Stop the Revolving Door: Giving Communities and Youth the Tools to Overcome Recidivism

Recommendations on Juvenile Reentry in New York City

YOUTH JUSTICE BOARD
A Project of the Center for Court Innovation
Youth Justice Board

This publication was written by the Youth Justice Board. Launched in January 2004, the Youth Justice Board is a team of young people from throughout New York City who study and propose solutions to public safety issues. The Youth Justice Board brings youth voices into the public debate on the topics—like juvenile justice and school safety—that most affect New York City teenagers.

The Youth Justice Board is a project of the Center for Court Innovation, a public-private partnership between the New York State Unified Court System and the Fund for the City of New York that works to improve public confidence in justice. The recipient of an Innovations in American Government Award from the Ford Foundation and Harvard University, the Center is an independent, non-partisan think-tank that works to reduce crime, aid victims, and strengthen neighborhoods. The Center’s demonstration projects include the award-winning Red Hook Community Justice Center and Midtown Community Court.

Points of view and opinions in this document are the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Center for Court Innovation.

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Dear Reader,

We’d like to ask you to put yourself in the shoes of a young person coming home after spending time in state custody for juvenile delinquency.

You committed a crime such as robbery, and because you did, you were removed from your home and your neighborhood and sent upstate. You were placed in a facility for 12 months. Your 12 months are up. Now what?

Coming home means coming back to the same situations that you left. Your family is used to life without you, you don’t have the steady supply of money from illegal activities, and your school won’t take you. The people—your friends—that led you to crime are still there, perhaps the only people that are welcoming you back. And, before you know it, you’re back to your old lifestyle, back in the same courtroom waiting to be sentenced, this time for drug dealing.

This is just your imagination, but in reality this is the “revolving door” that many youths continue to walk in and out of.

Now imagine you’re the parent of a child returning from state custody. Your daughter is coming home after being away for 12 months. You love your child, but as difficult as it is to admit, maybe your life was actually easier while she was away (like one parent we spoke with). You wonder: How many days of work am I going to have to miss this time around to go to court or to meet with a guidance counselor because she’s not going to school?

Reentry affects more than just that young person and family, though. When a young person is rearrested we all suffer: we don’t feel safe on our streets, and our tax dollars are spent on police and jails rather than on schools and after-school programs. Did you know that it costs $80,000 to place a young person for one year? That doesn’t even include the costs of arrest or court!

The worst thing, though, is that we lose bright, young people to lives of crime.

Stopping the revolving door for young people coming home from placement must be a priority. By putting our heads together, we have the opportunity to make a difference and help these young people become contributing members of society.

We hope that through this report on improving the reentry experience for youth, we can educate people and communicate to policymakers just how important the issue of juvenile reentry truly is.

The Youth Justice Board,

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[Signatures]
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Executive Summary

This report presents the recommendations of the Youth Justice Board on juvenile reentry in New York City. Juvenile reentry refers to young people coming home to New York City neighborhoods after being in state custody for juvenile delinquency.

What is the Youth Justice Board?
Launched in January 2004 by the Center for Court Innovation, the Youth Justice Board brings together young people from throughout New York City to propose solutions to the public safety issues that affect them and their peers.

The goal of the Youth Justice Board is to provide a credible vehicle through which young people, ages 14 to 18, can have a voice in the debate about public safety policy in New York City. Members learn how policy is crafted in the real world. Who really makes the decisions that affect youth? Under what kinds of constraints (fiscal, legal, political, etc.) do decision-makers operate? What roles—both formal and informal—do community voices play in the process? These are the kinds of questions that the Youth Justice Board helps participants answer.

The sixteen Board members, drawn from high schools throughout the city, spent nine months researching the topic of juvenile reentry. They met with over two dozen city and state officials, youth workers, scholars, and even reentry youth and their family members. They spent months analyzing the data they collected, formulating policy recommendations and drafting a formal report. The Board has already presented their recommendations to the Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education, Commissioner of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, Mayor’s Criminal Justice Coordinator, and Association of the Bar for the City of New York.

Findings/Recommendations
The Youth Justice Board chose to focus on juvenile reentry because they were shocked to learn that 75% of all youth released from state custody are rearrested within three years. Based on their interviews and research, the Youth Justice Board identified three principles that should apply to the whole reentry process:

- **Early Planning**
  Most juveniles who enter placement return to the same communities that they left. Placement is an opportunity to prepare the young person—and the family—to address the challenges he or she will face when released. Therefore, planning for the return home should start early—as soon as the decision is made to send the young person to placement.

- **Individual Treatment**
  The Youth Justice Board recommends that the key players involved with each young person meet early to create a plan that reflects his or her individual strengths and challenges. The team should include the young person, guardians, staff from the state agency responsible for
placement and reentry (New York State Office of Children and Family Services, or OCFS),
and a school representative.

- **Coordination**

  Young people in placement and aftercare come into contact with many agencies (e.g. OCFS,
  the New York City Department of Education, and community-based service providers), but
  the Board heard from several agencies that they are in the dark about what other agencies
  were doing. Regular meetings of all the agencies working with reentry youth would help
  improve communication, ensuring that youth do not fall between the cracks.

Building on these principles, the Youth Justice Board recommends the following ideas to help
prevent recidivism among reentry youth:

1. **Motivate young people to succeed**

   Ultimately, reentry youth themselves are the only ones that can improve their lives. One of
   the reasons youth drop out of programs and get into trouble is that they are not involved in activities
   they enjoy. To help reentry youth stay motivated, the Board recommends linking youth to
   programs they can get excited about, offering job training and links to adult mentors, in
   particular.

2. **Help young people get in school and stay in school**

   Although everyone interviewed agreed that education is crucial, it is hard to get reentry youth
   back in school and it is hard to get them to stay in school. One Department of Education official
   said that the biggest barrier is “the human hurdle—no one wants them back.” The Board
   recommends that OCFS make a higher priority of helping young people catch up in basic reading
   and math skills while in placement and provide an orientation workshop once they return home
   to prepare students for the return to their local school. In addition, the Department of Education
   should match students to schools quickly, make sure credits earned in placement are transferred
   correctly, and create incentives for schools to accept reentry students.

3. **Strengthen the relationships between family and youth**

   One OCFS official said that if a young person is not accepted by his or her family, he or she will
   hang out in the streets. He emphasized that it was important to make sure that the family is ready
   for the young person’s return and bring the youngster up to speed on what has occurred back
   home. To help address these problems, the Board recommends counseling for the family and
   youth together, as well as voluntary parent-to-parent support groups. In addition, to maintain
   communication while the young person is in custody, OCFS should make sure families have an
   easy way to visit placement facilities in upstate New York.

4. **Improve the reentry process**

   The Board recommends four specific ways to improve the current reentry process:

   a. **Share assessment information.** OCFS collects a lot of information about the young
      person. Relevant information from these assessments should be available to the
      organizations that provide services to the young person.

   b. **Track the early warning signs of recidivism.** Usually there are warning signs before a
      young person is rearrested: he or she becomes truant, violates curfew or doesn’t attend
programs. OCFS should institute a uniform system to track these warning signs and intervene before the next arrest occurs.

c. *Create Connection Centers.* The Board recommends creating a transition facility just north of New York City that would focus on helping young people make the difficult transition from placement to home. Since it is closer to home, OCFS aftercare workers, Department of Education staff, and parents could all meet to make sure the details of the reentry plan (e.g. school placement) are in place.

d. *Create Welcome Centers.* Once they are back home, reentry youth need a place where they can go to get reliable information about services and opportunities. Welcome Centers in their communities would have links to youth development programs, mental health and substance abuse services, job training and peer support groups.

The above recommendations are described in greater detail in the report that follows.
Introduction

Did you know that every year over 2,200 juveniles are released in New York State after serving time in custody for juvenile delinquency, and that almost eight out of 10 are rearrested and end up right back in the system?

These kids are not imaginary. They live in our neighborhoods and they go to our schools. Sixty percent of these juveniles live in New York City. They are young people just like us, the members of the Youth Justice Board. The problems and challenges that these juveniles face when they come back to their homes and communities are not widely publicized, and their voices are seldom heard.

As teens who face many of the same problems, we felt that it was important to let these voices be heard. Hearing comments such as “I don’t think I have a future” from another teenager really struck us. It was this concern that inspired and motivated us to create policy recommendations concerning youth coming out of placement.

This report presents the recommendations of the Youth Justice Board on juvenile reentry in New York City. Juvenile reentry refers to young people who come home after being in state custody (also known as placement) for juvenile delinquency.

The Youth Justice Board is a group of sixteen concerned teens from all over New York City. Although we come from different backgrounds and communities, we share a common goal—making a positive difference in our neighborhoods and the lives of young people.

The Youth Justice Board spent nine months analyzing the challenges that young people released from placement face when they return to their communities. The culmination of our analysis is the set of recommendations we present in this report. Through intensive training, interviewing and research phases, we asked all kinds of reentry stakeholders about their views on how to improve the reentry process. We interviewed policymakers, young people who have spent time in placement, their parents, social service agencies for youth, community-based organizations, and local officials.

In our research, we found that a number of important factors affect whether young people who have returned home manage to stay crime-free. These factors include:

- family support for the newly returned young person;
- an appropriate school;

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2 Bruce Frederick, Factors Contributing to Recidivism Among Youth Placed with the New York State Division for Youth, 1999, New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, 5.
3 This quote is from an interview with a participant in the Harlem Juvenile Reentry Network.
• counseling and other programs to address the youths' specific issues; and
• communication and coordination among agencies that deal with reentering youth.

The Youth Justice Board made this report with the hope that it will contribute to the well-being of youth who have fallen through the cracks of society, and that it will be a catalyst for change.

**Why did the Youth Justice Board choose to focus on reentry?**

We chose to focus on juvenile reentry because we were shocked to learn of the high recidivism rates—the number of young people who are re-arrested after returning from placement.

A 1999 study of recidivism rates among reentering youth conducted by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services found that 81% of boys and 45% of girls released from state custody had been rearrested within 36 months (see Figure 1). Combining boys and girls, 75% of all youth released from state custody were rearrested within three years. (From now on, in this report, we'll refer to this study as the DCJS study).

When we found out about the high recidivism rates, we were surprised and felt a need to do something to change it. In 2002, 64% of youth discharged from state placement were from New York City (see Figure 2). The 1,500 youth who return home to New York City from state placement every year grow up in the same neighborhoods, go to the same schools and are the same age as us, dealing with many of the same issues that all teenagers face. It is this unique perspective that helped us to relate to reentry youth and have a deeper understanding of what challenges they face and what could be done to improve their chances for success.

Another main reason why we chose to concentrate on reentry was because we found that there were not many people who knew about the high recidivism rate and what happens to the young New York City residents who leave state placement.

We hope that through this report on improving the reentry experience for the youth, we can demonstrate how important it is to take a stand on the issue of reentry. If the sky-high recidivism
rates are not made a priority, the future will hold much bigger problems. An investment in reentry programs and the juvenile justice system is an investment in the future.

Why is this issue important?

Reentry affects thousands of people in New York City besides the youth. It affects their families, the image of New York City teens and the welfare of all New Yorkers. It affects the safety of our neighborhoods.

And it affects how we spend our tax dollars. When reentry youth are rearrested, city and state dollars have to pay for police, courts and jails. This is money that is not being spent on schools and afterschool programs. It costs $80,000 to place a young person in state custody for one year— and that doesn’t even include the cost of arrest or court!

According to our calculations (see below), the state spends at least $157 million each year on placement. Yet, the total statewide budget for juvenile reentry is about 10 million dollars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost per year X Average length of stay</th>
<th>Number of juveniles admitted into OCFS custody, 2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$80,000</td>
<td>11 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total annual cost $157,080,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of all, though, 75% of released youth—approximately 1,000 New York City youth each year—get caught up in the justice system again instead of working to become executives, doctors and lawyers. They become a drain on our communities, rather than a source of strength.

The Youth Justice Board

We are a group of 16 youth leaders from all over the City of New York who are interested in making a change in our communities by making policy recommendations on the issue of reentry. We are ambitious, highly motivated and dedicated to helping other teenagers.

We joined the Board after learning of the expectations and goals of the program, which are to develop leaders, give youth a voice, and make a difference. Hearing these words (rarely heard regarding teenagers), we were very excited about this opportunity. After a competitive

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4 Officials at the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) told us that the annual cost is approximately $80,000. Other people we met with estimated a higher annual cost of placement.
5 This is an estimate based on two pieces of information. According to the Juvenile Justice Project of the Correctional Association, OCFS has an annual reentry budget of one million dollars. In addition, the New York State Executive Budget for 2004-2005 states that OCFS “will invest $6 million in Evidence-based Community Initiative programs designed to reduce the rate of recidivism among non-violent youths through the use of local non-profit agencies providing services ranging from family-based counseling to specialized after-school programs.”
6 We arrived at this number by multiplying the recidivism rate from the DCJS study (75%) by the number of New York City youth released from placement in 2002 (1,511).
application process, we were picked and together we brainstormed topics and issues that were important to us and where we wanted to focus as a group. Among the many topics we discussed were juvenile justice and school safety. The Youth Justice Board first became passionate about reentry when we heard about the high number of youths who recidivate.

Over the course of three months, we conducted in-depth research and learned investigation strategies and interview techniques. We invited research specialists to come speak to us. The training included sessions on note-taking, listening, and preparing for interviews, as well as lessons about the juvenile justice system and New York City government.

We then split into four groups in order to conduct 30 interviews with the organizations, young people and parents who make up the pieces of the reentry puzzle. We interviewed the following agencies and people in the Spring of 2004:

**Adolescent Portable Therapy**
Jean Callahan, Project Director
Evan Elkin, Clinical Director

**Annie E. Casey Foundation**
Molly Armstrong, Senior Consultant

**Advocates for Children**
Robyn Grodner, Director, Queens Family Court Project
Erin O'Neil, AmeriCorps
Helen O'Reilly, Case Advocate
Chris Tan, Director, Juvenile Justice Transition Project

**Community Prep High School**
Ana Bermudez, Co-Director

**Children's Aid Society**
Felipe Franco, Director, Community Reentry
Patricia Crossman, Director of Youth Programs, East Harlem Center

**Correctional Association**
Mishi Faruqee, Director of the Juvenile Justice Project
Youth participants

**Friends of Island Academy**
Sarah Guzman, Youth Leader
Edward Mercado, Youth Leader

**Good Shepherd Services**
JoEllen Lynch, Assistant Executive Director for Community-based Programs
Harlem Juvenile Reentry Network
Chris Watler, Judicial Hearing Officer
Youth participants
Participants’ families

John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Dr. Michael Jacobson, Department of Law and Police Science

Legal Aid Society
Monica Drinane, Attorney-in-Charge, Juvenile Rights Division

National Center on Juvenile Justice and Mental Health
Kathy Skowyra, Program Associate

New York City Department of Education
Dr. Lester Young, Senior Executive, Office of Youth Development and School-Community Services
Tim Lisante, Local Instructional Superintendent

New York City Department of Probation
Pamela Hardy, Associate Commissioner, Family Court

New York City Department of Youth and Community Development
Jeanne Mullgrav, Commissioner

New York Police Department
Sgt. Daniel Rivera, Juvenile Data Unit

New York State Office of Children and Family Services
Faye Lewis, Reentry Programs, New York City
William Baccaglini, formerly Director of Strategic Planning

Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator, City of New York
Eric Lee, Deputy Criminal Justice Coordinator
Michele Sviridoff, Deputy Coordinator for Research and Policy

Phoenix House
James Dahl, Director of Research

Red Hook Community Justice Center
The Hon. Alex Calabrese, Presiding Judge

After each of the interviews, we reconvened to share our findings. Each group put together a presentation on their interview. We had to get everything we learned down to a ‘T’ because we were in charge of educating the rest of the group to the point where they knew everything without having been there. These mini-presentations were good practice for our final
presentations and helped teach us how to present and be comfortable with the information we had just acquired.

After each presentation we looked at the areas we felt were being neglected and brainstormed possible solutions. This is where we gave birth to our policy recommendations.

The interview period lasted around three months, all jam-packed with new knowledge on this topic. Then we were on our way to developing possible policy recommendations. Midway into our 'policy phase,' we were given an opportunity to have a one-day retreat at Brooklyn College. We broke into small groups that focused on different areas and created a first draft of our recommendations. (You know what they say: all work and no play makes jack a dull boy, so after all the work we were able to unwind and went bowling. After a couple of slices of pizza and a couple of strikes, we were still talking about reentry!)

It then took us several weeks of discussion and work to finish our recommendations, begin the report and develop our presentation. We have learned a lot on the way here. We were all strangers to each other and to the topic of reentry; now we are friends who have studied reentry long and hard. We hope that the tremendous amount of work we put into this project is demonstrated on the following pages.
What Our Investigation Revealed

What is the current system?\(^7\)

In New York State, if a youth under the age of 16 is found responsible for a juvenile delinquency offense, the judge may decide it is in the best interests of the community and the young person to place the young person in the custody of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). The judge can assign the young person to OCFS placement for 12 to 18 months.

After the court decision (or adjudication), boys go to the Pyramid Reception Center in the Bronx and girls go to the Tryon Reception Center in Albany. Over the course of the next 14 days, the young people receive a series of tests and assessments that cover the psychological, behavioral, educational, and medical areas of their lives, including an assessment of the risks the young people present to themselves, the facility, community and family. OCFS also hosts a family day at the reception centers.

The information gathered at the reception centers is often used to decide the type of facility the juvenile will go to, as well as his or her date of release from custody. From the Pyramid or the Tryon reception centers, the young person is then placed in the appropriate placement facility. Most facilities have a combination of programs, with staff trained in different areas (e.g., substance abuse, sex offenses, mental health).

At the facilities, young people attend classes every day, taught by state-accredited teachers. G.E.D. programs are also offered. Young people participate in group sessions, depending on their needs. These include sessions on anger control, substance abuse, and morals.

\(^7\) We would like to thank Faye Lewis of OCFS New York City Reentry Programs for most of this description of the current process.
In most cases, an aftercare worker conducts a home assessment four to six months before a young person is scheduled for release. Once the final release date is set, OCFS notifies the aftercare worker—ideally one month before release. At that point, the aftercare worker will call the family. In 2002, 2,361 youth were discharged from OCFS custody; 64 percent (1,511) were from New York City.8

Once the young person is released, he or she is under the supervision of the aftercare worker until the term of the disposition is over. The responsibilities of an aftercare worker include: assessing the condition of the home prior to release to determine if the child can return home, finding necessary resources to support the child upon release (a Youth Service Plan), monitoring progress, ensuring that he or she remains law abiding, instituting graduated sanctions (mostly curfew restrictions) and on a regular basis assessing the youth’s improvement through a detailed Community Reentry Assessment.

Since the DJCS study highlighted the high recidivism rates for reentry youth in 1999, OCFS and other agencies have started several pilot programs to improve the reentry process.

OCFS has launched several evidence-based pilot programs that tackle reentry.9 They are:

- **Intensive Aftercare Program**: This program works with boys and starts the planning for their reentry shortly after adjudication at the Pyramid Reception Center. A case manager creates a service plan for the young person early on, with the input of the young person’s family, and ensures that the young person is receiving the appropriate services. Planning for the return to the community includes making arrangements to enroll the young person in school, as well as linking him or her to community-based services such as substance abuse counseling and mental health programs.

- **Multi-Systemic Therapy**: Because it is very expensive to place kids, Multi-Systemic Therapy does not require the young person to leave home. This program focuses on wrapping services around the entire family.10 A case manager works with the family to help them negotiate systems, especially the school system. The case manager also works with the family to address all of the issues facing the young person and family—employment, substance abuse, etc.

- **Functional Family Therapy**: Like Multi-Systemic Therapy, Functional Family Therapy focuses on the family. Through weekly one-hour sessions with the family, Functional Family Therapy tries to help the family (including siblings) improve communication and develop positive solutions to family problems. Two staff from

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9 Evidence-based is a term used to describe a program when research evaluations have shown that the program is successful in achieving its goals.
10 ‘Wraparound’ refers to an approach to providing services to young people and families. It means that the young person and family receive a full set of services that are individualized to their particular strengths and needs. These services are ‘wrapped around’ the family.
OCFS and two staff from Children’s Village (the non-profit that runs the program) work with the family for 8 to 26 weeks.

- **Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care:** This program is for reentering youth who are taken out of their home and put in therapeutic foster treatment care. While the child is out of the home, case workers work with the biological family. The goal is to reunite the family.

OCFS has also started a partnership with the New York State Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs and the Children’s Aid Society for reentry youth in Manhattan and the Bronx. This program—the **Community Reentry Program**—provides wraparound services to help youth reintegrate successfully into their home communities. Youth receive a one to two week screening that addresses physical health, mental health, substance abuse, education needs, employment, family needs, extracurricular interests and other youth development needs. Two transition schools (one in Manhattan, one in the Bronx) allow youth to be placed immediately in an academic setting until they are matched to a school. Once assessments and school placements are complete, youth are referred to one of the seven Boys and Girls Club sites in Manhattan and the Bronx.

Other programs we learned about include:

Located in Harlem, the **Juvenile Reentry Network** is a community-based reentry program for juveniles returning to Harlem and Upper Manhattan from state placement. The Juvenile Reentry Network combines rigorous monitoring (participants appear every two weeks before an OCFS hearing officer), intensive parent engagement, and links to youth development programs and social services through partnerships with the Children’s Aid Society and other community-based providers. A central part of the program is that the network of providers working with each young person meets before each appearance to review the young person’s progress and recommend next steps.

The Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services (CASES) opened the **Community Prep High School** in collaboration with the New York City Department of Education and the City University of New York. It is a transitional school and focuses on “school-readiness.” The goal is to improve the academic and social skills that students need to move on to—and succeed in—their next school, vocational program, or employment setting. The Community Prep School targets students who read significantly below grade level.

CASES also opened the **School Connection Center** in September 2002 to facilitate and streamline admissions by placing students released from custodial schools (schools in jails, detention centers, and secure facilities) into community schools. The Center matched Manhattan students with appropriate schools and gave students access to a wider range of schools than they have historically been granted. The School Connection Center closed in November, 2004. According to CASES, one of the reasons the Center closed was because they felt that a series of new policies enacted by the New York City Department of Education in Fall 2004 would be successful in getting reentry youth back in school and therefore fewer students would need the services of the School Connection Center.
Friends of Island Academy primarily serves older youth (over 16 years old) who are released from Rikers Island, a New York City jail for adults. Upon discharge, the Academy provides job training, counseling, education, mentoring, and youth leadership development. In return, participants are expected to stay out of trouble, take responsibility for themselves, and work to rebuild their lives. Friends of Island Academy also works with some youth who have been released from OCFS placement.

Phoenix House is the nation's largest non-profit organization devoted to the treatment and prevention of substance abuse. Eighty percent of the participants in Phoenix House's substance abuse treatment programs are referred by the courts. The Phoenix House Academy in Yorktown, N.Y., helps adolescents addressing substance abuse problems by combining residential treatment with on-site accelerated education.

Advocates for Children of New York provides a full range of legal services to reentry youth to secure quality and equal public education services. These include free individual case advocacy, technical assistance, and training for parents, students, and professionals about children's educational entitlements and due process rights in New York City.

Adolescent Portable Therapy is a substance abuse treatment program. It identifies young people in detention who use drugs heavily and offers treatment that ‘follows’ the youth. Rather than deliver treatment from a fixed location, Adolescent Portable Therapy works with kids inside detention centers and placement facilities, and then continues treating them in their home communities. It is a pilot program started in 2001 by the Vera Institute.

The Legal Aid Society is the nation’s largest and oldest provider of legal services to children who appear before the New York City Family Court in juvenile delinquency proceedings. The Legal Aid Society is starting a juvenile reentry program in Fall 2004.

There is a great need for change

Through our research, we saw proof of the need for change. According to the DCJS study, when youth come back to the streets, 75 percent are rearrested within the first three years of release. The same study found that:

"Youth faced an especially high risk of rearrest during the first six to nine months following first release from residential confinement to community supervision. Twenty-six percent were arrested within the first three months following release; 42 percent were arrested within six months; and more than half were arrested within nine months."

11 A New York City Family Court judge may place youth in detention while they are awaiting the outcome of their juvenile delinquency case.
It costs $80,000 a year for each child in placement. In contrast, on average, the state and city spend approximately $4,200 a year on reentry for those same children (see Figure 3).

The state and city spend a large amount of money on placement, but that expenditure seems to be wasted when the youth returns to crime. We feel that it is important to publicize the fact that so much money is being spent on something that doesn’t even seem to work. Half of that money comes directly from New York City’s budget.

Just about everyone that we interviewed was aware of the high recidivism rates and agreed that changes needed to be made. William Baccaglini, former Director of Strategic Planning for OCFS, said straight out "The system does not work. Would you go back to a deli where eight of the 10 sandwiches were terrible?"

There is another major issue we want to highlight: the percentage of minority youth in placement is significantly higher than the proportion of minority youth in the general population. African American and Latino youth make up 63% of the total youth population in New York City. However, they represented 94% of New York City youth admitted to OCFS custody in 2002.

In our research, we found that this pattern is true for both youth and adults throughout the United States—so much so that there is a term for it—disproportionate minority contact (DMC). A national study published by the U.S. Department of Justice found that "the preponderance of research over three decades documents evidence of racial disparities, at least at some stages within the juvenile justice system...The results clearly showed that there were substantial differences in the processing of minority youth within many juvenile justice systems. These differences could not be attributed solely to the presence of legal characteristics or other factors. Instead, approximately two-thirds of the reviewed research indicated that a youth’s racial status made a difference at selected stages of juvenile processing."

The Youth Justice Board did not have the time to fully understand how this issue plays out in New York and create specific recommendations to address it. However, we urge juvenile justice policymakers in New York to address these racial and ethnic injustices, along with the high recidivism rates.

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12 Officials at OCFS told us that the annual cost is approximately $80,000. Other people we met with estimated a higher annual cost of placement.
13 We calculated the average annual spending on reentering youth by dividing our estimate of OCFS’ annual reentry budget ($10 million) by the number of youth released from custody in 2002 (2,361). See p. 9 for an explanation of our estimate of the annual reentry budget.
We would like to make a note about OCFS. We know that OCFS has a tough job. Young people who are referred to OCFS for placement usually face tremendous challenges and helping them turn their lives around is very difficult.

OCFS is doing several things to improve the reentry process, including:

- shifting dollars from placement to reentry;
- investing $6 million in community-based aftercare programs;
- creating partnerships with community organizations like the Children’s Aid Society; and
- working with the New York City Department of Education to improve the process for reenrolling youth in local schools.

We applaud these changes and new programs. In fact, many of our recommendations are based on the positive aspects of new initiatives started by OCFS and other agencies in New York City.

However, we feel that much more needs to be done and can be done—not only by OCFS, but by city players as well.

**Contributing factors**

We found that there are several factors that contribute to the rearrest of young people after they have been released from placement:

![Graph showing reentry youth are dealing with multiple risk factors.](image)

**Most reentry youth are dealing with multiple risk factors.** The DCJS study found that over 95 percent of the children placed in OCFS custody had risk factors in four or more of the following areas: "mental health, substance abuse, behavior at school, academic performance, handicapping conditions, household characteristics, criminal or abusive family environment, or personal relationships with other family members." OCFS data show that this pattern was still true in 2002 (see Figure 4).

**Reentry youth go back to neighborhoods high in poverty and crime.** Many of these young people live in impoverished neighborhoods and others face financial, as well as social, strife. The DCJS study found that 87 percent faced one or more of the following challenges: high crime neighborhood, single parent home, at last address less than 1 year, unemployed mother, unemployed father, or receiving public assistance benefits.

---

Family relationships are a significant factor. The DCJS study reports that 80 percent of the youth had one or more of the following problems with the family environment: family involved in crime, substance abuse in the family, negative home assessment, youth sexually or physically abused, or a home not accepting youth. Furthermore, 65 percent had one or more of the following problems with their parents: bad relations with elder male or female, PINS for disobedience or runaway, or may need a surrogate home.\(^\text{18}\)

There is a need for programs dealing with substance abuse and mental health. Drugs and alcohol are also a major problem for New York City youth in placement. According to OCFS, 75 percent of all juveniles in placement have problems with drugs and alcohol. According to the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice, 60 percent of boys and 70 percent of girls in the juvenile justice system have mental health disorders.

Most young people in placement have a bad track record in school. According to the DCJS study, 92 percent of youth returning from placement have an educational handicap, 78 percent have behavioral problems in school, and 89 percent are either more than three years behind in reading and math or have low grades in core subjects.

\(^{18}\) PINS stands for “person in need of supervision.” A child under the age of 16 who does not attend school, behaves in a way that is dangerous or out of control, or often disobeys his or her parents, guardians or other authorities, may be found to be a person in need of supervision.
AFTERCARE AS AFTERTHOUGHT:
REENTRY AND THE CALIFORNIA YOUTH AUTHORITY

PREPARED FOR THE CALIFORNIA STATE SENATE JOINT COMMITTEE
ON PRISON AND CONSTRUCTION OPERATIONS

AUGUST 2002
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NEXT STEPS: The California Ex-Offender Community Reentry Project

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This report is the first in a series of reports of the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice’s “Next Steps: The California Ex-Offender Community Reentry Project” to address solutions to aftercare and reintegration needs of California’s parolee population.
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Executive Summary

Each year, more than 2,000 youthful offenders are released from the California Youth Authority (CYA). The challenge for the State of California is to preserve public safety and assist youthful offenders to make a positive transition to a productive life. Because every youthful offender will be released back to society, the costs of failure are staggering, and it is clearly in the best interest of our communities to rehabilitate this population. Given the extraordinary number of other urgent priorities, this public-safety challenge must be met with as much cost-efficiency as possible. Limited resources should be targeted at prevention and intervention programs with strong track records in preventing re-offense. Solutions do exist, and successful programs can become part of a statewide juvenile justice improvement strategy.

The CYA population includes the most serious juvenile offenders in the state. Most wards are committed for violent crimes, and are institutionalized for more than two years on average. The reentry process for CYA parolees fails to adequately prepare them for an independent, self-sufficient lifestyle outside of a correctional institution. The current system is highly fragmented and relies heavily on CYA parole agents who, despite the best of intentions, face significant obstacles to providing effective services. Constrained by caseloads as high as fifty parolees or more, no specialized training, and insufficient resources to even provide each parolee with a bus pass, parole agents are nonetheless responsible for providing parolees with services critical to a successful transition to their communities.

Current systems in California fail to adequately address the 91% recidivism rate of CYA parolees. This failure perpetuates an ineffective juvenile justice system in which youthful offenders cycle in and out of institutional facilities at an annual cost of $48,400 per offender. The high costs of crime, quantified in Appendix A, demonstrate that failing to invest in our youth costs society a lot more than the direct costs of incarceration: it costs society more than $1.7 million for each youth that drops out of school to become involved in a life of crime and drug abuse. Beyond the fiscal impact, the damaging collateral effects of the current system are felt at the individual, community, and statewide level, as large numbers of violent youthful offenders leave institutions and camps without a high school diploma, fractured social supports, and strong gang affiliations. Therefore, investing in reintegration programs that produce even a moderate reduction in recidivism reflects a sound, cost-effective investment decision.

Although the current state system is overwhelmed, there are answers. Effective programs range from the CYA Transitional Residential Program (recently eliminated due to inadequate funding), to the case-management continuum of care model employed by the state of Missouri. With an annual juvenile correctional budget one-third less than the eight surrounding states, Missouri boasts a 10% recidivism rate. Institutional education services also demonstrate success: of CYA wards that participated in a post-secondary college program, 80% did not return to prison after release.

Although each individual faces unique barriers, common challenges face all youthful offenders reentering their communities. The following barriers to successful reentry have been identified by researchers and were repeatedly cited in interviews with parole agents, service providers, researchers, and former wards:
- Lack of educational options: The average age of CYA parolees upon release is 21, which excludes them from the state's responsibility to provide a public education.

- Lack of housing options: For parolees for which family placement is not an option, residential transitional and treatment beds are in short supply.

- Limited skills and education: In 2001, only 11.5% of CYA students passed the California High School Exit Exam.

- Gang affiliations and attendant racial tensions: Incarceration in secure facilities strengthens and solidifies gang relationships.

- Institutional identity: The institutional policies, constant structure, and external discipline do not prepare wards for an independent life that requires internal discipline, motivation, and realistic expectations.

- Substance abuse problems: Over 65% of wards have substance abuse problems.

- Mental health problems: The CYA estimates that 45% of male wards and 65% of female wards in 2000 had mental health problems.

- Lack of community supports and role models: Most parolees will return to communities marked by conditions of poverty, family dysfunction and/or abuse.

- Legislative barriers that limit access to education, cash assistance, and public housing: Ex-offenders, particularly those with certain convictions, are restricted from educational financial aid, public housing, food stamps, and certain types of employment, such as childcare and education.

Given the staggering cost of failure, it is hard to imagine any justifiable argument against providing education and services to this population. The multiple service needs and histories of violent behavior among CYA wards necessitate a system of care that addresses the root causes of criminal activity. Despite the increasing recognition in theory of the role of reentry programs in reducing recidivism, federal and state policies devote insufficient resources to prevention and intervention programs with demonstrable records of effective treatment provision at lower costs than institutionalization. Current emphases on supervision and law enforcement rather than reintegration and support fail to attend to these issues.

While the specific elements of an effective reentry program may vary, the ultimate goal is the same: to preserve public safety, reduce recidivism, and assist individuals to achieve success. Reentry experts identify the following minimum components of "success": an individual not being rearrested since release, not being recommitted for a parole violation, and attending school and/or maintaining employment.¹ These principles inform the following recommendations for reforming and improving the reentry process:
- Implement the case management continuum of care model employed by the State of Missouri Division of Youth Services.
- Create a pilot program to utilize contract arrangements for institutional program services.
- Create additional community-based treatment and supervision slots for CYA wards.
- Transfer authority for determining length of stay and conditions of parole for CYA wards from the Youthful Offender Parole Board to the committing court.
- Expand community corrections sanctions, such as community service, restitution, and halfway houses.
- Create educational alternatives, such as Los Angeles-based Save Our Future.
- Expand gender-specific services.
- Replicate model programs, such as the Missouri Department of Youth Services.

When youthful offenders leave the CYA, the barriers they face far outweigh the opportunities for a successful reintegration into the community. Indeed, the odds are against them: low education, high unemployment, and a high likelihood that they'll re-offend. The people of California have already paid a terrible price for crime, and the price tag will continue to rise if we do not develop effective programs to prepare youthful offenders for life in the community. Although the list of barriers is daunting, certain strategies have demonstrated positive results. Although these solutions are not free, they are far cheaper than inaction. This report highlights nine exemplary programs in seven states and the District of Columbia that have demonstrated success through collaborative, comprehensive services at a lower per-capita cost than incarceration. The result is a win-win: improved public safety, lower costs, and a positive investment in our future.
I. Introduction

The movement of youthful offenders from correctional institution to community has gained increased attention in recent years from policy makers and legislators. However, this critical point in justice system processing remains significantly underresearched and underfunded, and has not received the level of public attention commensurate with the widespread concern over juvenile crime and arrest rates. Within the youthful offender population in California, the youths released from the California Youth Authority (CYA) represent the most serious juvenile offenders; many were committed to the CYA with histories of repeat criminal behavior, much of it violent. All of these individuals will eventually be released to the community. As over 2,000 CYA youth and young adults are paroled each year to cities and towns throughout the state, their ability to successfully reintegrate into their communities presents one of the largest and most crucial challenges in the juvenile justice field. Many adult offenders start committing offenses at a young age and approximately 40% of adult prison populations are graduates of institution-based juvenile justice systems. The return of youthful offenders presents an opportunity to stop the revolving door that places a significant financial, administrative, and public safety burden on the communities of return.

According to Jerry Harper, the current Director of the Department of the Youth Authority, a successful reentry process begins at the point that a youth is committed to the CYA, and continues until he or she is released from parole. The success of reentry depends on the individual’s capacity to return to society as a productive, contributing member and the presence of services to prepare for and facilitate this return. Confinement in a secure CYA facility can in theory provide the first phase in preparing for the inevitable transition to the outside world through education and counseling programs. Unfortunately, despite the CYA’s recognition of the importance of structured reentry services, the reality is far different.

According to the recent study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, of adult offenders released in 1994, 67% were recommitted within three years. A similar study of CYA recidivism showed that 91% of youth offenders released from the CYA will re-offend in the same time period. At a cost of $48,400 per CYA ward per year, this failure to rehabilitate comes at a high price. These startling statistics quantify the ineffectiveness of the current juvenile justice system at rehabilitation and raise serious questions about the efficacy of current state policies.

After release, parolees frequently return to their families in the cities and towns where their trouble arose. A successful reentry process includes, at a minimum, the services and supports necessary to deter the parolee from recommitment. Recent initiatives, such as the Department of Justice’s Going Home: Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Program and the collaborative Young Offender Initiative: Reentry Grant Program reflect an increasing awareness of the need to find creative, community-based alternatives to reduce recidivism among youthful and adult offenders. A recent poll indicates near unanimous public support for rehabilitation and reentry programs: 94% of those surveyed support requiring prisoners to work and receive job training to ensure that they leave prison with job skills, and 88% favor providing job training and placement to released prisoners.
The California Youth Authority does not directly measure recidivism. Instead, the Department measures certain Youthful Offender Parole Board actions concerning individuals under direct parole supervision. The National Institute of Justice compiled comprehensive recidivism data for CYA releases in the 1980s. These two measurements, described below, yield far different results.

**California Youth Authority calculation:** The number of parolees who were removed from parole for a technical or law violation within 24 months. Local arrests, convictions, and incarcerations were not included if they did not result in revocation or discharge by the Youthful Offender Parole Board. Any arrests, convictions, or incarcerations that occurred after discharge from the Youth Authority, even if they occurred within 24 months of parole release, were not included. This calculation yields a 47.3% parole violation rate in 2001.11

**National Institute of Justice calculation:** The number of wards released who were re-arrested within a 3 year time period. Ninety-one percent (91%) of CYA wards in 1986-87 were arrested or had parole revoked within three years. This data, presented at a meeting of the American Society of Criminologists in 1995, was never published or released.12

According to the *Young Offender Initiative RFP*, "[C] ompared with information about reentry adult offenders, little is known in general about reentry issues affecting youth."13 This report attempts to address this gap and to initiate a dialogue about this pressing concern. The goals of this report are to:

- Highlight the importance of reentry and aftercare programs in reducing recidivism and improving public safety
- Document the current reintegration process and the specific barriers facing CYA parolees
- Identify the challenges to families and communities presented by the reentry process and the collateral effects of recidivism
- Identify successful institutional and community-based aftercare programs that provide effective care at lower costs than incarceration
- Recommend strategies to improve the rate of successful parolee reintegration
II. Problem Statement

The process of reentry for California Youth Authority parolees fails to adequately prepare them for an independent, self-sufficient lifestyle outside of a correctional institution. The current system is highly fragmented and relies too heavily on CYA parole agents constrained by large caseloads and insufficient resources. Current systems fail to adequately address the 91% recidivism rate and perpetuate a costly, ineffective juvenile justice system, in which youthful offenders cycle in and out of institutional facilities. The damaging collateral effects of the current system are felt at the individual, community, and statewide level, as large numbers of violent youthful offenders leave institutions and camps with limited skills and education, fractured social supports, and strong gang affiliations.

Upon release, parolees face unique challenges as they attempt to make the transition from a highly structured locked facility to a life of relative independence. CYA wards live in a highly structured locked facility for over two years on average during a critical developmental period. Studies indicate that living conditions within the CYA, such as dormitory-style sleeping quarters and constant fear of violence, are not conducive to rehabilitation efforts. As indicated in Appendix C, average sentence lengths have increased considerably in the last twenty years, from 11.5 months in 1971 to 28.3 months in 2001. Longer sentences compound wards’ isolation, solidify their institutional identity, and reduce their connections to families and communities. In an environment where inmate-on-inmate violence is a daily occurrence, immediate survival and coping are far more germane to wards’ lives than preparation and planning for the future. This reality makes the transition to a “mainstream” life on the outside even more difficult.

The following excerpt from a qualitative examination of formerly incarcerated youth highlights the ongoing challenges facing the youthful offender reentry population:

*The current transitional focus on individual accountability and responsibility ignores several important facts about this population:*

- Youth ex-offenders are still adolescents, many of whom are experiencing delayed emotional and cognitive development due to [emotional abuse] and early drug use.

- They have never successfully used problem-solving or coping skills outside of the correctional setting.

- They still have no adults in their lives to help them learn the skills they need to deal with [normal life challenges].

While the specific elements of an effective reentry program may vary, the ultimate goal is the same: to preserve public safety, reduce recidivism, and assist individuals to achieve success. Reentry experts identify the following minimum components of an individual’s “success”: an individual not being rearrested since release, not being recommitted for a parole violation, and attending school and/or maintaining employment. Despite the increasing recognition in theory of the role of reentry programs in reducing recidivism, federal and state policies devote insufficient resources to prevention and intervention programs with demonstrable records of
effective treatment provision at lower costs than institutionalization. The high costs of crime, quantified in Appendix A, demonstrate that failing to invest in our youth costs society a lot more than the direct costs of incarceration: it costs society more than $1.7 million for each youth that drops out of school to become involved in a life of crime and drug abuse. Therefore, investing in reintegration programs that produce even a moderate reduction in recidivism, reflects a sound, cost-effective investment decision.

"Why wouldn't policy makers, policy administrators, and third-party payers rush to adopt service models that—in contrast to the services that are now widely available—are inexpensive, carefully and positively evaluated, easy to understand, and consistent with long-established values of respect for family integrity and personal liberty and privacy? If innovation is cheaper but more effective than current practices, why wouldn't it be quickly and widely adopted?

The nearly universal failure to adopt innovative service models as standard practice reflects intrinsic but often tractable obstacles to reform."

--Gary Melton

III. Scope and Methodology

This report attempts to fill in some of the research gaps regarding the state of CYA parolee reintegration. Research included a review of existing literature, interviews, and site visits.

A. Literature Review

The first step in the research process was a review of relevant studies and reports. A variety of existing research was consulted, including academic and criminal justice publications related to juvenile and adult offender reentry; data on institutional, transitional, and aftercare services available for youthful offenders; evaluations of existing violence prevention and intervention programs; and current and previous funding initiatives. This literature review was not comprehensive, but instead served as a foundation for the policy report. The Supplemental Bibliography lists other sources consulted.

B. CYA Population Characteristics

Official ward and parolee data were gathered from the State of California Department of the Youth Authority. Recidivism data was drawn from the National Institute of Justice.
C. Interviews with CYA Officials and Staff

Interviews were conducted with CYA staff at various levels of authority, including the Director of the Youth Authority, institutional staff members, and field parole agents. These interviews served to supplement the quantitative population data and informed the recommendations. References refer simply to “CYA staff” to respect the wishes of many CYA staff members who requested that their names not be used in this report.

D. Model Programs

To identify model programs in the field of juvenile aftercare, a national search of model transition and aftercare programs for juvenile offenders was conducted. Interviews were conducted in person and by telephone with program directors and staff members at public, private, and nonprofit violence prevention and intervention community organizations and advocacy groups.

E. Recommendations

Recommendations are based on the assessment of the current state of reentry after release from the CYA, existing research on the reentry process, identification of model reentry principles and practices, and specific recommendations made by institutional and program staff.

IV. The California Youth Authority

A. A Shrinking Population

There are currently over 5,700 people in CYA institutions and camps, but first admissions to the CYA have dramatically declined in the past decade, from 3,483 in 1990 to 1,501 in 2001 (see Appendix D). This significant reduction in commitments presents an ideal opportunity to divert resources from daily custodial functions to quality institutional and transitional programs through higher staff-to-ward ratios and improved training opportunities for institutional staff.

B. Characteristics and Criminal Justice Histories of Wards

- The average ward is 19 years old
- The average age at admission is 17 years
- Wards are institutionalized for 2.4 years on average
- Ninety-five percent of wards are male
- Hispanics comprise 48% of the ward population
- Fifty-four percent of wards come from Los Angeles County
- In 2002, 84% of admissions were first commitments
- Seventeen percent of first commitments had no prior conviction or sustained petition.
- Thirty-eight percent of first commitments had no prior local commitment
- The majority of wards were committed for violent offenses (58.6% of the institution population as of June 30, 2002)
C. Characteristics and Criminal Justice Histories of Parolees

- The shrinking institutional population translates into a declining parole population, which is expected to continue its decline through 2006
- The average age upon release to parole is 21 years
- Seventy percent of parolees were committed for violent crimes
- The number of parolees committed for narcotic and drug offenses has declined significantly in the past decade, from 13.9% in 1992 to 3.3% in 2001
- Over 75% are on their first parole
- The average amount of time spent on parole was 1.8 years for those leaving parole in 2001
- Parolees are concentrated in specific counties: over 60% of parolees were released to seven counties in 2001 (see Figure 1)

The following table shows the seven counties with the highest numbers of CYA parolees, as of June 30, 2002. Percentages are shown in parentheses.

**FIGURE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CYA Parole Releases &amp; Population by County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Top 7 Counties)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Bernardino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Clara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total, Top 7 Counties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parole Releases/Population
(All CA Counties)

| Percent of Total | 63.7% | 63.3% |

Source: California Youth Authority

D. Disproportionate Minority Confinement

It is impossible to ignore the high proportion of ethnic minorities within the CYA ward and parolee populations. In 2001, ethnic minorities accounted for 81% of first commitments to the Youth Authority, with Hispanics comprising 51% (see Figure 2). Such disproportionate minority confinement reflects a national trend in adult and youth correctional facilities. Although examining these numbers in detail is beyond the scope of this paper, these statistics raise important questions that warrant further research about the relationship between race, access to critical services, and rates of incarceration. As highlighted by Tim Roche et al., examining these demographics "trains our eyes on crime as a quality of life issue that cannot be
disentangled and dealt with in isolation from the issues of poverty, education, employment, substance abuse, housing and other critical issues that face our communities." These figures also underline the importance of developing culturally sensitive counseling and services for wards and parolees.

**FIGURE 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Wards</th>
<th>Parolees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: California Youth Authority

**E. Girls in the California Youth Authority**

Although the number of girls and young women committed to the CYA is still relatively small (279 as of June 30, 2002), there is a disturbing upward trend in female institutional populations—girls represented 3% of the CYA population in 1992, and 4.7% in 2002. Young women and girls in the CYA parole population comprise 6% of the total parole population. Twenty-two percent of female wards come from Los Angeles County. Female offenders are committed at higher rates for property and drug offenses than their male counterparts: in 2001, 38.5% of girls and 33% of boys were committed for property offenses and drug offenses accounted for 7.7% of female and 5.1% of male first commitments.

The only CYA facility that accepts girls is located in Ventura County in Southern California. With over 50% of girls committed from the Northern region, this distant location, inaccessible by public transportation, presents a barrier to an increasing number of families. Accepting long distance collect calls and making visits poses a great challenge for many families with limited financial resources. Without this family contact, female youth within the system become increasingly isolated and alienated.

**F. Special Needs of Wards**

Many wards have a range of special needs, due to histories of poor educational outcomes, mental illness, and substance abuse. In 2001, 7.9% of new commitments had a documented physical or mental disability. This figure likely underestimates the numbers of youth with disabilities in the CYA; studies indicate that as many as 70% of incarcerated youth suffer from disabling conditions, and a comprehensive assessment of the mental health system in the CYA concluded that on average, 50% of wards have 3-4 psychiatric diagnoses.
G. Implications of Characteristics

Collectively, these data point to a youthful offender population with a relatively serious criminal history and intense social service needs. This type of population information has been used to justify a highly punitive environment at the CYA. Indeed, policies and practices within the CYA have been subject to legal scrutiny for failure to meet the basic health and educational needs of wards.\textsuperscript{31} In contrast, the same data is presented here to demonstrate the need for a continuum of care services to address the root causes of criminal behavior.

H. Life in the California Youth Authority

\begin{quote}
"I lost God while I was at the YA. I thought, 'if there were a God, He would never let this place exist.'"\textsuperscript{32}
\end{quote}

-former CYA ward

Experience with local juvenile halls and other county facilities do little to prepare wards for the violent, penal environment at the Youth Authority. Youth enter the CYA through one of three reception centers, where they begin an ongoing two-tiered process of evaluation and testing; one tier encompasses the formal evaluative process undertaken by institutional staff, including psychiatric and education batteries. However, evaluations and counseling are significantly hampered by wards' constant fear: "I cried at 3 o'clock in the morning. Quietly. Everyone did...I was living in fear 22 hours a day in that place. There was no way I was going to open up during group therapy."\textsuperscript{33}

Fellow wards conduct a second, informal tier of evaluation, a series of ongoing tests that ultimately have the most bearing on a ward's daily quality of life within the institution. New wards are immediately sized up for potential weakness and vulnerability. Race, city of origin, gang affiliation, and physical size all contribute to the wards' social ranking and subsequent treatment. Youths determined to be "weak" are subject to regular victimization by other wards, including physical and sexual abuse. The wards are particularly vulnerable to attacks at night, when "50 or 60 young men are bedded down in a dormitory which is overseen by a single guard."\textsuperscript{34}

\begin{quote}
It was too dangerous to sleep at night. One night, this guy had the flu, and he was breathin' real loud. Another guy in the unit kept saying, 'Hey, knock it off. Stop breathin' so loud,' but the guy was on cough medicine or something, and was knocked out, couldn't hear a thing. Finally the guy gets so frustrated with the noise that he goes to the trashcan and grabs a metal dustpan. He raises it over his head and BAM, smacks the [sick] guy, splits his skull open with one hit.\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

Most wards are affiliated with gangs before their commitment to the Youth Authority, and these ties are strengthened during their tenure. Many others join gangs for self-protection.
I'm Cuban, but I look white. First they wanted me to join the white car [gang], but I wouldn't. Then they wanted me to join the brown car. I said I would rather face the knife than join a car...When I was about to be released, the Lieutenant [one of the gang leaders] told me that this time around I got a pass because I [had certain friends]. He said if I ever came back fto the CYA], if I didn't join a gang, I wouldn't get a pass—I wouldn't make it.36

Seasoned wards may “test” a new ward by spitting on his pillow, stealing personal belongings, or demanding cigarettes. If the new ward doesn’t appropriately challenge his testers, he is likely to become a regular victim of harassment and violence. A former ward describes witnessing the “orientation” of a new ward:

_This guys says to the new guy, ‘Got a smoke?’ and the new guy says ‘Yeah.’
‘Gimme one.’
‘I only have enough to last me...’
and WHAM the guy gets knocked out. From that point on, every day people’d walk by him, push him, shove him, whatever. Then one day he gets told that his laundry is ready for him in the back room. He goes back there, and nine guys are hiding, waiting for him..._37

According to a comprehensive report on life within the CYA, such “ratpacking” is common for wards without allies.38 Interviews with staff and wards repeatedly highlight a frightening reality: thousands of young men and women are living their adolescence in an environment in which their physical and emotional safety is threatened on a daily basis.

V. Reentry: From Detention to Independence

A. Barriers to Successful Reentry

Although each individual faces unique barriers, common challenges face all youthful offenders reentering their communities. The following barriers, detailed below, have been identified by researchers and were repeatedly cited in interviews with parole agents, service providers, researchers, and former wards:

- Lack of educational options
- Lack of housing options
- Limited skills and education
- Gang affiliations and attendant racial tensions
- Institutional identity
- Substance abuse problems
- Mental health problems
- Lack of community supports and role models
- Legislative barriers that limit access to education, cash assistance, and public housing
Although daunting, these barriers are not intractable. As detailed later in this report, effective programs throughout the country have demonstrated that answers to these challenges do exist.

1. Limited skills and education

Although the average age for first commitments in 2001 was 17, wards consistently demonstrate reading scores ranging from 8th to 9th grade levels, and math scores ranging from 7th to 8th grade levels. Educational deficiencies emerge as one of the most salient challenges facing CYA parolees. Test score data from standardized exams administered in 2001 quantify the depth of these educational limitations:

**FIGURE 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 9</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 10</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CEA</td>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>CEA</td>
<td>Statewide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 9</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 10</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CEA: California Education Authority (CYA School System)
*Data not available

**FIGURE 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English-Language Arts</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Average % Passing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These educational scores demonstrate the consequences of current state policies that allocate more money to corrections than to education. Even without a criminal history, expecting a group of students in which only 11.5% pass the California High School exit exam to function and excel in the conventional economy seems naïve at best. After two years of isolation in a correctional facility, youth are released into a work world in which employers expect a level of functional literacy for most entry-level jobs. Many wards also have limited English skills when they enter the CYA, and do not receive bilingual services within the institution to prepare them for sustainable employment.
Poor educational outcomes are compounded by a lack of job skills and poor work histories. Budget cuts since the late 1990s have reduced vocational program options within institutions. Combined with a criminal record, attaining sustainable employment presents a huge barrier to self-sufficiency.

2. Lack of educational options

Given the poor educational outcomes of most CYA wards, access to post-release education is especially important. However, many parolees are unable to return to the same schools that they attended before incarceration due to the following factors:

- Public safety risks: Youth may feel threatened by former gang rivals and/or family members affected by the youth’s criminal history;

- Age: The average age of CYA parolees upon release is 21, which excludes them from the state’s responsibility to provide a public education;

- Community opposition: Even for those students under 18 years of age, youth may encounter resistance to enrollment from teachers, school administrators, and parents of other students;

- Administrative hurdles: The process of transferring students’ credits and transcripts is frequently not completed before release, thereby preventing a student from immediate enrollment. This delay creates a disruption in an educational history already defined by inconsistency. Teachers and administrators at the local school may be reluctant to expedite a process that will only ensure that a student with a criminal record can attend school.

3. Lack of housing options

CYA parole agents cited the lack of quality housing options as one of the greatest barriers to successful reentry. The majority of CYA youth return to live with their families in the same communities from which they were committed. However, for wards for which family placement is not a viable option, there are limited alternatives. There are few residential transitional and treatment beds available for ex-offenders. The inadequate supply forces many parole agents to settle for any available residential placement, regardless of the quality of care provided.

4. Gang affiliations and attendant racial tensions

The vast majority of wards are affiliated with gangs upon commitment to the CYA. Incarceration in secure facilities strengthens and solidifies gang relationships. For example, at N.A. Chaderjian in Stockton, most wards live in double-bunked cells, and are housed according to gang affiliation. Gang altercations are frequent and the entrenched gang culture makes individual relationships among rival gang members exceptionally difficult.
5. Institutional identity

After being labeled and treated as a delinquent and housed with hundreds of other youth with a criminal background, many offenders simply learn to be better criminals. The institutional policies, constant structure, and external discipline do not prepare wards for an independent life that requires internal discipline and motivation. This institutional identity also manifests itself in unrealistic and inflated expectations upon release; many wards are unprepared for the daily challenges of independent living, and do not recognize the substantial difficulties inherent in the transition process. Combined with the culture of violence within CYA institutions and camps, we can expect that institutional experiences, rather than rehabilitating, will only magnify the anger and criminal potential of this population.

6. Substance abuse problems

Although only a small portion of wards is committed for drug-related offenses, many report substance abuse problems that require treatment services. According to a 2000 CYA study, 74% of male wards and 68% of female wards have substance abuse problems.47

7. Mental health problems

The CYA population reflects the increased recognition of mental health needs within the criminal justice system nationwide. Estimates of mental health disorders within the national population of incarcerated youth range between 50 to 75%.48 Within the CYA, rates of mental illness are very high: according to a preliminary report issued by the CYA in 2000, 45% of male wards and 65% of female wards had mental health problems.49

8. Lack of community supports and role models

The individual characteristics of CYA wards cannot be disentangled from their communities of origin. Many youthful offenders were raised in conditions of poverty, inadequate social supports, and family dysfunction and/or abuse. Most will return to the same conditions. Consequently, wards’ ability to rehabilitate is highly dependent on their access to a continuum of care services that support them at each stage of the transition process from institution to home.

9. Legislative Barriers

Despite having served their time, many ex-offenders continue to serve a life sentence in the form of reduced educational and social service supports. Due to a number of legislative barriers in the areas of education and human services, this population faces additional challenges in meeting their basic needs.
a) Education

The last decade was marked by a rise in punitive legislation targeting correctional education programs. Motivated by the perception that prison had become too easy, two regulations were introduced in the 1990s that solidified barriers to accessing higher education:

- Students incarcerated in state or federal prisons are ineligible for federal Pell grants, which are used for secondary education.\textsuperscript{50}

- Anyone with a drug conviction is prohibited from receiving federal financial aid to enroll in post-secondary institutions.\textsuperscript{51}

A higher education is not an immediate consideration for most wards and parolees, given the low educational level of most CYA youth. However, although this restriction does not directly affect most of the CYA population, this punitive legislation undermines the rehabilitative potential of institutional education, and flies in the face of the well-documented benefits of institutional higher education programs.\textsuperscript{52}

b) Cash Assistance and Food Stamps

The 1996 Welfare Reform Act specifies that offenders with a state or federal felony offense record involving the use or sale of drugs is subject to a lifetime ban on receiving cash assistance (TANF) and food stamps.\textsuperscript{53} Although states have the discretion to opt out of this ban or to enforce a partial ban (on one form of assistance but not the other), California has chosen to deny benefits entirely to this population.\textsuperscript{54} Although only a small portion of CYA wards are committed for drug offenses, this elimination of transitional income support for certain offenders reflects a legislative commitment to continue the "war on drugs," despite the proven ineffectiveness of these policies.\textsuperscript{55}

CYA wards that rely on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) may be denied access to this social support if they violate a condition of their parole.\textsuperscript{56} SSI is a federally administered income and health insurance program for qualified aged, blind, and disabled individuals. Although we do not have data on the number of CYA wards who rely on SSI, when one considers the high rates of mental illness within the CYA population, as well as the high proportion of parole violators, it is evident that this legislation places at risk the health and safety of many young people with disabilities.

c) Employment

Most states prohibit ex-offenders with felony convictions from certain types of employment, such as childcare, education, and nursing. This legal barrier does not account for the many employers who do not hire ex-offenders due to stigma, fear, and bias.
d) Housing

Under the 1996 “One Strike” Initiative, local Public Housing Authorities were given the discretion to restrict access to public housing for people with drug convictions. Depending on the policies of their local Housing Authority, CYA parolees may not be able to move in with their families who live in public housing.

c) Civic Participation

Upon release, Youth Authority Parolees are disqualified from voting in the state of California until successful completion of their parole process. This prohibition further marginalizes and isolates voting-age parolees from mainstream society.

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**ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES TO PROVIDING EFFECTIVE TRANSITION SERVICES**

- Supervision and enforcement take precedence over intervention and treatment at all stages of CYA institutionalization and parole.

- Transition planning does not begin until 30-60 days before a ward’s Parole Consideration Date.

- Institutional and field parole staff receive inadequate professional development and specialized transition training; CYA staff with specialized caseloads (i.e. related to mental health and substance abuse issues and sex offenders) receive no special training.

- A significant lack of communication, coordination, and commitment exists among agencies that serve CYA youth; there is little collaboration between CYA and service agencies with appropriate expertise, such as the California Department of Mental Health.

- CYA leadership discourages collaboration and input from outside agencies.

- Transferring wards’ educational records between institutional and community schools is often delayed.

---

B. The Current State of CYA Reentry and Aftercare

1. Institutional Programs

Institutional education and service programs provide the first step in a ward’s preparation for an independent life in the community upon release. The following section examines the structure of institutional transition programs currently operating in the CYA.
a. Educational Services

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, most juvenile offenders over the age of 15 do not return to school or do not graduate from high school after release from a correctional setting.\(^{60}\)

Education has been identified as one of the most effective methods for reducing recidivism.\(^{61}\) According to a preliminary CYA study in 1997, parolees with either a high school diploma, a GED or a high school proficiency certificate were four times more likely to succeed on parole than those who did not attain this educational level.\(^{62}\) CYA wards that participated in a post-secondary college program available at certain institutions had a significantly lower recidivism rate than the general population—80% of participants did not return to prison after release.\(^{63}\) Another study demonstrates that prisoners who received a degree while serving time had a recidivism rate four times lower than that of the general population (15% compared to 60%).\(^{64}\)

With the majority of wards of high school age or older, access to education is critical to their future success. In 1997, in response to documented problems within the CYA educational system, the California Education Authority (CEA) was created to ensure the accreditation and development of quality standards within CYA high schools. The “No Diploma, No Parole” policy, implemented in 1998, reflects a further attempt on the part of the CYA to codify and enforce educational standards.\(^{65}\) However, the policy has fizzled within institutions due to resource and staffing restraints and administrative lockdowns that prevent consistent enforcement of this policy.\(^{66}\) Therefore, many wards continue to be released without a high school diploma or G.E.D.

For most wards, the educational experience within the institution represents another disjointed step in an educational history largely defined by interruption and fragmentation. Although the majority of wards are between seventeen and twenty years of age, (73.2% as of December 31, 2001), their skill levels resemble those of students in grades 4-8.\(^{67}\) Prior to their commitment to the CYA, many have attended multiple county court schools, where repeated relocations create disruptions and wards frequently fail to complete a subject. At the CYA, an open enrollment policy necessitates the weekly entrance and exit of students, creating ongoing interruptions in the subject material and compelling teachers to teach in blocks. Although class size is limited to eighteen students, student skill levels within a single classroom may range from illiteracy to college-level proficiency. Administrative lockdowns compound irregular school attendance, perpetuate the gaps in students’ knowledge and skills, and contribute to student frustration and reduced motivation.\(^{68}\)

1. Special Education and Bilingual Services

The Youth Authority has been criticized for failing to provide legally mandated special education and bilingual services to wards. In 1998, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights determined that the CYA has failed to comply with the provision of required services to the estimated 26% of the wards who are English Learner students. An October 2001
review of the status of the Voluntary Resolution Plan designed to address these concerns found "continued deficiencies which they considered to be of a major and serious concern which if not corrected will lead to formal enforcement proceedings." According to a CYA process report of the sex offender treatment program, "services for Spanish-speaking wards are limited. The absence of bilingual staff limits the services provided by program staff to monolingual sex offenders."  

The CYA has also been cited for failing to respond appropriately to calls for special education programs for students with disabilities. An audit conducted by the Inspector General indicated that only between 38% and 77% of wards at the Nelles facility were receiving adequate special education services. In a recent lawsuit, the Prison Law Office indicated that deaf wards are not provided with the appropriate interpretive services necessary to successfully complete their Board-ordered programs, and then they are penalized for this failure.

Despite the proven importance of education and repeated criticism about the quality of education services provided in the CYA, the California Governor's May Revision of the State budget includes a reduction of $2.6 million for education services (Prop 98). This spending reduction produces only fleeting savings: at an estimated cost of $1.7 million for each rehabilitation failure, these cost savings would be fully negated if only two individuals re-offended.

ii. Transition Coordinator Program

The Transition Coordinator Program provides a valuable service to CYA wards in need of additional educational support. Through intensive counseling and specialized transition services targeting wards at high risk of low educational outcomes, Transition Coordinators assist students in achieving their educational and career goals and preparing for successful parole. These educators fill in a gap in educational programming; according to a recent Director’s Report, "Parole agents and youth counselors…have neither the time nor the expertise to fashion an intervention strategy for a student’s formal education program and plans for continued learning upon release."

This program reflects a promising step toward creating a continuum of educational services. However, the staffing level of the Transition Coordinator program fails to meet wards’ transitional needs. In response to a large regular and drop-in caseload, interviews with Transition Coordinators and other educational staff highlight the need for more Coordinator positions at each institution. Individual staff capabilities simply cannot compensate for daunting caseloads and insufficient resources.

b. Special Programs

Parole consideration depends on a wards’ completion of an individualized series of programs and services mandated by the Youth Offender Parole Board (YOPB). Services include substance abuse counseling; individual counseling; and resource groups on topics such as anger management, parenting, and gang awareness.
i. Assignment to Special Programs

Consistent waiting lists at all special programs indicate the unmet service needs of many wards (see Figure 6). Wards’ placement in special counseling programs is ultimately determined by the Youth Offender Parole Board, frequently driven by criminological management rather than medical necessity.75 Indeed, “[m]any of the assignments [to special programs] are made by fiat rather than by medical planning, and the recommendations come from entities not responsive to clinical input, education or feedback…Clinical staff are subject to the enthusiasms of administrators and YOPB board members who have no training in mental health.”76

FIGURE 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUTIONAL PROGRAMS77</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Type</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive Treatment Program (mental health)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized Counseling Program (mental health)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Offender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These are estimates based on 2001 data.

Institutional programs primarily utilize group approaches to treatment and service provision. Steiner et al. determined that regardless of the intended focus of institutional treatment programs, “almost all rely on group therapy, the content of which may not vary much from program to program.”78 Numerous studies demonstrate that the group approach (such as the one employed by the CYA) is ultimately counterproductive in attempting to rehabilitate young offenders:

...[Y]outh who participated heavily in the group activities not only had higher recidivism than those who took part in more individualized and family treatments, but they also had higher recidivism than control group youth receiving no intervention...The evidence suggests that many or most of these [delinquent] youth would be better served in programs that minimize rather than mandate interaction among delinquent peers.79

According to Stanford researchers assessing the mental health system at the CYA, the current number of authorized positions is insufficient to meet wards’ mental health needs.80 Intervention programs are further hindered by a lack of specialized staff training, staffing shortages, and insufficient resources dedicated to treatment services.
ii. Institutional Staffing for Special Programs

Youth correctional counselors and parole agents comprise the primary staff support for special programs. Staff training is limited primarily to standard correctional policy and operations, with any program-specific training provided only as time and resources allow. An evaluation of the Karl Holton Drug and Alcohol Treatment Facility (DATF) determined that 69% of youth correctional counselors did not believe that they had adequate training to effectively perform their counseling duties. Author’s interviews with institutional staff members yielded a consistent remark: staff members are trained to be prison guards, not social workers. Thus, despite the critical and difficult responsibilities of institutional staff, these employees are not adequately trained. Unfortunately, even parole agents’ good intentions and personal commitment cannot fully mitigate the effects of inadequate preparation and training.

The following section outlines the treatment and intervention programs available to wards.

iii. Mental Health

"Many [wards]...are not treated or evaluated [for placement in mental health programs] because they have not called attention to their mental health problems through their behavior." 82

Within the CYA, rates of mental illness are very high. The CYA reports that in 2000, 45% of male wards and 65% of female wards had mental health problems. 83 However, it is common for only the most extreme cases to be assigned to the specialized mental health programs due to an inadequate evaluation process and limited resources. According to a Treatment Needs Assessment report conducted by the Youth Authority, “due to limitations on available program resources, only the most seriously disturbed wards are referred for [psychological] evaluations." 84 Similarly, only the most serious cases ultimately receive the necessary treatment. According to CYA staff at N.A. Chaderjian, for example, the wards on the mental health unit have such extreme needs that “they should really be hospitalized” and the majority of wards should be receiving mental health treatment but are not. 85

The California May Budget Revision includes a potential improvement in the Youth Authority mental health delivery system: a proposed increase of $1 million would be used to change their custody-based counseling program to a case management approach. 86

iv. Substance Abuse

As noted above, a 2000 CYA study estimates that 74% of male wards and 68% of female wards have substance abuse problems that require treatment. 87 Substance abuse treatment is essential in reducing re-offense among juveniles. The presence of nine substance abuse treatment programs, however, does little to address these issues due to limited services provision
and the lack of specialized training for staff members who operate these programs. Despite their identification as a substance abuse treatment program, facilities such as the Karl Holton Drug and Alcohol Treatment Facility in Stockton are staffed primarily by youth correctional counselors and parole agents who receive the bulk of their CYA training in custody and security, and very limited training in counseling. Treatment staff working in specialized living units have the same qualifications and training as staff in the regular living units that do not provide special services: in 1999, over 50% of treatment staff had a 2-year college degree or less.88

The conflicting custodial and counseling responsibilities of institutional staff severely hinder their capacity to dedicate sufficient time to their counseling and service responsibilities. The difficulty in effectively balancing these roles was identified in formal evaluations and through staff interviews as one of the greatest barriers to ensuring adequate service delivery.89

v. Sex Offender Program

"[I]t is important to note that there is no departmentally-mandated, sex offender-specific training requirement for professional and line staff working directly with program wards at the formalized Continuum of Care Sex Offender Program." 90

The CYA operates two formal sex offender programs, one in Northern California and one in Southern California. The Youth Offender Parole Board maintains responsibility for sending wards to formal sex offender programs. As with the other intervention and treatment programs, the assessment process frequently identifies only certain wards for treatment; wards with histories of sex offenses but committed for another offense do not receive the benefits of these residential programs. The CYA is legally mandated to provide treatment to sex offenders, so that appropriate services are not necessarily provided to wards with the most severe needs.91 Wards not assigned to one of the formal programs may receive “informal” treatment services comprised primarily of specialized resource groups and counseling sessions. Despite reports of in-house training efforts for professional program staff, CYA research staff identified the lack of required training as a significant limitation to program efficacy.92

2. Parole Services

The parole phase of reentry represents a vital period in the successful reintegration process of juvenile offenders, a time in which “the supposedly beneficial cumulative effects of the institutional experience should be transferred to community settings, reinforced, monitored, and assessed.”93 Upon release, most CYA parolees return to their families in the communities from which they were first committed. They face a number of structural and emotional barriers that frequently undermine any skills, motivation, and good intentions present at the time of release. The first three to six months after release is a critical period in the reentry process, and the extent of supports and services accessed during this transition phase may determine the future outcomes of parolees.
The supervision and support of CYA parolees is the primary responsibility of sixteen parole offices throughout the state. Parole agents play multiple roles, including law enforcement agent, job developer, referral specialist, and community liaison. Unfortunately, the quality of parole services is largely dependent on the skills and initiative of the individual parole agent. Parole services are highly fragmented and suffer from the lack of an organizational vision.

Research demonstrates that effective aftercare programs should incorporate both supervision and support services:

> When the response is predominantly, or exclusively, a matter of offender surveillance and social control (e.g. drug and alcohol testing, electronic monitoring, frequent curfew checks, strict revocation policies) and the treatment and service-related components are lacking or inadequate...neither a reduction in recidivism nor an improvement in social, cognitive, and behavioral functioning is likely to occur.\(^{94}\)

Significantly, the CYA continues to emphasize social control over treatment. While the stages of parole supervision are progressively less restrictive, the emphasis remains one of control and law enforcement. As with institutional program staff, parole agents receive very limited training in service provision. Although CYA parole agents are expected to conduct supervision and intervention services, large caseload sizes, inadequate training and geographic limitations frequently translate into an emphasis on surveillance over treatment in practice.\(^{95}\) Parole offices are isolated physically and philosophically from the communities they serve. For example, the Oakland parole office, which serves a wide geographic area including Alameda, Contra Costa, and San Francisco counties, is located in a remote area close to the Oakland Airport, making access by public transportation difficult. This isolation severely hinders agents’ capacity to meet parolees’ needs and to provide appropriate services.

Agents are responsible for facilitating a reentry process that involves state, county, and local governmental agencies as well as community-based organizations. Navigating other governmental and local service agencies requires a commitment to interagency collaboration that is discouraged by current CYA policies: \(^{96}\)

> Parole agents are not likely to have contact with the social workers or teachers or Probation officers who knew their parolees and their families over a period of years. Similarly, County Probation Departments, and judges and other human service workers are not likely to ever see or have a conversation with a Youth Authority Parole Agent.\(^{97}\)

Parole agents and their clients could benefit tremendously from better collaboration and coordination among local agencies. CYA parole is guided by a leadership philosophy that CYA staff are best equipped to work with their offenders due to their correctional histories with them. I argue that a comprehensive approach, involving local, state, and county agencies and community-based organizations, provides a more effective intervention strategy.
A small proportion of wards are released after serving the maximum sentence, thereby entering their communities without any parole supervision. This small population would benefit from community support and case management services.

a. The Effect of Budget Cuts on Parole Services

The capacity to provide reentry services depends primarily on resources. For example, out-of-home placement slots are funded primarily through the transition funds that are available to a particular parole office. The proposed California Governor’s Budget for 2002-2003 (May revision) includes a **$5 million reduction in the Parole Services and Community Corrections Program**.98 The implications of these cuts are far-reaching—proposed cuts include the elimination of the following parolee services:

- Two residential intensive drug treatment programs for parolees
- Transitional residential programs
- Furlough program for INS wards
- Electronic monitoring
- Job development and employment contracts
- Volunteers in Parole mentoring program

According to the *Governor’s Budget May Revision 2002-2003*, these cuts occur only in “non-critical parolee services, which will not affect parolee oversight or public safety.”99 I argue that eliminating these parole programs has a direct impact on public safety—by eliminating transitional placements, employment opportunities, and valuable mentoring relationships, these budget reductions remove the very programs most likely to reduce recidivism among parolees, leaving hundreds of youth without constructive transitional alternatives.

C. Principles of a Model Reentry Program: A Continuum of Care

Criminal justice experts have identified a continuum of care service model provided in a community-based setting as the most effective way to ensure a smooth transition into the community. The multiple service needs and histories of violent behavior among CYA wards necessitate a system of care that addresses the factors leading to criminal activities. Current systems emphasizing supervision and law enforcement rather than reintegration and support fail to attend to these issues. I recommend incorporating a wraparound strategy that provides a continuum of services to parolees and their families.

“Wraparound is not a service but a comprehensive intervention strategy. [It] is a definable planning process that results in a unique set of natural supports and community services that are designed to achieve a positive set of outcomes. Wraparound is a youth- and family-focused intervention strategy that uses flexible, non-categorical funding and is coordinated across...the mental health, juvenile justice, child welfare, and educational systems. The intervention strategy is appropriate across the continuum...”100
These principles inform the following recommendations for reforming and improving the CYA reentry process. A diagram of an ideal continuum of care, drawn from model program principles, is available in Appendix B.

VI. Recommendations

A. Implement the case management continuum of care model employed by the State of Missouri Division of Youth Services.

“Missouri’s approach should be a model for the nation. Its success offers definitive proof that states can protect the public, rehabilitate youth, and safeguard taxpayers far better if they abandon incarceration as the core of their juvenile corrections systems.”

--Richard A. Mendel

“Less Cost, More Safety: Guiding Lights for Reform in Juvenile Justice”

This recommendation involves systems change and requires the commitment and support of the CYA Director and other government leaders. This approach provides consistency and support to youth throughout their custody and parole. The Missouri Department of Youth Services (DYS) employs a regional service delivery system with a continuum of care provided within each region. The DYS was identified by the American Youth Policy Forum as one of the “Guiding Lights” in juvenile justice reform, providing effective services at lower cost.

Key Elements of the DYS model include:

Case Management

Each youth works with a single case manager throughout his or her tenure at DYS. The case manager conducts a comprehensive risk and needs assessment of each youthful offender and develops, monitors, and refines an individualized service plan to address both public safety and service concerns.

Small-Scale Residential Correctional Centers

In contrast to the large training schools employed by the CYA, Missouri juvenile offenders are placed in one of a number of small-scale residential placements ranging from secure care facilities to group homes. This arrangement helps to prevent the cycle of intimidation and violence exacerbated by the large-scale, dormitory-style living conditions at the CYA (see pages 8-9).

Parole/Aftercare

Upon release from a correctional center, youth continue to work with the same case manager to find an appropriate placement and day treatment services. “Alternative Living” environments provide transitional services to help in the adjustment to independent living.
and employment. Youth are also supported and monitored through an Intensive Case Management Monitoring System, in which college students serve as “trackers” to provide mentoring and guidance to the youth and their families. Day Treatment services include alternative education, counseling, life skills, and community service opportunities.

Researchers have identified this type of individualized service as a superior intervention method to group-based treatment.\textsuperscript{103} In Missouri, reforms have resulted in lower recidivism and a less costly juvenile justice system: the DYS budget in fiscal year 2000 was $94 for each youth aged 10-17 years, one-third less than the juvenile correctional budgets of the eight surrounding states, and recidivism consistently hovers around 10%.\textsuperscript{104}

B. Create a pilot program to utilize contract arrangements for institutional program services.

The current staffing structure, in which youth correctional counselors and parole agents provide the majority of human service and counseling opportunities to wards, forces staff to balance the conflicting responsibilities of surveillance and service provision. With the majority of training and work hours dedicated to custodial tasks, service provision remains a secondary and neglected component within the Youth Authority.

By hiring and/or contracting with qualified personnel hired solely to meet the service and education needs of the wards, the CYA can demonstrate its commitment to meeting wards’ intense service needs without sacrificing its emphasis on security and public safety. During interviews, institutional staff identified this staffing structure, also referred to as counseling “out of post,” as a promising, more cost-effective approach. Steiner et al. recommends contracting with other state agencies such as the Department of Mental Health to provide more effective psychiatric services.\textsuperscript{105} A pilot program is recommended to enable an evaluation of the effectiveness of such an arrangement before creating department-wide policy changes.\textsuperscript{106} Correctional staff at all facilities should receive additional training in effective counseling and service provision to address ongoing concerns about their capacity to provide the necessary support to wards.

C. Create additional community-based treatment and supervision slots for CYA wards.

Additional funding is needed for contracted services in the community, particularly in transitional residential and day treatment programs. Limited resources should be targeted at prevention and intervention programs with strong track records in preventing re-offense. Of course, even unlimited funding cannot alleviate the limited availability of treatment programs and other community resources in certain counties. However, the CYA can take the lead in collaborating with local governmental and community-based agencies to address these limitations. CYA parolees are frequently seen as “beyond hope”; this approach facilitates a greater community commitment to serving this population.
D. Transfer authority for determining length of stay and conditions of parole for CYA wards from the Youthful Offender Parole Board to the committing court.

"The cities, counties and communities that are proving most successful in reducing juvenile crime rates are those that have focused comprehensively and engage key leaders from multiple sectors."\textsuperscript{107}

-Richard A. Mendel, American Youth Policy Forum

California State Senator Richard Polanco has recommended the elimination of the Youthful Offender Parole Board and the realignment of responsibilities modeled after the process used for group home and probation camp placements.\textsuperscript{108} This proposal facilitates improved inter-agency collaboration and local control. Following are excerpts from Senator Polanco’s proposal, which includes the following provisions:

- Eliminates the YOPB;

- Empowers the juvenile court, with input from probation, prosecutors, the juvenile and his or her counsel, and victims, to set an initial parole consideration date and recommend treatment and programming at the time the minor is committed to CYA;

- Requires the CYA to notify the court if the recommended treatment programs are unavailable;

- Requires probation to monitor the ward’s treatment and progress through visits every three months;

- Continues to use CYA parole agents for parole;

- Requires the juvenile court to monitor, through parole and probation, wards through parole until jurisdiction is terminated.

Benefits of this structure include:

- Enhanced local control
  
  - The local judge, with input from CYA, probation, local law enforcement, and other stakeholders, will decide when a ward is ready for release.

- Stronger link between CYA and the counties
  
  - Counties will have more input into what happens to their juveniles and the CYA will become a more responsive service provider.
• Increased CYA accountability
  o CYA will be held to higher standards because counties will have to pay for wards and will be responsible for wards when they are released back into their communities.

• Improved efficiency
  o The elimination of the YOPB removes a state body with too little knowledge of wards’ histories and needs to play a valuable role in sentencing and parole.

E. Expand community corrections sanctions

Placement in appropriate community sentencing programs provides an intermediate level of supervision in an ideal continuum of care. Community corrections methods, used successfully by model programs such as the Missouri Department of Youth Services, include the following:\textsuperscript{109}

• Community Service: Mandatory work through which offenders give back to the community.

• Halfway Houses: Residential placements where offenders work and/or attend school and pay rent in the community while undergoing counseling and job training.

• Restitution: Offenders provide financial compensation to those victims and communities their actions have harmed.

• Drug Treatment: Residential or outpatient drug treatment is proven to reduce drug use and associated criminal behavior.

• Intensive Supervision: Authorities maintain a close watch on offenders (closer than in regular parole) to ensure that they meet their Board-ordered obligations.

• Fines: Assess in proportion to people’s ability to pay, fines provide a strong disincentive to criminal activity and help to find the court system and/or victims’ funds.

• Electronic Monitoring: Helps maintain close surveillance for people ordered to home confinement, work programs or drug counseling

F. Create educational alternatives

To combat the low level of functional literacy among the CYA population, I recommend expanding educational options as one of the primary means for reducing recidivism and promoting self-sufficiency. Specifically, I recommend the following:
- Create a range of high school education options for parolees to ensure that both education and public safety goals are met.

- Create formal linkages with Adult Education programs and community colleges.

- Create an alliance with the local Board of Education to develop a seamless link between CYA schools and the community school and to prevent delays in school placement. For instance, the New Jersey Juvenile Justice Coalition (NJJJC) is working to build connections with the Board of Education in its efforts to have youth back in school within two days of release.\(^{110}\)

- Establish alternative schooling options such as “schools within schools,” in which students have access to smaller learning units and flexible instruction. Such programs have been identified as a promising method to reduce drug abuse and delinquency.\(^{111}\)

- Establish and support alternative schools that provide education and support services to the entire family unit. Charter schools such as Los Angeles-based Save Our Future provide ex-offenders of all ages with the opportunity to attain a high school diploma while also receiving wraparound services.

- Rescind legislation barring access to Pell grants. Education provides the best opportunity for reducing recidivism. The average Pell grant in fiscal year 2001 was $2,057. One study indicated that the higher level of degree received was inversely related to the level of recidivism of offenders: individuals with an Associate’s degree had recidivism rates of 13.7%, Bachelors 5.6%, and Master’s degree holders had 0% recidivism.\(^{112}\)

G. Expand gender-specific services

The need for gender-specific services has become more pressing as girls and young women are committed to the Youth Authority at increasing rates. Residential services for female offenders and parolees should be provided in a single-gender environment with staff experienced in providing services to this population. Female offenders have unique service needs that are best addressed through targeted programs that recognize the unique personal and criminal histories of this population. Traditional correctional practices fail to consider the long histories of emotional and physical abuse, sexual exploitation, and high poverty rates that characterize the female offender population. Services should be individualized, community-based and family-focused.

H. Replicate model programs

The following programs are included to:
- Demonstrate that investments in quality reentry services provide cost-effective alternatives to parole by reducing recidivism at far lower costs than incarceration;

- Assist officials in exploring effective approaches for juvenile offenders that could enhance existing programs for individuals released from the California Youth Authority;

- Identify programs that officials might consider for adaptation to address existing gaps in California's current continuum of services;

- Demonstrate to community leaders, especially those affiliated with grassroots organizations, religious institutions, and other nonprofit agencies, the role and efficacy of community-based programs for offenders in their home communities;

The following programs have been identified for their demonstrated ability to provide comprehensive, cost-effective services to youthful offenders in their reintegration into their communities. I have included as “Model Programs” only those services that have been formally evaluated. “Promising Practices” include programs that have resulted in the reporting of successful outcomes by program administrators and participants but for which formal evaluations have not been conducted or were not available. The following information provides mere snapshots of these programs. Additional contact information is available in Appendix G.

**Model Program #1: Missouri Department of Youth Services (DYS)**

The Missouri DYS provides an exemplary model of the capacity to implement cost-effective reforms with amazing results. Key program elements are described in Recommendation A.

**Model Program #2: Wraparound Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

The Wraparound approach offers a community-based, youth-centered, family-focused treatment plan that delivers services from a range of service providers, including mental health, juvenile justice, child welfare, and educational systems. Wraparound Milwaukee has incorporated this approach with high rates of success: multiple researchers have identified Wraparound Milwaukee as a “best practice” in violence reduction. Services target youth diagnosed with conduct disorder or an oppositional defiant disorder, two common diagnoses among juvenile justice clients. Services include: housing assistance; mentoring; tutoring; day treatment; residential treatment; crisis inpatient facility; independent living support; and parent aid. This program serves 600 youth per year at a cost of $3,300 per month. According to Richard Mendel’s report on model juvenile justice programs, Wraparound Milwaukee was identified by U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher as a reflection that “long term, complex care can be offered in an efficient way that reduces cost for all of the involved children and youth agencies.”
Model Program #3: Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care, Eugene, Oregon

Blueprints for Violence Prevention identified Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) as a cost-effective alternative to group or residential treatment and/or incarceration. At a 12-month follow-up, youth who participated in this program spent 60% fewer days incarcerated; had fewer subsequent arrests; and had significantly less hard drug use than non-participants. Adolescents were placed with community families who provide treatment and intensive supervision at home, in school, and in the community; positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior; a relationship with a mentoring adult; and separation from delinquent peers. This program ensures that community parents receive supervision and support. With family reunification as the ultimate goal, the biological or adoptive family also receives family therapy and training in the structured program used in the MFTC home. Program length averaged seven months at a monthly cost of $2,691 per youth.

Model Program #4: Multisystemic Therapy, multiple locations

Multisystemic Therapy (MST) targets chronic, violent, or substance abusing male or female juvenile offenders, ages 12 to 17, at high risk of out of home placement, and the offenders’ families. Using a home-based model of services delivery, trained therapists provide intervention strategies that include strategic family therapy, structural family therapy, behavioral parent training, and cognitive behavior therapies. Evaluations of MST have demonstrated reductions of 25% to 75% in long-term rates of re-arrest; reductions of 47% to 67% in out-of-home placements; extensive improvements in family functioning; and decreased mental health problems. The cost is $4,500 per youth for approximately sixty hours of contact over four months. According to a cost-benefit analysis conducted by Washington State Institute for Public Policy, MST saved taxpayers $8.38 for each dollar spent.

Model Program #5: Operation New Hope Lifeskills’95, California Youth Authority

This aftercare treatment program for CYA parolees provided thirteen consecutive weekly modules emphasizing different coping skills. Program goals included:

- Improving the basic socialization skills necessary for successful reintegration into the community
- Significantly reduc[ing] criminal activity in terms of amount and seriousness
- Alleviat[ing] the need for, or dependence on, alcohol or illicit drugs
- Improv[ing] overall lifestyle choices (i.e., social, education, job training, and employment)
- Reduc[ing] the individual’s need for gang participation and affiliation as a support mechanism
- Reduc[ing] the high rate of short-term parole revocations

Through intensive individualized treatment and counseling, as well as placing parolees away from their counties of commitment, this program produced successful outcomes for many participants. Participants in the Lifeskills’95 program were less likely to be arrested; use illicit
drugs; be unemployed; and to reestablish frequent contact with former gang affiliations than parolees who did not participate in the program.\textsuperscript{122}

**Promising Program #1: Independent Living Program, Washington, D.C.**

The Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice Independent Living Program (ILP) offers incarcerated youth and those youth placed out of their home environment with skill building and preparation for independence in a community-based setting. The program serves both males and females, ages 17 to 21. The duration of the program frequently ranges from 12 to 24 months. In place of a traditional “facility” to house program participants, each youth in the ILP is supplied with a furnished apartment, a comprehensive “life plan” developed with the youth and various key actors in his or her life, a weekly stipend, and around-the-clock monitoring and support. Based upon the philosophy of “unconditional care” rather than “zero tolerance,” the program facilitates each participant’s development of pro-social attitudes and relationships to enhance his or her capacity for crime- and drug-free living.

ILP staff work closely with participants to seek services and support to meet their needs from within the community. Special education services, substance abuse counseling, vocational training, mental health counseling and other social services are obtained from reputable community providers. All youth in the ILP are assigned to a case manager with a maximum caseload of ten youth. Specialized services are available for youth with infant children and for Seriously Emotionally Disturbed Youth. Seventy-four percent (74%) of those released remain arrest free during their participation in the program.

**Promising Program #2: Youth in Transition Program, Maryland and Pennsylvania\textsuperscript{123}**

The Youth in Transition Program (YIT), operated by the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives, provides a continuum of care to adolescents and young adults who need intensive, specialized services. The goal of these services is to meet the developmental, intellectual, emotional, and vocational needs of all youth. Residential programming is provided in the following settings:

- Small therapeutic group homes
- Residential Program Three-Bed Alternative Living Unit
- Supervised Independent Living
- Semi-Independent Living Transitional Unit

By offering a graduated system of residential placements, the YIT program provides a coordinated system of services to meet the individual needs of youth released from correctional facilities. Youth learn to manage independent living while also receiving supportive services.
Promising Program #3: Save Our Future, Los Angeles, California

Save Our Future is a nonprofit service organization dedicated to the prevention of at-risk youths from entering a life of crime and to ensure a successful rehabilitation for those who were incarcerated. The organization is committed to decreasing juvenile crime in South Central Los Angeles by providing comprehensive resources for at-risk youth and their families through life skills training, violence prevention, and family advocacy. Specific programs include Ja’Mee’s House, a residential treatment program for formerly incarcerated young men that includes medical care, victims awareness, and substance abuse programs; Corey’s (Community Organization for Rehabilitation and Education for Youth) Youth Services, which provides alternatives to criminal activity, mentoring and victims awareness; Computer Literacy; and the California Charter Academy, in which school administrators work closely with the students and their families to address specific needs. The Charter Academy provides wraparound services to ensure that all necessary academic and social supports are in place during the transition period.

Promising Program #4: Transitional Residential Program (TRP), Los Angeles, California

This CYA-funded program was discontinued as of June 30, 2002 due to budget cuts. However, the Transitional Residential Program remains a promising program with possibilities for modification and replication. Through contracted services with Volunteers of America (VOA), wards participated in a 90-day work furlough program. Serving up to twenty-two wards at a time, the TRP provided employment development services, job referrals, and counseling services. Participants were required to seek full-time employment and upon employment, were responsible for transportation costs. At program completion, wards were recommended for parole consideration by the YOPB. Although the TRP staff did not formally track former participants, the former Administrator estimated that 75-80% of program graduates had not re-offended within one year of program completion. Anecdotal evidence indicates that most participants maintained their jobs or were promoted to higher paid positions. Program costs approximated $1,200 per month to cover room, board, and personal expenses. Because the TRP was oriented around employment, educational pursuits were secondary. Considering the low skill level of many CYA wards, I recommend a similar program with an increased emphasis on education.

VII. Conclusions and Areas for Further Research

Several areas of research were beyond the scope of this report but deserve closer attention:

- Greater attention should be paid to the specific needs of girls and young women in the Youth Authority. Female offenders remain an understudied population; the increasing proportion of girls committed to the CYA facility in Ventura increases the urgency of the need for gender-based services and intervention programs that address the root causes of their criminal behavior.124
• Due to the documented evidence about the relationship between foster care placement and juvenile delinquency, additional research on the outcomes of youth who lived in out-of-home placements before commitment to the CYA would be beneficial.

• The CYA should create a better tracking system for youth and young adults released from the CYA. Data collection should include a full recidivism measure, as well as educational, employment, and health outcomes. The National Institute of Justice study provides a potential template for data collection.¹²⁵

The sobering facts about the outcomes for youth and young adults released from the Youth Authority demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the current “get tough” policies employed in the State of California and present an opportunity for reform. When youthful offenders leave the CYA, the barriers they face far outweigh the opportunities for a successful reintegration into the community. Indeed, the odds are against them: low education, high unemployment, and a greater than 50% chance that they’ll re-offend. The emphasis on surveillance and protection to the exclusion of education and treatment has had serious detrimental consequences for individual offenders, their families, and the communities to which they return. This report highlights the disjointed approach to reentry and the need for increased collaboration among state, local, and nonprofit organizations. A comprehensive approach to reentry must also address the limited opportunities that face many of these individuals:

[Paroled offenders] are struggling with the same stresses of poverty, the same limited opportunities, and same class and racial tensions as shape the lives of all youths, delinquent or not, who live in disadvantaged communities. Ultimately these issues must be confronted if we are to expect youthful offenders to establish meaningful lives in the community.¹²⁶

During the course of interviews conducted for this report, many individuals identified the need and widespread support for improved reentry services for CYA youth and young adults. However, without state leadership, the future outlook for this population remains grim. I hope that this report will result in a formal commitment to reentry and aftercare as an integral component in a continuum of juvenile justice services.
Notes


4 The California Youth Authority houses almost 6,000 of the state’s most serious youthful offenders, ages 12-25. Over 50% were committed for violent offenses, and 38% have two or more prior commitments. (State of California Department of the Youth Authority, “Characteristics of First Commitments to the Youth Authority 1990 Through 2001.”)


6 Jerry Harper [Director, Department of the Youth Authority], interview by author, 12 July 2002.


9 The Young Offender Initiative Reentry Grant Program is a joint program of the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Labor.


12 Linster et al.


15 State of California Department of the Youth Authority, "Characteristics of First Commitments Released to Parole 1959-2000" and "Institutional Length of Stay of First Commitments Released to Parole in 2001" (Sacramento, CA).

16 Todis et al.

17 Todis et al.

18 Snyder and Sickmund.


20 Linster et al.


24 State of California Department of the Youth Authority, "Characteristics of First Commitments to the Youth Authority 1990 through 2001" (Sacramento, CA).


28 State of California Department of the Youth Authority, “Characteristics of First Commitments to the Youth Authority 1990 through 2001” (Sacramento, CA).

29 State of California Department of the Youth Authority, “Characteristics of First Commitments to the Youth Authority 1990 through 2001” (Sacramento, CA).


31 Class Action No. CIV. S-01-0675 DFL-PAN-P.


33 Fomer CYA Ward.


35 Fomer CYA Ward.

36 Fomer CYA Ward.

37 Fomer CYA Ward.


39 State of California Department of the Youth Authority. “Characteristics of First Commitments to the Youth Authority 1990 through 2001” (Sacramento, CA).

41 State of California Department of the Youth Authority, “Percentage of Students Scoring At or Above the 50th Percentile Based on National Norms” (Sacramento, CA).

42 State of California Department of the Youth Authority, “Number and Percentage of Students Tested and Passing by School.” California High School Exit Exam May, 2001 Results (Sacramento, CA).


44 CYA Staff, Personal interviews, June-August 2002.

45 Each person between the ages of 6 and 18 years (with certain exceptions) is subject to compulsory full-time education according to Ca. Code § 48200.

46 CYA Staff, Personal interview and tour, 26 June 2002.


50 Higher Education Act of 1965, Title IV, Part A, Subpart 1, as amended.


54 Allard.

55 See Vincent Schiraldi and Barry Holman, “Poor Prescription: The Costs of Imprisoning Drug Offenders in the United States,” Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice (June 2000) and Jonathan P. Caulkins, et al., “Mandatory Minimum Drug Sentences: Throwing Away the Key or the Taxpayers’ Money?” RAND Corporation (Santa Monica, California: 1997).

56 Code of Federal Regulations § 416.1339(a)

57 Pub L. No. 104-20

59 National Center on Education, Disability, and Juvenile Justice.

<http://www.edjj.org/TransitionAfterCare/transition.html>; CYA Staff.

60 “Education as Crime Prevention.”

61 “Education as Crime Prevention.”


64 “Education as Crime Prevention.”

65 In some cases, completing these educational requirements may be unrealistic, due to short sentences and/or the youth’s current educational status. Policy enforcement takes these factors into account.

66 CYA staff.

67 California Department of the Youth Authority, “Age, Ethnicity, and Full Board Status of Institutionalized Cases, By Type, Sex, and Institution” (Sacramento, CA: December 31, 2001).

68 CYA staff.

69 Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee Number 4. 17 May 2002: 7.


71 State of California Department of the Youth Authority, “CCSOP.”

72 Class Action No. CIV. S-01-0675 DFL-PAN-P.

73 Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee Number 4. 17 May 2002. Note: as of August 5, 2002, the California State Budget has not yet been approved. Any budget statements are based upon the May Revision.


75 Steiner et al.

76 Steiner et al.: 44.
77 Steiner et al.: 45.

78 Steiner et al.: 45.


80 Steiner et al.

81 State of California Department of the Youth Authority Research Division, “The Karl Holton Youth Correctional
Drug and Alcohol Treatment Facility: An Implementation and Process Evaluation of the First Two Years”
(Sacramento, CA: January 1999).

82 State of California Department of the Youth Authority, “CYA Mental Health.”

83 State of California Department of the Youth Authority, “CYA Mental Health.”

84 State of California Department of the Youth Authority, “CYA Mental Health.”

85 CYA Staff.

86 California Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review. 17 May 2002.

87 California Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review.

88 State of California Department of the Youth Authority, “The Karl Holton.”

89 CYA Staff; Steiner et al.

90 State of California Department of the Youth Authority, “CCSOP”: 37.

91 Steiner et al.

92 State of California Department of the Youth Authority, “CCSOP.”

93 Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, “Intensive Aftercare for High Risk Juveniles: Policies and


95 Parolee supervision progresses from periods of intense supervision to the case management phase, in which face
to-face contact may be reduced to once every two months. Parole agents’ caseloads vary according to the intensity
of supervision they are providing. The reentry period lasts for thirty days after release, and requires smaller
caseloads. During the maintenance or case management period, caseloads may climb to fifty parolees or more per
agent.

96 CYA Staff.

98 State of California, California Governor's Budget 2002-03 May Revision.

99 State of California, California Governor's Budget: 67.

100 Principles of a Model Juvenile Justice System, Maryland Juvenile Justice Coalition: 11.


102 Mendel, "Less Cost."

103 Mendel, "Less Cost."


105 Steiner et al.

106 Previous attempts at providing contracted services at the CYA have had mixed results. In FY 1994/95, Karl Holton DATF contracted a community-based substance abuse treatment provider but terminated the contract due to "unsatisfactory delivery of services." (The Karl Holton: 21-22.)

107 Mendel, "Less Hype": 27.

108 Senator Richard Polanco, "Juvenile Commitments to the California Youth Authority: A Proposal for Local Control & Improved Accountability" (2002).

109 Roche et al.; Kurt Bumby, Linda Gramblin, and Rebecca Kniest, Division of Youth Services Annual Report Fiscal Year 2001, Missouri Department of Social Services; Missouri's Division of Youth Services Programs and Services, Missouri Department of Social Services.

110 Steve Adams, telephone interview with author, 9 July 2002.


113 Bumby et al.

114 Principles: 11
115 See Mendel, “Less Hype” and EDJ, A Publication of the National Center on Education, Disability, and Juvenile Justice 1 (January 2002).


<http://www.colorado.edu/cesp/blueprints/model/ten_multidim.htm>.


120 Josi and Sechrest.

121 Josi and Sechrest.

122 Josi and Sechrest.


125 Linster et al.

126 Josi and Sechrest.
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Appendix A

The National Center for Juvenile Justice created the following invoice, based on the work of economist Mark A. Clark, which depicts the cost to U.S. taxpayers when a youth drops out of high school for a life of crime and drug abuse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>COST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **THE COSTS OF JUVENILE CRIME**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>COST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile career (4 years @ 1 - 4 crimes/year)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim costs</td>
<td>$62,000 - $250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile justice costs</td>
<td>$21,000-$84,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult career (6 years @ 10.6 crimes/year)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim costs</td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal justice costs</td>
<td>$335,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offender productivity costs</td>
<td>$64,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total crime cost</strong></td>
<td>$1.5 – $1.8 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present value</strong></td>
<td>$1.3 – $1.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources devoted to drug market</td>
<td>$84,000- $168,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced productivity loss</td>
<td>$27,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drug treatment costs</td>
<td>$10,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical treatment of drug-related illnesses</td>
<td>$11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premature death</td>
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<tr>
<td>Criminal justice costs associated with drug crimes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total drug abuse cost</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present value 1999</strong></td>
<td>$150,000-$360,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs imposed by high school dropout:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost wage productivity</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fringe benefits</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonmarket losses</td>
<td>$95,000-$375,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total dropout costs</strong></td>
<td>$470,000-$750,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present Value</strong></td>
<td>$243,000 - $388,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total loss</strong></td>
<td>$2.2 - $3 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present Value</strong></td>
<td>$1.7 - $2.3 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Present Value is the amount of money that would have to be invested today in order to cover future costs of the youth’s behavior.
Length of Stay (Average Months)

Year | Average Length of Stay (Months)
-----|-------------------------------
1971 | 10.7
1976 | 10.7
1981 | 10.7
1986 | 10.7
1991 | 25.3
1996 | 25.3
2001 | 25.3
California Youth Authority
First Admissions by Year 1970-2000

Year
Number of Admissions
4500  4000  3500  3000  2500  2000  1500  1000  500  0
Appendix E

Parole Releases By Offense 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offense Type</th>
<th>Number of Parole Releases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resources: Programs With Promise

**INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM**
Calvin Smith, Director
Telephone: (202) 737-7270
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Barriers & Promising Approaches to Workforce and Youth Development for Young Offenders

Presented by
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Youth Employment

Despite overall job growth over the past few years:

- From 2000-2004, the teen [ages 16-19] employment-to-population ratio declined by 8.8 percentage points from 45.2% to 36.4%.
- The 2004 youth employment rate was lowest in the 57 years this data has been collected
- Older workers, college grads, & immigrants are ahead of youth in queue for "youth jobs".

Youth Employment

- An estimated 3.8 million youth (18-24), roughly 15 percent of all young adults, are neither employed nor in school
- According to the BLS, in August 2005 the unemployment rate for all youth 16-19 was 16.5%.
- At the same point, the unemployment rate for African American youth 16-19 was 35.8%.
The Skills Gap

- It is estimated that over 75 percent of new jobs will require post-secondary education or training.
- Half of businesses surveyed considered it difficult to fill job openings.
- A report of the National Association of Manufacturers called attention to "a talent shortage [that] threatens U.S. manufacturing."
- Employers report that many of our nation's youth with high school diplomas are ill-equipped.
- Increased reliance on immigrant labor, outsourcing and out-placement overseas.

High School Completion Rates

- Urban Institute reports that nationwide the overall graduation rate for the class of 2001 was only 68 percent.
- In many urban districts and among minority populations, only 50 percent or less of youth complete high school.
- According to ETS, from 1990 to 2000, the high school completion rate declined in all but seven states.
  - In 10 states, it declined by 8 percentage points or more.

Vulnerable/Disconnected Youth

- Neediest youth focus of the 2003 Final Report of the White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth
- Leading Foundations Focusing on Vulnerable/Disconnected Youth
  - Dropouts
  - Young and Juvenile Offenders
  - Youth aging or who have aged-out of Foster Care
  - Runaway and Homeless Youth
  - Parenting and Pregnant Teens
  - Limited English Speaking & Migrant Youth
  - Youth with Disabilities
  - Children of Incarcerated Parents

Vulnerable/Disconnected Youth

- Many states have launched efforts to better coordinate youth serving systems
- USDOL issues a Strategic Vision for Youth that prioritized serving the neediest youth
- USDOL funding local efforts focused on young offenders and foster youth in transition
- First Lady's White House Conference on Helping America's Youth
- Campaign for Youth Launched to Improve Opportunities for Vulnerable and Disconnected
  - Memo forwarded to White House and Governors
Reentry

- Nearly 650,000 people are released from incarceration to communities nationwide each year (BJS).
- Approximately 120,000 youth under the age of 18 are currently incarcerated in juvenile detention centers, state prisons, and local jails. (BJS).

Youth Service Principles

- Sar Levitan Center Youth Policy Network
- Continuity of Contact with Caring Adults
- Focus on the Centrality of Work
- Bona fide Connections to Employers
- A Variety of Contextual Educational Options for Competency Certification
- Opportunities for Leadership Development
- Positive Peer Support
- Opportunities for Post-Secondary Education
- Chances to Serve the Community, and
- Follow-Up and Support over a Sustained Period

Workforce Development and Juvenile Justice: Background

- U.S. Department of Labor Launches Youth Offender Demonstration Grants Project
- Annie E. Casey Foundation Commissions Study, Building on Work of Task Force, focusing on Lessons from Existing Practice & Policy Initiatives
- US DOL Launches Reintegration of Young Offender Initiative (Reentry Program/Going Home)
- White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth Prioritizes Youth in Public Care 2003
- President Announces Expanded Prison Reentry Program in 2004 State of the Union Address

Barriers & Promising Approaches for Workforce & Youth Development for Young Offenders
Working in the Juvenile Justice System

- Prioritization
  - Security, Mandates & Overcrowding
- Stigma
  - Employers & Job Training System Reluctant to consider juvenile offenders
- Geography
  - Facilities Far from Home/Labor Markets
- Philosophy
  - Punitive Focus Restricts Developmental Efforts
- Creativity
  - Committed to Rehabilitation

Findings and Implications

- Temporary employment programs, devoid of other services and opportunities do little to reduce delinquency or prepare for careers
- Vocational education, career preparation & workplace readiness initiatives must be linked to comprehensive strategies that address needs & build on strengths
- Barriers and need to be creatively addressed, including funding
- Focus of rehabilitation must be retained

Common Elements of Promising Practices

- Commitment to Rehabilitation (assets vs deficits)
- Continuum of Care (institutional care thru aftercare)
- Integrated Education (vocational, academic, workplace competencies & responsive to different learning styles)
- Collaboration (employers, workforce agencies, CBOs)
- Support Structures (staffing, caring adults & mentors)
- Accountability (high expectations for youth)
- Outcomes (employment and recidivism)

Promising Practices: Examples

- Texas RIO-Y
  - Pre-Release Work Readiness & Labor Market Information
  - Post-Release Links to Local One-Stop Career Centers
  - Partnerships with WIBs across the Texas
- Gulf Coast Trades Center – Vocational programs linked to labor market demands
- Avon Park Academy – Employer Involvement
- Fresh Start – Entrepreneurship & Incentives
Policy Initiatives

- Funding Ideas
- System Collaboration
- Adoption of New and Innovative Approaches

Workforce Investment Act of 1998

- Enacted into law in August 1998, repealed Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA)
- Youth Program one of three WIA formula funding streams (adult and dislocated workers)
- Funds funneled through states to local workforce boards/workforce investment areas
- WIA youth provisions reflect much of what has been learned in recent years, through research and practice, about effective practice

Why WIA Agencies Are Open to Partnering with Juvenile Justice

- WIA system has had difficulty recruit eligible out-of-school youth (enroll institutionalized youth upon intake)
- WIA system needs to leverage other resources to address full range of youth needs (i.e. follow-up using probation/aftercare/parole)
- Important impacts on the community (quality of life)
- Many examples of success
- Juvenile justice system needs
  - workforce and youth development expertise and
  - information about labor market demands to guide development of vocational programs

WIA Reauthorization

- Administration outlined its WIA proposal as part of FY 2004 Budget Proposal.
- WIA Authorization expired on Sept. 30, 2003
- House of Representatives passed WIA Reauthorization bill (H.R. 27) on March 2, 2005 (largely party-line vote).
- Senate Committee passed its WIA bill on May 18, 2005.
- Both bills would increase focus on juvenile offenders and court-involved youth
- Little chance bill will be completed this year
**Issues to consider for youth involved with the juvenile justice system**

- Begin reentry planning and workforce readiness upon entry into secure confinement.
- Work closely with schools to ensure that youth will be well received, able to maintain academic progress, and be enrolled swiftly.
- Identify a suitable alternative education program, if high school will not be appropriate.
- Help youth maintain or develop positive relationships with adults in the community.

**Issues to consider for youth involved with the juvenile justice system**

- Address the ability of youth to deal constructively with criticism, direct supervision, and authority figures;
- Provide opportunities to manage anger and address mental health needs;
- Help youth identify or develop a positive peer group that will support their efforts to change;
- Provide try-out employment to enable youth to adjust to the demands and expectations of the workplace.

**Issues to consider for youth involved with the juvenile justice system**

- Connect youth to demand occupational training relevant to the region in which will return.
- Match potential employers to individual youth based on their interests and skills.
- Help employers overcome stigmas through truthfulness, modeling respect, and focusing on youths’ strengths; and
- Provide follow-up support to both the youth and the employer to promote job retention.

**Promising & Effective Practices Network (PEPNet)**

PEPNet is the nation’s premier resource on best practices in youth workforce development programming.

PEPNet recognizes and promotes:
- Quality practice
- Increased performance outcomes
- Continuous improvement within workforce systems and programs for America’s neediest youth.
PEPNet Since 1995

- 96 programs nationwide have received the PEPNet Award, sponsored by the US Department of Labor
- NYEC has mined their best practices to create online Index of Quality Practices
- Awardees represent a diversity of organizations, serving the full spectrum of youth populations, through a range of approaches
- PEPNet Criteria Updated and new tools released in July 2005

ACTION IDEAS:

- Forge System-level Partnerships with other systems & agencies, specifically WIBs & Youth Councils
- Meaningfully Engage Employers
- Explore and Adapt Exemplary Practices
- Expand Community-Based Opportunities
- Expand or Establish Reentry Programs
- Look for Funding from Non-Traditional Sources
- Provide a Voice for Youth
- Resist the Status Quo and be Flexible

Thank You

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