

Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators

639 Granite St. | Suite 112 |
Braintree, MA 02184
(P) 781.843.2663 | (F) 781.843.1688
www.cjca.net

Mission

To connect, develop and strengthen youth corrections leaders to maximize their capacities to implement and sustain reforms in their systems that will improve outcomes for youth, families and communities.

Vision

“We believe every youth should leave a correctional program in a better place than when he or she came in.”

Core Values

- Continuous Learning
- Collaboration
- Rehabilitation
- Parental Engagement
- Supportive Communities
- Diversity

Executive Director

Michael P. Dempsey

Elected Officers

President

Fariborz Pakseresht, Oregon

Vice President

Lisa Bjergaard, North Dakota

Treasurer

Terri Williams, Kansas

Secretary

Cindy McKenzie, Montana

Community-based Mental Health Services

Background

Each year, more than 600,000 youth in America are placed in juvenile detention centers, and close to 70,000 youth reside in juvenile correctional facilities on any given day.¹ The juvenile justice system has become a system of last resort for many youths due to an inability to access adequate mental health services in their communities and a frustration with their behavior in the community.

Youth end up in the juvenile justice system for non-violent or relatively minor offenses. A contributing factor to contact with the juvenile justice system is an unmet need for behavioral health treatment and services.²

Instead of relying on the justice system to address a youth's mental health needs, it is now recognized that the more appropriate and effective response involves community-based treatment interventions that engage youth and their families.³

Effective diversion is a critical first step in accessing community-based, integrated services before a young person gets involved in the juvenile justice system. To achieve positive outcomes for youth, juvenile justice, behavioral health, and other relevant systems must increase collaboration continuity of care and access to integrated, evidenced-based, or promising-practice screening and treatment models.⁴

¹ Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Collaborative for Change: Better Solutions for Youth with Mental Health Needs in the Juvenile Justice System.

² Sickmund, M., Sladky, T.J., Kang, W., & Puzancera, C. (2011). *Easy Access to the Census of Juvenile in Residential Placement*. Online. Available: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp/>

³ Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Collaborative for Change: A Training, Technical Assistance and Education Center and a member of the Models for Change Resource Center Partnership. *Better Solutions for Youth with Mental Health Needs in the Juvenile Justice System*.

⁴ John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2013) *Improving Diversion Policies and Programs for Justice-Involved Youth with Co-occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders*.

Position Statement:

The Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA) strongly supports the position that youth with mental health needs be assessed at the earliest intervention possible to determine appropriate services. Many of the youth being served in the juvenile justice system would be better served in community-based settings with access to effective evidence-based treatments.

County juvenile justice systems, behavioral health systems and other related private and public programs must collaborate to increase access to screening and treatment models. This will improve the continuum of care.

There will be youth who are not appropriate for diversion to the community but still deserve access to effective community-based treatment while they are involved in the juvenile justice system. We support appropriate evidence-based services for detention settings. Services should include screening and assessment to determine need for services and a plan of treatment while in detention and reintegration to the community.