

# Models for Change 2008 Update:

## **Gathering Force**

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## Models for Change

Models for Change is an effort to create successful and replicable models of juvenile justice reform through targeted investments in key states, with core support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Models for Change seeks to accelerate progress toward a more effective, fair, and developmentally sound juvenile justice system that holds young people accountable for their actions, provides for their rehabilitation, protects them from harm, increases their life chances, and manages the risk they pose to themselves and to the public. The initiative is underway in Illinois, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, and Washington, and through action networks focusing on key issues in California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Wisconsin.



# Models for Change 2008 Update: Gathering Force

In December of 2007, during his opening remarks at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Models for Change National Working Conference, MacArthur Foundation President Jonathan Fanton welcomed the hundreds assembled in a hotel ballroom in Washington, DC—youth workers, advocates, researchers, administrators, judges, attorneys, educators and others from across the country—as fellow participants in a national “movement to reform the juvenile justice system”:

*I use the word “movement” rather than “program” or “initiative” for a reason. Movements are based on values and animated by a vision of a more just and humane society. Movements arise from a broad base, starting locally, gathering force, and gaining national momentum. And, most often, movements succeed in changing reality when the time is right and the public ready to embrace new ways of pursuing basic goals.*

Since Fanton spoke last year, the sense of movement in the field of juvenile justice—of something fundamental changing and “gathering force”—has grown stronger. Not long ago, the very idea of a separate justice system for young people, responsive to their developmental needs and focused on their practical rehabilitation, was being widely questioned. Now signs of the regeneration of juvenile justice in America are evident everywhere. It’s not just that significant and promising developments have occurred in lots of places—it’s the common pattern and direction of these disparate changes. It’s the way they align with and strengthen what looks like an emerging, post-ideological consensus on approaches to the problem of youth crime, based on a handful of shared values and acknowledged principles, a steadily expanding foundation of knowledge regarding what’s needed and what works, and a deep well of public support for investment in youth.

While many of these developments may seem isolated and local in nature—adapted to particular needs and conditions, aimed at particular problems—there are a small number of common strands that bind them together. It’s fair to say that, collectively, the nation has begun to do all of the following:

- **Act on the research.** Scientific findings establishing the nature and extent of the developmental differences between adolescents and adults are having decisive effects on juvenile justice practice and policymaking. *Roper v. Simmons*—the U.S. Supreme Court decision

that declared capital punishment to be an impermissibly “cruel and unusual” response to offenses committed by minors, given what is now known of their diminished decisionmaking ability, impulsivity, vulnerability to peer influence, and capacity to change—is beginning to look like a watershed in this respect. Since then, legislatures in Connecticut, Illinois, North Carolina, Wisconsin and Vermont, acknowledging the force of the developmental arguments on which the Court relied, have moved or begun considering moves to redraw their jurisdictional boundaries, to ensure that responses to crimes committed by minors take their individual and developmental differences into account.

- **Turn away from failed approaches.** Large, centralized, prison-like institutions—based on failed adult-correctional models that are now understood to breed abuse and crime—are being downsized or dismantled. The agencies that administered them are being reorganized. States like California, Texas, Louisiana and Illinois are increasingly looking to states like Missouri—which holds youth in a network of smaller, more home-like settings, with staff that are educated and trained to do more than stand guard—for inspiration and models.

- **Put the brakes on criminalization.** Of all the punitive approaches to delinquency that have lost steam in recent years, the most prominent is undoubtedly “adult time for adult crime.” As a wholesale strategy, trying and punishing juveniles as adults has been exposed—and all but officially acknowledged—as an expensive failure, a crime-control measure that not only works injustice but actually increases crime. So far, few states have done much more than tinker with the elaborate transfer structures they erected in the 1980s and 1990s. But legislative momentum in the direction of criminalization—once a juggernaut—has come to a complete standstill.

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- **Recognize the limits of incarceration.** The field has come to recognize that the problem of youth crime is resistant to fixes that rely solely or excessively on incarceration. The real costs of this approach in many states, in terms of abusive conditions, interrupted educations, lost opportunities for normal growth and development, and scandalously high recidivism rates, are well known by now. And the general public sees it: recent opinion research indicates that people prefer rehabilitative responses to youth crime over punitive incarceration, even if they have to pay more for them.
- **Invest in proven alternatives.** Fortunately, it is also becoming clear that rehabilitation is practical and cost-effective. Evidence-based practices that treat young people as individuals, target their problems intensively, and involve their families in changing their behavior have been proven to reduce crime and save money. In Illinois, Washington, Connecticut and other states, funding mechanisms have been restructured in response to the evidence, enabling local communities to choose effective alternatives to incarceration that keep communities safe and save tax dollars.

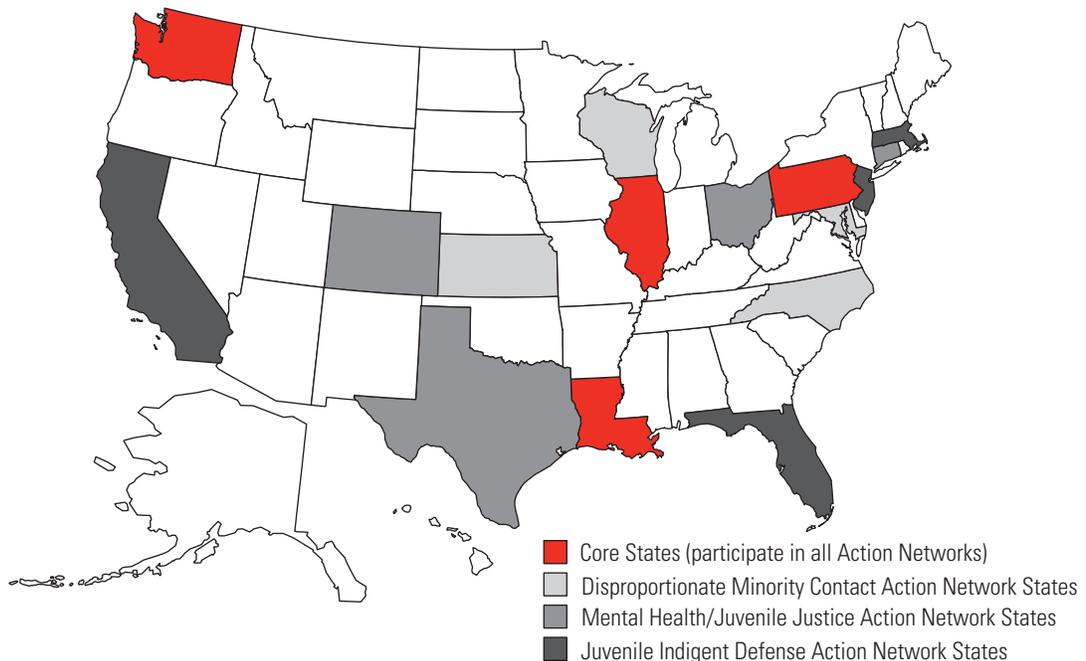
It's a movement, in other words. Something that hangs together, that is more than the sum of its parts. It's not as simple as some movements, or as easy to capture in a slogan—it

combines old values, new knowledge, a broad range of issues and disciplines, and a diverse array of leaders and champions who may have yet to recognize each other—but its time seems right. And its general direction is unmistakable.

From the beginning, Models for Change has been an effort to support, sustain and spread this broad movement. With long-term backing from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, which is committing a total of more than \$100 million to juvenile justice research and reform efforts, Models for Change was formally launched in Pennsylvania in 2004, and is now working with partners for change in 16 states and all regions of the country. Through its investment in innovative policy and practice models in four key bellwether states, its convening and coordination of reform-minded practitioners into issue-focused “Action Networks” representing twelve additional states, and its ongoing sponsorship of research that continues to expand the evidence base for reform everywhere, Models for Change is helping to guide and accelerate the nation’s momentum toward a more rational, fair, effective, and developmentally appropriate approach to juvenile justice.

This 2008 Update will review the basic design and structure of Models for Change, take a look at some of the places where it operates to assist change, describe the progress it has made so far, and lay out what it hopes to achieve in the next few years.

## Models for Change States



## Background

Models for Change was a natural outgrowth of years of MacArthur Foundation investments in developmental research, beginning in 1996 with the creation of the MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice. Those original research grants bore fruit in the form of a series of groundbreaking findings that did much to expand the base of knowledge regarding the differences between adolescents and adults—and to remind policymakers and the public of why a separate system of justice for the young is needed. But research for its own sake was never the point. For the Foundation, it was equally important to disseminate the work that its investments had made possible, to ensure that its consequences for policy and practice were understood, and to support movement in line with this new knowledge.

By the beginning of this decade, there was no shortage of signs of a swing away from the punitive and developmentally unsound policies that had prevailed in the 1990s. Change was happening—the problem was how to strengthen and accelerate its movement, and channel its direction. Packaging and promoting particular programs or piecemeal improvements would not answer this purpose. Models for Change was conceived with a broader goal: to support the development of multiple models of comprehensive, home-grown system reform. Starting with a framework of commonly held values that would help to point out the general direction reforms should take, and focusing its resources in a small number of key states chosen for their prominence, diversity, and readiness for change, the initiative would help to create and sustain reform models that could in turn be studied, shared and adapted in all directions.

There would be no one blueprint for change—no step-by-step guide. From the beginning, the initiative was designed to

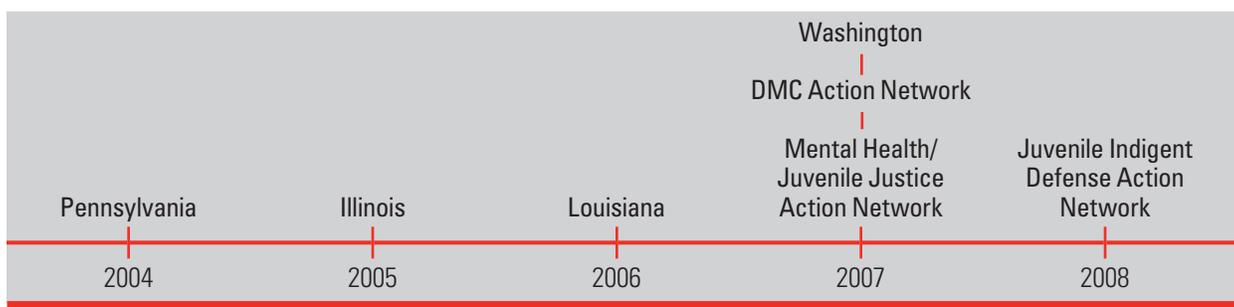
capture the strengths and benefits of diversity. Different states with different issues, in different regions, presenting different demographic and political challenges, and starting from different points along the reform spectrum, would naturally produce a variety of models of system reform.

But the structure of Models for Change, wherever it worked, would have a few consistent elements. A lead grantee organization would be designated in each core state, and given primary responsibility for (1) identifying key policy and practice improvement areas that would serve as leverage points for broader system reform, (2) creating a multi-year work plan with strategies for targeting those leverage points and concrete goals and measurable change outcomes to be achieved, and (3) coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the plan. The issues targeted would vary from place to place—and would reflect the state's own history, resources, strengths, needs, and reform priorities. But the initiative's hypothesis was that change in a few carefully chosen target areas would be capable of radiating change throughout the system. A range of in-state grantees, including state and local government agencies and county or parish demonstration sites, would receive Models for Change funds to carry out the work of bringing about change in the targeted areas. A "National Resource Bank" of prominent juvenile justice organizations would be funded to provide them with the expert consulting and technical assistance services they would need to succeed. And the Foundation itself would provide oversight and overall direction to the effort, with the assistance of the National Center for Juvenile Justice, which as "Technical Resource Center" would be charged with a variety of responsibilities, including initiative-wide coordination, documentation, and tracking of progress towards outcomes. In addition, the Technical Resource Center would assemble and track a select group of much broader

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## Models for Change Timeline

Models for change had a rolling start, with core states joining the initiative in each year from 2004 through 2007, and Action Networks created in 2007 and 2008.



indicators—*vital signs*—of juvenile justice system health and functioning in Models for Change jurisdictions. With time and refinement, vital sign measures of racial and ethnic processing disparities, system reliance on incarceration, social engagement, transfer and recidivism would not only be useful to planners and policymakers, but would serve as critical markers of progress towards a more rational, fair, effective and developmentally appropriate juvenile justice system.

Following the formal launch of Models for Change in Pennsylvania in 2004, the initiative expanded to Illinois in 2005, to Louisiana in 2006, and to Washington in 2007. Multi-state Action Networks focusing on disproportionate minority contact and mental health/juvenile justice issues were also convened in 2007, and a third Action Network addressing juvenile indigent defense issues was formed in 2008. Because of this “rolling start,” Models for Change is in completely different stages of development at different locations. This Update highlights the reform progress achieved in Pennsylvania, where the work has been under way for four years. Activities in states that are newer to the initiative are also described, but more details on Models for Change work in those states will be available in future reports.

## Pennsylvania

To see how Models for Change is working in practice, and what it is capable of producing in the way of system reform, there is no better place to look than Pennsylvania, where the initiative started.

Pennsylvania’s selection as the first Models for Change site was in part a recognition of the widely acknowledged strengths of the state’s juvenile justice system—including its seasoned and stable juvenile justice leadership, the prominent role taken by juvenile court judges and other professionals in state policymaking, its flourishing private youth services sector, and its pioneering commitment to evidence-based practices and other non-institutional, community-based responses to delinquency. While there were weaknesses to be addressed as well, the state’s own reform priorities substantially matched those of Models for Change. For instance, Pennsylvania had long recognized the significant racial and ethnic disparities in its juvenile justice system, and the need to do something to reduce them. Like other states, it was struggling to find better ways to identify and meet the behavioral health needs of its court-involved youth. And its leaders acknowledged the need for an overhaul of its inconsistent and uncoordinated approach

to reintegrating youth into their schools and communities following periods of institutional placement. Sustained work and well-targeted investments in support of these reform priorities, it was thought, could help to “tip” Pennsylvania’s development into an exemplary system.

Juvenile Law Center (JLC), a Philadelphia-based public interest law firm that has been advocating for children for more than 30 years, was chosen to plan and coordinate the Models for Change work in Pennsylvania. Working with state leaders, JLC developed a long-term plan that laid out strategies and set goals and objectives for (1) reducing disproportionate minority involvement with the juvenile justice system, (2) improving the system’s capacity to identify, serve and appropriately divert youth with behavioral health needs, and (3) enhancing planning, services and supports for youth leaving residential facilities and returning to their communities. As the “lead entity” in Pennsylvania, JLC’s duties have included recruiting state and local partners to the initiative, working with them to select a total of eight counties as pilot demonstration sites, coordinating training and technical assistance, identifying strategic opportunities for grants and other support, monitoring progress, and general troubleshooting.

The results of all this work to date, in terms of concrete, comprehensive and lasting change, have done much to justify the hopes with which Models for Change was launched. According to JLC executive director Bob Schwartz, “Pennsylvania illustrates what the state-based components of a progressive juvenile justice reform movement would look like. There are common values, goals and approaches, across stakeholders.” Given these shared beliefs and the general readiness for change, he says, “A relatively small investment, at the right time and in the right place, can have a catalytic effect beyond expectations, and can create space and opportunities for leadership to emerge.”

## DMC

The process is clearly visible in the way the work addressing disproportionate minority contact (DMC) has progressed, Schwartz says. “Models for Change benefited from the state’s strong history of addressing DMC. The State Advisory Group (the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Committee of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency) had over the past twenty years invested millions of dollars to reduce DMC.” Models for Change quickly formed a productive partnership with a standing DMC Subcommittee of the Juvenile

Justice and Delinquency Prevention Committee—which had been providing leadership on this issue since the early 1990s—to set priorities for the work.

One of the most urgent priorities involved data. To understand where racial and ethnic disparities occur and target your responses accordingly, you need detailed and accurate demographic data. Models for Change has decisively contributed to the effort to improve the quality and utility of data on youth processing in Pennsylvania, through the development, printing and distribution of a set of standard racial and ethnic coding guidelines for county juvenile probation agencies. The dissemination and widespread adoption of the guidelines has already been helpful in resolving the “hidden minority” problem—an effect of traditional intake data collection procedures that tend to divide most youth into “white” and “black” racial categories regardless of their ethnic origins. Because Pennsylvania juveniles of Hispanic ethnicity have in the past been “lost” statistically as a result of these data collection practices, processing disparities affecting Hispanic youth have been masked, and important needs have gone unrecognized. Going forward, Pennsylvania will have the demographic data it needs to form a more accurate and complete picture of its population, and its leaders will have the information they need to pinpoint problems and plan responses.

Significant and imaginative work addressing racial and ethnic disparities at the *local* level has also been made possible by Models for Change. Here again, Schwartz points out, state partnerships prepared the way. “The DMC Subcommittee reviewed data and helped select the counties in which Models for Change would invest resources,” he says.

One of them was Berks County (Reading), Pennsylvania, where Models for Change funding, coordination and expert assistance have enabled a coalition of court, probation and community leaders—the Racial and Ethnic Disparities Reduction Project—to take a series of innovative steps to deal with the disproportionate court involvement of the county’s rapidly growing population of Hispanic youth:

- **Enhancing Spanish-language capability and cultural competence.** Court notices and forms have been translated, in-court interpreters hired, cultural training provided, and instructional software and routine testing used to improve the Spanish-language proficiency of juvenile probation staff.
- **Reducing minority detentions through screening and alternatives.** To reduce high detention rates that

affected minorities disproportionately, a more structured and objective approach to detention decisionmaking was instituted, and a new evening reporting center was established in a predominantly minority neighborhood to serve youth who would otherwise have been detained for probation violations and similar infractions.

- **Recruiting nontraditional service providers.** Berks has also surveyed churches and other nontraditional providers that offer community service, mentoring and other opportunities, mapped responses against law enforcement and court data showing where court-involved youth live, and used the results to begin expanding and filling gaps in the array of services available to minority youth.
- **Developing workforce opportunities.** With Models for Change help, Berks has secured provisional Department of Labor funding for a Youth Build program that will soon begin acquiring old homes in need of repair and rehabilitation in minority communities in the Reading area, and giving neighborhood youth the chance to pick up transferable employment and job-readiness skills by working to restore them.

Significant local efforts are also under way in Philadelphia and Allegheny County (Pittsburgh), the other two Models for Change demonstration sites working to address racial and ethnic disparities—including development of a cultural competency curriculum for new police officers, a “graduated sanctions court” experiment to minimize unnecessary use of detention for youth on probation, and research intended to shed light on the causes of minority expulsions from residential programs and explore what can be done to prevent them. As these efforts are fully implemented and begin to show results, they too will be shared across a network of local jurisdictions focused on the same problems, not only in Pennsylvania but in “Action Network” sites across the country.

“DMC is the most intractable of problems, in part because it varies so much by local circumstances,” Schwartz observes. “Even so, we believe that by taking different approaches to address DMC that other jurisdictions—both inside and outside Pennsylvania—will find our efforts to be useful starting points for their own.”

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## Mental Health

Models for Change has also supported ambitious efforts in Pennsylvania to build a “comprehensive model system” for responding to court-involved youth with behavioral health disorders—one that allows for early identification, prevents unnecessary system penetration, and provides for timely access to appropriate treatment in the least restrictive setting consistent with community safety. Here too, important foundational work has taken place at both the state and local levels:

- **Policy commitment.** High-level representatives of the state’s juvenile justice, mental health, child welfare, drug and alcohol, and education systems were convened to produce a “Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Joint Policy Statement,” formally committing the state to the goal of having all of the following in place statewide by 2010:

routine screening and assessment of youth for behavioral health problems, an appropriate continuum of programs and services for diverting and treating them, opportunities for family involvement in their treatment, appropriate protections for their privacy and other legal interests, and sustainable funding mechanisms that support all of these practices.

- **Multi-system collaboration.** With Models for Change support, local coordination initiatives in Allegheny, Chester and Erie Counties are aimed at developing multi-system collaborative structures, utilizing standardized screening and assessment tools to identify youth with behavioral health issues, diverting appropriate youth from the juvenile justice system to mental health services when possible, and building a continuum of evidence-based treatment services in the community that

## Disproportionate Minority Contact Action Network

All juvenile justice system participants have a right to fair and unbiased treatment, without regard to their race or ethnicity—that’s one of the primary values animating the Models for Change initiative. All the states participating in Models for Change are taking steps to understand the causes of racial and ethnic disparities in their juvenile justice systems and find ways to reduce them. In addition to supporting these efforts, Models for Change launched a “Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) Action Network” at the end of 2007. The DMC Action Network brings together teams from local jurisdictions working on DMC across the country, and provides them with a forum for sharing strategies and ideas, accessing expert help, and accelerating progress in DMC reduction. In addition to local jurisdictions in the four core Models for Change states, the DMC Action Network includes representatives of sites in Kansas, Maryland, North Carolina and Wisconsin.

According to Mark Soler—who directs the Center for Children’s Law and Policy, a Washington, DC-based public interest law and policy organization that oversees Models for Change DMC efforts and coordinates the DMC Action Network—the goal of the Network is “to expand the number of models of successful DMC reduction.” Its more immediate objectives, he says, are: “First, to demonstrate that we can make changes in our sites. Second, to exchange information among sites. Third, to develop and model strategic innovations. And fourth, to create a national platform from which to discuss issues and celebrate wins.”

The twelve local sites participating in the DMC Action Network come from each of the four Models for Change states, and

from four additional states chosen through an open application process. Each site has demonstrated commitment to addressing DMC locally, and each has achieved some form of notable success. Like Baltimore, MD, which through its Pre-Adjudication Coordination and Transition (PACT) Center is providing structure, supervision, educational support and workforce training to predominantly African-American youth who would otherwise be detained pending hearings, and is so far achieving the kind of completion rates—with virtually all the youth it serves showing up for court dates without new charges—that could make it a model for the nation.

Or Peoria, IL, where close analysis of juvenile arrest data, undertaken in response to serious disproportionality in the county’s detention center, revealed that the majority of arrests and detentions for “aggravated battery” could be traced to incidents in which teachers and other legally protected school personnel were hurt attempting to break up fights among students. After alternative conflict resolution techniques were introduced at five local schools, cases of aggravated battery to school personnel dropped sharply, with referrals of African-American youth falling 43% in just one year.

“That’s a great example of very narrow-cast research leading to a specific intervention,” Soler points out. A major focus of the DMC Action Network is on collecting detailed data and using it in this way, to track problems to their sources and target solutions. It’s not data for its own sake—it’s data as “an alternative to anecdotes,” as Soler puts it. “This is not about finger-pointing,”

complements and coordinates with juvenile justice services. A Models for Change mental health coordinator at each site is dedicated to managing and implementing the changes decided on by the county's collaborative team.

- **Screening and assessment.** Following a statewide survey of county screening and assessment practices for delinquent youth and several related training events, a pilot behavioral health screening and assessment process for county juvenile probation departments was developed and launched, centered around the use of the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument, Version 2 (MAYSI-2). So far, more than a third of Pennsylvania counties are participating, with most using the MAYSI-2 to screen youth for possible behavioral health problems at intake. The experiences of the participating counties are being

documented, and local and statewide data reports on MAYSI-2 results and implications will be disseminated.

- **Diversion into services.** Another survey documented diversionary policies and practices at the county level, the current availability of diversion services and resources for youth, and local barriers to timely diversion into services. Based on the results, a partnership with law enforcement has been established to increase up-front behavioral health diversion through training that uses the Crisis Intervention Team model.
- **Family involvement.** Chester County has hired two parent advocates to participate in system planning and implementation and to help families with children involved in multiple child-serving systems to navigate the

he adds. "When you have finger-pointing, nobody wants to talk about the issue."

During the Action Network's first year, each site has agreed to implement at least one "strategic innovation" that will impact DMC locally. For example, all twelve have committed to specific improvements in routine tracking and reporting of DMC data. During the final quarter of 2008, all have been collecting a common set of "DMC Performance Measures," to be submitted and made the basis of an aggregate report at the beginning of 2009. The measures not only include demographically detailed "front-end" information on arrests and detentions—comprising "about thirty pieces of basic data we think every jurisdiction should collect," including offense types, referral sources, detention screening decisions, utilization patterns, and average lengths of stay—but also track and quantify concrete steps taken by the jurisdiction in response to DMC. "Ideally, we establish this as a standard in the field," Soler says.

Apart from improvements in data collection and reporting and data-driven practice, other strategic innovations being adopted by Action Network member sites include:

- Cultural competency, language competency, community responsiveness. These include such things as cultural competency training for staff, Spanish-language translation of forms, and community outreach and engagement efforts in sites with fast-growing Hispanic populations.

- Pre-adjudication screening and diversion. To reduce disparities at the front end of the system, measures like instituting standardized detention risk screening and the creation of accessible and relevant detention alternatives are being implemented.
- Post-disposition alternatives. At the back end, sites are finding new ways to sanction probation violators without incarceration and to expand culturally relevant disposition options.

Through regular reports, quarterly teleconferences, an e-mail list-serve, and an annual DMC Action Network conference, the sites are able to share their implementation experiences, compare strategies and results, get questions answered, and build a peer-to-peer learning network.

"This is a gigantic opportunity," Soler says. And not only for the sites, but for the field—which Soler believes has now entered a historic "third phase": "The first phase was the period up to about 1990 and primarily consisted of research and laying a foundation for later efforts. . . . The second phase was from the early 1990s to the middle of this decade, and was characterized by creative new efforts, a reliance on collection and analysis of data to drive policymaking, and demonstration of success in actually reducing DMC. . . . The third phase started in the middle of this decade and is continuing. In this phase, the issue is going to scale, and the lessons of the earlier phases are being applied in a significant number of jurisdictions around the country."

different systems and learn how to advocate for themselves and their children. The county has also developed a multidisciplinary team to implement Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) conferences, hired a dedicated FGDM coordinator, and trained county and service provider staff as FGDM conference facilitators. And with Models for Change support, innovative best practices like these are being assembled from around the state and documented in a monograph intended to encourage creativity and improve the overall level and quality of family involvement in supervision and treatment planning for children in Pennsylvania's behavioral health and juvenile justice systems.

- **Confidentiality and protection against self-incrimination.** Working with more than twenty key state organizations and agencies, Models for Change supported efforts to amend Pennsylvania's Juvenile Act to ensure that youth are protected against self-incrimination when providing information during screening, assessment, and evaluation. On October 9, 2008, Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell signed into law Act 109, which guarantees that information volunteered by Pennsylvania youth in court-ordered mental health screening or assessment will not be used against them in delinquency or criminal proceedings.

## Aftercare

By far the most dramatic changes produced by Models for Change partnerships in Pennsylvania have been in the area of aftercare. Here again, the initiative began by convening key state policymakers and working to secure their commitment to a fundamental vision of change, embodying that vision in a kind of foundational document that would serve the state as a reform blueprint, and supporting implementation efforts at a variety of levels with funding, training and tools. But over time, the reform activity that the initiative helped to stimulate has spread far beyond Models for Change. Other philanthropies are involved now. Substantial new federal grants have been tapped. State agencies have permanently shifted their policies and rechanneled their funding streams. Local officials that may never have heard of Models for Change are absorbing new ideas and rethinking old approaches. Practice is changing—and it's not only affecting the way Pennsylvania youth in placement are served and supported at the end of the commitment process, but how they are educated, trained, and prepared for successful adulthoods from the beginning.

This is system reform—starting in one location and spreading to others, targeting one central problem and radiating change outward. It is now clear that when Models for Change funding in support of reform efforts in Pennsylvania comes to an end,

## Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network

All of the core states participating in Models for Change are working to find better ways to meet the mental health needs of young people who come into contact with the juvenile justice system. In order to enable them to collaborate on this problem, share what they are learning, and begin to accelerate the pace of progress towards national solutions, Models for Change began funding the Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network in 2007. The Action Network brings together teams from each of the core Models for Change states, along with representatives from four additional states committed to reform in this area—Connecticut, Colorado, Ohio, and Texas—to work collaboratively to develop better ways of identifying, diverting and treating court-involved youth with mental health needs.

"Mental health is one of the biggest challenges in developing more effective juvenile justice systems," points out Joe Cocozza, director of the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice at Policy Research Associates, which oversees the Men-

tal Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network. "An Action Network, focused on developing and sharing better strategies for helping these youth, was viewed as critical to the juvenile justice reform efforts under way through Models for Change."

Like the other Action Networks, the Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network is an issue-focused forum for the development and exchange of ideas and strategies across states, and an effective means for sharing practical information and expertise in support of reform work. It's intended to serve as both a lab for creating innovative new solutions and a grapevine for spreading them. "Teams learn from one another," Cocozza says, "they exchange and share ideas, they identify new projects and ways to work together collaboratively. Anyone who has done any kind of collaborative work knows how hard it can be. . . . These meetings provide the energy and momentum to do this hard work."

Teams from each of the Action Network states are engaged not only in individual projects addressing challenges in their own states, but

some permanent and beneficial changes in Pennsylvania's juvenile justice landscape will remain:

■ **Vision from the top down.** "Aftercare begins at disposition and is tailored to the individual needs and capacities of each youth." That's how state officials and agency heads pulled together by Models for Change at the start of the initiative encapsulated the new approach they are seeking to institute statewide. In their "Joint Policy Statement on Aftercare," they committed the state to 17 concrete goals relating to aftercare—covering early assessment and planning, multi-agency collaboration, documentation and records transfer, visitation and monitoring, judicial oversight hearings, school reintegration, and a variety of other issues—to be achieved by the year 2010. A Models for Change-supported county-by-county assessment followed, comparing practice on the ground with the vision of the Joint Policy Statement. The assessment process not only uncovered a range of innovative aftercare approaches and yielded reform recommendations to address common weaknesses, it constituted a first step in recruiting local jurisdictions into a statewide movement to revamp aftercare policy and practice. Now more than half of all Pennsylvania counties are formally committed to the goals and principles of the

Joint Policy Statement and have begun efforts to implement them locally.

■ **Model development from the ground up.** Five counties were chosen to pilot nuts-and-bolts aftercare innovations at home—new ways to coordinate educational transitions for youth in placement, to connect them with jobs, to supervise them after release—and also to meet on a regular basis to share what they were learning and use it to build a working aftercare practice model that others in Pennsylvania could adapt. Over time they helped develop *Probation Case Management Essentials for Youth in Placement*, a document laying out specifications for a probation-driven model of ongoing assessment, planning, and review with which to guide placement and reentry decisionmaking.

■ **Dissemination of knowledge, training and tools.** In addition to funding the production and statewide distribution of the *Case Management Essentials*, Models for Change has supported the spread of practical knowledge in a number of other ways. To help probation officers get around barriers to the prompt educational reintegration of youth released from placement facilities, Models for Change commissioned the Pennsylvania-based Education Law Center to produce an *Educational Aftercare &*

also in collaborative work with other teams in one of two "strategic innovation" areas:

■ **Front-End Diversion.** The idea is to do a better job of identifying youth with mental health needs and diverting them into treatment—and to do it earlier in the process, before unnecessary system penetration has occurred. So some state teams are working together to develop a crisis intervention training curriculum for law enforcement officers, so that they'll recognize signs of mental illness and respond appropriately when troubled young people come to their attention. Others are establishing school-based "urgent response teams" to handle crises before police are called.

■ **Education and Training.** If juvenile justice agencies, courts and probation departments are going to improve their performance in recognizing and responding to young people with mental health issues, they're going to need staff with new knowledge and skills. Some state teams are involved in developing a mental health education package that will be

delivered to their juvenile justice workforce as part of a new approach to training, recruitment and retention.

"The fact that we have eight very different states, committed to the same goals, and undertaking the same strategies to address common problems is almost unheard of," Coccozza says. "This work will yield concrete improvements for justice-involved youth with mental health needs." And when it does, he adds, the Action Network will share them, not just with states within the Network, but with others who will be looking to the Action Network for direction.

That too is part of the point: to establish a "leadership community" that will help in the long run to shape the way the nation as a whole responds to the mental health needs of court-involved youth. "These states are at the forefront of mental health and juvenile justice," Coccozza says. "The work they do through the Action Network will serve as a guide for all states who are interested in improving services and supports for these youth."

*Reintegration Toolkit* and provide training in educational advocacy to probation departments all over the state. The Northeast Juvenile Defender Center was tapped to train juvenile defenders on better ways to represent their clients' interests and ensure that their needs are met in disposition and aftercare planning.

- **Policy changes.** Basic state probation standards on visitation and monitoring of youth in placement, state educational policy governing such matters as school assignment practices and credit awards for educational progress made by youth returning from commitment facilities, and guidelines from the state's Department of Public Welfare regarding funding of good reintegration practices have all been or are being rewritten as a result of Models for Change.

But it's likely that the most significant and lasting shift that Models for Change has helped to bring about is in Pennsylvania's approach to the educational and career training of youth in placement.

It began in Philadelphia, with the Reintegration Initiative—an ambitious rethinking of commitment and release practices that was supported by Models for Change and several other funders, both public and private. The Reintegration Initiative resulted in new pre-disposition assessment and case-planning

processes; new mechanisms for sharing information, monitoring progress, and troubleshooting; and new forms of neighborhood-based educational and employment help for Philadelphia youth returning to the city from placement facilities. But it soon evolved into a confrontation with larger barriers to the long-term success of the city's delinquent youth, including the lack of academic credentials, job preparation and marketable skills. "The Reintegration Initiative forced us to turn our attention back to what we were doing to *prepare* kids," according to Candace Putter, who managed the initiative for the Philadelphia Department of Human Services.

Thanks in part to its involvement in the larger aftercare reform network fostered by Models for Change, Philadelphia was eventually able to join forces with Allegheny County (Pittsburgh), the other big "consumer" of juvenile placement services in the state, to begin insisting on improvements in academic and career and technical education in Pennsylvania's private residential facilities. The result is the Pennsylvania Academic and Career/Technical Training (PACTT) Alliance—a formal partnership that brings together the state's two largest jurisdictions with the nine placement providers that collectively house more than 70% of their committed youth, to begin the work of improving and aligning academic offerings and expanding occupational skills programming while in placement.

## Juvenile Indigent Defense Action Network

The newest issue-focused leadership and problem-solving network created by Models for Change—the Juvenile Indigent Defense Action Network, coordinated by the National Juvenile Defender Center and convened for the first time in the fall of 2008—aims at improving access to and quality of counsel representing youth in delinquency proceedings nationwide. Like the other Action Networks, this one brings together teams of practitioners and policymakers from eight states—the four core Models for Change states and four additional states, California, Florida, Massachusetts, and New Jersey—to exchange ideas and devise strategies to address common problems, get training and technical assistance, and become involved in strategic innovation groups targeting specific areas of reform.

"Every day in the United States, far too many children are denied their fundamental right to have a lawyer represent their interests in court," says Patricia Puritz, executive director of the National

Juvenile Defender Center. "These children face the awesome prospect of incarceration and a lifetime of collateral consequences—limited job prospects, disqualification from financial aid for college, ineligibility to serve in the military—without the benefit of competent counsel to assist them."

From years of overseeing National Juvenile Defender Center assessments of state juvenile defense systems, Puritz knows that the same barriers to adequate legal representation for juveniles can be found everywhere, and that they are systemic. In state after state, the juvenile defense bar has to contend with inadequate pay and resources, unmanageable caseloads, and little or no administrative support. Specific training and mentoring in juvenile defense practice tends to be rare, and there is often no meaningful oversight for inexperienced attorneys. "In a lot of places," Puritz says, "you're given a stack of files and told, 'Go!'"

According to Russ Carlino, Allegheny County Juvenile Court Assistant Administrator, the PACTT Alliance is intended to send “a clear and consistent message to providers that education and workforce development opportunities for youth in placement must be geared toward successful reintegration. I believe the joint effort will benefit all youth in placement, not just those from Allegheny and Philadelphia.”

“What we’re working on right now—we’re hoping—can be expanded into every county in the state,” adds Deputy Director Jay Schrass of Philadelphia Juvenile Probation.

Efforts to date have already yielded solid gains, including better curricular alignment with state and home school district standards, streamlined records-transfer processes, and training for facility educational staff in remediation techniques. Experts from the Lehigh Career and Technical Institute (LCTI), one of the nation’s largest and most progressive secondary vocational schools, were brought in to assess occupational skills programs in the facilities, and to show how approaches that are vital to LCTI’s success—such as using industry-approved curricula, offering industry-recognized skill certificates, and employing instructors with current knowledge and up-to-date credentials in their fields—can work in delinquency placement facilities as well. “There is no reason why juvenile justice-involved students can’t have the same opportunities and perform at the same

level as LCTI students,” says Dr. Clyde Hornberger, Executive Director of LCTI, who is advising the PACTT Alliance. “The juvenile justice system youth need the same opportunities to learn rigorous academic and occupational skills as LCTI students. They need a caring adult to mentor them and to demand high expectations from everyone in the system, especially from the youth themselves.”

Over the next few years, the PACTT Alliance will be focusing on training efforts, expansion of accelerated credit recovery programs, the development and monitoring of facility-specific improvement and expansion plans with regard to career and technical education, and the creation of linkages that will ensure that technical training in placement facilities can be continued in community settings following release.

“There has been a dramatic transformation in the way everyone in the system is thinking about *and* implementing reintegration,” Bob Schwartz says. “There has been strong leadership at the state level—from the Department of Public Welfare, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and the Juvenile Court Judges’ Commission—and an equally strong commitment to transform the system at the county level. A relatively small investment has tapped into a hunger for changing the way re-entry is done.”

“It’s really hard,” she adds seriously, “when you’re out there on these issues alone, and no one has your back.”

Addressing these common issues—through change that strengthens and enhances juvenile indigent defense systems—is the purpose of the Juvenile Indigent Defense Action Network. Over the next few years, defense attorneys and other legal decisionmakers who make up the Action Network’s membership will have opportunities to learn from their peers, share accomplishments, access national experts, agree on common practice standards and concerted action, and take leadership on juvenile indigent defense issues. During the Action Network’s first year, members have agreed to concentrate their efforts in two areas:

- **Access to counsel.** The Network is working to reduce juvenile waivers of the right to counsel; to ensure that counsel for juveniles are appointed early in the process;

to improve post-disposition advocacy, especially for youth in commitment facilities; and to enhance training, oversight, supervision and other practice supports for juvenile defenders.

- **Resource centers.** The Network is also seeking to create an infrastructure of state, regional and local resource centers that will provide leadership, advocacy, mentoring and technical support to juvenile defenders, particular those that work independently of defender agencies.

“Never before have eight states come together with a dedicated focus on juvenile indigent defense,” Puritz notes. In the coming years, she predicts, Network participants “will change the way we as a nation view and administer justice to our youth.”

## Illinois

In Illinois, the second state chosen to participate in Models for Change, the initiative is seeking to support and help to implement basic changes in the legal, fiscal and organizational infrastructure of juvenile justice. Fundamental issues relating to the boundaries of the juvenile justice system, the way power and resources are distributed within it, and the way it interacts with other systems, are all being worked out in Illinois. Models for Change—through research, public education and advocacy, leadership development and support for collaboration, training, and local planning and experimentation—is helping to contribute to a new resolution that will guide other states in need of similar restructuring.

It's happened before. As the birthplace of the juvenile court at the turn of the last century, Illinois led the rest of the nation, and eventually the rest of the world, to a new conception of individualized and developmentally appropriate justice for young people. Now the state is seeking to adapt that original vision to new research and new realities.

Models for Change in Illinois is helping in a variety of ways, all of them aimed at sustaining successful and replicable change in three broad areas: (1) "right-sizing" the jurisdictional boundaries, responsibilities, and resources of the juvenile justice system; (2) reducing racial and ethnic disparities throughout the system, and (3) encouraging and expanding local and informal alternatives to system penetration.

"System change has occurred," according to Diane Geraghty, who heads the Civitas ChildLaw Center at Loyola University and sits on the Illinois Models for Change Coordinating Council that plans and oversees the initiative's activities throughout the state. As one of many examples she cites, perhaps the most symbolically prominent is the state's new juvenile commitment agency, the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), which was separated from the adult-focused Illinois Department of Corrections under legislation enacted in 2006: "The essential governmental system for juvenile incarceration is new." The creation of DJJ unquestionably presented Models for Change with a unique opportunity: to support the new agency's leaders' efforts to achieve what George Timberlake, former chief judge of the Illinois 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial Circuit and another member of the Coordinating Council, calls "a change in vision and a change in culture." Models for Change grantees have been deeply involved in transition planning, facility assessments, technical assistance, training and other efforts to help DJJ evolve away from its adult corrections origins and adopt a more rehabilita-

tive and developmentally informed model. It's one example, Timberlake says, of the way Models for Change is leveraging limited private resources "to move vastly larger sums of public resources toward reform practices and away from the old, broken systems."

Perhaps an even clearer example is the way Models for Change has worked to promote and expand "Redeploy Illinois." That's the name given to an innovative and successful state law that—starting on a pilot basis in a handful of jurisdictions in 2004—has substantially cut state commitments by eliminating perverse fiscal incentives that encourage local communities to wash their hands of juvenile offenders, providing the resources needed to treat and rehabilitate them closer to home instead. On the state policy level, Models for Change research and education efforts have been devoted to making sure that lawmakers and the general public appreciate the success of Redeploy Illinois—and the substantial cost-savings that have resulted. And it seems to be sinking in, says Paula Wolff, a Senior Executive at Chicago Metropolis 2020 and another member of the Coordinating Council: "In tight budget times, when other budgets are shrinking, resources for Redeploy Illinois... have been increased."

But just as important a contribution has come in the form of flexible support at the county- and circuit-level for development of alternatives to incarceration and formal processing. Models for Change has funded five "community-based alternative" pilot sites around Illinois—which have used the money, technical assistance and other help to strengthen local planning, assess community needs, streamline diversion processes, and develop new automated information capacity to manage local responses to delinquency. One tangible result has been "JWatch," the Illinois Judicial Supervision Watch Database that helps local courts and probation departments keep track of individual youth and system outcomes. Originally created as part of the Models for Change pilot project in the largely rural 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial Circuit, JWatch is now available free to local jurisdictions all over Illinois. It's a simple tool, but by measuring what counts—including positive youth outcomes—it can help impose system accountability and drive system improvement. "This is intended to be both a way to constantly monitor and reform the system against the principles embedded in the design of the system... and also to institutionalize and sustain the principles of reform," George Timberlake says.

Models for Change-supported research and planning has led most of the sites to design new diversion programs or processes to keep youth out of detention and commitment facilities or resolve their delinquency issues without court involvement. The

results of these local experiments will be studied and shared with other local jurisdictions. But whatever emerges will be home-grown, points out Esther Franco-Payne, another Coordinating Council member: “A unique aspect of Models for Change has been that, instead of prescribing approaches or solutions, [it] asks local stakeholders to analyze their system and identify solutions that will work for them. By asking what they want for their community and system and then empowering, supporting, providing TA and creating accountability to make the changes, we hope that Models for Change is supporting deep, broad and sustainable commitment to system improvement.”

Models for Change in Illinois has also contributed greatly to efforts to restore the appropriate responsibilities of the state’s juvenile justice system, and reallocate resources so that it can fulfill them. One of the signal achievements of juvenile justice reformers in Illinois in recent years—the repeal of the state’s automatic transfer law for children as young as 15 accused of drug offenses—was a first step toward reestablishing the system’s proper boundaries, and putting an end to the disastrous blurring of distinctions between the juvenile and criminal justice systems, according to Betsy Clarke, Director of the Juvenile Justice Initiative (JJI), a Models for Change grantee. JJI has followed up on that reform with research documenting the effects of the change, which has shown, among other things, that most of those affected have been low-level offenders posing little danger to the public, and nearly all have been youth of color. Models for Change-supported public advocacy has also been a factor in the growing movement to expand the juvenile court’s jurisdiction to cover all minors accused of crimes—including 17-year-olds, who are currently classed as adults for purposes of criminal prosecution in Illinois.

But even the most enlightened laws are unlikely to be of any benefit to young people who are denied the means to invoke their protections. In an effort to assure basic fairness in what Lisa Jacobs, the Coordinating Council’s lead staff person, calls “the balance of power of system participants,” Models for Change financed a comprehensive statewide investigation and assessment of the quality of legal representation for accused children in Illinois delinquency proceedings. Timed to coincide with the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *In re Gault*, the U.S. Supreme Court decision that established the right to counsel in juvenile cases, the study found that attorneys for youth in Illinois are too often under-resourced and overwhelmed, effectively depriving accused young people of that right. Often appointed too late to confer with their clients in advance of critical early hearings, juggling enormous caseloads, lacking investigative, social work, and administrative staff support, and working without training

or clear guidance as to their role as counsel and their responsibilities as zealous advocates, too many routinely resolve cases with inappropriate plea bargains or otherwise fail to energetically represent their clients’ interests.

A report detailing these findings and making a series of basic reform recommendations was prepared, published and disseminated with Models for Change funding, was widely reported in the press, and has clearly changed the climate of opinion. Reacting to the findings, the Illinois legislature created a state-level “juvenile defense resource center” to support the juvenile defense bar with training and technical assistance, and enacted a new law that not only requires appointment of counsel for juveniles in detention hearings, but provides that “in no event shall a detention or shelter care hearing be held until the minor has had adequate opportunity to consult with counsel.” Going forward, the results of the defender assessment will be used to design and target professional training for attorneys and judges, and to continue to build support for a more fairly resourced juvenile defender system.

Models for Change continues to work on a variety of fronts to address racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system in Illinois, in part by educating policymakers and the public on the issue, in part by seeking specific improvements in the data needed to monitor and assess system performance in this area, and perhaps most concretely by advocating for reforms of harsh and inflexible transfer laws that overwhelmingly affect minority youth—like the successful elimination of the automatic transfer law for low-level drug offenders, which the research shows has already resulted in the retention of hundreds of youth of color in the juvenile system. If Models for Change can succeed in these and similar efforts, Wolff says, “The expectation among youth in our poor and predominantly African-American communities will no longer be that it is normal or a rite of passage to go to jail and prison. Their families will not expect or accept this expectation and the norms in the system which foster it.”

**Models for Change is leveraging limited private resources “to move vastly larger sums of public resources toward reform practices and away from the old, broken systems.”**

Ambitions like those aren’t fulfilled overnight. It takes a lot of work, a lot of ideas, a lot of people. To sustain reform momentum over the long haul and bring together the people and ideas that are making change happen in Illinois, Models for Change launched a series of “Connecting the Pathways” conferences. The idea, reflected in a recent Proclamation issued by Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich, is to foster collaborations and the

spread of practical reform knowledge and strategies across Illinois, among those working within and without Models for Change. It's a mirror of the Models for Change strategy as a whole, which Paula Wolff says "connects the leaders in the movement on three levels: practitioners within and among states with one another; practitioners with researchers and their research; and practitioners with National Resource Bank members who create and monitor best practices." Ultimately, Connecting the Pathways is tapping into what Wolff calls "pockets of interest in juvenile justice reform, strong and deep commitment to change at the local level that can inspire and inform other communities across the state."

## Louisiana

Louisiana, the third state to enlist in the Models for Change effort, has come a long way since the 1990s, when crowded and substandard conditions in the state's juvenile corrections facilities prompted a U.S. Department of Justice civil rights lawsuit. The dramatic progress the state has made since arriving at a mediated settlement of that suit—in reducing its institutional population, shutting down unneeded facilities, and beginning the process of creating a more humane and effective system of community-based responses to delinquency—is proof of the sustained commitment and focus of Louisiana's juvenile justice leadership. That's what makes Louisiana an ideal state for Models for Change investment. Despite the challenges it has posed—including Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav, and Ike—there is no better place in America to find juvenile justice reform momentum.

Models for Change efforts in Louisiana, coordinated by the Louisiana Board of Regents for Higher Education, are aimed

**"Strong engagement and support for system reform among state and local leadership has been a constant" during the two and a half years that the initiative has been active in Louisiana.**

at helping state and local leaders plan for and build a local infrastructure of alternatives to formal processing and secure confinement; promoting and increasing access to evidence-based services; addressing the problem of disproportionate minority contact with the juvenile justice system; and supporting other statewide reforms aligned with these basic goals through various kinds of education, training, program development, and technical assistance.

"Strong engagement and support for system reform among state and local leadership has been a constant" during the two and a half years that the initiative has been active in Louisiana,

according to Dr. Debra DePrato, who serves the state Board of Regents as Project Director of Louisiana Models for Change. While political transitions—including both significant legislative turnover and a change of administrations—have replaced some of the key players, the state's commitment to basic goals has remained unchanged. "Juvenile justice reform continues to be a priority of Governor Jindal's administration," DePrato says.

So far, Models for Change has contributed in a variety of ways to lay the groundwork that will be necessary to establish a more flexible yet accountable, community-based and treatment-oriented set of responses to delinquency. National Resource Bank members have been working with Children and Youth Planning Boards and local leadership in selected parishes to assess diversion policies, practices, statutes and funding, review existing local programming, identify needs, and plan for expansions. Key decision points in local systems have been mapped, and the ways in which data are used in decisionmaking have been assessed and documented. And data collection has begun for an evaluation of a locally developed early intervention program for middle school students—which, if the results warrant, will be thoroughly documented and packaged for replication elsewhere in the state.

Models for Change also seeks to expand both the availability of scientifically supported community-level interventions in Louisiana, and the use of valid screening and assessment practices that effectively channel youth into those interventions. To help build a culture supportive of evidence-based practices in Louisiana generally, Models for Change has sponsored several large-scale training and public education events, including an "Evidence-Based Practice Summit for Louisiana Leadership." Jurisdictions participating in Models for Change have paved the way by adopting a common pre-disposition risk and needs assessment tool, the Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth, to guide and inform decisionmaking. All have developed local Functional Family Therapy teams that can provide proven treatment alternatives to the incarceration of parish youth. In anticipation of planned future expansions, a survey of treatment providers serving youth in these parishes has been conducted, documenting the assessment methods being used and the extent to which evidence-based and promising practices are employed to address identified needs.

Some of the most vital work of Models for Change in Louisiana has been done in partnership with universities. Training and educational events supportive of evidence-based practice have been organized by the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center School of Public Health, for example. An

innovative “data group” led by the University of New Orleans has performed a variety of essential functions—helping to guide and inform state and local reform planning, ensuring that the work in the parishes is structured and documented in such a way that its results can be accurately tracked and assessed, and working with policymakers to lay the groundwork for permanent improvements in the data systems that support juvenile justice decisionmaking in Louisiana. The data group’s activities are part of “a model for data-driven decisionmaking and the monitoring of outcomes within the juvenile justice system,” says DePrato. Local jurisdictions are seeing for the first time what kinds of practical help universities can provide, she adds, and they’re eager for more. “There is a clear desire to replicate these models, and increase these types of collaborations between higher education and juvenile jurisdictions. Jurisdictions are reaching out to local colleges and universities to engage them—in data collection, analysis, field placements, research, training, education, and provision of professional services.”

## Washington

Washington, the final core state chosen to participate in the Models for Change initiative, has been a leader in juvenile justice reform and innovation for decades. Its pioneering support for research-based practices, sustained commitment to evaluation, quality assurance, and cost-benefit analysis of juvenile justice programming, and ongoing work on such issues as reducing disproportionate minority contact and fostering multi-system collaboration have made it a fertile ground for reform investments.

As in other Models for Change states, state and local reform efforts in Washington are aimed at a range of goals, including expanding alternatives to formal processing and secure confinement, reducing racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system, and improving the way the system identifies and responds to the mental health needs of youth. In addition, Models for Change partners are working to enhance the quality of legal representation in delinquency cases, promote broader adoption of promising “balanced and restorative justice” approaches to delinquency, and improve overall communication, coordination and collaboration among the juvenile justice, child welfare, education, mental health and chemical dependency treatment systems.

It’s an ambitious agenda, admits the Hon. Bobbe Bridge, retired Washington State Supreme Court Justice and Founding President of the Center for Children & Youth Justice, a

Seattle-based reform organization that coordinates Models for Change in Washington. And it’s early yet. “It’s been a little over one year since the five local demonstration sites were selected,” she says, “and less than a year since their awards were made and work plan implementation commenced. Therefore, most work has centered on community engagement and obtaining a better understanding of the underlying factors contributing to the outcomes [we] intend to impact.”

But there is good reason to expect that reform work in Washington will yield models that will prove useful in other jurisdictions. For example, the initiative is helping state and local partners find effective ways to use truancy laws to reengage youth in school without unnecessary use of detention:

- Funding development and validation of an effective risk assessment instrument for status offenders, including truant;
- Informing and supporting efforts to revise state truancy laws, to introduce needed flexibility, improve access to effective truancy prevention and school re-engagement services, and ensure that formal processing and confinement are used only when all other approaches have failed;
- Reviewing truancy processes and procedures in one demonstration site, with an eye to expanding availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate truancy services for Latino youth; and
- Commissioning an evaluation of the effectiveness of a locally grown intervention program in another site—the Clark County Truancy Program—that may prove suitable for packaging and replication elsewhere in the state.

By the time these and other truancy-related reform efforts in Washington are finished, Bridge predicts, “Formal court processing of truant students will be the last resort in a comprehensive range of interventions focused on school re-engagement.” Results like that will get noticed—and used—across the country.

Similarly, Models for Change in Washington is supporting a variety of promising approaches to addressing the mental health needs of youth who come into contact with the juvenile justice system, including:

There is good reason to expect that reform work in Washington will yield models that will prove useful in other jurisdictions.

- An effort to enhance the cultural competence of evidence-based treatment programs in order to increase their efficacy in communities of color;
- A pilot middle school-based mental health intervention team program designed to reduce unnecessary referrals to the juvenile court; and
- Expansion of the use of the juvenile offender mental health disposition option as an alternative to incarceration in state delinquency institutions.

“It’s too early to show measurable success,” Bridge points out. Anyway, she adds, “Hiring staff, convening committees and evaluating current systems are not as challenging as the next steps.” But she’s optimistic, and she’s not the only one. “Models for Change has generated a great deal of excitement and been a catalyst for community engagement. It has also provided a synergistic forum, bringing together local and state leaders involved in the system reform efforts. ...Having a person or team dedicated to these reforms provides the coordinated effort necessary for ensuring what needs to be done, gets done.”

## Research Initiative

One of the founding principles of Models for Change is that practical approaches to delinquency should reflect and be guided by basic developmental science. It was the findings of the MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice that first gave rise to Models for Change, by calling attention to the urgent need for juvenile

justice reform that would close the gap between law, policy and practice and expanding developmental knowledge. Though the Research Network’s work is now completed, Models for Change continues to fund research in support of juvenile justice reform, through the Models for Change Research Initiative.

According to Dr. Laurence Steinberg, Distinguished University Professor and Laura H. Carnell Professor of Psychology at Temple University, who directed the

Research Network and now oversees the Models for Change Research Initiative, it was a logical progression. “For about ten years the Network studied how new knowledge about

adolescent development might inform policy and practice in the justice system. Given the Foundation’s interest in evidence-based practice, it was a natural follow-on to the Network to see if implementing change that was consistent with the lessons we learned would improve system performance in the Models for Change sites.”

The scientists who make up the Research Initiative consortium are now working on a set of nine research projects that will support and inform the substantive reform work going on in the four core Models for Change states. “Several members of the original Network,” Steinberg explains, “as well as a group of new researchers, are now studying a number of new questions that are directly relevant to the Models for Change initiative within the Models for Change sites. These include research on the use of mental health screening, the potential causes of disproportionate minority contact, and the ways in which juvenile justice systems respond to changes in their structure and financing.”

Specific research questions have been framed with the needs of practitioners and policymakers in mind. “One unusual aspect of this work is that the studies have been developed through a collaboration between the researchers, members of the Models for Change teams at each site, and members of the National Resource Bank,” Steinberg points out. Which means they are likely to yield results that are of more than academic interest—results that will both expand the evidence base for reform and shape its direction.

“We need to return to a more rehabilitative orientation with respect to the ways in which we respond to juvenile crime,” Steinberg says, adding that he is “guardedly optimistic” about the long-term prospects for change. “Attitudes among policymakers have appeared to be shifting, and our own survey data indicate that the public would prefer to rehabilitate rather than punish all but the most violent and incorrigible youth. But history teaches us that when the economy turns sour and unemployment increases, crime usually rises, and when crime rises, politicians are reluctant to call for any changes that might be interpreted as indicating that they are soft on crime.”

“Only time will tell. It certainly is the case that there is a consensus among individuals interested in juvenile justice that there is a great need for reform.”

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# ModelsforChange

Systems Reform in Juvenile Justice

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