

Draft Community Self-Evaluation

Georgia Juvenile Justice Workshops – May, 2013

Introduction

The following assessment is designed to help a community evaluate its readiness to undertake the significant project of addressing the needs of its children and youth involved with the juvenile justice system. While it is tailored to the current Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JJRI), it addresses broader issues designed to help you gauge your community's readiness to treat offending juveniles in the community setting, using local resources, and involving the multiple agencies and programs that serve children, youth, and families. Please remember the importance of being realistic about your community's readiness, as this assessment can serve as a template for future community development. This assessment is for your community's internal use and will not be submitted as part of any grant proposal.

The assessment makes some basic assumptions that you should keep in mind as you and your colleagues prepare your responses:

- Delinquent youth generally have been involved with numerous agencies due to other issues they or their families may have currently or have had in the past;
- Addressing the needs of delinquent youth requires collaboration from many local agencies, individuals, and non-profits, and cannot be viewed simply as a governmental duty; and
- Communities that have a history of working together successfully on other societal problems will be able to leverage formerly-built collaborative infrastructures and relationships to make juvenile justice projects work. Communities that haven't had those experiences will be less ready and will need to work harder to build those systems.

This readiness assessment has 5 sections. Each section has some questions for reflection and discussion followed by specific rating questions to be self-scored on a scale of 1 to 5. The categories target those areas that are essential not only to success in implementing this JJRI program but also in addressing juvenile justice issues in general. They are:

1. Attitude – It is critical that the community see these youth as redeemable individuals who need community support. This section assesses the attitudes of key participants to implementing a community diversion program.
2. Collaboration Among Change Agents – These youth are served by many different systems, with juvenile justice, schools, mental health, and DFCS (due to parental issues) being critical. Strong relationships between various child-serving agencies will improve the odds of group success.
3. Awareness – This section primarily addresses what each agency knows about the issues facing the community's youth and the policies and practices of other agencies. For example, if the court knows the school system's policies on dealing with delinquent youth and the school system and court personnel have sat down to compare notes and discuss these issues, there's a much higher likelihood that the agencies will work in partnership.

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4. **Juvenile Justice Infrastructure** – This section assesses the readiness of the county juvenile system and its leadership and the administrative capacity necessary to implement reform.
5. **Existing Resource Infrastructure** – The absolute heart of evidence-based practice is community-based treatment, especially programs that have workers who go out into the homes and neighborhoods where these families and children live. This section assesses the readiness of the community based resources.

Instructions

The assessment requires that you rate your community in various aspects of system infrastructure, collaborative spirit, resources, and leadership on a scale of 1 to 5. You will read a statement and be asked about your level of disagreement or agreement with the statement as it relates to that aspect of your community. Please think carefully about these numbers, as they will give you a final “readiness score.” The following descriptions, while general, will serve as a guide to determining your responses:

1: Strongly Disagree	You feel this is definitely not the situation in your community. For example, there may be little experience with the issue, little community awareness of the problem, few resources, or little history of collaboration on this or other issues. A “strongly disagree” indicates you are very concerned about this aspect of your community’s ability to design and implement a successful program.
2: Disagree	This is not yet the situation in your community, although you may see plans to make it so. On this particular issue – delinquent youth – the situation needs to be significantly improved
3: Neutral	This answer means you are uncertain as to whether you agree or disagree with the statement. You may feel ambivalent, in that you have strong feelings but can’t decide whether you agree or disagree with the statement.
4: Agree	An answer in this range indicates you have reason to be confident in this aspect of your community. While there is still work to be done in this aspect or area, you can say the statement is true for your community.
5: Strongly Agree	You feel your community is a definite “yes” on particular aspect. You can be confident in this area based on a record of achievement. For example, perhaps your community has already undertaken with a great deal of success similar collaborative juvenile justice projects. You know you’re strong and capable.

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The Five Sections

I. Attitude: Evaluate your community's view of delinquent youth

As the old saying goes, "Attitude is everything." If the goal is to work with juvenile offenders within the community and to re-integrate those who have offended, the community must see these juveniles as worthy of attention. If you have time, you might consider doing focus groups with your community leaders to gauge their attitudes towards these youth. Before rating your community in this area, discuss the following questions:

- *Does the average citizen in our community understand juvenile delinquency? Do they see juvenile offenders as just "young hoodlums," or do they see them as troubled youth worth saving?*
- *What are their perceptions of risk associated with having juvenile offenders in their community?*

Ratings 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree

	A. Our community has a positive overall attitude toward keeping juvenile offenders in the community and treating them within our schools, neighborhoods, and local organizations.
	B. Our community leaders distinguish between juvenile offenders and adult offenders.
	C. Our average citizen sees juvenile offenders as youth in need of assistance and help.
	D. Our community agencies, including schools and nonprofits, would welcome opportunities to work with and assist juvenile offenders.
	E. Juvenile offenders are welcome in our community's churches, mosques, temples, and synagogues and in our community recreation facilities.
	F. Our community's opinion leaders have been trained on issues of juvenile delinquency.
	G. Our community's business and civic leaders would welcome a juvenile offender into their businesses or agencies as a volunteer or intern.
	H. Our law enforcement officials and prosecutors are open to keeping juvenile offenders in the community, even when they have committed serious offenses.
	I. Our juvenile court judges and staff are focused on keeping juvenile offenders in the community despite the risk of recidivism.
	J. If offered a community-based program with a proven track record of preventing recidivism, our law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and juvenile court would use that program to keep our juveniles (even a more serious juvenile offender) in the community rather than incarcerating them.

Score: _____/10 = _____

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II. Collaboration: Evaluate your community's level of collaboration among "change agents"

As we know, most youth don't end up in secure confinement without significant prior issues: Many of these youth have had prior involvement with DFCS due to parental neglect or abuse; issues at school may have landed them in the alternative school program; many deal with mental health or substance abuse issues; and prior, less serious juvenile delinquency issues are also likely. Tackling these issues requires the involvement of DFCS, the schools, churches and volunteer organizations, law enforcement, prosecutors, county government, mental health providers, and of course juvenile justice personnel. While this project is focused on the end result of reducing secure juvenile confinement and recidivism, it is helpful to evaluate how your community is already working together to address in a holistic manner the needs of these youth, as such collaboration can both prevent and address these multiple issues.

Before rating your community, consider the following questions for reflection:

- *What are the strongest community organizations in your community, the ones known for getting things done? What do they focus on? What are their strengths? Their weaknesses? Do they or would they be interested in focusing on juvenile justice issues?*
- *How would you describe the relationships between and among your schools, law enforcement, juvenile authorities, DFCS, and other governmental agencies that serve youth? What programs are these agencies already engaged in together?*
- *Who are the strongest individual leaders in your community on children's issues? Think in terms of government leaders, nonprofit or organizational leaders, and volunteers.*
- *Who would be the best organization to lead your efforts? What organizations or agencies in your community need to be encouraged to participate? How can you encourage them to get onboard?*

Ratings 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree

	A. Overall, our community's leaders collaborate well to bring about needed changes.
	B. Our community has strong non-profits or volunteer organizations that serve children and youth.
	C. Churches, synagogues, mosques, and other faith-based organizations in our community are active collaborators with our government agencies in serving at-risk youth.
	D. Those nonprofits or volunteer organizations are willing to engage with youth who have committed offenses, even those that have resulted in their detention or incarceration.
	E. Those nonprofits or volunteer organizations have a history of serving delinquent youth successfully
	F. We have a strong mental health agency or agencies in our community.
	G. Our mental health agency leadership collaborates well with the school system, DFCS, and the juvenile court or juvenile justice authorities to help youth in crisis.
	H. Our school system understands the juvenile justice system.
	I. Our school system collaborates well with DFCS, the juvenile court, and our mental health agency to help youth in crisis.

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	J. Our juvenile court has strong partnerships with the school system
	K. Our juvenile court has strong partnerships with our mental health providers.
	L. Our community has an existing collaborative to address the needs of children who are involved with multiple systems because of their needs.
	M. Our District Attorney's office participates actively in a community collaborative designed to address the needs of at-risk children and youth
	N. Our law enforcement leaders collaborate effectively with our mental health and school systems to assist at-risk children and youth.
	O. Our community agencies successfully collaborate to obtain grants and funding for programs for at-risk and delinquent children and youth.
	P. Our community agencies share data on the youth they serve.
	Q. Our community agencies measure and report outcomes for the youth they serve.

Score: _____/17 = _____

III. Awareness: Evaluate your community's level of awareness and knowledge of the issues

Collaboration is a great thing, but knowledge of the big picture of issues facing our youth is key to juvenile justice reform. Success occurs when each collaborative partner understands the broad spectrum of issues facing at-risk children, the roles and concerns of other agencies, and how each agency's policies contribute to or block success. Before rating yourself in this area, please consider the following questions for reflection:

- *What is the level of understanding among our community's leaders of the issues facing children and youth, especially in the areas of mental health, neglect and abuse, substance abuse, and juvenile justice?*
- *Do our community leaders understand the programs that work, or are they using approaches that are popular but have been shown to be ineffective or counterproductive?*

Ratings: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree

	A. Our community leaders are very aware of the issues facing at-risk and delinquent children and youth.
	B. The leaders of our community agencies and nonprofits share ideas and concerns openly and freely.
	C. Our community leaders know the data on the local outcomes for our children in the areas of abuse, neglect, delinquency, and educational attainment.
	D. Our community leaders regularly report to the public on those outcomes.
	E. Our community leaders know how to use outcomes data and program information to make changes or to "course-correct" if approaches or programs are shown to be ineffective or counterproductive for our youth.
	F. Our community leaders regularly focus on creating policies and programs to improve those outcomes.

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	G. Our community agencies frequently share their models, policies, and concerns.
	H. Our community agencies are “cross-trained” to understand the perspectives, policies, and approaches of other agencies serving children and youth.
	I. Our community agency leaders regularly participate in training on effective systems to address the needs of at-risk, abused, and delinquent children and youth.
	J. Our community leaders regularly discuss the needs of children, youth, and families with local and state government leaders and advocate for appropriate funding and programs for those populations.

Score: _____ / **10** = _____

IV. Juvenile Justice Infrastructure: Evaluate your juvenile justice and grants management infrastructure

Juvenile courts and juvenile justice systems vary greatly across Georgia. In some areas, there is a single juvenile court for the county with one or more judges. In other counties, the judge or judges may cover an entire judicial circuit. Juvenile courts may also be “independent,” meaning that they have their own intake and probation staff, or the Department of Juvenile Justice may provide staff to work with the court. Likewise, some juvenile court have their own grants management staff, while others rely on the county administration or another fiscal agent to manage programs and funding. The infrastructure and experience of your juvenile court can affect how well you will be able to implement and manage a grant. Prior to rating your juvenile justice infrastructure, discuss the following issues:

- *What sort of delinquency prevention and early intervention programs do you already have, including “diversion” programs that keep charged youth out of a formal court proceeding? What is the background of the typical youth who are involved in these programs? How many youth can be served by each program at any given time? Is there any data showing how effective these programs are?*
- *When youth are charged by the police or law enforcement, who makes the decision as to whether they should be detained? What programs does your court have that might provide law enforcement or the court with an alternative to pre-appearance or pre-trial detention? How many youth can each program serve at any given time? Is there any data showing how effective these programs may be?*
- *What do your court’s secure detention and secure confinement numbers look like? How about your number of designated felony commitments? How about your court’s use of the short-term program?*
- *Who seeks out and manages grants and funding for your juvenile court system? Is it done by the court, the county, or other fiscal agents through partnerships?*

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Ratings 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree

	A. Our juvenile court has strong partnerships with the county administration and nonprofits that will enable them to work together to implement and monitor a significant juvenile justice reform project.
	B. Our juvenile court leadership actively reaches out to the community to address at-risk youth and delinquency.
	C. Our juvenile court and school system have a successful, active protocol for addressing delinquency referrals that come from the school system.
	D. Our juvenile court has an active truancy program in partnership with the school system.
	E. Our juvenile court has strong programs designed to keep children in the community and out of detention.
	F. Our juvenile court uses a risk assessment instrument to assist with intake and detention decisions.
	G. Our juvenile court uses a risk and needs assessment to assist with dispositional decisions.
	H. Our juvenile court does mental health screenings for charged youth.
	I. Our juvenile court staff actively participate in a community collaborative designed to address the needs of children involved with multiple agencies.
	J. Our juvenile court has a strong diversion and early intervention program.
	K. Our local government actively works with our juvenile court to find grants and funding for community-based programs.
	L. Our juvenile court has set up a specialized docket or dockets to address substance abuse issues or mental health issues.
	M. We have a significant percentage of locally-funded programs for juvenile offenders (as opposed to those relying solely on Department of Juvenile Justice resources).

Score: _____/18= _____

V. Existing Resources: Evaluate your community's available resources and the policies regulating them.

There are already services and programs in your community that are intended to address some of the issues we are addressing in this grant program. Some of those programs work; others may be well-intentioned but lack data showing their effectiveness. There may also be programs and services in your county that could be applied to juvenile justice issues but that need to be re-purposed. Or, there may be policies of our various agencies that discourage services to delinquent youth. Before rating this aspect of your community's readiness, consider the following questions:

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- *What public health, substance abuse, and mental health services are available in your community? Are they accessible and actually being provided consistently to youth involved with the juvenile justice system? How are they funded? Who provides them? How can you connect them with our target population? Are there any policies that are preventing our target youth from having access to these services?*
- *What school-based services are available for these youth, especially for the population we are seeking to keep in the community and re-integrate in the community after incarceration? Are there any school system policies that might complicate our ability to serve these youth and keep them in school?*
- *What volunteer or nonprofit youth-serving organizations are in your community, including faith-based organizations? What programs do they offer? Do they serve delinquent youth? If not, why not? What could you do to encourage them to serve these youth?*

Ratings 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree

	A. Our community already has a broad array of local services and programs that could be used to treat juvenile offenders within the community.
	B. Our community mental health services for children, youth, and families are adequate.
	C. Our mental health agencies eagerly provide services to families and children in the home and community setting.
	D. Our mental health agencies regularly receive cases from our juvenile court and actively participate in proceedings.
	E. Our mental health providers work closely with the schools and DFCS to ensure children referred from those systems receive needed treatment.
	F. Our school system has entered written protocols with law enforcement, the District Attorney's office, and/or the juvenile court to regulate the process for children and youth who commit offenses at school.
	G. Our school system has policies that encourage the re-enrollment and education of youth who have been detained or incarcerated.
	H. We can name a significant number of strong community collaborative partners in our community and can be assured of their roles in a juvenile justice reform project.
	I. Our school system has an active truancy program in collaboration other community agencies.
	J. Our local government funds community-based services for delinquent youth.
	K. The agencies in our community that serve children and youth have policies that do not bar services to juvenile offenders.
	L. Our community's children and youth-serving agencies measure and report outcomes for the youth they serve.
	M. Our community's children and youth-serving agencies seek out and implement programs that have been proven to work.

Score: _____ / **13** = _____

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Critical Factors: Current Systems and Outcomes

Current success is sometimes the best indicator of future success. If you can state with confidence that your community already has some of these systems and results, please add one point for each "yes" to the following rating questions. Answer "Yes" or "No"

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our community has in place a successful "system of care" program or similar strong cross-agency collaborative that works with the type of children and youth whose needs require assistance from the school system, juvenile justice, mental health, and DFCS.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our School Superintendent, our District Attorney, our chief law enforcement officer(s), our County Commission, and our Juvenile Court Judge(s) are all very supportive of an effort to keep the targeted juvenile offenders in the community and to re-integrate them following incarceration.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have a solid base of mental health and counseling providers who are willing to go out into the homes of our juvenile offenders and work closely with them and their families.

Score: _____

Scoring

First, total up your averaged scores for each element rated above:

Attitude: _____

Collaboration: _____

Awareness: _____

Juvenile System: _____

Service Infrastructure: _____

Total these scores up, with 25 being a maximum raw score:

Our total raw score: _____

These scores should tell you what's strong and what's weak in your county. What weight you give to each score is up to your county, as this is a self-evaluation and your leaders should be able to determine which systems may be more important in carrying out a successful program. In our experience, however, we would suggest giving more weight to your collaboration and juvenile system scores.

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To get a weighted score, multiply each raw score by the percentage weight you think it carries to get a total of 100%. For example, you might decide that collaboration and the juvenile infrastructure are worth 30% of the total, while attitude is worth only 10%. In this example, you might take your raw scores and multiply them thusly:

Attitude:	$3 \times 10\% = 3$
Collaboration:	$4 \times 30\% = 12$
Awareness:	$2 \times 10\% = 4$
Juvenile System:	$4 \times 30\% = 12$
Service Infrastructure:	$3 \times 20\% = 6$

37 out of a possible 50 points

Our weighted score: _____

Finally, add in any bonus points you received.

(For example, 37 plus 3 bonus points = 40)

Our Weighted Community Score: _____

Helpful references:

Plested, B.A., Edwards, R.W., & Jumper-Thurman, P. (2006, April). Community Readiness: A handbook for successful change. Fort Collins, CO: Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research.

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