



Center for Juvenile Justice Reform

- working across systems of care - georgetown university -



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Contact: Rachel Pugh

rmp47@georgetown.edu

202-687-4328

Center Examines Unmet Educational Needs of Youth in the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems

Georgetown Public Policy Institute's Center for Juvenile Justice Reform provides recommendations on how to improve educational outcomes in paper released at symposium

Washington, D.C. – Georgetown Public Policy Institute's Center for Juvenile Justice Reform released a paper today titled "Addressing the Unmet Educational Needs of Children and Youth in the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems" at a symposium at the Georgetown University Hotel and Conference Center.

The paper will discuss the poor educational outcomes many child welfare and juvenile justice involved youth face. As the paper states, "youth in foster care and youth in the delinquency system typically experience academic and behavioral problems in school, receive special education services at a higher rate, and are more likely to drop out of school than other students."

"A key barrier to their educational success is the lack of coordination between education, child welfare and juvenile justice systems. This is a central issue that this paper and symposium will address," said Shay Bilchik, director of the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and research professor at the Georgetown Public Policy Institute. "Our goal for the paper and symposium is to leave readers and attendees with a clear understanding of what holds these youth back academically and provide ways to reform our current practices."

The paper is co-authored by Lois Weinberg, professor at the Charter College of Education at California State University, Los Angeles, and Peter Leone from the Department of Special Education at the University of Maryland, College Park.

After presenting the educational barriers and poor outcomes the children face, the paper describes recent legal and policy reforms that have shaped education policy for this population of youth, as well as litigation that has been brought against jurisdictions not providing adequate education services to youth in their care.

Additionally, several promising practices are discussed, such as the use of educational liaisons. Liaisons work across systems to help youth stay connected to school despite their high mobility between schools and placements. Evidence based educational interventions, such as preschool and literacy programs, are also presented as practices that should be provided by systems to improve educational outcomes of youth in their care.

Reflecting on the importance of this issue, David Osher, vice president of the American Institutes for Research said, "the liability for educating children and youth involved in the child welfare and/or juvenile justice systems is the charge of everyone responsible for the well-being of the youngster. Ultimately, the academic achievement of our youth is dependent upon effective systems that collaborate and view themselves individually and collectively accountable for developing the academic, social and emotional competencies of every young person."

Jurisdictions doing promising work on this issue will be featured at the symposium. The invitation-only event will also include a panel discussion with the authors as well as a panel of policy experts to discuss the implications of the paper on federal and state law and practice.

The paper and symposium are made possible through support from the American Institutes for Research, the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, the National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At Risk (NDTAC) and the Robert F. Kennedy Juvenile Justice Collaborative: A Project of the RFK Center for Justice and Human Rights and the RFK Children's Action Corps. The paper will be available on the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform's Web site at <http://cjjr.georgetown.edu/>

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