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Report: Juvenile Crime Continues Downward Trend, Community Approaches Prove Effective

The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF) today released a new report, **“The State of Juvenile Justice in Wisconsin: What do We Really Know?”** The report examines recent trends in juvenile arrests and incarceration in the state, as well as the success of recent community-based alternatives to secure confinement of youth offenders. The report is available online at http://www.wccf.org/pdf/state_of_juvenile_justice.pdf.

Publication of the paper coincides with National Youth Justice Awareness Month, which is being recognized by events taking place across the country throughout October. More information about Youth Justice Awareness Month is available at <http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/national-youth-justice-awareness-month.html>.

“The State of Juvenile Justice in Wisconsin” contains a wealth of data related to juvenile crime and the treatment of youth in the justice system, including these highlights:

- The number of juvenile arrests per year in Wisconsin has declined by 42% over the last decade.
- The number of arrests of juveniles in the state for violent offenses has declined by 17.5% over the past five years.
- The average daily population in the juvenile correctional facilities has declined by 70% over the decade.
- Racial disparities remain significant at all stages of the juvenile justice system.
- The number and effectiveness of community-based alternatives to incarceration and the use of research-based practice throughout the juvenile justice system have increased.

Based on the trends identified in the report, as well as the large volume of research findings on juvenile corrections in recent years, WCCF recommends:

- returning 17-year-olds to the juvenile system, since the juvenile system is proving to be effective, has the capacity to handle it, and would avoid the unnecessary harm youth experience from being in the adult system;
- reaffirming what is working with youthful offenders, such as local approaches that keep youth in their own communities; and
- reinvesting savings from reduced use of incarceration to support the continued expansion of evidence-based, cost-effective community alternatives to confinement.

“We have learned a great deal in recent years about what works and what doesn’t in dealing with youth in the justice system, and this data dispels the notion that locking youth up is the best way to reduce crime,” said WCCF Deputy Director Jim Moeser. “It’s time to put that knowledge into wider practice by investing in community-based strategies that have proven to be the most effective way to keep communities safe and help young people get their lives on the right track.”