

THE STATE OF YOUTH JUSTICE: 2012 IN REVIEW, A ONE PAGE SUMMARY

2012 saw significant improvements in youth justice in New York State, with substantial work remaining ahead in order to realize the promise of true system transformation. Among the milestones:

- Sixteen New York counties shifted almost \$2 million dollars from detention spending to spending on community-based programming and services for youth in juvenile delinquency, juvenile offense, and Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) cases.
- Six non-secure detention facilities closed statewide. Additionally, there was a statewide reduction of 8 secure detention beds and 36 non-secure detention beds. These downsizings and closures are part of an on-going multi-year trend of decreasing NY's reliance on detention.
- As a result of the Close to Home Initiative, New York City contracted with non-profit providers to open new residential facilities, and fewer of the city's children have been placed into facilities far from their families and communities. There are, to date, approximately 169 youth in approximately 27 non-secure "Close to Home" placements. ACS is scheduled to begin opening Limited-Secure Placements in the fall of 2013.
- The call for New York State to raise the age at which children can be prosecuted as adults increased in volume and urgency with advocates, community members, Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman, and elected officials calling attention to this critical issue. New York remains one of only two states nationwide in which any 16 or 17 year old who is arrested is automatically and without exception processed as an adult. These 16 and 17 year-olds are subject to adult criminal records and, if detained/incarcerated, are confined in adult jails and prisons. NY also prosecutes children as young as 13, when charged with certain serious crimes, as adults.
- A groundbreaking national report on engaging families to transform the youth justice system was released to acclaim and a warm reception. The report, *Families Unlocking Futures: Solutions to the Crisis in Juvenile Justice*, researched and authored by families of youth in the justice system calls attention to the ways in which the justice system routinely locks families out of its operation, and systematically fails children, families and communities. It also offers a blueprint for reform.
- The New York City Administration for Children's Services issued a new Lesbian Gay B-sexual Transgender Questioning (LGBTQ) Policy, combining its previous child welfare and youth justice policies related to LGBTQ youth and families. This policy applies to Close to Home facilities. ACS worked closely with advocates and other stakeholders in developing its LGBTQ policies. New York State serves as an important national model both in its development of groundbreaking policies to protect LGBTQ youth at the state (OCFS) and city (ACS) levels, and in the robust collaboration between advocates, governmental agencies, and other stakeholders that informed the creation of these policies.
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation added New York State to their Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI). JDAI works with local jurisdictions to reduce secure detention use, reduce racial disparities and bias, improve public safety, save taxpayer dollars, and stimulate other youth justice reforms. Six NY counties are currently engaged in JDAI, with the hope of future expansion statewide.
- A national Human Rights Watch and American Civil Liberties Union report on youth in solitary confinement in jails and prisons, including youth in NYS, raised awareness about this devastating and counter-productive practice. According to the report, the average length of stay for adolescents in solitary confinement inside New York City jails is 43.1 days.¹
- Richard Ross released *Juvenile (In)justice*, a stunning book of photos of confined youth. The book includes photos youth in New York City detention centers and New York State Office of Children and Family Services facilities. The book calls attention to the many ways in which the correctional model of the youth justice system dehumanizes children, failing both them and public policy goals.
- The Department of Justice released long-awaited "National Standards to Prevent, Detect, and Respond to Prison Rape" under the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), including standards aimed at protecting youth housed in adult facilities.

Some of these key milestones and a brief overview of the work that remains for 2013 and beyond are addressed in more detail in the accompanying document.

¹ Human Rights Watch and the American Civil Liberties Union, *Growing Up Locked Down: Youth in Solitary Confinement in Jails and Prisons Across the United States*, October 2012, at 133.