by the Youth Transition Funders Group, a philanthropy network.

Missouri's per capita cost of its juvenile rehabilitation program is \$130 a day.

"The fact is that most kids from punitive states get out, get re-arrested, and get thrown back into correctional facilities," Krisberg says. "What amazes me is that taxpayers in these punitive states put up with such rates of failure."

Miriam Rollin, vice president at Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a nonprofit in Washington, D.C., with a membership of 3,500 police officials, prosecutors and crime victims, agrees:

"Twenty years ago, people threw up their hands and said, 'We don't know what works.' But now, we actually do know ... We're just not doing it - or not doing enough of it."

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KC School District citizens panel closing in on a vision

By JOE ROBERTSON - The Kansas City Star

Confessions from disappointed board members. Uncomfortable discussions of race and control. All leading to an “extraordinary moment.”

These were signs that the Education Reform Task Force may be finding its direction as it seeks to improve Kansas City schools.

“This conversation ... is exactly what you want to model to your community,” consultant Michael Casserly told the citizens panel at its most recent gathering at the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

For two months, the group of some 20 members had been circling around a mounting collection of statistics, reports and testimonials.

If the group is ever going to guide communitywide solutions, it will have to confront these harder issues, pull together and shape its vision, members agreed.

Here’s how it began to get there.

Confessions: Former Board of Education president David Smith has shared his “own personal disappointment” with some of the frustrations over the past several years and the board’s role in them.

Smith created the community task force after the board’s separation in January from former Superintendent Anthony Amato. The group began meeting in March to try to make productive energy of the outcries from a community whose confidence in its school district had been battered again.

By the end of April, the group was lining up behind a road map for reform: A 212-page evaluation by the Council of the Great City Schools.

It’s an evaluation that the school board requested — and one that was completed two years ago.

The peer review by administrators and teachers from across the country listed volumes of concerns and recommendations. It was touted all along by the board and Amato as the guide to the district’s new strategic plan.

What the task force wanted to know was: Why were so many of the reforms not happening?

Smith shared his regrets. Too often the board was sidetracked, he said. The battle with Independence over the district’s eastern boundary was a major distraction. So was the public feud with the Local Investment Commission over its contract for and before- and after-school programs.

Then came the friction with Amato and his administration, a growing distrust and a lack of confidence in the administration’s capacity to carry out the reforms as it launched a sweeping reorganization of district schools and programs.

“It’s a tremendous amount of work,” Smith said. “And you don’t get to it all.”

Uncomfortable discussions: Former school board member Bill Eddy has talked of “entrenched brokenness.” He shared ideas about causes and remedies that are viewed differently by the predominantly black and predominantly white communities on either side of Troost Avenue.

The group has talked about the pervasive lack of trust throughout the district, the schools and the community.

Eddy said the structure of the board — nine members, six elected from subdistricts — was a key source of problems.

He is recommending changes to replace the board with a three-member appointed panel, or even an appointed chief executive.

The changes are needed, Eddy said, to escape what he called a “culture of cronyism, patronage, political turf battles and a feeling of ownership by some community elements.”

Smith said he did not think the problems were rooted in the board’s structure. The solution rests with “the people.”

“It’s this whole group being involved. (It’s) people watching, saying, ‘How can we help?’ (rather than) watching with indicting finger-pointing.”

Eddy understands, he said in an interview, that his statements rubbed against a racial undercurrent. He is suggesting uprooting the board right after an April election that installed a board that is now majority black. And he has been challenged about that.

“I tell people I couldn’t care less what color the board is,” he said. If the board’s racial makeup is an issue, “it’s an issue for people who are brokering power.”

These are touchy issues, task force member Ajamu Webster agreed.

Subdistricts were established by state law to help strengthen minority representation on the board, he said. Dissolving the subdistricts would suggest a feeling that voters in a subdistrict “don’t have the sense to select a qualified board member.”

Eddy and Webster don’t agree, Webster said, “but what’s good about this is that we have a forum in which to discuss it.”

“Extraordinary moment”: For most of an hour at group’s latest meeting, members had laid these issues out and shaped some consensus going forward. But one piece remained.

“How does this translate into children learning?” the Rev. Wallace Hartsfield asked.

Then came Webster’s plea. In impassioned tones, he called for a “broader vision ... that sets the tone for what we expect of our students, that will show them that there is a community that embraces their success, that says what it expects of them.”

The model conversation that Casserly praised had come full circle. “You’ve had an extraordinary moment as a task force,” he said.

Interim Superintendent John Martin finds it encouraging. “The task force is getting where it needs to be,” he said.

It’s moving the district where he said most surrounding communities have long been — where “the entire environment is ... in support of the schools doing well.”

Public comments

The Education Reform Task Force will hold two more forums to receive public comment on Kansas City schools.

- 6:30-8 p.m. Monday at Trailwoods Elementary School, 6201 E. 17th St.
- 6:30-8 p.m. May 20 at Hartman Elementary School, 8111 Oak St.

To reach Joe Robertson, call 816-234-4789 or send e-mail to jrobertson@kcstar.com.

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