

National Community on Collaborative School Mental Health

Fact Sheet: Connecting School Mental Health with Juvenile Justice and Dropout Prevention Practice Group

Our focus:

This practice group is committed to working across stakeholder groups to advance knowledge and best practice related to effectively integrating school mental health with juvenile justice and dropout prevention. For youth to be successful, effective coordination and communication across systems is needed, and resources and best practice guidelines related to this work need to be readily available. Key priority areas include advancing effective strategies for:

- Promoting best practices in school engagement/connectedness and completion
- Reducing truancy, unnecessary suspensions and expulsions
- Promoting successful school reentry and transitions
- Reducing dropout rates
- Encouraging relevant professional development and advancing knowledge to improve outcomes for youth at risk of school dropout and/or entering the juvenile justice system
- Addressing risk factors and building resiliency to promote positive futures
- Addressing the school-to-prison pipeline

The reasons for forming a Practice Group (PG) on this issue*:

- Every 29 seconds a student gives up on school, resulting in more than one million American high school students who drop out every year
- Dropouts are more likely than high school graduates to be unemployed, in poor health, living in poverty, on public assistance, and single parents
- Dropouts are more than eight times as likely to be in jail or prison as high school graduates
- Current estimates suggest that 100,000 youth are released from detention centers everyday. More than two-thirds of these youth return to high school
- Between 50-75% of incarcerated youth have diagnosable mental health problems
- Juvenile Justice agencies report a lack of expertise, staffing, and training to care adequately for emotionally challenged youth
- Many schools and detention facilities lack collaboration and communication with one another, trust for one another, an understanding of the goals and mission of each system, transitional services, and parental involvement

The organization of our practice group:

The practice group is facilitated by the following individuals and is assisted by a knowledgeable and dedicated advisory group:

- Nancy Lever, Center for School Mental Health
- Judith Storandt, National Disability Rights Network
- Jerry Hime, Retired School Administrator
- JoAnne Malloy, Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire
- Dee Dee Letts, First Circuit Court, State of Hawaii
- Barbara Brady Ashcraft, West Virginia Department of Education

We look to our advisory group and practice group members to inform and help to contribute to the advancement of the work. We are committed to keeping the practice group relevant and sharing with its members up-to-date research, training, policy, and practice information as it relates to effectively connecting school mental health to juvenile justice and dropout prevention. We convene annually at the Annual Conference on Advancing School Mental Health and have regular communication through an active listserv and conference calls.

Activities expected to be conducted this year:

- Distributing the Request for Proposals and reviewing submissions and selecting proposals for the 2012 National Conference on Advancing School Mental Health
- Maintaining repositories of key articles/literature/organizations/agencies/initiatives relevant to the practice group
- Identifying and sharing principles of best practice in connecting school mental health with juvenile justice and dropout prevention
- Promoting dialogue centered on an issue(s) of high interest (e.g., school-to-prison pipeline, bullying, truancy) to the practice group
- Maintain a group email listserv for practice group members to share resources, and post inquiries for response by listserv members. Listserv typically sent three times per month

*"The Silent Epidemic," Bridgeland et al: retrieved http://right-mind.us/blogs/blog_0/archive/2009/04/22/67045.aspx; "News You Can Use: School Reentry of Juvenile Offenders," Center for School Mental Health, Matvya, Jennifer at al, August 2006; "Study Finds High Rate of Imprisonment Among Dropouts," New York Times, Dillon, Sam, October 2009: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/09/education/09dropout.html?_r=1&emc=eta1; "A Shortage of Mental Health Services Drives Inappropriate Placements in Juvenile Detention, M. Sage, Focal Point, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Summer, 2006); Annual Report 2006, Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice, available at: <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/218367.pdf>.