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June 16, 2009

The Rochester Democrat and Chronicle
55 Exchange Boulevard
Rochester, New York 14614

Dear Editor,

The brutal murder of a young Lockport group home employee (Two Rochester Area Teens accused of Murder, June 10) once again demonstrates the failure of the policies of the Office of Children and Family Services. It is time to hold OCFS responsible for their failed policy to close down state operated youth residences by placing criminal youth in the community.

The Lockport murder was apparently committed by two youth placed in a private community based group home by OCFS. One of the youths charged was moved to the group home from a more secure state operated facility. This follows the January shooting of a Rochester police officer by a youth placed in a community residence by OCFS and the recent riot and frequent AWOLs from Randolph Children's Home in Cattaraugus County.

OCFS continues to make bad placement decisions based on a misguided policy that most youths belong in the community. OCFS must change this policy and recognize their responsibility to protect the public from dangerous youth.

Sincerely,

Frank Besser,
PEF Region 3 Coordinator