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**Citizens for Juvenile Justice issues statement on The Annie E. Casey Foundation 2008  
KIDS COUNT Essay on juvenile justice reform**

BOSTON - Citizens for Juvenile Justice applauds the release of the Annie E. Casey Foundation Essay “A Road Map for Juvenile Justice Reform” and joins its call for immediate transformation of the juvenile justice system. The Essay identifies “the shameful overrepresentation of youth of color” as “perhaps the most troubling characteristic of our nation’s juvenile justice system,” and urges states to focus on collecting and analyzing statistical data, particularly race and ethnicity data, in order to implement effective “data driven policies and programs.”

Both racial disparities and failure to collect data are major problems in Massachusetts. As indicated in Casey’s KIDS COUNT report, youth of color are five times more likely to be securely confined in the Massachusetts juvenile justice system than white youth; the report lists only 5 states with higher ratios in the entire country.

Moreover, Massachusetts fails to collect and make public basic statistical data, especially race and ethnicity data, at each key decision point in the system. Without this data, Massachusetts cannot begin to understand or address these racial disparities.

As the recently released ACLU report *Locking Up Our Children: The Secure Detention of Massachusetts Youth After Arraignment and Before Adjudication* points out, “...Massachusetts is no closer than it was in 2003 to understanding why youth of color are overrepresented. It has no comprehensive state-wide plan to address the issue and it continues to appropriate very little money either to reduce overrepresentation or to develop alternatives to secure detention.”

State Senators Creem and Spilka have recently sponsored a budget amendment that would require “a study on the feasibility, methodology, and cost of implementing a comprehensive system for collecting statistical data,” including race and ethnicity data. Citizens for Juvenile Justice urges the legislature to include this requirement in the final 2009 budget as an important first step in solving the data problem and understanding the reasons for the existing racial disparities.