



# Juvenile Justice Report Card: 2008

I am pleased to present to the Alaska Legislature and other citizens this Report Card on the performance and concerns of the state's Division of Juvenile Justice.

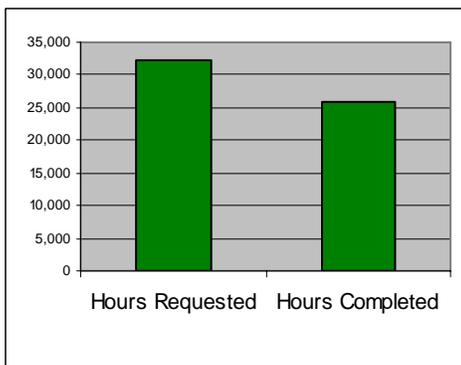
Our mission is to hold juvenile offenders accountable for their behavior, promote the safety and restoration of victims and communities, and assist offenders and their families in developing skills to prevent crime. For more details on how the Division of Juvenile Justice works to meet this mission, visit our web site at [www.hss.state.ak/djj](http://www.hss.state.ak/djj).

In this report we describe areas on which we're currently focusing our efforts. Attention to these issues is critical if we are to improve outcomes for delinquent youth, their victims, and communities in the years to come. We look forward to hearing your comments and ideas.

—Steve McComb, Director

## HOLDING OFFENDERS ACCOUNTABLE

### Community Work Service



Community Work Service (CWS) is an inherent part of a balanced and restorative justice system, providing juveniles an opportunity to be accountable for delinquent conduct, develop a meaningful sense of self and community, and demonstrate responsibility through a tangible act of restoration. Whether offering assistance to a local nonprofit agency, a government office, or a neighbor, juveniles can gain a sense of investment in their neighborhoods and in their own abilities and skills.

In FY 07, 81% of the CWS ordered either through formal, court processes or informal processes directed by a juvenile probation officer was completed.

## PROMOTING RESTORATION OF VICTIMS

### Restitution

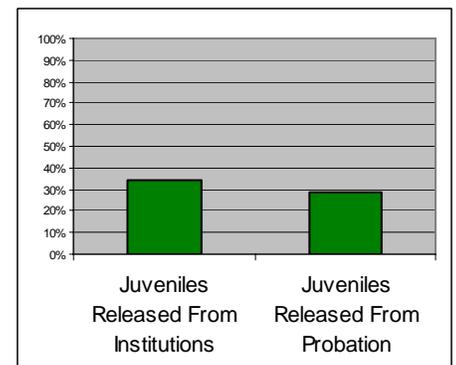


Restitution allows victims to recover damages resulting from property loss or destruction. Like community work service, it also provides a clear consequence of misbehavior, offering juveniles an opportunity to demonstrate ownership and responsibility for their actions.

In FY 07, 90% of restitution dollars requested from juveniles through non-court-ordered (or "informal") processes was collected by case closure. This measure also includes assignments of Permanent Fund Dividends made to victims through informal processes. Restitution ordered through the formal court system is not included, as these payments are tracked by the Alaska Department of Law.

## PREVENTING REPEAT CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

### Recidivism



The Division of Juvenile Justice measures recidivism for two populations of youth: those released from a term of treatment in one of Alaska's secure juvenile facilities, and youth who complete a period of probation supervision. For the 103 youth released from institutional treatment facilities in FY 05 the recidivism rate was 34%. For the 328 youth released from formal probation supervision in FY 05 the recidivism rate was 29%. These results closely mirror those of states that define and track recidivism similarly.

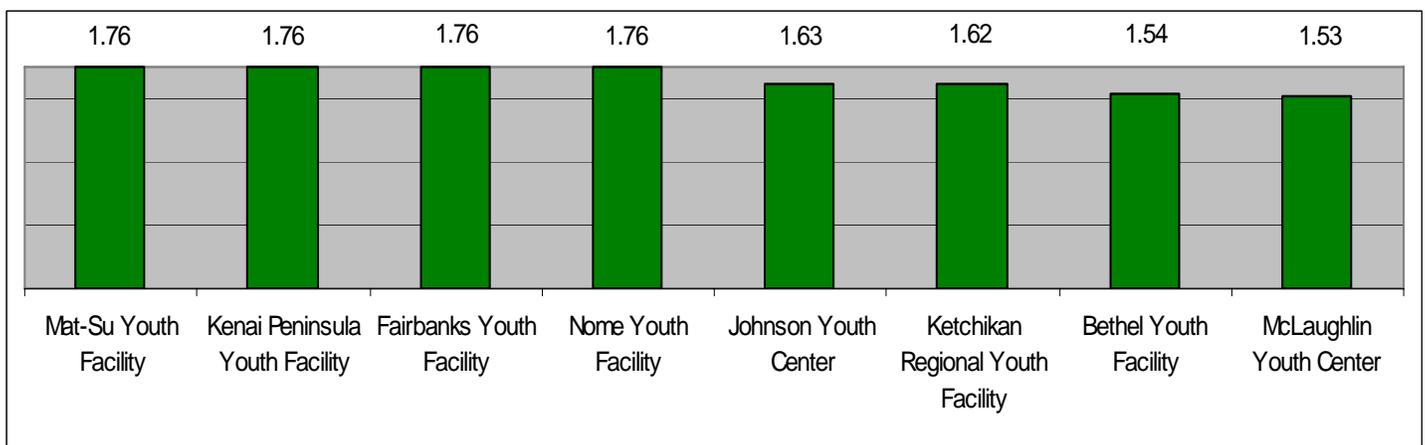
Recidivism is defined as new offenses that occur within 12 months of release that result in a new juvenile adjudication or adult conviction.

# Alaska Juvenile Justice to Focus Efforts on Juvenile Facility Safety and Security in 2008

The Department of Health and Social Services-Juvenile Justice is pursuing a variety of initiatives aimed at improving the safety, security, and success of every juvenile facility in the state. These include:

- ⇒ **Appropriate Funding for Safety and Security Through Elimination of the Vacancy Factor for Juvenile Facilities.** Most state government agencies have a relatively small but still significant amount of funding subtracted from their personnel budgets each year based on staff turnover and the gaps between the time one employee leaves a job and the replacement employee starts. This “vacancy factor” helps administrators budget more accurately and recognizes that the state saves money when vacancies occur. However, Alaska’s juvenile facilities must be open and operating 24 hours, every day of the year. Juvenile Justice is seeking to remove the vacancy factor from the budgets of its juvenile facilities so that these facilities can be fully and safely staffed at all times—assuring the safety of both residents and employees.
- ⇒ **Providing Adequate Support for the Nome Youth Facility.** The Nome Youth Facility was dramatically renovated and expanded in FY 06. At the time, inadequate funding was provided to meet the costs of the new building, such as for heating and food for residents. The facility needs an additional \$150,000 to meet its annual operating needs.
- ⇒ **Meeting Behavioral Health Needs.** Data for FY 07 has shown that 46% of youth formally involved with the Alaska juvenile justice system had at least one primary behavioral health disorder. The Division is committed to having an adequate number of mental health clinicians working in its facilities to meet their needs.
- ⇒ **Continued Participation in Performance-based Standards.** This national quality assurance program has been crucial in helping Alaska’s juvenile facilities determine areas on which to focus safety and security efforts.
- ⇒ **Providing Sufficient Staffing Levels in Juvenile Facilities.** Several of the state’s juvenile facilities lack sufficient permanent staffing to meet best practice levels of supervision for the safety, security, and habilitation of youth.
  - ◇ Analysis of Alaska’s juvenile facility staffing statewide demonstrates that four facilities—McLaughlin Youth Center, Bethel Youth Facility, Johnson Youth Center, and the Ketchikan Regional Youth Facility are short-staffed.
  - ◇ Lack of adequate permanent staff requires more hiring of non-permanent employees, drives up overtime costs, and leaves staff and residents at risk since units may lack adequate supervision.
  - ◇ The Division of Juvenile Justice is seeking sufficient funding to ensure that all youth facilities are equitably and adequately staffed.

Staff-to-Post Ratios of Alaska’s Juvenile Facilities\*



\*The “Staff-to-Post Ratio” assists juvenile and adult correctional agencies in determining the number of staff needed to adequately operate their programs. For every work station that must be manned at a juvenile facility in Alaska, 1.76 staff should be available since some staff must be called away to escort residents, participate in training, and meet other demands. Facilities under the 1.76 staff-to-post ratio are understaffed.