COUNTY SOLUTIONS FOR KIDS IN TROUBLE

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Texas Juvenile Justice System 2011:

55,145 youth referred to 165 county juvenile departments

27,143 youth detained in 50 secure county pre-adjudication detention facilities

16,601 youth disposed to probation

2,616 youth sent to 33 secure county post-adjudication facilities.

2,436 sent to non-secure placements

956 youth sent to 6 state secure facilities

173 youth certified
Keeping Kids Close to Home

• Access to community resources
• Access to family
• Lower staff turnover
• Safer for youth and staff
• Less expensive
• Legislative Mandate
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Survey at Giddings (boys) state facility
How many times did a family member visit you at those facilities?
(More than Once a Week, Once a week, Once a Month, A Few Times, or Never)

Survey at Ron Jackson (girls) state facility
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What has been the least helpful to prepare you for your future after you leave the juvenile justice system?

- Staff - put you down, provoke you, have negative attitude: 12
- General atmosphere of a secure facility: 10
- Peers - bad influence: 9
- Treatment/Programming - not effective: 8
- Peers - don’t feel safe: 7
- Staff - inconsistent enforcement of rules: 4
- Treatment/Programming - not enough attention from caseworkers and counselors: 3
- Too far from family: 3
- Programming - not enough recreational activities: 2
- Medical - insufficient medical care: 1
- Seclusion: 1
- Stages system: 1

Survey at Giddings (boys) state facility
If you were in charge and had the power to change one thing about the juvenile system, what would you change?

- More staff training - more positive interactions, respect and fairer rules enforcement
- Easier to see family - furloughs, phone calls, visits
- Earlier release - no stages system, complete treatment community after MLS
- More alternatives to secure placement
- Better food
- More activities
- Nothing
- More protection from violent peers
- Less punishment for minor violations
- No fences
- Change name back to TYC
- More community involvement
- More advocates with inside knowledge
- Add a commissary
- Better caseworkers
- Better treatment programs

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Survey at Giddings (boys) state facility
How safe did you feel at those facilities?
(Very Safe, Kind of Safe, OK, Not Safe, Very Unsafe)

Survey at Ron Jackson (girls) state facility
How much power did gangs have in those facilities?
(No Power, A Little Power, A Lot of Power, A Huge Amount of Power)

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Community Challenges

• (Very) Insufficient Funding

Is current funding for county juvenile probation departments sufficient to implement best practices for reductions in juvenile crime and recidivism?
  – Very insufficient: 11%
  – Insufficient: 64%
  – Sufficient: 25%
  – More than sufficient: 0%

• Limited state oversight / guidance
Please rank the following by need of increased funding at your department.

1. Mental Health Services (average rank: 3.0)
2. Community Alternatives to Secure Detention (average rank: 3.2)
3. Family Involvement Programs (average rank: 3.7)
4. Prevention Programs (average rank: 4.2)
5. Substance Abuse Services (average rank: 4.4)
6. Reentry and Aftercare Programs (average rank: 5.0)
7. Staff Training (average rank: 6.7)
8. Assessment Instruments (average rank: 7.3)
9. JJAEP and Detention Schoolwork (average rank: 7.7)
Mental Health and Trauma

• Texas ranks **last** in mental health funding

• 1/3 of probation youth have a diagnosed mental illness
  ▪ Only 1/4 of those diagnosed youth receive mental health treatment

• 1/2 of referred youth report a past traumatic experience
  ▪ 1/2 of girls at Ron Jackson report probation experience **did not help or did more harm than good** in helping them to deal with past trauma
  ▪ The biggest predictor of increasingly severe placements for girls

• Wide variation in county responses to mental health
How well did staff, programs, and treatment help you to deal with past trauma in your life?
(Very Helpful, A Little Helpful, Not Helpful, More Harm Than Good)

Survey at Ron Jackson (girls) state facility
County Successes

- Coordination is Key
  - Texas Front End Diversion Initiative
  - Mobile Crisis Outreach Teams
- Need for more trauma-informed systems
Pre-adjudication Detention

• In 2011:
  ▪ 16,700 youth spent more than 10 days
    ▪ 11,000 for non-felony offenses
  ▪ 5,600 spent more than a month
    ▪ 3,400 for non-felony offenses
  ▪ 600 spent over 100 days
    ▪ 280 for non-felony offenses

• Texas law disfavors detention
• It does not reduce recidivism for most youth
• It’s 4 times as expensive as intensive supervision
• Varies widely from county to county
County Successes

Length of Stay in Detention

Total Youth Detained at Least That Many Days

Length of Stay (Days) in 2010

- Comparison County
- Williamson County
County Successes

JDAI Sites' Average Daily Detention Population

- Harris County
- Dallas County
Seclusions and Restraints

- In 2011 in county facilities:
  - 5,333 physical restraints
  - 37,071 seclusions (likely thousands >24hrs)
- Especially problematic for traumatized youth or youth with disabilities
- Injuries are very costly
- Policies and procedures vary widely from county to county
Family Involvement

• Higher involvement lowers recidivism for youth and siblings

• Many county visitation policies allow only for the minimum required visitation opportunities (30 minutes every seven days)
County Successes

- Family Functional Therapy (FFT)
- Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST)
- Parenting with Love and Limits (PLL)
- Parent Project, Family Preservation, others
Certification

- Adult prisons are very dangerous for youth
  - More sexual victimization
  - Limited programming and oversight
  - Development of anti-social behaviors
  - Higher recidivism

- 173 TX youth were certified as adults in 2011
  - Many were first-time offenders
  - Do not differ significantly from determinate sentenced youth
County Successes

Certifications in Hidalgo County

- Certifications in Hidalgo County
- Certifications in Cameron County
- Average Certifications for Large Urban Counties

“It’s not a question of being more effective, it’s a question of not allowing serious offenses to go unpunished. People have to be held accountable for their actions. . . . Most of this is not a question of rehabilitation. Most of what we do is punishment.”

— Hidalgo County District Attorney Rene Guerra

“I view the adult system as a punitive system and the juvenile system as a rehabilitative system... Certification is always a last option.”

— Hidalgo County Judge Mario Ramirez
SB 653 (2011)

Sec. 201.002. PURPOSES AND INTERPRETATION. This title shall be construed to have the following public purposes:

(1) creating a unified state juvenile justice agency that works in partnership with local county governments, the courts, and communities to promote public safety by providing a full continuum of effective supports and services to youth from initial contact through termination of supervision; and

(2) creating a juvenile justice system that produces positive outcomes for youth, families, and communities by:

(A) assuring accountability, quality, consistency, and transparency through effective monitoring and the use of systemwide performance measures;

(B) promoting the use of program and service designs and interventions proven to be most effective in rehabilitating youth;

(C) prioritizing the use of community-based or family-based programs and services for youth over the placement or commitment of youth to a secure facility;

(D) operating the state facilities to effectively house and rehabilitate the youthful offenders that cannot be safely served in another setting; and

(E) protecting and enhancing the cooperative agreements between state and local county governments.
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