

Juvenile Justice Reform

Improving Public Safety and Youth Outcomes Within Available Revenue

In 2007 and 2009, the Legislature adopted reforms signed by Governor Perry recognizing that sending all youths to remote and expensive lockups – regardless of the severity of their offenses – was costly and ineffective.¹ The legislation shifted some youth offenders to local community-based supervision and treatment programs, which have been shown to improve results at a lower cost.

These measures have produced great results, but continued progress depends on taking the next step in the reform process. By redirecting funding away from costly TYC facilities, hundreds of youth could be better served – at a lower cost and with better results – by their local county probation departments.

Specifically, to continue on its path of reform in 2007, the Legislature should:

- 1) Streamline government and merge the TYC and Texas Juvenile Probation Commission (TJPC),
- 2) Consider eliminating the most remote, costly and ineffective TYC facilities, while maintaining effective lockup and treatments options for youth who cannot be safely treated elsewhere.
- 3) Redirect existing revenue to fund more effective and less costly community-based supervision and treatment programs.

Continued reform will improve public safety and youth outcomes:

- These recommendations will allow Texas to maintain an effective level of services for youth by decreasing taxpayer reliance on ineffective, remote, costly facilities.
- Community-based supervision and treatment is cited by right-leaning, left-leaning, and independent research groups for its superiority in reducing recidivism, improving public safety, and helping to place children on the path to becoming productive members of society.
- Youth with disabilities will get better treatment and achieve better outcomes in the community.

Continued reform will save taxpayer dollars:

- These reforms can be completed within available revenue.
- The cost per youth at TYC facilities is approximate \$359/day, and the cost of county-run facilities is approximately \$170/day.² Non-secure county facilities have an even lower cost.
- According to our analysis by FTI Consulting, merging the TYC and TJPC will save the state almost \$150 million.³

Several of Texas' leading research and advocacy organizations support these reforms. They include:

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¹ <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=80R&Bill=SB103>; <http://www.legis.state.tx.us/BillLookup/Text.aspx?LegSess=81R&Bill=HB3689>

² http://www.lbb.state.tx.us/PubSafety_CrimJustice/3_Reports/Uniform_Cost_Report_0111.pdf

³ FTI Consulting, Economic Impact of Restructuring the Texas Juvenile Justice System, on file with Texas Appleseed.