

PREFACE

Quality Assurance for Juvenile Justice Educational Programs

Quality assurance reviews (QARs) of educational programs in Florida's juvenile justice facilities are conducted annually by the Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program (JJEPP). JJEPP is funded by the Florida Department of Education (DOE), Division of Public Schools and Community Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services, through a grant to the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Florida State University.

History of the QAR in Florida's Juvenile Justice Facilities

In 1983, the Florida juvenile justice system came under scrutiny from the federal courts as a result of a federal class action lawsuit. The lawsuit was filed on behalf of a 14-year old boy referred to as *Bobby M.* and three other children who were confined at the Arthur G. Dozier Training School for Boys in Marianna, the Florida School for Boys in Okeechobee, and the Alyce D. McPherson School for Girls in Ocala. The *Bobby M.* complaint alleged inhumane conditions and treatment in the three existing training schools that served as Florida's highest security facilities for juvenile offenders.

In response to the *Bobby M.* case, the Juvenile Justice Act of 1990 completely revamped Florida's juvenile justice system. The Juvenile Justice Act recognized similarities in the needs of delinquent and dependent children and authorized funding for enhanced prevention and early intervention service needs and risk assessments, reduction in the use of secure detention, alternative placement and supervision, and treatment programs to meet the needs of juveniles.

There was a consensus among DOE, the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS), and the Florida Legislature that a strong internal QAR process was necessary to ensure more effective treatment for youth at risk. In 1993, the HRS Division of Children and Families developed a QAR procedure and wrote evaluation standards. DOE was asked to assist HRS in developing standards for educational programs provided within juvenile justice commitment facilities. The professional staff at DOE's Bureau of Education for Exceptional Students developed four standards (transition, service delivery, personnel competencies, and administration) and developed key indicators for each standard to identify the areas that would be reviewed.

In 1994, the Juvenile Justice Reform Act removed juvenile justice programs and services from HRS and assigned them to the newly created Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). DJJ was created as the administrative agency to develop, coordinate, and oversee

comprehensive services and programs statewide for the prevention, early intervention, control, and rehabilitative treatment of juvenile offenders. A significant piece of this legislation required that a QAR program be a part of the new department as an ongoing component of the state's juvenile justice services.

In 1995, the first QAR report from DJJ was submitted to the Governor and the Legislature, and educational reviews were again scheduled by DJJ. DOE professional staff members and contracted part-time reviewers were trained and assisted with conducting the educational portion of these reviews.

In 1996, the Legislature created s.230.23161, F.S., entitled "Educational Services in DJJ Programs," which authorized DOE to conduct educational QARs, annually revise the QAR standards and key indicators, and write an annual report on the status of juvenile justice educational programs to be included in the "Annual Report to the Legislature" by DJJ. This legislation defined the educational services that are required to be provided by a local school district to each DJJ detention center and commitment program. It also contained additional requirements for school districts and for evaluation of juvenile justice programs, including allocations of resources and teacher competencies.

In 1997, DOE awarded a project to the University of North Florida to coordinate the educational QAR process. Educational programs in 182 juvenile justice facilities were assessed using the four QAR standards. Key indicators for each standard were rated based on the quality of performance in the facility. In 1998, the project between DOE and the University of North Florida ended, and DOE awarded a new contract to Florida State University. On June 1, 1998, the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Florida State University began a discretionary project with DOE to conduct QARs and conduct research related to Florida's juvenile justice educational programs. This program was named the Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program (JJEPP).

In 1998, and again in 1999, JJEPP held several statewide regional meetings to elicit input from various public and private providers and school district administrators on revisions of the current standards and the key indicators within those standards. These meetings provided the basis for annually revising the educational quality assurance standards. JJEPP's future plans include conducting annual educational QARs in juvenile justice facilities, providing targeted technical assistance and regional training, maintaining a database to facilitate technical assistance and information dissemination, identifying most promising practices and program components, developing policy recommendations based on the QARs, and researching various topics that impact the effectiveness of educational programming in Florida's juvenile justice facilities.

JJEEP Mission Statement

The mission of JJEEP is to ensure that each student who is assigned to DJJ programs receives high-quality and comprehensive educational services that increase that student's potential for future success. JJEEP's four main functions are to:

- conduct annual QARs of the educational programs in Florida's juvenile justice facilities
- provide technical assistance to improve the various educational programs
- conduct research that identifies and validates most promising educational practices
- provide annual recommendations to DOE about policy, aimed ultimately at ensuring the successful transition of students back into the community, school, and/or work

JJEEP Vision Statement

The vision of DOE and JJEEP is for each provider of educational services in Florida's juvenile justice facilities to be of such high quality that all young people transitioning back to their local communities will be prepared to return to school, work, and home settings as successful and well-educated citizens.

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