

NH JUVENILE COURT DIVERSION

CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE UPDATE OCTOBER 2013

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Activities

- Conducted a statewide diversion program assessment gathering input from NH State Advisory Group on Juvenile Justice, Department of Health and Human Services, Circuit Court, NH Juvenile Court Diversion Network and programs providing diversion services.
- Completed a literature review of 40 published research and evidence-based practices of diversion programs across the United States, and incorporated them into an annotated bibliography that will serve as a resource for the diversion programs, policymakers and other stakeholders.
- Conducted over 20 site visits and key informant interviews to determine the current landscape of NH's diversion programs and identify gaps in services, common challenges and barriers to providers, diversion strategies being implemented, as well as level of community buy-in or support for the programs.
- Presented results from initial wave of interviews to key stakeholders on July 24, 2013 toward informing strategic planning sessions to stabilize and sustain the diversion programs in the state. Three areas of focus have emerged as identifiable needs:
 1. Secure **sustainable funding streams**, as this is a major source of vulnerability for most of the current diversion programs.
 2. Maintain or **increase the number of referrals** made to existing diversion programs as these numbers have declined in recent years and a number of existing programs have the capacity to serve more youth.
 3. **Increase the visibility and awareness** of diversion programs across the state through a marketing and communication strategy that includes training and awareness campaigns for stakeholders such as police departments, judges, and school personnel.

Overview of Diversion in New Hampshire – September 2013

Demographics		Accreditation Status	
Youth served per year (<i>among 18 sites</i>)	1400	# of "Court Approved Diversion Programs"	14
Age of Youth (<i>average</i>)	11-17	# of "Community Resource" Programs	4
Cost per youth (<i>average</i>)	\$1200	Program Philosophy Used	
Fees charged (<i>average of those that charge</i>)	\$214	Restorative Justice	4
Average Length of Program	4.5 months	Traditional Diversion (Volunteer Panel)	9
Completion Rate (<i>last 5 years</i>)	86%	Teen Court	2
Programs using volunteer panels	16 of 18	Other (Mediation/Counseling)	3
Most Common Offenses		Organizational Structure	
Threatening/Assault	Shoplifting/Theft	City/Town/County Government	9
Disorderly/Reckless Conduct	Trespass/Mischief	Nonprofit	9
Possession of Drugs	Fire setting	Evidence-Based Practices Used	
Possession of Alcohol		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CHALLENGE ■ Take Control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 3rd Millennium ■ Juv. Fire Setters Prevention
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ FAST ■ YES 	

October 2013

Court Approved Diversion Programs have undergone rigorous review in the following areas:

Court Diversion Program Organization/Agencies	Employees/Volunteers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The program providing services is a non-profit 501(c)(3) or a unit of government. ▪ The program has a governing body/board. ▪ The program has a written policy manual and/or employee handbook. ▪ The program subscribes to a code of ethical standards and practices. ▪ The office complies with all building/safety codes and is handicapped accessible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Those having direct contact with participants are employees/volunteers of the agency. ▪ The program has an application/resume on file for each of its employees and volunteers. ▪ The organization conducts criminal background checks on staff and subcontractors who have one-on-one direct contact with participants. ▪ All volunteers undergo either a reference and/or criminal background check. ▪ The program has written employee job descriptions on file. ▪ The program has a process for evaluating staff assigned to the juvenile court diversion program. ▪ The organization has an oath of confidentiality form on file for all staff and volunteers. ▪ The organization has a form on file for all of its volunteers that complies with RSA 508:17.
<p style="text-align: center;">Training/Staff Development</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The program provides training/orientation to new staff and diversion volunteers. ▪ The program maintains a record of training provided to staff and volunteers. 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Community involvement and partnerships</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The program follows a written procedure for transferring diversion cases to other jurisdictions or diversion programs. ▪ The program can show evidence of community involvement in their juvenile court diversion process. ▪ The program can show evidence that they have working relationships with local police and schools. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Diversion Program Components</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Financial</p>	<p>The program has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a written juvenile court diversion referral process. ▪ written eligibility guidelines for participation in court diversion. ▪ a diversion participation agreement form. ▪ a confidential release of information form. ▪ a diversion intake or screening/information form. <p>The program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ utilizes a diversion contract as part of their juvenile court diversion efforts. ▪ has signed diversion contracts on file for all juvenile court diversion participants. ▪ incorporates restorative justice principles into the development of contracts. ▪ offers community service opportunities to juveniles participating in juvenile court diversion. ▪ has an educational resource to educate juvenile participants about drugs and alcohol. ▪ documents all contact they have with participants, parents or others involved with the juvenile diversion process. ▪ has a process for exiting participants from the program upon completion of their obligations. ▪ maintains a copy of each closing/completion letter. ▪ provides written notice of completion to all referral sources. ▪ provides a list of community resources available to children and their families.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The program has a regularly updated schedule of fees for the services they provide. ▪ The program has an annual operating budget that is approved by its governing body. ▪ The organization has at least a bi-annual audit or financial review showing their revenues and expenditures for diversion programming and/or file as required by RSA 7:28. ▪ The program maintains a liability insurance policy that covers its governing body, employees, volunteers, and diversion related programs. 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Record Keeping</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The program has a mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of their programming. ▪ The program maintains a data base or filing system for all active and closed juvenile diversion cases. ▪ The program produces an annual report to stakeholders. ▪ The program follows all laws regarding the privacy, storage and destruction of client records. 	

Next Steps

Develop and conduct surveys with the following stakeholders:

Police Departments

A survey of the 230 Chiefs of Police will help us to:

- identify local programs, either within the department's themselves or community-based services that are unknown to the NH Juvenile Court Diversion Network (NHJCDN);
- learn the level of collaboration happening between local diversion programs and regional networks;
- gain a better understanding as to how police departments utilize diversion in their communities;
- ascertain police departments' level of satisfaction with diversion programs in their jurisdiction; and
- identify ways that existing programs can be improved to better meet the needs of their local police departments.

Regional Public Health Networks

A survey of the 13 Regional Public Health Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinators will help us to:

- identify additional diversion programs that are unknown to the NHJCDN;
- learn the level of collaboration happening between local diversion programs and regional networks;
- ascertain the kinds of support regional networks are able to provide to diversion programs; and
- identify diversion models in other states that may be beneficial to New Hampshire.

Create Site Profiles for all known programs – Court Approved and Community Resources:

Within the next 30 days, all 18 programs currently known to NHJCDN will have updated site profiles available utilizing common language and highlighting key information including:

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|----------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| ▪ Organization description | ▪ Program length | ▪ Evidence-based practices |
| ▪ Contact information | ▪ Whether fee charged | ▪ Assessment tools utilized |
| ▪ Program structure | ▪ Program structure | ▪ Annual number served |
| ▪ Ages served | ▪ Location of services (in house or community referral) | ▪ Community partners |
| ▪ Accreditation status | | ▪ Unique features of program |
| ▪ Most common violations | | |

We anticipate that programs will share these profiles with their local police departments. These profiles are intended to be a working document, and will be updated regularly with new information as warranted.

Update NH Juvenile Court Diversion Network Website

In order to raise awareness of the efficacy of juvenile court diversion programs, the Network is in the early stages of updating its website. With a target completion date of Winter 2014, new features will include:

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| ▪ Interactive map by county with downloadable site profiles and links to program web sites. | ▪ Accreditation standards and application materials. | ▪ Listing of collaborative partners and community members that choose to become members of the Network. |
| ▪ Success stories of youth tied into each of the most common violations featuring outcomes. | ▪ Definitions of the four program philosophies used in NH – restorative justice, traditional diversion using volunteer panels, teen court and other (mediation/counseling). | ▪ Network meeting schedules and meeting minutes with archives. |
| ▪ Descriptions of evidence-based programs used. | | |

Looking Ahead

Through the following efforts, we intend to help raise the quality and profile of diversion programs in NH and identify potential funding sources and strategies for sustainability. By meeting with policymakers, engaging in a strategic planning process, developing materials that help promote court diversion program, and establishing means to measure the effectiveness of diversion, community organizations, programs, and policymakers will grow in their knowledge of and action in support of court diversion. The following activities will guide our efforts during the upcoming year:

- Continue to **engage policymakers and stakeholders in a collaborative strategic planning process** in order to develop a sustainable juvenile court diversion system. This will involve participating in Diversion Network Strategic Planning Committee meetings; and convening policymaker and stakeholder working meetings to ensure the strategies being put into place closely align with other state and local priorities.
- Continue to **research national best practices** and identify where adaptations or adoption would serve the interests of the court diversion programs in NH through literature review and outreach to other state professional diversion networks or coordinators. This will build on the literature review that was initiated during year one and facilitate the development of monitoring and evaluation strategies for the diversion programs.
- **Enhance data collection strategies** to successfully demonstrate the effectiveness of the diversion efforts in the state. Measures must be both feasible and meaningful to the programs, their stakeholders and potential funders.
- **Research approaches to determine the cost-benefit** of juvenile diversion so that policymakers can help make informed recommendations and understand the true monetary value, in addition to the social justice, of diversion programs.
- **Increase the visibility** of court diversion and its contribution to juvenile justice in the state, which is essential to the sustainability of juvenile court diversion programs.

How Can You Help?

Please review all correspondence about this initiative, including survey requests.

- Please contact Rachel Kohn at Rachel_Kohn@jsi.com for more information.

New Hampshire juvenile court diversion programs currently lack a “champion” in the state to talk about the efficacy of diversion for youth. We hope to gather testimonials from key stakeholders and community leaders to help highlight the benefits.

- Please contact Betsy Houde at [bhoud@theyouthcouncil.org](mailto:bhoude@theyouthcouncil.org) with ideas or for more information.

NHJCDN’s goal is to hire a coordinator to continue to work on these strategies once the grant is complete. We will be seeking ways to secure and leverage public or private funding to create and sustain this position.

- Please contact Nicole Rodler, NHJCDN Chair at nicole.rodler@rochesternh.net for more information.