70 million

ONE ~~JAIL~~ AT A TIME.
story

EPISODE 5

One State Is Disrupting the Pipeline from Foster Care to Jail

Hello!

Thanks for listening to 70 Million. Whether you're a seasoned criminal justice reform advocate, private citizen, educator, public or private sector leader, we appreciate your interest in finding solutions to the incarceration quagmire.

We've assembled this 70 Million Criminal Justice Toolkit for those ready to turn interest into action.

This resource guide draws from practical tactics shared by those who launched the initiatives chronicled in our episodes, including:

-- How to access and deploy public and private sector databases and legislative bodies to build reform solutions.

-- How to highlight individual stories of the incarcerated in order to drive organizational and grassroots action.

-- How to harness citizens' willingness to engage in methodical, trial-and-error pilot efforts in order to build effective reform programs and movements.

Our hope is that this Toolkit can help get you started. Keep in mind that steps do not have to happen strictly chronologically. Use them and the questions to frame and shape change in your community and let us know about it.

THE 70 MILLION TEAM

The SMART model of program development and evaluation is an open-sourced method used by public sector, nonprofit and citizen/community groups to organize solutions-oriented projects.

Specific (Steps 1-4)

Measurable (Steps 5-6)

Achievable (Steps 7-8)

Relevant (Steps 9-10)

Timebound (Step 11)

Identify & Analyze Concerns

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Be specific about what you are trying to achieve

Case Study -- Episode 5 of 70 Million Podcast: Since 1999, more than 230,000 youth nationwide have transitioned or 'aged out' of foster care. An estimated 30,000 emerge without stable family, residential, or job supports. Many end up in the criminal justice system as a result.

What changes must occur in California's foster care system to mitigate the foster care-to-jail connection? In 2015, California introduced the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) program, an initiative within its foster care system that aims to improve outcomes for youth.

"Like we have to build a system that responds differently and we can't have this one idea of foster care is bad."

Brian Blalock, Policy Researcher at the Tipping Point, a California anti-poverty group monitoring foster care reform efforts.

Identify and Convene Internal Division Representatives and External Stakeholders

What is the minimum personnel needed?

➔ List Must-Have Roles
➔ List Potential Ideal Individuals to Assume Must-Have Roles

Example: Foster families, youth who had aged out of the system and ended up in the criminal justice system, as well as journalists who chronicled the plight of affected youth, were key in pushing California's lawmakers to take action toward reforming the foster care-to-jail connection. For example, foster care host families, organized by reform advocacy groups including Tipping Point, visited lawmakers and pushed for the state's social services department to develop Continuum of Care in order to provide better needs-assessments of youth, increase funding allocations for foster families, and improve practical supports for youth before they exit the system.

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Itemize Resources, Inputs, and Assets Needed to Achieve Solutions/Outcomes

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What do we want to accomplish?

➔ Why is this goal important?
➔ Who should be involved?
➔ What resources are needed?

Example: California redirected portions of funding normally used for group homes and facilities for foster youth into a Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) program that includes "Resource Family" homes, a network of post-foster care homes that welcome youth who have aged out of the formal system, and are eligible for extended services.

Will Clark on his balcony in his home. He's been living with his resource family, the Huson's, for the past year.

Photo: Liza Veale for 70 Million.

Develop Framework & Timeline for Achieving Goals

Example: California's foster care reform advocates faced the complex challenge of developing ways to remake group homes and other parts of the traditional system without disrupting existing supports and inadvertently pushing more youth into high-risk situations that lead to incarceration.

"If group homes get shut down...there's less of an opportunity for some youth to be diverted to a less restrictive setting, which would be a group home, and then they ended up in a worse setting [such as a] locked facility."

Brian Blalock of the Tipping Point.
Photo courtesy of Tipping Point

STEP 5
Measuring Progress & Efficacy

➔ Set evaluation criteria to determine progress & success rate
➔ Assess Legislative/Funding/Regulatory Barriers & Opportunities

Example: In evaluating the efficacy of the new Resource Families approach, advocates say one key aspect will be hard to quantify: the exact ways that a loving family environment post-foster care contributes to success for youth who age out of the system.

STEP 6
Support Desired Outcomes with Data and/or Metrics

Example: California's Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) initiative is formed from a culturally-competent and trauma-informed model. It is the result of legislation approved by Gov. Jerry Brown in 2015. Along with systemic changes to how the state's department of social services funds and administers foster care programs, implementation established efficacy metrics for the new initiative. Components identified for regular evaluations include:

➔ Staff and Programs
➔ Administrative Structures
➔ System Collaboration

"I think that what the state of California is trying to acknowledge is that all kids need a family and a home and relatives. It may not be mom and dad and a cat and a dog, but it has to be a family. It has to be home life. It has to be someone who loves you, who knows you, and who cares about you."

Reporter Karen de Sa.

STEP 7
Achievability Review

➔ Revisit whether goals are realistic and introduce flexibility in goal-setting
➔ Operational Oversight Assessment

Example: The California Department of Social Services, administrator of the foster care system, collaborated with a range of community-based organizations, educators, and others to develop policy changes designed to improve foster care. The Integrated Core Practice Model (ICPM), established in 2015, is the resulting measurable framework for caregivers, local social services officials, and community affiliates and agencies.

STEP 8
Program(s) and Asset Resource Monitoring

Example: Providers and local social services officials across California follow the Integrated Core Practice Model (ICPM). Local administrators of foster care programs and services must follow county and state compliance and financial reporting accountability rules, as well as monitor outcomes from CCR.

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE

CORE PRACTICE MODEL
A Guiding Framework for Child Welfare Practice

" We anticipate that as we implement and learn from our data and experience locally and statewide, this guide will be augmented, refined, and revised."

From ICPM report, Jennifer Kent, Director Dept. of Health Care Services, and Will Lightbourne, Director, California Dept. of Social Services.

STEP 9
Relevancy Check-Up

➔ Examine whether each milestone supports the overall vision
➔ Preliminary Outcomes Evaluation & Process Updates

Example: Funding schedules for foster families are not yet wholly aligned with the CCR schedule for placement of youth. This creates a risk gap that exacerbates challenges that face youth who are aging out of traditional foster care homes or facilities, as it coincides with the CCR mandated closure of foster care facilities. Families within the Resources Families and Homes project of CCR may not receive appropriate funding as CCR scales up. This means that advocates like Brian Blalock at Tipping Point are prioritizing monitoring ways that the transition is impacting youth.

STEP 10
Full Program Review

Example: California's effort to reform its Foster Care system so that youths who age out don't end up in the criminal justice system began in earnest in 2015 with the Care Continuum Reform program. Its efficacy in terms of improved outcomes for youth is being monitored and evaluated ongoing.

"It was so many rules. Like, you have to ask for a pass to go to your room, you have to ask to take a shower. Like, how do you learn how to cook if you weren't able to cook in the kitchen because we don't know if you're going to cut somebody or burn somebody? Like, you're not letting us be human, like you're not letting us just be regular girls."

Aminah Gipson, former foster youth.

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Ensure Reform Efforts Are Time-bound

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How long does it take to achieve goals?

➔ Are established deadlines realistic?

Example: "The way [Blalock] sees it, if social services don't get to some of these kids early, the criminal justice system will later. When Blalock was an attorney, he saw that behind a lot of kids' criminal charges there's a story of parental abuse or neglect. Right now, judges can go easy on some of them and send them to group homes instead of juvy. But those homes are disappearing. Over 300 have closed since CCR got underway last year." -- Liza Veale for 70 Million.

RESOURCES

To get started developing a reform project similar to California's foster care effort, these resources can help:

➔ Learn more about the State of California's Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) [program here](#).

➔ Visit the community nonprofits and advocacy organizations working to end the foster care to prison connection in California:

➔ [Tipping Point Community](#)

➔ [Foster Club](#)

➔ [Larkin Street Youth Services](#)

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