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REPORT

Los Angeles County Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act

Fiscal Year 2009–2010 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 proba-

tioners. In fiscal year (FY) 2009–2010, the state allocated approximately $25 million to Los Angeles County for JJCPA programs and services; the county actually received only about $21 million.[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, because, for most JJCPA programs, the big six outcomes are measured only for six months after entry into the program[2] 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.

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[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 2009–2010

Overall, in FY 2009–2010, 38,375 youth received JJCPA services in Los Angeles County. Of these, 16,013 (41.7 percent) were at risk and 22,362 (58.3 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 2009–2010 and the number of participants who received services in each program. 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.

Table S.1
Programs in the Three JJCPA FY 2009–2010 Initiatives and Number of Youth Who Received Services

Initiative and Programs	Abbreviation	Participants
I. Enhanced Mental Health Services		
Mental Health Screening, Assessment, and Treatment	MH	10,987
Special Needs Court	SNC	91
Multisystemic Therapy	MST	154
II. Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Need Youth		
Youth Substance Abuse Intervention	YSA	545
Gender-Specific Community (including Young Women at Risk)	GSCOMM (including YWAR)	883
High Risk/High Need	HRHN	1,494
III. Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services		
School-Based Probation Supervision for Probationers and At-Risk Youth	SBHS-PROB SBMS-PROB SBHS-AR SBMS-AR	6,443 213 1,316 1,285
Abolish Chronic Truancy	ACT	11,764
After-School Enrichment and Supervision	PARKS	703
Housing-Based Day Supervision	HB	250
Inside-Out Writers	IOW	2,247
Total		38,375

NOTE: The number of participants in a given program is determined by who received services during the fiscal year, which goes from July 1, 2009, through June 30, 2010. To allow a six-month eligibility period for recidivism, however, the number for which outcomes are reported uses a reference period of January 1, 2009, through December 31, 2009. 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.

Table S.2
Programs in the Three JJCPA FY 2009–2010 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	2,306	FY 2008–2009 MH participants	2,325
SNC	50	SNC-identified near misses	59
MST	132	MST-identified near misses	46
II. Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Need Youth			
YSA	340	FY 2008–2009 YSA participants	227
GSCOMM (including YWAR)	894	FY 2008–2009 GSCOMM participants	934
HRHN	950	FY 2008–2009 HRHN participants	1,723
III. Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services			
SBHS-PROB	4,124	Routine probationers	3,435
SBMS-PROB	134	Routine probationers	170
SBHS-AR	768	FY 2008–2009 SBHS-AR participants	494
SBMS-AR	838	FY 2008–2009 SBMS-AR participants	766
ACT	6,320	Pre/post comparison	—
PARKS	577	Pre/post comparison	—
HB	137	Pre/post comparison	—
IOW	1,125	FY 2008–2009 IOW participants	1,502

NOTE: 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 that was needed to cover the cost of program participation. 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.

Changes in Comparison Groups

Prior to FY 2008–2009, 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 2008–2009, 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 with those in the same program the previous year. The goal of this comparison was to determine whether this year's participants did at least as well as last year's—the hope and expectation for JJCPA programs. Beginning in FY 2009–2010, 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

Because youth in the MH program represent almost 93 percent of all youth in the Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative, the results for the initiative as a whole will necessarily be virtually identical to those for the MH program. JJCPA youth in the Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative had significantly lower rates of arrest, incarceration, and probation violation, and completed probation at a significantly higher rate. Comparison-group youth were significantly more likely to complete restitution. The two groups were not significantly different in rates of completion of community service. Supplemental outcomes for all three programs in the Enhanced Mental Health Initiative that qualified for statistical testing were significantly improved in the six months after program entry compared with the six months before entering the program.

Overall, program youth in the Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Need Youth initiative had higher rates of completion of probation but lower rates of completion of restitution than comparison-group youth. Differences between the two groups in rates of arrest, incarceration, completion of community service, and probation violations were not statistically significant. The relevant supplemental outcomes for GSCOMM and HRHN participants were significantly improved in the six months after entering the program compared with the six months before entering.

Youth in the Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services initiative had significantly better outcomes on all of the big six measures than the baseline period or comparison group had. For the programs that used educational measures as supplemental outcomes, school attendance improved significantly in the term following program entry over that of the previous term, and there were significant reductions in school suspensions and expulsions. All other supplemental outcomes that had enough successful outcomes to allow statistical testing showed significant improvement.

Regardless of initiative, programs with contemporaneous comparison—MST, SNC, SBHS-PROB, and SBMS-PROB—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.

Youth in programs that used historical comparison groups—MH, YSA, GSCOMM (including YWAR), HRHN, SBHS-AR, SBMS-AR, and IOW—generally did less well than comparison youth, though the differences were not always statistically significant. FY 2009–2010 MH participants had a higher arrest rate than their FY 2008–2009 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 2008–2009 counterparts. FY 2009–2010 HRHN participants had significantly lower arrest and incarceration rates than their FY 2008–2009 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 2009–2010 and FY 2008–2009 participants. FY 2009–2010 participants in GSCOMM had fewer arrests

and were more likely to successfully complete restitution than their FY 2008–2009 counterparts were. Other outcomes were not significantly different for the two years. FY 2009–2010 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.

Difference in Differences Analyses

When using the previous year's program participants as a comparison group for the current year's program youth, there is an implicit assumption that the two groups have comparable characteristics at the time they enter the program. However, because of changes in program acceptance criteria, policing practices, changing juvenile crime rates, and other factors, this assumption might not be correct from year to year. We have therefore added a difference in differences analysis for each JJCPA program that uses the previous year's cohort as a comparison group. A difference in differences analysis basically isolates the effect of the *change* in the current year's cohort relative to the *change* in the previous year's cohort, when comparing outcomes before and after JJCPA program entry. If the two cohorts have different baseline risk profiles, this method will control for such differences.

Out of 34 total outcomes (six outcomes in each of five programs, plus two outcomes for SBHS-AR and two for SBMS-AR), a difference in differences analysis came to a different conclusion from that of a simple comparison of the two cohorts in nine outcomes. This was most pronounced in MH, in which a simple comparison of rates of incarceration, completion of probation, and violations showed the FY 2009–2010 cohort with more favorable outcomes, whereas a difference in differences analysis indicated that the FY 2008–2009 cohort had more favorable outcomes for completion of probation and violations and no differences in the two groups in incarceration rates. We also saw a reversal in violations in the HRHN program, in which a simple comparison showed no difference between the groups but a difference in differences analysis indicated that the FY 2008–2009 cohort had fewer violations.

Overall, in almost 75 percent of the comparisons, the difference in differences analysis confirmed the results of the simple comparisons that are required for CSA-reported outcomes. The difference in differences analyses pointed to opposite conclusions almost exclusively with large sample cohorts. In four of the nine instances in which the difference in differences analysis pointed to a different conclusion from that of a simple comparison of outcomes, the difference in differences analysis showed a more positive result for the current year's cohort. In the other five instances, the difference in differences analysis showed a less positive outcome than was indicated by a simple comparison.

JJCPA Per Capita Costs

A total of 38,375 youth were served in Los Angeles County JJCPA programs in FY 2009–2010, at a total cost of $21,028,776, or $548 per participant.[3] 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 that, like MST, 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 2009–2010, and the cost per program participant. Overall, the cost per youth in the Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative in FY 2009–2010 was $490, whereas the Enhanced Services to High-Risk/

Table S.3
Estimated Per Capita Costs, by JJCPA Program, FY 2009–2010

Program/Initiative	Youth Served	Budget ($)	Per Capita Expenditure ($)
Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative	11,232	5,509,184	490
MH	10,987	3,886,675	354
SNC	91	1,154,337	12,685
MST	154	468,172	3,040
Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Needs Youth initiative	2,922	4,640,167	1,588
YSA	545	952,565	1,748
GSCOMM (including YWAR)	883	764,737	866
HRHN	1,494	2,922,865	1,956
Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services initiative	24,221	10,879,425	449
SBHS-PROB	6,443	5,963,704	926
SBHS-AR	1,316	1,077,570	819
SBMS-PROB	213	194,494	913
SBMS-AR	1,285	1,233,754	960
ACT	11,764	375,464	32
PARKS	703	1,201,985	1,710
HB	250	633,441	2,534
IOW	2,247	199,013	89
All programs	38,375	21,028,776	548

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

[3] The number of youth served in FY 2009–2010 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 period 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.

High-Need Youth initiative cost $1,588 per youth served, and the Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services programs spent $449 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, and the various costs associated with being arrested. In our analysis of overall JJCPA costs, we have attempted to estimate each such cost 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 2009–2010. Weighted averages are also shown for each initiative. It should be noted that the costs for each initiative are driven largely 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 because 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 ($6,800) than in the baseline period ($4,360), primarily because six months is not a long enough time to evaluate the long-term benefits of changes brought about by participating in JJCPA programs. Although not shown in Table S.4, the majority of 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 might 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.

Component Cost Savings, by Initiative

For each of the three FY 2009–2010 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

Table S.4
Mean of the Total Estimated Cost per Participant, by JJCPA Program, FY 2009–2010 ($)

	Baseline		Follow-Up			
Program	Mean	95% CI	Mean	95% CI	Participants	Difference
Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative	6,735	6,583–6,887	13,118	12,895–13,340	10,271	–6,382
MH	6,707	6,554–6,860	13,145	12,919–13,371	10,089	–6,438
SNC	15,832	11,893–19,770	19,679	16,352–23,005	50	–3,847
MST	5,451	4,496–6,405	8,538	7,563–9,513	132	–3,087
Enhanced Services to High-Risk/High-Need Youth initiative	5,778	5,451–6,105	5,696	5,419–5,972	2,186	82
YSA	6,790	5,936–7,644	5,558	4,919–6,196	340	1,232
YWAR and GSCOMM	949	758–1,140	1,560	1,406–1,714	896	–611
HRHN	9,970	9,305–10,635	9,645	9,025–10,265	950	325
Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services initiative	2,399	2,325–2,474	2,344	2,269–2,419	14,023	55
SBHS-PROB	4,858	4,680–5,037	3,326	3,178–3,474	4,124	1,532
SBHS-AR	107	58–155	476	409–543	768	–369
SBMS-PROB	4,172	3,567–4,777	2,660	1,911–3,409	134	1,512
SBMS-AR	15	6–25	417	337–497	838	–402
ACT	21	11–30	60	46–74	6,320	–39
PARKS	845	587–1,104	1,950	1,697–2,203	577	–1,105
HB	703	245–1,162	1,935	1,798–2,072	137	–1,232
IOW	10,882	10,243–11,520	14,501	13,766–15,236	1,125	–3,619
All programs	4,360	4,284–4,436	6,800	6,702–6,897	26,480	–2,439

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 = confidence interval. Means and confidence intervals at the initiative level are weighted averages of the individual programs within each initiative.

program and the six months after entering. The Enhanced Mental Health Services initiative, which serves only probationers, showed lower 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 youth, saw

Table S.5
Mean Net Costs for Initiatives, FY 2009–2010 ($)

Component	Enhanced Mental Health Services	Enhanced Services to High-Risk/ High-Need Youth	Enhanced School- and Community-Based Services
Program	–495	–1,603	–405
Supervision	–336	–74	–250
Arrest	365	77	153
Juvenile hall	–2,910	102	–197
Camp	–3,894	833	–110
Court	886	745	633
Total	–6,382	82	55

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

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

Conclusions

As with any evaluation, there are inherent limitations in our assessment of the JJCPA program in Los Angeles County. Methods using 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 might 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 2009–2010, Probation switched to a new database system. All data from the previous system were supposed to be 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, the Probation Department will work to coordinate and integrate JJCPA strategies, initiatives, programs, and resources into the aforementioned system reforms, gang interventions, 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. School attendance, in particular, improved markedly for those programs that used attendance as a supplemental outcome measure. Programs whose supplemental outcomes were not school related also tended to show positive results in the measures used.

Los Angeles County will continue to receive JJCPA funding on an annual basis and will continue to report outcomes to CSA annually.