

UTAH JUVENILE JUSTICE WORKING GROUP

June 16, 2016 Meeting Summary

On June 16, 2016, the Utah Juvenile Justice Working Group convened its inaugural meeting. Led by Working Group Chair Ron Gordon, executive director of the Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (CCJJ), the Working Group reviewed its charge and goals as established by state leadership and discussed the process and timeline. The Working Group then examined national juvenile justice trends and research before engaging in a discussion about strengths, areas needing improvement, and areas needing investigation within the Utah juvenile justice system.

Working Group Charge, Goals, and Process

Opening Remarks and Introduction

Chair Gordon called the meeting to order and welcomed the members, asking each to introduce him or herself. The members of the Working Group are:

- Senator Stuart Adams, 22nd District
- Steve Anjewierden, Chief of Police Services, Unified Police of Greater Salt Lake
- Charri Brummer, Deputy Director, Department of Human Services, Division of Child and Family Services
- Susan Burke, Director, DHS Division of Juvenile Justice Services
- Darin Carver, Clinical Practice Administrator, Weber Human Services
- Judge Ryan Evershed, 8th Judicial District.
- Maria Garcia, Executive Director, NeighborWorks Salt Lake
- Ron Gordon, Executive Director, CCJJ
- Carolyn Hansen, Associate Director, Salt Lake County Youth Services
- Judge Michelle Heward, 2nd Judicial District
- Representative Eric Hutchings, 38th District
- Steve Kaelin, Alternative and Adult Education Services Specialist, State Office of Education
- Judge James Michie, 3rd Judicial District
- Troy Rawlings, County Attorney, Davis County
- Dawn Marie Rubio, Juvenile Court Administrator, Administrative Office of the Courts
- Representative Lowry Snow, 74th District
- Doug Thomas, Director, DHS Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health
- Pam Vickery, Executive Director, Utah Juvenile Defender Attorneys
- Senator Todd Weiler, 23rd District

Review of Working Group Charge and Goals
Chair Gordon reviewed the charge of the Working Group established by state leaders from all three branches of government, including Governor Gary Herbert, Chief Justice Matthew Durrant, Senate President Wayne Niederhauser, House Speaker Gregory Hughes, DHS Executive Director Ann Williamson, and CCJJ Executive Director Gordon.

The charge of the Working Group is to develop comprehensive policy recommendations to improve the juvenile justice system. These recommendations will be used as the foundation for statutory, budgetary, and administrative changes during the 2017 legislative session. The goals of the Working Group are to:

- Promote public safety and hold juvenile offenders accountable;
- Control costs, and
- Improve recidivism and other outcomes for youth, families, and communities.

JJS Director Burke and Juvenile Court Administrator Rubio each spoke to the respective interests of JJS and the judiciary in bringing together the Working Group to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the juvenile justice system with the goal of improving outcomes.

Review of Working Group Process and Timeline
Chair Gordon reviewed the process and timeline, beginning with a state data analysis and system assessment review in July and August. In September, the Working Group will assess juvenile justice research and break into subgroups in order to begin policy development. The Working Group will deliver a final report to the legislature, the Governor, and the Chief Justice containing a comprehensive, statewide set of policy reforms by December. Throughout this process, the Working Group will collect input from stakeholders by holding individual and group meetings with a wide range of groups, including but not limited to judges, crime victims, defense representatives, district and county attorneys, youth, families, education representatives, and others requested by the Working Group.

Overview of National Juvenile Justice Trends

Chair Gordon introduced members of the team from the Pew Charitable Trusts' public safety performance team, who will be providing technical assistance to the Working Group.

The Pew team presented federal data showing that the national juvenile commitment rate declined precipitously between 1997 and 2013, mirroring an equal decline in the juvenile violent crime index. However, there is wide variation in commitment rates among states. Federal data shows Utah's rate falls approximately in the middle relative to other states.

State Systems Out of Step with Research

The Pew team presented data showing that prior to enacting comprehensive juvenile justice reform, six states—including Georgia, Hawaii, Kentucky, South Dakota, West Virginia, and Kansas—found they were experiencing poor or unknown outcomes from out-of-home placements for youth despite investing as much as \$199,000 per youth per year in such placements.

The Working Group learned that in response to these poor returns, states turned to a strong and growing body of research about what works to reduce reoffending and improve outcomes, including research showing out-of-home placements generally fail to produce better outcomes than alternative sanctions and can be counterproductive. Additionally, longer stays out-of-home do not yield consistent reductions in youth reoffending.

As states such as Georgia, West Virginia, and South Dakota examined their own state data, they found their systems were out-of-step with research. In Georgia and South Dakota, low-level offenders made up a large proportion of the juvenile justice population, and in West Virginia, lengths of stay in out-of-home placement were increasing for certain youth.

State-Specific Policy Solutions

The Working Group learned that each of the six states developed tailored, research-based policy solutions guided by three reinforcing principles. States enacted reforms that protected public safety by strengthening the continuum of services and sanctions in the community, containing costs by limiting out-of-home populations, and sustaining reform by

reinvesting savings in evidence-based programs and providing continued oversight. Packages enacted in each of the six states featured large projected reductions in the out-of-home populations that will result in avoided costs available for reinvestment in services in the community. Most of the states included upfront reinvestment in order to jumpstart reform.

Strong and Widespread Support

The Working Group members learned that reform efforts in each of the six states were supported by champions from a wide coalition of stakeholders, from Kansas Sen. Greg Smith—a longtime victims advocate and former law enforcement officer—to Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. Reform legislation also received strong support in public polling, editorials in local media, and ultimately the legislatures themselves. Each state passed legislation based upon their respective working groups' recommendations through unanimous or near-unanimous votes.

Improved Outcomes

The Working Group members reviewed data showing strong initial outcomes from legislation in Georgia and Kentucky. In Georgia, counties participating in a \$5.6 million fiscal incentive program to develop evidence-based alternatives experienced a 62 percent decline in felony commitments while juvenile arrests continued to decline. Through continued reinvestment, evidence-based programs for youth residing at home are now available in every judicial district in the state. In Kentucky, diversions increased statewide as a result of their reforms, including an increase as high as 45 percent in certain counties.

Working Group Discussion

The Working Group discussed what members perceived as strengths of the Utah juvenile justice system, areas in need of improvement, and issues about which they had questions and would like further investigation.

Next Steps

The next Working Group meeting will take place on July 14 at 8:30 a.m. in the Aspen Room of the Senate Building. Chair Gordon reminded members that they may reach out to request or recommend any additional information for review and to coordinate logistics for stakeholder roundtable meetings.