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Building on Family Strengths for Better Outcomes:

Involving more families, more often, for more youth.

Vera Institute of Justice and Sedgwick County Division of Corrections

Cymone Fuller, MPA, Vera Institute of Justice

Lanora Franck, MACJ, Sedgwick County Division of Corrections

Ryan Shanahan, PhD, Vera Institute of Justice

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Introduction

Juvenile justice agencies are increasingly aware of the benefits to partnering with families whose youth are in their care and custody. The research, albeit limited, is conclusive: youth who have more family support are more likely to succeed.¹ In 2015, the Sedgwick County Division of Corrections (DOC), after spending years conducting residential juvenile placement reform, turned their attention to family partnership as a way to continue their achievements in reductions with placement, and to achieve better outcomes for the youth touched by the system.

To that end, the Vera Institute of Justice (Vera) worked with the DOC on an intensive family engagement initiative that was driven by staff and centered by the voices of youth and families. In short, the goal of the project was to *involve more families, more often, for more youth*. Most juvenile corrections approaches often focus on deficits—and typically view youth and families as problems, rather than a source for solutions. Shifting this culture to a strengths-based and family-focused approach is a significant effort that requires changes in policy, procedure, practice, and staff training at each program. For the DOC to embrace the model, it required 18 months of technical assistance with Vera that included an assessment of current practices and identification of areas for improvement; recommended policy, procedure, and practice changes; system-wide staff training on best practices; and a pre- and post-reform evaluation.

The practice changes designed to better engage youth with their parent(s) and families positively impacted all juvenile clients served across the continuum of DOC services: the Juvenile Intake and Assessment Center (JIAC), Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF), Juvenile Residential Facility (JRF), Home-based Supervision (HBS), Juvenile Intensive Supervision Program/Juvenile Field Services (JFS), Juvenile Case Management, and the Sedgwick County Youth Program (SCYP) (see Appendix A: Sedgwick County DOC Juvenile Court Process Flowchart).

This report provides an overview of the division's family engagement plans, as well as the assessment of their efforts based on data collected in 2017, in comparison to the baseline data collected in 2016. The report provides background information to contextualize the changes implemented by the DOC during the family engagement initiative and summarizes the plans developed by each facility and program. The report also lays out the methodology used to track change and measure impact of the DOC changes and findings from the final assessment. The report concludes with a summary

¹ See: Monahan, 2011; Osgood et al, 2005; Holt & Miller, 1972

of the impact of the family engagement initiative and recommendations for sustainability.

Background

Over the last decade, Sedgwick County implemented a succession of evidence-based reforms guided by their partnership with the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, The W. Haywood Burns Institute,² and Georgetown University’s Center for Juvenile Justice Reform’s program on multi-system integrated youth.

In 2014, Sedgwick County voted to close the central juvenile justice residential facility that had served the community for 53 years. During those years, the Judge Riddel Boys Ranch had allowed the county to successfully work with medium- and high-risk young men close to home. Young men housed in this facility had a recidivism rate of 48 percent (compared to 80 percent for similarly situated young men who were not housed in the facility).³

In response to the closing of the Judge Riddel Boys Ranch—and in anticipation of the implementation of a state juvenile justice reform legislative package aimed at reducing the number of youth incarcerated by serving them in their communities—the DOC began designing alternatives to meet youth and community needs.⁴ Out of this strategic planning process came a two-pronged approach: increase the use of evidence-based cognitive behavioral programming, and implement a family engagement model to strengthen work with families.

In 2016, the DOC engaged Vera to support the implementation of a family engagement model. This work was organized in three phases: (1) assessment, (2) targeted support for a family engagement initiative, and (3) evaluation of the DOC efforts.⁵ This report focuses on the details of the family engagement initiative and the results of the DOC’s efforts.

² <http://www.burnsinstitute.org/what-is-red/>

³ Craig-Moreland, D. (2013). Impacts if Judge Riddel Boys Ranch is Closed (Issue brief).

⁴ For more on the legislative reform, *S.B. 367*, please see: <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2017/06/kansas-2016-juvenile-justice-reform>

⁵ For more information on the assessment phase, including baseline data methodology and findings, please see *Building on Family Strengths for Better Outcomes: Findings from phase one assessment*.

Family Engagement Initiative

Over the course of the family engagement initiative, the DOC made tremendous gains in improving family engagement policies and practices for youth and families in their system. Working together, they were able to meet their goal of having more families involved for more youth, more often. Below we list the most impactful reforms that position Sedgwick County DOC as leaders in the field for family engagement. The family engagement reforms are centered on the three organizing principles of the project: identify, engage, and empower families for true partnership.

1) Identify—Define family members broadly

The biggest changes implemented by DOC involved expanding visitation privileges. Prior to the family engagement initiative, only parents and a limited number of pre-approved family members were able to spend time with incarcerated youth. During the initiative, staff took courageous steps to implement the division's new mission statement: *"To promote public safety through accountability and partnerships using effective and supportive intervention and treatment services to empower youth and families."* This involved including more people in contact visits without jeopardizing safety, guided by the agency-wide adoption of a new definition of family: *"supportive people, identified by youth and their parents or guardians, whose positive involvement contributes to their success."*

Buoyed by this new definition, facilities now allow extended and expanded family visitation for people like siblings, aunts, uncles, and other supportive community members. Although each facility and program is implementing the new policy differently, in one facility alone, 149 visits were scheduled within three months of the policy change that would not have been allowed prior to the project.

In support of the new broader definition of family, staff began using tools to engage youth and families about the natural support available to them. Staff are using the Juvenile Relational Inquiry Tool and family mapping tools in their assessments and case management to identify the broadest array of support. Staff are using the tools in early assessments and throughout their case management to help youth and families meet their goals—goals required by the county as part of their treatment (for example, meeting curfew and attending school), but also goals the youth develop for themselves (for example, getting a job and spending more time with their little sister).

Staff shared stories about how the impact of the new definition of family made real changes in their work. For example, because of the changes, one mother is now able to

visit her son because she is allowed to bring her baby into visits. We also heard of one young man who now gets multiple visits a week because more family members are able to participate—his mom comes one day, his aunt another, and his grandmother another.

2) Engage— Increase quantity and quality of time for young people to be in contact with a broader definition of family members.

A huge change for the DOC in their effort to engage more families was creating more welcoming environments. All of the DOC juvenile facilities expanded the number of visitation days each week and extended the amount of time per visits. The time families are now able to spend together is also enhanced with games, crafts, and snacks (see Image 1).

Image 1. Snacks, Games, and Family Craft Activities Offered at Family Visits



Sedgwick County worked to also improve their relationship with the families of the youth they serve. The county made large efforts to improve the visitation space with areas for children to play (see Image 2), murals (see Image 3), more comfortable furniture, and entertainment (movies and magazines).

Image 2. Play Area for Children



Image 3. Murals in Facilities



To increase the access that youth and families had to each other, some facilities eliminated policies connecting contact to a youth's "behavior level." Removing restrictions around family contact signaled to the youth and families the importance of support for *all* youth in facilities.

The DOC also began exploring how to provide free phone calls to all youth. Eliminating phone costs removes an additional collateral punishment for youth and families who do not have adequate resources.

3) Empower—Improve the DOC’s connection to families

Image 4. Family Bill of Rights



The DOC further empowered families by creating a *Family Bill of Rights* (Image 4). This document lays out clearly what families can expect and how they deserve to be treated. Highlights from the bill reflect the DOC’s new approach to family:

- “You have the right to be informed about matters related to your loved one’s welfare.”
- “You have the right to meaningful participation in the planning and implementation of your loved one’s case plan and to receive updated plans throughout their involvement in our services.”

To put the bill of rights into action, many of the programs increased their efforts to involve families in treatment team planning processes. For example, facilities re-crafted or created welcome letters to families that explained the purpose of planning and communicated the importance of family input and participation. The juvenile residential facility (JRF) worked hard to open lines of communication—creating a weekly news digest about each young person and letting families choose how the digest was communicated. Many families chose email, an easy and convenient way to know what their loved one participated in during the week and how their behavior was improving.

Programs also began scheduling meetings around family members’ schedules. Home-based supervision (HBS) staff now conduct approximately 70 percent of meetings during the school year in the field, rather than the office. And, juvenile field services (JFS) staff extended office hours and the times they are available for the first meetings they have with families. Program staff reported that extended time with families in locations where they are most comfortable greatly improved lines of communication,

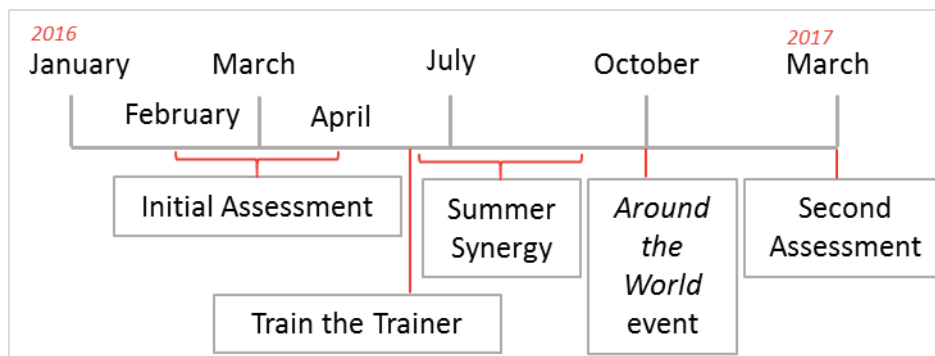
and they noticed parents were much more engaged in asking questions about the process that will serve the youth throughout the time under supervision.

The DOC also greatly expanded opportunities for family to give feedback. The different programs and facilities all had surveys, modeled after customer satisfaction surveys, available in the waiting areas of their building. Some programs went further and created monthly, more in-depth surveys that collected feedback about specific aspects of their service or initiatives. The DOC also began holding family engagement meetings with family and community members as the first step toward developing a family council.

Roadmap for Change: System-wide family reform

The family engagement initiative was a huge success, but it took a lot of work to get there. Vera conducted a three-month assessment of all the youth programs within the division—meeting with county stakeholders, surveying staff and youth, talking with family members, and reviewing policies. In partnership with the DOC leadership, Vera designed an intensive year-long initiative that worked simultaneously on changes agency-wide and tailored to each facility and program. The changes included: rewriting policy to reshape practices, training tailored to the diversity of staff positions, and a rollout of reform efforts during a concentrated time period that the DOC labeled the Summer of Synergy.

Image 5. Project Timeline



Changes to Policy and Practice

The agency-wide reforms followed the principles of identifying, engaging, and empowering families. The program- and facility-specific reforms were developed with a cross-sectional workgroup and designed according to their function and specific needs (see Table 1).

Table 1

Facility and Program Reforms

Department Description	Changes to Policy and Practice
<p>Juvenile Intake Assessment Center (JIAC) operates every day, 24 hours a day, and receives referrals from law enforcement agencies and the district attorney's staff. JIAC also offers referrals to families that call in for help and works with an average of 200 referred youth each month.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update the "how to" documents with preferred language from Vera (example: juvenile to youth / parent to family) 2. Plan to provide facility tours for family 3. Create a FAQ document for families 4. Identify and implement a strengths-based assessment 5. Develop a JIAC section for the family guidebook 6. Begin facility improvements (example: painting murals)
<p>Home-based Services (HBS) is an alternative detention program providing home- and community-based services with youth under close supervision of staff members.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Create community-based regional offices. 8. Develop a parent curriculum 9. Integrate family voice into progress meetings/ work with youth and family to develop plan of care 10. Develop parenting strategy tip sheet 11. Draft a handbook that shares county resources for families
<p>Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF) is Sedgwick County's 24-hour detention facility for youth awaiting court hearings or placement into residential correctional facilities.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Use JRITs to expand youth support system and visitation possibilities. 13. Increase the numbers of youth getting visits by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Expanding definition of who can visit b. Increase length of time and number of opportunities families get to visit c. Plan a foster visitors program for youth who do not receive visits d. Make the visit space more welcoming: Offer games and snacks at visits; paint the space; instructions on using lockers, pictures of control booth staff e. Explore options for a lobby greeter (volunteers or family council member) 14. Develop a virtual tour of facility for families
<p>Juvenile Residential Facility (JRF) is a non-secure, but supervised, living facility that serves youth who require detention services but do not require secure confinement.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Increase contact: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Remove phone restrictions (phone access was associated with level of progress) b. Allow free phone calls every day c. Remove restrictions on number of long distance phone calls 16. Increase number of youth receiving visits: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> d. Open the options for visitation days/times e. Snacks and activities at visits 17. Use genograms 18. Create youth progress sheets to share with families 19. Develop family feedback forms

Sedgwick County Youth Program (SCYP) is the county's residential program for young men ordered to out-of-home placement by the court and who could benefit from skills, education, and job seeking instruction.

20. Plan for family furlough programs
21. Develop a family guidebook
22. Draft a new welcome letter for families from the facility manager of SCYP

Juvenile Field Services (JFS) provides supervision and/or case management for adjudicated youth in Sedgwick County. Youth served by this agency include: those at risk of entering state's custody, those placed on intensive supervision probation, those in the custody of the state, and those directly committed to a state juvenile correctional facility.

23. Utilize genograms and ecomaps to include family support in case planning
24. Expand the approved list of family supports that can attend case planning meetings and orientation
25. Develop a family council to organize family voice in JFS work

The strength of the family engagement initiative stemmed from the intense support from agency leadership and the time and attention they gave to it. As program and facility leaders were taking on large scale reform efforts, the DOC leaders took on county-wide policies that could support their goal of having more families involved, more often, for more youth. These major reforms included:

- spearheading the development of a new definition for family that was consistent across all of their juvenile justice programs and facilities;
- overseeing the inclusion of a series of tools and strength-based assessments to better identify family and others who support young people meeting their goals; and
- creating system processes to ensure information from the new tools was accessible across the continuum by expanding the internal database.

Division leadership offered budget support to help facilities re-envision their spaces to be more family-friendly and welcoming and to pay for staff time that was crucial for the facilities to offer more days, hours, and options for families to spend time with their loved ones.

Family-Engagement Training

To kick off the Summer of Synergy all DOC employees were trained by DOC staff in family engagement (DOC trainers were originally instructed via a Vera train-the-trainer program. For more information, see Appendix B). The training helped employees learn about the new expectations of all staff related to involving families under the three

organizing principles of identifying, engaging, and empowering.⁶ All employees received Family Engagement 101 and Working with Reluctance training. Case managers further received training on family mapping tools and correctional staff received training on the Juvenile Relational Inquiry Tool (JRIT). This section describes the various training components in detail.

Family Engagement 101: Before engaging in a large initiative dedicated to family partnership, juvenile justice staff need space to discuss their work and the impact of families on youth, while also learning basic techniques to engage youth and their families through targeted dialogue. The Family Engagement 101 helps all staff—regardless of their position in the agency—reflect on their beliefs about family partnership and the values they bring to their work, learn about the research on family involvement for youth in the justice system, and reflect on how asking youth about their support system can work toward case management or supervision goals.

Working with Reluctance: Staff members can sometimes feel frustrated when their efforts to include families are not met with a warm response. The workshop on reluctance teaches staff about the role of family on adolescent development and the effects of incarceration on family functioning. Staff get the opportunity to work through the challenges of engaging and supporting families, with a focus on prioritizing diverse cultures and family values.

Family Mapping Tools: Family mapping tools help staff working in different contexts apply a family-focused approach and engage youth in a strength-based way. These tools help improve rapport between staff and youth while identifying information that is valuable for reentry planning and case management. Family mapping tools provide staff with a visual means to engage participants in discussion and planning regarding their social support. A “genogram” builds on the concept of a family tree and charts information about strengths and challenges that repeat across generations within families and social networks. An “ecomap” displays public and community resources available to a family, as well as relationships with the criminal justice system, connections in the community, and institutions such as drug treatment, public housing, school, or a place of worship.

The Juvenile Relational Inquiry Tool (JRIT): Not all agency staff will have the time to use family mapping tools. For them, the JRIT is the most useful. This eight-question instrument was created to help juvenile corrections staff learn about the strengths and

⁶ For more on these organizing principles, please see: <https://www.vera.org/publications/identifying-engaging-and-empowering-families-a-charge-for-juvenile-justice-agencies>

social supports of people in their custody. It is intended to initiate a conversation that will inform programming, reentry planning, and other aspects of correctional case management. The goals of the JRIT are to help staff build rapport with youth and identify people who can provide support to the youth while they are incarcerated and when they return to the community.

Summer of Synergy: Focused Attention on Family Partnership

Vera and DOC leadership targeted efforts with each facility and program working on implementation plans to help them meet the Vera recommendations and increase opportunities for families to be involved. This concentrated focus on planning, implementing, and aligning improvements to family partnership policy was called the Summer of Synergy.

During the Summer of Synergy, the DOC focused on facility- and program-level family engagement improvement plans. Vera provided monthly coaching sessions for each of the facilities and programs and, at the end of the summer, organized an event to weave in cross-program support and accountability. In an all-day activity, which the DOC called “Around the World of Sedgwick County DOC,” Vera staff led the workgroup through a system-wide assessment. Vera asked the workgroup to approach the activity as a system-wide “open house” for people to share accomplishments and improvements, and allow peers to ask questions, provide support and suggestions, and stretch each other past their comfort zones.

During the “Around the World” activity, the workgroup visited each program and facility the way a family might experience it—from walking into the building, sitting in the waiting room, reviewing the forms that families would be asked to fill out, talking with staff that families would encounter, asking questions that families might have, and reviewing information that families would be given.

The workgroup was asked to:

1. be sensitive to the surroundings—how is the lighting, the smell, the comfort?;
2. pay attention to the information being gathered—is it repetitive, is it unnecessarily invasive, is it already known?; and
3. notice the staff interactions—what information is provided to the family about length of processing, and why are they being asked to wait; in what manner did staff introduce themselves and explain their role; how much time was allotted for the family’s questions or concerns; what resources were provided to the family, and; how did the family learn what happens ‘behind the locked doors’ (for

example: provided the opportunity to tour the facility or provided visuals of where young people eat, sleep, and go to school)?

The activity prompted people to “steal” ideas from other programs, debate the restrictions that some parts of the continuum have, and think through any course corrections that should be addressed with more technical assistance and training.

DOC leadership used the “Around the World” as the half-way marker in the targeted support phase—allowing time for staff to make more changes and identify areas that could be tracked with data to measure their success. Vera continued to provide technical assistance to the programs and facilities for the rest of the targeted support phase of the project, but the DOC showed leadership by instituting bi-weekly workgroup check-in meetings to weave in accountability and to help ensure that everyone met their goals, with the support of their peers and Vera, by the end of the project.

Evaluation

To capture the changes and measure the impact of the reforms, Vera conducted two assessments. This section describes the data collection and analysis for these assessments.

Methodology

In February of 2016, Vera conducted a first-round assessment of family engagement in the Sedgwick County DOC, through a series of surveys and focus groups with youth, families, and staff. The findings from the first round of assessments were shared in a report to the DOC leadership and informed the structure and content of Vera’s targeted support.

- Vera collected **data from youth** through surveys of all youth incarcerated in the DOC’s Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF) and Juvenile Residential Facility (JRF). An online version of the survey was also made available to young people under community supervision with Juvenile Field Services (JFS). The surveys sought to gather youths’ perceptions about the DOC’s family engagement efforts and their ability (the amount and quality) to be in contact with family members while incarcerated or have family members involved in decisions about them while under community supervision. The survey was organized into four areas:

perceptions of family support, perceptions of staff, connection and family relationships, and ideas for improvement related to family engagement.

- Vera collected **data from family members** about their experiences through focus groups and online surveys. During the family focus group, family members sat down to meals with Vera staff to discuss the experience of having youth in the juvenile justice system—specifically their understanding of policy and procedure, their interactions with staff and the DOC process, their ability to stay connected to their children, and their ideas for improving family engagement practices.
- To collect **data from staff**, Vera distributed an online survey and conducted several focus groups. The staff survey is based on Vera’s Staff Attitudes and Beliefs Towards Families Scale, which preliminary results show has internal validity in measuring staff beliefs and attitudes toward families and staff tendencies toward family-oriented work.⁷

After a year of agency focus on improving family engagement practices and policies in each program and facility of the DOC Juvenile Services, Vera returned in March of 2017 to reassess the experiences of youth, families, and staff using the same methodology as described above. The second assessment was not meant to be an exact pre-/post-comparison because of the different staff, youth, and family participation. Instead, Vera compared the aggregate findings from each point-in-time survey with youth and families to understand general changes in youth responses.

It was also not meant to be a one-to-one comparison across the agency because the programs vary so drastically from one another. For example, the average length of stay for young people varies widely by program and facility: 24 days in JDF, 30 days in JRF, 235 days in SCYP, and 57 days with HBS. The information offered in the report was meant to support the programs and facilities in their specific initiatives and help them track their own progress (for more detailed program- and facility-specific information, see Appendix C).

Youth Findings

Vera collected 51 surveys from DOC youth in March 2017 (at JDF, JRF, SCYP) (see Table 2). Of the 51 youth that completed surveys, 37 percent had been in the facilities for a month or less and 33 percent had been in for three months or more.

⁷ Sandra Villalobos Agudelo, “The Implications of Correctional Staff Attitudes and Beliefs Towards Families” (presentation to the American Society of Criminology, Chicago, IL, November 16, 2012).

Table 2

Youth Survey Participants by Program in March 2017

Facility	N	Average Daily Population (ADP) (2017)
Secure Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF)	28	55
Non-Secure Juvenile Residential Facility (JRF)	12	16
Sedgwick County Youth Program (SCYP)	11	14
Total	51	85

Table 3

Youth Survey Participants Demographics

Race/Ethnicity	N	% of sample
African American/Black	11	22%
White	12	24%
Latino/Hispanic	9	18%
Missing	8	16%
Multi-racial	6	12%
Other/Not Comfortable Sharing	5	10%
Native American/First Nation	0	0%
Total	51	100%

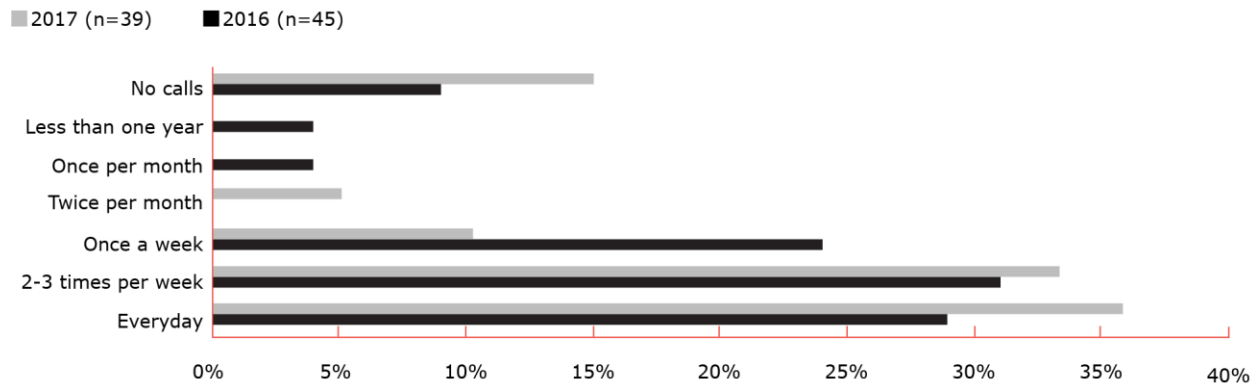
Contact and Connection

A primary goal of the family engagement initiative was to increase the amount of contact youth were able to have with their family. With a new, broader definition of family that allows for supportive people that the youth and their parents/guardian want to be involved, Vera was interested in capturing changes in youth reports of the amount of contact they had with their family members.

Figure 1

Contact by phone by year

JDF/JRF: How often do you receive calls?

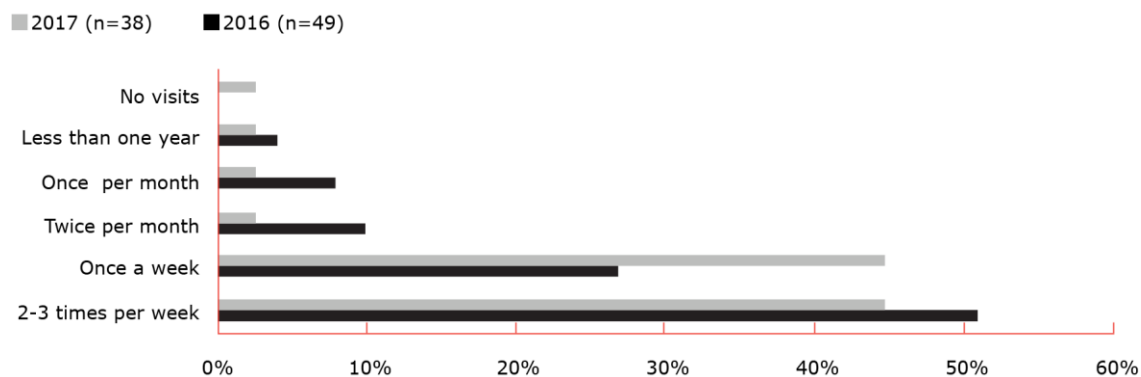


Thirty-six percent of youth surveyed in 2017 indicated that they spoke with a family member by phone at least once every day, compared to 29 percent in 2016. More youth in 2017 than 2016 also indicated receiving calls multiple times a week (see Figure 5). While more youth in 2016 received phone calls once a week than did in 2017, it is possible that this is because more youth in 2017 are receiving calls more frequently than once a week. Additionally, youth in JDF and JRF saw an increase in the amount of youth who reported having received visits from a loved one at least once a week (Figure 6).

Figure 2

Visits by year

JDF/JRF How often do you receive visits?

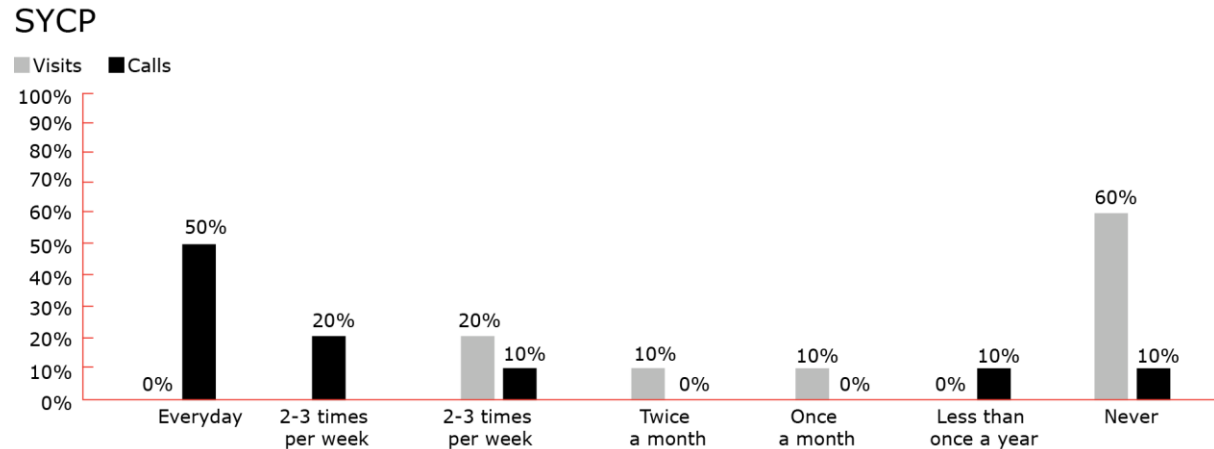


Although we were not able to collect survey data from youth incarcerated at SCYP during the first assessment visit, SCYP surveys collected in 2017 reinforced staff

knowledge about the lack of family contact for youth in that facility. While half of the 10 SCYP youth that completed the surveys were receiving phone calls from family every day, barely any were receiving visits (Figure 7).

Figure 3

SCYP Contact by phone 2017

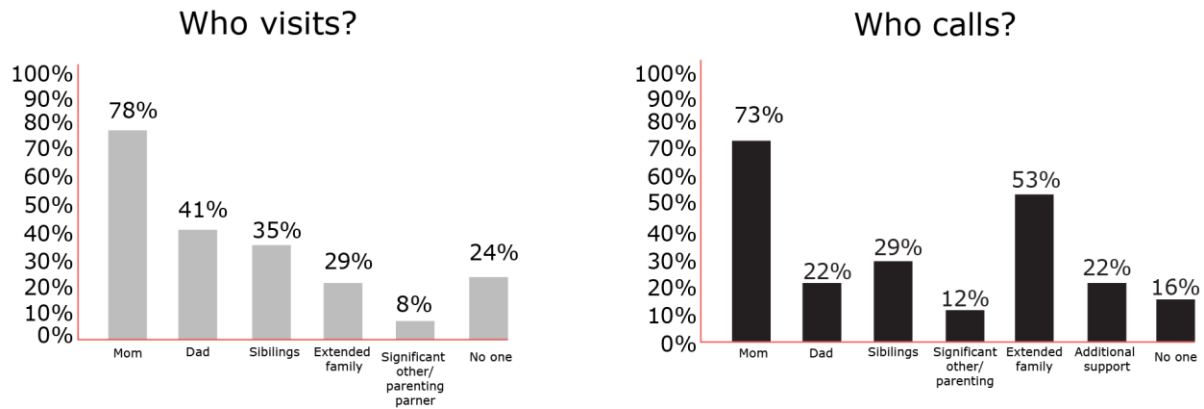


Expanded Definition of Family

In addition to increasing the amount of contact youth have with their loved one, another objective of the initiative was to expand the type of family that are able to stay connected with youth under the new definition of family that now includes broader social support. With the new definition, youth are receiving calls and visits from a variety of different supportive people in their lives. While mom and dad still make up the highest proportion of visitors in JDF and JRF, youth are now in contact with aunts and uncles, cousins, grandparents, parenting partners, and even a coach. Thirty-five percent of youth who participated in the surveys also received visits from their brothers and sisters. As we heard in the first round of surveys, visits with siblings was one of the top recommendations youth had about improving family engagement and increasing access to support for youth in facilities.

Figure 4

Visits and phone calls by relationship 2017



Overall, while the results from the youth surveyed in the first and second assessments are similar, there are strong indicators that the culture change the DOC seeks is beginning to impact young people’s experiences. For example, a few young people had been in the system at some point prior to the second assessment and reflected on how their current experience was different. In an open-ended question about whether or not youth noticed a change in the facility, one youth said “visits are longer now” and another said “more visits and more people.”

But, there were still a few youth who said the changes did not go far enough—for example, they would like their significant others to be allowed to visit. This was especially true for older youth in the SCYP facility. During the survey distribution we met young men who, at 19 and 20 years old, were living with their girlfriends prior to being returned to a short period of incarceration with the DOC. Because of visiting restrictions, the young men were not able to visit with the young women who were part of their support system in the community. When asked about what recommendations they had for improving the DOC, a majority of the youth wrote that they would recommend longer visits with more options for visit days and times to better accommodate their families.

Staff Findings

One hundred and nineteen juvenile services division staff in 2016 and 116 in 2017 participated in surveys that captured their values around family engagement, their readiness to take on a family engagement initiative, and their ideas for improving family engagement across the agency.

Importance of family for youth

During the first assessment with staff in 2016, a majority of staff (79 percent) already agreed that families are the most important source of support for youth in the juvenile justice system and that those youth needed help staying connected to their families. In 2017, that number grew to 84 percent of staff agreeing with that same statement. (See Figure 9).

Table 4

Staff Perceptions of Family Role by Year

Staff agree with the statement...	2016	2017	% Change
It is important that youth stay connected to their families.	86%	91%	+5%
Families are the most important source of support for youth.	79%	84%	+5%
Youth in this facility need additional assistance maintaining relationships with their families.	70%	79%	+9%

In focus groups, staff shared that they have noticed improved moods and behavior for youth on days that they know they will receive a visit and shared that parents have appreciated being more involved and informed about their child's progress.

Comfort with families

Overall, the entire division reported an increase in their comfort and engagement with families during the initiative. During focus groups with staff from all programs and facilities, staff shared the positive outcomes they saw or experienced from the family engagement initiative and areas that are still challenging.

Table 5

Staff Comfort with Family Engagement by Year

Staff agree with the statement...	2016	2017	% Change
I ask family input when planning for youth I work with.	22%	48%	+26%
I seek support from family members to better understand youth I work with.	33%	53%	+20%
I feel comfortable talking about family issues with youth.	59%	71%	+12%
I feel comfortable working with youths' families.	74%	87%	+13%

Most staff reported noticing an increase in the diversity of family members in contact with youth and an increase in the frequency of contact. Furthermore, there was a 20 percent increase in the number of staff who reported seeking support from family members and a 26 percent increase in those asking for family input for youth they work with (see Figure 10). Additionally, staff in focus groups shared that it “feels good” to see youth and families playing games together in visits and seeing smaller children playing with the toys in the lobbies.

Nevertheless, a few staff shared challenges that continue to persist in their attempts to engage with families, including experiences with families that were loud and disrespectful during visits, or an incident where a family member tried to pass contraband. To address these issues, facility leadership encouraged staff to communicate and address the concern with the youth and families, and also reinforced that these isolated incidents would not be used to roll back reform efforts and punish other families. The staff also discussed capacity challenges that came with accommodating more visitation days with more visitors.

Staff training and support

Over the course of the initiative, each program attempted to include as many staff as possible in the family engagement trainings offered during the Summer of Synergy and is still working to train every staff member on the family engagement principles and the appropriate family engagement tools. From 2016 to 2017, there was an increase in staff agreement with every statement related to training, preparedness, and agency support for engaging with families. The biggest increases in agreement were for the statements “supervisors at my workplace provide coaching to help staff better work with families” and “my workplace encourages staff to engage with families.” This is a testament to the fantastic work supervisors and division leaders have done to really embrace the challenge put forth by the initiative and support and encourage their staff in the work.

Table 6

Staff Perception of Support to Engage Families by Year

Staff agree with the statement...	2016	2017	% Change
I have the tools I need to successfully work with families.	44%	67%	+23%
My workplace encourages staff to engage with families.	46%	72%	+26%
Supervisors at my workplace provide coaching to help staff better work with families.	31%	56%	+26%
My agency policies reflect the value that family involvement is important.	62%	74%	+12%
My agency values family input.	58%	77%	+19%
I received training to talk with youth about their families.	27%	50%	+23%

DOC Connection to Community

Although the primary goal of the initiative was to have more family involved for more youth, more often, an additional component was the need to connect youth and families to external resources in the community. During the first assessment, staff, families, and youth raised the hypothesis that the DOC providing families with more information would help families address their needs and increase youth success in the community. While there is still work to be done on this, there was an increase in staff agreement with statements related to connections to community resources (See Figure 12). Survey results showed that the largest percentage increase in this category was for staff agreement with the statement about being encouraged to work with others outside the facility. Some programs even included creating resource guides for families as part of their family engagement improvement plans.

Table 7

Staff Perceptions of Resources to Engage Families by Year

Staff agree with the statement...	2016	2017	% Change
Facility staff can help youth at this facility stay connected to the community.	45%	58%	+13%
Staff are encouraged to work with others outside the facility (parole, child welfare, social service and treatment organizations, etc.)	29%	47%	+18%
Staff have formalized procedures for connecting incarcerated youth to services in the community.	30%	47%	+17%

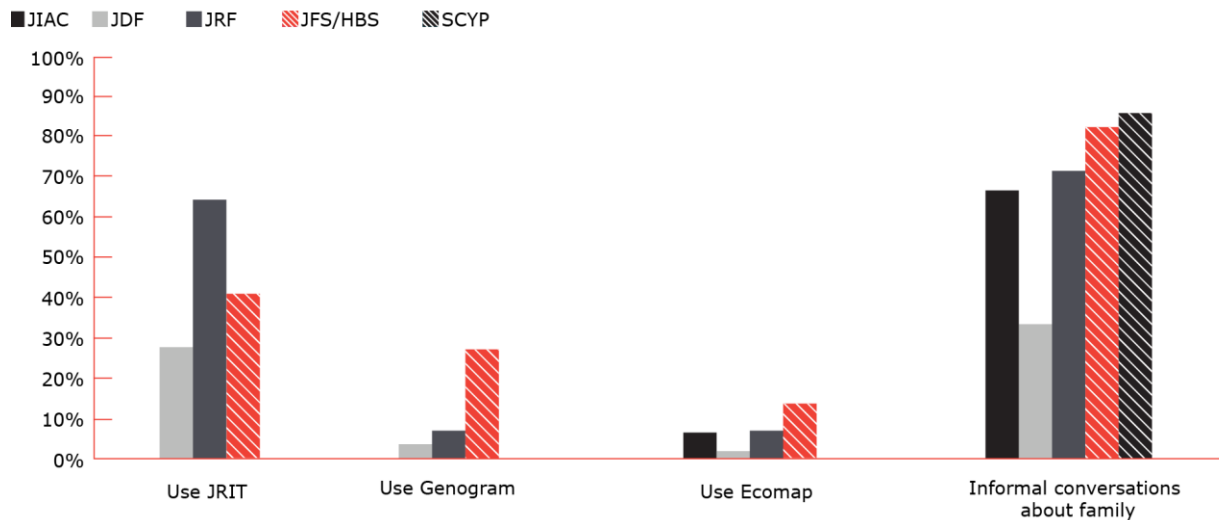
Learning about Families

During the pre-initiative assessment, 50 percent of staff indicated that they assessed the impact of family engagement on youth outcomes through informal conversations with youth. During the initiative, staff in all of the facilities and programs were trained to use a variety of different family engagement tools and techniques, specific to their roles. While having informal conversations with youth is still the primary strategy staff in all facilities and programs are using to learn information about families, staff are in the beginning stages of utilizing other tools to work with youth and learn about families. In focus groups, staff shared that the mental health staff in JDF were using JRITs to help identify support for youth who were struggling to identify family placements. Additionally, besides the tools shared during the training, several staff indicated that they are assessing family engagement using things like family surveys and Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) assessments.

Figure 5

Staff usage of family engagement tools

The use of family engagement tools by program (2017)



Family Findings

During the first assessment, a focus group with family members revealed a few themes: the importance of accountability (for youth and staff), the anxiety that comes from the unknown, and ideas for resources that families could use to support their loved one. These themes were shared with staff and used to drive Vera’s recommendations for improvement. With things like youth report cards shared with families of youth in JRF, the virtual tour book created for families with youth in JDF, and resource guides and family mapping, many of the improvements made by programs were directly related to family feedback received during the first focus group.

Although some families experienced having multiple kids in the Sedgwick County DOC or having one kid with multiple stays in the system, none of the families that participated in the first focus group were represented in the second round assessment focus group. Additionally, while there were nine family members that participated in the first focus group, there were only three family members that participated in the focus group during the final assessment. Each of the family members that participated had a youth that was involved with JFS at the time.

During the second focus group, families had a lot of great things to say about their experiences with JFS Intensive Supervision Officers (ISO’s). All three shared positive experiences with ISO’s that gave their youth multiple chances and approved special accommodations for youth to travel to events like sports and school dances. One parent shared that she “couldn’t be happier with the people here.”

Some families also shared that they had difficulty engaging with the DOC, including problems with clear communication. One mother shared that “once her daughter wasn’t feeling well and one staff member told her she could go lay down but then a few minutes later, another staff member told her she needed to get up.” Another parent said, “I’m not sure if they [staff] actually explain the expectations to them [kids] or if they just give them a list because I feel like they [staff] don’t actually make sure they [kids] understand.” Family members also shared that they experience issues with the way staff assert authority or question their ability to support their children. One parent said, “They [staff in the facility] bring a lot of their own values into the ways that they treat our children and “if they’re [staff] just here for a paycheck, then they really aren’t making it easier for us or our kids when they come home.”

Conclusion

The results of the hard work and commitment made by DOC over the course of the family engagement initiative are evident in the findings of the final assessment. The experiences shared by staff, youth, and families during the final assessment describe a DOC-wide culture shift that is moving far beyond a simple understanding of family importance for the young people in DOC, and has now cemented a commitment to prioritizing family involvement in policy and practice.

Survey results for staff indicate that the biggest impact of the family engagement initiative was an increased confidence and preparedness to engage and support youth and their families, as well as to include family engagement tools and strategies in their work. For young people in the care of DOC, and their families, there was a noticeable change and appreciation for the amount and type of family members they were able to keep in contact with during their time in DOC, due to the expansion of family contact policies to include supports that extend beyond parents and guardians. Vera also observed a tremendous difference in the experience of staff and families related to the quality of visitations for youth in DOC confinement settings. Staff, youth, and families all appreciate the work done to enhance the visitation experience (additional and more comfortable furniture, colorful murals, large posters with the Family Bill of Rights, the new definition of family and new mission statement, as well as added activities, games, and snacks) to be a more comfortable atmosphere for families to connect with their loved ones.

While the results of the family engagement initiative are impressive and have put DOC on track to increase their goals, the work is still not complete. In order to build on the

changes made and capitalize on the apparent shift in agency culture change, Vera recommends the following as important next steps for continued improvement and sustainability:

1. **Implementing the tools.** Each program and facility should continue to train all staff and implement family engagement tools for their intended purposes. For example, while mental health staff at JDF are implementing the JRIT with youth who are struggling to identify family support for housing decisions, the JRIT is designed to be implemented with all youth, regardless of housing situation, by front-line corrections staff who spend the most time with youth. For JDF and JRF, front-line staff should begin to use the JRIT with all youth after seven days in the system.

Additionally, mental health staff and JRF staff should work to utilize the family mapping tools as a part of their standard process and practice with youth on their caseloads. Utilizing these tools is not only a way to capture the support and family dynamics in a youth's life, but should also be utilized to leverage what is learned to better support youth and bring family into decisions about case planning and reentry.

To monitor the implementation of the tools, Vera recommends that DOC integrate information from the tools into their on-line data management system. Additionally, the data management system would allow for information sharing across positions and divisions within the department.

2. **Data collection.** In order to fully understand the impact of the reform efforts, DOC should focus on data collection practices that will capture the identification and engagement of family for youth in their care. For example, capturing data for visitation and phone calls, behavior incidents, recidivism, etc. Furthermore, regularly reviewing the data collected will allow for real-time learning of which efforts are producing the best outcomes, and which may need further training or strategizing.
3. **Exploring internal capacity and leadership.** Continuing to meet as a workgroup with leaders from each facility and program is also a worthwhile endeavor. Over the course of the initiative, the workgroup really helped leaders learn from their counterparts in other areas of the continuum and helped to push each facility and program to move closer to the goal of connecting more youth to more family, more often. For example, the implementation of the expanded definition of family in visitation and phone call policies are areas that require

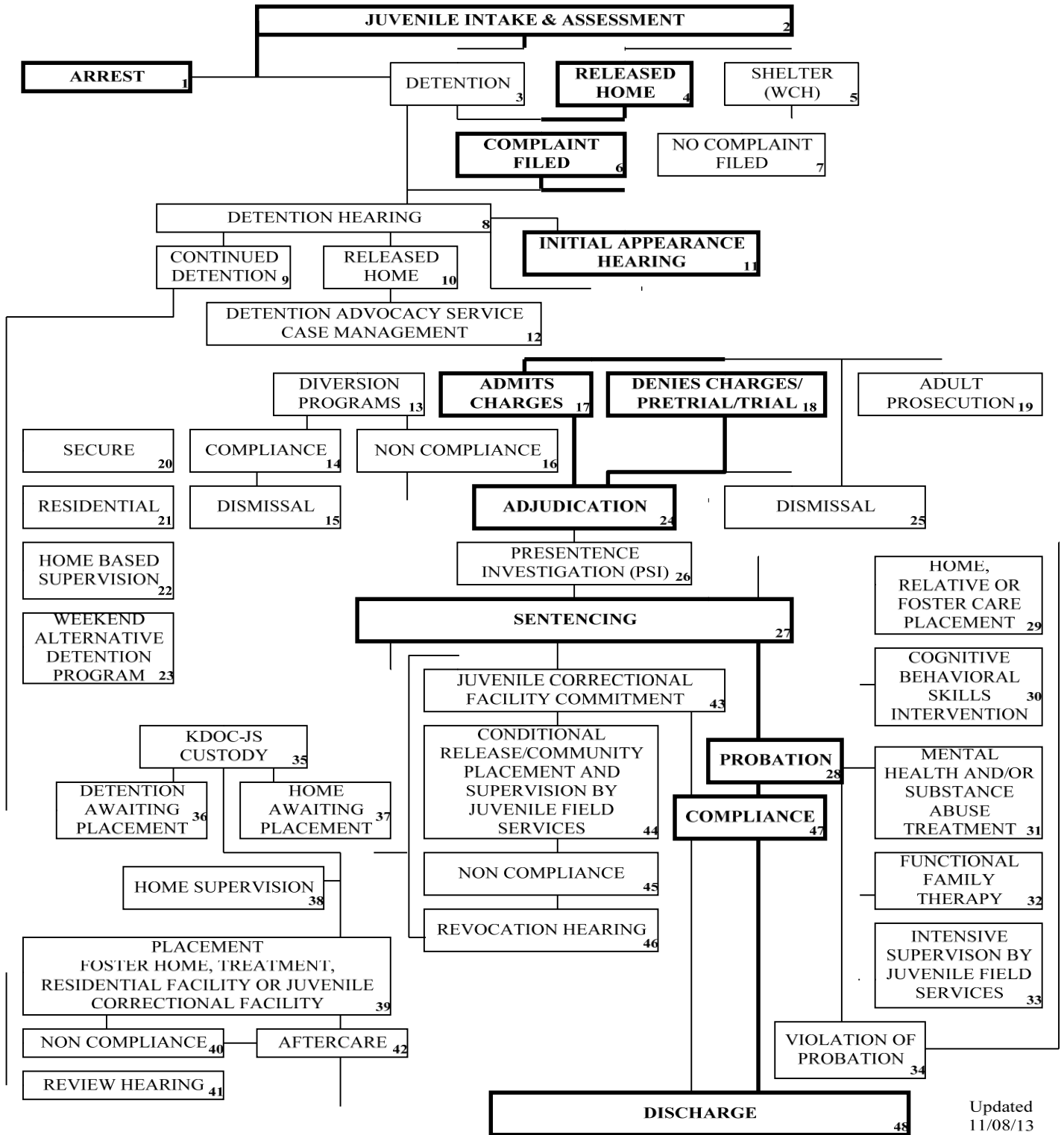
continued attention and prioritization. While some facilities have made exceptional efforts to adjust their visitation and phone call policies, others still have work to do to ensure that all identified family support can contact and connect with their loved one.

4. **Family and youth partnership**. Expanding opportunities to incorporate youth and family voices in system-level decisions, like the family council in JFS, is a strong way to elevate the DOC's commitment to family engagement and become a national leader in the field.

Overall, the Sedgwick County DOC continues to solidify and strengthen the changes that have been made thus far and will continue to push the boundaries of family engagement into other systems in the community to build an integrated coalition where families and youth are empowered as they navigate the juvenile justice system.

Appendix A: Sedgwick DOC Juvenile Court Process Flowchart

In the District Court, Eighteenth Judicial District, Sedgwick County, Kansas
COURT PROCESS OF JUVENILE OFFENDER CASES



Updated
11/08/13

Appendix B: Sedgwick County Internal Newsletter highlighting Family Engagement Staff Training

Sedgwick County Employee Weekly Newsletter
August 8-14 2016

EMPLOYEE BULLETIN

In This Issue...

- New Management Team - JIAC

Things to Know...

New Management Team Announced

County Manager Mike Scholes launches a new organization chart, reducing his direct reports to four people. Those include a deputy county manager, two assistant county managers and a county engineer.

- Deputy County Manager: Tom Golden
- Assistant County Manager: Tom Stoltz
- Assistant County Manager: Tim Kaufman
- County Engineer: David Spears

Places to Go...

Jeff Dunham at Intrust Bank Arena

Saturday, December 3, 5 p.m.
International comedy sensation Comic/Ventriloquist Jeff Dunham along with his cast of hilarious characters present the "Perfectly Unbalanced" Tour. This show is packed with surprises and old favorites. Tickets are \$48.50.
For more information go to www.intrustbankarena.com.

Spotlight On You



Juvenile Intake and Assessment Center (JIAC) staff members Cameron Andrews and Michelle Boyd explore ideas on how to improve family partnerships with the Vera Institute of Justice.

JIAC provides transportation and food assistance for youth. This year they've assisted four families with travel vouchers and provided meals to nearly 35 youth.



Cody Charvat is re-elected to another two-year term as Regional Vice President for the Kansas Emergency Management Association (KEMA).



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[W] www.sedgwickcounty.org [E] communications@sedgwick.net

Juvenile Intake and Assessment Center (JIAC)

The JIAC is the Sedgwick County Division of Correction’s (DOC) front door, operating 24 hours a day, every day, receiving arrested and non-arrested youth from law enforcement agencies, the district attorney’s staff, and families. The JIAC also offers referrals to families that call or walk in for help and works with an average of 200 referred youth each month.

The JIAC plays a unique role in setting the tone and experience for families and youth, as the first point of the Sedgwick County juvenile justice system. In the beginning of the initiative, JIAC staff communicated that their time with youth and families was often strategically short and that the limited time impacted their ability to engage families. For example, youth and families go to the JIAC before they go to court. All that withstanding, during the first assessment, most staff agreed that their workplace encourages them to engage with families and that they have the tools to successfully work with families, although most staff did not agree that their supervisors provided coaching to help staff better work with families. However, after the family engagement initiative, staff increased in agreement with each of those statements. Most notably, 100 percent of JIAC staff that completed the final assessment survey agreed that they have the tools they need to successfully work with families (See Figure 1).

Figure 1

JIAC Staff Perception of Support to Engage Families

Staff agree with the statement...	2016 (n=11)	2017 (n=15)	% Change
I have the tools I need to successfully work with families.	64%	100%	+36%
My workplace encourages staff to engage with families.	91%	93%	+2%
Supervisors at my workplace provide coaching to help staff better work with families.	36%	67%	+31%

Furthermore, during the first assessment, 91 percent of staff agreed with statements about working with families regularly and feeling comfortable working with families and talking to youth about their families. While almost all of the staff were working with families and felt comfortable doing so, 73 percent of staff agreed that they were seeking support and/or input from families to help in their work with youth. Again, agreement with these kinds of statements increased across the board during the final assessment.

One question that resulted in a decrease in agreement, was the question about regularly working with families. While other results suggest that a family-focused approach has been effectively woven into the JIAC’s culture and practice, an increase in staff numbers at the JIAC may have meant that there are some staff that tend to have very little direct contact with families due to other tasks and responsibilities at the JIAC (See Figure 2). In the focus group, JIAC staff talked about how improvements to documents given to families and improving the physical spaces where youth and families wait and spend their time at the JIAC made a positive difference in the experience of youth and families.

Figure 2

JIAC Staff Comfort with Family Engagement

Staff agree with the statement...	2016 (n=11)	2017 (n=15)	% Change
I am comfortable working with youths’ families.	91%	100%	+9%
I seek support from family members to better youth I am working with.	73%	93%	+20%
I feel comfortable talking about family issues with youth.	91%	93%	+2%
I ask family input when planning for youth I work with.	73%	93%	+20%
I work with families regularly.	91%	80%	-11%

Altogether, JIAC staff—while limited to working with youth for a very short amount of time—have made some significant improvements to better engage families in the process. The JIAC has made improvements to their “Starting Point” program focused on prevention for youth “at risk” of entering the justice system by including time for family members to ask questions about the program and experience. Staff have also begun letting youth who went through the program take the lead in answering questions and teaching back what they’ve learned to their families. Additionally, the JIAC made improvements to their intake assessment, including strength-based questions about family. Albeit brief, the improvements the JIAC has made on the front end of the system help to encourage family engagement throughout the rest of continuum.

Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF)

The JDF is Sedgwick County’s 24-hour detention facility for male and female youth between the ages of 10 and 18 who are awaiting court hearings or placement into residential correctional facilities. During the initial assessment of staff perceptions and experiences with family engagement, JDF staff shared that because of their roles in the facility, they had very limited interactions with families, consisting mainly of monitoring visitations, or “no family interaction at all,” with the exception of mental health staff. Several staff expressed hesitation about working with families and had a hard time understanding the role of a correctional officer for improving family engagement. As one staff put it during a focus group in the first assessment, “working with families is above our pay grade.”

Over the course of the initiative, staff at multiple levels of the JDF embraced the charge to improve family engagement in their facility. As seen in Figure 1, staff responses to feeling prepared and supported to engage families increased. Of the 56 staff that completed surveys in the second assessment, 54 percent agreed with the statements “supervisors at my workplace provide coaching to help staff better work with families” and “my workplace encourages staff to engage with families,” which are 25 and 34percent-increases from those who agreed with those statements in the first assessment (See Figure 3). During focus groups, JDF staff mentioned that mental health staff are now completing the Juvenile Relational Inquiry Tool (JRIT) with all youth in the facility and are sharing the results of that tool with other programs as youth move through the continuum.

Figure 3

JDF Staff Perception of Support to Engage Families

Staff agree with the statement...	2016 (n=56)	2017 (n=46)	% Change
I have the tools I need to successfully work with families.	34%	50%	+16%
My workplace encourages staff to engage with families.	29%	54%	+25%
Supervisors at my workplace provide coaching to help staff better work with families.	20%	54%	+34%

Furthermore, results from the second assessment showed a pretty dramatic increase in the number of JDF staff who now feel comfortable working with youths’ families. In focus groups with JDF staff, they shared examples of being flexible and accommodating

for family visits and talked about how it was nice to see families engaging over games during visitation. One staff member shared how she knew a kid and his mom were both struggling with depression and mental health issues, and it felt nice when she saw them sit together and put a puzzle together during a visit.

Figure 4

JDF Staff Comfort with Family Engagement

Staff agree with the statement...	2016 (n=56)	2017 (n=46)	% Change
I am comfortable working with youths' families.	25%	72%	+47%
I seek support from family members to better understand youth I am working with.	18%	26%	+8%
I feel comfortable talking about family issues with youth.	45%	46%	+1%
I ask family input when planning for youth I work with.	7%	20%	+13%
I work with families regularly.	25%	48%	+23%

There is still a low proportion of staff that actually report seeking input or support from families to better understand and work with youth (See Figure 4). Leadership at the JDF hypothesize that survey results reflect the position of many of staff—they do not always have the chance to interact with family members given their location in the facility.

Overall, JDF staff shared that they feel good about the direction they are moving to improve family engagement, but are also feeling that the impact of staffing shortages, which can make the additional efforts to include families or offer opportunities to be involved with their children more challenging. While the JDF has expanded the length of family visits, added an extra visit timeslot on Sunday evenings, and approved a variety of new family visitors, they report that figuring out ways to properly staff those visits is sometimes difficult. Nevertheless, most staff agreed that they like the changes made to visitation, including adding games and snacks, and have seen some positive outcomes for youth and families as a result.

Juvenile Residential Facility (JRF)

The JRF is a non-secure, but supervised, living facility that serves youth between the ages of 10 and 18 who require detention services but do not require secure confinement.

During the first assessment, JRF staff reported out in focus groups that family engagement was mostly a function of the staff that transported youth to court, services, and appointments. Staff outside that role reported that the only time they had with families was checking them in and monitoring them during visitation.

Even though staff interactions with families were initially reported as minimal, most JRF staff in the first assessment reported feeling supported and prepared to work with families. The feelings of support and preparedness grew throughout the initiative, with the exception of being provided coaching from supervisors (See Figure 5).

Figure 5

JRF Staff Perception of Support to Engage Families

Staff agree with the statement...	2016 (n=20)	2017 (n=14)	% Change
I have the tools I need to successfully work with families.	60%	86%	+26%
My workplace encourages staff to engage with families.	60%	79%	+19%
Supervisors at my workplace provide coaching to help staff better work with families.	65%	50%	-15%

During focus groups with JRF staff during the final assessment, Vera staff noted the ease and confidence staff had when talking about their work with family. Staff shared stories of how they were reaching capacity during visitations and how adding games, snacks, and activities during visitation had made some families more willing to bring siblings and other family members to visit youth in the facility. Furthermore, Vera staff were able to sit in during a visitation night and watch staff greet families by name at the door, help ease kids' anxiety about being screened by metal detectors wands, and share progress reports with parents as the youth enjoyed time with their families. Vera observed one young man laughing and coloring with his mother, sisters, aunts, and cousins at one big table, while another celebrated a birthday with his mother and siblings. This shift in staff comfort interacting with families was also represented in the survey data. Staff showed an increase in agreement with every statement having to do with comfort in working with families and gathering support and input from families to better understand and support youth in their care (See Figure 6).

Figure 6

JRF Staff Comfort with Family Engagement

Staff agree with the statement...	2016 (n=20)	2017 (n=14)	% Change
I am comfortable working with youths' families.	90%	100%	+10%
I seek support from family members to better understand youth I am working with.	35%	43%	+8%
I feel comfortable talking about family issues with youth.	70%	71%	+1%
I ask family input when planning for youth I work with.	15%	50%	+35%
I work with families regularly.	50%	64%	+14%

Throughout the initiative, JRF staff excelled at being innovative in their thinking about ways to improve family engagement for youth in their facility. The JRF removed restricted visiting hours, offering increased flexibility for the families. Hours were changed to allow longer visits, several additional holidays were added to the holiday schedule, birthday visits were implemented, and special visits were implemented for families unable to attend scheduled visiting times. They also developed a youth progress report system that is sent out to families on a regular basis, which has been well received. As mentioned before, JRF identified a service to bring in crafting kits to provide youth and families during visitation and either let families take them home or display their crafts around the facility. JRF has incorporated monthly themes for visitations that coincide with holidays or other things staff and youth come up with. In summary, the JRF staff seemed excited to continue expanding their work on family engagement moving forward.

Sedgwick County Youth Program (SCYP)

The SCYP is a program that offers a 15-bed residential program for young men ordered to out-of-home placement by the court who could benefit from skills, education, and job seeking instruction. The purpose of the program is to prepare young men for independent living. Youth receive assistance in finding and maintaining jobs, saving money, and learning to take care of themselves in a supervised setting.

At the beginning of the initiative, it was clear that the SCYP, because many of the youth in their care had very limited, if any, family involved in their lives, faced some of the biggest challenges. In the first assessment, the majority of SCYP staff did not feel supported or encouraged by their supervisors or workplace to work with families and only 20 percent of staff reported having the tools that they need to successfully work with families (see Figure 6). Throughout the initiative, the SCYP faced budgetary limitations, but persisted in their efforts to improve family engagement in the program.

Figure 7

SCYP Staff Perception of Support to Engage Families

Staff agree with the statement...	2016 (n=20)	2017 (n=7)	% Change
I am comfortable working with youths' families.	60%	86%	+26%
I seek support from family members to better understand youth I am working with.	10%	14%	+4%
I feel comfortable talking about family issues with youth.	65%	86%	+21%
I ask family input when planning for youth I work with.	10%	14%	+4%
I work with families regularly.	10%	29%	+19%

A reduction in bed capacity and staff had an impact on participation in the final assessment surveys. However, their efforts paid off: the results from the second assessment show a striking difference in the way staff responded to questions about support and preparedness to successfully work with families. The majority of SCYP staff that completed the survey agreed that “their supervisors provide coaching to better work with families.” They also agreed their “workplace encourages staff to engage with families” and they “have the tools they need to successfully work with families” (See Figure 8).

Figure 8

SCYP Staff Comfort with Family Engagement

Staff agree with the statement...	2016 (n=20)	2017 (n=7)	% Change
I have the tools I need to successfully work with families.	20%	57%	+37%
My workplace encourages staff to engage with families.	30%	86%	+56%
Supervisors at my workplace provide coaching to help staff better work with families.	15%	71%	+56%

During the first assessment, the majority of SCYP staff reported feeling comfortable working with families and talking with youth about their families, but also reported that they rarely sought support or input from families. In focus groups, staff shared that this was mainly because it was difficult to identify or contact families for youth in SCYP. Results from the second assessment showed a large increase in the percentage of staff reporting that they feel comfortable working with families, but still a low proportion reporting connecting with families for support or input (See Figure 7).

All and all, family engagement for staff working in SCYP is still challenging. SCYP has made changes to reduce barriers to engagement and enhance the quality of visits when youth do have family contact. SCYP revised their behavior classification system to increase the amount of family contact youth were allowed to have on various levels and added snacks and games during visitation.

Juvenile Field Services (JFS)/Home-Base Services (HBS)

JFS covers youth that have been assigned to community supervision and is made up mostly of Intensive Services Officers (ISOs) who are tasked with supervising and supporting youth in the community. HBS is an alternative detention program that diverts appropriate juveniles from the juvenile detention facility (JDF) to their own homes under close supervision of staff members.

Figure 9

Field Service Staff Perception of Support to Engage Families

Staff agree with the statement...	2016 (n=7)	2017 (n=22)	% Change
I am comfortable working with youths' families.	100%	100%	No Change
I seek support from family members to better understand youth I am working with.	100%	95%	-5%
I feel comfortable talking about family issues with youth.	71%	95%	+24%
I ask family input when planning for youth I work with.	86%	91%	+6%
I work with families regularly.	100%	82%	-18%

In the beginning of the initiative, JFS and HBS staff were some of the most experienced with family engagement and had already begun implementing certain strategies of engagement such as a parent orientation and parent support groups. During focus groups, JFS staff shared that they rarely had parents that came into the office for youth meetings and that participation in parenting groups were low. For HBS staff, family engagement was expressed as more of a hassle. As one HBS staff member put it, “Sometimes the parents are the problem and we would like less engagement.”

There was a significant difference in the staff survey participation during the first and final assessment, with only seven staff participating in the first assessment and 22 staff in the final. During the first assessment, 100 percent of JFS and HBS staff that participated in the survey agreed that their workplace encourages staff to engage with families (See Figure 9), which remained the case in the final assessment. The biggest shift for staff was the percent of staff that agreed that they have the tools they need to successfully work with families, which increased by 20 percent (See Figure 10). During the final assessment focus group, HBS staff seemed to have a completely different attitude towards family engagement. One HBS staff member said that “when families are involved it works great.”

Figure 10

Field Service Staff Comfort with Family Engagement

Staff agree with the statement...	2016 (n=7)	2017 (n=22)	% Change
I have the tools I need to successfully work with families.	57%	77%	+20%
My workplace encourages staff to engage with families.	100%	100%	No Change
Supervisors at my workplace provide coaching to help staff better work with families.	67%	68%	+1%

During the final assessment, an overwhelming majority of staff that completed the survey agreed with statements about comfort and experience working with families (See Figure 10). In the final assessment focus group, a JFS staff member gave an example of how, using the new definition of family, one kid had 14 different people on his “approved to supervise” list and which included many members from his church who stepped up to volunteer.

Overall, both JFS and HBS made some big shifts in practice to improve family engagement in their programs. To gather input from families about their experiences with JFS, staff use family surveys and started a family and youth council made up of family members and youth that have experienced time under JFS supervision. While in the early stages of both, staff expressed that they have found these strategies helpful and meet on a regular basis to review the feedback and think about ways to incorporate youth and family suggestions into their work. HBS made significant changes by incorporating youth and family participation in the development of case planning. HBS also implemented case plan reviews, an incentive program and expanded meetings with families outside of the office setting. HBS staff also provide feedback forms to families and meet regularly as a team, including the supervisor, to discuss case planning and to help each other with resources and other advice to better support youth and families on their caseload.