

Wayne Bear, MSW

President – National Juvenile Detention Association (NJDA)

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Mr. Wayne Bear is the current CEO of the National Partnership for Juvenile Services (NPJS) and the Executive Director of the Juvenile Detention Centers and Alternative Programs (JDCAP) of Pennsylvania. Prior to his current role in NPJS, Mr. Bear was President of NPJS and Chairperson of the Critical Issues Committee, which is responsible for developing and promulgating all of the Position Statements for the organization. Mr. Bear's twenty-seven plus year career path includes work as a detention front line staff, juvenile probation officer, residential program management and private practice as a licensed social worker.

Mr. Bear saw his initial involvement in NPJS as a means to address the need to improve the juvenile justice system, and to work collaboratively to identify and promote a group or systems concept that produces more power and leverage and includes all parties of the system from law enforcement, criminal justice, and youth services in order to implement sustainable change and a functioning organization with providers participating in a holistic manner of services.

In both his role as the Chairperson of the Critical Issues Committee and now as the CEO of NPJS Mr. Bear has unwaveringly lead the organization down the path of research, best practices, and data based decision making. Mr. Bear stated that there has been a lot of good research conducted within the field of juvenile justice that has been focused in two areas, 1.) diverting low risk youth away from exposure to higher risk youth within juvenile justice facilities, and 2.) moving the direction of service provision from a punitive approach to a more clinically (evidence-informed) approach, In his mind, his single most important role is to guide the field toward successful implementation of operations to address both of these areas of focus.

Mr. Bear went on to state that he believes the most important advancement in the field is to start collecting data that can be used to inform decision-making. There has been several evidence-based services that have been introduced to address the needs of delinquent youth, however when programs have the ability to critically examine what they do and subsequently identify the outcomes (positive and/or negative) associated with what they do, they can make decisions to change and then track the outcomes associated with those changes, each time,

eliminating services that are ineffective or potentially harmful and increasing or improving upon those services that support positive growth.

When asked about the future of juvenile justice and the NPJS, Mr. Bear provided the following response:

In most jurisdictions, the juvenile justice system goals are to offer balanced attention to public safety, victim restoration and developing competencies for justice involved youth. The biggest issue facing the field right now is shaping how these goals get acted upon within the system. Some would say, that community protection would require the removal of high risk youth, while others would focus their attention to improving the services those youth to reduce or eliminate recidivism. These two objectives are not mutually exclusive. I (like many other) believe the role of the juvenile justice system is to offer youth experiences and opportunities for growth which will result in these youths returning to their homes and communities as productive members of society. However, it is my experience that there are inadequate funds to hire enough qualified staff, train staff to perform tasks with fidelity, train managers to effectively coach and develop subordinates, and purchase the technical and operational resources necessary to maintain quality service delivery.

One final note from Mr. Bear, he believes that the juvenile justice system is responsive to larger social and economic factors such as access to health care, access to quality education, access to family support, community safety, family dysfunction, abuse, etc. Efforts to change the juvenile justice system are worthy of critical attention and ongoing system improvement activities.