

**Kansas Juvenile Justice Workgroup
Juvenile Justice Advocates Executive Summary
Topeka, Kansas
August 20, 2015**

On August 20, 2015, the Kansas Juvenile Justice Workgroup held a roundtable discussion with juvenile justice advocates. The meeting was facilitated by Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC) Director for Community Based Services Randy Bowman, a member of the Workgroup, and Representative John Rubin, co-chair of the Workgroup. Attendees at the meeting included:

- Bob Hanson, Topeka Youth for Christ
- Deborah Tubbs, Topeka Youth for Christ
- Dona Booe, Kansas Children's Service League
- Lazone Grays, IBSA, Inc.
- John Errante, Heartland 180
- Kenneth Davis, Mentoring 4 Success
- Christie Applehantz, Children's Alliance
- Benet Magnuson, Kansas Appleseed
- Jane Adams, Keys for Networking, Inc.

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

- **Commitment of Community Corrections Officers (CCOs) and Court Services Officers (CSOs):**
 - Advocates reported that a strength of the system is the commitment of probation officers for Intensive Supervision Probation and Court Services. One advocate stated that CCOs "try to get [youth] involved in the diversionary programs when they are available." Another advocate commented on the commitment and longevity of CSOs, who "are a stable group" in that they do not have the job turnover that others in the field experience and thus can develop a stronger relationship with youth and with service providers.
- **Improvements in the Programs at KDOC-Run Secure Facilities:**
 - At least one advocate commented on the "drastic improvements" that he had seen in the programs and services being offered at KDOC's juvenile correctional facilities (JCFs)
- **When Available, Juvenile Assessment and Intake (JAIC) Workers Use Opportunities for Diversion from the Juvenile Justice System:**
 - One advocate reported that when diversion programs are available in the community, JAIC workers make sure to use them and ultimately outcomes are improved as youth are diverted to needed services instead of referred to the juvenile justice system.
- **When Provided, Training of School Resource Officers (SROs) Keeps Youth Out of System:**
 - Advocates reported that in some communities, SROs receive valuable "crisis intervention team training." Advocates stated that this training is effective at reducing the number of youth referred to the juvenile justice system from schools.
- **JDAI Work to Prevent Pre-Adjudication Detention in the State's Five Largest Counties**

➤ **Areas in Need of Improvement:**

• **Lack of Consistency for Each Youth in the Juvenile Justice System:**

- Advocates stated that probation and facility policies and resources were inconsistent from county to county. Advocates discussed the severe differences in mental health and other services available for youth in some counties but not others.

• **Youth and Families Often Poorly Informed about the Juvenile Justice Process:**

- Advocates reported that youth and family members are often not given enough information about how juvenile justice operates in Kansas and what is required of them in order to keep from moving deeper into the system. Families “have a strong sense of being buffeted around from one institution to another.” In addition, parents are uninformed about prevention services that could keep youth from offending. One advocate stated that educating and advocating for youth and families within the juvenile justice system is easier “when they are in your community,” adding “it would help increase the capacity of the system to look out for the rights of the kids if they were in the community.”

• **System Does Not Do Enough to Engage Families:**

- Advocates reported that the juvenile justice system is missing early opportunities to work with families early during the initial and assessment stage so that they can do more to prevent youth from moving further into the system. As one advocate stated, “there are windows when parents are more receptive to whatever you get. And one of those is early intake and assessment. That’s a big jolt and everybody wants to do something. ... There are just these snap times when you’ve got people’s attention.”

• **Informal Diversion Programs are Not Available in Enough Communities:**

- Advocates reported that effective informal and formal diversion programs are available in some counties but not others. Programs are inconsistent across jurisdictions.

➤ **Other:**

• **Some Community-Based Programs for Monitoring, Mentoring, and Keeping Youth from Reoffending Do Exist but Lack Adequate Funding:**

- Advocates reported on many types of community-based programs operating in some communities but stated that funding has been limited, despite the steep decline in juvenile arrests and intakes in Kansas. As one advocate stated, “we have to shift the resources over to reward the work that has been done to drop the arrests.”

• **More Needs to be Done to Address Disproportionate Minority Contact**

➤ **Notable Quotes:**

- **On Better Focusing the Goals of the Juvenile Justice System:** “I worry that we’re asking too much of the juvenile justice system if we want to address happy homes ... I worry about net widening. I think it should be laser-focused on true accountability, and by that I mean not incarceration ... but also Multisystemic Therapy and things like that.”
- **On the Importance of Expanding Pre-File Court Diversion Programs:** “When there are opportunities through juvenile intake centers [and]... when there is a philosophy and support

around evidence-based assessments and an ability to divert children, there are great outcomes for youth, and I hope that gets capture in the policy making.”

- ***On Engaging and Educating Youth about the Juvenile Justice System:*** “Kids are most successful if they are not terrified about what’s going to happen and when they know what’s going to happen. ... If you cannot ensure parents that they can get through this and be positive in this, we lose kids.”
- ***On Working to Strengthen Families and Prevent Reoffending:*** “No one has helped parents understand that their behaviors affect their children’s. ... There are opportunities to have those parenting conversations and engaging parents to help them understand that your child is behaving this way and here are ways to empower you to ... do this a better way.”