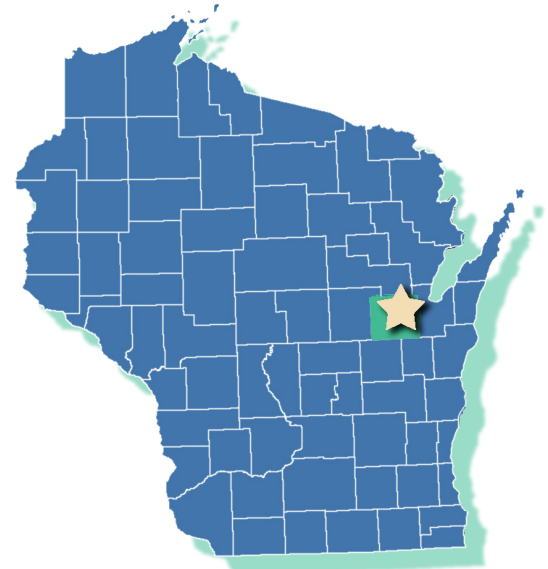


# COUNTY LEADERSHIP IN JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM:

## 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 death of four young people 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.

“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

## 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

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 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.”

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.”

“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

# 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

## 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.

## SUCCESSES 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 \$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 Mertens.



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

## 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.”

**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.”

NACo is a proud partner of the Resource Center Partnership, sponsored by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. We would like to thank the Foundation for its assistance in producing this publication and its continued support in helping to educate county officials about opportunities to improve their juvenile justice systems. For more information about this publication or the *Models for Change* Initiative and the Resource Center Partnership, please contact Kathy Rowings, NACo Justice Program Manager, at [krowings@naco.org](mailto:krowings@naco.org) or 202.942.4279.

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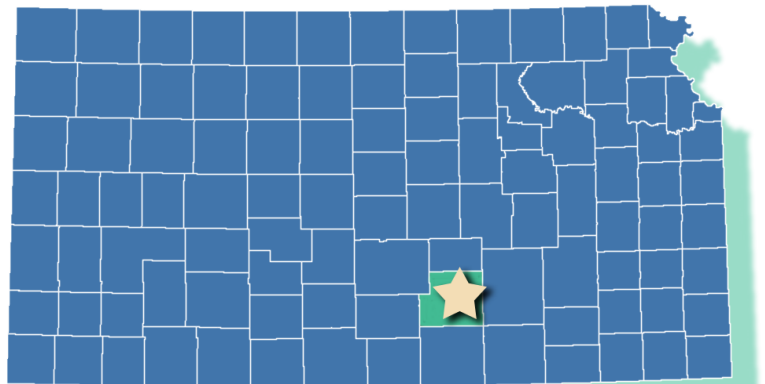
# COUNTY LEADERSHIP IN JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM:

## 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 the county’s 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.

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

## 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 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 what doesn’t work, 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 2014, Buchanan and Masterson proactively met to discuss how to sustain some of the progress in anticipation of the change of political perspective and leadership coming in 2015.

## SEDGWICK COUNTY’S MODEL

Sedgwick County’s work to improve its juvenile justice system predates 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

## 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

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*

# 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

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 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, more 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 savings 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 40 percent drop in out-of-home commitments 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."



**Mark Masterson**

**Director of the Sedgwick County  
Department of Corrections**



“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.”

–William Buchanan,  
Sedgwick County Manager

**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.”

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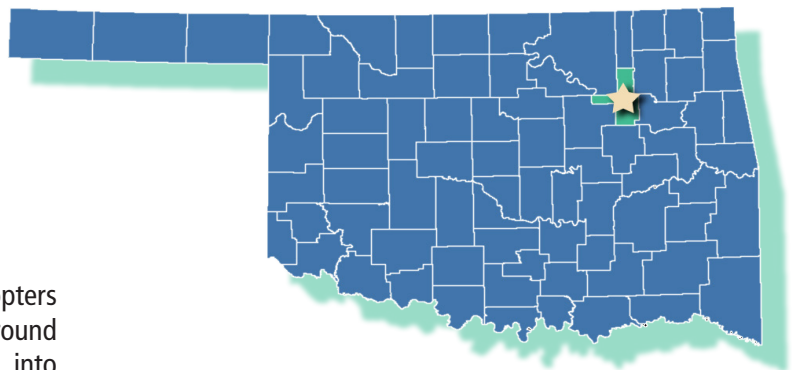
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# COUNTY LEADERSHIP IN JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM:

## TULSA COUNTY, OKLAHOMA

**Population (2013 estimate): 622,409**  
**Youth Population: 158,714 (25.5 percent)**  
**Main Community Makeup: 95 percent Urban,  
5 percent Rural**  
**Persons Below Poverty Level: 15.9 percent**



### THE IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

The state of Oklahoma and Tulsa County were early adopters of the system of care philosophy, implementing wraparound services and embracing the idea of “no wrong entry” into treatment approximately 20 years ago. When Brent Wolfe, Director of the Tulsa County Juvenile Bureau, came on board 10 years ago, he discovered that although the county did have a wraparound system in place, it wasn’t serving very many families—and, in particular, it was difficult to get a juvenile justice-involved youth or family into the system. The juvenile justice system was isolated from the community and its service providers and the one wraparound team had eligibility criteria that were often problematic for families to meet. Wolfe’s goal was to create a better connection to wraparound services, so that justice-involved youth could be directly referred and treated in the community. Wolfe, as well as Doris L. Fransein, the county’s chief juvenile judge, felt strongly that connecting the juvenile justice system to the community was important.

They knew that Tulsa’s juvenile justice system did not have the resources to provide adequate treatment and also believed that the best treatment model didn’t rely on a siloed, do-it-yourself mentality but instead on a collaborative system that provided support for families in the community.

### THE CHANGE ENVIRONMENT

Expanding Tulsa County’s system of care necessarily required cooperation and buy-in from many different agencies and organizations in the community. Wolfe and Fransien worked to promote the concept that the families and young people being served belonged not just to the juvenile justice system, or the mental health system, or the department of human services,

but to the community as a whole—so it was in everyone’s best interest to join together and figure out what the best supports for these families would be.

As Wolfe explains, Tulsa County had a history of being a collaborative community, so this wasn’t necessarily a new concept, but it did require outreach. “We found that in many, many cases, they just simply hadn’t been asked to work together,” Wolfe said.

Strong support from elected officials has also allowed Tulsa County to continually improve its juvenile justice system. For example, **referrals into the juvenile justice system have decreased dramatically over the years, which has led to reduced caseloads for workers, but the county commission did not reduce the budget.** This has allowed for the program to keep the same number of staff but with lower caseloads. “This is where the county has been really supportive of what we do,” says Wolfe. “They could have said, ‘We’re going to reduce your budget accordingly’ but they knew we could use that money effectively and so they let us keep it.” Similarly, when the county closed its juvenile residential treatment center the commission left the operating amount with the juvenile justice system, which was able to invest the money into its current intensive family treatment program. “It’s really a no-brainer,” explains Commissioner Karen Keith. “This is the front end of everything that impacts county government. If we can turn the lives of these children around they are more productive citizens, they’re tax payers, they don’t end up in our jail and long term they’re not in the state system. This is our best shot.”

## TULSA COUNTY’S MODEL

Tulsa County has taken advantage of its collaborative history and continued to engage partners both within and outside the county juvenile justice system. By reaching out to many stakeholders and seeking their input and participation, Tulsa



**Brent Wolfe**  
 Director of the Tulsa County  
 Juvenile Bureau

# HIGHLIGHTS

- Voter-approved sales tax extension to fund new juvenile justice center
- Increased community-based detention alternatives
- Overall diversion of youth from juvenile detention as a sanction
- Improved collaboration among probation and other youth-serving departments and agencies
- Closure of residential treatment center
- Decreased caseloads for juvenile justice staff

County leaders were able to develop stronger linkages and obtain support from a variety of players, including the Oklahoma State Department of Health and Tulsa Public Schools.

### Services that Work for Youth and Families

The county’s juvenile probation department took a hard look at how its services were being delivered, and realized that they weren’t being offered in a way that made sense for the youth and families in its programs. “Ten years ago, the process was just that we came into the office, would make a phone call or do whatever follow up we were supposed to do, and that was it,” Wolfe says. “That obviously wasn’t working—it’s not good enough to just say, ‘They didn’t call back’ or ‘They missed their appointment’ and leave it at that. We need to find out where the youth or family is, find out why they didn’t call and find out how to better help them.” In that vein, Tulsa County services underwent a “cultural change” and now operate under the philosophy that it is their responsibility to get out into the community and meet youth and families where they are.

**The probation department has also focused on determining what treatment will be most effective for each family. “Not every family needs a full-on wraparound system,”** Wolfe says. At intake, Tulsa County screens youth with a risk/needs assessment adapted to suit their community. “We made it a point to do this right at the very beginning, and to do the best assessment possible to get a family to the right place as quickly as possible,” explains Wolfe. The majority of youth and families do not go any further

# JUVENILE PROGRAMS

- Intensive Supervision Program
- Phoenix Rising
- Check and Connect
- Girl Power
- Child In Need of Supervision Diversion Program
- Family Drug Court
- Crisis Intervention Center



“It’s really a no-brainer. This is the front end of everything that impacts county government. If we can turn the lives of these children around they are more productive citizens, they’re tax payers, they don’t end up in our jail and long term they’re not in the state system. This is our best shot.”

-Karen Keith,  
Tulsa County Commissioner

into the justice system after their assessment and are instead diverted back out to services in the community that can best treat their needs.

## Intensive Family Treatment Program

**Tulsa’s Lakeside Intensive Family Empowerment (LIFE) program provides intensive, family-based therapeutic and support services** to youth and families in the juvenile justice system. Tulsa County modeled its LIFE program on evidence-based programs such as Multisystemic Therapy and Functional Family Therapy, which have been evaluated and shown to have positive outcomes, but wanted

“None of this happens overnight, but if you keep talking to people, answering their questions and helping them understand what the juvenile justice system really can be, many of them will eventually come around.”

- Karen Keith,  
Tulsa County Commissioner

to create a program that fit the county’s specific needs. LIFE is a six-month program that assists youth and families who are assessed as high risk/high needs and who have either failed in probation or are determined to be likely to fail. The primary service offered is a family therapy component, which can be as intensive as necessary, with daily therapy sessions in some instances. Families also have access to support workers whose job is to assess what the family’s basic needs are, determine if

they are being met, where gaps are for needs that are not being met and how the county can help the family meet its needs. “It’s also always important to work with the understanding that we are only here providing support for a short time, so how do we immediately help you with urgent needs but also how do we prepare you to sustain this over time?” explains Wolfe.

## SUCCESSES AND OUTCOMES

Tulsa County’s probation programs have resulted in a recidivism rate of about 7 percent—meaning **93 percent of the youth served by Tulsa County probation do not reoffend**. In its first full year of implementation, 84 percent of youth who completed the LIFE program did not reoffend. As Wolfe noted, although this rate is not as good as the county’s entire probation population, the LIFE program serves the highest-risk youth and families and so that difference in population may explain the difference in rates.

In 2014, **voters approved a sales tax extension to build a new juvenile justice center**. The journey to gaining community support for a new juvenile facility was not a short or easy one, but Commissioner Keith was committed to the effort. “We worked on this for a long time and tried several times,” she explains. “We tried to be strategic, and I talked to every civic group that would listen over the last four years.” Commissioner Keith was also successful in engaging local media to highlight the problems with the county’s current facilities, which helped inform residents about the issue.

## LESSONS LEARNED

**It’s important to understand everyone’s motivations:** Each system that deals with youth has its own responsibilities—for example, the Tulsa County Juvenile Bureau’s mandate is community safety, while community service providers’ mandates are to deliver treatment to youth and families. Understanding the perspective from which each partner comes makes it easier to determine how best to have those perspectives work together toward a common goal.

**Collaboration isn’t always easy, but it’s worth it:** “It takes a lot of work to collaborate,” says Wolfe. “It affects staffing, it requires extra communication with all sorts of new people. But the payoff is that it does eventually lighten your workload and leads to better, shared treatment and services.”

**The importance of outreach to all stakeholders cannot be overstated:** Even in Tulsa County, which traditionally has been a collaborative jurisdiction, Wolfe had to reach out to many different entities. For example, the county

“It’s also always important to work with the understanding that we are only here providing support for a short time, so how do we immediately help you with urgent needs but also how do we prepare you to sustain this over time?”

–Brent Wolfe,  
Director of the Tulsa County Juvenile Bureau

had a Children’s Behavioral Health Community Team but the team did not have a representative from the juvenile justice system on it. Similarly, Commissioner Keith spent years meeting with local groups to garner support for the new juvenile justice center, and is now still working with neighborhood groups to find an appropriate location for the facility. “None of this happens overnight, but if you keep talking to people, answering their questions and helping them understand what the juvenile justice system really can be, many of them will eventually come around,” she says.

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# COUNTY LEADERSHIP IN JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM:

## VENTURA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

**Population (2013 estimate): 839,620**  
**Youth Population: 205,707 (24.5 percent)**  
**Main Community Makeup: 97 percent Urban,  
3 percent Rural**  
**Persons Below Poverty Level: 11.1 percent**

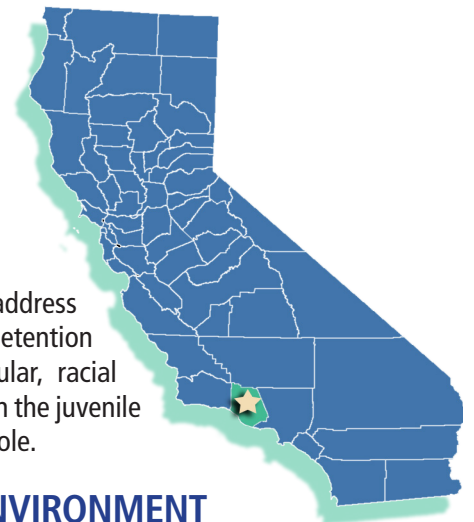
### THE IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

In the late 1990s, Ventura County was looking to build a new juvenile justice center to replace its facility, which had been built in the 1940s and was significantly overcrowded: The center had a capacity of 84 beds but 120-130 youth were regularly housed there, which often required doubling kids up in rooms. The county received a grant to build a new facility but in the meantime still needed to address the overcrowding at the current building. Through a combination of looking at incarceration statistics and projections to prepare for the new facility and a separate grant to fund an examination of admissions criteria for youth into juvenile hall, Ventura County realized that youth of color were disproportionately represented. The county formed a juvenile justice-related coordinating committee that included the district attorney, the courts, the sheriff, the school superintendent, county board of supervisors members, local law enforcement, community representatives and others, in order to bring policy leadership to the table and

determine how to address overcrowding in the detention facility and, in particular, racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system as a whole.

### THE CHANGE ENVIRONMENT

Although Ventura County did open up a new, larger juvenile detention facility (designed to hold up to 420 youth), the goal was not to fill it up. "We wanted to continue working on things in the community that had brought us success," explains Mark Varela, Director and Chief Probation Officer at the Ventura County Probation Agency. "Even though we had plenty of room in the new facility, we were looking at ways to manage youth in the community and keep them in their homes." Anecdotally, the county's justice partners suspected there were racial and



ethnic disparities (RED) in the juvenile justice system: “It didn’t take a grant to figure that out,” Varela says. But the grant was instrumental in bringing all the justice stakeholders to the table and agreeing to participate in efforts to fix the system, and helped the county focus on two target populations: violations of probation and bench warrants.

“We wanted to continue working on things in the community that had brought us success. Even though we had plenty of room in the new facility, we were looking at ways to manage youth in the community and keep them in their homes.”

- Mark Varela,  
Director and Chief Probation Officer at the Ventura  
County Probation Agency

Ventura County approached its RED work in three phases, with the assistance of the W. Haywood Burns Institute. **Phase one** focused on developing the probation department’s capacity to collect and analyze data from its information system, as well as training the department’s juvenile division on the fundamental of racial and ethnic disparities. “This was incredibly important, because often the staff that are in the trenches doing the work don’t really understand it,” Varela says. **Phase two** focused on engaging system and community stakeholders in the process of deeply examining data and developing an intervention to address the target populations. **Phase three** focused on developing an evening reporting center, which was chosen as a method to address detentions resulting from violations of probation.

The existence of **the county’s juvenile justice coordinating council was critical in enhancing partnerships across agencies**, as was involvement of the judiciary. “We’re fortunate in this county that our judges are very engaged with the community,” says Ventura County Supervisor Kathy Long. “The



Mark Varela

Director and Chief Probation Officer at  
the Ventura County Probation Agency

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Reduction in racial and ethnic disparities in admissions to detention
- Revamped risk assessment instrument
- Creation of stakeholder group to regularly assess juvenile justice system
- Reduced population in juvenile detention center
- Increased diversion of youth from juvenile detention as a sanction
- Focus on individualized incentives for youth in probation

good relationship between the bench and law enforcement has really made a difference in everyone being willing to tackle this together.

## VENTURA COUNTY’S MODEL

Ventura County started by simply taking a look at its 2010 census data and comparing the number of 10-17-year-old Latinos in the community to the numbers of those youth who were admitted to secure detention. These numbers revealed that in 2010 about 46 percent of the county’s youth were Latino, but 70% of admissions to juvenile hall were Latino youth. That was a huge indicator about the disparity issues in the county, and so staff started drilling down on the numbers, eventually looking at where—by zip code—these kids were coming from. The majority of Latino youth were coming from five zip code areas, and staff then worked to determine who was admitting these youth and for what reason they were being admitted. The data showed that the two primary reasons for admission were bench warrants and violations of probation, and that probation was the agency that most often brought youth to juvenile hall. “That was amazing to me,” Varela says. “I would have never thought it was us—I would have thought it was the police or the sheriff. But it turns out that we’d be supervising kids in the community, they’d violate their terms, and so we’d bring them to juvenile hall. That was a huge eye opener.”

# JUVENILE PROGRAMS

- Juvenile Drug Court Program
- Solutions Court Program
- Repeat Offender Prevention Program
- Evening Reporting Center
- Recovery Classroom Program
- Gateway Community School
- Truancy Habits Reduced Increase Vital Education (THRIVE)
- Call Notification Program



"We're fortunate in this county that our judges are very engaged with the community. The good relationship between the bench and law enforcement has really made a difference in everyone being willing to tackle this together."

-Kathy Long,  
Ventura County Supervisor

## Reducing the Use of Bench Warrants

Of the 341 bench warrants issued in 2010, nearly 60 percent were for failure to appear at a hearing, and Latino youth were overrepresented in admissions to detention for these violations. County leaders decided to pursue new efforts to ensure that youth would appear in court and to reduce detentions from bench warrants. To help achieve this goal, **the probation department started a call notification program. This program used student workers to make reminder calls when a youth was due in court; 2,420 calls to 1,202 youth were made from January-July 2013.** Bilingual staff attempt to reach a youth and determine what, if any, issues may prevent the youth from attending court, and then how to solve those issues.

## Evening Reporting Center

Once the county really understood where and why juveniles were coming into the system—a majority from Oxnard, the largest city in the county, a majority of them Latino, and the time most of them were arrested was between 3:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m.—leaders focused on finding a targeted intervention.

The result was an evening reporting center (ERC), which Varela describes as "based on a day reporting center merged with an after-school program." When a youth is picked up, they are given the option of serving a period of time at the ERC, usually 30-40 days, in lieu of returning them to custody. The ERC is located at the Boys and Girls Club (funded by a state grant) and includes case management services, recreational programs, meals, on-site tutoring and more. "We surround them with adults that care, in a structured environment," Varela says. "Kids are usually pretty reluctant at first, but once their time is done they elect to stay on. It's a safe place for them, and they've found people who care."

## SUCCESSES AND OUTCOMES

Ventura County's juvenile justice facility was recently holding only 61 kids, the lowest population the county has ever seen at this location—and even at its highest has only held 240. By applying a more critical eye to detaining youth for violations of probation, **the county has seen a significant reduction in admissions to secure detention for all youth and particularly for Latino youth, which have dropped by more than 50 percent since 2009.**

Of the 2,420 calls attempted from January-July 2013, only 642 resulted in actual contact with an individual, but for those reached the appearance rate was more than 90 percent. To date, the ERC has had 78 youth referred to the program and 39 have successfully graduated. Thirty graduates have voluntarily returned to the program after their probation-ordered participation, and one probation-referred youth was named "Teen of the Month" at the Boys and Girls Club.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### **Good data is invaluable and worth the investment:**

Ventura County had a lot of very rich data, but was not very good at extracting the data in a comprehensive way so it could be used well. Their process allowed them to dedicate a staff person to solely focus on pulling data in a useful way, which Varela says “was the smartest thing we ever did.” Even in counties where resources are tight, Varela emphasizes that using data to learn about what’s really happening in your community and to make decisions based on that is crucial to success.

**Don’t be afraid to let your mistakes be known:** “You have to be willing to allow your dirty laundry to be aired,” Varela says. “When we looked at the numbers, we had to explain to our stakeholder partners that probation has led the efforts to implement juvenile detention alternatives but we are also the No. 1 admitters into juvenile hall...that’s really putting it out there. It takes a lot of courage, but that’s what you have to do to be an example and a motivator to others.”

“We surround them with adults that care, in a structured environment. Kids are usually pretty reluctant at first, but once their time is done they elect to stay on. It’s a safe place for them, and they’ve found people who care.”

–Mark Varela,  
Director and Chief Probation Officer at the Ventura  
County Probation Agency

### **Take advantage of community-based organizations:**

Your county likely has a number of groups already doing juvenile justice-related work in the community, and these groups can be your best advocates if they are included in county work from the start. “If you’re faced with a reluctant board member or other stakeholder, identify a community advocate group that they trust and have that group be the one to start a conversation about what’s going on in the community and why it’s time to change the paradigm of what’s being done,” Supervisor Long suggests.

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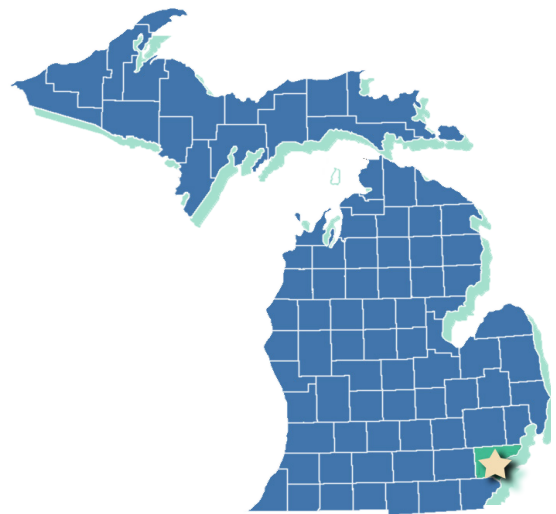
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# COUNTY LEADERSHIP IN JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM:

## 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 contain 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

## 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

communities with experience in mental health and substance use issues. The agencies were asked to develop partnerships and, if they did not 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?"



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

## 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 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."

## 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.



Alisha Bell  
Wayne County  
Commissioner

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.

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.

“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.

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