

Department of Juvenile Justice
Human Research & De-Identified Case Specific Data Request
Annual Report FY 2021

Regulations

On February 9, 2005, [6 VAC 35-170](#), *Minimum Standards for Research Involving Human Subjects or Records of the Department of Juvenile Justice*, adopted by the Board of Juvenile Justice, became effective. These regulations require the establishment of a Human Research Review Committee (HRRC) and set out the conditions required for approval of external research proposals. The Administrative Code was most recently revised on June 24, 2021. Select sections of the regulations are included below to provide an overview of the review process:

6VAC35-170-130. Human Research Review Committee

A. In accordance with § 32.1-162.19 of the *Code of Virginia*, the department shall establish an HRRC composed of persons of various backgrounds to ensure the competent, complete, and professional review of human research activities conducted or proposed to be conducted or authorized by the department. No member of the HRRC shall be directly involved in the proposed human research or have administrative approval authority over the proposed research except in connection with his role on the HRRC.

6VAC35-170-150. Committee review of human research proposals.

In reviewing the human research proposal, the HRRC shall consider the potential benefits and risks to the human subjects and shall recommend approval only when:

1. The benefits to the human subjects outweigh the risks;
2. The methodology is adequate for the proposed research;
3. The research, if nontherapeutic, presents no more than a minimal risk to the human subjects;
4. The rights and welfare of the human subjects are adequately protected;
5. Appropriate provisions have been made to get informed consent from the human subjects, as detailed in 6VAC35-170-160;
6. The researchers are appropriately qualified;
7. The criteria and means for selecting human subjects are valid and equitable; and
8. The research complies with the requirements set out in this chapter.

6VAC35-170-50. Conditions for department approval of external research and data requests.

A. The department may approve research projects and data requests only when it determines, in its sole discretion, that the following conditions have been met:

1. The department has sufficient financial and staff resources to support the request, and, on balance, the benefits of the request justify the department's involvement;
2. The request will not interfere significantly with department programs or operations, particularly those of the operating units that would participate in the proposed research; and
3. The request is compatible with the purposes and goals of the juvenile justice system and with the department's organization, operations, and resources.

6 VAC 35-170-190. Committee reports required.

A. In accordance with § 66-10.1 of the *Code of Virginia*, the HRRC shall submit to the Governor, the General Assembly, and the director at least annually a report on human research projects approved by the HRRC and the status of such research, including any significant deviations from the proposals as approved.

B. The HRRC also shall submit annually to the Board of Juvenile Justice the same report as required by subsection A of this section.

Human Research Review Committee

During fiscal year (FY) 2021, the Department of Juvenile Justice's (DJJ) HRRC was comprised of members from various backgrounds:

- Jessica Schneider, Ph.D. (Chair) – Research Manager, DJJ*
- Robin Binford-Weaver, Ph.D. – Director, Behavioral Services Unit, DJJ*
- Vince Butaitis – Director, 15th Court Service Unit, DJJ*
- Will Egen – Policy Analyst, Virginia Commission on Youth
- Michael Favale – Legislative & Policy Director, DJJ*
- Brooke Henderson – Rights and Accountability Manager, DJJ*
- Rebecca Smith – Graduate Student, Virginia Commonwealth University
- Lara Todd – Records and Legal Support Manager, DJJ*
- Joseph W. Young, Jr. – Superintendent, New River Valley Juvenile Detention Home

*Members also served on the internal sub-committee that reviewed de-identified case-specific data requests.

DJJ Senior Research Associate, Dhara Amin, Ph.D., serves as the Coordinator of External Research.

In addition to reviewing the human subjects research studies as defined in the Regulations, an internal sub-committee of the HRRC reviews requests for de-identified case-specific data. The following report includes projects involving either human subjects research or de-identified case-specific data.

In accordance with § 32.1-162.19, *Human research review committees*, an executive summary of completed projects can be found in Appendix A.

I. Research Proposals

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of proposal submissions and reviews had been steadily decreasing; however, projects involving case-specific data requests with hands-on operational planning and logistical components had been increasing. The United States Department of Health and Human Service, an agency that oversees research ethics and practices, temporarily paused in-person human research studies due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Depending on the Institutional Review Board, the duration of the halt varied. Consequently, the HRRC received and reviewed fewer research proposals in FY 2021 than in previous years. In FY 2021, DJJ approved two studies, and as of June 30, 2021, two submissions were still under review.

During FY 2021, the Coordinator of External Research continued to focus on obtaining final reports and executive summaries from long-term open research studies and completing revisions to 6 VAC 35-170, effective at the end of FY 2021.

II. Active Studies

In FY 2021, there were 15 active studies. The studies are summarized below:

Cognitive Behavioral Interventions for Medium- and High-Risk Juvenile Offenders: Practitioner-Researcher Partnership Project

Researcher: KiDeuk Kim

Institution: Urban Institute

Study Type: Human Research

Approval Date: April 17, 2015

The purpose of the study was to examine the implementation and impact of two treatment modalities, Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART) and modified Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), on committed youth's attitudes, behaviors, and recidivism. Youth designated as having an aggression management treatment need were assigned to participate in one of the two treatment modalities. Staff members who provided treatment participated in interviews regarding their experiences and perceptions of the treatment modalities, and 429 youth completed surveys. The researcher found that both ART and DBT reduced rearrest rates. The differences between ART and DBT were not statistically significant; therefore, the researcher was unable to conclude that one aggression management program was more effective than the other program. The researchers also found that youth who participated in DBT showed improved self-report aggression measures compared to ART youth, but due to a limited sample size, this finding was not statistically significant. In addition, staff interviewees noted an increase in service coordination and delivery with the transition to the Community Treatment Model (CTM) because staff and youth are assigned to a single unit. However, high staff turnover and program fatigue may have impacted staff and institutional support over time. The final report was submitted in November 2020. See Appendix A for this study's executive summary.

Examining Probation Outcomes and Changes in Risk

Researchers: JoAnn Lee, Faye Taxman, and Mark Murphy

Institution: George Mason University and DJJ

Study Type: De-Identified Case-Specific Data Request

Approval Date: March 7, 2016

The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of youth's risk-need profiles based on the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI), changes in risk-need profiles, and services on their probation outcomes. The researchers reviewed probation recidivism data. DJJ delivered data to the researchers in July 2017 and an updated data set in June 2018. In January 2020, the researchers submitted a preliminary report regarding the latent class analysis conducted to identify subgroups of youth on probation. The researchers identified seven subgroups, in which four were consistent with previous studies: youth with low needs, high needs, substance abuse services needs, and mental health service needs. The researchers also found distinct sex-specific high-need groups and a group for youth with low protective factors. Due to the amount of time that passed since the data was

delivered to the researchers and operational changes at DJJ, the researchers focused only on the research questions that were relevant to DJJ after the agency's transformation (i.e., How do risk-needs profiles of probation youth change over time?, Are risk-need profiles related to probation outcomes?). The researchers found that youth whose risk increased during probation had much higher recidivism rates, while youth whose risk decreased during probation had lower recidivism rates. The final report was submitted in August 2021. See Appendix A for this study's executive summary.

Toward a Pedagogy of Possibility: Justice System Involved Youth Read and Write Alternative Texts

Researcher: Judith Dunkerly-Bean
Institution: Old Dominion University
Study Type: Human Research
Approval Date: March 20, 2017

The purpose of the study was to a) qualitatively examine how justice-involved youth living at the Tidewater Youth Services Crisis Center read, responded to, and created alternative texts and b) improve youths' reading and writing skills and motivations. The researcher administered informal reading inventories to assess youth's reading level and interests and then assigned selected readings intended to improve reading comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. The researcher provided reading support and intervention to youth as needed. The researcher and youth then participated in group-based discussions about the reading. Finally, the youth responded to the text by creating their own alternative text, specifically a 'zine (magazine), or another self-selected representation of self-expression. The researcher focused on helping youth improve written literacy proficiencies and develop their identities as writers. The researcher found that many of the youth's work contained themes of personal struggles, such as poverty, hardships, drugs, death of family members and friends, and hopelessness when it comes to change. The researcher recommended ongoing collaborative effort to expand "lived literacies" experiences. The final report was submitted in March 2021. See Appendix A for this study's executive summary.

Social and Psychological Predictors of Delinquency in Youth in the DJJ System

Researchers: Aradhana Bela Sood and Mark Murphy
Institution: Virginia Commonwealth University Health System and DJJ
Study Type: De-Identified Case-Specific Data Request
Approval Date: May 18, 2017

The purpose of the study was to examine the demographic, social, and psychological characteristics related to juvenile delinquency and recidivism. The researchers investigated the extent to which mentoring relationships mitigate and mental health issues exacerbate juvenile delinquency by examining data from a trauma assessment tool and the family, alcohol and drugs use, and mental health data from the YASI. The researchers found that gender was associated with trauma and mental health presence; however, there was no association between sociodemographic characteristics and the total dynamic risk. The results also indicated no relationship between the YASI family domain and mental health and substance abuse. Race and dynamic substance abuse risk were associated with 12-month arrest. The final report was submitted in January 2020. See Appendix A for this study's executive summary.

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice
Human Research, FY 2021

Vision 21: Linking Systems of Care for Children and Youth

Researcher: Laurie Crawford

Institution: Virginia Commonwealth University

Study Type: De-Identified Case-Specific Data Request

Approval Date: May 26, 2017; amended May 17, 2019

The purpose of the study was to pilot the Virginia Victimization Screen (VVS), a screening tool used to assess victimization, associated symptomatology, and protective factors. Court service unit (CSU) directors selected DJJ staff to become VVS administrators. The VVS is utilized for all youth who are diverted or placed on probation with a moderate- or high-risk YASI score. The VVS administrators also make referrals to appropriate partner agencies as needed. The researchers aimed to validate this screening tool and requested case specific, de-identified data from other standard screening tools (i.e., YASI, Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Instrument, Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire). In addition, VVS administrators met with researchers for regular meetings that include ongoing technical assistance. During these meetings, the researchers invited DJJ staff to participate in pre- and post-surveys. Participants reported that the training was effective for various professional positions and the Spanish form needed to be refined to include commonly used language. They also objected to the word “victimization” being commonly used in this tool, but alternatives were not suggested. The final report was submitted in November 2020. See Appendix A for this study’s executive summary.

Evaluation of a Comprehensive Community-Level Approach to Youth Violence

Researchers: Derek Chapman and Diane Bishop

Institution: Virginia Commonwealth University

Study Type: De-Identified Case-Specific Data Request

Approval Date: November 28, 2017; amended January 28, 2020

The purpose of the study is part of a larger project aimed at learning more about youth violence in low-income neighborhoods of Richmond, Virginia. The researchers will examine retrospective, de-identified data for youth between the ages of 10 and 24 who were associated with an intake case at CSU 13 between January 2012 and December 2019. The researchers requested data on intake decisions, youth demographics, offense information, Detention Assessment Instrument (DAI) ranking, select YASI items, length of stay (if applicable), and recidivism rates. Since the researchers are interested in low-income neighborhoods of Richmond, such as Mosby Court, Gilpin Court, and Creighton Court, they requested individual block-level geographical data. The researchers trained the DJJ Research Unit staff on how to clean and geocode the data manually. The researchers identified the variables they need from DJJ, and the data and the data dictionary were delivered to the study’s researchers in July 2020. The researchers reviewed the data and data analysis and reporting is underway. The researchers expect to complete this study in 2022.

Virginia Personal Responsibility Education Program Innovative Strategies (VPREIS)

Researcher: Amanda Dainis

Institution: James Madison University

Study Type: Human Research

Approval Date: February 20, 2018; amended March 29, 2019

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the *Vision to You* program, an evidence-based teen pregnancy program. The program’s main outcomes include the following: (i) to reduce the

frequency of sexual activity; (ii) to reduce the number of sexual partners; and (iii) to increase contraceptive use among participants. Another goal of this project is to increase knowledge related to healthy sexual practices. The program is collaborating with juvenile detention centers (JDCs) throughout the state. Eligible youth are asked if they would like to participate, and the research staff collects parental consent information. Once the youth complete the online program, they have the opportunity to participate in three post-program surveys. Youth can elect to participate in the program or participate in the program and the surveys. The researcher submitted two amendments in order to incorporate questions recommended by the grant monitor. The youth data collection is completed and there have been 105 participants across nine JDCs. The researcher is analyzing data and expects to complete the project by the end of calendar year 2021. Preliminary findings suggest that 76% of youth intend to use a physical barrier the next time engage in oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse, and 86% of youth liked the *Vision of You* program better than other programs covering similar topics.

Third National Survey of Youth in Custody (NSYC-3)

Researcher: David Cantor

Institution: Westat

Study Type: Human Research

Approval Date: June 14, 2018; amended July 23, 2018

The purpose of the study was to collect data for the National Survey of Youth in Custody, as required to meet the mandates of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). The two primary objectives of the survey were to: (i) identify facilities with the highest and lowest rates of victimization, and (ii) provide data for the development of national standards for preventing sexual victimization in correctional facilities. This was the third of four surveys. The researchers' sample frame included either state-owned or operated facilities that hold at least 10 adjudicated youth (and the adjudicated youth comprise more than 25% of the total youth population in the facility) or contract facilities that house at least 10 adjudicated youth (including at least one state-placed adjudicated youth). DJJ and/or the selected detention centers participated in the parental consent process in some form; however, in order to accommodate the selected facilities, the process and Westat's involvement varied. Youth with parental consent who have been in the selected facility longer than four weeks were invited to participate in the survey. The HRRC committee voiced concern with the study's alternative questions as they were sensitive in nature and may make some youth uncomfortable. However, the committee also recognized the inconvenience of requesting that Westat change their entire survey instrument for one state. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) released two initial reports focusing on victim, perpetrator, and incident characteristics and sexual victimization reported based on data collected nationally. The sample included 327 juvenile facilities (state-owned, locally operated, and privately operated facilities), and 6,049 youth respondents. In Virginia, 92 youth participated in the survey, with a response rate of 37.6%. Approximately five percent of respondents reported incidents of sexual victimization by another youth or facility staff member in the past 12 months, or since admission to the facility if the youth was at the facility for less than 12 months. BJS does not plan on conducting state-specific analyses at this time. This research study is completed, but an executive summary was not submitted to DJJ.

Connection, Safety, Fairness, and Purpose: A Follow-Up Study

Researcher: Ryan Shanahan

Institution: Vera Institute

Study Type: Human Research

Approval Date: July 26, 2018

The purpose of the study was to provide a follow-up to the surveys the researcher administered to committed youth in 2015. The researcher administered surveys related to connection, safety, fairness, and purpose to youth and staff in the juvenile correctional center (JCC). Residents were asked to provide the contact information for a family member whom the researcher could contact and potentially recruit to participate in a telephone interview. Once the surveys and interviews were completed, the researchers conducted collaborative research meetings with residents and staff at the JCC to discuss the findings and possible contributing factors for the findings. DJJ was informed that the institution went through a reorganization and the conditions in the Research Agreement Form will not be met for this study. However, in December 2020, a final report was submitted. The researchers found that overall, the perceptions of youth, families, and staff on services and programming were positive. Nearly all of the results for the measures remained stable or improved when comparing 2015's results to this study's findings. See Appendix A for this study's executive summary.

Process Evaluation of the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice Regional Service Coordinator Model

Researchers: Kelly Murphy

Institution: Child Trends

Study Type: Human Research

Approval Date: August 10, 2018; amended May 7, 2020

The purpose of the study is to conduct an in-depth evaluation of DJJ's Regional Service Coordinator (RSC) model. The goal of this project is to provide feedback and recommendations to DJJ. The study has three primary objectives: (i) conduct a process evaluation of the RSC model to understand the extent to which it is being implemented as intended; (ii) provide an initial assessment of the extent to which implementation of RSC model is associated with youth outcomes; and (iii) translate and disseminate findings to target audiences, such as DJJ, other systems that are interested in similar models, and stakeholders. This evaluation is planned to be conducted over a period of four years, including a pilot study in the first year. The researchers conducted 17 interviews with direct service providers and three focus groups with CSU staff. The researchers worked with the Deputy Director of Community Programs to increase recruitment efforts with the CSU staff. The researchers were unsuccessful in recruiting youth to be interviewed. In addition, after some outreach assistance from DJJ, the researchers conducted nine judge interviews. The researchers are also working to develop a web-scraping tool to create maps depicting youth's needs and available service providers.

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice
Human Research, FY 2021

Brief Alcohol and Dating Violence Prevention Program for Court-Involved Youth

Researchers: Christianne Esposito-Smythers and Caitlin Williams

Institution: George Mason University

Study Type: Human Research

Approval Date: August 22, 2018

The purpose of the study was to provide a dating violence and alcohol prevention program for court-involved youth. The researcher delivered a four-hour group workshop utilizing didactic instruction, motivational interviewing, and cognitive-behavioral skill building to increase skills and knowledge in order to avoid high-risk alcohol and dating violence situations. This study aimed to (i) integrate materials from two existing, evidence-based prevention programs and develop manuals for the interventions, training, and fidelity and (ii) conduct a pilot to evaluate the therapeutic potential of the proposed program. The researchers conducted the focus groups but experienced recruitment issues. Due to the principal investigator's relocation, the researchers elected to terminate their efforts for this study.

Resident and Staff Perceptions of Safety and Engagement with the Community Treatment Model (Part II)

Researchers: Sarah Jane Brubaker and Hayley Cleary

Institution: Virginia Commonwealth University

Study Type: Human Research

Approval Date: April 10, 2019

The purpose of the study was to conduct a follow-up to the researchers' original study. The researchers wanted to examine perceptions of safety and levels of engagement among staff and youth under CTM, which has been fully implemented in the JCC. The researchers wanted to expand the original study by including feedback from various DJJ staff. Furthermore, because the original study may have been impacted by the closure of one of the JCCs, the researchers wanted to conduct the study again to gain a better understanding of staff's and youth's current perceptions since they had time to become acquainted with Bon Air JCC. Due to time and financial barriers, the researchers elected to terminate their efforts for this study.

Rigorous Evaluation of the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice's Second Chance Act Reentry Reform

Researchers: Kelly Murphy

Institution: Child Trends

Study Type: Human Research

Approval Date: October 30, 2019; amended March 9, 2020

The purpose of the study is to conduct an evaluation of DJJ's reentry reform efforts. The researcher aims to examine (i) the extent to which DJJ is implementing the recommendations developed during the Second Chance Act Juvenile Reentry Reform Planning Grant, (ii) the extent to which the agency's services align with the youth's needs, (iii) what the youth's participation in reentry services look like, and (iv) how the implementation of the reforms have impacted youth outcomes. This study is funded by the NIJ. The evaluation will be conducted over a four-year period, including a pilot period. The evaluation includes focus groups with various stakeholders, such as DJJ's Reentry Advocates, parole officers, JCC counselors, and more. The researcher submitted amendments to account for administrative changes to the key informant and family and youth

interview protocol and create a standalone interview protocol for the Family Engagement Committee. Since the pilot period, the research team trained their staff on how to facilitate the research and non-research interviews and conducted a total of 31 interviews.

Juvenile Delinquency and Adult Gun Sales: Comparative Effect of Different Minimum Age Standards for Firearm Purchase

Researchers: Jeff Swanson
Institution: Duke University
Study Type: De-Identified Case-Specific Data Request
Approval Date: August 19, 2020

The purpose of the study is to conduct a comparative analysis of three southern states with different laws regarding juvenile delinquency records and the minimum age standards for gun sales. The researchers selected three states that have differing thresholds for the minimum age of gun purchase for people with juvenile criminal records. By working with multiple state agencies, the researchers plan to conduct a longitudinal comparison of gun-related adverse outcomes in order to provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of the minimum-age standards in preventing gun violence and suicide. The researchers provided DJJ with letters of support from the other agencies to ensure the feasibility of this study and are coordinating the logistics of the various data requests. Currently, the researchers are working with two of the partner agencies, Virginia State Police (VSP) and the Department of Health, to further amend the Virginia budget language and propose the new language to the General Assembly in January 2022. This amendment would authorize VSP to share identifiable data with the Department of Health.

The Impact of Dental Operatory Color on Anxiety in Adolescents in Juvenile Detention

Researchers: Tegwyn H. Brickhouse and Matilda Sullivan
Institution: Virginia Commonwealth University
Study Type: De-Identified Case-Specific Data Request
Approval Date: November 23, 2020

The purpose of the study is to examine the impact of color on patients in the JCC's dental facility rooms. Previous studies have indicated in private dental facilities, the color in dental operatories can influence the patient's anxiety levels. The researchers aims to determine if a similar result is found in a JCC, specifically at Bon Air JCC, which is a gap in existing literature.

III. Proposed / Pending Studies

Exploring Perceptions of Juvenile Court Service Personnel: Do Cognitive-Communicative Skills Impact Outcomes for Juvenile Offenders?

Researcher: Allison Chappell
Institution: Old Dominion University
Study Type: Human Research
Approval Date: N/A

The purpose of the proposed study is to examine CSU staff's views on the relationship between youth's communication skills and the legal process, including outcomes and decision-making. Existing research found that nearly half of juvenile offenders have a cognitive-communicative

disorder that can impact their ability communicative effectively and appropriately. The researcher aims to gather qualitative data at CSU 4 (Norfolk) to assist with creating a formal survey instrument, which will allow the researcher to collect statewide data on staff's and other stakeholder's views on cognitive-communicative impairments and their impacts.

Optimizing Supervision and Services Strategies to Reduce Reoffending: Accounting for Risks, Strengths, and Developmental Differences

Researcher: Gina Vincent

Institution: University of Massachusetts Medical School

Study Type: De-Identified Case-Specific Data Request

Approval Date: N/A

The purpose of the proposed study is to (i) identify which risk and protective factors are most strongly associated with reduction in recidivism to inform supervision practices, (ii) examine which services and supervision practices facilitate positive youth development and reduce reoffending, and (iii) assist with capturing data regarding protective factors, service usage, and reoffending to inform decision-making. The researcher is requesting archival data for January 1, 2015, to December 31, 2017, to be used for a baseline. The archival data would include risk assessment, demographic, offense history, case management, service, and recidivism data. The researcher is also requesting prospective data from five CSUs, which are piloting a protective factors survey for comparison purposes and to understand how services impact youth's outcomes.

IV. Denied Proposals

No research proposals were denied during this fiscal year.

V. Administratively Closed Proposals

Administratively closed proposals include proposal packets the Coordinator of External Research or the HRRC reviewed, but the agency did not hear back from the researcher(s) after providing feedback and/or requests for revisions. No research proposals were administratively closed during this fiscal year.

Appendix A: Executive Summaries of Completed Human Research Projects from the Researchers*

* Executive summaries are completed by the researchers, and the content is not revised by DJJ.

Cognitive Behavioral Interventions for Medium- and High-Risk Juvenile Offenders’ Executive Summary¹

Researcher: KiDeuk Kim

Purpose

In partnership with the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the Urban Institute was awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to assess the effectiveness of two cognitive behavioral interventions for aggression – specifically, Aggression Replacement Training (ART) and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT).

Summary/Takeaways

Findings suggest that the provision of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) for aggression would reduce recidivism among youth in secure residential settings. Youth who had received ART had a 9.6% lower rearrest rate than youth who had not received ART. There was also general support for the recidivism reduction potential of DBT. Receiving DBT would lower the chance of being re-arrested. When it comes to the question of which of the two programs, ART and DBT, would lead to a greater impact on recidivism, there was mixed evidence. While the intent-to-treat analysis based on experimental data suggests that DBT would be more effective than ART at reducing general recidivism, the quasi-experimental evaluation shows little difference in general recidivism between the two programs.

To recap, based on a relatively limited sample size ($n < 200$) and follow-up duration ($t < 12$ months), our evaluation shows little or no basis for advocating one “brand” of CBTs over another. Both ART and DBT would be effective at reducing disruptive, aggressive behavior. Relatedly, as CBTs aim to address psychological adaptation and adjustment issues through clients’ social relationships with others, it is important to recognize the implications of obtaining staff buy-in and support for program effectiveness. The interviews with DJJ staff reveal that staff enthusiasm and institutional support for each program may have waned as time elapsed from the adoption of ART and DBT, respectively.

Recommendations/Next Steps

As DJJ continues striving to advance its mission through data-informed practice, it would be important to assess the effectiveness of its interventions on an ongoing basis. Especially given that the diminishing enthusiasm among staff could potentially lead to a gradual decrease in program effectiveness over time, we strongly recommend that the impact of CBT on recidivism be reassessed at least every 2-3 years, along with the level of staff buy-in.

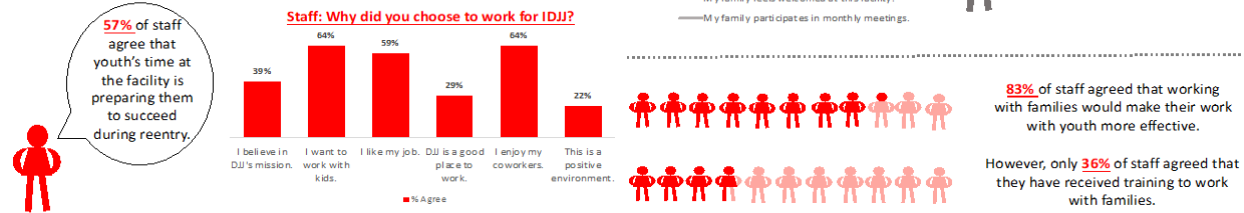
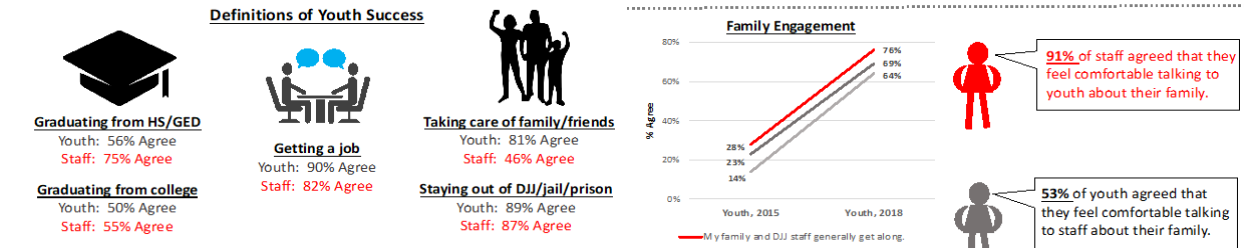
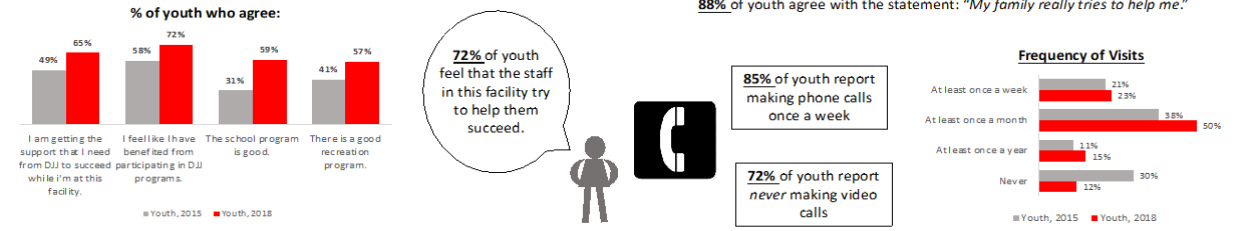
The provision of CBT can be routinized over time and become stale among staff. Our evaluation suggests that staff motivation/fatigue would play a critical role in the successful implementation of CBT. As such, it would be strategic to periodically refresh the organization and/or content of CBT to avoid staff fatigue. Continued training and development for clinical staff would also be a reasonable way to promote staff motivation.

¹ Please direct all correspondence to KiDeuk Kim (Principal Investigator), The Urban Institute, 500 L’Enfant Plaza SW., Washington, DC 20024 (Email: kkim@urban.org)

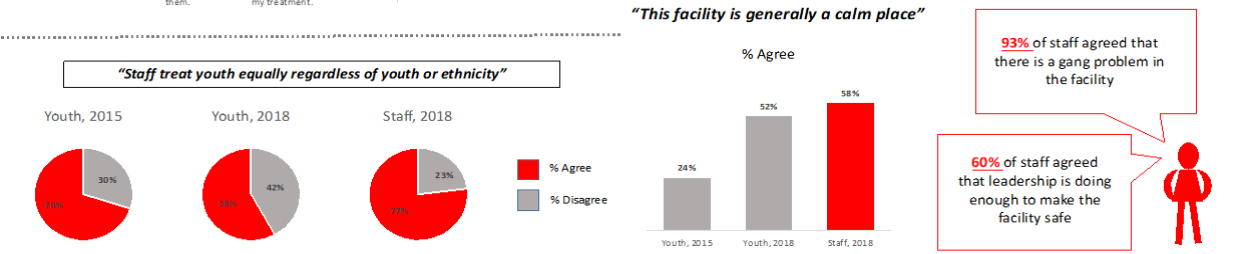
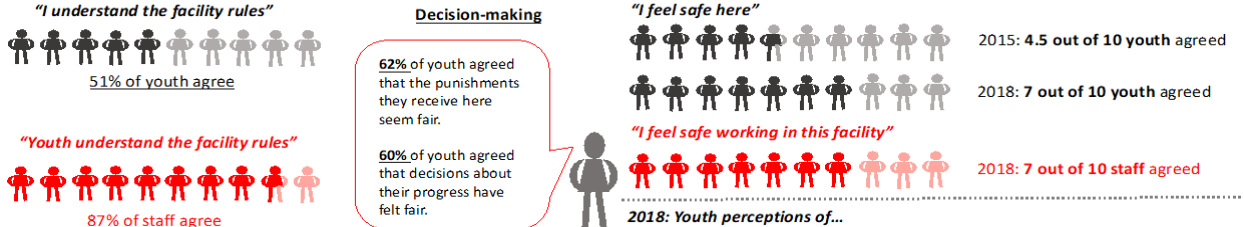
Connection, Safety, Fairness, and Purpose: A Follow-Up Study's Executive Summary

Researcher: Ryan Shanahan

Purpose **Connection**



Fairness **Safety**



Examining Probation Outcomes and Changes in Risk's Executive Summary

Researchers: JoAnn Lee, Faye Taxman, and Mark Murphy

Project Summary

The purpose of this project is to enhance our understanding of the associations between risk profiles, changes in risk, services, and probation outcomes. We identified five study aims:

- 1) What are the risk-need profiles of youth at intake?
- 2) How do risk-need profiles of probation youth change over time?
- 3) Are changes in risk-need profiles related to services?
- 4) Are risk-need profiles related to probation outcomes?
- 5) Are associations identified in study aims 2-4 unique for subpopulations such as black youth, females, and crossover youth?

Project Status

We initially received data on July 20, 2017, and an updated dataset on June 29, 2018 when an error in the original dataset was caught. After discussion on February 25, 2021, we have decided to extend the project for six more months in order to address study aims 2 and 4. We will no longer be pursuing study aims 3 and 5, since the service data have now become outdated.

In order to address study aim 1, we used latent class analysis (LCA) to identify distinct profiles of youth using the total subscales from the 10 domains, using the three categories: none-low, medium, and high levels of risk. We dropped 2 subscales with very little variability (e.g., mental health dynamic risk and aggression static risk). We explored how the identified classes were similar or different, and we replicated the LCA with a random half sample to verify. We identified 7 distinct classes based on 16,402 youth with a complete YASI at intake, which we summarized in the report we submitted on January 9, 2020.

Since then, we have completed aims 2 and 4 using the 7,859 unique youth with matched YASI completed at intake and exit. We explored changes in risk scores and associations with recidivism using both multivariate logistic regression models, in addition to latent transition analysis (LTA). For our LTA, we estimated latent classes of youth at intake and exit, as well as the probability of transitioning between the classes. We examined LTA models beginning with 2 classes at intake and 2 classes at exit, ranging up to 7 classes at intake and 6 classes at exit.

Findings

Our preliminary analyses suggest that changes in legal history, community and peers, alcohol and drugs, mental health, attitudes, skills, and employment and free time subscales are related to recidivism when controlling for the other subscales. Specific associations vary depending on how the change in subscale is coded (e.g., whether it is in the desirable direction, whether any change, etc).

Our LTA suggested that the 6-to-6 class solution was optimal. These classes demonstrate consistent characteristics at intake and exit: overall high risk; high risk with high protective employment factors; social and drug risk; individual risk; drug risk, and low risk. Our analyses suggest that the youth in the high risk ($pr=.59$) and social drug risk ($pr=.69$) groups were most likely to exit in a different group, followed by the high risk with high protective employment ($pr=.74$) and individual risk ($pr=.73$), and finally the youth in the low risk ($pr=.97$) and drug risk ($pr=.92$) groups were most likely to exit in the same group. Additionally, for five of the six groups, there was one transition that was most likely: from low risk to individual risk; drug risk to low risk; individual risk to low risk; social drug risk to drug risk, and high risk with protective employment to drug risk. For the high risk group, there were three transitions that were likely: into the high risk with protective employment, social drug risk, or drug risk groups.

We also found the lowest recidivism rates for youth who remained in the low risk group (17.5% and 10.3% for rearrests and reconvictions, respectively), and the highest recidivism rates for youth who remained in either the high risk group (56.4% and 45.3% for rearrests and reconvictions, respectively) or the high risk with high protective employment (56.5% and 43.9% for rearrests and reconvictions, respectively). Additionally, for five of the groups, the most likely transition resulted in lower recidivism rate, the exception being the youth who transitioned out of the low risk group into the individual risk group.

A more detailed summary for the LCA has already been provided, and a more detailed summary of the LTA is also attached.

Social and Psychological Predictors of Delinquency in Youth in the DJJ System's Executive Summary

Researchers: Aradhana Bela Sood and Mark Murphy

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to use available data included in the YASI and ACE trauma screen to determine what interactions may exist between subject demographics, scales scores, and levels of reported trauma. The study was designed to further examine the role these factors had in recidivism.

Summary/Takeaways

Multiple factors studied did not show any significant interactions with each other or with recidivism. Significant among these was the lack of interaction between mental health treatment and substance abuse.

Conversely items on the family scale for static risk factors did significantly impact substances dynamic and static risk as well as ACE scores. While the family scale dynamic and static risk scale was not predictive of recidivism, Substance abuse dynamic risks was.

These findings suggest that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on treatment of the entire family system to reduce negative outcomes related to trauma and substance abuse. This is counter to traditional approaches which emphasize a mental health focus related to substance abuse treatment and involving the family in the treatment of the child as opposed to treating the family in its own right.

Therapists and other professionals working with juveniles under community supervision should pay increased attention to the substance abuse dynamic risk factors when making decisions about when to adjust or intensify the plan of care.

Recommendations/Next Steps

Given the failure to find a connection between family dysfunction and recidivism while showing connection to substance abuse which then in turn impacts recidivism, more research needs to be done to explore this relationship. High base rates of recidivism may have obscured this factor while undetermined mitigating factors may be at work reducing the impact of family dysfunction in some but not all of the youth studied.

Additional research should also be conducted on interventions focusing on the entire family system as well as added supports for youth being raised in families with high levels of dysfunction.

Toward a Pedagogy of Possibility: Justice System Involved Youth Read and Write Alternative Texts' Executive Summary

Researcher: Judith Dunkerly-Bean

Purpose

The purpose of this critical ethnography was to explore how justice system involved youth (pre-adjudicated) read, respond, and create alternative multimodal texts and other art-based mediums in order to respond to issues that are important in their lives. Research on youth critical literacies and multimodal arts underpin the creation of zines aimed at addressing issues that move beyond pathological views of youth. We utilized a multiple-case study approach. Data include field note analysis and artifacts in the form of zines that incarcerated youth (termed “co-researchers”) produced to address issues of human rights and their own identities as youth in the justice system. The research questions were:

- How do pre-adjudicated youth in the justice system read, respond to and create alternative texts?
- How does engagement with alternative texts influence pre-adjudicated youths motivation and performance in reading and writing?
- What types of alternative texts are useful in sustaining youth engagement and production in this context?

As researchers, we did not ask these young people to engage in or practice literacy *per se* – or at least as it is defined in alternative school placements. Instead, we provided them with a blank notebook and a collection of colored gel pens and asked them to share their stories with us, as they felt comfortable. In essence, this approach offered a kind of intermediate space that, while structured around sessions on conflict resolution and other relevant topics, our sessions were typically art based and consciously designed to not “do school.”

Summary/Takeaways

One of the most important things we learned in the early stages of navigating this context was that anything we brought in that had a school-like aura was likely to fail. Thus, zines and their artistic and narrative creation became a center point in our weekly meetings. The faces of the school to prison pipeline are diverse and complex and they were willing to share their experiences with a larger audience.

While is not appropriate to generalize that these narratives to all BIPOC incarcerated youth, nor is appropriate to universalize their experience as representative of a population. However, many of their lyrics and accounts were filled with images of poverty and the accompanying hardships, the potency of drugs, the devastation of dead family members and friends in their communities, as well as the collective sentiment that it is “too late” to change their lives. They shared these uncensored accounts as part of what they termed “their struggle,” which synonymized to their stories.

While we worked with fewer female adolescents, the stories they shared were not altogether different. For many of the young women, writing poems and songs chronicled the ways in which adolescent girls shared and/or yielded and embodied their identities. One young woman exemplified this in her songs and lyrics that attempted to decenter stereotypes of Black girls and re-center them as powerful acts of activism in a society rife with racism and sexism, where Black voices are intentionally silenced.

Recommendations/Next Steps

Some “next step” questions for further research/intervention or replication or continuation with other youth are as follows:

1. School disciplinary practices are widely established as having a strong correlation to juvenile justice system referrals. What can be done within academic programs, especially those in alternative placements to redirect “discipline” towards “development,” rather than “detainment”?
2. The high number of minority populations (i.e. children in foster care, racial minorities, students with mental health needs, children with disabilities, children in poverty/homelessness, *et cetera*) characterize the academic referrals that manifest into law enforcement involvement. What resources do teachers and academic personnel need to better serve their increasingly diverse student populations without seeing diversity of behaviors and past experiences as subversive?
3. How might an expanded view of literacy/ies help incarcerated youth reclaim their identity in classrooms, before, during, and after their detainment? How can literacy engagement and critical literacy practices promote the healthy and positive identity evolution of youth once they have been part of the justice system?

Using these multi-pronged questions as recommendations for “next steps” we believe it would be of great benefit to youth involved in the juvenile justice system to have the benefit of partnerships between the Department of Juvenile Justice and institutions of higher education, such as Old Dominion University. We propose that in addition to university faculty working alongside detention center administration, staff and teachers to make the shift towards “lived literacies” that the youth we worked with so aptly demonstrated; there might also exist space to reverse the school-to-prison pipeline into an avenue to access higher education.

Clearly, such an endeavor would require a larger mechanism to be in place than we are capable of generating as one research team. However, since many of the youth we encountered expressed the desire to go to college, while at the same time despairing that they would never have that opportunity (for a variety of reasons), it is a goal that we see as having a significant impact on the lives of justice-system involved youth in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Vision 21: Linking Systems of Care for Children and Youth's Executive Summary

Researcher: Laurie Crawford

Purpose:

To evaluate the Virginia Victimization Screen¹, a brief screening tool to identify experiences of and symptomology related to trauma and victimization in youth.

Summary/Takeaways:

- The development of the VVS was preceded by a national search for existing screening approaches intended for young victims from early childhood (under age 6) through teen years and into young adulthood. A good fit for the LSC project's goals was not found. Through consultation with leading experts and with support from the project's national Steering Committee, the VVS was developed.
- The VVS was piloted across a diverse range of communities within Virginia, including a mixture of both urban, suburban, and rural communities. The pilots involved a variety of settings that provide services to children, youth, and families and the VVS has promise for being implemented in these settings.
- The VVS training was effective at increasing service providers' perceived ability to administer the screening and their knowledge about childhood victimization.
- Given the breadth of communities and local partner agencies, the project encountered some challenges. However, there was wide support for the VVS among those implementing the tool, even when they encountered challenges in their particular environment.
- Overall, 230 screens were administered during the pilot phases of the project; and with ongoing feedback from the project's evaluation process led by VCU, the VVS was modified and improved. The VVS received broad support among those working directly with children and youth during the pilot, despite some feedback about the awkwardness of asking specific types of questions.
- The pilot helped both the screen administrators and the people being screened understand that there are ways to help people who have experienced bad things.
- VCU determined that the VVS is serving its intended function to identify young victims and link them to services, and responses to VVS items during the pilot phases were determined to be internally coherent.

¹ Since the pilot and evaluation of the Virginia Victimization Screen, the name of the screening tool has been changed to the Screening for Experiences and Strengths (SEAS).

Recommendations/Next Steps:

Training

Recommendation 1: Continue ongoing VVS training to address the needs of those implementing the instrument in a manner that is responsive to their agency roles and culture.

Recommendation 2: Improve the training to address the needs of screeners who lack a specific background in behavioral health.

Recommendation 3: Consider expanding the core training to include a component on cultural diversity.

Statewide Implementation

Recommendation 4: The VVS should be implemented across the Commonwealth with support to organize continuous feedback for refining the screening tool and procedures for administering it.

Recommendation 5: Refine the Spanish language version of the VVS to consider informal and formal communication styles.²

Recommendation 6: Expand translation of the VVS into additional languages commonly spoken in Virginia.

Research

Recommendation 7: Two to three years into statewide implementation, seek support for continuing to advance the research supporting the reliability and validity of the VVS and assessing whether VVS guided intervention and referral leads to better outcomes for youth. Focus future research on settings where the VVS is in wide use and focus research activities with data support from that agency sector.

² This recommendation has been incorporated, as the Spanish version has been re-translated since the conclusion of the pilot.