

Category Two Case Studies

Washington State

The Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR) in Washington State has undertaken the development of tools to support the goal of establishing a data-driven juvenile justice system. During its time as a site involved with the MacArthur Foundation's *Models for Change* Initiative, WSCCR developed several databases designed as evaluation research tools. These tools allow the state to undertake a variety of analyses in areas such as juvenile and criminal court contact, the impact of different assessment characteristics on re-referral to juvenile court or probation, and the characteristics of youth that are petitioned for truancy in Washington. These tools have been used in a variety of ways to support the development of programs and policies.

For example, in 2010, the Washington State DSHS Research and Data Analysis Division (RDA) undertook a statewide analysis of dual status youth that yielded a wealth of information about the characteristics and experiences of these youth and their families across the state. Four Washington counties used these findings to help inform their efforts in implementing new Integrated Case Management practices. In addition, the RDA continues to track these youth and analyze their data with the goal of better identifying dual status youth and determining how to best meet their needs.

In King County, the WSCCR tools were used to support a prevalence study of its dual status youth. The resulting findings highlighted characteristics of these youth that helped in designing county-wide reforms that establish new practice in the areas of identification of dual status youth and coordinated case planning on their behalf.

With these tools, Washington has created mechanisms and processes for facilitating the sharing of data that is of use state-wide and to its local government organizations in their work to benefit youth and families involved in their child and family serving systems. "Very importantly, the tools have helped facilitate groundbreaking research and new insights on challenging juvenile justice issues, including the trajectories of multi-system youth and risk-need screening for special populations like status offenders."

For information, see **Models for Change Innovation Brief, Beyond Anecdote: New Resources in Washington State for Data-Informed Policy Reform (2013)**.

Case Study

Newtown County, Georgia

Newtown County, Georgia had no established data sharing agreement to identify which of the youth who were entering the juvenile justice system (via a complaint filed in juvenile in court) also had either current or prior child welfare system involvement. A number of state and county level stakeholders collaborated to launch a data sharing project with a primary goal of collecting and sharing accurate data that would inform policies and practices to effectively serve “cross system” children and families. Representatives from a number of agencies participated in the effort, including the following:

- Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice
- Georgia Department of Human Services, including the Division of Family and Children Services
- Newton County Department of Family and Children Services (hereinafter referred to as “DFCS”)
- Governor’s Office of Children and Families (hereinafter referred to as “GOCF”)
- Newton County Juvenile Court (hereinafter referred to as “the Court”)
- Canyon Solutions, Inc. (data contractor for the Court)
- Georgia Department of Education
- Newton County Board of Education
- Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Addictive Disease
- ViewPoint Health and private mental health providers
- Newton County Community Partnership
- Newton County District Attorney’s Office
- Newton County Public Defender’s Office

Georgia statute (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-84) directs that “governmental agencies” shall exchange with each other all information, that is not held as confidential pursuant to a federal law and relating to a child which may aid a governmental entity in the assessment, treatment, intervention or rehabilitation of a child of the court. In addition, there was buy-in from state partners and a willingness to share data across agencies. Nevertheless, the group had to undertake arduous work to achieve its goal. The group needed to draft a data sharing agreement consistent with applicable laws. Moreover, the agreement needed to describe exactly how the data sharing would happen, including identifying the key data elements to share and within what time frames, and allocating the staff to prepare the necessary queries and retrieve the data. The work was done by various committees which included members of state agencies responsible for the day-to-day operations regarding data collection and systems operation. Legal counsel for each of the agencies involved had to approve the draft. The agreement took over a year to be finalized.

Under Georgia law, DFCS may only release a child’s name to a third party without parental permission if it has a court order to do so. In addition, the agencies each had their own data systems with limitations. Specifically, the Court’s data system (JCATS) did not allow for the sharing of data in “real time;” extracts would need to be conducted each time project data needed an update. The DFCS data system (SHINES) did not have levels of access, making it impossible for Court staff to utilize SHINES to identify youth with dual involvement. These issues, as well as the statutory limitations on releases of DFCS information

without parental permission, required the subcommittees to rethink the flow of data sharing. The data sharing and legal subcommittees developed an information flow chart for a manual data collection protocol syncing data from various agencies in the absence of the technology for system interface and automated data extracts. The workgroup utilized this protocol to collect prevalence data. An initial analysis of the prevalence of the dually-involved target population enabled the workgroup to develop and deliver staff trainings to educate stakeholders about the how a history of child welfare involvement may impact delinquency issues.

To better serve individual children and families, a process was established whereby county DFCS case managers provide the Court Intake officer with previous child welfare history for youth with new Court referrals on a weekly basis. Monthly multi-agency meetings are utilized to ensure appropriate services are available for dually-involved families, with appropriate releases of information and confidentiality agreements in place. An Advice of Rights form was drafted to ensure that the child's Fifth Amendment rights are not violated during evaluations or staffing of cases.

The workgroup's efforts have provided additional guidance and direction to the Governor's Office of Children and Families and the Children's Cabinet to carry forth the state's commitment to data sharing and system interfacing.