
ICCA Public Policy on Juvenile Justice

I. INTRODUCTION

ICCA has a long-standing tradition of supporting juvenile justice systems and programs that operate in the best interests of children.

ICCA believes that children and youth have distinct personal and developmental needs that require specialized programs completely apart from adult offenders. The juvenile justice system must provide specialized care and rehabilitative programs for young offenders consistent with the protection of the public and focused on the principle of accountability for behavior. The juvenile correctional system includes: prevention, diversion, specialized treatment programs, family focused therapies, school-based services, wrap-around services, therapeutic foster care, mentoring, mediation, community residential detention, and probation.

ICCA believes that juveniles who commit crimes should be held accountable and that communities must be safe-guarded. ICCA members support a menu of evidence-based, least restrictive programs by offering various levels of community treatment, care and community reintegration. While juvenile corrections has an overarching responsibility to provide programs that suppress crime, it also seeks to fulfill the goals of family restoration, competency development, and healing the harm to communities.

ICCA believes that government agencies at all levels should develop and support policies and fund programs that will sustain a comprehensive, balanced approach to delinquency, youth crime and prevention. The highest priority should be placed on evidence-based treatment and services that suppress crime, develop competencies, strengthen families and heal the harm to communities. In partnership with juvenile corrections professionals, elected officials, the educational system, the media and the community should all be leaders in providing adequate resources and positive role models for children at risk.

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II. BACKGROUND

Concern over juvenile crime has resulted in governments and communities taking stronger and more effective roles in preventing delinquency. Juvenile crime overall has decreased every year for more than a decade. Most juveniles do not commit serious felonies and most are detained for low level offenses. When juveniles who are detained for less serious offenses are placed in community settings, they are more effectively served and reduce the need for expensive secure residential facilities.

ICCA, in support of “What Works” according to evidence-based best practices, believes the priorities of a continuum of services should be to:

- A. Reduce delinquent behavior through primary prevention and collaboration with communities and families.
- B. Promote effective intervention and treatment practices.
- C. Appropriately classify and place non-violent offenders in juvenile community-based programs; and
- D. Emphasize strengths and protective factors of communities, families and individuals.
- E. Provide transition services for juveniles released from secure residential facilities to less restrictive, community-based residential programs.

III. STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

ICCA believes policy-makers, juvenile justice officials and agencies should:

- A. **Develop a system that offers a continuum of care, including prevention and early intervention, remedial, extended care, specialized treatment services, after care and custody.** The priority of this continuum should be to eliminate the risk of

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delinquent behavior. The system should recognize the importance of partnerships with related service providers

- B. Provide adequate, consistent and reliable funding that supports the continuum of care.
- C. Provide a system of comprehensive assessment.
- D. Address the child's need for permanence and bonding with the family and the community. Legislation and policy should support service systems (e.g., education, substance abuse and mental health treatment) that affirm individual growth and development of children and youth, and provide effective and humane approaches to treatment, supervision and custody.
- E. Expand and utilize research and evaluation of what treatment and services are most effective in preventing delinquency, working with status offenders, supervising juveniles accused of criminal behavior, and providing support and community reintegration for those released from secure care.
- F. Safeguard the accuracy and privacy of juvenile records.
- G. Make appropriate decisions on individual juvenile cases by communicating with all aspects of the juvenile justice and youth service systems.
- H. Provide an appropriate range of community and residential programs and services to meet individual needs, including education, vocational training, recreation, religious opportunities, individual and family counseling, medical, dental, mental health, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS counseling, sexual offender treatment, and culturally and gender responsive health treatment.
- I. Monitor and evaluate program outcomes to assure quality.

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