

**Juvenile Court Services Testimony**  
**Health & Human Services Appropriation Sub-committee**  
**February 17, 2015**

On behalf of the Chief Juvenile Court Officers and Juvenile Court Services in Iowa, I want to thank committee and the legislative body as a whole for their support over the years.

In addition I want to thank Department of Human Services, whose budget support helps make the services we provide possible.

**Outcomes**

Before we talk about our requests this year, I want this committee to understand the value and positive effects that the funds you provide for the young people and their families we work with is having. I want to share with your some outcomes that the funding from this committee has made possible during just the past three (3) years.

- **Juvenile Arrests**

The Chief Justice began that discussion at the State of the Judiciary when he shared with you that between 2012 and 2014 the number of juveniles committing felonies dropped 20% (300 fewer juveniles and 450 fewer felonies) and the number of juveniles committing law violations dropped 20% (3000 fewer juveniles and 4000 fewer charges).

- **Recidivism:**

These efforts are affecting not only the number of youth committing serious crime but also repeat offenders. In the 10 most populous counties, the number of youth we consider to be chronic or having committed three or more crimes, have dropped by 22%, going from 496 to 386.

- **Placements:**

Another indication of the success of the services we are able to provide with your assistance is the reduction in out-of-home placements in the time period between 2012 and 2014. The total placements dropped from 5516 to 4778 (some duplication) or a 13% drop. Detention placements dropped from 3124 to 2728, also a 13% drop. Group care placements dropped from 936 to 800 or nearly a 15% reduction.

- **Crime in School**

One of the areas we are particularly proud of is our work with the schools in Iowa. Through our Juvenile Court School Liaisons and local efforts to develop diversion programs in the schools and to increase the amount of Juvenile Court Services and Decat supported counseling services in the schools, we have been able to show a significant reduction in the number of students who are charged with crimes in all the

schools in Iowa. From 3915 criminal charges in 2012 to 3252 criminal charges in 2014, a 17% drop in those three years.

- ***What's working***

The reductions in these four measures and in others not listed here have been accomplished by:

1. Concentrating the efforts of Juvenile Court Officers on the clients most likely to re-offend and focusing on the factors which those clients that make them at-risk.
2. Spending more time with the families of our clients, helping improve the environment there.
3. Purchasing locally controlled Best Practices programs to serve the clients and their families, and provide an adequate dosage of services to have the desired effect.
4. Providing services outside of the Juvenile Court system to deal with low risk clients to ensure they spend less time with clients and in an environment that would raise the likelihood that they would commit further crime.

**Request #1**

This year we are requesting the same allocation of \$17,063,376 (that includes \$520,150 for Drug Court, \$3,290,000 for Court Ordered Services and \$13,253,226 for Graduated Sanctions) that we received for the current fiscal year. We believe that given the budget constraints you must wrestle with and the outcomes we are achieving, the allocation should be adequate to maintain the needed service to our clients and their families for the upcoming year. We believe that with your continued support at the current level, we can provide needed care and service.

***This is possible for three reasons:***

1. Juvenile Court Services has increasingly been able to use the flexibility of the local Decategorization projects provide and purchase services at a lower cost over a longer period of time. We have provided a detailed description for you of how this is being done and provided a breakdown, specific to the eight judicial districts. Please keep in mind that only a portion of our allocation goes to the Decats and that the majority purchases primary services for clients not reflected in the Decat handout. We have also provided the counties involved and the contract information of each of the Chief Juvenile Court Officers, if you have questions of the areas that you represent.
2. Secondly, we have been expanding the best practice programs, such as Functional Family Therapy, Multi-Dimensional Family Therapy, Aggression Replacement Training and others to cover the state.

This process has been slower than we anticipated because as in the case of other jobs in Iowa, it has been difficult in both our rural and urban areas, to hire and maintain the caliber of employees that can perform these services. Additionally, the training for the services is costly and lengthy and so filling vacancies and starting new programs is a time intensive issue.

3. Finally, in those areas where quality programming has been in place for several years, we are reaching a plateau in the need for the service where the number of clients and their family's needing the services, is close to the availability of the services. Thus the need for expansion in those areas has reached a level status.

### **Request #2**

We are asking the legislature to extend the jurisdiction of juvenile court services to work with clients who reach their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday while on our caseload and voluntarily want continued support of Juvenile Court Services, possibly until they are 21. Some of our clients reach 18 but either lack family supports or are in foster care or in some way need additional support. Currently our jurisdiction for all clients except those at the State Training School ends at 18. With this change, we could continue to provide services, contact and guidance. This assistance in the transition to adulthood would be for those clients wanting that assistance.

While this is not directly a HHS appropriations issue, the services to support these clients will come from on the graduated sanction budget with a needed DHS rules rewrite. The numbers of those clients are estimated to be quite small (probably 2-3 per district), therefore minor in terms of cost.

### **Request #3**

When we look across our juvenile justice system areas can be identified that need additional resources. We also see a glaring gap in services. That gap is the need for a Girls State Training School. After the closure of the Iowa Juvenile Home in December 2013, Iowa no longer provides a secure setting for the treatment of our most serious juvenile female offenders.

Comments have been made that these girls all have other placements, so there really is no need for a Girls State Training School. On the surface it appears to be true while in reality many, if not most, of these girls are not receiving adequate treatment in their current setting. This is not a negative reflection on the residential treatment facilities for girls. Those programs work for most of our juvenile delinquent girls. We are talking about a small number of high-risk delinquent girls who pose a safety concern to the community. The Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning Agency reports that overall complaints to Juvenile Court Services decreased in 2013 through 2014, yet law violations generated by youth in out of home placement have increased. The increase is in part due to the number of

complaints filed against girls in placement. Detention statistics between the years of 2012 and 2014 show a decrease for of both male and female placements. The total number of bed days for boys has decreased while the number of girl bed days increased. The average length of stay for boys in detention continues to decrease while the length of stay for girls has increased by 24%. Girls are staying longer in detention because of lack of adequate placement options.

If you are a delinquent male, you can be placed at the Boys State Training School, but if you are a girl the Court does not have that option for an Iowa placement. There is no Girls State Training School level of care for female delinquents in Iowa. If you are a delinquent male and placed at state training school, you will receive some of the best treatment in the state for delinquents and it will be provided in Eldora, Iowa. If you are a girl ordered to the training school, the only option is out of state placement. Placement out of state not only increases the length of stay in detention, but also makes it more difficult to stay connected to the family, the Juvenile Court Officer, and other community resources. The disrupted education program is more complicated since each individual state has different educational requirements and expectations.

Worse yet is when the Court finds there are no available services for treatment since there is no in-state girl's training school and the determination is made she can only be served in the adult system. While boys can be placed at the Boys State Training School and remain in confinement past his 18th birthday. Last year 61 girls were waived to the Adult system with 185 charges. The prior five years, females waived to the adult system averaged two or fewer charges per juvenile; however in 2014 girls averaged three plus charges. One additional charge may not sound like much, but it could make a substantial impact when it comes to sentencing.

This glaring gap has caused a ripple effect on the system. Girls are staying longer in lock up. Girls are not promptly and effectively matched to treatment thus continue to generate additional law violations. Community safety is not adequately addressed. Girls are placed out of state or waived to the adult system simply because there is no Girls State Training School placement option. Juvenile Court Services has been tracking delinquent girls since January 2014 who either did or would have a recommendation to the Court for the state training school. During this time 15 girls have been waived to the adult system or were closed unsuccessful (maximum benefits). Eight were placed out of state and five aged out without adequate treatment. 22 could currently be treated at Girls State Training School. Research has shown a juvenile delinquent who receives appropriate treatment will save society millions of dollars over his/her lifetime. It seems that providing a girls state training school level of care is the not only fair to our girls, but it is fiscally responsible.

## **Major Initiatives**

- ***Evidenced Based Programs***

As individual districts experience recidivism reductions through various evidence based programs we strive to assist others districts to replicate those successes. All of these programs like Functional Family Therapy, Aggression Replacement Training and Drug Courts are designed to support behavior change and not merely meant as simple deterrence.

Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning Agency has a federal planning grant (\$100,000) to construct an evidence based plan that all Juvenile Court Officers would use to reintegrate youth to our communities from a juvenile justice facility. If the plan is accepted for funding the state could receive \$2 million dollars to implement. Several entities are working on this comprehensive plan that includes some very aggressive recidivism targets over a 5 year period.

- ***Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol-SPEP***

Clearly one of the premiere tools in the country for measuring the effectiveness of juvenile justice programs. SPEP is being developed in 3 judicial districts with plans to deploy it statewide upon grant completion if funding is available. SPEP measures the definition, scope and integrity of the program, how youth are matched to the service by risk, the amount of service dosage that is necessary to produce change and gives the program a score. This tool has the ability to substantially improve our practice effectiveness by informing both Juvenile Court Services and providers on areas that need improvement. A copy of one of our initial reports is attached.

The [Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol](#) (SPEP) provides a uniform metric used to describe how effective a program is expected to be, based on how closely it conforms to the most effective practices found in Dr. Mark Lipsey's meta-analysis of approximately 600 evaluation studies of juvenile justice interventions. The SPEP is a process that assigns a score between 0 and 100 points to a program based on how closely it matches those practices with regard to the type of service it provides, the quality of the service delivery, the amount of treatment, and the risk level of participating youth. This scheme allows states and localities to evaluate, and then improve, their juvenile justice services. For example, if a program is found to have lower than optimal scores based on the quantity of service it provides, JJRRI will work with the jurisdiction to develop strategies to increase the number of contact hours the youth receive without having to redesign the entire service system. Once improvements have been made, the programs will be reevaluated, allowing administrators to see the degree to which their programs have

improved. This reevaluation will also provide the information necessary to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the program.

- ***Effective Practices in Community Supervision—EPICS***

The purpose of the EPICS model is to teach our Juvenile Court Services Officers how to translate the principles of effective intervention into practice, and, more specifically, how to use core correctional practices in face-to-face interactions with offenders. Results indicated that officers trained in the EPICS model demonstrated more consistent use of core correctional practices. Remarkably, trained officers are more proficient in their use of these skills over time as a result of participation in coaching sessions. Findings underscore the importance of training and coaching as an on-going process to assist agencies in gaining adherence to the principles of effective intervention and core correctional practices. Jurisdictions that have consistently used these principles have steadily witnessed declines in recidivism. Plans are to have every Juvenile Court Officer trained and certified in Iowa within the next 18 months.

- ***Continue School Assistance***

Using the Iowa Court Information System we can identify schools with high Juvenile Court Services referral rates and offer ways to reduce criminalizing some school behaviors that often times drive up disproportionality. Through the School Liaison Program, or by other means, we can help schools develop and implement internal program like Aggression Replacement Training or on-going mental health services in some districts. Plans are being developed to train school liaison officers to deal with bullying and conflict resolution through mediation certification next fiscal year.

### **Summary**

The Legislature and this committee should feel quite proud that the funds you have provided are having a very positive effect on the communities, schools and homes in Iowa. So to recap, we would ask the following:

1. That you continue our funding at the current level.
2. That you authorize our work with clients on our caseload at 18 to assist their transition to adulthood.
3. That you address the need for a Training school level of care for girls in Iowa.

***Thank you for your time and consideration.***

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The girl’s state training school has always been a placement of last resort. Iowa Code 232.52(2) defines the criteria for placement at the State Training School.

**Criteria for STS placement (delinquency only) – check all that apply (must be three of four): 138 cases**

- Child is at least 15 years of age       Child has previously been found to have committed a delinquent act
- Child has committed a crime against a person that is an Aggravated Misdemeanor or Felony
- Child has previously been placed in a treatment facility outside the child’s home as a result of a delinquency act

**OR**

Child is at least 12 years of age, and has been found to have committed: **9 cases**

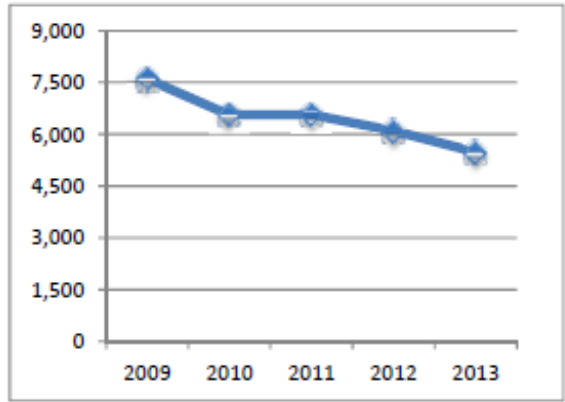
- a Forcible Felony       a Felony violation of Code of Iowa Section 124.401

Additional females that have a reverse waiver: **3 cases**

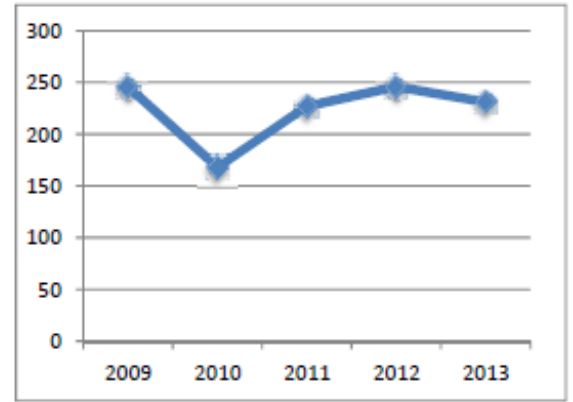
Note: There may be some duplication among these criteria so we cannot add together and provide a total number of cases/youth eligible.

*Source: calendar year 2014 CJP*

**Figure 1: Juvenile Complaints (Females) 2009-2013**



**Figure 2: Females Eligible<sup>1</sup> for STS 2009-2013**



<sup>1</sup> A single individual may appear in this count multiple times due to the existence of multiple eligibility options.