

125549

**U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice**

This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Institute of Justice.

Permission to reproduce this ~~confidential~~ material has been granted by

Public Domain/OJP/OJJDP
U.S. Department of Justice
to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

Further reproduction outside of the NCJRS system requires permission of the ~~copyright~~ owner.



OJJDP

JUVENILE JUSTICE BULLETIN

Robert W. Sweet, Jr., Administrator

Reprinted from *NIJ Reports* No. 219 March/April 1990

Improving Juvenile Justice at the Local Level

by Tom English

Ten years ago, Oregon faced serious problems in dealing with its juvenile offenders. Oregon's training school enrollment was increasing rapidly, and officials were considering additional facilities. Juveniles were routinely jailed with adults, especially in rural sections of the State. Oregon had few alternatives for juvenile offenders, and those that did exist were plagued with long waiting lists and inadequate funding. Services were fragmented, with little communication among the various agencies and programs offering services to children and families.

By 1989, however, the situation had turned around thanks to a series of far-sighted legislative actions and innovative local efforts. Volunteer-based commissions now work actively in each of the State's 36 counties to plan community-based programs targeted to their own high-risk youth. Public agencies, private organizations, and businesses cooperate to work with juveniles on all levels and activities.

In 1988, the Governor called for an Oregon "Children's Agenda" to invest in the State's future by saving its youth. The

legislature responded by enacting sweeping measures that expanded existing programs, created a new commission to serve the State's children and families, and added more than \$60 million to a variety of child and family services.

The goal of this effort, say Oregon leaders, is to build a continuum of services from the least restrictive to the most restrictive so that each community has the resources to respond legally and appropriately to the needs of each young person.

From the Administrator

We have come a long way since 1974 and seen significant improvements in the administration of juvenile justice and the prevention of youth crime. Our juvenile justice system, once dominated by institutional responses to delinquent behavior, has made impressive strides in moving toward a system founded on community-based youth services. Although much has been accomplished through legislation and public policy, we are still confronted with a chronic lack of viable youth services in our towns, cities, and neighborhoods.

It is the Federal Government's responsibility to provide direction on effective programs as well as leadership in how public and private agencies can improve services and allocate resources. With this information, States and local jurisdictions, which ultimately have the authority, responsibility, and resources to solve the problems of juvenile crime and victimization, can better address their concerns.

This *Bulletin* describes the steps one State has taken to improve its juvenile justice system at the local level. Oregon combined legislation, coordination, and

volunteer efforts to turn its system around to meet the needs of youth at the community level. OJJDP, committed to disseminating information about effective programs, hopes Oregon's experiences will help other communities as they strive to improve their juvenile justice systems by developing comprehensive, systemwide strategies, deploying existing resources, and involving the private sector.

Robert W. Sweet, Jr.
Administrator

Federal Act serves as Oregon's model

These achievements are the culmination of more than a decade of hard work and community cooperation among local, State, and Federal agencies as well as public and private organizations. The efforts began in 1979 with the adoption of the Oregon Community Juvenile Services Act designed to return responsibility for serving juveniles to the local communities.

Based squarely on the Federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act, the Oregon legislation gave communities the opportunity to address their own juvenile problems in ways best suited to local needs and resources. It focused on the key concepts of local responsibility for organizing, planning, identifying, and coordinating existing resources, and developing strategies to address prob-

Goals of Oregon's Community Juvenile Services Act

- The family unit shall be preserved;
- Intervention shall be limited to those actions which are necessary and will utilize the least restrictive and most effective and appropriate resources;
- The family shall be encouraged to participate actively in whatever treatment is afforded a child;
- Treatment in the community, rather than commitment to a State juvenile training school, shall be provided whenever possible;
- Communities shall be encouraged and assisted in the development of alternatives to secure temporary custody for children not eligible for secure detention.

lems and issues. Oregon's legislation sought to:

- Establish statewide standards for juvenile services by creating a State Juvenile Services Commission.
- Provide appropriate preventive, diversionary, and dispositional alternatives for young people.
- Encourage coordination of the various elements of the juvenile services system.
- Promote local involvement in developing improved services for youth.

grams on a proportional basis. Each county in the State receives at least \$25,000, with more populous counties receiving additional funds.

More than money is needed

Although the money is important, Oregon has realized that money alone is not enough. In fact, during the 1970's Oregon spent millions of dollars on services to youth and families only to see things get worse. The situation began to turn around when responsibility for decision-

"Based squarely on the Federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act, the Oregon legislation gave communities the opportunity to address their own juvenile problems in ways best suited to local needs and resources."

Focusing on the community

The Oregon legislation also established a framework for county juvenile services commissions, composed of both juvenile justice professionals and lay persons, to establish priorities and programs for serving their at-risk youth. While participation in the Community Juvenile Services Act was voluntary, counties were quick to endorse the concept of local control and planning, and now all 36 Oregon counties participate.

Once a county decides to take part, its county officials, along with the local juvenile court judge, appoint a local juvenile services commission consisting of a chairperson and from 11 to 21 members. The local commission draws up a comprehensive juvenile services plan that includes an inventory of available services, an assessment of current needs, and recommendations for programs that will meet these needs. It then submits this plan to the State Juvenile Services Commission, which funds the community pro-

making about youth was returned to local communities.

The Oregon legislation set in motion community planning, cooperation, and joint ventures aimed at serving all the State's children. But the real impetus for action came in 1982 when a Federal judge ruled that juveniles could no longer be jailed with adult offenders. This was followed by a 1983 legislation mandating that status offenders should not be jailed at all. With these mandates, Oregon faced two critical tasks: finding alternative treatments for juvenile offenders and developing effective programs for keeping at-risk youth from entering the juvenile justice system.

Juvenile Justice Alliance boosts statewide cooperation

Many citizens felt these rulings underscored the importance of extending cooperative efforts beyond the county level.

These concerns led to the formation of the Juvenile Justice Alliance (JJA) in 1983. Funded by private sector grants and contributions, the Alliance brings public agencies and private organizations together to explore opportunities for helping youth and to develop programs drawing on a variety of resources. JJA functions as an independent intermediary group, stimulating partnerships between youth development organizations and other community agencies.

JJA is a consensus-building partnership that demonstrates what can be done when people pool their efforts and resources. "All involved work on a goal—to serve and help children—that is bigger than their own personal agendas," says Alan Peterson, Director of Lincoln County's Juvenile Department and former chairman of JJA.

In his own county, Peterson says, one cooperative effort places at-risk young women into Girl Scout activities. The program involves the Girl Scout Council, court officials, and school leaders who identify candidates for the program, and businesses or civic organizations that buy uniforms for the girls.

Followup activities are an important outcome of the joint efforts of community-based commissions and JJA. For instance, business people working on the commissions may offer to place young people in jobs, teachers may provide after-school tutoring, and other community leaders may contribute the resources of their civic organizations.

Interagency cooperation received a further boost in 1987, when the Oregon Legislature placed county juvenile departments under the broader control of the county officials. In the past, although they had been funded by the county, the departments were independent and thus found it difficult to tap into other county resources—such as education, health, and recreation—that could provide valuable services for at-risk young people.

How OJJDP Helps States

Congress passed the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 to provide direction, coordination, resources, and leadership in meeting national concerns about juvenile crime and delinquency. The act established the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention within the Department of Justice to spearhead this effort.

Part of OJJDP's responsibility involves providing funds to States, and to public and private agencies within the States, to develop and operate various programs within their juvenile justice systems. Funding takes place in one of two ways:

1. Formula grants, administered by OJJDP's State Relations and Assistance Division, are allocated to States on the basis of relative population under age 18, with no State receiving less than \$325,000. The grants are designed to help States develop more effective education, training, research, prevention, diversion, treatment, and rehabilitation programs to prevent delinquency and improve the juvenile justice system.

To qualify for the funds, States have to show compliance with specific sections of the JJDP Act dealing with the deinstitutionalization of status offenders and nonoffenders, the separation of juveniles from adult prisoners in secure adult facilities, and the removal of juveniles from adult jails and lockups.

A participating State submits a 3-year plan and reports annually on progress in meeting plan objectives. The State allocates the OJJDP funds to particular programs within its borders, two-thirds of which must be local government programs.

2. Discretionary grants, administered by OJJDP's three other divisions, are made directly to agencies and programs operating at national, State, or local levels. For instance:

□ The Training, Dissemination, and Technical Assistance Division funds programs that train juvenile justice practitioners, disseminate juvenile justice information, and provide technical assistance to organizations dealing with juvenile delinquency and with juveniles.

□ The Research and Program Development Division funds programs to improve understanding of the causes of delinquency; develop empirically based prevention strategies; improve understanding of the problem of missing and abused children; gather information on juvenile involvement with drugs and develop programs to reduce involvement; improve the justice system's handling of juvenile and status offenders; and develop effective alternative dispositions in the juvenile justice system.

□ The Special Emphasis Division funds various approaches to delinquency prevention and control. Current emphases include juvenile drug and alcohol use, juvenile arson, crime victims/witnesses, child abuse prosecution, gangs, family strengthening, school crime and dropouts, and systemwide handling of serious juvenile offenders.

To obtain more information on OJJDP programs, call the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse toll free at 800-638-8736.

Use of OJJDP formula funds

Oregon's statute also established objectives that parallel those of the JJDP Act, including preservation of the family, and a preference for treatment in the community with family participation (see box on page 2). But the JJDP Act did more than simply guide the development of Oregon's juvenile programs. It funded many of the programs through OJJDP's administration of formula grants to States (see box on page 3).

"These programs highlight how OJJDP made a significant difference for the chil-

Judges Association, to forge a collaborative relationship.

Formula grants also funded a coordinator position for the Oregon Juvenile Court Judges Association. With this staff person as a resource, the judges were able to provide input into such major efforts as changing the State's training schools. The association now links the 36 county juvenile courts with the work of public and private youth-serving agencies and organizations. This enhanced communication is helping remove obstacles to effectiveness.

"Here we've taken the approach that everyone needs to invest in our future by helping our children. If every community group can help just a few kids, imagine how many we can save."

dren of Oregon," says Jim Mosier, member of the board of directors of Juvenile Services Administration. He adds that many of the successful pilot programs began with seed money from OJJDP formula grants.

For instance, Oregon used formula grants to establish and implement a computerized client tracking system containing demographic data and information on the services provided to each client. The system tracks programs funded by the State Juvenile Service Commission's County Grants Program and the Federal JJDP Act programs, and it documents unmet service needs as well.

In 1986, the commission added a second tracking system for reporting and collecting statistical data from public and private agencies. The initial development and planning led to a uniform system of statistical data gathering from all 36 county juvenile departments. The system also established a means for several groups, including the Juvenile Services Commission, the State Children's Services Division, and the Juvenile Court

Lay participation is key success factor

The involvement of lay persons was a critical mandate of Oregon's legislation. Both the commission chair and a majority of the members must be people who do not work for agencies providing direct services to children. "Involving lay citizens helped the government do far more than it could have done alone," says Jim Francesconi, chair of the Oregon Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee. By 1989, nearly 600 citizens—more than 250 of them lay persons—were serving on local commissions, contributing an average of 17,000 hours of volunteer time every month.

In addition to receiving authority and resources for planning their own programs, the local commissions were encouraged to share information and resources. The citizens have connected resources with children in need. The commissions appear to have experienced few of the turf battles that commonly plague citizen committees.

Key Events in Oregon's Implementation of Improvements in Juvenile Services

1971—Oregon establishes State Children's Services Division.

1974—U.S. Congress passes JJDP Act.

1979—Oregon Legislature passes Community Juvenile Services Act.

1982—Judicial order releases children from adult jails.

1983—Legislation removes status offenders from detention.

1983—Juvenile Justice Alliance (JJA) organizes.

1984—State Juvenile Services Commission monitors the impact of 1983 legislative changes and makes recommendations for modifying the detention law.

1987—Oregon Legislature places juvenile departments under the broader control of county officials.

1988—Governor announces Oregon's Children's Agenda.

1989—Oregon Legislature enacts sweeping legislation increasing funding by more than \$60 million to a variety of children's programs and agencies.

Keeping youth off drugs and on the job

Oregon's experience in community cooperation stimulated a variety of new ventures. For instance, in Portland, what began as a drug and alcohol counseling program has spawned job training,

employment services, and other activities. Through a joint grant to the Juvenile Justice Alliance from the Fred Meyer Charitable Trust and the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, the Boys and Girls Clubs developed a drug and alcohol counseling program aimed at redirecting the lives of 60 young people on juvenile probation.

The program began with a partnership between the Boys and Girls Clubs, which developed constructive peer activities, and the State's Child Services Department, which loaned a full-time juvenile probation officer to serve as project director. Once the young people were drug- and alcohol-free, the local juvenile commission looked for ways to keep these 14- to 18-year-olds involved. The citizen leaders realized that jobs and job contacts were critical for these young people.

Ultimately, the Multnomah County Juvenile Department and the United Way joined forces in funding a youth employment and restitution project. Dubbed "Project Payback," each year the program provides orientation, job skills training, socialization activities, and jobs for 100

court-referred young people to earn money and pay restitution. Sixty percent of their earnings are paid back to victims.

After completing their restitution requirements, the participants are given opportunities for increased responsibility and continued employment.

Concentrating efforts on youth

Taking the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 as its point of departure, Oregon has placed young people at the top of its agenda. The successful juxtaposition of grass-roots community cooperation, a responsive legislature, and the leveraging power of OJJDP information and resources has led to significant changes in the juvenile justice system and to new approaches for controlling juvenile drug use, delinquency, and other pernicious problems.

"When you look at the big picture in juvenile programs, you see so much that you can easily be overwhelmed and wonder what, if anything, you can do," says

Alan Peterson. "Here we've taken the approach that everyone needs to invest in our future by helping our children. If every community group can help just a few kids, imagine how many we can save."

Tom English is executive director of the Oregon Council on Crime and Delinquency, a citizen-based policy and research group dealing with both juvenile and adult justice issues. He was formerly State Juvenile Services Commissioner and Chair of the State Juvenile Justice Advisory group.

The Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs, coordinates the activities of the following program Offices and Bureaus: the Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Institute of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

NCJ 125549

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Washington, D.C. 20531

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use \$300

BULK RATE
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
DOJ/OJJD
Permit No. G-91