

LOUISIANA CROSSAGENCY TASK FORCE
Position Statement:
Evidence-based Programs

Our Position: It is in the best interest of Louisiana’s children, youth and their families that the state gives priority to those services that have the most likelihood of young people developing into successful adults. This is especially true for those young people who are at risk of being removed from their homes into the state’s care or custody in juvenile justice, child welfare or mental health placements. When purchasing services or supports for those young people and their families, Louisiana agencies should give the highest priority to services that are community based, that are in the least restrictive setting, and that are proven to be effective by scientific research.

Our Commitment: We have adopted as a guiding principle that we will use the best scientific research and evidence to shape our services to young people, their families and their communities. We refer to these as “evidence-based programs.” We know that:

- it is preferable to treat most youth outside of institutional settings;
- it is preferable to offer youth the services they need to reduce delinquency and other destructive behaviors while increasing educational and pro-social skills;
- it is preferable to select interventions that have been proven to consistently achieve better outcomes for youth.

What is an evidence-based program? “Evidence-based program or practice” (also called EBPs) refers to approaches to prevention or treatment (also called *intervention*) that have documented scientific evidence (i.e. published research) that they work. Related to the interface of mental health issues and juvenile justice issues, we look for such things as a reduction in crime/delinquency, family conflict, substance use, academic failure, behavioral problems, delinquent peer associations, etc. as evidence of effectiveness. In addition, evidence-based interventions can yield significant cost savings in both financial and human capital. For example, an evidence-based program that has been shown to successfully treat delinquent youth in the community and decrease out of home placement may cost between \$1,300 and \$5,000 per family per year, while incarcerating just one youth will cost over \$50,000 per year.

Learning and changing. We cannot expect to shift our system over night, but we are committed to a bold path of action. That path includes utilizing our state funds to support programs and practices that can produce the best outcomes for the youth in our care. This is already being demonstrated by investments in practices such as Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment, Multi-Systemic Therapy, and Functional Family Therapy (all evidence-based practices). Continuing to communicate plans for investing in EBPs is critical, so we will provide information about specific practices that we endorse and seek to provide, whether directly or through our contracting processes. We welcome the partnership of all providers in the state as we move forward to more effectively address the needs of our youth, families and communities.

Next steps. In the coming months, our offices will be reviewing the array of possible evidence-based practices that are best suited to Louisiana, and making this information widely available. We will also be making clear how we will further encourage the expansion of evidence based practices, track our progress and document our success. To help all partners in the process, we will conduct regional meetings throughout the state starting in Fall 2009.