

NEBRASKA YRTCS (1991-PRESENT)

1991

1

Concerns that YRTCs represent inadequate use of state funds

Several articles from April to December highlighted concerns about boys getting incomplete treatment, overcrowding, and the lack of a certified drug counseling program. Articles highlighted high recidivism rates and youth moving on to the adult correctional system.

2002

2

YRTC Kearney loses accreditation by American Correctional Association

2002

3

Whistle blown on youth-on-youth physical "takedowns"

After complaints were made by formerly-incarcerated youth, the Johanns administration eliminated the practice of physical restraint of boys by their peers at YRTC Kearney. In 12 months, there had been 1,344 "takedowns," lasting minutes to hours.

2008

4

Agency proposes \$18 million new facility to serve boys who had prior YRTC commitment

The proposal was based on a high recidivism rate and concerns about lack of community-based programming for reentry. Opponents viewed it as an expensive addition to bolster a failing program.

2011

5

Rising violence at YRTC Kearney

In 2011, there were 96 assaults on staff compared with 22 in 2008. 472 youth-on-youth assaults were also reported.

2013

6

Ongoing disturbances and escapes at YRTC Kearney

News reports highlighted 11 boys creating a disturbance in the middle of the night, a teen attempting to sell drugs, and 18 separate escapes.

2013

7

Report shows Nebraska has one of the highest youth incarceration rates

The Legislature considered closure of the YRTCs to prioritize funding for a treatment-based system, and formed a task force to develop a plan for closure in favor of a regional service model.

2019

14

Safety violations cause DHHS to close YRTC Geneva

Fire safety locks were malfunctioning, buildings damaged, and girls described being held in indefinite solitary confinement in rooms without working lights. Concerns were also raised about ability to hire and retain staff.

2019

13

Two teens charged with robbing, assaulting female staffer at YRTC Kearney

Fence built at YRTC Kearney
Youth escapes and attempted escapes have continued.

2018

12

Inspector General report identifies reversal in improvements at YRTC Kearney

Critical incidents were up, with 19 escapes and 14 assaults in FY 2017-2018.

2017

11

Solitary confinement report shows high rate and long lengths of isolation at YRTC facilities

Girls at Geneva were subjected to room confinement at a rate of 2.84 times per 100 days, with an average confinement of almost 23 hours. Boys at Kearney were subjected to it at a rate of 2.32 times per 100 days, with an average length of over 49 hours.

2017

10

11 girls attempt escape from YRTC Geneva in one night

2016

9

Inspector General report highlights high number of escapes, assaults, and fights, use of solitary confinement, and loss of programming at YRTC Kearney

2016

8

Former YRTC worker charged with sexual abuse of protected individual

The 28-year-old licensed provisional mental health practitioner eventually pled no contest to the second-degree felony for having sexual contact with a teen at YRTC Kearney.

2019

15

DHHS attempted removal of four girls to Lancaster County detention facility and ultimately removed all 24 girls to the Kearney campus.
Four girls escaped in early September.

2020

16

Lincoln YRTC opens
20 youth transferred from Kearney to Lincoln

2021

17

Hastings YRTC open holding 10 girls
YRTC 5-year strategic plan implemented, identifying two primary objectives
response to concerns identified in 2020 and advancing the facilities from a "traditional corrections approach" to a "comprehensive treatment approach"

2022

18

Hastings YRTC recognized for 100% compliance with corrections standards

2023

19

Report from OIG shows surge in use of solitary confinement on youth in Nebraska YRTCs
Same year YRTC Kearney received 100% compliance with corrections standards.

2024

20

Three teens escape Lincoln YRTC
Allegations that teens stole a vehicle and committed a robbery during the escape

2025

21

Alleged staff sex abuse at Kearney YRTC reported by several youth
Annual Ombudsman report also notes concerns about physical facility structures