

**Corey R. Steel**  
State Court Administrator



**Deborah A. Minardi**  
State Probation Administrator

April 2023

Re: Juvenile Justice Enhancement Nebraska Probation System Review Final Report

Greetings Juvenile Justice Stakeholders,

The Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation is thrilled to have the Juvenile Justice Enhancement Nebraska Probation System Review Final Report December 2022 (including the Data Capacity System Assessment Report) before you. This report crafted by the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice and a Data Capacity System Assessment conducted by the National Center for Juvenile Justice represents approximately eighteen months of intensive review and analysis. We hope that many of you were engaged and a part of this process and would like to thank the participating stakeholders. While the report does recognize the strengths of our juvenile justice system, more importantly, it gives us a roadmap in the form of focus areas to enhance our juvenile justice collaboration and response.

Now that the recommendations are before us, we ask for your feedback regarding the priorities presented in this report. This feedback will decide how and where time and energy will be expended. Probation is committed to applying best-practices approaches in the juvenile justice arena to further improve outcomes for youth and safe communities. Throughout the history of juvenile justice reform work in Nebraska, one thing has been clear; the Judicial Branch recognizes collaboration, partnership, and input is essential for success. We look forward to receiving your comments and propelling ahead as we move Nebraska's juvenile justice system from good to great!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah A. Minardi".

Deb Minardi  
Probation Administrator



RFK  
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RFK NATIONAL  
RESOURCE CENTER  
FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE

April 7, 2023

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State Probation Administrator  
Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation  
State of Nebraska Judicial Branch  
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Probation Administrator Minardi,

In October 2020, the Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation (AOCP) applied for and was awarded a three year grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention (OJJDP) that required an examination of all key decision points within the Nebraska juvenile justice system to highlight and build upon existing strengths and identify opportunities to enhance system performance and improve youth outcomes. The competitively awarded grant also provided technical assistance support to enhance organizational infrastructure supporting sustainable and measurable reforms. The initial examination and system review was conducted by the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice (RFKNRCJJ) using their seminal probation system review framework and was augmented by a Data Capacity System Assessment (DCSA) conducted by the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ). The broader purpose for the system review included 1) supporting a comprehensive, long-term plan for juvenile justice system improvement, and 2) implementation of recommendations for enhanced juvenile probation and system stakeholder performance consistent with the mission of AOCP and the goals of the juvenile justice system (e.g., reduction of recidivism, youth accountability, positive behavior change, and community safety).

The findings and recommendations, captured in the attached ***Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Nebraska Probation System Review Final Report***, include multiple strengths that reflect significant progress and embrace of research-driven and evidence-based policies and approaches that position AOCP as a positive leader in juvenile justice system practice. Additional recommendations focus on challenges to system reform that include matching of effective services and programs to ameliorate future risk of re-offending, consistency of juvenile probation practice across all twelve districts, and collaboration of critical juvenile justice stakeholders. The RFKNRCJJ was asked to identify a set of prioritized recommendations from among the thirty eight included in the final report. The set of twelve prioritized recommendations are detailed in the Executive Summary section of the Final Report.

The Probation System Review process, conducted by the RFKNRCJJ in thirty eight state and local jurisdictions over the past eighteen years, is a rigorous undertaking and requires courage by the agency leadership, transparency among all agency staff, and a strong commitment to implement positive change. When conducted in the manner envisioned by the RFKNRCJJ, the review process is dynamic and encourages active consideration of system reform enhancements from the outset. The AOCP worked collaboratively with the RFKNRCJJ and other technical assistance partners to ensure the system review process was completed with fidelity. The AOCP also demonstrated an unwavering commitment to creating the infrastructure that will produce positive system enhancements where challenges were

identified. By advancing their own culture of accountability and demonstrating their intention to work together with critical juvenile justice system partners (e.g., judges, attorneys, behavioral health service agencies, etc.), the AOCB has generated positive opportunities to enhance outcomes for youth and families that come into contact with the juvenile justice system and probation. We applaud these exemplary efforts. The RKNRCJJ welcomes the continuing opportunity to partner with AOCB and the Nebraska juvenile justice system stakeholders and to support the effective implementation of the prioritized recommendations contained in the ***Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Nebraska Probation System Review Final Report***.

Respectfully,



John A. Tuell  
Executive Director

# Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Nebraska Probation System Review Final Report

DECEMBER 2022

*Produced for:*

**Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation  
State of Nebraska Judicial Branch**

*Presented by:*

**Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice**  
*A Program of RFK Community Alliance*



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# Executive Summary

## Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Nebraska Probation System Review

Nebraska's Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation (AOCP) invited the RFK National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice (RFK National Resource Center) to conduct a juvenile justice system review to support their efforts to strengthen policy, practice, and service provision for the youth and families involved with the youth justice system. AOCP has embraced initiatives aimed at improving youth and system outcomes and recognized that there were areas that, through enhancement, would improve the youth experience while on probation, increase staff satisfaction, and engage stakeholders by further integrating best-practices and evidence-supported strategies.

The probation system review framework was used to examine key areas of the Nebraska juvenile justice system. RFK National Resource Center is committed to best practices that are supported by research and are predicated on adolescent development science. These principles guided the development of the strategies and recommendations made in the Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Nebraska Probation System Review report.

1. Use validated risk and needs assessments to guide supervision, service and resource allocation decisions,
2. Implement evidence-based and promising programs and services proven to reduce recidivism and improve a variety of other youth outcomes, and evaluate the results of these services through effective data collection and analysis,
3. Embrace a cross system and collaborative approach to address the youth's needs,
4. Employ knowledge and understanding of adolescent development to guide policies, programs and supervision practices.

Juvenile justice systems were created to serve youth outside of the adult correctional system. Current research demonstrates that adolescent brain structure and function differs from adults and these changes are witnessed in three important ways:

- Adolescents are less able to regulate their own behavior in emotionally charged contexts,
- Adolescents are more sensitive to external influences such as the presence of peers and the immediacy of rewards,
- Adolescents are less able to make informed decisions that require consideration of the long term<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> National Research Council. (2013). Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/14685>

While these firmly established research findings must practically inform the juvenile justice system and its affiliated partners, it does not suggest any change to the established primary responsibilities or aims of the juvenile justice system. Those responsibilities remain to:

1. hold youth accountable for wrongdoing,
2. prevent further offending, and
3. treat all youth with fairness and equity.

The RFK National Resource Center employed an interactive consultation process designed to assist and support, not supplant, the authority, talents, initiatives and work of leaders within Nebraska's juvenile justice system. The protocol relied on the engagement of agency leadership, court, probation, and other relevant practitioners and stakeholders to develop the recommendations and findings. The final recommendations from the review process focus on the key partners who have decision making authority that affect a youth's trajectory in the juvenile justice system.

The RFK National Resource Center Team has been asked to identify priority recommendations among the completed list identified in the final Probation System Review Report (Appendix M). As an initial step to satisfy this request, the RFK National Resource Center Team has placed all recommendations within focus areas that reflect operations and practices for AOC and critical stakeholders. The recommendations were then prioritized. The result is presented below as the initial start toward enhancing Nebraska's youth justice system to create a more informed system that operates from a shared understanding of best practices in youth justice. The areas include:

- Adolescent Development
- Family Engagement
- Principles, Policy and Legislation
- Decision Making Instruments
- Service Delivery
- Personnel and Performance
- Continuous Quality Improvement
- Collection and Use of Data

During this intensive review and analysis of the Nebraska youth justice system, each key decision point was examined. In the most efficient and effective youth justice system, true collaboration of all stakeholders is required to realize optimal system performance and youth outcomes at each of the decision points. As is the case in all state and local youth justice systems, most operations and practices are performed by the primary court administration and/or probation agency. This fact most often results in a majority of recommendations focusing on the primary agency executing those responsibilities. That is true in our final Probation System Review Report offered for consideration by the Nebraska AOC and its stakeholders. The RFK National Resource Center Team wishes to emphasize that our recommendations in totality reflect our conviction that there exists an equally shared responsibility among the AOC and stakeholders (e.g., judges, county attorneys, public defenders, and



service providers) to implement the adopted recommendations into practice and enhance the system performance and youth outcomes with fidelity in every district across the state.

## **Adolescent Development**

The growing body of research and knowledge about adolescent development should inform the goals, practices, policies, outcomes, and operations of a juvenile justice system and its affiliated youth-serving partners. With this as the underlying principle, the following recommendations should be prioritized to create a foundation from which system enhancement can continue.

1. Develop a training plan to ensure county attorneys practicing in the juvenile justice system understand and demonstrate proficiency in application of the core tenets of adolescent brain science, positive youth development, and risk screening.
  - a. Include specialized training as a continued education requirement for county attorneys, also available to juvenile court judges and public defenders, to raise the likelihood for effective and appropriate reliance on diversion, improved desistance of delinquent activity, and enhanced community safety.
  - b. Convene working group with AOCJ and the County Attorney Association to adopt a mutually agreed upon method to incorporate training curriculum for attorneys that serve youth to improve the working knowledge of what drives youth behavior and support their positive development. Expectation from this recommendation is for development of a mutually agreed upon “certification process” ensuring sustainability of this recommendation.
2. Judges that hear juvenile court matters coordinate with AOCJ to develop a routine set of educational learning sessions that focus on adolescent development, application of the scientifically validated screening and assessment instruments, and understanding of the impact of targeted, evidence-based services for youth and their families. The education sessions must include required topics for new judges and continuing learning (e.g., Booster events) for sitting members of the judiciary. Expectation from this recommendation is for development of a mutually agreed upon “certification process” ensuring sustainability of this recommendation.
3. Add a separate module for adolescent development to ensure staff training, proficiency of understanding, and application of skills that underscore the unique characteristics of adolescence and the approaches that produce positive behavior change to reduce future engagement in the juvenile justice system and protect community safety.

## **Family Engagement**

Active family engagement and involvement in planning and interventions increases the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes for system-involved youth.

4. AOCJ must re-examine family engagement training, policies, practices, and communication mechanisms related to involving families as partners in realizing the positive outcomes for youth and system performance. The articulation of a set of core principles and beliefs that guide the

specific family practices promulgated by AOCF for adoption should inform the re-examination in every district and may include:

- a. Recognizing that the family is a child's primary emotional, social, cultural, and spiritual resource.
- b. Ensuring that there are flexible and authentic opportunities for families to participate in the design, implementation, and monitoring of their child's plan by providing an opportunity for family members to have meaningful, informed and authentic input at each key decision point in the process.
- c. Creating access to resources such as workforce personnel and service interventions that are supportive of their involvement, including family peer advocates and skill building for self-advocacy.
- d. Demonstration that Nebraska juvenile probation and juvenile justice stakeholders have proficiency in the skills and practices that acknowledges that all families and acknowledge that families act in the best interest of their child, and fulfill their role, when they have the knowledge, skills, and supports necessary to provide ongoing and developmentally appropriate guidance and interaction.
- e. Develop a discrete set of approaches and information that systems can provide to families to assist them in meeting their family's needs, including in helping them make the best use of and connection to system and community resources that honor their familial beliefs and culture.

## **Principles, Policy, and Legislation**

Written guidance for the application of best practices is important for ensuring consistency and fairness.

5. Support revision of statutes that would prevent truancy cases from formal justice involvement in the delinquency system thereby eliminating the potential for a youth to be exposed to the harmful consequences of deep-end youth justice system involvement for status offenses.

## **Decision Making Instruments**

The best practice approach to reduce reoffending includes the commitment to the use of structured decision-making instruments that inform professional judgement at key decision points (e.g., risk-needs-responsivity [RNR] tools).

6. Commit to a training plan for the YLS that includes an identified curriculum focusing on proficiency of understanding, application that improves interrater reliability, and specified intervals for initial and ongoing training requirements.

## **Service Delivery**

In combination with the appropriate use of RNR approaches, services and interventions need to be available and accessible to ameliorate a youth's risk and to build on their strengths.

7. Develop a statewide task force to examine accessibility and growth of evidence-based and promising local service interventions that address the criminogenic needs and support improved behavioral health outcomes. Task force participation should include District CPOs, judicial leadership, community providers, educational representatives, and juvenile justice resource supervisors.
  - a. Continue to work with Dr. Keith Cruise on implementing trauma and behavioral health screening.

## **Personnel and Performance**

Staff, management and leadership are essential to the Nebraska juvenile justice system's productivity and success.

8. Utilize the results of the workload study to establish criteria for staffing of the districts that is predicated on workload responsibilities, caseload size, job requirements and expectations.
  - a. Create policies that ensures quality assurance evaluation and analytical job responsibilities are allocated appropriate levels of effort and time to perform the assigned task to the highest quality.
9. Develop consistent roles and responsibilities for District Data Analysts (DDA) and develop position classification.

## **Continuous Quality Improvement**

Developing quality improvement processes provides the optimal likelihood for positive outcomes.

10. Review the quality assurance policies, procedures and analytical methodologies with a prioritized focus to create standards and criteria for service and program analysis (e.g., percentage of referrals) that eliminates the arbitrary threshold currently in operation.
11. Develop a mechanism through policy to report service gaps that enables AOC to develop aggregate data that informs future fiscal and service resources needed in every district. The RFK Team can avail multiple examples from other jurisdictions for consideration by AOC.

## **Collection and Use of Data**

Two key aspects for adopting evidence-based practice are routine reliance on data to inform system performance and youth outcomes and examining and analyzing data for trends within interdisciplinary meetings.

12. Continue to use the Fundamental Measures in Juvenile Justice (FMJJ) framework as a catalyst for expanding data use and dissemination for the AOC and grow beyond it.

## I. BACKGROUND

### A. Probation System Review Design and Framework

Nebraska’s Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation (AOC) is a self-evaluating agency that has embraced initiatives aimed at improving services to enhance outcomes for the people involved with probation and for the communities they serve. In their continuing effort to strengthen policy, practice, and service provision for the youth and families involved with Nebraska’s juvenile probation across all 12 districts, the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice (RFK National Resource Center) was invited to conduct a comprehensive probation system review. In partnership with the AOC leadership and relevant interested stakeholders, the analytic probation system evaluation began in July 2021 and concluded in August 2022. The process included a review and examination of policy, practice, and service provision designed to inform immediate opportunities for system enhancement, improvement, and reform.

The specific design of the review was guided by the 2019 publication entitled Probation System Review Guidebook, 3rd Edition<sup>2</sup> (PSR Guidebook) and was accomplished through discussions with the probation and system stakeholders regarding the most critical issues that confront Nebraska’s juvenile justice system. The overarching purpose for this evaluation is to support the long-term plan for comprehensive juvenile justice system improvement and identify opportunities for enhanced probation performance based on best practice standards concentrated on the following:

- Increased capacity and organizational infrastructure to support reform and system improvements,
- Effective and efficient court and probation management performance,
- Improved recognition of the neuroscience of adolescent development and adoption of the principles and hallmarks of a developmental approach to address youth risk and treatment needs,
- Improved utilization of evidence-based practices and intervention services, and
- Implementation of enhanced prevention and intervention and interagency approaches for youth and families with risks and needs in multiple domains.

The evaluation focused on four primary areas successfully used in jurisdictions and described in the PSR Guidebook. The structure of the review, recommendations, and findings include the following elements and areas of concentration:

#### **Element A: ADMINISTRATION**

- *Policies and Procedures*
- *Agency Goals*
- *Management Practices*
- *Training*

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<sup>2</sup> Tuell, J. & Harp, K. (2019). Probation System Review Guidebook, 3rd Edition. Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice.

### **Element B: PROBATION SUPERVISION**

- *Probation Officer Approach to Supervision*
- *Professional Staff Responsibilities, Mandates, and Expected Products*
- *Assignment/Handling of Specific Probationer Populations*
- *Decision Making Processes*
- *Service Delivery to Probationers*

### **Element C: INTRA- AND INTERAGENCY WORK PROCESSES**

- *Relationship with the Court and other Stakeholders*
- *Interagency Case Flow Processes*

### **Element D: QUALITY ASSURANCE**

- *Monitoring Youth and System Outcomes*
- *Employee Performance Measurement*
- *Program Evaluation (intra-agency and external providers)*
- *Data Collection, Reporting, and Analysis*

These recommendations aim to enhance system practice and performance in ways that are consistent with current best practice standards focused on improving youth and family outcomes. In collaborating with the RFK National Resource Center, Nebraska's Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation and its partners supported an analytic review and examination of current practices that included:

1. Assessment of **current available individual and aggregate data** to inform prevalence, demographics and characteristics, risks and needs, trends, trajectories, and outcomes for juvenile justice youth interacting with the youth justice system in Nebraska,
2. Assessment of **probation system process and performance** in the areas of management policy, court practices, structured and validated screening and assessment tools, key decision points and probation officer decision-making, and identification of strengths and opportunities in these domains,
3. Analysis of **case management** as well as its linkages with the organizations with whom it interfaces as the case moves through the system (e.g., child protection, education, behavioral health),
4. Ability to **identify system and client outcome measures** that drive system and probation officer performance, and
5. Ability to **identify and access effective community-based resources** that match identified service needs through validated screening and assessment instruments and methodologies.

The elements covered in this review and the recommendations made herein coalesce to support the overarching goal of improving youth outcomes. According to research conducted by the Council for State Governments, there are four core principles for improving youth outcomes:

1. Use **validated risk and needs assessments** to guide supervision, service and resource allocation decisions,
2. Implement **evidence-based and promising programs** and services proven to reduce recidivism and improve a variety of other youth outcomes, and evaluate the results of these services through effective data collection and analysis,
3. Embrace a **cross system and collaborative approach** to address the youth's needs,

4. Employ knowledge and **understanding of adolescent development** to guide policies, programs and supervision practices<sup>3</sup>.

These four core principles have guided the development of the strategies and recommendations made in this report and must continue to support juvenile probation in Nebraska during implementation of these recommendations.

## **B. Developmental Reform in Juvenile Justice<sup>4</sup>**

The growing body of research and knowledge about adolescent development should inform the goals, practices, policies, outcomes, and operations of a juvenile justice system and its affiliated youth-serving partners. The research effectively synthesized in the 2013 National Research Council report recognized that adolescents differ from adults in three important ways:

- Adolescents are less able to regulate their own behavior in emotionally charged contexts,
- Adolescents are more sensitive to external influences such as the presence of peers and the immediacy of rewards,
- Adolescents are less able to make informed decisions that require consideration of the long term<sup>5</sup>.

These adolescent characteristics provide the foundation for the adoption and implementation of developmentally informed practices, policies, and procedures that have proven effective in achieving the primary responsibilities of the juvenile justice system, which include accountability, prevention of reoffending, and fairness and equitable treatment. Unfortunately, and all too frequently in current practice, this growing body of knowledge does not inform the goals, design, and operation of the juvenile justice system. As a result, the outcomes are more likely to be negative interactions between youth and justice system officials, increased disrespect for the law and legal authority, and the reinforcement of a deviant identity and social disaffection<sup>6</sup>. The challenge going forward for Nebraska's juvenile probation and its stakeholders includes increasing the understanding and consistent application of the research findings by all partners involved at each decision point across the juvenile justice system and creating quality assurance methodologies that ensure fidelity to these principles and practices for every youth across all districts.

Upon closer examination of the origins of the research over the past decade, there is evidence of significant changes in brain structure and function during the period of adolescence<sup>7</sup> that has resulted in

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<sup>3</sup> Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System. July 2014. Council of State Governments Justice Center.

<sup>4</sup> Tuell, J., Harp, K., & Heldman, J. (2017). Developmental Reform in Juvenile Justice: Translating the Science of Adolescent Development to Sustainable Best Practice. Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice. <https://rfknrcji.org/resources/>.

<sup>5</sup> National Research Council. (2013). Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/14685>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Scientifically, adolescence has no precise chronological onset or endpoint. It refers to a phase in development between childhood and adulthood beginning at puberty, typically about 12 or 13, and ending in the late teens or early twenties. Generally speaking, referring to an adolescent focuses on those persons under age 18.

a strong consensus among neuroscientists about the nature of these changes. Much of this work has resulted from advances in magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) techniques that provide the opportunity to track development of brain structure, brain function, and brain connectivity in humans<sup>8</sup>. The evidence suggests that the three previously highlighted cognitive tendencies are linked to the biological immaturity of the brain and an imbalance among developing brain systems. Simply stated, the brain system that influences pleasure-seeking and emotional reactivity develops more rapidly than the brain system that supports self-control. This fact leaves adolescents less capable of self-regulation than adults<sup>9</sup>.

In addition to adolescent development being a contributing factor to emotional reactivity, trauma can affect neurological development. According to the 2012 publication, “Trauma in Dual Status Youth, Putting Things in Perspective,” there is a higher prevalence of youth with active trauma symptoms in the juvenile justice setting<sup>10</sup> than in the general population. It is imperative for agencies to recognize the influence of active trauma responses when working with youth and to factor them in as a responsivity factor when identifying appropriate services to support a youth.

Another key aspect of the research findings from *Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach* has significant implications for initial juvenile justice system responses and the consideration of alternatives to formal processing and diversion opportunities. Specifically, the research shows that for most youth the period of risky experimentation does not extend beyond adolescence, ceasing as identity settles with maturity<sup>11</sup>. The vast majority of youths arrested or referred to juvenile court have not committed serious offenses, and more than half of them appear in the system only once.

Both the seriousness and likelihood of offending are strongly affected by influences in youths’ environments — peers, parents, schools, and communities. While these firmly established research findings must practically inform the juvenile justice system and its affiliated partners, it does not suggest any change to the established primary responsibilities or aims of the juvenile justice system. Those responsibilities remain to:

1. hold youth accountable for wrongdoing,
2. prevent further offending, and
3. treat all youth with fairness and equity.

Within these responsibilities for the Nebraska juvenile probation system and its partners, the research strongly supports that focusing on the positive social development of youth can enhance and assure the protection of public safety. An examination of these responsibilities reflects their compatibility with the developmental approach to juvenile justice.

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<sup>8</sup> Steinberg, L. (2009). Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice. *Annual Review Clinical Psychology*, 5, 459-485.

<sup>9</sup> National Research Council. (2013). *Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/14685>

<sup>10</sup> Grisso, T. & Vincent, G. (2014). *Trauma in Dual Status Youth: Putting Things in Perspective*. Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice. <https://rfknrcij.org/resources/>.

<sup>11</sup> National Research Council. (2013).

### ***Accountability***

It is imperative that our juvenile justice systems provide an opportunity for youth to accept responsibility for their actions and make amends to individual victims and the community. This focus ensures that youth are answerable for wrongdoing, particularly in cases in which there is harm to person and/or property.

### ***Preventing Reoffending***

The best practice approach to reduce reoffending includes the commitment to the use of structured decision-making instruments that inform professional judgement at key decision points (e.g., risk-needs-responsivity [RNR] tools). In the case process, this includes referral/intake, diversion or alternative responses, adjudication, disposition, and case planning<sup>12</sup>. These scientifically validated tools and instruments inform appropriate levels of supervision by identifying whether a youth is at low, moderate or high risk to reoffend.

Further, RNR assessment tools (e.g., YLS-CMI, etc.) may be used to assess for the specific needs of the youth in identified domains (family, peers, behavioral health, education, etc.), permit a more effective matching of treatment and programmatic interventions that will ameliorate the risk to reoffend, and detail protective factors that can be integrated into case planning to support positive youth development. If implemented well, the use of RNR tools effectively target specific evidence-based interventions (e.g., therapeutic interventions such as aggression replacement therapy and cognitive-behavioral therapy) that reduce reoffending and produce fiscal returns relative to the costs of system involvement.

### ***Fairness and Equitable Treatment***

Another responsibility of juvenile justice that is supported by research is the requirement to treat all youth through the assurance that due process laws and procedures are protected for every youth and family involved in the juvenile court process. Fundamentally, this includes equal certainty that all youth have access to and are represented by properly trained defense counsel and that all youth have an opportunity to participate in the juvenile justice system proceedings. The fairness standard also applies to the practice of swift justice. An adherence to standards and timelines for case processing is critical in that the juvenile justice process is designed to teach youth that illegal behavior has consequences and that anyone who violates the law will be held accountable.

The RFK National Resource Center thus asserts that emerging from these primary areas of responsibility is the need to prioritize the following areas of practice if Nebraska's juvenile probation and the juvenile justice system are to optimize success:

### ***Collaborative Leadership***

As youth serving agencies often face the steady stream of immediate crises, it is frequently a challenge to dedicate time and attention to nurturing important professional partnerships. This can lead to a

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<sup>12</sup> Tuell, J. & Harp, K. (2019). Probation System Review Guidebook, 3rd Edition. Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice. <https://rfknrcji.org/resources/>.



fragmentation of efforts among well-meaning service professionals that undermines accomplishing goals, objectives, and outcomes that benefit the youth and families we serve. With varying missions and mandates, it is all too easy to argue for this separatist practice to continue even as we fail to realize positive outcomes as a community of service practitioners. The underlying premise for a developmental approach to juvenile justice system reform (e.g., less capacity for self-regulation, heightened sensitivity to peer pressure, and less ability to make judgements that require future orientation) provides the strongest case yet for system partners to find common ground around which a strong collaborative foundation can be built. With this strong scientific basis, our professional practitioners can collectively recognize that during this period of adolescence, our youth actively engage in risky decision-making in relation to authority at home, in school and in the community.

Collaboration is not merely a concept; rather it is a dynamic and detailed set of connected philosophies and actions. It is not episodically accomplished, but must be routinely applied through the development and adoption of policies, procedures and protocols effectively overseen by the persons who comprise the collaborative partnership.

#### *Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) Tools*

After more than two decades of research that confirmed the efficacy of scientifically validated and structured decision-making tools to screen and assess for risk to reoffend, there is still a significant gap between the research and practice. In view of the neuroscience of adolescents, instead of basing sanctions solely on the offense, a more effective approach is to assess each youth's risk for reoffending and reserve the most intensive monitoring and interventions (including both therapeutic services and sanctions) for those at highest risk. Moreover, evidence suggests that the best results come from matching services to a youth's specific "dynamic risk factors"—that is, risk factors that can be changed, such as substance abuse, poor school achievement, or lack of parental monitoring. Further, with a strong commitment to the RNR tools, juvenile justice system practitioners can more effectively target positive youth development opportunities that focus on increasing competency and cognitive skills development and recognizing individual strengths.

Nationally, a growing number of jurisdictions that have effectively implemented and sustained fidelity of RNR practices have evidence that the approach has significant positive impact on juvenile justice system performance and protection of public safety. The improved system performance achieves increased diversion of low-risk offenders from formal involvement in the juvenile justice system and the improved exchange of relevant information among prosecutors, public defenders and judges that permit more timely case processing and informed dispositions. The positive impact on public safety produces reduction of recidivism and corresponding improvements in cognitive skills and positive youth development. This key area of recalibration of practice is supported by the obligations detailed in Nebraska Legislative Bill 464, passed into law in 2014, which has been incorporated into multiple sections of the Nebraska Revised Statutes.

#### *Graduated Response / Sanctions*

A strong system of "graduated responses" – combining sanctions for violations and incentives for continued progress – can significantly reduce unnecessary incarceration or other out-of-home

placements, reduce racial and ethnic disparities, and improve successful probation completion rates and other outcomes for youth under supervision. There is compelling evidence that the juvenile justice system and its partners should incorporate this practice at key decision points that affect the trajectory of the youth into and out of system involvement. An effectively implemented system of responses and incentives may reduce harmful effects of confinement while holding the youth appropriately accountable. It is a “cardinal tenet of our justice system that punishment should be proportional to the offending behavior and evidence is now available from many criminal justice and youth-serving contexts that using incentives more frequently than sanctions is most likely to achieve behavior change.”<sup>13</sup>

### Positive Youth Development

Yet another practice directly informed by the research about adolescent development involves commitment to the concepts related to positive youth development (PYD). This approach erodes the deficit-based approach that dominates many of our juvenile justice and probation system paradigms for case management and acknowledges that youth are capable of stabilizing maladaptive behaviors when attached to a variety of social resources that facilitate healthy development. In the past decade, concentrating on positive youth development goals has provided the juvenile justice system with a compelling framework for service delivery, especially in cases involving younger juveniles and those referred with less serious crimes. The PYD asserts that reducing offending means not simply restricting opportunities to offend but expanding opportunities to grow. The practices associated with an effective PYD approach support development of more mature patterns of thinking, reasoning, and decision-making<sup>14</sup>.

In combination with the appropriate use of RNR approaches, case management plans should incorporate PYD opportunities into the strategies that strengthen cognitive skills and positive assets that ameliorate risk in the priority domains for treatment and intervention.

### Case Processing Timeline Standards

Research confirms that delays in the processing of youth through the justice system can have negative results for the youth, their families, and communities. Improving the timeliness of the justice process is far more than a technical matter for managers and judges; it is a critical part of policy and practice in ensuring the juvenile justice system fulfills its basic mission.”<sup>15</sup> The qualitative research findings on successful adoption of adherence to these improved practices highlighted two common themes:

- Success in addressing court delays requires leadership in the form of a court culture that is committed to case management, and
- Routine and shared communication is vital for any successful case management system, regardless of how automated that system may be.

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<sup>13</sup> Center for Children’s Law and Policy. (2016). Graduated Responses Toolkit: New Resources and Insights to Help Youth Succeed on Probation. Washington, DC. <http://www.cclp.org/graduated-responses-toolkit/>

<sup>14</sup> Schubert, C.A. & Mulvey, E.P (2014). Programs that Promote Positive Development Can Help Young Offenders Grow Up and Out of Crime. Chicago, IL: MacArthur Foundation.

<sup>15</sup> National Institute of Justice and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (2014). Delays in Youth Justice. Justice Research. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/237149.pdf>

Revising case processing timeline standards requires collaboration from the key system actors and includes judges, prosecutors, defense counsel, court administrators, and court/probation staff at a minimum.

### *Family Involvement and Engagement*

The active engagement and involvement of families, which by definition must include the nuclear, single parent, and extended family units, must be 1) based on their strengths and assets, and 2) provide for an active role and partnership in the development, implementation and management of comprehensive treatment plans for their children. Adolescent youth rely on the family, the primary natural support, to provide guidance, instruction and nurturance no matter the level of dysfunction and our efforts must seek to enhance and not supplant that support system in both the short- and long-term. The research is clear that absent the meaningful engagement and involvement of families in our planning and interventions there is a decreased likelihood of achieving the positive outcomes we seek for our youth.

The foundation of the Probation System Review and its findings and recommendations are built upon the belief that when this research and associated principles and practices are applied to the primary areas of juvenile justice system responsibility (accountability, preventing re-offending, and fairness and equitable treatment), then Probation has a higher likelihood of achieving its mission, goals, objectives and outcomes. The achievement of these outcomes is a shared community responsibility (e.g., the community of public and private actors and organizations).

## II. METHODOLOGIES

The RFK National Resource Center employed an interactive consultation process designed to assist and support, not supplant, the authority, talents, current initiatives, and work of leaders within Nebraska’s juvenile justice system. This initiative was undertaken with the guidance and support of the Executive Leadership Team that included participation from the leadership of the Supreme Court and Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation (Appendix A). Each member possessed the expertise and authority to oversee key decisions and activities potentially affecting reform. The Probation System Review Team (PSRT) was integral toward informing the process. The primary members of this group included:

- Senior Leadership from the Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation
- Juvenile and County Court Judges
- Interagency leadership including Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Education
- Statewide and local Law Enforcement
- Other critical partners responsible for supporting the youth justice system

At the outset of the project, the RFK National Resource Center team (RFK Team) worked with the Executive Leadership Team and PSRT to examine the most advantageous methodologies proven effective in past evaluations. The groups met at regular intervals during the project period to develop and refine the collaborative work plan, to determine the composition of relevant and necessary standing or ad hoc subcommittees, to discuss expectations and parameters, and to set any other necessary directions for the work.

The process and multiple methodologies contained herein have been utilized successfully in multiple state and local jurisdictions. The employed process and methods sought to fulfill and achieve the Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Nebraska (JSEN) goals. These goals include prevention efforts through supporting programs and services designed to meet the needs of identified youth who are at-risk or have violated Nebraska law and youth whose behavior is such that they endanger themselves or others.

The engagement of agency/organizational leadership, court, probation, and other relevant practitioners and stakeholders was essential to the development of these recommendations and findings. These recommendations capitalize on state and local expertise while seizing viable opportunities for reform. ***This collaborative approach substantially increases the likelihood that Nebraska’s juvenile probation and other relevant and critical youth serving partners within the court system will actively implement plan recommendations.***

In partnership with the RFK Team, the committees and working groups deployed the following methods to carry out the elements of the review:

### ***Routine Meetings with a Designated Project Leadership Team***

Site visits conducted on the following dates:

- July 14-16, 2021
- October 18-19, 2021
- November 17-19, 2021
- March 29-31, 2022

During each visit, scheduled meetings convened with the Executive Leadership Team provided direction for the execution of the work plan, allowed access to designated personnel, supported discussion and assessment on the progress of the evaluation, and offered dynamic suggestions to address preliminary themes and findings as the evaluation progressed. This methodology permitted opportunities for constructive conversations about the initial and ongoing observations and findings. As needed, video conferencing served to address relevant issues arising between site visits and to meet with ad hoc groups to provide information on topics introduced during the onsite meetings.

### ***Document Review***

The RFK Team reviewed foundational documents that detailed the practices, processes, philosophies, and data for the Juvenile Services Division. Throughout the process, document exchange and review further informed the primary topics of discussion. See Appendix B for a complete inventory of documents reviewed.

### ***Court Observation***

The RFK Team observed court processes including the interactions between key stakeholders. These observations occurred from August 9-11, 2022, in counties that provided a representative cross-section of the districts differing in geography, population, judicial procedure, and probation staffing. This exercise contributed toward the findings in this report.

### ***Process Mapping***

Process mapping through interactive interviews with selected probation staff informed an understanding of key decision points throughout the Nebraska juvenile justice system. The interviews relied upon a standard set of protocol questions to drive conversations that detailed the process for each of the represented juvenile probation districts. The purpose of this exercise was to analyze interfaces, handoffs, bottlenecks, and other case flow issues in the handling of cases internally. This included a discussion of what information is available at various decision points while identifying perspectives on interagency work processes and opportunities to improve practices in the priority areas for the review.

### ***Employee Survey***

Two electronic surveys served as a secondary source to support observations and identify areas for review. The decision to use two surveys occurred because probation work occurs in districts that are influenced and affected by local factors and the Administrative work is statewide. The survey labels were JJSN Employee Survey and JJSN Administrative Survey.

The JJSN Employee Survey took place in January-February 2022 (Appendix C). Invitations and an online link to participate included current juvenile probation staff and juvenile probation leadership

(supervisors, managers, probation chiefs). Participants had one month to complete the survey. The survey consisted of 77 multiple-choice and open-ended questions and protected anonymity of participants. There was an 83.5% (n=188) response rate.

The JJSEN Administrative Survey took place during February 2022 (Appendix D). The survey participants included Administrative leadership inclusive of the Directors, Deputies, Assistant Deputies and all regular administrative staff that conduct youth-based work. Because this was a smaller group of participants, the survey was active for two weeks. The survey consisted of 68 multiple-choice and open-ended questions and protected anonymity of participants. There was a 76% (n=26) completed survey response rate.

The RFK Team provided an overview of the findings and conclusions to the Executive Leadership Team in March 2022. Additional follow-up meetings (June 2022) with probation officers and Chief Probation Officers explored perspectives and reactions that further clarified interpretation of results. The results and conclusions from both surveys contributed to the findings and the development of the final recommendations.

### ***Data Assessment***

RFK National Resource Center teamed with the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) to assess strengths and challenges for the effective ability to measure system performance and youth outcomes. The NCJJ developed a standardized methodology to conduct a Data Capacity Assessment (DCA). The DCA Report (*included as Section V. Data Capacity Assessment*), conducted by Hunter Hurst, Senior Research Associate contains summarized findings and recommendations to inform and support remedies for enhancement in challenging areas of quality assurance and continuous quality improvement (e.g., data collection, management, use for routine reporting to inform policy and practice). We support the current progress of AOCF and endorse the finding and recommendations.

### ***Change Management***

The Impact Center at FPG Child Development Institute at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Impact Center) collaborated on this review and serves as the premier source for enhancing skills in change management through the application of core principles and tenets of Implementation Science. Dr. Robin Jenkins and Dr. Renee Boothroyd, Senior Implementation Specialists are renowned experts in this field of study and application. The Impact Center provided an analysis of organizational infrastructure and leadership/management capacity that effectively drives innovation and positive change within the AOCF. Their findings and conclusions inform multiple recommendations contained in this report inclusive of the following items:

- Management Infrastructure,
- Co-creation of Innovative Reforms,
- Leadership Management,
- Focus on Training and Coaching for Staff Development,
- Emphasis on Skill Development,
- Strategic Pace of Change.

### ***Behavioral Health Review***

Dr. Keith Cruise, Director of Clinical Training, Department of Psychiatry, Fordham University and Director of Behavioral Health Screening Services, National Youth Screening and Assessment Partners, LLC, performed a behavioral health assessment and conducted training on the best-practice methods for behavioral health screening and assessment to inform decision making for youth involved in Nebraska’s juvenile probation. His work is ongoing with the JJSEN project. Dr. Cruise’s recommendations that inform the support for a behavioral health screening process are included within this report and address:

- Selection of a comprehensive behavioral health screening methodology that integrates a full spectrum of results for risk, needs, and trauma,
- Development of improved infrastructure (policy and procedure) to support behavioral health reform, and
- Selection of pilot site(s) to enhance the implementation of improved processes.

### ***Probation Orders Analysis***

In partnership with the RFK Team, The Gault Center (formerly known as the National Juvenile Defender Center) staff began a review of relevant standard and supplemental probation orders with a focus on three key issues:

- number of conditions on the orders,
- types of conditions on the orders, and
- language and accessibility of the orders.

The analysis is ongoing at the time of this report with subsequent findings and recommendations forthcoming.

The RFK Team reviewed relevant court orders and pre-disposition reports from each district during the course of the system analysis. The findings contributed to the review of case management practices and the findings are separate from the analysis of The Gault Center.

### ***Key Stakeholder Interviews***

The RFK Team conducted multiple interviews with the key groups connected to the performance of the juvenile justice system in Nebraska. The information gathered was shared with the Executive Leadership Committee. The groups included:

Judicial Leadership  
Education Representatives  
Juvenile Probation Officers  
Service Provider Representatives  
Chief Probation Officers  
Youth Council and Family Advocates

County Attorneys  
Juvenile Justice Resource Specialists  
Public Defenders  
Diversion Representative  
Quality Assurance Representative

### ***Best Practice Analysis***

The best practice analysis of the juvenile justice system, core to this system evaluation, involved an ongoing review of the following practices framed against the current research and understanding of evidence-based approaches and probation policies and practices:

- Integration of adolescent development and positive youth development,
- Application of incentives and sanctions decision-making processes,
- Referral and intake process (intersection with probation and law enforcement; maximize opportunities for effective diversion from formal involvement),
- Implementation of risk/need screening instrument (YLS-CMI) and behavioral health screening instrument,
- Case processing (swift, certain, fair),
- Use of data (quantitative and qualitative) reports to probation management and collaboration of key stakeholders),
- Measurement of desired recidivism measures and outcomes,
- Creation of infrastructure and management to sustain positive innovation and system change.

This applied method for analysis occurred routinely within the PSRT meetings and in interviews with judges, county attorneys and public defenders and supplemented in-person court observations in multiple districts across Nebraska.



### **III. NEBRASKA JUVENILE JUSTICE**

#### **A. Purpose and Intent of Juvenile Code of Nebraska**

The intent, authority and purposes codified in Nebraska Revised Statutes (NRS) §43-246 reflect the following:

Acknowledging the responsibility of the juvenile court to act to preserve the public peace and security, the Nebraska Juvenile Code shall be construed to effectuate the following:

- 1) To assure the rights of all juveniles to care and protection and a safe and stable living environment and to development of their capacities for a healthy personality, physical well-being, and useful citizenship and to protect the public interest;
- 2) To provide for the intervention of the juvenile court in the interest of any juvenile who is within the provisions of the Nebraska Juvenile Code, with due regard to parental rights and capacities and the availability of non-judicial resources;
- 3) To provide for the intervention of the juvenile court in the interest of any juvenile who is within the provisions of the Nebraska Juvenile Code, with due regard to parental rights and capacities and the availability of non-judicial resources;
- 4) To remove juveniles who are within the Nebraska Juvenile Code from the criminal justice system whenever possible and to reduce the possibility of their committing future law violations through the provision of social and rehabilitative services to such juveniles and their families;
- 5) To offer selected juveniles the opportunity to take direct personal responsibility for their individual actions by reconciling with the victims through juvenile offender and victim mediation and fulfilling the terms of the resulting agreement which may require restitution and community service;
- 6) To achieve the purposes of subdivisions (1) through (3) of this section in the juvenile's own home whenever possible, separating the juvenile from his or her parent when necessary for his or her welfare, the juvenile's health and safety being of paramount concern, or in the interest of public safety and, when temporary separation is necessary, to consider the developmental needs of the individual juvenile in all placements, to consider relatives as a preferred potential placement resource, and to make reasonable efforts to preserve and reunify the family if required under section 43-283.01;
- 7) To promote adoption, guardianship, or other permanent arrangements for children in the custody of the Department of Health and Human Services who are unable to return home; to provide a judicial procedure through which these purposes and goals are accomplished and enforced in which the parties are assured a fair hearing and their constitutional and other legal rights are recognized and enforced;
- 8) To assure compliance, in cases involving Indian children, with the Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Act; and
- 9) To make any temporary placement of a juvenile in the least restrictive environment consistent with the best interests of the juvenile and the safety of the community.

It is important to identify this codified language as a preview to the structure and operations of Nebraska's juvenile probation as it establishes the baseline for the review and assessment of the

functions and practice for achieving the intent and desired performance related to public safety, accountability and positive youth development that ameliorates the risk for re-offending.

## **B. Nebraska Juvenile Probation Structure**

Probation services in Nebraska are responsive to the Court and fall under the judicial branch of government. The Administrative Office of Courts and Probation (AOCP) is the entity responsible for leadership and oversight to achieve the statutory mission, goals and outcomes. The Probation Administrator is responsible for directing the statewide AOCP, which is inclusive of juvenile and adult probation services in Nebraska. The Juvenile Services Division of the AOCP and is responsible for the statewide administration of intake, investigations, supervision, and services for youth. Administrative staff interact with juvenile justice stakeholders within and among the twelve districts in Nebraska. Nebraska has three separate juvenile courts located in Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy counties. In the remaining areas, juvenile matters are heard in county courts. Two of the 12 districts have courts that are juvenile specific and the other 10 districts have courts that handle adult and juvenile cases. Chief Probation Officers oversee support and case management staff (Appendix E) and lead the 12 districts. The Juvenile Services Division seeks to prevent juveniles from returning to the juvenile justice system by:

1. Engaging families and juveniles in the court process,
2. Eliminating barriers to accessing effective treatment services,
3. Partnering with educational and community stakeholders.

Juvenile probation operates with a diminished emphasis on punitive responses and focuses on ensuring public safety through a balanced approach of incentives and sanctions that incorporates the evidence related to adolescent brain development while providing for services that will decrease a youth's risk to reoffend.

## IV. OBSERVATION, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Element A: ADMINISTRATION

#### A. Introduction

The review of administration entailed a review of the policies, procedures, and operations, along with analysis of feedback provided by stakeholders, members of the AOCB, probation officers, and district leadership.

The review considered the co-occurring reform and change initiatives affecting the AOCB staff, Chief Probation Officers (CPOs), and key stakeholders for juvenile probation including:

- Advanced Coaching for Excellence (AC4E) (Sustainability and Fidelity Plan),
- Workload Study,
- Emerging Adults,
- SWOT Analysis,
- Salary Study.

These initiatives are evidence of the fact that AOCB leadership is a self-evaluating agency willing to acknowledge and address challenges that affect the workforce and their ability to provide effective management and services for the communities of Nebraska. The AOCB has demonstrated a courageous commitment to ongoing review to ensure operations are supportive of the most effective methods to support youth, families, and professional staff to achieve the goal of statutory mandates and provide for positive outcomes.

The review of AOCB focused on policies, procedures, and operations, as well as the application of probation practices in each district. The analysis used feedback from probation officers, stakeholders, and partners to inform findings.

Juvenile probation across Nebraska and within each of the 12 districts is guided by statewide policy with fidelity expected by all districts. This approach acknowledges that each district has unique factors affecting application of these policies. Prominent among these distinguishing factors include available staffing, services and programming, and court structure.

*The key issues for examination in this review element were:*

1. whether the probation policies and procedures are a relevant guide for daily practice,
2. how management practices contribute to the overall functioning of probation,
3. how the design and delivery of training support desired probation practices,
4. whether the probation supervision is effectively carried out, and
5. whether services to probationers are effectively delivered.

In addressing probation practice and implementation in Element A, the review began with an analysis of policies, procedures, and operations that govern probation administration.

Specifically, the PSRT and other stakeholders examined how probation practices are informed and guided by its memorialized documentation related to probation leadership, managerial oversight, supervision of clients, and training. This was also the initial opportunity to ensure that the review was significantly informed by feedback from probation staff and relevant stakeholders (e.g., judges, prosecutors, public defenders, etc.).

## **B. Policies and Procedures Manual**

The analysis of the AOC's policies and procedures began with an inquiry and discussion about the documents that guide the operations of probation and the daily activities of the probation officers.

*Questions that guided this part of the review:*

- Do the mission, vision, policies, and procedures link well to each other?
- Do the mission, vision, policies, and procedures reflect best practices?
- Do the mission, vision, policies, and procedures link well to daily juvenile probation operations?

Effective organizations have a clear mission that forms the foundation for the strategies that guide daily operations. High-performing organizations have greater effectiveness when vision, mission, and values statements are clearly articulated and accountability plans are incorporated into a management strategy.

AOC is currently developing updated vision and mission statements. The State Probation Administrator is seeking input from staff in all districts, and the finalized statements reflecting staff input will be presented to the Court for its review. The RFK Team agrees with developing a new set of statements that will align with the current practices and represent the guiding principles for the agency. The method through which feedback is sought reflects solid leadership principles and will likely contribute to increased alignment with the final vision and mission statements. Because the revised mission and vision are still in development, they will not be included in this report.

### **Recommendations:**

- Formally incorporate the final vision and mission statements into policy,
- Identify policies and procedures for future reviews that includes the timeline and process to ensure consistent and ongoing alignment of the policies supporting the AOC mission and vision.

Nebraska juvenile probation is guided by statewide policy and protocols as well as district level operating processes. The statewide policy establishes a standard expectation but allows the districts to develop their own procedures to meet identified criteria in recognition of the unique nature of the districts particular to their geography, staffing, and court structures. The statewide policies and protocols are available to staff through a database called Zequel. These policies set the standard expectation for core practices. Policies are reviewed in regular intervals with oversight provided by an executive policy committee. The policies provide expectations on key activities to which probation officers adhere. This includes the topics of intake, dual status youth, court recommendations, record confidentiality, case management, and out-of-home placements.

The Zequel database contains documents outlining information on juvenile probation protocols that guide the application of the policies. Available to all AOCB staff, these policies and protocols include other topics (e.g., predisposition, assessment, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers (YRTC), discharge, etc.) and other operational components supporting the delivery of probation services. It is a cumbersome system to navigate and proves difficult to find additional detail that would aid in the application of the defined processes. During the interview process, staff commented on their difficulty navigating the database to find what they were looking for to guide their practice. In fact, the employee survey revealed that only 60.4% of staff agreed that the policy manual was useful for guiding their work. In supplemental conversations, some staff discussed the difficulty with accessing policy and protocols when working in the field or when working the overnight intake shift. When the policy, as written, is not easily consultable to drive practice, then there is risk that individuals will inadvertently alter those processes to accommodate their comfort of application. Over time, this circumstance heightens the risk for drift from fidelity of intended practice. This affects fair and equal treatment for all youth.

As a noted strength, the policies and protocols incorporate the AOCB commitment to best practice (e.g., family engagement, identifying responsivity factors, using risk to drive supervision and other risk-need principles). The policies, protocols, and training further demonstrate AOCB commitment to incorporation of new and/or revised practices. However, a method to ensure sustainable consistency of alignment and integration of the multiple policies and expected practices could strengthen the performance to these expectations across all districts.

For example, criteria in the Juvenile Intake and Court Recommendation Protocol outlines the process for requesting a continuance when an assessment of juvenile risk is unavailable, thus targeted interventions cannot be identified in line with recommended practice. This protocol represents AOCB's understanding and commitment to the best method for matching interventions to a youth's risk and needs. However, this policy is not consistent with instruction in the New Probation Officer Training (NPOT). In week 5 training (Juvenile Investigations), the opening dialogue informs participants about a process known as direct probation or bench probation. This is a process where the court moves directly to disposition without a predisposition investigation. The training reflects the court identifies these youth as low risk. Though this training is meant to inform staff about a court practice, this training undercuts the value of the assessment tools, especially for a population of youth that may be better served without formal justice involvement. Moreover, it fails to support the best-practice method for identifying youth risk prior to recommending a level of supervision.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Streamline access to the policies and protocols to provide a simplified method for viewing the policy and protocol together, thus increasing adherence to agency policy.
- Expand the objectives of the review committee to include comparing existing policies, protocols and trainings and providing updates when an identified inconsistency misaligns with best practices.
- Optimize the current routine process to account for identifying all areas that require attention for edits and/or updates prior to implementing new policies or trainings.
- Identify key policies and protocols for training at the local level to support staff competency with expected practices.

## C. Management Practices

### *Implementation Science*

The RFK Team examined the organizational management practices that affect juvenile probation services. Information gathered through qualitative interviews with the leadership, administrative staff, CPOs, supervisors, and the probation staff, as well as through consultation with the Impact Center, informed the examination. The Employee Survey and stakeholder interviews with critical partners (e.g., judges, county attorneys, public defender) also informed this area of the review.

Early in the review process, AOCPP leadership proactively engaged with the Impact Center to integrate principles of implementation science in anticipation of the organizational changes and readiness preparation essential to adopting this report's recommendations. Core competencies addressed through implementation science (IS) included functional and effective leadership/teaming structures, workforce development systems, establishment of a continuous learning cycle, quality improvement learning systems, media strategies, communication, and networking systems. Nebraska has a strong advocate for commitment to IS in its State Probation Administrator. She has continued to challenge the leadership team to evolve the culture of probation, think inclusively, and to adopt the use of evidence-based practices to improve AOCPP. Given that the research is incontrovertible regarding the positive and long-term impact of adopting IS, the RFK Team applauds her strong advocacy and positive leadership and her willingness to demonstrate adaptive leadership skills in concert with AOCPP Leadership Team to optimize the long-term improvement of system performance and positive youth outcomes.

Implementation principles enhances organizational capacity and infrastructure that inevitably addresses the concerns revealed to the RFK Team by members of juvenile probation staff across various roles. These concerns demonstrated staff felt overwhelmed by continuously bringing on new initiatives. Feedback provided during group interviews reflected the grievance that staff were often asked to focus on a single priority area of change only to be drawn away from that task to support another emerging priority. The Employee Survey revealed that nearly 30% of staff did not feel supported by AOCPP. Additionally, 43% of staff who completed the Administrative Survey did not feel adequately recognized by AOCPP. Adaptive leadership skills prepare AOCPP leadership personnel and staff to be nimble and accept that practices and processes are continually changing and evolving. Additionally, it teaches leaders to anticipate challenges that may arise and to account for them early on in the implementation cycle. Importantly, it creates focus for leaders on what is important to their practice and encourages discarding policies, processes, and protocols that are no longer providing value.

Skills and techniques learned through the intensive work with the Impact Center, to which AOCPP has committed, will enhance implementation of current and future reforms, including the endorsed and adopted recommendations contained in the Probation System Review Report. Demonstrated progress is apparent through:

- Adoption of IS principles,
- Initial leadership restructuring that involves the inclusion of all CPOs,
- Establishment of a concise list of AOCPP priorities,

- Development of a “mental model” (in final form known as a business model),
- Creation of a training structure to support new initiatives.

The RFK Team recognizes the important action by AOCB that occurred during the Probation System Review. These actions accelerate the likelihood for achievement of goals and objectives and support the necessary changes to policy and practice aligned with desired system performance and youth outcomes. An ongoing challenge to this progress includes the continual commitment of juvenile justice system stakeholders to the collaboration necessary to sustain this progress. Element C (Intra- and Interagency Work Processes) includes additional observations and findings regarding the commitment of critical stakeholders to the core principles and best practices, inclusive of their understanding of IS.

### ***Training***

Training is an important method to enhance employee performance, grow staff’s knowledge base and improve job skills. The absence of well-developed training curriculum, supportive coaching, and effective supervision, and training delivery methods can lead to variance in employee performance that ultimately affects the outcomes of the youth. This part of the review examines those factors within three distinct AOCB training types: New Employee, Refresher/ Booster, and Stakeholder.

The RFK Team accessed the New Probation Officer Training modules as part of the document review. This training protocol is a set of courses delivered over seven weeks. The topics covered include:

- Week 1 - Evidence Based Practice (EBP), Enhanced Family Engagement, Ethics, Vision, Real Colors, Working with Victims of Crime, Service Definitions,
- Week 2 - Cultural Inclusion, Motivational Interviewing,
- Week 3 - Suicide, American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), Foundations of Substance Abuse, Mental Health and Co-Occurring Disorders, Trauma, LGBTQ,
- Week 4 - Adult Supervision Practices, Dual Status Youth, Introduction to Adolescent Development
- Week 5 - Juvenile Intake, NYS, YLS 2.0,
- Week 6 - Interstate Compact, Out of Home Placement,
- Week 7 - Group Facilitation, Behavioral-Based Case and Caseload Management, Family Team Meetings, Resiliency.

The current training curriculum is a strength supportive of AOCB’s commitments to research-driven and evidence-informed practice. The core tenets of best practice frequently serve as introductions to subsequent training topics and build understanding for application of expected practice. For example, training in Week 1 on EBP gives an overview of criminogenic needs and serves as an important component in the Week 5 module on the YLS 2.0. Though there is discussion of best practices within the current curriculum, there is no distinct curriculum for adolescent development beyond a basic introductory session in Week 4 to set the stage for how youth are separate from adults. This distinct focus is especially imperative in districts where supervisors and managers oversee juvenile and adult probation officers.

**Recommendation:**

- Add a separate module for adolescent development to ensure staff training, proficiency of understanding, and application of skills that underscore the unique characteristics of adolescence and the approaches that produce positive behavior change to reduce future engagement in the juvenile justice system and protect community safety.

Nebraska has a seminal model developed within District 3J for the construct of Adolescent Development Training for staff and for external partners. AOCPC has recognized the quality of this model and is in the process of extending it statewide. In each case where Adolescent Development is included in the core training, AOCPC must continue to examine the benefits from utilizing the District 3J curriculum.

Booster training provides opportunities for staff to expand their skillsets, advance knowledge for increased expertise, and achieve measurable new levels of competency within their roles. Effective booster training contributes to a greater capacity for practical application of the skills in combination with accrued job experience. The RFK Team found that district leadership refers staff for training events, but there is no annual requirement for staff to participate in a set of mandated trainings to increase competency and reaffirm tenets of the system. This circumstance undermines consistency of practice and fails to ensure proficiency of understanding and application of the fundamental skills required of AOCPC staff and stakeholders.

**Recommendations:**

- Survey the districts for key topics that will support their work and build into a set of booster trainings.
- Engage CPOs in identifying training topics that will enhance the performance of their staff.
- Develop a Booster Training plan to inform sustainability including who will deliver the trainings and who will construct the curriculum.
- Initial booster training curriculums should include adolescent development, YLS 2.0, motivational interviewing, and case planning.

In a well-balanced system enabled to achieve optimal performance, all key youth justice partners embrace the research and evidence informing the basis for policies and expected practices. AOCPC has made a commitment to best practice and has incorporated those practices and performance expectations at key decision points throughout the juvenile justice system. The use of the Risk Assessment Instrument, YLS, and Nebraska Youth Screening are examples of how AOCPC has incorporated assessment instruments to provide consistency and identify appropriate supervision and service levels for youth. Despite the very nature of an adversarial justice system, each partner operationalizes their role with shared goals and outcomes. Unfortunately, the Nebraska juvenile justice system has not achieved balance with all key stakeholders. Most notable among the set of critical system partners, the RFK Team finds that in the aggregate county attorneys have not embraced the core principles of practice that achieve the shared goals of the juvenile justice system. Specifically, contrary to the evidence, county attorneys in multiple districts still utilize offense type as the singular driver of decision-making. This approach is contrary to nearly three decades of evidence that reflects enhanced reduction of reoffending and community/public safety occurs when science-based individualized



assessment is applied. The YLS currently in use by AOCB is among the scientifically validated instruments that produce enhanced outcomes. The myriad factors affecting adoption and adherence to key decisions within the juvenile justice system among critical litigants in the juvenile justice system are real. The reasons for failure to commit to addressing those factors as a collaboration of stakeholders within each district are undermining the effectiveness of the juvenile justice system in Nebraska.

An approach that focuses on supporting an increased awareness and understanding to strengthen the practice of county attorneys within the juvenile justice system takes advantage of the current requirements for continuing education (20 hours annually) within their discipline. Committing to completion of specific juvenile justice best-practice training modules (e.g., adolescent development, balance of incentives and sanctions, and risk-need-responsivity [specifically involving the YLS at a minimum]) within those required hours before practicing in the juvenile justice system advances the discipline as a true collaborator in producing the desired goals and outcomes of the juvenile justice system. To ensure fair, consistent and equal application of best practice and thereby maximize the effectiveness of the Nebraska juvenile justice system, county attorneys must participate in regular training on adolescent development, application of the scientifically validated screening and assessment instruments, and understanding of the impact of targeted, evidence-based services for youth and their families.

**Recommendation:**

- Convene working group with AOCB and the County Attorney Association to adopt a mutually agreed upon method to incorporate training curriculum for attorneys working with youth to improve the working knowledge of what drives youth behavior and support their positive development. Expectation from this recommendation is for development of a mutually agreed upon “certification process” ensuring sustainability of this recommendation.

The Court is the ultimate authority for dispensation of judicial orders mandating supervision and services for youth. The RFK Team did not find that all judges handling juvenile delinquency and status youth matters are proficient in the understanding of the research informed and evidence-based practices that AOCB is promulgating. Not unlike the necessity for county attorneys referenced above, it is critical that all judges rendering decisions in their respective courts participate in training and/or learning opportunities to enhance their ability to apply these fundamental tenets of effective juvenile justice system practice.

**Recommendation:**

- Juvenile court judges coordinate with AOCB to develop a routine set of educational learning sessions that focus on adolescent development, application of the scientifically validated screening and assessment instruments, and understanding of the impact of targeted, evidence-based services for youth and their families. The education sessions must include required topics for new judges and continuing learning (e.g., Booster events) for sitting members of the judiciary. Expectation from this recommendation is for development of a mutually agreed upon “certification process” ensuring sustainability of this recommendation.

## D. Training Development

Training development consists of identifying the training design (web based, instructor-led) and curriculum development to instruct recipients on core competencies. Throughout the review, the RFK Team learned of previous training sessions offered at the onset of an initiative, but then sparsely offered subsequently due to limited operational capacity to sustain the training. The review revealed some core trainings transferred to the districts after initially originating within AOC. This has contributed to unequal access to training and variability in the content across the districts. To be beneficial and applicable for the field, training must have a strong planning element at the onset to ensure sustainability of the concepts in practice. Effective training plans include:

- Identifying the curriculum (initial and booster sessions),
- Identifying method for delivery and content (who and what), and
- Developing method to measure knowledge acquisition in the core competencies.

Following the embraced principles of implementation science will permit AOC to develop training that is effective and sustainable. While perhaps contrary to the goals of organization often driven by immediate responses to crisis, slowing down or pacing the development of effective training plans will serve the long-term goal of addressing the needs of youth by having a better-informed and more qualified staff that relies on best practices to serve their communities.

Nebraska has implemented the Advanced Coaching 4 Excellence (AC4E) training curriculum to develop competency around the core areas of best practice. As with other trainings, there was not an initial sustainability plan and this created gaps for maintaining the training over time. Additionally, not all districts had the staff available to continue training. This training is worth investing resources as it captures key elements of best practices: Actuarial Risk/Needs, Enhancing Intrinsic Motivation, Targeting Interventions, Skill Training with Directed Practice (e.g., Aggression Replacement Training, Thinking for a Change), Increased Positive Reinforcement, Engaging Ongoing Support (Community Providers), Measuring Relevant Processes/Practices (case level and staff level), and Providing Feedback (accountability and outcomes).

### **Recommendation:**

- Reexamine the training plan for AC4E to ensure it has the necessary components to support long-term sustainability (trainers, content, and method of delivery).

## E. Communication

Communications from AOC disseminated to staff employ various strategies that include a newsletter, data report distribution, and messaging through the CPOs. The review identified that the CPOs did not feel connected to the AOC message and did not demonstrate the authority or ability to deliver information skillfully to their staff in a manner that positively affected job responsibilities. Staff felt data reports were more like being on a “naughty list” as opposed to providing direction for areas to focus on for skill building and/or practice reform. The RFK Team learned there was not always a direct connection from the CPOs to administrative decision-makers and this resulted in failed communication of district

priorities and ideas, which could support business processes within their districts. Through this area of examination, the RFK Team also learned that a small percentage of the CPOs are not supportive of the practices that form the foundation of an evidence-based system. The CPOs are the main connective tissue that links the probation practices with the courts. Within their group, it is critically important to have regular interaction and education on the priority areas that AOCF and Probation focuses on and directly affect the education and course of practice for all stakeholders.

The CPOs value inclusion and this reality is a significant benefit to developing leadership and interconnected relationships with AOCF and other key stakeholders that allow for reliable transmission of the mission and vision at the district level on a routine basis. Solutions to incorporate the CPOs into the leadership team are already underway. The AOCF leadership has added the CPOs to the systemic leadership team and added co-facilitation duties for group meetings. This provides the opportunity to increase the trust between the districts and the AOCF leadership. This practice increases the opportunity to secure committed buy-in from the CPOs and ultimately their staff that provide practical direction to positive reforms within juvenile probation.

## **Element B: PROBATION SUPERVISION**

### **A. Introduction**

The review and analysis of probation supervision practices and approaches included the decision-making processes throughout the juvenile justice system (e.g., arrest, referral, detention intake, adjudication, disposition, case planning and management, revocation, case closure) and the resulting assignment and oversight of particular groups of probationers in specific programs as compared to recognized best practices standards. The review focused on probation supervision and areas for practice development and improvement.

*The key issues in this review element were:*

1. Analysis of the probation officers' approach to supervision, the role of the probation officer, their day-to-day tasks and how the tasks connect to desired youth outcomes,
2. Review of professional staff responsibilities, mandates, and expected products and outcomes that support improved decision making at each key step, and
3. Analysis of decision-making processes and the assignment and handling of particular groups of probationers (e.g., risk levels, special populations) in specific programs.

*Questions that guided this part of the review within Element B include:*

- How are cases assigned to probation officers?
- What role does the probation officer play in the life of a probationer?
- Are supervision levels matched based on risk and needs through the use of structured decision-making tools?
- How are services matched to a youth's needs?
- What products are the probation officers responsible for creating? How are they used?
- What are the supervision criteria for each probationer group?

- How clearly are client outcomes identified for each probationer?
- How do probation officers' tasks connect to desired youth outcomes?
- How is staff evaluated? Based on what criteria?

In the analysis of this element, the review relied heavily on the group discussions that took place with the juvenile probation officers and supervisors, the PSRT, CPOs, and the Employee Survey feedback. This element of the review focused on the Probation's commitment to use screening and assessments effectively to guide case planning, dispositional recommendations, and case management activities.

## **B. Staffing**

If administration serves as the neurological center of an organization, then probation is the heartbeat. Good probation practices identify youth who are appropriate for probation supervision and seek to address their criminogenic needs by connecting them to interventions that can build resiliency through protective factors that reduce their likelihood of returning to the juvenile justice system.

### ***Recruitment***

Probation cannot fulfill this role when staffing is inadequate. There is a nationwide crisis in hiring and retention across many employment sectors and Nebraska Juvenile Probation is not exempt from this issue. Throughout the review, stakeholders discussed the understaffing of districts. In some instances, staffing deficits led to supervisors taking on case management coverage. When supervisors are case managing, there is not adequate opportunity to fulfill their role of coaching and supervising in a way that promotes and ensures fidelity to policy and practice. Additionally, this circumstance resulted in exemptions for some probation staff from attendance at court hearings to optimize oversight of probationers in the field. The courtroom absence of the primary probation professionals, who are working most closely with the youth and family, negatively affects effective communication of case compliance and progress. Understaffing also leaves the remaining probation officers to manage higher caseloads placing them in a position to triage case crises instead of providing proactive early interventions and positive behavioral supports. While there is no accepted, evidence-based model for staffing level determinations, there is guiding criteria to inform the administrative and funding decisions. These criteria include caseload size, risk levels of cases, and weight of job descriptions that detail responsibilities and activities (e.g., ancillary duties in the community, courtroom appearances and expectations, administrative expectations, travel related to geographic coverage, and committee or working group assignments, etc.).

### **Recommendation:**

- Utilize the results of the workload study to establish criteria for staffing of the districts that is predicated on workload responsibilities, caseload size, job requirements and expectations.

### ***Retention***

Retention of trained and knowledgeable staff is equally as important as recruitment of new staff. The RFK Team learned from district leadership of the frequent transition of staff from juvenile probation to adult probation. This movement is often associated with the assertion the adult probation system is

driven by clarity of operational and decision-making rules (e.g., an adult cited for marijuana use is eligible for a fine whereas a youth is placed on probation with multiple enforcement conditions), and a frustrating inconsistency of expectations in juvenile probation. Probation staff also reported they felt there was too much work and not enough time to do it – frequently characterized by the conundrum of “paperwork vs field work.” In the rural districts, probation staff experience significant travel requirements. In this present environment, probation officers prioritize quantity of activities versus quality application of activities more directly affecting mission, goals, and outcomes. Retaining qualified staff that have participated and benefitted from training and experience that enhances their skill will support AOC’s mission.

#### **Recommendation:**

- AOC to continue their commitment to retention of qualified staff by:
  - Incentivizing current staff through career ladder or promotional opportunity with salary increases based on service time and demonstration of skills.
  - Consistently utilizing meaningful performance reviews to support promotional opportunities to bring value to the process instead of it being a perfunctory requirement for supervisory staff.
  - Reviewing responsibilities and tasks of probation officers and eliminating tasks that are legacy duties without practical application and impact on youth outcomes and AOC mission.

Addressing the recruitment and retention issues is foundational for AOC and CPOs given their negative impact on consistent and effective supervision practices. The RFK Team recognizes and supports AOC’s continued focus on recruitment efforts and retention of staff. Currently this action includes development of an improved performance review process incentivizing prioritized activities and including demonstrated proficiency of critical skills and rewards for service time.

### **C. Behavioral Health Screening**

As part of the review, AOC worked with Dr. Keith Cruise for an assessment of the behavioral health screening process. AOC currently relies on multiple screening methods and instruments without consistency of application for informing case planning and next steps across all districts. The RFK Team also found that juvenile justice staff lack the necessary understanding of the reason for their use and are therefore inconsistent in applying the results to decision-making. As evidence of this troubling finding, many probation staff asserted the screening practice is an administrative requirement because the instruments are built into the database and must be completed to access other case management screens within the system.

The RFK Team found two other concerns affecting consistent and effective screening for behavioral health. First, the absence of criteria establishing timeframes. This has led to delays in securing critical information supporting effective case plans. Second, the RFK Team finds that stakeholders promulgate recommendations without the benefit of behavioral health screening and/or assessment results. To the second concern, the RFK Team found inconsistent use of predisposition investigations. Reliance on these reports would more routinely ensure consideration of behavioral health screening and assessment results. Recommendations made in the absence of this scientifically validated methodology often leads

to costly evaluations unsupported by objective evidence. Further, the absence of timely conduct of screening and evaluation often leads to harmful delays in addressing existing or emergent behavioral health concerns. Given the incontrovertible research regarding the prevalence of mental health, trauma and substance abuse in the juvenile justice and probation population, this action undermines the fundamental mission and outcome goals sought by probation and the juvenile justice system.

Resulting from the partnership with Dr. Cruise, a new Task Force with subcommittees focused on:

1. *Training* - curriculum delivery to all internal and external partners on behavioral health screening process
2. *Policy and Procedure* - to support implementation by defining the process
3. *Cross System Communication* - sharing of information
4. *Community Capacity* - availability of resources matched to a youth's screening results
5. *Data Acquisition and Quality Assurance* - information shared to support the process, referral capacity, and fidelity to the process

The Task Force has been working as the review was occurring and have completed their primary task by selecting the Child Trauma Screen (CTS) and Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument-2 (Maysi-2) screening instrument. Additional critical steps still lay ahead for the Task Force and include:

1. Creation of the policy and corresponding procedures that drive consistent application of the process for administering and using the behavioral health screening in every district,
2. Development of a training curriculum and implementation plan for the initial and booster training within all districts and among required probation staff and stakeholders,
3. Conduct an assessment of evaluation, treatment and service interventions within each district and produce a report of findings that must be shared with providers and key stakeholders (e.g., judges, attorneys, and clients).

The RFK Team believes the JJRS in each district must assist in identifying the availability of resources and documentation of resource gaps. The existing policy and procedure reflect consistent JJRS expectations that include advising AOCF when new resources need to be developed to be responsive to the needs of the youth identified for referral.

The AOCF will stagger implementation to provide an opportunity to hone the process before rolling it out statewide. The RFK Team congratulates and supports the AOCF for commitment to this innovative approach and strongly endorses continued collaboration with Dr. Keith Cruise on implementation of this consistent and comprehensive approach to effective and efficient behavioral health screening statewide.

#### **D. Assessment and Case Management Tools**

Assessment and screening is a practice that helps practitioners assess, classify, and treat the individuals for which they are committed to helping. AOCF has integrated the YLS into policy and protocol and conducted independent testing for validation of the instrument in the state. The longstanding commitment to its use in accordance with the evidence and best practice methods is commendable.

Unfortunately, despite this commitment, training to ensure application consistent to fidelity of best practice is varied.

For an assessment to provide accurate results for youth and reliability across probation officers, there must be training to guard against inevitable drift of application. The RFK Team found that booster training is occurring in variable periods across districts (e.g., monthly or annually) and the content is not supported by a centrally developed curriculum. Therefore, the RFK Team concludes probation officers are not provided the same training and coaching opportunity to ensure consistency, enhancement of the requisite skills and abilities, and fairness for each youth.

Enhanced training resulting in adopted curricula materials and routine booster events serve to emphasize the necessity of the YLS beyond the frequent view of its perfunctory nature. AOCPC expects the instrument to fundamentally drive case planning (AKA Success Plan) and decision-making, but the RFK Team found the YLS has not infiltrated the philosophy of practice among all probation officers. This finding was reflected in the continued and frequent reliance on compliance-based conditions that are not related to the risk-need-responsivity finding in the YLS and the corresponding lack of matched interventions for youth. Additionally, court observations and document review methodologies conducted by the RFK Team revealed that YLS assessed low and high-risk youth often experienced no variation of recommendations.

**Recommendation:**

- Commit to a training plan for the YLS that includes an identified curriculum focusing on proficiency of understanding, application that improves interrater reliability, and specified intervals for initial and ongoing training requirements.

AOCPC's adoption of supportive resources and matrices assists with evidence-based decision-making (e.g., service recommendation matrix [Appendix F]). The matrix guides probation officers when making recommendations to the court and requires the probation officer to match a youth's score (risk) with their offense type to determine the appropriate level of supervision and service types. Generally, appropriate use of a service matrix increases the effectiveness and accuracy of assigned supervision levels. In the best practice approach, the process incorporates an override/underride process usually involving supervisory review before such overrides are applied.

Despite this guidance, the RFK Team found that recommendations for services were made without regard for the matrix. From the document review, youth who scored low-risk were often recommended for services reserved for youth in higher risk categories. Overall, the matrix did not adequately prevent probation officers from implementing compliance-based conditions, which are inconsistent with research-informed practices (e.g., curfew, drug screening, etc.) and unrelated to the recommended service interventions directly connected to reduction of risk.

## Recommendations:

- Develop an override/underride process that requires approval from a supervisor to ensure appropriate intensity and frequency of probation contact corresponding with identified risk level for youth.
- Conduct qualitative reviews across all districts in routine intervals to ensure fidelity of established practice for the Service Recommendation Matrix.
- Provide training and instruction on the effective and consistent use of the adopted Service Recommendation Matrix that includes evidence of understanding of concept and proficiency of application in practice.

## E. Pre-Dispositional Investigation

Research consistently confirms that low-risk youth experiencing limited juvenile justice system contact provides optimal outcomes. This approach also reserves the time and resources of a juvenile justice system for youth that are at higher risk for reoffending that may compromise public safety. The first touchpoint for Probation for most referred youth is often the predisposition investigation (PDI).

The PDI process is “a comprehensive investigation and report outlining the background, environmental factors and status of a juvenile who is awaiting disposition. The information obtained is to be specific to the circumstances of the adjudicated offense, risk, and needs of the juvenile in order to provide information that will assist the court in determining disposition.” The PDI presents the best opportunity for specially trained probation staff to provide information to the court about a youth’s risk and offer recommendations based on, screenings, assessments, evaluations. Evidence reflects adjudicated youth – and the shared interests of all parties/litigants in a juvenile proceeding – benefit from a comprehensive PDI completed in a timely manner that includes results from a risk-needs-responsivity instrument to inform professional judgement and recommendations tailored to that youth. Unfortunately, the most recent data available from 2021 reveals that utilization of a PDI decreased by 8% from 2020.

The RFK Team reviewed PDIs from each district as part of the document review. Additional supplemental input also informed the methodology. Observations from this methodology included:

- Community supervision always recommended regardless of the risk level for a youth,
- Inconsistency of recommendations for length of probation supervision, including deferring to the discretion of the court,
- Recommended use of electronic monitoring in cases where there was no reported history of runaway or significant curfew concerns,
- Variance across cases and districts for when PDIs were ordered,
- Variance of staff assigned to conduct and complete the PDI (e.g., specially assigned PDI officer or probation staff also managing a caseload),
- Limited value assigned to the PDI (e.g., “results looked the same for all youth”, recommendation of same resource for all youth), limited necessity in every case,
- Perspective that PDI’s deleteriously affect families who have to return to court for an extra hearing and the court docket,
- Absence of alignment with the Service Recommendation Matrix.



In addition to the triad of shared juvenile justice outcomes benefitting from pre-dispositional use of the YLS (e.g., accountability, reduced risk to reoffend, and improved community safety), the YLS also must serve to inform case plan development, case management, and guide early release opportunities. The adoption and use of such policies driven by a consistent system of supervision, coaching and quality assurance – or, continuous quality improvement (CQI) provides the optimal likelihood for positive outcomes.

Using the example provided by the District 3J policy development for early case closure (developed in 2020) provides for a proven framework for policy and protocol development to increase early and successful probation closure. The practice relies on consistent use of the YLS to reassess reduction of risk and collaborative policy development among probation, county attorney, public defender/private attorney, court administration and the judiciary. District 3J developed a standard definition for early release from probation that provides guidance to probation officers on timely consideration for requesting early release from probation. In the past two years in District 3J, probation has realized a near doubling of early and successful case closures (15% to 29%) with a corresponding decrease of risk-level and recidivism among all risk levels for those youth affected by this policy. The District 3J example provides a replicable example for all stages of development, implementation, measurement, and sustainability for AOCp consideration.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Create a multi-disciplinary working group to establish policies and procedures guiding the conduct of a Pre-Dispositional Investigation and report that informs every dispositional hearing scheduled for a youth adjudicated on a delinquent offense that articulates established criteria resulting in an override to the PDI requirement.
- The PDI must identify the priority matched service intervention and probation supervision level and length. When the priority-matched service is not available, the report must reflect the most appropriate available treatment or accessible service.
- Adopt a mechanism through policy to report service gaps that enables AOCp to develop aggregate data that informs future fiscal and service resources needed in every district. The RFK Team can avail multiple examples from other jurisdictions for consideration by AOCp.
- Adopt the method, policy, protocol and practice for early release and successful closure of probation provided by the District 3J example.

## **F. Family Engagement**

The research is clear that absent the meaningful engagement and involvement of family and/or caregiver support in planning and interventions there is a decreased likelihood of achieving positive outcomes for system involved youth. Family engagement in child welfare, juvenile justice, schools, and mental health all yield greater client satisfaction and, for the most part, better outcomes. Although families may have histories of domestic violence, addictions, mental illness, and criminal activity, their participatory engagement results in plans that fit the family's cultural heritage and motivate youths and their kin and probation officer to lend their support. Youth and their families enhance their sense of competence and pride in their identity as they generate plans readily agreed to by their formal and informal networks. A sense of fair play and mutual respect improves relations among the youth and

their families and the involved agencies and decreases time spent in court with its associated costs. Repeatedly, studies show that family engagement increases alternatives to placement outside the home, whether from foster or group care or from detention. A preponderance of studies show improvements to the safety and stability of youths as well as their families and victims.

At present, AOCP is utilizing the YLS and a corresponding pre-screening instrument (NYS), requiring a focus on using motivational interviewing techniques to engage and obtain the youth's story and family perspective to drive the onboarding, screening, and case planning process, AOCP reflects its commitment in principle to identifying and mitigating the criminogenic needs of the youth and family. However, the feedback from CPOs, staff, and survey responses obtained during the review does not reflect a standard of family involvement and engagement that would permit AOCP and Juvenile Probation to realize optimal outcomes.

Effective family engagement and involvement results in improved case plan development that respects cultural and religious beliefs of the family, more rapid availing of targeted services and interventions by family members and the youth, and longer periods of desistance of delinquent behavior by the youth thereby protecting public safety. Improvement in practice in this critical area of improvement must include qualitative and quantitative information on frequency of family involvement in case planning, case management, response to positive and negative behaviors by youth on probation and termination/closure decisions.

The RFK Team strongly supports the tools, resources and expected practices adopted in Lancaster County (District 3J) that provides a replicable framework to mimic in practice. Additionally, the training curriculum developed by Fairfax County, Virginia supporting these ideals and practices should be examined by AOCP (available upon request) to inform development and implementation of enhanced training, policy development, and fidelity of practice supporting this focus area.

### **Recommendations:**

- AOCP must re-examine family engagement training, policies, practices, and communication mechanisms related to involving families as partners in realizing the positive outcomes for youth and system performance. The articulation of a set of core principles and beliefs that guide the specific family practices promulgated by AOCP for adoption should inform the re-examination in every district and may include:
  - Recognizing that the family is a youth's primary emotional, social, cultural, and spiritual resource.
  - Ensuring that there are flexible and authentic opportunities for families to participate in the design, implementation, and monitoring of their youth's plan by providing an opportunity for family members to have meaningful, informed and authentic input at each key decision point in the process.
  - Creating access to resources such as workforce personnel and service interventions that are supportive of their involvement, including family peer advocates and skill building for self-advocacy.
  - Demonstration that Nebraska juvenile probation and juvenile justice stakeholders have proficiency in the skills and practices that acknowledge that families act in the best interest of

their child, and fulfill their role, when they have the knowledge, skills, and supports necessary to provide ongoing and developmentally appropriate guidance and interaction.

- Develop a discrete set of approaches and information that systems can provide to families to assist them in meeting their family's needs, including in helping them make the best use of and connection to system and community resources that honor their familial beliefs and culture.

## **Element C: INTRA- AND INTERAGENCY WORK PROCESSES**

### **A. Introduction**

Work processes affecting system performance and youth outcomes in probation and the youth justice system involve major sets of interconnected activities through which decisions and services are delivered. Well-conceived, clearly articulated, coordinated policies that are subject to periodic review and monitoring ensure effectiveness and efficiency. Effective youth justice processes depend on the cooperation of many inter-related parts of Probation as well as a wide array of outside organizations. Efforts to review these work processes involved examination of various professional roles inside Probation, within and across other public agencies, throughout the Court, and with private provider agencies.

*Key issues in this review element were:*

1. How the case flow process functions within probation and whether key information is available at critical decision-making points,
2. Whether the relationship with the court is clear and functioning well in terms of roles and responsibilities,
3. How interagency processes function from the perspective of probation and the key agency partners and how linkages can be strengthened, and
4. Whether ongoing forums exist to resolve issues between probation and other agencies.

*Questions that guided this part of the review within Element C included:*

- Are the roles and responsibilities of all court partners reflected in policy and/or protocol?
- How effective are the linkages between the court partners and probation?
- What is the nature of the relationships with outside stakeholders and partners?
- Is there a service/treatment referral protocol? Is it effective?
- What information do the service/treatment providers receive?
- Are communications and client progress updates meeting the needs of both parties?
- Are there cross-system collaborations and communication forums?
- What regular forums exist with stakeholders and providers for troubleshooting and problem solving?

There are multiple agencies that partner to plan and serve youth involved in youth justice. The following section focuses on agencies and stakeholders that have a direct connection with the legal and case management processes as they directly impact a youth's involvement in the justice system. Despite consistent efforts to include personnel from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the

RFK team was not able to secure sufficient information regarding their policies and procedures to draw meaningful conclusions and incorporate targeted recommendations to improve their collaboration with the AOC. The RFK team does have enough historical knowledge from prior work in the state combined with current anecdotal accounts reported during the system review of the challenges that undermine effective coordination and collaboration between the two agencies. In view of that information and incontrovertible research and evidence related to the complex risks and treatment needs of youth within the Nebraska delinquency and dependency systems, the RFK team strongly supports efforts to improve multi-systemic collaboration of AOC and DHHS to achieve optimal outcomes for Nebraska youth and families.

Decision-making for youth involved in the youth justice system begins before formal case processing. One of the key decisions is whether a youth is referred to diversion or to an alternative response outside of the juvenile justice system. The goal of diversion is to redirect youth from the justice system by providing programming and supports. Evidence shows that diversion/alternative responses can be more successful at limiting future court involvement for low-risk youth than formal involvement in the justice system.

Nebraska Revised Statute provides the county attorney with the authority to establish pretrial diversion programs. Revised statute §43-260.03 enumerates the goals of diversion as:

- (1) To provide eligible juvenile offenders with an alternative program in lieu of adjudication through the juvenile court,
- (2) To reduce recidivism among diverted juvenile offenders,
- (3) To reduce the costs and caseload burdens on the juvenile justice system and the criminal justice system, and
- (4) To promote the collection of restitution to the victim of the juvenile offender's crime.

Nebraska Revised Statute §43-260.04 details the factors for county attorney consideration for a youth referred to diversion and directs those services to be delivered at the county level. Each county has their own county attorney that currently results in the absence of continuity of decision-making for diversion. The RFK Team concluded from individual conversations with multiple county attorneys that participated in our interview protocols that diversion decisions seemed to rely primarily on the offense type and individual historic knowledge of the youth or family. Given the abundance of research-driven evidence available for the past two decades, focusing singularly on offense type is contrary to decision-making that yields optimal outcomes. The evidence of this reliance is particularly noteworthy in Nebraska in light of the historical commitment and reliance on screening and assessment instruments to inform early intervention and case planning decisions.

## **B. Diversion Screening**

It is important to acknowledge that at one time or another, almost all adolescents engage in risky behaviors, act without thinking, and make bad decisions more often than they will as adults; thus, many may engage in what would be judged as illegal behavior.<sup>16</sup> Most youth are not apprehended every time

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<sup>16</sup> Scott, E. & Steinberg, S. (2009). *Rethinking Juvenile Justice*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

they do so, but arrest is a common experience among adolescents, especially for youth of color in urban areas. Yet only a small percent of those youth will be arrested for a second delinquent act or will become repeat offenders in adulthood.<sup>17</sup> In other words, for the majority of youth arrested, their first delinquency is not a sign of a future. One of the diversion criteria (§43-260.04(5)) for county attorneys' consideration includes "provide screening services for use in creating a diversion plan utilizing appropriate services for the juvenile." The current prevailing method of practice does not rely on an interview protocol with the youth and does not rely on any validated screening for risk. The benefit accrued to youth and the jurisdiction from improved use of routine screening would include consideration of relevant information on the youth's risk prior to making a decision for the youth's involvement in the formal adjudicatory process. Adhering to more routine practice including screening for risk contributes to data collection opportunities that enhance the identification of and subsequent availability of appropriate diversion services. Low and low-moderate risk diverted youth connected to appropriate services and programs in the community produces significant reductions in reengagement with the juvenile justice system.

Benefits from the important criteria of Nebraska §43-260.04 needs to be supported through implementation of a training plan for additional key stakeholders of the juvenile justice system (e.g., judges, county attorneys, and public defenders). As has been documented, the RFK Team had access to multiple personnel occupying these key disciplines. The methods to gather perspectives and information included individual and group interviews, review of existing diversion policies, and presentations at conference events. With reference particular to the Nebraska county attorneys, a training presentation provided key aspects of adolescent development, positive youth development and risk screening and behavioral assessments at their annual conference. In combination with other review methodologies, the RFK Team concludes there is minimal awareness of the credible research and evidence in these topic areas and an apparent absence of commitment to application of these principles in routine juvenile justice practice by key stakeholders. The RFK Team concludes that inconsistent application of validated risk screening to inform county attorney decision-making is deleteriously affecting youth outcomes and is not representative of the intent and spirit of the statute.

### **Recommendations:**

- Each district must collaboratively develop policies and practices for application of a validated risk screen to inform diversion practice decision-making in accordance with Nebraska §43-260.04.
- Develop a training plan to ensure County Attorneys practicing in the juvenile justice system understand and demonstrate proficiency in application of the core tenets of adolescent brain science, positive youth development, and risk screening.
- Include specialized training as a continued education requirement for County Attorneys, also available to juvenile court judges and public defenders, to raise the likelihood for effective and appropriate reliance on diversion, improved desistance of delinquent activity, and enhanced community safety.

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<sup>17</sup> Moffitt, T. (1993). *Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior: A Developmental Taxonomy*. *Psychological Review*, 100, 674-701.

The CPOs play a critical role in developing and maintaining stakeholder relationships and ensuring consistent application of best practice principles across all disciplines of professionals who have an active role in decision-making for youth that interact with the youth justice system. Regularly scheduled meetings with system stakeholders (e.g., educational representatives, county attorneys, treatment service providers, etc.) provides opportunities to promote consistent practice to create learning and guidance opportunities for these key stakeholders. The RFK Team finds that current fragmented operations and practices (e.g., differing or opposing expectations, goals, and/or philosophies) deleteriously affect consistent application of best-practice policy, fairness, and positive outcomes. CPOs can and must play an active role in coordinating stakeholders to achieve a more productive and consistent level of expected policy implementation and practice. There exist multiple examples from which to draw upon for the CPOs to promote, lead and create a more effective collaboration among key stakeholders without undermining statutory authority or discretion.

### **C. Status Youth**

Research demonstrates that involving low-risk youth in the juvenile justice system, including youth with status offenses like truancy, increases their risk for future involvement in the system. The Juvenile Services Division Detailed Analysis for Fiscal Year 2021<sup>18</sup> shows that 15% (290) of all cases supervised by probation are for status youth. From those cases, 85% are for truancy. Data from a previous fiscal year also reflect that nearly 1000 Nebraska youth were under court-ordered probation supervision for an average of 10 months. Placing status youth on probation demonstrably increases delinquent behavior by subjecting youth to escalating probation responses often designed or focused on increasing compliance. Further, Nebraska Revised Statute permits status youth to be placed in the deep end of the system (e.g., out of home, residential or “institution”) if they meet criteria specified in §43-251.01. Nationally, there is an increasing departure from system involvement for youth connected only to their truancy or status offense behaviors. The federal Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 outlines new standards for handling of status offenders (e.g., elimination of valid court order exception (VCO)), and further reflects the evolving standard that status youth are best served through community-based service interventions. Jurisdictions that have committed to community-based diversion practices have seen lower truancy rates, increased academic achievement, and timely access to resources that address youth and family needs. This change in approach for status youth has a positive effect on juvenile probation by reducing caseload sizes and court dockets thereby allowing the youth justice system to focus on youth at the highest risk for creating a public safety event.

The Coalition for Juvenile Justice led the Safety, Opportunity, Success Project (SOS Project) in 2013 that created the National Standards for the Care of Youth Charged with Status Offenses.<sup>19</sup> The SOS Project standards guided states in implementing policy and practices that divert status offenders from the courts to family- and community-based systems of care that more effectively meet their needs. The SOS Project also sought to eliminate the use of locked confinement for status offenders and other non-

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<sup>18</sup> Administrative Office of the Courts & Probation Juvenile Services Division. (2022). Juvenile Services Division Detailed Analysis for Fiscal Year 2021. State of Nebraska Judicial Branch.

<sup>19</sup> Coalition for Juvenile Justice. (2013). National Standards for the Care of Youth Charged with Status Offenses. Washington, DC.

delinquent youth. Additionally, Council of State Governments (CSG) used the SOS Project to promulgate a recommended set of practices to align with best-practice standards.<sup>20</sup>

The Nebraska Supreme Court Probation Services Committee created the Rethinking Status Youth Workgroup in 2020 to address the status youth population in the Courts. The RFK National Resource Center was contracted to assist this committee to endorse principles, opportunities, and outcomes to divert status youth from the juvenile justice system, by ensuring youth receive effective services in schools and local jurisdiction to provide specific *exhaustive efforts* utilizing community-based resources prior to any court involvement. Since January 2021, the Nebraska Supreme Court Probation Services Committee and RFK National Resource Center consultant, John A. Tuell, have used the CJJ standards and CSG recommended practices to inform progress on the goals of the Rethinking Status Youth Workgroup. The standards identify core areas of focus to shape the policy and practice development. These include a primary focus on “efforts to limit court involvement” and coordination “with other relevant formal and informal systems of care to better serve children and families.” As of September 2022, the Rethinking Status Youth Workgroup had produced a draft policy statement that provides recommendations for sought goals and “exhaustive efforts” language that comports with the goals and outcomes for status youth and processes for referral to juvenile court (Appendix G). The RFK Team supports the adoption of the Rethinking Status Youth Workgroup policy statement by AOC.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Support revision of statutes that would prevent truancy cases from formal justice involvement in the delinquency system thereby eliminating the potential for a youth to be exposed to the harmful consequences of deep-end youth justice system involvement for status offenses.
- Collaborate with system stakeholders at the state and local levels to develop diversion services that address the factors generally shown to affect truancy behavior- family, economic, and student factors.
- Coordinate with the Rethinking Status Youth Workgroup to create a timely plan for implementation of the recommended policy statement in all 12 districts that relies on the leadership of the CPOs in collaboration with necessary and relevant stakeholders.

#### **D. Out-of-Home Placement**

Out-of-home placements should be reserved for the highest risk youth that pose the most severe risk to public safety and require intensive treatment to address the factors contributing to delinquency. During the review, differing partners expressed, that on occasion, youth are placed out of home because there are no community-based services available in their districts. Feedback from the interview protocol and the survey supports this feedback. Contrary to these assertions, AOC data shows access to in-home services has grown to canvas 95% of the districts.

In 2017, Nebraska began expansion of their home-based initiative - a collaborative effort between the AOC and local foundations that aims to reduce recidivism and the number of out-of-home placements

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<sup>20</sup> The Council of State Governments Justice Center. (2020). Rethinking the Role of the Juvenile Justice System: Improving Youth’s School Attendance and Educational Outcomes.

for youth in the justice system across the state. Nebraska relies on two main services to provide community-based support for youth involved in the justice system, Multi-systemic Therapy (MST) and Ecological In-Home Family Therapy (EIHFT). Both of these services individually work with youth and families to address their needs and improve youth and family functioning.

The review revealed the frequent practice of bypassing viable in-home service options resulting in out-of-home placement for youth. This system response is creating a cyclical problem for expansion of the services. Without referrals, the EIHFT services remain difficult to “scale” or maximize availability, and absent scalability, key stakeholders remain resistant given the challenges of timely service delivery. Regardless of the cause of the limited requests, lack of utilization is undermining the consistent availability of treatment providers for evidence-based service interventions that mitigate the often negative effects of out-of-home or residential placement.

AOCP has demonstrated commitment to expanding access to these services as evidenced by availability in 13 new geographic areas in 2021. Additionally, AOCP is responsibly addressing effective implementation of EIHFT services in the rural areas. The RFK Team supports the continuing commitment of AOCP to the provision of services for youth in their home, support of active family involvement and engagement practices, and prevention of the frequently harmful consequences of out-of-home placement.

Youth need access to more community-based services than just the aforementioned home-based options. Currently, there are long waitlists for mental health providers and gaps in the continuum of services to address the various needs of youth served by the youth justice system. To improve service access and increase the availability of various service types, community partners and stakeholders must be involved in a collaborative process and have access to the data on the needs of the population so services can be developed and sustained.

As part of the review, the RFK team toured a Youth Residential Treatment Center and a therapeutic residential treatment center. Given the geographic size of the state, the varying distance from a youth’s home, and limited descriptions for the commitment factors beyond anecdotal concerns there are no specific recommendations provided for the improvement of these programs. This is not to say they could not benefit from enhancements to their programming or training, but rather, there is insufficient information gained from this review to support recommendations that enhance service delivery, program development and behavioral management within these programs.

### **Recommendations:**

- Develop a statewide task force to examine accessibility and growth of evidence-based and promising local service interventions that address the criminogenic needs and support improved behavioral health outcomes. Task force participation should include CPOs, judicial leadership, community providers, educational representatives, and juvenile justice resource specialists.
- Focus on opportunities to enhance service availability and local services to improve behavioral health outcomes.



- Increase and improve regular communication of service availability, waitlist data, anticipated start date for new referrals, and outcomes for youth who complete the in-home programming to judicial partners, thus supporting informed decision-making and dispelling concerns that there are no community-based supports.

## **Element D: QUALITY ASSURANCE**

### **A. Introduction**

Probationers' achievement of successful outcomes should be the main business of probation and the gravitational point around which all of the probation officers' and stakeholder activities center.

"The achievement of successful outcomes first depends on a careful identification of what outcomes are sought; second, an examination and address of the factors that affect achievement; and third, the development of a measurement system to document achievement. The importance of the third item, or performance measurement, cannot be overstated because often what gets measured is what people value and where they focus their efforts."<sup>21</sup>

It is important to note that the review work conducted in Element D is supported by and integrated with the analysis completed in Element A.

*The key issues in this review element were:*

1. Whether Probation has established clear definitions for the various recidivism measures associated with their goals (e.g., closed probation cases, successful completion of probation terms, diverted youth, special populations, and court programs, etc.),
2. Whether Probation is focused on the achievement of intermediate outcomes related to positive behavioral change in addition to recidivism,
3. Whether Probation has developed a clearly articulated set of client outcomes,
4. How Probation measures and evaluates worker performance,
5. How worker performance and its measurement are related to desired outcomes, and
6. How Probation is ensuring fidelity to their use of a risk screening tool and/or risk-needs assessment.

The examination conducted under Element D addressed system performance measurement and client outcomes and focused on worker performance, the completion of particular case processes, and setting and measuring client outcomes. The context for this discussion was prioritized toward identifying the activities that have a clear and positive relationship with sought youth outcomes and system efficiency and effectiveness. The analysis did not result in an evaluation of individual worker performance.

*Questions that guided this part of the review included:*

- Which performance measures exist presently for the completion of specific case processes (e.g., meetings with probationers, collateral contacts, and timely completion of reports)?

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<sup>21</sup> Child Welfare League of America (2005). Los Angeles County Probation Department Program Audit Report (Submitted to Los Angeles County Department of Auditor-Controller).

- Which measures exist for the achievement of successful client outcomes?
- What measures exist for the case assignment and caseload standards?
- Has probation clearly articulated a set of client outcomes?
- Do client outcomes drive probation practice and activities?
- Do probation officers know what outcomes they are seeking in their work with probationers?
- How are client outcomes identified in the individual case (intermediate and long-term outcomes)?
- What results are achieved by the current programs and practices?
- Are the programs and practices of Probation the best that can be provided and are the programs carried out in an effective manner?
- How do the practices relate to national standards for delivery of probation services?

NCJJ collaborated with the RFK Team throughout this review as they conducted their data capacity assessment (DCA). The conclusions in this section incorporate findings from NCJJ's report (*see Section V. Data Capacity Assessment*). The RFK Team believes findings presented in Element D support recommendations identified in the preceding sections.

## **B. Data Capacity**

By all measures, Nebraska has a robust data system that has the capability to produce the information needed to inform their system enhancements. Two key aspects for adopting evidence-based practice are routine reliance on data to inform system performance and youth outcomes and examining and analyzing data for trends within interdisciplinary meetings. The NCJJ data capacity assessment (*provided as Section V.*) revealed a limitation on the ability to perform analysis. To address this limitation, in part, job descriptions and requirements for current District Data Analysts (DDA) requires re-examination. The RFK Team found DDAs are frequently engaged in information technology tasks that distracts and interferes with sufficient time to perform analytic activities. The RFK Team supports the NCJJ recommendation to review the role of the DDA, clarify job requirements and commensurate experience, and review pay scale.

In practice, the utility of data to inform system performance and policy and practice is only as good as the data entry. There exists a maxim indicating "garbage in, garbage out" often affiliated with inadequate or inaccurate data entry. In the survey conducted by NCJJ, 51% of respondents did not know who provided training on the case-management system or said there was no formal training for use of the system. The RFK Team found inconsistent data/information sharing across districts. Independent district analysis contributed to variable interpretations of the data reports and an absence of context for the findings, which undermined effective use of available data. Incorporating district leadership into the systemic leadership team as part of the implementation science review, will help to bridge this gap as the leaders will know what data is being collected thus allowing them to communicate the information more effectively. The RFK Team supports the NCJJ recommendation to provide training (new and booster) on effective use and data entry requirements for all users.

Absent reliable training to support effective and accurate navigation of the data system housing key system performance and youth outcomes data, AOCF can expect unacceptable reliability of data

reports. Through time, this circumstance undermines data input/entry, quality of data reports, capacity of personnel to interpret data accurately, and stakeholder perspective on data reliability. The RFK Team found that despite a strong allocation of personnel within AOC, the aforementioned conditions undermine the best practice methods for collection, management and reporting of qualitative and quantitative reports that routinely inform AOC and district operations. Recent actions to integrate CPOs to the AOC Leadership Team will help to mitigate this concern. Conducting routine analysis among this group supports proper contextualization of the data reports and reinforces expectations to share the reports and analysis routinely among AOC, probation staff, and key justice stakeholders throughout each district.

### **C. Voucher System**

Throughout the review process, the voucher system was mentioned as a pain point for many probation officers. Nebraska adopted the voucher system with the intention to give youth and families “voice and choice.” In application, there is no consistency for how probation staff utilize the system. Completing the forms for the voucher in the database requires the probation officer to have detailed information from the family about their income. Some solicit information from the family prior to requesting the voucher, others request the voucher and intend to gather information on income at a later time. Additionally, there has been much discussion about how the voucher system has contributed toward limiting the providers available for juvenile services as they are reluctant to interact with the voucher system. Many providers use their own agency databases. However, for the voucher to provide payment to the provider, they would need to do duplicate data entry in the juvenile probation system.

AOC is currently undergoing a rewrite of the voucher system in their database to address some of these concerns. The updates are intended to streamline the process while allowing for data collection at the administrative level. Caution must be exercised to not sacrifice case management for the desire of having more qualitative data. There is a balance that must be achieved for data systems to work well. The required fields must meet a case management function while collecting the information needed to monitor and maintain system performance. Where possible, required data entry that does not serve a necessary probation function, should be limited in as much as it is possible to turn off these features.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Survey providers, those that register and those that do not, to gather additional and current information on whether updates to the voucher system have eliminated the concerns that were influencing the provision of services.
- Conduct internal training for staff to reinforce the need for the data required by the voucher system to create consistency across districts.

### **D. Quality Assurance Roles**

To achieve agency mission and mandates with consistency, fidelity, and maximized performance, AOC and all organizations must embrace and create an effective quality assurance operation. In business models, consistency of high-quality performance is a source of competitive advantage and an essential basic requirement; when translated in youth serving agencies this level of quality creates consistent

methods to access effective services and improved youth outcomes. Quality assurance also ensures operational efficiency for each employee within all agency units.

Currently, AOC and juvenile probation operate with a working model for qualitative review of the effectiveness of services and programs. The RFK Team found uneven application of the quality assurance process for services across all districts. The current approach establishes a population threshold for the service or program before applying the quality analysis. This approach omits districts with lower populations of youth served from the benefit – and necessity – of critical evaluation to guide policy, practice and access efficacy of services. During the review process, the RFK Team also witnessed several personnel departures from the existing quality assurance staff. Prior to the departures, exiting staff expressed frustration with their capacity to focus on primary quality assurance responsibilities without assignment of tasks characterized as “competing priorities.” Additionally, examples were provided reflecting “inadequate allocation of time” to perform their analysis and assignment. The RFK Team is devoid of sufficient information to draw a conclusion on these perspectives but the clear fact is that the loss of these seasoned staff must cause a closer internal examination that ensures effective operational analysis related to quality assurance methods.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Review the quality assurance policies, procedures and analytical methodologies with a prioritized focus to create standards and criteria for service and program analysis (e.g., percentage of referrals) that eliminates the arbitrary threshold currently in operation.
- Create policies that ensures quality assurance evaluation and analytical job responsibilities are allocated appropriate levels of effort and time to perform the assigned task to the highest quality.

## V. DATA CAPACITY ASSESSMENT REPORT

*This section of the JJSN Probation System Review Report presents the Data Capacity Assessment (DCA) Report in its original format. The DCA Report was prepared by the National Center for Juvenile Justice, the research division of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, under contract with the Nebraska Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation. The DCA Report Executive Summary is provided as Appendix H.*

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### Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Nebraska Data Capacity Assessment Report

#### Introduction

During the winter and early spring of 2022, the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) conducted a juvenile justice data capacity assessment on behalf of the Nebraska Administrative Office of Courts and Probation (AOCP). The formal juvenile justice Data Capacity Assessment (DCA) is one of several specialized juvenile probation transformation focal points led by the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center on Juvenile Justice under contract with the AOCP for the Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Nebraska (JJSN) project. The JJSN is supported by a grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and officially started in June of 2021 with a virtual kick-off event to introduce the project and the consultant team led by NRC. Therefore, the audience for this report is the AOCP leadership team and NRC partners working on other aspects of JJSN. The purpose of this DCA report is to:

- Provide background and context by briefly describing the foundation from which the DCA developed and the juvenile probation data infrastructure in Nebraska;
- Identify data, research, and planning strengths upon which to build;
- Identify the primary challenges identified by NCJJ during individual and group interviews and tours of primary data systems, dashboards, and reports;
- Provide initial recommendations that the AOCP leadership team can consider for improving data in alignment with the programmatic transformation for juvenile probation that the NRC recommends; and
- Provide a foundation of confirmed knowledge from which the NRC team can provide technical assistance.

#### Methods

The DCA interview protocols and procedures were developed during an OJJDP-sponsored Juvenile Justice Model Data Project. Led by the NCJJ, the Juvenile Justice Model Data Project proposed 86 Fundamental Measures for Juvenile Justice (FMJJ) for monitoring the efficiency and effectiveness of juvenile justice systems from arrest through youth reentry from secure placements. The FMJJ also

specifies 40 additional supporting youth and system-referral characteristic data items. The measures are available on the FMJJ website, organized under ten questions that every juvenile justice system should be able to answer (see <http://www.ncjj.org/fmjj/>). In addition, to support the ability of jurisdictions to pursue the FMJJ, NCJJ developed a three-dimension (3D) juvenile justice data capacity self-assessment (3D Assessment). The three dimensions are 1) infrastructure, 2) data use and dissemination, and 3) specific performance indicators (see also [www.ncjj.org/fmjj/](http://www.ncjj.org/fmjj/)).

The NCJJ introduced the FMJJ and 3D Assessments to the JJSN participants in the AOCF during a series of recorded webinars in late 2021 and early 2022. The NCJJ conducted the assessment data collection in 2022 by reviewing publicly available statistical and research reports, vital internal reports, and interviewing AOCF staff during two on-site trips. The first trip occurred in February 2022 and focused on the administrative state team staff. The second trip happened in May 2022 and focused on the staff working in local probation districts (e.g., chief probation officers, supervisors and district data analysts). See Appendix I for the site visit agendas. The NCJJ adapted the interview protocol from questions used in the 3D Assessment. To supplement qualitative information gathered by interview, the NCJJ, with the help of AOCF, distributed a 21-question electronic survey to measure data climate and provide greater reach. Finally, the NCJJ staff benefited from virtual tours of the primary data systems and interviews with data team staff to take an inventory of the AOCF ability to produce and use all 86 FMJJ measures and 40 youth/referral characteristics.

## Juvenile Probation Data Infrastructure Overview

The Nebraska Probation Application for Community Safety (NPACS) is the primary data system of the AOCF. The AOCF developed NPACS in-house as a data reporting system. Development work started in 2014, and the AOCF continues to internally maintain and support the application through a data team in the state office. Complementing NPACS is the AOCF Data Warehouse. The AOCF built the data warehouse using an IBM Cognos Analytics platform (after this Cognos Data Warehouse). Related to probation, the AOCF also developed and supports a primary data system to support court operations and reporting called JUSTICE. NPACS and JUSTICE were developed independently at different times and are supported by different AOCF data team units. However, the NPACS and the JUSTICE data team units report to the same deputy administrator who is a member of the AOCF administration leadership team. Due to infrastructure challenges and unit of count differences (case-based versus person-based), the automated connectivity or data sharing between NPACS and JUSTICE exists but is limited.

In addition to NPACS and the Data Warehouse, the AOCF has internally developed a contract service provider data system called Service Provider Portal (SPP), commonly referred to during interviews as the Voucher System. The SPP was initially designed to help manage electronic invoicing and invoice review and approval of probation contract services across Nebraska. The AOCF data team is currently rewriting the SPP system under a plan for expanding the business process it covers and the reporting needs for managing care. A state team member is now leading the redesign and has a background in working with managed care systems. The SPP rollout is occurring this summer.

Other supplemental data systems identified during interviews included another development piece in progress for an outside vendor, SCRAM systems/Nexus (after this Nexus) to develop a case management

augmentation to NPACS. At the time of the DCA, the Nexus augmentation of NPACS was still in the business process mapping and design phases. It is important to note that the AOCF administrative data team had also previously developed an application optimized for mobility to assist with case management in the field. The NPACS mobile application was in limited use at the time of the DCA. It may be supplanted by the Nexus product, which features mobility and the reorganizing and augmenting of information to be helpful in the field by probation officers working and interacting with their clients.

Some auxiliary tracking tools supported outside of NPACS were identified during interviews. The most prominent examples were developed in Microsoft Excel to track residential services and a transitional living application (TL module) designed by an outside vendor and mostly pertinent to adult probation in specific districts. In addition to these two stand-alone systems, informal examples of add-ons were identified during interviews with district chiefs and supervisors. The systems were generally used to augment information drawn from the Cognos Data Warehouse, reorganize it, and potentially append information to produce tracking or monitoring systems and/or create charts and tables needed in the probation districts. During the DCA interviews, a participant shared an overview diagram that presented an outside perspective on how the primary and add-on data systems may be viewed (see Appendix J).

## Research and Planning

From the NCJJ's view, the AOCF has established two tiers of responsibility for the business intelligence, research, and planning function. The top layer is the administrative data team, led by the Director of the Research and Data, Operation Division. The administrative data team includes the NPACS programmers and Cognos Data Warehouse research analysts. During the past year, the AOCF leadership team expanded the number of administrative data team positions to meet their data improvement goals better and reduce information delays.

From the NCJJ's view, the second layer of research and planning support exists at the district level with district data analyst (DDA) positions. However, not every DDA has the same experience or role, and their involvement in assisting data analysis can be limited or restricted. Finally, as is common in many jurisdictions, some state office and district staff with an interest and competencies in organizing and presenting data are involved with preparing and sometimes augmenting data outside the primary data systems.

## Findings

This section provides an overview of characteristics that the NCJJ views as foundational strengths upon which to advance data infrastructure, data use and dissemination, and the breadth of fundamental measures that the AOCF has command over and can use.

### Data Strengths

To date, nationally, the NCJJ has conducted 15 juvenile justice data capacity assessments. Nebraska AOCF is among the highest-tier jurisdictions assessed to date. The NCJJ bases this grading on the data infrastructure and research and planning support identified during the DCA, tours of public-facing data reports, the NPACS system and dashboard portals, a triage of all of the FMJJ described later in this

report, and the NCJJ climate surveys with district probation staff (Appendix K). Additionally, AOCJ District 3J/Lancaster County (after this 3J) was a leader during the Dennis M. Mondoro Probation Transformation Demonstration Project (after this the Mondoro Project), helping to transfer lessons learned to other jurisdictions in the national DCA cohort. As a result, 3J currently has data infrastructure and features that most other jurisdictions that NCJJ has assessed lack. 3J also shares the challenges that more advanced jurisdictions encounter, such as organizing information from hundreds of reports, implementing ongoing client/family surveys, and training line staff and others to use data.

Overall, the AOCJ exhibited a more advanced data culture than most jurisdictions assessed to date. The information reviewed during the DCA and group interviews suggests that there has been sustained focus since about 2013 on improving data support for probation. The participation in group interviews at both the state positions and district-level juvenile probation position levels was high. Participants spoke freely in group interviews about various experiences with AOCJ and data, including offering constructive criticism regarding existing infrastructure and efforts.

The AOCJ data infrastructure also addresses more business process areas than many jurisdictions. Although subject to a critical eye, AOCJ has more control over its data by deciding to develop and maintain current primary data systems. Comparable systems in other states or large urban jurisdictions are often kept in separate agencies, missing essential business processes, or subject to inflexible and costly outside contracts with private IT service providers to make ongoing improvements. In summary, AOCJ has fewer barriers than most jurisdictions in which the NCJJ has conducted a DCA and has more significant opportunities to address challenges than many. Twelve infrastructure strengths include:

- 1) Ownership of NPACS and JUSTICE. Comparable systems in other states are often overseen by independent agencies, creating administrative/agency barriers to data sharing and integration.
- 2) Integration of results from risk/need assessments within NPACS. In some jurisdictions, the risk/need assessments are not included in the primary information system or merged from an outside source at the data warehouse level.
- 3) Existence and ownership of a basic level of contract service provider data and plans for the new SPP to increase available data to manage services.
- 4) Cognos, an IBM-Cloud-powered data warehouse solution for NPACS business intelligence and reporting.
- 5) Full-time, specialized state research and planning and business intelligence positions, and expanded positions and capacity in recent years.
- 6) Specialized positions for data support in the AOCJ probation districts—the District Data Analyst (DDA). Room for growth and improvement exists, but this infrastructure is often not present in states or large urban jurisdictions.
- 7) Contracting to address the case management limitations of NPACS with a Nexus overlay focused on mobility and usability.
- 8) The *Juvenile Services Division, Detailed Analysis Report*, is a robust effort to organize complex information in a meaningful way for juvenile justice partners, state policymakers and the public generally about inputs, process outputs, and performance.



- 9) Partnerships with universities to conduct research activities and provide analytic files from the Cognos data warehouse. Many agencies lack the control (a vendor would have to produce the research file(s)) or the technical ability and tools required to create complex research files.
- 10) Some informal, dedicated structure to help juvenile probation staff in the districts and to provide training support through the DDA.
- 11) The Cognos Data Warehouse pushes reports to the DDA to identify data inaccuracies and support data integrity.
- 12) As measured by the DCA survey, a better environment for data use in probation than most other jurisdictions assessed to date.

## Gaps and Challenges

The following eight topics emerged from the DCA as the primary, immediate data challenges.

### **1. Ongoing core training for new staff and booster training for tenured staff on how to use NPACS and how to understand and use data reports.**

The training provided by the current AOC staff to new staff is cursory during new staff orientation. It does not involve hands-on training in a computer lab-style setting using a training mirror of the database. Substantial infrastructure for training exists through Judicial Branch Education. The primary challenge identified during the DCA was lacking NPACS labs or training rooms and a continuously updated curriculum that integrates hands-on experience against a training database. Ongoing training is a role that some DDAs have acquired. Still, there may be some variance in the probation districts for how this occurs, and the tools and support for it are informal and dependent on the cooperation and sharing between DDAs. Finally, there seems to be inconsistent training support when new functionalities, features, or Cognos Data Warehouse reports are released. DDAs sometimes assume a problem-solving role or the probation chief assigns a role for developing fact sheets and checklists to help staff understand a new feature or change. DDAs generally also train line probation in the districts as requested. The administrative data unit has a report data validation (quality assurance) process, and DDAs have primary responsibility for helping with data integrity. Still, some state team and district probation staff interviewed during the DCA suggested data integrity is a fundamental barrier to optimally trusting data. Importantly, little to no formal training exists to train probation staff to understand what data reports are primary and secondary and how to understand and use them well.

### **2. Inconsistent communication and sharing between the district teams about data use.**

The opportunities for the district leadership (probation chiefs and supervisors) to share current workings with NPACS reports and information is limited. During the group interview with probation chiefs and supervisors, some knowledge exchange occurred as the NCJJ asked questions about past work with data. The opportunities for DDAs to gather in person and share information about current work are also limited. The DCA interviews occurred in person and provided a rare opportunity to network and discuss respective roles, responsibilities, and practices. While the data culture in the AOC is generally strong, the DCA indicated that procedures for ongoing communication and peer learning between districts are limited, as are the forums for leaders in the district and those on the state leadership team to communicate about important data roles.

A specific example was the frustration expressed by some probation chiefs about the lead time required for the state data team to respond to a custom report request and validate a report. Up to 10 business days without a response seemed excessive to some. However, during interviews with the data team, several time-intensive tasks can be associated with accommodating a new report, ensuring it is not duplicating prior work, and conducting hand-validation to be sure the information is accurate. The DCA interviews suggested that the difference may have more to do with communication about why up to 10 working days are required and the average time to completion.

### **3. Structural challenges to NPACS and JUSTICE integration.**

A common challenge for juvenile probation data systems is information sharing about key activities that a different agency or division manages. The administration of courts (including juvenile) and juvenile and adult probation are integrated under the AOC in Nebraska. Additionally, the primary data systems of the courts and of probation are both internally developed and supported by the AOC. However, these systems started and grew on different timelines and platforms. A unit-of-count difference between NPACS and JUSTICE presents a structural challenge for merging data at the person and case level on the Cognos Data Warehouse. NPACS is organized by “person” as the lowest unit-of-count, whereas JUSTICE organizes data by “case” at the most basic level.

### **4. NPACS was designed as a case reporting system and lacks some modern case management functionality.**

Among the data systems that the NCJJ has reviewed in DCA work, NPACS has a robust reach and when measured against the complete set of FMJJ performs above average (Appendix L). However, NPACS has grown over time in a manner that has caused some navigation challenges and lacks some of the case management functionalities that off-the-shelf systems offer. There are considerable efforts underway to address this challenge. A couple of years ago, the AOC data team implemented a mobile application for NPACS by contracting with a local automation vendor, Capstone in Omaha. However, implementation was incomplete and paused by a movement towards Nexus as the mobility and probation case management solution. The Nexus product will not only pull data from NPACS but from other state agency databases that can help probation officers manage their clients.

### **5. Flux in the Service Provider Portal.**

A strength for AOC is the efforts to automate the exchange of service provider information for payment through a Service Provider Portal (SPP). However, a challenge exists to fully automate the business process around purchased services (e.g., treatment services) and provide the support required to create strong service provider and probation officer buy-in to use the system. As a result, a rewrite of the SPP is in process and nearing deployment. From the NCJJ’s national vantage point of data capacity, much is at stake with this migration at a time when the AOC is also taking on other significant automation improvements with the Nexus case management augmentation of NPACS.

### **6. Cognos Data Warehouse organization.**

Similar to how NPACS grew over time, the Cognos Data Warehouse fed by NPACS has also evolved and become challenging to organize. The Data Warehouse library of over 850 reports and 17 dashboards

with a variety of audiences and purposes has become a navigation challenge. A well-organized report library that can be shared and understood by internal consumers at the AOCB is currently unavailable. The administrative data team is working on cataloging and creating efficiencies, including selecting and purchasing a software application to assist in cataloging, but data staff turnover during the “great resignation” has slowed that effort, and an informative report catalog remains a work in progress.

### **7. Divergent roles and expectations for the DDA position.**

About ten years ago, the AOCB created a DDA position with a vision that the position would have a supporting analytic role in the probation districts. The DDA job responsibilities, though, differ between districts. The differences have developed over time and, based on DCA interviews, can be attributed to DDAs having:

- Primary information technology and network support roles in some districts but not others where another agency supports an IT/network person to the courts and probation;
- Varied backgrounds and interest in data analysis in positions within the entry-level clerical support category of positions;
- Limited career advancement opportunities within the DDA role and opportunities for skill acquisition;
- District chiefs set different expectations for their DDA, and responsibilities can include a wide range of on-demand network, hardware, and software troubleshooting; and
- Different expectations for DDA are set by the AOCB data team based on their familiarity with the Cognos Data Warehouse environment, sometimes limiting the ability to realize a data analysis role.

### **8. Data, research and planning staff retention.**

Government agencies and the private sector compete for the most able information technology leaders, data engineers, and analysts. Typically the private sector can provide higher compensation packages. Staff retention in agency data, research and planning positions is a common challenge. Turnover in a vital data team position for developing reports in the Cognos Data Warehouse occurred during the DCA, just as the AOCB expanded the data department with new positions and onboarded new staff.

## **Primary Recommendations**

The DCA for the AOCB confirmed that Nebraska is among the higher functioning jurisdictions that the NCJJ has examined. Therefore, the primary challenges for continuing to advance are within reach and begin with continuing a workforce development path that recognizes the importance of business intelligence and strong data use in sustaining a continuous quality improvement effort for probation transformation.

### **1.1 Develop a formal structure for NPACS training.**

During the DCA, the importance of NPACS training was a prevalent topic. Training topics included NPACS skill acquisition for the continuous flow of new staff being onboarded to probation positions and ongoing with refreshers and support when the data team deploys new features or reports. The AOCB training division manages the cycle and the competing curriculum demands for new officers during a 9-

week training period, much of which is conducted by field staff. The division lacks a dedicated computer training site environment or virtual option for group instruction and to facilitate practice exercises that allow new officers to practice against a fake/test data set. The division supports virtual learning through a Learning Management System (LMS) but currently lacks a module covering NPACS or understanding and using the data reports distributed from the Cognos Data Warehouse.

The NPACS training curriculum was developed when the application was initially released and is outdated. Working with the DDA team, the training division updated the curriculum and created a lesson plan. However, under the current model of informal responsibility handed off to the DDA in each district, the potential for inconsistency exists simply because some DDA cover larger geographic regions. The convergence of interest from the training division to improve NPACS training and an updated curriculum through the efforts of the DDA team converge to make this recommendation the most accessible and potentially impactful improvement. Addressing training formally through existing training division infrastructure can also impact Recommendation 1.2.

## 1.2 Develop consistent roles and responsibilities for DDAs and develop position classification.

From the NCJJ's view, the DDA position is the day-to-day conduit or connective highway between the state data team and the probation officers working with youth. The challenge for AOCP is three-fold and already in progress.

First, the primary role of the DDA should continue to be to support data integrity/quality assurance. Still, it should expand to working with probation chiefs and supervisors in the respective probation districts to provide data analysis support. Some of the DDAs currently have this role but most do not and may be restricted from taking it on. Depending on the district and how network and computer hardware are supported, some DDAs assume a more significant information technology (IT) role than others. The skill set and training for IT and data analysis are different. Jurisdictions that blend the roles frequently must sacrifice the data analysis, research, and planning role. Where IT support is provided through relationships with the courts or the county, districts have increased possibilities to have the DDA position function as intended (true to the title). A first step, which is already underway, is to document where DDAs are drawn into IT support roles and discuss possible solutions and the resource requirements such as dedicated IT positions.

Second, as the data analysis expectations increase for DDA, it will be necessary to build the workforce by updating the job classification to reflect the skills and training required for ongoing data analysis. The skills could generally include:

- Design, develop, and modify reports, data, or databases per user specifications;
- Create and maintain management reports to meet data analysis needs;
- Investigate and identify reporting improvement opportunities to meet information service needs and solve problems;
- Design a meaningful system of audits (checks and balances) to ensure data in reports are accurate;
- Monitor and improve the quality and accuracy of data analysis and reporting;

- Validate and analyze data by applying critical thinking and analytical abilities; and
- Produce recurring metrics and reports and create new reports as requested.

Third, the core skills required will justify a compensation band above the entry-clerical pay band the DDAs currently fall under. The revised position should have a career ladder that recognizes the AOCPSpecific skill acquisition and helps to retain DDAs. This recommendation has resource implications but similar to the era when AOCPS created the DDA position, the administrative leadership team can renew a vision for the future and identify the resources required to develop the current workforce to meet them. Implementation science capacity acquired during JJSen will help launch the revised positions and create buy-in with the probation chiefs so that everyone understands DDA roles and has a voice to identify potential district-specific challenges. After revising the position to emphasize data analysis, AOCPS should formalize regular, perhaps annual, sharing about how DDAs use data in collaboration with the chiefs in their respective districts.

### 1.3 Monitor/evaluate the implementation of large-scale automation improvements and set priorities and implementation sequences.

The AOCPS has two large-scale, vulnerable automation improvement efforts underway. The first initiative is to rewrite the SPP and improve and expand the business processes tracked by the application, with a vision to have management information about service availability and utilization across a range of client and provider dimensions. The second large-scale effort addresses the limitations of NPACS as a case management system.

The convergence of both large-scale efforts is creating considerable pressure at all levels of the organization, with pockets of skepticism that the new applications can increase probation efficiency by making jobs easier and ultimately improve outcomes for youth on probation. A comparable SPP is in place in only 1 of the 15 jurisdictions where the NCJJ has conducted a DCA. The Connecticut Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division (CSSD) has internally developed an SPP-equivalent system. The CSSD uses its Contractor Data Collection System (CDCS) to exchange information between state probation and the provider network and to merge data with its NPACS-equivalent system in its data warehouse. The CSSD example is set apart by its mastery of this business process, the buy-in received from both probation and contract provider staff, and how the system disseminates information between the agency and its contract provider network.

The Nexus data overlay project to improve the case management functionalities of NPACS is an equally ambitious undertaking. Unlike the SPP, the NCJJ has not encountered a jurisdiction that has succeeded with an overlay/augmentation system in the juvenile probation space but is aware of at least one other state juvenile probation agency considering purchasing a similar case management overlay and augmentation application.

The SPP and Nexus project implementation can potentially overload the teams that will be critical to buy in to reach a tipping point to enable the efforts succeed. The implementation science technical assistance track of JJSen, led by the Impact Center in collaboration with the NCJJ consultants and the NRC, provides an opportunity to triage the SPP and Nexus implementation schedules and advise the AOCPS leadership team.

## Secondary Recommendations

The next three recommendations supplement the primary recommendations with possible technical assistance activities during the final year of JJSN.

### 2.1 Identify the resource and timeframe requirements for building information sharing between NPACS and JUSTICE.

As noted in the challenge section of this report, the primary data systems for court operations and probation evolved on separate schedules and tracks. While on the surface a challenge, the applications are internally developed and supported by the AOC, not isolated within different agencies, and are supported by the same Cognos Data Warehouse infrastructure. The DCA indicated that some limited information sharing exists. The primary integration barriers concern how JUSTICE evolved and is hosted on county servers rather than a central state server. In addition, JUSTICE organizes the business process by cases, and NPACS organizes by person, making a unifying case identifier challenging to deploy. Working with the NCJJ for technical assistance, JJSN presents an opportunity to reduce the obstacles for sharing information between the two systems by identifying technical solutions.

### 2.2 Identify a framework for organizing metadata concerning the Cognos Data Warehouse and consolidating report needs with data marts.

Juvenile justice organizations with a data warehouse and robust reporting ability like the AOC must manage the challenge of organizing existing reports and providing some guidance called metadata about when, how, and why a report was developed and organizing it in a manner that it can be curated. Most jurisdictions, even high-functioning ones that have been DCA recipients, frequently have little to no organization of various reports. Over time, the resulting chaos of hundreds of reports becomes difficult for new staff transitioning to the team to navigate, creating inefficiencies. The Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) supports the internally developed primary data systems for juvenile corrections and county court services across Oregon. OYA supports four, full-time positions on its primary data system reports team. A primary responsibility of one of the report team members is to develop the documentation for all reports and classify them by title (see Table 1).

Table 1. Possible report catalog examples based on the Oregon Youth Authority example.

Report				
<u>ID &amp; Title</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Sub-Category</u>	<u>Format</u>	<u>Primary Users</u>
00507	Assessment	Summary	Dashboard	County Court Services (CCS)
00628	Custody	List	Excel	State Agency (SA)
00701	External Research	List	Excel	SA
00522	Published Disposition	Summary	System report	CCS
00246	Recidivism	List	System report	SA/CCS
00619	Revocations	List	Excel	SA
00246	Provider	Monitoring	System report	SA
00364	Recidivism	Summary	Infographic	Legislature
00051	Incidents	Monitoring	List	SA/CCS
00627	Incidents	Ad hoc	Summary	Legislature
00255	Interstate compact	List	Excel	SA

Developing this type of system and identifying the time required to provide ongoing updates will help the AOC data team, working with the leadership team, to control the lack of timeliness of reports, identify inefficiencies, and communicate with the districts through the DDAs about what the warehouse inventory has by aisle and shelf. This accounting will also help identify opportunities for building data marts within the warehouse or super-reports that organize data to meet multiple needs without creating redundancies. During the technical assistance phase, the NCJJ proposes organizing a webinar for the leadership team with a presentation about how this works in other jurisdictions and the efficiencies that have been realized.

### 2.3 Continue to use the FMJJ framework as a catalyst for expanding data use and dissemination for the AOC and grow beyond it.

During the DCA process, the leadership team requested that the NCJJ triage the AOC's ability to measure all 86 of the FMJJ and the 40 youth and referral characteristic items that are also part of the FMJJ framework. The NCJJ organized the information in an Excel workbook and scheduled a series of two calls to triage the items in three groups: probation sector, non-probation sector, and youth and referral characteristics. The triage indicated that the AOC had made progress in the four years since the Mondoro Project Assessment on behalf of 3J. Each performance measure was discussed and rated on the following scale:

- 2 = we compute this FMJJ measure and use it;
- 1 = we have the necessary data items but do not currently produce and use the measure;
- 0 = we lack the capacity within our data system to calculate this measure.

#### Probation sector FMJJ measures results

The FMJJ website designates 41 measures as being in the probation sector for juvenile justice. Across these measures

- 32% (13) measures rated a 2 (we compute and use this measure);
- 53% (22) rated a 1 (we have the necessary items but don't calculate the measure) and;
- 15% (6) measures rated a 0 (we lack capacity to calculate this measure).

It should be noted that during the discussions of each item, participants sometimes wanted to rate between items on a scale, such as halfway between zero and 1 or between 1 and 2. Therefore, the preceding summary is scored by taking the lower, more conservative view of data capacity for a measure.

#### Youth and referral characteristics results

In addition to the probation sector FMJJ, 40 youth and case referral characteristics were rated. Examples include race and ethnicity, age, and current grade level for the youth characteristics and offense category and grading for the referral characteristics. Using the same scale:

- 25% (10) rated a 2 (we compute and use this measure);
- 27% (11) rated a 1 (we have the necessary items but don't calculate the measure); and
- 48% (19) rated a 0 (we lack capacity to calculate this measure).

### Non-probation FMJJ measures results

The data team at AOCPP also triaged 45 additional FMJJ measures outside of the probation sector and returned the results to the NCJJ. The review identified 17 additional measures that AOCPP rated at 2 (we compute and use this measure) and 5 measures that rated at 1 (have the necessary items but don't calculate the measure). The remaining measures were rated 0 but were generally outside AOCPP's direct oversight, such as arrest data, secure detention utilization, and details about experiences in residential placement.

The FMJJ should be considered version 1.0. The FMJJ provides a manageable starting place organized under the idea of 10 overarching questions that every juvenile justice system should be accountable for measuring performance. The DCA also indicated that the FMJJ was helpful for the AOCPP in its data planning and stimulated discussions that help to advance data use and dissemination (e.g., 3J's measures during the Mondoro Project). Even when there is no exact performance measure solution within FMJJ 1.0, that discussion at AOCPP sparks innovation and growth that helps the organization grow beyond a bar designed to be comprehensive but accessible to most jurisdictions and may one day inform an FMJJ 2.0.

### Summary

The JJSEN program is a multi-featured initiative to transform probation practice in Nebraska within a short, 3-year window. The DCA report and recommendations provide a tiered menu of options to prioritize during the technical assistance phase of the project and align with the programmatic enhancements recommended by the NRC and other JJSEN consultants.



## VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The probation system review confirms that AOC, through its Juvenile Services Division, has incorporated fundamental elements of best practices to support youth committed to their supervision. This commitment permitted focus on the implementation of these practices and the interconnected juvenile justice system practices.

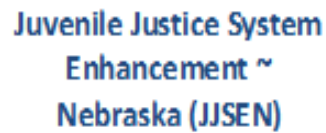
The RFK Team used multiple methodologies to explore juvenile justice system practice, performance, and outcomes within AOC and among all critical stakeholders (e.g., group and individual interviews, survey feedback, and document review). The findings provide ample evidence that recommended areas for juvenile justice system enhancement will build upon a foundation of strength-based and research informed approaches currently in place in Nebraska. Upon full implementation of the recommendations contained herein, the RFK Team is confident AOC will strengthen the interwoven set of policies and practices to more closely align with research-informed and evidence-based approaches that produce positive youth outcomes and improved system performance. This alignment will provide benefit from the point of intake through reentry. Key findings resulting from the Probation System Review center on:

- Expanding the leadership team to include district representation,
- Examining the process for gathering and providing information at the first touchpoint a youth has with the system,
- Reviewing and refining policy and training to support a more effective workforce,
- Developing and updating training to ensure curriculum is reflective of best practices,
- Delivering training to system partners to ensure fundamental tenets of juvenile justice are guiding decision-making,
- Collaborating with system stakeholders to co-create practices and their implementation methods,
- Enhancing the availability of qualitative data and communicating it to partners to support decision-making.

Incorporating the recommendations (Appendix M) from the Probation System Review will remedy areas of inconsistency and provide opportunities to ensure the juvenile justice system is operating from the same set of principles intended to rehabilitate youth by planning for them based on their individual needs and strengths. Nebraska is in a position to deliver high quality supervision that yields positive youth outcomes. Recommendations from this report will support AOC and its system partners in building collaborative systems that enhance consistency of best practices at all points of decision-making by acknowledging strengths and reexamining the implementation and application of practices known to improve youth outcomes and system performance.

## Appendix A

### Executive Leadership Team and Committee Members



#### Executive Leadership Team

- Honorable Jeffrey Funke, Supreme Court Justice
- Corey Steel, State Court Administrator
- Deb Minardi, State Probation Administrator
- Jeanne Brandner, Deputy Administrator, Juvenile Services Division
- Kari Rumbaugh, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Juvenile Services Division
- Mary Visek, Chief Probation Officer, District 4J
- Darren Duncan, Chief Probation Officer, District 12
- Amoreena Brady, Juvenile Justice Reform Specialist, Juvenile Services Division

#### Probation System Review Team

- Jeanne Brandner, Deputy Administrator, Juvenile Services Division
- Kari Rumbaugh, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Juvenile Services Division
- Shane Stutzman, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Programs and Services Division
- Jacey Rader, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Operations Division
- Amoreena Brady, Juvenile Justice Reform Specialist
- Deb VanDyke-Ries, Director, Court Improvement Project
- Honorable Elise White, Separate Juvenile Court Judge (Lancaster)
- Honorable Randin Roland, County Court Judge (Cheyenne)
- Tony Vargas, Senator
- Patty Pansing Brooks, Senator
- Mark LaBouchardiere, Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Juvenile Services
- Tamara Gavin, Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Behavioral Health
- Alger Studstill, Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services
- Amy Hoffman, Crime Commission
- Michelle Borg, Department of Education
- Bri McLarty, County Attorney (Dodge)
- Shon Lieske, Public Defender (Adams)
- Monika Gross, Foster Care Review Office
- Keith Bell, Nebraska State Patrol
- Anna Colon, Omaha Police Department

### **Juvenile Leadership Roles Discussion Group**

- Sue Kissinger, Chief Deputy Probation Officer, District 10
- Darci Poland, Chief Deputy Probation Officer, District 4J
- Harlin Welch, Chief Deputy Probation Officer, District 8
- Molly Marion, Placement Coordinator, District 4J
- Mindy Vogel, Intake Coordinator, District 3J
- Mike Wiegand, Juvenile Supervisor, District 11
- Joshua Albrecht, Juvenile Supervisor, District 9
- Tina Wigington, Juvenile Supervisor, District 4J
- Melanie Lueders, Juvenile Supervisor, District 5
- Crystal Hestekind, Juvenile Justice Resource Supervisor, District 7
- Jesse Williams, Juvenile Justice Resource Supervisor, District 6
- Erin Sliva, Juvenile Justice Resource Supervisor, District 2

### **Juvenile Probation Officer Discussion Group**

- Melissa Feighner, Juvenile Probation Officer, District 1
- Katie Griffen, Juvenile Probation Officer, District 2
- MaKayla Parriott, Juvenile Probation Officer, District 3J
- Brooke Fuhr, Juvenile Probation Officer, District 4J
- Chaunita Wells, Juvenile Probation Officer, District 4J
- Dustin Niedermeyer, Juvenile Probation Officer, District 5
- Maria Alfrey, Juvenile Probation Officer, District 6
- Larissa Funk, Juvenile Probation Officer, District 7
- Nikki Davis, Juvenile Probation Officer, District 8
- Tim Williams, Juvenile Probation Officer, District 9
- Rory Schiffbauer, Juvenile Probation Officer, District 10
- Kellie Matthewson, Juvenile Probation Officer, District 11
- Francis Romero-Thomas, Juvenile Probation Officer, District 12

### **AC4E Chief Probation Officer**

- Ashley Griess, Chief Probation Officer, District 1
- Jeff Jennings, Chief Probation Office, District 2
- Lori Griggs, Chief Probation Officer, District 3J
- Mary Visek, Chief Probation Officer, District 4J
- Carrie Rodriguez, Chief Probation, Officer District 5
- Patty Lyon, Chief Probation Officer, District 6
- Kathryn Liebers, Chief Probation Officer, District 7
- Tara Sprigler-Price, Chief Probation Officer, District 8
- Connie Hultine, Chief Probation Officer, District 9
- Joseph Budnick, Chief Probation Officer, District 10
- Lonnie Folchert, Chief Probation Officer, District 11
- Darren Duncan, Chief Probation Officer, District 12

## **Administrative Office Roles**

- Michele Lueders, Juvenile Intake and Detention Alternatives Specialist, Juvenile Services Division
- Amy Latshaw, Juvenile Investigations and Evaluations Specialist, Juvenile Services Division
- Jeremy Behrends, Juvenile Case Management Specialist, Juvenile Services Division
- Emily Schoenleber, Home-Based Services Program Specialist, Juvenile Services Division
- Julie Smith, Out-of-Home Program Specialist, Juvenile Services Division
- Mike Nehe, Domestic Violence Programs and Services Specialist, Programs and Services Division
- Lindsay Meyers, Juvenile Project Specialists, Juvenile Services Division
- Tara Bos, Problem Solving Court Specialist, Programs and Services Division
- Carra Thompson, Juvenile Services Officer- RISE, Juvenile Services Division
- Jennifer Manning, Programs and Services Officer, Juvenile Services Division
- Luke Estes, Reentry Supervisor, Juvenile Services Division
- Teresa Campbell, Utilization Management and Provider Network Specialist, Rehabilitative Services, Programs and Services Division
- Stacy Simonsen, Service Fidelity and Funding Specialist, Rehabilitative Services, Programs and Services Division
- Melissa Koch, Juvenile Behavioral Health Specialist, Rehabilitative Services, Programs and Services Division
- Renee Faber, Supportive Services Specialist, Rehabilitative Services, Programs and Services Division
- Eric Maly, Programs and Services Specialist-Alternatives to Incarceration, Programs and Services Division

## **JJSEN Initiative Discussion Group**

- Jeanne Brandner, Deputy Administrator, Juvenile Services Division
- Kari Rumbaugh, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Juvenile Services Division
- Amoreena Brady, Juvenile Justice Reform Specialist

## **County Attorney and Public Defender Discussion Group**

- Bri McLarty, County Attorney (Dodge)
- Denise Kracl, County Attorney (Colfax)
- Shon Lieske, Public Defender (Adams)
- Jennifer Houlden, Public Defender (Lancaster)
- Colleen Dostal, Public Defender (Sarpy)

## **Juvenile Justice Stakeholder Discussion Group**

- Julie Zimmerman, Omaha Public Schools
- Robin Dextor, Grand Island Public Schools
- Keith Bell, Nebraska State Patrol
- Anna Colon, Omaha Police Department
- Taylor Givens-Dunn, Voices for Children
- KaCee Zimmerman, Department of Health and Human Services, Children and Family Services
- Renee Dozier, Region 5, Behavioral Health

### ***Juvenile Justice Stakeholder Discussion Group – Continued***

- Mark Benne, Northeast Nebraska Juvenile Services
- Margaret Vacek, Boys Town
- Vicki Thompson, CEDARS
- Mande Walter, Optimal Family Preservation

### **Juvenile Court Judicial Leadership Discussion Group and Lunch**

- Honorable Elise White, Separate Juvenile Court Judge (Lancaster)
- Honorable Randin Roland, County Court Judge (Cheyenne)
- Honorable Anne Paine, County Court Judge (Red Willow)
- Honorable Curtis Maschman, County Court Judge (Richardson)
- Honorable Chad Brown, Separate Juvenile Court Judge (Douglas)
- Honorable Matthew Kahler, Separate Juvenile Court Judge (Douglas)
- Honorable Vernon Daniels, Separate Juvenile Court Judge (Douglas)
- Honorable Judge Michael Long, County Court Judge (Madison)
- Honorable Judge Michael Burns, County Court Judge (Adams)

### **Probation Youth Council and Family Advocates**

#### **Probation Administrative Leadership Team**

- Jeanne Brandner, Deputy Administrator, Juvenile Services Division
- Kari Rumbaugh, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Juvenile Services Division
- Kelli Schadwinkel, Director, Juvenile Services Division
- Sara Quiroz, Director, Juvenile Services Division
- Julie Scott, Director of Rehabilitative Services, Program and Services Division
- Tyson Jenkins, Director, Programs and Services Division
- Adam Jorgenson, Director, Problem Solving Court, Programs and Services Division
- Hazel Delgado, Director, Research and Data, Operation Division
- Kelli Wood, Director, Judicial Branch Education
- Jerid Wedige, Probation Education Manager, Judicial Branch Education
- Mary Pat Coe, Specialist, Court Improvement Project
- Ben Johnson, Specialist, Performance Management, Operations Division
- Sara Haake, Information Technology Data Program Manager, Operations Division
- Amoreena Brady, Juvenile Justice Reform Specialist, Juvenile Services Division

## Appendix B

### Inventory of Documents Reviewed

#### JJSEN Probation System Review

##### Probation Supervision:

- Dispositional Orders for the 12 Juvenile Probation Districts
- PDI Reports for the 12 Juvenile Probation Districts
- Probation Orders for the 12 Juvenile Probation Districts

##### Infrastructure and Organization:

- Organizational Chart
- Nebraska Probation System Roles Descriptions

##### Training:

- Nebraska Supreme Court, Judicial Branch Education Training Curriculum
- Training Calendar
- AC4E training

##### Services:

- Juvenile Services Catalog
- Registered Service Provider Rates
- Registered Service Provider Standards of Practice
- JJ Home Based Initiative Stakeholder Report (2022)
- JJHBI Coverage Area Map- 2017 to Present 2022
- Nebraska Probation District Map- MST Coverage Area (2022)
- Nebraska Probation District Map- EIHFT Coverage Area (2022)
- Case Management Voucher Screens

##### Data Reports and Analysis:

- 2021 Juvenile Services Detailed Analysis for Fiscal Year 2021
- SWOT Analysis PowerPoint
- 2021 Probation District Needs Analysis
- SWOT Analysis PowerPoint
- 2021 Juvenile Services Detailed Analysis for Fiscal Year 2021

##### Information and Resources

- Juvenile Information Blast (JIB)
- Zequel Database-Policies, Protocols, Forms, and Guides
- <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/laws/laws.php>

## Appendix C

### Employee Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. The estimated time to complete this survey is approximately **30-45 minutes**. We recognize that every respondent participating in this survey has a very busy schedule and we greatly appreciate your assistance.

We recommend designating an appropriate amount of time to begin and complete the survey without interruption; however, if it is necessary, you may save an incomplete survey and finish it at a later time.

**\*\*\*PLEASE NOTE\*\*\***

- A unique link was emailed to you to access the survey. Each link is anonymously generated through an automated system. Your unique link is NOT traceable.
- You may save an incomplete survey and continue taking it at a later time. Use the unique link that was emailed to you to resume a partially completed survey.
- ***Please note, responses to open-ended questions cannot be saved and completed later.***
- Your survey responses will not be submitted until you complete the survey.

If you are ready to take the survey, please begin by clicking "**Next**".

## **Employee Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative**

The Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice (RFK National Resource Center) is conducting an Employee Survey as part of the Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska (JJSEN) Initiative. The JJSEN includes an assessment of program planning and implementation, management, delivery of services, and relationships with other agencies. As part of that assessment and through this survey, we are seeking employees' input to gain their perspectives.

This survey is designed for use by probation officers and probation leadership. You are invited to respond to each of the questions, but we recognize that, depending on your area of responsibility and function, you may not have knowledge related to every question. It is for that reason that we have a column to mark entitled, "do not know" and we encourage you to use it if you have no knowledge related to a particular question.

Again, we thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.



## Employee Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

\* Number of years working in probation services

- < 1
- 2 - 3
- 4 - 5
- 6 - 10
- 11 - 15
- 16+

## Employee Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

**Please give your response to the following statements by answering: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or that you do not know.**

**\* PRE-DISPOSITION INVESTIGATION**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
1. Court reports are generally well written and of good quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. The court reports do not provide sufficient detail regarding the needs of youth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Recommendations to the court for youth are based on individualized needs for treatment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Recommendations to the court for youth are based on available community resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Employee Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

### \* CASE SUPERVISION

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
1. Juvenile probationers on specialized caseloads receive an enhanced level of supervision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Juvenile probationers are receiving the required engagement per policy and as indicated by risk scores	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Client outcomes are clearly identified for each probationer to guide the service delivery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Juvenile Probation Officers do not assure that probationers receive services to which they have been ordered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Juvenile Probation Officers do not work close enough with community resources to which they refer probationers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Juvenile Probation Officers work closely with juvenile probationer's parents/caregivers to achieve desired outcomes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. The levels of supervision based on risk are characterized by distinctly different activities on the part of the probation officer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. The caseload sizes do not allow for an adequate level of supervision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. The engagement required for each level of supervision is appropriate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Juvenile probationers need more support than they presently receive during their period of probation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Additional resources are needed to adequately provide for parent and family support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. The enforcement of conditions is a sufficient activity for the supervision of juvenile probationers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. The supervision of juvenile probationers does not result in greater public safety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. The supervision of juvenile probationers is focused more on enforcement than rehabilitation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Employee Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

### \* DEPARTMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
1. Juvenile Probation Officers are supported in their work by the Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation (AOCP)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Juvenile Probation Officers are supported in their work by their supervisors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Juvenile Probation Officers efforts are not adequately recognized by AOCP	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Juvenile Probation Officers are provided the tools necessary to carry out their job functions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. The probation manual (policy/protocol) is useful in directing Juvenile Probation Officers' work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. The judges do not base their decisions on Juvenile Probation Officers' recommendations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Juvenile Probation Officers are provided sufficient training to function effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Juvenile and/or County Court Judges respect the work of Juvenile Probation Officers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Juvenile Probation Officers are not adequately prepared to testify in court	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Judges read the Juvenile Probation Officers' PDI reports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Employee Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

### \* RESOURCES AND SERVICE DELIVERY

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
1. Juvenile probationers have access to treatment resources that address their particular needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Juvenile probationers do not have access to needed mental health services while on probation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. The current staffing/placement process is satisfactory	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Services to juvenile probationers are not provided in a timely manner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Juvenile probationers have access to needed substance abuse resources while on probation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Juvenile probationers receive adequate support when they transition in and out of placement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Juvenile probationers do not have access to aftercare services upon return home to parents/caregivers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Juvenile Probation Officers have a method for identifying juvenile probationers with mental health needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Juvenile probationers are not matched to placements equipped to address their individual needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. There is sufficient oversight of juvenile probationers while in placement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Adequate community resources exist to address the needs of juvenile probationers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Most juvenile probationers are referred to the same services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. There is not adequate communication between treatment providers and Juvenile Probation Officers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Juvenile Probation Officers are provided with current information regarding the adequacy of community resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Additional funding is the most important solution to improve service delivery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Employee Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

\* BEST PRACTICES

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
1. Juvenile probation services are not based on best practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Evidence-based practices would be applied to all juvenile probationers if there was adequate funding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Evidence-based practices are available in the community but are not used	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Juvenile Probation Officers are not knowledgeable about best practices for providing services to juvenile probationers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Juvenile Probation Officers are knowledgeable about evidence-based practices and their impact on recidivism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Current case management strategies are based on best practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. The Juvenile Probation Office in my District should coordinate with community-based organizations in defined geographic areas to target the needs of juvenile probationers in that area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. The availability of evidence-based practices in the community would allow juvenile probationers to stay out of placement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Employee Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

\* CLIENT OUTCOMES

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
1. Juvenile Probation Officers are not knowledgeable about identifying client outcomes for juvenile probationers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Juvenile Probation Officers set clear, achievable goals for each juvenile probationer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. The AOCP uses the achievement of client outcomes to select and monitor providers who contract with the AOCP	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. The work of the AOCP is not related to the achievement of outcomes by probationers beyond the period of probation supervision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. There should be incentives and rewards for Juvenile Probation Officers whose juvenile probationers achieve successful outcomes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Employee Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

### \* INTERAGENCY RELATIONSHIPS

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
1. Juvenile Probation Officers' relationships with the County Attorney are not good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Juvenile Probation Officers' relationships with community-based agencies have improved in the past three years	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Juvenile Probation Officers' relationship with the Public Schools could be improved	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Juvenile Probation Officers' relationship with the Public Schools is good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Juvenile Probation Officers' relationship with the community service providers could be improved	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Juvenile Probation Officers would function more effectively if its relationships with community-based agencies were better	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Juvenile Probation Officers should look at data across service delivery systems to assist with the identification of prevention and earlier intervention opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. The interface between the AOC and District Juvenile Probation Officers needs improvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Juvenile probationers' prior Child Welfare/Child Protection (NE DHHS) involvement is known/documented	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## **Employee Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative**

Following is a set of open-ended questions that offer you the opportunity to provide your particular ideas about how the AOC and the Juvenile Probation Officers within your District could improve their functions and/or operations to improve youth outcomes. Please take some time to offer your comments and recommendations here. Thank you.

**Please Note:** Partially completed responses to open-ended questions **cannot be saved** and continued later. If you must exit or close out the survey before you're ready to submit your responses, we advise copying/pasting your drafted responses into a document that you can save and access later when you resume the survey.

- 1. How could the probation policy/protocol be improved? What could be added?**
- 2. What enables you to do your job most effectively?**
- 3. What training would help you do your job?**
- 4. What services are needed for juvenile probationers that do not exist at this time?**
- 5. What client outcomes should the AOC seek for juvenile probationers?**
- 6. What specific ideas do you have for the improved delivery of probation services that you believe will result in better client outcomes?**
- 7. What makes you uncomfortable or upset in court?**
- 8. What ideas do you have about reducing the amount of paperwork?**
- 9. What challenges do you face in your relationships with other agencies/stakeholders?**
- 10. What are some of the special skills and talents that you offer to probation operations that aren't currently tapped in your role as a Juvenile Probation Officer?**
- 11. In what ways would you like your work to be recognized?**
- 12. Where do you see yourself in 3-5 years? What are your career aspirations?**

**Any additional comments:**

## Appendix D

### AOCP Administration Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. The estimated time to complete this survey is approximately **30-45 minutes**. We recognize that every respondent participating in this survey has a very busy schedule and we greatly appreciate your assistance.

We recommend designating an appropriate amount of time to begin and complete the survey without interruption; however, if it is necessary, you may save an incomplete survey and finish it at a later time.

**\*\*\*PLEASE NOTE\*\*\***

- A unique link was emailed to you to access the survey. Each link is anonymously generated through an automated system. Your unique link is NOT traceable.
- You may save an incomplete survey and continue taking it at a later time. Use the unique link that was emailed to you to resume a partially completed survey.
- Partially completed responses to open-ended questions cannot be saved and continued later. If you must exit or close out the survey before you're ready to submit your responses, we advise copying/pasting your drafted responses into a document that you can save and access later when you resume the survey.
- Your survey responses will not be submitted until you complete the survey. Please click "SUBMIT RESPONSES" on the last page of the survey to ensure your responses are collected.

If you are ready to take the survey, please begin by clicking "**Next**".

## AOCP Administration Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

The Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice (RFK National Resource Center) is conducting an Administrative Employee Survey as part of the Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska (JJSEN) Initiative. The JJSEN includes an assessment of program planning and implementation, management, delivery of services, and relationships with other agencies. As part of that assessment and through this survey, we are seeking administrative employees' input to gain their perspectives.

This survey is designed for use by Probation Administrative Staff. You are invited to respond to each of the questions, but we recognize that, depending on your area of responsibility and function, you may not have knowledge related to every question. It is for that reason that we have a column to mark entitled, "do not know" and we encourage you to use it if you have no knowledge related to a particular question.

Again, we thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.

## AOCP Administration Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

\* Number of years working in probation services

- < 1
- 2 - 3
- 4 - 5
- 6 - 10
- 11 - 15
- 16+

## AOC Administration Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

*Please give your response to the following statements by answering: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or that you do not know.*

### \* CASE SUPERVISION

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
1. Client outcomes are clearly identified for each probationer to guide the service delivery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Juvenile Probation Officers do not assure that probationers receive services to which they have been ordered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Juvenile Probation Officers do not work close enough with community resources to which they refer probationers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Juvenile Probation Officers work closely with probationers' parents/caregivers to achieve desired outcomes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. The levels of supervision based on risk are characterized by distinctly different activities on the part of the juvenile probation officer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. The caseload sizes do not allow for an adequate level of supervision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. The engagement required for each level of supervision is appropriate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Overall, Juvenile Probation Officers provide juvenile probationers sufficient support throughout their period of probation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Additional resources are needed to adequately provide for parent and family support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. The enforcement of conditions is sufficient activity for the supervision of juvenile probationers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. The supervision of juvenile probationers does not result in greater public safety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. The supervision of juvenile probationers is focused more on enforcement than rehabilitation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## AOCB Administration Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

### \* DEPARTMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
1. Juvenile Probation Officers are supported in their work by the Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation (AOCB)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Juvenile Probation Officers efforts are not adequately recognized by AOCB	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Juvenile Probation Officers are provided the tools necessary to carry out their job functions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. The probation policies/protocols are useful in directing Juvenile Probation Officers' work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Juvenile Probation Officers are provided sufficient training to function effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Juvenile Court Judges respect the work of Juvenile Probation Officers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. The current iteration of the Pre-dispositional Investigation (PDI) report format is effective at capturing key information for juvenile court litigants (e.g., judges, attorneys, service providers)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. The district staff share with the AOCB that their judges read the Juvenile Probation Officers' PDI reports and rely upon them in their decision-making	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## AOCPS Administration Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

### \* RESOURCES AND SERVICE DELIVERY

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
1. Juvenile probationers have access to treatment resources that address their identified needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Juvenile probationers do not have access to needed mental health services while on probation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. The current staffing/placement process is satisfactory	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Services to juvenile probationers are not provided in a timely manner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Juvenile probationers have access to needed substance abuse resources while on probation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Juvenile probationers receive adequate support when they transition in and out of placement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Juvenile probationers do not have access to aftercare services upon return home to parents/caregivers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Juvenile Probation Officers have a method for identifying probationers with mental health needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Juvenile probationers are not matched to placements equipped to address their individual needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. There is sufficient oversight of juvenile probationers while in placement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Adequate community resources exist to address the needs of juvenile probationers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Most juvenile probationers are referred to the same services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. There is not adequate communication between AOCPS staff, treatment providers, and Juvenile Probation Officers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Juvenile Probation Officers are provided with current information from AOCPS regarding the adequacy of community resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Additional funding for programs and services is the most important solution to improve service delivery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## AOC Administration Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

### \* BEST PRACTICES

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
1. Probation supervision and services are not based on best practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Evidence-based practices would be applied to all juvenile probationers if there was adequate funding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Evidence-based practices are available in the community but are not used	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Juvenile Probation Officers are not knowledgeable about best practices for providing services to juvenile probationers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Juvenile Probation Officers are knowledgeable about evidence-based practices and their impact on recidivism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Current case management strategies are based on best practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Juvenile Probation Officers should coordinate with community-based organizations in defined geographic areas to target the needs of juvenile probationers in that area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. The availability of evidence-based practices in the community would allow juvenile probationers to stay out of placement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## AOCP Administration Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

### \* CLIENT OUTCOMES

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
1. Juvenile Probation Officers do not routinely identify specific client outcomes for probationers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Juvenile Probation Officers set clear, achievable goals and objectives for each juvenile probationer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. The AOCP uses the achievement of client outcomes to monitor providers who provide services for juvenile probationers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. The work of the AOCP is not related to the achievement of outcomes by juvenile probationers beyond the period of probation supervision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. There should be incentives and rewards for Juvenile Probation Officers whose juvenile probationers achieve successful outcomes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## AOCP Administration Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

### \* INTERAGENCY RELATIONSHIPS

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
1. The AOCP's relationships with the County Attorney Association are not good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. The AOCP's relationships with stakeholders and other state agencies have improved in the past three years	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. The AOCP's relationship with the Department of Education could be improved	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. The AOCP's relationship with the Department of Education is good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. The AOCP's relationship with the service providers could be improved	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. The AOCP would function more effectively if its relationships with stakeholders and other state agencies were better	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. The AOCP should look at data across service delivery systems to assist with the identification of prevention and earlier intervention opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. The interface between the AOCP and District Leadership and Juvenile Probation Officers needs improvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## AOCPS Administration Survey: Juvenile Justice System Enhancement - Nebraska Initiative

Following is a set of open-ended questions that offer you the opportunity to provide your particular ideas about how the AOCPS and the Juvenile Probation Officers could improve their functions and/or operations to improve youth outcomes. Please take some time to offer your comments and recommendations here. Thank you.

- 1. How could the probation policy/protocol be improved? What could be added?**
- 2. What enables you to do your job most effectively?**
- 3. What training would help you do your job?**
- 4. What services are needed for juvenile probationers that do not exist at this time?**
- 5. What client outcomes should the AOCPS seek for juvenile probationers?**
- 6. What specific ideas do you have for the improved delivery of probation services that you believe will result in better client outcomes?**
- 7. AOCPS express that they are servant leaders to district staff, in what ways is this found to be true? Untrue?**
- 8. What ideas do you have about reducing the amount of paperwork for Juvenile Probation Officers?**
- 9. What challenges do you face in your relationships with other agencies?**
- 10. What are some of the special skills and talents that you offer to probation operations that are not currently tapped in your role within administration?**
- 11. In what ways would you like your work to be recognized?**
- 12. Where do you see yourself in 3-5 years? What are your career aspirations?**

***Any additional comments:***

## Appendix E

### Nebraska Probation – System Roles

#### Management

**Chief Probation Officer** — Appointed by the Probation Administrator and charged with management responsibilities relative to planning, organizing, coordinating, staffing, directing, and supervising all Probation-related activities within a probation district.

**Chief Deputy** — Exercises general probation officer duties and responsibilities, however, the position entails specifically assigned administrative tasks for the district and from the Chief Probation Officer.

**Reporting Center Coordinator** — Adult supervisory-level position primarily responsible for planning, delivery, coordination, and evaluation of evidence-based programs and services, to include case management, and supervision.

**Juvenile Justice Resource Supervisor** — Responsibilities include matching juvenile service needs and funding options, analysis of provided services, and research to identify and develop interventions, best practices, and services at the district level.

**Problem-Solving Court Coordinator** — Oversees the administrative and day-to-day operation of a local problem-solving court and its employees.

**Probation Supervisor (Adult or Juvenile)** — Under limited supervision, this position is responsible for coordinating, directing, and supervising daily activities and employees within a specialized unit, district field service division or satellite office.

**Juvenile Placement Coordinator** — Responsible for supporting juvenile officers in matching youth to appropriate levels of care when you are appropriate for out-of-home placement and for supporting out-of-home facilities located within their assigned areas.

**Juvenile Intake Coordinator** — Supervises Intake staff, responsible for application of risk assessments and screening tools, and identification of placement and juvenile-specific programming options.

**Juvenile Alternatives to Detention (JADI) Coordinator** — Develops expertise in the purpose and use of secure detention and detention alternatives.

#### Field Officers

**Treatment Probation Officer** — Treatment Probation Officers are licensed within the State of Nebraska as a Mental Health Practitioner, Clinical Social Worker, or Alcohol and Drug Counselor. Responsible for the day-to-day activities and case management for individuals with problematic substance use and mental health disorders.

**Specialized Probation Officer** — Primarily responsible for the case management of clients classified as high-risk. Participates in the treatment process of clients and is engaged in the individual's treatment through regular and on-going communication with providers.

**Juvenile Reentry Supervisor and Specialize Population Probation Officers** — Responsible for overseeing the reentry process for youth committed to the Youth Rehabilitative Treatment Center, supporting the youth while at the facility, and acting as a liaison between the home district officers and the facility.

**Problem-Solving Court Officer** — Responsible for case management of adult or juvenile clients and reports directly to the Problem-Solving Court Coordinator of the probation district.

**Probation Officer** — Work includes the supervision and/or monitoring of adults and/or juveniles engaged in the justice system. Performs a wide variety of investigatory and supervisory responsibilities, which require ability to motivate others toward self-improvement.

**Juvenile Intake Officer** — Responsible for making timely decisions regarding the appropriate placement of juveniles when called to do so by law enforcement officials.

**Victim Specialist** — Work involves interviewing and collecting information from victims and preparation of a victim impact statement for presentence reports in cases of domestic violence, sex offenses, child abuse, homicides and other violent offenses.

**Recognizing Increased Skills in Education (RISE) Program Specialist** — Facilitates a skill-based curriculum to adjudicated youth, ages 12-18, focusing on educational skill development which takes place in a group setting either in-person or virtually.

**Assistant Probation Officer** — Provides support to probation officers in a wide range of areas, including assisting in the supervision of adults or juveniles and preparation of investigative reports.

### **Support Staff**

**District Data Analyst** — Coordinates all components of statistical data information for the District. Functions as a tester, trainer and issue tracker for the case management information system.

**Office Manager** — Responsible for supervising and training all secretarial staff under the direction of the Chief Probation Officer. Handles sensitive administrative matters on a daily basis.

**Secretary** — Responsible for performing a variety of secretarial functions such as filing, data entry, receptionist, word processing, and other general office duties under direct supervision.

**Case Monitor** — A highly responsible support staff position, which involves managing and coordinating activities, associated with the supervision of administrative and low-risk probation cases.

**Substance Use Monitor** — Work involves intentional interaction with the adult or juvenile and their supervising probation officer; obtains background information such as history of substance use and drug of choice, schedules responsibilities, and serves as compliance liaison for substance use testing.

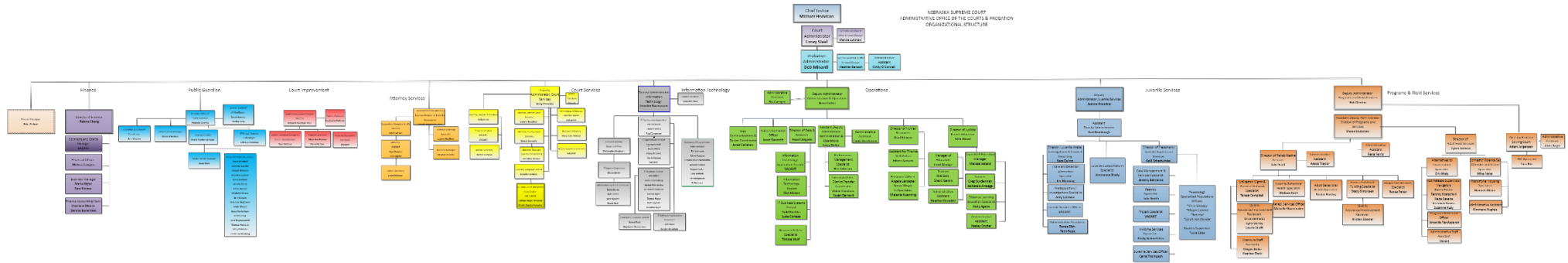
**Lab Technician** — Manages the day-to-day laboratory operations including specimen preparation, analysis and communication of substance use testing results in an organized and timely manner.

**Drug Technician** — Responsible for collecting and conducting drug/alcohol screens. Communicates on a regular basis with probation staff and individuals who have been court ordered to substance use testing. Documents test results for case files.

**Administration** — See Org Chart

# Appendix E (continued)

## Organizational Chart





Probation Officer Service Recommendation Matrix

This guide is for Officers to utilize as a tool when making recommendations to the court. Staff must always begin with the least restrictive and less intrusive setting within a particular disposition

Most Serious Presenting Adjudication As defined by Neb. Rev. Stat. § 43-247	YLS/CMI Risk Level and High Domains			
	Low Risk Score of 0-8	Low Moderate Risk Score of 9-15	High Moderate Risk Score of 16-22	High and Very High Risk Score of 23-42
Subdivision (3b), (4), or any 1 <sup>st</sup> time (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Level 2 → 3-	Level 3- → 3+
Subdivision (1) minor	Level 1	Level 2 → 3-	Level 3- → 3+	Level 3- → 3+ → 4
Subdivision (1) serious = Acts of violence against persons and/or sexually based	Level 2	Level 2 → 3- → 3+	Level 3- → 3+ → 4	Level 3+ → 4 → 5
Subdivision (2) only	Level 2	Level 3- → 3+	Level 3+ → 4	Level 3+ → 4 → 5

	Probation Supported	Provider Supported
Level 1	Probation active supervision by monitoring conditions / Probation programming	No service utilization
Level 2	Probation supervision focused on targeted services/Probation programming, RISE	Limited service utilization ie: education and skill building classes
Level 3	<b>3-</b> Probation supervision includes active case management: team meetings, home visits, RISE, and cognitive groups <b>3+</b> indicates increased intensity and frequency of level 3- strategies	<b>3-</b> Community-based services* <b>3+</b> Intensive community-based services and/or home-based services*
Level 4	Probation intensive supervision includes supervision strategies from level 3+ with a focus on transition planning	Out-of-home placement and residential therapeutic services*
Level 5	Probation enhanced intensive supervision with focus on reentry planning	YRTC

## Probation Officer Service Recommendation Matrix

### **PURPOSE**

The Service Recommendation Matrix is a guide for probation officers to utilize as a tool to support the development of recommendations for the Court during both the predisposition investigation and update/review hearing stages. This Matrix links Nebraska Revised Statute 43-247, which identifies acts that give the juvenile court jurisdiction with the Youth Level of Service Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) assessed risks and needs identified. The Matrix is designed to guide probation officers in developing targeted recommendations utilizing the least restrictive and effective method of support and service delivery.

### **SUPPORT**

National Juvenile Justice leaders endorse the utilization of a recommendation matrix:

- Council of State Governments (CSG)
  - Seigle, E., Walsh, N., & Weber, J. (2014). Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism and Improving Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System
- Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice (RFK)
  - Tuell, J. & Harp, K. (2016). Probation System Review Guidebook, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition
- Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, Georgetown University (CJJR)
  - Evidence-Based Decision-Making Certificate Program

### **DEVELOPMENT AND DESIRED OUTCOMES**

The Service Recommendation Matrix was created by the Administrative Office of Probation through consultation with RFK and CJJR. It's structure based upon the validated matrix utilized in Florida to achieve the following:

- Low risk youth remain in the community with minimal supervision and services
- Moderate risk youth placed in more structured community programs
- High risk youth receive intense probation supervision and services
- Residential placement is reserved for the highest risk youth after community-based alternatives have been exhausted

### **COMPREHENSIVE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations guided by the Matrix create a plan to effectively target a youth's individual risk:

- Provider supported services
- Supervision strategies provided by probation



## Appendix G

### RETHINKING STATUS YOUTH EXHAUSTIVE EFFORTS PROPOSED POLICY

#### I. Introduction:

The Nebraska Probation Services Committee convened under the Nebraska Supreme Court, created a subcommittee “Rethinking Status Youth Workgroup” to address the Status population in the Courts. The Subcommittee partnered with national expert, the Robert F. Kennedy Resource Center for Juvenile Justice to build specific processes which are supported by research, best practice and other state expertise, resulting in keeping status youth out of the formal justice system.

#### II. Goal Statement:

Make the commitment to endorse principles, opportunities and outcomes for status youth in Nebraska to divert from the Juvenile Justice system, by ensuring youth receive effective services in schools and local jurisdiction to provide specific ***exhaustive efforts*** utilizing community-based resources prior to any court involvement. Ensure successful practices shown to be effective prior to court involvement are shared with local entities. In rare circumstances when a youth becomes court involved, best practice supervision, programs and services will be implemented to ensure status youth and families receive programming focused directly on the status offense. Programming addresses the core cause of the status offense (i.e. truancy). The role of the Court is to serve the specialized needs of youth, or secure parental cooperation regarding education. Use of evidence based practice services and interventions shall include feedback from families and communities. Providing a voice to the youth is paramount.

#### III. Law Consulted:

##### A) Title I, Part D of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)

The goals of Title I, Part D, are to:

- 1) Improve educational services for these children so they have the opportunity to meet challenging State academic content and achievement standards;
- 2) Provide them with services to successfully transition from institutionalization to further schooling or employment; and
- 3) Prevent youth who are at-risk from dropping out of school and to provide dropouts and children and youth returning from correctional facilities with support systems to ensure their continued education

##### B) Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-245

##### C) Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-246

##### D) Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-246.01

##### E) Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-247

##### F) Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-248.02

##### G) Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-250

##### H) Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-260

##### I) Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-260.01 thru 43-260.06

- J) Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-286
- K) Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-286.01
- L) Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-290
- M) Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-297.01
- N) Neb. Rev. Stat. 79-209 - Failure by the school to document the efforts required by subsection (2) of this section is a defense to prosecution under section 79-201 and adjudication for educational neglect under subdivision (3)(a) of section 43-247 and habitual truancy under subdivision (3)(b) of section 43-247. Illness that makes attendance impossible or impracticable shall not be the basis for referral to the county attorney.

IV. Studies Considered:

- A. “Rethinking the Role of the Juvenile Justice System: Improving Youth’s School Attendance and Educational Outcomes” CSG, Justice Center, The Council of State Governments. September 2020.

V. Necessary Partners:

- A. Nebraska Department of Education
- B. School District Administrators
- C. County Attorneys
- D. Probation
- E. Courts
- F. Legislature
- G. Community Partners

VI. Process:

Before a youth is referred to the County Attorney for a Status filing, the School would take the necessary steps to ensure all community based resources have been exhausted. A process that identifies youth at risk within the school setting must be developed. Nebraska Revised Statute § 79-209, articulates the statutory requirements which this process is created to support. The statute states that all school districts shall define the circumstances and number of absences or the hourly equivalent upon which the school shall render services to address barriers to attendance. If a youth is identified, the “Community Team” would make contact with the family within 24 hours. The Community Team’s role is to ensure that the school adopts and implements a comprehensive, actionable, tiered approach to improving attendance and ensure exhausted efforts. Ideally, the Community Team should be composed of key school staff including the school attendance officer, school social worker, or a school administrator or his/her designee, school counselor, school social worker, as well as community partners including providers, Guardian Ad Litem or Defense Counsel (as necessary), health centers, diversion or state agency staff (as necessary) and the Educational Right Counsel and most importantly legal guardian, family/caregiver, pro-social personnel (mentor, coach, teacher), and the youth.

The Community Team will communicate with the legal guardian using verbal or written communication by school officials and one or more meetings between the family to discuss

community based options to support the youth and the family. The meeting is designed to work through the Exhaustive Efforts categories list to determine the necessary supports and make referrals for the youth and family. Active family engagement recognizes that the family or caregiver is the primary emotional, social, cultural and spiritual resource for the child or youth. Strategies and actions by the Community Team will be in accordance with family empowerment research acknowledging family and caregiver strengths and actively encourages consistent opportunities to have meaningful, informed and authentic input in their child's treatment and service plan. The Community Team actions to engage families must exceed singular instances of correspondence (e.g. letter or e-mail) and telephone outreach and reflect flexible and authentic opportunities for families or caregivers to inform and support family focused, school or community-based and culturally appropriate services.

Continuous monitoring shall include weekly check-ins to ensure the services are matching the needs of the youth and family. The Community Team shall document all meetings, referrals and progress. Nebraska Revised Statute § 79-209, requires that the result of the meeting(s) shall be to develop a collaborative plan to reduce barriers identified to improve regular attendance. The plan shall consider, but not limited to: a) the physical, mental, or behavioral health of the child; b) educational counseling; c) educational evaluation; d) referral to community agencies for economic services; e) family or individual counseling; f) assisting the family in working with other community services; and g) referral to restorative justice practices or services. In the event improvement in attendance is not achieved, the Community Team shall continue to explore other service needs on the Exhaustive Efforts list. Only upon a determination that the youth has been provided all exhaustive efforts, and no improvement has been made, shall a referral for a court filing be submitted to the County Attorney. All documentation included in the collaborative plan surrounding the interventions must be included in the filing to the County Attorney's Office.

VII. Exhaustive Efforts (Categories):

- A. Family and Youth Meeting with Community Team
  - i. Initial Meeting with Family and Youth
  - ii. Weekly Meetings to determine if further interventions are necessary
- B. Consider Educational Neglect as the leading factor
- C. Behavioral Services
  - i. Behavioral Intervention
  - ii. Corrective Action Plan
  - iii. Aggression Replacement Training
  - iv. Aggression Assessment
- D. Controlled Substance Services
  - i. Chemical Dependency Evaluation
  - ii. CD Treatment
- E. Mental Health Services
  - i. Psychological Evaluation
  - ii. Individual/Family Therapy
- F. Psychiatric or Medication Management Services
  - i. Psychiatric Evaluation

- ii. Medication checks
  - G. Financial Assistance/Economic Services
    - i. Community based interventions to assist in finances
    - ii. Food Pantry
    - iii. Furniture donations
    - iv. Clothing donations
  - H. Transportation Services
    - i. School Bussing adjustments
    - ii. City Bussing considerations
    - iii. After School Care considerations
    - iv. Alternative Community Support to assist in transportation
  - I. Educational Neglect Interventions (Parental Supports/Voluntary services)
    - i. Partnering with HHS to assess Parental involvement
    - ii. Family Support Services
    - iii. IFP/In-homes services/Ecological Services/MST
  - J. Child Welfare Services (Voluntary services)
    - i. Partnering with HHS to assess Child Welfare and Neglect considerations
    - ii. Family Support Services
    - iii. IFP/In-home services/Ecological Services/MST
    - iv. Temporary placement with suitable relative or kinship
  - K. Mentor/Role Model Supportive Services
    - i. 100 Black Men
    - ii. Big Brothers/Big Sisters
    - iii. Teammates
    - iv. Urban League
  - L. Educational Evaluation and Counseling: 504/MDT/IEP considerations
    - i. Child Find requirements
    - ii. Updated FBA/504/IEP
    - iii. Staff with MDT
    - iv. Utilize Educational Rights Counsel
  - M. Physical Health Considerations
  - N. Whether or not the efforts can be made without excluding the student from formal education
    - a. Alternatives to removal to regular instruction
- VIII. Referral for Filing petition in Court:

Upon the determination that all community-based services have been utilized in the Exhaustive Efforts list the Community Team shall forward a referral to the County Attorney's Office for consideration of a petition to the Courts. Said referral shall contain documentation in the Collaborative Plan regarding all meetings, attendees, dates, times, notes and services implemented. Documentation shall also be collected from the service providers in their efforts in intervention. Upon the filling of a petition, and ultimately an adjudication in the Courts, Probation shall utilize Specialized Supervision for Status youth in the Court system.

## Appendix H

### Data Capacity Assessment Report – Executive Summary

*This report was prepared by the National Center for Juvenile Justice, the research division of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, under contract with the Nebraska Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation.*

National Center for Juvenile Justice  
3700 South Water Street, Suite 200  
Pittsburgh, PA 15203  
412-227-6950

#### Contributors:

- Hunter Hurst, Senior Research Associate, National Center for Juvenile Justice
- Gene Siegel, Senior Research Associate, National Center for Juvenile Justice

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### Executive Summary

With support from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the Nebraska Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation (AOCP) started the Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Nebraska (JJSEN) project to assess the State’s administration of juvenile probation. The AOCP contracted with the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center on Juvenile Justice to lead its probation transformation efforts. The NRC assessment strategy has specialized tracks, including one led by the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) to conduct a juvenile probation Data Capacity Assessment (DCA). This executive summary summarizes the findings and recommendations from the NCJJ DCA. The audience for this report is the AOCP leadership team and NRC partners working on other aspects of JJSEN. The purpose of this DCA report is to:

- Provide background and context by briefly describing the foundation from which the DCA developed and the juvenile probation data infrastructure in Nebraska;
- Identify data, research, and planning strengths upon which to advance further;
- Identify the primary challenges identified by NCJJ during individual and group interviews and tours of primary data systems, dashboards, and reports;
- Provide initial recommendations that the AOCP leadership team can consider for improving data in alignment with the programmatic transformation for juvenile probation that the NRC makes; and
- Provide a foundation of confirmed knowledge from which the NRC team can provide technical assistance during JJSEN.

### Findings and Recommendations

NCJJ identified a robust juvenile justice data, research, and planning foundation in Nebraska, identifying twelve strengths upon which the AOCP can build improvements. These strengths range from ownership of its primary data systems and internal research and planning support—to specialized data analyst positions for data integrity support in the AOCP probation districts. As measured with an electronic

survey during the DCA, the probation staff climate for data was more substantial than most other jurisdictions NCJJ has assessed (see pages 6-7 for the complete list and discussion of strengths).

While a foundation of considerable strengths exists, the DCA report identifies eight immediate challenges to consider addressing during the technical assistance phase of the JJSEN. The challenges range from supporting robust data system training—to inconsistent role expectations for district data analyst staff—to retaining highly skilled data and business intelligence staff (see pages 7-10 for a discussion of challenges). To address these challenges, NCJJ provides three primary and three secondary recommendations for improvement.

**1.1 Develop a formal structure for NPACS training.** NCJJ recommends identifying resources, such as computer labs and test databases, to provide hands-on training for primary data systems. NCJJ also recommends expanding support for ongoing training, including refresher training for staff making data entry errors and when the state data team implements new features or applications.

**1.2 Develop consistent roles and responsibilities for District Data Analyst (DDA) positions and develop proper position classification.** The study identified inconsistencies in the part of the DDA and recommends a three-fold strategy for improving what it describes as the primary connective pathway between a rich data warehouse and juvenile probation officers working to improve outcomes for youth.

- First, the primary role of the DDA should continue to be to support data integrity. Still, it should expand to working with chiefs and supervisors in the respective probation districts to provide data analysis support.
- Second, as the data analysis expectations increase for the DDA, it will be necessary to build the workforce by updating the job classification to reflect the skills and training required for ongoing data analysis.
- Third, the core skills required will justify a compensation band above the entry-clerical pay band within which the DDA position currently falls.

**1.3 Monitor/evaluate the implementation of current, large-scale automation improvements and set priorities and implementation sequences.** The AOC has two large-scale, vulnerable automation improvement efforts happening at the same time. The first initiative is to rewrite the Service Provider Portal (SPP) and improve and expand the business processes tracked by the application. The vision is to have management information about service availability and utilization across a range of client and provider dimensions. The second large-scale effort addresses the limitations of NPACS as a case management system.

The SPP and Nexus project implementation can potentially overload the teams that will be critical for buy in to reach a tipping point where the efforts succeed. The implementation science technical assistance track of JJSEN, led by the Impact Center at FPG Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Impact Center) in collaboration with the NCJJ consultants and the NRC, provides an opportunity to triage the SPP and Nexus implementation schedules and advise the AOC leadership team.

**2.1 Identify the resource and timeframe requirements for building information sharing between NPACS and JUSTICE.** The primary data systems of the court operations and probation evolved on separate schedules and tracks. While on the surface a challenge, the applications are internally

developed and supported by the AOC, not isolated within different agencies, and are supported by the same Cognos Data Warehouse infrastructure. Working with the NCJ for technical assistance, JJSEN presents an opportunity to reduce the obstacles to sharing information between the two systems by identifying technical solutions.

**2.2 Identify a framework for organizing metadata concerning the Cognos Data Warehouse and consolidating report needs with data marts.** Juvenile justice organizations with a data warehouse and robust reporting ability like the AOC must manage the challenge of organizing existing reports and providing some guidance called metadata about when, how, and why a report was developed and organizing it in a manner that it can be curated. The report identifies an example of cataloging by another advanced jurisdiction and recommends providing technical assistance on this topic through JJSEN.

**2.3 Continue to use the *Fundamental Measures for Juvenile Justice (FMJJ)* framework as a catalyst for expanding data use and dissemination for the AOC and growing beyond it.** During the DCA process, the leadership team requested that NCJ triage the AOC's ability to measure all 86 of the FMJJ and the 40 youth and referral characteristic items that are also part of the FMJJ framework. The triage indicated that the AOC had made progress in the four years since the Mondoro Project Assessment on behalf of District 3J/Lancaster County. Therefore, NCJ recommends continuing to use the FMJJ as a touchstone but considering it a 1.0 release and growing beyond it, potentially advising an update or FMJJ 2.0.

# Appendix I

## DCA Report: Site Visit Agendas



Data Capacity System Assessment Site Visit  
Hunter Hurst IV, Senior Research Associate, National Center for Juvenile Justice  
Gene Siegel, Senior Research Associate, National Center for Juvenile Justice  
Executive Building, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room  
February 17 and 18, 2022

**DATE: Thursday, February 17, 2022**

**Time:**

8:30am to 10:00am

Probation Administration Leadership Team

- Deb Minardi, State Probation Administrator
- Jeanne Brandner, Deputy Administrator, Juvenile Services Division
- Gene Cotter, Deputy Administrator, Operations Division
- Bob Denton, Deputy Administrator, Programs and Services Division
- Jennifer Rasmussen, Deputy Administrator, Information Technology Division
- Kari Rumbaugh, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Juvenile Services Division
- Jacey Rader, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Operations Division
- Shane Stutzman, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Programs and Services Division
- Kelli Wood, Director, Judicial Branch Education

10:00am to 10:15am

Break

10:15am to 12:00pm

Administrative Data Team Meeting

- Hazel Delgado, Director, Research and Data, Operation Division
- Timbre Wulf, Information Technology Data Program Manager, Operations Division
- Rick Hixson, Information Technology Data Analyst, Operations Division
- Luke Cortese, Information Technology Data Analyst, Operations Division



- Todd Koehler, Information Technology Data Analyst, Operations Division
- Paul Carpenter, IT Applications Supervisor, Operations Division
- Bret Layman, IT Project Manager, Operations Division
- Jeff Ifland, IT Software Architect, Operations Division

12:00pm to 1:30pm

Lunch

1:30pm to 3:00pm

Administrative Staff Meeting

- Jeremy Behrens, Juvenile Case Management Specialist, Juvenile Services Division
- Julie Smith, Out-of-Home Program Specialist, Juvenile Services Division
- Lindsay Meyers, Juvenile Project Specialists, Juvenile Services Division
- TBD, Programs and Services Officer, Juvenile Services Division
- Luke Estes, Reentry Supervisor, Juvenile Services Division
- Ben Johnson, Specialist, Performance Management, Operations Division

3:00pm to 3:15pm

Break

3:15pm to 4:45pm

Administrative Staff Meeting

- Amy Latshaw, Juvenile Investigations and Evaluations Specialist, Juvenile Services Division
- Jennifer Manning, Juvenile Intake and Detention Alternatives Specialist, Juvenile Services Division
- Emily Schoenleber, Home-Based Services Program Specialist, Juvenile Services Division
- Carra Thompson, Juvenile Services Officer- RISE, Juvenile Services Division
- Tara Bos, Problem Solving Court Specialist, Programs and Services Division
- Eric Maly, Programs and Services Specialist-Alternatives to Incarceration, Programs and Services Division
- Mike Nehe, Domestic Violence Programs and Services Specialist, Programs and Services Division

**DATE: Friday, February 18, 2022**

**Time:**

8:30am to 10:00am

Rehabilitative Services Team Meeting

- TBD, Juvenile Behavioral Health Specialist, Rehabilitative Services, Programs and Services Division
- Dustin Bartley, Adult Behavioral Health Specialist, Rehabilitative Services, Programs and Services Division
- Renee Faber, Supportive Services Specialist, Rehabilitative Services, Programs and Services Division
- Teresa Campbell, Utilization Management and Provider Network Specialist, Rehabilitative Services, Programs and Services Division
- Samantha Besemer, Programs and Services Officer, Rehabilitative Services, Programs and Services Division

10:00am to 10:15am

Break

10:15am to 11:45am

Division Director Team Meeting

- Sara Quiroz, Director, Juvenile Services Division
- Kelli Schadwinkel, Director, Juvenile Services Division
- Julie Scott, Director of Rehabilitative Services, Program and Services Division
- Tyson Jenkins, Director, Programs and Services Division
- Adam Jorgensen, Director, Problem Solving Court, Programs and Services Division
- Jerid Wedige, Probation Education Manager, Judicial Branch Education



**National Center for Juvenile Justice Data Capacity System Assessment Site Visit Agenda  
Hunter Hurst, Senior Research Associate and Gene Siegel, Senior Research Associate**

**Date: Tuesday, May 17, 2022**

**Location: District 3J Probation Office, 605 South 10th Street, Lincoln, NE., Group Room 8**

**Time:**

**Discussion Group:**

8:30pm to 9:15am

Juvenile Division Leadership Meeting

- Jeanne Brandner, Deputy Administrator, Juvenile Services Division
- Kari Rumbaugh, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Juvenile Services Division
- Amoreena Brady, Juvenile Justice Reform Specialist, Juvenile Services Division

9:30am to 12:00 pm

Juvenile Probation Leadership Meeting

- Sue Kissinger, Chief Deputy Probation Officer, District 10
- Darci Poland, Chief Deputy Probation Officer, District 4J
- Harlin Welch, Chief Deputy Probation Officer, District 8
- Mindy Vogel, Intake Coordinator, District 3J
- Shelly Salter, Juvenile Alternatives to Detention Coordinator, District 4J
- Mike Wiegand, Juvenile Supervisor, District 11
- Joshua Albrecht, Juvenile Supervisor, District 9
- Tina Wigington, Juvenile Supervisor, District 4J
- Melanie Lueders, Juvenile Supervisor, District 5
- Crystal Hestekind, Juvenile Justice Resource Supervisor, District 7
- Norma Barragan, Juvenile Justice Resource Supervisor, District 6
- Erin Sliva, Juvenile Justice Resource Supervisor, District 2

12:00pm to 12:15pm

Break

12:15pm to 2:45pm

Chief Probation Officer Lunch and Meeting

- Ashley Griess, Chief Probation Officer, District 1
- Jeff Jennings, Chief Probation Office, District 2
- Bev Hoagland, Chief Probation Officer, District 3J
- Jeff Curry, Chief Probation Officer, District 3A
- Mary Visek, Chief Probation Officer, District 4J
- Damon Strong, Chief Probation Officer, District 4A

- Carrie Rodriguez, Chief Probation, Officer District 5
- Patty Lyon, Chief Probation Officer, District 6
- Kathryn Liebers, Chief Probation Officer, District 7
- Tara Sprigler-Price, Chief Probation Officer, District 8
- Connie Hultine, Chief Probation Officer, District 9
- Joseph Budnick, Chief Probation Officer, District 10
- Lonnie Folchert, Chief Probation Officer, District 11
- Darren Duncan, Chief Probation Officer, District 12

2:45pm to 3:15pm

Break

3:30pm to 4:30pm

Bev Hoagland's Chief Swearing in Ceremony

**Date: Wednesday, May 18, 2022**

**Location: Executive Building, 5th Floor Conference Room, Lincoln, NE.**

**Time:**

**Discussion Group:**

8:30am to 10:15am

District Data Analyst Meeting

- Patrick Wiechert, Data Analyst, District 1 and District 3A
- Kanu Akwani, Data Analyst, District 2
- Harmonii Allen, Data Analyst, District 3J
- Jesse Henne, Data Analyst, District 4A
- TK Vang, Data Analyst, District 4J
- Donna Davis, Data Analyst, District 5, 7 and 8
- Susan Moravec, Data Analyst, District 6
- Sonya Frickey, Data Analyst, District 9 and 10
- Priscilla Vega, Data Analyst, District 11
- Olga Lenzen, Data Analyst, District 12

10:15am to 10:30am

Break

10:30am to 12:00pm

JUSTICE IT/Data Meeting

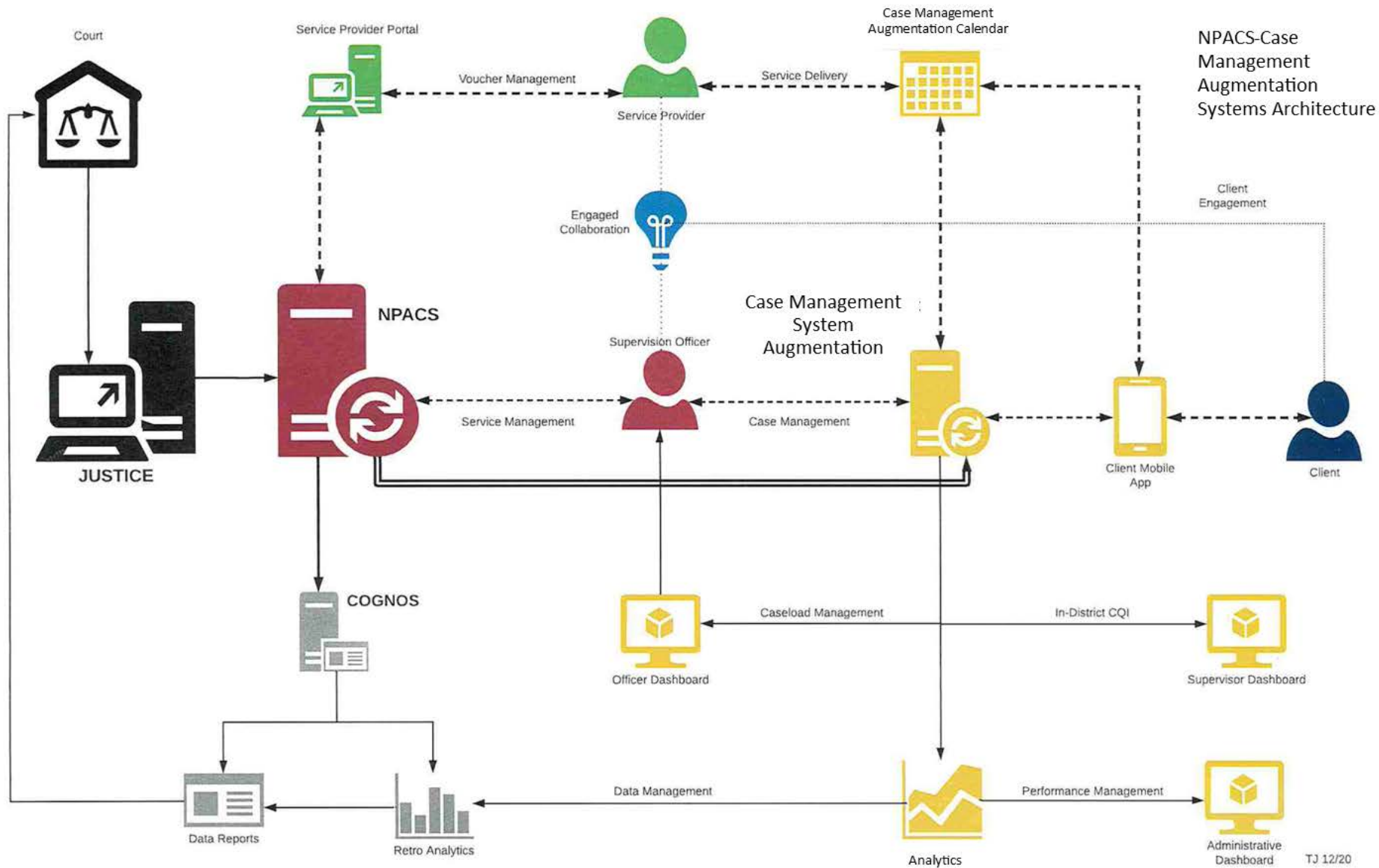
- Sherri Dennis, IT Application Supervisor for JUSTICE
- Jordan Hernandez, Business Analyst for JUSTICE
- Paul Carpenter, IT Application Supervisor, Operations Division
- Hazel Delgado, Director of Research and Data, Operations Division

12:00pm to 1:15pm

Lunch

# Appendix J

## DCA Report: Data System View Shared During Interviews



## Appendix K

### DCA Report: 1-Page Summary of Data Climate Survey Results

During May of 2022, NCJJ administered a 21-item (7-minute) survey an email list of all chiefs, supervisors, probation officers, and district data analysts across all 14 probation districts. The survey was administered to 226 staff and received an exceptional response rate of 77%. The highlights table is organized from the most positive to least: green = 80% of respondents or greater; blue = 50-79%; orange = 35-49%; yellow = 20-34% red = less than 20% of respondents. Notes: 1) No items scored in the green range. 2) Asterisks note items where statistically significant differences exist between probation districts.

**73%**

To what extent does your agency use data to inform decisions (e.g., funding, community resources, and reducing service gaps)? (21% don't know) (2% not at all)

**62%\***

Does your agency systematically collect information on incentives provided to youth for compliance or progress? (3J, 4J, 11) (16% don't know) (<1% no)

**61%**

Does your agency have an overarching set of performance measures? (31% don't know) (2% no)

**58%**

Can your state's juvenile probation system access data to determine how many youths are under community supervision on any given date? (27% don't know) (2% no)

**46%**

Does our agency's data system track start and end dates for programming? (14% don't know) (6% no)

**45%**

How familiar are you and/or your coworkers with performance measures, data analysis, and continuous quality improvement? (26% don't know) (7% unfamiliar)

**41%**

Does your agency's primary data system meet the needs of you and/or your coworkers? (30% don't know) (4% no)

**36%**

Does your agency allow direct service staff to review data and make decisions based on agency-wide data? (37% don't know) (12% no, just admin)

**34%**

Does your agency collect information about the manner in which youth enter the juvenile justice system, such as by law enforcement referral, school, or walk-in referral? (35% don't know) (4% no)

**32%**

How often do staff and administrators receive training on your data system? (48% don't know) (9% admin never receive training)

**19%**

Who receives training on your data system? (33% don't know) (18% there is no formal training on our data system)

# Appendix L

## DCA Report: Fundamental Measures for Juvenile Justice Triage

Fundamental Measures for Juvenile Justice (FMJJ) Probation Sector Measures		Score
FMJJ measure (hyperlinked)		
<b>1 How many youth are involved in various stages of the system?</b>		
<a href="#">1.01 Number of youth in the general population who are within the age boundaries of juvenile court jurisdiction</a>		2
<a href="#">1.07 Number of youth who start community supervision</a>		2
<a href="#">1.08 Number of youth on community supervision on a given day</a>		2
<a href="#">1.09 Average daily population of youth on community supervision</a>		2
<a href="#">1.10 Population-based community supervision rate</a>		1
<a href="#">1.11 Number of youth whose community supervision ended</a>		2
<b>2 What are the key characteristics of the youth involved?</b>		
<b>3 How did the youth become system involved?</b>		
<b>4 How did the youth move through the system?</b>		
<a href="#">4.07 Percent of cases diverted pre-petition that successfully completed diversion program requirements</a>		0
<a href="#">4.21 Average time on community supervision</a>		2
<a href="#">4.22 Number of cases that successfully completed community supervision</a>		2
<b>5 Is the system fair?</b>		
<a href="#">5.07 Ratio of cases adjudicated delinquent and disposed to community supervision by demographics and case characteristics</a>		1
<a href="#">5.08 Ratio of cases adjudicated delinquent and disposed to residential placement by demographics and case characteristics</a>		1
<b>6 How do youth change while in the system?</b>		
<a href="#">6.01 Percent of youth whose criminogenic risk level decreases within 12 months of initial assessment date</a>		1
<a href="#">6.02 Percent of youth who demonstrate improved pro-social skills while under supervision</a>		1
<a href="#">6.03 Percent of youth who demonstrate academic progress while under supervision</a>		1
<a href="#">6.04 Percent of youth who demonstrate vocational progress while under supervision</a>		0
<a href="#">6.05 Percent of youth who are referred to court for a new offense committed while under community supervision</a>		1
<a href="#">6.06 Percent of youth who are adjudicated or convicted for a new offense committed while under community supervision</a>		1
<b>7 Does the system meet the needs of youth, their families, and the community?</b>		
<a href="#">7.01 Percent of youth under supervision with individualized case plan within established benchmark</a>		1
<a href="#">7.02 Average number of days from referral to program start date</a>		1
<a href="#">7.03 Percent of youth who successfully complete program within established benchmark</a>		1
<a href="#">7.04 Number of services available</a>		2
<a href="#">7.05 Percent of programs meeting fidelity requirements</a>		1
<a href="#">7.06 Percent of victims of crime who were offered support services</a>		1
<a href="#">7.07 Percent of victims of crime who were offered support services and who received services</a>		1
<b>8 What was the experience of youth in the system?</b>		
<a href="#">8.01 Number of youth who received a technical violation while under community supervision</a>		1
<a href="#">8.02 Percent of youth who received at least one technical violation while under community supervision</a>		1
<a href="#">8.03 Number of technical violations occurring during community supervision</a>		1
<a href="#">8.04 Percent of youth whose behavioral health screening indicates the need for further attention</a>		0
<a href="#">8.05 Percent of youth referred for further assessment that received assessment within expected timeframe</a>		0
<a href="#">8.11 Average number of incentives applied while under community supervision</a>		2
<a href="#">8.12 Average number of responses to non-compliance applied while under community supervision</a>		2
<a href="#">8.13 Percent of youth who receive more incentives than responses to non-compliance while under community supervision</a>		2
<b>9 How much does it cost?</b>		
<a href="#">9.03 Annual expenditures for purchasing and sustaining evidence-based programs. And engaged in an eval w/ a process.</a>		2
<a href="#">9.04 Expenditures per risk/need assessment</a>		2
<b>10 What are the long-term measures of success?</b>		
<a href="#">10.01 Percent of youth who are adjudicated or convicted for a new misdemeanor or felony committed within two years of their first adjudication of delinquency</a>		1
<a href="#">10.02 Percent of youth who are adjudicated or convicted for a new misdemeanor or felony committed within two years of release to the community from placement in a residential placement</a>		1
<a href="#">10.03 Percent of youth who are adjudicated or convicted for a new misdemeanor or felony committed within two years of discharge from custody of a juvenile corrections agency</a>		1
<a href="#">10.04 Percent of youth who are adjudicated or convicted for a new misdemeanor or felony committed within two years of community supervision case closure</a>		1
<a href="#">10.05 Percent of youth who are diverted pre-petition who are adjudicated delinquent or convicted in criminal court for a new misdemeanor or felony committed within one year of diversion decision</a>		1
<a href="#">10.06 Percent of youth who meet an educational milestone within two years of end of supervision</a>		0
<a href="#">10.07 Percent of youth who meet a vocational milestone within two years of end of supervision status</a>		0

Fundamental Measures for Juvenile Justice (FMJJ) Youth and Referral Characteristics

<u>FMJJ measure (hyperlinked)</u>	<u>Score</u>
<b>2 What are the key characteristics of the youth involved?</b>	
<a href="#">Academic performance</a>	0
<a href="#">Age</a>	2
<a href="#">Antisocial attitudes</a>	1
<a href="#">Antisocial history</a>	1
<a href="#">Antisocial peers</a>	1
<a href="#">Antisocial personality</a>	1
<a href="#">Attendance</a>	0
<a href="#">Criminogenic risk level</a>	2
<a href="#">Current grade level</a>	1
<a href="#">Current involvement with child welfare</a>	1
<a href="#">Current living situation</a>	2
<a href="#">Education and employment</a>	0
<a href="#">Employment status</a>	1
<a href="#">Ethnicity</a>	2
<a href="#">Family relationships</a>	0
<a href="#">Gang involvement</a>	1
<a href="#">Gender expression</a>	0
<a href="#">Gender identity</a>	0
<a href="#">History of child abuse or neglect</a>	0
<a href="#">History of diagnosed learning disability</a>	0
<a href="#">History of family disruption</a>	0
<a href="#">History of family violence</a>	0
<a href="#">History of parental drug and/or alcohol use</a>	0
<a href="#">Individualized Education Program (IEP)</a>	2
<a href="#">Legal residence</a>	2
<a href="#">Leisure/recreational activities</a>	0
<a href="#">Parental criminal history</a>	1
<a href="#">Prior juvenile justice involvement</a>	0
<a href="#">Protective factors</a>	0
<a href="#">Race</a>	2
<a href="#">Sex</a>	2
<a href="#">Sexual orientation</a>	0
<a href="#">Substance abuse</a>	1
<a href="#">Target service amount</a>	1
<b>3 How did the youth become system involved?</b>	
<a href="#">Location of incident</a>	0
<a href="#">Location of incident - type</a>	0
<a href="#">Offense category</a>	0
<a href="#">Offense category - general</a>	0
<a href="#">Offense grading</a>	2
<a href="#">Source of court referral</a>	2



Fundamental Measures for Juvenile Justice (FMJJ) Non-Probation Sector Measures	
FMJJ measure (hyperlinked)	Score
<b>1 How many youth are involved in various stages of the system?</b>	
<a href="#">1.02 Number of youth arrested</a>	0
<a href="#">1.03 Population-based arrest rate</a>	0
<a href="#">1.04 Number of youth referred to juvenile court</a>	0
<a href="#">1.05 Population-based court referral rate</a>	0
<a href="#">1.06 Number of youth petitioned to juvenile court</a>	2
<a href="#">1.12 Number of youth admitted to residential placement</a>	2
<a href="#">1.13 Number of youth in residential placement on a day</a>	2
<a href="#">1.14 Average daily population of youth in residential placement</a>	2
<a href="#">1.15 Population-based residential placement rate</a>	2
<a href="#">1.16 Number of committed youth released from residential placement to the community</a>	2
<b>4 How did the youth move through the system?</b>	
<a href="#">4.01 Number of law enforcement formal diversions</a>	0
<a href="#">4.02 Number of arrests involving youth</a>	0
<a href="#">4.03 Average time between initial admission to facility used for pre-petition detention and detention hearing</a>	0
<a href="#">4.04 Average length of stay in a facility used for pre-petition detention</a>	0
<a href="#">4.05 Number of referrals to juvenile court</a>	0
<a href="#">4.06 Percent of referrals to juvenile court eligible for pre-petition diversion</a>	0
<a href="#">4.08 Percent of referrals petitioned to juvenile court</a>	0
<a href="#">4.09 Average time from court referral received to intake decision</a>	0
<a href="#">4.10 Average time from court referral received to filing of petition</a>	0
<a href="#">4.11 Average time from filing of petition to adjudication decision</a>	0
<a href="#">4.12 Number of court referrals petitioned to juvenile court that were subsequently adjudicated delinquent</a>	2
<a href="#">4.13 Percent of court referrals petitioned to juvenile court that were subsequently adjudicated delinquent</a>	2
<a href="#">4.14 Number of court referrals petitioned to juvenile court that were not adjudicated delinquent</a>	2
<a href="#">4.15 Percent of court referrals petitioned to juvenile court that were not adjudicated delinquent</a>	1
<a href="#">4.16 Average time from adjudication decision to initial disposition</a>	2
<a href="#">4.17 Number of admissions to residential placement</a>	2
<a href="#">4.18 Average time between initial disposition and placement of detained youth awaiting post-disposition placement</a>	0
<a href="#">4.19 Average length of stay in placement</a>	2
<a href="#">4.20 Number of discharges from custody of juvenile corrections agency</a>	1
<b>5 Is the system fair?</b>	
<a href="#">5.01 Ratio of arrest rates by demographics and case characteristics</a>	0
<a href="#">5.02 Ratio of referral rates by demographic and case characteristics</a>	0
<a href="#">5.03 Ratio of diversion rates by demographics and case characteristics</a>	0
<a href="#">5.04 Ratio of secure detention rates by demographics and case characteristics</a>	1
<a href="#">5.05 Ratio of petition rates by demographics and case characteristics</a>	1
<a href="#">5.06 Ratio of cases adjudicated delinquent by demographics and case characteristics</a>	1
<a href="#">5.09 Ratio of judicial waiver rates by demographic or case characteristics</a>	2
<a href="#">5.10 Percent of youth represented by counsel in delinquency proceedings at various case processing points</a>	2
<a href="#">5.11 Percent of admissions to secure detention that met criteria of validated detention risk screening instrument</a>	2
<b>6 How do youth change while in the system?</b>	
NONE	
<b>7 Does the system meet the needs of youth, their families, and the community?</b>	
NONE	
<b>8 What was the experience of youth in the system?</b>	
<a href="#">8.06 Percent of petitioned referrals where number of days from referral to initial disposition is greater than 90</a>	0
<a href="#">8.07 Average duration of isolation in residential placement</a>	0
<a href="#">8.08 Number of incidents of isolation in residential placement per 100 person days</a>	0
<a href="#">8.09 Number of incidents of restraints in residential placement per 100 person days</a>	0
<a href="#">8.10 Number of unauthorized departures from residential placement per 100 person-days</a>	0
<b>9 How much does it cost?</b>	
<a href="#">9.01 Expenditures per-day, per-person for residential placement settings</a>	2
<a href="#">9.02 Daily marginal costs for residential placement settings</a>	2
<b>10 What are the long-term measures of success?</b>	
NONE	

## Appendix M

### JJSEN Probation System Review Recommendations

#### Element A: ADMINISTRATION - *Recommendations*

- Formally incorporate the final vision and mission statements into policy
- Identify procedures for future reviews that includes the timeline and process to ensure consistent and ongoing alignment of the policies supporting the AOCJ mission and vision.
- Streamline access to the policies and protocols to provide a simplified method for viewing the policy and protocol together, thus increasing adherence to agency policy.
- Expand the objectives of the review committee to include comparing existing policies, protocols and trainings and providing updates when an identified inconsistency misaligns with best practices.
- Optimize the current routine process to account for identifying all areas that require attention for edits and/or updates prior to implementing new policies or trainings.
- Identify key policies and protocols for training at the local level to support staff competency with expected practices.
- Add a separate module for adolescent development to ensure staff training, proficiency of understanding, and application of skills that underscore the unique characteristics of adolescence and the approaches that produce positive behavior change to reduce future engagement in the juvenile justice system and protect community safety.
- Survey the districts for key topics that will support their work and build into a set of booster trainings.
- Engage District CPOs in identifying training topics that will enhance the performance of their staff.
- Develop a Booster Training plan to inform sustainability including who will deliver the trainings and who will construct the curriculum.
- Initial booster training curriculums should include adolescent development, YLS 2.0, motivational interviewing, and case planning.
- Convene working group with AOCJ and the County Attorney Association to adopt a mutually agreed upon method to incorporate training curriculum for attorneys that serve youth to improve the working knowledge of what drives youth behavior and support their positive development. Expectation from this recommendation is for development of a mutually agreed upon “certification process” ensuring sustainability of this recommendation.
- Juvenile court judges coordinate with AOCJ to develop a routine set of educational learning sessions that focus on adolescent development, application of the scientifically validated screening and assessment instruments, and understanding of the impact of targeted, evidence-based services for youth and their families. The education sessions must include required topics for new judges and continuing learning (e.g., Booster events) for sitting members of the judiciary. Expectation from this recommendation is for development of a mutually agreed upon “certification process” ensuring sustainability of this recommendation.
- Reexamine the training plan for AC4E to ensure it has the necessary components to support long-term sustainability (trainers, content, and method of delivery).

## **Element B: PROBATION SUPERVISION - *Recommendations***

- Utilize the results of the workload study to establish criteria for staffing of the districts that is predicated on workload responsibilities, caseload size, job requirements and expectations.
- AOCPS to continue their commitment to retention of qualified staff by:
  - Incentivizing current staff through career ladder or promotional opportunity with salary increases based on service time and demonstration of skills.
  - Consistently utilizing meaningful performance reviews to support promotional opportunities to bring value to the process instead of it being a perfunctory requirement for supervisory staff.
  - Reviewing responsibilities and tasks of probation officers and eliminating tasks that are legacy duties without practical application and impact on youth outcomes and AOCPS mission.
- Commit to a training plan for the YLS that includes an identified curriculum focusing on proficiency of understanding, application that improves interrater reliability, and specified intervals for initial and ongoing training requirements.
- Develop an override/underoverride process that requires approval from a supervisor to ensure appropriate intensity and frequency of probation contact corresponding with identified risk level for youth.
- Conduct qualitative reviews across all districts in routine intervals to ensure fidelity of established practice for the Service Matrix.
- Provide training and instruction on the effective and consistent use of the adopted Service Matrix that includes evidence of understanding of concept and proficiency of application in practice.
- Create a multi-disciplinary working group to establish policies and procedures guiding the conduct of a Pre-Dispositional Investigation and report that informs every dispositional hearing scheduled for a youth adjudicated on a delinquent offense that articulates established criteria resulting in an override to the PDI requirement.
- The PDI must identify the priority matched service intervention and probation service level and length. When the priority-matched service is not available, the report must reflect the most appropriate available treatment or accessible service.
- Adopt a mechanism through policy to report service gaps that enables AOCPS to develop aggregate data that informs future fiscal and service resources needed in every district. The RFK Team can avail multiple examples from other jurisdictions for consideration by AOCPS.
- Adopt the method, policy, protocol and practice for early release and successful closure of probation provided by the District 3J example.
- AOCPS must re-examine family engagement training, policies, practices, and communication mechanisms related to involving families as partners in realizing the positive outcomes for youth and system performance. The articulation of a set of core principles and beliefs that guide the specific family practices promulgated by AOCPS for adoption should inform the re-examination in every district and may include:
  - Recognizing that the family is a child's primary emotional, social, cultural, and spiritual resource.
  - Ensuring that there are flexible and authentic opportunities for families to participate in the design, implementation, and monitoring of their child's plan by providing an opportunity for family members to have meaningful, informed and authentic input at each key decision point in the process.

- Creating access to resources such as workforce personnel and service interventions that are supportive of their involvement, including family peer advocates and skill building for self-advocacy.
- Demonstration that Nebraska juvenile probation and juvenile justice stakeholders have proficiency in the skills and practices that acknowledges that all families and acknowledge that families act in the best interest of their child, and fulfill their role, when they have the knowledge, skills, and supports necessary to provide ongoing and developmentally appropriate guidance and interaction.
- Develop a discrete set of approaches and information that systems can provide to families to assist them in meeting their family's needs, including in helping them make the best use of and connection to system and community resources that honor their familial beliefs and culture.

### **Element C: INTRA- AND INTERAGENCY WORK PROCESSES - *Recommendations***

- Each district must collaboratively develop policies and practices for application of a validated risk screen to inform diversion practice decision-making in accordance with Nebraska §43-260.04.
- Develop a training plan to ensure County Attorneys practicing in the juvenile justice system understand and demonstrate proficiency in application of the core tenets of adolescent brain science, positive youth development, and risk screening.
- Include specialized training as a continued education requirement for County Attorneys, also available to juvenile court judges and public defenders, to raise the likelihood for effective and appropriate reliance on diversion, improved desistance of delinquent activity, and enhanced community safety.
- Support revision of statutes that would prevent truancy cases from formal justice involvement in the delinquency system thereby eliminating the potential for a youth to be exposed to the harmful consequences of deep-end youth justice system involvement for status offenses.
- Collaborate with system stakeholders at the state and local levels to develop diversion services that address the factors generally shown to affect truancy behavior- family, economic, and student factors.
- Coordinate with the Rethinking Status Youth Workgroup to create a timely plan for implementation of the recommended policy statement in all 12 districts that relies on the leadership of the District CPOs in collaboration with necessary and relevant stakeholders.
- Develop a statewide task force to examine accessibility and growth of evidence-based and promising local service interventions that address the criminogenic needs and support improved behavioral health outcomes. Task force participation should include District CPOs, judicial leadership, community providers, educational representatives, and juvenile justice resource specialists.
- Focus on opportunities to enhance service availability and local services to improve behavioral health outcomes.
- Increase and improve regular communication of service availability, waitlist data, anticipated start date for new referrals, and outcomes for youth who complete the in-home programming to judicial partners, thus supporting informed decision-making and dispelling concerns that there are no community-based supports.

## **Element D: QUALITY ASSURANCE - *Recommendations***

- Survey providers, those that register and those that do not, to gather additional and current information on whether updates to the voucher system have eliminated the concerns that were influencing the provision of services.
- Conduct internal training for staff to reinforce the need for the data required by the voucher system to create consistency across districts.
- Review the quality assurance policies, procedures and analytical methodologies with a prioritized focus to create standards and criteria for service and program analysis (e.g., percentage of referrals) that eliminates the arbitrary threshold currently in operation.
- Create policies that ensures quality assurance evaluation and analytical job responsibilities are allocated appropriate levels of effort and time to perform the assigned task to the highest quality.

## **Data Capacity Assessment Report - *Recommendations***

### **Primary Recommendations**

- Develop a formal structure for NPACS training.
- Develop consistent roles and responsibilities for DDAs and develop position classification.
- Monitor/evaluate the implementation of large-scale automation improvements and set priorities and implementation sequences.

### **Secondary Recommendations**

- Identify the resource and timeframe requirements for building information sharing between NPACS and JUSTICE.
- Identify a framework for organizing metadata concerning the Cognos Data Warehouse and consolidating report needs with data marts.
- Continue to use the FMJJ framework as a catalyst for expanding data use and dissemination for the AOCP and grow beyond it.