MODULE

1

A Toolkit for Status Offense System Reform

STRUCTURING SYSTEM CHANGE

STATUS | REFORM
OFFENSE | CENTER

ABOUT THE MODELS FOR CHANGE RESOURCE CENTER PARTNERSHIP

The Resource Center Partnership works to advance juvenile justice systems reform across the country by providing state and local leaders, practitioners, and policymakers with technical assistance, training, and the proven tools, resources, and lessons developed through the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change: Systems Reform in Juvenile Justice initiative.

The Partnership is anchored by four complementary, connected Resource Centers that address four important issues in juvenile justice:

- Mental health: The Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Collaborative for Change, led by the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice. For more information, visit: cfc.ncmhjj.com

- Stronger legal defense for indigent youth: National Juvenile Defender Center. For more information, visit: njdc.info/resourcecenterpartnership.php

- Appropriate interventions for youth charged with non–delinquent—or status—offenses: The Status Offense Reform Center, led by the Vera Institute of Justice. For more information, visit: www.statusoffensereform.org

- Coordinated systems of care for young people involved in both the juvenile justice and child protective systems: The Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice, led by the RFK Children's Action Corps. For more information, visit: www.rfknrcjj.org

The Partnership also includes a strategic alliance of national experts and organizations representing state leaders, mayors, judges, law enforcement, prosecutors, corrections professionals, court personnel, and justice reform advocates. These partners further enrich the tools, best practices, and training offered by the Centers and provide direct connections to professionals working in juvenile justice.

For more information about the Models for Change Resource Center Partnership, visit: modelsforchange.net/resourcecenters

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TOOLKIT
INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, states and localities are seeking to develop and implement strategies for safely and cost-effectively diverting youth from the juvenile justice system. Perhaps nowhere is this more necessary than in the response to youth who have committed what are called status offenses— a range of behaviors, such as running away from home, skipping school, or violating curfew, which are prohibited under law because of an individual's status as a minor. Across the country, these young people are frequently referred to juvenile court and subject to the same punitive interventions as youth charged with criminal activity. According to the most recently available national estimates, 137,000 status offense cases were processed in court in 2010, and youth in more than 10,000 of those cases spent time in a detention facility.[1]

Using justice system interventions to respond to behaviors that are problematic, but noncriminal in nature, is costly and often does more harm than good.[2] Overburdened with more cases than they can handle expeditiously, courts are ill-equipped to provide the assistance youth and families in crisis urgently need.

There is a better way. Several states and localities nationwide have implemented community-based and family-focused alternatives to court intervention that are reducing family court caseloads, lowering government costs, and providing meaningful and lasting support to children and families. These community-based systems feature the following hallmarks:

■ **Diversion from court.** Keeping kids out of court requires having mechanisms in place that actively steer families away from the juvenile justice system and toward community-based services.

■ **An immediate response.** Families trying to cope with behaviors that are considered status offenses may need assistance right away from trained professionals who can work with them, often in their home, to de-escalate

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[1] Charles Puzzanchera and Sarah Hockenberry. *Juvenile Court Statistics 2010*. (Pittsburgh, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice, 2013).

[2] Annie Salsich and Jennifer Trone. *From Courts to Communities: The Right Response to Truancy, Running Away, and Other Status Offenses.* (New York, NY: Vera Institute of Justice, 2013).

the situation. In some cases, families also benefit from a cool-down period in which the young person spends a few nights outside of the home in a respite center.

- **A triage process.** Through careful screening and assessment, effective systems identify needs and tailor services accordingly. Some families require only brief and minimal intervention – a caring adult to listen and help the family navigate the issues at hand. At the other end of the spectrum are families that need intensive and ongoing support to resolve problems.

- **Services that are accessible and effective.** Easy access is key. If services are far away, alienating, costly, or otherwise difficult to use, families may opt out before they can meaningfully address their needs. Equally important, local services must engage the entire family, not just the youth, and be proven to work based on objective evidence.

- **Ongoing internal assessment.** Regardless of how well new practices are designed and implemented, some are bound to run more smoothly than others, at least at first. Monitoring outcomes and adjusting practices as needed are essential for sustaining support.

While these practices are critical for developing an alternative system for responding to status offenses, leaders and officials interested in making change are often stymied by a lack of guidance and tools. Questions they commonly raise include: Who should be involved in this work? What policy and practice changes should we make? And, most critical, how will we know if the reforms are working?

A product of the Status Offense Reform Center (SORC), this toolkit addresses those questions and many more. With funding and support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Vera Institute of Justice (Vera) launched SORC as a one-stop shop of information and practical guidance for policymakers and practitioners seeking to prevent youth who engage in noncriminal misbehavior from entering the juvenile justice system and provide them with services and supports in the community. A Toolkit for Status Offense System Reform draws on Vera's work with policymakers and practitioners in more than 30 jurisdictions across the country to improve local status offense systems. It is also grounded in the lessons learned through the MacArthur Foundation's flagship juvenile justice reform initiative Models for Change and informed by sound planning and implementation practices identified in research literature and policy reports.

The toolkit is organized into four modules, each of which covers a discrete phase of the system change process.

MODULE ONE: STRUCTURING SYSTEM CHANGE describes how to lay the foundation for productive engagement with stakeholders that leads to action and meaningful system change. Given the complex and often fragmented nature of status offense systems, this module helps you think about who should be involved in the change process, how they should be engaged, and what information will help them along the way.

MODULE TWO: USING LOCAL INFORMATION TO GUIDE SYSTEM CHANGE describes how stakeholders spearheading the reform effort can assess their current system to promote a reform planning effort that is data-driven and attuned to the unique strengths and needs of their jurisdiction.

MODULE THREE: PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING SYSTEM CHANGE describes how to use the information gathered through the system assessment, along with best practice insights from across the country, to develop and implement a well-informed plan for system change that fosters sustainability and continual learning.

MODULE FOUR: MONITORING AND SUSTAINING SYSTEM CHANGE describes how to monitor whether the reform plan is being implemented as designed, measure whether the changes are leading to improved system outcomes, and modify as needed.

Woven throughout each module are tips, spotlights and resources. Tips are bite size pieces of advice intended to help you effectively implement a step. Spotlights are examples of jurisdictions that have translated a step into meaningful action. And, resources (which are listed in the accompanying appendix and available through SORC's library) run the gamut from publications that you may want to consult as you implement a step to customizable datasets and PowerPoint presentations.

The toolkit modules follow an order common to many processes that aim at system reform; however, the ordering is not intended to be prescriptive. System change is not always linear in nature and is often iterative. Practitioners are encouraged to use the modules in the order that is most logical for a particular situation and community. For example, officials in jurisdictions that are just beginning to get their feet wet with system change, may wish to start with module one and make their way through the series in full, whereas those that have already implemented a reform may be interested in going directly to module four and perhaps going back to the others as the need arises. Keep in mind that each module is written with the assumption that jurisdictions are taking on this work on their own, without the benefit of an outside technical assistance provider. If you do have the resources for outside help, work closely with that provider to map out his or her role in the process and what order will work best for you.
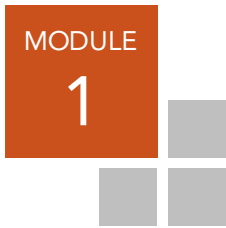
STRUCTURING SYSTEM CHANGE

The transformation of your local status offense system to an effective community-based approach depends on the commitment, energy, and knowledge of the people who will help plan, implement, and sustain the change you seek. For this reason, it is critical to spend some time early in the process thinking about who should be involved and how they should be prepared for the work ahead. This module describes how to lay the foundation for productive engagement with stakeholders that leads to action and meaningful system change.

STEP 1 | IDENTIFY AND RECRUIT STAKEHOLDERS

Status offense systems are complex in nature, with responsibilities for serving young people and their families often fragmented across multiple agencies. As you set out to reduce reliance on the courts and firmly root your local status offense system in the community, taking a collaborative approach can enhance the commitment of different stakeholders to reform and help assure that changes will occur and endure. Whether your plans include systemwide or targeted reform, forming a working group is a necessary first step. This working group will be responsible for assessing current practice, identifying areas of concern, and planning, implementing, and sustaining the change needed to address those areas. Below are some important considerations to keep in mind when assembling a working group:

RECRUIT A CHAMPION

Every working group, whether it is an informal group of three or an official steering committee of 20, needs a champion committed to and adept at leading the change effort. The champion need not have a preconceived plan for how to change the status offense system, but must support an effort to study and improve how the system serves youth and families in crisis. This person may be you or someone else with a vested interest in system reform. Ideally, the champion is a respected local leader who can muster the political will and leverage the resources necessary to bring about true change. A natural champion may be a juvenile court judge, a commissioner of social services, or a commissioner of juvenile probation, since people in these positions are often respected public figures with knowledge of the status offense system and commitment to fostering the well-being of youth and families. However, it is certainly not a prerequisite that the champion be a high-ranking official. Others who have the respect and buy-in from leadership can play this role as well. (See appendix for toolkit resources.)

SPOTLIGHT: A JUDICIAL CHAMPION

In 2003, Steve Teske, chief judge of Georgia's Clayton County Juvenile Court, grew frustrated by the high volume of youth referred to his court for low level misdemeanors and status offenses. Guided by the belief that many of these cases could be dealt with more effectively outside of the juvenile justice system, he brought together a stakeholder working group charged with designing and implementing an alternative to court response for youth at risk of being charged with status offenses. For more information on how Judge Teske used his judicial convening power to champion status offense system reform, see his profile in the Coalition for Juvenile Justice's report Positive Power: Exercising Judicial Leadership to Prevent Court Involvement and Incarceration of Non-Delinquent Youth (available as a toolkit resource).

LEVERAGE AN EXISTING GROUP

Before launching a new working group, consider whether an existing group in your jurisdiction could be repurposed to take on status offense system change. If there is a group of stakeholders accustomed to collaborating with one another on interagency issues pertaining to youth and families, you may be able to build on its track record and hit the ground running. Moreover, system officials juggling busy schedules will likely appreciate your limiting the number of working groups in which they are asked to participate. Be mindful, though, that status offense system reform not get watered down or forgotten in the midst of their work. To avoid this, make sure the existing group commits explicitly to status offense analysis and change, or forms a representative sub-committee to take on this work and report back to the larger body. (See appendix for toolkit resource.)

STRIVE FOR REPRESENTATIVE MEMBERSHIP

Recruiting working group members from the array of agencies, organizations, and groups involved in the system will ensure that the change process is informed by a representative body. It will also promote the sharing and leveraging of resources. Most important, it can increase the likelihood that system improvements will be achieved and sustained, since people are more inclined to support changes they have helped shape.

SPOTLIGHT: UTILIZING AN EXISTING WORKING GROUP

In 2004, as part of a larger juvenile justice reform initiative, Louisiana passed a law mandating each parish to create a Children & Youth Planning Board (CYPB) responsible for assessing services for at-risk youth and implementing programs to divert youth from the foster care and juvenile justice systems. Local leaders in Calcasieu, Rapides, and Jefferson Parishes later charged these boards with coordinating and executing efforts supported by the MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change initiative, including status offense system reform. Asking the planning boards to take on this work made sense: status offense system change was compatible with their missions and stakeholders essential to the change process were already members. In fact, the statute establishing the boards required that appointees consist of members of the education, criminal justice, health care, social services, faith-based, and business communities as well as members of parent and youth organizations. According to Judge Patricia Koch, former president of Rapides Parish's CYPB, the relationships among board members, forged and strengthened during an initial three-day planning retreat, were particularly helpful in inspiring status offense system reform and ensuring commitment and accountability for implementation.

To get the right mix of people at the table, consider inviting both people who work in and with the system as well as those served by it. This will allow for different, but equally valuable expertise and perspectives to inform the work. While it is reasonable to tailor your working group's membership to the scope of your change agenda, any comprehensive reform effort will need to draw on the following stakeholder groups:

- law enforcement
- courts
- probation
- public defender's office
- prosecutor's office
- mental health
- substance use
- faith-based organizations

- schools
- social services
- budget representatives
- young people
- caregivers and family members
- child and family advocates
- community-based service providers

Equally important is the need to ensure racial and ethnic diversity within the group. Compared to their representation in the general population, youth of color are often disproportionately represented in local status offense systems—something that is even more pronounced in the broader juvenile justice and child welfare systems. Jurisdictions that successfully undertake reform thoughtfully build their working groups to reflect, to the extent possible, the race, ethnicities, and communities of the population they serve.

TIPS: ASSEMBLING A STAKEHOLDER WORKING GROUP

Engaging the right people in your stakeholder working group can make a big difference in what the group is able to accomplish over the long term.

1. **Recruit respected leaders:** Invite top-level officials who will seek input from and report back to their staff on an ongoing basis. This approach will ensure that the group's work is connected to and mindful of the realities on the ground.

2. **Recruit passionate managers:** Invite mid-level officials who may not be in a position of leadership but will have the time, ability, and passion to manage and execute the change process.

3. **Recruit a mix of skill-sets:** In addition to recruiting members from an array of stakeholder groups, be sure to invite people who are adept at collecting and analyzing data as well as people who are skilled in program and policy planning and implementation.

4. **Conduct a stakeholder analysis:** Identify and reflect upon the potential benefits and barriers associated with inviting each potential group member. Taking time to assess how potential members will contribute to the working group will enable you to structure a process that both fosters productivity and leads to a meaningful outcome. (See appendix for toolkit resources.)

INCORPORATE YOUTH AND FAMILY VOICES

Regardless of size, a truly representative working group includes young people and family members who have come in contact with the system and are interested in contributing to its reform. In recent years, there has been a

gradual shift in policymaking from viewing youth and family members as clients in need of intervention to treating them as partners in system reform work. Policymakers increasingly recognize that young people and family members have expertise to contribute about how the system operates and what might be done to improve outcomes for those it serves.

When planning to invite young people and family members to your working group, it is often helpful to call upon a local service provider, a school guidance counselor, or a community or family advocate to assist in recruiting young people or family members. Also, invite more than one young person and one family member to the group. This will help support participants who have had less experience with reform committees and public speaking, allow for diverse points of view, and generally ensure a more inviting environment. (See appendix for toolkit resources.)

TIPS: INCORPORATING YOUTH AND FAMILY VOICES IN YOUR REFORM EFFORT

1. **Recruit with purpose:** When recruiting young people and family members through community partners, be sure to provide your partners with criteria for your search—such as age, location, type of past system involvement, and level of comfort speaking publicly. In addition, define family in broad terms as a young person may turn to people outside the nuclear family for support and assistance. And, finally, it is advisable to limit your recruitment of young people to those with inactive cases and, with minors, to obtain the consent of a parent or guardian.

2. **Prepare participants for meetings:** In organizing working group meetings that involve young people and family members, it's important to prepare all members for their participation. Prior to the first meeting, consider organizing training or a less structured discussion to help members communicate and interact effectively within cross-cultural settings. This may involve encouraging working group members that work in or with the system to avoid the use of acronyms or other jargon whenever possible at meetings, since young people and family members may not be fluent with system terminology. It is also important to talk with youth and family members prior to the first meeting about the goals of the working group

and brainstorm strategies for their active participation. Young people, for example, may feel most comfortable participating in "break-out" sessions with other youth before reporting back to the larger working group. Family members, too, may feel more at ease collaborating with stakeholders with whom they have existing relationships, such as school officials or leaders of a community-based organization. Or, you may ask for volunteers willing to be called upon during the meeting to share their experiences. Finally, both young people and family members may, or may not, feel comfortable or inclined to share their personal stories with the larger working group. This should be their decision and one that they have the space and comfort to share with working group organizers in advance. After the first working group meeting, follow up with the youth and family members to see if the meeting met their expectations and identify areas that could be improved upon in the future. If time allows, repeat this process before and after all working group meetings.

3. Be mindful of participants' time and needs: Working group meetings involving young people and family members will likely infringe on other obligations they may have, such as work, extracurricular activities, or family commitments. Every effort should be made to minimize the logistical difficulties and increase the personal reward of participating in reform efforts. Schedule meetings at venues that are accessible, safe, and welcoming for families and at times that pose the least difficulty for them. If possible, offer child care for parents who may need to bring younger children along. And finally, consider reimbursing them for costs associated with their attendance, such as time and transportation.

4. Strive for a collaborative decision-making process: While it may not always be possible to reach full consensus in all areas of planning, the success and sustainability of any system change effort will increase enormously if members of the working group feel that everyone is engaged in the decision-making process, all views expressed are valued, and all members are considered equal participants.

STEP 2 | PREPARE STAKEHOLDERS FOR SYSTEM CHANGE WORK

Regardless of the size of your working group, convening members for an official kick-off or launch meeting will help them develop a shared sense of purpose for, and commitment to, the work ahead. While all are system stakeholders with an interest in fostering the well-being of youth and families in their community, it is nonetheless important for them to collectively acknowledge that aspects of their current status offense system (or even the system as a whole) need to be revamped, and commit to closely examining its strengths and weaknesses in order to plan and implement meaningful reform. A typical working group launch meeting will have three objectives: 1) to ratify the group's charge—its agreed upon purpose or scope of work; 2) to establish roles and responsibilities; and 3) to plan the first phase of its work. Below are some important considerations to keep in mind when preparing for working group members to meet:

INVITE WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

Whether you take advantage of an existing group of stakeholders or create a new one, it is critical to formally invite members to participate in the change process. While the invitation may take the form of an official letter, a casual email, or even a phone call, it is important that it comes from the champion—a respected leader in your jurisdiction. Any written invitation and other correspondence should use language that can be easily understood by people with varying levels of familiarity with the system and issues at hand. If needed, a glossary of technical terms can be developed and shared as the work progresses. (See appendix for toolkit resources, including a sample and customizable invitation letter.)

The invitation should be passionate and compelling, ultimately conveying why an analysis of the current system and a new approach to status offending youth are needed. It should also clearly articulate the working group's charge. The group's charge could be comprehensive in scope—for example, to examine how the juvenile justice system is used to respond to youth who commit status offenses and to identify and implement strategies for safely reducing that use. Or, it could be somewhat limited in scope—for example, to examine school-initiated status offense referrals to the courts and to identify and implement strategies for handling those cases at the school-level without involving the courts.

The invitation should also stress the importance of the invitee's participation in the group and set clear expectations for his or her engagement in and accountability to the reform process, as follows:

- At launch, members are asked to come together to acknowledge the unsatisfactory nature of their current status offense system and generate buy-in for a deeper analysis and reform process.

- In the near term, members are expected to conduct a system assessment, during which they will gather and analyze information about their status offense system to identify and target specific problem areas. Based on their assessment and additional best practice research findings, members will establish a set of guiding principles for the status offense system and plan reform.

- In the long term, members are expected to dedicate their time, attention, and resources to implementing, monitoring, and sustaining reform.

DEFINE THE LOCAL SYSTEM

Status offense systems can vary significantly across jurisdictions, both in terms of what behaviors constitute status offenses and the ages by which a youth may enter the system. Moreover, these systems are often complex, with referrals coming from school officials, parents, or law enforcement, and services that are housed and accessed through multiple agencies, such as social services, mental health, probation, and courts.

For these reasons, it is not uncommon to convene a working group of knowledgeable and experienced system officials and find that each person has a different understanding of the scope and flow of the local system. To ensure an accurate and common understanding of the local status offense

system, which is a prerequisite to any change effort, it is important to define the parameters of your system in advance of your first working group meeting. If needed, consider asking a few members of the working group to help you with these tasks.

■ First, identify how your state classifies the noncriminal misbehaviors of truancy, running away, and ungovernability (or being incorrigible), as well as violations of curfew and liquor laws. Most states define these behaviors in the context of a separate legislative category of status offenses (such as child in need of services, or CHINS). However, some states classify some of these behaviors as child welfare related, and others classify some as juvenile delinquent offenses. Also, check whether your state identifies the first time violation of a court order and any other behaviors, such as those involving violations of tobacco laws, as status offenses.

Document the various behaviors identified as status offenses in your local state statute. This will establish a common baseline understanding of the legal framework that governs your system. Following the launch meeting, group members can further investigate how your jurisdiction responds to these behaviors in practice (described in more detail in Module Two).

■ Second, identify the lower and upper age by which youth may be brought into the status offense system. While this information may seem basic to many, some group members may not have this knowledge or may have certain false assumptions.

■ Third, generate a simple status offense system flow chart by documenting the various ways a young person can come into contact with the system and the multiple paths a case can take once it enters the system. Be sure to identify key decision-making points, as well as the parties involved at each point.

Document the system flow according to policy and don't worry about capturing the nuance of what occurs in practice. Again, group members can and should wrestle with the reality of what occurs in practice once they start assessing their system (described in more detail in Module Two). (See appendix for toolkit resources.)
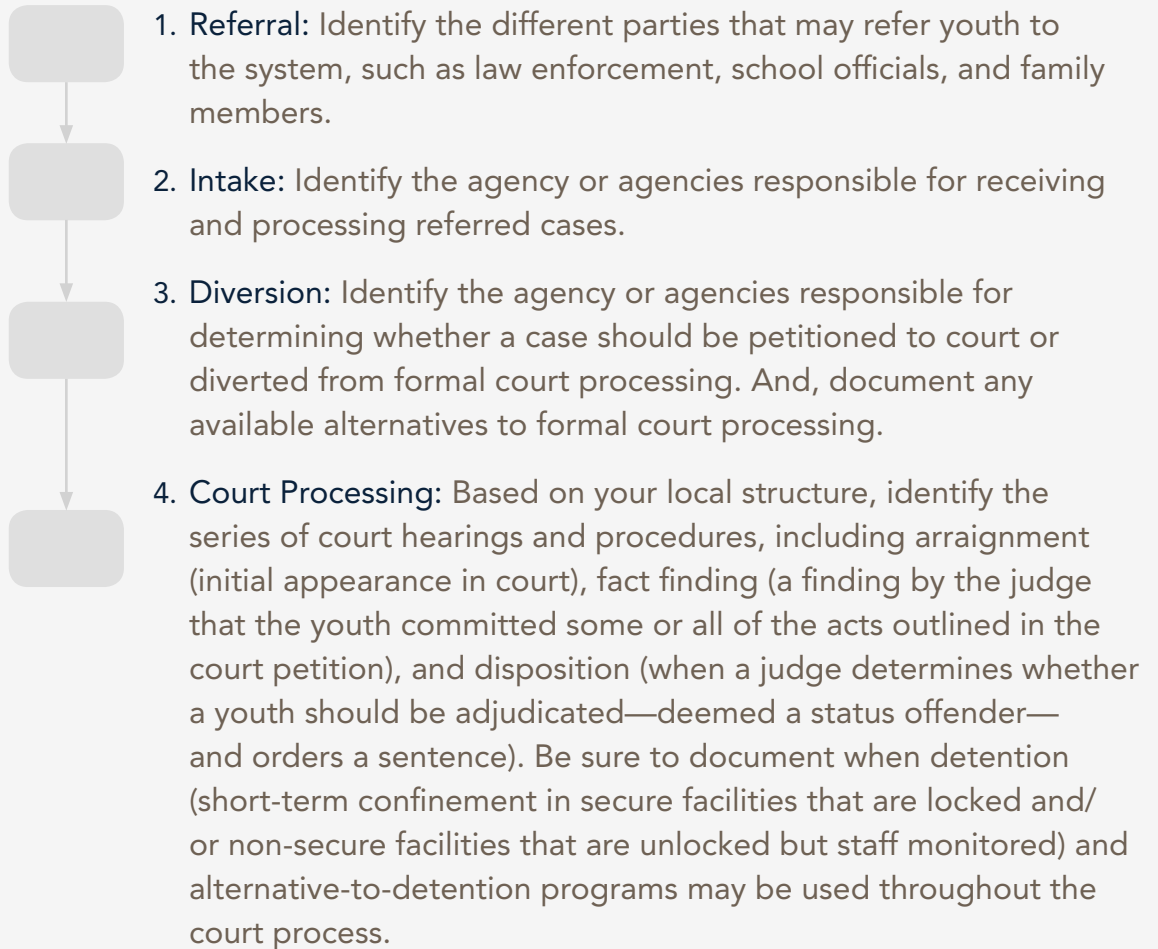
IDENTIFY A FACILITATOR

Bringing together a group of stakeholders to engage in a thoughtful conversation on status offense system change can be challenging. Members may walk through the door with varying levels of familiarity with the system,

as well as differing priorities, institutional allegiances, and cultures. For these reasons, it is useful to identify a facilitator for the initial meeting (and future meetings, as needed). The champion or another designated working group member may play that role. In this scenario, however, it is important to recognize that this person's position within the system may influence how he or she facilitates the discussion. Be sure to acknowledge this up front, establish ground rules to help members feel comfortable contributing to the discussion, and offer the facilitator some resources on how to most effectively take on this task. Alternatively, you may have the resources and inclination to bring in an

outside facilitator who is committed to the process but does not have a stake in its outcome. Or, if your group is contracting with a technical assistance provider as part of your reform effort, you may want to invite a member of its staff to facilitate the meeting. (See appendix for toolkit resource.) 📚

CRAFT A MEETING AGENDA

Organizing a high-quality meeting is vitally important when bringing together working group members for the first time. To that end, it is critical to craft an agenda that helps members gain a clear sense of the group's charge and their specific roles within that charge and achieves the meeting's objectives in the amount of time allotted (a typical launch meeting may last anywhere from one to three hours). Otherwise, members may leave the meeting feeling confused and reluctant to participate in the change process. Consider using the following agenda when convening your working group for the first time or introducing the topic of status offense reform to an already existing group:

■ **Welcome & Introductions:** The champion opens the meeting by thanking participants for attending and emphasizing the importance of their contribution to status offense system analysis and reform. He or she then explicitly states the meeting's objectives, which may look something like: 1) to ratify the group's charge; 2) to establish roles and responsibilities; and 3) to begin to plan the first phase of their work. Finally, the champion allocates time for members to introduce themselves to the group.

■ **Presentation: Placing the Local Conversation in a National Context:** The champion, or a designated person, delivers a presentation, which sets the context for why local status offense system analysis and change is needed. This presentation begins with a brief history of status offense system responses nationally, including the reliance on court and the formal juvenile justice system. Citing examples from research and practice in the field, it then moves on to why and how jurisdictions across the country are shifting away from reliance on court processing towards community-based, family-focused responses and outlines the five features of an effective community-based status offense system (see toolkit introduction). It concludes with a preliminary overview of the local system (drawing on the information you gathered previously about how your jurisdiction defines status offenses, the upper and lower age limits, and the system flow chart). If, at the time of this launch meeting, some high-level data is available—such as the number of status offense referrals, court petitions, or admissions to detention over the last several years—be sure to include that information in the presentation. These

high-level statistics can whet the group's appetite and help lay the foundation for a more comprehensive system assessment, described further below. (See appendix for toolkit resource—a sample and customizable PowerPoint presentation.) 📚

■ **Discussion of the Group's Work Going Forward:** The facilitator explains that in order to accurately identify the ways in which the local status offense system may align with and deviate from promising practices and design a reform that is truly responsive to system needs and challenges, members will need to conduct a system assessment. This assessment, or thoughtful examination of the system using both quantitative and qualitative data, is the centerpiece of reform planning and will inform and guide the working group's priorities and strategies.

With the help of the facilitator, members then explore whether they have the resources necessary to conduct a comprehensive assessment of their system before they determine the scope of reform they will undertake. While this is preferable, some groups will find they must limit their study, at least at first, to a particular aspect of the system about which they are most concerned (such as school-based truancy referrals).

Once the group has settled on the scope of their system assessment, the facilitator invites members to generate a list of what they expect to find when they take a closer look at their system. Members can use this time to share their perceptions of, or hypotheses about, the system's strengths and challenges. For example, members may anticipate that school referrals have steadily increased over the last five years, or that it takes several weeks for a young person referred to the system to be linked with a service provider in the community. This list helps set the stage for the planning work ahead and provides an interesting point of analysis for the group once the assessment is complete—at which point, members can ascertain whether their hypotheses held up.

■ **Next Steps:** Before adjourning, the facilitator engages members in a discussion of next steps:

• Review, amend as needed, and ratify the group's charge, in terms of scope of analysis and reform.

• Assign roles and responsibilities for general working group functions such as meeting logistics, external communications, facilitation, and note taking.

• Begin to assign roles and responsibilities for the system assessment and other tasks to be completed during the reform planning period. Members may choose to organize into subcommittees (or "task teams") at this time or hold off on doing so until later in the planning process. Tasks may include studying system statutes and regulations, quantitative data collection and analysis, interviews and focus groups, cataloging youth and family services, and best practice research. (See Module Two for a more detailed description of what some of these areas will entail.)

• Set a tentative timetable for conducting the system assessment and schedule future working group meetings.

TIPS: RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

Running an effective meeting requires thoughtful preparation, execution, and follow-up.

1. **Prepare participants:** The productivity of a meeting is contingent upon participants showing up and actively participating. It's good practice to remind participants of the meeting time and location a few days in advance of the meeting either via email or phone. And, if you have the time, consider sending an agenda and briefing materials (any documents that offer background on the meeting topic) to participants about a week before the meeting.

2. **Start strong:** The first few minutes of every meeting are crucial in setting the tone. Participants want to know why they're there and ensure that their time isn't being wasted. Make every effort to start on time and clearly articulate the meeting objectives.

3. **Stick to the agenda:** Review the agenda with participants at the start of the meeting and solicit their feedback. Is there anything members want to add? Is the amount of time allocated to each item sufficient? Once everyone has had an opportunity to sign off on the agenda, stick to it.

4. **Establish ground rules for discussion:** To maximize member participation in an open, respectful discussion, set ground rules at the start. Propose a few ground rules of your own and then ask members whether they

have any additional rules to add. Examples of such ground rules are: listen respectfully, without interrupting; avoid blame, speculation and inflammatory language; and allow everyone the chance to speak. Once a list of rules has been generated, ask participants if they are agreeable. Upon securing agreement, write the rules on poster board or a flip chart and display them in the room in a manner visible to all members.

5. **Keep everyone on task:** In the introductory meeting, participants are likely to have numerous questions and comments, which can make it challenging for the facilitator to maintain the intended pace of the meeting. In addition to building in ample time for questions into the agenda, consider using the "parking lot" to prevent off-topic questions and comments from derailing your agenda. This is the place where you write down any questions, comments, or issues that come up during the meeting but are not directly tied to the meeting agenda. Introduce the parking lot concept at the beginning of the meeting and at the end of the meeting you can decide as a group which items on the parking lot may be appropriate for future meeting agendas, and which are best addressed outside of the working group.

6. **Follow up:** Within a few days of the meeting, you should plan to contact participants to thank them for their attendance, outline next steps, and invite their feedback. If your group agreed upon any responsibilities to be assumed by particular members, make sure to note them in writing, and include a date by which they should complete any action steps.

CONCLUSION

At this point, you have established a working group that is led by a local champion and whose members represent the system. You have invited members to participate in a thoughtfully planned launch meeting and have gathered information about the national context and your local system that will help members understand the need for reform. Once the working group meets to ratify their charge and determine roles, responsibilities, and next steps, they are ready to begin diagnosing their system and planning their reform (see Module Two).

APPENDIX | TOOLKIT RESOURCES FOR MODULE ONE: STRUCTURING SYSTEM CHANGE

This appendix includes a list of resources designed to help you take tangible steps toward structuring system change. These resources run the gamut from existing publications and guides about a specific topic to sample letters and a PowerPoint presentation that can be customized to meet the needs of your jurisdiction. Some are focused exclusively on status offense system reform while others are not, but they all represent good practice and process. You can access all of these resources and more online at http://www.statusoffensereform.org/library.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY AND RECRUIT STAKEHOLDERS
RECRUIT A CHAMPION
- Exercising Judicial Leadership to Reform the Care of Non-Delinquent Youth: A Convener's Action Guide for Developing a Multi-Stakeholder Process

- Positive Power: Exercising Judicial Leadership to Prevent Court Involvement and Incarceration of Non-Delinquent Youth

LEVERAGE AN EXISTING GROUP
- Louisiana Children & Youth Planning Board Toolkit: Creating & Optimizing Children & Youth Planning Boards

CONDUCT A STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS
- The DMC Stakeholder: Buy-in and Participation

- Exercising Judicial Leadership to Reform the Care of Non-Delinquent Youth: A Convener's Action Guide for Developing a Multi-Stakeholder Process

INCORPORATE YOUTH AND FAMILY VOICES
- An Advocate's Guide to Meaningful Family Partnerships

- Engaging Young People in Juvenile Justice Reform

- Family & Youth Involvement: A Workbook for Policy & Governance Boards and Planning Groups

- Family Comes First: A Workbook to Transform the Justice System by Partnering with Families

- Innovation Brief: Strengthening the Role of Families in Juvenile Justice

- Setting an Agenda for Family-Focused Justice Reform

STEP 2: PREPARE STAKEHOLDERS FOR SYSTEM CHANGE WORK

INVITE WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

- Customizable Status Offense Reform Working Group Invitation Letter

- Sample Working Group Invitation Letter: Campbell County, Kentucky

DEFINE THE LOCAL SYSTEM

- Sample Status Offense System Flow Chart: Clark County, WA

- Sample Status Offense System Flow Chart: Orange County, NY

IDENTIFY A FACILITATOR

- The Role of Facilitators and Staff in Supporting Collaborative Teams

CRAFT A MEETING AGENDA

- Customizable PowerPoint Presentation: Placing the Local Conversation in a National Context

This toolkit is available on Vera's Status Offense Reform Center website at www.statusoffensereform.org.

The Vera Institute of Justice is an independent nonprofit organization that combines expertise in research, demonstration projects, and technical assistance to help leaders in government and civil society improve the systems people rely on for justice and safety.

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