

Sedgwick County, Kansas

POPULATION (2013 CENSUS ESTIMATE):	505,415
YOUTH POPULATION (2013 CENSUS ESTIMATE):	134,507 (26.6 PERCENT)
MAIN COMMUNITY MAKEUP:	92% URBAN, 8% RURAL
OVERALL POPULATION DENSITY PER SQUARE MILE:	499.6
PERSONS BELOW POVERTY LEVEL, 2008-2012:	14.4%

The Impetus for Change

Consistent with states and counties throughout the country, Sedgwick County started in the *early 1990s* to take a hard look at the call to expand the size of their jails and juvenile detention centers. Instead of taking a superficial look at the growing numbers, County Manager William Buchanan saw an opportunity to re-examine the assumptions that had been made about the effectiveness of “business as usual.” He directed juvenile detention management to identify options. At this time juvenile detention reforms were being discussed at the national level. On a parallel path with the national discussion Sedgwick County implemented home-base supervision (1990) and a residential shelter (1994) as detention alternatives. Gang violence and police intervention addressing it caused sudden growth in demand for detention and overcrowding. Buchanan worked with county, state and court officials to establish a collaborative data-driven model to address the short and long term needs and issues. He brokered an important and lasting relationship with Wichita State University to take a deeper and ongoing look at the existing practices and programs and discovered that some of their long-time practices were working and others were not. The results were revealing.

While there were “feel good” programs that had strong constituencies, the data simply did not support the investments made. These program evaluations took on a different significance as state financial support dwindled and as Sedgwick County itself faced fiscal constraints. The focus then became not simply whether the program produced positive outcomes, but whether they produced positive outcomes for the *highest need* youth. These decisions were even harder to make and more controversial, because some programs that did indeed work lost support. However, with unified support from the county stakeholders, with the data to support the decisions, and a commitment to community engagement, those shifts became easier – albeit not easy.

The Change Environment

In 1995, the adult and juvenile corrections departments were unified into a single county department allowing for greater leveraging of resources and a deeper cross-pollination of emerging effective practices in both fields. Sedgwick County Department of Corrections Director Mark Masterson, who has among his many honors been named the 2011 Models for Change Champion for Change, was there for the merger, but so too was a leader he considered a partner in the work, County Manager Buchanan. The continuity of leadership since the *early 1990s* has certainly afforded Sedgwick County great advantages to examine data critically, identify what works and doesn’t, learn from the field, and see through reforms. Yet, it has been the creative leadership of both county leaders that has led the charge in their county and set an example for other juvenile justice systems as well as their peers in county management and administration.

Even as the Board of Commissioners has changed over time, with swings in political philosophies, Buchanan and Masterson have remained resolved to elevate juvenile justice as a priority for the county. Yet, other key actors have remained consistent partners throughout the years with a consistent juvenile bench since 1989 and district attorney since 1988. The Board of Commissioners also had some long-time allies to this work, notably Commissioner Thomas G. Winters, who came with an interest and expertise in early childhood development which added to his commitment to early intervention approaches in juvenile justice.

The continuity of leadership, the organizational support for collaboration, and immediate need to address overburdened detention facilities and dwindling budgets created the perfect conditions for an interdisciplinary approach to juvenile justice. Since 1996 the Detention Utilization Committee – a policy group that brings together key stakeholders – has met and been instrumental to keep the communication lines open among the chief judge, juvenile judiciary, district attorney, detention, probation, and others. In 2000, a broader policy group, Team Justice was added to engage community stakeholders in expanding prevention and early intervention programs to reduce delinquency. Both policy groups continue today with monthly meetings. In fact, in this year, Buchanan and Masterson have proactively met to discuss how to sustain some of the progress in anticipation in the change of political perspective and leadership incoming in 2015.

The Results

Sedgwick County's work to improve its juvenile justice system predates its involvement in national reform efforts, such as the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's *Models for Change* Initiative. However, both initiatives amplified and catalyzed local efforts not simply by bringing financial resources but by cementing pre-existing and emerging collaborative relationships in the county.

Spotlight: Partnership with Schools

Among the keystone accomplishments of Sedgwick County, KS has been its growing relationship and cooperation with local systems. Lanora Franck was brought on board as the new liaison, uniquely positioned to broker meaningful partnerships between juvenile justice and schools. Franck is based within the Department of Corrections, but brings 12 years of experience on the local school board and a strong relationship with the school superintendent. Since 2009, several Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) have been entered between the Department of Corrections and the school system that have led to significant diversion of youth away from the juvenile justice system.

These agreements targeted the onerous and largely ineffective zero-tolerance policies that had been in place in schools and modifying how suspensions and expulsions are used to handle in-school discipline problems. The first of these

Highlights

- Introduction of an objective detention screening instrument
- Increased detention alternatives, both residential and home-based options
- Reduction in racial and ethnic disparities in juvenile arrests
- Reduction in arrests at schools for minor offenses
- Overall diversion of youth from juvenile detention as a sanction
- Shift to evidence-based interventions and ongoing evaluation of those programs
- Coordinated efforts with schools to handle school discipline issues in the community and to ease the reentry of youth coming out of detention and back into the community

MOUs were established in 2009-2010 and expanded to all Wichita schools in 2011. Since then, Franck and Masterson have continued to work with local schools to build new agreements in support of different behavior modification models and supporting a wraparound model informed by the National Wraparound Initiative, established by Eric J. Burns from the University of Washington School of Medicine and Dr. Janet Walker of the Regional Research Institute at Portland State University. These efforts helped reduce school-based arrests for disorderly conduct by 37 percent in just the first year (2009 to 2010).

The county-school partnership has also extended to the deep end of the justice system, addressing the needs of youth who are returning from confinement. In 2011, the local school district (*USD 259*) piloted a new transitional school designed as a “soft landing” for these juveniles, scaffolding their social and academic adjustment to public school. Again, the work has been carefully modeled by best practices – those identified by the US Department of Education and by model work in Multnomah County, OR (Portland).

Spotlight: Increasing Racial and Ethnic Fairness

Sedgwick County has also been a leader in Kansas and throughout the country in looking at the racial and ethnic disparities in its own system and introducing interventions to make systems fairer and more equitable. During the period of October 1, 2007 through June 30, 2012, Sedgwick County worked in partnership with the DMC Action Network *Models for Change* Project. Under this project, Team Justice engaged in an iterative process of data collection, analysis, collaboration, training, prevention, intervention, graduated sanctions, research, evaluation and reporting activities.

Through these efforts, Sedgwick County established *new* alternatives to detention, enhanced data systems, more robust prevention programming, graduated sanction grids, workplace diversity and cultural competency training, implementation and validation of objective assessment tools, new methods of community engagement to support and develop strategies to reduce disparity at the point of arrest, among many other actions.

The positive impacts has reached all involved youth but has also closed some of the disparity gaps that had previously existed. In FY13, the Juvenile Justice Authority and County Crime Prevention Funded Programs served 1,922 youth and had 1,499 cases closed either successfully or unsuccessfully. The overall success rate was 82.5%. The success rate for minority youth was 82.7%. African American youth succeeded 77.1% of the time and Hispanic youth 86.5%.

The impact of our jurisdiction’s work to reduce DMC is evidenced in numerous ways from successful reductions in: arrests for specific offenses; school referrals to the juvenile justice system; and, reliance on juvenile detention for sanctions. Additionally, reform efforts include increasing: access to counsel, effectively serving cross-over youth and collaboration with the educational system.

Juvenile Programs

- Aggression Replacement Training
- Communities In Schools
- City Life Work Program
- D.A.’s Juvenile Intervention Program
- Detention Advocacy Service (case management only)
- Education, Training & Employment Program
- Functional Family Therapy
- Learning the Ropes (youth only)
- PATHS for Kids
- Targeted Outreach Program
- Teen Intervention Program

Other Headlines From Sedgwick County

- Sedgwick County Allows Non-Custodial Bench Warrants. Sedgwick County implemented a two-tier warrant procedure to reduce bench warrants resulting in admissions to secure detention. The procedure permits judges to issue non-custodial orders in addition to custodial orders.
- Sedgwick County Eliminates Use of Restraint Chairs in Detention. The Sedgwick County Department of Corrections ended the use of restraint chairs in its juvenile detention facility in October 2011. The change emerged from a study by county of best practices in the field. They found that use of restraints, restraint chairs, and isolation was declining due, in part, to staff training in evidence-based practices, crisis intervention stress management debriefing with residents, staff debriefing of critical incidents, closer monitoring by supervisors, use of specialized case plans with youth experiencing mental health issues, and enhanced programming time for residents.
- Sedgwick County Implements Graduated Sanctions and Rewards for Youth on Intensive Probation. To reduce the number of youth entering detention for violating the terms of their probation, Sedgwick County developed a system of graduated sanctions and incentives in August 2009. The system equips probation officers with greater options to reward positive behavior and hold youth accountable for negative behavior without resorting to incarceration. Sedgwick County also developed a non-residential weekend reporting alternative to detention program in January 2010. These innovations, along with increased use of evidence-based practices and structured decision making, led to a drop in out-of-home commitments of 40 percent between 2006 and 2010. The number of youth locked up on any given day fell 20 percent between 2006 and 2011; as a result, county officials estimated that they saved about \$1.28 million per year on detention beds.

The County As A Key Stakeholder

Counties juggle multiple competing and extremely important priorities. Criminal justice is among the largest of those areas, with juvenile justice services representing an often tiny part of the overall budget. Why would a county like Sedgwick County, KS, which is certainly not exempt from these other pressures and interests spend so much time and other resources on this issue area?

"Part of our jobs as administrators is to make sure that elected officials make informed decisions," explains County Manager Buchanan. "It is the most critical part of our job. We have to frame this issue as very important. It may be a small part of the budget. But the consequences of not funding programs; the consequences of doing it wrong; the consequences of not paying attention are huge for the community. They are huge for all individuals involved in the system. They are especially huge for the youth and families involved."

With the benefit of sound research from their local university partner, Wichita State University, Buchanan, Masterson, and their partners have learned and shared with leadership that inefficiencies and relative costs in "traditional" juvenile justice work far amplify the relative size of the budget line item it represents. Buchanan shares some of what has worked to garner support from the Commissioners, "Help them understand how the system works. Outsiders to the system often do not know who is impacted by the system, what issues they come with, and how they move through that system. Leadership needs not only the hard facts but the actual stories and experiences of those in the

system. They want to hear them and respond to the stories. They want to hear where we have succeeded and where we can succeed."