

# Juveniles at the Training School

## DEFINITION

*Juveniles at the Training School* is the number of juveniles up to age 21 who were in the care and custody of the Rhode Island Training School at any time during the 2007 calendar year. The total includes youth who spent time at the Training School and/or in other community placements while in the care and custody of the Training School.

## SIGNIFICANCE

The juvenile justice system has three primary obligations: to identify and respond to the needs of the young people in its care; to protect youth from legal jeopardy; and to keep the public safe from youth who will harm others.<sup>1</sup> Early antisocial behavior, cognitive impairment, inadequate parenting skills, child maltreatment, exposure to family violence, association with other high risk youth, poor academic performance, family poverty and exposure to chronic violence in school or neighborhoods are associated with risk for involvement with the juvenile justice system.<sup>2,3</sup>

Delinquent behavior among youth in the U.S. has been declining over the last 15 years.<sup>4</sup> Only a fraction of incarcerated youth are violent and dangerous. Most are incarcerated for drug and property offenses that could be addressed through diversion

programs.<sup>5</sup> In the U.S., Black youth are more likely than White juveniles to be arrested, formally charged, held in secure detention pending court, and incarcerated in both juvenile and adult correctional settings.<sup>6</sup>

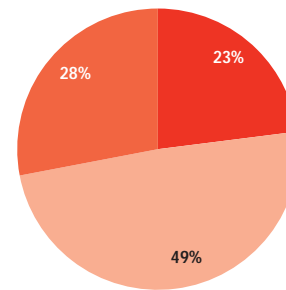
Research indicates that alternatives to incarcerating youth are more successful in preventing recidivism, more cost-effective, and can lessen the disproportionate confinement of minority youth. Successful efforts are comprehensive, community-based and family-focused, with intensive treatment and transition services for reintegration into the community.<sup>7,8</sup> For some youth, community-based alternatives such as community service, restitution or diversion to behavioral health treatment (for mental health problems and/or substance use) are more effective at reducing re-offending than incarceration.<sup>9,10,11</sup>

The Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) operates the Rhode Island Training School for Youth, the state's residential detention facility for adjudicated youth and youth awaiting trial. A total of 1,122 youth (80% male and 20% female) were in the care and custody of the Training School at some point during calendar year 2007. On January 1, 2008, there were 158 youth on the grounds at the Training School, 22 under capacity.<sup>12</sup>

Adjudicated Juveniles, Rhode Island Training School for Youth on January 1, 2008

### By Age

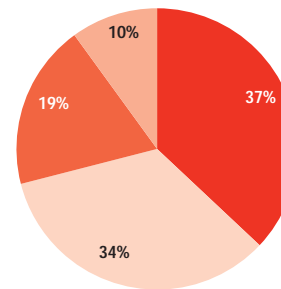
- 23% Ages 14-15
- 49% Ages 16-17
- 28% Ages 18-20



n=262

### By Length of Time in Custody

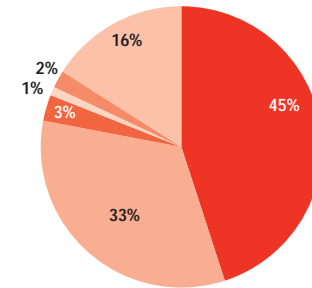
- 37% Less than 6 months
- 34% 6 to 11 months
- 19% 12 to 23 months
- 10% 24 months or more



n=262

### By Race\*

- 45% White
- 33% Black
- 3% Asian
- 1% Native American
- 2% Multiracial
- 16% Unknown Race



n=262

\* All categories are mutually exclusive. On January 1, 2008, 74 adjudicated youth (28%) at the Rhode Island Training School were identified as Hispanic. Hispanic youth may be of any race.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RIC HIST, January 1, 2008.

## Alternatives to Juvenile Incarceration

- ◆ The Rhode Island Training School is an important resource for the rehabilitation of youth who commit serious offenses and who pose a danger to themselves or the community. For youth who do not pose a danger to themselves or others, expanding Rhode Island's capacity to provide effective community-based alternatives to incarceration is essential.
- ◆ High-quality research-based alternatives to incarcerating youth are more successful in preventing recidivism and are significantly more cost-effective. Successful diversion efforts are comprehensive, community-based and family-focused, with intensive counseling and treatment.<sup>13,14</sup> Peer influences are often a significant factor in the development of antisocial behavior and placing delinquent youth together may reduce positive program impacts and may lead to negative outcomes.<sup>15</sup>
- ◆ Programs that offer transition services for reintegration into the community are important as well. For some wayward and delinquent youth, community-based alternatives that include components such as family involvement, community service, restorative justice, or diversion to drug court or substance abuse treatment can be more effective at reducing re-offending than incarceration.<sup>16,17</sup>

## Highest Level Current Charges of Youth Incarcerated at the Training School, January 2008

CHARGE	# BOYS	% BOYS	# GIRLS	% GIRLS
Crimes against property	24	22%	1	8%
Felony assault	20	18%	2	15%
Violation of probation	20	18%	0	---
Illegal substance-related crime	13	12%	2	15%
Simple assault	7	6%	3	23%
Obstruction, resist, escape	6	5%	1	8%
Possession of a weapon	6	5%	3	23%
Sex crime	4	4%	0	---
Traffic: Driving w/out a license, DUI	2	2%	1	8%
Unknown charge	8	7%	0	---
<b>Total Youth*</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, week of January 14, 2008. \*Data were gathered for the 110 boys adjudicated to the RITS and the 13 girls in residence at the RITS (9 adjudicated and 4 detained).

## Risk Factors for Rhode Island Youth at the Training School

### History of Child Abuse and Neglect

- ◆ Nearly half (47%) of the adjudicated youth in the care and custody of the Training School on January 1, 2008 had at some point in their childhood been victims of documented child abuse or neglect.<sup>18</sup>

### Behavioral Health Needs

- ◆ Nearly one-third (31%) of the adjudicated or detained females (4 of 13) and 14% of the adjudicated males (15 of 110) at the Training School during the week of January 10, 2008 were receiving psychotropic medications.<sup>19</sup>
- ◆ During 2007, 60 males participated in the six-month residential substance abuse treatment program at the Training School, designed specifically for youth offenders.<sup>20</sup> Half of youth at the Training School during the week of January 10, 2008 were receiving outpatient substance abuse treatment.<sup>21</sup>

### Teen Pregnancy and Parenting

- ◆ Two of 13 adjudicated or detained females at the Training School during the week of January 10, 2008 were pregnant. Nine of the 110 adjudicated males at the Training School during this period reported already being a parent and 2 reported being an expectant parent.<sup>22</sup>

### Educational Attainment

- ◆ A review of 123 randomly-selected records of adjudicated male students and adjudicated or detained female students at the Training School on January 15, 2008 found 27 students (22%) had no school records available. Of those with school records, 12 (13%) had failed all classes before entering the Training School. Approximately half of students at the Training School receive special education services.<sup>23</sup> Although the average age of youth tested at the Training School is 16.7, the average pre-test scores for both reading and math skills were at fifth grade levels.<sup>24</sup>

- ◆ During the 2006-2007 school year, 69 adjudicated youth graduated from high school while serving a sentence at the Training School. Forty-four of these students graduated with a General Educational Development (GED) diploma and 25 graduated with a high school diploma.<sup>25</sup>

# Juveniles at the Training School



## Prevention of Recidivism Among Delinquent Youth

- ◆ Of the 1,122 youth who were at the Training School at some point during 2007, 24% (268) had been admitted previously. One quarter (66) of the youth previously admitted had been at the Training School three or more times.<sup>26</sup>
- ◆ Research indicates that early identification and treatment of youth at risk for chronic delinquency, and immediate, intensive interventions involving the youth and his or her family in counseling, all-day academic programming and substance abuse treatment or counseling are effective in reducing chronic delinquency.<sup>27</sup>
- ◆ For serious, repeat and violent juvenile offenders, the quality of rehabilitative services is critical, since most youth will return to their communities. Successful models for the rehabilitation of serious and violent youth include intensive and individualized academic programs, supervision by well-trained staff, an intentional focus on transition planning and aftercare services, and the development of vocational skills.<sup>28</sup>



## Probation for Rhode Island Youth

- ◆ The Juvenile Correctional Services Division of DCYF includes the Rhode Island Training School for Youth and Juvenile Probation and Parole. Juvenile Probation and Parole works to rehabilitate youth in the community to ensure public safety and full compliance with court orders and conditions of probation. Adolescents are placed on probation by the Family Court either as an alternative to incarceration at the Training School or as the final part of their sentence after being incarcerated at the Training School. Parole is not currently used for youth in Rhode Island.<sup>29</sup>
- ◆ On December 31, 2007, there were 1,313 youth on the DCYF probation caseload. One quarter (25%) of youth on probation were ages 11-15, 48% were ages 16-17 and 26% were ages 18-21.<sup>30</sup> Half (50%) of youth on probation were White, 27% were Black, 2% were Asian, 1% were more than one Race and 19% were of unknown race. More than one quarter (27%) of youth were identified as Hispanic (Hispanic youth may be of any race).<sup>31</sup>



## Age of Jurisdiction for the Rhode Island Family Court

- ◆ The Rhode Island Family Court has jurisdiction over delinquent and wayward children and youth under age 18. Between July 1 and November 8, 2007 there was a temporary change in the law establishing the age of jurisdiction of the Rhode Island Family Court. The maximum age at which youth could be brought before the Family Court was lowered from 18 to 17 and the maximum age for continued monitoring by the Family Court was lowered from 21 to 19.<sup>32</sup> This resulted in approximately 500 17-year-olds being charged and referred to adult courts during this 4-month period.<sup>33</sup>
- ◆ On October 30, 2007, the General Assembly increased the age of Family Court jurisdiction back up to age 18. This reversal, which took effect on November 8, 2007, included a provision that would seal the records of youth affected by the change.<sup>34</sup> The reversal was not retroactive, leaving the estimated 500 17-year-olds who had been charged as adults during this period in the adult legal process.<sup>35</sup>
- ◆ A series of judicial decisions in late 2007 and early 2008 resulted in approximately 400 misdemeanor cases involving 17-year-olds (of the estimated 500 total 17-year-olds charged) being returned from the District Court to the jurisdiction of the Family Court. As of February 2008, the Attorney General's office reported having referred 93 cases of 17-year-olds to the Superior Court (70 of which had resulted in charges and 23 of which were still being screened).<sup>36</sup>
- ◆ Between July 1, 2007 and November 8, 2007, 59 youth who were 17 years old (53 males and 6 females) were charged as adults and awaited trial at the Adult Correctional Institutions (ACI), 45 of whom were subsequently released. An additional 6 males were sentenced to the ACI during this period, 4 of whom were incarcerated at the ACI and released before the repeal of the law and 2 of whom remained incarcerated at the ACI after the repeal of the law.<sup>37</sup>
- ◆ Research on adolescent brain development and effective juvenile justice programs support laws that treat 17-year-olds as juveniles. Scientific evidence shows that judgment and decision-making skills do not fully develop until the early 20s. Youth placed in adult correctional facilities are less likely to receive counseling, therapeutic, job training or educational services, which form the basis of rehabilitation in youth correctional environments. Youth are more likely to re-offend after serving adult sentences than after serving juvenile sentences.<sup>38</sup>

# Juveniles at the Training School

Table 24. Youth at the Rhode Island Training School, 2007

CITY/TOWN	TOTAL POPULATION AGES 13-21	NUMBER OF YOUTH
Barrington	2,009	8
Bristol	3,525	7
Burrillville	2,067	11
Central Falls	2,625	59
Charlestown	755	2
Coventry	3,688	17
Cranston	8,499	53
Cumberland	3,325	26
East Greenwich	1,397	0
East Providence	5,092	48
Exeter	730	4
Foster	512	2
Glocester	1,251	4
Hopkinton	912	2
Jamestown	536	0
Johnston	2,624	10
Lincoln	2,260	6
Little Compton	351	0
Middletown	1,647	8
Narragansett	2,798	2
New Shoreham	70	1
Newport	3,755	27
North Kingstown	2,773	14
North Providence	3,045	20
North Smithfield	1,073	5
Pawtucket	8,298	132
Portsmouth	1,723	5
Providence	33,871	385
Richmond	783	4
Scituate	1,155	0
Smithfield	3,890	6
South Kingstown	6,532	14
Tiverton	1,523	9
Warren	1,208	9
Warwick	8,863	49
West Greenwich	599	0
West Warwick	3,177	30
Westerly	2,414	12
Woonsocket	5,034	71
Out of State	NA	51
Unknown	NA	9
Core Cities	56,760	704
Remainder of State	79,629	358
Rhode Island	136,389	1,062

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2007.

Training School data are for 1,062 youth who passed through the Training School during calendar year 2007.

There is no statutory lower age limit for sentencing, however adjudicated children under the age of 13 typically do not serve sentences at the Training School.

An "out-of-state" designation is given to youth whose parent(s) have an address on file that is outside of Rhode Island or to a youth who lives in another state, but commits a crime in Rhode Island and is sentenced to serve time at the Training School.

Total Population Ages 13-21 data are from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Grisso, T. (2004). *Double jeopardy: Adolescent offenders with mental disorders*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>2,4,6</sup> Smith, C. A. (2008). Juvenile delinquency: An introduction. *The Prevention Researcher: Preventing Juvenile Delinquency*, (15)1, 3-6.

<sup>3</sup> Wasserman, G. A., Keenan, K., Tremblay, R. E., Coie, J. D., Herrenkohl, T. I., Loeber, R. & Petechuk, D. (2003). Risk and protective factors of child delinquency. *Child Delinquency Bulletin Series*. (NCJ Publication No. 193409). Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

<sup>5,6,7,13,16</sup> A matter of choice: Forks in the road for juvenile justice. *ADVOCASEY* briefing. (2003). *ADVOCASEY*, 5(1), 4-17.

<sup>8,10,14</sup> Mendel, D. (2003). And the walls keep tumbling down. *ADVOCASEY*, 5(1), 18-27.

<sup>9,17,27,28</sup> Mendel, R. A. (2001). *Less cost, more safety: Guiding lights for reform in juvenile justice*. Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum.

<sup>11</sup> *Criminal neglect: Substance abuse, juvenile justice and the children left behind*. (2004). New York, NY: National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, Columbia University.

<sup>12,18</sup> Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Dodge, K. A., Dishion T. J. & Lansford, J. E. (2006). Deviant peer influences in intervention and public policy for youth. *Social Policy Report: Giving Child and Youth Development Knowledge Away*, 20(1), 3-19.

<sup>19,21,22</sup> Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, week of January 14, 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Rhode Island Training School, Civigenics, Straight Ahead Program, 2007.

<sup>23,24,25</sup> Rhode Island Training School, DCYF Alternative Education, January 2008. Specialized schools are defined as specialized programs that exist separately from public schools, and do not include alternative or special programs within a public school system.

<sup>28</sup> Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, January 1, 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Juvenile Correctional Services Division, February 2008.

<sup>30,31</sup> Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), Juvenile Probation and Parole, December 31, 2007.

<sup>32,34</sup> Rhode Island Senate Committee on Health and Human Services. (January 2008). *Our commitment to children: Oversight of the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families*. Providence, RI: Rhode Island Senate.

<sup>33,35,36</sup> Rhode Island Office of the Attorney General, February 2008.

<sup>37</sup> Rhode Island Department of Corrections, January 2008.

<sup>38</sup> The Campaign for Youth Justice. (2007). *The consequences aren't minor: The impact of trying youth as adults and strategies for reform*. Washington, DC: Campaign for Youth Justice.