

INCREASING STATE ADVISORY GROUP EFFECTIVENESS:

Building Capacity for State Leadership



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Table of Contents

Project Overview	4
Methodology	5
Principles of SAG Effectiveness	6
Principle I.....	6
Findings.....	6
Recommendations.....	7
Principle II.....	8
Findings.....	8
Recommendations.....	11
Principle III.....	12
Findings.....	12
Recommendations.....	15
Principle IV.....	16
Findings.....	16
Recommendations.....	18
Principle V.....	19
Findings.....	19
Recommendations.....	21
Conclusion and Next Steps	21
Appendix A – An External Partner’s Ideal SAG	23
Appendix B – The Five Principles and Related Questions	24

Project Overview

In 2013, the National Research Council published *Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach*, a report that signaled what could be a sea change in juvenile justice policy and practice. Among other things, the report posited that the current juvenile justice system's reliance on "containment, confinement and control," which "removes youth from their families, peer groups, and neighborhoods," is in many ways at odds with what the science shows will work best with youth at risk for, or involved with, the juvenile justice system. While many in the field viewed the report as validation of what they have long known to be true—that "kids are different"—like much of the emerging knowledge in juvenile justice, it was not intended to, nor did it, provide actionable and implementable steps for change. The report was followed, in 2014, by *Implementing Juvenile Justice Reform: The Federal Role*, a set of recommendations for action for various system stakeholders to put the developmental approach to juvenile justice into practice.

As is appropriate in any comprehensive discussion of juvenile justice policy and practice, the report included some focus on the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) and its four core protections. Even more than 40 years since its original passage, this federal law remains the standard-bearer for how young people who come into contact with the justice system ought to be treated. Among the recommendations in the National Research Council report, was some discussion of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, national organizations, and various federal initiatives. The report also considered the role of State Advisory Groups (SAGs). SAGs are governor-appointed bodies at the state-level that administer funds appropriated under the JJDP and ensure states' compliance with the four core protections. As such, it is self-evident that they would have an essential role to play in any implementation of juvenile justice reform.

Though certainly not the *only* impetus for a renewed focus on State Advisory Groups, the National Research Council reports help elevate the urgency of building SAG capacity to be reform leaders and capable stewards of juvenile justice resources. Despite this essential role, SAGs have in recent years faced many challenges, including national inattention to juvenile justice, fluctuations in state level leadership, and a paucity of resources.

Nevertheless, many SAGs have emerged as reform leaders in their states and nationally, managing to champion and advance cutting-edge approaches to juvenile justice, funded by a mix of federal and state dollars and private philanthropic investment. However, there has never been a full-scale analysis of the characteristics of these "high-performing" State Advisory Groups, including a consideration of the factors that contribute to their success and those which remain challenges. Likewise, there has never been an in-depth examination of other SAGs, which have been relatively slow to adopt a leadership role in juvenile justice in their states and beyond.

Through this report, based on a process of analyzing and engaging SAGs, their leadership and the context in which they operate, the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ), in partnership with The Tow Foundation and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Center for Coordinated Assistance to the States (CCAS), hopes to identify and gauge those factors that contribute to SAG effectiveness on a state-by-state basis. The ultimate goal is not only to develop dynamic metrics to measure the SAGs capacity, but also to help bolster their ability to become champions for evidence-based and developmentally-appropriate juvenile justice policy and practice.

Methodology

The following findings and recommendations are based on interviews that the Coalition for Juvenile Justice conducted over the course of five months with 34 SAGs and Juvenile Justice Advisory Groups (JJAGs).¹ Interviews were conducted in the spring and summer of 2015. All 56 states and territories were offered the opportunity to participate, with 90 percent of the states in CJJ's Midwest Region responding, 69 percent of states in the Northeast Region responding, 61 percent of the states in the Southern Region responding, and 37 percent of states in the Western Region responding.

Interviews were conducted with SAG Chairs whenever possible, though proxies were used in some rare instances.

Each participant in this project was asked a series of questions based on the Five Principles of SAG Effectiveness. These Principles were developed by CJJ's staff, with feedback and input provided by the organization's Executive Board, which is comprised of SAG members, SAG Chairs, and juvenile justice stakeholders with many decades of leadership in juvenile justice, even predating the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. Questions were intended to gauge where SAGs are now and to determine areas of growth they may have in relation to each of these principles. A total of 106 possible questions were used, though not all SAGs were asked each question (Appendix B contains a sample list of these questions, along with the Five Principles).

As part of this project, CJJ also conducted two focus groups with Juvenile Justice Specialists, state employees who work with the SAGs. These focus groups included representatives from seven states. CJJ then convened a focus group that consisted of twenty national organizations and five SAGs. CJJ also attempted to survey all members of the National Juvenile Justice Network (NJJN), a coalition of state-based reform and advocacy organizations. The goal was to assess how these advocacy groups view SAGs and their effectiveness. Thirty-two percent of NJJN members participated in the surveys.

Limitations of this Report

This report and its findings are by no means an empirical or scientific measure of SAG effectiveness but rather, a reflection of the SAGs' self-assessments and the assessments of those with whom they work in the field. The findings are based on those assessments. The recommendations in this report were crafted by staff of the Coalition for Juvenile Justice in consultation with CJJ membership, the Juvenile Justice Specialists, and other thought-leaders and stakeholders most knowledgeable about the history, operational realities, and aspirations of the SAGs.

¹ For the remainder of the document "SAG" will be used to identify both State Advisory Groups and Juvenile Justice Advisory Groups.

Principles of SAG Effectiveness

Principle I. Compliance with the Core Requirements

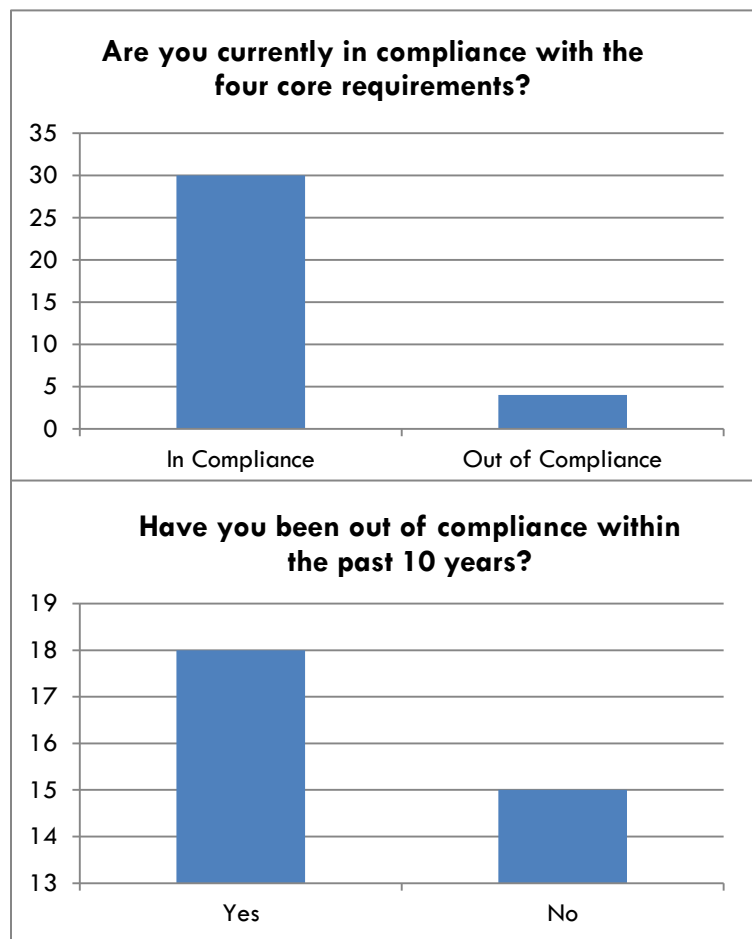
One of the SAGs' primary roles is ensuring that their state complies with the JJDP Act and the core protections that it provides for system-involved youth. Effective SAGs ensure that the federal resources allocated to their state are used in manner that will support and promote practices and policies consistent with the goals of the JJDP Act to prevent delinquency and implement appropriate interventions. Further, when a problem arises, SAGs are charged with taking action to address non-compliance.

Findings

Among respondents, 88 percent of states indicated that as of 2015, they were currently in compliance with all four of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act's (JJDP Act) core requirements. One SAG indicated that they were out of compliance with the sight-and-sound separation requirement; two SAGs indicated that they were not sure which specific requirements they were out of compliance with; and one SAG indicated that their state was not compliant with the disproportionate minority contact (DMC) requirement.

These reports are consistent with OJJDP data, which indicates that five states were out of compliance with one or more core requirement in Fiscal Year 2014.²

A larger number, 54 percent, indicated that they had been out of compliance with at least one of the Act's requirements at some point in the past 10 years. Eleven of the 34 responding states indicated that because of their short tenure on the SAG they were unaware of either whether the state had been found out of compliance during that time frame, or if so, why they were deemed non-compliant. Meanwhile, seven states indicated that they had a problem with either jail removal or sight and sound separation; two indicated they had a problem with the deinstitutionalization of youth charged with status offenses requirement; and three indicated they were found out of compliance with DMC.³



² In fiscal year 2014, Mass., N. Ca., S. Ca., W. Va. and P.R. received funding deductions for non-compliance with at least one core requirement. Wyoming chooses not to participate in the Act. Information available at http://www.ojjdp.gov/compliance/compliance_data.html.

³ Please note, some states indicated compliance problems with more than one requirement. For this reason, the percentages do not total 100. For similar reasons, other numbers may also not total 100 throughout the report.

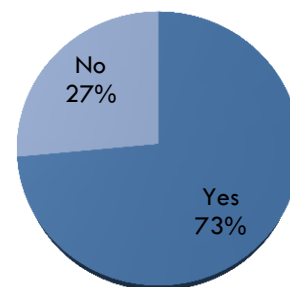
In some instances, it took a matter of months for a state to address the issue and get back into compliance. In other instances, states reported that they were out of compliance for several years.

Recommendations

SAGs should:

- 1. Make funding decisions with a view toward ensuring that their state complies with each of the JJDP A's core requirements.** The funding decisions that SAGs make should be tied to the ultimate goal of ensuring that young people in the state receive the protections prescribed by the JJDP A. As stewards of the funding appropriated under the Act—Title II and Title V—and of the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant, SAGs have considerable influence over ensuring that the programs and approaches that receive funding are those that can accomplish its goals. At a minimum, all SAGs and individual SAG members should be aware of their state's status with regard to the core requirements and take an active role in monitoring the state's progress on each of them. Failure to comply results in a loss of 20 percent of federal grant funding for each core requirement and states are then required to use 50 percent of the remaining grant funding to come into compliance. This, of course, puts a considerable burden on a state's ability to effectively fund programming.
- 2. Seek out training and technical assistance (TTA) and other resources to help their state come into compliance when non-compliance is discovered or anticipated.** Apart from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and its various training and technical assistance centers, there are many resources in the field to support states seeking knowledge, tools and training on how to address issues that may arise that threaten a state's ability to comply with one or more core requirements of the Act. While the staff of the designated state agency—Juvenile Justice Specialists, DMC Coordinators and Compliance Monitors—may be at the front line for determining TTA needs, SAGs can play a supportive role in seeking experts, including national organizations that are foundation-funded, to disseminate tools or conduct training in specialized areas to the field. SAGs are also permitted to allocate some resources to pay for TTA and should be proactive about evaluating on a periodic basis what those needs may be.
- 3. Consider partnerships that will help support compliance.** Foundations, both local and national, may be able to provide grants and other financial assistance to support JJDP A-funded programs. SAGs should consider leveraging their federal funding as a match not only for state funding, but also for funding from private entities. Particularly in a climate of diminishing federal resources for juvenile justice programs, support from other sources could make a significant difference in

Do you actively work on legislation and policy change?



funding programs at a scale that produces real outcomes and impact. Young people impacted by the system, their families, and community organizations can support compliance by providing SAGs with real-world feedback on the efficacy of programs and approaches that they are funding or considering funding.

4. **Seek out training for themselves and employees of state agencies who are working on their behalf.** Juvenile justice is a dynamic field, with significant changes occurring fairly regularly with the release of new research, evaluation results, and legislative changes. SAG members, SAG chairs,, and staff should be in a constant state of learning and stay informed of changes that are taking place in state and federal laws and regulations that could have an impact on practice. This is particularly true of SAG members and chairs, many of whom may not have a background in juvenile justice, or deep knowledge about public systems in general. Training from foundations, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ), and others, is also essential to help SAGs with new leadership or high turnover understand their role and how it can be maximized.
5. **Ensure that accurate records are maintained and rigorous data collection is conducted.** Often, the difference between compliance and non-compliance can rest on a state's ability to collect and report to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention on the work they have done and the impact it has had on young people. SAGs will also be hamstrung in their efforts to support the remedying of problems in their systems if they have inadequate information about the scale and scope of those problems. Accurate data from the states also drives state and national juvenile justice policy. SAGs should provide support when possible for systems that enable staff to collect and report data accurately. They should not fund programs and approaches that lack metrics for success and methods for collecting information on outcomes. Where there are inadequate resources for data collection, or inadequate expertise to collect data accurately, SAGs can and should seek out partnerships and cooperative agreements with colleges, universities, and other organizations that may have resources, expertise, and a vested interest in information about the juvenile justice system.

Principle II. Has a Positive Impact on the State of Juvenile Justice

An effective SAG can have a positive impact on the state of juvenile justice in a number of ways. This can include working with others to promote innovation, creating legislative plans to help shape juvenile justice reforms, partnering with a broad range of allies to help facilitate change, and being looked to by others in the state and elsewhere as leaders in juvenile justice reform.

Findings

For purposes of the survey, this issue was broken down into several subparts: whether the state was actively engaged in legislative and policy reform; whether the state was viewed as an authority on juvenile justice in their own state and elsewhere; whether the state had worked with others to train and build innovation; and whether they had partnered and collaborated with others in the field to help facilitate change.

Among SAG respondents, 73 percent indicated that they actively work on legislation and policy change. Among NJJN member organizations, 40 percent reported that their SAG had specifically endorsed legislation in the past, while 27 percent indicated that the SAG has testified at legislative hearings, and 13 percent reported that the SAG has either helped draft legislation or has opposed legislation they thought would be harmful to the state. SAGs themselves also reported participating in one-on-one meetings with lawmakers, writing position letters, and advocating for bills. SAG Chairs reported that their work had included the following:

- Helping get a bill passed to decriminalize truancy;
- Working to raise the age of criminal jurisdiction to 18;
- Writing pieces that are distributed to legislators; and
- Taking positions on bills and providing information to the Legislature.

“We’ll keep plugging away,” one state said of their unwillingness to give up the fight for a long-awaited change to the age of original jurisdiction in criminal court.

Some states reported that they were extremely successful in implementing legislative change. Challenges exist, however, for SAGs that are attempting to work on legislative and policy reform. For example, states reported that when governors change, they are frequently given new directives on how active the SAG should be on legislation. SAG Chairs also reported that political will and other political factors can play into their ability to implement change and succeed in enacting legislative reform. States that are confronting the issue of raising the age of adult jurisdiction reported the most problems in this area.

Members of two focus groups comprised of Juvenile Justice Specialists indicated that because of the challenges that legislative change can pose, their SAGs often seek out the related state agency as a first step when change is needed on a particular issue. These states report that they engage with the agency and request a change in policy before they attempt to move the Legislature.

Some states and external partners noted that their ability to engage on legislation is very limited and that separate boards exist in the state to work on legislative reform. The SAG is sometimes one of many competing entities in a state that may be trying to find its niche within the juvenile justice landscape. Even so, some external partners noted that SAGs are uniquely positioned to help make sure juvenile justice remains a top priority within their state.

Among respondents, 90 percent reported that they had worked with others to build innovation or to train others on innovative practices. NJJN members disagreed though. Of the 16 individuals who responded to this question, 11 reported that their SAG either did not engage in this type of activity or that they were unaware of whether their SAG was working with others to build innovative practices. One reported that, “I think it would help if SAGs were provided a model of how they should operate.” This sentiment was echoed by stakeholders who attended a November 2015 convening on SAG effectiveness as well, with one attendee indicating that “[i]f you really want to make the SAGs more effective, they need clear expectations and tools.”

Are you viewed as an authority on juvenile justice in your state or other states?

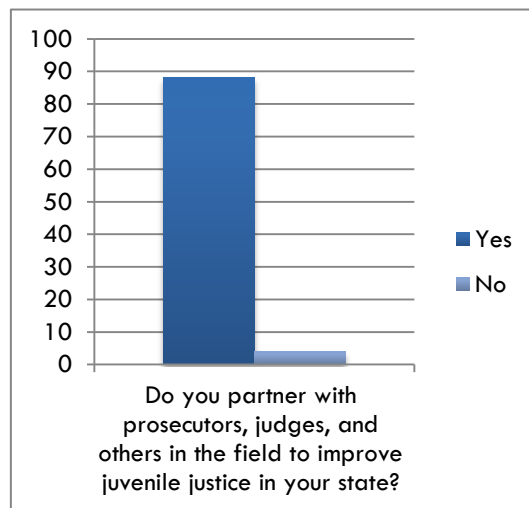
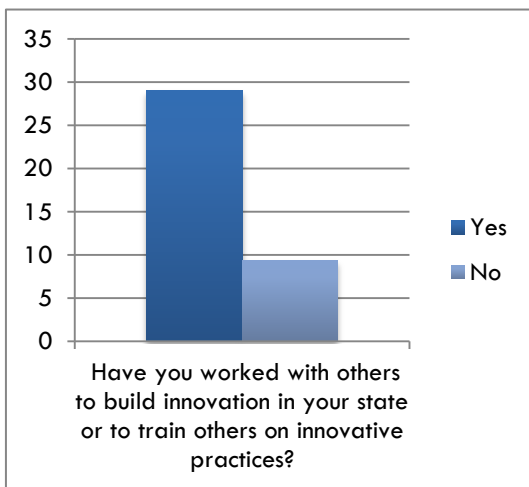
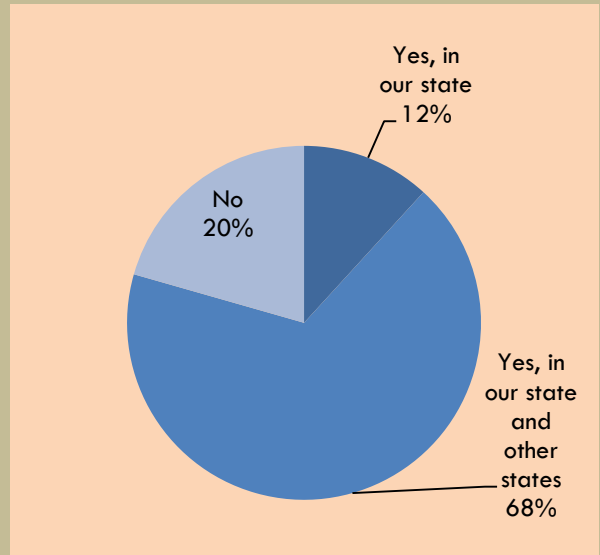
Several states indicated that while various agencies look to them for input, there is room for growth when it comes to serving as an authority on juvenile justice, particularly as more groups emerge within states to address juvenile justice issues:

“We should be, but there’s a lot of competition for that honor.”

“I don’t think we’re as strong as we need to be.”

“Generally, no. ... I’m not sure the governor knows we exist.”

“I think the board wants to think it’s an authority on juvenile justice, but within the state we’re not there yet. That’s one of our goals.”



One avenue for creating these tools might be through private foundations. Approximately 82 percent of SAGs indicated that their committee had actively worked with a private foundation as part of these efforts. Of these foundations, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the organization’s Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) were most frequently cited (32 percent). Twenty-eight percent of those who received assistance said it came from state or other foundations. A smaller number of states also reported receiving assistance from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trusts, and The Tow Foundation.

Approximately 88 percent of SAGs reported that they had partnered with judges, prosecutors, and other stakeholders. A majority of respondents said their partnerships with these stakeholders were based on them holding positions on the SAG. One state indicated that stakeholders who are non-SAG members are also brought in to serve in an advisory capacity.

Examples of other stakeholders that SAGs partner closely with included:

- State juvenile justice and probation agencies;
- State Department of Education;
- Court Administrators Associations;
- Non-profit organizations;
- Tribal governments; and
- Public defenders and related Bar Associations.

Recommendations

SAGs should:

6. **Act as conveners of stakeholders that have the power or knowledge to make a positive impact on juvenile justice in their state.** As originally envisioned by the JJDP, SAGs should ideally be comprised of almost all the expertise necessary to assess programs and approaches that will have the most impact on juvenile justice in a state. In reality, this is often not the case. High turnover, lack of clarity about authority, accountability or processes, and other challenges often mean that SAGs do not have some of the tools they need to make that impact. SAGs can, however, bring together voices and expertise from the various child-serving systems and agencies that could have influence outcomes for juvenile justice system involved youth. SAGs may also command the attention of national foundations and reform initiatives that have limited in-state connections and that are seeking to implement programs or pilot new interventions. By acting as that connector—of national to state and local resources—SAGs can maximize their impact without significant financial outlay.
7. **Act as an information hub for their state legislature.** One of the key responsibilities of SAGs is to report to their legislature on SAG activities. The annual report is a golden opportunity for SAGs to exercise some influence over the direction of juvenile justice in their states. SAGs should ascertain whether their state's rules permit them the latitude to also report on emerging issues, opportunities for innovation, and areas of concern that the legislature may be best positioned to address. Further, SAGs should seek to establish themselves as a key informant on juvenile justice and related issues in the legislature by testifying on proposed policies, providing data, and acting as a conduit of information about national trends in the field.
8. **Develop or nurture their connection to their governor's office.** Without exception, SAG members must be appointed by their governor. Unfortunately, this does not always translate to a close connection between SAGs and their governors' offices. Many are firewalled from that connection by staff or other intermediaries or simply by being buried in a much larger state

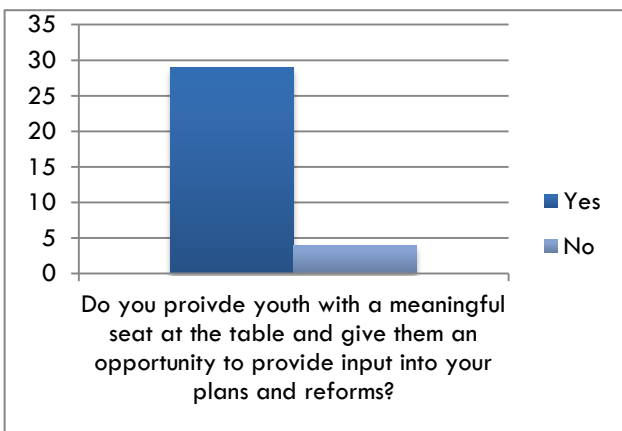
agency bureaucracy. SAGs are most effective when they make the most of their connection to their governor by reaching out to relevant members of his or her staff, offering and providing briefings, and giving credit as well as cover for decisions made at the executive level. Turnover among SAG members, the changing of a SAG Chair, and swearing in of a new governor can present a threat to SAG stability. It can also be an opportunity for SAGs to reach out and renew a connection to the executive branch or forge a relationship where one previously did not exist.

Principle III. Acts Strategically to Improve Juvenile Justice

Strategic action is essential to effective leadership. When SAGs act strategically to improve juvenile justice, they find ways to meaningfully engage youth, use well thought out plans to guide their work, and use programmatic goals to help shape their grantmaking decisions.

Findings

In discussing Principle III, states were asked about: the role youth play on their SAG; whether they use a three-year plan or other similar document to guide their work; whether they have or seek out juvenile



justice expertise; whether their grantmaking decisions are based upon their programmatic goals; whether they use a three-year plan or other plan to guide their work; and whether they are leading innovation or engaging in innovative practices that others have started.

Approximately 88 percent of respondents indicated that they felt their SAG gave youth a meaningful seat at the table and enabled them to provide input into their plans and reforms. Thirty-nine percent of those asked indicated that they had a Youth Advisory

Committee or Emerging Leaders Committee that is specifically for younger members. Some of these committees include youth who are still in the juvenile justice system. Meanwhile, two-thirds of all respondents indicated that they are currently looking for ways to increase youth engagement.

This is an area in which NJJN members and other stakeholders also felt that there was room for improvement. Of the 16 responses to this question, all but three NJJN organizations indicated that the organization was either unaware of what the SAG does to engage youth or that there were concerns about the SAG’s efforts in this area. Several NJJN members indicated that their SAGs had difficulty meaningfully engaging youth. One respondent noted that a recent youth applicant was denied a position on the SAG because they had a previous charge. The respondent further noted that “[we] don’t believe that the SAG truly understands the value of youth engagement nor provides [an] appropriate venue and opportunity to engage youth with prior involvement in the juvenile justice system.”

One SAG indicated they needed additional training and technical assistance on how to meaningfully engage youth. Others cited challenges in this area as well, including the fact that young people may

have difficulty fitting in meetings due to competing demands on their schedules, that costs associated with travel to meetings may be prohibitive for young people, and that young people move more frequently than older adults.

Young people are not the only members that SAGs have trouble retaining. Focus groups with juvenile justice specialists revealed that at least a handful of states have difficulty getting adult SAG members to attend meetings and remain on the SAG as well. Specialists indicated that they have in some cases tried to provide stipends and babysitting to increase adult participation, but these efforts have had mixed results and in some instances attrition has remained a problem.

When asked about whether they were effectively engaging young people, SAG Chairs had the following to say:

- *“That’s a question better answered by youth.”*
- *“My youth members have helped me perceive this issue with a more vivid light.”*
- *“I think we have to be a little bit creative and flexible.”*
- *“Keeping youth members is a challenge. That’s an understatement.”*
- *“It’s been hard, attendance-wise, to keep them engaged.”*
- *“I think it will always be a struggle, but I think we’ve made some good strides.”*

A majority of SAG and NJJN members both agreed that SAGs possess juvenile justice expertise. Among SAG Chair respondents, 81 percent reported that they either had juvenile justice expertise on their SAG or that they sought it out as necessary from other sources. Approximately 34 percent of states reported that they had general juvenile justice expertise or expertise resulting from agency leaders serving on their SAG. Other areas in which SAGs either already have or actively seek out expertise include DMC and cultural diversity (12 percent), raising the age of original jurisdiction in criminal court (6 percent), mental health (6 percent), prevention and diversion (6 percent), truancy (3 percent), minors and sex offender registries (3 percent), and juvenile life without parole (3 percent).

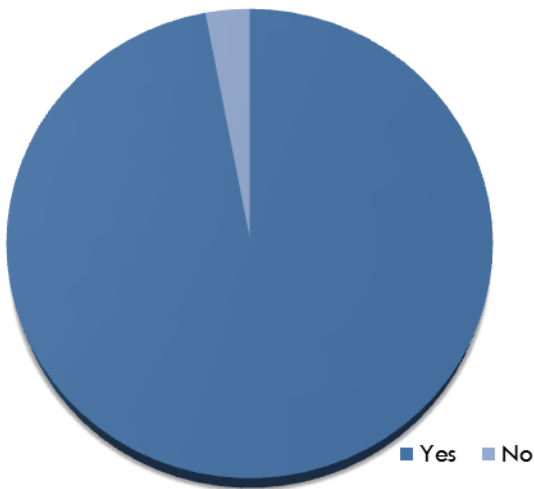
States indicated that they identify areas in which they need additional expertise and assistance through the following means:

- Issues that arise at meetings;
- Issues that arise at the state or federal level;
- Presentations and inquiries that are made by outside entities; and
- Cost benefit and cost avoidance.

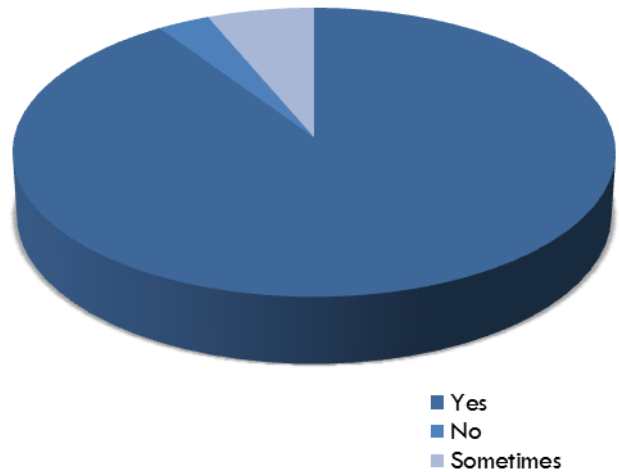
During two focus groups with Juvenile Justice Specialists, the need for training and technical assistance emerged repeatedly. Specialists indicated that training is vital in states with term limits or frequent turnover. They also indicated that assistance should go beyond webinars and instead include onsite training and meeting facilitation for SAGs.

When asked about whether they were leading innovation or engaging in innovative practices that others had started, 76 percent of respondents indicated “yes.” These innovations focused on a range of issues, from creating DMC task forces to raising the age of original jurisdiction in criminal courts to 21. Still others noted that they had been trail blazers in establishing community truancy review boards to help decrease the number of youth who are referred to court for missing school. One state indicated that it is currently working on issues related to domestic adolescent battery.

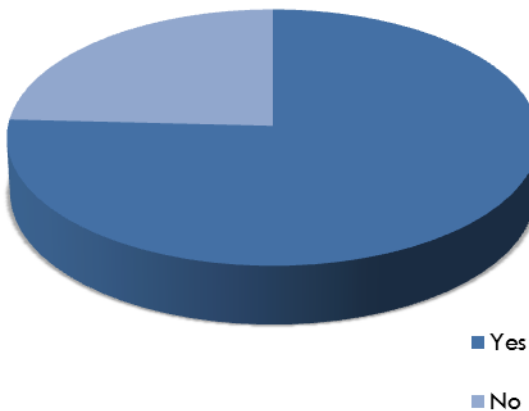
Do you use a three-year plan or other plan to guide your work?



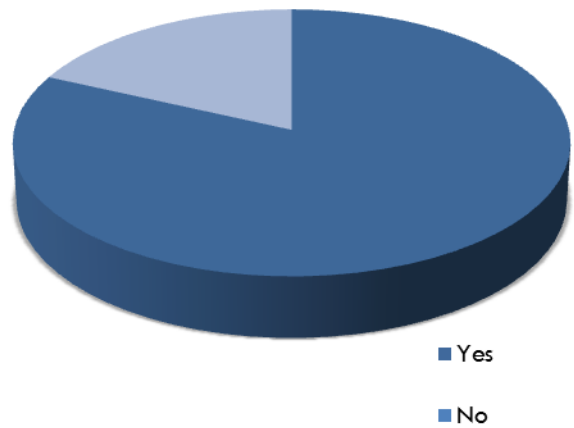
Are your grant-making decisions guided by your programmatic goals?



Are you leading innovation or engaging in innovation that others have started?



Does your SAG have or seek out juvenile justice expertise?



When SAGs undertake new innovations, Juvenile Justice Specialists said it is often because they have a strong SAG Chair at the group’s helm. Strong leadership, they said, is the most important factor in ensuring SAG effectiveness.

Many respondents indicated that their SAG has partnered with private foundations to further innovations. Of those asked, seven states indicated they had worked with the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) to reduce incarceration of youth. A smaller number of respondents (3) indicated that they had worked with the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to develop innovation or implement innovation others had established. Other responses included the Pew Charitable Trusts (one state), The Tow Foundation (one state), and state-based foundations (one state).

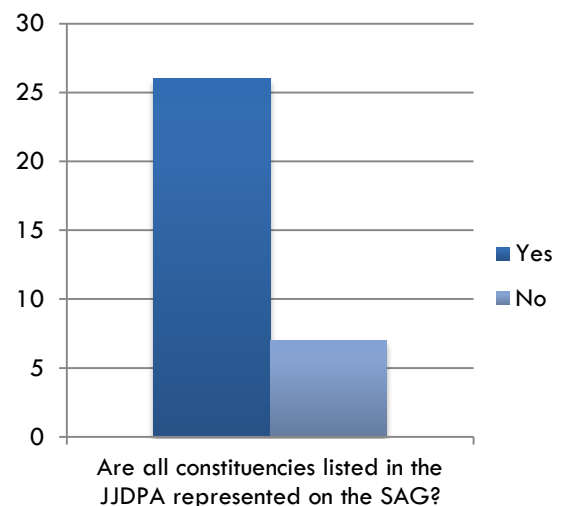
Recommendations

SAGs should:

9. Create a plan of action that includes measurable goals and outlines the steps that they will undertake to achieve them. While the JJDPa requires SAGs to create and report a three-year plan to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, that document should not act as a substitute for a more detailed work plan with timelines, benchmarks, and specificity about parties responsible for executing each element.

10. Use three-year plans and work plans as a basis for all meetings and decision-making. Most SAGs meet infrequently. As a result, the time when they do meet is severely constrained and sometimes inefficiently used. SAGs should make frequent reference to their three-year plans and work plans as they evaluate funding requests and ensure that grants are issued in a way that furthers their goal to improve local systems and implement developmentally-appropriate and effective programs. Work plans should be a “living” and ever-changing document that should be routinely reevaluated at meetings to determine progress toward goals and monitor their relevance.

11. Meaningfully engage young people and other non-traditional partners. Since the passage of the Act, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPa) recognized that system-involved and formerly system-involved young people have an important role to serve on SAGs. Similarly, juvenile justice practitioners have also begun to realize the potential of contributions from families and communities. Both groups bring to bear knowledge based on their lived experience, which other SAG members may lack. SAGs should ensure that these stakeholders are able to fully engage in their work and that this engagement goes beyond tokenism. For instance,



SAGs should think creatively about how young people—especially young people who were or are involved in the juvenile justice system—can fully participate in the SAG’s meetings, discussions, and decision-making processes. This might include providing them with tools and training they need to fully engage, considering alternative times and places to hold SAG meetings, and generally, creating an atmosphere in which all voices, regardless of age, are heard and acknowledged.

Principle IV. Has Effective Processes in Place

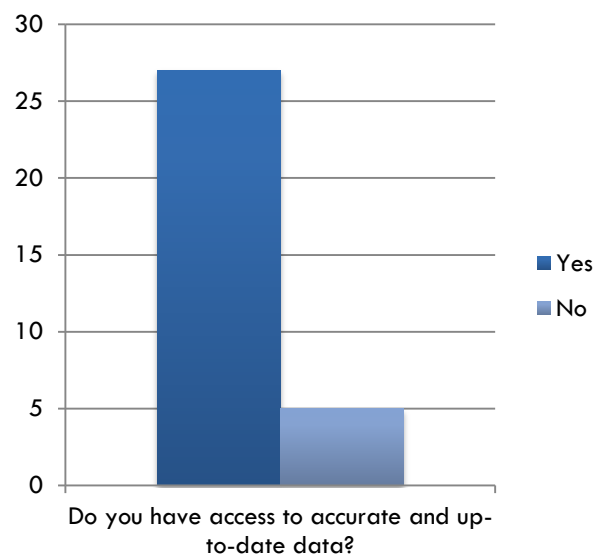
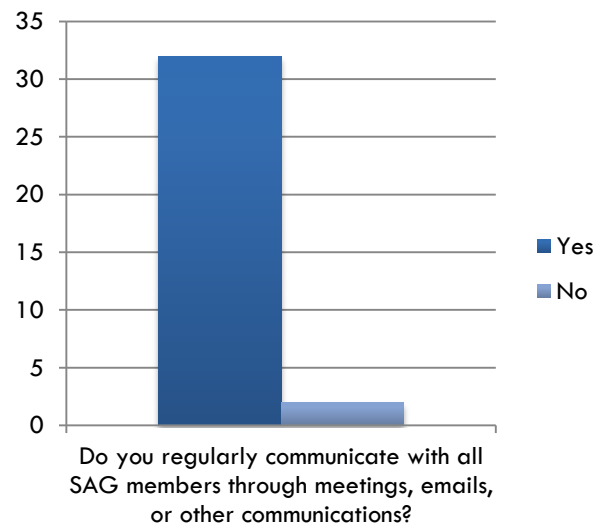
Like other groups, it is essential that SAGs have effective processes in place. This includes ensuring that all involved parties— including SAG Chairs, staff, and each member who has been appointed to serve on the committee— are in routine contact through regularly-scheduled meetings and that their processes are as transparent as possible both to members and the public at large. Effective SAGs also ensure that all constituencies named in the JJDPa are represented on their board, that they have access to accurate and up-to-date data, and that established criteria are used to determine how funding will be administered.

Findings

The fourth Principle of SAG Effectiveness focuses on procedural matters. In addressing this issue, states were asked whether: all constituencies from the JJDPa were represented on the SAG; they regularly communicate with all SAG members; their SAG’s processes were open and transparent; and they had access to accurate and up-to-date data on juvenile justice in their state.

Approximately 79 percent of respondents indicated that all constituencies listed in the JJDPa are currently represented on their SAG. Among the 21 percent of states in which all constituencies were not represented, youth were the most likely to be missing or not present at the required levels. Thirty-three percent of states that responded indicated that youth members were the hardest to find. Other states reported spots for law enforcement and prosecuting attorneys were vacant as well.

When vacancies do arise on the SAG, many states indicated that getting appointments confirmed was sometimes challenging. While some states reported that it took a matter of weeks for their governor to



fill vacant spots, others reported that the process took an “extremely long” time. One state reported that they waited six months for their governor to confirm their new SAG Chair’s appointment. Another indicated that they had been waiting two years to get one of their nominees confirmed by the governor, despite the fact that the individual was already regularly attending the group’s meetings. Respondents credited the delay in appointments to new administrations and competing priorities for administrators’ time.

Of the states interviewed, 94 percent reported that they regularly communicate with all SAG members. This communication included both regular SAG meetings and, in many cases, committee meetings as well. Of those who responded, 59 percent meet quarterly as a full SAG, while 28 percent meet bimonthly. Four states reported that they previously met monthly, however two of those have cut back on meetings in recent months for various reasons, including budget constraints.

Almost all states indicated that they felt their processes were transparent. These states indicated that their meetings were open to the public and that their agendas and meeting details were posted ahead of time for public view. Half of all states indicated that their annual reports and three-year plans were also available online, with the remaining half indicating that they were either unsure or that the reports are not currently posted to a website.

Among those NJJN members that responded, however, 41 percent indicated that the SAG was not transparent; another 18 percent said they were not sure if the SAG was transparent. Five of the 17 respondents indicated they either didn’t know what a SAG was or that they were unclear about the role of a SAG’s. At least two additional NJJN member organizations refrained from participating in the survey, noting that they did not know enough about SAGs and their functions. Additional concerns regarding transparency were noted by NJJN members when they were asked about their SAG’s grantmaking process.

Does your state have access to accurate and up-to-date data?

While 84 percent of respondents indicated that they had access to accurate and up-to-date data on juvenile justice in their state, many challenges emerged as part of the conversations around this issue. States reported the following struggles in relation to data collection:

- One state reported that the only data that was reasonably available was related to placement in juvenile detention facilities.
- “We have challenges getting race and ethnicity data from police and courts.”
- One state reported that data is collected at the county-level and that definitions of arrest can vary from one county to the next.
- Most states indicated that data is collected by multiple separate agencies and that collaboration between those entities can be difficult.
- “The challenge is that there are so many places and it’s not centralized.”

Recommendations

SAGs should:

12. **Ensure that all constituencies required under the JJDPa are represented in adequate numbers on their board.** By design, the JJDPa specified the constituencies that should be represented in order to assist with the effective administration of the funds appropriated under the Act, and to assure representation of a diversity of interests. SAGs should refer to the Act for a comprehensive list of stakeholders that should be part of their board and actively seek to recruit them where there are gaps.
13. **Build relationships in their state's executive branch to ensure that appointments are made as quickly as possible when a vacancy arises.** As discussed in Recommendation #8 above, a positive working relationship with the executive is an essential component to SAG effectiveness. This relationship will help SAGs have efficient processes as it will facilitate timely appointments when vacancies arise and ensure that work can continue with minimal disruption when members leave. It also gives SAGs some influence about whom among their partners and from the field might be well suited to serve on the board.
14. **Develop an on-boarding process and organize training for new SAG members.** SAG members may join the board with disparate levels of knowledge about juvenile justice in general, about juvenile justice in their state specifically and about the federal policy that gives rise to their role. SAG Chairs should develop a process that trains new SAG members and gives them the background information that will help them be most effective in their new role. Once appointed, all members should also be given a chance to actively participate in the SAG's deliberations. All members of the SAG or relevant subcommittee should be included in regular communications and have an opportunity to weigh in on group decisions. Rules of governance and decision-making should be established and shared with all members, as should codes of conduct, including those that require full and meaningful participation in the group.
15. **Seek to make their processes and meetings as transparent as possible so that members, juvenile justice stakeholders, families, youth, and the public at large are aware of their activities.** SAG meetings should be public whenever possible or practical and SAGs should make as much information as possible available to the public following meetings, including their three-year plan, meeting dates, times, agendas, and minutes from previous sessions. Participation by members of the public should be entertained whenever possible, not just as a matter of civic engagement, but because it could expose the SAG to information that may not be available in official reports and could increase public buy-in for agency-level decisions. As with all other partnerships, SAGs should strive to make the one they have with the public as collegial and collaborative as possible.
16. **Maintain transparency around the evaluation of funding requests, and use established criteria to administer grants.** SAGs should use clearly defined measures to evaluate funding requests or should publish the criteria that the state uses to determine which programs will be funded. Some

states and SAGs use a formula to allocate funding among their state’s geographical regions, which limits SAG discretion about which individual programs receive support. Even in these cases, SAGs should make the metrics clear to the public to ensure that the legitimacy of their process is unquestioned. Similarly, the results and outcomes of projects that are/were currently funded should be made public when available and the extent to which those results or any other factors influence their funding should be disclosed.

Principle V. Collaborates Effectively for Maximum Impact

Good leaders recognize that reform requires more than one individual or one organization acting alone. Effective SAGs develop close relationships with judicial officers, state and federal lawmakers, and their executive branch. They work closely with advocates and other stakeholders, including youth and their families, and are routinely sought out for their expertise in the field of juvenile justice.

Findings

For the fifth Principle of SAG Effectiveness, CJJ focused its interviews on the relationships that SAGs have developed with others. Questions focused on the nature of the group’s relationship with each of the three branches of government, as well as advocates and other stakeholders. This principle also included discussion about whether the SAG routinely receives and responds to

“It’s not like I see the governor everyday by any stretch, but I can pick up the phone and call his staff any time.”

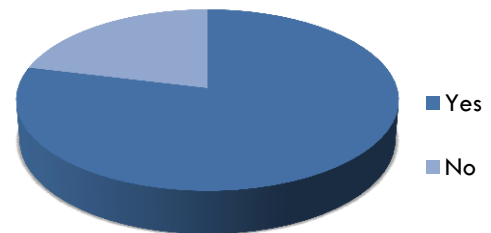
inquiries seeking information about juvenile justice.

Among the groups noted above, states were most likely to indicate that they had close relationships

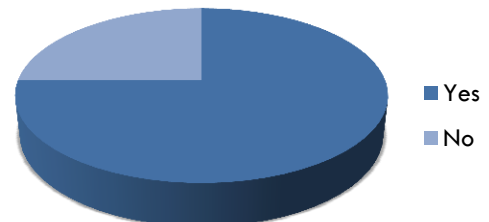
with advocates and other stakeholders (82 percent). States indicated that they routinely worked with non-profit organizations, foundations, and individual stakeholders such as youth and families. Among NJJN respondents, however, only 44 percent believed that the SAG had strong relationships with advocates. “Honestly, they seem like one more committee that meets every few months,” one respondent stated.

States were least likely (58 percent) to describe their relationships with members of the legislative branch as strong. While some states indicated that they had state lawmakers actively participating on their board other states indicated that members of their legislature “didn’t even know what a SAG was.” States noted that it can be difficult to develop relationships with the legislature, particularly when the political party of the legislative majority differs from that of the governor who appointed the SAG’s membership.

Do you have close relationships with your state’s judiciary branch?



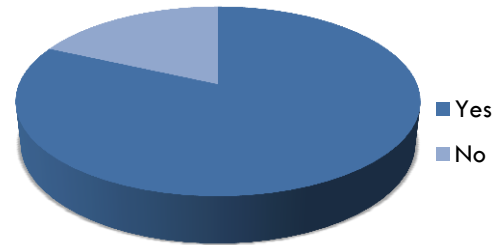
Do you have close relationships with your state’s executive branch?



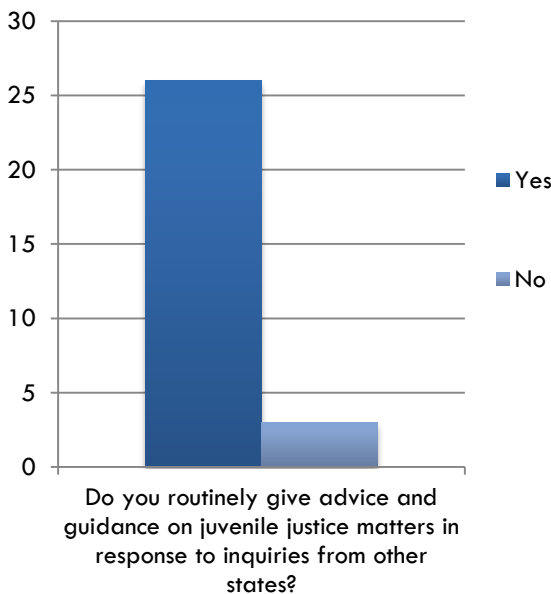
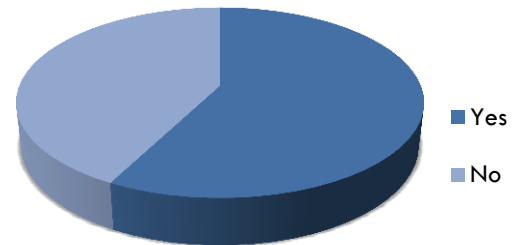
States were almost equally likely to describe their relationship with the executive and the judiciary branch as close (75 and 79 percent respectively). The executive branch could pose challenges, they noted, when new administrations came in that did not consider juvenile justice a priority. Other states noted that they had faced challenges getting members of the judiciary on board with change and reform. In still other states, however, judges had forged the path to change. At least one state reported that they tried to help the judiciary as needed. At times, they said, this had been as simple as making statements and taking stands on certain issues that judges themselves might not be permitted to do under ethical rules.

Among respondents, 90 percent indicated that they routinely give advice in response to inquiries from others. States indicated that these inquiries come most often from juvenile justice and child welfare agencies (29 percent), non-profits and other child serving entities (29 percent), the courts (17 percent), and law enforcement agencies (11 percent). These inquiries focused on a broad range of topics, including: safe harbor laws, juvenile life without parole, truancy, raising the age of original jurisdiction in criminal court, and how to build SAG capacity.

Do you have close relationships with advocates and other stakeholders?



Do you have close relationships with your state's legislative branch?



Roughly 76 percent of respondents indicated that requests for information came from individuals and entities within their own state. The remainder indicated that their input was either not sought out or that others had sought out juvenile justice information from them, both nationally and regionally.

Again, however, NJJN members expressed differing opinions. Only 19 percent of those that responded indicated that the SAG was routinely sought out for and routinely provides advice and guidance on juvenile justice issues.

Recommendations

SAGs should:

17. **Develop and nurture strong relationships with other key players in the juvenile justice field beyond their state.** In addition to fostering relationships with all branches of their state's government: executive, judicial, and legislative, and with youth, families and communities, SAGs should look beyond their geographical boundaries to develop relationships in the field. Over the past decade, while many key developments in juvenile justice occurred at the state level, many were helped along by private investments from national foundations and reform initiatives like the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative and the MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change initiative. It is no accident that many of the states that have seen significant advancement in juvenile justice policy and practice were participants in these or similar partnerships. National-level organizations seeking to field-test new approaches or implement new programs often struggle to find effective and well-positioned local partners. SAGs should be poised to assume this role; in so doing, they could put their state at the cutting edge.
18. **Execute their responsibilities in a spirit of collaboration.** SAGs that are most effective build strong relationships with attorneys, judges, families, youth, foundations, advocates; and with their various organizations and associations that represent these groups. Even where there may be a divergence of interests, SAGs should maintain open lines of communication with all stakeholders and position themselves as problem-solving rather than adversarial whenever possible. Ideally, SAGs should serve as leaders among these groups in the effort to create a developmentally-informed juvenile justice system and should actively engage in initiatives that they undertake as part of the reform process.
19. **Provide, as well as, seek out expertise.** While many of the markers of an effective SAG involves SAGs seeking out information and expertise, it is equally important that they seek out opportunities to provide information and expertise that they may have gained through their work. Statewide convenings and conferences, workshops and presentations at national conferences, webinars and distance-learning presentations, and peer support networks are some of the different forums in which SAGs should actively participate. As part of their work plans, SAGs should establish goals for sharing lessons they have learned, program successes, and new approaches for which they can claim credit. Not only is this motivating for staff and SAG members, but also it enhances the reputation of the state and SAG in the field and opens up opportunities for future collaboration.

Conclusion and Next Steps

A growing number of states have reformed their juvenile justice systems and policies in recent years. Federal lawmakers are also taking notice of the need to change existing criminal and juvenile justice laws. As these reforms continue to take shape, SAGs should evaluate where they are and to what extent they have embraced the Principles of SAG Effectiveness. CJJ, in conjunction with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Center for Coordinated Assistance to the States has released a toolkit that SAGs can use to help gauge their current strengths, find areas in which there is room for

improvement, and help operationalize many of the recommendations in this report. The toolkit also outlines common challenges that SAGs face and ways other states have overcome them.

With the assistance of The Tow Foundation, CJJ has a group of “learning lab” states from across the country. These states are being brought together to help build their skills in transformational leadership, identify roadblocks, and share information with one another to help ensure that they can all become highly effective SAGs. Tools, white papers, and other resources developed with the assistance of the learning lab states will be disseminated on a rolling basis.

SAGs are uniquely positioned to serve as leaders on juvenile justice in their states. From the initial creation, they were intended to ensure that states were moving their policies and laws forward in a way that created brighter futures for our children, families, and communities. CJJ hopes through this project to help SAGs regain this role and seize the opportunity to help their states implement a developmentally-informed approach to juvenile justice.

Appendix A- An External Partners' Ideal SAG

An ideal State Advisory Group, according to external partners, would:

1. Be effective, connected, and able to engage the right stakeholders;
2. Be transparent about data, reports, source of data, and source of funding that was distributed;
3. Collect more comprehensive data;
4. Engage in peer-to-peer training and assistance;
5. Be flexible;
6. Be experts on juvenile justice;
7. Be accessible and have access to staff;
8. Be open-minded;
9. Be aware of their role and how they relate to other entities in the state;
10. Communicate with other SAGs and other stakeholders within their state;
11. Have clarity of expectations and a shared mission;
12. Be willing to serve as brokers; and
13. Help to build up other states.

Appendix B- The Five Principles and Related Questions

The following represents a sampling of the questions that states were asked during their interviews.

Five Principles of State Advisory Group Effectiveness

Is in compliance with the JJDP A's four core requirements

1. Are you currently in compliance with all core requirements?
 - a. If no, which one(s) are you not in compliance with?
 - b. If no, how long have you been out of compliance?
 - c. If no, why are you out of compliance?
2. What methods are you using/considering in an effort to come back in compliance with the requirement(s)?
3. Have you been out of compliance at any point within the past 10 years?
4. Which requirement(s) were you out of compliance with?
5. How long were you out of compliance?
6. Why were you found out of compliance?
7. What methods did you use to come back in to compliance with the requirement?

Has a positive impact on the status of juvenile justice

1. Do you have a legislative plan or have you assisted with the enactment of legislative change?
2. How long have you worked in the area of legislative reform?
3. What are your current/previous priorities for legislative change?
4. What methods have you used to try to implement legislative change?
5. What have been the outcomes of your efforts to implement legislative change?
6. To what do you attribute these outcomes?
7. Are you viewed as an authority on juvenile justice in your state and elsewhere?
 - a. If yes, by who?
 - b. If yes, in what areas of juvenile justice are you viewed as an expert?
 - c. If yes, is this view held by your state, region, or nationally?
 - d. If no, what is the SAG doing to gain status as an authority in juvenile justice?
8. Have you worked with others to train and build innovation in your state and elsewhere?
9. With what groups/agencies have you worked?
10. Has your work been inside your own state, region, or nationally?
11. In what area(s) have you been able to be the most innovative?
12. Do you closely monitor emerging issues in juvenile justice within your state to see where new innovations might be needed/beneficial?
13. Have you partnered with private foundations and entities to help further your efforts in this area?
14. Do you partner and collaborate with prosecutors, the judiciary, and others in the field to help facilitate change?
15. With which of the above listed stakeholders do you most closely partner?
16. Are there other stakeholders not included in our list that you partner with?
17. Are there groups with whom you would like to strengthen your partnerships?

18. What do your partnerships with these stakeholders look like (e.g. they serve on our SAG, we have an advisory council that includes these types of stakeholders, we have them make presentations at meetings, etc.)?

Acts strategically to improve juvenile justice

1. Do you meaningfully engage youth?
2. What role do youth have on your SAG and how actively do they participate?
3. Do you have a Youth Advisory Committee or other similar panel?
4. Are any of the stakeholders you mentioned above either a youth or someone previously involved in the juvenile justice system?
5. Are you working on any projects to increase youth engagement on your SAG?
6. Do you work toward a three-year plan or other plan?
7. What type of plan are you working towards?
8. When was your plan last updated? What process was used to do this?
9. How often are the goals and priorities within your plan reevaluated?
10. Does the plan include benchmarks and measurable goals to help ensure progress?
11. Do you have/seek out juvenile justice expertise?
12. In what areas of juvenile justice does your SAG have the most expertise?
13. In what areas of juvenile justice is your SAG most in need of additional expertise?
14. Does your SAG actively attempt to gain additional expertise through training and presentations at SAG meetings, conferences, etc.?
15. How does the SAG determine areas within which additional expertise is needed and ways in which they will go about building expertise?
16. Do you use programmatic priorities to help guide grantmaking decisions?
17. Over the past five years, have grants been administered in a way that recognizes and attempts to further programmatic goals that the SAG has established?
18. If grants are not administered in this fashion, what basis is used for determining what grants will be considered?
19. Are you leading innovation or engaging in innovative practices that others have started?
20. What innovative practices have you developed in your state/communities?
21. What innovative practices have you adopted from others?
22. If practices were adopted from others, how long after they were first developed did you implement them locally?
23. Are there areas in which your state is currently working on new innovations?
24. What, if any, private foundations have you partnered with to help further your innovation?

Has effective processes in place

1. Are all constituencies named in the JJDPa represented on the SAG?
 - a. If no, what constituencies are not represented? Why? Are there efforts to ensure that these constituencies are represented?
 - b. If yes, do all constituencies regularly attend meetings and actively participate in the SAG's decision-making processes?

2. Do you communicate regularly with all SAG members, through regularly scheduled meetings and other channels?
3. How often does the SAG meet?
4. When decisions are made/action is taken, is it the result of deliberation and action by the group as a whole?
5. If quick action is needed, do members communicate with the SAG's entire membership by email/conference call and give all members an opportunity to weigh in before a decision is made?
6. Are a majority of SAG members actively engaged in communications and decision-making?
7. Are the SAG's processes transparent?
8. Are the SAG's agenda, meeting date, and location available to the public before the meeting takes place?
9. Are the SAG's meetings open to the public?
10. Are the SAG's annual reports and three-year plans easily available to the general public and those working in the field?
11. Are established criteria used to administer funding?
12. Are existing grant programs reviewed regularly to determine their outcomes and continued success?
13. What criteria are used to determine which grants will receive funding?
14. Does a preference exist either for funding one large project or several small projects?
15. Do you have access to accurate and up-to-date data on juvenile justice within the state?
16. What types of data are currently available? (e.g. underlying offense, LGBT data, ethnicity, VCO usage, number of youth referred to diversion programs, results of programs, etc.)
17. Who is responsible for collecting and maintaining this data?
18. How is it collected?
19. How often is it updated?
20. Is it shared with the public? If so, how?

Collaborates effectively for maximum impact

1. Do you have close relationships with your state's legislative branch?
2. What form of communication do you use (e.g. email, phone calls to staff, phone calls to the legislator, in person meetings, letters, or a mix of these communications)?
3. How often do you communicate with the legislature?
4. How pervasive are your contacts within the legislature?
5. Do you actively work with members of the legislature to improve juvenile justice laws and policies and to ensure adequate financial allocations in the state budget?
6. Do you regularly educate members of the legislature on new and emerging issues in the field of juvenile justice and/or that have connections to the field of juvenile justice?
7. Do you have close relationships with your executive branch?
8. What form of communication do you use (e.g. email, phone calls to members of the executive branch/governor/head of your state's juvenile justice agency, in person meetings, letters, or a mix of these communications)?
9. How often do you communicate with the executive branch?
10. How pervasive are your contacts within the executive branch?

11. Do you actively work with members of the executive branch to improve juvenile justice policies and to ensure adequate financial allocations in the state budget?
12. Do you regularly educate members of the executive branch on new and emerging issues in the field of juvenile justice and/or that have connections to the field of juvenile justice?
13. Do you work with members of the executive branch to suggest strong nominations for SAG membership and to ensure that all populations required under the JJDPa are represented?
14. Do you have close relationships with your judiciary branch?
15. What form of communication do you use (e.g. email, phone calls to staff, phone calls to judicial officers, in person meetings, letters, or a mix of these communications)?
16. How often do you communicate with the judiciary?
17. How pervasive are your contacts within the judiciary?
18. Do you actively work with members of the judiciary to improve juvenile justice practices and to participate in convenings they might call in an effort to implement change?
19. Do you regularly educate members of the judiciary on new and emerging issues in the field of juvenile justice and/or that have connections to the field of juvenile justice?
20. Do you have close partnerships with advocates and other stakeholders?
21. What types of advocacy groups and other stakeholders do you work with?
22. How frequently are you in contact with advocacy groups and other stakeholders?
23. Do you actively work with these stakeholders to improve juvenile justice laws and policies and to ensure adequate financial allocations in the state budget?
24. Do you regularly work with advocates and stakeholders to help educate one another on new and emerging issues in the field of juvenile justice and/or that have connections to the field of juvenile justice?
25. Are you routinely sought out for (and give) advice and guidance on juvenile justice matters?
26. What types of agencies/groups seek your input and guidance?
27. How often do they seek your input and guidance?
28. Are there specific areas of juvenile justice on which your guidance is most frequently requested?
29. Is your input sought within your state, region, or throughout the country?



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