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FACT SHEET 2013
Texas Juvenile Justice Department Funding

Support Key Components of the Legislative Appropriations Request For the Texas Juvenile Justice Department

RESTORE FUNDS AS A MEANS OF SUSTAINING REFORM FOR TEXAS' YOUTH

Under Senate Bill 1, appropriations for the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) are reduced 11 percent from the current biennium. Yet the Texas juvenile justice system has a high need for more, not less, state funding. In a recent survey of county juvenile probation departments, 75 percent reported insufficient or very insufficient funding, and very few departments reported receiving funding support beyond state and county government appropriations.¹ **Underfunding programs is inefficient because it impedes youth rehabilitation, increases recidivism (thus harming public safety), and leads to overreliance on expensive incarceration.** Counties are left struggling to address the needs of our troubled youth, and costly state facilities become an ending point for those who failed to succeed in the community.

TCJC urges policy-makers to restore all funds in order to sustain TJJD's current progression to a front-end agency. This is especially critical considering the ongoing and wide-ranging transitions within TJJD and the large budget cuts to the agency over the past biennium. These both contribute to serious disruptions for youth in the custody of the department, whether at the county or state level.

This fact sheet outlines various funding requests by TJJD. We strongly urge state leaders to support these requests, in furtherance of safer communities, less taxpayer waste, and stronger families.

KEY FUNDING PRIORITIES SUPPORTED BY THE TEXAS CRIMINAL JUSTICE COALITION

TJJD Exceptional Item Requests

The Texas Criminal Justice Coalition supports the following TJJD exceptional item requests:

- » **Exceptional Item #5: County Mental Health Services**, to provide support to local juvenile probation departments that are charged with treating over 12,000 youth with mental health issues held in pre- and post-adjudication facilities.²
- » **Exceptional Item #6: Commitment Diversion Initiatives**, to continue to allow counties to keep youth in the community and out of lockup.
- » **Exceptional Item #8: Reentry Skills Development and Family Reunification**, to equip TJJD with effective aftercare services, ultimately reducing the amount of time that youth spend in confinement.
- » **Exceptional Item #9: Office of the Independent Ombudsman**, to ensure robust monitoring to protect the safety of all youth in custody.

TCJC Proposed Rider Revisions

The Texas Criminal Justice Coalition recommends revisions to the following agency budget riders:

- » **Rider 1: Performance Measures.** Amend the current rider to include measures that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the department's performance, not simply its workload.
- » **Rider 28: Reporting to the Legislative Budget Board.** Amend the current rider to include reporting requirements on all community-based programs offered to youth, which will more effectively evaluate the use of funds.
- » **Rider 31: Commitment Diversion Initiatives.** Amend the current rider to incorporate TJJD's request to incentivize counties to serve youth locally, bringing Texas under the mandated commitment cap on youth sent to state facilities.

Citations

¹ Texas Criminal Justice Coalition, *Survey of Texas County Juvenile Probation Departments* (August 2012).

² Texas Juvenile Justice Department, *Legislative Appropriations Request for Fiscal Years 2014-2015* (August 30, 2012), <http://www.tjjd.texas.gov/about/LAR2014-2015.pdf>.