

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 8, 2006

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Research Shows Significant Improvements In Montgomery County And Nine Other Communities Piloting Reclaiming Futures' Approach To Teens In Trouble

Coordination of substance abuse treatment in the juvenile justice system has improved significantly in Montgomery County and in nine other communities that are piloting Reclaiming Futures, a new approach to helping teens who struggle with drugs, alcohol and crime, according to 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 since 2003," said Jeffrey A. Butts, research fellow with the University of Chicago and member of the Reclaiming Futures evaluation team. In Montgomery County, for example, there have been significant improvements in drug and alcohol assessments, targeted treatment, effectiveness of treatment, access to services, family involvement, and interaction among partner agencies.

"Through systems change, Reclaiming Futures is making a difference in the health of our youth and their families," said Nick Kuntz, Administrative Judge for Montgomery County Juvenile Court. "Our judges, justice workers, treatment providers and community members are working hard to bring about these important changes. Montgomery County, along with the other pilot communities, ultimately can serve as models for juvenile justice improvements across the nation."

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Montgomery County uses the Reclaiming Futures model to 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 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.

“Key to Montgomery County’s success has been our recruitment and training of Natural Helper volunteers, who are carefully matched with court-involved youth and provide much-needed support, guidance and encouragement to these young people,” said Judge Anthony Capizzi, Montgomery County Juvenile Court. To date, Reclaiming Futures—Montgomery County has trained 62 Natural Helpers who have made a difference in the lives of 74 young people and their families.

A summary of the Urban Institute evaluation results is available online at <http://www.reclaimingfutures.org/evaluation.asp>. The 10 communities piloting the \$21 million initiative include Anchorage, AK; Santa Cruz, CA; Chicago, IL; three counties in Eastern Kentucky; Marquette, MI; the state of New Hampshire; Rosebud, SD; Montgomery County, OH; Portland, OR and Seattle, WA. In addition to the biannual surveys, five of the 10 communities—including Montgomery County—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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