The Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center is developing a Model Juvenile Defense Practice and Policy Clinic. Once fully incorporated into the Law Center’s curriculum, the model clinic will engender a corps of highly trained law students who, during their studies, will provide sound vigorous legal defense and policy advocacy on behalf of children involved in the juvenile justice system in Louisiana. Additionally, the model curriculum, materials and business plan the Law Center develops as deliverables for the grant will be made available to law schools throughout the country seeking to improve or establish their own juvenile defense clinics. In this manner, the project ultimately seeks to create a valuable tool for increasing the national capacity of law schools to train committed juvenile defenders capable of providing effective and zealous representation for the expressed interests of their clients and contributing to the reform of the juvenile justice system in their own jurisdictions.

**Project Focus**

The Model Juvenile Defense Practice and Policy Clinic will be based on best practices in the areas of both juvenile defense and clinical methodology. The Clinic will also reflect guiding principles and primary goals of the MfC initiative including, but not limited to, fundamental fairness and respect for due process, recognition of juvenile-adult differences, community responsibility, and holding juvenile offenders accountable for their actions in developmentally appropriate ways. The Law Center’s faculty and staff will integrate the identified best practices for the clinical training of juvenile defenders into its currently existing Juvenile Representation Workshop, a live-client representation course offered in collaboration with the juvenile division of the East Baton Rouge Public Defender’s Office since 2003, in order to transform the class into a truly model clinic.

In order to determine best practices, project faculty and staff will participate in site visits to model juvenile defense legal clinics at law schools around the country in an effort to experience first-hand the most successful methods and structures for clinical training in juvenile defense. After gathering and reviewing curricula, information, and materials from these clinical programs, the project team, in conjunction with National Resource Bank Consultants, will assess the information and develop protocols for the incorporation of the determined best practices into the model curriculum. The Law Center will also draw heavily upon the resources available to it as a result of Louisiana’s membership in MacArthur’s Juvenile Indigent Defense Action Network (JIDAN), which is comprised of stakeholders and MfC partners working toward juvenile justice reform in the eight states targeted by the foundation. In order to build and sustain the model clinic, the project team will also develop as part of the fact-finding process a business plan designed to sustain the clinic in the years ahead. The creation of the Model Juvenile Defense Practice and Policy Clinic will be a central piece of the Law Center’s already ongoing comprehensive efforts to improve its experiential learning program through the construction of a state-of-the-art clinic space to house all its clinics, the creation of new clinics in other areas of law, and the hiring of a Director of Clinical Legal Education to oversee these and other improvements.

In addition, as part of the grant project the Law Center will host a national Symposium in Spring 2010 on waivers/transfers from juvenile courts to adult criminal courts. The Louisiana Law Review will host the Symposium and publish the resulting articles in the journal’s symposium issue, helping the impact of the Symposium on such an important legal issue to be felt well beyond the immediate gathering.

**Site Leadership**

For more information about the project, contact Professor Lucy McGough at 225.578.8846 or at Lucy.McGough@law.lsu.edu.

Louisiana was selected for the Models for Change initiative because of the progress it has made since the 1990s in improving its juvenile justice system and the commitment of its state and local leadership to building on this momentum. The Louisiana Models for Change initiative supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation focuses on system reforms in three major areas: alternatives to formal processing, evidence-based community services and disproportionate minority contact.