

Strengthening the Missouri Model of Juvenile Justice: Missouri Division of Youth Services Staff Perspectives

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Introduction

The Missouri Division of Youth Services (DYS) approach to juvenile justice has become a national model, often referred to as “The Missouri Model.” Missouri’s approach has produced positive outcomes including satisfactory discharges, high law-abiding rates, and low rates of recidivisms.¹ Although a model for other states, Missouri DHS is not without room for growth. We propose that one of the ways to improve is by involving the family members more in the youth’s treatment plan. Based on the suggestion made

by Ringle and colleagues to blend out-of-home residential care with family based in-home aftercare services, this study aimed to explore Missouri DHS staff perspectives on merging Intensive Family Reunification Services into the current Missouri DHS Model of Juvenile Justice.²

Background

The juvenile justice system applies a comprehensive and systematic approach to treat adjudicated delinquents and prevent further delinquent action. This system does not seek to criminalize and stigmatize young offenders, but rather provide treatment options that best suit their needs and the needs of the community.³ However, until the 20th century, children were not guaranteed any rights or treated differently from adults.⁴ The idea of *parens patriae*⁵ led a new way for handling delinquent and neglected children; however, there were still many injustices as children were not allowed certain rights.⁶ Moving forward into the 20th century, juvenile approaches and standards were greatly improved and clear distinctions between criminal and juvenile offenses were created and maintained.⁷ The current juvenile justice model completely separates adults from juveniles⁸ including the terminology and resources. Like the criminal justice system, the juvenile justice system contains three

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¹ Missouri Department of Social Services: Division of Youth Services, *Annual Report Fiscal Year 2019*, accessed July 7, 2020, <https://dss.mo.gov/re/pdf/dys/youth-services-annual-report-fy19.pdf>, 1-42.

² Jay L. Ringle, Ronald W. Thompson, and Mona Way, “Reunifying Families After an Out-of-Home Residential Stay: Evaluation of a Blended Intervention,” *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 24, no. 7 (2015): 2079–87, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-014-0009-2>.

³ Bruce Bullington, Daniel Katkin, and Drew Hyman, “Rhetoric and Reality in the Reform of Juvenile Justice Policy,” *Review of Policy Research* 2, no. 2 (1982): 230-238.

⁴ Brooke Troutman, “A More Just System of Juvenile Justice,” *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* (1973) 108, no. 1 (2018): 197-221.

⁵ The Latin term, *parens patriae*, refers to the “parent of the nation.”

⁶ Bullington, Katkin, and Hyman, “Rhetoric and Reality.”

⁷ Troutman, “A More Just System.”

⁸ Juvenile refers to an individual under the age of 18 years old.

significant components: policing, courts, and corrections. However, juveniles are not tried, convicted, and sentenced. In contrast, juveniles are diverted, adjudicated, and treated.

First Contact and Sentencing

When a minor first encounters the police, the officer has the authority to detain the juvenile or place them back in the care of their parents or guardians.⁹ If the officer's assessment confirms that the minor may be a risk to themselves or others in the community, the child is then diverted to the juvenile court. The juvenile court system evaluates each case independently and identifies whether the child should be placed in a detention facility or should remain with their caretakers in the community. Following the decision, a systematic process is followed to ensure the safety of the juvenile and society. As discussed in the aforementioned section, the court determines if the child should be remanded to a detention facility or remain in the custody of their guardians until their trial. The second stage is the adjudication hearing, which is considered the trial element of the court process.¹⁰ At this stage, the judge determines guilt or innocence. If the minor is found to be an adjudicated delinquent, the next phase is for the judge to determine a disposition.¹¹ Dispositions range from probation to rehabilitation to more intensive correctional treatments. In a criminal court, dispositions would be referred to as sentences or punishments. However, after the Illinois Court Act of 1899, youths were separated from adult criminals¹² and were to be given treatments rather than punishments. The primary goal and overarching premise of the juvenile process is to examine the needs of the minor, determine proper treatments, and, ideally, prevent future delinquent behavior.

Corrections

After a juvenile is adjudicated, a proper sentence is given considering the juvenile's background, prior history, family dynamics, and other significant factors. Treatments within juvenile corrections include probation, electronic monitoring, community service, rehabilitation programs, group homes, confinement, and boot camps.¹³ The placement which is deemed most appropriate for the adjudicated youth is dependent upon the recommendations of the court. The most restrictive treatment is confinement at a residential facility.¹⁴ If a juvenile is taken out of their home environment, then it is the responsibility of the juvenile justice system to address schooling, important social relationships, mental health, substance use and other components that are critical to a juvenile's daily lifestyle.¹⁵

Missouri Juvenile Justice Reform

According to the Missouri Department of Social Services, Missouri began systemic planning to reform the juvenile justice system in the 1970s.¹⁶ The reform included abandoning the larger "training schools" and replacing them with smaller treatment facilities with a five-year plan to: a) expand community-based services; b) establish delinquency prevention programs; c) build staff development and training; d) improve the quality of programs; e) improve quality of education for youth; and f) conduct effective research and evaluation.¹⁷ In 1981, Missouri's state juvenile corrections agency, the Division of Youth Services (DYS), incorporated family therapy to the treatment plan.¹⁸ The program then added day treatment programs and intensive case management services in the early 1990s. Missouri's new youth corrections approach centered on the philosophy of rehabilitation and therapeutic peer-based treatment.¹⁹ The multi-

⁹ U.S. Department of Justice: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Statistical Briefing Book, "Juvenile Justice System Structure and Process," accessed July 14, 2020, https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/structure_process/case.html.

¹⁰ (OJJDP) Statistical Briefing Book, 2020.

¹¹ A disposition is the "sentence" placed on the juvenile for being found guilty.

¹² David S. Tanenhaus, *Juvenile Justice in the Making* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Troutman, "A More Just System."

¹³ US Department of Justice: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Statistical Briefing Book,

"Probation as Court Disposition," accessed July 1, 2020, <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/>.

¹⁴ (OJJDP) Statistical Briefing Book, 2020.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Missouri Department of Social Services: Missouri Division of Youth Services, *The Missouri Approach: Our History*, accessed July 7, 2020, <http://missouriapproach.org/history/>.

¹⁷ Missouri Department of Social Services, *The Missouri Approach*.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Missouri Department of Social Services, *Annual Report Fiscal Year 2019*; Missouri Department of Social Services:

layered treatment and youth development approach aimed to assist juveniles in making behavioral changes while also supporting them through a successful transition back into the community.²⁰ With these changes, Missouri gained attention and became the model for many other states.²¹ State officials across the country have visited Missouri to learn more about Missouri's juvenile treatment model²² and states continue to express a desire to replicate Missouri's model.²³

Juvenile Outcomes and Recidivism in Missouri

During the fiscal year of 2019, DYS served five geographical regions in Missouri and oversaw twenty-nine residential facilities serving 1,217 youths and 450 youths in their day-treatment programs.²⁴ Through the services that DYS provides, Missouri has seen positive outcomes including satisfactory discharges, high law-abiding rates, and low rates of recidivisms.²⁵ Out of the 710 youths who were discharged from DYS custody, only 9 percent, or 65 total, were unsatisfactory discharges, a decrease from the prior year.²⁶

Out of the 640 Missouri youths who were discharged in 2016, 14.6 percent recidivated after one year, 22.4

percent after two years, and 26.9 percent after three years.²⁷ Roughly, 73 percent of youths remained law-abiding after three years, a rate that has remained consistent over the past five years.²⁸ In comparison with other state juvenile correction agencies that measure recidivism similarly, such as Arizona, Indiana, and Maryland, Missouri achieves greater success in reducing recidivism.²⁹ Unfortunately, there is not a standard measure of recidivism that is used across all states and few even measure recidivism of youth after their discharge from corrections.³⁰ Therefore, comparing Missouri's recidivism rate to many states, as well as the nation, is difficult; however, it should be noted that it is not uncommon to see numbers as high as 75 percent recidivism after three years of release.³¹ With numbers as low as Missouri's, it is understood why it is a model that many other states are looking to for their own juvenile justice reform.

Importance of Family in Reducing Juvenile Delinquency

In order to reduce recidivism, criminogenic needs, also referred to as dynamic predictors or dynamic risk factors, must be addressed.³² Family has consistently been identified as a criminogenic need.³³ For

Missouri Division of Youth Services, *The Missouri Approach: Who We Are*, accessed July 7, 2020, <http://missouriapproach.org/approach/>.

²⁰ Richard Mendel, *The Missouri Model: Reinventing the Practice of Rehabilitating Youthful Offenders* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010); Missouri Department of Social Services, *Annual Report Fiscal Year 2019*.

²¹ Missouri Department of Social Services, *Annual Report Fiscal Year 2019*; Richard A. Mendel, "Less Cost, More Safety: Guiding Lights for Reform in Juvenile Justice." *American Youth Policy Forum*, Washington, D.C., 2001; Opinion Page, "The Right Model for Juvenile Justice," *The New York Times*, October 28, 2007, accessed July 7, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/28/opinion/28sun2.html>; Todd Lewann, "Mo. Tries New Approach on Teen Offenders," *USA Today*, December 29, 2007, accessed July 7, 2020, www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-12-29-2062815235_x.htm.

²² Mendel, *The Missouri Model*, 2010.

²³ Missouri Department of Social Services, *The Missouri Approach: Who We Are*.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Missouri Department of Social Services, *Annual Report Fiscal Year 2019*.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Mendel, *The Missouri Model*, 2010.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Elizabeth Seigle, Nastassia Walsh, and Josh Weber, *Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System*, The Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2014, accessed July 7, 2020, https://www.njcn.org/uploads/digital-library/CSG_Core-Principles-for-Reducing-Recidivism-Improving-Outcomes-for-Youth-in-the-JJ-System_2014.pdf.

³² Donald Arthur Andrews and James Bonta, *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct* (New Providence, NJ: Matthew Bender & Company, Inc, 2010), 49.

³³ Ibid.; Robert Agnew, *Juvenile Delinquency: Causes and Control* (United States: Oxford University Press, 2004); Michael T. Baglivio and Kevin T. Wolff, "Predicting Juvenile Reentry Success: Developing a Global Risk Score and Risk Classification Levels Using the Residential Positive Achievement Change Tool," *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 17, no. 3 (2019): 241–68, accessed July 8, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204018804870>; Linda Simourd and Don A. Andrews, "Correlates of Delinquency: A Look at Gender Differences," *Forum on Corrections Research*

example, Andrews and Bonta lay out a summary of the Central Eight risk/need factors that are said to predict criminal behavior.³⁴ These eight risk/need factors are included on the widely used Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) risk assessment and case management tool, based on principles of the empirically-supported Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) framework.³⁵ Making the Central Eight list is the domain of *Family/Marital Circumstances*. For youth, the two key variables are related to the parent-child relationship: nurturance/caring and monitoring/supervision. A lack of nurturance/caring and/or little monitoring/supervision requires targeted change of the parent-child relationship which could include reducing conflict, building a positive relationship, and/or enhancing monitoring and supervision.

Importance of Family in Rehabilitation

Family involvement throughout a youth's rehabilitation is a critical component to the youth's success.³⁶ Several research-based, family-focused models have been developed to reduce youth involvement in court

and increase family skills. Multisystemic therapy (MST), functional family therapy (FFT), parenting with love and limits (PLL) and the family integrated transition (FIT) program all work to engage the family and provide any services that are needed, such as assisting the caregivers in developing effective parenting skills. Each of these interventions have shown to produce positive outcomes in reducing recidivism.³⁷

In addition to therapy, in-home services are another promising intervention approach. In-home programs are usually hosted within a youth's home and provide services to the family such as case management.³⁸ In-home programs put the family as the unit of focus and provide individualized services to connect the family with community supports and networks and to improve family functioning and parenting.³⁹ Research has shown that in-home programs improve outcomes related to caregiver stress, family functioning, child behavior, parenting, and family access to resources.⁴⁰

6, no. 1 (January 1994) 26-31, accessed July 9, 2020, https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/research/forum/e061/061g_e.pdf; Duyen Luong and J. Stephen Wormith, "Applying Risk/Need Assessment to Probation Practice and Its Impact on the Recidivism of Young Offenders," *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 38, no. 12 (2011): 1177-99, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854811421596>; Tracey A. Vieira, Tracey A. Skilling, and Michele Peterson-Badali, "Matching Court-Ordered Services with Treatment Needs: Predicting Treatment Success with Young Offenders," *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 36, no. 4 (2009): 385-401, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854808331249>.

³⁴ Andrews and Bonta, *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*, 2010.

³⁵ Ibid.; Maggie Clarke, Michele Peterson-Badali, and Tracey Skilling, "Patterns of Change in Dynamic Risk Factors over Time in Youth Offenders," *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice* 61, no. 2 (2019): 1-25, accessed June 19, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjccj.2018-0001>; Robert D. Hoge and Donald A. Andrews, "The Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory Manual and Scoring Key," *Toronto, Canada: Multi-Health Systems* (2002).

³⁶ Joey Hedger, "A 'Mom and Pop' Confinement: How Families Can and Must Get Involved in the Juvenile Justice System," *Corrections Today* 79, no. 2 (2017): 32-36, accessed June 19, 2020, <https://www.questia.com/magazine/1G1-485937102/a-mom-and-pop-confinement-how-families-can-and>.

³⁷ Lili Garfinkel, "Improving Family Involvement for Juvenile Offenders with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders and Related Disabilities," *Behavioral Disorders* 36, no. 1 (2010): 52-60, accessed June 19, 2020, <https://www.pacer.org/jj/pdf/bedi-36-01-52.pdf>; Eli A. Karam, Emma M. Sterrett, and Lynn Kiaer, "The

Integration of Family and Group Therapy as an Alternative to Juvenile Incarceration: A Quasi-Experimental Evaluation using Parenting with Love and Limits," *Family Process* 56, no. 2 (2017): 331-347, accessed June 19, 2020, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/famp.12187>; Cindy M. Schaeffer and Charles M. Borduin, "Long-Term Follow-Up to a Randomized Clinical Trial of Multisystemic Therapy with Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 73, no. 3 (2005): 445, accessed June 19, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.73.3.445>.

³⁸ Kristin Duppong Hurley et al., "Parental Report of Outcomes from a Randomized Trial of In-Home Family Services," *Journal of Family Psychology* 34, no. 1 (2020): 70-89, accessed June 24, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000594>.

³⁹ Don D. Schweitzer et al., "Building the Evidence Base for intensive Family Preservation Services," *Journal of Public Child Welfare* 9, no. 5 (2015): 423-443, accessed June 24, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15548732.2015.1090363>.

⁴⁰ Mark Chaffin et al., "A Statewide Trial of the SafeCare Home-based Services Model with Parents in Child Protective Services," *Pediatrics* 129, no. 3 (2012): 509-515, accessed June 24, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2011-1840>; Robert E. Lewis, "The Effectiveness of Families First Services: An Experimental Study," *Children and Youth Services Review* 27, no. 5 (2005): 499-509, accessed June 24, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2004.10.009>; Matthews R. Sanders et al., "The Triple P-Positive Parenting Program: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of a Multi-Level System of Parenting Support," *Clinical Psychology Review* 34, no. 4 (2014): 337-357, accessed June 24, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2014.04.003>.

Involving the family and providing intervention to the family as well as the youth can provide a holistic approach to juvenile justice. Families experience distress and challenges of their own that may increase their need for assistance; therefore, providing interventions to the family system can be a powerful force that aids in a youth's success because it will affect the home-life.⁴¹ Specifically, interventions that provide case management services, parenting skills, family therapy and community support are all essential to the success of youth and family systems.⁴²

Missouri Division of Youth Services Family Involvement

According to Mendel, the Missouri Model has six core characteristics: 1) small and non-prisonlike facilities, close to home; 2) individual care within a group treatment model; 3) safety through relationships and supervision, not correctional coercion; 4) building skills for success; 5) families as partners; 6) focus on aftercare. For the purposes of this study, we will focus on the last two characteristics: families as partners and focus on aftercare.⁴³

Many juvenile justice systems do not effectively engage and support the family members of delinquent youth. Missouri DYS, however, attempts to engage youths' caregiver(s) and other family members from the first day the youth is committed to DYS custody.⁴⁴ Staff encourage families to engage in the treatment process, visit the youth in care, and participate in family therapy. The family therapy aspect aims to help caregivers and youth address their family dynamics and work toward more positive and supportive relationships. This may include providing suggestions to parents regarding discipline and/or anger management or may focus more on caregivers' needs themselves, including help with mental health or substance abuse issues. By the end of therapy, the youth and caregiver(s) leave with agreements that address new

rules and other ways to maintain the new dynamics in the home. Caregivers are involved in the planning of the youth's release from DYS custody whether they participate in family therapy or not. This may include reenrolling in school, identifying extracurricular activities or employment opportunities, and setting up rules such as curfews. Youths then begin to transition back into their home, consisting of short-term stays to identify any problems that need to be addressed. After release or reentry to the home and community, DYS staff check in regularly with the youth, caregiver(s), and family members. The length of aftercare varies across youths and is based on their needs.

Missouri Children's Division Family Engagement

Missouri's Children's Division provides child welfare services to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in the state of Missouri.⁴⁵ As a way to meet their goals, Children's Division offers services to families such as Family-Centered Services and Intensive In-Home Services. Family-Centered Services seek to improve the family unit by addressing family functioning and any other concerns related to a child's well-being. Intensive In-Home Services are a type of crisis intervention available to families. These services are provided in their home and utilize skill-based intervention to improve the family and home and keep the family safely together. These services may include family counseling, parenting education, and child development training.⁴⁶

A sister program to Intensive In-Home Services, Intensive Family Reunification Services (IFRS), is a Missouri Department of Social Services, Children's Division sponsored program, contracted to companies such as Great Circle.⁴⁷ Intensive Family Reunification Services are short-term, intensive, family-based interventions that aim to reunite children in out-of-home placement with their families. Contracted staff meet with the family to improve the family's

⁴¹ Garfinkel, "Improving Family Involvement," 2010.

⁴² Laure Nissen, "Bringing Strength-Based Philosophy to Life in Juvenile Justice," *Reclaiming Children and Youth* 15, no. 1 (2006): 40, accessed July 19, 2020, <https://lauraburneynissen-lovessocialwork.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/bringing-strength-based-philosophy-to-life-in-juvenile-justice-settings.pdf>.

⁴³ Mendel, *The Missouri Model*, 2010.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Missouri Department of Social Services, *Children's Division*, accessed July 14, 2020, <https://dss.mo.gov/cd/>.

⁴⁶ Missouri Department of Social Services: Missouri Division of Youth Services, *Services for Families*, accessed July 14, 2020, <https://dss.mo.gov/cd/keeping-kids-safe/services-for-families.htm>.

⁴⁷ A Missouri behavioral health provider.

functioning, help the family meet the needs of the children, and assist them in obtaining community resources.⁴⁸ In order to successfully reunite the child with their family, IFRS utilizes a three-phase program. Phase one lasts between two to four weeks and ensures safety in the home by having staff members work directly with the family. The next phase is six to eight weeks long and includes eight to ten hours of family intensive services a week. Phase three consists of end-to-end services, lasting ninety days, to ensure that the family remains stable after intensive services are removed.⁴⁹

Agency Collaboration

According to Seigle and colleagues, nearly two-thirds of youths involved in the juvenile justice system also had contact with the child-welfare system.⁵⁰ Historically, a youth would be referred over to a community-based service or the state's child welfare agency to receive aftercare; however, this presents a disruption in treatment and rehabilitation due to the differing foundations, philosophies, approaches, and practices that may exist between agencies.⁵¹ Ringle and colleagues proposed the blending of out-of-home residential care with family based in-home aftercare services after finding in two different studies⁵² that this service decreased youth behavior problems and improved parenting skills. In addition, both studies

found that a high rate of youths remained arrest-free after one year.

Filling the Gap

The Missouri Model has revolutionized the juvenile justice system.⁵³ While still a model for many other states, Missouri should not stop working toward better outcomes. We propose that one of the ways to improve is by involving family members more into the youth's treatment plan. It is thought that family relationships and parenting practices can have a profound effect on a youth's behavior.⁵⁴

One could argue that parent-child attachment, including closeness, warmth, and affection, can decrease delinquent behavior because youths value the parent-child relationship.⁵⁵ Currently, the services provided by DYS attempt to improve parent-child relationships by making suggestions to parents regarding discipline and/or anger management and preparing the family for discharge. These services are supported in the research to have successful outcomes.⁵⁶ However, the family services offered by DYS are not mandatory for youth to be discharged; in fact, only about 30 percent of youth participate in some form of family therapy.⁵⁷

Upon departure from out-of-home care, youths face many challenges as they attempt to reenter into their

⁴⁸ Great Circle, *Intensive Family Reunification Services*, accessed July 7, 2020, <https://www.greatcircle.org/services-by-program/home-community-based/in-home-family-support/intensive-family-reunification-services-ifrs>; Missouri Department of Social Services: Children's Division, 2015-2019 Child and Family Services Plan Final Report, accessed July 14, 2020, <https://dss.mo.gov/cd/cfsplan/2019fy-child-family-services-plan-report.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Great Circle, *Annual Report Fiscal Year 2019*.

⁵⁰ Seigle, Walsh, and Weber, *Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism*, 2014.

⁵¹ Ringle, Thompson, and Way, *Reunifying Families*, 2015; Scott Sells, Irene Sullivan, and Donald DeVore, "Stopping the Madness: A New Reentry System for Juvenile Corrections," *Corrections Today* (2012): 40-45, accessed June 24, 2020, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/Abstract.aspx?id=262242>.

⁵² Ringle, Thompson, and Way, *Reunifying Families*, 2015; Ronald W. Thompson et al., "Aftercare for a Cognitive-Behavioral Program for Juvenile Offenders: A Pilot Investigation," *The Journal of Behavior Analysis of Offender and Victim Treatment and Prevention* 2, no. 3 (2010): 198-213, accessed June 24, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0101575>.

⁵³ Beth M. Huebner, "The Missouri Model: A Critical State of Knowledge," *Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach* (2013): 411-30, accessed June 24, 2020, <https://www.nap.edu/read/14685/chapter/16>; Mark W. Lipsey et al., *Improving the Effectiveness of Juvenile Justice Programs: A New Perspective on Evidence-Based Practice*, (Washington, DC: Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, Georgetown Public Policy Institute, Georgetown University, 2010), 1-60.

⁵⁴ Travis Hirschi, *Causes of Delinquency* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Vanessa G. Hodges et al., "Intensive Aftercare Services for Children," *Social Casework* 70, no. 7 (1989): 397-404, accessed June 24, 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/30845031_Aftercare_service_development_for_children_in_residential_treatment; Robert E. Lieberman, "Future Directions in Residential Treatment," *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America* 13, no. 2 (2004): 279-294, accessed June 24, 2020, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1056-4993\(03\)00118-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1056-4993(03)00118-4).

⁵⁷ Mendel, *The Missouri Model*, 2010.

pre-intervention home and community environments.⁵⁸

Research has shown that youth improvements made during out-of-home care are at risk of being sustained once the youth transitions back into the home and community environments.⁵⁹ To better support youths transitioning back into their home and community environments, family based in-home aftercare services are recommended.⁶⁰ Although family is encouraged to be involved in aftercare, the aftercare services offered by DYS rely mostly on intensive surveillance,⁶¹ individual youth guidance, and check-ins with the youth and family members⁶² rather than intensive family based in-home aftercare services.

Methods

Based on the suggestion made by Ringle and colleagues to blend out-of-home residential care with family based in-home aftercare services, this study aimed to explore Missouri DYS staff perspectives on merging IFRS into the current Missouri DYS Model of Juvenile Justice.⁶³

Sample & Procedures

All participants were predetermined by a purposeful criterion based on their professional knowledge and

role within Missouri DYS. Recruitment was conducted via emails and phone calls. Our sample consisted of five DYS professionals ranging in different levels and roles of juvenile supervision. In total, the professionals had a total of 64 years of work experience within Missouri DYS.

One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted at a DYS facility in a private meeting room. A small digital voice recorder was used to record the 15-30-minute interviews over a two-week time period. Once the interviews were completed, the interviews were then transcribed verbatim. Transcribed interviews were stored on a password protected personal computer. Interview and data analysis files were kept in a password protected file that was only accessible by the researchers. All transcripts and data analysis files utilized a numbering system to maintain confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Using the guidance and suggestions laid out by Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard, transcripts were analyzed using a combination of inductive and deductive coding.⁶⁴ This was completed to guide us through the coding process, while also maintaining closeness to the data. During open coding, the two researchers

⁵⁸ Mark E. Courtney and Amy Dworsky, "Early Outcomes for Young Adults Transitioning from Out-of-Home Care in the USA," *Child & Family Social Work* 11, no. 3 (2006): 209-219, accessed June 22, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2206.2006.00433.x>; John F. Curry, "Future Directions in Residential Treatment Outcome Research," *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America* 13, no. 2 (2004): 429-440, accessed June 22, 2020, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1056-4993\(03\)00127-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1056-4993(03)00127-5); Richard A. Epstein Jr., "Inpatient and Residential Treatment Effects for Children and Adolescents: A Review and Critique," *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America* 13, no. 2 (2004): 411-428, accessed June 22, 2020, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1056-4993\(03\)00126-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1056-4993(03)00126-3); Wilbert W. Lewis, "Ecological Factors in Successful Residential Treatment," *Behavioral Disorders* 7, no. 3 (1982): 149-156, accessed June 22, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23881758>; Martin Leichtman and Maria Luisa Leichtman, "Facilitating the Transition from Residential Treatment into the Community: I. The Problem," *Residential Treatment for Children & Youth* 19, no. 1 (2001): 21-27, accessed June 9, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1300/J007v19n01_02.

; Ringle, Thompson, and Way, *Reunifying Families*, 2015; Thompson et al., "Aftercare for a Cognitive-Behavioral

Program," 2010; Alexandra L. Trout et al., "The Departure Status of Youth from Residential Group Care: Implications for Aftercare," *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 19, no. 1 (2010): 67-78, accessed June 24, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-009-9283-9>.

⁵⁹ Courtney and Dworsky, "Early Outcomes for Young Adults," 2006; Curry, "Future Directions in Residential Treatment," 2004; Epstein Jr., "Inpatient and Residential Treatment Effects," 2004; Leichtman and Leichtman, "Facilitating the Transition," 2001; Lewis, "Ecological Factors," 1982.

⁶⁰ Ringle, Thompson, and Way, *Reunifying Families*, 2015.

⁶¹ Huebner, "The Missouri Model: A Critical State of Knowledge," 2013.

⁶² Missouri Department of Social Services: Division of Youth Services. "Aftercare Services," accessed July 14, 2020, <https://dss.mo.gov/dys/aftercare-services.htm>.

⁶³ Ringle, Thompson, and Way, *Reunifying Families*, 2015.

⁶⁴ Mai Skjott Linneberg and Steffen Korsgaard, "Coding Qualitative Data: A Synthesis Guiding the Novice," *Qualitative Research Journal* 19, no. 3 (2019), accessed June 9, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-12-2018-0012>.

cycled back and forth between inductive and deductive coding, keeping literature and theory in mind, while also remaining open to new ideas to come out of the data. During our first cycle of coding, we assigned attribute codes to the interview transcripts. This gave us a general structure of the data which allowed us to explore the data more closely in the next round of coding. During the next round of coding, we assigned descriptive codes to data that summarized what the data was about. As codes were developed, we looked at the similarities and grouped them into categories based on commonalities. These specific categories and themes are described in more detail in the following section.

Results

This study aimed to explore Missouri DYS staff perspectives regarding the merging of IFRS into the current Missouri DYS Model of Juvenile Justice. Our results suggest that family is an essential factor that needs to be addressed within the Missouri Model. According to the DYS staff, family involvement and engagement are essential to a youth's success and are components that DYS is currently missing. Our participants also indicated that a youth's reentry into their pre-treatment home and family has an impact on their recidivism. In addition, DYS staff were unaware of the use of IFRS within Missouri Children's Division. Their lack of knowledge regarding IFRS indicates a clear lack of collaboration between the two agencies. Upon learning about IFRS, DYS staff were in support of incorporating it into the Missouri DYS Model of Juvenile Justice. They believed that it could strengthen success rates for youths and reduce recidivism.

Family Involvement & Engagement is Essential in Youth Rehabilitation

All the participants agreed that family involvement and engagement were "absolutely crucial"⁶⁵ regarding youths' rehabilitation. Family involvement and engagement encompassed the caregiver's and other immediate family's participation and support of the juvenile youth's rehabilitation during their stay with DYS and the aftercare process. One staff member

explained, "If we can incorporate them [parents/guardians] in the juvenile's treatment, then it is like everyone is working together and the treatment is more invested. I think they tend to do better when they go home because they are working together as a unit. It is definitely beneficial and helps the family be more productive overall."⁶⁶ Another participant shared that family involvement is crucial if the family members are beneficial to the juvenile youth. The participant stated,

Family involvement is amazing in most cases. In ninety percent of the cases, I think family involvement is key when it is beneficial to the youth. If it is demonstrated time and time again that the family involvement is negative for the youth, then sometimes that family is not the best place for that kid at that time. I'm not saying that it can't get to a better situation at some point where they can get more involved with each other and the kids can build a stronger relationship with their family, but sometimes we need a pause, so the issues can be worked on.⁶⁷

The Family is Missing in DYS

Participants stated that family participation is not mandated in the Missouri DYS Model. Overall, it seemed as though very little is accomplished with a youth's family. However, it is important to note that DYS attempts to include the parents and family members in a youth's rehabilitation. One participant stated that "... parents are hard to contact. First of all, they won't return calls or keep their phone numbers updated. Sometimes families don't even show up for family sessions, they don't even call. Families feel like, 'Stay out of our business,' which is unfortunate because they don't realize the opportunities they are missing that could benefit them."⁶⁸ While the parents and families not wanting to be involved is definitely a barrier in incorporating family into a youth's rehabilitation, another barrier is that DYS does not offer much for parent and families. Referring to the lack of services provided to the parents and families, one participant stated, "... that's just not how the system is set up."⁶⁹ One staff member stated, "I don't know of any training we offer to the parents. The only avenue

⁶⁵ Participant 1, interview, April 2019.

⁶⁶ Participant 4, interview, May 2019.

⁶⁷ Participant 3, interview, April 2019.

⁶⁸ Participant 1.

⁶⁹ Participant 1.

we have to help the parents, in general, is our family specialist and the family sessions. I mean we supervise visits on Sundays, and we try to make sure everything goes respectfully, and everyone is communicating well, but as far as actually teaching and educating the parents, we are lacking in that aspect.”⁷⁰ Even though they offer family therapy, one staff member stated that it is rare. “If a judge orders it [family therapy/parent education], it is mandatory. A judge could say they have to do it and have so many sessions, but I’ve never seen that.”⁷¹ Another participant stated, “Honestly, I would like it more if we could get more training for the families. That’s one of the things that I think we lack, is getting the parents in on learning some new coping skills, new ways to communicate with each other and practicing those skills of communication.”⁷² From the interviews, it became clear that DYS desires to include the family, but it is difficult to do so due to the lack of the family commitment and what DYS offers the families.

Pre-Treatment Family and Home Life Effect on Recidivism

The participants mentioned that youths tend to reoffend after returning to their pre-treatment home and family because many of them “struggle with home life.”⁷³ The pre-treatment family and home life encompassed negative family dynamics, lack of parenting skills, and family substance abuse that the youth was surrounded by when they reentered the home. Negative family dynamics, lack of parenting skills, and family substance abuse can be difficult to pull apart as many of them influence the other. Our participants mentioned that they believe that “... it [recidivism] starts with a lack of positive family relationships, solid structure, and solidified family roles.”⁷⁴ Other staff members had similar statements regarding family relationships and dynamics. One participant stated that “The family dynamics are sometimes chaotic, and we are just putting them right back into what they came out of.”⁷⁵ Another staff

member shared that they often see that “There is usually something in their background where they just haven’t bonded with their family the way a kid should be.”⁷⁶ Family relationships, dynamics, and bonding can all be influenced by parenting skills. A few of our participants mentioned how they believed that the youths were “not getting their needs met at home”⁷⁷ and that there was a “lack of parenting skills.”⁷⁸ For instance, parenting skills can be affected by substance abuse. When one’s life revolves around a substance, it can be difficult to put children first. From what our participants shared, substance use seemed to be a common concern among youths’ families. One staff member stated that “A lot of our youth have parents that use or abuse substances or have been in and out of prison themselves.”⁷⁹ Drugs and substance abuse were viewed as “an ongoing problem with families. It’s not just kids and their parents, but it’s the kids, their parents and their grandparents struggling with drugs and alcohol.”⁸⁰ The drug use by the family was mentioned again by another participant who stated, “... we have some major drug issues in our area, addictive drugs, and that is hard for our kids, especially if it’s in the family and in the community.”⁸¹ Whether it was the family dynamics, relationships, parenting skills, or family substance abuse, it was clear that the participants held the opinion that it was detrimental to have the youth return to their pre-existing family and home life.

IFRS Implementation into DYS

The following responses represent the reasons the DYS staff perceive that IFRS would increase the success rate among juvenile youth offenders. All participants agreed that implementing IFRS would decrease recidivism and increase a youth’s chance to succeed. One participant stated, “I think getting something like that [IFRS] started would be helpful. I mean I think the more services that can be offered to a family or a kid is going to be helpful. I think agencies

⁷⁰ Participant 4.

⁷¹ Participant 5, interview, May 2019.

⁷² Participant 3.

⁷³ Participant 4.

⁷⁴ Participant 2, interview, April 2019.

⁷⁵ Participant 3.

⁷⁶ Participant 1.

⁷⁷ Participant 4.

⁷⁸ Participant 5.

⁷⁹ Participant 3.

⁸⁰ Participant 2.

⁸¹ Participant 5.

working together would strengthen the success rates, for sure.”⁸² Another participant stated,

I think that [IFRS] would make a significant difference. I think it [IFRS] would be very beneficial for the students and their families. The reality is students may struggle some once they get home, which would be normal because they are trying to figure out where the fit in there. So, I think that it [IFRS] would be super beneficial, not just for the kids, but for the families as a whole unit. Educating the family goes hand in hand with what we already do here.⁸³

Other staff highlighted the importance of their youths’ parents and caregivers having basic parenting skills⁸⁴ and how helpful IFRS would be to their families,⁸⁵ especially since it is the “key component that we [DYS] are missing.”⁸⁶ Overall, participants consistently agreed on two points. First, family involvement is imperative to the rehabilitation process of juvenile youths. In addition, an IFRS program would benefit the success rate of youths being released from the DYS Missouri Model of Juvenile Justice program due to the missing family component.

Discussion & Implications

The goal of the Missouri Model of Juvenile Justice program is to rehabilitate juvenile youths and to prevent further criminal behavior.⁸⁷ Prior research recognizes the family, and more specifically, the parents, as

an important influence on youths’ behavior.⁸⁸ However, the Missouri DYS Model appears to lack in their engagement with the family. Missouri Children’s Division houses Intensive Family Reunification Services that engages the family by going into the family’s home and providing family interventions. Our findings support our claim that the Missouri DYS Model of Juvenile Justice could improve by providing intervention services to the family of youths. One family intervention service already familiar in Missouri is the Intensive Family Reunification Services that are provided by Missouri Children’s Division.

The practical implications from this research can be surmised in a couple of critical factors: family involvement and recidivism. Both factors were highlighted in the current study and previous literature. Even though there are limitations to the research, including the small sample size, the consistency among our sample of participants was significant which should not be overlooked or undervalued.

The first factor to be addressed is the impact of family involvement. It is well known that family involvement is an important aspect of juvenile justice. Numerous studies reveal that youths are significantly more likely to successfully complete rehabilitation and other similar programs with the support of their families.⁸⁹ In addition, as parental involvement is strengthened, the likelihood of engaging in delinquent behavior decreases.⁹⁰ Regarding the current study, all

⁸² Participant 5.

⁸³ Participant 4.

⁸⁴ Participant 2.

⁸⁵ Participant 1.

⁸⁶ Participant 3.

⁸⁷ Missouri Department of Social Services, *The Missouri Approach: Who We Are*.

⁸⁸ Richard J. Bonnie et al., *Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach* (Washington, D.C: The National Academies Press, 2013), accessed June 24, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.17226/14685>; Hedger, “A ‘Mom and Pop’ Confinement,” 2017; Hirschi, *Causes of Delinquency*, 1969; Inge Simons et al., “A Program of Family-Centered Care for Adolescents in Short-Term Stay Groups of Juvenile Justice Institutions,” *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health* 11, no. 1 (2017): 1-8, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://capmh.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s13034-017-0203-2>.

⁸⁹ Leanne Fiftal Alarid, Carlos D. Montemayor, and Summer Dannhaus, “The Effect of Parental Support on Juvenile Drug Court Completion and Postprogram Recidivism,” *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 10, no. 4 (2012): 354-369, accessed

June 22, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204012438422>; Barrett Mincey et al., “Perceptions of Successful Graduates of Juvenile Residential Programs: Reflections and Suggestions for Success,” *Journal of Correctional Education* (2008): 8-31, accessed June 22, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23282643>; Hirokazu Yoshikawa, “Prevention as Cumulative Protection: Effects of Early Family Support and Education on Chronic Delinquency and its Risks,” *Psychological Bulletin* 115, no. 1 (1994): 28, accessed June 22, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.115.1.28>.

⁹⁰ Abigail A. Fagan, “Family-Focused Interventions to Prevent Juvenile Delinquency: A Case Where Science and Policy Can Find Common Ground,” *Criminology & Public Policy* 12, no. 4 (2013): 617-650, accessed June 19, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12029>; Joseph P. Ryan and Huilan Yang, “Family Contact and Recidivism: A Longitudinal Study of Adjudicated Delinquents in Residential Care,” *Social Work Research* 29, no. 1 (2005): 31-39, accessed July 8, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/29.1.31>; Ronald L. Simons et al., “Collective Efficacy, Authoritative Parenting and Delinquency:

participants agreed that parental involvement was the greatest component related to rehabilitation efforts. However, parental involvement is not mandatory for youths to complete their rehabilitation and many parents may be struggling with their own problems, which limits their involvement with their children. Additionally, for families who seek to be involved, they may not know how to help their child even if they could participate. Therefore, if children are being sent back to the same home environment that encouraged their delinquent activity, their likelihood of reoffending is high.

The second component to be addressed is recidivism. The current qualitative analysis identifies the need for families to receive services so that youths are not returning to the same environment. When youths are placed back into their pre-treatment homes and families, it makes it difficult for them to sustain the gains they made in out-of-home care.⁹¹ For instance, the home environment can increase recidivism due to lack of proper parental support, monitoring, and behavior. Therefore, the family can create a toxic or positive environment for a child. Interestingly, the family component is also critical in reducing youth recidivism.⁹² The more familial involvement and support can lead to a decrease in juvenile youth offending.

It is imperative that proactive steps are put in place to strengthen parental and familial bonds to reduce delinquent behavior. Rehabilitative administrators should attempt to consistently encourage parents and family members to take part in their child's rehabilitation and help them learn ways to become an advocate for their child.⁹³ These suggestions are not only

grounded in our findings, but also in previous research. For instance, having parenting courses that include information on parental support, parental monitoring, proper discipline techniques, anger management, and family dynamics could greatly decrease their child's likelihood of re-offending.⁹⁴ In addition, it is important for caregivers to be a part of treatment and receive education on the skills needed to provide proper support a youth needs to maintain socially acceptable behaviors.⁹⁵ If the family of a youth is not given attention, poor family functioning is likely to persist which influences the youth into delinquency.⁹⁶ Family training programs that teach parents proper parenting skills are often successful in reducing delinquent behavior.⁹⁷ Furthermore, policymakers and child advocacy groups also should look into this facet and push for better family counseling centers, parenting classes, and parent/child bonding courses to reduce youth delinquency at the state level. By being proactive, compared to reactive, policies could greatly improve the rates of delinquent activity and decrease the likelihood of children getting involved in or returning to the justice system. Therefore, families, advocates, and policymakers should continually strive towards the same goal of utilizing all possible avenues to reduce the cycle of delinquency and crime.

For these reasons, we strongly advocate for implementation of Intensive Family Reunification Services, as many of these aspects discussed would be addressed with these programs. Our research indicates that intensive in-home reunification services build more successful families compared to families who do not have this advantage. Youths who come out of Missouri DYS learn several effective life skills;

A Longitudinal Test of a Model Integrating Community-and Family-level Processes," *Criminology* 43, no. 4 (2005): 989-1029, accessed June 22, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.2005.00031.x>; John Paul Wright and Francis T. Cullen, "Parental Efficacy and Delinquent Behavior: Do Control and Support Matter?" *Criminology* 39, no. 3 (2001): 677-706, accessed July 19, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.2001.tb00937.x>.

⁹¹ Courtney and Dworsky, "Early Outcomes for Young Adults," 2006; Curry, "Future Directions in Residential Treatment," 2004; Epstein Jr., "Inpatient and Residential Treatment Effects," 2004; Leichtman and Leichtman, "Facilitating the Transition," 2001; Lewis, "Ecological Factors," 1982.

⁹² Fagan, "Family-Focused Interventions," 2013; Jeff Latimer, "A Meta-Analytic Examination of Youth Delinquency, Family

Treatment, and Recidivism," *Canadian J. Criminology* 43 (2001): 237, accessed July 8, 2020, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/cjccj43&div=23&id=&page=&collection=journals#>.

⁹³ Ryan and Yang, "Family Contact and Recidivism," 2015.

⁹⁴ Hirschi, *Causes of Delinquency*, 1969; Hodges et al., "Intensive Aftercare Services," 1989; Lieberman, "Future Directions," 2004; Loeber, Rolf, and Magda Stouthamer-Loeber, "Family Factors as Correlates and Predictors of Juvenile Conduct Problems and Delinquency," *Crime and Justice* 7 (1986): 29-149, accessed June 22, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1147516>.

⁹⁵ Agnew, *Juvenile Delinquency*, 2004.

⁹⁶ Simons et al., "A Program of Family-Centered Care," 2017.

⁹⁷ Agnew, *Juvenile Delinquency*, 2004.

however, youths are placed back into homes in which there has been little to no intervention. Families of youths involved in DYS could benefit from the skill-sets taught from the IFRS utilized in Missouri Children's Division. The best outcome would be for both parents and children to receive services⁹⁸ so that all parties are equally involved in the rehabilitation of the child to help break the generational cycle of abuse and crime.

⁹⁸ Ryan and Yang, "Family Contact and Recidivism," 2005.