

Florida

Florida Network of Youth and Family Services

Overview

Description

Across the state of Florida, the gatekeeper and primary manager of status offense cases (known in Florida as FINS or, if formally petitioned, CINS) is not a government entity, but, instead, a non-profit organization called the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services. Through legislative funding, the Florida Network is able to act as an umbrella organization, directly linking youth and families with member agencies that can provide the services they need. The Network is responsible for making sure that there are providers available all over the state to meet those needs. The Florida Network is designed to keep youth and families in crisis out of the court system, providing them appropriate support within a community-based setting.

Target Population

The Florida Network of Youth and Family Services provides and procures services for children aged 10 and older who are acting out beyond the control of their parents, running away, habitually truant, or otherwise troubled, as well as for their families. These are children who, but for the intervention of the Network, would otherwise likely end up in court with formal status offense cases.

Referral/ Assessment Process

Some families in crisis contact the Florida Network directly. In other cases, law enforcement or school officials steer a family in need to the Network. Either way, from the first phone call, the network conducts a centralized intake with screening, assessment and triage, and a service plan is developed based on the needs of the youth and family. The intake and triage process demonstrates the Network's emphasis on front-end, preventive care for families—halting crises before they escalate.

Services Provided

The Florida Network provides and refers families to a wide variety of services. First, in keeping with its emphasis on prevention, the Network offers an immediate respite option: When families are experiencing crises that are too volatile to handle, or who simply need a "time out," this respite shelter gives youth a place to stay for a short period of time while the family and the case manager work to address the issues the family is having. The 21 private, non-profit community agencies of the Florida Network operate 28 youth crisis shelters around the state. In addition to respite services, the Network offers a variety of non-residential services, including crisis intervention and individual, group and/or family counseling, which can take place with clients in their homes, at established community locations, or at the local agency's offices. All youth and families admitted for services also receive case management services. These services include information gathering, supportive linking, advocacy, coordinating and monitoring services, case review and discharge planning. When the agency's short-term services have resolved the

family's immediate crises, the family is connected with longer-term community-based services and encouraged to follow through in order to build upon the strengths identified while receiving FINS services.

If the FINS service plan was not successful, then the case is sent to a “case staffing committee” that takes a deeper look at what might be going on with the youth and family and tries to identify why the service plan has not been successful. Through this process, the original plan could be amended if it was inappropriate for some reason (e.g., services were scheduled when the parent was at work, or they did not match needs), or any untried community services might be contacted. The staffing committee might determine that the situation at home has resolved itself or that no services are needed. The Network attempts to exhaust every alternative before a formal CINS petition is filed.

Evaluation/Data

The Florida Network of Youth and Family Services’ funding is directly tied to the outcomes it achieves, making it crucial not only that the Network operate effectively, but also that it carefully monitor and track its success. The Network uses highly organized and structured measured outcome data to show the legislature that it is effective, and the legislature continues to fund it accordingly. For example, in the state of Florida, only about 6% of FINS cases are petitioned to court as CINS. Approximately 90% of youth successfully complete services, 95% of youth are crime-free while receiving services, and 90% remain crime-free for 6 months after receiving services. Moreover, research revealed that the Network saved the state and the Department of Juvenile Justice between \$31.2 and \$37 million in a single fiscal year.

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Connecticut Family Support Centers

Overview

Program Description

Connecticut's status offender model is based on the concept of Family Support Centers (FSC). FSCs offer court-involved juveniles and their families the opportunity to come together and receive needed counseling and support services. They are viewed as "multi-service one-stop" centers. The goal is to divert youth who are referred to the court as a status offender (in CT they are called Families with Service Needs or FWSN) from further court involvement. FSCs provide an array of services beginning with triage and concluding with successful connections to community-based service providers that meet the needs of the youth and families referred. This is a state-funded program. There are currently four FSCs in Connecticut.

Target Population

FSCs target children and youth age 11-15 years old, who are status offenders with escalating behaviors, who do not pose a significant threat to the public and are able to remain at home or for whom alternative custody arrangements in the community can be made.

Referral/ Assessment Process

Involvement in FSCs is voluntary; all children and families sign an agreement to fully participate in the program and adhere to all program requirements. Youth and families arrive to a FSC following a child's referral to court for a status offense. If certain criteria are met, the family is sent to the FSC without formal processing. If a referral is made by a probation officer (PO), the FSC is required to respond within one hour to the PO to make sure the case is acceptable. FSC staff must try and establish contact with the youth's family within three hours of receiving the referral. An initial screen of the youth and family is done at that time, which is followed by a full assessment to identify any urgent needs. The following screening tools are used: MAYSI-II, Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire, and the Juvenile Assessment Generic. If more in-depth assessment is required The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment- Mental Health (CANS-MH) is administered. A service plan, called Collaborative Plan, is then developed with the youth and family. On-site programs and services are also provided by FSC staff.

Services Provided

FSCs offer the following services: crisis intervention, family mediation, case management/coordination, group programming, educational consultation/mediation, aftercare services, referrals to home-based and community programs, and flex funds for pro-social activities. These centers conduct their work utilizing research-based approaches and practices such as motivational interviewing techniques, trauma-sensitive

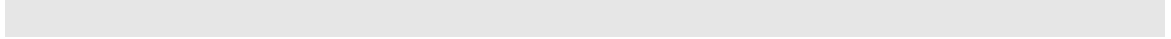
practice, and female responsive practice, with an overarching relational, strengths-based approach.

Evaluation/Data

Since the establishment of FSCs, detention numbers have decreased as well as the numbers of delinquent referrals.

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Orange County, New York

Family Keys

Overview

Program Description

In an effort to better serve youth and families in crisis, Orange County, New York has shifted away from a court-centered model and moved toward a community-based service model, and has done so with impressive success. The county contracts with Family Keys, a branch of Southwest Key Programs, which is a recognized national leader in responding to the needs of youth and families, to serve as the lead organization in charge of status offense referrals (known in New York as Persons In Need of Supervision or PINS) in the county. The defining characteristics of the shift to working with Family Keys is that the system now provides an immediate, out-of-court response to families in need, and keeps young people out of the court system and in their homes wherever possible.

Target Population

The Family Keys program is designed for youth and family who are in crisis, and need immediate intervention, de-escalation, and, potentially, short term and long term services to address their ongoing needs and challenges.

Referral/ Assessment Process

When parents seek to file a PINS complaint – alleging that his or her child is, essentially, out of their control, they call probation or are referred to probation. Probation does a screening, and if the probation officer determines that PINS allegations are in fact present, the case is referred to Family Keys. A Family Keys case worker will then contact the family within 24 hours of the referral, and will do an assessment of the case over the phone to determine the severity of the case. Depending on the assessment, the case worker will develop a short term intervention plan, which generally includes linking youth and families to community based programs, and a plan for accessing community services and a plan for accessing support available through family, friends, and community networks for both the parents and the youth.

Services

Family Keys usually works closely with a family for 2-3 weeks to calm the crisis, ensure that the family is engaged in the service plan, and troubleshoot any issues that arise. After that time, the family generally continues with follow-up services in the community. Family Keys is still available to the families, but their contact with them is less frequent. If the assessment in a case reveals that more intensive intervention is needed, or if through the process of working with a youth and family the case worker decides that more services are needed, they can refer a case to the department of mental health services. If appropriate, youth and families and can then be referred to more high end services such as MST (multi systemic therapy) and FFT (functional family therapy).

Family Keys has also recently developed a tailored response to runaway cases, using a special version of this crisis intervention model.

Evaluation/Data

Between March 2003 and March 2008, Family Keys received 2,375 referrals. Of the 2,180 families who accepted Family Keys' services, 98 percent, or 2,136 children, avoided out-of-home placement. In 2007, the program served 396 families, with an operating budget of approximately \$422,000. The average program duration that year, from referral to discharge, was 22 days. 57 runaway youth were served by Family Keys in 2007, and all avoided residential placement.

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