

Issues in Brief

Respite Care: A Promising Response to Status Offenders at Risk of Court-Ordered Placements

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YOUTH JUSTICE PROGRAM

As adolescents try to make sense of the world and establish their own identity, they naturally resist their parents' authority. But what happens when a teen's disobedience, which can put the youth at risk of harm, becomes routine? Confronted with such a crisis and at the breaking point, some families literally beg probation officers, family court judges, and child welfare workers to take control of their troubled children.

Nationally, these youth are known as status offenders. Many states have their own moniker: in New York, for example, they are called "persons in need of supervision" (PINS). Unlike juvenile delinquents, whose behavior would be defined as criminal if they were adults, a status offender's disobedient behavior is only an offense because of the person's age.¹ This Issue in Brief examines respite care for runaways and alleged status offenders by highlighting four programs from around the nation that aim to give parents and children the immediate assistance they need.

Most states have a system in place to assess and then refer these families to agencies in their communities that can help to address the problems they are facing. But if the parent or child refuses to engage in this process, or if their case is not successfully "adjusted," they often end up in court. Faced with a child who refuses to return home or a parent who will not accept a child back into the house, the judge may have no option other than to remand that youth to a non-secure detention center, foster care group home, or other juvenile institution, even when the youth poses no real threat to the community.

While these temporary placements succeed in separating embattled parties, research shows that putting adolescents in foster care and non-secure detention can actually exacerbate some of the problems that cause family conflict.² Teens with a history of skipping school, for example, often attend classes even less often while they are living in a juvenile institution.³ Without appropriate services for the whole family, the adolescent's disobedience is likely to continue when he or she returns home. The use of detention also can lead

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to criminal behavior because of the youth's increased exposure to negative peers.⁴

This response is also expensive. The duration of the remand is usually guided by a court calendar, and a child could spend weeks or even months in foster care or non-secure detention pending the next hearing or the judge's final decision. These long stays coupled with the high cost per bed compared to less costly community-based services make placement the most expensive way for government to respond to a family's problems.

Respite care can serve as the first in a series of rehabilitative services designed to prevent future crises by giving family members a needed break from one another, using trained counselors to help them get to the root of their problems, and reunifying them quickly. Respite programs provide a viable alternative to non-secure detention and other "custodial placements" for status offenders and can prevent future contact with the juvenile justice and child welfare systems.

I. Respite Care Defined

Traditionally, respite care is thought of as a way to assist families caring for someone with a serious disability or chronic disease, as well as parents at risk of losing a child as a result of abuse and neglect.⁵

By providing a much needed break for the primary caregivers, respite care aims to promote the unity and stability of families under stress or in crisis. Albeit much less frequently, respite care also has been used to help status offenders and their parents. Youth sent to respite programs are kept out of institutions geared toward serving foster children who may never be able to return home or serious delinquents who are detained because of concerns about public safety. Moreover, these respite care centers generally separate children from their parents for a shorter time period and are less expensive than traditional out-of-home placements.

The core of a respite program for status offenders is a cooling-off period when the

child and parents live apart, typically ranging from a few days to two weeks, depending on the nature of the family crisis, the needs of the family members, and the program's own policies. For teenagers who have run away from home and are without a safe place to stay, a respite program also provides the security and comfort they need immediately. There are few comprehensive evaluations of respite programs, but practice shows that they do succeed in giving families a break and in getting children back home quickly.

Some respite programs function through host families. Others operate as small centers. Even centers with just a few beds can serve a large number of children annually because the average stay in respite care is so brief. Children receive a thorough physical exam and psychological assessment within hours after entering a respite program. Then, with help from trained, experienced counselors, parents and children meet and negotiate the terms that will enable children to return home quickly. Equally important, respite programs provide or connect families with follow-up services to maintain and build on gains that occur during the respite period.

II. Respite Care in Practice

Intake

Entry routes. Parents and children find respite care in different ways. A single program is likely to have a few discrete entry routes. Respite programs can exist as voluntary walk-in or police drop-off centers for runaways, as court diversion programs for status offenders, and as an alternative to non-secure detention for status offenders already involved in family court. Each program conforms to the local status offender laws and policies.

17-year old Sophie ran away from her suburban home near Boston to be with her boyfriend in the city. Once she arrived, however, Sophie and the boy, who was then*

homeless, fought constantly. Confused about whether to stay in Boston or return home, Sophie followed a friend's suggestion to call Bridge Over Troubled Waters. At a meeting with a runaway counselor from the agency, Sophie focused on the problems she has communicating with her mother. When the intake counselor contacted Sophie's parents, however, they raised other issues. They said that Sophie had been skipping school, staying out late at night, and abusing drugs and alcohol. They also told the runaway counselor that this was the fourth time Sophie had run away from home. They wanted their daughter to get drug treatment before she came home.

In addition to serving as a drop-in center for teens in crisis, Bridge Over Troubled Waters in Boston operates a medical van that canvasses the city and from which workers reach out to runaways to let them know that shelter and services are readily available to them. Across the country in San Francisco, runaways can walk into Huckleberry House and ask for help, so can parents who have been pushed to the limit by a disobedient teenager. And when police officers pick up a runaway, they can bring the adolescent to Huckleberry House instead of a detention center.

At Youth-Family-Adult (YFA) Connections in Spokane, Washington, a little more than half the agency's clients are referred to respite care by child welfare agencies. The others are either walk-ins or have been referred by a school official or probation officer who has asked YFA to engage that family in respite care. YFA Connections operates separate but similar programs for each group. Eight of its 13 beds are reserved for a five-day respite program that accepts only families referred by the child welfare system. Another respite program, called Directions, targets runaways. Directions has four beds and engages families for two weeks. YFA

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Connections also runs a single-bed, thirty-day program for homeless youth.

Of the four respite programs described in this issue brief, only Kids Oneida in upstate New York restricts participation to teenagers who are referred to respite care by probation or social services, or who are ordered into the program by a family court judge. Kids Oneida has a contract with the county to provide family services that are designed to prevent foster care placement. The agency's intake counselors usually include respite care as one of several services for these families. Respite care is frequently planned weeks in advance to provide a break for the family members or prevent a crisis.

Assessment. Because a stay in a respite program is intended to be brief, its success depends on quickly gathering critical background information about the child and family. Without a thorough assessment, a respite program cannot provide the appropriate type and level of services for each family. The assessment should also identify youth who are not appropriate for respite care. Agencies typically will not admit teenagers with past histories of violence, current involvement with the juvenile justice system, or, with the exception of Kids Oneida, teenagers with serious mental health problems.⁷

An intake counselor interviews potential participants about a wide range of issues, including family relationships, mental and physical health, school performance, sexual activity, substance use, and delinquent and other illegal behavior. The counselor tries to engage the youth in conversation, encouraging him or her to talk freely. Some kids, particularly runaways, initially resist disclosing personal information, but most cooperate after spending a few hours in the respite center or agency's offices, having a meal, and realizing that the respite program is a safe place. The length of an intake interview varies a great deal across agencies and individual cases, ranging from an hour to a full day. Staff also contact the youth's

parents to collect information and get them involved as soon as possible.

Orientation. At intake, a respite program has to establish the ground rules for a family's participation in the program. For example, to work with YFA Connections, parents must sign forms that allow the agency to house the child and contact his or her school. Both the parent and child also sign a contract stipulating the rules of the program. If they do not abide by the rules, YFA's counselors may ask them to leave the program. The children who enter Huckleberry House sign a similar

contract for services. For most runaways, a large proportion of Huckleberry House residents, just having a safe place to stay and regular meals is incentive enough to live by the rules,

If a judge requires a family to work with Kids Oneida, a contract between the teen, guardian, and the program is developed in court. The contract requires the family to participate in therapy sessions and the juvenile to attend school, stipulates the length of stay in the program and curfews for the teen, and addresses other relevant issues. Families that violate the contract must return to court. While Bridge

The Vera Institute's national Youth Justice Program (YJP) supports public officials who are engaged in improving their juvenile justice and child welfare systems. The program facilitates a collaborative approach to the reform process and helps to develop solutions that are cost-effective and have the potential to produce better outcomes for young people.

YJP draws on the expertise of seasoned government leaders who have advanced successful reforms in their own jurisdictions—legislators, juvenile justice and social service agency administrators, budget analysts, and others. We train them to be effective peer consultants, brief them thoroughly about the jurisdictions they will assist, and deploy them to work on site. These “associates,” along with our staff, help to coordinate the work of all agencies responsible for serving youth in a jurisdiction and to ensure that careful study and objective data shape the reform process.

This approach is currently working in New York State. A law raising the age limit of status offenders (“persons in need of supervision” or “PINS,” as they are called in New York) from 16 to 18 took effect on July 1, 2002. Months earlier, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services contracted with YJP to help county and state officials prepare for the anticipated sharp rise in cases. That work focuses on strengthening programs that divert cases from court and developing alternatives to non-secure detention and other placements.

As part of the program's assistance to New York State, I'm happy to introduce *Respite Care: A Promising Response to Status Offenders at Risk of Court-Ordered Placements*. When judges hear the pleas of frustrated parents who need time away from a rebellious teenager, they often have no choice other than to remand the children. These “temporary” placements often separate parents and children for months, however, while failing to address the source of the family's crisis. Respite care takes the opposite approach, using a very short separation to set families on the path toward health and stability. It can be an effective response to New York's growing PINS population and to other groups of troubled youth around the country.

To learn more about the Youth Justice Program and how we can assist reform in your jurisdiction, visit our web site www.vera.org/youthjustice or contact me at (212) 376-3032 or hsegal@vera.org.

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Over Troubled Waters does not require teens or guardians to sign a contract, counselors make home visits and work to involve the whole family in services.

Family Reunification

From the very first hours after a youth enters a respite care program, the focus is on reunifying that child with his or her parents. Staff at a good respite program quickly develop a plan for reunification and implement it.

Last year, 14-year old Anne told her mother that she was gay and, unintentionally, launched a family conflict that eventually pushed her to leave home.

Anne had been living with friends for three days before telling her high school counselor that she was on the run. The school counselor referred Anne to Huckleberry House. Shortly after Anne arrived, a house counselor called her mother to let her know that Anne was safe and to say that Anne could stay at Huckleberry House for a little while if she and her daughter were willing to participate in a family reunification session. Anne's mother agreed.

Reunification requires involving the entire family in discussions about the sources of conflict among them and how to prevent future crises, then engaging the family in appropriate support services. Each family member must participate voluntarily. Involving someone who lacks interest in solving the family's problems is likely to impede reunification. To be able to engage parents and children in productive discussions, the counselors must have experience working with adolescents and with families in crisis. They also must be able to address specific issues their clients raise, such as the impact of living on the streets for some time, drug or alcohol abuse, or being involved in the child welfare and family court systems.

At San Francisco's Huckleberry House, counselors hold an initial two-hour reunification session, usually within the

Respite Care in Lieu of Foster Care

Most people think of foster care as a response to child abuse. Yet in New York City, where adolescents make up more than 40 percent of the foster care population, status offenders—teens who routinely skip school, break curfews, use drugs, and run away—outnumber those adolescents in foster care as a result of abuse and neglect.

The anticipated rise in the number of “persons in need of supervision” (PINS)—New York's moniker for status offenders—resulting from a state law that raised the PINS age limit from 16 to 18 pushed city officials who understood the shortcomings of placing these youth in foster care to find an alternative. None of them knew exactly how often or which status offenders were ending up in foster care, however. To answer these crucial questions, planners and researchers at the Vera Institute tracked 200 families.

While a probation officer or judge sent nearly 80 percent of the families to a designated agency for a needs assessment and referral for services, the other families became embroiled in court cases and often in foster care as well. Seventeen percent of all PINS spent some time in foster care, four months on average. Yet in about eight out of 10 situations, either the judge later dismissed the case or the parents stopped pursuing it. These youth returned home but without the services they needed. Those juveniles who came to court on a warrant were more likely to end up in foster care, and warrants were issued more often for girls than boys.

Additionally, when parents were filing a second PINS petition or reported certain types of disobedient behavior, their child was more likely to be remanded. To learn more, read *A Study of the PINS System in New York City: Results and Implications* available on the Institute's web site, www.vera.org.

Vera staff are now planning a respite care center designed specifically as a less expensive, more appropriate alternative to foster care. Parents would maintain custody while the youth enters a facility that involves the whole family in mediation designed to quickly reunify the members. Following a respite stay that lasts just a few days, families immediately would begin receiving services in the community that could help them resolve the underlying problems that nearly fractured their bonds.

youth's first two days at the house. Prior to that meeting, the assigned counselor meets separately with the youth and his or her parents to discuss sources of conflict and resources the family can draw on to prevent and better manage conflict in the future. These resources might include relatives or close family friends who are willing to help care for the youth when problems arise or when the child and parents simply need a break from one another. Counselors also help parents consider whether local after-school programs or community-based organizations could help guide and support their son or daughter.

When the family meets together, the counselor leads a structured discussion about issues raised in the individual meetings. Ultimately, the family must

either set a date when the child will return home, ideally within two days, or schedule a follow-up family meeting within a week or so and set some interim goals. If no other relative or close friend can provide temporary shelter, the child remains at Huckleberry House.

When Anne, her mother, and a Huckleberry House counselor met for the usual two-hour family reunification session, both mother and daughter talked openly and expressed an interest in participating in family counseling with a therapist at Huckleberry Youth Programs. Anne also said that she needed help with her class work and finding a job, support that Huckleberry Youth Programs could provide. Mother and daughter decided that Anne would stay at Huckleberry House for one more evening so that the mother

Huckleberry House, San Francisco, California

Huckleberry Youth Programs, a large San Francisco nonprofit, runs a respite program called Huckleberry House. Open day and night, the house maintains six beds for youth aged 11 to 18, many of whom are runaways. For the youth who come to Huckleberry House and their parents, the respite program is usually just the first of many helpful engagements they will have with Huckleberry Youth Programs, often following respite with mediation services, family counseling, individual therapy, and anger management classes.

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YFA Connections, Spokane, Washington

Youth-Family-Adult (YFA) Connections provides respite care for adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17 in a large five-bedroom house in Spokane, Washington. With a total of 13 beds, YFA Connections runs three distinct programs: a five-day respite program that can shelter up to eight kids at a time, a two-week respite program called Directions with a capacity of four beds, and one 30-day respite program reserved specifically for runaway and homeless youth.

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Kids Oneida, Oneida County, New York

Kids Oneida, located in Oneida County, New York, provides planned and emergency respite care through host parents. These adults complete a rigorous training program to become qualified to cope with the wide array of problems the children have. Most of the kids who enter respite care are 14 or 15, but Kids Oneida does offer respite to some 16- and 17-year-old persons in need of supervision (PINS) and runaways. Kids Oneida also contracts with a local psychiatric care facility to treat those teens with serious conduct and mental health problems.

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Bridge Over Troubled Waters, Boston, Massachusetts

For 30 years, Bridge Over Troubled Waters' Runaway Program has provided respite care through host families to runaway and homeless youth up to age 18. Located in Boston, the agency recruits the hosts through action centers and churches. Today five families voluntarily shelter kids for up to three days and without compensation. Kids spend nights and weekend days with their host family and report to the agency's offices each weekday. In addition to giving children a temporary home while working to reunify them with their parents, Bridge Over Troubled Waters provides individual therapy, substance abuse counseling, medical and dental care, and vocational training.

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could talk to her boyfriend about what she learned during the family reunification session and her intention to begin family therapy. Anne left Huckleberry House the following evening.

The other respite programs described in this issue brief take similar approaches to family reunification. YFA Connections, for example, schedules—and in most cases requires—parents to attend about four or five family counseling sessions. These sessions focus on managing anger, using rewards and consequences, setting and obeying house rules, and other skills to resolve conflict. Kids Oneida also facilitates frequent meetings between parents and kids during the respite period and

aims to help families learn how to resolve conflict and set practical house rules.

Bridge Over Troubled Waters often encourages a family to meet at home, if being in a familiar environment encourages open and honest dialogue among members. The counselors in all four programs do what it takes to get the family members to confront their problems—from stimulating communication to finding programs that address their needs. Counselors spend as much time working with the kids on their own as they do running family meetings. Both strategies are necessary.

While efforts to reunify families proceed, the teens are immersed in a highly structured and supervised environment.

At Huckleberry House, for example, kids have little idle time and are never left unsupervised. Individual and group therapy, health care, sports and other recreational activities, and classroom education for youth who are not enrolled in school are provided by the parent agency, Huckleberry Youth Programs. For teens who are enrolled in school, the House provides bus passes and enforces strict curfews. Even with fewer resources, YFA Connections' staff establish a strictly controlled schedule, particularly for those children who are not enrolled in school. Daily activities include educational enrichment, therapy, recreation, and supervised peer discussions about issues such as AIDS, substance use, peer pres-

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sure, and parenting. Like Huckleberry House, YFA provides bus tokens for children who are enrolled in school and monitors their attendance.

Respite programs realize that family reunification is not always possible or the best solution. In these cases, the goal shifts to keeping the youth out of a juvenile institution. Program staff often will look for a relative who is willing to make a home for the boy or girl, particularly for kids 16 and younger. If no relative agrees, the respite program usually contacts the local child welfare agency or refers the family to court.⁸

For some older teens, going home may never be a viable option. Either they are unwilling to return home or their parents won't take them back. Entering a respite care program could be the most recent event in a series of failed interventions that often include efforts by child welfare agencies to preserve the unity of the family, foster care placements, time in detention, and involvement in other programs. While respite staff will look for a relative willing to house an older teenager, they also will explore placing the teen in a program geared specifically to prepare older adolescents to live independently. What they need most from their stay in respite care is an introduction to basic skills and a place to go when respite ends.⁹

Aftercare

For several months after a youth returns home, the family needs continued support to manage ongoing stress and avert another crisis. Even before the child returns, a respite program should establish what type of aftercare the family will need and who will provide these services. In a study on emotionally and behaviorally disturbed teenagers in residential care, a family's access to community-based services following discharge proved to be the most important predictor of positive outcomes.¹⁰ Similarly, another study suggests that tapping resources in the community not only facilitates family reunification but also diminishes the chances that serious

family problems will recur.¹¹

When a counselor at Bridge Over Troubled Waters initially confronted Sophie about her alleged drug use, she denied having any problem with drugs. But after meeting with one of the agency's substance abuse counselors who spoke with her about indicators of substance abuse and dependence and about treatment options, Sophie agreed to enter a two-week detox program. After Sophie completed detox, she went home. Her initial counselor at Bridge Over Troubled Waters kept in touch with Sophie while she was in detox and after she was discharged began leading monthly meetings with Sophie and her family. She also arranged for Sophie to meet regularly with the substance abuse counselor who had referred her to the detox program. Six months later, Sophie's problems as a result of drug use have greatly diminished; she is attending school regularly and preparing to graduate, and she is obeying her curfews.

The respite program itself can provide aftercare, or the program can refer families to other agencies in the community. The programs described in this issue brief offer different types and levels of follow-up support. None of them, however, have the capacity to provide intensive, sustained case management, so the families they serve must rely to some degree on other agencies.

Huckleberry Youth Programs provides many of the services families need after their children return home from Huckleberry House and refers families to local agencies for other services. And Huckleberry House itself offers each family the opportunity to participate in three to five mediation sessions during the weeks following reunification. The mediation sessions typically focus on setting goals and house rules as well as rewards and consequences for good and bad behavior.

During the first month after a child returns home, the YFA Connections counselor who worked with the family during the respite period provides ongoing therapy either at the agency's offices

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or in the family's home. The counselors focus on helping the family use and refine skills required to resolve conflicts. Most families receive about 15 hours of counseling over the month. YFA Connections also refers families to other agencies for long-term services that the center cannot provide, such as substance abuse and mental health treatment.

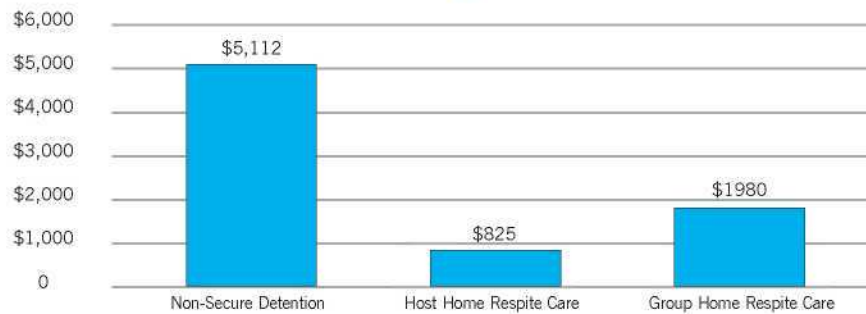
In addition to referring families to other agencies, Bridge Over Troubled Waters tracks families for between six weeks and three months following reunification—longer than the other three programs discussed here—but contact between counselors and families is sporadic. Each family can attend three to five mediation sessions and meet with a counselor three times to discuss progress. For families that continue to have serious problems, counselors will canvass the community for alternative or additional sources of support.

Since all families at Kids Oneida have an open child welfare case, they have access to the local agencies that provide services under contract with the county department of social services—including parenting classes, in-home therapy and counseling, mentoring and recreational programs, and substance abuse treatment. Kids Oneida helps families secure slots in these programs.

All these respite programs are willing to re-admit a youth if another crisis occurs, perhaps indicating a more serious breakdown in the family structure than the program had realized. During any subsequent stay, the program typically intensifies family mediation, revisits issues raised during the previous stay in respite care, and continues to look for services to support the family. At the same time, programs are clear that respite care cannot become an escape for families unwilling to work on their problems.

One night about three weeks after Anne came to Huckleberry House, she showed up again. She described a recent argument with her mother and said that she needed a

The Cost of Respite Care Compared with Non-Secure Detention in Oneida County, New York



In Oneida County, New York, youth who are declared to be "persons in need of supervision" spend an average of 24 days in non-secure detention. At \$213 per night, the total cost averages about \$5,000. In contrast, youth who engage in respite care through Kids Oneida spend an average of just 11 days away from home. To serve them through host families costs \$75 per night, for a total cost of \$825. Group-home respite care costs \$180 per night, for a total of just under \$2,000. Even these cost comparisons do not capture what the county and state save as a result of respite care. Teens who enter long-term placements following a stay in non-secure detention spend an average of 330 days in an institution for youth. At \$300 per day, the cost of placing youth averages \$99,000.

place to stay. Her mother told the house counselor on duty that Anne was just trying to escape punishment for missing her curfew but permitted Anne to stay because it was late at night. Anne's mother picked her up the next day, and since then Anne has not returned to Huckleberry House.

III. Measuring Performance

None of the four respite care programs described in this issue brief track the long-term progress of families. Bridge Over Troubled Waters provides aftercare for the longest period of time, but even these counselors follow most families only for up to three months. As a result, programs generally measure success according to how many families reunify following a respite period and how long kids stay in respite care before they return home or move to a suitable long-term placement.

YFA Connections serves about 300 families a year and helps to reunify approximately 80 percent of them within the allotted five or 14-day respite period. Huckleberry House reports a similar rate of family reunification: In 2001, approximately 75 percent of the teens who spent time at Huckleberry House either returned home or to a relative's house, and most of these kids (90 percent) left the respite

center within 10 days. At Bridge Over Troubled Waters, counselors succeed in reunifying 60 to 70 percent of the families they serve and place most of the other kids in independent living programs. On average, counselors at Kids Oneida work with families for two weeks, helping to reunify approximately 70 percent.

Families that return to a respite program are not counted as failures. Of the 199 adolescents who entered Huckleberry House in 2001, 28 percent, or 56 teens, returned at least once, and about half of them (28 kids) returned at least twice. Some of these families needed more services than Huckleberry House and Huckleberry Youth Programs originally provided. Others used the respite program to prevent a crisis within the family by separating briefly and addressing problems before they escalated. Whatever their reasons, Huckleberry House has a higher return rate than other respite centers because the program does not discourage families from seeking additional services if they demonstrate a real commitment to addressing their problems.

IV. The Cost of Respite Care Compared with Traditional Placements

Respite care is far less expensive for state and county agencies than detention and

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placements in other juvenile institutions, primarily because the length of stay is so much shorter. Swift turnover allows each program to serve a greater number of youth than if the program operated according to the court's calendar. For example a io-bed respite center with an average length of stay of io days can serve between 300 and 350 children per year. Therefore, in measuring the comparative cost it is more accurate to focus on the cost per youth rather than the cost per day.

Of the four programs discussed here, an actual cost comparison between respite care and detention or other court-ordered placement is only available for Kids Oneida. For the status offenders, or "PINS," remanded to non-secure detention in Oneida County, the average length of stay is 24 days. Since the average cost per night is \$213, the expense of detaining a PINS in Oneida County is approximately

\$5,000. In contrast, providing a host home through Kids Oneida costs an average of just \$825. Kids remain in the host home for an average of 11 days, at a cost of \$75 per day. Group home respite care provided by Kids Oneida is more intensive and expensive but is not nearly as costly as detention. The average length of stay in this type of respite care is also 11 days, and at \$180 per day, the average total cost per youth is just under \$2,000.

The average cost of providing respite care in the other programs is similar. At YFA, for example, the daily cost per child is \$140. Since the average length of stay is two weeks, the average total cost \$1,960.

The annual cost of operating Huckleberry House is about \$775,000. This includes administrative costs, the expense of housing teens, 24-hour supervision, and counseling for kids and their families. Serving someone for a single night costs about \$350. With an

average length of stay of 7 days, the total cost per youth averages less than \$2,500.

V. Conclusion

Respite care is a viable response to adolescents at risk of detention and placement. It serves them, their guardians, and the government officials responsible for funding services. Unlike traditional detention and other out-of-home placements for runaways and lockouts, respite care promotes better educational outcomes and better interaction among family members at a fraction of the cost. By serving the whole family, rather than focusing just on the youth, and linking the family with an array of community-based services, respite care can help youth improve their behavior and reduce the chances of costly future contact with child welfare and juvenile justice agencies.

Footnotes

- 1 In most states a juvenile can be adjudicated a status offender until he or she turns 18 years old. In Georgia and Massachusetts, however, the age limit is 17; in Connecticut and Vermont the cut-off is age 16.
- 2 Dylan Conger and Alison Rebeck, *How Children's Foster Care Experiences Affect Their Education* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2001), 21.
- 3 Timothy Ross, Mark Wamsley and Ajay Khashu, *The Experiences of Early Adolescents in Foster Care in New York: Analysis of the 1994 Cohort* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2001), 19.
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- 7 Kids Oneida contracts with a local child welfare agency to treat these teens. That agency runs a crisis residential facility with a psychiatric unit able to provide a high-level of supervision and therapeutic services.
- 8 Interview with Kenneth Shelton, director of YFA Connections; Interview with Monica Harlow, program manager of Huckleberry House.
- 9 Interview with Barbara Whelan, executive director of Bridge Over Troubled Waters.
- 10 "Residential Care for Children and Adolescents with Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Conduct Disorder," 497.
- 11 Christopher G. Petr and Cindy Enriken, "Service System Barriers to Reunification," *Families in Society*, 76, no. 9 (1995): 526.

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