



The Independent Voice for Kentucky's Children

KENTUCKY
YOUTH
ADVOCATES

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Reclaiming Futures in Kentucky

Applying a Proven Framework to Respond Effectively to Status Offenses

Jeffersontown, KY - As communities across the Commonwealth recognize the need for a new way to respond to youth who have been sent to court for status offenses, Kentucky Youth Advocates (KYA) releases, *Reclaiming Futures in Kentucky: Applying a proven framework for an effective community and judicial response to status offenses and other complex needs of youth in rural and urban settings.*

KYA and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (DBHDID) came together to adapt the national Reclaiming Futures framework, which originally focused on youth with substance abuse problems, and applied it to the secure detention of youth for status offenses. DBHDID has been working with the original Reclaiming Futures framework in the Cumberland River and Kentucky River regions since 2002.

In Kentucky status offenses are youth misbehaviors that include skipping school, being late for school, running away from home, and being beyond control of parents/guardians or school personnel. Currently, Kentucky locks up youth for status offenses at the second highest rate in the nation – a response which fails to address the underlying causes of the problem.

“Research shows that therapeutic interventions work and still keep children charged with status offenses accountable. Locking them up actually makes it more likely they will commit crimes in the future,” said Tara Grieshop-Goodwin, Deputy Director of Kentucky Youth Advocates. “The Reclaiming Futures framework provides a roadmap for communities to implement what is known to be effective for public safety in the long run.”

Kentucky’s legislature considered policy changes to reduce the incarceration of youth for status offenses during the 2011 General Assembly, and this document provides a community-based framework that complements those proposed policy changes. It assists communities in developing a results-focused response to youth misbehavior. Also, it holds youth accountable while addressing the underlying problems of their complex needs.

"Many judges, court designated workers and juvenile justice practitioners have expressed concern with the current lack of effective community-based options outside of secure detention for youth charged with status offenses," said Patrick Yewell, Executive Officer of the Department of Family and Juvenile Services with the Administrative Office of the Courts. "This framework could assist more communities in Kentucky to develop strong community-based initiatives."

Reclaiming Futures' framework identifies the critical stages of implementing a successful plan for youth who have been or are at risk of being charged with a status offense. The framework consists of six stages that direct how the juvenile justice system, other youth serving agencies and organizations, and the community can work together to reduce the secure detention of youth charged with status offenses and work toward positive outcomes for these youth and their families.

Every child needs quality learning opportunities and support to make a successful transition to adulthood and become a productive citizen of our Commonwealth. Because adolescence can be such a vulnerable and risky time for youth as they attempt to become independent adults, some will engage in troubling behavior. However, appropriate and consistently-applied discipline can ensure youth have opportunities to learn from mistakes and become successful contributing adults.

To find out more, contact Whitney Neal at wneal@kyyouth.org or 502-895-8167 extension 121 for an embargoed copy of *Reclaiming Futures Framework for Kentucky*. On August 25, 2011, the report will be available at <http://www.kyyouth.org/Publications/>.

Communities interested in licensing criteria to pursue becoming an official Reclaiming Futures site should contact the Reclaiming Futures National Program Office at info@reclaimingfutures.org.

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***Kentucky Youth Advocates** is a non-partisan, non-profit children's advocacy organization. KYA represents a voice for Kentucky's most precious asset – its youth. We believe that Kentucky's youth deserve the opportunities and resources necessary to ensure their productive development and health.*