

November 29, 2011

***Testimony of:***

Curtis L. Whitten, Commissioner  
Kansas Juvenile Justice Authority  
Topeka, Kansas

***presented to:***

The Hon. Pat Colloton and Honorable Members  
*of the* Joint House-Senate  
Corrections and Juvenile Justice  
Oversight Committee:

**Chair Colloton, Vice-Chair Brungardt, Ranking Member Gatewood and Honored Members:**

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to appear before your Committee to share information about our work on behalf of our Citizens, our Youth and our State. The last time we were here together, I enjoyed the robust conversation and we left with a few questions about which we were asked for a little more explanation. Since that meeting, I wrote to you and the committee with additional information. I trust that you have my letter. I hope that we answered your questions. If we left anything out, I will be glad to answer any questions you have about our previous topics as well as those I cover today.

You have asked that I address three major topics this morning. The three topics are: (1) the realignment involving the movement of Prevention grants, Intake and Assessment among others from JJA to Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS); (2) issues and capacity surrounding a separation of Child In Need of Care (CINC) youth from JJA Custodial youth with some specific statistics; and (3) an update on our work on the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) with the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

**Realignment**

JJA fully supports the movement of the particular functions identified to SRS. We are supporting the move with resources and expertise. The fact is that the world for these youth must be collaborative. At JJA, we collaborate with SRS – and other state and local government agencies – all of the time on a broad range of issues including prevention, intake, and assessment processes. This realignment won't be any different. After all, the steps we all call Prevention, Intake and Assessment are means not ends.

We can't say the entire process will be seamless as far as government is concerned and we aren't really in a position to predict future performances but JJA is fully supportive of the process and wants the realignment to be seamless so far as the youth and the day-to-day work is concerned. We are working with SRS to translate the over-arching process into actionable details.

One of the specific requests posed to JJA as a part of this process was to work with SRS to provide your committee with specific information pertaining to utilization of Youth Residential Center IIs (YRC II), Transitional Living placements (TLP) and Emergency Shelters. Attachment A to this testimony is the result of our collaborative work.

Among the important points to be kept in mind when considering placement issues: JJA works very hard not to be a "one size fits all" juvenile justice system. JJA operations (and relationships) are premised upon making an effort to treat each youth – regardless of the when, where and how they have come to us – as an individual. As a result, individualized placement decisions are made at a local level supported by technical assistance, training and guidance from JJA. While it is technically correct to say that JJA and the Commissioner's office may intervene to direct those decisions, JJA has rarely intervened to over-ride local decisions. On occasion, distance may be outweighed by other considerations.

### **Separation of Youth – CINC from JJA**

For a variety of reasons, JJA has been moving along the path toward establishing better separation of the placement of JJA custody youth from co-placements with CINC youth in SRS custody. The effort has been orderly and seems to be going smoothly. It appears that the separation can be accomplished in ways that do not significantly impact the lives of our youth and the Provider network while providing a greater degree of protections for the lives and safety of our youth.

### **Annie E. Casey Foundation JDAI**

Since we last spoke about the Annie E. Casey Foundation work on JDAI initiatives, JJA has been working with partnering judicial districts and the Foundation to assess the five pilot JDAI sites. The five sites include the 10<sup>th</sup> (Johnson), 18<sup>th</sup> (Sedgwick), 29<sup>th</sup> (Wyandotte), 7<sup>th</sup> (Douglas) and 3<sup>rd</sup> (Shawnee) Judicial Districts. The purpose of the assessment is to determine if, or the extent to which, current practices align with the eight core JDAI strategies. A report has been provided to each. We are eagerly moving forward with the mutual development to alternative strategies. In general, JJA considers the assessments favorable and the continued efforts worth pursuing.

In conclusion, again, I would offer to address any continuing questions.

Thank you for the time and effort which each of you continue to contribute to our mutual mission:

*[To] assist youth to become successful and productive citizens by providing leadership and support to:*

- *Strive to prevent youth from becoming involved in the juvenile justice system*

- *Provide community supervision for youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system*
- *Provide safe, secure, humane and restorative confinement of youth to enhance public safety*
- *Promote public safety by holding youth accountable for their behavior, and improve the ability of youth to live productively and responsibly in their communities*

**Thank you.**

**Curtis L. Whitten  
Commissioner  
Juvenile Justice Authority**

Enc. Attachment A (9 pages)