

Juveniles at the Rhode Island Training School

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.

- ◆ **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 calendar year 2008. On January 1, 2009, there were 159 youth on the grounds at the Training School.**
- ◆ **Of the 1,084 youth who were at the Training School at some point during 2008, 24% (258) had been admitted previously.** One-quarter (64) of the youth previously admitted had been at the Training School three or more times.
- ◆ **In 2007, 73% of admissions to detention at the Rhode Island Training 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.**
- ◆ **Of youth discharged from the Training School in calendar year 2008 (including adjudicated and detained youth), 83% were there for six months or fewer, 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 more than 10 months.

National Research on Improving Juvenile Justice Systems

The rehabilitation of youth and the prevention of recidivism (repeat offending) with the goal of protecting of 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.

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 are effective in reducing chronic delinquency.

Key components of successful community-based programs to prevent juvenile recidivism include intensive family therapy and an acknowledgment of the critical role 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.

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

Programs that offer transition services for post-incarceration reintegration into the community are important for reducing recidivism as well. The quality of rehabilitative services is critical, since most youth will return to their communities. Successful models for the rehabilitation 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.

Prepared by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, February 2009.

All data are from the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families & the Rhode Island Family Court, 2008. For more information, please contact Elaine Budish at ebudish@rikidscount.org or 401-351-9400 x17.

Risk Factors for Juvenile Delinquency

National research shows that risk factors for juvenile delinquency and involvement in the juvenile justice system include: early antisocial behavior, poor cognitive development, poor parenting, child maltreatment, exposure to family violence, association with other high-risk youth, poor academic performance, and family poverty. Many of these risk factors indicate direct contact with other support systems, which can indicate opportunities to prevent delinquent and wayward behavior early.

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.

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.
- ◆ During 2008, 54 males participated in the residential substance abuse treatment program at the Training School, designed specifically for youth offenders. Half of youth at the Training School during the week of January 10, 2008 were receiving outpatient substance abuse treatment.

Educational Attainment

- ◆ Of the youth at the Training School on January 15, 2008 with school records available, 12 (13%) had failed all classes before entering the Training School. Approximately half of students at the Training School receive special education services. Better addressing the academic needs of these students in traditional school setting could prevent delinquent and wayward behavior.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ 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.

Prepared by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, February 2009.

All data are from the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families & the Rhode Island Family Court, 2008. For more information, please contact Elaine Budish at ebudish@rikidscount.org or 401-351-9400 x17.

Alternatives to Incarceration for Juvenile Offenders

Juvenile justice systems have a wide range of options for handling juvenile offenders in addition to incarceration, including: restitution, community service, home curfews, academic supports, counseling for youth and families, substance abuse treatment and probation. Using effective community-based programming for preventing or treating the behavior of delinquent and violent youth costs significantly less than incarceration and has been shown in repeated studies to be more effective at reducing recidivism.

- ♦ In 2008 in Rhode Island, 22% of all cases referred to Family Court were diverted instead of proceeding to a formal court hearing.
- ♦ There are 30 Juvenile Hearing Boards in Rhode Island that serve 32 communities. Three of the existing Juvenile Hearing Boards were not active in 2007 (Providence, Exeter and Central Falls) and seven communities in Rhode Island did not have Juvenile Hearing Boards (Jamestown, Little Compton, New Shoreham, North Providence, Richmond, South Kingston and Tiverton). Comprised of volunteer community members, these Boards permit the diversion of juveniles accused of status offenses or misdemeanors prior to referral to Family Court. Sanction options in this process include community service, restitution and/or counseling. A total of 804 cases were heard before Juvenile Hearing Boards in 2007.

Juvenile Wayward/Delinquent Offenses Referred to Rhode Island Family Court, 2008

- ♦ 5,242 youth (5% of Rhode Island youth between the ages of 10 and 17) were referred to Family Court for 8,790 wayward and delinquent offenses.
- ♦ 26% of juvenile offenses referred to Family Court were committed by youth from Providence, 24% were committed by youth from the other five core cities and 50% were committed by youth from the remainder of the state.
- ♦ Of the 8,790 offenses, 386 (4%) involved violent offenses, 242 (63%) of which occurred in the core cities.

By Type of Offense

28%	Property Crimes	5%	Traffic Offenses
19%	Disorderly Conduct	4%	Violent Crimes
17%	Status Offenses*	3%	Weapons Offenses
10%	Simple Assault	5%	Other**
8%	Alcohol and Drug Offenses		

**Status offenses are age-related acts that would not be punishable if the offender were an adult, such as truancy and disobedient conduct. **Other includes offenses such as conspiracy, crank/obscene phone calls and computer crimes. Probation violations, contempt of court and other violations are not included in the offenses above.*