

Chapter 13: New Horizons for Juvenile Justice in Illinois **Where do we go from here?**

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“Through the 2000 Illinois Probation Outcome Study a great deal was learned about the needs of Illinois’ juvenile probation population, the capacity of the system to address these needs, and the many benefits that a sentence to probation can offer to the offender and the community. There are also a number of practice and policy questions, however, which these data give rise to.

- One clear area where there could be improvement is in the identification of probationer substance abuse problems, and, where appropriate, orders to participate in treatment programs. For a relatively large proportion of probationers the extent and nature of the offender’s substance abuse problem was unknown to the probation officer. Further, even among those identified as substance abusers at the point of probation intake, not all were ordered or referred to treatment. Analyses of the data clearly reveals the potential impact treatment can have on reoffending: those with substance abuse problems who did not complete treatment were much more likely to get rearrested while on probation as those who completed treatment.
- Another issue, which has been identified previously by practitioners, and was documented in this study, is the lack of accurate and complete information about juvenile offenders in Illinois. Only one-half of juvenile probationers in Illinois have a pre-sentence investigation completed that could assist the courts in making more informed decisions regarding the conditions of probation sentences. Thus, it appears that orders to treatment, payment of financial conditions, and other conditions of probation are often only based upon what is readily available or offered at sentencing by the defense or prosecutor, which is usually limited to criminal history and the current charge. Although probation officers collect a great deal of information from the probationer during their intake interview, including questions about drug use, verification of education, etc., this is done after the sentence to probation and ordering of conditions by the court.

Thus, the results from the 2000 Juvenile Probation Outcome Study give Illinois’ juvenile justice practitioners and policy makers a lot to consider. Illinois’ probation system is working with a population that has considerable risk factors, ranging from low-educational achievement, substance abuse problems, and prior involvement in the system. Importantly, this population has continued to increase during the 1990s. Despite this, probation officers throughout the state are handling their multifaceted responsibilities, including monitoring and working with juvenile offenders, monitoring their progress in treatment programs, ensuring payment of financial conditions and adherence to other conditions of the probation sentence, with high levels of success. “Adams, Olson, and Adkins (2002).

“As the 1990s moved into the 21st century, several new juvenile justice reform efforts took shape in Illinois... Several focused efforts were launched, including community-based restorative justice programs in Chicago, an overhaul of clinical services at the Cook County Juvenile Court, cultural sensitivity training for juvenile court professionals, monitoring and inspection of juvenile correctional facilities, community services capacity building, improving legal services for youth, and statewide youth advocacy initiatives centering on automatic transfers of youth to adult court, over-reliance on youth incarceration, and several other juvenile justice policy concerns...

Other related developments bolstered the consistency and intensity of these efforts,

producing an effective synergy for reform in Illinois. Many of the individuals promoting these reforms, representing advocacy groups and policymakers, collaborated on a document that outlined the principles of juvenile justice that they felt should guide all reform efforts... The reforms summarized here represent significant and sustained juvenile justice reform efforts in Illinois since the mid-to late 1990s. They produce tangible results, and they are spawning other noteworthy juvenile justice reforms. Still, the work is not complete... Illinois juvenile justice reformers will watch with fingers crossed as the new Department of Juvenile Justice opens its doors and begins an arduous implementation phase, guided by a Citizens Advisory Board charged with an evaluation and oversight role. " (Coldren, n.d.)

One example of the noteworthy juvenile justice reforms in Illinois is the Fiscal Year 2007 Budget which included the following monies for juvenile justice related programs:

- "\$126 million for the new Department of Juvenile Justice;
- \$2.295 million for Redeploy Illinois -an increase of \$795,000 over current funding;
- \$12 million increase for After School programs through the State Board of Education;
- \$1.5m for Juvenile Meth pilot program at Franklin County Juvenile Detention Center;
- \$5 million for children's mental health services based on recommendations from the Children's Mental Health Partnership;
- \$150,000 for the Long-Term Prisoners Study Committee (Rep. Turner's House Joint Resolution 80);
- \$50,000 lump sum for a grant to the South Suburban Disproportionate Minority Confinement Foundation for costs associated with a study regarding DMC; and,
- Language in the DCFS budget that provides authorization of \$5 million "For all expenditures related to the collection and distribution of Title IV-E reimbursements for counties included in the Title IV-E Juvenile Justice Pilot Program to be implemented in one county in each of the DCFS regions of Cook, Northern, Central, and Southern in accordance with an intergovernmental agreement to be developed with each pilot county." (Reynolds, 2006).

Uniformity of juvenile law has yet to be achieved. Many citizens still adopt an out-of-sight, out-of-mind attitude toward youths with problems, and both citizens and practitioners are often frustrated by our supposed failure to curb delinquency and abuse or neglect in spite of the millions of dollars invested in the enterprise. We continue to refuse to address the larger societal issues of race, class, and gender as they relate to crime and delinquency.

We have discussed in varying detail the philosophies of the juvenile justice network, the procedural requirements of that network, and some of the major problems with the network as it now operates. We have seen that the juvenile justice system is subject to numerous stresses and strains from within, and without change, trial and error, and good intentions with sometimes less than desirable results characterize the system (see Chapter 13).

The initial underlying assumption of the juvenile justice network is that juveniles with problems should be treated and/or educated rather than punished. Adult and juvenile justice networks in the United States were separated because of the belief that courts should act in the best interests of juveniles and because of the belief that association with adult offenders would increase the possibility that juveniles would become involved in criminal careers. The extent to which we have achieved the goals of the juvenile justice network continues to be debated.

Where do we go from here? There appear to be four more or less distinct possibilities for the future of the juvenile justice network. Possibility number one is that the juvenile justice network will cease to exist as a separate entity.

Possibility number two is that the juvenile system will begin in to rely heavily on hybrid sentencing with regard to violent youth. Possibility number three is that the restorative or balanced justice (see chapter 10) movement will triumph and we will return to a more caring, personal approach to juvenile justice. Possibility number four is that those favoring a get tough approach will be victorious and that the goals of the juvenile justice network will change dramatically. The juvenile court today is more focused on accountability and punishment than ever before. Thus possibility number four is that get tough or just deserts approach supporters will reform the juvenile justice system so that an increasing number of youths are dealt with in the adult justice network. Although many states have adopted this approach and are now operating in full swing with transfers to adult court, this philosophy is contradictory to the purpose of juvenile court. There is little argument that the current juvenile justice system is in turmoil requires reform. Confidence in the ability of the current system to control juvenile delinquency has eroded while fear and anxiety about youth crime have become increasingly widespread. There is a public perception that juvenile crimes are becoming more and more serious and that the juvenile justice system is sometimes too lenient on offenders. At the same time, the rate of juvenile violent crime arrests has consistently decreased since 1994. Get tough proponents have chosen not to publicize the decreased crime rates, but have focused on the upswing in juvenile violence over the past year.

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Review Questions

1. What are two problems identified by the 2000 Illinois Probation Outcome Study?
2. What are some of the changes that have occurred in the juvenile justice system in Cook County over the past decade?
3. What evidence, if any, is there of a collaborative effort on the part of agencies focusing on juvenile justice in Illinois?
4. Does the fiscal year budget for 2007 appear to address juvenile justice issues in a serious manner? Why or why not?
5. What are some of the major issues in juvenile justice in Illinois that still need to be addressed as we move toward the end of the first decade of the 21st century?