

Juvenile Justice Vision 20/20 Training Event

Effective Case Management: Funding

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It is no secret that funding for juvenile courts is both diverse and complex. Changes in the offending, arrest rates, families, and the juvenile justice system affect how the courts address the needs of individuals who come through the court system. Understanding court funding helps juvenile justice professionals meet the current, yet ever-changing needs of children and families.

Since the 1980's, there has been an increased amount of juveniles being processed through the juvenile justice system. Offenses that would have been a "slap on the wrist" in the past are now taken with the upmost seriousness. In addition, the past 5 years have seen an increased amount of juveniles with mental health disorders who are being criminalized for negative behaviors in order to receive necessary services. Many of these youth are treated with psychotropic medicines which have greatly increased in popularity. Understanding funding can prepare juvenile justice professionals to handle current challenges, as well as prepare for future challenges.

There are a variety of different funding sources with which juvenile court systems interface in order to receive funding for programming, administrative costs, etc. The primary funding source for juvenile justice is the State of Michigan, via the Child Care Fund. This Act is outlined in the Social Welfare Act – PA 280 1939. This funding source is complex but important because it grants courts flexibility in their programming. With the Child Care Fund, the state reimburses 50% of juvenile justice programming costs. This method of funding satisfies the state's need for standardization, while allowing the counties to have flexibility.

The majority of other funding for courts comes from the County General Fund. Before paying for programming, money from the County General Fund pays for court appointed attorneys, wages, salaries, equipment, and other necessary expenses. After, the county then funds programming and different services that they offer juveniles and their families. Other funding sources include Title IV-E, Medicaid, SED (Serious Emotional Disturbance) Waivers, and blended funding or alternative funding sources.

There is a lot of room for courts to find creative funding opportunities. Although grants are time-consuming and thorough, they are a great way to receive extra money for court programming and other services. Grants can be located through community foundations, corporate foundations, and through smaller local foundations that have a specific focus. In addition, many federal organizations (SAMHSA, OJJDP, BJA, etc.) offer grants for various projects and activities. Courts are also encouraged to partner with different organizations and systems to address common goals. Pooling resources can have many benefits for the community and the youth within it. Most important to partnering organizations is to build relationships with community members and other potential partners.

Without funding, juvenile court systems would not be able to provide the services they do to meet the needs of juveniles and their families. Funding is truly connected to every aspect of the court system and its importance cannot be overstated. Funding is connected to risk/need assessments as these

assessments inform programming needs. Funding allows a court system to develop community-based services that create positive outcomes for many people. Quality data collection informs the effectiveness of programs which is then shared with the data sources, ensuring adequate and sustainable funding in the future. Although many court staff do not work with funding as a part of their job description, it is important to understand court funding sources as it affects every aspect of juvenile court systems.