



Juvenile Justice Project
of
Louisiana

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Statement on the 2008 Kids Count Essay by the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana

New Orleans, LA--We would like to join the *2008 KIDS COUNT Essay* in its challenge to local and state-level institutions to reduce the unnecessary and inappropriate detention and incarceration of youth in Louisiana. Despite several positive changes instigated by national foundations armed with progressive, evidenced-based initiatives, the road to effective reform is still far from complete.

In spite of an increase in investments into alternatives, there is not yet an effective continuum of sanctions for youth. Louisiana's youth detention centers are deteriorating, with reports of abuse, widespread fighting, and most recently, the tragic death of a child. Just three weeks away from his release date, the death of this youth reveals more than anything the human cost of a juvenile justice system in need of further reform efforts.

More than 60% of youth in secured facilities in Louisiana are serving time for non-violent offenses. These children would be more appropriately served by effective, evidenced-based alternatives to incarceration. Evidence shows us that these models can work to improve public safety and save the lives of children.

This essay is Louisiana's chance to demonstrate the leadership necessary to fix a broken juvenile justice system and finally deliver a better future for all of Louisiana's children.

Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana

The Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana's mission is to transform the juvenile justice system into one that builds on the strengths of young people, families and communities in order to instill hope and to ensure children are given the greatest opportunities to grow and thrive.

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