

Ohio Dual Status Youth: Replicable Progress and Achievements and the Challenges Ahead

Innovation Brief
By John A. Tuell



**RFK
COMMUNITY
ALLIANCE**

**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER
FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF YOUTH JUSTICE**

**National Resource Center for the
Transformation of Youth Justice**
*formerly known as the RFK National Resource Center for
Juvenile Justice*
A Program of the RFK Community Alliance

INTRODUCTION

The Children and Families Section, Supreme Court of Ohio (CFS, Supreme Court of Ohio) issued a Request for Proposal in fiscal year 2019 titled “Course Development, Delivery, and Technical Assistance Related to Youth Involved in Both Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems.” The CFS, Supreme Court of Ohio specifically sought “to identify a Contractor to develop and deliver a multi-disciplinary statewide training course on the topic of youth involved in both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, as well as to assist the Court in developing a competitive scholarship application program designed to provide two Ohio counties technical assistance through on-site training and on-site technical assistance.” The National Resource Center for the Transformation of Youth Justice (NRC), formerly known as the RFK National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice, was the recipient of this competitive grant and began work to develop the initial set of training events across the state. Through this educational process, local jurisdictions were able to gain clarity regarding the expectations reflecting a commitment to selection as a participant site. Since the original competitive selection of two sites, there have been a total of six additional jurisdictions participating in the technical assistance process in partnership with the NRC.

Since the beginning of calendar year 2022, four of the original jurisdictions have implemented and sustained dual status youth initiatives. The CFS, Supreme Court of Ohio has continued to contract with the NRC to provide ongoing technical assistance to the following four rural/suburban Ohio counties:

- Champaign County (initiated in 2022)
- Clark County (initiated in 2020)
- Fairfield County (initiated in 2022)
- Hancock County (initiated in 2021)

All four counties demonstrated a strong commitment to a cross-system leadership collaborative to identify their selected targeted population, assess the legal assets (e.g., active participation of prosecuting and defense attorneys) and challenges (e.g., information disclosures and lawful execution of informed releases), develop the intricate set of policies, procedures and protocols, and oversee the multi-system training and fidelity of practice on behalf of their target population.

In the fall of 2024, the CFS, Supreme Court of Ohio once again solicited grant applications for the expansion of the Dual Status Youth (DSY) Technical Assistance Project (DSY TA Project) in partnership with the NRC to feature four additional selected Ohio counties. The expansion effort to eight total participating counties in the cohort deliberately included both rural/suburban and urban/suburban jurisdictions to expand the diversity of replicable experiences – successes and challenges – so that results could inform all eighty-eight counties in Ohio in their future efforts to positively impact dual status youth. Successful applicants were able to receive intensive technical assistance and consultation toward the development of a coordinated and integrated child welfare and juvenile justice system to enhance the service provision and outcomes for maltreated youth who were involved in or at-risk for involvement in the youth justice system.

The overarching purpose of the DSY TA Project is “to remove barriers to the efficient and

effective administration of justice for children and families, strengthen engagement between the courts, families, children and system partners, and promote cross-system collaboration and data sharing as part of the Court Improvement Program grant” (Supreme Court of Ohio, 2024).

Importantly, the solicitation identifies the “proven tools, procedures, protocols, and publication resources developed and utilized over the past fourteen years” (Supreme Court of Ohio, 2024) by the NRC as supports to the technical assistance for the participant counties. The activities for the additional four selected counties were to be guided by the following resource publications:

- *Guidebook for Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare System Coordination and Integration: A Framework for Improved Outcomes, 3rd Edition* (Wiig & Tuell, Heldman, 2013)
- *Dual Status Youth — Technical Assistance Workbook, Updated Edition* (Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice, 2021)
- *Developmental Reform in Juvenile Justice: Translating the Science of Adolescent Development to Sustainable Best Practice* (Tuell, with Heldman & Harp, 2017)
- *Achieving the Possible on Behalf of Dual Status Youth* (Tuell & Martin, 2023)

Two of the publications were either updated or newly developed as a direct result of the progress and advances made by the four counties in the original Ohio DSY TA Project cohort.

The additional selected sites included Coshocton, Franklin, Hamilton, and Union counties. While planning and mobilization to

launch began immediately after selection, in coordination with the Supreme Court of Ohio and the selected counties, the NRC officially began their new partnerships as follows:

- Coshocton (December 2024)
- Franklin (January 2025)
- Hamilton (January 2025)
- Union (February 2025)

It is important to note at the outset that among the most prolific headlines emerging from this initiative given the current factors affecting cross-system collaboration and coordination (particularly involving dependency and delinquency courts and youth and family serving agencies) and the enormous fiscal strain arising from out-of-home placements is the successful development of multi-agency partnerships, institutionalized through protocols, procedures, and policies that have led to reduced placements and/or stability of placement for dual status youth – both short- and long-term – among the participating counties. In counties where true practice coordination was not routinely present, there now exists a regular collaboration among the social workers and probation/court staff. The specific evidence is documented in additional detail later in this Innovation Brief.



CRITICAL PHASES FOR DSY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT PARTICIPANT COUNTIES

The founder of the NRC, who has also served as its Executive Director since its launch in 2013, created the original multi-system framework in 2001, which is documented in the *Guidebook for Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare System Coordination and Integration: A Framework for*

Improved Outcomes, now in its third edition (Wiig, Tuell, & Heldman, 2013). The approach outlined in the accompanying *Dual Status Youth – Technical Assistance Workbook, Updated Edition* (Robert F. Kennedy Children’s Action Corps, 2021) reestablishes four critical phases of activity that provide the foundation of success for youth serving agencies and their communities to achieve positive outcomes for this challenging population of vulnerable youth and their families. *The four phases are depicted below in Figure 1.*

FIGURE 1: Four Phases of the DSY Technical Assistance Project

PHASE 1: Mobilization and Advocacy

- ❑ Develop cross-system leadership team with knowledge and skills to manage and drive multi-system change.
- ❑ Create working groups and committees from among multi-system personnel with subject matter expertise in required areas of analysis.

PHASE 2: Study and Analysis

- ❑ Examine data to establish prevalence of prioritized target population of dual status youth; build structure for collection and reporting of fidelity of cross-system policies and youth outcomes.
- ❑ Review existing policies, procedures, and protocols for strengths and opportunities to institute collaborative methods of case planning, case management, and access to effective services, treatment and programs.
- ❑ Analyze current law, court rules, policy, and information and data sharing strictures for prohibitions and opportunities to strengthen multi-system collaboration.

PHASE 3: Action Strategy

- ❑ Working Groups / Committees present findings and recommendations for action; establish priorities and sequencing of collective action.
- ❑ Establish tasks, timelines, and written documentation (policies, procedures, and protocols) designed to align with desired youth, family and multi-system performance outcomes.

PHASE 4: Implementation

- ❑ Adopt plan of action that adheres to principles of implementation science and change management best-practices to assure sustainability of practices.
- ❑ Apply quality assurance and continuous quality improvement methods to clearly articulate quantitative and qualitative measures sought by the multi-system initiative.

Over the past two decades, this framework and detailed process therein has been successfully used to closely partner with thirty-eight state and local jurisdictions nationwide – both on- and off-site – to implement activities and methodologies that have achieved impressive results on behalf of dual status youth. The NRC TA process was once again designated by the CFS, Supreme Court of Ohio to inform development of successful approaches and practices in the four new participant counties.

BACKGROUND

The term “dual status youth” refers to any youth who has come into contact with both the child welfare and juvenile justice (hereafter referenced as youth justice) systems, to any degree, in any order, and at any point in time. The overarching term for these youth acknowledges a current or historical status in the child welfare and youth justice system. In 2013, and after a decade of experience working with state and local jurisdictions using the seminal Dual Status Youth framework detailed in the *Guidebook for Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare System Coordination and Integration: A Framework for Improved Outcomes, 3rd Edition* (2013), sufficient data and information permitted a more precise application of subcategories further distinguishing the status of these vulnerable and challenging youth. The following subcategories support localized identification of a specific target population for whom multi-system collaborations may develop policies, procedures and protocols that improve youth and family/caregiver outcomes:

- Dually-identified: youth who are currently involved with the youth justice system and have a history in the child welfare system but no current involvement
- Dually-involved: youth who have concurrent involvement (diversionary, informal, formal, or a combination) with both the child welfare and youth justice systems
- Dually-adjudicated: youth who are concurrently adjudicated in both the child welfare and youth justice systems (i.e., both dependent and delinquent) (Wiig et al., 2013)

FOUNDATIONAL RESEARCH

As was documented in *Achieving the Possible on Behalf of Dual Status Youth* (Tuell & Martin, 2023), the research has clearly indicated for more than three decades that child maltreatment increases the likelihood of future delinquency and criminality (Loeber, R., & Farrington, D. 2001; Widom, C. S., & Maxfield, M. G. 2001; and Halemba & Siegel, 2011). One of the best-known prospective studies involved a group of abused and neglected children in the Midwest who came to the court’s attention between 1967 and 1971. The authors concluded that childhood abuse and neglect increased the odds of future delinquency and adult criminality overall by 29%. Being abused or neglected as a child increased the likelihood of arrest as a juvenile by 59%, as an adult by 28%, and for a violent crime by 30% (Wiig et al., 2003).

A decade later, a King County, Washington study found that youth with a history of formal child welfare involvement begin their delinquency careers earlier and are detained at an earlier age, more frequently, and for longer

periods of time than youth with no child welfare involvement (Halemba & Siegel, 2011). Similarly, a study in Missouri reported that history of maltreatment was significantly associated with referral to the youth justice system at a younger age, an assault history, and a prior out-of-home placement (Dannerbeck & Yan, 2011).

The research also recognizes that dual status youth have experienced “complex trauma” at a significantly higher rate than general population youth. Complex trauma is exposure to a number of traumatic events of an interpersonal nature with potentially long-term impacts. For many of these youth, exposure to these traumatizing experiences causes behavior problems, resulting in contact with the youth justice system (Grisso & Vincent, 2014). Dual status youth also experience a higher incidence of behavioral health and educational challenges, characteristics which are also present among their parents and/or caregivers. In sum, these vulnerable and challenging youth are experiencing remarkably complex circumstances during the most significant period of physical and emotional development in their lives.

Additionally, research detailing the adverse outcomes - including a rapid trajectory deeper into both the delinquency and dependency systems, and the impact on the developing brain and body of dual status youth - underscores the need for our public systems/agencies, service providers, and community-based organizations to foster collaborative and comprehensive systems of care that consider the totality of situations and the unique needs of these youths to help mitigate adverse outcomes. Foremost among these considerations is the imperative action to identify active trauma symptoms among dual status youth through early

screening, assessment, evaluation and evidence-based treatment interventions.

Since its inception, the NRC has been committed to applying research informed principles and practices to the knowledge about adolescent brain science and youth development. The research that was effectively synthesized in a National Research Council (2013) report recognized that adolescents differ from adults in three important ways:

- Adolescents are less able to regulate their own behavior in emotionally charged contexts.
- Adolescents are more sensitive to external influences such as the presence of peers and the immediacy of rewards.
- Adolescents are less able to make informed decisions that require consideration of the long term.

These adolescent characteristics have provided the foundation for the adoption and implementation of developmentally informed practices, policies and procedures that have proven effective in achieving the primary responsibilities of the youth justice and child welfare system collaborations among the participating Ohio counties. The obvious challenge going forward includes increasing the numbers and array of multi-system practitioners across Ohio and the United States who understand and embrace the research findings and implications of adolescent brain development, thereby adopting cross-system youth and family intervention practices across the spectrum of key decision points directly impacting the primary goals of these two youth serving systems.

A second area of commonality identified among Ohio counties was the embrace of the *positive youth development* (PYD) approach which has come to be applied to “a set of principles, a philosophy or approach emphasizing active support for the growing capacity of young people by individuals, organizations, and institutions, especially at the community level. The youth development approach is rooted in a commitment to enabling all young people to thrive. This simple statement combines two principles: universality or inclusiveness (all youth) and a positive orientation building on strengths (thriving)” (Hamilton et al., 2004). Additionally, *Focusing Juvenile Justice on Positive Youth Development* (Butts et al., 2005) describes the following PYD assumptions:

“(1) Focus on strengths and assets rather than deficits and problems. PYD frameworks emphasize the building of youth assets, or the skills and competencies that will allow youth to take on new roles as they transition from childhood to adulthood.

(2) Strengths and assets are usually acquired through positive relationships, especially with pro-social and caring adults. Relationships with pro-social peers can also facilitate development, but positive relationships with adults are the primary focus of PYD.

(3) The development and acquisition of youth assets occurs in multiple contexts and environments, including schools, workplaces, community organizations, social programs, and neighborhoods.” (Butts et al., 2005, p. 5)

In combination with the appropriate use of risk-needs-responsivity (RNR) screening and assessment approaches, coordinated case management plans can incorporate PYD opportunities into the strategies that strengthen cognitive skills and positive assets which help to ameliorate risk in the priority domains for treatment and intervention of dual status youth (Schubert & Mulvey, 2014).

This set of fundamentally sound approaches (multi-system collaboration, adolescent brain development, adverse trauma experiences and active symptoms, and positive youth development) is supported by more than three decades of research and provides the foundation for successful work with dual status youth and their families/caregivers.



Our community (Clark County) developed a collaborative program with very specific outcomes to address the critical needs of this significantly high-risk group of youth (including placement stability and reduced recidivism). The most important discoveries in our journey resulted in

- 1) stronger understanding of the youth involved in both juvenile justice and child welfare and the necessity to coordinate our agency efforts on their behalf
- 2) specifically identifying the additional services needed in our community to assist in providing the best outcomes for our youth, and
- 3) significance of data collection to tell the accurate story of impact

Overall, the initiative provided us with the opportunity to imagine and implement a more effective way to provide services for dually involved youth and obtain the best outcomes for our youth.”

*The Honorable Katrine Lancaster, Judge
Clark County Court of Common Pleas
Domestic Relations Division-Juvenile Section*

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER IN OHIO: SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES

Since the beginning of calendar year 2022, four of the original jurisdictions have implemented and sustained dual status youth initiatives. The CFS, Supreme Court of Ohio has continued to contract with the NRC to provide ongoing technical assistance to the following four rural/suburban Ohio counties:

- Champaign County (initiated in 2022)
- Clark County (initiated in 2020)
- Fairfield County (initiated in 2022)
- Hancock County (initiated in 2021)

All four counties demonstrated a strong commitment to a cross-system leadership collaborative to identify their selected targeted population, assessing the legal assets (e.g., active participation of prosecuting and defense attorneys) and challenges (e.g., information disclosures and lawful execution of informed releases), developing an intricate set of policies, procedures and protocols, and oversee the multi-system training and fidelity of practice on behalf of their target population. In three instances (Clark, Champaign, and Fairfield counties), the target population was defined as dually involved youth. Using the Clark County (2020) definition as a representative example, their final procedural narrative described the target population as:

Youth who have concurrent involvement (diversion, formal, or a combination of the two) with both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems:

- Youth, of any age, who is a member of an open case (Intake or Ongoing) with Clark

County Department of Job and Family Services (CCDJFS) and a new charge (delinquent, unruly and truancy charges) with Clark County Juvenile Court (CCJC).

- Pathway One – Youth who become involved with the juvenile justice system and are currently involved with Children Services.
- Pathway Two – Youth who receive a new charge with the juvenile justice system and become involved with Children Services within 30 days of the filing of that charge. CCJC will be responsible for determining if a referral has been made to Children Services or make a referral if necessary, within 30 days of the filing of the new charge, and a case has been opened with Children Services.

This specificity is critical in support of the effective, routine identification of the population of youth intended for impact and is also representative of the targeted efforts in their sister counties of Champaign and Fairfield.

In Hancock County, experience among the collaborative leadership in combination with a critical “assist” from historical data scans resulted in their focus on “youth, ages 10-17, displaced from their home due to an act of violence, where the youth is identified as the alleged perpetrator” (Hancock County, Ohio Dual Status Youth Executive Committee, 2021).

Across all four counties, and within each of their multi-system leadership groups – often referred to as the Executive or Steering Committee – jurisdiction-specific experience, research, and local data informed the set of youth outcomes (and specific measures) adopted as indicators of success. Each county also highlighted important process measures that would permit each to

assess their fidelity to the procedures and protocols adopted into practice.

With encouragement from the NRC, it is also noteworthy that three of the four counties adopted unique names for their dual status youth initiatives. This assignment of a brand to their cross-system work enhanced ownership and commitment, an important feature given the frequent challenges to success of the collaboration and positive outcomes for a difficult population of youth. These examples include:

- Hancock County **SAFETY** (Systemic Approach for Engaging Targeted Youth)
- Champaign County **GRACE** (Group Response for A Chance to Excel)
- Fairfield County **PACT** (Protecting and Advocating for Children Together)



By focusing on a target population involving youth at-risk for out-of-home placement (including detention and longer term options), namely youth initially charged with domestic battery in their family, our dually involved work enabled our community in Hancock County to:

- Create policy and procedure changes that allow all community partners to work with youth and families in ways that align with their agency requirements, but do not impede information-sharing or progress.
- Build a commitment of the team to meet the families where they are, with the dedication and effort to get them to where they want/need to be to function more appropriately and safely.
- Work to collaborate with all involved agencies, with a level of respect and understanding to address deficiencies within the system.

**The Honorable Kristen K. Johnson, Judge
Hancock County Probate and Juvenile Court**

CORE PRACTICES IN ACHIEVING ALIGNMENT

The intensive DSY TA partnership experiences in the original four participating Ohio counties led to the highlighting of a specific set of seven core practices that must be addressed within this framework to achieve the multi-system alignment and coordination that produces replicable, sustainable practices and positive outcomes.

The Core Practices are:

- Routine early identification of dual status youth.
- Agreement on set of sought outcomes for dual status youth based on their characteristics within the unique jurisdiction (usually including reduction of recidivism, placement/home stability, behavioral health stabilization/improvement, educational engagement or achievement).
- Commitment to use of validated screening and assessment instruments to support collaborative decision making.
- Emphasis on alternatives to formal processing at earliest opportunity and key decision points.
- Engagement of families/caregivers and prosocial familial and community supports.
- Convening of multi-disciplinary team process, including youth and family, to assess available relevant and necessary information that supports an effective intervention plan.
- Coordination of case planning, court processes (delinquency and dependency), and case management to achieve the shared mandates of the multi-system partners.

As these youth serving agencies consider coming together to more effectively impact dual status youth and interrupt the costly trajectory – both in human and fiscal terms – experienced by these youth, families and our communities, it is important to address the view that “competing mandates” derived from statutory requirements and/or philosophical approaches among and across agencies may undermine successful dual status youth efforts. In each of the successful efforts in the initial cohort, the Executive/Leadership Team addressed these issues and permitted the ongoing pursuit and development of agreed upon policies and procedures on behalf of dual status youth. Ultimately, each found through respectful experience-based and data-informed debate and discourse that a shared set of goals, objectives, desired outcomes, and specific multi-agency policies and procedures could be – and were - adopted into practice and sustained through collaborative oversight.

“We intentionally wanted all community partners to maintain their autonomy within their own set of rules and regulations. Based upon mutual respect for those roles and requirements and positive relationships built over time, we developed a shared vision and were able to agree on a set of policies, goals, and outcomes which has resulted in our consistent community collaboration to achieve success for youth charged with domestic battery (dually involved target population for Hancock County).”

Shawn Carpenter
Court Administrator/Chief Probation Officer
Hancock County Probate and Juvenile Court

OHIO'S MARKERS OF SUCCESS

As detailed in *Achieving the Possible on Behalf of Dual Status Youth* (Tuell & Martin, 2023), the seven core practices are critical to achieve multi-system alignment and coordination that results in sustainable practices and positive outcomes that have remained consistent through twenty years of the NRC's site-based project work. In addition, all four of the Ohio counties in the original cohort also established the following impressive markers of development and progress since they undertook their dual status youth initiatives. These “markers” can be referenced by any future state or local jurisdictions undertaking dual status youth initiatives:

- (1) Formed a strong multi-system leadership collaboration and adopted a formal oversight structure that includes all the critical partners necessary to success (e.g., child welfare/protection, juvenile court, probation, law enforcement, prosecutors, defense counsel, education, behavioral health, family, youth, community, CASA).
- (2) Utilized professional experience, unique contextual and environmental expertise, and historical and current data scans to identify a specific target population of dual status youth for whom the collaboration would focus their policy and procedural activities.
- (3) Defined with precision the attributes and status of the target population within each of the child welfare and youth justice systems and the specific point at which the youth would be identified for attention by the dual status youth initiative procedure.

- (4) Articulated specific youth outcomes (and affiliated measures, e.g., reduction of recidivism as measured by no new delinquent referrals and/or no new abuse/neglect complaints opened for investigation during involvement with the dual status youth initiative) that would be the focus of ongoing data collection and reporting to assess the effectiveness of their efforts.
 - (5) Analyzed, assessed, and overcame perceived and actual legal impediments (federal and state statute and relevant court rules) that permitted proper authorization and/or consent to share (or protect) relevant and necessary information to inform professional judgement on behalf of their target population.
 - (6) Created and adopted detailed policy and procedure documentation that included specific roles, responsibilities, timelines and tasks for each agency and their personnel from initial identification of the youth and family as part of the target population until closure of their status within the initiative (Note: in several counties, overarching Memoranda of Understanding/Agreement (MOU/MOA) were developed and executed indicating ongoing commitment to the initiative, procedures, and policies).
 - (7) In accordance with recommended best-practices, established within their procedural narrative the timing and method by which a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) would be expertly facilitated to ensure effective consideration of relevant and necessary historical and current information would inform a coordinated treatment plan (sometimes referred to as a “crisis plan”) designed to stabilize the current circumstances and provide for more immediate access to services and programs within the community.
 - (8) Established and delivered a cross-system training plan to ensure all impacted professionals, community members, families and youth understood the purpose and process for the dual status youth initiative (e.g., includes brochures, scripts, and other communication mechanisms).
 - (9) Created exemplary processes for cross-system data collection, management, and routine reporting of system performance measures (aligned with key process and decision points detailed in protocols) and youth outcomes achieved by their dual status youth initiatives. Each county is producing a quarterly report reflecting successes and challenges and actively reviewing and analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data to inform opportunities for “tweaks” or adjustments and to highlight the positive impact of their work.
- All nine of these impressive areas of progress and results are supported by documentation that institutionalizes the cross-system commitments and support replication and sustainability for Clark, Champaign, Fairfield, and Hancock counties. The success was enabled by a collective commitment to the step-by-step approach to address issues normally confronting multi-system efforts that are enumerated in the NRC’s *Dual Status Youth – Technical Assistance Workbook, Updated Edition* (2021). In several instances, the combination of patience and diligence of leadership to stay committed to the process contributed to the achievement of their success.

DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE DATABASE

Focusing on one issue that consistently confounds the dual status youth initiative, the Clark County Data Subcommittee led the way in the development of a sophisticated, ancillary database to measure the impact of their Dually Involved Youth (DIY) Initiative. For over two years and at quarterly intervals, their Executive Committee convenes to review the DIY demographic characteristics, offense types, detention length of stay, MDT timing, participants, and recommended services, and outcome results, among other impressive details. During a technical assistance visit to Clark County, the Data Subcommittee agreed to produce an instructional document by year end 2023 that ultimately included:

- Research Log – an accumulation of queries accrued over the past two years that have been raised that reflect data points important to their DIY Initiative
- Data Attributes – a section including all current definitions of data points included in the quarterly reports
- Data Protocol – a section reflecting the source, timing and requirements for collection of all data that comprises the quarterly reports
- Data Dashboard – identification of approximately 5-8 priority data points that are reflected in a monthly/quarterly depiction of current status and trends for the DIY Initiative

This approach has led to the availability of quarterly data reports that have informed the Executive Committee on trends, process and outcome measures, and case characteristics that

is unparalleled (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, age, offense type, education status, assessment scores/results, etc.). Through leadership on this important issue, Clark County has paved the way for the other three counties to produce similar data reports for routine use and analysis – and for all Ohio counties to replicate these efforts should other jurisdictions adopt dual status youth initiatives.

OHIO'S RESULTS SUPPORT STRONG COLLABORATION

The commitments and achievements in these four counties do not stop with “process and procedural” accomplishments. Ultimately this work seeks to interrupt the costly – human and fiscal – trajectory deeper into child welfare and youth justice that is so common to this vulnerable and challenging population. Through the establishment of strong collaborations and evidence-informed procedures, these four counties have positively impacted youth and families, producing the following outcomes that all youth-serving professionals would applaud:

- High rates of diversion for low risk to reoffend youth from formal prosecution (exceeding 80%) – opportunities frequently not made available to dual status youth.
- Decreased length of stay for youth initially placed in a secure setting.
- Safe placement in temporary respite care instead of detention for youth initially charged with domestic assault of a family member; and safe return to their family in less than 2 days after MDT meetings that occur within 24 hours of the incident.

- Only 9.8% of dually involved youth served (N= 61) ended up in child protective services custody, 90.2% were returned to a parent/guardian/relative; 67% did NOT incur any new charges during their SAFETY involvement (Hancock County).
- 65% experienced NO placement changes, 82% experienced NO placement in detention, and 66% experienced increase in Developmental Assets scores during their PACT involvement (Fairfield County)
- Experienced recidivism rates of 10% and 5% for their dual status youth population within the first year after identification as dually involved youth despite the high needs and moderate-high risk in two counties.

Teams of professionals are finding expanded opportunities for stable placements, service connections and new community supports not previously “on their radar” as viable interventions due to the increased cross-system collaboration; these opportunities have included mental health, education, and pro-social service connections that address priority treatment domains.

In fact, examples of best-practice procedural narratives have recently been adopted in Coshocton, Hamilton and Union counties that provide outstanding examples of multiple agencies coming together to serve their dual status youth in a truly coordinated partnership. In one county, grant funds were accessed to enable expedited behavioral health assessments/evaluations for their target population. In that same county and among multiple Ohio counties involved in the dual status youth initiative, improved coordination with Ohio RISE has resulted in improved access

to necessary treatment that is designed to increase the likelihood of placement stability and reduction of risk for the youth and family.

The work to produce these results includes a compilation of documents that can easily be accessed to replicate. In many instances, minor amendments to the language in MOUs, policies, procedures, protocols, forms, brochures, scripts, and training curricula can result in an effective adaptation for new sites taking on dual status youth initiatives. The NRC maintains a library of these documents, and many others from across the country, to support these opportunities. Just prior to publication of this Brief, the Supreme Court of Ohio and the NRC hosted a virtual Dual Status Youth Roundtable via Zoom.

Representatives from the four original counties shared their experiences, successes, and challenges to teams from the new cohort of counties. This “mentoring” approach proved beneficial to highlight the myriad issues facing this work, methods by which challenges were overcome, and established new professional and community connections across counties for future opportunities to launch or sustain dual status youth initiatives. Much to the credit of the project leadership at the Supreme Court of Ohio, a second in-person DSY Roundtable is now being planned to advance these mentoring and learning opportunities.

2nd COHORT – NEW LESSONS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

In current Ohio DSY counties (2nd Cohort), there is both laudable progress and significant challenges that continue to confront the

successful launch and implementation. In a recent update report from the NRC to the CFS, Supreme Court of Ohio, several strengths and challenges were identified. Many of the strengths have amplified the importance of several core principles and practices previously indicated that contributed significantly to the success of jurisdictions in Cohort 1. These include:

- presence of a well-formed collaborative comprised of multiple agency and community service providers that possess the ability and authority to drive and inform change,
- formation of ad hoc working groups/sub-committees to ensure local subject matter expertise is informing the project development,
- presence of a highly functioning project coordinator, this has been particularly evident in Coshocton and Hamilton counties,
- strong benefit from excellent judicial leadership, this has been particularly evident in Coshocton and Hamilton counties, and
- identified desired target population outcomes based on retrospective examination of a cross-system data scan (scope TBD by capacity within each jurisdiction).

The additional “lessons learned” themes that may be further amplified also include:

- It is important to commit to the numerous “sub-elements” that are critical to the success of dual status youth projects (e.g., legal ability to identify dual status youth target populations, sharing of relevant and necessary information to inform MDT process, effective language in Release of Information forms to support the exchange

and protection of case specific information, and best-practice procedures and protocols, etc.), much of which has been supported by previous Ohio-specific legal analysis informed by statutory (federal, as well as state statutes) examination, review of agency policy and regulations, and awareness of any relevant court rule(s).

- It is important to adopt a trust for the technical assistance process that creates the opportunities to examine all elements of the dual status youth initiative, with particular attention to the orderly steps that permit the conduct of a mapping process, initial development of a draft procedural narrative, and connection of those procedures and protocols that directly connect to the desired youth outcomes sought by the DSY project.

Several DSY initiatives are frequently “bogged down” at the outset by questions that likely cannot be answered specifically until the mapping process and specific details of a procedural narrative are constructed. After a challenging launch of the DSY TA process in Hamilton County, a small sub-group mapped the process for the specified target population. The group created a detailed procedural narrative that was presented to a larger group to provoke *specific questions* that may affect *specific decision-making entities*. In this systematic method, many questions for stakeholders – and innovative suggestions and solutions – could be effectively addressed and incorporated into the procedural narrative with widespread approval, and frequently through consensus.

Additionally, the process mapping has proven key to answering an oft-asked question “we are already doing this, why put so much effort into re-examining what we are already doing?” Almost without fail after the detailed conduct of a mapping process for the distinct target population, light is shone on the differences in current practice versus proposed practice for a unique dual status youth target population. Foremost among those revelations that reflect differences in practice are:

- Unique *target population* (often with distinguishable and research-informed characteristics),
- Unique *set of sought multi-domain outcomes* (recidivism, placement stability, behavioral health, education, family stability,
- Unique *set of multi-disciplinary team (MDT) participants* (including youth, family, attorneys, etc.),
- Unique *set of timing for next steps in court process*, reflecting an urgency not persistently present in similar MDT or planning processes,
- Practices that result in ability/capacity to collect process measures and cross-agency outcome data, and
- Consistent meetings of a uniquely established Leadership/Executive Team, shaped by a specific Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement (MOU/MOA) designed to assess fidelity to the policies and procedures and the outcome data in the management and oversight of the DSY initiative.

- The data collection methods and practices continue to rely on the development of ancillary systems and require assignment of a data analyst to collect necessary process and outcome measures; common concerns reflect that this approach requires “double entry” of data extracted or collected from existing information systems. Despite this concern, Clark and Fairfield counties have developed extremely mature systems that are producing routine reports contributing to the sustainability and fidelity of their DSY initiative and forming the basis of positive examples for Cohort 2 counties and all future DSY Project work throughout the state.

The current Ohio counties (Coshocton, Franklin, Hamilton and Union counties – Cohort 2) are continuing their efforts to implement dual status youth initiatives with two of those jurisdictions on course to launch their reforms within the next 60 days. As they all progress toward a successful beginning on behalf of dual status youth and their families, a continued focus will include the core principles, practices, and lessons learned that have guided previous Ohio counties like those in Cohort 1. The seminal framework produced by the NRC and the invaluable experiences from Ohio – and those across the United States – certainly provide a robust opportunity for future Ohio counties to positively impact cross-system collaboration that positively impacts one of the most challenging and vulnerable populations of youth that are engaged in our child welfare and youth justice systems.

CONCLUSION

The Children and Families Section of the Supreme Court of Ohio, in partnership with the National Resource Center for the Transformation of Youth Justice, has modeled how state level support in collaboration with local jurisdictions can produce highly effective, research-informed, replicable practices to improve outcomes for dual status youth in the eight participant jurisdictions – but also more broadly across all other Ohio counties. With the practical results and demonstrated impact over the past five years, this approach has the potential to produce exponential gains that literally save the future of dual status youth and reduce the historical duplication of resources in an atmosphere of strained service availability.

While there remains much to do on behalf of dual status youth and their families, the Ohio example and similar initiatives in Douglas County, Nebraska and Clark County, Nevada, provide guidance and hope that many more youth justice, child welfare, delinquency and dependency judges, and committed stakeholders will take advantage of the successful path forged to effect positive change in multiple other state and local communities across the United States. While the challenge to consistent implementation, sustainability, and measurement of fidelity to practice and impact on the target population remains considerable, success in Ohio among the eight counties has paved the way for achievable success that presents Ohio as the preeminent example for other state and local jurisdictions across the United States to emulate.

About the Author

John A. Tuell currently serves as the Executive Director for the National Resource Center for the Transformation of Youth Justice (formerly known as the RFK National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice) at RFK Community Alliance. The NRC focuses on practice and policy reform in the youth justice system through an active commitment to partnerships with state, local and federal agencies dedicated to improving the lives of our nation's youth and protecting the safety of our communities. Mr. Tuell has devoted his entire professional career to improving and enhancing the youth justice system and has authored numerous guiding publications and articles that support this goal. Mr. Tuell has partnered with more than seventy state and local jurisdictions to provide consultation and technical assistance to achieve enhanced system performance that leads directly to replicable, measurable and sustainable positive youth outcomes.

***All of the NRC's Publications, Guides, and Tools are available in its
Online Resource Library: www.rfknrcjj.org/resources***

REFERENCES

- Butts, J. A., Mayer, S. & Ruth, G. (2005). *Focusing juvenile justice on positive youth development*. Chapin Hall Issue Brief. Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.
- Clark County. (2020). *Memorandum of understanding between Clark County Juvenile Court (CCJC) and Clark County Department of Job And Family Services (CCDJFS)*. <https://rfknrcjj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Clark-Co.-OH-DIY-MOU-Sept2020.pdf>
- Dannerbeck, A., & Yan, J. (2012). Missouri's crossover youth: Examining the relationship between their maltreatment history and their risk of violence. *OJJDP Journal of Juvenile Justice*, 1(1).
- Grisso, T., & Vincent, G. (2014). *Trauma in dual status youth: Putting things in perspective*. Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice, Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps. <https://rfknrcjj.org/resources/trauma/>
- Halemba, G., & Siegel, G. (2011). *Doorways to delinquency: Multi-system involvement of delinquent youth in King County (Seattle, WA)*. National Center for Juvenile Justice.
- Hamilton, S.F., Hamilton, M.A., & Pittman, K. (2004). Principles for youth development. In S.F. Hamilton & M.A. Hamilton (Eds.), *The youth development handbook: Coming of age in American communities* (pp.3-22). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Hancock County, Ohio Dual Status Youth Executive Committee. (2021). Policies and procedures regarding dual status youth. In *Hancock County policies and procedures manual* (updated April 2021).
- Loeber, R., & Farrington, D. (Eds.). (2001). *Child delinquents: Development, interventions, and service needs*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- National Research Council (2013). *Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.17226/14685>.
- Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice. (2021). *Dual status youth - technical assistance workbook, updated edition*. Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps, an affiliate of Perkins. <https://rfknrcjj.org/resources/dual-status-youth/>
- Schubert, C.A. & Mulvey, E.P. (2014). *Programs that promote positive development can help young offenders grow up and out of crime*. MacArthur Foundation.
- Supreme Court of Ohio. (2024). *Request for technical assistance grant applications*.
- Tuell, J. A., with Heldman, J., & Harp, K. (2017). *Developmental reform in juvenile justice: Translating the science of adolescent development to sustainable best practice*. Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps. <https://rfknrcjj.org/resources/developmental-approach-to-reform/>
- Tuell, J. A., & Martin, J. (2023). Achieving the possible on behalf of dual status youth. *Journal of Community Justice*, 33(1). <https://rfknrcjj.org/resources/dual-status-youth/>
- Widom, C. S., & Maxfield, M. G. (2001). An update on the "cycle of violence" (Research in Brief). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice.
- Wiig, J. K. & Tuell, J. A., with Heldman, J. K. (2013). *Guidebook for juvenile justice & child welfare system coordination and integration* (3rd ed., p. xix). Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps. <https://rfknrcjj.org/resources/dual-status-youth/>
- Wiig, J. K. & Widom, C. S., with Tuell, J. A. (2003). *Understanding child maltreatment and juvenile delinquency: From research to effective program, practice, and systemic solutions*. CWLA Press. <https://rfknrcjj.org/resources/dual-status-youth/>