



Growing Movement Toward Localizing Juvenile Justice

Written by: [Vincent Schiraldi](#) on Jan 10, 2013

Like 14
 +1 0
 Tweet 13



Not since the opening of the first juvenile reform school in 1886 has our nation's approach to confining delinquent youth experienced such fundamental and widespread change. From California to New York, states are reducing juvenile placements, shuttering facilities and shifting money and kids to county control. If done thoughtfully, it's a trend that holds much promise.

This national realignment movement took a huge step forward on Sept. 1, when New York state's "Close to Home" law went into effect. When fully operational, the law will ensure that all but a handful of delinquent youth from our nation's largest city are cared for locally in New York City, rather than in large, distant and debilitating state institutions.

The passage of Close to Home was the culmination of more than a decade of work. Between 2002 and 2011, the city reduced institutional placements of delinquent youth by 62 percent, while experiencing a 31 percent decline in major felony arrests of juveniles.

Under Close to Home, New York City is creating a continuum of high-quality, community-based programs and facilities. City youth who were formerly placed in "non-secure" state facilities are being transferred to 35 small facilities run by non-profits located near their home; the same will happen next fall for youth in "limited secure" placement. By freeing up funds that were tied to antiquated reform schools, Close to Home will allow the city to fund more and better community-based programs, which will in turn improve public safety and further reduce unnecessary confinement.

The initiative, which was shepherded by Gov. Andrew Cuomo and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and passed with bi-partisan support, has many advantages over the traditional state-centralized, institution-based model. Instead of being sent to large institutions far away from home, which often requires families to travel hundreds of miles, parents and guardians will now be able to take the subway to see their child, facilitating family therapy and helping the young person transition back into the community. Instead of being confined in state institutions with unaccredited schools, youth will remain in the New York City school system, assuring that they get credit for their work and improving their chances of staying in school.

New York state isn't alone in maintaining public safety by localizing juvenile justice and reducing institutionalization. California reduced the number of confined young people from more than 10,000 in 1996 to fewer than 1,000 today. In California, 99 percent of adjudicated youth are now housed or supervised by counties, with county costs defrayed by \$93.4 million in state funds last year alone.

A look at crime data from the [California Department of Justice](#) shows that these changes have not come at the expense of public safety. While the incarcerated state youth population in California declined by 84 percent

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...



Richard Ross Brings

Photographs, Message to

NYC's Vera Institute of

Justice



White House Taps Juvenile

Justice Advocates for

Expertise on Gun Violence



Number of Young People

Arrested in Florida's Public



from 1996 to 2008, the juvenile arrest rate declined by 32 percent. Meanwhile, as the adult prison population was increasing by 21 percent during that same time, the adult arrest rate declined by a more modest 15 percent.

In Michigan, Wayne County, which includes Detroit, had 731 youth confined in state facilities in 1998; last year it had four. When state and county officials agreed to realign care and funds from the state to the county, county officials contracted with five Care Management Organizations (CMOs), which are similar to HMOs. The CMOs receive a block grant for the youth in their catchment area, which incentivizes them to place youth in local, successful and cost-effective programs. Wayne County's remarkable decrease in state commitments has been accompanied by a compliance rate that exceeds 90 percent while the young people are under care, and a felony reconviction rate of 18 percent for youth released from secure care two years after they return to the community.

In 1991, Ohio was home to four of the 20 most overcrowded juvenile facilities in the nation. In 1994 the state launched **RECLAIM Ohio**, which carefully incentivizes county innovation. Under the program, if counties safely reduce state juvenile placements in a given year, they earn more money the following year.

When RECLAIM was piloted in 1994, pilot counties quickly reduced state commitments (mostly for low-level felonies) by 42 percent, while commitments from the non-pilot counties actually increased. By 2011, the number of RECLAIM-funded programs initiated statewide topped 600, while the number of youth sent to state facilities dropped by 79 percent.

Since its inception, the training school model, which Mayor Bloomberg called a "relic of a bygone era," has had disappointing results and been plagued by a never-ending cycle of scandalous abuses followed by cosmetic reforms. But, between 2001 and 2010, there was a 33 percent decline nationally in the number of youth in confinement, with declines in 43 states. Through the increasing use of more effective risk assessment tools, evidence-informed programs, and creative fiscal incentives, local jurisdictions are creating a fundamentally more balanced approach to juvenile delinquency that may bring the juvenile justice system into modern times and end our reliance on the 19th century training school model.

STAY IN THE LOOP

[Click here to sign up for email updates to this and other JJIE stories.](#)



You and 14 others like this. 14 people like this.

You might like:



White House Taps Juvenile Justice Advocates for Expertise on Gun Violence



Florida DJJ Says Aftercare Contractors Overpaid; State May Replace Vendors with Probation Officers



Are Infants that Grow Up in Recession-Ravaged Homes Likelier to Become Delinquents?



Reclaiming Our Children's Futures



Schools Drops by Nearly Half over Last Eight Years



Maine Looks at Placing Young Adult Inmates in Juvenile Detention Centers



Are Infants that Grow Up in Recession-Ravaged Homes Likelier to Become Delinquents?



Michigan Law Makes it Easier for Juvenile Offenders to Expunge Criminal Records



Juvenile Offenders that Work Long Hours and Skip School More Likely to Engage in Antisocial Behavior



Roster of Exonerations Shows the Particular Vulnerability of Juveniles Under Questioning

Maryland Board Postpones



Putting a Developmental Approach Into Practice



Putting a Developmental Approach Into Practice



Reclaiming Our Children's Futures



Are Infants that Grow Up in Recession-Ravaged Homes Likelier to Become Delinquents?



Florida DJJ Says Aftercare Contractors Overpaid; State May Replace Vendors with Probation Officers



White House Taps Juvenile Justice Advocates for Expertise on Gun Violence
[?]

Vote That May Double Size
of Keymar Juvenile Facility



Former CDC Director Says
NRA "Terrorized" Gun
Violence Researchers



Vincent Schiraldi

Vincent Schiraldi is Commissioner of Probation for New York City.

[More Posts](#)

[« Previous Post](#)

[Next Post »](#)



[\(3 people unfriended you\)](#)

[See Who](#)

There are no comments yet. Be the first and leave a response!

Leave a Reply

Name **(required)**

E-Mail Address **(required)**

Website

Comment

Notify me of followup comments via e-mail. You can also [subscribe](#) without commenting.

[ABOUT](#) [CONTACT](#) [FAQ](#) [PROMOTE YOUR COMPANY](#) [PRIVACY POLICY](#)

The Juvenile Justice Information Exchange is supported by the Center for Sustainable Journalism at Kennesaw State University. All Rights Reserved. ©2011

Copyright @ Juvenile Justice Information Exchange