

**Kansas Juvenile Justice Workgroup
YRCII and TLP Staff Roundtables Executive Summary
August 26, 2015**

On August 26, 2015, the Kansas Juvenile Justice Workgroup held roundtable discussions with seven staff at two Youth Residential Centers (one male YRCII and one female YRCII) and one staff at a Transitional Living Program (TLP). The meetings were facilitated by Workgroup member Randy Bowman, Director of Community Based Services for the Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC).

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

- **Shifting approach to look at needs of youth:** Some YRCII staff reported using a trauma-based approach and looking at the issues behind why a youth is in placement versus just responding to the youth's offense.
- **Positive reinforcements are an integral part of the TLP model:** TLP staff reported an approach that involves positive reinforcement and incentives for setting and achieving goals. Staff reported that youth in TLPs are clear on sanctions but also on how to achieve more independence, including goals around employment and housing. Youth receive guidance but are also expected to take their own initiative to reach their goals.

➤ ***Areas in Need of Improvement:***

- **Inconsistency regarding system response to youth:** YRCII staff reported that there seems to be "flip flopping" between a push for keeping youth in the community and a push towards placing youth in facilities, which makes it difficult to adequately serve youth in a way that addresses their risk and needs. Staff reported that the most important thing is that the youth's needs are addressed and indicated that services that are accessed in the community by youth in YRCIIs don't require placement.
- **Continuity of care:** YRCII staff reported that youth may leave the facility without being able to afford their medications in the community. Medical cards expire, and some psychiatrists don't always take medical cards.
- **Staff struggle with access to services and lengthy waits:** YRCII staff reported that youth often wait multiple weeks for CMHC appointments and services, and that their main way of accessing services is through the community even though the youth are in placement.
- **PTRF discharges occur without a feasible follow-up plan:** YRCII staff reported that youth are discharged from PTRFs and placed in YRCIIs without adequate transition planning.
- **YRCIIs can be inconsistent regarding sanctions and incentives:** TLP staff expressed differences in the YRCII model in regards to consistent sanctions and incentives, as youth transitioning to TLP report that there were not consistent responses to behaviors or achievements in YRCIIs.

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

- **Probation serves as a "middle man":** YRCII staff reported that probation officers set up appointments for psychiatric evaluations, which requires coordination between the YRCII staff, youth, and probation.

➤ ***Other:***

- **More youth are entering YRCIs with mental health and medical issues:** YRCII staff reported that youth are coming in with more mental health behaviors, such as cutting and suicidal behavior. YRCII staff also reported an increase in youth on multiple medications.
- **Changes in Kansas school systems seem to be affecting the juvenile justice system:** YRCII staff reported that cuts in education funding and programming seem to be affecting the types of youth that are sent to out of home placements, in that youth that seemingly could be served with support in the community are sent to YRCIs.
- **TLP staff would like to coordinate more with YRCIs:** TLP staff reported that they would like to do more outreach to YRCIs and explain the positive reinforcement approach, and to transition more youth out of YRCIs and into TLPs, as this better prepares youth to live on their own.

➤ **Notable quotes:**

- **YRCII staff on access to services:**
 - “Access to services matters more than level of care.”
- **YRCII staff on mixing populations:**
 - “Lots of younger kids [age 12] come in off of one bad behavior and then learn bad things from older kids.”