



LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR  
DARYL G. PURPERA, CPA, CFE

February 10, 2014

## OFFICE OF JUVENILE JUSTICE MONITORING OF PREVENTION AND DIVERSION CONTRACT PROVIDERS

The state's Office of Juvenile Justice does not effectively monitor the contracts it has with entities that provide prevention and diversion programs to keep youth out of the juvenile justice system, according to a staff audit released Monday by Legislative Auditor Daryl Purpera.

The Office of Juvenile Justice “does not collect sufficient information to evaluate whether prevention and diversion programs are reducing the number of youth who enter into the state juvenile justice system,” the performance audit said.

The purpose of the programs is to keep youth who have been charged with misdemeanor crimes or have behavioral issues from entering the juvenile justice system. Youth in the programs have been recommended for placement by their schools or courts. The services provided by the contractors include violence and conflict resolution, family therapy, and life skills training.

Because of budget cuts and Louisiana's move toward providing youth services through the multi-agency Coordinated System of Care, OJJ had to decrease the number of prevention and diversion contracts from 59 providers with 10,842 youth slots in 2011-12 at a cost of \$3.9 million to 18 providers in the current fiscal year. The existing 18 contracts are worth \$963,953 and cover 2,535 youth slots, according to the state auditor.

The report said that because OJJ does not see to it that providers submit annual reports detailing their performance in specific areas at the end of each fiscal year, the agency cannot determine if the providers are properly performing the services promised.

Because of the lack of information from contractors and with a reduced amount of money for the program, OJJ is renewing – or not renewing – contracts “without evaluating which programs were most effective at preventing entry into the juvenile justice system.” One measure of the success of the programs is the number of youth who do not enter the juvenile justice system after completing the program.

OJJ did not renew six of the 10 programs with the lowest entry rate (less than 5 percent) for fiscal year 2013-14, including two that had no youth enter the juvenile justice system. By tracking fiscal year 2012, the report said that 10 of the 18 programs renewed had at least 5



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percent of their enrollees enter the juvenile justice system after a year, and one program renewed had 68.75 percent of its youth enter the juvenile justice system within a year of finishing its program.

The report said that state law requires the juvenile justice office “to evaluate data relating to the effectiveness of programs designed to prevent or reduce delinquency of youth. However, OJJ does not collect sufficient information to evaluate whether prevention and diversion programs” are working like they should.

The report also found that:

- For the 2012-13 fiscal year, only 30 of 42 providers submitted annual reports to OJJ, and 26 of those were incomplete because the contractor did not report all required information, such as the percentage of youth who successfully complete the program or the percentage of youth who enter the juvenile justice system after finishing the programs.
- Although OJJ has a standardized form for quarterly assessments of the programs, the forms are not adaptable for specific programs and do not take into account specific program goals or needs. “Without a monitoring tool specific to each of these programs, OJJ cannot ensure that program specialists are adequately monitoring the specific services of each prevention and diversion provider,” the report said.

**For more information, contact:**

Daryl G. Purpera, CPA, CFE  
Legislative Auditor  
225-339-3800

**On Twitter:** OJJ does not effectively monitor contracts with entities that provide prevention and diversion programs.