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Operation Youth Success: Developmental Evaluation Final Report

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OPERATION YOUTH SUCCESS:

Developmental Evaluation Final Report

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Nebraska Center for Justice Research

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the summer of 2014, a subset of leaders and stakeholders in Douglas County initiated a collective impact project to reform the county's juvenile justice system. Since the first meeting of that group, a number of additional stakeholders have been incorporated into this initiative, which is now known as "Operation Youth Success." Operation Youth Success, or OYS, has been engaged since that time in an effort to create system change producing a more effective, efficient, and compassionate justice system that better serves the families and youth who are the users of this system. This report will review the activities and progress of OYS through May of 2016.

At this stage of the predicted timeline, OYS has attained many of the objectives and achieved significant progress on the elements of collective impact which were laid out by FSG, the entity responsible for the setup of the collective impact initiative. With respect to independent assessment of the conditions of collective impact (not relative to FSG projections), considerable progress has been made in terms of the development and solidification of a Backbone organization, the development of a common agenda, and the creation of continuous communication channels. Less progress has been witnessed in terms of mutually reinforcing activities, either among Steering Committee members or the working groups which were developed. Finally, with respect to the creation of a shared measurement system, there has been little to no progress to date. Although OYS has been able to facilitate the development of a State of the System report as a central repository for information on juvenile justice, this has not actually resulted in data sharing or discussions of a shared measurement system.

The overall findings of the evaluation team at this point are as follows:

- The chief benefit that OYS provides for participants (according to meeting feedback surveys) is an open forum for education, discussion and collaboration; the space for learning and interaction has appeared as consistent themes of "what works well" across groups;
- The Steering Committee now appears to have more fractionalization in terms of what the group "should" be doing, although interviews indicate most members have trust in the processes and in other members to be committed to the initiative's success;
- Unanticipated consequences from two key decision points (first, to have the Steering Committee allocate community-based aid funds and; second, to open the meetings to the public) have led to setbacks in terms of group openness/trust and cohesiveness for most OYS groups, but chiefly for the Steering Committee;
- Working groups are making considerable progress on their plans but meeting attendance of members has dropped below 50% for most groups since January 2016.

The remainder of this report focuses upon the progress which has been made by the Backbone, Steering Committee, and working groups through May of 2016 and begins with an overall assessment of initiative progress relative to FSG projections. The report then provides a detailed description and analysis of the OYS Steering Committee, including an assessment of group satisfaction, organizational assessment, and group findings/recommendations. Finally, the report describes and reviews all of the working groups (except the Juvenile Justice League and Policy Working Group); specific recommendations are then provided with respect to the functioning of the working groups. Overall recommendations for the initiative are available from NCJR upon request.

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THE OYS PROGRAM: WHAT, SO WHAT, NOW WHAT?

Operation Youth Success (OYS) is a collective impact initiative drawing together a wide range of public and private entities in an effort to reform the existing juvenile justice system in Douglas County. Initial setup of the program was undertaken by FSG, a consulting agency focused on facilitating social change. FSG developed the foundation for the initiative and for OYS as an organization through the creation of a Steering Committee, various working groups, and hiring of a “Backbone” staff. Much of the work that was done prior to June 2015 was focused on aggregating stakeholders around a common agenda (vision statement) and building capacity for sustainability. In the months since FSG’s exit, these groups and the staff have continued to carry on their work through the creation and execution of formal work plans that align with the overall reform effort.

WHAT IS BEING DEVELOPED?

As with a large number of initiatives which bring together an array of stakeholders, the ‘what’ that is being developed is **an integrated network of actors**; OYS is in essence constructing or strengthening a series of relationships which bridge preexisting divides across a number of “silos”. Relationship-building was first undertaken with the creation of the Steering Committee, followed by the working groups, and the subsequent hiring of Backbone staff members to assist and support all of these entities. Additional network development has occurred with outreach to the larger community and to other ongoing initiatives, particularly the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, or JDAI. Many of these relationships are still in the early/formative stages with a focus on continued trust-building and the establishment of regular and continuous channels of communication, although some entities (specific working groups such as the School-Based Arrest Task Force) have demonstrated more advanced levels of integration/collaboration through the implementation of mutually reinforcing activities.¹

A secondary element of ‘what’ is being developed is a central forum and repository of information. By drawing together individuals who serve in different capacities/roles, it is possible to share and build upon the work of others rather than using resources to duplicate existing or past efforts. Further, in alignment with existing principles around collective impact, the centralization of information and data makes it possible to more easily know if the outcomes which are desired are actually being obtained.

SO WHAT?

In the course of this evaluation, what has been learned is that **OYS “works well” for its members when it provides an open forum where participants feel free to express their ideas without judgment or fear of retribution from others**. Meeting feedback surveys across the Steering Committee and working groups consistently highlight the value of discussions with individuals at other agencies as well as the value of opportunities to work together to develop plans for remedying existing issues within the juvenile justice system. Surveys point to three significant changes for participants: (1) changes in thinking; (2) changes in communication; and (3) changes in collaborative efforts (these self-reported changes are included with the “What’s Being Done Differently” section).

¹ The School-Based Arrest Task Force has demonstrated more advancement in terms of collaboration through active partnerships, such as the Georgetown Capstone Project (a partnership between the Office of Juvenile Probation and Omaha Public Schools) and Strategies for Youth (a partnership with the Omaha Police Department).

The implications of the ongoing development of this network include the following:

- Top-down creation of the OYS network (starting with agency leaders or powerful entities serving on the Steering Committee and leaders/front line staff in the working groups) is a sustainable and effective method for producing lasting reform outcomes in juvenile justice
- Relationships undergird functional networks; in particular, taking time to build trust is necessary to implement what can be difficult changes
- Bringing more participants to the table (or tables) in a fashion that respects existing partners makes the initiative more likely to succeed
- Engaging with other initiatives working in the realm of juvenile justice is crucial for creating and implementing change
- Engagement with those who are not directly involved in the reform effort is also crucial for success in changing the juvenile justice system
- The creation of a forum of this nature (open and trusting) will not only produce information-sharing and learning but will eventually lead to mutually reinforcing activities that can result in systemic change—centralizing information through the OYS forums makes collaboration easier and more successful in juvenile justice

NOW WHAT?

As OYS continues to develop its network, **each of the implications listed above should receive further scrutiny and assessment** along with general evaluation of the network itself. In addition, it is important to **examine the unintended consequences of two major decision points** which have substantially affected the relationships among those who are involved in the Steering Committee and working groups:

1. The decision to make OYS responsible for allocation of community-based aid funding
2. The decision to open OYS meetings (Steering Committee and working groups) to the public

An element which could prove valuable in the evaluation moving forward is a full assessment of the network that is currently in existence, how it serves to facilitate change, and how it can be modified or improved to deliver the type of reform envisioned by OYS members. The developmental evaluation team believes that investigating the following research questions will provide meaningful feedback to primary intended users as they continue their work:

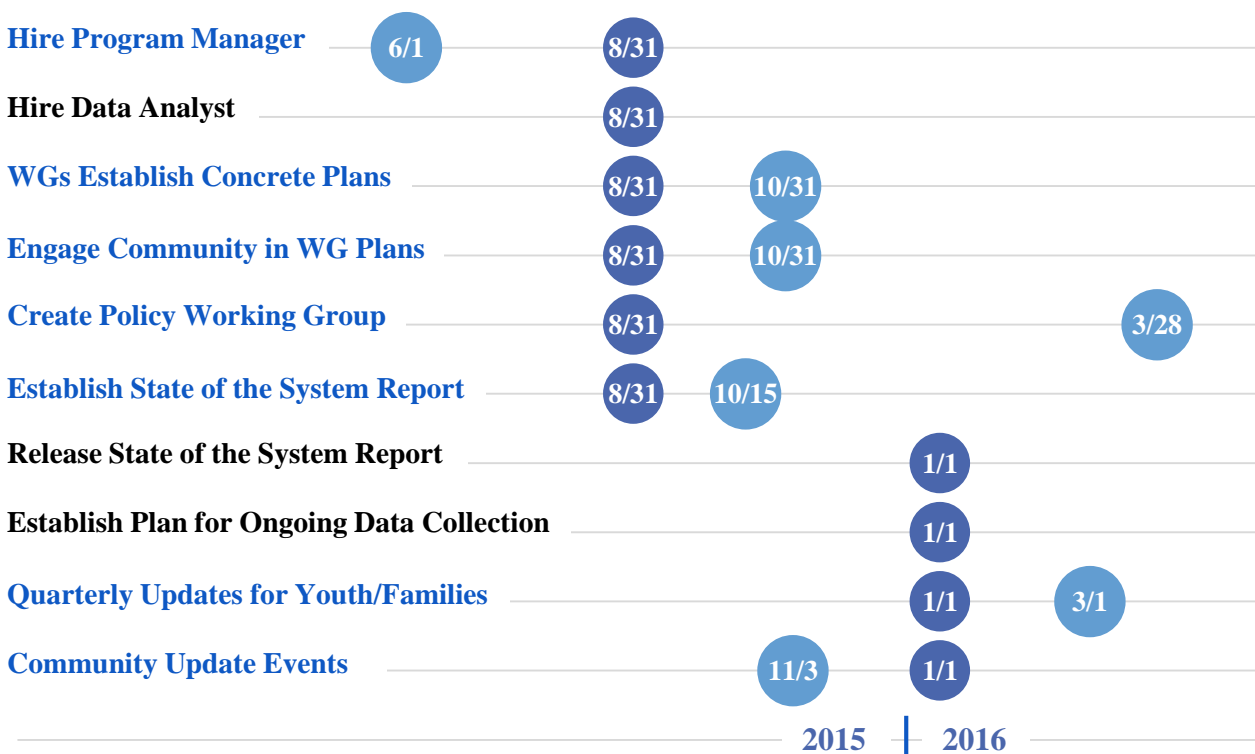
- What do communication and collaboration networks look like among existing OYS members? How do these networks look compared to the past? And what is the relationship between those networks and reform effort success or failure?
- What is the level of trust necessary for optimal group functioning (particularly on the Steering Committee) and how can that level of trust be obtained?
- What conditions or factors have resulted in certain groups (i.e. the School-Based Arrest task force) pushing forward with more mutually reinforcing activities and further implementing the CI model? Are these conditions or factors missing from other groups or can they be implemented with the assistance of the Backbone staff?
- Has the formalization of OYS procedures and membership resulted in greater efficacy with respect to juvenile justice reform?
- As it is still early in the process, what have been the effects of opening the working group meetings to the public? What are the effects upon the Steering Committee?
- What has been the follow-through with respect to challenges already noted (trust issues, lack of clarity on roles/membership responsibilities, etc.)?
- What role does evaluative thinking play in the organization and in each of the subgroups?

PROGRESS ASSESSMENT vs. FSG PROJECTIONS

In June of 2015, the contract with FSG focused on the creation of the collective impact coalition ended. Prior to leaving, FSG established a series of milestones and timelines to guide the future work of OYS. The graphics and tables in the subsequent pages assess how OYS and the Backbone in particular have performed with respect to these milestones.

The detailed milestones and timeline against OYS performance for the end of 2015 and early 2016 are captured in the figure below:

OYS Milestone Attainment versus FSG Projections

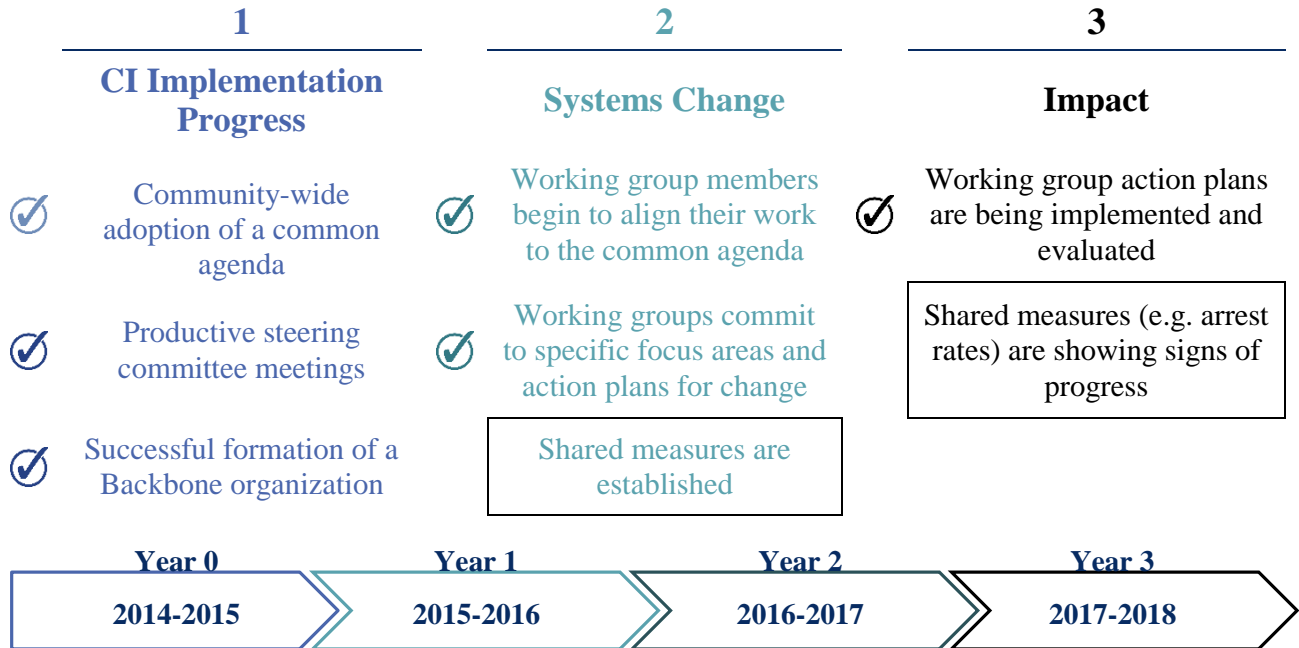


Overall, the organization’s performance has closely mirrored FSG expectations, although often at times after anticipated dates. The element of collective impact which has seen the least progress according to these milestones is the creation of a shared data or measurement system. Creation of this system has been hampered by the delay in hiring an OYS data analyst, which has been moved back until summer of 2016. Given that this position is heavily tied to the creation and development of the State of the System report as well as a leadership position on the JDAI Data Committee (which has been identified as a central position with respect to the plan for ongoing data collection), it is unsurprising that other data items are also delayed in their implementation. If possible, additional efforts should be made to ensure that this position is not further delayed and to facilitate forward progress regarding the release of the State of the System report and the creation of a data collection plan as it relates to OYS and system change.

FSG projections extended to a multi-year and multi-stage timeline through the summer of 2018. The figure below highlights these stages/years and corresponding activities for each stage. Activities that

are underway or completed are indicated by a check mark; activities that have yet to see movement are enclosed in the boxes.

Multi-Year Timeline Assessment



Although much progress has been made, a few points are worthy of specific discussion:

- As previously noted, work on the **shared measurement system** has not progressed, likely as a result both of the delayed hiring of the Data Analyst and the larger issues of data sharing in Douglas County. Recommendations at the end of this report include a list of potential shared measures that, if accepted by OYS stakeholders, provide a foundation for assessing system change and better understanding organizational impact.
- Although there is general acceptance among stakeholders of the common agenda, the evaluation team is unable to assess **whether the common agenda that was set forth has truly been adopted at the community level**. Prior engagement with the community on this issue has been limited to evaluations of the vision statement. A mission statement elaborating how OYS achieves its vision would allow for more effective and meaningful assessment of whether the community truly supports the common agenda.
- Conflict among steering committee members has significantly affected steering committee meetings. This has resulted in revisiting many decisions that SC members had thought were settled. Returning to past decision points, the perceived underlying conflict within the Steering Committee, and the recent decision to open the meetings to the public have led many members to question **the productivity of Steering Committee meetings**.

Beyond the general guidelines already discussed, FSG provided detailed and specific projections for the OYS Backbone. Progress related to these projections is listed in the Implementation Notes section of the following table.

Detailed Backbone Progress Assessment

Potential Year 0-1 Outcomes (June 2014-May 2016)		
<u>Function</u>	<u>Projection</u>	<u>Implementation Notes</u>
Guide Vision and Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common agenda is established • Governance structures in place • Trust is developed among stakeholders 	Agenda is in place and governance structures (Executive Team, Steering Committee) are present. Trust is still being developed among stakeholders and OYS members; unknown trust level within the community.
Support Aligned Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All WGs have action plans • All WGs have implemented one quick win • Backbone program manager is hired to facilitate work groups 	As of October/November 2015, all WGs had strategies and action plans corresponding to those strategies. Quick wins have been identified for Families, School-Based Arrest, Reentry, and Absenteeism groups. No quick wins for Prevention WG. Program manager and now program coordinator hired to facilitate work groups.
Establish Shared Measurement Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared measurement system is established • Baseline for key indicators is established • Backbone data analyst is hired to oversee measurement and learning 	No shared measurement system or set of baseline for key indicators has been formally established; potential indicators have however been identified. Hiring of the data analyst has been delayed.
Build Public Will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community stakeholders (agencies, parents, youth, community, and faith-based leaders) are made aware of and engaged in the effort 	Agency representatives, community providers, and faith-based leaders have been invited to join working groups. Limited to no presence of parents (just appearing as a parental or family representative and not as agency member) or youth on working groups. Community events to increase public awareness poorly attended.
Advance Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy work group is formed • Other working groups identify policy changes necessary to meet the vision and goal of the effort • Key policymakers in NE are aware of/brought into effort 	In March 2016, the initial meeting of the Policy WG was held. Working groups are making progress on understanding existing policies and have not yet formally put forth any policy recommendations. Douglas County policymakers are aware of the effort but it is unknown if city or state-level policymakers have that awareness.
Mobilize Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backbone budget for years 1-3 is secured • Work groups are able to secure resources for “quick wins” 	Backbone budget has been solidified through 2017. Work groups have applied for monies via community-based aid to obtain quick wins. Reentry and School-Based Arrest groups successfully received funding and have implemented audits or programming.

For future assessments of OYS Backbone progress relative to FSG projections, the following tables can be used to catalogue levels of implementation.

Potential Year 2 Outcomes (June 2016-May 2017)		
<u>Function</u>	<u>Projection</u>	<u>Implementation Notes</u>
Guide Vision and Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision and strategy are revisited based on learnings from implementation 	
Support Aligned Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All working groups are implementing action plans • More funders/organizations aligning to the action plans • All initiatives supporting children and youth in Douglas County are in regular contact and avoiding duplication 	
Establish Shared Measurement Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared measurement system is implemented • Data from shared measurement system is used to track progress and for continuous improvement 	
Build Public Will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community stakeholders (agencies, parents, youth, community, and faith-based leaders) publicly support the effort 	
Advance Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy changes that support the vision and goal and the work group strategies are considered • Policy changes are passed 	
Mobilize Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backbone budget for years 4-6 is secured • New state/national funding for juvenile services is brought to Douglas County 	

Potential Year 3 Outcomes (June 2017-May 2018)		
<u>Function</u>	<u>Projection</u>	<u>Implementation Notes</u>
Advance Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy changes are passed • Policy makers from other counties and states come to Douglas County to study it as a best practice community 	
Mobilize Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term sustainability of Backbone is secured • New state/national funding for juvenile services is brought to Douglas County 	

STEERING COMMITTEE PROGRESS ASSESSMENT

VISION STATEMENT

The OYS Steering Committee initially set forth the following vision statement:

- Across Douglas County, our vision is a **comprehensive, coordinated, and community-wide** approach to juvenile services that eliminates the need for youth involvement with our justice system while maintaining public safety. For all youth who do enter our justice system, our goals are to provide effective, compassionate and individualized support that empowers youth and their families to succeed and to build an environment of mutual trust and accountability.

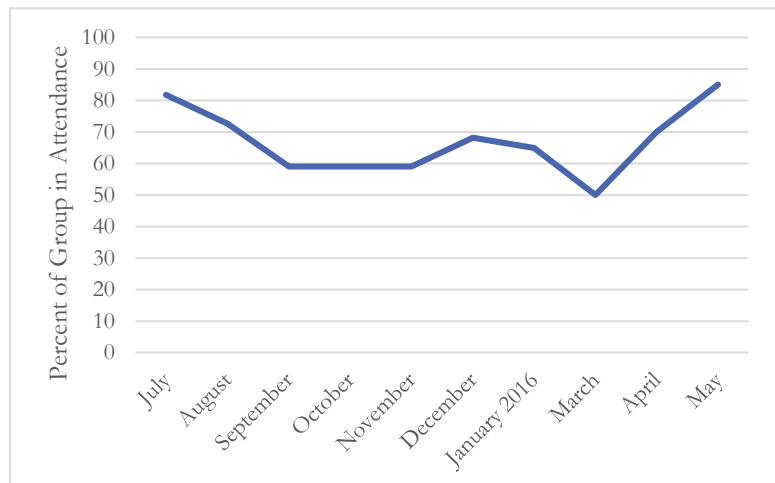
COMPOSITION: 20 MEMBERS

Current membership in the group is comprised of individuals representing the following entities:

- Boys Town
- Douglas County Attorney
- Douglas County Administration
- Douglas County Commissioners
- Douglas County Juvenile Court
- Douglas Co. Public Defender
- Douglas County Youth Center
- Douglas Co. Sheriff's Department
- Juvenile Assessment Center
- Nebraska Family Support Network
- Office of Juvenile Probation (4)
- Omaha Police Department
- Private Attorneys
- ReConnect Success Inc.
- Sherwood Foundation
- Urban League
- Westside Community Schools

ATTENDANCE

Attendance of Steering Committee members has exceeded attendance rates at working group meetings in all months except March 2016. As of May 2016, one of the entities listed (Douglas County Public Defender) in the membership had not attended a meeting since at least June 2015. The spike in attendance in May is due to the strategic planning event held during that month. Peak attendance rates for the Steering Committee have generally occurred at the same time as voting on CBA proposals.



INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Semiannual interviews with Steering Committee members began in the fall of 2015. Initial interviews asked SC members to assess the vision statement, progress they considered to have occurred with respect to the five conditions of collective impact, group membership and relationships, and potential conflicts of interest. What emerged from those interviews were a series of themes and subsequent questions which are listed below, as well as the follow-up that was generated in response to identification of these themes/questions.²

² The DE team created and administered a survey regarding these themes; all follow-up that is described is that taken on behalf of the Backbone or Steering Committee and not the DE team.

Theme	Subsequent Questions	Follow-Up
Accountability and Boundaries	What are the roles/responsibilities of Steering Committee members?	Explicitly addressed at the May Strategic Planning Event with development of SC principles
Commitment and Engagement	What are the expectations in terms of resource investment (participation, time, etc.) from SC members?	Not explicitly discussed yet
Transparency	What are the processes for discussion and/or decision-making? Are these processes clear and inclusive?	SC selected Robert's Rules of Order for meeting management and opened the meetings to the public in December 2015
Relationships	What is or should be the relationship between OYS entities (SC, WGs) as well as other entities (such as JDAI)?	Meetings held between OYS and JDAI leadership/staff in spring 2016 to clarify and further develop this relationship
Trust	What is the level of trust in the group? Where is trust found?	Mentioned but not substantially addressed at the May Strategic Planning Event

A second set of interviews conducted in the spring of 2016 (February through April) revisited these themes, returned to the subject of the efficacy across the five conditions of collective impact, and also incorporated organizational adaptiveness assessments. Themes from this second set of interviews largely echoed those found in the fall of 2015, although more interviews now more heavily emphasized the politics of money allocation, fractionalization and makeup of the group, and the need to make forward progress and stop revisiting past decisions. For these interviews, a series of questions about Steering Committee satisfaction were posed, with the following results for the 17 interviews which were completed (three SC members did not complete their interview).

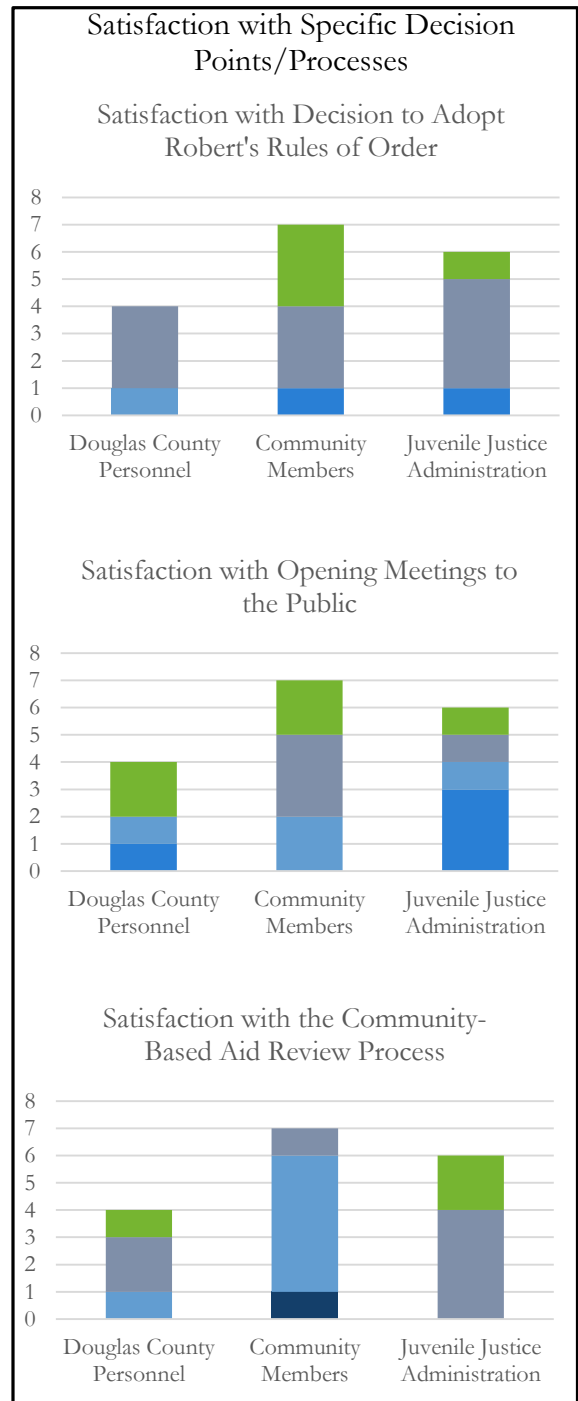
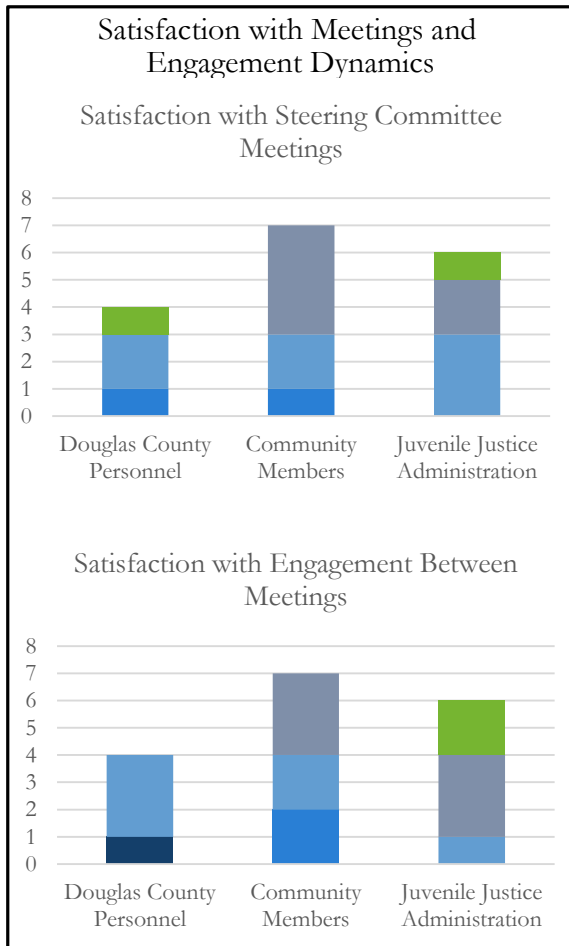
With respect to satisfaction, the interviews indicated that 88.2% of Steering Committee members are neutral, satisfied, or very satisfied with the meetings.³ Assessments of engagement between meetings are very similar with 82.4% of the full group indicating they felt neutral, satisfied, or very satisfied with that engagement.⁴ On these questions, Douglas County personnel (county commissioners and grants administration) had the least satisfaction. Turning to the decision points discussed, 82.4% of the group was satisfied or very satisfied with the adoption of Robert's Rules of Order. However, the decision to open the meetings to the public and the community-based aid review process generated significantly more dissatisfaction, particularly among distinctive subgroups. Members of the committee who are considered juvenile justice administration (law enforcement, county attorneys and judges, JAC, DCYC, and Probation) felt much higher levels of dissatisfaction (50%) with the decision to open the meetings to the public; reasons for this often referenced the need for open discussions and the feeling that this decision would generate either silence or significant backlash for those who did speak their mind. Satisfaction with the community-based aid process is high among Douglas County personnel (75%) and juvenile justice administration (100%), but is much lower (14.3%) among members of the community, many of whom are providers.⁵

³ This overall percentage breaks down as follows: 41.2% neutral, 35.3% satisfied, and 11.8% very satisfied.

⁴ 35.3% neutral, 35.3% satisfied, and 11.8% are very satisfied with engagement between meetings.

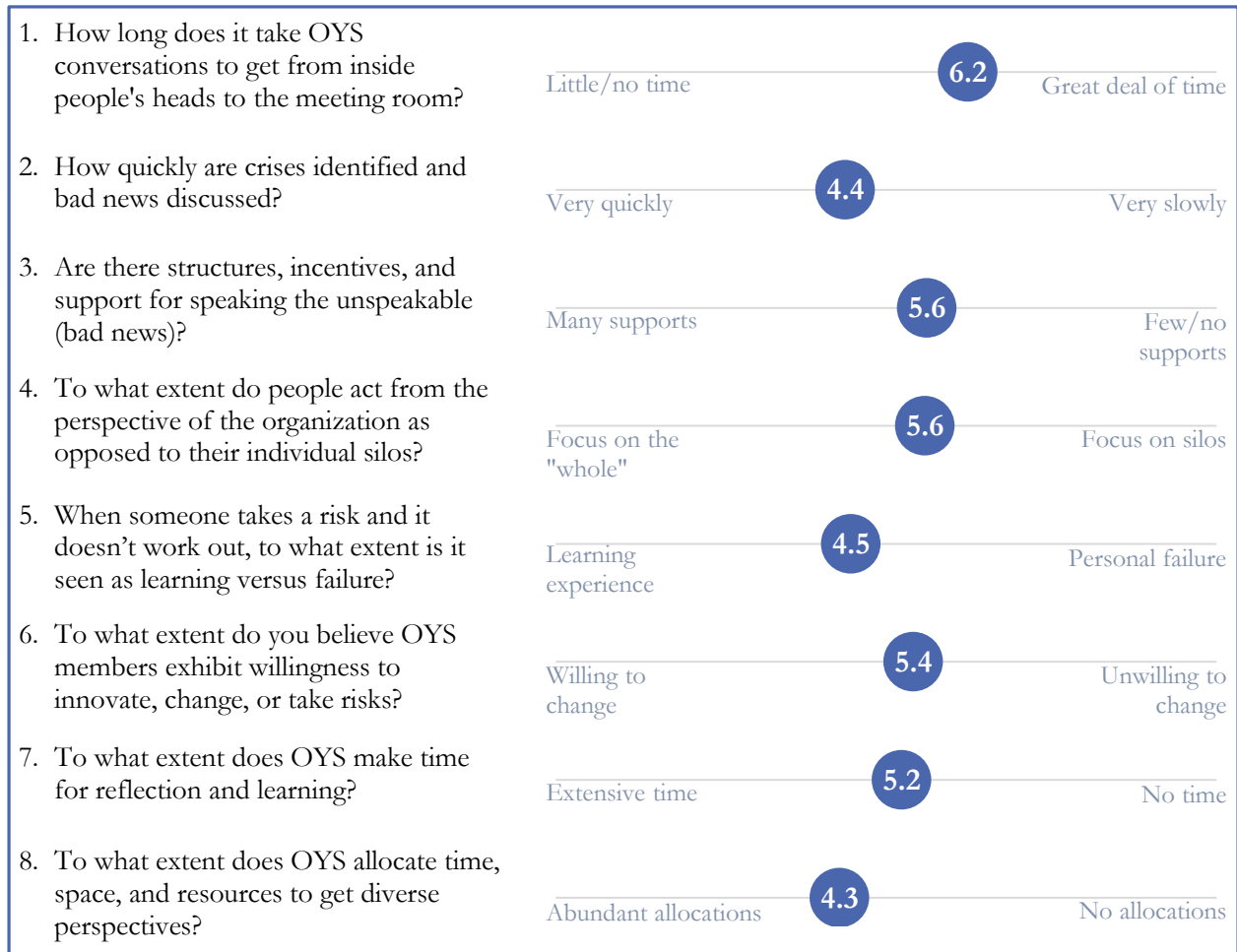
⁵ Of the community members on the OYS Steering Committee, 14.3% are very dissatisfied, 71.4% are neutral, and 14.3% are satisfied with the community-based aid review process.

- Community members are most satisfied with the adoption of Robert’s Rules and opening meetings to the public and least satisfied with the community-based aid review process
- Douglas County personnel (commissioners and county staff) are most satisfied with community-based aid review process and least satisfied with engagement between Steering Committee meetings
- Juvenile justice administrators (DCSO, DCYC, JAC, Juvenile Courts, OPD, Probation) are most satisfied with the community-based aid process and least satisfied with opening meetings to the public



A second component of the spring 2016 interviews was the addition of a questionnaire regarding the “adaptiveness” of OYS as an organization. Statements on the questionnaire addressed the openness of discussion particularly with respect to bad news, collective mindsets, attitudes toward taking risks and learning, diverse perspectives, and overall optimism. Results from these questionnaires (and the corresponding questions which were posed to the members) are listed below.

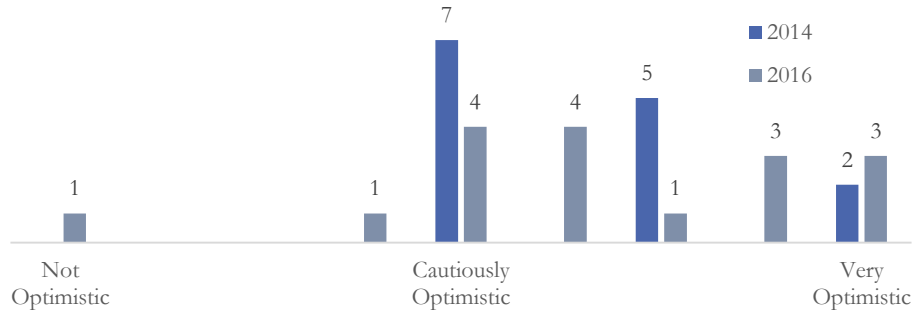
Spring 2016 Interview Questionnaire: Average Scores



According to these results, Steering Committee members as a group (1) at most do not feel supported to speak and at least are hesitant to do so; and (2) there is still a consistent perception that buy-in is lacking, either in terms of adopting a collective mentality or an attitude that is open to change. These findings are corroborated by the qualitative evidence derived from the second series of interviews.

OVERALL MINDSET

The final question that has been posed to Steering Committee members asks their level of optimism regarding whether OYS can transform the juvenile justice system. The most recent interviews show that, while optimism remains high, more members are losing optimism when compared with 2014.



GROUP-SPECIFIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- A recurring discussion at Steering Committee meetings and in interviews involves who should be included “at the table”. Additional efforts should be made to identify specific entities and individuals that need to be incorporated if that is deemed appropriate. Further discussion should also be had about member responsibilities in terms of attendance and participation and how to ensure accountability of those members.
- Trust is another recurrent topic, particularly in individual interviews. Questions about trust in the interview indicate most individuals trust the processes that OYS uses and also trust individuals to be committed to the success of the effort. Interview data points to concerns about private agendas as a possible factor diminishing trust among those who have highlighted the need to further build trust.
- Inter-organizational trust between OYS and JDAI has made significant gains since December 2015 due to initial and ongoing conversations between JDAI and OYS staff and leadership, particularly regarding specific projects such as the State of the System report. Continued communication and collaboration, especially between JDAI and OYS leadership, is likely to produce stronger support within each organization’s network as well as limit fallout of unanticipated consequences regarding decisions made by either body.
- A relatively uncommon but potentially important issue that has arisen through interviews and discussions with Steering Committee members is the need for clear understanding of the existing juvenile justice system and its current operations. Juvenile justice administrators in particular have highlighted a series of misunderstandings about policies and laws that have occurred in past discussions. Implementation of a learning element or presentations (similar to past presentations from the Crime Commission or the Budget and Finance Director) may assist with clarification regarding these misunderstandings.

WORKING GROUP PROGRESS ASSESSMENT

FAMILIES

OBJECTIVES

The Families Working Group was initially developed with the following focus areas:

- Increase trust, respect, and understanding between families and system professionals
- Help families understand the system and develop processes for engagement
- Improve coordination between all of the system professionals that provide services to families
- Provide access to appropriate services to youth and families

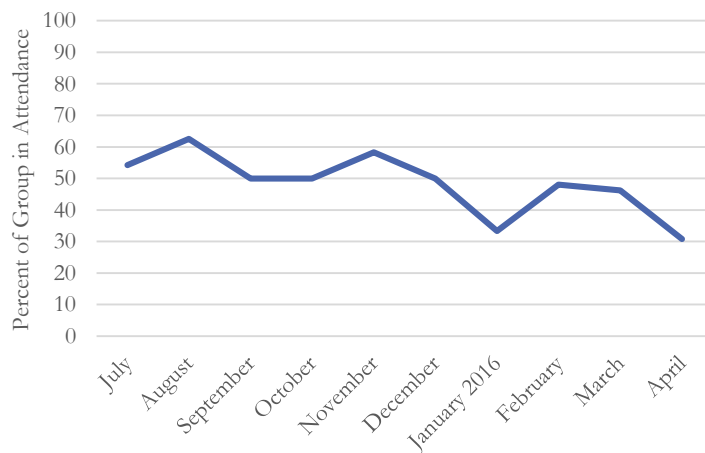
COMPOSITION: 27 MEMBERS

Current membership in the group is comprised of individuals representing the following entities:

- Alegent Behavioral Health
- Boys Town
- Douglas County Attorney
- Douglas County Fire Dept.
- Douglas Co. Public Defender
- Douglas County Youth Center
- Family First
- Impact One
- Juvenile Assessment Center
- Learning Community
- Metropolitan Community College
- Nebraska Families Collaborative
- Nebraska Family Support Network
- Office of Juvenile Probation (4J)
- Omaha Home for Boys
- Omaha Police Department
- Private Attorneys
- Project Everlast
- Robinson Family Support
- Urban League
- Westside Schools

ATTENDANCE

Attendance at Families working group meetings has shown a slow decline over time, with more significant decreases in attendance in January and April of 2016. As of May 2016, three of the entities listed (Family First, Project Everlast, and Urban League) in the membership had not attended a meeting in the previous six months. Entities which have not attended since January 2016 include the Douglas County Attorney and Westside Schools.



BRIEF ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

The work plan for the Families working group initially emphasized educational elements prior to putting other action steps into motion. From October 2015 through March 2016, the group held a “Juvenile Justice 101” series of presentations from members on the family and youth engagement strategies of different JJ contact points or providers in the community. JJ 101 presentations were finished by March 2016, at which time the group focused on finalizing a draft handout for families who are at detention hearings and putting together a grant application to provide compensation for families who attend any OYS working group meeting.

DETAILED WORK PLAN PROGRESS ASSESSMENT

Strategy	Action Steps	Progress
Advance implementation for “orientation” engagement strategy	1. Improve family engagement at time of Detention Hearing	In Progress
	2. Produce an informational handout for families of youth pending Detention Hearing	In Progress
	3. Mapping of system contact points	In Progress
	4. Cross-training for professionals/stakeholders/ WG members	In Progress
	5. Detention Orientation Process	In Progress
Identify engagement opportunities for youth and families across the system	6. Look at each system contact point for policies and procedures re: families and youth	Completed
	7. Identify opportunities for family and youth involvement within juvenile justice at key points	In Progress
Provide families and youth with timely information regarding system liaisons	8. Evaluate the family engagement strategy of various system contact points	In Progress
	9. Develop an inventory of family liaisons for various system contact points	Not Started
	10. Have WG develop “next steps” following 3a and 3b	Not Started

GROUP-SPECIFIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Meeting feedback surveys obtained over the course of the past 3-4 months indicate that certain dominant voices are problematic for other Families working group members; meeting facilitators should look to address this concern in the instance it continues to be an issue for WG members.
- JJ 101 is widely viewed as a valuable approach to the work of this group; moving forward, the group should evaluate whether JJ 101 should be an ongoing element of the meetings (if the value derived from the group for many of the WG members resides with these educational elements).
- Of all the groups involved in OYS, Families is the only group with consistent and involved engagement on the behalf of the Public Defender as of May 2016; the desire of the OYS Steering Committee to reincorporate this entity might begin most fruitfully by working with the Families WG and the member who is located in that office.

PREVENTION

OBJECTIVES

The Prevention Working Group was initially developed with the following focus areas:

- Addressing the **barriers** that prevent youth and families from seeking and accessing needed supports and services
- Increasing **community and provider knowledge and capacity** to identify and serve at-risk youth earlier in their lives with evidence informed programs
- Increasing **funding for preventative services** for youth who are at-risk of justice system involvement

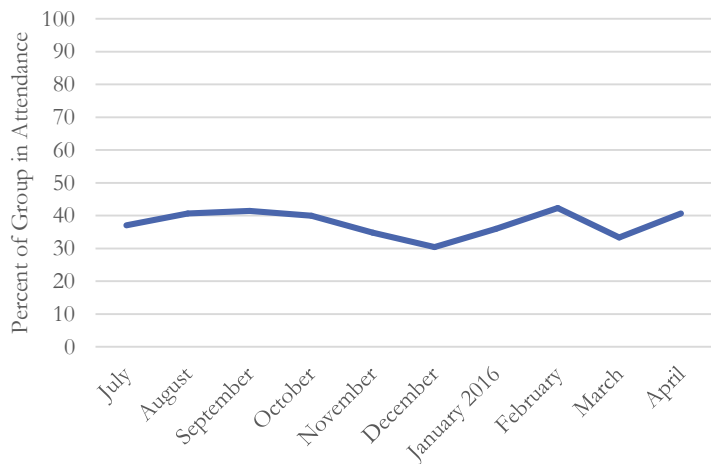
COMPOSITION: 31 MEMBERS

Current membership in the group is comprised of individuals representing the following entities:

- Boys and Girls Club
- Boys Town
- Charles Drew Health Center
- Dept. of Health and Human Services
- Douglas County Attorney
- Douglas County Health Dept.
- Douglas County Fire Dept.
- Douglas Co. Public Defender
- Impact One
- Juvenile Assessment Center
- Lutheran Family Service
- Midlands Mentoring Partnership
- Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
- Nebraska Families Collaborative
- Omaha 360
- Omaha Home for Boys
- Omaha Police Department
- Office of Probation
- Office of Juvenile Probation
- Project Everlast
- Region Six
- South Omaha Violence Intervention and Prevention
- Thrive Center
- UNO School of Social Work
- Urban League
- Domestic Violence Council

ATTENDANCE

Attendance at Prevention working group meetings has been lower than attendance rates for other working groups although the rate of attendance is fairly consistent. As of May 2016, nine of the entities listed in the membership (Boys and Girls Club, Charles Drew Health Center, Domestic Violence Council, Douglas County Attorney, Douglas County Public Defender, Nebraska Children and Families Collaborative, Omaha 360, Omaha Police Department, SOVIP) had not attended a meeting in the previous six months.



BRIEF ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

The work plan for the Prevention working group initially identified trauma and trauma-focused care for youth as its primary objective. However, this group has struggled to identify specific and tangible action steps which may be associated with that topic. Many of the meetings prior to spring 2016 were focused upon clarifying what population would be most appropriate for the Prevention group's

work strategies to target. As of May 2016, the group has partnered with other organizations focused on trauma (including the Douglas County Health Department), begun developing connections with elementary and middle schools to support initiatives within schools that center around trauma and/or mental health issues, and begun working with neighborhood associations with the goal of facilitating neighborhood clean-up efforts.

DETAILED WORK PLAN PROGRESS ASSESSMENT

Strategy	Action Steps	Progress
Determine how youth are identified for prevention services	1. Obtain information about youth impacted by trauma	In Progress
	2. Identify parameters for youth that qualify for services or support	Not Started
	3. Identify effective methods as to how to address cultural and social barriers to help-seeking families and youth	Not Started
	4. Assess existing opportunities for parent engagement within the prevention arena	Not Started
Identify already existing services for youth who have experienced trauma as well as services that are not available but needed	5. Understand the existing youth trauma services and supports that are already available in Douglas County for youth and families	In Progress
	6. Use a mapping exercise to identify current training tools, workshops, and supports in the community	Completed
	7. Work with existing agencies to identify gaps in services and brainstorm programs that are still needed	In Progress
Assess existing opportunities for supporting trauma-informed tools, training, and resources for adults working with youth impacted by trauma	8. Identify evidence-based practices relevant to trauma and whether providers utilize these practices	Not Started
	9. Identify services or agencies that currently serve youth with trauma but do not presently have trauma training	Completed
	10. Identify supports for parents, teachers, mentors, child development agencies and others to learn more about trauma and ways to respond to trauma	In Progress
	11. Identify ways that the group can advocate for trauma-informed systems and develop a communication plan for dissemination of this information	In Progress
	12. Map new and/or available funding and resources not currently utilized by services or providers in Douglas County	Not Started

GROUP-SPECIFIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Meeting feedback surveys indicate that leadership is critical for this working group; providing additional facilitation/leadership support and/or training to co-chairs may be a strategy worth engaging for this group.
- Prevention has struggled the most in terms of establishing a solid action plan with follow-through; continuous use of the work plan at each meeting to guide the group (and to avoid repetitive discussions) has now been implemented by the co-chairs. The evaluation should determine whether this is useful in keeping forward momentum.
- There is a great deal of crossover between this working group’s plan and activities of other agencies (United Way, Douglas County Health Dept.); keeping the group apprised of these efforts is necessary to avoid duplication.



SCHOOLS: ABSENTEEISM

OBJECTIVES

The Schools Working Group opted for division into three distinct task forces, one for each major issue area identified that was pertinent to schools. The Absenteeism Task Force was created with the following focus area:

- **Reducing absenteeism:** excessive absences can cause direct system involvement (truancy) and may be a risk factor for future delinquency

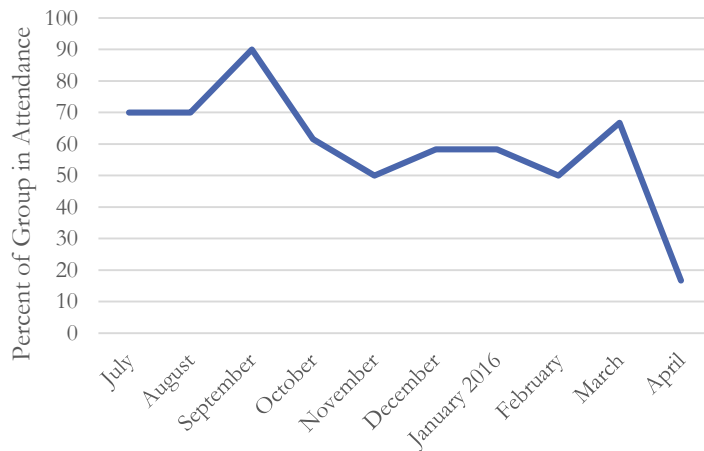
COMPOSITION: 13 MEMBERS

Current membership in the group is comprised of individuals representing the following entities:

- Collective for Youth
- D2 Center
- Douglas County Attorney
- GOALS Center
- Juvenile Assessment Center
- Midlands Mentoring Partnership
- Nebraska Family Forum
- Nebraska Families Collaborative
- Omaha Public Schools
- Office of Juvenile Probation (4)

ATTENDANCE

Attendance at the Schools Task Forces has often been better than with other working groups, which may be a function of this group being approximately 1/3 the size of other working groups. The meeting held in April 2016 deviated substantially from the previous patterns observed in that attendance dropped below 50%. As of May 2016, one of the entities listed in the membership (Collective for Youth) had not attended a meeting in the previous six months. The Douglas County Attorney has not attended since December 2015.



BRIEF ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

The work plan for the Absenteeism Task Force initially targeted existing school, county, and state policies and procedures for absenteeism/truancy as well as identification of what services exist within the community. Early discussions held by the group located existing resources that have been adopted by the respective entities at the table (e.g. the GOALS Center’s documentation regarding various school district attendance policies) and focused on utilizing these resources as the basis for family-friendly materials which could be distributed. In April 2016, the group began conducting surveys with school staff regarding what is and isn’t working in their respective settings as far as attendance policies and developed an RFP to catalogue existing absenteeism and truancy services in the community.

DETAILED WORK PLAN PROGRESS ASSESSMENT

Strategy	Action Steps	Progress
Promote engagement and collaboration between schools, public agencies, and community organizations that receive attendance-related referrals, to more actively and effectively partner with each other and the families they serve	1. Collect information regarding MOUs and/or agreements which address absenteeism from various community organizations and review for communication and information expectations	In Progress
	2. Create and disseminate family friendly language regarding attendance statute	In Progress
	3. Create and disseminate family friendly language regarding school policies/attendance expectations	In Progress
	4. School-based coalition meeting to share information quarterly with community stakeholders	Not Started
	5. Knowledge Exchange meeting/central knowledge resource for those serving families regarding specific attendance conversations (exchanging resources amongst professionals)	Not Started
	6. Develop a booklet/written resource to be distributed to families creating a listing of services	Not Started
	7. Develop an understanding of the MDT process/meeting to determine if this is a viable approach	In Progress
	8. Gather information on services available with an attendance focus	In Progress
	9. Initial identification of gaps with respect to existing services	In Progress
Identify and develop services to address absenteeism	10. Develop plans and strategies to fill the gaps identified	Not Started
	11. Engage schools, families, and community to provide recommendations with respect to those gaps	Not Started
	12. Encourage a system of care which provides resources and comprehensive services to children without requiring involvement with the formal juvenile justice system	In Progress

GROUP-SPECIFIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Meeting feedback surveys for this working group emphasize the need for additional involvement of members, as co-chairs have taken on much of the work themselves. Continued delegation of tasks to group members so that they can support the co-chairs, work in between meetings, and take action at the individual level is likely to prove helpful to the group and should improve perceptions of involvement/buy-in.
- As with the Prevention working group, there is a significant amount of crossover between the work of this group and the United Way; additional efforts should be made to connect with the United Way to determine the scope of their work and to avoid duplication, particularly with the impending review of existing absenteeism/truancy services.
- Due to the steep drop in attendance in April, it is important to monitor future attendance rates and to determine if this indicates a particular challenge for this group that should be addressed. If so, additional questions could be administered to group members (via meeting feedback surveys) regarding attendance issues.



SCHOOLS: REENTRY

OBJECTIVES

The Schools Working Group opted for division into three distinct task forces, one for each major issue area identified that was pertinent to schools. The Reentry Task Force was created with the following focus area:

- **Improving outcomes related to school re-entry** (following an extended absence due to justice system involvement): system-involved youth often face challenges readjusting to the school environment or academic demands (which may have also been a struggle prior to system involvement)

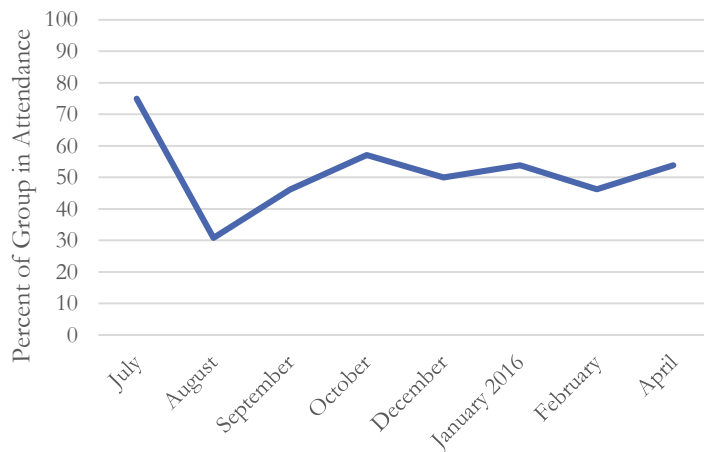
COMPOSITION: 15 MEMBERS

Current membership in the group is comprised of individuals representing the following entities:

- Boys Town
- Douglas County Youth Center
- Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties
- Nebraska Dept. of Education
- Omaha Public Schools
- Omaha Street School
- Office of Juvenile Probation (4)
- Ralston Public Schools
- Westside Community Schools

ATTENDANCE

Attendance rates for the Reentry Task Force have been approximately 50% since October of 2015, although a significant drop in attendance was experienced in the previous summer. As of May 2016, one of the entities listed in the membership (Omaha Street School) had not attended a meeting in the previous six months. One of the group’s co-chairs has not attended meetings of the working group since December of 2015.



BRIEF ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

The three strategies identified by the Reentry Task Force fall into two main categories: (1) addressing the problems with the various methods for handling student reentry in Douglas County and (2) understanding what services and/or providers are located within schools and the larger community. To date, much of the group’s work has focused upon looking at best practices or evidence-based programs in combination with identifying the network of professionals who are engaged in this field. In the spring of 2016, the Reentry Task Force issued an RFP which was awarded to Category One Consulting; this audit should allow the group to catalogue existing services and to identify barriers and gaps that inhibit the reentry process.

DETAILED WORK PLAN PROGRESS ASSESSMENT

Strategy	Action Steps	Progress
Promote continuity of student education while out of home school	1. Prepare for student departure and reentry in advance; develop process outline	In Progress
	2. Ensure compliance with, maintenance of, and support for IEPs across settings	Not Started
	3. Establish transition roles and responsibilities for home district, school administration, facility, and JJS system	In Progress
Provide opportunities and support for students to continue with curriculum and assignments while out of home school	4. Cross-training between schools and judicial systems	In Progress
	5. Increase communication and clarity regarding what credits will count toward graduation requirements	Not Started
	6. Credit accumulation policy	Not Started
Gain an understanding of reentry programming that currently exists	7. System audit regarding system-involved youth school reentry programs & services	In Progress
	8. Analyze audit data to see strengths and challenges (gaps and opportunities). Quarterly data sharing to monitor progress toward reducing racial disparities and disproportionate minority contact of policies and/or procedures	Not Started
	9. Reentry pilot school (hub/coop) as an intermediate placement to prototype strategies for successful reentry	Not Started
Better understand the possibilities for reentry programming	10. Consulting/training regarding best practice for reentry programming	Not Started
	11. Research juvenile justice best practice models for school reentry	In Progress
Establish a proactive reentry program that supports learners and their families and leads to graduation or GED	12. Establish/enhance court reentry programs	Not Started

GROUP-SPECIFIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Reentry Task Force has opted to hold shorter meetings than most other working groups and this is an issue which has been raised in meeting feedback surveys. Additional check-in with group members should be done to determine if meetings are sufficient or if more work can be completed by individuals between meetings.
- As of April 2016, Reentry is the only working group which has not had public attendance at their meetings. Backbone staff and evaluators should monitor closely how this affects the group’s dynamics, particularly due to the fact that meeting feedback surveys highlight the collegial environment for these meetings as being something that “works well”.



SCHOOLS: SCHOOL-BASED ARREST

OBJECTIVES

The Schools Working Group opted for division into three distinct task forces, one for each major issue area identified that was pertinent to schools. The School-Based Arrest Task Force was created with the following focus area:

- **Reducing the need for school-based arrests:** arrests while at school directly channel youth into the system and are a symptom of the broader school to prison pipeline

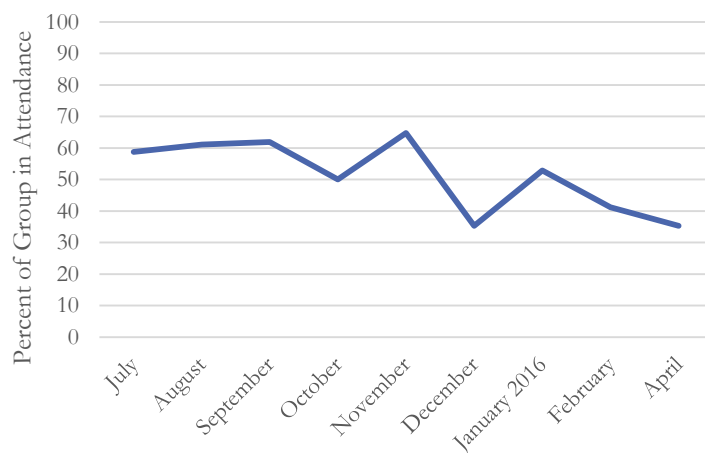
COMPOSITION: 21 MEMBERS

Current membership in the group is comprised of individuals representing the following entities:

- Boys Town
- Douglas County Youth Center
- Omaha Police Department
- Concord Mediation Center
- Nebraska Families Collaborative
- Omaha Public Schools
- Douglas County Attorney
- Office of Juvenile Probation (4J)
- Omaha Street School
- Douglas Co. Public Defender

ATTENDANCE

Attendance for the School-Based Arrest Task Force was been at or above 50% for nearly all of 2015 but has seen a considerable decrease since January 2016. As of May 2016, two of the entities listed in the membership (Douglas County Youth Center and the Omaha Street School) had not attended a meeting since October of 2015.



BRIEF ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

The School-Based Arrest Task Force has been more active with its work plan than other OYS workgroups. Much of this forward momentum was generated with the application and acceptance into the Georgetown School-Justice Partnership program. As a direct result of the October 2015 conference, the SBA task force was able to design and implement a new intervention for Probation-involved youth. An indirect consequence of attendance at the conference was also an introduction to the Executive Director of Strategies for Youth, an organization that conducts formal assessments of policing agencies and their interactions with youth. Strategies for Youth will be finishing its work in Douglas County through the summer of 2016. The SBA task force was also the first OYS working group to apply for and receive community-based aid funding to sponsor a school resource officer (SRO) training which will be hosted by the National Association of School Resource Officers, also in the summer of 2016. Due to the fact that all work plan items are in progress as of May 2016, the group has opted to add more to their agenda and will subsequently be revising the work plan.

DETAILED WORK PLAN PROGRESS ASSESSMENT

Strategy	Action Steps	Progress
<p>Increase training for school staff and SROs, while increasing accountability for the proper use of relevant skills; and increase coordination between schools and community and public services, support the increase in alternatives to suspensions and law enforcement involvement</p>	1. Investigate ways to support schools and their implementation of a multi-tiered system of supports to address behavior	In Progress
	2. Develop Restorative Practices, Restorative Justice training, and/or training support to include use of 3 rd party mediation	Completed
	3. Develop training plan for trauma-informed care	In Progress
	4. Create support systems that allow identified stakeholders to attend requested trainings	In Progress
	5. Develop and promote knowledge exchange for preventive resources within the community; ongoing cross-system training to develop cultural and relevant racial competencies within staff	In Progress
	6. Review existing MOUs	In Progress
<p>Foster an environment in which administration across school districts and individual schools engage in a collaborative process with the greater school community, law enforcement, juvenile justice agencies, and other stakeholders to consider the most appropriate and effective school-police partnership</p>	7. Review and enhance written policy and procedures within school districts to formalize key elements of the school-police partnership outlining officers’ roles and authority as defined through the collaborative process	In Progress
	8. Develop a common understanding of the relationship and interplay between public schools and law enforcement organizations including action plans which minimize school as the entry point into the juvenile justice system	In Progress
	9. Support efforts for the Georgetown School-Justice Partnership Capstone Project as needed	In Progress
<p>Support a culture within the school setting that will utilize restorative and rehabilitative measures to address adolescent behavior</p>	10. Review agreements with school-police partnership	In Progress
	11. Improving and formalizing cross-system collaboration by adopting a multi-disciplinary team approach in response to student focused incident prevention plans; collaboration with culturally competent, community-based organizations situated within the diverse neighborhoods where students and their families reside	In Progress
	12. Encourage administration to clearly explain expectations for law enforcement involvement	In Progress

GROUP-SPECIFIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- This Task Force has nearly completed its work plan. To maintain this momentum, Backbone staff should consider how best to facilitate additional forward progression and if additions/revisions to the work plan are sufficient to achieve that outcome.
- Public attendance has been highest with this working group and has resulted in combative discussions with working group members; continued attention should be paid to this dynamic and how it affects attendance/participation of members.

OYS WINS

“Wins” of the Organization	
OYS Steering Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the Backbone, developed an open and transparent multilevel grant review process which has been recognized and applauded by the Crime Commission • Completed its first Strategic Planning meeting and outlined principles for Steering Committee members
OYS Backbone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secured funding to ensure continued operations through 2017 • Hired additional staff to offer more support to the working groups • Held multiple Knowledge Exchanges and community events to distribute information regarding OYS • Developed an OYS website and joint OYS/JDAI newsletter to facilitate community learning regarding these efforts • Hosting the 2016 Summer Trauma Training Series for juvenile justice providers in partnership with JDAI
Families Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has been providing additional family support at detention hearings via the Nebraska Family Support Network since fall 2015 • Developed a Family/Youth Guide to assist those going through court processes • Applied for funding to support family attendance at OYS working group meetings
Prevention Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted a survey of providers to catalogue trauma-informed care training and has now connected with similar efforts being carried out by the United Way and Douglas County Health Department • Conducted a survey of school staff on mental health programs and needs in schools
Absenteeism Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted a survey of teaching staff on attendance/truancy policies to learn about existing policies/practices and to guide future work • Issued an RFP for an audit of existing attendance/truancy services in Douglas County
Reentry Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted a survey of juvenile probation officers on reentry processes they use with youth returning to school • Issued and awarded an RFP to Category 1 Consulting to complete an audit of existing reentry services
School-Based Arrest Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied for and attended the Georgetown School-Justice Partnership Certificate program; have now been officially recognized as Georgetown Fellows • Implemented the Georgetown Capstone Project: multi-disciplinary team meetings to support students on probation at Blackburn and Omaha South High Schools • Connected with and invited Strategies for Youth to evaluate police/juvenile practices and policies of the Omaha Police Department (with the support of the Sherwood Foundation) as a result of the October conference

WHAT'S BEING DONE DIFFERENTLY

Meeting feedback surveys asked OYS members “what are you doing differently as a result of this working group” in spring 2016; the quotes below are some of the member’s responses. Overwhelmingly, members noted how OYS has made it possible to **think, communicate, and work** more collaboratively.

“Thinking **‘bigger picture’ about relationships** with departments”—Steering Committee member

“I’m much more **plugged into what’s happening in the community with juvenile justice work**; excited for what’s to come!”—Absenteeism Task Force member

“**My approach to discipline is more deliberate and thought based.** Consequences come to play during initial interactions and not after.”—School-Based Arrest Task Force member

“I have **encouraged the families to contact me with any questions they may have, little or small.** I think it's important for families to feel like they can have someone to call. I don't always have the answers they are seeking but I will tell them that and I will call and email until I get an answer for the family. And **every time I hear back from Probation or anyone with a question I am amazed at their willingness to help me.**”—Families Working Group member

“I am able to **engage in conversations differently** with more knowledge on current community efforts; **we provided our staff with trauma-informed care training from Project Harmony!**”—Prevention Working Group member

“I think that these ongoing conversations are impacting my work in small ways all the time. **I am more likely to make a connection than to act in isolation.**”—School-Based Arrest Task Force member

“I am continually trying to **network with groups that are advocates for children**”—Families Working Group member

“**Much better connected** with other agencies, new initiatives, federal law changes, & innovative programs that will support the youth I serve”—Reentry Task Force member

“**Coordinating the vision of this group with the community health improvement plan**”—Prevention Working Group member

“**Constant collaborations**”—Steering Committee member