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# The Effectiveness of the Sheriff's Department's Juvenile Diversion Projects in Southeast Los Angeles County (CA)

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT'S JUVENILE  
DIVERSION PROJECTS IN SOUTHEAST LOS ANGELES COUNTY

A Supplement to the First Annual Evaluation  
Report for the Cerritos Corridor Juvenile  
Diversion Project, the Positive Alternatives  
for Youth Diversion Project (PAY), and the  
Southeast Early Diversion Project (SEED)

April 1977



Submitted by:

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## SUMMARY

The major message of this report is that juvenile diversion, as practiced by the three Sheriff's Department Projects in southeast Los Angeles County, appears to be quite successful. The accomplishments of these three projects were assessed with regard to two primary goals:

1. Reduction of the number of juveniles referred further into the juvenile justice system (probation and the courts) by law enforcement.
2. Reduction of the incidence of juvenile delinquency among youthful offenders subsequent to diversion.

The pattern of findings reviewed in this report provide convincing evidence that both these goals are being met. The highlights of that evidence are as follows:

- a. With the inception of the diversion projects in 1976, the number of diversions from the participating law enforcement stations increased substantially.
- b. The majority of the juveniles selected for diversion would probably have been referred to the Probation Department on non-detained petition applications if diversion had not been available; only a minority would have been counseled and released.
- c. The records of the sheriff's stations participating in the diversion projects showed that they sent fewer non-detained petition applications to the Probation Department after the projects began operations.

- d. The records of the Probation Department showed that they received fewer non-detained petition applications from the participating stations after the projects began operations.
- e. The six-month recidivism of diverted juveniles was lower than that of somewhat similar juveniles referred for non-detained petitions and in some cases lower than that of juveniles counseled and released.
- f. The six-month recidivism of diverted juveniles was lower for those who received extensive service from the youth service providers than for those who dropped out, received fewer hours, or received fewer weeks of service.
- g. The number of juvenile arrests declined in the participating sheriff's stations after the projects began operations. The offenses for which the declines were greatest were those from which the greatest number of diversions had been made.

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their second year of operation, the available evidence supports the finding that they are effective both in reducing the number of non-detained petition applications sent to the Probation Department and in restricting and perhaps reducing subsequent delinquent activity among the diverted youth.

## INTRODUCTION

This report is issued as a supplement to the first annual evaluation report for the Cerritos Corridor Juvenile Diversion Project, the Positive Alternatives for Youth Diversion Project (PAY), and the Southeast Early Diversion Project (SEED), all located in Southeast Los Angeles County. While the annual reports focused on the details of the operation and outcome of each of the three projects, this supplementary report aggregates the data for law enforcement referrals in order to address the broader issue of the overall effectiveness of diversion as represented by these three projects. It is expected that this information will be of interest not only to the projects, but to others who are concerned with the effectiveness of diversion as an alternative treatment strategy for juvenile offenders.

### The Concept of Diversion

Diversion, as implemented by the projects under consideration here, is designed to give law enforcement officers an alternative disposition for juvenile offender cases. Without the diversion option, juvenile offenders detained by the police must either be released to their parents without further action ("counseled and released") or application must be made to the Probation Department for filing a petition with the court. Diversion provides an option that lies between these two dispositions. A diverted juvenile is not simply released to parental custody but rather is referred to a community agency for counseling or some other service. No formal application is made to the Probation Department; thus the diverted offender is kept from



further involvement in the juvenile justice system.

The rationale for juvenile diversion is twofold. First, it is intended to reduce the penetration of youths into the juvenile justice system. The desirability of keeping youths out of the justice system rests on the beliefs that association with juvenile hall, juvenile courts, etc., may stigmatize juveniles and affect their self-esteem as well as the way they are treated by other social institutions; that involvement with the juvenile justice system brings impressionable juveniles into contact with more experienced juvenile offenders with possible negative effects on the juvenile's behavior and delinquent tendencies; and that handling juveniles through the justice system may not be cost effective -- if diversion could achieve comparable results with less expense per juvenile than the current system, there would be a net savings to the entire law enforcement and justice system.

The second rationale for diversion is the reduction of juvenile delinquency. Proponents expect diversion services to redirect "predelinquent" youths and to be more effective than the courts in rehabilitating the juvenile offender. Thus it is hoped that subsequent to diversion the juveniles will engage in less criminal activity and that there will be a corresponding reduction in community crime rates and juvenile arrests.

#### The Three Diversion Projects

All three of the diversion projects were initiated by the Youth Services Bureau of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department in cooperation with the participating cities. They were funded under a grant from the California State Office of Criminal Justice Planning and the

Law Enforcement Assistance Administration of the Department of Justice.

The three projects are organized along similar lines, encompassing three primary components: law enforcement agencies and schools which are the referral sources, community youth service providers, and the project office itself which acts as something of a broker between the other two components.

Each project is associated with two law enforcement stations that provide the major source of juvenile referrals. Of the six law enforcement stations associated with the three projects, four are county sheriff's stations and two are city police departments. The referrals that come through the local school districts are not covered in this report. The juveniles of interest here are those arrested, formally or informally, by the law enforcement officers. Juvenile officers in each law enforcement station decide which juveniles are to be diverted. They then select a community youth service provider using information prepared by project staff and refer the juvenile to that agency. In two of the stations the juvenile who is to be diverted is sent to the project office where project staff select the service provider, relieving the juvenile officer of this part of the decision.

All the service providers to whom the diversion juveniles are sent are indigenous community agencies, public or private, that specialize in youth services. None are organizationally affiliated with the diversion projects themselves though the majority have signed contracts and receive fees for their service. More than 40 service providers are on contract to the three projects and another

20 or so provide free services on an occasional basis without contracts. Most of the service providers specialize in youth counseling but a number offer recreational, tutorial, or employment programs.

Each of the project offices is staffed by a director who is a sergeant assigned from one of the participating sheriff's stations, and a secretary. In addition, two of the projects have a staff person who works primarily with the school districts, one project has a business manager, and one project has a law enforcement co-director. The primary function of the project office is to serve as a coordinating agent between the law enforcement stations and the youth service providers. Project personnel facilitate referrals from law enforcement, handle the paperwork, pay the fees for the services the diversion youths receive, and conduct some monitoring and follow-up of their cases.

The three projects serve fourteen different cities plus some of the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. The projects' jurisdictions are contiguous and located in the southeast part of the County. Considerable demographic variability exists in the project areas. For example, there are several large economically depressed areas and a number of communities with a majority of Mexican-American residents.

#### DID DIVERSIONS INCREASE?

The three projects opened their offices between November 1975 and January 1976, and their first year of operation coincided very nearly with the 1976 calendar year. The first question to ask about the projects' functioning is whether or not the coordination and infusion of service money they provided actually produced an increase in the

number of youth diverted by the target law enforcement stations.

All of the law enforcement stations associated with the three projects were making some diversions prior to inception of the projects themselves. In some cases diversion was purely an informal affair arranged by individual officers; in other cases small-scale diversion programs sponsored by the Youth Services Bureau of the Sheriff's Department were underway prior to the beginning of the present larger scale, externally funded projects.

Table 1 shows the changes in diversion from 1975, before the projects began, to 1976, their first year of operation. This information was available for the four county sheriff's stations but not the two city police departments.

Table 1  
Number and Percent of Diversions  
for Participating Sheriff's Stations\*

	<u>Sheriff Stations Other Than Project Stations</u>	<u>Four Project Stations</u>	<u>East L.A.</u>	<u>Lake-wood</u>	<u>Nor-walk</u>	<u>Pico Rivera</u>	<u>All Sheriffs Stations</u>
1975	1658 (8%)	498 (5%)	145(6%)	178(6%)	131(5%)	44(3%)	2156(7%)
1976	<u>1862 (9%)</u>	<u>806 (8%)</u>	<u>168(7%)</u>	<u>274(10%)</u>	<u>208(8%)</u>	<u>156(10%)</u>	<u>2668(9%)</u>
% Change 1975-1976	+12%	(+62%)	+16%	+54%	+59%	+254%	+24%

\* Data supplied by the Management Staff Services of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Due to different tabulation procedures these figures may vary from those reported in the annual reports for each project.

As Table 1 indicates, there was a 62% increase in diversions between 1975 and 1976 from the four sheriff's stations associated

with the projects and only a 12% increase for the remaining stations in the County. During 1975 the four stations diverted about 5% of the total reported number of juvenile cases handled while in 1976 they diverted 8%. There was a much smaller increase in the percent of juvenile cases diverted for those sheriff's stations which were not associated with the three diversion projects.

Three of the four participating sheriff's stations increased their diversion rate substantially, finishing 1976 with 8-10% of their reported juvenile cases being diverted. The East Los Angeles Station showed a smaller increase and finished the year with 7% of its cases in the diversion category.

Thus, overall, the inception of the three diversion projects in 1976 clearly resulted in an increase in the number of diversions which were made from each of the participating sheriff's stations. Comparable data was not available for the two police departments associated with the diversion projects, but there is reason to believe that they too increased the number and percentage of juvenile cases which were diverted.

It should be noted that 1976 was the first year of operation for all three projects. Thus, during a good part of the first six months or more the projects were still struggling to establish themselves. Much of the year, therefore, was lost while office facilities and procedures were arranged, personnel hired and trained (on-the-job), and contracts negotiated with appropriate community service providers. The full effect of the projects in increasing the number of diversions from the participating law enforcement stations cannot be fairly assessed until at least their second full year of operation. By that time all projects should be past their formative stages and fully functioning.

CONCLUSION: During their first year of operation the three diversion projects produced a substantial increase from the previous year in the number of youth offenders who were diverted from the participating law enforcement stations. This increase in diversions was about five times as great as the increase for the county sheriff's stations which did not begin new diversion projects that year.

#### WHO WAS DIVERTED?

For all the projects, the decision about whether or not to divert a particular juvenile is made by the officer within the law enforcement station who has responsibility for that case. The diversion criteria which have been adopted by the Sheriff's Department generally describe the "divertable" youngster according to the following factors:

1. The juvenile is not already on probation or otherwise involved in the juvenile justice system.
2. The juvenile's offense does not involve violence or other serious violations; the juvenile does not present a danger to others or self.
3. The juvenile does not have an extensive arrest record and is not involved in serious juvenile gang activity.
4. The seriousness of the crime, the juvenile's needs, or the

family situation make it undesirable to simply release the juvenile to parental custody.

5. The juvenile accepts responsibility for the violation and is willing to participate in diversion.

Through November 1976, a total of approximately 1250 law enforcement referrals were handled through the three projects. The demographic characteristics of the youth and the nature of their records and referring offenses are described in Tables 2 through 5. The totals in those tables vary somewhat because of missing data on some variables.

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Table 2  
Age and Sex of Law Enforcement  
Diversion Referrals

<u>Age</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Totals</u>
12 and under	101	25	126 (10%)
13	88	31	119 ( 9%)
14	118	77	195 (15%)
15	201	100	301 (24%)
16	220	78	298 (23%)
17	<u>185</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>230</u> (18%)
Total	913 (72%)	356 (28%)	1269

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Table 3  
Ethnicity of Law Enforcement  
Diversion Referrals

Caucasian	688 (59%)
Mexican-American	446 (38%)
Other	25 ( 2%)

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Table 4  
Referring Offense for Law  
Enforcement Diversion Cases

Status Offenses		204 (17%)
Unfit home, neglected, victim	8	
Runaway	163	
Truant	2	
Incorrigible	13	
Curfew violations	18	
Violations of the Law		990 (81%)
Penal Code Violations	629 (52%)	
Burglary	232	
Theft & petty theft	129	
Victimless crimes	136	
Property crimes - minor	49	
Property crimes - major	41	
Crimes against person - minor	9	
Crimes against person - major	33	
Health & Safety Code Violations	283 (23%)	
Possession of marijuana	255	
Sale/cultivation of marijuana	10	
Other drug violations	18	
Liquor Violations (B&P)	34 ( 3%)	
Vehicle Code Violations	44 ( 4%)	
Other Referral Reasons		23 ( 2%)
School, Family, Personal		

Table 5  
Arrest Status and Prior Record  
of Law Enforcement Diversion Cases

Was juvenile	Yes	998 (83%)
formally arrested?	No	199 (17%)
Were there	Yes	537 (45%)
prior offenses?	No	654 (55%)



The typical juvenile selected for diversion was male, about 15 years old, and either Caucasian or Mexican-American. He was most likely to have been formally arrested on a charge involving a penal code offense such as burglary, petty theft, or disorderly conduct, or for possession of marijuana. Slightly less than half of the diversion juveniles had offense records prior to diversion and, for the remainder, the diversion offense was their first.

If diversion had not been available, diverted juveniles either would have been sent home (counseled and released) or application would have been made to the Probation Department for filing a non-detained petition. In order to get a picture of the characteristics of the juveniles and their offense records which distinguished diversion cases from counsel and release cases on the one hand and non-detained petition cases on the other, a three-way comparison was made for a selected group of juveniles.

A sample of 118 juvenile cases was drawn from one of the sheriff's stations (Norwalk) which included 47 counsel and release cases, 41 diversion cases, and 30 non-detained petition cases. An examination was then made of the file for each of these juveniles and all available information was tabulated which might distinguish the three dispositions from each other. The results of this procedure appear in Table 6.

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Table 6  
 Comparison of the Characteristics of Counsel and Release,  
 Diversion, and Non-detained Petition Cases for a Small  
 Sample of Cases From One Sheriff's Station  
 (\*\*Marks a significant contrast with diversion cases)

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Counsel and Release Cases (N=47)</u>	<u>Diversion Cases (N=41)</u>	<u>Non-detained Petition Cases (N=30)</u>
Age			
14 or less	10	15	2**
15-16	20	17	20
17-18	17	8	8
Sex			
Male	34	27	27**
Female	13	14	3
Ethnicity			
Caucasian	32	31	20
Mexican-American	15	9	9
Severity of Offense			
Minimal or Minor	39**	16	5**
Minor/Mod. or Moderate	7	23	15
Mod./Severe or Severe	1	2	10
Number of Charges			
One	39	32	17
Two or more	8	9	13
Violence in Crime			
Yes	42	34	24
No	5	6	6
Weapons Used			
No	45	37	27
Yes	2	1	3
Number of Suspects			
One	24	20	17
Two or more	23	20	12
Victims			
None	40	31	18
One or more	7	9	11
Victim vs Property Crime			
Victim	6	3	6
Property	41	36	23
Amount of Money Involved			
\$25 or less	13	15	4
More than \$25	1	7	7

Table 6 continued

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Counsel and Release Cases (N=47)</u>	<u>Diversion Cases (N=41)</u>	<u>Non-detained Petition Cases (N=30)</u>
<b>Did Juvenile Confess</b>			
No	14**	7	8
Yes	10	21	18
<b>Were There Prior Offenses</b>			
Yes	12	16	13**
No	22	23	6
<b>Was Juvenile on Probation</b>			
No	35	20	7**
Yes	0	1	5
<b>Juvenile's Attitude</b>			
Bad	0	3	7
Average/Good	3	5	5
<b>Gang Membership</b>			
Yes	0	1	3**
No	24	17	3
<b>Employed</b>			
No	28	18	8
Yes	3	2	4
<b>In School</b>			
Yes	41	38	24
No	5	2	5
<b>Problems Noted</b>			
Out of control	0	1	2
Family problems	1	2	1
Drinking/Drugs	1	4	4
School problems	0	3	2
<b>Parents Attitude</b>			
Bad	1	2	1
Average/Good	1	5	3
<b>Family Situation</b>			
Bad	1	3	2
Average/Good	1	3	2
<b>Family Cooperative</b>			
No	0	0	2
Yes	3	10	6
<b>Family Asks for Help</b>			
No	0	2	1
Yes	1	4	5
<b>Legal Problems with Case</b>			
No	1**	11	2**
Yes	3	0	2

Note: Variable totals fall short of sample size because of missing data.

\*\*  $p < .10$  using a chi-square test of statistical significance.

The data presented in Table 6 is not very definitive. It is based on a relatively small number of juveniles to begin with and for many variables there was no information in the files one way or the other for the preponderance of juveniles. Nonetheless, it is striking how few of the variables show any contrast between the dispositions. The only factor of significance that distinguished diversion cases from both counsel and release cases and non-detained petition cases was the severity of the crime. Counsel and release cases were primarily those with minor offenses. More severe cases were most likely ~~to end up as non-detained~~ petition applications.

There were more variables that showed a contrast between diversion and non-detained petitions than between diversion and counsel and release cases. Most of those, however, merely reflected the diversion criteria adopted by the Sheriff's Department regarding, for example, confession to the offense, prior arrest record, probation status, and gang activity. With respect to sex and age, diversion juveniles were more similar to counsel and release juveniles than to those referred for non-detained petitions.

If the sampled station is representative, and there is no reason to believe that it is not, it would appear that the juvenile officers are fairly uniform in choosing to petition juveniles charged with serious crimes and in counseling and releasing juveniles charged with relatively minor offenses. Though there is less consistency on other variables, the overall pattern suggests that the official diversion criteria are being followed at least to an order of approximation.

One possible reason that the diversion cases are not more distinctive is that a very large number of officers make disposition

decisions for juveniles. The 1250 diversions made during the first year by the project law enforcement stations were the result of decisions by 88 different officers. Most of these officers (53%) made fewer than 10 diversions during the course of the year and thus had little experience applying the diversion criteria. Interviews with those relatively few officers who diverted large numbers of juveniles have indicated that they hold very different ideas about what type of youth should be diverted.

CONCLUSION: Diversion juveniles were typically male, 15-16 years old, and Caucasian or Mexican-American. Slightly more than half were first time offenders and their offenses were most frequently burglary, petty theft, or a victimless crime such as possession of marijuana or disorderly conduct. Juvenile officers seemed to be applying the official diversion criteria at least approximately with the heaviest emphasis placed on the severity of the juvenile's offense. Diversion juveniles, however, did not show a profile of characteristics that sharply distinguished them from juveniles who receive alternate dispositions. This lack of distinctiveness probably resulted from the fact that diversion decisions were made by a large number of officers, the majority of whom had little experience with diversion.

#### DID DIVERSION WORK?

The effectiveness of diversion can be assessed on two factors: a reduced flow of cases into the juvenile justice system (probation and the courts), and reduced criminal activity by juveniles after they receive diversion services.

Candidates for diversion are, for the most part, either drawn from those juveniles who would otherwise have been sent to the Probation Department for action on a non-detained petition request or from those who otherwise would have been counseled and released. In the case of juveniles who would have been petitioned, the effect on the juvenile justice system is direct --the Probation Department receives fewer petition applications and, if they generally act on such applications, should carry reduced caseloads as a result of those that are siphoned off into diversion. In the case of juveniles who are diverted instead of being counseled and released, there is at best an indirect effect on the juvenile justice system. Most counsel and release cases have no subsequent contact with law enforcement or the juvenile justice system, thus diversion of these juveniles makes no difference to juvenile justice caseloads either way. Some counsel and release cases, however, recidivate; that is, they are picked up again, perhaps more than once, by law enforcement. The recidivating offenses may well be serious enough to warrant an application for a non-detained or detained petition. If diverting these juveniles were to prevent or reduce this recidivism, in the long run it would also reduce the number of cases referred to the Probation Department and courts. Thus diverting counsel and release cases may result indirectly in lower probation caseloads if the juveniles

diverted are those who would have recidivated with more serious offenses had they not received diversion services.

Lowered recidivism rates and reduced juvenile justice caseloads are therefore different sides of the same coin. What follows is the best attempt to assess these two factors that can be made with the data presently available for the three diversion projects under consideration.

#### Impact on the Juvenile Justice System

It has already been shown that the onset of the three projects in 1976 resulted in an increased number of diversions from the participating law enforcement stations. The first question is whether these diversions were drawn primarily from cases that would otherwise have been counseled and released or from those that would have been referred to probation for non-detained petitions.

One source of information comes from the juvenile officers who make the diversion decision. In each case they were asked if a petition would have been requested if diversion were not available. For 67% of the diversion cases the officers said that, in fact, a petition would have been requested; in the remaining 33% of the cases, they indicated that no petition would have been requested. Thus the officers are claiming that two-thirds of the diversion cases would have been referred to the Probation Department for further action (Table 7).

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Table 7  
Officers Report of Probable Disposition Without Diversion

	<u>Four Project Stations</u>	<u>East L.A.</u>	<u>Lake- wood</u>	<u>Nor- walk</u>	<u>Pico Rivera</u>
Would not have been petitioned:	330 (33%)	47	121	111	51
Would have been petitioned:	679 (67%)	136	238	205	100

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Additional evidence corroborating the officers' view that many diversion cases came from those that otherwise would have been petitioned resulted from an examination of the pattern of dispositions from the project stations before and after the projects were begun. The three dispositions of interest are counsel and release, diversion, and non-detained petition requests since these are the only realistic alternatives for potential diversion cases. Considering only these three dispositions, Table 8 shows the relative proportions of each for 1975, the year before the projects began, and 1976, their first year of operation.

As Table 8 shows, the general pattern of the three categories of dispositions from 1975 to 1976 is one in which the proportion of counsel and release cases stayed essentially constant while the proportion of diversion cases increased and the proportion of non-detained petition requests decreased. The largest effects were shown for the four project stations, where new diversion activity began in 1976, but the same pattern characterized the remaining sheriff's stations, many of which had ongoing diversion projects of their own.

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Table 8

Distribution of Dispositions for Counsel and Release (C&R),  
Diversion (Div), and Non-Detained Petition Requests (NDP)

	Four Project Stations			Sheriff's Stations Other Than Project Stations			All Sheriff's Stations		
	<u>C&amp;R</u>	<u>Div</u>	<u>NDP</u>	<u>C&amp;R</u>	<u>Div</u>	<u>NDP</u>	<u>C&amp;R</u>	<u>Div</u>	<u>NDP</u>
1975	52%	6%	42%	48%	11%	41%	49%	9%	42%
1976	51%	11%	38%	48%	13%	39%	49%	12%	39%

  

	East L.A. Sta.			Lakewood Sta.			Norwalk Sta.			Pico Rivera Sta.		
	<u>C&amp;R</u>	<u>Div</u>	<u>NDP</u>	<u>C&amp;R</u>	<u>Div</u>	<u>NDP</u>	<u>C&amp;R</u>	<u>Div</u>	<u>NDP</u>	<u>C&amp;R</u>	<u>Div</u>	<u>NDP</u>
1975	57%	7%	37%	54%	6%	39%	42%	6%	52%	55%	3%	41%
1976	58%	9%	32%	54%	12%	34%	43%	11%	46%	49%	12%	39%

Note: Data for this analysis supplied by the Management Staff Services of the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department. Percentages shown exclude all other dispositions.

Of the four project stations, only the Pico Rivera Station showed a decline in the proportion of counsel and release cases accompanying the increase in the diversion proportion. They also showed a decline in the proportion of non-detained petition cases but it was not as large as the decline in counsel and release cases.

The changes in the distribution of the three key juvenile dispositions for the four project stations is shown more vividly in Figure 1. That figure displays the changes in the balance of dispositions for each six-month period from 1975 to 1976.

Figure 1  
 Relative Proportion of Three Key Dispositions for  
 Four Project Station by Six-Month Intervals

Counsel and Release	Diversion	Non-Detained Petition
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<u>Six-Month Interval</u>	Four Project Stations		
1975-1	51%	6%	43%
1975-2	53%	5%	42%
1976-1	48%	11%	40%
1976-2	54%	11%	35%
	East L.A. Station		
1975-1	56%	9%	35%
1975-2	57%	4%	39%
1976-1	55%	10%	35%
1976-2	61%	8%	30%
	Lakewood Station		
1975-1	54%	7%	39%
1975-2	54%	6%	40%
1976-1	49%	12%	38%
1976-2	58%	11%	31%
	Norwalk Station		
1975-1	41%	4%	54%
1975-2	42%	8%	50%
1976-1	42%	12%	46%
1976-2	45%	10%	45%
	Pico Rivera Station		
1975-1	51%	4%	46%
1975-2	59%	3%	38%
1976-1	48%	10%	42%
1976-2	51%	14%	35%
	Sheriff's Stations Other Than Project Stations		
1975-1	48%	12%	39%
1975-2	48%	9%	43%
1976-1	50%	13%	37%
1976-2	46%	13%	41%

Figure 1 shows that the four project stations showed both a steady increase in the proportion of diversions and a steady decrease in the proportion of non-detained petition requests for the successive six-month intervals during 1975 and 1976. Furthermore, the proportion of counsel and release cases generally increased from period to period except for the first six months of 1976 when the diversion projects were just getting underway.

The sudden increase of diversions brought on by the inception of the projects early in 1976 apparently was achieved in large part by diverting juveniles who would otherwise have been counseled and released. This seemed to be particularly true in the Lakewood and Pico Rivera Stations. By the second six-month period of 1976, however, when the projects were more securely established, the expanded diversion proportion had moved much further into the non-detained petition range. In fact, during the second six months of 1976, three of the four project stations showed a smaller proportion of non-detained petition requests and a larger proportion of counsel-and-release cases than at any time in the previous two years (1974 data was included for this analysis). The fourth station, Pico Rivera, had a smaller proportion in the non-detained petition category than in previous periods but also showed a somewhat reduced proportion in the counsel and release category.

The sheriff's stations in the county that are not associated with the three diversion projects did not show the reduced proportion of non-detained petitions and increased proportion of counsel and release cases during the second six months of 1976 which the project stations demonstrated, thus this result cannot be attributed to some more

general event such as sharp area-wide decreases in the incidence of moderate to serious juvenile crime.

**CONCLUSION:** Diversion cases appear to have been drawn primarily from juveniles who would otherwise have received non-detained petition applications rather than from those who would otherwise have been counseled and released. The expansion of diversion initiated by the three diversion projects was accompanied by decreased proportions of non-detained petition requests by the participating sheriff's stations but not by corresponding decreases in the proportion of cases counseled and released. This was particularly true during the latter half of the projects' first year when initial start-up difficulties had been overcome and the projects were functioning more securely. No evidence was found to support the claim that the projects' diversions were being drawn heavily from juveniles who would otherwise have been counseled and released.

#### Cases Referred to the Probation Department

The discussion above has focused on whether or not most diversion juveniles would otherwise have been counseled and released. If, as was argued, the majority of them would in fact have been referred to the Probation Department on non-detained petition requests, some noticeable reduction in the number of petition

requests should be associated with the expanded diversion activity. Table 8 and Figure 1 showed that the relative proportion of non-detained petition requests decreased when diversion was increased. Table 9, below, demonstrates that the actual number of non-detained petition requests reported by the sheriff's stations participating in the three diversion projects decreased as well.

Table 9  
Major Juvenile Dispositions as Reported by the  
Sheriff's Stations in 1975 and 1976

	<u>Four Project Stations</u>	<u>East L.A. Station</u>	<u>Lakewood Station</u>	<u>Norwalk Station</u>	<u>Pico. Rivera Station</u>	<u>Sheriff's Stations Other Than Project Stations</u>
<u>Counsel &amp; Release</u>						
1975	4339	1192	1526	898	723	7472
1976	<u>3774</u>	<u>1079</u>	<u>1236</u>	<u>826</u>	<u>633</u>	<u>7014</u>
% change	-13.0%	- 9.5%	-19.0%	- 8.0%	-12.4%	- 6.1%
<u>Diversion</u>						
1975	498	145	178	131	44	1658
1976	<u>806</u>	<u>168</u>	<u>274</u>	<u>208</u>	<u>156</u>	<u>1862</u>
% change	+61.8%	+15.9%	+53.9%	+58.8%	+254.5%	+12.3%
<u>Non-Detained Petition Requests</u>						
1975	3551	769	1109	1131	542	6427
1976	<u>2753</u>	<u>599</u>	<u>792</u>	<u>865</u>	<u>497</u>	<u>5730</u>
% change	-22.5%	-22.1%	-28.6%	-23.5%	- 8.3%	-10.8%
<u>Detained Petition Requests</u>						
1975	1263	407	282	424	150	2878
1976	<u>1523</u>	<u>528</u>	<u>355</u>	<u>442</u>	<u>198</u>	<u>3401</u>
% change	+20.6%	+29.7%	+25.9%	+ 4.2%	+32.0%	+18.2%

Note: The data on which this table is based were supplied by the Management Staff Services of the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department.

The data in Table 9 indicate that, compared with 1975, the first year of the diversion projects brought an increase in the number of diversions and detained petition requests and a decrease in the number of counsel and release and non-detained petition dispositions. The decrease in non-detained petition requests, however, was greater both numerically and in percentage terms than the decrease in cases counseled and released.

A convenient comparison for the project stations is the group of sheriff's stations throughout Los Angeles County which did not begin new diversion projects in 1976 (though some had ongoing projects). If there were a countywide decrease in non-detained petition requests, the decrease in the projects' stations could not be attributed simply to the effects of diversion. As Table 9 shows, the other sheriff's stations did in fact show increased diversions and detained petitions and decreased counsel and release and non-detained petition dispositions just like the project stations. However, the changes in the other sheriff's stations were not as sharp as those in the four project stations. The four project stations showed a larger drop in non-detained petition requests (-22.5%) than the rest of the stations (-10.8%) as well as a larger counsel and release decrease (-13.0% vs -6.1%). The increase in diversions, of course, was much greater (+61.8% vs +12.3%) for the project stations and the increase in detained petition requests was about the same (+20.6% vs +18.2%).

Thus, relative to other stations in the county, the four project stations showed greater decreases in counsel-and-release and

non-detained petition dispositions from 1975, the pre-project period, to 1976, the projects' first year. Furthermore, the drop in non-detained petition requests, which was 11.7 percentage points lower than the comparison stations, was greater than the drop in counsel and release dispositions (6.9 percentage points difference).

This circumstantial evidence suggests that the expansion of diversion brought about by inception of the projects in 1976 resulted primarily in fewer non-detained petition referrals to the Probation Department and, secondarily, in fewer juveniles who were counseled and released.

A further check can be made on the apparent decrease in non-detained petition requests by examining data reported by the Probation Department itself regarding its intake of new cases. The Probation Department's record of referrals received in 1975 and 1976 was used to construct Table 10 below. This data concerns probation intake only and not the ultimate disposition of the case by the Probation Department.

The numbers in Table 10 are different from those in Table 9, due apparently to bookkeeping differences between the sheriff's stations and the Probation Department, but their significance is the same. The Probation Department reported fewer non-detained petition requests from the four project stations during 1975 than they had the year before. They also reported fewer NDP referrals from other agencies, but the decrease was considerably greater for the project stations. From 1975 to 1976 the number of detained

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Table 10

Referrals Reported by the Probation Department for 1975 and 1976

	<u>Four Project Stations</u>	<u>East L.A. Station</u>	<u>Lakewood Station</u>	<u>Norwalk Station</u>	<u>Pico Rivera Station</u>	<u>All Other Referring Agencies</u>
<u>Non-Detained Petition Requests</u>						
1975	3710	823	1122	1171	594	41493
1976	<u>3179</u>	<u>761</u>	<u>959</u>	<u>1082</u>	<u>377</u>	<u>39493</u>
% change	-14.3%	- 7.5%	-14.5%	- 7.6%	-36.5%	- 4.8%
<u>Detained Petition Requests</u>						
1975	713	233	215	154	111	12180
1976	<u>747</u>	<u>288</u>	<u>215</u>	<u>134</u>	<u>110</u>	<u>10663</u>
% change	+ 4.8%	+23.6%	0.0%	-13.0%	- 0.9%	-12.5%

Note: Data for this analysis supplied by the Information Management Office of the Los Angeles County Probation Department.

petition requests from the project stations increased, as the stations themselves had reported, though Probation received fewer from other agencies.

One additional detail is worth checking. The Probation Department does not necessarily carry every case that is referred to it; many are closed at intake. If the decrease in petition requests to Probation made by the project stations came largely from those which Probation would have closed anyway, there is little net saving to the Probation Department. Probation would receive fewer referrals from the stations but if they had to act on a higher percentage of



those referred, their active caseload might be essentially unchanged.

The Probation intake records report the Probation Officers' intended action for each case including whether or not the case was closed at intake. Table 11 compares the intended actions for those referrals made from the four project stations in 1975 and in 1976.

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Table 11  
Intended Disposition by Probation of Cases Referred by the  
Four Diversion Project Sheriff's Stations in  
1975 and 1976 for Non-Detained Petitions

<u>Intended Action</u>	<u>Non-Detained Petition Referrals From Project Stations</u>	
	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>
Closed at intake	429 (11.6%)	361 (11.4%)
654 (Informal probation) Petition	795 (21.4%)	603 (19.0%)
CYA	2096 (56.5%)	1791 (56.3%)
Held in abeyance	3 ( 0.1%)	1 ( 0.0%)
Other	290 ( 7.8%)	277 ( 8.7%)
	<u>97 ( 2.6%)</u>	<u>146 ( 4.6%)</u>
Total	3710	3179

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Note: Data for this analysis supplied by the Information Management  
Office of the Los Angeles County Probation Department.

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Table 11 shows that there were no significant differences between 1975 and 1976 in the Probation Department's intended response to the referrals if received from the project stations. Thus the decrease in NDP referrals from 1975 to 1976 came from all categories and was not heavily concentrated in cases that were weak and would have been closed at intake by Probation anyway.

The data thus are consistent. During the diversion projects' first year, fewer non-detained petition requests were made to the Probation Department than the year before and the Probation intake caseload clearly reflected the decrease. Furthermore, the decreases in the project stations were greater than the decreases recorded for other stations and referring agencies which did not begin an expanded diversion program in 1976.

**CONCLUSION:** The expansion of diversion produced by the three diversion projects was accompanied by a decrease in the number of non-detained petition requests sent to the Probation Department from the participating sheriff's stations and by a corresponding decrease in the intake caseload of the Probation Department. Not all of the decrease in non-detained petitions can be attributed to increased diversion activity but the pattern of evidence indicates that the expanded diversion did reduce the penetration of youthful offenders further into the juvenile justice system (Probation Department) and spare the system the expense of dealing with them.

#### Impact on Juvenile Delinquency

One of the chief purposes of diversion is to reduce the incidence of delinquency among the diverted youth. It is worth noting that there are two different standards by which the delinquency

prevention aspect of diversion may be assessed. One standard simply requires that the subsequent delinquent behavior of a youth who is diverted be no worse than it would have been if that youth had been referred for a non-detained petition. If the effect on delinquency is about the same, but diversion is easier and less expensive than petitioning, diversion is clearly preferable.

The second standard asks that diversion results be superior to the results of petitioning. If diversion is viewed as a rehabilitative strategy, diverted youth would be expected to engage in significantly less delinquent activity than if they were petitioned and denied the diversion services or, for that matter, if they were counseled and released.

Assessing the impact of diversion upon delinquent behavior by either of these standards is extremely difficult. Once a youth is diverted, it is not easy to tell how he/she would have behaved if something else had been done instead. The data available for this report allow only a comparison between similar youth who received different dispositions, including diversion. More sophisticated research designs which, in effect, compare juveniles who are experimentally assigned to diversion with those assigned to other dispositions are underway in several law enforcement stations and should produce much more definitive information by the time of the next annual report.

Table 12 presents the simple six-month recidivism rates\* for samples of juveniles who were counseled and released, diverted, or

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\* Six-month recidivism is defined as any police contact recorded in the Central Juvenile Index (CJI) during the six-months subsequent to the target offense.

referred for non-detained petitions by the three target sheriff's stations that participate in the diversion projects.

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Table 12  
Six-Month Recidivism Rates for Alternative Dispositions

<u>Disposition</u>	<u>Juveniles With No Prior Record</u>	<u>Juveniles With At Least One Prior Offense</u>
Counsel & Release	21.6% (N=227)	49.2% (N= 59)
Diversion	31.5% (N=355)	45.2% (N=124)
Non-detained Petition	45.3% (N=137)	64.2% (N=137)

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Note: Data collected for the East Los Angeles, Lakewood, and Norwalk Sheriff's Stations

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For diverted juveniles with prior records and those without, the simple recidivism rate was closer to that of juveniles who were counseled and released than to that of juveniles who were referred for non-detained petitions. Indeed, for juveniles with prior records, the diversion cases had lower recidivism than either the counsel-and-release or non-detained petition category.

Thus on the surface there is no reason to believe that diverting a juvenile results in more subsequent delinquent activity than requesting a non-detained petition does nor do diversion juveniles recidivate at a level strikingly higher than counsel and release juveniles.

Of course, juveniles counseled and released were generally those involved in less serious crimes, diversion juveniles were those involved in more serious offenses, and non-detained petition juveniles

the most serious of all. Thus it is to be expected that the counsel and release cases would have the lowest recidivism, diversion next, and petitions the highest. These groups can be made somewhat more comparable by looking only at a single category of offender. Table 13 presents the recidivism rates for first offenders who were charged with burglary, petty theft, or narcotics violations — all categories from which a substantial number of diversions were made.

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Table 13  
Six-Month Recidivism Rates for First Offenders  
Charged with Selected Offenses

<u>Disposition</u>	<u>Burglary</u>	<u>Petty Theft</u>	<u>Narcotics (Health &amp; Safety Code)</u>
Counsel & Release	17.2% (N=29)	10.9% (N=46)	29.0% (N=31)
Diversion	32.6% (N=86)	19.2% (N=73)	28.7% (N=122)
Non-detained Petition	43.7% (N=32)	26.7% (N=15)	60.0% (N=15)

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Note: Data collected for the East Los Angeles, Lakewood, and Norwalk Sheriff's Stations.

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When the offense characteristics and prior record were made more comparable, as in Table 13, the recidivism rates for diversion cases were, for the most part, more similar to those for non-detained petition cases than to counsel-and-release cases. This is not surprising since, as the discussion in an earlier section showed, a majority of the diversion cases might well have been referred for petitions if diversion had not been available. For each selected offense, however, the recidivism rate for the diversion cases was substantially lower

than for the analogous first offenders who were referred for non-detained petitions. In the case of narcotics violations, the recidivism rate for diversion cases was indistinguishable from that for counsel-and-release cases.

One other fact is worth noting. As Tables 12 and 13 illustrate, in most cases it was a minority, sometimes a substantial minority of juveniles who recidivated. Thus the margin upon which any rehabilitative effects of diversion can work is relatively slight. Most offenders will not be rearrested within six months irrespective of the treatment they receive. Even if extremely effective, diversion impact could show only for relatively few diverted youth.

**CONCLUSION:** Most arrested youth did not recidivate within six months irrespective of the disposition they were given; thus, at best, any delinquency reducing effect of diversion could have observable impact on only a minority of diversion cases.

In general, the pattern of recidivism data was consistent with what would be expected if diversion were effective in reducing recidivism. Recidivism rates for diverted juveniles were consistently better than those for non-detained petition juveniles and in some cases as good or better than those for counsel and release juveniles. When very comparable cases were examined, e.g., first offense burglary, diversion recidivism was still substantially lower than recidivism for non-detained petition cases; for narcotics violations it was

(continued...)

as low as for counsel and release cases. This pattern of results might have resulted from a selection of "good" kids for diversion but it might also be because diversion had some effect in reducing recidivism.

#### Arrest Rates and Reported Crime

The available recidivism data for diversion cases, though favorable, cannot be interpreted as any kind of "proof" that diversion lowers recidivism -- there are too many other factors unaccounted for at the present time. If, however, recidivism were lowered and the juveniles were committing fewer crimes, there should be a concomitant decrease in the number of juvenile arrests and reported crimes, especially with regard to those offense categories for which a substantial number of diversions were made.

Juvenile crime data is extremely difficult to work with because it is subject to so many influences -- reporting practices, seasonal variations, population trends, and, of course, actual levels of criminal activity. The resulting instability of the data effectively prevents any clear picture of trends or program effects from emerging. The necessarily tentative picture that emerged from the juvenile arrest and cases handled data reported by the Sheriff's Department, however, was essentially favorable to the three sheriff's diversion projects under consideration here.

Table 14 displays the number of juvenile arrests in 1975 and 1976 for the four project sheriff's stations in comparison to the sheriff's stations that are not associated with the projects.

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Table 14  
Juvenile Arrests for 1975 and 1976  
In Project Stations and Other Stations

	<u>Four Project Stations</u>	<u>East L.A. Station</u>	<u>Lakewood Station</u>	<u>Norwalk Station</u>	<u>Pico Rivera Station</u>	<u>Sheriff's Stations Other Than Project Stations</u>
1975	10176	2627	3233	2794	1522	19706
1976	<u>9571</u>	<u>2561</u>	<u>2886</u>	<u>2552</u>	<u>1572</u>	<u>19739</u>
% change	- 6.0%	- 2.5%	-10.7%	- 8.7%	+ 3.3%	+ 0.2%

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Table 14 indicates that the number of juvenile arrests dropped 6% between 1975 and 1976 in the jurisdiction of the four project sheriff's stations while it increased a slight 0.2% in other jurisdictions. Furthermore, the largest decreases in juvenile arrests came in the two stations which were most active in their diversion efforts (Lakewood and Norwalk). The possibility that the inception of the diversion projects in 1976 produced some reduction of juvenile delinquency thus cannot be dismissed out of hand. Of course there are literally dozens of other factors that could have produced fewer arrests in the project areas too -- diversion was only one candidate.

Table 15 breaks out the juvenile arrest data for the first six months of the year versus the second six months. If diversion was implicated in the overall decrease in juvenile arrests, the effects should be stronger during the latter part of the year when the diversion rate and functioning of the diversion projects were at their peak.

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Table 15  
 Juvenile Arrests for Six-Month Periods  
 In 1975 and 1976 for Project Stations and Others

	<u>Four Project Stations</u>	<u>East L.A. Station</u>	<u>Lakewood Station</u>	<u>Norwalk Station</u>	<u>Pico Rivera Station</u>	<u>Sheriff's Stations Other Than Project Stations</u>
<u>First Six Months</u>						
1975-1	5346	1433	1695	1527	691	10393
1976-1	<u>4761</u>	<u>1185</u>	<u>1387</u>	<u>1358</u>	<u>831</u>	<u>9877</u>
% change	-10.9%	-17.3%	-18.2%	-11.1%	+20.3%	- 5.0%
Difference from Non-Project Stations:	(-5.9)	(-12.3)	(-13.2)	(-6.1)	(+25.3)	
<hr/>						
<u>Second Six Months</u>						
1975-2	4830	1194	1538	1267	831	9313
1976-2	<u>4810</u>	<u>1376</u>	<u>1499</u>	<u>1194</u>	<u>741</u>	<u>9862</u>
% change	- 0.4%	+15.2%	- 2.5%	- 5.8%	-10.8%	+ 5.9%
Difference from Non-Project Stations:	(-6.3)	(+9.3)	(-8.4)	(-11.7)	(-16.7)	

Relative to the other stations which did not begin diversion projects in 1976, the decrease in juvenile arrests is as great or slightly greater the second half of 1976 as the first half. Two of the individual project stations have stronger relative decreases the second half of the year than the first including one station (Norwalk) which was especially active in diversion. The picture is cloudy but we still cannot eliminate the possibility that the onset of diversion was a factor in the reduction of the juvenile arrest rate.

Another way to examine the possible relationship between arrest rates and diversion is to look at specific offenses. For some offenses

a relatively large proportion of the juveniles were diverted; for other offenses, relatively few juveniles were diverted. If the increased level of diversion in 1976 was implicated in the lowered number of 1976 juvenile arrests, the arrest reduction should be the largest for those offenses where the most diversions were made. In order to focus on those arrest decreases which were distinctive to the diversion project stations and not present in other stations, however, arrest changes must be looked at relative to the changes in non-diversion project stations. If diversion was related to lowered arrests, those offenses for which project stations showed a greater 1975-76 decrease than non-project stations should be those for which a high proportion of diversions were made. The data relevant to this argument are presented in Table 16. All juvenile offenses were included for which there was adequate 1975 and 1976 data on arrests and diversion proportions from the four sheriff's stations that participate in the projects.

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Table 16

Relationship of Diversion Proportion to 1975-76 Juvenile Arrest  
Changes for Project Stations Relative to Non-Project Stations

<u>Arrests</u>			<u>Diversion</u>
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Percentage Change 1975 to 1976 FOR NON-PROJECT STATIONS	Percentage Change 1975 to 1976 FOR FOUR PROJECT STATIONS	Difference (a) Between (1) and (2)	Proportion (b) of Arrests Diverted by Projects in 1976
			<u>Offense</u>
- 7.7	-16.0	- 8.3	Disorderly Conduct 20.3
+ 9.5	+ 1.1	- 8.4	Malicious Mischief 19.0
+11.9	- 7.0	-18.9	Burglary 17.3
+26.7	-33.9	-60.6	Sex Misdemeanors 12.3
-15.8	-22.9	- 7.1	Petty Theft 12.2
+ 1.3	-16.3	-17.6	Grand Theft 11.6
+29.6	+16.8	-12.8	Drunk 9.1
+45.3	+33.8	-11.5	Juvenile, non-criminal 7.3
+11.5	+19.9	+ 8.4	Liquor 7.2
-19.1	-18.7	+ 0.4	Non-Agg. Assault 6.2
+ 3.7	+ 6.7	+ 3.0	Grand Theft Auto 6.0
- 1.5	+37.6	+36.1	Weapons 5.1
-10.2	- 9.9	+ 0.3	Robbery 2.4
+19.6	+25.8	+ 6.2	Agg. Assault 1.7

(a) Advantage (minus) or disadvantage (plus) of project stations relative to non-project stations.

(b) Diversions for the offense listed plus closely related offenses.

A convenient measure of the strength of the relationship between relative decreases in the number of juvenile arrests (column 3, Table 16) and the diversion proportion (column 4) is a statistic called the rank-order correlation coefficient (Spearman's rho). The correlation

between the columns in Table 16 is 0.70, a figure which indicates a statistically significant relationship ( $p < .01$ ). Table 17 presents the rank-order correlations between relative arrest decreases and diversion proportion for the four project stations combined and for each separately.

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Table 17  
Rank-Order Correlation Coefficients Between Relative 1975-76  
Juvenile Arrest Decreases and Diversion Proportion for Project Stations

<u>Station</u>	<u>Correlation<sup>(a)</sup> Coefficient</u>	<u>Statistical Significance</u>
All four project stations	.70	$p < .01$
East L.A.	-.08	N.S. (not significant)
Lakewood	.24	N.S.
Norwalk	.27	N.S.
Pico Rivera	.23	N.S.

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(a) Spearman's Rho

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Table 17 indicates that for three of the four project stations taken individually there was a positive but statistically insignificant relationship between relative arrest changes and diversion proportion. The stability of the data, of course, is considerably less for the stations taken individually than when they are combined.

The pattern of this evidence, though weak, was suggestive. There appeared to be some association between diverting a high proportion of juveniles who were arrested for a particular offense

and a relative decrease in the juvenile arrest rates for that offense.\*

CONCLUSION: The evidence reviewed here is consistent with the possibility that initiation of the diversion projects produced lowered juvenile arrest rates and, for that matter, crime rates. With the beginning of the three diversion projects, juvenile arrest rates decreased in the project stations noticeably more than they did in non-project stations. Furthermore, the arrests decreased the most for those offense categories from which the greatest number of diversions was made. Taken together, the arrest data and the recidivism data discussed earlier suggest that diversion is having a beneficial effect on the incidence of juvenile delinquent activity.

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\* If the reported number of "cases handled" for each offense is used instead of arrest rates a similar result emerges; that is, a pattern of statistically insignificant correlations that are, nonetheless, in a positive direction in four out of five cases. Changes in number of cases handled from year to year is not a very satisfactory measure of juvenile crime rates, however; depending on the offense, between about 0 and 75% of the cases handled will reflect adult criminal activity.

### FACTORS AFFECTING RECIDIVISM

The most immediate and accessible overall measure of the effects and effectiveness of the diversion program is the recidivism of the diverted juveniles. If, subsequent to diversion, the juveniles commit fewer offenses and have less contact with law enforcement agents than they would have if they had not received diversion services, the projects were effective. Such results will show up eventually in reduced caseloads in the juvenile justice system and in a reduced incidence of juvenile delinquency in the community.

As noted earlier, it is quite difficult to determine whether or not juveniles recidivate less after diversion than if they had not been diverted. The evidence presented in earlier portions of this report suggested that diversion may have some beneficial impact on recidivism and, at worst, might have no impact one way or the other.

The discussion in this section of the report examines the recidivism rate for diversion juveniles as a function of their personal characteristics and the nature of the diversion service they received. Such an examination helps to identify those factors that are associated with lower recidivism rates. With the information presently available it is not possible to determine if those factors actually cause the lowered recidivism. A factor that is associated with lower recidivism rates may simply identify those juveniles who are "good kids" and would have lower recidivism irrespective of the influence of diversion services. Examining the factors associated with lower recidivism rates, however, at least helps identify those juveniles who come out of diversion with good records.

Recidivism Index

In order to give a reasonably differentiated picture of recidivism, a recidivism index has been constructed that takes into consideration a juvenile's past offense history, and both the number and seriousness of any recidivating offenses. In effect, this index tells us whether a juvenile's offense record subsequent to the referring offense (i.e., the diversion offense) is better or worse than the record prior to the referring offense. A record is better if there are fewer subsequent offenses or if subsequent offenses are less serious or both. A record is worse if there are more subsequent offenses or if they are more serious or both.

The recidivism index uses the six-month period subsequent to the referring offense to determine the recidivism record and compares that with the six-month period prior to the referring offense. All prior and recidivistic offenses within the respective six-month periods which appear in the Central Juvenile Index (CJI) are counted and each is assigned a seriousness rating from a scale used by the California Youth Authority.

Table 18 defines the various categories of this recidivism index for juveniles without prior records and those with prior records at the time of the referring offense. Also shown are the number of juveniles who fell into each category for the combined caseloads of the three diversion projects featured in this report.

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Table 18  
 Categories of the Recidivism Index  
 And Number of Diversion Juveniles in Each

Juveniles with no offenses prior to the referring offense:

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
1 - The recidivism record is worse than the prior record (i.e., the referring offense) for <u>both</u> offense frequency and severity.	24	4.9%
2 - The recidivism record is worse than the prior record (i.e., the referring offense) for <u>either</u> offense frequency <u>or</u> severity with the other being the same for prior and recidivism record.	42	8.5%
3 - The recidivism record is the same as the prior record on <u>both</u> frequency and severity <u>or</u> it is worse on one and better on the other.	46	9.3%
4 - There is a single recidivistic offense but it is less severe than the referring offense.	40	8.1%
5 - There is no recidivistic offense recorded.	340	69.1%

Juveniles with offenses prior to the referring offense:

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
1 - The recidivism record is worse than the prior record (including the referring offense) for <u>both</u> offense frequency and severity.	6	3.6%
2 - The recidivism record is worse than the prior record (including referring offense) for either offense frequency or severity with the other being the same for prior and recidivism record.	11	6.6%
3 - The recidivism record is the same as the prior record (including referring offense) on <u>both</u> frequency and severity <u>or</u> it is worse on one and better on the other.	20	12.0%
4 - The recidivism record is better than the prior record (including referring offense) for either offense frequency or severity with the other being the same for prior and recidivism record.	20	12.0%
5 - The recidivism record is better than the prior record (including referring offense) for <u>both</u> offense frequency and severity.	26	15.6%
6 - There is no recidivistic offense recorded.	84	50.3%



Perhaps the most interesting aspect to notice about Table 18 is the high proportion of diversion juveniles who had no recidivistic contacts subsequent to the diversion offense or who had contacts which were fewer or less severe than their prior record. Of those juveniles without prior records, 69% had no subsequent contact at all and another 8% had another offense which was less serious. Among juveniles with prior records, 50% had no recidivism and another 28% had subsequent records better than their prior records. Only about 13% of the juveniles without priors and 10% of the juveniles with priors had worse records after diversion than before.

Table 19 shows the relationship between the recidivism index and the age, sex, and ethnicity of the juveniles. For simplification, only the aggregate proportions with worse recidivistic records, better records, and no recidivistic record are presented.

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Table 19  
Aggregate Recidivism Categories for Age, Sex, and Ethnic Groups

	<u>Juveniles Without Priors</u>				<u>Juveniles With Priors</u>			
	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Better</u>	<u>No Recidivism</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Better</u>	<u>No Recidivism</u>	<u>(N)</u>
<b>AGE</b>								
6-10	10.0%	90.0%	80.0%	( 10)	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	( 1)
11	12.5	87.5	87.5	( 8)	---	---	---	( 0)
12	12.5	87.5	79.2	( 24)	0.0	87.5	25.0	( 8)
13	19.2	70.2	63.8	( 47)	14.3	64.3	42.9	( 14)
14	7.0	84.9	72.1	( 86)	20.0	70.0	43.3	( 30)
15	13.7	72.0	69.6	(125)	9.4	75.5	45.3	( 53)
16	14.9	75.4	62.7	(134)	6.4	87.2	59.6	( 47)
17	15.3	78.0	72.9	( 59)	7.1	78.5	71.4	( 14)
<b>SEX</b>								
M	16.0%	76.3%	65.8%	(342)	12.8%	72.6%	44.4%	(117)
F	7.3	78.8	76.2	(151)	4.0	90.0	64.0	( 50)
<b>ETHNICITY</b>								
Caucasian	13.0%	76.7%	68.5%	(317)	6.3%	82.3%	55.2%	( 96)
Mexican-American	15.3	75.8	66.9	(157)	15.7	73.4	45.3	( 64)

The information in Table 19 indicates that for juveniles without prior offenses, the best recidivism records were attained by those who were twelve years of age and younger and those who were female. Ethnicity showed little difference. A somewhat different pattern emerged for the juveniles with prior records, however. In that group the best recidivism records were attained by youth of age 15 and over. Females also had better recidivism records as did Anglo youth.

Table 20 relates the recidivism record of the diversion juveniles to the characteristics of the offense for which they were diverted by

the law enforcement officers.

Table 20  
Aggregate Recidivism Categories for Diversion Offense Characteristics

OFFENSE TYPE	<u>Juveniles Without Priors</u>				<u>Juveniles With Priors</u>			
	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Better</u>	No Recid- ivism	(N)	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Better</u>	No Recid- ivism	(N)
Penal Code	11.8%	79.7%	68.6%	(261)	13.3%	76.0%	46.7%	( 75)
Welfare & Institutions Code	17.8	63.3	62.0	( 79)	7.5	85.0	55.0	( 40)
Health & Safety Code	13.9	79.5	71.3	(122)	6.2	78.0	59.4	( 32)
MAJOR OFFENSES								
Burglary	4.7%	90.7%	67.4%	( 86)	0.0%	63.2%	31.6%	( 19)
Petty Theft	10.9	84.9	80.8	( 73)	---	---	---	---
Victimless PC	18.3	63.2	61.2	( 49)	20.7	79.3	34.5	( 29)
Runaway	19.7	62.0	62.0	( 71)	7.9	86.8	55.3	( 38)
Marijuana Possession	11.9	81.2	72.3	(101)	6.6	80.0	60.0	( 30)
FORMAL ARREST?								
Yes	13.7%	78.6%	69.6%	(401)	11.3%	75.0%	47.6%	(124)
No	12.3	67.9	65.4	( 81)	7.6	84.6	59.0	( 39)
WOULD PETITION HAVE BEEN REQUESTED?								
Yes	13.8%	76.5%	66.1%	(298)	12.9%	73.4%	47.7%	(109)
No	13.1	76.7	72.7	(176)	5.9	84.3	52.9	( 51)

Table 20 includes several interesting relationships. First-time violators of the Welfare and Institutions Code (601 section), largely runaways, had one of the worst recidivism records, for example. But runaways with prior offenses showed a recidivism record that was

considerably better than average. Burglary and other penal code offenses generally showed the opposite pattern. First-time offenders had relatively good recidivism records while those with prior offenses had worse than average records.

#### Recidivism and Diversion Service

The most interesting set of recidivism statistics had to do with the nature and functioning of the various service providers who work with the diversion projects to counsel the diverted juveniles and provide other youth services. If diversion has any rehabilitative aspects which result in lowered recidivism, it is most likely due to the efforts of the service providers.

The relationship between delivery of service and recidivism provided one interesting and important check on the claim that the services had rehabilitative effects. If diversion service did have beneficial effects, those juveniles who participated fully and received greater attention from the service provider should show better recidivism records than those who did not. Their better records could simply be because they were better kids to begin with, i.e., predisposed to cooperate with service and stay out of trouble irrespective of the service. But even so, the absence of any relationship between delivery of service and recidivism would be very damaging to the claim that the service providers were having a beneficial effect. Table 21 summarizes the pertinent recidivism data in relationship to the termination reasons for closing diversion cases, the number of service hours delivered per week, and the number of weeks during which service was provided.

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Table 21  
Aggregate Recidivism Categories Related to Delivery of Service

	<u>Juveniles Without Priors</u>				<u>Juveniles With Priors</u>			
	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Better</u>	<u>No Recidivism</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Better</u>	<u>No Recidivism</u>	<u>(N)</u>
<b>SERVICE TERMINATION REASON</b>								
Positive Termination	9.4%	80.8%	73.6%	(235)	6.1%	87.7%	64.6%	( 65)
Client No Show	20.0	76.4	70.9	( 55)	9.5	81.0	42.9	( 21)
Client Uncooperative	19.2	71.8	62.8	( 78)	16.7	66.7	33.3	( 36)
External Reasons	20.0	68.0	66.0	( 50)	14.3	78.6	50.0	( 14)
<b>AVERAGE NUMBER OF SERVICE HOURS PER WEEK</b>								
	3.91	5.00	4.86		1.33	3.51	3.40	
	(N=44)	(N=267)	(N=239)		(N=12)	(N=91)	(N=63)	
<b>NUMBER OF WEEKS OF SERVICE</b>								
0-5	12.5%	75.0%	71.9%	( 64)	10.0%	60.0%	50.0%	( 10)
6-10	14.2	71.1	62.3	(106)	9.7	87.1	58.1	( 31)
11-15	5.3	86.0	77.2	( 57)	0.0	75.0	62.5	( 24)
16-20	13.6	84.1	72.7	( 44)	4.8	85.7	47.6	( 21)
20	14.9	71.6	63.5	( 74)	18.5	74.1	51.9	( 27)

The data in Table 21 were quite consistent in showing lower recidivism rates for those juveniles who received more diversion services. Those juveniles who participated for the full term of service and had their cases closed as "positive terminations" recidivated less than all other categories. Those juveniles with no recidivism or better recidivism records than prior records had received a greater number of service hours per week, on average, than juveniles who ended up with worse recidivism records. Finally, those juveniles

who received more weeks of service, up to about 15 weeks, had better recidivism records than those who received less service. The greater recidivism of those juveniles who received prolonged service (more than 15 weeks) may well have been due to the special characteristics of those who need such extended service.

This pattern of results was quite encouraging for the diversion projects. It does not prove that diversion services result in lower recidivism, but it does support that possibility. The pattern of results at this point is just what would be expected if diversion services were having rehabilitative effects on delinquent behavior. Other factors could also cause these results, but the benefit of any doubt should be given to the service providers.

Table 22 examines some other characteristics of the diversion services in relation to recidivism. The factors involved are whether or not the diversion service was exclusively counseling, the delay between the time of referral to the service provider and the time of actual intake for service, and whether or not the service provider reported any outreach to the diversion clients.

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Table 22  
Aggregate Recidivism Categories Related to Service Characteristics

	<u>Juveniles Without Priors</u>				<u>Juveniles With Priors</u>			
	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Better</u>	<u>No Recid-ivism</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Better</u>	<u>No Recid-ivism</u>	<u>(N)</u>
<b>TYPE OF SERVICE</b>								
Exclusively Counseling	11.8%	77.8%	70.7%	(338)	8.0%	79.7%	54.0%	(113)
Not Exclusively Counseling	11.0	75.5	65.2	(155)	14.8	74.1	42.6	( 54)
<b>INTAKE LAG</b>								
0-6 days	15.7%	74.7%	69.9%	(146)	15.2%	74.2%	53.0%	( 66)
7-12 days	8.3	77.1	66.1	(109)	3.7	85.2	55.6	( 27)
13-18 days	11.6	81.4	65.1	( 43)	7.1	71.4	57.1	( 14)
19-24 days	14.3	71.4	71.4	( 21)	---	---	---	( 2)
25-30 days	12.5	75.0	66.7	( 24)	---	---	---	( 3)
30 days	7.7	80.8	69.2	( 26)	---	---	---	( 0)
<b>REACH OUT?</b>								
Yes	17.1%	75.2%	68.8%	(141)	20.0%	72.5%	50.0%	( 40)
No	11.7	77.4	68.2	(283)	5.3	84.0	57.4	( 94)
Not Reported	13.0	79.7	72.5	( 69)	12.1	66.7	30.3	( 33)

No clear pattern of results emerged from the data presented in Table 22. Whereas Table 21 showed a relation between amount of service and lowered recidivism, Table 22 shows that the characteristics of the service which were reported had little relationship to recidivism. There was slightly less recidivism for juveniles with prior offenses who received exclusively counseling and somewhat better recidivism when the intake lag was three weeks or less. Reach out, which was rather casually reported by many service providers, showed no especially interpretable relationship to recidivism.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The pattern of relationships between variables describing the delivery of diversion services and the subsequent recidivism of the diverted juveniles was quite favorable to the service providers. Recidivism was lower for those juveniles who received more attention from the service providers than for those who were uncooperative, had fewer service hours, or fewer weeks of service. Diversion services seem to be significantly related to lowered recidivism. Furthermore, recidivism was lower for juveniles with certain characteristics, e.g., young first offenders, and for certain offenses, e.g., first-time burglaries and runaways with prior offenses. Such factors as whether the diversion service was exclusively counseling and the amount of delay in starting the service may be important but the data presently available show no strong relationship to recidivism.



## EPILOGUE

The conventional logic of research in the behavioral sciences is to assume that no effect exists, then marshal evidence to the contrary. In evaluating social programs, the authors believe the converse logic should apply -- a program effect is assumed to exist, then the data is examined for contrary evidence. Coupled with a vigorous attempt to develop data that will thoroughly probe the significant program issues, this approach provides a rigorous evaluation while still giving the program the benefit of any doubt about interpretation of the findings.

Though it may not be readily apparent, the questioning approach described above has been applied in this report. We began with the presumptions that (1) juvenile diversion results in fewer non-detained petition cases for the Probation Department, and (2) diversion services reduce the recidivism and subsequent delinquent activity of diverted juveniles. An industrious attempt was then made to examine all the evidence that could be compiled or developed at the present time which might contradict these two presumptions for the diversion projects under consideration. Though our search continues, no evidence has been found that offers substantial dispute to the original presumptions. We examined much evidence that could easily have been negative but, in fact, did not find any of it inconsistent with the original suppositions about the beneficial effects of diversion.

We conclude, therefore, that the three Los Angeles County Sheriff's Diversion Projects have been successful. Though only in