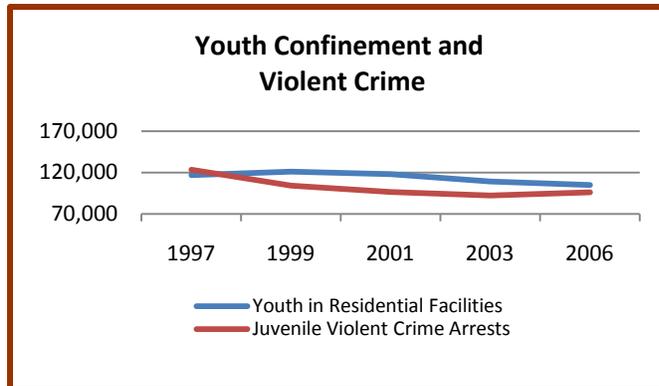


REDUCING YOUTH IMPRISONMENT SAVES PUBLIC DOLLARS, IMPROVES PUBLIC SAFETY AND PROMOTES THE HEALTHY FUTURES OF YOUNG ADULTS

In difficult economic times, elected officials need reliable, cost-effective approaches that improve the lives of children and families. Outlined below are several budget-conscious solutions that improve outcomes for youth and make communities safer.



States spend about [\\$5.7 billion](#) each year imprisoning youth, though the majority are held for nonviolent offenses and could be maintained safely in the community. A [cost-benefit analysis](#) of a broad range of prevention and early intervention programs for children and families found that investments in effective programs for juvenile offenders have the highest net benefit. Such programs yield savings from \$1,900 to \$31,200 per youth. The long term benefits to both youth and society are

enormous. It is [estimated](#) that the value of preventing one youth at age 14 from entering the justice system is \$3.2 million to 5.8 million, which includes the costs associated with delinquent behavior and lost productivity in the community over the youth's lifetime.

Once a youth comes in contact with the justice system, the programs most successful at reducing recidivism and promoting positive life outcomes are administered in the community, outside of the juvenile justice system. Community-based programs have demonstrated reductions in recidivism of up to [22 percent](#) as well as reductions state expenditures. One [evaluation](#) showed these programs not only pay for themselves but produce a return on investment of between \$1 and \$25 for every dollar invested. These resources can be used to expand community-based programs and to provide an incentive pool for counties to retain youth locally rather than sending them to expensive state facilities that separate them from family and community. The results of effective prevention and rehabilitation programs are youth who are educated, productive and gainfully employed.

Responsible, Budget Conscious Policies

- Realign Resources to County Programs.** Ohio created a system that allocates money to counties for juvenile justice based on delinquency levels and population size. The county has access to the same amount of funds whether it utilizes community-based alternatives or state commitment. Between [RECLAIM Ohio's](#) enactment in 1992 and 2009, the number of young people committed to secure state care in Ohio [fell 42 percent](#). According to a fiscal analysis by the Ohio Department of Youth Services, for every \$1 spent on the RECLAIM program, the state [saved](#) from \$11 to \$45 in commitment and processing costs, depending on the risk level of the youth. [Illinois](#) redirected funding from juvenile confinement in state facilities to local jurisdictions to provide a continuum of local, community-based sanctions and treatment. The three-year pilot reduced commitments by 51 percent and saved the state \$18.7 million. In 2009 the program became permanent in Illinois state law.

- **Use Savings to Incentivize Alternatives to State Facilities.** In 2009, [New York State](#) closed six state facilities, downsized two, and closed three evening reporting centers. The savings, \$16.4 million, were redirected to counties to strengthen alternatives to incarceration. Coinciding with state residential facility closures, legislators introduced [Re-direct New York](#), which creates a fiscal incentive for counties to utilize alternatives to incarceration rather than state-run residential facilities for youth or local detention facilities. Similar to the highly successful [Maryland Opportunity Compact](#), New York’s law would reimburse counties for 65 percent of the cost of using alternatives to incarceration, reinvest half of the savings in community-based alternatives and fund only evidence-based options.
- **Redefine the Role of State Facilities.** [California](#) reduced the population of state facilities by 80 percent through a series of bipartisan legislative measures. These actions changed placement options, allowing only serious violent offenders and sex offenders to be sent by the counties to state facilities. The state provided additional funding to county placement options, thus maintaining youth closer to home and family for more effective rehabilitation interventions.
- **Redirect Existing Resources.** Policymakers can shift savings from reduced detention costs to programs or practices that achieve better results. [Multnomah County, Oregon](#), closed three 16-bed detention units, redirecting \$12 million in savings to detention alternatives. Federal grants currently available to the states through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) can be used for community-based alternatives and supervision programs; [New Jersey](#) has used this federal funding to support alternatives to detention and commitment in state residential facilities.
- **Leverage Private Funding.** A number of private foundations are supporting changes by states in the utilization of state residential facilities for juvenile offenders. The [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) is launching a new initiative to expand the highly effective Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has provided grants, including the [Reclaiming Futures Initiative](#), to states to improve substance abuse services to youth thereby reducing reliance on state delinquency facilities for treatment.

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