

FINAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EVALUATION OF THE INGHAM COUNTY, MICHIGAN JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

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Ingham County Juvenile Justice System contacted The Center for Criminal Justice Research at the University of Cincinnati for assistance in evaluating their juvenile justice system. The evaluation was three-fold. First, juveniles were assessed using a standardized and objective risk/need instrument to identify the risk and need levels of the juvenile. In addition, data were collected from court files for 200 juveniles who were processed through the system between January 2003 and July 2003 to determine social demographic information, criminal history, and current criminal charges. Second, stakeholders and judicial members were surveyed to determine their opinions of the state of the juvenile justice system. Third, correctional programs, which provide services to Ingham County Juvenile Justice youth, were assessed using a standardized process to determine whether they meet certain principles which research has identified as the best practices for the correctional population. Together these data allow us to determine if the programs in Ingham County are meeting the needs of the juveniles. The specific research questions that were addressed included:

Who is being served by the Ingham County Juvenile Justice System?

- The majority of the juveniles was male (67.7%), nonwhite (60.3%), and on average 14 years old. Approximately 66 percent of the juveniles had prior arrests with 63.9 percent having prior adjudications. Fifty-four percent of the juveniles had previous contact with court in the form of court supervision of which only 24.4 percent successfully completed the court supervision.
- Data concerning the current arrest indicated that the majority of the juveniles were between the ages of 15 and 16 years old. The majority of youth was arrested for a property crime (42.9%) or personal crime (29.1%) followed by truancy charges (13.8%); other (e.g., unlawful operation of a motor vehicle, trespassing, and obstructing official business) (6.0%); possession of a substance (4.6%); and sexual offenses (3.6%). An overwhelming majority of the charges were for misdemeanor offenses (72.3%). The most prevalent disposition was juvenile court officer supervision, residential placement in state, and paying court costs.

The average length of time between arrest and adjudication was approximately 3 months.

- Data were also available concerning the risk level of the juveniles. The Youthful Level of Service/Case Management Inventory was conducted by University to determine the risk and need levels of the juveniles. The YLS/CMI data were available for 94 youth (47.0%)¹. The majority of youth scored in the moderate or high category for each of the following criminogenic needs: criminal history; family and parenting; education and employment; peer relations; substance abuse; leisure and recreation; personality and behavior, and attitudes and orientation. Furthermore, for the overall risk score, the majority of youth scored in the moderate category (58.5%), 28.7 percent of the youth scored in the high risk category, 10.6 percent of the youth scored in the low risk category, and 2.1 percent of the youth scored in the very high risk category.

What are the programs and services being offered by private and public service providers in Ingham County?

- Ingham County Juvenile Justice System and private providers within the county offer a number of services including: substance abuse, residential services, day treatment; sex offender services; diversion services; anger management; family services; detention services; probation services; and truancy court.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Ingham County Juvenile Justice System?

This evaluation used the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory (CPAI) to assess the state of programs and services within Ingham County. The CPAI uses a structured interview format to assess programs based upon the principles of effective interventions. The use of the CPAI allowed us to identify several strengths and areas that need improvement in the Ingham County Juvenile Justice System. Specifically, the strengths were as follows:

- The program directors are well qualified. They typically had at least a bachelor's degree and had prior experience working with offenders in a treatment setting. In

¹ The YLS/CMI interviews were scheduled by Ingham County Juvenile Justice personnel. Every effort was made to increase the number of juveniles who reported for the interviews. A letter was sent to the juvenile's home address and phone calls were made by their juvenile court officer. However, only 94 youth reported to the court building for the interview. The interviews were conducted during two weeks in July and one week in August.

addition, the program directors were involved with the day-to-day operations of the programs. For example, they selected, trained, and supervised treatment staff.

- Both the CPAI data and the survey data reflected the fact that the programs and the Juvenile Justice System was supported by the community.
- The programs receive appropriate juveniles for the services being provided.
- The programs in Ingham County assigned staff to treatment groups based on education, experience, and interest.
- Many of the programs and services reported using appropriate punishing stimuli in response to antisocial behavior.
- Staff were hired based on personal qualities related to service delivery.
- Many agencies within the county reported having on-going training available for their staff. Moreover, staff reported attending multiple trainings throughout the past year.
- Staff reported feeling that they have a voice within their agency. In addition, many staff gave concrete examples of changes that have been made based upon their recommendations.
- Programs that utilized outside treatment providers had adequate quality assurance mechanisms in place. They reported receiving regular progress updates for the juveniles.
- There appears to be stability within the programs in regards to programming and support. In addition, many programs had an advisory body that oversaw their operations.

While a number of strengths were identified, Ingham County Juvenile Justice System also had a number of areas that could use some improvements. Specifically, concerns were noted regarding the following:

- Few agencies consulted the literature on effective interventions for offenders before implementing their program not was the literature consulted prior to changes being made to the programs.
- The programs did not conduct a formal pilot period in which the program is tested prior to its full implementation.

- There were some concerns among the programs that they could not implement the program as designed because of the lack of sustainable funding. The lack of funding has affected the ability to train staff, provide aftercare, and provide additional services.
- Many programs did not have formal exclusionary criteria in place. Adherence to exclusionary criteria will prevent inappropriate juveniles from entering treatment groups. Furthermore, some programs are forced to accept any juvenile that is sent from the court.
- The programs within the county are not utilizing standardized and objective risk/need instruments to measure the juvenile's risk of recidivating and their need levels.
- Many agencies are not measuring barriers to treatment (e.g., responsivity) using standardized instruments. Those that are measuring responsivity are only doing so haphazardly.
- Many of the programs fail to target criminogenic behaviors. Instead, the programs are focusing on self-esteem, physical fitness, bonding delinquents together, and art therapy.
- Even though some of the programs are using cognitive-behavioral techniques, none had fully implemented a cognitive-behavioral approach. Many programs are relying on an education-based, client-centered therapy using processing groups. On a related concept, many of the programs are not using structured treatment manuals which results in much inconsistency across group facilitators.
- The length of programming and monitoring in Ingham County is lacking. Many programs are shorter than 3 months. In addition, the staff are relying on self-reports from the juveniles to determine their whereabouts and peer associations.
- A formal system of behavioral reinforcements is not implemented within the programs in Ingham County. While some are using rewards, the types of rewards are problematic. Furthermore, the punishers are administered ineffectively.
- While some programs are teaching juveniles to identify behavioral triggers, they fail to allow sufficient opportunities for practicing alternative behaviors and skills. Thus, many juveniles are leaving the programs without the skills to avoid situations that may result in recidivism.
- Most programs in Ingham County do not require family involvement nor do they require attendance in aftercare sessions. Many programs have voluntary participation for these components. However, it was reported that attendance for these sessions is lacking.

behavioral approach throughout the groups and services. Additionally, these youth should also be assessed on a general risk/need assessment to determine if other risk factors need to be addressed. Finally, improved quality assurance mechanisms and the implementation of an evaluation protocol can help assess the program's overall effectiveness.

- Probation services need to improve the consistency of services and decision-making. Protocols and policies should be in place to insure that youth are being referred for appropriate services. Greater oversight must also be implemented to ensure that JCOs are making appropriate decisions and are providing adequate supervision and monitoring. Staff should also be trained on cognitive-behavioral approaches so they have an understanding of the services being provided.
- The Truancy Court should continue to monitor youths' school attendance. However, it is likely that many of these youth are in need of treatment services in addition to monitoring. Research has shown that treatment is more effective at changing long-term behavior than simply monitoring. Therefore, standardized assessments should be completed to determine the youths' treatment needs and appropriate referrals should be made.
 - Many of the programs can be effective if they make the recommended changes. However, programs that fail to implement these changes are less likely to be effective and should not receive referrals from the juvenile justice system.
- Fourth, staff training needs to be improved. New staff should receive intensive training on assessments and the interventions, treatments and curriculums used by the program. Initial staff training should also include co-facilitation with senior staff, job shadowing, clinical review, and directed feedback. Moreover, staff should be trained on the principles of effective interventions, behavioral strategies and the application of reinforcers, and treatment planning. It is also important that on-going staff training be made a priority. All staff should participate in trainings related to effective interventions, risk/need assessments, cognitive-behavioral interventions, treatment planning, and other related topics.
- Fifth, quality assurance mechanisms need to be developed and implemented. These should include regular clinical supervision, file review, peer review, audits, group observation, and client satisfaction surveys. It is also important that progress reports are provided to JCOs on a regular basis. Moreover, recidivism data should be regularly collected, using at least 6 month follow-up periods. Finally, data collection measures should be developed to allow for the completion of process and outcome evaluations.

- Intensive Neglect Services needs to provide more structured services and needs to have greater oversight into the type and quality of services being provided by external providers. Participants should be referred to specific services based on need. The interventions should be guided and should focus on specific skills and attitudes rather than being client-centered. Quality assurance mechanisms also need to be implemented.
- Camp Highfields has a strong foundation in place and should continue using curriculums similar to ART for the sTART program. However, assessment data should be used to guide the creation and implementation of additional interventions. It is also important that the new and existing groups become very structured and focused. The use of experiential activities will be much more effective if they are explicitly tied to prosocial skills in a very directed manner.
- Similar to St. Vincent's, it is questionable whether the court should continue to refer youth to Insight's substance abuse services. The length of service for these services is largely dictated by insurance guidelines as the program receives all of its funding from private insurance. The program needs to extend its duration to at least 3 months. If funding is not adequate to allow that length of service, then the court should cease referring youth there. If the program continues to be utilized, it needs to make a number of changes related to effective interventions.
- Community Mental Health has a strong foundation in place. Services should become more structured and formalized in order to improve its effectiveness. Youth and their families should be placed into appropriate services based on their assessed needs. Moreover, these services should be very directed and aimed at reducing risk factors.
- The Michigan State University Diversion program should continue to be used for lower-risk youth. However, assessments need to be conducted to ensure that appropriate youth are being received. The student advocates need better training in regard to criminogenic needs and assessment. The program should consider reducing the intensity of services. However, it should also consider providing more guided interventions during the time spent with youth.
- The Community Sex Offender should continue many of the activities already in place as it is likely an effective program. Its effectiveness can be improved, however, by utilizing a cognitive-

should use it consistently. We can also provide the following specific recommendations:

- The Youth Attention Program (YAP) should be eliminated. Research has found that this type of program is ineffective at changing offender behavior and makes youth worse in terms of risk level.
- Although Cristo Rey scored very low on the CPAI, it has a great deal of potential. The programs need to increase their duration and intensity, adopt and implement a cognitive-behavioral approach throughout its programs, and implement stringent quality control and evaluation mechanisms.
- Peckham Industries also needs to make a number of changes to its programming. Crossroads should be shortened in duration and should implement completion criteria. Given the intensity of services, a great deal of intervention can be provided. The focus should shift from employment opportunities to other criminogenic needs such as substance abuse and antisocial attitudes. It is also important that monitoring be increased. Finally, the level system and associated privileges need to be modified.
- The Youth Detention Center should continue its emphasis on pre-treatment as they do not hold youth long enough to provide more traditional treatment services. However, the pre-treatment services should be directed rather than client-centered. Efforts should also be made to separate youth based on risk level and participation in treatment. YDC staff should continue to have a voice in the program; however, the development of new groups and services should be guided by the literature and assessed needs rather than simply on staff interest.
- While St. Vincent's Catholic Charities scored better than some programs on the CPAI, it is not clear that this program should continue to be utilized. The program was not designed for serving adjudicated youth and does not appear to be prepared to provide the necessary services to this population. It desires low-risk youth, yet residential services should be reserved for higher-risk youth. Moreover, the placement of adjudicated youth and non-adjudicated youth is problematic. Although the program has some strong points in terms of stability and implementation, it essentially needs to develop a new component aimed at adjudicated youth and needs to make provisions to keep these youth separate from the general population. Youth should not be placed in this program until these changes occur.

- Youth should be regularly reassessed to measure progress. Reassessment will allow for the identification of other needs and provide a measure of program effectiveness.
- Second, treatment plans should be developed on level of risk and need. The assessment data suggest that the majority of youth are moderate to high risk.
 - Lower risk youth will likely need minimal services. Juvenile Court Officer's should consider referring such youth for community service, drug testing, and diversion services. Moreover, some youth may benefit from referrals to restorative justice services such as victim mediation and restitution.
 - In contrast, moderate and higher risk youth will need more intensive services. These youth should receive more intensive monitoring and will likely benefit from a wider range of services. These youth should be referred to services focusing on education, family, sex offending, substance abuse, peer associations, and antisocial attitudes. Placement decisions should be made based on the results of the risk/need assessments.
- Third, Ingham County needs to develop and enhance a number of treatment groups.
 - The assessment data suggests that youth in Ingham County have a wide range of needs. The majority of youth were moderate or high risk in every subcomponent on the Y-LSI. However, the current services are not effectively targeting these areas. Efforts need to be made to enhance the programs aimed at education, substance abuse, family functioning, and anger management. In addition to providing skills related to these areas, these programs also need to begin targeting attitudes related to these risk factors. Moreover, programs need to be developed focusing on peer associations and antisocial attitudes.
 - The enhancement of current services and development of new programs can be assisted by the use of "blueprint programs" such as *Multi-Systemic Therapy* (MST) and *Functional Family Therapy* (FFT). These programs are very structured and can be used as guidelines for the development of other services.
 - The CPAI data suggests that programming in Ingham County is lacking. Specifically, 9 of 10 agencies were assessed as unsatisfactory. Most of the programs need to be overhauled to increase program effectiveness. All of the programs need to implement a cognitive-behavioral approach and

- There does not appear to be formal completion criteria in place for programs in Ingham County. Rather, completion appears to be based on the length of time in the program and not the acquisition of prosocial skills. Furthermore, it was reported that staff do not feel that they have the authority to make referrals for additional programming. In addition, many staff reported that juveniles will be terminated from programming by the judges before they have successfully completed the program.
- The initial training of treatment staff is problematic for the county. In addition, quality assurance mechanisms that measure if the program is being implemented as designed is non-existent for many programs. Clinical supervision is not always provided to treatment staff and programs are not evaluating the clinical skills of program staff.
- The programs in the county failed to monitor the juvenile's progress through the programs. There is minimal reassessment of juveniles and the treatment plans are not updated on a consistent basis.
- In addition to not monitoring the juveniles' progress through the program, the programs are failing to evaluate themselves. For example, only a few programs have been formally evaluated which compared participants to a control group.

What improvements can be made to increase the effectiveness of the Ingham County Juvenile Justice System?

Based on our evaluation of the agencies, the following recommendations are needed to improve the Ingham County Juvenile Justice System:

- First, Ingham County Juvenile Justice system needs to implement a system of assessment.
 - Youth being referred to court should be assessed on a standardized risk/needs assessment. Youth suspected of substance abuse and those involved with sexual offending should be further assessed on behavior specific assessments. The results of the assessments should be used to guide decision-making regarding treatment placements. Specifically, youth should be matched to services based on need and level of risk. Treatment providers should receive copies of the completed assessments and should use the information to create treatment plans.
 - Youth should also be assessed on responsivity factors such as motivation, level of anxiety, and cognitive abilities. These factors will impact the likelihood of success in any treatment intervention. This information should be shared with treatment providers to enable matching to treatment groups and therapists.

- Finally, program contracts should be based on performance measures. The court system should develop performance and outcome measures related to its expectations for treatment providers. These measures should then be used to determine payment for services. Programs that fail to meet expectations should not be utilized by the court system.