

# ModelsforChange

Systems Reform in Juvenile Justice

## The Models for Change Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network

### Overview

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation is sponsoring the creation of a Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network (the “Network”) as part of its Models for Change initiative. The MacArthur Foundation is investing more than \$1 million per year the MH/JJ Action Network for each of the next three years for a total of more than \$3 million. The Network will be coordinated through the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice (NCMHJJ) at Policy Research Associates in Delmar, NY. The intent of the Network is to establish a leadership community of states at the forefront of mental health and juvenile justice issues. Four new Partnering States will join the current four Models for Change States (Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Illinois, and Washington) in this important endeavor.

Network States will be afforded a unique opportunity to work closely with other states interested in and committed to improving the response to youth with mental health needs in contact with the juvenile justice system, with the assistance and support of leading experts from across the country. Network States will also participate in the Network’s Strategic Innovation Groups - a novel approach in which a small group of representatives from Network States will work closely together, with the guidance of leading experts and funding to support implementation, to develop and implement new strategies for addressing specific issues in mental health and juvenile justice. Finally, the Network will afford this select group of states with various opportunities for peer learning and networking, allowing Network States to learn from one another’s experiences and successes.

### Background

Over the past several years, states across the country have increasingly become aware of the large numbers of youth involved with the juvenile justice system with mental health and co-occurring substance use disorders. More than two million youth under the age of 18 are arrested each year, and more than 100,000 of these youth are in placement in juvenile detention and correction facilities on any given day. Studies have consistently found the rate of mental disorders to be higher among the juvenile justice population than among youth in the general population, with approximately 65-70% experiencing a mental health disorder approximately 25% experiencing serious mental health problems. There is also a growing recognition that a significant proportion of these youth also have co-occurring substance use disorders.

In addition to the large numbers of youth in the juvenile justice system with mental health disorders, there is significant documentation of the inadequate and often inappropriate care and treatment these youth receive while in the system. A series of investigations undertaken by the U.S. Department of Justice into the conditions of confinement in juvenile correctional facilities have repeatedly found a failure on the part of the facilities to adequately address the mental health needs of youth in their care. This is particularly troublesome in light of recent reports that suggest that many youth are incarcerated solely to access mental health services that are unavailable in the community but believed to be available through the juvenile justice system. A report by the US General Accounting Office conservatively estimates that in fiscal year 2001, parents placed over 12,700 youth into the child welfare or juvenile justice systems so that children could receive mental health services. Of these placements, approximately 75% were in the juvenile justice system.

In response to this growing sense of crisis, significant efforts have been undertaken to address this issue, both at the national and local level. As a result, clear progress has been made. Over the past few years, we have seen the increasing use of scientifically sound screening and assessment instruments, the growing emphasis on diversion and community-based treatment, and the development and expansion of evidence-based practices. While these advancements represent clear opportunities for an improved response to these justice-involved youth, the ability of the field to capitalize on these developments on a large scale continues to be limited by a number of issues that remain unaddressed. Therefore, the involvement of youth with mental health problems in the juvenile justice system continues to be one of the most pressing issues facing county and state juvenile justice and mental health systems.

As a result, a handful of states have embarked on major reform efforts targeted specifically at improving the response to youth with mental health needs in contact with the juvenile justice system. For example, the four states participating in the MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change initiative have identified mental health as a priority. Models for Change is a systems change effort to create successful and sustainable models of juvenile justice system reform through targeted Foundation investments in particular states. States selected to participate in this initiative identify targeted areas of improvement, and then work in conjunction with local, state and national partners to implement a plan to bring about systemic change and address these issue areas. The goal is to make the state a successful model of reform and share the learnings with other states and communities interested in similar reform. *Additional information about Models for Change is available at [www.modelsforchange.net](http://www.modelsforchange.net).*

Models for Change is not a mental health/juvenile justice reform effort per se. However, because of the significance of this issue, all four of the selected Models for Change states have identified a variety of issues related to justice-involved youth with mental health needs. For example, both Pennsylvania and Washington have identified mental health as one of their three Targeted Areas of Improvement for Models for Change, and have participated at both the local and state level in an intensive strategic planning process to improve their response to justice-involved youth with mental health needs. Similarly, Louisiana and Illinois, in their efforts to address issues such as community-based services and evidence-based practices are, or will be, directly focusing on mental health.

The attention by the Models for Change states to this issue echoes the concerns being raised across the country over the inappropriate and inadequate treatment of these youth in the

juvenile justice system, and the call for improving the response to the needs of justice-involved youth. Given the common concern about this issue among these sites, the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice, received funding from the MacArthur Foundation to establish the Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network to bring these four states together, along with four new Partnering States, to work together to develop and implement new solutions and strategies, to foster peer learning and information sharing, and to establish a leadership community that spurs improvements across the country.

## Objectives

### ***Objective 1: Foster Development and Exchange of Ideas among the Network Sites.***

Models for Change has emerged as a real opportunity for the development of exciting and important innovations, with the potential to significantly improve the lives of youth with mental health needs in contact with the juvenile justice systems in the Models for Change States. Each of these states has embarked individually on important work in mental health / juvenile justice. While these individual efforts are clearly important, the Models for Change States, like many others across the country, are often grappling with many of the same challenges in developing a model system that appropriately responds to this population, such as implementing screening and assessment mechanisms, ensuring access to needed community-based mental health programs, developing evidence-based practices, funding of mental health services, and establishing collaborative working relationships across agencies.

In the face of such commonalities, there is clearly much to be gained by peer learning and networking. Not only can sites learn from one another about strategies and approaches already undertaken in other sites, but opportunity also exists for brainstorming of new strategies and new innovations. Despite this, until now there was no adequate, formal mechanism in place to facilitate such peer to peer discussion of barriers, sharing of strategies, or diffusion of lessons learned. The need for such a mechanism was the impetus for the development of the Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network. In pursuit of this goal, a major objective of the Network's activities will be to facilitate this type of peer learning and exchange of ideas.

### ***Objective 2: Support and Enhance Progress in the Network States by Providing Information, Resources, and Expertise.***

The Network will also seek to enhance the efforts within the Network States by providing the sites with the latest resources and information on mental health and juvenile justice. The coordinator of the Network, the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice, operates a resource center focused exclusively on this issue. Network activities, such as the Annual Meeting, will draw on the resources and national contacts of the Center to ensure that Network States have the information needed to make informed, appropriate decisions and to evaluate new strategies and approaches with knowledge of and assistance from leading experts in the field.

### ***Objective 3: Develop and Implement New Solutions and Strategies to Better Identify and Treat Youth with Mental Health Needs in the Juvenile Justice System.***

The Network has been designed to function as a springboard for innovation. Most notably, one of the major activities of the Network - the Strategic Innovation Groups (described in the "Activities" section) - will bring Network States and leading experts together to develop strategies and recommendations for addressing specific, targeted issues identified as priorities within participating states. States will implement the recommendations developed through their

Strategic Innovation Group and track the changes that have occurred. This intensive strategic planning and implementation process will place Network States at the forefront of change and establish them as national leaders.

***Objective 4: Disseminate Learnings from Models for Change and the Network across the Country.***

As the Network States emerge as leaders across the country, the Network will work to actively diffuse the lessons learned in the Network States and through Models for Change. This will be accomplished through a number of activities, including the development and dissemination of publication series; the creation of a Network Web site; and listservs. In addition, the Network States will become part of a Leadership Community of States, sharing **their experiences with other jurisdictions, and potentially serving as expert host sites to other jurisdictions interested in learning more about their reform efforts.**

## **Network Activities**

In pursuit of these goals, the Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network will involve a number of activities that will enhance the progress of the Network States in addressing mental health issues among justice-involved youth; foster the development and exchange of ideas among the Network States; and disseminate the learnings from the Network and Models for Change nationwide. **Applicants selected as a Partnering State will be expected to fully participate in all Network Activities.** These activities include:

***Annual Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network Meetings.*** Each year, the Network will convene an Annual Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network Meeting, which will bring together key representatives from the Models for Change States and Partnering States, and leading national experts and researchers. The Annual Meeting will provide a forum for:

- Information sharing and networking, and relationship building;
- Sharing of new knowledge and resources, and discussion of key issues related to mental health and juvenile justice;
- Selection of possible topics for the Strategic Innovation Groups; and
- Solicitation of feedback and suggestions from Network States about the Network.

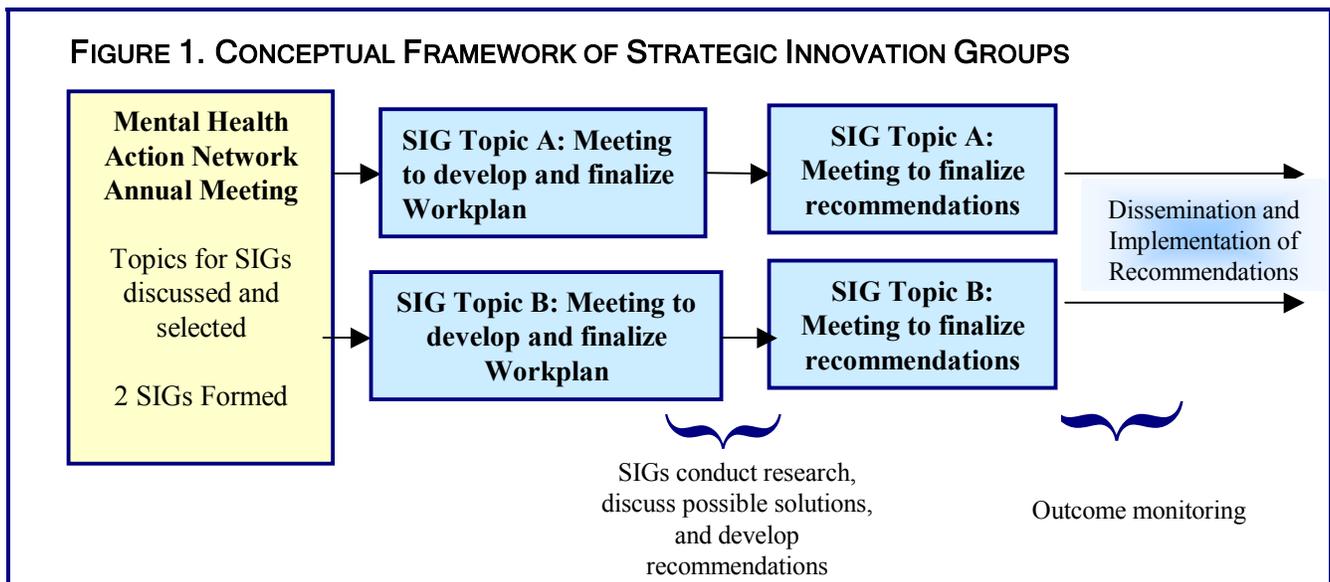
Each Network State's Core Team is expected to attend and participate in the Annual Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network Meetings. **The first meeting will take place in Washington, D.C. on October 30-31<sup>st</sup>, 2007.**

***Strategic Innovation Groups.*** The Strategic Innovation Groups (SIGs) **are a structured approach, specifically designed to generate new and innovative solutions through a collaborative process; and bring about rapid responses to critical issues through the development and implementation of practical recommendations or guidelines.** Each year at the Annual Meeting, critical topics will be chosen as the focus for the SIG. It will be expected that each Network State will address at least one SIG topic each year. The Strategic Innovation Groups constitute a mechanism within the Action Network for quickly developing and diffusing new knowledge among the Network States around critical and pressing mental health issues within the juvenile justice context. Network States that participate on the SIGs will work together to develop solutions to specific common issues. Each SIG will be charged with addressing and

developing new knowledge around a specific issue that has been identified across the sites. The SIG process is illustrated in Figure 1 and described more fully below.

SIG Process. Once the SIG topics have been selected, participating Network States will select their topic and send two representatives to attend the first SIG Meeting to be held in January 2008 for Year 1. Along with key experts in the particular issue of focus, this first meeting will serve as a forum for the group to designate roles and responsibilities, develop goals and objectives, and outline tasks. After the first SIG Meeting, the representatives will work with members from the Core and Home Teams to conduct further research on the issue, discuss possible strategies and solutions, and develop recommendations for addressing the issue. These recommendations will be finalized at a second SIG Meeting, also involving the same two selected representatives from the Network State, to be held in April 2008, and summarized in a formal report. Participating SIG Sites will then implement those recommendations.

Network States are expected to participate in at least one Strategic Innovation Group per year. **As part of this effort, Participating sites will be expected to develop baseline measures of key benchmarks for assessing the particular issue that is the focus of the SIG, and to monitor those benchmarks as the recommendations are implemented.** Limited funding will be made available to Partnering States to support the implementation of the SIG recommendations and/or strategies.



**Other Resources and Activities.** In addition to the activities described above, the Network will undertake a series of interrelated activities designed to enhance the Network States’ progress, facilitate peer learning, and provide networking opportunities. All Network States will have access to the resources of the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice. Since its inception, the Center has become the focal point for the collection, development and dissemination of the latest information on mental health and juvenile justice. The Center also has an extensive network of consultants and experienced staff that provide technical assistance and advice to jurisdictions across the country. As the Network Coordinator, the Center will provide resources and assistance to the Strategic Innovation Groups whenever needed, and will draw from its extensive list of national consultants to facilitate these groups and provide the Network with the latest information in mental health and juvenile justice through presentations at

the Annual Meeting.

The Network will also use a variety of means to directly provide Network States with the latest information, including a sophisticated Network Web site, web-based teleconferences, quarterly calls with site leaders, and targeted listservs. In turn, accomplishments of the Network States will be shared with the nation through these mechanisms, as well as a series of publications highlighting the accomplishments and innovations that emerge from the Network.

## **Benefits of Participation**

Participation in the Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network will yield many benefits, including:

- Access to a wealth of resources, including leading experts in the field and the latest resources and information;
- Participation in an innovative new change process - the Strategic Innovation Groups - that will assist participating states in tackling complex issues with the advice and guidance of peers in other states and expert consultants;
- Opportunity to serve in a leadership capacity for other states and counties across the nation;
- Participation in an Annual Meeting where the latest issues and new strategies will be highlighted, and a rich array of networking opportunities will take place; and
- Opportunity to form a strong network of relationships with other states and local jurisdictions concerned about mental health and juvenile justice, and striving to bring about change.