An Examination of Data-Sharing Procedures of Former Juvenile Offenders Re-enrolling Into Mainstream Public Schools[1]

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ABSTRACT

This study examined data-sharing advantages and disadvantages regarding the impact on school re-enrollment procedures employed by two school systems for 578 former juvenile offenders. These students were re-enrolling from secured supervised settings to urban mainstream secondary public schools and alternative schools and programs in New England. Quantitative data regarding student Individual Education Plans (IEP) and qualitative data from interviews with 19 support personnel and selected documents were used to evaluate how sharing data enhanced or disengaged former offenders from secondary urban schools. The characteristics of former juvenile offenders' lack of school involvement with respect to truancy, school suspension and expulsion, learning, behavior, and emotional disabilities, as well as family, economic, and social disadvantages were examined.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of school re-enrollment procedures of former juvenile offenders re-entering mainstream public schools by identifying data-sharing policies and practices. Bureaucratic barriers and logistical impediments between public school systems, juvenile justice agencies, child service agencies, and mental health and social service agencies causes poor academic, social, and behavioral outcomes of at-risk youth (Hartigan, 2011). Those obstacles promote ineffective collaboration, communication, and coordination across schools and public agencies that lead to school dropout factories and a pathway towards the juvenile justice system for vulnerable youth (Bahena, Cooc, Currie-Rubin, Kuttner, & Ng, 2012; Gonsoulin & Reed, 2011; Wilson, 2000).

Partnerships between state and local school districts and related child service agencies must provide fiscal and personnel resources, technological expertise, and memorandums of understanding (MOU) between agencies that establish clear expectations and protocols for sharing data (Gonsoulin & Reed, 2011). According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the American Bar Association (ABA) and experts in the field, implementing practices such as effective interagency communication, collaboration, and coordination into one comprehensive integrated data sharing system that link public school districts and related child service agencies, can foster positive outcomes that promote successful re-entry of former juvenile offenders into schools (Gonsoulin & Reed, 2011).

Although there are multiple approaches and strategies that may increase the likelihood of successful re-enrollment of former offenders into mainstream public school

districts from shared data systems, it is unlikely that former offenders will succeed in any school or learning environment unless innovative initiatives are implemented across public school districts and child service agencies that support re-enrollment strategies (Armstrong & Altschuler, 1997; Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Czeh, Cantor, Crosse, & Hantman, 2004). Unfortunately, standard operational protocols that address successful re-enrollment procedures within our child service agencies vary considerably from state to state and within states and school districts (Umass Donahue Institute Research and Evaluation Group, 2008). Therefore, the purpose of this research was to investigate the following research questions to identify and describe the difference between successful and unsuccessful school re-enrollment procedures covering the purposes of interagency data sharing:

1. When utilizing effective data-sharing procedures, are there significant differences between former juvenile offenders who are released from incarceration and successfully reenter alternative schools and programs and traditional schools, and those who do not successfully reenter with respect to disability, or Individual Education Plan (IEP) status?

2. What critical elements of the two Southern New England urban secondary school districts interagency data-sharing re-enrollment procedures, work effectively to prepare former juvenile offenders to re-enter mainstream or alternative school settings?

Review of Literature

Transition Issues

The best transition programs begin immediately when youth are incarcerated; however, research has shown that youth in correctional systems are “associated with poor academic outcomes, with 75 percent of youth advancing less than one grade per year ” (Matvya, Lever, & Boyle, 2006, p. 1). There are large numbers of juveniles incarcerated within juvenile correctional systems throughout America. According to Hagner, Malloy, Mazzone, and Cormier (2008), 7,100,000 adolescents are incarcerated annually in detention centers throughout America. The process of moving and eventually returning youth to the community poses formidable challenges for the juvenile justice system and its services providers, namely public schools (Chung, Schubert, & Mulvey, 2007). Coordinated and effective data sharing procedures are not in place in many school districts and juvenile detention systems throughout America because of cost considerations (Kumar, 2012; Matvya et al., 2006).

Contrary to early transition planning, transition plans are rarely in place to support at-risk youth when they exit confinement and return to family, school, and community (Nellis & Wayman, 2009). Nellis and Wayman reported that, even though some youth excel during confinement, many struggle to transition to schools successfully, which is due to the lack of data-sharing supports of different sources between educational, mental health and social service organizations that are required to unconditionally be responsible to provide necessary supports, assessments, or interventions (Boruch, 2012; Nellis & Wayman, 2009). As a result of the lack of those supports, at-risk youth “recidivism rates range between 50 to 70 percent” (Nellis & Wayman, 2009, p. 10).

Transition can be very difficult and complicated for incarcerated youth, and even more burdensome for incarcerated youth with disabilities who move between the correctional and public school systems (Edgar, Webb, & Maddox, 1987**;** Whitney-Thomas & Moloney, 2001). A number of factors force former offenders through the human resource network, which have been developed unsystematically by lawmakers, community leaders, and special interest groups driven to respond to the needs of health, education, and social services (Edgar et al., 1987). Unfortunately, those factors often relate to the system and not the needs of the clients, but when targeted areas of improvement (TAI) are initiated through the collection and sharing of information, at-risk youth with disabilities can and should have supervision, supports, and services immediately available during post-release (Child Welfare League of America and Juvenile Law, 2008; Edgar et al., 1987). Without the collection and sharing of information TAI are worthless. For instance, a juvenile offender may require special education and mental health services but may only transition to a separate agency to receive those services because they seldom provide joint services for both needs (Edgar et al., 1987).

School districts and human service agencies “have evolved complex organizational patterns that are not always consistent across agencies; what is true in one location may vary in another” (Edgar et al., 1987, p. 254). As a result, substantial barriers to data-sharing responsibilities inadvertently create territorial issues, communication barriers, and staff resistance that perpetuates the unwillingness to embrace a set of goals and objectives to benefit timely at-risk transitions (Edgar et al., 1987 Gonsoulin & Read, 2011).

School Reentry

Historically, former juvenile offenders that transition to urban public schools have not experienced positive academic and social outcomes (Eber, Nelson, & Miles, 1997). Furthermore, some of the biggest challenges to school success include excessive dropout rates, academic failure, low graduation rates, institutional placements, and poor post release adjustments (Eber et al., 1997). In addition, more than two-thirds of youths released from secured juvenile settings do not return to school, and the prevalence of learning among former offenders with emotional and behavioral disabilities is three to five times higher than the general population of youth in court-ordered placement (Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, 2009).

Unfortunately, schools and service agencies that fail to provide and share academic, social, and family service programs, jeopardize successful school and community integration the first few months after release, which is often critical for young offenders, since they are without structure, supervision, and support of court-placement settings when they re-enroll to school (Chung, Schubert, & Mulvey, 2007).

The Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (DYS) (Umass Donahue Institute Research and Evaluation group, 2008) studied challenges that prevented the efficient and effective transition of former juvenile offenders to urban public and alternative schools and programs. As a result of the study, an effort to reform those challenges began in 2003 (Umass Donahue Institute Research and Evaluation group, 2008). Key findings with respect to transition services revealed that more vigorous career readiness methods improved the infrastructure to support student transitions, and improved education system coordination for DYS youth needed to be implemented (Umass

Donahue Institute Research and Evaluation group, 2008). Implementation of the education reform strategies at DYS resulted in positive outcomes, such as workforce stability and qualifications, changes in instructional practices, high school diplomas earned, General Education Diploma (GED) attainment, and MCAS achievement (Umass Donahue Institute Research and Evaluation Group, 2008).

In 2006, the Umass Donahue Institute Research and Evaluation group (2008) program evaluation first identified the characteristics of former offenders; large proportion of youth are below grade level; chronic academic and behavioral difficulties; 45 percent have special learning needs; limited educational options; 55 percent of DYS youth received social services; 61 percent used alcohol prior to commitment; and 82 percent used marijuana prior to commitment (Umass Donahue Institute Research and Evaluation group, 2008). Not only does the characteristics of DYS youth present challenges, the evaluation revealed that a multitude of private organizations were contracted by DYS, complicating coordination and management of educational services. Furthermore, information systems were limited in supporting education-related data collection and reporting (Umass Donahue Institute Research and Evaluation group, 2008). As a result of the limitations of data-sharing information systems supporting related educational services contracted from private organizations, former juvenile offenders enrolled into Community Transition Schools (CTS) in Holyoke, Lynn, and Boston Massachusetts school districts. DYS required former offenders meet specific benchmarks in CTS before transitioning to mainstream schools. Moreover, system coordination for DYS education services improved when they hired an Education Data Systems Specialist to collect, manage, and analyze student, teacher, and program data

(Umass Donahue Institute Research and Evaluation group, 2008). Although many positive outcomes of the evaluation reflect the "best practices" approach to school reenrollment, there are strategic suggestions from the Umass Donahue Institute Research and Evaluation group (2008) that "identified possible priorities and opportunities for the continued improvement at DYS," (p. 66). Those priorities were communication and cooperation of regular and special education services between DYS and private vendors, monitoring student transition services goals and long-term outcomes, such as GED pass rates, high school graduation rates, and the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) achievements, central information management for reporting system data, and a communication strategy for both internal and external service agencies (Umass Donahue Institute Research and Evaluation Group, 2008).

Effects of Poverty Associated to At-Risk Youth

While Umass Donahue Institute Research and Evaluation Group (2008) identified effective strategies for school reenrollment of Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (DYS), other risk factors experienced by former offenders outside of school are family, community, peer groups, and poverty (Christle et al., 2005). Effects of poverty pose growing challenges to urban youth in a multitude of ways (Jenson, 2009; Lippman, Burns & McArthur, 1996). "The four primary factors affecting families living in poverty are emotional and social challenges, acute and chronic stressors, cognitive lags, and health and safety issues" (Jenson, 2009, p. 7). The likelihood of being poor contributes to a cascade of factors including risk-taking behaviors that make desirable outcomes much more difficult to reach (Jenson, 2009; Lippman, Burns, & McArthur, 1996).

Children who live in poverty often feel isolated and unloved compared to well-off children (Jenson, 2009). Poor children have fewer and less parental and social supports and are more likely to depend on peers than adults, which lead to life events that contribute to poor academic performance, high tardy rates and absenteeism, dropping out of school, crime, drug abuse, and teenage pregnancy (Jenson, 2009). In addition, Jenson (2009), also reported that children living in poverty display "acting-out behaviors, impatience and impulsivity, gaps in politeness and social graces, a more limited range of behavioral responses, inappropriate emotional responses, and less empathy for others' misfortunes" (Jenson, 2009, p. 19). Many of those affects or growing challenges of poverty mirror the dynamic risk factors for delinquency, which perpetuates troubled youth to re-offend (Knowledge Brief, 2011). As a result of collecting and sharing data between educational and juvenile justice agencies, parole and probation officers, sharing a completed validated risk/needs intervention assessment tool digitally between stakeholder agencies, can lead to a significant reduction in recidivism rates of youth living in poverty (Knowledge Brief, 2011).

Recent evidence suggests (Jenson, 2009) that social relationships presents a greater amount of influence on their behavior due to the quality of care a parent provides. Core relationships with parents and peers, whether they are secure and attached or unsecured and detached, form the personality of a young child (Jenson, 2009). When a child is detached from an unsupportive parent, those core relationships often pressure youth to act like their peers (Jenson, 2009). Children raised in poverty that are influenced by negative peer relationships usually behave differently than affluent children (Jenson, 2009). Also, parents of poor children that develop antisocial

behaviors are faced with overwhelming challenges that contribute more chronic sources of stress, such as large number of siblings that need care, difficulty paying bills, family disruptions, living in substandard housing, poor quality of medical care, high mobility rates, lack of transportation, and risks of criminal victimization (Hashima & Amato, 1994; Jenson, 2009; Payne & Slocum, 2011).

Those overwhelming challenges are affecting student's success and contributing to juvenile justice involvement throughout America (Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, 2011). In the State of Rhode Island, 30,000 or 14 percent of "children had a least one parent unemployed during 2010, compared to only two states with higher rates; Nevada at 16 percent, and the District of Columbia at 15 percent" (Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, 2011, p. 1). Also in Rhode Island, the "percentage of children living in poverty increased from 15 percent in 2008 to 17 percent in 2009, but continued to be lower than the national rate of 20 percent" (Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, 2011, p. 2). Moreover, 31 percent of children in Rhode Island were "living in families in which no parent had full-time, year-round employment in 2009, the same as the national rate" (Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, 2011, p. 2). With fewer economic and human resources, a child's energy to learn and stay focused in school is distracted by violence, danger, and overwhelming family problems, such as "missed rent payments, utility shutoffs, inadequate access to health care, unstable child care arrangements, and food insecurity" (Jenson, 2009; The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011, p. 9; McKinney, Flenner, Frazier, & Abrams, 2006).

Youth Offenders with Emotional, Behavioral, and Learning Disabilities

Students with disabilities under the authority of the juvenile justice system face serious transition and rehabilitation challenges as they reenter the community (Hagner,

Malloy, Mazzone, & Cormier, 2008). The high failure rate of rehabilitating juveniles indicates that there is a subgroup of juvenile re-offenders that fall into one of the following categories identified as “learning disabled, emotionally disturbed/mentally disordered, developmentally delayed, drug and alcohol dependent, neurologically impaired, and juvenile sex offender” (Smedley, Levinson, Barker, & DeAngelis, 2003, p. 108). Accurate estimates of at-risk youth with disabilities are difficult to obtain in part because many of them are undiagnosed (Hagner et al., 2008). However, when disabilities of at-risk youth are diagnosed, the majority of them are diagnosed with emotional and behavioral disturbances (Hagner et al., 2008). Hagner et al. further noted that out of the estimated 7,100,000 youth incarcerated annually throughout juvenile correctional facilities in America, an estimated 40 to 70 percent have disabilities; “43 percent of those exiting youth detention without high school diplomas never reenter school, and 60 percent of those who do not return to school subsequently drop out” (p. 241). Seventy three percent of juvenile offenders with emotional disturbances (also referred to as emotional or behavior disorders) who dropped out of school were arrested (Sinclair, Christenson & Thurlow, 2005). “Fifty two percent of all of the students with emotional or behavioral disabilities who exited special education did so because they moved, compared to 37 percent of students across all disability categories” (Sinclair et al., 2005, p. 466). Many behavioral and education issues addressed through individual special education programs (IEP) closely resemble issues incorporated within the juvenile justice disposition process (Burrell & Warboys, 2000). Even though state laws determine confidentiality of juvenile records, many behavioral and educational issues relating to IEPs are a manifestation of the disability (Petrila,

2012). Those education and behavior indicators that lead to delinquency can be prevented through interagency data-sharing systems when the data is analyzed to impose interventions that relate to “out-of-school factors and in-school performance” (Hartigan, 2011, p. 2).

Alternative Education

Parents, educators, school board members, and others have realized that traditional education is not meeting the needs and interests of children of the at- risk population (De La Rosa, 1998). Alternative educational measures should provide students with opportunities to learn in nontraditional settings where they receive more individualized instruction (De La Rosa, 1998). However, although Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, (2008) noted that the data collected from 33 states in this study suggested that alternative schools and programs be utilized as a setting for a variety of factors, such as dropouts, suspensions, expulsions, learning difficulties, court system referrals, social and emotional problems, and others, they should not be utilized as “dumping grounds” or “holding tanks” to “baby sit” a challenging population.

The drive for alternative measures derives from the nations concern over the continued problem of at-risk children dropping out of school (De La Rosa, 1998; Lehr et al., 2008). Staggering social and economic ramifications cost America about 77 billion dollars annually (De La Rosa, 1998). “For every 1 dollar spent on the prevention and education of potential dropouts, 9 dollars would be returned to the state” (De La Rosa, 1998, p. 1).

Understanding the role and responsibilities of alternative schools and programs, and the extent in which they provide services to at-risk students is not well known and

indicates that the function and role they play needs to be further researched and developed to understand how at-risk students are faring, since a large proportion of them drop out of schools (Lehr et al., 2008). For alternative schools and programs to thrive and provide encouraging outcomes for students who are at-risk of failing, the quality of political and educational leadership is crucial to enhance "communication and collaboration skills to work with related school service personnel, community-based professionals, and students and their families" to enhance the necessary supports, to complete their secondary school program and obtain the necessary skills either to move on to higher education, or successfully support themselves and their families (Foley & Pang, 2006, p. 20; Lehr et al., 2008).

Re-enrollment Best Practices: A Collaborative Approach

Responding to the needs of children, especially children in the juvenile justice arena, requires not only good judgment, but also includes digital data records that can be linked to integrated data systems that matches students across all service agencies (Boruch, 2012; Gonsoulin & Read, 2011: Rapp, Stephens, & Clontz, 1989).

Promoting and encouraging a system of shared and coordinated responsibility across all agencies on the part of former juvenile offenders can improve the educational success and overall well-being of troubled youth (Gonsoulin & Read, 2011). Attaining effective interagency collaboration and communication data systems can be very challenging to all stakeholders in each agency and may create substantial barriers that impact at-risk youth (Gonsoulin & Read, 2011). Several of those obstacles to collaboration can include philosophical barriers, such as differences in each agencies mission, mandates, and goals; second, structural barriers that include fragmented

management and decision making arrangements; third, language and communication barriers that entails unique terminology that frustrates other child-serving agencies and causes an unwillingness to work with each other, and lastly, staff resistance which may be perceived as a change in job responsibilities, increased workload, and operating outside of the comfort zone (Gonsoulin & Read, 2011).

Although effective interagency collaboration and communication are not easy tasks between various child services agencies, it is essential to develop a comprehensive data-sharing system that links records to incorporate educational and related services of former juvenile offenders that expeditiously re-enrolls them into mainstream school settings (Bouruch, 2012; Gonsoulin & Read, 2011).

Implications for School Leaders

School leaders informally and formally attempt to keep former offenders out of their schools because of repeated disciplinary issues that require thorough documentation and compliance to due process laws (Bahena, Cooc, Currie-Rubin, Kuttner, & Ng, 2012; Frakas et al., 2003). On the other hand, Klehr (2009) noted that school leaders have used the NCLB Act to push out disruptive students out of school by expelling them because they are under pressure to produce data that show students are achieving. Expelling disruptive students eliminates underachieving data of Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) protocols of the NCLB Act because a disruptive student is no longer a part of the school district (Bahena, Cooc, Currie-Rubin, Kuttner, & Ng, 2012; Klehr, 2009).

The 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) clearly states that a free appropriate public education (FAPE) must be available to all children with disabilities,

including students who have been suspended or expelled from school (Crabtree, n.d.). Certain behaviors that fit the characteristics of former juvenile offenders, such as possession and use of dangerous weapons, illegal substances, and serious assaults at school or school functions can change a students placement to an interim alternative educational setting for 45 days “proving that maintaining the child in her current placement is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or others” (Crabtree, n.d., p. 2). Also, long-term suspension or expulsions cannot be imposed on special education students if the behavior being disciplined is a manifestation of the disability (Crabtree, n.d.). Furthermore, as a result of the manifestation of the disability, a functional behavior assessment must be developed or modified to address the behavior for which the student was suspended or expelled (Crabtree, n.d.).

By understanding the laws that apply to NCLB, FERPA, and IDEA, and finding alternative methods to keep youth in school, school leaders can effectively service students and former juvenile offenders with special needs by sharing information in cooperative, collaborative, and coordinated methods (Crabtree, n.d.;Gonsoulin & Read, 2011).

Methodology

Framework of the Study

Stufflebeam’s CIPP Evaluation Model (1987), was utilized as an evaluation approach in this research to improve the functioning of school re-enrollment programs as it relates to data-sharing issues. For the purpose of this research, the Process (i.e., implementation) and Product (i.e., outcomes) components of the model were utilized.

Process and Product Evaluation

An on-going assessment of the school re-enrollment process was conducted through standardized open-ended interviews. Interview questions were framed to elicit process concept responses that "assess the extent to which participants carry out their roles" and responsibilities (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007, p. 341). In addition, there were interview questions designed to elicit product responses that were intended to provide outcome related data such as short and long term goals, and intended and unintended consequences as perceived by the school support personnel, specialist, and administrators (Stufflebeam, 1987).

School re-enrollment documents from both school districts were obtained and reviewed to draw inferences about institutional phenomena and determine patterns of habitualization (Krippendorff, 2004). Krippendorff further states that, "much communication that takes place within institutions is routine, relational, and coordinative, and it is valued as such, even enforced, without apparent reason" (p. 71).

Sample

This study examined archival educational data of former juvenile offenders from *N*=2 urban school districts in Southern New England subject to the guidelines of The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The purpose of sampling former juvenile offenders was to enable the researchers to generalize from a sample of juvenile offenders re-enrolling into schools from grades 9 to 12 and carefully defining the sample to represent the demographics of the population (Creswell & Piano Clark, 2007). With the approval of *N*=2 school superintendents, *N*= 578 computer generated educational data points (*n*=359 in school district 1, and *n*=219 in school district 2) were categorized, and coded into school district identification number, grade, gender, ethnicity, Individual

education Plan (IEP), English proficiency, economically disadvantage status, successful school re-enrollment, and school attendance combined for calendar years 2005 to 2010. Furthermore, in accordance with FERPA, IEP coded data indicted a “yes” or “no” of IEP status. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) release and disclosure requirements are substantially identical to those in FERPA (National Forum on Educational Statistics, 2004). Therefore, individuals could not be identified in any of the coded categories utilized within the study. As a result of those coded categories, FERPA allows certain records to be disclosed without consent of a parent or eligible student when there is a “legitimate educational interest.” Those disclosures include other schools to which a student is transferring, and organizations or persons, such as the researchers who conducted this study for or on the behalf of the school (National Forum on Educational Statistics, 2004).

Standardized open-ended interviews (Pattern, 2002) were with *N*=2 urban secondary special education directors who also served as school transition facilitators, *N*=3 school vice principals, one which also served as the head of guidance, *N*=4 school social workers, *N*=6 guidance counselors, *N*=2 school psychologist, *N*=1 Diagnostic Prescriptive Teacher (DPT), and *N*=1 urban secondary school principal from *N*=3 urban secondary schools. One urban secondary school district has 1 special education director representing 2 secondary schools.

Successful school re-enrollment defines coordinated post-release, appropriate support services, and a successful movement towards school re-entry. Also defined within the successful school re-enrollment model is youth are required to regularly attend school on time for the first 40 to 45 days with a minimum of five verifiable

absences.

Instrumentation

Interviews (Pattern, 2002) were utilized so “respondents answer the same questions, thus increasing comparability of responses” (Patton, 2002, p. 349), and “the data obtained are thus systematic and thorough” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 247). To ensure data reliability, member checking was utilized to give the interviewees the opportunity to review the transcriptions from audio recordings to correct errors and challenge perceived inaccurate interpretations (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The terminology from the transcripts of interviews was documented and analyzed to corroborate, cross-validate, or confirm emerging themes, patterns, ideas or concepts to converge data obtained from school re-enrollment documents and archival educational data (Mathison, 1988; Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003).

Institutional Documents

As a follow-up to the interviews, blank school re-enrollment forms from the school districts were collected and reviewed. Both school district registration documents questions, regarding student registration information, were carefully constructed under certain legal conditions reflecting the legal constraints required under state and federal law (Krippendorff, 2004). Also, according to Patton, (2002) institutional documents in schools are pervasive and “are socially constructed realities that warrant study in their own right” (p. 498). The purpose of collecting school re-enrollment (registration forms) documents was to recognize the meanings to the texts, and to corroborate, confirm, cross-validate the data from archival educational data and interviews.

Data Collection

Archival educational data were collected from the State Education Agency (SEA) in Southern New England with the permission from the school districts superintendents in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Interviews with school vice principals, principal, school guidance counselors, special education directors, transition coordinators, school psychologists, a diagnostic prescriptive teacher, and school social workers were conducted in an office of each participant's school where they were assigned. The interview questions of key informants were designed and targeted towards individual perceptions and experiences of their school districts school re- enrollment process including data-sharing procedures, personal policies, and organization outcomes (Yin, 2009). Each interview was recorded. Everything that was recorded or said was confidential to the study. After each interview was conducted, the digital recorder was checked to ensure that there were no malfunctions and the interview was clear and precise for rigor and validity (Patton, 2002). During the interviews, extensive detailed field notes were taken and checked to "uncover areas of ambiguity or uncertainty" (Patton, 2002, p. 383). After the interviews, a period of time was arranged to reflect upon the field notes to clarify, elaborate, and evaluate the observations and settings of each interview (Patton). Also, after each interview session, digital recordings were transferred to an audio compact disc (CD) so they could be transcribed to analyze the data for emerging themes, patterns, ideas, or concepts. Institutional school re-enrollment (registration) documents were collected from each school district during and after interviews. During certain interviews the interviewee reflected upon the content of the documents to express or imply the operational meanings (Krippendorff, 2004).

Data Analysis

The archival education data addressed Research Question 1. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, 2011) software was utilized to analyze coded quantitative nominal education archival data. Prior to conducting the chi-square analyses, descriptive statistics (i,e., frequencies and percents) were analyzed. Findings reported the relationships between nominal categories of disability (IEP) and successful school re-enrollment. Chi-square analysis was utilized to analyze whether there was a significant difference between the expected and observed cell frequencies in nominal categories (Isaac & Michael, 2005). In this study the researchers focused qualitative findings on disability and IEP status as a significant factor for successful school re-enrollment as it relates to data sharing procedures within school districts. Furthermore, utilizing data sharing protocols between schools, school districts, juvenile justice systems, and child service agencies within the legal guidelines of IDEA and FERPA support the findings of this study.

Analyzing interview data “involves identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying, and labeling the primary patterns in the data. This essentially means analyzing the core content of interviews and observations to determine what’s significant” (Patton, 2002, p. 463). For this study, the hand-coding approach was used to group evidence and label themes from interview transcripts and school re- enrollment documents, and categorize them to describe, compare, and interpret the findings(Creswell & Piano Clark, 2007).

Results

Process Analysis

Both school districts, and the child-service agencies that serve former juvenile

offenders “evolved complex organizational patterns not always consistent across agencies” (Edgar et al., 1987, p. 254). Stufflebeam (1987) noted “a process evaluation provides information that can be used to guide the implementation of program strategies, procedures, and activities, as well as a means to identify successes and failures” (p. 25).

In both urban school districts the *N*=19 standardized open-ended interviews revealed that there were no systematic re-enrollment procedures, including interagency data-sharing procedures or practices between school districts and the juvenile detention facility comprehensive enough to effectively service former juvenile offenders with and without IEPs. Table 1 (see end of document) indicates that there are 65 percent of former juvenile offenders without an IEP compared to 35 percent with an IEP. In Table 2, the quantitative data analyzed utilizing chi-square analysis indicated that for those former juvenile offenders who had an IEP, more than expected were successful, and fewer than expected were not successful. Also, for those that did not have an IEP, fewer than expected were successful, and more than expected were not successful. This finding revealed a significant problem for at-risk youth without an IEP, since they were placed into a less structured environment within mainstream urban public school systems, which lack service supports that are mandated for former offenders with IEPs. Also significant about student IEP data are the special needs and uses of that data as it pertains to planning instruction (National Forum on Educational Statistics, 2004). Student data needs continue to be even more significant when it promotes efficiency and effectiveness of the educational agency or program, as well as accountability and funding decisions (National Forum on Educational Statistics, 2004). When school

districts share IEP data between themselves, juvenile justice systems, and child service agencies, and appropriately place them where their needs are being addressed by special needs teachers, their academic accomplishments are much more meaningful, that lead to high school graduation and postsecondary commitments.

Product Analysis

In school district 1 where Stufflebeam & Shinkfiled's (2007) product evaluation theory was examined, the Transition facilitator could not provide any primary examples of positive educational outcomes other than her excellent relationship with the employees at the juvenile correctional agency that held many of her former students. She further noted that there was a lack of communication between out-of-district placements within her school district, known as group homes, where former offenders would register for school during the summer months when school was in recess, and then began violating traditional school rules, thus creating problems during the beginning of school year. She further revealed that the court system failed to communicate with the school district by not inquiring about a former offender's academic progress or whether or not they had been truant, tardy, or committed school infractions that limited their learning.

In school district 2 a guidance counselor revealed that when parents did not fill out the re-enrollment (registration) packet questions, she did not notify or probe the parent(s) or student to answer the required registration questions, because she felt that she did not want to breach any confidentiality issues. She also was asked about what elements of the re-enrollment process were most effective, and she revealed that school transcripts, as well as school curriculums were not uniform throughout Southern New England schools. She considered this to be an obstacle for former offenders re-

enrolling into different school systems. In addition, she believed that former offenders with and without special needs should begin in alternative learning programs first, because they do not last in the tradition school settings.

For the vast majority of children involved in the juvenile justice system, many of them "frequently face parent(s) who have given up on them, teachers and fellow students who fear them, and citizens who do not want them" to return to the community" (Ingersoll & LeBoeuf, 1997, p. 6). Unfortunately, the lack of social support and assistance, and parental behavior create very dangerous situations for children that hinder their chances for future success (Hashima & Amato, 1994; Ingersoll & LeBoeuf, 1997). As a result of family issues, former offenders create problems for school administrators, engage in delinquent behavior, become habitually truant from school, experience school failure, drop out of school, and become involved in the juvenile justice system (Ingersoll & LeBoeuf, 1997). In addition, more than two-thirds of youths released from secured juvenile settings do not return to school, and the prevalence of learning difficulties among former offenders with emotional and behavioral disabilities is three to five times higher than the general population of youth in court-ordered placement (Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, 2008).

Re-enrollment Documents

The purpose for collecting and examining school re-enrollment (registration) documents was to recognize the meanings of the texts, and determine whether or not they were significant similarities or differences with respect to potential positive or negative outcomes. Both school districts' school re-enrollment (registration) documents were very similar and were utilized to gather essential data to re-enroll or enroll all

youth. However, even though all re-enrollment documents were basically specific enough to gather data to make logical decisions, they should have been utilized systematically, within integrated data systems to be more effective (Boruch, 2012).

In addition, developing and implementing a comprehensive systematic approach to gather school re-enrollment data on former offenders, leads to school and agency coordination, adequate transition planning, faster retrieval and transfer of educational records, and sufficient follow-up and sustained support after enrollment (Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, 2008).

Conclusions

The major factors that impede successful school re-enrollment are interagency fragmentation, lack of coordination, collaboration, communication, training, and data sharing capabilities. These factors often cause child welfare, mental health, juvenile justice agencies, education systems, and families to lack the pertinent information that increases the likelihood that former juvenile offenders successfully transition into mainstream schools and graduate (Gonsoulin & Read, 2011). Without these essential procedures in place, former offenders become frustrated with school, dropout, and more likely than not, re-offend, and return to confined structured environments (Leone & Weinberg, 2010).

Existing school re-enrollment procedures in both urban secondary Southern New England school districts of former offenders with and without disabilities must be redesigned so they yield positive, academic, social, and behavioral outcomes to reduce recidivism rates (Stephens & Arnette, 2000). Also, it is fiscally more prudent to re-enroll former offenders into mainstream public schools or alternative programs, utilizing cost

effective integrated data systems, since it's average costs of $88,000 annually to incarcerate one individual, compared to slightly more than $10,000 to educate one individual (Boruch, 2012; Justice Policy Institute, 2009; R.C. Wood & Associates, 2006).

Educational Implications

Unfortunately, schools and child and social service agencies that fail to provide academic, social, and family service programs jeopardize successful school and community integration the first few months after release. This time period is critical for young offenders, because they are without structure, supervision, and support of court-placement settings when they reenroll to school (Chung, Schubert, & Mulvey, 2007).

The process of moving and eventually returning youth to the community poses formidable challenges for the juvenile justice system and its child service providers and mainstream schools (Chung et al., 2007).

In accordance with this study, re-enrollment services must enable interagency coordination, communication and collaboration by:

1. Developing integrated data systems that link school districts, child-service agencies, and juvenile justice systems to share data within the guidelines of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and IDEA that acts in the best interest of all former juvenile offenders with and without special needs (Hartigan, 2011);

2. Develop and establish a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between school districts, child-service agencies, and juvenile justice systems that verifies agreed-upon arrangement of policies, procedures, and agency responsibilities; MOUs should include, purpose, authority, roles and responsibilities, shared funding and cost, penalties for improper data and information sharing, and training (Gonsoulin & Read, 2011, p. 2);

3. Develop and establish cross-agency training and/or professional development forums that focus on safety, special education rights and laws, educational transition needs, positive youth development strategies that facilitate family and

youth-driven care, and data gathering and analysis (Gonsoulin & Read, 2011, p. 7).

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Table 1

Number and Percentage of Former Juvenile Offenders with an IEP

IEP	Number	Percentage
Yes	201	35
No	377	65
Total	578	100

Note. IEP is defined as Individual Education Program

Table 2

Relationship between Individual Education Programs and Success

IEP		Successful	Unsuccessful
Yes	Count	155.0	46.0
	Expected Count	115.5	85.5
	% within IEP	77.1%	22.9%
	Adjusted Residual	7.0	-7.0
No	Count	177.0	200.0
	Expected Count	216.5	160.5
	% within IEP	46.9%	53.1%
	Adjusted Residual	-7.0	07.0

Note. IEP is defined as Individual Education Program.