



Juvenile Integrated Information Sharing Focus Group Summary Report March 16, 2002



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Preface

This summary report contains views and observations of participants in the August 21-22, 2001 Focus Group on Juvenile Integrated Information Sharing held in Denver, Colorado. It is not intended to represent the official policy position of the attending local or state jurisdictions. Similarly, aside from opening remarks of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Program Manager, Gwendolyn Dilworth, this summary report is not intended to represent positions or recommendations of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The purpose of the focus group was to identify information integration issues and challenges by identifying models, actions and solutions to integration information sharing.

Background

The Center for Network Development (CND) conducted the first national focus group on ***Integrated Information Sharing to Prevent Juvenile Delinquency***. The meeting was held August 21-22, 2001 in Denver, Colorado. The meeting focused on the practical experiences and processes developed by various jurisdictions to build Juvenile Integrated Information Sharing (JIIS) systems that result in improved outcomes for children, youth and their families. Representing jurisdictions in various stages of JIIS planning, development and implementation, focus group members included juvenile drug court and district court judges, school superintendents, juvenile assessment center directors, court administrators, state program representatives and IT directors. These practitioners volunteered their time to participate in the focus group component of the training needs assessment, the results of which will be integrated into the content and design of two levels of JIIS curricula.

We sincerely thank the focus group members for their time, enthusiasm and expertise toward advancing juvenile integrated information sharing across the country. See Appendix for the list of focus group participants.

I. Introduction

OJJDP's *Integrated Information Sharing to Prevent Juvenile Delinquency* program intends to improve outcomes for at risk youth and juvenile justice system involved youth through improved cross system and sector information sharing.

The OJJDP, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Education have collaborated to provide coordinated juvenile information technology resources that will advance more proactive solutions to juvenile delinquency by providing training and technical assistance on information sharing to juvenile justice, education, health, child welfare, and other youth serving systems or organizations that foster multidisciplinary, multi-agency solutions. The program will accomplish this purpose through provision of two levels of regional training workshops for multidisciplinary, cross sector teams of three to six persons representing local and State collaboratives that plan to initiate JIIS efforts, and for collaboratives planning to enhance efforts currently underway. The instructional focus will cover the legal, ethical, technical, and structural knowledge and skills necessary to ensure effective development and management of juvenile information sharing systems within the context of integrated information architectures being developed in the justice, education, and health and human services communities.

In January 2001, CND launched OJJDP's JIIS initiative through a competitively awarded cooperative agreement with the Center for Network Development. The CND has completed a training needs assessment and design for the two-level instructional curricula being piloted among jurisdictions across the country to give them the tools they need to proceed with IIS development and implementation. The primary components to be addressed through the training and follow up assistance will include: **multiple systems and agencies partnerships and collaboration, confidentiality, formation and maintenance issues and technology.**

The focus group explored the variety of approaches jurisdictions use to perform JIIS activities, and determined a core set of skills and resources that enabled them to achieve successful information sharing systems. To accomplish this, the focus group referenced the work of Julie Slayton, *Twenty Steps to Successful Information Sharing*, which appeared in the JAIBG

Bulletin, OJJDP (2000). Other references included Etton and Petrone (1994). Project staff theorize that lack of familiarity with the activities, resources and skills needed to accomplish such steps is a barrier to planning, design, implementation, and upgrading or expanding a multiple system and agency integrated information sharing system.

II. Description of Focus Group

There were fifteen focus group participants representing fourteen jurisdictions. The participants represented local or state level multiple system initiatives that address either juvenile offender or high-risk youth populations such as Juvenile Assessment Centers, Safe Schools/Healthy Students, or juvenile courts.

The focus group was organized by the CND staff and facilitated by Dr. Patricia Baca, Jennifer Mankey, MPA, Carol Miyagishima, MA, and Stephanie Rondenell, CTO.

The focus group agenda and process was designed to address the following issues.

1. Why are jurisdictions building integrated information sharing systems?
2. How do sites address IIS components of partner building/collaboration, confidentiality, and technology?
3. What are the most critical gaps, challenges and opportunities that impact how the work is done?
4. What strategies worked?
5. What resources are used or needed?
6. What skills are needed to do the work?
7. How do sites evaluate their IIS?

To determine the types of activities or skills needed by jurisdictions in various stages of development and implementation, participants were asked to complete a form that delineated their areas of responsibility in the planning, designing and implementation of JIIS for their jurisdiction prior to the meeting. The participants were then assigned to a group that focused on

the early stages of planning and design (Group 1), or a group that focused on the later stages of design through implementation (Group 2).

The following definition of integrated information sharing was suggested to provide a context for the discussion, “Juvenile integrated information sharing is the sharing of essential information between multiple agencies and across systems through structured procedures to improve outcomes for youth and families.”

III. Summary of Findings

Why are jurisdictions building Juvenile Integrated Information Sharing Systems?

The CND was interested in what motivates jurisdictions to embark on such a long term and difficult process as IIS and asked participants to share the “motivators” for their jurisdiction. Each jurisdiction presented multiple reasons, or motivations. Participants had hopes or vision for improved outcomes, they reacted to mandates to share information, and responded to a sense that things could work better.

The focus group identified six categories of responses: (1) improved service delivery including case management practices, (2) improved system processes, (3) enhanced information, (4) external forces, (5) evaluation, and (6) improved outcomes.

Participants wanted to improve outcomes for the youth by improving services that focus on youth and families. They acknowledged that agency services often overlapped in their attempts to address the youth’s needs or that youth’s needs were not addressed because the decision makers had inadequate information. This perceived waste of scarce resources became a prime motivator to share information across systems in order to increase the level and quality of services provided, reduce redundancy in services, and provide continuity of care. Group members postulated that existing cross agency information sharing practices were inadequate and that there is a need to change cross agency communication from a primarily informal system of individual worker based personal contacts with other agencies, to a formalized cross system

approach that engages multiple systems and agencies through an overarching principle of improving outcomes for youth and families. Integrated information sharing fosters good decision-making and data collection that can be used to evaluate system and service effectiveness and impact policies. An ancillary outcome is that specific information educates juvenile justice system practitioners and fosters discussion of prevention and intervention approaches for youth at risk of entering the juvenile justice system, and their families.

In addition to these internal motivators, external motivators can be the primary catalyst for a jurisdiction to begin the process of developing a JIIS collaboration. Examples of these external motivators are; state mandates for cross agency information sharing, and government-funded programs that target information sharing as a program component. Group members identified the OJJDP Comprehensive Strategy or Juvenile Accountability and Incentive Block Grant (JAIBG) as specific examples.

How Do Jurisdictions Evaluate their JIIS?

The CND and OJJDP are interested in how jurisdictions evaluate their JIIS efforts. Focus group participants were asked to respond to the following questions: “How will you know when you have achieved your desired outcomes?” “How will you measure it?”

Responses to the questions are listed below.

How will you know when you have achieved your desired outcomes?

- People are using the system.
- It meets business requirements and provides security.
- Data is available to test program effectiveness.
- There is increased collaboration among systems and agencies.
- The best interests of the individual child have been met.
- There are improved services to youth and families.
- The system is more efficient and functions are more appropriate.
- There is a decline in the at-risk behaviors or individual youth.

- Partners are working together to benefit youth.
- Goals of the partnership are being met.

How do you measure it?

- Recidivism is reduced.
- There are fewer youth in the “system”.
- There is documented evidence with good data.
- The availability of data is documented.
- User satisfaction surveys.
- Data is complete and accurate.
- Consumer satisfaction surveys.
- There is a reduction in court hearing times.
- There is a decrease in over representation of minority youth in the juvenile justice system.
- Earlier intervention services are delivered.

The remaining focus group questions were organized under the three JIIS components of multiple systems and agencies **Partnerships and Collaboration, Confidentiality and Technology**. The importance of devoting adequate attention to these interdependent components was affirmed through the focus group work. The responses to the focus group questions are presented in this report in separate sections under their respective JIIS component.

Partnerships and Collaboration

The function and operation of cross agency partnerships or collaborations was identified as critical to successful information sharing efforts. The partnerships represented by the focus group participants included juvenile justice, youth serving organizations, school, and various state and local agencies. All had built cross system partnerships of varying scope that were convened either specifically for integrated information sharing, or were existing partnerships that expanded their scope to include developing an integrated information sharing system.

Question - How do jurisdictions build and maintain a multiple system collaboration?

Group I and Group II shared similar accounts of how they developed and maintained collaborative partnerships across systems and agencies; demonstrating that the development and maintenance activities are similar, or that the maintenance of their collaboration reflects ongoing development. As the jurisdictions moved from the planning phase to design, implementation and maintenance, they began to formalize communication and processes, confirmed partner commitments, collaboratively sought funding and other resources, and for local initiatives, advocated against mandated “one size fits all” systems.

Group 1 identified key ways in which they built, or were building successful collaborative partnerships.

- 1) They leverage laws and grants that mandate multiple system partnerships.
- 2) They use food as a motivator for people to attend meetings.
- 3) They assemble a diversified group of agencies, engage them by building a small core group of partner agencies, and each partner agency provides one contact person for the initiative.
- 4) New partners are engaged through one on one contacts, and relationships are formalized using interagency agreements or memoranda of understanding.
- 5) They have visible leadership and leverage existing and emerging community-wide plans to motivate participation.
- 6) They develop a common vision and focus early in the partnership.

Group 2 suggested ways to maintain and build effective multiple system partnerships and collaboration. Group members identified the following as the three most critical accomplishments. (1) They showed the value of JIIS to the stakeholders who were engaged in the collaboration. (2) They demonstrated the value and showed the vision of future possibilities through site visits to and sharing information with other jurisdictions that had successfully implemented JIIS. (3) Overall, collaborations exercised strong leadership through the “lead agency” and other partners.

In addition:

- 1) One jurisdiction's plan was integrated into a larger community strategy through their OJJDP's Comprehensive Strategy initiative. This garnered greater community ownership and more closely engaged agencies at the community level.
- 2) Local jurisdictions targeted state departments participation.
- 3) To engage partners, jurisdictions leveraged state mandates that identified partners, recognized that agencies do not want to be left out, and identified and invited missing stakeholders.
- 4) To maintain the collaboration or the partnerships, jurisdictions collaboratively sought resources, worked toward the objective of getting partner's technology capability to a similar level, held honest discussions on the difficulty of this collaborative work, utilized problem solving techniques, and focused on developing the investment of stakeholders.

Question – What are the issues; gaps, challenges and opportunities facing jurisdictions that build and maintain multiple systems and agencies partnerships and collaboration?

Groups 1 and 2 identified similar challenges that should be addressed early in the planning stage so they do not later emerge as barriers.

Group 1 identified the following as likely challenges in the early planning and organizing stages.

- 1) Finding the right partners.
- 2) Working with difficult personalities of agency representatives.
- 3) Political boundaries.
- 4) Issues of mental and physical health confidentiality.
- 5) Gaps and discrepancies in funding levels among partnering systems and agencies.

Celebrating positive outcomes and small successes were identified as opportunities to implement broader wrap around services. There was belief among group members that improved information sharing has the potential to ultimately improve prevention and intervention services for youth at risk of entering the juvenile justice system and their families.

Group 2 focused on two primary areas: engaging people in the collaboration and building the understanding, knowledge and commitment of the partner agencies and the individual agency representatives. Issues identified by Group 2 underscore the similarities between the groups:

- 1) Getting funding for the collaboration and integrated information sharing system.
- 2) Addressing agency “turf” issues.
- 3) Engaging the right agency people at the table, specifically persons with decision-making authority.

Issues related to the difficulty of sustaining a JIIS collaboration were also discussed. These issues include:

- 1) Member turnover.
- 2) A lack of understanding and knowledge of the partners.
- 3) Difficulty getting information from the department IT people.
- 4) Getting the right decision makers at the table.
- 5) Partners not fulfilling commitments and contributions made at the beginning of the partnership. This was presented as that point when reality sets in, and the realization that previous commitments to participate were not honored.

Question – What Resources are used and needed to build multiple systems and agencies partnerships and collaboration?

There was unanimous agreement that resources are needed to build and maintain collaboration and multiple systems and agencies partnerships. These resources include funding, personnel, training and publications. Similar resources were needed and used throughout the planning, design and implementation of JIIS.

Participants noted the following examples of resources used to build partnerships and collaborative processes, assist in supporting the collaboration, gather information, and educate the partners.

- 1) Agencies provided staff, or funds to hire new staff, to support the collaboration.
- 2) In house agency staff or consultants were used to provide training.
- 3) Leadership and vision was provided by partner agencies.
- 4) Historical data was presented.
- 5) Existing relationships were built on.
- 6) Grants were sought by partner agencies and the collaboration.
- 7) Agencies provided space for meetings.

Some of these specific resources include: “Twenty Steps to Information Sharing” (Etton and Petrone), time, partner agency staff including IT staff, and consultants.

Group 1 members identified a variety of funding sources for their JIIS efforts including Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, (SAMSHA), OJJDP, and other monies from county or state general funds.

Resources Needed-

Most participants identified a need for more funding, but also identified the following:

- 1) More information on how to build partnerships and collaborations
- 2) Learning from other sites that had been successful
- 3) Business process re-engineering and change management
- 4) Standing court orders
- 5) A change in federal and state statutes.

Confidentiality

Both groups commented that adequate and appropriate attention to confidentiality is critical to all phases of integrated information sharing development. Trust among partner systems and agencies was identified as the most critical element in successful integrated information sharing.

Question - How do jurisdictions address confidentiality?

Group 1 members developed formalized agreements (to facilitate sharing of confidential information at the client-agency level) and parental consent forms for the release of information. Information sharing was also facilitated across agencies through inter-department agreements, Memorandum of Understanding, and in some cases, court orders. It was important to the jurisdictions to hold discussions among the partners on the appropriateness of and need for sharing information, professional ethics that guide information sharing, and the type of information to be shared. Educating partners was also critical to the collaborations. Partnering agencies and consultants provided cross training in confidentiality statutes including existing federal, state, and local laws, and when needed, jurisdictions recommended new state legislation to facilitate information sharing.

Group 2 responses centered on the importance of confidentiality protocols throughout the development and life of a juvenile integrated information sharing system. They also identified four key areas to address in the design and implementation stages.

- 1) Developing cross-sector state level partnerships committed to information sharing and formalized interdepartmental exchange of information.
- 2) Using interdepartmental commitments/agreement to hold partners accountable.
- 3) Conducting regular review of statutes and insuring that the partners were educated about any juvenile justice exceptions.
- 4) Promoting respect for the confidentiality issues of partnering agencies.

Collectively, both groups believed that JIIS efforts should be piloted with a few agencies where there was a level of trust, and then gradually expanded to other agencies as those relationships and trust levels were built.

Other ways participants addressed confidentiality include:

- 1) Involving stakeholders' legal departments in the first meeting.
- 2) Reviewing existing processes including releases of information, and how information is currently shared.
- 3) Requesting the judiciary clarify what information could be shared and partners removed self-incriminating information such as information generated by self-report.

- 4) Identifying stakeholders who could easily share information and piloting information exchange with those agencies.
- 5) Building trust in the quality of information gathered and shared among partners.
- 6) Keeping participants informed about changes in confidentiality legislation and how those changes impacted their IIS.

Question – What are the issues; gaps, challenges and opportunities facing jurisdictions that are addressing confidentiality?

The issues identified by both groups were similar, implying that issues of confidentiality require ongoing attention throughout the development and implementation stages of JIIS. Notably, confidentiality issues were frequently described as gaps or challenges, and rarely as opportunities. The role of JIIS in building the awareness of and attention to cross agency confidentiality practices was viewed as an important element.

The groups identified issues that a) impact knowledge, b) cross agency relationships, and c) change agency practices. However, the members felt the lack of knowledge and understanding by all partners of confidentiality statutes and their purpose, and inviting agencies to share information that have not historically shared information or worked together, were more critical barriers. Fear was identified as a barrier to agreements of what information will be shared. Group members described fear as the uneasiness of what other agencies will do with the information, or general unfamiliarity with other system practices. Staying informed of changing confidentiality statutes and legislation, and defining and understanding the confidentiality issues of each partner agency presented a challenge. They underscored the importance of adequately processing confidentiality issues among the partner agencies, and of ensuring that technology facilitates the confidentiality practices, and not “drive” the practices.

Question – What are the resources used and needed to address confidentiality?

Resources Used-

Resources used by both groups include internal and external experts in confidentiality statutes and practices, publications, training, agency policies and procedures, and funding.

Group 1 participants use legal experts, private funding, OJJDP resources, new legislation, court orders, family members, existing partner agency policies and procedures.

Group 2 participants use legal departments of partner agencies as well as outside legal services, publications such as OJJDP's *Sharing Information: A Guide to the Family Educational Right and Privacy Act and Participation in Juvenile Justice Programs*, 1997, NCJ 163705, their state Children's Code, federal and state statutes and legislation, funding from private foundations, and trainers in confidentiality such as Julie Slayton. One jurisdiction found it critical to hold discussions of confidentiality in a location perceived as "neutral" to all partners.

Resources Needed-

Resource needs emphasized by both groups include more training and technical assistance in several areas: understanding of confidentiality statutes, problem-solving to address confidentiality issues, and reviewing examples of confidentiality practices adopted to promote JIIS.

They also cited the need for:

- 1) State leadership, authority and legislation that supports information sharing.
- 2) Court orders that foster appropriate information sharing.
- 3) Involving family members in the process.
- 4) Promising models on confidentiality practices.

Technology

Question -How do jurisdictions address technology?

Group 1 participants addressed technology issues by first reviewing their individual agency concerns regarding information sharing. Several participants discussed their inability to share information internally through an automated process thereby necessitating enhancements of their own processes prior to attempting to link to other systems. Several group members commented that their jurisdictions examined their own methods of sharing information by performing needs assessments and requirements analysis before determining systems development design and implementation strategies. Some jurisdictions began development of information sharing protocols between agencies to determine how information was going to be shared through technical means. These jurisdictions then identified what information was already being collected by the multi-agency collaboration to assist in the development of the integration methods and system design.

Group 2 participants prioritized the actions taken to address technology in their design and implementation stages.

- 1) Identifying system requirements.
- 2) Ensuring adequate system support and maintenance.
- 3) Planning for technology obsolescence.

Participants conducted these activities by:

- 1) Obtaining internal and external expertise.
- 2) Developing a clear understanding of the potential use of technology.
- 3) Reviewing proven technologies and advanced technologies.
- 4) Engaging vendors in providing demonstrations.
- 5) Recognizing that technology was not the focus or the major barrier to information sharing, but was a tool used to effectively deploy a JIIS system.

Question – What are the issues; gaps, challenges and opportunities jurisdictions face in addressing technology?

Focus group participants identified key gaps and challenges when considering a JIIS. Common gaps and challenges identified by both Groups included technical support and maintenance. Each group discussed concerns with properly maintaining the JIIS and providing appropriate system upgrades in order to maintain a state-of-the-art system. Additional barriers were discussed in the area of training. The need for basic IT training for staff, users of the JIIS and, availability of advance training in more complex technologies was discussed in detail by each breakout group and collectively.

The lack of technology standards for juvenile justice and youth based initiatives is a critical challenge. JIIS standards impact several key dimensions in the planning of JIIS systems such as establishing methods of integration, data collection methodologies, data models, and data elements and security.

Other gaps and challenges identified were:

- 1) Technical support and maintenance issues.
- 2) Training.
- 3) System development.
- 4) User fear of change.
- 5) The lack of youth specific models that encompass the specific needs of youth and families within systems.
- 6) Lack of clearly defined performance measures and outcomes for JIIS.

Additional gaps were raised in relation to data interpretation. How do you capture the appropriate data? How do you interpret the data accurately and how do you determine what data is necessary?

Several jurisdictions identified opportunities that were focused on sharing existing technology with other jurisdictions, creative funding sources, and good decision-making based on good data.

Question – What resources are used and needed to address technology?

Again, there were common themes found between Group 1 and Group 2. Both groups relied on external resources from partnering agencies to move through the planning phase to implementation. Both groups used existing infrastructures to develop their systems. Group 1 focused on the resources needed for planning and development. Group 2 focused on sustaining and maintaining the JIIS.

Resources Used-

Group 1 used outside consultants and agencies to assist with the planning and conceptualization of their systems. Jurisdictions also relied heavily on resources available through partnering agencies, advanced technologies, and other resources to assist them in developing a long-term plan for growth.

Similarly, Group 2 focused on networking outside their jurisdictions and accomplished this through individual contacts. They also emphasized training, support and maintenance resources. Funding resources were used to assist in the initial development and conceptualization of JIIS systems.

Resources Needed-

Both groups identified the lack of adequate funding as a serious issue for JIIS and technology. Participants stated that it is difficult to identify and obtain funds to support and maintain a system after implementation. They further stated that there is a need to find and engage unconventional resources to address the problems discussed. Group 2 also described the need for consultant resources with strong project management expertise, and learning about promising JIIS collaborations in other jurisdictions.

IV. Summary

The Center for Network Development (CND) conducted the first national focus group on *Integrated Information Sharing to Prevent Juvenile Delinquency* August 21-22, 2001. The

meeting focused on the practical experiences and processes developed by various jurisdictions to build Juvenile Integrated Information Sharing (JIIS) systems that result in improved outcomes for children, youth and their families. The information provided through the focus group process provides essential information that will be included in training curricula to give jurisdictions the skills and knowledge they need to proceed in JIIS development or implementation. The following are highlights of key points identified by the focus group members.

- Jurisdictions build JIIS to enhance information, provide data for evaluation, and improve case management practices, services delivery, system responses, and outcomes for at risk youth and juvenile offenders.
- The quality of multiple agency partnerships and collaboration was identified as central to successful JIIS. Strong leadership, and building shared vision and values among the partner agencies are critical to the development and maintenance of an effective collaboration.
- Ongoing attention to confidentiality law and practices is important throughout the development and implementation of JIIS. Education, cross training and formal mechanisms such as inter-agency agreements and consent forms are essential tools to implement and facilitate practices that support the sharing of confidential information.
- The focus group members emphasized that technology expertise needs to be represented in all areas of JIIS development. In the JIIS planning phase, data and technology needs assessments and requirement analysis are conducted before determining systems development design and implementation strategies. Important activities in the design and implementation phases are identifying system requirements, ensuring adequate system support and maintenance, and planning for technology obsolescence.
- Evaluation of JIIS uses both outcome and process measurements. Outcome measures include successful youth outcomes such as a reduction in recidivism and high-risk

behaviors, and system measures, such as reduction in court hearing times. Process measures include evidence of accurate and complete data, user and consumer satisfaction.

Focus group participant responses emphasize the need to ensure ongoing and concurrent attention to the three JJIS components of multiple system collaboration, confidentiality and technology. In addition, they identified a progression of activities and knowledge development within each of those components. This affirms and greatly contributes to the proposed two level instructional approach for the JIIS curricula that will provide one set of skills and information to the jurisdictions in the planning stages of JIIS, and a different set for the jurisdictions in a later stage of design and implementation.

APPENDIX

IIS Focus Group Participants

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