

Conditions of Confinement: Juvenile Detention and Corrections Facilities

Research Report

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Foreword

It is my pleasure to present to you the report *Conditions of Confinement: Juvenile Detention and Corrections Facilities*. This study, commissioned by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in response to the 1988 amendments to the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, is the most comprehensive nationwide research ever conducted on the juvenile detention and corrections field. It is remarkable that this research became a study both for and by the field. It involved the leadership of an exceptional research team at Abt Associates, Inc., a pool of experienced and dedicated consultants, and hundreds of administrators and staff who shared with us information about their facilities' operations and programs. It is this combination of leadership, talent, and commitment that has made this study a truly significant contribution to our understanding of juvenile confinement conditions.

The results of this research present many challenges to policymakers and practitioners nationwide. The need for consensus and action is clearly written in these pages. How do we provide conditions of confinement that ensure that basic needs are met and that a meaningful quality of life is provided? With pervasive crowding, staff turnover, and violence both inside and outside of institutions, the field must determine how to successfully accomplish its broader mission:

...to create legitimate, alternative pathways to adulthood through equal access to services that are least intrusive, culturally sensitive, and consistent with the highest professional standards.

—The 1992 Juvenile Detention and Correctional Forum Mission Statement

To meet the challenge posed by this report and its recommendations will require the cooperation of private organizations, courts and other governmental agencies, legislators, legal advocates, and professionals in the field. We need to begin a national movement founded on a basic human concern about justice for juveniles and the conditions of their confinement. As you read this document, think carefully and creatively about what you can do individually and through your employers and professional associations to respond to the challenges facing the field of juvenile detention and corrections. It is time that we begin to do the right thing by working together to achieve lasting improvements in the conditions of confinement for juveniles in this country.

John J. Wilson

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