



ProDES

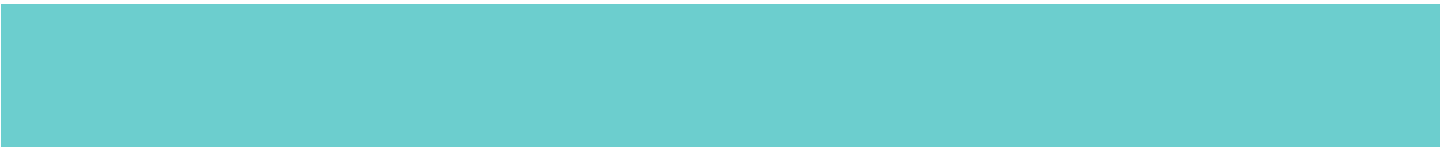
Program Development and Evaluation System

Juvenile Justice Trends 1994-1998 Report

August, 1999

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Executive Summary

"Juvenile drug abuse increased consistently from 1994 through early 1997 and has stabilized since then at around 60 percent."

Executive Summary

This report documents some of the key trends in the characteristics of the incoming juvenile delinquent population in Philadelphia from 1994 through 1998.* Some of the more important findings are:

At Intake

- ♦ *There has been a consistent growth in the overall monthly population fueled in part -- but not entirely -- by the increase in aftercare cases. Aside from aftercare, the most noticeable population trend is the consistent increase in the utilization of institutional programs.*
- ♦ *The incoming juvenile cohort is changing slightly both in terms of racial and age composition -- there are more Latinos and an 'older' population.*
- ♦ *There has been little or no change throughout the study period in either the types of offenses for which juveniles enter the system or the prior record of the incoming cohorts.*
- ♦ *Juvenile alcohol abuse increased through early 1997 but has dropped off slightly since then. Juvenile drug abuse also increased consistently through early 1997 and has stabilized since then.*
- ♦ *The proportion of juveniles with low IQ and/or a history of mental health problems is on the increase.*
- ♦ *The overall self-esteem and values orientation of incoming cohorts has not changed throughout the study period.*
- ♦ *The School Bonding measures show continued low scores on both school and community involvement scales (the latter actually becoming even worse over time) but some upward movement on the school attachment and commitment scores. We can only speculate whether the low involvement scores are due to a lack of juvenile motivation or the absence of opportunities. Informal feedback from program staff, social workers and probation officers suggests that the issue of motivation is almost moot since opportunities are virtually nonexistent.*
- ♦ *Given the low levels of involvement in school, it is encouraging to find some improvements in the level of attachment to school and to teachers.*
- ♦ *Nothing has changed for Family Bonding measures over time -- juveniles are most likely to rate parental 'caring and trust' the highest and the level of 'intimate and instrumental communication' the lowest.*

At Discharge

- ♦ *Average length of stay in programs is declining slowly. This is most apparent for institutional programs, where time in program has dropped from an average*

* In analyses that include DPW cases, October 1995 is the starting point for trends data.

of 45 weeks for clients admitted in 1994 to 37 weeks for those admitted in 1997.

- ♦ On average, juveniles emerge from programs with slightly higher self-esteem and markedly more prosocial values.
- ♦ Although we would like to see improvement across the board, the only School Bonding scales that reflect improvement are school commitment and school attachment. It is also true that juveniles at discharge have higher scores on perceived opportunities (they have more belief in their future) and lower scores on the consequences of arrest scale (less inclined to believe their arrest is ruinous).
- ♦ Three of the Family Bonding scales show an overall net improvement from intake to discharge -- identity support, instrumental and intimate communication.
- ♦ AWOL rates have remained constant throughout at about 20 percent.
- ♦ Program reported in-program re-offending rates have also stayed stable at about 9 percent (though this reflects a significant undercount of the actual amount).

At Follow-up

- ♦ There has been no change in the rate of offending, either in-program or post-discharge, during the study period. About 18 percent of juveniles re-offend at least once while in the program; about 22 percent re-offend at least once during the follow-up. If we combine the periods, we have about 36 percent of juveniles who re-offend at least once from the point of program intake to six months following discharge.
- ♦ There has been no real change in the time to re-offending, though there are fewer personal offenses among the new offenses than were among the initial offenses.
- ♦ There is a slow but sure decline in the proportion of both juveniles and parents who rate the programs as being helpful.

Synopsis

Three main findings emerge from the trend data. The first is that the juvenile population is changing over time in a number of ways and is, on balance, becoming more rather than less challenging. That is, incoming youths are more likely to have special needs in terms of substance abuse, IQ and/or mental health than in previous years. Second, although some juveniles clearly get worse rather than better by the end of the program, pre-post changes are more likely to be positive than negative. There is ground for guarded optimism. Third is the fact that, whatever is happening from intake to discharge, new petitions have remained unchanged throughout.

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Client population--
- total and
by program
type.

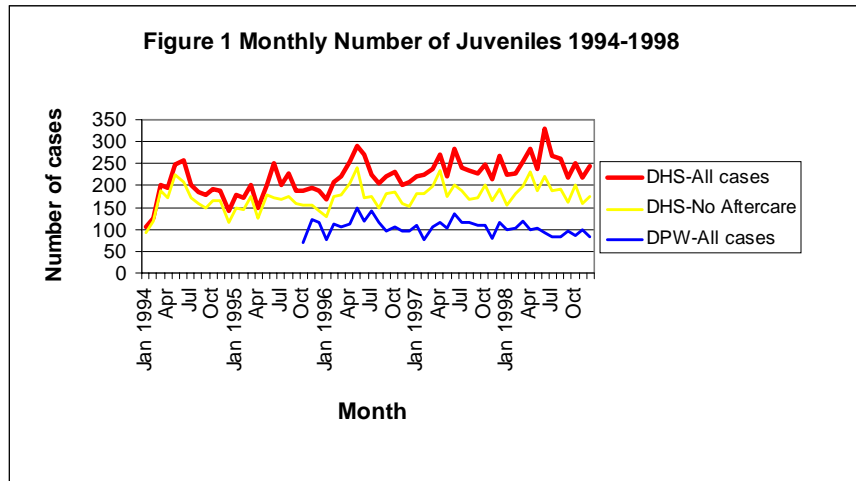
Introduction

After more than five years of operation, we can provide a clear picture of what is happening in that portion of the juvenile justice system monitored by *ProDES*. The most noticeable feature of our trends analysis is the basic stability and continuity that exists for most measures. It is unusual to find marked shifts in established patterns, a finding that suggests we can have confidence in any future projections we make based upon the existing trends.

Trends At Intake

Overall Population

In early 1994 the DHS juvenile monthly population was about 150; by the end of 1998 it had increased to about 250 per month including aftercare cases and 200 without these cases. In contrast, the number of DPW cases has fluctuated somewhat around an underlying stable average of about 100 per month (Figure 1).



"Juvenile populations are increasing, and their age and racial make-up are changing slightly."

We can break down the population trends separately for the larger and smaller program types. Among the larger types, we find that Day Treatment has remained roughly stable around 60 juveniles per month; Drug and Alcohol programs are also stable at about 19 per month. The major population changes involve Aftercare programs, which have increased from just 20 per month in 1994 to over 60 in 1998 and Institutional programs, which increased from about 60 in 1994 to over 80 in 1998. Among the smaller program types, SCOH programs have declined from an average

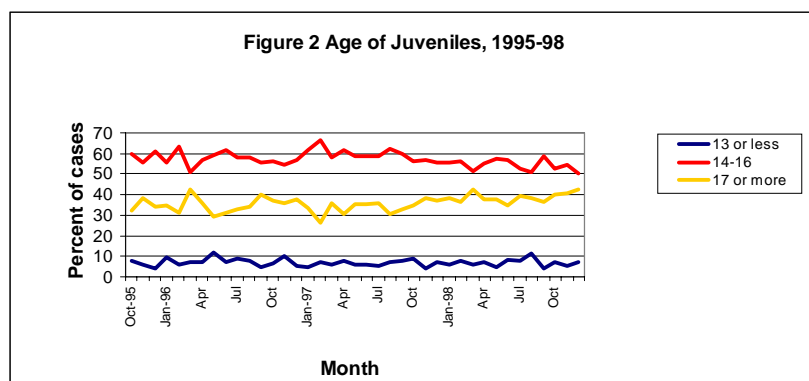
Socio-demographic, offense and prior record

of 7 to 3 juveniles per month, Mental Retardation programs have increased their numbers from 2 to 4 per month, Counseling from 4 to 6 and both Foster Care and Group Homes have remained stable at 6 and 4 per month, respectively.

Socio-Demographic Changes

The **gender** balance has remained unchanged -- males consistently comprise about 88 percent of the population. There has been a shift in **racial composition** -- the early years witnessed a slight increase in the proportion of Latino juveniles and a concomitant decline in the proportion of African-American juveniles, though the trends have leveled off during the past year or so.

There has been a continued increase in the average age of juveniles entering delinquency programs -- the number of juveniles aged 13 or younger has remained stable but the proportion aged 17 or older has increased and the proportion aged 14-16 has declined (Figure 2).



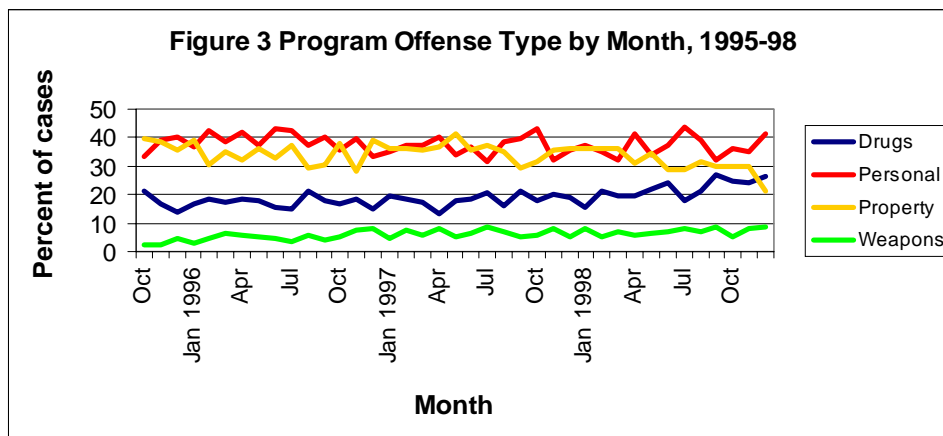
"There has been almost no change in the type of offenses for which juveniles are being petitioned to DHS funded programs."

Offense and Prior Record

There has been almost no change in the type of offenses for which juveniles are being petitioned to delinquency programs -- though there is some evidence of a recent upswing in the proportion of drug offenses (Figure 3). Equally, there has been no change in the prior record of juveniles entering the programs (about 50 percent are first-time offenders) or the average age of first arrest for those entering (it has been 14 for the entire period). There is some change, however -- more juveniles now have siblings who themselves have been arrested (up from about 22 to 32 percent

**Offense
type,
alcohol
abuse**

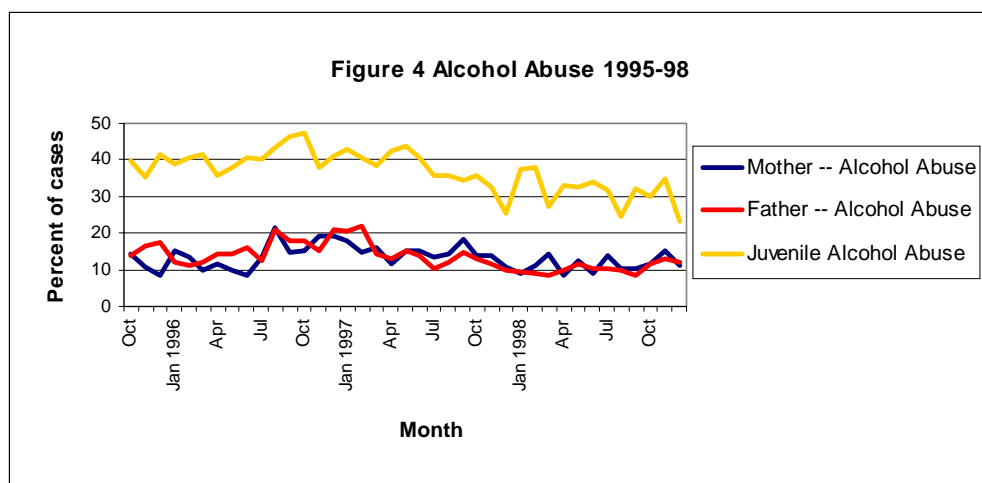
during the time period) and mothers who have been arrested (up from about 10 to 15 percent).



Substance abuse -- Juvenile and Parents

Substance abuse by the juvenile and the parents is one area where we find significant trends. As Figure 4 shows, there was a significant increase from 1995 to early 1997 in the proportion of juveniles reported in the J-File as having an alcohol abuse problem. Since early 1997, there has been an equally consistent decline in reported

abuse -- bringing the figures down below their earlier level. This pattern is replicated

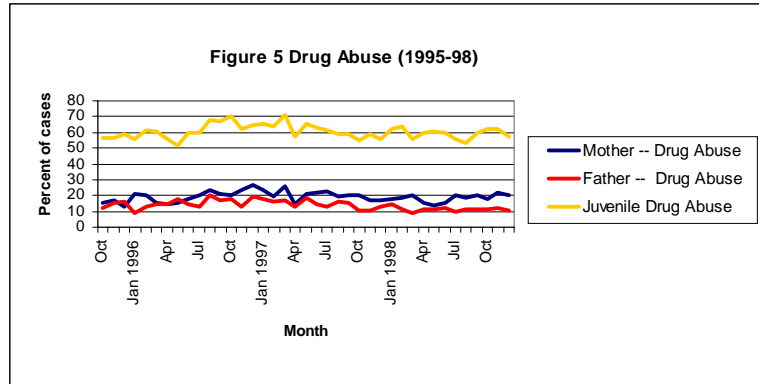


**Drug Abuse,
IQ and
Mental
Health**

in a much more muted way in reported alcohol abuse for both parents.

The trends for juvenile drug abuse are somewhat different. They indicate a peak in

the proportion of juveniles reported in the T-File as having a drug abuse problem at around 70% in late 1996 thru early 1997 (Figure 5). Since 1997, the figures have declined only

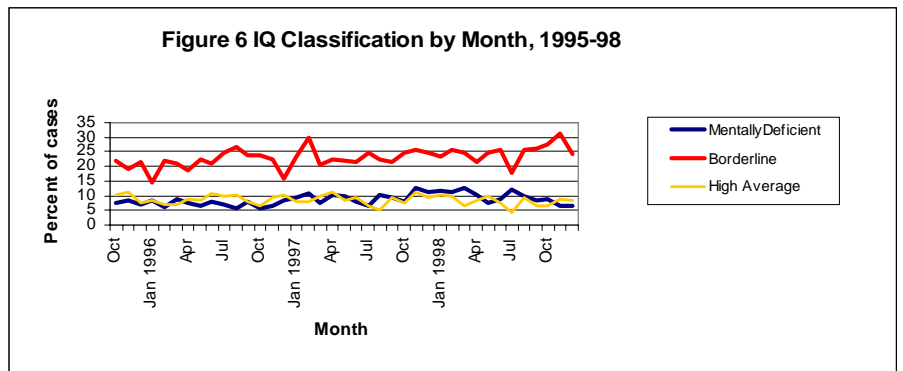


slightly and for the past two years have stayed around 60 percent. The data for parents show that, on average, about one in every six mothers and fathers have a drug abuse problem -- the figure has not changed significantly throughout the study period.

IQ and Mental Health

IQ classification and the presence or absence of any mental health problems are two of the more important factors that determine where a juvenile can be placed.

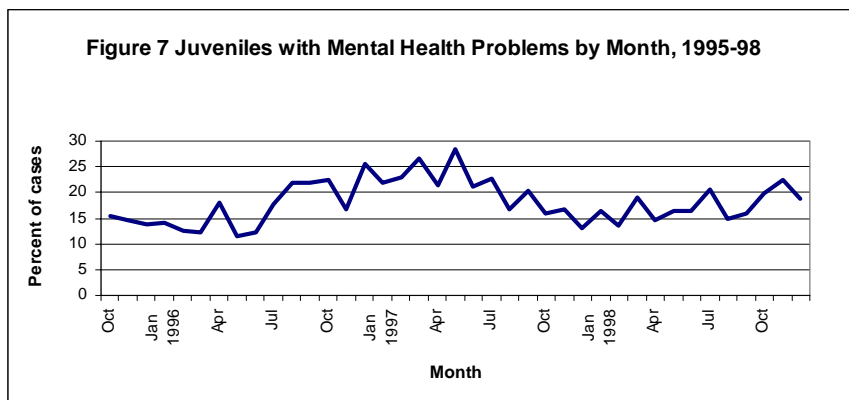
The data show that the proportion of juveniles classified as either 'borderline' or 'mentally deficient' is slowly but consistently on the increase (Figure 6).



"During the past five years more juveniles have low IQ scores, alcohol and/or drug abuse and a history of mental health problems."

Risk and Needs Measures

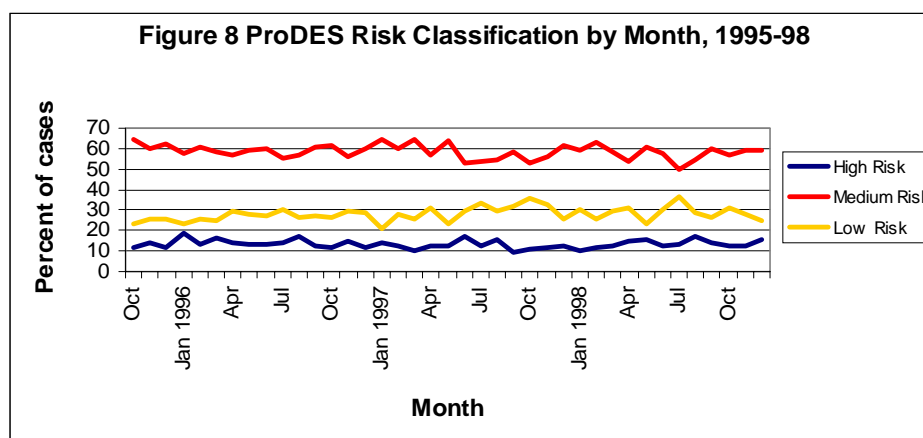
"In terms of risk and need the juveniles entering programs are clearly becoming a more difficult population with which to deal."



The data on juveniles reported in the J-File as having a history of mental health problems (Figure 7) has fluctuated significantly during the study period, but the underlying trend is quite clearly upwards -- from about 15 percent in 1995 to 20 percent in late 1998.

Risk and Need

So far, any changes we have noted tend to indicate a more challenging juvenile for delinquency programs. This is reflected in the risk instrument developed from 'J-File' data.* The proportion of high-risk clients entering programs is on the rise, while the proportion of low-risk clients is decreasing (Figure 8). Needs assessment data also indicate overall increases for juveniles in DHS-funded programs; it appears that increases in staff assessed educational and peer related needs are driving up the overall needs score rather than staff assessed need in the area of either health &



hygienic or sexual related needs. Overall, it is

* The risk instrument reported here is a validated instrument, developed using CHAID. Only factors available in the J-File were used, to allow for the inclusion of DPW cases (from whom we receive no intake staff assessment or self-report data).

School and Family Bonding at Intake

clear that the juveniles entering programs are becoming a more challenging population with which to deal.

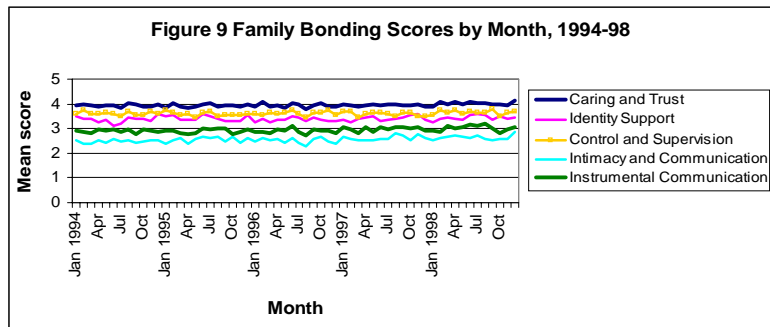
Self-esteem and Values

There has been almost no change in the average self-esteem or values score for juveniles during the entire five year period.

School Bonding

The School Bonding scales, which are self-report measures, essentially collapse into three groups -- and each has a slightly different set of trend results.

The *involvement scales* show a steady pattern of low scores for school involvement and a disappointing downward trend to for the community involvement scores.



The *consequences of arrest and perceived opportunities* scales show no change, indicating that juveniles continue to have relatively high expectations of their future chances in life and a neutral position in terms of the expected consequences of their arrest.

"It is clear that the level of communication between juvenile and family is the weakest part of the family bond."

Length of Stay in Program

"The median length of stay has declined slowly but consistently from around 33 weeks in 1994 to about 28 weeks for juveniles entering programs in 1997."

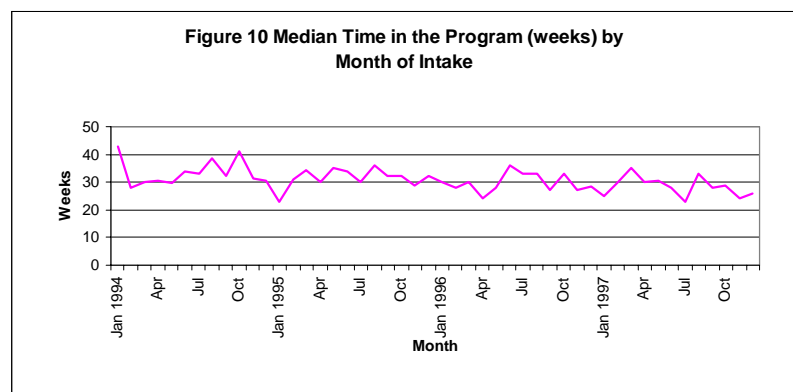
The *school attachment and commitment scales* along with the *attachment to teacher* scale show some evidence of higher scores among more recent intakes. This shows that, despite the increasing risk and need among recent cohorts, there are some positive signs that give grounds for optimism. The juveniles entering DHS programs in 1997 seem to be more positive about school than were juveniles several years ago.

Family Bonding

Family bonding is also measured with a self-report instrument. Figure 9 shows that there has been no change during the entire study period in either the absolute mean scores on each of the five Family Bonding scales or the relative scores of each scale vis a vis each

other. The average scores for caring and trust are the highest throughout the study period, and the scores for both intimate and instrumental communica-

tion remain consistently the lowest. Though juveniles feel they are cared for and supervised by their family, it is clear that the level of communication between juvenile and family is the weakest part of the family bond.



Trends At Discharge

Time in the Program

Most programs have expected lengths of stay around six to nine months. There are many reasons why a juvenile may not stay this long -- they could go AWOL or be rearrested or they could be transferred to a program felt to be more appropriate to their needs. Though early discharge reflects positive or negative reasons, it is useful to track length of stay since it is undoubtedly one of the key indicators of the overall 'health' of the system. As Figure 10 shows, the median length of stay has declined slowly but consistently from around 33 weeks in 1994 to about 28 weeks for juveniles

***Changes in
Self-Esteem,
Values, School
Bonding***

"The *ProDES* data have shown that the majority of juveniles already possess high self-esteem at the time of entry to the programs."

entering programs in 1997. If we break these figures down by type of program, we find that some types have changed very little -- for example the average for in-community (i.e., in Philadelphia) institutional programs has remained constant at about 22 weeks. Other program types have witnessed significant declines -- in-community non-residential programs (Aftercare and Day Treatment) have dropped from 27 weeks in 1994 to 20 weeks for 1997 intakes, out-of-community institutional programs have seen a drop from an average 45 weeks to about 37 weeks, and stays at out-of-area institutional programs have declined from about 47 weeks in 1994 to under 30 in 1997. Since AWOL and rearrest rates have not increased during the study period, it appears that there is some other system-related reason why juveniles are not staying in programs as long as clients admitted in previous years.

Changes in self-esteem and values

Each of the scales measured in *ProDES* reflects a dimension of juvenile personality or attitude that programs believe to be related to delinquent behavior. On each scale there is an expectation that program intervention will produce a change that, in turn, will positively affect future delinquent behavior. Most programs identify improved self-esteem as a goal. The *ProDES* data have shown that the majority of juveniles already possess high self-esteem at the time of entry to the programs. The change data (measured as a change in scale scores from intake to discharge for all cases where both scores exist) show that about 50 to 60 percent of juveniles do not experience any change in self-esteem, about 30 to 40 percent experience an increase in self-esteem and about 10 percent experience a decrease in self-esteem.

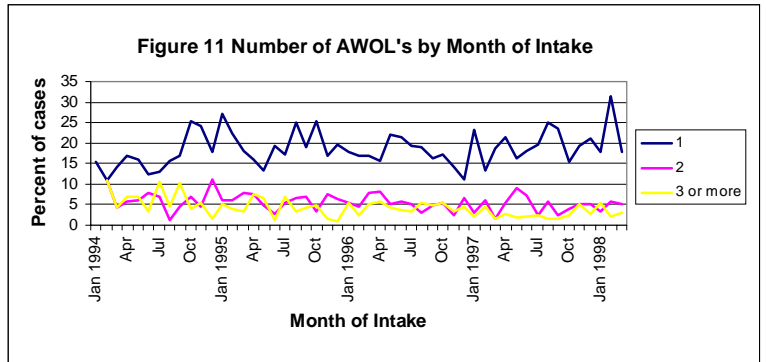
The data for values orientation are slightly different -- about 40 to 50 percent express more prosocial values by discharge, another 35 to 45 percent express no change in values orientation and about 15 percent have more anti-social values by the time of discharge.

Changes in School Bonding

From a system-wide perspective, most of the School Bonding scales are characterized by stability -- on most of the scales about 45 to 50 percent of juveniles remain unchanged from intake to discharge, and of the remainder, there are slightly more advances than declines. There is no evidence to suggest overall improvements

Discharge Data - AWOL's and Re-Arrests

in the level of *school or community involvement* by the time of discharge. In contrast, the data show a consistent overall increase in discharge scores for *school commitment* and *school attachment* and a similar, if weaker, pattern of increases by discharge in *attachment to teacher* scores. In general, juveniles have higher scores on *perceived opportunities* at discharge (showing they have more belief in their future) and a concomitant decrease in the *consequences of arrest* score (again showing that they are less inclined to believe their arrest is ruinous).



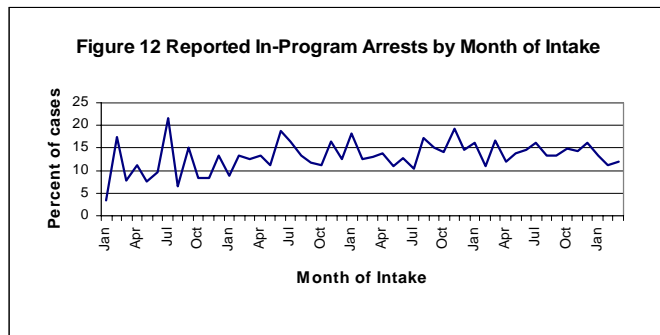
"Overall, just under 28 percent of juveniles go AWOL at least once while they are in a program. This figure has remained stable throughout most of the study period."

Changes in Family Bonding

The Family Bonding scales can be divided into two groups with regard to change -- there are two measures (*control and supervision* and *caring and trust*) that reflect almost no overall change and three measures (*instrumental and intimate communication* and *identity support*) that display evidence of consistently increased scores at discharge. Gross though the trends may be, the overall pattern is one of more positive than negative change in Family Bonding by the time of discharge.

AWOL's and Re-arrests

Programs that provide discharge data are asked to indicate how many times the juvenile was **AWOL** from the



program, was re-arrested while in the program (not all of which will become formal court petitions recorded in follow-up) and whether or not they felt the juvenile was an appropriate referral for their program given his or her

**Appropriateness
of Clients and
New Petitions at
Follow-Up**

"During 1997 and early 1998 the data show a slow decline in the proportion of youths judges to be appropriate down to about 70 percent."

needs, risk level etc. Figure 11 shows that overall, about 28 percent of juveniles go AWOL at least once while they are in the program. This figure has remained stable throughout most of the study period, with about 18 percent of the juveniles going AWOL just once.

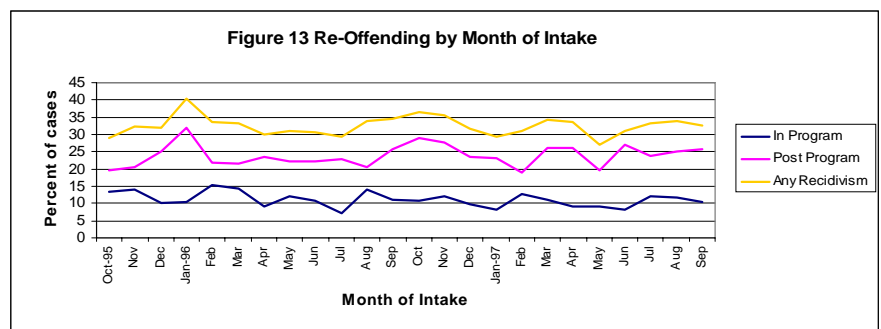
Figure 12 presents the trend data for *in-program rearrests* reported by program staff. The rearrest rate increased consistently from about 10 percent in 1994 to over 15 percent in early 1996 and it has remained at this rate ever since. In-program re-arrest data are available only in cases where programs provide discharge data. Furthermore, not all program arrests will result in formal court petitions. It is likely, therefore, that some discrepancies will occur between the staff reported in-program re-arrest data and the independently collected court in-program new petition data (one would expect re-arrests, if anything, to exceed new petitions). The fact that reported re-arrest rates are about two-thirds the in-program new petition rate identified by *ProDES* suggests that some programs are unaware of, or unwilling to report, new offenses occurring within programs.

Appropriateness of Referrals

Program staff have consistently reported that about 80 percent of all referrals were felt to be '*appropriate for their program*'. During 1997 and early 1998 the data show a slow decline in the proportion of youths judges to be appropriate down to about 70 percent. The most-commonly cited reasons why youths were deemed by staff to be inappropriate are: AWOL, attendance problem, and external problems (family, peers).

Given the importance of matching the needs of a juvenile with the appropriate

program services, this is a system indicator that we will need to watch carefully.



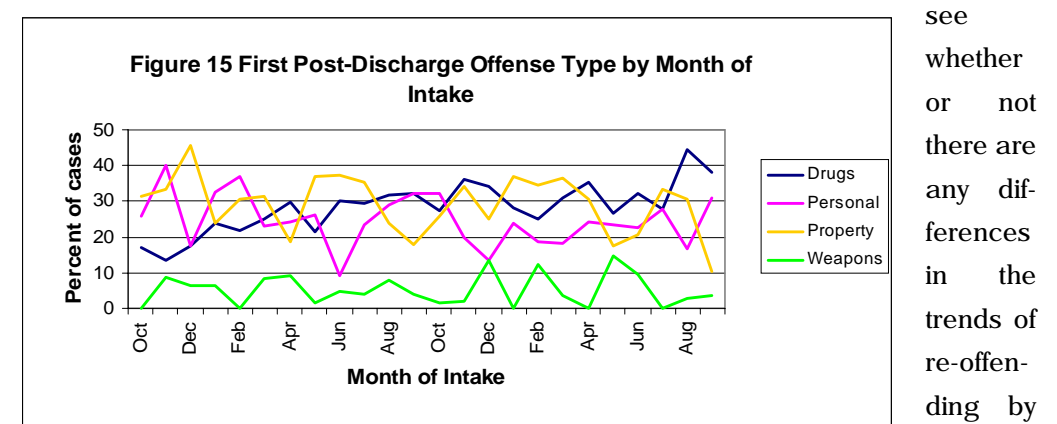
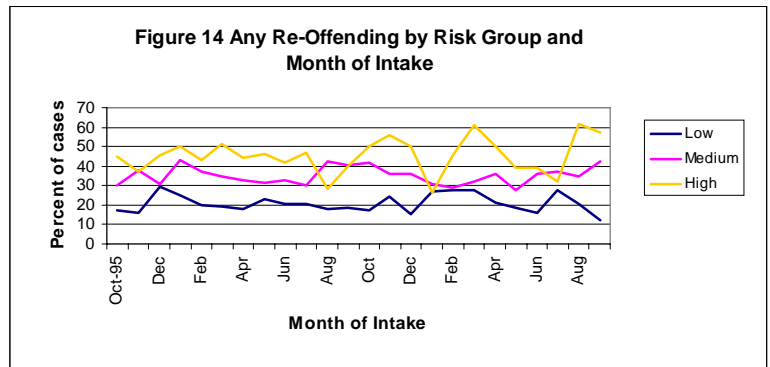
Any Re-Offending and Type of Re-Offense

Trends At Follow-Up

New Petitions
 One of the most unequivocal goals of the juvenile justice system is the reduction of future delinquent behavior. *ProDES* meas-

ures new offending by reviewing court records for the time spent in the program as well as a period of 6 months post-discharge (including juvenile and, where appropriate, adult offending). Figure 13 shows the trends for *new offenses occurring while in the program, during the 6 month follow-up and for both time periods combined*. Again, the most striking feature is the seemingly intractable nature of re-offending. Since 1995 there has been almost no change in the underlying rate of offending -- consistently, about 36% of juveniles offend at least once, either while in the program or during the six months following discharge. Though post-program recidivism has increased somewhat during the study period, in-program has decreased, leaving overall rates stable.

To examine re-offending rates in a little more detail we separated out the results for juveniles classified at intake as low, medium or high risk offenders. This allows us to



see whether or not there are any differences in the trends of re-offending by

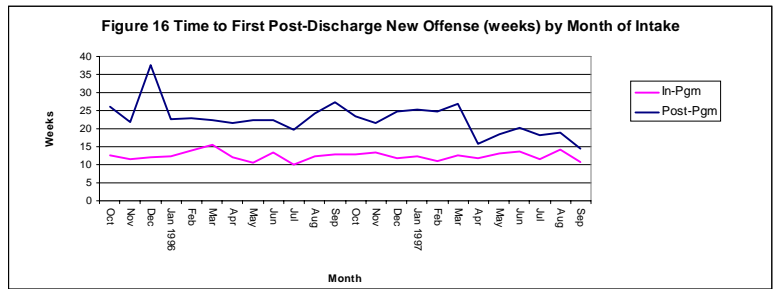
"There is no indication that re-offending rates are getting any better or any worse for any of the risk groups."

Time to New Offense

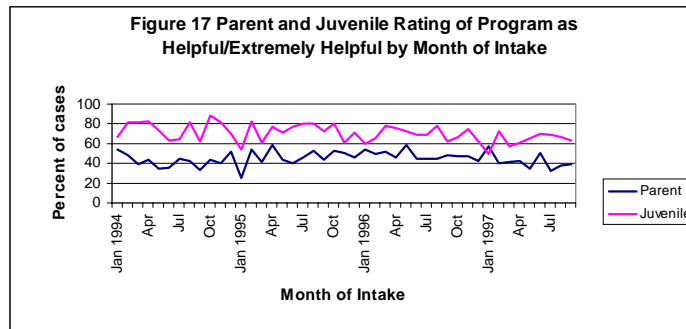
"There has been almost no change in the median time to first new offense.. about 17 weeks to the first in-program new offense and 11 weeks to the first post-discharge new offense."

risk group. Figure 14 shows the results for juveniles at low, moderate, and high risk of re-offending. The data show that rates of re-offending fluctuate most for the high risk group. Since

1995, high-risk juveniles have demonstrated a slow increase in rates of recidivism, although there is no indication that re-offending rates are getting any better or any worse for the low or moderate-risk juveniles..



Beyond knowing how much new offending occurs, it is important to monitor the nature of the re-offending and the time to the re-offense. In Figure 15 we examine the type of first post-discharge re-offense committed. Property crimes comprise about 31 percent of the new offenses, drug and personal offenses comprise an additional 25 percent each and weapons offenses make-up about 5 percent more. If we compare these proportions with those for the initial offenses of the juveniles we find there are fewer personal offenses and more drug offenses -- indicating a decline rather than an increase in overall offense seriousness.



In addition to reducing the rate of re-offending, or at least reducing the seriousness of any new offending, a logical system goal would be to lengthen the time taken to the new offense. Unfortunately there is little evidence that this is occurring. If we measure the time to the first in-program new offense, we find that there has been

Conclusion

Conclusion

In summary, delinquency programs are seeing a client population that is becoming increasingly challenging with which to work. This population is older, more likely to have problems with substance abuse, low IQ, and/or mental health, and are assessed to have higher risk for re-offending and greater needs. While this may be reflected in a decrease in the proportion of youths assessed by staff as appropriate for the program and a decrease in the average length of stay, there is some positive news. Most self-report measures indicate stability over time -- and rates of in- and post-program recidivism, AWOL's, and staff-reported in-program re-arrests have not increased. It is apparent that outcomes for these clients are no worse than for their less challenging counterparts admitted in previous years.

"It is apparent that outcomes for these clients are no worse than for their less challenging counterparts admitted in previous years."