



## POSITION STATEMENT

*Adopted by NPJS Board of Directors ~ October 20, 2014*

# REPURPOSING JUVENILE JUSTICE FACILITIES

### STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

When less restrictive alternatives are not appropriate, the role of juvenile justice facilities should be to provide the physical and structural amenities necessary to assure the safety of the placed youth and the safety of the community while offering treatment, rehabilitation and supervision. When these facilities close, communities are left with difficult choices. Many youth either are left without services or are moved far from their homes. However, opportunities to repurpose facilities and reinvest resources into community-based alternatives that can support cost-effective programs for youth may exist.

### NATURE OF THE ISSUE

- Substantial reductions in juvenile arrests, combined with the growth of more cost-effective community-based alternatives have resulted in decreased reliance on institutional care.
- When communities close residential facilities, they are still responsible to keep their citizens safe and to provide services for youth.
- Local juvenile justice facilities can be redesigned to offer community-based support and services.
- Staff members from local juvenile justice facilities are trained to respond to the needs of at-risk youth and have demonstrable skills that can be applied to youth at risk of removal from the community as well as to youth returning home.
- When local facilities are not available, youth often are placed far from their homes and lose opportunities for successful reintegration.
- Ready access to legal counsel, family, local school system and local physical and/or behavioral health resources improve outcomes and transition home.
- Evidence shows that youth who have increased access to positive community support and family resources are at decreased risk for recidivism.

### POSITION STATEMENT

The National Partnership for Juvenile Services (NPJS) supports the repurposing of juvenile justice facilities and staff as dispositional resources. NPJS believes that youth should be served in the least restrictive environment possible. Repurposing facilities allows local jurisdictions to provide secure care and/or alternatives that may be accessed when such an environment is essential to protect the youth and the community. In addition, repurposed facilities must create opportunities for programming and education that address the behavioral health needs of the youth and provide access to community resources designed to successfully reintegrate the youth back into society as a productive citizen.