

Developing Safe Schools Partnerships: Spotlight on Juvenile Justice

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Abstract

Understanding the Problem

When people think of the term "juvenile justice" they may think of a young person who has broken the law or gotten into some other serious trouble. People may not typically relate the juvenile justice (JJ) system to schools.

The term "juvenile justice" generally encompasses a variety of issues related to youth involved in the justice system, including juvenile and family court, dependency, detention, probation, or other types of supervision needed when a young person commits a delinquent act or has been a victim of abuse. The JJ system was created because of the belief that children are inherently different from adults. JJ involves the area of law for individuals not old enough to be charged in the adult criminal court, but who are held responsible for criminal acts. JJ covers offenses that would be crimes if they were committed by an adult. Most States have a JJ code that governs underage individuals, usually considered to be less than 18 years old.

Historically, JJ has had the goal of rehabilitation, rather than punishment. Some would argue that the goal is habilitation—that is, to make young people capable by helping them develop the social and life skills they lack. Schooling, which has the mission of helping children learn and grow in knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be successful in society, plays a critical role in the rehabilitation (or habilitation) of a young person. Therefore, schools and JJ are natural partners in the JJ system. Keeping a young person in school is a likely part of the plan for a juvenile offender.

JJ and school personnel, along with law enforcement and mental health personnel, need to be active partners in providing leadership and training and comprehensive services to a student involved in the justice system. Through strong partnerships, communities can more effectively educate a student and carry out the mission of the JJ system, namely to protect the public; hold the offender accountable; and provide treatment, rehabilitation, and competency development to young people and their families.

The featured information conveys the experience of the Federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative, which is supported by a joint effort of the U.S. Departments of Education, Justice, and Health and Human Services.

What Are the JJ Problems That Relate to Schools?

Status offenses:

- Truancy.
- Underage drinking.
- Running away from home.
- Being beyond the control of parents (ungovernability).
- Curfew violations.

Criminal incidents:

- Theft (most common).
 - Often involve acquaintances.
 - Most involve personal weapons and are perpetrated by students in schools.
- Threats/harassment.
- Drug possession.
- Gang activity.

Other juvenile-related problems faced by children who:

- Are abused, neglected, or abandoned.
- Suffer from the consequences of witnessing violence.
- Have problems learning and don't do well in school.
- Have other mental health issues.
- Lack support because of a disrupted family or social situation.
- Live in communities with a high incidence of crime and violence.



Photo courtesy of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, a component of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs.

What Are the Challenges to JJ/School Partnerships?

- Professional differences—Training/education, knowledge, skills, and attitudes; differences in schedules and timeframes for responding.
- Differences in purpose—JJ protects the public, holds young people accountable, and rehabilitates. Education helps students gain knowledge/skills.
- Different rules and legal standards—Such as confidentiality and the sharing of statistics.
- Complexity of problems facing young people—Including victimization and witnessing violence.
- Lack of agreement—About how to address truancy, the value of prevention and intervention, the role of JJ, how to remove a student from school, or the need for safety in schools.
- Training availability—About sharing information and how the different systems work.
- Limited funding/large caseloads—Making it difficult to provide adequate services.

Steps JJ and Schools Can Take To Achieve Safe Schools Partnerships

Provide Leadership By:

- Developing relationships across disciplines—Professional and personal.
- Communicating roles and expectations—For school and JJ staff, and how each system works.
- Complementing one another—In the interagency system of care (wraparound approach).
- Being at the table—School, mental health, and JJ working in partnership.
- Embracing prevention and early intervention.
- Advocating for/with youth—in youth commissions and teen courts.
- Providing continuity with reentry and aftercare.
- Identifying school staff as liaisons to JJ—Point persons for reentry plans and juvenile probation.

Hire/Train/Evaluate JJ Staff To:

- Work comprehensively to intervene to address mental health/educational needs.
- Coordinate Law-Related Education (LRE)—In school, institutional, or alternative settings.
- Be professional and caring—Knowing the value of relationships, brain development, prevention.
- Train each other in what each agency does—For example, school-based probation officers train school staff about probation services.
- Develop counseling and education that supports parents—Particularly inexperienced and teenage parents.

- Assume many roles—Counselor, problem solver, mentor, and teacher.
- Refer to those who can help best—Understanding referral agencies and processes.

Carry Out Partnership Activities By:

- Teaming together—In steering committees, assessment teams, and student assistance teams.
- Co-locating services—Juvenile/truancy courts in schools, probation officers in schools, summer and parenting programs in juvenile centers.
- Developing/implementing programs—Using evidence-based programs, coordinating day and afterschool programs, mock trial competitions, employment for school credit, service-learning programs, vocational training, peer education, mentoring, and parent training.
- Partnering in joint training—On mental health needs, verbal judo, brain development, restorative justice, cultural and language competence, etc.
- Mediating and providing specialty courts—Such as truancy, drug, and teen/youth courts.
- Communicating reentry plans—From JJ to school.
- Developing volunteer activities.
- Coordinating joint media campaigns to promote youth.
- Working on sustainability—Such as school probation officers providing services when an SRO cannot.



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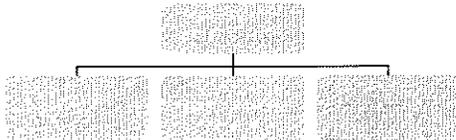
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- The Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Initiative provides schools and communities with Federal funding to implement a coordinated, comprehensive plan of activities, programs, and services that focus on promoting healthy childhood development and preventing violence and substance abuse.
- The U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice have collaborated in funding the initiative since 1999 (249 grants).

The Federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative



Elements of Safe Schools/Healthy Students

1. Safe school environments and violence prevention activities.
2. Alcohol, tobacco, and other drug prevention activities.
3. Student behavioral, social, and emotional supports.
4. Mental health services.
5. Early childhood social and emotional learning programs.

What Does Juvenile Justice Include?

Juvenile justice (JJ) covers many *issues*, all of which relate to schools, including:

- Child protection issues.
- Delinquency prevention.
- Disproportionate minority contact (DMC).
- Youth/teen and specialty courts.
- Juvenile corrections/detention/alternatives to detention.
- Restorative justice.
- Aftercare and reentry.

What *positions/people* are involved in a JJ-school collaboration?

- Probation officers.
- Judges, prosecutors, and public defenders/defense attorneys.
- Corrections officers and directors of custody.
- Truancy officers.
- Teachers.
- Counselors.

- Mental health outreach workers.
- School administrators.
- School psychologists.
- School liaison staff.
- Social workers.
- Nurses.
- Parole officers.
- Law enforcement officers.
- Victims and witnesses.
- Parents.

"Juvenile justice partners, along with schools, law enforcement, and mental health partners, play a key role in the rehabilitative process of young people, showing students that people care about them and at the same time are holding them accountable."

— Dr. Howard Eberwein,
 Director of the Juvenile Resource Center,
 Pittsfield, MA

"Partnership among schools, law enforcement, juvenile justice, and mental health brings four different cultures together, presenting both challenges and opportunities to learn. The partnership is strongest when the roles of all participants are defined by a single outcome—student success."

— Dr. Joseph Christy,
 Director, Washington County Juvenile
 Department, Hillsboro, OR

Pittsfield, MA

The Pittsfield SS/HS initiative helped to fund the Juvenile Resource Center (JRC)—a partnership of 27 local groups—to serve more young people and expand its services. The partner groups of the JRC, formed under the leadership of the sheriff, collaborate with the schools, increasing the number of direct staff and contracted service providers available to the schools, conducting outreach and assessment, and identifying additional youth at risk. JRC staff are hired and trained to show and demand respect from the students. The JRC runs a day school for students suspended short-term; a truancy program, where a social worker and truancy officer go to homes and throughout the community looking for truant students; and the after school program, where students referred by the juvenile court participate in anger management and life skill counseling.

Hillsboro, OR

The Hillsboro SS/HS initiative had strong leadership promoting collaboration across disciplines in the school, juvenile justice, and other county systems. The partnership connected the City Police Department, the Washington County Sheriff's Office, and the County Juvenile Office, together with the School District Improvement Team, the County Mental Health Department, the County Commission on Children and Families, and the Mayor's Office. Partnership activities include: Hiring three new SROs and two juvenile officers for the high schools; developing a JJ and law enforcement early intervention/truancy prevention team and program; developing a school safety team to improve system issues; completing safety audits for all buildings; reviewing crisis intervention policies and procedures; and forming a multidisciplinary student intervention team.

Visit the National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention's resource pages at:
www.promoteouryouth.org

Federal agencies
 Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)
www.ojjdp.gov

OJJDP's Model Programs Guide can be found at:
<http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojplanning/2003/ModelProgramsGuide.html>

Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
www.sshsinitiative.gov

Department of Education Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools
www.ed.gov

Organizations
 American Probation and Parole Association
www.appa-net.org

Coalition for Juvenile Justice
<http://www.juvenilejustice.org/>

International Association for Truancy and Dropout Prevention
www.iatdp.org

Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative
www.nccj.org/initiative/da/

National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice
www.nchjj.com

National Center for School Engagement
www.ncse.org/ncse/about.html

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ)
www.ncjfcj.org

National Juvenile Court Services Association (affiliate of NCJFCJ)
www.njcsa.org

National Center for Juvenile Justice (research arm of the NCJFCJ)
www.nchjj.org

National District Attorneys Association, along with the American Prosecutors Research Institute, runs the National Juvenile Justice Prosecution Center
www.njjaa-njpc.org

National Dropout Prevention Center/Network
www.dropoutprevention.org

National Juvenile Detention Association
<http://www.njda.com>

National Training and Technical Assistance Center on Juvenile Justice
www.ncttj.org

National Youth Court Center
www.nycc.org

National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center
www.nyvpc.org

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Abstract: The author of this four-page Issue Brief addresses the need for collaboration between the juvenile justice system, mental health providers, law enforcement, and schools and school personnel. Such partnerships, he explains can meet the needs of both the juvenile offender and the community in a coordinated and effective way. Juvenile justice/school partnerships can meet the educational and mental health needs of students, while also holding them accountable for their actions and protecting society. The author begins by identifying three categories of juvenile justice problems that relate to schools: (1) status offenses (e.g., truancy, underage drinking, running away from home, ungovernability, and curfew violations); (2) criminal incidents (e.g., theft, simple assaults, threats/harassment, drug possession, and gang activity); and (3) other juvenile related problems faced by children who are abused, neglected or abandoned, witness domestic or other violence, have learning problems, have mental health issues, lack family or social support, and live in communities experiencing high crime and violence. The author describes what juvenile justice/school partnerships entail, and explains steps that the juvenile justice system and schools can take to achieve safe schools partnerships. The Issue Brief includes a description of the national Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative, as well as profiles of two juvenile justice/school partnerships, located in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and Hillsboro, Oregon. The author also includes names and Internet links to additional resources.

Availability: Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative, National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention; Telephone: (240) 747-4824, E-mail: john.p.rosiak@macrointernational.com, Web site: www.promoteprevent.org

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