



**Evaluation of Choice  
Refocus & Opportunity Program  
Annual Report  
October 2005 – September 2006**

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*Committed to building the capacity of organizations and institutions to develop the health, economic equity, and social justice of communities.*

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## 1. Introduction

Choice Refocus & Opportunity (R & O) is designed to ensure community safety while helping youth remain living in their communities. Achieving this balance may be accomplished by providing youth with constructive opportunities to refocus their behavior. The purposes of Choice R & O are (Choice R & O, 2005b):

- Reduce over-usage of out-of-home placement;
- Utilize community-based programming; and
- Implement effective collaboration and interventions.

The guiding principles of Choice R & O are (Choice R & O, 2005a):

- Detention should be used only after all other supports and programs have been exhausted;
- Sanctions should promote accountability, be graduated to reflect the number and severity of violations, and do not necessarily require secure detention;
- Immediacy and certainty of sanctions is more important than severity of sanctions
- Detention can be reduced without compromising public safety;
- Family participation is critical to the success of youth in any intervention;
- All youth referred must have the potential to be successful in meeting the goals of the program's intervention; and
- Choice R & O is part of a larger coordinated continuum to keep appropriate youth out of detention and in the community.

The program's goals and objectives include (Choice R & O, 2005b):

- Ensure community safety;
- Reduce number of youth in pending placement;
- Reduce length of stay in detention;
- Create opportunities for youth to refocus behavior; and
- Enhance youth and families skill level.

The Choice R & O program includes the following core services (Choice R & O, 2005b):

- Daily face-to-face contact;
- Informal counseling;
- Educational support and in-school advocacy;
- Individual and group workshops;
- Structured after-school and weekend activities;
- Employment skills development;
- Linkage and referral to community resources;
- 24 hour crisis intervention; and
- Curfew monitoring.

These core services have demonstrated an ability to reduce delinquent behavior (Hyde, 1996; Seifert, 1992; Zapert, 1993). In addition, key Choice R & O program components include (Choice R & O, 2005b):

- Focus Continuum
  - Focus 4 is shelter at MYRC
  - Focus 3 is community re-entry using community detention (passive and active as needed)
  - Focus 2 is community integration
  - Focus 1 is completion month
- Focus Team
- Point System
- Graduated Responses

### ***1.1 Goals of the Evaluation***

The overall goal of the evaluation was to provide an independent assessment of the Choice R&O program. The Association for the Study and development of Community conducted the evaluation. Specifically, the evaluation:

- Examined the extent to which the program was implemented as intended including the partnership with Maryland's Department of Juvenile Services; other community partnerships; staff development, training, roles and responsibilities; the Focus Continuum; and fidelity to evidence-based practice; and
- Examined the extent to which the program reduced participants' problem behavior, reduced risk factors related to problem behavior, and enhanced protective factors related to problem behavior.

### ***1.2 Evaluation Methodology***

A primarily qualitative approach was used to evaluate implementation of Choice R & O. Interviews and document review were the main methods used to collect data. A minimum of two independent sources of evidence (e.g, two individuals or an individual and a document) was required for a finding to be considered valid.

***Protocols were developed for interviews, weekly reflections, and case file data extraction.*** ASDC developed protocols for the interviews with Choice R&O staff and key partners, as well as case file data extraction. In addition, a survey designed to measure collaboration was also used. Those interested in learning more about the specific questions asked of staff and key partners may refer to Appendix A.

***Interviews with key partners.*** ASDC conducted interviews with eight key partners and observed two program presentations with key partners. Five of the key partners were interviewed in a group setting. These partners were Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) Resource Office staff. Three partners were interviewed one-on-one and face-to-face. These partners represented DJS upper management, the

Maryland Youth Residence Center (MYRC) and the Greater Baltimore Committee. Presentations to Baltimore County judges and public defenders were also observed.

*Site visits.* ASDC conducted three site visits to the Choice R&O Baltimore City office. During these site visits, staff was interviewed and observations of daily operations were observed. A total of 22 interviews were conducted with staff; three individuals were interviewed three different times and one individual was interviewed two different times.

*Client file review.* ASDC reviewed 17 case files<sup>1</sup> to examine the information they contained and the extent to which high quality documentation practices were implemented.

### ***1.3 Organization of Report***

This report is organized into two main sections. Evaluation findings are presented next and are categorized according to program implementation findings and program impact findings. Program implementation findings are further organized according to partnerships; program personnel, procedures and practices; programming; and target population. The report ends with recommendations for year two priorities and activities.

## **2. Evaluation Findings**

Themes that emerged in response to the interview questions asked of key partners and staff are summarized here. Findings from a review of case files are also presented. The status of collecting outcome data is also described. A timeline of key program events and accomplishments may be found in Appendix B.

### ***2.1 Program Implementation***

Program implementation findings are organized into the following categories: (1) key partnerships, (2) program personnel, procedures, and practices, (3) programming, and (4) the program's target population.

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<sup>1</sup> ASDC was given "all" client files through July 2006 to review.

### 2.1.1 Partnerships

The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services and The Choice Program have a long-standing partnership and this history of joint organizational effort facilitated the development and implementation of Choice R & O. In addition to this practice-based knowledge, research (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001) has documented successful collaborative efforts and the factors contributing to success. Collaboration was identified by key partners as an important component of successful program implementation. While partners did not define collaboration, it is likely they had in mind one of the following definitions (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001, pp. 59-60).

**Collaboration** is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals.

The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards.

**Coordination** is characterized by more formal relationships and an understanding of compatible missions. Some planning and division of roles are required, and communication channels are established. Authority still rests with the individual organizations, but there is some increased risk to all participants. Resources are available to participants and rewards are mutually acknowledged.

**Cooperation** is characterized by informal relationships that exist without any commonly defined mission, structure, or planning effort. Information is shared as needed, and authority is retained by each organization so there is virtually no risk. Resources are separate as are rewards.

Factors contributing to the success of collaboration identified by the research include:

**Table 1. Factors Influencing the Success of Collaboration**

<b>Factors Related to the Environment</b>	History of collaboration or cooperation in the community
	Collaborative group seen as a legitimate leader in the community
	Favorable political and social climate
<b>Factors Related to Membership Characteristics</b>	Mutual respect, understanding, and trust
	Appropriate cross section of members
	Members see collaboration as in their self-interest
	Ability to compromise
<b>Factors Related to Process and Structure</b>	Members share a stake in both process and outcome
	Multiple layers of participation
	Flexibility
	Development of clear roles and policy guidelines
	Adaptability
	Appropriate pace of development
<b>Factors Related to Communication</b>	Open and frequent communication
	Established informal relationships and communication links
<b>Factors Related to Purpose</b>	Concrete, attainable goals and objectives
	Shared vision
	Unique purpose
<b>Factors Related to Resources</b>	Sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time
	Skilled leadership

While the partnership between DJS and Choice R & O was not systematically examined along the factors presented in Table 1, there was an intention to quantify the working relationship and assess any changes over the course of the year. The Interagency Collaboration Scale was administered to seven stakeholders (five of whom were Choice R & O staff) early during program implementation. Those who completed the survey uniformly (100%) agreed that there is a need to share information and that collaboration across agencies will result in more appropriate services for families. Most (83%) agreed that collaboration is a valuable use of time and most (71%) agreed that working with people across agencies is a positive experience. Changes in support for collaboration were not documented as the survey was completed only once.

Important partnerships were created among key stakeholders in Baltimore City.

Relationships among the Area Director, Juvenile Court Judges, MYRC staff, Probation Officers, the Resource Coordinator, and Specialists seem strong. How this was achieved and what lessons can be applied to developing relationships in the other two counties may be worth further reflection among partners. Strong working relationships have not yet been established in Baltimore and Prince George's counties. It is worth noting that despite these overall positive working relationships, referrals are still low. In addition, key DJS staff was relocated to other offices in September 2006, which may compromise established relationships. Similarly, relationships developed with representatives from central headquarters were lost when key partners left their positions. New contacts will need to be established to ensure ongoing program implementation.

### **2.1.2 Personnel, Procedures and Practices**

Staff interviews almost universally identified the "team work" and their colleagues as one of the program's greatest strengths. There seems to be a high sense of camaraderie and mutual respect among staff. In addition, key partners interviewed identified the youthfulness, enthusiasm, dedication and idealism of Choice R & O staff as one of the program's greatest assets. Staff is perceived, both by themselves and key partners, as important role models for the youth.

When asked about training and on-going support for doing their job well, all staff mentioned training and support from supervisors. Service coordinators and caseworkers hired initially participated in more informal training conducted by the Assistant Director at the time. Beginning in August 2006, more formal training was provided to all incoming case workers. Service coordinators were required to attend these trainings as well. Staff hired in July discussed their participation in this more formal training as well as "shadowing" Choice Intensive Advocacy caseworkers.

"Paperwork" was consistently identified as a challenge by staff members. Several staff suggested that all documentation needs to be electronic such that information is entered directly into a database. The struggle with paperwork is particularly evident in the "audit" conducted by both the evaluator and Choice R & O staff. Most files are missing information essential for monitoring program quality.

### **2.1.3 Programming**

The majority of staff interviewed consistently and accurately described the Choice R & O program model and its purpose. Interviews with the caseworkers hired in July 2006 reflected more explicit mention of core services such as face-to-face contact, and structured after-school and weekend activities. Most caseworkers identified the intensive interaction with clients as one of the greatest strengths of the program and valued their ability to establish relationships with youth and their families. Relationships with community partners are still emerging but initial partnerships with On Our Shoulders and Living Classrooms have been established. Some staff identified the need for additional education and employment services.



The most common frustrations among those interviewed were the low number of referrals, an inability to enforce client compliance with sanctions, the lack of involvement on the part of many DJS probation officers, and a concern that kids could just pass the time and graduate from the program without really achieving any of their service plan goals.

A review of client files indicated inconsistent documentation of key program components including focus team meetings, points, and sanctions. It was not possible, therefore, to determine whether or not the program was fully implemented. According to interviews with staff, the point system was abandoned due to its impracticality. Staff interviewed also reported difficulties with scheduling focus team meetings so that all needed stakeholders could attend.

#### **2.1.4 Target Population**

According to Choice R & O (2005a), the program was intended to serve the following population:

- Boys ages 10-17, with first priority given to youth 12 and under;
- Youth staffed for IMPACT level programming living in the catchment areas, or who are pending placement for IMPACT level programming;
- Youth with moderate to high risk based on the DJS Classification and Placement Tool

An analysis of information contained in client files (n = 17) indicated that Choice R & O served boys with a wide range of classification scores (2-14). The range reflects a lack of understanding about who the program is intended to serve. In addition, staff interviewed expressed ongoing frustration with the lack of “appropriate” referrals to the program. Procedures for accurately monitoring referrals, intakes, terminations, and graduations are under development.

#### **2.2 Program Impact**

ASDC anticipated collecting outcome data from both Choice R&O and DJS. Youth outcomes of interest to both organizations include:

- Reduced length of stay in pending placement and detention;
- Reduced number of youth in pending placement and detention;
- Reduced number of youth who acquire new charges 6 months after program completion;
- Reduced number of re-adjudicated youth 6 months after program completion;
- Reduced number of re-committed youth 6 months after program completion; and
- Reduced cost of serving youth slated for out of home placement.

Choice R & O staff did not systematically collect outcome data for participants. DJS did not provide outcome data for Choice R & O graduates. A meeting held with key

DJS staff suggested a willingness to provide these data in aggregate form as well as explore the possibility of identifying meaningful retrospective and/or comparison data to assess “reduction” in the above outcomes and program impact. The potential for collecting the recidivism measures of interest to both DJS and Choice R & O exists but to date DJS has not been responsive to requests for this information. Reasons for the lack of responsiveness are unclear.

### **3. Conclusion and Recommended Next Steps**

Year one successes and challenges are summarized in this section. In addition, recommendations for year two priorities are presented.

#### **3.1 Accomplishments**

Early momentum for Choice R & O was facilitated by a 16 year partnership with DJS and an effective program model of core services upon which to build. This foundation contributed to the successes achieved by Choice R & O staff and partners during the first year of program implementation. Key year one accomplishments include:

- Choice R & O opened and staffed its Baltimore City office;
- Choice R & O staff and MYRC staff established a productive working relationship;
- Choice R & O hired staff for the Baltimore County and Prince George’s County areas; and
- Choice R & O provided at least some of its services to 45<sup>2</sup> youth and families.

#### **3.2 Challenges**

Despite these accomplishments, Choice R & O was not implemented as planned. The program was designed to serve 300 youth in three Maryland jurisdictions. A total of 72 referrals<sup>3</sup> were received by Choice R & O staff. Of these referrals, 24 (33%) were rejected. Of the 45 referrals accepted, 15 youth have completed Choice R & O and 10 youth are active in the program as of mid-October 2006. At the end of year one, therefore, only 15% of projected clients (45/300) were served by Choice R & O and most of these youth resided in Baltimore City.

A lack of referrals to Choice R & O resulted in an underutilized program. Because the program never achieved full capacity, Choice R & O experienced staff turnover. In addition, underutilization resulted in the loss of dedicated staff and shelter beds at MYRC. Key reasons underlying the program’s underutilization include:

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<sup>2</sup> This figure was obtained from the Choice Refocus & Opportunity Program Client Referral List dated 10/19/2006.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

- Judges in all three jurisdictions are skeptical about Choice R & O as a viable alternative to the Impact Program; and
- DJS line staff is skeptical about Choice R & O as a viable alternative to the Impact Program.

In addition to a lack of referrals to the program, certain program components were impractical to implement as designed. Specifically:

- Focus Continuum. Ensuring that youth “earned” their way through the continuum (e.g., goals linked to graduation) rather than “just pass the time” was difficult to achieve.
- Focus Team. Engaging all participants in these meetings was difficult to achieve.
- Graduated Response System. Developing sanctions and supports that are consistently applied was difficult to achieve.
- Point System. Assigning points to behaviors was not feasible in a community-based setting.

### **3.3 Recommendations**

In order to address these challenges in year two, ASDC recommends prioritizing the following:

- Strengthen Partnership. Collaboration between DJS and Choice R & O is central to the program’s success. Enhancing working relationships will require central points of contact at both organizations. Partners may want to consider creating a Choice R & O work group that focuses initially on increasing appropriate referrals to the program. The work group would meet monthly until referrals increased and then might move to quarterly meetings.
  - The work group might include two levels of partners: (1) organizational leaders with decision-making authority and (2) line staff responsible for daily operations.
  - The work group may evolve into a collaboration that addresses issues such as program design, program policies, program outcomes, and promoting public support for community-based alternatives for committed youth.
- Institutionalize Choice R & O Policies, Procedures, and Practices. Create a Choice R & O Handbook that describes its policies, procedures and practices. A Handbook can be used to clarify roles and responsibilities both internally and externally with partners. Choice R & O staff initiated a concentrated effort on creating systems and processes for the program in May 2006 and the effort is ongoing.
  - The Handbook might include policies, procedures, and practices for staff recruitment, staff training and professional development, field operations (e.g., referral and intake processes, focus team meetings, graduated response system, core services), and documentation practices (e.g., daily logs, reports).

- Reexamine Program Design. Get back to basics. Core Choice services have been proven effective for reducing recidivism and they should ground Choice R & O services. Employment skills development may be particularly relevant for these clients. Specific Choice R & O program components can be used to further enhance these core services.
  - Focus teams reflect collaboration on a micro-level. Choice R & O staff needs to balance the importance of serving youth and establishing expectations for collaboration with key partners.
  - The graduated response system will determine Choice R & O's viability as a community-based alternative for committed youth in detention. It is essential, therefore, to implement sanctions and supports uniformly, quickly, and meaningfully. Data-driven decision making is essential to ensure success.
  - The point system is unnecessary if Choice R & O staff adopts high-quality daily documentation practices. Daily logging, done properly, provides accurate counts for real behaviors (e.g., youth contacts, family contacts, curfew met, education and employment activities) that can then be linked directly and objectively to graduated responses.
  
- Maximize Utilization of Evaluator . Choice R & O staff may want to integrate the evaluator more fully in the development of documentation practices and reporting tools. High-quality data management practices will help increase program accountability as well as mutual accountability between DJS and Choice R & O. In addition, the evaluation in year two could focus more on the unfolding collaboration between DJS and Choice R & O.

## 4. References

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Zapert, K. (1993). Community-based intervention with delinquent youth: Evaluation of The CHOICE Program. Unpublished manuscript.

**Appendix A**  
**Interview Protocols/Data Collection Materials**

# Interagency Collaboration Scale

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## Instructions

1. Thank you for agreeing to complete the Interagency Collaboration Scale. Your assistance will allow us to develop better measures of how organizations collaborate to provide services to children and their families. Please remember that your participation is voluntary and that all responses will remain anonymous and confidential.
2. Please complete the Interagency Collaboration Scale.
  - Please begin by answering the Respondent Information questions on page 3.
  - For the remaining questions, read each item carefully and circle the response that best describes your rating of each item. Some questions will require you to write in a response.
  - Try to answer all the items. If you don't know how to respond to an item, please circle the "DK" category.
3. When you are finished, please return the survey to the administrator.

## Respondent Information

1. Gender \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age \_\_\_\_\_
3. Race/Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_
4. Highest level of education completed \_\_\_\_\_  
Academic Area \_\_\_\_\_
5. Name of Agency/Organization \_\_\_\_\_
6. Job title \_\_\_\_\_
7. Years in current organization \_\_\_\_\_
8. What percentage of your time do you spend with the following groups?  
Children 18 years or younger \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Time  
Adults \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Time  
Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Time
9. What percentage of your time do you spend in the following work roles:  
Administrating/Supervising other employees \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Time Providing services to clients \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Time Case management of client cases \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Time Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_ %



**Beliefs/Values** Please Circle the number that best represents your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement

To what extent do you believe that .....

		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	There is a need for child-serving organizations to share information.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Interagency collaboration helps prevent children from “falling through the cracks,” and getting needed services from agencies.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Collaboration between organizations is a waste of time.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	My own organization takes an active role in promoting collaboration with other organizations.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Working with people across agencies is a positive experience.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Collaboration across agencies will result in more appropriate services for families.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Collaboration across agencies makes it unclear who has primary responsibility for providing services for each client/family.	1	2	3	4	5

**Please Continue**

## Collaborative Activities

		Not at all	Little	Somewhat	Considerable	Very Much	Don't Know
<b>To what extent does your organization SHARE with other child-serving organizations in .....</b>							
8.	Funding.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
9.	Purchasing of services.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
10.	Facility space.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
11.	Record keeping and management information systems data.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
12.	Developing programs or services.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
13.	Program evaluation.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
14.	Staff training.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
15.	Informing the public of available services.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
16.	Diagnoses and evaluation/assessment.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
17.	Common intake forms.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
18.	Child and family service plan development.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
19.	Case conferences or case reviews.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
20.	Informal agreements.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
21.	Formal written agreements.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
22.	Voluntary contractual relationships.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
23.	Collaborative relationships mandated by law.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
24.	Participation in standing interagency committees.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
25.	Information about services.	1	2	3	4	5	DK

**Please Continue**

## Knowledge of Other Organizations

26. Please list the **one** organization (e.g., local, state, national) that you collaborate with the most, either currently, or in the past.

**Please answer questions 27-31 based on the above organization.**

	Not at all	Little	Somewhat	Considerable	Very Much	Don't know
27. How difficult is it to contact the organization when your own organization needs information or help?	1	2	3	4	5	DK
28. How personally acquainted are you with the staff you work with from the organization?	1	2	3	4	5	DK
29. How personally acquainted are you with the Director of the organization?	1	2	3	4	5	DK
30. How often have you met with consultants from the organization?	1	2	3	4	5	DK
31. How familiar are you with the services provided by the organization?	1	2	3	4	5	DK

**THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING**

**CHOICE REFOCUS & OPPORTUNITY EVALUATION  
KEY PARTNERS INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**Partner Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Partner Identifier:** \_\_\_\_\_

**A. Participation in Choice R & O**

1. Why is your organization/agency participating in Choice R & O?
2. What other organizations are involved in Choice R & O?
3. How will/has participation in Choice R & O helped achieve your own or your organization's goals?

**B. Purpose of Choice R & O**

3. What are the purpose, goals, and objectives of Choice R & O as you understand them?

**C. Roles and Responsibilities of Key Partners**

4. What are the roles and responsibilities of your organization in Choice R & O?
5. What are the roles and responsibilities of other organizations involved in Choice R & O as you understand them?
6. Is there an individual or organization that should be part of Choice R & O but isn't? Who (or which organization) and Why?
7. How well is each partner organization fulfilling its roles and meeting its responsibilities in your opinion? *Prompts:* Examples of what's being done well? Examples of challenges?
8. How well does the partnership combine the perspectives, resources, and skills of its members?

**D. Communication and Decisionmaking**

9. How would you describe communication (about goals, activities, accomplishments, challenges) among the key Choice R & O partners?  
*Prompts:* Do partners discuss accomplishments and challenges openly and regularly?
10. What types of decisions do the partners make as a group?
11. How would you describe the decision making process among key Choice R & O partners?  
*Prompts:* Does each organization or individual have an equal opportunity to influence decisions?  
Are decisions based on fair criteria? Are decisions based on accurate information?

### **E. Conflict Management**

12. Have any major conflicts (i.e., conflicts that prevented Choice R & O from continuing, disrupted Choice R & O's operations, or caused participating organizations to change) arisen?

Please describe

*Prompts:*

- Differences in members' communication styles?
- Differences in philosophies or views about program goals?
- Power imbalance among individuals and/or organizations?
- Staffing issues?
- Individual agendas?
- Unclear goals and inconsistent processes?
- Unrealistic expectations of partners?

13. How were conflicts resolved? If they were not resolved, why? (review for each conflict)

### **F. Facilitating Factors/Conditions**

14. What factors or conditions have made it easier for Choice R&O to move forward?

*Prompts:*

- Links to political and decision making processes?
- History of collaboration and cooperation?
- Timing?
- Changes in policies and resource allocation at the local and/or state levels?

### **G. Challenging Factors/Conditions**

15. What factors or conditions have made it harder for Choice R & O to move forward ?

*Prompts:*

- History of competition and conflict?
- Limited time and resources?
- Changes in policies and resource allocation at the local and/or state levels?
- No links to political and decision making processes?

### **H. Overall Assessment and Lessons Learned**

16. What are the greatest strengths of the partnership?

17. What are the greatest strengths of Choice R & O?

18. What are the biggest challenges facing the partnership?

19. What are the biggest challenges facing Choice R & O?

20. What recommendations might you have for improving the partnership and/or Choice R & O?

Do you have any other comments?

**CHOICE REFOCUS & OPPORTUNITY EVALUATION  
STAFF INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**Choice R & O Office:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Staff Identifier:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are the purpose, goals, and objectives of Choice R & O as you understand them?
2. What is your role in Choice R & O?
3. What are your primary responsibilities?
4. What training have you received as part of your involvement in Choice R & O? Who provided it? When did you receive it?
5. What other organizations are involved in Choice R & O?
6. What are the roles and responsibilities of other organizations involved in Choice R & O as you understand them?
7. What are the greatest strengths of Choice R & O?
8. What are the biggest challenges facing Choice R & O?
9. What recommendations might you have for improving Choice R & O?
10. Do you have any other comments?

### *Daily/Weekly Reflection Questions*

Ongoing communication with Mr. Jones, Deputy Director of Choice R & O operations, is an essential part of the evaluation process. Dr. Hyde or Dr. Webster will communicate weekly with Mr. Jones. We suggest discussing the following.

#### *What progress was made this week?*

- How is the R & O partnership progressing?
- What key decisions were made this week?
- What important planning was accomplished this week?
- What program activities or events took place this week?

#### *What problems were encountered this week?*

- Which partners are resisting engagement in or creating challenges for the progress of R&O implementation?
- What key decisions were delayed, reversed, or otherwise stalled this week?
- What planning was delayed, reversed, or otherwise stalled this week?
- What challenges did program staff face with respect to serving youth and their families?

#### *What problem-solving occurred this week?*

- How did the problems encountered this week get addressed or resolved?

<b>Child/Youth Identifier</b>	
<b>Choice R&amp;O Office</b>	
<b>Days of Participation</b>	
<b>Participation Status</b>	
<b>Date of File Review</b>	

**CASE FILE DATA EXTRACTION MATRIX**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Complete</b>	<b>Incomplete</b>	<b>Missing Information/Document</b>
Authorization to deny or stop special telephone services			
Intake Assessment			
Service Plan(s)			
Focus Team Meeting Notes			
Weekly Point Sheet Acknowledgements			
Biweekly Reports			
Family Empowerment Scale			
Choice Completion Survey			
Termination Summary			
Service Summary Form			
Other			
Other			

Other Notes:



**FOCUS CONTINUUM**  
(cell = total points)

	<b>Focus 4</b>	<b>Focus 3a</b>	<b>Focus 3</b>	<b>Focus 2</b>	<b>Focus 1</b>
Week 1					
Week 2					
Week 3					
Week 4					
Week 5					
Week 6					
Week 7					
Week 8					
Week 9					
Week 10					
Week 11					
Week 12					
Week 13					
Week 14					
<b>Total Points:</b>					

**Overall Analysis:** Do the different documents (daily point sheets, weekly point sheet, biweekly report, & termination summary) create a traceable and consistent pathway through the program that is logically linked to point accumulation? Can anyone pick up these documents and say with certainty and accuracy that points were earned using consistent criteria and applied to movement along the continuum according to the ‘rules’ (e.g., more points earn more rewards, fewer points earn sanctions/consequences)?

Note: Determining the answer to these questions will require reading these documents and analyzing them for consistency and logic.

**Appendix B**  
**Timeline of Events and Accomplishments**

## Timeline of Choice R & O

### Choice Refocus & Opportunity Program (Choice R & O): Timeline of Key Year One Events and Accomplishments

Events & Accomplishments	Mar-Sept 2005	Oct-Dec 2005	Jan-Mar 2006	April-June 2006	July-Sept 2006
<b>Program Development</b>					
Initial concept and champions for Choice R & O emerges from Greater Baltimore Committee Leadership Program meeting at Choice Intensive Advocacy office	✓				
Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) requests a proposal outline for a program that would serve as an alternative to the Charles H. Hickey School's Impact Program	✓				
Initial proposal for program submitted	✓				
DJS and Choice further develop program concept together	✓				
Maryland Governor announces publicly the closure of the Charles H. Hickey School	✓				
DJS announces publicly that Choice would provide an alternative to the Impact Program	✓				
Assistant Director for Choice R & O identified and advertisements for other positions placed	✓				
Presented program to key juvenile justice stakeholders	✓				
Maryland Youth Residential Center (MYRC) identified as key partner (shelter beds)	✓				
<b>Program Implementation</b>					
<b>Partnership Development</b>					
Meeting with Key DJS Stakeholders – review status of program			✓		
Program presentations ('Meet & Greet')					

<b>Events &amp; Accomplishments</b>	<b>Mar-Sept 2005</b>	<b>Oct-Dec 2005</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 2006</b>	<b>April-June 2006</b>	<b>July-Sept 2006</b>
Judges (Annapolis, Baltimore County)				✓	
Public Defenders (Baltimore County)				✓	
Cheltenham staff				✓	
DJS Area Director (Baltimore County)			✓		
DJS line staff (Baltimore City & County)		✓	✓	✓	
Baltimore County Judge freezes referrals to Choice R & O because DJS case managers not following protocol					✓
MYRC limits intakes (cannot dedicate staff without regular flow of intakes)					✓
Key DJS partners relocated to other offices					✓
<b>Program Operations</b>					
Initial Choice R & O Staff hired		✓			
First Choice R & O intake (youth and family)		✓			
Choice R & O office opens			✓		
A.M.E.N. group starts for Choice R & O youth			✓		
Choice R & O Assistant Director leaves position				✓	
A.M.E.N. graduation ceremony				✓	
First Choice R & O graduations				✓	
New Choice R & O caseworkers hired & trained					✓
New Choice R & O Assistant Director hired					✓
<b>Program Evaluation</b>					
History of program development documented		✓			
Evaluation plan presented to key stakeholders		✓			
Weekly reflection meetings (telephone) with Assistant Director of Choice R & O		✓	✓	✓	✓
Site visits to Baltimore City office (Baltimore City and County/Prince George's County staff interviews & observations)		✓		✓	✓

<b>Events &amp; Accomplishments</b>	<b>Mar-Sept 2005</b>	<b>Oct-Dec 2005</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 2006</b>	<b>April-June 2006</b>	<b>July-Sept 2006</b>
Key partner interviews			✓		
Meeting with DJS about obtaining recidivism (outcome) data for Choice R & O			✓		
Observation of program presentation to key stakeholders (Baltimore County judges & public defenders)				✓	
Review of client files					✓

**Appendix C**  
**Summary of Training and Technical Assistance Provided**

## Summary of Training and Technical Assistance Provided

ASDC provided various training and technical assistance as part of the evaluation activities during year one. A summary of the assistance provided follows.

***Evidence-based practices.*** ASDC identified evidence-based practices (i.e., those identified in the OJJDP Model Programs Guide) for aftercare and graduated sanctions programs. ASDC submitted a literature review and annotated bibliography to Choice R & O staff.

***Systems and procedures.*** ASDC worked with Choice R&O staff to conduct an audit of client files and documentation practices with the goal of developing reporting tools that could be used to improve accountability. Reporting tools and procedures are currently under revision and development.

***Fiscal Year 2005 and 2006 reports.*** ASDC assisted Choice R&O staff with fiscal year 2005 and 2006 reporting requirements. ASDC analyzed data provided by Choice and generated reports for the Department of Juvenile Services. The fiscal 2006 findings are summarized below.

## **Choice Intensive Advocacy: Evaluation Findings for FY06**

### ***Demographic Information***

This summary of findings provides information on 362 youth who participated in the Choice Intensive Advocacy program in FY2006. Participants, on average, were in the program for 157 days or a little longer than five months. Eighty one percent (n = 294) of the participants were male and 19 % (n = 68) were female. In relation to race/ethnicity 71% (n = 256) identified as African American, 22% (n = 80) as Caucasian, 3% (n = 12) as Hispanic, and 2% (n = 8) as “Multi Cultural.”

### ***Prior Delinquent Behavior***

- For 2006 the average number of charges of youth at intake into Choice was 2, with the number of charges ranging from no charges to 17 charges. The most frequent number of charges youth had at intake was 1 (n=150).
- The most common offenses at intake were property offenses (e.g., arson, malicious destruction, auto theft) at 33% (n = 120) and person-to-person offenses (e.g., aggravated assault, robbery, sex offences) at 30% (n = 109).

### ***Reducing Delinquent Behavior***

- It was expected that 75% of youth would not acquire new charges while participating in Choice and this goal was exceeded with 80% (n = 290) not incurring charges.
  - Information about the type of charge was documented for the 72 youth who did acquire a formalized charge while participating in the program (FY06). The three most common types of charges were as follows: controlled dangerous substance (n =24), violation of probation (n = 20), and assault (n = 9).
- Over fiscal years 2003 (75%), 2004 (79%), 2005 (83%), and 2006 (80%), the average percentage of youth who do NOT acquire new charges while participating in Choice is 79%.
- It was expected that 80% of youth would reside in the community at the time of program completion; 71.5% did so.

### ***Strengthening School Engagement***

- School attendance information was documented for 88% (320/362) of the youth who completed Choice during fiscal year 2006. Thirty three percent (103/313) of the youth had attendance rates<sup>4</sup> of 85% or better. Maryland’s satisfactory standard for attendance is 94% for both middle and high schools<sup>5</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> School attendance rates were calculated by dividing the total number of days a youth attended school by the total number of days a youth was enrolled in school while he or she participated in Choice.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://msp.msde.state.md.us>.



- Choice faced challenges with securing and maintaining educational placements for youth in need of placement. Of the 70 youth *in need of* an educational placement at the time of intake into the program, 39% (n = 27) were enrolled in one at the time of program completion. Furthermore, 17% (n= 49) of the 291 youth *with* an educational placement at the time of intake into the program were not in a placement at the time of program completion.

**Delinquency Outcomes By Office:**  
**Fiscal Years 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, & 2006**

	<b>Expected: 75%</b> of youth will not acquire new charges while in the program					<b>Expected: 80%</b> of youth will reside in the community at program completion				
<b>OFFICE</b>	<b>ACTUAL OUTCOME</b>					<b>ACTUAL OUTCOME</b>				
	<b>FY02</b>	<b>FY03</b>	<b>FY04</b>	<b>FY05</b>	<b>FY06</b>	<b>FY02</b>	<b>FY03</b>	<b>FY04</b>	<b>FY05</b>	<b>FY06</b>
Anne Arundel County	80%	91%	71%	91%	82%	72%	84%	80%	72%	64%
Baltimore City – Cherry Hill	67%	67%	69%	75%	65%	83%	78%	71%	79%	67%
Baltimore City – Govans	54%	59%	62%	29%	-	75%	80%	78%	79%	-
Baltimore City – Northeast	59%	74%	66%	78%	65%	53%	70%	68%	83%	71%
Baltimore County	71%	77%	95%	69%	67%	61%	73%	78%	74%	69%
Montgomery County	92%	81%	86%	98%	84%	83%	84%	66%	71%	65%
Prince George’s County	89.5%	89.5%	92%	94%	98%	95%	84%	83%	79%	91%
St. Mary’s County	-	84%	74%	93%	-	-	78%	64%	78%	-
Washington County	93%	75%	76%	87%	100%	79%	80%	78%	85%	74%



**Evaluation of Choice  
Refocus & Opportunity Program  
Annual Report  
October 2005 – September 2006**

***November 1, 2006***



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*Committed to building the capacity of organizations and institutions to develop the health, economic equity, and social justice of communities.*

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## 1. Introduction

Choice Refocus & Opportunity (R & O) is designed to ensure community safety while helping youth remain living in their communities. Achieving this balance may be accomplished by providing youth with constructive opportunities to refocus their behavior. The purposes of Choice R & O are (Choice R & O, 2005b):

- Reduce over-usage of out-of-home placement;
- Utilize community-based programming; and
- Implement effective collaboration and interventions.

The guiding principles of Choice R & O are (Choice R & O, 2005a):

- Detention should be used only after all other supports and programs have been exhausted;
- Sanctions should promote accountability, be graduated to reflect the number and severity of violations, and do not necessarily require secure detention;
- Immediacy and certainty of sanctions is more important than severity of sanctions
- Detention can be reduced without compromising public safety;
- Family participation is critical to the success of youth in any intervention;
- All youth referred must have the potential to be successful in meeting the goals of the program's intervention; and
- Choice R & O is part of a larger coordinated continuum to keep appropriate youth out of detention and in the community.

The program's goals and objectives include (Choice R & O, 2005b):

- Ensure community safety;
- Reduce number of youth in pending placement;
- Reduce length of stay in detention;
- Create opportunities for youth to refocus behavior; and
- Enhance youth and families skill level.

The Choice R & O program includes the following core services (Choice R & O, 2005b):

- Daily face-to-face contact;
- Informal counseling;
- Educational support and in-school advocacy;
- Individual and group workshops;
- Structured after-school and weekend activities;
- Employment skills development;
- Linkage and referral to community resources;
- 24 hour crisis intervention; and
- Curfew monitoring.

These core services have demonstrated an ability to reduce delinquent behavior (Hyde, 1996; Seifert, 1992; Zapert, 1993). In addition, key Choice R & O program components include (Choice R & O, 2005b):

- Focus Continuum
  - Focus 4 is shelter at MYRC
  - Focus 3 is community re-entry using community detention (passive and active as needed)
  - Focus 2 is community integration
  - Focus 1 is completion month
- Focus Team
- Point System
- Graduated Responses

### ***1.1 Goals of the Evaluation***

The overall goal of the evaluation was to provide an independent assessment of the Choice R&O program. The Association for the Study and development of Community conducted the evaluation. Specifically, the evaluation:

- Examined the extent to which the program was implemented as intended including the partnership with Maryland's Department of Juvenile Services; other community partnerships; staff development, training, roles and responsibilities; the Focus Continuum; and fidelity to evidence-based practice; and
- Examined the extent to which the program reduced participants' problem behavior, reduced risk factors related to problem behavior, and enhanced protective factors related to problem behavior.

### ***1.2 Evaluation Methodology***

A primarily qualitative approach was used to evaluate implementation of Choice R & O. Interviews and document review were the main methods used to collect data. A minimum of two independent sources of evidence (e.g, two individuals or an individual and a document) was required for a finding to be considered valid.

***Protocols were developed for interviews, weekly reflections, and case file data extraction.*** ASDC developed protocols for the interviews with Choice R&O staff and key partners, as well as case file data extraction. In addition, a survey designed to measure collaboration was also used. Those interested in learning more about the specific questions asked of staff and key partners may refer to Appendix A.

***Interviews with key partners.*** ASDC conducted interviews with eight key partners and observed two program presentations with key partners. Five of the key partners were interviewed in a group setting. These partners were Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) Resource Office staff. Three partners were interviewed one-on-one and face-to-face. These partners represented DJS upper management, the

Maryland Youth Residence Center (MYRC) and the Greater Baltimore Committee. Presentations to Baltimore County judges and public defenders were also observed.

*Site visits.* ASDC conducted three site visits to the Choice R&O Baltimore City office. During these site visits, staff was interviewed and observations of daily operations were observed. A total of 22 interviews were conducted with staff; three individuals were interviewed three different times and one individual was interviewed two different times.

*Client file review.* ASDC reviewed 17 case files<sup>1</sup> to examine the information they contained and the extent to which high quality documentation practices were implemented.

### ***1.3 Organization of Report***

This report is organized into two main sections. Evaluation findings are presented next and are categorized according to program implementation findings and program impact findings. Program implementation findings are further organized according to partnerships; program personnel, procedures and practices; programming; and target population. The report ends with recommendations for year two priorities and activities.

## **2. Evaluation Findings**

Themes that emerged in response to the interview questions asked of key partners and staff are summarized here. Findings from a review of case files are also presented. The status of collecting outcome data is also described. A timeline of key program events and accomplishments may be found in Appendix B.

### ***2.1 Program Implementation***

Program implementation findings are organized into the following categories: (1) key partnerships, (2) program personnel, procedures, and practices, (3) programming, and (4) the program's target population.

---

<sup>1</sup> ASDC was given "all" client files through July 2006 to review.

### 2.1.1 Partnerships

The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services and The Choice Program have a long-standing partnership and this history of joint organizational effort facilitated the development and implementation of Choice R & O. In addition to this practice-based knowledge, research (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001) has documented successful collaborative efforts and the factors contributing to success. Collaboration was identified by key partners as an important component of successful program implementation. While partners did not define collaboration, it is likely they had in mind one of the following definitions (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001, pp. 59-60).

**Collaboration** is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals.

The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards.

**Coordination** is characterized by more formal relationships and an understanding of compatible missions. Some planning and division of roles are required, and communication channels are established. Authority still rests with the individual organizations, but there is some increased risk to all participants. Resources are available to participants and rewards are mutually acknowledged.

**Cooperation** is characterized by informal relationships that exist without any commonly defined mission, structure, or planning effort. Information is shared as needed, and authority is retained by each organization so there is virtually no risk. Resources are separate as are rewards.



Factors contributing to the success of collaboration identified by the research include:

**Table 1. Factors Influencing the Success of Collaboration**

<b>Factors Related to the Environment</b>	History of collaboration or cooperation in the community
	Collaborative group seen as a legitimate leader in the community
	Favorable political and social climate
<b>Factors Related to Membership Characteristics</b>	Mutual respect, understanding, and trust
	Appropriate cross section of members
	Members see collaboration as in their self-interest
	Ability to compromise
<b>Factors Related to Process and Structure</b>	Members share a stake in both process and outcome
	Multiple layers of participation
	Flexibility
	Development of clear roles and policy guidelines
	Adaptability
	Appropriate pace of development
<b>Factors Related to Communication</b>	Open and frequent communication
	Established informal relationships and communication links
<b>Factors Related to Purpose</b>	Concrete, attainable goals and objectives
	Shared vision
	Unique purpose
<b>Factors Related to Resources</b>	Sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time
	Skilled leadership

While the partnership between DJS and Choice R & O was not systematically examined along the factors presented in Table 1, there was an intention to quantify the working relationship and assess any changes over the course of the year. The Interagency Collaboration Scale was administered to seven stakeholders (five of whom were Choice R & O staff) early during program implementation. Those who completed the survey uniformly (100%) agreed that there is a need to share information and that collaboration across agencies will result in more appropriate services for families. Most (83%) agreed that collaboration is a valuable use of time and most (71%) agreed that working with people across agencies is a positive experience. Changes in support for collaboration were not documented as the survey was completed only once.

Important partnerships were created among key stakeholders in Baltimore City.

Relationships among the Area Director, Juvenile Court Judges, MYRC staff, Probation Officers, the Resource Coordinator, and Specialists seem strong. How this was achieved and what lessons can be applied to developing relationships in the other two counties may be worth further reflection among partners. Strong working relationships have not yet been established in Baltimore and Prince George's counties. It is worth noting that despite these overall positive working relationships, referrals are still low. In addition, key DJS staff was relocated to other offices in September 2006, which may compromise established relationships. Similarly, relationships developed with representatives from central headquarters were lost when key partners left their positions. New contacts will need to be established to ensure ongoing program implementation.

### **2.1.2 Personnel, Procedures and Practices**

Staff interviews almost universally identified the "team work" and their colleagues as one of the program's greatest strengths. There seems to be a high sense of camaraderie and mutual respect among staff. In addition, key partners interviewed identified the youthfulness, enthusiasm, dedication and idealism of Choice R & O staff as one of the program's greatest assets. Staff is perceived, both by themselves and key partners, as important role models for the youth.

When asked about training and on-going support for doing their job well, all staff mentioned training and support from supervisors. Service coordinators and caseworkers hired initially participated in more informal training conducted by the Assistant Director at the time. Beginning in August 2006, more formal training was provided to all incoming case workers. Service coordinators were required to attend these trainings as well. Staff hired in July discussed their participation in this more formal training as well as "shadowing" Choice Intensive Advocacy caseworkers.

"Paperwork" was consistently identified as a challenge by staff members. Several staff suggested that all documentation needs to be electronic such that information is entered directly into a database. The struggle with paperwork is particularly evident in the "audit" conducted by both the evaluator and Choice R & O staff. Most files are missing information essential for monitoring program quality.

### **2.1.3 Programming**

The majority of staff interviewed consistently and accurately described the Choice R & O program model and its purpose. Interviews with the caseworkers hired in July 2006 reflected more explicit mention of core services such as face-to-face contact, and structured after-school and weekend activities. Most caseworkers identified the intensive interaction with clients as one of the greatest strengths of the program and valued their ability to establish relationships with youth and their families. Relationships with community partners are still emerging but initial partnerships with On Our Shoulders and Living Classrooms have been established. Some staff identified the need for additional education and employment services.

The most common frustrations among those interviewed were the low number of referrals, an inability to enforce client compliance with sanctions, the lack of involvement on the part of many DJS probation officers, and a concern that kids could just pass the time and graduate from the program without really achieving any of their service plan goals.

A review of client files indicated inconsistent documentation of key program components including focus team meetings, points, and sanctions. It was not possible, therefore, to determine whether or not the program was fully implemented. According to interviews with staff, the point system was abandoned due to its impracticality. Staff interviewed also reported difficulties with scheduling focus team meetings so that all needed stakeholders could attend.

#### **2.1.4 Target Population**

According to Choice R & O (2005a), the program was intended to serve the following population:

- Boys ages 10-17, with first priority given to youth 12 and under;
- Youth staffed for IMPACT level programming living in the catchment areas, or who are pending placement for IMPACT level programming;
- Youth with moderate to high risk based on the DJS Classification and Placement Tool

An analysis of information contained in client files (n = 17) indicated that Choice R & O served boys with a wide range of classification scores (2-14). The range reflects a lack of understanding about who the program is intended to serve. In addition, staff interviewed expressed ongoing frustration with the lack of “appropriate” referrals to the program. Procedures for accurately monitoring referrals, intakes, terminations, and graduations are under development.

#### **2.2 Program Impact**

ASDC anticipated collecting outcome data from both Choice R&O and DJS. Youth outcomes of interest to both organizations include:

- Reduced length of stay in pending placement and detention;
- Reduced number of youth in pending placement and detention;
- Reduced number of youth who acquire new charges 6 months after program completion;
- Reduced number of re-adjudicated youth 6 months after program completion;
- Reduced number of re-committed youth 6 months after program completion; and
- Reduced cost of serving youth slated for out of home placement.

Choice R & O staff did not systematically collect outcome data for participants. DJS did not provide outcome data for Choice R & O graduates. A meeting held with key

DJS staff suggested a willingness to provide these data in aggregate form as well as explore the possibility of identifying meaningful retrospective and/or comparison data to assess “reduction” in the above outcomes and program impact. The potential for collecting the recidivism measures of interest to both DJS and Choice R & O exists but to date DJS has not been responsive to requests for this information. Reasons for the lack of responsiveness are unclear.

### **3. Conclusion and Recommended Next Steps**

Year one successes and challenges are summarized in this section. In addition, recommendations for year two priorities are presented.

#### **3.1 Accomplishments**

Early momentum for Choice R & O was facilitated by a 16 year partnership with DJS and an effective program model of core services upon which to build. This foundation contributed to the successes achieved by Choice R & O staff and partners during the first year of program implementation. Key year one accomplishments include:

- Choice R & O opened and staffed its Baltimore City office;
- Choice R & O staff and MYRC staff established a productive working relationship;
- Choice R & O hired staff for the Baltimore County and Prince George’s County areas; and
- Choice R & O provided at least some of its services to 45<sup>2</sup> youth and families.

#### **3.2 Challenges**

Despite these accomplishments, Choice R & O was not implemented as planned. The program was designed to serve 300 youth in three Maryland jurisdictions. A total of 72 referrals<sup>3</sup> were received by Choice R & O staff. Of these referrals, 24 (33%) were rejected. Of the 45 referrals accepted, 15 youth have completed Choice R & O and 10 youth are active in the program as of mid-October 2006. At the end of year one, therefore, only 15% of projected clients (45/300) were served by Choice R & O and most of these youth resided in Baltimore City.

A lack of referrals to Choice R & O resulted in an underutilized program. Because the program never achieved full capacity, Choice R & O experienced staff turnover. In addition, underutilization resulted in the loss of dedicated staff and shelter beds at MYRC. Key reasons underlying the program’s underutilization include:

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<sup>2</sup> This figure was obtained from the Choice Refocus & Opportunity Program Client Referral List dated 10/19/2006.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

- Judges in all three jurisdictions are skeptical about Choice R & O as a viable alternative to the Impact Program; and
- DJS line staff is skeptical about Choice R & O as a viable alternative to the Impact Program.

In addition to a lack of referrals to the program, certain program components were impractical to implement as designed. Specifically:

- Focus Continuum. Ensuring that youth “earned” their way through the continuum (e.g., goals linked to graduation) rather than “just pass the time” was difficult to achieve.
- Focus Team. Engaging all participants in these meetings was difficult to achieve.
- Graduated Response System. Developing sanctions and supports that are consistently applied was difficult to achieve.
- Point System. Assigning points to behaviors was not feasible in a community-based setting.

### **3.3 Recommendations**

In order to address these challenges in year two, ASDC recommends prioritizing the following:

- Strengthen Partnership. Collaboration between DJS and Choice R & O is central to the program’s success. Enhancing working relationships will require central points of contact at both organizations. Partners may want to consider creating a Choice R & O work group that focuses initially on increasing appropriate referrals to the program. The work group would meet monthly until referrals increased and then might move to quarterly meetings.
  - The work group might include two levels of partners: (1) organizational leaders with decision-making authority and (2) line staff responsible for daily operations.
  - The work group may evolve into a collaboration that addresses issues such as program design, program policies, program outcomes, and promoting public support for community-based alternatives for committed youth.
- Institutionalize Choice R & O Policies, Procedures, and Practices. Create a Choice R & O Handbook that describes its policies, procedures and practices. A Handbook can be used to clarify roles and responsibilities both internally and externally with partners. Choice R & O staff initiated a concentrated effort on creating systems and processes for the program in May 2006 and the effort is ongoing.
  - The Handbook might include policies, procedures, and practices for staff recruitment, staff training and professional development, field operations (e.g., referral and intake processes, focus team meetings, graduated response system, core services), and documentation practices (e.g., daily logs, reports).

- Reexamine Program Design. Get back to basics. Core Choice services have been proven effective for reducing recidivism and they should ground Choice R & O services. Employment skills development may be particularly relevant for these clients. Specific Choice R & O program components can be used to further enhance these core services.
  - Focus teams reflect collaboration on a micro-level. Choice R & O staff needs to balance the importance of serving youth and establishing expectations for collaboration with key partners.
  - The graduated response system will determine Choice R & O's viability as a community-based alternative for committed youth in detention. It is essential, therefore, to implement sanctions and supports uniformly, quickly, and meaningfully. Data-driven decision making is essential to ensure success.
  - The point system is unnecessary if Choice R & O staff adopts high-quality daily documentation practices. Daily logging, done properly, provides accurate counts for real behaviors (e.g., youth contacts, family contacts, curfew met, education and employment activities) that can then be linked directly and objectively to graduated responses.
  
- Maximize Utilization of Evaluator . Choice R & O staff may want to integrate the evaluator more fully in the development of documentation practices and reporting tools. High-quality data management practices will help increase program accountability as well as mutual accountability between DJS and Choice R & O. In addition, the evaluation in year two could focus more on the unfolding collaboration between DJS and Choice R & O.

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**Appendix A**  
**Interview Protocols/Data Collection Materials**

# Interagency Collaboration Scale

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## Instructions

1. Thank you for agreeing to complete the Interagency Collaboration Scale. Your assistance will allow us to develop better measures of how organizations collaborate to provide services to children and their families. Please remember that your participation is voluntary and that all responses will remain anonymous and confidential.
2. Please complete the Interagency Collaboration Scale.
  - Please begin by answering the Respondent Information questions on page 3.
  - For the remaining questions, read each item carefully and circle the response that best describes your rating of each item. Some questions will require you to write in a response.
  - Try to answer all the items. If you don't know how to respond to an item, please circle the "DK" category.
3. When you are finished, please return the survey to the administrator.

## Respondent Information

1. Gender \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age \_\_\_\_\_
3. Race/Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_
4. Highest level of education completed \_\_\_\_\_  
Academic Area \_\_\_\_\_
5. Name of Agency/Organization \_\_\_\_\_
6. Job title \_\_\_\_\_
7. Years in current organization \_\_\_\_\_
8. What percentage of your time do you spend with the following groups?  
Children 18 years or younger \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Time  
Adults \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Time  
Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Time
9. What percentage of your time do you spend in the following work roles:  
Administrating/Supervising other employees \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Time Providing services to clients \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Time Case management of client cases \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Time Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_ %

**Beliefs/Values** Please Circle the number that best represents your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement

To what extent do you believe that .....

		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	There is a need for child-serving organizations to share information.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Interagency collaboration helps prevent children from “falling through the cracks,” and getting needed services from agencies.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Collaboration between organizations is a waste of time.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	My own organization takes an active role in promoting collaboration with other organizations.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Working with people across agencies is a positive experience.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Collaboration across agencies will result in more appropriate services for families.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Collaboration across agencies makes it unclear who has primary responsibility for providing services for each client/family.	1	2	3	4	5

**Please Continue**

## Collaborative Activities

		Not at all	Little	Somewhat	Considerable	Very Much	Don't Know
<b>To what extent does your organization SHARE with other child-serving organizations in .....</b>							
8.	Funding.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
9.	Purchasing of services.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
10.	Facility space.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
11.	Record keeping and management information systems data.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
12.	Developing programs or services.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
13.	Program evaluation.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
14.	Staff training.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
15.	Informing the public of available services.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
16.	Diagnoses and evaluation/assessment.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
17.	Common intake forms.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
18.	Child and family service plan development.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
19.	Case conferences or case reviews.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
20.	Informal agreements.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
21.	Formal written agreements.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
22.	Voluntary contractual relationships.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
23.	Collaborative relationships mandated by law.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
24.	Participation in standing interagency committees.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
25.	Information about services.	1	2	3	4	5	DK

**Please Continue**

## Knowledge of Other Organizations

26. Please list the **one** organization (e.g., local, state, national) that you collaborate with the most, either currently, or in the past.

**Please answer questions 27-31 based on the above organization.**

	Not at all	Little	Somewhat	Considerable	Very Much	Don't know
27. How difficult is it to contact the organization when your own organization needs information or help?	1	2	3	4	5	DK
28. How personally acquainted are you with the staff you work with from the organization?	1	2	3	4	5	DK
29. How personally acquainted are you with the Director of the organization?	1	2	3	4	5	DK
30. How often have you met with consultants from the organization?	1	2	3	4	5	DK
31. How familiar are you with the services provided by the organization?	1	2	3	4	5	DK

**THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING**

**CHOICE REFOCUS & OPPORTUNITY EVALUATION  
KEY PARTNERS INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**Partner Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Partner Identifier:** \_\_\_\_\_

**A. Participation in Choice R & O**

1. Why is your organization/agency participating in Choice R & O?
2. What other organizations are involved in Choice R & O?
3. How will/has participation in Choice R & O helped achieve your own or your organization's goals?

**B. Purpose of Choice R & O**

3. What are the purpose, goals, and objectives of Choice R & O as you understand them?

**C. Roles and Responsibilities of Key Partners**

4. What are the roles and responsibilities of your organization in Choice R & O?
5. What are the roles and responsibilities of other organizations involved in Choice R & O as you understand them?
6. Is there an individual or organization that should be part of Choice R & O but isn't? Who (or which organization) and Why?
7. How well is each partner organization fulfilling its roles and meeting its responsibilities in your opinion? *Prompts:* Examples of what's being done well? Examples of challenges?
8. How well does the partnership combine the perspectives, resources, and skills of its members?

**D. Communication and Decisionmaking**

9. How would you describe communication (about goals, activities, accomplishments, challenges) among the key Choice R & O partners?  
*Prompts:* Do partners discuss accomplishments and challenges openly and regularly?
10. What types of decisions do the partners make as a group?
11. How would you describe the decision making process among key Choice R & O partners?  
*Prompts:* Does each organization or individual have an equal opportunity to influence decisions?  
Are decisions based on fair criteria? Are decisions based on accurate information?

### **E. Conflict Management**

12. Have any major conflicts (i.e., conflicts that prevented Choice R & O from continuing, disrupted Choice R & O's operations, or caused participating organizations to change) arisen?

Please describe

*Prompts:*

- Differences in members' communication styles?
- Differences in philosophies or views about program goals?
- Power imbalance among individuals and/or organizations?
- Staffing issues?
- Individual agendas?
- Unclear goals and inconsistent processes?
- Unrealistic expectations of partners?

13. How were conflicts resolved? If they were not resolved, why? (review for each conflict)

### **F. Facilitating Factors/Conditions**

14. What factors or conditions have made it easier for Choice R&O to move forward?

*Prompts:*

- Links to political and decision making processes?
- History of collaboration and cooperation?
- Timing?
- Changes in policies and resource allocation at the local and/or state levels?

### **G. Challenging Factors/Conditions**

15. What factors or conditions have made it harder for Choice R & O to move forward ?

*Prompts:*

- History of competition and conflict?
- Limited time and resources?
- Changes in policies and resource allocation at the local and/or state levels?
- No links to political and decision making processes?

### **H. Overall Assessment and Lessons Learned**

16. What are the greatest strengths of the partnership?

17. What are the greatest strengths of Choice R & O?

18. What are the biggest challenges facing the partnership?

19. What are the biggest challenges facing Choice R & O?

20. What recommendations might you have for improving the partnership and/or Choice R & O?

Do you have any other comments?

**CHOICE REFOCUS & OPPORTUNITY EVALUATION  
STAFF INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**Choice R & O Office:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Staff Identifier:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are the purpose, goals, and objectives of Choice R & O as you understand them?
2. What is your role in Choice R & O?
3. What are your primary responsibilities?
4. What training have you received as part of your involvement in Choice R & O? Who provided it? When did you receive it?
5. What other organizations are involved in Choice R & O?
6. What are the roles and responsibilities of other organizations involved in Choice R & O as you understand them?
7. What are the greatest strengths of Choice R & O?
8. What are the biggest challenges facing Choice R & O?
9. What recommendations might you have for improving Choice R & O?
10. Do you have any other comments?



### *Daily/Weekly Reflection Questions*

Ongoing communication with Mr. Jones, Deputy Director of Choice R & O operations, is an essential part of the evaluation process. Dr. Hyde or Dr. Webster will communicate weekly with Mr. Jones. We suggest discussing the following.

#### *What progress was made this week?*

- How is the R & O partnership progressing?
- What key decisions were made this week?
- What important planning was accomplished this week?
- What program activities or events took place this week?

#### *What problems were encountered this week?*

- Which partners are resisting engagement in or creating challenges for the progress of R&O implementation?
- What key decisions were delayed, reversed, or otherwise stalled this week?
- What planning was delayed, reversed, or otherwise stalled this week?
- What challenges did program staff face with respect to serving youth and their families?

#### *What problem-solving occurred this week?*

- How did the problems encountered this week get addressed or resolved?

<b>Child/Youth Identifier</b>	
<b>Choice R&amp;O Office</b>	
<b>Days of Participation</b>	
<b>Participation Status</b>	
<b>Date of File Review</b>	

**CASE FILE DATA EXTRACTION MATRIX**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Complete</b>	<b>Incomplete</b>	<b>Missing Information/Document</b>
Authorization to deny or stop special telephone services			
Intake Assessment			
Service Plan(s)			
Focus Team Meeting Notes			
Weekly Point Sheet Acknowledgements			
Biweekly Reports			
Family Empowerment Scale			
Choice Completion Survey			
Termination Summary			
Service Summary Form			
Other			
Other			

Other Notes:

**FOCUS CONTINUUM**  
(cell = total points)

	<b>Focus 4</b>	<b>Focus 3a</b>	<b>Focus 3</b>	<b>Focus 2</b>	<b>Focus 1</b>
Week 1					
Week 2					
Week 3					
Week 4					
Week 5					
Week 6					
Week 7					
Week 8					
Week 9					
Week 10					
Week 11					
Week 12					
Week 13					
Week 14					
<b>Total Points:</b>					

**Overall Analysis:** Do the different documents (daily point sheets, weekly point sheet, biweekly report, & termination summary) create a traceable and consistent pathway through the program that is logically linked to point accumulation? Can anyone pick up these documents and say with certainty and accuracy that points were earned using consistent criteria and applied to movement along the continuum according to the ‘rules’ (e.g., more points earn more rewards, fewer points earn sanctions/consequences)?

Note: Determining the answer to these questions will require reading these documents and analyzing them for consistency and logic.

**Appendix B**  
**Timeline of Events and Accomplishments**

## Timeline of Choice R & O

### Choice Refocus & Opportunity Program (Choice R & O): Timeline of Key Year One Events and Accomplishments

Events & Accomplishments	Mar-Sept 2005	Oct-Dec 2005	Jan-Mar 2006	April-June 2006	July-Sept 2006
<b>Program Development</b>					
Initial concept and champions for Choice R & O emerges from Greater Baltimore Committee Leadership Program meeting at Choice Intensive Advocacy office	✓				
Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) requests a proposal outline for a program that would serve as an alternative to the Charles H. Hickey School's Impact Program	✓				
Initial proposal for program submitted	✓				
DJS and Choice further develop program concept together	✓				
Maryland Governor announces publicly the closure of the Charles H. Hickey School	✓				
DJS announces publicly that Choice would provide an alternative to the Impact Program	✓				
Assistant Director for Choice R & O identified and advertisements for other positions placed	✓				
Presented program to key juvenile justice stakeholders	✓				
Maryland Youth Residential Center (MYRC) identified as key partner (shelter beds)	✓				
<b>Program Implementation</b>					
<b>Partnership Development</b>					
Meeting with Key DJS Stakeholders – review status of program			✓		
Program presentations ('Meet & Greet')					

<b>Events &amp; Accomplishments</b>	<b>Mar-Sept 2005</b>	<b>Oct-Dec 2005</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 2006</b>	<b>April-June 2006</b>	<b>July-Sept 2006</b>
Judges (Annapolis, Baltimore County)				✓	
Public Defenders (Baltimore County)				✓	
Cheltenham staff				✓	
DJS Area Director (Baltimore County)			✓		
DJS line staff (Baltimore City & County)		✓	✓	✓	
Baltimore County Judge freezes referrals to Choice R & O because DJS case managers not following protocol					✓
MYRC limits intakes (cannot dedicate staff without regular flow of intakes)					✓
Key DJS partners relocated to other offices					✓
<b>Program Operations</b>					
Initial Choice R & O Staff hired		✓			
First Choice R & O intake (youth and family)		✓			
Choice R & O office opens			✓		
A.M.E.N. group starts for Choice R & O youth			✓		
Choice R & O Assistant Director leaves position				✓	
A.M.E.N. graduation ceremony				✓	
First Choice R & O graduations				✓	
New Choice R & O caseworkers hired & trained					✓
New Choice R & O Assistant Director hired					✓
<b>Program Evaluation</b>					
History of program development documented		✓			
Evaluation plan presented to key stakeholders		✓			
Weekly reflection meetings (telephone) with Assistant Director of Choice R & O		✓	✓	✓	✓
Site visits to Baltimore City office (Baltimore City and County/Prince George's County staff interviews & observations)		✓		✓	✓

<b>Events &amp; Accomplishments</b>	<b>Mar-Sept 2005</b>	<b>Oct-Dec 2005</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 2006</b>	<b>April-June 2006</b>	<b>July-Sept 2006</b>
Key partner interviews			✓		
Meeting with DJS about obtaining recidivism (outcome) data for Choice R & O			✓		
Observation of program presentation to key stakeholders (Baltimore County judges & public defenders)				✓	
Review of client files					✓

**Appendix C**  
**Summary of Training and Technical Assistance Provided**



## Summary of Training and Technical Assistance Provided

ASDC provided various training and technical assistance as part of the evaluation activities during year one. A summary of the assistance provided follows.

***Evidence-based practices.*** ASDC identified evidence-based practices (i.e., those identified in the OJJDP Model Programs Guide) for aftercare and graduated sanctions programs. ASDC submitted a literature review and annotated bibliography to Choice R & O staff.

***Systems and procedures.*** ASDC worked with Choice R&O staff to conduct an audit of client files and documentation practices with the goal of developing reporting tools that could be used to improve accountability. Reporting tools and procedures are currently under revision and development.

***Fiscal Year 2005 and 2006 reports.*** ASDC assisted Choice R&O staff with fiscal year 2005 and 2006 reporting requirements. ASDC analyzed data provided by Choice and generated reports for the Department of Juvenile Services. The fiscal 2006 findings are summarized below.

## **Choice Intensive Advocacy: Evaluation Findings for FY06**

### ***Demographic Information***

This summary of findings provides information on 362 youth who participated in the Choice Intensive Advocacy program in FY2006. Participants, on average, were in the program for 157 days or a little longer than five months. Eighty one percent (n = 294) of the participants were male and 19 % (n = 68) were female. In relation to race/ethnicity 71% (n = 256) identified as African American, 22% (n = 80) as Caucasian, 3% (n = 12) as Hispanic, and 2% (n = 8) as “Multi Cultural.”

### ***Prior Delinquent Behavior***

- For 2006 the average number of charges of youth at intake into Choice was 2, with the number of charges ranging from no charges to 17 charges. The most frequent number of charges youth had at intake was 1 (n=150).
- The most common offenses at intake were property offenses (e.g., arson, malicious destruction, auto theft) at 33% (n = 120) and person-to-person offenses (e.g., aggravated assault, robbery, sex offences) at 30% (n = 109).

### ***Reducing Delinquent Behavior***

- It was expected that 75% of youth would not acquire new charges while participating in Choice and this goal was exceeded with 80% (n = 290) not incurring charges.
  - Information about the type of charge was documented for the 72 youth who did acquire a formalized charge while participating in the program (FY06). The three most common types of charges were as follows: controlled dangerous substance (n =24), violation of probation (n = 20), and assault (n = 9).
- Over fiscal years 2003 (75%), 2004 (79%), 2005 (83%), and 2006 (80%), the average percentage of youth who do NOT acquire new charges while participating in Choice is 79%.
- It was expected that 80% of youth would reside in the community at the time of program completion; 71.5% did so.

### ***Strengthening School Engagement***

- School attendance information was documented for 88% (320/362) of the youth who completed Choice during fiscal year 2006. Thirty three percent (103/313) of the youth had attendance rates<sup>4</sup> of 85% or better. Maryland’s satisfactory standard for attendance is 94% for both middle and high schools<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> School attendance rates were calculated by dividing the total number of days a youth attended school by the total number of days a youth was enrolled in school while he or she participated in Choice.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://msp.msde.state.md.us>.

- Choice faced challenges with securing and maintaining educational placements for youth in need of placement. Of the 70 youth *in need of* an educational placement at the time of intake into the program, 39% (n = 27) were enrolled in one at the time of program completion. Furthermore, 17% (n= 49) of the 291 youth *with* an educational placement at the time of intake into the program were not in a placement at the time of program completion.

**Delinquency Outcomes By Office:**  
**Fiscal Years 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, & 2006**

	<b>Expected: 75%</b> of youth will not acquire new charges while in the program					<b>Expected: 80%</b> of youth will reside in the community at program completion				
<b>OFFICE</b>	<b>ACTUAL OUTCOME</b>					<b>ACTUAL OUTCOME</b>				
	<b>FY02</b>	<b>FY03</b>	<b>FY04</b>	<b>FY05</b>	<b>FY06</b>	<b>FY02</b>	<b>FY03</b>	<b>FY04</b>	<b>FY05</b>	<b>FY06</b>
Anne Arundel County	80%	91%	71%	91%	82%	72%	84%	80%	72%	64%
Baltimore City – Cherry Hill	67%	67%	69%	75%	65%	83%	78%	71%	79%	67%
Baltimore City – Govans	54%	59%	62%	29%	-	75%	80%	78%	79%	-
Baltimore City – Northeast	59%	74%	66%	78%	65%	53%	70%	68%	83%	71%
Baltimore County	71%	77%	95%	69%	67%	61%	73%	78%	74%	69%
Montgomery County	92%	81%	86%	98%	84%	83%	84%	66%	71%	65%
Prince George’s County	89.5%	89.5%	92%	94%	98%	95%	84%	83%	79%	91%
St. Mary’s County	-	84%	74%	93%	-	-	78%	64%	78%	-
Washington County	93%	75%	76%	87%	100%	79%	80%	78%	85%	74%