



Summary of Recommendations to the Blueprint Commission

September 4, 2007

Florida's Children First recommends that:

Interagency Coordination:

Improved communication and collaboration with, among and between all of the agencies providing prevention and treatment services for children become a core premise of the "Blueprint."

Education:

- All children receive an education while in DJJ custody, and those children with disabilities receive special education services
- No child leave a JJ facility without an education transition plan to include enrollment in the local school and transfer of credit for work undertaken while in the facility.

Children's Health Services:

- Families are provided with the information to obtain health insurance for youth within the families' financial means.
- Health care records from time in custody must be provided to the family or the caseworker when the child leaves JJ custody.

Mental / Behavioral Health/Developmental Disabilities:

- DJJ implement measures to ensure that mental health and substance abuse information obtained in the JAC assessment conveyed to the Detention Center with the youth.
- Comprehensive assessments should be incorporated into a treatment plan for each youth, if the parent and child have given informed consent, or with the child's attorney's consent, or judicial order after a hearing where the child is represented by counsel.
- DJJ develop a standard informed consent form and protocols that meet recognized standards.

Psychotropic Medications:

- All youth should be properly evaluated prior to the administration of psychotropic medications and carefully monitored for side effects or contra-indications while receiving those medications.
- All youth who are being involuntarily treated with psychotropic medications should be appointed competent counsel to represent them.

Florida's Children First recommends that:

Access to Treatment in Detention Centers:

- DJJ work with community providers to provide youth with access to the mental health and substance abuse services they received in the community.
- DJJ initiate provision of mental health and substance abuse services to youth in detention centers.

Youth Incompetent to Proceed:

- DJJ work with community providers to create community based competency restoration programs.
- DJJ investigate best practices in other states to create appropriate systems for dealing with developmentally disabled youth in the criminal justice system.

Court Proceedings:

- Courts immediately order that DJJ stop the indiscriminate shackling of youth.
- Courts refuse to allow youth to plead guilty or no contest until they have had a meaningful opportunity to confer with an attorney.
- Courts, State Attorneys and Public Defenders cease using Juvenile court as training grounds and work together to enhance the quality of practice in juvenile court.
- Public Defenders train their staff on mental health and substance abuse issues for children and implement procedures to enhance the quality of advocacy at the dispositional phase.
- Bar associations provide educational programs with CLEs for attorneys on mental health and substance abuse issues for children and implement procedures to enhance the quality of advocacy at the dispositional phase.

Probation and Conditional Release (After-Care):

- The courts routinely require that the JPOs identify treatment providers and ensure that necessary and appropriate services are in place.
- DJJ and DCF work with communities to enhance availability of mental health and substance abuse services for youth released from DJJ custody.
- DJJ, DCF and CBC's work with communities to enhance availability of foster and group homes for youth released from DJJ custody.

Special Concerns:

- A careful, objective study of the practice of extending sentences be conducted and recommendations from the study be implemented.
- The state work to reduce disproportionate minority contact and the overrepresentation of minority youth in the juvenile justice system.

Transition to Adulthood:

The DJJ should revamp its programs to include evidence based practices that further goals related to successful transitions.

Florida's Children First recommends that:

Pre-Dispositional Behavioral Assessments:

- Behavior assessments conducted on children prior to disposition be provided to defense counsel for review and the opportunity to obtain revision/corrections prior to submission to the court.
- Public defenders increase their use of independent experts to examine youth and make dispositional recommendations.

Information Sharing:

- This Commission join with the Governor's Commission on Open Government and update Florida laws regarding confidentiality practices, privacy protections and information sharing relevant to:
 - Juvenile Court and Juvenile Probation records.
 - Child welfare and child protection records.
 - Education records.
 - Medical and behavioral health records.
 - Specialized services (e.g., pre-trial release, detention).
- FCF joins DOJ in recommending key decision-makers or stakeholders from the a number groups be involved in developing a new and better approach to information sharing.

Informed Consent/Common Release:

State agencies agree upon and implement a common process for obtaining informed consent for information release/sharing to begin the process.