

**ModelsforChange**

Systems Reform in Juvenile Justice

**Louisiana Models for Change:**

**Fostering a  
Movement Towards Evidence-Based  
Screening, Assessment, and Treatment**

*National Center for Mental Health  
And Juvenile Justice*

*Louisiana State University  
Health Sciences Center*

## **Background**

In 2006, Louisiana was selected as the third state for the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change initiative. Models for Change is a juvenile justice reform initiative that seeks to create successful and replicable models of juvenile justice reform through targeted investments in selected states. To attain this goal, the Models for Change states work with a variety of organizations, from the local to national level, to carry out a plan for developing models of reform around selected Targeted Areas of Improvement (TAI).

One of the TAIs selected as a focus for Louisiana's Models for Change work is "Evidence-Based Community Services." Louisiana had a long history of relying heavily on residential and institutional care for youth involved with the juvenile justice system. During the 1990s, Louisiana had the highest rate of incarceration per capita with 582 per 100,000 youth in a juvenile correctional facility (Trupin, 2006). However, in recent years the state has made major changes in the way it handles youth coming in contact with the justice system, significantly reducing the number of youth placed in residential facilities. In fact, over the past decade, the number of youth in the state's juvenile correctional facilities has decreased from over 2,000 youth to below 500 youth. While this reduction has been a welcome shift in Louisiana, the diversion of these youth into the community has highlighted the shortage of community-based services. In response, Louisiana selected Evidence-Based Community Services as one of its Targeted Areas of Improvement.

Louisiana recognized this new demand for community-based services as an opportunity to invest in more effective services in the community that reflect the current knowledge about what works for juvenile justice involved youth and their families, particularly those with mental health problems. Over the past decade, the juvenile justice field has witnessed a major shift, from a belief that nothing works for juvenile justice youth to broad recognition of programs and practices that have demonstrated positive outcomes for these youth (Skowrya & Coccozza, 2007). Louisiana saw implementation of these "evidence-based practices" — treatments and practices that have been shown through research to result in positive outcomes for youth — as a way to fill in the gaps in existing community-based services, and make a real and meaningful positive impact in the lives of youth and their families who come in contact with the juvenile justice system.

## **Louisiana's Reform Approach**

Successfully implementing a long-term, system wide movement towards evidence-based practices, while perhaps one of the most important reforms that a state or local jurisdiction can take on, is also one of the most challenging. Jurisdictions that take on this charge must address a number of complicated and interwoven challenges, including:

- the need for broad support and knowledge among a range of stakeholders at the state and local levels;

- the ability to provide for ongoing, continuous stakeholder education and awareness, in order to deal with changing leadership and agency personnel;
- lack of knowledge among stakeholders about the various evidence-based practices, and the potential “fit” of these practices with the local community’s needs and resources;
- capacity to implement evidence-based practices within the local provider community;
- provider resistance to shifting from treatment-as-usual to an evidence-based practice, and to participate in fidelity and outcome monitoring processes;
- funding streams that may not be structured to encourage or support evidence-based practices;
- the need for policy development that ensures the preferred utilization of evidence based practices

Recognizing that successfully shifting towards a system built around evidence-based practices requires a comprehensive approach that addresses all of these various challenges, Louisiana adopted a multi-faceted approach to its’ reform efforts that was organized around three primary tracks of activity:

- *Stakeholder Education and Awareness.* To help build a culture supportive of evidence-based practices, Louisiana has placed a major emphasis on raising awareness about evidence-based practices and building a network of informed and educated stakeholders and decision-makers.
- *Research-driven Reforms.* A major emphasis of the evidence-based practice work in Louisiana is data-driven planning. Local needs assessments and data collection represent the starting point for all reform efforts in Louisiana.
- *Strategic Implementation.* The research and education components of the work in Louisiana provide the foundation for careful, strategic implementation of evidence-based practices that are appropriate for local jurisdictions’ target populations, resources, and needs. This strategic implementation encompasses both policy and practice development.

This report highlights the work and major accomplishments in Louisiana around each of these tracks of activity, and identifies key lessons learned in Louisiana that may be instructive for other jurisdictions interested in starting an evidence-based practice reform movement.

## **Track 1: Stakeholder Education and Awareness**

Building long-term momentum for the implementation and expansion of evidence-based practices requires the buy in and support of policy makers, agency administrators, providers, youth and their families, and the community at large. Often times, the stakeholders so critical to such a movement have little, if any, knowledge about what is meant by the term “evidence-based practice,” why the use of EBPs is so important, and

what some of the critical considerations are in selecting and implementing EBPs. This knowledge gap, if left unaddressed, can frustrate the efforts of any reform effort. Conversely, the collective effort of a group of stakeholders who understand the benefits of EBPs, as well as the challenges of implementation, can eliminate many of the traditional barriers to EBPs and help pave the way towards reform.

As a result, Louisiana focused much of its early reform efforts, on educating stakeholders at the state and local level about evidence-based practices and standardized, scientifically-sound screening and assessment instruments. As part of this effort, the Louisiana Models for Change project has convened several large educational workshops and conferences, including:

- In April, 2007, the Louisiana Models for Change initiative sponsored a one-day *Evidence-Based Practice Summit for Louisiana Leadership* in Baton Rouge, LA. The conference convened national and state experts, representatives from Louisiana Models for Change, and the National Resource Bank,<sup>1</sup> to help Louisiana leadership, policymakers, and funders discuss the benefits of supporting and sustaining scientifically proven ways of addressing the needs of youth in contact with the juvenile justice system and reducing recidivism. The summit featured plenary sessions by leading experts such as Del Elliott, Ph.D., Director of The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, Institute of Behavioral Science at the University of Colorado and Robert Barnoski, Ph.D. of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, along with breakout sessions from leading national and local experts on a range of topics related to evidence-based practices. The conference equipped Louisiana's key stakeholders with knowledge critical to implementing and sustaining a long-term reform effort.
- On June 5, 2007, Louisiana Models for Change convened a one day *Screening and Assessment Workshop* for the Office of Youth Development (now the Office of Juvenile Justice) representatives from the local sites participating in Models for Change, and the Louisiana Supreme Court. Presentations and discussions led by national experts and the National Resource Bank highlighted the importance of relying on scientifically sound screening and assessment instruments, explained the difference between the two practices, and provided an overview of various instruments available for evaluating mental health, substance abuse, young offender needs, and delinquency risk.
- The Supreme Court Drug Court Office, in collaboration with Louisiana Models for Change, convened a *Juvenile Drug Court Summit* on November 11, 2007. The summit brought together key officials from the Supreme Court, representatives from the state's 18 juvenile drug courts, and members of the Louisiana Models for Change initiative and National Resource Bank. The summit was used as an opportunity to review the results of the juvenile drug court survey,

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<sup>1</sup> The National Resource Bank is the association of national organizations that provide technical assistance to the Models for Change states.

provide educational information about evidence-based practices, and discuss priorities and needs with the juvenile drug courts.

- In 2010, the Louisiana's Models for Change initiative co-sponsored the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Louisiana Governor's Conference on Juvenile Justice. The Conference was used as an opportunity to highlight the innovations and reforms emerging out of the state's Models for Change work and to disseminate information about evidence-based practices across the state (Louisiana Models for Change, 2010). Models for Change presentations at the Conference focused on a range of topics, including data-driven decision making, adolescent development, screening and assessment, substance abuse treatment, crisis intervention teams, motivational interviewing, family engagement, and leveraging resources.

In addition to these larger conferences and workshops, Louisiana Models for Change has developed an implemented a comprehensive strategy to continually educate stakeholders and the public, at both the state and local level, about evidence-based practices. This strategy has included:

- *Providing ongoing technical assistance to local jurisdictions and professional organizations (e.g. District Attorneys, Public Defenders, Judges, etc.) to educate stakeholders about evidence-based practices.* Models for Change makes available to participating states a cadre of national experts on a range of topics related to juvenile justice reform through its National Resource Bank. The National Resource Bank provides in-depth technical assistance to stakeholders and planning committees at the local and state levels working on evidence-based practice reform. In addition, through a grant to the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center (LSUHSC), Models for Change engaged a state-level university partner to provide assistance to local and state grantees in identifying, preparing for, and developing their capacity to implement and sustain evidence-based screening, assessment, and treatment. Finally, where necessary, expert consultants have been engaged to provide targeted technical assistance to state and local grantees around evidence-based practices. For example, the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice (NCMHJJ) partnered with LSUHSC to engage Blueprints for Violence Prevention, a leading organization on evidence-based practices, to provide Jefferson Parish with in-depth technical assistance around evidence-based practices appropriate for the school setting.
- *Ensuring ongoing engagement and buy-in of local and state level policy makers and key stakeholders.* The roll out of the Louisiana grant became an unintended lesson in sustaining reform efforts in the midst of sweeping leadership changes. These changes included a new Louisiana executive branch, a new administration's cabinet, and the replacement of nearly half of its legislative branch. In response, much of the work during the first few years was centered on establishing relationships with the new administration as well as supporting the continued efforts of the local sites in the midst of the transition. For example, much focus was placed on working with the new administration of the Office of

Juvenile Justice to establish their commitment to the support of the implementation of objective probation screening instruments and Functional Family Therapy as committed to by the previous administration.

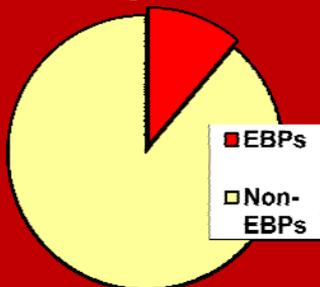
In addition, the Louisiana Models for Change project made a concerted effort to establish linkages with local media outlets to build support among the community and policy makers. Whenever new projects were unveiled, local media outlets were notified and/or invited to critical events. In addition, Models for Change partners have made efforts to circulate critical juvenile justice-related news articles and information and worked with advocacy groups to share the accomplishments of Models for Change.

## Track 2: Research-driven Reforms

A fundamental tenet of the Louisiana Models for Change initiative is that all reforms should be data-driven. Such data-driven decision making ensures that the initiative's efforts are targeted at critical gaps in the system, that limited resources are used efficiently, and that improvements can be monitored as the initiative progresses. At both the state and local level, innovative needs assessment and data collection efforts have driven reform in the state.

***The Juvenile Justice System Screening, Assessment and Treatment Services Inventory.*** Several local parishes within Louisiana were awarded grants by the Foundation to undertake efforts to increase reliance on evidence-based practices at the local level. A series of preliminary stakeholder meetings revealed that these parishes had varying levels

*In 2006, only 11% of Louisiana juvenile justice providers surveyed were utilizing an evidence-based practice*



*leaving youth with a 9 out of 10 chance of receiving a non-proven service.*

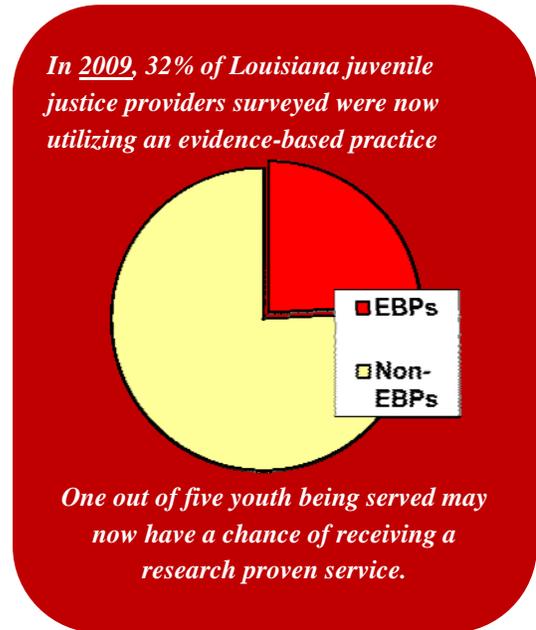
of evidence-based practice availability and stakeholder knowledge. Given this, a critical first step to building evidence-based practices at the local level was ensuring that local planning boards had sufficient knowledge about the current state of affairs within their parishes about the use of scientifically sound screening and assessment instruments, and evidence-based or promising practices.

Therefore, the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice (NCMHJJ) and the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center (LSUHSC) jointly developed a *Juvenile Justice System Screening, Assessment and Treatment Services Inventory* that could be

administered within the participating parishes and used to inform the planning boards about the current state of affairs. The *Inventory*, which has been implemented in seven Louisiana parishes to date, is now a web-based tool housed at LSUHSC, and is available

to all parishes statewide seeking to conduct a needs assessment around the use of EBPs and screening and assessment tools.

In addition to serving as a planning tool for local jurisdictions, the *Inventory* has provided Louisiana with a mechanism to monitor the extent of EBP adoption as the initiative has progressed. In fact, significant changes have already been observed since the initial implementation of the survey in 2006. During the initial 2006 administration, providers from seven parishes described 152 programs and services actively engaging youth and families affiliated with the juvenile justice system. Of those programs and services surveyed in 2006, only 17 (11%) were associated with nationally known evidence-based programs. In 2009, the LSUHSC surveyed 132 Louisiana juvenile justice service providers. In just three years, a shift is occurring, and Louisiana youth and families are the recipients of that change. Of the programs and services surveyed in 2009, 42 (32%) were associated with nationally known evidence-based programs. Most importantly, 2440 (20%) of the 12,252 kids those programs serve may now be receiving an EBP.



***The Louisiana Juvenile Drug Courts Survey.*** Louisiana currently has 19 juvenile drug courts serving youth across the state. While these courts all share the basic elements of a juvenile drug court structure, little was known prior to Models for Change about the screening and assessment instruments being used by the courts, and the services available to youth who participate in these programs. In response, the Louisiana Supreme Court partnered with the NCMHJJ and LSUHSC in 2007 to conduct a survey, and follow up phone interviews, with the state’s juvenile drug courts. The results of this data collection effort were summarized in a *Report to the Louisiana Supreme Court Drug Court Office on the Louisiana Juvenile Drug Court Survey*, which describes the structure of the state’s juvenile drug courts, including the referral process, court process, and funding sources; target population and characteristics of the youth served; and the screening and assessment instruments and treatment services available within the JDC programs (Cocozza, Shufelt, & Phillippi, 2007).

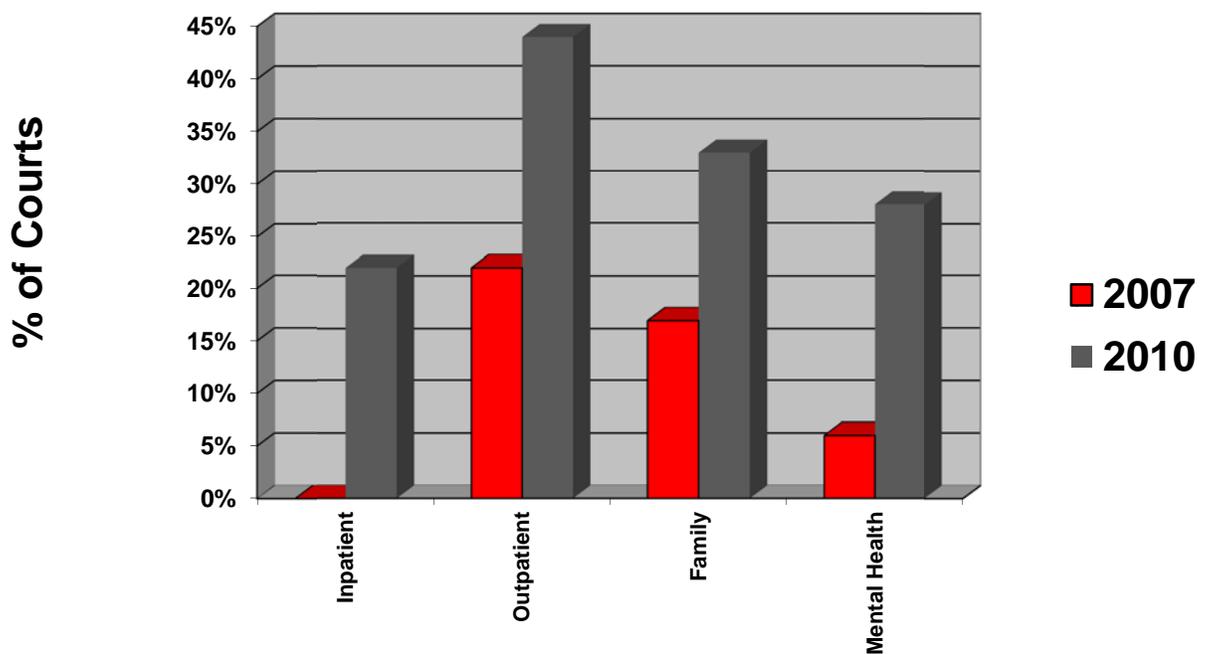
The results of the survey formed the basis of a multi-year effort to increase the reliance on scientifically sound screening and assessment instruments and evidence-based practices within the state’s juvenile drug courts. The gaps and needs identified through the survey became the focus of a series of trainings, the development of *Evidence-Based Practice Recommendations for Juvenile Drug Courts* (Hills, Shufelt, & Cocozza, 2009), and a pilot juvenile drug court project in Monroe, Louisiana. The knowledge gained through the 2007 survey allowed the Louisiana Supreme Court to target its reform efforts

at those issues that were most critical to the juvenile drug courts across the state, making for a more effective and meaningful reform effort.

In 2010, the NCMHJJ, in conjunction with the Louisiana Supreme Court Drug Court Office, conducted a follow-up survey to assess the extent to which the Louisiana Supreme Court's efforts described above have had an impact on the state's juvenile drug courts. The results of the survey suggest that a clear movement towards evidence-based practice screening, assessment and treatment has taken hold within the juvenile drug court. In particular, the survey results revealed:

- An increase in the number of juvenile drug courts that report using research-supported screening and assessment instruments, from 67% in 2007 to 83% in 2010.
- In 2010, more than half of the juvenile drug courts (61%) reported providing at least one service with research support.
- The number of juvenile drug courts that use evidence-based or promising practices has increased over the past three years. **Figure 1** illustrates the proportion of courts using evidence-based interventions in 2007 and 2010.

**Figure 1. Use of Research-supported Services**



**Strengthening Local Data Monitoring Capacity.** Critical to the long term sustainability of evidence-based practices is the ability to monitor fidelity and program outcomes. In light of this, one of the goals of the Louisiana Models for Change project has been to develop local data collection, analysis and reporting capacity. Several Models for Change partners, including the University of New Orleans (UNO), National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ), Vera Institute of Justice, and the National Youth Screening and Assessment Project (NYSAP) have worked with local Models for Change parishes to develop or modify existing databases to allow for timely, ongoing outcome monitoring,

and to educate local stakeholders on how to interpret those data and use data to monitor and/or modify programs and services.

### **Track 3: Strategic Implementation**

The Louisiana Models for Change project's research efforts and educational initiatives have culminated in a significant movement across the state towards the adoption of evidence-based screening, assessment and treatment policies and practices. While this movement is in many ways still in its infancy, it has already resulted in the implementation of a number of concrete changes that will improve the lives of youth and their families within Louisiana, as well as the community and the juvenile justice system. These advancements are described below.

#### ***Joint Position Statement***

LSUHSC, TAC, Inc, and the NCMHJJ worked collaboratively with the Louisiana Lead Entity to bring together the leadership of the state's child serving agencies, including the Office of Juvenile Justice, Department of Education, Office of Mental health, Office of Addictive Disorders, Department of Social Services/Office of Community Services, and the Governor's appointed director of the Louisiana Children's Cabinet. Those efforts have culminated in the development of three specific products. First a joint position statement was issued by the group supporting the development, implementation, and sustaining of EBPs at the community level. Second, a survey of current and projected EBP utilization was completed. Third, regional meetings are planned that include the collaborative presentation of all the child serving agency leadership to illustrate the joint vision for community based EBPs and to solicit input from the field on the strengths and barriers each region perceives in advancing EBPs. This group has also supported and helped disseminate a whitepaper on EBPs, created by LSUHSC with the support of NCMHJJ, TAC, Inc., OJJ, and JJPL, to reach legislators and state leadership as budget and policy considerations are being made for the 2010 legislative session.

#### ***Readiness Survey***

The NCMHJJ and LSUHSC worked with a national consultant to develop a framework for identifying and determining a community's and/or organization's readiness to select and adopt evidence-based practices. The readiness tool, which uses a structured questionnaire to map key readiness and implementation questions, helps to anchor discussions, capture priorities and key concerns of local decision makers, and focus the search for EBPs that might fit local needs. In particular, the guide helps assess and discuss the following areas:

- Target Population
- Funding
- Level of collaboration
- Level of evidence
- Practice Recognition
- Practice Structure
- Family Involvement/Engagement
- Expected Youth Outcomes
- Cultural Diversity
- Workforce Requirements
- Feasibility of Implementation
- Organizational Experience with EBPs
- Organizational Readiness

- Leadership

***Implementation of Functional Family Therapy.*** Ongoing efforts to educate state level policy makers and agency administrators about the importance of evidence-based practices led in 2007 to the dedication of state funding by the Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice to implement the state's first five Functional Family Therapy (FFT) teams. Functional Family Therapy is a family-based prevention and intervention program for youth who have demonstrated the entire range of maladaptive, acting out behaviors and syndromes. Funding committed by OJJ covered all year-one start-up and licensing costs in addition to three-years of funding to sustain the teams. As a result of this collaborative effort, 31 clinicians in six parishes have been trained as FFT providers and are now supplying services for over 300 families on any given day.

The success of the initial FFT teams, coupled with the momentum of the evidence-based practice movement within Louisiana, led the Louisiana legislature in 2009 to pass legislation establishing a statewide FFT pilot program (15 LA Rev. Statutes § 971 et. seq.). In passing the bill, the Louisiana Legislature sought to “create a cost-effective pilot program . . . to treat at risk juveniles and their families by utilizing evidence-based practices which have demonstrated effectiveness in terms of significant reductions in the recidivism rate of juvenile offenders” (15 LA Rev. Statutes §971). Passage of the FFT Pilot Program Legislation will help to ensure that an increasing proportion of youth in contact with Louisiana's juvenile justice system have access to effective treatment.

***Implementation of a Statewide Professional Development Training Package.*** In addition to working to implement large scale evidence-based practices across Louisiana, Models for Change has, through the grant to the LSUHSC initiated a professional development strategy focused on building a foundation for evidence-based practices among a broad range of providers that may or may not have the capacity to undertake a large scale evidence-based program but could alter individual practices. LSUHSC developed and implemented a professional skills training for providers that includes motivational engagement of youth and families, cognitive-behavioral treatment, and social-ecological approaches to treating youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

Since its' initial development three years ago, this training has reached hundreds of providers across the state through local and regional trainings, and workshops at state conferences, helping to ensure that youth in the care of Louisiana's providers are receiving services that are research-driven. Even more important, the development of in-state evidence-based practice training capacity, including the development of web-based learning technologies, at LSUHSC will help to ensure the sustainability and continued expansion of these practices long after the Models for Change efforts in Louisiana are completed.

***The 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial District's Prosecutor's Early Intervention Program (PEIP).***

Recognizing the importance of early identification and intervention with at-risk youth, in 2000, the 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial District's district attorney's office developed an early intervention program for use in the district's elementary schools. Building on promising evaluation

results from the elementary school program, the district attorney's office received a Models for Change grant to assist in the development and evaluation of a modified version of the PEIP that could be used in middle schools. Working with the NCMHJJ, the National Youth Screening Assistance Project, LSUHSC, and the Vera Institute of Justice, the 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial District modified the PEIP to incorporate evidence-based screening and assessment tools and processes, and evidence-based practices such as Functional Family Therapy and Motivational Interviewing.

The middle school component of PEIP is currently operating in seven of the thirteen middle schools within the 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial District. An evaluation conducted by the Vera Institute of Justice suggested that youth who received intervention services through the program showed improvements along dimensions of emotional and behavioral strengths, as well as school attendance (Vera, 2010). The work of the 16<sup>th</sup> JDC, in conjunction with its Models for Change partners, has resulted in the development of a promising program model for use with status offenders that can be expanded to other parishes in Louisiana and beyond.

***Adoption of Scientifically-Sound Screening and Assessment.*** Ensuring youth receive appropriate, evidence-based treatment requires that a youth's service needs be accurately identified. Given this, a major priority of the work over the past few years has focused on developing screening and assessment processes that rely on scientifically-sound instruments. Working with the National Youth Screening Assistance Project (NYSAP), the local Models for Change parishes have taken steps to strengthen their screening and assessment processes through the adoption of proven instruments, development of policies and procedures to ensure that screening and assessment results are administered and used properly, and establishment of referral procedures that ensure that youth are linked to appropriate services based on screening and assessment results.

These local advancements have already begun to diffuse across the state. For example, the Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ) recently moved forward with a plan to implement the Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY), a scientifically-sound violence risk assessment tool that can be used to guide service planning (Borum, Bartel, & Forth, 2006), in probation offices across the state. Implementation of the SAVRY began with a pilot project in Caddo Parish to implement a pre-dispositional assessment process. As part of the pilot project, Caddo Parish implemented the SAVRY and the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI-II) and pilot tested a "service matrix," developed through a collaboration between NYSAP, LSUHSC, and NCMHJJ, that is designed to guide service referral decisions based on SAVRY risk levels and identified needs. The SAVRY, along with region specific service matrices, are now in place statewide.

***Revision of Contracting Processes to Incorporate Evidence-Based Practices.*** As part of its initial grant to support and further implement evidence-based practices, Jefferson Parish requested consultation from the NCMHJJ, TAC Inc., and LSUHSC in order to revise its contracting and RFP processes. An initial survey conducted by the NCMHJJ and LSUHSC showed a baseline of 13% of youth receiving EBP's. Through the use of

blended funding between Models for Change, the Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice, and the Department of Juvenile Services' municipal funds, solicitations for contracts were developed to emphasize, implement and sustain evidence-based practices. The contracts were designed to offer preference to EBP contracts and require all contracted service providers to monitor and report outcomes. Statistics for 2010 showed an increase in the utilization of EBPs with 94% of youth on probation being referred to an evidence-based practice and 100% of their juvenile treatment budget being dedicated to EBPs.

### **JEFFERSON PARISH EBP UTILIZATION**

	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Dollars spent on EBPs	\$0.00	\$551,759	\$707,474	\$640,223
Percent of Treatment Budget Spent on EBP's	9%	88%	96%	100%
Number of Youth Referred to EBPs	101/534	142/406	471/558	375/401
Percent of Youth Referred for EBP's	19%	35%	84%	94%
Number of Contracts for EBPs	0	6	8	9
*Note: Some youth have more than one referral.				

The Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice, working in consultation with TAC, Inc. and LSUHSC, has also begun to explore ways to revise its RFP and contracting process in order to encourage the adoption and expansion of evidence-based practices. This has proven particularly challenging with sweeping budget cuts due to the national economic downturn in the past two years. However, despite this, consensus has been reached that OJJ should focus on its priority populations, and that desired outcomes needed to be expressed in terms of public safety (reduced crime), cost efficiency (reduced recidivism) and effectiveness (improved community tenure). To achieve this, TAC, Inc. and LSUHSC have focused on assisting OJJ with the following:

- Preparation of a policy paper on OJJ's position on the use of evidence-based practices for its clients and services.
- Preparation of a framework for choosing and implementing EBPs, including detailed recommendations of language that could be used in the development of RFPs at the appropriate time and when funding is available. The recommendations are to 1) wherever possible, implement the best evidenced-based programs; 2) if funding an unproven program, an evaluation component must be included; 3) programs that fail to produce OJJ driven outcomes will not continued to be funded; 4) establish an acceptable transition time for programs to train and implement evidence-based programs prior to expecting outcomes.
- Statewide replication of the provider survey to target current OJJ contracted providers to provide baseline EBP utilization data for the project.

- Development of mechanisms to evaluate EBP fidelity and to measure and report outcomes in a way that is both useful to OJJ administration and their field offices.

## Lessons Learned

The availability of evidence-based screening, assessment and treatment represents a major advancement in the field of juvenile justice, and has the potential to transform the lives of youth and their families, as well as the systems that serve them and the communities in which they reside. However, the widespread adoption of these services requires a fundamental shift in the provision of services and programs that is a very challenging endeavor. Over the past few years, the state of Louisiana has made significant progress in overcoming these challenges and moving towards a system that is more and more oriented around evidence-based practices. Since Models for Change started in Louisiana, the state has seen:

- Growing consensus among state and local policy makers and agency administrators about the importance of utilizing evidence-based practices, as reflected by the 2009 FFT Pilot Project Legislation, the statewide implementation of the SAVRY, and the development of the *Evidence-Based Practice Recommendations for Juvenile Drug Courts*.
- Implementation and expansion of evidence-based practices across the state, including the establishment of five Functional Family Therapy Teams capable of serving over 300 families on any given day.
- An increase in the proportion of juvenile justice programs and providers that incorporate nationally known evidence-based program models, up from 11 percent in 2006 to 32 percent in 2009.
- Widespread adoption of scientifically sound screening and assessment processes across the state, including statewide adoption in juvenile probation of the Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY).
- Steady adoption of evidence-based screening, assessment, and treatment within the state's juvenile drug courts.
- Enhanced local data collection, outcome monitoring, and reporting capacity among local Models for Change jurisdictions.
- Development and testing of a middle-school intervention program for status offending youth that can serve as a model for other parishes across the state.

The lessons learned from Louisiana's experiences can help to inform other state and local jurisdictions seeking to make a similar shift. Some of the key lessons learned from the Louisiana Models for Change evidence-based practices reform efforts include:

- **Instituting a sustainable, system-wide movement towards evidence-based practices requires a comprehensive strategy.** Implementing and sustaining evidence-based practices requires the buy-in and support from a range of stakeholders, from the state level policy makers and agency administrators with decision-making authority over funding and services, to the service providers that will have to modify their practices. Given this, a successful evidence-based practice

movement must understand and target the priorities of each stakeholder group. Policy makers must understand what evidence-based practices are and why they are important, local jurisdictions need to see that scarce resources are being targeted towards services most needed, and providers must have the training and skills to implement these services. Accomplishing this requires a multi-faceted approach that links stakeholder awareness and education, research-based decision making, and strategic implementation in a way that maximizes resources and builds a long-term movement.

- **Maintaining community and stakeholder support for evidence-based practices requires ongoing educational and outreach efforts.** While educational and outreach efforts are particularly important in the beginning of an evidence-based practices movement, when the primary focus is on getting critical stakeholders on board and building support for the movement, continuing those efforts throughout the reform effort can also play a vital role in ensuring continuity of support amidst changing administrations, fiscal shortfalls, and competing priorities. An ongoing educational/outreach campaign should include, at a minimum, the establishment of ongoing channels of communication with policy makers and agency heads, the development and implementation of a strategic media campaign, and a routinized process for capturing and reporting outcome data and accomplishments to key decision-makers in a timely and easy to understand format.
- **Developing local experts, rather than relying exclusively on outside expertise, helps to ensure the continued diffusion of evidence-based practices.** Early in its reform work, Louisiana recognized that in order to build long-term momentum for evidence-based practices, and ensure the continued diffusion of the accomplishments of Models for Change, the state needed to develop local experts that could assist in that diffusion. Therefore, while the state took full advantage of the technical assistance resources available through Models for Change, it actively sought to partner those national technical assistance experts with local counterparts and build in-state expertise and technical assistance capacity. Louisiana now has built a wealth of in-state expertise, within the state universities as well as local jurisdictions, who can provide in-state training on screening, assessment, and evidence-based treatment long after Louisiana's Models for Change project is completed.
- **Focusing on the professional development of individual providers, in addition to working towards implementation of evidence-based program models, can build capacity for evidence-based services in rural areas and among individual providers.** Individual providers and providers in rural areas may not have the capacity to implement the "large-scale" evidence-based programs (e.g. Multi-Systemic Therapy, Functional Family Therapy) that are typically the primary focus of the discussion around EBPs. However, with appropriate professional development training, such as the professional development package developed by LSUHSC, these clinicians can incorporate evidence-based approaches into their practice and improve outcomes for the youth and families they serve.

- **Decisions must be data-driven, and reflect the needs, resources, and limitations of local jurisdictions.** The selection and adoption of an evidence-based practice imposes a number of challenges on a local jurisdiction. Resources must be re-allocated, often meaning in a practical sense that the resources must be redirected from an existing service; priorities must be adjusted; and new levels of accountability are often required. When local stakeholders do not believe that the evidence-based practice that is selected is “workable” for their jurisdiction, either because it does not meet the needs of the community, is not realistic in light of the resources or capacity of local providers, or is believed to impose undue reporting or oversight responsibilities on them, resistance to its adoption is likely to be high. In contrast, where an evidence-based practice is carefully selected based on a data-driven needs assessment, and a realistic appraisal of the community’s resources and limitations, and where providers and other key stakeholders are involved early in the process, barriers to implementation can be minimized.
- **Implementation of innovations at the local level, coupled with ongoing involvement of state partners, can be an effective way to facilitate statewide adoption.** The first two years of Louisiana’s evidence-based practices reform efforts focused on raising awareness and support for evidence-based practices at the state level, while simultaneously building concrete models of evidence-based practice implementation at the local level. State stakeholders were purposefully engaged in local EBP implementation projects to ensure that the perspectives and concerns of the state were taken into consideration in planning, and to ensure that the state was aware of and invested in these local models. As support for EBPs grows at the state level, the existence of these local models provides a ready made example for statewide implementation.

## References

15 LA Rev. Statutes § 971 et. seq.

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