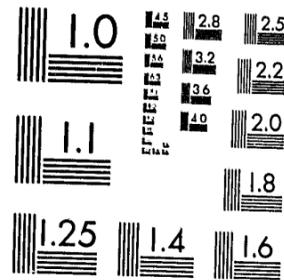


National Criminal Justice Reference Service



This microfiche was produced from documents received for inclusion in the NCJRS data base. Since NCJRS cannot exercise control over the physical condition of the documents submitted, the individual frame quality will vary. The resolution chart on this frame may be used to evaluate the document quality.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART  
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS-1963-A

Microfilming procedures used to create this fiche comply with the standards set forth in 41CFR 101-11.504.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author(s) and do not represent the official position or policies of the U. S. Department of Justice.

National Institute of Justice  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C. 20531

3/22/85

U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice

95609

This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Institute of Justice.

Permission to reproduce this copyrighted material has been granted by

Minnesota Citizens Council on  
Crime and Justice

to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

Further reproduction outside of the NCJRS system requires permission of the copyright owner.

95609

CR. sent  
1-21-85

FINAL REPORT  
PREPUBLICATION COPY

OUT OF HOME PLACEMENTS OF JUVENILES:  
A SYSTEM IN NEED OF GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY

October 19, 1983

Minnesota Citizens Council on Crime and Justice  
1427 Washington Avenue South  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55454  
(612) 340-5432

PREFACE

The term "out-of-home placements" of juveniles defies easy definition. Simply stated, out-of-home placements of juveniles is the arrangement whereby a child goes from his/her parental home to a substitute living situation generally for purposes of sanction or treatment. Complicating this definition, however, is the fact that a broad range of persons and agencies interact to bring about the placement.

Local and state correctional and welfare agencies, insurance carriers and families pay for the cost of placements. In addition, many treatment facilities are subsidized by philanthropic contributions.

Those who participate in the decision to remove a child from home include judges, probation officers, welfare workers, doctors, staff of treatment facilities, and families of children involved. Occasionally the child being placed has a voice in the decision.

Placements include foster homes and short-term shelters, pretrial detention, state and local public training schools, group homes, private residential treatment centers, hospital psychiatric and hospital chemical dependency units.

Out-of-home placements in some instances are a result of families taking voluntary initiatives in the face of growing behavior problems or familial conflicts. Other placements are a result of considerable pressure from school and treatment personnel. Still other children are removed by order of the court with little or no agreement on the part of the child or family.

95609

The purposes of out-of-home placements range from punishment for illegal behavior to treatment for emotional problems.

The Citizens Council believes that it is necessary to differentiate between coercive removal of children which is characterized by little or no participation of the child and family in the decision and voluntary placement which is characterized by willing independent decision of the child and his or her family in the placement decision. There are many gradations of decisions on this continuum.

While the term out-of-home placements refers to all placements on this continuum, this report concentrates on the issues surrounding those out-of-home placements in which the element of coercion is a significant factor. When the term is used to describe admissions to local and state training schools, it will be so identified.

Generalizations about policies and practices in this complex field need to be made with caution.

#### BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Issues surrounding out-of-home placements of juveniles are receiving an increased amount of attention by juvenile justice professionals, policy makers and concerned citizens.

In 1982 Ira Schwartz and his associates of the Hubert Humphrey Institute at the University of Minnesota released the results of their national research on the confinement and out-of-home placement of youth. The research is contained in three separate reports:

1. "Public Attitudes Toward Youth Crime", April 1982
2. "Rethinking Juvenile Justice", June 9, 1982
3. "Youth in Confinement: Justice by Geography", September, 1982

While the Schwartz research was national in scope, it also provided data on Minnesota. In summary, the Schwartz findings and recommendations for Minnesota were:

1. In the period 1975-1979 new programs with the goal of diverting juveniles from juvenile court mushroomed. One of the unanticipated consequences of the proliferation of these programs was a widening and strengthening of the degree of social control. Pretrial detention admission rates during this period declined only slightly, while state and local public training school admission rates remained constant.
2. Deinstitutionalization policies must be broadened to take into account the increased placement rates in welfare, mental health and the newly emerging chemical dependency and private youth residential programs.
3. For the state of Minnesota which ranked 13th in the rate of admissions to state and local public training schools in 1979, the data show a tremendous growth in the numbers of youth placed in residential treatment settings particularly on a "voluntary basis."
4. There is a pressing need to develop strategies to both inform and educate the public about the realities of the juvenile crime problem.

5. In Minnesota, the growth in the number of out-of-home placements, the reasons and methods of referral, and the ultimate impact of these placements on youth raise significant policy questions. It is hypothesized that a "hidden" or private juvenile correctional system has rapidly evolved for disruptive or "acting-out" youth who are no longer processed by the public juvenile justice control agencies.
6. Any examination of the inter-relationship between the various youth-caring systems should take into account the various public and private methods of financing services.
7. There is a need to collect comprehensive and reliable data on an ongoing basis concerning juveniles admitted to adult jails and local lock-ups.
8. Detention centers and training schools are not being used solely for purposes of public protection. The current public policy debate surrounding the juvenile court and juvenile corrections must confront these findings and carefully consider the prospects for needed reforms.

The initial reaction to Schwartz's conclusions by juvenile justice professionals was mostly negative. Many professionals thought that the report was unduly critical of current practices, that the data was not accurate and that there was little opportunity to respond with their perspective on the issue.

THE PURPOSES OF THE CITIZENS COUNCIL STUDY WAS TO GRANT AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROFESSIONALS WITH A STAKE IN OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT POLICIES TO BE HEARD, TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE RESEARCH AND CONCLUSIONS OF IRA SCHWARTZ AND HIS COLLEAGUES WERE AN ACCURATE PORTRAYAL OF THE SITUATION, AND TO DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS RELATIVE TO OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES.

The Committee heard from over 25 juvenile justice professionals who were invited to present their reactions at 7 meetings. They included THOSE WHO RECOMMEND out-of-home placement of juveniles (directors of county court services), THOSE WHO DECIDE (judges), THOSE WHO PAY (directors of county social service departments and third party payors), THOSE WHO PROVIDE SERVICES (directors of juvenile institutions and private residential treatment centers) and EXPERTS AND THEORITCIANS

in juvenile justice and the treatment of youth (planners, academicians). A final hearing was held where Ira Schwartz responded to the presentations. All presenters were asked to respond to a number of questions. In addition, comments and reactions were received from those professionals and participants attending the hearings. Transcripts of the hearings were made available to the Citizens Council Committee and all participants along with data and information relative to the subject matter. The questions were:

1. Concentrating on Minnesota, does the data identified in the Schwartz report (which ranked the state 13th in the rate of admissions to state and local public training schools) accurately reflect the practices during the time period of the report?
2. Are the trends identified in the report an accurate reflection of current practices?
3. Do current policies for out-of-home placement constitute a problem?
4. Which juveniles need or benefit from out-of-home placements? What is your prediction of future needs both in numbers and in types of children needing out of home placements?
5. Should the use of out-of-home placements be at the current level, increase or decrease?
6. If increases or reductions should be made, where should they be made?
7. What is and what should be the interrelationship between the public and private youth caring systems -- those who decide, those who pay, those who provide?

What follows is the Citizens Council's summary findings to each of these questions and the Council's corresponding conclusions and recommendations.

QUESTION 1: CONCENTRATING ON MINNESOTA, DOES THE DATA IDENTIFIED IN THE SCHWARTZ REPORT (WHICH RANKED THE STATE 13TH IN THE RATE OF ADMISSIONS TO STATE AND LOCAL PUBLIC TRAINING SCHOOLS) ACCURATELY REFLECT THE PRACTICES DURING THE TIME PERIOD OF THE REPORT?

What The Citizens Council Learned:

The majority indicated that, overall, the data accurately reflected the practices during the time period of the report.

Many of those who criticized the Schwartz data had generalized disagreements but these persons did not provide documentation supporting their criticisms nor did such persons present adequate alternative data.

More helpful criticisms were from those presenters and participants who gave specific examples, though these tended to be given as a defense for the need for out-of-home placements rather than for the purposes of critiquing the Schwartz data.

Professionals representing public agencies were the most critical. It was suggested that the reasons the Schwartz data was questionable was because they had little confidence in the data their agencies provided to state and national data collection agencies. Others, however, believed their data was accurate and that they had good information on the children for whom they had responsibility. These persons resented the conclusion that they could not account for the children under their care.

In addition, three other major research reports studying Minnesota practices were in general agreement with Schwartz's research. The other studies are:

- a. Out of the House - Report on the Substitute Placement of Juveniles, Ann Jaede and Marie Junterman with assistance from the Minnesota Criminal Justice Program, November, 1982.
- b. Juvenile Care in Hennepin County: Trends and Future Directions, Urban Coalition of Minneapolis, August 4, 1982.

- c. Out of Home Placement of Children in Minnesota: A Research Report, Kerry K. Fine, Minnesota House of Representatives, St. Paul, February, 1983.

Each has received criticism. As with the criticism of the Schwartz data, the documentation supporting these objections was not presented to the Citizens Council.

Citizens Council conclusions:

Without checking original data from local sources there is no way to determine the accuracy of the data which was presented. Schwartz and his colleagues used the best available techniques to compile this data and sought expert consultation to insure that their methodology was sound. There is no persuasive evidence to indicate that this commonly used data is not a reasonably accurate reflection of the practices during the time period of the report. The Schwartz data is the best available reflecting the practices during the time period of the report.

QUESTION 2: ARE THE TRENDS IDENTIFIED IN THE REPORT AN ACCURATE REFLECTION OF CURRENT PRACTICES?

What The Citizens Council Learned:

While there were differing opinions whether trends since 1979 contrast with the time period studied by Schwartz, the majority of the presentors considered the situation identified in the 1979 data a close representation of current practices overall.

Schwartz has reported that preliminary analysis of incomplete 1982 data indicates that the number of out-of-home placements overall (public and private) in Minnesota has been reduced slightly since 1979. Because the numbers of children at

risk has gone down even more the rate of out-of-home placements may actually be increasing since 1979. This preliminary analysis indicates that more states are ahead of Minnesota in admissions to local and state training schools than was the case in 1979. The exact ranking requires additional analysis not available at this writing.

Citizens Council conclusions:

The apparent increase in rates of out-of-home placements overall from 1979 to 1982 makes a review of policies and practices a continuing necessity.

QUESTION 3: DO CURRENT POLICIES FOR OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS CONSTITUTE A PROBLEM?

What The Citizens Council Learned:

All presenters recognized problems with Minnesota's current policies relating to the out-of-home placement of children. They differed as to which problems they thought were most crucial and as to where the problems existed in the system. These problems ranged from lack of clarity of purpose for the various placements to difficulties in monitoring the quality of care. Some believed that changes in current policy would run the risk of creating more problems than solutions. Several argued for radical reductions in all out-of-home placements. Several cautioned against wholesale reductions. Arguments were presented in favor of long-term placements for the few who would be damaged by constant movements from placement to placement. Several called for better criteria in the decision to place out-of-home. Many called for greater protection of the rights of juveniles both in court ordered and voluntary placements. Several participants indicated that funding all too often influences diagnostic labels.

All too often the judgement to place children out of their homes is made under a great deal of discretion and subjectivity and with little public scrutiny. As many of the participants pointed out, it is difficult under such circumstances to defend the process, to protect the rights of juveniles, to determine if proper procedures are being used and if reasonable standards are upheld. Concern was expressed that much harm might be visited on children under well meaning intent and under the name of treatment when such conditions exist.

Citizens Council conclusions:

The major problem with current policies on out-of-home placements of children is that performance and the quality of care in the system is insufficiently evaluated.

QUESTION 4: WHICH JUVENILES NEED OR BENEFIT FROM OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS? WHAT IS YOUR PREDICTION OF FUTURE NEEDS BOTH IN NUMBERS AND IN TYPES OF CHILDREN NEEDING OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS?

What The Citizens Council Learned:

There is a worrisome disagreement amongst professionals about which juveniles need or benefit from out-of-home placements, even though most participants were confident that they knew who needed such responses. There is also a lack of clarity as to the purposes of the various placements and whether the children who end up in one placement vs. another are actually behaviorally different from one another. Often times the treatment does not vary sufficiently to justify the many diagnostic labels applied to children.

Citizens Council conclusions:

Those few juveniles who have committed the most serious offenses should be institutionalized for the purpose of accountability and sanction and should be offered effective and humane rehabilitative opportunities when in such placements. Even if the current rates remain the same, the need for out-of-home placement resources will be less overall in the future as a result of a decrease in the juvenile population at risk. The danger lies in existing programs attempting to sustain themselves by increasing the rates of out-of-home placements or the durations of such placements. Decision criteria for out-of-home placements need to be improved.

QUESTION 5: SHOULD THE USE OF OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS BE AT THE CURRENT LEVEL, INCREASE OR DECREASE?

What The Citizens Council Learned:

None of the participants advocated for increasing the use of out of home placements (though many of the providers are advertising in order to maintain their level of occupancy). Most presenters indicated concern about the fact that Minnesota ranked 13th in the rate of admissions to state and local public training schools. At the same time, they expressed frustration with the lack of data to evaluate whether or not this was actually a positive or negative finding. Those supporting current policies raised a number of questions: Does an aggressive use of public training school and other out-of-home placements represent a high commitment to helping children? Does such a policy go hand in hand with preventing high rates of adult incarceration (Minnesota is 3rd from the bottom in such rates)? Does the existence of private treatment facilities represent a highly motivated and greatly concerned private sector?

A literature search conducted by Schwartz on research evaluating the effectiveness of out-of-home placements nationally found little evidence showing that out-of-home placements had been effective. No conclusive research which evaluated current Minnesota programs was presented to the Citizens Council.

Several presenters reported that their jurisdictions had decreased the use of out of home placements without any noticeable, negative consequences for the public or the juveniles involved. Some presenters expressed concern over the high cost of out-of-home placements and they felt these costs resulted in a decrease in the use of alternative responses.

Citizens Council conclusions:

The data on effectiveness is not sufficient to conclude on this basis alone whether or not out-of-home placements should be increased or decreased. However, the fact that in those jurisdictions where decreases are being made report no negative impact on public safety gives currency to the idea that such reductions should be encouraged at least for local and state training schools.

Significant decreases in placements could be accomplished if the philosophy were aggressively and systematically applied that placement should only be used after all other alternatives have been exhausted. Transferring dollars from the reduction in out-of-home placement would provide resources for improving the effectiveness of alternatives. The orientation toward day treatment and family strengthening for the vast majority of juveniles as opposed to removal from the home is a value shared by most practitioners and ought to be the basis for actual practice.

QUESTION 6: IF INCREASES OR REDUCTIONS SHOULD BE MADE, WHERE SHOULD THEY BE MADE?

What The Citizens Council Learned:

It was reported that since the latter part of 1981 some reductions have been evident in the state system at juvenile correctional institutions. There is an ever changing typology of children so that little is known about what types of placements were reduced. Furthermore, as indicated above, it became clear in the testimony that diagnostic typologies were more a function of who was paying for services than an indication of exactness in determining need and placement purpose.

It is also unclear as to what percentage of these reductions have been moved into the private system carrying such diagnostic labels as "emotionally disturbed" or "chemically dependent." Almost all participants agreed that the direction should be to decrease placements but judgments as to where such reductions should be made varied considerably.

Furthermore, most presenters indicated that reductions since 1979 were substantially motivated by economic reasons rather than shifts in policy. No clear picture is available from practitioners for a strategy to reduce the number of placements.

Citizens Council conclusions:

There was no evidence that the current level of dependence on out of home placements is any better than a policy of expanding the number of children who stay in their homes and giving support to the family in solving individual and familial problems.

Given the lack of concensus in the field, it is clear that much needs to be accomplished in developing concise typologies of children in need and in developing better criteria for placements and the durations of such placements. These criteria should be agreed to by the various agencies and programs operating in this field.

QUESTION 7: WHAT IS AND WHAT SHOULD BE THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE YOUTH CARING SYSTEMS -- THOSE WHO DECIDE, THOSE WHO PAY, THOSE WHO PROVIDE?

What The Citizens Council Learned:

Most presenters had difficulty in justifying the rationale for the differences among the various programs and in explaining why one juvenile is placed in one private residential treatment program as opposed to another or as opposed to a public correctional institution.

Competition among providers at state, local, public and private levels continues to be a major issue.

Citizens Council conclusions:

The complexity, subjectivity and competition in the juvenile justice, welfare, mental health, chemical dependency and related systems makes it difficult to influence improvements and to overcome the tendency of some system participants to protect status quo.

There will continue to be a tendency to overuse out-of-home placements as long as the system is characterized by such problems as:

- a) undue complexity
- b) lack of dispositional criteria
- c) ill defined standards
- d) poor monitoring and evaluation
- e) confusion between sanction and treatment goals
- f) lack of clarity between the missions of public and private providers

Furthermore, these conditions make it difficult for the concerned citizen to understand, much less influence, improvements.

STATE JUVENILE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION COST ANALYSIS

The Citizens Council used the same methodology to determine the total costs to the state of Minnesota for maintaining juveniles in state correctional institutions as was used for determining costs of the adult institutions (see "Adult Incarceration: The Cost to Minnesota Taxpayers").

This report on juvenile institution costs used a more current Department of Corrections (DOC) cost report (January 1 to December 31, 1982) in addition to the other DOC financial reports. Because of the recent changes in the state juvenile correctional institutional population, these cost figures which include those changes more accurately reflect current costs. The indirect operating cost figures used are the same as those collected in the course of the adult cost study (FY 1982 - July 1, 1981-June 30, 1982) and therefore, if anything, are a conservative estimate of today's higher costs.

Operating Costs

Direct operating costs of Minnesota's juvenile correctional institutions are taken from the January 1, 1983 Cost Report of the Minnesota Department of Corrections. This is the public document which reports the costs of running the state's correctional institutions.

TABLE 1  
1982 Direct Operating Cost of  
Minnesota State Juvenile Correctional Institutions

<u>Minnesota Correctional Institution at</u>	<u>Direct Operating Cost</u>	<u>Average Daily Population</u>	<u>Cost Per Placement</u>
Red Wing	\$4,111,921	121	\$33,983
Sauk Centre	\$3,333,188	77	\$43,288
Thistledew	\$1,319,830	39	\$33,842

Indirect costs, that is, expenses of the DOC central office and other state departments, constitute approximately 11% of the total operating cost of each institution. The totals are distributed among the various juvenile facilities and listed as an average cost per placement as in Table 2.

TABLE 2

1982 Indirect Operating Cost of  
Minnesota State Juvenile Correctional Institutions

Minnesota Correctional Institution at	Central Office	Other Related State Depts.	Instit. Imprmts. & Repairs	Total Indirect Operating Costs	Average Daily Population	Total Indirect Operating Costs per Placement
Red Wing	\$427,600	\$28,800	\$126,280	\$582,680	121	\$4,816
Sauk Centre	\$329,000	\$22,200	\$ 39,886	\$391,086	77	\$5,079
Thistledeew	\$121,200	\$ 8,200	\$ 25,235	\$154,635	39	\$3,965

The operating cost per placement is considerably greater than would be known by studying the operating costs reports of the DOC which do not allocate indirect costs to each institution as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3

1982 Combined Operating Costs  
(Direct and Indirect) Per Placement at  
Minnesota State Juvenile Correctional Institutions

Minnesota Correctional Institution at	Direct Operating Cost Per Placement	Indirect Operating Cost Per Placement	Combined Annual Operating Costs Per Placement
Red Wing	\$33,983	\$4,816	\$38,799
Sauk Centre	\$43,288	\$5,079	\$48,367
Thistledeew	\$33,842	\$3,965	\$37,807

Construction and Financing Costs

The Citizens Council did not do a complete cost estimation for the construction and financing of juvenile institutions as it did for adult institutions. However, it is necessary to include such costs for juvenile facilities. On the one hand, because juvenile institutions are smaller, they tend to be more costly per bed to construct than large institutions (see page 7 of adult report). On the other hand, they are minimum security institutions as opposed to maximum security and these are thus less costly. A cost of \$15 per diem cost for construction and financing as compared to a \$25 for large adult institutions or \$41 per diem for small adult institutions was chosen for this analysis.

Total Cost of Incarceration

The actual cost of incarceration is the sum of the various cost centers as shown.

TABLE 4

1982 Average Total Daily Annual cost Per Placement at  
Minnesota State Juvenile Correctional Institutions

Minnesota Correctional Institution at	Combined Operating Cost	Construction & Financing	Total Daily Cost/Placement	Total Annual Cost/Placement	vs. DOC Reported Cost/Placement
Red Wing	\$106	\$15	\$121	\$44,165	\$33,983
Sauk Centre	\$133	\$15	\$148	\$54,020	\$43,288
Thistledeew	\$104	\$15	\$119	\$43,435	\$33,842

As in the cost analysis for adults, these figures do not include the cost of land, the opportunity costs involved in the land being unproductive for tax purposes, the loss of potential community service and restitution to victims of crime and the human cost.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

1. The concern about out-of-home placements of juveniles has a variety of motivations. There are four primary reasons motivating the current review of out-of-home placement policies and practices: 1) a decline in financial resources which support the use of out-of-home placements; 2) a diminishing confidence, among certain persons, that placing children out of their homes helps them more than less costly alternatives; 3) a sense, on the part of concerned persons, that vested interests on the part of providers of out-of-home placement services may be more of a driving force in policy and practice than is appropriate; and 4) a general tendency on the part of Minnesotans to look for better ways to accomplish services.
2. There is a broad range of reactions to the Schwartz study. Many, though by no means all, of the providers of out of home placements perceived that there was an underlying assumption in the Schwartz report that placements were usually a bad choice. While this was never stated in the report the perception caused various degrees of defensiveness among practitioners.
3. Generalizations about local use of out-of-home placements should be made with caution. The Schwartz study was national in scope and does not report the policies and practices of jurisdictions below the state level. Thus generalizations about the use of out-of-home placements at the local level must be interpreted with caution. Many local jurisdictions in Minnesota are very aggressive in the use of alternatives while some have a relatively high commitment to the use of out-of-home placements both coercive removal and

- voluntary placements. This appears to be a result of differing philosophies. The availability of resources may be a factor of some importance but even their existence or non-existence is a function of need expressed by local officials.
4. The major problem in the child placement system is that it is characterized by a great deal of subjectivity. The Citizens Council was concerned by the high level of subjectivity in decisions to place children out of home. Nearly everyone believes that he or she is doing or advocating what is best but little empirical data exists to evaluate whether they are right or wrong. The level of subjectivity is evident by the range of philosophies and interventions and the extreme differences in the use of out-of-home placement from one jurisdiction to the next. Of concern is the fact that in many instances a policy can be the result of one person's philosophy and policy can change significantly with the appointment or election of individuals in key positions. A knowledge base is either lacking or not adequately applied.
  5. Relative rates of admissions to state and local public training schools as reported in the Schwartz study are insufficient evidence in themselves for judgement about current out-of-home placement policies. The quality of what happens in these placements is a critical factor. The Schwartz study did not have as its purpose any evaluation of the quality or performance of various programs. As a result, no conclusions are possible from the Schwartz data on these important questions.

6. Current out-of-home placement policies and practices should be critically and continuously reviewed because:

- A. Minnesota is high overall in the use of out-of-home placements in local and state training schools relative to other states.
- B. Out-of-home placement of children is expensive.
- C. Practitioners, researchers and theorists disagree markedly about the effectiveness and correctness of current out-of-home placements policy.
- D. There is no persuasive documentation that the current rate of out-of-home placement is the correct or incorrect policy nor are there sufficient measures of the quality and performance of out-of-home placement settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) Persons involved in out-of-home placements of children should establish a more precise and consistent justification for policy, decisions and programs. The alternative is increasing frustration by those who pay for, utilize or provide services to children and families.
- (2) It is essential to pursue forthwith research which evaluates the effectiveness of a broad range of responses to children and families in need. It is incumbent upon those directly involved to search for and implement a more precise knowledge base. Existing programs must be monitored to insure their effectiveness. Public and private funding sources should encourage the design and carrying out of such research.
- (3) More effort should be devoted to helping children and families deal with troublesome situations while remaining in their homes. Concepts such as humaneness, permanency, least restrictive setting should guide decisions and programs for all children. Every out-of-home placement should have a carefully thought out answer to the question - Has every other option been considered?

One way to accomplish this is to support the continuation of what seems to be a shift away from a dependence on out-of-home placements of large numbers of children. Such a shift should go beyond that which could be expected to occur by the projected reductions in the age group at risk. Local and state training schools should be used only for those children who commit the most serious offenses and who, by their previous offense history, represent a

threat to the public. Other non-institution penalties while on probation such as home arrest, community work orders, and fines should be expanded and integrated with programs combining restitution and victim offender reconciliation.

It is recognized that some children will benefit from placements when they are the only reasonable and humane course of action. Likewise, some children will need specially designed in-patient treatment including a few who need long term placements.

- (4) Programs of public education should be expanded in order to intervene in the misperceptions about troubled and troublesome children, the facts about actual delinquency rates and the costs and effectiveness of various programs. An informed public is less vulnerable to emotional appeals and simplistic solutions.
- (5) Every effort should be made to improve and develop alternative programs to out-of-home placements of children. Funding for the development of such programs could be realized through reduced expenditures for out-of-home placements. Because of their high costs, a small reduction in out-of-home placements would permit a significant increase in the number of additional alternative programs.
- (6) Policy makers must deal realistically and sensitively with a number of practical and political issues involved in any shift of resources. They are:

- a) The economic importance of institutions to host communities;
  - b) The elimination and realignment of jobs that such programs provide;
  - c) The long term investment in careers by personnel in these programs;
  - d) The lack of sufficient incentives to modify programs;
  - e) The heavy commitment in buildings and other capital investments;
  - f) The commitment of staff and groups to existing programs;
  - g) The increasing aggressiveness of institutions to seek their share of a decreasing market;
  - h) The tendency of legislators to represent the interests of constituents whose institutions are vulnerable to closing;
  - i) The tendency to manipulate populations and durations of stay to maintain existing facilities.
- (7) Incentives must be designed and put in place to attract support from existing program staff for further shifts to alternatives. Integrating the missions of institutions and field staff may provide one incentive at the public institution level. Lateral transfer of personnel from institutions to expanded family oriented programs may be beneficial.

IN SUMMARY:

The money spent on the current system is too great, the resources too finite and the potential for individual damage to children and families too high to continue to let the out-of-home placement system function without better knowledge of its effectiveness and without a greater commitment to the improvement and development of alternatives.

**END**