



Advertise on NYTimes.com

EDITORIAL

Help Closer to Home

Published: July 11, 2008

One proven way to prevent borderline young offenders from becoming serious criminals is to treat them — and their families — in community-based counseling programs instead of shipping them off to juvenile facilities that are often hundreds of miles away from home. Early data suggests that New York City's alternative-placement programs are cutting recidivism rates.

In addition to saving young lives, the community-based programs cost a lot less: \$20,000 per child per year versus as much as \$200,000 for holding a child in a juvenile facility. Despite that, politicians and labor unions — eager to preserve local jobs — are fighting hard to keep facilities open.

Earlier this year, Gladys Carrión, the commissioner of New York's Office of Children and Family Services, announced her intention to close five of the state's 22 facilities for low-level offenders and an intake center in the Bronx. A longtime advocate of community-based therapies, Ms.

The Board Blog

Additional commentary, background information and other items by Times editorial writers.



Go to The Board »

Carrión was fiercely criticized by the unions and communities where the facilities are located. The Legislature then restored funding for one of the facilities and the intake center. Gov. David Paterson will need to press a lot harder to close the rest of the unneeded centers and to help keep the reform effort on track.

If there is any doubt, Governor Paterson and other politicians in Albany should review the data on recidivism. About 80 percent of the young men who are placed in juvenile facilities in New York end up committing more crimes within three years of their release.

Preliminary data from New York City suggests that the recidivism rate for the new community-based programs might be as low as 35 percent.

The idea is to help borderline young offenders before they turn to serious crime. Young people are required to participate in the programs as a condition of probation. Both they and their families are provided with counselors who teach parenting skills and who often mediate between troubled children and their families.

New York and other states will always need some facilities for young people who commit grave crimes. But they need to stop reflexively confining young people who present little or no risk. New York needs to greatly expand access to community-based programs. It can do that by closing unneeded juvenile detention centers and investing the savings in programs like the ones adopted in New York City.

More Articles in Opinion »

More Articles in Opinion »

THEATER nytimes.com/theater Familiar faces bring the prairie to stage Also in Theater: Neil Young's 'Greendale' Daniel Stewart goes around the world No more Mr. Tough Guy

MOST POPULAR

E-MAILED BLOGGED SEARCHED

- 1. Panel Urges End to Prostate Screening at Age 75
2. David Brooks: Where's the Landslide?
3. Recipes for Health: Beets: The New Spinach
4. Maureen Dowd: Mr. Darcy Comes Courting
5. Basics: The Nose, an Emotional Time Machine
6. Well: Learning to Be Your Own Best Defense in a Disaster
7. G.O.P. Drops in Voting Rolls in Many States
8. Roger Cohen: Aux Barricades! France and the Jews
9. To Heal the Wounded
10. Housing Lenders Fear Bigger Wave of Loan Defaults

Go to Complete List »

BUSINESS nytimes.com/business Campaigning for ratings Also in Business: The acid-tongued maverick analyst An 11-letter synonym for Scrabulous An internal Wiki that's not classified

Past Coverage

- [ABOUT NEW YORK; The Juveniles Are Gone, Yet the Jails Remain \(March 26, 2008\)](#)
- [A Home Remedy for Juvenile Offenders \(February 20, 2008\)](#)
- [Burden Grows On Services For Teenagers \(October 28, 2002\)](#)
- [For Young Criminals, Focus Is Saving, Not Punishing \(July 5, 1997\)](#)

Related Searches

- [New York State](#) [Add Alert](#)
- [Juvenile Delinquency](#) [Add Alert](#)
- [Children and Youth](#) [Add Alert](#)
- [Prisons and Prisoners](#) [Add Alert](#)

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM



BOOKS »



[East Village, Before the Gentry](#)

THEATER »



['Hair' Revival: A Time Warp for Tears and Fun](#)

OPINION »

Sex-Biased Abortion

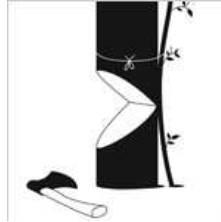
In a Bloggingheads video, two authors discuss how sex-selective abortion changes society.

OLYMPICS 2008 »



[An Olympic Stadium Worth Remembering](#)

OPINION »



[Op-Ed: Not Quite Ready to Leave Iraq](#)

HEALTH »



[You're Checked Out, but Your Brain Is Tuned In](#)

[Home](#) | [World](#) | [U.S.](#) | [N.Y. / Region](#) | [Business](#) | [Technology](#) | [Science](#) | [Health](#) | [Sports](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Arts](#) | [Style](#) | [Travel](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Automobiles](#) | [Back to Top](#)

Copyright 2008 The New York Times Company | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)