



Invest Early or Pay Later

Ohio's Early Childhood and Juvenile Justice Systems

Kids in Ohio are among the most likely in the nation to experience high rates of childhood trauma and the vast majority of youth in Ohio's juvenile courts have likely experienced trauma. The link between childhood trauma and juvenile incarceration creates a cradle to prison pipeline. During the earliest and most critical years of development, children are highly vulnerable to adversity—and high rates of trauma put kids at greater risk for long-term negative impacts on academic success, health, and behavior. Early investments like quality child care, quality preschool, and evidence-based home visiting can help mediate the effects of childhood trauma by increasing a child's resiliency. Without the buffering impact of resiliency factors, later interventions, like the juvenile justice system, are extremely costly and ineffective in addressing the roots of a child's behavior.

	Ohio's Early Childhood Programs	Ohio's Youth Prisons
Children Served	141,365 participants ¹	510 incarcerated ^{4, 5}
Annual State Spending	\$323,616,460 ²	about \$95,000,000 ⁶
Average Cost/Child	\$4,966.54	\$185,230 ⁷
Return on Investment	13% ³	Unknown

Ohio is investing too little in the evidence-based programs that we know can improve outcomes for youth, including community-based programs⁸ and early childhood education that increases school readiness, increase lifelong success, and reduce an individual's likelihood of serving jail or prison time by 46%. Instead, we are investing \$95 million each year to hold 500 youth in youth prisons that reach children too late, fail to address the root causes of a child's behavior, and results in a nearly 50% rate of recidivism.⁹

The Bottom Line

If we make strategic, evidence-based investments in early childhood education, we can give all kids the opportunity for success, significantly reduce the need for juvenile justice intervention, and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of Ohio's taxpayer dollars.

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References

1. Ohio Legislative Service Commission. "Early Childhood Programs." 7 February 2018. Unpublished report.
2. State-Source GRF, LGF, PLF, LPEF Expenditures, Actual FY 2017 Spending
3. Weighted average of FY 2017 participant costs for PFCC, ODE publicly funded pre-school, and Help Me Grow home visiting (Ohio Legislative Service Commission. "Early Childhood Programs." 7 February 2018. Unpublished report.)
3. [The Heckman Equation](#). "There's more to gain by taking a comprehensive approach to early childhood development."
4. Based on average daily facility population in April, 2018. [Ohio Department of Youth Services, Monthly Fact Sheet: April 2018](#).
5. Note: The total number of youth in Ohio's youth courts is unknown, this number only accounts for individuals in Ohio's three youth prisons. [Juvenile Justice Coalition, Denied Existence: The Untold Stories of 90,000 Cases in Ohio's Juvenile Courts \(June 2016\)](#)
6. [Ohio Department of Youth Services, Monthly Fact Sheet: April 2018](#).
7. [Ohio Department of Youth Services, Monthly Fact Sheet: April 2018](#).
8. [Juvenile Justice Coalition, Bring Youth Home: Building on Ohio's Deincarceration Leadership \(January 2016\)](#).
9. [Ohio DYS, 2016 Recidivism Report: An Examination of the Reincarceration Rates of Youth Released from Juvenile Correctional Facilities of the Ohio Department of Youth Services](#).

Created in conjunction with the Juvenile Justice Coalition



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