

# LESSONS LEARNED



**Liz Ryan, President & CEO  
Youth First! Initiative**

# #1: LESSONS LEARNED

- STATES ARE EMBRACING THE RESEARCH ABOUT WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T.
  - WHAT DOESN'T WORK:
    - YOUTH PRISONS AREN'T SAFE.
    - YOUTH PRISONS AREN'T FAIR.
    - YOUTH PRISONS DON'T WORK.
  - WHAT WORKS:
    - NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (NAS) RESEARCH.
    - YOUTH THRIVE BEST IN FAMILIES.

## #2: LESSONS LEARNED

- STATES CAN MOVE AWAY FROM INCARCERATING YOUTH WITHOUT COMPROMISING PUBLIC SAFETY.
- EXAMPLE:  
AFTER A SCANDAL AT ONE OF TEXAS' YOUTH PRISONS, BETWEEN 2007-2012, TEXAS REDUCED THE NUMBER OF YOUTH IN STATE-RUN SECURE FACILITIES BY 61%. (*COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS REPORT 2015*)

# #3: LESSONS LEARNED

- MILLIONS OF DOLLARS CAN BE FREED UP.
- REINVEST SAVINGS INTO MORE EFFECTIVE, COMMUNITY-BASED ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION.
- CREATE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES.
- FOR EXAMPLE:  
CA: BEFORE REFORM, 10,000 YOUTH IN STATE YOUTH PRISONS. NOW AT 653. CREATED \$90 MILLION YOUTH OFFENDER BLOCK GRANT FOR LOCALITIES TO SUPPORT YOUTH IN THE COMMUNITY.

# #4: LESSONS LEARNED

- YOUTH JUSTICE IS A BIPARTISAN ISSUE ACROSS THE BOARD.
  - ENACTED ON A BIPARTISAN BASIS.
  - ALL REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY.
  - ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT: STATE, COUNTY AND LOCALITY.



# #5: LESSONS LEARNED

- PUBLIC STRONGLY BACKS THESE REFORMS:
  - PUBLIC STRONGLY SUPPORTS PREVENTION AND REHABILITATION OVER PUNISHMENT AND INCARCERATION.
  - PUBLIC CONFIRMS WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS: YOUTH IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW ARE CAPABLE OF CHANGE FOR THE BETTER.

# CONTACT

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# A FAMILIAR STORY



**Jeffrey Butts, Director  
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- YOUTH JUSTICE HAS ALWAYS BEEN CONTROVERSIAL AND BESET WITH CONFLICTS OVER POLITICS, ECONOMICS, AND VALUES.
- WE ASK THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM TO PURSUE TWO MISSIONS SIMULTANEOUSLY:
  - 1) PROTECT THE PUBLIC SAFETY, AND
  - 2) HELP YOUNG PEOPLE DEVELOP INTO LAW-ABIDING ADULTS.

WHENEVER THESE TWO MISSIONS ARE IN CONFLICT POLITICALLY, PUBLIC SAFETY GOALS TAKE PRECEDENCE.

- STATES INVEST IN YOUTH CONFINEMENT FACILITIES BECAUSE THEY SERVE A NUMBER OF KEY ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INTERESTS, NOT BECAUSE THEY ARE WELL-SUITED TO ACHIEVING EITHER THE PUBLIC SAFETY OR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT GOALS OF THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM.
- CONFINING YOUTH IN SECURITY-ORIENTED CONGREGATE CARE FACILITIES:
  - 1) DOES NOT INCREASE THE CHANCES THAT YOUTH WILL BE LAW-ABIDING, AND
  - 2) CREATES LASTING HARM AND STIGMA THAT ONLY ADDS TO THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGES YOUTH FACE UPON RELEASE.

IF YOUTH CONFINEMENT FACILITIES ARE SO BAD, WHY DO WE CONTINUE TO USE THEM?

ADVOCATES SAY THAT YOUTH CONFINEMENT FACILITIES "DON'T WORK."

I WOULD DISPUTE THAT.

YOUTH CONFINEMENT FACILITIES WORK PERFECTLY, BUT THEY WORK TO ADVANCE SEVERAL OF THE LESS PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED GOALS OF YOUTH JUSTICE.

1. THEY EXERT TEMPORARY CONTROL OVER YOUNG PEOPLE & TELLS THEM THAT THEY ARE NOT IN CHARGE OF THEIR OWN LIVES.

[BUT, OF COURSE, THIS ONLY UNDERMINES YOUTH'S FUTURE DEVELOPMENT]

2. THEY PROVIDE PUBLIC OFFICIALS WITH A VISIBLE SYMBOL OF THE VALUE THEY PLACE ON CRIME-FIGHTING.

[GREAT FOR ELECTION CAMPAIGNS BUT IT DOES NOTHING TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SAFETY]

3. THEY MAKE IT EASIER TO CONTROL JUSTICE-INVOLVED YOUNG PEOPLE BY GATHERING THEM IN ONE PLACE.

[BUT THIS CONVENIENCE IS VERY EXPENSIVE]

4. THEY EXPRESS OUR DISAPPROVAL OF SPECIFIC BEHAVIORS AND THE INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN THOSE BEHAVIORS.

[BUT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE WONDERFULLY IMPERVIOUS TO OUR DISAPPROVAL / WE MAY BE ONLY STRENGTHENING THEIR BONDS TO ANTI-SOCIAL PEERS]



IT HAS BECOME VERY CLEAR DURING THE PAST FEW DECADES THAT SECURE CONFINEMENT FACILITIES ARE NOT AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO CORRECT YOUTH BEHAVIOR AND THAT WE SHOULD ONLY USE THEM WHEN WE SEE NO CHANCE THAT A PARTICULAR YOUNG PERSON WILL EVER BE ABLE TO REJOIN THE COMMUNITY AND BE FREE OF JUSTICE SUPERVISION.

# CONTACT

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# **CONNECTICUT WITHOUT YOUTH INCARCERATION**

**A COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH TO HOLDING YOUTH ACCOUNTABLE,  
ACHIEVING PUBLIC SAFETY AND HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE IN NEED**



**Shaena Fazal, National Policy Director  
Youth Advocate Programs**

# GUIDING QUESTIONS

- IF WE CLOSE YOUTH PRISONS, WHAT DO WE DO INSTEAD?
- WHAT DO WE MEAN BY COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS?
- DO THEY WORK?





# WHAT DO COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS FOR HIGH-NEED YOUNG PEOPLE LOOK LIKE?

- ACCEPT ALL KIDS AND ADOPT “NO REJECT” POLICIES
- BE AVAILABLE, ACCESSIBLE AND FLEXIBLE
- VOICE, CHOICE & OWNERSHIP
- INDIVIDUALIZE SERVICES FOR EACH YOUTH
- ENSURE FAMILY-FOCUSED SERVICES
- TAKE A STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH
- CULTURAL COMPETENCY
- ENGAGE YOUTH IN WORK
- PRIORITIZE SAFETY AND CRISIS PLANNING
- UNCONDITIONAL CARING (NO-EJECT POLICIES)
- CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND GIVING BACK
- CULTIVATE LONG-TERM CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY

*SOURCE: FAZAL, S., SAFELY HOME (2014)*

# MOVING FROM FACILITY-BASED JUVENILE JUSTICE TO COMMUNITY-BASED JUVENILE JUSTICE

- **WHY WE “NEED” YOUTH PRISONS**

- PUBLIC SAFETY
- PUNISHMENT
- “BAD” FAMILIES

- **HOW WE CAN MEET THESE GOALS IN THE COMMUNITY**

- RE-DEFINING PUBLIC SAFETY
- HOLDING YOUTH ACCOUNTABLE IN THE CONTEXTS OF THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES (AND WITHOUT RESORTING TO INCARCERATION)
- SUPPORTING FAMILIES IN NEED

# DOES IT WORK?

- WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT EFFECTIVENESS?
  - DATA-DRIVEN
  - PRACTICE-DRIVEN

# DATA: COMMUNITIES CAN SAFELY SERVE “HIGH-RISK” YOUTH IN THE COMMUNITY

- FROM JOHN JAY APRIL 2014 ISSUE BRIEF “MOST HIGH RISK YOUTH REFERRED TO YOUTH ADVOCATE PROGRAMS, INC. REMAIN ARREST FREE AND IN THEIR COMMUNITIES DURING YAP PARTICIPATION”
- 3,523 YAP YOUTH
  - 90% HAD SOME PRIOR LEGAL DISPOSITION
    - OF THESE, 30% HAD PRIOR FELONIES
    - 21% HAD AT LEAST ONE PRIOR OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT
  - 86% WERE ARREST-FREE WHILE IN THE PROGRAM
  - 93% WERE LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY AT THE TIME OF DISCHARGE FROM YAP (SO EVEN IF THEY HAD BEEN ARRESTED, THEY WERE NOT COMMITTED OR RECOMMITTED)

# DATA: HIGH-RISK YOUTH CAN SUCCEED AFTER DISCHARGE FROM COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAM

FROM, JOHN JAY ISSUE JUNE 2014 ISSUE BRIEF [“YAP HELPS TO KEEP YOUTH OUT OF SECURE FACILITIES AND LIVING IN THEIR COMMUNITIES”](#):

- 1,851 YAP YOUTH POST-DISCHARGE
- BETWEEN SIX AND 12 MONTHS AFTER THEIR DISCHARGE FROM YAP:
  - **MORE THAN 87% LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY**
  - **LESS THAN 5% IN SECURE PLACEMENT.**



# PRACTICE

- TWO CASE STUDIES
  - GUS – FIRESETTER
  - CARL – MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

# CONTACT



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