



**For immediate release  
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**DOC Oversight Hearing: Testimony on Impact of Placing Youth at DC Jail  
Witnesses Call for Removal of Youth from DC Jail, Changes in DC Law**

(Washington D.C.) – On October 29<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 am, the DC City Council will hold a Department of Corrections oversight hearing at the DC Council Chambers on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the DC Council building located at 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. At the hearing, youth, advocates and experts will testify on the impact of placing youth at the DC Jail and call on officials to remove youth from DOC custody. Witnesses include Dr. Jennifer Woolard of Georgetown University; Michelle Tupper, attorney and board member of DC Lawyers for Youth; and Wil, a youth formerly incarcerated at the DC Jail.

Witnesses will discuss the findings in a new report released in July, *A Capital Offense: Youth in DC's Adult Criminal Justice System and Strategies for Reform*, which examines the status of children in the District of Columbia's adult criminal justice system. The report's findings show that youth in D.C. jail can spend up to 23 and a half hours a day locked up in their cells. Many of these youth – some as young as 15 years of age – were sent to adult jail without review by a judge or court hearing.

“The current process of charging youth as adults without judicial review and then detaining them without providing necessary services has eliminated any possible rehabilitation for many District teenagers - rehabilitation we have come to know works since these laws were passed,” says Michelle Tupper, an attorney and board member of DC Lawyers for Youth. “Instead, the system sends these youth back to their communities in a significantly worse position than at the time of their arrest.”

Additionally, witnesses will testify that the tripling in the number of youth at the DC Jail is not due to an increase in juvenile crime. In *A Capital Offense: Youth in DC's Adult Criminal Justice System and Strategies for Reform* the report shows that the number of youth in adult jails is three times what it was in 2006 (12 in 2006 vs. 40 in 2007).

Dr. Jennifer Woolard, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Georgetown University states, “This population is of incredible importance because they are often the most targeted or talked about group in policy discussion about juvenile crime.”

According to the Justice Policy Institute (JPI), more youth locked up has not meant less crime for District neighborhoods, as youth are responsible for only a small percentage of the crimes committed in DC. So far in 2007, youth make up only 6.8 percent of all DC arrests, and less than 20 percent of all arrests for violent crimes.

Jason Ziedenberg, Executive Director of the Justice Policy Institute says, “Locking up more youth in an effort to curb violent crime is an inappropriate response to the city’s crime challenges.”

Youth detained in the D.C. jail do not benefit from the extensive reform measures currently being implemented at the Department of Youth Rehabilitative Services under the comprehensive reform legislation, the Omnibus Juvenile Justice Amendment Act of 2004 (D.C. Law 15-261), approved by the DC Council, such as the detention (pretrial) programming at the Youth Services Center, DC’s detention facility for youth awaiting a hearing in juvenile court.

“My struggle was hard, my life scarred, and my mindset crippled. Since I was a juvenile charged as an adult I could not go to any group home for juveniles and since I was sixteen, I could not go to a halfway house for adults. Basically I was stuck,” says Wil, a youth formerly incarcerated at the DC Jail. “Instead of learning how to survive in an adult prison, there could be other places a child could be. Is that what you want the future adults to learn how to survive in a jungle of violence?”

Witnesses will call upon DC City Council to implement the recommendations in “A Capitol Offense” which have been endorsed by local advocates in a letter to the Mayor and D.C. City Council:

- End the pretrial placement of youth in the adult jail;
- Require that all transfer cases be decided by a judge;
- Provide a “reverse” waiver mechanism for youth in adult court to be returned to juvenile jurisdiction when appropriate;
- Collect and analyze data on youth tried and sentenced as adults on an on-going basis.
- Encourage the Federal Bureau of Prisons to contract with the Department of Youth Rehabilitative Services so that youth can serve out their sentences close to home.

“What we really need to do is address the endemic causes – racism, classism and criminalization of youth which make it so likely for youth of color attending public schools in the nation’s capital to end up in prison rather than college,” says Shani O’Neal, Director of Justice for DC Youth (JDCY), a diverse, inter-generational group that is pushing for a fair and more effective juvenile justice system in the District and manages the “Prison to College” Pipeline Project at the Oak Hill Youth Center, DC’s youth correctional facility.

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*The Campaign for Youth Justice (C4YJ) is a national organization dedicated to ending the practice of trying, sentencing and incarcerating youth under the age of 18 in the adult criminal justice system. For more information, visit: [www.campaign4youthjustice.org](http://www.campaign4youthjustice.org).*



D.C. Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services

## Fact Sheet on DYRS' Approach to Public Safety

The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS, formerly the Youth Services Administration, or YSA) was created in 2005 simultaneous with the appointment of its first Director, Vincent Schiraldi. Since then, DYRS has been reforming all aspects of the Department's work, causing lead plaintiff's counsel in the 20-year-old *Jerry M. vs. the District of Columbia* case to proclaim that there has been more progress in the Department in the past two years than in the previous 18 years.

While reforms at DYRS are still a work-in-progress, this fact sheet provides some of the data about the Department's progress to date in the area of public safety.

### **New secure programming rehabilitates youth, improves public safety**

- Research by the Annie E. Casey Foundation showed that, in 2005, all Oak Hill youth stayed there an average of only 71 days regardless of offense severity and that only 17% of Oak Hill youth were confined for the most serious offenses.
- DYRS reforms now keep youth with more serious offenses in Oak Hill longer and involve them with more rehabilitative programming. "Tier I" (most serious offending) youth now stay at Oak Hill 9-12 months and make up 67% of the facility's population.
- Initial rearrest studies regarding new programming for those youth are showing that youth who complete the new "DC Model" program at Oak Hill are rearrested at *half* the rate of youth who do not.

### **Community based alternatives reduce youth crime and save public dollars**

- Since 2005, the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) has launched two new *detention* (pretrial) alternatives that have proven to reduce re-arrest and failure to appear rates.
  - Intensive Third Party Monitoring (ITPM)<sup>1</sup> provides intensive face-to-face supervision (up to three times per day) by community-based youth workers. Of the 70 youth participating in ITPM, 95% successfully completed the program and avoided re-arrest and failure to appear in court.
  - Similarly, there was a 93% success rate among the 403 youth participating in Evening Reporting Centers (ERCs)<sup>2</sup>, which provide five hours of evening supervision nightly and programming such as tutoring, recreation, and the arts.

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<sup>1</sup> DYRS operates ITPM under contract with the Alliance of Concerned Men and Culbreth and Culbreth.

<sup>2</sup> ERCs are operated by the Latin American Youth Center and ARCH under contract with DYRS.

- DYRS has also launched a triad of evidence-based programs for *committed* (post-adjudication) youth - Functional Family Therapy (FFT)<sup>3</sup>, Multisystemic Therapy<sup>4</sup>, and Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC)<sup>5</sup>.
  - While it is too early in their implementation to have local data on these programs, national evaluations of these models demonstrate that they reduce re-arrest rates by as much as 50%. According to the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, for every public dollar invested in these programs, between \$29 to \$44 dollars are saved by taxpayers and crime victims due to crime avoidance.
  
- DYRS has also launched the Civic Justice Corps<sup>6</sup>, a workforce development program that provides job training, civic works and hands-on work experience to DYRS youth. None of the 12 participants in the program this year were rearrested and, of those youth who graduated, the average post-graduation earnings were \$9.60 per hour. National research on conservation corps has found them to reduce recidivism and improve job retention, findings which were especially strong amongst African American youth.

## **Reduction in Homicide and Abscondance Rates Show Progress**

Even one youth homicide is one too many and DYRS is working hard to prevent these tragedies from occurring in the community.

- The homicide rate among youth on DYRS' caseload has dropped by 50% since 2005.
- In 2005, 8 youth on DYRS' caseload were homicide victims. In 2006, 7 DYRS youth were homicide victims. So far this year, 4 DYRS youth have been homicide victims, and we intend to continue to work diligently in this area until we reach the only acceptable number – zero.

Abscondance rates amongst DYRS youth have also significantly declined. Abscondance means running away from home, a group home, independent living, etc. or failing to return on a home pass to Oak Hill.<sup>7</sup>

- In 2003, 26% of youth committed to YSA (DYRS' precursor agency) were on abscondance.
- Since that time, DYRS created an in-house "absconders unit" augmented by a contracted absconder's program<sup>8</sup> These two programs have been working jointly with MPD's absconder's unit to return youth to DYRS' custody who have run away.
- As a result, by 2007, the abscondance rate has declined to 5%.

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<sup>3</sup> Operated by the Center for Student Support Services.

<sup>4</sup> Operated by Youth Villages.

<sup>5</sup> Operated by Foundations.

<sup>6</sup> Operated by the Earth Conservation Corps.

<sup>7</sup> This is different from "escapes", of which there are very few. There have been no escapes from the Youth Services Center since its opening in 2004. Three youths escaped from Oak Hill in January 2006 and were found by DYRS staff and returned to the facility within a few hours.

<sup>8</sup> Operated under contract with the Alliance of Concerned Men.

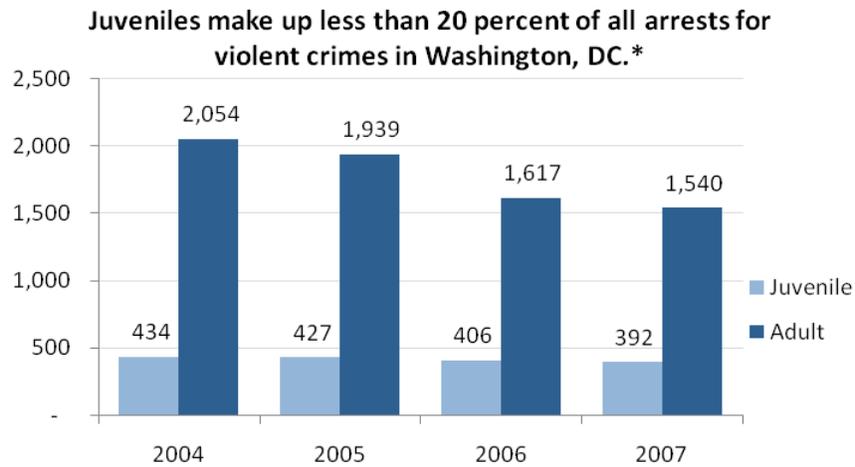
## Overall Public Safety Outcomes

As noted above, DYRS is in the throes of a substantial overhaul of our services to young people to help turn their lives around and to protect the residents of the District of Columbia. Early results are promising. While there was a 23% *increase* in juveniles arrested for serious offenses<sup>9</sup> in the District of Columbia in 2003 and 2004, in the first two years for which there is full year data since the new Department's reforms were initiated, 2005 and 2006, there has been a 1.7% *decline* in serious juvenile arrests.

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<sup>9</sup> Serious juvenile offenses include robbery/carjacking, rape/sexual assault, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny theft, auto theft, homicide and arson.

The number of youth in adult jails is three times what it was in 2006 (12 in 2006 vs. 40 in 2007). However, more youth locked up has not meant less crime for District neighborhoods, as youth are responsible for only a small percentage of the crimes committed in DC. So far in 2007, juveniles made up only 6.8 percent of all DC arrests, and less than 20 percent of all arrests for violent crimes.<sup>10</sup> Locking up more youth in an effort to curb violent crime is an inappropriate response to the city’s crime challenges.



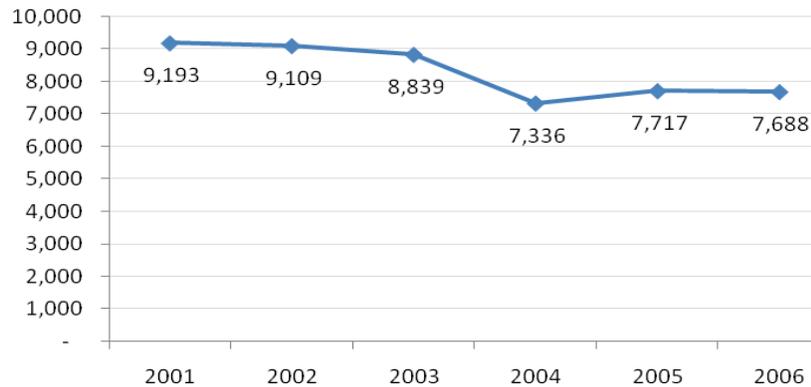
\*Violent crimes include homicide, rape, aggravated assault and robbery.  
2006 and 2007 data only contains arrests from January 1 thru October 20.  
Source: Metropolitan Police Department. December 2006. *Building a Safer DC: Statistical Report, 2001-2005*. Online at [www.mpdc.dc.gov](http://www.mpdc.dc.gov)

**CRIME**

- Although violent crime rates continue to be at record lows, DC experienced almost a five percent increase in the number of violent crimes since 2004, when DC started locking up more youth in adult jails.

<sup>10</sup> All numbers are from the DC Metropolitan Police Department Website [www.mpdc.dc.gov](http://www.mpdc.dc.gov) unless otherwise noted.

**The number of violent crimes reported in Washington, DC has increased since 2004.**



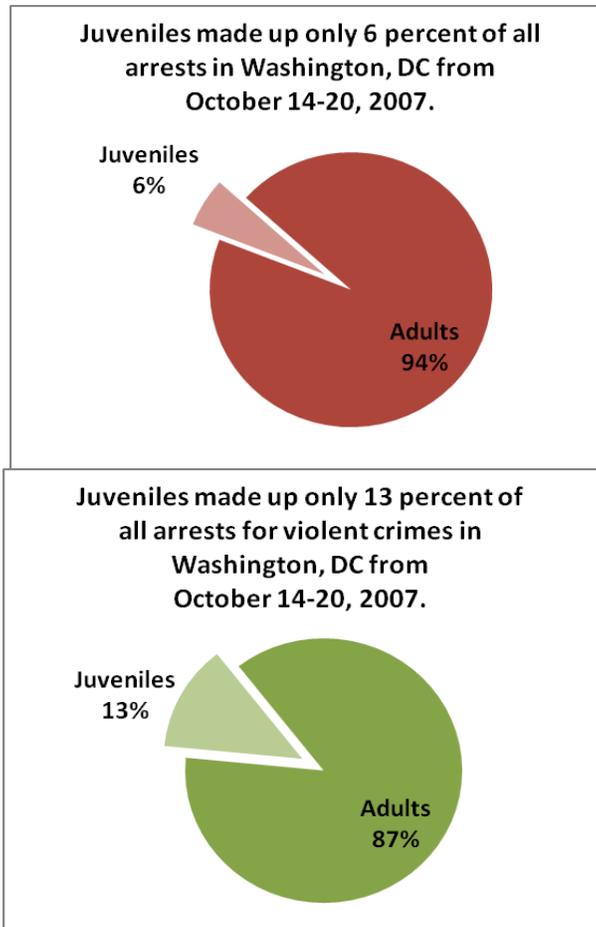
Source: DC Metropolitan Police Department, *Citywide Crime Statistics, Annual Totals and Monthly Statistics*. Online at [www.mpdc.dc.gov](http://www.mpdc.dc.gov)

- Overall, reported violent crimes were down 1.3 percent from January to September 2007, compared to the same time in 2006.
  - While robberies were up 5 percent, aggravated assaults were down 7 percent and sexual assaults reported were down 27 percent.
  - There have been 13 more homicides in the first 9 months of 2007 compared to 2006.

## **ARRESTS**

- For the week of October 14-20, there were 789 adults arrested and 48 juveniles arrested for all crimes. Of the 31 people arrested for violent crimes that week, only 4 were youth under the age of 18.

**Juveniles make up a small percentage of all arrests in Washington, DC.**



Source: Metropolitan Police Department. *Number of Adult and Juvenile Arrests (10/14-10/20/07)*. Online at [www.mpdc.dc.gov](http://www.mpdc.dc.gov)

- Juvenile arrests for robbery from January to October 2007 are down 17.1 percent from the same time in 2006.
- Juvenile arrests for homicides are down from 6 in 2006 to 4 in 2007. Adults make up 95.5% of arrests for homicide in 2007.