

Supporting Youth with Multisystem Involvement

Research Brief

Prepared at the Request of New York County Leaders
Compiled by: Elizabeth Day
Cornell University and University of Oregon

BACKGROUND

More and more youth across New York are involved in multiple county systems, such as child welfare, juvenile justice, and mental health systems.¹ These youth are also referred to as crossover, dually-involved, dually-adjudicated, or dual-system youth.^{2,3}

Crossover Youth

Youth who experience abuse and neglect and engage in delinquent acts. These youth may or may not have involvement in one or both systems.

Dual-System Youth

Crossover youth who touch both the child welfare and the juvenile justice systems.

Dual Contact

Youth who touch both systems and the contact across systems is non-concurrent.

Dually-Involved

Youth who touch both systems and the contact is concurrent.

Dually-Adjudicated

Youth in the care of child welfare and under the formal supervision of the juvenile justice system

Involvement is associated with:

- Higher risks for mental health, educational, and vocational challenges
- Higher rates of recidivism and longer stays in detention
- Poorer placement stability and permanency outcomes

There is a disproportionate number of crossover youth who are female, African-American, or identify as LGBTQIA+. The majority of crossover youth struggle with mental health or substance use issues.²

40% crossover youth who are female

56% youth who are African American

83% youth with mental health or substance use challenges

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUPPORTING YOUTH

Counties face a range of challenges when trying to better support youth with multisystem involvement, including cross-system funding roadblocks and lack of resources for housing youth. Experts from the Georgetown Center for Juvenile Justice Reform offered several considerations for best practices to support youth.

- 1 There is no simple solution**
 - First and foremost, experts recognize this is an incredible challenge for counties across the U.S. and that there is no easy solution, particularly when there is a lack of housing for youth.
 - Using a comprehensive approach like the Crossover Youth Practice Model can help engage the multiple systems and levels of government necessary for creating sustainable change.

Example

The Crossover Youth Practice Model

<https://cjjr.georgetown.edu/our-work/crossover-youth-practice-model/>

The Crossover Youth Practice Model is a nexus between research and best practices that outlines systemic changes youth serving systems can make to improve their ability to serve youth.

- 2 Prevention, prevention, prevention**

The best way to support youth is prevention.

 - Get creative with funding.

Example: pregnancy is considered a risk for system involvement in the Family First Prevention Services Act, so youth who are pregnant qualify for FFPSA funds.
 - Use extensive family finding services and leverage kinship care. When youth don't have a place to stay, consider creative approaches to housing youth.

Example: one Midwest state is training teachers and school personnel to serve as police protective custody for short-term, weekend stays so youth can avoid being unhoused.
- 3 Engage Youth Advocate Programs**

Youth Advocate Programs (YAP) provide young people, adults and their families with intensive support in their home, school and community through our YAPWrap model that blends best practices from research in wraparound, mentoring, and positive youth development.

 - YAP has offices across NYS: <https://www.yapinc.org/Locations>

4

Ask families and youth what they need

Experts emphasized the importance of asking families themselves for the gaps in services and what supports are most useful to them.

- Incorporate youth and family feedback into services across systems – even short, quick surveys or interviews (single-question) can provide meaningful insights on what families need.
- Emphasize to service providers the importance of recognizing the challenges these youth face are no fault of their own.

5

Provide concrete supports to youth during placement transitions

Youth with multisystem involvement often have a lack of stability and consistency in their lives. This includes not only changing houses, but changing schools, caseworkers, mentors, counselors, and any other adults or peers in their lives.

*“When youth make any kind of transition, provide them with everything they need in their physical **and** emotional suitcases.”* – Crossover Youth Program Leader

- Stabilize everything you can for crossover youth, such as school, counselors, mental health professionals, and caseworkers, even when placements can't be maintained.
- Pack pre-made bags for youth that include basic necessities such as deodorant, soap, towels, and other toiletries. This can reduce stress for youth who may wonder where these will come from in a new placement.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Common Problems, Common Solutions: Looking Across Sectors at Strategies for Supporting Rural Youth and Families Tool-Kit

Lisa Pilnik and Christine Humowitz, Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, Georgetown
<https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/mbamtdmc4ogbxar6n9z4v0lygikb1j0l>

From Conversation to Collaboration: How Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Agencies Can Work Together to Improve Outcomes for Dual Status Youth

The Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice
<https://rfknrcjj.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/RFK-whitepaper-April2014.pdf>

Leading with Lived Experience Webinar

Jennifer Rodriguez, Executive Director of the Youth Law Center
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SOLEf0cbi6Q>

FUNDING & SUPPORT



UNIVERSITY OF
OREGON

HEDCO Institute

This brief was completed as part of a project funded by the William T. Grant Foundation and is a joint effort of Cornell Project 2Gen, housed in the Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research at Cornell University, and the HEDCO Institute for Evidence-Based Educational Practice at the University of Oregon. For more information, please contact Elizabeth Day at ead255@cornell.edu.

METHODS

Findings presented in this brief come from discussions with experts at the Georgetown Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, as well a literature review of academic peer-reviewed studies and findings from non-partisan think tanks, foundations, and organizations. Given the rapid nature of this search, other relevant studies may exist. In addition, please note that we did not use formal statistical methods for summarizing results and exploring reasons for differences in findings across studies.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Herz, D. C., Dierkhising, C. B., Raithel, J., Schretzman, M., Gultinan, S., Goerge, R. M., ... & Abbott, S. (2019). Dual system youth and their pathways: A comparison of incidence, characteristics and system experiences using linked administrative data. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 48, 2432-2450.
- ² Casey Family Programs (2022). Is there an effective model for serving youth involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems? <https://www.casey.org/crossover-youth-practice-model/>
- ³ Caietti, C.M., Gaines, K., & Heldman, J. (2017). "Improving outcomes for dual status youth," presented at the Beyond the Bench Conference, December 19, 2017. Retrieved from <http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/BTB24-2G-00PPT.pdf>