

# FAMILY



## Implementing Family Engagement in the Juvenile Justice System

Melody Pappan,  
Cowley County Youth Services  
[mpappan@cowleycounty.org](mailto:mpappan@cowleycounty.org)

# Objectives

- Explain what is meant by “family engagement”
- Identify barriers to family engagement
- Provide recommended steps at state and local levels
- Provide an overview of Cowley County’s efforts





# What is Family Engagement?

- There is no universal term
- Family engagement is empowering families, based on their strengths, to have an active role in their child's disposition and treatment
- Family engagement involves establishing a collaborative relationship

# Who are Families?

- Parents and/or other adults caregivers
  - Biological or step parents
  - Legal guardians and foster parents
  - Grandparents, uncles, aunts, siblings
  - Kinships
- Youth's perspective of family
- Noncustodial parents



# Why Involve Families?

- Leads to better outcomes for youth
- Leads to better outcomes for the community
  - Families are the experts on their youth
  - Families have influence over youth



# Why Involve Families? (cont)

- Involving parents is a best practice principle
  - Reduces behavior problems
  - Promotes school success
  - Provide greater supervision
  - Reduces recidivism



# Family Barriers to Family Engagement

- The family
  - Does not trust the system
  - Feels betrayed by the system
  - Is frustrated
  - Feels degraded by the system
  - Is confused/does not understand the system
  - Feels powerless
  - Feels ashamed
  - Is uncooperative



# Family Barriers (cont)

- Financial barriers
- Time barriers
- Transportation issues
- Multiple barriers





# System Barriers to Family Engagement

- System design
- Fiscal challenges
- Lack of cultural competence
- Lack of training
- Conflicting goals
- Stereotypes
- “Us” vs. “Them”



# Commitment to Change

- There is agreement among Juvenile Justice professionals that family engagement is a major need
- However, implementation of systematic steps to improve family engagement is limited
- There has to be a real and lasting Commitment to change



# Recommended Steps at the State Level

- Develop common concepts and measurements of family engagement
- Develop fiscal strategy to fund family engagement
- Develop a basic guide for families
  - To find examples guides go to:  
<http://modelsforchange.net/publications/436>
  - <https://www.pachiefprobationofficers.org/docs/Family%20Guide%20to%20PA%20Juvenile%20System.pdf>
  - See handout for contents of guide



# Recommended Steps at State and Local Levels

- Provide training for Juvenile Justice professionals, including:
  - How to interact with families
  - Cross cultural representation
- Implement performance based standards
- Implement research-based models of improving family involvement



# Recommended Steps at State and Local Levels (cont)

- Integrate parent advocates into the Juvenile Justice system
- Identify existing family support organizations and initiatives
- Implement Parent Education programming



# Recommended Steps at State and Local Levels (cont)

- Adopt family-friendly sentencing options
- Incorporate strategies to improve family involvement in out-of-home placements





# Recommended Steps Local Level

- Have dedicated staff persons with each agency to coordinate family engagement efforts and activities
- Establish a foundation of mutual respect
- Identify and promote family engagement practices and processes, which support communication between families and juvenile justice system

# Recommended Steps Local Level (cont)

- Review current policy and procedures to identify where opportunity for family engagement can be strengthened
- Engage existing groups that support family engagement to assist them in identifying, adapting and or developing materials for families





# Cowley County Youth Services Family Engagement Program



- Purpose of the program
  - Involve families in the juvenile justice process
  - Reduce responsivity factors
  - Ensure successful rehabilitation
  - Sustain reintegration into the community

# Cowley County Youth Services Family Engagement (cont)



- First steps
  - Hire a family collaboration coordinator
  - Cross-train family collaboration coordinator
- Family Engagement Caseload
  - Court ordered
  - On supervision
  - Score high to moderate risk on the YLS/CMI
  - Immediate Intervention after referral to multi-disciplinary team (MDT)

# Cowley County Youth Services Family Engagement (cont)



- Responsibilities of the coordinator:
  - Remind parents of upcoming court dates
  - Attend court hearings
  - Attend supervision planning meetings
  - Assist in finding resources for family
    - Counseling
    - Legal services (Eagles Nest)
    - Food banks
    - Education
    - Insurance

# Cowley County Youth Services Family Engagement (cont)



- Responsibilities of the coordinator (cont):
  - Offer emotional support
  - Collaborate with parents to reduce the “us vs. them” mentality
  - Meet with the families a minimum of once a month – twice a month
  - Offer assistance in keeping parents on track with probation goals.
  - Attend the Parent Project<sup>®</sup> parenting class (more info on following slides)

# Parent Project®



- Two programs available:
  - Parent Project Sr. (parents of adolescents)
  - Parent Project Jr. (parents of children 5 -10)
- Focuses on difficult children, but is both a prevention and intervention program
- Behavioral approach: lots of love and affection, clear rules; consistent consequences, structure, and active supervision
- Skill building workshop with added emotional and practical support for parents

# Parent Project<sup>®</sup> (cont)

- 16 week program
- Part I: Skill Building
  - Promote love and affection (influence vs. control); increase positive behavior (school attendance & performance); handle negative behavior, promote active supervision, identify risk factors
- Part II: Build Self Help Support Group + Skill Refinement:
  - Finding help, communicating values/ standards, family unity, building positive self concepts
- Part III: Parent Led Support Groups:
  - On-Going, Parent Led Support Groups



# Parent Project<sup>®</sup> (cont)

- Examples
  - Parent Survey
  - Stories



example

# Parent Project<sup>®</sup> (cont)



- 6 Key Elements of Parent Projects' Success:
  1. Solution-focused
  2. Deals with even the most difficult acting-out adolescent behaviors
  3. Activity-based
  4. Community collaborative approach
  5. Provides parents information, skill training, encouragement, & practical/emotional support
  6. Developed as a compilation of answers to parents' questions (MOST unique component)





# Discussion

# For More Information

- Feel free to contact Melody Pappan, [mpappan@cowleycounty.org](mailto:mpappan@cowleycounty.org)
- Consult the following materials used for developing this presentation:
  - Models for Change: “Family Involvement in Pennsylvania’s Juvenile Justice System”
  - The National Reentry Resource Center: “Effectively Implementing Family Engagement and Involvement Practices for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System”
  - OJJDP Model Programs Guide: “Family Engagement in Juvenile Justice”
  - National Institute of Mental Health/MacArthur Foundation: “The Challenge and Opportunity of Parental Involvement in Juvenile Justice Services”
  - Vera Institute of Justice “Identifying, Engaging and Empowering Families: A charge for Juvenile Justice Agencies”
  - National Council on Crime and Delinquency: “Engaging Juvenile justice System Involved Families”
  - National Juvenile Justice Network: “An Advocate’s Guide to Meaningful Family Partnerships: Tips from the Field”
  - Campaign for Youth Justice: “Family Comes First”