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The Importance of Cross-System Collaboration for Dual Status Youth

Cece Sadek

Honors in the Discipline Senior Thesis

Social Work, Elizabethtown Coleege

May 1, 2022

Dual Status Youth (DSY), youth who receive supervision from both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, are more vulnerable than youth who are only involved in one of these child-serving systems. Dually-involved youth have more detrimental outcomes in exposure to trauma, homelessness, substance abuse, recidivism, health problems, and protective indicators (factors such as education, peer or family support, employment, and coping skills) than youth who are only involved in one system (Narendorf et al., 2020). It is more common for youth to initially be involved in child welfare and become a part of the juvenile justice system later than vice versa; only about 8% of youth from the juvenile justice system transition to child welfare (Kim et al., 2021).

A cross-system collaboration is pivotal to the success of these individuals because it would allow for better communication and engagement between the family and the systems as well as increase the services available to successfully overcome the barriers that DSY face (McMinn et al., 2021). The Lancaster County DSY Initiative will encourage collaboration between the two child-serving systems that would allow for better communication and datasharing, thus ensuring success for DSY. However, for it to be successful, employees and families must be aware of its existence and purpose.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

On average, there are over 400,000 children and youth in the foster care system each fiscal year with about 200,000 newly entering the system (Children's Bureau, 2021). Out of all these youth, DSY are upwards of 50 percent of that population (Thomas, 2015). Although the exact number of DSY is unknown due to the lack of system collaboration, statistics indicate that

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both girls and African American children are over-represented within this population (Casey Family Programs, 2018).

These youth report the highest Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) scores, compared to those with single or no system involvement, with a mean score of 5.6 out of 10 (Narendorf et al., 2020). An ACE score is a tally of traumatic experiences such as child maltreatment, parental mental illness, substance abuse, incarcerated parents, and interpersonal violence in the household. A higher ACE score is correlated to long-term physical and mental problems during adulthood including cancer, depressive disorders, anxiety, anorexia, substance abuse, and suicidal tendencies (Grusnick et al., 2020). Their past trauma can result in a defense mechanism that often involves violent behavior and high-risk survival tactics to protect themselves. Thus, these maltreated youth are 47% more likely to engage in delinquent behavior than youth from the general population (Haight et al., 2016). This is important to understand because it explains why DSY may behave the way they do which can help identify what kind of services the youth need to succeed.

Impacts of DSY

Being a Dual Status Youth has a range of short and long-term impacts including an increased risk of being homeless as young adults, higher rates of recidivism and mental health diagnoses, and lower rates of education attainment. Out of the 3.5 million Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness (YAEH) per year, one-third have previously been involved in the foster care system and nearly half of those reported being involved in the juvenile justice system (Narendorf et al., 2020). Research shows that YAEH who have no history with either child-serving system were less likely to experience childhood trauma or mental health diagnosis while

Dual Status Youth have the highest rates of both (Narendorf et al., 2020). This then leads to higher rates of criminal behavior, including use of illegal substances.

To survive on the streets, these young adults often engage in high-risk strategies such as trading sex, selling drugs, or other criminal acts that leave them at an even higher risk of getting involved with the criminal justice system. Studies show that 78% of all YAEH have been arrested at one point as they engage in criminal behavior to meet their basic needs for food, water, and shelter (Narendorf et al., 2020). These high-risk strategies also introduce them to the world of drugs and alcohol and can lead to substance abuse over time, with YAEH who were dually involved having the highest rate of substance abuse (Narendorf et al., 2020).

DSY are also at a higher risk of recidivism than youth who are only involved in the juvenile system (Hirsch et al., 2018). Due to lack of resources and the higher likelihood for DSY to "slip through the cracks," they often find themselves in the same situations to those that initially led them to be involved in the juvenile justice system. This is likely because numerous people and services are involved in the youth's case which may cause confusion and misunderstanding on what is being done to help them. One study found that 57% of DSY are charged with a second offense. This suggests that re-entry into the juvenile justice systems is highly likely for these youth, especially if they do not receive the services they need (Kim et al., 2021).

Dual Status Youth were found to have lower rates of protective factors than youth involved in only one system (Narendorf et al., 2020). If a child has a strong bond with their school, they are less likely to engage in delinquency and the chances for recidivism are decreased significantly (Hirsch et al., 2018). However, DSY are also at an increased risk of lower educational attainment. Other educational problems include poor attendance, increased

likelihood of expulsion and suspension, increased behavioral and academic problems, and higher drop-out rate (Hirsch et al., 2018). Only 60% of DSY receive their high school diploma or GED, significantly less than the 75% who have never been involved in either child-serving systems (Narendorf et al., 2020).

While there is a correlation between mental health diagnosis and being involved in a child-serving system, DSY are more likely to be diagnosed with a mental health disorder than those who are only involved in one system (Kim et al., 2021). One study found that 83% of DSY experienced substance abuse or at least one behavioral health problem (McMinn et al., 2021). DSY are also reported to have the highest rates in six mental health diagnoses: PTSD, bipolar disorder, depression, ODD, ADHD, and schizophrenia (Narendorf et al., 2020). Despite nearly 80% of DSY receiving inpatient or outpatient mental health care during their time in the systems, they still experience disruptive behaviors and anxiety afterwards. This is likely due to their backgrounds of dysfunctional family environments that lead to complex trauma and/or exposure to high-risk factors (Kim et al., 2021). Entering these systems also opens the door for psychological evaluations and interactions with mental health providers which could lead to a higher chance of diagnosis (Narendorf et al., 2020).

Systemic Impacts on DSY

Cross-system collaboration is critical in ensuring that DSY receive the services they need, including mental and behavioral health treatment, and juvenile justice rehabilitation services. However, the differences in philosophy and practice across these child-serving systems has tended to inhibit collaboration (Kim et al., 2021). Each agency tends to have its perspectives of the youth and what services they need which can make collaboration difficult. The juvenile justice system views the youth as a perpetrator and focuses on rehabilitative services while the

child welfare system views the youth as a victim who needs care and protection (Wright et al., 2017). There can also be technical difficulties in identifying mental health issues in DSY whose cases are transferred from one system to another (Kim et al., 2021). Due to constant movement, information may get lost, misplaced, or not communicated therefore leading to the youth not receiving the services they need.

Fulfilling the requirements of services from both systems not only increases the costs that the youth and their family pay, but also increases the cost of resources that each system is investing into the child. Different treatments and services can also create confusion and frustration for the youth and their family due to the constant changes they must endure (Wright et al., 2017). Additionally, the youth may be provided similar or duplicated services, further wasting the family's finances. A collaboration between the child welfare and juvenile justice system would bridge the gap for resources as both systems work together to provide appropriate services and interventions.

Theory

Systems theory focuses on how systems interact and impact those within them (Robbins et al., 2005). It allows social workers to look broadly at the client's struggles as they try to understand why these hardships occur. It emphasizes the historical idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. This means that things tend to be more effective and useful when they work together as a whole rather than individually. This is precisely what a collaboration between both child-serving systems would be offering. Working together would ensure better results for the children and families of DSY.

One of the main concepts of systems theory is that systems tend toward equilibrium (Robbins et al., 2005). Equilibrium is the state of balance in a system that refers to its internal

social phenomena and the relationship it has with its external environment ("Social Equilibrium," 2002). Systems tend to remain as they are, even if it is not the most functional. Changing a system requires ongoing efforts and services, thus, to increase collaboration between the child welfare system and juvenile justice system will require ongoing efforts on both parts to ensure the systems do not return to their previous states.

Models for Collaboration

Across the country, child-serving systems have been working to improve collaboration, coordination, and communication between one another. The Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM), implemented in 2012 in Omaha, NE, was developed to address the problems listed above to enhance service delivery to crossover youth (Wright et al., 2017). The CYPM initiative includes the collaboration of the county attorney's office, Department of Health and Human Services, juvenile assessment center, probation department, private welfare provider, a family advocacy center, a youth advocate, and a facilitator (Wright et al., 2017). A representative from each of these agencies meet every week to discuss crossover cases from the county. The team then collaborates to provide the services and interventions these youth need to be successful until the case is closed (Wright et al., 2017). The intended outcome for the CYMP is a reduction in use of out-of-home placements and reduced recidivism (Wright et al., 2017).

There are three key phases implemented in the CYPM. The first phase ensures communication and collaboration between the child-serving systems. Once a youth is arrested, their justice representative checks the child welfare records to determine if the youth is involved with that system (Wright et al., 2017). If they are, the representative will reach out to the youth's primary caseworker to begin the collaboration. The next step in phase one is to have "diversion meetings" which require the attendance of the youth, their family, the child welfare worker, the

juvenile justice personnel, attorneys, and any other service providers (Wright et al., 2017). Everyone will then work collaboratively to provide services and interventions required for the youth to succeed until the case is closed. If the case is not closed, phase two begins.

Phase two, when the youth enter the juvenile justice system, includes a continued collaboration between the caseworkers in both child-serving systems throughout the case assignments, planning stages, and court structure. (Wright et al., 2017). Caseworkers should begin working together immediately after the case is assigned. They must coordinate all decision-making to ensure collaboration and should use interagency discussions and family approach when handling the case (Casey Family Programs, 2018). Through compiling information from across systems (such as mental health, substance abuse, or education) and discussing this information during the family-centered interagency discussions, the caseworkers will create new goals or alter old ones to best suit the youth's needs (Casey Family Programs, 2018).

Lastly, phase three, the disposition of the case, focuses on case planning for permanency, transition, and case closure. During this phase, the caseworkers will continue to collaborate to assess the youth's process, implement the case plan, and deliver services based on the results of the process (Wright et al., 2017). This can be achieved when all individuals and services involved with the case take an active role and bring any issues that arise to the team so they can be discussed (Casey Family Programs, 2018). Caseworkers will continue to work collaboratively to find a safe and secure environment to transition the youth and close the case (Wright et al., 2017).

Overall, there were significant decreases in the rates of recidivism the year following the initiation of CYMP at Oak County (Haight et al., 2016). Compared to the 48% in the comparison

group, only 31.6% of the youth in the treatment group were adjudicated for one or more criminal offense that year. Oak County compared these results to their own data from previous years and surrounding counties and still found a decrease in recidivism amongst these youth.

Lancaster County's DSY Initiative

The three phases of CYMP are very similar to the goals for Lancaster County's Dual Status Youth Initiative (DSYI) which aims to prevent further involvement in both the juvenile justice and child welfare system as well as develop effective interventions that are family-focused and strength-based (McMinn et al., 2021). The initial crossover introduction, when both child-serving systems begin working together, will be initiated by juvenile probation. Once a week, the juvenile probation department will email a list of youth who have had allegations of delinquency that week. The screening supervisor for Children and Youth Services will then run those names through the system and see if there are any matches. If the youth is found to have dual youth status, the collaboration between both systems officially begins (McMinn et al., 2021).

The DSYI will hold similar meetings to the CYPM diversion meetings called the Dual Status Meeting (DSM). These meetings will include the youth, their family, a juvenile probation worker, and a children and youth worker. During these meetings, a joint case plan will be created that identifies strategies and interventions that the youth needs. This plan is meant to focus on the areas that need the greatest change instead of rules, expectations, or guidelines. It will seek to use strength-based, team-approach techniques to encourage positive change (McMinn et al., 2021). These meetings will occur regularly until the youth's case is closed, however, if the case remains open, an updated case plan will be created and a new DSM will be held every 4-6 months (McMinn et al., 2021).

Conclusion

Dual Status Youth are at-risk individuals who need the support of child welfare and juvenile justice agencies to escape the cycle of system involvement. Once a child is in one of the systems, the process of leaving it is very difficult and is often prolonged, especially for DSY. Being involved in both child-serving systems currently means that the youth must complete the requirements on both ends before they are able to have their case closed and get their life back to normal. This process is often very time-consuming and can be repetitive and confusing for the youth as they try to complete tasks for both systems. Some of the tasks may be the same on both ends while others may contradict due to the different beliefs and requirements of both agencies.

Lancaster County has used models, such as CYPM, for guidance on how to make the DSYI successful. Due to the newness of the DSYI, training sessions must be implemented to educate the employees and clients of both child-serving systems on this project. Educational pamphlets will be given to all employees of both systems for distribution to clients and a training with information about the DSYI, as well as the process of the project, will be developed as an ongoing resource.

Methodology

In order to share information about the Dual Status Youth Initiative (DSYI) pamphlets and trainings were developed for workers of Lancaster County's Children and Youth and Juvenile Probation agencies as well as the DSY, their parent(s), attorneys, and other service providers. The pamphlet and training explain the DSYI project, the systems, services, and individuals involved, their roles, and who qualifies for the new program.

To develop the materials, the point of view of an outsider was taken to determine what information someone completely new to the initiative would need to know. This perspective was

used to draft an outline of the training videos and the pamphlet. This was then reviewed by a member of the taskforce who made additions for comprehension and clarity.

Pamphlet

The tri-fold pamphlet educates parents/guardians of DSY and is a helpful resource that caseworkers can use to introduce eligible families to the DSYI project. It is designed to be handed out as a reference the families can take with them. The front page of the pamphlet introduces the name of the project – Dual Status Youth Initiative. It also acknowledges the key individuals and agencies involved in making this project successful; The RFK National Resource Center; Lancaster County CYA; and Juvenile Probation. The back of the pamphlet is styled partially as a fill-out form with blank spaces for individuals to write down the time of their dual-status meeting, where it will be taking place, and the contact information of the Juvenile Probation and Child Welfare worker assigned to the case. The logo of both agencies is stamped at the top of the page and the phone number of both agency offices is also provided at the bottom of the page.

When the pamphlet is open, the first page has information about DSY and what the DSYI is. It explains that a DSY is any youth who is under the supervision of Juvenile Probation and has been accepted for services or assessments by Children and Youth. It goes on to describe the DSYI, a program created to prevent further involvement in both child-serving systems and provide essential intervention services that are strength-based and family-focused. The goals of the DSYI are to ultimately reduce the number of DSY, lower rates of recidivism, and prevent out-of-home placements.

The second page of the pamphlet talks about what the process of the DSYI looks like.

This is also where the Dual Status Meeting (DSM) is explained, and individuals are informed on

what to expect at the meeting. The third page discusses what to expect at the DSM and how to prepare for the meeting. The purpose of the DSM is to introduce all parties involved with the case, identify the roles and responsibilities, explain the DSYI, and begin developing a case plan for the child. Other areas of discussion may include the concerns that lead the youth and family into both systems and potential goals that will correspond with the identified needs. DSM participants include the child, their family, both agencies, attorneys, school personnel, and any other service providers involved with the child's case. Parents can prepare for the DSM meeting by being ready to discuss their strengths, concerns, and any questions they have about the process moving forward.

Finally, the last page of the pamphlet lists out exactly who is involved in the DSYI, the youth and their family, the judge and attorney, both child-service system, and any other services provided. It also explains the role of the parent throughout this process. It emphasizes the importance of parental involvement through continual communication with the agencies and participation in all required meetings. Please see the Appendix for a visual of the pamphlet.

Training Videos

While the pamphlet explains the DSYI in some detail, it is not enough to fully educate workers on this project as its purpose is to be an initial introduction for *families* of DSY. More detailed training on the DSYI is provided for workers at the child-serving agencies and other resource providers. This training consists of seven pre-recorded Zoom videos that further explaining the DSYI project. It is shared with all parties through a sharable link sent by email.

The training is broken into seven sections that last 30 minutes in total, ranging from 2-6 minutes. They cover topics of who DSY are, what is already being done to help them, the DSYI process and purpose, and further explaining who CYA and JPO are. The first video begins by

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introducing the initiative and recognizing all the committee members that have helped bring this vision to life. It explains Judge Workman's vision for the initiative and why he believes this is important. This first video also lays out the structure of the next six videos to make it easier for individuals to navigate through them.

The second video explains who DSY are and the two different groups they can fall into; dually involved or dually adjudicated. It describes a dually involved youth as any youth involved in both the child welfare and the juvenile justice system, and a dually adjudicated youth as any youth who is declared judicially as delinquent and dependent. The video also shows the barriers that DSY face, throwing light on the lack of resources for DSY and the overlap in services they receive from both child-serving systems. Lastly, individuals watching the video are informed on the impacts dual status has on a youth.

The third video goes into current services that address the troubles DSY face and briefly introduces Lancaster County's DSYI. It provides brief overviews of initiatives from multiple jurisdictions including Ottawa County, Hampden County, Hamilton County, and Douglas County. It then delves deeper into the common pieces and outcomes between each initiative, emphasizing the proof of significant decrease in the rates of recidivism due to these projects.

The fourth video provides more detail on the DSYI. It covers the partners, goals, and objectives of the initiative. This video demonstrates the importance of collaboration between JPO and CYA in bettering the lives of DSY. It also explains the two core goals of the mission, prevention and intervention, and describes what each one means. Additionally, it goes over the five objectives of the intervention and why addressing these problems is crucial to the success of DSY.

The fifth and sixth videos help individuals better understand each child-serving system. They each go over the agencies' mission statements and guiding principles. The CYA video also describes each department of the agency, Intake, Permanency, and Family Support. The JPO video gives a brief overview of the different forms of probation, formal and informal probation, and clarifies the different types of probation officers and their roles.

Finally, the seventh video walks through the DSYI and the steps an employee should take if their client is a DSY. It explains how one determines if a youth has dual status and the steps that should be taken once that is confirmed. This video also delves deeper into the dual status meetings, specifically how they are run, who is involved, and what their focus is. Lastly, the video explains the importance of a joint case plan and how it is created and implemented between the agencies. See the Appendix for the copies of the PowerPoint slides for each video.

Discussion

The purpose of this project was to inform stakeholders about the Dual Status Youth Initiative in Lancaster County. This initiative was started to help prevent the poorer outcomes experienced by these clients, including homelessness, higher ACE scores, higher rates of recidivism, mental/behavioral health diagnosis, and substance abuse and lower rates of educational attainment than youth with singular or no system involvement (Narendorf et al., 2020). Child-serving systems across the country have recognized the need for a model that requires juvenile justice and children and youth agencies to work together to ensure better outcomes for DSY (Wright et al., 2017). Lancaster County modeled its Dual Status Youth Initiative after manuals provided by the Robert F. Kennedy Resource Center. Members of the DSYI committee hope that this initiative will serve as a model for many other Pennsylvania counties moving forward.

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Having a universal understanding of what is expected of employees in this model and how they should interact with one another is key. Therefore, the video series was developed to provide training to future employees as well as a refresher resource for current employees. This initiative requires employees from both child-serving agencies to work together to support the DSY. There has been very little collaboration between the agencies in the past which allowed DSY to slip through the cracks and not get the help they need. The caseworks and probation officers must work together to declare DSY, run the Dual Status Meetings, and create the joint case plan. This forces a continued collaboration between the agencies until the youth's case is closed. It is also important that the youth and their families are engaged as full partners and are kept in the loop with everything happening in the youth's case.

Projects tend to fail when they do not deliver on what is promised so it is crucial for both agencies to have a clear understanding of the goals and objectives of the initiative. The DSYI is designed to improve overall system functioning by providing targeted resources to the youth and their families in hopes of shortening the length of time they are involved with the systems. It also aims to stabilize living situations to ensure better educational attainment and mental health for DSY. It is important for agencies to follow through on these objectives to ensure the success of the project. If families see these things are not being done, they will lose trust in the agencies and the initiative will ultimately fail.

Finally, setting realistic expectations is essential in ensuring the success of the DSYI.

This is a new concept for all employees, families, youth, and anyone else involved in the process, so there needs to be flexibility as everyone begins to learn and adapt to the initiative. If there are unrealistic expectations on what individuals can do given the timeframe they are provided, frustration and burnout will quickly lead to the initiative's downfall. It is important to understand

what each person can accomplish so that there is not an unbearable amount of work and expectations set on them.

Limitations

The biggest limitation for the DSYI is that it has not yet been implemented with actual employees and families to gain their perspective. Work on the DSYI began in December of 2019 and the initiative was implemented in February of 2022. Since the initiative has only been in place for a short period of time, not much has been done outside of providing current employees with a brief, one-hour, training session on Zoom.

Recommendations

Moving forward, resource planning is a necessity to ensure the DSYI goals are achieved. It would be beneficial to plan timelines, meetings, and structures to follow so that nothing is forgotten throughout the process. The next coming years will create a standard for what the DSYI looks like in Lancaster County. If this model is successful, it can be a great resource and motivation to push out other initiatives that will help DSY. By being aware of the initiative's limitations, following through with the promised goals and objectives, and setting realistic expectations of what can be achieved, the Lancaster County DSYI can fulfill its promise to those it serves. These things ensure quicker turnaround and streamline processes, thus reducing the length of time DSY spend in each child-serving system and provide a brighter future.

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Pamphlet

WHO IS A DUAL STATUS YOUTH?

A Dual Status Youth is any youth who is under the supervision of Juvenile Probation and has been accepted for assessment or services with Lancaster Children and Youth.

> WHAT IS THE DUAL STATUS YOUTH INITIATIVE?

DSYI is a program created to prevent further involvement in both Lancaster County's Children and Youth and Juvenile Probation Agencies. It provides essential intervention services that are strength-based and family-focused. The initiative's goal is to improve overall family function, reduce recidivism, stabilize the current living situation, and increase behavioral health and education stability.

Your meeting with the team is scheduled for:



IMPORTANT CONTACT INFO:

CYA Caseworker (name & #):

Probation Officer (name & #):

Attorney (name & #):

GAL:

(name & #):

Public Defender (name & #):

CYA Office #: 717-299-7925

JP Office #: 717-299-8161

Lancaster County's Dual Status Youth Initiative



A program created with the technical assistance of the RFK National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice, Judge David R. Workman, and the collaborative effort between Lancaster County Juvenile Probation and Lancaster County Children and Youth.

THE DSYI PROCESS:

- Child is identified as a DSY.
- A joint family meeting with JPO and CYA occur to create the joint case plan.
- A Dual Status Meeting (DSM) is scheduled.
- The meeting is held, and the joint case plan is reviewed.
- The Joint Case Plan is presented to the Dual Status Youth judge (if applicable).

HOW PARENTS CAN PREPARE FOR THE MEETING:

Parents can prepare for the DSM meeting by being ready to discuss their strengths, concerns, and any questions they have about the process moving forward.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT DSM:

The purpose of the Dual Status Meeting is to:

- Introduce all parties involved with the case.
- Identify the roles and responsibilities
- Explain the DSYI project in greater detail.
- Finalize the Joint Case Plan.

Other areas of discussion may include the concerns that lead the youth and family into both systems and potential goals that will correspond with the identified needs.

WHO PARTICIPATES IN DSM?

DSM participants include:

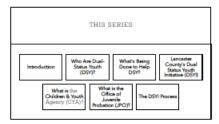
- Youth
- Youth's family
- Lancaster County Children and Youth
 Caseworker and/or Supervisor
- Lancaster County Juvenile Probation
 Caseworker and/or Supervisor
- Child/Parent attorneys
- School personnel
- Any other service providers involved with the child's case



Video 1 - Introduction

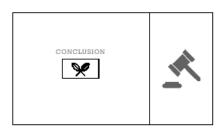
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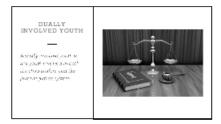


Video 2 – Who are dual-status youth?

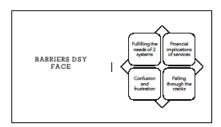
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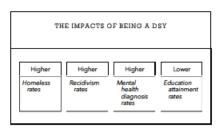








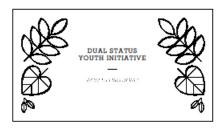


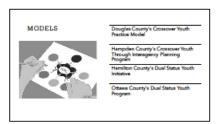


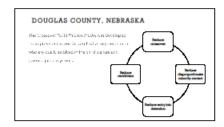
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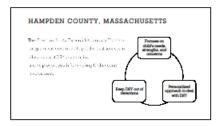
Video 3 – What's being done?

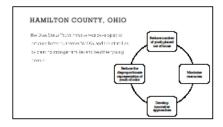
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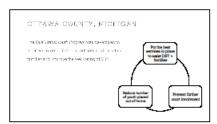








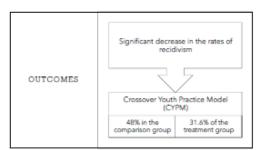




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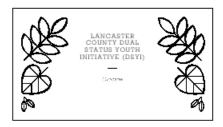


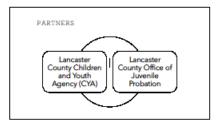


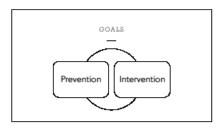


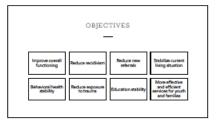
Video 4 – Dual Status Youth Initiative overview

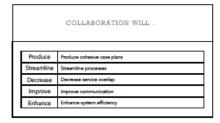
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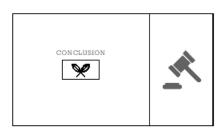












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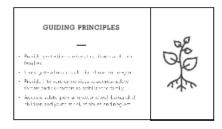
Video 5 – What is Children and Youth Agency?

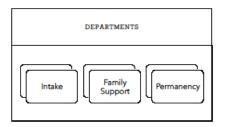
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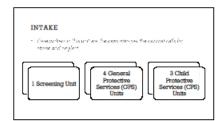


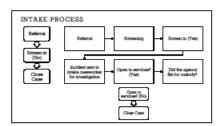
MISSION STATEMENT

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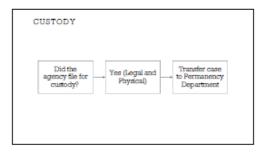


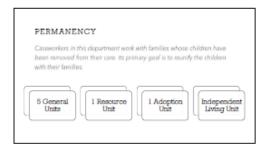


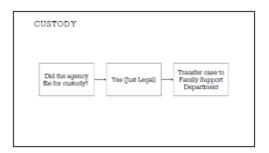


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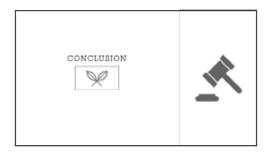
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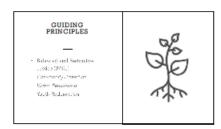
Video 6 – What is Juvenile Probation Office?

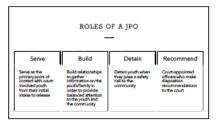
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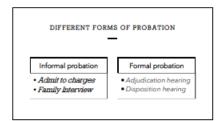


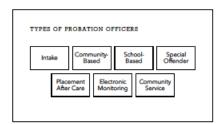
MISSION STATEMENT

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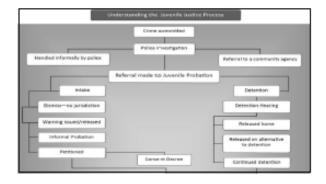


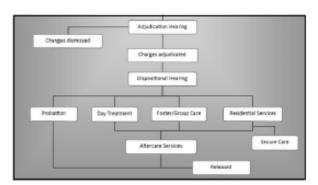


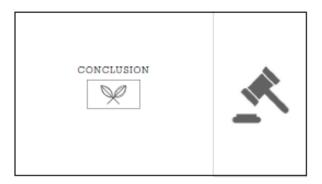


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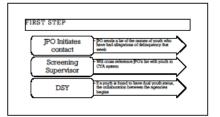


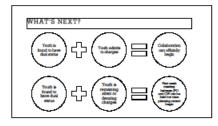


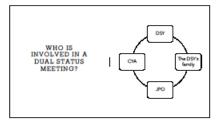
Video 7 – The DSYI process

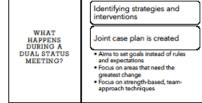
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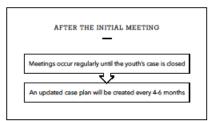












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