

Missouri division of youth services research paper examples

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



Introduction

This paper summarizes the history of the Missouri Division of Youth Services (DYS), examines the beliefs and philosophies behind its programs, provides some explanation of the Dual Jurisdiction system, the treatment programs available through the DHS, the prevailing recidivism rates, and how DHS compares to the programs in other U. S. States.

The Research

DYS History. A Missouri Division of Social Services article entitled “ DHS Overview” (Jan 2010) reported that the DHS was created as part of the Social Services in 1974 as a result of the Missouri General Assembly passing the 1974 Omnibus Reorganization Act. However, over the intervening years, the DHS has undergone numerous changes. The principal events are summarized below, as extracted from “ Missouri Division of Youth Services History, 1970-2010.”

- In the 1970’s: System wide plans to move from larger treatment establishments to smaller treatment centers, plus expansion of aftercare;
- 1971: DHS Advisory Board replaces the Training Schools Board;
- 1972: DHS moves into the community, establishes Group Homes;
- 1974: Omnibus Reorganization Act brings DHS under Social Services. Age ranges amended to be 12 to 17;
- 1975: Wider scope for DHS includes: prevention, training, consultation, technical help for local communities, and new information system across the state. Board increased to 15-strong;
- 1980’s: Treatment continuum expanded, treatment facilities taking in more and training schools less, bringing beliefs/philosophies into actual practice;
- 1980: Creation of “ Juvenile Court Diversion” program;

1981: Closure of girls' Training School;\n- 1983: Closure of boys' Training School;\n- 1986: DYS education programs get state aid funded via local school districts;\n- 1987: Increased funding for DYS through recommendations by the Blue Ribbon Commission;\n- 1990-1991: Day treatment commences as does intensive management of cases. Expansion training set up in North West & St. Louis regions;\n- 1992: " Community Liaison Councils" bring better links to local communities;\n- 1995: Based on the Juvenile Crime Bill, DYS can petition for extending stay up to the age of 21, lower age limit removed and introduced " Dual Jurisdiction". New DYS facilities authorized;\n- 1997: DYS authorized to graduate students who comply with the state high school graduation requirements;\n- 1999: Residential capacity up by 200 beds using new region-based facilities;\n- 2003: DYS model increasingly recognized and visited by other states;\n- 2005: DYS establishes process of " Advanced Group Facilitator Certification";\n- 2007: To ensure sustainability of the DYS culture/approach, " High Performance Transformational Coaching" adopted;\n- 2008: DYS wins the " Annie E. Case Innovations in American Government Award in Children and Family System Reform";\n- 2010: Expansion of DYS " community-based services and supports." \nDYS Beliefs and Philosophies. An article on the Missouri Department of Social Services website entitled " Missouri DYS Treatment Beliefs" (n. d.), encapsulated the DYS beliefs and philosophies in a series of short paragraphs, paraphrased as follows:\n- Foundation of the treatment is based on safety and structure, to satisfy the youth's basic needs and to offer safety in both physical and emotional contexts, so that they know that the DYS staff care about them;\n- Because each person is

unique, services including support are tailored to each individual, so that the youth recognize and are inspired to succeed and challenged by their own strengths and those of others;\n- Youth are guided and supported to help them accept change, as well as to learn from their own mistakes in the process of succeeding;\n- Programs use people's natural needs for approval, acceptance and their wish to contribute;\n- The programs do not make judgments about people's emotions. Feelings are considered to be neither right nor wrong. It is important that they can talk about their past experiences to help healing and for their personal growth;\n- Challenging behavior is considered to hide underlying needs that the programs try to address and help the youth understand them to assist with change;\n- Youth coming into the program often have limited understanding of their options in terms of behavior or emotions. In that context their behavior seems logical to them;\n- Because family knowledge and involvement is important, the DYS program considers their input necessary to implement the treatment and to promote change within the family;\n- " We are more alike than different." Staff deal with the fears and insecurities manifested to help youth deal with them positively and productively;\n- The change process occurs most effectively in a group environment, therefore DYS helps youth to help others and help themselves. We encourage development of healthy relationships with adults, their family, their peers, and others in their community and neighborhoods;\n- We are all who we are through past and present experiences. We investigate and help youth to link those experiences in order to develop their knowledge, new skills and the emotional capability for success in their home and in the community;\n-

Throughout our programs, we “ demonstrate respect for and build on the values, preferences, beliefs, culture, and identity of the youth, family, and community. Diversity in expression, opinion, and preference is embraced.”\nDual Jurisdiction. DYS published a brochure entitled “ Dual Jurisdiction Program” (2005). Essentially, it is what the DYS brochure described as a “ blended sentencing option” under which a juvenile sentence and an adult sentence are imposed simultaneously, but the adult sentence is suspended. That option can be made available to youth offenders who are below 17 years old, are transferred to a general jurisdiction Court, and for whom their prosecution resulted in a guilty plea or a conviction. To be considered for the program a youth has to be assessed for suitability, then - if accepted - will be placed on the dual jurisdiction program and transferred to the DYS 40-bed secure facility located in Montgomery City. Treatment programs there include individual and group counseling, academic tuition and training of a vocational nature. The emphasis throughout is on:\n- Developing skills in communication and problem-solving;\n- Recognizing and correcting bad decision-making concepts;\n- Identifying elements comprising negative behaviors;\n- Implementing empathy with victims and restorative justice.\nWhen a youth in the program reaches 17, there is a mandatory Court hearing to decide if that youth should be placed on probation, or transferred to prison, or allowed - by agreement - to stay in DYS custody. If a youth should violate the suspended sentence conditions, the Court may either continue or revoke the juvenile arrangements, or impose the previously suspended adult sentence, or determine any other course of action it decides. Youths can stay in the DYS program only until the age of 21.

However, if the DYS considers a youth to be beyond its capabilities, it can petition the Court to transfer the youth out of its custody.

DYS Treatment Programs. A booklet published by the DYS in 2004 provided a guide to the DYS programs and services. The mission statement at the beginning of that booklet stated that the mission is to “ improve communities by providing appropriate services to youth and their families.” The organization, which is split into five regions, provides a comprehensive range of treatment programs geared to individual needs, some residential, others non-residential. For each youth, the first stage is a risk and needs assessment process, resulting in the formulation of an Individual Treatment Plan (ITP), which includes placement in the least restrictive appropriate program / facility. Following that, treatment and/or counseling is normally conducted with groups of between 10 and 12 youths. Services offered are also wide-ranging and include help with finding and keeping jobs, education, even re-homing if returning to the family home is not possible or appropriate. The DYS has over 30 residential facilities of various categories dependent on need.

Recidivism Rates. The Division of Youth Services Annual Report Fiscal Year 2012 (Feb 2013) included recidivism figures for the year 2011, based on youths released from custody and remaining law-abiding for at least one year. Those figures showed a low recidivism rate of just 14.4 percent with those returning to adult prison as only 0.9 percent. Looking at a two-year basis instead, the recidivism figure was 26.4 percent, with 3.2 percent going to adult prison. The same figures based on a three year post-DYS interval were 33 percent and 3.8 percent respectively.

DYS Compared with Other States. “ Small is Beautiful: The Missouri Division of Youth Services”

(2003) is the title of a booklet that claimed Missouri “ has become a model for the nation in juvenile corrections.” The booklet noted that focusing on small treatment centers (as opposed to large-scale establishment commonly used elsewhere) and emphasizing treatment and the philosophies behind the treatments are the keys to the success of DYS. The booklet also picked out the DYS policy of aftercare as another important element, helping their youth “ clients” with the transition from DYS back to a home environment. There was also commendation for Missouri’s exceptionally low recidivism rates, even though costs per young person are much lower than other states.\n

Conclusions

\nMissouri, through the DYS, appears to have designed just about the best juvenile corrections and rehabilitation system nationwide. From the DYS mission statement and through their entire systems of programs, case management, treatments, the Dual Jurisdiction system and the continuing aftercare and other support services, DYS is the envy of many other states which spend far more per head to operate an inferior system. The success of DYS must surely be best measured by the reduction in the numbers of adult criminals and prison inmates, all arising from the work done by the DYS when the offenders are young enough to be turned from a potential life of crime. The DYS example serves to demonstrate that punishment “ per se” is not always the answer, and does suggest that programs of a similar nature might also be effective with a significant proportion of adult offenders, too.\n

References:

Division of Youth Services Annual Report Fiscal Year 2012. (Feb 2013). Retrieved from <http://dss.mo.gov/re/pdf/dys/youth-services-annual-report-fy12.pdf>

Dual Jurisdiction Program. (2005). Missouri Division of Youth Services. Retrieved from <http://dss.mo.gov/dys/pdf/djp021705.pdf>

DYS Overview. (Jan 2010). Missouri Department of Social Services. Retrieved from <http://www.dss.mo.gov/dys/dir.htm>

Missouri Division of Youth Services History, 1970-2010. (n. d.). Retrieved from <http://www.juvenilecouncil.gov/>

Missouri's Division of Youth Services: Programs and Services. (2004). Retrieved from <http://dss.mo.gov/dys/articles/progservice.pdf>

Small is Beautiful: The Missouri Division of Youth Services. (2003). Retrieved from <http://www.ctjja.org/resources/pdf/reform-smallisbeautiful.pdf>