

# KANSAS JUVENILE JUSTICE WORKGROUP

## June 17, 2015 Meeting Summary

On June 17, 2015, the Kansas Juvenile Justice Workgroup convened for its inaugural meeting. Led by Workgroup Co-Chairs Representative John Rubin and Senator Greg Smith, the Workgroup reviewed its charge and goals, as well as the process and timeline. The Workgroup also reviewed the national juvenile justice landscape and engaged in a discussion of their preliminary thoughts on strengths of the Kansas juvenile justice system, areas that might be in need of improvement, and questions they want to explore. As part of the forthcoming system assessment and data analysis, the Workgroup will explore those areas in more detail to determine the actual strengths and needs of the system.

### **Overview of Workgroup Charge, Goals and Process**

#### *Welcome Remarks and Introductions*

Co-Chair Rubin welcomed the members and asked each to introduce him or herself and describe their interest in juvenile justice issues. All members of the Workgroup were in attendance:

- Rep. John Rubin, Workgroup Co-Chair
- Sen. Greg Smith, Workgroup Co-Chair
- Mark Gleeson, Office of Judicial Administration
- Rep. Gail Finney, District 84
- Karen Griffiths, Assistant County Attorney, Norton County
- Sen. Pat Pettey, District 6
- Judge Thomas Foster, 10<sup>th</sup> Judicial District
- Judge Mary Thrower, 28<sup>th</sup> Judicial District
- Judge Delia M. York, 29<sup>th</sup> Judicial District
- Stephanie Springer, 27<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Chief Court Services Officer
- Ray Roberts, Secretary, Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC)
- Terri Williams, Deputy Secretary of Juvenile Services, KDOC
- Randy Bowman, Director of Community Based Services, KDOC
- Melody Pappan, Crowley County Youth Services Administrator
- Trent Wetta, Kansas Legal Services
- Jaime Rogers, Deputy Secretary, Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF)
- Ed Klumpp, Kansas Association of Chiefs of Police

#### *Review of Workgroup Charge and Goals*

Co-Chair Rubin reviewed the charge of the Workgroup set out by state leaders from both parties and all three branches of government, including Governor Sam Brownback, Chief Justice Lawton Nuss, Senate President Susan Wagle, Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, House Speaker Ray Merrick, and House Minority Leader Burroughs.

The charge of the Workgroup is to develop proposals for comprehensive reform of the juvenile justice system that will be used as the foundation for statutory, budgetary, and administrative changes during the 2016 legislative session. The Workgroup's priorities are to:

- 1) Promote public safety and hold juvenile offenders accountable;
- 2) Control taxpayer costs; and
- 3) Improve outcomes for youth, families, and communities in Kansas.

KDOC Deputy Secretary Williams and Judge Foster updated the Workgroup on current motivation from the executive and judicial perspective to comprehensively examine the juvenile justice system.

#### *Review of Workgroup Process and Timeline*

Co-Chair Smith described the Workgroup process and timeline, which includes a data analysis and system assessment review in July and August. The Workgroup will break into subgroups in September and begin policy development. Ultimately, the Workgroup will develop and recommend specific policy reforms in a final report to the legislature, the Governor, and the Chief Justice in November. Throughout this process, the Workgroup will conduct stakeholder outreach through individual or group meetings with a broad range of groups, including but not limited to youth and families, law enforcement, judges, crime victims, faith leaders, prosecutors, defense attorneys, educators, service providers, youth advocates, and other groups requested by the Workgroup members.

## **Overview of National Juvenile Justice Landscape**

The Co-Chairs asked Jake Horowitz, state policy director for the Pew Charitable Trusts' public safety performance project, to introduce the Pew team—who will be providing technical assistance to the Workgroup—and to review the national juvenile justice landscape.

### *National Juvenile Crime and Commitment Trends*

Mr. Horowitz presented national data trends showing that while juvenile crime is down nationally, there is great variation among state reductions in commitments to the juvenile justice system. The Workgroup members learned that prior to enacting juvenile justice reform, states such as Georgia, Hawaii, and Kentucky invested as much as \$199,000 annually for each youth placed out-of-home, with poor recidivism outcomes or unknown recidivism rates.

### *Research and State Systems Misaligned*

The Workgroup reviewed research showing that residential placement fails to produce better outcomes than alternative sanctions and can be counterproductive for reducing recidivism. Additionally, longer stays out-of-home do not yield consistent reductions in youth reoffending. Data analyses in states such as Georgia and West Virginia revealed that those state systems were out-of-step with current research. In Georgia, low-level offenders made up a large proportion of the juvenile justice population, and in West Virginia, lengths of stay in out-of-home placement were increasing for certain youth.

### *State Policy Solutions*

The Workgroup members learned that states have developed tailored, state-specific policy solutions to juvenile justice challenges. These solutions protect public safety by strengthening community options, contain costs by reducing out-of-home populations, and sustain reform by reinvesting savings in evidence-based programs and providing oversight. Juvenile justice reform packages enacted in Georgia, Hawaii, Kentucky, South Dakota, and West Virginia featured large projected reductions in the out-of-home populations that will result in avoided costs that can be reinvested in services in the community. The Workgroup learned that many of

these states provided an initial investment to jumpstart the reforms.

### *Broad Public Support*

The Workgroup reviewed information demonstrating strong public support for juvenile justice policies that align with current research principles. Reforms proposed (and later passed) by Georgia and South Dakota received endorsements from a broad set of stakeholders, from local district attorneys and sheriffs to Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. In addition, the Workgroup reviewed a recent national poll demonstrating that voters care more about preventing crime than about whether or how long juvenile offenders are incarcerated. In Georgia, Hawaii, South Dakota, West Virginia, and Kentucky, comprehensive juvenile justice reform packages received broad support from the legislature.

### *Outcomes in Georgia*

The Workgroup members reviewed preliminary outcomes from Georgia indicating that enacted juvenile justice reforms have resulted in a 62percent decline in felony commitments over a nine-month period among 49 counties that participated in a voluntary fiscal incentive program to increase the use of community evidence-based practices. This led to a 14 percent population reduction at secure state facilities during the same period.

## **Workgroup Discussion**

The Workgroup engaged in a wide-ranging discussion regarding what each member viewed as the strengths of the Kansas juvenile justice system and the areas in need of improvement.

## **Next Steps**

The next Workgroup meeting will be on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015 in Topeka. Co-Chair Rubin reminded members that they may reach out to request or recommend any additional information for consideration by the Workgroup.