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**Ohio Team Working to Improve Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System
Representatives Gathered at 50-State Forum to Begin Developing Comprehensive Plan
November 19, 2015**



Ohio Team at Last Week's 50-State Forum

From left to right: David Williams, Stephanie Graubner Nelson, Judge Gill, Representative Pelanda, Director Reed, Gabriella Celeste, Deborah Herubin, and Tom Stickrath***

Columbus, Ohio— A team of Ohio representatives joined other states from across the country last week to address the next big challenge they all share in juvenile justice: reducing the likelihood youth will be rearrested and end up in the adult criminal justice system.

Last week's 50-state forum, "Improving Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System," gave Ohio's team the opportunity to collaborate, learn from others' experiences, and understand the latest research from national experts. Organized by the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, and made possible through funding by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the team included Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) Director Harvey Reed, Representative Dorothy

Pelanda, Franklin County Juvenile Court Judge Elizabeth Gill, Holmes County Chief Juvenile Probation Officer David Williams, Deborah Herubin with Gov. John R. Kasich's Office, and Stephanie Graubner Nelson with the Supreme Court of Ohio.

For many years, Ohio has been regarded as a leader in juvenile justice, reforming the system to serve the right youth in the right environment with the right treatment. Juvenile correctional facilities are reserved for higher risk youth while a strong community infrastructure serves lower risk youth close to home. The DYS population has decreased from an average of 730 youth in facilities in 2011 to under 500 youth today, yet the community impact continues to grow as more youth get the help they need earlier, preventing a deeper dive into the juvenile justice system.

With this solid foundation for helping Ohio's youth in place, there is still much to do. "Our team is taking a careful look at how we can do a better job ensuring that that youth are released from facilities and community supervision positioned to succeed by staying crime free, achieving academically, and getting and keeping jobs," said Representative Dorothy Pelanda.

The team set out to build on Ohio's successes and collaborate with other juvenile justice experts and state teams at the two-day forum. They heard how other organizations are tracking outcome data and using it to guide policy and funding decisions. Team members reviewed research on effective strategies to reduce recidivism and improve other youth outcomes. "The Franklin County Juvenile Court is committed to continue its efforts to reduce recidivism and to assist youth involved in the juvenile court system to grow to be healthy productive members of our society," explained Judge Elizabeth Gill. "The Court will continue to collect and analyze data in an effort to better understand what each child and family needs to give them the best chance of not returning to the juvenile court or entering into the adult correctional system."

A comprehensive plan will be created as the team continues to meet and identify additional stakeholders who can help boost work with youth to reduce the likelihood that youth will be rearrested and end up back in the juvenile justice system or in the adult criminal justice system. The team will consider opportunities to leverage resources and apply for grants available through CSG as well as enrich collaborations with Ohio's employers, schools, and other community organizations.

"We want the very best for the youth that we serve," said Harvey Reed, Director of DYS. "I am thankful for the support and opportunity to unite with this inter-branch team. By working together, we can improve outcomes for youth in our juvenile justice system and ultimately make for a safer Ohio."

DYS is the juvenile corrections system for the state of Ohio and is statutorily mandated to confine felony offenders, ages 10 to 21, who have been adjudicated and committed by one of Ohio's 88 county juvenile courts. DYS currently operates three juvenile correctional facilities, provides parole services from five regional sites and funds and supports over 600 community programs serving 80,000 youth throughout the state.

**Gabriella Celeste is the Director of Child Policy at the Case Western Reserve University Schubert Center for Child Studies. She was a presenter at the forum. **Tom Stickrath is the former Director of DYS and current Director of the Bureau of Criminal Investigation. He serves on the CSG Justice Center Board Executive Committee.*

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