



# JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM

COUNTY LEADERSHIP ROLES  
AND OPPORTUNITIES

# WHY JUVENILE JUSTICE MATTERS TO COUNTIES

It matters because the juvenile justice system has a direct impact on counties' investments in health, justice and social services. It matters because juvenile justice systems cost more to counties than the benefits they bring to the community. And it matters because effective juvenile justice systems can divert youth from future involvement in the adult criminal justice system, where counties already spend more than \$70 billion each year.

County governments are uniquely positioned to be leaders in the juvenile justice field and have a dramatic impact on the lives of their young residents, families and the broader community. As the primary local provider of health, justice and social services, counties have the opportunity and responsibility to implement comprehensive, evidence-based programs and policies that bolster public safety and improve human outcomes. The National Association of Counties (NACo) has joined the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's *Models for Change* Juvenile Justice Reform Initiative to educate and assist county leaders as they undertake important improvements to benefit communities and reduce costs.

## TRADITIONAL JUVENILE JUSTICE PRACTICES ARE EXPENSIVE AND PRODUCE POOR OUTCOMES

Kids who end up in juvenile detention are less likely to graduate high school, less likely to find employment and more likely to reoffend as adults. Incarcerating kids is expensive, and counties foot the bill for many of the related costs and services. Counties pay for the operation of detention centers, medical and mental health care and education services for incarcerated youth. The expense of running a locked detention facility ranges by jurisdiction, but often costs \$200-\$300 per day per

youth. The costs grown even higher over time, as juveniles who are detained and adjudicated are more likely to end up in the adult system.

## YOUTH IN JUVENILE JUSTICE HAVE MAJOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND OTHER NEEDS

Fewer than 5 percent of youth who are arrested are arrested for violent crimes.<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of youth end up in the juvenile justice system for non-violent or relatively minor offenses, and all too often a contributing factor to their contact with the justice system is an unmet need for behavioral health treatment.

- Up to 70 percent of youth in the juvenile justice system suffer from mental health disorders.
- Over 60 percent of those with a mental health disorder also have a substance use disorder.
- Among those with mental health disorders, 27 percent have disorders so severe that their ability to function is significantly impaired.<sup>2</sup>

Many juvenile justice systems are ill-equipped to serve these youth; in fact, many do not even have the tools to identify these youth.

## COUNTIES CAN INTRODUCE ALTERNATIVES THAT PRODUCE BETTER OUTCOMES AND COST LESS

Community-based services are less costly than detention and more effective than care in correctional facilities. Most juvenile offenders are less likely to be involved in future delinquent behavior when they remain in the community and receive services that address their underlying needs. Detention is among the least effective strategies to reduce crime, yet counties spend staggering sums on these systems.<sup>3</sup> Alternatively, diversion and proven therapeutic programs produce as much as \$13 worth of benefit for every \$1 spent.<sup>4</sup>

Counties now have access to good tools that can identify youth who would be better served with treatment rather than jail time. In the short term, this type of early intervention helps ensure that youth are engaged in school, are receiving appropriate treatments and services and do not fall further into the justice system. Long term, such reforms can help counties keep costs down as fewer youth reoffend and end up in the adult criminal justice system, saving money and lives.

Through its partnership with *Models for Change* and its explicit commitment to improving juvenile justice, NACo will share effective ways to improve juvenile justice, even as county leaders grapple with tight budgets and tough fiscal decisions. NACo will provide written publications, webinars, blog posts, podcasts and forums at sites around the country.

To learn more about the *Models for Change* Resource Center Partnership and access toolkits as well as examples from counties that have improved their juvenile justice systems, visit the sites to the right and [www.naco.org/programs/csd/Pages/Models-for-Change.aspx](http://www.naco.org/programs/csd/Pages/Models-for-Change.aspx).

## END NOTES

1. Juvenile Arrest Rates. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Available at <http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/JAR.asp>.
2. Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Collaborative for Change. Better Solutions for Youth with Mental Health Needs in the Juvenile Justice System. Available at <http://cfc.ncmhjj.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Whitepaper-Mental-Health-FINAL.pdf>.
3. Holman, Barry & Ziedenberg, Justin. The Dangers of Detention: The Impact of Incarcerating Youth in Detention and Other Secure Facilities. Justice Policy Institute, November 2006 at 11. Available at [http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/06-11\\_rep\\_dangersofdetention\\_jj.pdf](http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/06-11_rep_dangersofdetention_jj.pdf).
4. Holman, Barry & Ziedenberg, Justin. The Dangers of Detention: The Impact of Incarcerating Youth in Detention and Other Secure Facilities. Justice Policy Institute, November 2006 at 11. Available at [http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/06-11\\_rep\\_dangersofdetention\\_jj.pdf](http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/06-11_rep_dangersofdetention_jj.pdf).



The Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Collaborative for Change, led by the National Center for Mental Health and

Juvenile Justice, promotes and supports adoption of new resources, tools and program models that allow states and local communities to better respond to youth with mental health needs in the juvenile justice system. It works with sites nationally to provide training, technical assistance, and education. <http://cfc.ncmhjj.com>



The Status Offense Reform Center at the Vera Institute of Justice

serves as a clearinghouse of information and assistance for practitioners and policymakers in juvenile justice, with a focus on encouraging and showcasing strategies to safely and effectively divert non-delinquent youth from the formal juvenile justice system. <http://www.statusoffensereform.org/>



The National Juvenile Defender Center (NJDC) improves access to counsel and the quality of representation for children in the justice system. NJDC

bolsters juvenile defense by: supporting the creation and replication of field-driven innovations, facilitating the adoption of new juvenile justice defense standards and developing a corps of certified juvenile indigent defense trainers. [www.njdc.info](http://www.njdc.info)



Led by the Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps, the RFK National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice builds the capacity of state and local leaders and

practitioners to address the unique needs of dual status youth, coordinate and integrate child-serving systems and improve juvenile probation systems. <http://www.rfknrcjj.org>

## FOR EVEN MORE INFORMATION, VISIT

- **Juvenile Justice Resource Hub** | [www.jjie.org/hub](http://www.jjie.org/hub)  
The Juvenile Justice Resource Hub is a comprehensive source of information on cutting-edge juvenile justice issues and reform trends. It provides ready access to reliable, accurate, curated information and analysis on juvenile justice issues, including relevant research, best practice models, policy levers for reform, toolkits and experts in the field.
- **Models for Change Website** | [www.modelsforchange.net](http://www.modelsforchange.net)  
Funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, *Models for Change* supports coordinated, multi-system interventions to improve outcomes for youth in the juvenile justice system. This site provides effective tools, research, knowledge and innovations to promote reform.

# WHY JUVENILE JUSTICE MATTERS TO HUMAN SERVICES AGENCIES

It matters because the juvenile justice system has a direct impact on counties' investments in health, justice and social services. It matters because current juvenile justice practices cost more to counties than the benefits they bring to the community. And it matters because collaboration between human services and juvenile justice systems can divert youth from future involvement in the adult criminal justice system and use of public health systems, where counties already spend more than \$70 billion and \$69 billion annually, respectively.

County governments are uniquely positioned to have a dramatic impact on the lives of their young residents, families and the broader community. As the primary local provider of health, justice and social services, counties have the opportunity and responsibility to implement collaborative, evidence-based programs and policies that bolster public safety and improve human outcomes. The National Association of Counties (NACo) has joined the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's *Models for Change* Juvenile Justice Reform Initiative to educate and assist county leaders as they undertake these important improvements to their justice and human services systems that can benefit communities and reduce costs.

## MANY JUSTICE-INVOLVED YOUTH ARE INVOLVED IN MULTIPLE PUBLIC SYSTEMS

Many youth are served by the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, but fall through the gaps between them. One study found that 67 percent of youth referred to the juvenile justice system had some involvement with the county's child welfare agency.<sup>1</sup> These "dual status youth" experience particularly poor outcomes: they have higher rates of recidivism, are detained more often and for longer periods of time and experience more frequent placement changes. As adults, they are more likely to be incarcer-

ated, be unemployed and depend on public systems like cash or housing assistance. These outcomes translate into tremendous costs for communities and the youth themselves.

## THESE YOUTH HAVE MAJOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND OTHER NEEDS

The vast majority of youth end up in the juvenile justice system for non-violent or relatively minor offenses, and unmet behavioral health needs are often a contributing factor.

- Up to 70 percent of youth in the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable mental health disorder.<sup>2</sup>
- More than 60 percent of those with a mental health disorder also have a substance use disorder.<sup>3</sup>
- As many as 30 to 50 percent of incarcerated youth have a learning disability.<sup>4</sup>

Law enforcement, detention centers and courts are not equipped to meet these unique needs on their own. County agencies must work together to identify a child's issues and provide appropriate treatment. Most juvenile offenders are less likely to reoffend if they remain in the community and receive services that address their underlying needs.

## COLLABORATION AMONG COUNTY AGENCIES PRODUCES BETTER OUTCOMES AND COSTS LESS

Youth often receive services from multiple providers that do not coordinate care. They may see different judges, have different therapists and their probation officer and child protection workers may not communicate, or even know of the other's existence. Community-based services are less costly than detention and more effective than care in correctional facilities. Sites with successful cross-agency collaboration follow protocols to ensure that dual status youth are identified early in the justice process, use coordinated case planning meetings to bring together the youth, family and professionals from multiple systems to develop a workable case plan and commit to providing evidence-based programs to steer youth away from further justice involvement.

County officials are encouraged to visit the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice to learn about coordinating the systems of their youth-serving agencies. The Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Collaborative for Change offers resources on effective practices to meet the behavioral health needs of kids in the justice system. With all of the *Models for Change* Resource Centers, NACo will educate county leaders on effective ways to improve their juvenile justice systems, even as they grapple with tough fiscal decisions. NACo will provide publications, webinars, blog posts, podcasts and forums at sites around the country.

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### END NOTES

1. Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice. From Conversation to Collaboration: How Child Welfare Agencies & Juvenile Justice Agencies Can Work Together to Improve Outcomes for Dual Status Youth. Available at [http://www.modelsforchange.net/publications/539/From\\_Conversation\\_to\\_Collaboration\\_How\\_Child\\_Welfare\\_and\\_Juvenile\\_Justice\\_Agencies\\_Can\\_Work\\_Together\\_to\\_Improve\\_Outcomes\\_for\\_Dual\\_Status\\_Youth.pdf](http://www.modelsforchange.net/publications/539/From_Conversation_to_Collaboration_How_Child_Welfare_and_Juvenile_Justice_Agencies_Can_Work_Together_to_Improve_Outcomes_for_Dual_Status_Youth.pdf).
2. Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Collaborative for Change. Better Solutions for Youth with Mental Health Needs in the Juvenile Justice System. Available at <http://cfc.ncmhjj.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Whitepaper-Mental-Health-FINAL.pdf>.
3. Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Collaborative for Change. Better Solutions for Youth with Mental Health Needs in the Juvenile Justice System. Available at <http://cfc.ncmhjj.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Whitepaper-Mental-Health-FINAL.pdf>.
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## County Concerns:

# THE ROLE OF COUNTY OFFICIALS IN JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM

Counties are the primary provider at the local level of health, social services and juvenile and adult corrections, giving county governments and leaders a unique and important role in improving juvenile justice systems. With so many stakeholders involved in the juvenile justice system, leadership from elected officials is critical to establishing objectives, eliciting buy-in from the many interested parties and continually motivating others to accomplish set goals.

## SET AGENDA

County officials are often faced with the question, “Why focus on juvenile justice when it is such a small part of the budget?” By considering the significant downstream implications (financial and human) of not intervening early and appropriately to the needs of youth, county officials can be important conveners, framers and leaders in this area. They can bring juvenile justice reform ideas to the forefront of their county’s agenda and realign policies and spending priorities to promote reform. They can encourage the formation of working groups to pinpoint problems and gather data, bring together stakeholders from various agencies and engage the community in efforts to enhance juvenile justice programs.

## IDENTIFY NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

For elected officials, it is important to identify and assess their jurisdiction’s particular needs. What challenges does the community face with its juvenile justice system, and what opportunities exist to improve outcomes and increase efficiencies? In particular, successful system improvement requires the collection, analysis and use of data. It is imperative to know who is in the juvenile detention center, what services are offered and actually used, how much money is spent on detention and services, etc. Good decisions—from budgetary choices to assessing treatment options to identifying a population on which to focus—must be data-driven and reflect the needs, resources and limitations of the county. Leadership from county officials is critical in identifying the need for and establishing mechanisms

through which the county can collect and use good data. It is often as important to understand what questions counties can answer and which they cannot.

## ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS OF THE RIGHT PEOPLE

County officials should engage stakeholders at all levels and organizations, including non-profit agencies, faith-based organizations and businesses in the community. Successful reform depends on collaboration between multiple government entities, as well as between public and private agencies. Elected officials are well positioned to bring together uncommon allies, engage primary stakeholders from all possible organizations and encourage active participation and collaboration to facilitate thoughtful consideration of key juvenile justice and youth services questions.

Some of the individuals who should answer these questions include directors of juvenile justice and human services agencies, juvenile court judges and staff, the county administrator or county manager, detention center staff, school employees and any other organizations that might provide services to you.

The following page contains suggested questions to help get you started.

**WHAT IS OUR STARTING POINT?**

What do we do well in our juvenile justice system? What youth and families are best served? How do we know that?	
What are the major challenges in the juvenile justice system (overcrowded detention center, racial and ethnic disparities, etc.)?	
What systems/agencies/programs/facilities are most used by juveniles in the justice system?	

**HOW COST EFFECTIVE ARE OUR INVESTMENTS?**

In what systems/agencies/programs/facilities are the costs greatest? Where are the costs greatest per youth served?	
In what systems/agencies/programs/facilities are the outcomes not meeting expectations?	
In what systems/agencies/programs/facilities are the outcomes most positive?	
What interventions are most cost effective?	
Are there specific programs the county would like to improve/add/change?	

**WHAT DO WE KNOW? WHAT DON'T WE KNOW?**

What data are currently being collected?	
How are these data being used and/or analyzed?	
What other data need to be collected?	
Who or what agencies can collect and analyze needed data?	
What data does each agency or stakeholder need to achieve success? Who has those data?	

**WHO IS AT THE TABLE? WHO NEEDS TO BE AT THE TABLE?**

How does the juvenile justice system or detention facility collaborate with other agencies or service providers? Are there any relationships that can be expanded?	
How are schools involved with youth in the juvenile justice system? How is child welfare and dependency involved? How are other systems involved?	
How could those partners be involved if they are not already? How could they be engaged to participate as partners?	
Who are existing and possible champions for juvenile justice reform? Who should be included in conversations? What relationships exist versus what relationships need to be forged?	
Are there local businesses or philanthropies that would be interested in investing in juvenile justice reform?	

**WHAT CHALLENGES DO WE NEED TO OVERCOME?**

What budgetary restrictions exist?	
What cultural changes need to happen?	
What policy changes may need to be made?	
What other challenges might arise?	
How can these be overcome?	

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## County Concerns:

# BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND JUVENILE JUSTICE

As many as 70 percent of youth in contact with the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable mental health disorder and more than 60 percent of those youth with a mental health disorder also have a substance use disorder. Nearly one in five youth in detention have disorders that are serious enough to require immediate and serious treatment—more than three times the rate in the general youth population.

## WHY SHOULD MY COUNTY BE CONCERNED ABOUT ABOUT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IN JUVENILE JUSTICE?

Many youth with behavioral health needs end up in the juvenile justice system for non-violent or relatively minor offenses, often as a well-intentioned yet misguided attempt to provide that youth with treatment. However, many of the issues faced by these youth are only exacerbated by secure detention. For example, many techniques used in correctional settings, like restraints or prolonged isolation, lead to increased acting out and self-harm.

Research has shown that most youth with behavioral health needs can be safely, effectively and more cost-efficiently treated

Youth with behavioral health needs are those children who have a mental health issue, substance use disorder or both.

in community settings. Youth detention alone costs counties between \$75,000-\$100,000 per year per youth. However, detaining a young person with mental illness can amplify that cost by at least \$18,800. And the costs do not stop there. As these young people languish in the adjudication process and in detention they become increasingly likely to end up in the adult criminal system and rely on public health and services systems

when they leave jail or prison. The costs only continue to spiral over time.

Alternatively, evidence-based services provided in the community have been proven to reduce recidivism by more than 20 percent and provide upwards of \$10 worth of benefit for every \$1 spent.

Not only do counties have a responsibility to consider these alternatives as stewards of public tax dollars, but they are natural and necessary leaders to help divert youth with behavioral health issues out of the juvenile justice system and connect them with community-based services that can help them while maintaining or enhancing public safety.

Legally, there are concerns about the appropriateness of having youth disclose information in a pre-adjudication setting that could be used against them in court—for example, admissions about drug use or tendencies toward anger. One solution to this problem is to develop a policy that restricts the use of pre-trial mental health screening information. Agencies can also select tools that minimize potential prejudice as much as possible while still meeting primary objectives.<sup>5</sup>

## WHAT CAN MY COUNTY DO?

County agencies see youth at many critical intervention points, whether it be contact with law enforcement, at intake, during judicial processing, in detention or during probation. It is



imperative that youth with behavioral health needs be identified and diverted at the earliest stage possible to effective, community-based services whenever safe and possible. To achieve positive outcomes for these youth, county juvenile justice, behavioral health and other related systems must improve collaboration, increase access to evidence-based screening and treatment models and improve continuity of care.

County agencies can work together to determine what types of data can be collected, and then monitor data throughout the process. For example, tracking prevalence rates of youth with behavioral health issues in the justice system supports why improvements and/or new programs are necessary. Measuring short- and longer-term outcomes, like how many youth successfully complete a program or stay out of the justice system, ensures that programs are working and should receive continued support. These types of data build support for and community confidence in the efficacy of treating youth with behavioral health needs in a community setting.

Counties can ensure that employees at all levels are properly educated and trained about the special needs of youth with behavioral health issues. For example, law enforcement officials should be trained to identify the signs and symptoms of behavioral health needs, and all mental health screens and assessments should be administered by properly trained staff.

## EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

- **The Bernalillo County, N.M.**, Juvenile Detention Center developed an intake process that identifies youth with behavioral health needs and diverts them to a community mental health clinic that is located 200 yards from the detention facility. Referrals to the mental health clinic can also be made by care providers, parents or other concerned individuals, which helps reduce any incentive to refer a juvenile to the detention center just to access services.

- **In Summit County, Ohio**, the Crossroads Probation program targets youth in the court system who have behavioral health disorders. Approximately 70 youth each year participate in this program. A case plan is developed for each child, who, along with his or her family, receives treatment for at least a year, including substance abuse treatment, mental health counseling, drug screening and educational, vocational and employment services. If the juvenile successfully completes the Crossroads Program, his or her offense is dismissed and expunged.

## RESOURCES AND MORE INFORMATION

- **Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Collaborative for Change:** <http://cfc.ncmhjj.com/>

The Collaborative for Change is a new, multi-dimensional Resource Center that shares information on mental health reforms developed by jurisdictions involved with Models for Change and provides guidance for effectively implementing those reforms in new communities throughout the country.

- **National Youth Screening & Assessment Project:** <http://nysap.us/>

The National Youth Screening & Assessment Project (NYSAP) is a technical assistance and research center, dedicated to helping juvenile justice programs identify youths' needs for behavioral health intervention and risk management. NYSAP has been working with juvenile justice programs nationwide since 2000 and providing technical assistance for use of NYSAP's mental health screening tool.

- **Models for Change:** <http://www.modelsforchange.net/reform-areas/mental-health/index.html>

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## END NOTES

1. Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Collaborative for Change. Better Solutions for Youth with Mental Health Needs in the Juvenile Justice System. Available at <http://cfc.ncmhjj.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Whitepaper-Mental-Health-FINAL.pdf>.
2. National Alliance on Mental Illness. Juvenile Detention Centers: Are They Warehousing Children with Mental Illnesses? Available at [http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=juvenile\\_justice\\_and\\_child\\_welfare&template=/Content-Management/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=38468](http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=juvenile_justice_and_child_welfare&template=/Content-Management/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=38468).
3. Justice Policy Institute. The Costs of Confinement: Why Good Juvenile Justice Polices Make Good Fiscal Sense. Available at [http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/09\\_05\\_rep\\_costsofconfinement\\_jj\\_ps.pdf](http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/09_05_rep_costsofconfinement_jj_ps.pdf).
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## County Concerns:

# STATUS OFFENSES

More than 50,000 kids are taken to court every year just for skipping school.<sup>1</sup> An additional 87,000 youth are in court because they ran away, were arrested for underage drinking, were out past curfew or their parents feel they are beyond control. The majority of these youth are processed through county courts and served by local entities like probation or social service agencies,<sup>2</sup> creating an enormous expense for counties.

A status offense is an act that is illegal only because the person committing it is a minor: things like running away, truancy, curfew violations, underage drinking and ungovernability or incorrigibility (classifications given to a youth who is disobedient or beyond the control of parents or guardians). These low-level offenses are often the result of underlying issues, such as an unsafe school environment, child abuse/neglect or mistreated or undiagnosed disabilities.

### WHY SHOULD MY COUNTY BE CONCERNED ABOUT STATUS OFFENSES?

Courts across the country are faced with more cases than they can handle, which often results in slow response times. In status offense cases, however, time is often of the essence as many of these violations are the result of an underlying issue. For example, a child who is regularly truant could be avoiding a negative school environment, feeling depressed or reacting to problems at home. Courts are not usually equipped to assess such underlying circumstances and judges have few options when faced with a teenager who is acting out or parents who feel they can't handle their child.<sup>3</sup>

Using courts and detention facilities to handle youth charged

with status offenses is expensive and ineffective. Detention can cost counties \$200-\$300 per day per youth. The costs grow even higher over time, as juveniles who are detained and adjudicated are more likely to end up in the adult system. When youth charged with low-level offenses are diverted from court and treated in the community, they have better outcomes and recidivism rates drop. Community-based services are also much less costly than detention.<sup>4</sup> Counties are natural leaders to help bridge the gap between youth with needs and community-based services that can help them, with a far greater breadth of services than may be available to the courts.

The federal government has also recognized that status offenders are fundamentally different than other youth in court. The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A) limits detention and mandates the provision of services for status offenders.<sup>5</sup> Federal funding that states receive to support juvenile justice requires the deinstitutionalization of these youth.

Despite the JJDP A's prohibition on detaining status offenders, one exception does allow for it: The Valid Court Order exception allows courts to incarcerate a child if he or she is in violation of a court order (such as an order to attend school, which the child does not do). Detaining youth for these types of violations is counter to the goal of the JJDP A, and a large coalition of advocates are seeking the removal of this exception.

## WHAT CAN MY COUNTY DO?

Because youth charged with status offenses can be referred to the juvenile justice system at many different points — by parents who feel their child is acting out in an uncontrollable manner, by schools dealing with discipline or truancy issues or by law enforcement officers who encounter a runaway child — it is critical that county agencies collaborate to build a safety net and best serve these youth. County agencies can work together to set up systems that provide youth greater opportunities for diversion from court involvement, quickly identify and address underlying issues that may be causing youth to act out and provide community-based services that result in better outcomes at lower costs.

Families are critical allies but also in need of assistance when working with a child charged with a status offense. Counties can ensure that services are easy for children and families to access. If services are far away, expensive or otherwise difficult to use, families may opt out before their needs can be addressed.

## EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL STATUS OFFENSE REFORM EFFORTS

In **Clark County, Wash.**, students who skip school must attend a truancy workshop where they learn about consequences of truancy and sign an agreement that they will improve their attendance. Those who fail are enrolled in the Truancy Project, which provides a mix of individual supervision and group activities that identify student-specific barriers to school attendance. Youth involved in the Truancy Project were significantly less likely to have further involvement with the juvenile justice system.<sup>6</sup>

In **Calcasieu Parish, La.**, the Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) functions as a centralized point of intake for families. Youth can be referred to the MARC by law enforcement, family

members, school officials or other concerned adults. MARC staff use assessments to identify a youth's needs and interview the youth's guardian before developing a service plan that can include counseling, functional family therapy and/or other programs offered by community service providers. In the MARC's first year of operation, the average time from when a youth or family sought help to receiving help dropped from 50 days to approximately two hours.<sup>7</sup>

## RESOURCES AND MORE INFORMATION

▪ **Models for Change** Website: [www.modelsforchange.net/reform-areas/dual-status-youth/index.html](http://www.modelsforchange.net/reform-areas/dual-status-youth/index.html)

Funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Models for Change supports coordinated, multi-system interventions to improve outcomes for youth in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. This site provides effective tools, research, knowledge and innovations to promote reform.

▪ **Status Offense Reform Center** | [www.statusoffensereform.org](http://www.statusoffensereform.org)

The Status Offense Reform Center offers resources and tools to policymakers and practitioners interested in creating effective alternatives to juvenile justice system involvement for youth who commit status offenses — behaviors that are problematic but certainly not criminal in nature.

▪ **Toolkit for Status Offense System Reform** | [www.statusoffensereform.org/toolkit/introduction-a-toolkit-for-status-offense-system-reform](http://www.statusoffensereform.org/toolkit/introduction-a-toolkit-for-status-offense-system-reform)

This toolkit provides guidance and tools to create an approach to respond to youth charged with status offenses in the community. The toolkit is organized into four modules: (1) Structuring System Change; (2) Using Local Information to Guide System Change; (3) Planning and Implementing System Change; and (4) Monitoring and Sustaining System Change.

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1. Annie Salsich & Jennifer Trone. From Courts to Communities: The Right Response to Truancy, Running Away, and Other Status Offenses. The Vera Institute of Justice, 2013. Available at <http://www.statusoffensereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/from-courts-to-communities-response-to-status-offenses.pdf>.

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4. Although there is limited research focused specifically on status offenders, it stands to reason that community-based approaches are also a better approach for youth who are acting out but haven't committed a crime. See Annie Salsich & Jennifer Trone. From Courts to Communities: The Right Response to Truancy, Running Away, and Other Status Offenses. The Vera Institute of Justice, 2013. Available at <http://www.statusoffensereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/from-courts-to-communities-response-to-status-offenses.pdf>.

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Available at [http://www.statusoffensereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Clark\\_Final.pdf](http://www.statusoffensereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Clark_Final.pdf).

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## County Concerns:

# DUAL STATUS YOUTH

Counties spend more than \$70 billion a year on justice and public safety systems, and spend more than \$2.6 billion on child welfare systems.<sup>1</sup> As the primary local provider of these services, county agencies are well aware of the fiscal and human costs that occur when youth are involved in these systems. What may be surprising, however, is the sheer volume of crossover that occurs between the juvenile justice and child welfare populations.

### WHY SHOULD MY COUNTY BE CONCERNED ABOUT DUAL STATUS YOUTH?

Child abuse or neglect and delinquency are deeply connected and each amplifies the negative effects on youth. A child who suffers abuse or neglect is 59 percent more likely to be arrested as a juvenile, 28 percent more likely to be arrested as an adult, and 30 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime.<sup>2</sup>

Dual status youth are those children who are involved with both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems.

Dual status youth return to the justice system twice as often as their peers. Once they are back in the system, they spend more time in detention than youth without involvement in the child welfare system.<sup>3</sup> Maltreated children are younger at the time of their first

arrest, commit nearly twice as many offenses and are arrested more frequently.<sup>4</sup> They are at increased risk for mental health issues, educational problems, unemployment and substance use disorders.

As youth who start in child welfare have their lives disrupted by justice involvement, the cycle continues as they become further involved in child welfare and dependency systems. These youth straddle two systems but are often underserved by both. Their experiences are also surprisingly common. In King County, Wash., for example, 67 percent of youth referred to the juvenile justice system had at least some history of involvement with the child welfare agency. Newton County, Ga., found that 56 percent of its youth with new juvenile justice referrals had some involvement with child welfare.<sup>5</sup>

### WHAT CAN MY COUNTY DO?

Counties across the country are recognizing that collaboration is essential between the systems that serve dual status youth. Meaningful communication and coordination between juvenile justice and child welfare systems provide greater opportunities to prevent the entry or continued movement of a child through

the justice system, and in the long term can divert youth from future involvement in the adult criminal justice system and reliance on public health systems. When the systems that serve dual status youth work together they can create continuums of care, develop early warning systems for at-risk youth and pool services for youth and families, all of which produce positive outcomes.<sup>6</sup>

Without collaboration, these youth are caught between multiple systems but served well by none. A child may see different judges, be represented by different attorneys, and have different therapists and service providers. His probation officer and child protection worker may not communicate, or even know of the other's existence. These cases are complex and require thoughtful use of limited county and court resources. When counties identify and prevent duplication of services and coordinate goals of all parties involved, they will save money and improve outcomes.

## EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

- In **Hampden County, Mass.**, the Department of Youth Services and the Department of Children and Family Services signed a memorandum of understanding that outlines a framework that those agencies use to work together to reduce the unnecessary use of pretrial detention.<sup>7</sup>
- **Newton County, Ga.**, developed a cross-system “match” process through which court intake and local Division of Family and Children Services staff can identify target population youth.<sup>8</sup>
- **Outagamie County, Wis.**, brought together staff from its child welfare, juvenile justice and police department to develop

a protocol for intra-familial sex abuse cases “to ensure a seamless process of both investigating and responding and doing so in a manner that is coordinated, trauma-informed and decreased likelihood of subsequent abuse.”<sup>9</sup>

## RESOURCES AND MORE INFORMATION

### ▪ Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice | [www.rfknrcjj.org](http://www.rfknrcjj.org)

The RFK National Resource Center provides consultation, technical assistance and training to serve local, state and national leaders, practitioners and youth-serving agencies to improve system performance and outcomes for youth involved with the juvenile justice system.

### ▪ *Models for Change* Website | [www.modelsforchange.net/reform-areas/dual-status-youth/index.html](http://www.modelsforchange.net/reform-areas/dual-status-youth/index.html)

Funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, *Models for Change* supports coordinated, multi-system interventions to improve outcomes for youth in the juvenile justice system. This site provides effective tools, research, knowledge and innovations to promote reform.

### ▪ *Guidebook for Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare System Coordination and Integration: Framework for Improved Outcomes* | [www.rfknrcjj.org/images/PDFs/Guidebook-for-JJ-and-CW-System-Coordination-and-Integration-Cover.pdf](http://www.rfknrcjj.org/images/PDFs/Guidebook-for-JJ-and-CW-System-Coordination-and-Integration-Cover.pdf)

This guidebook is offered to the field as the centerpiece of a library of publications and resource documents that enable state and local jurisdictions to implement enhanced multi-system practices that improve outcomes for youth and their families.

## END NOTES

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A close-up photograph of three men of diverse backgrounds smiling and looking towards the camera. The man on the left is partially visible, the middle man is looking slightly to the right, and the man on the right is smiling broadly.

# COUNTY LEADERSHIP IN JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM:

A photograph of a courtroom scene featuring a wooden gavel with a brass head resting on a stack of papers. In the background, the golden scales of justice are visible.

HIGHLIGHTS AND  
EXAMPLES FROM  
JURISDICTIONS  
GUIDING INNOVATION

# COUNTY LEADERSHIP IN JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM:

## HIGHLIGHTS AND EXAMPLES FROM JURISDICTIONS GUIDING INNOVATION

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Counties are the primary provider at the local level of health, social services and juvenile and adult corrections, giving county governments and leaders a unique and important role in improving juvenile justice systems. Although juvenile justice may be a small portion of your county's budget, the long-term impacts of a child's involvement with it are enormous. Youth detention costs counties \$75,000-\$100,000 per year per youth, and the costs do not stop there. Young people who are involved in the adjudication process or put in detention are more likely to end up in the adult criminal system and rely on public health and services systems when they leave jail or prison—leading to higher and higher expenditures over time and worsened outcomes for the individuals and their communities.

Not only are counties stewards of public tax dollars, but they also have a responsibility to provide the most effective treatments and services to their residents, including their youth. Community-based services are less costly than detention and more effective than care in correctional facilities. Detention is among the least effective strategies to reduce crime, yet counties spend staggering sums on these systems.

These case studies highlight counties across the country that have taken the lead in innovating and improving their juvenile justice systems. From [Wayne County, Mich.](#), which took control of its juvenile justice system from the state and created a unique system to provide a robust menu of community-based services to youth, to [Sedgwick County, Kan.](#), where leaders have focused on school-based reforms and on reducing racial and ethnic disparities, to [Outagamie County, Wis.](#), which invested in a new building and expert leaders to ease its transition to an independent juvenile justice system focused on community-based treatment, each of these jurisdictions shows that counties can and should be at the forefront of juvenile justice reform. No two counties are alike, but these examples offer a look at systems that are working and can be adapted to fit the needs of other communities.

The National Association of Counties (NACo) has also produced a number of publications that accompany these case studies, on topics ranging from why juvenile justice matters to counties to the intersection between behavioral health and juvenile justice to the role human services agencies can play in juvenile justice and more. All of these publications are meant to serve as a jumping off point, for county leaders and staff to begin examining their systems, considering what works and what doesn't and implementing collaborative, evidence-based programs and policies that bolster public safety and improve human outcomes.

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# SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS

Population (2013 Census Estimate): 505,415  
 Youth Population: 134,507 (26.6 percent)  
 Main Community Makeup: 92 percent Urban, 8 percent Rural  
 Persons Below Poverty Level: 14.4 percent



## THE IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

Consistent with states and counties throughout the country, Sedgwick County started in the early 1990s to take a hard look at the call to expand the size of its jails and juvenile detention centers. County Manager William Buchanan saw an opportunity to re-examine the assumptions that had been made about the effectiveness of “business as usual” and directed juvenile detention management to identify options. Juvenile detention reforms were also being discussed at the national level and, on a parallel path with the national discussion, Sedgwick County implemented home-based supervision (1990) and a residential shelter (1994) as detention alternatives. Gang violence and police intervention addressing this violence led to sudden growth in demand for detention and overcrowding. Buchanan worked with county, state and court officials to establish a collaborative data-driven model to address the short- and long-term needs and issues. He brokered an important and lasting relationship with Wichita State University to take a deeper and ongoing look at the existing practices and programs and discovered that some of their long-time practices were working and others were not. The results were revealing.

While there were “feel good” programs that had strong constituencies, the data simply did not support the investments made. These program evaluations took on a different significance as state financial support dwindled and as Sedgwick County itself faced fiscal constraints. The focus then became not simply whether the program produced positive outcomes, but whether it produced positive outcomes for the highest-need youth. These decisions were even harder to make and more controversial, because some programs that did indeed work lost funding. However, with unified support from county stakeholders, the data to support the decisions and a commitment to community engagement, those shifts became easier – albeit not easy.

## THE CHANGE ENVIRONMENT

In 1995, Sedgwick County’s adult and juvenile corrections departments were unified into a single county department, allowing for greater leveraging of resources and a deeper cross-pollination of emerging effective practices in both fields. Sedgwick County

County Manager William Buchanan saw an opportunity to re-examine the assumptions that had been made about the effectiveness of “business as usual.”

Department of Corrections Director Mark Masterson, who was named the 2011 *Models for Change* Champion for Change, was there for the merger, but so too was a leader he considered a partner in the work, County Manager Buchanan. The continuity of leadership since the early 1990s has afforded Sedgwick County great advantages to examine data critically, identify what works and doesn’t, learn from the field and see through reforms.

Consistent leadership, organizational support for collaboration and the immediate need to address overburdened detention facilities and dwindling budgets created the perfect conditions for an interdisciplinary approach to juvenile justice. The Detention Utilization Committee—a policy group that brings together key stakeholders—was created in 1996 and has been instrumental in keeping communication lines open among the chief judge, juvenile judiciary, district attorney, detention, probation and others. In 2000, a broader policy group, Team Justice, was added to engage community stakeholders in expanding prevention and early intervention programs to reduce delinquency. Both policy groups continue today with monthly meetings. In fact, in this year, Buchanan and Masterson have proactively met to discuss how to sustain some of the progress in anticipation of the change of political perspective and leadership coming in 2015.



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Introduction of an objective detention screening instrument
- Increased detention alternatives, both residential and home-based options
- Reduction in racial and ethnic disparities in juvenile arrests
- Reduction in arrests at schools for minor offenses
- Overall diversion of youth from juvenile detention as a sanction
- Shift to evidence-based interventions and ongoing evaluation of those programs
- Coordinated efforts with schools to handle school discipline issues in the community and to ease the reentry of youth coming out of detention and back into the community

## SEDGWICK COUNTY'S MODEL

Sedgwick County's work to improve its juvenile justice system pre-dates its involvement in national reform efforts, such as the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's *Models for Change* Initiative. However, both initiatives amplified and catalyzed local efforts by cementing pre-existing and emerging collaborative relationships in the county as well as bringing financial resources.

### Partnership with Schools

Among the keystone accomplishments of Sedgwick County's juvenile justice reform has been its growing relationship and cooperation with local systems. Lanora Franck was brought on board as liaison between juvenile justice and schools. Franck is based within the Department of Corrections, but brings 12 years of experience on the local school board and a strong relationship with the school superintendent. Since 2009, several Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) have been entered between the Department of Corrections and the school system that have led to significant diversion of youth away from the juvenile justice system.

These **MOUs targeted the largely ineffective zero-tolerance policies that had been in place in schools and modified how suspensions and expulsions are used to handle in-school discipline problems.** The first of these MOUs was established in 2009-2010 and expanded to all Wichita schools in 2011. Since then, Franck and Masterson have continued to work with local schools to build new agreements in support of different behavior modification models and supporting a wraparound model informed by the National Wraparound Initiative.

The county-school partnership has also extended to the deep end of the justice system, addressing the needs of youth who are returning from confinement. In 2011, the local school district (USD 259) piloted a new transitional school designed as a "soft landing" for these juveniles, supporting their social and academic adjustment to public school. Again, the work has been carefully modeled on best practices identified by the U.S. Department of Education and on work in Multnomah County, Ore.

### Increasing Racial and Ethnic Fairness

Sedgwick County has also been a leader in Kansas and throughout the country in looking at the racial and ethnic disparities in its own system and introducing interventions to make systems fairer and more equitable. From October 1, 2007, through June 30, 2012, Sedgwick County worked in partnership with the Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) Action Network *Models for Change* Project. Under this project, Team Justice engaged in an iterative process of data collection, analysis, collaboration, training, prevention, intervention, graduated sanctions, research, evaluation and reporting activities. Through these efforts, Sedgwick County established new alternatives to detention, enhanced data systems, developed more robust prevention programming, created graduated sanction grids, increased workplace diversity and cultural competency training, implemented and validated objective assessment tools and fostered new methods of community engagement to support and develop strategies to reduce disparity at the point of arrest.

## SUCCESSES AND OUTCOMES

**Sedgwick County's collaboration with local school systems helped reduce school-based arrests for disorderly conduct by 37 percent in just the first year.** Similarly, its work to increase racial and ethnic fairness has positively impacted all justice-involved youth but has also closed some disparity gaps that had previously existed. In 2013, the Juvenile Justice Authority and Community Crime Prevention Funded Programs served 1,922 youth and had 1,499 cases closed either successfully or unsuccessfully. The overall success rate was 82.5 percent and the success



Mark Masterson

Director of the Sedgwick County Department of Corrections

# JUVENILE PROGRAMS

- Aggression Replacement Training
- Communities In Schools
- City Life Work Program
- D.A.'s Juvenile Intervention Program
- Detention Advocacy Service (case management only)
- Education, Training & Employment Program
- Functional Family Therapy
- Learning the Ropes (youth only)
- PATHS for Kids
- Targeted Outreach Program
- Teen Intervention Program

rate for minority youth was 82.7 percent. African-American youth succeeded 77.1 percent of the time and Hispanic youth 86.5 percent.

Sedgwick County's work to reduce DMC has also led to successful reductions in: arrests for specific offenses, school referrals to the juvenile justice system and reliance on juvenile detention for sanctions. Additionally, reform efforts include increasing access to counsel, effectively serving cross-over youth and collaboration with the educational system.

Between 2007 and 2014 admissions to state custody were reduced from 310 to 134; juvenile correctional facility admissions went from 147 to 66; juvenile filings went from 1745 to 1099; the average daily population (ADP) in locked juvenile detention went from 73 to 55; and overall the ADP dropped from 120 to 99. These accomplishments enhanced public safety by being smart on crime while producing significant saving for taxpayers.

## LESSONS LEARNED

**Offering a variety of treatment options leads to better outcomes:** To reduce the number of youth entering detention for violating the terms of their probation, Sedgwick County developed a system of graduated sanctions and incentives in August 2009. The system equipped probation officers with greater options to reward positive behavior and hold youth accountable for negative behavior without resorting to incarceration. Sedgwick County also developed a non-residential weekend reporting alternative to detention program in January 2010. These innovations, along with

increased use of evidence-based practices and structured decision making, led to a drop in out-of-home commitments of 40 percent between 2006 and 2010.

**Staff and administrators can and should play a key role in decision making:** "Part of our jobs as administrators is to make sure that elected officials make informed decisions," explains County Manager Buchanan. "It is the most critical part of our job. We have to frame this issue as very important. It may be a small part of the budget. But the consequences of not funding programs, the consequences of doing it wrong, the consequences of not paying attention are huge for the community. They are huge for all individuals involved in the system. They are especially huge for the youth and families involved."

**Data is important, but so are personal stories:** With the benefit of sound research from their local university partner, Wichita State University, Buchanan, Masterson and their partners have learned and shared with leadership that inefficiencies and relative costs in "traditional" juvenile justice work far amplify the relative size of the budget line item it represents. Buchanan shares some of what has worked to garner support from the Commissioners: "Help them understand how the system works. Outsiders to the system often do not know who is impacted by the system, what issues they come with and how they move through that system. Leadership needs not only the hard facts but the actual stories and experiences of those in the system. They want to hear them and respond to the stories. They want to hear where we have succeeded and where can succeed."



"Part of our jobs as administrators is to make sure that elected officials make informed decisions. It is the most critical part of our job. We have to frame this issue as very important. It may be a small part of the budget. But the consequences of not funding programs, the consequences of doing it wrong, the consequences of not paying attention are huge for the community."

—Bill Buchanan,  
Sedgwick County Manager

# WAYNE COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Population (2013 Census Estimate): 1,775,273  
 Youth Population: 431,391 (24.3 percent)  
 Main Community Makeup: 99 percent Urban, 1 percent Rural  
 Persons Below Poverty Level: 23.8 percent



## THE IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

Until 2000, Wayne County’s juvenile justice system was administered by the state. Throughout the 1990s, its juvenile justice system faced a number of problems, including overcrowding and rapidly rising costs: The state ward caseload reached 3,500 juveniles and costs increased 260 percent in less than a decade. Both the state and Wayne County realized these expenditures were unsustainable and the current system was not meeting its responsibility to help troubled kids and protect public safety. When the opportunity arose for Wayne County to take over control of the juvenile justice system, local leaders knew it would be better for all parties—the county, the state and the juveniles in the system—for the system to be county-administered. So, beginning in 2000, Wayne County took over administration of its juvenile justice system and today remains the only county in Michigan that is 100 percent responsible for a full continuum of juvenile justice services.

## THE CHANGE ENVIRONMENT

Wayne County realized that the state’s system was relying on a one-size-fits-all approach that simply matched youth with open beds in detention facilities instead of identifying and addressing a youth’s risk, needs and appropriate treatment options. This meant that many low-risk youth were unnecessarily being placed in the juvenile justice system, leading to poor outcomes and high costs. Recidivism rates were over 50 percent and high escape rates contributed to a revolving door of kids in and out of court or detention, and many youth were being placed in detention primarily for technical violations, not for new crimes.

Juvenile justice in Michigan was overcrowded—so overcrowded that 200 kids were sent to detention centers in other states—and no one contested that the system wasn’t working. In 1996, Michigan’s Department of Human Services announced it would relinquish control of the juvenile justice system to any county willing to take responsibility for its delinquent youth, and Wayne County

jumped at the opportunity.

The state and county entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that realigned responsibility and authority for all mandated juvenile justice services to Wayne County. This new arrangement provided the platform for Wayne County to build a new system of care that would focus on outcomes and performance-based measures and that contains a continuum of prevention, diversion and treatment services.

Wayne County created a long-term strategy to transform the delivery of services to youth in the juvenile justice system, based on **four main goals**: 1) **To provide a continuum of service options, based on a youth’s needs and risks**; 2) **To locate services close to the families of youth**; 3) **To reinvest savings in community-based services and provide incentives for local responsibility**; and 4) **To create a contract-based, privatized services network that focuses on adaptability and resiliency**.

## WAYNE COUNTY’S MODEL

To meet its goals of transforming and improving the juvenile justice system, Wayne County developed a contract-based system that allows for a single point of intake and assessment through its Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC), which is the hub of a network of five Care Management Organizations (CMOs). Wayne County put out a request for proposals when seeking the CMOs, and in particular sought agencies that represented their communities with experience in mental health and substance use issues. The agencies were asked to develop partnerships and, if they did not

Wayne County pays each CMO a set amount every month, and each CMO is responsible for providing supervision, services and resources—based on assessments and conditions ordered by the Court—for a group of juveniles in a particular geographic region.

have experience with the juvenile justice system, to learn from other organizations that did. Wayne County pays each CMO a set amount every month, and each CMO is responsible for providing supervision, services and resources—based on assessments and conditions ordered by the Court—for a group of juveniles in a particular geographic region.

Wayne County has implemented a comprehensive system of performance management to gauge and report the progress of its juvenile justice program to achieve outcomes that clients, tax payers and stakeholders expect. The county has a Juvenile Justice Services Dashboard, which tracks a variety of measures, including New Diversion Cases, New Prevention Cases, Recidivism, Juveniles Diagnosed with Mental Illness, Expenditures and more. **The county measures progress against its own trends (not against other counties or localities), within the mission and goals of the department.** It asks, “is the system of care efficient, effective and are the youth’s needs and risks aligned with the least restrictive level of intervention?”

### Providing Behavioral Health Services

In its beginning phases, the Wayne County model had to focus just on fixing the corrections portion of juvenile justice, but has evolved over the years into an integrated continuum of prevention, diversion, juvenile corrections and post-care (re-entry) services for at-risk and adjudicated youth. In 2006, the county began doing cross-systems work with mental health agencies.

More than 50 percent of youth entering Wayne County’s juvenile justice system are diagnosed with emotional, behavioral, substance abuse or mental health disorders. These youth are assessed at the JAC (which is a Medicaid-approved children’s mental health agency), and then assigned to a CMO that connects them to a Community Mental Health (CMH) treatment provider. The CMO is responsible for coordination of services and a CMH provider treats the specific behavioral health needs of the juvenile. **This system supports the least restrictive treatment for each youth and blending mental health and juvenile justice services to increase the probability of successful home-based**

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Development of an objective screening and assessment tool
- Creation of single point for intake and assessment
- Increased focus on a continuum of service options based on needs and risks
- Increase in preventative programming
- Overall diversion of youth from juvenile detention as a sanction
- Decrease in recidivism
- Decrease in juvenile justice expenditures

“We worked with the mental health agencies to make sure the JAC met all the mental health requirements and the mental health agencies agreed to accept JAC assessments as determinants of eligibility.”

—Daniel Chaney,  
Director of the Juvenile Services Division of Wayne County’s Department of Children & Family Services

**treatment.** Treatment options include wraparound services and evidence-based services such as Multi-systemic Therapy, Trauma Focused Therapy and Functional Family Therapy.

New programs and home-based interventions for troubled teens and their families have expanded across the entire county. This strategy has reversed the unnecessary conviction of at-risk adolescents and their sentencing into the formal justice system just to get the help they needed in the first place.

Communication and cooperation across agencies has been key, says Daniel Chaney, Director of the Juvenile Services Division of Wayne County’s Department of Children & Family Services. “The primary challenge was that juvenile justice and mental health agencies spoke a different language,” he explains. “We worked with the mental health agencies to make sure the JAC met all the mental health requirements and the mental health agencies agreed to accept JAC assessments as determinants of eligibility. That allowed us to keep everything going through one point at the JAC and then assign kids to the right community-based services.”



Daniel Chaney

Director of the Juvenile Services Division of Wayne County’s Department of Children & Family Services

# JUVENILE PROGRAMS

- Juvenile Assessment Center
- Care Management Organizations
- First-Contact and Youth Assistance community programs
- Community Policing
- Correct Course diversion program
- Functional Family Therapy
- Multi-systemic Therapy
- Attendance Participation and Support
- Community Health, Outreach, Intervention and Clinical Engagement Services

“This is one of the issues we agree unanimously on. Every time the county executive asks us for funding, we always find the money. We all recognize that you can pay now or you can pay later when it comes to crime, and providing children with these services cuts those costs down the line.”

–Alisha Bell,  
Wayne County Commissioner

## SUCCESSES AND OUTCOMES

Since the beginning of its reform effort, **Wayne County has decreased the daily number of youth in detention from more than 500 to approximately 100, and estimates that more than 5,000 juveniles have been diverted from the juvenile justice system.** Where there were once 700 juveniles from Wayne County in state training schools, where youth are sent post-sentencing and often remain for several years, there are now only two. The recidivism rate has dropped from 56 percent in 1998 to 16 percent in 2013. Cost savings have also been significant: **Residential care costs have decreased from \$115 million per year in 1998 to around \$45 million this year,** and the convicted juvenile caseload, the most costly to the county, has been reduced by 75 percent.

County support of these programs continues to be exceptionally strong. “This is one of the issues we agree unanimously on,” says Wayne County Commissioner Alisha Bell. “Every time the county executive asks us for funding, we always find the money. We all recognize that you can pay now or you can pay later when it comes to crime, and providing children with these services cuts those costs down the line.”

## LESSONS LEARNED

**Know you can’t fix everything at once:** Although the whole system was failing, Wayne County recognized that it first had to get issues with secure detention under control, before moving to other problems in the system. By focusing on a discrete issue, the county was able to effectively use its resources and show that its new model worked on a smaller scale before expanding it.

**Make sure all partners speak the same language, but this can take time:** It’s important that all participants in the system understand and use the same language, but different agencies and systems have different terminology and operating methods. “The learning curve for dealing with the court was pretty steep for private community agencies,” says Dan Chaney. With a focused effort on cross-systems understanding, barriers come down and real solutions begin to emerge. By taking the time to get everyone on the same page in terms of communication and definitions, Wayne County’s juvenile justice system now functions smoothly across all the different partners involved.

**Taking a big picture look at the problem allows for a clearer solution:** Because all the services related to juvenile justice are provided under one administrative umbrella, Wayne County leaders can see where all the elements fit together and where attention is needed to provide better outcomes and/or address financial issues.



Alisha Bell  
Wayne County  
Commissioner

# OUTAGAMIE COUNTY, WISCONSIN

Population (2013 Census Estimate): 180,345  
 Youth Population: 43,824 (24.3 percent)  
 Main Community Makeup: 75 percent Urban, 25 percent Rural  
 Persons Below Poverty Level: 8.6 percent



## THE IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

In the mid-1990s, Outagamie County faced a juvenile justice budget that was growing dramatically—so dramatically that even the county’s increased tax revenue was not enough to cover the rising costs in juvenile justice. At the same time, county leaders saw that the services being provided to kids were inappropriate or inadequate and the detention center was overcrowded. For example, Wisconsin state law changed around this time to prohibit placing youth in detention for status offenses, but Outagamie County was still detaining these youth. “There was a waiting list for juveniles who had been convicted of a crime to be placed in the detention center, when kids who were in there were there for running away—how did that make any sense?” explains Helen Nagler, Chairperson of the Outagamie County Board of Supervisors. Additionally, in 1995 a gang-related murder/suicide that resulted in the

“There was a waiting list for juveniles who had been convicted of a crime to be placed in the detention center, when kids who were in there were there for running away—how did that make any sense?”

—Helen Nagler, Chairperson  
 Outagamie County Board of Supervisors

death of four youths in the county led to a broad community desire to address youth issues and improve services available.

## THE CHANGE ENVIRONMENT

Until 1996, juvenile justice and child protection services were administered within one division in Outagamie County. After the tragic events in 1995, the county commissioned a study of its youth-serving systems, and ultimately decided to form a new division (called Youth and Family Services) to assist youth involved

in delinquency or status offenses. Strong support from the board of supervisors, the county executive and the sheriff helped propel this change. “Supervisor Nagler and others on the county board and those involved in administration determined that we really needed to develop an infrastructure of community-based interventions and treatments,” says Mark Mertens, Manager of the Youth and Family Services Division. Along with rising costs and an overcrowded detention center, there were coordination issues among the employees working with youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Staff were located in different buildings scattered across the county, which often made coordinating treatment and care difficult.

Additionally, Outagamie County has historically had a strong health and human services department with a focus on preventative care, and county leaders realized it was important to hold on to that focus. “We’ve always had the feeling that if you don’t do something up front, you’re going to pay more for it,” says Supervisor Nagler. “We don’t want to end up at the high-cost end of treatment.”

Outagamie County underwent a second phase of reforms in 2009, when it began participating in two initiatives to reduce racial and ethnic disparities: one through the Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance and one through the MacArthur Foundation’s *Models for Change* Initiative.

## OUTAGAMIE COUNTY’S MODEL

Outagamie County’s changes aimed to make its juvenile justice division independent and focused on community-based treatments. To enhance these goals, Outagamie County invested in the construction of a new building dedicated solely to juvenile justice services. This allowed for all workers involved with these youth to be in one location, along with various youth programs, which led to the formation of new communication systems (both formal and informal) and increased collaboration. This new construction was

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Introduction of an objective assessment tool
- Reduction in racial and ethnic disparities in juvenile arrests
- Shift to evidence-based interventions and ongoing evaluation of those programs
- Improved collaboration among juvenile justice staff
- Reintroduction of 17 year olds into juvenile justice system
- Closure of juvenile detention center

a large up-front investment, but because the building was specifically designed for its current use, it has saved the county money in the long run through better efficiencies and even reduced staffing. Currently about 45 staff members work in the building, and the county's juvenile justice programming is also housed there.

Outagamie County leaders understood that there may be high initial costs at the outset of reform, but were willing to shoulder that burden in order to see savings in the future. In fact, the county double budgeted for juvenile justice for the first three years, paying to keep the old system in place as the transition to more treatment-focused options were developed. "It was a real risk to double budget like that," says Mark Mertens. "But the leaders were confident it would work and felt it was really necessary to make our system better." "We were patient, and we waited several years before we even thought about declaring that the new system was working," adds Supervisor Nagler. "The important thing is what is in the best long-range interest of your community. Sometimes you just have to take a risk, but this almost didn't even feel like a risk because what we were doing wasn't working and the changes couldn't be any worse."



Mark Mertens, Manager of the Outagamie County Youth and Family Services Division, and Helen Nagler, Chairperson of the Outagamie County Board of Supervisors

In keeping with the county's commitment to intervening early, **Outagamie County has also voluntarily taken 17 year olds back into its juvenile justice system.** Wisconsin state law treats 17 year olds who are charged with crimes as adults, but Outagamie County leaders felt those youth were not being served well in the adult system, says Supervisor Nagler. "Kids can't leave the community," she says. "You have to help them and take care of them, or you're going to have to deal with them again when they're adults."

### Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities

As Outagamie County continued its focus on community-based treatments, leaders began to concentrate on reducing racial and ethnic disparities (RED). As part of the *Models for Change* Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) Action Network, the county focused on reducing the number of disorderly conduct arrests. The county has a strong DMC governing body that is co-chaired by the deputy district attorney and focuses on identifying and monitoring reforms.

Through its two RED initiatives, Outagamie County has focused on a number of innovative practices, such as:

- **Implemented the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) tool**, to assist with objective assessments and decision making regarding youths' risks, needs and protective factors.
- **Provided special training to juvenile justice staff to enhance case planning and intervention strategies.** This has allowed the county to focus on targeting the most critical (criminogenic) needs of youth to reduce risk to the community and prevent further arrests, explains Mark Mertens.
- **Contracted with a consultant to collect and analyze data**, which helps the county assess its programs and spending, and continue to support appropriate programming and make changes when necessary.

## SUCSESSES AND OUTCOMES

Thanks to the reductions in the use of secure detention of youth over the course of several years, the Outagamie County Juvenile Detention Center was closed on January 1, 2014. **Supervisor Nagler notes that the county has saved huge amounts in "cost avoidance," including approximately \$700,000 year in staffing and operations fees.** In 2007, for example, the county paid for more than 2,400 days of care in juvenile detention, compared to 552 in 2013. The rate of incarceration of youth in the state Juvenile Correctional Institutions has also fallen significantly. The state charges the county \$301 per day per youth at Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake schools, and Supervisor Nagler estimates that if the county was continuing to detain as many juveniles in these institutions as it did in the early 1990s, costs would be around

# JUVENILE PROGRAMS

- Restorative justice victim-offender mediation offered to all victims of youth crimes
- Report Center
- Mentoring Program
- Aggression Replacement Training (ART)
- Independent Living Program
- Cognitive Intervention Program
- Wraparound Services
- Families In Action Program
- Use of Shelter Care for Most 72-Hour Holds

\$2.2 million today. **Overall juvenile justice costs to the county have decreased \$336,087 from 2005 to 2013.**

Outagamie County's work to reduce RED has also led to a reduction in racial disparities at arrest, which was the county's most disparate decision point and most in need of improvement. In 2004, African-American youth were 7.5 times more likely to be arrested than white youth, while all minority youth were nearly 3 times more likely to be arrested than white youth. Those numbers decreased to 6 times more likely and less than two times more likely, respectively, in 2011. "We still have a lot of work to do, but this data shows that we are moving the needle in the right direction," says Mark Mertens.

## LESSONS LEARNED

**Initial investments in good staff and facilities are worth the extra cost:** When Outagamie County decided to revamp its juvenile justice system leaders realized the importance of having a person with expertise at the helm and a building that worked for them. "If you're going to make a major change like this, you have to find someone who knows how to do it," says Commissioner Nagler. "You can't just do it on the cheap—and in the end, the savings have far outweighed that initial cost."

**Progress isn't always easy or consistent:** "Sometimes you'll go two steps forward and one step back," explains Commissioner Nagler. "You have to realize that's normal and to be expected, and you have to work through it and keep pushing to get where you need to go."

"Kids can't leave the community. You have to help them and take care of them, or you're going to have to deal with them again when they're adults."

—Helen Nagler, Chairperson  
Outagamie County Board of Supervisors

**Winning over skeptics might be easier than you think:** At the outset of Outagamie County's reform efforts, the sheriff visited many parts of the community to talk to residents about the plan and elicit feedback. By taking the time to explain what changes were being made and why, the sheriff made sure that community members felt like they were a part of the process and garnered support at the front end. Similarly, the sheriff, county board and county executive all made sure to have open lines of communication with local judges, police officers and schools, in order to address and alleviate their concerns and keep them updated as positive outcomes were achieved. "Once they saw how the new system was working, they got on board really quickly," says Commissioner Nagler. "If you start talking about the successes, the community will really come with you and trust that you're working for them and with their best interests in mind."





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THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES (NACo) IS THE ONLY NATIONAL ORGANIZATION THAT REPRESENTS COUNTY GOVERNMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES. FOUNDED IN 1935, NACO ASSISTS AMERICA'S 3,069 COUNTIES IN PURSUING EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC SERVICE TO PRODUCE HEALTHY, VIBRANT, SAFE AND RESILIENT COUNTIES. NACo PROMOTES SOUND PUBLIC POLICIES, FOSTERS COUNTY SOLUTIONS AND INNOVATION, PROMOTES INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE COLLABORATION AND PROVIDES VALUE-ADDED SERVICES TO SAVE COUNTIES AND TAXPAYERS MONEY.

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