



OJJDP FACT SHEET

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The Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center Project

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The Justice Research and Statistics Association (JRSA) and the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) are working together to enhance the ability of States to evaluate the effectiveness of their juvenile justice programs. The goal of this project is to provide useful resources and practical technical assistance that will strengthen the ability of local and State policymakers, program administrators and staff, and evaluators to implement and use evaluation studies and their findings. To further this effort, JRSA and OJJDP created the Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center (JJEC).

The first phase of the project focused on the assessment of the States' (and territories') existing evaluation practices and technical assistance needs, especially as they relate to the programs and initiatives funded through the Title II, Part B, State Formula Grants program. Subsequent project activities are based on this assessment.

Evaluation of States' Needs

Beginning in early 1999, JRSA surveyed three groups of State stakeholders: juvenile justice specialists, Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) directors, and State Advisory Group (SAG) chairs who head the Governor-appointed boards that establish and review programs and policies for OJJDP's Formula Grants program. The assessment is summarized in the report *Juvenile Justice Evaluation Needs in the States: Findings of the Formula Grants Program Evaluation Needs Assessment*, which is available on JRSA's Web site (www.jrsa.org/pubs). It found that training and technical assistance should help increase knowledge of evaluation principles and techniques at the State and local levels, develop and improve State infrastructures for supporting systematic evaluation, and foster relationships among State agencies, local programs, and evaluators.

Addressing States' Needs

JJEC has a number of ongoing activities designed to address the needs identified in the assessment.

Regional training. JJEC worked with the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ), which represents the SAGs, and the planning committees of the four regional SAG coalitions to conduct training conferences (in New Orleans, LA; Omaha, NE; Pittsburgh, PA; and San Diego, CA) in the summer and fall of 2000. The training featured a combination of skill-building workshops and sessions that highlighted successful local and national juvenile justice evaluation projects. Similar training activities are planned for fiscal year 2001 and include the CJJ national and regional conferences.

Technical assistance. The project offers the States onsite technical assistance, including short-term, State-specific consultation, that enhances their capacity to assess their juvenile justice programs and initiatives (funded under the Formula Grants program) and to incorporate evaluation into the program development and planning processes. During these brief technical assistance visits, experts work closely with the SAGs and juvenile justice specialists to ensure that evaluation systems are in place, to develop statewide performance measures for juvenile justice projects, and to assist in conducting evaluation studies. Summary reports on the technical assistance projects and their outcomes will be published regularly by JJEC.

SAC Evaluation Partnership Program. JJEC provides seed money to encourage partnerships between the SACs and SAGs. The goal of these partnerships is to build sustainable relationships that enhance long-term juvenile justice evaluation capacity. States are designing evaluation systems, building performance measures into the Formula Grants process, and evaluating specific initiatives. Partnership projects were funded in Maine, Massachusetts, and New Mexico in late 1999, and in Illinois, Iowa, and Maine in the summer of 2000. Final reports summarizing the activities and findings from Maine and Massachusetts are posted on JJEC's

Web site (www.jrsa.org/jjec) under "State Resources." Reports from the remaining States will be posted when available.

JJEC Online. JJEC Online provides evaluation resources and information specific to juvenile justice programs and initiatives. The online center offers a dynamic resource in four main areas:

- ◆ **Programs** contains information on performance measures, evaluation designs, links to initiatives, and publications for 17 different juvenile justice program areas.
- ◆ **State information** provides a forum for States to share reports, monitoring documents, requests for proposals, and other information produced at the State level.
- ◆ **Resources** includes a list of publications, evaluation instruments, and links to other evaluation sites.
- ◆ **National initiatives** provides a direct link to Federal agencies and their juvenile justice-related initiatives.

Evaluation manual. The publication *Collecting and Using Evaluation Information for Program Improvement* will provide basic evaluation information for local programs. It will present an overview of the evaluation process and describe tools that can be used to carry out meaningful evaluation activities. Although the manual is being written primarily for program managers, the authors hope to produce a document that will benefit everyone involved in the collaborative evaluation process. JRSA hopes to publish the manual by the end of 2001. It will be posted on JRSA's Web site.

Evaluation briefing papers and guides. A series of nontechnical briefing papers on topics related to the evaluation of specific juvenile justice initiatives will serve as brief resource guides. JJEC also will produce a series of more indepth guides containing information on program evaluation and effectiveness in three topic-specific areas: an overview of juvenile justice evaluation (June 2001), strategies for evaluating small juvenile justice programs (July 2001), and hiring and working with an evaluator

(July 2001). The evaluation guidebooks, which will be targeted to program administrators and State planners, will be posted on JRSA's Web site by August 2001.

Disproportionate minority confinement (DMC). JRSA is working on several projects involving DMC, including a guide to related evaluation issues and technical assistance on evaluating DMC initiatives. SAC Evaluation Partnership Programs for 2001 will also focus on DMC issues.

Overall, JJEC helps States measure the effectiveness of juvenile justice programs and provides constructive feedback that helps local programs improve their performance. Through these activities, JJEC strengthens the ability of State and local policymakers, program administrators and staff, and evaluators to implement and use evaluation studies and their findings.

For Further Information

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The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

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