

**AFTERCARE AS AFTERTHOUGHT:
REENTRY AND THE CALIFORNIA YOUTH
AUTHORITY**



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NEXT STEPS: The California Ex-Offender Community Reentry Project



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This report is the first in a series of reports of the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice's "*Next Steps: The California Ex-Offender Community Reentry Project*" to address solutions to aftercare and reintegration needs of California's parolee population.

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Executive Summary

Each year, more than 2,000 youthful offenders are released from the California Youth Authority (CYA). The challenge for the State of California is to preserve public safety and assist youthful offenders to make a positive transition to a productive life. Because every youthful offender will be released back to society, the costs of failure are staggering, and it is clearly in the best interest of our communities to rehabilitate this population. Given the extraordinary number of other urgent priorities, this public-safety challenge must be met with as much cost-efficiency as possible. Limited resources should be targeted at prevention and intervention programs with strong track records in preventing re-offense. Solutions do exist, and successful programs can become part of a statewide juvenile justice improvement strategy.

The CYA population includes the most serious juvenile offenders in the state. Most wards are committed for violent crimes, and are institutionalized for more than two years on average. The reentry process for CYA parolees fails to adequately prepare them for an independent, self-sufficient lifestyle outside of a correctional institution. The current system is highly fragmented and relies heavily on CYA parole agents who, despite the best of intentions, face significant obstacles to providing effective services. Constrained by caseloads as high as fifty parolees or more, no specialized training, and insufficient resources to even provide each parolee with a bus pass, parole agents are nonetheless responsible for providing parolees with services critical to a successful transition to their communities.

Current systems in California fail to adequately address the 91% recidivism rate of CYA parolees. This failure perpetuates an ineffective juvenile justice system in which youthful offenders cycle in and out of institutional facilities at an annual cost of \$48,400 per offender. The high costs of crime, quantified in Appendix A, demonstrate that failing to invest in our youth costs society a lot more than the direct costs of incarceration: **it costs society more than \$1.7 million for each youth that drops out of school to become involved in a life of crime and drug abuse.**¹ Beyond the fiscal impact, the damaging collateral effects of the current system are felt at the individual, community, and statewide level, as large numbers of violent youthful offenders leave institutions and camps without a high school diploma, fractured social supports, and strong gang affiliations. Therefore, investing in reintegration programs that produce even a moderate reduction in recidivism reflects a sound, cost-effective investment decision.

Although the current state system is overwhelmed, there are answers. Effective programs range from the CYA Transitional Residential Program (recently eliminated due to inadequate funding), to the case-management continuum of care model employed by the state of Missouri. With an annual juvenile correctional budget one-third less than the eight surrounding states, Missouri boasts a 10% recidivism rate. Institutional education services also demonstrate success: of CYA wards that participated in a post-secondary college program, 80% did not return to prison after release.

Although each individual faces unique barriers, common challenges face all youthful offenders reentering their communities. The following barriers to successful reentry have been identified by researchers and were repeatedly cited in interviews with parole agents, service providers, researchers, and former wards:

- Lack of educational options: The average age of CYA parolees upon release is 21, which excludes them from the state’s responsibility to provide a public education.
- Lack of housing options: For parolees for which family placement is not an option, residential transitional and treatment beds are in short supply.
- Limited skills and education: In 2001, only 11.5% of CYA students passed the California High School Exit Exam.
- Gang affiliations and attendant racial tensions: Incarceration in secure facilities strengthens and solidifies gang relationships.
- Institutional identity: The institutional policies, constant structure, and external discipline do not prepare wards for an independent life that requires internal discipline, motivation, and realistic expectations.
- Substance abuse problems: Over 65% of wards have substance abuse problems.
- Mental health problems: The CYA estimates that 45% of male wards and 65% of female wards in 2000 had mental health problems.
- Lack of community supports and role models: Most parolees will return to communities marked by conditions of poverty, family dysfunction and/or abuse.
- Legislative barriers that limit access to education, cash assistance, and public housing: Ex-offenders, particularly those with certain convictions, are restricted from educational financial aid, public housing, food stamps, and certain types of employment, such as childcare and education.

Given the staggering cost of failure, it is hard to imagine any justifiable argument against providing education and services to this population. The multiple service needs and histories of violent behavior among CYA wards necessitate a system of care that addresses the root causes of criminal activity. Despite the increasing recognition in theory of the role of reentry programs in reducing recidivism, federal and state policies devote insufficient resources to prevention and intervention programs with demonstrable records of effective treatment provision at lower costs than institutionalization. Current emphases on supervision and law enforcement rather than reintegration and support fail to attend to these issues.

While the specific elements of an effective reentry program may vary, the ultimate goal is the same: to preserve public safety, reduce recidivism, and assist individuals to achieve success. Reentry experts identify the following minimum components of “success”: an individual not being rearrested since release, not being recommitted for a parole violation, and attending school and/or maintaining employment.² These principles inform the following recommendations for reforming and improving the reentry process:

- Implement the case management continuum of care model employed by the State of Missouri Division of Youth Services.
- Create a pilot program to utilize contract arrangements for institutional program services.
- Create additional community-based treatment and supervision slots for CYA wards.
- Transfer authority for determining length of stay and conditions of parole for CYA wards from the Youthful Offender Parole Board to the committing court.
- Expand community corrections sanctions, such as community service, restitution, and halfway houses.
- Create educational alternatives, such as Los Angeles-based Save Our Future.
- Expand gender-specific services.
- Replicate model programs, such as the Missouri Department of Youth Services.

When youthful offenders leave the CYA, the barriers they face far outweigh the opportunities for a successful reintegration into the community. Indeed, the odds are against them: low education, high unemployment, and a high likelihood that they'll re-offend. The people of California have already paid a terrible price for crime, and the price tag will continue to rise if we do not develop effective programs to prepare youthful offenders for life in the community. Although the list of barriers is daunting, certain strategies have demonstrated positive results. Although these solutions are not free, they are far cheaper than inaction. This report highlights nine exemplary programs in seven states and the District of Columbia that have demonstrated success through collaborative, comprehensive services at a lower per-capita cost than incarceration. The result is a win-win: improved public safety, lower costs, and a positive investment in our future

I. Introduction

The movement of youthful offenders from correctional institution to community has gained increased attention in recent years from policy makers and legislators. However, this critical point in justice system processing remains significantly underresearched and underfunded, and has not received the level of public attention commensurate with the widespread concern over juvenile crime and arrest rates.³ Within the youthful offender population in California, the youths released from the California Youth Authority (CYA) represent the most serious juvenile offenders; many were committed to the CYA with histories of repeat criminal behavior, much of it violent.⁴ All of these individuals will eventually be released to the community. As over 2,000 CYA youth and young adults are paroled each year to cities and towns throughout the state, their ability to successfully reintegrate into their communities presents one of the largest and most crucial challenges in the juvenile justice field. Many adult offenders start committing offenses at a young age and approximately 40% of adult prison populations are graduates of institution-based juvenile justice systems.⁵ The return of youthful offenders presents an opportunity to stop the revolving door that places a significant financial, administrative, and public safety burden on the communities of return.

According to Jerry Harper, the current Director of the Department of the Youth Authority, a successful reentry process begins at the point that a youth is committed to the CYA, and continues until he or she is released from parole.⁶ The success of reentry depends on the individual's capacity to return to society as a productive, contributing member and the presence of services to prepare for and facilitate this return. Confinement in a secure CYA facility can in theory provide the first phase in preparing for the inevitable transition to the outside world through education and counseling programs. Unfortunately, despite the CYA's recognition of the importance of structured reentry services, the reality is far different.

According to the recent study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, of adult offenders released in 1994, 67% were recommitted within three years.⁷ A similar study of CYA recidivism showed that **91% of youth offenders released from the CYA will re-offend in the same time period.**⁸ At a cost of \$48,400 per CYA ward per year, this failure to rehabilitate comes at a high price. These startling statistics quantify the ineffectiveness of the current juvenile justice system at rehabilitation and raise serious questions about the efficacy of current state policies.

After release, parolees frequently return to their families in the cities and towns where their trouble arose. A successful reentry process includes, at a minimum, the services and supports necessary to deter the parolee from recommitment. Recent initiatives, such as the Department of Justice's *Going Home: Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Program* and the collaborative *Young Offender Initiative: Reentry Grant Program* reflect an increasing awareness of the need to find creative, community-based alternatives to reduce recidivism among youthful and adult offenders.⁹ A recent poll indicates near unanimous public support for rehabilitation and reentry programs: 94% of those surveyed support requiring prisoners to work and receive job training to ensure that they leave prison with job skills, and 88% favor providing job training and placement to released prisoners.¹⁰

RECIDIVISM DEFINED?

The California Youth Authority does not directly measure recidivism. Instead, the Department measures certain Youthful Offender Parole Board actions concerning individuals under direct parole supervision. The National Institute of Justice compiled comprehensive recidivism data for CYA releases in the 1980s. These two measurements, described below, yield far different results.

California Youth Authority calculation: The number of parolees who were removed from parole for a technical or law violation within 24 months. Local arrests, convictions, and incarcerations were not included if they did not result in revocation or discharge by the Youthful Offender Parole Board. Any arrests, convictions, or incarcerations that occurred after discharge from the Youth Authority, even if they occurred within 24 months of parole release, were not included. This calculation yields a 47.3% parole violation rate in 2001.¹¹

National Institute of Justice calculation: The number of wards released who were re-arrested within a 3 year time period. Ninety-one percent (91%) of CYA wards in 1986-87 were arrested or had parole revoked within three years. This data, presented at a meeting of the American Society of Criminologists in 1995, was never published or released.¹²

According to the *Young Offender Initiative RFP*, “[C] ompared with information about reentry adult offenders, little is known in general about reentry issues affecting youth.”¹³ This report attempts to address this gap and to initiate a dialogue about this pressing concern. The goals of this report are to:

- Highlight the importance of reentry and aftercare programs in reducing recidivism and improving public safety
- Document the current reintegration process and the specific barriers facing CYA parolees
- Identify the challenges to families and communities presented by the reentry process and the collateral effects of recidivism
- Identify successful institutional and community-based aftercare programs that provide effective care at lower costs than incarceration
- Recommend strategies to improve the rate of successful parolee reintegration

II. Problem Statement

The process of reentry for California Youth Authority parolees fails to adequately prepare them for an independent, self-sufficient lifestyle outside of a correctional institution. The current system is highly fragmented and relies too heavily on CYA parole agents constrained by large caseloads and insufficient resources. Current systems fail to adequately address the 91% recidivism rate and perpetuate a costly, ineffective juvenile justice system, in which youthful offenders cycle in and out of institutional facilities. The damaging collateral effects of the current system are felt at the individual, community, and statewide level, as large numbers of violent youthful offenders leave institutions and camps with limited skills and education, fractured social supports, and strong gang affiliations.

Upon release, parolees face unique challenges as they attempt to make the transition from a highly structured locked facility to a life of relative independence. CYA wards live in a highly structured locked facility for over two years on average during a critical developmental period. Studies indicate that living conditions within the CYA, such as dormitory-style sleeping quarters and constant fear of violence, are not conducive to rehabilitation efforts.¹⁴ As indicated in Appendix C, average sentence lengths have increased considerably in the last twenty years, from 11.5 months in 1971 to 28.3 months in 2001.¹⁵ Longer sentences compound wards' isolation, solidify their institutional identity, and reduce their connections to families and communities. In an environment where inmate-on-inmate violence is a daily occurrence, immediate survival and coping are far more germane to wards' lives than preparation and planning for the future. This reality makes the transition to a "mainstream" life on the outside even more difficult.

The following excerpt from a qualitative examination of formerly incarcerated youth highlights the ongoing challenges facing the youthful offender reentry population:

The current transitional focus on individual accountability and responsibility ignores several important facts about this population:

- *Youth ex-offenders are still adolescents, many of whom are experiencing delayed emotional and cognitive development due to [emotional abuse] and early drug use.*
- *They have never successfully used problem-solving or coping skills outside of the correctional setting.*
- *They still have no adults in their lives to help them learn the skills they need to deal with [normal life challenges].¹⁶*

While the specific elements of an effective reentry program may vary, the ultimate goal is the same: to preserve public safety, reduce recidivism, and assist individuals to achieve success. Reentry experts identify the following minimum components of an individual's "success": an individual not being rearrested since release, not being recommitted for a parole violation, and attending school and/or maintaining employment.¹⁷ Despite the increasing recognition in theory of the role of reentry programs in reducing recidivism, federal and state policies devote insufficient resources to prevention and intervention programs with demonstrable records of

effective treatment provision at lower costs than institutionalization. The high costs of crime, quantified in Appendix A, demonstrate that failing to invest in our youth costs society a lot more than the direct costs of incarceration: **it costs society more than \$1.7 million for each youth that drops out of school to become involved in a life of crime and drug abuse.**¹⁸ Therefore, investing in reintegration programs that produce even a moderate reduction in recidivism, reflects a sound, cost-effective investment decision.

“Why wouldn’t policy makers, policy administrators, and third-party payers rush to adopt service models that—in contrast to the services that are now widely available—are inexpensive, carefully and positively evaluated, easy to understand, and consistent with long-established values of respect for family integrity and personal liberty and privacy? If innovation is cheaper but more effective than current practices, why wouldn’t it be quickly and widely adopted?”

The nearly universal failure to adopt innovative service models as standard practice reflects intrinsic but often tractable obstacles to reform.”¹⁹

--Gary Melton

III. Scope and Methodology

This report attempts to fill in some of the research gaps regarding the state of CYA parolee reintegration. Research included a review of existing literature, interviews, and site visits.

A. Literature Review

The first step in the research process was a review of relevant studies and reports. A variety of existing research was consulted, including academic and criminal justice publications related to juvenile and adult offender reentry; data on institutional, transitional, and aftercare services available for youthful offenders; evaluations of existing violence prevention and intervention programs; and current and previous funding initiatives. This literature review was not comprehensive, but instead served as a foundation for the policy report. The Supplemental Bibliography lists other sources consulted.

B. CYA Population Characteristics

Official ward and parolee data were gathered from the State of California Department of the Youth Authority. Recidivism data was drawn from the National Institute of Justice.²⁰

C. Interviews with CYA Officials and Staff

Interviews were conducted with CYA staff at various levels of authority, including the Director of the Youth Authority, institutional staff members, and field parole agents. These interviews served to supplement the quantitative population data and informed the recommendations. References refer simply to “CYA staff” to respect the wishes of many CYA staff members who requested that their names not be used in this report.

D. Model Programs

To identify model programs in the field of juvenile aftercare, a national search of model transition and aftercare programs for juvenile offenders was conducted. Interviews were conducted in person and by telephone with program directors and staff members at public, private, and nonprofit violence prevention and intervention community organizations and advocacy groups.

E. Recommendations

Recommendations are based on the assessment of the current state of reentry after release from the CYA, existing research on the reentry process, identification of model reentry principles and practices, and specific recommendations made by institutional and program staff.

IV. The California Youth Authority

A. A Shrinking Population

There are currently over 5,700 people in CYA institutions and camps, but first admissions to the CYA have dramatically declined in the past decade, from 3,483 in 1990 to 1,501 in 2001 (see Appendix D).²¹ This significant reduction in commitments presents an ideal opportunity to divert resources from daily custodial functions to quality institutional and transitional programs through higher staff-to-ward ratios and improved training opportunities for institutional staff.

B. Characteristics and Criminal Justice Histories of Wards²²

- ❖ The average ward is 19 years old
- ❖ The average age at admission is 17 years
- ❖ Wards are institutionalized for 2.4 years on average
- ❖ Ninety-five percent of wards are male
- ❖ Hispanics comprise 48% of the ward population
- ❖ Fifty-four percent of wards come from Los Angeles County
- ❖ In 2002, 84% of admissions were first commitments
- ❖ Seventeen percent of first commitments had no prior conviction or sustained petition.
- ❖ Thirty-eight percent of first commitments had no prior local commitment
- ❖ The majority of wards were committed for violent offenses (58.6% of the institution population as of June 30, 2002)

C. Characteristics and Criminal Justice Histories of Parolees²³

- ❖ The shrinking institutional population translates into a declining parole population, which is expected to continue its decline through 2006
- ❖ The average age upon release to parole is 21 years
- ❖ Seventy percent of parolees were committed for violent crimes
- ❖ The number of parolees committed for narcotic and drug offenses has declined significantly in the past decade, from 13.9% in 1992 to 3.3% in 2001
- ❖ Over 75% are on their first parole
- ❖ The average amount of time spent on parole was 1.8 years for those leaving parole in 2001
- ❖ Parolees are concentrated in specific counties: over 60% of parolees were released to seven counties in 2001 (see Figure 1)

The following table shows the seven counties with the highest numbers of CYA parolees, as of June 30, 2002. Percentages are shown in parentheses.

FIGURE 1

CYA PAROLE RELEASES & POPULATION BY COUNTY (TOP 7 COUNTIES)		
County	CYA Parolees Released 2001	Total CYA Parole Population June 30, 2002
Los Angeles	651 (25.8%)	1050 (24.8%)
San Bernardino	200 (7.8%)	339 (8.0%)
Fresno	207 (8.0%)	315 (7.4 %)
Orange	179 (7.0%)	287 (6.8%)
San Diego	152 (5.9%)	247 (5.8%)
Santa Clara	100 (3.9%)	230 (5.4%)
Riverside	145 (5.7%)	216 (5.1%)
Total, Top 7 Counties	1,634	2,684
Parole Releases/Population (All CA Counties)	2,565	4,237
Percent of Total	63.7%	63.3%

Source: California Youth Authority

D. Disproportionate Minority Confinement

It is impossible to ignore the high proportion of ethnic minorities within the CYA ward and parolee populations. In 2001, ethnic minorities accounted for 81% of first commitments to the Youth Authority, with Hispanics comprising 51% (see Figure 2).²⁴ Such disproportionate minority confinement reflects a national trend in adult and youth correctional facilities. Although examining these numbers in detail is beyond the scope of this paper, these statistics raise important questions that warrant further research about the relationship between race, access to critical services, and rates of incarceration. As highlighted by Tim Roche et al., examining these demographics “trains our eyes on crime as a quality of life issue that cannot be

disentangled and dealt with in isolation from the issues of poverty, education, employment, substance abuse, housing and other critical issues that face our communities.”²⁵ These figures also underline the importance of developing culturally sensitive counseling and services for wards and parolees.

FIGURE 2

CYA POPULATION BY RACE		
Race/Ethnicity	Wards	Parolees
Hispanic	48%	51.3%
African American	30%	24.1%
Caucasian	17%	13.6%
Asian	4%	7.6%
Other	1%	3.3%

Source: California Youth Authority

E. Girls in the California Youth Authority

Although the number of girls and young women committed to the CYA is still relatively small (279 as of June 30, 2002), there is a disturbing upward trend in female institutional populations—girls represented 3% of the CYA population in 1992, and 4.7% in 2002.²⁶ Young women and girls in the CYA parole population comprise 6% of the total parole population.²⁷ Twenty-two percent of female wards come from Los Angeles County. Female offenders are committed at higher rates for property and drug offenses than their male counterparts: in 2001, 38.5% of girls and 33% of boys were committed for property offenses and drug offenses accounted for 7.7% of female and 5.1% of male first commitments.²⁸

The only CYA facility that accepts girls is located in Ventura County in Southern California. With over 50% of girls committed from the Northern region, this distant location, inaccessible by public transportation, presents a barrier to an increasing number of families. Accepting long distance collect calls and making visits poses a great challenge for many families with limited financial resources. Without this family contact, female youth within the system become increasingly isolated and alienated.

F. Special Needs of Wards

Many wards have a range of special needs, due to histories of poor educational outcomes, mental illness, and substance abuse. In 2001, 7.9% of new commitments had a documented physical or mental disability.²⁹ This figure likely underestimates the numbers of youth with disabilities in the CYA; studies indicate that as many as 70% of incarcerated youth suffer from disabling conditions, and a comprehensive assessment of the mental health system in the CYA concluded that on average, 50% of wards have 3-4 psychiatric diagnoses.³⁰

G. Implications of Characteristics

Collectively, these data point to a youthful offender population with a relatively serious criminal history and intense social service needs. This type of population information has been used to justify a highly punitive environment at the CYA. Indeed, policies and practices within the CYA have been subject to legal scrutiny for failure to meet the basic health and educational needs of wards.³¹ In contrast, the same data is presented here to demonstrate the need for a continuum of care services to address the root causes of criminal behavior.

H. Life in the California Youth Authority

*“I lost God while I was at the YA. I thought,
, ‘if there were a God, He would never let this place exist.’”³²*

-former CYA ward

Experience with local juvenile halls and other county facilities do little to prepare wards for the violent, penal environment at the Youth Authority. Youth enter the CYA through one of three reception centers, where they begin an ongoing two-tiered process of evaluation and testing; one tier encompasses the formal evaluative process undertaken by institutional staff, including psychiatric and education batteries. However, evaluations and counseling are significantly hampered by wards’ constant fear: *“I cried at 3 o’clock in the morning. Quietly. Everyone did...I was living in fear 22 hours a day in that place. There was no way I was going to open up during group therapy.”³³*

Fellow wards conduct a second, informal tier of evaluation, a series of ongoing tests that ultimately have the most bearing on a ward’s daily quality of life within the institution. New wards are immediately sized up for potential weakness and vulnerability. Race, city of origin, gang affiliation, and physical size all contribute to the wards’ social ranking and subsequent treatment. Youths determined to be “weak” are subject to regular victimization by other wards, including physical and sexual abuse. The wards are particularly vulnerable to attacks at night, when “50 or 60 young men are bedded down in a dormitory which is overseen by a single guard.”³⁴

It was too dangerous to sleep at night. One night, this guy had the flu, and he was breathin’ real loud. Another guy in the unit kept saying, ‘Hey, knock it off. Stop breathin’ so loud,’ but the guy was on cough medicine or something, and was knocked out, couldn’t hear a thing. Finally the guy gets so frustrated with the noise that he goes to the trashcan and grabs a metal dustpan. He raises it over his head and BAM, smacks the [sick] guy, splits his skull open with one hit.”³⁵

Most wards are affiliated with gangs before their commitment to the Youth Authority, and these ties are strengthened during their tenure. Many others join gangs for self-protection.

I'm Cuban, but I look white. First they wanted me to join the white car [gang], but I wouldn't. Then they wanted me to join the brown car. I said I would rather face the knife than join a car...When I was about to be released, the Lieutenant [one of the gang leaders] told me that this time around I got a pass because I [had certain friends]. He said if I ever came back [to the CYA], if I didn't join a gang, I wouldn't get a pass—I wouldn't make it.³⁶

Seasoned wards may “test” a new ward by spitting on his pillow, stealing personal belongings, or demanding cigarettes. If the new ward doesn't appropriately challenge his testers, he is likely to become a regular victim of harassment and violence. A former ward describes witnessing the “orientation” of a new ward:

This guys says to the new guy, 'Got a smoke?' and the new guy says 'Yeah.' 'Gimme one.' 'I only have enough to last me...' and WHAM the guy gets knocked out. From that point on, every day people'd walk by him, push him, shove him, whatever. Then one day he gets told that his laundry is ready for him in the back room. He goes back there, and nine guys are hiding, waiting for him...³⁷

According to a comprehensive report on life within the CYA, such “ratpacking” is common for wards without allies.³⁸ Interviews with staff and wards repeatedly highlight a frightening reality: thousands of young men and women are living their adolescence in an environment in which their physical and emotional safety is threatened on a daily basis.

V. Reentry: From Detention to Independence

A. Barriers to Successful Reentry

Although each individual faces unique barriers, common challenges face all youthful offenders reentering their communities. The following barriers, detailed below, have been identified by researchers and were repeatedly cited in interviews with parole agents, service providers, researchers, and former wards:

- Lack of educational options
- Lack of housing options
- Limited skills and education
- Gang affiliations and attendant racial tensions
- Institutional identity
- Substance abuse problems
- Mental health problems
- Lack of community supports and role models
- Legislative barriers that limit access to education, cash assistance, and public housing

Although daunting, these barriers are not intractable. As detailed later in this report, effective programs throughout the country have demonstrated that answers to these challenges do exist.

1. Limited skills and education

Although the average age for first commitments in 2001 was 17, wards consistently demonstrate reading scores ranging from 8th to 9th grade levels, and math scores ranging from 7th to 8th grade levels.³⁹ Educational deficiencies emerge as one of the most salient challenges facing CYA parolees. Test score data from standardized exams administered in 2001 quantify the depth of these educational limitations:

FIGURE 3

STANDARDIZED TESTING AND REPORTING (STAR) PROGRAM AVERAGE PERCENTILE PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS BY SUBJECT BY GRADE LEVEL 2001⁴⁰				
Grade Level	Reading	Mathematics	Language	Science
Grade 9	13%	19%	16%	20%
Grade 10	10%	16%	8%	17%
Grade 11	11%	16%	13%	17%

FIGURE 4

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS SCORING AT OR ABOVE THE 50th PERCENTILE BASED ON NATIONAL NORMS⁴¹								
Grade Level	Reading		Mathematics		Language		Science	
	CEA	Statewide	CEA	Statewide	CEA	Statewide	CEA	Statewide
Grade 9	10%	35%	7%	51%	11%	53%	9%	41%
Grade 10	8%	34%	3%	45%	5%	42%	9%	46%
Grade 11	8%	37%	4%	46%	10%	*	8%	42%

CEA: California Education Authority (CYA School System)

*Data not available

FIGURE 5

CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAM MAY 2001 RESULTS PERCENTAGE OF CYA STUDENTS PASSING⁴²		
English-Language Arts	Mathematics	Average % Passing
17%	6%	11.5%

These educational scores demonstrate the consequences of current state policies that allocate more money to corrections than to education.⁴³ Even without a criminal history, expecting a group of students in which only 11.5% pass the California High School exit exam to function and excel in the conventional economy seems naïve at best. After two years of isolation in a correctional facility, youth are released into a work world in which employers expect a level of functional literacy for most entry-level jobs. Many wards also have limited English skills when they enter the CYA, and do not receive bilingual services within the institution to prepare them for sustainable employment.

Poor educational outcomes are compounded by a lack of job skills and poor work histories. Budget cuts since the late 1990s have reduced vocational program options within institutions.⁴⁴ Combined with a criminal record, attaining sustainable employment presents a huge barrier to self-sufficiency.

2. Lack of educational options

Given the poor educational outcomes of most CYA wards, access to post-release education is especially important. However, many parolees are unable to return to the same schools that they attended before incarceration due to the following factors:

- Public safety risks: Youth may feel threatened by former gang rivals and/or family members affected by the youth's criminal history;
- Age: The average age of CYA parolees upon release is 21, which excludes them from the state's responsibility to provide a public education;⁴⁵
- Community opposition: Even for those students under 18 years of age, youth may encounter resistance to enrollment from teachers, school administrators, and parents of other students;
- Administrative hurdles: The process of transferring students' credits and transcripts is frequently not completed before release, thereby preventing a student from immediate enrollment. This delay creates a disruption in an educational history already defined by inconsistency. Teachers and administrators at the local school may be reluctant to expedite a process that will only ensure that a student with a criminal record can attend school.

3. Lack of housing options

CYA parole agents cited the lack of quality housing options as one of the greatest barriers to successful reentry. The majority of CYA youth return to live with their families in the same communities from which they were committed. However, for wards for which family placement is not a viable option, there are limited alternatives. There are few residential transitional and treatment beds available for ex-offenders. The inadequate supply forces many parole agents to settle for any available residential placement, regardless of the quality of care provided.

4. Gang affiliations and attendant racial tensions

The vast majority of wards are affiliated with gangs upon commitment to the CYA. Incarceration in secure facilities strengthens and solidifies gang relationships. For example, at N.A. Chaderjian in Stockton, most wards live in double-bunked cells, and are housed according to gang affiliation. Gang altercations are frequent and the entrenched gang culture makes individual relationships among rival gang members exceptionally difficult.⁴⁶

5. Institutional identity

After being labeled and treated as a delinquent and housed with hundreds of other youth with a criminal background, many offenders simply learn to be better criminals. The institutional policies, constant structure, and external discipline do not prepare wards for an independent life that requires internal discipline and motivation. This institutional identity also manifests itself in unrealistic and inflated expectations upon release; many wards are unprepared for the daily challenges of independent living, and do not recognize the substantial difficulties inherent in the transition process. Combined with the culture of violence within CYA institutions and camps, we can expect that institutional experiences, rather than rehabilitating, will only magnify the anger and criminal potential of this population.

6. Substance abuse problems

Although only a small portion of wards is committed for drug-related offenses, many report substance abuse problems that require treatment services. According to a 2000 CYA study, 74% of male wards and 68% of female wards have substance abuse problems.⁴⁷

7. Mental health problems

The CYA population reflects the increased recognition of mental health needs within the criminal justice system nationwide. Estimates of mental health disorders within the national population of incarcerated youth range between 50 to 75%.⁴⁸ Within the CYA, rates of mental illness are very high: according to a preliminary report issued by the CYA in 2000, 45% of male wards and 65% of female wards had mental health problems.⁴⁹

8. Lack of community supports and role models

The individual characteristics of CYA wards cannot be disentangled from their communities of origin. Many youthful offenders were raised in conditions of poverty, inadequate social supports, and family dysfunction and/or abuse. Most will return to the same conditions. Consequently, wards' ability to rehabilitate is highly dependent on their access to a continuum of care services that support them at each stage of the transition process from institution to home.

9. Legislative Barriers

Despite having served their time, many ex-offenders continue to serve a life sentence in the form of reduced educational and social service supports. Due to a number of legislative barriers in the areas of education and human services, this population faces additional challenges in meeting their basic needs.

a) Education

The last decade was marked by a rise in punitive legislation targeting correctional education programs. Motivated by the perception that prison had become too easy, two regulations were introduced in the 1990s that solidified barriers to accessing higher education:

- Students incarcerated in state or federal prisons are ineligible for federal Pell grants, which are used for secondary education.⁵⁰
- Anyone with a drug conviction is prohibited from receiving federal financial aid to enroll in post-secondary institutions.⁵¹

A higher education is not an immediate consideration for most wards and parolees, given the low educational level of most CYA youth. However, although this restriction does not directly affect most of the CYA population, this punitive legislation undermines the rehabilitative potential of institutional education, and flies in the face of the well-documented benefits of institutional higher education programs.⁵²

b) Cash Assistance and Food Stamps

The 1996 Welfare Reform Act specifies that offenders with a state or federal felony offense record involving the use or sale of drugs is subject to a lifetime ban on receiving cash assistance (TANF) and food stamps.⁵³ Although states have the discretion to opt out of this ban or to enforce a partial ban (on one form of assistance but not the other), California has chosen to deny benefits entirely to this population.⁵⁴ Although only a small portion of CYA wards are committed for drug offenses, this elimination of transitional income support for certain offenders reflects a legislative commitment to continue the “war on drugs,” despite the proven ineffectiveness of these policies.⁵⁵

CYA wards that rely on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) may be denied access to this social support if they violate a condition of their parole.⁵⁶ SSI is a federally administered income and health insurance program for qualified aged, blind, and disabled individuals. Although we do not have data on the number of CYA wards who rely on SSI, when one considers the high rates of mental illness within the CYA population, as well as the high proportion of parole violators, it is evident that this legislation places at risk the health and safety of many young people with disabilities.

c) Employment

Most states prohibit ex-offenders with felony convictions from certain types of employment, such as childcare, education, and nursing. This legal barrier does not account for the many employers who do not hire ex-offenders due to stigma, fear, and bias.

d) Housing

Under the 1996 “One Strike” Initiative, local Public Housing Authorities were given the discretion to restrict access to public housing for people with drug convictions.⁵⁷ Depending on the policies of their local Housing Authority, CYA parolees may not be able to move in with their families who live in public housing.

e) Civic Participation

Upon release, Youth Authority Parolees are disqualified from voting in the state of California until successful completion of their parole process.⁵⁸ This prohibition further marginalizes and isolates voting-age parolees from mainstream society.

ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES TO PROVIDING EFFECTIVE TRANSITION SERVICES⁵⁹

- Supervision and enforcement take precedence over intervention and treatment at all stages of CYA institutionalization and parole.
- Transition planning does not begin until 30-60 days before a ward’s Parole Consideration Date.
- Institutional and field parole staff receive inadequate professional development and specialized transition training; CYA staff with specialized caseloads (i.e. related to mental health and substance abuse issues and sex offenders) receive no special training.
- A significant lack of communication, coordination, and commitment exists among agencies that serve CYA youth; there is little collaboration between CYA and service agencies with appropriate expertise, such as the California Department of Mental Health.
- CYA leadership discourages collaboration and input from outside agencies.
- Transferring wards’ educational records between institutional and community schools is often delayed.

B. The Current State of CYA Reentry and Aftercare

1. Institutional Programs

Institutional education and service programs provide the first step in a ward’s preparation for an independent life in the community upon release. The following section examines the structure of institutional transition programs currently operating in the CYA.

a. Educational Services

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, most juvenile offenders over the age of 15 do not return to school or do not graduate from high school after release from a correctional setting.⁶⁰

Education has been identified as one of the most effective methods for reducing recidivism.⁶¹ According to a preliminary CYA study in 1997, parolees with either a high school diploma, a GED or a high school proficiency certificate were four times more likely to succeed on parole than those who did not attain this educational level.⁶² CYA wards that participated in a post-secondary college program available at certain institutions had a significantly lower recidivism rate than the general population—80% of participants did not return to prison after release.⁶³ Another study demonstrates that prisoners who received a degree while serving time had a recidivism rate four times lower than that of the general population (15% compared to 60%).⁶⁴

With the majority of wards of high school age or older, access to education is critical to their future success. In 1997, in response to documented problems within the CYA educational system, the California Education Authority (CEA) was created to ensure the accreditation and development of quality standards within CYA high schools. The “No Diploma, No Parole” policy, implemented in 1998, reflects a further attempt on the part of the CYA to codify and enforce educational standards.⁶⁵ However, the policy has fizzled within institutions due to resource and staffing restraints and administrative lockdowns that prevent consistent enforcement of this policy.⁶⁶ Therefore, many wards continue to be released without a high school diploma or G.E.D.

For most wards, the educational experience within the institution represents another disjointed step in an educational history largely defined by interruption and fragmentation. Although the majority of wards are between seventeen and twenty years of age, (73.2% as of December 31, 2001), their skill levels resemble those of students in grades 4-8.⁶⁷ Prior to their commitment to the CYA, many have attended multiple county court schools, where repeated relocations create disruptions and wards frequently fail to complete a subject. At the CYA, an open enrollment policy necessitates the weekly entrance and exit of students, creating ongoing interruptions in the subject material and compelling teachers to teach in blocks. Although class size is limited to eighteen students, student skill levels within a single classroom may range from illiteracy to college-level proficiency. Administrative lockdowns compound irregular school attendance, perpetuate the gaps in students’ knowledge and skills, and contribute to student frustration and reduced motivation.⁶⁸

i. Special Education and Bilingual Services

The Youth Authority has been criticized for failing to provide legally mandated special education and bilingual services to wards. In 1998, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights determined that the CYA has failed to comply with the provision of required services to the estimated 26% of the wards who are English Learner students. An October 2001

review of the status of the Voluntary Resolution Plan designed to address these concerns found “continued deficiencies which they considered to be of a major and serious concern which if not corrected will lead to formal enforcement proceedings.”⁶⁹ According to a CYA process report of the sex offender treatment program, “services for Spanish-speaking wards are limited. The absence of bilingual staff limits the services provided by program staff to monolingual sex offenders.”⁷⁰

The CYA has also been cited for failing to respond appropriately to calls for special education programs for students with disabilities. An audit conducted by the Inspector General indicated that only between 38% and 77% of wards at the Nelles facility were receiving adequate special education services.⁷¹ In a recent lawsuit, the Prison Law Office indicated that deaf wards are not provided with the appropriate interpretive services necessary to successfully complete their Board-ordered programs, and then they are penalized for this failure.⁷²

Despite the proven importance of education and repeated criticism about the quality of education services provided in the CYA, the California Governor’s May Revision of the State budget includes a reduction of \$2.6 million for education services (Prop 98).⁷³ This spending reduction produces only fleeting savings: at an estimated cost of \$1.7 million for each rehabilitation failure, these cost savings would be fully negated if only two individuals re-offended.

ii. Transition Coordinator Program

The Transition Coordinator Program provides a valuable service to CYA wards in need of additional educational support. Through intensive counseling and specialized transition services targeting wards at high risk of low educational outcomes, Transition Coordinators assist students in achieving their educational and career goals and preparing for successful parole. These educators fill in a gap in educational programming; according to a recent Director’s Report, “Parole agents and youth counselors...have neither the time nor the expertise to fashion an intervention strategy for a student’s formal education program and plans for continued learning upon release.”⁷⁴

This program reflects a promising step toward creating a continuum of educational services. However, the staffing level of the Transition Coordinator program fails to meet wards’ transitional needs. In response to a large regular and drop-in caseload, interviews with Transition Coordinators and other educational staff highlight the need for more Coordinator positions at each institution. Individual staff capabilities simply cannot compensate for daunting caseloads and insufficient resources.

b. Special Programs

Parole consideration depends on a wards’ completion of an individualized series of programs and services mandated by the Youth Offender Parole Board (YOPB). Services include substance abuse counseling; individual counseling; and resource groups on topics such as anger management, parenting, and gang awareness.

i. Assignment to Special Programs

Consistent waiting lists at all special programs indicate the unmet service needs of many wards (see Figure 6). Wards’ placement in special counseling programs is ultimately determined by the Youth Offender Parole Board, frequently driven by criminological management rather than medical necessity.⁷⁵ Indeed, “[m]any of the assignments [to special programs] are made by fiat rather than by medical planning, and the recommendations come from entities not responsive to clinical input, education or feedback...Clinical staff are subject to the enthusiasms of administrators and YOPB board members who have no training in mental health.”⁷⁶

FIGURE 6

INSTITUTIONAL PROGRAMS⁷⁷			
Program Type	# of Beds	Treatment Time	Wait List
Intensive Treatment Program (mental health)	273	19 months	5-10 wards
Specialized Counseling Program (mental health)	246	1 year	190 wards
Substance Abuse	1,300	8 months	Not available
Sex Offender	229	19 months	Not available

Note: These are estimates based on 2001 data.

Institutional programs primarily utilize group approaches to treatment and service provision. Steiner et al. determined that regardless of the intended focus of institutional treatment programs, “almost all rely on group therapy, the content of which may not vary much from program to program.”⁷⁸ Numerous studies demonstrate that the group approach (such as the one employed by the CYA) is ultimately counterproductive in attempting to rehabilitate young offenders:

...[Y]outh who participated heavily in the group activities not only had higher recidivism than those who took part in more individualized and family treatments, but they also had higher recidivism than control group youth receiving no intervention...The evidence suggests that many or most of these [delinquent] youth would be better served in programs that minimize rather than mandate interaction among delinquent peers.⁷⁹

According to Stanford researchers assessing the mental health system at the CYA, the current number of authorized positions is insufficient to meet wards’ mental health needs.⁸⁰ Intervention programs are further hindered by a lack of specialized staff training, staffing shortages, and insufficient resources dedicated to treatment services.

ii. Institutional Staffing for Special Programs

Youth correctional counselors and parole agents comprise the primary staff support for special programs. Staff training is limited primarily to standard correctional policy and operations, with any program-specific training provided only as time and resources allow. An evaluation of the Karl Holton Drug and Alcohol Treatment Facility (DATF) determined that 69% of youth correctional counselors did not believe that they had adequate training to effectively perform their counseling duties.⁸¹ Author's interviews with institutional staff members yielded a consistent remark: staff members are trained to be prison guards, not social workers. Thus, despite the critical and difficult responsibilities of institutional staff, these employees are not adequately trained. Unfortunately, even parole agents' good intentions and personal commitment cannot fully mitigate the effects of inadequate preparation and training.

The following section outlines the treatment and intervention programs available to wards.

iii. Mental Health

“Many [wards] ...are not treated or evaluated [for placement in mental health programs] because they have not called attention to their mental health problems through their behavior.”⁸²

Within the CYA, rates of mental illness are very high. The CYA reports that in 2000, 45% of male wards and 65% of female wards had mental health problems.⁸³ However, it is common for only the most extreme cases to be assigned to the specialized mental health programs due to an inadequate evaluation process and limited resources. According to a Treatment Needs Assessment report conducted by the Youth Authority, “due to limitations on available program resources, only the most seriously disturbed wards are referred for [psychological] evaluations.”⁸⁴ Similarly, only the most serious cases ultimately receive the necessary treatment. According to CYA staff at N.A. Chaderjian, for example, the wards on the mental health unit have such extreme needs that “they should really be hospitalized” and the majority of wards should be receiving mental health treatment but are not.⁸⁵

The California May Budget Revision includes a potential improvement in the Youth Authority mental health delivery system: a proposed increase of \$1 million would be used to change their custody-based counseling program to a case management approach.⁸⁶

iv. Substance Abuse

As noted above, a 2000 CYA study estimates that 74% of male wards and 68% of female wards have substance abuse problems that require treatment.⁸⁷ Substance abuse treatment is essential in reducing re-offense among juveniles. The presence of nine substance abuse treatment programs, however, does little to address these issues due to limited services provision

and the lack of specialized training for staff members who operate these programs. Despite their identification as a substance abuse treatment program, facilities such as the Karl Holton Drug and Alcohol Treatment Facility in Stockton are staffed primarily by youth correctional counselors and parole agents who receive the bulk of their CYA training in custody and security, and very limited training in counseling. Treatment staff working in specialized living units have the same qualifications and training as staff in the regular living units that do not provide special services: in 1999, over 50% of treatment staff had a 2-year college degree or less.⁸⁸

The conflicting custodial and counseling responsibilities of institutional staff severely hinder their capacity to dedicate sufficient time to their counseling and service responsibilities. The difficulty in effectively balancing these roles was identified in formal evaluations and through staff interviews as one of the greatest barriers to ensuring adequate service delivery.⁸⁹

v. Sex Offender Program

“[I]t is important to note that there is no departmentally-mandated, sex offender-specific training requirement for professional and line staff working directly with program wards at [the formalized Continuum of Care Sex Offender Program].”⁹⁰

The CYA operates two formal sex offender programs, one in Northern California and one in Southern California. The Youth Offender Parole Board maintains responsibility for sending wards to formal sex offender programs. As with the other intervention and treatment programs, the assessment process frequently identifies only certain wards for treatment; wards with histories of sex offenses but committed for another offense do not receive the benefits of these residential programs. The CYA is legally mandated to provide treatment to sex offenders, so that appropriate services are not necessarily provided to wards with the most severe needs.⁹¹ Wards not assigned to one of the formal programs may receive “informal” treatment services comprised primarily of specialized resource groups and counseling sessions. Despite reports of in-house training efforts for professional program staff, CYA research staff identified the lack of required training as a significant limitation to program efficacy.⁹²

2. Parole Services

The parole phase of reentry represents a vital period in the successful reintegration process of juvenile offenders, a time in which “the supposedly beneficial cumulative effects of the institutional experience should be transferred to community settings, reinforced, monitored, and assessed.”⁹³ Upon release, most CYA parolees return to their families in the communities from which they were first committed. They face a number of structural and emotional barriers that frequently undermine any skills, motivation, and good intentions present at the time of release. The first three to six months after release is a critical period in the reentry process, and the extent of supports and services accessed during this transition phase may determine the future outcomes of parolees.

The supervision and support of CYA parolees is the primary responsibility of sixteen parole offices throughout the state. Parole agents play multiple roles, including law enforcement agent, job developer, referral specialist, and community liaison. Unfortunately, the quality of parole services is largely dependent on the skills and initiative of the individual parole agent. Parole services are highly fragmented and suffer from the lack of an organizational vision.

Research demonstrates that effective aftercare programs should incorporate both supervision and support services:

When the response is predominantly, or exclusively, a matter of offender surveillance and social control (e.g. drug and alcohol testing, electronic monitoring, frequent curfew checks, strict revocation policies) and the treatment and service-related components are lacking or inadequate...neither a reduction in recidivism nor an improvement in social, cognitive, and behavioral functioning is likely to occur.⁹⁴

Significantly, the CYA continues to emphasize social control over treatment. While the stages of parole supervision are progressively less restrictive, the emphasis remains one of control and law enforcement. As with institutional program staff, parole agents receive very limited training in service provision. Although CYA parole agents are expected to conduct supervision and intervention services, large caseload sizes, inadequate training and geographic limitations frequently translate into an emphasis on surveillance over treatment in practice.⁹⁵ Parole offices are isolated physically and philosophically from the communities they serve. For example, the Oakland parole office, which serves a wide geographic area including Alameda, Contra Costa, and San Francisco counties, is located in a remote area close to the Oakland Airport, making access by public transportation difficult. This isolation severely hinders agents' capacity to meet parolees' needs and to provide appropriate services.

Agents are responsible for facilitating a reentry process that involves state, county, and local governmental agencies as well as community-based organizations. Navigating other governmental and local service agencies requires a commitment to interagency collaboration that is discouraged by current CYA policies:⁹⁶

Parole agents are not likely to have contact with the social workers or teachers or Probation officers who knew their parolees and their families over a period of years. Similarly, County Probation Departments, and judges and other human service workers are not likely to ever see or have a conversation with a Youth Authority Parole Agent.⁹⁷

Parole agents and their clients could benefit tremendously from better collaboration and coordination among local agencies. CYA parole is guided by a leadership philosophy that CYA staff are best equipped to work with their offenders due to their correctional histories with them. I argue that a comprehensive approach, involving local, state, and county agencies and community-based organizations, provides a more effective intervention strategy.

A small proportion of wards are released after serving the maximum sentence, thereby entering their communities without any parole supervision. This small population would benefit from community support and case management services.

a. The Effect of Budget Cuts on Parole Services

The capacity to provide reentry services depends primarily on resources. For example, out-of-home placement slots are funded primarily through the transition funds that are available to a particular parole office. The proposed California Governor's Budget for 2002-2003 (May revision) includes a **\$5 million reduction in the Parole Services and Community Corrections Program.**⁹⁸ The implications of these cuts are far-reaching—proposed cuts include the elimination of the following parolee services:

- Two residential intensive drug treatment programs for parolees
- Transitional residential programs
- Furlough program for INS wards
- Electronic monitoring
- Job development and employment contracts
- Volunteers in Parole mentoring program

According to the *Governor's Budget May Revision 2002-2003*, these cuts occur only in “non-critical parolee services, which will not affect parolee oversight or public safety.”⁹⁹ I argue that eliminating these parole programs has a direct impact on public safety—by eliminating transitional placements, employment opportunities, and valuable mentoring relationships, these budget reductions remove the very programs most likely to reduce recidivism among parolees, leaving hundreds of youth without constructive transitional alternatives.

C. Principles of a Model Reentry Program: A Continuum of Care

Criminal justice experts have identified a continuum of care service model provided in a community-based setting as the most effective way to ensure a smooth transition into the community. The multiple service needs and histories of violent behavior among CYA wards necessitate a system of care that addresses the factors leading to criminal activities. Current systems emphasizing supervision and law enforcement rather than reintegration and support fail to attend to these issues. I recommend incorporating a wraparound strategy that provides a continuum of services to parolees and their families.

“Wraparound is not a service but a comprehensive intervention strategy. [It] is a definable planning process that results in a unique set of natural supports and community services that are designed to achieve a positive set of outcomes. Wraparound is a youth- and family-focused intervention strategy that uses flexible, non-categorical funding and is coordinated across...the mental health, juvenile justice, child welfare, and educational systems. The intervention strategy is appropriate across the continuum...”¹⁰⁰

These principles inform the following recommendations for reforming and improving the CYA reentry process. A diagram of an ideal continuum of care, drawn from model program principles, is available in Appendix B.

VI. Recommendations

A. Implement the case management continuum of care model employed by the State of Missouri Division of Youth Services.

“Missouri’s approach should be a model for the nation. Its success offers definitive proof that states can protect the public, rehabilitate youth, and safeguard taxpayers far better if they abandon incarceration as the core of their juvenile corrections systems.”¹⁰¹

--Richard A. Mendel

“Less Cost, More Safety: Guiding Lights for Reform in Juvenile Justice”

This recommendation involves systems change and requires the commitment and support of the CYA Director and other government leaders. This approach provides consistency and support to youth throughout their custody and parole. The Missouri Department of Youth Services (DYS) employs a regional service delivery system with a continuum of care provided within each region. The DHS was identified by the American Youth Policy Forum as one of the “Guiding Lights” in juvenile justice reform, providing effective services at lower cost.¹⁰²

Key Elements of the DHS model include:

Case Management

Each youth works with a single case manager throughout his or her tenure at DHS. The case manager conducts a comprehensive risk and needs assessment of each youthful offender and develops, monitors, and refines an individualized service plan to address both public safety and service concerns.

Small-Scale Residential Correctional Centers

In contrast to the large training schools employed by the CYA, Missouri juvenile offenders are placed in one of a number of small-scale residential placements ranging from secure care facilities to group homes. This arrangement helps to prevent the cycle of intimidation and violence exacerbated by the large-scale, dormitory-style living conditions at the CYA (see pages 8-9).

Parole/Aftercare

Upon release from a correctional center, youth continue to work with the same case manager to find an appropriate placement and day treatment services. “Alternative Living” environments provide transitional services to help in the adjustment to independent living

and employment. Youth are also supported and monitored through an Intensive Case Management Monitoring System, in which college students serve as “trackers” to provide mentoring and guidance to the youth and their families. Day Treatment services include alternative education, counseling, life skills, and community service opportunities.

Researchers have identified this type of individualized service as a superior intervention method to group-based treatment.¹⁰³ In Missouri, reforms have resulted in lower recidivism and a less costly juvenile justice system: the DYS budget in fiscal year 2000 was \$94 for each youth aged 10-17 years, one-third less than the juvenile correctional budgets of the eight surrounding states, and recidivism consistently hovers around 10%.¹⁰⁴

B. Create a pilot program to utilize contract arrangements for institutional program services.

The current staffing structure, in which youth correctional counselors and parole agents provide the majority of human service and counseling opportunities to wards, forces staff to balance the conflicting responsibilities of surveillance and service provision. With the majority of training and work hours dedicated to custodial tasks, service provision remains a secondary and neglected component within the Youth Authority.

By hiring and/or contracting with qualified personnel hired solely to meet the service and education needs of the wards, the CYA can demonstrate its commitment to meeting wards’ intense service needs without sacrificing its emphasis on security and public safety. During interviews, institutional staff identified this staffing structure, also referred to as counseling “out of post,” as a promising, more cost-effective approach. Steiner et al. recommends contracting with other state agencies such as the Department of Mental Health to provide more effective psychiatric services.¹⁰⁵ A pilot program is recommended to enable an evaluation of the effectiveness of such an arrangement before creating department-wide policy changes.¹⁰⁶ Correctional staff at all facilities should receive additional training in effective counseling and service provision to address ongoing concerns about their capacity to provide the necessary support to wards.

C. Create additional community-based treatment and supervision slots for CYA wards.

Additional funding is needed for contracted services in the community, particularly in transitional residential and day treatment programs. Limited resources should be targeted at prevention and intervention programs with strong track records in preventing re-offense. Of course, even unlimited funding cannot alleviate the limited availability of treatment programs and other community resources in certain counties. However, the CYA can take the lead in collaborating with local governmental and community-based agencies to address these limitations. CYA parolees are frequently seen as “beyond hope”; this approach facilitates a greater community commitment to serving this population.

D. Transfer authority for determining length of stay and conditions of parole for CYA wards from the Youthful Offender Parole Board to the committing court.

“The cities, counties and communities that are proving most successful in reducing juvenile crime rates are those that have focused comprehensively and engage key leaders from multiple sectors.”¹⁰⁷

-Richard A. Mendel, American Youth Policy Forum

California State Senator Richard Polanco has recommended the elimination of the Youthful Offender Parole Board and the realignment of responsibilities modeled after the process used for group home and probation camp placements.¹⁰⁸ This proposal facilitates improved inter-agency collaboration and local control. Following are excerpts from Senator Polanco’s proposal, which includes the following provisions:

- Eliminates the YOPB;
- Empowers the juvenile court, with input from probation, prosecutors, the juvenile and his or her counsel, and victims, to set an initial parole consideration date and recommend treatment and programming at the time the minor is committed to CYA;
- Requires the CYA to notify the court if the recommended treatment programs are unavailable;
- Requires probation to monitor the ward’s treatment and progress through visits every three months;
- Continues to use CYA parole agents for parole;
- Requires the juvenile court to monitor, through parole and probation, wards through parole until jurisdiction is terminated.

Benefits of this structure include:

- Enhanced local control
 - The local judge, with input from CYA, probation, local law enforcement, and other stakeholders, will decide when a ward is ready for release.
- Stronger link between CYA and the counties
 - Counties will have more input into what happens to their juveniles and the CYA will become a more responsive service provider.

- Increased CYA accountability
 - CYA will be held to higher standards because counties will have to pay for wards and will be responsible for wards when they are released back into their communities.
- Improved efficiency
 - The elimination of the YOPB removes a state body with too little knowledge of wards' histories and needs to play a valuable role in sentencing and parole.

E. Expand community corrections sanctions

Placement in appropriate community sentencing programs provides an intermediate level of supervision in an ideal continuum of care. Community corrections methods, used successfully by model programs such as the Missouri Department of Youth Services, include the following:¹⁰⁹

- Community Service: Mandatory work through which offenders give back to the community.
- Halfway Houses: Residential placements where offenders work and/or attend school and pay rent in the community while undergoing counseling and job training.
- Restitution: Offenders provide financial compensation to those victims and communities their actions have harmed.
- Drug Treatment: Residential or outpatient drug treatment is proven to reduce drug use and associated criminal behavior.
- Intensive Supervision: Authorities maintain a close watch on offenders (closer than in regular parole) to ensure that they meet their Board-ordered obligations.
- Fines: Assess in proportion to people's ability to pay, fines provide a strong disincentive to criminal activity and help to fund the court system and/or victims' funds.
- Electronic Monitoring: Helps maintain close surveillance for people ordered to home confinement, work programs or drug counseling

F. Create educational alternatives

To combat the low level of functional literacy among the CYA population, I recommend expanding educational options as one of the primary means for reducing recidivism and promoting self-sufficiency. Specifically, I recommend the following:

- Create a range of high school education options for parolees to ensure that both education and public safety goals are met.
- Create formal linkages with Adult Education programs and community colleges.
- Create an alliance with the local Board of Education to develop a seamless link between CYA schools and the community school and to prevent delays in school placement. For instance, the New Jersey Juvenile Justice Coalition (NJJC) is working to build connections with the Board of Education in its efforts to have youth back in school within two days of release.¹¹⁰
- Establish alternative schooling options such as “schools within schools,” in which students have access to smaller learning units and flexible instruction. Such programs have been identified as a promising method to reduce drug abuse and delinquency.¹¹¹
- Establish and support alternative schools that provide education and support services to the entire family unit. Charter schools such as Los Angeles-based Save Our Future provide ex-offenders of all ages with the opportunity to attain a high school diploma while also receiving wraparound services.
- Rescind legislation barring access to Pell grants. Education provides the best opportunity for reducing recidivism. The average Pell grant in fiscal year 2001 was \$2,057. One study indicated that the higher level of degree received was inversely related to the level of recidivism of offenders: individuals with an Associate’s degree had recidivism rates of 13.7%, Bachelors 5.6%, and Master’s degree holders had 0% recidivism.¹¹²

G. Expand gender-specific services

The need for gender-specific services has become more pressing as girls and young women are committed to the Youth Authority at increasing rates. Residential services for female offenders and parolees should be provided in a single-gender environment with staff experienced in providing services to this population. Female offenders have unique service needs that are best addressed through targeted programs that recognize the unique personal and criminal histories of this population. Traditional correctional practices fail to consider the long histories of emotional and physical abuse, sexual exploitation, and high poverty rates that characterize the female offender population. Services should be individualized, community-based and family-focused.

H. Replicate model programs

The following programs are included to:

- ❖ Demonstrate that investments in quality reentry services provide cost-effective alternatives to parole by reducing recidivism at far lower costs than incarceration;
- ❖ Assist officials in exploring effective approaches for juvenile offenders that could enhance existing programs for individuals released from the California Youth Authority;
- ❖ Identify programs that officials might consider for adaptation to address existing gaps in California’s current continuum of services;
- ❖ Demonstrate to community leaders, especially those affiliated with grassroots organizations, religious institutions, and other nonprofit agencies, the role and efficacy of community-based programs for offenders in their home communities;

The following programs have been identified for their demonstrated ability to provide comprehensive, cost-effective services to youthful offenders in their reintegration into their communities. I have included as “Model Programs” only those services that have been formally evaluated. “Promising Practices” include programs that have resulted in the reporting of successful outcomes by program administrators and participants but for which formal evaluations have not been conducted or were not available. The following information provides mere snapshots of these programs. Additional contact information is available in Appendix G.

Model Program #1: Missouri Department of Youth Services (DYS)¹¹³

The Missouri DYS provides an exemplary model of the capacity to implement cost-effective reforms with amazing results. Key program elements are described in Recommendation A.

Model Program #2: Wraparound Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin¹¹⁴

The Wraparound approach offers a community-based, youth-centered, family-focused treatment plan that delivers services from a range of service providers, including mental health, juvenile justice, child welfare, and educational systems. Wraparound Milwaukee has incorporated this approach with high rates of success: multiple researchers have identified Wraparound Milwaukee as a “best practice” in violence reduction.¹¹⁵ Services target youth diagnosed with conduct disorder or an oppositional defiant disorder, two common diagnoses among juvenile justice clients. Services include: housing assistance; mentoring; tutoring; day treatment; residential treatment; crisis inpatient facility; independent living support; and parent aid. This program serves 600 youth per year at a cost of \$3,300 per month. According to Richard Mendel’s report on model juvenile justice programs, Wraparound Milwaukee was identified by U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher as a reflection that “long term, complex care can be offered in an efficient way that reduces cost for all of the involved children and youth agencies.”¹¹⁶

Model Program #3: Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care, Eugene, Oregon¹¹⁷

Blueprints for Violence Prevention identified Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) as a cost-effective alternative to group or residential treatment and/or incarceration. At a 12-month follow-up, youth who participated in this program spent 60% fewer days incarcerated; had fewer subsequent arrests; and had significantly less hard drug use than non-participants. Adolescents were placed with community families who provide treatment and intensive supervision at home, in school, and in the community; positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior; a relationship with a mentoring adult; and separation from delinquent peers. This program ensures that community parents receive supervision and support. With family reunification as the ultimate goal, the biological or adoptive family also receives family therapy and training in the structured program used in the MTFC home. Program length averaged seven months at a monthly cost of \$2,691 per youth.

Model Program #4: Multisystemic Therapy, multiple locations¹¹⁸

Multisystemic Therapy (MST) targets chronic, violent, or substance abusing male or female juvenile offenders, ages 12 to 17, at high risk of out of home placement, and the offenders' families. Using a home-based model of services delivery, trained therapists provide intervention strategies that include strategic family therapy, structural family therapy, behavioral parent training, and cognitive behavior therapies. Evaluations of MST have demonstrated reductions of 25% to 75% in long-term rates of re-arrest; reductions of 47% to 67% in out-of-home placements; extensive improvements in family functioning; and decreased mental health problems. The cost is \$4,500 per youth for approximately sixty hours of contact over four months. According to a cost-benefit analysis conducted by Washington State Institute for Public Policy, MST saved taxpayers \$8.38 for each dollar spent.¹¹⁹

Model Program #5: Operation New Hope Lifeskills'95, California Youth Authority¹²⁰

This aftercare treatment program for CYA parolees provided thirteen consecutive weekly modules emphasizing different coping skills. Program goals included:

- Improving the basic socialization skills necessary for successful reintegration into the community
- Significantly reduc[ing] criminal activity in terms of amount and seriousness
- Alleviat[ing] the need for, or dependence on, alcohol or illicit drugs
- Improv[ing] overall lifestyle choices (i.e., social, education, job training, and employment)
- Reduc[ing] the individual's need for gang participation and affiliation as a support mechanism
- Reduc[ing] the high rate of short-term parole revocations¹²¹

Through intensive individualized treatment and counseling, as well as placing parolees away from their counties of commitment, this program produced successful outcomes for many participants. Participants in the Lifeskills'95 program were less likely to be arrested; use illicit

drugs; be unemployed; and to reestablish frequent contact with former gang affiliations than parolees who did not participate in the program.¹²²

Promising Program #1: Independent Living Program, Washington, D.C.

The Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice Independent Living Program (ILP) offers incarcerated youth and those youth placed out of their home environment with skill building and preparation for independence in a community-based setting. The program serves both males and females, ages 17 to 21. The duration of the program frequently ranges from 12 to 24 months. In place of a traditional “facility” to house program participants, each youth in the ILP is supplied with a furnished apartment, a comprehensive “life plan” developed with the youth and various key actors in his or her life, a weekly stipend, and around-the-clock monitoring and support. Based upon the philosophy of “unconditional care” rather than “zero tolerance,” the program facilitates each participant’s development of pro-social attitudes and relationships to enhance his or her capacity for crime- and drug-free living.

ILP staff work closely with participants to seek services and support to meet their needs from within the community. Special education services, substance abuse counseling, vocational training, mental health counseling and other social services are obtained from reputable community providers. All youth in the ILP are assigned to a case manager with a maximum caseload of ten youth. Specialized services are available for youth with infant children and for Seriously Emotionally Disturbed Youth. Seventy-four percent (74%) of those released remain arrest free during their participation in the program.

Promising Program #2: Youth in Transition Program, Maryland and Pennsylvania¹²³

The Youth in Transition Program (YIT), operated by the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives, provides a continuum of care to adolescents and young adults who need intensive, specialized services. The goal of these services is to meet the developmental, intellectual, emotional, and vocational needs of all youth. Residential programming is provided in the following settings:

- Small therapeutic group homes
- Residential Program Three-Bed Alternative Living Unit
- Supervised Independent Living
- Semi-Independent Living Transitional Unit

By offering a graduated system of residential placements, the YIT program provides a coordinated system of services to meet the individual needs of youth released from correctional facilities. Youth learn to manage independent living while also receiving supportive services.

Promising Program #3: Save Our Future, Los Angeles, California

Save Our Future is a nonprofit service organization dedicated to the prevention of at-risk youths from entering a life of crime and to ensure a successful rehabilitation for those who were incarcerated. The organization is committed to decreasing juvenile crime in South Central Los Angeles by providing comprehensive resources for at-risk youth and their families through life skills training, violence prevention, and family advocacy. Specific programs include Ja'Mee's House, a residential treatment program for formerly incarcerated young men that includes medical care, victims awareness, and substance abuse programs; Corey's (Community Organization for Rehabilitation and Education for Youth) Youth Services, which provides alternatives to criminal activity, mentoring and victims awareness; Computer Literacy; and the California Charter Academy, in which school administrators work closely with the students and their families to address specific needs. The Charter Academy provides wraparound services to ensure that all necessary academic and social supports are in place during the transition period.

Promising Program #4: Transitional Residential Program (TRP), Los Angeles, California

This CYA-funded program was discontinued as of June 30, 2002 due to budget cuts. However, the Transitional Residential Program remains a promising program with possibilities for modification and replication. Through contracted services with Volunteers of America (VOA), wards participated in a 90-day work furlough program. Serving up to twenty-two wards at a time, the TRP provided employment development services, job referrals, and counseling services. Participants were required to seek full-time employment and upon employment, were responsible for transportation costs. At program completion, wards were recommended for parole consideration by the YOPB. Although the TRP staff did not formally track former participants, the former Administrator estimated that 75-80% of program graduates had not re-offended within one year of program completion. Anecdotal evidence indicates that most participants maintained their jobs or were promoted to higher paid positions. Program costs approximated \$1,200 per month to cover room, board, and personal expenses. Because the TRP was oriented around employment, educational pursuits were secondary. Considering the low skill level of many CYA wards, I recommend a similar program with an increased emphasis on education.

VII. Conclusions and Areas for Further Research

Several areas of research were beyond the scope of this report but deserve closer attention:

- Greater attention should be paid to the specific needs of girls and young women in the Youth Authority. Female offenders remain an understudied population; the increasing proportion of girls committed to the CYA facility in Ventura increases the urgency of the need for gender-based services and intervention programs that address the root causes of their criminal behavior.¹²⁴

- Due to the documented evidence about the relationship between foster care placement and juvenile delinquency, additional research on the outcomes of youth who lived in out-of-home placements before commitment to the CYA would be beneficial.
- The CYA should create a better tracking system for youth and young adults released from the CYA. Data collection should include a full recidivism measure, as well as educational, employment, and health outcomes. The National Institute of Justice study provides a potential template for data collection.¹²⁵

The sobering facts about the outcomes for youth and young adults released from the Youth Authority demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the current “get tough” policies employed in the State of California and present an opportunity for reform. When youthful offenders leave the CYA, the barriers they face far outweigh the opportunities for a successful reintegration into the community. Indeed, the odds are against them: low education, high unemployment, and a greater than 50% chance that they’ll re-offend. The emphasis on surveillance and protection to the exclusion of education and treatment has had serious detrimental consequences for individual offenders, their families, and the communities to which they return. This report highlights the disjointed approach to reentry and the need for increased collaboration among state, local, and nonprofit organizations. A comprehensive approach to reentry must also address the limited opportunities that face many of these individuals:

*[Paroled offenders] are struggling with the same stresses of poverty, the same limited opportunities, and same class and racial tensions as shape the lives of all youths, delinquent or not, who live in disadvantaged communities. Ultimately these issues must be confronted if we are to expect youthful offenders to establish meaningful lives in the community.*¹²⁶

During the course of interviews conducted for this report, many individuals identified the need and widespread support for improved reentry services for CYA youth and young adults. However, without state leadership, the future outlook for this population remains grim. I hope that this report will result in a formal commitment to reentry and aftercare as an integral component in a continuum of juvenile justice services.

Notes

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² Bonnie Todis et al., "Overcoming the Odds: Qualitative Examination of Resilience Among Formerly Incarcerated Adolescents," *Exceptional Children* (2001): 119-139.

³ Don A. Josi and Dale Sechrest, "A Pragmatic Approach to Parole Aftercare: Evaluation of a Community Reintegration Program for High-Risk Youthful Offenders," *Justice Quarterly* 16 (March 1999); "Background Fact Sheets for Less Hype, More Help: Reducing Juvenile Crime, What Works and What Doesn't," American Youth Policy Forum.

⁴ The California Youth Authority houses almost 6,000 of the state's most serious youthful offenders, ages 12-25. Over 50% were committed for violent offenses, and 38% have two or more prior commitments. (State of California Department of the Youth Authority, "Characteristics of First Commitments to the Youth Authority 1990 Through 2001.")

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¹⁶ Todis et al.

¹⁷ Todis et al.

¹⁸ Snyder and Sickmund.

¹⁹ Gary Melton, “Why Don’t the Knuckleheads Use Common Sense?” *Innovative Approaches for Difficult-to-Treat Populations* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1997), 354. Quoted by Mendel in “Less Hype.”

²⁰ Linster et al.

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- ³⁴ Steve Lerner, *The CYA Report Part Two*.
- ³⁵ Fomer CYA Ward.
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- ³⁷ Fomer CYA Ward.
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- ⁴⁹ State of California Department of the Youth Authority, “CYA Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment Needs Assessment: Description and Preliminary Findings.” (Sacramento, CA: August 2000).
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⁹⁰State of California Department of the Youth Authority, “CCSOP”: 37.

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¹⁰² Mendel, “Less Cost.”

¹⁰³ Mendel, “Less Cost.”

¹⁰⁴ American Youth Policy Forum *Press Release* (June 6, 2001).

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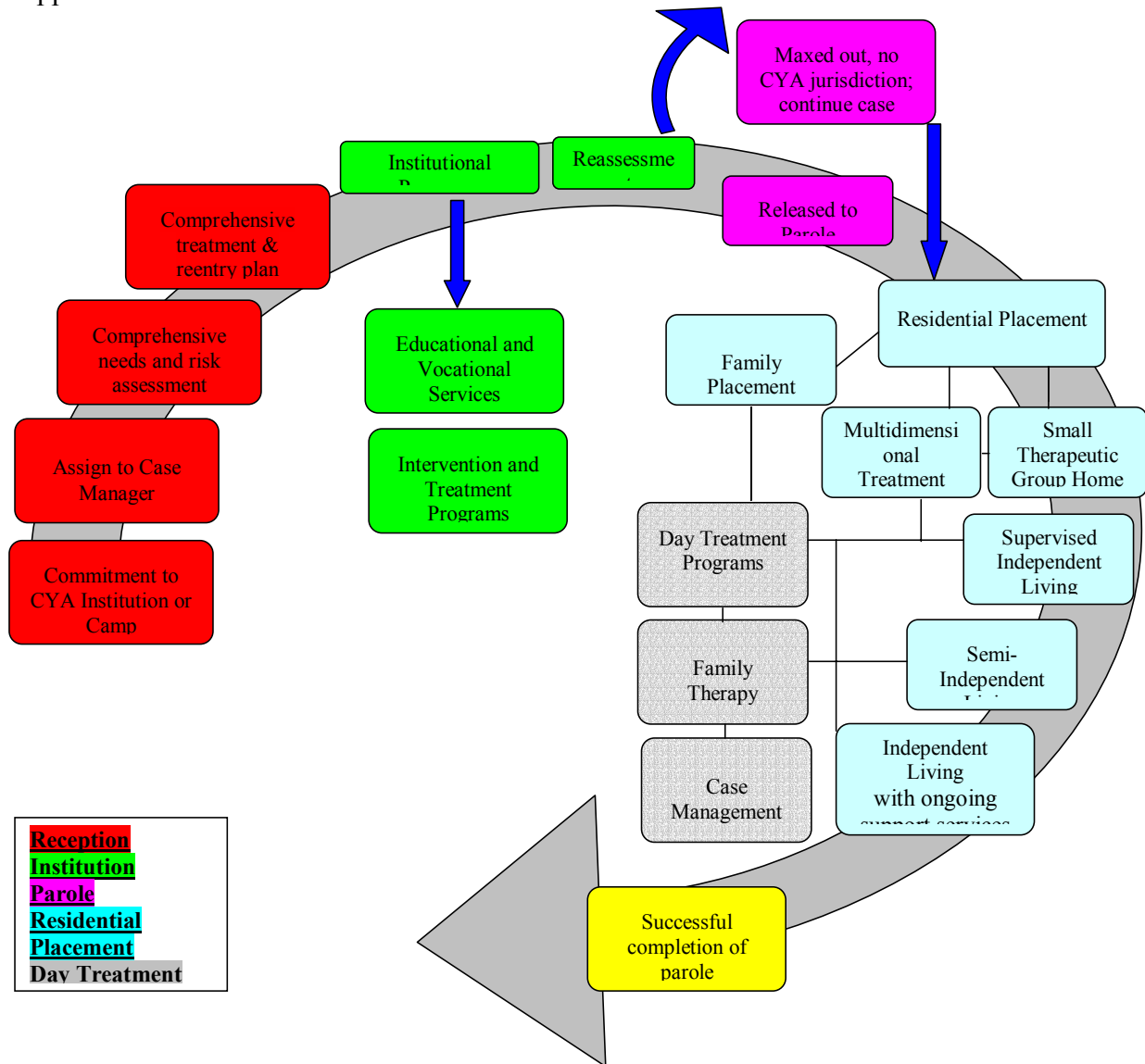
Appendix A

The National Center for Juvenile Justice created the following invoice, based on the work of economist Mark A. Clark, which depicts the cost to U.S. taxpayers when a youth drops out of high school for a life of crime and drug abuse.

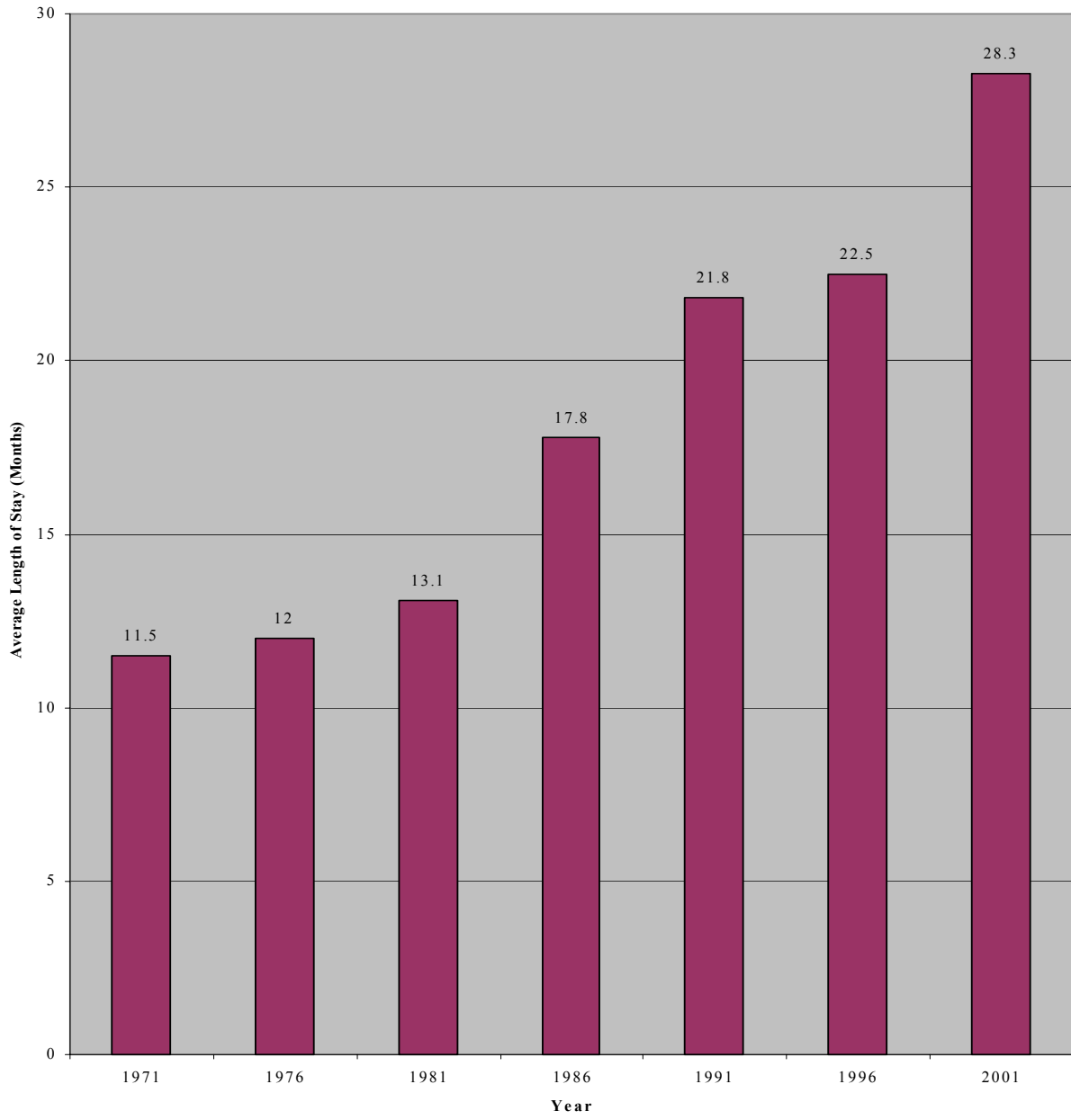
THE COSTS OF JUVENILE CRIME¹²⁶	
DESCRIPTION	COST
Crime	
Juvenile career (4 years @ 1 - 4 crimes/year)	
Victim costs	\$62,000 - \$250,000
Juvenile justice costs	\$21,000-\$84,000
Adult career (6 years @ 10.6 crimes/year)	
Victim costs	\$1,000,000
Criminal justice costs	\$335,000
Offender productivity costs	\$64,000
Total crime cost	\$1.5 – \$1.8 million
Present value	\$1.3 - \$1.5 million
Drug Abuse	
Resources devoted to drug market	\$84,000- \$168,000
Reduced productivity loss	\$27,600
Drug treatment costs	\$10,200
Medical treatment of drug-related illnesses	\$11,000
Premature death	\$31,800 - \$223,000
Criminal justice costs associated with drug crimes	\$40,500
Total drug abuse cost	\$200,000 - \$480,000
Present value 1999	\$150,000-\$360,000
Costs imposed by high school dropout:	
Lost wage productivity	\$300,000
Fringe benefits	\$75,000
Nonmarket losses	\$95,000-\$375,000
Total dropout costs	\$470,000-\$750,000
Present Value*	\$243,000 - \$388,000
Total loss	\$2.2 - \$3 million
Present Value*	\$1.7 - \$2.3 million

*Present Value is the amount of money that would have to be invested today in order to cover future costs of the youth's behavior.

Appendix B

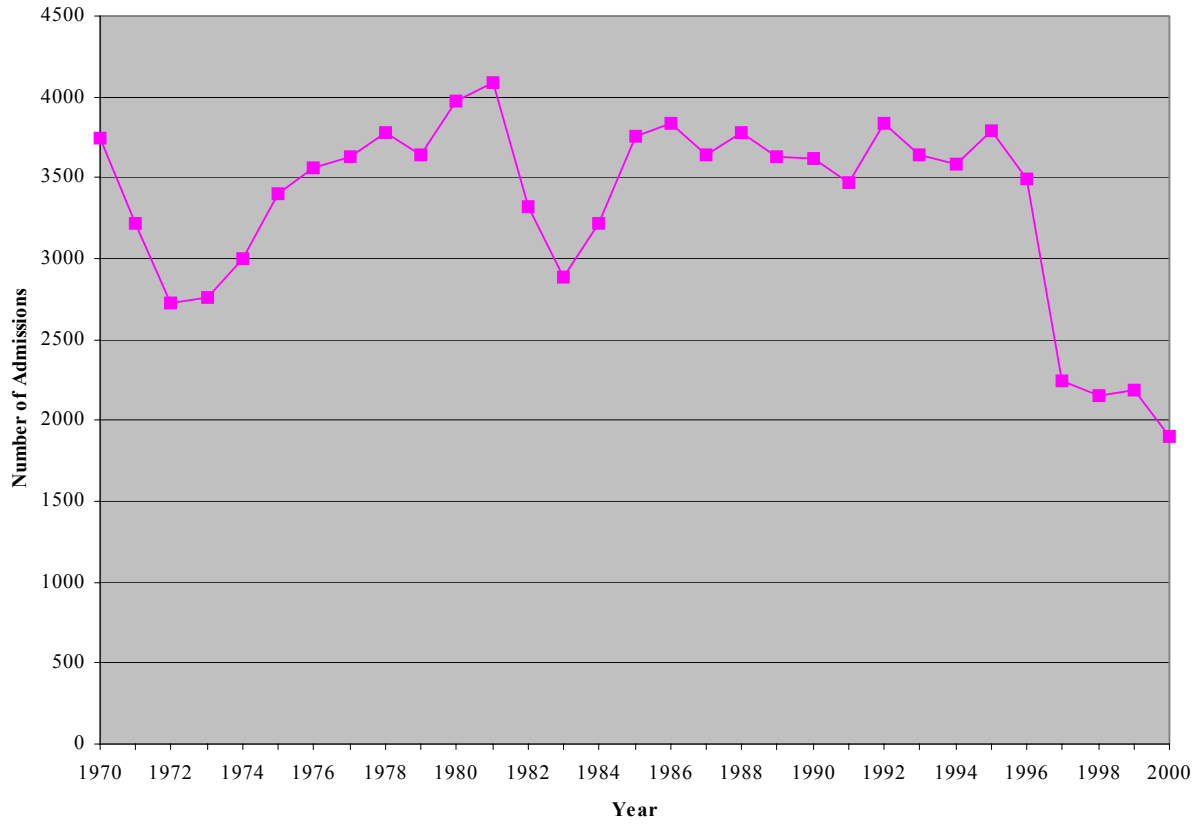


Length of Stay (Average Months)



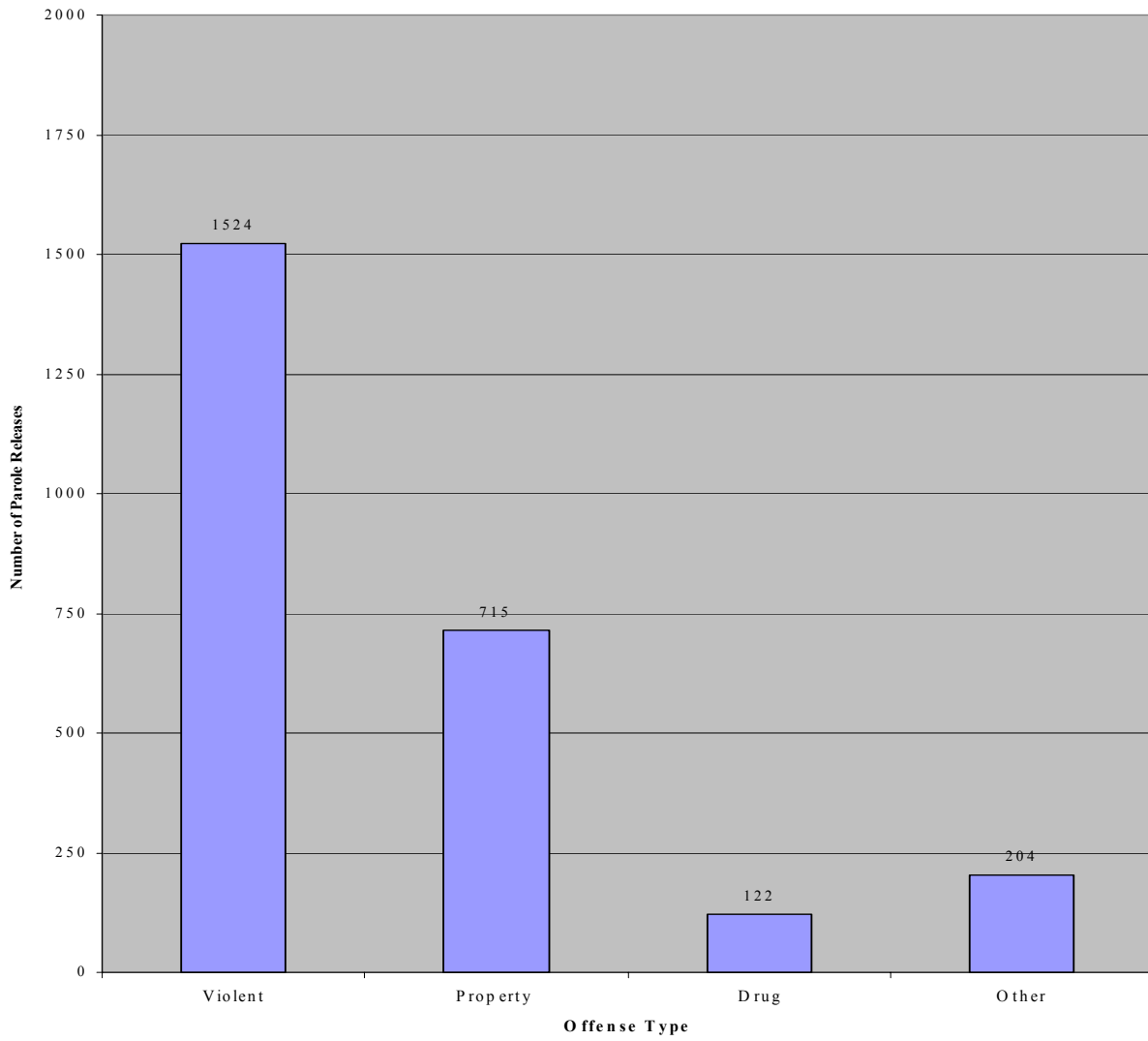
Appendix D

**California Youth Authority
First Admissions by Year 1970-2000**

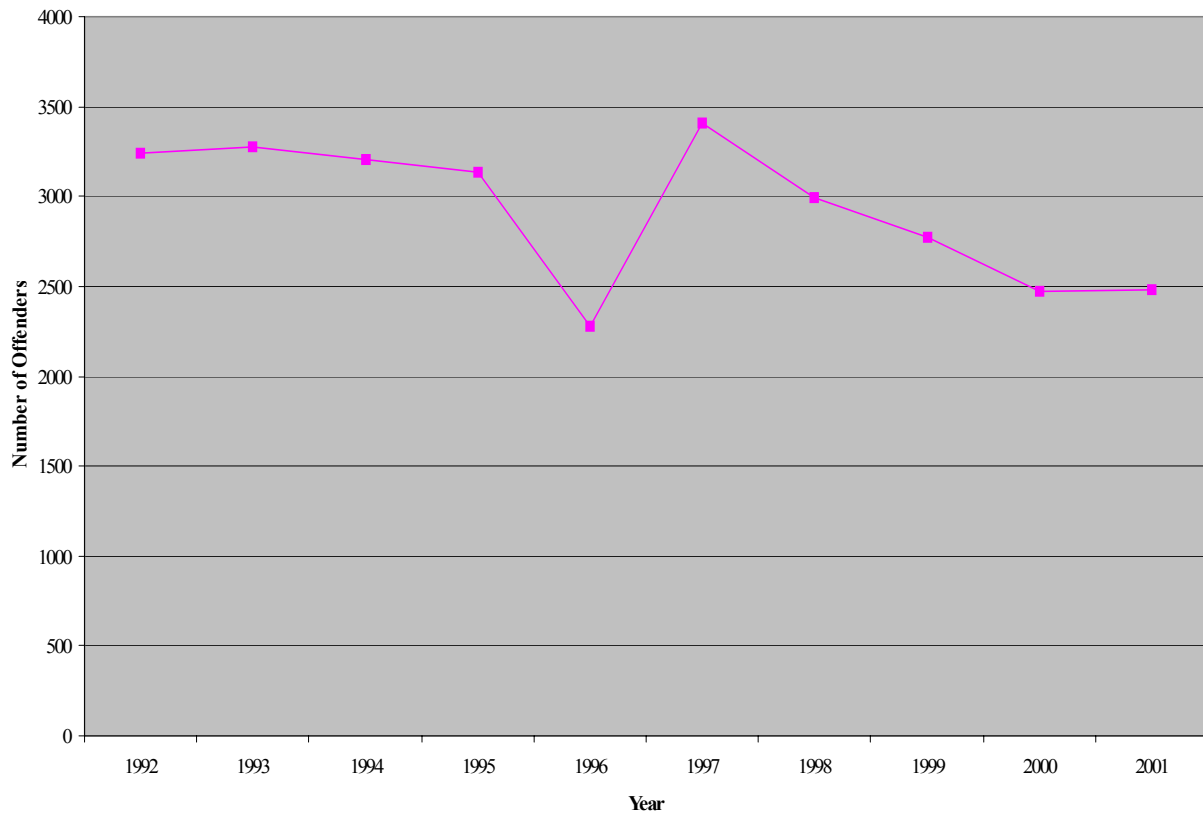


Appendix E

Parole Releases By Offense 2001



**CYA Parole Releases
1992-2001**



Appendix G

Resources: Programs With Promise

INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

Calvin Smith, Director
Telephone: (202) 737-7270
<http://www.cjcj.org/programs.html>

Missouri Division of Youth Services

Broadway State Office Building
P.O. Box 447
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0447
Telephone: (573) 751-3324
Fax: (573) 526-4494
<http://www.dss.state.mo.us/dys/index.htm>

Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care

Patricia Chamberlain, Ph. D., Clinic Director
Oregon Social Learning Center
160 E 4th Street
Eugene, OR 97401
Telephone: (541) 485-2711
Fax: (541) 485-7087
Email pattic@oslc.org
www.oslc.org

Multisystemic Therapy

For information about program research, contact:
Scott W. Henggeler, Ph.D.
Family Services Research Center
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences
Medical University of South Carolina
67 President St, Suite CPP
PO Box 250861
Charleston, SC 29425
(843) 876-1800
(843) 876-1845 FAX
E-mail henggesw@musc.edu

Multisystemic Therapy (con't)

For information about training and technical assistance as well as materials, contact:
Keller Strother

MST Services, Inc.
268 Coleman Blvd, Suite 2E
Mount Pleasant, SC 29464
Telephone: (843) 856-8226 x11
Fax: (843) 856-8227
E-mail keller@mstservices.com
www.mstservices.com or www.mstinstitute.org

State of California Department of the Youth Authority

Communications & Public Affairs Office
George Kostyrko, Assistant Director
4241 Williamsborough Drive, Suite 220
Sacramento, CA 95823-2088
Telephone: (916) 262-1479
Fax: (916) 262-1749
www.cya.ca.gov

SAVE OUR FUTURE

3210 West Vernon Avenue, Suite A
Los Angeles, CA 90008
Telephone: (323) 291-6623
Fax: (323) 291-6373 (fax)
www.saveourfutureusa.org

TRANSITIONAL RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

State of California Department of the Youth Authority
Los Angeles Regional Parole Office
741 Glenvia Street, Second Floor
Glendale, CA 91206
Telephone: (818) 543-4717

WRAPAROUND MILWAUKEE

9501 Watertown Plank Road
Milwaukee, WI 53226
Telephone: (414) 257-6532
<http://www.wrapmilw.org/>

YOUTH IN TRANSITION PROGRAM

National Center on Institutions and Alternatives
Youth in Transition (YORK office)
475 Madison Avenue
York, Pennsylvania 17404
Telephone: (717) 846-44340
Fax: (717) 848-1214
