



DJJ Should Better Identify At-Risk Youth, Use Proven Prevention Models, and Revise Funding Practices

at a glance

The Department of Juvenile Justice uses high crime zip codes and risk factors to identify youth in need of prevention services. However, its methodology for determining which zip codes relate to a rate of high crime is not optimal and the risk factors need to be updated to reflect more current evidence-based research. The department also does not require all providers to serve youth with multiple risk factors, who are at highest risk for delinquency.

The Legislature should update program requirements to reflect current research on effective prevention models. The department should then require prevention providers to use these proven interventions and to serve youth with risk factors addressed by their program model.

The department tracks recidivism but not other outcomes related to the prevention services it provides, such as education. The department should track and assess outcomes related to each program's service delivery model in addition to tracking delinquency referrals.

The program's system for funding prevention grants for no more than three years hinders developing long-term programs that maximize positive outcomes.

Interagency efforts to address delinquency prevention are limited and should be pursued.

Scope

As directed by the Legislature, OPPAGA reviewed Department of Juvenile Justice prevention services. This report examines the processes the department uses to identify appropriate youth for prevention services, develop evidence-based programs, and fund prevention programs.

Background

The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice offers a wide variety of services designed to prevent delinquency, including alternative schools for troubled girls, wilderness canoe trips, school-based educational programs, and residential crisis stabilization.

Effective prevention programs can protect public safety by serving youth with the highest likelihood of committing crimes and addressing the problems most closely associated with delinquency. The programs can also save the state money by helping to prevent the need to place children in expensive residential delinquency treatment programs.

The department historically has spent about 10% of its budget on prevention, which amounted to \$63 million in Fiscal Year 2006-07. The department contracts with providers to deliver prevention services and employs 17 staff statewide to administer and monitor these services.

As shown in Exhibit 1, prevention services are funded in three main ways: state contracts, state grants, and federal grants.

Exhibit 1

For Fiscal Year 2006-07, the Legislature Appropriated \$63 Million for Prevention Services

State-Contracted Programs	Number of Youth Served	Funding Amount
Florida Network of Youth and Family Services	15,635	\$28,827,919
Practical Academic Cultural Education (PACE) Centers for Girls	2,137	11,878,997
Outward Bound Discovery	195	880,454
Contracted Special Member Projects	844	1,889,981
Florida Youth Challenge Academy	324	469,596
Total Contracts	19,135	\$43,946,947
State Grant-Funded Programs		
Community Partnership and Invest in Children Grants	6,974	\$5,386,594
Federally Grant-Funded Programs		
OJJDP Title II Grants	2,599	\$2,576,206
OJJDP Title V Grants	1,552	1,068,163
OJJDP Challenge Grants	266	300,000
Juvenile Accountability Block Grants	1,398	1,910,341
Total Federal Grants	5,815	\$5,854,710
Other Operational Expenses		
Salaries, Monitoring, etc	NA	\$ 7,826,118
Total Prevention	31,924	\$63,014,369

Source: OPPAGA analysis of data provided by the Department of Juvenile Justice Prevention and Victim Services Program.

Three contracted providers account for the majority of prevention expenditures.

- The Florida Network of Youth and Family Services is an affiliation of 27 member agencies that serve runaway, truant and ungovernable youth statewide.
- PACE Centers for Girls is a day treatment educational program serving as alternative schools in 18 centers throughout the state.
- Outward Bound Discovery is a wilderness expedition program operating in Brevard, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Orange and Seminole counties.

Other prevention programs are funded primarily through grants to local communities and offer a wide variety of services. These grant awards range in size from \$20,000 to more than \$750,000,

with an average of almost \$70,000. These programs serve anywhere from 3 to 328 children, the average being about 73. Appendix A provides additional detail on prevention providers.

Findings

Ideally prevention should serve youth most at risk for delinquency using interventions that have been proven to work. For the past decade, OPPAGA has reported concerns regarding which youth are served and what interventions are provided by the department's prevention programs.¹ While the department has taken some steps to address these problems, additional actions should be taken to improve the way the department identifies at-risk youth. It should also require providers to use evidence-based program models, and restructure its funding process to obtain effective services.

The department should improve the way it identifies at-risk youth

To be effective, prevention services need to be provided to youth who are at risk of delinquency. In Fiscal Year 2006-07, fewer than 5% of the children in the state between 10 and 17 years old were referred to the court for delinquency.² Because relatively few children become involved in the juvenile justice system, it is important to focus limited prevention resources where they can provide the most cost-effective return on investment. The department should update the criteria it uses to identify youth who would most benefit from prevention services to better reflect current delinquency trends and research.

The department uses two methods to try to reach high-risk youth.

- First, the department examines the home addresses of youth who are referred to the

¹ *Policy Review of Prevention Programs of the Department of Juvenile Justice*, [OPPAGA Report No. 96-35](#), January 1997; *Follow-up Report on Prevention Programs Administered by the Department of Juvenile Justice*, [OPPAGA Report No. 98-63](#), February 1999; *Justification Review: Prevention and Victim Services Program Department of Juvenile Justice*, [OPPAGA Report No. 02-62](#), November 2002; and *Progress Report: DJJ Prevention Makes Progress; More Analysis and Contract Monitoring Needed*, [OPPAGA Report No. 04-47](#), July 2004.

² In Fiscal Year 2006-07, 88,409 youth were referred to court for delinquency.

juvenile justice system each year to determine which zip codes within each county produce the highest number of referrals. It then requires prevention providers to serve youth from these zip codes.³

- Second, the department requires prevention providers to serve youth who exhibit risk in at least one of four areas: individual/peer, family, school, and community.

The department's methodology for targeting youth by zip code should be improved, its risk factors need to be refined to better identify youth that are at highest risk for delinquency, and its criteria for enrolling high-risk youth in prevention services should be strengthened.

The department's county-by-county zip code analysis results in several high crime areas not being served. The department's methodology for identifying high crime zip codes uses a county-by-county, rather than statewide approach. Because this methodology considers the number of delinquency referrals only in relation to other zip codes within individual counties and not in relation to the state as a whole, smaller counties with relatively little crime receive the same priority for funding as larger communities with unusually high crime rates.

The department requires that between 60% and 70% of the youth served in each program come from zip code areas accounting for the majority of a county's delinquency referrals. For instance, 10 zip codes in Broward County account for half of all of the county's delinquency referrals to the department. Therefore, a minimum of 60% to 70% of the youth served by prevention providers must come from these 10 high-crime zip codes.

Under this system, the Broward zip code, ranked 11th highest in delinquency services with 321 referrals in Fiscal Year 2006-07, will not be targeted for prevention services. In contrast, Baker County's highest referral zip code, with 79 referrals that year, will be targeted for prevention services although it had less than one-fourth the number of referrals. As a result of this system, the department's county-by-county approach excluded 28 zip codes with delinquency referral

rates that were among the highest in the state—together, these 28 zip codes accounted for 8,828 referrals during the 2006-07 fiscal year. The department's methodology is thus an inefficient way to allocate limited prevention resources to maximize statewide reductions in delinquency.

As an alternative, the department could use the zip code information it produces to identify areas with high concentrations of referrals throughout the state and fund prevention programs within those communities. This would redeploy prevention resources throughout the state in a more effective manner. However, it would likely result in some programs having to move their operation to areas where there are more children at risk for delinquency. Another option would be for the department to balance the need for prevention in high-risk areas with the need for some prevention services in other, less urban areas of the state. It could do so by allocating a significant portion of prevention resources (e.g., 75%) to the highest crime areas of the state and awarding the remaining portion of funds competitively to the other counties in the state. This would allow communities with existing programs to access a portion of prevention funds to keep those programs in their communities, provided that they are demonstrably effective and use evidence-based techniques.

Current risk factors should be refined to identify those most closely associated with delinquency. While the department used national research to select delinquency risk factors a decade ago, it has not updated them to reflect subsequent research that has further clarified which factors are most predictive of delinquency. As a result, the department's current assessment can classify a youth as at risk of delinquency on the basis of a single risk factor that, by itself, has been found to not be strongly predictive of delinquency, such as failing one class or skipping classes a few times. In contrast, more recent research has identified and validated assessments that combine risk factors and weight them to more accurately predict the risk of delinquency. The department has applied for a federal grant to adopt a new evidence-based risk assessment tool for its prevention programs that would reflect more current research and better identify high-risk youth.

³ This requirement applies to all prevention programs funded by the department except for the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services' residential shelter programs.

To better identify factors that put youth at risk for delinquency, the department could adapt the risk assessment tool called the Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT), which it already uses for all of its programs except prevention. Since PACT includes criminal history, some revision and subsequent validation would be required to use it for prevention.

Expanding the use of PACT to prevention program screening would enable the department to provide a more accurate assessment of delinquency-related social history, attitude and behavioral risk factors among youth than its current framework. The department could use these results in placement decisions that decide which programs can best serve the needs of a given child, and could also provide a basis for a pre- and post-test assessment of improvement on targeted risk factors as a measure of intermediate prevention program outcomes.

When implementing this use of PACT for prevention programs, the department should also take into account information from the U.S. Surgeon General's Office that indicates that some risk factors are only indicative of risk within a limited age range. For example, drug or alcohol use between the age of 6 and 11 years has been found to be a strong predictor of delinquency, but is only a weak predictor for children between age 12 and 14. Similarly, anti-social peers are a strong delinquency predictor between age 12 and 14, but a weak predictor before that age.

The department has expanded the scope of its prevention services to serve youth with less risk for delinquency. The department has relaxed its requirement that providers serve higher risk youth. At one time, the department required youth to have risk factors in at least three of the four areas, or domains (individual, family, school, or community); now grant providers are required to serve youth with risk in only one area. The department also does not specify the proportion of at-risk youth that the program must serve, such as it does by requiring that 60% to 70% of the participants must come from a high-risk zip code.

While the department's rationale for this change is to serve the maximum number of youth, research indicates that the youth at the highest risk for delinquency are those with multiple risk

factors in multiple domains. The department could better maximize the impact of its limited prevention resources by requiring providers to serve youth with multiple risk factors and establishing a minimum acceptable percentage of high risk youth to serve, similar to what it has already done with high crime zip codes.

Evidence-based programs could improve prevention effectiveness

The department has not implemented procedures to ensure that the prevention programs it funds are based on intervention strategies that research has shown to be effective. In addition, funded programs are not required to serve youth with the specific risk factors that their services target. The department also gives little weight to performance outcomes in its funding process, and as a result it funds programs without consideration to whether they are likely to be effective at addressing the needs of the children they serve.

Program models are not limited to those that have been proven effective. The department's current program criteria are very broad and do not require that program models show evidence of success in reducing delinquency. Section 985.605(2)(a), *Florida Statutes*, stipulates that all prevention funds must be spent for services that can be classified into one of four broad categories: encouraging youth to attend school; engaging youth in productive and wholesome activities; encouraging youth to avoid the use of violence; or assisting youth to acquire skills needed to find meaningful employment.

These statutory categories should be updated to reflect current research on program effectiveness. Recent national research has identified highly cost-effective evidence-based models that reduce delinquency. These programs typically include one or more of the following components:

- structured social or interpersonal skills training for youth using cognitive behavior approaches;
- training for parents and/or teachers to increase skills in dealing with and preventing antisocial behavior; and/or
- opportunities for developing positive relationships with caring adults, through mentoring, monitoring, and modeling of pro-social skills.

Research indicates that the most effective evidence-based program models target youth with multiple risk factors and use two or all three of these components.⁴ Exhibit 2 lists some of these successful programs. The department should instruct its Office of Accountability to research evidence-based programs, adopt a list of approved models, and require providers to use these models for prevention services.

Exhibit 2

Successful Programs Address Multiple Risk Factors

Life Skills Training

- aimed at middle school students
- provides information related to drug use
- teaches self-management and social skills

Project Towards No Drug Abuse

- aimed at high school students
- school-based
- reduces substance abuse and violence-related behavior

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

- provides a mentoring relationship
- reduces youth violence and substance abuse
- improves attitudes toward school and academic performance

Guiding Good Choices

- improves parenting skills
- reduces family conflict and substance abuse among children.

Source: Blueprints for Violence Prevention of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado Matrix of Programs. Programs rated as effective, model, or exemplary by four to eight different organizations that rate programs that have been shown to reduce delinquency and delinquency-related outcomes.

The department does not require programs to address risk factors of enrolled youth. Ideally, prevention programs funded by the department should serve youth who have the risk factors that the programs are designed to address. For example, programs that have a focus on drug treatment should serve children that have identified risk factors related to drug abuse.

However, while the department requires providers to serve youth that exhibit risk in at least one area, programs are not required to enroll youth with the specific risk factors related to the services the program provides. For instance, the department currently would consider a drug treatment program to have met its obligation to serve a youth with at least one risk factor even if the youth's only risk factor was related to academic skill deficits.

The department could better assure that its prevention programs are effectively targeted at youth by requiring providers to identify the specific evidence-based delinquency risk factors their programs address and serve youth with those risk factors.

The department does not use performance information to improve prevention services. While the department measures one key program outcome—whether served youth are subsequently referred for delinquency offenses within six months of program release—it should also measure other relevant outcomes related to the prevention services it provides. It could then use this evaluation information to improve its programs and consider this information in its funding decisions.

For example, prevention programs that focus on academic skills should be required to report academic outcomes of the students they serve, while therapeutic programs should be required to report therapeutic outcomes. These measures should be standardized to allow for comparisons among providers offering similar services. The department could then use this data to assess the performance of different types of prevention programs and also control for differences in youth and their initial risk for delinquency, similar to the Program Accountability Measures report it publishes for residential programs.⁵

⁴ A number of governmental agencies and professional organizations rate prevention programs according to the research indicating their effectiveness in promoting various outcomes. Blueprints for Violence Prevention of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence has the most rigorous standards for delinquency and violence prevention programs, and provides a useful matrix of ratings of 298 programs by 12 different rating organizations at <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/matrix/matrix.pdf>. The U.S. Surgeon General's office also uses rigorous research standards to rate programs for delinquency and violence prevention.

⁵ The Program Accountability Measures report provides an assessment of the relative effectiveness of programs in reducing recidivism and providing cost-effective services.

The department could also evaluate certain prevention programs, such as the Florida Network's services for CINS/FINS youth, more meaningfully with measures in addition to delinquency referral rates, which are currently the only outcomes measured.⁶ Chapter 984, *Florida Statutes*, states that this population has different treatment needs and expected outcomes than delinquent youth. For these programs, useful intermediate, service-related outcomes would include the number of youth reunified with their families, the number of habitual truants with improved school attendance, or the number of youth diverted from court.

Prevention funding practices do not support the development of sustainable and effective programs

Several funding practices for prevention programs discourage development of long-term, sustainable programs.

- The department does not have a strategic method for allocating most prevention funding.
- Funding for grant programs is limited to a maximum of three years.
- The timing of evaluations for grant-funded programs does not support funding decisions.

In addition, awarding prevention funds to existing programs funded by other agencies could enhance prevention efforts.

The department does not have a strategic method for allocating most prevention funding. A challenge the department has in administering the prevention program is that it does not have a strategic method for allocating most program funds and it does not control most funding decisions. The Legislature directly appropriates two-thirds of prevention funding to three contracts: the Florida Network, PACE Center for Girls, and Outward Bound Discovery. In Fiscal Year 2006-07, an additional \$1.9 million was

directly appropriated to specific prevention projects. Federal grant funds of \$5.8 million are allocated by the State Advisory Group, as required by federal law.⁷ For the remaining state grant funds, state law requires the department to consider recommendations from circuit boards and county councils as part of its decision process.⁸

As a result, prevention funds are allocated in a fragmented manner by numerous stakeholders with different priorities and agendas. The department's philosophy in allocating the portion of prevention funds that it does control has been to provide as many prevention activities as possible, but these efforts are not strategic and there is limited assurance that funds are allocated to the highest priority children and most effective programs.

To address this situation, the department should work with the Legislature, the State Advisory Board, and the local boards and councils to develop a unified vision of how prevention services should work together as a statewide program. Ideally, funding should be targeted to prevention programs that are evidence-based, serve youth with related delinquency risk factors, and maintain positive performance over time.

Federal and state requirements prohibit funding of grant programs for longer than three years. A second challenge facing the department is that it limits funding of prevention grant programs to no more than three years, which discourages development of long-term, effective programs. It also hinders the department's ability to develop a statewide framework of effective, long-term prevention programs.

The federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention requires states to follow a three-year funding cycle for allocating federal Title V prevention grants to local governments. The rationale of this policy is to provide start-up money to local government entities with an

⁶ Children-in-need-of-services/Families-in-need-of-services programs are designed to reduce status offenses, which include running away, habitual truancy, and children who are beyond the control of their parents. They are called status offenses because they would not be illegal if committed by an adult. While there is overlap between status offending and risk factors for delinquency, CINS/FINS programs are designed to prevent status offenses primarily, as described in s. 984.04, *F.S.*

⁷ The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 2002.

⁸ In addition, s. 985.668, *F.S.*, encourages the department to work with the boards and councils to develop innovation zones to experiment with limited prevention resources rather than directing funds toward programs with proven effectiveness. This approach further erodes the effectiveness of delinquency prevention on a statewide level. However, the department indicates that it has not yet developed any innovation zones.

expectation that those governments will assume responsibility for sustained funding of the program after three years. Section 985.676(2)(a), *Florida Statutes*, similarly limits funding of Community Partnership Grant programs to a maximum of three years. To streamline its funding administration, the department follows this same three-year requirement for all program grants. For example, the State Advisory Group has extended the three-year requirement to all federal prevention grants. The department combines Invest in Children license plate funds with the Community Partnership grants, which limits recipients of the combined awards to three years of funding as well.⁹

The department does not track the survival of prevention programs after the three years of funding have ended, so it lacks information on whether its funding technique is successful in developing quality, sustainable programs.

Department evaluations for grant-funded programs are not available to support funding decisions. While department evaluations of grant-funded programs could in theory provide an important information source for improving prevention services and informing funding decisions, the current timing of the evaluation process prevents this use. At present, evaluation results from funded prevention programs are not available until the department has already made a decision on whether to renew the programs for the final year of available funding. The department's current methodology requires two full years to elapse after a program is initiated before it is evaluated. This time period is intended to allow for a full year of follow-up on the youth released during the program's first year of operation. The department therefore does not begin analysis of data on the first year's program participants until the decision to award the program's third and final year of funding has

already been made. As a result, outcome data does not inform funding decisions and cannot be used to improve the programs before their funding runs out.

To improve its funding process, the department should adjust its methodology to evaluate prevention programs earlier in the funding cycle. The department currently calculates subsequent referral rates within six months and one year of release from prevention programs each fall. It could calculate referral rates each six months rather than annually which would allow for the results to be considered in funding decisions.

Combining delinquency prevention funds could enhance existing programs. The department also could increase the impact of prevention dollars by leveraging these funds to support existing programs funded by other state agencies to meet the needs of youth at high risk for delinquency. Research demonstrates that major risk factors for delinquency are closely related to other social problems, such as school behavior problems, school failure, child abuse, and substance abuse. Florida supports numerous programs in schools and social service programs that serve at-risk families and children. However, these initiatives are not coordinated or evaluated to maximize their potential impact in reducing juvenile delinquency.

For example, 36 school districts have implemented the Positive Behavior Solutions program in 250 schools with federal funding from the Safe and Drug Free Schools Program and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act through the Department of Education. This program has a teacher and child curriculum and has demonstrated success in reducing school behavior problems; aggressive behavior in elementary school is one of the strongest predictors of future delinquency, violent offending, and gang membership. National research indicates that such programs can be most successful in reducing future delinquency for youth at high risk of violent offending if they also include parent training and small group work with children exhibiting

⁹ Section 320.08046, *F.S.*, authorizes a fee of \$1 to be collected from the sale of all license plates and annual registration renewals. Of that amount, \$0.42 is deposited into the Grants and Donations Trust Fund. Approximately \$0.30 is used for prevention and \$0.12 is used for aftercare. Collections must be spent for programs within the county in which they were originally collected. The department award counties no less than \$35,000 in grant funding. In order to reach this minimum threshold and comply with statute directing funds to be returned to the county in which they were collected, the department combines the revenue from Community Partnership and Invest in Children funding sources.

behavior problems.¹⁰ The Department of Juvenile Justice could partner with the Department of Education to fund such enhanced programs.

The state similarly funds the Healthy Families program under the Ounce of Prevention initiative to reduce child maltreatment and promote parenting skills, positive parent-child relationships, and healthy child development. This program is similar to the nationally recognized Nurse Family Partnership Program for high risk pregnant women and their infants, which provides parenting education like that provided by Ounce of Prevention, and has been found by national studies to produce approximately 80% reductions in both child abuse and neglect and parent and child criminal convictions.¹¹ The department could partner with Ounce of Prevention to expand the Healthy Families program to also address risk factors such as domestic violence, mental health and substance abuse and thus maximize its ability to reduce delinquency as well as child maltreatment.

To enhance delinquency prevention, the department should encourage joint planning, funding, data sharing, and evaluation, among state agencies. For example, the Department of Juvenile Justice should work with the Department of Education and the Department of Children and Families to identify current programs that can be targeted to also address delinquency prevention by incorporating evidence-based practices into their current services. The agencies would then identify performance measures to assess the program's impact on delinquency prevention as well as their other outcomes. To spur such efforts, the Legislature could establish an interagency group to develop plans for implementing effective delinquency prevention models for early childhood, or charge an existing entity such as the Children's Cabinet, the Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council, and the

Substance Abuse Prevention Advisory Council, to serve this function.

Recommendations

To ensure that limited prevention resources serve youth at highest risk for delinquency we recommend the actions described below.

- The department should modify its assessment of areas with high concentration of delinquency referrals and fund prevention programs in the zip code areas with the highest overall juvenile crime rates. The department could also balance the need for prevention in high risk areas with the need for prevention services in counties with lower referral rates by allocating a significant portion of prevention resources (e.g., 75%) to the highest crime areas of the state and awarding the remaining portion of funds competitively to the other counties in the state.
- We recommend that the department adopt the Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT) instrument to identify children for prevention services, and that it incorporate age into its risk factor assessment.
- We recommend that the department require prevention providers to serve youth with risk factors in multiple domains, and specify the minimum percentage of high-risk youth that each program must serve.

To ensure that prevention programs are effective, we recommend the actions described below.

- The Legislature should revise s. 985.605(2)(a), *Florida Statutes*, to require the department to limit prevention funding to program models that are evidence-based. The department should develop a list of approved evidence-based prevention program models, such as the Blueprints for Violence Prevention identified by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and only fund grant proposals that implement these programs.
- The department should require providers to select the evidence-based delinquency risk factors they plan to address, and serve youth with those risk factors.

¹⁰ National research has indicated that the Incredible Years program, the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies, and the Seattle Social Development program are cost-effective evidence-based program models that provide training for parents, teachers, and children to prevent, reduce, and treat aggressive behavior in elementary school.

¹¹ *Nurse-Family Partnership: Blueprints for Violence Prevention, Book Seven*, Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado, 1998.

- The department should develop standardized performance measures that are more closely linked to the specific prevention services provided by prevention service providers. These measures should relate to the specific risk factors that are targeted by the services provided.

To ensure that funding practices support the development of sustained, effective delinquency prevention programs, we recommend the actions describe below.

- The department should work with the Legislature, the State Advisory Board, and the local boards and councils to develop a unified vision of how prevention services should work together as a statewide program. Ideally, funding should be targeted to prevention programs that are evidence-based, serve youth with related delinquency risk factors, and maintain positive performance over time.
- The Legislature should consider amending s. 985.676(2)(a), *Florida Statutes*, to allow for continued funding of demonstrably successful prevention programs beyond three years.
- The department should calculate referral rates each six months rather than annually which would allow for the results to be considered in funding decisions.

To better leverage available prevention funding,

- we recommend that the department work with other state agencies such as the Department of Education and the Department of Children and Families to leverage its prevention funding by incorporating evidence-based prevention components into other programs targeted to at-risk youth; and
- we further recommend that the Legislature consider establishing an interagency group to develop plans for implementing effective delinquency prevention models for early childhood, or charge an existing entity such as the Children's Cabinet, the Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council, and the Substance Abuse Prevention Advisory Council, to serve this function.

Agency Response

In accordance with the provisions of s. 11.51(5), *Florida Statutes*, a draft of our report was submitted to the Secretary of the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice to review and respond. The Secretary's written response has been reproduced in Appendix B.

Appendix A

Prevention Programs

The department offers the prevention services described below.

Florida Network of Youth and Family Services. Twenty-seven member agencies provide both residential shelter services and non-residential delinquency prevention services. Their services include centralized intake, screening, referral to other agencies, assessment, case management, and counseling. Shelters are designed to help youth and families in crisis, with the goal of family reunification whenever possible and practical. The network serves CINS/FINS runaway, truant, and ungovernable youth as described in Ch. 984, *Florida Statutes*.

Practical Academic Cultural Education (PACE) Center for Girls. Eighteen alternative schools across the state provide academic education, individualized attention, gender-specific life management curriculum, therapeutic support services, parental involvement, student volunteer service projects, and transition follow-up services after departure or graduation. PACE serves girls age 12 to 18 who are dependent, delinquent, truant, runaway, ungovernable and academically challenged. Students are referred to the program by the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Children and Families, schools, community service agencies, parents, family members, friends, and self-referrals.

Outward Bound Discovery. This program, located in judicial circuits 16 and 18, provides a 28-day wilderness expedition designed to help youth develop personal competencies in group decisions, problem solving, anger management, communication skills, leadership and service to others. Boys and girls age 13 to 20 years are referred to the program by the court, schools and social service agencies.

Federal Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Title II and Title V Grants. Forty-five grants fund a variety of programs that serve youth in high crime zip codes. Title II Programs address minority over-representation, gender-specificity, and out-of-school suspensions. Title V grants are awarded directly to local units of government to facilitate coordinated community delinquency planning and do not necessarily directly serve children. These funds are awarded by the State Advisory Group and administered by the department.

Juvenile Accountability Block Grants. These 43 grants are awarded to the state by the State Relations and Assistance Divisions of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. They can be used for school safety, restorative justice, diversion, or accountability-based programs for juveniles.

Community Partnership Grants. The Florida Legislature funded these grants to develop partnerships among law enforcement, public schools, DJJ and DCF to address at-risk youth ages 10 to 17. From every license plate sold in the state, \$0.30 is placed in a trust fund to fund this program. These funds are currently combined with Invest in Children funds and support 90 grants throughout the state.

Invest in Children Grants. These grants are funded with the proceeds from the "Invest in Children" license plate, which costs an extra \$20. These funds (after deducting the cost of the plates themselves and a 7% fee that is placed in state general revenue) are returned to the county in which it was collected to fund local prevention programs. These funds are currently combined with Community Partnership funds and support 90 grants throughout the state.

Contracted Special Member Project Programs. Legislative initiatives in Bradford, Pasco and Miami-Dade counties designed to reduce and prevent juvenile crime. Programs offer a variety of activities including academic assistance, recreation, employment readiness, job placement, counseling, cognitive and social skills enhancement, and computer training.

Appendix B



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

Charlie Crist, Governor

Walter A. McNeil, Secretary

February 7, 2008

Dr. Gary VanLandingham, Director
Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability
Claude Pepper Building, Room 312
111 West Madison Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1475

Dear Dr. VanLandingham

The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice has reviewed the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability's draft report, *DJJ Should Better Identify At-Risk Youth, Use Proven Prevention Models and Revise Funding Practices*. Our mission is to increase public safety by reducing juvenile delinquency through effective prevention, intervention and treatment services that strengthen families and turn around the lives of troubled youth. Delinquency prevention programming is an important aspect of our vision to ensure the children and families of Florida will live in safe, nurturing communities that provide for their needs, recognize their strengths and support their success.

Pursuant to section 11.51(5), Florida Statutes, the department is providing a written response and explanation concerning each of the recommendations from the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability. The areas addressed in this response include the methodology used to identify at-risk youth by zip code, risk factors, the use of evidence-based program models for prevention, the system of funding prevention programs, and the development of interagency collaboration. I have attached the department's responses to the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability's recommendations.

The department will actively pursue the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability's recommendations to improve its prevention efforts and increase public safety by reducing juvenile delinquency through effective prevention, intervention and treatment services that strengthen families and turn around the lives of troubled youth. The Office of Prevention and Victim Services work group will begin its efforts within the next few weeks. We will keep you updated as to the progress the department is making in implementing your recommendations. Should you have any questions or need further information, please contact Cassandra D. Jenkins, Assistant Secretary for the Office of Prevention and Victim Services, at (850) 488-3302.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Walter A. McNeil", is written over a horizontal line.

Walter A. McNeil
Secretary

Attachment

cc: Cassandra D. Jenkins, Assistant Secretary, Office of Prevention and Victim Services
Bonnie Rogers, Director of Interagency Operations

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The mission of the Department of Juvenile Justice is to increase public safety by reducing juvenile delinquency through effective prevention, intervention and treatment services that strengthen families and turn around the lives of troubled youth.

Florida Department of Juvenile Justice

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"The department should modify its assessment of areas with high concentration of delinquency referrals and fund prevention programs in the zip code areas with the highest overall juvenile crime rates. The department could also balance the need for prevention on high-risk areas with the need for prevention in counties with lower referral rates by allocating a significant portion of prevention sources (e.g., 75%) to the highest crime areas of the state and awarding the remaining portion of funds competitively to the other counties in the state."

Response:

The department is committed to reaching the children in Florida most likely to enter the juvenile justice system by providing the right services at the right time and in the least restrictive environment. The Office of Prevention and Victim Services is currently establishing a work-group to coordinate the development of plans to address issues raised by this review. One of the major areas to be addressed, will be the development of a more efficient means to target the most at-risk youth with effective prevention programs. Consideration will be given to the percentage of delinquent youth in a zip code area, as well as the rate of school referrals, truancy, runaways and status offenses. In addition, it will be important to focus on issues related to serving girls. The work-group will also address the efficient use of resources to reach as many high risk children and families as possible, keeping in mind that juvenile justice funded prevention programs may be the only existing programs in some rural counties. This work-group will consist of representatives from the Office of Prevention and Victim Services, Office of Research and Planning, the Programming and Technical Assistance Unit, delinquency prevention providers, Juvenile Justice Circuit Board and County Council Chairs, other state agencies and community partners.

"We recommend that the department adopt the Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT) instrument to identify children for prevention services, and that it incorporate age into its risk factor assessment."

Response:

The State Advisory Group (SAG) has approved a request from the Programming and Technical Assistance Unit for \$79,000 in Juvenile Accountability Block Grant funding to develop evidence-based program coordination and fidelity monitoring of prevention and early intervention programs. This funding request is currently in the approval process at the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention.

The funding will provide for the establishment of a Prevention PACT Planning Committee and efforts to design an evidence-based risk and needs assessment instrument that is validated to detect the future likelihood of juvenile delinquency within populations of youth with no criminal

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history. The effort will build upon the intake PACT used in Probation and the Residential PACT under development for use in residential commitment programs. A Prevention PACT design and implementation team will consider the benefits of integrating an instrument into the Juvenile Justice Information System's Prevention Web to gain the greatest number of efficiencies for staff and community-based programs in developing grant proposals and individual service plans.

"We recommend that the department require prevention providers to serve youth with risk factors in multiple domains, and specify the minimum percentage of high-risk youth that each program must serve."

Response:

The department concurs with the report's conclusion that youth at the highest risk for delinquency are those with multiple dynamic risk factors and supports the recommendation of placing a priority on serving youth with multiple risk factors. Currently, approximately 86% of the youth served by the Florida Network of Youth Services (CINS/FINS), PACE Centers for Girls and Outward Bound Discovery have risk factors in (3) or more of the (4) domains. However, current grant funded delinquency prevention programs may not reach this threshold. Through the work-group, the department will ensure that the prevention procurement and contract documents require prevention providers to serve youth with risk factors in multiple domains, and specify the minimum percentage of high-risk youth that each program must serve.

"The legislature should revise s. 985.605(2)(a), *Florida Statutes*, to require the department to limit prevention funding to program models that are evidence-based. The department should develop a list of approved evidence-based prevention program models, such as the Blueprints for Violence Prevention identified by the Center for the Study and Prevention of violence at the University of Colorado and the office of Juvenile Justice and delinquency Prevention, and only fund grant proposals that implement these programs."

"The department should require the providers to select the evidence-based delinquency risk factors they plan to address, and serve youth with those risk factors."

"The department should develop standardized performance measures that are more closely linked to the specific prevention services provided by prevention service providers. These measures should relate to the specific risk factors that are targeted by the services provided."

Response:

The Office of Prevention and Victim Services' newly developed Comprehensive Strategy focuses on providing contemporary, evidence-based services with measurable outcomes that

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demonstrate repeated effectiveness in reducing juvenile delinquency. The 2007-2008 Delinquency Prevention Grant requires providers to utilize prevention "model" programs or evidence-based prevention strategies in their service to youth and a monitoring tool has been developed to provide a greater measurement of program performance. In addition, the Office of Prevention and Victim Services work-group will focus on the inclusion of evidence-based prevention models and strategies, implementation of these models, resources to evaluate existing programs, and training of staff and providers.

"The department should work with the Legislature, the State Advisory Board, and the local boards and councils to develop a unified vision of how prevention services should work together as a statewide program. Ideally, funding should be targeted to prevention programs that are evidence-based, serve youth with related delinquency risk factors, and maintain positive performance over time."

Response:

The Office of Prevention and Victim Services' Comprehensive Strategy gives great emphasis to collaboration with the Juvenile Justice Boards and County Councils, the State Advisory Group, faith-based organizations and community partners. The collaborative effort recommended in this report is extremely important to an effective prevention and early intervention strategy. The Office of Prevention and Victim Services work-group will develop a detailed strategy to update current local juvenile delinquency prevention plans and create a coordinated collaborative prevention effort.

"The legislature should consider amending s. 985.676(2)(a), *Florida statutes*, to allow for continued funding of demonstrably successful prevention programs beyond three years."

Response:

The three-year funding cycle for delinquency prevention grants was designed to provide "seed money" to faith and community-based organizations for delinquency prevention programs and services. Grant recipients are required to provide a plan that outlines their efforts to secure funding that will ensure the prevention program continues beyond the initial three-years of grant funding. The Office of Prevention and Victim Services work-group will address the issue of supporting community-based grant recipients beyond the three-year grant cycle. The work-group will focus on technical assistance to support recipients with developing sustained funding, creating community partnerships, enhancing community support through media and networking, and collaborating with the local Juvenile Justice Boards and County Councils to connect with additional community resources.

The recommendation by the Juvenile Justice Blueprint Commission, "to amend the statute, which establishes the Juvenile Justice Circuit Boards and Juvenile Justice County Councils, to provide for local discretionary funds to meet the specific needs within their local communities",

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would serve as an additional resources to ensure the continuation of successful prevention programs.

"The department should calculate referral rates each six months rather than annually which would allow for the results to be considered in funding decisions."

Response:

The Office of Prevention and Victim Services work-group will conduct a thorough review of the current delinquency prevention grant monitoring process and seek ways to enhance monitoring and evaluation services in order to identify programs that are research-based and effective, and to create methods to replicate these programs in other areas within the state when needs are identified. The work-group will focus on: monitoring tools, frequency of monitoring visits, intermediate outcomes (e.g., increased school attendance and grade point average), evidence-based outcomes, delinquency risk factors, and youth served. Additionally, as a part of this evaluation process, the department will calculate referral rates each six months. This effort will promote the development of effective, efficient, research-based programs that support the achievement of goals and objectives in community prevention plans.

"We recommend that the department work with other agencies such as the Department of Education and the Department of Children and Families to leverage its prevention funding by incorporating evidence-based prevention components into other programs targeted at-risk youth; and further recommend that the Legislature consider establishing an interagency group to develop plans for implementing effective delinquency prevention models for early childhood, or charge an existing entity such as the Children's Cabinet, the Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council, and the Substance Abuse Prevention Advisory Council, to serve this function."

Response:

The department concurs with the recommendation to collaborate with the Department of Education, Children and Families as well as other statewide entities to leverage financial resources and professional and volunteer resources in their efforts to work together toward identified prevention-based goals. The recent report of the Juvenile Justice Blueprint Commission recommends that the "Children and Youth Cabinet should direct the development and implementation of a statewide multi-agency plan to coordinate the efforts of local, state and federally funded programs, appropriations or activities designed to prevent juvenile delinquency, status offense behaviors, and other related behavioral problems."

The Florida Legislature

Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability



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