

Volume 7, Issue 13, December 2009

**Staggering Failure Rate at State's Flagship Juvenile Facility, Victor Cullen Center***Major Changes Needed Before Replication***Executive Summary**

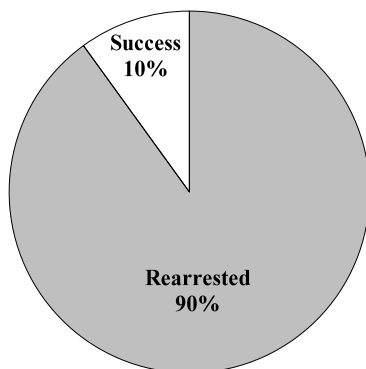
Ninety-percent of youth successfully discharged from Victor Cullen Center were rearrested within 16 months. Advocates for Children and Youth has repeatedly warned about the threat to public safety caused by Victor Cullen's poor programming, long distance from families and lack of aftercare.

**Background**

The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services reopened the Victor Cullen Center for youth who require secure placements and plans to build two additional facilities based on this model. This issue brief discusses the latest recidivism data.

**Findings**

Of the youth successfully discharged from Victor Cullen during Fiscal Year 2008, 90 percent were rearrested within 16 months, as reflected below.<sup>1</sup>

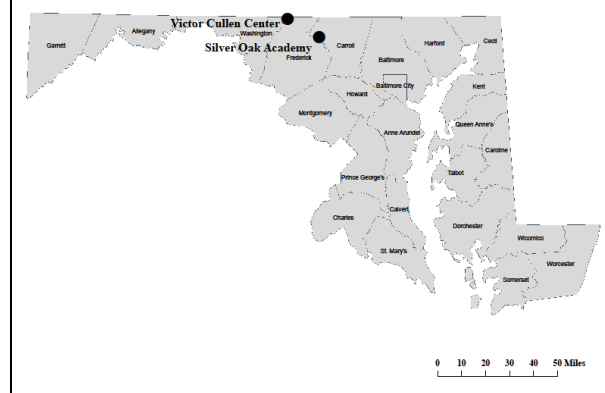
**Success Rate At Victor Cullen****Discussion**

Victor Cullen's high failure rate contrasts starkly with the success other states, including Missouri, are having with similar youth.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit, *Third Quarter Report* at p. 3 (2009).

<sup>2</sup> Harvard, *Division of Youth Services Honored As Innovations in American Government Award Winner* (2008).

Advocates for Children and Youth and others have previously pointed out significant deficiencies at Victor Cullen. It is vitally important that families live close enough to allow for regular whole-family services that start during placement and continue seamlessly afterwards. Victor Cullen and a second new facility are located at the edge of the State.

**Locations of Two New Juvenile Jails****Recommendations**

For success to occur at Victor Cullen and other secure facilities existing or planned in Maryland, the following steps are recommended:

1. Contract with an entity familiar with the Missouri practice model to help the State design and operate effective secure facilities.
2. Delay any activities relating to the replication of Victor Cullen until there are assurances that the proposed facilities will adhere to best practice.
3. Improve the programming at Victor Cullen so that it fully occupies youth all day and is carried out by adequately trained staff.
4. Restrict placement at Victor Cullen to youth who come from the local region.
5. Adopt and implement aftercare standards.<sup>3</sup>
6. Increase use of evidence-based community services, like Multi-Systemic Therapy.

<sup>3</sup> See Juvenile Reintegration and Aftercare Center, *Intensive Juvenile Aftercare Reference Guide* (2004).