**Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention**

**Quarterly Meeting**

**October 21, 2011**

U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs

 810 Seventh Street NW, Washington, DC 20531

Abstract

At the October 21, 2011, quarterly meeting of the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Council), Council members heard a panel presentation on strengthening military families. The panel was moderated by Robert L. Gordon III, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy, U.S. Department of Defense (DOD). Panelists included Dr. Mary Keller, President and CEO, Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC); Dr. Patricia Lester, Associate Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Director of Welcome Back Veterans Family Resilience Center, University of California, Los Angeles, and Director of Families OverComing Under Stress; Dr. Anita Chandra, Manager, Behavioral and Social Sciences Group, RAND Corporation; and Barbara Thompson, Director, Office of Family Policy/Children and Youth, DOD.

In addition, Council members heard updates on several agency initiatives. Kristen Harper, Senior Policy Advisor, U.S. Department of Education, reported on the Supportive School Discipline Initiative. Leslie Boissiere, Executive Director,White House Council for Community Solutions, reported on activities of the White House Council. Bryan Samuels, Commissioner, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, reported on a number of activities under way at his agency.

The following action item emanated from the meeting:

* William Modzeleski, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, U.S. Department of Education, and Jeff Slowikowski, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, volunteered to examine how their agencies might provide guidance to local school personnel about interpreting the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

Meeting Summary

Welcome and Opening Remarks

*Jeff Slowikowski, Acting Administrator, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ); Coordinating Council Vice Chair*

Jeff Slowikowski convened the meeting and welcomed attendees. He announced that he would chair the meeting in the absence of Attorney General Eric Holder. Mr. Slowikowski reported on recent changes in Council membership.

* Roland Warren, National Fatherhood Initiative President, has completed his term as practitioner member. Mr. Slowikowski thanked Mr. Warren for his contributions and presented him with a certificate of appreciation.
* Laurie Garduque, Director of Justice Reform at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, was recently appointed as a practitioner member.
* Robert Velasco, Acting Chief Executive Director of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), will represent CNCS.

Strengthening Military Families

***Robert L. Gordon III, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy, U.S. Department of Defense (DOD); Dr. Mary Keller, President and CEO, Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC); Dr. Patricia Lester, Associate Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Director of Welcome Back Veterans Family Resilience Center, University of California, Los Angeles, and Director of Families OverComing Under Stress; Dr. Anita Chandra, Manager, Behavioral and Social Sciences Group, RAND Corporation; Barbara Thompson, Director, Office of Family Policy/Children and Youth, DOD***

Robert Gordon presented an overview of the challenges faced by military families. Currently almost 2 million children have a parent serving in the military—either in active duty or the Reserves.Of these children, 1.2 million are in school; some are in DOD schools, but the vast majority are in public schools. After 10 years of war, children of military families face enormous stressors including the absence of one or both parents due to deployment. Mr. Gordon introduced the panelists, who each spoke about initiatives to support military families.

Mary Keller spoke about the educational challenges faced by military children affected by frequent moves, family separation, and transition. She reported that MCEC is a nonprofit organization focused on ensuring quality educational opportunities for all military-connected children. It conducts research, conducts professional trainings, and develops and publishes resources. Dr. Keller encouraged Council members to consider two policy issues to ensure quality educational opportunities for military children:

* Collect data on military-connected children so this population can be disaggregated. Without good data, educators cannot identify educational gaps and work to close those gaps.
* Support the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (an initiative led by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers to create a common core of academic standards for grades K through 12). Currently every state has a different set of standards, and these inconsistencies adversely affect children who move frequently.

Patricia Lester reported that a decade of war has heightened our national awareness of the challenges faced by military children and families such as extended and repeated separations from a parent, altered family roles and responsibilities, school and community transitions, and possible parental combat-related mental health problems, physical injury, or death. A growing body of research is finding that military children are at increased risk for mental health symptoms and academic difficulties, and the risk increases as cumulative months of deployment increase. Dr. Lester spoke about FOCUS (Families Overcoming Under Stress), a family-centered, evidence-based, public health preventive model that provides resiliency training to military children and families affected by combat deployments. FOCUS teaches military children and families to understand their emotional reactions, communicate more clearly, solve problems more effectively, and create a shared sense of family understanding. This early intervention program for families at risk significantly reduces the prevalence of depression and anxiety symptoms among parents and children.

Anita Chandra presented highlights from two Rand Corporation studies on the impact of deployment on military children and youth. Both studies can be downloaded at rand.org.

* *Views from the Homefront,* sponsored by the National Military Family Association, studied the general well-being of military youth and spouses during and after parental deployment. In regard to academic engagement and peer relationships, military youth function at comparable levels to other U.S. youth. However, military youth function below the U.S. average in three critical areas: family relationships, anxiety symptoms, and general emotional difficulties. The effects of parental deployment are cumulative, and longer periods of deployment are associated with more problems. Children whose non-deployed parents report better emotional well-being experience fewer problems, a finding that underscores the need to support parent well-being.
* *Effects of Soldiers’ Deployment on Children’s Academic Performance and Behavioral Health,* a study prepared for the U.S. Army, found that schools face barriers in addressing the needs of children struggling with deployment. School staff reported that they lack consistent information regarding a family’s military or deployment status, staff at many traditional public schools (even those close to military posts) feel disconnected with military installations, and teachers are not adequately trained to help address students’ deployment-related emotional and behavioral challenges.

Ms. Chandra concluded that there is a need to work across sectors to target evidence-based behavioral health interventions for military youth and families; to expand support to families during reintegration, focusing on parent-child relationships; and to better equip school to provide support to military students during moves and deployment transition periods.

Barbara Thompson provided an overview of Presidential Study Directive #9, *Strengthening Our Military Families.* The study, which was initiated by President Obama to lay the foundation for a coordinated approach to supporting military families, identifies four priority areas: (1) enhance the well-being and psychological health of the military family; (2) ensure excellence in military children’s education and their development; (3) develop career and educational opportunities for military spouses; and (4) increase child care availability and quality for the Armed Forces. Ms. Thompson highlighted progress made since the report’s release in January 2011:

* The U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has established the [Office of Servicemember Affairs](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/petraeus-letter/), which focuses on military members and their families.
* Treasury is collaborating with DOD on licensing and credentialing practices to improve career opportunities for military spouses subjected to multiple relocations across state jurisdictions.
* DOJ settled with Bank of America and Saxon Mortgage for illegally foreclosing on service members in violation of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act.
* The Office of Personnel Management is working with the civilian community to produce a best practice manual for hiring veterans and working to improve hiring opportunities for military spouses.
* DOD has partnered with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to enhance child care licensing standards.
* DOD has partnered with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the Chamber of Commerce to improve career opportunities for military spouses.
* The U.S. Department of Education (ED) has made supporting military families one of its supplemental priorities for its discretionary grant programs.

**Questions and Discussion**

*Can you identify the most important area to focus on as the Nation’s wars wind down and large numbers of deployed military personnel return?* Dr. Keller said it is important to make sure educators understand the needs of children whose parents have served; Dr. Lester said we must think systematically about how to implement evidence-based prevention measures at every level; Dr. Chandra said we must provide social supports to help families reintegrate; and Ms. Thompson said DOD needs the support of other federal agencies and local communities.

*The challenges faced by military children (e.g., lack of education core competencies) seem to parallel challenges faced by children in foster care. Can we learn from and/or partner with the child welfare system as a way to advocate for these children?* Dr. Keller responded that strong community-based partnerships at the local level can be very effective in addressing the needs of at-risk children including military and foster children. Dr. Lester added that family-centered interventions have been shown to be effective for a variety of issues and likely would have applications to children in foster care.

*Are military children more or less likely than other kids to come into contact with the juvenile justice system?* Dr. Keller responded that MCEC learned from its survey of large school districts that there is no significant difference in the percentage of military children enrolled in alternative discipline programs. Dr. Chandra added that the RAND studies found no significant differences in risk behaviors.

*Are schools serving military children aware of the McKinney-Vento Act’s definition of “homelessness” (which includes not being in the physical custody of parents or legal guardians), and are there gaps in services to this population?* Dr. Keller responded that there are gaps in communication and documentation. When a parent is deployed, the military does a good job of making sure there is a family care plan, but the plan is not always communicated to the schools. Schools and the military community have begun a public outreach effort to military families to ensure that schools have documentation of custodial care during deployment.

*How does the work around military youth help military families who have children in the juvenile justice system?* Ms. Thompson responded that every installation offers legal assistance and a family support system for military families including those with children in the juvenile justice system. Dr. Keller cited an example from North Carolina, where Legal Assistance for Military Personnel (a volunteer organization) is involved in a statewide comprehensive approach to serve military children.

*Are data about military children disaggregated by race and gender, and do different subgroups have different issues?* Dr. Chandra reported that RAND researchers examined racial, gender, and age differences. They found few significant differences associated with race except in academic engagement, where African-American and Latino youth reported poorer outcomes. In regard to gender, girls showed higher levels of anxiety during reintegration. In regard to age, older teens (ages 15 to 17) reported more challenges with household responsibilities and higher levels of stress. Dr. Lester added that, in regard to gender differences, boys of all ages exhibit more behavioral difficulties; the difference is especially pronounced among younger children. Dr. Keller added that MCEC’s work with Gallup found that boys tend to be more worried; she reminded the audience that deployment is unique for every child and family.

*Did these studies on military youth gather information about familial relationships before the parent’s deployment?* Dr. Chandra responded that RAND found that quality of communication among family members before and during deployment is critical. RAND is currently conducting a study of families before, during, and after deployment to learn more about this issue. Dr. Lester added that FOCUS research has found that teaching family communication skills is an effective intervention.

*What is the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and the effects of deployment?* Dr. Chandra replied that RAND examined SES by collecting information on parent’s rank and pay grade. They found little association between SES and children’s overall emotional health and well-being; however, they found differences in access to resources based on SES. Dr. Keller added that it is important for children to be engaged in extracurricular activities, and economically stressed families are less likely to have access to these activities.

*Can you provide examples of what schools are doing to help military kids?* Dr. Keller said schools are making concerted efforts to reach out to military families. For example, MCEC sponsors Student 2 Student, a peer-support program for military children. Ms. Thompson said DOD has embedded child and youth behavioral specialists in public schools that serve military children. Dr. Lester added that we need to change policy so school districts have the capability to identify military kids; otherwise, schools can’t target and serve these students.

*Children whose parents are in the foreign service encounter some of the same issues (e.g., frequent transitions and parents assigned in war areas). The U.S. State Department could benefit from the work being done with military-connected youth.* Dr. Chandra agreed and said that her organization works closely with State as part of an interagency roundtable. She added that children of civilian contractors also face these same issues.

*A disproportionate number of deployed parents are fathers. If returning fathers are not resilient, it is difficult to have resilient families.* *It is important to focus on fathering skills.* Dr. Lester agreed and said that it is critical to teach effective communication skills to parents, particularly when the family is under stress. Dr. Chandra added that, with the large numbers of troops returning, we need to prepare returning fathers and mothers to reintegrate with their families. Ms. Thompson said that DOD offers several programs to support fathers and build parenting skills including its New Parent Support Program, Daddy Boot Camp, and Military One Source.

*What are the obstacles to sharing information about a parent’s military status with schools?* Dr. Keller responded that local interpretation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act can create obstacles to information sharing between military installations and schools. She suggested that the federal government give guidance to local school personnel about interpreting these laws. Bill Modzeleski (ED) volunteered to look into this issue, and Mr. Slowikowski said DOJ can work with ED on the issue.

Mr. Slowikowski thanked the panelists for their thought-provoking presentations. He reported that DOJ and DOD recently entered into a partnership to provide mentoring services for children with a parent in the military.

**Agency Announcements and Updates**

**Keeping Kids in Class: Update on the Supportive School Discipline Initiative**

***Kristen Harper, Senior Policy Advisor, U.S. Department of Education***

Mr. Slowikowski reminded the Council that at the July meeting Attorney General Holder and Education Secretary Duncan announced the launch of the Supportive School Discipline Initiative to address the “school-to-prison pipeline” and disciplinary policies and practices that push students out of school and into the justice system. He announced that Kristen Harper (Office of Safe and Healthy Students [OSHS]) and Robin Delany-Shabazz (OJJDP) co-chair the interagency federal group working on this initiative.

Ms. Harper reported that 30 staff from 10 federal offices have organized into four subgroups to support the initiative’s four-part strategy, and she updated the Council on each group’s progress:

1. *Consensus building:* OJJDP awarded $400,000 to the Council of State Governments to conduct consensus-building sessions across the country with the goal of developing a bipartisan agreement on policies and practices to foster safe and productive learning environments. The subgroup is working to compile logistical support for these stakeholder meetings.
2. *Research and data collection:* The subgroup is developing a comprehensive list of federal research and surveillance/monitoring tools related to school discipline. The group has been asked to identify gaps (in research and federal monitoring), to examine how data is being used and recommend ways to use it more effectively, and to identify ways the federal government can help state and local education agencies improve monitoring efforts.
3. *Joint guidance from DOJ and ED on school discipline policies:* DOJ and ED have held high-level discussions to develop a strategy for issuing recommendations to the field. The joint guidance will focus on the legal implications of school discipline policies and recommend best practices.
4. *Technical assistance (TA) and outreach:* This subgroup is compiling a list of all federal TA providers that can develop training products and tools, and it is developing a strategy and schedule for convening a series of stakeholder groups (separate from the consensus-building sessions) to get feedback on the types of tools and trainings that would be useful to the field.

Ms. Harper reported that the initiative has received an overwhelming show of interest and support from philanthropic and civil rights groups.

***Questions and Discussion***

Questions and comments were directed to Ms. Harper.

*Will there be training at state/local levels regarding FERPA?* Stakeholders will help identify specific issues/challenges that need to be addressed, including FERPA obstacles.

*The data-sharing issue is huge. There is so much misunderstanding around laws that are supposedly to protect children’s privacy. Great good could be done by developing a generalized product for wide distribution.* ED has already begun to make some strides in this area. It has a Privacy TA Center and a new Chief Privacy Officer. In regard to the school-to-prison pipeline, we will identify what the specific difficulties are and then perhaps develop new tools.

*Foster children often move from school to school. Schools are not always informed of the multiple issues and systems the child has been in contact with. There is a need for education at the local level about what school districts can and cannot do under FERPA.*

*Has there been discussion about positive engagement strategies?* The Supportive School Discipline Initiative is focused on providing a positive school climate and keeping schools safe.

*Will truancy be addressed?* We haven’t yet broken school-to-prison pipeline data into sub-issues such as truancy. As part of the consensus-building process, we will identify sub-issues around which we can make recommendations.

*What is the timeline?* Stakeholder meetings will begin before the end of 2011. The consensus-building process will take 2 years.

*I encourage you to include professionals in the mental health and substance abuse fields when convening stakeholders.* OSHS has a long relationship with organizations working in substance abuse and mental health and they will be included.

**White House Council for Community Solutions**

***Leslie Boissiere,* *Executive Director***

Leslie Boissiere reported that President Obama established the White House Council for Community Solutions in 2010 to highlight local, multiple-sector initiatives to help disconnected youth. The group, which is hosted by CNCS, focuses on bringing attention to disconnected youth, helping these youth move along the path toward employment, and engaging agencies across the federal government to strategically address the issue. The White House Council conducted listening sessions across the country to learn more about the challenges faced by disconnected youth and what they would need to reconnect. Stakeholders at the sessions identified the need for prevention and intervention (e.g., improvements in systems that serve youth and involvement of caring adults), holistic and relevant programs (e.g., integrated network of youth services and high-quality, relevant education and job training), and expanded outreach to youth about available resources. Ms. Boissiere summarized key implications for the White House Council’s work, including the need to publicize that programs and systems that serve youth are necessary but not sufficient, to highlight and identify effective strategies that address the needs of youth, to leverage youth voices, and to engage multiple agencies to facilitate cross-sector collaboration at the local level. More information about the work of the White House Council is available at [www.serve.gov/council](http://www.serve.gov/council).

Robert Velasco commented that CNCS is serving as the national liaison to the White House Council. He emphasized that CNCS will need the support from other federal agencies to implement the recommendations from the White House Council.

***Questions and Discussion***

Questions and comments were directed to Ms. Boissiere.

*Did any points raised in the listening sessions come as a surprise?* There were no real surprises. One of the most powerful messages was that youth need to be a part of the solution.

*Is the White House Council in the position to address all issues that run across the spectrum of disconnected youth?* The fact that youth face multiple hurdles points to the need for a system of support.

*Could AmeriCorps volunteers be placed at schools, community-based organizations, and juvenile courts to advocate for and communicate with youth across systems?* This would be a great model and is something CNCS might look into in terms of the allocation of resources.

*Since the White House Council is working at the federal level, how will the solutions work at the state and local level?* We need to look at how federal resources can work in a way that is more effective for state and local interventions. Federal funds are implemented at the state and local level, and we need to take a “top-down” approach to look at federal funding streams that flow into communities.

*Youth empowerment is critical. How can we develop partnerships to empower youth to serve other youth?* The White House Council recognizes that youth in communities are a powerful asset. They are looking to CNCS’s AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve America as well as other existing federal and community resources to mobilize youth.

**Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) Updates**

***Bryan Samuels, Commissioner, ACYF, HHS***

Bryan Samuels updated Council members on recent activities of the Administration for Children and Families (ACY). For almost 20 years the child welfare system has focused on system reform (e.g., reducing the number of children and length of stay in foster care), which has been a successful effort. Today ACF is focused on improving outcomes for children and families in four areas: educational outcomes, social and emotional well-being, family capacity building, and relational health.

To improve educational outcomes, the Children’s Bureau and ED will hold a 2-day summit in November to bring together leaders in the child welfare, education, and juvenile court systems from every state to encourage participation in cross-system efforts, showcase best practices, and help states develop action plans to improve educational outcomes for children in foster care. In addition, ACF discretionary funds are (1) supporting early childhood education partnerships to expand protective factors for young children in foster care and (2) building collaborations between child welfare and schools.

To improve mental health outcomes, ACF is collaborating with DOJ on the Defending Childhood Initiative, which aims to prevent children’s exposure to violence, mitigate the negative effects experienced by children exposed to violence, and increase knowledge and awareness of this issue. In support of this initiative, ACF partnered with OJJDP, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to develop a compendium of evidence-based practices on trauma. In addition, ACF worked with Congress to reauthorize the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act, which includes new language addressing trauma. And finally, ACF awarded discretionary funds to integrate trauma-informed practice in child protective services, support family capacity building, and help older youth in foster care strengthen relationship-building skills.

***Questions and Discussion***

*Will a protocol be established to deal with the tendency to overprescribe psychotropic medications to children in foster care?* The Fostering Connections Act of 2008 requires child welfare agencies to monitor all medications including psychotropics, and the reauthorized Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act contains specific language in regard to child welfare agencies establishing protocols for monitoring psychotropics. In addition, ACF is working with other federal agencies to identify evidence-based alternative treatments to psychotropic drugs and working with Medicaid to find ways to fund these treatments.

**Other Agency Announcements**

***Federal Interagency Reentry Council:*** Richard Morris (DOL) reported that the Federal Interagency Reentry Council has released a series of reentry “mythbusters,” factsheets designed to clarify federal policies that affect formerly incarcerated individuals and their families. Attorney General Holder recently announced the release of two mythbusters related to reentering juvenile offenders—focusing on education and on access to juvenile records. For additional information, go to [www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org](http://www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org).

***Office of Justice Programs (OJP):***Jeff Slowikowski announced that OJP’s 2010 Annual Report has been released and is available at [www.ojp.gov](http://www.ojp.gov).

**Summary of Next Steps, Closing Remarks**

*Jeff Slowikowski*

Mr. Slowikowski thanked participants for attending the meeting and announced that the next quarterly meeting of the Council will take place after the first of the year.