

Community-Based Supervision: Increased Public Safety, Decreased Expenditures

TIP SHEET | NOVEMBER 2014

Introduction

As a society, we all want safe neighborhoods and prosperous communities. To achieve these goals, however, we need to redesign our juvenile justice systems.

Currently, our juvenile justice system is like a maze that does not have a way to get in and out. A lot of youth, no matter how they enter the juvenile justice system, get on a path that leads straight to secure custody, with no way out. We know that other routes must be made available — like those that lead to mental health services, addiction services, or services that help youth mature into responsible adults — and that these must be made into two-way paths, so that youth can get where they need to go in the most effective and efficient way possible. If we do this, we can improve outcomes, and achieve safer neighborhoods for everyone.

A longstanding and growing body of research shows that pre-trial detention and post-adjudication incarceration for youth can have extremely negative ramifications for the youth's ability to get back on the right track.¹ Youth prisons and detention facilities have been shown to be dangerous, ineffective, and unnecessary. Community-based supervision programs for youth² both cost less than confinement and provide increased rehabilitative benefits for youth.³ This brief tip sheet will describe a few fundamental characteristics of community-based supervision programs and will summarize their average costs.

¹ Shaena M. Fazal, Esq., "Safely Home: Reducing youth incarceration and achieving positive youth outcomes for high and complex need youth through effective community-based programs" (Washington, DC: Youth Advocate Programs Policy & Advocacy Center, June 2014), accessed July 7, 2014 at <http://bit.ly/1R6mj8>.

² Although "alternative to detention" and "alternative to incarceration" are the terms commonly used by juvenile justice professionals, for the purpose of this tip sheet, we use instead use the inclusive term "community-based supervision program". We prefer this because it does not imply that detention or incarceration is the norm; instead it emphasizes what should be expected and appropriate treatment for youth in trouble with the law.

³ Richard A. Mendel, *No Place for Kids: The Case for Reducing Juvenile Incarceration* (Baltimore: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011), 2. Accessed July 6, 2014 at: www.aecf.org/noplaceforkids.

Benefits of Community-Based Supervision Programs

In the past decade, states, elected officials and policymakers have questioned the high costs of confining youth. This has resulted in a shift in the funding mechanisms and incentives aimed at keeping youth in their home communities. According to a public safety performance report by the Pew Charitable Trusts, some states may spend as much as \$100,000 annually per committed youth.⁴ Fortunately, research has consistently shown that diversion and community supervision programs not only are more cost-effective than incarceration, but also yield fundamental benefits such as decreased recidivism, more appropriate treatment for youth, reduced stigma associated with formal juvenile justice system involvement, and increased family participation.⁵ For example, evaluations of Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP)—which serves high-risk youth in the community who would otherwise be placed out of home—found that 86 percent of youth remained arrest-free while in the program, and 87 percent were still living in the community six and 12 months after completing the program.⁶ Moreover, Pathways to Desistance, a large, multi-site longitudinal study that followed nearly 2,000 youth who had committed violent offenses for seven years, found that community supervision was as effective at incarceration at reducing anti-social activity.⁷



⁴ Pew Charitable Trusts, “Latest Data Show Juvenile Confinement Continues Rapid Decline” (August 2013) accessed June 24, 2014, at <http://tinyurl.com/l4dz8ms>.

⁵ See e.g. “The Truth about Consequences,” (Washington, D.C.: National Juvenile Justice Network, January 2012), at <http://bit.ly/VFF2RO>; National Research Council, *Reforming Juvenile Justice* (Washington, DC: National Academies of Science, 2013): 127, at <http://bit.ly/1zhoVmM>; Stephanie Lee, Steve Aos, Elizabeth Drake, Annie Pennucci, Marna Miller, Laurie Anderson, “Return on Investment: Evidence-Based Options to Improve Statewide Outcomes April 2012 Update,” available at <http://1.usa.gov/1bQiPsn>; and Annie Balck, “The Real Costs and Benefits of Change: Finding Opportunities for Reform During Difficult Fiscal Times” (Washington, DC: National Juvenile Justice Network, June 2010), 13-14.

⁶ See Douglas Evans, and Sheyla Delgado, “Most High Risk Youth Referred to Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. Remain Arrest-Free and in their Communities During YAP Participation” (New York, NY: John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Research and Evaluation Center, YAP Facts, April 2014), 2; and Evans and Delgado, “YAP Helps to Keep Youth out of Secure Facilities and Living in Their Communities” (New York, NY: John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Research and Evaluation Center, YAP Facts, June 2014), 1.

⁷ Thomas A. Loughran, et al., “Estimating a Dose-Response Relationship Between Length of Stay and Future Recidivism in Serious Juvenile Offenders,” *Criminology*, 47 (2009): 699-740.

Inclusion Criteria

A plethora of programs work with court-involved youth, but for the purpose of this fact sheet, we have focused only on those non-residential programs that are used as an option for youth who otherwise would face a term of detention or incarceration. From among those programs, we chose a handful that met the majority of the key characteristics needed for effective community-based programs (see chart titled “Selected Key Components,” page 5). While this list of programs is not exhaustive, it provides a fair sample of the kinds of programs that exist as sound community supervision options for youth who would otherwise be confined. To be included in this list, programs had to meet the majority of the following criteria:

Evidence-informed

- Serves youth through practices that have been evaluated and can capture data and report on outcomes.

Court accountability

- Has the ability to take referrals directly from the court.
- Can respond to court requests for information on youth progress.

Strength based/positive youth development approach

- Helps youth develop their strengths in the context of a positive youth development framework.
- Incorporates an assessment of the whole child’s needs, including work or job training components and connection to educational opportunities.

Family engagement

- Works with youth in the context of their families.
- Uses a family-centered approach that includes strength-based interventions for caregivers.

Follow-up services and aftercare

- Helps families and youth access community resources.
- Provides long-term, ongoing support.

Services focused on the youth who need it most

- Does not exclude youth who commit the most serious offenses or who have the most complex needs
- Does not “widen the net,” or “cream” youth into the program who would otherwise not have been placed in a youth detention or incarceration facility.

Examples of Community-Based Supervision Programs

➔ **AMIkids:** AMIkids is a national organization that provides a structured, family environment to guide youth back on track to becoming productive and contributing members of society. Active in Florida, Louisiana, New Mexico, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia, AMIkids offers a variety of programs to meet the needs of kids and communities. One of its programs is a day treatment program that allows youth to reside at home and attend the program daily. In order to get youth back on track, the AMIkids day treatment program uses its own Personal Growth Model™ for improving the lives of troubled youth by combining behavior modification, education and treatment in a unified approach. The day treatment program is in lieu of incarceration for 10- to 17-year-old youth who have been adjudicated for misdemeanors and lesser felonies. Youth are referred through juvenile justice agencies or school districts. Length of stay is usually four to six months.

➔ **CASES:** CASES offers programs to help New York City's justice-involved young people ranging in age from 13-20. Among other services, CASES provides an alternative-to-incarceration program for youth called the Court Employment Project (CEP). CEP is for youth ages 16-19 facing felony charges in adult court. The program is strengths-based and grounded in youth development; it is focused on educational, vocational and social development, with accountability to the courts. CEP has an average length of stay of six months.

➔ **Center for Community Alternatives:** The Center for Community Alternatives (CCA) promotes reintegrative justice and a reduced reliance on incarceration through advocacy, services, and public policy development in the state of New York. CCA works extensively with court-involved young people and at-risk youth with ongoing disciplinary problems involving violent behavior or weapons possession. CCA provides youth with services that include intensive community-based supervision; individual case management; therapeutic groups to address trauma; life skills based on an evidence-based curriculum; curfew monitoring; supervision of school attendance and performance; home visits; random urinalysis testing to determine drug use; and educational and vocational counseling. Youth between 12 and 16 years old arrested for a felony offense are eligible for CCA's Youth Advocacy Program (YAP). CCA's YAP is a court-mandated alternative to placement and alternative to incarceration program for youth charged as adults and involved with the New York Supreme Court. CCA also offers the Client Specific Planning program for youth 15 or younger with delinquency cases in the family court. For both youth programs, CCA provides up to 12 months of supervision. However, the average stay for youth is usually between six and eight months.

➔ **Eckerd:** Eckerd is a youth and family service organization that provides behavioral health, juvenile justice and child welfare services to children and families in Florida, Iowa, Louisiana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, and Vermont. Eckerd's community-based services enable at-

risk children and youth from birth through age 23 to remain safely in their homes and receive services in the community while addressing complex mental, emotional and behavioral needs. Eckerd’s community-based juvenile justice alternative program provides individualized treatment plans that include wraparound services, evidence-based interventions, and family-focused support that last four to six months, on average.

➔ Southwest Key: Southwest Key Programs, Inc. is a non-profit organization that provides a holistic, family-centered approach to reform and rehabilitation through a continuum of care spanning from prevention to re-entry. Services are provided to youth between the ages of 10-17 who might otherwise be placed in residential treatment facilities or secure care institutions, as well as youth who commit status offenses. Southwest Key operates over 70 juvenile justice site- and home-based programs, including youth mentoring, truancy prevention, community-based supervision, wraparound case management, alternatives to detention, safe shelters for immigrant children, alternative education schools, mental health and substance abuse intervention, day treatment, diversion programs for youth who commit status offenses, and community-building initiatives. In addition, Southwest Key Programs offers evidenced-based Functional Family Therapy programs throughout the state of Georgia. Southwest Key serves the states of Arizona, California, Georgia, New York, Texas, and Wisconsin.

➔ YAP: The Youth Advocate Program (YAP) is a nationally recognized nonprofit that offers more than 100 programs across 18 states in rural, suburban and urban areas, including 25 major metro areas, and is exclusively committed to the provision of non-residential, community-based alternatives to detention, state incarceration and residential treatment. YAP uses a wraparound advocacy model to keep children and youth out of these facilities by providing youth and their families with intensive support in their homes, schools, and communities. YAP provides individualized service plans balanced with activities driven by the family's prioritized wants and needs. These plans typically include evidence-based curricula, case management, crisis intervention services available 24/7, skill development, and educational and vocational work.

SELECTED KEY COMPONENTS FOR YOUTH SUPERVISED PROGRAMS						
	Evidence-Informed	Court Accountable	Positive Youth Development	Engage Families	Follow-up/Aftercare	Serve High-Risk Youth
AMIkids	x	x	x	x	x	
CASES	x	x	x	x		x
CCA	x	x	x	x	x	x
Eckerd	x	x	x	x		
SW Key	x	x	x	x	x	x
YAP	x	x	x	x	x	x

The average length of stay for youth in YAP is six months, but if the youth needs more or less service, YAP accommodates that.

Cost of Youth Incarceration

If the average cost to incarcerate a youth is approximately \$100,000 per year, then it costs states about \$274 per day for each youth in the care of their juvenile justice systems. According to the 2011 Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement (CJRP), which collects a snapshot of youth held in public and private residential juvenile facilities across the United States, 41,934 youth were committed that year to public and private facilities.⁸ That means that if all 41,934 youth were confined at once, states would have spent approximately \$11.5 million per day to do so.

There are no national data to examine trends in the lengths of stay in residential facilities. However, if we make reasonable, conservative calculations using data provided by the CJRP, estimated state spending for confining these nearly 42,000 youth throughout 2011 was an astounding \$1.33 billion dollars.⁹



Cost of Community-Based Supervision Programs

Not surprisingly, community-based supervision programs are more cost-effective than residential facilities. The cost of community-based programs varies based on program intensity; necessary and desired contractual hours; level of risk and needs of each youth; and on logistical factors such as location, minimum wages and cost of living. For programs designed to work with youth in the home, these costs per day range from \$30 to \$80 per/youth, with an average cost of \$59 per day—far less than the \$274/day per youth it costs states to manage these youth. Given that community-

⁸ See M. Sickmund, T.J. Sladky, W. Kang, & C. Puzanchera, "Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement," accessed September 18, 2014 at <http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp/>. Data source: Author's analysis of OJJDP's Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement for 2011. Note that this total does not include youth sent to detention facilities.

⁹ This cost is for all youth who were in a residential facility in 2011. It should be noted that the CJRP report grouped youth by their length of stay (e.g., 1,399 youth were held 2-6 days, 2,032 youth were held for 7-13 days, etc.). We multiplied the number of youth in each group by the estimated daily cost of \$274 and then by the lowest number of days in each length-of-stay grouping. In other words, where 1,399 youth were held between two and six days, we assumed that all 1,399 youth were held for only two days, and multiplied those two numbers by \$274/day. Similarly, where 2,032 youth were held between seven and 13 days, we assumed all 2,032 were held for only seven days and then multiplied the two numbers by \$274/day. As a result, our cost estimate is quite conservative.

based supervision programs have a program duration ranging from 6–12 months, the average annual cost for community-based programs highlighted in this tip sheet can range from \$5,400 (six months at \$30/day) to \$29,200 (12 months at \$80/day). If we make the conservative assumption

ESTIMATED 2011 COST SAVINGS FROM SERVING COMMITTED YOUTH IN COMMUNITY

Cost to states for housing 50% of
youth in commitment facilities



Cost to states if those youth were
placed in community-based
supervision program



Potential estimated savings to
states for use of community-based
supervision programs



that only 50% of the youth held in juvenile commitment facilities in 2011 could have been supervised in the community for an average program duration of nine months, states would have saved more than 300 million dollars.¹⁰

Beyond achieving mere cost savings, community-based programs actually lead to far better outcomes for youth and public safety, as youth under community supervision stay attached to school, family and other community supports that are critical to their future success.

Conclusion

States and jurisdictions across the country are grappling with significant budget challenges. One option for policymakers is to reduce spending on youth incarceration and fund community-based supervision programs that offer services like counseling, education and employment skills. Not only are these programs more effective at improving public safety, they are also less expensive than confinement.

¹⁰ Community-based programs have a program duration ranging from 6–12 months. For the purpose of this cost analysis, we averaged the length of stay at 9 months. Serving 50 percent of 41,934 youth x an average daily program cost of \$59/day x 9 months x 30 days = \$334 million. Savings: \$667 million for commitment - \$334 million community-based supervision = \$333 million.