

University of Utah College of Nursing and Juvenile Justice Services

Residential Juvenile Justice Service (JJS) facilities provide onsite health care to thousands of American youth each year, yet they are largely underutilized by academic institutions as opportunities for education and professional development. Direct university involvement in correctional health care has been shown to result in a more structured delivery of health care services using evidence-based practice (Kendig, 2004). A few universities have established a school of medicine—correctional facility collaboration. These institutions have developed comprehensive correctional medical, mental health, pharmacy, and dental care systems within their academic health centers. Only one other college of nursing—corrections collaboration was identified in the literature. No college of nursing-juvenile justice collaborations were identified.

Since 2000, the University of Utah College of Nursing (CON) has had a contract to care for justice involved youth housed in Utah's JJS facilities. Initially, five of 18 facilities were included in the contract between the CON and JJS. The services provided by the CON were highly valued and in July 2014 JJS requested the CON provide services in ten JJS facilities across a large catchment area known as the Wasatch front. Currently, the CON/JJS contract covers 8 facilities, secondary to two closing. There are three different types of facilities: short-stay detention centers (jails), a restitution facility and secure facilities (prisons). CON faculty and staff provide care for an average of daily census of 170 youth each day. Yearly nursing visits total over 25,000.

The CON/JJS contract is written in three year increments and has been renewed five times since the contract's initiation in 2000. The CON team currently consists of an adolescent physician, primary care nurse practitioners, psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners, full- and part-time registered nurses (RNs) and a medical assistant. The Clinical Director is a nurse practitioner. All nurse practitioners hold faculty appointments with the CON. The physician (medical director) is employed part-time by the CON and holds a faculty appointment within the School of Medicine. The RNs and NPs provide JJS youth care for acute and chronic illness and precept both undergraduate and graduate nursing students as well as medical residents.

A juvenile justice based faculty practice provides CON nursing staff and faculty opportunities for professional growth in all missions of the college; practice, education, research and service. The JJS sites provide a rich and diverse clinical experience for faculty practice for both mental health and primary care practitioners and students. In addition to gaining primary care skills, RN and NP students have the opportunity to serve as teachers and role models for the youth. Student led projects create a benefit for JJS and the CON in this academic-corrections collaboration. Faculty members can become Certified Correctional Health Professionals and specialists in adolescent primary care. Students, faculty and staff alike see how social determinants of health can affect youth and learn the role of patient advocate in daily clinic life as they reach out to professionals within and beyond the JJS setting. There are many opportunities to present at national conferences, publish in correctional health, nursing education and adolescent health peer reviewed journals, and serve as experts on professional, state and national boards. Research opportunities abound in this understudied population.

This long standing, successful collaboration has produced many measurable positive outcomes. The most notable example is the establishment of a statewide screening program for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) that was established in 2015. Faculty from the CON advocated for STI funding from the state legislature, which they received. With this funding they implemented and manage a program that spans 16 facilities. The current positivity rate for Chlamydia and Gonorrhea infections is 8.2% overall, and 22% among females. With a treatment rate of 75-90%, we have made a substantial impact on the lives of many youths. The CON also collects data on the high risk behaviors of youth and collaborates with law enforcement and social justice groups to implement programs that meet identified needs.

The current collaborative, respectful relationship is the result 18 years of dedication to the missions of both the practice and academic partners. This dedication allows the PP to attain optimal performance in their area and the AP to facilitate practice at the top of education and licensure while providing excellent care for the justice involved youth. The CON/JJS commitment to AACN/AONE Guiding Principles will be elaborated upon in the summary document.