

## **Safety, Opportunity & Success (SOS): Standards of Care for Non-Delinquent Youth National Standards Development Process**

The Coalition for Juvenile Justice's "**Safety, Opportunity & Success (SOS): Standards of Care for Non-Delinquent Youth**," ("SOS Project") is a multi-year partnership that engages State Advisory Group (SAG) members, judicial leaders, practitioners, service providers, policy makers and advocates to guide states in implementing policy and practices that:

- divert youth at risk or charged with status offenses from the courts to connect them to family- and community-based systems of care that more effectively meet their needs;
- eliminate the use of locked confinement for status offenders and other non-delinquent youth.

At the heart of the SOS Project are National Standards aimed at supporting key stakeholders who are committed to implementing optimal policies and practices to facilitate positive outcomes for youth who are already involved or at risk of involvement in the justice system for status offenses, as well as their families and communities. CJJ has convened an expert advisory group comprising key juvenile justice professionals, advocates, researchers and judicial leaders to assist in the drafting and vetting of the standards. (A complete list of the Standards Advisory Committee is attached.)

The Standards are structured as follows:

### **I. Statement of Purpose and Scope**

### **II. Principles for responding to status offense behaviors**

This section of discusses key principles that frame a system that will protect child and family safety, promote family connections and permanence and ensure child and family well-being. It offers guidelines to acknowledge and address the individual, familial and community contexts in which status offenses occur. Because children living in impoverished communities and homes are more likely to enter the status offense system, these standards also offer policy and practice approaches that recognize such circumstances.

### **III. Efforts to Avoid Court Involvement All Together**

This section of the *National Standards* discusses key principles and practices to shape how education, social service, child welfare, runaway and homeless youth, mental/behavioral health, law enforcement and juvenile justice systems should *first* respond to youth and families at risk and in need of immediate assistance. It offers guidance about the reason(s) the child and family may have been referred to them, and examples of early intervention services that will help the child and family avoid court involvement.

### **IV. Efforts to Limit Court Involvement Once a Petition is Filed**

This section focuses on judicial, legal and other professionals working within the court system, with guidance about how to use the court's powers to ensure the proper services are implemented while avoiding deeper court involvement. It will provide specific guidance at various stages of the case to ensure best outcomes for youth and families.

### **V. Policy and Legislative Implementation**

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This section includes:

- Mapping and creating a continuum of pre-court diversion responses
- Funding systems
- Research-based service availability
- Legal representation/waiver issues
- Alternatives to detention
- Eliminating the VCO

Once drafted, the National Standards will be vetted broadly via a nationwide public comment period. Major national and state organizations will also be asked to endorse the Standards once completed. Following the comment and endorsement periods, the Standards will be publicly released.

The release of the National Standards will be accompanied by a schedule of CJJ speaking, training and technical assistance activities to promote their use and adoption across the country.

*For more information about The Coalition for Juvenile Justice's "**Safety, Opportunity & Success (SOS): Standards of Care for Non-Delinquent Youth**," ("SOS Project"), contact Deputy Executive Director, Marie Williams, at 202-467-0864, ext. 113 or [williams@juvjustice.org](mailto:williams@juvjustice.org).*