

Promoting a New Direction for Youth Justice

Strategies to Fund a Community-Based Continuum of Care and Opportunity

Samantha Harvell, Chloe Warnberg, Leah Sakala, and Constance Hull

Kansas cut youth incarceration and **invested \$12.5 million in evidence-based community programming.**

California created a Youth Justice Reinvestment Fund and is **awarding nearly \$37.5 million in local diversion programming** in communities with high rates of youth arrests.

Agency restructuring in Onondaga County, New York, **supported a \$500,000 investment of child welfare funds in community-based services for youth** in communities with disproportionately high numbers of system-involved youth in 2016.

Residents of Oakland, CA, approved a tax in 2014 that **generates millions of dollars—roughly \$8 million in fiscal year 2017–18—for violence prevention and intervention.**

Lena Pope in Fort Worth, Texas, leased property to a shopping center developer and **collects \$1 million annually that supports counseling and education** for youth in the community.

THE NEED TO INVEST IN COMMUNITY-BASED SOLUTIONS

Research has shown that community-based alternatives are more effective than incarceration in reducing future illegal behavior. However, structural inequalities result in the reality that some communities simply do not have the resources to offer all youth the same access to education, jobs, health care, supports, and opportunities that promote healthy development and safe neighborhoods. Funding a continuum of care and opportunity in communities that experience concentrated disadvantage is the next frontier of juvenile justice reform (see figure 1). There is a critical need to identify proven, promising, and innovative strategies for investing in community-based solutions.

FIGURE 1
Continuum of Care and Opportunity



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PROMISING AND INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES

States and localities across the country are experimenting with innovative strategies to invest in community-based youth justice solutions. This report highlights four approaches, summarized briefly below.

Capturing and Redirecting Savings from Reduced Youth Incarceration and Facility Closure

Most states have seen a 50 percent reduction or more in youth incarceration over the past decade, resulting in hundreds of closed facilities and freeing up resources for investment in community-based alternatives. States and localities as diverse as California, Kansas, and Virginia have redirected savings from reduced incarceration or made an upfront investment in community-based services for youth and families.

Repurposing Youth Facilities and Leveraging Land Value

Empty youth corrections facilities can hold tremendous potential. Communities have repurposed former facilities into everything from technology parks to teen centers. They have also leveraged land value to create new funding streams to fund services and supports.

Maximizing Existing State and Federal Funding Opportunities

The population of youth and families accessing services from juvenile justice, child welfare, housing, and public health systems overlaps significantly. These systems share responsibility for collaboratively addressing the needs of youth clients and their families, and state and federal funding streams outside the juvenile justice system can and do support services for youth who are, or are at risk of becoming, justice-involved. Potential sources of funding include child welfare funding, Medicaid, federal workforce and education programs, the Victims of Crime Act, Community Development Block Grant, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Implementing Innovative Strategies to Fund Community Investment

While many states and localities are looking beyond the juvenile justice system to identify new funds to invest in youth development strategies, the scope and scale required to reverse historical underinvestment in communities disproportionately impacted by incarceration has led residents to think even bigger and develop and implement their own solutions. Innovative strategies include:

- levying a new tax
- implementing a Pay for Success program
- supporting participatory budgeting
- leveraging opportunity zones
- partnering with anchor institutions
- harnessing funds from cannabis legalization

ADDITIONAL READING:

FULL REPORT

Promoting a New Direction for Youth Justice: Strategies to Fund a Community-Based Continuum of Care and Opportunity
Samantha Harvell, Chloe Warnberg, Leah Sakala, and Constance Hull <https://urbn.is/2HSuXnp>.

HELPFUL TOOL THAT WALKS THROUGH KEY QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

How Can We Fund a Continuum of Care and Opportunity?

Chloe Warnberg, Samantha Harvell, Leah Sakala, and Constance Hull <https://urbn.is/2H1bhmK>.

METHODOLOGY

The Urban Institute collected information for this report using the following methods:

- **Interviews** with more than 20 stakeholders ranging from government officials to community representatives.
- A **convening** on “Innovative Strategies for Reinvesting in Youth Justice” with approximately 40 advocates, practitioners, and budget experts.
- Two **roundtables with youth advocates** on “Making Smarter Investments in Juvenile Justice.”
- A **review** of relevant program materials, research, and reports.