JUMPSTART MASTERY

JSM GUIDANCE GROUP

JUVENILE JUSTICE

From Silos to Solutions: Building a More Connected System

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FROM SILOS TO SOLUTIONS: BUILDING A MORE CONNECTED SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

From Silos to Solutions: Building a More Connected System is the fifth and final paper in the Jumpstart Mastery Guidance Group Series, which aims to inform juvenile justice practices and decision-making through practitioner insights and systems-level reflection.

The four papers that came before this one examined the juvenile justice system from the inside out: *Trauma and Dignity: Everyday Influence, Lasting Impact* explored how daily interactions either reinforce or repair harm; *Communication for Collaboration* traced how inconsistent language and siloed communication erode trust and outcomes across roles; *Aligning Practice with Purpose* examined the gap between stated values and the realities of daily program design; and *Leadership in Juvenile Justice* addressed how leaders can shift from reactive crisis management to proactive, purpose-driven practice. Together, those papers offer a clear-eyed account of what is working, what is not, and why the most persistent problems in juvenile justice are as much relational and cultural as they are structural.

This paper picks up where the others leave off. If the preceding four papers answered the question "what needs to change within roles and relationships?" this one asks: "what has to change across the system so that individual-level improvements can take root and endure?"

The answer is not a new bureaucratic layer or a top-down mandate. It is something more practical and more demanding: a shift from operating in silos to building the habits, structures, and relationships that enable people across the juvenile justice network to work together toward a shared purpose. That shift is available to professionals at every level and in every sector, including frontline staff, independent program managers, agency leaders, school and system administrators, and professionals across the judicial system, including law enforcement. It does not require waiting for someone else to go first.

The content draws on the same body of practitioner dialogue that animated the rest of the series: more than twenty weeks of candid conversation among members of the Jumpstart Mastery Guidance Group, synthesized by Roundtable Group Consulting, LLC into this final capstone paper.

Like its companions, this paper is presented in two formats: a concise executive briefing for those seeking a high-level overview, and a detailed paper for those seeking deeper context. The executive briefing outlines each challenge at the system level; the detailed paper provides specific examples that illustrate how those challenges manifest in daily practice: situations professionals will recognize from their own roles, and an invitation to consider how those same situations look from other roles and from the perspectives of the youth and families being served. Together, the five papers form a coherent framework for understanding and improving the juvenile justice system from the inside out.

FROM SILOS TO SOLUTIONS: BUILDING A MORE CONNECTED SYSTEM

EXECUTIVE BRIEFING

This briefing summarizes the fifth and final paper in the Jumpstart Mastery Guidance Group Series. It offers field-grounded guidance shaped by practitioners who have navigated the pressures, turning points, and possibilities that those working in and alongside the juvenile justice system face every day.

PURPOSE

The first four papers in this series examined trauma-responsiveness, communication, program alignment, and leadership as distinct yet deeply interconnected dimensions of juvenile justice practice. Each paper identified a consistent underlying problem: when professionals operate in isolation from one another, whether within roles, organizations, or sectors, the system's capacity to support youth rehabilitation and reintegration is fundamentally compromised.

This paper directly addresses that problem. It examines why cross-sector collaboration is so difficult to sustain, offers a practical framework for building more connected practices, and provides specific recommendations for professionals at every level of the system. The goal is not a theoretical vision of perfect alignment but something more achievable: practical steps that move the juvenile justice network from fragmented and reactive to coherent, collaborative, and more effective.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The juvenile justice system is often described as a network. In practice, it frequently operates more like a patchwork, with agencies, organizations, independent providers, school systems, law enforcement, and the judicial system doing important work in parallel, with limited coordination and little to no shared infrastructure to connect their efforts. Youth and families navigating this network encounter conflicting expectations, confusing language, and decisions that prioritize the convenience of individual organizations or systems over a coherent, easy-to-track care plan.

Most professionals in the juvenile justice system care deeply about the young people they serve. The problems and challenges are structural and cultural: siloed operations, fragmented communication, and institutional habits that have calcified over decades. As earlier papers in this series documented, these dynamics show up in how authority is exercised, how language is used, how crises are managed, and how programs are designed. Addressing them requires more than improving individual practice; it requires changing how the system operates as a whole.

KEY CHALLENGES

This executive briefing outlines four system-level challenges. The detailed paper that follows grounds each in specific, recognizable situations from everyday practice. These representative examples are the kinds of situations professionals encounter regularly, when thoughtful, well-intentioned people doing their jobs collectively produce outcomes none of them would choose. That is what makes these patterns so important to examine: they persist not because of individual failure or ill intent but because of structural gaps that individual effort alone cannot close.

1. Fragmented Infrastructure and Competing Mandates

Organizations serving youth develop protocols and performance measures in isolation. Too often, the result is confusion, duplication, or service gaps that fall hardest on the children and families the system is meant to serve. Parallel case plans, each oriented toward the priorities of the system that created it, can leave youth and families navigating overlapping and at times contradictory expectations for the same goal.

Examples in the detailed paper: "The parallel case plan" and "The education gap no one owns" (p. 10).

2. Absence of Coordinated Communication Structures

Without centralized communication mechanisms and clear roles for information sharing, case planning remains disjointed, leading to uncoordinated responses and inconsistent support. Court orders that are not properly shared, caregivers enforcing outdated expectations, and crisis responses that reach the person with the strongest rapport too late each illustrate how information silos translate directly into harm. The result is unnecessary sanctions, punitive measures, and damaged trust, outcomes that set back the very rehabilitation and reintegration goals the system exists to serve.

Examples in the detailed paper: "The court order no one shared," "The caregiver left to guess," and "The crisis that escalated because the wrong people were called" (p. 11-12).

3. Structural Inertia and Role Protectionism

Even when professionals agree that collaboration is beneficial, entrenched practices, funding silos, and unexamined hierarchies resist change. Cross-training is avoided or treated as a one-off compliance measure; outdated programs and practices persist out of habit; and reform efforts are perceived as criticism rather than opportunities. As the *Leadership in Juvenile Justice* paper noted, institutional inertia is not primarily a logistical challenge; it is a cultural mindset. Barriers to cross-systems training remain unaddressed because no one is specifically accountable for removing them, and the resulting gaps have serious downstream consequences.

When leadership proposes a new behavior-modification or restraint/isolation-reduction program, resistance often stems from individual reluctance rooted in a culture that has not yet developed the shared language or psychological safety needed to examine familiar practices honestly. Moving beyond deeply embedded belief systems requires a sustained cultural commitment to evidence-based practice rather than to modalities that have simply become comfortable through habit, not through evidence of their value.

Examples in the detailed paper: "The cross-training that never happened," "The program that outlived its usefulness," and "The evidence that hasn't moved the practice" (p. 13-14).

4. Underutilized Cultural Momentum

Successful reform efforts are often isolated, undocumented, and not widely celebrated, making it difficult to replicate or scale what works. When trauma-responsive practices improve youth behavior and workplace safety, those gains are too often shared informally or not at all, so they fail to influence broader system-wide practice. Visible, engaged leadership ensures that successful practices are celebrated, documented, and embedded rather than lost. Scheduled, structured review of outcome data turns isolated wins into system-wide practice change.

Examples in the detailed paper: "The training that worked and stayed in one organization" and "The collaboration that worked and then the people moved on" (p. 14-15).

FUNDAMENTAL APPROACH

Moving from silos to solutions requires both structural investment and a cultural mindset shift. The two are inseparable: structures without cultural buy-in become procedural compliance; cultural commitment without infrastructure has no place to take root. Success requires active coordination, consistent communication, and visibly engaged leadership. The following five elements provide a practical foundation:

- ### Statewide Operational Centers

  Establish centralized statewide or regional hubs that bring together youth-serving organizations across sectors to align policies, share data, and coordinate providers' efforts and resources toward common goals.

- ### Communication Liaison Roles Within Each Organization

  Designate communication liaisons within each organization to bring field-level insights and practices to system-level strategy and translate cross-agency plans into role-specific actions.

- ### Shared Language and Cross-Sector Orientation

  Develop statewide shared-language and onboarding orientation frameworks to reduce role confusion and terminology-based fragmentation.

- ### Cultural Reinforcement Through Shared Practice

  Establish regular forums for cross-role collaboration, role-play, joint problem-solving, and story sharing to normalize collaborative practices.

- ### Model Collaboration Through Leadership Structures

  Establish leadership councils. Leadership that models the connectivity it asks of others through transparent cross-network engagement and visible, shared problem-solving demonstrates a commitment to system-wide success.

These elements align directly with what the earlier papers identified as essential: trauma-responsive communication, dignified use of authority, purpose-driven program design, communication for collaboration, and leadership grounded in self-awareness and accountability. The structural changes recommended here are the conditions that sustain those practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Five strategic recommendations guide this paper's practical guidance:

1. Establish a centralized statewide operational center for juvenile justice system efforts, with the authority and financial resources to convene stakeholders, share data, track accountability measures, and support collaboration across jurisdictions.

2. Create a statewide communication liaison network with trained liaisons in participating organizations, linking field-level realities to system-level strategy.

3. Develop, teach, and normalize a shared language and protocols, particularly in areas where cross-sector confusion is most costly: case planning, crisis response, diversion, and reentry.

4. Facilitate ongoing networking and cross-role collaboration as a normalized part of the professional workflow, not an add-on.

5. Document, celebrate, and showcase reform efforts across jurisdictions to build a culture that learns from what works and leverages those successes to generate momentum.

CONCLUSION

The challenges documented throughout this series, including fragmented communication, punitive norms, a pattern of reactive leadership, misaligned programs, and siloed operations, are not separate problems with separate solutions but rather symptoms of the same underlying condition: a system that has not yet developed the infrastructure, culture, and functionality to work as a coherent whole.

The recommendations in this paper are not a blueprint for sweeping reform. They are an invitation for leaders, practitioners, and cross-sector collaborators to start where they are, build what they can, and connect with others who are doing the same. When professionals across the juvenile justice network choose connection over self-protection, shared purpose over institutional turf, and learning over compliance, the system becomes more than the sum of its parts. That is when lasting change becomes possible.

FROM SILOS TO SOLUTIONS: BUILDING A MORE CONNECTED SYSTEM

Detailed Paper

OVERVIEW AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Read together, the four papers that precede this one tell a consistent story. Across settings, roles, and sectors, juvenile justice professionals who work with members of the Jumpstart Mastery Guidance Group identify the same recurring obstacle: the system's capacity to support youth and their families is constantly undermined by its inability to operate as a connected whole. Communication breaks down across organizations; programs run in parallel rather than in concert; leaders respond to crises that better coordination might have prevented; staff carry the burden of policies and norms they did not create and cannot change alone; children and families navigate a system that presents itself as a network but functions as a patchwork of overlapping pieces, arranged without a cohesive framework or shared direction.

This is the problem this paper addresses from the perspective of professionals who work within these systems and know firsthand the cost of failed coordination and collaboration.

The earlier papers offered specific guidance for individual practice: how to communicate with greater clarity and care, how to align daily program decisions with rehabilitative purpose, how to lead in ways that foster trust and prevent crises, and how to treat trauma responsiveness and dignity as daily commitments rather than aspirational values. This paper asks what cultural and systemic conditions are necessary for that individual-level guidance to take hold and endure.

The answer requires honesty about what the system currently lacks. It requires naming the structural gaps, cultural habits, and institutional patterns that keep professionals isolated, even when they share goals. And it requires a practical path forward, grounded in what is already working in jurisdictions where collaboration has taken root and accessible to leaders and practitioners at every level of the system.

Improving outcomes for young people requires more than isolated efforts by individual entities. Rehabilitation must be approached with an understanding of how agencies, organizations, and providers intersect and how that intersection is experienced by the people they intend to serve. Rather than focusing solely on internal reforms, coordinated improvements to strengthen communication practices and structures can be built one relationship at a time, if necessary. The key is to foster cross-sector collaboration and, ultimately, statewide alignment. This approach requires implementing and reinforcing cultural norms that prioritize a shared purpose over the protection of institutional turf and the preservation of embedded bias.

Systemic coherence is neither a luxury nor a novelty. It is essential for equitable, effective, and developmentally sound responses to the young people the system is designed to serve.

Note: This paper reflects themes raised in recorded discussions and is informed by participating experts' professional roles and on-the-ground experience. Perspectives varied in proximity to different juvenile justice system settings; some risk categories or experiences may not be fully represented. Their absence should not be interpreted as irrelevant. This pattern, in which dialogue and group comfort shape which challenges are surfaced, is worth naming. It applies to this paper's recommendations as much as to any team debrief: what remains unspoken, often unknown or intangible, is as important as what is said and known.

KEY CHALLENGES

The structural and cultural barriers to cross-sector collaboration in juvenile justice are well known to those working within the system. They are not mysterious. What is harder is confronting them directly, naming their causes, and committing to practical alternatives. The four challenges that follow were consistently identified in the Guidance Group's conversations and align closely with what the earlier papers described for individual roles and organizations. Here, they are examined at the system level.

It is worth saying plainly: the examples below are not accounts of negligence or indifference. The professionals in these scenarios care about the young people they serve. They are doing their jobs as defined by their organizations and roles. That is precisely what makes these patterns so persistent: well-intentioned people working within well-established structures collectively produce results none of them intends. No single role offers a view of the full picture, so how each organization contributes to the outcome remains invisible from within.

1. Fragmented Infrastructure and Competing Mandates

Agencies, organizations, and providers often develop their protocols, technologies, and performance measures independently and in isolation. This reflects the reality that each entity operates under distinct funding streams, regulatory frameworks, and accountability requirements. The result, however, is a system in which the pieces do not fit together. When systems do not align, young people fall through the cracks or become overwhelmed by uncoordinated demands and confusing, sometimes contradictory guidance.

The Communication for Collaboration paper documented that the terms "case plan," "diversion," and "behavior management" carry different meanings across settings, creating confusion for youth, families, and providers alike. That language fragmentation is one expression of a deeper structural problem: when each part of the system develops its own framework independently, common ground becomes difficult to find and even harder to maintain.

Example 1: The parallel case plan

A probation officer and a community mental health coordinator each work with the same child. Both are diligent professionals with a system and a plan. They don't know each other; their professional paths never cross. Their organizations operate independently, and their roles require adherence to distinct organizational priorities. The plans may use different language for overlapping goals, or the same language to mean different things, creating confusion and potentially conflicting guidance for the child and their family. When the child and their caregiver try to follow both plans, they receive conflicting instructions on what to prioritize when the two pull in opposite directions. The child eventually stops engaging with one or both providers because they cannot reconcile the competing demands. No one intended this outcome. Yet it was a natural result when the two systems aren't communicating or collaborating to prioritize the child's success.

Example 2: The education gap no one owns

A high school student completes coursework in a detention facility's educational program. When they return to their community high school, the school has no record of what they completed and no way to apply the credits. The student is placed in courses they have already completed, or loses credit for partial work the receiving school cannot verify. The student loses motivation, disengages, and falls behind. Up to three professionals, including

the detention center educational coordinator or teacher, the high school counselor or registrar, and the probation officer or case manager, were likely to be involved in the student's case during the transition. There was no coordinated system for sharing what the student accomplished. Each did their job. Together, they produced a reintegration failure that none of them intended, none of them were trained to address, and none of them would be held accountable for.

Addressing fragmented infrastructure does not require dismantling what exists. It requires building the connective tissue, shared language, communication protocols, and coordinated roles that enable existing components to work together more effectively.

2. Absence of Coordinated Communication Structures

Fragmented infrastructure is most damaging when communication across it breaks down. Many jurisdictions lack centralized communication mechanisms to align case planning, supervision, and support. Information sharing is inconsistent, roles for sharing information are unclear, and the absence of designated liaisons leads to redundancy, delays, and misinterpretation across sectors.

What is especially striking about these breakdowns is how invisible they are to the professionals involved. Each person, in their own lane, is doing exactly what their role requires. The breakdown happens in the space between roles: the handoff that few, if any, job descriptions cover, and the communication that almost no job descriptions make clear is anyone's responsibility to initiate.

Example 1: The court order no one shared

A judge issues an order requiring a child to complete a substance use assessment within 30 days. The order is entered into the court's case management system but is not sent directly to the school, the probation officer, or the child's family. Weeks later, the probation officer learns of the requirement during a routine check-in and discovers that no appointment has been scheduled. The family is upset; no one told them this was required. The school counselor, who sees the child daily and could have helped coordinate the referral, was never informed. A compliance violation is now on the child's record, not because the child refused to comply, but because the communication structure assumed someone else would relay the information.

Example 2: The caregiver left to guess

A grandmother caring for a child on probation learns from the child that the case plan and curfew have changed. The grandmother calls the probation office and is told that a written notice is on the way and that details cannot be shared over the phone. She continues to enforce the old curfew, the only one she was officially informed of. The grandmother was trying to do the right thing. The system gave her no reliable way to make a change. The child is cited for non-compliance, and both lose confidence in a process that didn't provide them with what they needed to succeed.

Example 3: The crisis that escalated because the wrong people were called

A child in a residential program becomes dysregulated during a group activity. A staff member, unsure how to de-escalate, contacts law enforcement. Two officers arrive within minutes. The child, who has a significant history of trauma involving prior law enforcement contact, escalates further. The clinical supervisor, who knows this child's history and has a strong rapport with them, is notified 20 minutes into the incident, after the situation has already peaked.

The clinical supervisor helps calm the child, but the damage to trust is done. What was missing was a coordinated protocol specifying who to contact first, in what order, and how to loop in those with the most relevant relationships and knowledge before escalating to a formal response.

These failures are not the result of individuals not caring or not working hard at their jobs. They are the predictable outcome of a system that has not built reliable structures for communication across its parts. Building those structures means assigning clear responsibility, not merely expressing shared intention.

3. Structural Inertia and Role Protectionism

Of the four challenges described in this paper, structural inertia may be the most difficult to address, not because it is the most complex, but because it is the most invisible. Long-standing cultural norms and habits, funding structures, and organizational hierarchies do not announce themselves as obstacles to collaboration. They present themselves as the way things are and have always been done.

The Leadership in Juvenile Justice paper described this dynamic at the organizational level: reform efforts are met with skepticism or dismissed as merely symbolic unless there is visible leadership, genuine, growth-driven feedback

systems, and practical support for implementation. The same pattern appears at the system level. When collaboration is perceived, even implicitly, as a threat to an individual's or organization's autonomy, resources, or professional identity, the instinct is to protect and resist rather than engage. That instinct is not irrational. Professionals who have practiced long enough for their boundaries to feel settled and clear are reasonably cautious about what it might mean to blur lines they have come to rely on.

Example 1: The cross-training that never happened

A county juvenile justice department proposes a joint training day for probation officers and school counselors. The goal is simple: help each group understand the other's work, build relationships before a crisis forces them to work together, and develop a shared communication protocol when a child is struggling at school. The proposal is well received at a meeting. Then nothing happens. The probation department is unsure whose budget will cover it. The school district is hesitant to pull counselors from their caseloads for a full day. A supervisor in one agency quietly worries that cross-training might pressure probation officers to take on more of a counseling role than their training supports. A year later, youth statistics still show children falling through the very gap the training was designed to close. Everyone agrees the training would have helped. No one can quite explain why it never happened. Yet the explanation is visible in the details: three legitimate, solvable concerns, none of them voiced to the others, and no one whose role it was to bring them together. The communication gap the training was meant to close is the same gap that kept it from happening.

Example 2: The program that outlived its usefulness

A residential facility has run the same behavioral modification program for over a decade. Staff know it well, and their annual schedule is built around it. When a new director arrives and proposes piloting a trauma-responsive alternative, they are met with polite but firm resistance. Staff raise concerns about consistency. A supervisor notes that the current program has never produced a formal negative outcome report. What is harder to see and harder to say out loud is that the program's familiarity has become its primary justification. No one is defending it because they believe it is optimal. They are defending it because changing it feels hard and because the culture has not yet built the shared language or psychological safety needed to examine it honestly.

Example 3: The evidence that hasn't moved the practice

Decades of research show that reducing or eliminating physical restraints leads to better outcomes for youth and staff alike: fewer injuries, less trauma, stronger therapeutic relationships, improved workplace satisfaction, and lower recidivism. Programs that have adopted the Sanctuary Model, the Missouri Approach, or similar trauma-responsive frameworks report measurable improvements in staff safety and morale, as well as better youth outcomes. Many facilities know this evidence exists. Yet restraint practices persist not because the evidence is disputed, but because stopping them requires sustained commitment, staff buy-in, and visible institutional support that few systems have yet to build.

Addressing structural inertia does not begin with a policy change. It begins with honestly naming what is happening, without blame, and then with building the leadership commitment and cultural conditions that make something different possible.

4. Underutilized Cultural Momentum

Across the juvenile justice network, professionals have found ways to collaborate effectively, programs have delivered meaningful results, and reform efforts have taken root in individual jurisdictions. These successes deserve more than quiet acknowledgment. They deserve to be celebrated, documented, shared, and amplified because one of the most powerful antidotes to institutional inertia is evidence that something better is already happening.

The problem is structural as much as cultural: the system is better at tracking what goes wrong than at capturing and leveraging what goes right. When a promising outcome emerges, it tends to stay local, passed along informally, if at all, and rarely translated into a practice others can learn from and adapt.

Example 1: The training that worked and stayed in one organization

Where the evidence is clearest, adoption is often slowest. Organizations that implement the Sanctuary Model, the Missouri Approach, or similar trauma-responsive frameworks report measurable improvements in staff safety, morale, and youth outcomes. These results typically require years of sustained commitment, which may explain both why implementation takes so long and why organizations that stay the course see the strongest returns. Yet in jurisdiction after jurisdiction, an organization does this hard work, documents

its results, and stops there because no framework exists to share that progress across the wider system. Meanwhile, another organization facing the same challenges begins exploring trauma-responsive approaches from scratch, unaware that the evidence and programs it needs are already in use elsewhere, possibly in its own state. The system lacks a reliable structure for turning one organization's hard-won progress into a resource for others.

Example 2: The collaboration that worked and then the people moved on

A probation supervisor and a school vice-principal built a strong working relationship over several years. Together, they developed an informal protocol: when a child on probation struggles at school, they talk it through and respond consistently across both settings. Youth and families notice that the authorities in their lives are actually talking with each other. Then one is promoted, and the other transfers. The protocol, never written down, disappears with them. Their successors start over. The children and families who benefited from that collaborative connection experience the loss directly: responses become inconsistent again, information stops traveling between settings, and support that once felt coordinated becomes fragmented. They cannot name what changed, but they live with the difference. When cultural momentum lives only in relationships rather than in systems, it leaves with the people who built it.

These examples are not cautionary tales about individual failure. They illustrate a system that has not yet built the infrastructure to learn from its experience, trust its successes, and collaborate across its parts. When leadership is visibly engaged in cross-network collaboration, exchanging lessons, asking what is working elsewhere, and creating space for practitioners to do the same, the culture begins to shift from self-contained expertise to shared learning.

FUNDAMENTAL APPROACH

The four challenges described above are interconnected. Fragmented infrastructure makes communication harder. Poor communication hardens into structural silos. Structural inertia protects the status quo, even when it is clearly failing. And the absence of shared learning leaves each organization to rediscover the same lessons independently, without the benefit of others' prior learning.

Addressing these challenges requires both structural investment and cultural commitment. The two are inseparable: structures without cultural buy-in become procedural compliance exercises, and cultural commitment without infrastructure has no reliable place to take root. The five approaches below provide a practical foundation. Taken together, they create the conditions to sustain the guidance from the earlier papers in this series on communication, trauma-responsiveness, leadership, and program alignment across roles, organizations, and transitions.

Statewide Operational/Coordination Infrastructure

Establish centralized statewide or regional hubs that bring together youth-serving organizations across sectors to align policy, share data, and coordinate providers' efforts and resources toward shared goals. These hubs should be designed not as compliance mechanisms but as learning and problem-solving spaces where systemic misalignments can be identified and addressed before they become crises. Their authority should come from credible, demonstrated usefulness, not from hierarchy alone.

Communication Liaison Roles Within Each Organization

Designate communication liaisons within each organization to serve as the conduit between internal operations and the broader network. These roles are not administrative; they are relational and strategic. Effective liaisons bring field-level insight to system-level planning and translate cross-sector decisions into role-specific actions. They also surface implementation challenges that need to be addressed before they become failures, which means the liaisons will need senior-level support and genuine authority to raise concerns.

Shared Language and Cross-Sector Orientation

Develop statewide shared-language and onboarding orientation frameworks to orient staff, regardless of seniority, organization, or sector, to shared goals, expectations, and accountability systems. As the *Communication for Collaboration* paper emphasized, alignment cannot be assumed; it must be deliberately built and continuously reinforced. A shared-language framework is not a glossary that sits on a shelf. It is a living resource, updated through cross-sector dialogue, that reflects how terms are used across roles and settings.

Cultural Reinforcement Through Shared Practice

Establish regularly scheduled cross-role gatherings, not just conferences but ongoing working sessions, collaborative case reviews, and joint problem-solving spaces where frontline professionals engage with peers from other sectors. These gatherings should also include structured storytelling: opportunities for practitioners to share what is working, what they have learned, and how their practice has evolved. Incentivize organizations to document and share examples of progress, particularly those that reflect cross-sector collaboration or improved youth outcomes.

Model Collaboration Through Leadership Structures

Establish leadership councils with rotating facilitators. Leaders cannot ask for collaboration they do not demonstrate. Leadership that models the connectivity it asks of others, through transparent cross-network engagement and visible, shared problem-solving, demonstrates commitment to system-wide success. As the *Leadership in Juvenile Justice* paper argued, leaders who model self-awareness and reflective practice create cultures where those qualities become organizational norms. The same is true at the system level: leaders who model connectivity create systems where connectivity becomes the norm.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below are practical steps, not aspirational targets. They are grounded in the Guidance Group's identification of the most consequential leverage points for systemic change and in the conditions necessary for individual-level improvements to take hold, as established in earlier papers. They are designed for professionals at every level of the system: those with formal authority to build new structures and those whose daily choices, within existing structures, either reinforce silos or begin to dissolve them.

1. Establish a Centralized Operational Center for Juvenile Justice Coordination

Invest in infrastructure that enables coordinated decision-making, data sharing, and accountability tracking across jurisdictions. This center should be empowered not only to collect information but also to act on it, convening stakeholders when misalignments are identified, facilitating shared learning across the network, and supporting the implementation of cross-sector protocols. Its effectiveness depends on genuine authority and adequate resources, not merely a coordinating title.

For frontline practitioners and program managers: even without a formal center, you can begin now. Identify your counterpart at an adjacent or neighboring organization, someone whose role intersects with yours, and set up a regular check-in. The habits that a statewide infrastructure should normalize can start as individual commitments to connection.

2. Create a Statewide Communication Liaison Network

Assign and train liaisons within each organization or program who connect directly with the operational center, facilitating alignment and surfacing implementation challenges in real time. These liaisons should be selected for their relational skills and credibility among colleagues, not solely for administrative capacity. They need protected time, clear expectations, and a reliable, penalty-free channel for raising concerns. Each organization should also designate a trained backup liaison, so continuity does not depend on a single person's availability and a change in staffing doesn't leave the organization without a functioning connection to the network.

For organizations not yet part of a formal network: designate an internal role, even an informal one, responsible for tracking developments in the broader system and bringing that information back to your team. Staying connected to what others are learning is not a luxury; it is a professional responsibility.

3. Develop, Teach, and Normalize Shared Language and Protocols

Provide orientation and ongoing training to ensure consistent terminology, definitions, and expectations, particularly in areas prone to cross-sector confusion: case planning, crisis response, diversion, behavior management, and reentry. This is not a one-time curriculum; it is a continuous commitment to verifying shared understanding and updating shared language as practice evolves.

The Aligning Practice with Purpose paper noted that fragmented communication and role confusion are among the most damaging patterns in juvenile justice programs. *The Communication for Collaboration* paper explains why: when language is used inconsistently, even well-intentioned messages can create confusion, conflicting interventions, and broken trust. A shared language framework addresses this at the root.

4. Facilitate Ongoing Networking and Cross-Role Collaboration

Normalize a collaborative culture by embedding cross-sector forums, joint training sessions, and shared evaluation processes into the routine workflow of

juvenile justice professionals. These are not extras to be scheduled when time permits; they are core professional functions. When cross-sector relationships are built through regular contact rather than crisis-driven needs, coordination becomes easier, trust deepens, and the system becomes more resilient.

Meaningful inclusion of youth and family perspectives is essential here, not merely as a procedural step but as a genuine commitment to grounding collaboration in lived experience. As the *Trauma and Dignity* paper emphasized, youth, their support networks, and community members are not passive recipients of services; they are active partners in shaping rehabilitative experiences.

5. Document, Celebrate, and Share Reform Efforts Across Jurisdictions

Document and celebrate successful reform models within and beyond the state. Elevate stories of progress to build momentum, increase buy-in, and counter skepticism about what is possible. When positive outcomes remain local and undocumented, the system cannot learn from itself. When they are widely shared, they become cultural motivators, showing that something better is not just theoretically possible but already happening.

This recommendation requires a shift in how the system understands its relationship to its own experience. As the *Leadership in Juvenile Justice* paper argued, transforming crisis responses into proactive strategies requires continuous, structured reflection and learning from experience. The juvenile justice network needs to build the habit of looking at what is working, naming it clearly, and using it to raise the floor for everyone.

CONCLUSION

The five papers in this series began with the most immediate and personal dimensions of juvenile justice practice: how trauma and dignity manifest in daily interactions, how communication patterns build or erode trust, how programs align with or contradict their stated purpose, and how leadership can shift from reactive to proactive. This final paper addresses what must change at the system level to ensure that individual-level work endures.

The answer is neither a new compliance framework nor a reorganized org chart. It is something both simpler and harder: a culture of connection, practiced at every level of the system and supported by infrastructure that makes connection reliable and trusted rather than exceptional and uncertain.

The professionals who contributed to this series have seen what happens when that culture is absent. They have also seen, in their own work and in the work of colleagues across the country, what becomes possible when it is present. When a probation officer and a school counselor know each other's names and talk before a crisis, not after, and sometimes prevent one altogether. When a liaison surfaces a policy conflict before it derails a reentry plan. When a leader shares a story about what worked and invites others to try it. When a young person feels, for the first time, that the adults around them are actually talking with each other and listening for meaning.

These are not utopian visions. They are the practical outcomes of deliberate, sustained effort to move from silos to solutions. The juvenile justice system has everything it needs to begin that work. What it needs now is collective will.

A Note on the Evidence: The practices and patterns described in this series are supported by a growing body of research on youth justice, trauma-responsive care, and organizational change. Readers seeking to explore the evidence base further may find useful starting points in the work of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Missouri Division of Youth Services, the Sanctuary Model developed by Dr. Sandra Bloom, and the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, among others. These resources reflect the same conviction that animates this series: that better outcomes for youth, staff, and communities are not only possible but already happening in systems willing to do the work.

ABOUT THIS SERIES

The juvenile justice system touches the lives of young people at their most vulnerable, and it depends on the collective judgment, skill, and commitment of an extraordinary range of professionals: law enforcement officers, prosecutors and defense attorneys, judges, court staff, child advocates, case managers and social workers, educators, detention center staff, reentry specialists, and many others. These professionals rarely sit at the same table. Yet the challenges they face are deeply interconnected.

This paper is the fifth and final entry in a practitioner-led series designed to bridge that gap. The series examines some of the most persistent and consequential issues in juvenile justice, from how trauma shapes behavior to how leadership shapes systems. It offers practical, field-grounded strategies to improve youth outcomes, strengthen cross-sector collaboration, and support the well-being of youth, families, and communities at the center of the work.

The series grew out of more than twenty weeks of candid, ongoing dialogue among the members of the Jumpstart Mastery Guidance Group (JSM-GG), a team of experienced professionals whose work spans crisis response, psychiatric care, behavioral health, reentry services, confinement prevention, military leadership, and direct youth services. Their conversations, open, extensive, and rooted in hard-won experience, revealed patterns that cut across roles and settings: fragmentation where there should be coordination, silence and disconnection where there should be clear communication and connection, and opportunities where many see only dysfunction.

Roundtable Group Consulting, LLC, led by conflict resolution specialist and mediator Beth Myers, reviewed the full body of recorded sessions and dialogue, identified the themes that resonated most, and synthesized them into this series of accessible, action-oriented briefs. Each paper reflects the group's authentic voice and professional judgment, not a consensus document or a formal research product, but something arguably more valuable: the distilled, practice-tested insight of people who have spent their careers in these systems.

Each topic is presented in two formats: a concise executive briefing for those seeking a high-level overview, and a detailed paper for those seeking deeper context. Together, the five papers form a coherent framework for understanding and improving the juvenile justice system from the inside out.

Paper titles in this series:

- *Aligning Practice with Purpose*
- *Communication for Collaboration*
- *Trauma and Dignity in Juvenile Justice: Everyday Practice, Lasting Impact*
- *Leadership in Juvenile Justice*
- *From Silos to Solutions: Building a More Connected System*

For assistance with implementing any recommendations in this series, contact Jumpstart Mastery at https://www.jumpstartmastery.org

ABOUT THE AUTHORS AND ORGANIZATIONS

From Silos to Solutions: Building a More Connected System is the fifth and final paper in a practitioner-led series that offers insights and guidance from professionals whose expertise spans crisis response, behavioral health, public safety, leadership development, and systems innovation, as well as direct service within the juvenile justice system. Contributors include a confinement prevention administrator leading statewide juvenile reform efforts; a reentry specialist supporting transitions from incarceration to community life; a clinical supervisor integrating crisis response with addiction treatment for vulnerable populations; and others whose work in psychiatric care, military preparedness, mobile crisis teams, and emergency response brings a rare depth of practical and strategic knowledge to this series. Together, their field-tested guidance offers actionable pathways to improve youth outcomes and address the juvenile justice system's broader social, systemic, organizational, and public safety impacts.

Developed through a collaborative effort between the Jumpstart Mastery Guidance Group (JSM-GG) and Roundtable Group Consulting, LLC, each paper in the series is shaped by the lived experience, professional insight, and strategic reflection of JSM-GG's seven members. Their diverse professional paths span direct service and systems-level leadership within and beyond youth justice, informing how society as a whole ensures safety, fairness, accountability, and trust in its systems of care and response.

As the writing and facilitation lead for this series, conflict resolution specialist and mediator Beth Myers of Roundtable Group Consulting, LLC, applied expertise in systems thinking, deep listening, and analysis to synthesize dialogue, transcripts, and key insights, distilling complex ideas into actionable guidance grounded in foundational juvenile justice research. The insight itself belongs to the professionals who lived it.

Jumpstart Mastery – Guidance Group Member Bios

Andy Prisco, founder of Jumpstart Mastery, LLC (JSM), is a leading figure in crisis de-escalation education, emphasizing non-violent crisis management. His background in founding psychiatric emergency response programs and experience as a firefighter and EMT ground his work in practical, life-saving skills for public safety professionals. Prisco's

innovative approach to training reflects his belief in continuous learning and community empowerment to address the urgent need for safer crisis interventions.

Mike Delay, a Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Clinical Supervisor, excels in integrating crisis intervention and addiction treatment for vulnerable populations. His work focuses on building community partnerships and leading mobile response teams, mainly supporting homeless individuals and those in the justice system. Delay's compassionate approach to crisis management and recovery is essential in addressing the complexities of addiction and mental health in today's social service landscape.

Dan Gapsch has over 40 years of psychiatric nursing experience and over a decade of leadership experience in safety and crisis intervention education within psychiatric care and services workforces. As the Training and Development Manager at one of the nation's largest psychiatric hospitals, he was pivotal in creating and implementing programs that promote safety and reduce violence. His expertise extends into security management, equal opportunity, and dispute resolution, demonstrating a broad commitment to fostering safer, more respectful environments in high-stress institutions.

Candis Hannah, a re-entry Program Director and Crisis and De-escalation Specialist dedicated to reentry services, brings academic knowledge and practical insight to her work supporting individuals transitioning from incarceration to community life. Having managed the largest homeless shelter in Thurston County, Candis implemented effective crisis management and de-escalation strategies tailored to the unique needs of vulnerable populations. Candis' passion is serving youth and marginalized communities and empowering individuals during their reentry journey.

Grace Icenogle is a key advocate for justice system reform, specializing in youth development and confinement prevention. As a Confinement Prevention Administrator in a Juvenile Justice State System, Icenogle leads efforts to reduce youth confinement through evidence-based programs. Her research-driven approach and leadership in developing alternative support systems exemplify a forward-thinking, rehabilitative focus on justice reform.

James Sporleder brings a multifaceted approach to crisis response and leadership, blending military training with a philosophical focus on systems thinking. His extensive experience in survival training, repatriation, and workplace security positions him as a leader in developing specialized crisis prevention and intervention programs. Sporleder's dedication to human dignity and safety is reflected in his leadership roles across both military and corporate sectors.

Mark Wiser, a retired Lieutenant Colonel, offers a distinguished military career focused on joint combat operations, organizational behavior, leadership, and deliberate planning. As a highly decorated instructor pilot, Wiser has trained elite aircrews and shaped operational strategies across U.S. and NATO military theatres. His expertise in airpower, combined with a strong foundation in combat operations, continues to inspire teams as he now serves as a motivational speaker and consultant, sharing insights on leadership and personal development.

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