

State Initiatives for Dual System Youth: A National Scan

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INTRODUCTION

The National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) has published many groundbreaking dual system youth (DSY) publications in recent decades. There has been a growing body of research by NCJJ and others covering DSY issues and initiatives beginning with the *When Systems Collide: Court Practices and Programs in Dual Jurisdiction Cases* publication from 2004 to the most recent *Dual Status Youth: Data Integration to Support System Integration* publication in 2016, among many others in between.

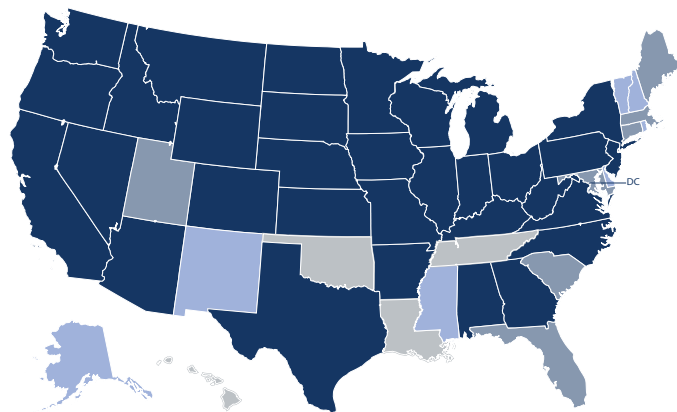
In brief, DSY refers to youth who have some form of cross-system involvement (concurrent or historical) with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Almost all the research examining DSY (regardless of how DSY is defined) has consistently confirmed the adverse trajectories of these cases that are likely to persist without meaningful interventions. These adverse trajectories include but are not limited to extended juvenile justice and child welfare system involvement, frequent out-of-home placement disruptions, continued delinquent activity, poor permanency outcomes, frequent school changes and substandard educational performance, and a range of negative systemic impacts on the courts and other systems intended to serve these challenging cases.

Despite the research that has documented the unfortunate outcomes for so many DSY, there have also been important innovations that have shown promising impacts (e.g., Nebraska Youth Impact!, Project ONE in Washoe County, and others highlighted by Georgetown University's Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice). This research suggests that despite the variety of risks and high needs presented by DSY, there are promising approaches that can curtail or reduce these negative pathways. That said, what also became clear during our interviews for this scan is that sustaining DSY reforms requires ongoing commitment and leadership including finding ways to balance DSY innovations with other priorities and resource

Overview

The brief is based on interviews with key stakeholders in 49 states and territories. These interviews were conducted in 2024. Efforts were made to obtain information on DSY-related activities in all 50 states and 5 territories but as indicated, not all states were able to provide updated responses. The interview content or protocol largely focused on state-level capacities to describe DSY-related statutes (for example, that promote cross-agency collaboration), administrative orders, court rules, agency policies, and/or other formal or informal aspects tied to improving DSY practices and outcomes and applicable data.

Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice State Agency Integration



Administration of child welfare, juvenile probation, and juvenile corrections:

Single state department (7 states)

Separate centralized state departments (7 states)

At least one component decentralized (32 states, plus DC)

Notes: The following states did not participate in this survey (light gray on map): Hawaii, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Tennessee. See page 3 for details on state agency integration.

considerations. Sustaining DSY reforms is not easy and there have been important obstacles that have inhibited progress including the pandemic which had far-reaching effects on the child welfare and juvenile justice systems beyond DSY reforms.

One of the primary goals of this brief is to provide updated information on state efforts to address the needs of DSY, recognizing that DSY initiatives are not static phenomena – they do change as circumstances, resources, and priorities shift. Despite the dynamic nature of DSY reforms, it seems informative and relevant to take an updated look at what states are reporting related to DSY including those efforts that are striving to improve cross system collaboration. This brief will provide a broad updated state-based overview of DSY and systems integration policies and practices and will provide examples of initiatives in states that continue to prioritize this important work.

Organization of Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice

States use different administrative approaches to organize the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. These can vary widely across states, influencing their ability to coordinate services. For example, seven states and three territories have centralized systems; meaning, there is either a single state department or one umbrella agency with different departments that oversee juvenile justice and child welfare respectively. Interviews suggest, in some instances, this structure can reduce barriers to coordination, streamline data sharing, and increase oversight.

Seven states have separate state-level child welfare and juvenile justice agencies. This structure has similar advantages to centralized systems but requires strong interagency communication like data sharing agreements, automated case linking,

and/or shared funding to help coordinate effectively.

States can also organize services at the local level which can create some fragmented systems. Thirty-two states and DC have at least one department organized at the local level. Even with challenges in communication in this structure, DSY can have more tailored, flexible services and local initiatives can be formed.

State Level Systems Integration

States employ multiple strategies to improve cross system collaboration for DSY. Each has advantages and disadvantages depending on agency structure and statewide communication. These strategies highlight the diverse approaches states use to address the needs of DSY and facilitate and improve coordination between systems.

Over half of the states and territories that provided information for this brief have data sharing agreements for the child welfare and juvenile justice systems in some way at the state level. This is a promising indication that information regarding DSY is available for data driven decision making related to policy and planning for states.

Twelve states have a single automated information system for both child welfare, and at minimum, substantial aspects of juvenile justice system services, including Delaware, New Hampshire, New Mexico, and Vermont that have both the juvenile justice and child welfare structured at the state level. There are also several states that have at least one component decentralized that have state-level data sharing such as Arkansas, Colorado, and Wisconsin. There are additional ways that states and territories bridge systems at the state level through direct data linkages. For example, five states (Arizona, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Wyoming) use this as a data sharing method. There are also more informal

means of communication at the state level that allow agencies to manually search in the systems for a youth or they may conduct self-report surveys. There are eighteen states that use one of these methods to share data about DSY across agencies but that do not also share an automated information system or direct data linkages. Similar data sharing efforts also occur at the county level in a number of states.

The presence of either a statewide committee or state level committees in multiple agencies that focus on DSY issues is another important aspect tied to DSY reforms. These are more common in decentralized states and allow for communication across agencies to improve system integration for DSY. There are a few states that have these committees occurring at the county level as well allowing for collaboration to be a priority in individual jurisdictions in place or in conjunction with state level efforts.

Certain states and territories have also created different formal and informal agreements to help bridge gaps in collaboration. These agreements can help to mitigate issues in areas where automated information systems and data linkages are not established, with thirty-one states and territories having some form of either formal or informal agreements. There also are a few states and territories that have both capacities including Alaska, CNMI, Connecticut, Maine, and Massachusetts among others, as well as some counties that have these types of agreements in certain states.

Statutes and court rules can also be a way for states to require collaboration between agencies. There are twenty-nine states that have a court rule or statute or both. Each state is different in terms of what those statutes and/or rules specifically require of agencies, but they can help clarify and solidify roles and responsibilities for the agencies.

It is important to view these indicators within the broader context of how states and/or local jurisdictions share data and information.

How are Dual-Status Youth Issues Coordinated at the State Level?

State	Data sharing agreements	Standing Statewide DSY Committee/ Taskforce	Committees in multiple agencies	Formal interagency agreements	Informal interagency agreements	Statute requiring interagency collaboration	Court rule requiring interagency collaboration
# of states/territories	26	20	20	19	22	26	9
Single State Department							
Alaska				■	■	■	
CNMI	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Delaware		■					
Guam		■	■				
Mississippi			■			■	
New Hampshire							
New Mexico	■	■				■	
Puerto Rico					■	■	
Rhode Island	■				■	■	
Vermont							
Separate centralized state departments							
Connecticut	■		■	■	■	■	
Florida	■		■	■		■	■
Maine		■	■	■	■	■	
Maryland						■	
Massachusetts	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
South Carolina	■			■			■
Utah	■	■		■			
At least one component decentralized							
Alabama	■	■			■		
Arizona	■						
Arkansas	■		■	■	■	■	
California	■	■	■	■		■	■
Colorado	■	■	■	■	■	■	
District of Columbia	■				■	■	■
Georgia	■		■		■	■	
Idaho	■		■	■	■	■	■
Illinois		■					
Indiana	■	■	■	■		■	
Iowa					■		
Kansas	■	■	■	■		■	
Kentucky	■	■	■			■	
Michigan					■		
Minnesota			■				
Missouri	■	■		■	■		■
Montana					■	■	
Nebraska		■			■		
Nevada			■				
New Jersey	■		■				
New York	■	■				■	
North Carolina		■					
North Dakota	■	■	■	■	■		
Ohio		■					
Oregon					■		
Pennsylvania						■	
South Dakota				■			
Texas	■		■	■		■	
Virginia	■	■		■		■	
Washington			■	■	■	■	
West Virginia			■				
Wisconsin							
Wyoming	■				■	■	

Notes: American Samoa, Hawaii, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and the Virgin Islands did not provide information for this survey. CNMI = Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

County Organization

As noted, our recent state contacts generally revealed that many state-level DSY efforts have ebbed and flowed since our JJGPS systems integration scans in 2014 and 2016. Despite these shifts, there are examples of states and counties that have initiated and/or sustained meaningful DSY efforts. While the examples described here are primarily focused on state-level developments, it is important to recognize that some of the more persistent “on the ground” DSY programs have been maintained at county levels. In the next section, we offer guidance to judges and courts for developing, supporting and sustaining the CQI process in child protection matters, including the judge’s role as CQI champion.

Reporting and Analysis for DSY

Beyond collecting data about DSY, states and counties can use that data to disseminate both internal and external reports to examine prevalence, characteristics, timing, and outcomes of dual system involvement. Thirty-two states and territories indicated some form of prevalence reporting at either the state or county level or both. For eighteen states, reporting is done on a routine basis (monthly, quarterly, yearly, etc.) at some level. Seven states indicated reporting is done on a periodic basis, such as every 3–5 years. Seventeen states noted that reporting is done on a one-time basis, for example for a special project report.

Prevalence reporting like this gives states and counties the opportunity to make data driven decisions and enact changes to improve outcomes for DSY. Some different uses indicated by the states were to:

- Identify training gaps
- Inform committee and stakeholder groups

- Provide significant information to assist in launching initiatives
- Improve understanding and prevalence
- Understand and improve coordination of services

Each state, territory, and county’s priorities and problem solving around DSY are unique to their space, but it is encouraging to see the many ways that these places can find use in the data around this population.

Training and Technical Assistance Use

Of the forty-nine states and territories that participated in the interviews, thirty-nine states reported initiating some form of DSY initiatives during the past decade. These initiatives ranged from training and technical assistance activities to data linkages to work groups and support units. Of those, eighteen indicated that they had program initiatives at both the state and county levels. Nine states indicated work occurring at the state level only and the other twelve indicated work happening at the local level only.

A number of national technical assistance and training (TTA) providers have been working with states and/or local jurisdictions to promote collaboration between juvenile justice and child welfare and improve DSY outcomes and practices. These TTA providers include the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform (CJJR) at Georgetown University that developed the Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM), and the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice (RFKNRC) that developed the Dual Status Youth Reform Model. The CYPM has been implemented and/or presented through training in twenty-three different states and the RFKNRC model has been implemented and/or presented in twenty states. Ten states indicated that there had been participation in another form of TTA. These trainings may be

organized or tailored at the county level so, within a state, there can be counties that have participated in different models of TTA. The scope of the CYPM, RFKNRC, and other implementation and training efforts have varied within these states, reflecting different levels of DSY initiatives and changing circumstances.

Technology Compatibility

One important goal of the DSY State Scan was to update the status of each state’s data capacities related to DSY including, to a limited extent, the degree and nature of data and information sharing across agencies. As described earlier, 12 states reported having an automated information system that contains both child welfare and juvenile justice data, while the remaining respondents provided an array of information methods and sources. These range from different/separate automated information systems for child welfare and juvenile justice at the state and/or county levels, reliance on manual searches to identify dual system involvement, use of self-report data (e.g., through intake interviews or surveys), periodic sharing of lists of juveniles in custody to allow child welfare and juvenile justice to identify cross system involvement, and other methods. What is notable here is how diverse these approaches are for identifying DSY, with some approaches being more attuned to prompt identification (an important aspect for timely intervention and collaboration) than others.

Even with an automated information system that captures child welfare and juvenile justice information, it is important to recognize that the existence of such systems does not mean these sources automatically identify or track dual system cases. These systems may have the capabilities to link dual system involvement (depending on how such cases may be defined in each of the respective states/jurisdictions), but that does not mean these capabilities are utilized or that routine and timely data output

(e.g., active case listings shared across agencies) are evident.

There can be a number of reasons why single or separate child welfare and juvenile justice information systems do not readily identify or track DSY. Some of these reasons may include:

1. The lack of unique identifiers and direct data linkages that would automatically capture or tag dual system cases when they occur. Without shared identifiers and direct data linkages, states and local jurisdictions must rely on other means to reliably identify DSY. This may include probabilistic case matching based, at minimum, on name, date of birth, and perhaps other demographic data.
2. Broad definitions of DSY that may include informal system contact or other case aspects that are not tracked by these information systems.
3. Limited data capacities or resources that inhibit agency abilities to automatically identify DSY and force them to rely on manually produced case listings. The agencies then use these listings to cross-check for DSY. In applicable jurisdictions, this process usually begins when a youth is in custody and then one entity (e.g., perhaps, a juvenile detention or intake unit) communicates with the child welfare agency to confirm dual system involvement. In some cases, this approach may involve significant time demands for those searching agency and/or court records, again, depending on the number of cases requiring such searches, the available staff resources, the state or local criteria for dual system involvement, and perhaps other considerations.
4. The lack of information or data sharing agreements that more readily allow agencies to exchange relevant data, which may be exacerbated by concerns over what data or information can be shared.

Conclusion

While initiatives to support DSY may not be as abundant as they have been in the past, there are numerous states and jurisdictions that continue to recognize the importance of DSY issues. From states sharing state level data between agencies to local jurisdictions getting training and technical assistance, along with on-the-ground examples of cross-system collaboration, the emphasis on providing the best outcomes for DSY is emerging again across the country. We highlight several important state-level examples at the end of this brief.

The examples range from those that integrate statewide data linkage through probabilistic matching on personal identifiers in Massachusetts; to those that link data in their statewide automated child welfare information systems in Colorado; to efforts in Maryland to align state policy with a requirement by counties to develop and implement local DSY plans. The research also suggests that coming out of the COVID-19 Pandemic, some states are revisiting their statewide efforts to support progress with DSY reforms. The findings of this landscape study suggest that these efforts do not need to start from scratch and can benefit from a peer network of states innovating on behalf of systems integration for young people with dual system status in child welfare and juvenile justice.

References

Siegel, G., & Lord, R. (2004). *When Systems Collide: Improving Court Practices and Programs in Dual Jurisdiction Cases*. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and National Center for Juvenile Justice.

Hyland, N. (2016). *Dual Status Youth: Data Integration to Support System Integration*. Juvenile Justice Geography, Policy, Practice & Statistics StateScan. National Center for Juvenile Justice.

For information on CJJR DSY TTA and related research, go to cjjr.georgetown.edu/our-work/crossover-youth-practice-model/. For information on RFK NRCJJ DSY TTA and related research, go to rfknrcjj.org/our-work/dual-status-youth-reform/

Juvenile Justice Geography, Policy, Practice, & Statistics (2014). Go to jjgps.org/systems-integration

Methods

State-level juvenile justice and child welfare professionals were interviewed using a semi-structured interview framework. We defined dual-status youth as youth with either current or past involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Respondents were also interviewed about local pilot projects or activities. In addition to surveying state officials, NCJJ documented the organization and administration of juvenile justice services and child welfare in an effort to provide a strategic structural overlay.

State Spotlight: COLORADO

In Colorado, child welfare is overseen by the Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Child Welfare, but administered at the county-level. The Department of Human Services, Division of Youth Corrections administers juvenile justice. There is consistent data sharing about DSY at the state-level as well as formal and informal collaborative statements/memoranda of understanding, collaborative funding agreements and standing committees that focus on DSY issues. In the past, Colorado implemented the CYPM and encouraged local jurisdictions to implement it as well. Both Georgetown's CYPM and RFKs Dual Status Youth initiative have been involved in Colorado's efforts.

Information about DSY is coordinated through a statewide automated information system called the Colorado Trails System (the SACWIS system in Colorado), which includes both child welfare and juvenile justice data. In 2019, DHS and Colorado's judicial districts started a new program called "the Link" as a hub to merge child welfare and juvenile justice data. One of the important features of the Link is the use of common identifiers to better identify DSY. However, the probation side does not have immediate access to this feature.

There have been some challenges implementing this new system, but progress is underway. On the child welfare side, TRAILS can flag cases that have cross system involvement and users that have a "business need" can see the other side when a case is flagged for DSY. Despite this progress, there still appears to be reliance on manual searches to match youth for DSY in some jurisdictions.

A state statute also exists that mandates coordination for DSY. There are also examples of data sharing and coordination for DSY at the local level in Colorado including formal and informal collaborative statements/memoranda of understanding, collaborative funding agreements, and local standing committees that focus on DSY issues.



State Spotlight: MAINE

In Maine, state statutes anticipate that young people committed to state corrections may have DSY status and authorizes sharing of information and coordination of services to reduce the length of time in placement. The Maine Children's Cabinet is comprised of the Commissioners of each of the state's youth service agencies. Recent legislation requires the Cabinet to foster inter-agency collaboration. Additionally, the judicial branch has created a joint child welfare and juvenile justice specialist position to help advance coordination of young people with DSY status.

A process for multi-agency staffing on behalf of young people with DSY status occurs on a sustained basis for youth in juvenile corrections and for youth on community supervision. Every two weeks the cases of young people with DSY status in juvenile corrections are discussed in joint meetings that include representatives from the Department of Corrections (who operates secure juvenile corrections) the Department of Health and Human Services (that oversees child protective services) and Children's Behavioral Health. The cases are staffed to discuss what systems of care are required to release youth safely from pre-adjudication detention or corrections into their home communities.

For youth on community supervision where DSY has been identified, multi-agency staffing of situations can be requested through what are called regional tier teams (RTT). There are three regional probation/corrections management areas, with each having a regional tier team with cross-agency representation. Juvenile community corrections officers can refer young people to their RTT. The RTT members have the ability to problem solve stuck cases and coordinate resources for what children need to succeed, including basic needs, such as housing, transportation, and clothing to support transition to adult lives.



State Spotlight: MARYLAND

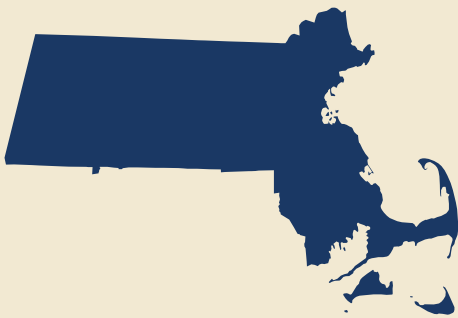


In Maryland, two statutes authorize coordination between the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) and the Maryland Department of Social Services (DSS). While the statutes do not require coordination these policies help to support current state efforts that have advanced in recent years through technical assistance provided by the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University (CJJR). During the technical assistance period, a statewide committee existed to help plan system improvement for young people with DSY status. While the committee was sunset at the end of the consultation, local committees were established in most of Maryland's 24 judicial districts. Each of the districts has a standing cross-over youth practice model (CYPM) committee with different structures and participating agencies determined by the district. Each of the districts is charged with developing a DSY coordination handbook, with 17 of the

24 completing one. The handbooks may include inter-agency agreements and procedures for identifying DSY customized to its inter-agency team and data environment.

Additionally, the Maryland efforts to implement CYPM are enhanced by two state agency positions at DJS. The first position is charged with advancing data linkage between state agencies and data systems, with a new system in the works called the Child and Juvenile Management System (CJAMS). While there currently is not a unique identifier across agencies, work is ongoing to build linkages through matching based on personal identifiers. The other position develops inter-agency policy and procedures to coordinate services for young people with DSY status and training to implement the procedures.

State Spotlight: MASSACHUSETTS



In Massachusetts, three statutes operate at a high level which require collaboration between the Department of Youth Services (DYS) and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to support young people who have dual system involvement: the first requires interagency reviews on youth with complex histories and multi-system involvement; the second statute permits information sharing from all other executive branch agencies when a DYS commitment occurs; and the third statute requires an interagency planning committee to improve services for youth with multi-agency involvement.

A common child identifier is not available between important state youth-serving agencies, but state agencies have developed an interim solution. Over the past several years, the Department of Youth Services (DYS) and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) have progressed from manual searching and matching to a more automated process involving data extracts of information from DYS and DCF and linking records through probabilistic matching programs based on personal identifiers. A primary data sharing MOU exists that allows DCF and DYS to share information from the respective agency data systems for client management. The agencies further execute data sharing agreements that are specific to specific goals. For example, the Master Data Management (MDM) agreement helps DYS with flagging DSY and coordinating information to new clients, such as court dates. The MDM is an overlay system that each agency exports case records to and then matching occurs at that level in a way that is at a data warehouse level and flags young people for joint staffing. Comprehensive prevalence statistics are not published but DYS publishes information about the prevalence of DSY among youth detained in their annual statistical report, (see mass.gov/info-details/dys-reports-and-resources).

State Spotlight: NEBRASKA

Nebraska has a strong history of DSY efforts. Beginning in 2018, the State implemented key tenets of the CYPM statewide, after five CYPM sites had earlier implemented the CYPM model. During this period, over 900 child welfare and juvenile justice staff received cross-system training to improve understanding of each other's roles.

In Nebraska, most child welfare services are provided by the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services (DHHS/DCFS). Juvenile justice services are mainly provided by the Juvenile Services Division under the State Court Administrator's Office (AOC). Delinquency and dependency cases are heard in separate juvenile courts in Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy Counties. In the rest of the state, delinquency and dependency cases are heard in county courts.

The state juvenile justice and child welfare systems are covered under a unified judicial code which allows for easier collaboration. In addition to this state-level structure, local county attorneys operate multi-system approaches with the goal of early identification of youth involved in multiple agencies.

Three DSY initiatives have been sustained in Nebraska. Douglas County's Youth Impact! program, which began in 2012, has been evaluated by the University of Nebraska-Omaha and has demonstrated a range of public safety and cost-effective benefits. Lancaster, Gage, and Dodge Counties have been operating initiatives since 2015 in areas that include Lincoln and some very rural areas. Sarpy County initiated a CYPM program in 2016.

DSY data sharing varies across the state. There is an important data sharing agreement/MOU between state-level child welfare and juvenile justice agencies in place with the Douglas County DSY team. In addition, at the State level, Nebraska also has informal agreements between agencies. DHHS/DCFS and the AOC drafted policy enacted in 2018 that describes collaboration expectations and a cross-agency glossary of terms to help stakeholders better understand each other. These informal arrangements also outline collaborative steps that follow CYPM guidelines. While Nebraska officials are not able to track pathways into dual system involvement, they do have accurate data of current DSY status. Interestingly, Nebraska officials report that 70%-80% of juvenile justice youth have some form of prior child welfare involvement.

Overall, Nebraska's CYPM goal is to identify cross-system involvement, even prior to adjudication, if possible, to start collaborative case planning.



The National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) is a non-profit organization that conducts research on a broad range of juvenile justice topics and provides technical assistance to the field. NCJJ is the research division of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ).

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