

THE LINK

CONNECTING JUVENILE JUSTICE AND CHILD WELFARE

Agency-Driven Cultural Competence: *The Gap Between Ideal and Reality in the Juvenile Justice Systems*

By Constance Burgess and Matthew Gerst

People come in an amazing variety of shapes, sizes, and colors, with an equally staggering variety of backgrounds and belief systems. Effective juvenile justice organizations are able to working with human diversity in a manner that adds value to the process and promotes rehabilitation.

Organizations that have not yet effectively focused on developing an approach to leveraging their diverse human resources are more inclined to create one-size-fits-all approaches to care delivery for a number of reasons. Those service delivery systems that are culturally competent and reflect a diverse workforce produce better outcomes, have increased levels of employee satisfaction, and are healthier organizations overall.

The enthusiasm focused on youth rehabilitation that was prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s was negatively affected by systems administration and an overwhelmed service system in the years that followed. Recently, institutional overcrowding, high recidivism rates, and reduced community tolerance for juvenile offense has led the public to look poorly upon the juvenile justice system.

Despite adverse political currents, the juvenile-justice ideal has received a new lease on life thanks to pioneering efforts by states and by foundations, as well as the continuing programmatic influence of the federal approach begun in the 1970s (Krisberg, 2005).

By taking the initiative to build anticrime programs structured to fit local needs, community leaders have generated a plethora of information on which programs work, where they work, and what it takes to carry them out.¹ Services for youth in the juvenile justice system and their families can significantly improve when organizations focus on the core value of respecting uniqueness and diversity at all levels.

The unique cultures found in courtroom, detention, and group home settings seem harsh to those not familiar with how the juvenile justice system operates. Families

with youth in detention are struck by the confrontational nature of every interaction, the emphasis on rules and procedures, the focus on safety and security, the starkness of the environment, and the rigid hierarchical nature of all relationships.

Language serves as a demarcation of group status, whereas skin color or the place of birth is highly important in the social structure. Police, probation officers, counselors, and guards all have unique subcultures marked by language, procedure, uniform, and group affiliation. Clients, detainees, inmates, residents, and family members have subcultures as well.

During the last decade or more, service delivery has been evolving toward processes that recognize and value the wide variety of culture. This evolution from what has been a deficit-based model—often characterized by lengthy incarceration or institutionalization—towards a strength-based community model is not yet complete but has begun to yield excellent outcomes.

Although traditional service models historically have focused on set “programs” in which experts attempted to “fix” or rehabilitate broken youth, we now have begun to implement service models in which we embrace the uniqueness of each individual and family, build upon the strengths of their cultures and experiences as people, and match both formal (professional) and informal (community and family) membership in child and family focused teams.

Today communities, funders, and government agencies are embracing alternative strength-based approaches to

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1 See the Juvenile Justice FYI website for more information, www.juvenilejusticefyi.com.

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the Director of the Juvenile Justice Division. Now that I have retired from the Fairfax County (Virginia) Police Department after 25 years of service, I look forward to continuing to work with children and families as CWLA has done for decades. During my tenure with Fairfax County Police, I spent 20 years investigating cases of child abuse and exploitation, and preparing these cases for prosecution. I also had the good fortune of consulting, training, and networking with multidisciplinary professionals both nationally and worldwide.

My passion for protecting and improving the lives of children can best illustrated by this country's first reported and adjudicated case of child abuse in 1874: The story of Mary Ellen Wilson. This case typified how the perseverance of a few dedicated individuals helped form the governance of what became the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. I believe the Juvenile Justice Division's mission, and that of CWLA as a whole, is to continue the legacy of protecting and improving the lives of children, as established by this historical case. As a result, the Juvenile Justice Division strives to educate on the connections between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and the need for an integrated approach to programs and services.

This work is complex but paramount if this country is to curb the trajectory of maltreated children who may become juvenile delinquents. We will embrace the many challenges ahead. The division's commitment is to support dedicated efforts of those who wish to provide leadership to jurisdictions that promote the improvement of children's lives through systems integration.

On behalf of Kerrin Sweet, Program Coordinator; John Tuell, Director of the Systems Integration Initiative; and myself, we welcome the opportunity to talk with you about any issue that surrounds children or families involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and to discuss any assistance we might bring to resolve conflict between the two systems.



Wayne S. Promisel, Director
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the traditional deficit-driven models. These new models promote looking at the unique strengths and experiences of the people with whom we work and building highly individualized strategies. Strength-based approaches to care, such as wraparound, embrace a set of values and best practices that include providing highly individualized services, flexibility, community-based and family-driven methods, and a team approach that is needs driven.² A common factor in all of the new and promising approaches to care is an emphasis on individuality, relationships, strengths, and cultural competence.

With the juvenile justice system now in contact with more than 1 million youth per year, and with more than 100,000 youth detained in correctional facilities daily, agency development of cultural competence has added importance. Youth in the juvenile justice system are disproportionately poor and children of color. Many of these children have histories of other problems that have not been addressed, including mental health problems, physical or sexual abuse, drug or alcohol use (by both parent and youth), poor school performance or truancy, family discord, and learning disabilities.

The National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice describes a key issue in the juvenile justice system: "Diversion programs need to be developed, and we need to push for more community-based treatment options that will provide treatment to these youth in their communities."³ Services should be appropriate for the child's age, gender, and culture; individualized; and family-focused.

African American youth ages 10–17 comprise only 15% of the U.S. population, but they account for 26% of juvenile arrests, 32% of delinquency referrals to juvenile court, and 46% of juveniles committed to secure institutions (Snyder & Sickmund, 1995).

While minority youth (including Hispanic youth) comprise 32% of the U.S. population ages 10–17, they make up 68% of the detention population and 68% of those committed to secure institutions (Community Research Associates, 1997).

There is general agreement that cultural competence is an essential attribute of an integrated service delivery system. As wraparound consultants, we believe professionals should focus on the strengths and protective factors available to culturally diverse youth, including their families and extended families. Cultural competency does not require abandoning the values and norms that are dear to us. Instead, cultural competency enables us

- 2 For additional information on wraparound, see Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health. (2006). National wraparound initiative. Available online at www rtc.pdx.edu/nwi. Portland, OR: Author.
- 3 National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Key Issues, www.ncmhjj.com/faqs/default.asp.

to better relate to others. We achieve this improved relationship by honoring what is important to the consumer and to ourselves as bearers of our own culture in ways that promote successful intercultural outcomes and a healthier organization.

People have a variety of ideas about what comprises cultural competency. These philosophical perspectives on cultural competency are not limited to professionals and institutions, but apply to families as well. The multicultural challenge faced in the current age of complex racial and ethnic classification systems is encapsulated in the question, "How do service providers develop system responses that are effective, consistent, and appropriate?" Culturally competent assessments, service plans, and treatment plans incorporate measures related to values, beliefs, norms, coping style, family and community support, and the family's willingness to seek treatment.

What Is Cultural Competence?

Cultural competence is defined as the ability of individuals and systems to work or respond effectively across lifestyles or customs in a manner that acknowledges and respects the unique qualities, experiences, skills, class, and backgrounds of the person or organization being served.

Everyone in society has a culture and is part of several subcultures. Subcultures may be related to gender, age, income level, geographic region, neighborhood, sexual orientation, religion, and physical disability. Institutions often create an additional emphasis on subculture, as residents are classified or self-designate themselves into specific communal strata.

Competence implies having the capacity to function effectively as an individual or organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by peers, consumers, and their communities. Whether in the context of institutional care or community monitoring and support, respectful and sensitive youth development workers are aware and considerate of the values, beliefs, traditions, customs, and parenting skills of the families being served. In addition to developing highly individualized service systems, culturally competent organizations support the development of a heterogeneous workforce that values staff diversity and promotes practices that shape or change the organizational culture.

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Cultural beliefs and behaviors are ever changing. Transformations occur within the individual as that person grows and develops and becomes exposed to new things. As individuals and families living in America, we share elements of a national culture, such as baseball, hot dogs, high school marching bands, and Fourth of July celebrations. Many of us also carry the gifts and strengths of other cultural traditions. We play soccer, eat tacos, listen to reggae, dance at pow-wows, and march in parades on the Chinese New Year. Cultural diversity can be observed in the ways we greet and respect each other and in our rituals, symbols, stories, foods, heroes, and clothing.

Cultural Competence in the Organization

If you ask organizational leaders if they believe cultural competence is important, they will almost always respond affirmatively, citing the importance of this competency in service delivery, organizational health, or contractual obligations. A survey of those same organizations often would reveal large gaps between those values or ideals and actual practice.

The question that emerges then is, "If cultural competency is so important, and the path to achieving improved performance so well-known, why are more agencies failing to drive this process?" A number of possible reasons exist for this gap between ideal and reality:

- **Change is hard.** Conflict can be difficult. Remaining the same is much easier. Human nature dictates that we find it hard to make any changes, particularly those that may involve challenging our beliefs, our actions, and ourselves. Systems seek homeostasis and can resist change by nature. Changing the culture of a juvenile justice organization can be even more difficult, given the intense pressures individuals within the system face to maintain their roles and identity, such as that of guard, counselor, probation officer or advocate.
- **We are generally ethnocentric.** Intentionally or not, we often believe our own worldview is the correct one and thereby fail to see that, from other perspectives, we are not culturally competent. Juvenile justice agencies often have their own culture shaped by legal mandates and the violence of the communities they serve, which inhibits their ability to see other possibilities.
- **The lack of organization skills is disempowering.** There is a huge distance between consumers, the community, and grassroots movements and the organization's boardroom. People who underserved often do not have the skills necessary to maneuver in the more formal corporate environment of the organization, let alone the legal system that holds such intense power.

- **Cultural competence movements often are crowded out.** Organizations often are so focused on the urgent that they fail to address the merely important. Generally, movements toward cultural competency are not seen as critical and fail to command the urgency necessary to gather the organization's attention and resources. The juvenile justice service delivery system tends to focus on handling large case-loads of offenders with limited resources and often does not have the bandwidth to focus on organizational health and development.
- **Fiscal value.** Administrative leadership often does not see the fiscal value of improved cultural competency. Practice leadership fails to see the potential positive effect on service outcomes to be gained by improved cultural competency. Many of these leaders do not recognize the value of cultural competency, unfortunately, until reminded when costs go up or when challenged by a concerned constituency group.
- **One size does not fit all.** The path to organizational cultural competency is unique to each company or agency. Although tools and expert consultation are readily available as road maps, the agency must chart its own course and develop its own work processes. This route requires more effort and creativity on the part of the agency.

Future standardized frameworks for youth and family services must create, in and of themselves a new and innovative culture, whether in the context of institution or community. Rehabilitation is the restoration of someone to a useful place in society. New rehabilitation service frameworks must consider the family and the existing culture of the client in any decisions. If the focus within juvenile rehabilitative services is on helping young offenders develop, mature, and become confident, competent, responsible adults, then institutions that range from the most secure institutions and residential facilities to community-based programs, prevention services, and family-focused parole aftercare must have within them new and inventive organizational cultures.

Most funders make provision for agencies to develop collaborative skills and encourage work with other agencies. The new direction calls for blending funding and resources to achieve lasting outcomes. Funders now want to sponsor outcomes in which service delivery ends because success has been achieved rather than because a child has reached the age of adulthood or has become incarcerated in the adult criminal system. Through this cross-agency, family-centered, socioculturally sensitive approach to service delivery do we see children and families actually getting the help they need in a family-building, valuing, and maintaining manner.

Benefits to the Organization

The culturally competent organization realizes a number of benefits:

- **Increased customer satisfaction.** Cultural competence builds understanding and trust. Continuing trust opens doors to relationships—a value-added exchange that involves flexibility and the ability to make things better—the heart of customer service.
- **Improved quality of care.** Compelling evidence exists that attending to the differences in health status, access to care, and the provision of physical and mental health services related to race, ethnicity, primary language, geography, and socioeconomic position yields improved client outcomes. For juvenile justice agencies, this translates to lower recidivism; improved functioning in school, at home and in the community; healthier families; and eventually lower crime rates.
- **Promotion of best practices.** Good science is always essential in deriving public health approaches to mental health. We are a nation of many cultures, races, and ethnicities, to which the systems of mental health care must bear together as an integrated, albeit differentiated whole. Until the science base for culturally competent care is developed, we must ensure we have at least begun to cultivate an enabling rather than disabling service philosophy.
- **Cost-efficiency of better services.** Scarce resources committed to an ineffective service delivery system often are wasted. Achieving better outcomes with those same resources affects the agency's overall cost-efficiency. The fiscal argument for culturally relevant services is that they work better and therefore can cost less in the long run.
- **Improved decision-making.** The term *group think* refers to faulty decision-making in a group or organization. Teams experiencing group think do not consider all alternatives, and they desire unanimity at the expense of quality decisions. Group think occurs when groups are highly cohesive and when they are under considerable pressure to make a quality decision. Team members are not critical of each other's ideas, do not examine early alternatives, do not seek expert opinion, and are highly selective in gathering information. The presence of diverse perspectives in the workforce has been linked to increased creativity, greater flexibility, and fewer mistakes. Mistakes that occur more often are due to group think.
- **Better employee satisfaction and reduced turnover.** Human service organizations must

develop policies and practices aimed at recruiting, retaining, and managing a diverse work force. These organizations must meet the demands of a more diverse service population by providing culturally appropriate care and improving access to care for racial/ethnic minorities. Cultural competence as a component of training can influence the retention rates of high-potential staff.

The Path Toward Organizational Cultural Competence

Business cultures of the past often were built around rules, control, and hierarchy. Change came slowly, and decisions came from the top down. Today's fast-paced, changing world rewards staff who can be flexible and focus on customer needs. Access to new information and time to respond, change, and renew skills can reduce stress and facilitate needed change.

The agency desiring to conduct a cultural competency self-assessment has many tools at its disposal, including expert external consultation and many readily available and published assessment tools. Whereas the agency must individualize the process for itself, the available assessment tools can help the organization better understand the ethnic and cultural make-up of its consumer and employee populations. Conducting this self-assessment is, in and of itself, an initial and fundamental statement to the organization and its community that diversity is valued and cultural competence is a desired goal.

Self-assessment processes often begin with the creation of a work team or task force. Agencies differ in how they get things done, with some agencies better able to utilize and organize around team structures and continuous quality improvement practices. For example, many organizations develop levels of team structure to promote change including steering groups, self-assessment teams, and specific work groups. These groups, and in particular the self-assessment work team or task force, should include diverse representative membership from throughout the organization, including membership from the patient and staff populations.

Sponsorship of this process is important if the effort is to be successful. The participation of a CEO or other senior organizational leader, with the support of the board and senior management team, is a necessary legitimizing component. The sponsor receives reports from the work team that is steering the cultural competency initiative, helps define the scope of the team's work, assures organizational resources, and acts as the connection to the board and senior leadership groups.

Leadership of the task group is also critical. This individual should be selected based upon the capacity to be seen as credible, reliable, respected, and sensitive to diversity issues. The leader should possess the ability to facilitate and lead a multifaceted work process. The group facilitator will need to encourage diverse participation,

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On the Ethical Care of Gay and Lesbian Youth in Corrections

By Laurie Schaffner

Noticing a New Minority in New Ways

Studies of youth in juvenile court systems reveal the disproportionate minority contact that youth of color experience. At almost every stage of processing, youth of color are disproportionately represented, compared with their ranks in the general population (Hsia, Bridges, & McHale, 2004; Snyder & Sickmund, 2006).

Research devoted to gender-specific interventions for girls, another minority in the system, provides overviews of what brings young women into the system (Bloom, Owen, Deschenes, & Rosenbaum, 2002; Dohrn, 2004). These reports point to recommendations that address inequitable treatment of minority populations in juvenile corrections.

Recently, scholars and practitioners have begun to document the emergence of a new and different category of minorities who are disproportionately represented in juvenile correctional systems: young people who constitute a sexual minority, or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ) youth (Dang, 1997; Feinstein, Greenblatt, Hass, Kohn, & Rana, 2001).

Because juvenile court systems are not equipped to handle the unique human rights and health care needs of this particular population, the increasingly visible presence of LGBTQ minors in family and delinquency courtrooms raises various key sociolegal conundrums: How to adjudicate the results when families reject their nonmajoritarian sexual children? How do minors' sexual and gender identity and practices affect decisions by social workers, attorneys, judges, and probation officers? In what ways do sociolegal, welfare, and youth scholars and advocates contribute to and perpetuate the framing of certain youth in trouble as not *in* crisis, but *the* crisis (Davis, 1999)?

Between 1996 and 2004, I conducted a study of court-involved female juveniles, interviewing and observing 100 youth and 42 adults who worked with them. Drawing from my forthcoming book on girls in the juvenile legal system, this article describes some of what is known about LGBTQ youth in legal and family systems, presents comments from LGBTQ youth detainees, and concludes by suggesting two new resources that address the needs and rights of this particular minority court-involved population. Education is key, but not merely the education of the adolescents under the purview of the state.

Consequences of Institutional Discrimination
Sexual identity can be a complex developmental process beginning consciously at puberty or before. In the United States since the 1980s, research shows that a society-wide homophobia provoked a disproportionate number of lesbian and gay teens to drop out of school, run away from home, live in homelessness, medicate with street drugs and alcohol, perform survival sex, and prostitution to survive, and attempt suicide (Sullivan, Sommer, & Moff, 2001; Garafolo Deleon, Osmer, Doll, & Harper, 2006; Jordan 2000).

Another way LGBTQ teenagers come into the system is through “domestic battery,” or beating up their girlfriends or boyfriends. Because, for female juvenile offenders, these offenses are sometimes minimized and coded as girlfighting or girl-on-girl violence, the prevalence of violence between intimates becomes difficult to identify and address when the courts' vision of sexual minority youth is clouded.

Contemporary adolescence at the turn of the 21st Century includes a sense of entitlement to explore sexualities (Rubin, 1990; Vance, 1984; Thompson, 1995; Walkerdine, Lucey, & Melody, 2001). Yet, young people's decisions to explore same-sex desire—or getting caught exploring it—may result in social exclusion and marginalization (see also Tolman, 1994). Even though in one recent Chicago Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 8.5% of the students described themselves as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, or reported same-sex sexual contact, GLBQT youth—in and out of the court systems—are largely invisible, often isolated, dealing alone with social stigma and cultural rejection (Sullivan, 2006).

In an ominous development for young men and women struggling simultaneously with sexual orientation and gender identity issues, self-love, and staying out of juvenile corrections, homophobia was on the rise in schools, and gay-bashing reportedly widespread in the late 1990s. In a national survey of sexual harassment in schools, 10% of girls reported “being called lesbian” (American Association of University Women, 2001). In a poll of thousands of the highest-achieving high school students in the United States, almost half admitted prejudice against gays and lesbians (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network, 2003). A 2000 study of students in western Massachusetts found that young lesbians and bisexual girls (72%) experienced more sexual harassment than did heterosexual girls (63%) (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Specific challenges that court-involved minors face have been noted by human rights groups, such as that homosexual youth may be doubly punished in the system, both for their offense and for their sexual identity (Dang, 1997).

LGBTQ youth face qualitatively different challenges than do heterosexual youth. Because of misinformation and prejudice, gay youth receive the brunt of social scorn as they develop sexual selves. Adolescence is a time for

adolescents to experience and explore sexuality, gender (and other) identities, and sexual orientations; yet rarely are youth afforded open social and cultural permission to explore homosexual or transsexual experiences or identity as possible positive options.

Some gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender teenagers—especially young women with conventionally masculine demeanor and young men with more effeminate presentation—reported they suffered such vilification at home or in school because of their sexual orientation that they were forced into the streets (Sullivan et al., 2001). In a Los Angeles study 16% of runaways identified themselves as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (Yates, Mackenzie, Pennbridge, & Swofford, 1991).

In one study of inner-city street youth, 25% reported they were lesbian, gay, or bisexual (Fineran, 2001; see also Kruks, 1991). Social service agencies estimate the proportions of homeless youth who identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual to be as high as 38% (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Anger, stigma, and self-hatred combine to create immense suffering among this largely, previously invisible population of youth. LGBTQ youth come to the attention of juvenile legal and psychiatric authorities in what are believed to be disproportionate numbers through these and other unique processes (Curtin, 2002).

As a result, the growing visible presence of LGBTQ youth in correction facilities became an area of mounting concern to feminist, human rights, and youth advocates by the early 2000s. As with proportions among the general population of LGBTQ teenagers, it is not possible to make statistical or demographical claims about LGBTQ youth—including LGBTQ youth of color—caught in the net of juvenile corrections. National data about LGBTQ youth in corrections—in school, medical, legal, or psychiatric systems—are not systematically collected or available. Collecting these data would require all LGBTQ youth to declare their sexual orientation or gender identity on official records, something research suggests would not be safe (Fedders, in press).

But recent localized studies have begun to uncover the experiences of LGBTQ youth in court systems. According to 1997 testimony before a Human Rights Commission hearing in San Francisco, LGBTQ youth comprised less than 1% of juveniles arrested (Dang, 1997). One study in the New York juvenile justice system estimated from 4% to 10% of the juvenile delinquent population as LGBTQ (Feinstein et al., 2001).

Another writer estimates homosexual youth make up about 20% of the 50,000 youth forcibly institutionalized annually (Owens, 1998). Other accounts reveal that the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV* diagnoses of “sexual dysfunctions” and “gender identity disorders” provided pathways for youth to be admitted into adolescent psychiatric wards (Scholinski, 1997; Hepp, Kraemer, Schnyder, Miller, & Delsignore, 2005).

As in society as a whole, juvenile court personnel are not equipped to meet the unique considerations of LGBTQ youth. This is a new and challenging public moment because neither child welfare nor juvenile legal systems are formulated with the comfort of LGBTQ youth in mind. Living areas and, increasingly, classrooms, are divided into male and female spaces, conventionally defined. Youth reports reveal that sleeping, showering, and dressing can become harrowing locations of harassment for gender-explorative youth, and for their frightened and ill-prepared cohorts. Now would be an auspicious time for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to explore this tension, given that mandates for new gender-specific interventions are called for and evaluations are beginning to be conducted (Gaarder, Rodriguez, & Zatz, 2004; Goodkind, 2005).

Voices of Lesbian Girls in Detention

Despite the absence of systematic quantitative data, narrative evidence confirms links between factors such as homosexuality in the lives of teenagers and challenges they face in juvenile corrections systems. Compared with other studies of female juvenile offenders, this sample included an unusually high proportion of girls who confided that their erotic and romantic interests were other than heterosexual (9 out of 100). This may have been due to fact that the study design, methodology, and instruments were designed to be gay-friendly. Language used during interviews reflected attempts to not assume *a priori* knowledge about the sexual orientation or gender identity of study participants.

Slightly more than one third of the total participants talked about lesbian relationships, concerns about other girls being gay, or concerns about family members being gay (35 out of 100). When afforded nonjudgmental locations to discuss their ideas, study participants shared that homosexuality in their families was a concern. Girls talked about what they thought about other young women who were gay. It was typical to hear girls exploring their ideas about same-sex interest in these ways:

Me and my girl kick it nice and easy when I'm on the outs. It's cool, but my family don't know about it. They think we just friends. My parents would kill me if they ever knew. But I ain't worried—maybe

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it's just a phase I'm in... (17-year-old white girl, drug sales)

I got one friend in here. We always together. We write notes to the same place and we know the same people. So other girls thinks we gay. But I don't trip—they's a lot of gays up in here but I'm not one. (16-year-old African American girl, drug sales)

Girls should act her real self—even with make-up, a guy will want her for her real self. Some girls will disrespect themselves and get with a lot of guys. I see boys—all of 'em are dogs until they find the right girl. If a girl is too easy—he'll just do her. I think girls become gay because they don't like guys. They had too much of them. I had a friend, she was pretty—but she never like guys... (17-year-old African American girl, weapon possession offense)

I like guys all right—but I'm attracted to older females. (15-year-old Latina, aggravated assault).

This boy called me a dumb broad for wanting to be a car mechanic, so I kicked his ass. Then I got kicked out of my placement. I'm straight—but you could leave me in a room for a couple hours with Drew Barrymore and a bottle of Hennessy...she is sooo cute! (14-year-old white girl, probation violation)

As these quotes illustrate, girls approached ideas about same-sex relationships in a variety of ways. Other research yields similar accounts. One young woman testified when she was locked in detention, she was “never given a roommate because she was a lesbian” and that “special showering arrangements were made to prevent her from showering with other girls” (Dang, 1997).

Another girl recounted her experience while living in a group home: “I prepared myself to get in a fight when I went downstairs later that night for dinner” (Wadley, 1994). Her homophobic mother had driven this young woman out of her house, but the girls in the group home finally accepted her.

Ominous findings from one Human Rights Commission report found that “many youth who enter the juvenile justice system for hate-related crimes have committed crimes against LGBTQ people” (Dang, 1997)

Battery among lesbian couples appeared as another undertheorized problem among girls in trouble (Lobel, 1986; Scherzer, 1998). One third of the self-identified queer youth in this study revealed they had beaten up their girlfriends or lovers. For example:

I was involved with a hooker—she was bisexual. I was always buyin' her things, but we fought a lot. I beat her up off crystal [from being high on methamphetamine] so I caught an ADW off that [Assault with a deadly weapon charge]. (15-year-old Latina, aggravated assault)

I beat my girl 'cause she ran away with Miguel. First we left him, but then he started buggin' her.

Then we fought. I beat her bad. (15-year-old white girl, simple assault)

Even though these were clearly examples of intimate violence or domestic battery, court and correctional personnel charged and discussed these cases as girl-on-girl violence or girlfighting (see also Schaffner, in press).

To sort out how to move resources on behalf of both perpetrators and victims in these disputes, one must first determine how homophobia, self-loathing, and lack of community, political, or psychological support acts upon the lived realities of LGBTQ youth. Is the state to rescue them from homosexual relations to attempt to force or restore them into some kind of heterosexual norm? And what does one make of the “work” of guards and counseling staff in court facilities? Many saw their mission to include rooting out the “bad habits” (i.e., nonnormative expressions of sexuality and gender) of the youth charges in their care. To identify discourses surrounding state intervention and LGBTQ youth, much more research, advocacy, and scholarship is needed.

Model Standards, Model Care

One challenge is to tease apart the simultaneous popular media fetishization of girl-on-girl sexuality and the glamorization of “queer style” with the homophobia that reigns as a subtle national anthem. Arguably, the eroticization of same-sex sexual practice is featured by corporate sponsorship. Consider the much-discussed kiss between an aging Madonna and teen star Britney Spears during the 2003 prime-time television's annual MTV Awards, or the political furor over—and box office success of—the film *Brokeback Mountain*.

Even though the Supreme Court recently outlawed the criminalization of sodomy (*Lawrence v. Texas* 2003), representatives of the state lag in sensitivity to and recognition of the notions that gay and lesbian desire are legitimate experiences; that being gay is about more than just sex; that homophobia is devastating especially for young people forming their sense of self; and that eliminating prejudice is essential to fair treatment of LGBTQ youth in child welfare and juvenile legal systems (see also Fedders, in press; Remafedi & Blum, 1986; Zemsky, 1991).

In light of the mission to develop and implement a standard of the ethical care for LGBTQ youth in juvenile court systems, a forthcoming edition of the *University of Nevada Law School Journal* will publish the proceedings from the January 2006 conference on the Ethical Representation of Children in Families, detailing specific recommendations for model standards for the representation of sexual minority youth in family and juvenile court proceedings.

In addition, a group of scholars, advocates, and judicial players came together in the early 2000s to develop the Model Standards Project, an initiative to address the care of youth in both the dependency and delinquency court. These standards, *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines: Serving LGBT Youth in Out-of-Home Care* (Wilber, Ryan,

PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

New Gang Legislation Harmful to Youth

The Community Protection Against International Gangs Act (S.3946) was introduced by Senator Bill Frist (R-TN) on September 27. This legislation would make an alien who is a member or suspected member of a criminal gang, removable from and inadmissible to the United States. This overly broad definition would give the Attorney General and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) unprecedented discretion to determine who is a gang member—resulting in removing young people who have not committed or been convicted of any crime, who are merely suspected of being gang members, as well as youth who have successfully broken from gangs and become productive members of society.

Gang members who commit illegal acts are already subject to the criminal justice system for the act itself. Immigrant gang members who commit criminal acts are subject to inadmissibility and deportability laws, and DHS can and does deny applications for permanent residence on discretionary grounds, such as involvement in gang activity. Also, S.3946 would punish former gang members who have chosen to leave the gang and reform their lives, refusing them admission, and deporting them to countries where they may face interrogation, torture, detention, and even death.

This legislation is expected to be reintroduced in the new Congress in 2007. For further information, contact Tim Briceland-Betts, CWLA Government Affairs Division, 202/942-0256, or bricebet@cwla.org.

& Marksamer, 2006), are available online through a collaboration between the Annie E. Casey Foundation and CWLA.

These recommendations stand as a strong beginning to offering real protection for the growing population of sexual minority youth who increasingly find themselves being processed in child welfare and juvenile corrections systems. Short of shutting down the punitive side of juvenile correctional systems, bringing youth voices into the discussion, and mandating ethical standards of care, represent forward progressive movement toward the equitable treatment of all young people.

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JUVENILE JUSTICE NEWS AND RESOURCES

Registration Open for National Conference on Substance Abuse, Child Welfare, and the Courts

Registration is open for *Putting the Pieces Together for Children and Families: The National Conference on Substance Abuse, Child Welfare and the Courts*, hosted by Children and Family Futures and the Children's Research Triangle, January 30–February 2, 2007, at the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim, California. The conference promotes system collaborations to reduce child abuse and neglect, and focuses on advances in practice and policy that produce improved services for children, youth, and families affected by substance use disorders.

For more information, and to register for the conference online, visit www.cffutures.org.

Forums Serve Those Serving Children and Families in Hurricane-Effectuated Areas

In partnership with American Bar Association (ABA) and the National Center for State Courts, with support from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges is hosting discussion forums for judges and other professionals working with abused and neglected children and their families in jurisdictions affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The forums are designed to enable participants to pose questions, exchange information, and inform others of challenges and successes.

To join any of these forums, visit www.ncjfcj.org/forums.

ABA Launches Youth at Risk Initiative

ABA President Karen Mathis has announced the Youth at Risk Initiative, designed to help at-risk youth by addressing issues such as finding better ways to serve status offenders, meeting the needs of youth who age out of support systems, and supporting teens living in dysfunctional homes.

For more information, visit www.abanet.org/initiatives/youthatrisk/about.shtml.

MacArthur Issue Briefs

The MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice has released a series of issue briefs that present findings from the network's past and ongoing research. The briefs cover research on competence to stand trial, criminal blame-worthiness, adult transfer, youth psychopathy, and findings from the ongoing Pathways to Desistance study. The briefs are a valuable tool for creating a common understanding among the many players in the juvenile justice arena.

To download the issue briefs, visit www.adjj.org. To view the report, visit www.macfound.org/site/c.lkLXJ8MQKrH/b.1135955/k.DB98/Newsletters_and_Publications/apps/nl/newsletter2.asp.

Grants Advance Integration of School and Mental Health Systems

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools has announced new FY 2006 grants to state and local educational agencies and Indian tribes intended to increase student access to quality mental health care by developing innovative approaches that link school systems with local mental health systems.

For further information and a list of the FY 2006 new grant awards, visit www.ed.gov/programs/mentalhealth/fy2006awards.html.

Disproportionate Minority Contact Technical Assistance Manual, 3rd Edition

This manual provides detailed guidance on disproportionate minority contact (DMC) identification and monitoring, assessment, intervention, and evaluation. Its intended audience is juvenile justice specialists, members of state planning agencies and state advisory groups, DMC researchers and consultants, and policymakers and practitioners involved in the juvenile justice system at the state and local levels. The manual incorporates lessons learned in DMC efforts, bringing states and localities the latest information and tools for understanding and effectively addressing minority overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system.

To access the manual, visit www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/dmc_ta_manual/index.html.

Report Highlights Lessons From Transitional Jobs Project

A new report from the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families focuses on nine cities that designed transitional job programs to help residents overcome barriers to work. The efforts of the project cities provided valuable insight into the role municipal leaders can play in developing programs that strengthen the job readiness and contribute to the economic success of individuals and families.

For more information, visit www.nlc.org/content/Files/IYEF_Transitional_Jobs_Report.pdf.

Data at a Glance: Race and Child Poverty

In 2004, African American and Hispanic children were more likely to be poor (33% vs. 29%, respectively) than

were white children (10%). Over the past 20 years, African American and Hispanic children were much more likely to be poor than were white children in every year. From *Understanding Recent Changes in Child Poverty*, by Austin Nichols.

To view this publication online and for more information on the Urban Institute, visit www.urban.org/publications/311356.html.

Custody and Control: Conditions of Confinement in New York's Juvenile Prisons for Girls

Human Rights Watch and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) take the first in-depth look at New York's highest security juvenile prisons for girls. What the report uncovers is disturbing: Upon being found delinquent, young girls from backgrounds of intergenerational poverty, many of whom have survived abuse and trauma, are locked up and again abused and neglected, this time at the hands of the state. This report documents the excessive use of a face-down restraint procedure in which girls are thrown to the floor, often causing injury, as well as incidents of sexual abuse and inadequate educational and mental health services.

The report is available online at <http://hrw.org/reports/2006/us0906/>.

Journal and Policy Brief Explore Social and Economic Mobility

The latest issue of *The Future of Children*, a journal published by the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University and the Brookings Institution, features nine articles that focus on the extent to which children's chances of success depend on the circumstances into which they are born. A companion policy brief explores the role of education in enabling less advantaged children to move up the economic ladder. It concludes that, in many respects, the U.S. education system tends to reinforce rather than compensate for differences in family background.

To see the journal and the policy brief, visit www.futureofchildren.org/pubs-info2825/pubs-info_show.htm?doc_id=388485.

Manual Introduces Juvenile Offenders to Community Service Learning

Recently updated and revised, *Giving Back: Introducing Community Service Learning* provides skill-building strategies and materials to introduce juvenile offenders to fundamental concepts of community and community problems.

Developed by the Constitutional Rights Foundation and the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago, through a

grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the manual is a useful resource for youth courts and other juvenile justice agencies seeking to apply school-based learning methods to court-mandated community service.

To access the manual, visit www.crf-usa.org/YouthCourt/Giving_Back_2006.pdf.

Prevention Programs for Young Rural Teens Can Reduce Methamphetamine Abuse Years Later

New research supported in part by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health, shows that prevention programs conducted in middle school can reduce methamphetamine abuse among rural adolescents years later. Because methamphetamine addiction leads to problems with social interactions and a range of medical conditions, research into early interventions such as this is critical to protecting the nation's youth. The paper is published in the September issue of *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*.

For more information visit www.nih.gov/news/pr/sep2006/nida-04.htm.

Cook County Juvenile Advisory Council Program Overview

Juvenile Advisory Council (JAC) is a partnership of probation staff and court wards working together to develop a client-based perspective on the department's program and policies. Youth representatives to the council are equal partners and enjoy the same standing, benefits and rights as adult staff members. JAC relies heavily on its members to guide its work by contributing their thoughts and insights to an ongoing examination of the many aspects of the probation experience. Youth representatives present the probation orientation and the exit interview programs all probationers are required to attend. Preliminary research indicates that clients who attend JAC's Probation Orientation Program return to court for violations approximately half as often as clients who miss the program.

For more information on the JAC program, visit www.vera.org/publication_pdf/273_522.pdf.

Mismatch Between State Child Welfare Initiatives and System Weaknesses

Closing gaps in services for children and families and recruiting and retaining caseworkers are essential to improving child welfare outcomes, according to survey results released by the U.S. General Accountability Office. Yet, far too many state initiatives to better child welfare systems did not address these fundamental

from *Competence*, page 5

ensure mutual accountability, and achieve best outcomes from the group's work.

Generally, the self-assessment work team's process moves through the following steps or phases:

- The agency chooses an organizational strategy for completing a self-assessment, including appointing the team leader and membership, establishing the team's scope and charter, developing a timeline for the project, and establishing working relationships among team members.
- The self-assessment team selects assessment tools based on the agency's unique needs. The group starts with a series of conversations in which the group asks what they want to know about themselves in terms of cultural competency. The team can examine existing self-assessment tools or make their own.
- The group must also determine who is best able to complete specific sections of its survey, or give a work team information necessary to assess cultural competency. These surveys are administered and the results collected, reviewed, and discussed.
- The self-assessment team may conduct in-depth interviews to gather additional information touched upon in the survey. These issues, identified by the team as warranting further exploration, are clarified through these interviews, and the responses are recorded and discussed.
- Evaluation results are reviewed and discussed in total, and the team determines of where the agency is in terms of cultural competency.
- A report is generated to the agency, identifying the agency's relative strengths and offering recommendations for growth and action. This report may lead to a long-term organizational strategy for change.

Taking the First Steps

We found that organizations that have begun the process of developing improved cultural competence can trace the genesis of their journeys back to a single conversation or two. Many have begun their developmental processes by simply having an initial discussion that starts with a question. Individuals who are passionate about the value of cultural respect and are merely waiting for the signal to participate, can be found in all agencies.

Agencies seeking assistance in developing culturally competent practices can turn to CWLA's Division of Cultural Competence.⁴ This division is responsible for the development and implementation of cultural competence

4 For more information see, www.cwla.org/programs/culture.

program principles, goals, operational objectives, and activities for CWLA staff and member agencies.

The division coordinates CWLA's disproportionality efforts, conducts cultural competence assessments, develops curriculum, and provides resources and training support when necessary or when requested by CWLA staff, member agencies, or its Board of Directors. Currently, CWLA has three publications available to members in support of the development of organizational cultural competence.⁵

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Constance Burgess is a parent partner, seasoned trainer, and facilitator of complex group discussion, focusing on multicultural competence, leadership, parent-professional teaming, and wraparound systems change for children and families in need of services. She assists agencies and counties in developing interagency collaboration, strategic planning, leadership skills, cultural competence, and planning processes for systems change.

Matthew Gerst is a practicing licensed clinical psychologist in Morgan Hill, California. He has served as the principal operations director for a number of children's mental health organizations and currently provides consultation and technical assistance to service organizations focusing on strength-based, individualized, and needs-driven services for children and families, cultural competence, and organizational program development in wraparound service systems.

5 Information regarding these CWLA publications is available online at www.cwla.org/pubs/subjsearch.asp?SUBJ=CulturalCompetence.

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

To keep up with the latest juvenile justice news, information, and policy developments, as well as the events, publications, and of the CWLA Juvenile Justice Division, e-mail ksweet@cwla.org and sign up for jjpolnet, the CWLA Juvenile Justice Division listserv.

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from *Ethical Care*, page 9

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For more information

Center for Young Women's Development, San Francisco, www.cywd.org

Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services, Los Angeles, http://glassla.org/cms_glass/index.php

Green Chimneys, New York, New York, www.greenchimneys.org

Lambda Legal Defense Fund, New York, New York, www.lambdalegal.org

Legal Services for Children, San Francisco, www.lscsf.org

Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center (LYRIC), San Francisco, www.lyric.org

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challenges. The new report, *Child Welfare: Improving Social Service Program, Training, and Technical Assistance Information Would Help Address Long-standing Service-Level and Workforce Challenges*, suggests states that have received federal reviews were creating an interagency infrastructure to ensure children and families received needed services.

To read the new publication, visit www.gao.gov/docsearch/abstract.php?rptno=GAO-07-75.

Fact Sheet: Youth Under Age 18 in the Adult Criminal Justice System

This fact sheet from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency presents statistics and issues related to persons under age 18 involved in the adult criminal justice system in the United States, regardless of whether their state considers them adults or juveniles. In all cases, the latest available data is represented.

To see the fact sheet online, visit www.nccd-crc.org/nccd/pubs/2006may_factsheet_youthadult.pdf.

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National Center for Lesbian Rights, San Francisco, www.nclrights.org

Young Women's Empowerment Project, Chicago www.youarepriceless.org

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