



Broward County, Florida: **Exploring the Children's Services Council Strategic Use of Resources, Funding, and Partnerships to Support Disconnected Youth**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Broward County, the second most populous county in Florida, lies just north of Miami and is home to nearly 2 million residents. The county represents a patchwork of incorporated cities, many of which provide social and community services as independent government entities. This highly localized system for providing services creates an opportunity to improve policy, practices, and supports across the county. One area for potential improvement is the supports and services provided to disconnected youth (or youth at risk being disconnected from school and/or work).¹

In an effort to meet this community wide need, residents of Broward County voted to create a special taxing district, called a children's services council (CSC), in 2000. With a child poverty rate of 18%, the county benefits greatly from the additional funding that the ad valorem tax provides. The CSC convenes relevant stakeholders to collaboratively identify the needs of children and youth across the county. These stakeholders then develop a strategy to align CSC funds with existing local, state and federal funds, providing a coordinated system of supports that meet the needs of children and youth across the county.

This case study describes how federally-funded technical assistance helped the CSC parlay lessons learned from past programs serving disconnected youth into a more expansive effort to align funding for this population across all county systems and services.

¹ Disconnected youth are typically defined as youth, ages 14-24, who are homeless, in foster care, involved in the justice system, or are neither employed nor enrolled in an educational institution (youth.gov).

Background

In many communities, leaders come together to collectively set desired academic, workforce, and social and emotional outcomes for disconnected and youth at risk of disconnection. All too often, however, these leaders do not discuss how to build a collaborative resource development strategy, or plan where they can coordinate local, state, philanthropic, and federal resources to support youth in a comprehensive, integrated way.

Broward County partners supported multiple programs that provided academic and college and career preparation supports to the desired youth between ages 14 and 24. The *CSC LEAP (Literacy, Enrichment, and Academic Pursuits)* high school afterschool program, funded by the federal 21st CCLC program, provided students with the academic supports they needed to earn their high school diploma. *Innovative Concepts (iCon)*, funded by WIOA dollars and offered by the Broward County Public Schools, prepared youth that were no longer enrolled in high school for high-skill jobs through paid work experience as well as with life skills and leadership training. However, the students participating in LEAP wanted access to job training and the iCon youth needed additional academic support to be successful in the job training programs. The pieces of a support system for youth were there—but they did not work together to effectively serve the multiple needs of their participants. The community took charge to bring these parts together, creating an integrated, comprehensive support system. As Cindy Arenberg Seltzer, president and CEO of the CSC of Broward County, put it, “We needed to make the programs fit the child, rather than make the child fit the program.”

This case study describes how the CSC in South Florida did just this, leveraging and pooling multiple funding streams to maximize impact for disconnected youth.

A New Approach to Leveraging Federal Funds

In 2015, the CSC received a Performance Partnership Pilots Program (P3) grant. The grant program provides communities with flexibility in using designated federal funding streams to best meet the needs of their children and families. Using the flexibility granted by P3, CSC leveraged the post-secondary focus of WIOA, the academic focus of 21st CCLC, and the post-secondary support focus of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) to create the Best Opportunities to Shine and Succeed (BOSS) program. This new comprehensive program provides a continuum of needed supports during the school year and over the summer. The strategic approach the CSC used to fund the BOSS program, blending and braiding targeted federal grants with local funds, has inspired even deeper work in coordinating funding that better serves children and youth countywide.

APPLYING THE PARADIGM SHIFT:

A Fiscal Map of Diversion Funds in Broward County

Beyond flexibility, the P3 program also provides communities with access to expert technical assistance (TA) around the use of financing strategies and structures, setting measurable community-level goals, and leveraging data as a tool to demonstrate impact. The CSC is leveraging TA to apply a fiscal mapping process to address another challenge affecting disconnected youth in the county—funding deep end services rather than lower cost, effective prevention and diversion services.

DESIGNING A FISCAL MAPPING PROCESS

First, CSC formed a workgroup comprised of stakeholders across the county that manage touchpoints for diverted youth. As a trusted convener of community entities, CSC successfully engaged individuals from Broward County Public Schools, the Behavioral Health Coalition, Department of Juvenile Justice Services, the Department Children and Families, Child Welfare, and the Broward County Human Services Department in the workgroup. Workgroup members were expected to share data about the local, state, and federal funding streams that their agency administers to support diversion efforts.

Armed with a research question: What funds support youth diversion activities in Broward County?, the CSC working group charted out parameters for the fiscal mapping process including:

- ✦ Desired population characteristics such as age and income eligibility
- ✦ Services such as academic support, runaway and homeless youth services, and violence prevention
- ✦ The types of flexibilities that some funding streams may offer such as in use, eligible recipients, or for direct versus non-direct program use

When presenting the draft mapping parameters for this project to a larger set of stakeholders for review, the working group learned that the definitions of these parameters varied across agencies, providers, and funding streams.

Varying perspectives on the definition of the parameters is not an unusual result. However, a shared understanding of these parameters is essential to uniformly and consistently identify the nature of existing services and the populations that they currently support. To arrive at consensus regarding definitions of services, the demographic characteristics of target youth, and the types of programs that the fiscal map would address, CSC walked through each of the draft parameters with

Descriptive metrics

include: Funding Agency, Administering Department, Source of Funds, Eligible Recipient, and Target Age Range

Analytic metrics address:

What is the funding stream's alignment to the target population and services offered? What are the types of flexibilities possible with a funding stream? Are there opportunities for coordination?

a broader network of community organizations. The insights from this exercise informed a collaboratively-driven data collection framework, featuring a series of community-driven descriptive and analytic metrics (see above for examples).

Next, CSC embarked on a comprehensive, two tiered data collection process, first engaging in interviews with key behavioral health and juvenile justice providers, followed by soliciting both descriptive and analytic information about the funding streams they leverage and the services they provide. The organization also issued a basic survey to additional community organizations to capture information about additional relevant, public funding streams that they leverage to support diverted youth. As a result, CSC generated a picture of the public resources that support diversion programs.

TRANSLATING RESULTS INTO COLLABORATIVE ACTION

Over the course of several months, CSC disseminated the survey across the county and coordinated in-depth follow-up interviews with six of the seven major providers of services for justice-involved youth in the county. CSC staff aggregated the data from the surveys and interviews into a single master data spreadsheet that demonstrated the full extent of resources in the county used to support diversion-related services.

Lessons Learned from Broward County:

- + Engage a workgroup comprised of cross-sector representatives in your issue of interest to guide the fiscal mapping process.
- + Plan to use a mixed-method approach to data collection; interviews help clarify survey responses.
- + Generate consistent definitions of fiscal mapping parameters from service providers to ensure you are collecting comparable data.

The Road Ahead

The subsequent analysis of funding data revealed that funds explicitly supporting diversion are limited. This discovery prompted a broader conversation around how the community can better support disconnected youth. Additionally, CSC discovered that the majority of diversion funds are devoted to residential-based and community-based intervention services, indicating the need to bridge a significant gap in prevention services.

To address this gap in services, the CSC will issue a request for proposals in 2018 to fund additional, more coordinated, prevention-based services for teens in Broward County. This process, with the support of engaged and invested stakeholders, will also serve as the basis for a broader fiscal mapping project in the coming year that aims to highlight the full extent of services for youth in the juvenile justice system—and encourage the coordination of diverse funding streams to bridge additional gaps.