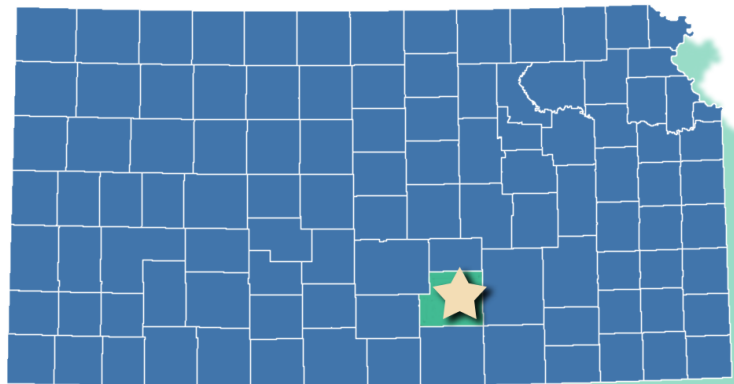


# COUNTY LEADERSHIP IN JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM: SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS

**Population (2013 Census Estimate): 505,415**  
**Youth Population: 134,507 (26.6 percent)**  
**Main Community Makeup: 92 percent Urban,  
8 percent Rural**  
**Persons Below Poverty Level: 14.4 percent**

## THE IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

Consistent with states and counties throughout the country, Sedgwick County started in the early 1990s to take a hard look at the call to expand the size of its jails and juvenile detention centers. County Manager William Buchanan saw an opportunity to re-examine the assumptions that had been made about the effectiveness of “business as usual” and directed juvenile detention management to identify options. Juvenile detention reforms were also being discussed at the national level and, on a parallel path with the national discussion, Sedgwick County implemented home-based supervision (1990) and a residential shelter (1994) as detention alternatives. Gang violence and police intervention addressing this violence led to sudden growth in demand for detention and overcrowding. Buchanan worked with county, state and court officials to establish a collaborative data-driven model to address the short- and long-term needs and issues. He brokered an important and lasting relationship with Wichita State University to take a deeper and ongoing look at the existing practices and programs and discovered that some of the county’s long-time practices were working and others were not. The results were revealing.



While there were “feel good” programs that had strong constituencies, the data simply did not support the investments made. These program evaluations took on a different significance as state financial support dwindled and as Sedgwick County itself faced fiscal constraints. The focus then became not simply whether the program produced positive outcomes, but whether it produced positive outcomes for the highest-need youth. These decisions were even harder to make and more controversial, because some programs that did indeed work lost funding. However, with unified support from county stakeholders, the data to support the decisions and a commitment to community engagement, those shifts became easier – albeit not easy.

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## THE CHANGE ENVIRONMENT

In 1995, Sedgwick County’s adult and juvenile corrections departments were unified into a single county department, allowing for greater leveraging of resources and a deeper cross-pollination of emerging effective practices in both fields. Sedgwick County Department of Corrections Director Mark Masterson, who was named the 2011 *Models for Change* Champion for Change, was there for the merger, but so too was a leader he considered a partner in the work, County Manager Buchanan. The continuity of leadership since the early 1990s has afforded Sedgwick County great advantages to examine data critically, identify what works and what doesn’t work, learn from the field and see through reforms.

Consistent leadership, organizational support for collaboration and the immediate need to address overburdened detention facilities and dwindling budgets created the perfect conditions for an interdisciplinary approach to juvenile justice. The Detention Utilization Committee—a policy group that brings together key stakeholders—was created in 1996 and has been instrumental in keeping communication lines open among the chief judge, juvenile judiciary, district attorney, detention, probation and others. In 2000, a broader policy group, Team Justice, was added to engage community stakeholders in expanding prevention and early intervention programs to reduce delinquency. Both policy groups continue today with monthly meetings. In fact, in 2014, Buchanan and Masterson proactively met to discuss how to sustain some of the progress in anticipation of the change of political perspective and leadership coming in 2015.

## SEDGWICK COUNTY’S MODEL

Sedgwick County’s work to improve its juvenile justice system predates its involvement in national reform efforts, such as the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation’s *Models for Change* Initiative. However, both initiatives amplified and catalyzed local efforts by cementing pre-existing and emerging collaborative relationships in the county as well as bringing financial resources.

### Partnership with Schools

Among the keystone accomplishments of Sedgwick County’s juvenile justice reform has been its growing relationship and cooperation with local systems. Lanora Franck was brought on board as liaison between juvenile justice and schools. Franck is based within the Department of Corrections, but brings 12 years of experience on the local school board and a strong relationship

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Introduction of an objective detention screening instrument
- Increased detention alternatives, both residential and home-based options
- Reduction in racial and ethnic disparities in juvenile arrests
- Reduction in arrests at schools for minor offenses
- Overall diversion of youth from juvenile detention as a sanction
- Shift to evidence-based interventions and ongoing evaluation of those programs
- Coordinated efforts with schools to handle school discipline issues in the community and to ease the reentry of youth coming out of detention and back into the community

with the school superintendent. Since 2009, several Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) have been entered between the Department of Corrections and the school system that have led to significant diversion of youth away from the juvenile justice system.

These **MOUs targeted the largely ineffective zero-tolerance policies that had been in place in schools and modified how suspensions and expulsions are used to handle in-school discipline problems.** The first of these MOUs was established in 2009-2010 and expanded to all Wichita schools in 2011. Since then, Franck and Masterson have continued to work with local schools to build new agreements in support of different behavior modification models and supporting a wraparound model informed by the National Wraparound Initiative.

The county-school partnership has also extended to the deep end of the justice system, addressing the needs of youth who are returning from confinement. In 2011, the local school district (USD 259) piloted a new transitional school designed as a “soft landing” for these juveniles, supporting their social and academic adjustment to public school. Again, the work has been carefully modeled on best practices identified by the U.S. Department of Education and on work in Multnomah County, Ore.

### Increasing Racial and Ethnic Fairness

Sedgwick County has also been a leader in Kansas and throughout the country in looking at the racial and ethnic disparities in its own system and introducing interventions to make systems fairer and more equitable. From October 1, 2007, through June 30, 2012, Sedgwick County worked in partnership with the Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) Action Network *Models for Change*

# JUVENILE PROGRAMS

- Aggression Replacement Training
- Communities In Schools
- City Life Work Program
- D.A.'s Juvenile Intervention Program
- Detention Advocacy Service (case management only)

- Education, Training & Employment Program
- Functional Family Therapy
- Learning the Ropes (youth only)
- PATHS for Kids
- Targeted Outreach Program
- Teen Intervention Program

Project. Under this project, Team Justice engaged in an iterative process of data collection, analysis, collaboration, training, prevention, intervention, graduated sanctions, research, evaluation and reporting activities. Through these efforts, Sedgwick County established new alternatives to detention, enhanced data systems, developed more robust prevention programming, created graduated sanction grids, increased workplace diversity and cultural competency training, implemented and validated objective assessment tools and fostered new methods of community engagement to support and develop strategies to reduce disparity at the point of arrest.

## SUCCESSES AND OUTCOMES

**Sedgwick County's collaboration with local school systems helped reduce school-based arrests for disorderly conduct by 37 percent in just the first year.** Similarly, its work to increase racial and ethnic fairness has positively impacted all justice-involved youth but has also closed some disparity gaps that had previously existed. In 2013, the Juvenile Justice Authority and Community Crime Prevention Funded Programs served 1,922 youth and had 1,499 cases closed either successfully or unsuccessfully. The overall success rate was 82.5 percent and the success rate for minority youth was 82.7 percent. African-American youth succeeded 77.1 percent of the time and Hispanic youth 86.5 percent.

Sedgwick County's work to reduce DMC has also led to successful reductions in: arrests for specific offenses, school referrals to the juvenile justice system and reliance on juvenile detention for sanctions. Additionally, reform efforts include increasing access to counsel, more effectively serving cross-over youth and collaboration with the educational system.

Between 2007 and 2014 admissions to state custody were reduced from 310 to 134; juvenile correctional facility admissions went from 147 to 66; juvenile filings went from 1745 to 1099; the average daily population (ADP) in locked juvenile detention went from 73 to 55; and overall the ADP dropped from 120 to 99. These accomplishments enhanced public safety by being smart on crime while producing significant savings for taxpayers.

## LESSONS LEARNED

**Offering a variety of treatment options leads to better outcomes:** To reduce the number of youth entering detention for violating the terms of their probation, Sedgwick County developed a system of graduated sanctions and incentives in August 2009. The system equipped probation officers with greater options to reward positive behavior and hold youth accountable for negative behavior without resorting to incarceration. Sedgwick County also developed a non-residential weekend reporting alternative to detention program in January 2010. These innovations, along with increased use of evidence-based practices and structured decision making, led to a 40 percent drop in out-of-home commitments between 2006 and 2010.

**Staff and administrators can and should play a key role in decision making:** "Part of our jobs as administrators is to make sure that elected officials make informed decisions," explains County Manager Buchanan. "It is the most critical part of our job. We have to frame this issue as very important. It may be a small part of the budget, but the consequences of not funding programs, the consequences of doing it wrong, the consequences of not paying attention are huge for the community. They are huge for all individuals involved in the system. They are especially huge for the youth and families involved."



**Mark Masterson**

**Director of the Sedgwick County  
Department of Corrections**





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—William Buchanan,  
Sedgwick County Manager

**Data is important, but so are personal stories:** With the benefit of sound research from their local university partner, Wichita State University, Buchanan, Masterson and their partners have learned and shared with leadership that inefficiencies and relative costs in "traditional" juvenile justice work far amplify the relative size of the budget line item it represents. Buchanan shares some of what has worked to garner support from the Commissioners: "Help them

understand how the system works. Outsiders to the system often do not know who is impacted by the system, what issues they come with and how they move through that system. Leadership needs not only the hard facts but the actual stories and experiences of those in the system. They want to hear them and respond to the stories. They want to hear where we have succeeded and where can succeed."

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