



SchoolWorks Juvenile Rights Project, Inc.

Program Purpose

SchoolWorks is a program focusing on improving the academic performance of the most at-risk students – those in the juvenile justice and foster care systems. The purpose of SchoolWorks' advocacy is to keep at-risk students "in school and out of trouble." SchoolWorks has two major underlying premises: (1) failure in education is often the root of juvenile crime and (2) children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems are falling between the cracks. Research shows that school failure is one of the strongest predictors of future delinquency, crime, and violence. Studies have also shown that addressing risk factors, such as lack of school attendance or suspension or expulsion from school, reduces the likelihood that a youth will get involved or stay involved with the juvenile justice system.

Many children who are already involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems (where poor and racial minority children are disproportionately represented) are ignored and/or denied their rights to free and appropriate public education, as well as mental health and other social services. SchoolWorks seeks to ensure that these at-risk children have access to appropriate educational services.

The main goals of the program are to:

- Reduce or prevent juvenile violence and juvenile justice involvement.
- Improve the educational outcomes for dependent and delinquent youth.

The specific objectives of the program are as follows:

- Provide school-based individual case advocacy and representation each year to approximately 210 dependent or delinquent youth between the ages of eight and 15 who are experiencing achievement, attendance, or behavioral difficulties at school.
- Establish eligibility for special education services for 75 percent of SchoolWorks youth deemed in need of these services.
- Assist 75 percent of SchoolWorks youth not currently enrolled in school to re-enroll in school.
- Reduce or prevent disciplinary action for 75 percent of SchoolWorks youth subject to such action.
- Reduce or prevent suspensions or expulsions for 75 percent of SchoolWorks youth threatened with suspension or expulsion.
- Create new or updated school plans (such as Individualized Education Programs [IEPs] and 504 Plans), consistent with child welfare and/or juvenile court plans, for 75 percent of SchoolWorks youth who need them.
- Link 75 percent of SchoolWorks youth (who are in need) with new school services (e.g., tutoring, positive behavioral intervention services, counseling, speech therapy, educational aides, etc.).
- Prevent moves between schools for 75 percent of SchoolWorks youth for whom frequent school moves have been identified as a problem.

- Obtain a more appropriate school placement for 75 percent of SchoolWorks youth who are in or being referred to a school placement that is inappropriate for their needs.
- Facilitate cross-system coordination (e.g. between school districts and the Department of Human Services or the Juvenile Justice Department) for 75 percent of SchoolWorks youth who are experiencing school difficulties.
- Promote improved academic achievement for 75 percent of SchoolWorks youth for whom achievement has been identified as a concern.
- Reduce absenteeism for 50 percent of SchoolWorks youth for whom attendance has been identified as a concern.
- Reduce juvenile court events for 50 percent of SchoolWorks youth for whom this has been identified as an immediate concern.
- Provide community trainings and education sessions to 75 participants and participate in other meetings designed to enhance partnerships with other agencies serving this population.
- Complete two or three targeted systemic reform activities per year in years one through three.

Target Population

Juvenile Rights Project (JRP) attorneys handle many of the delinquency and dependency cases in Multnomah County. Of these cases, children and youth ages eight through 15 are eligible for individual case advocacy if they are experiencing difficulties with: school attendance (including truancy, suspension and expulsion or barriers to enrollment), behavior and/or academic achievement. Youth who reside or attend school in Multnomah County are eligible; youth who are placed in a long-term residential treatment facilities are not eligible until they are preparing to discharge. After referral by the primary JRP attorney and screening by the SchoolWorks supervising attorney and legal assistant, cases are assigned to a SchoolWorks attorney or social worker for service.

Program Components

The program has three primary components: (1) individual case advocacy (ICA), (2) community training and education (CTE) and (3) targeted systemic reform (TSR). Following is a detailed description of the three components:

- *Individual case advocacy (ICA)*: Most of SchoolWorks' legal and educational advocacy consists of skillful diplomacy and the facilitation of communication among various service providers, the school, and the family or foster family. Each youth is unique and receives individualized services. For example, he or she may need to be properly assessed for learning disabilities, to have a behavior plan developed that emphasizes alternatives to suspension and expulsion, and/or to receive additional services such as mental health treatment. The SchoolWorks advocate brings together representatives from numerous agencies to address the youth's educational needs comprehensively. This includes identifying appropriate services for the participant as well as his or her eligibility and legal right to receive them,

identifying school contacts and services, making requests for special education assessment, advocating for specific services and school placement, and facilitating exchanges of information among various agencies, such as the court, school, child welfare department, juvenile justice department, social service agencies and the family. Staff also appear at Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, suspension and expulsion hearings and appeals, and advocate with other agencies that provide mental health, developmental disabilities, child welfare and juvenile justice services.

- *Community training and education (CTE)*: This component is premised on the belief that the unique needs of children and youth in the foster care and juvenile justice systems are poorly understood by the larger community, including by parents or guardians and the agencies charged with serving them, notably the schools. This part of the program works to promote partnerships among people and agencies working with a specific youth or with this group of children and youth in general.
- *Targeted systemic reform (TSR)*: This component seeks to use the knowledge and experience the staff gain through their work on the first two parts of the program and apply it strategically to target system-wide problems for improvement. For example, program staff have brought together representatives from various systems to address a problem that is affecting many youth. These cross-system efforts at collaboration have brought together agency representatives and other advocates and stakeholders to address:
 - a) Students involved with multiple public systems who are transitioning from secondary school to adulthood.
 - b) Children in a shelter care facility in Multnomah County and their access to public education.
 - c) Coordination among school districts, child welfare, juvenile justice and other systems to better meet the needs of the children and youth they serve.

Program Resources

Byrne Funding

The SchoolWorks program received \$184,741 in Byrne grant funding and provided \$61,580 in matching funds from July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2005. Seventy-three percent (73%) of the total budget pays for the salaries and benefits of SchoolWorks staff. During the period July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2005, the program expended \$184,741 in federal funds, and \$61,580 in match funds. Juvenile Rights Project, Inc. uses the majority of the Byrne grant funds to pay the cost of personnel salaries and contractual services.

Program Staff

The program is operated as part of the Juvenile Rights Project, Inc. Five attorneys (one supervising attorney and four attorneys) and a social worker are responsible for providing individual case advocacy for clients, conducting community training and education, and working on targeted systemic reform. The JRP Director oversees the program and administers the grant. Other key team members include two legal assistants and the database administrator. The Child Welfare Partnership at Portland State University serves as the external program evaluator.

In the first two years of the grant, the SchoolWorks advocates represented children in school and related matters only. The SchoolWorks attorney or social worker worked in concert with the child's court-appointed defense attorney, who represented the child in court matters. In year three, SchoolWorks began shifting to a model of integrated representation. Two attorneys began representing their court-appointed clients in both juvenile court and school matters (for clients who met the eligibility requirements of the SchoolWorks program). The remaining SchoolWorks attorneys continued to represent clients in school matters only. The program will continue to develop the model of integrated representation and will further refine the model in year four.

Collaboration

The most important factors in SchoolWorks' success are the knowledge, skill and experience of the individual staff and the staff's ability to work as a team and to form teams with their evaluators, advisory group, and community partners. SchoolWorks staff participate in a work group of other special education attorneys and advocates, in state and county advisory meetings and in cross-system meetings and work groups around specific issues (e.g., homeless students, older students with disabilities, minority students, students with significant mental health disorders and students who were exposed to drugs and alcohol prenatally). SchoolWorks also provided technical assistance to attorneys at the Oregon Department of Education on proposed statutory updates to reflect recent changes in federal law. SchoolWorks recommended specific language about the definitions of parent and foster parent and the appointment for educational surrogates for children in state custody.

Logic Model

Theoretical Premise Failure in education is often the root of juvenile crime; juveniles can be diverted from delinquency if their educational needs are met. Child protection and juvenile justice systems do not adequately provide for juveniles' education needs. Integrated legal and social work intervention will increase juveniles' access to and utilization of needed services.

Please see the next page for the SchoolWorks program logic model.

Program Logic Model SchoolWorks - Juvenile Rights Project

Target Population	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Objectives	Goals
<p>JRP clients in Multnomah County, ages 8-15 with identified attendance, achievement or discipline problems</p>	<p>Individual Case Advocacy (ICA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Referral ◆ Intake ◆ Assessment ◆ Advocacy ◆ Monitoring <p>Community Training and Education (CTE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Education about the unique educational needs and challenges of children in foster care and those involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice system <p>Targeted Systemic Reform (TSR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Research and systemic reform focused on a variety of issues 	<p>ICA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 210 youth are represented per year. 2. Specific services, such as 504 plans and amendments, expulsion hearings, IEP plans and amendments, psychological evaluation and other assessments, transition services <p>CTE</p> <p>50 adults, including school, child welfare and juvenile justice staff, as well as parents and foster parents are educated about the unique educational needs and challenges of children in foster care and those involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems</p> <p>TSR</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2 or 3 projects identified at the beginning of the grant cycle for work during years one through three 	<p>ICA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Re-enrollment 2. Establish special education eligibility 3. New/updated school plans 4. New services 5. Less severe disciplinary actions 6. Prevent suspensions/expulsions 7. Reduced absences 8. Reduction in juvenile court events (for delinquency) 9. Prevent moves between schools 10. More appropriate school placement 11. Cross system coordination 12. Improved academic achievement <p>CTE</p> <p>School, child welfare and juvenile justice staff, as well as parents and foster parents, have an increased awareness of the unique educational needs and challenges of children in foster care and those involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems</p> <p>TSR</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achievement of various, specific changes to relevant systems resulting in better education-related services for dependent and delinquent youth. 	<p>ICA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase school attendance by participants 2. Decrease in negative behaviors and discipline referrals of participants 3. Improve participants' school achievement 4. Reduce participants' contact with the police and juvenile courts <p>CTE</p> <p>School, child welfare and juvenile justice staff, as well as parents and foster parents are better able to meet the unique educational needs of children in foster care and those involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and will be better prepared to deal with the challenges</p> <p>TSR</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relevant systems (i.e., schools, DHS, OYA) are better able to meet the educational needs of dependent and delinquent youth 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce or prevent juvenile violence and juvenile justice involvement 2. Improve the educational outcomes for dependent and delinquent children and youth

Program Progress

During the third program year, from July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2005, the SchoolWorks program continued to make good progress on its goals and objectives. Program staff provided individual case advocacy to 295 children and youth during this time period and trained/educated over 100 community members. In addition, the program completed its final targeted systemic reform effort to address the educational needs of children in foster care.

SchoolWorks was very effective in advocating for dependent or delinquent children and youth in local school systems, and the program met most of its school-related objectives (e.g., reducing absences, reducing school moves, creating or updating school plans, reducing or eliminating suspensions and expulsions, improving achievement, etc.). The Portland State evaluators began collecting juvenile justice and school records for 22 SchoolWorks clients in year three. These and additional youth will be included in a pilot evaluation using a pre-/post-test design.

Process Evaluation

- *Clients served:* From July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2005, the SchoolWorks program provided individual case advocacy to 295 youth (209 new admissions and 86 carried over from year two).
- *Client profile:* The clients who were enrolled in the program in year three (N = 209) matched most of the target criteria for program services. Originally, the program only planned to target youth ages eight through 15. Youth ages 16 and older are eligible for SchoolWorks if they have previously been served by the program. Cases for 13 youth under the age of eight, as well as 31 youth over the age of 15, were opened in year three. All of the youth were referred because they had an open dependency or delinquency case and met the other SchoolWorks eligibility criteria: experiencing difficulty with school attendance (including truancy, suspension and expulsion or a school's refusal to enroll the child), behavior, or academic achievement. Youth could be experiencing problems in only one area or in more than one area. In year three, 22 percent of the youth were referred because they were not in school, 67 percent were experiencing behavioral problems in school, 72 percent were academically behind, and 51 percent had more than two reasons for referral. The majority of SchoolWorks clients were male (64 percent) and a disproportionately large number were minority students (52 percent). In addition to the admission criteria, some of the most prevalent risk factors, among the children served, discovered during the course of the SchoolWorks program (2004-05), were:

Learning Disabled	24%
Mood disorder (e.g., depression or bi-polar)	24%
Attention Deficit Disorders	27%
Emotional Trauma	34%
Behavioral Disorder	36%
Poverty	78%

Foster Care	63%
Single Parent	37%
Poor Performing School	13%
Attended more than one school during the year	35%
History of many school changes	26%

- Program implementation:* During the third year, 154 clients completed SchoolWorks, and 141 clients remained active in the program at the end of year three. Of those who exited the program, 44 percent had received assistance to the point that SchoolWorks services were no longer needed. Cases also closed for other reasons. In 47% of the cases, youth became ineligible for the program because their juvenile court case closed, because they were placed in a residential treatment facility or because the youth left Multnomah County. In 7% of the cases, the youth no longer wanted to receive services from SchoolWorks, and in 1% of the cases, the parent or educational surrogate no longer desired SchoolWorks services for the youth. For this reason, we will present short-term outcomes both for the total number of SchoolWorks cases closed in year three and for the cases that closed because SchoolWorks services were complete.

SchoolWorks staff engaged more than 100 people (including teachers, school administrators, lawyers, Court Appointed Special Advocates [CASAs], foster parents, and advisory board members) in formal training or partnership meetings during this grant year. Examples included:

Training

- The SchoolWorks summer camp provided training to SchoolWorks staff, Juvenile Rights Project staff and law clerks and SchoolWorks advisory board members from the community. Topics included disproportionate minority suspension and expulsion, early intervention and early childhood special education, functional behavioral assessment and behavioral intervention plans, the 2004 federal reauthorization of IDEA, implications of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 on obtaining school records, and Extended School Year programs for special education students.
 - Brian Baker did a presentation on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 reauthorization as it pertains to children in foster care and homeless youth and participated in a panel discussion on other changes to the federal special education law at an Oregon Bar Association event. The audience included Oregon Department of Education officials, school district attorneys, private attorneys who represent parents and students, and educators.
 - Mr. Baker also provided a training to Multnomah and Washington County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) who advocate for children in foster care.

- Jennifer McGowan and Brian Baker presented a training on the problem of minority overrepresentation in school discipline and potential solutions to the “Closing the Achievement Gap” conference sponsored by the Oregon Department of Education.

Partnership Meetings

- Attorney Brian Baker met with Multnomah County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) to discuss CASAs being appointed as educational surrogates and CASAs’ role in educational advocacy for the children and youth they represent.
- Mr. Baker met with the Cultural Competency Coordinator of the Oregon Commission on Children and Families regarding disproportionate minority discipline. The discussion explored the impact on Russian and Slavic youth, as well.
- Four SchoolWorks staff attended the Northwest Conference on the Special Education-Bilingual Interface, “Putting the Pieces Together,” at Lewis and Clark College, with educators and para-educators from the Portland area and from around the Pacific Northwest.
- The SchoolWorks social worker, Mark McKechnie, attended as a member of the Multnomah County Children’s Mental Health System Advisory Committee and the Oregon Children’s Mental Health System Advisory Committee.
- SchoolWorks staff met with the program analyst for the Long Term Care and Treatment programs of the Oregon Department of Education.
- SchoolWorks staff met with case managers from the Developmental Disabilities Services department of Multnomah County regarding participation in children’s IEP meetings and the coordination between schools and DD services.

SchoolWorks staff completed two systemic reform efforts which involved multi-system collaboration during this grant year. The first was aimed at increasing transition planning for older special education students. The effort, coordinated by SchoolWorks attorney Mary Kane, involved representatives from the Department of Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, DHS Children, Adult, and Families, Developmental Disabilities, and the Office of Mental Health and Addiction Services. The group created a brochure that provides resources for transitioning youth. It was published by the Department of Education. The guide identifies the system players and their roles and will be available in hard copy and via the Internet.¹ The guide was distributed in time for the 2004-05 school year.

The second reform effort involved representatives of the Department of Education; several Educational Service Districts (ESDs); school board administrators; Oregon Youth Authority (OYA); and DHS Children, Adults, and Families; Portland State University; the Oregon Advocacy Center; the Oregon Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee and private children’s treatment programs.

¹ <http://www.ode.state.or.us/gradelevel/hs/transition/transitionplanningguide.pdf>

It was focused on the educational needs of children in foster care. The group met every six weeks to focus on the sharing of information and coordination of services among the different systems serving court-involved students. The group focused on addressing barriers that often prevent multiple systems who serve the same children from working in concert. Informational presentations were given by Mr. Baker, leading to discussions within the group on the following topics: records exchange and confidentiality under the Federal Education Rights Privacy Act, the education needs of foster children, IDEA reauthorization and SB 1619 (special education services for homeless and foster children) and legislative concepts regarding the education of children in foster care. Ultimately, policy changes were not produced by the group because new legislation was passed by the Oregon Legislative Assembly in 2005 which specifically addresses the needs of public school students who are in the custody of the State of Oregon.

Successes, barriers and solutions

SchoolWorks originally anticipated serving 220 youth per year of the program. SchoolWorks has provided educational advocacy in 638 cases over three years. This includes children who have been served more than one time. We have discovered that some of the cases can take months to resolve. We have also found that some cases re-open after SchoolWorks has successfully completed its work. These cases occur when children are removed from foster homes or adoptive homes, causing school changes and other disruptions in their lives; when children move into or out of the county; when children move into or out of residential treatment facilities; when youth matriculate from elementary to middle schools or from middle to high schools; when services they are receiving are reduced, cut or changed in some way; when there is a change in the child's contact with important figures in their lives, such as their parents, siblings, case workers, teachers, therapists and others; or when other events undermine a child's stability or success. Some cases are kept open from one school year to the next when it appears that the likelihood for such disruptions is high.

Responses to SchoolWorks from school personnel and school districts have varied and have changed over time. While some school personnel who have responded to our satisfaction surveys have criticized the zealous advocacy of the SchoolWorks staff, many school personnel have voiced appreciation, as well, for representing the interests of children who are likely to fall through the cracks. Some have also appreciated the independent status SchoolWorks has in advocating for the child's interests. SchoolWorks has collaborated with teachers, school psychologists, counselors and administrators, as well as foster parents, probation officers, case workers, mental health therapists and others to overcome funding, policy and other barriers to accessing the educational services that SchoolWorks' very needy clients require. Cases in which hard fought battles over resources, for example, have given way to mutual respect and appreciation between SchoolWorks advocates and school district personnel for our efforts to meet the needs of the children we both serve are particularly gratifying.

Outcome Evaluation

The primary outcomes of interest for the individual case advocacy component of SchoolWorks include: 1) establish special education eligibility, 2) re-enrollment in school, 3) less severe disciplinary action, 4) prevent suspensions/expulsions, 5) new/updated school plans, 6) new school services such as counseling, speech therapy, educational aids, 7) prevent moves between schools, 8) appropriate school placements, 9) cross-system coordination, 10) improve academic achievement, 11) reduce absences, and 12) reduce juvenile court events. The program objective for many of the individual case advocacy activities was to provide the service to at least 75 percent of those who needed it.

Outcomes are tracked at case closing; 376 cases were closed between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2005. These are the outcomes for all youth served whose cases were closed during in years two and three:

Short-Term Outcome (N = 376)	Percentage of SchoolWorks clients for whom this was an identified need	Percentage of cases where outcome was achieved or partially achieved
Re-enrollment in school	26%	79%
Establish Special Education Eligibility	10%	84%
New/updated school plans	43%	90%
New services for student	17%	98%
Earlier/less severe disciplinary action	8%	94%
Reduce or prevent suspension/expulsion	18%	82%
Reduce student absences	13%	57%
Reduction in juvenile court events ²	4%	47%
Prevent moves between schools	12%	72%
More or prevent less appropriate school placement	25%	86%
Cross System Coordination	41%	97%
Improved academic achievement	14%	83%

Cases were closed because SchoolWorks services were no longer needed in 49% of the closed cases (N=184). These are the short term outcomes for this cohort:

² This outcome is difficult to assess on a short-term basis. Portland State University is conducting a pre-/post-test study design to better assess this outcome.

Short-Term Outcome (N = 184)	Percentage of SchoolWorks clients for whom this was an identified need	Percentage of cases where outcome was achieved or partially achieved
Re-enrollment in school	20%	97%
Establish Special Education Eligibility	12%	87%
New/updated school plans	45%	96%
New services for student	20%	100%
Earlier/less severe disciplinary action	10%	100%
Reduce or prevent suspension/expulsion	16%	97%
Reduce student absences	9%	81%
Reduction in juvenile court events ³	2%	67%
Prevent moves between schools	15%	75%
More or prevent less appropriate school placement	29%	95%
Cross System Coordination	45%	100%
Improved academic achievement	16%	100%

The primary outcomes of interest for the community training and education component include: (1) increase in staff awareness of the unique educational needs of children in foster care and (2) increase in parents/surrogates' knowledge of their rights and responsibilities.

Portland State University evaluators mailed out 203 surveys to school staff and community partners (a group which includes foster parents, case workers, probation officers, Court Appointed Special Advocates and health and social services providers) in 2003, 2004 and 2005. Sixty-eight (68) surveys were returned from school district personnel and community partners. Responses from school district personnel and community partners included the following:

"From your perspective, has SchoolWorks assisted in:

Providing helpful information about the educational needs of students?"

Yes: 71% (48) No: 24% (16) Don't know: 3% (2) Blank: 2% (1)

Bringing caregivers (parents and foster parents) to the table?"

Yes: 72% (49) No: 18% (12) Don't know: 10% (7)

The primary outcome of interest for the targeted systemic reform component is the achievement of various specific changes to relevant systems resulting in better education-related services for dependent and delinquent youth. These were responses to the relevant questions in the surveys sent to school district personnel and community partners in 2003-3005 (N = 68):

³ See note 2.

“From your perspective, has SchoolWorks assisted in:

Developing effective teams/improving communication between systems?”

Yes: 81% (54)

No: 13% (9)

Don't know: 6% (4)

Improving educational outcomes for youth?”

Yes: 78% (53)

No: 10% (7)

Don't know: 12% (8)

Program Performance Measures and Outcomes

The numbers below (and those for “short term outcomes” included in the previous section) are based on data collected via forms filled out by SchoolWorks staff when a case is closed for any reason. The “closing form” includes information on services needed and services received for each youth, risk factors, and reason for case closing, as well as the short-term outcomes listed below. SchoolWorks staff assess achievement of these outcomes based on information available at the time the case is closed.

The performance measures for this program include:

- Percent of clients who complete the program.
- The program provided 209 additional youth with individual school-based advocacy and representation and continued to provide these services to 81 youth from the previous year. Cases were closed for 154 children during 2004-05.

These outcomes were tracked at case closing (N = 154) during the third grant year.

The outcomes for SchoolWorks include:

- The program established special education services eligibility for 80 percent (16 of 20) of youth deemed in need of these services.
- The program re-enrolled 91 percent (38 of 42) of youth in school not previously enrolled.
- 93 percent (12 of 13) of youth with previous disciplinary problems received less severe disciplinary action due to intervention of the program.
- 96 percent (21 of 22) of youth previously threatened with suspension or expulsion had suspensions or expulsions reduced due to the intervention of the program.
- 95 percent (59 of 62) of youth in need of new or updated school plans (e.g., IEPs and 504 plans) received them.
- 100 percent (26 of 26) of youth deemed in need of new school services such as counseling, speech therapy or educational aides were linked with these services.
- 68 percent (13 of 19) of youth who had previous problems with frequent school moves avoided changing schools as a result of the program.
- 86 percent (31 of 36) of youth in inappropriate school placements obtained a more appropriate placement.

- 96 percent (64 of 67) of youth identified as needing cross-system coordination because of achievement concerns received this assistance.
- 83 percent (24 of 29) of youth for whom academic achievement was a concern improved academically.
- 60 percent (12 of 20) of youth for whom attendance was a concern reduced absenteeism.
- SchoolWorks staff engaged more than 100 people (including teachers, school administrators, lawyers, CASAs, foster parents, and advisory board members) in formal training or partnership meetings.
- Targeted system reform efforts involved multi-system collaboration around transitioning older special education students from school to work or higher education and around better understanding the educational needs of children in foster care.

Lessons Learned

The delivery of advocacy services for individual clients remains true to the original SchoolWorks program design. The major obstacles to service delivery relate primarily to the involuntary closing of some cases before all needed services can be completed. Furthermore, staff note that many of these vulnerable students could use these advocacy services throughout their tenure in school, rather than just for a short period of time. The program was originally designed to provide legal advocacy and to assist the youth and youth's parents or foster parents to advocate for themselves. However, the program may have underestimated how difficult it is for some parents and foster parents to access educational and other services. Thus, the SchoolWorks advocate takes on additional tasks, such as arranging tutoring or after-school programs. This is not inconsistent with the program vision, but is perhaps a more comprehensive service package than anticipated at the inception of the grant.

There are also a number of cases where it has been more difficult and time consuming than anticipated in order to help some students obtain the "free and appropriate education" to which they are entitled. Even in some of the most difficult cases, resolutions have been eventually reached through direct negotiation and advocacy with the school district. Only 1% of the cases to date have required the use of special education due process procedures. These have been initiated judiciously when other means have failed. Exercising their due process has helped individual clients obtain needed educational services. None thus far have gone as far as the administrative hearing stage, yet all of them have been resolved through settlement agreements in favor of the child. Some of these cases have also assisted in identifying and remedying systemic barriers which impact other SchoolWorks clients and other students as well.

The short time that SchoolWorks represents a delinquent youth can be a barrier, however, to service provision. The program has addressed this by reaching an agreement with the Chief Judge of the Multnomah County Circuit Court and with the Chief Judge of the Family Law Division to extend the JRP appointment, usually to 90 days. Nonetheless, SchoolWorks advocates cannot always anticipate when a case will have to close. Some of the other factors which lead to cases closing prematurely or

unexpectedly are: the juvenile court dismisses the child's dependency case; the child welfare agency places the child in a residential treatment facility or in a placement outside of the county, the youth runs away and cannot be contacted or the youth does not want SchoolWorks assistance because they do not want to attend school or to receive different or additional services. In addition, SchoolWorks cannot effectively represent a child in school matters when the parent or educational surrogate does not desire SchoolWorks services. This is because the parent or surrogate is the party who has the authority to consent to evaluations and services and to exercise other educational rights on behalf of a child.

SchoolWorks' success lies in the skill and expertise of its staff and the location of the program within an office that already represents children and youth. Each of the SchoolWorks staff has previously worked with children in foster care and in the juvenile justice system and has a thorough understanding of those systems. As SchoolWorks staff gain additional expertise in the education system, they are uniquely situated to bring these multiple systems together. Having the program as part of an existing law office for children means that representation and advocacy for children can be far more holistic than if the two service elements were separate.

In the spirit of providing more holistic legal representation to children, SchoolWorks began testing a staffing model in year three in which the same attorney represents SchoolWorks-eligible children in both juvenile court and school matters. This model has shown some success. Two lessons were learned. The first was that significant experience in both educational advocacy and juvenile defense work is necessary to provide holistic representation. Thus, the staffing for year four is designed to provide some staff more experience in each area. The second lesson was that the program had to adjust the workloads of the attorneys providing both defense and SchoolWorks representation so that the number and types of cases include children who are likely to be eligible for SchoolWorks and that the workload allows the attorney to provide high-quality legal representation in both areas of the child's life.

For further information about this program, please contact Ms. Angela Sherbo at (503) 232-2540 ext. 233.