



Crossover Youth¹ and Institutional Care

Research shows that institutionalization increases the likelihood of arrest and juvenile justice involvement.² Child welfare-involved youth who are placed in at least one group home are two-and-a-half times more likely to be charged with crimes as compared to similar youth in other foster care placements.³ In one Arizona study, 90 percent of youth in delinquency court had a prior foster care placement in a group home and/or residential treatment program.⁴ Almost half of these youth's time in child welfare was spent in institutional care (46 percent), versus with parents (12 percent), relatives (13 percent), or in a foster home (four percent).⁵

Youth in institutional care are at greater risk of arrest.

The risk of arrest is greater for youth while in institutional care. For example, in a Los Angeles study of group home effects on crossover, 40 percent of the youth experienced their first arrest in a group home, despite only 26 percent of the youth in the study ever having been placed in a group home.⁶ Studies have found that two-thirds to three-quarters of youth who cross over are actually arrested in their group home or foster care placement.⁷

Institutional care disconnects youth from supportive relationships and negatively affects youth development and behavior.

The higher rate of arrest for youth in group homes is related both to the type of youth who are placed in institutional care as well as the effects of institutional care itself. There are a number of factors that impact juvenile justice system involvement for youth placed in institutional care:

¹ For the purposes of this section, the term "crossover youth" is used to describe youth who are formally involved with the child welfare system to some degree (e.g., under investigation, in foster care) and subsequently enter the juvenile justice system, either while their child welfare case remains open or after it is closed.

² J.J. Cutuli, Robert M. George, Claudia Coulton, Maryanne Schretzman, David Crampton, Benjamin J. Charvat, Nina Lalich, Jessica A. Raithel, Cristobal Gacitua, and Eun Lye Lee, "[From Foster Care to Juvenile Justice: Exploring Characteristics of Youth in Three Cities](#)," *Children and Youth Services Review* 67 (2016): 84-94; Andrea Bogie, Kristen Johnson, Janice Ereth, and Chris Scharenbroch, "[Assessing Risk of Future Delinquency among Children Receiving Child Protection Services](#)," National Council on Crime and Delinquency (2011).

³ Joseph P. Ryan, Jane Marie Marshall, Denise Herz, and Pedro M. Hernandez, "[Juvenile Delinquency in Child Welfare: Investigating Group Home Effects](#)," *Children and Youth Services Review* 30, no. 9 (2008): 1088-1099.

⁴ Gregory J. Halemba, Gene C. Siegel, Rachael D. Lord, and Susanna Zawacki, "[Arizona Dual Jurisdiction Study: Final Report](#)," National Center for Juvenile Justice (2004).

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Ryan, et al, 2008.

⁷ Hui Huang, Joseph P. Ryan, and Denise Herz, "[The Journey of Dually-Involved Youth: The Description and Prediction of Rereporting and Recidivism](#)," *Children and Youth Services Review* 34, no. 1 (2012): 254-260, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2011.10.021>; Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and American Public Human Services Association, "[Bridging Two Worlds: Youth Involved in the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems](#)," Georgetown University Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and Arlington: American Public Human Services Association (2008).



- The lack of kinship placements and foster families that are equipped to handle adolescent youth and provide them with much-needed protective relationships increases the risk of institutional care, and therefore juvenile justice involvement.⁸
- Youth in institutional care are less likely to see their family members and are less likely to be reunified; this is especially true for youth aged six to 12.⁹ Some youth are placed in institutional care settings hundreds of miles away from their families.¹⁰
- Group homes demand more structure than foster families (often to justify the increased expense),¹¹ which then increases the likelihood of failure.
- Adolescents in group homes report more delinquent peer associations than those in foster families.¹²
- Youth in institutional care are more likely to run away, often running to the homes of friends or relatives.¹³ This increases their chance of detention.
- Institutionalization has clear negative effects on youth. There is an iatrogenic effect of being among antisocial peers¹⁴ as well as a lack of relationships and supervision from a caregiver.¹⁵

Institutional care is especially problematic for girls, doubling the chance they will become involved in the juvenile justice system.¹⁶ The lack of safety in group homes due to peer-on-peer violence, theft of belongings, inappropriate staff conduct, and poor physical conditions¹⁷ is of particular importance for girls.¹⁸ This lack of safety may cause girls to develop coping behaviors for an “insecure” environment, which manifest as delinquent behavior or running away.¹⁹

⁸ Cutuli, et al., 2016.

⁹ Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and American Public Human Services Association, 2008.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Allegra Abramo, “[Foster Kids Kept by State in Hotels at Record Rate](#),” *Investigate West*, Sept. 21, 2018.

¹¹ Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and American Public Human Services Association, 2008.

¹² *Id.*; Joseph P. Ryan, Denise Herz, Pedro M. Hernandez, and Jane Marie Marshall, “[Maltreatment and Delinquency: Investigating Child Welfare Bias in Juvenile Justice Processing](#),” *Children and Youth Services Review* 29, no. 8 (2007): 1035-1050.

¹³ Sarah Goodkind, Jeffrey J. Shook, Kevin H. Kim, Ryan T. Pohlig, and David J. Herring, “[From Child Welfare to Juvenile Justice: Race, Gender, and System Experiences](#),” *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 11, no. 3 (2013): 249-272.

¹⁴ Cutuli, et al., 2016.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ Goodkind, et al., 2013.

¹⁷ Madelyn Freundlich, Rosemary J. Avery, and Deborah Padgett, “[Care or Scare: The Safety of Youth in Institutional Care in New York City](#),” *Child Abuse and Neglect* 31, no. 2 (2007): 173-186.

¹⁸ Susan J. Popkin, Tama Leventhal, and Gretchen Weismann, “[Girls in the ‘Hood: The Importance of Feeling Safe](#),” Urban Institute (2008); Judy Schoenberg, Toija Riggins, and Kimberlee Salmond, “[Feeling Safe: What Girls Say](#),” Girl Scout Research Institute (2003); Shannon B. Wanless, “[The Role of Psychological Safety in Human Development](#),” *Research in Human Development* 13, 1 (2016): 6-14; Judith Warner, “[The Unequal Toll of Toxic Stress: How the Mental Burdens of Bias, Trauma, and Family Hardship Impact Girls and Women](#),” Center for American Progress (2017).

¹⁹ Goodkind, et al., 2013.