



## POLICY AND PRACTICE

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The number of juveniles confined to secure detention has steadily declined across the country over the past 15 years, according to figures from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). This decline is due in part to the understanding that detaining low and medium risk youth increases the likelihood of recidivism and to the economic realities of strained state and county budgets. Many states have implemented strategies that move away from detainment and towards community-based services that focus on identifying the local and state level drivers which push low level or status offenders into state juvenile justice systems. Many states have also found that the economic realities of strapped county level juvenile systems have negatively incentivized local jurisdictions to commit youth to larger state funded agencies.

Since the mid-1990s Ohio's Department of Youth Services (DYS) has addressed these issues through innovative funding mechanisms and support for locally controlled evidence based strategies. RECLAIM Ohio (Reasoned and Equitable Community and Local Alternatives to Incarceration of Minors) and its offshoot program, Targeted RECLAIM have been responsible for a 346 percent reduction in DHS's average daily population compared to 1992, a reduction of almost 1,900 securely detained youth at any given time.

"Through system-change initiatives such as RECLAIM Ohio and Targeted RECLAIM, as well as the use of objective risk assessment, Ohio has been able to transform its juvenile justice system in a cost-effective way that supports safety and security while enhancing community capacity to serve youth," said Harvey J. Reed, director of Ohio Department of Youth Services.

### RECLAIM Ohio

Like many states during the late 1980s and early 1990s, Ohio's juvenile justice system was buckling under the pressure of ever increasing commitments to its state run Department of Youth Services. The system was stuck in a cycle where dwindling juvenile county court budgets spurred steady increases in state commitments. These commitments hit a high-water mark in 1992 when DHS's secure and non-secure facilities were running at 181 percent of their capacity. According to a 1994 RECLAIM program overview "it was becoming readily apparent that many of the youth committed to DHS, particularly first-time nonviolent offenders would be better served in their communities."

The unsustainable nature of business as usual spurred the office of then Governor George Voinovich and the heads of the DHS to begin strategizing a new way forward for the state's juvenile justice system. Their strategy, RECLAIM Ohio, was a bold funding initiative that provided county courts with an economic incentive to develop and or contract for local alternatives to incarceration. Intended to divert low to medium risk youth, the RECLAIM initiative focused on enhancing the discretion of local juvenile court judges and allowing DHS to focus its efforts on Ohio's highest risk youth. Based around a model of shared responsibility, increased funding for county initiatives was made available through DHS and based on an equation that refunds counties for the time juvenile offenders would have spent if they had been committed to DHS state facility. To read more about the algorithm used to determine RECLAIM funds [click here](#).

With political leadership from within the Governor's office, the legislative changes and initial funding increase (needed to create RECLAIM Ohio) passed the Ohio legislature with bipartisan support in 1993. By 1994, DYS was piloting RECLAIM in nine of the state's 88 counties. During this pilot period the University of Cincinnati and criminologist Edward J. Latessa, Ph.D. began an evaluation of the community based programming created by RECLAIM. This relationship would continue past the initial 1996 report, to a 1998 evaluation, a longer term 2005 evaluation and a 2005 cost-benefit analysis.

Spurred on by a 43 percent reduction in DYS commitments from the nine pilot sites, RECLAIM Ohio went statewide in January of 1995. With statewide implementation, all of Ohio's 88 counties were able to capitalize on the financial incentives provided by the deinstitutionalization of juvenile offenders. These incentives allowed for a statewide proliferation of community based alternatives that empowered local courts, juvenile justice practitioners and youth advocates. According to 2009 expenditures, RECLAIM's top funded program areas were: residential treatment; probation and intensive probation; restitution, community service/work detail; monitoring and surveillance; mental health counseling; substance abuse treatment and diversion. In 2009, the DYS launched Targeted RECLAIM, a secondary initiative that provides funding and technical assistance for select counties interested in implementing evidence based programming.

## RECLAIM Results

Since the inception of RECLAIM Ohio, the DYS has seen the number of youth committed to secure detention drop by more than 40 percent, allowing the state to permanently close four of its secure facilities at a cost savings of over \$50 million dollars. In addition, a 2005 RECLAIM cost-benefit analysis showed that for every dollar spent on a RECLAIM funded local program, the state saved \$11-\$45 in commitment and processing costs (depending on youth risk level).

**Table 6. Dollars Saved By Placement in RECLAIM Versus CCF**

Alternate Placement	Dollars Saved Per Dollar Spent on		
	Low	Moderate	High
CCF	21.93	27.17	21.4
DYS + Aftercare		44.39	33.9

<sup>1</sup> = Figures based on recidivism costs with total victim costs

Along with the cost savings associated with diverting youth from state run secure detention and community corrections facilities (CCF), RECLAIM Ohio is also reducing recidivism among all but the very highest risk youth. According to a 2005 RECLAIM evaluation, moderate risk youth in RECLAIM funded programs had a 12.6 percent recidivism rate compared to 39.5 percent for youth in state run community care facilities and 47 percent for youth securely detained in a DYS facility. This trend held consistent with high risk youth as RECLAIM programs recidivism rates were at 28 percent compared to 43 percent for CCF and 39 percent for youth in DYS.

**Table A-2. Recidivism Rates by Risk Level**

	Low	Moderate	High
RECLAIM	12.9	12.6	27.8
CCF	29.3	39.5	43.4
DYS		47.0	39.4
DYS + Aftercare		45.6	41.3

RECLAIM Ohio has successfully met its main goals of empowering local judges with incarceration alternatives, incentivizing the creation and capacity building of local programs and shifting DYS's focus toward working with youth who have the highest likelihood of recidivating. By diverting low risk youth away from secure detention the Ohio DYS has been able to free up funding and staff time

for its newest initiatives including the [Behavioral Health Juvenile Justice Project](#) (a partnership with the Ohio Department of Mental Health), the [Ohio Youth Assessment System\(OYAS\)](#) and Targeted RECLAIM.

## Targeted RECLAIM

In an effort to continue the progress made through RECLAIM Ohio, DYS staff tracked not only where youth go to serve their sentences but also from which court they were referred. A 2009 analysis of this data revealed that six of the state's 88 counties were responsible for 63 percent of DYS's total admissions. Despite the fact that these six counties represented a disproportionate number of agency commitments, they only represented 26 percent of RECLAIM funding for local courts. By being proactive with data collection and analysis efforts the DYS was able to target additional resources where they were needed most. These new resources came in the form of a 2010 initiative called Targeted RECLAIM. Targeted RECLAIM was designed to help the six identified counties (Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Lucas, Montgomery and Summit) address a lack of appropriate evidence based services and alternatives to DYS commitment. Targeted RECLAIM funds which totaled \$2.8 million in 2010 and \$4 million in 2011 must be used for the creation and implementation of evidence based programming. Examples of this programming include [Multi-Systemic Therapy\(MST\)](#), [Multi-Dimensional Family Therapy\(MDFT\)](#), [Cognitive Behavioral Therapy\(CBT\)](#) and [High Fidelity Wrap Around Services](#). In an effort to make sure programs are implemented with fidelity, DYS engaged experts from University of Cincinnati, Kent State University and most recently Case Western Reserve University to provide ongoing technical assistance. In addition to the creation of more specialized services that provide youth with alternatives to incarceration, the six participating counties also agreed to targeted reductions in DYS admissions. These targeted reductions varied from 10-40 percent with an average agreed upon a reduction of 19 percent. Although the targeted goals were assumed to be lofty, the reduction in commitments exceeded expectations with an aggregated reduction of 39 percent in 2010 and 23 percent in 2011. By targeting resources toward those communities most in need of evidence based alternatives, the DYS was able to successfully reduce commitments in Targeted RECLAIM sites by 389 youth in 2010.

## Moving Forward

"DYS, in partnership with the juvenile courts, will continue to work hard to make sure that youth are served where they have the best chance to lead successful, law-abiding lives. Moving forward, there will be a conscious effort to continue to support community programming and funding for the low to moderate risk population of youth who are more effectively served in appropriate, less costly community settings," Reed explained.

Building off the current success, DYS leadership continues to push innovation and support data driven and evidence based initiatives. In addition to the continued expansion of other projects like the Behavioral Health Juvenile Justice Project and the statewide Youth Assessment System, DYS also plans to expand the Targeted RECLAIM initiative to an additional eight counties. These eight counties, chosen through a data driven identification process, will be provided funding and technical assistance to implement one or more evidence based programs. The expansion of Targeted RECLAIM, the flagship in Ohio's efforts to promote evidence based initiatives, will be rolled out in early 2012 with programming starting during FY 2012-2013.

To read more about this and other Ohio Department of Youth Services initiatives [click here](#).



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