



# JAIBG

Juvenile Accountability Incentive  
Block Grants Program

## BULLETIN

John J. Wilson, Acting Administrator

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### From the Administrator

Communities across the Nation are working in a collaborative and comprehensive way to address juvenile crime. To provide appropriate interventions, however, they need information about the youth in their communities, their families, and the problems they face. Multi-disciplinary collaboration and information sharing are crucial elements of success in helping at-risk and delinquent juveniles.

This Bulletin, one of OJJDP's JAIBG Best Practices series, describes key elements of effective information sharing, provides a model interagency agreement, and highlights examples of best practices for partners working to integrate juvenile justice services and develop informed, appropriate decisions regarding youth.

Attaining interagency collaboration and setting parameters for information sharing is challenging, but success in these areas can help ensure that juveniles receive the support they need.

**John J. Wilson**  
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## Establishing and Maintaining Interagency Information Sharing

**Julie Slayton**

*This Bulletin is part of OJJDP's Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grants (JAIBG) Best Practices Series. The basic premise underlying the JAIBG program, initially funded in fiscal year 1998, is that young people who violate the law need to be held accountable for their offenses if society is to improve the quality of life in the Nation's communities. Holding a juvenile offender "accountable" in the juvenile justice system means that once the juvenile is determined to have committed law-violating behavior, by admission or adjudication, he or she is held responsible for the act through consequences or sanctions, imposed pursuant to law, that are proportionate to the offense. Consequences or sanctions that are applied swiftly, surely, and consistently, and are graduated to provide appropriate and effective responses to varying levels of offense seriousness and offender chronicity, work best in preventing, controlling, and reducing further law violations.*

*In an effort to help States and units of local government develop programs in the 12 purpose areas established for JAIBG funding, Bulletins in this series are designed to present the most up-to-date knowledge to juvenile justice policymakers, researchers, and practitioners about programs and approaches that*

*hold juvenile offenders accountable for their behavior. An indepth description of the JAIBG program and a list of the 12 program purpose areas appear in the overview Bulletin for this series.*

Since the beginning of the 1990's, public bodies, professional organizations, and business groups have been calling for greater interagency coordination to achieve a more comprehensive approach to providing services for children and families at risk (Soler, Shotton, and Bell, 1993). Central to interagency coordination efforts is the establishment of interagency information-sharing networks or programs. More specifically, collaboration and information sharing may provide for multidisciplinary, multiagency approaches to comprehensively address problems posed by juveniles who are at risk of or have already committed serious delinquent or criminal acts. Information-sharing programs also present a way to further partnerships between agencies that are currently engaged with each other to serve these same juveniles, their siblings, or their families. These partnerships, therefore, work to preserve the family unit by addressing the needs of the juvenile, the sibling, and/or the entire family as the need arises.

Information-sharing programs make it possible to coordinate juvenile justice services that foster more informed, appropriate decisions regarding juveniles. An information-sharing program would, for example, provide a teacher who believes a student may be at risk of becoming involved in gang or drug activity with a method for notifying the appropriate service providers who could intervene before the student engages in such activities. Similarly, such a program might require probation officers to furnish information to teachers about the conditions of a juvenile's probation so that they could monitor the student's behavior and be aware of any risks the student might present to others in the classroom. Sharing information will allow service providers to more efficiently determine the level and type of services juveniles need by avoiding redundancy of service and conflict in treatment approach. A central database of information regarding delinquent, at-risk, and dependent juveniles would eliminate the need for multiple agencies serving a single juvenile to collect the same information and might also eliminate the need for each of these agencies to obtain a release to gather the information needed to serve that juvenile.

Additionally, sharing information can facilitate services and treatment, improve decisionmaking and feedback concerning juveniles, and ensure that children do not fall through the gaps in civil society into the world of drugs, gangs, and juvenile delinquency. For example, such a program would allow the formation of a treatment team to address the needs of a juvenile who has been adjudicated delinquent for threatening a public official. Each member of the team—probation, mental health, and juvenile justice—would provide the appropriate services to that juvenile based on shared information. Similarly, information sharing can

improve a system participant's ability to make case- or management-level decisions, which ultimately may significantly improve the treatment of juveniles and decrease or eliminate offending behaviors. For example, educators—people who frequently see the first warning signs of delinquency and/or have critical information about youth involved in the juvenile justice system—can help justice and other youth-serving agencies develop effective intervention strategies by sharing information (Medaris, Campbell, and James, 1997).

Information sharing is an effective tool for those who deal with at-risk and delinquent juveniles. Agencies can use a great many methods for sharing information. As Soler and colleagues (1993, p. 47) suggest: "Written releases, interagency agreements, court orders, memoranda of understanding, statutory authorizations for information sharing, as well as designations of information not considered confidential, all present agencies with abundant opportunities to work together to provide better services for children and families."

This Bulletin offers an overview of what is necessary to establish and maintain an interagency information-sharing program. It presents strategies and sources for the development of information-sharing programs, details the functional requirements for an effective and efficient program, and identifies policy concerns and key issues in the implementation and maintenance of information-sharing programs. Agencies building collaborative information-sharing programs must consider several key issues, including possible legal restrictions in Federal and State laws, the need for an evaluation system to determine the effectiveness of the information-sharing program, and potential barriers to successful programs.

## **Key Elements of an Effective Information-Sharing Program**

### **Strategies and Sources for Development**

Interagency partnerships should, where possible, begin by building on existing methods of information sharing. Communities should strive to develop a comprehensive and systemwide information-sharing program that maintains financial accountability, contains cumulative data for reporting purposes, and can be evaluated to determine whether it meets the goals of the system's partners (Etten and Petrone, 1994). The partnership must also establish high levels of security to prevent the inappropriate release of information and should give extensive consideration to training staff in the technical aspects of the information system, including all security measures (Soler, Shotton, and Bell, 1993).

In addition to determining the appropriate strategy for sharing information in a given community or jurisdiction, it is important to identify available sources of information within each participating agency. Sources used to create a common pool of information for program participants will have to be determined by the partners in the program. A partial list of agencies and organizations to consider as potential sources of information would include the following: police, probation, education, social services, prosecution, judicial, and corrections (Bellmio, 1995). The information gathered from these sources may range from statistics regarding rates of crime or victimization among juveniles in a given community to probation information, including conditions of community control and predisposition reports; disposition of juvenile court cases; parole information for youth to be released from juvenile institutions; data on juvenile crimes and arrests from

neighboring jurisdictions; human service information related to abuse, neglect, or exploitation of juveniles; accounts of gang involvement or substance abuse by youth; and school records (Bellmio, 1995). The specific sources used by each information-sharing partnership should come from the community context and the expectations of the partners. Thus, the participating agencies need to determine which sources of information will most efficiently provide the information needed for success in dealing with juveniles in the partners' service area. Partners will have to look beyond the usual information and determine the specific needs of their community. Finally, they will have to develop policies and procedures that will formalize the gathering and sharing of information in a secure manner (Bellmio, 1995).

### Functional Requirements

A variety of factors must be in place for effective interagency information sharing. Melaville and Blank (1991) identify five key factors that affect the success of local collaborative efforts:

- The climate in which the initiative begins.
- The processes used to develop trust and handle conflict.
- The people involved.
- The policies that support or inhibit their efforts.
- The availability of resources to enable their effects to continue.

In addition, the success of an information-sharing program can depend on the completion of several other functional requirements: identifying appropriate partners, establishing program goals, focusing on intervention and prevention, developing a common framework, knowing the law, communicating frequently, providing technical assistance, and developing a computerized information-sharing system.

### Identify Appropriate Partners

It is of primary importance that the right "players" from agencies serving specific juvenile populations are brought to the table to facilitate collaborative cross-system planning and delivery (Isaacs, 1992; Melaville and Blank, 1991). To identify appropriate partners, it might be useful for multidisciplinary teams to conduct a community self-assessment to learn more about the nature of juvenile problems in the community and to build a commitment to change. The assessment can help identify community and interagency partners outside the juvenile justice system and locate untapped community resources.

### Establish Program Goals

Once agency partners have been identified, an interagency task force should be established to create the framework within which the program will operate and to set forth the goals of the information-sharing partnership. The task force must be composed of agency representatives with the power to make decisions. The goals must be clearly laid out and shared by all the agencies participating in the information-sharing program (Wagner et al., 1997). The goals will determine the level of information to be shared (i.e., case-level, department/agency-level, community-level) and the individuals within each agency who should have access to the information. Medaris, Campbell, and James (1997) suggest that these goals focus on delinquency prevention and intervention, community safety, efficiency, and coordination. The goals of the partnership also may include the following:

- Providing appropriate programs and services to intervene with juveniles currently involved in the juvenile justice system.
- Providing appropriate programs and services to deter at-risk juveniles from delinquent behavior.

- Increasing the safety and security of the community and its children by reducing juvenile crime.
- Eliminating duplication of services.
- Leveraging resources and training programs through coordination.
- Improving case- and management-level decisionmaking.

### Focus on Intervention and Prevention

In order to establish an interagency information-sharing partnership that provides information geared toward both intervention and prevention, the system must help service providers to be both proactive and reactive. James (1994) defines a reactive program as one in which the partners wait until incidents of criminal activity occur, identify the violators, and then mete out appropriate sanctions. He defines a proactive program as one in which the partners scan the horizon for signs of trouble and devise plans to respond to symptoms that arise prior to the outbreak of undesired behavior. A partnership is reactive if the partners provide each other with information about juveniles who have already committed serious violent or criminal acts and proactive if they also share information identifying at-risk juveniles.

### Develop a Common Framework

Other imperatives for a successful information-sharing plan are developing a common definition of youth who are "at risk" and identifying the juvenile population(s) that will be the focus of the information-sharing partnership. It is important that participating agencies share the same criteria for defining youth at risk of delinquency, delinquent youth who are at risk of becoming serious habitual juvenile offenders, and youth already considered serious habitual

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## Model Interagency Agreement

Medaris, Campbell, and James (1997) outlined goals of a model interagency agreement for partners of an information-sharing program that includes representatives from juvenile court, probation, social services, education, law enforcement, and prosecution. The following model agreement is adapted from that document.

### Each of the parties agrees to:

1. Promote a coordinated effort among agencies and staff to achieve maximum public safety with the goal of reducing juvenile crime.
  2. Participate in interagency planning meetings, as appropriate.
  3. Assign staff, as appropriate, to participate in a consolidated case management system, to facilitate reentry into school of children returning from detention or commitment programs, and other information-sharing activities to assess and develop plans for at-risk youth and those involved in the juvenile justice system.
  4. If applicable, participate in the planning and implementation of a juvenile assessment, receiving, and truancy center to the extent feasible for each party.
  5. Jointly plan and/or provide information and access to training opportunities, when feasible.
  6. Develop internal policies and cooperative procedures, as needed, to implement this agreement to the maximum extent possible.
  7. Comply with relevant State and Federal law and other applicable local rules that relate to records use, security, dissemination, and retention/destruction.
4. Consider the issuance of court orders necessary to promote the goals of this agreement, particularly information sharing between the agencies involved.
  5. Develop, in cooperation with school, law enforcement, and local service providers, a written plan to determine the procedures to follow when a child is identified as being truant from school.
  6. Develop appropriate internal written policies to ensure that confidential education record information is disseminated only to appropriate and authorized personnel.

### The juvenile court agrees to:

1. Notify the superintendent, or designee, of the name and address of any student adjudicated delinquent or who has had his or her adjudication withheld following determination of responsibility. Notification shall be within 48 hours and shall include the specific adjudicated or withheld delinquent act or specific crime for which the student was convicted if prosecuted in the criminal justice system.
2. Identify sanctions for youth who are in violation of a court order requiring school attendance.
3. Upon request by the school district, share dispositional information with the superintendent or a designee regarding juveniles who are students within the educational system for purposes of assessment, placement, or security of persons and property.

### The Department of Probation agrees to:

1. Notify the sheriff and superintendent of schools or designees, immediately upon learning of the move or other relocation of a juvenile offender into, out of, or within the jurisdiction, who has been adjudicated delinquent or had an adjudication withheld for a violent misdemeanor or felony-level offense.
2. Share dispositional, placement, and case management information with other agencies as appropriate for purposes of assessment, placement, and enhanced supervision of juveniles.
3. Develop, in cooperation with school, law enforcement, and local service providers, a written plan to determine the procedures to take when a child is identified as being truant from school.
4. Develop appropriate internal written policies to ensure that confidential education record information is disseminated only to appropriate authorized personnel.

### The Department of Health [or Social Services or similar agency] agrees to:

1. Provide notice to the superintendent of schools or a designee, immediately upon the initiation of planning efforts with private nonprofit entities or governmental entities, including agencies that are part of this agreement, which could result in the creation, relocation, or expansion of youth services programs and which may impact the school district.
2. Develop, in cooperation with school, law enforcement, and local service providers, a written plan to determine the procedures to take when a child is identified as being truant from school.

3. Develop appropriate internal written policies to ensure that confidential education record information is disseminated only to appropriate authorized personnel.

**The school superintendent agrees to:**

1. Notify, within 24 hours, the school principal of a juvenile arrested for a criminal act upon receipt of such information from law enforcement, the court system, or probation department. The principal, within 24 hours of such notice, shall provide such information to student service personnel, the school resource officer, the student assistance coordinator, and the student's immediate teachers.
2. Designate the contact person to be responsible for receiving juvenile arrest information and inform all parties as to the superintendent's designee.
3. Request criminal history information only for the purposes of assessment, placement, or security of persons and property.
4. Designate the contact person(s) to be responsible for receiving confidential offender history information and inform all parties as to the names of those individuals.
5. Develop appropriate internal written policies to ensure that confidential offender history information is disseminated only to appropriate and authorized school personnel.
6. Share information on student achievement and behavioral and attendance history on juvenile offenders and juveniles at risk of delinquency with the parties to this agreement for the purpose of assessment and treatment.
7. Develop, in cooperation with school, law enforcement, and local service providers, a written plan to determine the procedures to take when a child is identified as being truant from school.
8. Notify the appropriate law enforcement agency when an adult or a student commits any of the following offenses on school property, on school-sponsored transportation, or at school-sponsored activities: homicide; sexual battery; armed robbery; aggravated battery on a teacher or other school personnel; kidnaping or abduction; arson; possession, use, or sale of any firearm; possession, use, or sale of any controlled substance; or any act that

compromises school or community safety. Additionally, if the offense involves a victim, school officials shall notify the victim and the victim's parents of the offense and the victim's right to sign a criminal complaint against the offender. School personnel shall cooperate in any investigation or other proceedings leading to the victim's exercise of this right as provided by law.

**Each law enforcement chief [or sheriff] agrees to:**

1. Notify the superintendent, or designee, of the name and address of any student arrested for a criminal act. Notification shall be within 24 hours and shall include the specific act that led to the arrest.
2. Upon request by the school district, share summary offender history information with the superintendent or a designee regarding juveniles who are students within the educational system for purposes of assessment, placement, or security of persons and property.
3. Develop appropriate internal written policies to ensure that confidential education record information is disseminated only to appropriate and authorized personnel.
4. Develop, in cooperation with school, law enforcement, and local service providers, a written plan to determine the procedures to take when a child is identified as being truant from school.
5. Notify the superintendent or designee of the name and address of any employee of the school district who is charged with a felony or with a misdemeanor involving the abuse of a minor child or the sale or possession of a controlled substance. Notification shall be within 24 hours and shall include the specific act that led to the arrest.

**The State attorney [or district attorney] agrees to:**

1. Notify the superintendent or designee in a timely manner when a student is formally charged with a criminal offense or a delinquent act that would be a felony if committed by an adult.
2. Provide copies in a timely manner to the superintendent or designee of all petitions, other charging documents, or no file decisions regarding students charged with criminal misdemeanors and felonies or delinquent acts that would be felonies if committed by an adult.

juvenile offenders (Bellmio, 1995). A common framework can improve communication between participating agencies. Thus, after defining the juvenile population(s) to be served, the task force should determine the specific information that will be shared and develop interagency agreements for sharing that information (Soler, Shotton, and Bell, 1993). The partnership should also consider mechanisms to protect the interests of clients, including notifying them of the scope and purposes of the information system, determining the information that will be provided by agency workers, and deciding on the form of any written releases (Soler, Shotton, and Bell, 1993).

### **Know the Law and Communicate Frequently**

Melaville and Blank (1991) list two other factors necessary for the successful development and implementation of an interagency information-sharing program:

- Having law(s) in place that will allow interagency information sharing to take place.
- Knowing the laws and the way they provide for interagency information sharing.

Wasik, Lam, and Kane (1994) add to these factors the need for partners in an interagency information-sharing network to communicate frequently and share information in a timely manner. Mechanisms for sharing information vary from information requests and responses via telephone or written reports to online access to a set of core data from a multiagency information database. Failure to share information in a timely manner can undermine the effectiveness of a coordinated effort.

### **Provide Technical Assistance**

Further, for an interagency partnership to be developed successfully, the

participants will need technical assistance for general project development and implementation. They will need access to a common information base and implementation resources. Technical assistance, including information on materials and procedures, should be provided through staff training. As part of its mandate, the task force should develop staff training policies and procedures (Soler, Shotton, and Bell, 1993). Similarly, technical assistance in developing and implementing supervisory procedures is also helpful. Finally, technical assistance may be necessary for developing and implementing sound procedures for evaluating the information-sharing system. Project evaluation should determine if or how well the system is accomplishing the goals outlined by the partners and identify specific changes that might be necessary to ensure the program meets its goals.

### **Develop a Computerized Information-Sharing System**

When considering whether to develop a computerized central information-sharing system, a number of preliminary issues should be explored. For example, how quickly would the partners like to begin sharing information. The development of a computerized central information-sharing system may be expensive and can be extremely time consuming. It may take months or years to develop the appropriate software to link different partners to the system. Inputting information into the system may also be time consuming and may require a great deal of coordination between members. On the other hand, despite these potential difficulties, there are also good reasons for implementing a central computerized information-sharing system. These include both the ease of access to information and the consistency of the information available to all partners at the same time.

Other issues need to be considered prior to developing a computerized and central information-sharing system (Etten and Petrone, 1994; Soler, Shotton, and Bell, 1993), including:

- Overall policies and procedures covering the purposes of the information system.
- The importance of limiting information.
- Methods of interagency cooperation and information sharing.
- Notices to clients and other protections of clients' interests.
- System security measures.
- The type of data contained in the computerized files.
- The individuals and agencies authorized to receive data.
- The purposes for which data will be used.
- The relationship between the system and the clients/juveniles whose records are in the data bank.
- Confidentiality protections.

Similarly, system developers should address how information will be recorded and entered and what will happen when inaccurate information is entered into the system (Etten and Petrone, 1994). Etten and Petrone also strongly suggest that any computerized system have an electronic security system that allows access only by authorized personnel. As part of its mandate, the task force should develop these policies and procedures, which should be approved by all agencies involved in the partnership (Soler, Shotton, and Bell, 1993).

### **Policy Issues**

A variety of policy issues need to be considered when attempting to establish or maintain an interagency information-sharing program. A successful program requires political and monetary support from policy-

makers. In some instances, policy-makers will need to sponsor legislation allowing interagency collaboration. In other instances, legislation will not be necessary but political support will be.

State-level efforts, legislative or otherwise, to create information-sharing networks must require or encourage a diverse group of youth-serving agencies (such as child welfare, mental health, juvenile justice, law enforcement, substance abuse, and health) to take the lead in forming interagency partnerships that meet the needs of each community. This State-level political support may be necessary to convince different agencies to begin to collaborate or to garner public support for such a system.

Policymakers can help ensure that the necessary financial resources are available to establish and maintain the interagency information-sharing program and that the policies and approaches chosen to support the system are having their intended effect. Finally, a policy issue that should be considered by those at both the State and local levels who are interested in information sharing is how agencies can use the system to prevent and reduce juvenile delinquency. Demonstrating the system's potential or actual effectiveness in dealing with at-risk and offending juveniles will help to earn the support of community members and potential agency participants in the program.

## Legal Issues

Most agencies that collect data on juveniles must follow Federal, State, and local statutes, ordinances, resolutions, regulations, court orders, and legal opinions (Etten and Petrone, 1994). These laws, policies, and procedures address the collection, maintenance, and release of information. Before any interagency information-sharing program can begin operating, it is imperative that all parties to the partnership reveal anything that they

## Twenty Steps to Successful Information Sharing

Etten and Petrone (1994) developed a 20-point prescription for comprehensive system development:

1. Appoint an Information Management Committee composed of representatives from every agency in the juvenile justice system and funding agency officials, legislative staff, management information system experts, community representatives, child welfare agents, and parents.
2. Determine the information collected and maintained by all the agencies.
3. Evaluate information needs.
4. Evaluate agency goals and identify those that are overlapping.
5. Determine the mission (overall goals) of the juvenile justice system.
6. Clarify reasons to share information.
7. Identify what specific information is to be shared and who needs access to each item of information.
8. Determine statutory record requirements about information collection and dissemination mandated by Federal, State, and local governments.
9. Determine exceptions to statutory requirements.
10. Draft an interagency agreement.
11. Fund the system.
12. Designate information management liaisons in each agency.
13. Build the system.
14. Prepare and/or revise policies and procedures.
15. Train staff.
16. Supervise confidentiality needs.
17. Review policies regularly.
18. Review needs regularly.
19. Revise system as necessary based on audits and system needs.
20. Repeat steps 14 through 19.

A successful information-sharing program can be formulated by focusing on the majority of these points.

think might interfere with their ability to share information. For example, potential partners should identify any laws that they think might impede their ability to share information between or among agencies. In some cases, both Federal and State legal barriers will limit the sharing of certain types of information without

consent or a court order. It is important to stress that in most cases, however, there are no legal barriers to sharing information. Rather, policies associated with these laws, or the lack thereof, may have interfered with the sharing of information between agencies. Many of the legal or ethical concerns associated with the informal

information sharing that is already taking place in many communities also can be overcome through the development of a simple consent procedure or a discussion with clients of the need to sometimes share limited amounts of confidential information (Soler, Shotton, and Bell, 1993).

The Federal and State statutes discussed below should be considered as information-sharing partnerships are being developed. However, it must be emphasized that all of these laws allow programs to share information. There are ways to appropriately share vital information within the legal limitations that exist, and policies can be changed to encourage interagency information sharing.

## Federal Laws

**Privacy Act of 1974.**<sup>1</sup> This Act applies to all records regarding individuals that are collected by Federal agencies. It prohibits any Federal agency from disclosing, without consent, individually identifiable records maintained in a records system that can be retrieved by a person's name or identification number. Although the law does allow for disclosure of records without consent under limited circumstances, it does not authorize the parent or guardian of a minor to consent to disclosure of a minor's medical records. However, the minor can give consent to release records, and disclosure without consent is allowed to other government agencies for civil or criminal law enforcement purposes, in instances where the health or safety of the person is endangered, or by court order. Because information-sharing partnerships are intended to address civil or criminal law enforcement purposes and circumstances where the health and safety of the juvenile is endangered, information can be shared between government agencies. Where non-government agencies are part of

the partnership or where none of the above-mentioned exceptions exist, a court order will allow for the sharing of this information. Thus, this Act need not present a major impediment to appropriate information sharing.

**Correction of Youthful Offenders (1984).**<sup>2</sup> This Act requires that records of juvenile delinquency proceedings in Federal district courts be safeguarded from disclosure to unauthorized persons except under a variety of circumstances that fit directly into the needs of an information-sharing program. These include inquiries from another court of law, agencies preparing presentence reports, investigative law enforcement agencies, treatment agencies assigned by a court, or a victim regarding disposition of his or her case. Thus, it is unlikely that this law will pose a barrier to the appropriate sharing of information.

**Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974.**<sup>3</sup> The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), also known as the "Buckley Amendment," applies to "educational agencies and institutions" that receive funds under any program administered by the U.S. Secretary of Education. This includes virtually every public elementary and secondary school and school district and also most postsecondary institutions in the United States. FERPA protects parents' and students' privacy interests in "education records" maintained by the agency or institution.<sup>4</sup> Parents or eligible students (those who are 18 years of age or attending postsecondary institutions) must provide a signed and dated written consent before an educational agency or institution may release personally identifiable information

from a student's education records, except in conditions specified by statute.

There are several specific exceptions to the prior written consent rule under FERPA that may permit educational agencies and institutions to share information from the education records of at-risk or delinquent juveniles as part of a properly constructed information-sharing network. The most pertinent of these, the Juvenile Justice System Exception, permits nonconsensual disclosure to State and local officials or authorities to whom the information is specifically allowed to be reported or disclosed pursuant to a State statute if the reporting or disclosure concerns the juvenile justice system and its ability to effectively serve the student whose records are released.

Educational agencies and institutions may also release without consent personally identifiable information that has been designated as "directory information" in accordance with FERPA requirements. Directory information includes the student's name, address, date of birth, dates of attendance ("from and to" dates of enrollment), and other general information that is not considered an invasion of privacy if disclosed. However, directory information does not include a student's Social Security or other identification number. Also, parents and students have the right to refuse to allow agencies and institutions to disclose directory information without consent.

FERPA contains other exceptions for nonconsensual disclosure that may be of value in establishing an information-sharing program, including disclosures in connection with a health and safety emergency and in compliance with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena. Also, records of the law enforcement unit of an educational agency or institution that were created and maintained for the purpose of enforcing any Federal, State, or local laws are excluded from FERPA's definition of education records and,

<sup>2</sup> 18 U.S.C. §5038.

<sup>3</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99.

<sup>4</sup> Education records are defined as any information recorded in any way—including handwriting, print, computer media, video or audio tape, microfilm, and microfiche—that is directly related to a student and maintained by an educational agency or institution or by a party acting for the agency or institution.

<sup>1</sup> 5 U.S.C. § 522 (a); 1 CFR § 425.1 *et seq.*



## Juvenile Justice System Exception to FERPA

Under the Juvenile Justice System Exception, State legislators may authorize the sharing of student information between educational institutions and other youth-serving agencies without parental consent or the consent of an eligible student if four conditions are met:

- The disclosure or reporting of the records must be to a State or local juvenile justice system agency (to be defined by the State legislation).
- The disclosure must be based on a State statute authorizing the disclosure.
- The State law was passed after November 19, 1974, and the allowed reporting or disclosure concerns the juvenile justice system's ability to effectively serve, prior to adjudication, the student whose records are released.
- The State or local officials and authorities to whom such information is disclosed must certify in writing to the educational agency or institution that the information will not be disclosed to any other party except as provided under State law without the prior written consent of the parent of the student.

Once a State has authorized information sharing, FERPA requires that:

- Schools maintain a record, kept with the education records of each student, that will indicate all individuals, agencies, or organizations that have requested or obtained access to a student's education records maintained by such educational agency or institution and that will indicate specifically the legitimate interest that each such person, agency, or organization has in obtaining this information.
- Any agency that violates the disclosure limitations shall be prohibited from obtaining access to information from education records for a period of not less than 5 years.

therefore, from the Act's protections against nonconsensual disclosure.

Thus, FERPA allows for the sharing of information under a variety of circumstances—with parental or eligible student consent, by judicial order or subpoena, in accordance with a State statute that allows for sharing, or in a health and safety emergency—and should not pose a problem for the sharing of information from schools to other agencies participating in an information-sharing program. Furthermore, FERPA does not impede, in any way, a school from receiving information from any other participant in such a program.<sup>5</sup>

**Computer Matching and Privacy Protection Act of 1988.**<sup>6</sup> This Act mandates that computer records can be disclosed only to a Federal agency in a computer-matching program except pursuant to

a written agreement specifying the purpose for collection of the information and procedures for ensuring its security. This includes any item, collection, or grouping of information—educational, financial, medical, criminal, or occupational—identifying an individual that is maintained by a Federal agency. Other communications are allowable, including those pursuant to a court order, those for a government agency for civil or criminal law enforcement activity, and those for a person showing compelling circumstances of a risk to health or safety (Soler, Shotton, and Bell, 1993). Thus, as with the other Federal laws described here, this Act does not present a significant barrier to sharing information in an inter-agency partnership.

**Comprehensive Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Act (1970)<sup>7</sup> and Drug Abuse and Treatment Act (1972).**<sup>8</sup> These Acts specifically apply

to the confidentiality of patient records in alcohol or drug abuse programs receiving Federal assistance. The programs and practitioners covered by these Acts include but are not limited to treatment or rehabilitation programs, programs within general hospitals, school-based programs, and private practitioners who hold themselves out as providing alcohol or drug abuse diagnosis, treatment, or referral for treatment (42 CFR 2.12, 1998). These laws prohibit the release of patient record information, either verbally or in writing, except under limited circumstances.

Generally speaking, a program or practitioner cannot release any information, directly or indirectly, that identifies a person in the program and cannot acknowledge the presence of an individual in the program. But patient record information can be released under the following exceptions:

- It will be used in internal communications between or among those with a legitimate interest who need the information in connection with

<sup>5</sup> OJJDP has published a guide to FERPA called *Sharing Information: A Guide to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and Participation in Juvenile Justice Programs* (NCJ 163705).

<sup>6</sup> 5 U.S.C. § 552a.

<sup>7</sup> 42 U.S.C. §4541 *et seq.*

<sup>8</sup> 42 U.S.C. §290dd-2; 42 CFR § 2.1 *et seq.*

their duties that arise out of the provision of diagnosis, treatment, or referral for treatment of alcohol or drug abuse if the communications are within the program or between a program and an entity that has direct administrative control over the program.

- It relates to a medical emergency requiring assistance.
- It relates to research or an audit of the program or service.
- It relates to a crime on the premises involving drug use or a mental condition.
- It relates to reports of suspected child abuse and neglect.
- A court order has been obtained.
- It will be used by qualified organizations providing services to the program.
- Proper consent, by way of a criminal justice consent form, has been obtained from the individual in the program (in the case of a minor, the consent must be obtained from either the patient, the parents, or both). This consent must be in writing and must contain each of the following items:
  - The name and general description of the program(s) making the disclosure.
  - The name of the individual or organization that will receive the disclosure.
  - The name of the patient who is the subject of the disclosure.
  - The purpose or need for the disclosure.
  - How much and what kind of information will be disclosed.
  - A statement regarding revocation of consent.
  - The date, event, or condition upon which the consent will expire.

- The signature of the patient.
- The date on which the consent is signed.

The requirements regarding consent for the sharing of information among treatment programs and criminal justice agencies are somewhat unusual and strict but must be carefully followed. A general medical release form, or any consent form that does not contain all of the elements listed above, is not acceptable. Whenever possible, it is best to have a proper criminal justice system consent form signed by the defendant before he or she is referred to the treatment program. All disclosures, and especially those made pursuant to a consent form, must be limited to information that is necessary to accomplish the purpose for the disclosure (§2.13(a)). It would be improper to disclose everything in a defendant's file if the recipient of the information needs only one piece of information.

It is important to note that these two laws and regulations prohibit the use of information obtained from patient records to initiate or substantiate any criminal charges against a patient or to conduct any criminal investigation of a patient, regardless of the status of the person obtaining the information or of whether the information was obtained in accordance with these regulations (42 CFR § 2.12, 1998). Finally, if a patient's alcohol or drug abuse diagnosis, treatment, or referral for treatment is not provided by a program that is federally conducted, regulated, or supported, that patient's record is not covered by these regulations. It is, therefore, possible for an individual patient to benefit from Federal support yet not be covered by these confidentiality regulations, because the program in which the patient is enrolled is not federally assisted. The above-mentioned special exemptions for information under these Acts (especially the court order) should

provide information-sharing programs with the tools necessary to obtain the information they need. Thus, these laws should not present a barrier to such a partnership.

**Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Adoption Reform Act (1977).**<sup>9</sup> This Act protects the confidentiality of children's records listed in the child protective services files of agencies that want to remain eligible for Federal funds. Under this Act, the right to confidentiality must be balanced with the need to ensure the accuracy and currency of the information. States may draft legislation complying with this Act that provides records access by (Etten and Petrone, 1994):

- Local child protective services.
- Law enforcement officers investigating reports of abuse or neglect.
- Persons legally authorized to place children in protective custody.
- Physicians, parents, guardians, or supervisory agencies.
- Courts, so long as the review is limited to an *in camera* inspection.
- Grand juries.

Moreover, consent by the child would also allow the release of this information.

In general, juvenile records relating to court dispositions, school information, child abuse, and drug/alcohol treatment can be released under specific circumstances to interested parties. In fact, almost all of these laws permit the sharing of information by obtaining the consent of the individual to whom the information pertains. Thus, Federal statutes provide sufficient flexibility to permit inter-agency information sharing in appropriate circumstances while protecting the confidentiality of juveniles and their families.

<sup>9</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 5106a(b)(4); 45 CFR § 1350.14(j).

## State Laws

In addition to Federal statutes that may impact the establishment and maintenance of interagency information-sharing networks, State statutes also must be considered. Each agency group interested in establishing this type of network will need to identify State laws that govern the collection, use, and dissemination of juvenile records by juvenile justice and other juvenile-related agencies. Specifically, these laws will include but may not be limited to those governing law enforcement records, school records (a State-level codification of FERPA), juvenile court records (legal and social), child protective services and other youth-serving agency records, and mental health records.

Some States treat juvenile court records as public information (see, for example, Washington Revised Code 12.50.050; 13.50.010). Other States permit access to court records only by the juvenile and agencies directly involved in the juvenile justice system. Most States use a method of conditional disclosure of juvenile court records in which a judge issues a court order that permits access to agencies that are not part of the juvenile justice system (see, for example, Pennsylvania Revised Code 6307; 6308). Most State codes do not address procedures for verbal exchanges of information and, for the most part, recognize the right of service providers to share confidential information verbally (Etten and Petrone, 1994).

In the past several years, many State legislatures have reconsidered their laws concerning juvenile records, making them more flexible in order to allow youth-serving agencies to comprehensively address juveniles who have committed serious or violent offenses. In fact, since 1992, 40 of the 50 State legislatures and the District of Columbia have made substantive changes to their laws relating to

the confidentiality of juvenile records or proceedings (Torbet et al., 1996). Relevant statutes can be identified in a number of ways. The most efficient approach is to access either a Lexis/Nexis or Westlaw database<sup>10</sup> in order to identify relevant State statutes through a keyword search. Alternatively, each State's codes are available in any law library. It will likely be most effective to assign a representative from the juvenile justice side of the partnership to determine which laws are relevant to the partnership.

Finally, in addition to identifying the statutes that impose legitimate constraints on establishing and maintaining interagency information-sharing programs, each group will need to identify policies that restrict or limit information sharing. Policies, while often based on laws, are much easier to change. After determining the applicable State laws in each of these areas, it is important to assess implementation policies and practices related to or derived from these laws to see if they inappropriately hinder the ability of agencies to share information with each other. In many instances, policy and practice, not laws, may impede the sharing of information. In either case, both law and policy may need to be changed to increase access to information.

## Evaluation Plans

A good evaluation mechanism is another element needed to establish a successful information-sharing network (Wagner et al., 1997). Without evaluation tools, program participants are unable to determine whether the program is serving the needs of its intended clients and cannot make adjustments where necessary to do a better job. The lack of evaluation results can make it impossible to

determine with any certainty whether information-sharing programs are effective in preventing or reducing juvenile delinquency (Isaacs, 1992).

Moreover, Wagner et al. (1997) suggest that both internal and external evaluations are necessary. An internal evaluation provides the participants in the network with a firsthand look at the way the program operates and builds capacity within the collaborating organizations for analyzing information and improving decisionmaking. An external evaluation provides for a degree of objectivity that an internal evaluation might not. Therefore, Wagner et al. (1997) set out six major goals that should be established when structuring a system evaluation process:

- *Provide a rationale for the collaboration.* This means making a commitment to a particular set of results that are meaningful for each member agency and the community at large. This commitment will provide a stronger basis for partners to continue to work together.
- *Increase the program's effectiveness.* In other words, track the program's progress toward a specific result. This tracking makes it more likely that the program will actually make a difference because the participants will know if they need to make changes to increase the program's effectiveness.
- *Improve accountability to diverse groups.* The evaluation should provide a detailed report of the results achieved or not achieved to help the partners tailor future efforts.
- *Increase the program's credibility.* An evaluation will provide documented results that will increase the program's credibility with funders and constituents who want to know that the money is being used efficiently and effectively. This may be particularly important given that one of the

<sup>10</sup> Lexis/Nexis and Westlaw are comprehensive online legal databases that provide access to State and Federal legislation and case law and also other law-related documents.

major impediments to the continued existence of many programs is the lack of ongoing and stable funding.

- *Advocate for change in the system.* Having ongoing documented knowledge of what is and is not working in the current system can provide a credible rationale for making fundamental changes in how the system works.
- *Take into account the information needs of all concerned.* Community participation is required to help build support for collaborative efforts. When an interagency information-sharing program enlists all groups that are affected by juvenile delinquency, every community resource can be used to its fullest potential. It is also important to stay flexible to address new information needs that arise within the partnership.

In addition to the goals set out for the evaluation, Wagner et al. (1997) suggest that the evaluation must have specific strategies for reaching these goals. The evaluation must be clear about the outcome desired by the partnership—in this case, a decrease in the amount of juvenile delinquency. Wagner et al. (1997) also assert that the evaluation must choose adequate measurement tools to assess the success of partnership activities for which data are available. These measurement tools must demonstrate a link between the activities of the partnership and its stated goals. If this is accomplished, the evaluation will necessarily meet the six goals outlined by Wagner et al. (1997) for the evaluation process. Thus, the evaluation should have at least two components—goals and measures that will be used to assess whether the partnership is reaching the goals. To successfully create these components, it is crucial to identify at the outset the assumptions that the partners are making about what will and will not work in a given community

(Wagner et al., 1997). Proposed activities must be consistent with these assumptions. It is also important to continuously update the partnership's goals to reflect revised activities and to create short-term, interim, and long-term indicators for the continuous evaluation process.

## Barriers to Success

In addition to focusing on which aspects are most important in the development of a successful information-sharing partnership, it is also necessary to identify those obstacles that most frequently impede or undermine the establishment, implementation, or continued existence of an interagency information-sharing partnership, so that they can be avoided at the outset.

**Lack of trust.** One of the most common barriers to information sharing is the lack of trust between agencies that typically do not work together, which can lead to information territorialism (Etten and Petrone, 1994). Differences in agency cultures, goals, vocabularies, and frames of reference also can interfere with appropriate information sharing. Similarly, it is difficult to transfer knowledge when there is a shortage of time and meeting places. Other major barriers that are cited as frequently affecting interagency information-sharing programs include (Isaacs, 1992; Wagner et al., 1997):

- The burden of gathering and reporting information.
- The lack of adequate funding and resources to enable successful programs to continue.
- The difficulty in working effectively with the school system and other youth-serving agencies.
- The failure to conduct an evaluation.

**Technical incompatibilities.** Moreover, technological incompatibilities can impede information sharing. For example, if agencies do not use a

common client identifier for all cases, they may be unable to match a juvenile's name in the different agency computer systems. Agencies may use different coding procedures and have systems using incompatible computer programming languages. Similarly, agencies may define variables using different classification methods (Etten and Petrone, 1994).

**Lack of funding.** Isaacs (1992) asserts that long-term, stable funding frequently does not exist for interagency partnerships. Thus, programs are not able to hire necessary staff, operate for a significant duration or on a significant scale, or provide continuity of services.

There also is always the risk that an agency may opt out of an interagency information-sharing partnership because it is not the lead organization. Another risk of sharing information between a diverse group of service providers is that children may be prematurely labeled by mental health insurers or other agencies.

In some instances, because of narrow statutory interpretations, long-standing practices, a lack of understanding of other agencies' duties and policies, or a mistrust of other agencies, some agencies will continue to refuse to share their information with others in the system, despite evidence that sharing will contribute to achieving systemwide goals of rehabilitating juveniles and protecting the public (Etten and Petrone, 1994). Yet such problems should not discourage an agency or agency group from attempting to establish an information-sharing program. In many cases, the barriers described above can be overcome with thoughtful planning and by working closely with potential partners. For example, differences in agency cultures can be resolved through discussion, teambuilding, job rotation, and other efforts to find common ground. Scheduling conflicts can be addressed by establishing

flexible schedules and mutually convenient places for knowledge transfer, including rotating the meeting place between the different agencies to encourage full participation and ownership of the activity. Finally, technological obstacles may be overcome by having different agencies adopt similar computer programming languages so that each agency's computer system can access the same data (Etten and Petrone, 1994).

### **Promising Programs**

Interagency information sharing already exists in some form in every community in the country. Many juvenile justice and other youth-serving agencies already engage in informal information-sharing practices. Some agencies share information through hard-copy formats but are unable or unwilling to establish similar automated arrangements. Many agencies share information informally over the phone, but never make such sharing routine or formalized (Soler, Shotton, and Bell, 1993). These informal approaches usually take place in the context of long-term relationships between individuals at different agencies and are based on high levels of trust.

Because sharing information among agencies is an easy and effective way to confront problems posed by at-risk juveniles and juvenile offenders, the goal for communities should be to establish a formalized information-sharing system. Throughout the country, an increasing number of agencies have developed formalized information-sharing relationships. In some cases, agencies have implemented an automated system for entering core information into a database that all parties can access. This shared database eliminates the need to have each agency grant direct access to its information system. A number of jurisdictions have gone further and are developing fully integrated multiagency information

systems. The examples below illustrate three different strategies adopted to foster information sharing.

### **Serious Habitual Offender Comprehensive Action Program**

Thirty-two counties in Florida and communities in Maryland, North Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and Washington have implemented the Serious Habitual Offender Comprehensive Action Program (SHOCAP). This program establishes an interagency information-sharing process through agency collaboration. Communities adopt shared criteria for identifying serious habitual offenders and at-risk youth. These criteria allow the agencies to focus on the same population of juveniles. Information resources are used to make better decisions regarding control, intervention, and prevention strategies.

Florida's initiative is a statewide effort that involves the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), and the Florida Department of Education. The initiative grew out of reform efforts begun in 1990 by the State legislature, which created a commission to monitor and review the implementation of long-range juvenile justice reforms. However, from 1990 through 1992, efforts were frustrated by delays in funding and the inability of the human services umbrella agency responsible for juvenile justice programs at the time to rapidly implement new programs and provide treatment slots for youth in need. Significant legislative reforms took place in 1993 regarding information sharing among public and private agencies that enhanced the penalties for the use and possession of weapons by minors and allocated funding (\$50 million) to establish additional delinquency, drug, and mental health placement beds. In 1994, the legislature transferred responsibility for the delinquency programs

from the human services agency to a new department-level authority, DJJ, devoted solely to juvenile justice. The reform bill also targeted violent and chronic juvenile offenders with measures that, among other things, relaxed confidentiality standards for juvenile records. In 1995, the legislature appropriated funds to implement the continuum of juvenile justice services it had established in the 1994 legislation.

### **Houston's Juvenile Accountability Court Program**

In 1998, the Mayor's Office, the Houston Police Department, and the U.S. Attorney's Office worked together to identify systemwide changes they felt were needed to enhance the operation and management of the juvenile and criminal justice systems, to support and link various Federal initiatives (including JAIBG), and to promote prevention and early intervention for juvenile offenders in Houston. One outgrowth of this collaboration was the establishment of Houston's Youth-Focused Community Policing Initiative (YFCP). The goals of Houston's YFCP initiative are to:

- Improve interagency collaboration.
- Remove legal barriers to information sharing.
- Eliminate service duplication.
- Enhance service coordination.
- Develop a formal structure and process for interagency collaboration.
- Identify processes and data systems for resource collection and dissemination.

In June 1999, the YFCP initiative implemented the Juvenile Accountability Court Program (JACP) to identify and intervene with juveniles who have committed minor criminal offenses before they commit more serious ones. JACP places counselors, most of whom are social workers, in the Municipal and Justice of the Peace

courts. A juvenile who has committed a Class C misdemeanor is referred by municipal and peace court judges to a JACP counselor for a needs assessment. The assessment is conducted before or at the juvenile's hearing. The counselor makes recommendations to the judge, and they work together to determine which services will be provided to the juvenile. The juvenile is then ordered by the court to attend these services. Several different types and levels of support are available. JACP provides both direct services and workshops to juveniles. The programs range from less to more intensive. They include pro-social behavior programs, gang intervention, drug and alcohol intervention, parenting classes, and anger management. In addition, JACP can refer a juvenile to outside nonpaid mental health programs.

The JACP contracts with community-based nonprofit organizations to provide services. In addition to the contracted service providers, JACP has established relationships with other nonpaid service providers who donate their services. Each service provider is required to outline and implement a well-defined program. Moreover, each service provider is required to report information concerning the juvenile's participation and progress back to JACP. In addition to the information JACP receives from service providers, it also has access to county and city arrest records, gang records, and juvenile probation records. Similarly, JACP has formed informal relationships with the Houston Independent School District and Operation Weed and Seed to share information regarding juveniles in their programs.

Over the first year of the program's operation, JACP counselors have faced a number of challenges. First, they found that the workshops they provided were too large. They not only needed to provide smaller workshops, but they also needed to

provide more monitoring. They also had to face the reality that a large percentage of the juveniles they treat have drug and alcohol problems. Additionally, they discovered that many of the juveniles with whom they deal are under the jurisdiction of multiple courts. And finally, an unexpectedly large number of the juveniles for whom they provide services are in need of anger management training.

JACP began operation in June 1999. The counselors see approximately 100 juveniles a week. Since its inception, the program has formally served more than 400 juveniles and has referred many more who do not fall within the program guidelines to other service providers.

### Missouri Juvenile Justice Information System

In 1995, the Missouri Legislature mandated that the Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA) and the Departments of Social Services, Mental Health, and Health coordinate their information systems "to allow for tracking of individual children by the juvenile court and the departments of social services, mental health and health" (Mo. Stat. Rev. § 210.865). Consequently, a statewide effort was begun to implement an "information sharing network between juvenile offices/courts and executive branch youth service agencies" (Missouri Office of the State Courts Administrator, 1998b). The developers of the Missouri Juvenile Justice Information System (MOJJIS) began their efforts by identifying existing system deficiencies. The problems they identified included (Missouri Office of the State Courts Administrator, 1998a):

- The lack of a uniform data collection process pertaining to individual youth as they proceed through the juvenile justice system.
- The lack of a statewide database to track juvenile offenders or allow

for the systemic reporting of offender dispositions.

- The difficulty in determining the duration, effectiveness, or costs of youth programs across the State.
- The dependence on a system of juvenile/family self-reporting which leads to duplicate services among agencies.
- The absence of an immediate method through which the State can notify agencies about an offender's circumstances and family history.
- The lack of a means for law enforcement agencies, sheriffs, the Missouri Highway Patrol, schools, and social service agencies to request a record check in order to determine if a juvenile or family is known to the juvenile justice system.

The MOJJIS developers established two primary goals: (1) allow juvenile offices to have online access to pertinent juvenile data gathered from cooperating executive agencies and (2) establish a cooperative information-sharing system among juvenile justice agencies. Then, they took the following preliminary steps:

- A coordinated juvenile information-sharing workgroup representing OSCA; the Departments of Social Service, Elementary and Secondary Education, Mental Health, and Health; and the Missouri Juvenile Justice Association was formed.
- A draft of a cooperative information-sharing agreement was completed.
- Agency information needs and common data elements were identified.

According to the MOJJIS grant administrator, the first jurisdictions came online in mid-1999. To date, juvenile justice agencies are able to communicate with each other online, sharing confidential information through a secured network. Other

participating agencies, including the 40 school districts, the Division of Youth Services, the Department of Mental Health, and others, are able to share nonconfidential information with each other via e-mail. MOJJIS is supported by a \$6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and additional funding from the Missouri State Legislature. Efforts to procure additional funding are currently under way.

## Conclusion

States and local entities must turn to multidisciplinary and multiagency approaches to combat and prevent delinquent acts by juveniles. This means creating partnerships among representatives from a variety of fields, including public health, mental health, juvenile justice, education, law, child welfare, child advocacy, and law enforcement. Members of the community, families, and private groups also should be included. Central to creating partnerships that will focus on serving this juvenile population is the ability to share information among all the agencies responsible for delivering services to children. Interagency collaboration for sharing information can be and is being done effectively. With time and patience, a community or jurisdiction can establish a successful information-sharing partnership.

## For Further Information

An interagency information-sharing resource package that contains abstracts and copies of all the articles cited in this Bulletin and additional papers, studies, and articles on information sharing is available from Development Services Group, Inc., JAIBG Training and Technical Assistance grantee, 7315 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 700E, Bethesda, MD 20814; 877-GO-JAIBG (877-465-2424);

www.dsgonline.com (Internet). The resource package also includes: information available on the Internet, relevant State Statutes on information sharing and confidentiality, sample interagency agreements and memoranda of understanding, sample court orders, and model consent forms.

Additional resources and assistance are available from OJJDP's Training and Technical Assistance Center, 800 K Street, Washington, DC 20531; 800-830-4031 (phone); 202-353-9095 (fax); nttac@community-research.com (e-mail).

For information about the Los Angeles information-sharing project, contact: Robert Sainz, Associate Executive Director, Commission for Children, Youth, and Their Families, 333 S. Spring Street, Los Angeles, CA, 90013; 213-485-3821 (phone).

For information about the Houston Juvenile Accountability Court Program, contact: Robin Melrose, Program Manager, Juvenile Accountability Court Program, City of Houston Mayor's Anti-Gang P.O. Box 1562, Houston, TX 77251; 713-437-6511 (phone); 713-247-1340 (fax); rmelrose@myr.ci.houston.tx.us (e-mail).

For information about Missouri's information-sharing project, contact: Gary Waint, Director, Division of Juvenile and Adult Court Programs, Office of State Courts Administrator, P.O. Box 104480, Jefferson City, MO, 65110; 573-751-4377 (phone); gary\_waint@osca.state.mo.us (e-mail).

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