Juvenile Justice: Achieving Better Outcomes at Less Correctional Cost

Public Safety Performance Project

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The Pew Charitable Trusts is a nonprofit organization that applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public, and stimulate civic life.

Pew’s public safety performance project works with states to advance data-driven, fiscally sound policies and practices in the criminal and juvenile justice systems.
Public Safety Performance Project

- Protect public safety
- Hold offenders accountable
- Control corrections costs
- Improve outcomes for youth, their families and the community

**Goal:** Help states get a better public safety return on their corrections dollars
National Juvenile Justice Trends
National Juvenile Justice Trends:
National juvenile commitment rate declined and juvenile arrest rates for violent crime also declined.
National Juvenile Justice Trends:
Residential placement generally ineffective

Longer Stays Do Not Yield Consistent Reductions in Juvenile Recidivism

Rearrest rates in 2 counties remained steady for offenders with longer placements

Note: Study evaluated serious adolescent offenders in Maricopa County, Arizona, and Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania.


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Figure 3
Most RECLAIM Ohio Youth Have Lower Recidivism* Rates
Recidivism rates by risk level and placement

Source: Pew Charitable Trusts, *State-Local Partnership in Ohio Cuts Juvenile Recidivism, Costs*
National Juvenile Justice Trends:
Strong public support for what works

Voters Care Less About Whether or How Long Juvenile Offenders Are Incarcerated Than About Preventing Crime

“It does not matter whether a juvenile offender is sent to a juvenile corrections facility or supervised in the community. What really matters is that the system does a better job of making sure that he or she is less likely to commit another crime.”

“IT does not matter whether a juvenile offender is in a juvenile corrections facility for 6 or 12 or 18 months. What really matters is that the system does a better job of making sure that when a juvenile does get out, he or she is less likely to commit another crime.”

Source: Pew Charitable Trusts, Public Opinion on Juvenile Justice in America

Note: Party affiliations represent Democratic, independent, and Republican voters.
State Juvenile Justice Trends
State Level Juvenile Commitment:

Wide variation in state-level commitment rates

U.S. juvenile commitment rate: 133 per 100,000 youth ages 10 to the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction
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2011 Commitment rate per 100,000

- 0 to 84 (13)
- 85 to 133 (13)
- 134 to 165 (14)
- 166 to 400 (11)
Pew’s State Technical Assistance
Pew’s State Technical Assistance:
A bipartisan, inter-branch process

1. Data Analysis / System Assessment
2. Policy Development
3. Consensus Building

Stakeholder Engagement
Pew’s State Technical Assistance:
State policy solutions are tailored and reinforced

- Protect Public Safety and Improve Outcomes by Strengthening Community Options
- Contain Costs by Reducing Out-of-Home Populations
- Sustain Through Oversight and Reinvestment
Pew’s State Technical Assistance:
States facing high annual costs per youth

- Georgia: $90,000
- Hawaii: $199,000
- Kentucky: $87,000
- South Dakota: $41,000 - $144,000
- West Virginia: $100,000
Pew’s State Technical Assistance:
States experiencing poor or unknown outcomes

- Georgia
  Recidivism: 65%

- Hawaii
  Recidivism: 75%

- Kentucky
  Recidivism: unknown

- South Dakota
  Recidivism: 45%

- West Virginia
  Recidivism: unknown
“We need to do a better job determining which youth offenders really need to enter an expensive Youth Detention Center and which ones can be effectively supervised in the community.”

Danny Porter, District Attorney, Gwinnett County
Scott Berry, Sheriff, Oconee County, Georgia

“The solution is to focus our secure facilities on higher risk, serious offenders and place others in community-based programs better suited to their criminal behavior and their needs”

Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives
Kelly McCutchen, president and CEO of the Georgia Public Policy Foundation
Pew’s State Technical Assistance:
Strong legislative support for reform

- **Georgia**
  - Senate: 47-0
  - House: 173-0

- **Hawaii**
  - Senate: 24-0
  - House: 50-0

- **Kentucky**
  - Senate: 32-6
  - House: 84-15

- **South Dakota**
  - Senate: 35-0
  - House: 60-7

- **West Virginia**
  - Senate: 34-0
  - House: 100-0

SUCCESS
Pew’s State Technical Assistance:  
Measuring Results in Georgia

Observable Results

- Reduction in felony commitments from fiscal incentive counties* 
  - 62%

- Reduction in population at secure state facilities* 
  - 14%

*After the first nine months of implementation
The Future of Juvenile Justice

• As a nation, we’re headed in the right direction on juvenile crime and commitment.

• We know more about what works, and more about the high costs and poor returns of residential placement.

• Now, states are applying that knowledge in a proactive effort to lock-in and accelerate the crime decline, improve outcomes, focus beds and save money.
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