

SUPPORT IMPROVED SERVICES FOR YOUTH IN OCFS FACILITIES

STOP THE CLOSURES OF TRYON LIMITED SECURE RESIDENTIAL CENTER, ANNSVILLE RESIDENTIAL CENTER AND THE DOWNSIZING OF LANSING RESIDENTIAL CENTER

FACT

The Governor's Task Force on Transforming New York State's Juvenile Justice System made recommendations for reforming The State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS,) including "fund and provide services and programs, including education and mental health treatment, which prepare youths for release;" "provide access to a high-quality education within facilities that prepares youths for success in the community;" and "provide funding to ensure that all placement facilities are adequately staffed to serve youth needs." While this budget adds funds for additional mental health staff at some facilities, it does not go far enough towards providing the levels of staffing necessary to successfully prepare youth for release.

FACT

OCFS programs offer opportunities for youth who have done wrong things to finally do something right. OCFS facilities lead the state in GED passage rates, 80% of all OCFS youth who take the test pass, compared to 60% of other NYS residents and 73% nationwide. Youth attend classes, get vocational training, and participate in community service projects.

FACT

Instead of laying off employees, all staff should be redeployed. A draft OCFS report on rightsizing recommends resources be redistributed "to run safer, better programs with more comprehensive treatment services for youths." Fifty one percent of OCFS youths have special education needs, 67% have serious mental health needs. OCFS is not staffed adequately to serve these youths. Staffing in all disciplines needs to be enhanced.

FACT

OCFS has intentionally run down the census of OCFS facilities, including telling judges not to send youth to OCFS care. Criminal youth, many with serious behavioral problems, will end up either in private residential programs or in the community.

FACT

According to the Governor's Task Force OCFS' contracts with private agencies do not even include performance measures to ensure these agencies provide youths in their facilities with a certain standard of care and supervision. One-third of youths placed by OCFS in private facilities fail in these placements and are transferred to OCFS facilities for more appropriate treatment.

FACT

It has not been proven that community programs can cope with the types of youth who are sent to OCFS facilities. Judges have been reluctant to send youths directly to these programs instead of institutional placements.

FACT

OCFS continues to sink \$1 million per year and send additional youth into a program that has been proven unsuccessful. OCFS' evaluation of the Multisystemic Therapy (MST) program found that participation was not associated with lower rates of rearrest, reconviction, or reincarceration for OCFS youth. Boys who participated in MST were more likely to be rearrested for a violent felony offense than boys in the control group. The failure of the program was attributed to the severity and intractability of the problems facing OCFS youths and their families.

FACT

Numerous research studies have documented that small scale environments enable improved treatments for youths. Instead of moving in that direction, OCFS continues to close these types of programs, including the 25 bed Annsville Residential Center. OCFS should repatriate children receiving services out-of-state or in privately run facilities and treat them at underutilized facilities.

FACT

Commissioner Carrion has told judges that youths should be sent to OCFS facilities only if they pose a risk to public safety, regardless of their need for mental health, substance abuse or other problems. New York does not have a standard by which dangerousness can be assessed, nor are there adequate community based supports to address criminal youths' other needs. This policy threatens the safety of the community and will not meet the needs of troubled youths.

FACT

Closures and staff reductions will negatively affect the economies of hard hit upstate regions. The plan to close the Tryon and Annsville programs will have far reaching economic impact well beyond the affected employees. The facilities' closures will have an adverse impact on numerous local, private providers that rely on employment and contracted services with these programs.

FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR CHILDREN AND OUR COMMUNITIES

RESTORE \$2.9 MILLION TO THE OCFS BUDGET

KEEP YOUTH FACILITIES OPEN



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