

Yes We Can*Maryland as a National Model in Juvenile Justice***Executive Summary**

Maryland can become a national model in juvenile justice reform by: replicating the Clayton County model to reduce youth arrest; expanding Multi-Systemic Therapy to treat youth in their own communities; using the proven Missouri Model to rehabilitate youth who need temporary confinement; and training law enforcement in youth development.

Some jurisdictions and states are doing pieces of effective juvenile justice reform. Maryland will be a national model when it brings together all of these parts in one place.

Have Strong Leadership

The Secretary and senior staff at the Department of Juvenile Services need to understand the research on rehabilitating youth and have experience implementing it on a large scale.

Treat Youth, Don't Just Arrest Them

In Clayton County, Georgia, students who commit non-serious offenses are referred to student conflict workshops to address the underlying causes of delinquency. The program, which requires the collaboration of juvenile service workers, school officials, judges and prosecutors, has significantly reduced disruptive behavior without arresting youth. Every jurisdiction in Maryland can benefit from the Clayton County approach.¹

Use Proven, Community-Based Interventions

Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) is a proven program that rehabilitates even high risk youth in their own communities by providing intensive home-based therapy to a youth and his or her family. It reduces recidivism at a fraction of the cost of a juvenile jail. Maryland needs about 500 MST slots.²

¹ Advocates for Children and Youth, *Police Can Reduce Student Misbehavior Without Arrest* (Feb. 2010); Advocates for Children and Youth, *Protecting Public Safety Without Juvenile Arrests* (July 2010).

² Advocates for Children and Youth, *Protecting Safety, Saving Money* (April 2009); Advocates for Children and Youth, *Expanding Multi-Systemic Therapy Rapidly, Effectively and Affordably* (Jan. 2009).

Serve Youth Close To Home

The Missouri Model has produced nationally acclaimed results through regional facilities close enough to where youth live to enable whole-family treatment. The facilities are small, but their effectiveness is less because of size and more because of proximity to communities and services provided.

Provide Seamless Transitions Back Home

From the first day of confinement, Missouri plans for a youth's return back into the community. Effective aftercare significantly reduces the likelihood that a youth will return to delinquency. Caseworkers and facility staff collaborate to link youth to community-based services upon release.³

Strengthen Frontline Workers

Juvenile service workers need to have the skills and desire to rehabilitate youth. They are not guards providing supervision; they are treatment-oriented, addressing youth and family needs and building family capacity. Staff need significant training and coaching, initially and on an ongoing basis.

Address Sources of Racial Inequity

Maryland can reduce racial disparities in juvenile services by directly addressing the problem and, in particular, ensuring that police and juvenile justice intake workers have adequate, culturally competent training in youth development.⁴

Target Right Outcomes

The ultimate measure of an effective juvenile justice system is improved public safety. Thus, three particularly important outcomes are: (1) number of youth arrested; (2) number of youth confined; and (3) percentage of youth re-arrested or re-referred within a year of release.

³ Advocates for Children and Youth, *Roadmap to Better Aftercare, Reduced Recidivism* (Apr. 2010); Advocates for Children and Youth, *Services for Youth After Leaving Programs Key to the Acclaimed Missouri Model* (June 2010).

⁴ Advocates for Children and Youth, *Racial Remain High in Juvenile Arrests* (Oct. 2010).