



# Supreme Court

STATE OF ARIZONA  
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

Ruth V. McGregor  
Chief Justice

David K. Byers  
Administrative Director  
of the Courts

November 27, 2007

Ms. Debra K. Davenport, Auditor General  
Office of the Auditor General  
2910 N. 44<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 410  
Phoenix, Arizona 85018

Dear Ms. Davenport,

Enclosed you will find our response to the recommendations in your juvenile treatment audit report.

The auditors recommendations to strengthen the risk and needs assessment process and to improve case planning align well with efforts already underway by the AOC and the local juvenile courts. Most recently, Columbia University re-validated the current risk assessment instrument. In addition, the AOC is working with the local juvenile courts to revamp the needs assessment instrument to identify and target case planning, supervision, and treatment interventions for those youth who are most at risk of re-offending. Furthermore, the AOC has partnered with the Vanderbilt University Center for Evaluation and Research Methodology to incorporate evidence-based practices into the delivery of treatment services with the goal of reducing juvenile recidivism.

We are also pleased the auditors have concluded the AOC has established a thorough process to contract with treatment service vendors, although we recognize there is still room for improvement in the monitoring of vendors. Over the years, AOC has strived to maintain a cost effective balance between the need to appropriately monitor vendors and the overarching goal of providing effective treatment services to youth.

We appreciate the audit work and the cooperation and professionalism of your staff.

David K. Byers, Administrative Director  
Administrative Office of the Courts

Enclosure

**Administrative Office of the Courts  
Juvenile Treatment Services Audit  
Response to Auditor General Recommendations**

**Finding 1**

1. The AOC should seek the Arizona Judicial Council's direction regarding the need to develop and implement policies and procedures regarding the risk and strengths/protective factors assessments, case planning, and monitoring the delivery of treatment services to juveniles, as necessary.

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

2. If the Arizona Judicial Council approves the need to develop and implement policies and procedures, the AOC should work with the county juvenile courts to develop policies and procedures regarding the completion of the risk assessment. These policies and procedures should:
  - a. Prescribe the time frame for completing this assessment and allow for instances to potentially complete one risk assessment if multiple referrals occur within a specified time frame;
  - b. Recommend how a juvenile's risk assessment should be used to determine an appropriate level of supervision for juveniles on probation and if the juvenile should receive more aggressive treatment services; and
  - c. Determine whether the juvenile should receive needs and/or strengths/protective factors assessments based on the juvenile's risk assessment.

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

3. The AOC should continue its efforts to evaluate and revise its needs assessment to better meet best practices and to provide a useful, easy tool for probation officers.

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

4. If the Arizona Judicial Council approves the need to evaluate the approach for assessing strengths/protective factors, the AOC should work with the county juvenile courts to ensure this approach is consistent with best practices and establish policy requiring the completion of a strengths/protective factors assessment.

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

5. If the Arizona Judicial Council approves the need to develop and implement policies and procedures guiding the creation of case plans for juveniles, the AOC should work with the county juvenile courts to develop and implement such policies and procedures for case plans which are consistent with best practices. These policies and procedures should require that case plans:

- a. Address prioritized needs as identified in the risk and needs assessments;
- b. Include action steps for reaching defined goals and objectives;
- c. Use target dates for action steps, goals and objectives, and completion of services; and
- d. Receive regular supervisory review.

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

6. If the Arizona Judicial Council approves the need to define an appropriate time frame for completing a case plan, the AOC should work with the county juvenile courts to develop an appropriate case plan time frame.

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

7. If the Arizona Judicial Council approves the need to develop policies and procedures regarding monitoring delivery of treatment services to juveniles, the AOC should work with the county juvenile courts to establish policies and procedures that:

- a. Direct juvenile probation officers to monitor the delivery of treatment services received by juveniles, regardless of the funding source, to help ensure treatment services are addressing a juvenile's needs; and
- b. Require county juvenile courts to periodically reassess juvenile's risk and needs, and adjust case plans as needed.

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

8. Once the various policies and procedures recommended in this audit report are developed, the AOC should submit these policies and procedures to the Arizona Judicial Council for its review and approval.

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

9. The AOC should conduct a sufficient level of analysis during its county juvenile court Operational Reviews to determine whether assessments are conducted within the required time frames. It should also expand the reviews to include a review of county compliance with the additional policies, procedures, and practices recommended in this report once they have been implemented.

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

## **Finding 2**

1. The AOC should fully implement its plan to improve its self audit process by requesting and reviewing a sample of case files with completed vendor forms to ensure vendor contract compliance.

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation is being implemented.

2. The AOC should modify its vendor sampling approach to conduct annual monitoring site visits for a sample of its smaller vendors.

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

3. The AOC should finalize, implement, and follow its policies for the timely review and approval of vendor corrective action plans.

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

**SUPERIOR COURT • JUVENILE PROBATION DEPARTMENT**  
**Maricopa County**

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**Carol L Boone– Chief Juvenile Probation Officer**

November 26, 2007

Debbie Davenport, Auditor General  
Office of the Auditor General  
2910 N 44<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 410  
Phoenix, Arizona 85018

Dear Ms. Davenport,

The Executive Management and Treatment Management teams have reviewed the performance audit report, dated November 21, 2007, in reference to Juvenile Treatment Programs in Maricopa County. This performance audit and objective assessment of how we are addressing the needs of juveniles is very timely. The Maricopa County Juvenile Probation Department (MCJPD) is currently updating and developing operating policies and procedures. Your findings and recommendations will be used to improve case management and the delivery and monitoring of treatment services to youth and families.

As the department moves forward, MCJPD will actively participate and collaborate with the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and other County Probation Departments to improve juvenile treatment programs and services. The Executive Management Team has targeted process improvement using best practices as a priority in working with juveniles in the system.

There are three major areas identified in the performance audit that the department will focus on as a result of your findings and recommendations. These areas are; risk and needs assessment, case planning and monitoring treatment services.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you and your team for the insightful information provided and the professional conduct displayed throughout the entire process of this audit. The final report will help the department thoroughly review strengths and areas where we have opportunities for improvement. The MCJPD is looking forward to working with the AOC to update, develop and implement policies and procedures that will help us become a model Juvenile Probation Department.

Sincerely,

Carol Boone  
Chief Juvenile Probation Officer

## **1. Risk Assessment**

The Administrative Office of the Court (AOC) developed a Risk/Needs tool for all counties in the State of Arizona to utilize, as directed in A.R.S. 8-246. The current assessment tool is not utilized effectively by probation officers. The AOC recently established a workgroup to improve the risk / needs assessment process and make it a functional and easy to use tool that will promote consistent use by probation officers. The Maricopa County Juvenile Probation Department (MCJPD) will continue to work with the AOC and other participating counties to implement a new assessment tool.

- **Policy and Procedure Development**

MCJPD is working to revise and amend current policies and procedures. The risk assessment process is one such policy being updated. The implementation of such a revised policy will improve the completion rate of required assessments, and to establish timelines for reassessments as an ongoing case management process.

- **Disposition recommendations**

The current risk/needs assessment does not facilitate matching the right youth with a treatment program. It is the goal AOC needs workgroup to make the revised assessment tool one that is a useful tool to assist in making appropriate disposition recommendations to the Court.

- **Timelines**

MCJPD will ensure probation staff are educated as to the timeframe required when completing risk and needs assessments. Policy and procedure will dictate assessments shall be completed prior to disposition in order to facilitate using the information when making treatment and supervision recommendations to the Court.

## **2. Case Plan Development**

A case plan is a treatment tool that will assist the probation officer in monitoring the progress of treatment. The AOC is committed to creating an assessment tool that will create a treatment plan based on assessment results. This was an original goal of the previous risk / needs assessment, and will be a benefit of a revised tool.

- **Best Practice**

Information will be taken from the risk / needs assessment to ensure it conforms to Best Practice criterion including the following: clear, specific goals, meaningful objectives, details that outline the process for accomplishing goals and realistic timeframes for completion of identified goals. This expectation will

be addressed in policy and procedure revision, which is being updated by MCJPD.

- Timelines

Case plans are to be created within 45 days of a child being placed on probation. This expectation is not new, but will be monitored for compliance in the future. MCJPD believes the development of an assessment tool that incorporates a case plan feature will assist officers in meeting this goal.

- Review of Case Plans

Best Practice has determined that case planning should be a dynamic process, in order to be meaningful. Case plans will be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure youth are working toward goals. Revised policy will require case plans to be used as a living document.

### **3. Monitoring of Services**

- Documentation of Progress

MCJPD will work with the AOC to ensure the documentation of progress toward treatment goals. It is important contracted providers provide progress reports to probation officer that outline the juvenile's movement toward treatment objectives. The probation officer may also conduct reassessments of a juvenile's risk to determine his/her progress towards goals. This information will be kept in the file and shared with the Court as required. MCJPD will establish an internal process to monitor compliance and performance while adjusting treatment services based on the juvenile's progress.

- Monitoring of Non-AOC funded Programs

MCJPD will work closely with Magellan liaisons and clinical leadership with Magellan to streamline service delivery. Through collaboration under the leadership of the Presiding Juvenile Court Judge, a process is being developed to create a rapid response to high-risk and high-need juveniles in detention.

As the MCJPD implement change and process improvements, we will continue to use such resources as the National Center for Juvenile Justice *Desktop Guide to Good Juvenile Probation Practice*, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges *Graduated Sanctions for Juvenile Offenders: A Program Model and Planning Guide*, as well as other Best Practice/Evidence-Based models of intervention.

# SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF ARIZONA

## Pima County Juvenile Court

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**Rik Schmidt**

Director of Juvenile Court Services

**Jesus Diaz**

Deputy Director of Juvenile Court Services

An Organization committed to:

\*Community Protection

\*Restoring Victims

\* Successful Youth and Families

November 29, 2007

Debbie Davenport

Auditor General

2910 North 44<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 410

Phoenix, Arizona 85018

Dear Ms. Davenport:

Pima County Juvenile Court administration found the audit report of the Supreme Court's juvenile treatment programs to be generally informative and accurate. We appreciate the audit team's willingness to incorporate many of our suggestions and recommended changes within the final audit report.

We remain committed to providing effective treatment services to the youth of Pima County and, consequently, audit findings and recommendations that will assist in strengthening these services will be seriously considered for implementation. However, given that there are no specific findings or recommendations directed at our juvenile court, we are not primarily responsible for responding to those identified within the audit document. The Administrative office of the Courts (AOC) has that responsibility, and we will support the AOC's efforts to respond effectively.

Some of the core elements of the report suggest there should be statewide solutions that are developed in response to the Findings. However, I would point out that the AOC is not in a position to necessarily create the broad responses (solutions) at a statewide level versus working with court jurisdictions at the individual county level for solutions unique to their situations. I would caution that any substantive statewide changes that AOC develops will require the support and agreement of the local jurisdictions if they are to be fully and effectively implemented. Therefore, I hope the recommendations to AOC are realistic and reflect an understanding of these process requirements.

We are encouraged by several activities already underway at the statewide level that are consistent with improving treatment services. Specifically, the Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP) process should result in a best practices model that is critical to effective and efficient use of resources. However, SPEP will require fidelity to the specific treatment model that may be used, and we anticipate the end result will be the need for more treatment funds. From our perspective, the final audit



Debbie Davenport  
November 29, 2007  
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report should help articulate the need for a substantially different approach to providing treatment services to youth. The dosage and frequency of treatment must be sufficient to truly be considered a best practice that will ultimately result in the best opportunity for improving a youth's functioning and decreasing risk to the public. Also, the development of an effective needs assessment instrument through the work of the current AOC committee is very promising. We support in principle many of the statements in the audit report pertaining to developing effective statewide instruments, and the needs assessment is one example that is already underway.

We appreciate the efforts of the audit team in identifying substantive statewide issues and our opportunity to provide comment regarding the report. We look forward to issuance of the final document on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007, and more importantly, the collaborative statewide effort to respond to the findings and recommendations in a manner that will ensure effective treatment for Arizona's youth.

Sincerely,

Rik Schmidt  
Director of Juvenile Court Services

RS/bcs

Cc: Patricia Escher, Presiding Judge