Realigning the California Youth Corrections System

A primer on why it was needed, how it was done and what other states can learn from it

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Realignment: Why did we need it?
Building the case for reform - the storm gathers at CYA

- Overcrowding
- Institutional violence – gangs, assaults and suicides
- Program quality in question – education, MH, other
- Long stays – longer for kids than adults
- High fail on release (recidivism) rates
- High cost – exceeds $200,000 per inmate per year by 2007
California Youth Authority before 2007 legislative realignment

- Jurisdiction and confinement to age 25
- Counties could commit for any offense at low local cost
- Length of stay controlled by state parole board— not by the committing court— longest stays in the nation
- Eleven institutions, 7,000 beds and 10,000 inmates at peak (1996)
- Big volume of parole returns to custody
- Strong union and policymaker support for status quo, advocacy challenges largely fall flat through the 1990s
1996: Sliding scale fees imposed for level V-VII commitments—CYA population drops swiftly

2000: Proposition 21 opens new doors to adult court

2000: Legislature funds local probation & CBO programs (Juv. Justice Crime Prevention Act)

2004: Consent Decree in Farrell case vs. CYA—generates state costs that are catalysts for SB 81

2007: SB 81 bans future commitments of non-707 youth

2010: DJJ parole is realigned to county probation

2012: Governor proposes to close DJJ, proposal dies but time adds are banned, age of jurisdiction is lowered

DJJ POP

10,000

700
CA Division of Juvenile Facilities: Per ward/ per year Institutional Cost 1996 - 2009

Sources: CA state budgets, CA Dept. of Finance, CA Div. of Juvenile Justice,
Legislative Realignment
Senate Bill 81 - 2007

- **Banned state commitments of non violent juveniles**
  - DJJ in future to accept only youth with serious (adult court) offenses or defined sex offenses

- **Phased out currently housed non-violent offenders**

- **Created the Youthful Offender Block Grant (YOBG)**
  - Negotiated “deal” with local probation– based on paying $117,000 per youth per year to serve the caseload locally
  - County allocation formula drew debate: county share is based on county youth population (50%) and juv. felony crime rate (50%)

- **Total state allocation has grown from $92 million at start to over $113 million per year in 2014**
  - Another $300 million in bond funds to build local capacity
## CYA-DJJ Institution Closures 2000 - 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLOSED FACILITIES</th>
<th>Rated Capacity</th>
<th>Year Closed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fred Nelles</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karl Holton</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCRC</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>DW Nelson</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paso Robles</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stark</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCRC</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,757</strong></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>STILL OPEN</th>
<th>Rated Capacity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chaderjian</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OH Close</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventura- M</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventura- F</td>
<td>295</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,655</strong></td>
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California Division of Juvenile Facilities
Institutional Population
1996 – 2014 (as of December 31 each year)

Source: Ca. Dept. of Corrections & Rehabilitation, Div. of Juv. Justice

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Annual Juvenile Court Commitments to DJJ
All Counties – 2003 through 2014

Juv. Court Commitments to DJJ

Commonweal
We lack decent data on outcomes for realigned juveniles
  - SB 81 did not impose performance outcome measures on counties
  - 2009 cleanup bill added modest performance outcome reporting

However, juvenile felony and violent arrests have declined steadily and substantially in CA in the wake of realignment

Mental health cases, other special needs populations—counties still lack program capacity to meet needs

State oversight of realignment remains minimal—counties still receive >$100 million per year in state juvenile justice realignment funds
California state DJJ facilities—Full Closure Proposal

- Counties push back on public safety grounds
- Adult court impact: no viable options to keep DJJ youth out of state prison system
- Programs have improved in the new, downsized Division of Juvenile Justice
California Juvenile Justice Realignment Lessons for other states

1. Goals of realignment must be articulated
2. Realignment should be tightly structured as to jurisdiction, cases affected, local custody and supervision, violation policy & other points
3. Money is important! State savings must follow the caseload to support local control & programs
4. Provision should be made to track outcomes and performance of realigned youth
5. Beware of “solutions” that push caseload to adult prisons
6. Different realignment models apply to different state systems and legal structures