



Research Summary

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This research summary was created as an addendum to the Crossover Youth Practice Model. The information contained in this document is structured based on the practice elements outlined in the model. For more information regarding the Crossover Youth Practice Model, please visit <http://cjjr.georgetown.edu>.

Increased attention to crossover youth in the past decade has generated a growing body of research related to the intersection of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The results and reflections of this literature stress the need for these systems to work together and offer ways to overcome the challenges inherent to cross-systems work. The purpose of this research summary is to provide an overview of “what we know” about crossover youth and their experiences in the two systems. To this end, research findings for each of the following areas will be reviewed relative to each stage of the practice model.

- The relationship between maltreatment and delinquency
- The pathways that define and help to identify crossover youth
- The characteristics of crossover youth
- Juvenile justice processing outcomes for crossover youth
- Promising approaches for handling crossover youth

Practice Area I: Arrest, Identification, and Detention

Maltreatment as a Risk Factor for Delinquency: What Leads to an Arrest?

A substantial amount of research demonstrates that maltreatment (i.e., abuse—physical or sexual—and/or neglect) is a risk factor for delinquency.¹ In other words, a child with a history of maltreatment is more likely than a child without a history of maltreatment to commit a delinquent act. More specifically, the presence of maltreatment increases the likelihood of delinquency by 47% to 55% for any arrest (Ryan & Testa, 2005 and Wiig, Widom, & Tuell, 2003, respectively), and a maltreatment history increases the likelihood of committing a violent offense by 96% (Wiig et al., 2003). Although the relationship between maltreatment and delinquency is well-established, the mechanisms by which maltreatment increases

¹ A review of this research is beyond the scope of this research review. Readers are encouraged to reference Herz & Ryan (2008), Petro (2006); Widom, Wiig, & Tuell (2004); Jonson-Reid, 1998; and Widom (1989) for a more extensive discussion of this literature.

the likelihood of delinquency (i.e., under what conditions will maltreatment lead to delinquency) remain tenuous. Identifying the mechanisms by which maltreatment leads to delinquency is vital because despite consistent findings related to the relationship between maltreatment and delinquency, not all children who are victims of maltreatment commit delinquency. To be most effective, prevention of and early intervention for delinquency must be targeted to children who need these services the most.

A limited number of research studies have identified four factors to further understand the relationship between maltreatment and delinquency: (1) the age at which maltreatment was experienced, (2) the absence of social bonds, (3) the number of placements received while in the care of child protective services, and (4) the type of placements received while in the care of child protective services. Using data from the Rochester Youth Development Study, for instance, researchers found that children who experienced maltreatment only during childhood were less likely to engage in delinquency (as well as other problem behavior such as drug use and pregnancy) than those who experienced maltreatment persistently through childhood and adolescence or in adolescence only (Smith, Ireland, & Thornberry, 2005; Ireland, Smith, & Thornberry, 2002; Thornberry, Ireland, & Smith, 2001). With regard to social bonds, Ryan, Testa, and Zhai (2008) examined the relationship between attachment and commitment and future offending in a longitudinal study of 278 African American males in foster care. For these youths, positive attachments/relationships between foster youth and foster parents as well as commitment (as measured by youths' involvement in religious organizations) reduced the risk of delinquency. African American males suspended from school, on the other hand, were more likely to engage in delinquency behavior.

In addition to age at the time of maltreatment and social bonds, the number of placements and the type of placements experienced by foster care youths also appears to mediate the effect of maltreatment on delinquency (see also Jonson-Reid & Barth, 2000b; Petro, 2006; Kapp, Schwartz, & Epstein, 1994; Kapp, 2000 for a discussion of this issue). Ryan & Testa (2005) examined the number of placements

for adolescent males and found that males with three placements were 1.54 times more likely to have a delinquency charge and males with four or more placements were 2.13 times more likely to have a delinquency charge than adolescent males with one placement. Ryan, Marshall, Herz, & Hernandez (2008) analyzed the impact of congregate care on subsequent delinquency using a sample of youths in child protective services care in Los Angeles between 2002 and 2005. Overall, the youths placed in congregate care were disproportionately African American and male and were more likely to have a history of multiple placement episodes compared to youth in foster care placements. Living in a congregate care placement and running away from placement were the two greatest risk factors for subsequent delinquency overall, and the youths with at least one congregate care placement were more than twice as likely to be arrested as youths who were placed only in a foster care placement.

A more recent study by Ryan, Hong, Herz, and Hernandez (under review) examined delinquency across kinship care placements and non-kinship care placements in Los Angeles County. Overall, they found that kinship care placements were more likely to serve males and African American youth, and kinship care placements increased the likelihood of delinquency for African American males and Caucasian males living in kinship placements compared to non-kinship placements. Kinship placements (versus non-kinship care placements) did not increase the likelihood of delinquency for females in the sample.

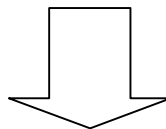
The findings related to congregate care and kinship care raise important questions about what types of placements are problematic for youth; however, before sweeping changes are made to the use of such placements, it is necessary to identify the conditions under which these placements and related child welfare decisions may be criminogenic (Jonson-Reid & Barth, 2000a; Jonson-Reid & Barth, 2000b; Jonson-Reid, 2004). For instance, congregate care placements with the following characteristics may be driving the relationship with delinquency: the use of inexperienced and untrained staff, the absence of clear de-escalation techniques and procedures (i.e., not relying on law enforcement to resolve the situation), the

absence of appropriate treatment modalities, high concentrations of high-risk youth in one facility (e.g., the peer contagion effect), and/or the absence of behavioral modification techniques appropriate for the population served by the facility (see Ryan, et al. 2008 for more discussion on these points). Similarly, for kinship care placements, it is necessary to explore whether placements that lead to delinquency are well-supported with the services they need and whether they are differentially exposed to neighborhoods impacted by gangs, drugs, and violence (Sampson & Bean, in press).

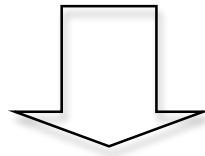
Identifying Crossover Youth: The Need for Definitions

Clear definitions of crossover youth are still forming as research expands in this area, but multiple references to different subgroups of this population can and do cause confusion. For instance, at least three terms are used to refer to this population: crossover youth, dually-involved youth, and dually-adjudicated youth. Although these terms are often used interchangeably, we believe they refer to different subgroups of crossover youth. To provide clarity, we offer the following definitions to distinguish categories or subgroups of crossover youth.

Crossover Youth: Any youth who has experienced maltreatment and engaged in delinquency. This is the broadest definition because it refers to youth with these experiences regardless of whether the maltreatment and/or delinquency have come to the attention of the child welfare and/or delinquency systems.



Dually-Involved Youth: A subgroup of crossover youth who are simultaneously receiving services, at any level, from both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.²



Dually-Adjudicated Youth: A subgroup of dually-involved youth, encompassing only those youth who are concurrently *adjudicated* by both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.³

Identification of youth within these categories can occur through multiple pathways. The most common pathway is when a youth under the care of child protective services becomes involved in the delinquency system at some level. A second pathway occurs when a youth with a previous, but not current, case with child protective services enters the delinquency system. The presence of a previous case in child welfare may or may not result in a current referral to child welfare from the delinquency system; this potential referral being dependent upon a review of the

² Two clarifying notes: (1) the phrase “services at any level” encompasses a wide array of possible intervention by either the child welfare or delinquency system. For instance, dual involvement would include being adjudicated by one system and receiving diversionary services from the other OR receiving formal services after adjudication in both systems. (2) “Simultaneously,” in this case, does not require that involvement in both systems began at the same time. In most cases, a youth’s involvement will begin in one system first and include the second system at some point afterward. Thus, “simultaneous” in this context indicates that involvement in both systems occurs at the same time regardless of which system was initially involved.

The term dually-involved youth has its origins in the work of a number of people who have focused on young people known to both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, including Janet Wiig, Senior Consultant with CWLA, in work carried out under contract with the Arizona Governor’s Office for Children, Youth, and Families in the development of Arizona’s Blueprint for child welfare and juvenile justice systems integration (2008) and Greg Halemba, Gene Siegel and Rachael Lord and Susanna Zawacki in the National Center for Juvenile Justice’s Arizona Dual Jurisdiction Study (2004).

³ Two clarifying notes: (1) Adjudication refers to formal court processing that results in a youth becoming a formal “dependent” or “delinquent.” Receiving diversionary services, for instance, would not constitute adjudication. (2) Similar to the note above, “concurrent” adjudication assumes that the adjudication of a youth in one system occurs before that youth’s adjudication in a second system. In other words, a youth will come to the attention of one system (e.g., the child welfare system) prior to coming to the attention of the second system (e.g., juvenile justice system).

current circumstances. A third pathway occurs when a youth who is currently a victim of maltreatment without any (i.e., previous or current) contact with child welfare enters the delinquency system. Upon investigation of the case, a referral to child welfare from delinquency ensues. A fourth pathway includes a youth who exits juvenile justice (most often a correctional facility) and enters the child welfare system because he/she is does not have a home to which to return (Cusick, Goerge, & Bell, 2009).⁴ Youth identified in all these pathways are all considered crossover youth; however, the extent to which they are dually-involved youth or dually-adjudicated youth depends on the level of contact they have with both systems.

Determining how many youth fall into each of these pathways is nearly impossible because information systems across agencies are rarely, if ever, integrated; data fields to identify when a youth has contact with the other system are often absent from individual agency information systems; and no child welfare record exists when abuse/neglect was never reported (e.g., pathway 3; see Herz & Ryan, 2008a for more discussion of this issue). As a practical matter, these challenges make it difficult to identify youth when they cross into another system, and they often limit the focus of research largely to crossover youth currently or previously in the care of child protective services who subsequently receive a delinquency charge. Therefore, integrated information systems are strongly recommended to facilitate practice improvements for crossover youth (Siegel & Lord, 2004; Wiig & Tuell, 2004; Petro, 2007), and when integrated systems are not possible, creating and consistently using a data field to capture involvement in another system is desirable (Herz & Ryan, 2008a).

⁴ Note: When an offender under the age of 18 completes his/her delinquency disposition and is abandoned by parents/relatives or that home is not safe to return to, he/she may enter the child welfare system in order to transition out of the delinquency system. It should also be noted that in some states, delinquent offenders are placed in child welfare placements as a result of their disposition (i.e., foster homes and congregate care). These youth would not be considered crossover youth or dually involved youth because their involvement in the child welfare system is not because of maltreatment.

Without integrated information systems or a field to indicate dual system involvement, measuring the prevalence of crossover youth is difficult but not impossible. Data can be matched across systems to identify youth with dual system contact. In general, such studies estimate between 9 29% of child welfare youth also has contact with the juvenile justice system (Zingraff, Leiter, Myers, & Johnsen, 1993; Smith & Thornberry, 1995; Kelley, Thornberry, & Smith, 1997; Widom, 1989; Dennison & Waterson, 2002; Johnson, Ereth, & Wagner, 2004; Smith, Thornberry, Ireland, & Elwyn, 2008). Using matched administrative records in Los Angeles County between 2002 through 2005, Ryan, Herz, Hernandez, and Marshall (2007) reported that of 69,009 first-time offenders, 7% (N=4,811) entered the juvenile justice system from the child welfare system. When considering specific race/ethnicity groups, 14% of first-time African American offenders entered the juvenile justice system from the child welfare system. Using data from Arizona, Halemba, Siegel, Lord, and Zawacki (2004) found that the percentage of probation cases increased as one moved deeper into the juvenile justice system. Only 1% of all informal diversion cases were dual jurisdiction youth, but 7% of probation supervision cases and 42% of cases placed in a private group home or a residential treatment facility were dual jurisdiction youth.

Crossover Youth Characteristics

At least four studies currently describe the characteristics of crossover youth adjudicated for delinquency charges (Herz & Ryan 2008b; Halemba, Siegel, Lord, & Zawacki 2004; Kelley, Thornberry, & Smith 1997; Saeturn & Swain, 2009). Collectively, these studies show considerable consistency with regard to crossover characteristics despite the use of different methodological approaches and the use of samples drawn from different geographical locations and with different selection criteria. In sum, these studies reported the following:⁵

⁵ See Herz & Ryan (2008) or Herz, Ryan, & Bilchik (in press) for a more detailed review of these studies and their findings.

- Approximately one-third of crossover youth appear to be female, which exceeds the representation of females in general delinquency statistics.
- African American youth are overrepresented in the crossover numbers relative to the general population, child welfare referrals, and juvenile justice referrals (this finding was specific to Herz & Ryan, 2008 and Saeturn & Swain, 2009).
- Overall, crossover youth appear to enter the system when they are young children and remain in the system into (and sometimes through) adolescence;
- Crossover youth often come from families in which there is a history of criminal behavior, mental health, and/ or substance abuse problems.
- During their time in care, crossover youth experience numerous placements, often resulting in one or more placements in congregate care;
- Crossover youth are often truant from school. When they do attend school, they often have poor academic performance and exhibit behavioral problems.
- Crossover youth have high rates of mental health and substance abuse problems—over three-quarters of these youth exhibit symptoms or have diagnoses for a mental health disorder and/or substance abuse.
- At least one-third of arrests for crossover youth are related to their placement, and most of these situations occur in a group home placement (this finding was specific to Herz & Ryan, 2008 and Saeturn & Swain, 2009).
- Between one-half and three-quarters of crossover youth have had previous contact with the juvenile justice system in some way (i.e., status offense, delinquency charge resulting in diversion or not resulting in processing).

While these characteristics provide substantial insight into “who” crossover youth are, research has not directly compared the prevalence of these characteristics to foster youth who do not enter the juvenile justice system or to offenders without a maltreatment history. Such comparisons would determine whether the risks and needs of crossover youth are similar or different from non-crossover youth. Even

without such a comparison, however, the findings from these studies highlight the need to (1) intervene early in the lives of children who experience maltreatment to prevent delinquency, and (2) bring systems together to intervene as early as possible when escalations in antisocial behavior result in delinquency.

Identifying Crossover Youth: The Earlier the Better

The Practice Model Flow Chart stresses the need to identify crossover youth as early in the process as possible (Siegel & Lord, 2004). Arguably, the first opportunity to identify a crossover youth with current or previous child welfare contact is at the pre-adjudication detention intake decision or at the point of charging if pre-adjudication detention is not applicable. Conger and Ross' (2001, 2009) work with Project Confirm in New York City demonstrates the importance of early identification and system collaboration for crossover cases. Their work evolved from a Vera Institute of Justice study examining interagency communication when foster youth were arrested. Study results indicated that detention was used more often for foster youth even though there were no significant differences in the number of crimes or the severity of crimes committed by foster youth and non-foster youth (for more discussion see Ross & Conger, 2009; see also Conger & Ross, 2001). Interviews conducted with court and agency personnel further revealed:

For foster children the locus of responsibility [in the court process] is often unclear to frontline staff, case managers, and foster parents. Confusion about roles, delays in transmitting information, and misunderstanding between frontline workers in the child welfare and juvenile justice agencies may increase the likelihood that arrested foster children are detained in juvenile detention facilities rather than released to legal caregivers or caseworkers (p. 178).

Project Confirm was created in 1998 to address these problems by implementing a notification system and court conferencing. The notification system requires detention staff to contact Project Confirm each time a youth was admitted to the detention facility. A screener at Project Confirm then determines if the youth has an

open case with child welfare. For youth with open cases, the screener coordinates contact between the foster care provider, the child welfare social worker, and the juvenile justice case worker in order to assure that all child welfare parties with legal responsibility over the youth attend the detention hearing. Increased notification, in turn, was expected to increase the amount of information available to juvenile justice decision makers. Next, court conferencing is used to facilitate cross-systems discussion of the case. Once again, a Project Confirm coordinator introduces all parties across agencies prior to the court hearing in order to improve information exchange and hold appropriate parties accountable (Ross & Conger, 2009).

Conger and Ross (2009; 2001) evaluated the impact of Project Confirm and found post-implementation, the percentage of foster youth detained did not decrease relative to the pre-implementation of Project Confirm, but foster care bias was eliminated. In other words, the percentage of foster youth detained was statistically equivalent to the percentage of non-foster youth detained (56.5% compared to 50.9%) after Project Confirm was implemented. More notable findings were found when detention rates for youth charged with less serious offenses were compared to rates for youth charged with more serious offenses. Only 35% of foster youth charged with less serious offenses were detained, and no foster care bias was found; however, the detention rate for foster youth charged with more serious offenses increased to 75%, which was 14 percentage points higher than for non-foster youth (61%). This finding indicated that improved information sharing increased assessments of risk for more serious offenders. While these findings are consistent with best practice (i.e., detain the higher risk youths and release lower risk youths), Conger and Ross (2009) stress the need to clearly explain the information provided to juvenile justice decision makers to avoid inaccurate perceptions of risk (e.g., interpreting a history of AWOL as a marker of high risk and need for detention). Project Confirm was ultimately institutionalized by child welfare in New York City and was showcased by Siegel and Lord (2004) as a promising approach to identify

crossover youth early in the juvenile justice process and avoid unnecessary incarceration.

Practice Area II: Decision making regarding charges

Practice Area II focuses on the charging decision made for each case. In charging decisions, probation intake or prosecutors typically make this decision shortly after a youth is arrested or immediately after the youth is detained (if applicable).

Possible outcomes in this process include: dropping the charges; offering diversion as an alternative to formal juvenile justice processing; petitioning the charge formally to the juvenile court; or filing/requesting to file the case in adult court. To date, research on crossover youth is silent on this decision point in juvenile justice processing; consequently, how crossover youth are charged and how charging for these youth compares to non-crossover youth is unknown.⁶

The absence of research at this stage represents a significant gap in the literature. The charging decision is arguably one of the most important decision points in the juvenile justice process because it provides an opportunity to identify a crossover youth and address his/her risks and needs early in the process. Such intervention, in turn, may prevent a crossover youth from formally entering the juvenile justice system. For example, a youth may receive diversion instead of formal processing if appropriate programming is provided by child welfare (e.g., coordinating with the school to address the youth's special education needs, providing substance abuse treatment through the child welfare system, etc.). Additionally, identification of a crossover youth early in juvenile justice processing facilitates information sharing, improves the quantity and quality of data available, and provides a critical opportunity to give contextual explanations for particular factors (e.g., multiple

⁶ This is concerning for a number of reasons, but particularly concerning is the absence of numbers on how many crossover cases are processed in adult court. Once they enter the adult court system, it is extremely difficult to identify these cases.

placements, going AWOL from placements, etc.). Contextual explanations are significant because they can prevent exaggerated perceptions of risk by juvenile justice personnel (Conger & Ross, 2009). Ultimately, a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the case may also help avoid the unnecessary penetration of the juvenile justice system (i.e., placement with a relative or foster care placement instead of congregate care or a correctional placement).

Practice Area III: Case Assignment, Assessment, and Planning

Juvenile Court Processing Outcomes

Research related to crossover youth experiences in the juvenile justice system concludes that crossover youth receive harsher processing outcomes compared to delinquent youths who have no connection to the dependency system (Ryan, Herz, Hernandez, & Marshall, 2007; Morris & Freundlich, 2004; Conger & Ross, 2001). As mentioned above, Conger and Ross (2001) reported that crossover youth were more likely to be detained than non-crossover youth regardless of offense severity. Similarly, Morris and Freundlich (2004), interviewed a variety of stakeholders (e.g. foster parents, young adults, judges, and child welfare administrators) about foster youth experiences in the juvenile justice system and concluded that (1) the offenses associated with dependent youth entering the juvenile justice system were less serious compared to non-dependent delinquents, and (2) many stakeholders believed crossover youth were treated differently than their delinquency-only counterparts. Differential decision making was perceived to be related to decision makers' perceptions of the living arrangements of these youth (e.g. group home placement) and their perceptions of the youth's risk to reoffend. The authors also reported that foster youth were consistently dissatisfied with their legal representation and felt that the punishments were often more severe for dependent youth. Similarly, foster parents perceived inequities in the judicial dispositions given to foster youth.

Perceptions regarding the disparate treatment of crossover youth at the disposition stage were validated in a study conducted in Los Angeles County, California by Ryan, Herz, Hernandez, and Marshall (2007). Ryan et al. (2007) examined dispositions for first-time offenders with a child welfare case compared to first-time offenders without a child welfare case between 2002 and 2005. Although no differences were found in the dismissal of cases based on child welfare status, first-time offenders with a child welfare case were less likely to receive home on probation (58% v. 73%) and more likely to receive “suitable placement” (i.e., placement in congregate care—21% v. 11%). Additionally, youth with a child welfare case were slightly more likely to receive correctional placements (21% v. 16%), but this difference was not statistically significant (see also Halemba et al., 2004 for a similar finding).

Case Assignment

Regardless of how the case is charged (i.e., diversion or formal juvenile justice processing), the research documenting the processing disparities between crossover and non-crossover youth stresses the need to coordinate all decision making related to the case within and across systems. Promising approaches to ensure the continuity of decision makers throughout the court process and to facilitate information sharing in a timely manner were identified and described by Siegel and Lord (2004; see also Petro, 2006 and Petro, 2007) as “case assignment” and “case flow management” approaches. Case assignment approaches consolidate court processing so that the dependency and delinquency cases are handled simultaneously and are supervised by attorneys familiar with both systems. At least three types of approaches fall into this category: one family/one judge, dedicated dockets, and special qualifications for attorneys (see for example, Herz et al., 2010 and Scrivner, 2002). Case flow management approaches bring child welfare, juvenile justice, and any other relevant personnel together to share information and make coordinated recommendations to the court. Approaches that fall into this category include: joint pre-hearing conferences, combining dependency and delinquency hearings, joint court orders and court reports, and mandatory attendance of the case-carrying CW social worker and JJ case worker at hearings. Siegel and Lord

(2004) classify these approaches as promising because, thus far, their effectiveness has not been evaluated beyond the use of anecdotal evidence.⁷

Joint Assessment and Coordinated Case Planning

A common and primary goal of all promising approaches for crossover youth is bringing information together across systems and using interagency discussions of shared information to develop a coordinated plan for the youth and his/her family/caregiver. The use of a joint assessment and coordinated case management for crossover youth are critical activities in this process. Conducting assessments for and providing appropriate levels of supervision and treatment to crossover youths is particularly challenging because it requires coordination, at a minimum, and collaboration, ideally, across the dependency and delinquency court systems (Nash & Bilchik, 2009). While there is a growing amount of literature that documents the need to integrate treatment and accountability to successfully reduce recidivism, there is little evidence to indicate that such integration is occurring across systems (Brezina, 1998; Halemba & Lord, 2005; McMackin & Fulwiler, 2001; Pumariega et al., 1999).

Traditionally, for example, assessment of the youth's risks (both personal safety and public safety) and intervention/treatment needs is completed by individual agencies responsible for some aspect of the youth's well being. For a crossover youth, this could easily involve six different systems: Child welfare, juvenile justice, education, mental health, substance abuse, and medical. These systems rarely work with one another to coordinate assessments; rather, each system conducts its own assessment and produces its own recommendations in isolation or with little contact with other systems. Additionally, the viewpoints of youth and parent/caregiver are often marginalized in this process. As a result, a youth and family may have multiple case plans that either conflict with one another, duplicate

⁷ For a description of specific initiatives that fall into the categories defined by Siegel & Lord (2004), please see Siegel & Lord (2004), Petro (2007), Herz & Ryan (2008a), and Halemba & Lord (2005).

services, or contain expectations that are unattainable. Joint assessment seeks to improve upon this method by coordinating assessments in an effort to increase the validity of the information collected decrease inconvenience to youths and decrease inconvenience to youth and their families/caregivers. This may involve the use of one tool that serves the needs of all agencies or the use of multiple tools from which the recommendations are discussed across agencies and compiled into one case plan. To the extent possible, the youth's and parent/caregiver's perspective should be central to the assessment process.⁸ A case plan collectively informed by all these perspectives should then be used as a basis for coordinated case supervision.

Several promising approaches were identified by Siegel and Lord (2004; see also Petro, 2006, Petro, 2007 and Halemba & Lord, 2005) to facilitate joint assessment and coordinated case planning. The "case planning and supervision" approaches that focus specifically on assessment and case planning include the use of: joint case plans, multi-disciplinary team assessment, special qualifications and/or training for case managers, and the use of child protective services liaisons and/or probation liaisons. As mentioned earlier, these approaches are considered "promising" because evaluations of their effectiveness have not been conducted with one exception. In 2007, Los Angeles County implemented a "241.1 Multidisciplinary Team Pilot Program (MDT)."⁹ The MDT was responsible for completing a joint assessment report and recommendations for the court. The team was comprised of a juvenile justice case worker, child welfare social worker, mental health clinician, and educational rights attorney. Once the team received a referral, each member collected information related to the case from their respective agency files. They

⁸ Including the youth's voice in assessments pre-adjudication can be difficult given due process and confidentiality concerns related to the juvenile justice court process. Engaging public defenders in the development of a joint assessment process can help find ways to include the youth's voice as early as possible without putting him/her at risk for self-incrimination.

⁹ A "241.1" youth in California refers to a youth currently in the care of child protective services who receives a delinquency charge. The number is a reference to the statutory language (Welfare and Institutions Code 241.1) outlining the process by which the delinquency court must adjudicate these cases.

then met as a team to share the information, discuss the information, and collectively make recommendations to the court.

An evaluation was recently completed on the MDT using 50 youth referred to the MDT and 44 youth matched from a pool of crossover youth who were not referred to the MDT (Herz, unpublished).¹⁰ The results were generally positive:

- The MDT increased the quality and quantity of information collected on crossover youth. Specifically, the availability of educational information, number of strengths, and the number of recommendations for case planning in court reports improved.
- The MDT was more likely to recommend informal supervision for crossover youth compared to recommendations made in the traditional assessment process, and MDT cases were more likely to receive informal supervision, particularly lower levels of informal supervision, at disposition than non-MDT youth.
- MDT reduced recidivism by about 20% (percent change between groups); however, this difference was not statistically significant.

This program was not without its challenges. Although the MDT reduced the number of youth becoming formal delinquency wards (i.e., they received informal supervision instead), 15% of the informal probation youth eventually became formal wards of the delinquency court. This rate was statistically equivalent to the rate for non-MDT youth. This finding raises questions about the MDT's ability to improve access to appropriate services and placements. While it appears that the quality of information improved within the joint assessment for crossover youth, the MDT did not have an effective mechanism or structure to transition from the assessment/planning stage to the coordinated case supervision in the field. Thus,

¹⁰ Initially, matches were found for 50 youth; however, six of the selected youth did not meet the selection criteria for this study (i.e., their delinquency charge preceded the involvement of child protective services).

the full benefits and utility of joint assessment and coordinated case planning depends heavily on the successful implementation of the case plan—in other words, the use of successful coordinated case supervision.

Practice Area IV: Coordinated Case Supervision and On-Going Assessment

Interagency approaches aimed at improving the oversight and implementation of case plans for youth also fall into Siegel and Lord's (2004; see also Petro, 2006, Petro, 2007 and Halemba & Lord, 2005) "case planning and supervision" category. Initiatives specific to coordinated case supervision in this category include: specialized case management and supervision units, multi-disciplinary team case management, special qualifications and/or training for case managers, and the use of child protective services liaisons and/or probation liaisons. Each of these approaches stresses the need to formally link case oversight to staff in both the child welfare and probation systems. Jurisdictions that combine these approaches with collaborative funding agreements (e.g., blended, braided, or pooled funding) enhance access to a full continuum of services that comprehensively address the risks and needs presented by crossover youth (Siegel & Lord, 2004; see also Petro, 2006, Petro, 2007 and Halemba & Lord, 2005).

Coordinated case supervision is often challenging because it requires several elements to be successful. Before coordinated case supervision is possible, for instance, administrators must formally develop a memorandum of understanding that clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of each agency, resolves issues of information confidentiality, and provides clear and equitable procedures for the mediation of conflict (Wiig & Tuell, 2004; Siegel & Lord, 2004). Once an agreement is in place, staff interested in working with crossover youth and building collaborative approaches must be selected for the initiative, and on-going cross-training and support must be provided to increase staff knowledge of and ability to access services and placements across systems (Wiig & Tuell, 2004).

Coordinated case management is not limited to the child welfare and juvenile justice systems; additional partners must be sought and engaged in this process. For instance, the youth's parents/caregivers, school, mental health treatment provider, substance abuse treatment provider, and any other relevant party (e.g., connections to the community such as pastor or mentor) must actively participate in the implementation and supervision of the case plan. At a minimum, the child welfare social worker and juvenile justice case worker should be "on the same page," keeping each other informed and presenting a "united front" as well as a "united support system" to the youth and his/her family or caregiver.

The goal of coordinated case supervision is to reduce the likelihood of reoffending and improve the overall well being of the crossover youth. Herz, Ryan, & Bilchik (in press) examined factors related to recidivism among 581 crossover youth processed in Los Angeles County in 2004. In total, 64% of these youth had a new arrest for a criminal offense by the end of 2008. To determine what factors increased the likelihood of delinquency, regression models were estimated. Youth with substance abuse and youth who were truant from school were twice as likely to commit delinquency as their counterparts. These results stress the need to prioritize school engagement for crossover youth and making sure appropriate treatment services are provided to the youth and his/her family. As demonstrated in the MDT evaluation study, coordinated case plans will fall short of their potential if they are not fully implemented and closely monitored (Herz, 2009). For crossover youth, this requires child welfare and juvenile justice to work closely with a youth's social network, school, treatment provider, and community-based program to connect him/her to the community while they receive appropriate levels of supervision and treatment.

A key part of coordinated case supervision is accessing appropriate services and placement for crossover youth. In 2008, Herz & Ryan conducted a national survey of

state and county administrators for child welfare and juvenile justice.¹¹ Following the administration of a survey regarding practices and policies related to crossover youth, a small group of respondents was selected for phone interviews (N=9). During the phone interviews, respondents were asked what types of services crossover youth needed. Although respondents felt that crossover youth did not necessarily require different services from non-crossover youth, they believed that crossover youth required more case management than non-crossover youth and more access to educational assessments and services, gender-specific programming, day centers, mental health and substance abuse treatment; mentoring, and community-based services in general. Stabilizing placements and addressing permanency issues were considered primary issues for crossover youth. For placement, respondents stressed the need for more therapeutic living arrangements that were structured and intensively supervised. Several respondents felt that current placements were often inappropriate because they did not offer appropriate levels of supervision and structure combined with appropriate levels of treatment.

In general, respondents in the phone interviews emphasized the importance of consistency and the willingness to listen and respond to crossover youth needs and desires. Interestingly, the findings from the phone interviews parallel the thoughts and feelings of five crossover youth who were interviewed as part of the Los Angeles County MDT program (Herz, unpublished). When asked what they wanted, all or a majority of respondents offered the following:

- to stay with their families or stay connected to their families;

¹¹ Herz & Ryan (2008a) distributed surveys to several administrators and decision-maker groups who represented the child welfare and the juvenile justice system at both the state and county levels. At the state level, surveys were sent to child welfare administrators, probation administrators, institutional corrections administrators, and juvenile justice specialists. At the county level, surveys were sent to child welfare system directors, chief officers of probation departments, county administrators for institutional corrections, and judges. 144 state representatives and 220 county representatives received an email inviting them to participate in the survey. 104 (73%) state representatives entered the survey site and 77 (53%) completed the survey. 141 (64%) county representatives entered the survey site and 107 (49%) completed the survey. In total, there are 182 survey respondents. A total of 47 states (including the District of Columbia) and one U.S. Territory were represented by state and/or county respondents.

- to be informed and given choices in the decision making process;
- to be given clear expectations and reasonable levels of supervision (i.e., probation) to help them stay out of trouble;
- to have access to individual counseling and family counseling; and
- to have access to activities that help them explore their interests—from sports to hobbies to educational/vocational interests.

A significant challenge facing coordinated case supervision is the child welfare social worker's and juvenile justice case worker's ability to access appropriate services and placements for crossover youth. Even though there is no research related to the effectiveness of programs with crossover youth specifically, a large body of research currently identifies characteristics of effective programs as well as specific promising or evidence-based programs for child welfare, juvenile justice, and behavioral health (Whitehead & Lab, 1989; Palmer, 1991; Lipsey, 1992; Leone, Quinn, & Osher, 2002; Hansen, Litzelman, & Marsh, 2004; Howell, Kelly, Palmer, & Mangum, 2004; Huser, Cooney, Small, O'Conner, & Mather, 2009). Jurisdictions should not exclude the use of local programs without rigorous evaluations, but they should prioritize the use of programs or types of programming consistent with "what works." Simultaneously, they should strongly encourage local programs to demonstrate their effectiveness by tracking outcomes.

Based on the profiles presented by crossover youth, there are several programs that should be considered when working with crossover youth. For instance, programs such as (but not limited to) Wraparound, Multi-Dimensional Therapeutic Foster Care, Anger Replacement Therapy, and cognitive behavioral trauma programs represent a few programs that address the complex issues presented by crossover youth (Kamradt, 2001; Bruns, Walker, Adams, Miles, Osher, Rast, & VanDenBerg, 2004; Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2004; Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2008; Drake, Aos, & Marna, 2008; Foster Family-Based Treatment Association, 2008; McLendon, 2009). The challenge for child welfare social workers and juvenile justice case workers, then, is how to access these programs as well as others for youths and their families/caregivers.

A final consideration for child welfare social workers and juvenile justice case workers collaboratively supervising crossover youth is utilizing family-centered programs, gender-based programming, and culturally competent programming whenever possible. Stabilizing placement and achieving permanency are primary issues for crossover youth; thus, child welfare social workers and juvenile justice case workers must think creatively about family (e.g., locating family members that live outside of the county or jurisdiction) and engage family in order to provide the support needed to reunite youths with their parents or relatives when parents are not available (Kumpfer, 1999; Stoep, Williams, Jones, Gileen, & Truplin, 1999; Family Strengthening Policy Center, 2004; Campbell, 2005; Gordon, Tullis, Hanson, & Sowders, 2005; Marsh, Ryan, Choi, & Testa, 2005; Brock, Burrell, & Tulipano, 2006; Osher, Osher, & Blau, 2008; Pullman, 2009). In many cases, reuniting with family may not be possible, so it becomes important to look for a caregiver that can play a significant role in the youth's life. As indicated above, the representation of females in crossover populations is slightly higher than in general delinquency populations. This statistic underscores the need to integrate gender-specific programming in case plans for female crossover youth. Similarly, child welfare social workers and juvenile justice case workers should seek out culturally competent programming for minority youth.

Practice Area V: Planning for Youth Permanency, Transition, and Case Closure

As part of successful case management, both child welfare social workers and juvenile justice case workers must pay close attention to achieving youth permanency and effectively transitioning youth upon case closure. While these are important issues for all youth in child welfare and juvenile justice, they are particularly relevant for crossover youth because they often face the loss of familial connections, community connections, and the support of social networks as a result of their interaction with both systems.

Cusick, Goerge, and Bell (2009), for example, examined eight cohorts of youth correctional exits (1996–2003) in Illinois and found that 65% of youth exits had prior child welfare history before entering the correctional facility. Upon exiting correctional facilities, 9% of youth exits in the State of Illinois and 11% of exits in Chicago were in an out-of-home placement in child welfare one year after their exit. In other words, many youth returned to care simply because they did not have access to a stable support system when they returned to the community. Particularly concerning was Cusick et al.'s finding with regard to education. Although less than 1% of correctional exits had completed high school, only 36.5% of youth exits were enrolled in school after their release.

Equally alarming are the results from Widom and Maxfield (2001; see also Widom & Maxfield, 1996). Their prospective study tracked children with substantiated child abuse cases between 1967 and 1971 and a matched comparison group of children without a substantiated child abuse case for 25 years to assess the relationship between childhood abuse/neglect and offending. Their results showed that not only were children victimized by child abuse (i.e., physical abuse, sexual abuse, and/or neglect) more likely to commit crimes as juveniles compared to children without such histories (27% and 17%, respectively), but children with child abuse cases were also more likely to commit crimes in adulthood (42% compared to 33%), and they were at an increased risk to commit violent crimes specifically (18% compared to 14%).

These findings from Cusick et al. (2009) and Widom and Maxfield (2001) underscore the importance of stabilizing permanency for crossover youth and providing them with the appropriate services that will increase their success after their cases close in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Unfortunately, there is currently no research that examines “what works” for crossover youth in this area; however, there is a growing amount of research related to effective programs and practices for juvenile justice reentry (Altschuler & Armstrong, 1994; Zimmerman, Hendrix, Moeser, & Roush, 2004; Harris, 2006; Altschuler, 2008; Gagnon & Richards, 2008; Altschuler, Stangler, Berkley, & Burton,

2009) and achieving permanency for youth in child welfare (Freundlich 2009; Frey, 2009; Neff, 2000). Jurisdictions implementing the practice model should consider this broader literature as they develop their own approaches to improve the long-term outcomes for crossover youth.

Summary

In sum, improving outcomes for crossover youth requires a clear understanding of “who” crossover youth are as well as their experiences in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. A growing body of research on crossover youth indicates that crossover youth are often in the child welfare system for long periods of time; they are at an increased likelihood to be female compared to general delinquency populations; and minorities, particularly African Americans, appear to be overrepresented in crossover populations in some areas. Most crossover youth have been placed out of the home and often experience numerous placements including multiple placements in congregate care. They are often truant and/or performing poorly at school, and over half of crossover youth have multiple contacts with law enforcement. Between a quarter and one half of crossover youth are also detained prior to adjudication (Herz & Ryan 2008b; Halemba, Siegel, Lord, & Zawacki 2004; Kelley, Thornberry, & Smith 1997; Saeturn & Swain, 2009). Additionally, research indicates that crossover youth are perceived as higher risk by juvenile justice decision makers and receive harsher dispositions than their non-crossover counterparts (Ryan, Herz, Hernandez, & Marshall, 2007; Morris & Freundlich, 2004; Conger & Ross, 2001).

Increasingly, crossover youth research points to the necessity of multi-system collaboration to comprehensively address the risks and needs of crossover youth (Wiig & Tuell, 2004; Siegel & Lord, 2004; Halemba, 2005; American Bar Association, 2008; Herz & Ryan, 2008; and Bilchik & Nash, 2009; Garland, Hough, Landsverk & Brown, 2001; Maschi, Hatcher, Schwalbe, & Rosato, 2008). Such efforts require, at a minimum, the use of coordinated case assignment, joint assessment, coordinated

case plans, and coordinated case supervision. Additionally, jurisdictions are challenged to integrate the use of best practice and evidence-based programs as they relate to child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health and substance abuse, and education practices. Without such integrated and comprehensive efforts, crossover youths are less likely to receive the appropriate services and placements they need to improve their outcomes in both the short-term and long-term (Widom & Maxfield, 1996; Widom & Maxfield, 2001; Cusick, Goerge, & Bell, 2009).

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(Note: This list includes references for both the Research Summary and the Practice Model Document overall.)

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