

# THINK OUTSIDE THE WALLS

## PUBLIC SAFETY



### **Incarceration does not teach them a lesson ...**

- More than 80 percent<sup>1</sup> of youth who leave the Connecticut Juvenile Training School are rearrested.
- This is in line with national experience. Within three years of release, around 75 percent of youth are rearrested and 45 to 72 percent are convicted of a new offense.<sup>2</sup>

### **... or it teaches them the wrong lesson**

- Some studies indicate that incarceration not only does not stop law breaking – but it actually makes it more likely.
- One 10-year study found that incarceration was not only associated with more adult crime but also with more violent crime, compared with a control group of similar youth.<sup>3</sup>
- One study identified juvenile incarceration as a significantly greater predictor of recidivism than a poor parental relationship, carrying a weapon or gang membership.<sup>4</sup>
- An extensive report by the Pew Charitable Trusts concluded that youth incarceration provides no public safety benefit:

*A growing body of research demonstrates that for many juvenile offenders, lengthy out-of-home placements in secure corrections or other residential facilities fail to produce better outcomes than alternative sanctions. In certain instances, they can be counterproductive.<sup>5</sup>*

### **What about “dangerous” youth?**

- A fence and locked cell are not the only ways to achieve security. We could assign a one-on-one worker to a youth 24/7 for less than the cost of CJTS, which is more than \$30 million annually.
- Most of the young people sentenced to CJTS have multiple mental diagnoses. We know that incarceration only makes their conditions worse.

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<sup>1</sup> Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee. October 20, 2016 See [https://www.cga.ct.gov/app/tfs/20141215\\_Juvenile%20Justice%20Policy%20and%20Oversight%20Committee/20161020/TYJl%20Final%20PowerPoint%20Presentation.pdf](https://www.cga.ct.gov/app/tfs/20141215_Juvenile%20Justice%20Policy%20and%20Oversight%20Committee/20161020/TYJl%20Final%20PowerPoint%20Presentation.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation, No Place for Kids, 2011. Available: <http://www.aecf.org/resources/no-place-for-kids-full-report/>

<sup>3</sup> Aizer, A., and Doyle, J.J., Jr. (2013). Juvenile Incarceration, Human Capital and Future Crime: Evidence from Randomly-Assigned Judges. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

<sup>4</sup> Benda, B.B. and Tollet, C.L. (1999), “A Study of Recidivism of Serious and Persistent Offenders Among Adolescents.” Journal of Criminal Justice, Vol. 27, No. 2 111-126.

<sup>5</sup> The Pew Charitable Trusts. (April 20, 2015), Re-Examining Juvenile Incarceration: High cost, poor outcomes spark shift to alternatives. Available: <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2015/04/reexamining-juvenile-incarceration>



Good mental health care, which is best delivered in a community setting, is a much better way to change behavior.

- For the rare youth who presents a risk to public safety that cannot be managed in a less drastic way, the state should establish small, therapeutic locked facilities. These should not be downsized prisons – but a true departure from CJTS in culture, environment and purpose.
- The typical stay at CJTS is six months, so youth are rapidly returning to their communities now. We have to ask ourselves: Does time in prison send them back better or worse? Research and recidivism rates both suggest that they go back worse.

### **How do we know community-based programs will work?**

Because they already do.

- Community-based programs are better than prisons at keeping neighborhoods safe. A John Jay College of Criminal Justice study of community-based programming found that 86 percent of juvenile justice youth remained arrest free while participating. These were youth considered “high risk.”<sup>6</sup>

### **If youth prisons don’t work, why do we have them?**

The only answer that makes sense is that we have them to punish youth. Connecticut’s legislature agreed last year to remove punishment from the mission of our juvenile justice system.

- We can still hold kids accountable. Community programs ask a lot from kids, including active participation in school and counseling and often community service and restorative justice practices, where they make restitution.
- The reason we have a separate juvenile justice system is that we recognize kids have an enormous potential to rehabilitate. That is the system's purpose. Incarceration undermines that purpose.

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<sup>6</sup> Evans, D. and Delgado, S., Most High Risk Youth Referred to Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. Remain Arrest Free and in their Communities During YAP Participation (April 2014); Evans, D. and Delgado, S., YAP's Approach To WrapAround Services Appears Intensive and Flexible, (May 2014), John Jay College of Criminal Justice Research and Evaluation Center; Evans, D. and Delgado, S. YAP Helps Keep Youth Out of Secure Facilities and Living in Their Communities, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Research and Evaluation Center, (June 2014)

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Think Outside the Walls is a series of issue briefs that will educate the public about how best practice and research shows we can help high-need youth succeed.