



**REMARKS OF ROBERT L. LISTENBEE
ADMINISTRATOR
OFFICE OF JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION
AT THE
“MEETING OF THE COORDINATING COUNCIL” EVENT
WASHINGTON, D.C.
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*REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY***

It has now been a little over three months since I had the privilege of becoming Administrator of OJJDP. As you might imagine, it’s been a busy time. I’ve had the pleasure of meeting many groups and individuals who have conveyed a strong message that we continue to move ahead to implement OJJDP’s vision to ensure that we are a nation where our children are healthy, educated, and free from violence, and if they do come into contact with the juvenile justice system, that contact is rare, fair, and beneficial to them.

I have also begun making visits to our Council partners to hear how we can better coordinate our work around our collective goals. These visits have been of great value to me and I’ve already learned so much from many of you. I look forward to continued conversations and the formalization of concrete action steps to move our respective work forward.

My predecessors have left me an OJJDP well poised for progress; under the leadership of Jeff Slowikowski and Melodee Hanes, ongoing work was enhanced and new activities were initiated.

One such activity initiated under Jeff’s leadership was the commission of the National Academy of Sciences’ report *Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach*, the focus of our meeting today. Thank you Jeff for your vision regarding this initiative.

The National Research Council of the Academy was charged with the following:

1. Reviewing recent advances in behavioral and neuroscience research.

2. Drawing out the implications of this knowledge for juvenile justice reform.
3. Assessing the new generation of reform activities occurring in the United States.
4. And assessing OJJDP's role in carrying out its statutory mission as well as its potential role in supporting scientifically based reform efforts.

With this charge, the National Academy brought together a panel of experts who, in 2 short years, produced the substantial, 442 page report you see here [*Bob L. holds up NAS Report*]. As you can imagine, we are still digesting the report's findings and recommendations. Please note that you have the report's Executive Summaries in your packets.

For me, this report is an inspiring document. It is highly comprehensive. Most importantly, it includes the varying perspectives of practitioners, academics, researchers, legislators, mental health specialists, criminologists, economists, lawyers, judges, victims' rights advocates, prosecutors, and many others.

It consolidates much of what we know about:

- youth development
- the adolescent brain
- current practice in juvenile justice
- what works in juvenile justice
- what doesn't work
- and how we can best move our nation forward.

The central premise of the report is stated in very optimistic terms which bear repeating: If the procedures for holding youth accountable for their offending and the services provided to them are designed and operated in a developmentally informed way, this approach will promote positive legal socialization, reinforce a pro-social identity, and reduce reoffending.

The Academy was just as bold in its warning about the failure to pursue such an approach: If a developmental approach is not taken, "the outcome is likely to be negative interactions between youth and justice system officials, increased

disrespect for the law and legal authority, and the reinforcement of a deviant identity and social disaffection.”

As reflected in the June 2013 public announcement of this report, and as I believe you will hear today, NAS speakers emphasized the applicability of the report to not only juvenile justice, but child welfare and related concerns. We at OJJDP believe that this report’s findings and recommendations can transform how policy makers, practitioners, and researchers address the needs of children who are at risk for involvement or involved in the juvenile justice system.