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Advocating for court-involved children and the professionals who touch their lives since 1966.

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August 8, 2007

Virginia Council on Juvenile Detention (VCJD)
Joanne Smith, President
c/o Merrimac Juvenile Detention Center
9300 Merrimac Trail
Williamsburg, Virginia 23185

Dear Ms Smith:

Please allow this letter to serve as an apology to our colleagues and friends employed in secure detention settings. Following the publication of the VJJA *Advocate* Summer 2007 issue, the *Advocate* office received phone calls and e-mails from VJJA members employed in secure detention homes who were concerned about the inclusion of an excerpt on the dangers of detention. The item was excerpted from Barry Holman and Jason Ziedenis's recently published study, "*The Dangers of Detention: The Impact of Incarcerating Youth in Secure Facilities*" (Justice Policy Institute, Washington, DC). It is clear from the letters and emails that we have received that the inclusion of the news item was upsetting to members of your association and for that we are truly sorry.

The news item was not an article or editorial but a listing of the key findings of a recently published study. Similarly, we reprinted an excerpt from a recently released publication on motivational interviewing. The *Advocate* periodically includes such items as a way of exposing our readership to and encouraging members to stay abreast of research in our field.

In including the excerpt there was absolutely no intent to "demonize" detention or condemn Virginia's 25 detention facilities. Virginia's secure detention facilities are an integral part of the overall juvenile justice system and fulfill an important public safety function. We recognize that we are blessed in Virginia to have hard working and knowledgeable staff, rigid certification standards and well-run secure detention facilities. We also know that rehabilitation does not stop at the detention home door and that Virginia's detention homes offer many innovative on-site treatment programs and opportunities for referrals to programs and services upon return to the community.

A few individuals who expressed their concerns noted an interest in submitting articles on innovative programs in secure detention for inclusion in the *Advocate*. The *Advocate* office receives limited feedback and few submissions and would absolutely welcome such contributions. We ran an article on detention re-entry in the last issue and have talked about including articles on post-dispositional programs, the placement of mental health clinicians in detention and the community placement programs in future issues. Contributions concerning those and other innovative programs and approaches are welcome and can be sent to advocateeditor@vija.org. The deadline for the Fall 2007 issue is October 1.

VJJA values professionals from the secure detention community as friends, colleagues and members of our organization. We also value the diversity and opportunities for learning afforded by having members across a broad spectrum of juvenile justice work places. We sincerely apologize that the inclusion of the news item conveyed otherwise.

Sincerely,

Gary Conway
Advocate Editor

Beth Stinnett
VJJA President