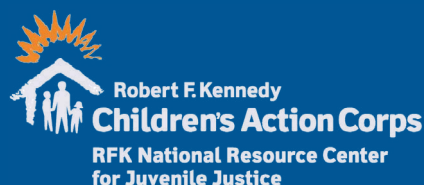




Building A Brighter Future for Youth with Dual Status

A Policy Roadmap Forward

October 2018



The Children’s Partnership is a non-profit, advocacy organization that works to improve the lives of children where they live, learn, and play. Since 1993, we have worked to advance the health and wellbeing of underserved children in California and in the country, through meaningful community partnerships, forward-thinking research, and community-informed policy. Visit www.childrenspartnership.org.

The Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice (RFK National Resource Center), led by Robert F. Kennedy Children’s Action Corps, provides informed and experienced field-based support to local, state, and national leaders, practitioners, and youth-serving agencies in improving system performance and outcomes for youth involved with, or at risk of becoming involved with, the juvenile justice system. The RFK National Resource Center focuses on consultation, technical assistance, training, and publication resources in four primary focus areas: advancing best practice in juvenile justice systems; improving probation system practice and performance through structured and comprehensive review and analysis; improving outcomes for youth with involvement in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems (known as dual status youth) through a seminal framework to guide multi-system coordination and integration; and overcoming multi-system information sharing challenges. Visit www.rfkchildren.org.

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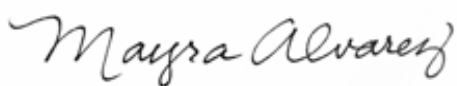
Foreword

The Children’s Partnership and the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice present this *Policy Roadmap Forward* as a guide for interested stakeholders across disciplines and across the country—in federal, state, and local jurisdictions and amongst schools, behavioral health service providers, health care settings, and community-based services—to move toward a better system of care and services for children and youth involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.


The independent operations of health, behavioral health, child welfare, education, and juvenile justice systems have too frequently discouraged collaboration, coordination, and integration of care and services for youth. As a result, the siloed structure exacerbates the challenges faced by youth with behavioral health issues, who, without adequate and appropriate health care, face escalating punitive treatment that can lead to contact with the juvenile justice system. Vulnerable youth with multi-system contact are at disproportionate risk for future justice-involvement and victimization, particularly youth of color and girls, which can be detrimental to their health and overall wellbeing. Through improved coordination and collaborative practices, child- and family-serving systems have an opportunity and obligation to disrupt pathways to delinquency and help mitigate youth exposure to adversity and trauma.

On April 30, 2018, 40 stakeholders from federal, state, and local levels in child welfare and juvenile justice convened in Washington D.C. to develop an actionable *Policy Roadmap Forward* to interrupt the pathways to delinquency for youth with child welfare involvement and instead forge a path forward. The convening brought together advocates, policymakers, researchers, clinicians, youth leaders, and other experts to share research and to identify promising policies, practices, and effective system change frameworks to improve outcomes for youth and prevent further exposure to trauma.

The day long discussion was inspired by the experiences and insights provided by a panel of youth; informed by new multi-jurisdictional research; and guided by the promising strategies at the state and local level, including innovative and technology-based solutions. As we seek to prevent system involvement for all youth, we must also work to minimize vulnerabilities and implement resilience-focused practices that support youth health and overall wellbeing. The perspective of inspiring youth, the successful and innovative programs from the state and local level, and the valuable lessons they provide are discussed in this *Policy Roadmap Forward* with the hopes that their impact on youth experiences in the child welfare and/or juvenile justice system can be replicated in communities nationwide. We look forward to working together with partners across the country on a shared agenda to provide all our children and youth a bright future.



Mayra E. Alvarez, President
The Children’s Partnership



John Tuell, Executive Director
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Executive Summary

Youth with dual status—often referred to as *dual status or crossover* youth—are at increased risk for poor outcomes and comprised lifelong trajectories. Contact with both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems can be detrimental to the health and wellbeing of youth, increasing exposure to adversity and trauma. Increasing access to coordinated and integrated health, behavioral health, and education services for youth with dual status can improve outcomes and support their healthy transition into adulthood. Federal, state, and local jurisdictions are well-positioned to implement feasible, actionable, and sustainable agendas to help mitigate trauma and ensure that youth are safe, healthy, and thriving. Effective and suitable changes for youth who are dually-involved incorporates youth-led recommendations at every stage of the policy process. While translating policy into effective practice can be a lengthy and costly process, once adopted and widely implemented, it may result in cost-savings and, most importantly, improved outcomes and opportunities for youth with dual status.

Policy Roadmap Forward is organized around three identified needs for action by jurisdictions:

1. Support cross-system collaboration that integrates a shared vision and values.
2. Implement coordinated trauma-informed approaches into child- and family-serving systems beyond child welfare and juvenile justice systems.
3. Adopt innovative and technology-based solutions that improve outcomes and opportunities for youth with dual status.





Policy and Practice Recommendations

Cross-system Collaboration

- **Recommendation 1:** Commit to integration and coordination of child welfare and juvenile justice systems to increase collaboration and accountability.
- **Recommendation 2:** Adopt policies, protocols, and procedures that promote multi-system collaboration and service coordination.
- **Recommendation 3:** Reauthorize the Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Act (JJDP A) to incentivize and promote cross-system collaboration and implementation of information sharing policies.
- **Recommendation 4:** Increase public awareness of the risk of dual-involvement for youth in the child welfare system and the implications of multi-system contact.

Trauma-Informed Approaches

- **Recommendation 1:** Adopt shared terminology and system language that empowers rather than alienates youth and families, including a shared definition of trauma and “a trauma-informed response.”
- **Recommendation 2:** Promote trauma-informed systems and a workforce with demonstrated knowledge, skills, and willingness to work with youth with dual status and their families.
- **Recommendation 3:** Optimize braiding or blending of funds at all levels to enhance a trauma-informed continuum of care for youth with dual status.
- **Recommendation 4:** Develop and implement quality measures to increase accountability and ensure trauma-informed approaches are implemented with fidelity; that the staff is adequately trained; and outcomes are monitored.
- **Recommendation 5:** Adopt legal responses aligned with trauma-informed approaches across processes, practices, protocols, and policies.

Technology and Innovation

- **Recommendation 1:** Child- and family-serving systems need to adopt technology-based solutions that address infrastructure issues, improve collaboration, and increase accountability.
- **Recommendation 2:** Increase access to training, including trauma-informed approaches, to foster parents, relative caregivers, biological parents, and group home providers.
- **Recommendation 3:** Adopt technology-based solutions to recruit, engage, and retain quality resource families or relative caregivers to increase placement stability and permanency for youth with dual status.
- **Recommendation 4:** Increase access to quality healthcare services and information for youth with dual-involvement.
- **Recommendation 5:** Adopt innovative solutions to engage, support, and develop youth with dual status.

Introduction

Jason, a twelve-year-old African-American youth in Los Angeles, comes before the juvenile court judge in distress as he looks around the room searching for a recognizable face. Jason is before the court because when he was 11 he got into a fight with another boy in his foster home, and his foster parents called law enforcement to de-escalate the situation. Prior to this incident, Jason has had six placements, was separated from his biological siblings, had not seen his mother, and has had service interruptions due to placement instability. Jason is currently in juvenile hall awaiting yet another placement.

Unfortunately, Jason's story is not unique. Far too many youth in foster care end up with juvenile justice involvement, which is detrimental to their health and overall wellbeing, increasing placement instability and exposure to adversity and traumatic experiences.

With a growing body of research outlining adverse outcomes on the developing brain and body of youth with dual status, public systems, service providers, and community-based organizations must foster systems of care that consider the totality of situations and the unique needs of these youths to help mitigate adverse outcomes. To help limit contact with the justice system, mitigate the exposure to adversity and trauma, and forge a better path for youth with dual status, our public systems, courts, service providers, and community-based organizations must improve system collaboration, integrate trauma-informed approaches, and leverage technology-based solutions and innovation. This *Policy Roadmap Forward* outlines effective policies, practices, and frameworks that disrupt entry into the justice system and helps prioritize the health and wellbeing of youth with dual status to build better systems of care for their healthy development.

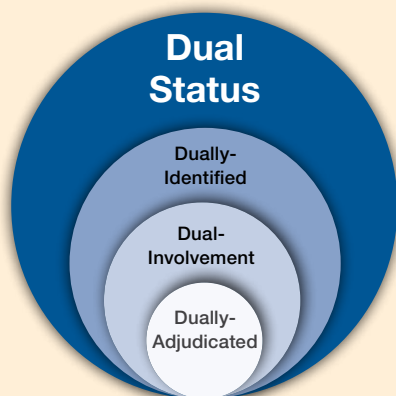


Overview of Dual Status

Heightened multi-system contact and involvement can perpetuate a foster care-to-prison pipeline, increasing exposure to adversity, trauma, and toxic stress for youth. Youth with dual status may face additional issues as a result of *complex trauma*—exposure to multiple traumatic incidents often repeated, prolonged, and extreme, which can affect child physical and mental development.¹ Services and systems are often siloed and inconsistent with each other, resulting in unintended consequences and re-traumatization of the youth they seek to support. With approximately 440,000 children in foster care and nearly 900,000 children arrested annually, it is critical to decrease and ultimately eliminate the overrepresentation of youth with dual status in both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems.² Disrupting compromised pathways and creating pipelines of opportunity for youth is fundamental to foster resilience, build protective factors, and mitigate exposure to adversity and trauma.

“Both of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems try to balance--public safety in one system and physical safety in the other--and we often do not think about the emotional safety of a child that’s part of that computation. We know now that the biggest way we can help with public safety is to help people feel healed and loved and supported themselves. Hurt people hurt other people and loved people love other people. In child welfare, we are so concerned with risk and physical safety, we never think about the fact that if you feel lonely and isolated and like nobody cares, if you’re away from everything that feels like home and you’re not being nurtured, you are in no way safe.”

- Jennifer Rodriguez, Youth Law Center



Terminology Matters: Identifying Youth with Dual Status

Jurisdictions and different systems within jurisdictions use various terms to describe youth who are or have been involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. For this brief, the term “dual status” will refer to any youth who has come into contact with both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, to any degree, in any order, and at any point in time. The timing and extent of the contact is what distinguishes the following subcategories:

- **Dually-identified:** youth who are currently involved with the juvenile justice system and have a history in the child welfare system but no current involvement.
- **Dually-involved:** youth who have concurrent involvement (diversionary, informal, formal, or a combination) with both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.
- **Dually-adjudicated:** youth who are concurrently adjudicated in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems (i.e., both dependent and delinquent).³

In addition to the above terms, some jurisdictions use the term “crossover” to refer to youth leaving the child welfare system and entering the juvenile justice system. Ultimately, this “crossover” and multi-system contact is precisely what systems should work to prevent.

Source: *Guidebook for Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare System Coordination and Integration: A Framework for Improved Outcomes*, 3rd Edition, Robert F. Kennedy Children’s Action Corps.

Policy Context: Federal, State, and Local Landscape for Youth with Dual Status

Federal legislation and regulation have significant implications for child welfare, juvenile justice, and other child- and family-serving systems. Across the United States, many of our most vulnerable youth are negatively impacted by contact and involvement with both the child welfare and juvenile justice system; moreover, the unique needs of youth with dual status are equally the responsibility of other public systems—including education, health, behavioral health—as well as many community-based organizations and advocates.

The Federal government provides guidance, accountability, and funding by developing infrastructure and enforcing collaboration, with the potential to improve system collaboration and outcomes for youth. Understanding existing policy and ongoing administrative and legislative efforts can help state and local partnerships to facilitate collaboration, coordination, and integration of services. Federal policy and regulation provides overarching standards and guidelines that can help reduce barriers to access of services, improve service utilization, address disparate treatment, identify risk factors, and monitor outcomes of youth with dual status. See page 7 for federal legislation and regulation that helps support state and local jurisdictions.

States and local jurisdictions are well-positioned to disrupt pathways to delinquency and reform policy and practice to reflect the unique needs because they are primarily

responsible for the administration and implementation of child welfare and juvenile justice systems. States vary in the operation and delivery of child welfare services. The majority of states operate via a centralized administrative system, but nine states operate child welfare services via a county administered system. Three states operate a system that is a hybrid of the state and partial administration by counties.¹³ Across the country, more than half of all juvenile probation services are administered at the local level or by a combination of local and state agencies and the rest are administered solely by state agencies.¹⁴

Administration and implementation of child- and family-serving systems beyond the core systems—including health, behavioral health, and education systems—creates opportunities for state and local jurisdictions to implement and sustain systems of care that improve the health and overall wellbeing of youth. Pioneering states and local jurisdictions can create meaningful and lasting policy and practice changes that promote healing and mitigate trauma by bridging service gaps for youth, adopting early identification protocols of youth at risk of dual contact, and ensuring safeguards are in place to prevent more profound experiences in the juvenile justice system. Disrupting compromised pathways and forging a better future for youth with dual status requires federal, state, and local jurisdictions to work together and put forth policies and practices that are in the best interest of youth.



Federal Legislation and Regulation

Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Act (JJDP)	<p>The JJDP, reauthorized in 2002, established the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to uphold federal standards of care, safeguard community interest, and prevent victimization of children, youth, and families involved with the juvenile and criminal courts.⁴ Reauthorization of JJDP included amendments that require, under formula grant programs, interaction and coordination of child welfare and juvenile justice agencies, including ensuring juvenile court access to child welfare records (including child protection services) of youth before their court appearance; policies and systems incorporate child welfare records into juvenile justice records to facilitate the implementation of treatment plans for youth; and, systems safeguards in place in place for Title IV-E [42. U.S.C. 672] funded youth placements ensuring adequate case planning and review.⁵ Reauthorization of the JJDP will establish cross-system protocols, policies, and procedures for juvenile justice and child welfare systems to collaborate and coordinate services for youth who are victims of abuse and neglect.</p>
Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)	<p>CAPTA was reauthorized in 2010 and included provisions from 2003 acknowledging the relationship between child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Amendments include protocols that enhance cross-system collaboration and service delivery for youth. Provisions include improvements to service delivery and treatment for youth with dual status including treatment planning and service transitions between systems [42 U.S.C. 5106a(a)(12)],⁶ as well as a provision [42 U.S.C. 5106a(d)(14)] requiring states to report annual data on children and youth who were in the care of child welfare and transferred to the juvenile justice system.⁷ CAPTA's discretionary grant funding and guidance support state effort for collaboration, data collection on the prevalence of youth with dual status, and service delivery for youth with dual status.</p>
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)	<p>ESSA was signed into law in 2015, creating transparency and shared accountability to support disadvantaged children and youth, including students involved with both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.⁸ Provisions include safeguards and proper interventions to support the academic success of students. ESSA pay-for-success initiatives provide funding and resources for schools to provide prevention and intervention services for system-impacted youth including victims of abuse or neglect, youth engaging in delinquent behavior, or youth at-risk of coming into contact with either system.⁹ ESSA funds provide an opportunity for education systems to provide services to youth with dual status to improve educational and occupational outcomes.</p>
Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)	<p>FFPSA was signed into law in 2018, restructuring child welfare system in efforts to help keep children with families and out of foster care. FFPSA builds on H.R. 5456 changing federal child welfare financing to invest in prevention and early intervention services can help deter future juvenile justice contact of youth in the child welfare system by limiting out of home placement, encouraging placements in family-like settings, and increasing access to evidence-based practices.¹⁰ Despite restrictions on federal reimbursement for placements other than family settings, FFPSA offers opportunity for child welfare agencies to adopt policies and practices rooted in prevention that address child welfare pathways to delinquency.</p>
Affordable Care Act (ACA), Medicaid & Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)	<p>ACA, Medicaid, and CHIP expansion and reauthorization provide opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of youth with dual status up to the age of 26. Comprehensive coverage is critical for system-impacted youth due to increased vulnerabilities and significant health and behavioral health needs.¹¹ Most children and youth involved with child welfare and juvenile justice systems are eligible for Medicaid.¹² Understanding the role of health care, including Medicaid entitlements, continuity of coverage, utilization, and access to services can improve positive short-term and long-term health outcomes for youth with dual status.</p>

Characteristics of Youth with Dual Status

Youth with dual status are particularly vulnerable, often identified as victims of child abuse or neglect and having contact with the delinquency system, and face unique challenges due to their complex needs. This *Policy Roadmap Forward* highlights the characteristics, demographic disparities, exposure to trauma, outcomes, and financial impact of dual status and provides policy recommendations to better support the healthy development of youth with dual status.

Dual Involvement

Youth with multi-system contact are more likely to experience the adverse effects associated with dual involvement and fare worse than their peers who have single system contact. Research shows that youth who come into contact with the child welfare system—often as a result of neglect—are at increased risk of poorer outcomes and future delinquency.¹⁵ Depending on how broadly the term is defined, the prevalence of dual system involvement of youth referred to juvenile courts can exceed well over 50 percent.¹⁶ Despite limitations and challenges identifying and monitoring youth with dual status, several local and state level studies have collected data identifying a link between child welfare and juvenile justice involvement. These jurisdictions, including both state and local, found the following:

- In King County, Washington, approximately 65 percent of youth with referrals to the juvenile court had past or current involvement with the child welfare system.¹⁷
- In Los Angeles County, California, an estimated 80 percent of youth exiting from intensive probation had been referred to the child protection services, with many experiencing referrals beginning in early childhood.¹⁸
- In Massachusetts, almost 75 percent of youth committed to the state's corrections department had involvement with the child welfare system.¹⁹
- In Washington, approximately 43.9 percent of youth referred to the juvenile justice system had a history of involvement with child welfare.²⁰



Multi-jurisdictional findings from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Dual Systems Study, conducted by researchers Carly Dierkhising and Denise Herz from the California State University, Los Angeles, and presented at the convening, found that approximately two-thirds of youth in the juvenile justice system have had contact with the child welfare system, in any order, and at any point in time.²¹ These results, released at the convening, indicate that the majority of these youth had historical child welfare involvement, with 69 percent of youth in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, and 70 percent of youth in New York City, New York.

Prior child welfare contact is not only a potential risk factor for delinquency but an opportunity for prevention and early intervention to deter future justice involvement. Early interventions and service delivery can help decrease and eliminate juvenile justice-involvement of youth in the child welfare system and reduce the risk of continued involvement in multiple systems throughout adulthood.

Disparities in Demographics

Youth of color and girls are overrepresented in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and among dual status populations. Youth of color, in particular, are overrepresented at every stage of the delinquency process—from arrest to secure detention, confinement, and transfer to the adult system. According to the Department of Justice, African American youth are five times more likely to be detained than their white peers and make up 44 percent of youth residing in juvenile facilities. A similar pattern is prevalent in the child welfare system, where children and youth of color are more likely to be identified as victims of child abuse and neglect. In 2016, African American children had the highest rates of victimization; 20.7 percent of the victims of child abuse and neglect were African American while African American children only comprise 13.8 percent of the general child population.²² Along the same pattern, multi-jurisdictional findings confirm that African American youth with child welfare involvement are at an increased risk for juvenile justice contact compared to their peers with single system involvement.²³ State and local jurisdiction demographics, of both child welfare and juvenile justice systems, align with federal findings: youth of color are more likely to have contact with both systems and experience disparate treatment.²⁴

Girls in the child welfare system are also at increased risk of becoming justice-involved. Girls represent one third to one half of the dually-involved population but only represent 20–25 percent of the general delinquency population.²⁵ A recent study found that historical and concurrent child welfare contact increases the risk of juvenile justice involvement for girls by almost 50 percent.²⁶ As stated above, youth with child welfare contact, particularly African American youth and girls, are at a disproportionate risk for future dual status.

The existence of racial and ethnic disparities within child welfare and juvenile justice systems has been a persistent challenge for decades. Multi-system contact is detrimental for youth and can be compounded for already vulnerable youth, such as African American youth and girls. However, there are opportunities to take a data-informed approach to reduce disparities and provide youth of color and girls a more positive trajectory for the future.

Exposure to Trauma

Exposure to traumatic events is a very frequent experience for youth in both child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Studies show that approximately 70 percent of children in the child welfare system and 80 percent of youth in the juvenile justice system have experienced trauma.²⁷ Youth with dual status are also more likely than their peers to have experienced *complex trauma*, increasing their risk of further adverse experiences.²⁸ Youth who have contact with health and human services, such as child welfare and juvenile justice, are also more likely to have experienced intergenerational trauma, a cumulative and collective trauma over multiple generations.²⁹

Defining Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care

Trauma

“Trauma” refers to experiences that cause intense physical and psychological stress reactions. It can refer to “a single event, multiple events, or a set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.”³⁰

Complex Trauma

“Complex trauma describes both children’s exposure to multiple traumatic events—often of an invasive, interpersonal nature—and the wide-ranging, long-term effects of this exposure. These events are severe and pervasive; such as abuse or profound neglect. They usually occur early in life and can disrupt many aspects of the child’s development and the formation of a sense of self.”³¹

Trauma-Informed Care

The critical elements of a trauma-informed system of care incorporate the following key elements into practice: (1) realizing the prevalence of trauma; (2) recognizing how trauma affects all individuals involved with the program, organization, or system, including its workforce; (3) responding by putting this knowledge into practice; and, (4) resist re-traumatization.”³²

Chronic and long-term exposure to traumatizing events results in adverse effects compromising the social, emotional, and physical development of children and youth.³³ Consequently, trauma-based behaviors or maladaptive coping increase youth engagement in risky or self-injurious behavior.³⁴ Signs, symptoms, and effects of trauma can manifest in reactions or behaviors that interfere with a youth's daily function or ability to interact with others, including emotional dysregulation—aggression, impulsivity, absenteeism, self-harm, or risk-taking/seeking—and physiological symptoms—heart pounding, vomiting, or bowel or bladder control issues.³⁵ Physical and emotional responses to adversity, trauma, and toxic stress can be heightened by punitive juvenile justice system responses such as detention or out-of-home placement for dually-involved youth.³⁶

Improving opportunities and outcomes for youth with dual status will require a commitment to promising programs and practices that work, such as a trauma-informed approaches, and provide incentives for their use. Recognizing a trauma-informed approach to better meeting the needs of youth with dual status will require organizational and cultural change, as a well as cross-system collaboration.

Outcomes of Dual Status

Through no fault of their own, children and youth who enter the child welfare system are at an increased risk of becoming dual status and then suffer from lifelong effects. Youth with dual status are more likely to experience poor outcomes across multiple domains, and are at increased risk of continued poor outcomes throughout adolescence and adulthood, including health, education, employment, and justice system involvement.³⁷ Outcomes include:



Health: Youth with multi-system involvement interact with health and behavioral health providers at an increased rate compared to other youth.³⁸

A 2008 Los Angeles County study found that 83 percent experienced at least one behavioral health problem; an estimated 28 percent were found to have suffered a mental health problem without a substance use problem; and 17 percent had experienced a substance use problem without a co-occurring mental health issue.³⁹



Justice Involvement: Youth with dual status are more likely to be detained; experience longer stays in detention; are more likely to recidivate; and are more likely to experience adverse outcomes related to permanency, with higher numbers of placement changes.⁴⁰

A 2015 New York City study found that 57.1 percent of youth with multi-system involvement experienced incarceration within six years of exiting care, compared to 14.7 percent of youth with child welfare involvement only.⁴¹ A recent OJJDP Dual Systems Study found that youth with dual-involvement (concurrent involvement with both systems) are 16-91 percent more likely to be placed in out-of-home-care, have an average of five to nine placements, and are 28-57 percent more likely to be detained after being charged.⁴²



Education: Studies show a strong relationship between maltreatment and adverse school outcomes, such as poor grades, high rates of absenteeism, grade retention, behavioral issues, and involvement in special education programs.

An Arizona-based study found that more than 50 percent of youth with dual status were more than one year behind in school, at least 44 percent required special education services, and 67 percent of youth with dual status were identified as chronically truant.⁴³ Although youth with dual status experience adverse school outcomes due to increased educational risk, a recent study found increased educational risk is not associated with increased educational service referrals or access.⁴⁴



Employment: Linked to poor education outcomes, youth with dual status experience poor employment outcomes.

A study in Los Angeles County, California, of 222 non-minor dependent probation foster youth exiting from probation, found that less than half had a high school diploma or equivalent, and only 34 percent had either full-time or part-time employment.⁴⁵

To reduce risk factors and improve outcomes for youth with dual status, systems must deliberately work to strengthen and build protective factors such as school engagement, educational attainment, positive relationships, and community ties.⁴⁶

Fiscal Implications for Families and Society

The occurrence of child neglect, abuse, and delinquency imposes an economic expense on youth and families directly, as well as on state child- and family-serving systems. For systems, the number and range of associated services and processes rendered to youth with dual status—such as detention, court processing, out-of-home placement, and other services—are resource intensive and come at a significant cost. Research has shown that youth with dual status are twice as likely as youth involved in a single system to become chronic users of public systems; three times more likely to have contact with the criminal justice system and have longer stays in jail; one and a half times more likely to receive public assistance in the form of General Relief; and twice as likely to be unemployed.⁴⁷ A comparative study from the New York City Office of the Mayor in 2015 found similar results with the average cumulative cost of dual involvement at 40 percent higher than youth with single system involvement—the average cost being \$65,424 per youth with dual status compared to \$46,670–\$47,854 for youth with single system involvement.⁴⁸ The study also validated that youth with dual status have higher utilization rates across several domains, including greater reliance on cash aid, nutrition assistance, and Medicaid, as well as more emergency department visits, jail, detention, foster care, and single adult shelter stays. Ultimately, youth with dual status have a 10 percent–30 percent increase in utilization of four to five public systems compared to their peers with single system involvement. Multi-system involvement for youth results in increased economic cost, straining overburdened child- and family-serving systems and public benefit services.⁴⁹

Youth with dual status have higher utilization rates across several domains, including greater reliance on cash aid, nutrition assistance, and Medicaid, as well as more emergency department visits, jail stays, detention stays, foster care stays, and single adult shelter stays.



Aside from the fiscal impact to the systems, dual system involvement can have a significant impact on a young person's overall quality of life. It is already known that children and youth who are victims of child abuse and neglect are more likely to have lower levels of education, employment, earnings, and assets in adulthood.⁵⁰ Add to this the potential negative impact on life outcomes related to juvenile justice involvement and what results is a high degree of concern about the impact on individuals and society as a whole. The overall cost of maltreatment and recidivism, in both economic and human terms, is not only a threat to the health and wellbeing of youth involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, but can also have a long-term economic impact perpetuating a cycle of financial hardship and poverty.

Supporting a path to self-sufficiency for youth with dual status, which will ultimately reduce the fiscal impact described above, relies on a multi-disciplinary commitment to system collaboration and improvement, and meaningful youth engagement. Improving the experience for youth with dual status and preventing system involvement where possible will support an individual youth's development and also strengthen our nation's future by breaking the cycle of poverty and financial hardship.

Policy Roadmap Forward

Ongoing efforts by local, state, and federal jurisdictions to advance initiatives that ensure a youth's successful transition into adulthood recognize the increased attention to the issues affecting youth with dual status. As voices of youth are elevated and critical data shared, there is a strong sense of collective urgency to prevent multi-system contact and involvement of youth by disrupting pathways for dual involvement. Preventing more profound experiences in the justice system can be achieved by implementing successful and sustainable changes in both policy and practice that integrate multiple intervention components at both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems level. Although youth with dual status have contact with multiple agencies, there is an excellent opportunity for reform within the two core systems—child welfare and juvenile justice—guided by and in partnership with youth with experience in these systems.

The goal of this *Policy Roadmap Forward* is to provide useful guidance and implementable policy and practice options for federal, state, and local leaders to create lasting change. Toward this end, it is critical to ensure that federal agency initiatives align with state and local goals, while leveraging innovation and technology. To achieve this, the *Policy Roadmap Forward* provides a federal overview of legislation and regulation to help support state and local initiatives forge a path forward for youth. The following recommendations highlight the challenges we are facing, as evidenced by the findings above, and offer insights for what more can be done to improve the outcomes for youth. In promoting collaboration, a cultural shift, and innovation, these recommendations seek to create a more responsive and equitable approach to support the healthy development of youth with dual status.

Improving the outcomes of youth with dual status requires a comprehensive multi-system approach that strengthens and builds protective factors, and requires a policy and

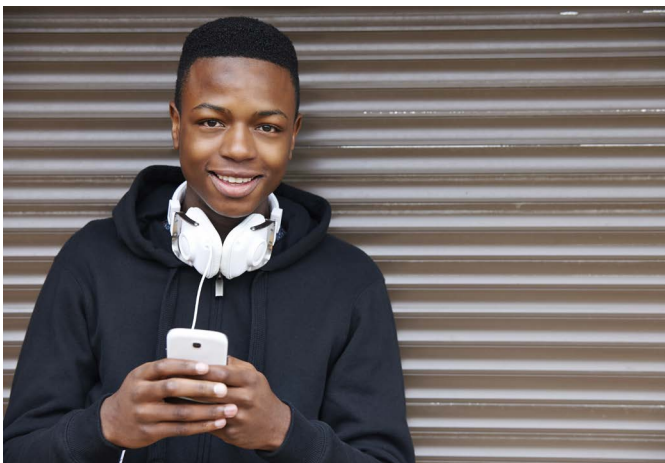
practice paradigm shift grounded in the principles of healing, resilience, and prevention. By recognizing long-standing challenges and obstacles—such as identification and uniform definition of youth with dual status, database infrastructure, workforce training and retention, family engagement, cross-systems collaboration, among others—jurisdictions can forge policy and practice reforms that supports youth and families more effectively.



Disrupting Pathways to Delinquency for Youth with Child Welfare Involvement: Opportunities and Recommendations

States and local jurisdiction have the opportunity to create a continuum of care that adheres to the best interest of youth with dual status, reflective of their unique needs and characteristics. The following opportunities are highlighted by jurisdictional representatives at the convening in Appendix A. Jurisdictions have a responsibility to mitigate trauma and minimize vulnerabilities for youth with dual status by implementing a comprehensive and responsive trauma-informed systems of care for youth. Convening participants agreed that creating a continuum of care for youth with dual status can be achieved at the state and local level with federal support. State and local jurisdiction representatives, researchers, advocates, and youth leaders identified the following opportunities for state and local jurisdictions:

- Judicial leadership
- Legislative and administrative action
- Collaboration, coordination, and accountability
- Information sharing and database infrastructure
- Comprehensive and holistic service delivery
- Education and occupational services
- Workforce training
- Innovation and technology-based solutions



Informed by convening attendees, an overview of existing research, and a scan of existing promising programs, improved outcomes and opportunities for youth can be achieved through multi-system collaboration and coordination of child- and family-serving systems, integration of trauma-informed systems of care, and the adoption of innovative and technology-based solutions. The following provides an overview of recommendations that can improve outcomes and eliminate disparities for youth with dual status that can be adapted based on jurisdiction circumstances and needs.

Cross-System Collaboration

While the child welfare system seeks to protect children and provide family-focused services and the juvenile justice system attempts to rehabilitate youth while ensuring public safety, collaboration and coordination of both systems, that are not always in alignment, can improve the health and overall wellbeing of youth with dual status. Youth with dual status often face service interruptions as they transition between systems, and a comprehensive and coordinated holistic approach can help decrease and eliminate service disruption and create a continuum of care for youth. These efforts include coordination of services including education, health and behavioral health systems, law enforcement, and others. Coordinating and integrating these systems can be challenging for jurisdictions yet worthwhile by reducing costs and improving long-term outcomes for youth.

During the convening, a panel representing five-jurisdictions explored challenges and limitations to collaboration, coordination, and systems integration while sharing promising approaches that resulted in cost-savings, reduction in overreliance of out-of-home placement, and confinement. See *Appendix A* for jurisdiction panel examples. Panelists agreed that despite their success there is still a lot of work to be done. Additionally, participants agreed that youth impacted by both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems should be included in systems change conversations, at all levels of the process.

Dually-involved youth are often among the high-need and high-risk populations requiring systems to collaborate and coordinate efforts to improve outcomes, safeguard youth from further victimization, and reduce further contact with justice systems. A shift in policies and outcomes beyond safety and permanency can be challenging and often requires child- and family-serving systems to establish new expectations, partnerships, and practices. Collaboration and coordination requires a commitment, strong leadership, and assured sustainability often attained by the adoption of systems frameworks, legislative or administrative action, and awareness. The adoption of the following practices can achieve collaboration and coordination of child- and family-serving system.



Recommendation 1

Commit to integration and coordination of child welfare and juvenile justice systems to increase collaboration and accountability.

Integrating child welfare and juvenile justice systems will facilitate identification of dually-involved youth and those at risk of multi-system contact allowing child- and family-serving agencies to adequately service and support youth. Practice frameworks and promising practices help promote collaboration and system coordination, ultimately improving service delivery for dually-involved youth. Such frameworks and promising practices can address system inefficiencies, organizational culture, and shared mission and values.



Dual Status Youth Initiative

The Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice, led by Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps, provides guidance and intensive technical assistance for state and local jurisdictions in their endeavor to improve outcomes for dual status youth and families and to enhance system performance among critical child- and family-serving agency partners. The original framework for dual status youth reform was developed in 2002, and the work has been advanced by several publications that delve into research, best practice, and system change guidance. The RFK National Resource Center staff and consultant teams help state and local jurisdictions address core components of multi-system collaboration, data, resource, and legal matters as well as planning, managing, and sustaining change.



Crossover Youth Practice Model

The Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University developed the Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM) in 2010 to strengthen collaboration—specifically between the child welfare system, the juvenile justice system, and related systems—and incorporate an integrated approach to reduce the number of youth that crossover from the child welfare system to the juvenile justice system.⁵¹ This strength-based approach combines both research and best practices to improve outcomes for dual status youth.

Recommendation 2

Adopt policies, protocols, and procedures that promote multi-system collaboration and service coordination.

States and local jurisdictions must establish dual status policy, protocol, and procedures improving collaboration among systems. Changes at both the state and local levels create mechanisms to continuously identify youth with dual status, establish data-sharing agreements, create partnerships, increase accountability and reporting, and help mitigate exposure to adversity and trauma for youth and families. Policies, protocols, and procedures that invest in multi-system cross-training and workforce development are critical to facilitate collaboration and coordination and to strengthen youth resilience and family cohesiveness.

“It’s really hard to legislate love. We can’t tell the state legislature, we can’t say, ‘The state shall coordinate with the counties that the social worker shall love the youth,’ right? That would be beautiful.”

- Jesse Aguiar, Journey House

Multi-system Collaboration Policies and Practice

Hampden County, Massachusetts: The County’s Department of Children and Families implemented pre-trial multi-disciplinary team meetings (MDT) to collaboratively prevent youth from moving deeper into the delinquency system. MDT meetings are facilitated by the court mental health clinical director and includes the Probation Officer, DCF Social Worker, DCF Diversion Workers, youth when appropriate, Parent Advocate, Family Resource Center, defense attorney, and Assistant District Attorney. For additional multi-system collaboration policies and practice examples, see Appendix A.



Recommendation 3

Reauthorize the Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Act (JJDP A) to incentivize and promote cross-system collaboration and implementation of information sharing policies.

JJDP A can help provide a greater depth of understanding of the implications of multi-system involvement allowing for the implementation of a continuum of care focused on both prevention and intervention for youth who are at-risk of dual contact and those dually-involved. Access and collection of child welfare data can potentially facilitate service delivery, monitoring, and help coordinate case management.



Take Action: ACT 4 Juvenile Justice

[ACT 4 Juvenile Justice](#) (ACT4JJ) is a national campaign of the National Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coalition comprised of child welfare, juvenile justice, and youth development organizations advocating for the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Act (JJDP A). ACT4JJ represents more than 180 national, state, and local organizations that work to ensure the following principles are maintained in the reauthorization of the JJDP A: keep youth out of the juvenile justice system; ensure equity and competence; ensure age and developmentally appropriate responses; and, strengthen federal partnership with state, local, and tribal governments.



Recommendation 4

Increase public awareness of the risks of dual-involvement for youth in the child welfare system and the implications of multi-system contact.

Public awareness can be integrated as an overall approach or strategy by agencies and jurisdictions across all levels to prevent further victimization, penetration into justice systems, and exposure to adversity and trauma. Public awareness can take the form of campaigns, twitter chats, and web-based platforms, among others, to help raise awareness, change perceptions, engage partners, and mobilize child- and family-serving agencies to take action and improve outcomes for youth.



Trauma-Informed Choices

With increased awareness on the impacts of adversity, trauma, and toxic stress on youth's social, emotional, and physical development, child- and family-serving agencies must adopt policies and practices that recognize these impacts and strengthen and support youth. Ongoing and chronic exposure to high doses of adversity, trauma, and toxic stress can be detrimental to the developing brain. Child- and family-serving systems have a responsibility to adhere to the best interest of youth, to adopt and implement trauma-informed approaches, to help mitigate risk, and to minimize effects of adversity, trauma, and toxic stress. Coordinated and integrated multi-system trauma-informed approaches reflected in both policy and practice can help strengthen community supports, resources, and protective factors for youth.

Public systems—child welfare, education, health, behavioral health, probation, the judicial system—as well as many community-based organizations and advocates need to shift the power differential when working with youth. Engaging youth in decision-making at every step of their case and treatment plan enables youth to hold on to their power, facilitates growth, and strengthens protective factors, and self-actualization. A shift from systems of structural inequality to an approach that empowers youth and families can help mitigate exposure to trauma by operating from a commitment to ensuring that all are physically, psychologically, socially, and emotionally safe. Prevention, treatment, and service delivery for youth with dual status rooted in family context increases trust between youth, families, and systems resulting in improved safety and stability for youth. Youth and families can define for themselves what trauma is and what truly makes them feel safe and supported.

“All the trauma I’ve ever been through ceased to exist every time my mom was with me.”

- Tauheedah Shakur, Youth Organizer

Prevention and intervention efforts rooted in the context of family and based in communities will facilitate the integration of trauma-informed policies and practices across a continuum of services, specifically education, child welfare, and juvenile justice systems. During the convening, participants worked to define adversity, trauma, and toxic stress, and to explore opportunities to implement trauma-informed systems of care. Youth leaders challenged participants to rethink how public agencies and service providers define and operationalize trauma while treating and servicing youth in the context of family. As one of the youth leaders said, “we can’t talk about foster care if we are not investing in our families.” Coordinated and trauma-informed approaches might be challenging but are critical in preventing further exposure to adversity and trauma. Scalable and sustainable trauma-informed systems of care can help build protective factors, foster resilience, and allow youth to heal.

“Youth will only benefit from these systems if it’s done right, and the way that it’s done right is to involve the family; let them be at the table when they make decisions.”

- Margaret Samuel, Youth Advocate

Adoption of the following recommended practices can facilitate healing and improve outcomes for youth with dual status.

Recommendation 1

Adopt shared terminology and system language that empowers rather than alienates youth and families, including a shared definition of trauma and “a trauma-informed response.”

Because there is a lack of standardized education, training, and resources among the various systems involved with youth and families, there needs to be a concerted effort to establish a unified language that is accepted by the system workforce and families and youth alike. The power differential that exists between families, their communities, and systems requires a modification of messaging and language. Child- and family-serving system terms, including “casework” or “intake,” are often viewed as impersonal and lead individuals to feel that their voices are not welcomed. Agencies and service providers that use terms such as “child in need of services” rather than “delinquent” or “status offender” drives attitudes and responses toward a more child-centered and family-focused approach. Also, person-first language should be used rather than using labels before the person (e.g., youth with dual status rather than dual status youth). Furthering this opportunity to give agency to youth and families, the definition of trauma and what being trauma-informed will mean throughout the continuum of child- and family-serving systems must include an understanding that behaviors observed in youth need to be considered in the context of what is known about trauma exposure, symptoms, and disorders. Youth are in the best position to identify what is traumatic for them and what constitutes being safe in their environments and interactions.



Recommendation 2

Promote trauma-informed systems and workforce with demonstrated knowledge, skills, and willingness to work with youth with dual status and their families.

A trauma-informed system of care requires ongoing workforce training that yields a paradigm shift in culture, knowledge, perspective, skills, and attitude recognizing the importance of responding to adversity and trauma. System and agency practices that integrate a trauma-informed approach, with particular attention to youth with multi-system contact, ought to include the following components:

- Wide-ranging opportunities for relevant training across all systems with which youth and families interact
- Training models that include coaching to ensure knowledge is put to use appropriately and effectively
- Practicing cultural humility and focusing on resilience rather than on the trauma
- Increasing accountability to ensure that necessary services are available and effective in supporting system-impacted youth and families



Outagamie County, Wisconsin

Outagamie County is committed to focusing on organizational culture change as a primary activity and has made significant gains in bridging the gap between child welfare and juvenile justice among supervisors and workers. The County Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Children and Families (DCF), partnered with the Department of Children and Families in Madison, to bring Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) certification to 30 clinicians from 11 agencies. The staff from both the Youth Justice Division and the Child Protective Services Division received training from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN). Additionally, staff is provided with toolkits and resources to help families respond to children and youth's symptoms of trauma. This course is offered two times a year to biological parents and foster/kin caregivers. In the last year, the agency began to pilot two trauma screening tools – the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the Screen for Childhood Anxiety Related Emotions Disorder (SCARED). The state has developed additional programs and efforts that are more preventative in nature, such as creating trauma-informed systems and increasing access to mental health services.

Recommendation 3

Optimize braiding or blending of funds at all levels to enhance a trauma-informed continuum of care for youth with dual status.

Existing models are guiding how systems can work together to coordinate funding of needed resources and services, helping to sustain and increase providers' capacity to serve youth with dual status. Streamlining integrated funding models increases access to services for youth and families, allowing for a more comprehensive and holistic approach that integrates social determinants of health, including housing, nutrition, transportation, and others.⁵² Braiding and blending funding models—including funding streams for prevention, treatment, and health—should be explored and applied to ensure trauma-informed training and services are made available to all system partners.



New Jersey Children's System of Care

New Jersey Children's System of Care (CSOC), a division of the Department of Children and Families (DCF), created a comprehensive system of care for children and families with emotional and behavioral disturbances by providing effective clinical care and support.⁵³ CSOC, a multi-year initiative with a five-year implementation, significantly changed financing, contracting, organization, and service delivery for children and families. Funding for New Jersey's multi-year initiative includes both new and existing state and federal revenue. CSOC is managed by the NJ's Department of Human Services with funding streams that include Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services (Medicaid), Youth and Family Services, and others.⁵⁴

Recommendation 4

Develop and implement quality measures to increase accountability and ensure trauma-informed approaches are implemented with fidelity; the staff is adequately trained; and outcomes are monitored.

Although adversity and trauma definitions and measures vary widely depending on the tools used, there are limited tools to evaluate trauma-informed systems of care. Systems guided by youth and families must work to define measures that indicate success in becoming trauma-informed. Professionals in child- and family-serving systems should promote standards and outcomes that support the changes in the social, emotional, and physical wellbeing of youth.

Recommendation 5

Adopt legal responses aligned with trauma-informed approaches across processes, practices, protocols, and policies.

Multi-system involvement for youth with dual status often includes both dependency and delinquency courts. Current responses from the legal system are often based on approaches that are not trauma-informed, resulting in out-of-home placement or detention of youth. Practices that re-traumatize youth, such as placement changes and detention, often contradict efforts that support permanency and wellbeing. Courts, social workers, probation officers, and attorneys should consider community-based interventions and less restrictive placements that help promote resilience and protective factors. Trauma-informed legal systems ensure youth with dual status are afforded legal representation and that they are supported, consulted, and advised in a meaningful way. A legal system rooted in an understanding of trauma can play a critical role in creating a community of healing.





Juvenile and Family Court Trauma-Informed Framework

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ), in collaboration with the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), established a trauma-informed juvenile and family court framework focused on mitigating exposure to adversity and trauma. Court systems and legal professionals interact with vulnerable populations to create an environment that promotes healing, safety, agency, and enhanced social connections. Courts and legal professionals must become trauma-responsive and knowledgeable about adolescent development. NCJFCJ's framework embraces the strategic role courts play in the lives of vulnerable populations, and encourage courts and legal responses to be aligned with trauma-informed approaches.

Trauma-informed systems of care can help support youth and families impacted by multi-system involvement and improve their health and wellbeing.

Technology and Innovation

Technology and innovation can help disrupt the foster care-to-prison pipeline by bridging the gaps amongst public sector, service providers, and court systems. Various factors contribute to inefficiencies—within systems such as child welfare, juvenile justice, courts, health, behavioral health, and education—and create more challenges for already overburdened and under-resourced child- and family-serving systems. These factors include lack of access to real-time data, lack of database infrastructure, challenges with information sharing, communication issues, lack of family engagement, difficulty of recruitment of resource families, and others issues that can be addressed by innovative and technology-based solutions. Increased access to tools and design can help address these challenges, creating opportunities to facilitate collaboration, coordination, and accountability at the local, state, and federal level.

The use of technology and innovation to improve the experience of children and youth in the child welfare system is growing. The past few years have shown increasing interest in identifying opportunities for technology to address challenges. Across the country, a series of foster care hackathons—events that bring together a group of coders, youth, and other stakeholder to work collaboratively to create a new solution in a short, intense time period and often spurred on by a competitive element—have generated new tools and resources to better serve children and youth in the child welfare system. However, while the hackathons are exciting and participants emerge with great energy to make change, as time passes, that commitment and energy may dissipate.⁵⁵ To counter this effect, it is necessary to focus technology and innovation efforts on sustainable investments for systemic change to improve the lives of children and youth in foster care. Investments in social innovation will enhance service delivery and create targeted interventions for youth and families.

Technology

Technology-based solutions create opportunities to disrupt pathways to delinquency for youth with child welfare contact or involvement by creating tools designed to not only increase access to data, but also by developing systems that help support young people to develop, grow, and thrive. Tools include human-centered infrastructures that allow systems to share data, networks that help foster and strengthen family ties, software that helps increase access to services and deliver interventions for youth and families, and advanced analytics that help make data-informed decisions based on behavior. Adoption and integration of innovative technology-based strategies and solutions across all sectors can create pipelines of opportunity for youth who have contact with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Innovation

Innovative opportunities that help foster community connections, prosocial development, and increase educational attainment can help youth successfully transition to adulthood. In efforts to improve the health and wellbeing of youth with dual status, it is imperative to explore and exhaust all options to limit exposure to adversity and traumatic experiences across all levels of government and sectors. Examples of non-traditional responses that promote permanency, safety, and build protective factors instead of sanctions are occupational training pre-programs, mentorship opportunities, network platforms, and civic engagement models. Disrupting compromised pathways requires child- and family-serving systems to adopt creative solutions that help youth heal and promote resilience.

Throughout the convening, participants were challenged to identify innovative and technology-based solutions to address barriers to collaboration, coordination, and implementation of a trauma-informed approach. Rafael Lopez, former commissioner of the Administration for Children and Families, and Sixto Cancel, CEO and Founder of Think of Us, challenged participants to adopt innovative solutions to help bridge the gap between the public sector, service providers, and courts. Connecting innovation and technology to disrupt the pathways to delinquency and help mitigate the exposure to adversity and trauma can be achieved in the following ways.

Recommendation 1

Child- and family-serving systems need to adopt technology-based solutions that address infrastructure issues, improve collaboration, and increase accountability.

Developing and enhancing infrastructure that facilitates identification, monitoring, and sharing of information among child welfare, juvenile justice, education, and court systems can help improve outcomes for youth with multi-system involvement. Cross-system data and information sharing, coupled with data standards definitions, are critical for collaboration, accountability, and service delivery. Access to real-time data increases efficiency, communication, case planning, and improves access to services for youth with dual status.



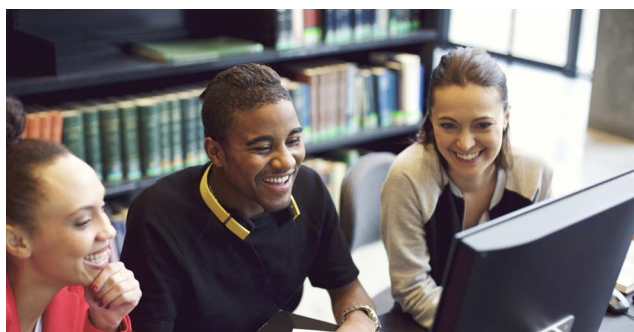
California

The State of California has taken strides to revisit their dual status policy, protocol, and procedures by investing in infrastructure and establishing data standards. In 2016, the legislature directed the Judicial Council of California to convene stakeholders and examine established data standards to facilitate the identification and monitoring of youth with dual status.⁵⁶ Concurrently, California is redesigning their child welfare information system, [Child Welfare Services](#)—California Automated Response and Engagement System (CWS-CARES), increasing system capabilities to assess safety and permanency of at-risk children and youth.

“Using data is extremely important to move the work along. Kids are falling through the cracks in our systems. Even with identification, we’re finding that kids are falling through the cracks.”

- Melissa Blom

Children, Youth & Families Division,
Outagamie County Department of Health & Human Services



Recommendation 2

Increase access to training, including trauma-informed approaches, to foster parents, relative caregivers, biological parents, and group home providers.

Access to virtual training can help increase knowledge on adolescent development and trauma-informed practices, assisting families to respond to and de-escalate trauma-based behaviors. Ensuring that families have the tools necessary to care for and support youth is critical to limiting contact with law enforcement and justice systems while increasing stability and safety for youth.



Foster Parent College

[Foster Parent College](#) (FPC) increases access to virtual training for resource parents—foster, adoptive, and kinship parents—through interactive multimedia training courses in a convenient, engaging, and effective way. FPC increases support and knowledge on parenting and behavioral challenges by providing self-paced access to expert trainings 24/7. Public and private agencies, such as the State of California’s Department of Social Services, partner with FPC to increase access to online trainings at no cost to resource parents.

Recommendation 3

Adopt technology-based solutions to recruit, engage, and retain quality resource families or relative caregivers to increase placement stability and permanency for youth with dual status.

Recruitment and engagement of quality resource families—relative caregivers, extended family, foster parents, and prospective adoptive parents—can help support the safety and healthy development of youth with dual status that reside in out-of-home placement. Throughout their trajectory, youth with dual status have connections with caseworkers and probation officers but often only for short periods of time. Efforts to establish a connection with an uncle, aunt, coach or teacher can serve as a critically important resource for youth. Ensuring that youth have lifelong connections can help foster a sense of belonging by fostering resilience, building protective factors, and deterring risky behavior. Recruiting, retaining, and

supporting current and prospective resource families that have parenting skills and knowledge of child development and awareness of the impact of trauma will help meet the unique needs of youth with dual status.

**"There's no power without family."
- Joaquin Granger, Youth Organizer**



Promoting Placement Stability

[Florida Match](#) partners with state government agencies to create an online network for child welfare professionals to help identify and match prospective foster and adoptive families with children and youth. Foster Match uses technology to connect children and families, helping create stability and permanency for children and youth.

[Family Finding](#) helps identify relatives and supportive adults to establish permanent connections. This model helps youth develop meaningful and enduring connections and relationships with adults; promotes safety and stability; helps youth develop agency and a sense of identity; prevents recidivism; and decreases formal services interventions.

[Quality Parenting Initiative](#) strengthens foster care by focusing on parenting for children and youth in the child welfare system. This initiative improves strategies and practices to recruit and retain quality caregivers while concurrently supporting reunification of children and youth with their parents.





Recommendation 4

Increase access to quality health care services and information for youth with dual-involvement.

Youth with multi-system contact have frequent placement changes that disrupt access and service delivery of both behavioral and health care services. Youth who are dually-involved are part of high-need, high-risk populations often requiring health care or behavioral health services. Technology-based solutions can safeguard the continuity of care for youth by ensuring access to coverage and increasing access to services. Access to medical information can help mitigate stress and limit service disruptions for youth. Additionally, technology-based healthcare delivery services, like telehealth, can reduce barriers to care by improving access to primary care, oral health, and behavioral health through video conferencing. Technology-based solutions can bring critical services to youth and enhance access by increasing referrals through virtual screening and assessment.



Health Technology For Youth

Health Passports

Increasing access to health records and information, including primary health information such as immunizations and coverage information, reduces stress and improves utilization of health care services. [Health Passport](#) is a statewide mobile-enabled electronic health record that provides foster parents, youth, health providers, and caseworkers with Medicaid claims-based health information for children in care, all of whom are served by a single managed care organization (Superior Health Plan). Electronic record systems have the potential to address the problem of fragmented health care and incomplete health records for youth with multi-system involvement.



Health Technology For Youth

Telehealth

[Telehealth](#) and telemedicine increase the capacity for primary care and behavioral health providers to ensure healthy social, emotional, and physical development of youth. Building the ability of service providers to deliver consultations, linkages and referrals, medication management, and therapeutic interventions can help reach youth and families where they are at. Increasing health care options for families impacted by multiple systems can help eliminate the barriers they face when seeking office-based care—including transportation, financial, and language barriers. Wider adoption of telehealth services that address the unique needs of youth with dual status can help mitigate further exposure to adversity and trauma.

Recommendation 5

Adopt innovative solutions to engage, support, and develop youth with dual status.

Innovation in the child welfare, juvenile justice, and education systems can help shape the experiences youth have by increasing prosocial development, fostering healthy relationships, promoting educational attainment, and creating community ties. Solutions that support and increase prosocial development, healthy relationships, leadership building, and improve access to mentorship can strengthen protective factors and foster resiliency. Integrating extracurricular activities including arts, sports, organizing, and technology into case planning to foster prosocial development can provide much-needed enhancements for youth who are dually-involved. Also, programs and strategies rooted in positive youth development—an intentional, prosocial approach that promotes leadership and skills-building opportunities for youth—can improve outcomes for youth and support their healthy transition into adulthood.⁵⁷ Innovation is not limited to technology, but there are opportunities for technology-based solutions to enhance delivery of innovative services that can help engage, support, and develop youth with dual status.

“The judges always decided where I would go, what homes I would be in. Lawyers and judges would talk to me--not really talk to me, they would talk at me and have me sign something; I didn’t know nothing that they were saying, no one really took the time to talk to me--and my foster mom, different foster moms, would decide if they would abuse me or not or feed me or love me or whatever it was. But in my poem book, I decided whatever I want. You’re not going to tell me how to write, you’re not going to tell me when to write. I could write and do whatever I wanted to do. My poems were my way of saying, ‘You control my life in this way, but you don’t control it here.’ That was a way to take control of my life.”

- Tauheedah Shakur, Youth Organizer

Enhancing Positive Social Connections for Dually Involved Youth

Mentorship and Counseling Programs	<p>Mentorship and counseling programs can help build and develop youth’s prosocial and leadership skills helping youth transitions into adulthood. Illinois is leading the way in the implementation of mentorship programs as alternative responses to youth with system-involvement.</p> <p>Cook County, IL adopted the Regenerations Program, an intensive wraparound program that includes a mentorship component, to help address the unique needs of youth with dual status and prevent further justice system involvement. This program consists of up to 30 hours of weekly programming that provides youth with advocacy, education, therapy, vocational training, and matches youth with a mentor from the Youth Advocate Program. Child welfare, probation, and program staff along with youth collaborate to create a community-based treatment plan that connects youth to supportive mentors, family, and community members. The priority is to place the youth with family or a foster parent in their community.</p> <p>Becoming A Man (BAM), a Chicago model, helps youth navigate difficult circumstances and systems that impact their daily life and threaten their future. BAM is a school-based social, emotional support system that creates a safe environment for exploration and teaches youth to “think about their thinking.”⁵⁸ This model’s curriculum includes clinically-based group —including aspects of cognitive-behavioral therapy, youth development, and mentoring—sessions with 12-15 students who meet once a week for an hour for two years.</p>
Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)	<p>CASA’s, or guardian ad litem (GAL), are court-appointed volunteer advocates that help build a caring one-on-one relationship with children and youth impacted by abuse and neglect. Community volunteers are often the only consistent adult in a youth’s life that help youth navigate the complexities of the dependency systems. CASA’s advocate for children and youth by gathering critical information for the judge and facilitate their access to services to children and youth heal and thrive.</p>
Connections and Support Systems	<p>Think Of Us platform is a web and mobile platform that works to create and strengthen bonds and help foster relationships that support and reunify youth and families. This platform helps youth tackle education, health, transportation, housing, financing, among others by empowering youth to build their advisory of supportive adults that help youth navigate the child welfare system.</p>



In Closing

Breaking the foster care to prison pipeline and interrupting pathways to delinquency requires child- and family-serving systems to collaboratively address the complex needs of youth experiencing adversity and trauma, beyond food, shelter, and safety. With increasing knowledge of brain development and the physiological impact of trauma, there is a growing recognition that systems, service providers, and community-based organizations must adopt policies and practices that promote resilience and wellbeing, and help foster environments of healing. Within this context, it is imperative to shift system cultures to help increase access to family supports and services that will help youth heal and develop resilience; create safeguards that prevent multi-system contact; and invest in positive youth development to facilitate their transition into healthy and prosperous adults.

This *Policy Roadmap Forward* outlines useful tools, policies, practices, and frameworks to support federal, state, and local jurisdictions seeking to improve outcomes for youth with dual status. We encourage child- and family-serving systems to shift their way of thinking and adopt policies and practices that are developmentally appropriate, trauma-responsive, and are youth-led, allowing them to prosper and thrive. Improving opportunities for youth that help foster resilience, build protective factors, and promote healthy social and emotional development can help support their transition into healthy adulthood. We know that stable and nurturing families can help build youth resilience, mitigate exposure to adversity, and improve long-term outcomes for youth; therefore, interventions targeting youth with multi-system involvement or those at-risk of multi-system contact must serve and treat youth in the context of a family.



Child- and family-serving systems play a critical role in the lives of our most vulnerable. Therefore, they must harness innovation and technology to improve the health and wellbeing of youth with dual status. adaptive, human-centered, and technology-enabled system responses will help build and enhance social connections, improve system efficiency, facilitate collaborative, and promote permanency and safety for youth and families. Reaching youth at-risk of penetrating the justice system and those who are dually-involved requires systems to explore innovative strategies and technology-based solutions that challenge system structures and bureaucracies and also improve health, development, and prepare youth for a brighter future.

Appendix A:

Youth with Dual Status Reform Jurisdiction Representatives

Hampden County, Massachusetts

The target population for the Hampden County initiative was defined as youth already involved with DCF (child welfare) on any open matter (including current investigation, open Child in Need of Services, voluntary applications, or Care and Protection cases) who are arraigned on a delinquent offense. The first practice instituted as part of the initiative was the use of a pre-trial multi-disciplinary team meeting (MDT). The goal of the MDT is to collaboratively design strategies for preventing youth from moving deeper into the delinquency system. The meeting is facilitated by the court clinic director (mental health professional) and includes the Probation Officer, DCF Social Worker, DCF Diversion Workers, youth when appropriate, Parent Advocate, Family Resource Center, defense attorney, and Assistant District Attorney. Following the launch of this practice in April 2013, leaders recognized the value of pairing this practice with the development of a dedicated court docket. In October of 2013, parent peer advocates were hired to support families by providing information and guidance on accessing mental health and education services and other ways of advocating for their children.

Early outcome tracking indicates that youth experiencing the full array of practice reforms were less likely to commit a new offense or violate terms of probation. The number of children held in detention or committed to the Department of Youth Services was significantly reduced, and there were gains in the area of increasing permanency for youth with dual status.

Outagamie County and the State of Wisconsin

The target population in Outagamie County are youth of any age referred to Juvenile Intake for Delinquency or JIPS (Juvenile in Need of Protection or Services) who have been involved in Child Protection/Child Welfare systems in Wisconsin. After finding that many of the target population youth had a history of trauma exposure, the guiding approach to reform was defined as ensuring the delivery of trauma-informed care with a coordinated and evidence-based approach. Protocols were designed to ensure coordinated assessment and case planning, including an intra-familial sexual abuse response, coordinated case planning, and dual court. While these practices were put into place with staff investment, continued progress was made on becoming a trauma-informed responsive system.

Outagamie County is committed to focusing on organizational culture change as a primary activity and has made significant gains in bridging the gap between child welfare and juvenile justice among supervisors and workers. Also, steps were taken to increase trauma-informed practitioners in the community by partnering with the Department of Children and Families to bring in TF-CBT certification to 30 clinicians from 11 agencies. The staff from both the Youth Justice Division and the Child Protective Services Division have been trained in a 16-hour curriculum from the NCTSN on “How to Care for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma” and given toolkits on how to help children regulate and educate their caregivers in trauma and regulation. This course is now offered two times a year to biological parents and foster/kin caregivers. In the last year, the agency began to pilot two trauma screening tools (SDQ and the SCARED). The state of Wisconsin has developed additional programs and efforts that are more preventative in nature, such as creating trauma-informed systems and increasing access to mental health services.

Los Angeles, California

In 2007, Los Angeles began a 241.1 Multi-disciplinary Team (MDT) pilot program, providing enhanced case assessment for youth with dual status. The program has since been implemented countywide. It provides for the formation of an MDT comprised of a DCFS Social Worker, a Probation Officer, a Department of Mental Health Psychiatric Social Worker, and an Education consultant. This group meets pre-disposition to develop a recommendation to the court on the most appropriate legal status as well as to identify support services for the youth. The MDT then convenes post-disposition to discuss the implementation of the plan for the youth.

Los Angeles has also benefited from the establishment of the CARE (Crossover Advocacy and Resource Effort) Unit at the Children's Law Center. The Unit utilizes MSW interns who work 16-20 hours per week for 9 months, increasing the face-to-face contact with youth, including frequent phone, text, or email communication; maintaining the contact through changing needs or issues (placement change, school issues, etc.); attending dependency court hearings; and providing updated information to attorneys.

Newton County and the State of Georgia

Newton County, GA, established SYNC – “a multi-system partnership with one vision for youth and families.” Through this partnership, participants discovered that 40% of the County's youth with dual status were status offenders, and therefore targeted reforms toward this particular population of youth. SYNC successfully navigated information and data sharing challenges, resulting in the ability to identify target population youth routinely. The County continues to collect data on its dual status youth population to design new data-driven interventions. As part of its prevention work, Newton County established a Truancy Intervention Board aimed at diverting youth away from the formal court process by addressing problems of truancy and educational neglect outside the courtroom with the support of invested stakeholders.

In 2013, Georgia passed House Bill 242, which addressed the overuse of out-of-home placement in juvenile justice, particularly for misdemeanants and status offenders. They also increased the use of evidence-based programs (EBPs) by establishing an incentive grant program with funds to identify, implement, and manage EBPs in 49 counties. Early outcomes show a reduction in the number of youth sent to state custody and out of home placements.

Cook County, Illinois

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and University of Illinois-Chicago, in collaboration with the Circuit Court of Cook County Juvenile Division, developed a pilot project designed to address the issue of youth with dual status held in detention. These youth are referred to a program called the Regenerations Program. It is an intensive wraparound program with up to 30 hours a week of programming, including mentoring through a partnership with the Youth Advocate Program. This program prioritizes finding the youth's strengths and how this impacts the youth's placement and treatment. Juvenile probation officers, DCFS staff, and Regenerations staff along with the youth and family sit together to work on a realistic plan for the youth. This plan is then presented to the Juvenile Court judge. The team is committed to locating a placement in the youth's neighborhood or with family members if possible, and to connecting the youth to mentors, family and community members who will provide the youth with support and positive activities.

Initial outcomes have been good. There has been a significant drop in the number of dual status youth in Cook County Juvenile Detention and a reduction in the length of time the youth spends in custody. Cook County has reduced the dual status youth population by over 50%. Additionally, the average length of stay for dual status youth has decreased from more than 70 days to an average of 31 days.



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