



“We can rekindle the intellectual excitement in our field if we are willing to leave the mainstream to involve ourselves with practitioners and struggle with them to solve important practical problems, which also have theoretical implications” (Whyte, 1989).

Components of the Texas Statewide Research Collaborative

Target Cities

Dallas, Houston,
San Antonio, Austin,
Tyler, Hempstead

Research Partners and study sites in each target city will include at least one of the following:
Child Serving Public Agency (Child Protective Services, Juvenile Court)
Child Serving Private Agency
Elementary and Connected Middle School and High School

Research Advisory Council

Local Funding Organizations
Community Partners
Legislators
Community Leaders
Former Juvenile Delinquents
Juvenile Justice Scholars
Retired Police Officers

Each target city will be represented on the council in these nine capacities. They will advise the Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center on what research projects it should pursue.

Local Collaborative

Members of the Advisory Council from the same city

While advising the center on what research projects to pursue, the local collaborative will consider the prevailing concerns in their respective communities.

Pilot Projects

Projects to test intervention ideas

Projects will be implemented at study sites for a duration of no longer than two years.

Evidence Based Interventions

Interventions that have proven to effect change on the target population or system

At the conclusion of the pilot project, there will be evidence that the intervention has produced the desired change and can be considered an effective change mechanism.



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Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center



STATEWIDE RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE



PRAIRIE VIEW
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Mission and Purpose

The Research Collaborative (RC) is designed to bring together the caring community across the state of Texas to support a sustained change effort in the interest of children and families involved or at risk of being involved in the juvenile justice system for delinquent behavior. The joining of research, practice and community activism is the identified model of change to create a path to success for youth in under served and vulnerable communities. The collaborative is an innovative concept that will touch all corners of the largest land mass of any state in America outside of Alaska. Our challenge is to bring to bear the diversity and complexities of juvenile delinquency across race, gender, age, culture and geographic location including urban and rural communities. A collection of different ideas from people with an expressed interest in serving this unique population is imperative for us to create effective interventions.

Description of Research Projects

The RC focus is on projects in three specific areas that are unique to children and youth in different stages of their social development. These projects are aimed at youth who are (1) vulnerable to being exposed to the juvenile justice system for delinquent behavior (2) youth who have been adjudicated and (3) those who have been discharged from a county or state institution after serving their commitment. The projects are divided into three broad categories:

Prevention Projects will examine how to prevent youth from being exposed to the juvenile justice system. These projects will target elementary and middle school age children.

Intervention Projects will be aimed at youth who are under the supervision of the court and the effectiveness of the services provided to them.

Aftercare Projects will examine critical variables that impact their chances of being productive citizens after they are no longer involved in the juvenile justice system.

The objective of Intervention and Aftercare projects is to examine models of intervention that can lead to a reduction in the rate of recidivism. As a result of our research we want to develop and establish evidence-based programs that effectively address systemic problems.

Research Advisory Council

The Research Advisory Council will consist of a cross-section of people that have an interest in the well-being of children and families. Each person on the council will have a specific area of expertise and value that they will bring to the council. The council will represent communities across the state of Texas with the hub being the six research sites. There are seven domains that will make up the membership of the council:

Local Funding Organizations The idea is that these individuals will be strong supporters of the Center and will advocate for funding streams within their organizations to support projects in their community.

Community Partners The selected study sites, private and public child serving agencies along with an elementary, middle and high school from each target city will have a place on the council. Their contribution to the council will be as service providers who are able to offer insight into the nature and design of projects the Center should be pursuing.

Legislators At least one local and state legislator from each target city who has expressed an interest in the well-being of children and families will serve on the council. Their contribution will be to advocate for the Center regarding available funding, and contracts. They will also inform the Center on legislative areas of concern. Their presence on the council will indicate that they have a vested interest in the success of the Center and will support the Center’s activities.

Local Collaborative

Each target city has its own contingent on the advisory council that will advise the Center on statewide research initiatives. They will also serve as an advocate for the people in the community where they reside. The concept of a local collaborative suggests that the state’s geopolitical and cultural dynamics are considered when research projects are designed.

Community Activists/Leaders At least one person who is well-known and respected by the community members who reside in low-income or under served neighborhoods will serve on the council as a voice for them. They will bring credibility to the work of the Center in these critical areas where much of the work will be conducted.

Former Juvenile Delinquents Two individuals from each target city who were involved in the juvenile justice system will serve on the council. They will be able to use their personal experience, as a guidepost for what projects should be pursued.

Juvenile Justice Scholars They will bring a level of expertise that will ensure the work of the Center is viable and has national implications.

Retired Law Enforcement Personnel They will provide insight into the dynamics of various communities from the perspective of police officers.

Research Partners

Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Austin, Hempstead and Tyler have been identified as target cities in which the Center will establish working relationships with private and public child serving agencies. Connected elementary, middle and high schools will be identified along with County and City agencies in each target city where study sites will be created to conduct pilot projects and test ideas from which evidence-based programs and new knowledge will be developed.

Each partner will agree to allow the Center to engage in research activities that employ the full range of research methods including surveys, interviews, focus groups, video and audio recording.

Approach to Carrying out the Work

The Center will employ the appropriate methods needed to carry out our research program. Because we are interested in systems transformation and community collaboration we will draw from the family of action-oriented research and principles of community-based research. A defining characteristic of action research is the researcher initiates change based on a feeling that something needs to change to create a better human situation. The fundamental aim of action research is to improve practice rather than to produce knowledge. The production and utilization of knowledge is subordinate to and conditioned by this fundamental aim (Elliott, 1991). Participative research is a method where the primary goal is to create an environment and process where context-bound knowledge emerges to develop “local theory” that is understandable and actionable. In participative research, the long-term skill of the participants to “solve their own problems and keep solving them” is an outcome that extends beyond the research project itself.

The focus in participative research is on the inclusion of the participants and their organizations within the process and the practical outcome, rather than removing the process from its context. The researcher is not a facilitator of the process as in action research, but a co-producer of learning (Elden, 1981). Participatory action research combines both the goals of improved capacity and practice of researchers as in action research and of achieving practical objectives and changing social reality, as in participative research, through group participation. Those affected by a problem participate in planning, carrying out analyzing and applying the results of the research. The growth and development of the participants are also an important part of the desired outcome. This method is initiated by the organization of interest and engages researchers that share control of the social process design with participants in the organization. Participative Action Research has implication for the participants as a participant within their larger environment. The participants and researchers are processing significant theoretical issues together.