

## **News for Immediate Release**

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## Governor Corbett Invests \$10 Million for At-Risk Youth and Juvenile Offenders

**Harrisburg** –Governor Tom Corbett unveiled a new plan today that will invest \$10 million into proven prevention and intervention strategies for at-risk youth and juvenile offenders.

This strategy came out of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative, established last year to evaluate ways to enhance public safety through the most efficient and effective use of limited state resources. It focuses on the Department of Public Welfare's Youth Development Centers.

"As we examined our resources, we realized we needed to take a closer look at the juvenile system," Corbett said. "If we can prevent at-risk youth from becoming offenders, we can reduce the likelihood that they will spend time behind the bars of our county and state prisons, costing taxpayers billions of dollars each year."

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission and the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) worked collaboratively on the plan. It will redirect investments into:

- Effective prevention and intervention programs for at-risk children;
- Strengthening Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system through accurate risk assessment and targeted interventions with high-risk juvenile offenders; and
- Training programs for juvenile offenders that will help move them into employment.

"Our juvenile justice experts have presented a strong plan for the reinvestment of these savings," Corbett said. "This money will help grow existing proven programs which have already shown great results in helping communities and schools reduce and prevent juvenile crime."

The plan entails the closure of the New Castle Youth Development Center, a secure 100-bed facility for delinquent boys. Referrals to the center have drastically decreased over the last several years, with only 31 juveniles housed there as of Jan. 1. The facility costs taxpayers more than \$19.4 million annually, at a cost of \$725 per day per child. The closure of this center on Feb. 15 and relocation of its residents will result in \$73 million in taxpayer savings over five years.

A team from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) will be assisting workforce development staff and local PA CareerLinks® in providing services to make this transition as seamless as possible. The team will provide information and assistance regarding unemployment compensation benefits, the availability of COBRA to extend health care benefits, registration in the PA Job Gateway (www.jobgateway.pa.gov) and many other services to help the 223 affected individuals become reemployed quickly.

Vacancies within DPW will also be temporarily frozen so that dislocated employees from the center can be provided any opportunities to move to other positions.

The Departments of Community and Economic Development and General Services will work together with local government, community and business organizations to examine and market the property for resale or redevelopment.

"This is a reinvestment strategy that works for Pennsylvania," Corbett said. "But we're also committed to minimizing impacts to the residents of Lawrence County through a strong re-employment and economic development plan that will continue to provide jobs for those in the surrounding region."

Under a larger strategy to achieve better outcomes for Pennsylvania's youth, the initiative will continue to focus on the specific needs of children by using more effective treatment and prevention methods toward the goal of reducing recidivism. This will include assessing the individual risks and needs of each delinquent youth, ensure community protection, and identify a continuum of high-quality, innovative services for youthful offenders.

"We know the best way to prevent juvenile crime is through early identification and intervention," Mark Zimmer, chairman of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency said. "This long-term strategy benefits Pennsylvania's at-risk youth, while providing a greater return on taxpayers' investments."

For more information, visit <u>www.pa.gov</u>.

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