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TECHNICAL  
REPORT

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Los Angeles County  
Juvenile Justice  
Crime Prevention Act

Fiscal Year 2004–2005 Report

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Prepared for the Los Angeles County Probation Department



RAND INFRASTRUCTURE, SAFETY, AND ENVIRONMENT

The research described in this report was conducted within RAND Infrastructure, Safety, and Environment (ISE), a division of the RAND Corporation, for the Los Angeles County Probation Department.

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## SUMMARY

### **THE JUVENILE JUSTICE CRIME PREVENTION ACT**

In 2000, the California State Legislature passed the Schiff-Cardenas Crime Prevention Act, which authorized funding for county juvenile justice programs and designated the Board of Corrections (BOC) the administrator of funding. A 2001 Senate Bill extended the funding and changed the program's name to the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA). This effort was designed to provide a stable funding source for juvenile programs that have been proven effective in curbing crime among at-risk and young offenders.

Administration of the JJCPA program is currently the responsibility of the Corrections Standards Authority (CSA), formed in July 2005 by merging the BOC and the Commission on Correctional Peace Officer Standards and Training (CPOST). The CSA is required to submit annual reports to the California State Legislature measuring the success of JJCPA. The legislation identified six specific outcome measures ("the big six") to be included in annual reports from each of the individual JJCPA programs. These outcome measures are (1) successful completion of probation, (2) arrests, (3) probation violations, (4) incarcerations, (5) successful completion of restitution, and (6) successful completion of community service.<sup>1</sup> Each county can also supply supplemental outcomes to measure locally identified service needs.

### **JJCPA in the Context of Los Angeles County Probation Department Programs**

JJCPA represents one of the major programs administered by the Los Angeles County Probation Department, whose mission is to promote and enhance public safety, ensure victims' rights, and facilitate the positive behavior change of adult and juvenile probationers. In FY04–05, the state allocated just less than \$28 million to Los Angeles County for JJCPA programs and services. This represents roughly one-third of juvenile field expenditures, one-quarter of detention expenditures, and more than one-third of camp expenditures, or almost 10 percent of all juvenile expenditures.

JJCPA programs were designed to complement and leverage other probation resources for at-risk and delinquent youths in the juvenile justice system. The leveraging

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<sup>1</sup> For at-risk youths, only arrests and incarcerations are reported, since the other four measures relate to conditions of probation.

of resources allows the Deputy Probation Officer (DPO) to shape a plan that builds on the strengths of each youth and is uniquely responsive to service needs. In collaboration with school officials, parents, and community partners, JJCPA DPOs are able to coordinate service plans that include various school- and community-based resources.

The Los Angeles County Probation Department submitted program evaluation designs, approved by the BOC, that used quasi-experimental methods. Programs utilized a group of youths with characteristics similar to those of program youths where appropriate, and a pre/post measurement design in instances where no appropriate comparison group could be identified. Generally, outcomes for program participants are measured for a six-month period after starting the program, or after release into the community (for camp and juvenile hall programs). In addition to the “big six,” the Los Angeles County Probation Department, working with the BOC (and later with the CSA), defined supplemental outcomes specific to each program, which are also reported to the CSA on an annual basis.

Some discussion of the “big six” is in order. The CSA does not rank the relative importance of these measures, nor is there any universally accepted relative importance of these measures of recidivism. For its planning purposes, Los Angeles County has ranked these in order, from most important to least important, in the view of Probation Department standards: successful completion of probation, arrests, probation violations, incarcerations, successful completion of restitution, and successful completion of community service. An ideal outcome would be for no program youths to be arrested, incarcerated, or in violation of probation; and for all to complete probation as well as (if applicable) community service and restitution. However, since for most JJCPA programs the “big six” outcomes are only measured for six months after entry into the program,<sup>2</sup> and because most youths’ term of probation runs from 12 to 18 months, in practice a 100 percent completion of probation rate is not a realistic expectation. For all the “big six” measures, the most important metric is whether program youths performed significantly better than comparison youths, not the absolute value of any given outcome. We would also note that because program youths are more closely supervised than youths on routine probation, it would not be surprising to find that program youths show more probation violations than comparison youths.

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<sup>2</sup> For programs based in juvenile hall, the “big six” outcomes are measured for the six months after the youth returns to the community, rather than from program start.

**PROGRAM CHANGES AND ENHANCEMENTS IN FY04–05**

Based in part on program outcome analyses from previous years, recommendations from RAND, and stakeholder input, the Probation Department made several significant enhancements to JJCPA during FY04–05. These enhancements are detailed in Table S.1, which compares JJCPA programs from FY04–05 with those from FY01–04.

**Table S.1  
Programs in the Three JJCPA Initiatives in FY04–05**

FY04–05 Initiative and Programs	FY01–04 Initiative
I. Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative	
Mental Health Screening, Assessment, and Treatment (MH)	Mental Health
Community Treatment Facilities (CTF)	Mental Health
Multisystemic Therapy (MST)	Mental Health
II. Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Need Youth initiative	
Special Needs Court (SNC)	Mental Health
Youth Substance Abuse Intervention (YSA)	School Success
Young Women at Risk (YWAR)	School Success
High-Risk/High-Need (HRHN)	N/A
III. Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services initiative	
Abolish Chronic Truancy (ACT)	School Success
After-School Enrichment and Supervision (PARKS)	School Success
Housing-Based Day Supervision (HB)	School Success
Inside-Out Writers (IOW)	School Success
School-Based Middle School (SBMS) and High School (SBHS) Probation Supervision	School Success

**Training Enhancements**

The focus of this training was to strengthen service delivery through increased collaboration and case management interventions. The trainings included Los Angeles Risk and Resiliency Checkup (LARRC), Strength-Based/Family-Focused Case Management Skills training, and Social Learning Model (SLM) training.

**Program Implementation and Enhancements**

FY04–05 is the first year that substantial program changes were made in response to observed outcomes. In response to program and contract monitoring reviews, family and participant needs, and stakeholders’ feedback, the following JJCPA enhancements were implemented in FY04–05: (1) restructuring of the Gang Intervention, Intensive

Transition, and Gender-Specific programs into the new High-Risk/High-Need (HRHN) program; (2) implementation of family-based interventions; (3) parental skills training; (4) School Safety Collaboratives/Safe Passages program; (5) increased emphasis on skill-building training and activities for JJCPA youths; and (6) Correctional Program Assessment Inventory (CPAI) training of Contract Monitoring staff.

In addition, during this fiscal year, the Probation Department focused on strengthening program fidelity by administering LARRC to all probationers, and utilizing LARRC scores in program placement and offering social learning theory training for JJCPA DPOs to help them align program practices with evidence-based theory.

### **PROGRAMS AND OUTCOMES IN INITIATIVE I: ENHANCED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Before JJCPA, the Los Angeles County Probation Department processed juvenile referrals in a manner similar to most probation departments in California, offering crisis intervention services only. There was no dedicated court to address youths with severe mental health issues, few if any placement options for crossover populations, and no cost-effective family-based community treatment service. These problems were addressed in FY04–05 by three programs within the Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative: Mental Health Screening, Assessment, and Treatment (MH); Community Treatment Facilities (CTF); and Multisystemic Therapy (MST).

#### **Summary of Outcomes for the Enhanced Mental Health Services Initiative**

Overall, JJCPA youths in the mental health initiative showed higher completion of community service rates than youths in the comparison groups. Program youths also had higher school attendance rates, and fewer suspensions and expulsions, in the school term after entering the program than in the term before entering the program. However, program youths had higher arrest rates than comparison youths, more probation violations, and lower completion of restitution rates. Program and comparison youths were very similar in incarceration rates and completion of probation rates.

### **PROGRAMS AND OUTCOMES IN INITIATIVE II: ENHANCED SERVICES TO HIGH-RISK/HIGH-NEED YOUTH**

The High-Risk/High-Need initiative targets youth at the highest risk and those with the highest need in the JJCPA program. Programs and services in this initiative include Special Needs Court (SNC), Youth Substance Abuse Intervention (YSA), the community-based Young Women at Risk (YWAR), and the new High-Risk/High-Need

(HRHN) program. Many of the youths participating in this initiative are gang involved, drug and alcohol users, and low academic performers; have mental health issues and multiple risk/needs factors across multiple domains; and pose a high risk for committing new crimes. Therefore, consistent with juvenile justice research, the initiative targets higher-risk offenders and criminogenic risk/need factors, considers responsivity factors, and employs social learning approaches.

### **Summary of Outcomes for the Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Need Youth Initiative**

Overall, program youths in the Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Need Youth initiative had lower arrest and incarceration rates, and higher completion of probation, restitution, and community service rates, than comparison group youths. All of these differences were statistically significant except for the completion of community service rate, which was not statistically testable because of small sample size. Program youths did, however, also have significantly higher probation violation rates than comparison group youths. Supplemental outcomes were available for only two of the four programs in this initiative, but these were significantly improved in the six months after entering the program, as compared with six months before entering the program. The HRHN program was initiated too late in the fiscal year to report outcomes for FY 04-05. Given the makeup of this program, we would expect HRHN youths to show relatively high rates of probation violations

### **PROGRAMS AND OUTCOMES IN INITIATIVE III: ENHANCED SCHOOL- AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES**

The school-based program is at the core of this initiative and has as its main objective the reduction of crime and delinquency in 85 high-risk neighborhoods by targeting school-based probation supervision and services for the population of probationers and at-risk youths in the schools. A secondary goal is enhanced protective factors through improved school performance. The 85 targeted neighborhoods were identified as the most crime-impacted neighborhoods in Los Angeles County on the basis of number of youths on probation at the schools, rate of overall crime, rate of juvenile crime, rate of substance abuse, rate of child abuse and neglect, and number of residents below the poverty level.

Programs and services included in this initiative are School-Based Middle School (SBMS) and High School (SBHS) Probation Supervision for probationers and at-risk

youths; Abolish Chronic Truancy (ACT); After-School Enrichment and Supervision (PARKS); Housing-Based Day Supervision (HB); and Inside-Out Writers (IOW). A total of 22,046 youths received services from programs in the school-based initiative during the JJCPA program's FY03–04.

### **Summary of Outcomes for the Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services Initiative**

Taken as a whole, youths in the Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services initiative showed improvements in the primary program goals of completion of probation, restitution, and community service, as well as a decrease in arrests and incarcerations, although the differences in arrest rates were marginal. In contrast to the other initiatives, youths in the School- and Community-Based Services initiative had marginally lower rates of probation violations than did comparison group youths. For the programs that used educational measures as supplemental outcomes, school attendance improved significantly in the term following program entry, as compared with the previous term, along with significant reductions in school suspensions and expulsions. Other supplemental outcome measures in this initiative were mixed, with some showing significant improvement while others did not.

### **EFFORTS TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF JJCPA PROGRAMS**

RAND conducted site visits in FY04–05 to 11 community-based organizations (CBOs) that provided services for JJCPA participants in order to assess the extent to which these organizations were providing treatment services consistent with “best-practices” principles. Home-based programs were found to be serving only a small fraction of their capacity, and only half reported regular contact with the Probation Department. Programs complained about the low number of referrals received and about poor communication with the Probation Department. Most employment-based programs reported no self-evaluation. Contact between the programs and the Probation Department was generally viewed as irregular, and funding was mostly seen as insufficient. Implementation issues included low referrals, poor communication, inadequate screening before referral, and unmotivated participants.

In addition to RAND's site visits to CBOs, Edward Latessa, a juvenile justice expert from the Center for Criminal Justice Research at the University of Cincinnati, pilot-tested the use of the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory (CPAI) as a tool for measuring how closely JJCPA programs meet known principles of effective

correctional treatment. The pilot test evaluated home-based services of males in the Inter-Agency Drug Abuse Recovery Program (I-ADARP). The CPAI assessment of I-ADARP resulted in an overall program score of 35.5 percent, or “unsatisfactory.” In the coming year, the Probation Department plans to use the CPAI as a tool for auditing fidelity in program design and implementation for all JJCPA programs.

### **JJCPA PER CAPITA COSTS**

A total of 30,933 youths were served in JJCPA in FY04–05, at a total cost of \$30,153,382, or \$975 per participant.<sup>3</sup> As one might expect, some programs had lower per capita costs than others. In general, the larger programs, such as Mental Health Screening, Assessment, and Treatment (MH), had the lowest per capita costs, while the programs that offered more extensive services to a smaller population, such as Special Needs Court (SNC), had higher per capita costs. Table S.2 shows the total budget for each program, the number of youths served in FY04–05, and the cost per program participant. Overall, the cost per youth in the Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative in FY04–05 was \$434, while the Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Need Youth initiative cost \$14,173 per youth served, and the Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services programs spent \$811 per youth.

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<sup>3</sup> The number of youths served in FY04–05 is greater than the number of youths for whom outcome measures were reported to the CSA, because the time frames are different. Because our cost estimates include arrests during the six-month eligibility mandated for “big six” outcomes, the number of program youths will match the number used to report outcomes to the CSA, not the total number served during the fiscal year.

**Table S.2  
FY04–05 Per Capita Costs, by JJCPA Program**

Initiative/Program	Youths Served	Budget	Per capita
MH	14,357	\$5,329,354	\$371
CTF	120	\$643,224	\$5,360
MST	80	\$351,740	\$4,397
Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative	14,557	\$6,324,318	\$434
SNC	83	\$1,119,399	\$13,487
YSA	157	\$1,160,468	\$7,392
YWAR	266	\$2,174,257	\$8,174
Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Need Youth initiative <sup>4</sup>	789	\$4,454,124	\$8,803
SBHS	7,844	\$8,451,438	\$1,077
SBMS	1,817	\$1,272,809	\$701
ACT	3,762	\$227,169	\$60
PARKS	1,371	\$1,076,900	\$785
HB	350	\$1,418,727	\$4,054
IOW	443	\$199,858	\$451
Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services initiative	15,587	\$12,646,901	\$811
All programs <sup>5</sup>	30,933	\$30,153,382	\$975

### Components of Cost

In addition to the costs of delivering JJCPA services in the various programs, there are also other costs incurred by JJCPA participants. These include the cost of supervision for those on probation, the cost of juvenile hall for those who spend time in the halls, the cost of juvenile camp for those assigned to camp, the cost of receiving a technical violation of probation, and the various costs associated with being arrested and going to

<sup>4</sup> Totals for Initiative II do not include those for the HRHN program. In addition to the 283 youths who received services in the HRHN program, the budget allocated to HRHN (\$6,728,039) also paid for an unknown number of participants in other programs that were discontinued during FY04–05, or incorporated into the HRHN program.

<sup>5</sup> In contrast to the Initiative II totals, the total costs for all programs, and the total number of youths served, does include those for HRHN.

court. We have also included, as a “negative” cost, the benefits of increased school attendance for youths in the school-based programs. In our analysis of overall JJCPA costs, we have attempted to estimate each of these costs on a daily basis in order to calculate the actual cost of each individual participant.

It should be emphasized that these are *estimated* costs, based on the best information available at the time of this report. Most involve calculations involving estimates provided by the Probation Department, or from publicly available data. These analyses are not intended to provide exact costs, but to give an indication of approximate trends for each program, and to allow comparisons between program participants in the six months after entering JJCPA programs versus the six months before entering.

### **Total Cost of Programs and Initiatives**

Table S.3 shows the mean total cost per participant in JJCPA programs in FY04–05. Weighted averages are also shown for each initiative. It should be noted that the costs for each initiative are largely driven by the costs of the program or programs in that initiative that serve the most participants. Thus, CTF and MST costs have very little influence on the overall costs of the Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative, since the vast majority of youths served within that initiative are in the MH program.

**Table S.3**  
**Total Juvenile Justice Costs by Initiative**

Initiative/Program	Follow-up	Baseline	Participants
MH	\$12,144	\$7,147	10,504
CTF	\$9,484	\$5,037	66
MST	\$8,027	\$5,165	66
Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative	\$12,102	\$7,122	10,636
SNC	\$26,852	\$19,393	32
SA	\$8,321	\$4,710	204
YWAR	\$5,718	\$0	257
Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Need Youth initiative	\$8,167	\$3,208	493
SBHS-PROB	\$4,338	\$5,018	4,043
SBHS-AR	\$1,004	\$133	490
SBMS-PROB	\$4,260	\$3,589	280
SBMS-AR	\$530	\$19	820
ACT	\$53	\$0	2,202
PARKS	\$945	\$367	730
HB	\$3,738	\$1,262	199
IOW	\$11,115	\$9,252	541
Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services initiative	\$2,925	\$2,891	9,305
All programs	\$7,828	\$5,101	20,434

As we might expect, overall juvenile justice costs for JJCPA participants were generally higher in the follow-up period (\$7,828) than in the baseline period (\$5,101), primarily because six months are not enough time to evaluate the long-term benefits of changes brought about by participating in JJCPA programs. The majority of the JJCPA programs, however, produced substantial average costs savings in arrests, hall, court, and camp costs. If these costs savings were accumulated over a longer period of time they may have offset the substantial investment made in program costs. We are not able to extend the time frame to measure changes, however, because not enough time has elapsed to allow us to obtain data beyond a six-month period. With a longer follow-up

period, the initial program costs may be offset by reductions in subsequent arrests, court appearances, and days spent in halls and camps.

We note also that savings in juvenile justice costs for arrests, camps, and juvenile halls do not take into account potential savings associated with improved family and community relations. Because we have no data on the value of such improvements, we are not able to include these factors in our estimates of cost differences between the baseline and follow-up periods.

It is actually somewhat surprising to note that, driven primarily by cost savings among school-based high school probationers and the low costs of programs targeting at-risk youths, participants in the Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services initiative actually had slightly lower total juvenile justice costs in the follow-up period than in the baseline period. For these programs at least, savings in other areas of juvenile justice were enough to offset the cost of administering the programs, even in the short six-month time frame.

### **Component Cost Savings by Initiative**

For each of the three FY04–05 initiatives, Table S.4 shows the mean net cost for each cost component, i.e., the mean difference between the cost in the six months before entering the program and the six months after entering. As we might expect, there are noticeable differences in mean component costs among the three initiatives. The Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative, which serves only probationers, showed fewer arrest costs, but much higher camp costs, after entering the program than before entering. The Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Need Youth initiative, which targets a large number of at-risk youths, saw the bulk of its expenses in program costs, while costs for arrests, juvenile hall, camp, and court were lower in the six months after entering the program. The Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services initiative, which targets a combination of probationers and at-risk youths, saw increased program and supervision costs, but savings in arrest and court costs after entering the program.

**Table S.4**  
**Mean Cost Savings for FY04–05 Initiatives**

Initiative	Mental Health	High-Risk/High-Need	School-Based
Program	-\$168	-\$5,293	-\$601
Supervision	-\$263	-\$102	-\$305
Arrest	\$599	\$88	\$164
Juvenile hall	-\$646	\$128	-\$11
Camp	-\$4,354	\$100	\$5
Court	-\$152	\$120	\$491

Note: A positive number in this table indicates that mean costs were lower in the six months after beginning the program than in the six months before beginning. A negative number indicates that costs were higher after entering the program than before entering.

#### **LIMITATIONS OF THIS EVALUATION**

As with any evaluation, there are inherent limitations in our assessment of the JJCPA program in Los Angeles County. As we have noted, no randomized designs were used and we were unable to verify the comparability of comparison groups for some of the programs, so that observed differences between treatment and comparison groups may reflect pretreatment differences between the groups rather than treatment effects of the programs.

This is the fourth year of RAND’s JJCPA evaluation findings. Over the years, the strength and breadth of the evaluation has improved. More-rigorous comparison groups have been identified for some programs, and the overall quality of outcome data has continued to improve. This is the first year we have added cost comparisons to our report. Work by the Probation Department to enhance and improve the quality of program delivery continues through the newly established concentration on social learning, family orientation, and auditing the implementation of programs using the principles of the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory (CPAI).