



SAN MATEO COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT

THE JUVENILE DIVISION – ASSESSMENT
CENTER/INVESTIGATIONS UNIT
ANNUAL EVALUATION

2020 - 2021



About the Researcher

Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a nonprofit social research firm dedicated to helping people build better communities by collecting meaningful data, facilitating information-based planning, and developing custom strategies. The firm was founded on the principle that community improvement, initiative sustainability, and program success are closely tied to assessment needs, evaluation of community goals, and development of appropriate responses.

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Contents

Program Description	3
Programmatic Challenges	4
Evaluation Methods.....	5
Evaluation Findings	6
Fiscal Year 2020-21 Highlights	6
Profile of Clients Served	6
Risk Indicators	7
Justice Outcomes.....	8
Program-Specific Outcomes.....	9
Client Story	10
Appendix A: Case Triage Dispositions	11

Program Description

The Juvenile Assessment Center/Investigations Unit (ASC/INV Unit) provides a primary point of entry for intake and assessment of youth who have come into contact with the juvenile justice system via law enforcement, including, but not limited to, youths who participate in Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) funded programs. The intake process begins at the ASC/INV Unit, when the youth receives a multidisciplinary team (MDT) risk/needs assessment, including screening for mental health, substance abuse, and other significant risk factors. Based upon the assessment findings, a recommendation that includes a balance of accountability and support/treatment services is completed and discussed with the youth's family by the assigned Deputy Probation Officer (DPO). Recommendations are also made to the Juvenile Court if release from custody is appropriate. Diversion-eligible youths can be referred to a range of programs and services, including the Petty Theft Program (PTP), Juvenile Mediation Program, Victim Impact Awareness (VIA) Program, and Traffic Court. Youths may also be placed on supervised Probation Diversion short-term (three month) or long-term (six month) contracts.

While this evaluation focuses on youths assessed at the ASC/INV Unit, the Unit also provides triage services for additional youths. (See Appendix A for further details on triage services provided by the ASC/INV Unit.) Triage services are primarily intended to be brief and link youths with appropriate community resources to avoid formal court proceedings where possible. In contrast, some immediate bridging services are available for youths in crisis to stabilize families and optimize chances for success. This allows the ASC/INV Unit to focus efforts on those youths who are at higher risk to re-offend.

In November 2020, the Juvenile Assessment Center merged with the Juvenile Investigations Unit to become the ASC/INV Unit. Although services provided to the youths and community have not been affected due to the merge, DPOs assigned to the ASC/INV Unit are now responsible for intake as well as completing various types of reports for the Court's review and consideration when they work with a youth who is subsequently referred to the District Attorney's (DA) Office and involved in a formal court process. Reports completed typically address and include a youth's entire social history, including but not limited to educational, health, and familial information, which are considered when submitting dispositional recommendations.

Programmatic Challenges

Beginning in March 2020, The Juvenile ASC/INV Unit experienced major adjustments in processes and procedures due to COVID-19 restrictions. Initially, only one DPO remained on-site, while others were approved to telework from their residences. Weeks later, two DPOs were required to be on-site while the remaining staff continued to telework from their homes. Most recently, staffing returned to pre-pandemic levels. However, during this reporting period, most of the contacts, assessments, and counseling were managed via telephone, and neither processes nor procedures were delayed. Some families appreciated that they did not have to report in person because it was inconvenient, while other families said they preferred in-person interactions, as they believe they are more effective in helping youths focus on the topic at hand. Staff were successful at monitoring the youths on their caseloads and providing needed services to youths and their families.

During this time, a minimal number of youths were booked into the Youth Services Center (YSC). However, there was a decrease in out-of-custody referrals to the Probation Department. In addition, the availability of services changed as community-based organizations cancelled services, but services later resumed via communication platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. These changes required regular communication and monitoring.

Evaluation Methods

Programs funded by San Mateo County Juvenile Probation (Probation) monitor their programs and report client, service, and outcome data to the department and its evaluator, Applied Survey Research (ASR). The methods and tools used to collect these data are:

Participants and Services: Grantee programs collect demographic data (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) and service data (e.g., type of services, hours of services, etc.) for individual participants. Program staff entered these data elements into their own data systems prior to transferring the data to ASR for analysis.

Risk Factors: Grantee programs used the Juvenile Assessment and Intervention System (JAIS) to provide a standard measure of risk for youths. This individualized assessment is a widely used criminogenic risk, strengths, and needs assessment tool that assists in the effective and efficient supervision of youths, both in institutional settings and in the community. It has been validated across ethnic and gender groups. The JAIS consists of a brief initial assessment followed by full assessment and reassessment components (JAIS Full Assessment and JAIS Reassessment). The JAIS assessment has two unique form options based on the youth's gender. Probation has elected to administer the JAIS to all youths receiving services in community programs for at-risk and juvenile justice involved youth. The JAIS Girls Risk consists of eight items, and the JAIS Boys Risk consists of ten items. Each assessment yields an overall risk level of 'low,' 'moderate,' or 'high.'

Outcomes: Like all JJCPA funded programs, the ASC/INV Unit collects data for several justice-related outcomes for program participants. Probation has elected to report these outcomes at 180 days post entry. The reference or comparison group reflects the past year's cohort of program participants to interpret FY 2020-21 outcomes. In FY 2020-21, the ASC/INV Unit collected the following outcome measures:

- arrests
- detentions
- probation violations
- court-ordered restitution completion
- court-ordered community service completion

The ASC/INV Unit also reports the average daily population in Juvenile Hall to track progress toward its goal of reducing the number and length of Juvenile Hall stays.

Evaluation Findings

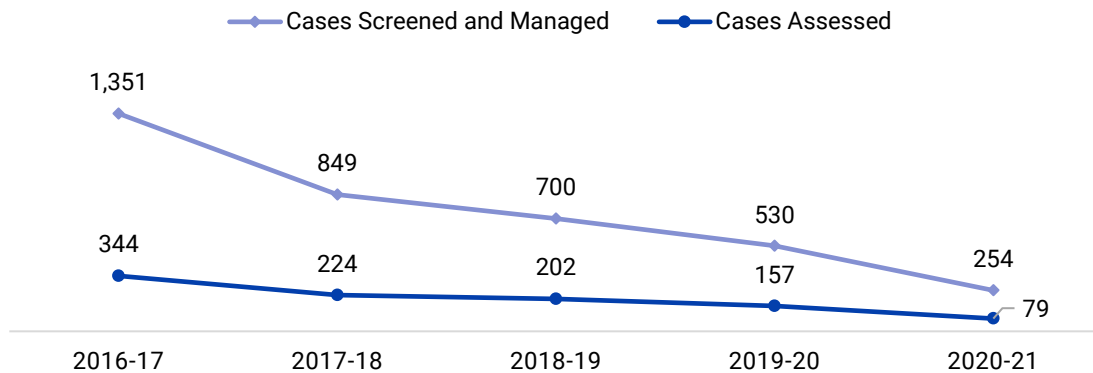
Fiscal Year 2020-21 Highlights

- The number of youths screened decreased by 52%, from 530 to 254, and the number of youths assessed decreased by half, from 157 to 79, compared to prior fiscal year
- There was a 67% increase in the average time spent in the ASC/INV Unit (2.5 months) compared to the prior fiscal year.
- The ASC/INV Unit served clients across the risk spectrum: 72% scored as 'low' risk, 17% scored as 'moderate' risk, and 11% scored as 'high' risk on the criminogenic risk spectrum.
- The percentage of youths with a drug or alcohol problem and suspension or expulsion at entry decreased compared with FY 2019-20.

Profile of Clients Served

In FY 2020-21, the ASC/INV Unit screened and managed 254 cases, which consist of youths adjudged under WIC Section 602 (formal wards of the Court or those who have committed criminal law offenses) and youths adjudged under WIC Section 601 (those with a history of truancy, running away, or out-of-control behavior at home and/or in school). Figure 1 shows the total number of cases screened and managed each year, demonstrating a clear decline in numbers served over time. For further detail on how each case was processed through the system, please see the Appendix.

Figure 1. Total Number of Cases Screened and Managed, FY 2016-17 to FY 2020-21



The ASC/INV Unit assessed 79 youths during FY 2020-21 (Table 1). Since FY 2016-17, the number of youths assessed by the ASC/INV Unit has declined in part due to the changing population in San Mateo County, changes in reporting policies at the ASC/INV Unit, and adjustments based on the COVID-19 booking policies implemented by the state. The demographic and outcome data reported reflect the status of 75 of 79 youths (94%).

Table 1. Youth Services

YOUTH SERVICES	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21
Number of Youths Assessed	344	224	202	157	79
Average Time in the ASC/INV Unit (Months)	2.0	2.6	3.8	1.5	2.5*

FY 2020-21 *n=75 youths with individual data.

Based on the 75 youths whose demographic data were recorded in FY 2020-21:

- Three out of four (75%) youths served were male, and 25% were female.
- The average age of youths was 17.2 years.
- Of the 75 youths who had race/ethnicity data available, 59% identified as Hispanic/Latino, 23% as White/Caucasian, 12% as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 4% as Black/African American.
- Youths were served for an average of 2.5 months in the ASC/INV Unit.

Risk Indicators

The ASC/INV Unit evaluated certain risk indicators upon entry, including if the youth had an alcohol or other drug problem, a school attendance problem, and whether they had been suspended or expelled from school in the past year (Table 2). The findings below indicate:

- In FY 2020-21, 26% of youths had an alcohol or other drug problem at entry.
- Nearly one-half (41%) of youths had an attendance problem upon entry.
- Over one-third (34%) of youths had been suspended or expelled in the past year.
- Two indicators, alcohol or other drug problem and suspension/expulsion in the past year, decreased compared with FY 2019-20.

Table 2. Youth Risk Indicators at ASC/INV Unit Entry

RISK INDICATORS	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21
Alcohol or Other Drug Problem	10%	20%	12%	34%	26%
Attendance Problem	36%	20%	16%	27%	41%
Suspension/Expulsion in the Past Year	39%	41%	36%	50%	34%

FY 2020-21 n=46-49

In FY 2020-21, the ASC/INV Unit primarily served youths who scored 'low' at the initial risk assessment (72%). Fewer youths scored 'moderate' risk (17%) and 'high' risk (11%; Table 3). Although slightly more youth scored high in FY 2020-21, the results have been fairly stable over the past four years. This is expected given the nature of the ASC/INV Unit's programs, which focus on diversion programs and informal probation.

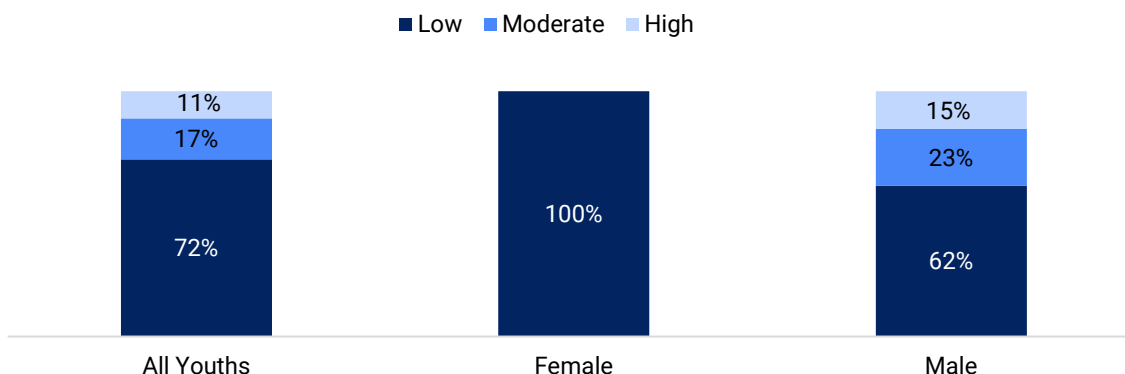
Table 3. JAIS Risk Level

JAIS RISK LEVEL	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21
Low	62%	66%	64%	60%	72%
Moderate	30%	30%	34%	37%	17%
High	8%	3%	2%	4%	11%

FY 2020-21 n=18. Note: Percentages may not total to 100 due to rounding.

When disaggregated by gender, only males scored as ‘moderate’ risk or ‘high’ risk (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Criminogenic Risk Level by Gender



All Youths n=18; Female n=5; Male n=13. Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Justice Outcomes

Table 4 presents justice-related outcomes for 67 youths whose six-month post-entry evaluation milestone occurred in FY 2020-21. Of note:

- The percentage of youths arrested for a new law violation increased from 0% to 8% in FY 2020-21.
- The percentage of youths detained during their time in the Unit has remained low for the last three fiscal years (2-4%).

Table 4. Justice Outcomes

JUSTICE OUTCOMES	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21
Youths Arrested for a New Law Violation	N/A	13%	1%	0%	8%
Youths with Detentions	22%	8%	4%	2%	3%
Youths with Probation Violations	N/A	20%	*	*	*
Completion of Restitution	*	*	*	*	*

JUSTICE OUTCOMES	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21
Completion of Community Service	*	*	*	*	*

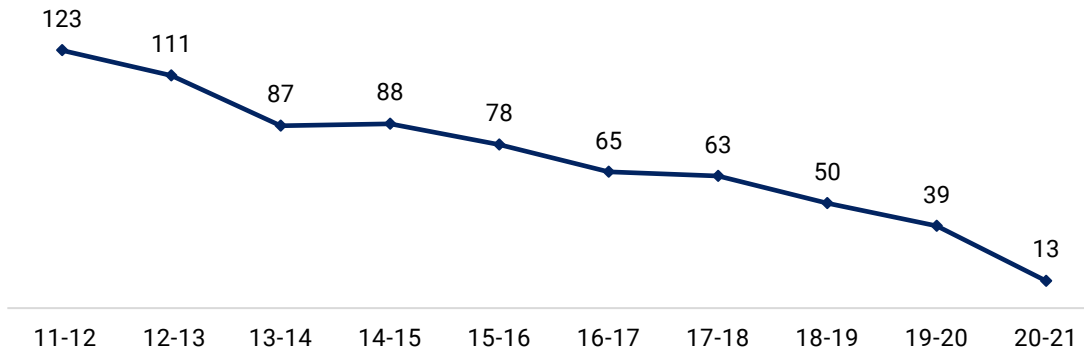
*FY 2020-21 Youths Arrested for a New Law Violation n=67, Youths with Detentions n=67, Youths with Probation Violations n=3, Completion of Restitution n=0, Completion of Community Service n=1. +*Indicates that no youths were in that category in the fiscal year or data were suppressed due to a sample size below five.*

Program-Specific Outcomes

One of the ASC/INV Unit’s goals is to reduce the number of Juvenile Hall stays by diverting youths away from detention. Between FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21, the average number of youths in Juvenile Hall declined by 67%, from 39 to 13 total youths. Between FY 2011-12 and FY 2020-21, the average daily population decreased by 89% (Figure 3).

Several factors seem to influence this trend, such as a decrease in crime overall, fewer bookings for non-violent and less serious offenses, and adjustments based on COVID-19. Though fewer youths are being served, data collected for the 2020-25 Local Action Plan suggest that the needs of youths who are entering Juvenile Hall are complex and require significant resources and supervision.

Figure 3. Average Daily Population by Fiscal Year Over the Last Decade



Client Story

Each year, staff at JJCPA-funded programs provide a client story to help illustrate the effect of services on their clients. The following is the client story provided by the ASC/INV Unit for FY 2020-21.

Name of Client	Jane Doe
Age and Gender	17, female
Reason for Referral	Jane participated in individual therapy, as requested on her informal contract. She was referred by a DPO to the Youth Outreach Program to fulfill the individual counseling requirement.
Client's Behavior, Affect, and Appearance When They First Started in the Program	She was guarded and apprehensive when referred to our program. However, as time progressed, she became invested in developing treatment goal(s). She also met consistently with a counselor and met treatment goals by the time her contract terminated.
Activity Engagement and Consistency	She was a model student and was involved in a sport after school. She met with the counselor weekly despite her busy schedule. She also participated in community service, both to fulfill her contract and for school requirements.
Client's Behavior, Affect, and Appearance Toward the End of the Program	Jane was confident and was able to self-advocate to fulfill her informal contract. She was also a willing participant to work with a community worker and directly communicated with all those involved in helping her meet contract requirements.
What the Client Learned as a Result of the Program	<p>She learned that consequences are a result of direct choices and behaviors. She also learned to think before she acts in order to avoid future similar challenges.</p> <p>She is continuing to be a good student who is involved in pro-social activities in preparation for college.</p> <p>Jane stated she was thankful for the support she received from all the individuals who helped her meet informal contract requirements.</p>

Appendix A: Case Triage Dispositions

DISPOSITIONS	FY 16-17		FY 17-18		FY 18-19		FY 19-20		FY 20-21	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Mandatory court cases	13	21%	353	42%	410	59%	365	69%	191	75%
Booked into secure custody	247	18%	176	21%	223	32%	192	36%	52	20%
Placed in petty theft program	51	4%	19	2%	12	2%	10	2%	1	<1%
Placed in Juvenile Mediation/Victim Impact Awareness Program	130	10%	38	4%	1	<1%	1	<1%	3	1%
Screened and referred to Traffic Court	86	6%	61	7%	74	11%	44	8%	28	11%
Referred to youth's county of residence	53	4%	72	8%	57	8%	47	9%	18	7%
Youth Outreach Program families served	10	0%	N/A		13	2%	18	3%	14	6%
Criminal background checks	236	17%	243	29%	283	40%	91	17%	86	34%
Alcohol and Other Drug assessment	30	2%	23	3%	22	3%	17	3%	2	1%
Received letter of reprimand	57	4%	15	2%	36	5%	36	7%	25	10%
Juvenile record sealing application evaluated for submission to the Court	88	7%	88	10%	60	9%	54	10%	62	24%
Assessed and placed on diversion contracts	38	3%	35	4%	26	4%	12	2%	9	4%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intervention (90-day contract) 	Data not collected in prior fiscal years		23	3%	17	2%	6	1%	4	2%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Informal diversion (6-month contract) 			12	1%	8	1%	6	1%	5	2%
Total Cases Screened and Managed	1,351		849		700		530		254	