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Boston College Law School

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Casey Foundation Essay Tackles Juvenile Justice Reform

6/13/08--ON JUNE 12, THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION LAUNCHED ITS 2008 KIDS COUNT DATA BOOK ESSAY, "A ROAD MAP FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM."

6/13/08--On June 12, the Annie E. Casey Foundation launched its 2008 KIDS COUNT Data Book essay, "A Road Map for Juvenile Justice Reform." Every year the KIDS COUNT Data Book, the flagship publication of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, contains an essay that looks at a child well-being topic. The 2008 essay focuses on developments in the juvenile justice systems in the United States and draws attention to urgently needed reforms for positive youth development and community safety.

The Juvenile Rights Advocacy Project (JRAP) at Boston College Law School is mentioned within the essay as an example of what is needed to yield a far fairer and more efficient juvenile justice system. "Optimally, states and localities should study and emulate the Children and Family Justice Center at Northwestern University Law School, the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, or Boston College Law School's Juvenile Rights Advocacy Project," the essay reads. "These programs offer innovative, comprehensive representation for justice-involved youth."

"The 2008 KIDS COUNT Data Book essay demonstrates that much of current juvenile justice policy is not working and that there is now a solid body of research about evidence-based practices that can promote safety, enhance opportunities for kids, and strengthen communities," said JRAP Director Francine Sherman. "The essay describes Casey's flagship Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) which is now in almost 100 local jurisdictions reducing the inappropriate detention of youth and expanding opportunities for youth in their communities. Having provided technical assistance to JDAI sites on ways to reduce the detention of girls for the past 7 years, I have seen many examples of juvenile system reform using JDAI principles that reduce the use of harmful secure detention and provide girls and their families with the kind of support that creates opportunities and encourages healthy development. The essay makes a strong case for states and Congress to invest in this package of juvenile justice practices that work."

The book also provides national and state-by-state profiles of the well-being of America's children through rankings on ten key measures and information on the social, health, education, economic conditions of America's families and children. The 2008 KIDS COUNT Data Book and "A Road Map for Juvenile Justice Reform" essay are available at <http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/sld/databook.jsp>.

"I, along with hundreds of other child advocates, attended the Casey Foundations Congressional Briefing," said Jason Langberg, BC Law class of 2009. "As a 2L last year at Boston College Law School, I was fortunate enough to be a JRAP student. Under the supervision of three practicing attorneys and with student partners on each case, I represented teens in special education meetings, school discipline hearings, Child in Need of Services status proceedings, abuse and neglect cases, and post-dispositional administrative advocacy. My experiences in JRAP are already proving tremendously beneficial in my work as a summer law

clerk with the Public Defender Service in Washington, DC and as I continue pursuing a career as a juvenile attorney. And it is with great fondness that I look back on having the opportunity to be part of something so special."

JRAP represents youth (with a focus on girls) who are confined to juvenile facilities, comprehensively across systems, and until they reach majority. JRAP draws on the legal system to access social and community services and hold systems accountable, reducing the use of incarceration and supporting girls in their communities. In addition to individual representation, JRAP is involved in ongoing research and policy advocacy aimed at reducing incarceration and supporting youth in their communities. Within its policy agenda, JRAP seeks to develop and model programs for delinquent youth that provide access for youth to a range of social services and promote collaboration across systems.

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