

JUVENILE JUSTICE

JUVENILE JUSTICE DATA PROJECT

A Partnership to Improve State and Local Outcomes

SUMMARY REPORT

Phase I: Survey of Interventions and Programs

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following taskforce members contributed their time, knowledge and expertise to the **Juvenile Justice Data Project: A Partnership to Improve State and Local Outcomes.**

Berkeley Center for Criminal Justice
www.law.berkeley.edu/centers/bccj

Books Not Bars
www.booksnotbars.org

California Academy of Child
& Adolescent Psychiatry

California Alliance of Child & Family Services
www.cacfs.org

California Budget Project
www.cbp.org

California Children & Families Commission
www.cffc.ca.gov

California Department of Alcohol
& Drug Programs
www.adp.ca.gov

California Department of Corrections
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www.cdcr.ca.gov

California Department of Education
www.cde.ca.gov

California Department of Justice
Criminal Justice Statistics Center
www.ag.ca.gov/cjsc/index.php

California Department of Social Services
www.dss.cahwnet.gov

California District Attorneys Association
www.cdaa.org

California Institute for Mental Health
www.cimh.org

California Mental Health Directors Association
www.cmhda.org

California Police Chiefs Association
www.californiapolicechiefs.org

California State Association of Counties
www.csac.counties.org

California State Sheriffs' Association
www.calsheriffs.org

Center for Research on Crime
www.USC.edu/go/ssri

Center for Social Services Research
cssr.berkeley.edu

Chief Probation Officers of California
www.cpoc.org

Commonweal
www.commonweal.org

Corrections Standards Authority
www.cdcr.ca.gov/DivisionsBoards/CSA

Contra Costa County Probation Department
www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/depart/probation

County Welfare Directors Association
www.cwda.org

Division of Juvenile Justice
www.cya.ca.gov/DivisionsBoards/DJJ

Faith Communities for Families and Children
www.fcforfc.org

Fresno Unified School District
www.fresno.k12.ca.us

Fight Crime Invest in Kids
www.fightcrime.org/ca

i.e. communications
www.iecomm.org

Judicial Council
www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc

National Council on Crime and Delinquency
www.nccd-crc.org

Orange County Probation Department
www.oc.ca.gov/Probation

Sacramento County Probation Department
www.probation.saccounty.net

San Francisco Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice
www.sfgov.org/site/mocj

Seneca Center
www.senecacenter.org

Solano County Probation Department
www.co.solano.ca.us/Department/Department.asp?nav.id=91

State Public Defenders Association

Youth Law Center
www.ylc.org

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PHASE I: Survey of Interventions and Programs

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INTRODUCTION

On any given day more than 100,000 youth are under the jurisdiction of California's juvenile justice system – in secure facilities, private treatment programs or on probation or parole. County probation departments manage 95% of these cases. The state's Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), is responsible for approximately 5% of the juvenile justice caseload.

It is the responsibility of the juvenile justice authorities, according to the California Welfare and Institutions Code, to assure public safety, ensure accountability and to mandate "punishment as is consistent with rehabilitation." In fulfilling these purposes, the Code calls for interventions that preserve and strengthen family ties whenever possible, with removal from home only when necessary to protect the minor or the public. The Code also calls for juvenile courts and public agencies to act in conformity with a comprehensive set of objectives established to improve system performance in a vigorous and ongoing manner.¹

The public, policymakers, involved stakeholders and youth themselves are in agreement: we can do a better job at realizing these goals. But without reliable and meaningful data, it is difficult to identify best practices and effective programs. The Juvenile Justice Data Project (JJDP), a partnership of state and local stakeholders, represents a response to this need for data. JJDP is a multi-year effort to better define desired outcomes, understand the capacity of current data systems to track outcomes, and ultimately to improve the outcomes for youth in the juvenile justice system. In its first phase, summarized here (with additional detail in the full report available on www.cdcr.ca.gov), the JJDP has taken two important steps. It has: (1) determined what data is already collected by the counties and what is not, and (2) established a baseline description of practices from which the state and counties can make informed, evidence-based policy decisions.

This Phase I report provides the results of the *Survey of Interventions and Programs: A Continuum of Graduated Responses for Juvenile Justice in California*, executed in 2006. It provides the first ever statewide data snapshot of the involvement of juveniles across the hundreds of community intervention programs, group homes, county camps and similar confinement programs,² juvenile halls³ and state facilities offered across the state by county probation departments and the DJJ.

WHAT IS THE JUVENILE JUSTICE DATA PROJECT?

The JJDP has its origins in Governor Schwarzenegger's Juvenile Justice Working Group, formed by the Governor in 2004. One of the primary areas of consensus and concern identified by the Working Group was a need for better statewide juvenile justice data collection and outcome information.

In October 2004, the Youth and Adult Corrections Agency (now the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation), the Youth Law Center and members of the Governor's Juvenile Justice Working Group formed a statewide taskforce: the California Juvenile Justice Accountability Project (CJJAP), subsequently renamed the Juvenile Justice Data Project (JJDP). The taskforce includes representatives from law enforcement, probation, corrections, county government, state agencies, advocacy groups, service providers, data analysts and policymakers who have given generously of their time to identify programs and processes to improve state and local outcomes for youth in California's juvenile justice system.⁴

While similar statewide planning and data projects have taken place in other states, including Oregon, Missouri, Washington and Minnesota, nothing of this scope had been attempted in a state as large and diverse as California. Realizing that it would be difficult to secure public funding on the desired schedule, the Youth Law Center obtained funding from the JEHT and Walter S. Johnson Foundations and Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund to staff the taskforce work, convene meetings, and provide the ability to collect and analyze data.

Early on, the taskforce identified the need to define desired outcomes, determine gaps in data collection and propose policies to encourage implementation of evidence-based practices. But from the beginning, it was difficult to move forward in defining outcomes or developing policy recommendations without a more complete understanding of current county practices, what counties do and do not collect with respect to information on services and various forms of confinement. To realize this goal, the JJDP enlisted the services of researchers at the University of Southern California's Center for Research on Crime⁵ (hereafter "USC researchers") to develop a survey and collect the necessary data.

The USC researchers developed the survey instrument using categories and strategies recognized by the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). OJJDP advocates that juvenile justice systems strive to involve the family and other core societal institutions, provide a swift response, identify juveniles with a high risk of re-offending, and involve juvenile offenders in a continuum of graduated sanctions. In this continuum system responses are gradually stepped up and stepped down as risk levels and violating behavior warrant, all the while providing services as needed.⁶



SURVEY METHODOLOGY

USC researchers worked with officials from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC), the California Department of Justice (DOJ), the Youth Law Center (YLC), and county-level probation staff to develop the statewide data survey. It was designed to collect consistent information on specific issues across the state with respect to rates of involvement in programs and interventions across the continuum of graduated responses, duration of services and characteristics of specific kinds of interventions.

The data in this report is meant to represent a “snapshot” of the current system as well as a baseline against which efforts to improve outcomes, restructure or realign the system can be compared in the future. This information may also prove useful in identifying trends, positive outcomes, disparities, discrepancies and variances to assist decision-makers regarding reform at the state and local levels.

The completion of the survey was voluntary and was itself a significant accomplishment given the level and detail of information requested. While some counties have a sophisticated data system available, many do not. The completion of the survey required significant staff resources from all counties. Fifty-five out of 58 counties completed at least some portion of the survey and, remarkably, 50 of the 58 county probation departments and the DJJ provided comprehensive data covering every level of the continuum of graduated responses and detention.⁷ This level of participation speaks to a high level of commitment to this project and to the on-going county and state partnership to improve state and local outcomes.

Counties were instructed to self-report the total count of juveniles being served in any capacity by county probation or the state DJJ on the day of the survey (excluding those in the intake process) and to categorize them according to a set of common definitions of graduated intervention responses and confinement established for this study (as listed in Figure 1a on page 4). For each program or intervention in use,

additional characteristics related to duration, intensity, content and outcomes were also requested. The resulting county-level tables (available at www.cdcr.ca.gov) are based on the 50 counties that completed the entire survey.

Rates of involvement at each level of response per 100,000 juvenile residents in the reporting counties were calculated. Two separate rates were calculated for DJJ youth correctional facilities, one for juveniles age 18 or younger and one for youth age 19 and older (because different denominators are used). Since 95% of the youth on DJJ parole were age 19 and older, only this rate is included in Figure 1b on page 5.



On any given day more than 100,000 youth are under the jurisdiction of California’s juvenile justice system.

JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Prior to a youth's entry into the juvenile justice system, law enforcement, schools and other community-based agencies on their own and in collaboration with county probation departments undertake substantial prevention and diversion efforts. Beyond these prevention and diversion efforts, the continuum of graduated responses (graduated sanctions) provided by the county probation departments and the state DJJ are described in Figure 1a.

Entry into the California juvenile justice system begins with a referral from law enforcement (or other agencies or individuals) to a county probation department based on an alleged law violation. Juvenile court and county probation departments then assign a level of response based on state statutes, local policies and resources, the offender's risk of re-offending and the principles of graduated sanctions. The lower steps in the continuum take place in the community – Community Probation Supervision. Early Intervention involves diversion, informal probation, or short-term interventions such as community service and restitution that are not court-ordered. Regular Probation Supervision and Intensive Probation Supervision are based on a court disposition for probation supervision in the community. Regular probation typically involves supervision by county probation officers and the provision of services as needed in the community. Intensive supervision involves programs that are more intensive and include a higher level of services, for example, special programs for violent, gang and sex offenders. The fourth level of community supervision, County Aftercare, is provided for youth stepping down from more intensive programs especially for those returning from out-of-home placement or county confinement.

If community supervision interventions are exhausted or inappropriate, a youth may be placed outside of the home in various settings. Juveniles may be placed in foster care, licensed group homes or community treatment facilities, just like children in the child welfare system. In the continuum defined here, this is called Community Placement. Juveniles may receive a disposition (analogous to a sentence) sending them to County Confinement in a county-operated ranch or camp or confinement in a juvenile detention facility. In addition, juveniles may be held in a detention facility pending adjudication (analogous to a trial) or pending transfer to placement or camp. In California, juvenile detention centers or

juvenile halls are county-operated, secure (locked) facilities. Finally, juveniles may receive a disposition committing them to State Level sanctions involving confinement in youth correctional facilities or parole under the jurisdiction of DJJ in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Figure 1a | Operational Definitions of Graduated Responses

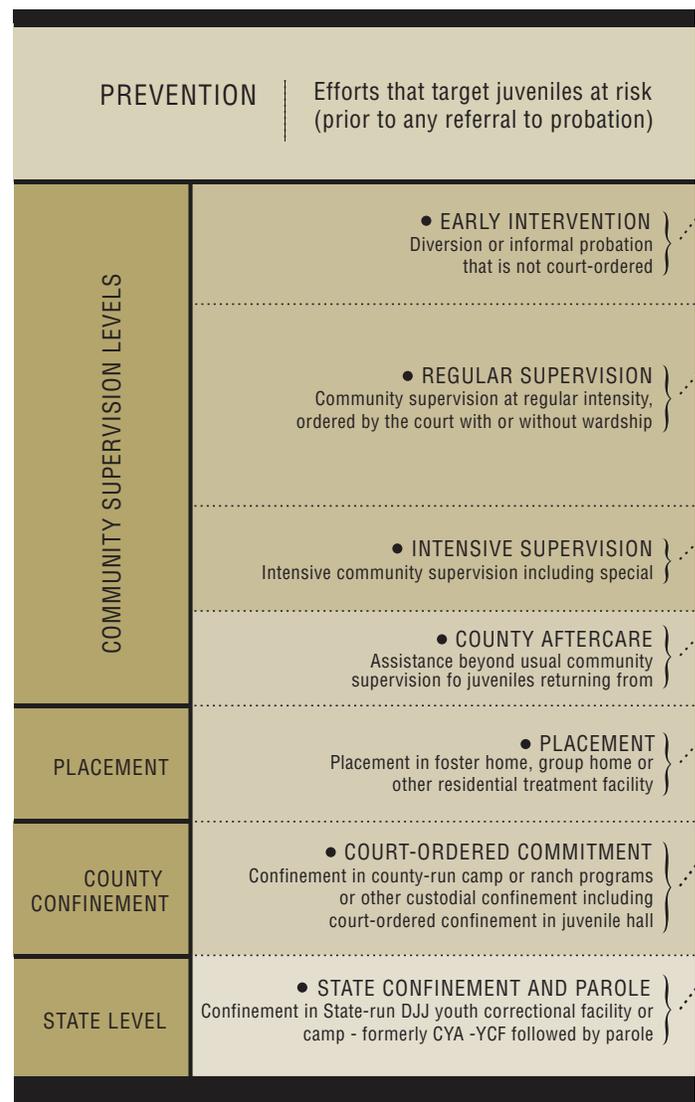
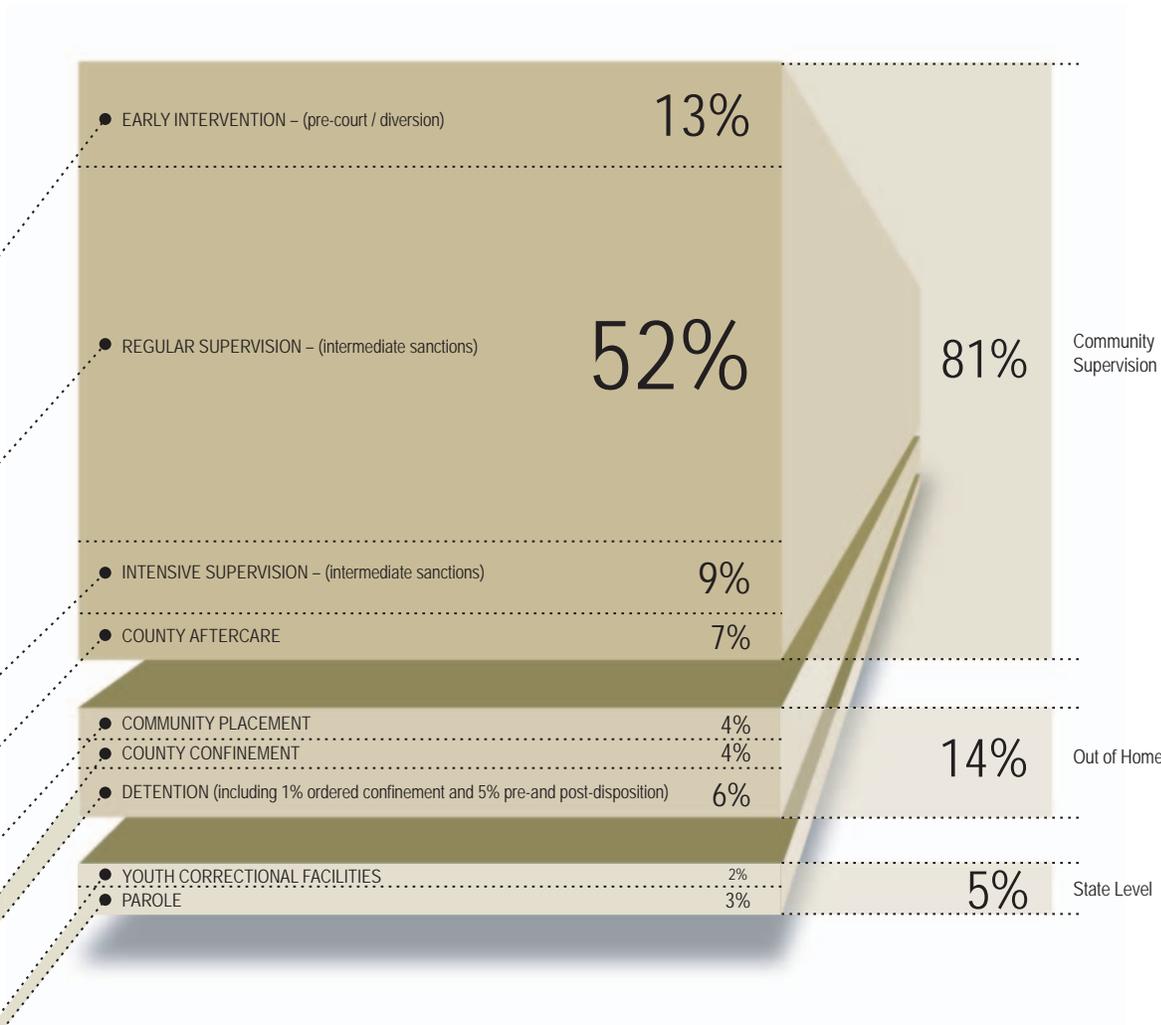


Figure 1b | Rates of Involvement



SURVEY FINDINGS IN BRIEF

In California on a given day, 81% of all juveniles in the juvenile justice system are residing in the community, participating in community probation programs at the early intervention (13%), regular supervision (52%) or intensive probation supervision (9%) levels, or in community aftercare (7%).

On a given day, 14% of all juveniles in the system are out of their homes, including 4% in foster care and group home

placements, 4% in county ranch or camp confinement programs, and 6% in juvenile detention centers (1% confined there by court order and 5% either waiting for a disposition or waiting to be transferred somewhere else – to camp, placement or another jurisdiction). Of the remaining 5% of juveniles and youth in the system, about half are confined in a state DJJ youth correctional facility while the rest are under the jurisdiction of DJJ on parole in the community.

COUNTY LEVEL RESULTS

The survey results are not intended to focus on individual county-level practices but instead on the lessons from the statewide analysis of various county groupings according to commonalities in:

- County size
- Geographic region
- Rural vs. urban setting
- Level of juvenile crime (county rate of juvenile felony arrest)
- Wealth (median household income)
- County juvenile justice resources (staff and expenditures)

The full report with charts and appendices (available here: www.cdcr.ca.gov) provide detail on the results for each county as well by the above groupings. Following are highlights of survey findings, by a subset of these county groupings.

County Size

Twenty-seven counties were designated as small (county population in 2004 was less than 100,000); ten as medium (populations between 100,000 and 700,000) and thirteen as large (populations over 700,000).⁸

Juvenile residents of smaller counties are involved in the primary levels of community supervision (see table 1a for definitions) at higher rates than medium and large county residents with one exception: residents of medium-sized counties are involved at about the same levels as the small counties in early intervention, with an average rate almost twice as high as in the large counties.

At the higher levels of the graduated continuum, we found that:

- Juvenile residents of small counties are placed out of their homes in foster care or group homes at double the rates reported in medium and large counties.
- Small counties use county camp programs and confinement in juvenile detention centers at about the same rate.
- In general, the medium-sized counties report lower rates of all kinds of interventions that place juveniles out of their

homes, including placement, county camps and DJJ youth correctional facilities.

- Large counties report a low rate of ordered confinement in detention centers, but the highest rate of confinement in county ranch camps. This may explain their higher rates of aftercare, which is linked to transitioning to the community from confinement and placement.
- The rate of aftercare in small counties is lower than would be expected given their high rates of placement and confinement.
- Despite differences in the types of facilities used, overall the large and small counties report approximately the same rates of county confinement, approximately double the rates reported in medium-sized counties.

Further analyses noted in the full report suggests that a higher preponderance of rural settings in the smaller counties is associated with the higher rates of placement and regular probation supervision found there. Also, poverty as measured by county-level median household income is generally correlated with higher rates of sanctions at all levels except county ranch camps and DJJ. These analyses are descriptive, not causal.

Geographic Region

Counties were categorized by regions according to the divisions used by CPOC, dividing counties into the following areas: North, Bay, Sacramento, Central and South.⁹ The rate of residents involved at all levels of county response is high in the North region. With the exception of early intervention and placement, the rates of juveniles involved from the Central region are also relatively high across most levels of sanctions. Regular community supervision in the Bay, Sacramento and South regions involve a dramatically lower proportion of juvenile residents than in the North or Central regions. The North region also reports double the level of involvement in placement out of the home than elsewhere in the state. The Central region has highest rates of involvement in DJJ parole.

Further analysis suggests that the higher rates of DJJ involvement observed in the Central and North regions may be partially due to higher juvenile felony arrests rates experienced there (several of the counties with the highest

felony arrests rates are in these regions). In addition, and apparently independent of arrest rates, poverty as measured by the county-level median household income is also prevalent in the North and Central regions and is associated with higher involvement in DJJ.

County Variability

At an individual county level, the survey illuminates wide variability among counties, at all levels. For example, the data shows a median of 110 per 100,000 youth in placement (including foster care and group homes) statewide. However, this number ranges from a median of 75 per 100,000 youth in medium-sized counties to 214 per 100,000 youth in small counties and on a county by county basis from 22 per 100,000 in El Dorado County to 771 per 100,000 in Lassen County.

In other areas, the range of rates is equally pronounced. Early intervention efforts ranged broadly from more than 10,000 per 100,000 youth in Sierra County (a resort area with a small local population and large numbers of juveniles coming in from outside of the county), 3,625 per 100,000 youth in Del Norte County to 29 reported cases per 100,000 youth in Mendocino County and 0 per 100,000 in Alpine County (which had only one person on juvenile probation on the day of the survey).

Even when isolating counties by similar characteristics, wide-ranging practices were evident. For example, in large counties, where the prevalence of camps and ranches is highest, the rates ranged from 26 per 100,000 youth in San Bernardino, to 52 per 100,000 youth in Alameda County, 124 per 100,000 in Los Angeles County to a high of 155 per 100,000 youth in Sacramento. As another example of variability, intensive supervision rates vary within large counties from San Mateo at 702 per 100,000 to Contra Costa at 55 per 100,000; within medium-sized counties from 809 per 100,000 in Santa Barbara to 90 per 100,000 in San Joaquin; and within small counties from 2,027 per 100,000 in Glenn to seven small counties with no Intensive Supervision programs.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

Overall, the expectation that fewer and fewer juveniles are involved in higher and higher levels of the continuum is met in the California juvenile justice system, and to varying degrees by individual counties as well. However, many critical questions remain. For example:

- Are those who reach the top level – which currently is confinement in DJJ – there because lower level interventions have failed or are inappropriate?
- In practice, does each of the county systems use the same criteria for movement up the levels?
- In practice, do counties successfully assess youth risk levels and match them with appropriate evidence-based interventions to reduce recidivism?
- Are youth in mid-level interventions such as court-ordered detention in juvenile hall or confinement in county ranch camps provided with effective programs that help build the resiliency and strengths needed to change course – and if so, is this true in just some places or everywhere?

CAPACITY FOR EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

The survey examined other aspects of common practices relevant to the capacity of county and state juvenile justice agencies to monitor and improve outcomes for juveniles and their communities. Strong themes that have emerged in the current research on the effectiveness of juvenile justice interventions indicate the importance of three practices needed to sustain favorable outcomes:

1. Assessing risk for re-offending at intake and matching juveniles to the appropriate level of intervention;
2. Monitoring key details of program delivery (including the intensity, duration and content of interventions as implemented); and
3. Tracking the outcomes for juveniles involved in the interventions in use.

Use Of Validated Risk Assessments

A third of the counties reported using a validated multi-factor risk assessment to match the individual with the appropriate level of intervention from diversion to confinement.¹⁰ Other departments have the potential to substantially improve juvenile justice outcomes by the adoption and use of validated risk assessments to determine an appropriate level of response for rehabilitative purposes.¹¹ This finding suggests that an important segment of the California juvenile justice system is not currently taking advantage of the best practices available. Supporting counties in their efforts to select and adopt validated risk assessment tools for the purpose of determining the appropriate levels of response and to train staff to use it is a necessary and critical goal if the system is to take advantage of evidence-based practices to improve outcomes for juveniles in the state.

Monitor Key Implementation Elements

The survey responses suggest that the capacity to routinely monitor interventions on key dimensions (intensity, duration and content as implemented) is lacking in most (but not all) county probation departments, and also in DJJ. Given the evidence accumulating in the program evaluation literature about the critical importance of monitoring implementation details, building the capacity to identify gaps in implementation relative to evidence-based benchmarks has the potential to produce large dividends in better outcomes for youth. Failure to do so may result in well-intentioned efforts with little or reduced value.

The Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) and similar legislation contributed greatly to the capacity of many counties to implement the outlined evidence-based practices. The evaluations required under JJCPA encouraged the use of validated risk assessment tools, the development of data systems to monitor implementation and a consensus on a common set of outcomes, but only for the programs funded. The JJCPA funding rarely extended beyond the specific demonstration programs implemented and in many cases these innovations could not be continued when funding ended.

Funding explicitly designed to support the adoption of validated multi-factor risk assessments, improve data systems, and design common outcome measures can significantly stimulate and support progress toward improving outcomes for juveniles. Significant improvement is within reach.

Track Outcomes

In the survey, counties reported their current efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions in use. Only about 5% of the programs in use system-wide are being evaluated in terms of recidivism or other outcomes beyond the duration of the intervention (i.e., some months after program completion) and even fewer counties examine changes in risk and resiliency factors thought to mediate reductions in offending. Engineering and coordinating data systems that involve multiple agencies and incorporate juvenile and adult systems is extremely challenging. To collect comprehensive, uniform data is costly and difficult yet outcomes are unlikely to improve if there is no mandate to monitor them in any uniform way.

A consensus on key outcomes to track and the desired tracking periods should be reached, if not statewide, within regions or clusters of counties. Counties or regions could gain access to the data needed to accomplish this by including the following additional information in their yearly reports to DOJ for the Juvenile Court and Probation Statistical System (JCPSS):

- a) multi-factor risk assessment scores at intake measured using approved validated instruments; and
- b) the actual beginning and end dates for each specific intervention or service provided.

NEXT STEPS

The statewide survey report on county interventions is phase I of the research. The USC team will be doing further work with a sample of individual youth in order to tie intervention levels to individual outcomes, such as subsequent involvement in the system. Once that work is complete, the JJDP will be able to provide additional data to inform improvement of technological and logistical capacity with the goal of more accurately measuring the factors that produce success, and how best to implement effective practices. The USC research team and the JJDP partnership invite comments and questions about this report and the project as a whole.

END NOTES

¹ California Welfare and Institutions Code, Section 202.

² For the 50 responding counties, 28 counties operate their own camps including two pairs of counties that jointly operate camps, 19 counties use camps in other counties (including 5 who have their own camps as well) and 8 counties report that they do not use camps in their continuum of responses.

³ Among the 50 responding counties, 43 operate a juvenile detention center including one pair that operates a shared facility under a joint powers agreement, 4 of these operate more than one hall, while 7 have none and use detention facilities in other counties as needed.

⁴ For a complete list of participants, please see Acknowledgements page.

⁵ Contact hennigan@usc.edu or kolnick@usc.edu at the Center for Research on Crime, Psychology Department, University of Southern California.

⁶ James C. Howell. 2003. Preventing & Reducing Juvenile Delinquency: A Comprehensive Framework. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications. Pages 241-246.

⁷ Counties that did not participate in the survey include Nevada, Riverside and Tuolumne. Counties that did not complete the entire survey include Butte, Plumas, Sonoma, Tehama, and Tulare.

⁸ Twenty-seven counties were designated as small counties (Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Colusa, Del Norte, El Dorado, Glenn, Humboldt, Imperial, Inyo, Kings, Lake, Lassen, Madera, Mariposa, Mendocino, Modoc, Mono, Napa, San Benito, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Sutter, Trinity, Yolo and Yuba). Ten counties with populations between 100,000 and 700,000 were classified as medium (Marin, Merced, Monterey, Placer, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, Solano and Stanislaus), leaving 13 counties with populations over 700,000 as large (Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Ventura).

⁹ The North region includes Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lassen, Modoc, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou and Trinity; Sacramento region includes Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Lake, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba; Central region includes Fresno, Inyo, Kern, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Mono and Stanislaus; Bay region includes Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Mendocino, Monterey, Napa, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz and Solano; and the South region includes Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura.

¹⁰ These multi-factor assessments are designed to determine what level of intervention matches a juvenile's overall risk of re-offending. Assessments for this purpose are distinct from those designed specifically to determine whether to hold or release from juvenile detention. Only half of the counties that use a detention decision assessment also use a multi-factor risk assessment. Finally, once these determinations are made, various needs assessments such as the MAYSI2 are also needed to tailor the program offered at each level of the continuum to an individual's unique needs.

¹¹ The predictive ability of unvalidated assessments is questionable, often as a result of missing domains (e.g., family, peers, past behavior), an overemphasis on a few domains or lack of specificity. Validated risk assessment tools have been empirically proven to predict future offending. A validation study confirms a scoring scheme that effectively classifies high, mid and low risk groups. Ideally this needs to be confirmed locally in the same population where it is used.

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