



Search Help Search this site...

[Home](#) » [September 2012](#)

[Donate](#)

Contact Us

3980 Broadway Suite 103 Box 139
Boulder, CO 80304
Phone: 303.448.9105
Toll free: 888.891.9416
Fax: 208.247.1830

Staff List

Deb Courson
Managing Editor
[Contact](#)

Chris Thomas
Western Editor
[Contact](#)

Mary Hulsebus
Senior Operations Associate
[Contact](#)

Kimberly Lavender
Development Director
[Contact](#)

Amber Wilson
Community Engagement Director
[Contact](#)

Matt Hemmendinger
Digital Development/Social Media
Director
[Contact](#)

Lark Corbeil
Founder
[Contact](#)

David Crandall
Business Manager
[Contact](#)

Report: Juvenile Justice System in Crisis

September 10, 2012

ARLINGTON, Va. - The nation's juvenile justice system is in crisis, according to a new [report](#) that includes data gathered from more than 1,000 families across the country who have dealt with the issue firsthand. The report cites research that shows locking up children in adult-like prisons puts them at grave risk and increases their chance of being violently abused and locked up again.

The U.S. has the highest incarceration rate per 100,000 people of any country in the world, according to Liane Rozzell, executive director of Families and Allies of Virginia's Youth. She says about 40 percent of Virginia kids are jailed unnecessarily for nonviolent offenses.

"These are kids who are not a danger to public safety. We need to figure out how to treat them in ways that are effective and respond to them in ways that are effective - and youth prisons are not effective."

According to the report, during the past 35 years local, state and federal governments have increased the amount of funding targeted toward incarcerating youth and adults; at the same time, funding for basic social services has declined. Rozzell says communities really need to step up to the plate.

"In Virginia, in particular, we have a high percentage of young people who are in our juvenile correctional centers who have mental health problems, and our mental health system for young people in Virginia is not working well. These youth need to be served better in the community."

Rozzell says one program that is working very well and is administered by the state is the Juvenile Detention Prevention Initiative, which in the past six to seven years has significantly reduced the numbers of young people locked up, with no increase in crime or danger to public safety.

The Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice lists 704 incarcerated youths in its five facilities. This number does not include youth housed in other

[Public News Service - VA](#)
[September 2012](#)
[Budget Policy & Priorities](#)
[Community Issues and](#)
[Volunteering](#)
[Criminal Justice](#)
[Family/Father Issues](#)
[Mental Health](#)
[Youth Issues](#)
[Download audio](#)
[Print this article](#)
[Email This article](#)

Like

digg it

detention centers around the state.

The report makes several suggestions, such as removing barriers to mental health services and reallocating resources from failed justice strategies to investments in families and communities that support community safety. Rozell's group plans to present copies of the report and its recommendations to the Virginia State Board of Juvenile Justice on Wednesday in Virginia Beach.

The full report, "Families Unlocking Futures," is available at www.justice4families.org.

Monique Coppola, Public News Service - VA

Copyright © 2012 Public News Service