



BRIEFING REPORT

Analysis of the Respite Care Alternative to Detention for Domestic Violence-Involved Youth

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Issue:

In keeping with the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) and the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice's (FDJJ) Roadmap to System Excellence, the Department has examined the relationship between respite care placement and recidivism among youth charged with misdemeanor domestic violence offenses. In 2012, FDJJ initiated a respite care placement alternative to secure detention for youth who committed a misdemeanor domestic violence related offense, but did not score for detention on the Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (DRAI). This analysis examines the effectiveness of the respite care placement alternative with respect to reducing the likelihood of future recidivism.

Methodology:

All youth included in this study were released from either respite care or secure detention between October 1, 2014 and May 1, 2017. The youth included in the study were referred for a misdemeanor domestic violence offense and did not score for secure detention (i.e., scored less than 12 on the DRAI) and thus were eligible for respite care placement. If youth were placed in respite care at any point throughout the study period, they were placed in the respite care sample rather than the secure detention sample in order to gain a better estimate of the effectiveness of respite care placement. Youth who were 17 years or younger at the time of release were removed from the sample to allow for a one-year follow up period within the juvenile justice system. The respite care sample of youth were matched to the youth released from secure detention based on demographic, familial, juvenile justice system involvement, and individual characteristics so that the two groups were statistically identical. This allowed for the effect of respite care placement to be isolated. The final sample consisted of 2,715 youth, 1,193 of which were placed in a respite care shelter and 1,522 youth who were placed in secure detention (and did not receive respite care treatment) during the same time period.

Results:

For the average youth, respite care placement was found to decrease the likelihood of the following:

- For the average youth placed in respite care, respite placement decreases the probability of being charged with any new juvenile offense by 5.5 percentage points
- For the average youth placed in respite care, respite placement decreases the probability of being charged with a new felony offense by 5.3 percentage points

For Hispanic youth, however, respite care placement was found to increase the likelihood of being charged with any new juvenile offense, being charged with a new felony offense, and being charged with a new domestic violence offense within one year of release.

Brief Overview of the Respite Care Alternative in Florida:

Supporting statutory language for this initiative can be found in Florida Statute 985.601 subsection (3)(a):

The department shall develop or contract for diversified and innovative programs to provide rehabilitative treatment, including early intervention and prevention, diversion, comprehensive intake, case management, diagnostic and classification assessments, trauma-informed care, individual and family counseling, family engagement resources and programs, gender-specific programming, shelter care, diversified detention care emphasizing alternatives to secure detention, diversified probation, halfway houses, foster homes, community-based substance abuse treatment services, community-based mental health treatment services, community-based residential and nonresidential programs, mother-infant programs, and environmental programs. Each program shall place particular emphasis on reintegration and conditional release for all children in the program.

Respite care placements are thus expected to provide youth with counseling, care, and related programming that would otherwise be unavailable to them in secure detention. Accordingly, respite care placement would be expected to reduce the likelihood of recidivism by connecting youth with needed services that would otherwise be inaccessible to them. This report assesses the validity of that assumption by examining a variety of recidivism measures among matched respite care and securely detained misdemeanor domestic violence youth.

Methodology:

All data in this briefing sheet were derived from the Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS) and analyzed by the Office of Research and Data Integrity. These data represent youth charged with misdemeanor domestic violence offenses aged 17 or younger at the time of their release (to allow for a one-year follow up) from respite care or secure detention between October 1, 2014 and May 1, 2017.

Using logistic regression and propensity score matching (PSM) techniques to control for other factors known to influence criminal propensity and the probability of re-arrest, this report examines the effect of being placed in respite care over the alternative of never experiencing respite care and instead being placed in secure detention among youth arrested for a misdemeanor domestic violence offense. In order to assess various measures of recidivism that may be impacted by respite care placement, three different outcomes were compared between the two groups, all with a one-year follow up period. The following outcomes were assessed:

1. *Any new charge* – Any new referral for a juvenile offense during the one-year follow up period was included in this measure.
2. *New felony charge* - Any new referral for a felony offense during the one-year follow up period was included in this measure.

3. *New domestic violence-related charge* - Any new referral for an offense flagged as domestic violence related during the one-year follow up period was included in this measure.

Propensity score matching creates an appropriate counterfactual (control group), meaning that for all intents and purposes, the youth in the securely detained group are identical to the youth in the respite care group after matching. This assures that any significant impact of the treatment (respite care placement) on the outcome can be attributed to the treatment itself rather than selection bias caused by fundamentally different youth routinely ending up in one group over the other. This method is used to estimate the average treatment effect on the treated (ATT)¹. The ATT estimates the average difference in recidivism that would be found if all youth who were arrested for a misdemeanor domestic violence-related offense were placed in respite care versus if all youth who were arrested for a misdemeanor domestic violence-related offense did not receive respite care and were instead placed in secure detention. In the multivariate analyses presented in this report, the following control variables were included in order to isolate the impact of respite care placement on the likelihood of recidivism:

- Gender: Male, Female
- Race: Black, White, Other
- Ethnicity: Hispanic, Non-Hispanic
- Age at Release from Respite Care or Secure Detention
- Address Change
- Prior Misdemeanor Charges
- Overall Risk to Score on the PACT: Low Risk, Moderate Risk, Moderate-High Risk, High Risk
- Age at First Offense
- Gang Member or Affiliate
- Delinquent Peers
- Prosocial Peers
- DCF Placement
- History of Running Away
- Victim of Abuse
- Victim of Neglect
- History of Anger/Irritability
- History of Depression
- Parent Substance Use
- Current Household Jail History
- Judicial Circuit of Disposition²

¹ Li defines the ATT as, “the average difference that would be found if everyone in the treated group received treatment compared with if none of these individuals in the treated group received treatment” (2013:190).

² Circuit of disposition was measure dichotomously, using circuit 14 as the reference category.

Comprehensive Results:

The present study included 2,715 youth charged with a misdemeanor domestic violence offense who did not score for secure detention (i.e., scored less than 12 on the DRAI) who were subsequently detained or placed in a respite care shelter and were 17 years or younger when they were released from this placement between October 1, 2014 and May 1, 2017. This sample included 1,522 youth who were securely detained and 1,193 youth who were placed on probation.

The first step of the analysis was ensuring that each of the three measures of recidivism were correlated with respite care placement. Placement into respite care was associated with a lesser likelihood of receiving any new charge ($r = -0.065$, $p < 0.001$) or a new felony charge ($r = -0.071$, $p < 0.001$) within one year of release, however, there was no statistically significant relationship between respite care placement and receiving a new domestic violence-related charge ($r = -0.003$, $p = 0.861$). These p values indicate that the probability of finding a statistically significant association between respite care placement and any new charge or a new felony charge by chance alone when in fact no association exists is less than 0.1%. The large p value for the relationship between respite care placement and receiving a new domestic violence-related charge indicates that respite care placement is not reliably associated with receiving a new domestic violence-related charge. Put simply, youth who went to respite care fared no better than youth who were securely detained in terms of returning to the juvenile justice system with a new domestic violence-related offense.

Next, difference in means t -tests were run to ensure that the respite care and secure detention groups were significantly different from one another before matching to support the use of propensity score matching. For the sake of brevity, only variables that were significantly different between the groups are displaying in Table 1.

Table 1
Significant Differences between Respite Care and Secure Detention Youth (Before Matching)

Variable	Respite Youth Mean	Detention Youth Mean	<i>t</i> value ³	<i>p</i> value
Any New Charge	0.66	0.72	3.38	< 0.001
New Felony Charge	0.29	0.36	3.71	< 0.001
Male	0.52	0.64	6.31	< 0.001
Black	0.46	0.41	3.06	0.002
Address Change	0.25	0.29	2.09	0.037
Prior Misdemeanor Charges	1.45	1.96	4.93	< 0.001
PACT Risk to Reoffend	1.53	1.80	7.42	< 0.001
Delinquent Peers	0.51	0.55	2.00	0.045
DCF Placement	0.16	0.20	2.43	0.015
Victim of Neglect	0.09	0.11	2.08	0.037
Victim of Abuse	0.18	0.24	3.63	< 0.001
History of Anger/Irritability	0.43	0.49	2.86	0.004
Current Household Jail History	0.30	0.33	2.12	0.034
Judicial Circuit 1	0.03	0.08	5.83	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 2	0.05	0.004	7.95	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 3	0.01	0.001	2.54	0.011
Judicial Circuit 4	0.15	0.03	11.18	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 6	0.08	0.06	2.05	0.041
Judicial Circuit 7	0.02	0.02	6.43	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 8	0.02	0.01	2.56	0.011
Judicial Circuit 9	0.10	0.14	2.96	0.003
Judicial Circuit 10	0.18	0.04	11.90	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 11	0.04	0.02	2.58	0.010
Judicial Circuit 12	0.01	0.04	4.61	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 15	0.01	0.06	6.56	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 18	0.01	0.09	8.78	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 19	0.05	0.03	2.78	0.006
Judicial Circuit 20	0.03	0.08	4.70	< 0.001

Source: Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, Office of Research & Data Integrity

Table 1 shows that without accounting for inherent differences (selection biases) between the two groups, the securely detained youth are significantly more likely to recidivate than the respite care youth. As expected from prior recidivism research (Sullivan et al., 2016; Wiley et

³ The *t* value refers to the distribution of probabilities used to calculate the *p* value. This distribution is primarily determined by the size of the sample used to obtain the results. In a normal distribution of probabilities (such as is assumed here), a *t* value of 1.96 corresponds to a *p* value of 0.05.

al., 2013; Wright et al., 2016), this group is more likely to be: Male, transient, have more prior charges, be assessed as a greater risk to reoffend, currently spend time with antisocial peers, be a victim of abuse or neglect, have a history of anger/irritability, and have at least one member of their current household with a history of imprisonment. Contrary to prior recidivism research (Johnson et al., 2011; Ostermann et al., 2015), however, youth in the securely detained group are less likely to be Black.

The next step in the analysis was to estimate the propensity for each youth to be placed in respite care, given all of the covariates previously listed, using logistic regression. The significant results from this logistic regression analysis are highlighted below in Table 2:

Table 2
Significant Variables in Predicting the Likelihood of Respite Care Placement

Variable	Odds Ratio	<i>p</i> value
Male	0.60	< 0.001
Age at Release	1.11	0.036
PACT Risk to Reoffend	0.74	< 0.001
Age at First Offense	0.81	0.003
Judicial Circuit 1	2.73	0.036
Judicial Circuit 2	72.71	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 3	57.29	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 4	33.43	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 5	11.18	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 6	12.89	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 8	19.16	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 9	4.99	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 10	30.70	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 11	16.64	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 13	7.56	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 17	5.46	< 0.001
Judicial Circuit 19	13.42	< 0.001

Source: Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, Office of Research & Data Integrity

Males, youth who were older at the time of their first offense, and youth assessed by the PACT as higher risk to reoffend were significantly less likely to be placed in respite care as opposed to secure detention. Conversely, older youth and youth residing in judicial circuits 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 17, or 19 were significantly more likely to be placed in respite care.

Next, youth from each group were matched based on this estimated propensity score. To ensure that these matches were actually “good” matches (i.e., that matched youth were similar in terms of demographics, previous offending, and risk factors), a 0.03 caliper was used. This means that that two matched individuals can only differ in their likelihood of receiving respite care

placement (propensity score) by a *maximum* of 3%. The matched sample was then used to calculate the average treatment effect on the treated (ATT), that is, the average gain from respite care treatment for those who were actually treated. In this context, the ATT refers to the average decrease in recidivism for youth who were placed in respite care rather than secure detention. The estimated ATT for receiving any new charge and a new felony charge are displayed below in Table 3.

Table 3
Estimated Average Treatment Effects of the Treated for Respite Care Youth

Outcome	ATT	<i>p</i> value
Any New Charge	-0.055	0.020
New Felony Charge	-0.053	0.044

Source: Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, Office of Research & Data Integrity

As can be seen in Table 3, the average treatment effect on the treated was significant for both measures of recidivism.

These results should be interpreted in the following manner:

- For the average youth in the treatment group, placement into respite care decreases the probability of receiving any new charge within one year of release by 5.5 percentage points.
- For the average youth in the treatment group, placement into respite care decreases the probability of receiving a new felony charge within one year of release by 5.3 percentage points.

Since the third measure of recidivism, a new domestic violence-related charge, was not significantly related to respite care placement at the bivariate level, no multivariate analyses were run for that outcome. Thus, the data suggest that there is no relationship between respite care placement and receiving a new domestic violence-related charge within one year of release. To examine whether the relationships between respite care and these three measures of recidivism vary between judicial circuit or different demographic groups, the sample was broken down by circuit, gender, age, race, and ethnicity and bivariate analyses were run for each group. Any group with a significant bivariate relationship between respite care placement and recidivism was subjected to a multivariate test of the relationship using logistic regression. Logistic regression was necessary to ensure that observed bivariate relationships were not spurious (i.e., false relationships that are actually caused by a third variable not considered in the analysis). Logistic regression was chosen specifically since its use is appropriate for dichotomous outcomes such as the three measures of recidivism examined in this study.⁴ The

⁴ Propensity score matching was not used for the subsamples due to the smaller sample sizes and inability to find appropriate matches based on the covariates used in the full sample.

specific geographic and demographic groups with significant logistic regression results are shown below in Table 4.

Table 4
Subsamples for which Respite Care Placement Significantly Predicts Recidivism

Subsample	Outcome	Odds Ratio	p value
Males	Any New Charge	0.72	0.004
White	Any New Charge	0.75	0.021
Hispanic, Circuit 9	Any New Charge	6.07	0.019
White	New Felony Charge	0.65	0.030
Hispanic, Circuit 9	New Felony Charge	14.37	0.001
Hispanic Females	New Felony Charge	3.20	0.001
Hispanic, Circuit 9	New Domestic Violence Charge	3.25	0.044
Hispanic Females	New Domestic Violence Charge	12.92	< 0.001

Source: Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, Office of Research & Data Integrity

For males and White youth, being placed in respite care was associated with significantly lower odds of receiving a new charge within one year of release. Curiously, however, for Hispanic youth in judicial circuit 9, respite care placement significantly increased the odds of receiving a new charge within one year of release. Similarly, for White youth, being placed in respite care significantly lowered the odds of receiving a new felony charge, whereas for Hispanic females and Hispanic youth in judicial circuit 9, respite care placement significantly increased the odds of receiving a new felony charge within one year of release. Finally, for Hispanic females and Hispanic youth in judicial circuit 9, respite care placement was found to significantly increase the odds of receiving a new domestic violence-related charge within one year of release.

Taken together, these results suggest that respite care placement is detrimental to Hispanic youth. It is unclear why this may be the case, however, and future inquiry is warranted. One limitation of the current study is that recidivism was examined using arrests rather than adjudications. It is possible that the effects of respite care placement may differ when court processing is taken into account.

References

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