



STATE POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE NEWS

Nebraska passes reform bill, California enacts sentencing reforms

IN THIS ISSUE

State Policy and Legislative News	1
Issue in Focus	1
On the Fiscal Front	2
Juvenile Justice News	2
Other News	3
Publications	3

The **Nebraska** Legislature passed a new law providing \$14.5 million over the next two years for juvenile justice reform. Legislative Bill 561, passed in May, expands community based alternatives to incarceration in the state. The law also transfers the supervision of juvenile offenders in the community from the Department of Health and Human Services to the Office of Probation Administration, which is under the Nebraska Supreme Court. According to LB 561 sponsor Brad Ashford, "We are going to see a change to better reflect best practices dealing with juveniles. That will be an immediate change in Nebraska. We will see out of home placement go down dramatically."

In September 2013, the **California** Legislature passed, and the governor signed a law enacting juvenile sentencing reforms. [Senate Bill 260](#) creates a revised parole review process for some prisoners who were transferred to adult court despite being under age 18 when they committed the crime. The law provides that eligible inmates can have their cases reviewed for possible release as early as 15 years into their prison sentence. This law will affect over 6,800 California inmates who were under age 18 when they committed the crime but were prosecuted in the adult system. "This bill gives young people hope and incentive to reform, reflect and improve their lives," said Sen. Loni Hancock, the author of the new law.



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ISSUE IN FOCUS – RAISE THE AGE

A new **Massachusetts** law raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction to 18 years old took effect Sept. 18. The law will effectively bring 17-year-olds (with some exceptions) into the juvenile court system. According to the bill sponsor Representative Kay Khan, "We always talk about how important youth are, but our policies often fall short of our words. Today, Massachusetts is taking an important step in the right direction. We decided that 17 is far too young to give up on a child. Now, thousands of kids who would have been lost to the adult system have a chance to grow into productive citizens."

With the enactment of [House Bill 1432](#) Massachusetts became the 40th state to set the maximum age of juvenile court jurisdiction at 17. Eight states set the limit at 16, while New York and North Carolina set the jurisdictional limit at 15. Both the Massachusetts House and Senate passed the bill unanimously.

ON THE FISCAL FRONT

Hawaii launches bi-partisan, inter-agency "Juvenile Justice Reform Project"

"The Hawaii Juvenile Justice Reform Project," a new effort to increase public safety and hold juvenile offenders accountable for their actions while reducing costs to **Hawaii** taxpayers, was launched in August. The project was announced by Senate President Donna Mercado Kim, and Representative Mele Carroll (on behalf of Speaker Joseph Souki), Gov. Neil Abercrombie, and Hawaii Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald. A new bipartisan, inter-branch working group will analyze the state's juvenile justice system and develop data-driven policy recommendations for the 2014 Legislature.

"With the amount of money we spend locking up each juvenile offender and the high recidivism rates, it is clear we are not getting an adequate public safety return on our

juvenile justice investment," said Rep. Mele Carroll, chair of the House Human Services committee.

The working group is composed of policymakers, practitioners and stakeholders.

David Hipp, executive director of Hawaii Office of Youth Services said, "I think if we were to reach kids at more of the front end of the system, address the issues when they're 12, 13, 14 years old, we would have a much better shot of not relying on the back end of the system to resolve our problems."

State leaders have charged the working group with issuing a consensus report to all three branches of government in December 2013 that will include research findings and specific policy recommendations.

JUVENILE JUSTICE NEWS

MacArthur Foundation launches resource centers

At the upcoming Models for Change Conference on December 16–17, 2013, the Resource Center Partnership will reach yet another important milestone, as each of the four Centers formally unveil their websites. The websites represent much more than building a web presence for the four centers focused on mental health, status offense reform, dual status youth and probation services, and juvenile defense. They signal the release of online resources targeted to a broad range of leaders and practitioners in juvenile justice as well as the opening of new doors for training and technical assistance opportunities for the field. All of the Centers will kick off their sites with practical tools to translate the lessons learned from research and best practice to juvenile justice systems throughout the country. Furthermore, they represent yet another set of resources for cities, counties and parishes, regions, states, and tribal communities who are looking to build or continue the momentum of juvenile justice system improvement.

Stay tuned for more information about and from each of the four Resource Centers as the Models for Change Conference comes closer. Here are some things to look for in particular from each of the Centers:

The newly launched Resource Centers include:

- **The Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Collaborative for Change: A Training, Technical Assistance and Education Center**, led by the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice at Policy Research Inc. – Collaborative for Change will launch its new website with a series of resources organized around major issue areas that are particularly relevant in today's juvenile justice environment. Ultimately, there will be nine such areas, but the initial launch will include accessible packages of content around topics like screening and assessment and diversion models.



JUVENILE JUSTICE NEWS (CONT.)

- **The National Juvenile Defender Center** – The National Juvenile Defender Center has been providing technical assistance for years and will continue to grow its outreach as part of the Resource Center Partnership. Expect to see major enhancements to its site in early 2014 as it unveils its new website. In the meantime, NJDC continues to provide invaluable resources such as their National Juvenile Defense Standards, the Juvenile Training Immersion Program, and the replication of field driven innovations.
- **The Status Offense Reform Center**, led by the Vera Institute of Justice – The State Offense Reform Center (SORC) will launch with a variety of resources including the first two modules of a toolkit designed to provide local communities with the tools and strategies they need to implement status offense reform. SORC will also highlight some examples of system improvement efforts in communities throughout the country.
- **The Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice**, led by the Robert F. Kennedy Children’s Action Corps. – The RFK National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice will release new and updated publications on its website, including “Dual Status Youth – Technical Assistance Workbook,” a companion piece to its newly revised “Guidebook for Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare System Coordination and Integration: Framework for Improved Outcomes”; and “Probation Review Implementation: How Best Practices Meet Everyday Practices,” which serves as an accompaniment to the “Probation Review Guidebook” released in 2011.

OTHER NEWS

Boston Juvenile Justice Meeting Recap

Lawmakers from 18 states descended upon the city of Boston on Sept. 17 to participate in a four-day meeting on pressing juvenile justice issues. The meeting, convened through a partnership with the National Conference of State Legislatures and the John T. and Catherine D. MacArthur Foundation, provided an opportunity for teams of state legislators to get together and learn from national and local juvenile policy experts in Massachusetts and also from each other.

During the meeting, attendees heard from Massachusetts Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo on juvenile justice reform in the state. Robert Listenbee Jr., Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), spoke on his vision of juvenile justice in the United States moving forward. Participants also heard from expert panelists on many youth issues including positive youth development, status offender reform, adolescent brain development and realignment strategies to reinvest money from closed or downsized youth correctional facilities into community based programs.

The meeting program included a tour of ROCA, a model performance-based and outcomes-driven organization that is working to help alter the life trajectories of the most high-risk young people in Massachusetts. ROCA uses its Intervention Model to make substantive changes in the lives of both young people and the communities in which they reside. Legislators met with staff to hear ROCA’s strategies for success and interacted with some of the young men currently participating in the program to hear the positive impact its programs have had on their lives.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the state teams reviewed and reflected on the information they had obtained over the previous few days and developed juvenile justice priority action items to bring home. Each state shared their ideas and perspectives with each other—learning from their similarities and differences.

JUVENILE JUSTICE PUBLICATIONS

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) updated its [Statistical Briefing Book](#), which offers easy access to a variety of juvenile justice resources, including data on juvenile populations, populations of youth in residential placement, the FBI's data on homicide victims and offenders, and more. [Access the Statistical Briefing Book here.](#)

In Fall 2013, the Coalition for Juvenile Justice will release its 'National Standards for the Care of Youth Charged with Status Offenses.' Status offenders are youth who have committed non-criminal offenses, such as truancy or running away. The *National Standards* aim to promote best practices for this population, based in research and social service approaches, to better engage and support youth and families in need of assistance. To learn more about the Standards, visit <http://www.juvjustice.org/reform-initiatives/safety-opportunity-success-project>.

The Fourth Wave: Juvenile Justice Reforms for the 21st Century takes a comprehensive look at the evolution of juvenile justice reform efforts over the past century and highlights the current wave of reform influencing policy changes that achieve better outcomes for children, their families, and their communities. The Fourth Wave: A Brief Look at Juvenile Justice Reforms for the 21st Century is a shorter booklet version of the report, ideal for distribution. See more [online](#).



NCSL Juvenile Justice staff are available to visit your legislature to provide testimony or other technical assistance on a variety of juvenile justice issues. Please contact: Sarah Brown, (303) 364-7700 ext. 1361 or at sarah.brown@ncsl.org.

NOTE: Links to external websites and reports are for information purposes only and do not indicate NCSL's endorsement of the content on those sites.

This newsletter is prepared under a partnership project of NCSL's Criminal Justice Program in Denver, Colo., and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation in Chicago, Ill. The NCSL project is designed to help states tap the best research and information available to put a lens to juvenile justice policy options and reforms.