

Overview of Kansas Juvenile Justice Effort

- We applaud state leaders from all three branches, including the governor, the chief justice, and legislative leadership, for appointing this bipartisan, inter-branch workgroup to conduct a comprehensive study of the Kansas juvenile justice system and issue a set of recommendations that will produce better outcomes for youth, families, and communities by protecting both public safety and the public purse.
- In recent years, reports have indicated that our juvenile justice system is not getting us the public safety results we want. Moreover, national data show that Kansas is not seeing the reductions in its juvenile correctional population that other states have achieved.
- States across the country, such as Texas, Kentucky, Georgia, and South Dakota, have aligned their juvenile justice policies with the research showing how to improve outcomes by strengthening community supervision and services; holding juveniles accountable; and focusing our most expensive correctional resource – residential facilities – on the youth at highest risk to reoffend.
- The members of this workgroup represent a deep well of experience in juvenile justice and include judges, law enforcement, a prosecutor, a public defender, and legislators of both parties.
- The workgroup will consult with stakeholders and experts, study the drivers of Kansas' juvenile justice population, and review the best research in the field on how to keep youth from reoffending and become productive members of society.
- This review will result in the development of a comprehensive set of evidence-based policy recommendations for the 2016 legislative session aimed at producing better outcomes for our communities while containing taxpayer costs and improving public safety across the state.
- The workgroup will be assisted in its efforts by staff from the Pew Charitable Trusts, a non-profit, non-partisan technical assistance provider that has worked directly with more than a dozen states to help develop research-based juvenile justice policies.