

## **KANSAS SELECTED BY MACARTHUR FOUNDATION FOR ACTION NETWORK TO REDUCE RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISPARITIES IN JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM**

Kansas is one of four states selected in a highly competitive process by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to participate in a new action network to reduce the disproportionate number of minority youth in the juvenile justice system. Kansas is now one of 12 states providing leadership as part of MacArthur's \$120 million Models for Change, a national initiative to reform juvenile justice across the country.

As part of the network, Kansas will work to eliminate systemic unfairness based on ethnicity or color. Youth of color constitute approximately one-third of the adolescent population in the United States, but comprise two-thirds of incarcerated youth. Available data demonstrate that in many jurisdictions youth of color are treated more harshly than white youth at key decision points in the juvenile justice system, even when charged with the same category of offense. Efforts will be carried out in Sedgwick County to develop model programs that can be used to create a set of best practices for others across the nation. Sites were selected based system leadership, demonstrated use of data-driven approaches to reducing biases, and determination to build a viable continuum of alternative programs and diversion services. Reducing this disparity has been identified by Models for Change as one of the biggest challenges to developing more effective juvenile justice systems.

"We are honored to be one of the four communities selected to join the Models for Change initiative by the MacArthur Foundation," said Sedgwick County Commissioner Tom Winters. "The funding will help us to continue the collaborative work in Sedgwick County on our Disproportionate Minority Contact project. The partnerships with the State of Kansas, the Juvenile Court system and our Sedgwick County Corrections have helped us to gather more accurate data and develop more effective juvenile programs. Being part of this DMC Action Network will give us access to others' best practices and allow us to share our success stories."

Maryland, North Carolina and Wisconsin were also named today by the MacArthur Foundation as part of the Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) Action Network, which will be coordinated by the Center for Children's Law and Policy. Chosen from a pool of 21, the four states join eight others as part of MacArthur's Models for Change initiative, which is gathering evidence about what works and funding model programs to illustrate the potential for reform. Illinois, Louisiana, Pennsylvania and Washington form the core of the initiative, where work has been underway since 2005. They also will be participating in the new DMC action network. Colorado, Connecticut, Ohio and Texas were named today by MacArthur as members of the Mental Health Action Network, which will work to improve mental health services for young offenders. A third network will be added in 2008 that will focus on juvenile indigent defense.

“With momentum for reform already growing across the country, the action network will help accelerate the pace of change to reduce the disproportionate number of minorities that come into contact with the system,” said MacArthur President Jonathan Fanton. “Innovative state leaders, such as those in Kansas are reshaping juvenile justice systems across the United States to improve the lives of young people in ways that the public supports and that keep communities safe.”

The Models for Change initiative is grounded in a fundamental set of principles that are shared by model juvenile justice systems. Model systems are rational, effective and recognize the developmental differences between adolescents and adults. These systems 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 Foundation recognizes that there is no single model or pathway for reform. Successful and replicable system-wide change can only be achieved through a collection of approaches and interventions.

#### **About the MacArthur Foundation**

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation is a private, independent grantmaking institution helping to build a more just and sustainable world. Through the support it provides, the Foundation fosters the development of knowledge, nurtures individual creativity, strengthens institutions, helps improve public policy, and provides information to the public, primarily through support for public interest media. With assets of more than \$6.4 billion, the Foundation makes approximately \$300 million in grants annually. More information is available at [www.macfound.org](http://www.macfound.org).

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