

A New Mindset for Correctional Out-of-Home Placements and Use of the County Home School

Final Report and Recommendations from the Correctional Out-of-Home Placement Workgroup

Concerns voiced by the Hennepin County Board in early 2008 about the efficacy of the County Home School resulted in the formation of the Correctional Out-of-Home Placement Workgroup.¹ Over the course of five months, the Workgroup found that many elements of the current correctional placement process in Hennepin County need to be restructured – including the County Home School.

Hennepin County spends \$31 million each year on correctional out-of-home placements. These taxpayer dollars can be spent in a way that is more effective in protecting public safety, in reducing juvenile delinquency and in serving the best interests of the juvenile. To do this, the entire juvenile justice system and the Department of Human Services and Public Health need to work together toward a common vision.

Hennepin County Vision for Correctional Placements

Our juvenile justice and out-of-home placement system will:

- Focus on the goals of public safety, reducing juvenile delinquency and serving the best interests of the child;
- Use programs and services proven to reduce future criminal behavior;
- Measure the results of its actions;
- Be cost effective and use tax payer resources more efficiently; and,
- Strengthen families and communities and end the cycle of repeated out-of-home placements.

The recommendations put forward by this Workgroup require a change in mindset in Hennepin County. They move our system from one that focuses on processes to one that focuses on achieving the desired results.

Research tells us that some interventions work better than others to reduce future criminal behavior and many of the most effective interventions cost less than our current practices. However, Hennepin County's current practices do not use the most effective interventions. The Workgroup's recommendations are based on current national research and effective practices. Other Minnesota communities including Dakota, Ramsey and

¹ The Workgroup was comprised of Judge Lucy Wieland; Judge Tanya Bransford; Judge Kathryn Quaintance; Community Corrections & Rehabilitation Director Thomas Merkel; Community Corrections & Rehabilitation Area Directors Chris Owens and Jerry Driessen; Human Services and Public Health Department liaison Brian Guidera; and, Community Corrections & Rehabilitation Project Manager Jennifer Schuster-Jaeger.

Washington counties have implemented many of these effective practices and have seen cost savings, reduced recidivism and public safety improvement.

Taken as a whole, the recommendations will do two things: 1) help Hennepin County reduce the number of correctional placements and related costs; and, 2) allow Hennepin County to re-invest or reallocate those cost savings toward the creation of community based services that are more effective and less expensive.

Workgroup Recommendations

- 1.** Reduce the number of out-of-home placements and the length of stay.
- 2.** Transform the County Home School; dramatically restructure programming and reduce operational costs.
- 3.** Invest cost savings from fewer placements and reduced length of stay to develop a continuum of services for addressing juvenile delinquency that includes more effective and less expensive intensive in-home community-based treatments.
- 4.** Move existing \$15.6 million for contracted correctional out-home-placements from the Human Services and Public Health Department (HSPHD) budget to the Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCCR) budget.
- 5.** Reduce the number of out-of-home placement providers in order to better manage contracts and increase accountability.
- 6.** Routinely measure outcomes and audit costs associated with all programs and placements.
- 7.** Create an oversight group to implement these recommendations.

Workgroup Recommendations

1. Reduce the number of out-of-home placements and the length of stay.

In 2007, Hennepin County Juvenile Court sent 494 juveniles to a correctional out-of-home placement. The majority of these youth (72%) were adjudicated for a felony offense. Conversely, one-quarter were sent to a correctional placement for a gross misdemeanor or misdemeanor offense. Less than half of the juveniles (48%) sent to correctional placement scored as a high risk to public safety based on the risk assessment instrument used by juvenile probation.²

² Juvenile Probation uses the Youth Level of Service Inventory (YLSI) tool to measure juvenile offenders' "risks and needs" with regard to various criminogenic factors, such as offense history, family circumstances, educational/vocational skills or deficiencies, substance abuse, etc. YLSI data provide objective and valid information to help determine appropriate services and risk of re-offending.

The Workgroup recommends that Hennepin County develop a continuum of intensive in-home services for juveniles who are low and moderate risk to reoffend. Based on preliminary data, approximately 100 juveniles who scored low or moderate as a risk to public safety and are currently sent out-of-home could instead receive community-based services and supervision. This will save money because intensive community-based services are less expensive than out-of-home placements and public safety will not be compromised.

In addition, the Workgroup recommends that residential correctional placements be less than nine months with the exception of sex offender programs which should be longer than nine months. National research reviewed by the Workgroup states that the recommended length of treatment is three to nine months. The Workgroup did not find evidence that longer lengths of stay reduce future criminal behavior. Furthermore, research suggests that participants may experience negative effects from treatment which is too long (beyond 12 months). Reducing current lengths of stay to less than nine months will reduce overall placement costs.

2. Transform the County Home School; dramatically restructure programming and reduce operational costs.

The County Home School currently serves as a place of “last resort” or “catch-all” for out-of-home placements. It costs between \$100 to \$200 per-day more than other out-of-home placement providers used by the County. The concept of decommissioning the County Home School was not taken lightly by the Workgroup.

The County Home School’s greatest asset is its proximity to the families and communities it serves. Based on national research, family engagement is a significant component of effective interventions for delinquent youth. Juveniles whose families are engaged in the treatment process are less likely to reoffend. The Workgroup recommends that the Home School be restructured into a facility that serves an overall strategy to keep juvenile delinquents engaged with their families and communities whenever possible. Families need to be trained on ways to support their children in a pro-social lifestyle.

National research also emphasizes the importance of aftercare and reentry services for juveniles who have been in out-of-home placement. Juveniles are often released to disorganized communities, where it is easy to slip back into the habits that resulted in their arrest in the first place. Aftercare can help maintain any gains made by juvenile offenders in correctional facilities. The restructured Home School will provide aftercare services and structure during the transition back into the community for all Hennepin County juveniles returning from out-of-home placement.

The restructuring of the Home School will include the addition of programming not currently offered, redesigning some existing programming and eliminating some of the existing programming (detailed in Appendix 1).

Two programs that will be added at the County Home School include:

- Daytime (12-hour) non-residential vocational and consequence programming through a reformatted version the BETA program; and,
- Daytime (12-hour) non-residential Structured Day Treatment (SDT).

These two programs will complement the continuum described in recommendation #3. They will be used when specific juveniles require more structured programming than can be provided in-the-home but do not require an out-of-home placement. Both of these programs will be connected to current correctional programs including Sentence to Service and Electronic Home Monitoring.

Restructured programming at the County Home School will include:

- Continuation of the current Sex Offender Program;
- A restructured Female Offender Program – 3 to 6 months in length;
- A restructured Male Offender Program – 3 to 6 months in length; and,
- An expanded Transition Program so all juveniles returning from out-of-home placements will receive transitional services to prepare them to succeed when they return to their families and community.

All programs will be redesigned based on current research. They will also be the first programs used by the Hennepin County Juvenile Court when appropriate– thus ensuring maximum utilization of the programs at the Home School. All of these programs will include educational and vocational programming. The Juvenile Male Offender Program will be 3 to 6 months in length.

Four areas currently operated at the Home School will be eliminated:

- The Secure Unit will be eliminated as a 24/7 operational area; and,
- The three residential treatment programs currently offered to Juvenile Male Offenders at the Home School will be eliminated.
 - These juveniles will either receive alternative services outlined in recommendation #3 or be sent to other correctional placements.

To decrease operational costs, the Home School will:

- Discontinue the 3 residential treatment programs currently offered for Juvenile Male Offenders;
- Operate BETA and SDT for 12-hours-per-day, 7-days-per-week instead of 24 hours/7-days-per-week;
- Eliminate the Secure Unit as a 24/7 operational area; and
- Modify staffing patterns for more efficient use of staff.

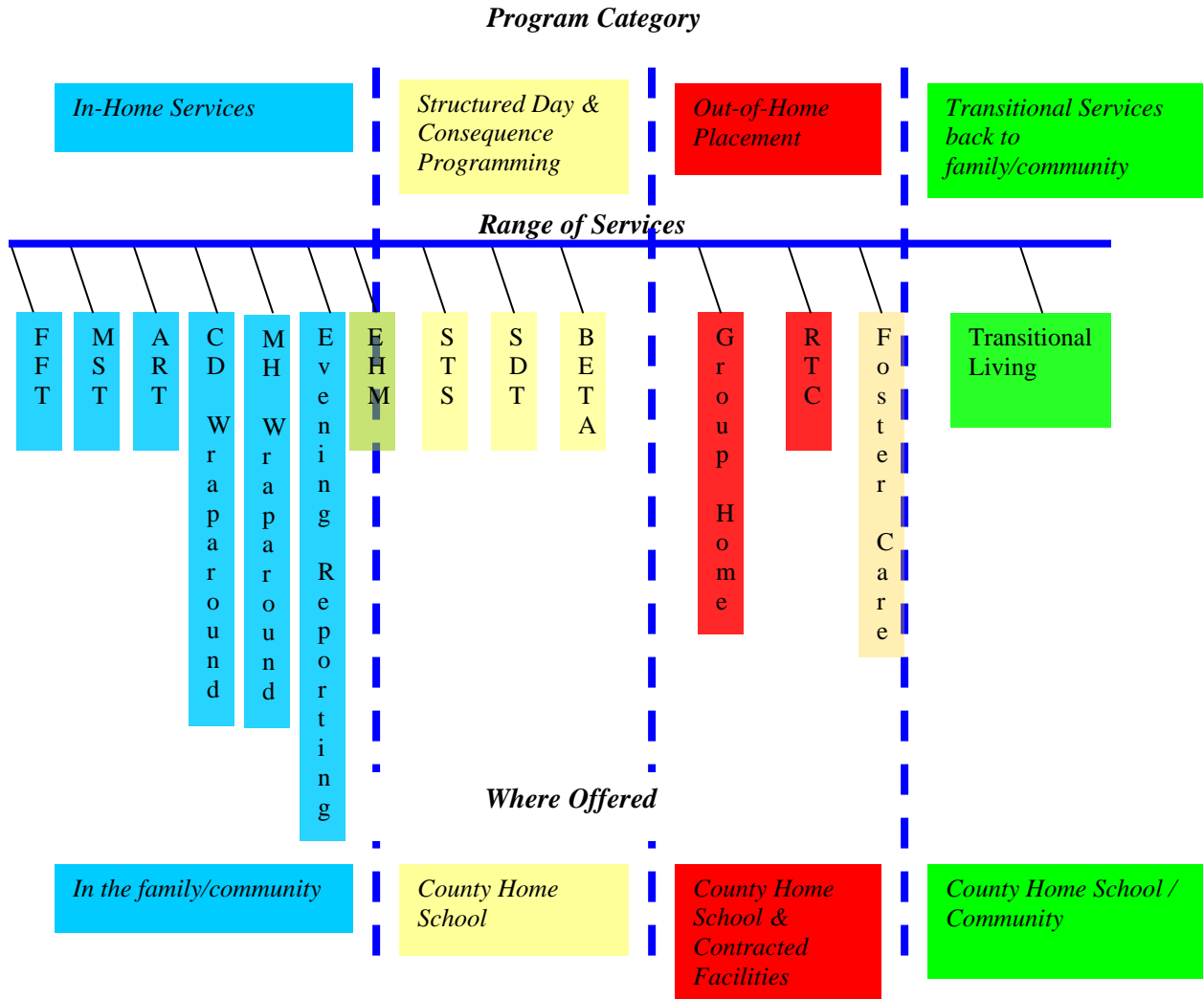
3. *Invest cost savings from fewer placements and reduced length of stay to develop a continuum of services for addressing juvenile delinquency that includes more effective and less expensive intensive in-home community-based treatments.*

The Workgroup recommends that dollars saved from implementation of its recommendations be re-allocated to develop a continuum of in-home services to serve as alternatives to correctional out-of-home placement. This does not mean that juveniles will never be sent out-of-home. Instead, a continuum of services, up to and including out-home-placement, will be used to most effectively and least expensively protect public safety, reduce juvenile delinquency and serve the best interests of the juvenile (proposed continuum is outlined in Diagram 1).

National research of effective interventions to reduce juvenile criminal behavior shows treatment-oriented intervention works better than punishment in changing future behavior. In addition, treatment in the community is more likely to be effective than treatment in institutions. High-quality community-based programs often yield better results than out-of-home placement at a fraction of the cost. Current programming used in Dakota, Washington and Ramsey Counties demonstrates that in-home family based services are *more effective and less expensive* than out-of-home placement.

To effectively reduce juveniles' future criminal behavior, the criminal justice system must develop and support a range of services including family focused interventions, structured day and consequence programming for juveniles, electronic supervision, evidence-based out-of-home intervention and structured transition services. The following structured interventions have been proven to reduce future criminal behavior: Functional Family Therapy (FFT); Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST); Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART); Chemical Dependency (CD) Wraparound Services; and, Mental Health (MH) Wraparound Services. None of these proven in-home services are available in Hennepin County for these juveniles - resulting in overuse of correctional out-of-home placements. The use of Electronic Home Monitoring (EHM) and enhanced GPS monitoring will provide accountability and protect public safety while the juveniles and their families are engaged in community-based services.

**Diagram 1
Proposed Continuum of Services for Responding to Delinquent Juveniles**



4. Move existing \$15.6 million for contracted correctional out-home-placements from the Human Services and Public Health Department (HSPHD) budget to the Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCCR) budget.

In 2007, \$15.6 million was spent on sending juveniles to 68 different privately operated correctional out-of-home placements. The dollars associated with these placements are currently managed by HSPHD, however the placement processes are managed by the DOCCR, Hennepin County Juvenile Court and the rest of the criminal justice system. The remaining dollars spent on correctional placements (\$12.5 million for operating the County Home School, \$1.8 million for placing juveniles at Red Wing and \$686,000 for operating the BETA program) are currently managed by the DOCCR.

The Workgroup recommends that these dollars be moved to the DOCCR budget so budget accountability is closer to the criminal justice agencies who affect out-of-home placement decisions. Consolidating this funding will create the flexibility to develop an array of effective services including in-home intensive services.

The Workgroup recognizes that juveniles have complex needs that are served by both HSPHD and DOCCR. In addition, there is significant existing fiscal infrastructure which serves both departments. HSPHD and DOCCR must continue to work in partnership to create more effective and cost effective services.

5. Reduce the number of out-of-home placement providers in order to better manage contracts and increase accountability.

When the Workgroup was formed, there was an assumption that the top four placement providers used for Hennepin County correctional placements were the County Home School, Glen Mills, Woodland Hills and Red Wing. The group was surprised to find a total of 68 different programs were used for correctional placements in 2007. In addition, one fifth of the juveniles who were sent to placement in 2007 went to more than one placement resulting in 494 juveniles sent to 585 placements. Approximately two-thirds of all correctional placements in 2007 were sent to twelve providers. The remaining one-third went to fifty-six different providers. Many of these programs are not routinely monitored for effectiveness or quality assurance – which is understandable given the large number of different providers used and the lack of quality assurance standards in Hennepin County.

Table 1
Top 12 Correctional Out-of-Home Placements in 2007

<i>Placement</i>	<i>How many kids did we send in 2007?</i>	<i>How long did they stay on average³?</i>	<i>How much does it currently cost the county per day?</i>
Hennepin County Home School	94	9 months	\$332 ⁴
Woodland Hills - Treatment	37	9 months	\$189
Thistledeew Camp	37	3 months	\$140-\$161
Elmore Academy	36	4 months	\$112
Eau Claire Academy	34	7 months	\$228
Hearthstone Group Home	30	8 months	\$220
Woodland Hills - Consequence	27	3 months	\$124
St. Josephs Home for Children	24	1 month	\$195
Bar None	23	6 months	\$186-\$266
Glen Mills Schools	17	16 months	\$110
MCF- Red Wing	15	15 months	\$115
Mille Lacs Academy	15	12 months	\$215

³ Average length of stay is for placements made in 2006.

⁴ The current per-diem at the County Home School would be \$251 if all programs were fully utilized, meaning all beds currently staffed and budgeted for were filled every day of the year.

The Workgroup recommends a dramatic reduction in the number of vendors used for correctional out-of-home placement and that the remaining vendors be managed based on service quality, outcomes, and cost.

6. *Routinely measure outcomes and audit costs associated with all programs and placements.*

None of the current correctional placement programs are routinely measured based on outcomes and cost. Although all placements meet licensing standards and provide an acceptable level of care, the services provided are not evaluated for their conformance with correctional best practices or their success in reducing future criminal behavior. The Workgroup recommends that measurement begin immediately and include:

- Report regularly on the quality of services by evaluating programs and services against correctional best practices;
- Report regularly on the cost of services;
- Measure juvenile criminal behavior at one, two and three years following placement;
- Measure juvenile risk to reoffend and track changes to that risk before and after placement or other programming; and,
- Report regularly to the bench on juveniles in out-of-home placement including length of stay, progress toward goals, and plans for future living arrangements.

7. *Create an oversight group to implement these recommendations.*

Full implementation of the recommendations outlined in this report will require a great deal of effort and time. In addition, implementation will require significant buy-in from the DOCCR, the bench, juvenile justice partners, HSPHD and the community. The Workgroup recommends that an Oversight Group with representatives from DOCCR, the bench, HSPHD and the community be established to ensure the successful implementation of these recommendations.

Conclusion

Implementation of the recommendations contained in this report will result in significant changes to current correctional out-of-home placement practices in Hennepin County. The Workgroup believes that these recommendations are consistent with national research and will better serve the needs of juveniles in the system. These recommendations will not compromise public safety.