

***Cross-Site Report: Perceptions of Changes to Juvenile Drug Court Service Matching
During Reclaiming Futures Model Implementation - July 2015
Five Site Report***

This report summarizes perceived changes to the process of matching youth to services, or service-matching, and the overarching orientation of the Juvenile Drug Court (JDC) that occurred during the implementation of Reclaiming Futures (RF) at the JDCs. This report captures observations from interviewees situated in different subsystems involved in the JDC/RF programs (i.e., Administration, Judicial/Justice, Treatment, and Community) across the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years of the JDC/RF grant-funded project period. During semi-structured, one-on-one interviews conducted annually at each JDC/RF evaluation site, interviewees were asked to reflect on implementing RF at their JDC. More specifically, interviewees were asked whether the process of matching youth to services improved over the grant-funded period, and if so, in what ways (e.g., new assessments, and faster treatment initiation). Some interviewees also reported changes to the overall orientation of their JDC that they observed (e.g., more focus on collaboration and community engagement) over the course of the grant-funded project period.

The data for this report come from 52 semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with JDC/RF team members. Four JDC/RF team members from each evaluation site were selected to participate in annual interviews. One person from each of the following subgroups was interviewed at each evaluation site annually: Administration, Judicial/Justice, Treatment, and Community. Due to the timing of the evaluation, interviews at two of the evaluation sites were conducted during the 3rd and 4th years of the grant-funded project period (16 interviews) while interviews at three of the evaluation sites were conducted during the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years of the grant-funded project period (36 interviews). The data are summarized across the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years of the grant-funded project periods in this report unless otherwise noted.

The interview questions and responses varied based on how embedded interviewees were in the JDC/RF team and how long they had been involved with the JDC. For example, interviewees involved in the day-to-day operations of the JDC (e.g., project director, and probation officer) were more likely to have extensive knowledge of RF and service-matching than interviewees who provided direct services to youth but were only peripherally involved in the JDC system (e.g., community treatment provider).

Interviewees who had been affiliated with the program prior to the grant-funded project period were asked to reflect on what the service-matching process looked like before the implementation of RF and if they thought that the RF model improved service-matching.¹ Interviewees who joined the JDC/RF team after the RF model was implemented were asked to reflect generally on any changes they observed in the JDC/RF program that they attributed to the addition of RF without making comparisons to the JDC program in place prior to the implementation of RF.

¹While the grant funded the implementation of an integrated JDC/RF model, all evaluation sites had a JDC program based on the Juvenile Drug Court: Strategies in Practice (JDC:SIP) in existence before the grant-funded project period began. As a result, most interviewees perceived the grant as adding RF to their existing JDC program. In essence, integrating the JDC:SIP and RF models is what the courts did, but since the JDC:SIP was already deeply embedded in the JDC processes, most interviewees saw the changes as the addition of the RF model. Twelve interviewees made a clear distinction between the RF model and the grant requirements (e.g., reporting to the funders, attending trainings by the RF National Program Office, and utilizing the Global Assessment of Individual Needs [GAIN] assessment). However, the vast majority of interviewees, including the 12 interviewees that specifically differentiated between the RF model and the grant, reflected on the entire RF experience during the interview. Thus, the data reported here include interviewees' perceptions of the RF model itself as well as the affiliated tasks of fulfilling grant requirements.

General Observations Regarding Reclaiming Futures (RF)

A consistent observation from interviews with JDC/RF program staff across the five evaluation sites was that the RF model did not constitute an entirely new approach to service-matching. Instead of completely overhauling the previous system, interviewees familiar with the day-to-day operations of the JDC observed that the RF model directives were used to enhance existing JDC practices and procedures. Interviewees who were involved with the JDC before the implementation of RF commented that many of the elements of the RF model were part of their JDC program prior to the implementation of RF (e.g., screening, assessment, and treatment services). At least one interviewee from each evaluation site emphasized that they already had a good JDC with effective service-matching prior to the implementation of RF as indicated in the following quotes from the 2nd year of the grant-funded project period.

- *"[...]we already had a really good Drug Court in place before Reclaiming Futures came, so now we wanna just take that, you know bigger."*
- *"Treatment services were already in place. We have always been very treatment-oriented. We just needed funding."*

Similar sentiments were expressed at other evaluation sites during the 3rd year of the grant-funded project period.

- *"I mean, I really think this is just a basic treatment model. Honestly. You know? They're everywhere. This one says, 'Reclaiming Futures.' I think we were already using it before."*
- *"[...] it's good to get feedback and maybe, you know, tuning up, you know, twisting a screw here or there. But I don't see that since I've been here there's been any substantial changes as a result of working with Reclaiming Futures. That may have happened before I got here. Um, but generally my sense is that we were kind of chugging along. Reclaiming Futures offered technical expertise and some grant funding [...], so that was obviously a big help."*

Rather than completely overhauling their current JDC system, interviewees perceived the addition of RF to their JDC program as a way to enhance current processes and procedures in more subtle ways. Interviewees who felt that they could comment on changes to the JDC during the grant-funded project period identified both general and specific changes to their JDC related to service-matching over the course of the implementation of RF.

General Observations Regarding Improvements in Service-Matching

In 26 (50%) of the interviews, the interviewees suggested that service-matching had improved. In nine (17%) of the interviews, the interviewees stated that they did not know if service-matching had improved at all due to RF when asked directly. However, a number of these interviewees did describe aspects of the JDC that had changed when responding to other questions. For example, one administrator said that she did not know if RF improved service-matching generally, but later explained that the JDC implemented formal protocols to shorten the timeline between when youth were assessed and when they initiated the program that were not in place prior to the grant-funded project period. In the remaining 17 (33%) interviews, the interviewees reported being unable to comment specifically on whether or not service-matching improved because they were too peripherally involved with the JDC/RF program or had only recently joined the JDC/RF team.

General Changes to Juvenile Drug Courts (JDCs) Related to Improved Service-Matching

Enhanced focus on community and family engagement

Increased emphasis on systemic change

Better communication and collaboration with team

Improved self-monitoring and evaluation

The most commonly cited change, reported in 40% of the interviews, was that the JDC team focused more intently on community engagement during implementation of RF. In particular, interviewees explained that service-matching improved because their JDC sought new community-based opportunities, such as pro-social activities, mentoring, and employment, to support youth during the transition off of court supervision. Additionally, some interviewees described a shift in the JDC/RF culture toward a “heightened awareness of staff of areas to look for” where team members “think outside the box.” Quotes from interviewees representing different subgroups at three different evaluation sites below illustrate a shift in perspective to embracing community opportunities for youth throughout the grant implementation period.

- *“Um, so I think it’s opened just the lines of communication so that when a kid leaves our program, they know that the community is there to support them.”*
- *“[...] Reclaiming Futures is not about the treatment modality. It’s really about how, how we are going to provide for our children that come through our system. The services that they need during the treatment phase and after the treatment phase. How well is the community connected to this process? That’s what Reclaiming Futures is about.”*
- *“Now the conversation is so much more holistic, so much richer and it’s looking outward toward opportunities for the kids in terms of education and employment and prosocial activities. It’s very strength-based and it’s happened you know over the course of these last years. And you know it’s been a gradual shift and so I think a lot of us just sort of take it for granted that it’s always been that way, but it hasn’t.”*
- *I think the biggest thing that we’ve kind of gained from Reclaiming Futures is more the mentoring and community involvement. The other stuff, we’ve kind of been doing throughout. But I think definitely hooking client up with an appropriate mentor has been huge.”*

The second general change was described by interviewees at three of the five evaluation sites. These interviewees suggested that their JDC embraced systemic change during the implementation of RF that became embedded in the way the JDC operated more broadly. One interviewee described RF as a “touchstone that all the providers can come back to” when coordinating care. Another interviewee remarked that, “everything we do is, you know, with Reclaiming Futures in mind.” One judicial official who was interviewed in the 3rd year of the grant-funded project period surmised,

- *“[...]the model that gives you the system, systematic approach to be able to incorporate all these things that we’ve been doing in the past to incorporate it not only for the Drug Court, but for our juvenile court system.”*

At least one interviewee from each evaluation site reported general improvements in collaboration and communication with the team during the grant-funded project period that enhanced service-matching. For example, one community provider explained that interagency communication improved once her agency was invited to attend the Drug Court/Change Team meetings at the JDC. Other interviewees reported that getting the right people into the JDC/RF team over the grant-funded project period improved the collaborative environment (e.g., enthusiastic Judge, visionary Project Director, and engaged Community Fellow), which led to better coordination of services for youth in the JDC/RF program.

Interviewees, particularly in administrative and high-level judicial roles, also described efforts to continually evaluate and monitor the program to identify gaps and areas for improvement during the grant-funded project period. Some interviewees saw continual improvement as an aspect of their JDC that predated the implementation of RF. Nevertheless, as the following quotes illustrate, interviewees perceived that constructive program monitoring and evaluation occurred over the course of the implementation of RF.

- *“I think that’s the beautiful thing about Reclaiming Futures. That somebody had an idea some years ago that we could do better by looking at what we were doing to start with, which is what you do when you first fall under the umbrella of Reclaiming Futures. You look really seriously and deeply at how you’re doing things right now and what could improve. And that’s what we’ve done.”*
- *“Well, I think we fully believed in it and we were doing pieces of the model already. Now, we’re just maintaining fidelity to the full model. I think we’ve also improved our collaboration. We’re ensuring that we have shared expectations and that all parties know what is happening so that we’re not duplicating services. And we’ve improved our services by finding resources that are a good fit for the kids. We’ve found supports that ensure success beyond kids’ experience with us. I think overall it’s been a good experience and the families and youth have benefited. It allowed us to identify additional services, not just for kids in drug court but for all kids in probation .”*

Interviewees described modifications in these areas as beneficial to improving the processes and procedures of the JDC overall as well as improving service-matching directly.

Specific Changes to Juvenile Drug Courts (JDCs) Related to Improved Service-Matching

Tighter timelines for screening, assessment, initiation

More treatment modalities, more training for clinicians

More supervision, more incentives for youth

Additional mental health services

Conclusion

This report summarizes interviewee perceptions of changes to the process of service-matching at five JDC/RF sites that occurred during the implementation of RF, which occurred during the grant-funded project period. Qualitative data from 52 interviews conducted during the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years of the grant-funded project period show that interviewees perceived the integration of RF as way to enhance the existing structure of the JDC through general changes, such as increased focus on community involvement, as well as specific changes such as shorter timeframes between assessment and treatment. Overall, interviewees perceived the integration of RF as an opportunity to refine internal processes and procedures rather than as an entirely new approach to service-matching and the JDC program more generally.

Questions about this report?

Contact Monica Davis, Evaluation Coordinator, at 520-295-9339 x 211 or midavis@email.arizona.edu

Disclaimer: The development of this report is funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) through an interagency agreement with the Library of Congress – contract number LCFRD11C0007. The views expressed here are 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.

Acknowledgements: SIROW wishes to acknowledge the contributions of the evaluation sites, Dr. Rodney Haring and the evaluation partners, Chestnut Health Systems (CHS) and Carnevale Associates, LLC (CALLC) to this National Cross-Site Evaluation. In addition, SIROW is appreciative of support from the Library of Congress - Federal Research Division, OJJDP, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and the Reclaiming Futures National Program Office.

Suggested Citation: University of Arizona - Southwest Institute for Research on Women (2015). National Cross-Site Evaluation of Juvenile Drug Courts and Reclaiming Futures: Cross-Site Report: Perceptions of Changes to Juvenile Drug Court Service-Matching During Reclaiming Futures Model Implementation - July 2015 . Five Site Report. The University of Arizona: Tucson, Arizona.