



Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans

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Youth Study Center should accept offers of help

Saturday, December 20, 2008

Re: "Progress faulted at youth prison," Page 1, Dec. 17.

Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans, through its Criminal Justice Reform Committee, is working with Orleans Parish Juvenile Court to identify the critical needs of our city's juvenile detention facility, the Youth Study Center.

Continuing to detain juveniles without implementation of best practices will only perpetuate the cycle of criminal activity for these youths.

We have observed the conditions that youth face in confinement at the YSC and are in full agreement with best practices established by the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Many recommendations require little additional funding.

The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative Advisory Committee, a public-private collaboration, works to establish best practices for youth to deter criminal activity and to provide coordinated and comprehensive services.

Funding for a new YSC facility is in place, and stakeholders must be involved in the design to ensure that needed services be available to juveniles and their families.

Foremost is the immediate need for improved administration and management of the YSC.

The city of New Orleans' Department of Human Services has oversight of the facility and has made little progress in improving basic medical and educational services and in enhancing the management.

Our recommendation is that Mayor Nagin require true, open and transparent change from the Department of Human Services and regular benchmarks for reform, and he should provide the public evidence of such achievement.

Ruthie Frierson

Chairman

Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans

New Orleans