



WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON

**children
& families**

Raising Voices to Make Every Kid Count

555 West Washington Ave, Suite 200

Madison, WI 53703

www.wccf.org

☎ 608-284-0580

✉ 608-284-0583

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TO: Joint Finance Committee

FR: Charity Eleson, Executive Director

RE: Budget Paper # 249: Position Reductions in Juvenile Corrections
(Corrections – Juvenile Corrections)

The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF) supports maintaining **position authority** for 29.92 positions consistent with **Alternative 2** of paper #249 (Position Reductions in Juvenile Corrections).

The cornerstone of the juvenile justice system and what separates this system from adult corrections are the extensive treatment resources. Juvenile correctional facilities provide treatment to the juvenile offenders with the most significant needs. The Department of Corrections has little control over their population (just like an adult prison) and is responsible for providing services to each child placed in their care and custody. As such, the Department must have the flexibility to immediately respond to increased staffing needs in the institutions to maintain a safe environment for the kids in their care.

We support **Alternative 2**, which **maintains the authority for 29.92 positions**, to enable the Department to quickly respond to growing needs in juvenile corrections. For example, according to the institutional population reports for the Department of Corrections, the Juvenile Correctional Institution population on January 5, 2007 was 575. The same population on June 1, 2007 swelled to 600. Given the specialized services these juveniles receive, an influx of 25 kids at any particular institution has significant implications for staffing patterns. For one of the boys' institutions (Ethan Allen or Lincoln Hills), an additional 25 youth would result in the need to open a new cottage, which requires 12.25 new staff (8.25 youth counselors, 2 social workers and 2.5 teachers) for 24-hour staffing. Just 13 more girls at Southern Oaks would require an increase of twelve positions.

This investment can help avoid future adult incarcerations. The recidivism rates in juvenile corrections are considerably better than adult corrections. Below is a chart prepared by the Division of Juvenile Corrections for their annual report with the most recent juvenile recidivism rates:

Overall Recidivism Rates within DJC with a Two Year Follow Up*

Release Year	Overall Recidivism Rate	Male Recidivism Rate	Female Recidivism Rate
2000	18.3%	19.7%	7.7%
2001	17.5%	18.8%	7.4%
2002	18.8%	20.5%	7.1%
2003	13.8%	14.5%	8.5%

The safety of our communities depends on the ability of the Division of Juvenile Corrections to provide treatment to Wisconsin's neediest juvenile offenders. It is imperative they retain the flexibility to staff the facilities as the population rises. **We urge the committee to adopt alternative 2 to allow Corrections to retain the position authority for the 29.92 positions.** Thank you for your support in this matter.