
The Blueprint for Kentucky's Children: Juvenile Justice

Changing the Handling of Status Offenses



October 7, 2009
Step Up For Kids Conference



Blueprint History with Juvenile Justice

- Chosen as a priority area in June 2008
 - Draft legislation developed Fall 2008
 - Working towards getting the draft legislation introduced during the 2010 General Assembly
-

Issue Brief on Status Offenses



June 2009

Issue Brief Series

Support

This report is funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Foundation.

For more information, contact:
Tara Grieshop-Goodwin
tgrieshop@kyyouth.org
Amy Swann
aswann@kyyouth.org

To learn more about the Blueprint for Kentucky's Children and current legislative priorities, visit www.blueprintky.org

Reducing the Use of Detention for Status Offenses in Kentucky

In education, health, safety, juvenile justice, and economic well-being, rankings on child well-being consistently place the Commonwealth among the bottom ten in the nation. Responding to a challenge from legislators, children's advocacy groups from across the state formed a broad based coalition to develop a clear and workable agenda to move Kentucky forward. The result is the Blueprint for Kentucky's children.

This issue brief series serves as a tool to share the latest statistics, research, best practices, and the group's recommendations for action. This brief focuses on reducing the use of secure detention for status offenses.

Background

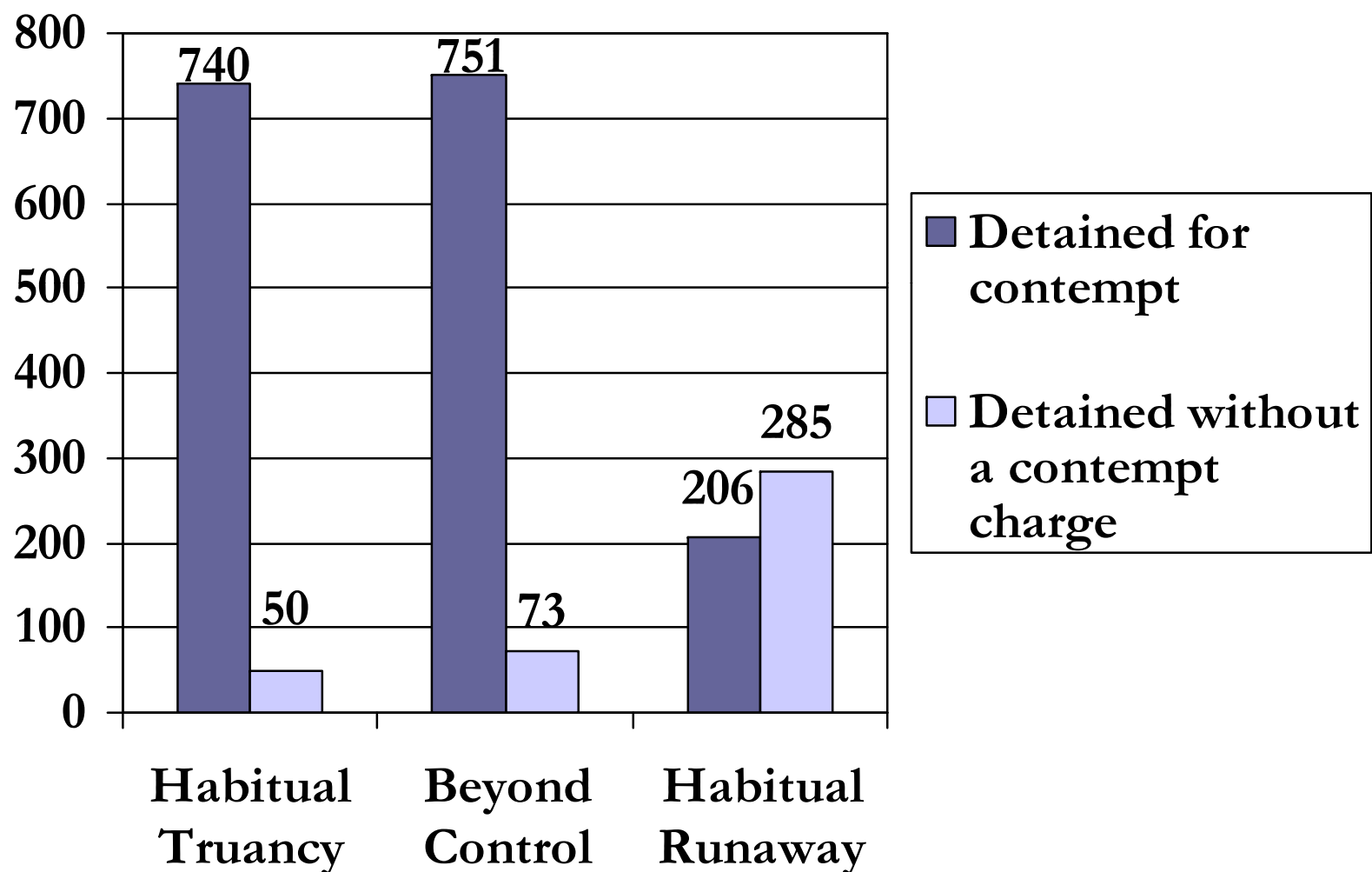
Every child needs quality learning opportunities and support in making a successful transition to adulthood in order to become a productive citizen of our Commonwealth. Adolescence can be a vulnerable and risky time for youth as they attempt to define themselves and become more independent. While some adolescents will engage in troubling behavior, appropriate and consistently-applied discipline is needed to ensure youth have opportunities to learn from mistakes and become successful contributing adults.¹

Status offenses are acts defined as illegal if committed by people who are under 18 years of age, but not if committed by adults. Status offenses are non-violent and therefore pose no threat of harm to society. In Kentucky, status offenses include:

- Habitual truancy – being reported as a truant two or more times during a one year period;
- Beyond the control of parents – repeatedly failing to follow the reasonable directives of parents or guardians when the behavior places the child or others at risk;
- Beyond the control of school – repeatedly violating the lawful regulations set forth by the school;
- Habitual runaway – being absent from the lawful place of residence without the permission of custodian for at least three days during a one year period;

- 9,585 youth charged with status offenses in Kentucky
- Kentucky detains youth charged with status offenses at the second highest rate in the nation

Youth Detained for Status Offenses, 2008



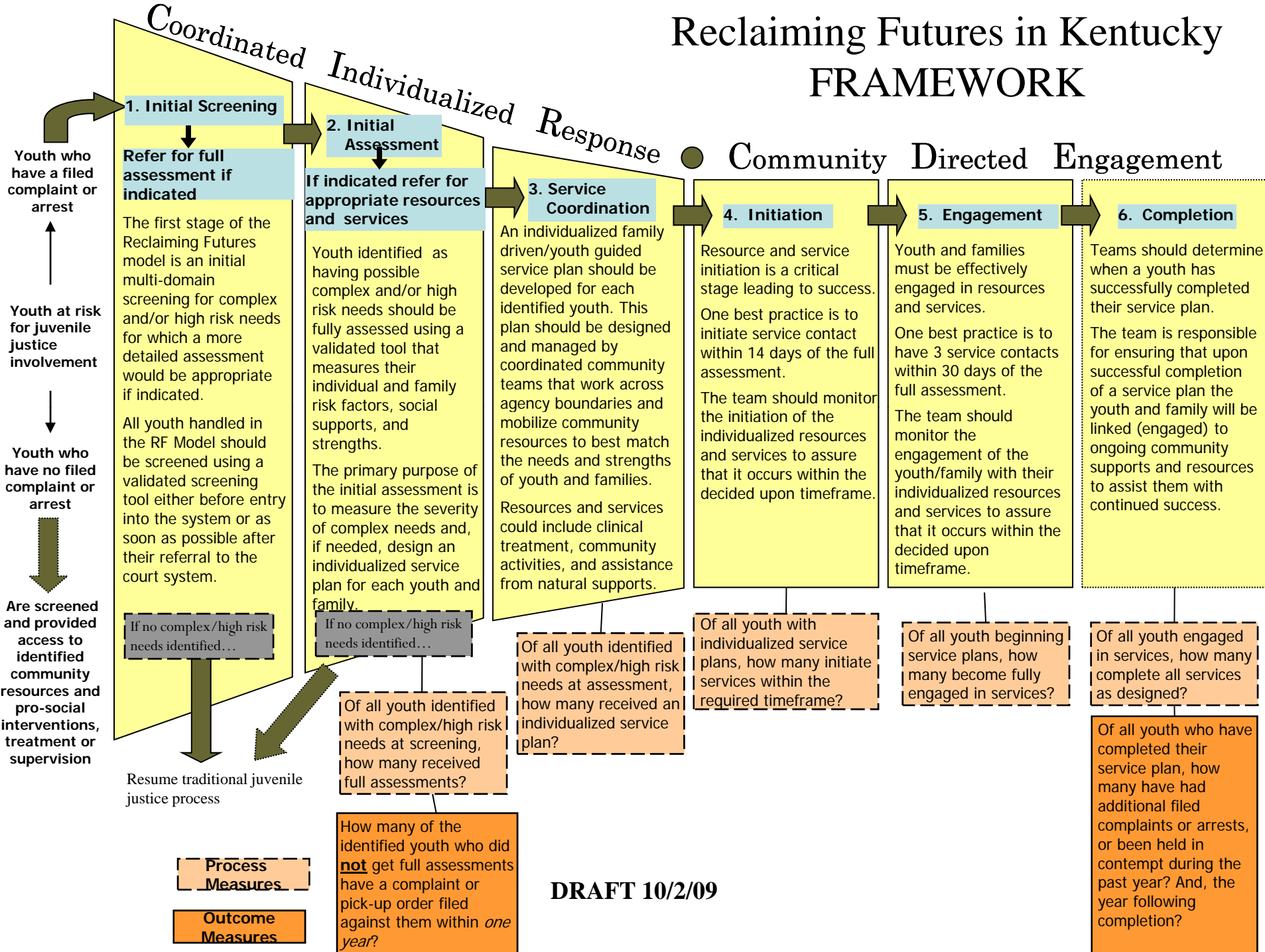
Strategies to Reduce the Use of Secure Detention for Status Offenses

- KYA has been convening two juvenile justice work groups
 - Status offenses
 - Disproportionate Minority Contact
 - Status Offenses Work Group focusing on increasing the usage and number of other options available for the handling of these cases
-

A Model for Promoting a Community Approach to Status Offenses

- ❑ Reclaiming Futures model from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
 - ❑ Stresses screening of youth to identify contributing factors
 - ❑ Using a coordinated community approach to service provision
-

Reclaiming Futures in Kentucky FRAMEWORK



Contact Information

- www.kyyouth.org
- Amy Swann
aswann@kyyouth.org
(502) 895-8167 x115

