

# The Berrien County Experience:

An example of a  
change process  
and Evidence  
Based Practices



# Facts about Berrien County

- Located in the Southwest corner of Michigan
- Population = 158,500
- Youth ages 10-19 = 24,127
- Largest Cities:
  - Benton Harbor
  - Niles
  - St. Joseph

# FOCUS

- System Change by using a data driven decision making process to assess the juvenile justice system and then incorporating evidence-based principals to make improvements and evaluate impact.

2001

vs.

2010

- Avg. of **120** youth in residential placement

- Avg. of **35** youth in out of state placement

- Avg. of **35** youth in residential placement

- Avg. of **1** youth in out of state placement

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Financial Stewardship
- Accountability
  - Data Driven Decision Making
  - Research Indicated Practices
  - Cost/Benefit
  - Standardized Assessment Instruments
  - Evidence Based Programs
  - Evaluate Outcomes

# STRATEGIES

Focus resources on high risk offenders

Develop community and family based treatment options

Expedite diversion/closure of low risk cases

# Early predictors of future juvenile delinquency...



# The Major Risk Factors

- History of antisocial behavior
- Personal attitudes, values, beliefs supportive of crime
- Pro-criminal associates and isolation from anti-criminal others
- Familial factors
- Temperament and personality factors
- Low levels of education and personal achievement

## THE PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION

# Risk Principle

- invest resources in higher risk youth
- higher risk youth need more intensive services
- low risk youth require little to no intervention

# MODEL ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

## Delinquency Risk/Need

- Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT)
- Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI)
  - Youth Level of Service (YLS)

# The Benefits of Using a Risk Assessment Tool:

Enhances the probation process by matching client needs to appropriate services.

- Links interventions to the outcome of the assessment to impact recidivism.
- Allows for differentiated supervision based on risk.

## THE PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION

# Need Principle

- Targets of intervention must be linked to delinquent behavior.
- Focus on dynamic risk factors – *things that can be changed.*

So now what do you do with  
all this risk and needs  
information?

- **Match appropriate interventions to youth.**

# Research - Lipsey, Andrews, and others

- Effectiveness found in treatment and reduced recidivism
- Some treatment models work for some type of high risk youth
- Wrong-match = no results or negative results
- thus...classify both high risk youth and services to link together for positive results

# What are “Evidenced-Based Treatment” Models?

- They have measurable goals and objectives
- They are targeted to a specific group of individuals
- They evolve with the knowledge base—constantly changing and getting better . . .
- Data, data, data: There’s perpetual scrutiny at making sure that the right program is being delivered to the right people...and we can PROVE it!

# COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES

## Higher-risk Offenders

- Multisystemic Therapy (MST)
- Functional Family Therapy
- Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT)
- Intensive Probation Services
- Home/Family Based Treatment Service
- Parenting w/ Love and Limits (PLL)

# Impact from EBP in Berrien County:

- Reduced out-of-home placements
- Reduced recidivism
- Reduced severity of re-offense
- Reduced use of Detention
- Improved functioning and reduced risk of youth (YASI scores)
- Improved relationship with CMH
- Better services provided to families and youth

# Community Based Services Outcomes

- Risk Level
  - =Reduction over time
- Placement Status
  - = 3/4 remain in home
- Recidivism
  - =82% not reoffending
- Cost
  - =\$8000 per child
- Duration of Service
  - =6-7 months

# RECIDIVISM DATA

Not re-offending 1 year post closure

- High Risk 60-70%
- Medium Risk 75-80%
- Low Risk 88-94%

# “Measuring the Meaningful”

- Successful case closures
- Living Status
- School Enrollment
- Community Service Work
- Restitution Payment
- Recidivism
- Out of Home Placement

# Why invest in Community-Based Programs?

The real savings story.....

# Examples of Community-Based Program Costs:

- MST \$8,000 per family
- Intensive Probation \$16 per day/per youth
- FFT \$6000 per family
- BSFT \$4,022 per family
- PLL \$2,700 per family

# By Comparison...Examples of Out-of-Home Costs:

- Foster Care \$38.65 per day / \$14,000 per year
- Private Institution \$189 per day / \$69,000 per year
- Detention \$168 per day / \$61,000 per year
- State Facilities \$284 per day / \$103,660 per year

**Source: FY2003 CCF Statistics, DHS Publication 292**

# The savings can be dramatic!

- Average cost of community based examples **\$5,100** per year / per child or family
- Average cost of out of home placement examples **\$87,500** per year / per child

## So what do we do about this?

- Many more proven strategies, approaches, and tools are available to courts, child welfare, mental health, etc. to actually improve quality of care, reduce recidivism, and reduce short and long-run costs to taxpayers.
- Same old, same old is not working.
- So how do I find out more?.....

# Resources

Best Practices of Youth Violence Prevention: A Sourcebook for Community Action (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Centers for Disease Control)

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/bestpractices.htm>

Blueprints for Violence Prevention Programs (University of Colorado)

<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/>

OJJDP Model Programs Guide (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention)

[http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg\\_non\\_flash/mpg\\_index.htm](http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg_non_flash/mpg_index.htm)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Model Programs in Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment

<http://www.modelprograms.samhsa.gov>

# Resources (continued):

- Substance abuse: [www.csat.samhsa.gov](http://www.csat.samhsa.gov)
- Mental Health:  
[www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov)
- Non-profit Foundations for Children:  
[www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/2child.htm](http://www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/2child.htm)
- Auto-register for all federal grants:  
[www.fedgrants.gov](http://www.fedgrants.gov)
- And there are many more foundations that fund innovations for children including Kellogg, United Way, MacArthur, Robert Wood Johnson, etc.

**The End....**

**Thank You!**

- Elvin Gonzalez
- Family Division Administrator
- Berrien County Trial Court  
269-982-8615  
[egonzale@berriencounty.org](mailto:egonzale@berriencounty.org)