

Evaluation and Reporting Tools for Keeping Kids in Schools and Out of Courts

*An Implementation Plan for a Chief Justice program of the
Judicial Council of California*

A Masters Policy Report
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Disclaimer

This study has been prepared for the Judicial Council of California, San Francisco, CA. The student author conducted this study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Public Policy at Mills College and in compliance with the requirements of the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects. The judgments and conclusions are solely those of the author, and are not necessarily endorsed by the Mills College Public Policy Program, the sponsoring Client organization, or any other organization or agency.

Executive Summary

Implement a Multi-Faceted Strategy to Evaluate and Report on KKIS Work
If JCC is to successfully address the invisible achievement gap through the KKIS Initiative, it needs to take the following steps to produce data for evaluation and reporting:

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| ➤ Adopt new Logic Model provided with short, mid, and long-term goals. |
| ➤ Conduct data analysis through the sourcing of suggested databases. |
| ➤ Administer county surveys provided on KKIS supported programs. |
| ➤ Incorporate CALPADS foster youth data when it becomes available. |
| ➤ Follow template provided for court reports for judges. |
| ➤ Follow steps necessary to gain access to Foster Focus data. |
| ➤ Coordinate with CDE track county trauma informed programs. |

Figure 1: Executive Summary Recommendation Table

KKIS Exists to Reduce the School-to-Prison Pipeline

Foster care students are at a considerable disadvantage in California schools, as year after year they are reporting lower achievement and graduation rates, attending the lowest-performing schools in the state, and have lowest school permanency rates compared to their peers – this is known as the Invisible Achievement Gap (Wiegmann, et al. 2015). The Judicial Council of California (JCC), a policy-making body of the state’s court system, decided to take on the Invisible Achievement Gap through the creation of the Keeping Kids in Schools and Out of Courts Initiative (KKIS) in 2013.

Knowing that the school-to-prison pipeline is prevalent among foster care students, JCC is leading an effort to build awareness at the court level about the issues facing foster youth and promote trauma informed intervention programs. KKIS’ current goals are:

1. Lower suspension rates to 2%.
2. Reduce chronic absenteeism.

California juvenile justice judges have expressed a desire to receive information about the educational outcomes and challenges unique to foster care students, so at the heart of all KKIS work is involving judges more directly on awareness and collation building relating to improving outcomes for foster care students.

KKIS currently conducts the following main activities:

- 1) Convene interagency county teams led by judges throughout the state to support foster care students.
- 2) Organize an annual summit to bring together stakeholders for professional development and knowledge sharing.
- 3) Convene a steering committee to lead the initiative's strategy.
- 4) Produce guides for judges about the effects of trauma on students.

Masters Policy Report Recommends a Strategy for Evaluation

This project recommends a strategy for evaluating the KKIS Initiative. A successful evaluation strategy for KKIS will produce enough data to measure against goals, inform the ongoing strategy and work, and produce court reports on the educational outcomes of foster care students per county that will be used by juvenile justice judges.

KKIS Goals Need Further Expansion

During the discovery period it became clear that the KKIS Initiative is achieving many milestones but lacks the systems to report on their impact. The stated goals of the initiative are long-term and to perform an informative evaluation, short and mid-term goals are needed.

Proprietary Educational Data and Constraints Affect Evaluation Work

Data on foster care students is highly confidential. While there are some agencies collecting education-related data on foster care students, JCC does not have access to that information at this time.

This project faced a number of constraints accessing qualitative and quantitative data including:

- No access to conduct surveys at district level.
- No available data on foster students in schools.
- No access to Foster Focus database.
- No unified KKIS system or approach at the county level.
- A moratorium on surveying judges at JCC.