

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Models for Change Initiative?

Models for Change is an effort to create successful and replicable models of juvenile justice system reform through targeted investments in key states. With substantial long-term funding and support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Models for Change seeks to accelerate progress toward a more rational, fair, effective, and developmentally appropriate juvenile justice system, and to advance reforms that effectively hold young people accountable for their actions, provide for their rehabilitation, protect them from harm, increase their life chances, and manage the risk they pose.

What are Action Networks?

Models for Change has recruited other state and local jurisdictions to become "Action Networks." With support from the Foundation and the assistance of MfC partners, Action Networks focus on bringing about change in three specific issue areas in juvenile justice: the eradication of racial disparities in the juvenile justice system, the development of better means of treating and diverting court-involved youth with mental health needs, and the enhancement of juvenile indigent defense representation.

What is the purpose of the Juvenile Indigent Defense Action Network?

The Juvenile Indigent Defense Action Network (JIDAN) seeks to promote change that strengthens and enhances juvenile indigent defense systems by actively engaging juvenile defenders, policymakers, judges, and other decision makers in designing strategies that will improve juvenile indigent defense policy and practice. The vision for reform is to create a model juvenile indigent defense system that ensures the protection of youth's due process rights throughout the duration of the juvenile court process. In this system, youth have early and timely access to competent, well-trained, and well-resourced counsel, and juvenile defenders have the ability and capacity to provide comprehensive and thorough legal representation to the children they serve.

How will JIDAN undertake this work?

The work of the JIDAN will be organized into two "Strategic Innovations Groups" known as SIGs. The SIGs will undertake concerted reform efforts (strategic innovations) on specific issue areas that will lead to measurable outcomes to improve juvenile indigent defense system policies or practices.

The JIDAN has chosen to focus on two important areas, (1) Access to Counsel and (2) Resource Centers. The Access to Counsel SIG will work to ensure that youth have timely access to counsel throughout the duration of the juvenile court process, with a particular focus on early appointment, post-disposition representation, and increased defender competence and oversight through the development of standards and practice guidelines. The second SIG, focused on the creation of state, local or regional juvenile defender Resource Centers, presents an opportunity to provide leadership, capacity building, support, and mentoring to juvenile defenders, and to promulgate policies and practices that advocate for a holistic and zealous approach to juvenile defense.

What states belong to the JIDAN?

California, Florida, New Jersey and Massachusetts were selected to join the four existing MfC states, Illinois, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, and Washington, to make up the eight-state Juvenile Indigent Defense Action Network.

Who will coordinate the work of the JIDAN?

The National Juvenile Defender Center (NJDC) coordinates the JIDAN. NJDC is a member of the Models for Change National Resource Bank and its mission is to ensure excellence in juvenile defense and to promote justice for all children. To learn more about the Juvenile Indigent Defense Action Network please contact Senior Policy and Communications Associate Rey Cheatham Banks at rbanks@njdc.info or at 202.452.0010, ext. 107.