Robert F. Kennedy
Children's Action Corps
**RFK National Resource Center
for Juvenile Justice**

How to Improve Data Capabilities in Dual Status Youth Initiative Sites: Key Principles and Examples

By Gene Siegel

I. INTRODUCTION

This is the second in a series of articles intended to help jurisdictions engaged in dual status youth (DSY) or other multi-system reform initiatives improve their data-related capabilities, including ways that they can acquire, organize, and use their data to help guide important program planning and implementation decisions.
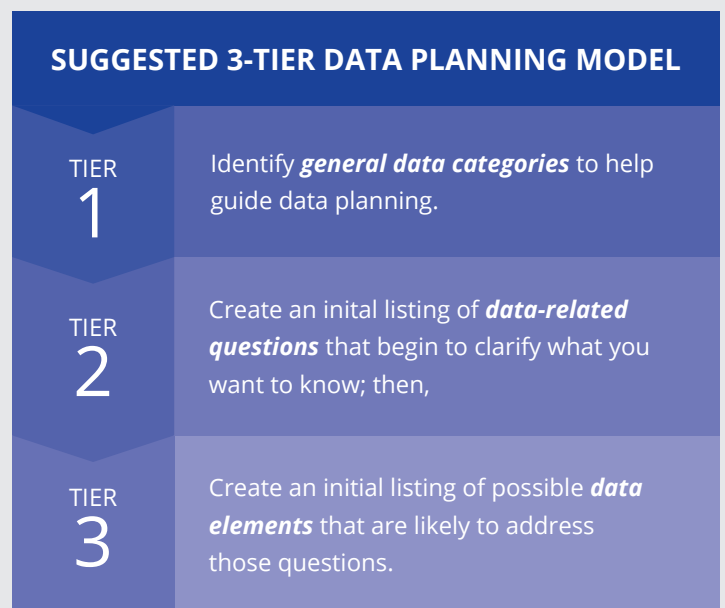
The first data article, entitled *Data Planning in the Dual Status Youth Initiatives: Initial Suggestions*, offered a three-tier planning approach, reviewed briefly below, that first asks sites to list and prioritize the types of data-related questions they hope to address in their reform efforts.

This second article draws from the first and offers examples of the types of *initial* DSY prevalence and case characteristics data that can be compiled and how those data can be "used" to begin to inform DSY program development and implementation and subsequent data-related activities including more active tracking of key program performance indicators.[1]

Readers should recognize that while the principles and examples laid out in this article reflect strategies geared toward a DSY initiative, the same examples and principles can be applied and/or adapted to examine broader probation reform efforts or any practice improvements that impact juvenile justice-involved youth.

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1   Tuell, J., Heldman, J., & Wiig, J. Dual Status Youth – Technical Assistance Workbook. Models for Change and RFK Children's Action Corps. December 2013. Available at http://rfknrcjj.org

II. BACKGROUND

The first article presented a 3-Tier Planning Model as illustrated in the following diagram:

SUGGESTED 3-TIER DATA PLANNING MODEL

TIER 1 Identify *general data categories* to help guide data planning.

TIER 2 Create an inital listing of *data-related questions* that begin to clarify what you want to know; then,

TIER 3 Create an initial listing of possible *data elements* that are likely to address those questions.

The RFK National Resource Center has prepared a data planning "work grid" that can be adapted to help jurisdictions clarify, organize and prioritize their data planning information. This grid can be accessed at http://rfknrcjj.org/our-work/dual-status-youth-reform.

This approach suggests starting with a set of general data categories (as shown below), then creating an initial listing of data-related questions intended to address *"what"* a jurisdiction or site wants to know about a group of youth, a program, or some other relevant topic of interest in the agency or organization. The third tier suggests creating a listing of possible data elements that are likely to help address or answer those questions.

To help better organize the data-related questions, the planning model suggests using a series of general data categories. These categories, which overlap to some degree and which can be adjusted to reflect local planning needs, include:

1. Prevalence;

2. Case characteristics and history;

3. Case processing (including key decision steps from arrest through disposition and including case assignment);

4. Case management, planning and supervision;

5. Protocol adherence and training;

6. Placement and services;

7. System outcomes and performance indicators (for example, cost impacts, due process/fairness, efficiency, workload impacts, others); and,

8. Youth and family outcomes (for example, outcomes by age, gender, race/ethnicity, as well as community impacts).

The planning model also encourages sites to distinguish between what may be more complex and/or longer-term research-oriented questions versus more basic or essential data questions that should be addressed in the initial stages of data planning and implementation. Lastly, the planning model strongly encourages jurisdictions to aspire to collecting, compiling, analyzing, and using their data in a more active or dynamic fashion rather than relying on single point in time or "snapshot" data summaries.

III. PURPOSE OF THIS ARTICLE

While the first data article focused on *"what"* a jurisdiction may want to know about its dual status youth, this article focuses on a number of key aspects related to *"how"* one can best find, organize, and present data to answer those questions.

Furthermore, this article presents a series of *Key Principles* that underlie this data identification and refining process and

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supplements these principles with a small number of examples including data tables, reports, and charts. These basic examples are intended to highlight the following:

- How the data can look and be presented;

- How the data can be "used" to help inform key program decisions in a more active and dynamic fashion; and,

- How this data planning and improvement approach can result in more routine and sustained tracking of cases and critical program activities.

Because there is important variability in data capabilities across juvenile justice and child welfare organizations, the content and examples displayed in this article will be fairly basic, yet intended to be relevant for any jurisdiction, from the least to the most sophisticated data-capable agencies and organizations.

Before specific examples are described, it is important to emphasize that this article assumes that a jurisdiction, consistent with the suggested data planning model, has already identified its general data categories, listed out *and* prioritized its data questions, and is ready to embark on or has already initiated activities related to Tier 3 – creating an initial listing of possible data elements that are likely to answer those questions.

IV. TIPS BEFORE BEGINNING THE PROCESS

View Data as Living and Active

One of the most important aspects of the suggested data planning approach is to encourage jurisdictions to aspire toward achieving more dynamic or "real time" data capabilities rather than relying on single point in time data "snapshots." As emphasized in the first data article and the *Guidebook for Juvenile Justice & Child Welfare System Coordination and Integration*,[2] having more dynamic or real time data allows for active tracking of any group of cases (DSY or otherwise) and helps administrators, program managers, on the ground staff, and others enhance their abilities to do their work more effectively. Real time data can help juvenile justice program managers be more proactive rather than reactive and can

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2   Wiig, J., Tuell, J., & Heldman, J. Guidebook for Juvenile Justice & Child Welfare System Coordination and Integration (3rd Edition). Models for Change: Systems Reform in Juvenile Justice. 2013. Also see, Siegel, G. Data Planning in the Dual Status Youth Initiatives: Initial Suggestions. Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps, RFK National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice. 2014. Both publications are available at http://www.rfknrcjj.org

enable them to address critical programmatic concerns and events before they become serious problems.

Relying solely or even primarily on snapshot data is disadvantageous for a number of reasons including:

- It inhibits or prohibits jurisdictions from *actively/proactively* gauging what is happening with a particular program or initiative;

- It often requires substantial manual effort and time demands that can prevent the timely compilation of accurate and sufficient program performance and outcome data; and,

- It can make those who provide key data (e.g., staff who work directly with youth and families) question why they are spending time compiling and entering this information because the data are of little practical use to them.

Real time or more current data also tend to promote more consistent data accuracy and quality, and ultimately, can help jurisdictions monitor short- and long-term program performance indicators and outcomes. That said, achieving these data capabilities and making data improvements top priorities represent important challenges for many jurisdictions. It requires the commitment of administrators, judges, directors, chiefs, program managers, and others —and often that commitment will require either additional resources or creative re-allocation of existing resources.

Data Collection Doesn't Have to be Complicated

Organizations undergoing DSY reforms understand that data will likely have to be acquired from multiple sources. Information may come from paper case files, from a juvenile justice organization's case tracking or database, and from a child welfare case management system. It is an unfortunate reality in DSY initiative sites and elsewhere that there are no (or far too few) fully integrated automated juvenile justice/child welfare databases, and DSY sites often have to look to ancillary data options.

If specific essential data elements are manually collected and stored in paper files, those data will need to be acquired and entered into a suitable automated database to track DSY cases. Many agencies and departments often turn to software like Excel as an ancillary database resource to capture and organize their DSY or other program data.

For those using basic software like Excel, there are steps one can take to simplify the challenges of entering data into a worksheet. This type of data entry process can be time-consuming and can result in data entry mistakes, especially if the user does not have sufficient experience. Fortunately, Excel has a number of built-in features and tools that can improve both the speed and accuracy of spreadsheet data entry. These include Excel's lists, AutoComplete, and data validation features (among others) that help reduce keystrokes and prevent errors[3]. Once these data are entered into Excel (or other database software) and it becomes the routine/standard dynamic data source or an ancillary data source for a DSY or other program, the data are much easier to work with in terms of basic analyses, calculations, organization, and presentation. Excel users are encouraged to seek out additional online resources and training if they are not already familiar with these tools.

> *...data collection may be looked at as a dynamic process that can continue or evolve over time.*

Data Collection is a Journey, Not a Destination

The collection of prevalence, case characteristics, and other data does not have to proceed in a purely linear fashion. Instead, data collection may be looked at as a dynamic process that can continue or evolve over time. In many situations, particularly those in a multi-system collaborative DSY initiative, a jurisdiction with sufficient baseline scan data can begin informed discussions about what its DSY initiative might look like. The collaborative partners can initiate thinking about implementation of agreed-upon changes (even incrementally) before all of the desired data are collected.

Jurisdictions pondering DSY reforms should not assume that all data collection must be completed before changes in practices are activated. In fact, incremental program implementation is evident in a number of DSY sites that are, in effect, field testing some of their practice changes and new DSY protocols (e.g., new methods for more promptly identifying dual status youth) during initial data collection activity.

V. KEY PRINCIPLES FOR IDENTIFYING AND ORGANIZING YOUR DATA

This section will cover key principles surrounding basic or essential data elements and provide examples of how the data can be organized, analyzed, and presented in ways that can help jurisdictions inform themselves about their emerging DSY initiatives.

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3 For example, go to http://www.techrepublic.com/blog/microsoft-office/use-excels-built-in-features-to-simplify-data-entry/

The *four key principles* underlying the identification, acquisition and use of data elements include:

1. Whenever possible, capture the most basic data elements that you can track over time in a variety of ways. How the most basic data elements are captured will vary across jurisdictions, but obtaining these basic/essential data elements must be a priority.

2. Recognize the differences between *static* data elements that do not change over time versus *dynamic* data elements/variables that do change over time.

3. Capture individual events for the data category/data question – compilation of accurate individual events will enable you to better organize your data.

4. Create up-to-date reports that allow you as a program manager to be alerted about key program activities and performance indicators, and help you make more informed and timely program adjustments. Consider how those reports can be "used" in proactive and routine ways to track performance and inform possible program changes.

This section also offers a number of basic prioritized data questions that seem fairly typical in jurisdictions undergoing DSY practice reforms. These questions are followed by the identification of the basic/essential data elements needed to answer those questions and a small number of examples that show how those data can be organized and presented. These include:

- One example of an initial or baseline scan of potential DSY target population data (these initial baseline scans are required of each of the DSY sites as they engage in the DSY project planning process);

- One chart displaying key DSY case characteristics data;

- Two tables that provide examples of how a DSY site can use data to track key performance indicators; and,

- One chart that provides a single preliminary baseline indicator of DSY recidivism.

Most of these examples are retrospective in that they contain data for pre-DSY reform time periods that are being used by sites to help select program target populations. They involve basic/essential data elements (e.g., name, date of birth (DOB), gender, race/ethnicity, other demographics, arrest/referral information, etc.) that are typically collected at the point of intake or some subsequent case processing stage. However, in the examples that reflect performance data or that which relates to changes in DSY practices (e.g., out-of-home placement tracking report and a multi-agency case planning meeting performance report, respectively), the data being collected may have to be entered periodically at the designated program events or as soon as possible.

Key principle #1:

Whenever possible, capture the most basic data elements that you can track over time in a variety of ways. How the most basic data elements are captured will vary across jurisdictions, but obtaining these basic/essential data elements must be a priority.

Basic or essential data elements refer to those pieces of data that are absolutely necessary in order to answer one's data questions. At a minimum, these generally include the data elements covered earlier – gender, race, ethnicity, and DOB. However, each jurisdiction has to identify additional basic or essential data elements that they may need to answer their prioritized data questions. Once again, the DSY data planning work grid and the first data article offer initial examples.

In this baseline example, the jurisdiction has selected the point of the most recent delinquency or status offense referral as the dual status program eligibility threshold on the juvenile justice side. However, the jurisdiction has not yet decided if it should include both formal and informal child welfare involvement as eligibility criteria. As a result, it first wants to determine the prevalence of the potential DSY target populations as well as at least one essential case characteristic – age at first referral.

Data question example #1: What are the prevalence and essential demographic characteristics of the dually involved population by case category?

In this example, the jurisdiction must break down the data question to include the case type subcategories needed then clearly define the basic data elements within those subcategories.

The case type subcategories and related data elements must be consistent and clearly defined. In the first example, the DSY case subcategories of interest include youth referred for a juvenile delinquency (JD) or status offense (JS) during calendar year 2014 that also have one of three levels of *formal* abuse/neglect (court) dual system involvement:

- No prior or open abuse/neglect/dependency court case;

- Only prior abuse/neglect or dependency court case; or,

- An open abuse/neglect or dependency court case.

The basic/essential demographic data elements of interest used to compile the first example include:

- Race

- Ethnicity (Hispanic/Latino)

- Gender

- Age (using DOB)

The first three basic/essential data elements noted above (race, ethnicity, and gender) only need to be captured once – these are the static data elements or variables (more on the dynamic basic/essential data element "age" in a moment). In terms of case types, each jurisdiction has to select the subcategories that it wants to track (e g., the subcategories that comprise its program's target population).

Table 1 presents preliminary summary juvenile court data that show applicable prevalence (numbers) for each of the three selected case subcategories, along with race, ethnicity, and gender breakdowns. As one example of an age group of particular interest, the table also displays age data for the under 14 years of age subcategory (i.e., youth referred at younger ages).

TABLE 1			
Youth Referred on JD and/or JS Referral in CY2014			
Demographics	**No Prior or Open DCS Court Case**	**Only Prior DCS Court Case**	**Open DCS Court Case**
Number	2,954	634	174
Male	66%	63%	53%
Female	34%	37%	47%
White	28%	27%	30%
African-American	57%	61%	54%
Hispanic	8%	4%	4%
Multi-Racial	5%	7%	11%
Other	<1%	<1%	<1%
Under 14	32%	37%	37%

Source: Marion County Juvenile Court. Quest data extract for youth referred during CY2014.

It is important to note that this first example is limited to *formal* court data that are generally more accessible and not data from both the court and child welfare agencies databases. This situation is not uncommon as at least some of the DSY sites have had to examine available court or juvenile justice data first before moving on to the more complicated process of matching juvenile justice cases with cases in child welfare databases. In other words, by starting with *available* automated data that reveal important aspects of the potential DSY target population, a jurisdiction can move closer to selecting its DSY target population and implementing actual DSY reforms.

Table 1 shows one example from Marion County, IN of how to display essential baseline DSY prevalence and demographic data or pre-reform court data:

The initial prevalence data indicated in Table 1 reflect that there were a substantial number (174) of dually involved youth (i.e., youth referred for delinquency and/or status offense referrals who also had open child welfare court cases) and also many more youth (634) with only prior child welfare cases. Based on court data alone, this jurisdiction can begin to seriously weigh its DSY target population options.

Jurisdictions that compile their initial data scans should also include basic narrative descriptions of their data for program planning and other reasons (e.g., to inform important stakeholders about their data and what it may mean for evolving DSY reforms). For example, a simple bulleted description of the data in Table 1 might read as follows:

As presented in Table 1, the initial scan of calendar year 2014 prevalence data indicates the following preliminary findings:

- There were a substantial number (174) of dually involved youth (i.e., youth referred for delinquency and/or status offense referrals who also had open child welfare court cases);

- There were many more dual status youth (634) in the data scan who only had prior child welfare cases;

- A substantial proportion (47%) of the DSY youth identified in the 2014 scan are female – this finding is consistent with national DSY research; and,

- The data indicate that there are a substantial number of younger DSY youth in the possible target population - over one-third of the cases (37%) experienced their first delinquency or status offense referrals when they were under age 14 (previous research indicates that this is a group that may be at higher risk of subsequent referrals compared to youth first referred at older ages).

Table 1 displays youth-based counts; that is, unduplicated counts of juveniles. This is a very important aspect for determining prevalence levels as well as tracking youth over time. Other types of counts (e.g., cases, referrals, etc.), while still relevant, can often include the same juveniles counted more than once. At a minimum, all DSY sites should have the capabilities to establish and track unduplicated youth-based data.

Based on court data alone, Marion County is able to initiate important discussions about its DSY target population options and move forward with development and implementation of an action strategy while continuing supplementary data collection efforts that may include cross-system case matching.

Key principle #2:

Recognize the differences between static data elements that do not change over time versus dynamic data elements/variables that do change over time.

While the distinction between static and dynamic data elements may seem rudimentary, it is critical for advancing data capabilities and ongoing tracking of cases, performance indicators, and outcome measures, particularly as these may relate to the changing variable of "age."

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A DSY program should only have to capture date of birth once (although DOB discrepancies do occur) in order to track the age variable over time. The ability to easily and automatically track age using DOB produces a *dynamic* variable since age changes over time in contrast to single point in time calculations of age. Collecting a child's DOB is easier than having to manually calculate age (e.g., at the point of intake or at the point when one's data are being assembled through some type of manual compilation or report).

Even the most basic database software can calculate age, age ranges, average age, etc. for any selected time period. Of the four basic demographic data elements shown, age is the only variable that needs to be calculated (e.g., for displaying age ranges). The other static demographic variables (race, ethnicity, gender) are straightforward counts that for individual youth do not change over time.

Of course, age is not the only essential data element that requires dates. For a DSY case, a program manager may want dates such as the 1st arrest or referral, when youth became dual status, or the date a youth entered a DSY program. Each site has to make these determinations. For data entry personnel, it should be easier to enter dates and to have their computers/software make the calculations. Strengthening these capabilities will also add flexibility that allows use of key data elements, like DOB, for a broader range of important data reports.

The next example takes a look at one of the key aspects of DSY cases; that dual status youth tend to be referred for delinquent acts at younger ages than youth who do not have cross-system involvement. This unfortunate tendency has been confirmed in repeated DSY-related research, and at least some DSY initiative sites have used these data, along with the process mapping process called for in the *Guidebook for Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare System Coordination and Integration*, to help them determine when they want their DSY interventions to occur (e.g., at the point of first referrals, at younger ages, etc.) and what types of changes in practices should be considered.[4]

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4 Halemba, G. & Siegel, G. Doorways to Delinquency: Multi-System Involvement of Delinquent Youth in King County. Models For Change. National Center for Juvenile Justice. 2011. Available at www.ncjj.org (go to publications).

Data question example #2: At what ages are youth becoming dually involved? Are they receiving their first delinquency referrals earlier than youth who are not dually involved?
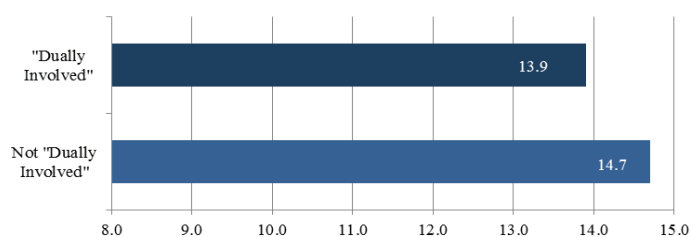

FIGURE 1

"Dually Involved" Youth Are Referred Earlier

Age at 1st delinquency referral for "Dually Involved" youth is – on average – 1 year earlier
- "Dually Involved" youth: Average age at 1st delinquency referral = 13.9 years of age
- Not "Dually Involved" youth: Average age at 1st delinquency referral = 14.7 years of age

Average Age at First Delinquency Referral

Source: Fulton County Juvenile Court. June 29, 2015. Analysis of data extracted from Jcats for youth with active court involvement as of May 8, 2015 (pre-DSY reform).

The summary data in Figure 1 show additional important age related information. Using DOB, along with court data elements related to the case subcategories of open dependency/court cases, prior dependency/court cases, and no prior or open dependency/court cases, average age at first delinquency referral has also been calculated for dually involved youth. Once more, a jurisdiction has essential summary data that can help it make more informed decisions about its DSY target population and about when new practices should take place.

Key principle #3: Capture individual events for the data category/data question – compilation of accurate individual events will enable you to better organize your data.

Data question example #3: How many DSY youth are in congregate out-of-home placements, how long have they been in those placements, and what are their statuses?

Research has shown that dual status youth experience substantially higher rates of out-of-home placements (e.g., foster homes, congregate care), more frequent placement changes and disruptions, and higher overall placement related costs than non-DSY cases.[5] As a result, many DSY sites are

5   Halemba, G. Placement and Delinquency Trajectories of Youth with Active Juvenile Court Dependency Cases. National Center for Juvenile Justice. Pittsburgh, PA. 2015.

exploring options for accurately and more actively tracking placement events and attempting to identify changes in practices that will positively affect placement experiences and trajectories.

The next example focuses on out of home placements though similar report formats could be used for tracking any type of intervention, program component, or service interventions. As emphasized in Key Principle #3, the first consideration involves capturing as many individual placement events as possible while not limiting placement data to a single point-in-time cumulative count.

As indicated, in some sites with more sophisticated data systems and data analysis capabilities, it may be possible to take individual youth placement information (e.g., data that are entered and compiled in individual electronic case files or records over the life of a case) from separate databases and have that information pulled into summary placement reports. However, that is not the circumstance in most jurisdictions where separate non-integrated child welfare and juvenile justice case management systems and databases are the rule.

With the focus on fairly basic examples, the first out-of-home placement table shown will reflect a "stand alone" listing that could easily be compiled and actively maintained using Excel. It uses mock examples of individual youth, sorted in a way that those needing the most attention appear at the top of the list. This timely attention could be due to their lengths of time in placement, upcoming placement review, impending permanency goal that needs to be met, or for other reasons. There could be multiple reports for this factor, but minimally the report displayed would enable a program manager to see the number of youth in out-of-home placements at any particular time. The report could also track discrete events for individual cases that have an action pending or that may relate to local performance goals. Each jurisdiction will need to figure out what those goals might be and will need to have the data to populate the report. The jurisdiction will need to plan for sufficient time to enter and maintain the data as well.

As with prior examples, the initial focus needs to be on the most essential or prioritized data elements. Over time, a jurisdiction with automated capabilities can add additional data or supplemental information and/or reports. These enhancements may include more detailed information about frequencies of placement disruptions and reasons why placement disruptions occur, with such information being drawn from an individual youth's electronic case record to help feed additional reports.

Initially, however, essential placement data may include the name of every youth placed out-of-home, key case and

demographic data, the name of the assigned probation officers and social workers, the dates of placement, the number of days in placement (with the list showing who has been in placement the longest first) and some notes about the status of placement (e.g, detention, upcoming hearings, wait lists, AWOL, etc.). In effect, this report should not only provide an up-to-date listing of who is in out-of-home placement and where, but also some important indications of what is happening with those cases.

Unlike the previous table and chart that were able to rely initially on court data and that did not necessarily require acquisition of data from multiple agencies, some of the

examples shown in this and subsequent sections may require sharing of information (either electronically or manually) between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Regardless, the important point to keep in mind here is that *the examples shown involve or promote more active/dynamic data approaches*.

Table 2 offers one very basic example of how this might look (software like Excel could automatically calculate the "days in" totals). The cells highlighted in yellow and red serve as alerts that cue a program manager and/or someone managing a particular case that something important is going on and needs attention.

TABLE 2							
Youth in congregate out of home placements on 10/01/15 (mock data)							
Program	**Juv/ID**	**DOB**	**Probation Officer**	**Social Worker**	**Date Placed**	**Days in**	**Notes**
Open Cases (as of today)							
Group Home	JT		AB	MN	1/01/14	345	Placement review hearing 10/01/15
	JH		AB	MN	9/25/15	5	AWOL 9/29/15 Detained 9/30/15
Residential Treatment Center	LJ		CD	OP	1/01/15	180	Wait list – Independent Living (ILP)
	GS		CD	OP	9/01/15	1	AWOL
Shelter	KH		AB	MN	9/25/15	5	Wait list – GH
Closed Cases (previous month)							
					Original date placed	**Date closed**	**Released to (use codes)**
Group Home	GH		AB	MN	8/15/14	9/15/15	1 – ILP
Residential Treatment Center	SD		CD	OP	3/10/15	9/10/15	3 – Relatives
Shelter	S		AB	MN	9/22/15	9/29/15	2 – Parents

For performance tracking purposes, Table 2 also displays closed cases for the previous month. For the applicable cells (e.g., the *Released To* cells in the far bottom right hand column under

Closed cases), one might assign specific data codes to different statuses so that these can be easily and dynamically tracked by the computer/software, by placement facility, over time.

Key principle #4: Create up-to-date reports that allow you as a program manager to be alerted about key program activities and performance indicators, and that can help you make more informed and timely program adjustments. That is, when thinking about the types of data reports you want, be sure to consider how those reports can be "used" in proactive and routine ways, to track performance and inform possible program changes.

Research has reinforced the need for more timely responses in DSY (and other) cases[6]. This is particularly important at the "front end" of the DSY case identification and case processing decision points. More timely DSY case identification, along with efforts to achieve greater cooperation and coordination across systems without adversely affecting due process rights, have prompted a number of DSY sites to consider new and expedited case planning approaches. Ultimately, these approaches might also result in more prompt delivery of an expanded and more effective range of services for DSY and their families.

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6   A number of publications emphasize the importance of timely response in delinquency and dependency matters. For example, see:

Siegel, G. & Halemba, G. The Importance of Timely Case Processing in Non-Detained Juvenile Delinquency Cases. Technical Assistance to the Juvenile Court: Special Project Bulletin. NCJJ & OJJDP.   July 2006.

Siegel, G. & Halemba, G. Promising Practices in the Diversion of Juvenile Domestic Violence Cases. NCJJ. March 2015.

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Juvenile Delinquency Guidelines: Improving Court Practice in Juvenile Delinquency Cases. NCJFCJ. Reno: Spring 2005.

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Resource Guidelines: Improving Court Practice in Child Abuse & Neglect Cases. NCJFCJ. Reno: Spring 1995.

From an initial data perspective, there are a number of prioritized data elements clearly related to this program option. In the example shown below, the DSY initiative has set a goal of providing more timely multi-agency case planning meetings for each DSY-identified case.

As illustrated, a useful report displays how many new Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings (MDTs) occurred, dates the MDTs were scheduled and convened, and pertinent notes delineating follow up goals and tasks. Once again, the use of individual case level information provides some flexibility to work with the data versus simply compiling a gross count of how many meetings may have been held at the end of a single time period.

In this example, this jurisdiction set the following performance goals:

- Identify DSY cases immediately upon receipt of delinquent referral (physical or paper);
- Schedule Multi-Agency Case Planning meetings within 72 hours of DSY target population confirmation; and,
- Hold case planning meetings within two weeks of being scheduled.

In order to initially monitor these performance goals, this site developed a simple table that would allow the DSY program manager to track these events, as shown in Table 3:

TABLE 3					
Multi-Agency Case Planning Meetings – Performance Tracking Report (Mock Data)					
Juv/ID	Referral Date	Date Dual Status Confirmed	Meeting Date Scheduled	Date Meeting Held	Notes
JT	8/3	8/3	8/3	8/7	Stable in foster home.
JH	8/4	8/5	8/7	8/20	Intake not aware of new protocol for identifying DSY.
GS	8/5	8/5	8/10	8/27	Key staff on vacation.

A program manager in this example would want to focus on those cases that fall outside the target goal dates (highlighted in yellow or red) to determine why these are happening and what can be done about it. In this instance, the manager would want some basic information and the capability of automatically generating individual case "profiles" for each of these cases. This would allow the manager to follow up with assigned staff to determine what happened in each case and what actions will be taken. This gives managers or supervisors a way to actively manage key program activities and key performance indicators.

In addition, the above tracking report could easily be converted, with Excel or other software, into a graphic format that would display summary performance data. For example, a bar chart could be created to indicate the percentage of cases during a selected time period that meet or do not meet performance goals. In this instance, a number of graphic displays could be compiled including those related to the dates of identifying DSY cases, scheduling of the multi-agency planning meetings, and actual convening of the meetings.

Eventually, a program manager may want to more proactively monitor this program component and not wait until youth slated for DSY case planning meetings have already passed their target dates. This could lead to the development of another report that both alerts the program manager ahead of time that certain kids are approaching deadlines and that others have just passed their deadlines.

As suggested earlier, it is not only the content of these reports that need to be considered, but also *how these data and reports can be used*. More specifically, both the out-of-home placement and multi-agency case planning report examples contain essential data that allow jurisdictions to more actively track key performance measures.

SUMMARY

This article presents several important tips a jurisdiction should take into consideration when beginning efforts to collect and use data effectively. It also highlights four key principles underlying *how* a jurisdiction can begin to identify the basic/essential data elements needed to answer its prioritized data questions; it presents a small number of basic examples of *how* those data can be organized, displayed and used before DSY practice reforms are implemented and/or after changes are put in place; and it emphasizes how important it is for jurisdictions undergoing DSY or other system improvement efforts to make achievable data improvements top priorities as they aspire to achieve more active "real-time" data and case tracking capabilities.

Future data-related articles will continue to strive to offer the DSY sites, and others, practical guidance and information for achieving their data improvement goals including how to display and track critical performance and outcome data.

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About the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice

The Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice, led by Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps, provides consultation, technical assistance, and training to enhance the performance of youth-serving systems and improve outcomes for youth and families touched by the juvenile justice system. The services and resources delivered by the RFK National Resource Center address: (1) youth with prior or current involvement in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, known as dual status youth, (2) the review and improvement of juvenile probation systems, and (3) the use of a model framework to address the state and national laws and policies governing the exchange and sharing of data, information, and records for youth and families.

For additional information, please visit www.rfknrcjj.org.