

WHY JUVENILE JUSTICE MATTERS TO HUMAN SERVICES AGENCIES

It matters because the juvenile justice system has a direct impact on counties' investments in health, justice and social services. It matters because current juvenile justice practices cost more to counties than the benefits they bring to the community. And it matters because collaboration between human services and juvenile justice systems can divert youth from future involvement in the adult criminal justice system and use of public health systems, where counties already spend more than \$70 billion and \$69 billion annually, respectively.

County governments are uniquely positioned to have a dramatic impact on the lives of their young residents, families and the broader community. As the primary local provider of health, justice and social services, counties have the opportunity and responsibility to implement collaborative, evidence-based programs and policies that bolster public safety and improve human outcomes. The National Association of Counties (NACo) has joined the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's *Models for Change* Juvenile Justice Reform Initiative to educate and assist county leaders as they undertake these important improvements to their justice and human services systems that can benefit communities and reduce costs.

MANY JUSTICE-INVOLVED YOUTH ARE INVOLVED IN MULTIPLE PUBLIC SYSTEMS

Many youth are served by the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, but fall through the gaps between them. One study found that 67 percent of youth referred to the juvenile justice system had some involvement with the county's child welfare agency.¹ These "dual status youth" experience particularly poor outcomes: they have higher rates of recidivism, are detained more often and for longer periods of time and experience more frequent placement changes. As adults, they are more likely to be incarcer-

ated, be unemployed and depend on public systems like cash or housing assistance. These outcomes translate into tremendous costs for communities and the youth themselves.

THESE YOUTH HAVE MAJOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND OTHER NEEDS

The vast majority of youth end up in the juvenile justice system for non-violent or relatively minor offenses, and unmet behavioral health needs are often a contributing factor.

- Up to 70 percent of youth in the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable mental health disorder.²
- More than 60 percent of those with a mental health disorder also have a substance use disorder.³
- As many as 30 to 50 percent of incarcerated youth have a learning disability.⁴

Law enforcement, detention centers and courts are not equipped to meet these unique needs on their own. County agencies must work together to identify a child's issues and provide appropriate treatment. Most juvenile offenders are less likely to reoffend if they remain in the community and receive services that address their underlying needs.

COLLABORATION AMONG COUNTY AGENCIES PRODUCES BETTER OUTCOMES AND COSTS LESS

Youth often receive services from multiple providers that do not coordinate care. They may see different judges, have different therapists and their probation officer and child protection workers may not communicate, or even know of the other's existence. Community-based services are less costly than detention and more effective than care in correctional facilities. Sites with successful cross-agency collaboration follow protocols to ensure that dual status youth are identified early in the justice process, use coordinated case planning meetings to bring together the youth, family and professionals from multiple systems to develop a workable case plan and commit to providing evidence-based programs to steer youth away from further justice involvement.

County officials are encouraged to visit the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice to learn about coordinating the systems of their youth-serving agencies. The Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Collaborative for Change offers resources on effective practices to meet the behavioral health needs of kids in the justice system. With all of the *Models for Change* Resource Centers, NACo will educate county leaders on effective ways to improve their juvenile justice systems, even as they grapple with tough fiscal decisions. NACo will provide publications, webinars, blog posts, podcasts and forums at sites around the country.

To learn more about the *Models for Change* Resource Center Partnership and access toolkits as well as examples from counties that have improved their juvenile justice systems, visit the sites to the right and www.naco.org/programs/csd/Pages/Models-for-Change.aspx.

END NOTES

1. Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice. From Conversation to Collaboration: How Child Welfare Agencies & Juvenile Justice Agencies Can Work Together to Improve Outcomes for Dual Status Youth. Available at http://www.modelsforchange.net/publications/539/From_Conversation_to_Collaboration_How_Child_Welfare_and_Juvenile_Justice_Agencies_Can_Work_Together_to_Improve_Outcomes_for_Dual_Status_Youth.pdf.
2. Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Collaborative for Change. Better Solutions for Youth with Mental Health Needs in the Juvenile Justice System. Available at <http://cfc.ncmhjj.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Whitepaper-Mental-Health-FINAL.pdf>.
3. Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Collaborative for Change. Better Solutions for Youth with Mental Health Needs in the Juvenile Justice System. Available at <http://cfc.ncmhjj.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Whitepaper-Mental-Health-FINAL.pdf>.
4. National Council on Disability. Addressing the Needs of Youth with Disabilities in the Juvenile Justice System: The Current Status of Evidence-Based Research. http://www.ncd.gov/rawmedia_repository/381fe89a_6565_446b_ba18_bad024a59476?document.pdf.



The Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Collaborative for Change, led by the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice, promotes and supports adoption of new resources, tools and program models that allow states and local communities to better respond to youth with mental health needs in the juvenile justice system. It works with sites nationally to provide training, technical assistance, and education. <http://cfc.ncmhjj.com>



The Status Offense Reform Center at the Vera Institute of Justice

serves as a clearinghouse of information and assistance for practitioners and policymakers in juvenile justice, with a focus on encouraging and showcasing strategies to safely and effectively divert non-delinquent youth from the formal juvenile justice system. <http://www.statusoffensereform.org/>



The National Juvenile Defender Center (NJDC) improves access to counsel and the quality of representation for children in the justice system. NJDC

bolsters juvenile defense by: supporting the creation and replication of field-driven innovations, facilitating the adoption of new juvenile justice defense standards and developing a corps of certified juvenile indigent defense trainers. www.njdc.info



Led by the Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps, the RFK National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice builds the capacity of state and local leaders and

practitioners to address the unique needs of dual status youth, coordinate and integrate child-serving systems and improve juvenile probation systems. <http://www.rfknrcjj.org>

FOR EVEN MORE INFORMATION, VISIT

- **Juvenile Justice Resource Hub** | www.jjie.org/hub
The Juvenile Justice Resource Hub is a comprehensive source of information on cutting-edge juvenile justice issues and reform trends. It provides ready access to reliable, accurate, curated information and analysis on juvenile justice issues, including relevant research, best practice models, policy levers for reform, toolkits and experts in the field.
- **Models for Change Website** | www.modelsforchange.net
Funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, *Models for Change* supports coordinated, multi-system interventions to improve outcomes for youth in the juvenile justice system. This site provides effective tools, research, knowledge and innovations to promote reform.