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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Jefferson, Greene Counties to Pilot Program to Improve Future for Youth**

Jefferson City, MO—The Missouri Department of Social Services and the State Crossover Youth Policy Team has selected Judicial Circuits in Greene and Jefferson Counties as pilot sites for a program to reduce the number of youth who likely to become involved with both the child welfare and the juvenile justice systems and help those youth transition successfully to adulthood.

Youth who move between the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system, known as “crossover youth” generally have more extensive trauma histories, less family and kin support, fewer community placement options and more complex mental health, educational, and transition issues than youth who only have been only been in one of the systems. However, juvenile justice system decisions and actions may occur without full information or benefit of the available resources. The State Crossover Youth program will involve a team approach to gain comprehensive perspective of the youth’s life and integrate services so decisions and actions will reflect a more thorough understanding of the complexities of the youth’s history and circumstances.

Over the next year, the Department of Social Services will work with the Judicial Circuits in Jefferson and Greene Counties and the local communities to more effectively address the unique issues of crossover youth through case review, decision-making, and implementation of a Crossover Youth Practice Model developed by Georgetown University and Casey Family Programs. The Georgetown University Center for Juvenile Justice Reform will also support the efforts of each Circuit through technical assistance and training.

The State Crossover Youth Policy expects the program will improve outcomes for crossover youth by reducing crossover between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and supporting successful transitions of crossover youth to a safe, stable, and productive adulthood. “These youth have tremendous hurdles to overcome and supporting their needs at this formative time of life is critical and can transform their future. We are extremely pleased that the 23<sup>rd</sup> Judicial Circuit in Jefferson County and the 31<sup>st</sup> Judicial Circuit in Greene County have been selected as the pilot sites to forge an innovative path in Missouri to improve outcomes for these youth,” said Alan O. Freeman, director, Missouri Department of Social Services.

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