



A Vision to Serve Youth

A Snapshot of Youth Involved in the Juvenile Justice System

- Approximately 8,249 Arkansas kids were involved with the Division of Youth Services (DYS) in 2009.¹
- Each year, police arrest 2.2 million American youth. On any given night, nearly 100,000 American youth are confined in juvenile lockup.²
- Nationally, one out of every five youth taken to court for breaking the law is put into a detention facility.³
- On a given day in 2010, the average age of youth committed to DYS was 16.⁴
- 85% of the children committed to DYS in Arkansas are boys.⁵

The current system deepens divisions.

- Nationally, African-American youth are five times more likely to be incarcerated than white youth who committed the same law violations.⁶
- Nationally, African-American youth without any prior offenses are six times more likely to be locked up than whites.⁷
- In Arkansas, African-American youth are disproportionately committed to DYS⁸: more than half the youth committed to DYS are African American.⁹

¹ Interview with Ron Angel, Director of the Arkansas Division of Youth Services (July 2010).

² "A Road Map for Juvenile Justice Reform," The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2008), 1.

³ C. Puzzanchera, B. Adams and M. Sickmund, "Juvenile Court Statistics 2006-2007," (Pittsburgh, Pa.: National Center for Juvenile Justice), 2010, 32.

⁴ "FY 2010 – First Half Profile Summary (Snapshot)," Arkansas Division of Youth Services Director's Office.

⁵ "FY 2010 – First Half Profile Summary (Snapshot)."

⁶ Miriam Wright Edelman and James M. Jones, "Separate and Unequal: America's Children, Race, and Poverty," *The Future of Children* 14-2 (2004): 135.

⁷ Jasmine Tyler, Jason Ziedenberg, and Eric Lotke, "Cost-Effective Youth Corrections: Rationalizing the Fiscal Architecture of Juvenile Justice Systems," Justice Policy Institute (2006), 2.

⁸ Pat Arthur and Tim Roche, "Juvenile Justice Reform In Arkansas: Building a Better Future for Youth, their Families, and the Community," (2008), 13, <http://www.state.ar.us/dhs/dys/statistical%20report/ArkansasReportFinal.pdf> (accessed July 26, 2010).

⁹ "FY 2010 – First Half Profile Summary (Snapshot)."

- Kids in the juvenile justice system are twice as likely to have a mental disorder, and their condition typically worsens when they're locked up.¹⁰
- Arrests of kids in Arkansas are closely related to substance abuse.¹¹

Most kids are minor, nonviolent offenders.

- In Arkansas, 90% of kids who get into trouble do not commit violent acts.¹²
- 36% of Arkansas youth crimes are misdemeanors.¹³
- According to the U.S. Department of Justice, more juveniles are arrested for curfew violations than violent crimes such as murder, rape and assault.¹⁴
- Kids usually stop breaking the law on their own. 60% of youth arrested never come back into the court system.¹⁵

The majority of kids are disadvantaged and have other conditions that contribute to their misbehavior.

- Of all the youth in Arkansas' locked facilities, 91% have mental and/or behavioral disorders.¹⁶ More than 33% are special needs youth.¹⁷
- Most kids in the Arkansas juvenile justice system come from chaotic home lives. More than 83% have had some contact with the child welfare system before,¹⁸ 82% come from homes where one or both parents are absent, and more than 63% have parents or guardians with drug or alcohol addictions.¹⁹
- More than 90% of girls who are in custody in the U.S. have been physically or sexually abused.²⁰
- Those who have been abused or neglected are 59% more likely to be arrested as juveniles.²¹
- More than 63% of Arkansas youth in correctional facilities have had a drug abuse problem, and more than 57% have struggled with alcohol abuse.²²

¹⁰ Thomas Grisso, "Adolescent Offenders with Mental Disorders," *Juvenile Justice* 18, No. 2 (Fall 2008), <http://www.princeton.edu/futureofchildren/publications/journals/article/index.xml?journalid=31&articleid=45§ionid=146&submit> (accessed July 23, 2010).

¹¹ "FY 2010 – First Half Profile Summary."

¹² Pat Arthur, 1.

¹³ "Arkansas Child Welfare Report Card, Report Period July 2008-June 2009," Arkansas Division of Youth Services, 8.

¹⁴ Jeffrey Butts, Susan Mayer and Gretchen Ruth. "Focusing Juvenile Justice on Positive Youth Development," (Chapin Hall Center for Children Issue Brief, October 2005), 1.

¹⁵ Brian Lee, William Christeson, M.H.S., and Danielle Wondra, "On the Right Track to Safer Communities: Steering California's Juvenile Offenders Away from Lives of Crime" (Fight Crime: Invest in Kids *California*, 2007), 6.

¹⁶ "FY 2010 – First Half Profile Summary."

¹⁷ "DYS Juvenile Profile," Arkansas Division of Youth Services (2010).

¹⁸ Pat Arthur, 22.

¹⁹ "DYS Juvenile Profile."

²⁰ Elizabeth Cauffman, "Understanding the Female Offender,"

<http://www.futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/journals/article/index.xml?journalid=31&articleid=44> (accessed July 29, 2010).

²¹ Cathy S. Widom and Michael G. Maxfield, "An Update on the 'Cycle of Violence,'" (National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, 2001), 1.

²² "DYS Juvenile Profile."