

1999 Outcome Evaluation Report

Youth Released from Juvenile Justice Programs
July 1, 1996 through June 30, 1997



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TRANSMITTAL LETTER

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Juvenile Justice Accountability Board annually evaluates the outcomes of juvenile justice programs in Florida. This year's report focuses on youth who were released from programs during Fiscal Year (FY) 1996-97.

Florida's annual investment in its juvenile justice programs buys a range of programs, including prevention, diversion, intervention and commitment. For the current year, that investment will reach almost \$640 million. Program costs vary widely, from less than \$300 per stay for some youth diverted to as much as \$145,000 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, and to provide for appropriate supervision upon their return to home and community.

This year, the Board's evaluation of juvenile justice programs and the youth served focused on outputs and outcomes, including program completion, length of stay, and recidivism. Analysis has been broadened to examine offenses occurring during supervision in non-residential and aftercare programs, and the outcomes of diversion programs.

In accordance with 1998 legislation, the Board has developed a standard methodology for using its outcome evaluation report. That methodology includes a program performance index, which combines recidivism, offenses during supervision, escapes or absconds, and Quality Assurance scores. In this report, the Board has recommended minimum and target thresholds for groups of programs.

Findings and Recommendations

The Board has amended continuing recommendations and developed new ones based on recent research. The complete recommendations may be found on page XX of the report.

Young Children in the Delinquency System. Elementary school-aged children sometimes commit delinquent acts. Because of the immature stage of development of these children, their families must be involved in resolving the case and preventing future offending. Young children generally are not served well through the juvenile justice system.

Recommendation to the DJJ: *The DJJ should evaluate and re-design assessment and screening procedures for these children, to ensure use of information about patterns of behavior from parents and especially teachers, who observe these children on a daily basis and have a more objective perspective.*

Recommendation to the DJJ: *The DJJ should evaluate and re-design diversion and intervention programming to make better connections with,*

and provide support to, the parents or primary caregivers in their role as providers of guidance and supervision of young children.

Provision of Aftercare Services. The failure rate of youth after admission to aftercare, including recidivism, exceeds 50%. Almost 33% of youth admitted to aftercare will re-offend while under supervision of the program.

Recommendation to the DJJ: *The DJJ should conduct a study of a sample of juveniles upon their release from residential treatment. The purpose of the study would be to document the amount of time they are without direct adult supervision, and its relation to re-offending behavior.*

Recommendation to the DJJ: *The DJJ should, in light of the results of the research, re-design aftercare programming. The DJJ should develop pilot programs across the state which are research-based, multi-systemic and holistic, which focus on empowering the parents or primary caregivers as providers of constant adult supervision, care and guidance of youth released from treatment programs.*

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.

Recommendation to the DJJ: *The DJJ should develop multiple long-term strategies to make DJJ prevention, diversion, and intervention programs easily accessible to minority youth.*

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 differ in the severity of delinquency histories or offenses.

Recommendation to the DJJ: *The DJJ should plan, implement and report on a comprehensive validation of its screening and assessment instruments and processes. In addition, the report should describe how the information produced through the DJJ's screening and assessment processes is used by others in the juvenile justice system.*

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 the State Automated Management Accounting Subsystem (SAMAS) and financial affidavits. Costs involved in the provision of services through community control remain aggregated within case management, which includes the costs of intake, in spite of annual requests to specify them separately.

Recommendation to the Legislature: *The Legislature should require the DJJ to amend the terms for financial audits in provider contracts to include information on all funding sources and amounts.*

Recommendation to the DJJ: *The JJAB again recommends that the DJJ determine and report the costs associated with community control and any other provision of supervision in Level 2, including aftercare, which is provided through DJJ Juvenile Probation Officers.*

Integrity of Automated Data. Accuracy, timeliness and completeness of information collected and used by the department continue to be questionable. This is especially true in the areas of diversion and intervention. As community-based diversion programs begin to play a greater role in the options available to state attorneys and judges, especially with younger offenders, the collection of reliable data from these sources is critical for the evaluation of their effectiveness. The integrity of the data to be collected, kept and reported by 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.

Recommendation to the DJJ: *The DJJ should begin to develop program and cost data from community-based diversion programs.*

Recommendation to the DJJ: *The DJJ should develop a policy and process to ensure data integrity. This process would include periodic audits of data input. These audits would take place at the district level and would be performed by a team of MIS staff and the district data integrity staff.*

PREFACE

The Juvenile Justice Accountability Board (JJAB) 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 (DJJ) or operated by a provider under contract with the department." Section 985.401(4)(d), FLA. STAT.

The Accountability 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 Accountability Board compiled rates of recidivism based on data gathered from the CIS, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), the Office of State Courts Administrator (OSCA) and the Department of Corrections (DC).

INTRODUCTION

The State of Florida will invest almost \$640 million in the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) during the current fiscal year. Legislators and the citizens they represent should expect a significant return on their investment. The *1999 Outcome Evaluation Report* to the Legislature constitutes the assessment by the Juvenile Justice Accountability 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, 1996 and June 30, 1997. The report includes a description of the intake, assessment, classification and placement of youth released from juvenile justice programs. It contains data and an analysis of DJJ programs ranging from intervention to maximum-risk services and aftercare. This report also includes program output and client outcome data such as length of stay, program completion, offenses during supervision, recidivism and an index of program performance.

In accordance with 1998 legislation, the Board developed a standard methodology for using its outcome evaluation report. That methodology, fully explained in the text, incorporates a program performance index that is a combination of recidivism, offenses during supervision, escapes or absconds, and Quality Assurance scores. The report contains information on how to interpret this information, and Board recommendations for minimum and target thresholds for DJJ districts and groups of similar programs. This report 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 Board reviewed:

- The appropriateness of the control, discipline and punishment imposed on youth referred to the system;
- 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;
- The efficiency of the department with regard to program outputs and outcomes; and
- The effectiveness of programs at maintaining public safety.

The assessment and classification process is the cornerstone of the statutory framework that the Legislature has established in Florida. The hundreds of 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, classification and placement 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;
- Use this information to differentiate among types of offenders according to the risks they pose to society and their needs for treatment;
- Use this information to develop plans for treatment that include 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 Office of Economic and Demographic Research reported that during FY 1996-97, there were 1,427,384 youth between the ages of 10 and 17 years in Florida. A total of 108,397 (8%) were charged with delinquency offenses and were referred to the department during this period.

Evaluating the Department

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 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 assess, classify and place juvenile offenders.

In addition to information from these sources, the JJAB also has collected data from the information systems of the DJJ, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), the Office of State Courts Administrator (OSCA) and the Department of Corrections (DC). The combination of information from individuals and the analysis of data provide the foundation for the *1999 Outcome Evaluation Report*.

THE CONTINUUM OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The largest and most tangible purchase made with Florida's \$640 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. A full description of program types within the various levels of restrictiveness is included in Appendix 1.

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 *1999 Prevention Outcome Report* (JJAB Doc. #99-001-OE). The services provided by these programs are designed to enhance personal growth and development, school attendance and academic performance and family functioning.

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. Currently, there are more than 20 models for diversion programs implemented across the state in more than 100 programs. Most of these programs are community based, and many rely on local funding. Examples of these programs include civil citation, teen court, juvenile 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 make restitution and perform 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 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 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.

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 \$640 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) and (2), FLA. STAT.

Florida law requires comprehensive screening and assessment for youth charged with an offense. This process is described in detail in Appendix 2. 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 is essential 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.

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). The PDR 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 incomplete commitment packets. 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. According to the new DJJ Provider's Manual, DJJ policy allows placement of a juvenile in a commitment program accompanied only by a commitment order, with none of the "mandatory" assessment information attached.

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

JJAB Finding

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

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 concern frequently reported by providers of services and DJJ staff was the difficulty in obtaining these materials at first placement or from previous programs.

Assessment of Young Children. Each year, more than 10,000 elementary school-aged children (12 years of age and younger) are charged with criminal offenses in Florida. This is nearly 10% of youth referred to the department. The usual intake and assessment system is not designed for pre-adolescent children, who are at a significantly different stage of development than middle school or high school students. First arrests which occur before age 12, multiple charges at first referral, and the seriousness of these offenses are predictors of chronic offending patterns. These predictors may be even more powerful when coupled with input from school teachers and those in the community who have observed the child's behavior in multiple settings. Children with multiple problems in the multiple environments of home, school, and community are at extreme risk for chronic involvement in the juvenile justice system. Because the focus of intake and assessment is on the immediate circumstances and is designed for adolescents, intake and assessment workers do not look for childhood patterns predictive of chronicity. This information is not gathered and cannot be used to target families in need of special support to deal with the present offense and to prevent further involvement in the system.

The traditional juvenile justice system was designed primarily for adolescents. Experts in the field of child and adolescent development define the beginning of adolescence as entry into middle school or junior high school.

Summary. 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 used 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.

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 while addressing the risks they pose to 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.

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 1996-97, 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	less than \$300
• Level 2	\$658 to \$24,000
• Level 4	\$2,250 to \$16,900
• Level 6	\$5,400 to \$40,100
• Level 8	\$9,000 to \$60,000
• Level 10	Up to \$145,000

Demographics Across Major Program Components

For youth released during FY 1996-97, gender, racial and age differences follow well-established patterns.

Demographics: Youth Released, FY 1996-97

System Component	Average Age at First Referral	Average Age at Entry	Percent Male	Percent Non-White
Florida Population, 10-17 ¹			51%	23%
CINS/FINS			46%	40%
Intervention (JASP)	14.5	15.2	72%	32%
Community Control	14.5	16.0	78%	40%
Level 2	13.5	15.9	79%	51%
Level 4	13.1	15.0	81%	47%
Level 6	13.2	15.9	89%	49%
Level 8	12.9	16.2	91%	53%
Level 10 ²	12.6	16.5	100%	77%

¹Office of Economic and Demographic Research, Florida Legislature

²Level 10 programs were all male during FY 1996-97.

Minority Over-Representation

The percentage of minorities in the juvenile justice system becomes progressively more disproportional with the increasing security of the various levels of the juvenile justice commitment continuum. Likewise, the under-representation of minority males in the juvenile justice prevention continuum has been noted for a number of years, but the referral patterns have not changed much. The Board has repeatedly noted that there is no satisfactory research-based explanation for these data.

The over-representation of minorities in the juvenile justice system is a societal problem that requires strategies and initiatives on many fronts if it is to be eliminated. Individual and societal biases that influence attitudes towards minorities are deeply rooted, and while their appearance may be subtle, the impact is not. Causation aside, the poverty conditions in which so many minorities find themselves give rise to many of the conditions that place them at risk of physical health and mental health problems. These problems can in turn contribute to poor school performance, which often results in poor employment prospects, a disconnection from society, and the perpetuation of the cycle of poverty. Just as the explanations for this phenomenon are complex and multi-faceted, so too must be the solutions.

The troubling matter of the over-representation of minorities in the juvenile justice system has been raised by the JJAB and others for many years. In this year that our nation celebrates the 100th anniversary of the creation of the first juvenile court, the disproportionate number of minorities who come into the system must be considered a serious condition that threatens the integrity of that institution and all who are associated with it.

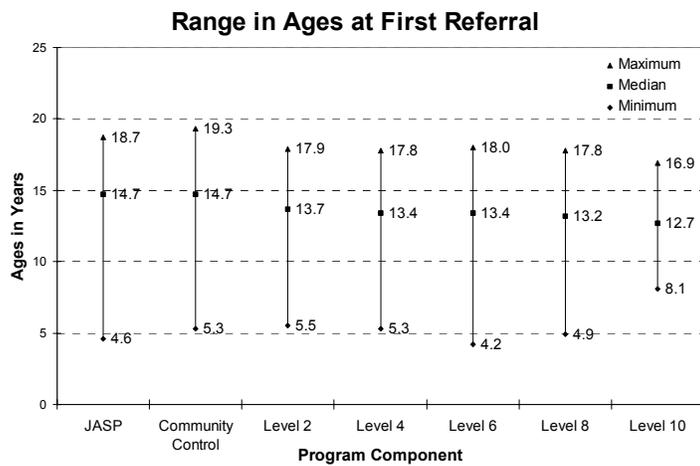
This is a problem that predates the creation of the DJJ, and one over which the DJJ has only limited control. All branches and levels of government, all public and private educational and business organizations and institutions, all segments of society, and each

individual citizen must make a commitment to change the circumstances that give rise to the unjustly disproportionate numbers of minorities who come into the justice system. Without such an effort, the same shadow will hang over future celebrations of our state and nation’s juvenile and adult justice systems.

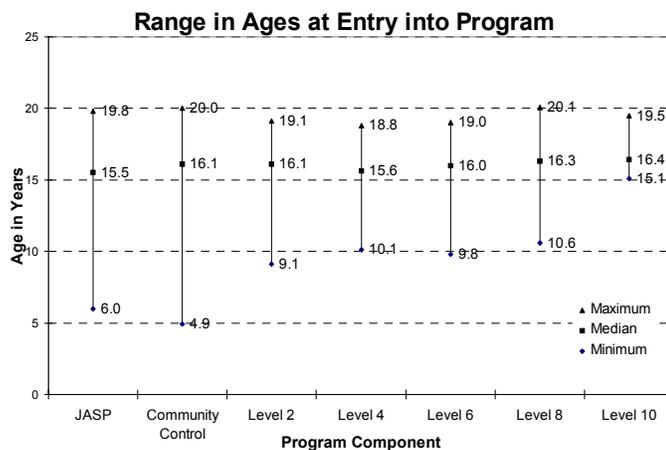
With respect to age, youth entering the most secure programs – boot camps, Level 8 and Level 10 programs – tend to start their interaction with the juvenile system at an earlier age than youth entering other less restrictive programs. They tend to be older upon entry into the program, which suggests that many individuals in the most restrictive settings have had a lengthy career in the juvenile justice system, starting at early ages.

Age of Offenders

The average age at first referral in JASP is 14.5 years. The range varies from 4.6 to 18.7 years. The median age at first referral for JASP is 14.7 years, which means that 50% of all youth are above 14.7 years in age, and 50% are below. The table above displays decreases in median age at first referral as the restrictiveness level increases. The charts here indicate that offenders who are involved in the juvenile system at early ages make up a significant portion of those in deep-end programs.



Extremely low minimum ages at first referral and at entry to the program are a significant finding. 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 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 in Florida reported children younger than 10 years entered community control in FY 1996-97. In four 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, there is ample evidence that young children are found in Florida’s juvenile justice system.

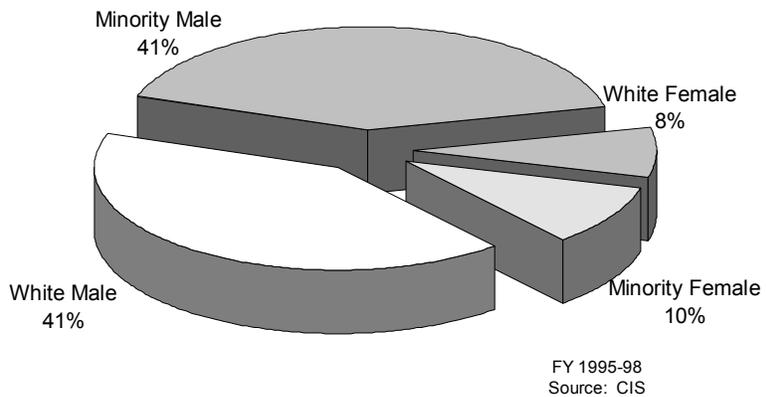
Young Offender Characteristics

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*, Butts & Snyder).

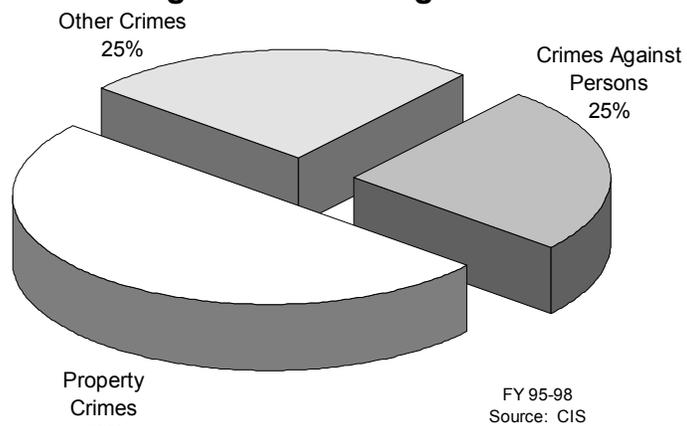
These authors considered delinquent youth younger than 15 years to be "young," and those age 12 years and younger, "youngest." Those 12 years and younger accounted for 9% of juvenile arrests in 1995. Arrests for arson, sex offenses and vandalism were found to be disproportionately high among youth 12 years of age and younger.

In response to these findings, which were included in the *1998 Outcome Evaluation Report, Volume I*, the JJAB closely examined the issue of children ages 10 years and less who commit crimes in Florida. Children of this age group were selected from first-time referrals for the last three fiscal years. Most of the crimes were property crimes. Only 25% were crimes against persons. More than 80% of these children were male, and more than half were minority children.

Gender and Race of Children Referred, Age 10 and Younger



Offense Types Charged to Children, Age 10 and Younger



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. Under British common law, there was a rebuttable presumption that a child between the ages of seven and fourteen 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.¹

The first constitutionally authorized juvenile courts were created in Florida in 1950,² and the next year a new Chapter 39, Fla. Stat., governing juvenile court proceedings, was enacted by the Legislature.³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵

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.

Researchers say that effective interventions must be holistic and address the major areas of the child's environment. Over the past five years governmental services have become dis-integrated into the Departments of Health, Children and Families, Education and Juvenile Justice. One of the great challenges to policy makers concerned with public safety and crime prevention is the absence of coordinated services to youth and families at risk of chronic offending in environments where funding and services are not coordinated.

¹ Section 2.01, FLA. STAT. (1997). Also see, *State v. D.H.*, 340 So. 2d 1163 (1976).

² Art. I, § 15, FLA. CONST. (1885).

³ Chapter 39, FLA. STAT. (1951)

⁴ *State v. D.H.*, 340 So. 2d 1163 (1976).

⁵ *Id.*, at 1166.

Many juvenile justice professionals support the establishment of a minimum age to apply for juvenile court jurisdiction. 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 11 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.

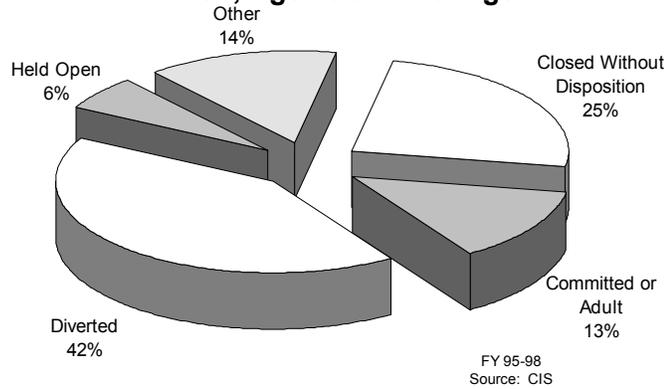
The DJJ and the Legislature typically use estimates of Florida's population of youth from ages 10 through 17 years as the population base for forecasting future potential needs for delinquency programs. Children less than 10 years of age usually are not thought of in terms of juvenile crime and delinquency services. These children do have an impact on the juvenile justice system.

The difference between the average age at first referral for young chronic offenders and the average age at entry into front-end programs suggests that existing prevention programs may not be serving this population. Services available under the CINS/FINS program cannot, by law, be provided to youth who have open delinquency or dependency cases. CINS/FINS services are aimed at adolescents who run away, are ungovernable or truant. Without a report of alleged abuse or neglect, staff in Department of Children and Families (DCF) cannot initiate a child protective investigation and frequently will have no basis for

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, the two agencies most likely to be equipped to serve young children, currently are not available for families with young children who are in trouble with the law.

**Dispositions of Charges,
Children, Age 10 and Younger**



Ages at First Referral for Front-End Programs

Program	Total Youth	Average Age at First Referral	Minimum Age at First Referral	Percent 12 Years or Younger at First Arrest	Average Age at Entry
Florida Network, FY 1996-97	16,421 ⁴	14.3 ⁶	4.1	22%	14.7
ILAP, FY 1996-97 ¹	1,267 ⁵	13.5	6.9	29%	13.7
JASP, FY 1996-97	17,245	14.5	4.5	23%	15.2
Community Control, FY 1996-97	18,332	14.5	5.3	22%	16.0
Young Chronic Offenders (YCO) ²	1,389	12.1	7.0 ⁷	NA	NA
YCO Comparison Group ³	5,319	14.4	7.0 ⁷	NA	NA
FY 1997-98 Referrals	107,095	14.9	NA	NA	NA

¹ ILAP data is from Hillsborough County.

² Youth referred during FY 1995-96.

³ See Young Chronic Offender Study Report.

⁴ Stratified random sample of youth referred during FY 1995-96.

⁵ A total of 8,481 of these youth had a referral in the DDR file.

⁶ A total of 434 of these youth had a referral in the DDR file.

⁷ A total of 14,840 of these youth had accurate dates of birth supplied in Network data.

⁸ Researchers for the YCO study assumed ages less than 7.0 years were data entry errors.

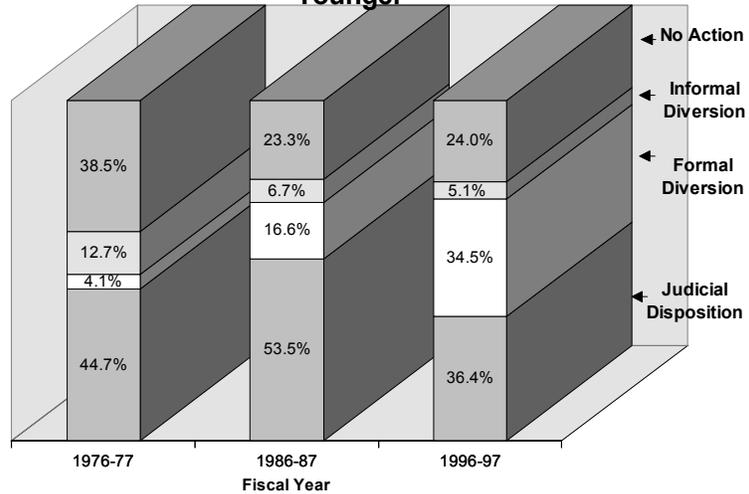
providing services to families with young children who are in trouble with the law. For those families who have children less than 10 years of age who get into trouble with the law, delinquency services may be the only way in which to get some help. Delinquency services generally are not tailored to the special developmental requirements of young children, nor do they engage families in training about parenting of young children.

Over the 20-year period from FY 1976-77 to 1996-97, diversion became more widely used in the state. Prosecutors and judges may have felt that elementary school-aged children needed attention, but were unwilling to commit them to the custody of the state.

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.

The program design for JASP and community control assume the capacity of the youth to reason logically. In the field of child development, it is generally well accepted that children 12 years of age and younger have not fully developed the ability to reason abstractly, to appreciate fully the consequences of their actions or understand the perspective and feelings of their victims. Children seven years of age and younger are even more at a disadvantage. 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.

Dispositions of Youth, 12 Years of Age and Younger



Offender Characteristics 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.

Information on the referral and placement histories of youth released from delinquency programs generally 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 are the only historical data

available. The percentage of youth who had a prior adjudicated delinquency referral is smaller among youth released from JASP (21%) than among those released from CINS/FINS programs (37%) and from community control (95%). 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 Offenses		Average Seriousness ¹	
		Violent Felonies	Property Felonies	Seriousness Index	Commitment Offense
Level 2	6.2	0.4	1.2	16.0	3.7
Level 4	6.4	0.3	1.3	16.4	3.5
Level 6	8.1	0.5	1.8	22.5	4.1
Level 8, Boot Camps	10.5	0.8	2.9	34.1	5.0
Level 10	14.1	1.6	4.8	52.1	6.7

¹ 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 charged prior to the placement date.

Measuring Seriousness. The seriousness index 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.

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.

Youth released averaged more than six previous delinquency cases and seriousness index scores of about 16. 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 indicators of that risk are the seriousness of the commitment offense and the seriousness index.

Comparisons Between Program Types

JJAB staff 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 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. Level 2 programs provide a good example:

Level 2 Programs

Program Type	Percent of Youth With Prior	
	Felonies	Placements
SIG Contracted	65%	16%
Intensive Community Supervision	71%	14%
SIG State Operated	78%	18%
Day Treatment Contracted	78%	14%
AMI Day Treatment	80%	14%
Work and Wilderness	81%	24%

- Smaller percentages of youth released from contracted SIGs had prior felonies and prior placements than those released from state-operated SIGs.
- A greater percentage of youth released from Work and Wilderness programs had prior placements than those released from other Level 2 programs.

These differences must be taken into account when comparisons are made among various program types.

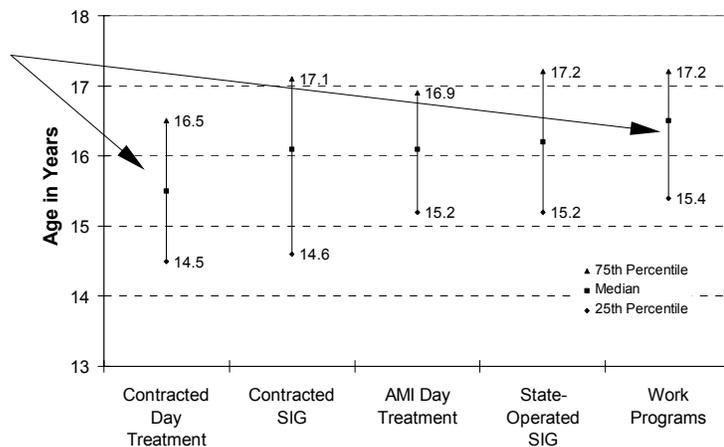
The following charts present comparisons among selected types of commitment programs. The data and comparisons selected show most clearly the differentiation among youth released from the programs within levels reported.

Another way to illustrate the distribution 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.

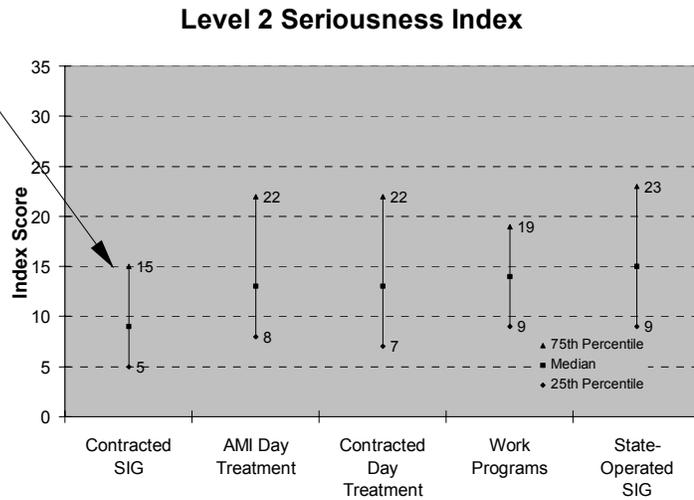
These mid-range charts quickly show important differences in some comparisons as well as similarities in others. For example, consider the mid-range charts for selected Level 2 program types.

Level 2 Age at Entry

- Youth released from contracted day treatment generally appear to be a little younger than those released from other programs, and those released from Level 2 work programs are a little older.

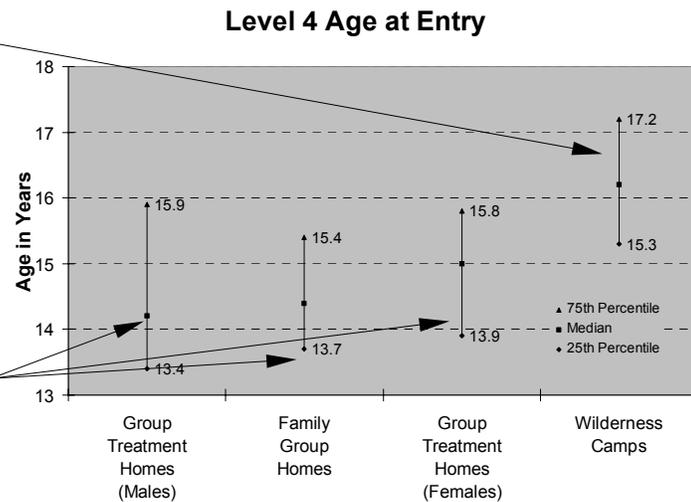


- Youth released from SIG contracted programs have lower seriousness scores than do youth released from other Level 2 programs.

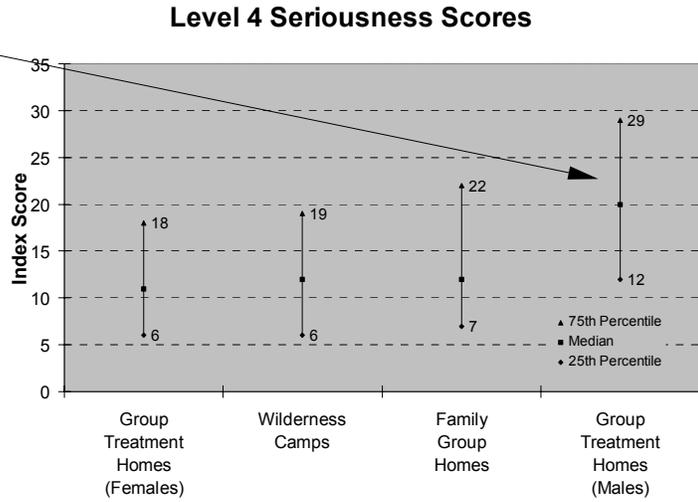


Outcome-based comparisons between contracted SIGs and other Level 2 programs should be made only with caution, because of apparent differences in both age at entry and seriousness scores for the youth released from each program type.

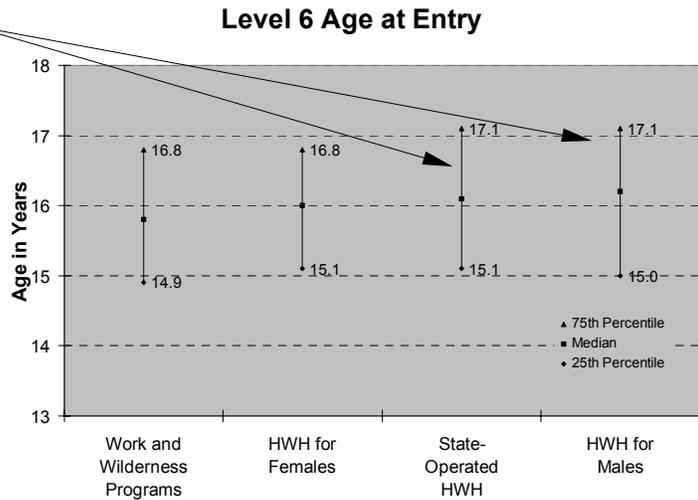
- Youth released from wilderness camps are older than youth released from other Level 4 programs.
- Group treatment homes for males, family group homes, and group treatment homes for females seem to cluster together. These three program groups have the youngest ages at entry in the commitment continuum.



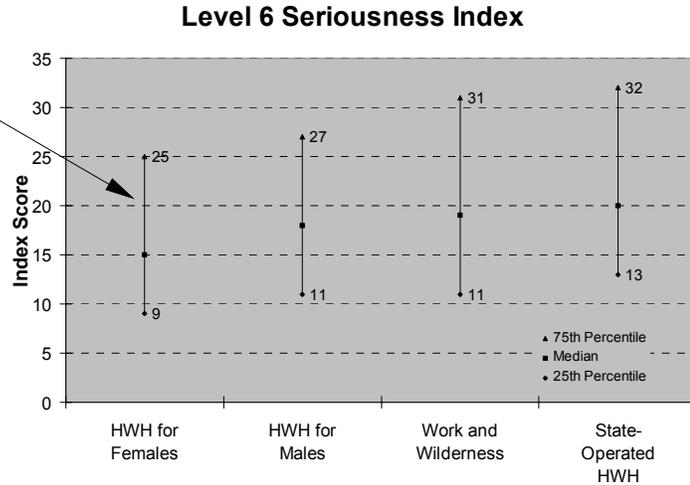
- Males released from group treatment homes had the highest average seriousness index scores among Level 4 programs.



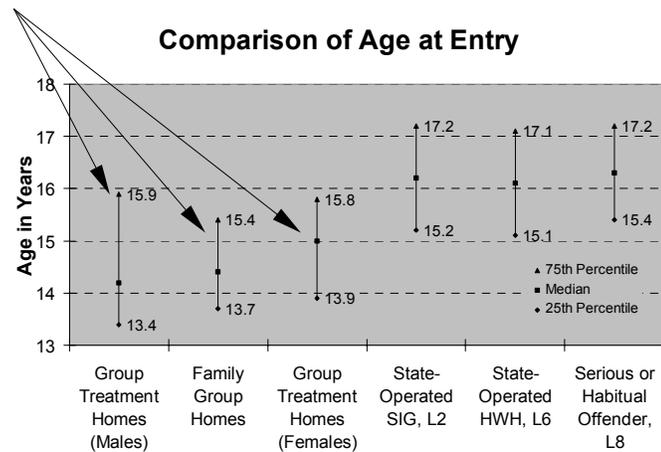
- Youth released from contracted halfway houses for males and state-operated halfway houses are virtually identical.



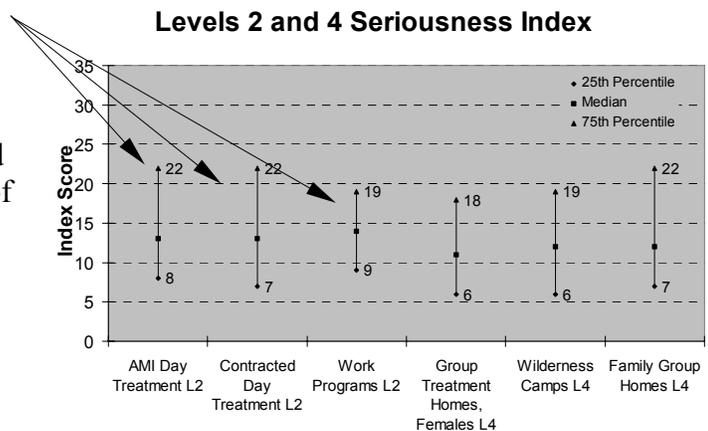
- Females released from contracted halfway houses had lower seriousness index scores than youth released from any other Level 6 program.



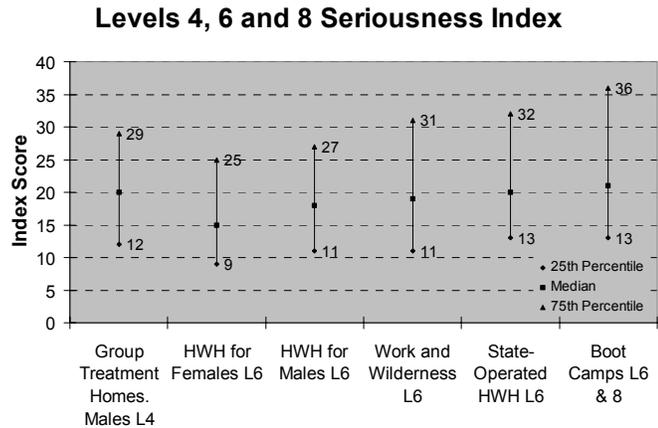
- Level 4 group treatment homes for males and females and family group homes admit youth at younger ages than any other program group across the commitment continuum. Juveniles in these programs may be behind those in other programs in terms of their physical, cognitive and psycho-social developmental stages.



- Youth released from most Level 2 programs resemble those released from Level 4 group treatment homes for females, wilderness camps and family group homes in terms of the seriousness of their offenses.



- Based on seriousness index scores, Level 4 group treatment homes for males, Level 6 programs, and boot camps may warrant comparison. Boot camps were re-classified as Level 6 programs during 1998.



Although the males in group treatment homes are among the youngest in the commitment continuum, their seriousness index scores are more similar to those of Level 6 programs. Rates of recidivism for these Level 4 group treatment home males is higher than Level 6 halfway house male youth. Although the comparison between these programs and Level 6 programs seems inviting, the difference in development due to age differences must be taken into account.

With the exception of Level 4 wilderness programs, Level 4 youth are younger than those placed in Level 2. In terms of age at entry, level of seriousness and program design, it makes sense to compare Level 4 wilderness programs with Level 2 programs.

Summary

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 more than 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 variability among juveniles among restrictiveness levels may indicate the following:

- 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.
- This variability may indicate that commitment managers may 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.

- This variability may suggest the need for a new assessment process which will take into account the developmental stage of the child or adolescent.

Because of their stage of development, these children require different approaches to diversion, intervention and treatment. Whereas children and youth may exhibit needs which have the same label, the treatment, discipline and guidance for high school-aged offenders must be different in quality than those for middle school-aged youth, and for children of elementary school age.

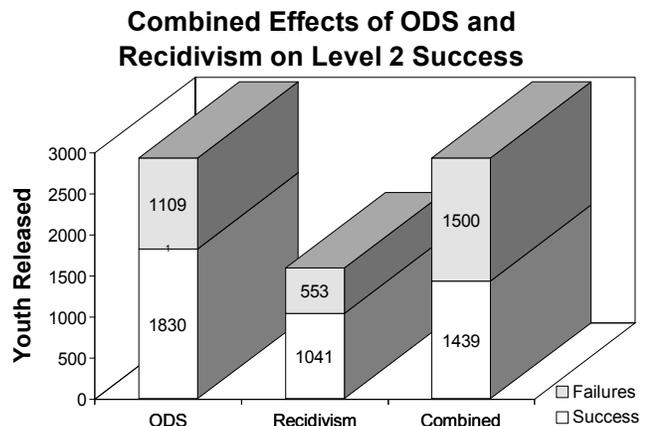
State attorneys and judges increasingly rely on formal diversion programs for school-aged children. The DJJ should begin to develop diversion and intervention models appropriate to their stage of development. In addition, the DJJ should make special efforts to encourage local communities to give special attention and support to these children and their families, especially in urban areas where these children seem to be concentrated.

Intake and assessment practices with elementary school-aged children must include contact with both the primary caregiver and the child's classroom teacher, to screen for patterns of behavior observed over time. Input from teachers typically differs from that of parents, and may be more reliable. This information may indicate that the child is on a trajectory toward chronic offending.

Other Findings

Aftercare Effectiveness. The 1997 Legislature directed the JJAB and the DJJ, in cooperation with a research committee composed of JJAB staff, representatives from the DJJ, providers and other stakeholders to study juvenile aftercare. The report, *Juvenile Aftercare Effectiveness in Florida* (Doc. #98-003-SPAM-Full, DJJ Management Report #96) provided an in-depth examination of current aftercare practice, outcomes, and the perceptions of youth, parents and DJJ juvenile probation officers of the effectiveness of aftercare.

In addition to this study, a new measure of effectiveness for aftercare and Level 2 non-residential programs was recommended and adopted through the work of the Common Definitions Workgroup, composed of representatives from the JJAB, department, Legislature and providers. Because juveniles in these programs are at liberty in their community at some time during the day, they have a greater opportunity to re-offend than their counterparts



placed in some sort of residential program. In order to get an idea of how prevalent offending behavior is during their period of supervision or re-integration into the community, a measure of offenses termed “Offenses During Supervision” (ODS) was defined.

Offenses during supervision are important for a number of reasons. They are a measure of the effectiveness of aftercare programs in the provision of supervision, or in enabling parents or other caregivers to provide proper supervision, care and guidance for these youth.

Because many of these juveniles will be re-classified and returned to residential care upon their arrest, ODS also gives a rough measure of the cost of program failure.

Finally, in most cases the measurement of recidivism as an indicator of program success or failure begins after the juvenile is released. In the case of aftercare, if

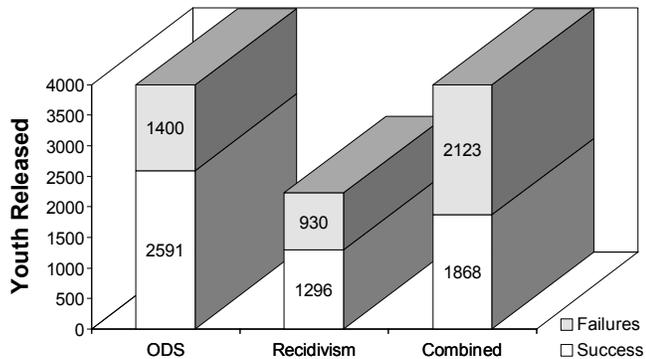
a youth is re-arrested while in a program, he or she may be excluded from the sample used to compute recidivism due to the return to residential care. The rate of program success is influenced by a culling process.

Juveniles released by these programs during FY 1996-97 were matched with the Delinquency and Dependency Referral File to determine whether an arrest occurred while they were under supervision. Level 2 programs had an ODS rate of 38%, while aftercare programs had a rate of 35%. The rate of offenses during supervision and the rates of recidivism for some programs indicate that the failure rate for these programs may be seriously underestimated. When recidivism and offenses during supervision are combined, using the total number of juveniles released by the program, the result is an indicator of a combined failure rate. The average combined failure rate for both Level 2 and Aftercare exceeds 50%.

These findings raise important questions about aftercare programming. Although most day treatment programs provide adequate supervision while the youth are at the site, the amount of supervision their parents or primary caregivers actually provide is not documented.

Over the years, research has indicated a strong relationship between the amount of unsupervised time available to these youth and rates of re-offending.⁶ Those researchers who define supervision as the number of contacts made with the youth by juvenile probation officers find little relationship between higher rates of their contacts and

Combined Effects of ODS and Recidivism on Aftercare Success



⁶ Mayer, G. R. (1995). Preventing antisocial behavior in the schools. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Analysis* 28(4). 467-478. Patterson, G. R., Reid, J. B., and Dishion, T. J. (1992). *Antisocial Boys*. Eugene, OR: Castalia Publishing.

reduced recidivism. The findings of the recent aftercare report indicate that more than 40% of youth violate electronic monitoring. There is no substitute for direct adult supervision by parents or responsible caregivers for these children and youth. OJJDP researchers report that the families of these youth are characterized by high percentages of single-parent households with working parents who are unavailable between the time youth are released from school and 6:00 pm.⁷ They may also have one or more siblings, who may present difficult parenting challenges as well. A commitment to public safety and the welfare of these youth means that the family must be the focus of aftercare support.

Recidivism and JASP Programming. Because participation is voluntary, a number of youth who are disposed to JASP drop out of the program and do not complete it. In some cases, youth disposed to JASP never actually arrive at the program. In many cases the failure to enter the program is attributed to the youth, while in others it is attributed to lack of cooperation from the parents. In the analysis of JASP data, these youth were grouped for comparison to those who actually attended and were released from JASP. Their rates of re-arrest and re-adjudication are displayed in the following table.

Rates of Recidivism for JASP Recidivism Sample and Comparison Group

District	Recidivism Sample				Comparison Sample		
	Youth Released	Sample Size	Rate of Re-Arrest	Rate of Re-Adjudication	Sample Size	Rate of Re-Arrest	Rate of Re-Adjudication
1	829	697	20%	15%	69	51%	36%
2	966	859	25%	17%	58	53%	38%
3	356	303	21%	12%	34	38%	21%
4	1065	865	25%	16%	88	56%	39%
5	1482	1057	26%	18%	297	72%	57%
6	1628	1197	30%	16%	379	77%	39%
7	2315	1755	21%	12%	332	61%	43%
8	1387	1097	24%	16%	191	76%	58%
9	650	419	28%	12%	231	57%	35%
10	353	202	21%	13%	59	39%	25%
11	3967	2581	20%	6%	1076	48%	20%
12	510	384	27%	15%	76	68%	51%
13	502	383	24%	17%	85	51%	40%
14	706	562	28%	20%	130	78%	53%
15	102	98	29%	21%	2	100%	50%

It is apparent from the table that the juveniles who fail to arrive at the program have a higher rate of re-arrest and re-adjudication than their counterparts who participate. It may be that the reason for their failure to appear is due to a re-arrest and a different type of disposition. The time of the re-arrest, however, is within the 12 month period after their case is closed. It would appear that youth who fail to enter JASP programs as scheduled

⁷ Kumpfer, K. (1994). *Family Strengthening in Preventing Delinquency: A Literature Review*. Washington, DC: OJJDP.

are at high risk for continued involvement in the system. They are also an easily identified target for intense prevention efforts.

A FRAMEWORK FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

In its 1998 session, the Legislature amended the Juvenile Justice Accountability Board's mandate to evaluate client outcomes from juvenile justice programs. Section 985.401(4), FLA. STAT. (1998 Supp.). New requirements focus on the development of a standard methodology for interpreting the JJAB's outcome evaluation reports, which is to include:

- Common terminology and operational definitions;
- Program outputs and outcomes for groups of programs and for specific programs within the groups;
- Desired client outcomes; and
- Recommended minimum thresholds of satisfactory performance.

The Board consulted with a wide range of stakeholders and experts. Whenever appropriate, the goals and approved measures for performance-based program budgeting (PB²), Quality Assurance (QA), and the department's cost-effectiveness model were integrated in the methodology.

The Board works under an interagency agreement with the department to use common terminology and operational definitions for the programs and measures used in evaluation research and reports by each agency. Under that agreement, a group convenes annually to devise common definitions for use during the next cycle of analyses and reporting. The specific measures used, analysis methods and operational definitions will be subjects for annual review under the agreement between the JJAB and the DJJ to develop and use common definitions.

Standard Methodology

The Board identified desired client outcomes and performance measures, and developed thresholds in consultation with stakeholders. These stakeholders included DJJ field and headquarters staff and contract providers of services of DJJ programs. Expert advice also was sought concerning how to develop and use performance measures and thresholds to improve program performance. The Board also considered lessons learned from the efforts in Florida and other states to improve the performance of low-performing public schools.

The next three sections describe the identification of desired client outcomes, guiding principles for developing the framework for accountability, and the performance index and thresholds recommended.

Identifying Desired Client Outcomes

Through many forums, stakeholders suggested desired client outcomes summarized here. Performance data for DJJ programs, as well as proposed measures for PB², were examined to determine their suitability as measures for these outcomes. Important client outcomes for which no measures are currently available were identified, and steps to fill those gaps were recommended.

Based on current research, the Board holds that effective interventions require a focus on both strengths and deficits in the different areas of life: individual, family, school, and neighborhood or community. Stakeholders repeatedly affirmed the necessity of working with families, schools and community-based supports for effectively intervening with delinquent and at-risk youth. Stakeholders agreed with the Board on the following six client outcomes:

- Public safety;
- Education;
- Coping and life management skills;
- Character development;
- Family functioning; and
- Community supports.

Public safety is the primary client outcome desired by most stakeholders, including:

- No new crimes committed by youth after release from DJJ programs;
- No criminal activity by youth while in DJJ programs; and
- No escapes or absconds by youth from DJJ programs.

Although many service providers share the Board's desire to know more about outcomes in the other areas, public safety is the most important outcome desired from DJJ programs. According to victim advocates, victims want assurances that the offender will not do to others what had been done to them.

Education is the next most important outcome for youth leaving DJJ programs. Educational outcomes include:

- A minimum grade-level competence to be achieved in reading and math;
- Acquisition of a high school diploma or GED; and
- Vocational certification in a marketable trade.

The JJAB considers education essential for altering the course of the lives of youth in productive ways. It is the foundation for rehabilitation in delinquency programs (JJAB Doc. #98-002-SPAM). In contrast to public-safety outcomes, however, the Board identified no standard, commonly accepted method for measuring educational outcomes among the youth released from DJJ programs. In its report of the Educational Policy Task Force, the Board also recommended that:

- Educational measures be taken of all youth who enter and leave DJJ programs; and

- Youth in DJJ facilities should be included in the standardized academic testing programs of local school districts.

Coping skills and life-management skills are included in many programs' descriptions and in the DJJ's PB² measures and are a desired client outcome. Coping skills include such things as:

- Anger management;
- Peer resistance;
- Personal decision-making; and
- Basic living skills.

No specific method or common instrument has been identified for taking these measurements. For promoting accountability, and for adding to the future usefulness of PB² measures in this area, focused attention is needed on the development and use of specific instruments or measures.

Character or moral development, another desired client outcome, concerns the fundamental identity of youth and their ethical foundation for making important choices in life. Comments in this area focused on such things as:

- Empathy for victims and family;
- Understanding and acknowledgement of the effects of one's actions; and
- Developing an appropriate sense of right and wrong as guides to making choices.

Unlike coping and life management skills, few providers report any effort to measure outcomes in this area, and no commonly accepted instrument has been identified for use. The department is currently attempting to develop such a measure.

Family functioning, usually expressed in terms of parenting and supervision skills, was a commonly identified desired outcome. Some stakeholders expressed a concern for second- and third-generation patterns of offending, and for the negative influence of delinquent youth on their younger siblings.

Community supports or capacity for supporting troubled youth and their families were also identified as important outcomes by stakeholders. Stakeholders expressed the idea that DJJ programs are a part of a larger network of helping and intervention agencies and informal local systems of support for parents and youth. When youth leave a DJJ program, they return to their families and communities. Meaningful change cannot be sustained if parents lack sufficient parenting skills and essential community-based support.

Based on these identified client outcomes, the Board concluded that:

- The standard methodology for interpreting and using its outcome evaluation reports will be developed from the public-safety outcome measures that are available.
- Instruments for measuring educational outcomes should be identified and put into practice just as soon as is possible. The Florida Department of Education reports that suitable instruments and testing protocols are being developed for common use in school year 2000-2001.

- Measures of the other important outcomes should be developed, but these will require a longer development and testing period.
- Many proposed measures for the DJJ's PB² use focus on coping and life management skills, family functioning and community support, but the measures as now proposed do not measure outcomes. As effective measures are developed, they should be reviewed for inclusion in PB².

Guiding Principles

The Board adopted guiding principles for the development of its standard methodology. Efforts to improve public school performance in Florida and other states, as well as contributions from stakeholders in Florida's juvenile justice system were considered. The principles are:

- Programs should be grouped based on similarity of services provided and of the characteristics of youth served.
- Minimum and target thresholds should be proposed in order to assure minimum satisfactory performance and to create conditions for continual improvement.
- Performance thresholds should reflect realistic minimums and targets. When thresholds are either too low or too high, they do not stimulate improvement and lose credibility.
- Performance measures and thresholds should be reported for groups of programs. The department should hold its staff and its contractors accountable for program performance. The Legislature should hold the department accountable for DJJ system performance.
- Consequences should follow for programs and for the department when performance falls below the minimum or exceeds the target. Legislation anticipates a range of consequences for both good and poor performance. See provisions concerning PB² (Ch. 94-249, Laws of Florida), Quality Assurance (Section 404 (12), FLA. STAT.) and the intended uses of the department's cost-effectiveness model (Section 985.404 (11) (e), FLA. STAT.).
- Thresholds should have a simple application. Whatever the measures and thresholds, their application should clearly show which programs fail to meet the minimum recommended thresholds, and which ones exceed the target.
- The standard methodology should retain an emphasis on client outcomes.

The Program Performance Index

The Board's standard methodology rests on a public-safety oriented measure of program performance, a performance index. The program performance index combines four separate performance measures:

- Recidivism;
- Offenses committed during supervision (ODS);

- Escapes or absconds; and
- Quality Assurance scores.

The measures were standardized and combined into the performance index. Recidivism was weighted the most heavily, then ODS. For residential programs, where escapes represent a greater risk to public safety than do absconds from non-residential programs, escapes got an intermediate weight.

See Appendix 4 for an explanation of how the index was constructed and for program-by-program displays of performance data, with initial analyses and notes.

There are no ODS measures for residential programs. The least weight in the program performance index was given to Quality Assurance scores and to absconds.

Index scores are calculated for specific programs in identified groups. Minimum and target performance thresholds are recommended. Under the Board’s standard methodology:

- The median performance index score within each program group is 100.
- The minimum threshold is recommended at 90 on the index.
- The target threshold is recommended at 110 on the index.

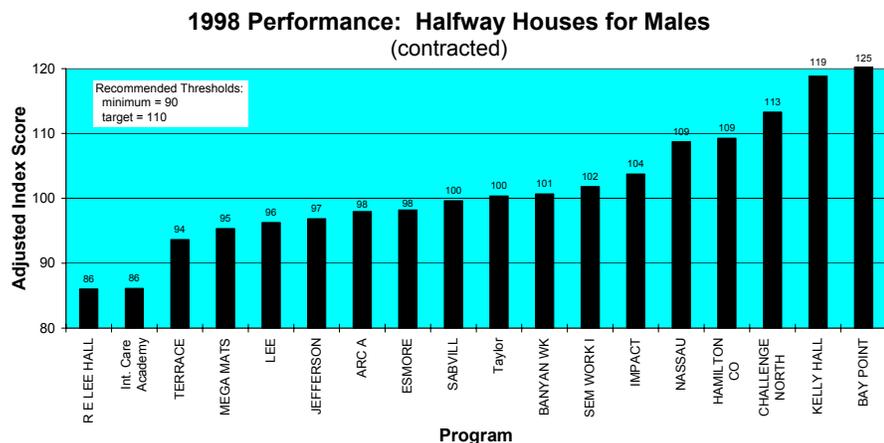
The formulas for calculating performance index scores must be kept constant for at least three years in order to show year-to-year changes in performance. If the formulas are maintained, then performance in each subsequent year can be assessed against the 1998 performance index values. Otherwise, program managers will not know what they must do in order to improve their performance index scores. If the program performance index is to promote continued performance, predictability in the index measurement methods must be assured for enough time for stakeholders to gain experience in its use.

Analyzing Program Performance

Two types of analysis were done of the performance index scores: performance index scores were analyzed, and then index scores were examined in relation to other variables.

In the first analysis, programs with index scores below 90 or above 110 were identified. Patterns of variation also were analyzed. Substantial variation in index scores suggested that lessons may be learned from good and poor performers, and transferred among other programs in the group or district. See the adjacent chart, 1998

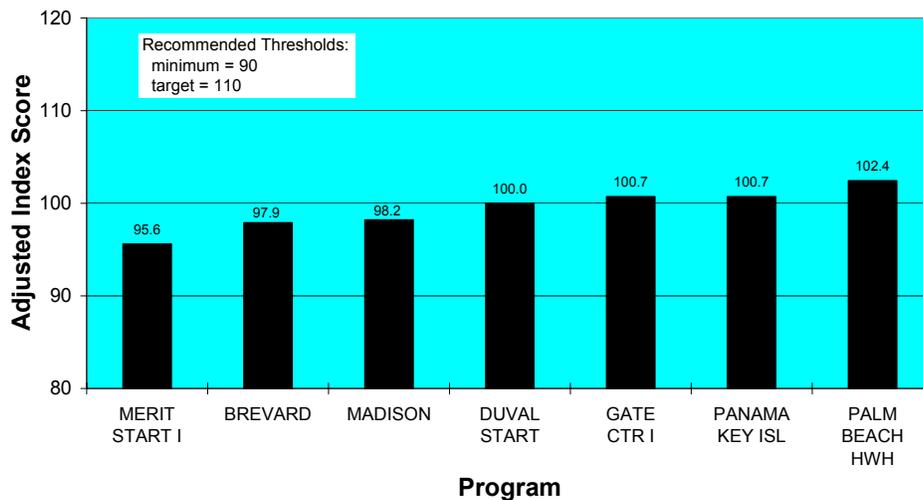
Performance: Halfway Houses for Males, for an



example.

In contrast, scores for all programs in a group clustered closely around 100 implied that efforts to improve must be done systemically, by changing program models or altering screening or placement criteria. This pattern suggests the need for policy-level attention by the Legislature, the Governor or the Secretary of DJJ. See the following chart, 1998 Performance: Group Treatment Homes, for an example.

**1998 Performance: Group Treatment Homes
and L6 HWHs (males avg. < 15 yrs)**



The spread in performance scores for group treatment homes and halfway houses for younger youth is less than seven points on the performance index, in contrast to a spread of nearly 40 points for contracted halfway houses for older males. Lessons to be learned from the better-performing halfway houses may be used to improve performance among other halfway houses. For the group treatment homes, however, any substantial improvements in performance will need systemic changes by the Legislature, the Governor and the DJJ Secretary.

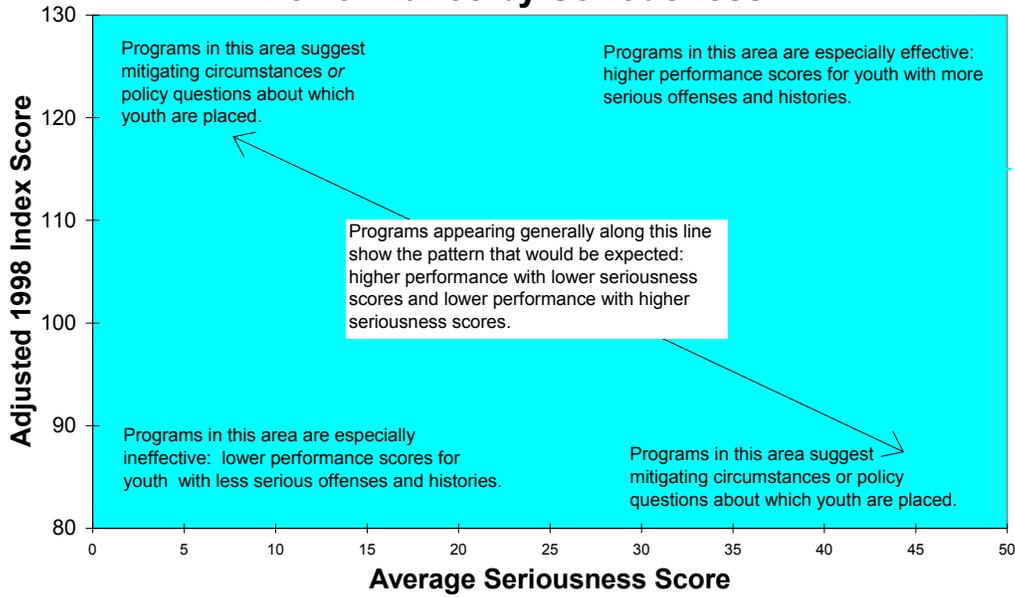
In the second analysis, performance index scores were examined in relation to the average seriousness, average age at entry, cost per stay and average length of stay. The tool for this type of analysis is a scatterplot.

This type of analysis generates possible explanations for good and poor performance. It suggests mitigating circumstances to consider in use of performance thresholds and raises policy issues improving program performance among the other programs in the group. Good performance that is associated with differences in seriousness index scores may mitigate any consequences to follow from those findings. Good performance associated with higher costs or longer lengths of stay might raise policy issues about exit criteria, or about the DJJ's management of its budgets and waiting lists.

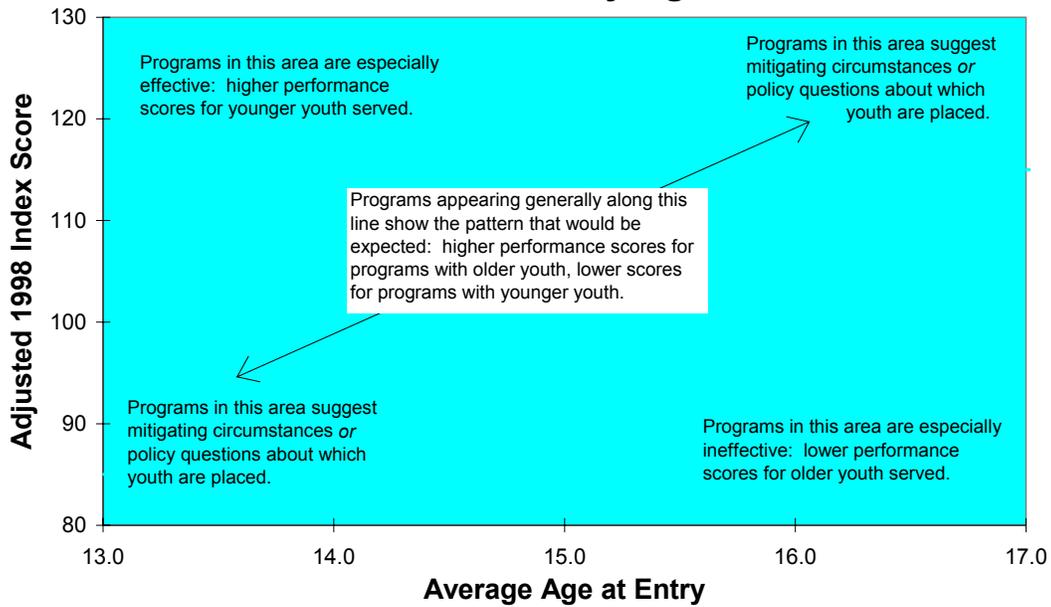
This type of analysis also identified programs as particularly effective, ineffective, efficient or inefficient. These programs may warrant closer examination by the DJJ. If deeper explanations can be found, lessons might be transferred to other programs in the group.

Examples are shown below, followed by the scatterplots for the contracted halfway houses for males.

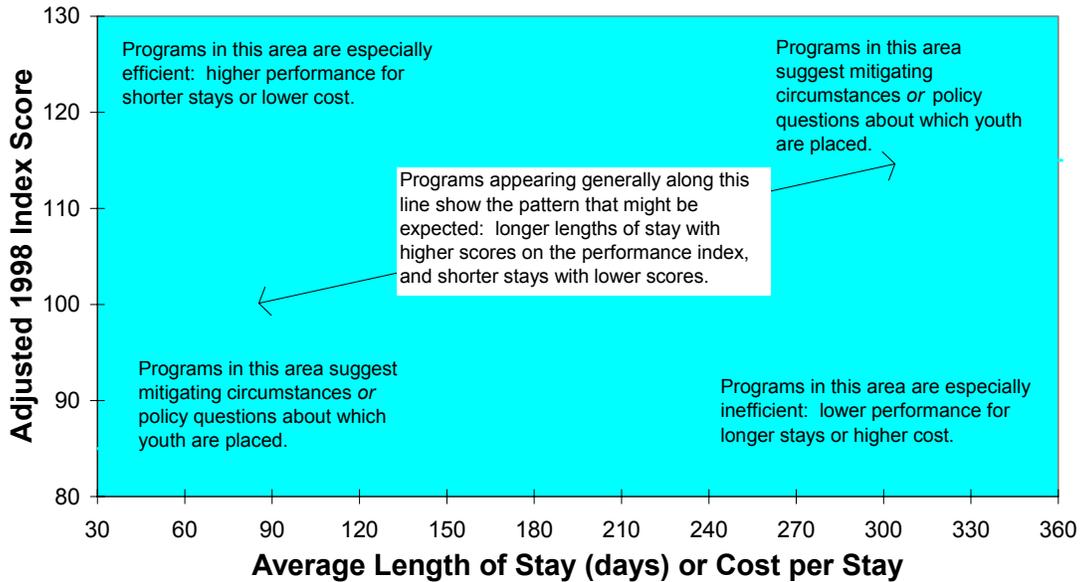
EXAMPLE: Performance by Seriousness



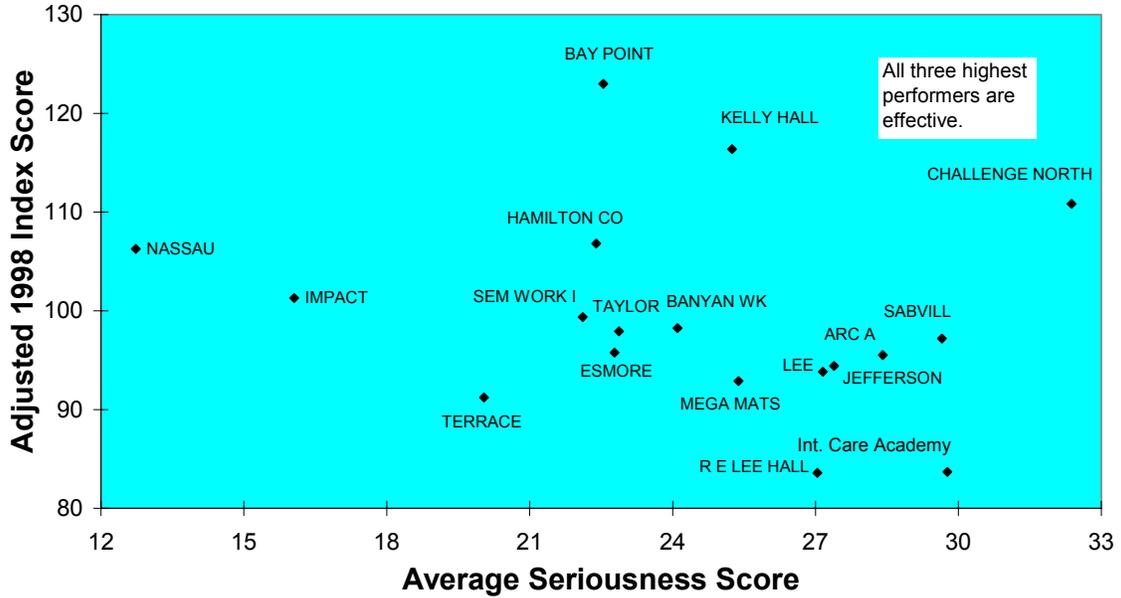
EXAMPLE: Performance by Age



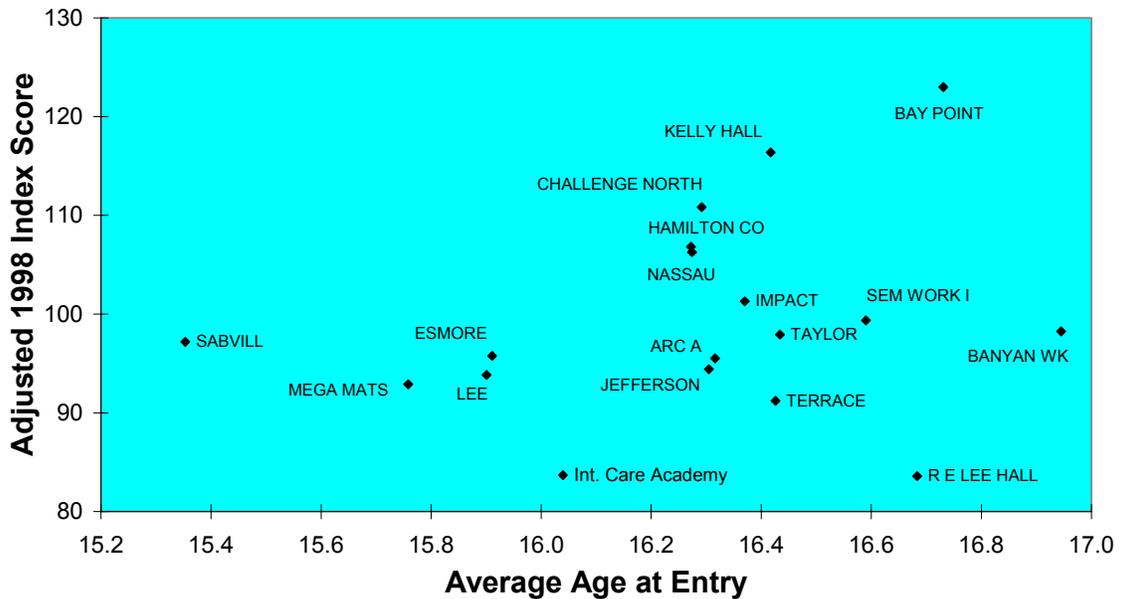
EXAMPLE: Performance by Length of Stay or Cost



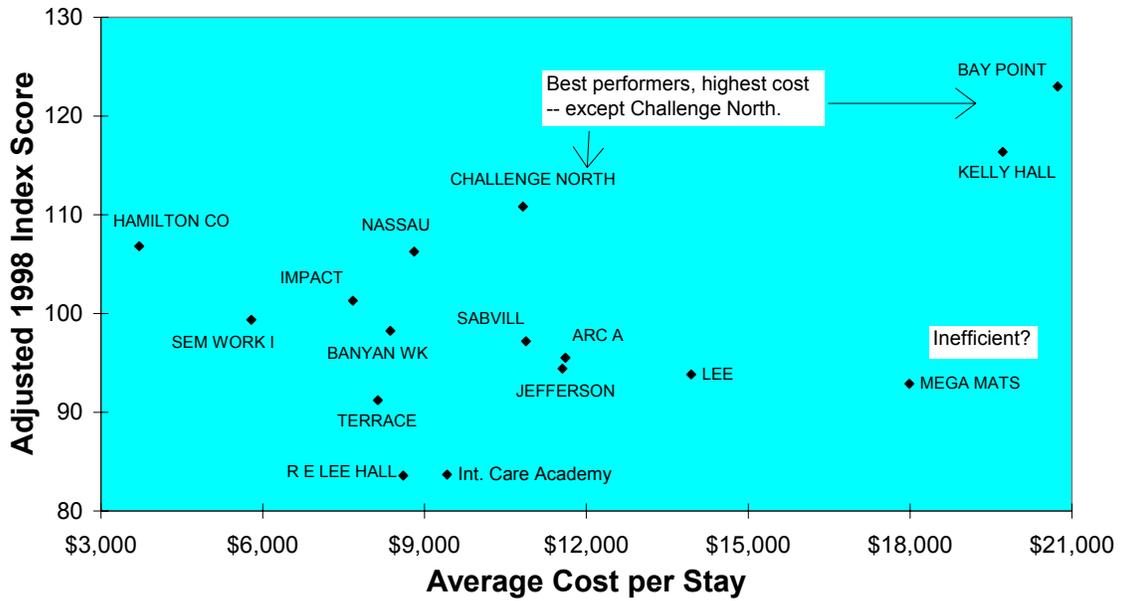
Halfway Houses for Males (contracted): Performance by Seriousness



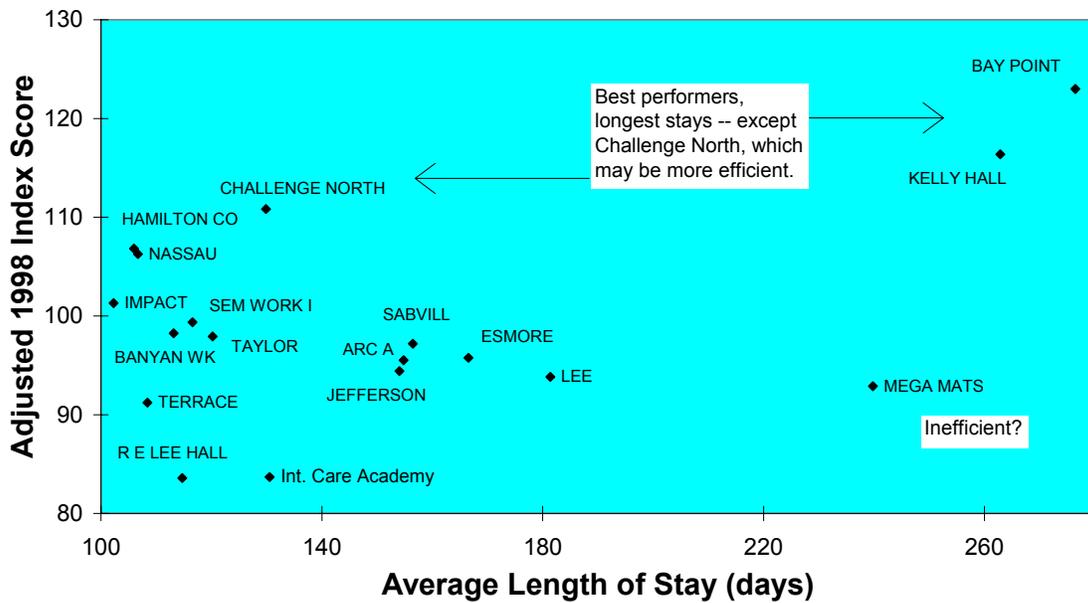
Halfway Houses for Males (contracted): Performance by Age



Halfway Houses for Males (contracted): Performance by Cost



Halfway Houses for Males (contracted): Performance by Length of Stay



The review of the analyses of performance among contracted halfway houses for males indicated:

- The two programs that scored highest on the performance index, Bay Point and Kelly Hall, also showed higher costs and longer lengths of stay. Many providers report pressure from the DJJ to shorten lengths of stay, both for managing tight DJJ budgets and to place youth who are on waiting lists for halfway-house placements. The department may wish to test carefully the potential benefit of extending the length of stay in some halfway houses. The design for such a test should consider other important factors in those programs selected for changes. These factors include the integrity of the underlying treatment design, the qualifications of its staff with respect to that specific intervention model and the degree of coherence or integration of the model with respect to the educational component.
- Challenge North, the other high-performing halfway house, serves youth with the highest average seriousness scores and without the additional costs and lengths of stay that Kelly Hall and Bay Point show. Challenge North, upon closer examination by DJJ analysts and other contract providers, may offer lessons for use by other halfway houses.
- These analyses suggested no explanation to mitigate the findings that the performance of R. E. Lee Hall and Intensive Care Academy was below the minimum satisfactory threshold. Intensive Care Academy has been closed. R. E. Lee Hall warrants a closer look by DJJ contract and program managers, with the intent of explaining more fully its low performance score and developing specific plans to improve performance.
- The Manatee Adolescent Treatment Services program (MEGA MATS) appears to be inefficient – its performance score of 95, while above the recommended minimum threshold of 90, is not as high as it is for Kelly Hall and Bay Point, which also showed longer stays and higher costs. The DJJ should look for an explanation, and if needed, develop a plan to improve performance or to reduce the length of stay and costs. This program may serve youth with more serious mental health problems than are found in other halfway houses. If so, the DJJ might justify its performance and take no other action. Or, the department could alter its placement policy for this program, or reclassify the program as a special-needs program.

Summary of Group-by-Group Performance Analyses

Performance index scores were analyzed for 15 groups of programs. The programs analyzed were grouped according to the similarity of services delivered, and to the extent possible, the average seriousness scores of youth released and their average ages at entry. For halfway houses, programs for females were analyzed separately, and for males, contracted programs were grouped separately from state-operated programs.

The specific program groups analyzed and the group-by-group charts and scatterplots appear in Appendix 4. The results of those analyses are summarized here.

Programs with High and Low Performance Index Scores

The following tables show programs with index scores above 110 and with index scores below 90, with comments that describe possible mitigating factors:

High-Scoring Programs

Program	Score	Comments
AMI Day Treatment:		
JMI East and West	120/121	Lowest seriousness scores in group ^a
Level 4 Wilderness Camps		
STEP II	114	Lowest seriousness scores in group; also shortest ALOS.
Level 6 Halfway Houses for Males		
Bay Point	125	ALOS nearly 7 months (4 - 5 typical), costs high ^b
Kelly Hall	119	ALOS nearly 7 months (4 - 5 typical), costs high ^b
Challenge North	113	Highest seriousness scores, ALOS < 5 months ^b
Level 6 Special Needs		
GUYS Dual Diagnosis	111	Oldest average age in group
TPC Village	115	Lowest seriousness scores in group
Boot Camps		
Boot Camps for Females	115	Lowest seriousness, youngest in group, short ALOS
Martin County Boot Camp	110	High seriousness scores, youngest for males, long ALOS
Level 8 Intensive Halfway Houses		
ARC	114	Older youth, typical seriousness and ALOS
Training Schools		
Glen Mills School	110	Oldest youth, longest ALOS (nearly 1.5 years)

Notes:

^aIn all types of programs except for those in Level 8, District 4 (and Duval County, for JASP) shows markedly lower seriousness scores than do other districts. These low seriousness scores for the JMI Day Treatment Programs may represent differences in charging practices by state attorneys in that judicial circuit, rather than youth with less serious histories or offenses.

^bThe markedly higher performance scores for Bay Point and Kelly Hall also hold when recidivism alone is examined.

Low-scoring Programs

Program	Score	Comments
JASP		
St. Lucie County	89	This contract has been canceled, being rebid.
Special Intensive Groups		
ICCS Manatee	89	No apparent mitigating factors.
Day Treatment		
Fort Lauderdale TRY	79	Highest seriousness score in group.
The Oaks II	81	Youngest in group.
OMI West	84	Typical seriousness, age; long ALOS.
The Oaks I	85	Second youngest in group.
L4 Wilderness Camps		
Myakka STOP	88	Highest seriousness, youngest, longest stay. ^a
Halfway Houses for Females		
Charter	87	Youngest in group; high seriousness score.
State-run Halfway Houses, Males		
Volusia	81	Short lengths of stay, low costs.
Contract Halfway Houses, Males		
R. E. Lee Hall	86	No apparent mitigating factors.
Intensive Care Academy	86	Program has been closed.
L6 Work & Wilderness Camps		
Escambia Outward Bound	81	No apparent mitigating factors.
Space Coast Residential, AMI	81	No apparent mitigating factors.
Boot Camps		
Volusia	83	No apparent mitigating factors.
(L8) Intensive Halfway Houses		
Esmore	86	Short ALOS.

Notes:

^aBecause of higher seriousness scores and younger ages, the population of Myakka STOP may be more difficult to treat successfully.

Variation in Program Performance Index Scores

Three groups of programs showed relatively little variation in performance index scores for 1998: group treatment homes (with halfway houses for males younger than 15 years), serious or habitual offender programs (SHOPs), and training schools. For these program groups, there is little to suggest that substantial performance improvements can be achieved program by program. Instead, performance improvements will need systemic attention to the features in common across all programs in the group. Of these three groups, the group treatment homes and halfway houses for younger males probably warrant closer attention: there are few, if any, other placement options for residential commitment for serious offenders as young as those placed in these programs, and for some years, this group of programs has shown higher rates of recidivism than other programs.

There is nothing in the analyses of performance data for group treatment homes to suggest what might make improvements. Systemic changes are needed if performance is to improve. Research generally suggests that intensive and sustained interventions that focus on families and schools as well as the youth themselves may be necessary. This implies a systemic change in the program model. Research also suggests the need to identify those at risk of becoming young chronic offenders at elementary school ages, much earlier than most delinquency prevention and early intervention programs in Florida. This suggests a systemic change in the target population and the delivery of prevention services.

In contrast to group treatment homes, most of the program groups show sufficient variation in performance across programs to suggest that significant performance improvements are possible program-by-program. The DJJ and many contract providers could effectively use these performance analyses to target intensive performance reviews of programs with extremely good and extremely poor performance. Lessons learned from those intensive reviews, or process evaluations, could be transferred among other programs in each group.

Other Model Programs

Analyses of scatterplots of performance and seriousness, age, cost and length of stay identified other community control and SIG programs that, while not scoring above 110, show particular promise for closer study. These programs showed performance scores for 1998 above what would have been expected, based on the seriousness scores of the youth served, their average ages, their cost per stay or their length of stay. Like those programs that scored above 110, these programs may warrant special study to identify useful lessons for improved performance.

The SIG programs are ICCS Hillsborough (108.3), White Intensive SIG (109.7) and SIG Lake (104.4). The ICCS Hillsborough and White Intensive programs scored high on the 1998 performance index, while the youth released showed high seriousness scores and relatively short average lengths of stay. The SIG Lake program also achieved a good performance index scores yet served youth with high seriousness scores. The community control programs are those of Districts 11 (109.9) and 12 (107.6). District 11 showed youth released with a high concentration of prior adjudications and typical lengths of stay

for community control. District 12 achieved its high index score with even shorter lengths of stay.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this report, the Juvenile Justice Accountability 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 Accountability Board is concerned about the following:

- Evidence that very young children are being arrested and processed in a juvenile justice system that is not equipped to work effectively with elementary school-aged children and their families;
- Evidence that the supervision provided by aftercare programs is inadequate due to its basic design;
- Minority youth are under-represented in prevention programs and over-represented in commitment programs compared to their proportion in the general population;
- 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.

Elementary School-Aged Children in the Delinquency System

Children 12 years of age and younger sometimes commit acts that would be considered crimes when committed by older youth or adults. More than 3,000 children 10 years of age and younger 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. Through its young chronic offender study, the JJAB found that a significant group of elementary school-aged offenders will go on to become chronic offenders, the small number of juveniles who are responsible for a disproportionate number of crimes. These findings indicated that children at risk of becoming chronic were identifiable for the purpose of targeted prevention efforts.

Elementary school-aged children and their families may not be served well through a juvenile justice system designed to intervene with adolescents. 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 families of these children to exercise appropriate guidance and supervision also must be assessed and supported.

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 elementary school-aged 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 DJJ: *The DJJ should reconsider its policy goals and strategies for addressing the problems associated with families and their elementary school-aged children who have been referred to the juvenile justice system for criminal behavior. The DJJ should conduct a multi-disciplinary 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 state entities and agencies, including the JJAB, DCF, and DH, and their respective services providers, along with other executive branch agencies, as needed. The study should be complete not later than December 31, 1999, and at a minimum should include findings and recommendations with respect to the following:*

- *The number and age of elementary school-aged children who have committed crimes, and the types of offenses they have committed in the past five years;*
- *Descriptions of the jurisdiction, services, and funding that each state agency 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;*
- *An assessment of the ability of the families of these children to provide adequate adult supervision, and a description of avenues of aid to support and empower parents or primary caregivers in that role.*
- *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, especially with regard to CINS/FINS provisions;*
- *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 DJJ: *The DJJ should evaluate and re-design assessment and screening procedures to access information about patterns of behavior from parents and especially teachers, who observe these children on a daily basis and have a more objective perspective.*

Recommendation to the DJJ: *The DJJ should evaluate and re-design diversion and intervention programming to make better connections with, and provide support to, the parents or primary caregivers in their role as providers of care, guidance and supervision of difficult children.*

Recommendation to the Legislature: *Based upon the content of the recommended study, the Legislature should appropriate funds for the development, implementation and evaluation of pilot projects for programs targeted at families and their elementary school-aged children 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 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.*

Provision of Aftercare Services

A joint research project conducted by the JJAB and the DJJ has been completed, and the final report, along with recommendations, has been released. As JJAB staff studied the outcomes of aftercare programs, they found that the failure rate of youth after admission to aftercare, including offenses during supervision and recidivism, exceeds 50%. Almost one-third of youth admitted to aftercare will re-offend while under supervision of the program. These findings, those of the joint research project, and the results of other research point to the need for continual adult supervision of these youth upon their release from residential treatment until the youth begins to re-build a history of positive behavior.

Traditional aftercare programming is a model in which the juvenile probation officer provides supervision and coordinates services for the client. Supervision is considered a process of making occasional one-on-one contacts with the youth, at varying levels of frequency. Little is known, however, about the amount of time these youth spend unsupervised by their parents or primary caregivers. Researchers in delinquency have found an association between the lack of direct adult supervision and offending behavior. It may be necessary to re-define supervision beyond occasional contacts by juvenile probation officers.

Recommendation to the DJJ: *The DJJ should conduct a study of a sample of juveniles upon their release from residential treatment in order to document the amount of time they are without direct adult supervision, and its relation to re-offending behavior.*

Recommendation to the DJJ: *The DJJ should, in light of the results of the research, consider re-designing aftercare programming, and developing pilot programs across the state which focus on empowering the parents or primary caregivers as providers of constant adult supervision, care and guidance of youth released from treatment programs.*

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 Outcome Evaluation Report* (Doc. #98-001-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 that 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. The Board also recommends 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.

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.*

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 Outcome Evaluation Report* and the issues remain. 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 DJJ: *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.*

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 diversion and intervention

programs, commitment placements, and in identifying the full costs of providing services.

As state attorneys and judges increasingly rely on formal diversion and intervention programs for first-time offenders and elementary school-aged children, the effectiveness of these programs must be assessed. In addition to program outputs, data should be collected on program costs in order to understand each community's ability to provide such services.

Recommendation to the DJJ: *The DJJ should begin to develop program and cost data from community-based diversion programs.*

The JJIS is now operational, 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 began to issue pay increases to district staff to focus on issues of data integrity as an addition to their current workload. It is not known whether individuals with these responsibilities are required to have any special data processing skills. 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.

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 entered 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 be effective, 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.

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APPENDICES