

# Foster Care Programs

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## Juveniles at Intake

From 1994 through September 1999, Foster Care programs admitted 398 delinquent boys and girls from Philadelphia (see Figure 1). As the total number of juveniles entering the system has slowly grown, the number of admits to Foster Care programs initially declined from 83 in 1994 to 52 in 1997 before picking up again to 60 in 1998 and a projected 80 in 1999. In total, Foster Care accounts for between 2½% and 4½% of all non-aftercare admits.

The juveniles who entered Foster Care programs ranged in age from 11 to 20, with 64% between 15 and 17 and an average age of almost 16½. Over four-fifths (83%) of juveniles were African-American, 11% were Latino, and 6% White. About 36% were female -- more than three times the 'norm' for the delinquent population.

More than half (56%) of the juveniles had one or more prior arrests and a very large proportion -- 57% -- had a history of prior dependency referrals to DHS. Almost one-third (32%) of juveniles had a reported history of family violence. About 7% of mothers of juveniles had a criminal record, but for fathers the figure was 13%.

About 47% of incoming juveniles were referred for personal offenses and 31% for property offenses (see Figure 2). More than a quarter (27%) of all intakes involved offenses where a victim was injured, and almost one in five (19%) involved the use of a weapon. Using CJRI's risk assessment tool, we find that 50% of the incoming clients were low risk, 31% moderate risk and 19% at high risk of re-offending.

Only 7% of juveniles lived with both parents at the time of intake; 31% lived with their mother alone, 13% lived with their natural mother and stepfather/ paramour, and 25% lived with other relatives.

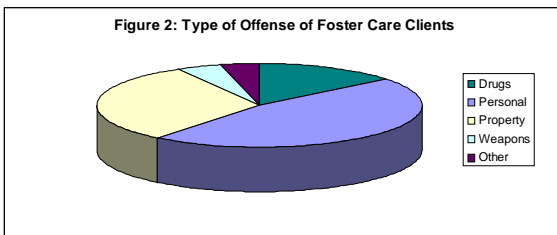
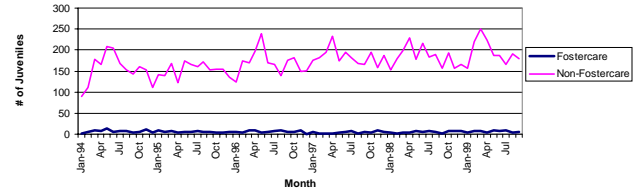


Figure 1: Foster Care -- Monthly Intake of Philadelphia Juveniles (1994-1999)



Alcohol abuse by the mother was noted in 20% of cases; by the father in 14% of cases. Maternal drug abuse was reported in one-third (33%) of cases; paternal drug abuse was reported in 17% of cases. The proportion of juveniles with a history of alcohol abuse was high -- at 39% -- with 12% said to have a chronic drinking problem. Juvenile drug abuse was even higher at 57% of cases -- with 26% reported to have a chronic abuse problem. In addition, probation records show more than a quarter (27%) of Foster Care juveniles to have had a history of mental health problems.

About one in ten Foster Care juveniles were found to have low (or very low) self-esteem (11%) and 62% had high self-esteem. About 43% of juveniles had either an antisocial (28%) or very antisocial (14%) values orientation.

## Juveniles at Discharge

The average program stay in Foster Care programs was 37 weeks -- slightly above the average of 34 weeks for all program types (see Figure 3). Foster Care programs reported that about one quarter (24%) of their clients were 'inappropriate' placements -- about the average for most program types.

About 16% of the intake juveniles were reported as having completed the program. Almost half the juveniles (45%) were discharged because of AWOL's and a further 13% because they were 'appropriate but not responding to the program'. Other reasons for discharge included 'unsuccessful/reason unknown' (10%), the juvenile not considered 'appropriate' for the program (6%), and rearrest (8%).

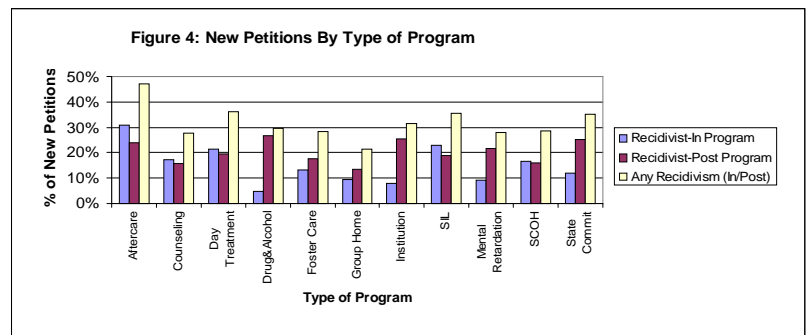
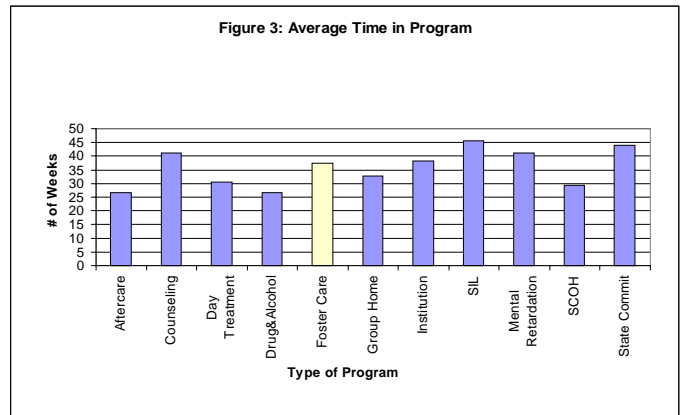
If we examine the changing behavior and attitudes of the youth from intake to discharge, we find some mixed results. Overall, it is common for between half and three-quarters of the youth to remain fairly stable from intake to discharge on most of the measures. However, there are some measures where the findings are quite different or offer notable results. Before describing these results we should note that there is only a very small number (approximately 21) of complete pre-post cases for Foster Care programs and therefore we report numbers instead of percentages. We are able to report percentages for **Overall Juvenile Need** because for this

particular item, we have data on over 125 cases.

- Of the five juveniles for whom self-esteem changed while in the Foster Care, there were only slightly more juveniles with increased than decreased self-esteem (three and two respectively).
- Five juveniles had more prosocial values at discharge than they did at intake compared with just one who had more antisocial values at discharge.
- On most family bonding measures, any change that occurred was far more likely to be in a positive than negative direction -- for example, on the measure **caring and trust**, six juveniles changed from intake to discharge and all recorded higher levels at discharge than intake.
- The one family bonding exception is **control and supervision** where nine juveniles changed their scores by discharge and five of these reported lower levels at discharge from Foster Care than at intake.
- There was only slight change on the school bonding measure of **school commitment** and little change on **attachment to teachers**. There was more change on **school attachment** though almost as many juveniles decreased their school attachment (3) as increased school attachment (4) at discharge.
- Three juveniles experienced greater **community involvement** from intake to discharge while only two experienced worsened community involvement. For **school involvement**, one improved while three declined.
- Staff reports show that there was a change in the level of **overall juvenile need** in 65% of cases -- with considerably more showing an increase in overall need (46%) than a decrease (20%).

#### Juveniles at Follow-up

When juveniles have been discharged for at least six months CJRI independently completes a follow-up court record check. Of the 220 Foster Care clients for whom we have these data, about 13% received a new petition for an arrest while in the program. Only 18% received a petition for a new arrest during the six months following discharge. The total new petition rate - from intake to six months following discharge -- of 28% for Foster Care juveniles is below the average for all programs. Furthermore, if we examine the new petition rates through the study period we find that they are declining slowly -- from total rates slightly above 30% in 1994 to rates around 25% for 1998



intakes.

The new petition data show that re-offending varies considerably by the intake risk-classification of the juveniles -- with 20% of low risk juveniles having new petitions (from intake to six months following discharge) compared with 38% of moderate and 35% high risk juveniles.

We can compare rates of new petitions for Foster Care and other program types -- see Figure 4. The data show that the in-program new petition rates for Foster Care are above those for Drug & Alcohol, Group Home, Mental Retardation, State and Institutional programs and below most other types. The post-discharge new petition rates are lower than almost all other program types (only Group Homes, Counseling and SCOH are lower). The total new petition rate is also among the lowest. If we control for the risk classification of juveniles at intake, we find that the total new petition rates for Foster Care programs are slightly above average for moderate risk juveniles but one of the lowest for high risk juveniles (only Mental Retardation is lower). For low risk youth, Foster Care's total new petition rate is about average.

For more in-depth information on the information presented here, or to request additional analyses, please contact Lori Grubstein at (215) 627-0496 or [prodeslori@aol.com](mailto:prodeslori@aol.com).