



# PENNSYLVANIA JUVENILE JUSTICE

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judges' Commission

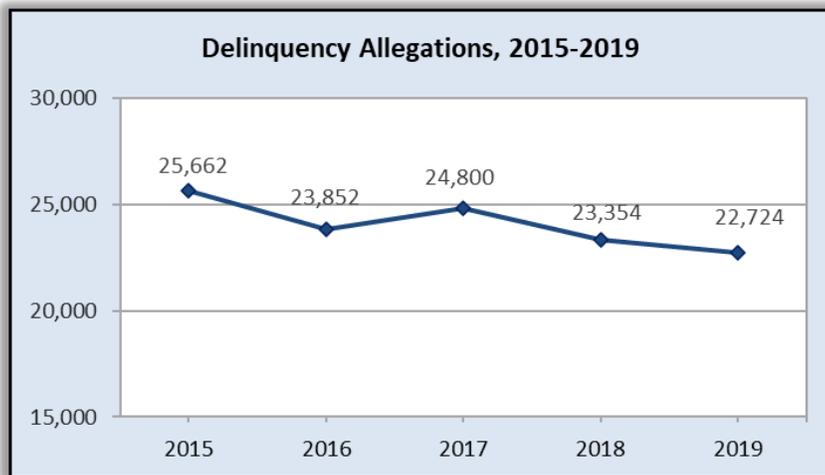
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## PENNSYLVANIA'S 2019 JUVENILE COURT ANNUAL REPORT

Since 1972, the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission has published an annual report focused on juvenile court dispositions and juvenile court statistics to measure and quantify work across the state by juvenile justice professionals. This article is the first of a series that describes data contained in this year's report. The first article focuses on Allegations, Dispositions, Secure Detention, and Placements data.

There were 22,724 delinquency-related allegations in Pennsylvania during 2019. This represents an 11.4% decrease from 2015, and a 2.7% decrease from 2018.



Delinquency dispositions statewide in Pennsylvania have decreased in each of the last five years (see Figure 1 on page 2). This includes a 4.9% decrease from 2018, and an overall decrease of 13.0% since 2015. Allegheny County reported a decrease of 3.1% from 2018 to 2019, and Philadelphia County reported a 3.8% decrease for this time period.

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# 2020

**James E. Anderson**  
**PENNSYLVANIA**  
Conference on Juvenile Justice  
**November 5-6, 2020**

*Presented Virtually!*



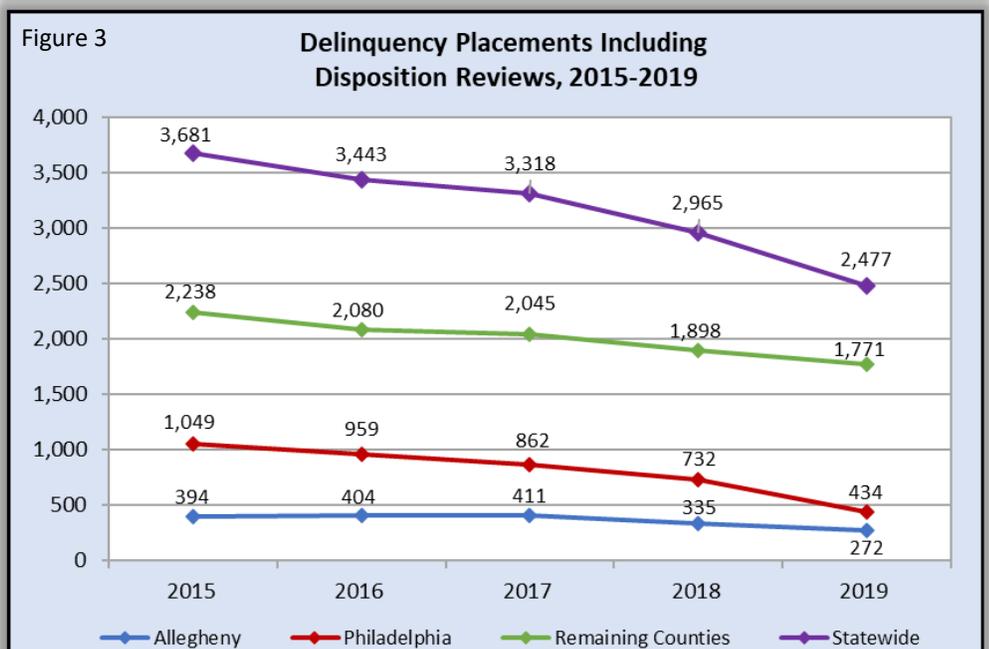
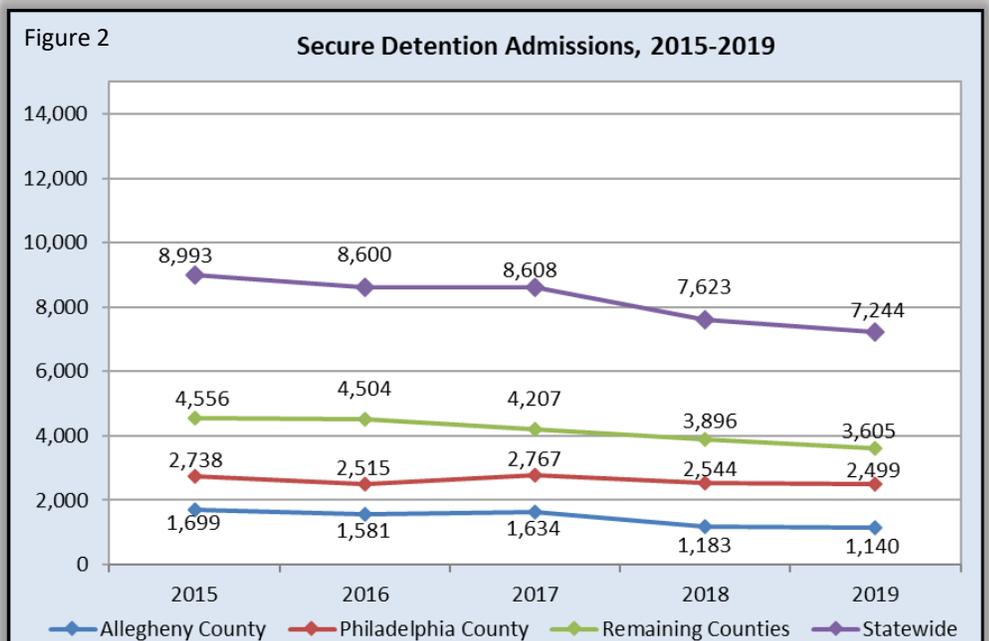
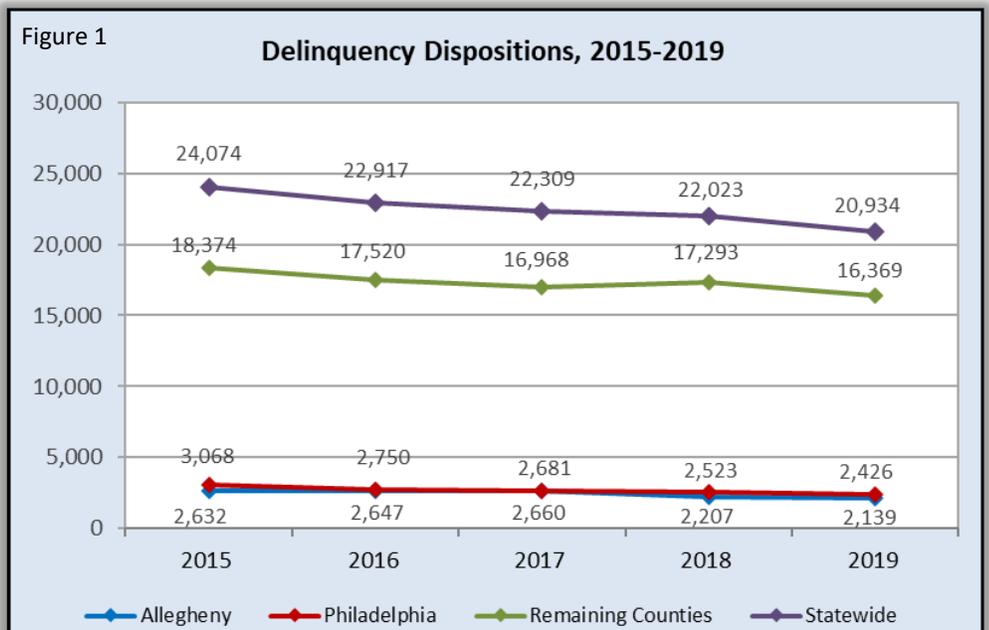
*More Info to Come Soon!*

Detention admissions have declined statewide since 2015, with a 19.4% overall decrease, and a 5.0% decrease from 2018 to 2019 (see Figure 2). Allegheny County detention admissions decreased by 3.6% from 2018 to 2019, and Philadelphia County admissions decreased by 1.8% during the same time period.

Delinquency placements have declined each year since 2007, with an overall decrease of 67.1% statewide over that time period. Since 2015, there has been an overall decrease of 32.7% statewide, and from 2018 to 2019, a decrease of 16.5% was observed (see Figure 3). The 2,477 delinquency placements in 2019 represented 5.6% of all delinquency dispositions. Delinquency placements in Allegheny County decreased 18.8% from 2018 to 2019 and placements in Philadelphia County decreased 40.7% for this time period.

County-specific data on delinquency allegations, delinquency dispositions, secure detention admissions, and delinquency placements can be found in the appendices of Pennsylvania's 2019 Juvenile Court Annual Report at:

<https://www.jcjc.pa.gov/Research-Statistics/Disposition%20Reports/2019%20Juvenile%20Court%20Annual%20Report.pdf>



# “REDUCING RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISPARITIES CERTIFICATE PROGRAM” COMING TO PENNSYLVANIA SUMMER 2021

In summer 2021, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) will host the Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Juvenile Justice Certificate Program in Harrisburg, PA. The five-day Certificate Program is an intensive training designed to support local counties within Pennsylvania in their efforts to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in their juvenile justice systems. The program is operated jointly by the Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy’s Center for Juvenile Justice Reform (CJJR) and the Center for Children’s Law and Policy (CCLP) and funded by PCCD.

The three primary goals of the Certificate Program are to help jurisdictions reduce:

1. Overrepresentation of youth of color in the juvenile justice system;
2. Disparate treatment of youth of color as compared to white youth within the juvenile justice system; and
3. Unnecessary entry and movement deeper into the juvenile justice system for youth of color.

While the program will primarily address disparities in the juvenile justice system, it will also include a focus on the relationship between disproportionality in the juvenile justice system and disparate treatment in other child-serving systems, including child welfare and education. Further, the specific program modules will be tailored based on the composition and goals of the selected teams.

After completing the program, teams will be responsible for the development of a data-driven local Capstone Project reform effort and will receive technical assistance from CCLP and CJJR. The Capstone Project allows participants to apply what they learned from the Certificate Program toward new or existing efforts to reduce overrepresentation and eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system. Toward the end of the 18 months following the Certificate Program, teams will have the opportunity to apply for additional technical assistance with CCLP to further support their Capstone Projects in their jurisdictions.

The total program cost will be paid by PCCD. This includes the five-day Certificate Program training for all participants, and the 18-months of Capstone TA. Travel, hotel, and incidental expenses and reservations will be the responsibility of the participating jurisdictions; however, breakfast, lunch, and snacks are provided throughout the program.

A maximum of eight multi-disciplinary teams will be invited for participation in the program. PCCD will work together along with the Juvenile Court Judges’ Commission and the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers to identify teams for invitation based on data that signify counties with the greatest need. Additionally, a state-wide team will be included with the eight teams in order to provide additional support to all counties throughout Pennsylvania. Each team is to be comprised of up to seven members, including leaders working in juvenile justice, who are positioned to affect meaningful change to reduce racial and ethnic disparities. The team composition shall reflect the diverse community and youth they serve.

Strongly recommended team members include:

- The senior juvenile justice administrator in the jurisdiction (this could be the chief juvenile probation officer, the regional director of juvenile justice, or other individuals with responsibility to oversee the provision of juvenile justice services and supervision);
- A juvenile court judge;

- A law enforcement leader, such as a chief of police or deputy chief in charge of juvenile matters;
- The individual who will be responsible for coordinating local efforts to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system; and
- A community leader and youth/family representative.

With the goal of holding this event in person in 2021, application materials will be released mid-fall with the application deadline nearing year's end. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, and with an emphasis on exercising proper precautions and social distancing practices, additional details regarding this event will be made available at a later time.



## COUNTY SPOTLIGHT

### MARK F. BENEDETTO RETIRES

After 39 years of distinguished service, Mark F. Benedetto retired as the Chief Juvenile Probation Officer of the Mercer County Juvenile Probation Department on August 7, 2020. Mr. Benedetto joined Mercer County's Juvenile Probation Department in 1981 as a Juvenile Probation Officer. In 1989, he was promoted to Deputy Chief, and in 1996, he was appointed to the position of Chief Juvenile Probation Officer. He was also the Administrator of Mercer County's Intermediate Punishment Program from 2000 until his retirement.



Mr. Benedetto stands out as an exuberant leader in Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system who leaves behind a considerable record of accomplishments. Several highlights of Mark's career are as follows:

- Led Mercer County's implementation of both Balanced and Restorative Justice, and the Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy (JJSES).
- Served as the Chair of Mercer County's Criminal Justice Advisory Board, where he led a host of initiatives aimed at improving the services delivered by Mercer County's criminal and juvenile justice systems. In fact, in 2018, Mr. Benedetto was recognized by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency and earned the Commission's *Linda K. M. Ludgate CJAB Excellence in Leadership Award*.
- Served as a member of the JJSES Leadership Team, where he led the team's implementation of Building Blocks.
- Served on the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission Awards Committee.
- Was a long-time active member of the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers, where he served on the Executive Committee and as Chair of the Prevention, Diversion, and Family Involvement Committees.
- Served on the Pennsylvania Joint State Government Commission's Advisory Committee on Truancy and School Dropout.
- Was an active member of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency's Delinquency Prevention and Diversion Committees.
- In 2017, Mr. Benedetto was recognized as the Chief of the Year at the annual James E. Anderson Pennsylvania Conference on Juvenile Justice.

Mark holds a B.A. degree in Sociology from Thiel College and an M.S. in Administration of Criminal Justice from Mercyhurst College. He will no doubt be busy in retirement with family and church-related activities.

# 2019 PENNSYLVANIA JUVENILE JUSTICE

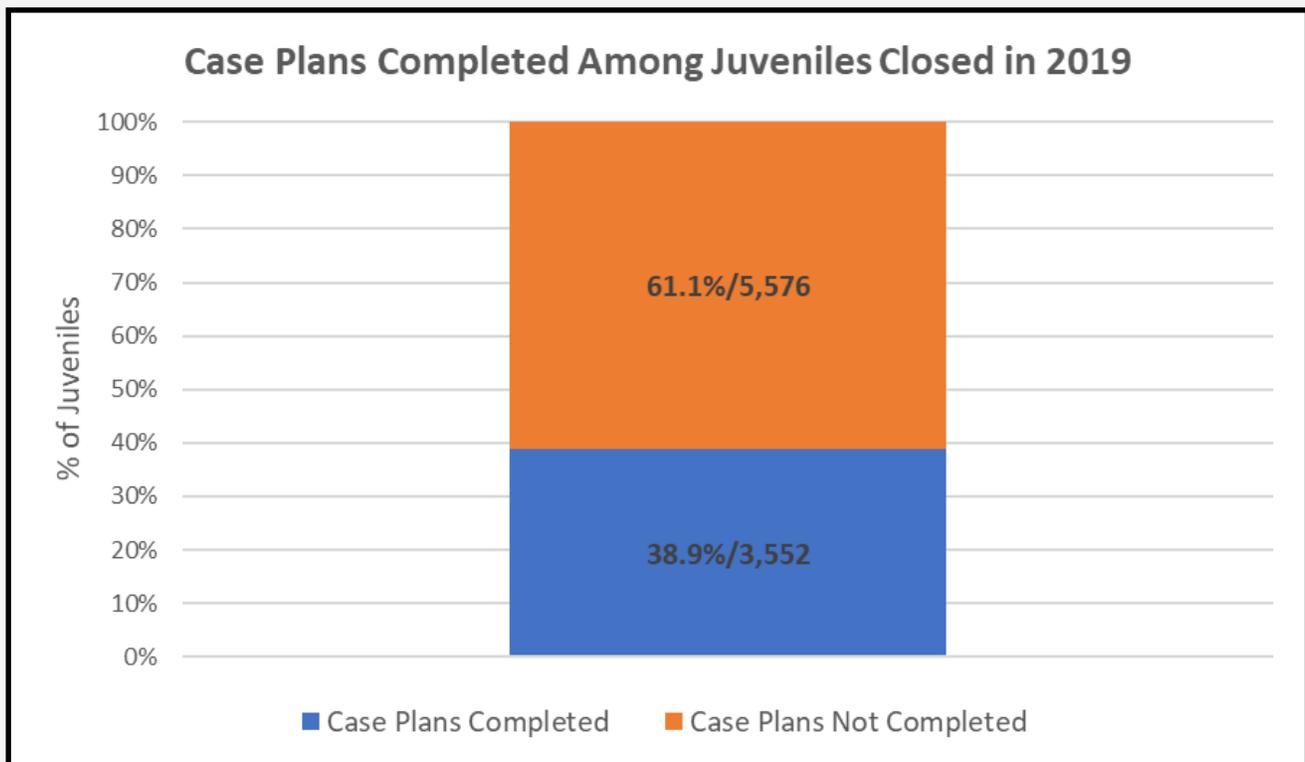
## OUTCOME MEASURES - COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT

Earlier this summer, the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission (JCJC) released the 2019 Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice System Outcomes Report, which can be viewed at <https://www.jcjc.pa.gov/Research-Statistics/Documents/2019%20Pennsylvania%20Juvenile%20Justice%20Outcome%20Measures%20Report.pdf>.

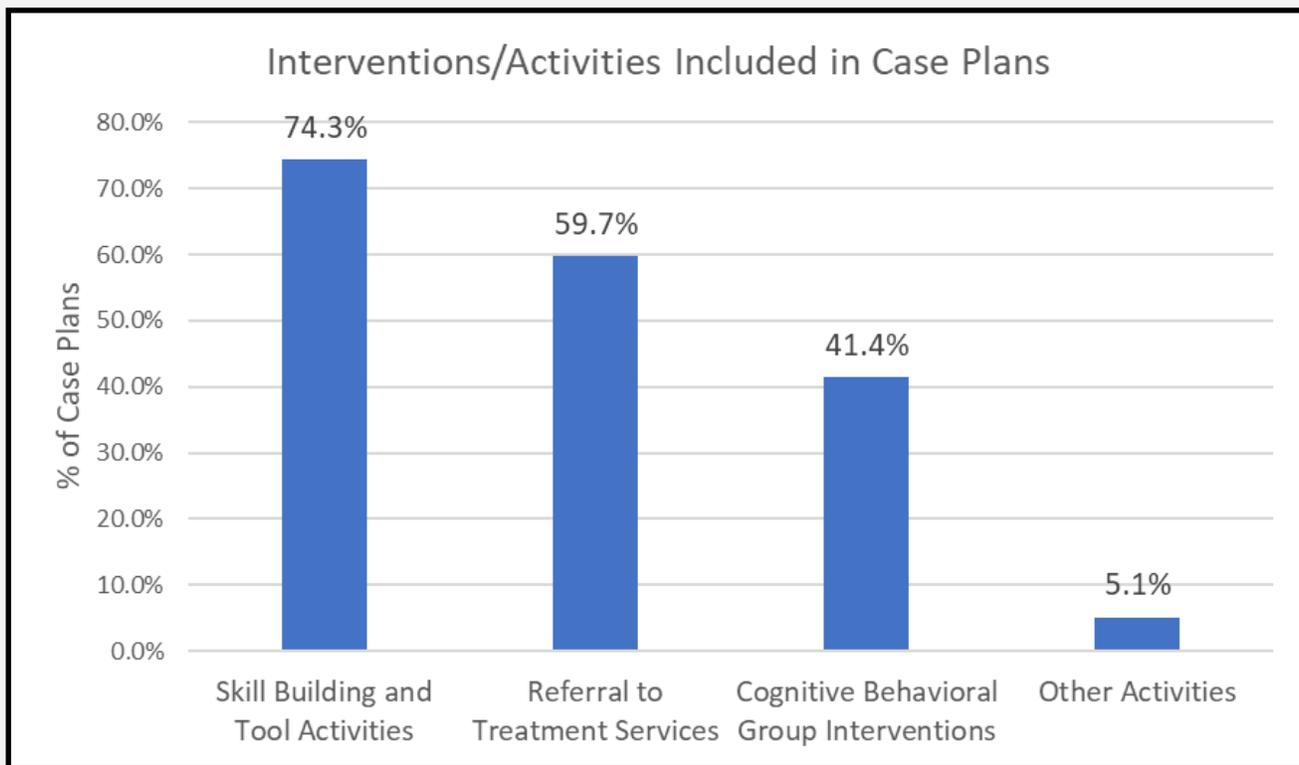
Each time a case is closed within a juvenile probation office, juvenile probation officers are required to provide information specific to the services that the youth received and their behavior while under court supervision. Through a collaboration between JCJC and the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers, additional fields were added this year to allow for deeper analysis. This is the last of three articles that take a closer look at findings from the report, with a focus on these new fields.

This month's report examines Competency Development outcomes. New fields for Competency Development include a section on the percentage of juveniles closed that had Case Plans completed by their probation officer, which therapeutic interventions were included as part of those case plans (e.g., Skill Building and Tools Activities), and the percentage of case plans that were updated throughout the supervision period. In addition, for the first time, detailed information is presented on the nature of educational/vocational activities that youth were engaged with at the time their cases were closed.

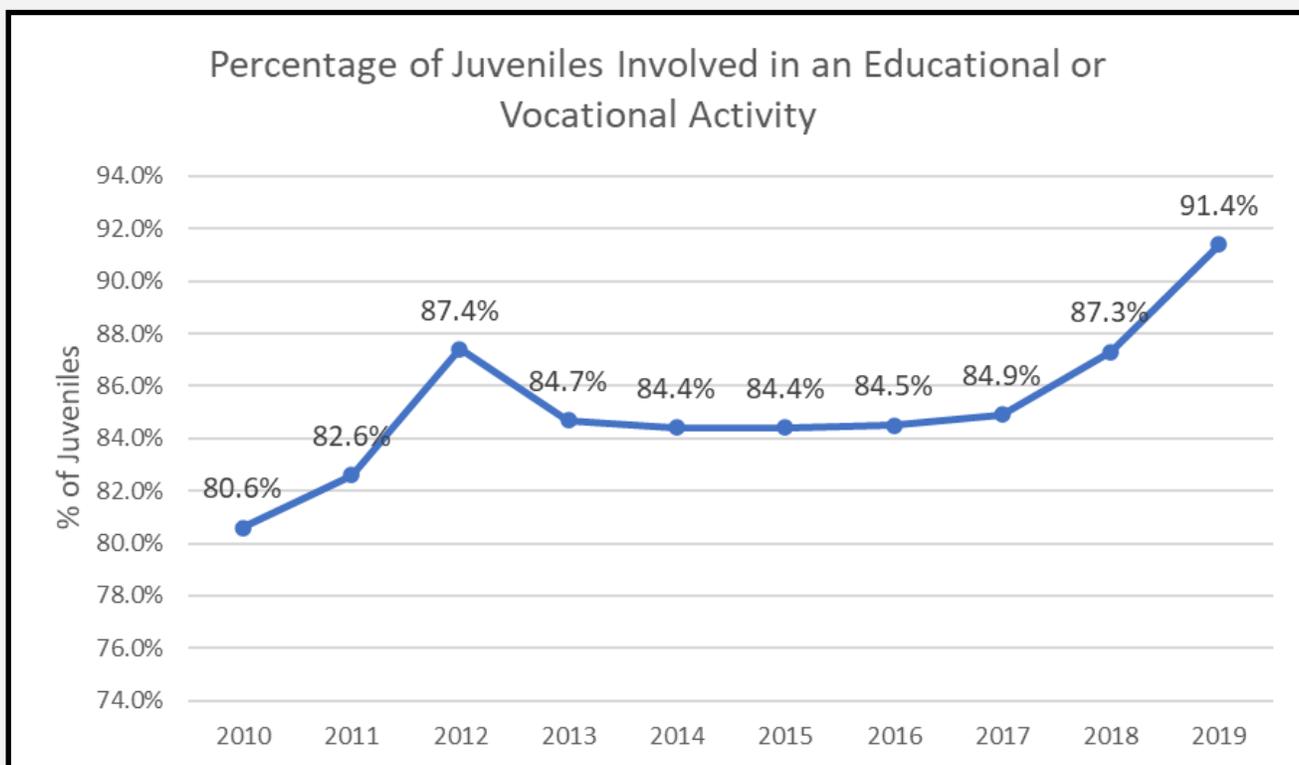
1. 38.9% of juveniles closed had case plans completed that included goals and risk reduction activities to address the top 2-3 criminogenic needs identified by the YLS. Once this data is collected in future years, we can compare between years to see whether the percentage of juveniles who had case plans completed is increasing or decreasing.



- Almost three-quarters (74.3%) of case plans completed included Skill Building and Tool Activities, 59.7% included Referral to Treatment Services, 41.4% included Cognitive Behavioral Group Interventions, and 5.1% included Other Activities.



- The percentage of juveniles closed who were involved in an educational or vocational activity increased from 87.3% in 2018 to 91.4% in 2019. This is the highest percentage of juveniles involved in an educational or vocational activity over the last ten years.





## Working Together in the Pandemic: Tips for Supporting Youth and Families in a Time of Crisis

The COVID-19 crisis is impacting every youth and family in some way or another. Youth involved in the juvenile justice system are particularly impacted by the pandemic. Along with the many stressors and challenges they face ordinarily, these youth now struggle with increased worry about their health and safety, the health and safety of their friends and loved ones, and possible grief and loss.

The impact of COVID-19 is compounded by justice-involved youth's limited or inconsistent access to support networks in their homes, schools, and communities as well as to adult and peer role models and mentors. Youth in residential facilities may not be able to have in-person visits with caregivers. For many justice-involved youth, these losses, both literally and figuratively, of important relationships may serve as reminders for prior traumatic experiences.

When working with youth in this pandemic, there are several important considerations to keep in mind, including:

- Expecting an increase in difficult behaviors as youth grapple with a rise in uncomfortable emotions and a decrease in ways to cope with those emotions such as a loss in social support due to social distancing.
- Understanding that as youth are processing new challenges, abrupt changes, and healthcare concerns, they are still looking to trusted adults for support and modeling of effective responses and coping strategies.
- Knowing that every interaction with a youth is a chance to create meaningful connection, increase a sense of safety, and increase a feeling of empowerment.
- Staying focused on managing your own stress while interacting with youth is extremely important because your management of stress helps create calm and a sense of safety for youth. When youth feel an increased sense of safety, they are less likely to exhibit challenging behaviors that make it more difficult to function.

When working with families of justice-involved youth, there are several important considerations to keep in mind, including:

- Parents and families may have heightened concerns about the health and safety of their child who is in a residential setting or incarcerated, especially if they have limited contact.
- Many families of youth in the juvenile justice system have pre-existing stressors that have been exacerbated by this crisis, such as homelessness, food insecurity, poverty, and lack of access to quality health and mental health care.
- If your role involves direct contact with family members, you may be in a position to increase caregivers' sense of calm and safety by providing information and a space to be heard, as well as validating their concerns and sharing resources. In times of crisis, the feeling that one has been heard can go a very long way for families under stress.

### Questions to Consider When Working with Justice-Involved Youth and Their Families

- What steps are you taking to contribute to the health and safety of youth and their parents or caregivers?
- Are youth expressing themselves or their feelings about this crisis through creative, non-traditional ways such as through drawing, music, or other creative arts?
- What are you doing to maintain a sense of connection to the youth you're working with, even if that connection can't be in person? Are there ways to use both traditional and virtual communication with youth? How can you use youth's strengths and interests to connect with them during this time?
- What steps can you take to keep parents and caregivers regularly updated about children in residential facilities? What virtual ways can you use to maintain connections between youth and their families?

- Are there resources you can provide to parents and caregivers who need additional support?
- Are you taking steps to manage your own stress as you're interacting with youth and families?

### Dos and Don'ts of Working with Youth and Families in a Time of Crisis

**DO** listen and help each youth and family member sort out their thoughts and feelings in a way that they feel is most helpful – listening carefully and supportively to youths and family members actually saves more time and effort than it takes.

**DON'T** offer generic reassurance or coping tactics, false hope or encouragement, or promises that you cannot fulfill.

**DO** learn what has happened in the lives of youths and family members so that you can understand where they're coming from.

**DON'T** make assumptions about what has happened or why certain events have particular meaning for each individual.

**DO** learn and support what each youth and each family member hold as their core values.

**DON'T** assume that a youth or family member has no morals or positive values.

**DO** learn about the specific ways the pandemic has affected the youth's and family members' personal life and their personal relationships.

**DON'T** overlook the importance of personal relationships and activities that have been negatively impacted or assume that those relationships and activities are lost forever or beyond repair.

**DO** nonjudgmentally acknowledge distress expressed by youths or family members as understandable in the circumstances and relate it to their core values.

**DON'T** provide simplistic reassurance or advice or attempt to convince them to feel or think differently.

**DO** creatively build on youths' and family members' strengths, interests, and talents to brainstorm modified or alternative coping tactics.

**DON'T** teach only generic pre-packaged coping tactics such as deep breathing, (which can be very effective) but tailor coping strategies to personality, culture, and preferences.

**DO** identify and reinforce ways youths give to and receive from family and personal support systems, including faith-based supports.

**DON'T** assume that a youth's personal relationships are supportive and overlook possible areas of conflict or tension.

**DO** provide links to culturally sensitive and evidence-based online resources consistent with youths' and family members' specific goals.

**DON'T** generically suggest online resources that are not directly relevant to them or have no evidence base.

**DO** identify and reinforce ways each youth and family member is engaging in practical self-care, and acknowledge any small steps to doing so, including the interest in self-care.

**DON'T** suggest simplistic "solutions" or coping tactics that are unrealistic or that are not tailored to the individual.

**DO** make sure youths and family members leave every conversation with you with a thought or tool that provides a sense of a way forward.

**DON'T** treat any conversation with a youth as pointless or worthless.

**DO** establish a practical way for youths and families to stay in contact with you, consistent with professional boundaries.

**DON'T** overlook or ignore them because you're too busy or focused on something/someone else. Check in with them regularly.



### Suggested Citation

Recommended Citation: Baetz, C., Ford, J., Pickens, I., & Cruise, K.R. (2020). *Front-line staff: Working together in the pandemic*. UCLA-Duke, National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Los Angeles, CA.



## TECHNOLOGY CORNER

### Four New Training Documents to Be Released

The Juvenile Court Judges' Commission (JCJC) will be releasing four new training documents for new and existing users of the Pennsylvania Juvenile Case Management System (PaJCMS). These training documents are tailored for different types of user roles within PaJCMS, but they can also be used as a general reference for PaJCMS screens for other users. These training documents are not intended to replace on-site county personalized trainings, but rather to help an onboarding process or supplement existing knowledge of the PaJCMS.

Once the training documents are finalized, the JCJC helpdesk will be sending information to PaJCMS users regarding the availability and accessibility of these documents. If you have any additional ideas for training plans, please feel free to contact us with your suggestions by emailing the PaJCMS Help Desk at [ra-jcjheldesk@pa.gov](mailto:ra-jcjheldesk@pa.gov).

Please note that at this time the JCJC staff will not be taking any requests for in-county trainings for PaJCMS due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. However, consideration will be given to trainings that could be held through web conferencing.

#### Juvenile Demographic Screens

This training walks the user through the data entry process for the screens used in PaJCMS to enter juvenile demographic information. These include the juvenile face-sheet, basic search, advanced search, juvenile explorer, victim search, juvenile medical information, family-related information, documents, employment, ID marks, license/ID, photos, alias, SSN, DNA info, and detention management.

#### Court Related

This training walks the user through the data entry process for the screens used in PaJCMS to enter court-related processes. These include cases, arrest summary, alleged charges, state/county transfer, victim manager, codefendant, involved persons, hearings, dispositions, out-of-home services, forms, and warrants.

#### Probation Management

This training walks the user through the screens used within PaJCMS for probation management processes. These include community service, drug testing, Youth Level of Service (YLS), juvenile calendar, other services, and the Pennsylvania Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (PaDRAI).

#### System Administrator

This training walks the user through the screens used in PaJCMS for the various system administrator functions. These include new or existing employee changes, covers all 93 LTM screens, change juvenile ID, global PO change, sharing PO's dashboards, system options, audit log, security and dashboard assignments.

## STAFF DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS

### September

- 17-18 Four Core Competencies for Supervisors - **Virtual Training**
- 23 Carey Guides - **Virtual Training**
- 24 Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP™) Informed Training - **Virtual Training**
- 25 Brief Intervention Tools or BITS - **Virtual Training**
- 30 LGBTQ+ - **Virtual Training**

Registration available at  
[www.jcjcjems.state.pa.us](http://www.jcjcjems.state.pa.us)

### VIRTUAL TRAINING EVENTS

The Juvenile Court Judges' Commission (JCJC) and members of the Peer Training Network have developed the following series of virtual training events:

- Four Core Competencies for Supervisors (September 17th and 18th)
- Carey Guides (September 23rd)
- Brief Intervention Tools (BITS) (September 25th)

Additionally, there are other virtual professional development opportunities available:

- SPEP™ Informed (September 24th)
- LGBTQ + (September 30th)

As these training events are in high demand and may have waiting lists, we will be scheduling most of these virtual training events again, along with additional virtual trainings, in the near future. Please log onto the JCJC's Events Management System (JEMS) for more information.



### Dr. Thomas L. Austin Undergraduate Scholarship Fund

We invite you to participate in supporting the Dr. Thomas L. Austin Undergraduate Scholarship Fund. Since 1986, the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission has awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to an undergraduate student at Shippensburg University majoring in Criminal Justice. This scholarship is named in honor of Dr. Thomas L. Austin, who taught in the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission-sponsored Graduate Education Program at Shippensburg University from its inception in 1982 until his retirement in 2011. The criteria for this scholarship are academic excellence and an interest in juvenile justice.

Donate to the Juvenile Justice Scholarship Fund today!  
<https://tinyurl.com/JJScholarshipFund>



# NATIONAL JUVENILE JUSTICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following announcements are reprinted from JUVJUST, an OJJDP news service:

## NEW ISSUE OF AMBER ADVOCATE NEWSLETTER NOW AVAILABLE

OJJDP has released the latest issue of The AMBER Advocate newsletter. This issue features articles on:

- The training of Missouri officers on the law enforcement response to child sex trafficking.
- The Massachusetts AMBER Alert leading to the safe recovery of an abducted girl.
- Shelly Smitherman, Tennessee's AMBER Alert Coordinator.
- AMBER Alert in Indian Country.



The U.S. Department of Justice and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children coordinate the AMBER Alert program nationally.

### RESOURCES:

- Access previous issues of the newsletter.
- View and download OJJDP's "AMBER Alert Field Guide for Law Enforcement Officers."
- Follow OJJDP on Twitter and Facebook.

## HHS TO HOST WEBINAR SERIES ON IMPROVING REENTRY OUTCOMES THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation will host a virtual training series titled "Leveraging the Secret Sauce of Relationships to Improve Reentry Outcomes: The Value of Social Capital." Four bi-weekly training webinars will explore strategies to foster relationships in reentry programs for individuals returning to their communities following incarceration. The following webinars will be held Tuesdays from 2 to 3 p.m. ET:

- September 1: Fostering Organizational, Participant, and Mentoring Relationships
- September 15: Incorporating Relationship Building Practices in Your Organization
- Learn more and register for upcoming webinars.

### RESOURCES:

- View and download OJJDP's reentry fact sheet.
- Visit OJJDP's Model Programs Guide to learn about evidence-based reentry programs.
- View OJJDP's Juvenile Reentry Programs I-Guide.
- Follow OJJDP on Twitter and Facebook.

## OJJDP ANNOUNCES UPCOMING WEBINARS

Register for upcoming juvenile-justice related webinars on funding, programs, and initiatives.

- September 3, 2020 Investigation, Prosecution, and Treatment of Juvenile Offenders (Prosecutors Only) Register
- September 9, 2020 Digital Evidence in Missing/Abducted Children Cases Register
- September 16, 2020 Substance Use Issues in Juvenile Court: An Overview for Prosecutors Register

## OJJDP NEWS @ A GLANCE, JULY/AUGUST 2020

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) announces the availability of OJJDP News @ a Glance, July/August 2020. This issue's top story and Message from the Administrator discusses OJJDP's virtual tribal consultation, attended by 288 tribal leaders and representatives from across the country. The Youth Voices section highlights the activities of a youth peer guide in Indian country.



Other features in this issue—

- Supporting Effective Interventions for Adolescent Sex Offenders and Children with Sexual Behavior Problems
- Staff Spotlight: OJJDP Welcomes New Team Members
- Stakeholder's Corner: Addressing the Training Needs of Juvenile Prosecutors
- News from the Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice
- News in Brief
- Upcoming Events
- New Publications

### RESOURCES:

- OJJDP News @ a Glance, July/August 2020 (NCJ 254787) is available online.
- Follow OJJDP on Twitter and Facebook.

This publication is produced monthly by the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission. Guest articles are welcome; please submit by e-mail to [ra-oajcnews@pa.gov](mailto:ra-oajcnews@pa.gov).

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