Myth: Juvenile boot camps effectively rehabilitate offenders and reduce recidivism.

Fact: Juvenile boot camps are less than or equally effective at rehabilitating and reducing recidivism compared to residential or community-based programs.

Numerous studies on juvenile boot camps have demonstrated that they are no more effective at reducing recidivism than other interventions. Evidence also indicates that boot camps may aggravate antisocial behavior for youth with trauma histories compared to youth without trauma histories.¹

Further, one study using random assignment failed to find significant reductions in average time to first arrest or average number of arrests for youth who attended boot camp compared to youth who attended traditional facilities.² Additional studies using non-random assignment found no difference between youth who attended boot camps and those attending traditional facilities on a host of outcomes, including reconvictions and new offenses.³,⁴ A meta-analysis also noted that discipline-oriented programs, such as boot camps, may increase recidivism up to 8% compared to other programs.⁵

The Department supports evidence-based interventions in the least restrictive environment conducive to public safety. As part of this approach, the Department will not support or fund traditional-style boot camps.