

Date: June 16, 2012  
To: OJP Science Advisory Board  
From: Mark Lipsey, Chair, OJJDP Subcommittee  
Re: Progress Report

### **Committee Members**

From the SAB

Mark Lipsey (chair), Vanderbilt University  
Judge Theodore McKee, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit  
Ed Mulvey, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

Ad hoc members

Jeffrey Butts, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY  
David Finkelhor, University of New Hampshire  
Linda Teplin, Northwestern University

### **OJJDP Liaison to the Subcommittee**

Brecht Donoghue, Research Coordinator, OJJDP

### **Meetings and Contacts Since the Last SAB Meeting**

- February 1, 2012: Conference call with Lipsey (Subcommittee Chairman) and OJJDP Administrators Melodee Hanes (Acting OJJDP Administrator), Janet Chiancone (Associate Administrator, Budget and Planning Division), and Brecht Donoghue (Research Coordinator and liaison to the Subcommittee).
- February 8, 2012: Conference call with Subcommittee members and James (Buddy) Howell, former OJJDP Director of Research and Program Development and Deputy Administrator.
- February 9, 2012: Conference call with Subcommittee members and Shay Bilchik, former OJJDP Administrator.
- February 13, 2012: Conference call with Subcommittee members and John Wilson, former OJJDP Acting Administrator, Senior Counsel, and Deputy Administrator.
- February 15, 2012: Conference call with Subcommittee members and Betty Chemers, former OJJDP Deputy Administrator for Discretionary Programs.
- February 17, 2012: Conference call with Subcommittee members and Brecht Donoghue and Janet Chiancone.
- May 17, 2012: Conference call with Subcommittee Chair and Brecht Donghue.

### **Summary**

Under the new Acting Administrator Melodee Hanes, appointed in January, 2012, one significant topic of discussion at OJJDP has been reorganization of the OJJDP units and divisions. One issue of great interest to the OJJDP SAB Subcommittee within that context is where the research functions will be located in that reorganization. In former times, OJJDP was organized with a separate research division (Research and Program Development). Currently there is no separate research division and the research functions and associated personnel are dispersed across the other units. A particularly salient question for the reorganization plan, therefore, is whether the research functions and personnel should be more consolidated than they are currently.

In order to better understand the background and prior OJJDP experience with different ways of organizing the research functions, the Subcommittee arranged a series of interviews with former OJJDP administrators who were especially knowledgeable about OJJDP's research activities and related internal organizational dynamics. These interviews were conducted in February with the following individuals and at least three of the Subcommittee members:

Shay Bilchik, former OJJDP Administrator;  
Betty Chemers, former OJJDP Deputy Administrator for Discretionary Programs;  
James (Buddy) Howell, former OJJDP Director of Research and Program Development and Deputy Administrator;  
John Wilson, former OJJDP Acting Administrator, Senior Counsel, and Deputy Administrator.

These interviews focused on the organization of research at OJJDP but also ranged over a variety of other topics related to research, research funding, and current issues faced by OJJDP. Following these interviews, Subcommittee members had a conference call with Brecht Donoghue (OJJDP Research Coordinator and liaison to the Subcommittee) and Janet Chiancone (OJJDP Associate Administrator, Budget and Planning Division and former Research Coordinator) to discuss the current status of the reorganization plan and the timeline for decisions about it.

Exchanges among the members of the Subcommittee revealed that there was no consensus for a recommendation about how the Subcommittee thought research should be structured in the OJJDP reorganization. Nonetheless, the members felt it was appropriate to share a summary of the themes that had emerged on this topic in the interviews and the Subcommittee's discussions. On March 18, therefore, the Chairman sent the following memo on behalf of the Subcommittee to the OJJDP administrators Melodee Hanes, Jeff Slowikowski, Janet Chiancone, and Brecht Donoghue.

Date: March 18, 2012  
Subject: Recent OJJDP Subcommittee conversations

As I believe you know, in recent weeks the SAB OJJDP Subcommittee has held a series of conference calls with former OJJDP administrators and research directors. We were mainly interested in their views about whether support for research was better served by a dedicated research unit at OJJDP or by a dispersed arrangement with researchers embedded in all the units. Many other interesting matters came up as well and I think the Subcommittee came away with much to think about.

In any event, I thought I'd share with you some of the themes that arose about the organizational issue and some of the Subcommittee's reactions, recognizing that you've had this topic under active discussion. Just to be clear on the formalities, we're aware that we have no direct advisory role with OJJDP and, indeed, have no advice to offer. Nonetheless, I thought you might be interested to know what we've taken away from our various conversations. Below are the main themes as I've construed them.

\*\* A strong message that came to the Subcommittee is how central research is to OJJDP's national leadership role in juvenile justice. Our informants were near universal in noting that,

while OJJDP has limited ability to directly regulate state and local juvenile justice practice, it has considerable influence through dissemination of credible information about effective practice and programs, summaries of research on relevant issues, demonstration programs that offer models for emulation, technical assistance based on valid evidence and synthesis of best practice, and the like. The research basis for such activities includes that conducted by researchers outside OJJDP as well as the research OJJDP itself supports.

\*\* We heard virtually no support in our conversations with the former administrators for the dispersed model of research support. The gist of the comments went something like the following.

While embedding designated research-oriented personnel in the various OJJDP divisions and units has the attractive feature of providing them with proximity to the activities and decision-making in those units, it has significant limitations. These personnel answer to the supervisors of the respective units, whose priorities are necessarily at least somewhat different. The chain of command for dispersed personnel does not readily allow for a research director or administrator with sufficient stature, rank, and organizational positioning to advocate for research and participate with other division directors and the OJJDP administrator at the highest levels of policymaking in the Office. Coordination of research functions across units is challenging and the respective personnel have little opportunity collectively to develop a supportive research culture among themselves. Dispersed personnel faced with the immediate priorities of their respective units have limited ability to engage in the background work that allows them to keep abreast of research in the field, improve their research-related knowledge and skills, and participate in the kind of reflective interaction with researchers and other research-oriented personnel that leads to new ideas, applications, and initiatives. Positions in units that do not have a primary focus on research are not attractive for many individuals with strong research credentials, making it difficult to recruit and retain such personnel. Even if a dispersed system is made to work well under a particular OJJDP administration, its effectiveness is easily degraded by a less supportive administration and, in either case, the centrality and importance of research at OJJDP is less visible to the juvenile justice field generally-- practitioners, policy makers, and researchers outside OJJDP. Similarly, the centrality and importance of research at OJJDP, and its research-oriented functions and contributions, are less visible to Congress, undermining the ability to advocate for adequate support for those functions and contributions.

\*\* Despite the strong preference of the informants we spoke with for a consolidated research unit, the members of the Subcommittee have divided opinions on the topic. We all agree that it is important for OJJDP to have staff with appropriate research credentials, interests, and experience and to have collaborative relationships around research themes across the units. And, we agree that it is important to have evidence from research inform funding, training, program activities, publications, planning, and the like. Subcommittee members have less consensus on the organizational arrangements that might best support such functions, and how vulnerable a consolidated research unit might be to any moves to transfer OJJDP research functions to NIJ or outside political interference, neither of which seems like a good thing to us. Moreover, we recognize that, in any event, our perspective from outside could easily overlook important internal considerations and dynamics.

The reorganization planning at OJJDP is continuing to develop and the Subcommittee will be meeting with OJJDP administrators on June 20, prior to the SAB meeting the next day, for updates and further discussion on this topic.