



WHAT COMES AFTER YOUTH PRISONS?

Part One: Creating a Model for a Community-Based System of Care

INTRODUCTION

More than a century and a half ago, Frederick Douglass famously said that “[i]t is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

Douglass’ words echo today with an eerie precision in New Jersey, where, rather than building strong children, the State makes deep financial investments in incarcerating Black and Latino children.

In 2019, New Jersey invested \$289,287 to incarcerate each young person in a state youth prison.¹

With fewer than 200 kids in prison, on average, New Jersey invests an incredible \$54,385,956 on youth incarceration alone.²

This shameful investment in youth incarceration occurs as New Jersey’s youth prisons are almost two-thirds empty,³ and when almost a quarter of the young people released from youth facilities return within three years.⁴

But even as New Jersey’s overall prison population has fallen by 50 percent in the last 20 years, its racial disparities have exploded, such that New Jersey has the worst Black to white youth incarceration disparity rate in America. In New Jersey, a Black child is 21 times more likely to be detained or incarcerated than a white child,⁵ even though research shows that Black and white kids commit most offenses at similar rates.⁶

Thus, New Jersey, a state of around nine million people, only incarcerates eight white kids.⁷

This failed and racist system must be put to an end.

In 2018, the Institute and partners across New Jersey launched the 150 Years is Enough campaign to transform New Jersey’s broken youth justice system by closing its failing youth prisons and investing in a system that builds kids, not prisons for them. Firm in its belief that there are no throwaway kids, the campaign seeks to end youth incarceration in New Jersey and invest funds into an effective community-based system of care that will replace the current failed punitive model of youth justice.

The campaign has seen many successes since its launch. First, in response to the campaign’s advocacy, former Governor Chris Christie made the historic announcement that Jamesburg, the state’s largest youth prison for boys opened 150 years ago (after which the campaign is named), and Hayes, New Jersey’s girls’ youth prison, would close. Second, and also in direct response to the campaign’s advocacy, Governor Phil Murphy issued [Executive Order No. 42](#) in 2018, which created the Task Force for the Continued Transformation of Youth Justice in New Jersey. And third, the campaign’s work led to the creation and introduction of the New Jersey Youth Justice Transformation Act (Bill S3701/A5365), which establishes a youth prison closure timeline, creates a plan to address the racial disparities that characterize New Jersey’s youth justice system, and invests a \$100 million annual investment into the communities most impacted by youth incarceration.

While any plan to transform New Jersey’s youth justice system must include a facilities discussion, what is of equal

importance is what lies on the other side of youth prison closure.

What would it look like if New Jersey, rather than investing \$289,287 per child on youth incarceration, instead invested meaningful resources into building up kids at the front end? More specifically, if New Jersey were to commit \$100 million to the communities most impacted by youth incarceration, as called for in the New Jersey Youth Justice Transformation Act, where would that money go to best support our kids?

In short, what would a community-based system of care for our young people look like?

Over the past two years, the Institute and its partners sought to answer this question by developing a community-based system of care model that supports and wraps around our kids to keep them in their communities and out of youth prisons.

First, the Institute, in partnership with Salvation and Social Justice, conducted numerous focus groups in select cities to hear what resources young people and families wanted. Based on these conversations, we created a community-based system of care model that we feel will most effectively support our young people in their communities.

Second, using this model, the Institute, in partnership with Dr. Geoffrey Fouad, went into the communities most impacted by youth incarceration in our state at a micro-level to see what resources these communities already had to best support our kids, and what more was needed. To memorialize available resources, the Institute and Dr. Fouad created asset maps of these communities to easily identify strengths and gaps in available youth programs and services.

Together, the model and asset maps encompass Part One of our community-based system of care project. In Part Two, which is ongoing, the Institute and partners will evaluate the implementation success of the proposed model to determine if it actually creates better youth community-based outcomes.

This report serves as a summary of Part One of the project, outlining the development of the model and asset maps. We hope that, in conjunction with Part Two of the project, this will serve as a blueprint for where to use the \$100 million currently proposed to fund community-based youth programs. Ultimately, this should serve as a guide for other jurisdictions to develop such a model that can be implemented on the other side of youth prison closure.

In the long term, our goal is to develop a fully-funded community-based system of care that is centered on community accountability, the provision of comprehensive services, care coordination, and restorative and transformative justice practices.

In doing so, we will set forth a roadmap for creating a community-based system of care that builds strong children so that we don't have to repair broken adults.

I. Developing a Model for a Community-Based System of Care

Over the last two years, the Institute and its partner [Salvation and Social Justice](#) (SandSJ)—a faith-based advocacy organization led by Rev. Dr. Charles Boyer—have worked together to design a new community-based system of care model for our youth. To understand firsthand what resources community members wanted for their kids, we conducted visioning sessions with faith leaders, mental health professionals, school officials, service providers, and youth in six New Jersey cities (Atlantic City, Camden, New Brunswick, Trenton, Newark, and Paterson).

During these visioning sessions, we discussed the challenges facing young people in their communities and the conditions that lead to youth incarceration. These talks addressed a number of community issues and concerns, including the school-to-prison pipeline, lack of employment opportunities, food scarcity, transient living

arrangements (“couch surfing”), and trauma and mental health issues. Participants offered ideas and recommendations for change in their respective communities.

Our main findings from this process indicated a need to build meaningful relationships with neighborhood youth and families; invest in mental health treatment; develop restorative and transformative justice practices; inform youth and families about the services and programs available in their communities; and create community accountability strategies. We merged these recommendations into a *community-based system of care model* aimed at breaking system silos; driving communication across existing service models; and encouraging proactive community engagement and accountability.

As depicted in the diagram below, the community-based model is composed of two parts: *The Foundation* and *the Building Blocks*. The *Foundation* include three service models—(1) Success Centers and organizations offering wraparound services, (2) Community Schools, and (3) County Youth Services Commissions—key funders and developers of community resources that are currently operating independently and in silos. Above the Foundation are six *Building Blocks* formed to create interconnected practices and processes and to ensure comprehensive services and programs are available in the targeted communities.

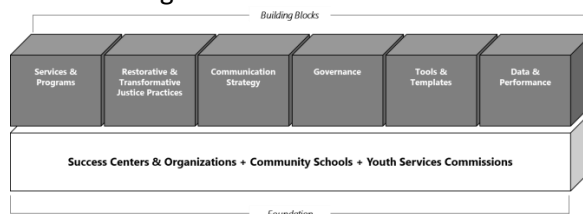


Figure 1: Community-based system of care model

II. Community Asset Maps: What Already Exists and What Do We Need to Succeed?

With our model in place, we next set out to determine what assets and resources already exist in New Jersey’s urban communities and what more is needed.

To this end, the Institute initiated a *community asset mapping project*⁸ to identify assets, gaps, and barriers to community care in three cities disproportionately impacted by youth incarceration (Camden, Trenton, and Newark) and to propose areas for improvement.

We began our analysis with the premise that a multi-level continuum of care, which includes prevention, pre-intervention, intervention, diversion, and aftercare is necessary on the ground.

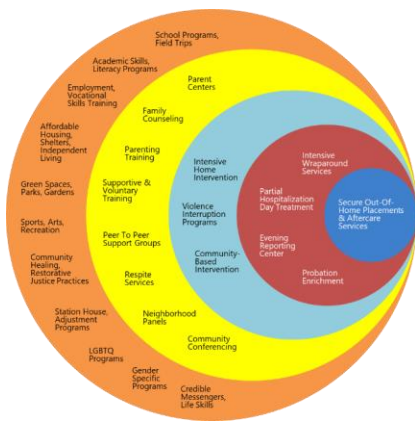


Figure 2: Continuum of Care, Level of Service

Prevention

Prevention services increase the likelihood that youth will remain free from harmful behaviors and youth incarceration involvement.

Pre-Intervention

Pre-intervention Services proactively engage youth, families, and community resources, and prevent harmful behaviors and youth incarceration involvement.

Intervention

Intervention services provide home and community-based intervention, address harmful behaviors, and prevent youth incarceration involvement.

Diversion

Diversion services provide an opportunity to avoid arrest and prosecution through alternatives.

Out-Of-Home & Aftercare

Out-of-home and aftercare services support youth in out-of-home placements who require intensive community-based support to successfully transition to their community after release from youth prison.

To carry out the project, the Institute collaborated with Dr. Geoffrey Fouad—who specializes in spatial analysis and Geographic Information Systems (GIS)—and worked with local community teams to complete an *online data review* and a *field review* of existing assets, focusing on the strengths and positive assets in the targeted communities. We ventured into communities to gather information about assets that develop the character, competencies, and connections young people need for a positive life experience.

The following sections offer insight into the availability, utilization, and delivery of resources in our target communities. The data collected in both the online data and field reviews establish a starting point for what services and programs can be utilized through the community-based system of care model.

Online Data Review

First, the Institute set out to inventory existing state-recognized services through an *online data review* led by Dr. Geoffrey Fouad. The review examined asset data available online for Camden, Newark,⁹ and Trenton (Figure 2). The online data review focused on assets for youth under the age of 18.¹⁰ Dr. Fouad compiled the information from the online data review into GIS maps that included the following: 1) community asset points, such as community centers, treatment facilities, and educational institutions, and the locations of these asset points; 2) assets per total population; and 3) assets per minor population. The GIS database included ten forms of community assets and data review findings (Table 2). For details, see [GIS Services for Asset Mapping Project – Final Report](#). The maps are posted here <https://arcg.is/1KQcqqK>.



Figure 3: Maps of review area boundaries in Trenton, Newark, and Camden, New Jersey

Area Population (2017)	Camden ¹¹	Newark ¹²	Trenton ¹³
Area	10.34 mi	25.98 mi	8.155 mi
Total Pop	75,550	282,703	84,867
Total Youth Pop (< 18 years)	23,739	70,109	21,370

Table 1: Area and Population

#	Community Assets	Camden	Newark	Trenton
1	Community Centers	7	13	2
2	Drug Treatment Facilities	11	35	13
3	Educational Institutions	44	134	29
		(16 – Charter)	(42—Charter)	(4—Charter)
		(22 – Public)	(64—Public)	(20—Public)
		(6– Non-public)	(18—Non-public)	(3—Non-public)
			(7—Unknown)	(2—Unknown)
4	Empty Lots	76	66	15
5	Health Clinics	11	9	4
6	Social Service Offices	3	5	11
7	Recreational Centers	9	14	4
8	Religious Facilities	136	536	194
9	Transportation Locations (bus & train stops)	831	2056	659
10	Open Spaces (parks, sport fields)	207	204	399

Table 2: Online data review findings for ten forms of community assets

These maps show us a subset of services and programs delivered primarily by governmental agencies and large service providers. While the online data review identified a considerable number of assets in the target cities, it failed to capture a broader list of programs delivered by small grassroots organizations; many of these programs do not have the resources to have an online presence. Ergo, we knew that a more comprehensive evaluation was needed to identify grassroots resources as well.

Field Review

To survey assets from a grassroots community viewpoint, the Institute collaborated with local community members and conducted a **field review**. The field review examined assets in Camden, Newark (South & West Wards), and Trenton and focused on resources available for youth (< 18 years) and young adults (< 24 years). We formed three data collection teams. Each team had two community members who were in place at each of the targeted cities. During the field review, the data collection teams reviewed 451 service provider organizations and 584 asset programs across the three targeted cities.

As part of the field review, the data collection teams hosted two focus group sessions in each of the targeted cities. They held one session with community members, two sessions with youth, and three sessions with service providers. The focus group discussions provided insight into resource gaps, the ease of access and utilization of programs, and care coordination. The data collection teams also conducted in-person and phone interviews, as well as neighborhood walking and car tours to gain a better perspective of what assets existed in each community. See Table 3 below for a high-level overview of the focus group sessions and sample answers from two of six questions.

Based on this information, Dr. Fouad created three different types of field maps per city, which, similar to the online data maps, included community asset points, assets per total population, and assets per minor population. The field mapping project revealed a number of community assets tied to grassroots organizations that we were

not able to identify through the online mapping project discussed above. In total, sixty maps per city were generated and are posted here (<https://arcg.is/1KCqgK>).

With the conclusion of the data mapping activities, we now have a plethora of information on a number of different community-based resources. For example, we can now determine if grassroots organizations provide significant programming in local communities not fully supported by larger state-recognized service providers. An in-depth analysis of the available maps can thus uncover valuable information to help inform and direct important funding decisions in these communities.

Focus Group Event	Camden	Newark	Trenton
Event (1)	<i>Service Provider</i>	<i>Service Provider</i>	<i>Service Provider</i>
Date	<i>July 16, 2019</i>	<i>July 12, 2019</i>	<i>July 24, 2019</i>
Location	<i>Dare Academy Library</i>	<i>Day Reporting Center</i>	<i>Online Survey</i>
# of Participants	<i>14</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>7</i>
Question 3: What services would your organization provide if additional resources were available?	<i>Trauma healing, clothing, shelter, mentorships, internships, transportation, job training, childcare.</i>	<i>Transportation, food, dress for success, parenting skills classes, helping youth secure state documentation (Birth certificates, Driver's License, etc.).</i>	<i>Art and music therapy, capacity building.</i>
Event (2)	<i>Adult and Youth</i>	<i>Youth (16-19 yrs)</i>	<i>Youth (16-19 yrs)</i>
Date	<i>May 23, 2019</i>	<i>June 12, 2019</i>	<i>May 29, 2019</i>
Location	<i>Dare Academy Library</i>	<i>Reporting Center</i>	<i>YouthBuild</i>
# of Participants	<i>19</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>
Question 5: Have you ever visited a Family Success Center?	<i>Yes (29%), No (71%)</i>	<i>Yes (0%), No (100%)</i>	<i>Yes (0%), No (100%)</i>

Table 3: Sample of Focus Group Feedback

As shown in Table 4 below, the GIS field review database captures two forms of assets: 1) service provider organizations (e.g., the Genesis Counseling Center in Camden) offering programming in the target cities and 2) programs grouped by the Continuum of Care (CoC) levels of services—prevention, pre-intervention, intervention, diversion, and aftercare.

City Service Provider Organizations (#)							Total # Assets/ Programs
	Prev	PreInter	Inter	Diver	AfterCar	Other	
Camden Orgs (210)	222	32	53	13	0	1	321
Newark Orgs (71)	52	2	8	2	1	2	67
Trenton Orgs (170)	166	9	16	1	1	3	196
Total Orgs (451)	440	43	77	16	2	6	584

Table 4: Total number of assets, grouped by CoC levels of service, reviewed in Camden, Newark (South & West Wards), and Trenton

Since They Built Them, Why Don't They Come?

Our asset mapping work revealed that there is a plethora of available prevention programs—one of the most important tools to keep kids out of the youth justice system. However, we also learned that residents lack information about prevention assets/programs. *Why?*

Our analysis shows that community residents do not have this information because it is not readily available. Governmental agencies like the county Youth Services Commissions (YSCs),¹⁴ funded by the Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC),¹⁵ and the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF)¹⁶ often operate in silos, communicate information on different platforms, and do not effectively communicate information to community members. As noted in the Institute's recent report, *Bring Our Children Home: Building Up Kids Through New Jersey's Youth Services Commissions*, the JJC website provides minimal YSC information and information available on individual YSC webpages varies greatly.¹⁷ Greater transparency is needed to ensure all relevant programming information is available to communities. As recommended in the report, the State should mandate that all YSCs create individual websites and post to them all relevant YSC documents, including a complete list of programs available to youth and families.¹⁸ Additionally, the State should collaborate with service providers and community stakeholders to develop a comprehensive communication strategy that will inform the community about the website and available programs.

III. Next Steps: Recommendations to Address Gaps and Needs

Part One of our community-based system of care project identified eight strategic areas that we will need to focus on during the Part 2 implementation stage of the project:

1) Barriers to Quality Care

- **Access to timely programming:** Youth and families need to have access to effective programming in a timely manner. This is especially true for parents seeking support for young people engaged in gang related activities and harmful behaviors.
- **Access to quality mental health services and support:** Ensuring impactful mental health services for young people is crucial to keeping them out of the youth justice system. In particular, parents want treatment from culturally competent professionals for their children.

2) Resource Gaps

- **Housing and independent living programs:** Many young people said that access to stable housing was an incredibly important factor in keeping them in the community. We must prioritize housing options for young adults (18 to 24 years) in need of life skills, jobs skills, financial literacy, and parenting skills.
- **Innovative job skills programs:** Employment that pays a living wage is a significant factor in keeping kids out of youth prisons. We must increase access to quality jobs through providing young people with job skills training that includes pre-apprenticeship opportunities, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) career pathways, job internships, and industry-related work experiences.
- **Quality education:** Schools play a critical role in keeping kids out of youth incarceration. We must expand available resources to schools by increasing access to basic educational tools to help young people learn, e.g. books, computers, STEM programs, music programs, school trips, etc.
- **Quality sports programs:** Young people and their families expressed a desire to keep their kids active and engaged in their communities by increasing access to basic equipment and facilities.

- 3) Underutilization of assets:** Parents need to be made aware of what resources are available to their kids to best utilize those resources. For example, nearly 100% of our focus group participants had not heard of Family Success Centers, which are located in every county and connect families to community services.

- 4) **Technical assistance for grassroots organizations:** Some participants expressed interest in providing programs and services, but didn't know how to begin the process. For those service providers in need of capacity building, they should be provided help with completing the 501(c)(3) nonprofit registration process and support with building professional teams, sustaining services, and securing adequate space for operation.
- 5) **Care Coordination:** Far too often, key service providers act in silos. We must encourage collaboration between agencies and create practices and processes to foster care coordination across agencies and with communities.
- 6) **Community Accountability:** Community members must have agency in the services available in their communities. Community accountability measures should be strengthened to promote safety and community building and ensure essential community services and programs are available.
- 7) **Community-Engagement Steering Committee:** To strengthen community accountability, individual communities should create an inclusive governance practice comprised of processes for sustained community engagement, transparent decision-making, and accountability.
- 8) **Community-Based Program Evaluation Process, Tracking, and Reporting System:** Data is key to tracking successful outcomes for community-based resource provision. We should work to develop a quantitative system to gauge success and ensure community-based service providers report data in a consistent and reliable manner and create an evidence-based youth justice model.

CONCLUSION

Through the development of the community-based system of care model and asset maps in Part One of our project, we learned that communities are eager to transform the current youth incarceration model into a community-based restorative justice model, require significant investment in mental health services and micro-targeted programming (e.g. life and job skills programming, etc.), require more transparency in programming and care coordination, and expect more community-engagement and accountability. Most importantly, we learned that communities have a clear vision about how best to use the \$100 million per year investment proposed in the New Jersey Youth Justice Transformation Act (Bill S3701/A5365).

We look forward to the next phase of our work, which aims to plan, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the community-based system of care model.

When this work is finally implemented, we will be on the road to a New Jersey that leads the way in building a national "best in class" youth community-based system of care.

¹ N.J. DEP'T OF THE TREASURY OFFICE OF MGMT. & BUDGET, GOVERNOR'S FY 2020 DETAILED BUDGET D-264 (2019), <https://www.nj.gov/treasury/omb/publications/20budget/pdf/FY20GBM.pdf>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.* This calculation was determined by subtracting the average daily population of Juvenile Justice Commission youth prisons in 2019 (188) from the operational capacity of these facilities that same year (511). The resulting number (323) was then used to obtain the percentage of empty youth prison beds (323 is 63.2% of 511).

⁴ N.J. DEP'T OF CORR. ET AL., RELEASE OUTCOME 2014: A THREE-YEAR FOLLOW UP 6, https://www.state.nj.us/corrections/pdf/offender_statistics/2014_Release_Recidivism_Report.pdf.

⁵ Nat'l Ctr. for Juvenile Justice, *Race/Ethnicity by State (Rate)*, 2017, EASY ACCESS TO THE CENSUS OF JUVENILES IN RESIDENTIAL PLACEMENT: 1997-2017, https://www.ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacirp/asp/State_Race.asp.

⁶ JOSHUA ROVNER, THE SENTENCING PROJECT, RACIAL DISPARITIES IN YOUTH COMMITMENTS AND ARRESTS 6-7 (2016), <https://www.sentencing-project.org/publications/racial-disparities-in-youth-commitments-and-arrests/>; see also NAT'L JUVENILE JUSTICE NETWORK, IMPLICIT BIAS: WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOUTH JUSTICE 1-2 (2017), <http://www.njjn.org/uploads/digital-library/NJJN%20Implicit%20Bias%20Snapshot%202017.pdf>.

⁷ N.J. JUVENILE JUSTICE COMM'N, AS OF MAY 1, 2019, THE TOTAL NUMBER OF YOUTH IN A JJC SECURE FACILITY, BROKEN DOWN BY FACILITY, RACE, GENDER, AND AGE (2019) (on file with author).

⁸ SUSTAINABLE JERSEY, COMMUNITY ASSET MAPPING (2019), http://www.sustainablejersey.com/actions-certification/actions/?type=1336777436&tx_sjcert_action%5BactionObject%5D=90&tx_sjcert_action%5Baction%5D=getPDF&tx_sjcert_action%5Bcontroller%5D=Action&cHash=d8896df5ca9909fc37fd61db1c3b38da.

⁹ In the online review, we focused on assets for youth across the entire city of Newark. In the field review, we focused on assets in the communities where most of the system-impacted youth reside (e.g. South and West Wards).

¹⁰ In the field data review, we focused on assets for youth (< 18 years) and young adults (< 24 years).

¹¹ *ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates: Camden City, New Jersey*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU: AM. FACT FINDER, <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF> (last visited Sept. 18, 2019).

¹² *ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates: Newark city, New Jersey*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU: AM. FACT FINDER, <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF> (last visited Sept. 18, 2019).

¹³ *ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates: Trenton city, New Jersey*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU: AM. FACT FINDER, <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF> (last visited Sept. 18, 2019).

¹⁴ *Youth Services Commissions*, STATE OF N.J.: DEP'T OF LAW & PUB. SAFETY, https://www.nj.gov/oag/jjc/localized_programs_ysc.html (last visited Sept. 18, 2019).

¹⁵ *Juvenile Justice Commission*, STATE OF N.J.: DEP'T OF L. & PUB. SAFETY, https://www.nj.gov/oag/jjc/localized_programs.html#about (last visited Sept. 18, 2019).

¹⁶ *About Us*, STATE OF N.J.: DEP'T OF CHILD. & FAMS., <https://www.nj.gov/dcf/about/> (last visited Sept. 18, 2019).

¹⁷ ANDREA McCHRISTIAN & RYAN HAYGOOD, N.J. INST. FOR SOC. JUST., BRING OUR CHILDREN HOME: BUILDING UP KIDS THROUGH NEW JERSEY'S YOUTH SERVICES COMMISSIONS 11 (2019), https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/njisj/pages/1345/attachments/original/1565122296/Bring_Our_Children_Home_LowRes.pdf?1565122296.

¹⁸ *Id.*