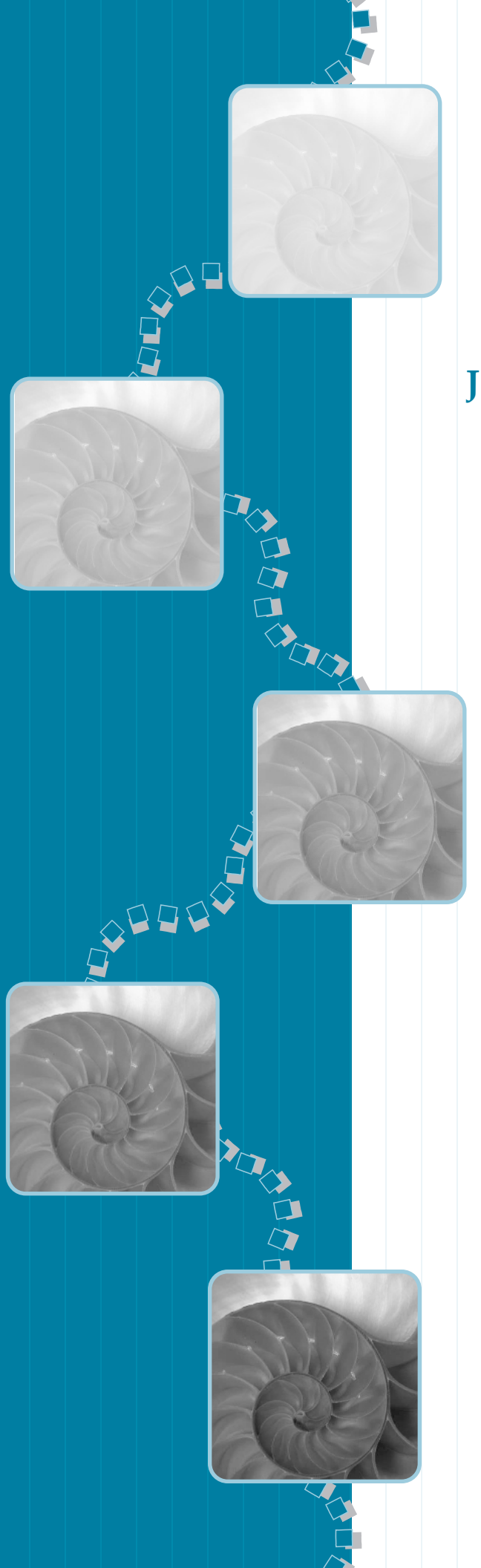

REFORMING JUVENILE JUSTICE THROUGH COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLANNING

by

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NCCD

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BACKGROUND

. . . substitute an individualized, caring, and redemptive concept of justice in lieu of the punitive psychology that dominated traditional criminal law.

On the eve of the twentieth century, the United States created the juvenile court. The new children's court became the model for treating troubled youngsters in most counties. The celebrated American legal philosopher, Roscoe Pound, felt that the new juvenile court was "the greatest step forward in Anglo-American jurisprudence since the Magna Carta" (Pound, 1965). Professor Pound was commenting on the attempt to substitute an individualized, caring, and redemptive concept of justice in lieu of the punitive psychology that dominated traditional criminal law. For the past 100 years, Americans have been trying to translate this humanistic theory into practice. Rarely has the American juvenile court possessed the resources needed to accomplish its mission. The last century witnessed a series of reforms and innovations designed to strengthen the juvenile court, refine its mission, and invent the necessary technologies to meet its goals. The passage of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) in 1974 was a bold attempt to provide federal governmental leadership and resources to pursue justice for children. This landmark legislation created the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the agency that has formulated national juvenile justice policy, supported research and demonstration projects, and given grants to states to sponsor innovative programs. Since it was established, OJJDP has achieved impressive progress in removing children from jails, diverting troubled youth to the most appropriate systems of care, and focusing attention on the over-representation of minority youths in confinement. OJJDP also became a respected source of data, research, and professional experience on the most effective responses to youth crime. The Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders was, in many ways, an example of how OJJDP accumulated empirical knowledge and practitioner wisdom and presented this information to the field.

In the waning days of the senior Bush's Administration, two officials of the Justice Department, John J. Wilson and Dr. James C. Howell, circulated a position paper entitled, *The Comprehensive Strategy on Serious, Violent, and Chronic Youth Crime*. Their goal was to stimulate a new national professional dialogue on effective responses to juvenile crime. The political climate at the time was not very conducive to a data-driven discussion on the topic. The media and many politicians were reacting to claims from academics (such as John DiIulio and James Fox) that a new generation of teenage "super-predators" was about to produce an unprecedented crime wave (DiIulio, 1996). Despite the fact that these claims were based on faulty science, and that these dire predictions did not come to pass, the media continued to treat every sensational crime that involved young people as evidence that the "super-predators" were among us.

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In the United States Congress and in most state legislatures, elected representatives proposed "crackdowns" on juvenile criminals. These proposed laws made it easier to prosecute teenagers in criminal courts, mandated stiffer penalties for a broad range of youthful misconduct, attacked the traditional confidentiality of juvenile records, and encouraged the use of federal law enforcement resources to target juvenile gang members. While the federal legislation was bogged down in debates over increasing gun control requirements, more than 40 states passed laws that dramatically toughened their response to youth crime (Torbet et al., 1996). In countless American communities new policies required mandatory expulsion of students who brought guns or drugs to school, as well as stronger penalties for truancy, graffiti, and curfew violations. Many school safety advocates called for students to wear uniforms as a way to discourage youths from wearing "gang clothing." None of these policy deliberations was informed by research data. Few, if any, communities conducted objective evaluations of the new "crackdown" programs.

Wilson and Howell sought to address this situation with evidence gleaned from rigorous research studies and sound evaluations of effective programs. In particular, they sought to refocus attention on prevention and early intervention as important parts of a comprehensive youth crime strategy. Their Comprehensive Strategy rested on key assumptions that emphasized strengthening families and bolstering community institutions such as schools, religious and civic groups, and public family assistance agencies. Wilson and Howell deemed prevention the most cost-effective means of reducing youth violence and argued for a system of graduated sanctions that appropriately responded to various levels of law breaking by adolescents. The Comprehensive Strategy also relied on research that showed a very small number of young people to be responsible for a very large share of serious and chronic violent offending. The early identification and effective control of those "dangerous few" was another core of the Comprehensive Strategy. Wilson and Howell also envisioned a complete continuum of services that would deliver the right mix of developmentally appropriate supervision and services to each youngster.

In 1993 the Comprehensive Strategy received increased support at the national and state levels. By that time, the Strategy had received positive feedback from hundreds of juvenile justice practitioners and researchers around the country. Consistent with the Comprehensive Strategy, the Department of Justice leaders pointed out that the quality of care a child receives in the first few years of life is pivotal to avoiding a range of problems later. The Attorney

General was a proponent of comprehensive community-based plans to meet youth and family needs — in her words, ". . .to reweave the fabric of society." Most important, the Department of Justice believed that local officials, and not federal bureaucrats, should determine what is best for their communities. The federal government could best act as a source of research and information on promising programs, while communities make the key decisions for themselves.

The sustained and generous financial support of OJJDP, the dedication of the Department of Justice staff and public policy advocacy by OJJDP leadership, and the leadership of the Attorney General were critical to the successful development and evolution of the Comprehensive Strategy. The prestige and credibility of the United States Department of Justice assisted in the rapid acceptance of this bold approach to juvenile justice system reform.

. . .the Comprehensive Community Planning model was a very sophisticated THEORY of juvenile justice reform; what was needed, however, was a thoughtful examination of how to translate this theory into reality.

In 1993 the Department of Justice began the effort to flesh out the Comprehensive Strategy and to provide tools for localities that wanted to implement the Strategy. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) and Developmental Research and Programs, Inc. (DRP) were selected to move the Strategy forward. An OJJDP Study Group was assembled that included some of the nation's most respected researchers (Loeber and Farrington, 1998). One goal of the Study Group was to push forward the research knowledge base that was the foundation of the Comprehensive Strategy.

NCCD conducted an exhaustive review of literature by federal agencies and professional organizations, and solicited hundreds of nominations of promising programs across the nation in the juvenile sanctions arena. DRP conducted a parallel effort for prevention programs. All nominated programs were examined for the adequacy of their evaluation data, and the quality of descriptive material on actual program operations. Programs were characterized as "proven" if in addition they possessed rigorous independent evaluation designs and, preferably, multiple replications. They were characterized as "promising" if they possessed at least some independent research support and were consistent with existing findings on the causes and correlates of serious juvenile offending. Only a handful of programs met the first standard, and a few additional programs qualified as "promising." The vast majority of nominated programs had no evaluation components of any kind. This is not to say that these programs were not successful, but rather that their effectiveness was completely undetermined. NCCD collected supplementary materials and, in many instances, conducted site visits of the promising programs.

The results of this survey were published by OJJDP as the *Guide for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders* (Howell ed., 1995). The *Guide* restated the core principles of the Comprehensive Strategy, offered suggestions on structuring community planning efforts, and reported the attributes of successful, proven, or promising programs. The *Guide* presented models for classification and assessment tools that could be used to form case plans and determine the most appropriate interventions. In virtually every instance, the *Guide* made specific references to programs and agencies around the country that could provide more information on implementation concerns. OJJDP printed and disseminated more than 70,000 copies of this publication. The Guide was formally released at "Guaranteeing Safe Passage," a national summit on preventing youth violence attended by experts in public policy, leading journalists, and representatives of interested private foundations. The Attorney General and Children's Defense Fund President, Marian Wright Edelman gave the summit's keynote addresses.

Following the summit, OJJDP, NCCD, and DRP conducted a series of workshops using the *Guide* at the annual meetings of many professional and academic associations. In addition, regional training seminars were held in Berkeley, California; Cambridge, Massachusetts; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Jacksonville, Florida. Even though the Comprehensive Strategy was well received at each of these dissemination efforts, it was clear that more work was needed to better understand the dynamics of community implementation of the Strategy*.

A crucial next step in the evolution of what was to become a National Comprehensive Community Planning Program came in the form of support from the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, a Florida-based foundation, which became a partner with OJJDP in the implementation of the Strategy in three pilot communities. At this stage, the Comprehensive Community Planning model was a very sophisticated *theory* of juvenile justice reform; what was needed, however, was a thoughtful examination of how to translate this theory into reality.

**OJJDP is continuing its efforts to conduct Comprehensive Strategy activities through a program called Targeted Community Action Planning (TCAP). For more information on TCAP, refer to the OJJDP website: www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/tcap*

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PILOT SITES

"The right service, for the right youth, at the right time."

Only communities highly motivated to try a Comprehensive Community Planning Approach were considered as possible pilot sites. Three sites were selected: Fort Myers, Florida; Jacksonville, Florida; and San Diego County, California. The leadership varied in each case but came from both the public and private sectors. Preliminary meetings were held with a range of individuals at each site. These meetings showed there was an interest not in starting a "new program," but in setting in motion a systematic approach to juvenile justice system reform. Sites were told that there were no guarantees that additional funding would be immediately available to community agencies and programs. However, it was suggested that the planning and mobilization processes would give most communities an advantage in applying for federal or foundation funding. OJJDP and the duPont Fund supported extensive training and technical assistance for communities that emphasized the identification of local staffing resources to help guide the day-to-day activities of the Strategy. NCCD briefed state-level policy makers to enlist their support for the efforts carried out at the local level. We made it clear that the Strategy would not be imposed on any community, and that success depended upon the commitment of key local leaders.

Mobilizing key community leaders was the first step of Comprehensive Community Planning. Next followed an intensive assessment phase of data collection and analysis to identify priority risk factors that contribute to youthful lawbreaking and draw attention to gaps in the existing continuum of prevention and juvenile justice programs. Once the community needs and resource assessment was completed, OJJDP, NCCD, and DRP presented information about promising programs that were directly responsive to the identified community needs. This phase of the approach produced a multi-year Strategic Plan endorsed by local officials and designed to guide the development of new programs and the investment

OVERVIEW OF COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY

Problem Behavior ► Noncriminal Misbehavior ► Delinquency ► Serious, Violent, or Chronic Offending

Prevention
Target Population: At-Risk Youth

Graduated Sanctions
Target Population: Delinquent Youth

Programs for All Youth ► Programs for Youth at Greatest Risk ► Immediate Intervention ► Intermediate Sanctions ► Community Confinement ► Training Schools ► Aftercare

Youth Development Goals:

- Healthy and nurturing families
- Safe communities
- School attachment
- Prosocial peer relations
- Personal development and life skills
- Healthy lifestyle choices

Youth Habilitation Goals:

- Healthy family participation
- Community reintegration
- Educational success and skills development
- Healthy peer network development
- Prosocial values development
- Healthy lifestyle choices

of resources. The Plan served as both a blueprint for reform and a community education tool.

Armed with its own Comprehensive Community Plan, NCCD intended to help each community create a structure that would turn the plan into action. A component of the technical assistance helped communities find needed funding for new programs. We also expected to teach communities how to establish ongoing evaluation of existing and new programs. Ultimately, we envisioned a full continuum of services available to at-risk youths and their families. The elements of the continuum were based on solid research, intended to produce measurable outcomes, and designed to reflect sensitivity to gender, cultural diversity, and the developmental needs of young people. We popularized these concepts with the simple phrase, "The right service, for the right youth, at the right time."

At this point, a "curriculum" for the Comprehensive Community Planning process did not exist. The main text included the *Guide* and other presentation materials. In many respects, in the pilot communities, we developed and field-tested the curriculum materials that would prove invaluable to subsequent sites. Later there were detailed manuals for trainers and participants and a number of tools used by communities to implement the Comprehensive Community Planning model (OJJDP, 2000).

Work in the pilot sites was generally organized around three main training events: a one-day orientation for community leaders, a three-day training on how to collect and analyze data on risk factors and service gaps, and a three-day training on promising strategies. The first orientation was designed to elicit support for and commitment to the Comprehensive Community Planning process. This training was directed at the "movers and shakers," those who could marshal the funding, the political clout, and the agency and public support to initiate and sustain the reform process. The next two training sessions were designed for the "implementers," those responsible for conducting the day-to-day activities of public and private agencies, and those who were needed to make operational changes to support new policies and procedures. It was the latter group that actually drafted the Comprehensive Community Plan for the site.

Between the major training events, OJJDP, NCCD, and DRP staff delivered intensive technical assistance both on-site and over the telephone. This technical support ran the gamut from very specific advice on data collection procedures, to "active listening" sessions to help local planners solve political and interpersonal problems. The most critical job was to help sites sustain enthusiasm for the difficult and time-consuming planning process.

Jacksonville was the first site to complete its Comprehensive Community Plan. The Jacksonville team published a very attractive report that was widely disseminated by the Jessie Ball duPont Fund. San Diego also produced an impressive document that presented its analysis and action steps. The San Diego Plan was spearheaded by the San Diego Children's Commission, under the auspices of the County Board of Supervisors. Both of these communities secured grants to staff the Comprehensive Community Plan and to partially underwrite local efforts. Jacksonville and San Diego also enjoyed substantial commitments of staff resources from regional or local juvenile justice agencies.

The Fort Myers site experienced more difficulty completing the planning documents, but eventually submitted its final version. The Fort Myers planning group relied extensively upon staff borrowed from other community agencies.

The pilot communities provided important confirmations of some of the key assumptions of Comprehensive Community Planning. They also catalyzed significant modifications in our approach to training and technical assistance. One crucial observation made at all three sites was the extraordinary lack of information that local officials possessed about crime patterns in their areas. Often the key leaders believed that crime was on the rise, when in fact crime rates were declining. Most community leaders believed that young people were responsible for the majority of violent crime in their communities and were amazed to learn that teenagers accounted for a relatively small percentage of violent offenses. There was a general lack of knowledge about recent trends in specific offense categories such as drug offenses, domestic violence, or gun crimes. This level of misinformation often led to public policies built on weak factual foundations. Many community leaders blamed the media for distorted perceptions of the local crime problem. However, media representatives complained that it was very difficult for them to gather accurate data on the crime problem. Indeed, in the pilot communities, there were multiple criminal justice data sources. Furthermore, it was difficult to draw simple conclusions about which agency's data were most reliable. Public discussions about crime were frequently informed by anecdotes or the most recent "bizarre" crime. Participants in all of the pilot sites found great value in "getting the facts straight" and in technical assistance to obtain and interpret accurate data on crime and criminal justice trends.

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Another barrier to reform at all of the pilot sites was the disconnect between prevention agencies and justice agencies. These two groups rarely met and tended to distrust one another. For example, the prevention agencies often expressed the view that justice officials were primarily focused on punishment, possessing little genuine interest in helping at-risk families. Justice officials asserted that many youth agencies were unavailable to help their clients, being more interested in working with the youth who were already succeeding. These stereotypes interfered with effective collaboration between the two groups.

Even within the justice community, there was often perceived miscommunication between law

enforcement agencies, the courts, and corrections officials. Interactions among agencies tended to be case-specific and oriented toward resolving disputes with few opportunities for joint planning and program development. There was a strong perception of intense competition over funding among all agencies. Each agency seemed to possess a very clear understanding of its own policies and procedures but lacked awareness of the operations of other agencies.

Comprehensive Community Planning created excellent opportunities for agencies to share information and to learn about the strengths and resources of other agencies. Community representatives expressed satisfaction that the planning process helped build mutual trust and created a "safe process" in which difficult interagency problems could be candidly discussed and solved. One of the early planning exercises completed at each site was the construction of a flow chart that described both the prevention and justice systems. Devising these system descriptions was often a time-consuming and labor-intensive exercise, but there was virtually unanimous agreement that the effort was beneficial.

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Despite the initial segmentation in most communities, there were increasing numbers of collaborative inter-agency activities. Many of these efforts were dictated by government or philanthropic funding requirements; collaboration was the core requirement of virtually all new revenue sources. Ironically, communities were "drowning in collaboration," various permutations of the same agencies were required to meet in different collaborative ventures on an almost daily basis. Participants complained that these meetings were time consuming and increasingly unproductive. Sometimes the first agenda item was to determine exactly which collaborative effort was to be discussed. Leadership among these ad-hoc joint ventures shifted constantly. Moreover, after initial meetings, the decision makers would delegate attendance to lower level staff members, and the resulting groups were not empowered to make important decisions without consulting their agency leaders. The local Comprehensive Planning participants began calling this phenomenon, "colliding collaboratives." Part of the work involved mapping all of the pertinent collaborative structures and suggesting ways in which the work of these groups could be consolidated or, at least, better coordinated.

Almost the first objection to the Comprehensive Community Planning process was the fear that local personnel would have to "reinvent the wheel." Indeed, a substantial amount of good thinking and planning had already occurred, but these efforts were rarely disseminated outside the problem-specific areas that had spawned the planning efforts. The Comprehensive Community Planning staff assured communities that NCCD and CRP wanted to review all existing documents relevant to prevention and juvenile justice. NCCD and CRP collected numerous reports; in most cases it was likely that they were the only people who had read and digested all of the recent community planning documents. The staff prepared summaries of the various community planning documents, showing the areas of agreement and disagreement. Communities had already worked very hard to profile and analyze their pressing concerns, but had done so independently and without continuity with other efforts.

The experience of the pilot sites demonstrated the clear need for a more structured curriculum for the Comprehensive Community Planning. The technical assistance needs of the pilot sites were much greater than had been assumed. Further, local planners often requested more guidance in following the paths believed to be most productive in completing the Comprehensive Community Planning process.

Those who were trained wanted materials to review and refer to when trainers were not on site. There were also modifications made in the number and duration of training events. It became clear that a good deal of preparation was needed to make sure that the "right people" attended the training sessions and that they were clear on the purposes of these events. Most important, we learned that thorough preparation by both the local planners and the national technical assistance teams was critical to the success of the scheduled training events.

The pilot sites also showed us that the relationship between the new consultants and the local planners was far more complex than the simple delivery of factual materials or technologies. NCCD and CRP were sources of optimism and encouragement when the process bogged down, or when local officials became frustrated with the amount of time and energy involved. They were "shoulders to cry on" if local personality conflicts flared up, or if local staffing decisions were not ideal. They mediated disputes and performed "shuttle diplomacy." NCCD and CRP were able to move the process forward by being the "bad guys" when difficult facts had to be acknowledged.

The trainers had to remain uninvolved in local disputes. The Comprehensive Community Planning process required local commitment and support for the resulting consensus. Trainers could not force that consensus, and could not offer the final product. The duPont Fund Program Officer, Sally Douglass, used the apt analogy of teaching a young person to ride a bicycle. At first, the adult holds onto the back of the bicycle to provide some balance. The new rider often pleads with the adult not to let go, but soon the novice bicyclist is speeding along and looks back to discover that the adult has already let go and that they are really riding by themselves. The key is knowing when to let go.

Similarly, it was important that the trainers understood their particular role in the Comprehensive Community Planning process. They were facilitators, not leaders. They could guide the local process, but the outcome had to be "owned" by the community. It was very important to identify those local leaders and practitioners most invested in seeing the Comprehensive Community Plan succeed in their communities. The technical assistance providers needed to control their natural instincts to see their own "pet projects" dominate the planning process. It was critical that all of the positive community recognition and publicity went to the local planners. When the Comprehensive Community Planning technical assistance process works as intended, the outside advisors and helpers are all but invisible.

RESULTS IN THE PILOT SITES AND BEYOND

Each community placed a great emphasis on the need to expand prevention programs that were research-based and oriented toward measurable outcomes.

As previously noted, all of the pilot sites completed their plans. In San Diego and Jacksonville, completion of the plan was celebrated with a community-wide event. These ceremonies provided local planners the opportunity to thank one another for support and to dedicate themselves to the implementation of their recommendations. Another goal of these public ceremonies was to gather the attention of the media to educate the general public about the need for a comprehensive response to youth crime.

In all of the pilot communities, local planners identified priority risk factors and highlighted gaps in their existing service systems. Each community placed a great emphasis on the need to expand prevention programs that were research-based and oriented toward measurable outcomes. In all of the pilot sites, agency leaders and staff began thinking about ways to create a true continuum of care, linking prevention programs with graduated sanctions. There was increased awareness of the need for collaborative and inter-agency programming.

In Jacksonville, the Comprehensive Community Planning process led local officials to dedicate a significant share of their allocation of federal block grant funds to implement their recommendations. The duPont Fund provided additional financial support to staff the implementation of the Community Plan and convened several meetings to assist implementation activities. The Fund also made a significant grant to further the local plan's call for enhanced gender-specific programming for at-risk young women. There were also meetings with the local forum of private philanthropists to educate them about Comprehensive Community Planning and the opportunities for private sector participation.

In San Diego County, the Plan provided the organizing framework and data to assist the County in securing millions in grant funds from state and federal sources. The Plan helped ensure that the needs identified via the planning process were given

priority in San Diego County's budgetary and resource development plans. San Diego requested and received an enhanced level of federal technical assistance support to advance specific components of their plan.

In Fort Myers, broad community consensus developed to advance the plan of action. After completing the Comprehensive Community Planning process, the Lee County Juvenile Justice Council adopted the Comprehensive Community Planning model as its own planning process and spearheaded the initiative within the community. The Council assumed the role of coordinating implementation of the goals outlined in the strategic plan. It has already secured a $2.7 million grant to create a multi-agency collaborative effort under the Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant and has constructed a $2.3 million Community Assessment Center. In addition, Lee County developed a drug court program, helped 56 families gain better parenting skills, and implemented a truancy intervention program at four elementary schools. Besides these strong programmatic developments, the community built upon the efforts of Comprehensive Community Planning by starting a series of other community initiatives focused on children and youth.

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While these pilot site results provide significant validation for the value of the Comprehensive Community Planning process, the road to institutionalizing the implementation is complex. It is not surprising that the pilot communities were experimenting with a range of new structures and processes to move their plans into action. Further, these communities expressed the need for continuing technical assistance in updating their planning data and in establishing management information systems that meaningfully track their progress. The pilot sites needed additional help in identifying the most promising programs that match their identified priorities, and in developing and institutionalizing the new initiatives.

THE COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLANNING PROCESS EXPANDS

. . .the inclusion of state officials would facilitate the investment of existing state resources and federal block grant funding in the Comprehensive Strategy communities. . .

While the process in the pilot sites was well underway, OJJDP decided to expand into a number of additional communities. To build state-level capacity to support Comprehensive Community Planning after the federal training and technical assistance support ended, this expansion included not only additional communities, but their respective state juvenile justice agencies as well. We hoped that the inclusion of state officials would facilitate the investment of existing state resources and federal block grant funding in the Comprehensive Strategy communities.

OJJDP released a request for applications to states that wished to receive substantial amounts of federal technical assistance and training in the Comprehensive Community Plan. This program did not provide direct funding for the planning process or the resulting initiatives. State applicants had to represent the Governor's Office and include the relevant agencies that administered federal juvenile funding in the state. Up to six communities in each state and approximately 20 states were defined as the sites for Comprehensive Community Planning within the following two years.

The Training and Technical Assistance Process

In the states of Florida, Hawai`i, Iowa, Maryland, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, and Wisconsin, Comprehensive Community Planning was designed to lead to very specific results in the chosen sites. Through the following meeting formats, we aimed to train the communities to continue the Comprehensive Community Planning process indefinitely and independently.

State Level Briefing – to discuss the leadership and commitment necessary from the state for the successful development of a Comprehensive Plan and to

review what could be expected through the initiative from OJJDP and its partners.

State Leader Orientation – to provide the rationale for OJJDP's development of the Comprehensive Community Plan, as well as its core principles.

Community Agency Briefing – to introduce the Comprehensive Planning process to the local community's lead organization and to clarify roles and responsibilities, the training and technical assistance process, appropriate planning tools, tasks to be completed, and a timeline.

Community Leader Orientation – to provide local sites with the necessary tools for strategic planning including team structure, community vision, goals, and communication with key leaders.

Community Planning Team Orientation – to introduce the CS theoretical framework, to assist participants with the collection of data on risk factors, resource gaps, and juvenile justice system decision points, and to create consensus around a community vision.

Assessment Training – to teach participants to identify problem behaviors, create a profile of juvenile offender populations, assess community-specific risk and protective factors, inventory existing graduated sanctions, and analyze the effectiveness of existing prevention programs and services. Participants learned to identify gaps in the continuum of service and how to fill these gaps.

Community Planning Training – to instruct participants to apply outcome-based planning to the identified priorities, and to build up the current system with promising approaches.

Lessons Learned Event – to review local site plans with others in the state and with the training and technical assistance partners, to facilitate any necessary adjustments, to consider successes, and to compare the local plan with the State's plan.

RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY SITES

Beacon Communities

Corpus Christi, Texas, and Hawai`i County, Hawai`i, serve as beacon Comprehensive Community Planning sites. Both of these communities, through their commitment to the foundations of Comprehensive Community Planning, chose to embrace fact-supported programs. It was clear that these sites had a broad community consensus to advance their developed plans of action. Comprehensive Community Planning has promoted a more reasoned and considered response to violent and serious youth crime, and Corpus Christi and Hawai`i County have served as model systems of graduated sanctions and of an overall comprehensive continuum of services for system-involved youth.

Corpus Christi, Texas

When Corpus Christi (Nueces County) was chosen as a Comprehensive Community Planning jurisdiction in 1997, a primary aim was the blending of the variety of juvenile justice initiatives in which the community was then engaged. Federal initiatives such as Weed and Seed were already addressing juvenile justice system responses to crime, but the planning model offered the opportunity for these and other initiatives to form a community collaborative that focused on the entire continuum of services.

Because the Sheriff's Department and, in particular, the County Undersheriff were publicly promoting the planning effort, Corpus Christi identified the development of a juvenile assessment center as one of their five priority target projects. In June, 1999, the Corpus Christi City Council approved a plan to open a juvenile assessment center, which opened in September, 1999. Funding in the amount of $90,000 originally came from the City through its Crime Control and Prevention District, and was followed by an additional $206,000 from the Corpus Christi Police Department through Juvenile Accountability Block Grant funding. The Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC) integrated daytime truancy and nighttime curfew violation programs, as well as provided case management that was coordinated with the Municipal Court. As an outgrowth, attention was paid to the risk assessment tool delivered at the JAC. OJJDP and NCCD provided technical assistance to the Center as they adopted an appropriate instrument for Nueces County youth.

In addition to the local funding for the JAC refinement, the Corpus Christi Comprehensive Strategy effort, or "Youth Opportunities United" (YOU), as it was titled, garnered over $8.2 million in funding to support programs identified in its Strategic Plan. The sources of the funding were diverse: the Kennedy Foundation, a local granting agency; the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; the Texas Governor's Office; and the Bank of America Corporation, to name a few. YOU was incorporated into a nonprofit and earned 501(c)(3) status, thereby institutionalizing the administration and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. The Mayor of Corpus Christi and the County Sheriff at the time collaborated on a 12-minute public service announcement on the YOU Initiative and the supporting Comprehensive Community Planning activities and programs.

The economic impact of Comprehensive Community Planning on Corpus Christi has been far reaching. A grantwriter was hired solely to develop proposals in support of the YOU Initiative. Two county-wide Youth Summits were held that focused on parent education of youth substance abuse, campus-based diversity projects, peer mentoring programs, youth employment initiatives, and an anti-violence education project.

Corpus Christi, Texas, was especially successful

in the mobilization of local youth around the issue of violence prevention. As part of the Comprehensive Community Planning process, a Youth Involvement workgroup was formed and has since supported over 500 members. Activities and projects of the group were supported by a $30,000 grant from the Central Power and Light District. A YOUth Directory (YOU After School) was published, and youth representatives from the entire County of Nueces engaged in outreach about violence reduction and prevention.

Hawai`i County, Hawai`i

Hawai`i County began its process in May, 2000, when the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney recognized the need for a collaborative effort among agencies and service providers to identify and address juvenile justice issues. The effort began with a conference bringing together close to 150 representatives from local government and the community. The enthusiasm of the key leaders, especially those from public agencies, including the state Office of Youth Services (OYS), insured the success and the expansion of Comprehensive Community Planning in the state of Hawai`i. During the final stages of planning, Hawai`i County adopted many of the best practices of Comprehensive Community Planning. Perhaps most significantly, the State allocated all of the following year's Title V funding to implementation of the target programs and services outlined in the Hawai`i County Strategic Plan. The federal Title V Community Prevention Grants Program supported collaborative, community-based delinquency prevention efforts. The State of Hawai`i received approximately $100,000 each year through this funding stream. This promise of ongoing funding provided the group with a strong basis of support for implementation and helped to insure the sustainability of the work of Hawai`i County.

OYS was also building upon the success of this local planning effort by replicating the Comprehensive Strategy process in two additional counties – O`ahu and Maui – and by developing an innovative, statewide Comprehensive Community Planning process. The long-term goal was to institutionalize the principles of the Comprehensive Strategy into the systems and agencies that serve delinquent youth in the State of Hawai`i. To accomplish this mission, Hawai`i was working to align its State Advisory Group's (SAG) work with the principles of Comprehensive Community Planning. Every state in the country was required to allocate funding for the juvenile justice system through an appointed SAG. Hawai`i was developing a process whereby the SAG would develop a state-level Comprehensive Plan to be used to guide funding decisions. All funding in the juvenile justice system would then be accountable under a research-driven planning and evaluation system where resources are aligned according to the greatest need. The SAG was also required to work with local planning groups at the county level to insure that goals were aligned and that local needs were being met. Hawai`i was still in the initial stages of developing this new approach, but given the strong commitment from key leaders in this community, it is likely that Hawai`i will continue to serve as an example of the innovative ways in which the Comprehensive Community Planning model can be applied for long-term results.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Many of these programs were supported with federal grants including the 21st Century Learning Centers and Safe Schools/Healthy Families programs. Most programs sought to expand the involvement and role of schools in services for at-risk youth.

Local communities have benefitted in a number of different ways from the Comprehensive Community Planning initiative. Now that communities have devoted a year or more to implementation of a Plan, we can better understand the impact that this initiative has had on strengthening local responses to juvenile delinquency. This section outlines the results of the Comprehensive Community Planning process. Broadly defined, these outcomes are categorized in three ways: 1) process outcomes related to improved collaboration and coordination, 2) the development of new programs, and 3) policy and system changes. There is also additional discussion on legislation reflecting the principles of Comprehensive Community Planning.

Process Outcomes

Consensus Building

Many communities stressed the more intangible results of the planning process that result from "being in the same room." Increased communication and a better understanding of common issues enabled communities to achieve a number of promising changes. Representatives from many sites said that the process raised awareness of the need for more and better prevention programs. Perhaps the most common outcome was described best by a site coordinator in Miami – Dade County when she said that her community "developed a joint sense of what is important."

Progress in Collaboration

Many communities had experience with collaboration before implementing Comprehensive Community Planning. The framework of the planning process has helped some of these to move forward in real ways that had not been achieved through previous planning efforts. As a result of its success in helping communities to understand and create results through coordinated efforts, the framework has been adopted to guide the work of other planning processes. In

Oregon, communities advocated to use the framework to guide state-mandated planning under Senate Bill (SB) 555. This legislation required local communities to create a single strategic plan to guide the work of the five key public agencies in their respective areas. The integration process eliminated duplication of planning efforts and provided a strong basis for coordinated planning, action, and evaluation of community outcomes.

Increasing Efficiency

As a result of the collaborative process, sites also enhanced coordination among service providers to reduce the duplication of services. In their day-to-day activities, many providers did not have a formal means of communicating with each other. The Comprehensive Community Planning model provided a vehicle through which agencies could better coordinate services and, therefore, cut costs to the community and enhance program effectiveness. For example, during the planning process in Corpus Christi, Texas, two service providers discovered that both were providing GED courses to a broad population of adolescents. After this discovery, the two worked together to target specific youth groups. Subsequently one agency provided GED courses only to institutionalized youth, while the other program continued to serve youth in the community.

New Programs

In addition to these process outcomes, the majority of Comprehensive Community Planning sites implemented new programs or enhanced or expanded existing ones to make progress towards the goals outlined in their Community Plans. These programs addressed a range of problem behaviors, including substance abuse, delinquency, teenage pregnancy, school drop-outs, and violence. What follows is an overview of the number and types of programs that were implemented, and a brief description of the most popular prevention and graduated sanctions programs developed at the sites. Approximately 94 programs were created, enhanced, or expanded as a result of the planning efforts. On average, sites were currently working on three to four programs. The majority of the sites also reported plans for additional programs that were either in the design phase or awaiting funding.

Prevention Programs

Approximately 60 new or expanded prevention programs were implemented. Most sites were working on at least three different programs. The most popular program types were mentoring, academic enhancement or school-based services, and substance abuse treatment. Others included job training, sexual or health education, parent education, and conflict resolution programs.

Effective prevention programs seek to simultaneously reduce identified risk factors and build protective factors. The programs described here were developed, enhanced, or expanded as a result of a planning process that was guided by data on risk factors.

• Mentoring

One of the most common program types among communities was mentoring programs. These services may be school-based or community-based and typically involve nonprofessional volunteers who model positive behavior with youth in a supportive, nonjudgmental manner. Mentoring programs often address issues such as alienation, academic failure, low commitment to school, and association with delinquent and violent peers.

• Academic Enhancement or School-Based Services

As a result of the link with local school districts, many communities developed related programs that worked to enhance the academic performance of youth such as reading and literacy programs, after-school programs, violence prevention, conflict resolution, and alternative education. For many communities, this was their first opportunity to work alongside school staff to address youth delinquency, despite the proven link between delinquency and academic performance. Many of these programs were supported with federal grants including the 21st Century

Learning Centers and Safe Schools/Healthy Families programs. Most programs sought to expand the involvement and role of schools in services for at-risk youth.

• Treatment for Substance Abuse

High numbers of youth in the juvenile court system with substance abuse problems, combined with a lack of services for those youth, prompted many communities to invest resources in treatment. Most programs focused on treatment for youth that were already involved with the juvenile justice system.

For example, Multnomah County in Oregon found that almost 60% of their delinquent youth were abusing drugs or alcohol. In addition to these high numbers, they identified a lack of services for these youth. In response, the community developed an intensive residential dual diagnosis treatment program housed in the local secure detention facility. The setting accommodates 15 youths.

Graduated Sanctions

Approximately 30 new or expanded graduated sanctions programs were implemented. On average, most sites implemented one or two graduated sanctions programs. Many of these involved customized policy or staffing changes. Teen and drug courts, truancy prevention, and community assessment centers are the most common model programs.

A model graduated sanctions system combines treatment and rehabilitation with reasonable, fair, humane, and appropriate sanctions, and offers a continuum of care consisting of diverse programs. The continuum includes: immediate sanctions within the community for first-time nonviolent offenders, intermediate sanctions within the community for more serious offenders, and secure care programs for the most violent offenders. The majority of the graduated sanctions implemented by the communities were immediate sanctions programs that filled gaps or provided additional or enhanced services at the "front-end" of the system.

• Youth Courts

Youth courts represent an alternative approach to the traditional juvenile justice system. In youth courts, juveniles charged with minor offenses such as underage drinking, impaired driving, and other substance-related offenses are considered by a jury of their peers. The courts serve a dual purpose — they provide a mechanism for holding youthful offenders accountable, and they provide youth with an opportunity to develop valuable skills.

Variations on this concept include the juvenile drug court, which functions much like a youth court, but is specifically focused on drug offenses; a Citizen Advisory Board, which features a jury of community leaders; and a Youth Accountability Court, which serves first- and second-time offenders and some misdemeanor offenses.

• Truancy Prevention

Truancy is rated as one of the major problems facing schools and has been linked with increased substance abuse and delinquent behavior. In an effort to combat this growing concern, many communities hired truancy officers and counselors to identify and address the needs of youth who were missing school, not merely to punish them.

• Community Assessment Centers (CACs)

CACs, also called juvenile assessment centers or intake centers, provide a 24-hour centralized point of intake and assessment for juveniles who are already involved or are likely to become involved with the juvenile justice system. This "one stop shop" can reduce the duplication of services, promote system efficiency, and facilitate access to services for youth and families.

• Public Education Campaigns

In addition to direct service programs, many communities developed public education campaigns about youth needs and about the impact of the collaborative work of Comprehensive Community Planning. In addition to garnering more support for the Comprehensive Plan, these public engagement efforts have

the potential to change attitudes and behavior in a range of areas.

Policy and System Changes

Some communities were most interested in the ways in which the overall system that cares for youth could be enhanced to reduce delinquency. Many sites took advantage of the collaborative process to build infrastructure and make policy and system changes. The most common of these included: 1) the development of assessment tools to guide decision making, 2) changes in the allocation of resources, 3) evaluation of the use of those resources, 4) efforts to share client information among agencies, and 5) local technical assistance and training. In addition, one community was successful at implementing legislation that supported the efforts of their planning group. Over the long term, these types of efforts are likely to produce lasting effects on juvenile crime and safety.

Assessment Tools

A structured needs assessment can ensure that the most appropriate treatment is selected for all youth, by all staff. Scored instruments provide additional measures for setting priorities. In addition, aggregated information derived from assessments can provide a basis for agency planning and evaluation.

For example, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, developed a risk assessment instrument to guide intake at their juvenile detention center. The type of assessment tools most often developed were ones used to guide placement of youth in detention facilities.

Most assessment tools used for delinquent youth contain similar questions. However, many agencies do not use the same format, which makes collaboration difficult. Many communities already using assessment tools, but using different versions at different agencies or at different points in the system, worked to develop common tools to increase efficiency in data analysis and service provision.

For example, Stark County, Ohio, coordinated youth assessments at different public agencies. The same basic set of assessment questions were asked of each youth in four different functional areas.

Changes in the Allocation of Resources

The possibility of achieving community-level goals is much greater when embraced by a broad selection of community institutions. Communities used the momentum gained during the planning process to reallocate resources in support of programs that were proven effective. Many communities were able to influence the priorities set by local funders. In addition, many sites were extremely successful at accessing additional funding for their communities to support the activities outlined in their Community Plans. Smaller jurisdictions that typically lacked access to the level of resources larger cities enjoyed were able to use data to advocate for additional funding at state and federal levels. A good example is Corpus Christi, Texas, which leveraged $8.2 million for a range of programs including after-school, Head Start, violence prevention, and a community assessment center.

At the same time, many communities lacking access to additional funding made significant strides in developing or enhancing existing services with very limited resources. Small communities leveraged the support of volunteers and in-kind staff from existing community agencies to provide high levels of service and to develop new programs.

For example, Waterloo, Iowa, determined through a resource assessment that youth in their community were not receiving consistent or in-depth health education from teachers at the local high schools. In addition, they had an unacceptably high pregnancy rate. The Comprehensive Planning team developed a volunteer program to fill this gap. They recruited over thirty volunteers to provide sexual and health education. The community implemented this program with no funding and was successful at serving almost every high school student in the community.

Evaluation

Communities promoted greater evaluation and accountability for agencies as a result of the lessons learned through the data-driven framework. Some communities adopted stronger outcome-based funding strategies; other communities hired evaluators to track community outcomes. This long-term focus on data provided communities the tools they needed to ensure that they were investing resources in programs that make a difference.

Information Sharing

In a given community, many public and nonprofit agencies work with the same youth but often fail to coordinate their efforts. One of the most significant opportunities that exists for greater coordination between these organizations is information sharing. Many participating agencies gathered extensive information from youth while serving them and some were still in the process of negotiating the obstacles that typically arise when developing management information systems, such as issues of confidentiality. Successful partnerships were formed between school districts and the courts. These were possible because of existing policies that required schools to provide courts with specific information about delinquent youth, such as attendance records.

Local Technical Assistance and Training

Many sites held training sessions on risk factors, delinquency prevention, and evaluation. Some developed online resources for public access to the data collected through assessment. Other communities used the data to help organizations raise funds for programs serving youth and families. In this way, the lessons learned through the process were shared widely, broadening the impact of NCCD's training efforts.

New Legislation Reflecting Comprehensive Community Planning

Local collaborative entities, such as the participating sites, possess the power to effectively advocate for legislative changes related to the core principles of Comprehensive Community Planning. The planning group in Dane County, Wisconsin, was advocating for a bill (AB 212) to add a weekend reporting center as a dispositional alternative.

Many states instituted legislative changes related to graduated sanctions as a result of their knowledge of the Comprehensive Community Planning process. Kansas, North Carolina, Texas, California, and Connecticut all passed legislation institutionalizing the goals of Comprehensive Community Planning. These locations can serve as models for other communities interested in legislative action to support their work.

- Kansas implemented both prevention and graduated sanctions components of the Comprehensive Community Planning model [Statutes Annotated Volume 6, Chap. 75-78]. They established teams and a statewide system to create comprehensive plans for each community.
- North Carolina [General Statute, Volume 17, Article 3C] implemented both prevention and graduated sanctions components of a Comprehensive Community Planning model. Comprehensive plans were developed in collaboration with county Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils and their State Advisory Council.

- California [Bill number SB 1760, Chapter 133] legislation created the Juvenile Crime Enforcement and Accountability Challenge Grant Program. A Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council in each participating county was required to oversee the development of Local Action Plans that were based on elements of Comprehensive Community Planning such as outcome measures and evaluation. These local plans assessed the existing continuum of responses to juvenile crime and identifed gaps that were candidates for state-funded demonstration grants.
- California also developed legislation [Bill number 3220, Chapter 730] creating the Repeat Offender Prevention Program, which was modeled after the graduated sanctions component of the Comprehensive Community Planning model. It has been implemented in the Counties of Orange, Fresno, Humboldt, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, San Mateo, and Solano.
- Connecticut [General Statue Annotated, Volume 21B Titles 46-46b, Page 190-194] legislation demonstrated a strong commitment to prevention. Connecticut incorporated prevention efforts with graduated sanctions for serious, repeat juvenile offenders.
- Texas [Family Code Annotated, 51.01 Chapter 59] code called for the adoption of a seven-step progressive sanctions system and a first offender program.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

In the early 1990s the juvenile court was under siege. Conservative critics declared that the juvenile court was a failure — too lenient in its philosophy to deal with the new wave of violent children. Liberals questioned the commitment of the court to equal justice and complained that the juvenile court dispensed second-class justice to poor youngsters. The media frightened the American public with inflated tales of the new generation of "super predators." They reported that rates of gun violence and homicide involving teenagers were escalating rapidly, that juvenile gangs were out of control, and that adolescent drug use was increasing dramatically. Although many of these public perceptions were based on questionable or nonexistent data, few elected officials were willing to defend the juvenile court (Jones and Krisberg, 1994). The American public was looking for a plan to stem this crisis and traditional juvenile court critics were "at the ready" with proposals to abolish the juvenile court, to prosecute more children in criminal courts, and to increase the use of incarceration. The juvenile court suffered legislative defeats across the nation — limiting the court's jurisdiction, increasing the power of prosecutors to direct cases away from the juvenile court, ending the practice of confidential juvenile court hearings, and mandating stiffer penalties. Interestingly, a number of public opinion polls suggested that, although the citizenry was very concerned about escalating youth violence, they had not abandoned their faith in the value of prevention and rehabilitation services as opposed to incarceration (Krisberg and Austin, 1993).

Despite the fact that "get tough" policies were sweeping legislative forums, the principles of the Comprehensive Strategy seemed to resonate with local sentiment in most communities, including those that had always supported more conservative politicians. Absent from these local forums were the more strident voices that advocated simplistic solutions to complex problems. Community members wanted solid information that was based on research, and they wanted objective information on promising prevention and treatment programs. Remarkably, there were few discussions about transferring youths to criminal courts, the need for more incarceration, or more juvenile arrests in any of the Comprehensive Community Planning sites. Indeed, the police and the prosecutors often led community dialogues toward more focus on prevention and earlier intervention with troubled youngsters. The Comprehensive Community Planning process was the beneficiary of the emerging law enforcement consensus for "community justice" and "problem-solving law enforcement." Even as the U.S. Congress and state legislatures appropriated more and more funds for police and prosecution, the leadership of local agencies sought innovative programs that created true partnerships with local residents and community-based organizations.

The Comprehensive Community Planning process held out the promise of research-based strategies and a greater emphasis on actually reducing youth crime. The model argued for inclusion — a wide range of people working together to solve difficult community problems. Training and technical assistance events created a "safe environment" in which community leaders could honestly explore their concerns and start a process of problem-solving.

The process of Comprehensive Community Planning is not easy, but none of the initial communities chose to jettison the planning efforts. The experience suggests that there are productive ways in which the federal government can interact with and assist local initiatives. This experience offers a wealth of experience about how to promote interdisciplinary, multi-agency responses to the needs of our most vulnerable and troubled young citizens. A former Attorney General asked that our communities set out to "reweave the fabric of society" rather than continue the senseless debate over how many prison beds must be built. Comprehensive Community Planning consists of a series of approved tools to help communities achieve this vision. If we succeed, the ideals that inspired the founders of the American juvenile court just might be realized in its second century.

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A P P E N D I X

List of Participating Sites

California: San Diego County

Florida: Dade County, Duval County, Lee County, Leon County, St. Lucie County, Volusia County

**Hawai`i:** Hawai`i County

Iowa: Black Hawk County, Clinton/Jackson Counties, Muscatine County, Marshall County, Polk County, Woodbury County

Maryland: Baltimore City, Charles County, Montgomery County, Prince Georges County, Washington County, Wicomico County

Ohio: Butler County, Cuyahoga County, Lucas County, Mahoning County, Stark County

Oregon: Baker County, Clackamas County, Columbia County, Lane County, Tillamook County, Umatilla County

Rhode Island: Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, Woonsocket

Texas: Brownsville, Corpus Christi, Galveston, Houston, McAllen

Wisconsin: Dane County, Jefferson County, Kenosha County, Sheboygan County

NCCD Mission

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency, founded in 1907, is a nonprofit organization which promotes effective, humane, fair, and economically sound solutions to family, community, and justice problems. NCCD conducts research, promotes reform initiatives, and seeks to work with individuals, public and private organizations, and the media to prevent and reduce crime and delinquency.

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