

The National Campaign to Reform State Juvenile Justice Systems was a multi-state initiative aimed at changing juvenile justice policies.

ARCHIVED: THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO REFORM STATE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEMS

The National Campaign to Reform State Juvenile Justice Systems was a multi-state initiative aimed at changing the juvenile justice policies that enhance public safety, improve outcomes for youth and reduce costs to the taxpayer.

Most juvenile justice systems are broken. Kids are treated like adults despite developmental differences. Minor infractions in schools are criminalized. Low-risk offenders are placed in harsh detention and prison facilities, rather than offered appropriate community services. Minority youth are subject to discrimination. This campaign supported policy changes to reverse this pattern and allow youth to get the help they need while holding them accountable for their actions.

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CAMPAIGN HISTORY

"The child receives the worst of both worlds: he gets neither the protections accorded to adults nor the solicitous care and regenerative treatment postulated for children."

— *Kent v. United States*, 383 U.S. 541, 556 (1966)

For years, national and local foundations have supported demonstration programs to improve and reform the juvenile justice system and worked to replicate these programs in other jurisdiction¹. These local initiatives have helped to raise the profile of successful juvenile justice reforms that safely use proven alternatives to incarceration and other reforms to keep children close to their homes, address their mental health and behavioral issues (and those of their families), reduce recidivism rates and ultimately save money and keep communities safer. To permanently reform local juvenile justice systems, campaigns have begun to target effective state policy changes that build on proven successes.

In the fall of 2010, under the leadership of the MacArthur Foundation, the Juvenile Justice Funders' Collaborative formed to support statewide initiatives that would accelerate policy reforms to juvenile justice systems throughout the country. NEO agreed to house this funders' collaborative and launched The National Campaign to Reform State Juvenile Justice Systems to enact meaningful state reforms over the next several years. NEO hired M+R Strategic Services (M+R) to manage the day-to-day Campaign, consult with and report regularly to the Funders' Collaborative², and provide strategic resources and support to state-based campaigns.

The Campaign has positioned itself to capitalize on the growing bipartisan support for laws that reduce the number of children in custody in the juvenile and adult systems and redirect resources to more effective community-based services that save taxpayer dollars and reduce crime. With a growing consensus on treatment, recent federal regulations on the placement of youth in adult facilities and the Supreme Court ruling to end the mandatory sentencing of juvenile life without parole, states are poised to capture this momentum for change.

Since January 2011, The National Campaign to Reform State Juvenile Justice Systems has worked with 30 state-based efforts to provide strategic resources to end the reliance on punitive responses to juvenile crime and delinquency and move toward evidence-based rehabilitative and restorative approaches.

The Campaign assessed the current policies and programs, opportunities for reform and the political obstacles in each of its target states. Based on those assessments and local needs, Campaign staff sought to assemble, in each state, a team of seasoned government affairs professionals, communications experts and policy analysts to support a reform agenda. These consultants worked alongside local juvenile justice advocates and policy makers to support and shape state-based initiatives leading to more than 100 progressive juvenile justice reforms that have been signed into law. Each of the state campaigns has its own specific reform agenda but all seek ways to save money, improve public safety, lower recidivism rates, and help young people and their families.

Written October 2014

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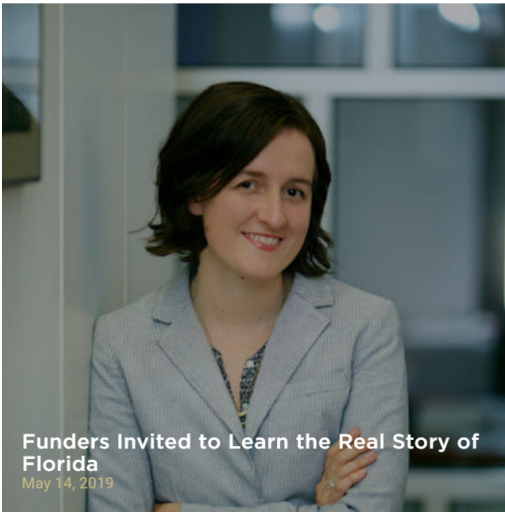
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¹ These juvenile justice programs include The MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change, Annie E. Casey's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, The Robert Wood

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