

Juvenile Justice & Corrections

JUVENILE JUSTICE

DRW works to ensure justice-involved juveniles with disabilities are able to receive the services they need in the least restrictive setting possible.

***Why:** According to national statistics, at least one third of justice-involved youth are considered to have a disability that qualifies them for special education under IDEA. Adding youth with a mental health diagnosis to those in special education, the percentage of youth in the juvenile justice system rises to between 50 and 70 percent. DRW focuses its juvenile justice priorities on the overrepresentation of children and juveniles with disabilities in the juvenile justice system, as well as best practices in programming and the negative effects of isolation practices.*

Lincoln Hills/Copper Lake

- Proposal: Support proposals in the Department of Corrections budget that increase the number of staff for living units, medication dispensing, and mental health treatment.
- Proposal: Fund an independent review using national experts in the field of juvenile justice and mental health to examine restrictive housing policy and practices and facility-wide practices and programming that result in the use of isolation, including sending residents to restrictive housing. (One-time \$150,000).

Longer Term Solutions for Juvenile Justice Reform

- Proposal: Fund two, regional group home pilot projects that employ best practices in juvenile justice which can potentially lay the groundwork for statewide replication. (\$2,700,000 per year; downsize Lincoln Hills/Copper Lake).
- Proposal: Convene a statewide stakeholder group to examine the entire Wisconsin out-of-home, post-adjudication juvenile justice system, including county detention facilities. This group would be charged with making recommendations for a redesign that is evidenced-based and includes a regionalized model of small, safe and treatment-oriented facilities to replace the current large, statewide facility.

CORRECTIONS SYSTEM

DRW works to promote access to mental health treatment and services for people involved in the criminal justice system.

***Why:** Individuals with mental illness are overrepresented in a criminal justice system which has become by far the largest institutional system housing and treating people with mental illness in the state. Conservative estimates suggest that over 50% of the prison and jail population have a history of mental illness and/or substance abuse.*

- Proposal: DRW supports significant proposals in the Department of Corrections budget to increase staffing to treat inmates' social services, medical, and mental health needs; to enhance access to psychological treatment and add psychological service staff.
- Proposal: DRW supports adopting statewide policies to suspend and not terminate eligibility for Medicaid for inmates during incarceration. This will expedite access to necessary community supports upon release and reduce costs related to non-treatment of conditions. (Cost estimate required).