


# **Justice for Louisiana Children and Youth: An Historical Perspective**

**The Louisiana Juvenile Justice Commission  
&  
Advisory Board**



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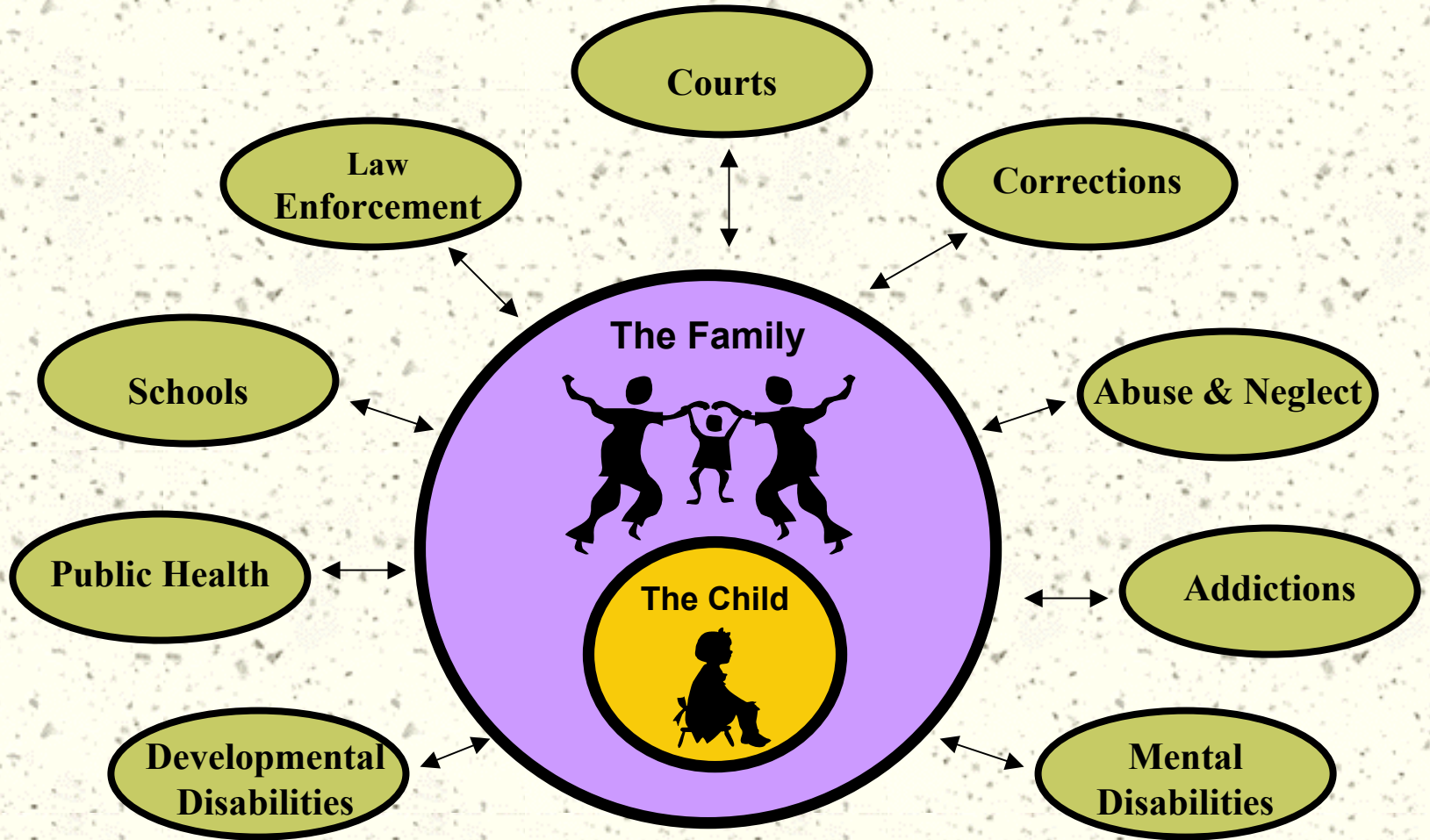
**“Youth came to the attention of the police, courts, and juvenile authorities because they have failed to function successfully in our society- failed to meet the expectations of family, school, and neighborhoods... We cannot afford to blame the school system, the foster care system, or the correctional system for rising delinquency rates. It is easy to believe that if we could remove all the problem makers from the streets, then the problem would be solved...**

**Changing a system and a bureaucracy is difficult and frustrating. The probation officer feels it, the judge feels it... and surely the public feels it... We cannot forego change simply because the status quo is easier or more convenient... We must join forces at the state and local levels of government.”**

**-Don E. Wydra**

**A Timeline for Change August, 1991**

# Components of the La. Juvenile Justice System



# Prior to 1900

- # **Children and adults with mental or correctional problems were treated the same – tendency to lock children and adults away from the public.**
  - **1846 – Dorothea Dix, noted advocate for the mentally ill, brings her campaign for reform to Louisiana.**
  - **1870 – Samuel Wilson, age 9, of Bienville Parish was sent to adult prison for life.**
  - **1899 – First juvenile court in nation opens in Chicago.**

# Early 1900

- # **Advocative efforts begin to separate juvenile and adult offenders.**
- # **Treatment for juveniles based on racial and gender characteristics.**
  - **Prison Reform Association of Louisiana tried unsuccessfully to separate juvenile and adult offenders.**
  - **1904 – Louisiana State Reform School for Boys opened in Monroe.**
    - **White males only.**
    - **Future site of Louisiana Training Institution in Monroe and Swanson Correctional Center for Youth.**
  - **1910 – Children as young as 7 still in the adult prison system.**
  - **“Race-Cost Consciousness Prevailed in Reform Efforts”**
    - **Money spent to rehabilitate blacks was thought to be wasted; this was seen most predominately with juveniles who, like adults, were predominately black (Carleton, 1971, p. 95).**

# 1900 – 1969

## # Segregated System

## # Little rehabilitation emphasis

## # Rehabilitation – in name only

- **1904 – Louisiana State Reform School for Boys (white boys)**
  - All black males and females were sent to adult prisons.
- **1926 – State Industrial School for Girls opened (white girls) at Ball, La.**
- **1948 – State Industrial School for Colored Youth opened (Scotlandville).**
  - Co-ed facilities
- **1950 – Separation of children from adults with mental health problems. Southeast Hospital in Mandeville, opened 84 beds for adolescents; 25 beds for young children.**

# 1900 – 1969 cont'd...

- **1956 – First dorm built at State Industrial School for Colored Youth – Scotlandville, for “colored girls.”**
- **1960 - Leesville State School for retarded children (Act 321, 1960 Legislature).**
- **1964 – In Re Gault – U.S. Supreme Court rules that juveniles entitled to same constitutional due process rights as adults**
- **1969 – Supreme Court ended “separate, but equal correctional facilities.”**
- **Late 1960’s – Juvenile Reception and Diagnostic Center (JRDC) opens at Louisiana Training Institution**
  - **Scotlandville site; provided response to desegregation order by assessing youth and placing youth in one of four juvenile correctional facilities on system of racial equity.**
- **Late 1960’s – 1970’s – Gary W. lawsuit to stop placement of children outside of the state.**

# 1970 – 1980

- # **Rehabilitation is still in the “stated aim” of the juvenile justice system.**
- # **Deinstitutionalization begins.**
- # **Serious overcrowding problems begin in juvenile institutions.**
- # **Federal oversight of Louisiana prison system begins.**
- # **Federal legislation finally passed to separate juveniles from adult offenders.**
- # **First high profile investigation of abuses at LTI – Scotlandville.**

# 1970 – 1980 cont'd...

- **1973 – Federal government intervention begins.**
  - Northwest State School for Children with Disabilities opened.
  - Southwest State School opens
- **1973-74 – LTI-Bridge City opens for younger males**
- **1974 – Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act is passed (JJDP); separates juveniles from adult offenders and rules that status offenders (truants, runaway, etc.) can no longer be treated the same as juvenile delinquents.**
- **1978 – Division of Youth Services formed.**
  - **1978 – High profile investigation into beatings of youth at LTI – Scotlandville in Baton Rouge**

# 1980 – 1990

- # **Policy shift from rehabilitation to public safety begins.**
- # **Nationally “get tough” policies become popular as juvenile crime rises.**
- # **Treatment still an issue in Louisiana institutions, but there is a marked decrease in emphasis on rehabilitation.**
- # **Overcrowding becomes a major problem – community-based alternatives pushed.**
- # **State gives complete control for committed youth to DPSC.**
  - **1981 – New Orleans Adolescent Hospital opened; 124 beds for children with mental disabilities.**

# 1980 – 1990 cont'd...

- **1984 – Federal consent decree caps juvenile population in institutions at 850; primarily based upon fire and safety hazards; some minimal standards set.**
  - **Waiting list established for youth committed to LTI system.**
- **1985 – Attempt to end “fragmented system” – all juvenile probation, parole and placement transferred to state Office of Youth Development (former Office of Juvenile Services).**
  - **Some local probation has remained in tact.**
- **1987 – Act 57 - Basically gives all decision making authority to state Department of Public Safety and Corrections (DPSC) when child is committed to custody; “sole custody and determination of placement, care and treatment for youth committed to DPSC.”**

# 1980 – 1990 cont'd...

- **1988 – Mandatory interagency coordination with CASSP (Child and Adolescent Service System Program); aimed at assisting youth with disabilities.**
- **Late 1980's – Serious backlog of juvenile commitments to correctional institutions**
  - Youth kept in local facilities.
  - Local authorities frustrated and angry.
- **1989 – State commits to plans for improved care, custody and treatment of youth in state custody**
  - 80 secure beds opened.
  - Governor approves accelerated development of community based programs.
- **May 1989 – Girls facility closed at Ball, La.**

# 1990's - 2000

- # **Juvenile justice model moves away from child centered emphasis and towards modeling of adult system.**
- # **Public safety focus replaces rehabilitation focus.**
- # **Children/youth coming into system with more serious problems – mental disability, developmental disabilities, more serious criminal behavior.**
- # **Attempt to focus on families**
- # **Human Rights violations exposed.**
- # **Intense Federal government supervision begins.**

# 1990's – 2000 cont'd...

- **1991 – Louisiana Children's Code**
  - FINS established
  - Streamlined laws
- **1992 – Act 971 establishes Children's Cabinet to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to coordinate policy making and planning for all state agencies and programs responsible for services to children and their families**
- **1994 – Tallulah Correctional Center for Youth opens (11/16/94).**
  - Federal court involvement begins six weeks later.
- **1995 – Human Rights Watch investigation (HRW).**
  - - identifies critical deficiencies in the system and details horrible physical abuse of youth.
  - - 10/95 – Children in Confinement in Louisiana released by HRW.

# 1990's – 2000 cont'd...

- **1996 – DPSC response to HRW report with development and implementation of Project Zero Tolerance (PZT); an attempt to reduce violence in state's juvenile facilities**
- **1997 – DPSC begins transfer of juveniles to adult prisons to ease overcrowding.**
- **1998 – Supreme Court finds transfers of juveniles unconstitutional.**
  - **12/98 – Jena Correctional Center for Youth opened.**
  - **Jena closed later in the year because of problems**

# Late 1990's

- # Louisiana Training Institutes are renamed Correctional Centers for Youth.
- # Tallulah Correctional Center for Youth (now Swanson Correction Center for Youth-Madison).
- # Jetson Correctional Center for Youth (Baton Rouge – formerly LTI-BR or LTI-Scotlandville).
- # Swanson Correctional Center for Youth (formerly LTI-Monroe).
- # Bridge City Correctional Center for Youth (formerly LTI-Bridge City).
- # On-going attempts to reach an agreement with Department of Justice over conditions of confinement for Louisiana youth.
- # Class action suit filed by Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana (JJPL).

# 2000 - 2001

- # **Settlement reached between state and Department of Justice in September 2000.**
- # **State attempting comprehensive reformation of juvenile justice system.**
- # **Identified issues:**
  - **Minority over-representation**
  - **Recidivism**
  - **On-going human rights violations**
  - **Fragmented services for Louisiana children.**
  - **Rehabilitation vs. Public Safety.**
  - **Inappropriate treatment for children and youth with disabilities.**
  - **Limited substance abuse treatment.**
  - **Lack of local control and alternatives.**
  - **Lack of community based alternatives.**
  - **Effectiveness of large juvenile prisons for youth – especially youth displaced from community and family.**