

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: PERSPECTIVES ON AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF JUVENILE DRUG COURTS IMPLEMENTING RECLAIMING FUTURES

Alison Greene — Kendra Thompson-Dyck

Megan S. Wright — Monica Davis — Katie Haverly

Community engagement is an important aspect of adolescent substance abuse treatment and an essential component of the Juvenile Drug Court/Reclaiming Futures (JDC/RF) program. Community organizations contribute to the program- and system-level planning and decision-making process of the juvenile drug court, bringing an outside perspective to juvenile justice. In addition, collaborations build a network of community resources that youth and their families can draw upon when they transition out of the program. Yet effectively engaging collaborators, achieving formalized community partnerships, and creating strong community linkages is challenging. This article uses data from the National Cross-Site Evaluation of Juvenile Drug Courts and Reclaiming Futures to examine how JDC/RF programs work to attain community engagement goals and effectively translate community engagement into their operations, processes, and programming.

THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL and Prevention (CDC) and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry define community engagement as “the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people.” These two national organizations also call for community engagement as a basis for any campaign that is aimed at improving public health (Clinical and Translational Science Awards Consortium’s Community Engagement Key Function Committee [CTSA Committee], 2011).

Substance use among youth is one such public health concern that can be better addressed by communities working collaboratively. By participating in community, service, faith-based, vocational, or extra-curricular activities, justice-involved youth have opportunities to build positive relationships with adults and peers, participate in skill-building activities, and take on leadership roles (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003; Nissen, 2011). Further, they are less likely to engage in antisocial behavior, substance abuse, and gang activity or other crimes, and to attain higher academic achievement (Hyman, 2002; Mahoney & Stattin, 2000). Research suggests that youth engagement in community and prosocial activities acts as a protective factor against substance abuse relapse and criminal recidivism for those who have been involved in the juvenile justice system and/or substance abuse treatment (Elder, Leaver-Dunn, Wang, Nagy, & Green, 2000; Henggeler et al., 2006; Mackenzie & Brame, 2001; Xue, Zimmerman, & Caldwell, 2007). Through a positive youth development approach, community engagement can enhance youths' abilities and competencies by exposing them to supportive and empowering environments that foster skill-building and horizon-broadening experiences (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

To be most successful, collaborations should consist of a representation of multiple domains including, but not limited to, juvenile justice, treatment, schools, businesses, recreational, and the faith-based community (CTSA Committee, 2011). In a 2011 practice guide developed by the National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk,¹ Gonsoulin and Read discuss the importance of interagency collaboration:

When child-serving agencies communicate and work with each other, and are committed to coordinating services and supports for the youth and families they serve, they become part of a more integrated system. Such a system may prove more

¹ Now the Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children and Youth.

efficient and effective than one in which child welfare, juvenile justice, education, and related agencies work in silos. (p. 10)

Both juvenile drug courts and Reclaiming Futures (RF) have recognized this need for community engagement to enable substance-abusing, justice-involved youth to successfully complete treatment programs and transition back into their communities.

THE JUVENILE DRUG COURT: STRATEGIES IN PRACTICE

Juvenile Drug Court: Strategies in Practice (JDC:SIP) delineates 16 strategies that juvenile drug courts should use to implement and operate a drug court that is tailored specifically to addressing the needs of adolescents (Dennis, Baumer, & Stevens, 2016; National Drug Court Institute [NDCI] & National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges [NCJFCJ], 2003). Community engagement appears as a central element in 7 of the 16 strategies (1, 2, 6, 7, 10, 13, and 15; see Table 1).

As outlined in the JDC:SIP monograph (NDCI & NCJFCJ, 2003), the first strategy, Collaborative Planning, entails the incorporation of organizations and individuals typically not involved in juvenile justice and court process. In this strategy, juvenile justice personnel, including the evaluator or specialists in management information systems, are to work with relevant representatives from schools, treatment providers, and community-based organizations in facilitating a form of jurisprudence that is responsive to the unique needs of individual youth and focused on social and familial reintegration. Strategy 2, Teamwork, reiterates the importance of and need for collaboration between the drug courts and a diverse range of community stakeholders and agencies, particularly those that represent the populations served by the system. This strategy further states that to function successfully, work teams must maintain a spirit of solidarity and cooperation throughout the development of the juvenile drug court (JDC) program.

Community engagement extends beyond internal community representation in the drug court process to support youth postadjudication.

TABLE 3		COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT-RELATED JUVENILE DRUG COURT STRATEGIES
Strategy		Description
1.	Collaborative Planning	Engage all stakeholders in creating an interdisciplinary, coordinated, and systemic approach to working with youth and their families.
2.	Teamwork	Develop and maintain an interdisciplinary, nonadversarial work team.
6.	Community Partnerships	Build partnerships with community organizations to expand the range of opportunities available to youth and their families.
7.	Comprehensive Treatment Planning	Tailor interventions to the complex and varied needs of youth and their families.
10.	Cultural Competence	Create policies and procedures that are responsive to cultural differences and train personnel to be culturally competent.
13.	Educational Linkages	Coordinate with the school system to ensure that each participant enrolls in and attends an educational program that is appropriate to his or her needs.
15.	Goal-Oriented Incentives and Sanctions	Respond to compliance and noncompliance with incentives and sanctions that are designed to reinforce or modify the behavior of youth and their families.

Note: Adapted from *Juvenile Drug Courts: Strategies in Practice*, National Drug Court Institute & National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 2003, Rockville, MD: Bureau of Justice Assistance (<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/bja/197866.pdf>).

Strategy 6, Community Partnerships, encourages court teams to establish connections with local agencies, businesses, councils, and service organizations that could provide recreational, educational, and social opportunities for youth and their families. Strategy 7, Comprehensive Treatment Planning, states that these partnerships should be leveraged to create ancillary programs, such as vocational training, literacy tutoring, mentoring, and community service opportunities to assist youth in cultivating social and life skills. As emphasized by Strategy 13, Educational Linkages, educational programs are particularly significant in preparing youth for productive and meaningful careers.

Planning and operational teams are thus advised to forge connections with representatives from local education systems, including teachers, principals, and superintendents to stay informed of a given drug court-involved youth's academic and/or vocational progress.

Community resources can be used in creating incentives and sanctions to foster a sense of motivation and responsibility among JDC participants. Strategy 15, Goal-Oriented Incentives and Sanctions, recommends JDCs invite local businesses to donate goods and services that can be offered to youth as rewards for productive behavior; alternatively, civic organizations can assist in promoting personal accountability by providing community service opportunities.

The related processes of selecting organizations for potential collaboration and identifying and providing complementary services must be informed by cultural awareness. Strategy 10, Cultural Competence, stipulates that to be effective, partner organizations and collateral programs must reflect the diversity of the client population. Thus, in simultaneously broadening its scope and tailoring its activity through community partnerships, comprehensive treatment planning, educational linkages, incentives, and cultural competence, the court becomes more effective in holistically addressing client needs, expanding the range of provided services, and generating a network of community support for the youth and families served.

Success indicators for JDCs that subscribe to the JDC:SIP framework include implementation of interagency collaborative planning, involvement of stakeholders in decision-making processes, institutionalization of model practices, and full implementation of the 16 strategies, including building strong community partnerships (van Wormer & Lutze, 2010).

Reclaiming Futures

Reclaiming Futures is a systems integration and change model approach to bridge gaps in services and to address the unmet needs of substance-using youth in the juvenile justice system (Dennis et al., 2016; Nissen, Butts, Merrigan, & Kraft, 2006; Solovitch, 2010). Community engagement is a tenet of RF and part of its overarching ap-

proach; it emphasizes coordination and inclusion of stakeholders to “commit to shared goals developed across previously fragmented systems, and to finding ways to address these collectively” (Nissen & Kraft, 2007, p. 62). The RF model has been shown to improve outcomes for juveniles and their families by linking community system reforms, substance abuse treatment, and community engagement to break the cycle of drug use and crime (Altschuler, 2011; Nissen, 2011).

To enhance community involvement, a critical component of RF is a leadership team responsible for implementing the six steps of the RF model (Reclaiming Futures, “How the Model Works,” n.d.) and working together to integrate justice, service, and community organization systems to better serve the needs of youth. Each leadership team consists of five “fellows”: a project director, a judge, a justice representative (e.g., probation officer, court administrator), a representative from the treatment sector, and a community member. The role of the community fellow is extensive and includes bringing a community perspective to the table and to the decision-making process. The community fellow also plays a vital role in identifying community agencies for collaboration and creating linkages that will be necessary for youth as they transition out of the program. This fellow is also key to bringing awareness of RF to the larger community. “The right community leader can make [the] RF initiative a true success” (Reclaiming Futures, “A Team of Leaders,” n.d.).

In addition to having community engagement as part of the overarching approach to RF, creating community partnerships and working collaboratively is specifically outlined in two of the six steps, Service Coordination and Transition. Service Coordination emphasizes that service plans should be both comprehensive and individualized to meet the needs of each youth. Among other services, these plans should include treatment services, prosocial activities, and education services. Service plans need to be family driven, yet developed and coordinated by community teams, and should incorporate community-based resources. Transition is the RF step when youth withdraw from formal engagement with the juvenile justice and substance abuse treatment agencies and return to life without court involvement. As described on the Reclaiming Futures website,

To stay crime-free and drug-free after completing probation, teens need mentors and other caring adults in their lives. They also need help finishing school, finding a job, and getting involved in activities like the arts, sports, and community service that help them learn the social skills [needed] to succeed in life. (Reclaiming Futures, “The Problem,” n.d.)

In an article discussing the foundations of the Reclaiming Futures model, Nissen and Merrigan (2011) discuss community engagement: “If the community does not offer youth routes to longer-term opportunity such as ongoing access to education and other types of meaningful, productive involvement, then a life is not reclaimed” (p. S7).

The JDC/RF Initiative

Community engagement is an integral component of the JDC/RF federal initiative, in which JDCs were funded to integrate the JDC:SIP and RF models (see Greene, Kagan, Ostlie, & Davis, 2016 [this volume]) into their existing JDCs. Community engagement is called for at multiple junctures of the program, as has already been described for both the JDC:SIP and RF models. In addition, the JDCs that received funding under this initiative were charged with convening “change teams.” This team would include all five fellows from the RF leadership team in addition to other community representatives. JDC/RF programs in this initiative were encouraged to partner with faith, business, mentoring, or youth leadership organizations, and to include youth and families in these teams.

Additionally, JDCs were required to hire a coordinator for the team who would be responsible for implementing the RF model to establish an integrated system of care for youth (Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2009). Youth who enroll in the JDC/RF programs often have multiple issues that need to be addressed in addition to substance use and criminality (e.g., mental health and educational issues). Thus, having a coordinated system of care with multiple service organizations working together to address the needs of youth results in better outcomes than having youth receive services from siloed systems. By integrating RF into JDCs, the juvenile justice and treatment systems are encouraged to invite the

community to help reclaim youth by providing additional services and engaging them in new and positive opportunities (DHHS, 2009).

The approach to community engagement for the JDC/RF grantees is two-pronged. First, working in partnership with community organizations enables grantees to collaboratively create a system of care for youth and families, with the community contributing to the program- and system-level planning and decision making. Engaging the community in JDC/RF programs brings outside perspectives into the change team and allows the JDCs to approach juvenile justice through a truly community-based approach.

Community engagement at this level may also help reduce the stigma associated with juvenile justice by exposing community members to the “human side” of the system. In addition, JDC programs engaging with the community foster more relationships between the JDC and active community resources (e.g., gyms, mentoring programs), giving youth and families access to a wider array of support services and activities while helping the court sustain more services without relying on grant funding.

Second, a network of community partners is built, which youth and families can engage with when they transition out of the program. However, it is unrealistic to expect youth to be able to seek out and connect with these resources on their own; this is why it is necessary to successfully link the youth to these community entities while they are still enrolled in the program. Successful linkage can be facilitated when collaboration exists between the JDC and the community organization. Programs are encouraged to begin building this infrastructure early on so that youth are engaged and linked to the community during the service engagement and can thus more easily transition out of care.

However, despite the many advantages, there are barriers to engaging the community in JDC programs: First, identifying community resources/partners and establishing mechanisms to formally connect with those partners pose one set of challenges (Nissen, 2011; Tappin & McGlashan, 2007). Second, funding and resources are also often a concern, both when attempting to engage partners with the court and when linking youth to community services (Tappin & McGlashan,

2007). Research on related interventions in the juvenile justice system has found that limited resources can also pose a challenge to engaging community organizations in project planning if potential partners cannot allocate staff time to build these connections (Barton, 2006). Third, potential partners may also be reluctant to work with JDC youth, or with JDC/RF programs in general, because they perceive court-involved youth as difficult or dangerous due to the stigma associated with juvenile justice and substance use (Belenko & Dembo, 2003; Nissen, 2011). Finally, even when resources are available and partners are actively engaged, juvenile drug courts must successfully link individual youth (or families) with specific community partners.

To better serve the needs of substance-abusing, justice-involved youth, it is important to understand in more detail how juvenile drug courts implementing the RF model engage community stakeholders, what barriers and challenges they face, and what effective strategies enable them to overcome these challenges and achieve successful community engagement. That is the focus of the current study, which is a substudy of the National Cross-Site Evaluation of Juvenile Drug Courts and Reclaiming Futures (JDC/RF National Evaluation). This article presents findings from the study, analyzing the community engagement experience of juvenile drug courts that implemented the integrated JDC/RF model, and suggests promising practices—not causal relationships between community engagement and program outcomes—for juvenile drug courts.

METHODS

To explore JDC/RF evaluation sites' experiences with community engagement and community partnerships, this study utilized in-depth individual interviews and observations of change team meetings. Interviewees described specific strategies their site used to engage the community, as well as successes and challenges they encountered when attempting to collaborate with local agencies and individuals. They also offered recommendations for improvement. Data collected through observations of the meetings were used to substantiate these findings. Study measures and procedures were reviewed and approved by the University of Arizona's Institutional Review Board

(IRB). The current study is not an experimental or quasi-experimental design, as recommended by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (2015).

Sample

From 2012 to 2014, the evaluation team conducted in-depth individual interviews annually and twice per year observed change team meetings at five JDC/RF evaluation sites. Across the five evaluation sites, qualitative analysts conducted a total of 52 semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with 29 individuals, all of whom provided informed consent. Nine interviewees were replaced over the duration of the evaluation because they left their position or did not respond to evaluator requests for an interview. Interviewees were offered remuneration for their participation.

Additional qualitative data were collected through observation and audio recordings of change team meetings during the biannual visits to each evaluation site. Depending on the grant-funding period and the University of Arizona's IRB approvals, the number of observations varied between three and five per site (one or two per year), for a total of 18 observations across the five sites. The individual interviews and the change team meeting observations were conducted during the second, third, and fourth years of the grant-funded project period for three of the evaluation sites and during the third and fourth years for the other two sites.

Procedure

To select participants for individual interviews, the evaluation team collected rosters of all staff and partners affiliated with the JDC/RF evaluation site. Rosters were categorized into four subgroups, and individuals were then randomly selected to interview from these groups: administration (e.g., project directors, court administrators), community (e.g., community fellows, social service caseworkers), justice (e.g., attorneys, judges, probation officers), and treatment (e.g., substance abuse and mental health providers).

Interviews were conducted both in person and by telephone. Thirty-seven interviews that could not be scheduled during the site visit were conducted by phone. Forty-six of the 52 interviews were audio-recorded. Recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim by one person on the research team, and then a random sample of the transcripts was checked for quality assurance purposes, resulting in 98% accuracy. Interviewees were asked questions from a semi-structured direct question interview guide developed for the JDC/RF National Evaluation. The categories of questions pertained to the usefulness of screening and assessment tools, availability of youth services and resources, systemwide collaboration, successes and challenges of implementing an integrated JDC/RF model, and recommendations to improve the matching of youth to appropriate services. Demographic data were not collected from research participants.

The evaluation team observed naturally occurring change team meetings to record meeting content and patterns of interaction among and between the four subsystems (administration, judicial/justice, substance abuse treatment, and community). All meeting participants agreed to observation by providing informed consent. Nine of the 20 observed meetings were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The other meetings were not recorded because all participants did not consent to audio recordings. The evaluation team took detailed notes of interviews and meetings where participants did not consent to recording.

All interviews were deductively coded (Lewins & Silver, 2007), using Atlas.ti, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis program. The codebook generated to analyze these data contained 46 codes and was based largely on the 11 research questions of interest for the JDC/RF National Evaluation, the 16 strategies of the JDC:SIP (NDCI & NCJFCJ, 2003), and the six steps of the RF model (Nissen et al., 2006; Reclaiming Futures, “How the Model Works,” n.d.) to look for evidence of implementation of these two models. For the present study, codes that related to “community” (e.g., community context, community partnerships) were then analyzed to determine participants’ understandings about their programs’ existing community partnerships, their local community culture, barriers to community

involvement, strategies currently employed to engage community, and suggestions for increasing community engagement.

Change team meeting data underwent two stages of analysis. First, meeting transcripts were coded line by line for specific quotes that related to the JDC/RF model, utilizing the 46 codes (consistent with those used for the interviews) that were relevant to the meeting discussions. Second, the evaluation team generated a detailed summary for each of these meetings describing major agenda items discussed and interactions between participants. These summaries were coded for evidence of collaboration, community engagement, and recommendations for improvement, as well as other themes related to the JDC/RF model that emerged in the data. Summaries were then integrated with the findings related to these codes in the individual interviews to gain a broader understanding of how juvenile drug courts that have implemented Reclaiming Futures engaged with their communities.

RESULTS

The Value of Community Engagement

Nearly all JDC/RF study participants who were interviewed described efforts by their JDC/RF team to cultivate and sustain systemwide collaboration consistent with the JDC/RF model. Participants emphasized that effective collaboration within the juvenile court system (e.g., JDC/RF team, detention, treatment providers, case management) expanded their capacity to address youth needs. Participants who were involved in the JDC prior to the JDC/RF implementation explained that while their site had at least a minimal level of community engagement before the JDC/RF grant, staff in the program were subsequently more dedicated to expanding community participation.

More specifically, community engagement was perceived as a valuable asset to expand resources, knowledge, and court capacity and to increase potential sustainability for JDC/RF programs. First, community collaboration was perceived as an effective means of expanding available resources that directly benefited youth and their families during JDC/RF program participation. Community partners

could augment existing internal JDC/RF resources by utilizing their professional networks to increase access to needed youth services in the community (e.g., mentoring, prosocial activities, job training). “I’m a collaborator,” one interviewee from the community explained. “I’m the collector of people. I don’t know every service that’s available, I don’t know every process. But I know somebody who does. That’s all I need.”

Second, participants described the way community involvement expanded the knowledge base of the JDC/RF team by bringing in community partners with a diverse range of expertise. Court personnel who were interviewed explained that community representatives contributed different perspectives and knowledge of additional resources that was advantageous for addressing difficult juvenile cases:

We have a woman who is housed here, but she works for the [name of community organization], who...is trying to help hook us up with money and...helping us walk through certain things as far as getting the kid...Medicaid and stuff like that.

Third, participants reported that additional community providers enhanced the court’s capacity to provide individualized services for JDC/RF participants, particularly for specialized resources (e.g., trauma counseling, dual diagnosis, gender-specific treatment, LGBTQ programming). For example, in counties with diverse populations, working with local community organizations increased access to culturally specific services (e.g., resource centers that work primarily with Native American populations). Additionally, community agencies could provide services for youth and their families in areas beyond the capacity of the JDC/RF program. For example, participants reported that external agencies provided a range of direct assistance to families, such as paying household bills, providing Thanksgiving dinner for youth and their families, and offering substance abuse treatment for parents. Participants also indicated that increasing their community partnerships expanded their ability to appropriately match youth to clinicians or mentors based on individual needs or preferences (e.g., demographics, location).

Fourth and finally, community engagement was perceived as valuable for its potential to increase access to alternative funding streams, and thus bolster sustainability. Those participants who were concerned with the financial feasibility of the JDC/RF program (e.g., administrators, judges) valued community connections as a way to increase sustainability (e.g., community partners with access to grant funding). As one judicial official explained, “Well, community organizations, their involvement is important because it gives us elasticity. It gives us redundancies. It gives us the ability to weather budget shortfalls or hiccupping in funding.”

Barriers to Positive Community Engagement

Participants also described barriers to positive community engagement—challenges that precede a juvenile drug court’s initial attempts to engage their communities. For example, if the larger community culture does not or cannot support substance-free living, it may be difficult for a JDC to positively engage the community, or undesirable to even attempt to do so. Five categories of barriers to community engagement were identified in the data set: (1) normative drug use in the community, (2) stigma associated with JDC youth, (3) staff turnover, (4) limited community resources, and (5) community economic factors.

Normative Drug Use in the Community

Participants from the majority of sites reported that their local community culture, in which drug use was a norm, was a significant barrier to successful community engagement. When drug use is normative for families of youth and for the larger community, it becomes difficult to positively engage the community in JDC/RF programs. Participants expressed concern that this causes a mismatch in the messages about drug use that youth receive from JDC/RF compared to those from their home and community environments. Additionally, participants discussed that the normative drug use in the community ensures abundant access to drugs and potentially greater temptation for youth to use.

Two sites in the study were located in states facing the legalization of recreational marijuana use at the time of data collection. Participants from these sites expressed particular unease because they felt the norms of the community stood in opposition to the messages and practices of the court. One interviewee foresaw difficulties the JDC/RF program could face:

The genie has been let out of the bottle, and I don't know. We're going to have to adapt. We're going to have to adapt our practices to the norms of the community, and the big thing now is, these kids have role models, they have parents, family members, everybody smokes pot.

In both communities where marijuana was and was not undergoing legalization, participants cited normative drug use in the area as a significant barrier to community engagement.

Stigma Associated with JDC Youth

Stigma against court-involved youth was also discussed by participants as part of local community culture that impeded community partnerships. Three of the five sites brought up issues of community members' fear of and discomfort with JDC/RF youth. For example, one interviewee shared the following:

They're not very welcoming to our clientele. A lot of the churches do have an older generation, as major people that are involved with the churches, that are involved in the decision making, and they just aren't willing to really give these kids a chance, just because of whatever their experience has been with poverty, youth in poverty, or youth that have been on probation in the past. So they just haven't been very welcoming to it....A lot of them...say that they're scared of them.

At another site an interviewee shared similar sentiments: "The mentors themselves are scared of working with our kids, or they just, the kids are labeled." The interviewer followed up by asking, "Are they worried about theft, or are they worried about violence?" The reply was "Both."

Staff Turnover

The JDC/RF model requires intensive collaboration internally within the change team and externally with youth-serving treatment providers. Staff turnover in either of these areas can create significant barriers to positive community engagement. One site suggested that, internally, judicial turnover was a particular challenge:

I think change is difficult for everybody, and so we went from one judge to another judge. And then there were issues before Reclaiming Futures, and then all of a sudden...another judge came on. I think...the transition was kind of difficult in the beginning, but once we realized...that we're working together as a team, there haven't been any issues.

In addition, interviewees also spoke to the common experience of staff turnover at provider sites. These shifts could often inhibit drug courts from making effective and timely referrals. As one participant noted,

It takes a long time to get a referral made, to get an initial intake set. There's a large turnover of providers, so having...employees that you can keep who are invested in the program, who love what they did and were not just hopping from one job to the next, that would be fantastic.

Limited Community Resources

Participants across all evaluation sites described practical challenges that their JDC/RF programs faced in recruiting and sustaining community involvement to enhance matching youth to community resources and services. Often cited were gaps in community resources for particular types of services or populations. While participants generally felt that their court had adequate access to the most essential services to operate the JDC (e.g., substance abuse treatment, educational support), when asked about available resources almost all described specialized services that they thought were lacking in their community for specific populations (e.g., LGBTQ youth, undocumented families, treatment for youth over the age of 18) and for specific services (e.g., foster placement, residential treatment, mental

health and dual-diagnosis services, adult substance abuse treatment, housing, prosocial activities). Lack of service organizations was a particularly salient barrier for sites in rural areas. Without appropriate resources in their county, youth either went without needed services or were required to leave the community to obtain them. Even at other sites where adequate organizations were in place, barriers existed to providing services to those in need. One metropolitan area experienced such rapid growth that the community organizations could not meet the growing demand for youth services.

Community Economic Factors

Economic circumstances influenced the extent of community involvement. For example, public schools taxed by state-level funding cuts were unable to send school representatives to change team meetings, and this decreased linkages between JDC/RF programs and youth education. For example, one participant remarked,

Although they've been invited in the past, they've been in attendance sporadically. Getting somebody from the schools involved in this process has been difficult. I'm sure you know [the state] spends less per student on our kids than most of the states in the Union. We're pretty pathetic. And so our schools are stretched pretty thin. They're understaffed. That may contribute to it, but we don't have a lot of school involvement in the drug court.

Additionally, during the economic downturn, nonprofit community organizations discontinued specific services and were less likely to collaborate due to limited resources.

Strategies for Success in Overcoming Challenges to Community Engagement

JDC/RF program staff described efforts by their courts to improve community engagement and reported successes and challenges with their endeavors. Over the course of JDC/RF implementation, participants across all evaluation sites described similar strategies their programs devised to increase community involvement. While most

participants were enthusiastic about the progress made to involve the community in their JDC/RF program, at the end of the evaluation cycle the consensus was that community engagement remained “an ongoing conversation” and a “work in progress.” Many discussed areas of challenges and offered related strategies to improve community engagement. Two overarching strategies that emerged in the data with regard to community engagement challenges faced by the sites addressed general approaches—(1) prioritize community engagement, and (2) assemble a committed JDC/RF team—while two other strategies addressed more specific approaches: (3) increase JDC/RF program visibility in the community, and (4) identify, engage, and maintain community partners.

Prioritize Community Engagement

First, participants recommended prioritizing community engagement in the implementation of JDC/RF as a way to improve the link between JDC/RF and the community. During interviews and change team meetings, participants discussed the importance of having community engagement efforts at the forefront of the JDC/RF program. As one interviewee noted,

I think unfortunately our work has been looking at family engagement, community engagement as an afterthought... after everything else is in place. Sometimes I think that maybe...we should have had family engagement, community engagement at the forefront. And if we had done that, then maybe we'd be further along in getting more engagement from the community, more engagement from the families to allow our young people to be successful. So I continue pushing to see how we can put that at the forefront, and not as an afterthought.

However, prioritizing community engagement requires sufficient resources, particularly staff time, to accomplish community outreach. Participants recommended increasing the JDC/RF staff capacity to offer person-to-person referrals (i.e., active linking process) to enhance their site's ability to cultivate and sustain community connections and to improve the site's ability to match youth to appropriate services.

Additional personnel were seen as important in two ways: First, additional staff in case management would reduce the number of youth on each caseload and allow staff to spend more time cultivating relationships with community providers. Second, people in case management capacities could help youth or their families connect to services in the community and navigate difficult bureaucratic systems. For example, case managers could set up and attend a family meeting with the community housing authority or transport a youth to a hip-hop class and introduce her or him to the instructor. Other shifts in staffing could achieve this same end. For example, a probation officer with fewer youth to supervise could potentially devote more time to seeking out specialized prosocial activities tailored to the youth's interest. One interviewee summed up the thoughts of many participants that effective community engagement requires resources:

You know, I have been doing this kind of work for a long time [laughs]. And so we always say, "Oh, well let's just volunteer. Let's just do this with them." But the fact is, you need staff. You need support staff that are making this stuff get done.

Additionally, community engagement is more easily prioritized if JDC/RF leadership sets the focus and positive tone as precedence for the team. Judges and magistrates were viewed as instrumental in cultivating JDC/RF team collaboration and in championing a philosophy that tailored services to youth interests, needs, and strengths. As one participant noted,

I think we [need] someone taking the lead. And I think the court needs to be in the lead position to focus in on providing [help to] youth and families to deal with their dysfunction in their lives—to set the tone.

Participants perceived that an engaged and committed judicial official improved team morale, which in turn enhanced collaboration. In particular, service providers from the community, involved community members, and the internal court team felt valued when judicial figures solicited their expertise to make decisions about, for example, youth treatment plans, incentives, and sanctions.

Assemble a Committed JDC/RF Team

Second, participants described the importance of the JDC/RF team. Nearly all interviewees were positive about the collaborative working environment and the teamwork among members of the JDC/RF team (e.g., judges, community representatives, probation officers, attorneys, treatment providers). One interviewee noted that having “the right people...at the table was necessary to foster a culture of collaboration and community outreach.” A committed and enthusiastic team was required to fully embrace community engagement as part of the court’s JDC/RF program.

There appeared to be a self-selection effect, in which individuals aligned with the overall philosophy of the JDC/RF program opted into the team, while those who did not gradually exited it. One probation officer who was interviewed in the last year of the JDC/RF grant, after having recently transferred to the JDC, explained the effect like this:

I was excited to come into drug court because...the change team was so inspiring to me...—everything that they were doing. And I wanted to become even more involved in that. I think we’ll just keep plugging away at doing more of the same...and getting the community involved to a larger extent, hopefully.

Those not aligned opted out. Participants from two different sites explained that in the initial stages of the JDC/RF model integration, some people on the team were skeptical or had personalities that did not mesh well with the rest of the group. Participants reported that once these individuals left, the cohesion and teamwork between stakeholders improved.

Increase JDC/RF Program Visibility in the Community

Educating the community about the JDC/RF program was viewed as a necessary preliminary step to engaging community members and community agency staff and increasing collaboration. If the community is unaware of JDC/RF or is not familiar with the goals and aims of the JDC/RF program in their community, it is challenging to de-

velop, engage, and sustain relationships between the program and the community. Early in the evaluation, participants suggested there was room for improvement in this area. As one community subgroup interviewee expressed, “We have [not] done a good job of really connecting the community well with the goals of Reclaiming Futures yet.” Change team meeting observations supported this finding, as participants at all but one site discussed ways to spread awareness about the JDC/RF program in their local community.

As part of the JDC/RF grant, sites received technical and communication support from the Reclaiming Futures National Program Office to advance these efforts, and by the evaluation’s final wave of data collection, all sites had initiated at least one form of outreach to the community to spread general awareness and raise visibility of the JDC/RF program. For example, when asked to share a success story from their JDC/RF program, participants from two sites described youth in their program who were featured on a Reclaiming Futures video. These videos were used in trainings or media releases to educate the community about the JDC/RF program. JDC/RF sites also submitted articles to the local newspapers, generated informational videos on the program elements, and sent JDC/RF personnel to give presentations about the JDC at community meetings. One site sponsored a 5K “fun run” event as a way to increase its presence in the community. Another site hosted a community conference where attendees learned about the different types of community services available, how to access them, and the internal processes and procedures of various systems (e.g., juvenile drug court, child and family services). Another strategy to improve community outreach common to multiple sites was allocating resources to educate existing members of the team on the JDC/RF model (e.g., sending staff to trainings, reviewing the model during staff meetings) so they could act as ambassadors in the community.

Participants reported that these efforts raised JDC/RF visibility in the community, which helped forge both formal and informal connections with community members. For example, one participant explained that presentations to the community expanded their reach and resources. At one presentation they forged connections with the pres-

ident of the local community college and received monetary donations to fund youth incentives.

Another strategy that all sites used to boost visibility and improve community collaboration was allocating internal resources, such as staff time. Some JDC/RF sites created specialized staff positions dedicated to raising community visibility, seeking out new opportunities for community connections, and increasing community engagement. Staff members in these roles were responsible for forging new partnerships with community agencies and/or improving coordination between the courts and community organizations. Other JDC/RF sites embedded these same types of responsibilities into existing positions (e.g., case manager).

Raising JDC/RF visibility in the community increases JDC/RF awareness, and potentially interest, which lays the foundation for identifying and collaborating with the community.

Identify, Engage, and Maintain Community Partners

To assemble a committed JDC/RF team, appropriate and effective partners need to be identified, and then good relationships with these partners need to be established and maintained to provide court-involved youth with the ongoing services they need. Across sites, JDC/RF program staff who worked directly with youth felt that they knew where to send clients for additional counseling, family services, and basic needs in the community. As one participant described,

As far as treatment needs, as far as mental health needs, as far as schooling needs, as far as transportation, as far as clothing—things of those natures, things that we can control, we do a really good job at, I believe.

However, participants also described the need to identify and recruit new agency partners. Sites used several strategies to accomplish this. First, participants from multiple sites described a successful strategy of generating a comprehensive list of local community resources to identify areas for expansion. For example, one participant explained that the change team initially thought education and employment services in the community were insufficient for JDC/RF

youth. Yet, after conducting thorough community resource searches, they discovered that education and employment services were available in local schools. Identifying these resources and recruiting the appropriate school liaison to the team meetings improved collaboration with the local schools and increased resources for JDC/RF youth.

Utilizing personal and professional networks of existing team members was another successful strategy for identifying new community partners. One participant described how this worked in practice:

Usually just social networking between members of the treatment team, members of probation, the courts, using the press to a limited extent. Generally, people come to us via word of mouth. We talk about people that may be appropriate, and a member of the team will reach out to them, invite them to come in and to see if it's something they're interested in.

Personal connections were mentioned as leading to the most successful community collaborations. Some probation officers cited examples where they had a personal contact with someone at an agency that helped them access services for youth very quickly. Leveraging these untapped resources of personal and professional networks was viewed as necessary to expand the reach of JDC/RF. Change teams were charged with identifying and approaching potential partners, as one participant explained:

If you see people in the community, say, "We're working on this project about family engagement. I'd love for you to partner with us." Because this group, this tiny group cannot do half of our list. We don't have the time or the energy.... This is what we need, so one of the tasks I want to assign all of you is, let's make this group bigger.

Establish mechanisms to formally engage partners—Community partners need clarification on their role and the purpose of their involvement so they remain engaged and invested. Establishing mechanisms to harness community interest in order to collaborate was recommended by participants. One explained, "Now it's just a matter of leveraging all of that energy and all of the services that we provide and really connecting in a formal way with community partners." At

one change team meeting, one volunteer explained that he willingly attended the court-sponsored “game night” but was not sure what he was supposed to do. He suggested that for future events the team should clarify what they wanted volunteers to do before the event to make sure they felt that their contributions were worthwhile. Other community representatives ended their involvement when they were not sure what role to play or how to make the partnership mutually beneficial. Delegating specific roles and tasks (e.g., mentoring, sitting on an advisory board, providing prosocial activities for youth) was a way to formally engage community partners.

At least one participant from each evaluation site explained that their program successfully engaged additional community representatives as advisers or created staff positions dedicated to community engagement. All evaluation sites also engaged representatives from community-based agencies that provided services for JDC/RF youth or their families. Some invited community members to the change team meeting, whereas others convened separate advisory boards or councils to gather community input. Additionally, one site structured the change team meeting as an open forum and invited and recruited representatives from a diverse range of community organizations (e.g., youth pastor, school board representative) to share general information and expertise.

Lastly, sites made targeted requests for particular types of resources as a way to engage community members at varying levels of commitment (e.g., youth gym memberships, beds in residential treatment center, transportation for youth). This flexibility of involvement led to greater engagement.

*Maintain and sustain good working relationships and procedures—*When interviewees were asked to describe what they thought was necessary for successful collaboration with the community, the majority described teamwork and clear and frequent communication between community partners who were involved in the program as the core elements of JDC/RF program operations. As one participant explained, communication is “the best tool we have.”

One aspect of communication that was particularly pertinent for collaboration between the courts and community mental health or substance abuse treatment providers was protocols for sharing sensitive and confidential information. At sites where collaboration with treatment providers predated the JDC/RF integration, interviewees generally reported that the information sharing between key members of the team worked well because protocols for sharing confidential information were already in place. However, at one site, the process of developing information-sharing protocols between the community substance abuse treatment provider and the courts involved lengthy negotiation and cross-training. All interviewees at this JDC noted the significant resources required to get all parties “on the same page.” As one interviewee reflected,

I thought that was the intent of the grant: to dig deep into the community and to get us really connected. So I think that [in] the early years...we lost some time trying to get those systems to work well together.

Participants also emphasized the need for ongoing two-way communication to ensure that relationships with community agencies remained mutually beneficial and to strategize solutions to obstacles as they arose. One participant explained, “Sometimes it’s frustrating because we want an agency to do something that we personally can’t do, and a lot of times we don’t understand what their limitations are.” For example, one JDC/RF site identified a community partner to provide gender-specific services but did not have enough youth to attend to make it worthwhile for the partner agency. Another interviewee offered the following insight on previously unsuccessful community partnerships: “I think it’s just our goals weren’t aligning, and if we’re not honest and upfront about that on the front end, those are the collaborations that fall apart.” Many participants recommended developing a sustainable plan that was mutually beneficial for both parties, with clearly defined roles, responsibilities, limitations, and goals of collaborating.

During one change team meeting observation, respectful communication between various stakeholders was specifically addressed:

This group represents a full spectrum of the community—every level of government, every level of each organization—from judges and the exec’s office down to folks who are working direct service with the kids in the community. So how can we all communicate and work together in a very respectful way that will keep people in the conversation and not turn people away and upset each other?

This culture of open communication cultivated dialogue between parties, as illustrated in the following quote from an interview:

There’s no such thing as a stupid question. No one person or agency is right. There’s always going to be disagreements as to how things are done. But I think maintaining an open dialogue—and when you sense that friction is building, you get it on the table. You address it immediately. You make sure that your partners feel appreciated for things they bring to the table, even if you don’t always go the way they want to see things go. That people have a chance or partners have a chance to voice concerns, to make suggestions—to make sure that they are heard, and that they’re part of the process. That they’re not marginalized and put off to the side. So overall I think the communication piece is probably the biggest, most essential piece to maintaining positive relationships with partners.

Using regular meetings for communications was a way to ensure that the JDC/RF team members were on the same page, and allowed the team to identify individual youth needs, barriers, and resources, as well as gaps in the overall system. Numerous participants cited the importance of having all of the team members in the same room because it ensured that youth were not manipulating staff and allowed better coordination of various service plans between treatment, probation, and (sometimes) case management.

Ongoing feedback from community partners and individuals was essential, as one participant described: “Keeping the momentum going, keeping everybody on board...I think it’s important to hear what they have to say—not always us asking them for things or to do

things for us. I think it works both ways.” This sentiment was echoed at another site during a change team meeting discussion on ways to show appreciation for and solicit feedback from volunteer community advisory board committee members as a retention strategy. A different site also valued soliciting feedback from community members as a strategy when, despite significant growth in their team roster after concerted efforts to bring more community agencies to the table, meeting attendance varied greatly from month to month. Regular attendees lamented the inconsistency because it made accomplishing the team’s goals difficult.

Continually reassessing partnerships is another important element of program success. As a participant at another site shared,

People leave positions, policies change . . . I think one of the problems is that perceptions sometimes become reality—and this is across the juvenile court, not just in drug court. But I think sometimes we’ll have an idea of what we think an agency offers, or that they won’t work with our kids or something, and that idea gets spread. But we don’t actually find out. So instead of calling to find out what they can do for us, we just don’t reach out. That’s a problem. I think staying in contact with community agencies really matters.

Participants valued the diversity of the perspectives on their JDC/RF team and said that the presence of community partners expanded their access to resources. Outside collaborators participating in change team meetings enabled their respective organizations to provide input and differing perspectives to the JDC/RF program staff on policies and procedures of the program.

Community Engagement Beyond the Juvenile Justice System: Linking Youth to Services and Supports

All evaluation sites discussed the need to connect youth and their families with resources that extended beyond juvenile justice system involvement. Participants strongly emphasized the role of the community in supporting youth *after* they transition out of the JDC/RF program. Without sufficient resources to support their sobriety, youth

may experience obstacles when transitioning back to their homes and community. One interviewee summarized the view of many respondents, saying,

The goal is really to find community partners who can be involved in what we're doing. We want to make sure we have supportive agencies in place that kids can connect with outside of the drug court team, so that when they transition back into the community they still have supports and don't have to be in the system.

In particular, participants cited mentors (RF uses the term “natural helpers”), prosocial activities, and access to community-based youth services as part of an ideal support network for adolescents to continue with after they complete the program.

Mentorship

Natural helpers (mentors) and prosocial activities were strongly emphasized at every site as priority aspects of community engagement and an important component of implementing the JDC/RF model. One interviewee explained,

We really want people in the community to be able to have a resource for these kids once we can transition them back into the community. As a governmental entity [we] maybe step out of the situation, knowing that they have that support group that's available for them. That's part of the things that we've been working on this year—to try to create that community-based mentorship program.

Responses from interviewees suggested that each site made a concerted effort to increase mentorship and prosocial opportunities for youth. One evaluation site formed a dedicated subcommittee in the change team to focus on mentoring. At another site, the JDC/RF team regularly discussed mentor recruitment and training at observed change team meetings.

Despite overall enthusiasm for mentors, evaluation sites described challenges to recruitment. Logistical challenges included long waiting lists for community providers and lack of staff to manage the internal

processes of recruiting, doing background checks, and training volunteer mentors. Some agencies did not provide mentors for adolescent youth, and participants expressed concerns about the unique challenge of finding appropriate mentors for youth who did not fit the typical profile of “cute, young kids.” As one interviewee explained, “Big Brothers Big Sisters is a great resource, but our clients are not somebody you take out in the backyard and shoot hoops with....They might relapse. Then what?”

When community mentors did volunteer, there was often a demographic mismatch in terms of age, gender, or race/ethnicity between youth and mentor that some participants perceived as less than ideal. Another obstacle to mentoring was the need to engage interested mentors who were not affiliated with any community organization. As one interviewee explained, “We have adults that want to do something, but we’re lacking in telling them specifically how to get involved and having protocols in place for them to follow to be able to get involved.”

In response to these challenges, each site employed different strategies to recruit potential mentors based on what was available in their local community and the type of internal resources that could be leveraged to enhance mentorship. For example, a judge at one site volunteered for the local Big Brothers or Big Sisters chapter to establish rapport and build a partnership. As one interviewee described it, the judge “went through Big Brothers, Big Sisters. He actually had to become a Big Brother for them to buy into it.” Another site employed paid youth advocates, and another utilized a law enforcement mentorship program for youth in its JDC/RF program. Interviewees from this latter site apparently avoided some of the barriers in recruitment that sites recruiting mentors directly from the community faced, because the infrastructure for mentor recruitment and training was already in place.

Despite these challenges, at least one interviewee from each site reported improvement in its mentorship program over time. One interviewee offered the following insight:

I think the biggest thing that we've kind of gained from Reclaiming Futures is the mentoring and community involvement. The other stuff, we've kind of been doing throughout. But I think definitely hooking clients up with an appropriate mentor has been huge.

At the time of the first round of interviews, interviewees from only three of the sites reported some type of mentorship opportunity. By the end of the evaluation cycle, interviewees from all sites reported they had mentors in place for JDC/RF youth.

Prosocial Opportunities

Community engagement for prosocial activities showed great promise for supporting the work of the JDC/RF programs, but it also presented numerous challenges. Notably, what JDC/RF program staff perceived as barriers to prosocial engagement changed over time. In data from the second and third years of the grant-funded project period, at least one JDC/RF program staff member from each evaluation site said their site needed to identify additional prosocial and youth employment services in the community that catered to youth strengths and interests. This need spurred efforts to improve awareness by the internal JDC/RF team about services available in the broader community. By the fourth year of the grant-funded project period, JDC/RF program staff from across the evaluation sites reported that their site had formed a number of successful partnerships with community agencies for prosocial services, such as evening reporting centers at local boys' and girls' clubs, gym memberships, horseback riding, and music therapy.

However, across all grant-funded project periods, JDC/RF program staff acknowledged that costs and transportation arrangements associated with engagement in recreational services were prohibitive for some youth. In both urban and rural evaluation sites, youth often lacked reliable transportation to community resources, which prevented their consistent attendance and engagement. Transportation was especially a problem in areas where public transportation was costly, took too much time, or simply did not exist. At one observed change team meeting, prosocial program providers and probation officers had a lengthy dis-

cussion about the issue of long-term youth engagement in a range of activities. Youth were initially interested and participated enthusiastically in these activities, but attendance declined over time. Committee members brainstormed the potential causes of disengagement, one of which was lack of transportation, and strategies to assist with transportation needs.

In addition to efforts aimed at reducing transportation barriers for youth, participants described responses to other challenges associated with youth participation in prosocial activities. Some sites developed prosocial programs housed at the JDC/RF site and hosted by JDC/RF staff or community representatives. Additionally, some sites sought funding to pay for prosocial activity-related fees (e.g., entrance fees, sports equipment, a van to transport youth).

Access to Community-Based Youth Services

In early waves of data collection, addressing the previously mentioned gaps in services (e.g., foster placement, treatment for youth over the age of 18, undocumented families, mental health and dual-diagnosis treatment, housing, and prosocial activities for youth) was the JDC/RF sites' primary focus in helping youth access community services. Rural and urban sites had different experiences with this process. A JDC/RF site in a rural community reported that they were limited by few available resources but felt that the small community was a strength because of the numerous personal connections between agencies. Conversely, JDC/RF sites located in larger, urban areas saw access to many resources as a strength but noted that it was challenging to stay aware of available resources and to maintain the personal connections that facilitated effective service-matching (the process of linking youth with appropriate services).

In later waves of data collection, participants described the gap in sufficient services as secondary to the barriers that youth encountered when trying to access services. Even when resources are available and partners are actively engaged, JDCs must successfully link individual youth (or families) with specific community partners. Facilitating engagement can pose additional barriers due to cumbersome referral processes, which may require youth or family members to take the in-

initiative and overcome significant logistical and emotional barriers. One interviewee explained it this way:

[With] a lot of our families, we know that they're immediately eligible for that kind of financial assistance, but it is very, very difficult getting in touch with a lot of those agencies—even the church groups—to get them an initial intake appointment so that they can get the assistance. That's definitely a big barrier to families getting timely assistance. It does exist, but accessing it is always a challenge.

To reduce this barrier, a “warm hand-off,” or as one interviewee described it, “a real person handing [off a youth] to a real person” for referrals, was recommended to improve youths' access to services in the community. This may involve staff in setting up the appointment, going with the family to a meeting, or transporting youth to the program.

Although many of these practices were already in place at JDC/RF sites, participants suggested additional resources to bolster youth engagement with community providers, such as employing “system navigators”—individuals whose role is to provide assistance to youth and families and remove obstacles they face in accessing services. As one interviewee said,

We've noticed that you can make a referral for a kiddo to participate in a certain prosocial activity or employment development or a GED program in the community. But often-times—without family support or because of challenges like transportation or just not necessarily having the ability to regulate their own schedule—we really see a need for partners for the kids to keep them engaged in those programs.

Another participant concurred:

We have programs in place . . . but it sounds like we're losing the engagement piece and [not] supporting the youth. And maybe that's where we're kind of falling apart. We need to work together as a group to figure out who all the players are in this person's life. We start working together to

support the youth, instead of individually putting them over here, over here, over here, and over here.

As with engagement in prosocial opportunities, transportation was reported to be a challenge, along with cost of services. For example, in counties with undocumented immigrant families, securing funds to pay for services could be difficult to navigate. Moreover, poverty was described as a “matter of course” for many families in the JDC/RF program, which presented challenges when connecting youth to services that required fees or equipment purchases. As one interviewee clarified, “But just to say there are prosocial activities is misleading. The barriers to those are transportation, cost, and a feeling of isolation. So Parks and Rec might say, ‘We have basketball three nights a week, but it costs.’” These types of activities were viewed as inaccessible to youth, who tended to be from low-income families.

Despite the challenges, overall participants shared enthusiasm for increasing community collaboration and improving their JDC/RF program’s ability to link youth to services and engage the community. One participant summarized the sentiments of many:

The focus [before the grant implementation] was staying clean and sober, doing treatment and school—you know, the basic guidelines of probation. Now we’re kind of getting them to go outside the box. And it’s not just about treatment. We’re trying to get them connected to their community a lot more than we ever have.

DISCUSSION AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

The evaluation sites in this study clearly valued and perceived a benefit from the involvement of the community in their JDC programs. Youth and families have greater access to community services, prosocial activities, and mentorship opportunities. Community member involvement in the JDC team may also directly benefit youth, as these members could serve as advocates and bring a different perspective to the judicial environment. Court staff gain potentially innovative input by including community members in system-level

planning and decision making, as well as increased referral sources and professional networks to further support youth. Depending on the structure of the community involvement, the burden on case managers, probation officers, and other JDC staff working to meet the diverse needs of each youth may also be decreased. Raising JDC visibility in the community and involving the community in the JDC has the potential to impact local community culture and reduce barriers to success (e.g., stigma) for JDC youth. When members of the community work closely with the court and/or directly with the youth, the latter are humanized in the eyes of the community, rather than being labeled and perceived negatively, a practice that results in indifference toward or fear of JDC youth.

Yet the benefits are balanced by significant challenges to engaging the community. Community characteristics and local culture create environments that can be incompatible to the goals of JDC programs. Normative drug use and stigma toward justice-involved youth, limited resources, and economic downturn and ongoing poverty are significant factors that not only limit community engagement in the juvenile drug court but limit the supportiveness of the environment at a time in a youth's life when need for support is high. Identifying community partners and resources, engaging representatives to work with the court team and agencies to refer youth, and maintaining effective collaborations are each difficult and require much time and effort, as evidenced by the evaluation sites in this study. This is especially true in terms of engaging mentors and setting up systems that enable youth to successfully link to services and prosocial activities.

These challenges can be overcome or reduced by employing recommendations and lessons learned from the evaluation sites in this study—both those that have proven successful in engaging community partners and those that suggest ways to improve community engagement. While engaging the community requires much time and effort, the seeming burden will be lessened if community engagement is foundational to the JDC program, all JDC team members are committed to the goals of the program, and the leadership embraces community engagement as key to the overall program. Turnover in judicial leadership can pose a challenge for sites, particularly when a

new judge or magistrate transitions to the JDC and does not have related experience with juvenile drug court. However, a strong program culture will make such transitions easier, and the threat of losing momentum with engaging the community will likely be diminished.

Prioritizing community engagement as a core element and ensuring that it is embraced by the team will have a number of positive effects:

- Community engagement will consistently be on agendas.
- Processes and procedures for engaging staff will be developed and followed.
- Roles, responsibilities, and flexibility about the type of contributions community members can make will be defined and shared.
- Multiple mechanisms will be employed for regular communications between community members and the overall JDC team, as well as a point person.
- Staff time will be allocated for a community liaison or systems navigator, or time within a current position will be dedicated to community engagement efforts.
- Outreach to increase community awareness of JDC program (e.g., newsletters, presentations, press releases) will be ongoing.
- Referral processes will entail person-to-person connections and “warm handoffs.”
- Involved community members will be regularly provided opportunities to give feedback and to be appreciated.

Some of these recommendations require reallocation or additional funding. However, many can be implemented by leveraging current resources available within JDCs and the community. The evaluation sites in this study had funds allocated for implementing JDC/RF, yet they also used existing resources and made great improvements in their efforts to engage the community. In summary, our study suggests that engaging the community in juvenile drug courts is beneficial to youth and families, JDC program staff, and the community as a whole. Despite community culture-related barriers and engagement-related challenges, juvenile drug courts can implement practices to increase community engagement and benefit and support youth in need.

The development of this article was funded by the Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), through an interagency agreement with the Library of Congress (contract number LCFRD11C0007), and by OJJDP (grant number 2013-DC-BX-0081). The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official policies of OJJDP or the Library of Congress; nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

This manuscript reflects the authors' original work.

The University of Arizona's Institutional Review Board declared this study non-human subjects research because of its utilization of existing, de-identified data and data about program characteristics.

REFERENCES

- Altschuler, D.M. (2011). Reclaiming Futures and juvenile reentry: The case for joining forces. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33, S66–S69.
- Barton, W.H. (2006). Incorporating the strengths perspective into intensive juvenile aftercare. *Western Criminology Review*, 7(2), 48–61.
- Belenko, S., & Dembo, R. (2003). Treating adolescent substance abuse problems in the juvenile drug court. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 26(1), 87–110.
- Clinical and Translational Science Awards Consortium's Community Engagement Key Function Committee. (2011). *Principles of Community Engagement* (2nd ed.; NIH Publication No. 11-7782). Washington, DC: National Institutes of Health. Retrieved from http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/communityengagement/pdf/PC_E_Report_508_FINAL.pdf
- Dennis, M.L., Baumer, P.C., & Stevens, S. (2016). The concurrent evolution and intertwined nature of juvenile drug courts and Reclaiming Futures approaches to juvenile justice reform. *Drug Court Review*, 10(1), 6–30.
- Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2009). Grants to Expand Substance Abuse Treatment Capacity for Juvenile Drug Courts: Request for Applications (RFA) No. TI-09-004 (Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance [CFDA] No. 93.243).
- Elder, C., Leaver-Dunn, D., Wang, M.Q., Nagy, S., & Green, L. (2000). Organized group activity as a protective factor against adolescent substance abuse. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 24(2), 108–113.
- Gonsoulin, S., & Read, N.W. (2011). *Improving educational outcomes for youth in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems through interagency communication and collaboration*. Washington, DC: National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk.

- Greene, A., Ostlie, E., Kagan, R., & Davis, M. (2016). The process of integrating practices: The Juvenile Drug Court and Reclaiming Futures Logic Model. *Drug Court Review*, 10(1), 31–59.
- Hansen, D.M., Larson, R.W., & Dworkin, J.B. (2003). What adolescents learn in organized youth activities: A survey of self-reported developmental experiences. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 13(1), 25–55.
- Henggeler, S.W., Halliday-Boykins, C.A., Cunningham, P.B., Randall, J., Shapiro, S.B., & Chapman, J.E. (2006). Juvenile drug court: Enhancing outcomes by integrating evidence-based treatments. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 74(1), 42–54.
- Hyman, J.B. (2002). Exploring social capital and civic engagement to create a framework of community building. *Applied Developmental Science*, 6(4), 196–202.
- Lewins, A., & Silver, C. (2007). *Using software in qualitative research: A step-by-step guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Mackenzie, D.L., & Brame, R. (2001). Community supervision, prosocial activities, and recidivism. *Justice Quarterly*, 18(2), 429–448.
- Mahoney, J.L., & Stattin, H. (2000). Leisure activities and adolescent antisocial behavior: The role of structure and social context. *Journal of adolescence*, 23(2), 113–127.
- National Association of Drug Court Professionals. (2015). *Adult drug court best practice standards* (Vol. 2). Alexandria, VA: Author. Retrieved from http://www.ndcrc.org/sites/default/files/adult_drug_court_best_practice_standards_volume_ii.pdf
- National Drug Court Institute & National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. (2003). *Juvenile drug courts: Strategies in practice* (Bureau of Justice Assistance monographs). Rockville, MD: Bureau of Justice. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/bja/197866.pdf>
- Nissen, L.B. (2011). Community-directed engagement and positive youth development: Developing positive and progressive pathways between youth and their communities in Reclaiming Futures. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33, S23–S28.
- Nissen, L.B., Butts, J.A., Merrigan, D., & Kraft, M.K. (2006). The RWJF Reclaiming Futures initiative: Improving substance abuse interventions for justice-involved youth. *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, 57(4), 39–51.
- Nissen, L.B., & Kraft, M.K. (2007). The evolution of substance abuse treatment in juvenile justice. *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions*, 7(3), 51–71.
- Nissen, L.B., & Merrigan, D. (2011). Helping substance-involved young people in juvenile justice be successful: Conceptual and structural foundations of the *Reclaiming Futures model*. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33, S3–S8.
- Reclaiming Futures. (n.d.). How the model works. Retrieved from <http://reclaimingfutures.org/model/model-how-it-works>
- Reclaiming Futures. (n.d.). The problem. Retrieved from <http://reclaimingfutures.org/model/model-problem>
- Reclaiming Futures. (n.d.). A team of leaders. Retrieved from <http://reclaimingfutures.org/model/model-how-it-works/model-leadership>
- Roth, J.L., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003). What exactly is a youth development program? Answers from research and

- practice. *Applied Developmental Science*, 7(2), 94–111.
- Solovitch, S. (2010). Reclaiming Futures. In S.L. Isaacs & D.C. Colby (Eds.), *To improve health and health care Vol. XIII*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Tappin, R.J. & McGlashan, L. (2007). Evaluating Reclaiming Futures: Final performance review. Concord: New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies.
- van Wormer, J., & Lutze, F.E. (2010). Managing and sustaining your juvenile drug court. *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, 61(2), 45–53.
- Xue, Y., Zimmerman, M.A., & Caldwell, C.H. (2007). Neighborhood residence and cigarette smoking among urban youths: The protective role of prosocial activities. *American Journal of Public Health*, 97(10), 1865–1872. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2005.081307

Alison Greene, MA, director of Adolescent Research and Services at the University of Arizona's Southwest Institute for Research on Women (SIROW), oversees the implementation of promising and evidence-based interventions and the practical application of research methods to improve services provided to youth and their families. She is a co-investigator and process analyst for the National Cross-Site Evaluation of Juvenile Drug Courts and Reclaiming Futures, and is working on several other federally funded projects.

Kendra Thompson-Dyck, MA, a doctoral candidate in the School of Sociology at the University of Arizona, has conducted research on a multiyear study funded by the National Science Foundation on children's activities in the Phoenix-Mesa metropolitan area. From 2013 to 2015, she was the qualitative research analyst on the JDC/RF National Evaluation. Prior to graduate school, she coordinated social service outreach at the Girl Scouts of Southern Arizona.

Megan S. Wright, PhD, a JD candidate at Yale Law School, is currently a researcher with the Consortium for Advanced Study of Brain Injury at Yale Law. Her expertise is in social science research methods, gender studies, and law, medicine, and ethics. Previously she served as a qualitative analyst at SIROW, working on the JDC/RF National Evaluation. She earned her doctoral degree in sociology from the University of Arizona.

Monica Davis, BA, assistant research specialist at SIROW, has over 15 years in the substance abuse treatment and prevention and sexual health promotion field, working with and supporting the needs of vulnerable youth and families. She is the evaluation coordinator for the JDC/RF National Evaluation and serves as a data analyst in a national cross-site evaluation of federally funded initiatives for pregnant and postpartum women, and youth.

Katie Haverly, MS, assistant research social scientist at SIROW, worked on the JDC/RF National Evaluation. Her research interests include community development, addiction, and women's health and mental health issues. Prior to joining SIROW, she worked for the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services as an evaluator, researcher, and program manager to improve the quality and reach of substance abuse treatment programs statewide.

Direct correspondence to Alison Greene, MA, Southwest Institute for Research on Women, University of Arizona, 181 S. Tucson Blvd., Suite 101, Tucson, AZ 85716. (520) 295-9339 ext. 206. greenes@email.arizona.edu