

A close-up photograph of three young men of diverse backgrounds smiling and looking towards the camera. The man on the left is partially visible, the middle one is slightly behind, and the man on the right is more prominent, wearing a blue button-down shirt.

COUNTY LEADERSHIP IN JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM:

A photograph of legal symbols including a pair of golden scales of justice and a wooden gavel with a gold band, resting on a stack of papers.

HIGHLIGHTS AND EXAMPLES FROM JURISDICTIONS GUIDING INNOVATION

COUNTY LEADERSHIP IN JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM:

HIGHLIGHTS AND EXAMPLES FROM JURISDICTIONS GUIDING INNOVATION

Counties are the primary provider at the local level of health, social services and juvenile and adult corrections, giving county governments and leaders a unique and important role in improving juvenile justice systems. Although juvenile justice may be a small portion of your county's budget, the long-term impacts of a child's involvement with it are enormous. Youth detention costs counties \$75,000-\$100,000 per year per youth, and the costs do not stop there. Young people who are involved in the adjudication process or put in detention are more likely to end up in the adult criminal system and rely on public health and services systems when they leave jail or prison—leading to higher and higher expenditures over time and worsened outcomes for the individuals and their communities.

Not only are counties stewards of public tax dollars, but they also have a responsibility to provide the most effective treatments and services to their residents, including their youth. Community-based services are less costly than detention and more effective than care in correctional facilities. Detention is among the least effective strategies to reduce crime, yet counties spend staggering sums on these systems.

These case studies highlight counties across the country that have taken the lead in innovating and improving their juvenile justice systems. From [Wayne County, Mich.](#), which took control of its juvenile justice system from the state and created a unique system to provide a robust menu of community-based services to youth, to [Sedgwick County, Kan.](#), where leaders have focused on school-based reforms and on reducing racial and ethnic disparities, to [Outagamie County, Wis.](#), which invested in a new building and expert leaders to ease its transition to an independent juvenile justice system focused on community-based treatment, each of these jurisdictions shows that counties can and should be at the forefront of juvenile justice reform. No two counties are alike, but these examples offer a look at systems that are working and can be adapted to fit the needs of other communities.

The National Association of Counties (NACo) has also produced a number of publications that accompany these case studies, on topics ranging from why juvenile justice matters to counties to the intersection between behavioral health and juvenile justice to the role human services agencies can play in juvenile justice and more. All of these publications are meant to serve as a jumping off point, for county leaders and staff to begin examining their systems, considering what works and what doesn't and implementing collaborative, evidence-based programs and policies that bolster public safety and improve human outcomes.

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 their 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.

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

County Manager William Buchanan saw an opportunity to re-examine the assumptions that had been made about the effectiveness of “business as usual.”

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 doesn’t, 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 this year, Buchanan and Masterson have proactively met to discuss how to sustain some of the progress in anticipation of the change of political perspective and leadership coming in 2015.

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

SEDGWICK COUNTY'S MODEL

Sedgwick County's work to improve its juvenile justice system pre-dates 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 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* 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



Mark Masterson

Director of the Sedgwick County
Department of Corrections

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

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, 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 saving 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 drop in out-of-home commitments of 40 percent 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."

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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—Bill Buchanan,
Sedgwick County Manager

WAYNE COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Population (2013 Census Estimate): 1,775,273
Youth Population: 431,391 (24.3 percent)
Main Community Makeup: 99 percent Urban, 1 percent Rural
Persons Below Poverty Level: 23.8 percent



THE IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

Until 2000, Wayne County's juvenile justice system was administered by the state. Throughout the 1990s, its juvenile justice system faced a number of problems, including overcrowding and rapidly rising costs: The state ward caseload reached 3,500 juveniles and costs increased 260 percent in less than a decade. Both the state and Wayne County realized these expenditures were unsustainable and the current system was not meeting its responsibility to help troubled kids and protect public safety. When the opportunity arose for Wayne County to take over control of the juvenile justice system, local leaders knew it would be better for all parties—the county, the state and the juveniles in the system—for the system to be county-administered. So, beginning in 2000, Wayne County took over administration of its juvenile justice system and today remains the only county in Michigan that is 100 percent responsible for a full continuum of juvenile justice services.

THE CHANGE ENVIRONMENT

Wayne County realized that the state's system was relying on a one-size-fits-all approach that simply matched youth with open beds in detention facilities instead of identifying and addressing a youth's risk, needs and appropriate treatment options. This meant that many low-risk youth were unnecessarily being placed in the juvenile justice system, leading to poor outcomes and high costs. Recidivism rates were over 50 percent and high escape rates contributed to a revolving door of kids in and out of court or detention, and many youth were being placed in detention primarily for technical violations, not for new crimes.

Juvenile justice in Michigan was overcrowded—so overcrowded that 200 kids were sent to detention centers in other states—and no one contested that the system wasn't working. In 1996, Michigan's Department of Human Services announced it would relinquish control of the juvenile justice system to any county willing to take responsibility for its delinquent youth, and Wayne County

jumped at the opportunity.

The state and county entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that realigned responsibility and authority for all mandated juvenile justice services to Wayne County. This new arrangement provided the platform for Wayne County to build a new system of care that would focus on outcomes and performance-based measures and that contains a continuum of prevention, diversion and treatment services.

Wayne County created a long-term strategy to transform the delivery of services to youth in the juvenile justice system, based on **four main goals**: 1) **To provide a continuum of service options, based on a youth's needs and risks**; 2) **To locate services close to the families of youth**; 3) **To reinvest savings in community-based services and provide incentives for local responsibility**; and 4) **To create a contract-based, privatized services network that focuses on adaptability and resiliency**.

WAYNE COUNTY'S MODEL

To meet its goals of transforming and improving the juvenile justice system, Wayne County developed a contract-based system that allows for a single point of intake and assessment through its Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC), which is the hub of a network of five Care Management Organizations (CMOs). Wayne County put out a request for proposals when seeking the CMOs, and in particular sought agencies that represented their communities with experience in mental health and substance use issues. The agencies were asked to develop partnerships and, if they did not

Wayne County pays each CMO a set amount every month, and each CMO is responsible for providing supervision, services and resources—based on assessments and conditions ordered by the Court—for a group of juveniles in a particular geographic region.

have experience with the juvenile justice system, to learn from other organizations that did. Wayne County pays each CMO a set amount every month, and each CMO is responsible for providing supervision, services and resources—based on assessments and conditions ordered by the Court—for a group of juveniles in a particular geographic region.

Wayne County has implemented a comprehensive system of performance management to gauge and report the progress of its juvenile justice program to achieve outcomes that clients, tax payers and stakeholders expect. The county has a Juvenile Justice Services Dashboard, which tracks a variety of measures, including New Diversion Cases, New Prevention Cases, Recidivism, Juveniles Diagnosed with Mental Illness, Expenditures and more. **The county measures progress against its own trends (not against other counties or localities), within the mission and goals of the department.** It asks, “is the system of care efficient, effective and are the youth’s needs and risks aligned with the least restrictive level of intervention?”

Providing Behavioral Health Services

In its beginning phases, the Wayne County model had to focus just on fixing the corrections portion of juvenile justice, but has evolved over the years into an integrated continuum of prevention, diversion, juvenile corrections and post-care (re-entry) services for at-risk and adjudicated youth. In 2006, the county began doing cross-systems work with mental health agencies.

More than 50 percent of youth entering Wayne County’s juvenile justice system are diagnosed with emotional, behavioral, substance abuse or mental health disorders. These youth are assessed at the JAC (which is a Medicaid-approved children’s mental health agency), and then assigned to a CMO that connects them to a Community Mental Health (CMH) treatment provider. The CMO is responsible for coordination of services and a CMH provider treats the specific behavioral health needs of the juvenile. **This system supports the least restrictive treatment for each youth and blending mental health and juvenile justice services to increase the probability of successful home-based**

HIGHLIGHTS

- Development of an objective screening and assessment tool
- Creation of single point for intake and assessment
- Increased focus on a continuum of service options based on needs and risks
- Increase in preventative programming
- Overall diversion of youth from juvenile detention as a sanction
- Decrease in recidivism
- Decrease in juvenile justice expenditures

“We worked with the mental health agencies to make sure the JAC met all the mental health requirements and the mental health agencies agreed to accept JAC assessments as determinants of eligibility.”

—Daniel Chaney,
Director of the Juvenile Services Division of Wayne
County’s Department of Children & Family Services

treatment. Treatment options include wraparound services and evidence-based services such as Multi-systemic Therapy, Trauma Focused Therapy and Functional Family Therapy.

New programs and home-based interventions for troubled teens and their families have expanded across the entire county. This strategy has reversed the unnecessary conviction of at-risk adolescents and their sentencing into the formal justice system just to get the help they needed in the first place.

Communication and cooperation across agencies has been key, says Daniel Chaney, Director of the Juvenile Services Division of Wayne County’s Department of Children & Family Services. “The primary challenge was that juvenile justice and mental health agencies spoke a different language,” he explains. “We worked with the mental health agencies to make sure the JAC met all the mental health requirements and the mental health agencies agreed to accept JAC assessments as determinants of eligibility. That allowed us to keep everything going through one point at the JAC and then assign kids to the right community-based services.”



Daniel Chaney

Director of the Juvenile Services
Division of Wayne County’s
Department of Children &
Family Services

JUVENILE PROGRAMS

- Juvenile Assessment Center
- Care Management Organizations
- First-Contact and Youth Assistance community programs
- Community Policing
- Correct Course diversion program
- Functional Family Therapy
- Multi-systemic Therapy
- Attendance Participation and Support
- Community Health, Outreach, Intervention and Clinical Engagement Services

"This is one of the issues we agree unanimously on. Every time the county executive asks us for funding, we always find the money. We all recognize that you can pay now or you can pay later when it comes to crime, and providing children with these services cuts those costs down the line."

—Alisha Bell,
Wayne County Commissioner

SUCCESSES AND OUTCOMES

Since the beginning of its reform effort, **Wayne County has decreased the daily number of youth in detention from more than 500 to approximately 100, and estimates that more than 5,000 juveniles have been diverted from the juvenile justice system.** Where there were once 700 juveniles from Wayne County in state training schools, where youth are sent post-sentencing and often remain for several years, there are now only two. The recidivism rate has dropped from 56 percent in 1998 to 16 percent in 2013. Cost savings have also been significant: **Residential care costs have decreased from \$115 million per year in 1998 to around \$45 million this year,** and the convicted juvenile caseload, the most costly to the county, has been reduced by 75 percent.

County support of these programs continues to be exceptionally strong. "This is one of the issues we agree unanimously on," says Wayne County Commissioner Alisha Bell. "Every time the county executive asks us for funding, we always find the money. We all recognize that you can pay now or you can pay later when it comes to crime, and providing children with these services cuts those costs down the line."

LESSONS LEARNED

Know you can't fix everything at once: Although the whole system was failing, Wayne County recognized that it first had to get issues with secure detention under control, before moving to other problems in the system. By focusing on a discrete issue, the county was able to effectively use its resources and show that its new model worked on a smaller scale before expanding it.

Make sure all partners speak the same language, but this can take time: It's important that all participants in the system understand and use the same language, but different agencies and systems have different terminology and operating methods. "The learning curve for dealing with the court was pretty steep for private community agencies," says Dan Chaney. With a focused effort on cross-systems understanding, barriers come down and real solutions begin to emerge. By taking the time to get everyone on the same page in terms of communication and definitions, Wayne County's juvenile justice system now functions smoothly across all the different partners involved.

Taking a big picture look at the problem allows for a clearer solution: Because all the services related to juvenile justice are provided under one administrative umbrella, Wayne County leaders can see where all the elements fit together and where attention is needed to provide better outcomes and/or address financial issues.



Alisha Bell

Wayne County
Commissioner

OUTAGAMIE COUNTY, WISCONSIN

Population (2013 Census Estimate): 180,345
Youth Population: 43,824 (24.3 percent)
Main Community Makeup: 75 percent Urban, 25 percent Rural
Persons Below Poverty Level: 8.6 percent



THE IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

In the mid-1990s, Outagamie County faced a juvenile justice budget that was growing dramatically—so dramatically that even the county's increased tax revenue was not enough to cover the rising costs in juvenile justice. At the same time, county leaders saw that the services being provided to kids were inappropriate or inadequate and the detention center was overcrowded. For example, Wisconsin state law changed around this time to prohibit placing youth in detention for status offenses, but Outagamie County was still detaining these youth. "There was a waiting list for juveniles who had been convicted of a crime to be placed in the detention center, when kids who were in there were there for running away—how did that make any sense?" explains Helen Nagler, Chairperson of the Outagamie County Board of Supervisors. Additionally, in 1995 a gang-related murder/suicide that resulted in the

"There was a waiting list for juveniles who had been convicted of a crime to be placed in the detention center, when kids who were in there were there for running away—how did that make any sense?"

—Helen Nagler, Chairperson
Outagamie County Board of Supervisors

death of four youths in the county led to a broad community desire to address youth issues and improve services available.

THE CHANGE ENVIRONMENT

Until 1996, juvenile justice and child protection services were administered within one division in Outagamie County. After the tragic events in 1995, the county commissioned a study of its youth-serving systems, and ultimately decided to form a new division (called Youth and Family Services) to assist youth involved

in delinquency or status offenses. Strong support from the board of supervisors, the county executive and the sheriff helped propel this change. "Supervisor Nagler and others on the county board and those involved in administration determined that we really needed to develop an infrastructure of community-based interventions and treatments," says Mark Mertens, Manager of the Youth and Family Services Division. Along with rising costs and an overcrowded detention center, there were coordination issues among the employees working with youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Staff were located in different buildings scattered across the county, which often made coordinating treatment and care difficult.

Additionally, Outagamie County has historically had a strong health and human services department with a focus on preventative care, and county leaders realized it was important to hold on to that focus. "We've always had the feeling that if you don't do something up front, you're going to pay more for it," says Supervisor Nagler. "We don't want to end up at the high-cost end of treatment."

Outagamie County underwent a second phase of reforms in 2009, when it began participating in two initiatives to reduce racial and ethnic disparities: one through the Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance and one through the MacArthur Foundation's *Models for Change* Initiative.

OUTAGAMIE COUNTY'S MODEL

Outagamie County's changes aimed to make its juvenile justice division independent and focused on community-based treatments. To enhance these goals, Outagamie County invested in the construction of a new building dedicated solely to juvenile justice services. This allowed for all workers involved with these youth to be in one location, along with various youth programs, which led to the formation of new communication systems (both formal and informal) and increased collaboration. This new construction was

HIGHLIGHTS

- Introduction of an objective assessment tool
- Reduction in racial and ethnic disparities in juvenile arrests
- Shift to evidence-based interventions and ongoing evaluation of those programs
- Improved collaboration among juvenile justice staff
- Reintroduction of 17 year olds into juvenile justice system
- Closure of juvenile detention center

a large up-front investment, but because the building was specifically designed for its current use, it has saved the county money in the long run through better efficiencies and even reduced staffing. Currently about 45 staff members work in the building, and the county's juvenile justice programming is also housed there.

Outagamie County leaders understood that there may be high initial costs at the outset of reform, but were willing to shoulder that burden in order to see savings in the future. In fact, the county double budgeted for juvenile justice for the first three years, paying to keep the old system in place as the transition to more treatment-focused options were developed. "It was a real risk to double budget like that," says Mark Mertens. "But the leaders were confident it would work and felt it was really necessary to make our system better." "We were patient, and we waited several years before we even thought about declaring that the new system was working," adds Supervisor Nagler. "The important thing is what is in the best long-range interest of your community. Sometimes you just have to take a risk, but this almost didn't even feel like a risk because what we were doing wasn't working and the changes couldn't be any worse."



Mark Mertens, Manager of the Outagamie County Youth and Family Services Division, and Helen Nagler, Chairperson of the Outagamie County Board of Supervisors

In keeping with the county's commitment to intervening early, **Outagamie County has also voluntarily taken 17 year olds back into its juvenile justice system.** Wisconsin state law treats 17 year olds who are charged with crimes as adults, but Outagamie County leaders felt those youth were not being served well in the adult system, says Supervisor Nagler. "Kids can't leave the community," she says. "You have to help them and take care of them, or you're going to have to deal with them again when they're adults."

Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities

As Outagamie County continued its focus on community-based treatments, leaders began to concentrate on reducing racial and ethnic disparities (RED). As part of the *Models for Change* Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) Action Network, the county focused on reducing the number of disorderly conduct arrests. The county has a strong DMC governing body that is co-chaired by the deputy district attorney and focuses on identifying and monitoring reforms.

Through its two RED initiatives, Outagamie County has focused on a number of innovative practices, such as:

- **Implemented the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) tool**, to assist with objective assessments and decision making regarding youths' risks, needs and protective factors.
- **Provided special training to juvenile justice staff to enhance case planning and intervention strategies.** This has allowed the county to focus on targeting the most critical (criminogenic) needs of youth to reduce risk to the community and prevent further arrests, explains Mark Mertens.
- **Contracted with a consultant to collect and analyze data**, which helps the county assess its programs and spending, and continue to support appropriate programming and make changes when necessary.

SUCCESSES AND OUTCOMES

Thanks to the reductions in the use of secure detention of youth over the course of several years, the Outagamie County Juvenile Detention Center was closed on January 1, 2014. **Supervisor Nagler notes that the county has saved huge amounts in "cost avoidance," including approximately \$700,000 year in staffing and operations fees.** In 2007, for example, the county paid for more than 2,400 days of care in juvenile detention, compared to 552 in 2013. The rate of incarceration of youth in the state Juvenile Correctional Institutions has also fallen significantly. The state charges the county \$301 per day per youth at Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake schools, and Supervisor Nagler estimates that if the county was continuing to detain as many juveniles in these institutions as it did in the early 1990s, costs would be around

JUVENILE PROGRAMS

- Restorative justice victim-offender mediation offered to all victims of youth crimes
- Report Center
- Mentoring Program
- Aggression Replacement Training (ART)
- Independent Living Program
- Cognitive Intervention Program
- Wraparound Services
- Families In Action Program
- Use of Shelter Care for Most 72-Hour Holds

\$2.2 million today. **Overall juvenile justice costs to the county have decreased \$336,087 from 2005 to 2013.**

Outagamie County's work to reduce RED has also led to a reduction in racial disparities at arrest, which was the county's most disparate decision point and most in need of improvement. In 2004, African-American youth were 7.5 times more likely to be arrested than white youth, while all minority youth were nearly 3 times more likely to be arrested than white youth. Those numbers decreased to 6 times more likely and less than two times more likely, respectively, in 2011. "We still have a lot of work to do, but this data shows that we are moving the needle in the right direction," says Mark Mertens.

LESSONS LEARNED

Initial investments in good staff and facilities are worth the extra cost: When Outagamie County decided to revamp its juvenile justice system leaders realized the importance of having a person with expertise at the helm and a building that worked for them. "If you're going to make a major change like this, you have to find someone who knows how to do it," says Commissioner Nagler. "You can't just do it on the cheap—and in the end, the savings have far outweighed that initial cost."

Progress isn't always easy or consistent: "Sometimes you'll go two steps forward and one step back," explains Commissioner Nagler. "You have to realize that's normal and to be expected, and you have to work through it and keep pushing to get where you need to go."

"Kids can't leave the community. You have to help them and take care of them, or you're going to have to deal with them again when they're adults."

—Helen Nagler, Chairperson
Outagamie County Board of Supervisors

Winning over skeptics might be easier than you think: At the outset of Outagamie County's reform efforts, the sheriff visited many parts of the community to talk to residents about the plan and elicit feedback. By taking the time to explain what changes were being made and why, the sheriff made sure that community members felt like they were a part of the process and garnered support at the front end. Similarly, the sheriff, county board and county executive all made sure to have open lines of communication with local judges, police officers and schools, in order to address and alleviate their concerns and keep them updated as positive outcomes were achieved. "Once they saw how the new system was working, they got on board really quickly," says Commissioner Nagler. "If you start talking about the successes, the community will really come with you and trust that you're working for them and with their best interests in mind."



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