



Juvenile Justice Home-Based Initiative Developmental Evaluation Executive Summary

A. Evaluation Components

1. Overview
2. Retrospective
3. System Analysis
4. Vision for the Future and Guiding Principles
5. Learning Plan

1. Overview

The overview highlights the purposes of the Juvenile Justice Home-Based Initiative (Initiative) Developmental Evaluation (Evaluation) and provides the methods for collecting information. The overarching purposes of the Evaluation were as follows: 1) describe how the Initiative fits into the larger picture of reform, and 2) identify what system changes are needed to make the grant a successful endeavor. The Evaluation was carried out by TerraLuna Collaborative (TerraLuna). TerraLuna utilized a multi-method process to inform their deliverables including stakeholder interviews, listening sessions, and an arts-based evaluation to provide youth perspectives.

2. Retrospective

The Retrospective is a “[n]arrative documenting the development of juvenile justice reform efforts in the last decade in Nebraska, to identify successful efforts, opportunities, and gaps.”

3. System Analysis

The System Analysis reviews Nebraska’s juvenile system through: 1) identification of key factors that influence how this system does or doesn’t work; 2) the perspectives of various stakeholders involved in the system including young people; and 3) implications for reform efforts. Alongside this analysis, TerraLuna created maps of the juvenile system to illustrate two distinct areas: 1) actors and interactions across the system, and 2) a youth’s journey through the system.

4. Vision for the Future and Guiding Principles

This document of the Evaluation promulgates a vision for the Nebraska juvenile justice system. The Vision includes a set of principles to guide reform, core strategies to address needs and reinforces strengths, and suggestions for how the Initiative can support this vision.

5. Learning Plan

The Learning Plan provides an overview of measures that can inform the Initiative, outcomes that stakeholders would like to see tracked more effectively, and discussion of what systems and stakeholders should be more engaged in the process.

B. Overall Themes/Findings

1. Strengths

- a) Clear commitment to children and youth: “It is clear there is a strong commitment to protecting and serving children and youth.”
- b) Alignment with national reform efforts: “Nebraska seems to be catching up with the national tide of reform.”
- c) Perspectives are shifting: “Many stakeholders cited the focus on home-based and community-based treatment and the reduction in the number of kids in detention as two successes that go hand-in-hand.”

2. Challenges

- a) High stakes and short timelines: “With many of the reforms being driven by the Legislature, which has short term limits and reelections to consider, some stakeholders suggested there is not always enough time for reforms to take hold before new reforms are passed.”
- b) Unequal access: “There appears to be frustration from attorneys and judges in Western Nebraska that they are often the last to get services or reforms.”
- c) Racial disparity and disproportionate minority contact: “Interviewees mentioned that there is still a disproportionate amount of youth of color in the system, but no mention of a clear plan to address it.”
- d) Lack of youth and family voice: “Several of the youth participants we worked with did not feel they had been heard or listened to, or that youth were represented in decision-making in the system.”

3. Recommendation Highlights

- a) Ensure community representation in staff
- b) Ensure transparent communication across agencies without requiring additional meetings
- c) Coordinate existing efforts to streamline data collection and management
- d) Reach out to rural areas as projects are implemented
- e) Document and share success stories from youth and families

