Risk Assessment and Behavioral health Screening (RABS) Project

Two probation offices in each of two states will be selected to receive funding for a coordinator, get free training and technical assistance, and provided financial resources related to implementing evidence-based risk assessment and screening tools through a new program funded jointly by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (MacArthur Foundation) and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

The National Youth Screening & Assessment Project (NYSAP) in the Systems & Psychosocial Advances Center (SPARC) at the University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS) will provide the training and technical assistance. Participating sites will receive technical assistance for up to 18 months that will involve, training and implementation of the MAYSI-2 mental health screen, a substance abuse screen, and an empirically validated tool to assess risk for future delinquency.

Background
Sound case planning that is in line with youths’ risk level and criminogenic risk factors can be a very effective way to reduce continued delinquency while conserving resources. Adopting evidence-based risk assessment tools is only the first step to achieving that goal. Often agencies are not sure how to use these tools in their decisions or how to balance case planning based on criminogenic risk factors with behavioral health needs. Comprehensive implementation of assessment tools is essential. Our previous studies demonstrated that sound implementation of risk assessment and comprehensive case planning led to a significant reduction in rates of youth on high levels of probation supervision in five out of six jurisdictions, and cut out-of-home placement rates in half without increasing reoffending.

Overview of the RABS Project
The aim of this technical assistance and research project is to improve decision-making about youth processing in line with state-of-the art Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) principles while integrating behavioral health needs (mental health and substance abuse). The research team will collaborate with two juvenile probation offices in two states to evaluate an empirically informed approach to implementing risk assessment and a case-planning model (outlined in the Risk Assessment in Juvenile Justice: A Guidebook for Implementation). The project will add how to best incorporate behavioral health needs with criminogenic risk. NYSAP is studying whether effective implementation of the assessments and case planning approach decreases out-of-home placement and maximum levels of supervision and increases appropriate services to youth at all levels of risk of reoffending, without jeopardizing public safety.

This project is part of a broader collaboration between OJJDP and the MacArthur Foundation, which includes three additional initiatives:
- **Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities and Disproportionate Minority Contact:** Employing a collaborative, data-driven approach to improve equity and enhance outcomes for youth of color who come into contact with the juvenile justice system. The Center for Children’s Law and Policy (CCLP) will provide technical assistance and project oversight. Contact CCLP at tdavis@cclp.org.

- **Dual Status Youth Technical Assistance Initiative:** Designing and implementing multi-system responses to improve outcomes for youth involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and help systems work more effectively and efficiently together. Technical Assistance utilizing a proven framework for system coordination and integration will be provided by the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice, led by Robert F. Kennedy Children’s Action Corps. Contact RFK at jtuell@rfkchildren.org.

- **Mental Health Training Curriculum for Juvenile Justice:** Providing comprehensive adolescent development and mental health training to juvenile correctional and detention staff to improve staff knowledge, understanding and ability respond to youth with mental health needs. The National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice will provide technical assistance and project oversight. Contact NCMHJJ at kskowyra@prairnc.com.

OJJDP and the MacArthur Foundation are interested in involving as many jurisdictions as possible in this collaboration. While jurisdictions are not prohibited from applying for more than one initiative, the selection process will consider whether a jurisdiction is applying for multiple projects.

**Eligibility**

NYSAP invites applications from state or county-based juvenile justice courts or probation agencies to participate in this technical assistance and research project. Two probation offices in each of two states will be selected and expected to collaborate on the technical assistance initiative within their state. Probation offices that already have the MAYSI-2 are eligible and can still receive implementation assistance. Offices that are using a risk assessment tool that is not ‘evidence-based’ are also eligible if they are prepared to adopt a new tool.

**For Further Information**

We invite interested agencies to read the full announcement for additional details regarding this project, eligibility requirements, selection criteria, and the application process at [www.nysap.us](http://www.nysap.us) or contact Dr. Gina Vincent, the Principal Investigator, at gina.vincent@umassmed.edu.

**About the MacArthur Foundation**

The MacArthur Foundation supports creative people and effective institutions committed to building a more just, verdant and peaceful world. The Foundation’s Models for Change initiative seeks to accelerate reform of juvenile justice systems across the country. Focused on efforts in select states, the initiative aims to create replicable reform models that effectively hold young people 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. More information is available at [www.modelsforchange.net](http://www.modelsforchange.net).