

Overview

The Children and Family Council for Prevention Programs (CFCPP) facilitates Vermont's participation in the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP). The 21-member Council has three primary functions: 1) advise the governor, legislature and juvenile justice system actors on implementation of the JJDP; 2) monitor the state's compliance with the JJDP; and 3) make grants to develop and implement juvenile justice programs in partnership with the Vermont Department for Children and Families.

State Summary

Total FY2011 Federal Investment (JABG, Title II and Title V):
\$875,557

FY2010 Federal Investment:
\$974,045

The current funding levels for juvenile justice in Vermont represent a **12%** decrease of the previous FY funding level.

Although Vermont has a generally low (and steadily decreasing) crime rate, and consistently ranks among the safest states in the nation, juveniles age 16 – 17 years old are routinely prosecuted directly ("direct filed") in adult criminal court, even for misdemeanor offenses. Further, the state continues to experience significant challenges with collecting data on the rate of contact that minorities have with the juvenile justice system. These issues – the overreliance on the adult criminal justice system and a dearth of information on minority contact – have become focus points for the CFCPP. With the federal investment in juvenile justice, the Council has begun to take action to address these problems, as follows:

The Title II Formula Grants Program

The JJDP Title II federal investment in Vermont in FY 2011 was \$600,000, flat-funded from FY2010. One-third of those monies are directed to the Vermont Children's Trust Fund which also consists of state and private funds that are in turn granted to small community based organizations to deliver services to children and youth. The balance of Title II funds are dedicated to systems improvement, through a statewide network of court diversion programs, to address system-involvement by 16 and 17-year olds. This strategy is the result of an assessment commissioned by the CFCPP which concluded that keeping kids out of the system entirely should be the primary goal of the Vermont juvenile justice system. As a result, the CFCPP has focused a majority of its Title II resources on court diversion, specifically on the development of a risk, need and responsiveness system, workforce training and improving standards.

One major initiative has been the DEAP- VT program, which introduced the use of the YASI (Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument) to help system actors decide how and whether a youth will be

charged for a low-level offense. At present, the results of the screening are shared with the court and prosecutor only upon consent of the youth and family, and prosecutors are not mandated to use the results. Yet, as several counties initiated the use of this tool, prosecutors began using it with increasing frequency, incrementally changing the longstanding practice of direct filing 16- and 17-year olds to adult court. In addition, there have also been co-occurring reductions in crime and delinquency, although it is too early to determine whether these reductions are a result of the YASI program. In addition to the YASI program, Title II dollars fund the training of prosecutors in adolescent brain development, to help them understand and appropriately respond to delinquency and other offenses committed by youth.

The Juvenile Accountability Block Grant Program (JABG)

The federal JABG investment in Vermont was \$225,557 in FY2011, a reduction from \$289,100 in FY2010 (-22%).

JABG funds were used to supplement the YASI program as well as to develop the workforce training component of Vermont's juvenile justice systems reform efforts. The workforce training funded in part by JABG dollars was dedicated to helping juvenile justice system actors – including members of the judiciary and prosecutors – to understand the evidence behind targeting risk and needs to improve outcomes for system-involved youth and to prevent youth system-involvement. The funding also supported training in motivational interviewing for social workers and probation officers and youth serving entities, and allowed the CFCPP to successfully implement the evidence-based approaches of family group conferencing and restorative justice in every district in the state.

The Title V Local Delinquency Prevention Program

The federal investment in JJDP Title V programs in Vermont was \$50,000 in 2011, down from \$84,945 (-42%) from FY2010. Given the relatively small amount of the allocation, Vermont has historically targeted a single community at a time for Title V funding. The most current Title V

Program Highlights

Grant allocations from the CFCPP, including but not limited to federal funds, resulted in \$1,700,000 in grant awards.

Some of the systems improvement allocations include:

- DEAP-VT Assoc. of Court Diversion: \$350,000
- Workforce training of youth service and treatment professionals: \$371,000
- Restorative Family Group Conferencing: \$135,000

Truancy Intervention

- Funded initiative reduced absences among youth served by 78% in 2009.

community, Bellows Falls, VT, established a mentoring project in partnership with the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, which they later leveraged to obtain additional funding for a pregnant teen mentoring program. Bellows Falls is illustrative of the test Vermont faces when already limited funding is further reduced. While Bellows Falls does not have the same issues as Burlington, for example, it has high poverty and teen pregnancy rates and is geographically-challenged by being located between two districts. Sustaining the project without support from state and federal investments will pose a significant challenge to this community.

For a complete listing of the programs and outcomes funded by Vermont's Children and Family Council for Prevention Programs, contact Marie Williams at the Coalition for Juvenile Justice at williams@juvjustice.org, or 202-467-0864, ext. 113.