

# MACARTHUR

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

## **NEW MACARTHUR ACTION NETWORK TO ADDRESS LEGAL REPRESENTATION FOR INDIGENT JUVENILES**

Chicago, April 4, 2008 – The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, which is investing \$100 million in Models for Change, an initiative to support and accelerate promising models of juvenile justice reform, today announced the creation of a new national action network to help ensure young people receive the legal protections to which they are constitutionally entitled by improving the juvenile indigent defense system. The Foundation is inviting states, local jurisdictions, or organizations interested in joining to apply to become members of the new Juvenile Indigent Defense Action Network.

The Network will respond to the critical need to build the capacity of the juvenile defense bar and to improve access to counsel and quality of representation for youth involved in the justice system. Assessments done in states across the country reveal serious systemic problems and deficiencies that include crippling caseloads; untimely appointment of counsel; inadequate access to experts and investigative resources; and inappropriate waiver of counsel and use of plea bargaining. This issue was selected because it is among the biggest challenges in developing a more fair and effective juvenile justice system.

“Every day, thousands of children find themselves involved in the juvenile court system unprotected,” said MacArthur President Jonathan Fanton. “It has been documented in some jurisdictions that as many as 80 to 90 percent of youth waive their right to counsel. As a result, young people may proceed through hearings where serious determinations are made, without adequate access to qualified counsel, often resulting in decisions that can have unfortunate lifelong consequences. That is why MacArthur has chosen to invest heavily in this area of juvenile justice reform.”

Participating sites in the new Juvenile Indigent Defense Action Network, which will be selected in June through an open application process, will work with leading national experts in the field to address the critical problems common to juvenile indigent defense systems across the country by –

- Identifying and implementing new strategies and solutions to common problems;
- Collaborating with local, state, and national partners on defining best practices;
- Building capacity for high-quality indigent defender systems that understand and support the defender's responsibilities and ethical obligation; and
- Providing national leadership on improving juvenile indigent defense policy and practice.

The Juvenile Indigent Defense Action Network will be coordinated through the National Juvenile Defender Center, a non-partisan organization created to respond to the critical need to build the capacity of the juvenile defense bar and to improve access to counsel and quality of representation for children in the justice system. States, local jurisdictions or organizations interested in applying to become members of the Juvenile Indigent Defense Action Network

should contact Rey Banks at the Center at [rbanks.@njdc.info](mailto:rbanks.@njdc.info) or 202.452.0010, ext. 107. Applications must be submitted no later than June 6, 2008.

The new Network joins two existing action networks that focus on (1) reducing racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system, and (2) addressing the mental health needs of juvenile justice involved youth. MacArthur will invest up to \$15 million in juvenile justice action networks, with each network receiving over \$1 million a year for the next three years.

MacArthur supports the development of successful and sustainable models of juvenile justice reform through targeted investments in key states and has already committed \$10 million each to reform efforts in Illinois, Louisiana, Pennsylvania and Washington through its Models for Change initiative. The Foundation has invested in eight additional states by creating networks linking new states with the four core Models for Change states to promote juvenile justice reform across the country. Colorado, Connecticut, Ohio, and Texas participate in the Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network. Kansas, Maryland, North Carolina, and Wisconsin participate in the Disproportionate Minority Contact Action Network.

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#### **About Models for Change**

MacArthur's Models for Change initiative supports a juvenile justice system that is rational, effective, and developmentally sound by creating reform models to 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 initiative seeks to develop and support replicable, system-wide change that can serve as models for reform elsewhere. More information is available at [www.modelsforchange.net](http://www.modelsforchange.net).

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

The MacArthur Foundation supports creative people and effective institutions committed to building a more just, verdant, and peaceful world. In addition to the MacArthur Fellows, we work to defend human rights, advance global conservation and security, make cities better places, and understand how technology is affecting children and society. With assets of \$6.8 billion, the Foundation makes approximately \$260 million in grants annually. More information is available at [www.macfound.org](http://www.macfound.org). Press Contact: Jennifer Humke, 312.726.8000, [jhumke@macfound.org](mailto:jhumke@macfound.org).