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REPORT

Los Angeles County Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act

Fiscal Year 2008–2009 Report

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Prepared 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 California 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.

JJCPA provided funds to counties to add evidence-based programs and services for

- juvenile probationers identified with higher needs for special services than those received by routine probationers
- at-risk youth who have not entered the probation system but who live or attend school in areas of high crime or who have other factors that potentially predispose them to criminal activities
- youth in juvenile halls and camps.

Each juvenile is assigned to one or more JJCPA programs according to an assessment of the individual's need for services.

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 Peace Officer Standards and Training (CPOST). 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. 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 is one of the major vehicles to provide services to juveniles. JJCPA programs are administered by the Los Angeles County Probation Department (hereafter called the Probation Department or, simply, Probation), whose mission is to promote and enhance public safety, ensure victims' rights, and facilitate the positive behavior change of adult and juvenile pro-

bationers. In fiscal year (FY) 2008–2009, the state allocated approximately \$31.5 million to Los Angeles County for JJCPA programs and services.¹ 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 are grounded in social-ecological research. The central tenet of this approach is that behavior is multidetermined through the reciprocal interplay of the youth and his or her social ecology, including the family, peers, school, neighborhood, and other community settings. The primary goal of JJCPA programs is to optimize the probability of decreasing crime-producing risk factors and increasing protective factors, with the capacity to intervene comprehensively at the individual, family, peer, and school levels, and possibly the community level as well. The use of JJCPA and other 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 to BOC that used quasi-experimental methods. These designs were subsequently approved by BOC. Programs included a group of youth—either routine probationers, probationers in non-JJCPA programs, or at-risk youth receiving Probation services—with characteristics similar to those of program youth where appropriate, and a pre/post measurement design in instances in which no appropriate comparison group could be identified. Generally, outcomes for program participants are measured for a six-month period after starting the program (for community programs) or after release into the community (for camp and juvenile-hall programs). In addition to the big six, the Probation Department, working with BOC (and later with CSA), defined supplemental outcomes specific to each program, which are also reported to CSA annually.

Some discussion of the big six is in order. 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 youth to be arrested, be incarcerated, or be in violation of probation and for all to complete probation and (if applicable) community service and restitution. However, since, for most JJCPA programs, the big six outcomes are measured only for six months after entry into the program² and because most youths' terms of probation last 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 youth performed significantly better than comparison youth, not the absolute value of any given outcome.

¹ Because of California's fiscal crisis, Los Angeles County actually received only about \$25 million from the state for JJCPA funding. The county contributed the remainder, to bring the total funding to approximately \$31.5 million.

² For programs based in juvenile camps, the big six outcomes are measured for the six months after the youth returns to the community, rather than from program start.

Youth Involved in JJCPA Programs in FY 2008–2009

Overall, in FY 2008–2009, 39,458 youth received JJCPA services in Los Angeles County. Of these, 17,089 (43.3 percent) were at risk and 22,369 (56.7 percent) were on probation. Youth in one or more JJCPA programs receive services, often provided under contract by community-based organizations (CBOs), as well as supervision by a probation officer.

Los Angeles County JJCPA programs are organized into three initiatives—Enhanced Mental Health Services, Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Need Youth, and Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services. Table S.1 lists the JJCPA programs in each initiative in FY 2008–2009 and the number of participants who received services in each pro-

Table S.1
Programs in the Three JJCPA FY 2008–2009 Initiatives and Number of Youth Who Received Services

Initiative and Programs	Abbreviation	Participants
I. Enhanced Mental Health Services		
Mental Health Screening, Treatment, and Assessment ^a	MH	10,925
Multisystemic Therapy	MST	147
II. Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Need Youth		
Special Needs Court	SNC	61
Youth Substance Abuse Intervention	YSA	422
Gender-Specific Community (including Young Women at Risk)	GSCOMM (including YWAR)	1,033
High-Risk/High-Need	HRHN	1,566
III. Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services		
School-Based Probation Supervision for Middle-School and High-School Probationers and At-Risk Youth	SBHS-PROB	5,820
	SBMS-PROB	293
	SBHS-AR	984
	SBMS-AR	1,188
Abolish Chronic Truancy	ACT	12,990
After-School Enrichment and Supervision	PARKS	987
Housing-Based Day Supervision	HB	202
Inside-Out Writers	IOW	2,840
Total		39,458

NOTE: The number of participants in a given program is determined by who received services during the fiscal year, which goes from July 1, 2008, through June 30, 2009. To allow a six-month eligibility period for recidivism, however, the number for which outcomes are reported uses a reference period of January 1, 2008, through December 31, 2008. The people whose outcomes can be reported during the fiscal year have to enter the program in time to have six months before the end of the fiscal year, so the number of participants will not match the number for whom outcomes are reported.

^a The number of participants is based on the number screened for potential mental problems, which is everyone who enters a juvenile hall. But outcomes are reported only for those who actually receive services, which is typically 20–30 percent of those screened.

gram. Table S.2 shows the number of youth in each program for whom big six outcomes were reported, the comparison group used for the program, and the number of youth in the comparison group.³

Changes in Comparison Groups

Prior to FY 2007–2008, historical comparison groups had been used for SBMS-AR, SBHS-AR, MH, and HRHN. The comparison groups for MH, SBMS-AR, and SBHS-AR dated to 2000, while the HRHN comparison group came from 2003. By FY 2007–2008, there was simply too much elapsed time to consider these historical groups comparable to the current JJCPA participants, so it was decided to compare the current year’s participants to those in the same program the previous year. The goal of this comparison was that this year’s participants do at least as well as the previous year’s participants in JJCPA-measured outcomes. Beginning in FY 2008–2009, a similar approach was adopted for YSA, GSCOMM, and IOW, with the previous year’s cohort serving as the comparison group for the current program participants.

Outcomes

The CSA-mandated big six outcomes generally showed a somewhat different pattern in FY 2008–2009 than in previous fiscal years. JJCPA participants in the Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative were less likely than comparison-group youth to successfully complete probation and community service and had a higher rate of arrest. They did, however, also have a lower rate of probation violations. Youth in the Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Need Youth initiative had significantly fewer incarcerations than comparison-group youth but lower rates of successful completion of probation, restitution, and community service. Program youth in the Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services initiative showed significantly better outcomes than comparison-group youth in all big six outcomes. Unlike previous years, participants in six of the nine JJCPA programs targeted at probationers showed lower probation-violation rates than comparison-group youth. In programs that used a pre/post design (ACT, PARKS, and HB), JJCPA youth tended to show fewer arrests and fewer incarcerations after program entry than before program entry or to have rates not significantly different between the two periods.

Programs with contemporaneous comparison groups showed mixed results. SBHS-PROB program youth had significantly better outcomes than comparison-group youth in all of the probation-related big six outcomes, but there was no significant difference between the two groups in arrest and incarceration rates. SBMS-PROB youth showed a lower rate of probation violations than comparison-group youth, but differences in the other big six outcomes were not significantly different for the two groups. The much smaller programs MST and SNC showed no significant difference in big six outcomes from their respective comparison groups.

³ The “near misses” used in comparison groups for MST and SNC were youths with similar characteristics to program youths but who were not accepted into the program, usually because of language barriers or lack of MediCal or other insurance coverage.

Table S.2
Programs in the Three JJCPA FY 2008–2009 Initiatives and Number of Participants for Whom Outcomes Were Reported

Initiative and Programs	Participants	Comparison Group	Comparison-Group Members
I. Enhanced Mental Health Services			
MH	2,325	FY 2007–2008 MH participants	2,060
MST	99	MST-identified near misses	66
II. Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Need Youth			
SNC	36	SNC-identified near misses	66
YSA	227	FY 2007–2008 YSA participants	227
GSCOMM (including YWAR)	934	FY 2007–2008 GSCOMM participants	1,075
HRHN	1,723	FY 2007–2008 HRHN participants	1,269
III. Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services			
SBHS-PROB	3,402	Routine probationers	1,741
SBMS-PROB	188	Routine probationers	169
SBHS-AR	494	FY 2007–2008 SBHS-AR participants	576
SBMS-AR	766	FY 2007–2008 SBMS-AR participants	738
ACT	7,838	Pre/post comparison	
PARKS	883	Pre/post comparison	
HB	121	Pre/post comparison	
IOW	1,502	FY 2007–2008 IOW participants	876

NOTE: “Near misses” for MST and SNC were limited to those with characteristics comparable to those of program participants. Routine probationers used as comparison groups for SBHS-PROB and SBMS-PROB were statistically matched to program participants. Outcomes for MH were reported only for youth who received treatment.

Programs that used historical comparison groups generally did less well than comparison youth, though the differences were not always statistically significant. FY 2008–2009 MH participants had a higher arrest rate than their FY 2007–2008 counterparts, completed probation and community service at a lower rate, and had more probation violations. Differences in incarceration and completion of restitution between the groups were not significant. Arrests and incarcerations were not significantly different for SBHS-AR and SBMS-AR youths versus their FY 2007–2008 counterparts. FY 2008–2009 HRHN participants had significantly lower arrest and incarceration than their FY 2007–2008 counterparts, but they also had significantly lower rates of successful completion of probation, restitution, and community service. YSA big six outcomes were not significantly different for FY 2008–2009 and FY 2007–2008 participants. FY 2008–2009 participants in GSCOMM had fewer arrests and were more likely to successfully complete restitution than their FY 2007–2008 counterparts. Other outcomes were not significantly different for the two years. FY 2008–2009 IOW participants had more arrests, lower rates of successful completion of probation, and more probation violations than their counterparts from the previous fiscal year.

Supplemental outcomes, which varied from program to program, were generally more positive in the reference period after starting the program than in the comparable period before beginning the program. School attendance, in particular, improved markedly for those programs that used attendance as a supplemental outcome measure. For these programs, school suspensions and expulsions were likely to decrease as well. Programs whose supplemental outcomes were not school related also tended to show positive results in the measures used. Measures of risk, strengths, and barriers improved significantly for all four school-based programs. Only YSA, PARKS, and IOW had no significantly improved supplemental outcomes.

Table S.3
Estimated Per Capita Costs, by JJCPA Program, FY 2008–2009

Program/Initiative	Youth Served	Budget (\$)	Per Capita Expenditure (\$)
I. Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative	11,072	5,205,565	470
MH	10,925	4,651,750	426
MST	147	553,815	3,767
II. Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Needs Youth initiative	3,082	10,165,303	3,298
SNC	61	1,385,824	22,718
YSA	422	1,143,734	2,710
GSCOMM (including YWAR)	1,033	1,690,531	1,637
HRHN	1,566	5,945,215	3,796
III. Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services initiative	25,304	16,078,702	635
SBHS-PROB	5,820	8,230,316	1,414
SBHS-AR	984	1,251,512	1,272
SBMS-PROB	293	409,459	1,397
SBMS-AR	1,188	1,598,512	1,346
ACT	12,990	450,813	35
PARKS	987	2,624,090	2,659
HB	202	1,301,482	6,443
IOW	2,840	212,516	75
All programs	39,458	31,449,570	797

NOTE: Total budget for an initiative may not equal the sum of budgets of its component parts due to rounding to the nearest dollar.

JJCPA Per Capita Costs

A total of 39,458 youth were served in Los Angeles County JJCPA programs in FY 2008–2009, at a total cost of \$31,449,570, or \$797 per participant.⁴ As one might expect, some programs had lower per capita costs than others. In general, the larger programs, such as ACT, had lower per capita costs, whereas the programs, such as MST, that offered more-extensive services to a smaller population with higher risks and needs had higher per capita costs. Table S.3 shows the total budget for each program, the number of youth served in FY 2008–2009, and the cost per program participant. Overall, the cost per youth in the Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative in FY 2008–2009 was \$470, whereas the Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Need Youth initiative cost \$3,298 per youth served, and the Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services programs spent \$635 per youth.

Components of Cost

Although Table S.3 shows the costs of delivering JJCPA services in the various programs, other costs are also incurred for 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. In our analysis of overall JJCPA costs, we have attempted to estimate each on a daily basis or unit cost 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 writing. Most involve calculations using estimates provided by Probation or from publicly available data. These analyses are intended not to provide exact costs but to give an indication of approximate trends for each program and to allow comparisons for program participants in the six months after entering JJCPA programs versus the prior six months.

Total Cost of Programs and Initiatives

Table S.4 shows the mean total cost per participant in JJCPA programs in FY 2008–2009. 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, MST costs have very little influence on the overall costs of the Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative, since the vast majority of youth served within that initiative are in the MH program.

As we might expect, overall juvenile-justice costs for JJCPA participants were generally higher in the follow-up period (\$7,417) than in the baseline period (\$5,119), primarily because six months is not a long enough time to evaluate the long-term benefits of changes brought

⁴ The number of youth served in FY 2008–2009 is greater than the number of youth for whom outcome measures were reported to CSA, because the time frames are different. Because the cost estimates in this chapter include arrests during the six-month eligibility mandated for big six outcomes, the number of program youth will match the number used to report outcomes to CSA, not the total number served during the fiscal year.

Table S.4
Mean of the Total Estimated Cost per Participant, by JJCPA Program, FY 2008–2009 (\$)

Program	Baseline			Follow-Up			Participants	Difference
	Mean	95% CI		Mean	95% CI			
I. Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative	9,198	9,036	9,359	14,596	14,371	14,822	9,722	-5,399
MH	9,229	9,067	9,392	14,546	14,319	14,773	9,623	-5,317
MST	6,161	5,062	7,260	19,492	18,271	20,713	99	-13,331
II. Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Need Youth initiative	5,563	5,277	5,848	7,261	6,987	7,535	2,929	-1,698
SNC	17,263	12,185	22,340	12,553	9,727	15,380	36	4,710
YSA	6,145	5,301	6,988	6,812	6,052	7,572	227	-667
GSCOMM (including YWAR)	803	621	986	2,052	1,903	2,201	934	-1,249
HRHN	7,846	7,394	8,298	10,060	9,606	10,514	1,723	-2,214
III. Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services initiative	2,424	2,359	2,489	2,854	2,779	2,929	15,194	-430
SBHS-PROB	6,026	5,841	6,211	5,137	4,940	5,334	3,402	889
SBHS-AR	106	44	168	1,071	918	1,224	494	-965
SBMS-PROB	5,194	4,634	5,754	5,060	4,422	5,698	188	134
SBMS-AR	8	2	15	595	529	661	766	-587
ACT	0			28	28	29	7,838	-28
PARKS	429	271	588	2,675	2,455	2,895	883	-2,246
HB	60	-37	156	4,522	4,386	4,658	121	-4,462
IOW	9,924	9,429	10,420	13,864	13,266	14,462	1,502	-3,940
All programs	5,119	5,046	5,192	7,417	7,324	7,511	27,845	-2,298

NOTE: A positive number in the Difference column indicates the estimated amount of program savings, while a negative number indicates that overall costs exceeded savings for the program. CI indicates a 95-percent confidence interval.

about by participating in JJCPA programs. The majority of the JJCPA programs, however, produced substantial average cost savings in arrests and court costs. If these cost savings were accumulated over a longer period of time, they might 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 and court appearances.

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 participants in the Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services initiative had only slightly higher total juvenile-justice costs in the follow-up period than in the baseline period. This finding is driven primarily by cost savings among youth in high school-based and middle school-based probation programs and the low costs of programs targeting at-risk youth.

Component Cost Savings, by Initiative

For each of the three FY 2008–2009 initiatives, Table S.5 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. The Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative, which serves only probationers, showed fewer arrest costs but much higher camp and juvenile-hall 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 youth, saw the bulk of its expenses in program costs, whereas 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

Table S.5
Mean Net Costs for Initiatives, FY 2008–2009 (\$)

Component	Enhanced Mental Health Services	Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Need Youth	Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services
Program	-592	-2,759	-537
Supervision	-297	-51	-216
Arrest	1,061	43	174
Juvenile hall	-2,209	239	-203
Camp	-3,453	366	-236
Court	92	457	473
Total	-5,399	-1,698	-430

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. Total costs may include savings resulting from improved school attendance. Because of missing data for some components, total cost may not equal the sum of the component costs.

youth, saw increased program, supervision, juvenile-hall, and camp costs but savings in arrest and court costs after entering the program.

In general, the higher rates of recidivism in higher-cost programs are due to their focus on more-serious juvenile offenders.

Conclusions

As with any evaluation, there are inherent limitations in our assessment of the JJCPA program in Los Angeles County. Quasi-experimental comparison groups are always vulnerable to the criticism that they are somehow not comparable to the program group such that observed differences are not due to the program but rather to differences between the groups. We were unable to verify the comparability of comparison groups for some of the programs, so observed differences between treatment and comparison groups may reflect pretreatment differences between the groups rather than treatment effects of the programs. Over the past two years, use of the previous year's cohort as a comparison group for this year's program participants has strengthened the evaluation design of several JJCPA programs.

Data used to compute outcome measures were extracted from databases maintained by Probation. Near the end of FY 2008–2009, Probation switched to a new database system. In theory, all data from the previous system were imported into the new system. However, we have found this importation to be incomplete. For example, in contrast to previous years, gender and cluster data were unavailable for participants in a majority of JJCPA programs. Data on arrests and dispositions were incomplete and had to be supplemented by data already at RAND from previous years in order to produce a complete set of records.

Through the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC), the Probation Department will work to coordinate and integrate JJCPA strategies, initiatives, programs, and resources into system reforms, gang intervention, and violence-reduction efforts.

Results reflect the continuing collaboration between the evaluators and Probation to modify programs based on the integration of evaluation findings and effective juvenile-justice practices. We still see that the differences in outcomes between program participants and comparison-group youth are relatively small, although county-developed supplemental outcomes tend to be more favorable than state-mandated big six outcomes. Los Angeles County will continue to receive JJCPA funding on an annual basis and will continue to report outcomes to CSA annually.