



Main Office: 222 East Central Parkway • Cincinnati, Ohio 45202-1225
Neighborhood Center: 237 Wm. Howard Taft • Cincinnati, Ohio 45219
General Information: (513) 946-1000
General Information TDD: (513) 946-1295
FAX: (513) 946-2250
www.hcifs.org
www.hckids.org

Media Contact:

Brian Gregg
Media Spokesperson/Communications Manager
E-mail: greggb@jfs.hamilton-co.org
Phone: 513-946-1728
Fax: 513-946-2248

**Hamilton County Chosen for Innovative Program to Help Youth
Involved in Child Welfare System, Courts**

Cincinnati (April 16, 2010) Hamilton County has been chosen as one of 11 communities across the nation to participate in a nationally-recognized program helping youth involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

The Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University and Casey Family Programs has created a Crossover Youth Practice Model Initiative aimed at reforming services to “crossover youth” -- children and youth who are known to multiple systems of care, particularly juvenile justice and child welfare. The overall goals of the program are to reduce the number of youth placed in care outside of their homes and to reduce the number of youth who re-offend and wind up back in court.

Hamilton County’s Department of Job and Family Services and Juvenile Court were chosen to implement the model based on a “clear commitment demonstrated to improving outcomes for crossover youth.”

“I am proud of the work we already do in this area and I appreciate the Center’s recognition of our solid foundation in working with crossover youth,” said Moira Weir, director of the county’s Job and Family Services Department. “But we can always do better. It will be nice to see what is working in other parts of the country and hear how it can be adapted to Hamilton County. This new model will help us create a comprehensive system that takes the delivery of services to a whole new level.”

The Center’s practice model describes the specific practices that need to be in place within a jurisdiction in order to reduce the number of youth who crossover between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, the number of youth entering and re-entering care, and the length of stay in out-of-home care. The Practice Model provides a template for how counties can immediately impact how they serve crossover youth and rapidly impact their lives.

The main goals of the model are:

- Reduction in the number of youth placed in out-of-home care
- Reduction in the use of congregate (group homes, shelters) care
- Reduction in the disproportionate representation of children of color
- Reduction in the number of youth becoming sentenced by a court more than once

“These goals are consistent with what practices we already have in place and consistent with the initiatives we would like to implement in the future for aiding crossover youth,” said Mark Reed, administrator, Hamilton County Juvenile Court. “We’re eager to work on some of the best practices identified by the Center and find new ways to benefit the youth of Hamilton County.”

At any given time, about 350 children involved in the child welfare system are also involved with Hamilton County's Juvenile Court. The two already collaborate in many ways:

- JFS dedicates a social worker who serves as a liaison to the court and attends all initial delinquency plea hearings at the detention facility for children in agency custody or under agency supervision.
- The court adopts a one-magistrate/one-family case assignment for all complaints alleging a child is dependent, neglected or abused.
- The court grants JFS administrators access to the court's management information system to facilitate improved coordination and communication on crossover cases.
- The court conducts a daily assessment of the youth housed in the detention facility, and a multi-disciplinary committee convenes weekly in an effort to secure alternative placements for youth in detention; JFS participates in this weekly review of all youth in detention, and implements strategies to avoid unnecessary stays for youth in agency custody.
- Both the court and JFS contract with other social service agencies that offer community-based services for the crossover youth.

About Hamilton County's Department of Job and Family Services

The Department of Job and Family Services administers federal, state and local programs for those in need. The Department helps with local child protection, elderly protection, child care, child support enforcement, workforce development, cash assistance, food assistance and Medicaid disbursement. Servicing Hamilton County since 1947, the Department helps hundreds of thousands each year and is accredited by the Council on Accreditation, an international, independent, not-for-profit child and family service accrediting organization.