

Promising Practice: The Vital Role of Data Use Agreements in Juvenile Justice Interventions

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and the Michigan Committee on Juvenile Justice (MCJJ) administers the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Title II Formula Grants Program to support local efforts to prevent and address juvenile delinquency across the state as well as improve racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system.

Integrated Services of Kalamazoo (ISK), a recent grantee, established a specialized community-based intervention to collaboratively review youth at high risk for police contact and juvenile justice system involvement and connect them to mental, physical, and social health services to meet their needs and avoid formal justice system involvement.

To facilitate data sharing for their intervention and support evaluation, ISK collaborated with the local police department (KDPS) and established a Data Use Agreement (DUA), enhancing their ability to assess and understand the needs of youth in the justice system and the impact of the services they provided through their intervention.

DUAs are vital legal instruments that delineate data utilization, sharing, and management among involved parties. In the context of juvenile justice interventions DUAs...



Establish clear guidelines to safeguard against misuse or unauthorized access to data ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of data concerning youth participants.



Outline obligations for ensuring data security and integrity, thereby fostering trust and accountability among stakeholders of youth engaged in the justice system.



Lay the foundation for sustainable growth by establishing transparent guidelines for data utilization and facilitating scalability and replication of successful program models.



Enable accurate measurement of program effectiveness and outcomes, bolstering credibility and accountability.

ISK's successful implementation of a DUA within its program highlights the importance of such agreements in improving and evaluating juvenile justice outcomes. ISK's experience underscores the value of DUAs in promoting collaboration, accountability, and effective data management within juvenile justice programs and across law enforcement agencies. Their experience offers a compelling example for other initiatives seeking to enhance their impact through strategic data partnerships.

By leveraging data collected through their DUA with KDPS, ISK's grant team could provide concrete evidence of the effectiveness of their programs based on key law enforcement metrics among target high-risk youth. Their data-driven approach validated the efficacy of their initiative, for which they hypothesized that a collaborative approach to reviewing youth cases and referral to community-based services would decrease juvenile justice interactions. For instance, they used the data to highlight reduced rates of formal involvement with the juvenile justice system among program participants.

ISK was able to leverage this data because the DUA was in place. Clear documentation of data usage terms ensured all parties understood how their data would be used and protected. This DUA not only protected youth privacy but also facilitated collaboration and understanding across the organizations participating in the grant program, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness and impact of their initiatives. It allowed KDPS to confidently share data with ISK for the program evaluation because they could ensure the data would be secure and handled ethically. In turn, the availability of data allowed all program partners to understand the impact that their intervention was having for participating youth.

The data supported quality improvement (QI) efforts within juvenile justice approaches and community-based partnerships. By leveraging the data collection and analysis, the collaborative team of community organizations and partners could identify areas for improvement, track progress, and adjust their approaches for individual youth effectively. Although ISK did not implement formal QI measures, data-informed their program and case reviews across the intervention period. Their structured DUA allowed them to continually refine and improve their approaches to better serve their communities. Following the completion of the intervention, the evaluation of their grant created opportunities to inform future program iterations and initiatives within the Kalamazoo community, ultimately enhancing their long-term impact and sustainability.

While ISK utilized a DUA to collect information from their law enforcement partners, other organizations may learn from this approach and apply this strategy across other projects and partnerships. DUAs serve as vital tools for creating structured frameworks that ensure alignment and comfort among all parties involved in data sharing endeavors. Whether collaborating with community organizations, external evaluators, or other stakeholders, implementing DUAs can establish clear guidelines, rights, and responsibilities, fostering trust and collaboration. By providing a blueprint for ethical data handling and usage, DUAs facilitate transparency, accountability, and alignment across diverse partnerships, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness and impact of collaborative initiatives.

The success of ISK in implementing specialized community-based intervention exemplifies the critical role of DUAs in juvenile justice programs and similar initiatives. By facilitating effective data sharing and collaboration with the local police department, ISK was able to address the needs of high-risk youth and assess the impact that their program had in the community. Results from evaluation of the data demonstrated the overall impact of their program and will inform future strategies for ISK, which would not have been possible without the DUA in place. This approach paves the way for sustained collaboration and long-term improvements in juvenile justice outcomes.

As ISK's experience illustrates, DUAs are valuable tools that can support effectiveness and sustainability of juvenile justice programs, providing a promising practice for other organizations aiming to achieve similar goals to consider.

ISK Program Findings

- During the implementation period, 65% of participants engaged with community services in an ongoing manner.
- There was a 20% decrease in youth police contacts at the conclusion of the intervention period.
- Black/African American youth experienced a 74% decrease in police contacts from Q1 to Q3.
- More than half (65%) of participating youth had family involvement in services.
- Juvenile arrests saw a 74% decrease during the implementation period.

