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The Role of Training in System Change

Training to Support Innovation

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The term "innovation" is often used within the business or corporate context, but innovation has an important function within youth and family serving systems as well. As defined by Peter Drucker, renowned management expert, innovation is "the effort to create purposeful, focused change in an enterprise's economic or social potential." Essentially, innovation is making a commitment to explore how to produce better results in your endeavors. For those engaged in addressing social issues such as ensuring the safety of children and the safety of communities, innovation is a necessity as well as a particularly rewarding aspect of the work.

Drucker notes that "innovation requires knowledge, ingenuity, and above all else, focus." Training provides an opportunity to gain the knowledge, invite the ingenuity, and require the focus necessary to drive innovation in the juvenile justice and child welfare fields. With constantly developing research on topics such as adolescent brain development, effective mental health treatments, and strategies to reduce recidivism, training ensures that innovation is based on relevant and current knowledge and information. Once training participants have the requisite knowledge, trainers can guide participants in sharing their insights and identifying opportunities for innovation. This creative exploration taps into each individual's ingenuity, providing the chance to be inventive and imaginative, inspiring an interest in guiding and embracing change.

Finally, training can provide the focus necessary for innovation. Where a webinar or conference workshop on a reform topic can spark an interest, dedicating several hours or up to two days to a training that culminates in the development of strategic goals and a long-term work plan for achieving those goals can produce positive action and results. Investing time in building a sense of purpose, creating a vision of what can be achieved, and securing sincere commitment from all involved is critical, and can be done effectively through well-facilitated training. Ultimately, as noted by Drucker, "If diligence, persistence, and commitment are lacking, talent, ingenuity, and knowledge are of no avail."

It may seem difficult to muster the energy, resources, and time necessary to experiment with new ideas when established daily activities and responsibilities already demand a full-time effort. However, an investment in innovation can lead to realizing efficiencies in one's work and ensuring that human and fiscal resources are deployed most effectively. Engaging in training to support such innovation is an important part of achieving meaningful results within youth and family serving systems.

REFERENCE: Drucker, P. (2002) The Discipline of Innovation, *Harvard Business Review* 80(8): 95-100, available at <https://hbr.org/2002/08/the-discipline-of-innovation>.

What We Offer

The RFK National Resource Center offers a variety of [on-site training](#) opportunities addressing critical topics in juvenile justice. Because one of the strongest principles of effective transformation is collaboration within a jurisdiction, we bring subject matter

experts and experienced facilitators to you, ensuring that all vital leaders, staff, and stakeholders have the opportunity to benefit from the 1.5 or 2-day training. Each curriculum is based on well-established frameworks for reform that have been applied in numerous jurisdictions throughout the nation, while incorporating current research and emerging best practices. Our trainers work with you to identify your jurisdiction's unique goals and the training is then tailored to meet those goals. Our approach balances traditional presentation with dynamic discussions and facilitated activities aimed at initiating the process of transformation. As a result, participants conclude the training well-informed and poised to take action immediately.

Current programs offered through our Training Institute include:

- **Dual Status Youth: Improving Outcomes for Youth Involved in Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice** ([learn more](#))
- **Dual Status Youth: Implementing and Sustaining Reforms** ([learn more](#))
- **Advancing Best Practices in Youth Justice Seminar** ([learn more](#))
- **Probation System Review Training** ([learn more](#))
- **Information Sharing in Youth and Family Serving Systems** ([learn more](#))

"Collaboration is not about gluing together existing egos. It's about the ideas that never existed until after everyone entered the room."

- Anonymous

From the Field



In 2017, the RFK National Resource Center was pleased to have the opportunity to conduct a training on Dual Status Youth in Polk County, Iowa. Leaders and staff from the Juvenile Court, Child Welfare, and Probation, and other organizations, spent two days engaged in discussion and activities exploring strategies for improving outcomes for the youth they have in common. At the conclusion of the training, the group developed a set of action steps to support an ongoing commitment to using what they learned and effecting change in their systems.

Almost a year after the training, staff in Polk County continue to collaborate by holding regular "Dual Status Staffings" and their young clients are benefiting from their efforts. We at RFK are extremely gratified to see the progress and impact in Polk County. Here is an example shared by Judge Colin Witt of two staff who were recently acknowledged for the excellent work they have done as a team:

Juvenile Court Officer Nicky Davis and Social Worker II Anna Sposeto were presented with the Monthly Award for Polk County's Dual Status Project for excellence in continuing collaboration and teamwork on a very challenging dual status case. They were each awarded a Minion figure (lifting weights) as a small token of thanks / acknowledgement for the heavy lifting they have done together.

The dual status child they have been serving together struggled for a long time in his adoptive home, which he had been in since age 4. He struggled with destructive behaviors, had several mental health diagnoses, and was a high risk for self-harm both in the community and in group care placement. He presented as a risk in his family home. His family had literally reached the end. The child went to an out of home placement and struggled in group care. Due to out of control behaviors and out of county police reports, Juvenile Court Services got involved.

Thanks to thoughtful case planning, trauma informed care, collaboration, resources of both systems, time of caring professionals, dedication, open mindedness, humility, teamwork,

perseverance, perseverance, and no one saying it was the other system or worker that needed to "solve" the child or the family's problems, we have had wonderful improvements in child well-being and safety and family possibilities in the community. The child's assaultive and destructive behaviors have been greatly reduced. The child's level of care has been reduced. The child is going home with the adoptive parents and is going to be starting in public school with the appropriate supports and accountability services. We hope to be able to successfully close the case this year with the right supports in place, with no delinquency record for this child, and with the family having what they need to fully support this wonderful young person with such a bright future.

The story isn't over. But it is so much better and so much more hopeful because of Anna and Nicky. They have helped each other. They have supported each other. They supported this child through difficult waters and much turbulence. They have met the unique needs of the child. They haven't let this child languish in group care; they haven't given up hope. They worked hard to share information and work with the family. Thank you both, keep it up.

Testimonials

The Dual Status Youth Training is a must for anyone seeking to improve their systems of care and support for youth who are involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice system. You will walk away from the training renewed!

- Summit County, Ohio Training Participant

It was the best training I've ever attended. So much work was accomplished and the trainers were inspirational.

- Tulsa County, Oklahoma Training Participant

The staff from the RFK National Resource Center methodically led our local juvenile justice stakeholders through an exploration of our existing resources, data and practices and provided us with a vision and pathway for meaningful reform in our work.

- Augusta County, Virginia Training Participant

What Makes a Good Training?

In 2016, the RFK National Resource Center asked its [Practice Networks](#), made up of experienced child welfare and juvenile justice practitioners and leaders, what makes an effective training for juvenile justice and/or child welfare professionals. At the RFK National Resource Center, we have designed our [Training Institute](#) to reflect these ideas. Here is what they said:

- Make the material relatable. Be sure to ask participants to consider their actual clients as information is presented. The goal is to make research and best practice practical in the context of everyday work.
- Use case examples to both explain and apply concepts. Training is most effective when participants have the opportunity to practice what they learn.
- Focus on what will be different for participants when the training is over. How will the time spent in this training make a true impact in their work and the experience of youth, families, and their communities?
- When training across systems, remember that this is an opportunity to start building relationships. Provide opportunities for participants to get to know one another and begin to build familiarity and trust.

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