



RECLAIMING FUTURES
NATIONAL PROGRAM OFFICE

Communities helping teens
overcome drugs, alcohol and crime

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Research shows significant improvements in communities piloting Reclaiming Futures' approach to teens in trouble

Coordination of substance abuse treatment in the juvenile justice system has improved significantly in 10 communities that are piloting Reclaiming Futures, a new approach to helping teens who struggle with drugs, alcohol and crime, according to new research conducted by the Urban Institute and the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall Center for Children.

An initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), Reclaiming Futures combines system reform, treatment improvement and community engagement to help teens in the justice system get off drugs and alcohol. Research shows that teens who use drugs and alcohol are more likely to end up in the justice system, where treatment services are often unavailable or uncoordinated.

"Early findings indicate that the 10 pilot communities have significantly improved their coordination of juvenile justice and substance abuse treatment services," said Jeffrey A. Butts, research fellow with the University of Chicago and member of the Reclaiming Futures evaluation team.

Across the 10 communities, 12 out of the 13 indices have shown significant improvement since 2003, Butts said. For example, there have been significant improvements in drug and alcohol assessments, effectiveness of treatment and access to services. Communities report more families are involved in helping teens turn their lives around, and more teens who have struggled with drugs and alcohol are involved in positive social activities in their communities.

Key elements of the Reclaiming Futures model include screening and assessing teens for drug and alcohol problems and assembling a team to develop a personal care plan; training drug and alcohol treatment providers in evidence-based practices that work with teens; and involving community members as mentors and role models to provide the support teens need.

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“Through systems change, Reclaiming Futures is making a difference in the health of youth and their families,” said Kristin Schubert, RWJF program officer for Reclaiming Futures. “The pilot communities ultimately can serve as models for juvenile justice improvements across the nation.”

Communities using the Reclaiming Futures model screen and assess teens entering the juvenile justice system, match young people to clinical services and positive community opportunities, and provide care coordination and family support. Community leaders in these places work together as a team to assure that each part of the process functions effectively, remains accountable to the community and demonstrates progress, such as decreasing recidivism.

“The judges, justice workers, treatment providers and community members in our Reclaiming Futures communities are working hard to bring about these important changes,” said Laura Nissen, national program director. “While we’ve learned a great deal, there’s still more to be done.”

A summary of the Urban Institute evaluation results is available online at <http://www.reclaimingfutures.org/evaluation.asp>. The findings will also be discussed as part of a briefing about Reclaiming Futures for Congressional aides, 12:00 to 1:30 PM, Wednesday, March 15, in Room 2168, Rayburn Building, Washington, DC.

The 10 communities piloting the \$21 million initiative include Anchorage, Ala.; Santa Cruz, Calif.; Chicago, Ill.; three counties in Eastern Kentucky; Marquette, Mich.; the state of New Hampshire; Rosebud, South Dakota; Dayton, Ohio; Portland, Ore. and Seattle, Wash. These communities will pilot the project through the middle of 2007.

In addition to the biannual surveys, five of the 10 communities are conducting local evaluations on recidivism, relapse rates and other program outcomes for Reclaiming Futures teens. This data will be available after 2007.

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About Reclaiming Futures

Reclaiming Futures is a new approach to helping teenagers caught in the cycle of drugs, alcohol and crime. The mission of Reclaiming Futures, a \$21 million initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is to promote new opportunities and standards of care in juvenile justice. It is housed in the Regional Research Institute for Human Services of the Graduate School of Social Work at Portland State University. For additional information, visit www.reclaimingfutures.org.

About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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