A Toolkit for Status Offense System Reform

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING SYSTEM CHANGE

MODULE

3

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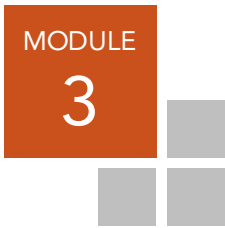
MODULE THREE: PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING SYSTEM CHANGE describes how to use the information gathered through the system assessment, along with best practice insights from across the country, to develop and implement a well-informed plan for system change that fosters sustainability and continual learning.

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.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING SYSTEM CHANGE

Successful status offense reform depends on a sound vision that is well-designed and executed. Through the system assessment described in Module Two, you identified the strengths and weaknesses of your local system. This module details a process for actively using that information, in combination with a review of promising practices from across the country, to plan and implement system change that best meets your local needs. It draws upon the research literature on implementation and organizational change, as well as sound strategies and other lessons learned from practitioners and policymakers on the ground.[3]

[3] Two bodies of research literature inform this module—implementation science and organizational change management. The former is an emerging body of research about effective implementation strategies that grew out of the public health field and is increasingly being applied across settings and contexts, including juvenile justice reform. The latter is a framework for effectively managing changes in an organizational structure, especially useful when those changes require people throughout the organization to learn and adopt new behaviors and skills. Publications from both bodies of literature are referenced in the appendix.

STEP 1 | LOOK TO PROMISING PRACTICES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Learning about jurisdictions that have worked to improve their responses to youth and families in crisis is a great way to kick off your local planning process. Understanding how states and localities have shifted away from traditional court responses to provide immediate access to community-based social services and supports will help inform and inspire your work. You will find that jurisdictions have done this in a multitude of ways, from developing a school-based truancy program to establishing a community-wide assessment and referral center, or even passing legislation at the state level to create a community-based system of care for status offenders.

As you investigate various reform approaches, be sure that the findings from your system assessment—that is, what you identified as your local need for change—drive your inquiry. What have other jurisdictions done to address similar needs? Start by reading the profiles of reform efforts in the Status Offense Reform Center's Notes from the Field series (http://www.statusoffensereform. org/library-tabs/notes-from-the-field). If you become interested in learning more about a particular reform, contact the Center (info@statusoffensereform. org) where staff can provide you with additional information or arrange for you to talk with someone from that jurisdiction who was involved in the reform effort. Or, if you have the resources and time to do so, plan a site visit to the jurisdiction. A visit allows working group members to see for themselves what a community-based approach to status offenses looks like in action, learning directly from a site's successes as well as challenges encountered along the way. (See appendix for toolkit resources.)

STEP 2 | PRIORITIZE AREAS FOR REFORM

After reviewing how other jurisdictions have approached status offense system reform, you may feel at once inspired and overwhelmed. Where to begin? Breaking down the work ahead into manageable steps helps. Start by prioritizing two to three reform areas and then set achievable, measureable objectives for each.

Setting priorities for reform will help focus your work and ensure that meaningful change occurs and endures. In selecting priorities, review your system assessment findings (see Module Two) to:

■ Identify those areas that currently present the greatest problems for your jurisdiction.

■ Of those problem areas, identify those that will likely have the greatest buy-in for reform.

■ Finally, select two to three of those problem areas for your initial reform agenda. Be sure to choose one that is a "low-hanging fruit"—a problem area that can be addressed in the near term. Doing so will increase the likelihood of an early success and generate the momentum and buy-in needed for more challenging reforms you may decide to pursue down the road.

With the target problem areas in hand, define clear objectives for each. What does your group hope to change in each area? What outcomes would you like to see? For example:

■ Sample problem area: Eighty percent of our status offense referrals end up in court. Our system assessment showed that this high rate of court referrals is likely occurring because it takes an average of two weeks to respond to and meet with youth and families who have been referred to the system and another six weeks to link them with appropriate community-based services.

■ Why this is a priority for reform: The delayed response allows problems to escalate and leads to court involvement and more costly interventions.

■ Sample objective: Increase the availability of appropriate community-based services and reduce the maximum length of time from (1) referral to response to 72 hours and (2) response to service enrollment to one week.

Taken together, the prioritized problem areas and their corresponding objectives will help you begin to craft a broader vision and design for your reform. They will also play a critical role when you develop performance measures to monitor and evaluate your system reform efforts. (See appendix for toolkit resources.) ▌▌▌

SPOTLIGHT: PRIORITIZING AREAS FOR REFORM

When Washington was selected as the fourth state to participate in the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change (MfC) initiative, local jurisdictions started to look internally at their juvenile justice system practices and processes to identify and prioritize areas ripe for change. Due to the Becca Bill—a law that requires schools to take court action against habitually truant students—many localities soon discovered that their courts were overwhelmed with truancy petitions. In Clark County, for example, system stakeholders found that the number of initial truancy petitions filed in court had grown so great that students were often brought into the courtroom 30 at a time. As a result, Clark officials decided to prioritize their MfC reform efforts to limit court processing for truant youth, with the goal of creating a system where psycho-social and educational interventions, rather than court and detention, are the norm for young people struggling to attend school.

STEP 3 | ARTICULATE YOUR ASPIRATIONS FOR LOCAL CHANGE

Drawing on the knowledge you have gained from the field and keeping your prioritized areas for reform in mind, work collaboratively to envision what you want your local system to look like down the road. Developing a vision statement will help you express your ultimate goal and reason for your reform, whereas a mission statement will help you articulate how you plan to realize that vision. As you craft these statements, refer back to the five hallmarks of successful community-based status offense systems discussed in the toolkit introduction. While these characteristics are helpful as a starting point, be sure to use language that speaks to your local needs and experience.

Strive to develop a vision and mission through consensus-building, with the goal that most, if not all, working group members fully embrace them. Broad-based support and investment are critical to the reform process and are often just as important as the nuts and bolts of the reform approach. In addition, aim to document them in a clear and concise manner so that funders and stakeholders across your jurisdiction can easily understand your reform effort's aspirations. (See appendix for toolkit resources.)

SPOTLIGHT: DEVELOPING A VISION AND MISSION

While there are certainly commonalities across localities that have undertaken status offense reform, each place expresses and captures its aspirations for change in different ways. The Florida Network of Youth and Family Services' vision is grand—Florida will be a safe place where all young people reach their full potential. The network aims to achieve this vision by valuing young people and creating safe pathways to their future by building strong families and communities. It then outlines a series of core values on family, quality, youth development, and safety and support to operationalize their vision. In Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana, the mission statement of the Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) cuts right to the chase: to use evidence-based screenings and referrals to divert at-risk youth from the juvenile justice system to appropriate and meaningful services that will lead to better outcomes for youth and their families.

STEP 4 | DESIGN THE REFORM

Once you have established a clear direction for reform, you must identify the structural and programmatic supports necessary for the desired change to take hold. This part of the planning process is akin to developing a reform blueprint. While you may continue to look to model jurisdictions and research studies for inspiration and guidance, you shouldn't feel limited or restricted by what others have done to date—leave room for innovation—especially when you must make allowances for local needs, resources, politics, and culture.

Below are eight questions you will need to address prior to implementation, along with information to assist you in doing so—although some key decisions may not present themselves until implementation is already underway. While some of the content that follows is applicable to any large-scale system change effort, guidance on how these elements relate specifically to status offense system change is provided throughout.

1. WHAT IS YOUR METHOD OF CHANGE?

The first step in the design process is to determine your method or methods for reform. Comprehensive system reform calls for change across three related areas—policy, practice, and process. Policy reform refers to changes to the laws and regulations that govern how your system responds to youth and families (such as the passage of legislation to create a status offense system distinct from the juvenile delinquency system); practice reform consists of changes to the way system personnel engage youth and families (such as the addition of a new program or assessment tool); and process reform refers to changes in the way system points interact with one another (such as instituting a new protocol for how schools make referrals). (See appendix for toolkit resources.) 📚

? Think about whether your reform effort calls for changes in policy, practice, or process, or all three. As you do so, reflect on the following questions:

- Did your system assessment uncover any laws or agency rules that run counter to the system you aspire to create?

- Did you find in your interviews with system stakeholders, including youth and families, that they faced particular challenges in how they were engaged? Or, did the information you collected on local service capacity reveal any gaps in services?

- Were there particular system assessment findings related to how information and/or youth and families move through the system that might suggest a need to rethink local processes?

2. WHO ARE YOU TRYING TO HELP?

It is necessary to identify your target population early on in the design process. Having a discrete population in mind from the onset will help you design a reform equipped to address the unique strengths and needs of that population. A well-defined target population will also play a critical role post-implementation when you measure the effectiveness of your reform (see Module Four).

To start, consult the statutes and regulations you gathered during your assessment (see Module Two), which will shed light on basic system parameters, such as the upper and lower age limit and the behaviors that constitute a status offense. Then consider whether and how you want to further define the population. For example, some jurisdictions have found it useful, at least initially, to target a subset of the status offense population by focusing on a particular offense (such as truancy) or geographic area.

Once you have established the target population, incorporate it into your reform design through referral protocols and eligibility criteria. Referral protocols indicate who may refer the target population to the system and by what channels, whereas eligibility criteria help staff ensure that only the "right kids" (namely those that fall within the target population) enter the system. Try to establish criteria firm enough to be of use to decision makers and yet flexible enough to allow for staff discretion, when appropriate. (See appendix for toolkit resources.)

When defining your target population and related protocols and eligibility criteria, consider the following questions:

Regarding the characteristics of the target population:

- What is the lower and upper age limit of your target population?

- Does your target population include youth alleged of all status offenses, or is it limited to a subset of offenses?

- Does your target population include youth throughout your jurisdiction, or is it limited to a particular geographic area (such as a neighborhood, school, or school district)?

SPOTLIGHT: ESTABLISHING TARGET POPULATION, REFERRAL PROTOCOLS, AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Local stakeholders from Rapides Parish, Louisiana looked to promising practices in Connecticut, New York, and Florida for ideas when determining the target population, referral protocols, and eligibility criteria for their status offense, or informal Families in Need of Services (FINS), system. First, they defined their target population in accordance with the Louisiana Children's Code. Next, they developed distinct referral protocols for the following groups: parents/guardians, the court, law enforcement, schools, the district attorney, and the office of behavioral health. They then developed a two-tiered eligibility criteria process. If a case satisfies the referral criteria, then an intake officer reviews the case to see if the youth meets the statutorily defined "inclusion criteria." If the youth does meet the inclusion criteria, the case is screened against "exclusion criteria," including whether the youth is currently involved with the child welfare or juvenile delinquency system.

Regarding the referral process:

- Who may initiate a referral—family members, school administrators, any concerned adult, law enforcement, etc?

- How may a referral be made—walk-ins, by phone, in writing?

- What agency, department, and staff receive the referrals?

- When may a referral be made—after there have been a certain

number of attempts to address the youth's misbehavior in school, after the family has attempted services, etc?

Regarding eligibility criteria:

- What are the basic eligibility criteria—age, allegation, geographic location, behavior, etc—to determine if the youth falls within the target population and is therefore appropriate for services?

- What (if any) are the de-selection criteria—absence of caregiver consent, etc—that would make an otherwise eligible youth ineligible for services?

3. HOW WILL YOU SCREEN AND ASSESS THE TARGET POPULATION?

Every youth and family eligible to be served by your new system will present with a unique set of strengths and needs, some of which could be at the root of status offense behaviors. Implementing screening and assessment protocols at the point of referral can provide staff with the information needed to triage cases—distinguishing among those youth and families who are actively in crisis or have serious needs from those who are not. It will also help staff link youth and families to services that can meet their individual challenges.

The terms "screening" and "assessment" are often lumped together, but it's important to think of them as two separate, although related, steps. Screening is a brief process (no more than 10 to 15 minutes) used to determine whether a young person requires immediate attention and intervention and/or needs a more comprehensive review. Assessment refers to a more comprehensive, individualized, and in-depth examination of a young person's needs and strengths identified during the screening.

While screening is appropriate for all young people who enter a status offense system, assessments should be used more sparingly—only when warranted by a screening or expert clinical opinion. Be judicious about the scope and quantity of information gathered during initial screening. You may, for example, find it helpful to screen for mental health issues, trouble at home, and potential for harm (both self and to another), but it is not necessary to gather every detail about a young person's life. In fact, doing so without proper parameters and oversight could have unintended consequences for young people and their families. For example, the uncovering of complex social service needs can at times serve to justify deeper and unwarranted involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Although the use of screening and assessment instruments can promote the consistent gathering of information and objective decision making and are part of good practice, selecting tools that are appropriate for youth who commit status offenses can be challenging. Many existing and popular tools used in the child welfare and juvenile justice fields to screen and assess for needs have not been validated (shown to be effective) for the status offense youth population. And, the various tools used to screen and assess for risk were designed for use with young people entering the juvenile delinquency system and are often inappropriate for young people who have not committed a crime. For this reason, there is no best practice yet on what specific tools are most appropriate and effective when working with this particular population. With a keen understanding of these limitations, jurisdictions have been able to identify—locally and through collaboration—what information they most need in order to make timely and informed decisions in status offense cases and made use of available tools that allow them to get as close to that information as possible. (See Notes from the Field at http://www.statusoffensereform.org/library-tabs/notes-from-the-field for a description of what this process has looked like on the ground for select sites such as Rapides and Calcasieu Parishes in Louisiana; New York City; Maricopa County, Arizona; Florida; Connecticut; and Clark County, Washington.) When choosing and implementing a tool, carefully consider the feasibility (length, cost of utilization, staff training, IT support) of using the instrument; be transparent and mindful of its limitations; and continually monitor how it is affecting case decisions. (See appendix for toolkit resources.)

4. WHAT COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES WILL YOU PROVIDE?

Shifting a status offense system from the court room to the community demands the availability of community-based programs and interventions to provide youth and families with the guidance and support they need. Depending on the scope of your reform, your group may opt to design a comprehensive continuum of services across the entire county or state, or you may choose to focus on a single neighborhood. Either way, the information you gathered during your system assessment about youth and family service needs and service capacity can guide your work (see Module Two).

You can start to design an array of services by selecting those existing providers in your community that have a demonstrated track record of effectively addressing the needs of your target population. While it's rare for a single

jurisdiction to offer a truly comprehensive set of services for the status offense population, potential services in your continuum may include:

- family interventions

- substance use interventions

- mental health treatment

- mentoring

- life-skills training

- educational assistance programs

- respite[4]

- wraparound services[5]

- afterschool recreational and enrichment programs

When building your array of services, consider the following questions:

- What is the range of your target population's service needs that you identified during your system assessment?

- What is the existing service capacity in your jurisdiction that you identified in your system assessment?

- Does the range of needed services exist in your community? If not, what gaps exist and what strategies can you employ to fill those gaps (such as enhancing the capacity of existing providers or soliciting new providers from outside the community)?

- To what extent are existing services community-based and to what extent have they demonstrated effectiveness?

- What contracts or agreements do you need to establish with existing services to ensure they accept referrals?

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[4] Respite is short-term temporary housing for youth in crisis, typically ranging from a few days to two weeks. Some respite programs function through host families whereas others operate as small centers. For the status offense population, respite offers a cooling-off period when the young person and family can live apart while working to resolve the crisis at hand.

[5] Wraparound is an intensive, individualized case management process for youth with serious or complex needs.

5. HOW WILL YOU MANAGE AND MONITOR CASES?

Once services are in place, establish a process by which the system can provide quality case management. First, determine how best to match youth and family members to the most appropriate services, in a speedy manner, and for the necessary duration of time. Some young people and families entering the system may not need a long-term, intensive clinical program and may simply require a caring and trained adult to listen and help them navigate the immediate crises and map out a plan for moving forward. Those families should receive immediate, less intensive interventions than those who present with complex mental health and/or substance use needs.

To ensure a thoughtful matching process, develop a service matrix documenting the available services in your continuum (including their location and any pertinent exclusionary criteria) and which needs they target. Case managers can use this matrix, along with information gathered through the screening and assessment processes, to work collaboratively with a family to develop

a service plan—a living and breathing document that can be altered (as many times as needed) if not initially successful. You can help families foster immediate connections with the provider(s) in their service plan by staffing provider representatives at the referring entity; requiring staff to call providers at the time the service plan is developed to make an initial appointment for the family; or providing families with detailed instructions on how to initiate services.

Second, when designing your case management process, consider how you can ensure that youth and families receive the services they need in the community and are not subject to court interventions if and when an initial service match is not successful.

The following questions can help you think through the service matching process:

- What processes do you need to implement to ensure staff use information about youth and family needs and service availability to make appropriate matches?

- What processes do you need to implement to ensure families initiate services in a timely manner?

When developing mechanisms to ensure success in the community, consider the questions below:

- How frequently and through what means will staff monitor cases after an initial service plan is put in place to ensure it is effective or correct a service mismatch?

- What will be the process for responding to escalating behavior and assessing whether a youth should be referred to more intensive services in the community?

- Will you use performance-based contracts to hold service providers accountable for meeting the needs of families outside of court? If so, how will these contracts be structured and monitored?

6. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Every reform, whether a new policy, practice, or process, needs a place to call home. It is advisable for one entity, in collaboration with others as needed, to have primary responsibility for the implementation and ongoing operation of your reform effort. This promotes efficiency and ensures accountability in a system that is often complex and fragmented across multiple agencies. This entity could be your social services department, a school board, or your county or city executive. The selection of a lead entity in your jurisdiction will depend on your method of reform, target population, and service delivery model. It will also, of course, depend on the readiness and interest of the agency, as well as its reputation in your community.

While it is important for one entity to be responsible for implementation and operations, it is unwise for that agency to operate in a vacuum. Consider establishing a board or committee—that may or may not mirror your working group—to provide the lead entity with oversight and support. This group may assist in developing policies and procedures, and also play a role in monitoring the reform effort (see Module Four). (See appendix for toolkit resources.)

SPOTLIGHT: STRUCTURING OVERSIGHT

Not all community-based status offense systems benefit from the careful watch and support of an oversight group, but those that do tend to see value in it. In Louisiana, the parishes of Calcasieu and Rapides rely on their respective Children & Youth Planning Boards (CYPB) for support of their status offense reforms. In Connecticut, an Executive Implementation Team, comprised of representatives from state juvenile justice and youth/family organizations, was created to oversee implementation of the state's plan to divert youth who commit status offenses from court. And in Campbell County, Kentucky, the court's collaborative case management program for youth alleged of status offenses is aided by a Change Agent Team; this team is comprised of local leaders that review data and assist the court in responding to issues that arise, such as funding shortages or service gaps.

When considering a lead entity and oversight body, reflect on the following questions:

- Does the entity have a history of operating and/or overseeing services for the target population, as well as the strong leadership, resources, and infrastructure needed to carry out this reform?

- Does the entity have a demonstrated track record of collaborating with the stakeholder groups that will be instrumental to the success of your reform?

- Does the entity's mission align with your broader reform vision?

- What are the potential risks and benefits associated with this entity leading the reform effort?

- Does your working group have the membership and expertise necessary to provide meaningful and long-term oversight and support to the lead entity?

7. HOW WILL YOU PAY FOR YOUR REFORM?

Research and practice show that community-based approaches to status offenses can greatly reduce reliance on expensive court and justice system resources. Despite this promise of future savings, finding funds to cover implementation and initial operating costs can be difficult, especially at a time when public resources are scarce. Identifying and securing funding for implementation early on can help ensure your reform's initial success and long-term sustainability. (See appendix for toolkit resources.)

When setting out to identify and procure funds, consider the following questions.

- What resources may be available in your community that could be leveraged for your reform (such as federal, county and/or city grants; philanthropic support; or local business or individual donors)?

- Which funding streams are likely to be available in future years?

- What is the projected cost-savings of your reform and how can you communicate this to potential funders to get them on board?

- What existing providers or agencies could you partner with to reduce program costs?

SPOTLIGHT: SECURING FUNDING

There is no single place to look for funds to support a community-based approach to status offenses. In fact, multiple sources of funding can be tapped for this purpose. For example, the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services is largely funded through state appropriations, but network providers also leverage Title 4E federal funding to support shelter room and board costs and private funding to support additional programming. The Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) in Louisiana's Calcasieu Parish, which diverts youth and families in need from court to services in the community, is funded entirely through a 10-year, parishwide property tax. And, New York City's Family Assessment Program, which conducts intake, assessments, and referrals for youth alleged of status offenses in the community, is funded through city preventative dollars.

8. HOW WILL YOU MEASURE SUCCESS?

All of your hard work to date has led to the design of what you believe will be a successful status offense system. But how will you know once your reform is implemented whether your new system is indeed successful? Defining success and designing an infrastructure to track and measure progress at the outset will enable you to continually track the progress of your reform and determine whether any of the new policies, practices, and processes associated with your reform need to be adjusted. (It is usually much easier to make adjustments in the early stages of change than after a reform has been fully implemented.)

As part of this process, identify performance measures that speak to the five hallmarks of a model status offense system (see Toolkit Introduction), to your vision and mission statements, and also to specific reform objectives you outlined earlier on in your planning process. For example, if one of your reform objectives is to reduce the length of time from referral to response to 72 hours or less, then you may define success as responding to 90 percent of referrals within 72 hours. In addition to response time, consider developing performance measures on service completion, youth and family outcomes, court involvement and diversion, and the use of detention. (See appendix for toolkit resources.)

? Use the following questions as a guide when designing your infrastructure for measuring success:

- How do you define success for each of your reform objectives?

- What processes and tools need to be developed for you to measure success in each of those areas on an ongoing basis (e.g., how will you track quantitative data, performance-based contracts, client satisfaction surveys, etc.)?

SPOTLIGHT: MEASURING SUCCESS

The Florida Network of Youth and Family Services, in collaboration with its service providers and the Department of Juvenile Justice, developed robust performance measures and has fine tuned its mechanisms for collecting appropriate data and providing quality services. Using performance-based contracts, the network holds its providers to the following standards: 85 percent of youth served by a program must complete the program; 90 percent must remain crime-free while receiving services; and 87 percent must have no court adjudications (findings of guilt) six months after discharge from services. The network tracks these outcomes through a centralized database. Providers enter case-level information into the database and the collected information is shared at statewide meetings that occur three to four times a year, allowing for continual learning and reassessment by providers. Additionally, on-site annual quality assurance reviews are conducted at random by review teams that include peer reviewers. This process ensures that providers are committed to, and held responsible for, providing the best services possible. It also provides an opportunity for service providers to learn from each other and bring back new ideas to their own agencies.

TIPS: TRANSLATING DESIGN INTO ACTION

It's useful to develop tools to accompany your reform blueprint as this will help the lead entity implement reform in a way that is consistent with your design. Here are some tips for doing so:

1. **Develop a logic model:** A logic model—a visual representation of how your reform will work—will help you chart the course for implementation. First and foremost, it is a clear presentation of your reform's theory of change— your assumptions and beliefs about why taking certain actions will lead to better outcomes. It can be used to rally support from potential funders and key stakeholders. In addition, it is an action-oriented tool that illustrates the resources and activities needed for implementation and describes how they will help you achieve your intended results. In this way, the logic model can serve as both the foundation for your implementation workplan and help you think about how to design your system reform evaluation (see Module Four). (See appendix for toolkit resources.)

2. **Create a workplan:** A workplan will help ensure those involved in implementation are focused and timely in their work. List each activity captured in your logic model, and then identify the key tasks that must be completed for each activity to be realized. For each task, work with the lead entity to designate a responsible party, target completion date, and deliverable. When creating a workplan, you may find it useful to organize staff into task teams, each responsible for implementing a discrete grouping of activities.

STEP 5 | IMPLEMENT THE REFORM

Once you have your reform design, or blueprint, in hand, you are ready for implementation. Despite all your efforts to date to work collaboratively and foster buy-in for reform, implementation can remain a difficult task. The lead entity responsible for implementation may still face resistance from those who are invested in the status quo. Moreover, unforeseen challenges are bound to arise due to the complex organizational, fiscal, political, and cultural dynamics that may be at play within your local system.

Fortunately, researchers and practitioners alike have identified key actions that, if embraced by those responsible for making change, can help smooth the often bumpy road of implementation. The actions recommended and described below are interdependent and should not be considered in isolation. (See appendix for toolkit resources.) 📚

■ **Start small:** Regardless of whether you plan to undertake a comprehensive reform or one that is more limited in scope, it is advisable to introduce the reform effort in phases or pilot it in a limited geographic area or on a subset of the target population. This will give you time to fine tune your design before you roll it out in full. Phasing in and piloting also require fewer resources, so it can be an effective strategy if start up funds are a concern. By starting small you can demonstrate the success of your model and then draw on that success to secure funding for the broader reform.

SPOTLIGHT: PILOTING CONNECTICUT'S FAMILY SUPPORT CENTERS

When Connecticut overhauled its status offense system, the General Assembly initially only provided funding for four Family Support Centers (FSCs). While these four centers could only serve a subset of the state's status offender population, rolling out the model in a limited number of jurisdictions allowed for a more thoughtful and effective expansion when the state legislature granted funding for centers statewide. Practitioners were able to collect and analyze data on the initial sites and fine-tune service provision accordingly.

■ **Promote the reform efforts:** The implementation of any status offense system reform, whether big or small, will require people to step outside of their comfort zone to try something new. To promote optimal participation and support from youth, families, practitioners, and policymakers, it is essential to establish a sense of urgency about the need for change and to clearly communicate your vision for reform. It is important to do this before staff and system partners are asked to adopt new behaviors or skills or take on new responsibilities. Besides communicating what the reform entails, explain how it was developed, noting the role of your working group and the involvement of diverse stakeholders.

To ensure consistency and transparency across system operations, the lead entity should codify the reforms being undertaken in agency policies and procedures. Consider involving staff in the development of any written documents intended to help them with their work, such as program manuals. Also, engage young people and family members in the development of materials that are intended to relay new agency policies and procedures to families.

Finally, an effective communications strategy includes media outreach. You should prepare accessible descriptions of your reform efforts for use by local television, radio, newspapers, and online platforms, including information about the current system's challenges, the changes you are proposing to overcome those challenges, and the expected positive impact.

TIPS: DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

1. **Articulate a compelling rationale for why change is needed:** Draw on your system assessment findings, promising practice research, and vision and mission statements to craft a convincing and compelling case for reform.

2. **Emphasize the benefits of reform:** When communicating your vision of reform, paint a vivid picture of what change could look like by sharing the details of the reform design and explaining how the new system will not only benefit young people and their families but all involved (such as better allocation of staff and stakeholder time to focus on those cases that need the most attention, higher job satisfaction by seeing better outcomes, and cost savings).

(continued)

3. **Conduct regular briefings:** Some reform leaders have found it helpful to do brief presentations on a regular basis to key stakeholders. These briefings provide an opportunity to check-in and maintain momentum, as well as learn about and address any concerns early on.

4. **Leverage the diversity of supporters:** Working group members who bring different perspectives and insights (such as law enforcement, courts, schools, and families) to the planning process can be extraordinarily helpful in disseminating information to and soliciting feedback from their peers.

5. **Educate the media:** In order for representatives of the media to publish engaging and accurate stories about your reform, disseminate press kits on an ongoing basis. Kits should include background on why reform is necessary; a clear description of the target population along with a few "human interest" stories about system-involved families; facts and figures about the current and proposed system; and contact information for at least one spokesperson who can answer questions about your reform efforts. You may also want to provide journalists with the opportunity to attend your stakeholder briefings as well as to make site visits with providers who serve status offending youth and their families.

- **Secure committed and inclusive leadership:** Just as your reform planning process needed a champion, your implementation process will benefit from strong leadership. It is vital that the agency leader(s) responsible for implementation demonstrates commitment to the reform and the youth and families it will affect. This can be done explicitly in communications with both internal staff and external stakeholders (see "Promote the reform efforts" above). Committed leadership can also be exercised by adopting organizational policies and securing resources that integrate the reform with other initiatives underway and reduce potential barriers to implementation. Reform leaders should also maintain an open door policy, regularly eliciting and meaningfully responding to feedback from all who are impacted, especially staff, youth, and family members. Regularly taking the temperature of those involved in reform and including them in ongoing decision making will help build trusting relationships, bolster the efficacy of your work, sustain critical buy-in, and prevent the reform from evaporating when there are changes in leadership.

■ **Promote staff competency through hiring, training, and coaching practices:** Successful implementation is dependent on managers, supervisors, and line staff with the support and know-how needed to actualize change. In most cases, leaders will need to make every reasonable effort to train and coach existing staff in new policies, practices, or processes and get them to buy into the reform effort. Providing staff with ample opportunities to air their frustrations and concerns, while simultaneously demonstrating commitment to the reform, and effectively communicating how their work experience will be improved by the reform are key to fostering staff buy-in.

In the event that leadership can hire staff from outside the agency to assist with implementation, be sure to revise job descriptions and interview processes in order to recruit staff with values and skills aligned with the reform's vision, objectives, and methods. In fact, doing so is good practice whether you recruit from outside or within the agency.

Train all managers and supervisors first not only in the reform's new policies, practices and/or processes but also in how to manage, oversee, and supervise the reform effort. This will enable them to model the reform's method(s) for, and provide the necessary guidance and support to, their direct report staff who will be responsible to execute change on the ground.

Finally, make sure staff are given opportunities to practice new methods and receive constructive feedback, or coaching, from both their supervisors and peers. Staff should not be reprimanded or punished for trying something new and failing. Successfully acquiring new skills and carrying out new duties takes time and a supportive environment.

SPOTLIGHT: STAFF TRAINING IN CALCASIEU PARISH

Staff training was a critical component of Calcasieu Parish's status offense system reform work. The Louisiana parish reformed its approach to youth alleged of status offenses by implementing the Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC)—a one-stop shop screening, assessment, and referral center. MARC staff received training for six months prior to its official launch. Everyone was trained in all aspects of the process, from administering assessments to data management, regardless of role or position. They also spent nearly a month inside the new building getting a feel for the physical space and practicing receiving and responding to "mock" cases before ever engaging with clients.

- **Monitor quality and adjust when needed:** As soon as implementation begins, start to measure the quality and consistency of your practices and the change you are seeking. Rely on the processes and tools you put in place – databases, performance-based contracts, qualitative case reviews, and client satisfaction surveys—to monitor progress and quality assurance. Assessing quality and measuring outcomes on a regular basis will enable you to mold and tweak your reform as needed, allowing it to become more and more effective over time (see Module Four).

CONCLUSION

At this point, you have collaborated to plan a reform that is informed by promising practices and driven by the unique needs, resources, politics, and culture of your jurisdiction. You have a committed lead entity in place, with strong leadership and well-trained staff. You are now ready to begin monitoring and sustaining system change (see Module Four).

APPENDIX

TOOLKIT RESOURCES FOR MODULE THREE: PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING SYSTEM CHANGE

This appendix includes a list of resources designed to help you take tangible steps toward planning and implementing system change. These resources run the gamut from existing publications and guides about a specific topic to online resource centers and reform profiles developed by the Status Offense Reform Center. 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 www.statusoffensereform.org/library.

STEPS 1 & 2: LOOK TO PROMISING PRACTICES ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND PRIORITIZE AREAS FOR REFORM

- From Courts to Communities: The Right Response to Truancy, Running Away, and Other Status Offenses

- Making Court the Last Resort: A New Focus for Supporting Families in Crisis

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

- The Status Offense Reform Center's Notes from the Field series

STEP 3: ARTICULATE YOUR ASPIRATIONS FOR LOCAL CHANGE

- Calcasieu Parish Multi-Agency Resource Center: M.A.R.C. Mission (available at www.cppj.net)

- Florida Network of Youth and Family Services: Mission and Values (available at www.floridanetwork.org/missionvalues.php)

- National Standards for the Care of Youth Charged with Status Offenses

- Rapides Parish Policy and Procedure Manual: Family in Need of Services (FINS) Program

STEP 4: DESIGN THE REFORM

WHAT IS YOUR METHOD OF CHANGE?

The following are brief descriptions of reform efforts from across the country that showcase different "methods" of change. Each is accompanied by related resources. Note, the resources speak not only to the method of change but to many of the topics addressed in step 4.

- Florida established a statewide network of community-based providers to respond to and serve status offending youth. Providers offer a range of services including respite shelters for youth that have runaway or are otherwise in crisis and unable to return home. (For more information, see Florida Network Policy and Procedure Manual and Notes from the Field: Florida.)

- Calcasieu Parish, LA, New York City, NY, and Connecticut have implemented one-stop-shop screening, assessment, and referral centers to ensure youth and families are linked to tailored community-based services in a timely manner. (For more information, see Notes from the Field: Calcasieu; MARC Policy and Procedure Manual; Notes from the Field: New York City; Notes from the Field: Connecticut; and Family Support Centers Serving Families with Service Needs in Connecticut.)

- Clayton County, GA and Rapides Parish, LA implemented several reforms to divert youth alleged of status offenses from court, including a school exhaustion form to ensure school administrators intervene with a misbehaving child at the school-level before referring that child to court. (For more information, see Notes from the Field: Clayton County; Notes from the Field: Rapides Parish; and Rapides Parish Policy and Procedure Manual: Family in Need of Services (FINS) Program.)

- Campbell County, KY developed a multidisciplinary case management court diversion program to link youth and families to services in the community. (For more information, see Notes from the Field: Campbell County.)

- Washington's Spokane and Clark counties developed community truancy boards to identify and address the underlying causes of a youth's truant behavior, outside of court. (For more information, see Notes from the Field: Spokane County; Spokane County Toolkit for Truancy Board Replication; Notes from the Field: Clark County; and Clark County Truancy Manual.)

WHO ARE YOU TRYING TO HELP?

The following document was developed for stakeholders in Rapides Parish, Louisiana to assist them in defining the target population for Families in Need of Services (FINS) reform. While specific to Louisiana, it offers a framework that may be of use to other jurisdictions.

- Louisiana Models for Change: Target Population

HOW WILL YOU SCREEN AND ASSESS THE TARGET POPULATION?

- 10 Steps For Implementing Mental Health Screening

- Guidelines For Instructing Youth Prior To Administration Of A Mental Health Screening Tool

The following Notes from the Field publications describe various screening and assessment tools and processes that some jurisdictions have used as part of their status offense reform efforts:

- Notes from the Field: Calcasieu Parish, LA

- Notes from the Field: Clark County, WA

- Notes from the Field: Connecticut

- Notes from the Field: Florida

- Notes from the Field: Maricopa County, AZ

- Notes from the Field: New York City, NY

- Notes from the Field: Rapides Parish, LA

WHAT COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES WILL YOU PROVIDE?

- Better Solutions for Youth with Mental Health Needs in the Juvenile Justice System

- Calcasieu Parish Service Directory (available at: www.calcypb.org/service-directory)

- National Wraparound Initiative (available at: www.nwi.pdx.edu/)

- Rapides Parish Policy and Procedure Manual: Family in Need of Services (FINS) Program

- Respite Care: A Promising Response to Status Offenders at Risk of Court-

Ordered Placements

- Service Referral Directory, Clark County, WA

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

The following Notes from the Field publications describe different oversight bodies:

- Notes from the Field: Campbell County, KY

- Notes from the Field: Connecticut

- Notes from the Field: Rapides Parish, LA

HOW WILL YOU PAY FOR YOUR REFORM?

- The Finance Project (available at: www.financeproject.org/)

- Status Offense Reform Funding Sources

HOW WILL YOU MEASURE SUCCESS?

- A Toolkit for Status Offense System Reform, Module 4: Monitoring and Sustaining Change

- Comprehensive Community Based Youth Services performance measures (available at: www.dhs.state.il.us)

- Child Welfare Information Gateway: Performance-Based Contracting (available at: www.childwelfare.gov/management/administration/agreements/contracting.cfm). This website provides information on trends, best practices, and successful state and local approaches to performance-based contracting in child welfare services. Although this information is specific to the child-welfare field, it may be helpful for those planning status offense reforms.

- Florida Network Policy and Procedure Manual (See pg. 60-61)

- Measurement as Learning: What Nonprofit CEOs, Board Members, and Philanthropists Need to Know to Keep Improving

- Measuring Success: A Guide to Becoming an Evidence-Based Practice

STEP 5: IMPLEMENT THE REFORM

- Implementation Research: A synthesis of the literature

- Implementing Practice Models

- Understanding and Facilitating Organizational Change in the 21st Century

- W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide