

Juvenile Justice Realignment Series

The Cost of the State’s Division of Juvenile Facilities:
Is there incentive for California Counties to serve youth locally?

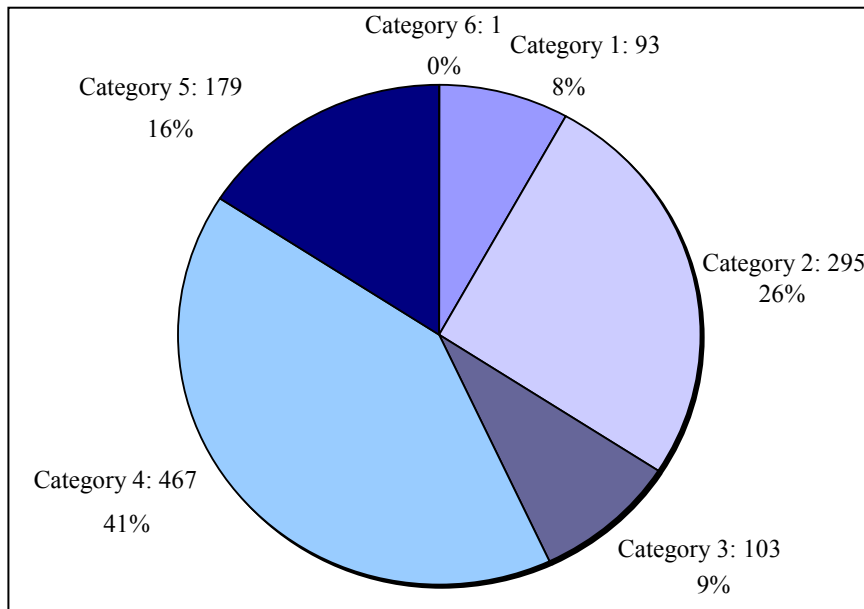
The following report is part three of the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice’s (CJCJ) *Juvenile Justice Realignment Series*. On February 28, 2011 Governor Jerry Brown revised his proposal for the elimination of the Division of Juvenile Facilities (DJF).¹ The \$242 million allocation to California’s 58 counties remains intact under the new proposal; however, it provides an option for counties to contract with the State for bed space. Under this proposal, counties would be required to contract with the State on a yearly basis and pay the true cost of over \$200,000 per annum to house a youth at the State’s youth correctional facilities. Currently, California counties pay a significantly smaller monthly fee to the State to house their juvenile justice involved youth. This report demonstrates the radical disparity between State and local cost for use of the DJF to house juvenile offenders.

While it costs \$224,712 per ward, per year to house youth in the DJF, counties contribute on a sliding scale while the rest is paid for by California taxpayers.² The scale is determined by offense category; Category 1 being the most severe offenses (e.g. murder, kidnapping) and Category 6 being the least severe offenses (e.g. concealable firearms, possession of explosives).³

CATEGORY	PER MONTH	PER YEAR
Category 1- 4	\$213	\$2,556
Category 5	\$1,839	\$22,068
Category 6	\$2,758	\$33,096

Due to the low cost of housing youth at the State-level there is no incentive for counties to serve high-risk youth at the local level. The monthly county fees are insignificant in comparison to the fiscal allocation necessary to provide rehabilitative services to juvenile justice involved youth at the local level. Taxpayers of self-reliant counties such as San Francisco are maintaining the burden for State-dependent counties such as Kings County that utilize the Division of Juvenile Facilities at a significantly higher rate. In fact, the five most State-dependent counties (Kern, Kings, Monterey, Fresno, and Merced) account for 8.8% of juvenile felony arrests and 22.9% of all DJF wards. This is drastically different in comparison to the five most self-reliant counties (Marin, Placer, San Francisco, Ventura, and Santa Clara) that accounted for 9.8% of juvenile felony arrests but

¹ The 2005 reorganization of the Youth and Adult Correctional Agencies into the CDCR created the Division of Juvenile Facilities (DJF). The DJF is commonly referred to as the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). This report uses the Division of Juvenile Facilities.
² This amount is the per capita cost of housing youths at DJF as reported in the Revised California Budget 2010-11.
³ Data obtained from the Juvenile Research Branch. (2010). *Youth population responsible to a facility by county of commitment and board category as of Dec. 31, 2010* [unpublished report]. Sacramento, CA: CDCR.



only 3.5% of all DJF wards (these five counties have one-seventh as many DJF commitments per juvenile felony arrests as the top five counties).⁴

CJ CJ's recent publication titled, *The impact of realignment on county juvenile justice practice: Will closing State youth correctional facilities increase adult criminal court filings?* findings centered on the radically different juvenile justice practices throughout California's 58 counties. In December 2010, five out of California's 58 counties accounted for 56.1% of the overall taxpayer cost for DJF use. The table below demonstrates the drastic difference

Currently, category 1 through 4 offenders comprise 84% of DJF's population.

between what the counties paid and the true cost of confining youth at the State's youth correctional facilities per month in December 2010.

COUNTY	YOUTH	COUNTY PAID	TRUE COST	TAXPAYER PAID
Los Angeles	317	\$147,195	\$5,936,142	\$5,788,947
Kern	98	\$54,313	\$1,835,148	\$1,780,835
San Diego	79	\$54,225	\$1,479,354	\$1,425,129
Fresno	79	\$33,087	\$1,479,354	\$1,446,267
Alameda	66	\$28,692	\$1,235,916	\$1,207,224

As an example, Kern County housed 98 youths in DJF in the month of December 2010 (second only to L.A. County) at the county expense of \$54,313, while state-wide taxpayers paid an additional \$1,780,835 to supplement for the true cost. Kern County also accounted for nineteen Category 5 offenders and the only Category 6 offender confined in DJF in December 2010. As category 5 and 6 offenders are less serious, the cost for counties to house them at DJF is higher in order to encourage counties to manage these youth at the local level. As evidenced by Kern County, this disincentive does not always prove effective. Ultimately, counties with greater than average dependence on the State account for approximately half of the youth population in California, and half of all juvenile felony arrests yet 72% of DJF commitments, at a state tax burden of \$15,063,146 (almost \$10 million more than the total taxpayer cost for the self-reliant county commitments).⁵ Thus California taxpayers bear the brunt of the financial burden for a handful of counties that still apply archaic and failed juvenile justice practices.

Governor Brown's proposal to realign the responsibility for the true cost of juvenile justice practices to counties may help to redress this balance. However, while DJF remains an option; State-dependent counties have little incentive to develop appropriate locally-based alternatives, and the result will further widen the gap between counties that utilize best practices and those that do not.

⁴ Data obtained from the Criminal Justice Statistics Center. (2011). Felony Arrests 2000-2009 [unpublished data file]. CA: Office of the Attorney General, California Dep't of Justice.

⁵ Id.