

## 2016 STATUS OFFENSE REFORM POLICY ACADEMY APPLICATION COVERSHEET

**Timeframe:** All applications are due by 8:00 pm ET on August 22, 2016

**Contact:** The Vera Institute of Justice  
233 Broadway, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10279

*Please only send electronic copies (send the narrative in MS Word format please, not as a PDF) of all proposal materials, including this coversheet, Email to: [ktamis@vera.org](mailto:ktamis@vera.org) and [szarba@vera.org](mailto:szarba@vera.org). For questions, please email Vidhya Ananthkrishnan at [vananthkrishnan@vera.org](mailto:vananthkrishnan@vera.org) or Sarah Zarba at [szarba@vera.org](mailto:szarba@vera.org).*

**Agency Name:**

**Contact Person:**

**Contact Phone:**

**Email:**

**Mailing Address:**

**Website:**

# Call for Applications

## 2016 Status Offense Reform Policy Academy

### Overview

The Vera Institute of Justice (Vera) announces a competitive opportunity for states to send a team to our 2016 Status Offense Reform Policy Academy. The Academy aims to help participating states improve their responses to status offenses and reduce the number of youth entering the juvenile justice system because of status offenses. The Academy will provide substantive information on best practices to reduce status offenses, help participants craft strategies to tackle reforms, and allow participants to brainstorm and share effective approaches. States selected to attend the Policy Academy will have the opportunity to apply later this fall to receive intensive technical assistance on local status offense reform from the Vera Institute beginning in early 2017.

The Policy Academy builds on Vera's work as a leader in status offense reform during the past fifteen years. At a time when policymakers are reducing justice system involvement, it makes little sense to arrest young people for noncriminal behaviors that are illegal only because they are under 18. Yet every year, thousands of youth are brought to court, held in detention, and placed in locked facilities for these "status offenses"—which are truancy, running away, curfew violations, underage drinking, and ungovernability.

There is a better way. Community-based and family-focused responses to status offenses—which often are due to a combination of interacting school, family, and community-level factors—are more effective than court involvement.

With generous support from the MacArthur Foundation, Vera developed the Status Offense Reform Center (SORC) in 2013 to help educate the field about the importance of a community-based approach to status offenses and share resources and information for implementing tangible and sustainable change on the ground. Vera is now leveraging this knowledge to provide states with more hands-on support, including intensive technical assistance currently being offered in three jurisdictions in Wisconsin and Georgia and this first Policy Academy, which will help identify new states that might be ready to pursue such efforts.

By investing in community-based responses to status offenses, we aim to stop the flow of youth into the justice system and instead provide young people and their families with meaningful, lasting support in their communities.

## **Application for 2016 Status Offense Reform Policy Academy**

**WHAT:** The Vera Institute of Justice is hosting its first Status Offense Reform Policy Academy in the fall of 2016. The Policy Academy will convene state and local representatives from several states for an intensive, two-day session to learn from experts about effective strategies to divert status offenders away from the juvenile justice system, develop action plans to pursue those strategies, engage in cross-state learning and sharing with peers, and visit promising local programs. States selected to attend the Policy Academy will have the opportunity to apply later this fall to receive intensive technical assistance on local status offense reform from the Vera Institute, beginning in early 2017.

Workshops will be offered on several key topics, including:

- 1. School-based responses:** Building community partnerships to identify factors that underlie status offenses and develop creative, effective, school-based programs for intervention and diversion.
- 2. Police-based responses:** Developing police and community diversion efforts to engage youth and their families in services and supports instead of arrest and detention.
- 3. Supporting families:** Ensuring communities have systems of early intervention and support for families, including foster families, to respond appropriately and effectively to status offenses or behavior related to status offenses.
- 4. Providing holistic services to youth across systems:** Improving support services for youth who face child welfare issues, experience conflict at home, and/or run away to prevent their juvenile justice system involvement and to reduce the number of crossover youth; developing strategies for centralizing the provision and monitoring of mental and physical health services across systems to ensure continuous and effective treatment.
- 5. Propelling system reform:** Driving status offense system reforms through legislative change and using data to inform and shape the reform process.

**WHEN & WHERE:** November 17-18, 2016, Connecticut (details to follow)

**WHO:** From this competitive solicitation, Vera will select five states to attend the Policy Academy. Each state may send teams of up to three representatives. Teams should include local stakeholders who are well-positioned to champion reform in their jurisdictions, particularly from areas of the state that may be ripe for progress on this issue. Attendees will be joined at the Academy by teams from Georgia and Wisconsin, states that are currently receiving Vera's technical assistance on status offense reform. *Please note: Selected states can send additional representatives at their own expense; the total number of representatives allowed from each state will be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis.*

**LOGISTICS / TRAVEL COSTS:** Vera will provide travel, two nights of accommodations, and incidentals for the three representatives from each state.

**TIMELINE:** All applications will be due by **8:00 pm ET on August 22, 2016.** Selected state teams will be notified by early September.

## **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

All interested states must submit responses to the list of questions below to help Vera assess each state's capacity and commitment to addressing status offense reform. Vera's selection criteria will include: evidence of high-level leadership and commitment to improving statewide responses to status offenses; evidence of collaboration among relevant city, county, and state agencies; capacity to gather, analyze, and apply local data to undertake reforms; and a clear indication of how participating in the Policy Academy will catalyze local efforts. Only one application is required per state. Please answer questions in a separate document and do not exceed three (3) pages for the narrative portion.

1. What types of, and trends in, status offenses are most concerning in your state?
2. Please note whether youth are detained for status offenses in your state. If so, how many detentions occurred in 2015? What type(s) of status offenses was (were) most common among these cases?
3. Please briefly describe your state's legislation related to status offenses and how it may promote or hinder status offense system reform, particularly around the issues noted in Question #1.
4. Are there certain counties that drive court involvement for or the detention of status offense cases (if any) in your state? If so, please briefly describe the trends seen in those counties are working to improve responses to status offenses.
5. Identify any prominent local-level or grassroots efforts around status offense reform currently underway in your state or counties that have effectively changed their approach to status offenses and reduced the number of status offense cases in detention and in the court system.
6. What is your state's current capacity to collect, analyze, and act on data on status offenses and the outcomes of those cases?
7. Please identify which individuals from your state would attend the Policy Academy. Explain why these individuals are well-positioned to learn and report back to the state from the Academy and how they would help champion future reforms.

8. How would participation in this Policy Academy strengthen efforts to implement or expand status offense reforms in your state? Please identify one or two specific goals that your state would like to accomplish and specific strategies you would like to learn more about at the Academy.
  
9. Of the workshop topics listed below, **please select four** that are most aligned with your areas of interest. We will aim to tailor the workshops presented based on these responses
  - a. **Truancy**: implementing collaborative and effective truancy and chronic absenteeism prevention and reduction programs.
  - b. **Community support for school interventions**: creative and unique ways that localities are partnering with community organizations and services to support schools, including strategies for addressing truancy.
  - c. **School-based diversion**: engaging schools and behavioral health systems in reforming school discipline policies.
  - d. **Early intervention and prevention**: best practices across systems to quickly identify and address behaviors that can lead to status offenses.
  - e. **Courts to community**: shifting from judicial responses to school or community review boards.
  - f. **Police diversion**: efforts to engage youth and their families in community-based services and supports instead of arrest and detention.
  - g. **Crossover youth**: best practices for handling runaways and other child welfare issues leading to juvenile justice system involvement.
  - h. **Family services and supports**: developing a system of early intervention and support for families, including foster families.
  - i. **Cross-system case management and healthcare**: strategies for centralizing the provision and monitoring of mental and physical health services across systems to ensure continuous and effective treatment.
  - j. **Mentor / advocate / CASA model**: examples of programs that provide advocates for foster or juvenile justice youth across systems.

Thank you for your interest in the Vera Institute's 2016 Status Offense Reform Policy Academy.