

**HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF
SHUMAN JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITY**

SEPTEMBER 2023



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September 26, 2023

Via Electronic Mail

Allegheny County Council
County Courthouse
436 Grant Street, Room 119
Pittsburgh, PA 15219-2497
Phone: 412-350-6490
Email: cntycouncil@alleghenycounty.us

Dear Allegheny County Council:

In connection with County Council Bill Number 12610-23, my office has completed a historical overview of Shuman Juvenile Detention Facility and youth justice operations in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.

The results of this review indicate the County's historic detention of young people violated state law and its approaches to justice issues did not conform with leading best practices. While access to records and information was limited, my office reviewed local data and reporting between 2008-2023, state inspection evidence regarding Shuman's operations and site conditions, and evidence of programs that more effectively support youth and community safety.

I offer the following recommendations in this report to seek better outcomes for all County residents.

Kind Regards,

Corey O'Connor
Controller

cc: Honorable Patrick Catena, President, County Council
Honorable John Palmiere, Vice-President, County Council
Mr. Ken Varhola, Chief of Staff, County Council



I. Executive Summary

This review examines Shuman Youth Detention Center's historical performance, evidence regarding youth incarceration locally and nationally, and case examples of more effective programming. The evidence available suggests operating youth detention facilities and incarcerating youth generally, in Pennsylvania and the U.S., are less effective as responses to criminality and community safety. Diversionary programming, on the other hand, is more effective and cost-efficient than past practice.

Youth incarceration also leads to negative medical and mental health, educational, and career outcomes, with heightened exposure to abuse—impacts that disproportionately involve Black and brown children (especially young girls). Detained youth experience maturation wholly differently from their nonincarcerated peers, and while the carceral system is coined to be rehabilitative, it is not, and it exacerbates the trauma that many in the system already experience. This is one reason detained youth reoffend at rates equal to or higher than youth with comparable backgrounds and offense histories who simply remain at home.¹

Evidence of successful alternatives to incarceration has only grown since Shuman closed. These solutions are not novel, rather, they address youth criminality from a community perspective and on the front-end to root out the causes of violence. Considering best practices and the social and cost benefit to non-carceral alternatives, funding and utilization should be expanded accordingly. This includes establishing mental health interventions early and often, increasing the collection and use of data to understand and respond to root causes of system involvement, funding programs to meet the diverse needs of all children, aligning programs with input from formerly incarcerated youth and community organizations, and removing access barriers to programming. Allegheny County currently subscribes to, and receives federal assistance for, reforms incorporating restorative justice and diversionary models to limit youth incarceration. But the County should more aggressively invest in childcare, education, and mental health care services to better support young people. Justice system improvements should further prioritize:

- » Aggressively addressing the disproportionate involvement of youth of color, especially girls, in local justice systems.
- » Identifying and funding specific early intervention, prevention, and diversion programs, to include counseling and therapies, community supervision, family/mentor engagement, and transportation and other access barriers.
- » Supporting school efforts to update culture, discipline, and curriculum to emphasize awareness around youth development and mental health concerns.
- » Reforming court procedures (on costs, fees, restitution, and probation) that prevent mobility, exacerbate the school-to-prison pipeline, and incentivize recidivism.

Adherence to such best practices and non-carceral alternatives result in better outcomes for young people and public safety.² The information included in this report is to be used to support children and community safety and is based on the historical performance of Shuman, evidence regarding youth incarceration locally and nationally, and case examples of more effective programming. Our leaders across County systems should embrace this evidence and adopt alternatives better suited to steering young people safely toward success.



II. Performance and Compliance of Shuman Center Operations

The Shuman Juvenile Detention Center is located at 7150 Highland Drive in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (OPA Lot and Block 123-D-100), containing a detention facility and grounds over approximately 18.49 acres. During its operation until closure in September 2021, Allegheny County spent approximately \$11 million per year to operate Shuman, with assistance from state and grant funding streams.

Shuman first opened in December 1974 with an occupancy of 120-130 beds, 10 housing units, and services that included education, health and social services, and recreation. The County ceased housing young people at Shuman in September 2021 but has maintained the utilities and systems at the physical site since. In September 2022, the Redevelopment Authority of Allegheny County issued a Request for Development Proposals (RFDP) for the purchase and redevelopment of the site.³ In March 2023, County Council passed Bill No. 12610-23 that, among other things, requested a pause to actions related to the RFDP and requested the Controller's Office complete a historical review to be reviewed by a new study group.⁴ In August 2023, the County issued an invitation for bids (IFB) to renovate sections of the facility and a housing pod and construct a temporary administrative and client services space for limited capacity operations.⁵

Shuman was historically a pre-adjudication facility, meaning youth were placed post-arrest but before adjudicatory hearings in front of a judge. This is distinct from detention facilities that provide permanent placements for young people who may be sent pursuant to a court order and/or after being formally adjudicated. During its operation, Shuman housed individuals between ages 10 and 17, and in some cases, up to age 21. Youth residing outside the county and accused of committing an offense inside the county, or under some other court order, could also be detained there.⁶ Charges commonly resulting in detention involved people, property, drug offenses, or probation violations—for instance, the nonpayment of fines, simple assault, property theft, and drug possession. If detained at Shuman, the County provided youth: healthcare services, a fulltime school program and associated diagnostic and instructional services, and recreational services such as sports and arts and crafts. In addition, Shuman, together with the County's probation system, provided social and therapeutic services to assist youths. Although the facility admitted approximately 1,600 youth annually, 20 young people were housed at the facility at the time of closure, a fraction compared to population figures of previous years. In 2003 alone, for reference, the average daily census was approximately 100, compared to 59 in 2017, 42 in 2018, and 28 in 2020.⁷ According to 2021 court data on youth incarceration, the median length of stay was 12 days, and the overall rate of offending among youth residing in the County was 0.77%.⁸

Under Pennsylvania law, second class counties (such as Allegheny County) that operate juvenile detention facilities are to create an advisory board to provide oversight functions. These boards ordinarily consist of the county's chief executive, county controller, and six private citizens, three to be appointed by the president judge of the Court of Common Pleas and three to be appointed by the county's chief executive.⁹ Because Allegheny County adopted a home rule charter, oversight functions were conducted by the now-defunct Juvenile Detention Board of Advisors.¹⁰

The facility maintained a history of noncompliance with the state's minimum licensure requirements and best practices regarding youth treatment, violations of which are publicly



documented since 2009.¹¹ As per the state, detained youth have rights to be free from abuse, mistreatment, harassment, and corporal punishment, rights to be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect, and rights to rehabilitation and treatment. But according to state inspection reports, Shuman violated these and other requirements under 55 P.S. §§ 3800 et seq.

These violations included, but are not limited to:

- » Staff committing child abuse, and in multiple cases, failing to intervene or timely reporting incidents of abuse and mistreatment (2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018).
- » Inadequate medical recordkeeping procedures, incomplete or delayed health assessments, and delays in administering medical assistance (2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018).
- » Unauthorized staff use of restraint and seclusion techniques and failure to document incidents (2014, 2015, 2016).
- » Improper staff use of manual restraints applying pressure and/or weight on the child's respiratory system (2015).
- » Application of unreasonable search and seizure policies and lack of additional meals available (2015).
- » Staff noncompliance completing or updating criminal history and/or child abuse background checks (2013, 2015, 2016).

Over several years, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services responded to violations at Shuman by downgrading its operating license to provisional status. But short of revoking or downgrading a facility's license, PA DHS does not redress individual violations of constitutional rights or enforce facility improvements. For instance, state legal mechanisms do not ensure facilities are subject to regular capital improvements, fair wage requirements to attract and retain qualified detention staff, requirements for age-appropriate mental health programming, or minimum managerial requirements.¹² As stated by Pennsylvania's Human Services Code, the purpose of regulations are to "protect the health, safety and well-being of children receiving care in a child residential facility through the formulation, application and enforcement of *minimum* licensing requirements."¹³ These issues surfaced throughout the last decade of Shuman's operations, and while children were assaulted and abused, the County did not make substantial improvements outside of its responses to state inspection citations and individual litigations. In the absence of stricter state legal requirements, facilities across Pennsylvania like Shuman committed little to advancements in site conditions, staff professional culture, and care involving engaging, age-appropriate, and educational activities and programs. How the rights of children residing in detention centers are specifically enforced or how they are to be treated falls primarily on individual county regulators, which proved to be problematic.

During an unannounced state inspection in the summer of 2021, PA DHS discovered multiple repeat violations, relevantly in health service and medication administration (*e.g.*, children not receiving their prescribed medication, little to no nursing staff on duty, expired medications, etc.).¹⁴ Shuman was previously cited for these violations under 55 Pa. Code §3800.148(a) (cited on August 24, 2018, October 1, 2019, and July 1, 2021) and §3800.53(b) (cited on July 1, 2021). Given this, state officials revoked Shuman's provisional license and concluded "[t]he amount and seriousness of the medication errors constitutes gross incompetence, negligence, and misconduct in operating the facility, that is likely to constitute an immediate and serious danger to the life or



health of the clients pursuant to 55 Pa. Code § 20.37.”¹⁵ Allegheny County closed Shuman soon after in September 2021.



III. Responses to Youth Justice Issues

While the United States has the highest rate of youth confinement of any country in the world, in the last two decades, the conversation regarding transformational changes to the youth justice system has gained momentum. Concerns at Shuman and other Pennsylvania facilities during this time also fueled the need for local change as officials grappled with evidence and methods to limit youth adjudication and reduce youth detentions. In fact, investigations by state and local officials into Shuman operations between 2008-2009 resulted in 28 cited violations (e.g., understaffing, infrastructure disrepair, and improper recordkeeping) and terminations of seven employees.¹⁶

In 2009, Pennsylvania passed legislation that, among other things, established the Pennsylvania Interbranch Commission on Juvenile Justice (ICJJ).¹⁷ The Commission was created in response to judicial corruption involving kids in Luzerne County (“kids-for-cash” scheme) and was mandated to propose recommendations for statewide justice reform that it published in May 2010.¹⁸ In Allegheny County, judges established the Allegheny County Commission on Juvenile Justice to evaluate how these recommendations could be applied to the Fifth Judicial District, releasing a coinciding report in 2012.¹⁹ The Courts committed to the Balanced and Restorative Justice model that ushered in “evidence-based practices, data-driven decision making, and professional development as goals” to its treatment of youth.²⁰ In practice, changes included updating probationary approaches, introducing certain risk and needs assessment tools, and broadening counseling options.

Between 2012-2013, state investigations into Shuman’s licensure violations cited child abuse, poor management of internal funds, staffing and administration issues, and deteriorating facility conditions.²¹ In addition, 70 employees representing approximately half of the facility’s budgeted workforce signed a petition claiming they faced a hostile work environment, prompting an investigation by the County Manager’s Office. This occurred during the same time the facility’s director and deputy director were suspended and subsequently terminated, and the facility was sued in a whistle blower lawsuit based on retaliation claims for reporting illegal staff activities.

In response to these concerns, the County Manager recommended Shuman administrators implement an employee satisfaction survey to improve workplace culture and treatment and develop plans in response to a declining resident population. In addition, the report recommended the Human Resources Department manage staffing responsibilities, Controller analyze Shuman’s payroll process and employee donation fund, and police manage certain facility security responsibilities. The Controller’s Office issued its report on Shuman’s internal procedures later that year, noting deficiencies in payroll operations (incorrect overcompensation of staff wages and benefits), the Resident and Resident Improvement funds (inadequate recordkeeping, lack of audit trail for receipts and donations), and the safeguarding of residents’ belongings (poor recordkeeping, property mismanagement).²²

Studies on youth incarceration conducted by nonprofit institutions, community organizations, and the academic community also shed light on ways the County could build better opportunities for young people. In 2015, the Pittsburgh Foundation began a study with input from formerly incarcerated young people to identify key considerations officials could employ in improving local justice systems. It recommended the County: (1) involve youth in the conversation to shape



prevention and diversion strategies; (2) address the lopsided involvement of youth of color, particularly girls; (3) reform discipline and curricula in school; and (4) reform court policies, fees, fines, and restitution.²³

Fundamental to these recommendations was local evidence that youth of color are incarcerated at much higher rates than white youth who have been alleged to engage in the same offenses (Black youth are more than four times as likely, Native American youth are three times as likely, and Latino youth are nearly two times as likely).²⁴ This extends to other contact points of the justice system, as 2016 census data shows Black girls accounted for 8.3% of Allegheny County's child population but made up 21% of referrals, 22% of investigations, 23% of cases accepted, and 22% of home removals from the Children, Youth, and Family Services Department. Black girls were represented at each decision point in the child welfare system nearly two and a half more times than the overall youth population.²⁵

In hopes of accelerating efforts to end harmful and inequitable past youth incarceration practices, six campaigns—in California, New York, Texas, Louisiana, the District of Columbia, and Mississippi—garnered national attention because they proved that locking children up is a failed experiment.²⁶ These jurisdictions engaged in multiyear processes of decarceration and resource reallocation by seeking justice for children who suffered past abuse and mistreatment, shutting down problematic carceral facilities, leveraging changes with coalitions of impacted people and families, and identifying local stakeholders to improve responses to economic and racial roots of incarceration.

In Allegheny County, youth can be diverted to a youth diversion program or juvenile delinquency counseling operated between court, probationary, and non-governmental interventions.²⁷ The Foundation of HOPE's Youth Diversion Program, for instance, is designed to give young people who have committed a "non-violent [or] low-to-medium offense [with] the opportunity to remain in the community while addressing their needs rather than being prosecuted, convicted, or incarcerated."²⁸ Together with local law enforcement, juvenile probation officials, the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh, and the District Attorney's Office, this initiative employs restorative justice and trauma-based approaches with community providers to ensure academic success, personal and career development, and civic participation.

In the wake of Shuman's closure, stakeholders from local community organizations, academic institutions, and youth service providers similarly began evaluating ways Allegheny County could expand use of alternative models while County administrators advocated for Shuman's retention.²⁹ They have advocated for funds previously spent on Shuman to be redirected to "services and resources needed to prevent violence and support, rather than punish, youth who come into contact with the carceral system."³⁰

"Post-Shuman Visioning," a report detailing this recommendation, was presented to members of County Council in 2023. The recommendation was simple: The County must focus on mutual accountability and healing rather than punishment to best support the safety and inclusion of its young people and communities.³¹ Members of the Youth Justice Coalition in Los Angeles also joined these presentations to speak about their efforts to close juvenile detention facilities and replace them with educational programming.³² The Fight for the Revolution that Will Educate and



Empower Los Angeles, or FREE L.A., School provides: (1) an alternative to detention and incarceration for youth facing confinement; (2) an educational site for youth who have been suspended or expelled from schools or entire districts; (3) a school for youth returning home from lock-ups; and (4) a more respectful and smaller program for youth that have left traditional schools discouraged.³³

Despite the evidence regarding past carceral practice and potentially effective alternatives, state officials continue to advocate for youth incarceration as a deterrence to low-level youth crime.³⁴ This is also true for local officials, who continue to respond to crime and youth justice issues by calling for Shuman to reopen.³⁵



IV. Diversion and Cost Efficiency of Youth Programming

Diversion, a process by which youth are generally redirected from the juvenile justice system, has been around since the 1960s.³⁶ While its goals include providing alternatives to detention and stigmatic findings of delinquent or deviant behavior, as research in the past two decades has expanded, it also incorporates measures to prevent justice system involvement and recidivism while promoting youth development and public safety. In addition, diversion allows youth to connect with community services, reduces justice system costs, caseloads, and out-of-home placements, and improves youth, community, and law enforcement relations.

Such programs are implemented at multiple contact points of the justice system—namely, during the pre- and post-arrest phases. Pre-arrest diversion prevents youth contact with the justice system by offering programs and supports prior to and directly after conduct occurs, such as when law enforcement chooses not to commit to an arrest or school officials decline to call the courts or law enforcement for conduct occurring on school grounds.³⁷ Post-arrest diversion offers nonviolent youth with diversionary options after engaging with the system and during court processes at intake or at a pre-adjudication or predisposition hearing.³⁸

As noted in this report, the types of diversionary programming vary. Examples include law enforcement initiatives in lieu of an arrest, giving out cautions, warnings, or civil citations, and linking youth to wraparound services. Coordinating available community services and mentoring, counseling, and skill-building services (to address life skills, educational, or vocational needs) is also another type of diversionary programming.³⁹

Central to practices today is also the adherence to a restorative justice approach which focuses on including offenders, communities, and victims to identify the harms committed, develop opportunities for victim restoration, and solidify steps to a safer and more supportive community. Victim and offender mediations, family group conferences, teen courts, community service, and victim impact statements are common examples of such an approach.⁴⁰

For both the types of programs and the stages of the justice system in which implementation can occur, net widening, increased surveillance, and inequitable access and usage are potential harms to be avoided.⁴¹ Net widening can occur in several ways, but problematically includes both youth who would have received detention and youth who would not have otherwise interacted with the system beyond initial police contact. Net widening also occurs through imposing stringent procedural requirements (such as technical probation rules or retaining the threat of prosecution if conditions are unmet), misclassification of youth behavior, and referral quotas set by operators trying to meet funding requirements. Increased surveillance, another potential harm, can occur if diversion programs are handled solely by probationary or similar agencies that treat youth in diversion the same as youth engaged in probation in lieu of incarceration.⁴² Inequitable access and use, on the other hand, refers to the current iteration of the youth justice system, which disproportionately involves Black children and favors nonminority youth. Due to inexperience and a lack of understanding about the potential risks and needs of Black boys versus girls, referrals can be unequal and pertain to issues that are not in the purview of a justice system process.⁴³



A. Youth incarceration and probation versus diversionary alternatives

Traditional probationary and detention responses to youth violence and justice issues lead to harmful outcomes for young people and families.⁴⁴ These responses also cost the taxpayer more to arrest, use probation, and incarcerate youths.⁴⁵ In Pennsylvania alone, it can cost nearly \$211,000 to incarcerate a child annually while only approximately \$16,000 to provide a child with a public education.⁴⁶ Shuman cost approximately \$11 million per year to operate, and 2021 data shows it cost approximately \$10,000 to arrest someone and approximately \$107 per day to provide bedspace at Allegheny County Jail.⁴⁷ Probation costs are similarly high—in 2016, 2017, and 2018, youth probation cost the County \$12,822,473, \$13,248,815, and \$13,559,604, respectively.⁴⁸

Non-carceral alternatives, such as providing therapies, life skills building, and wrap-around programs, are more cost effective. In 2019, Pennsylvania's Commission on Crime and Delinquency issued a return-on-investment analyses underscoring the cost benefits of funding prevention and intervention programming. Over the performance of 12 programs, 10 had positive returns on investment, while youth participating in these programs experienced lower recidivism rates, higher high school graduation rates, and increased lifetime earning potential.⁴⁹ These programs realized returns that ranged from \$0.11 to \$217.89 for each dollar spent, with the most expensive of the programs, multisystemic therapies, costing on average \$8,683 per participant (a fraction compared to the costs for an arrest, probation, and detention).⁵⁰ Diversion programs are also proven to rehabilitate youth more effectively, lowering future system costs and engagement.⁵¹

Allegheny County currently employs some youth measures as an alternative to incarceration, with associated costs comparable to the median costs of state-studied diversion programs. However, as stated, the County should do more, especially outside its currently-operating programs through probation services, as they can serve as a pipeline to detention without adequate attention to rehabilitative and skills-building benefits.⁵² In fact, between 2003 to 2015, 49% of adults arrested in the County had previous involvement in the youth probation system.⁵³ Considering the annual cost of probation per person in 2016 (\$1,756.50), 2017 (\$1,814.91), and 2018 (\$2,063.87), it is comparable to funding some evidence-based programs.⁵⁴ This could, in part, justify future reallocations of County funds in alternatives that more effectively reduce recidivism, system interactions, and costs altogether.⁵⁵

Ultimately, as advocated by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, County officials must “desist from using practices that research has shown to be ineffective at best and harmful at worst.”⁵⁶ This means justice system changes to youth detention and probation must be rooted in adolescent development research, community partnerships, and race equity. And given that youth probation can work in tandem with youth incarceration to surveil and punish children, the County should expand standalone evidenced-based diversion programs aimed at rehabilitation, support, and restoration.



V. Best Practices and Programs in Practice

Review of diversion literature reveals that successful practices focus on increasing the use of mental health interventions, expanding data collection on the causes of system involvement, refining program eligibility to meet the needs of all children, using input from impacted communities and formerly incarcerated people, and removing access barriers to programming.⁵⁷ To this end, using standardized screenings and assessment tools, clearly defining populations for programs, developing a robust network of providers and partnerships, providing diversion agreements and expungement opportunities, and promoting cultural and racial equity better support the County's youth and families.⁵⁸

For one, frequent screenings and assessments are increasingly important because well over half of justice-involved youth nationally meet the criteria for at least one diagnosable behavioral or mental health issue, with approximately 30% of youth having experienced symptoms specific to post-traumatic stress disorder.⁵⁹ And while the relationship between mental health issues and system involvement is complex, current systems are ill-prepared to respond to youth trauma issues.

Much like involving mental health professionals is crucial to treatment for each child, so too is understanding the root trends to identify youth and fund effective programming.⁶⁰ This means both recognizing that children have varied experiences and potential needs, and that programs should be community-centered and align with the interests of the various system stakeholders involved. The most effective models of diversion programs arise from jurisdictions that streamline efforts between schools, hospitals, courts, police, program administrators, and community providers.⁶¹ One such example exists in Allegheny County—Caring Connections for YOUth, which was established by the Black Girls Equity Alliance (of Gwen's Girls), is an intervention helpline aimed at ending the school-to-prison pipeline by giving schools, police, and justice systems opportunities to refer youths to community interventions instead of formal processing through the juvenile justice or child welfare systems.⁶²

Partnerships involving schools, law enforcement, probation departments, courts, and prosecutors can specifically reduce arrests for minor offenses and probation violations, reasons commonly used to detain youth.⁶³ In fact, tailored adolescent diversion projects, civil citation programs, school responder models, and organizing training opportunities with law enforcement and youth are promising examples of such coordination.

In Michigan, for instance, university psychology students work with the Ingham County Juvenile Court to develop intervention programs specifically tailored to each youth and provide access to community resources, civic engagement opportunities, and counseling.⁶⁴ In Florida, justice agencies created a civil citations program to reduce recidivism and the number of youths being detained. In lieu of an arrest for a non-misdemeanor, youths can agree to complete community service hours and participate in intervention services (such as counseling). After completing the terms outlined in the citation, participants leave with no criminal record.⁶⁵

In Minnesota, Clay County officials have adopted a deflection justice model that focuses on understanding victimization, holding referred youth accountable through a transformational process, and developing an agreement for youth to make things right with both the victim(s) and



the community. A youth who is referred may be assigned to one of four program models (victim-offender conference, community conference, youth conference, or victim impact course), with the hope that upon successful completion, recommendations are made for officials not to proceed with formal charges. Participants in this restorative process were less likely to interact with police and reoffend and Clay County saw reductions in recidivism rates compared to existing system outcomes.⁶⁶

A. Connecticut

On schools, Connecticut has implemented school responder models aimed at reducing school-originating arrests among youth with mental health needs by: “(1) reducing the frequency of expulsions, suspensions, and school-based arrests; (2) connecting youth at risk of arrest with services and supports; and (3) building knowledge and skills among school staff to recognize and manage behavioral health crises in school.”⁶⁷ Connecticut and other states have additionally employed a separate strategy for reducing youth arrest and justice system involvement that focuses on strengthening positive relationships between youth and police. With an understanding that police interactions disproportionately involve minority contact, these trainings are organized to increase racial awareness, knowledge of youth behaviors and strategies for effective interaction, officers’ attitudes towards youth, and the likelihood that interactions with police will have positive outcomes for youth and vice versa.⁶⁸ Studies have shown that when a youth’s expectations of the justice system are aligned with their lived experiences within the system, violations decrease.⁶⁹

B. Ohio

Since 2006, Ohio has been addressing the growing prevalence of youth experiencing mental health and substance use issues that were being arrested, adjudicated, and incarcerated. Local justice systems lacked the experience and resources to effectively serve youths, so judges, community providers, and government officials convened to test pilot programs diverting youth with unmet behavioral health needs away from incarceration and into community-based treatment settings. The Behavioral Health/Juvenile Justice Initiative (BHJJ) was soon born, expanding across 18 counties to administer treatment models including multi-systemic therapy, functional family therapy, integrated cooccurring treatment, trauma-focused behavioral therapy, and multidimensional family therapy.⁷⁰

Coordinating care between mental health and justice system stakeholders, youth charged with a crime are given immediate psychological assessments to determine program eligibility. If program eligibility is met, and the youth and their family agree to participate, the courts provide referrals to treatment services.⁷¹ Treatment provided is administered in the least restrictive setting possible, with in-home and outpatient settings frequently used. A 2017-2019 review of program outcomes noted 81% of youth successfully completed treatment, 86% returned to school, and police contact was reduced in 79% of cases.⁷² These programs can also be more affordable, as child commitments can cost approximately \$196,000 annually compared to approximately \$5,200 under BHJJ.⁷³

C. Missouri



Across four youth court circuits in 2005, Missouri also began experimenting with diversionary programming, streamlining collaboration between community, judicial, and state stakeholders to address the needs of justice-involved youth and divert them out of the justice system. Termed the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI), the program sought changes to improve delays in delinquency hearing scheduling, implement detention center assessments, create community collaboration teams, and impose graduated sanctions to avoid unneeded detention.⁷⁴

A review of data suggests that these changes have been successful in reducing reliance on secure confinement, improving public safety, reducing racial disparities and bias, and saving taxpayer dollars.⁷⁵ Each pilot program (see below) evidenced a reduction in detention center admissions and daily population, and no increase in crime or threats to public safety. The success of these examples led Missouri officials to expand diversionary programming statewide, resulting in the closure of six detention centers, implementation of a statewide detention assessment tool, and a rededication of funds toward future non-carceral alternatives.⁷⁶

<i>Greene County (2005-2013)</i>	35% reduction in youth detention center admissions
	30% reduction in detention center length of stay
	50% reduction in detention center daily population

<i>Jackson County (2005-2013)</i>	63% reduction in youth detention center admissions
	62% reduction in detention center daily population
	56% reduction in state detention center commitments

<i>St. Louis County (2005-2013)</i>	15% reduction in youth detention center admissions
	20% reduction in detention center length of stay
	9% reduction in detention center daily population

<i>St. Louis City (2005-2013)</i>	56% reduction in youth detention center admissions
	11% reduction in detention center length of stay
	60% reduction in detention center daily population

D. Cook County, Illinois

Cook County, home to Chicago, established the Juvenile Justice Collaborative (JJC) in 2017 with the goal of diverting youth and addressing the disproportionate representation of Black and brown children in the system. In 2015 alone, the arrest rate in Cook County was 37.9 per 1,000 youths and the detention admission rate was 6.7 per 1000 youths.⁷⁷ Statewide, Black youth accounted for



18% of the population but 59% of juvenile arrests and detentions.⁷⁸ JJC thus employed an interagency approach, which included a pediatric hospital, referral center, and 10 community-based service providers, to address kids' developmental needs.⁷⁹ Once youth interact with the system, care coordinators conduct a home visit to assess youth and family needs and develop a care plan. They are then referred to appropriate community-based service to receive adult or peer supports, skills training, or mental health supports. Popular services provided were mentoring (48%), mental health and substance use services (36%), and employment services (9%), with care coordination lasting an average of 95 days.⁸⁰ From 2017-2019, 64% of program participants completed their care plan.⁸¹ Successful JJC participants also recidivated at statistically significantly lower rates than those in traditional corrections programs.⁸² And according to local data, the average cost of JJC services was significantly less than the cost of detention (\$4,600/patient compared to \$47,000/person).⁸³



VI. Conclusion

Kids deserve equal opportunities to be treated fairly and equally, have a chance to live a full and healthy life, make mistakes and get it right, and be provided with care and support. But the justice system does not effectively provide this, and the tools and systems employed to address youth behavior can result in worse outcomes for all. This is inequitably true for Black and brown children and families, too, as existing systems are ill-equipped to respond to root causes of violence or fully support evidence- and community-based programming.

Youth need more, particularly in the context of education, health, and behavioral care and resources, to thrive in ways they are entitled to but hardly experience. The County's intention to reopen Shuman provides opportunities to expand our thinking on how to rehabilitate young people and assist in their growth. Available for immediate use is robust evidence of past approaches that were cost-inefficient, biased, and led to abuse, trauma, and further recidivism. Federal and state guidance already mandates counties employ evidence-based frameworks in juvenile justice systems, but we must do more to decarcerate youth, fund rehabilitative, behavioral, and mental health interventions in our systems, transform victim and community restoration, and provide spaces for youth to feel safe and supportive.

As stated, non-carceral alternatives provide better outcomes for young people and public safety. Justice system leaders should consider the information included and adopt alternatives better suited for all Allegheny County residents.



Endnotes

¹ Richard A. Mandel, “Why Youth Incarceration Fails: An Updated Review of the Evidence,” The Sentencing Project, March 2023, located at <<https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/why-youth-incarceration-fails-an-updated-review-of-the-evidence/>>.

² Center for Prison Reform, “Diversion Programs in America’s Criminal Justice System,” August 2015, located at <<https://centerforprisonreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Jail-Diversion-Programs-in-America.pdf>>.

³ Redevelopment Authority of Allegheny County, Request for Development Proposals of Former Shuman Juvenile Detention Facility, Allegheny County, September 2022.

⁴ Allegheny County Council, Bill No. 12610-23, March 2023, located at <<https://alleghenycounty.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6050101&GUID=421CEC0F-DD8D-416B-BF50-94103FAF03DD&Options=ID%7cText%7c&Search=12610-23>>.

⁵ Allegheny County Department of Facilities Management, Project Manual for Renovation of Shuman Juvenile Detention Center—Phase 1, Project No. IFB-9002, Allegheny County, August 2023; *see* Brian Conway and Brittany Hailer, “Allegheny County quiet on private juvenile detention efforts,” *Pittsburgh Independent*, August 2023, located at <<https://pghindependent.com/allegheny-county-quiet-on-private-juvenile-detention-efforts/>>.

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