

Philadelphia City Council Hearing

Monday, April 18, 2016

Testimony for Michael Pennington, Director
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency

Good morning, I am Mike Pennington Director of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention at the Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

On behalf of our Chairman, Josh Shapiro, I would like to thank you for inviting PCCD to be part of this hearing and for the opportunity to share some of PCCD's efforts around delinquency and violence prevention as well as Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system enhancement strategy.

The mission of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency is ... To enhance the quality, coordination and planning within the criminal and juvenile justice systems, to facilitate the delivery of services to victims of crime, and to increase the safety of our communities.

PCCD's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention works with state and local partners to improve the Commonwealth's juvenile justice system and prevent violence, delinquency, substance abuse and other related problem behaviors.

The demand for programs and interventions that are effective in preventing adolescent problem behaviors has never been greater. PCCD has a track record in leading the development and implementation of research-based approaches that have proven successful in preventing youth violence,

delinquency, substance abuse, educational failure and many other problem behaviors.

The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, at the Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado Boulder, designed and launched a national youth prevention initiative in 1996, with funding assistance from PCCD, to identify and replicate violence, delinquency, and drug prevention programs that had been demonstrated as effective. This project, initially called “Blueprints for Violence Prevention,” identified prevention and intervention programs that met a strict scientific standard of program effectiveness. Today, “Blueprints” has been rebranded as “Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development,” and funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. With funding from the Casey Foundation, outcomes have been expanded to include not only problem behavior, but also education, emotional well-being, physical health, and positive relationships.

It is well established that the presence of certain key factors in the life of a child places the child at increased risk of a myriad of adolescent problem behaviors. These factors include certain characteristics of individual communities, schools, and families, as well as the characteristics, attitudes, behavior and peer relationships of a child. The identification, assessment, and prioritization of these risk factors are a key aspect of the Communities That Care (CTC, for short) risk –focused prevention framework that is the foundation of PCCD’s comprehensive prevention strategy. CTC is a public health approach that seeks community involvement to identify and address a community’s local risk factors.

The CTC framework uses the “Social Development Strategy,” which is a research-based model that organizes known protective factors into a guiding framework for building positive futures for children; assesses risk and protective factors; matches risk and protection profiles with tested, effective programs; and promotes positive youth development by reducing risk and enhancing protection. The CTC Social Development Strategy helps communities assess and prioritize certain risk factors in communities and utilize effective programs to address those needs.

PCCD’s nationally recognized Resource Center for Evidence-based Prevention and Intervention Programs and Practices was created to support high quality and effective juvenile justice intervention and delinquency prevention programs in Pennsylvania. The ongoing work of the Resource Center is a collaborative effort with the Departments of Human Services, Drug and Alcohol Programs, Education, the Juvenile Court Judges’ Commission, the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers and other stakeholders. The Resource Center has three main focus areas:

- Supporting evidence based programs
- Incorporating research-based principles and practices into existing local juvenile justice programs; and
- Supporting community planning and implementation of effective programs.

Collecting and analyzing data is an important part of identifying problem areas to address. PCCD conducts a biennial survey of school students in the 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th grades to learn about their behavior, attitudes and

knowledge concerning alcohol, tobacco, other drugs and violence. The Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) is sponsored and conducted in the fall of odd-numbered years by PCCD. The data gathered in the PAYS serve two primary needs. First, the results provide school administrators, state agency directors, legislators and others with critical information concerning the changes in patterns of use and abuse of harmful substances and behaviors. Second, the survey assesses risk factors that are related to these behaviors and the protective factors that help guard against them. This information allows community leaders to direct prevention resources to areas where they are likely to have the greatest impact.

The 2015 PAYS was funded by PCCD, DDAP and PDE and this funding enabled the PAYS to be offered at no charge to any school or district. There are currently 351 schools districts participating.

PCCD, in partnership with the Department of Human Services supports the Penn State University's EPISCenter (Evidenced Based Prevention and Intervention Support Center) to provide ongoing technical assistance and support jurisdictions around the state to implement evidence-based prevention and intervention programs.

PCCD has had a long and successful partnership with the Prevention Research Center at Penn State University. Dr. Stephanie Bradley, the Managing Director of the EPISCenter is here today to provide more details on the work of the EPISCenter. The EPISCenter has developed the capacity to estimate the significant return-on-investment of PCCD's evidence-based prevention initiative, based upon the highly regarded approach of the Washington State

Institute for Public Policy. The goal is to focus on programs that give us the best confidence in achieving better statewide outcomes coupled with a more efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

Annually, PCCD provides funding opportunities to support evidence-based programming for children and families.

In addition, the Commonwealth continues to aggressively pursue implementation of the Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy (or JJSES for short). JJSES is a commitment to working in partnership to enhance the capacity of our system to achieve its balanced and restorative justice mission by:

- Employing evidence-based practices, with fidelity at every stage of the juvenile justice process;
- Collecting and analyzing data necessary to measure the results of these efforts; and, with this knowledge,
- Striving to continuously improve the quality of our decisions, services and programs.

The Juvenile Court Judges' Commission is coordinating the implementation of the JJSES with the assistance of the JJSES Leadership Team, comprised of leaders from the Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers, PCCD and staff from the JCJC.

Essential to the underlying philosophy of JJSES is the concept that juvenile justice interventions and programs are considered effective when they reduce a juvenile's risk to reoffend, and that the application of evidence-based practices will enhance public safety.

Equally important as the tenets of the JJSES are the concepts of fundamental fairness and structured decision making as a tool to help system professionals make consistent, appropriate, effective, and fundamentally fair decisions. The Pennsylvania juvenile justice system now uses the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) risk assessment instrument. It is a valid and reliable instrument that assesses risk for recidivism by measuring 42 risk/need factors within the following eight domains:

- Prior and current offenses
- Attitudes and Orientation
- Personality/behavior
- Peer relations
- Family circumstances/parenting
- Education/employment
- Substance abuse
- Leisure/recreation

The YLS is critical in helping develop recommendations to the court based on the YLS results, including the identified risk and needs of each juvenile; and the development and implementation of the case plan based on the YLS results which targets services to meet the risk and needs of each juvenile.

The availability of YLS scores, as a result of our system enhancement strategy, is becoming increasingly important to judges in crafting, implementing and monitoring dispositions in juvenile delinquency cases, and in complying with both statutory and procedural rule mandates.

The development of statewide and county-specific baseline recidivism rates is a particularly noteworthy accomplishment. Pennsylvania is one of the few states with the capacity to develop information of this type. For the purposes of this research, recidivism is defined as a subsequent adjudication of delinquency or conviction in criminal court for a misdemeanor or felony offense within two years of case closure.

The 18% recidivism rate for cases closed in 2011 represents an 18% reduction from the four-year average recidivism rate of 22% for cases closed in 2007 through 2010. This dramatic reduction in the statewide rate for cases closed in 2011 is especially significant because 2011 is the first year that the implementation of evidence-based practices through the JJSES could reasonably have been expected to have had an impact.

In order to improve services to youth in the juvenile justice system, we are piloting the Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP for short). SPEP is validated, data driven rating scheme for determining how well an existing program matches research evidence for the effectiveness of that particular type of intervention for reducing the recidivism of juvenile offenders.

The SPEP process includes provider interviews and the review of data from the JCJC's PaJCMS database, which has been used to identify statewide utilization rates of delinquency service providers. Probation officers and service providers jointly contribute to the SPEP assessment process and work with SPEP consultants at the EPISCenter to create and implement Performance Improvement Plans. Cooperation throughout this process has deepened system-wide understanding of provider programs and services. As

a result, judges and probation officers can more easily refer “the right kids, to the right programs, for the right amount of time.”

Another important initiative is the Pennsylvania Academic, Career and Technical Training (PACTT, for short) initiative. PACTT is an interagency initiative designed to further develop job readiness, academic, and employability skills for system-involved youth. The PACTT standards are built on the Balanced and Restorative Justice principle of offender competency development. PACTT provider affiliates focus on providing youth with training that will qualify them for jobs in areas of industry growth, and that will lead to careers with sustainable wages. This work begins while youth are in placement and continues once they return to their communities.

The main areas of focus of the PACTT initiative:

- **Curriculum Alignment with Pennsylvania Academic and Core Standards**
- **Career and Technical Education Training Programs Aligned to Industry Standards**
- **Job Readiness and Employability Skills**
- **Interagency Coordination and Transitional Services**
- **Data Driven Decision Making**
- **Use of Current Technology**

Recent trends regarding juvenile violent crime arrest rates, juvenile delinquency dispositions, juvenile delinquency placements, and juvenile detention center admissions all serve to confirm the efficacy of the evidence-based practices that now form the foundation of Pennsylvania’s juvenile justice system.

One of our emerging priorities is increasing the role of PCCD in coordinating and implementing a comprehensive delinquency and violence prevention strategy for the Commonwealth. One of our major goals is to make communities safe through collaboration and targeted investments by:

- Increasing the efficacy of state and local planning efforts through interagency planning and collaboration.
- Providing law enforcement with the appropriate tools and training to assist them in combating and preventing crime.
- Promoting and supporting the use of evidence-based programs and practices, and
- Promoting the implementation of reentry programs and practices.

Moving forward, PCCD will be working collaboratively with our state and local partners to continue to improve the coordination of delinquency and violence prevention-related initiatives across the Commonwealth as well as continued implementation of the JJSES.

PCCD will continue to promote comprehensive research-based initiatives to assist communities and community-based organizations in reducing risk to and promoting positive youth development of children and in preventing juvenile delinquency and youth violence.

PCCD is committed to investing in proven effective programs to address violence, delinquency and other problem behaviors. As I mentioned before, PCCD has also invested in a statewide infrastructure through the EPISCenter to provide training and technical assistance to communities and practitioners. Dr. Stephanie Bradley will further explain the work of the EPISCenter shortly.

Some of the specific funding streams that are available annually to support local initiatives include: state Violence Prevention Funds, state Substance Abuse Education and Demand Reduction funds, federal Title II Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention funds and federal Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) funds. Currently, the federal JAG funding announcement is open and up to \$5.4 million is available to support the following objectives:

- Increase the efficacy of state and local planning efforts through interagency collaboration;
- Provide law enforcement with the appropriate tools and training to assist them in combating and preventing crime;
- Develop solutions for justice-involved individuals with mental illness and/or substance abuse and co-occurring disorders;
- Promote and support evidence-based programs and practices;
- Promote the appropriate use and measure the effectiveness of promising approaches and dispositional alternatives;
- Promote the implementation of reentry programs and practices;
- Engage schools, communities and families in violence prevention and increase the support services provided to those who have been victims of violence;
- Improve the accuracy and reliability of state and local criminal justice data through the automated exchanged of information; and
- Increase the overall knowledge and skills among victim service, criminal and juvenile justice practitioners through training and accreditation.

Applications are due June 24 and eligible applicants are local units of government and private non-profit organizations. PCCD expects to fund 25 to 30 grants.

Maximum awards of \$150,000 are available for the initial year one project period. Successful applicants will be eligible to re-apply for second year awards at 70% of their year one award. Receipt of year one funding does not guarantee that an applicant will receive year two funding. To secure a year two award, applicants must demonstrate project impact and/or implementation progress, and will be directed to a specially designed application format in the PCCD Egrants System to guide them through what is required to gain second year funding.

Thank you for the opportunity to present today and I look forward to our partnership moving forward.