

**Kansas Juvenile Justice Workgroup
Education Roundtable Executive Summary
Topeka, Kansas
August 18, 2015**

On August 18, 2015, the Kansas Juvenile Justice Workgroup held a roundtable discussion about juvenile justice with education stakeholders. The meeting was facilitated by Senator Pat Pettey, a Workgroup member and a Kansas state senator representing the 6th District. Attendees at the meeting included:

- Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner of Education, Kansas State Department of Education
- Janet Waugh, Chair, Kansas State Board of Education
- Sarah Fischer, Manager of Prevention Services, Community Services and Programs Commission/Behavioral Health Services at the Kansas Department for Aging & Disability Services
- William Rains, Coordinator of Correction Education Services, Barton Community College
- Mark Ronn, Principal, Garden City Alternative Education Center

➤ ***Strengths of the Juvenile Justice System***

- **Community Resources Exist for Job Training and Vocational Education**
 - Roundtable participants noted that there are many resources available to young people who seek out educational opportunities or job training such as so-called “one-stop” employment centers. However, participants reported that youth are not necessarily aware of these resources and lack supportive mentoring or guidance that could refer them toward appropriate opportunities. In addition, participants noted that resources funded specifically for juvenile justice-involved youth are limited.
- **KDOC Maintains Strong Partnerships with Post-Secondary Institutions:**
 - Roundtable participants reported that KDOC facilities are working with outside post-secondary education institutions such as Barton Community College and Washburn Institute of Technology. Youth in the two KDOC-run juvenile correctional facilities (JCFs) can take online classes within the facilities and many youth have obtained associate degrees. Participants stated that student achievements within these programs are celebrated and families are invited to attend milestone ceremonies.
 - KDOC also works with the Kansas Department of Commerce and the Kansas Department of Labor in order to identify industries that are growing and allow youth and adults with prior convictions to work in the field. KDOC offers certifications and training hours in those areas for youth placed in JCFs.

➤ ***Areas in Need of Improvement***

- **Reduced Funding for Alternative Education Programs for Preventing Delinquency:**
 - Roundtable participants reported that state cuts to prevention programs in recent years in have resulted in the elimination of programs that had successfully kept youth in school and out of the juvenile justice system. One participant stated that a program run jointly between the school district and KDOC called Options had served students ages 17-18 who were suspended or expelled and at risk of delinquent behavior. The program had worked well, but when state funded evaporated, the district could not afford to maintain the program and it ended.

- **Lack of Consistent Post-Release Mentoring and Educational Advisement for Youth Returning Home to Certain Youth from Incarceration:**
 - Participants noted the need for greater supports for youth returning from incarceration. They reported that youth returning to county correctional agencies often lack effective advisement on educational and vocational opportunities. While Community Corrections Officers (CCOs) in certain counties may have the time and resources to refer youth toward available employment and education resources, other counties lack the resources to provide adequate supports.
- **Need for More Training for Those Working with Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth:**
 - Participants stated that while CCOs and KDOC staff are trained in techniques for effectively interacting with court-involved youth, teachers and other education staff are not.
- **KDOC is Dependent on the Kansas Department of Education and Other Community Resources for Providing Educational Training**

➤ ***How Pieces of the System Interact:***

- **Need for Greater Collaboration and Enhanced Data Collection Coordination Between KDOC and the Kansas Department of Education:**
 - Participants noted that they would like greater coordination between the two agencies in terms of tracking data about students who go between the education and juvenile justice systems. Participants stated that students who return to their neighborhood schools after time spent in multiple out-of-home placements often lack basic documents such as academic and medical records.
- **Responses to Truancy Vary Widely Across Schools and Judicial Districts:**
 - Participants stated that while there is a statewide “3-5-7” law regarding the reporting of truancy, the law is enforced differently across jurisdictions. District or County Attorneys respond to truancy filings with varying degrees of severity. In addition, many school districts that have resources available for such interventions attempt to address truancy prior to court involvement “because it’s quicker and cheaper.” According to one participant, these districts meet with parents and “try to figure out some way to help the kid.”

➤ ***Notable Quotes:***

- **On the Placement of CINC in Detention Due to Lack of Alternative Options:** “With the lack of foster care, our CINC goes to the JDC. Mom and Dad have a problem so the kid goes to jail.”
- **On the Loss of Prevention Programs Keeping Youth Out of the Juvenile Justice System:**
 - “Everything I’ve seen over the past 28 years, every dollar you spend on preventing something pays off later and we’re losing all that.”
- **On the Value of Education and Vocational Training:**
 - “The return on education in terms of avoiding recidivism is astronomical—something like 200 to 1. ... [Youth] provide for their families, they pay taxes.”

- “It’s so important that with these types of students we find a niche and give them vocational training. With the right certificate, you can go out and do very well. I think those programs are money makers—state or local—where they can get a job.”
- **On Inconsistent Supports for Youth Returning to Community Corrections Supervision from KDOC Incarceration:** “When they’re released [from a JCF], some of them aren’t being pushed toward communities agencies that can best help them. ... I don’t think there’s as much follow up as could be to get them to those resources.”