



FY 2022 OJJDP Administrator Topic-Specific Listening Session: The Continuum of Care

July 11, 2022 | 11 a.m.–1 p.m. ET

Combined Breakout Room Notes

1. What does it mean to you to build an integrated continuum of care?

- My belief in continuum of care is simple but also complex. Simple because it's about making sure the young person's needs are being met and complex because young people have complex needs. We typically label young people as children. We need to step out of that ageism. Continuum of care is not 3–6 months when they get kicked out of the program. A program that lasts 3–6 months does not meet a young person's needs. Continuum of care is the stability piece.
- I have a question/comment: Is continuum of care just in the juvenile justice system? My comment is that youth are best served if we are not working in siloed systems. Youth in juvenile justice were probably involved in the child welfare system. We need to figure out a way to sync the systems. As long as we don't do that, we are just talking about band aids.
- It's a writ large continuum; not just siloed in juvenile justice.
- The silo needs to end.
- I agree. A continuum of care is really about holding all the systems accountable, not just juvenile justice. We have schools that are failing us and a child welfare system that tells us what it means to parent. How do we define family and provide that continuum of care? Are youth coming back with skills or are they coming back more traumatized? If the community is lacking resources, the system is a revolving door. We need to keep those youth connected when they transition back into the community. For example, do they know if still have healthcare? Do they have that information? It's a 3–4-year transition back into the community—back into a community that's not thriving because we don't put the resources there.
- If I didn't know the system—and it's not OK—and you asked me if I could have a magic wand—what do I need?—I might say more law enforcement and school resource officers. That's not what we need. We need counselors and people that care about young people.
- Full engagement of the community and systems to create something that would prevent entry into the juvenile system and provides meaningful off-ramps if the entry occurs. It is not always about post-disposition. It is a super heavy lift of concept and practice. Sometimes, if a service is needed, the continuum of care may ignore points that are implementation-based, which include groups, communities, state officials, and local officials that implement the continuum of care. There is a gap between theory and practice. In other words, a holistic approach to ensure all the key players are present.
- Working to build an effective continuum of care. As a theoretical framework, the continuum of care should be preventive and proactive, and starts before the offense occurs and looks at individual circumstances in the families. By the time the kids come into the delinquency system, it is way too late. A continuum of care is preventive from the very start. It is also urgency based and should have a local focus. Where is the continuum of care needed most? We need to begin working in partnership with youth and families.



- Understanding the cultural norms and household dynamics of the individual enough to make an impact and provide continued support to both youth and household, in that the traumas and dangers are healed and averted...pulling the individual from the system and staying the course for recidivism.
- Partnerships. When we hear engagement, the default thought is automatically heavy lift. Most families are not seen as partners, they are seen as someone on a checklist. If we are going to build an effective system, we must incorporate that family engagement partnership mindset into all the work we do. When families are at the table, are they able to partake in the meal? There's work that must be done collectively. In other words, collateral respect – a 2-way process. Maintaining the dignity and humanity of everyone in this space.
- Something that flips the current system upside down. For example, the investments we make in institutions could become much smaller, so that the only alternative or norm is community. An effective continuum of care would be able to serve kids with the most complex needs. There is a lack of services for kids with complex mental health needs and family issues.
- Ensuring all the needs are met, even if that means using creative strategies.
- Targeting the small segment of youth who are currently incarcerated is also important.
- When we look at the research for improving outcomes for youth, it leads to supporting the core components and methodology of positive youth development. We must be mindful of keeping youth out of the system in the first place. There are two things to consider: (1) How do we continue to help young people learn new skills and apply those skills through programming and education? (2) A need to enhance and develop new relationships with pro-social individuals including family and folks in the community utilizing a holistic approach. The success of a child is linked to the success of the family. If we can craft a continuum of care that integrates these pieces, young people will be in a better position to transition into adulthood and become productive citizens. This applies to the prevention work, but also to the young people in the juvenile justice system.
- Offer diverse funding opportunities which differ from the usual carceral responses and transition the funding into community-based opportunities that are grassroots.

a. What do you think are best practices for maintaining an effective continuum of care?

- A lot of people need to be held accountable to make this work. Funding is a huge part of this for direct-service programs. We pay youth to participate. Make it easy access for funding opportunities. We know the systems are not going to do everything right but make funding easy. The system should be throwing opportunities and resources at us.
- Yes, compensate young people as experts and support them in their roles.
- I second what was just said. The mom-and-pop organizations are doing more than the big acronym organizations. Decide what that continuum of care looks like. It's not just a program where you are in for 6 months and then you are out of there. One child might need support for 6 months and another might need 9 months. You need to tie all the pieces together to make sure all angles of support are being provided.
- Agreed. Funding is key. Especially flexible, multi-year funding.
- I do think the funding is critical. We need to take down the barriers to funding. How often do we hear, "Oh, we couldn't figure out how to actually do that application"? The power and control is with the bigger organizations.



- With what we are investing in systems?—the outcomes are horrible. They do a research project and put it on a shelf. We could use that data to improve services. We want to do the work, but love does not pay the bills.
- Coordination of systems of care has to happen at every level in every jurisdiction. We need that level of strategic planning. We need to include the people that hold the purse strings. We need a shared vision at every level. It's called strategic planning. Lots of communication has to go on. We need the data to show if our programs are working. We need shared goals. It's largely administrative, when you think about it.
- You cannot run a program on 5–10 percent overhead.
- Figure out how to pay community members/groups to be part of the continuum if they aren't 501c3 organizations.
- Funding has to adequately cover the administrative costs essential to delivering programs.
- Remove the barriers for funding and that will make room for community-based organizations to build mutual relationships with systems.
- Ideally the metrics would be developed together and not starting with something that's unachievable.
- It's the oversight and power dynamic that must shift.
- Yes – that's key.
- Partnering with community members and organizations that are already working with youth to better understand the cultural norms and threats in the community. Also, taking an opportunity to break down complex information for youth that makes it easy for them to understand. Another is emphasis on community partnerships.
- Offering an expansive catalog of resources that include effective best practices and evidence-based practices.
- Principles of practice that support healing and productivity. Schools sometimes make it punitive and difficult for young people to be successful, but there are other methods that are non-evidence based that schools can also be using. Consider all potential intervention points for young people.
- To piggyback on [name redacted] comments regarding evidence-base practices; youth prisons have no evidence base but are consistently well-funded while exceptional community programs are left out altogether.
- A simple best practice is relationship building among communities that does not disempower but encourages and promotes their resilience and commitment to their youth.
- There are many ways to think about evaluation evidence that would be useful for smaller programs.

2. What are some challenges the field is currently facing when providing a continuum of care for youth?

- Some folks believe that there is a lack of programs and resources available to be able to provide a continuum of care.
- There is a lack of understanding of the universal programs and resources that are available to youth and families. At a baseline level, the goal, while facilitating, is sharing more information on the resources and programs that are available to systems, youth, and families. There is a lack of understanding across the board regarding cross-system collaboration. By elevating the level of understanding and increasing awareness for available



- resources and services, this minimizes the burden on families when they are navigating these complex systems. How do we leverage community partnerships, so folks better understand the strengths of the community, resources, and services available?
- Systems designed to serve youth and families are too often not supportive, trauma informed, culturally humble, etc. Law enforcement practice and schools could greatly improve practice.
 - There are many folks operating in silos.
 - Many service providers have a hard time with continued funding. During the pandemic, many offices were closed, and services stopped because organizations were fighting for the same funding. There is a lot of hoops to jump through. For example, evidence-based practices can be an obstacle for community officials when working with youth. System personnel do not utilize community groups to their full potential. They deliberately choose not to utilize the organizations available to them. Sometimes officials must wait until after a youth has been arrested or the first court hearing to get involved in the juvenile justice process.
 - Courts (judges, prosecutors, defense) need education around this issue of what community-based services work.
 - Shift in mindset about how we treat young people. Many times, there is an inability to see that things can be done differently, or officials see kids as an “other.”
 - Resource realignment is an important component. Justice realignment is a wonderful strategy for OJJDP to lean on. One of the key reasons kids are placed on probation is because they require special needs care. We should not use youth prisons as a default for kids that require targeted resources. Changing the way the money flows is going to be key. How can we pilot a realignment of justice funding for initiatives so money flows from institutions and probation and goes into the community?
 - Research also plays a role in this work. The research does not always have to be the classic evidence-based model. Stakeholders want to know the impact of efforts being led. OJJDP may consider enhancing community-level services and programs by building the evaluation capacity of community organizations to provide that data.
 - Lack of emotional and psychological support for youth and families.
 - OJJDP may consider utilizing colleges/universities within states that can partner with local grassroots organizations to assist in data capture for the research that is required.

a. What challenges is the field facing in terms of cross-agency communication and collaboration when trying to build a continuum of care for youth?

- The obvious one is the money. There’s always an argument or battle over money when it comes to cross-collaboration. There’s a lot of harsh feelings about money when it comes to who is going to provide support. There are barriers to great people being able to provide support. For example, a person giving youth in need food and gift cards at school. A lot of kids were going home with no money. The argument that they would use the money for alcohol or drugs was far outweighed by the need. This person was in danger of losing her job for doing what she did. That’s the kind of barrier.
- The challenges vary from state to state depending on what your state has done in juvenile justice reform. Connected are the challenges of people of color. I’ve seen the impact of the system. Thirty years ago...the systems are still being run the same way. The challenge is the



power dynamic, and that the data has to be on the same page. We have challenges because we are not a large, national scale organization. Why do I have to keep tap dancing to prove my worth? The systems are slow to change. I don't have the energy to get into the policy and advocacy because the systems are slow to change.

- I feel what the last person was saying. I juggle both and I'd rather be in the community and creating soil out of compost. No one really talks about the racial and ethnic disparities in the system. We can save another generation by investing in communities.
- Regarding data sharing across agencies: No system wants to be held accountable for their contribution. If you put juvenile justice and child welfare together, it's finger-pointing. We do have a school-to-prison pipeline. Schools use child welfare as a threat to parents.
- One of the problems of talking about an effective continuum of care is that there has not been an investment to create a model of continuum of care. The system perpetuates itself. It doesn't change. We started working on juvenile justice and decided to back way up. Just getting the data on those youth from all those divisions, like child welfare, has been difficult. It has taken 6 months to get past some of those restrictions (which some come from the federal level down to the local level).

b. What challenges is the field facing in terms of garnering family involvement in creating a system of care for their children?

- It takes a lot of trust and building relationships. Families and communities don't trust systems.
- Systems often demonize families or blame them for kids' behavior.
- Building the bridge to build that trust is critical.
- Instead of helping the family, the family is separated when incidents occur. Department of Social Services plays a big role in tearing families apart. Support to families and communities needs to be geared to holistic support.
- Historical distrust of systems.
- Complex, confusing, and unwelcoming systems that families are left to navigate.
- Lack of trust. There needs to be an understanding that families' experiences are at a level of expertise that others do not have. There needs to be a mutual respect for anyone who comes to the table to have these discussions. We should not dismiss parents. We need to invite them more often since they are closest to the youth.
- The system is not designed for family involvement and is inhospitable to families.
- Historical trauma...We need tangible and equitable participation without bias, prejudice, or tokenization...for our system-impacted citizens.
- The system actors are not trained to be family centered. In policy, we create very deliberate barriers. There are fines and fees that parents are expected to pay when their child enters the systems. We must consider all parts of the system that alienate families and make it impossible for them to be successful.

c. What challenges is the field facing in terms of data or information sharing across agencies when trying to build a continuum of care for youth?

- I'm interested in systems changing, not data.



- Data collection is an issue. Seems like folks are looking for specific answers but are unable to interpret the data. Situations can be very individualized for each youth and the information is not collected in a way that is helpful for the family.
- Databases are often not shared across systems, which creates inconsistencies when responding to youth.
- Lack of information-sharing and using the data in a helpful way in terms of a historical sense and to inform future efforts.
- Break out continuum of care into components or parts. The programs at a local level can be used more effectively if they have a blueprint of the all the parts. Missing preventive data such as key elements for positive youth development.
- The measure of success is normally not focused on what the youth or the family needs. Systems are set up to measure success after the offense has occurred. However, we should be measuring how we prevent that offense from ever occurring. OJJDP may want to consider how a young person defines success or what a family sees as success.
- If we are taking a family-based approach, it needs to be reflected in the performance measures. It is a linear process, but we need to find a short-term and long-term measure of success. How do we highlight adolescent development and set realistic expectations for youth?
- Young people/families should not be in the system to receive a higher level of support when it comes to mental health, addiction support, education, and job readiness training/internships.

3. If you had a magic wand, and there were zero barriers in the way, what would you say OJJDP's goal for integrating systems of care that are comprehensive and tailored to the unique needs of youth should be?

- Addressing a child's trauma should be first in culturally appropriate ways. It should be healing-centered. Look at the whole human being. I am still looking for ways to heal myself. We need to teach young children how to do that from birth. Once a young person touches the system, they are treated like they don't deserve a healing-centered approach. When a young person does not see their own value and own self-love, they are not going to succeed. Embrace a holistic, healing-centered approach. Even the term "trauma informed" has systems implications for people. Instead, say "healing-centered."
- How do communities embrace more of the Indigenous practices that were taken away from us? Those spaces (e.g., schools) have become places we no longer trust.
- We make progress and we reduce incarceration—and then the funds don't follow. We need fully funded alternatives. Reinvest in these alternatives that do work.
- Obstacle: When any progress is made to reduce youth incarceration, the savings is not reinvested in community-based continuum of care
- What do sites need to inform their work? They need the research at their fingertips. They need the resources at their tips. They need models to model after. This will provide a shared vision.
- I think OJJDP can and should help reverberate the idea that communities are valuable and important and can provide strength and support. And part of that has to do with where money goes.
- Our system is branded by the systemic issues and families don't trust it.



- Give the staff that run the toxic systems tools to improve recruitment. Let them rewrite their job descriptions. We need to orient kids to this idea that we can do better. Prisons are 100 percent not human-centered, holistic centered.
- Federal goal could be to provide legislation and financial incentives to divest from incarceration and separating families and invest in community based, culturally meaningful, strength-based, family-supported continuum of care. Divest in all kinds of incarceration or programs that separate families. Invest in holistic communities of care.
- You can't be trauma informed if you are ignoring race, culture, and gender identity. Some people say they are trauma informed, but they are just shifting language, not practices. OJJDP should come out and say, "If you are not addressing race, culture, and gender identity, you are not trauma informed."
- We've spent a lot of time maintaining views of kids that are still based in the 1800s.
- Community investment and human justice approaches are viable paths to creating safety and advancing well-being.
- I would say the best way to use "the magic wand" would be to hand the wand over to our people and invest in the communities directly to heal our own children and families, as we've seen time and time again that American systems have not effectively nor efficiently invested in our communities.
- Also, to touch on the brainwashing piece of creating that shared vision in systems for youth of color, is not what's necessary, as it wasn't necessary for white children, families, nor communities. White children and families don't have to sit down and create a shared vision for the health and safety of their children because they have been able to build their oasis on the backs of communities of color. There is no question of the vision and goals of the life they want for their children and that should not be a question that people of color (POC) have to develop with or for you. Systems must liberate our communities from the powers that be and allow our communities to develop our own vision for our communities, families, and children on the back of this government without agencies or systems intervening. Once the system recognizes our individuality as a people and culture, then the government should do everything they can to ensure necessary resources are being provided to realize that vision for POC, whatever that may be.
- The goal ultimately needs to be to meet the needs of youth and families in their communities and supporting the folks that are present in their lives. Another goal would be to offer an open-door approach for youth to access resources without being involved in the juvenile justice system.
- We would do whatever it takes to make sure that every young person—especially the young people who need the most help—is safely home with their families, getting the support they need.
- We would begin to see young people as YOUTH and not juveniles or the sum of the wrongs they have done.

4. What can OJJDP do to advance this key priority through the kinds of strategies and activities it undertakes? (For example, communications, webinars and training, publications, policy guidelines, and pilot programs.)

- Youth Justice Transformation versus Juvenile Justice Reform.



- a. **What policies, guidance, or communication would be helpful for OJJDP to develop to support a comprehensive and tailored continuum of care for youth in the juvenile justice system?**
- OJJDP needs a task force that holds the system accountable. Not just a task force that gives us data. And continue to have these open conversations. Not us just talking and talking and seeing no change. We need to see real change in the world.
 - Laws should be created to shut down detention and youth prisons that disproportionately cage young people of color or abuse kids in any way. This immediately stops incarceration, saves money, and provides opportunity to invest in families and communities.
 - Efficacy is a real problem. There are some evidence-based models available but getting that information to stick over time is a challenge.
 - OJJDP has a role to play with local system change and policy development. A lot of these strategies and conversations will translate into state or county action.
 - To start: Transparency between systems to community with funding and efficacy on a regular basis. Providing policy in allocating funds for community organizations and service providers to access.
- b. **What ideas do you have for pilot programs OJJDP could implement that align with this priority?**
- I want to dismantle the system. I want to see any pilot program that supports a community-based organization to stay afloat. It has to be a partnership. The system has to relinquish that power for it to be a real relationship. Trust needs to be built with the community organizations. Pilot something that results in less young people from being in the system and more not entering the system.
 - We do system-change work at the federal level. When we do, we do bring in folks from the local level. One very simple thing is if OJJDP could figure out how federal money could be used to pay for food when you are working with families and community-based organizations. We have to use our own money to do that. It's a small thing, but it's a bit step in showing OJJDP recognizes the realities.
 - The New York Credible Messenger program is a great model. For OJJDP to put that model everywhere. When a young person has a credible messenger, then they become one.
 - Shift the frame on Technical assistance.
 - Implementation of the [Search Institute's](#) Developmental Assets could be considered for a pilot program.
 - Search [Institute] also has a piece on how to be adult partners with young people.
 - There are still far too many professionals in both child welfare and juvenile justice who do not know about ACEs (adverse life experiences).
 - [The Restorative Center: Restorative Justice Circle Trainings](#); shifting to accountability without criminalization.
 - Increased funding for pilot programs. Begin helping folks tell the story of their experiences of their processes and connecting them with other peers in their communities, so they can



support one another in their work. In short, create a local infrastructure that is not dependent on the federal administration.

c. What types of trainings or webinars would it be helpful for OJJDP to develop on the topic of continuum of care for youth?

- I really think the system needs the training and the workshops. Any youth-serving organization: Department of Social Services, local parole, and even the court system—I would like to see those reform. They need the training. When you go to CDC, ACEs is included on their website. But ACEs are not considered in sentencing. Follow the work of [Dr. Nadine Burke Harris](#). These are the people we turn to in our work to be really healing. You need to be hearing from young people themselves. Ask them what they need. You have to meet them where they're at. This is a human being. Treat them as such. People are seeing youth of color as older than they are.
- Include youth voices in these webinars.
- A different model of TA and coaching for different affinity groups around the nation. Target TA to people who run facilities because they are a captive audience. And create a peer network across the nation for detention and prisons with the idea that we want to hear more from the field and raise best practices. Something that requires a planned change.
- Figuring out what is it we are all doing. Is there a core curriculum or core standards? The [Search Institute's](#) Developmental Assets is a starting point. If we could all focus on youth achieving identity, belonging, achievement, we would be so far along in changing language. Instead of a deficit model, look at strength building.
- What are the tools that we can teach to move forward? We need to rebuild that generational gap.
- Series of webinars or publications focused on how we support young people who might be categorized as high-risk or serious offenders.
- Offering more evidence that community models work.

d. What publications or products could OJJDP consider developing to support building an integrated system of care that is both comprehensive and tailored to the unique needs of youth?

- How will the information be shared across systems, states, governments, etc.? There is the search-and-find via web browsers, but then there are roles and responsibilities on how we implement those policies and practices. The implementation of the work requires the most support.
- Focus on racial equity should remain as well in all these conversations.

5. How can OJJDP support better cross-system collaboration to lead to improved systems of care for youth in the juvenile justice systems?

- We should flip this notion as well. Those negatively impacted by the lack of cross-system collaboration are those in the community. The guidance should come from community members, rather than system entities. Silos are created and maintained through the funding streams.
- OJJDP could leverage their capacity by incentivizing collaboration by those seeking funding.



- By partnering with youth, families, and communities, by highlighting promising models and approaches, by providing funding to spur innovation at the local level.
- Continued support and commitment for a continued partnership with community. Honor that commitment.
- Families and young people working at the community level have run through many traps and need and deserve the opportunity to share their experience and add their input.

6. What additional ideas or recommendations do you think OJJDP should consider for the upcoming fiscal year?

- All the above!
- How do we build up communities to implement these solutions?
- Staffing in youth-serving systems is a challenge. To operate systems effectively, you need good staff. Given staffing is an important dimension, how can OJJDP support families and staff dimensions such as recruitment, retention, and offer resources people need to do their job effectively? How do we position the agencies to do this well with that in mind?
- Offer more youth advocacy programs. Alternatives to detention have spread across jurisdictions because of incentive funding.
- Family/youth-led and -driven participation...Honoring their time by creating equitable positions for them and training to broaden effectiveness.
- Pathways to strengthen community members and those effected and attempting to solve these obstacles for their people.
- We have to continue building community. If we are closing prisons, use them for technical training. In order to do the work, it also takes funding, and we need to invest in community.
- On developing language: Parents don't always agree to what a young person is. Be intentional about what a young person is and don't transfer them to the adult side of services when they turn 18. I've seen some groups going to 25, 26, or 30 years old.

7. What questions do you have?