



## 2009 NDTAC National Conference

### Session Notes

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| <b>Session Title</b> | <b>Allegheny County Juvenile Probation: A Model Program</b> |
| <b>Presenter</b>     | Russel Carlino  |
| <b>Date and Time</b> | Tuesday, June 23, 2 p.m.–3:15 p.m.                          |

#### Summary

This session focused on model juvenile justice programs that operate in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. Below are summary notes of the presentation.

The mission of Allegheny County's (PA) juvenile justice system is based on a balanced and restorative justice model. The major tenants of the system are community protection, accountability/victim awareness, and competency development. Allegheny County operates the Juvenile Probation Department. The probation department manages case/youth from start to finish to ensure continuity of care and the presence of knowledgeable and informed staff. In addition to community- and school-based probation officers, the department has specially trained probation units that work with special populations of youth. In Allegheny County, about 95 percent of community service is completed and about 85 percent of youth do not reoffend while under supervision.

For several years, the department has measured outcomes related to the goals of balanced and restorative justice. Key indicators of success include community protection, offender accountability, and competency development. The department has worked diligently to improve its ability to develop offender competencies. A white paper, published by The National Center for Juvenile Justice, discusses five skills related to offender competencies: pro-social, moral reasoning, academic, workforce development, and independent living.

The department assesses each youth placed under probation or committed to a facility. To ensure consistency across the department, it uses a standardized risk and needs assessment tool. The results of the assessment help to guide the development of a supervision plan. The department offers a continuum of services to youth and aims to place youth in the right program for the right reason. The level of penetration into the system is driven by risk, not by the need for a program. The department seeks to provide the least restrictive program in the most appropriate setting.

Within the school-based probation service, a true partnership exists between the school, probation officer, and youth. Families are encouraged to come to the school and establish a relationship with the school and probation staff. The number of probation officers in the school depends on the number of supervised youth in the school. The probation officer is integrated into the school day and may even act as a sports coach. The probation officer trains school staff on laws, the judicial system, and the policies of balanced and restorative justice. The most significant goal of the school-based probation officer is to keep youth in the school.

Allegheny County works with Philadelphia on the PACTT (Pennsylvania Academic and Career/Technical Training) Project. The goals of this collaborative project are to (a) improve academic and career and technical outcomes for youth committed to juvenile facilities and (b) ensure a smooth transition back to the home school upon release.

## **Q&A / Comments**

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**Q1:** Do you come speak to programs that are starting up?

**Russel Carlino:** I have not done so. However, I am willing if the request is made.

**Q2:** How do you reinforce your role in the school?

**Russel Carlino:** There is continuous planning and dialogue between systems-level staff/ leaders and school-level staff. We ask the school, what would you do if the probation officer was not in the school? We attempt to augment the school's response and services as appropriate and as related to the youth's court involvement and delinquent behaviors. If a youth is having a difficult day, we ask the school what we can do to better engage the youth and maintain him/her in the school setting with the least amount of force.

**Q3:** Do local districts have to accept facility school credits?

**Russel Carlino:** Local schools do not always accept facility school credits. We work with the facility to see what it needs to do to make credits acceptable for transfer. A great deal of this is accomplished through continuous dialogue.

*For any further questions pertaining to the session or the topics discussed, please contact NDTAC at [NDTAC@air.org](mailto:NDTAC@air.org).*

## **Relevant Resources**

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[Advancing Competency Development: A Resource Guide for Pennsylvania](#) (white paper)