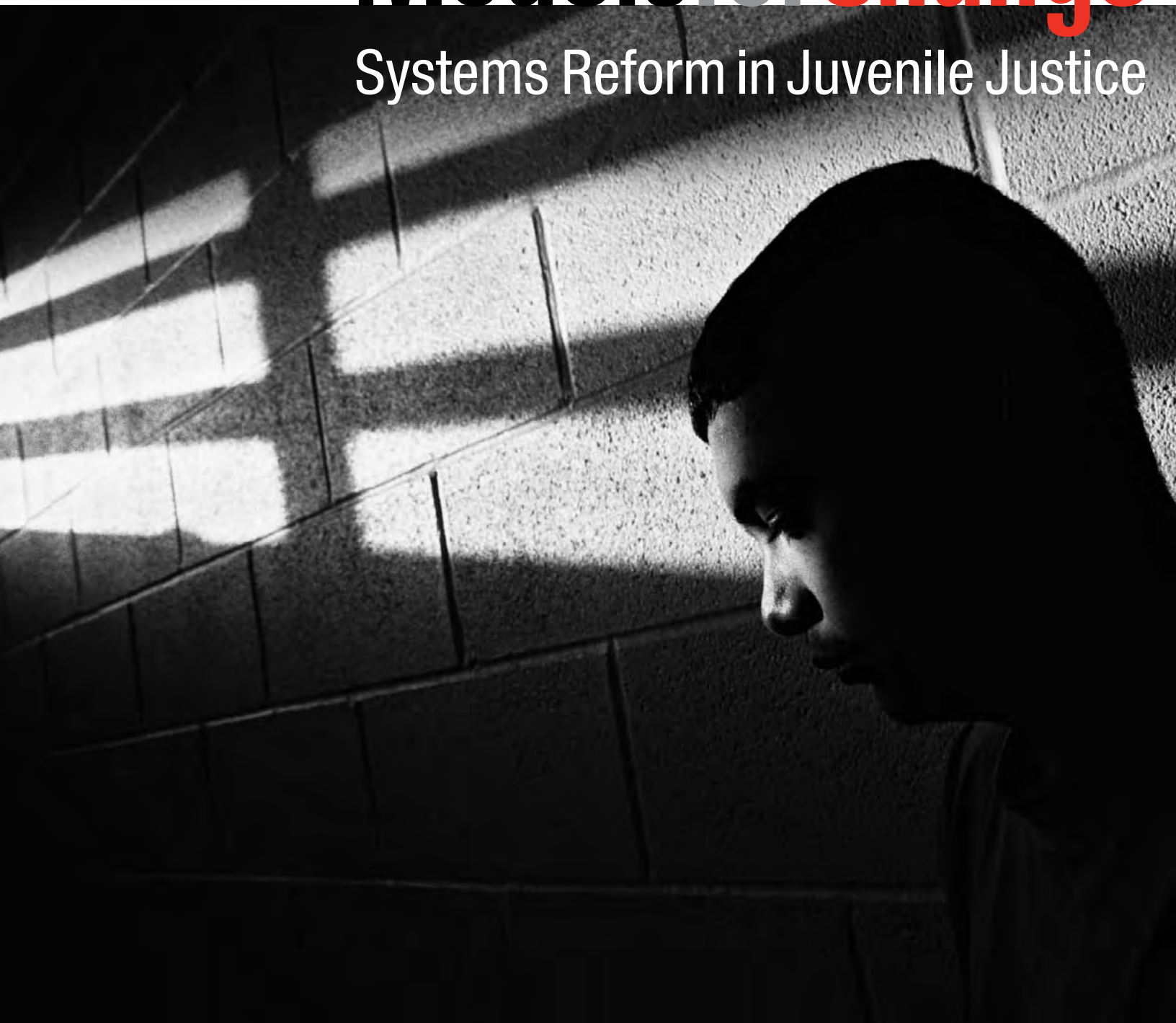


Overview

Models for Change

Systems Reform in Juvenile Justice



Overview

The United States' juvenile justice system was founded a century ago with the enlightened goal of providing individualized treatment and services to children in trouble. In the 1990s, however, the boundaries between the juvenile and criminal justice systems began to erode. Virtually every state passed laws that placed more young people in criminal court, instituted harsher sanctions, and allowed adults and youth to be incarcerated in the same facilities. That is the background against which the MacArthur Foundation entered the field of juvenile justice grantmaking.

Background | Perspective

The rising rate of violent juvenile crime in the 1990s clearly called for new responses. But was it appropriate to treat young offenders as adults? Emerging evidence in the neurosciences seemed to confirm that children, well into their teens, are, in fact, different from adults. Other research pointed to the high individual and societal costs of the new legal measures, including increased recidivism, reduced educational and employment prospects, and troubling racial disparities. The Foundation entered the field with the ultimate goal of promoting a juvenile justice system that is rational, fair, and effective, and that is linked to other agencies and organizations. The system would hold young offenders accountable for their actions, provide for their

rehabilitation, protect them from harm, increase their life chances, and manage the risk they pose to themselves and to public safety.

The first phase of grantmaking, which began in 1996, grew out of the Foundation's long-standing interest in youth development. Grants were directed at two efforts: advancing the scientific knowledge base; and fostering the development of appropriate laws, policies, and practices. The Foundation sought to give decision makers the tools that would allow them to make rational choices for individual juvenile offenders—to assess their culpability, the possibilities for rehabilitation, and the risk of future, more serious offenses. Grants supported the establishment of the long-term, interdisciplinary Research



Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice, as well as training, advocacy, policy analysis, and public education efforts.

These grants laid the groundwork for significant change in the field. But after five years, it was time to take the effort to another level. As our nation's juvenile justice system entered its second century, the Foundation launched an initiative to help states become models of juvenile justice reform.

Models for Change: A Framework

In partnership with its grantees in the juvenile justice field, the Foundation has developed a working framework for a model juvenile justice system.

The framework is grounded in eight principles that reflect widely shared and firmly held values related to juvenile justice:

- *Fundamental fairness*: All system participants—including youthful offenders, their victims, and their families—deserve bias-free treatment.
- *Recognition of juvenile-adult differences*: The system must take into account that juveniles are fundamentally and developmentally different from adults.
- *Recognition of individual differences*: Juvenile justice decision makers must acknowledge and respond to individual differences in terms of young people's development, culture, gender, needs, and strengths.
- *Recognition of potential*: Young offenders have strengths and are capable of positive growth. Giving up on them is costly for society. Investing in them makes sense.
- *Safety*: Communities and individuals deserve to be and to feel safe.
- *Personal responsibility*: Young people must be encouraged to accept responsibility for their actions and the consequences of those actions.
- *Community responsibility*: Communities have an obligation to safeguard the welfare of children and young people, to support them when in need, and to help them to grow into adults.
- *System responsibility*: The juvenile justice system is a vital part of society's collective exercise of its responsibility toward young people. It must do its job effectively.

Building on these principles, the framework defines goals, practices, and outcomes against which actual systems can compare themselves. In areas in which actual systems fall short or depart radically from this concept of the ideal, it is hoped that the framework will both stimulate and give practical direction to reform efforts.

Grantmaking Strategy

The initiative's goal is to accelerate progress towards more rational, fair, effective, and developmentally sound juvenile justice systems in selected states—in the process developing models of successful system-wide reform that can be emulated elsewhere. The states—Pennsylvania, Illinois, Louisiana, and Washington—were chosen based on a variety of criteria, including their political and fiscal commitment to reform, support for reform both in and outside the juvenile justice system, and the likelihood that other states would follow their lead.

A lead grantee organization in each Models for Change state is responsible for identifying target issues, planning reform efforts, and working with state and local agencies and organizations in shaping and implementing those plans. An advisory board of key individuals and groups will assist in clarifying reform goals and objectives, outlining strategies, and monitoring the progress of the work.

Because system change requires coordination and documentation, the Foundation also has provided a grant to the National Center for Juvenile Justice to broaden the perspective

and “connect the dots” within and across states. Other national grantees—including some of the nation's leading experts and practitioners in juvenile justice—are serving as a resource network for all states.

Advancing the Models

Efforts in targeted states cannot yield models of successful system change unless they are studied, documented and explained to the field. Ensuring that the work of the Models for Change initiative in each state has an impact beyond that state's borders calls for two basic kinds of efforts: efforts to document, assess, and understand the process of change; and efforts to spread the news about it. A range of vehicles and strategies will be used to develop and disseminate information about the initiative—the knowledge it generates, the innovations it fosters, the results it achieves, the lessons it teaches, and the possibilities it opens up—to a national audience. In addition to reports, briefs and other informational materials available to the public through the Models for Change website (www.modelsforchange.net), other ways of promoting systems change to juvenile justice audiences will include organized visits to pilot sites, state and national conferences, and outreach to the media. “Action networks” of practitioners and policymakers from other states will also be formed, to share reform ideas, strategies and knowledge with Models for Change participants.

As systems change efforts begin to show results, the Foundation will encourage the expansion of those efforts. The National Center for Juvenile Justice will develop materials and resources that can be used by other states, and communication activities that create interest and demand. But progress will also come organically, as the first states produce a critical mass of individuals and groups that serve as emissaries of reform. Success across different states will demonstrate that reform doesn't depend on a charismatic leader or an unusual alignment of forces. It will help other states see that barriers to systems change can be overcome—that there are many pathways to reform.



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Frequently Asked Questions

When and why did the MacArthur Foundation enter the field of juvenile justice grantmaking? The Foundation began making grants in the field of juvenile justice in 1996. The investment grew from our long-standing interest in youth development and was sparked by an unsettling national trend to treat youthful offenders as if they were no longer young.

What do you wish to achieve through your grantmaking in this area? Our goal is to promote a juvenile justice system that is rational, fair, and effective—one that holds young offenders 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 public safety.

How will the Models for Change initiative advance that goal? The initiative will identify and accelerate promising statewide models for juvenile justice systems reform. In each state a lead entity or organization is identifying systemic leverage points for targeted reform investments. The lead entity then partners with state, county, and national organizations to bring about change in those target areas, in the process helping the state to become a model of successful juvenile justice reform.

What does a model system look like? We do not believe that there is a single model—in fact, we are investing in multiple states with the express goal of promoting several different models. We do believe, however, that a model system must reflect eight key principles: fundamental fairness; recognition of juvenile-adult differences; recognition of individual differences; recognition of young peoples' potential; public safety; individual responsibility; community responsibility; and system responsibility.

How is the initiative structured? A lead entity oversees planning with local grantees and stakeholders and coordinates grantees' implementation work. A national resource bank of grantees provides training, technical assistance, and other support as needed. A technical resource center documents reform implementation, assesses its effects, and reports the results.

Which states did you select for investment, and why?

Pennsylvania, Illinois, Louisiana, and Washington were selected based on their record of progress, the likelihood of realizing successful outcomes in three to five years, and their potential as bellwether states. The states have very different histories and cultures, population demographics, economic resources, political landscapes and types of challenges. By examining change in states at different starting points, Models for Change aims to make it easier to generalize the lessons learned and replicate progress nationwide.

Who are the lead entities in those states? The lead entity in Pennsylvania is the Philadelphia-based Juvenile Law Center. In Illinois it's the Civitas ChildLaw Center at Loyola University Chicago. In Louisiana it's the Louisiana Board of Regents. And in Washington it's the Center for Children and Youth Justice.

How will progress be measured in each state? We will track five key outcomes.

- Impartial and unbiased decision making* (reduced racial disparities)
- Retention of youth in the juvenile justice system* (reduced transfer and waiver to adult criminal court)
- Pro-social development and engagement* (increased participation in education and rehabilitation and treatment programs and services)
- Public safety* (reduced recidivism)
- Informal local handling of delinquency* (reduced reliance on incarceration and increased use of community-based alternative sanctions).

How will you gauge the overall success of the initiative?

The success of the initiative will be judged by the extent to which the sites targeted for change show progress toward stated goals; to which change in targeted areas moves the state closer to having a model system; to which minority overrepresentation and racial disparities are reduced; and to which progress shown in Models for Change states motivates leaders in other states to take on the challenges of reform.

www.modelsforchange.net

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The National Resource Bank

The Models for Change initiative makes grants to national organizations that together constitute a national resource bank—a treasury of knowledge and tools, training and technical assistance, advocacy and public education strategies—that those working on juvenile justice system reform at the state and local levels can draw upon. Current initiative grantees include some of the leading experts and practitioners in the field:

- Center for Children’s Law and Policy
- Child Welfare League of America
- Coalition for Juvenile Justice
- Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators
- Justice Policy Institute
- Juvenile Law Center
- National Center for Juvenile Justice
- National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice
- National Council of La Raza
- National Juvenile Defender Center
- Research Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice
- University of Massachusetts, National Youth Screening Assistance Project

The photographs on the cover and on page three are by photographer Steve Liss, who gained unprecedented access to a juvenile detention center in Texas for his book *No Place for Children: Voices from Juvenile Detention* (University of Texas Press 2005).