

# 1998 Outcome Evaluation Report Volume I

**A Review of the Intake, Assessment, Classification and  
Placement of Youth Released from Juvenile Justice  
Programs Between July 1, 1995 and June 30, 1996**



April 22, 1998

JJAB Doc. #98-001-OE

## **Juvenile Justice Advisory Board**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every year, the Juvenile Justice Advisory Board evaluates the outcomes of juvenile justice programs in Florida. This year's report focuses on youth who were released from programs during FY 1995-96.

Florida's annual investment in its juvenile justice programs buys a range of programs, from prevention to diversion, intervention and commitment. For the current year, that investment will reach almost \$600 million. Program costs vary widely, from under \$300 per stay for some youth diverted to as much as \$139,000 for the longest stay in the most restrictive setting. The effectiveness of the juvenile justice system depends upon the ability of the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), with state attorneys and juvenile judges, to screen, assess, classify and place youth in accord with their treatment needs and the risks that they pose to public safety.

This year, the Board publishes its outcome evaluation report in two volumes. The first focuses on the intake, assessment, classification and placement process. This process matches youth with prevention, diversion, intervention or commitment components, and appropriate programs within each component. The second volume analyzes program outputs and outcomes for those youth.

## Findings and Recommendations

The Board continues to voice its concerns about several issues. Another issue is addressed this year, that of young children found in the juvenile justice system.

**Young Children in the Delinquency System.** Children younger than 10 years old sometimes commit delinquent acts. Because of their immature stage of development, the families of these children must be deeply involved in resolving the incident. Young children generally are not served well through the juvenile justice system.

*The JJAB recommends that the Legislature conduct an interim study of children, 10 years of age and younger, who are referred to the juvenile justice system.*

**Validate Screening and Assessment Instruments and Processes.** A variety of problems continue to be identified concerning screening and assessment: assessments not done or done late, assessment or screening information not used or overridden, and some assessments unnecessarily duplicated. Lending greater credence to these concerns is the finding that youth released from different commitment levels, for which costs vary widely, do not appear to be very different in terms of their delinquency histories or offenses.

*The JJAB recommends that the Legislature require the DJJ to plan, implement and report on a comprehensive validation of its screening and assessment instruments and processes.*

That report also should describe how the information produced through the DJJ's screening and assessment processes is used by others in the juvenile justice system.

*The JJAB also recommends that the Legislature take specific steps to rescind requirements for completing predisposition reports under*

*certain circumstances, but to protect the rights of different parties to obtain those reports.*

**Representation of Minorities in the Juvenile Justice System.** Minorities, especially minority males, continue to be disproportionately represented in the most restrictive placements in the juvenile justice system.

*The JJAB recommends that the DJJ improve its minority outreach efforts for prevention programs and its use of diversion and intervention strategies for minority youth.*

**Full Accounting for Costs.** Providers of delinquency services almost always rely upon sources of funding in addition to the DJJ for the provision of services to delinquent youth. Many providers could not continue to deliver their services if they were forced to rely exclusively on the funds they get under contracts with the DJJ. Yet there is no reporting of the full costs of delivering these services. The annual DJJ Quality Assurance Report includes cost information to the extent that it is identifiable through SAMAS and financial affidavits.

*The JJAB recommends that, as a matter of contract terms, the DJJ require from its contractors full disclosure of all funding sources and amounts.*

**Integrity of Automated Data.** Accuracy, timeliness and completeness of information collected and used by the department, continue to be suspect. The integrity of the data to be collected, kept and reported from the new Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS) must be assured. The JJAB commends the DJJ for its initial steps in this direction, but more must be done.

*The JJAB recommends that the DJJ establish a data integrity unit.*

That unit should monitor the integrity of the data in the JJIS; identify data integrity problems, and their underlying causes; and develop, test and implement effective solutions.

The complete recommendations may be found on page 41 of the report.



## **PREFACE**

The Juvenile Justice Advisory Board has the statutory responsibility to "establish and operate a comprehensive system to annually measure and report program outcomes and effectiveness for each program operated by the Department of Juvenile Justice or operated by a provider under contract with the department." Section 985.401(4)(d), FLA. STAT.

The 1998 Outcome Evaluation Report has two volumes. The first volume examines the intake, assessment, classification and placement of youth released from juvenile justice programs. The second volume examines DJJ programs ranging from intervention to maximum-risk services and aftercare. Both volumes should prove useful to the Legislature, the DJJ, providers and concerned citizens in their attempt to determine the most efficient and effective strategies for dealing with delinquent youth.

The Advisory Board compiled information from the Client Information System (CIS), which the Department of Children and Family Services and the Department of Juvenile Justice share. DJJ staff are responsible for the entry of data concerning youth referred to the juvenile justice system. In cooperation with the DJJ Bureau of Data and Research, the Advisory Board compiled rates of recidivism based on data gathered from the CIS, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) and the Department of Corrections (DC). In addition, information was gathered through interviews at Advisory Board meetings and site visits. Along the way, important findings began to emerge which raised questions about everything from how juveniles were placed in restrictiveness levels and programs to how the usual indicators of performance such as average length of stay, program completion, provision of aftercare and overall rates of recidivism may be related. This report offers thought-provoking questions and discussions about the interpretation of the data.

The Juvenile Justice Advisory Board offers this first volume as a springboard to future discussions about how the Department of Juvenile Justice can and should go about maintaining public safety while providing effective care and treatment through the use of its intake and case management system.

## INTRODUCTION

This year the State of Florida will invest almost \$600 million in the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). Legislators and the citizens they represent should expect some return on their investment. Volumes I and II of the 1998 Outcome Evaluation Report to the Legislature constitute the assessment by the Juvenile Justice Advisory Board (JJAB) of the extent to which the DJJ mission and the Legislature's purposes have been achieved for youth released from programs between July 1, 1995 and June 30, 1996. The first volume examines the intake, assessment, classification and placement of youth released from juvenile justice programs. The second volume examines DJJ programs ranging from intervention to maximum-risk services and aftercare. Both volumes should prove useful to the Legislature, the DJJ, providers and concerned citizens in their attempt to determine the most efficient and effective strategies for dealing with delinquent youth.

The mission of the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) is consistent with the declared purposes of the Legislature for Florida's juvenile justice system:

### **Legislative Intent**

To ensure the protection of society by providing for a comprehensive assessment of the child's needs so that the most appropriate control, discipline, punishment, and treatment can be administered consistent with the seriousness of the act committed, the community's long-term need for public safety, the prior record of the child, and the specific rehabilitation needs of the child, while providing whenever possible restitution to the victim of the offense. Section 985.01(1)(c), FLA. STAT.

### **Florida Department of Juvenile Justice Mission Statement**

The mission of the Department of Juvenile Justice is to provide a full range of programs and services to prevent and reduce juvenile delinquency in partnership with families, schools, communities, law enforcement and other agencies. We are committed to a balanced approach that increases public safety, provides department and offender accountability, and affords opportunities for youth to develop into responsible citizens.

Through this report, the JJAB seeks to promote both agency and offender accountability by examining core themes common to the mission of the DJJ and the intent of the Legislature:

- The appropriateness of the control, discipline and punishment imposed on youth referred to the system; and
- The degree to which delinquent youth have been afforded the opportunity to develop into responsible citizens through the provision of services that meet their specific rehabilitation needs.

Assessment and classification are the cornerstone of the statutory framework that the Legislature has established in Florida. The millions of dollars poured into the system each year will not yield their maximum potential unless juveniles are placed in the programs that are best suited to meet their needs and prevent or change criminal behavior. Unless assessment and classification function properly, the other components of the system cannot be successful. Poor performance in this area has ripple effects throughout the system, from administrators to the individuals working with these youth on a daily basis.

The department is responsible for the production of timely, accurate, and comprehensive information that supports the decisions made by case managers, state prosecutors, the court and service providers. An effective juvenile justice system must perform the following functions:

- Collect and record information needed to assess the significant risk and protective factors that influence a child's life – individual and peer, family, school, and community – and ensure that this information is readily available to those who need it from intake to aftercare;
- Competently use this information to differentiate among types of offenders according to the risks that they pose to society and their needs for treatment;
- Competently use this information to develop plans for treatment that includes appropriate educational services for each youth;
- Develop and maintain an affordable continuum of treatment resources in settings appropriate to the risks and needs of juvenile offenders; and
- Track program costs, outputs and client outcomes reliably in order to manage and improve the quality of services and to evaluate their effectiveness at changing the lives of youth.

The Florida Legislature's Division of Economic and Demographic Research reported that during FY 95-96, there were 1,309,200 youth between the ages of 10 and 17 years in Florida. A total of 105,370 (8%) were charged with delinquency offenses and were referred to the Department during this period.

In carrying out its statutory duty to monitor the implementation of juvenile justice policy, the JJAB has held public meetings, conducted site visits at delinquency programs across the state, and its members have attended a variety of meetings and conferences. At these events, the Board has heard from judges, prosecutors, DJJ staff, university-based researchers, treatment providers and other involved stakeholders with many years of experience. Presentations and anecdotal information from these stakeholders describe the ability of the system to efficiently and effectively assess, classify and place juvenile offenders.

In addition to information from these sources, the JJAB also has collected data from a variety of sources, including the information systems of the DJJ, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) and the Department of Corrections (DC). The combination

of information from individuals and the analysis of data provide the foundation for the 1998 Outcome Evaluation Report.

## **THE CONTINUUM OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

The largest and most tangible purchase made with Florida's \$600 million juvenile justice investment is the continuum of programs serving youth at risk and delinquent juveniles. The continuum ranges from prevention programs to maximum risk commitment, with increasing levels of treatment intensity, restrictiveness, and cost per individual released.<sup>1</sup>

### **Prevention Programs**

Delinquency prevention programs are designed to reduce the number of youth who enter the juvenile justice system. This is accomplished by targeting youth engaging in high-risk behaviors such as truancy, running away from home and ungovernability. Youth exhibiting these types of behaviors are often referred to as Children in Need of Services, and their families as Families in Need of Services (CINS/FINS). Examples of these programs include the agencies affiliated with the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services, and the PACE Centers for Girls, which are described in the Board's *1998 Prevention Outcome Report* (JJAB Doc. #98-002-OE). The services provided by these programs are designed to enhance family functioning, personal growth and development, school attendance and academic performance.

### **Diversion and Intervention Programs**

Diversion programs offer a youth charged with a minor first offense the opportunity to avoid an appearance before a judge, yet still be held accountable. Examples of these programs include civil citation, teen court, drug court and community arbitration. Intervention programs target youth who have committed a more serious offense or multiple offenses. The Juvenile Alternative Services Program (JASP) and community control are the two primary intervention programs. Youth remain in their homes and routinely are required to repay victims and communities through restitution and community service. Youth who fail to comply with the requirements of an intervention program usually become more deeply involved in the juvenile justice system.

### **Commitment Programs**

Commitment programs are designed for youth who have been adjudicated for a criminal offense and have been placed in the legal custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice. The court considers concerns for public safety raised by the youth's behavior and the youth's needs for guidance and treatment in making a decision to commit a youth. The commitment continuum includes restrictiveness levels 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10, ranging from the least to most restrictive. Also included in the commitment continuum are non-residential aftercare services. These programs monitor youth who

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<sup>1</sup> A full description of program types within the various levels of restrictiveness is included in Appendix 1.

have been released from commitment programs and require additional supervision and services.

The tables that follow describe the characteristics of juvenile justice programs. The first table contains a brief description of the major components of the juvenile justice continuum. Those which follow provide a description of the major program types within each level of restrictiveness within the commitment continuum. After these tables, the intake, assessment and classification processes are described. A more detailed description of the programs within the continuum is located in Appendix 1.

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## INTAKE, ASSESSMENT AND CLASSIFICATION

Department of Juvenile Justice programs vary by restrictiveness, treatment availability, and cost. High- and maximum-risk programs tend to be significantly more expensive than those at lower restrictiveness levels. In order to gain the best return on Florida's \$600 million investment, juveniles must be placed appropriately. The DJJ must assess and classify juvenile offenders, placing them in the least restrictive environment with the appropriate treatment resources for the right amount of time to achieve the goals for the rehabilitation of juveniles. Section 985.21(1)(b)1-3, (2), FLA. STAT.

Florida law requires that a comprehensive screening and assessment process occur for youth charged with an offense.<sup>2</sup> The information gathered during this process should contribute to an informed recommendation offered by the Department on how a case should proceed. The availability of this information to the state attorney and juvenile court should be critical in their decision-making process for matching a program or service to a youth that balances the youth's risk to the community and treatment needs.

**Intake.** The process begins when a law enforcement officer completes a complaint or affidavit alleging a delinquent act. The youth may be released to a parent or guardian or screened for detention status. The case is then assigned an intake worker or case manager, who begins the intake investigation. The investigation includes gathering information about the youth and the nature of the offense from the arresting officer, the victim, the youth and family.

**Recommendation to the State Attorney.** Once the investigation is completed, a recommendation is made to the state attorney, who may consider it in determining how to handle the case. The state attorney may transfer the case to adult court, file a delinquency petition in juvenile court, or divert the case from judicial handling in juvenile court. The state attorney may elect to file a delinquency petition for youth who fail to complete a diversion program.

985.03 Definitions.--When used in this chapter, the term:

(29) "Intake" means the initial acceptance and screening by the Department of Juvenile Justice of a complaint or a law enforcement report or probable cause affidavit of delinquency, family in need of services, or child in need of services to determine the recommendation to be taken in the best interests of the child, the family, and the community. The emphasis of intake is on diversion and the least restrictive available services.

Intake and assessment information should guide decisions made by:

- Case Managers;
- Commitment Managers;
- Prosecuting Attorneys;
- Public Defenders;
- Judges;
- Program Providers;
- Educators;
- Overlay Service Providers; and
- Aftercare Providers.

<sup>2</sup> This process is described in detail in Appendix 2.

**Hearings by the Court.** If a delinquency petition is filed, the first court appearance is an arraignment hearing. At this hearing, the youth may enter a plea of guilty or not guilty. When a plea of not guilty is entered an adjudicatory hearing is scheduled. The judge hears the evidence and determines the guilt or innocence of the youth. If the youth is found guilty, the case may be disposed at that time, or a disposition hearing may be scheduled. The statute provides that within a reasonable period prior to this hearing, all of the information gathered during the intake investigation is combined in a pre-disposition report (PDR) that is submitted to court, state attorney, youth's attorney, youth and parent. The court may order community sanctions or may commit the youth to the Department.

#### JJAB Finding

In practice, prosecutors and judges deal with heavy caseloads, and the realities of pleadings, plea-bargains and prosecutorial and judicial discretion sometimes result in the disposition of a case before the assessment process can be completed.

**Commitment Staffing and Compiling the Commitment Packet.** If the decision is made to commit the youth, a multi-disciplinary commitment staffing is scheduled. The district commitment manager, the case manager, the youth, parents or guardians, the youth's attorney, a representative of the state attorney's office, school officials, mental health and substance abuse professionals and other individuals with knowledge of the youth may attend the staffing. The purpose of the staffing is to decide, based on information available through the assessment and classification process, whether the youth's risk factors and service needs can best be addressed by remaining in the home and community or placement in a program outside the home. In the case of juveniles being committed by the court, the staffing serves to help determine which program within the restrictiveness level would best serve the youth's needs. A written summary is completed by the commitment manager and the recommendation and rationale is included in the PDR or becomes a part of the commitment packet. The commitment packet should contain the information necessary to guide treatment and aftercare, and should accompany the youth through the system.

#### JJAB Finding

Juveniles sometimes arrive at programs with an incomplete commitment packet. How frequently and in how many districts this occurs has not been documented. In some cases, however, assessment information arrives late, or may not arrive at all, causing treatment delays while assessments are completed by the provider.

#### JJAB Finding

A persistent waiting list along with a lack of specialized beds poses a challenge to appropriate placement and treatment.

**Assignment Centers.** The Legislature authorized the establishment of juvenile assignment centers, designed as maximum security residential facilities to hold moderate- to maximum-risk juveniles awaiting placement. Assignment centers were designed to compile and review all existing records, tests and assessments, and administer additional assessments as needed. They were intended to ensure that all commitment information is complete and provided to receiving programs.

**Transmission of Commitment Packets.** The commitment packet containing the results of all the information compiled through the assessment and classification process is given to the commitment program, and passed among programs as the juvenile is transferred through to aftercare. A frequent concern voiced by providers of services and DJJ staff was the difficulty in obtaining these materials at first placement or from previous programs.

**Use of Assessment and Classification**

**Information.** Although a great deal of effort is expended to develop accurate information about the needs and risks posed by juvenile offenders, this information is not always fully utilized in the decision-making process. At every stage in the process, the JJAB has heard and seen evidence that decisions are made without the full benefit of this information. Some cases have been disposed before the PDR has been developed. Department of Juvenile Justice personnel report that some of the screening instruments used in the assessment process are not considered valid or useful by those who are supposed to use them. The results are often set aside. During site visits, the JJAB has heard from providers that juveniles arrive at programs without complete commitment packets, and that in spite of assessment through the assignment center, juveniles are not always placed according to recommendations.

Although the cost and timing of the assignment center concept remains controversial among stakeholders and policy makers, several positive effects were found. In over 90% of cases surveyed by the DJJ, the commitment programs receiving these juveniles felt they were appropriately placed, and that the information received by them about the juvenile was complete and adequate to their needs.<sup>3</sup> The strong positive response to the service provided by the assignment center is an indicator of widespread dissatisfaction with the performance of the present system.

## PLACING YOUTH IN ACCORD WITH NEEDS AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Intake, assessment and classification processes should result in placements for youth that most closely meet their treatment needs and the risks posed for public safety. When a youth is referred to the DJJ, those who will make important decisions have access to substantial information about that youth's prior involvement in the juvenile justice system. That information includes the number and nature of prior crimes for which a youth has been adjudicated, and the number of prior commitments and placements in DJJ programs.

Each successive step in the continuum represents increasing restrictions of movement and freedom. Generally, those restrictions as well as lengths of stay tend to increase from diversion to intervention to commitment, and with higher levels within commitment. At higher commitment (restrictiveness) levels, programs also tend to grow larger and more institutional in character. Taken together, these features tend to make high- and maximum-risk commitments more punitive as well as restrictive.

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<sup>3</sup> Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (1997). *Manatee Assignment Center at a Glance* (Management Report Number 53). Tallahassee, FL: Bureau of Data and Research, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice.

Given these characteristics of juvenile justice programs, and the purposes for which assessments and classification are done, clear differences should appear between youth placed at different restrictiveness levels in terms of the seriousness of their offenses and delinquency histories, as well as such factors as age and needs for treatment. This section examines data about youth released from delinquency programs in FY 1995-96, comparing youth released from different program components, from different restrictiveness levels within commitment, and from different program types within restrictiveness levels.

As noted in the earlier tables, the range of costs of serving youth in different components of the juvenile justice system varies widely:

- Diversion      under \$300
- Level 2        \$1,700 to \$20,000
- Level 4        \$1,550 to \$14,000
- Level 6        \$5,500 to \$35,000
- Level 8        \$8,000 to \$60,000
- Level 10      Up to \$140,000

## Across Major Program Components

Youth released from diversion and intervention programs should be expected to have delinquency offenses and histories that are less serious than those released from commitment programs. Within commitment programs, those released from Level 2 should have less serious offenses and histories than those released from other levels. Those released from Levels 8 and 10 should show the most serious offenses and histories.

Research indicates that youth served in deeper-end programs should be slightly older and disproportionately male. Years of research shows growing racial disparities in the composition of populations of youth placed in more secure programs. There is no satisfactory research-based explanation for the over-representation of minorities.

## Demographics

For youth released during FY 95-96, gender and racial differences follow well-established patterns. With respect to age, youth released from the most secure programs – boot camps, Level 8 and Level 10 programs – tend to be a few months older, on average, than youth released from other programs.

## Demographics: Youth Released, FY 1995-96

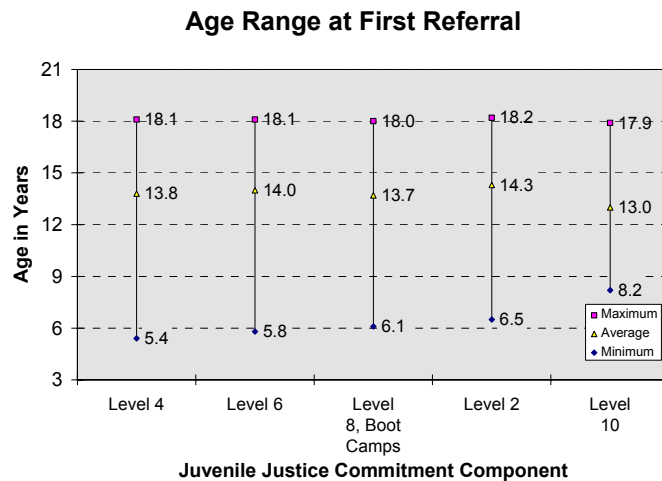
System Component	Average Age at First Referral	Average Age at Entry	Percent Male	Percent Non-White
Florida Population, <sup>1</sup> 10-17	n.a.	n.a.	51%	24%
CINS/FINS (FL Network)	n.a.	n.a.	50%	36%
Intervention – JASP	n.a.	15.2	70%	36%
Community Control	n.a.	15.8	78%	41%
Level 2	14.3	15.9	82%	50%
Level 4	13.8	15.4	88%	50%
Level 6	14.0	15.9	89%	50%
Level 8, Boot Camps	13.7	16.2	94%	59%
Level 10 <sup>2</sup>	13.0	16.2	100%	58%

<sup>1</sup>Source: Division of Economic and Demographic Research, Florida Legislature, 1998

<sup>2</sup>There has never been a Level 10 program for females.

The average, however, cannot describe the range. The average age at entry in JASP is 15.2, but the range varies from 4.2 to 19.7. Although the table above displays increases in average age as the restrictiveness level increases, the graphs which follow reveal the ranges in age, from the widest to the narrowest range.

The most striking data about ages are the minimum ages at first referral and at entry to the program. First exposure to the juvenile justice system at ages as young as four through eight years old is very early. The phenomenon of children younger than 10 years who are placed in intervention programs is not new: evaluations of JASP since 1989 have shown youth younger than 10 years of age present in every district, with state totals of from 2% to 2.5% of the caseload being children younger than 10 years. Although fewer in number and a small percent of the caseload, every district except one also reported children younger than 10 years released from community control in FY 1995-96. In five districts, the minimum age was less than seven years.



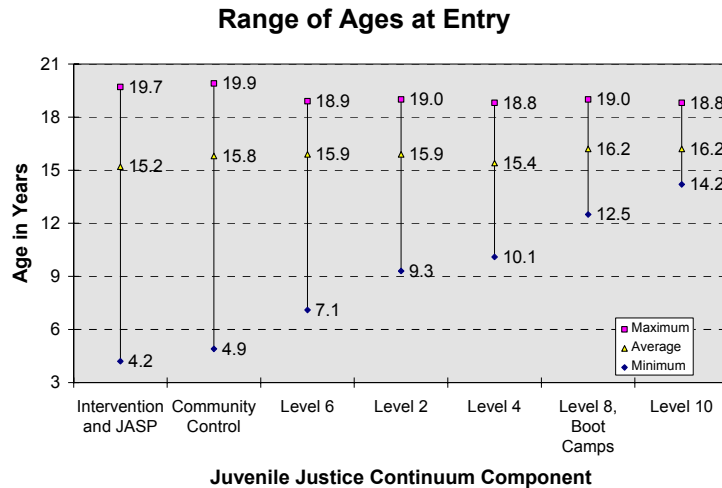
One frequently proposed explanation for finding young children in the juvenile justice system is data entry errors. Although there are many problems with the integrity of the data entered into and maintained in the CIS, both JJAB and DJJ research staff are diligent in their efforts to correct errors or minimize their effects. After careful testing of programming and confirmation of results

through telephone interviews, ample reasons remain for the belief that young children continue to be found in Florida's juvenile justice system.

In order to better understand the phenomenon of very young children served in the juvenile justice system, JJAB staff contacted DJJ field staff and providers of JASP services in a number of districts from around the state, from southeast Florida to the panhandle. Some noted that children under age six years are found in JASP or community control, but only rarely. Many of those contacted expressed surprise, even doubt, that four- or five-year-olds would be served in JASP or community control. Virtually everyone contacted, however, indicated that children from ages six to eight years could be found in the juvenile justice system, at least in JASP programs. Furthermore, these contacts indicated that children ages six to eight years should be expected to be found in JASP programs throughout the state. Offenses for which these youngsters might be arrested were reported to be predominantly arson and sex offenses.

The federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention released a report in September 1997 on the "youngest" juvenile offenders (*The Youngest Delinquents: Offenders Under Age 15*, by Jeffrey A. Butts and Howard N. Snyder). These authors considered delinquent youth younger than 15 years to be "young," and those age 12 years and younger, "youngest." Consequently, they did not break out any data for youth under age 10 years. Those 12 years and younger accounted for 9% of juvenile arrests in 1995. Among those 12 years and younger, arrests for arson, sex offenses and vandalism were noted as disproportionately representing arrests of the youngest offenders.

In a report issued twenty years ago (February 8, 1978), an Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Children and Youth of the Florida House of Representatives Committee on Health and Rehabilitative Services found that many juvenile justice professionals supported the establishment of a minimum age to apply for juvenile court jurisdiction. The report stated that six states had established a minimum age, which for four of those six was 10 years old. The National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ Snapshot, September 1997) reported that as of 1997, 15 states specify a minimum age for delinquency jurisdiction. In eleven of those states, that age is 10 years old. Those states represent a wide range



of political cultures and histories, including such diverse states as Texas, Louisiana, Vermont, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

The DJJ and the Legislature typically use estimates of Florida's population of youth from ages 10 through 17 years as the population base for forecasting future potential needs for delinquency programs. Children under age 10 years usually are not thought of in terms of juvenile crime and delinquency services. Services available under the CINS/FINS program cannot, by law, be provided to youth who have open delinquency or dependency cases. CINS/FINS services often are aimed at adolescents who run away, are ungovernable or truant. These problems are not as likely to be found in those youth less than 10 years of age. Without a report of alleged abuse or neglect, staff in DCF cannot initiate a child protective investigation and frequently will have no basis for providing services to families with young children who are in trouble with the law. For those families who have children less than 10 years of age who get into trouble with the law, delinquency services may be the only way in which to get some help. Delinquency services generally are not tailored to the special developmental requirements of young children, nor do they engage families in training about parenting for young children.

Delinquency interventions such as JASP and community control tend to focus on guidance, supervision and discipline – ensuring that the consequences incurred for offensive behavior are fully carried out. For adolescents who have the ability to reason abstractly and develop their own moral logic, these interventions are appropriate. Research in child development shows that most children age 10 and younger have significant limitations in their capacity to reason logically. In the case of children younger than seven or eight years, those limitations are so extensive that the interventions and methods typical of JASP and community control are neither appropriate nor effective. Interventions with younger children must examine family dynamics and build the capacity of parents and other significant adults to provide effective guidance, support and control for these youngsters.

#### **JJAB Finding**

Florida has set no minimum age of jurisdiction for juvenile delinquency courts.

Delinquency programs do not seem to be well suited to serving very young children, yet CINS/FINS and child protection services currently are out of reach for families with young children who are in trouble with the law.

### 4000 Years of Children, Crime and the Law

The National Center on Juvenile Justice recently observed that for more than 4,000 years, the law has treated young offenders differently than adults accused of crimes. Under both Roman Civil Law and Canon Law, seven years was the youngest age at which responsibility for criminal acts was possible. Between the ages of seven and fourteen there was a rebuttable presumption that a child was incapable of committing a crime. (NCJJ *Snapshot*, September, 1997). In 1829, Florida's territorial legislature enacted a law adopting the common law of England as it existed on July 4, 1776, and thus this presumption became a part of the law of Florida.<sup>4</sup>

The first constitutionally authorized juvenile courts were created in Florida in 1950,<sup>5</sup> and the next year a new Chapter 39, FLA. STAT., governing juvenile court proceedings, was enacted by the Legislature.<sup>6</sup> It was not until 1976 that the Florida Supreme Court ruled that the common law presumption of incapacity was not applicable to juveniles charged with acts of delinquency.<sup>7</sup> The Court's decision relied on Article I, § 15(b), of the Florida Constitution of 1885, which provided that a juvenile may be charged with a violation of law as an act of delinquency instead of a crime, and may be tried without a jury or other requirements applicable to criminal cases. The court concluded that the Legislature did not intend for the common law presumption concerning "crimes" to be applicable to proceedings involving "acts of delinquency." The common law presumption was inappropriate in juvenile proceedings, the court said, because its application would frustrate the remedial purposes of the Legislature, and would have the effect of denying to the children most in need, the care and treatment that is available to them in the delinquency system.<sup>8</sup>

At the time of the Supreme Court decision in 1976, the remedial care and treatment of juveniles was provided by the newly reorganized Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services with jurisdiction of matters relating to delinquency, dependency, mental health, alcohol and substance abuse treatment services, children's medical services, public health, and numerous other matters. Even with all of these services under one roof, there was competition among service components for scarce resources necessary to treat young children with potentially expensive treatment needs. In the past the availability of resources to meet service needs was, and still is, often dictated by the door through which a young child enters the system. A "Medicaid" child, or a "children's mental health" child might have greater access to treatment resources than a "delinquent" child. The Legislature's dissatisfaction with the allocation of resources for delinquent youth led to the separation of dependency and delinquency services into two programs in 1993, and to the creation of a separate Department of Juvenile Justice in 1994.

With the reorganization of social services and the delinquency system into a multitude of independent state agencies, it may be time to reconsider the efficiency and effectiveness of addressing the needs of very young offenders. When a young child commits an act that would be a crime if committed by an adult, attention must be paid to the child and family as well as the victim. Delinquency programs do not seem to be well suited to serving the needs of very young children. Currently, CINS/FINS and child protection services are beyond the reach of families with young children who are in trouble with the law. Because dealing effectively with young offenders involves questions of law, policy, and funding that cross the jurisdictional boundaries of several state agencies, an interim study of the issues by the Legislature may be the best approach.

<sup>4</sup> Section 2.01, FLA. STAT. (1997). *Also see, State v. D.H.*, 340 So. 2d 1163 (1976).

<sup>5</sup> Art. I, § 15, FLA. CONST. (1885).

<sup>6</sup> Chapter 39, FLA. STAT. (1951)

<sup>7</sup> *State v. D.H.*, 340 So. 2d 1163 (1976).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*, at 1166.



### Referral and Placement Histories

Information on the referral and placement histories of youth released from delinquency programs should reflect an increasing severity of offenses and seriousness of offense histories for those released from deeper-end programs. For prevention and intervention programs, adjudicated delinquency referrals is the only historical data available. The percentage of youth who had a prior adjudicated delinquency referral is smaller among youth released from CINS/FINS programs (16%) than among those released from JASP (26%) and from community control (60+%). More detailed information on prior histories is available for youth released from commitment programs.

#### Referral History, Youth Released from Commitment Programs

Restrictiveness Level	Average Cases	Average Prior Sanctioned Offenses		Average Indicators of Offense Seriousness	
		Violent Offenses	Property Offenses	Seriousness Index*	Commitment Offense*
Level 2	4.3	0.5	1.6	19.5	3.8
Level 4	4.7	0.4	1.8	20.7	3.7
Level 6	5.9	0.6	2.4	28.9	4.3
Level 8, Boot Camps	7.9	1.0	4.2	45.0	5.1
Level 10	10.4	1.5	6.0	61.6	5.8

\*Seriousness is measured as: 8 for a violent felony, 5 for a property or other felony, 2 for a misdemeanor, and 1 for an "other delinquency" offense. The index combines offense seriousness scores for each offense for which the youth was adjudicated, or adjudication was withheld, prior to the placement date.

**Measuring Seriousness.** The seriousness measurement was developed by the Board, the DJJ and providers, for the purpose of consistency in reporting. Other scoring schemes could be created or tested. Nonetheless, it clearly weights seriousness scores in a rational way.

On average, youth released from high-level programs have more serious offenses and histories than youth released from lower-level programs. There is little difference between Levels 2 and 4. Many youth released from lower-level commitments (2 and 4) show substantial delinquency histories.

Youth released averaged more than four previous delinquency cases and seriousness index scores of about 20. However, averages can mislead. They do not describe variation. Variation is important for understanding how well the levels differentiate among individual offenders. Youth are classified and placed within the restrictiveness levels on the basis of risk to public safety. The best available indicator of that risk are the seriousness of the commitment offense and the seriousness index.

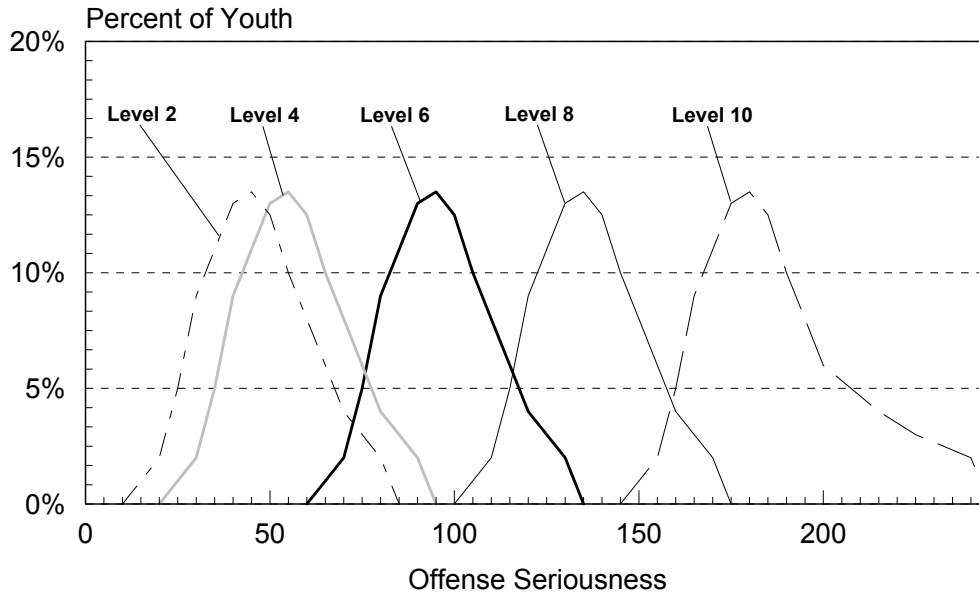
The Seriousness Index scored adjudicated offenses as follows: 8 for a violent felony, 5 for a property or other felony, 2 for a misdemeanor and 1 for an "other delinquency" offense. These scores were summed for each individual, and the average score for each program was obtained.

When these two are summed, they may be used as a single seriousness score which can then be plotted on a graph. Such a graph depicts variation in a way a simple average cannot.

Ideally, under a system of increasingly restrictive levels, youth who offend with greater frequency and severity would be expected to be found in more restrictive placements. The figure which follows displays a hypothetical graph of what this ideal might be expected to look like.

### Expected Pattern of Offense Seriousness

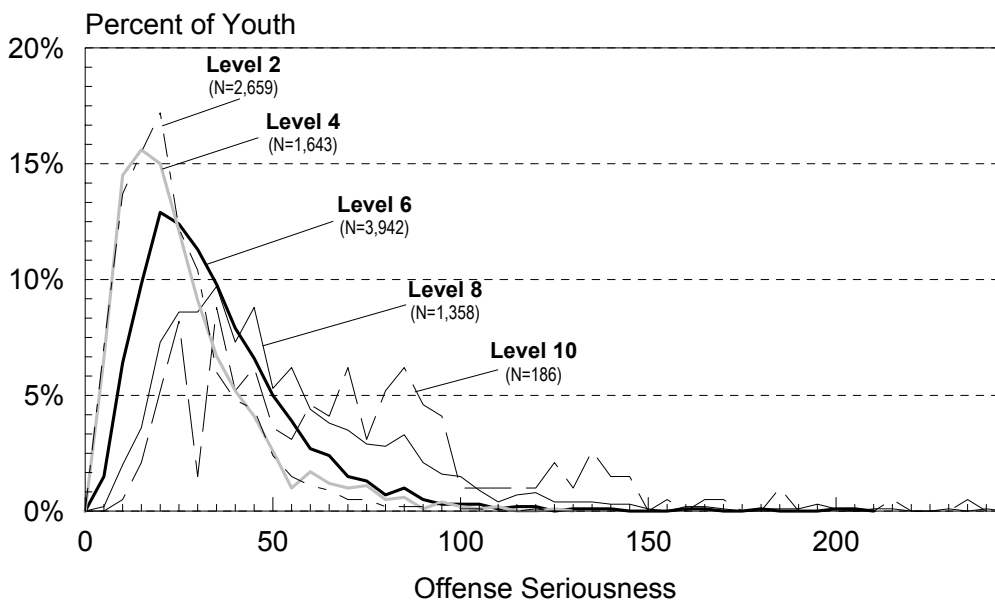
Levels 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10



The actual distribution of scores looks quite different. The graph which follows suggests that the commitment levels do not differentiate very well on the basis of the seriousness score.

### Distribution of Offense Seriousness Juveniles Released FY 1995-96

Levels 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10



**Overlap and Averages.** Although the averages increase with each successive level, the graph indicates that these juveniles do not seem to differ dramatically. In the distribution of seriousness scores across levels, a few youth in each level have very high scores. The maximum scores in each level exceed 200, in fact. In the higher levels, relatively more youth have very high scores. Those high scores make the average seriousness scores different across levels, even though most youth in each level have scores under 50.

Averages can be misleading. For example, the average of the numbers 3, 4, and 5 is 4. Change the 5 to 21, however, and the average becomes 8. That change in a single value, for the highest measurement taken, doubled the average.

**Differences among Judicial Circuits.** Differences among judicial circuits cannot explain the overlaps identified. When seriousness scores for each restrictiveness level were examined for each judicial circuit, some variations were evident among the circuits, but substantial overlaps still existed across levels.

The seriousness scores themselves varied substantially among circuits. The Second Judicial Circuit (Leon County and surrounding areas) and the Seventeenth Circuit (Broward County) show the highest seriousness scores in the state, while Fourth Circuit (Duval County and surrounding areas), the Fourteenth Circuit (Bay County and surrounding areas) and the Fifteenth Circuit (Palm Beach County) had the lowest seriousness scores. These differences among circuits raise the question of whether the seriousness scores might reflect differences among state attorneys in the charges they file against delinquent youth.

Other measures of delinquency history might be more useful. Measures such as the number of prior placements and number of prior commitments may reflect some aspect of judicial decision making (commitments) and DJJ actions (placements) in addition to state attorneys' influences in terms of the charges filed. Some youth in each circuit who had been released from Level 8 and 10 programs had no prior placements and no prior commitments. For most circuits, from 40% to 60% of these youth had no prior commitment, and from about 25% to 33% of these youth had no prior placements.

**JJAB Finding**

Committed youth released from different levels in FY 1995-96 had substantially similar offenses and offense histories. A greater proportion of those youth who had very serious histories were released from higher levels – but many in more restrictive placements had no prior placements and commitments, while many in less restrictive placements had prior placements or commitments. The Board does not have access to all the information that judges use when committing a youth, including any aggravating or mitigating factors. But the overlap among youths' delinquency offenses and histories across levels, when considered with the costs for serving youth that grow substantially across levels, lends added weight to concerns about the use and reliability of assessment and classification instruments and processes.

## Comparisons Between Program Types

JJAB staff also examined possible differences among youth placed in different program types within levels. These analyses serve two purposes. First, while a judge decides the restrictiveness level, the DJJ determines specific placements within levels.

Differentiation among youth within levels reveals something about how the department uses those resources. Second, differences among youth in various types of programs may argue against making particular outcome comparisons between programs in the same level, or for making comparisons between programs in different levels.

The following tables present comparisons among selected types of commitment programs. The data and comparisons that are selected here are those that show most clearly the differentiation among youth released from the programs within levels reported. These tables do not show all the data that were examined.

### Level 2 Programs

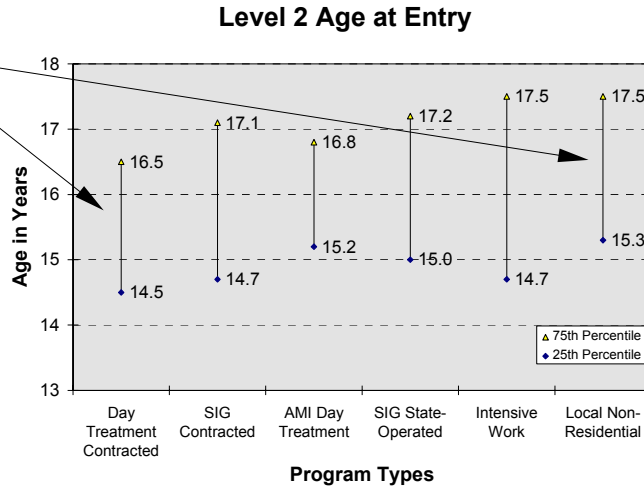
Program	Percent of Youth With Prior	
	Felonies	Placements
SIG Contracted	48.3	16.6
AMI Day Treatment	54.0	26.5
SIG State-Operated	59.1	33.4
Intensive Work	63.8	25.9
Local Non-Residential	64.9	26.7
Day Treatment Contracted	65.5	34.2

- Smaller percentages of youth released from contracted SIGs had prior felonies and prior placements than those released from state-operated SIGs.
- Smaller percentages of youth released from AMI Day Treatment had prior felonies and prior placements than those released from Contracted Day Treatment.

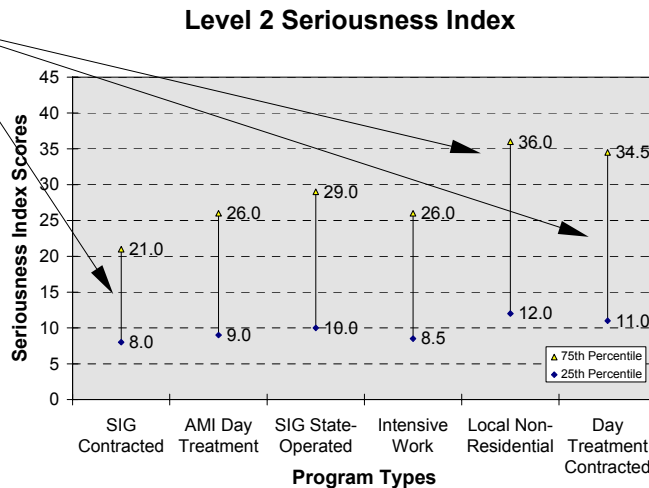
Another way to illustrate the distribution of any set of data is to show the range spanned between the 25th and 75th percentiles. This range is called the mid-range, and it is the range within which the middle half of the data can be found.

These mid-range charts quickly show important differences in some comparisons as well as similarities in others. For example, consider the mid-range charts for selected Level 2 program types.

- Youth released from contracted day treatment generally appear to be a little younger than those released from other programs, and those released from local non-residential programs are a little older.

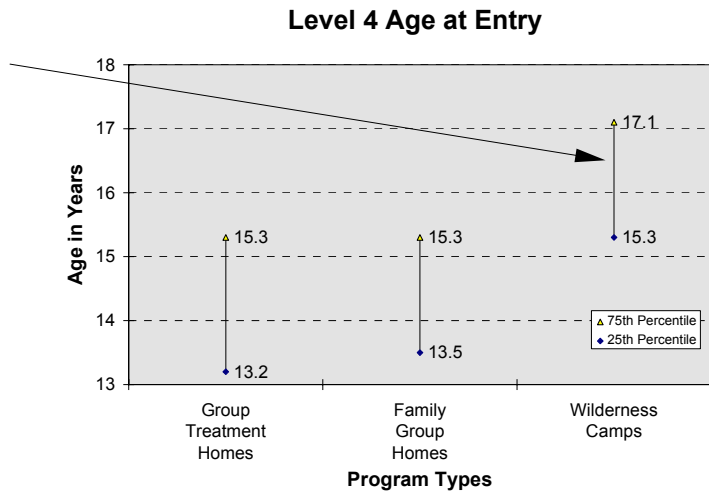


- Youth released from SIG contracted programs have lower seriousness scores than do youth released from local non-residential and contracted day treatment programs.

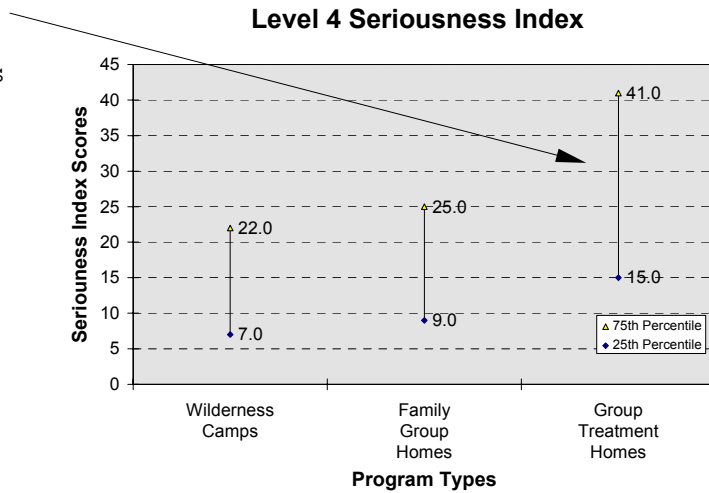


Outcome-based comparisons between contracted and state-operated SIGs, and between AMI day treatment and contracted day treatment, should be made only with caution, because of apparent differences in seriousness scores for the youth released from each program type.

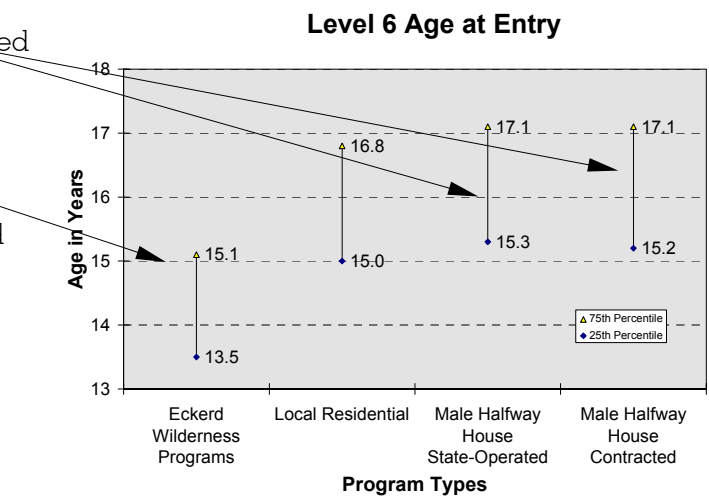
- Youth released from Wilderness Camps had the highest average age among Level 4 programs.



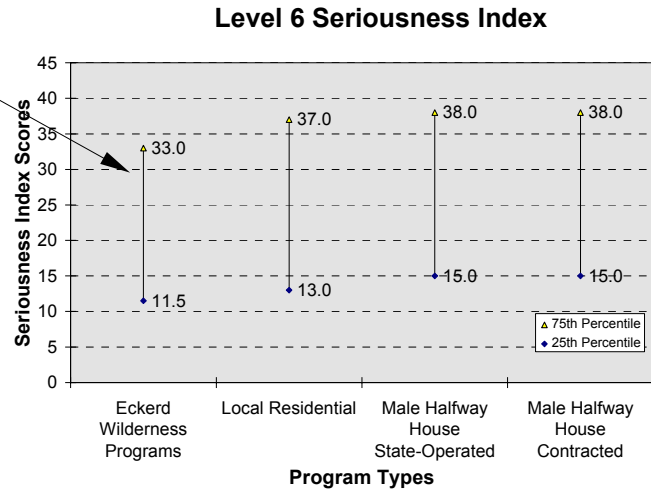
- Youth released from Group Treatment Homes had the highest average seriousness index scores among Level 4 programs.



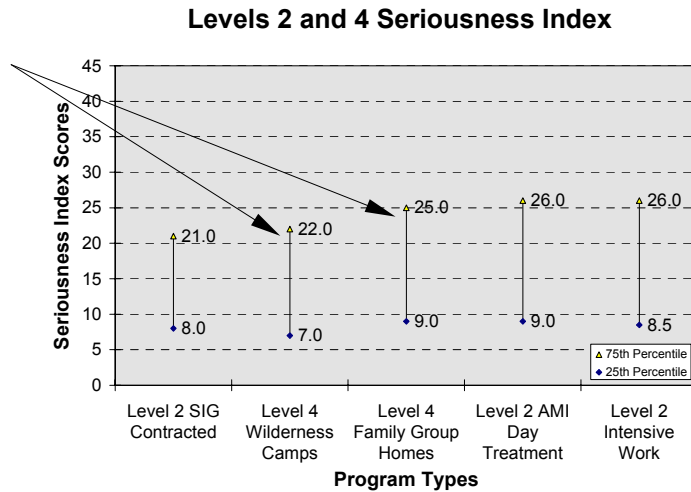
- Youth released from contracted and state-operated halfway houses are virtually identical.
- Youth released from Eckerd Wilderness Camps were younger than those released from any other Level 6 program.



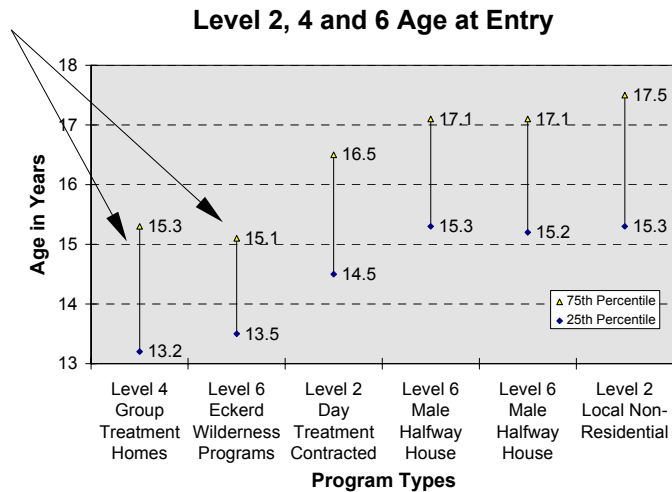
- Youth released from Eckerd Wilderness Camps had lower average seriousness index scores than those released from any other Level 6 program.



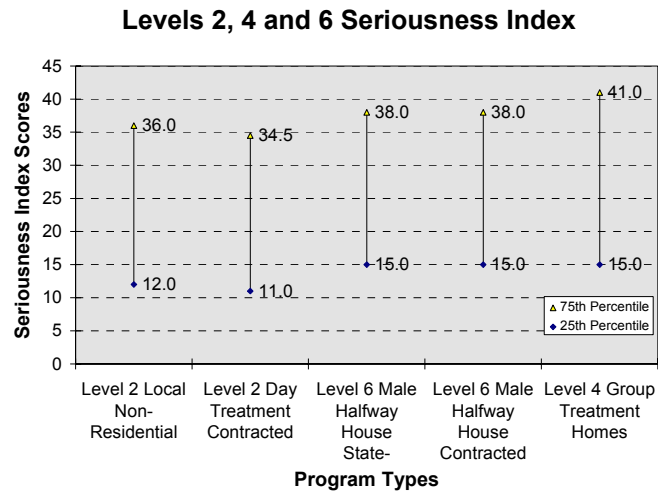
- Youth released from Wilderness Camps and Family Group Homes resembled those released from some Level 2 programs.



- On the basis of the age at entry to the program, Level 4 Group Treatment Homes and Level 6 Eckerd Wilderness Programs may be compared.



- Based on seriousness index scores, Level 2 Local Non-Residential, contracted Day Treatment programs and Level 4 Group Treatment Homes may warrant comparison with Level 6 Halfway Houses.



Some program types stand out for special attention in the analyses of program outputs and outcomes in Volume II of this report. Among these are the three main Level 4 program types and the Level 6 Eckerd Wilderness Camp programs.

The primary purpose of the intake, classification and assessment process is to determine risk to public safety and needs for treatment. On the basis of this information, committed juveniles are classified by risk and placed in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their needs. There are presently over 30 distinguishable program types or models within the five restrictiveness levels of the commitment continuum. It is not unreasonable to expect that juveniles placed in any one program would be more similar than different with regard to demographic and offense characteristics. This logic also applies to juveniles classified together at any of the five levels of restrictiveness.

The findings of this study may indicate that commitment managers informally compensate for weaknesses in the classification system. While this may be a commendable practice, the differences in what it costs to treat juveniles classified and placed at different restrictiveness levels makes it clear that tuning the intake, assessment and classification process may yield large long-term savings as well as better outcomes.

The findings of this study suggest that comparisons of all programs within a single restrictiveness level may not be appropriate. The juveniles within particular program types may not be similar enough to support the comparisons. In other cases, juveniles in programs at different restrictiveness levels are similar, and comparisons can be made in spite of the difference in classification.



## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this report, the Juvenile Justice Advisory Board has made the recommendations which follow. These recommendations are intended to stimulate further development of research-based prevention efforts, improve the process of classification and placement of juveniles within commitment programs, increase the level of consistency in program performance within each treatment model found in the continuum, and to increase the level of accountability across the entire continuum of juvenile justice programs and services.

The Advisory Board is concerned about the following:

- Evidence that very young children are being arrested and processed in a juvenile justice system that does not demonstrate the capacity to work effectively with the families of these children, while the agency that can more appropriately serve these young children and their families appears to be unable or unwilling.
- The demographic, racial and ethnic composition of youth served in DJJ prevention programs do not reflect the composition of youth who enter the delinquency system, and especially of youth found in the most restrictive settings.
- Evidence that disposition decisions are made frequently, if not routinely, without the benefit of information about the youth that should be contained in a predisposition report, and that such reports are routinely prepared on a *pro forma* basis after disposition decisions have already been made;
- The continued use by the DJJ of an instrument to assess youth's security risks and treatment needs in the face of long-standing evidence that its own staff, by virtue of frequently overriding the results from the use of that instrument, do not find the instrument to be useful for its intended purpose;
- The criteria used to recommend, and to decide, the disposition of youth who are adjudicated delinquent, particularly those committed to residential placements, when the costs of serving youth vary so widely across service components and commitment levels; and
- The integrity and reliability of the data available to support placement, service planning, program management and outcome evaluation, and the readiness of DJJ staff to competently use the new JJIS.

### Very Young Children in the Delinquency System

Children younger than 10 years old sometimes commit acts that would be considered crimes when committed by older youth or adults. Children of these ages have cognitive and emotional limitations. The families must therefore be deeply involved in resolving the incident and making restitution to the victim. The ability of the family to exercise appropriate guidance and supervision of the child also must be assessed and supported. Such young children and their families may not be served well through a juvenile justice system designed to intervene with adolescents.

Nevertheless, 300 to 600 very young children enter the state's juvenile justice system every year. Many of these young children are referred for arson and sex offenses, which are serious risks to public safety. Because of the risk to public safety and the limitations of such children, effective family-focused interventions are needed. Such interventions should:

- Assess the child and the family environment, including siblings;
- Determine whether the behavior is occasional or part of a larger negative behavior pattern of multiple problems in multiple settings, through consultation with parents, teachers and other care givers;
- Involvement of the parents as the primary focus of planning and implementation of any intervention;
- Use a team approach with those who provide care and supervision of the child in the settings where the child spends the most time, such as the home, the school and daycare; and
- Strengthen parenting techniques and provide counseling and education for parents appropriate to their needs.

It is apparent that the needs of very young children fall somewhere in between the primary missions of the Department of Juvenile Justice and the Department of Children and Family Services. The Legislature needs better information on how to meet the needs of this unique population. Any response must consider the need for public safety, the rights of victims to restitution, the effectiveness and cost of the services.

**Recommendation to the Legislature:** *In view of the significant governmental reorganization that has occurred in recent years, the Legislature should reconsider its policy goals and strategies for addressing the problems associated with families and their children 10 years of age and younger who have been referred to the juvenile justice system for behavior that would be a crime if committed by an adult. Specifically, the Senate and House of Representatives should independently, or jointly, consider a multi-disciplinary, cross-jurisdictional interim study of the legal, policy, funding and service delivery issues associated with these young children and their families. The interim study should draw upon the resources of the Legislature, including the JJAB, DJJ, DCF, and DH, and their respective services providers, along with other executive branch agencies, as needed. The interim project report should be complete not later than December 31, 1998, and at a minimum should include findings and recommendations with respect to the following:*

- *The number and age of children 10 years of age and younger who have committed crimes, and the types of offenses they have committed in the past five years;*
- *Descriptions of the jurisdiction and funding of every state agency as well as the services that each currently provides to these children and their families*

- *Descriptions of the means by which the treatment and rehabilitative needs of these children and their families are assessed and service planning is coordinated;*
- *An assessment of the appropriateness of current services with respect to the physical, intellectual and emotional development of these children;*
- *Descriptions of the means by which the future risks that these children pose to their victims or the public in general are assessed;*
- *An assessment of the adequacy of the current statutory framework for effectively and efficiently addressing the needs of these children, and their families and victims;*
- *An assessment of the need for greater or lesser judicial involvement in the development and implementation of service plans for these families;*
- *Descriptions of the cooperative efforts between and among state agencies, if any, to address the needs of these children and their families and victims, and*
- *Recommendations for changes, if any, in substantive or fiscal policy in order to more effectively and efficiently address the needs of these children and their families and victims.*

**Recommendation to the Legislature:** *Based upon the content of the recommended interim study, the Legislature should appropriate funds for the development, implementation and evaluation of pilot projects for programs targeted at families and their children 10 years of age and younger who have been referred to the juvenile justice system as a result of behavior that would be a crime if committed by an adult. The goal of the pilot programs should be to implement age-appropriate programs designed to minimize the risk factors that contribute to the criminal behavior of young children and to strengthen the protective factors that can help prevent future criminal acts. Responsibility and resources for implementation of the pilot project and should be given to a public or private entity with substantial experience in delivering interventions that are most likely to achieve this goal efficiently through a high degree of inter-agency collaboration. The pilot projects should be funded for implementation during FY 1999-2000.*

## Minority Representation

In past years, the Board has recommended minority outreach in response to finding that the demographic, racial and ethnic composition of those youth served in the DJJ's prevention programs do not reflect the composition of youth who enter the delinquency system, and especially of youth found in the most restrictive settings. That disparity continues from prevention to maximum-security commitment placements. In its *1998 Prevention Outcome Report* (#98-002-OE), the Board recommended that the

department conduct a systematic analysis of the populations it serves in prevention programs as compared to other components of the juvenile justice system, by district and county. The Board reiterates and extends its recommendation.

**Recommendation to the DJJ:** *The department should systematically analyze the populations it serves, by district and by county, to compare especially the race, ethnicity and gender of youth served by prevention programs with the race, ethnicity and gender of those served in diversion, in intervention and in commitment programs – and in commitment programs, by commitment level.*

This analysis could help the department more effectively target its use of prevention, diversion and early intervention resources. In its earlier report, the Board also recommended that the department actively engage the District Juvenile Justice Boards and county Juvenile Justice Councils in focused, data-based planning for more effective use of prevention resources. That role for those boards and councils might be extended to include planning for more effective uses of diversion and early intervention resources.

## Predisposition Reports

Reports from the field suggest that, in many delinquency cases, disposition is made at arraignment. In part, this reflects the realities of court caseloads: cases that can be pled, to the satisfaction of prosecuting and defense attorneys, youth and their families need not take up more of the court's time and attention. For many youth, disposition at arraignment may make sense and represent an efficient use of judicial and state attorneys' resources. In those cases, it makes little sense to require department staff to complete a PDR that apparently has no useful function.

Predisposition Reports (PDRs), however, usually cannot be completed fully and provided to all parties for use in deciding the disposition of the case, until an adjudication has been made. State law requires that PDRs be completed for all cases disposed judicially. Many case managers find themselves completing PDRs after the fact, knowing that the report cannot influence the disposition decision.

**Recommendation to the Legislature:** *The Legislature should amend current law to eliminate the requirement for completing PDRs in all juvenile cases that are disposed judicially. In any juvenile case, however, the right of the juvenile, his or her parent(s) or guardian(s), the state attorney, or the defense attorney to request the preparation of a PDR prior to the entry of a disposition order must be retained. The law should provide that in all cases where it is requested, a complete PDR should be prepared and available for review by all parties at least 48 hours prior to the time of the disposition hearing. A disposition order that is entered in violation of this requirement should be made grounds for appeal by either the juvenile or the state.*

Questions may arise concerning the propriety or effectiveness of the practice of disposing cases at arraignment, especially if that becomes an overused procedure in one or more circuits relative to the practice in others. But those questions should be addressed apart from the issue of case managers' completing paperwork as

prescribed by department policy but without useful application. For youth who are disposed to Community Control or, as is the practice in some circuits, to JASP, disposition without the PDR may be acceptable. For youth who are to be committed to residential placements, full PDRs should be completed and used in making commitment and placement decisions. Effective use of the resources required in providing residential services, and their costs, demand full assessments for consideration by all involved in making these decision.

**Recommendation to the Legislature:** *The Legislature should amend current law to prohibit any disposition of a juvenile to a residential commitment placement unless a complete predisposition report (PDR) is prepared and available for review by all parties at least 48 hours prior to the time of the disposition hearing. The law should permit a court to waive the requirement of a PDR if a joint written motion for waiver is signed by the juvenile, the juvenile's parent or guardian, the juvenile's attorney and the prosecuting attorney. The law should require that in all cases where the PDR is waived prior to a disposition resulting in a residential commitment, the disposition order entered by the court include a specific finding that a joint written waiver was filed in the case. Finally, the law should provide that a disposition order that is entered in violation of these requirements is grounds for appeal by either the juvenile, the state, or the Department of Juvenile Justice.*

## **Validation of Screening and Assessment Instruments and Processes**

The Board has recommended in the past that the DJJ validate its instruments for screening and assessment. The Supervision Risk Classification Instrument (SRCI), in particular, is reported to be overruled routinely by case managers in recommending placement for juveniles referred to the department. Instruments that produce information that frequently is not used represent wasted effort. If the reasons for non-use can be related to weaknesses in the instrument itself, then the instrument should be revised or replaced; if not, the practice of how the instruments are used, and under what circumstances over-ruled, should be examined and revised.

Screening and assessment are essential to the effective functioning of the juvenile justice system. It is vitally important for all concerned to have confidence in the screenings and assessments that are done. It also is important for them to know that the information will be delivered in a timely manner to those who can use it, and that those who make decisions about the youth will make effective use of the screening and assessment information. The wide variations in the costs of serving youth at different commitment levels, and the absence of clear differentiation of youth released from different levels, heavily underscores the need to validate and use the assessment tools and processes that are available to the major decision makers in the juvenile justice system.

**Recommendation to the Legislature:** *The Legislature should require that the DJJ plan a comprehensive validation of its screening and assessment instruments, report that plan to the Legislature through scheduled briefings for appropriate committees and staff, and*

*periodically report progress in validating DJJ screening and assessment instruments and processes. The plan also should address an examination of how the information produced by these instruments is used, and by whom.*

## **Data Integrity**

In other work, and in past outcome evaluation reports, the Board has noted serious gaps in the data available for outcome evaluation, as well as problems of data integrity in the automated data bases upon which evaluations rest. The Board reiterates its general concerns about data availability and integrity, while specifically noting difficulties in uniquely and accurately identifying local resources used as commitment placements, and in identifying the full costs of providing services.

The JJIS is scheduled to become operational soon, and with it, the Board expects substantially improved information about youths' histories, families, placements and services obtained through the juvenile justice system, and outcomes achieved. But issues of data integrity must be addressed and kept in focus, if the JJIS is to succeed. The DJJ recently issued a notice to its district managers of a proposal to identify and use district staff to focus on issues of data integrity with respect to the conversion of data to, and the continued input of data into, the JJIS. The Board remains concerned that these steps may not be sufficient.

Data are entered into the CIS by data entry operators from paper records. Under the JJIS, DJJ workers and contractors will enter data directly. Because the data entry responsibilities shift from data entry operators to other staff who work directly with youth, those staff and their supervisors will require training in the use of the JJIS. Ongoing monitoring of the integrity of the data entered into the JJIS, and continuing training for staff who will use the JJIS, will be required.

The department's new information system, the JJIS, is intended to be an on-line, real-time information system that supports operations as well as program management. The Board looks forward, in the near future, to requesting and using data extracts for outcome evaluation sooner than the current schedule, which was set to accommodate lags in entry of data into the CIS. Instead of waiting until September (or later) for useful information from the department's data base, the Board envisions a future in which extracts within a few weeks after the close of the fiscal year – perhaps as early as mid-July – would be available for analyses. Unless the integrity of the data in the JJIS can be managed credibly, any use of the data maintained there – and particularly earlier uses of data distributed through the JJIS – will be subject to serious skepticism.

**Recommendation to the DJJ:** *The department should continue to emphasize the importance of data integrity in and for the JJIS. In its push to identify and use field staff to attend to matters of data integrity, the department should develop and implement a plan to periodically test the integrity (accuracy, completeness, and timeliness) of the data put into and maintained in the JJIS. The department should create a data integrity oversight unit to monitor the integrity of the data in the JJIS; identify data integrity problems, and their underlying causes; and develop, test and implement effective solutions.*

If the data integrity unit is to effectively ensure data integrity, then that unit should represent the full range of skills and perspectives of those who must use the JJIS. At a minimum, these users include DJJ staff from Data and Research, Programs and Planning, Operations, the Central Placement Authority and Quality Assurance.

## Cost Data

The Board has heard from many providers that DJJ rates or payments alone cannot keep their operations going. Funding for education (FEFP) and medical care (usually, Medicaid) are essential to the continued provision of delinquency services for most commitment programs. But the Board also notes that there is no full compilation and reporting of the costs of providing services to youth and their families through the juvenile justice system. The DJJ attempts to collect important additional cost information from contract service providers through its QA process, but even a cursory examination of the most recent QA report shows many and substantial gaps in the information gathered and reported. Without full information on the costs of service provision, cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness measures and analyses cannot be developed.

This theme was identified and reported in the Board's *1998 Prevention Outcome Report* and the same issues arise here: unless full information is available about the costs of providing services, no one can measure and analyze cost-efficiency or cost-effectiveness, and the Legislature cannot appropriately understand the role that its appropriations for the DJJ play in delivering the delinquency services that are provided.

**Recommendation to the Department:** *The DJJ should require all of its contract service providers to report periodically on the amount and source of all non-DJJ funds received for the placement or treatment of youth, and the client outcomes that are desired from the use of such funds. The quarterly reporting of such information should be a required deliverable in all DJJ provider contracts. All DJJ contracts should require annual independent audits, and the audit requirements should include an accounting of the amount and source of all non-DJJ funds received for the placement or treatment of youth. All DJJ contracts should also provide that the failure of a contracted provider to submit the required quarterly reports on funds received from third parties may trigger the requirement of an immediate independent audit of the provider.*

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# **APPENDICES**

# 1998 Outcome Evaluation Report Volume II

**Outcomes for Youth Released from Juvenile Justice  
Programs Between July 1, 1995 and June 30, 1996**



September 25, 1998

JJAB Doc. #98-003-OE

## **Juvenile Justice Accountability Board**

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# 1998 Outcome Evaluation Report

## Volume II

Outcomes for Youth Released from Juvenile Justice Programs  
Between July 1, 1995 and June 30, 1996

Juvenile Justice Accountability Board

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every year, the Juvenile Justice Accountability Board evaluates the outcomes of juvenile justice programs in Florida. This year's report, published in two volumes, focuses on youth who were released from programs during FY 1995-96. Volume I reported on the characteristics of youth released from program in FY 1995-96 and the department's intake, assessment, classification and placement processes. This volume, Volume II, evaluates program outputs and outcomes for those youth.

## Findings and Recommendations

Florida's annual investment in its juvenile justice programs buys a range of programs, from prevention through diversion, intervention and commitment. For the current year, that investment will reach almost \$600 million. Program costs vary widely, from well under \$300 per youth for some youth diverted to as much as \$139,000 per youth for the longest stay in the most restrictive setting. The effectiveness of these programs varies as do average lengths of stay. The Board continues to voice its concerns about incomplete or unreported data on program costs and about data integrity. The Board adds new recommendations concerning diversion programs and Level 4 commitment programs. The recommendations concerning Level 4 programs address both placement and program effectiveness.

### Program Costs

Information on program costs continues to be unavailable. Some providers do not report full costs to the department, as required in its QA process, and the department has yet to break out program-specific costs for programs such as community control that are operated under case management.

*The JJAB recommends full reporting of program costs, whether state-operated or contracted. For contracted programs, the department should require full reporting of costs as a matter of contract. For case management, break out costs for major programs and functions.*

### Diversion and Intervention

At least 50,000 youth referred to the department each year are diverted from judicial processing through programs other than JASP, the department's primary diversion program. Very little is known or reported about these youth and these programs. Furthermore, the department's responses to critical performance audits of the JASP and community control programs have blurred the distinction between diversion and intervention.

*The JJAB recommends more detailed reporting from the DJJ on these youth and these programs. The Board further recommends that the Legislature create a task force, including representatives from the DJJ, Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association, the Juvenile Section of the Florida Conference of Circuit Court Judges, and non-governmental providers of diversion services, to be staffed by the Board, to complete a description of a prevention and diversion continuum and of the youth most appropriately to be diverted.*



## **Effectiveness Concerns, Level 4 Programs**

Outcomes for youth released from Level 4 programs often are worse than outcomes from comparable Level 2 or Level 6 programs – and at comparable or greater costs. Youth released from Level 4 wilderness camps and from family group homes have offense seriousness histories comparable to youth released from Level 2 contracted special intensive groups and from AMI day treatment, respectively – except for their ages. Youth released from Level 4 group treatment homes show offense seriousness histories comparable to youth released from Level 6 halfway houses – except for their ages.

*The JJAB recommends that the DJJ examine and revise as needed its assessments and recommendations concerning Level 4 placements and, for those youth committed to Level 4 placements by the court, adapt lessons for treatment and for aftercare from those Level 2 and Level 6 programs that produce better results at comparable or lower costs.*

## **Data Integrity**

Problems of data integrity persist. These problems impede the Board's ability to fulfill its outcome evaluation mission. The Board commends DJJ's actions to focus attention on data integrity problems as it implements the new Juvenile Justice Information System, but more is required.

*The JJAB recommends heightened attention by the DJJ to specific problems in the department's development of its new Juvenile Justice Information System.*

The complete recommendations may be found on pages 31-35 of the report.

For complete copies of the Board's *1998 Outcome Evaluation Report, Volume I* (JJAB Doc. #98-001-OE) and *Volume II* (JJAB Doc. #98-003-OE), contact the Board's staff at (850) 922-4377.

## PREFACE

The Juvenile Justice Accountability Board has the statutory responsibility to "establish and operate a comprehensive system to annually measure and report program outcomes and effectiveness for each program operated by the Department of Juvenile Justice or operated by a provider under contract with the department." Section 985.401(4)(d), FLA. STAT.

The *1998 Outcome Evaluation Report* has two volumes. The first volume examined the intake, assessment, classification and placement of youth released from juvenile justice programs. This second volume examines DJJ programs ranging from intervention to maximum-risk services and aftercare. Both volumes should prove useful to the Legislature, the DJJ, providers and concerned citizens in their attempt to determine the most efficient and effective strategies for dealing with delinquent youth.

The Accountability Board compiled information from the Client Information System (CIS), which is used by both the Department of Children and Family Services and the Department of Juvenile Justice. DJJ staff are responsible for the entry of data concerning youth referred to the juvenile justice system. In cooperation with the DJJ Bureau of Data and Research, the Accountability Board compiled rates of recidivism based on data gathered from the CIS, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) and the Department of Corrections (DC). In addition, information was gathered through interviews at Accountability Board meetings and site visits. Along the way, important findings began to emerge which raised questions about everything from how juveniles were placed in restrictiveness levels and programs to how the usual indicators of performance such as average length of stay, program completion, provision of aftercare and overall rates of recidivism may be related. This report offers thought-provoking questions and discussions about the interpretation of the data.

The Juvenile Justice Accountability Board offers this second volume as a springboard to future discussions about how the Department of Juvenile Justice can and should go about maintaining public safety while providing effective care and treatment through a comprehensive continuum of prevention, intervention and commitment programs.

## PROGRAMS AND MEASURES

This year, Florida's investment in Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) programs almost reaches \$600 million. The Juvenile Justice Accountability Board (JJAB) reported its evaluation of outcomes from prevention programs separately; see *1998 Prevention Outcome Report* (JJAB Doc. #98-002-OE). Volume I of its *1998 Outcome Evaluation Report* (JJAB Doc. #98-001-OE) examined intake, assessment, classification and placement processes. When working as designed, those processes should effectively identify youths' and their families' needs and strengths and appropriately match services with youth and families. The services include a variety of diversions from the judicial system, interventions, and commitment for up to three years.

### Programs

Volume II analyzes program measures and client outcomes from:

- The Juvenile Alternative Services Program (JASP), the department's primary diversion program;
- Community control, the department's major intervention program;
- Commitment programs at all levels, from Level 2, non-residential, through Level 8, high-risk residential, including Boot Camps and Serious Habitual Offender Programs (SHOPs); and
- Aftercare services.

Too few youth were released from Level 10 in fiscal year (FY) 1995-96 for recidivism analyses. Florida's fiscal year is July 1 through June 30.

### Performance Measures

The outcome analyzed is recidivism for youth released from these programs during the FY 1995-96. Recidivism can be measured in three ways: re-referral or re-arrest, re-adjudication, and re-commitment for offenses committed within one year of release from a program. For the purposes of this report, re-adjudication is the recidivism measure that is analyzed. The Board's use of this measure is a result of work done with providers and with DJJ staff, under an interagency agreement with the DJJ to develop and use common definitions. See Appendix 1 for a more complete explanation of methodology, including recidivism measurements.

Program measures include such things as average length of stay, quality assurance ratings, completion rate, and estimated cost per youth served. For the JASP and community control programs, analyses are done at the DJJ district level. The DJJ operates community control through its case managers. The DJJ contracts for JASP services at the district level.

For commitment programs, program type or group is the unit of analysis. The data tables in Appendix 2 report data for specific JASP and commitment programs and providers.

## Trends in DJJ Caseloads and Funding

Delinquency referrals and petitions have risen steadily since FY 1990-91. After some growth through FY 1994-95, community control caseloads are a little smaller.

Commitments show steady growth since FY 1992-93.

In FY 1996-97, there were more than 170,000 referrals and more than 80,000 petitions filed. Community control caseloads numbered about 35,000 and commitments, about 11,000. (See the Board's *1998 Annual Report and Fact Book*, Doc. #98-001-JJAB.)

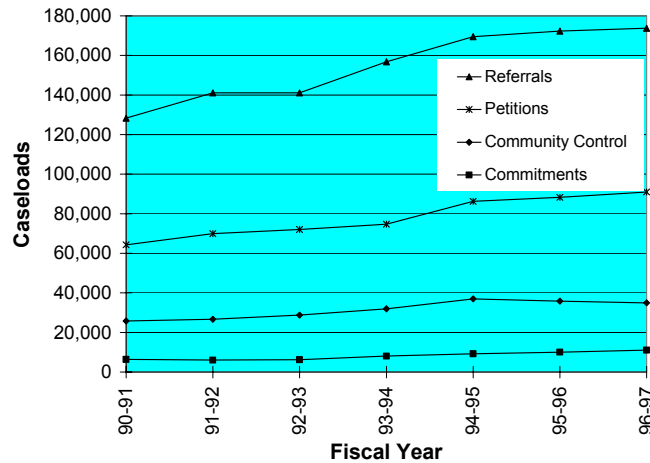
Referrals, petitions, cases and commitments do not represent numbers of individuals:

- Youth may be referred more than once in any given year, hence referrals overstate the number of youth referred;
- A single delinquency petition may collapse multiple referrals for the same youth, but youth may also face multiple petitions within a year, so although petitions are a good measure of workloads within the judicial system, they cannot be considered to be counts of youth or of referrals;
- A youth on community control may, within a one-year span, represent two or more cases when he or she exits community control, but within a short period of time is again placed on community control; and
- It is possible for the same youth to be committed, released, and re-committed within the span of a single year.

In FY 1995-96, for instance:

- About 105,000 youth were referred, accounting for about 171,000 delinquency referrals;
- Fewer than 22,000 youth were involved in more than 23,000 JASP cases;
- About 24,000 youth were supervised under community control, representing about 35,000 community control cases; and
- Almost 9,000 youth were involved in more than 10,000 commitments.

**Delinquency Caseload Trends**



From the JJAB's *1998 Annual Report and Fact Book (Juvenile Justice Glossary)*:

**Referral** – An allegation or count of criminal law violation... .

**Petition** – A request made to the court or to an official who has the authority to act on that request.

**Commit** – A juvenile court disposition placing an adjudicated child in a DJJ commitment program and authorizing the department to exercise active control over the child... .

To complicate accounting even further, the number of youth in each group may include some overlap across groups. A single youth for whom a JASP service episode was found could also be a youth who was committed later in the year, perhaps with a community control case open between JASP and commitment. Even so, these numbers suggest that a large number of youth either are found not guilty or are diverted from the judicial process of determining guilt and consequence by diversion other than JASP. JASP (22,000), community control (24,000) and commitment (9,000) account for at most 55,000 of the 105,000 youth referred. Therefore, at least 50,000 are found not guilty or are otherwise diverted.

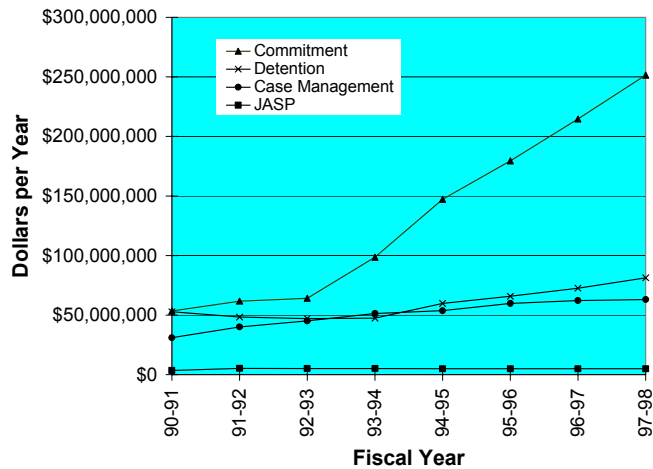
A similar analysis of the caseloads leads to the conclusion that many delinquency cases are diverted in ways other than through the provision of JASP. Commitments (10,000) plus community control caseloads (35,000) cannot account for the nearly 90,000 petitions filed. The 23,000 JASP cases do not fill that gap.

Large numbers of youth referred to the DJJ appear to be diverted from judicial processing of delinquency petitions through ways other than JASP. Little state funding supports these diversion alternatives, and the DJJ's automated information system collects and tracks little information on those who are diverted in ways other than through JASP.

Recent funding trends show substantial emphasis on commitment services, growth in detention and case management, and essentially level funding for JASP at a small fraction of the funding levels for case management, detention and commitment. The data shown in the Funding Trends chart are taken from the JJAB's *1998 Annual Report and Juvenile Justice Fact Book*.

The commitment funding trend line does not include funding for detention, case management or contracted case management. Because case managers also perform intake and assessment functions as well as community control supervision, case management funding was not included in commitment funding. JASP is not the only diversion available, and DJJ now funds some others, but JASP remains the department's major funding source for diversion.

**Funding Trends for Selected DJJ Programs**



## **DIVERSION AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMS**

Diversion provides alternatives to formal judicial involvement in the juvenile justice system. A wide range of local options exist for diverting youth alleged to have committed delinquent acts. Those options include programs such as Teen Court, Police Athletic League activities, civil citation, community arbitration and the Juvenile Alternative Services Program (JASP). Only JASP is implemented statewide, as a DJJ-funded program. It also is the only one for which automated information is available from the DJJ for use in evaluating outcomes from diversion programs. Many diversion programs, including JASP, are not specifically authorized or required in Florida statutes.

Participation in JASP typically requires restitution, community service, counseling, and home visits. It may also include such things as mentoring, vocational or educational training, urinalysis, victim mediation and awareness, and parent training. JASP is contracted through each DJJ district and a range of providers delivered the service around the state during FY 1995-96:

- The school board provided the service in at least one county;
- The Office of the State Attorney delivered JASP services in four judicial circuits;
- At least two private agencies delivered JASP services in some parts of the state, and
- One university-based JASP provider delivers the program in four DJJ districts.

Some DJJ districts have more than one JASP provider, and others only one. The designed length of stay for a JASP placement is 90 days.

A typical pathway into JASP occurs for youth with relatively minor offenses and history. The youth admits to the offense and with his or her family appears to be willing to participate in JASP. The DJJ case manager recommends JASP, and the prosecutor agrees. JASP requires voluntary participation by youth and their parents, although the prosecuting attorney retains the option to file a delinquency petition in juvenile court on the original charge for failure to complete the terms of a JASP placement.

Despite its diversion focus, JASP is not solely a diversion program. In most circuits, juvenile court judges at times order youth into JASP. The number of JASP cases that are ordered judicially is relatively small – about 4,000 of the 22,000 youth released from JASP for FY 1995-96 initially were placed under a judicial order.

The primary intervention program for which JASP is a diversionary alternative is community control, or juvenile probation. DJJ case managers monitor a youth's compliance with the requirements of the court-ordered community control placement while the youth remains at home. A judicial order to community control may include many of the services or requirements typically found for JASP. But unlike JASP, which is a program of voluntary participation, community control has the power of a court order. The order may include curfews, revocation or suspension of driver's licenses, and participation in specific programs or services, in addition to those features typically found in JASP, such as restitution, community service, and counseling.

A failure to comply with the terms of community control may trigger more serious consequences, including extended length of time under community control supervision,

increasingly severe requirements, or commitment to a residential placement under the DJJ's legal custody. The designed length of stay for community control is six months, twice that of a JASP placement.

Another intervention program authorized in statute is the Early Delinquency Intervention Program (EDIP).

Although funds have been appropriated for EDIP since FY 1991-92, it is a small program, with few youth served and released from the first pilot site in Duval County. EDIP has not been specifically evaluated by the JJAB.

Information provided to the JJAB during a site visit to EDIP in Jacksonville suggested that the cost per youth served in EDIP approaches \$5,000. JASP costs typically are less than \$300 per youth released. The cost per youth served in community control is not known.

## JASP and Community Control Workload and Funding

From FY 1991-92 through 1995-96, delinquency referrals and petitions grew by more than 25%, while Florida's population aged 10-17 years grew by less than 10%. As delinquency referrals have grown, JASP funding has remained essentially level. Providers reportedly have been required to maintain caseloads while giving more frequent supervision and while building local capacity for additional diversion options such as community arbitration, typically without additional funding from the DJJ. JASP was funded at a little more than \$5 million per year for FY 1991-92 through FY 1993-94, and a little less than \$5 million annually since then.

DJJ case managers are responsible for a number of functions other than supervision of youth on community control, including intake and assessment and the supervision of youth committed to the department's custody. The DJJ does not apportion its case management budget to distinguish the costs of community control as opposed to those for other functions and programs delivered by case managers. Funding for all of case management shows growth, from about \$40 million in FY 1991-92 to more than \$57 million for FY 1995-96, and more than \$60 million in FY 1997-98.

EDIP's annual funding grew from a little more than \$800,000 in FY 1994-95 and FY 1995-96 to more than \$1.5 million in each of the next two fiscal years, with the addition of a second site.

## Performance Audits and Impacts on Caseloads

In 1994 and 1995, performance audits were released that were critical of the JASP and community control programs (Auditor General’s Report No. 12293 and OPPAGA Report No. 95-01). The essence of the findings that were reported was that neither program really focused on the population for which both were intended. Community control served too many youth who did not meet requirements for judicial intervention. JASP served too many youth who did not meet minimum criteria for community control, and so were not really diverted.

The department responded to the findings in those performance audits, and follow-up reports by OPPAGA in 1997 (Reports No. 97-02 and 97-07) describe steps that the DJJ has taken, while identifying work that still should be done. Generally, the steps taken by the department aim to restrict access to JASP and community control to those youth who truly meet criteria for community control. These steps will create a JASP caseload that shows more serious delinquency histories or offenses than has been true before FY 1995-96.

The JJAB’s *1998 Outcome Evaluation Report* examines outcomes for youth released during FY 1995-96. That year is the first in which possible effects might be seen from any changes made in operational procedures as a response to the critical performance audits. For youth released in FY 1995-96, however, there is still a substantial difference in the delinquency histories of the youth served: 26% of those released from JASP had a prior adjudication or adjudication withheld in contrast to 62% of those released from community control. Furthermore, as noted in the recent OPPAGA follow-up reports, the DJJ continues to work on the issues raised in those audits.

**Since FY 1995-96:**

- Youth referred to JASP may have more serious offenses or offense histories;
- JASP providers have been expected to provide a wider array of diversion programs without additional funding from DJJ;
- The demand for diversion services continues to grow; and
- JASP funding has decreased.

## JASP and Community Control Performance for FY 1995-96

Various measures can be used to describe program performance, and those measures can be examined in many ways. After a brief look at measures of average length of stay, program completion and recidivism, a more comprehensive analysis examines possible associations among these performance measures. That analysis also includes information about quality assurance and the numbers of youth who have had a delinquency adjudication prior to entry into JASP or community control.



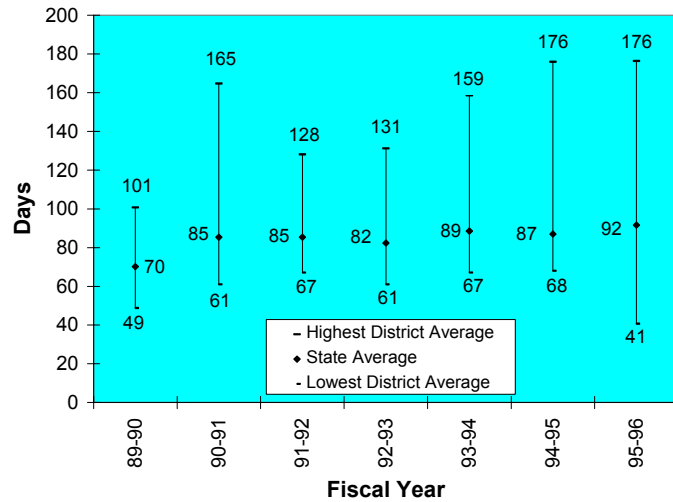
### Program Outputs

The average length of stay (ALOS) for youth who left JASP was almost 92 days, close to the designed 90-day stay. The ALOS ranged from 41 days in district 14 to 176 days in district 15. For youth leaving community control, the ALOS was just about 265 days, or almost nine months, half again as long as the six month designed length of stay. The ALOS ranged from about 226 days in district 10 to almost one year in districts 5 and 9. Even in the district with the shortest ALOS for community control, it exceeds the designed LOS by more than one month. Furthermore, the range in district ALOS for JASP is increasing, while that for community control is shrinking.

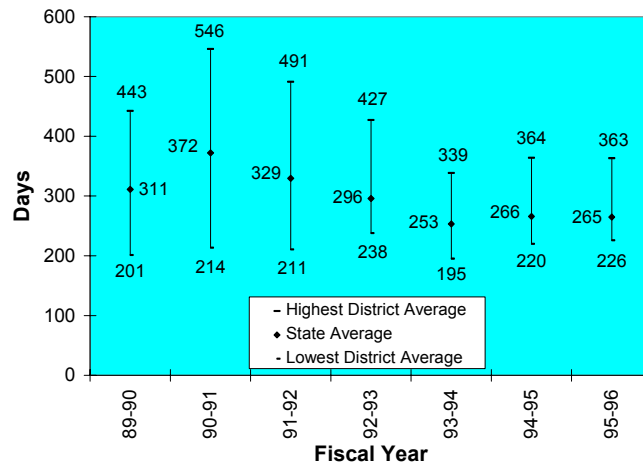
Program completion, sometimes called successful completion, is a way to measure performance. For JASP, more than 73% of those who exited were deemed to have completed the program successfully. For community control, the most appropriate measure adds those formally released and those released as required by law. Almost 62% of those who exited from community control were deemed to have had a satisfactory exit. Both JASP and community control show considerable variation among districts in these program performance measures:

- District 4 had the highest JASP completion rate, 95%, and district 9 had the lowest, at 54% – a spread of more than 40 percentage points;
- District 3 had the highest percent of satisfactory exits from community control, with 79%, and district 12 had the lowest, at 46% – a spread of about 33

**JASP Length of Stay**



**Community Control Length of Stay**



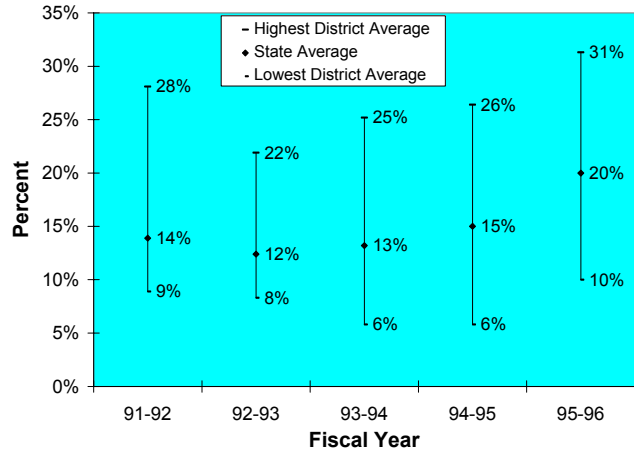
If, in all districts, the designed length of supervision under community control is exceeded by a substantial margin, then should the designed LOS be revised? What plan or concept lies behind the six-month design? What accounts for the current nine-to-twelve month practice?

percentage points.

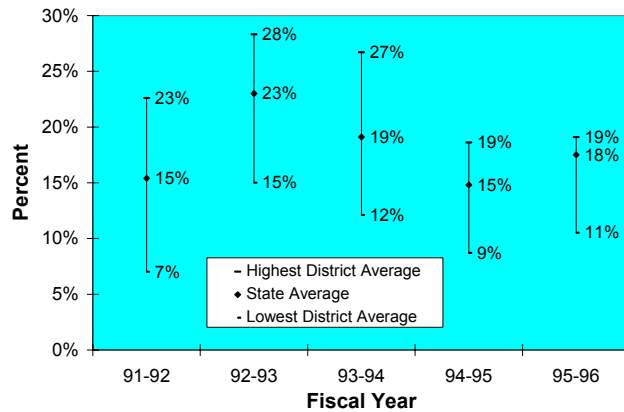
**Client Outcomes**

Outcomes from JASP show a short-term performance decline: recidivism rates increased from 12.4% in FY 1992-93 to 20.0% for FY 1995-96. For community control, the trend shows improvements, from 23.0% to 14.8% in FY 1994-95, with an increase in recidivism to 17.5% for FY 1995-96. The trend lines suggest that the range in outcomes among districts is widening for JASP while it is narrowing for community control. For JASP, the range in district recidivism outcomes is more than 20 percentage points (from 10.0% to 31.3%); for community control, that range is less than 10 percentage points (from 10.5% to 19.1%).

**JASP Readjudications Within One Year**



**Community Control Readjudications Within One Year**



**JASP and Community Control Performance Analyzed**

The basic question for analysis is whether any association can be found among program performance measures – whether higher QA scores, completion rates or lengths of stay seem to be related to better outcomes. One way to look for such associations is to view scatterplots.

Two hypothetical scatterplots follow, as examples to show how scatterplots might be interpreted. In the first, a strong relationship is seen between program completion and recidivism: higher rates of program completion clearly are associated with lower rates of recidivism. In an ideal world, this is the relationship expected – but very rarely seen.

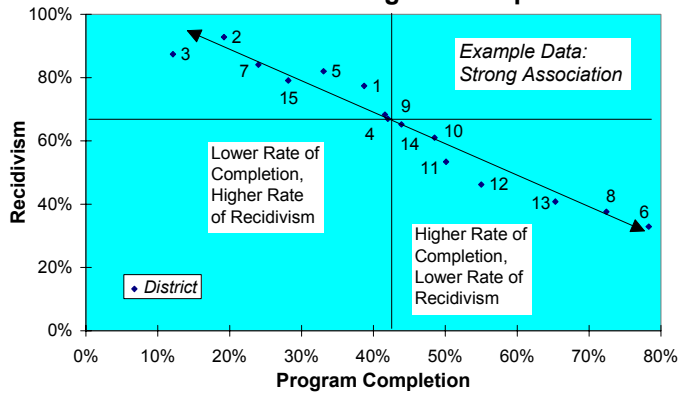
Recidivism outcomes for community control show no association with ALOS. ALOS varies widely across districts for both JASP and community control. It might be possible to better control and curtail some longer lengths of stay with no loss of effectiveness.

In the second, there is no apparent association between program completion and recidivism. Some districts have low completion and low recidivism; others, low completion and high recidivism. Among those with high rates of program completion, some have low recidivism, other have high recidivism.

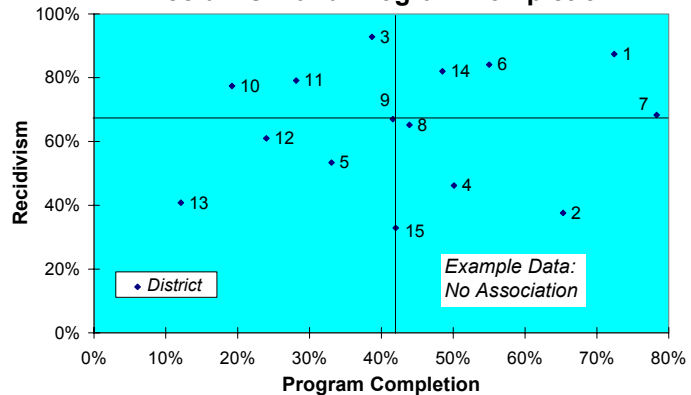
True-to-life performance data rarely show either kind of pattern in scatterplots, although the second, no association, is more common than the first. Other patterns may suggest new questions or follow-up studies for management reviews.

Scatterplots for JASP and community control are not like either of these examples. For JASP, districts 9, 10, 11 and 12 show low rates of successful completion, all under 70%. In contrast, nine of the remaining 11 districts remaining show rates exceeding 80%. The four districts with low completion rates show about average recidivism results. Among the other districts, there is a very strong association between successful completion and recidivism. Those districts with higher successful completion rates show lower recidivism.

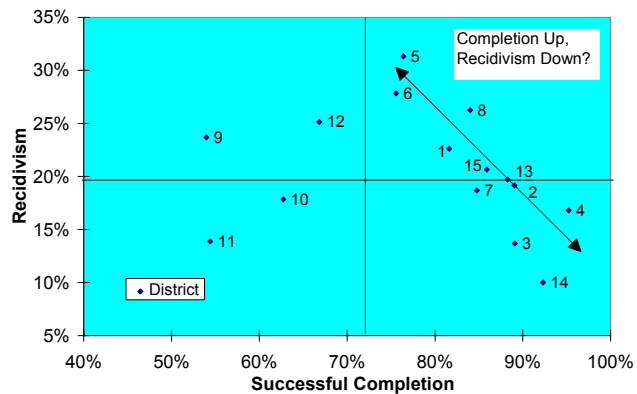
**EXAMPLE  
Strong Association Between  
Recidivism and Program Completion**



**EXAMPLE  
No Association Between  
Recidivism and Program Completion**

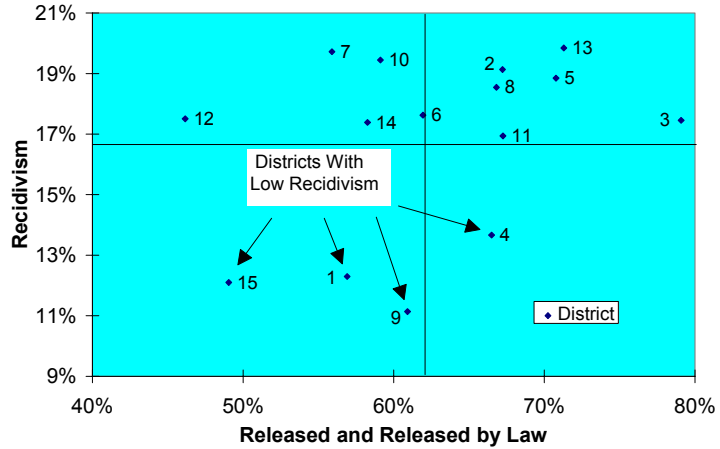


**JASP Successful Completion and Recidivism**



There is no similar pattern to the scatterplot for community control releases, which here include youth released as required by law, and recidivism. Four districts show lower-than-average recidivism rates with typical release rates. The community control recidivism rates for Districts 1, 4, 9 and 15 are under 13%, well below the state average of 17.5%. Their release rates range from less than 50% to more than 65%. Other districts range from about 45% to nearly 80%.

**CC Releases and Recidivism**

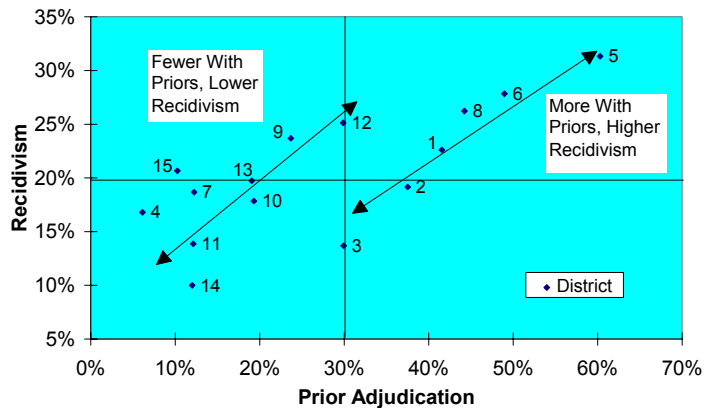


The department's responses to the critical performance reports of 1994 and 1995 are designed to divert less serious cases through programs other than JASP and to make JASP caseloads more like community control caseloads. For youth released from JASP in FY 1995-96, about 26% had prior adjudications. For youth released from community control, almost 62% did.

Scatterplots for prior adjudications and recidivism suggest a strong connection for JASP and again highlight the four-district pattern for community control. For JASP, districts 5, 6, and 8 show the highest concentrations of youth with prior adjudications and they also show the highest recidivism rates.

For JASP, better outcomes seem to arise from districts with two features: higher rates of successful completion and lower concentrations of youth with prior adjudications. From these data alone, it is not possible to judge whether it is the screening of youth placed in JASP, or completion of the JASP services themselves, that lead to lower recidivism.

**JASP Performance: Recidivism and Prior Adjudication**



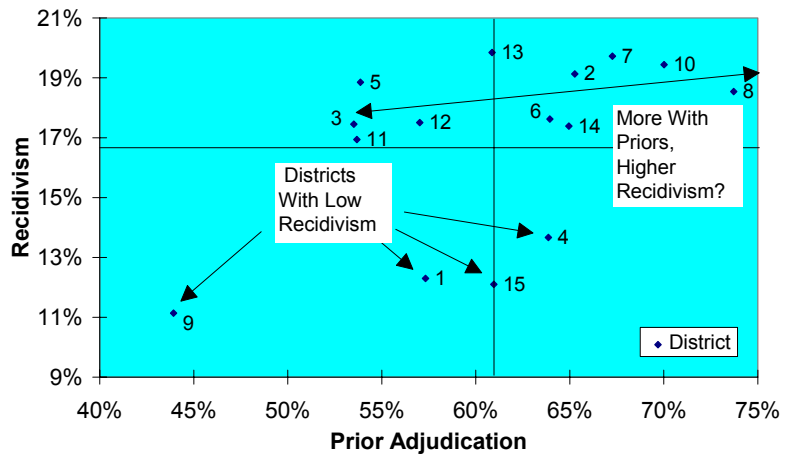
For community control, there is no apparent association between concentrations of youth with prior adjudications and recidivism – but those four districts with lower-than-average recidivism rates also show a wide range of youth with prior adjudications. The data for districts 1, 4 and 15 show concentrations of youth with prior adjudications that are comparable to most other districts.

For community control, districts 1, 4 and 15 show better-than-average results, but with no other features that could help to explain those results. District 9, the other district with low community control recidivism, also shows the lowest concentration of youth with prior adjudications, so this district's low recidivism might be a function of which youth are placed on community control rather than anything about the program. These data offer no satisfactory explanation for the relative good results found in Districts 1, 4, 9 and 15.

Another question is whether relative success in terms of recidivism is more a function of DJJ program management. If so, then districts that perform well on JASP should perform well on community control. This pattern does not appear. The four districts with lower-than-average recidivism for community control all show about average JASP recidivism. This lack of association is an important finding. If the relatively better results that are obtained in some districts cannot be ascribed to district management, then it still may be possible to learn something about the programs that could be used to improve performance in other districts.

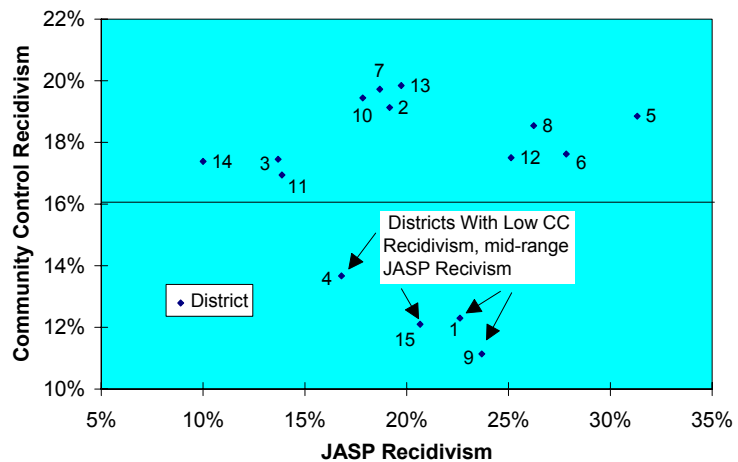
Examination of other scatterplots, using district-level QA, LOS, completion and recidivism data, revealed nothing more useful for analyses of JASP and community control performance. The scatterplots examined are found in Appendix 3.

### CC Performance: Recidivism and Prior Adjudication



When a youth is released for reasons of a filing on a new charge, or for violating the terms of community control, that youth is not included in the recidivism sample for follow-up measurement. Districts 1, 4 and 15 tend to show higher-than-average rates of filing – but other districts with poorer recidivism results also show relatively high rates of filing on new or old charges.

### JASP and CC Recidivism



## Diversion and Intervention Summary

Three themes seem worthy of further consideration: the implications of demographic, delinquency and funding trends; the meaning of recent and continuing changes in JASP and community control; and the value of more focused studies of performance in specific districts.

### Trends

The trends suggest growing workloads, especially for diversion and early intervention. Recent funding trends, however, focus on commitment resources and services. Indeed, commitments have been growing and waiting list pressures continue to exert a claim for expensive programs, facilities and services. Building more restrictive commitment programs and facilities – chasing the still increasing numbers of commitments – cannot resolve the problems of waiting lists and scarce placement resources. Tomorrow's commitments are a result of unsuccessful diversions and interventions. Stemming the growth in commitments will require more effective diversion and intervention programs, as well as more effective commitment programs and services.

### Diversion in Transition

JASP, the department's major diversion program, is undergoing a transition. Even though JASP funding remains level, providers have been expected to maintain caseloads, give more supervision to youth with more serious delinquency histories, and develop local alternatives to JASP services. Community control is embedded within case management and case management has grown – but with its growth has come the workload growth of intake and assessment for more youth referred, and the work of managing cases for the growing numbers of committed youth as well as community control supervision.

Evidence that JASP is in transition is seen in the trends for such performance measures as ALOS, successful completion rates and recidivism. The range of observed district-level performance for JASP is growing wider, while that for community control is narrowing. In the field of statistical quality control, growth in variability of important performance indicators suggests less control of those processes that produce the performance measured, while less variability indicates greater control. With control comes sufficient predictability to identify underlying causes and to design, test and implement alternatives for more systematic improvement in outcomes. Given the recent history of JASP – level funding, tougher kids who require more supervision, and demands for building alternative diversion options – this pattern of growing variability should be expected to continue.

With less control, or lack of statistical control, the performance management job requires sufficiently detailed information in order to understand what causes the wide variations, and those causes must be dealt with effectively in order to bring the variability down. Only then can systematic improvement be explored, tested and implemented. The JASP trends may reflect growing ambiguity about the program's mission and purposes, concerning just who it is that JASP is supposed to serve and how, and with what performance expectations and resources. Without consistency and clarity, control will not be re-established.

Community control, on the other hand, may be ripe for a more systematic examination of underlying causes of recidivism among youth released and more focused development of systematic program improvements. The community control performance data show a narrowing of variation in key performance measures, with recent improvements in the recidivism outcomes achieved.

### **Managing for Improved Outcomes**

The work required to improve outcomes from programs that show growing variability in performance measures is different than that required to improve outcomes from programs with constant or shrinking variability. Both pose substantial management challenges. The challenge for JASP is to bring more coherence and consistency to the separate district contracts. For community control, the challenge is to determine what causes better outcomes in those four districts with substantially better outcomes, and then use that knowledge to improve performance in the other districts.

The critical program performance audits released in 1994 and 1995 rest on the idea that JASP and community control should serve youth with comparable offense histories. The DJJ has taken steps to tighten placement in both JASP and community control, apparently trying to bring some comparability to the youth placed in each program. But JASP success, much more so than community control, seems to vary with the histories of the youth served – those programs with large percentages of youth with prior adjudications are less successful than others. It may be more important to clearly identify the youth for whom each program is most appropriate, and to place youth accordingly.

## COMMITMENT PROGRAMS

Recidivism data are contained in the tables in Appendix 2 and have been reported in the Board’s *1998 Annual Report and Juvenile Justice Fact Book*. Recidivism rates among youth released in FY 1995-96 show a slight decline from the rates for youth released in the previous year, except for youth released from Level 2 programs, which showed a slight increase. Recidivism was measured as the percentage of youth released from each level who were readjudicated for an offense committed within one year following release. Recidivism outcomes by level were:

Level 2 (non-residential; not aftercare)	38.7%
Level 4	51.3%
Level 6	46.5%
Level 8 (includes Boot Camps, SHOPs)	48.6%
Aftercare	44.7%

Youth released from Level 4 programs showed the highest rates of recidivism, followed by those released from Level 8 and then Level 6.

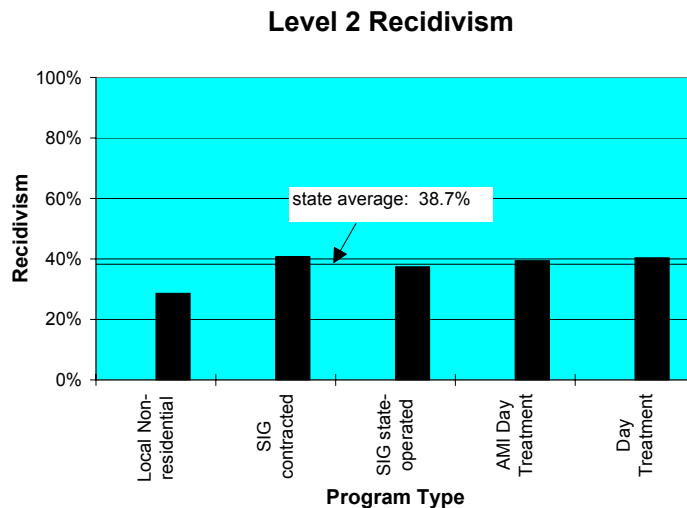
Recidivism rates among youth released from commitment programs (from 39% to 51%) are substantially larger than those among youth released from prevention, JASP and community control (all 20% or less). This disparity in outcomes is consistent with past results.

### Recidivism Within Levels

In the past, recidivism has been reported and compared among major program types within levels. Recidivism is reported by level and program type below.

#### Level 2 Recidivism

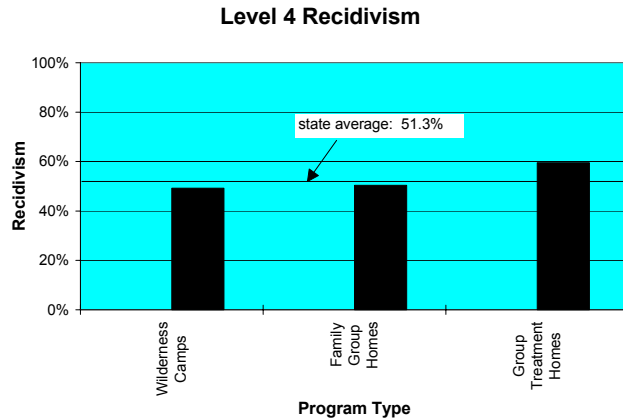
Recidivism among Level 2 program types varied from about 37% to about 41%, except for local non-residential programs (28.6%). Recidivism among youth released from Level 2 in FY 1995-96 was the lowest among levels and aftercare.





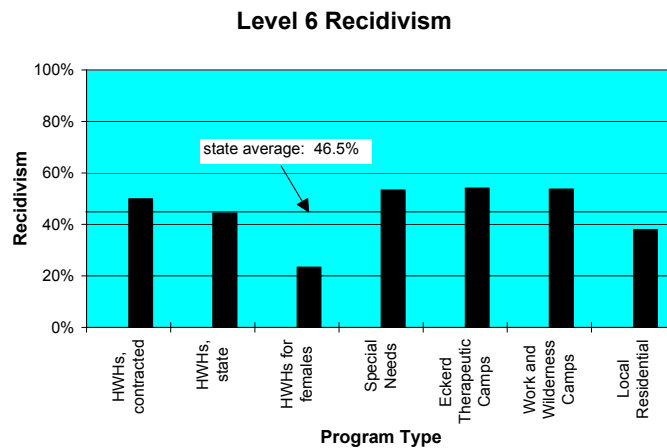
### Level 4 Recidivism

Recidivism among Level 4 program types varied from 49% to almost 60%. Recidivism among youth released from Level 4 in FY 1995-96 was the highest among levels and aftercare.



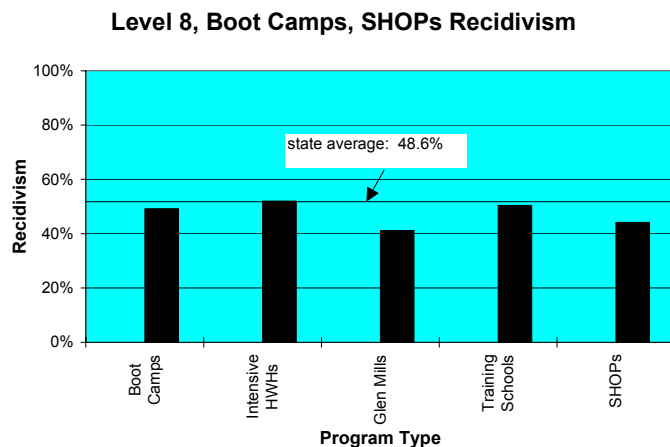
### Level 6 Recidivism

Recidivism among Level 6 program types varied from 44% to 54% - except for youth released from halfway houses for females (23.4%) and from local residential programs (38.0%).



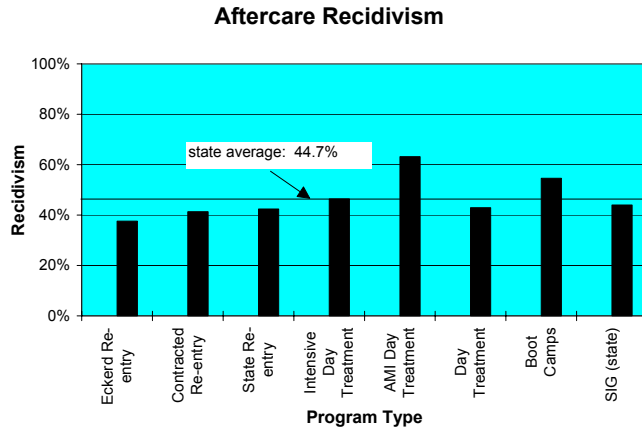
### Level 8 (including Boot Camps and SHOPS) Recidivism

Recidivism among level 8 program types and boot camps typically was close to 50%. Two exceptions showed lower recidivism rates: Glen Mills (out-of-state placement), at 41.2%, and the Serious Habitual Offender Programs, at 44.2%.



### Aftercare Recidivism

Recidivism among aftercare program types varied from about 38% to 46%. Aftercare for two program types showed higher recidivism: for boot camps, it was 54.6%; and for AMI Day Treatment, 63.2%.



### Selected Comparisons Across Levels

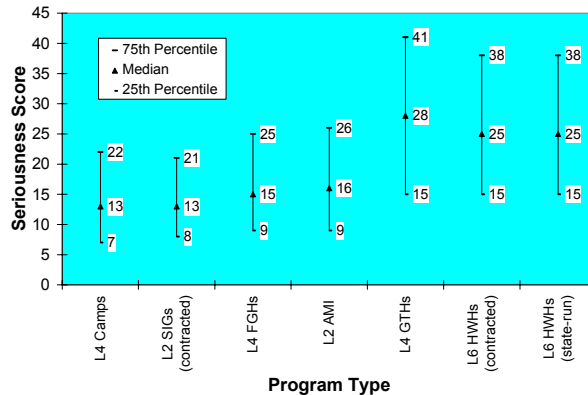
In the past, the Board has reported results by program type within level. Comparisons among program types across levels were not considered appropriate. In its *1998 Outcome Evaluation Report, Volume I*, the Board found that the offense and offense histories were different for youth released from different types of programs within the same commitment level, and differences in aggregate across commitment levels were difficult to discern. These findings undercut the traditional wisdom: some comparisons across levels may have value, and some comparisons among program types within levels may be inappropriate.

Seriousness is measured as an 8 for a violent felony, 5 for property or other felony, 2 for a misdemeanor and 1 for another delinquency offense. A seriousness index adds these scores for past adjudicated offenses.

The Board identified selected cross-level comparisons among program types that were warranted, primarily on the basis of the characteristics of the offenses and offense histories of the youth released from commitment programs in FY 1995-96. In this part of the Board's *1998 Outcome Evaluation Report, Volume II*, these new comparisons are explored. The cost-per-youth-served data that are reported here are derived from taking a range of *per diem* rates and multiplying those by the reported average length of stay.

Outcomes and costs for Level 4 wilderness camps are compared to those for Level 2 special intensive groups (SIGs), contracted. Outcomes and costs for Level 4 family group homes (FGHs) are compared with those for Level 2 AMI day treatment. Outcomes and costs for Level 4 group treatment homes (GTHs) are compared with those for Level 6 halfway houses (HWHs), both contracted and state-operated.

### Seriousness Index Scores



### **Level 4 Wilderness Camps and Level 2 Special Intensive Groups, Contracted**

The ALOS for youth released from contracted SIGs was 130 days; from wilderness camps, 51 days. The costs for serving a youth under contract for SIG services cannot be determined, because they were not reported by the DJJ; for wilderness camps, they typically range from about \$3,000 to \$4,000 per youth. If SIG contracted *per diems* were from about \$25 to \$30 per day, then the cost per youth served would be about the same; lower SIG *per diems* would mean lower costs per youth served. (In the Board's 1998 *Annual Report and Fact Book*, ten contracted SIGs are identified, and a *per diem* is reported for only one of those. That *per diem* is \$10.93.) The recidivism rate for youth released from the wilderness camps was 49.2%; for the contracted SIGs, it was lower, 40.8%.

Contracted SIGs produced substantially better results for lower costs per youth served than did the Level 4 wilderness camps.

Youth placed in Level 4 camps must be in good physical health and be able to withstand the physical demands of the camp experience. Presumably, a judgment has been made that a non-residential Level 2 placement would not be the most appropriate for the youth and family in question. When these youth are released, after an average of less than two months, they are returned to home and community. According to the DJJ's program description, the SIG program attempts to work with both youth and family, and it does so over a period of about four months.

Can DJJ improve aftercare for youth released from Level 4 Wilderness Camps, based on lessons from SIG contracted programs? Could DJJ improve its PDRs, to better target its recommendations to state attorneys and to juvenile court judges about the most appropriate commitment level for some of the youth now placed in Level 4 wilderness camps?

### **Level 4 Family Group Homes and Level 2 AMI Day Treatment**

The ALOS for AMI was 166 days, and for FGHS, it was 134 days, shorter by about one month. Despite that shorter ALOS, a typical FGH placement costs more than one in AMI: an AMI placement typically costs from more than \$5,000 to almost \$7,000 per youth; an FGH stay costs from almost \$9,000 to more than \$11,000. AMI day treatment produced better recidivism outcomes (39.4%) than did family group homes (50.4%).

AMI day treatment produced better outcomes at lower costs than did FGHS, for youth whose seriousness scores were comparable.

According to the DJJ's program descriptions, youth placed in family group homes are given a more family-like setting than are youth placed, for instance, in group treatment homes or in halfway houses. And those placed in FGHS tend to be younger than those served in AMI day treatment. According to those program descriptions, AMI day treatment services may include youths' families and the services are delivered over a longer duration than a typical stay in a FGH. Youth released from FGHS, typically, are returned to their homes.

Can the DJJ develop improved aftercare for youth released from FGHS, based on the AMI Day Treatment Program? Just what family- and community-oriented services are provided by FGHS for youths' families of origin, and for the homes and communities into which youth released from FGHS return – and how do those services compare with AMI day treatment services?

**Level 4 Group Treatment Homes and Level 6 Halfway Houses**

The ALOS for these two program types varied: it was 105 days for state-run HWHs, 120 days for GTHs, and 136 days for contracted HWHs. The costs for serving youth in each of these program types is roughly comparable, although the state-run HWHs appear to be a little less expensive, primarily because the ALOS is shorter. A GTH stay costs from almost \$9,000 to \$10,000 per youth; a contracted HWH stay, from almost \$10,000 to \$11,500, and a state-run HWH stay costs from almost \$7,000 to more than \$8,000. Group treatment home outcomes were worse than those for HWHs: for GTHs, the recidivism rates were 59.5%; for contracted HWHs, 50.0%; and for state-run HWHs, 44.4%.

The differences in performance between the Level 4 GTHs and their appropriate Level 6 comparisons are substantial.

DJJ program descriptions suggest that GTHs are smaller than HWHs, although both seem to have something of a small-scale institutional character: 24-hour awake staffing, with structured days. There are suggestions in the program descriptions that HWHs use a more structured, behavioral intervention than do the GTHs, which seem to have a somewhat looser feel to the program descriptions. Youth in GTHs, for instance, live in a dormitory-like environment, with opportunities for personal growth, social development and responsible behavior. Treatment for youth in HWHs incorporates structured learning theory and behavior management techniques, which integrate and reinforce the desired learning throughout the day, whether academic or social.

Should the DJJ adopt a more structured and integrated treatment approach for group treatment homes, like that used in Level 6 halfway houses? And what does a Level 4 commitment mean when, as appears to be the case, youth placed in Level 4 GTHs seem to be more like those in level 4 HWHs – except for their age? If anything, younger children may be more in need of a highly structured, well integrated behavioral approach to treatment.

Youth placed in GTHs were from one-and-one-half to two years younger than those placed in HWHs, and that differential in age may help to explain the differences in programs and in outcomes. The age difference also means that after release, the juvenile justice system faces up to two years more risk of delinquent behavior from youth released from GTHs. Older youth released from HWHs, if

they fall back into crime, may be more likely to find themselves in the adult justice system than the younger youth released from GTHs.

## Specialized Programs and the Commitment Continuum

Some programs deliver specialized services, or they serve a group of youth with highly specialized treatment needs. The uniqueness of these programs tends to undercut the idea of a commitment continuum, suggesting instead an array of some programs for which youth placed are committed to a level not necessarily because of the risk that they pose, or the seriousness of their delinquency history and offenses, but because of their specialized needs for treatment.

The Eckerd Therapeutic Wilderness Camps serve youth committed to level 6 who generally are younger than others in level 6, with somewhat less serious index scores than others committed to Level 6 or to GTHs, but higher than others committed, for instance, to Level 4. In addition, youth placed in the Eckerd Level 6 camps are described as emotionally disturbed. The ALOS was almost one year (338 days), with a cost per youth served of almost \$22,000 and one-year recidivism of 54.1%. It seems that these programs may have carved out a unique niche in the commitment array, for young, emotionally disturbed offenders – and for whom there is no other comparable program. These data suggest costly services for poor outcomes, but there is no other program that serves a comparable population against which to compare these results.

Programs for sex offenders offer another example. Typically, according to DJJ program descriptions, sex offender services are available in Level 2, for youth committed but allowed to remain in their homes and communities, or in Level 8. Programs in Levels 4, 6 and 10 offer little or no specialized treatments in response to the unique needs of youth whose offenses are sexual in nature.

Boot camps offer yet another example. As was reported in the Board's *1998 Outcome Evaluation Report, Volume I*, youth released from boot camps seem to fall somewhere in between youth released from Level 6 and from Level 8 programs, in terms of the seriousness of their offense histories.

For youth released in FY 1995-96, recidivism rates for boot camps were 49.2%; for Level 8 intensive halfway houses, 52.0%; and for the training schools, 51.6% (Dozier) and 49.1% (EYDC). The ALOS was 149 days for boot camps, 192 days for intensive HWHs, and 336 and 391 days for the training schools (Dozier and EYDC, respectively). The typical cost of serving a single youth in each of these programs was \$10,000 to \$12,000 for boot camps, \$18,000 to \$21,000 for intensive HWHs, and \$50,000 to \$60,000 for training schools.

Age, not seriousness of offense, seems to distinguish Level 4 FGH placements from Level 2 AMI day treatment placements, and Level 4 wilderness camp placements from Level 2 SIG placements – and the Level 2 programs cost less, intervene over a longer period of time, and produce better recidivism outcomes. Age, not seriousness of offense, also seems to distinguish Level 4 GTH placements from Level 6 HWH placements – with less structured and focused interventions for comparable periods of time and comparable costs but higher recidivism.

Do the differences that appear in performance among commitment program types undermine the concept of a restrictiveness-focused commitment **continuum**? Some program types fill a unique niche – such as the Eckerd Therapeutic Wilderness Camps and sexual offender programs – and that others may have more in common across commitment levels than they do with others at the same level.

## Special Note on Costs

Since 1994, the department has been required to report annually on the costs for its programs as part of the department's quality assurance activities (section 985.412, (1997) FLA. STAT.). In 1996, the requirement was re-emphasized (section 985.404 (10), FLA. STAT.): "The department shall annually collect and report cost data for every program operated or contracted by the department..." But the department's collection and reporting of providers' costs through the quality assurance program fails to show costs for many providers; it fails to capture and report costs from many other funding sources, as noted in those QA reports; and the department has yet to break down the costs of its case management services, to reflect program-specific costs for such programs as community control, intake and assessment, and case management for committed youth.

The department's *1997 Quality Assurance Report*, released in February 1998, notes the absence of some cost information for many programs with either of two explanations, "unknown" or "did not report." The department uses an affidavit process to solicit information about costs from providers. According to the DJJ, "unknown" is explained as "provider did not receive an affidavit or the program was not listed on the affidavit." "Did not report" is explained as "reflects on the providers that did not respond to two certified affidavits."

Many of the department's programs are delivered through case management, including such programs as community control, some Level 2 non-residential commitment programs, re-entry and aftercare programs, and intake and assessment. The department does not break out the costs of these separate programs, reporting total costs only for case management.

Without full and accurate reporting of costs for programs, contracted or state-operated, the JJAB and the Legislature cannot evaluate their cost-effectiveness.

## Special Note on Data

The availability and the accuracy of data for outcome evaluation purposes continues to pose special challenges to the Board. Assessment data are typically unavailable for analysis, not entered into the department's information systems even if assessments are completed. Some assessment information is available for committed youth, but

much of the data captured there is self-reported and of doubtful usefulness. Some, pertaining to diagnostic codes for psychological assessments, cannot be entered and maintained in the DJJ's current information systems because of technical limitations of that information system.

Data integrity continues to be an obstacle to the evaluation of DJJ programs. All juveniles committed to Eckerd Therapeutic Wilderness Camps, for example, cannot be identified. These camps have not been given unique identifiers. Each district may designate a resource ID for one or more of the camps. A camp may have more than one identifying code, or may share the same code with other programs. The DJJ has corrected this problem in 1998, from this point forward. For all youth released through FY 1997-98, though, this resource identification problem will remain.

Data entry errors may also cause problems. In one district, for example, the JASP provider entered data on juveniles from other diversion programs while none of the JASP youth were entered into the CIS. Recommendations on data integrity by the JJAB are presented in full in Volume I of this report. To these recommendations, accurate resource identification and attention to prevention and intervention data by a DJJ data integrity unit should be added as essential requirements.

The DJJ has begun to focus on issues of data integrity as it implements its new Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS). This initiative is important and the Board commends those steps that the department is taking to assure and improve the integrity of the data that will be entered into the JJIS for use by program managers and by the Board for outcome evaluation. But some data not now collected must be obtained and maintained, in order to promote outcome-focused improvement in program performance.

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board makes recommendations in five areas: costs, diversion programs, JASP and community control, Level 4 commitment programs and data integrity.

### Costs

Despite specific and focused requirements to report program costs that were enacted into law in 1994 and in 1996, the department fails to capture and report significant information about the costs of its contracted and state-operated programs. Without this information, it is impossible to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of its programs.

- For its contract providers, the department relies upon an affidavit process to solicit information about costs as part of the quality assurance process. The department's explanations of the continued absence of such information from many providers, as reported in the annual *Quality Assurance Report*, indicate that many providers simply do not respond to the affidavit or are not asked to do so for some programs.
- For those programs operated by the department under case management – which includes many identified programs and disparate functions – the department has not identified and reported costs by program.

**Recommendation to the Legislature:** *Require the department, in its budget submission for FY 1999-2000, to detail the current and requested expenditures for specific programs within its case management budget, including but not limited to community control and intake and assessment. Require the department to explain, in its next Quality Assurance Report, what steps it has taken and will take to correct the problem of providers who do not reports their costs.*

**Recommendation to the DJJ:** *Require as a matter of contract that providers report annually on total costs and sources of funding for services provided to youth referred to or placed in providers' programs by the DJJ. Break out case management costs, to reflect the costs of operating the many programs that now are delivered under this diverse category of funding.*

### Diversion Programs

Funding and referral trends show a very large diversion caseload for which little funding from DJJ, except for level funding for JASP, supports a wide range of diversion options. A large number of youth, perhaps as many as 50,000 annually, appear to be diverted but not served in JASP. JASP providers often have been called upon, without additional state funding, to help develop those other diversion alternatives, such as community arbitration and teen court.

To a great extent, the demands of building capacity sufficient to serve youth committed to the department's care and custody have driven recent funding trends. From FY 1992-93, funding for commitment has risen from about \$60 million to about \$250 million for FY 1997-98. Over the same period, funding for case management has risen from about \$45 million to about \$63 million and funding for detention services has risen from about \$47 million to more than \$80 million. Funding for JASP – the department's



major diversion program – has remained steady at just under \$5 million, while funding for other diversion alternatives has, in total, almost come to the amount for JASP. The department spends more on programs classified by the Board as prevention programs, including funding for status offenders.

**Recommendation to the Legislature:** *Require the department to report to the Legislature on the diversion programs funded by the department, contrasting the funds spent on diversion with those spent on prevention, status offenders, intervention and commitment services. That report should include the number of youth referred to the department who are diverted, and the number of each type of diversion employed.*

## JASP and Community Control

If distinctions among the range of juvenile justice programs from prevention through commitment are to be useful, something must clearly distinguish diversion programs from both prevention programs and from intervention programs. The absence of clear criteria to distinguish who is to be recommended for JASP and for community control placements appears to be at the heart of the assumption made, in critical program performance audits in 1994 and 1995, that JASP and community control should serve comparable youth. If these programs are to represent different components of the juvenile justice system, then the juvenile justice system must clearly distinguish between those components – not only in terms of the services offered, but in terms of the characteristics of the youth most properly served in each.

**Recommendation to the Legislature:** *Create in law a Task Force to develop recommendations for the description of a full continuum of prevention and diversion services and of the youth referred to the DJJ who may be diverted appropriately from formal judicial processing. Require the JJAB to convene and staff the Task Force, to hold its initial meeting no later than June 1, 1999, and to report to the Legislature not later than December 31, 1999. Identify the work of this Task Force as a topic for an interim study, to be monitored jointly by staff from the House and Senate substantive and fiscal committees of jurisdiction.*

The Task Force should include, at a minimum, representatives from the DJJ, the Prosecuting Attorneys Association, the Juvenile Section of the Florida Conference of Circuit Court Judges, and non-governmental providers of diversion services.

## Level 4 Commitment Programs

Level 4 programs need close examination and improvement. Recidivism outcomes from commitment programs greatly exceed those from all other DJJ programs, and Level 4 recidivism outcomes among youth released in FY 1995-96 were higher than those for any other level. The Board found (*1998 Outcome Evaluation Report, Volume I*) that youth released from Level 4 programs showed delinquency histories that were quite diverse. Those released from wilderness camps and family group homes had seriousness index scores much like those released from Level 2 special intensive group (contracted) and AMI day treatment programs, respectively – and those released from group treatment homes, except for their age, had seriousness scores much like youth released from Level 6 halfway houses.

If commitment decisions concerning level are to be understood to reflect the risk to public safety, and if the way in which the severity of delinquency offenses and histories is a useful measure of that risk, then the youth placed in Level 4 cannot be distinguished from others in either Level 2 or Level 6 placements. Logically, either the youth placed in Level 4 programs are not committed to a level appropriate to their risks and treatment needs, or the programs and services delivered in Level 4 placements are not as effectively addressing those treatment needs as are, for instance, the services delivered in other Level 2 and Level 6 programs.

Juvenile court judges decide the level into which a committed youth will be placed, and the commitment decisions now made by juvenile court judges may not be the most effective ones for the youth now served in Level 4 programs – some might be more appropriate for Level 2 commitments, others, Level 6. Prosecuting attorneys and DJJ case managers make recommendations to these judges, based on investigations and assessments, and Pre-Disposition Reports (PDRs) carry this information to the court. In past reports, the Board has addressed the continued absence of validation of the department's assessment processes and tools, and concerns about the usefulness and timing of delivery of the PDRs.

If problems exist with the appropriateness of placement of youth in Level programs, then the PDRs are the place to start for improving commitment decisions.

***Recommendation to the DJJ:*** Review and revise as needed the current assessments and criteria for the department's recommendations, tied to Pre-Disposition Reports intended for use by judges in making commitment decisions. Focus specifically on criteria for distinguishing recommendations for Level 4 commitments from those for both Level 2 and Level 6, especially insofar as those criteria now may fail to address adequately the developmental treatment needs of younger offenders, who now often are placed in Level 4. In doing its review, the department should consult with one or more state attorneys and one or more judges, both from juvenile divisions.

Second, the specific services delivered through Level 4 placements could be improved, taking lessons from specific Level 2 and Level 6 programs. The department has embarked on a review of its Level 4 programs, driven by the poor performance of these programs on the department's cost-effectiveness index, a combined program accountability measure. In the past, however, neither the department nor the Board have considered comparing programs across commitment levels. The *1998 Outcome Evaluation Report, Volume* suggests doing just that, based on the delinquency offense seriousness scores for those youth served in programs at different levels.

Youth released from Level 4 programs typically are returned to their homes and communities. For those youth released from Level 4 programs who seem to be more like others in Level 2 placements, specific lessons for working with those youth and their families might be learned from a closer review of the Level 2 programs. For those youth released from Level 2 group treatment homes, specific intervention lessons from Level 6 halfway houses may be more useful.

According to DJJ program descriptions, SIG contracted programs work with youth within the context of their family and community – and aftercare for youth released from Level 4 wilderness camps might incorporate SIG-like services. According to DJJ program descriptions, AMI day treatment programs offer a more intensive focus on family dynamics and interventions aimed to improve those dynamics – and services for

youth released from family group homes, both while in care and during aftercare, once released, might effectively incorporate the more therapeutic focus of that day treatment approach. According to DJJ program descriptions, Level 6 halfway houses integrate a structured, behavioral management approach into the entire intervention, whereas Level 4 group treatment homes tend to offer such things as opportunities for person growth and community service. A more structured, coherent, integrated intervention for Level 4 group treatment homes may be more effective with the youth served there.

**Recommendation to the DJJ:** *In its review of Level 4 programs, consider the lessons to be learned from Level 2 AMI day treatment and contracted special intensive group programs for making improvements to Level 4 family group homes and wilderness camps. Incorporate family-oriented services as appropriate into both Level 4 programs, and design aftercare for these Level 4 programs with those family-focused elements in place for each youth released.*

**Recommendation to the DJJ:** *In its review of Level 4 group treatment homes, consider the intervention approach used in Level 6 halfway houses. Revise Level 4 services to incorporate an age-appropriate intervention that is structured and integrated throughout the daily activities of the youth served, one that focuses on behavior management.*

## Data Integrity

The department has convened a data integrity group, and established in each district a focal point for assuring data integrity as the Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS) is implemented. The Board has recommended this action in the past, and commends the department on taking these steps. The Board identified two problems for data integrity in its outcome evaluation work this year, both concerning the identification of specific providers and services for youth released. One problem concerns the resource IDs used for a particular provider, Eckerd Therapeutic Wilderness Camps (Level 6); another, JASP and other diversion services.

Districts now use a generic "local residential" coding scheme to identify the Eckerd Level 6 camps – and these IDs are neither unique nor mutually exclusive. The Board cannot be sure that all youth released from these camps have been identified properly for outcome evaluation analyses, and also properly distinguished from youth released from other local resource placements. The department recently has taken steps to establish unique IDs for each of these camps for current and future placements, a step which the Board commends.

In one district, the Board discovered that youth who had been identified as receiving and released from JASP by one provider in one district were not, in fact, served in JASP. Instead, this provider mistakenly identified youth served in another diversion program, also run by that provider, as youth served in JASP, and it failed to identify the youth served in JASP. Other JASP providers in this district properly identified the youth served and released. Although JASP providers submit information in paper forms to the DJJ for data entry, it remains the department's responsibility to assure that proper instructions, accurate data and quality control are exercised in the reporting and entry of data into its data systems.

**Recommendation to the DJJ:** *Add the issue of resource IDs to the ongoing agenda and work of the data integrity unit. Assure that in the implementation of the JJIS, each provider, facility and site of service delivery is given a unique resource identification and that staff and contract service providers are trained sufficiently in the use of these IDs to assure that performance measures can be properly developed and associated with specific programs, providers, facilities and sites.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Methodology

Appendix 2: Data Tables for Commitment  
Programs and Aftercare

Appendix 3: Data Tables for Community  
Control and JASP

Appendix 4: Additional Scatterplots