

Policy Idea Statement: Implementing Evidenced Based Practices in DJJ

FJJA supports evidenced based programming, but the current definition used by DJJ is far too restrictive and lacks clarity. Additionally, most of the EB programs are proprietary and it is very expensive to get training. Additionally, certain RFPs require specific, proprietary programs. FJJA believes that the DJJ should drop the “research based” definition of EB and open the system to other useful models. There are examples of effective strategies for youth that are not evidence based, yet DJJ contracts encourage us to avoid non-EB programs. For example, Restorative Justice, a cornerstone of DJJ, is not evidence based.

DJJ’s research based focus is challenging in that the concept of “evidenced based” seems geared for “longer term” programming which presents serious barriers for “short term” programs to fully implement. Moving from the current philosophy would allow requirements for long and short term programs to be more flexible within time constraints throughout the continuum of services. Dropping the “research based” definition of evidenced based programming would open the system to other effective models and move implementation to a “real world application.”

3 Key Points

1. **To implement evidence based programming in the DJJ, FJJA recommends focusing on:**
 - Affordability (can the state afford it)
 - Feasibility (can it be delivered successfully)
 - Sustainability (can fidelity be maintained)
 - Outcome (does it deliver what is expected)
2. **Review and clarify how “best practices” are determined by DJJ; create alignment between state and federal lists.**
 - Does the agency “recreate the wheel” and should DJJ rely on research from universities, and other recognized entities?
 - Most of the EB programs are proprietary and it is very expensive to implement (Note: certain RFPs require specific, proprietary EB programs.
3. **Involve providers in the process to create the DJJ evidence based “vision”**
 - Providers are very knowledgeable and have expertise in the “operationalization” process.
 - Reduce evidence based programming costs by eliminating all requirements not required by developer.

Fiscal Impact:

Cost savings to state: DJJ can eliminate staff dedicated to determining EB, and rely on research from universities, federal or other recognized entities. **Cost avoidance to providers:** Providers will not bear the burden of purchasing proprietary programs.

Operational Impact:

DJJ should reconcile the following:

- Statute and licensing requirements for providing service: DCF 653D.
- Federal guidelines vs. state guidelines: Merging the two when they are in conflict getting DJJ to recognize those models.
- Federal organizations who have adopted “evidenced based” or “what works” practices.
- Certifications i.e. T for C only requires a HS diploma vs. a licensure.
- Requirements which are supposed to be integrated together: i.e. gender, impact of crime, & evidenced based.
- Development of the ability to capture information on youth, which shows the impact of use of EB.
- Differentiating evidenced based within the continuum and how it is used with youth in the various stages of that continuum.

Legislative:

- Legislative direction on how Florida requires, pays for and implements EB programming in juvenile justice programming.

PROS: Alignment with other states, more efficient use of state dollars, reduces duplication, clarifies intent and support of EB programming in the DJJ.

CONS: none