

Juvenile Justice

Juvenile Lockup v. Community-Based Alternatives:

Most Arkansas youth who enter the juvenile system are at low or moderate risk of posing physical harm to others. Holding youth in juvenile lockups, especially for extended periods of time, is bad for their well-being and endangers their physical safety and mental health. It also increases the likelihood they will reoffend and later enter the correctional system as adults. Committing youth to juvenile lockups is expensive for taxpayers.

High quality, evidence-based community programs are more affordable than locking kids up, more effective in improving their long-term outcomes, and better at ensuring public safety. In 2019 the Arkansas legislature passed comprehensive juvenile justice reform, Act 189. Act 189's major goals include reducing the number of youth and their length of stay in juvenile lockups; redirecting funding from secure confinement to more effective (and cheaper) evidence-based programs; ensuring that youth receive the services they need to improve their outcomes; and improving the accountability of the juvenile justice system for providers, juvenile judges, and the Division of Youth Services (DYS).

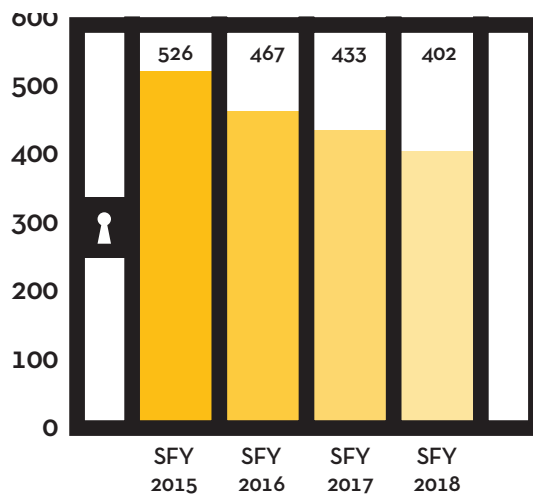
Recent Reforms are Just the Beginning: The success of Act 189 and juvenile justice reform will depend on how it is funded and implemented in the future. It will depend on every child receiving an accurate assessment of their risk level and need for services; judges making good decisions about the youth that come before their courts; evidence-based community services being available in every region of the state; and greater collaboration between juvenile judges, providers, and DHS.



What to Ask Candidates

- How would you ensure the state prioritizes community-based alternatives instead of new jail beds for juveniles?
- How would you ensure that developmentally appropriate, evidence-based community services are available for children in every region of the state?
- How would you hold juvenile judges, providers, and DHS accountable for their decisions and actions?
- How would you monitor the implementation and impact of Act 189, the state's major juvenile justice reform law, on Arkansas youth?

Arkansas Continues to Reduce the Number of Juveniles Committed to Detention



Source: https://humanservices.arkansas.gov/images/uploads/dys/FY2018_DYS_Annual_Report_Final.pdf