



Models for Change Washington State

Special Counsel for Enhancing Juvenile Indigent Defense

The MacArthur Foundation launched its [Models for Change \(MfC\) initiative](#) in Washington in an effort to create successful and replicable models of juvenile justice reform through targeted investments. Washington was selected as one of the four Models for Change states in recognition of its commitment to and support of juvenile justice system reforms incorporating evidence-based practices.

The Foundation selected the [Center for Children & Youth Justice](#) to serve as the lead entity to guide and coordinate the Models for Change initiative in Washington State. In addition the MacArthur Foundation awarded TeamChild a two-year grant to create a Special Counsel position to assist in statewide efforts to enhance juvenile defense in Washington. TeamChild was selected by CCYJ to be a collaborative partner in MfC and to host the Special Counsel because of the unique role it plays in juvenile justice reform.

The Models for Change initiative seeks to accelerate movement toward a more rational, fair, effective, and developmentally appropriate juvenile justice system. The Washington Models for Change Work Plan imparts the following vision for Washington's Juvenile Justice System:

“A model system would safeguard the procedural and substantive rights of all youth who come into conflict with the law. Meaningful access to legal counsel would be available as soon as possible after a youth's arrest, and comprehensive representation would continue until the youth's case was closed. Defense attorneys would have limited caseloads and adequate training and oversight, as well as access to investigators, experts, social workers, and support staff. Their compensation would be adequate, and they would work in an environment that encouraged and supported their responsibilities to their young clients.” See www.modelsforchange.net

In collaboration with MfC Lead Entity CCYJ, TeamChild and the Special Counsel will work with the juvenile defense community on activities to increase the access to counsel and:

- Improve juvenile defender's access to training, mentoring and technical assistance;
- Coordinate and build models of high quality holistic defense practices, and
- Increase juvenile defender's leadership and meaningful participation in system reform efforts.

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Special Counsel Activities and Updates

Development of Statewide Training Resources

The TeamChild Special Counsel is working with the juvenile defense community to identify training needs of attorneys handling juvenile cases. This will inform the development of a progressive training curriculum that builds basic to advanced practice skills for juvenile defenders. We'll ask defenders to help to identify the specific resource materials and manuals that would assist juvenile defense attorneys in all aspects of their practice, including pretrial investigation, discovery and motions, case negotiations, fact-findings, dispositions and post conviction relief. Project goals include:

- Ensuring that resources are readily available to practitioners statewide and can be adopted as part of a regular, ongoing resource for juvenile defenders,
- Introducing emerging social science and forensic research and its practical applications and relevance to juvenile defense, and
- Developing tools for experienced practitioners to effectively assist and train attorneys new to juvenile defense.

The Special Counsel has coordinated over a dozen CLE's addressing juvenile issues. These CLEs took place in Wenatchee, Benton-Franklin, Clark, Spokane, Snohomish, King and Skagit Counties and at the WDA annual conference in Sun Mountain.

Opportunities for Leadership and Advocacy

The TeamChild Special Counsel will serve as a facilitator to bring together juvenile defense practitioners who are interested in playing a leadership role in enhancing juvenile defense. Leadership activities may include:

- Improving the conditions under which juvenile defenders are practicing, including reasonable caseload standards and uniform contract provisions,
- Changing the statutory barriers to achieving community-based, therapeutic interventions for youth,
- Shaping model practice or court policies to ensure fairness, and
- Increasing the presence and effective participation of the juvenile defense community in system reform discussions at the local, state and national level.

The Special Counsel surveyed over 100 defenders on issues important to the juvenile defense practice. These conversations took place through a survey tool and brainstorming/focus group sessions. The survey results will assist in the identification of priority issues for defenders as well as create a forum for leadership and dialogue on the issues.

Technical Assistance and Case Support

The TeamChild Special Counsel provides support and technical assistance for juvenile defenders. George will facilitate connections between experienced defense attorneys to assist in mentorship of newer juvenile defenders and staffing of case specific issues. The Special Counsel has fielded hundreds of inquiries for referrals and technical assistance.

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