

St. Croix Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice Systems Integration Initiative Charter Agreement

BACKGROUND:

The challenges of working with youth and providing quality services to them in the Virgin Islands is not an easy task due to the limited number of resources. An essential element of creating positive responsive programming is the ability to assess existing policies and services in terms of what is in the best interest of the youth needing the services. Our youth in the Virgin Islands, like those on the mainland, are exposed to many risk factors that include but are not limited to: sexual abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, and physical violence in the home, family relationships, peer relationships, economic self-sufficiency, substance abuse health and wellness. Unfortunately the results deriving from these risk factors, child abuse and juvenile crime are endemic local problems that overwhelm local systems.

Child protection and well-being are no longer viewed as the responsibility of one or two public entities, but rather as a shared responsibility of many agencies, individuals, and institutions (formal and informal) in a community. Similarly, responsibility for guidance and accountability for delinquent youth requires the engagement of many supportive entities. Achievement of desired outcomes for children and youth being served by child welfare and juvenile justice agencies requires concerted effort and communication among many organizations and individuals, and the active engagement and support of their families. Success is more likely when all invest in the common goal and fully carry out their part in meeting it.

In St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, a broad group of community entities concerned about success for children and youth have come together in support of a more integrated system of services and responses for dependent children and youthful offenders. Work began with the LEPC funded U.S. Virgin Islands Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Symposium held in June 2006, which initiated a dialogue on systems integration through the keynote address.

A follow-up meeting was hosted on September 20, 2006 by Family Court Judge, Patricia D. Steele, with key stakeholders and facilitated by SAG Member, Kimberley Causey Gomez and Mr. John A. Tuell, Child Welfare League of America (CWLA). At this meeting, the participants agreed to form a coalition to examine their client populations, communication and teamwork, and outcomes. An initial meeting of the leadership coalition for this initiative was convened on March 29, 2007.

PURPOSE:

The St. Croix Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems Integration Initiative is a collaboration of public and private agencies and organizations that have come together to examine and make improvements in coordinated and integrated program and policy development and service delivery for children, youth and families served by juvenile justice and child welfare systems, and critical affiliated youth serving institutions such as education, mental health, and substance abuse. The initiative is supported by the Department of Human Services vision to provide a seamless system of a continuum of quality care for our children and families.

GOALS:

In consideration of the foregoing and the agreed upon long term goal of ensuring improved performance outcomes for youth involved, or at-risk for involvement, in the dependency and delinquency systems, the parties agree as follows:

- Promote increased cooperation, coordination, and integration at the administrative and service delivery levels for the benefit of children and families within the purview of children in the welfare and juvenile justice systems.
- Build consensus for work to develop a unified comprehensive platform for reform so that children in the juvenile justice, child welfare, and affiliated youth serving systems are recipients of improved case management and more coordinated services and programs;
- Through a comprehensive, strategic planning process that embraces and values inclusion of youth, families, and a broad based representation of youth serving agencies and organizations, achieve and institutionalize greater multi-system coordination and integration to improve outcomes for St. Croix children, youth and families.

1. **Scope of Work** Toward achievement of these goals, each member agency and organization agrees to:
 - 1.1. Produce an inventory of resources in local child serving systems, including: programs and services; a comparative analysis of missions, mandates and policies; determination of the use of assessment instruments; review and analysis of the funding to support the services and programs.
 - 1.2. Assess the current management information systems utilized by participant agencies/organizations and assist with the preparation of an analysis of the current capacity to share information across agencies/organizations. The analysis will identify barriers and obstacles and jointly provide recommendations to overcome the identified impediments to enhanced information sharing. The analysis will also identify critical information that must be shared across agencies/organizations to enhance case management and service delivery to youth and families.
 - 1.3. Inventory available data and identify data sets that must be shared across agencies/organizations and ensure that this information contributes to improved analysis of current trends. Utilize this analysis to enhance decision-making, particularly regarding prioritizing the allocation of shared resources among and across agencies/organizations.
 - 1.4. Conduct an examination of the legal, policy, and procedural mandates unique to each agency/organization in order to make recommendations for changes that will contribute to improved coordination of initial decision-making, case management, and service delivery. The parties agree to provide an analysis of their findings and recommendations.
 - 1.5. Provide agency representation to participate in an ongoing Executive Committee, as well as have members assigned to and participate in subcommittee meetings

organized to address the multiple issues articulated in this agreement (Sections 1.1 – 1.4). The Committee and subcommittees may consider additional members as necessary to complete the tasks articulated in this agreement at any time and with approval of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will assume responsibility for oversight, direction, and accountability for the St. Croix Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems Integration Initiative.

- 1.6. Utilize the best available information, research, and practices to guide the process.
- 1.7. Maintain confidentiality of their client information.
- 1.8. Assist in the development of a means to track and evaluate the success of the St. Croix Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems Integration Initiative.
- 1.9. Jointly compile subcommittee reports to produce findings and recommendations for action strategies resulting in youth serving system coordination and integration.
- 1.10. Jointly produce an implementation strategy with benchmarks and timelines, no later days from the adoption of the final report.

2. General Terms

- 2.1. **Term.** This agreement will be effective through December 2007.
- 2.2. **Termination.** Member Agencies and Organizations can withdraw from this agreement at any time by making said request in writing with the effective date and reason for withdrawal.
- 2.3. **Renewal.** This Agreement may be renewed by the parties' mutual agreement for additional terms.
- 2.4. **Liability.** Each party is responsible for its own acts and omissions and those of its officers, employees, and agents. No party is responsible for the acts of third parties.

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