

# Youth at the Training School

## DEFINITION

*Youth at the Training School* is the number of youth age 18 or under who were in the care or custody of the Rhode Island Training School at any time during the calendar year, including youth in community placements while in the care or custody of the Training School.

## SIGNIFICANCE

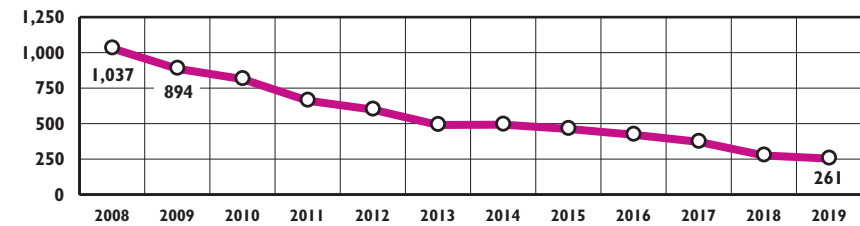
The juvenile justice system is responsible for ensuring community safety by promoting the positive development of youth in its care while recognizing that children have different developmental needs than adults.<sup>1</sup>

During adolescence, the brain's executive functions (including the ability to regulate emotions, control impulses, and weigh benefits and risk) have not fully developed. Judgment and decision-making skills continue to grow into the mid-twenties.<sup>2</sup> Compared to adults, adolescents often show poor self-control, are easily influenced by peers, and less likely to think through the consequences of their actions. Most youth involved in delinquency in adolescence will cease engaging in lawbreaking behavior when they become adults as part of the normal maturation process.<sup>3</sup>

Juvenile justice systems have a range of options for monitoring and rehabilitating youth in addition to incarceration, including probation, restorative justice programs, and evidence-based treatment programs such as Functional Family Therapy, and Multi-Dimensional Treatment Foster Care. Alternatives to incarceration have been shown to be effective in preventing recidivism and more cost effective than incarceration. The most successful programs involve family in treatment and promote healthy development at the individual, family, school, and peer levels.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

The Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) operates the Rhode Island Training School, the state's secure facility for adjudicated youth and youth in detention awaiting trial. A total of 261 youth (84% male and 16% female) were in the care or custody of the Training School at some point during 2019, down from 283 during 2018. Between 2018 and 2019, the number of females at the Training School decreased by 28% and the number of males decreased by 3%. On December 31, 2019, there were 73 youth in the care or custody of the Training School, 40 of whom were physically at the Training School.<sup>7,8</sup>

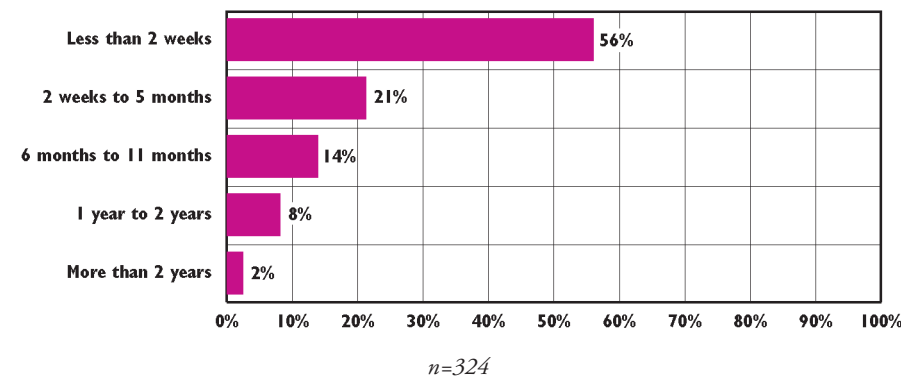
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**Youth in the Care and Custody of the Rhode Island Training School, Calendar Years 2008-2019**



Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHIST, 2008-2019.

◆ **Between 2008 and 2019, the annual total number of youth in the care and custody of the Training School at any point during the year declined by 75% from 1,037 to 261.<sup>8</sup> Some of this decline is due to the cap that was placed on the population at the Training School in July 2008 of 148 boys and 12 girls on any given day.**

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**Discharges From the Rhode Island Training School, by Length of Time in Custody, Calendar Year 2019**



Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHIST, 2008-2019. Total discharges (324) are higher than the total number of youth who passed through the Training School (261) due to some youth being discharged from the Training School more than once in 2019.

# Youth at the Training School



## Youth at the Training School by Age

- ◆ During 2019, there was one child age 11 or under, two children age 12, 47 youth ages 13-14, 132 youth ages 15-16, 103 youth ages 17-18, and one youth older than age 18 held at the Training School. The average age for youth at the Training School was 16 years.<sup>9</sup>
- ◆ Rhode Island is one of 29 states that has no statutory minimum age for prosecution in juvenile court.<sup>10</sup>



## Promoting Rehabilitation and Preventing Recidivism

- ◆ Nationally and in Rhode Island, youth crime, including violent crime, has fallen sharply since 1995.<sup>11</sup> In 2010, the rate at which states hold youth in secure confinement reached a 35-year low, with almost every state reducing the number and percentage of youth held in secure facilities.<sup>12</sup>
- ◆ The Rhode Island Training School is a resource for the rehabilitation of youth who commit serious offenses and who pose a danger to the community. However, a growing body of research shows that incarceration of youth does not reduce and can even increase criminal behavior, as well as increase recidivism among youth with less serious offense histories. Research also suggests that increasing the length of time a youth is held in secure confinement has no impact on future offending and that sentencing youth to long stays in correctional facilities is an ineffective rehabilitation strategy.<sup>13,14</sup>
- ◆ Jurisdictions throughout the country have used objective admissions screening tools to limit the use of secure detention to serious offenders. The Rhode Island General Assembly passed a law in 2008 that mandates the use of a screening tool (called a Risk Assessment Instrument, RAI) for Rhode Island youth being considered for secure detention. The RAI has been piloted but has not yet been fully implemented.<sup>15,16</sup>
- ◆ Of the 261 youth who were in the care or custody of the Training School at some point during 2019, 19% (50) were admitted at least twice in 2019, and 7% (17) were admitted to the Training School three or more times.<sup>17</sup>



## Probation for Rhode Island Youth

- ◆ The purpose of Juvenile Probation is to provide supervision and monitoring to youth who are under court jurisdiction to ensure that they comply with court orders.<sup>18</sup> The Juvenile Probation division at DCYF serves youth placed in a residential treatment program (temporary community placement) as well as those living at home and in foster care. Youth on probation have access to an array of services to help support them in the community and reduce the likelihood that they will reoffend.<sup>19</sup>
- ◆ On January 2, 2020, there were 380 youth on the DCYF probation caseload (334 males and 46 females). Three percent of youth on probation were ages 12 to 13, 23% were ages 14 to 15, 53% were ages 16 to 17, and 21% were age 18 or older.<sup>20</sup>
- ◆ More than half (56%) of youth on probation on January 2, 2020 were White, 27% were Black, 1% were American Indian, <1% were Asian, 9% were multiracial, and 7% were of undetermined race. Thirty-four percent of youth identified as Hispanic, who may be of any race.<sup>21</sup>



## Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI)

- ◆ The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) works in jurisdictions across the U.S. to strengthen juvenile justice systems by promoting policies and practices to reduce inappropriate and unnecessary use of secure detention, reduce racial and ethnic disparities, and improve public safety. JDAI promotes the vision that youth involved in the juvenile justice system are best served using proven, family-focused interventions, and creating opportunities for positive youth development. For youth who are not a threat to public safety, JDAI promotes the use of high-quality community-based programs that provide supervision, accountability, and therapeutic services while avoiding the negative outcomes associated with incarceration.<sup>22</sup>
- ◆ Since 2009, Rhode Island juvenile justice stakeholders have partnered with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to become a statewide JDAI site. The Rhode Island initiative has used JDAI's strategies to focus on reducing unnecessary and inappropriate use of secure confinement and enhancing community-based alternatives to detention.<sup>23</sup>

# Youth at the Training School



## Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Juvenile Justice System

◆ Youth of color, especially Black youth, are disproportionately represented at every stage of the juvenile justice system. Youth of color are more likely to be arrested, formally charged in court, placed in secure detention, and receive harsher treatment than White youth.<sup>24</sup> The federal *Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP)* requires states to collect data disaggregated by race and implement strategies to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system.<sup>25</sup>

### Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Rhode Island

	% OF TOTAL CHILD POPULATION, 2010	% OF YOUTH IN THE CARE AND CUSTODY OF RHODE ISLAND TRAINING SCHOOL, 2019
White	64%	52%
Hispanic	21%	35%*
Black	6%	33%
Asian	3%	1%
Multi-Racial	5%	9%
American Indian	<1%	1%
Unknown	NA	4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>223,956</b>	<b>261</b>

Sources: Child Population data by race are from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census. Youth at the Training School data are from the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), RICHIST, 2019. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. \*Hispanic children may also be included in race categories.

◆ Youth of color are disproportionately more likely than White youth to be in the care and custody of the Training School. During 2019, Black youth made up 33% of youth at the Training School, while making up 6% of the child population.<sup>26</sup>



## Girls in the Juvenile Justice System

◆ Nationally, girls make up a growing share of youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Girls in the juvenile justice system enter with different personal and offense histories and needs than their male peers. Girls are more likely than boys to be detained for non-serious offenses and many have experienced traumatic events, including physical and sexual abuse. Effective programs for girls in the juvenile justice system use a developmental approach that addresses the social contexts that influence girls' behavior, including family, peers, and community.<sup>27</sup>



## Risk Factors for Rhode Island Youth at the Training School

### History of Child Abuse and Neglect

◆ In 2019, 12% (31) of the 261 youth in the care or custody of the Training School had at some point in their childhood been victims of documented child abuse or neglect.<sup>28</sup>

◆ Children who experience child abuse or neglect are at an increased risk for developing behavior problems and becoming involved in the juvenile justice system.<sup>29</sup>

### Behavioral Health Needs

◆ In 2019, 130 youth (103 males and 27 females) received mental health services at the Training School for psychiatric diagnoses other than conduct disorders and substance abuse disorders. During 2019, 59 residents (43 males and 16 females) received substance abuse treatment services. Of these, 40 (all males) received residential substance abuse treatment.<sup>30</sup>

### Educational Attainment

◆ While the average age of youth at the Training School in 2019 was 16 years, students' math skills and reading levels were on average at the fifth-grade level at entry to the Training School.<sup>31</sup>

◆ Of the 167 youth ages 13 to 19 who received educational services at the Training School during the 2018-2019 academic year, 35% (59) received special education services based on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).<sup>32</sup>

◆ During 2019, nine youth graduated from high school while serving a sentence at the Training School (seven earned a GED, and two graduated with a high school diploma). An additional 15 youth received post-secondary education services at the Training School during the 2018-2019 academic year.<sup>33</sup>

### Teen Pregnancy and Parenting

◆ Nationally, 20% of youth in custody report having a child or expecting a child. The percentage of youth in custody who report they already have children (15% of teen males and 9% teen females) is much higher than the general teen population (2% and 6% respectively).<sup>34</sup>

Table 29.

**Youth in the Care or Custody of the Rhode Island Training School, 2019**

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**Youth in Detention in Rhode Island**

◆ In Rhode Island, the term “detention” is used to describe the temporary custody of a juvenile, who is accused of a wayward or delinquent offense, at the Training School pending the adjudication of his or her case. The only two legal reasons for pre-trial detention include cases where a youth poses a threat to public safety or is at risk for not attending his or her next court hearing.<sup>35,36</sup>

◆ Some youth are detained for short periods of time and released at their first court appearance (usually the following business day). Of the 324 discharges from the Training School during 2019, 22% resulted in stays of two days or less, 34% resulted in stays of three days to two weeks, and 44% resulted in stays of more than two weeks.<sup>37</sup>

CITY/TOWN	TOTAL POPULATION AGES 13-18	# OF ADJUDICATED YOUTH AT THE RITS	TOTAL # OF YOUTH AT THE RITS
Barrington	1,802	0	0
Bristol	1,780	0	0
Burrillville	1,319	3	5
Central Falls	1,859	3	11
Charlestown	554	0	1
Coventry	3,010	3	4
Cranston	6,184	8	16
Cumberland	2,746	1	2
East Greenwich	1,362	0	1
East Providence	3,243	1	4
Exeter	642	0	0
Foster	430	0	1
Glocester	878	0	1
Hopkinton	693	0	0
Jamestown	436	0	0
Johnston	2,025	4	7
Lincoln	1,851	2	2
Little Compton	228	0	0
Middletown	1,229	1	2
Narragansett	948	0	0
New Shoreham	50	0	0
Newport	1,604	1	2
North Kingstown	2,407	3	7
North Providence	2,027	4	7
North Smithfield	970	1	0
Pawtucket	5,514	19	36
Portsmouth	1,596	0	2
Providence	16,515	48	94
Richmond	637	0	0
Scituate	963	0	0
Smithfield	1,856	0	0
South Kingstown	3,540	1	3
Tiverton	1,115	0	0
Warren	675	0	1
Warwick	5,883	3	9
West Greenwich	568	0	1
West Warwick	1,891	1	5
Westerly	1,705	1	2
Woonsocket	3,112	11	20
Out-of-State	NA	7	15
Four Core Cities	27,000	81	161
Remainder of State	58,847	38	85
Rhode Island	85,847	119	246

**Source of Data for Table/Methodology**

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children’s Information System (RICHIST), 2019; and the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

Youth included in the adjudicated column may or may not have been in detention at the Training School prior to adjudication.

Total number of youth includes adjudicated and detained youth who were in the care or custody of the Rhode Island Training School during calendar year 2019 (including youth from out of state, those with unknown addresses, and those in temporary community placements). Youth with out-of-state and unknown addresses are not included in the Rhode Island, four core cities, or remainder of state totals.

There is no statutory lower age limit for sentencing, however adjudicated children under age 13 typically do not serve sentences at the Training School.

An “out-of-state” designation is given to youth whose parent(s) have an address on file that is outside of Rhode Island or to youth who live in other states but have committed crimes in Rhode Island and have been sentenced to serve time at the Training School. They are not included in the Rhode Island total.

**References**

<sup>1,3,5,14,24</sup> National Research Council. (2013). *Reforming juvenile justice: A developmental approach*. Committee on Assessing Juvenile Justice Reform, Bonnie, R. J., Johnson, R. L., Chemers, B. M., & Schuck, J. A., Eds. Committee on Law and Justice, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

<sup>2</sup> Gottesman, D., & Schwarz, S. W. (2011). *Juvenile justice in the U.S.: Facts for policymakers*. New York, NY: Columbia University, National Center for Children in Poverty.

<sup>4</sup> Juvenile Justice Information Exchange. (n.d.). *What are community-based alternatives?* Retrieved January 24, 2020, from www.jjie.org

<sup>6,13</sup> Mendel, R. A. (2011). *No place for kids: The case for reducing juvenile incarceration*. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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