



STRATEGY BRIEF

# SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

## Is there an effective model for serving youth involved in both **the child welfare and juvenile justice systems?**

Youth involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems — sometimes referred to as crossover, dually-involved, dually-adjudicated, or dual-system youth — require a special focus.<sup>1</sup> An intentional approach is needed because involvement in both systems is associated with: higher risks for mental health, educational, and vocational challenges; higher rates of recidivism; longer stays in detention; and poorer placement stability and permanency outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, the quality and consistency of casework services provided to crossover youth leave them more vulnerable to placement in restrictive settings, such as group and institutional facilities, and without strong permanency planning activities in place.<sup>3</sup> Crossover youth also require special protection to shield them from the legal consequences of an adjudication of delinquency. Depending on the nature of the crime and specific laws in a jurisdiction, adjudication can have negative, lifelong implications on employment options and also on child welfare outcomes, leaving crossover youth with fewer options for placement and support.



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## Facts about crossover youth



# 92 PERCENT

of crossover youth are first involved in the **child welfare system**.<sup>4</sup>

# 40 PERCENT

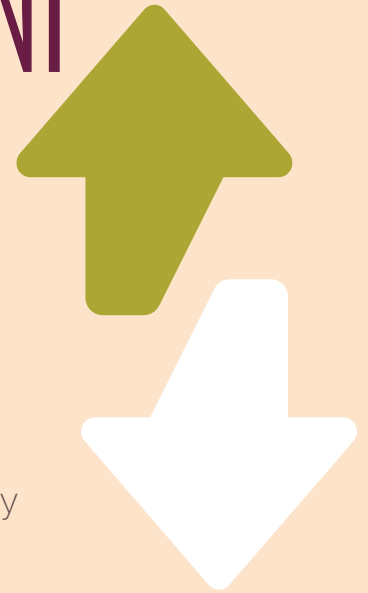
of crossover youth **are female**, which is disproportionately high compared with the general juvenile justice population.<sup>5</sup>



# 47 PERCENT

## GREATER RISK

**Maltreated youth are at a higher risk** for becoming involved in delinquency than youth from the general population.<sup>4</sup>



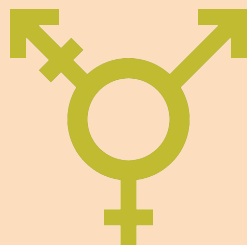
# 56 PERCENT

of crossover youth **are African-American**, which is disproportionately high compared to their peers from other racial groups.<sup>5</sup>



# LGBTQIA+ youth

are overrepresented within the crossover youth population.<sup>6</sup>



# 83 PERCENT

of crossover youth have challenges with **mental health or substance abuse**.<sup>5</sup>

# Is there an effective model for serving youth involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems?

In 2010, with support from Casey Family Programs, the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy developed the [Crossover Youth Practice Model](#) (CYPM) to address the needs of crossover youth. **The CYPM is a strengths-based model that focuses on family engagement and equitable treatment at every level of the system.**

Bold efforts are underway in many jurisdictions to [transform the juvenile justice system](#)<sup>7</sup> and create alternatives that are less punitive and more restorative. Simultaneous efforts are underway within many child welfare systems to [eliminate the need for group placements](#). While transformational changes like these should lead to a reduction in the number of crossover youth, an intentional cross-system approach is necessary for every young person at risk of dual involvement.

Research suggests that the best way to support the needs of crossover youth is to develop a comprehensive approach that involves integrated services from multiple systems including child welfare, juvenile justice, law enforcement, education, behavioral health, and the courts.<sup>8</sup> Multi-system collaboration is essential and minimally must include coordinated case management, joint assessment processes, coordinated case plans, and coordinated case supervision. The CYPM provides a roadmap for making systemic changes that involve these youth-serving systems.

## The Crossover Youth Practice Model

### Goals, values, principles, and themes

The CYPM includes a variety of evidence-based programs and best practices that aim to achieve four overarching goals:

1. Safe reduction in the number of youth placed in out-of-home care

## THE NEED FOR A COORDINATED APPROACH

At age 14, Evan<sup>9</sup> was arrested and spent the remaining years of his childhood involved in both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. He says he experienced a complete lack of coordination between the two. A juvenile corrections officer, who Evan met only rarely and briefly, made decisions determining the path of his life for 10 years. Recommendations from child welfare and behavioral health professionals working with him, as well as his own opinions on his current and future needs and goals, were mostly ignored, Evan says.

Evan was placed in an institutional setting and was unable to attend public school. This was despite multiple recommendations from the staff that knew him best and interacted with him regularly, who indicated he had completed all courses offered through his placement and was routinely bored. It took advocacy from the group placement and mental health staff and a judge's order to finally allow him to attend some public school classes. However, after completing high school, Evan was forced to retake some classes when his juvenile corrections officer lost documentation of his credits, Evan says.

Ultimately, despite having his charges reduced to misdemeanors and completing the required coursework to become a paramedic, Evan was denied a career in the medical field because of charges he faced at age 14. Still, 11 years after his first court hearing, Evan considers himself lucky. He is now employed in a different field, working as an advocate for change as a Jim Casey Young Fellow with the Annie E. Casey Foundation. He recognizes that many others with similar experiences are currently in prison.

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2. Reduction in the use of group and institutional placement
3. Reduction in the number of youth becoming dually involved with the juvenile justice and child welfare systems
4. Reduction in the disproportionate representation of youth of color, particularly in the crossover youth population

All practices, policies, programs, supports, and services in the CYPM are rooted in the following fundamental values, principles, and themes:

- Youth and families have **strengths** and should be treated as unique individuals.
- Systems must utilize **timely, integrated data** to make informed policy and practice decisions.
- **Workforce efficacy** needs to be strengthened and staff at all levels should be trained and supported appropriately to build their knowledge of crossover youth and capacity to implement the CYPM.
- **Family engagement** means building working relationships with families and including youth and family voices in all decision-making, planning, and casework.
- **Permanency** and transition planning is a key focus and begins at case initiation.
- **Disproportionality** and disparities are drivers for decision-making given that youth of color, females, and LGBTQIA+ youth are all overrepresented among crossover youth.
- **Sharing information** across systems is critical and issues must be addressed early on and throughout a case.
- **Alignment** of services through coordinated case management allows for improved effectiveness of service delivery and the achievement of common goals.

- Understanding, accessing, and **coordinating resources** leads to more efficient and effective services.

## Three phases of CYPM implementation

The CYPM is divided into three phases. Each phase identifies policies, programs, and practices that will enhance how a community supports crossover youth.<sup>10</sup> A full listing of the required elements is provided in [The Crossover Youth Practice Model Abbreviated Guide](#).

### PHASE I

During phase one, it is essential to **bring together top-level leadership** from participating agencies (at a minimum, presiding judge from the family court, chief probation officer/director of juvenile services, and the director of the child welfare agency). This team must be deeply committed to the model and actively involved in its implementation. Due to the complexity involved, an **implementation team** is also required. This team should include individuals representing the following organizations/populations: judiciary, juvenile justice, child welfare, education, mental health, substance abuse, youth, parents, law enforcement, attorneys, and Court Appointed Special Advocates (in smaller jurisdictions, communities may combine their leadership and implementation teams for efficiency). During this phase, jurisdictions should identify opportunities to prevent youth from being dually involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. The first phase of the CYPM focuses on two areas:

- **Arrest, identification, and detention:** Studies indicate that crossover youth are detained more often and for longer periods than youth without child welfare involvement.<sup>11</sup> Effective practice includes educating all professionals who work with crossover youth about the differences between youth involved with the child welfare system and their peers. This way, they become aware of the inequities and understand that they are being asked to treat the youth fairly, equitably, and individually and are not being asked to give

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crossover youth an unfair advantage. Identifying these young people at the point of crossover also enables collaboration at the earliest point possible.

- **Decision-making regarding charges:** Charging decisions can change a youth's trajectory. Effective practice includes evaluating and exploring the possibility of changing the way charging decisions are made by working with prosecutors and defense attorneys to develop strategies around information-sharing so that parties making charging decisions have the benefit of the youth's history and understanding of what led to the incident in question.

## PHASE II

Once a youth becomes dually involved, joint assessments and coordinated case planning are required across systems. Policies and procedures need to be in place to support the coordination and communication between everyone involved in supporting the youth, including:

- **Joint assessment and planning:** The child welfare and juvenile justice caseworkers should immediately begin working together with the youth and his or her family. This includes minimizing the use of duplicative assessments and sharing information when permissible.
- **Case assignment:** Decision-making related to the case within and across systems must be coordinated. At a systemic level, this includes considering opportunities for dedicated crossover staff or point people for ease of communication and consistency.
- **Court structures:** Jurisdictions are strongly encouraged to use either a dedicated docket or a one judge/one family approach to improve coordination and handling of cases.

- **Multi-disciplinary joint assessment process and coordinated case planning:** A coordinated plan for the youth and his or her family or caregiver is developed by compiling information from across systems (including consideration of mental health, substance use, and educational needs) and holding family-centered interagency discussions based on this shared information. These discussions lead to the development of a coordinated case plan to guide coordinated case management services.
- **Placement of crossover youth:** Research has shown that placement in a group setting is a contributing factor to youth crossing over from child welfare to juvenile justice, and that such placements are generally not the most effective form of intervention for crossover youth.<sup>12</sup> Youth who have been involved in the juvenile justice system often end up in group settings as their first out-of-home placement because of an arrest history. Jurisdictions must examine their use of group and institutional settings and placements and adopt best practices to achieve reduction. Jurisdictions should work with community providers to develop a flexible array of resources, such as family-based placements and placement with kin that respond to the needs and strengths of youth and families.

## PHASE III

In this final phase, agencies coordinate an ongoing assessment of youth and family progress and jointly implement the case plan, making adjustments as needed. Additional activities include:

- **Ongoing assessment of progress:** Those involved in serving the youth and family (including, at a minimum, the child welfare and juvenile justice caseworkers, placement provider, community-based providers, school personnel, and kin) take an active role in determining the

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efficacy of the case plan and bringing any issues to the team for problem resolution.

- **Planning for youth permanency, transition and case closure:** Effective child welfare and juvenile justice caseworkers work collaboratively to support youth to achieve permanency and effectively transition upon case closure. This includes agencies providing ample notice to their partners when case closure is being considered.
- **Permanency planning:** Permanency planning begins at the onset of serving every youth and family. All practices supported by the practice model (such as permanency roundtables and benchmark conferences) aid in achieving the goal of family reunification.

## Evidence to support the CYPM<sup>13</sup>

The Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy has conducted internal evaluations on the CYPM and two other universities have conducted external research evaluations that have demonstrated the model's efficacy. In recent years, the CYPM has been indicated as a "Promising Program" on multiple clearinghouses and registries, including the California Evidence Based Clearinghouse (2018) and U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice (2020).

Results indicate that the CYPM is having a positive impact on identification, case management, and improved outcomes for crossover youth. Use of the CYPM led to early identification of crossover youth at significantly higher rates compared to those who received practice as usual. Involvement in extracurricular and structured activities, as well as contact with family and parents, also increased for youth who experienced the practice model. Additionally, when compared to crossover youth who did not experience the CYPM, youth involved in the practice model were:

- Slightly more likely to have their cases dismissed or receive diversion, and less likely to receive probation supervision or placement in corrections.
- Three times more likely to receive a promising practice, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Functional Family Therapy, or wraparound services.
- Less likely to live in group settings.
- Less likely to have Another Permanent Planned Living Arrangement as a permanency goal.
- More likely to have "remain at home" as a permanency goal.
- More likely to have one or both cases (child welfare and/or juvenile justice) closed.
- More likely to show improvements in mental health.

## Jurisdictional implementation

As of 2022, more than 120 counties in 23 states have implemented or are in the process of [implementing the CYPM](#), with training and technical assistance support from the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform. Select examples of jurisdictional experiences, outcomes, and lessons learned can be found in the following reports:

- [Harris County, Texas](#), created a program for law students to build the unique skills needed to effectively serve crossover youth. Creating a legal workforce knowledgeable about the best ways to serve youth involved in both systems is essential to coordinating cross-system services.
- [Eastern Idaho](#) began fully implementing the CYPM in three counties in February 2020 after extensive planning with stakeholders. Pilot data gathered before and after implementation outline the demographics of crossover youth, differences in case processing and outcomes, and differences in social, behavioral health, and educational outcomes.

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- [Los Angeles County](#) studied how many youth involved in the juvenile justice system were at some point previously involved in the child welfare system. The purpose of the study was to identify

when additional supports may have helped strengthen the family and avoid future involvement with juvenile justice.

To learn more, visit [Questions from the field](#) at [Casey.org](#).

- 1 Unless otherwise noted, information in this document was gathered from materials provided by the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform (<http://cjjr.georgetown.edu/our-work/crossover-youth-practice-model/>) and personal communication with Macon Stewart, Senior Program Manager, Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, December 20, 2017 and Alex Miller, Program Manager, Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, April 6, 2022.
- 2 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>
- 3 Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2013). *NO PLACE FOR KIDS: The Case for Reducing Juvenile Incarceration*. Retrieved from <https://www.aecf.org/resources/no-place-for-kids-full-report>
- 4 Haight, W., Bidwell, L., Choi, W.S., & Cho, M. (2016). *An evaluation of the Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM): Recidivism outcomes for maltreated youth involved in the juvenile justice system*. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 6, 578-85.
- 5 The Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy. (2017). *The Crossover Youth Practice Model: A Summary of Evaluations*.
- 6 Irvine, Angela Ph.D. and Canfield, Aisha M.PP (2016). *The Overrepresentation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Questioning, Gender Nonconforming and Transgender Youth Within the Child Welfare to Juvenile Justice Crossover Population*. *Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law*, 24: (2), Article 2. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/jgsp/vol24/iss2/2>
- 7 For more information about efforts to transform juvenile justice, please see the following resources:
  - Georgetown University, [Transforming Juvenile Probation](#)
  - Annie E. Casey Foundation, [Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative](#)
  - NCJFCJ, [The Role of the Judge in Transforming Juvenile Justice](#) (2021)
  - Urban Institute, [Transforming Juvenile Probation](#) (2021)
- 8 Haight, W., Bidwell, L., Marshall, J.M., Khatiwoda, P. (2014) Implementing the Crossover Youth Practice Model in diverse contexts: Child welfare and juvenile justice professionals' experiences of multisystem collaborations. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 39, 91-100.
- 9 Conversation with Evan Davis on April 12, 2022
- 10 Aspects of the CYPM can be adapted for individual jurisdictions, however practices must be implemented with fidelity.
- 11 Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy Center for Juvenile Justice Reform. (2015). *The Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM): An Abbreviated Guide*. Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IUXfhHxnknx5XctxJU3iBMW-eVDLcll/view>
- 12 Barth, R. P. (2002). Institutions vs. foster homes: The empirical base for the second century of debate. Retrieved from <http://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/Institutions%20vs%20Foster%20Homes.pdf>
- 13 Research briefs and articles are available on the CJJR website: <http://cjjr.georgetown.edu/resources/publications/>

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