



Senator
Bill Stouffer

DISTRICT 21

Senator Bill Stouffer – Cultivating Rural Missouri.

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The Stouffer Report: Helping Troubled Youths

There is a program out there you may have never heard about until recently. The folks involved are doing great work and are starting to get noticed for it.

[Harvard University](#) has recognized [Missouri's Division of Youth Services \(DYS\)](#), which is part of the [Missouri Department of Social Services \(DSS\)](#), with one of six [Innovations in American Government Awards](#) given this year. Harvard is specifically applauding the [Missouri Model](#), which is the plan by which DYS works to keep teenagers from becoming criminals as adults.

The Division of Youth Services is recognized nationally as having one of the lowest recidivism rates in the country. The Missouri Model shows how treatment and education work together to help kids get back on track. It is through this approach that DYS makes great strides in preparing young people to re-enter society as law abiding, productive citizens who contribute to the communities in which they live. DYS is an accredited school district and is nationally ranked for its educational success of delinquent youth. The division also offers the Work Experience Program which allows young people to develop job readiness skills and gain on the job training experience making them more employable upon return to their communities.

The Division of Youth Services has 32 residential centers for youths around Missouri, including facilities in Waverly and Lawson. Their programs stress education, therapy, and special programs designed to help young people understand that their actions have consequences. Officials with DYS say more than 25 states have come to them wanting to learn about the Missouri Model and use it in their states.

Another component to the Missouri Model is the state's Juvenile Court

Detention Centers, which rank above the national average in several categories:

- 91 percent of Missouri youth in juvenile detention or corrections earned high school credit last, compared to only 46 percent nationally.
- 15 percent of these young people earned their GED, compared to 6 percent nationwide.

The Division of Youth Services also offers day treatment, which is a structured alternative program; family therapy; community-based residential programs that provide a “home like” setting 24 hours a day; moderate-care residential facilities, which are more structured; and aftercare to offer juveniles a smooth transition back into their communities.

We have learned over the years rehabilitation programs work when everybody involved has a role. You cannot merely leave it up to the youth and ask if he or she feels ready to return to the community or have a staffer say a young person can go simply because they are out of room. The DYS has put together a wonderful plan and has shown they have the know how and tools to turn these kids around before it is too late. I am proud of them and look forward to more good things to come from the Missouri Model.

Senator Stouffer serves the counties of Carroll, Chariton, Cooper, Howard, Lafayette, Macon, Ray, Saline, and a part of Clay.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by e-mail at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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