



Invest in the Best Juvenile Justice System for Virginia's Youth & Communities

Status quo in Virginia's juvenile justice system is unacceptable for our young people and communities.

- Virginia's current juvenile justice system's use of large juvenile prisons does not make our communities safer or rehabilitate our youth, which is exemplified by the 3 year reconviction rate of nearly 75% for youth leaving these facilities.
- Large juvenile prisons are not a best practice to putting youth on a path toward law-abiding lives. Virginia can do better.

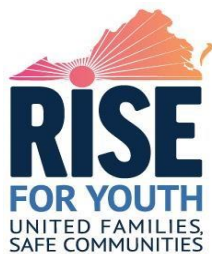
A full reinvestment in a continuum of community based alternatives is the solution.

- RISE for Youth wholeheartedly supports the Governor's proposal to **fully reinvest** the savings from elimination of units and entire juvenile correctional centers in proven programs that will keep youth in their homes and communities.
- Virginia has lost its continuum over the last fifteen years through closures. There is a large body of evidence showing that serving youth in their homes and communities results in better outcomes and is more cost-effective than confining youth.¹
- The foundation for any effective juvenile justice system is a true continuum of community based alternatives to incarceration.
- A successful continuum of community based alternatives to incarceration includes mentorship programs that strengthen families and provide positive skill training and role models for youth.

Invest in appropriate secure settings for the few youth who require them. These facilities should be:

- Small enough that the facility director knows the youth's name, family circumstances, and trauma history, etc., (less than 24 beds is the ideal size),
- Regionally based so that families do not have to travel more than an hour to stay connected to their child,
- Focused on positive youth development by emphasizing therapy, support, accountability, and relationship building,
- Prioritize individual therapeutic treatment needs,
- Under an independent ombudsman's oversight, and
- Developed with the input of impacted youth and families and advocates.

¹ Justice Fellowship, Right on Crime, and Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy, *Juvenile Justice Reform in Virginia*, September 2015, available at http://www.justicefellowship.org/sites/default/files/u179/JF_White%20Paper_September2015_final.pdf.



RISE for Youth's Guiding Principles for a Successful Juvenile Justice System

- **We believe** that the current system's use of large juvenile prisons does not make our communities safer or rehabilitate our youth, and the current system does not use best practices to put youth on a path toward law-abiding lives.
- **We believe** the juvenile justice system should prioritize the individual therapeutic treatment needs of youth rather than rely on methods that increase the likelihood of future crime and incarceration.
- **We believe** a continuum of evidence-informed community services for youth will improve the lives of children and the safety of all citizens of the Commonwealth.
- **We believe** the juvenile justice system should strive to keep youth at home with their families with appropriate service and supports, and youth should only be removed from home as a last resort. When youth are removed, the system should keep them as close to their families and support network as possible.
- **We believe** the juvenile justice system should be transparent and actively engage youth, families, victims, and community supporters in the development of a plan grounded in rehabilitation and restorative justice.

RISE for Youth is a nonpartisan campaign coalition whose central goal is to develop a continuum of community-based alternatives to incarceration that will keep juvenile justice system involved youth in their homes and connected with their support networks while making our communities safer.

