The King County (Washington) Systems Integration Initiative: A First Look at the Kent District Dual System Youth Pilot Program

By Gene Siegel

ABSTRACT

King County is one of five counties in Washington State participating in the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation’s Models for Change juvenile justice reform initiative. One key aspect of King County’s Models for Change participation involves ongoing “systems integration” work intended to improve how youth who have cross-over involvement in multiple systems—e.g., juvenile justice, child welfare, education, mental health, and/or others—are handled. These cross-over cases often present a range of challenges to juvenile courts including substantial risk factors that increase their likelihood of continuing system involvement. This article provides a first look at an emerging pilot project in King County that is intended to improve how cross-over cases are handled by child welfare and juvenile probation with the longer term goal of improving outcomes for these difficult cases.

This paper focuses on the Kent District’s Dual System Youth Pilot Program, an early component of the King County Systems Integration Initiative in Washington State. This work has been substantially enhanced by support from the MacArthur Foundation’s Models for Change juvenile justice reform initiative. In brief, the goal of the King County System’s Integration Initiative is to increase and improve access to effective programs and services that can serve as alternatives to formal processing in the juvenile justice system, including access by youth needing mental health, substance abuse and educational

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Gene Siegel has been a staff researcher and consultant at the National Center for Juvenile Justice since 1997. He provides field research and technical assistance to juvenile courts, child welfare, and juvenile justice agencies throughout the country. Correspondence: ncjj@ncjj.org

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services, dual jurisdiction youth, and minor/low risk offenders. As discussed here, the Kent District pilot program has been carefully designed to improve cross-system case assessment, case planning, and case management for dually-involved youth. This paper will provide an initial snapshot of the pilot program and its important early stage accomplishments.

BACKGROUND

A growing body of research continues to show that juveniles involved in multiple systems, including the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, present an extraordinary range of challenges. Typically, when compared to similar juveniles who do not have multi-system involvement, these challenges manifest in a range of adverse outcomes that have serious negative consequences for the future of these children. Some of these include:

- Overall higher recidivism rates for multi-system youth;
- Dramatically higher recidivism rates for first-time referred female juveniles, in stark contrast to the general population of first-time offenders in which boys are considerably more likely to recidivate than girls;
- Earlier onset of delinquent behavior;
- Substantially higher out-of-home placement rates, including more detention stays, and frequent placement changes; and
- Poor permanency outcomes.

In the face of these and other challenges, the King County Juvenile Court launched its “Systems Integration Initiative” in 2003 to promote improved cross-system handling of these complex and difficult cases. The King County Systems Integration Initiative, or KC-SII, is a collaboration of State and local community agencies and organizations that have come together to examine and improve coordinated program development, policy development, and assessment and case management for children, youth, and families served by the child welfare and juvenile justice systems as well as other youth-serving entities (e.g., the education system and behavioral/mental health providers).

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1 Throughout this paper, unless otherwise specified, reference to “cross-over,” “dually-involved,” “dual system,” “dual jurisdiction,” and/or “multi-system” youth refers to youth with co-occurring involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.


3 The Arizona Dual Jurisdiction Study, conducted by the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ), found comparable re-offending rates for boys and girls who experienced dual system (dependency/delinquency) involvement in that state. This stands in marked contrast to long-standing gender differences in re-offending or recidivism rates, with such rates typically being substantially higher for male juveniles compared to female juveniles. Go to http://www.cwla.org/programs/juvenilejustice/AZExecSummary.pdf
There have been many important accomplishments achieved through the KC-SII. Some of the more notable accomplishments include:

- The development of information sharing agreements and protocols;
- The specification of technological functionalities needed to facilitate the sharing of data and information on multi-system cases;
- The completion of an assessment of the local mental health services continuum;
- The design of a pilot school dropout retrieval and retention program; and
- The development of cross-training and joint policy/procedural protocols to facilitate cross-system casework.

The Kent District of King County was selected as the first pilot program site for a number of reasons. First, a preliminary analysis of case data revealed there were more than 200 cases with at least some form of cross-system contact in that region. Second, the enthusiasm and interest expressed by probation supervisors and DCFS units in that area were considered critical to successful implementation. It should also be noted that King County has had a very successful Model Dependency Court in place since 2006.

Over the course of the first four years of the project, the King County Juvenile Court and the Washington State Children’s Administration, Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS is the division that oversees child welfare services in Washington) have collaborated with a range of key local partners and stakeholders to formulate multi-agency protocols and strategies to enhance dual system (i.e., child welfare and juvenile justice) case management practices and outcomes. Three other key partners—the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University, and the Casey Family Foundation—have also provided critical technical assistance to the KC-SII.

These protocols served as key points for the development of training, new levels of cross-system working relationships, and the ability to identify many of the specific plans and critical tasks emerging from implementation of the protocols. However, it is fair to say that the “protocol aspect” of KC-SII work is still being developed and implemented, as the project moves forward.

As a result of this hard work and extraordinary cooperation, King County recently initiated the Kent District pilot program, a program that has been carefully designed to improve cross-system case assessment, case planning, and case management for dually-involved youth.

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4 This preliminary analysis was conducted by the two unit supervisors and included youth with any type of dual system involvement, not just youth who had formal involvement in the dependency and offender systems. Subsequently, eligibility for the pilot project was limited to youth who do have formal cross-system involvement (i.e., adjudicated for both dependency and offender matters).

5 CWLA and the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform are members of the MacArthur Foundation’s National Resource Bank (NRB), a group of national experts that provide technical assistance to sites participating in the Models for Change juvenile justice systems reform initiative. For more information on Models for Change, go to http://www.modelsforchange.net
HOW MANY CROSS-SYSTEM CASES ARE THERE IN KING COUNTY?

Previous research on cross-system or dual jurisdiction youth has shown that determining the precise number of such cases can be a formidable task. In brief, depending upon how one defines “cross-over” or “dual system” cases, the frequency may range from perhaps 10% of all adjudicated cases to much higher frequencies that expand counts to include any type of dual system involvement (i.e., not just formal adjudication). In King County, the target population for the pilot program involves youth who have been adjudicated in both the dependency and offender components of the juvenile court system. However, one of the interesting aspects of the King County effort is that while there have been some estimates of the prevalence of dual system or multi-system cases, there has not been a thorough county-wide analysis in this regard.

PRELIMINARY EXAMPLES OF “BASELINE DATA” FOR THE KENT DISTRICT PILOT PROGRAM

Tables 1 and 2 reflect possible “baseline” data for cases being considered for the Kent District Pilot Project. The numbers presented reflect one-day point-in-time “snapshot” counts for December 31, 2008. The differences in counts between the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice baseline data tables reflect a number of factors. These include different numbers of cases being screened for possible inclusion in the pilot program by each agency, as well as different types of baseline data being tracked by each agency. As the KC-SII and the Kent District pilot program move forward, it is likely that this preliminary listing will be modified. King County is also tracking these data by age.

Note: Data that are planned for tracking but not yet available are indicated in the following data tables with [. . .].

When these preliminary data snapshots were taken on December 31, 2008, there were eight youth who had been initially screened for the pilot and who met the traditional definition of “cross-over,” three of whom were males and three identified as African American. Three of the youth had been detained in a pre-adjudication detention facility at the time of the arrest, and all of these youth were African American. All eight had been petitioned to delinquency court and all were sent home on probation, even though each of the eight youth had an active abuse/neglect case at the time of their referral to delinquency court. Among them, two of the three White youth and the only Latino youth were still living at home, one of the three African-American youth was in foster care, and the remaining youth were in kinship or congregate care. The permanency goals for these youth did not include remaining at home, although four had permanency goals of reunification, and three of the four were male.

6 A one-day “snapshot” count of cross-system cases, taken on December 31, 2008, indicated there were eight cases on that date that met the target population criteria in the Kent District. Source: Overall Measures Template (dated 1/06/09) provided by the King County Systems Integration Initiative Project Coordinator.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>Child Welfare System Baseline Data (12/31/2008)</th>
<th>Total #</th>
<th># Males</th>
<th>Afr Am</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Cauc</th>
<th>Native</th>
<th>Other</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Referrals/Cases (i.e., referrals accepted for assessment)</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>2. Type of Placement/Current Living Situation</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. No Out-of-Home Placements (Home)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>b. Kinship/Relative</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>c. Foster Care</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Congregate Care</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>e. Other</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>3. Permanency Goals</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>b. Reunification</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>c. Adoption</td>
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<td>e. Permanent Planned Living Arrangements</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>TABLE 2</th>
<th>Juvenile Justice System Baseline Data (12/31/2008)</th>
<th>Total #</th>
<th># Males</th>
<th>Afr Am</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Cauc</th>
<th>Native</th>
<th>Other</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Referrals/Arrests/Complaints</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Pre-Adjudication Detention</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>...</td>
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<td>3. Diversion/Informal Adjustments</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>240</td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>4. Petition to Court</td>
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<td>144</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>5. Type of Disposition</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Dismissed</td>
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<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Home on Probation</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Congregate Care</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. Correctional Alternative-County</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>f. Correctional Institution-State</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>g. Other</td>
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</table>
To get a more complete picture of these cross-over cases over time, a complementary piece of work also funded through the *Models for Change* initiative has begun, the “King County Multi-system Youth Prevalence Study.” NCJJ is currently working on this study, which will examine a range of key case characteristics of multi-system involved youth in King County. It is envisioned that this study will result in:

- The development of a baseline summary that profiles critical case characteristics of dual-system youth who come into contact with the juvenile court (i.e., on an offender, Becca, and/or dependency matter) and provide some reliable estimates of the size of this population for designated time periods.
- Support for the development of specific coordinated intervention strategies with various sub-populations of dual-system youth based on base characteristics highlighted in the baseline profile summaries.
- The ability to examine (at least, preliminarily) the degree to which these interventions are having an impact on case outcomes and to provide the empirical basis for more rigorous future evaluations.
- A local template for how to conduct future research of this type on an ongoing basis and to engage the local expertise needed to provide such research support without future outside consultation.

**MOVING KING COUNTY’S SYSTEMS INTEGRATION INITIATIVE FROM PLANNING TO ACTION**

King County stakeholders, including the KC-SII Executive Steering Committee and others, have moved from the important strategic planning stages to implementing systems change on the ground. In 2008, local stakeholders decided to focus their project on the following key aspects to improve the handling of cross-system cases:

1. Case assessment
2. Case planning
3. Case management

As discussed in this paper, by establishing an initial pilot program in the Kent District of King County (an area of the county that has a substantial number of dually-involved youth), local stakeholders are beginning to track the impact of changes in these three key realms. Not surprisingly, development and initiation of the pilot program has taken some time to get off the ground but, as the following sections delineate, King County and its partners have been intentionally deliberative and thoughtful in structuring this systems change approach.

7 Becca cases generally refer to status offender cases, specifically with regard to truancy, and fall under the Becca Bill, passed in the mid 1990s. The law is named for “Rebecca,” a 13-year-old female runaway who was found murdered in a Spokane park after her parents futilely asked for help from the juvenile court to manage their troubled daughter, but were told the court had no jurisdiction to intervene unless Rebecca had committed a crime.
The Breakthrough Series Collaborative: A Framework for Change

One of the most important decisions made in King County involved the adoption of a proven framework for implementing changes in policies and practices. Specifically, the KC-SII decided to adopt the “Breakthrough Series Collaborative” or BSC model as its system change approach. The BSC approach, first developed in the health care field, has been successfully adapted and applied by Casey Family Programs in a number of its internal program improvement efforts. Georgetown University’s Center for Juvenile Justice Reform has worked with King County stakeholders, CWLA, and Casey Family Programs to further adapt the BSC so that it can meet the unique challenges and complexities associated with dual system realities.

Establishing a “Core Team” to Prioritize and Implement Changes

Within the BSC framework, King County established a “core team” that has been able to move the project from the planning phases to the concrete action stages. Members of this core team include a juvenile court judge, the juvenile court administrator, a probation supervisor from the juvenile court’s probation unit, a supervisor from a DCFS unit, a parent and child who had prior multi-system involvement, a youth services (service provider) representative, as well as one probation officer and one social worker. In addition to the core team, local stakeholders also created an “extended team” made up of local law enforcement officials, social service providers, and other parents and children who have provided feedback on the pilot program before and after its implementation.

Identifying Key “Change Package Components”

To further clarify areas of policies and practices that would be the subjects of systems change efforts in the Kent District, the BSC approach helped local officials identify six broad “Change Package Components.”

The six Change Package Components are, in effect, performance indicators that reflect improved or promising practices and processes. These components offer a common frame of reference for program planners and have helped local stakeholders implement the pilot effort.

The six Change Package Components, and examples of related subcomponents (performance indicators/measures)\(^8\) that will be tracked over time, include:

1. Measurable systems of agency/interagency accountability
   - Building a shared set of beliefs across all partner agencies that supports joint responsibility for cross-over cases; and

\(^8\) There are additional subcomponents, but a limited number of examples are provided here for brevity’s sake.
• Establishing processes in the court to ensure that judges will be aware of cross-system involvement and that the court will calendar these cases appropriately.

2. **Active engagement of family and youth in planning and decision-making**
   • Ensuring that children/youth are actively/authentically engaged in the design and evaluation of the project;
   • Making sure that clear information about agency and family roles/responsibilities is shared openly and agreed upon during cross-system team processes;
   • Taking special efforts to advise all dually-involved children/families of their rights and intentionally preparing them to participate in assessment, case planning, court proceedings, etc.

3. **Integrated systems of information compilation and sharing**
   • Creating an integrated information system that can identify and track children involved in multiple systems;
   • Establishing processes that will actively “mine data” and that will assist staff in identifying unique characteristics of these cases; and
   • Providing regular cross-training for staff.

4. **Shared approach to identification, assessment, and case plan development within and across systems**
   • Initiating a practice model that addresses early identification of cross-over youth;
   • Developing a unified assessment approach between child welfare and juvenile probation; and
   • Implementing coordinated case planning and joint case plan reviews.

5. **Shared case management, decision-making, and community service utilization**
   • Implementing sound clinical practices that result in optimal child and community safety;
   • Maximizing the use of evidence-based practices;
   • Making sure that case decisions are open, transparent, and grounded in integrated assessment tools; and
   • Utilizing specific interventions that are likely to reduce detention bias for children in foster care.

6. **Effective use of blended resources**
   • Establishing interagency agreements that guide the pooling of funding to serve cross-over youth; and
   • Identifying services, service providers, and funding sources that cross both systems.

In effect, the Change Package Components offer broad reference points from which local stakeholders may further clarify key indicators of systems change and implement more specific actions on the ground.
Plan-Do-Study-Act

The BSC approach is intended to foster quick and productive changes in practices while eliminating obstacles to such changes. The approach involves four relatively simple stages commonly referred to as the PDSA process—the acronym referring to “Plan Do Study Act.” As shown in this section, the core team has used these four stages to address the multitude of challenges associated with translating policies and practices into real substantive action.

Over the course of a series of weekly meetings, the core team used the PDSA process to identify targeted areas for systems change and the specific steps necessary to launch improvements in those areas. The PDSAs initially identified by the core team included:

- Provide detention staffers with a list of DCFS social workers and their contact information in order to decrease the time taken to notify assigned workers when a dual system youth is detained.
- Establish a safe process that allows dual system youth to be released from detention and transported to the appropriate DCFS unit (this component is limited to youth who are assessed as “low” runaway risks).
- Hold joint probation/DCFS unit meetings to promote probation officer and social worker interaction and exchanges of ideas.
- Hold regular community planning meetings to ensure that the area or region selected for a local systems integration project have input in its design, implementation, and evaluation. This included the engagement of local service providers in an effort to expedite treatment planning.
- Increase and sustain parent and youth involvement in both the core team and extended team.
- Attempt to create a “system educator” position. Ideally, the person filling this role would be someone (e.g., a parent) who has had direct experience with multi-system involvement. The system educator would be responsible for helping families and youth understand the oft-confusing paths associated with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Overall, the goal of the PDSA process is to eliminate or reduce barriers that get in the way of making prompt system changes, changes that, it is hoped, will improve outcomes for multi-system youth. The process offers a simple method for moving things forward, albeit in one pilot site initially, and it uses a “from-the-bottom-up” approach (i.e., local social workers and probation officers, working with the core teams, were instrumental in identifying the PDSAs) that can be incubated in one site and then spread to others.
Breakthrough Series Collaborative PDSA Form  
Enabling More Timely DCFS Detention Visitation

**Change Package Component:** Measures Child Well-Being—Number of institutional placements (i.e., residential care, group care, detention) of cross-over youth.

**Barrier to Practice:** DCFS social workers are required to request permission of the probation department to visit youth in detention. Once approved, the probation department must contact the detention supervisor on duty, requesting the DCFS social worker be approved to visit. The barrier is that, many times, probation is unavailable to respond to the request immediately. This may prolong detention stays, as DCFS is unable to promptly access youth to assess needs and to develop appropriate placement options.

**Strategy to Overcome the Barrier:** Allow DCFS social workers to visit youth in detention without requesting advanced permission from probation.

**Small Test of Change:** After change in policy, Kent DCFS social workers will be allowed to promptly visit youth in detention without prior permission.

**INDIVIDUAL TESTS**

**Plan:** *What* are we going to do?

1) Request Detention Administration to override policy and to allow Kent DCFS social workers to visit youth in detention without prior permission.
2) Provide list of Kent DCFS social workers to detention.
3) Inform Kent DCFS and probation of new policy.

*Who* will do it? Kelli Lauritzen (Juvenile Probation Unit Supervisor)

*When* will it be done? By 12/31/08

*Hypotheses* (what do you expect will happen)? Allowing DCFS social workers to meet with youth immediately will improve case planning. This will lead to earlier placement planning and less detention time.

**Do:** When will it be completed? 1/31/09

**Study:** Did what you expect to happen, actually happen? Yes, policy has been implemented.

**Act/Adjust:** What learning will you apply to your next test cycle?

*Create* a new small test of change based on what you have learned from this test. Can the new test be larger or spread? This step has been initiated. Detention stays are being tracked for all applicable cross-system cases.
This PDSA approach hinges on the belief that you immerse key decision makers, direct care practitioners, and stakeholders in a process that allows for prompt changes and that you give these key persons the tools they need to make those changes happen.

A Few Ways the PDSA Approach has been Implemented in King County

As shown, the PDSA approach provides a consistent framework for implementing timely system change that can affect how individual cross-system cases are handled. The PDSA form provides a standard planning format that requires stakeholders to clarify barriers to change, to identify strategies to overcome those barriers, to offer a small test of whether meaningful change actually occurs, followed by individual PDSA “tests” that require specific follow-up actions.

Example: Removing Barriers to DCFS Social Worker Detention Visits

As noted, cross-system youth tend to be detained more frequently and tend to experience longer detention stays than single system cases. Through the PDSA change process, King County officials quickly established a change in a long-standing policy that had inhibited timely involvement of DCFS social workers when cross-system youth were detained.  

Through this change in policy, it is hoped that the length of time that dual system youth stay in detention will be significantly decreased by enabling assigned social workers to have prompt access to detention, and by enabling workers to take steps to move children to more appropriate settings. The PDSA form as illustrated in this paper offers an overview of the steps taken to implement this change.

This policy alteration is in its early stages and there are segments of the plan (e.g., the Study phase and the Act/Adjust phase) that are only now being addressed. Again, one key aspect of the PDSA approach is that it is a continual process that builds on itself with each change being continually tracked to assess its impact and to determine if subsequent modifications are needed. To minimize these inconsistencies, the professionals in King County have initiated a simple change that should lead to better communication across agencies. Specifically, the two agencies have agreed to hold joint DCFS/juvenile probation meetings. These began in September 2008, and all social workers and probation officers in the two pilot site units are required to attend these meetings.

9 The reasons behind such long-standing policies are complex but ultimately stem from the traditional barriers (communicative, professional, and otherwise) that have impeded cross-agency cooperation and coordination.

10 It should also be noted that King County is not the first jurisdiction to implement policy changes intended to reduce detention stays for dual system youth. For example, see G. Siegel and R. Lord, *When Systems Collide: Improving Court Practices and Programs in Dual Jurisdiction Cases*—available at http://www.ncjrs.gov/pic/NCP/NCJWebsite/pdf/dualjurisdiction.pdf. Also go to http://cjjr.georgetown.edu/pdfs/Winter09_CrossoverPartII.pdf for more recent summaries of cross-system innovations. However, what does distinguish the King County reform effort is the manner in which they have adapted and implemented the BSC and PDSA systems change models to launch changes in a number of key policy and practice areas.
Breakthrough Series Collaborative PDSA Form
DCFS/Juvenile Probation Joint Meetings

Change Package Component: Measure of Workers Understanding and Ability to do Cross-System Assessment and Case Planning Work—Number of workers who report access to cross-agency client and case data, and number of workers who report knowing the identity of and how to contact their counterparts working with the same family.

Barrier to Practice: DCFS social workers and juvenile probation lack understanding of each agency’s policies and procedures and the limitations of each system. This lack of knowledge does not allow for effective working relationships or shared case planning, which in turn is not positive for youth. In addition, many workers and probation officers are not aware of who their counterparts are across systems.

Strategy to Overcome the Barrier: Provide a structure for professionals in each system to engage in regular face-to-face interactions with their counterparts, allowing professionals to become more familiar with both systems and the roles of their counterparts.

Small Test of Change: Provide an avenue for Kent DCFS and juvenile probation to meet to discuss each system, their services, and to develop effective working relationships.

INDIVIDUAL TESTS

Plan: What are we going to do? Set monthly Kent DCFS/juvenile probation meeting.

Who will do it? Jeanine Tacchini (DCFS Supervisor) and Kelli Lauritzen (Juvenile Probation Supervisor)

When will it be done? By 12/31/08 (implemented ahead of schedule, 9/08).

Hypotheses (what do you expect will happen)? Having joint unit meetings will enhance the understanding of each system and allow face-to-face interaction. This in turn will build better working relationships, which will improve cross-system case assessment, case planning, and case management.

Do: When will it be complete? 1/31/09 (joint meetings are now standard practice)

Study: Did what you expect to happen, actually happen? Yes. Regular meetings are occurring.

Act/Adjust: What learning will you apply to your next test cycle?

Create a new small test of change based on what you have learned from this test. Can the new test be larger or spread? Pending
A CASE EXAMPLE “BEFORE AND AFTER” LOOK AT HOW THINGS HAVE CHANGED

Rey (not his real name) is a 15-year-old white male who recently experienced simultaneous involvement in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. Rey’s history of involvement with the dependency side of the juvenile court began many years ago when his biological parents had their parental rights terminated. Rey was subsequently adopted at age 8. Over the ensuing years, Rey’s adoptive home became less stable and less safe as he grew into adolescence. This lack of stability is exemplified by Rey’s placement history which includes multiple out-of-home stays (at least eight placement changes that are documented) as DCFS attempted to address Rey’s serious mental health and behavioral problems that were compounded by serious family violence concerns.11

Unfortunately, over the past year or so Rey’s situation became even more tenuous as the incidents of family violence in his adoptive home escalated, particularly between Rey and his adoptive father. As a result, Rey has been unable to continue living with his adoptive parents and his permanent plan calls for him to be placed out-of-home so that he can continue in an appropriate school and, eventually, learn to live on his own.

Rey received his first delinquency referral to juvenile court in the fall of 2008 for a burglary offense. He pled guilty to this charge and was placed on probation. While in detention, Rey’s adoptive family refused to come and get him and indicated they would not accept him back home. As a result, juvenile intake contacted DCFS for placement assistance with this challenging case.

Below, we provide a “before and after” summary describing what, in all likelihood, would have happened to Rey at this stage if the KC-SII and the Kent District Pilot Program were not in place at the time of his secure confinement.

Rey’s case provides a sketch of how challenging it can be to achieve effective collaboration across two systems. Without the initial shared case planning evident in this matter, the juvenile justice system would likely have focused on Rey’s behavior related to his delinquency and perhaps not emphasized the serious safety risks that Rey faced in his adoptive home. But, by having DCFS and juvenile probation working together, Kent District officials made sure that this child’s safety was given due consideration, along with juvenile probation’s concern for the safety of the community and the need for accountability related to Rey’s burglary charge. At the same time, by working together, these professionals were able to keep Rey in his special school where he receives both academic instruction and mental health services.

Rey’s situation offers one example of how the Kent District has taken the PDSA planning components—shared case planning, detention visits, joint unit meetings, etc.—and actually put them into practice.

11 Many dual system youth experience frequent out-of-home placements. NCJJ’s research in Arizona, for example, found that dual jurisdiction youth averaged almost 11 placement changes during their involvement with the juvenile court system. Reducing placement changes and establishing some form of residential stability for these young people represent two important challenges for systems integration efforts across the country.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likely impact</th>
<th>Before the pilot program</th>
<th>After the pilot program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile Justice intake unaware of Rey's past involvement with DCFS, unsure who to call and what to do next with youth who presents multiple problems.</td>
<td>Juvenile Justice intake immediately determines Rey's prior DCFS involvement via direct access to DCFS computer system.</td>
<td>Juvenile Justice intake unaware of Rey's past involvement with DCFS, unsure who to call and what to do next with youth who presents multiple problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCFS declines to accept case and Juvenile Justice probation officer tries to do next with youth who presents multiple problems.</td>
<td>DCFS promptly agrees to conduct Family Assessment, pursuant to new KC-SII protocol; Rey released to shelter placement.</td>
<td>Juvenile Justice intake immediately determines Rey's prior DCFS involvement via direct access to DCFS computer system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detention releases Rey after the social worker working with Rey's adoption agency advises Rey to go to a voluntary shelter.</td>
<td>Juvenile Justice intake unaware of Rey's past involvement with DCFS, unsure who to call and what to do next with youth who presents multiple problems.</td>
<td>Juvenile Justice intake immediately determines Rey's prior DCFS involvement via direct access to DCFS computer system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rey runs away before a 2-week mentoring in a temporary shelter is completed for probation violation.</td>
<td>Rey goes to voluntary shelter but runs away before 2-week mentoring in a temporary shelter is completed for probation violation.</td>
<td>Rey runs away before a 2-week mentoring in a temporary shelter is completed for probation violation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rey ends up in detention again for probation violation, court hearing, court releases Rey to juvenile court, court releases Rey to Juvenile Justice probation officer.</td>
<td>Rey is released to temporary shelter; DCFS and juvenile probation promptly determine it is not safe for Rey to return home.</td>
<td>Rey is released to temporary shelter; DCFS and juvenile probation promptly determine it is not safe for Rey to return home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rey unable to handle mainstream school setting and becomes truant.</td>
<td>Juvenile Justice probation finds group home placement for Rey but it is not in Rey's home school district and forces Rey to change schools.</td>
<td>Rey unable to handle mainstream school setting and becomes truant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rey detained again for probation violation stemming from failure to attend school and running away.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rey continues to penetrate the juvenile justice system and is increasingly frustrated trying to find a placement for Rey.</td>
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</table>
This cooperative approach has also helped DCFS and juvenile probation become more familiar with each other’s system, an important development that can prevent cross-agency confusion and conflict, dynamics often associated with dual jurisdiction cases. One recent experience in the Kent District illustrates the misconceptions that juvenile justice and child welfare professionals often have of one another. In this particular instance, which occurred at a joint DCFS/juvenile probation meeting, a probation counselor indicated that he thought DCFS social workers could issue warrants on dependent children who run away from placement. When this misconception came to light, a DCFS social worker was asked to provide cross-training for juvenile probation counselors to clarify what social workers can and cannot do. This cross-training has eliminated these misunderstandings and has probably helped prevent interagency conflicts that were fairly common before the pilot program began.

**WHAT TYPES OF DATA AND OUTCOMES ARE BEING TRACKED AND BY WHOM?**

King County has been working very closely with CWLA and the Georgetown Center for Juvenile Justice Reform to ensure that appropriate data are being collected and tracked, particularly data relevant to *Models for Change*. These include a range of “kid level” data elements and outcome measures, as well as broader process measures tied to the Change Package Components discussed earlier.

The WSCCR and NCJJ will continue to work with the Juvenile Court and the Center for Children and Youth Justice (in addition to CWLA and the Georgetown University Center for Juvenile Justice Reform), to ensure that all relevant data are being compiled and analyzed. Again, one of the important aspects of the KC-SII is, ultimately, to provide a model for other sites to emulate as they attempt to tackle the unique challenges associated with multi-system cases.

**WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE PILOT PROGRAM?**

Any dual system case in the Kent area is considered eligible for the program. From October 2008 through October 1, 2009, the pilot program had provided case assessment and case management services for 21 dual system youth. An additional 20 juveniles who also had dual system involvement received services that were coordinated between the Kent Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice offices and units located in other areas of King County. The coordination of these additional cases reflects more recent expansion of the pilot program to include cases that may either reside outside the Kent region or that may be receiving services outside the district. Again, cross-over cases often present a range of serious challenges including histories of school failure, mental illness, substance abuse, serious child maltreatment, and other adverse childhood experiences.

Because of these problems and the difficulties that systems have traditionally faced in trying to address them, cross-system cases are much more likely to experience a range
of negative outcomes. Nevertheless, if King County can be successful in decreasing these young people’s re-offending rates, can decrease the frequency of placement changes these juveniles’ often experience (including detention stays and runaways), and can produce more positive outcomes for these children as they move out of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, the benefits will be far-reaching and substantial.

**HOW ARE THE KIDS AND FAMILIES FARING SO FAR?**

While it is too soon to determine if the pilot project is achieving the desired results, important progress is being made. The systemic changes and process improvements that are occurring between DCFS and juvenile probation are promising and should not be under-valued. It is evident that, on the ground level, DCFS social workers and juvenile probation officers in the Kent District are paying closer attention than ever to their dual system cases. They are coordinating case plans and communicating on a regular basis, they are meeting regularly to discuss mutual concerns as the pilot program moves forward, and they are trying to show that joint case management and cooperation can alter the negative pathways that too many cross-over youth experience.

King County will continue to carefully track a wide range of kid-based measures and outcomes and, over time, the court and its key partners will be able to evaluate the impact of the King County Systems Integration Initiative. NCJJ, in close consultation with WSCCR and the Lead Entity in Washington State, will continue to appropriately monitor the status of this important *Models for Change* effort.

**WHAT NEXT?**

Initial planning is under way to expand the pilot project to other sites in King County. Selection of the next site or sites will follow the same thoughtful process used to select the Kent region. Countywide data from the multi-system prevalence study should offer important insights and should help with selection of subsequent sites. The cross-agency dynamics found within specific DCFS and juvenile probation units, and unit leadership considerations, will also be keys in subsequent site selection.

King County will continue to work closely with CWLA and the Georgetown Center for Juvenile Justice Reform to ensure that the Breakthrough Series Collaborative approach is adhered to, that data collection and tracking of case outcomes are accurate and thorough, and that the levels of cooperation between DCFS and juvenile probation continue to progress to help improve the lives of dual system youth and their families.