

RESEARCH BRIEF

New York's "Close to Home" Initiative — Did it Work?

Close to Home (C2H) is an effort to localize the youth justice system in New York City by keeping young offenders near their neighborhoods and families rather than sending them away to facilities that are far from home. Phase 1 of the C2H initiative began in 2012. Phase 2 is scheduled to launch in 2015. As State and City agencies widen the scope of Close to Home into a second phase, the key question is, "Did Phase 1 work?"

The Research & Evaluation Center at John Jay College of Criminal Justice reviewed C2H outcomes to date. Researchers collected statistical information about the effort, interviewed many of the officials who designed and implemented it, and talked with private providers and advocates about their impressions of the initiative. **The study** suggests that C2H successfully changed the youth justice system in New York City, and in the way intended by the designers of the reform.

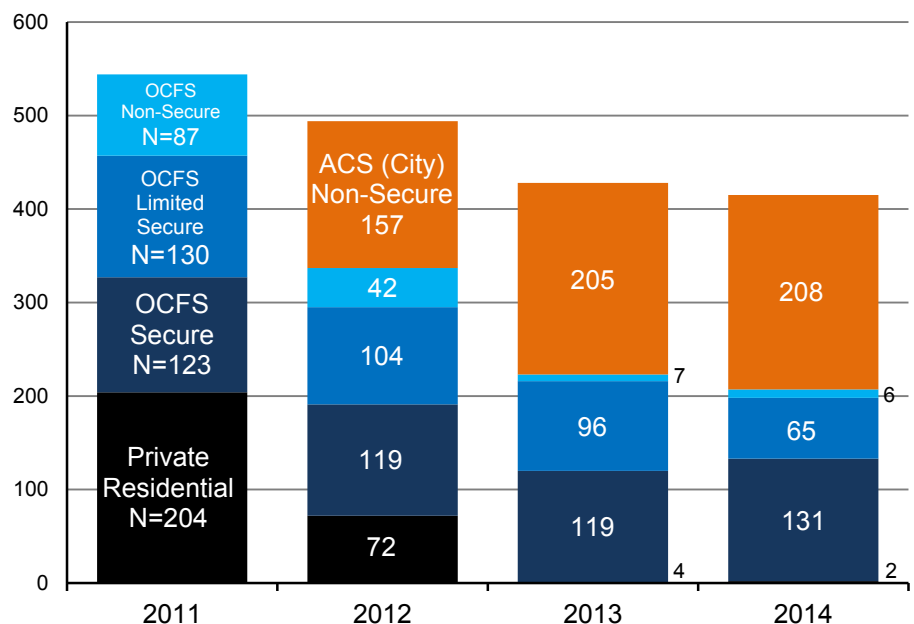
Out-of-home placements among New York City youth are falling. The overall volume of delinquency placements declined after the launch of C2H. Overall, placements dropped from 544 in 2011 to 494 in 2012 and 428 in 2013. By April 2014 the total number of New York City youth in placement was 415.

The decline in placements, however, cannot be attributed to C2H because the downward trend existed long before the reforms and did not accelerate appreciably after implementation. Changes in the configuration of placements, on the other hand, may

be attributed to C2H. The number of youth in State-run "non-secure" facilities plummeted as intended, from 87 placed youth in 2011 to 6 youth in 2014.

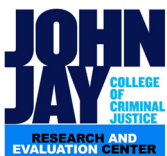
Before the launch of C2H, youth advocates worried that restricting New York City's access to the State's non-secure facilities could cause more offenders to be reclassified as "limited secure" (the next highest level of security), leading to an expansion of those placements. This did not happen. The number of New York City youth placed in the State's limited-secure facilities continued to fall after C2H. In 2014, there were 65 New York City youth in limited-secure placements — half the number in 2011.

Number of New York City Youth in Various Placements



Source: New York City Administration for Children's Services.

Note: 2014 data refer to placements in April. All other years refer to December.



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FULL REPORT

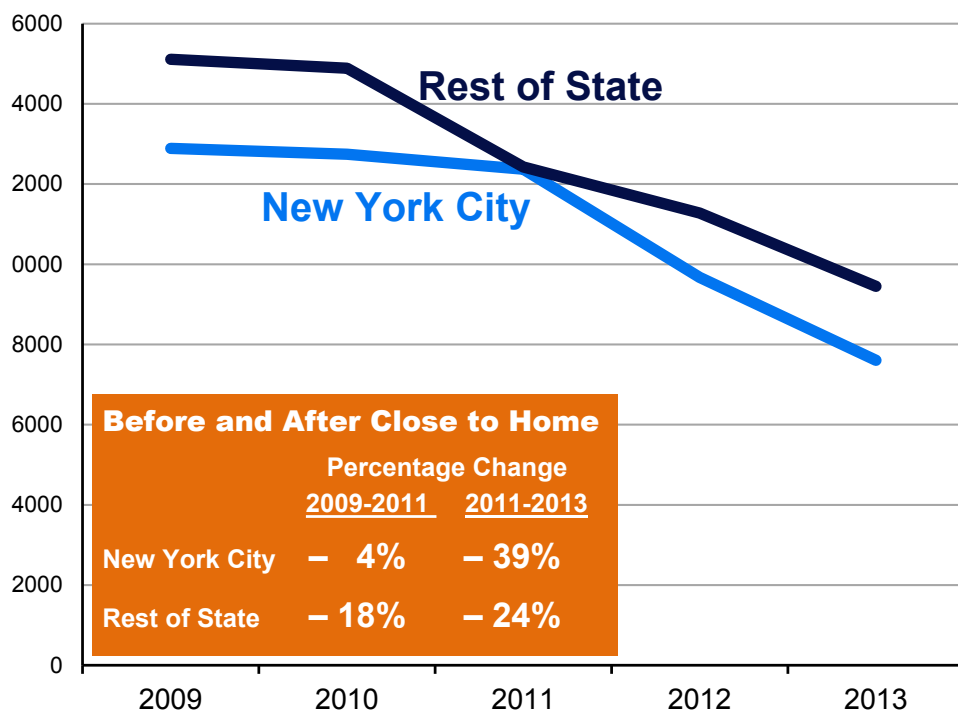
Staying Connected: Keeping Justice-Involved Youth "Close to Home" in New York City

Other dire predictions about Close to Home also failed to come true. There were concerns among advocates and even some officials that the expansion of programs and placements at the City level would lead to an overall expansion of the system rather than merely replacing State placements with local placements. As police and courts learned about the greater resources available at the local level — so went the argument — the perceived negative consequences of taking action against a youth would be lessened. Since there would be less chance that a particular youth would end up hundreds of miles away in a State-operated juvenile facility, the decision to arrest and charge a youth would be easier to make, resulting in more youth overall involved in the justice system.

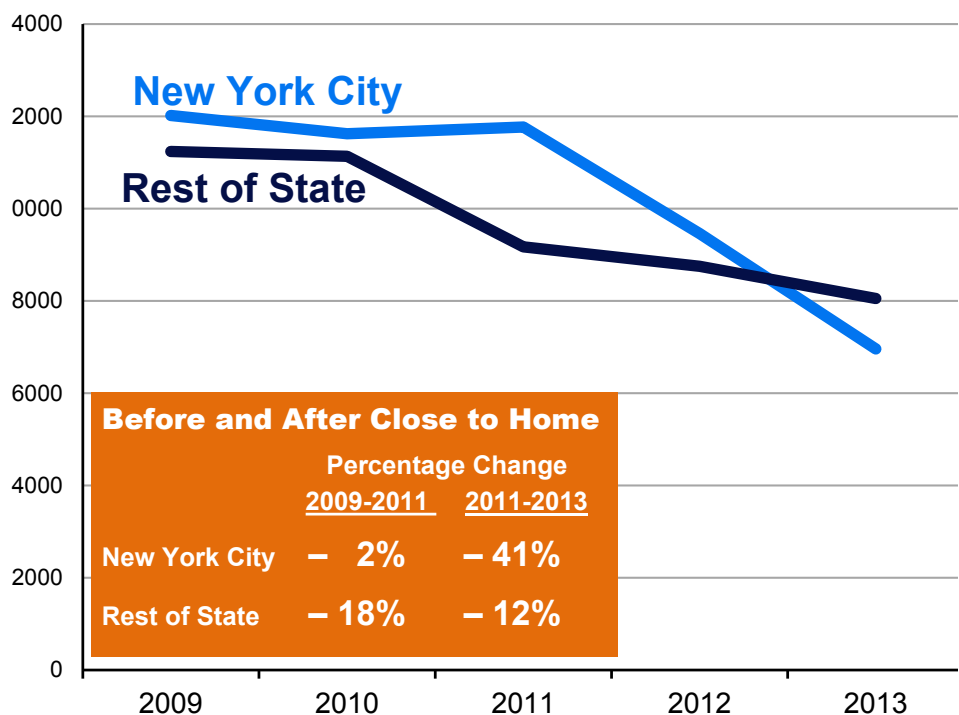
This did not happen. According to data disseminated by New York State's Division of Criminal Justice Services, juvenile arrests in New York City actually dropped more compared with the rest of the state more after C2H. In the years just before C2H (2009 to 2011), arrests were declining in the City and State, but the relative decline was smaller in New York City (–4% in New York City versus –18% in the rest of the State). After the beginning of Close to Home, the situation was reversed. Between 2011 and 2013, arrests in New York City fell more than in other areas of the State (–39% compared with –24%).

The same pattern was apparent in the number of intakes to probation departments. Intakes for delinquency matters declined more in New York City than the rest of the state after the implementation of Close to Home. In the two years just before C2H, intakes dropped 2 percent in New York City, but fell 18 percent in the rest of the State. After the beginning of Close to Home, the decrease in intakes by New York City probation was three times greater than in other New York communities (–41% versus –12%).

Juvenile Arrest Trends



Juvenile Probation Intakes



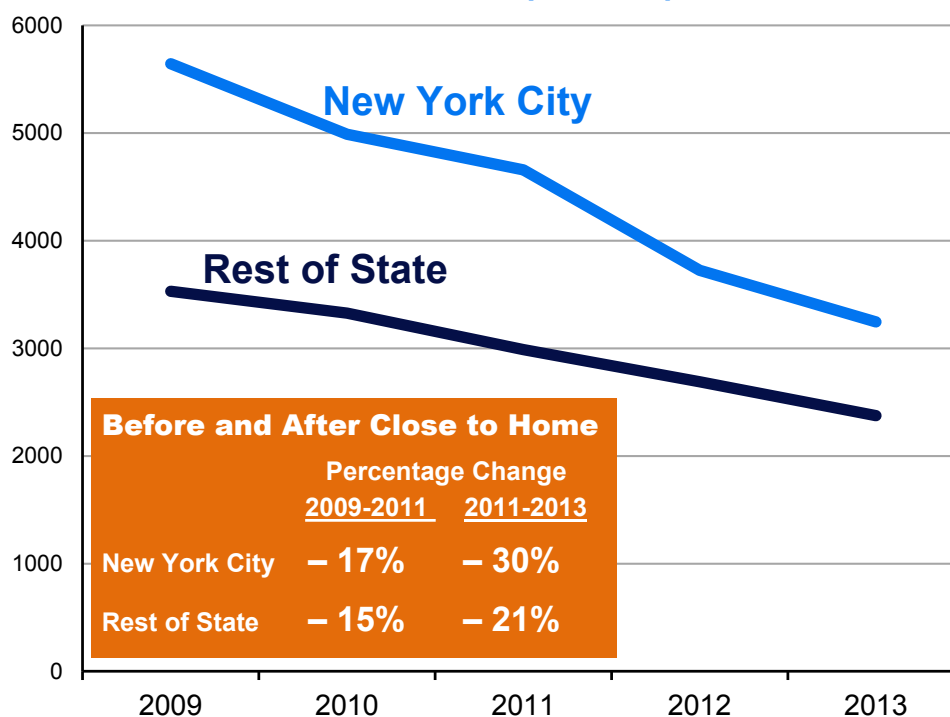
Policymakers were pleased when other unintended but feared consequences failed to occur after C2H. Restricting out-of-home placements could have led to greater demand for detention space. In fact, however, the launch of C2H was associated with an even larger decline in detention in New York City. Before C2H, the number of juvenile detention admissions in New York City declined at a pace that was slightly greater than the rest of New York State. Between 2009 and 2011, detention admissions in New York City fell 17 percent while admissions in other areas of New York State dipped 15 percent. After C2H, admissions in New York City decreased even more relative to the rest of the state (–30% versus –21%)

The same pattern was seen in the average daily detention population. Before C2H, the detention population in New York City fell slightly more than the rest of the state (–21% compared with –20%). After the launch of C2H, the decline in the City's detention population outpaced that of the rest of the state (–22% versus –15%).

CONCLUSION

Recent trends in youth justice suggest that Close to Home succeeded in lowering the number of New York City youth placed in the State's non-secure facilities. Critics of the reform initiative warned that making these changes could widen the net of intervention and even increase the use of placements and detention at the local level, but these predictions did not materialize. It will take several more years before additional research will be able to assess whether Close to Home also protected public safety and accomplished critical goals related to treatment and behavior change among young offenders. In the early years of Close to Home, however, the effort appears to be working as promised. State and City policymakers succeeded in meeting their stated goals without the negative effects of net-widening and system expansion.

Juvenile Detention Admissions (JD & JO)



Average Daily Juvenile Detention Population (JD & JO)

