

Juveniles at the Training School

DEFINITION

Juveniles at the Training School is the number of juveniles age 21 or under who were in the care and custody of the Rhode Island Training School at any time during 2008, including youth in 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 maintain public safety.¹ Early antisocial behavior, cognitive impairment, inadequate parenting skills, child maltreatment, exposure to violence, association with other high-risk youth, poor academic performance, and poverty increase risk for involvement with the juvenile justice system.^{2,3} Youth at risk often come to the attention of public schools, social service agencies and child welfare systems, presenting opportunities to prevent juvenile justice system involvement.

Violent crimes among youth in the U.S. have declined over the last 15 years. In 2005 and 2006, there was a slight increase nationally in arrests of juveniles for violent crimes, while juvenile arrests for property crimes continued to decline.^{4,5} Nationally, less than one-quarter of adjudicated youth

were incarcerated for violent felonies. Most are incarcerated for non-violent drug and property offenses or violations of court orders/probation.^{6,7}

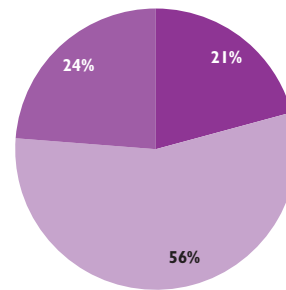
Juvenile justice systems have a range of options for monitoring and rehabilitating juvenile offenders in addition to incarceration, including: electronic monitoring, day/evening reporting centers, skills training programs, community-based therapy for youth and families and substance abuse treatment.⁸ Alternatives to incarcerating youth have been shown to be more successful in preventing recidivism and more cost-effective than incarceration. Programs that are community-based, intensive, sustained, and involve the families of the youth in individualized treatment programs are the most successful.^{9,10,11}

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 in detention. A total of 1,084 youth (81% male and 19% female) were in the care and custody of the Training School at some point during 2008. On January 1, 2009, there were 305 youth in the care and custody of the Training School, 159 of whom were physically at the Training School.¹²

Adjudicated Juveniles, Rhode Island Training School for Youth on January 1, 2009

By Age

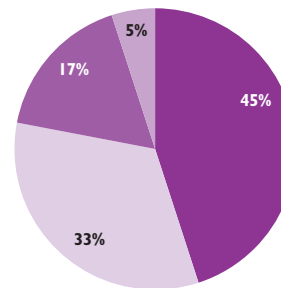
- 21% Ages 13-15
- 56% Ages 16-17
- 24% Ages 18-21



n=305

By Length of Time in Custody

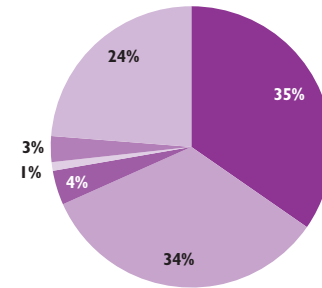
- 45% Less than 6 months
- 33% 6 to 11 months
- 17% 12 to 23 months
- 5% 24 months or more



n=305

By Race*

- 35% White
- 34% Black
- 4% Asian
- 1% Native American
- 3% Multiracial
- 24% Unknown Race



n=305

*On January 1, 2009, 89 adjudicated youth (29%) adjudicated to 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, RICHIST, January 1, 2009. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Highest Level Current Charge 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	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	0%
Traffic: Driving w/out a license, DUI	2	2%	1	8%
Unknown charge	8	7%	0	0%
Total Youth	110	100%	13	100%

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).

Disproportionate Minority Representation in Juvenile Justice Systems

◆ At every point in juvenile justice systems, minority youth (both males and females) are more likely to receive harsher treatment. Disproportionate minority representation has been shown not to be the result of higher rates of offending by youth of color. Minority youth are more likely than White youth to be detained, formally charged in juvenile court, placed in a secure facility (and less likely to receive probation), more likely to be waived to adult court and more likely to be incarcerated as an adult once waived to the adult system. In addition, a national review of more than 150 studies has shown that racial bias plays a definite part in the overrepresentation of minority youth in juvenile justice systems.^{13,14,15}

◆ In particular, it has been clearly documented that Black youth in the United States receive different and harsher treatment than White youth for similar offenses, accumulating disadvantage at each step of the juvenile justice process. Black youth made up 16% of the U.S. youth population between 2002 and 2004, but comprised 28% of juvenile arrests, 30% of adjudicated youth, 35% of youth waived to adult court and 58% of youth admitted to state adult prisons. National data on Hispanic youth in juvenile justice systems show that they also face disproportionate representation but the data are less clear in part because of poor record keeping on ethnicity in many jurisdictions.¹⁶

Risk Factors for Rhode Island Youth at the Training School

History of Child Abuse and Neglect

◆ More than two-fifths (42%) of the 305 adjudicated youth in the care and custody of the Training School on January 1, 2009 had at some point in their childhood been victims of documented child abuse or neglect.¹⁷

◆ Nationally, youth in child welfare systems who enter group homes are 2.5 times more likely than youth with similar backgrounds who are served in foster care homes to enter the juvenile justice system.¹⁸

Behavioral Health Needs

◆ In 2008, all youth adjudicated to the Training School received counseling services as part of their service plans, and 156 youth received mental health services for psychiatric diagnoses other than conduct disorders and substance abuse disorders.¹⁹ During 2008, 54 males participated in the residential substance abuse treatment program at the Training School, designed specifically for youth offenders.²⁰ Half of youth at the Training School during the week of January 10, 2008 were receiving outpatient substance abuse treatment.²¹

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 two reported being an expectant parent.²²

Educational Attainment

◆ Of the 96 students at the Training School on January 15, 2008 with school records, 12 (13%) had failed all classes before entering the Training School.²³ The average pre-test scores for both reading and math skills for students at the Training School were at fifth grade levels and the average post-test scores were sixth grade. Approximately half of the students at the Training School receive special education services.²⁴

◆ During the 2007-2008 school year, 78 adjudicated youth graduated from high school while serving a sentence at the Training School. Fifty-eight of these students graduated with a GED and 20 graduated with a high school diploma.²⁵

Juveniles at the Training School



Girls in the Juvenile Justice System

◆ Girls in the juvenile justice system enter with different personal and offense histories and needs than their male peers. Girls are less likely than boys to commit violent offenses. The majority of offenses committed by girls are property crimes and status offenses (age-related acts that would not be punishable if the offender were an adult, such as truancy). Girls are disproportionately arrested for running away from home. Girls in the juvenile justice system are very likely to have histories of physical and sexual abuse and exposure to violence. As a result, they may have a higher prevalence of self-abusive behaviors, mental health issues (like depression and post-traumatic stress disorder), substance use and suicide attempts, requiring support services tailored to their needs.^{26,27}



Alternatives to Juvenile Detention and 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 detention and incarceration is essential.

◆ The rehabilitation of youth and the prevention of recidivism (repeat offending) with the goal of protecting public safety are key elements of juvenile justice systems. National research shows that an over-reliance on the incarceration of juveniles is not cost-effective and leads to worse public safety outcomes and higher rates of recidivism than the use of community-based alternatives to incarceration.^{28,29}

◆ Key components of successful community-based programs to prevent juvenile recidivism include intensive family therapy and an acknowledgment of the critical roles that families, homes and communities play in resolving delinquency. Successful programs also work with youths' strengths and provide a wide range of services and resources tailored to the needs of youth and their families, including academic and job skills assistance, substance use and mental health treatment and supports.^{30,31}

◆ Peer influences are often a significant factor in the development of antisocial behavior. Placing delinquent youth together (such as in a Training School) may reduce positive program impacts and may even lead to negative outcomes.³²



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.³³

◆ On December 29, 2008, there were 1,259 youth on the DCYF probation caseload. One-quarter (24%) of youth on probation were ages 11-15, 50% were ages 16-17 and 26% were ages 18-21. Almost half (45%) of youth on probation were White, 26% were Black, 2% were Asian, 3% were more than one race and 23% were of unknown race. More than one-quarter (27%) of youth were identified as Hispanic. Hispanic youth may be of any race.³⁴



Prevention of Recidivism among Delinquent Youth

◆ Of the 1,084 youth who were at the Training School at some point during 2008, 25% (258) had been admitted previously. One-quarter (64) of the youth previously admitted had been at the Training School three or more times.³⁵

◆ Early identification and interventions for youth at risk of chronic delinquency, and immediate, evidence-based interventions involving the youth and his or her family in counseling and other treatment are effective in reducing chronic delinquency.^{36,37}

◆ Programs that offer transition services for post-incarceration reintegration into the community are important for reducing recidivism as well. For serious, repeat and violent juvenile offenders, the quality and intensity of rehabilitative services is particularly critical, since most youth will eventually return to their communities. Successful models for rehabilitation of chronically delinquent youth include addressing multiple needs at once, family involvement, counseling, interpersonal skills training, substance abuse treatment, intensive academic programs, and vocational skills training.^{38,39,40}

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Table 24. Youth at the Rhode Island Training School, 2008

CITY/TOWN	TOTAL POPULATION AGES 13-21	NUMBER OF YOUTH
Barrington	2,009	11
Bristol	3,525	3
Burrillville	2,067	7
Central Falls	2,625	48
Charlestown	755	4
Coventry	3,688	16
Cranston	8,499	50
Cumberland	3,325	28
East Greenwich	1,397	1
East Providence	5,092	36
Exeter	730	1
Foster	512	3
Glocester	1,251	3
Hopkinton	912	7
Jamestown	536	1
Johnston	2,624	10
Lincoln	2,260	11
Little Compton	351	0
Middletown	1,647	13
Narragansett	2,798	3
New Shoreham	70	0
Newport	3,755	32
North Kingstown	2,773	11
North Providence	3,045	18
North Smithfield	1,073	6
Pawtucket	8,298	113
Portsmouth	1,723	9
Providence	33,871	388
Richmond	783	1
Scituate	1,155	2
Smithfield	3,890	6
South Kingstown	6,532	8
Tiverton	1,523	7
Warren	1,208	8
Warwick	8,863	38
West Greenwich	599	0
West Warwick	3,177	36
Westerly	2,414	19
Woonsocket	5,034	79
Out of State	NA	45
Unknown	NA	2
Core Cities	56,760	696
Remainder of State	79,629	294
Rhode Island	136,389	1,037

Cap on the Number of Youth at the Rhode Island Training School

◆ In 2008, the Rhode Island General Assembly instituted a cap on the Rhode Island Training School detained and adjudicated populations. This cap of 148 males and 12 females can be achieved either by reducing the number of admissions or by reducing the length of stay.⁴¹

◆ In 2007, 73% of admissions to detention at the Rhode Island Training School resulted in stays of seven days or less. Of these short admissions, 24% led to adjudication to the Training School or Temporary Community Placements (TCP), while the remainder resulted in release.⁴²

◆ Of youth discharged from the Training School in calendar year 2008 (including both adjudicated and detained youth), 84% were there for six months or less, 9% for six months to a year, 6% for one to two years, and 2% for two or more years. Three of the 15 youth in detention on January 1, 2009 had been there for more than 10 months while waiting for waivers to the adult system.⁴³

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), 2008.

Training School data are for 1,084 youth who were in the care and custody of the Rhode Island Training School during calendar year 2008 (including youth from out-of-state, those with unknown addresses and those in temporary community placements).

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

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- 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.
- Snyder, H. N. (2008). *Juvenile arrests 2006*. Juvenile Justice Bulletin (NCJ 221338). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- ^{6,11,13,29,36,38} 2008 KIDS COUNT data book essay: *A road map for juvenile justice reform*. (2008). Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- ^{7,9,28} *Reform the nation's juvenile justice system*. (2009). Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation.

(continued on page 158)