

MAKING CHANGE

Raising the bar for criminal justice practice

Loyola’s commitment to social justice is finding renewed focus in its efforts to transform Illinois’s criminal justice system with the launch of the Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy, and Practice (CCJ). A multidisciplinary endeavor that aims to promote a more fair, informed, effective, and ethical criminal justice system, the center is a major initiative in the University’s new strategic plan.

“There is a sense of urgency to ensure justice for all those affected by crime: victims, offenders, and communities. And there is a growing understanding that this is important from social justice, ethical, and public safety perspectives,” says Lisa Jacobs, program manager for the CCJ, who will help identify opportunities, set goals, and recruit and support potential partners.

Supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and developed collaboratively with the law school, Loyola’s Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, and other University partners, the CCJ will be incubated within the School of Law’s Civitas ChildLaw Center and focus on multidisciplinary partnerships within and outside the University. It will sustain and build upon the significant progress produced by the Models for Change initiative, a multistate effort funded by the MacArthur Foundation to strengthen the nation’s juvenile justice systems.

“There’s a lot of momentum around criminal justice reform. We



know more about what works and what doesn’t, and there is increasing interest in applying that knowledge,” says Jacobs, who has helped coordinate and support all Models for Change work in Illinois as its program manager since 2007. Previously, she oversaw the state’s juvenile justice services and funding, directed judicial education programs for the Illinois Supreme Court, and co-managed an evidence-based criminal and juvenile justice practice initiative for the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts.

Raising the bar for criminal justice practice in the state will

begin for the CCJ with a focus on an emerging adult population of 18–24-year-olds. This group represents a disproportionately large share of arrests and admissions to jails and prisons. The CCJ is currently planning a February 2016 national conference to encourage development of policy and practice to heighten the potential of young adults to lead healthy, crime-free, and productive lives.

“At the national, state, and local levels, there’s a growing recognition that we can do better in our criminal justice systems,” says Jacobs. “We hope the center can support today’s

policymakers, practitioners, and students—the next generation of leaders—in developing more humane and effective approaches to crime, violence, and community well-being.” ■



Lisa Jacobs