

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/known-when-to-hold-them>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Lately, the media, policy makers, and the advocacy community have paid a lot of attention to the need for placement reform in the juvenile justice system shorthand for post-sentencing correctional reform. A feature by Denise-Marie Santiago in Sunday's Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle* titled [Why are more Monroe County kids in the juvenile justice system?](#) compared the county's high rate of teen placement to rates in neighboring Onondaga and Erie counties, which have developed a variety of community-based alternatives.

Pretrial detention equivalent to jail in the adult context is a key part of this story. Research shows that a kid put in detention is likely to become more deeply involved in the juvenile justice system later on than a similar kid who is not detained. In other words, detention prior to trial can increase a young person's chances of placement afterward.

Alternatives to pretrial detention can produce a positive ripple effect: If we give priority to the creation of community-based alternatives and use detention only for kids who are a risk to the community, the number of kids who enter placement facilities is likely to decline. And that in turn leads to better use of scarce public resources.

With funding from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services the state agency responsible for licensing local detention facilities [Vera's Center on Youth Justice](#) has been assisting New York City, Onondaga County (Syracuse), Erie County (Buffalo), Albany County, Monroe County (Rochester), and will soon begin working with Nassau County (Long Island) to research their system; identify their challenges, needs, objectives, and vision; and develop and implement a comprehensive juvenile justice reform agenda tailored to their local needs.

Santiago's article was on to a [real and promising trend](#): New York counties that have launched detention-reform efforts for kids have started to see significantly declining detention rates.

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