

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/rerouting-juvenile-justice-resources-in-the-right-direction>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

[In Wednesdays New York Times](#), Jim Dwyer decries the fiscal mess that is a product of the prison economy of much of upstate New York. The Tryon boys residential center cited by the U.S. Department of Justice in 2009 for abuse and neglect currently houses 6 kids, but has 155 employees on the payroll, thanks to an agreement made by then-governor Pataki with the employees union.

Although these empty beds each cost \$240,000 a year, the state is required to give one years notice before closing Tryon. The Office of Children and Family Services, the agency running the states juvenile justice system, is ready to close Tryon and other facilities, but its hands are tied. And because upstate communities depend on these jobs, the topic is politically charged.

Dwyer is right to be alarmed by the disarray. Governor Patersons [Task Force on Juvenile Justice](#) found that the state is harming its children, wasting money, and endangering the public by relying on these places as the backbone of its system for dealing with young people committed to the states custody. This is even more obvious in light of the fiscal crisis now burdening the state.

The governor recently introduced legislation that would push juvenile justice reform to the forefront, by reserving incarceration for those youth who are found guilty of a serious violent offense and appointing an independent monitor for state-operated placement facilities. This is clearly a step in the right direction.

[Veras Center on Youth Justice](#) is working with the state to build on the recommendations of the task force and move the process of change to the next level by increasing community-based alternatives, improving conditions in residential facilities, and creating a culture of accountability and transparency in the juvenile justice system.

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