

## CAROLINA JUSTICE POLICY CENTER

### JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL FUNDING - JCPCs

The legislature held its "continuation review" of the JCPCs (Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils) on March 27, 2008. The Committee Chairs are Sen. Ed Jones, Sen. Ellie Kinnaird, Rep. Alice Bordsen and Rep. Jimmy Love.

Speakers included fiscal staffer, John Poteat; Secretary George Sweat - Department of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention; Teresa Price - President, NC Juvenile Services Association; John Lauterbach - President, Community Alternatives for Youth.

Issues for Consideration Include:

1) What is the appropriate mix of at-risk and court-involved youth? The fiscal staff reported that 37% are at risk; 17% have been diverted and 41% have been to court. Sec. Sweat made a strong case for continuing to allow counties to make local decisions about how funds should be divided. The statute says that priority should be given to adjudicated juveniles, but also says the needs of at-risk juveniles should be considered.

Major referral sources into the programs are: Juvenile Court - 56.5%, School - 15.2%, Parent/guardian - 6.6%; School Resource Officer - 5.4%; Law Enforcement - 5.2%.

Each county is charged with making sure that "appropriate intermediate dispositional options are available" but it is impossible for counties to meet all the needs on the amount of funds that are appropriated.

2) Review and revise funding formula

Surveyed counties all agreed that the funding formula needs to be revised and Sec. Sweat's department is in the process of a revision. He said that part of the problem is designing a formula that insures that small counties get the level of funding they need.

3) Enhance accountability and evaluation

The statute clearly states that the Department shall fund "effective" programs. In 2003, the Department contracted with Vanderbilt researcher, Mark Lipsey, to develop the Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP). This appears to be an excellent model for evaluating specific programs to determine if they have the same characteristics contained in 500 programs that have been the most effective in reducing recidivism. NC programs began using this instrument to help evaluate their services in 2005-2006 and to date, scores are only available for half of the programs.

The evaluators determined that while there are some positive results, many of the programs tend to serve juveniles who already have a low risk of recidivating and "improvement ....will be needed for these

program to produce the large reduction in recidivism demonstrated by the best programs that appear in the research base."

The Department of Juvenile Justice presented its full continuation review document which can be reviewed at the following link:

[http://www.ncdjdp.org/news/2008/february/jcpc\\_cr.html](http://www.ncdjdp.org/news/2008/february/jcpc_cr.html)

Chief Sweat emphasized the need for the programs and said they work to fill the service gap for the decrease in commitments since. Commitments to the YDC's have gone from 1,360 in 1998 to 437 in 2007 due to changes in the sentencing laws. The average daily population of the YDCs has decreased from 925 to 473. Without funding for effective local services, court-involved and at-risk juveniles would be left with virtually no options in many communities.

"It's cheaper on the front end than on the back," said Sec. Sweat "and many can be changed if you get to them early enough.... People need to hear from you that what they do matters, is important and makes a difference. I thank them for what they do - some of them work miracles."

Sen. Clodfelter wondered if all the counties are meeting the demand for court involved kids and whether there was any program where the demand exceed the funding allocated for the purposes.

Rep. Goodwin responded that in her county we "don't even have enough money for the court-involved" youth. Many are suspended and not court-involved and have nowhere to go.

Sen. Kinnaird emphasized the effectiveness of the "system of care" model that has been utilized in Durham County. System of care would be an excellent model for other counties and Durham is preparing to use it for the adult population.

Sen. Clodfelter also wondered whether laws needed to be changed to allow more "blended funding" to enable counties to make use of multiple funding sources. Local program director Teresa Price assured legislators that counties are looking everywhere possible to find additional funding sources and to collaborate. The existing funds are not nearly enough to meet local needs.

If just 1% of her county's youth stayed in the community, Price concluded that the county would save the state \$992,250. YDCs cost 300 times more than the local services, according to Price.

Rep. Carolyn Justus stated that a speedy decision needs to be made about the funding of the programs. She said it's "unfair" to leave them hanging as the budget process moves along without knowing whether they will be funded. We agree, the JCPCs provide a critical service to the counties and there funding must be secured as quickly as possible so they can proceed with the local grant process.