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Juvenile Court Probation Supervised Youths: At Risk in Cuyahoga County, Ohio

By Christopher A. Mallett

More than 2 million juvenile court cases are processed each year in the United States. Delinquency accounts for 61 percent, victims of abuse/neglect account for 19 percent, and status offenses account for 16 percent of the total (Martin, 2005; Roberts, 2004; Snyder, 2004; U.S. Department of Justice, 2004).¹ Thus, more than 1.2 million youths are adjudicated delinquent and subsequently monitored by the juvenile justice system each year.² Of these adjudicated delinquent youths, 679,449 were court ordered for probation supervision in 2003, a 44 percent increase since 1990 (McNeese and Jackson, in Roberts, 2004).

For many years, community release probation and rehabilitation supervision has been the most common court disposition for adjudicated delinquent youths (Martin, 2005; Snyder and Sickmund, 1999). It is hoped that through probation and rehabilitation services, juveniles can learn or pursue additional, nondelinquent, alternatives (Roberts, 2004). Even the term "probation" is defined as "to prove," thus allowing a juvenile another opportunity (Sullenger, 1936).

Youths involved in the juvenile justice system are more at risk than their peers for family dysfunction and conflict, abuse and neglect, poverty, homelessness, mental health and addiction disorders, school problems and trauma (Howell, 2003; Lewis, 1987; Martin, 2005; National Coalition, 2002; Okamoto and Chesney-Lind, in Roberts, 2004; Rapp-Palicchi and Roberts, in Roberts, 2004; Teplin, 2001, Teplin, et al., 2002). At-risk life experiences impact youths and their families, contributing to their juvenile

court involvement (Chesney-Lind and Sheldon, 2003; Freeman, 1992; McGarvey and Waite, 2000; Myers, Burgess and Burgess, 1995; Osgood, 1995; Schwab-Stone, Ayers and Kaspro, 1995). Little research to date has reviewed life histories and risk factors of youths receiving juvenile justice system probation services.

The following research was conducted to determine how at risk the youths involved with the Probation Supervision Department of the Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Juvenile Court Division (secure and nonsecure custody groups) were when compared with their general population peers.

Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court Division

Ohio's expenditures for juvenile justice purposes were \$254 million in fiscal year 2004 (OBM, 2005), which included the Ohio Department of Youth Services (2004), Reasoned and Equitable Community and Local Alternatives to Incarceration of Minors (RECLAIM), and Youth Services grants (OBM, 2005). Cuyahoga County expenditures on juvenile justice services equaled \$44.1 million in fiscal year 2003, of which \$10.4 million was for probation supervision and rehabilitation services (Cuyahoga County Court, 2004).

In 2003, the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court Probation Supervision Department supervised 3,880 of the total 18,559 delinquent and unruly court youth population (Cuyahoga County Court, 2004). The Probation Supervision Department's duties

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include the responsibility for case investigations, predispositional reports, monitoring and providing youths with counseling and referral services. Supervision of youths is provided through graduated sanctions under a continuum-of-care philosophy. Probation services available for youths include community service, school-based probation, day reporting, multisystemic therapy (MST), placement and several other limited community-based services.

Methodology

This study used a simple random sample of youths who received probation supervision from the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court Probation Supervision Department in 2003. Ninety-five (2.45 percent) of all youths (n=3,880) who received probation supervision in 2003 were reviewed by case and court file analysis across 45 variables.³ Documents analyzed included full probation supervision and service case files, full histories of juvenile court involvement and reports from other systems involved with the youth and family over time (child welfare, mental health/addictions and schools). Not all variables studied were used in this article's final analysis because of data reliability concerns (e.g., employment — many youths are too young to work; victim of emotional abuse — no standard of measurement, etc.).

Youths Receiving Probation Supervision In 2003

Descriptive data of the 2003 Probation Supervision Department youth population are organized in the follow-

ing six categories: youth (demographics, characteristics), family characteristics, education (parents, youth), youth trauma, mental health/addictions and juvenile court involvement (delinquency offenses, probation services). The probation-supervised youth and family data are presented for the full sample (n=95), for the secure-custody population portion of this sample (n=24) and compared with their general county population peers.

Youth Demographics. The average age for youths who received probation supervision was 15 (see Table 1). Only 9.5 percent of youths were below the age of 14, while each successive year accounted for approximately one-fifth of the total. Only 2.1 percent of the entire population was 18 years of age or older.

The probation supervision population's race demographics were markedly different from those of the general county population. While black youths represented 28 percent of the Cuyahoga County population, they represented almost 70 percent of the probation supervision population and more than 58 percent of the secure-custody subpopulation. Conversely, white youths represented 67.1 percent of the Cuyahoga County population but only 30.5 percent of the probation supervision population and 41.7 percent of the secure-custody subpopulation.

Youth Characteristics. More than two-thirds of the youths lived with their mothers as the only parent (see Table 2). This is twice the Cuyahoga County population average for all households with children headed by females only. All other possible categories of persons with whom youths lived accounted for no more than 7 percent per category of the probation supervision population. Cuyahoga County grandparents took care of their grandchildren 2.3 percent of the time, less than half the rate for probation-supervised youths (5.3 percent).

Table 1. Youth Demographics: Age, Race and Gender

	2003 COURT PROBATION POPULATION		2003 CUYAHOGA COUNTY YOUTHS ⁱ
	FULL SAMPLE N=95	SECURE-CUSTODY N=24	
AGE (YEARS)	Mean=15.3	Mean=15.2	334,954 individuals under 18 years of age (25% of population)
12	2.1%	4.2%	
13	7.4%	4.2%	
14	24.2%	25.0%	10-14 years old: 8.0% (108,005)
15	22.1%	20.8%	
16	20.0%	25.0%	
17	22.1%	20.8%	15-19 years old: 6.4% (86,177)
18	2.1%	0.0%	
RACE			
Black	69.5%	58.3%	28.0%-28.7%
White	30.5%	41.7%	67.1%-68.2% ⁱⁱ
GENDER			
Male	71.6%	83.3%	47.5%
Female	28.4%	16.7%	52.5%

ⁱ Cuyahoga County data are reported from U.S. Census Bureau annual reports and analysis (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003c).

ⁱⁱ Range used based on U.S. Census Bureau's categories of "race alone" and "race in combination with one or more races" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003c)

Table 2. Youth Demographics: Parental Custody, Siblings, Parental Divorce, Family Relocation and Gang Affiliation

	2003 COURT PROBATION POPULATION		2003 CUYAHOGA COUNTY YOUTHS
	FULL SAMPLE N=95	SECURE-CUSTODY N=24	
YOUTH LIVED WITH			
Mother only	67.4%	58.3%	33.4% ⁱ (Female-headed household with children) 2.3% ⁱⁱ 16% ⁱⁱⁱ (Married couple families with children)
Father only	6.3%	8.3%	
Grandparent(s)	5.3%	4.2%	
Both parents	5.3%	4.2%	
Adoptive parents	5.3%	12.5%	
Aunt	3.2%	8.3%	
Cousin	1.1%	4.2%	
NUMBER OF SIBLINGS	Mean: 2.4; Median: 2.0	Mean: 2.6; Median: 3.0	N/A
1	34.7%	20.8%	
2	10.5%	12.5%	
3	22.1%	37.5%	
4	12.6%	8.3%	
5	5.3%	8.3%	
More than 5	5.5%	4.2%	
EXPERIENCED PARENTAL DIVORCE			
Yes	31.6%	29.2%	11.1%
No	20.0	20.8%	47.5% ^{iv}
Parents never married	47.4%	50.0%	32.3%
MOVED NEIGHBORHOODS	Mean: 1.9; Median: 2.0	Mean: 2.3; Median: 2.0	From 1990 to 2000, 40.4% of all households moved at least once. ^v
Once	29.5%	2.5%	
Twice	25.3%	37.5%	
Three times	9.5%	12.5%	
Four or more times	11.7%	16.7%	
Considered a leader	25.3%	29.2%	N/A
Considered a follower	71.6%	70.8%	
Reported positive strengths	66.3%	62.5%	N/A
Did not report strengths	29.5%	33.3%	
Has close friend(s)	77.9%	70.8%	N/A
Did not have close friend(s)	20.4%	29.2%	
GANG AFFILIATED			N/A
Yes	5.3%	8.3%	
No	93.7%	87.5%	

ⁱ Social Indicators, 2003a

ⁱⁱ Social Indicators, 2003a

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Census Bureau, American Survey, 2003b

^{iv} Social Indicators, 2003b

^v FedStats, 2003

Almost one-half (47.4 percent) of the probation supervision population's parents never married. This compares with about one-third (32.3 percent) of all parents in the general Cuyahoga County population who never married. More poignantly, 31.6 percent of the probation-supervised youths experienced a parental divorce, compared with only 11.1 percent of the general Cuyahoga County population.

The youths who received probation supervision believed themselves to be much more a follower (71.6 percent) than a leader (25.3 percent); they believed they did have positive strengths (66.3 percent) and reported they had at least one close friend (77.9 percent).

Family Characteristics. More than two-thirds of the youths who received probation supervision were in the custody of their mothers only. Fathers (6.3 percent), parents together (5.3 percent), grandparent(s) (5.3 percent), adoptive parents (5.3 percent), the state of Ohio (6.3 percent) and others (4.3 percent) accounted for a comparatively limited percentage of parents/entities with custody rights (see Table 3).

The average family size living at home for probation-supervised youths was four, compared with slightly more than three family members for the general county population. Sixty percent of youths who received probation

Table 3. Family Characteristics

	2003 COURT PROBATION POPULATION		2003 CUYAHOGA COUNTY FAMILIES
	FULL SAMPLE N=95	SECURE-CUSTODY N=24	
CUSTODIAN OF YOUTH			
Mother	67.4%	58.3%	N/A
Father	6.3%	8.3%	
Both parents	5.3%	4.2%	
Grandparent(s)	5.3%	4.2%	
Adoptive Parents	5.3%	8.3%	
State of Ohio	6.3%	4.2%	
Aunt	3.2%	8.3%	
Cousin	1.1%	4.2%	
FAMILY SIZE	Mean: 3.9; Median: 4.0	Mean: 3.8; Median: 4.0	Average household size = 2.43
One person	1.1%	4.2%	Average family size = 3.15 ⁱ
Two people	14.7%	8.3%	
Three people	25.3%	25.0%	Number of children per family = 1.9 ⁱⁱ
Four people	26.3%	29.2%	
Five people	14.7%	16.7%	
Six people	11.6%	4.2%	
Seven+ people	4.3%	8.4%	
FAMILY STRUCTURE			
One parent	60.0%	66.7%	28.1% (national comparison) ⁱⁱⁱ
Two parents	35.8%	25.0%	62.1% ^{iv}
Two grandparents	2.1%	4.2%	4.2%
One extended member	1.1%	4.2%	8.4%
FAMILY INCOME	Mean: \$21,796 Median: \$14,400	Mean: \$14,124 Median: \$14,400	Mean: \$51,147 Median: \$38,204
\$1,000-\$10,000	27.0%	25.2%	11.5%
\$10,001-\$14,900	27.1%	25.6%	7.2%
\$15,000-\$21,000	21.6%	33.6%	15.9% (\$15,000 to \$24,999)
\$21,001 and higher	24.3%	8.4%	56.4% ^v (\$25,000 and higher)
POVERTY STATUS			
Below federal poverty guideline	46.3% ^{vi}	50.0%	21.7%
Above federal poverty guideline	49.5%	45.8%	78.3% ^{vii}
HEALTH INSURANCE			
Medicaid/SCHIP	40.0% ^{viii}	37.5%	22.0%
Unknown	29.5%	29.2%	53.5% ^{ix}
Private insurance	28.4%	29.2%	
No health insurance	2.1% ^{ix}	4.2%	

ⁱ U.S. Census Bureau, Cuyahoga, 2003c

ⁱⁱ Social Indicators, 2003c

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Census Bureau, 2004b

^{iv} U.S. Census Bureau, 2004a

^v U.S. Census Bureau, Cuyahoga, 2004b. Categories are not exact comparisons due to how the data were collected.

^{vi} U.S. Census Bureau Poverty Thresholds, 2004e

^{vii} U.S. Census Bureau, Cuyahoga, 2004b

^{viii} SCHIP expanded Medicaid coverage in Ohio for youths/families living at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline (Health Policy Institute, 2005).

^{ix} U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2004e

supervision lived in a one-parent household. Only 35 percent lived in a two-parent household. This family household parenting structure is near opposite the national norm, with only 28 percent of all youths living with one

parent and more than 62 percent living with two parents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004c).

Youths and families who received probation supervision were significantly poorer and relied on public health

Table 4. Education

	2003 COURT PROBATION POPULATION		2003 CUYAHOGA COUNTY POPULATION
	FULL SAMPLE N=95	SECURE-CUSTODY N=24	
EDUCATION LEVEL—MOTHER			
Less than high school	29.5%	33.3%	14.0%
High school graduate	31.6% ⁱ	33.3% ⁱ	33.0% ⁱ
More than high school	18.9%	12.5%	24.9%
College graduate	3.2%	0.0%	27.9%
EDUCATION LEVEL—FATHER			
Less than high school	24.2%	29.2%	14.0%
High school graduate	29.5%	29.2%	33.0%
More than high school	6.3%	0.0%	24.9%
College graduate	0.0%	0.0%	27.9% ⁱⁱ
YOUTH IQ	Mean: 83 Median: 82 Range: 66-99	Mean: 84 Median: 80 Range: 69-99	Mean: 90-109 ⁱⁱⁱ
SPECIAL EDUCATION INVOLVEMENT	25.3%	29.2%	8.8% (youths ages 10-17) ^{iv}
MR/DD INVOLVEMENT	2.1%	4.2%	1%-2% of youth population ^v
READING TESTS	Mean: 7.5 grade Median: 7.0 Range: Second grade to second year in college	Mean: 7.5 grade Median: 7.0 Range: Second grade to 10 th grade	N/A
SCHOOL GRADE(S) BEHIND PEERS			
Not behind	34.7%	25.0%	N/A
One year behind	42.1%	58.3%	
Two years behind	16.8%	16.7%	
Three years behind	4.2%	0.0%	

ⁱ Includes GED equivalent (1.1% of total) for both mother and father categories reported.

ⁱⁱ U.S. Census Bureau, Cuyahoga, 2004b

ⁱⁱⁱ Estimate given is a national norm.

^{iv} U.S. Department of Education, 2004

^v Centers for Disease Control, 2004

insurance much more frequently than the general Cuyahoga County population. The median income of the probation-supervised youths' families equaled only 37 percent of the general Cuyahoga County family population's median income. Fifty-four percent of probation-supervised families' income was below \$15,000, compared with only 11.5 percent of the general Cuyahoga County family population. The secure-custody subpopulation had many fewer families earning above \$21,000 (33.6 percent) when compared with the full probation-supervised population (21.6 percent). These families whose youths were involved with probation supervision lived at or below the federal poverty guideline almost twice as frequently as their county peers. As expected, Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program covered almost twice as many probation-supervised youths, while private insurance covered almost twice as many general county youths.

Education. Probation-supervised youths' biological parents differed significantly from the general Cuyahoga County population in their level of education attained (see Table 4). Twice as many parents of youths on probation attained less than a high school education. Equal num-

bers of these parents graduated from high school but only when GED certificates of parents of youths on probation are included. These same parents of youths on probation attended schooling after high school only one-fourth as frequently as the general county parent population. These parents of youths on probation were one-tenth as likely to be college graduates.

The average IQ score (mean of 83) for probation-supervised youths was more than one standard deviation below the national norm. Eighty-four percent of all youths throughout the country scored higher on average than this court probation-supervised population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). These youths involved with probation supervision were three times more likely to be receiving special education services through their school systems when compared with the general Cuyahoga County youth population. These youths were on average one full academic grade behind their peers, with the secure-custody subpopulation even further academically behind.

Youth Trauma. Four out of 10 probation-supervised youths had been severely neglected; two out of 10 (and

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three out of 10 from the secure-custody subpopulation) were victims of physical abuse; and more than one of every 20 were victims of sexual abuse (see Table 5). General population comparisons of neglect and abuse prevalence rates posed reporting and identification difficulties, but the Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services reported that only 1.4 percent (4,839 total) of all Cuyahoga County youths were victims of substantiated or indicated abuse or neglect.

More than 58 percent of the families of the probation-supervised youths had a history of involvement with the county child welfare system. More than two of every 10 youths, and almost five of every 10 of the secure-custody youths, subsequently experienced an out-of-home placement due to this involvement (kinship care, foster care or permanent custody). More than three times as many of the probation-supervised youths and five times as many of the secure-custody youths lived with their adoptive parents at the time of their involvement compared with the general youth population.

Mental Health/Addictions. Almost 32 percent of the youths receiving probation supervision and 42 percent of the secure-custody youths were diagnosed with a substance abuse disorder (see Table 6). More than 61 percent of the probation youths' parents (biological or step) and more than 75 percent of the secure-custody youths' parents were diagnosed with a substance abuse disorder. Two out of 10 of the court probation-supervised youths and more than three of every 10 of the secure-custody youths had a history of involvement with the drug and alcohol system/services. This is significantly higher than the general Cuyahoga County youth population.⁴

Of the youths involved with the mental health system during their lifetimes, one-third received outpatient counseling (this was two-thirds for the secure-custody subpopulation), one-tenth in-home counseling, one-eleventh psychiatric evaluations, and smaller percentages experienced higher levels of care (residential placement, partial hospitalizations, etc.). Slightly more than one of every 10 youths in the general Cuyahoga County population accessed mental health services, which is much less frequent than the probation-supervised youths.⁵

Table 5. Youth Trauma

	2003 COURT PROBATION POPULATION		2003 CUYAHOGA COUNTY YOUTHS
	FULL SAMPLE N=95	SECURE-CUSTODY N=24	
SEXUALLY ABUSED			
Yes	6.3%	8.3%	1.4% of Cuyahoga County youths ⁱⁱ
No	90.5%	91.7%	
Unsubstantiated ⁱ	2.1%	0.0%	
PHYSICALLY ABUSED			
Yes	18.9%	29.2	1.4% of Cuyahoga County youths
No	65.3%	54.2%	
Unsubstantiated	14.7%	16.7%	
NEGLECTED			
Yes	41.1%	41.7%	1.4% of Cuyahoga County youths
No	42.1%	45.8%	
Unsubstantiated	15.8%	12.5%	
INVOLVED WITHIN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM			
Yes	58.9%	58.3%	2.4% of Ohio youths ⁱⁱⁱ
No	41.1%	41.7%	
RESIDENTIAL PLACEMENT			
No placement	74.7%	49.9%	N/A
Kincare	12.6%	16.7%	
Foster care	5.3%	16.7%	
Permanent	7.4%	16.7%	
ADOPTED			
Adopted	7.4%	12.5%	1.9%-2.4% ^{iv}
Not adopted	90.5%	87.5%	

ⁱ Unsubstantiated is defined as reported, investigated and not enough evidence found to substantiate the report.

ⁱⁱ This was calculated through Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services 2004 report of 4,839 substantiated or indicated child victims for the Cuyahoga County youth population as a percentage of the total 2003 population (334,954) (Children's Defense Fund, 2003).

ⁱⁱⁱ No Cuyahoga County data reported. Ohio data reported were correlated to under 18-year-age population (2,888,339) to arrive at this maximum possible percentage. The percentage may be smaller due to the potential duplicity of the 70,785 new reports to county children protective services.

^{iv} U.S. Census Bureau, 2003c

Table 6. Mental Health/Addictions

	2003 COURT PROBATION POPULATION		2003 POPULATION COMPARISONS
	FULL SAMPLE N=95	SECURE-CUSTODY N=24	
YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSIS			
None	27.6%	20.8%	
Conduct Disorder	17.3%	25.0%	53.8%
Oppositional Defiance Disorder	17.3%	24.2%	12.2%
ADHD	12.6%	16.7%	18.9%
Depression/Dysthymia	12.6%	29.2%	15.4%
Cannabis Dependence	11.0%	12.5%	Substance Abuse Disorders: 45.9% ⁱ
Bipolar	5.5%	16.7%	
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder	0.7%	0.0%	
Anxiety Disorder	0.7%	0.0%	
Adjustment Disorder	0.7%	0.0%	
YOUTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDERS			
Yes	31.6%	41.7%	
Cannabis	25.3%	33.3%	N/A
Not reported	26.3%	20.8%	
Alcohol	4.2%	0.0%	
PARENT SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDERS			
Yes	61.1%	75.0%	
No	15.8%	8.3%	N/A
Unknown	15.8%	8.3%	
Suspected	5.3%	8.3%	
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE USEDⁱⁱ			
Outpatient counseling	37.4%	66.7%	11.7% of the general Cuyahoga youth population received service from the mental health system ⁱⁱⁱ
Not involved	19.8%	12.5%	
Psychiatric hospital	13.0%	8.4%	
In-home counseling	9.9%	8.4%	
Family counseling	3.0%	0.0%	
Partial hospitalization	3.8%	8.4%	
Residential placement	4.6%	12.5%	
Rap art program	2.4%	0.0%	
Sexual offender program	0.7%	4.2%	
DRUG/ALCOHOL SERVICE INVOLVED			
Not involved	75.0%	66.7%	11.7% of the general Cuyahoga youth population ^{iv}
Partial hospitalization	8.0%	8.3%	
Residential placement	5.1%	12.5%	
Outpatient counseling	5.1%	8.3%	
Assessment	4.0%	8.3%	
Family counseling	1.0%	0.0%	
PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATIONS^v			
No lifetime use	57.0%	37.5%	N/A
Ritalin	7.4%	8.8%	
Concerta	4.7%	4.2%	
Zoloft	6.5%	12.5%	
Strattera	1.9%	0.0%	
Prozac	1.9%	0.0%	
Celexa	1.9%	4.2%	
Buspar	1.9% ^{vi}	4.2%	

ⁱ Mallett, (under review). Other reviews focused on the juvenile delinquent population have identified adolescents' mental health diagnostic prevalence rates, based on the DSM measurement, to range from 20 percent to 60 percent (Boesky, 2002; Huizinga et al., 2000; National Mental Health Association, 2004; Teplin, 2001; Teplin et al., 2002). Other reviews have identified nationwide adolescent mental health/substance abuse disorder prevalence rates to range from 8 percent to 22 percent (Center for Mental Health Services, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002; National Institute of Mental Health, 2003; The President's New Freedom Commission, 2003). The Ohio Department of Mental Health reports 39,108 (11.7 percent of the general

Ohio youth population of 334,954) youths (ages 13 to 17) were receiving mental health services in Cuyahoga County (specific diagnostic categories are not comparable due to ODMH's significantly different criteria definitions) (ODMH, 2003).

ii Youths may have been involved with more than one mental health service. Percentages cover full lifetime history of involvement. Current prevalence involvement rates were not possible to determine and no accurate picture can be described.

iii ODMH (2004) reported 39,108 (11.7% of the general population) youths (ages 13 to 17) were involved in mental health services in Cuyahoga County.

iv Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services reported 9,471 youths (2.8 percent of total Cuyahoga County, Ohio youth population ages 13 to 17 received drug/alcohol services (ODMH, 2004).

v Youths may have reported more than one medication prescribed over time.

vi Other medications reported only once included: Lithium, Adderall, Depakote, Neurontin, Larontin, Wellbutron, Ceraqual, Zyprexa and Risperdol.

Juvenile Court Involvement — Delinquency Offenses. The majority (52.6 percent) of youths receiving probation supervision were 13 or 14 years old when first involved with the juvenile court system, compared with 75 percent of the secure-custody youths (see Table 7). Each youth on average was charged with four offenses (five for the secure-custody youths) over the course of his or her juvenile court involvement, with a majority of these youths (67.4 percent and 79.2 percent for the secure-custody youths) being charged with at least one felony. The most prevalent of these court offenses were, in order: domestic violence, assault, unruly conduct, violation of court order, theft, probation violation, criminal trespass and disorderly conduct.

Court Probation Services. More than four of every 10 youths (43.2 percent), and six out of every 10 (62.5 percent) secure-custody youths, received court-ordered probation supervision for more than one time period (see Table 8). Almost two of every 10 youths (17.9 percent) received probation supervision for only one time period, and four of every 10 youths (38.9 percent) received probation supervision for the first time in 2003.

Each youth received on average three separate probation or probation-referred services, compared with four services for the secure-custody youths. The five most widely used prescriptions were, in order: community service, random urine analysis, anger management, counseling and MST. The most graduated court-ordered sanctions

Table 7. Youth Delinquency Offenses

	2003 COURT PROBATION POPULATION	
	FULL SAMPLE N=95	SECURE-CUSTODY N=24
AGE YOUTH FIRST INVOLVED	Mean: 13 years, 11 months	Mean: 13 years, 5 months
10 years old	4.2%	4.2%
11 years old	1.1%	0.0%
12 years old	9.5%	8.3%
13 years old	24.2%	33.3%
14 years old	28.4%	41.7%
15 years old	16.8%	12.5%
16 years old	8.4%	0.0%
17 years old	7.4%	0.0%
NUMBER OF COURT OFFENSES	Mean: 4.2; Median: 4.0	Mean: 5.6; Median: 5.0
TEN MOST PREVALENT OF DELINQUENCY OFFENSES		
Domestic violence	9.8%	
Assault	9.0%	
Unruly	8.8%	
Violating court order	8.5%	
Theft	7.9%	
Probation violation	7.9%	
Criminal trespass	5.2%	
Disorderly conduct	4.9%	
Burglary	4.1%	
Arson	3.3%	
MISDEMEANOR/FELONY CHARGES		
Charges with at least one felony	67.4%	79.2%
Charged with only a misdemeanor	32.6%	20.8%

Table 8. Youth Delinquency Offenses

	2003 COURT PROBATION POPULATION	
	FULL SAMPLE N=95	SECURE-CUSTODY N=24
PRIOR PROBATION		
Successful completion	17.9% ⁱ	0.0% ⁱ
Repeater	43.2%	62.5%
First time on probation	38.9% ⁱⁱ	37.5% ⁱⁱ
AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROBATION SERVICES	3.0	4.0
TEN MOST CUSTOMARY TYPES OF PROBATION SERVICES		
Community service	15.9%	
Random urine analysis	10.9%	
Anger management	8.6%	
Counseling	8.6%	
Multi-systemic therapy	7.6%	
Dual-diagnosis assessment	7.0%	
Psychological/psychiatric evaluation	6.3%	
Restitution	5.3%	
Electronic monitoring	5.0%	
Court Day Report Program	4.0%	
PROBATION RISK ASSESSMENT		
Time 1	score average = 19.5; n=92	score average = 22.2; n=23
Time 2	score average = 16.8; n=36	score average = 20.6; n=11
Time 3	score average = 19.7; n=10	score average = 24.8; n=5
MOST GRADUATED COURT SANCTIONS		
ODYS suspended commitment	23.2%	
Commitment to YDC suspended	10.5%	
Community service order	9.5%	
Commitment to ODYS	9.5%	
Restitution order	7.4%	
Commitment to YDC	7.4%	
Drug/alcohol counseling	5.3%	
Commitment to non-secure facility	5.3%	
House arrest	4.2%	
Family counseling	4.2%	
PCSA (public child service agency) referral	3.2%	
Commitment to non-DYS secure facility	3.2%	
Attend school every day order	2.1%	
Mental health counseling	2.1%	
Fine	1.1%	
SPENT TIME IN DETENTION CENTER	33.7%	66.7%
EXPERIENCED RESIDENTIAL PLACEMENTⁱⁱⁱ	49.5%	100.0%

ⁱ Variable defined as being on probation only once before or during the year 2003.

ⁱⁱ Youth was still involved with probation services at the end of 2003.

ⁱⁱⁱ Placements included: ODYS; mental health agency residential; shelter care; drug/alcohol agency residential; sexual offender residential; psychiatric hospitalization; military-type camp; detention center; and youth detention center.

for the youths were, in order: an Ohio Department of Youth Services (residential) suspended commitment, a residential Youth Development Center (YDC) suspended commitment, community service, restitution and a commitment to residential YDC.

The average initial probation risk assessment for all youths receiving probation supervision was a score of

19.5 (22.2 for secure-custody youths). For youths who received a second risk assessment, the average score decreased to 16.8 (20.6 for secure-custody youths). For youths who received a third risk assessment, the average increased to 19.7 (24.8 for secure-custody youths). Youths who received a third risk assessment often were receiving probation supervision and services for signifi-

cantly longer periods of time and/or were experiencing their second or even sometimes their third court-ordered probation referral.

Social Policy

In reviewing current research knowledge, it is not surprising to find that youths who received Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court probation supervision and secure-custody placement were more at risk than their general Cuyahoga County peers. However, the extent of these at-risk differences across many demographics and characteristics is surprising and deserves policy-makers' immediate attention.

In particular, probation-supervised youths were disproportionately male, black, and almost one-half were under probation supervision for at least the second time. These youths were twice as likely as their Cuyahoga County peers to live with their custodial mothers in a one-parent household. These households' income levels were on average one-half the income levels of all Cuyahoga County households. The youths and families were twice as likely to be poor as measured by the federal poverty guidelines. These youths' parents were twice as likely not to be high school graduates or to have attended or graduated from college. These youths' tested intelligence scores showed significant impairment, and they were three times more likely to have been involved with special education services through their school systems and were one academic grade level behind their peers. These youths had a significantly higher risk of being a victim of physical abuse, sexual abuse and/or neglect, and to have experienced an out-of-home placement.

The youths in this probation-supervised population who experienced a secure facility placement (25.3 percent) were even more at risk for physical abuse (29.2 percent), lower family incomes (50 percent), academic failure (58.3 percent were behind one academic grade level), adoption (12.5 percent), substance abuse (41.7 percent), increased number of court offenses (average of 5.6) and earlier juvenile justice system involvement (87.5 percent by age 14).

Recommendations

These youths and families represent a population with multidimensional difficulties that call for a multidisciplinary social policy effort. First, this study finding these youths and families at risk across many areas over long time periods calls for juvenile justice system probation departments to complete full sociohistorical, psychological and psychiatric assessments for each youth at time of intake. These assessments must identify key demographic, characteristic and systems involvement information similar to this review and identify strengths and weaknesses within the family to incorporate in the probation case planning.

Next, a proactive focus on youths at risk of secure-custody placement is called for based on this study finding these youths to be comparatively even more at risk, to have had more court offenses, to have had significantly higher felony rates, to have received more probation services and to have repeated court-ordered probation much more frequently. Assisting these youths through secure-custody facility placements is a high-end cost that might be preventable with increased attention, broader assessments and earlier coordinated efforts.

Also, these coordinated efforts should include all other youths and family supportive systems. This study identified that a majority of youths on probation were involved either prior to or concurrently with the mental health/substance abuse systems (33.7 percent to 66.7 percent), the special education system (25.3 percent to 29.2 percent) and/or the child welfare system (58.9 percent). Improved systems coordination and communication is effective social policy, and in light of this study's findings includes: school-based probation officers to address academic failure; establishing and appropriately funding drug courts to address the high prevalence of substance abuse disorders; preventative outreach to poor and at-risk neighborhoods; and establishing family courts with statutory authority to coordinate youth and family needs.

Finally, continued early identification and assessment in each juvenile justice jurisdiction of these comparatively very at-risk youths and families is necessary in order to continue determining additionally necessary legal, social, probation and prevention interventions.

ENDNOTES

¹ State law determines and defines juvenile crime. However, there are similar procedures across states defining youths' encounters with the juvenile justice system. The first definition is a juvenile "status offense," oftentimes diverting the youth from the juvenile justice system and using informal prescription options. The second definition is "delinquency," in most cases leading to direct juvenile court involvement. This latter delinquent category is subdivided into "delinquency," victims of "abuse/neglect" and "status offenses" (Roberts, 2004; Martin, 2005).

² There is no nationally reported methodology for tracking this population. Estimates are from the National Center for Juvenile Justice, which aggregates self-reported data from approximately 80 percent of the states' juvenile justice court jurisdictions (Krisberg, 2005).

³ These variables included: age, race, gender, custodial agent, family size, number of siblings, family structure, lives with whom, whether experienced divorce, whether adopted, family income, poverty status, mother's education level, father's education level, DSM diagnosis, substance abuse, parents' substance abuse, whether victim of physical abuse, whether victim of sexual abuse, whether victim of neglect, whether involved in mental health system, whether involved in drug/alcohol addictions system, whether involved in child welfare system, child welfare placement, special education involved, MR/DD (mental retardation/developmental disability) system involved, residentially-placed (and location), time in detention center, number of court offenses, list of delinquency offense(s), misdemeanor or felony, IQ results, reading test levels, school grades behind, age of first court involvement, whether on psychotropic medications, whether gang affiliated, prior probation supervision, youth health insurance coverage, whether had close friends, whether leader or follower, whether moved neighborhoods over time, whether youth reported having positive strengths, most graduated court sanction, number and type of probation services and probation risk assessment levels reported over time.

⁴ This comparison is methodologically difficult because the general youth comparison is from one reporting year and Probation Supervision Department sample reports over the lifetime. These differences are arguably less, even with this difficult-to-compare data.

⁵ This comparison is methodologically difficult because the general youth comparison is from one reporting year and the Probation Supervision Department sample reports over the lifetime. These differences are arguably less, even with this difficult-to-compare data.

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