A Better System for Status Offenders
National Best Practice and Case Outcomes

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Presentation Outline

- Presenter and Participant Introductions
- Status Offense Systems: Background
- System Reforms: The National Landscape
- System Reforms: Florida
- Wrap-Up
Status Offense Systems: Background
Established in 1960 to help “disobedient” youth

- Running away, truancy, ungovernability, alcohol/drug abuse
- Non-criminal behaviors that constitute an offense only because of the juvenile’s status as a minor

Uses family court to compel behavioral change
Status Offenders?

- Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS)
- Children in Need of Services (CHINS)
- Conduct Indicating a Need for Supervision (CINS)
- Families With Service Needs (FWSN)
- Families in Need of Services (FINS)
System Reforms:
The National Landscape
Key Areas of Reform

- The Problems
  - Courts overcrowded with status offense cases
  - Usage of detention
  - Lack of immediate crisis response/service resources
  - Sense that youth would be better served elsewhere
  - Kids best served at home and in community
  - Cost
Key Areas of Reform

The Solutions

- Make court the last resort
- Provide immediate crisis response
- Provide services that are tailored, community-based, and evidence-based
- Avoid detention
- Track outcome data
Make Court the Last Resort

- Court has been the historical entry point for status offenders
- Courts are generally ill-equipped to handle these cases
  - Overwhelmed
  - Can’t respond to crises
  - Compulsion-based
- Turn that model on its head
- Find a new gatekeeper
- Use court only as a last resort
Provide Immediate Crisis Response

- Families at the end of their ropes need response NOW
- New gatekeeper must be trained and equipped to respond immediately
  - Preferably in home
  - De-escalation
- Cool-down period, “time-out,” respite
- Referrals to services if needed
Provide Services that are Tailored, Community-Based, and Evidence-Based

- **Tailored**
  - No one size fits all
  - Validated screening and assessment
  - Room for flexibility and change in service plans

- **Community-Based**
  - Accessibility
  - Relationship-building

- **Evidence-Based**
  - Services that are proven to work
  - There are a variety of programs whose effectiveness has been rigorously tested and proven ("Family-Focused Therapy" ("FFT"), and "Multi-Systemic Therapy" ("MST"))
  - If not tested, use other programs grounded in same fundamental principles and techniques
Avoid Detention

- Does more harm than good
  - Environment
  - Peer influence
- Treating kids at home and in their communities more effective
- No crime committed
- Federal law (JJDPA)
- Jurisdictions around the country moving toward prohibiting altogether
Track Outcome Data

- Measure success
- Kinks are inevitable
- Measurement allows for thoughtful changes
- Sustainability
- Accountability
Status Offense Reforms: The National Landscape
National Models

- New York
- Louisiana
- Florida
New York State: Focus on Orange County
New York State: Orange County Reforms

- Philosophy
- Multi-System Collaboration
  - Department of Probation
  - Department of Social Services
  - Department of Mental Health
- Contracted with Non-Profit
  - Family Keys
- Immediate Response
New York State: Orange County Intake and Diversion

- **Point of Entry**
  - DEPT. OF MENTAL HEALTH
  - HOSPITAL EVALUATION
- **Family Keys**
  - FOLLOW-UP SERVICES
- ** Probation**
- **Family Court**

Non-truants
Between March 2003 and March 2008, Family Keys received 2,375 referrals.

Of the 2,180 families who accepted Family Keys’ services, 98 percent, or 2,136 children, avoided out-of-home placement.

In 2007, the program served 396 families, with an operating budget of approximately $422,000.

The average program duration that year, from referral to discharge, was 22 days.

57 runaway youth were served by Family Keys in 2007, and all avoided residential placement.
Louisiana: Models for Change Initiative

[Map of Louisiana with counties highlighted in different colors]

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Louisiana: Models for Change Initiative

- Calcasieu Parish
  - Fundamental Philosophy
  - Use of data
  - Creative grant writing

- Rapides Parish
  - Voluntariness
  - Contract length
  - School exhaustion
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