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# NATIONAL JUVENILE JUSTICE NETWORK

**September 5, 2013**

## News and Advances from the Field

### ATTORNEY GENERAL ERIC HOLDER CALLS FOR SWEEPING CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM REFORMS

*"While I have the utmost faith in -- and dedication to -- America's legal system, we must face the reality that, as it stands, our system is in too many respects broken."*

Attorney General Eric Holder announced in a speech to the American Bar Association last month that the Justice Department will adopt new policies in an attempt to "address persistent needs and



### IN THIS ISSUE

[Attorney General Calls for Justice System Reforms](#)

[MacArthur Foundation Announces New Resource Centers](#)

[Juvenile Justice Roundup](#)

[Youth in Adult Court: an NJJN Policy Platform](#)

[Massachusetts Raise the Age Bill Progresses](#)

unwarranted disparities" in the U.S. criminal justice system.

Holder made particular note of the U.S.'s inflated prison population, the epidemic of extreme sentencing for low-level and nonviolent offenses, and persistent disparities in sentencing across racial lines.



*Attorney General  
Eric Holder*

In his broad reform agenda for the criminal justice system, Holder mentioned juvenile justice issues several times:

- He announced plans to rally leaders "to better understand, address, and prevent young people's exposure to violence."
- He urged Congress to expand young people's access to quality defense counsel.
- Holder decried the school-to-prison pipeline, and reinforced his commitment to the Department's civil rights litigation in this area.

He struck a discordant note, however, when he announced increased funding for school resource officers through the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program. Research has repeatedly shown that police in schools can actually exacerbate the problems they are meant to address. [See NJJN's policy platform on [Safe and Effective School Disciplinary Policies and Practices](#) and [our response](#) last January to the President's plan to put more cops in schools.]

Nevertheless, we applaud the Attorney General's efforts to draw much-needed attention to the ongoing crisis in the U.S. criminal and juvenile justice systems. Holder's acknowledgement of the need for comprehensive reform of the justice system, although long overdue, is itself undeniably significant. We can only hope that his leadership will lay the foundation for a more fair and equitable justice system.

» [Go here for the story online.](#)  
» [Read the full speech.](#)

## YOUTH IN THE ADULT SYSTEM: NEW NJJN POLICY PLATFORM

We all recognize that youth are different from adults -- so why doesn't our criminal justice system?



With legal and scientific communities consistently asserting that young people cannot be held accountable for their actions in the same way as adults, data showing the physical and emotional harm that comes to youth in adult facilities, and evidence of the long-term negative consequences of an adult criminal record, it's past time to reform our policies that place youth in the adult system.

NJJN's new policy platform makes concrete recommendations for policies to keep youth out of the adult system.

» [Download the policy platform](#)

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**UPDATE: MASSACHUSETTS  
RAISE THE AGE BILL  
PROGRESSES**

Photo Credit: Flickr user [Talk Radio News Service](#)

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## MACARTHUR FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES JUVENILE JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP, LAUNCHES RESOURCE CENTERS TO ADVANCE REFORM

Building on its nearly 20-year, \$150 million investment in supporting juvenile justice reform, the John D. and Catherine T.

MacArthur Foundation recently announced an additional commitment of \$15 million to the field, in part to establish the new [Models for Change Resource Center Partnership](#). The

Partnership will provide public defenders, judges, policymakers, advocates, probation officers, social service agencies, and others with much needed technical assistance, trainings, tools, and resources to help advance juvenile justice reform across the country.



The new Partnership consists of four resource centers that will focus on areas critical to continued change in juvenile justice:

- The [Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Collaborative for Change: A Training, Technical Assistance and Education Center](#), focusing on response to mental health needs;
- The [National Juvenile Defender Center](#), focusing on stronger legal defense for indigent youth;
- The Vera Institute's [Status Offense Reform Center](#), focusing on interventions for youth charged with status offenses (activities that are criminalized for those under 18, e.g., truancy, running away, curfew violations); and,
- The [Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice](#), focusing on coordination of practices and policies for youth involved in both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, and enhancement of probation system practices.

Massachusetts inched closer to passing a "Raise the Age" bill in late July. [H. 1432](#) passed the Massachusetts House unanimously this May, and it has kept its momentum: the Senate also unanimously passed the bill in July. However, due to an amendment added by the Senate, the bill must be re-approved by the House before heading to the Governor's desk to be signed into law. NJJN member organization [Citizens for Juvenile Justice](#) has been a key player in campaigning for this bill, and we look forward to hearing more as the bill progresses.

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### SUPPORT NJJN

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- » [Find out more](#) about the partnership and resource centers!
- » Visit [Models for Change](#).

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## Juvenile Justice Roundup

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### UPDATES FROM THE FIELD:

- PBS recently aired a special titled "Fixing Juvie Justice" that examines alternatives to the U.S. juvenile justice system, which over-relies on incarceration. The show explores restorative justice approaches originating in Maori communities that have been successfully implemented in New Zealand; and follows one organization's attempt to implement those principles in communities in Baltimore. [Read more](#) about the special or [watch it online](#).
- The [Council of State Governments Justice Center](#) has recently launched its revamped [website](#). The CSG Justice Center aims to provide useful, data-driven justice-system strategies developed by the center's staff as well as experts from around the world.
- The [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention](#) (OJJDP) has released "[OJJDP Family Listening Sessions: Executive Summary](#)." In 2011, OJJDP and the [Campaign for Youth Justice](#), an NJJN partner, convened four listening sessions involving families and youth who have had direct experiences with the juvenile justice system at the local or state levels. This report summarizes the participants' experiences and their recommendations for reform. The listening sessions provide OJJDP, state juvenile justice agencies, and other stakeholders with a greater understanding of the challenges families face when their children become involved in the juvenile or criminal justice systems. [Read the executive summary here](#).

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National Juvenile Justice Network | 1319 F St. NW | Suite 402 | Washington | DC | 20004