Juvenile Detention in Cook County: Future Directions

Prepared for
Office of the Chief Judge, Circuit Court of Cook County

With support from
The Jane Addams Juvenile Court Foundation

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The National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD)

NCCD is a private, nonprofit research and consulting agency specializing in adult criminal justice, child welfare, and juvenile justice issues. NCCD’s mission is to promote just and equitable social systems for individuals, families, and communities through research, public policy, and practice. As the nation’s oldest criminal justice research agency, NCCD has been at the forefront of innovative research and policy development in adult corrections and juvenile court-related services since 1907. Learn more about our work at www.nccd-crc.org.

NCCD has conducted numerous justice system and child welfare evaluation studies, both single-site and multiple-site. With a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, NCCD evaluated the national Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative. NCCD conducted detention utilization studies in five of the nation's largest detention systems: New York City, Cook County, Sacramento, Multnomah County (Portland), and Milwaukee. This initiative was designed to demonstrate that jurisdictions can establish more efficient and effective systems to accomplish the purposes of secure juvenile detention. NCCD analyzed local detention trends and utilization patterns; developed forecasts of future bed needs; measured the impacts of proposed changes to policies and procedures on bed requirements; and assisted in the development and testing of risk screening criteria.

The Jane Addams Juvenile Court Foundation

The Jane Addams Juvenile Court Foundation is an independent not-for-profit corporation dedicated to fostering a shared commitment among the civic, business, philanthropic and social service communities to guide troubled children and families in Cook County toward stable, productive, safe and healthy lives while at the same time protecting the interests of all citizens.

Given the pivotal role of the juvenile court in advancing this mission, JAJCF is committed to working closely with the Cook County Juvenile Court and all its varied stakeholders to advance innovation and to further the role of the Juvenile Court of Cook County as a model for the administration of compassionate and effective justice for children, families and communities nationwide.
A message from the Jane Addams Juvenile Court Foundation

A New Vision for Youth Detention in Cook County

In 1899, Cook County set a new standard of justice for children when it established the first juvenile court in the world, and our Court continues to demonstrate a commitment to innovation. In one area, however, we have struggled in recent years. After years of overcrowded conditions at the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (JTDC), the American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit in 1999 that exposed alarming abuse and unsafe conditions at the facility. Under the scrutiny of the federal courts, substantial changes are now underway at the JTDC. Nonetheless, myriad voices still clamor for additional change at the JTDC and debate the specifics of those changes. We believe that it is time instead for Cook County to once again set a new standard—this time with a new vision for youth detention.

Toward this end, the Jane Addams Juvenile Court Foundation (JAJCF) has commissioned a study, on behalf of the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court, by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD). This study looks beyond the challenges of this specific facility to examine de novo the detention needs of our county and its youth. Without doubt, the decision to deny a child his liberty is an awesome one, and not without risk. Time in detention disrupts often-precarious ties to school, exposes youth to others with delinquent histories, and can actually increase the likelihood of reoffending for many young people, especially those who are at lower risk of reoffending. If we are to effectively protect the safety of our communities, it is critical that we detain only those youth who threaten that safety.

Consistent with the recommendations of NCCD, we believe that even after appropriate reforms are implemented, the JTDC will have at best limited capacity to meet the complex needs of youth being detained in Cook County. We, with NCCD, instead offer a new vision, one that rests on the conviction that secure detention must be one element of a cohesive juvenile justice system that includes efficient case processing, a range of alternatives to avoid unnecessary confinement, and equity for children of all races and ethnicities.

This vision for youth detention in Cook County, as summarized in the NCCD report, seeks to maximize community safety and the health and well-being of our youth and families by:

- reserving secure detention for only those youth who present a real threat to the safety of the community;
- providing youth who must be detained with meaningful assessment, case management, and programming;
- detaining youth in small, safe, community-based facilities consistent with best practice; and
- ensuring that decision making is guided by timely, accurate information about the youth and all aspects of the juvenile justice system.

Cook County has made impressive progress in many areas related to juvenile justice in the last two decades—through the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, restorative justice efforts, a network of court improvement committees, and significant increases in court diversion. JAJCF hopes that this report can inform a vital discussion on the future of juvenile detention in Cook County to ensure the county’s continued role as a standard-bearer for its next century of service to the children, families, and communities it serves.

Respectfully submitted,

Duane C. Quaini, Esq., Chair
The Jane Addams Juvenile Court Foundation

Sheila M. Merry, Executive Director
The Jane Addams Juvenile Court Foundation
Acknowledgments

We want to thank the Honorable Timothy C. Evans for his valuable support and guidance and Earl Dunlap and Mike Rohan for providing full access to both staff and data systems, including allowing their staff to spend a great deal of time with us, providing invaluable data, and assisting with analysis from different data sources. We also wish to thank Sheila Merry for her substantial support in producing this report and Anne Clary for her thoughtful editing.

In addition to the individuals mentioned above, the NCCD would like to thank the following individuals for their time and for sharing their views, insight, and information regarding both current circumstances and future needs of the Cook County juvenile justice system: Teresa Abreu, John Bentley, Tom Bilyk, Dr. Beverly Butler, Betsy Clark, Willie Fullilove, Dr. Ted Garlewski, Tom Geraghty, the Honorable Curtis Heaston, William Kern, Millicent Lewis-McCoy, Wayne Liddell, Bart Lubow, Darrien McKinney, Sheila Merry, Debra Mitchell-Wright, Dr. David Olson, Mike Palowski, Brenda Welch, and Ben Wolfe. It was a pleasure working with everyone involved in the juvenile justice system in Cook County. All errors and omissions are NCCD’s responsibility.

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Executive Summary

Cook County has a long and proud tradition of progressive practice in juvenile justice—not only with the advent of the first juvenile court but as a national leader through the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative. The last two decades, however, have brought intense scrutiny in the area of juvenile detention culminating in a lawsuit by the American Civil Liberties Union alleging a range of violations including overcrowding, unsafe and unsanitary conditions, and regular exposure to violence and abuse. With the intervention of the federal courts, substantial progress has been made to date and additional improvements are planned or underway. Nonetheless, substantial concern continues that such reforms cannot fully resolve the challenges presented by the existing facility.

In the belief that it is time for Cook County to once again set a new standard—this time for youth detention—the Jane Addams Juvenile Court Foundation (JAJCF), on behalf of the Chief Judge of Cook County, has commissioned the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) to conduct this study of youth detention in Cook County. This study looks beyond the challenges of the current facility to examine more fundamentally the detention needs of the county and its youth. The ultimate goal of the study is to guide discussion regarding a new vision for detention in Cook County—a vision that holds to the ideals that informed the creation of the court in 1899 while recognizing the current circumstances in which the court operates.

After careful assessment and discussion with experts within the County, it is the opinion of NCCD that, even after appropriate reforms are implemented, the current Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (JTDC) will have at best limited capacity to meet the complex needs of youth being detained in Cook County. Working with JAJCF, NCCD instead offers the following vision for detention in Cook County, one that rests on the conviction that secure detention must be one element of a cohesive juvenile justice system that includes efficient case processing, a range of alternatives to avoid unnecessary confinement, and equity for children of all races and ethnicities.

Cook County should maximize community safety and the health and well-being of its youth and families by:

- reserving secure detention for only those youth who present a real threat to the safety of the community;
- providing youth who must be detained with meaningful assessment, case management, and programming;
- detaining youth in small, safe, community-based facilities consistent with best practice; and
- ensuring that decision making is guided by timely, accurate information about the youth and all aspects of the juvenile justice system.

Following is a brief summary of some of the findings of this study and specific recommendations for the future of detention in Cook County.
Key Findings

Any recommendations regarding detention practice must be guided by the size and characteristics of the population currently referred to detention and the factors that drive those referrals. The following are key findings related to the current detention population and practice:

- As recently as 1998, the population of youth in detention on any given day numbered more than 600; today that figure is closer to 300. Many youth who previously would have been detained are now referred to an array of alternative programs designed to provide needed services and structure for youth.

- Although nearly 44% of all admissions are released within 7 days, youth who face adult charges (known as ATs or automatic transfer cases) may remain in detention for a year or longer. Violent offenses, sexual offenses, and other assaults together comprised less than 40% of all charges. Another 10.5% of those admitted to detention faced charges for drug offenses. Notably, 51.5% of admitted youth were charged with property offenses or statutory violations. The latter group includes youth who failed to appear in court (FTAs), probation violators, and other youth admitted without a new charge filed. Many of these youth would be candidates for alternatives to detention. The disparity in length of stay has significant implications for programming at the detention center.

- About 4% of all admissions to detention in 2009 were 13 or younger. Over half of youth under 13 admitted in 2009 and 2010 faced charges for property offenses, drug offenses, or statutory violations. Targeting these youth for intensive treatment and intervention could avert future offending.

- In 2009, 9.7% of admissions were female. Although girls generally represent much lower risk to the community, they have disproportionately higher use of mental health services—a challenge to any detention facility—than their male counterparts.

- African American youth in Cook County are arrested at 5 times the rate of white youth and detained at 46 times the rate. The high level of disparity in Cook County is due largely to the fact that so few white youth enter detention. White youth account for fewer than 3% of detention admissions in Cook County while African American youth comprise about 83%. Nationally, African American youth comprise 15% of the juvenile population, but 44% of the detention population.

- With careful attention to removing youth from detention who do not represent a threat to community safety, NCCD believes that Cook County’s detention needs could be met with a total capacity of 240 detention beds—a dramatic reduction in the nearly 500 beds of the JTDC.
Recommendations Related to Detention Population and Practice

Secure detention should be used only for youth who represent a threat to the safety of the community or a risk of flight.

- Develop and utilize a risk assessment instrument to identify youth most likely to fail to appear for a court date and those most likely to reoffend prior to sentencing to guide decision-making based on empirical data on Cook County youth.

- Use the information gained from a risk assessment instrument to reduce the number of youth detained on warrants and court holds.

- For youth identified as high-risk to fail to appear, special services should be provided which go beyond the current postcards to include reminder calls and transportation to court when needed.

- For first-time failures to appear, an administrative approach—possibly including a meeting with a probation officer within the court building to develop a plan to ensure the youth appears at the next scheduled hearing—to securing a new court date should be developed.

- Convene judges, particularly those with high detention rates, to identify alternatives to detaining youth, especially those who score as lower-risk based on a formal risk assessment.

- Create small, staff-secure alternatives to secure detention for girls and younger boys.

A thorough analysis of the disproportionate minority confinement (DMC) issue in Cook County is needed. This analysis, based on the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s guidelines, should focus on policies, practices, and programs needed to keep African American youth in the community as has been accomplished for their white peers.

Officials should continue to push to reduce long case-processing times for youth being prosecuted in adult court. The extended stays of transfer cases challenge the capacity of juvenile detention to appropriately meet programming needs.
Recommendations Related to Program Management

Assessment should be substantially expanded—at least for youth likely to be in custody for more than two weeks. Because the detention center houses both short- and long-term residents, a two-phased assessment and case-management process is needed. Educational, vocational, and mental health assessments are critical for youth who remain in detention for longer periods.

Assessment tools should be coordinated system-wide with information shared to provide continuity of care. Appropriate merging of assessment, case-management, and data-reporting capabilities across departments of the juvenile justice system will help create a continuum of care so that goals, objectives, expectations, and accountability are shared at every program level.

Case-management services for youth detained more than three months should mirror those in traditional correctional facilities. Appropriate case management must include comprehensive assessment, appropriate mental health treatment, multi-faceted educational and vocational programming, and regular multi-disciplinary staffing to assess ongoing needs consistent with the expectations of all long-term residential facilities.

Educational programs for short-term detainees should incorporate computerized curricula matched to their current capabilities.

All youth in detention need to be kept consistently active and involved in activities, including, but not limited to, educational programming and recreation.
Recommendations Related to the Physical Plant

The current facility should be replaced with two or more smaller facilities, ideally located around the community, with a total capacity of 240 beds.

- One site should be structured as a longer-term facility dedicated to meeting the needs of youth being tried as adults. These youth remain in detention far longer, and require specialized assessment, case management, and educational and vocational programming.

A comprehensive feasibility study is required to address issues of cost, location, renovation of existing buildings versus new construction, and potential reductions in operating costs that could be realized with state-of-the-art design.

Recommendations Related to Information Management

Cook County should invest in new data technology to allow for timely data to ensure that policies are followed, that practice standards are met, and that youth are receiving the services and supervision required to ensure community safety. Currently, data are captured in at least three separate databases that do not exchange information. Immediate action needs to be taken to provide reliable basic data about the system, though ultimately a longer-term solution will be required.

- On a short-term basis, data mining approaches should be explored to provide the Cook County juvenile justice system with timely, accurate information at all program levels. Current data systems are incapable of providing meaningful, timely data to guide decision-making. Data mining offers an immediate alternative to address this deficit.

- Over the long term, the county must invest in new data technology, perhaps exploring web-based options, to fundamentally redesign its data systems. Such a redesign is critical to allow for timely data to monitor compliance with county policies and practice standards, to ensure that youth are receiving the services and supervision required to ensure community safety, and to evaluate the impact of court intervention. Web-based models could offer a relatively inexpensive alternative.
Introduction and Background

Over the last two decades, secure detention of juveniles in Cook County has been under nearly constant review, culminating in a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the appointment of a transitional administrator charged by the federal court with improving conditions of confinement. Considerable progress has been made to date, and additional improvements are planned or already underway. The Jane Addams Juvenile Court Foundation has asked the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) to step back from the specifics of this controversy and to consider the detention needs of the youth and communities of Cook County.

When the JTDC was opened in 1976, it was considered a state-of-the-art facility that promised better conditions for youth as well as the convenience of being located in the court building. But dramatically increasing rates of juvenile crime, peaking in the mid-1990s, combined with growing public pressure to “get tough” on crime, placed substantial strain on both the judges and facilities of the court. As arrest rates skyrocketed, the JTDC—with a 500-bed capacity—sometimes housed over 800 youth.

At the same time, important reform efforts were underway. Beginning in 1993, Cook County partnered with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to test a new approach to reducing the use of detention for youth accused of nonviolent crimes. The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) employed a number of practices designed to minimize the inappropriate use of detention for less serious offenses. The most critical was a structured, objective screening instrument designed to identify which youth needed to be detained for the protection of the community. The initiative complemented this structured screening instrument with a continuum of less-restrictive alternatives in the community, most of which kept youth at home with their families. This initiative, combined with a substantial decrease in juvenile arrests and additional efforts to increase diversion, resulted in dramatic reductions in the detention population in Cook County. Nonetheless, in 1999, the ACLU filed a class action lawsuit on behalf of youth detained in the JTDC. The suit alleged overcrowding, unsafe and unsanitary conditions, regular exposure to violence, inadequate medical and educational services, overuse of room confinement, and mismanagement. Although a settlement was reached, the ACLU ultimately went back to court requesting additional court action due to limited progress. In 2007, the federal court appointed a Transitional Administrator to oversee implementation of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the ACLU and Cook County for reform of the JTDC. Considerable progress has been made to-date, and additional improvements are planned or already underway.

On behalf of the Chief Judge of Cook County, the Jane Addams Juvenile Court Foundation commissioned this study. It includes analysis of historical detention data and interviews with key stakeholders and advocates, and draws on research, reviews, and best practices of programs in other jurisdictions. Key to this analysis is a recognition that the use of detention is both extremely expensive (about $350 per day in Cook County) and can involve substantial unintended consequences that may actually increase the likelihood of reoffending, especially for youth who are otherwise at low or moderate risk of reoffending.1 We therefore work from the assumption that it is in the best interests of the County to reserve the extremely expensive alternative of detention for only those youth who truly need to be detained.

The goals of this report are to move Cook County beyond a narrow focus on its current Juvenile Temporary Detention Center to a results-oriented approach driven by research on best practice and to provide critical guidance to the County regarding long-term planning for juvenile detention. The study seeks to identify which youth should be detained and, based on this information, to determine what the optimal detention system for Cook County should include. Another important goal is to determine how best to implement improvements to the system, specifying—to the extent possible—the initial steps needed to move the plan forward. This research and the resulting recommendations form the basis for a vision designed to guide further reform—or the re-conceptualization—of the Cook County detention system.

Political realities and budgetary challenges, as well as divergent opinions among those that work with youth and are invested in the court, pose formidable—but not insurmountable—challenges to fundamentally redesigning detention in Cook County. Our aim with this document is not to grapple with each obstacle, but rather to envision the best possible approach to detention. We have separated the body of this report into the following sections: 1) Detention Population and Practice; 2) Program Management; 3) Physical Facility; and 4) Information Systems. In each of these sections, we provide a brief description of the situation as it now exists as well as the changes currently underway. We then turn to opportunities for reform. We conclude each section with specific recommendations for improvement. A summary of all the recommendations offered in the report is included in the final section.

Undeniably, detention in Cook County is in flux. Controversies about the Transitional Administrator’s staffing plan are being arbitrated in federal courts, with the fundamental role of the Transitional Administrator called into question. Nonetheless the JTDC staff, under the guidance of the Transitional Administrator, continues to move forward with a variety of reforms as do the other offices of the court. Federal court orders can be effective in improving systems, but rarely without creating considerable tension within those systems. However, what occurs after the court relinquishes control is, in many ways, far more important than actions taken by the court.

Therefore, it is critical that Cook County develop a clear sense of direction and a comprehensive operations plan for the entire juvenile justice system while the court order is in effect. This could speed the transition and will set the stage for continued system-wide improvement. In light of these ongoing controversies and the fiscal challenges faced by the county and state, there could not be a more critical time to reassess our vision for protecting our communities and meeting the needs of our youth in the most cost-effective and meaningful way possible.

To gather data for this review, NCCD interviewed staff, administrators, and key decision makers involved in juvenile justice in Cook County. In addition, we spoke at length with detention experts from around the country. In total, we interviewed over two dozen people, ranging from the Presiding Judge to staff responsible for day-to-day care of youth in the JTDC. Interviews were augmented with analysis of data from the JTDC and Probation, prior reports on the Cook County juvenile justice system, and data and reports from other U.S. jurisdictions.
Detention Population and Practice

As discussed above, this has been a dynamic and controversial period for youth detention in Cook County. Much change has happened and additional changes are currently underway. Reviewing the current circumstances of detention provides key information regarding how best practice nationally may inform a new vision for detention in Cook County. We begin by examining the population dynamics of youth currently detained in Cook County to explore what that can tell us about the needs for detention in Cook County. We then explore both the current system and a more complete system of program management for detention, including assessment, case management, and programming. Next we consider the appropriate physical facility for detention, reviewing the existing facility and the potential of alternative structures. Finally, we explore the information systems in juvenile justice in Cook County and possible strategies for promoting more informed decision-making. In the concluding section of this report, we lay out a number of concrete recommendations, which—taken together—coalesce into a new vision for juvenile detention in Cook County.

Current Population Dynamics

It is important to understand the size and characteristics of the current population of the JTDC and the factors that drive them if we are to recommend meaningful reforms for the county’s approach to detention. In this section, we look at trends in the number of youth in detention. We look as well at routes to and alternatives to detention that may also impact population size. We review the offenses that bring youth into detention, and the age, gender, and race of the youth. Before moving to specific recommendations, we also discuss the opportunities for reform in relation to warrants and court holds, disproportionate minority confinement, and automatic transfers.

Size of Detention Population

Among the number of areas of progress in Cook County related to detention in the last decade, none is more significant than the reduction in the size of the detention population. As recently as 1998, the population of youth in detention on any given day numbered more than 600; today that figure is closer to 300 (see Figure 1).

While a decline in the numbers of youth in detention might have been predicted given the substantial reductions in juvenile crime since its peak in the mid to late 1990’s, the reduced crime rate does not entirely account for the reduced population of the JTDC. Referring to Figure 2, in 1998, 75% of cases referred to court resulted in a petition being filed, whereas in 2010 only 37% resulted in a filed petition. This suggests a clear commitment in Cook County to diversion from court processing. Additionally, while the numbers of petitions filed in 2000–2001 mirrors the number filed in 2009–2010, the average daily detention population dropped from 478 in 2000 to 325 in 2010, a 33% decline. Cook County is clearly also demonstrating a commitment to reducing the numbers of youth detained.

A key element of this continued decline has been Cook County’s participation in the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI), which began in the mid-1990s. This
initiative is designed to ensure that the same criteria are applied to each young person brought to detention following arrest in order to determine whether or not secure confinement is necessary. It features a structured screening instrument (see Appendix A), which assigns points based on such factors as the severity of the offense and the past criminal history of the youth. Many youth who previously would have been detained are now referred to an array of alternative programs designed to provide needed services and structure for youth. Table 1 on page 13 outlines these programs, ranging from the least to the most restrictive, using program enrollment data from April, 2010. Notably, most of these programs operate at 60–70% of capacity, which suggests that more youth could be accommodated if alternatives to detention are appropriate.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Court Notification</th>
<th>Community Outreach Supervision</th>
<th>Home Confinement</th>
<th>Evening Reporting Center</th>
<th>S.W.A.P.</th>
<th>Electronic Monitoring</th>
<th>Staff-secure Shelter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written notice and telephoned reminders to all minor respondent households in advance of every court hearing during the pre-adjudication stage of proceedings.</td>
<td>Court-ordered conditional release from secure detention. Evening and weekend supervision by probation officers for up to 45 days. Capacity: 32</td>
<td>Court-ordered conditional release from secure detention. Evening and weekend supervision by probation officers for up to 45 days. Capacity: 180</td>
<td>Court-ordered sheriff-supervised work program in lieu of comparable dispositional term in the JTDC for up to 31 days. Daily Site Capacity: 100 Program Enrollment: 70</td>
<td>Court-identified minors released from secure detention under special order of electronic monitoring. Probation officers engage and supervise in collaboration with the Sheriff's Department. Violations result in expedited judicial review of custodial status; 5 to 21 days. Capacity: 200</td>
<td>Non-secure detention alternative for minors who are (1) diverted from police or JTDC custody by detention screening officers because of parent/guardian unavailability; or (2) qualified JTDC minors within 30 days of being placed in a long-term non-secure setting as directed by the court. Capacity: 20 boys, 14 girls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Daily Notices:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-adjudication:52 Post adjudication: 40 Total: 92 Serviced to Date:</td>
<td>Pre-adjudication: 21,788 Post-adjudication: 10,752 Total: 32,540 Average Daily Population: 98</td>
<td>Successful Completion Rate (current month): 67%</td>
<td>Present Enrollment: 142 Serviced to Date: 10,328 Average Daily Population: 146</td>
<td>Present Enrollment: 19 boys, 4 girls Serviced to Date: 11,509 Average Daily Population: 17 boys, 3 girls Youths AWOL: 496 Violations: 188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjudication: 47 Intake Screening: 39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Successful Completion Rate (current month): 79%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful Completion Rate (current month): 89%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Average Daily Population:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Successful completion indicates that the minor remained arrest-free during the time of the program.*

### Table 1. Circuit Court of Cook County Juvenile Justice Division Juvenile Detention Alternatives Continuum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment Month</th>
<th>Pre-adjudication</th>
<th>Post-adjudication</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Serviced to Date</th>
<th>Average Daily Population</th>
<th>Successful Completion Rate (current month)</th>
<th>Completions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Month 1</td>
<td>4,504</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>23,070</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month 2</td>
<td>4,504</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>23,070</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month 3</td>
<td>4,504</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>23,070</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The average daily population of the detention center is dependent not only on the number of youth placed in detention, but also on how long those youth are detained. Because the average length-of-stay figures reported below are determined at a single point in time, they are strongly influenced by youth who stay in care for particularly long or especially short periods. In Cook County, the average length of time of detention is about 21 days (see Table 2). When automatic transfers (ATs) are omitted from length-of-stay calculations, the average time in detention declines to 19.2 days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Admission Type</th>
<th>Percentage of All Admissions (%)</th>
<th>Average Length of Stay (days)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admissions Screened In</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admitted Via Warrants</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Holds</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Admissions</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These figures are based on a 4-month sample of admissions. Cases admitted in January, April, July, and November 2010 are included in the analysis. It is important to note that cases counted as screened in include those court holds and warrant cases that would have been screened had they been assessed at the time of admission.

Cases screened in following an arrest spend, on average, the most time in detention, about 27 days. Warrant cases spend 19.4 days and court holds an average of nearly 17 days.

Figure 3 illustrates how admissions impact the average daily population of the detention center. Although only 29% of admissions are screened in, these cases account for 38% of the average number of cases detained on any given day. Although the figures presented below will fluctuate by month, they provide a reasonable estimate of the impact of admission decisions on the population of the detention center.

Many youth who are admitted on warrants are detained for failure to appear (FTA) or violating other conditions of supervision. They represent less risk and are therefore frequently detained for shorter periods of time. About 12% of all youth admitted to detention are released within 24 hours.

Although the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) has had a significant impact on the number of children detained in Cook County, Figure 3 clearly demonstrates that the courts continue to play a major role in admissions. Hence, changes in policy and/or practice involving warrants and court holds could have a significant impact on the population of the detention center.
Table 3 displays a breakdown of different lengths of stay, showing the proportion of admissions they represent. Although nearly 44% of all admissions are released within 7 days, youth who face adult charges (known as ATs or automatic transfer cases) may remain in detention for a year or longer. Youth who are “screened into detention” based on the screening instrument described above are, on average, detained for longer periods of time than those admitted on warrants or following a court hearing. These young people generally face more serious charges, most often violent and/or weapons-related offenses, or have more significant histories of delinquent behavior and are more likely to represent a risk to the community.
Offenses of Youth in Detention

Of youth who entered detention as automatic transfer cases in 2009, 76 spent more than 6 months in detention; 32 of these cases remained in detention for a year or more. Table 4 outlines the charges faced by youth admitted to detention in 2010, categorized by severity.² Violent offenders, sexual offenders, and other assaults together comprised nearly 40% of all charges. Another 10.5% of those admitted to detention faced charges for drug offenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage of Admissions (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statutory Violations</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent Offenses</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Offenses</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Offenses</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons Offenses</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Assaults, Offenses</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Offenses</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notably, 51.5% of admitted youth were charged with property offenses or statutory violations. The latter group includes FTAs, probation violators, and other youth admitted without a new charge filed. Many of these youth would seem to be candidates for alternatives to detention.

Age and Gender of Youth in Detention

About 80% of all admissions to detention in 2009 were 15-, 16-, and 17-year-olds. However, over 4% were 13 or younger, and of these, 69 youth were age 12 or under (see Table 5). Through the first 11 months of 2010, there was a decline in the number of 11- and 12-year-olds: a total of 40 were admitted. Younger detainees, those 13 and under, stayed on average just under 15 days.

Table 6 indicates that most of the very young, those 13 and under, are admitted to detention for nonviolent offenses. Over half of 11–13-year-olds admitted in 2009 and 2010 faced charges for property offenses, drug offenses, or statutory violations, roughly similar to the offenses that led to the detention of other youth in the JTDC.

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² The source of these data was the 4-month sample of admissions described in the note attached to Table 2. Only the most serious offense was used. A total of 1,613 youth were sampled.
Best contemporary practices call for young offenders, especially those not charged with violence, to be placed in the community whenever possible. Targeting these youth for intensive treatment and intervention could avert future offending and stop the revolving-door syndrome in which youth reenter detention over and over again throughout their adolescence.

In 2009, 9.7% of admissions were female. This number declined through the first 11 months of 2010 to 8.9%. The average length of stay for girls in 2009–2010 was 18.5 days. As will be discussed in more detail below, girls generally represent much lower risk to the community, but have disproportionately higher use of mental health services—a challenge to any detention facility—than their male counterparts.

### Table 5. Age
(2010 Admissions*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1373</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>2314</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1145</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 and over**</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5837</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Estimates based on projections from first eleven months of 2010.
** Older youth can be admitted to the detention center if they were tried as juveniles and are detained subsequently due to a violation of probation.

### Table 6. Charges Facing Youth Age 13 or Younger
(2009–10 Admissions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charge</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violent Offenses</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory Violations</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Offenses</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Offenses</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons Offenses</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Assaults</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Racial Disproportionality in Juvenile Detention

Although the overall reduction in the number of youth detained since 1998 means that fewer African American youth enter detention, the rate of racial disproportionality in Cook County is striking. African American youth are arrested at 5 times the rate of white youth and detained at 46 times the rate. To put these statistics in perspective, national rates of disproportionate minority contact (DMC) for African American youth are presented in Table 7. Relative rates of detention for African American and white youth vary substantially among jurisdictions and national averages should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, all states report rates far below the 46:1 ratio found in Cook County.

Significantly, the actual rate of detention for African American youth in Cook County relative to their proportion of the youth population is similar to that reported nationally. The high level of disparity in Cook County is due largely to the fact that so few white youth enter detention. White youth account for fewer than 3% of detention admissions in Cook County. African American youth, on the other hand, comprise about 83% of Cook County admissions to detention. As Table 7 indicates, African American youth comprise 15% of the juvenile population, but 44% of the detention population. Hence, all things being equal, they are detained at about three times the “expected rate” (44:15). In Cook County, African American youth represent 2.6% of the juvenile population and 83% of the youth in detention. This is 3.2 times the “expected rate.” Thus, the extremely low rate of detention for white youth in Cook County drives the 46:1 relative rate of African American overrepresentation. While differences undoubtedly exist in both offense severity and social factors that account for some of the disparity reported here, the extraordinarily low rate of detention for white youth in Cook County is clearly the factor most responsible for the extreme disparity in detention rates for African American youth.

### Table 7. Racial Disproportionality in Juvenile Justice*

Nationally, African American youth under age 18 represent 15% of the juvenile population, but make up:

- 26% of juvenile arrests
- 31% of referrals to juvenile court
- 44% of the detained population
- 34% of youth formally processed by the juvenile court
- 46% of youth sent to adult court
- 32% of youth adjudicated delinquent
- 40% of youth in residential placement
- 58% of youth in state adult prisons

*For these and other national statistics on disproportionate minority contact see the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention website www.ojjdp.gov/dmc.
Opportunities for Reform

As described above, tremendous progress has been made in Cook County in reducing the number of youth detained. Nonetheless, our assessment suggests that the size of the population can be further reduced without a threat to the safety of the community. This will, however, require a shift in practice regarding the use of secure detention that brings Cook County closer to national best practice—i.e., using secure detention only to protect the safety of the community or to prevent flight. Appropriately minimizing the number of youth confined is in the County’s best interests, both in terms of the high financial cost of operating the detention center and the human costs to youth and communities of potentially higher rates of reoffending as an unintended consequence of secure confinement. Certain populations offer particular opportunity for such reductions, including those held on warrants and other court holds and girls. Moreover, it is critical that Cook County examine the alarming disproportionate representation of the African American community within the detention center. Ameliorating the conditions described below will go a long way toward assuring that fewer youth are held and that the youth who are held in detention cannot be better served elsewhere.

Warrants and Court Holds

The number of youth held on warrants and court holds in Cook County seems inordinately high, particularly in relation to the number of youth screened into detention following arrest. Most individuals interviewed believe further reductions in the number of youth detained are possible, and nearly everyone cited the high number of youth admitted on warrants. Analysis of available data shows that about 320 youth a month are detained on warrants or as court holds for violations that do not involve new charges and do not meet the standard to be detained based on the JDAI screening instrument. On average, these youth remain in detention for 18.6 days, which—importantly—suggests that these are not simply a function of the warrant itself, but result from judges choosing to continue to hold these youth after a hearing takes place. Clearly, policies designed to reduce the number of youth held pursuant to a warrant must be developed with a clear understanding of what leads judges to continue the detention initially triggered by these warrants.

Most individuals interviewed believe further reductions in the number of youth detained are possible, and nearly everyone cited the high number of youth admitted on warrants.

We also found that different calendars demonstrate a significantly different rate of court holds; the ratio of court holds in detention ranged across calendars from 0.0% to 32.0%, demonstrating that individual judicial practice plays a significant role in determining the number of youth detained. It is particularly important to learn from judges who use more court holds what alternatives would need to be in place to reduce their perceived need to detain youth whose presenting charges and past behavior do not meet the standard for detention determined by the JDAI screening instrument.

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3 These percentages should be viewed with caution as there were no data available that allowed us to compare the offense severity or risk level of cases on each calendar. Nevertheless, the range in the percent of cases sent to JTDC from various calendars suggests that Cook County judges view the need for detention differently. A study of effectiveness of detention use could help formulate policy to guide the use of detention and lead to greater consistency among judges.
Comparing the percentage of cases detained with the percentage committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice by court calendar proved interesting as well. For the most part, these figures were quite similar. This makes sense as those youth presenting the highest risk to public safety are candidates for secure placement both pre- and post-disposition. In a few instances, however, judges used detention in far more instances than they used subsequent placement in DJJ while, in two instances, this pattern was reversed. A more definitive study could help determine whether changes in practice should be considered. The court may, for example, consider steps to increase consistency in how judges use detention after a warrant is issued and a youth is brought back to court. This might mean using the current Cook County detention JDAI screening device at subsequent detention hearings or using additional risk assessment instruments, such as the New York City approach described below.

New York City (NYC) offers a potentially useful alternative in which judges are provided with a more comprehensive formal assessment based on empirical data on factors associated with the likelihood that youth will either fail to appear for a court hearing or be rearrested while their case is pending in court. The assessment also incorporates into the score “protective factors” that were found to be inversely correlated with re-arrest (that is, decreased the likelihood of re-arrest.) At the hearing, the judge has the youth’s “score” for the likelihood of failing to appear and to reoffend pre-sentencing based on actual experience with youth in NYC. Preliminary results over the last two years show that detention rates have decreased overall by 25% and, notably, re-arrest rates for cases awaiting hearings have decreased 30% over that same period. Clearly, it is possible to reduce the use of secure detention and improve community safety when judges have good statistical information to guide their decision-making.

Although we could not determine through available data sources which cases were detained for their failure to appear (FTA) at court hearings, staff interviewed reported that the majority of cases detained for violations were FTAs. Strategies aimed at reducing the number of FTAs and promoting the use of alternative programs for handling probation violations could have a major impact on the number of youth detained. With a screening instrument similar to that used in NYC, it would be easy to identify those youth at high risk to fail to appear, allowing workers to target these cases for additional services. Alerting youth and their families to upcoming court hearings and/or providing transportation to hearings are simple strategies that have reduced FTAs in other jurisdictions. A postcard notification system is in place in Cook County, but the notification system may need strengthening. One of JDAI’s most successful sites has found that simply escorting these high-FTA-risk youth to court saves the county a great deal of money in cost for weeks of detention.

Because FTAs remain a significant problem in Cook County, renewed focus could have a significant impact on the size of the detention population. For cases where a warrant has been issued as a result of a first FTA, a system should be in place that allows the youth to secure a new court date without being detained in the JTDC. When an FTA warrant is issued and an arrest is made, cases could be brought to the screening unit. New community-based sanctions could be imposed if needed and

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4 Because decisions to detain and place in DJJ could cross reporting periods, caution is urged in interpreting these results.
Reducing 10–20% detention of expensively community-based may waiting for disposition. According to data from the Office of the Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court, detention is sometimes used as a disposition. This data shows that about 7% of youth admitted to detention in 2010 were placed in detention as part (or all) of their disposition. Use of detention as a disposition appears to vary fairly significantly among judges. If the accepted purpose of detention is to protect the public from high-risk youth awaiting court proceedings and to ensure that youth show up for hearings, using detention as a disposition runs counter to its intended role in the juvenile justice system.

Alternative programs, such as those in Table 1, already in place in Cook County are underutilized. They operate well below capacity and could be used for many youth currently held in detention. For example, approximately 40% of all admissions remain in detention for 7 days or less. These youth, in general, have been charged with nonviolent offenses or are in detention for violating conditions of supervision. Short stays in detention provide little in the way of community protection and may serve only to disrupt the youth’s life, taking him/her away from school and involvement in community-based programs. These youth seem ideally suited for alternative programs.

Reducing the number of youth detained for probation violations and violations of court orders by 50% would reduce the average daily population of the detention center by approximately 80 youth. In effect, given the current number of youth detained, this represents a 25% reduction in total population. Of course, time in detention may still be required to deal effectively with the most serious violators. Undoubtedly, many youth who are detained by judges have previously been placed in the existing alternatives and failed to comply with program rules. Still, detention is too expensive and potentially counterproductive for many of these youth, especially those who represent little risk to the community. Judges should work with Probation staff to create consequences short of detention for those youth at low risk of reoffending, even when they have failed to comply with detention alternatives. Graduated use of community sanctions is a better option, even if additional features need to be added to existing programs to keep more youth in the community.

Reducing the number of youth appearing in court for FTAs and other violations could also free up court resources, reducing the time required to process other cases. Shortening court processing time 10–20% could further shrink the number of detention beds required.

Renewed focus on FTAs could have a significant impact on the size of the detention population. Alternative programs already in place in Cook County are underutilized.

a Notification by postcard also introduces issues regarding confidentiality, as required by both legislation and policy. Court information regarding juveniles is usually zealously guarded to protect both the child and his/her family. Data on a postcard are obviously available to anyone who comes into contact with that postcard, creating the potential for misuse of information and would appear, on the surface, to breach confidentiality requirements.
Girls and Younger Boys in Detention

In Cook County, 20–30 girls are detained on any given day. NCCD recently completed a review of girls who were committed to the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) and found that few of these girls represented a significant risk to community safety. Studies of the level of risk represented by girls, including a recent study for the IDJJ, have reached the same conclusion: most girls can be handled safely and more effectively in community-based programs. Further, the Cook County Juvenile Justice Division’s own 2009 Annual Report documents that girls are 50% less likely to return to court for a subsequent offense within 2 years.

Because they represent such a small portion of the population, the needs of girls in detention are often overlooked. Cook County, however, has made a concentrated effort to focus on transition planning, so that when girls return to the community, they have a support system in place to help them avoid future detentions. These goals could be accomplished more effectively if these girls were already in a community-based setting. State/county cooperation in this area would be particularly beneficial. Establishing better placement options for girls bound either for detention or IDJJ would lead to (1) reduced use of incarceration, (2) more effective treatment, (3) better outcomes, and (4) economies of scale in developing and operating community-based options for girls. Moreover, moving girls out of detention would further reduce the need for beds and would reduce operational costs.

The mental health needs of girls in detention, and the corresponding need for services, are disproportionately more acute than those of boys. In a 2009 report on the mental health needs of youth in detention, Cook County mental health staff reported that, while girls represented 8% of the population, they accounted for 36% of crisis intervention calls. Although most girls in the justice system pose low risk to the community, they often have serious needs that add to the program costs of an institution. Generally speaking, these needs can be more effectively met in community-based settings. Further, it seems likely the cost involved in establishing community-based options for girls can be offset by overall reductions in detention center expenditures.

For example, a Fort Myers, Florida program administered by NCCD’s Center for Girls and Young Women found that in-depth assessment followed by community-based services matched to assessment findings was very successful in keeping girls out of detention and crime-free in the community. This program’s success has led to interest from other cities in Florida and it is expected that the program will be replicated in several additional jurisdictions this year.

Additionally, boys 13 and under represent an important category within the detention population. This group is both more vulnerable than their older peers and at higher risk of becoming chronic offenders in light of their early involvement with the justice system. They are also more likely to be involved in school—a connection that the county must be invested in sustaining, and that will be

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8 Alternative Services for Girls in Detention in Southwest Florida. NCCD’s National Center for Girls and Young Women. 2010.
undermined by placement in detention. This is another group that would be much better served by small, community-based programs, unless they represent a clear danger to the community.

**Disproportionate Minority Confinement**

As mentioned earlier, JDAI has had a major impact on the number of youth detained in Cook County. Given the magnitude of the problem and the size of the youthful offender population, progress in Cook County is as impressive as that found in any jurisdiction in the nation. Reducing the population of the detention center has, of course, significantly reduced the number of minority youth detained.

Still, the disproportionate confinement of African American youth in Cook County relative to the rate of detention for white youth (46:1) is the highest NCCD has encountered anywhere in the nation. One factor more than any other drives disproportionality to such an extreme level: very few white youth enter detention. Cook County has been very successful in keeping white youth in the community. Although they comprise over 50% of 10–18-year-olds in Cook County, white youth make up less than 3% of detention admissions. Differences in arrest rates (5:1) and even in rates of commitments to IDJJ (22:1) between African American and white youth are dwarfed by the 46:1 difference in detention admissions.

These data suggest that something different is occurring for African American and white youth at the point of arrest. (We found little difference when comparing detention admissions by type of admissions—screened in, warrants or court holds.) White youth are only slightly more likely to be screened in following arrest than to enter detention on a court hold or on warrant status. As a consequence, few white youth are ever considered for detention placement.

Over the last two decades, several initiatives have been undertaken to address the problem of disproportionate minority contact in Cook County and DMC has been a major focus of JDAI. Despite these efforts, the problem persists, and renewed effort is required.

To begin, Cook County should conduct a thorough study of the issue using the DMC approach recommended by the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The OJJDP approach isolates nine separate points of contact to help jurisdictions identify the source of the problem and to pinpoint strategies that are likely to have the greatest impact. Cook County has already undertaken some of this work and will be able to use the OJJDP approach to build on their progress to date. This approach includes five key phases: (1) identification of data at critical decision points relative to possible overrepresentation of minority populations; (2) assessment/diagnosis of factors that may contribute to disproportionality; (3) development and implementation of intervention strategies to reduce minority overrepresentation; (4) evaluation of the effectiveness of these interventions; and (5) ongoing monitoring of disproportionality at each stage of the process. A somewhat more detailed outline of the OJJDP program is presented in Appendix B.
**Automatic/Adult Transfers (ATs)**

Few jurisdictions, including Cook County, have effectively addressed the impact of youth held in detention pending their trial in the adult court. Although the number of ATs admitted to detention is rather small, these youth tend to stay for long periods of time. Our best estimate of the average length of stay for ATs is 177 days. As a result, they constitute about 30% of the average daily detention population. In effect, this creates two distinct populations with very different needs within the facility. Consequently, staff must provide programming for both a population that stays a short period of time (1–30 days) and a population that stays for an extended time period.

Recently the Transitional Administrator has created a separate unit specifically for ATs. Although this is an important step toward appropriate programming, this population should ideally be housed in a separate facility, and always in separate units, and provided programming similar to that usually available to youth sentenced to state facilities. This programming should include education, vocational training, counseling, and substance abuse treatment programs. In general, programming should be enhanced and recreational programs increased for these youth. Simultaneously, efforts to shorten detention stays for automatic transfer cases should be pursued.

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9 We encountered what we believe were coding errors in the database that, if resolved, could change this number to a small degree. The average will also vary based on which cases are included in the AT calculations. A number of cases appeared to be ATs who were in detention, awaiting transfer to the Department of Corrections (their stay was always less than 30 days), and a few others who stayed for very short periods of time. These may be cases in which charges were dropped and they were released. In any event, the 30% of ADP figure was difficult to verify with data from the information system, but it seems reasonable. If 3% of all admissions are ATs and they remain in detention for an average of almost 6 months, then approximately 100 of the 320–330 youth in detention will be ATs.
Recommendations

We present the following recommendations in the conviction that if Cook County were to reserve secure detention for youth who represent a threat to the safety of the community or a risk of flight, the detention population could be reduced by 30–35%.

Secure detention should only be used for youth who represent a threat to the safety of the community or a risk of flight.

- Develop and utilize a risk assessment instrument to identify youth most likely to fail to appear for a court date and those most likely to reoffend prior to sentencing based on empirical data on Cook County youth.

- Use the information gained from a risk assessment instrument to reduce the number of youth detained on warrants and court holds.

- For youth identified as high risk to fail to appear, provide special services beyond the current postcards to include reminder calls or transporting youth to court when needed.

- For first-time failures to appear, create an administrative approach—possibly including a meeting with a probation officer within the court building to develop a plan to ensure the youth appears at the next scheduled hearing—to allow them to secure a new court date.

- Convene judges, particularly those with high detention rates, to identify additional alternatives to detaining youth, especially those who score as lower risk based on a formal risk assessment.

- Create small, staff-secure alternatives to secure detention for girls.

- Children 13 and under should not be detained unless they represent a clear danger to the community or to themselves (in which case they should be placed in a mental health setting).

A thorough analysis of the DMC issue in Cook County, focusing on policies, practices, and programs is needed. This analysis, based on the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s guidelines, should focus on policies, practices, and programs needed to minimize African American youth coming into detention as has been accomplished for their white peers.

Officials should continue to push for ways to reduce long case-processing times for youth being prosecuted in adult court. The extended stays of transfer cases challenge the capacity of juvenile detention to appropriately meet programming needs.
Program Management

Current Practice

While it is not the purpose of this report to assess the operations of the current detention center, certain areas of program management will be critical to ensuring effective detention services. Here we will very briefly review the current status of Cook County detention in a number of key areas—assessment, case management, and such programming as mental health and educational services. We then suggest opportunities for improvement as the county moves forward.

Assessment

Current intake and assessment procedures include (1) an orientation to detention center programs, rules, and expectations; (2) health screening and medical services, if needed; (3) a review of the youth’s juvenile justice history; and (4) application of a mental health screening tool (MAYS). If serious mental illness is indicated, the youth is referred to a clinician for further evaluation. Probation and school information are rarely available at intake, but are obtained at a later date if the youth remains in detention following the initial court appearance.

Case-management

Case-management activities undertaken to date include the implementation of a cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) program and efforts to standardize disciplinary procedures to ensure that room confinement decisions are appropriate and meet best practice standards. Implementing CBT in a detention setting is always a challenge, given the limited time available to work with many youth who enter and leave the facility within 14 days. However, CBT has become a mainstay in youth corrections throughout the nation and should help manage those who stay in detention for extended time periods.

Earlier reports on disciplinary practice in detention in Cook County noted the overuse of room confinement to deal with infractions. Youth were frequently confined for excessive time periods. Specifically, a November 2010 John Howard Association review of room confinements in Cook County found that 78 (19.6%) exceeded 36 hours. There is now a quality assurance program in place to monitor use of room confinement. Hearings are held on a scheduled basis and the latest data indicates 96% compliance with time standards that were established. Substantial progress has been made in standardizing the disciplinary procedures and the use of room confinement. Although there is little evidence to date that the number of disciplinary reports has declined over the last year, it does appear that the number of “not guilty” findings is down, indicating less inappropriate use of room confinement.10

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10 The number of “not guilty” findings was reviewed by the John Howard Association in November 2010 and by NCCD in May 2011. The number had decreased by 50% despite the fact that overall disciplinary reports had increased by about 20%.
Mental Health Services

A major expansion of mental health services provided to youth in detention represents a significant improvement in meeting the needs of vulnerable youth. Mental health staff in the detention center estimate that about 25% of all youth detained are prescribed psychotropic medication. Further, national surveys\(^\text{11}\) of justice-involved youth indicate that as many as 70% have mental health needs, and that few of them are receiving appropriate services in the community. A study in 2006 of the youth in the JTDC found that 66.3% of males and 73.8% of females detained there have at least one diagnosed psychiatric disorder and many had more than one.\(^\text{12}\) A recent report outlining activities of mental health professionals working in the detention center shows an impressive increase in services provided.\(^\text{13}\)

Educational Services

The Nancy B. Jefferson School located within the detention center is run by the Chicago Public Schools. The school currently provides most traditional educational classes. The creation of pods within the detention center has posed some challenges to the school in that the Transitional Administrator insisted on youth attending the school by pod, rather than based on their grade placement or academic abilities. For a time, this resulted in many youth receiving education services on their units rather than in the school section of the building; however, a new principal at the school has worked to accommodate this new requirement and all pods now attend classes in the school facility. During our tour of the facility, we noted other improvements in education, including a significant investment in technology geared toward increasing student interest in arts programs.

Despite these advances, most people interviewed for this report felt that significant improvement in the educational program is needed. One of the most vexing problems facing detention centers is that time in school is often preempted by court hearings, mental health treatment, safety issues, disciplinary action, etc. Identifying educational needs and setting goals for individual youth is dependent on getting records and transcripts from community schools in a timely fashion. (Time is of the essence in settings where youth often spend only a few days or a few weeks.)

In sum, meeting the educational needs of incarcerated youth represents one of the most challenging problems confronting juvenile justice agencies. Most youth who enter detention are far behind expected grade level and many need special services. Because these students have such a wide variety of academic skills, traditional classroom teaching methods are not applicable and resources for more individualized instruction have historically been quite limited.

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\(^{11}\) According to the Council for State Governments (CSG), 66% of boys and 74% of girls in corrections have diagnosed mental health problems. For more information, see www.csg.org


\(^{13}\) 2008-2009 Annual Report, (June, 2008 through May, 2009), The Isaac Ray Center, 1725 West Harrison St., Chicago, Illinois 60612
Other Programming

Current programming at the JTDC varies substantially depending on the efforts and creativity of the staff in the individual “centers.” Historic criticism of the JTDC suggested that little programming was available to occupy youth during out-of-school hours, with an overreliance on television. Since the development of the new pod system, some of the centers (most notably the Wings girls unit) have developed an array of programs to provide positive activities ranging from drum circles to sports tournaments. Although important progress has been made in some of the centers, there is ongoing concern that more opportunities need to be available to meaningfully fill out-of-school time. Little treatment-focused programming is available at the JTDC.

Opportunities for Reform

Assessment

Current intake and assessment procedures in the temporary detention center are quite limited, but in conjunction with an appropriate screening mechanism to ensure the right youth are being detained and basic physical and mental health screenings occur, they are probably adequate for youth who remain in custody for less than 2 weeks. However, many youth, particularly AT cases, remain in detention for extended periods of time. A recent review of detention releases in Cook County indicated that nearly half of all youth admitted to detention stay for at least 2 weeks and about 30% are detained for a month or more. AT cases can spend months or even years in detention.

When youth are detained for 2 weeks or longer, assessment and classification are critical elements of a detention facility’s case-management system, providing information to guide programming efforts, including educational and vocational programs, counseling and mental health services, and programs needed to transition youth back to the community following their stays at the detention center. For these youth, a more comprehensive assessment protocol is needed.

Although it might be ideal to conduct a comprehensive assessment for all youth coming to the JTDC, this may not be cost effective given current fiscal constraints. It should, however, be relatively easy to identify those cases most likely to remain in detention for 2 weeks or longer for more comprehensive assessment. The ATs are apparent, and a simple scale (or algorithm) based on past experience could be used to “predict” other youth who are likely to remain in detention for 2 or more weeks and will need a more comprehensive assessment.

In designing an assessment protocol for youth who will stay in detention for 14 or more days, there is an opportunity to promote efficiencies, coordination of efforts, and communication between different components of the juvenile justice system. Detention, probation, and IDJJ all engage in assessment. Using the same standardized tests, mental health screening tools, and strengths and needs
assessments would eliminate duplication of effort and enhance case planning and service delivery to create a continuum of care for youth as they move through the system. Such coordination of effort allows staff at all levels of the system to work on the same long-range plan for each young person, regardless of where he/she is at any particular point in time. When detention receives critical information on the needs of youth who come in on probation violations and can, in turn, provide the similar information to probation officers or IDJJ staff on youth who leave detention for either program, everyone benefits—most notably the youth. Hence, NCCD recommends that the design of the classification process be conducted with input from probation and IDJJ. It should also be carefully integrated with needed data-system enhancements (discussed below) to ensure that information is conveyed in the most efficient manner to improve collaboration and cooperation among all segments of the juvenile justice system.

Recently, NCCD has been working with various jurisdictions around the country to identify protocols needed to assess educational needs of youth entering correctional facilities. A brief synopsis of findings, as presented in a recent NCCD webinar, can be found in Appendix C. This information is provided to illustrate the issues that need to be considered in establishing assessment protocols for education and the need to share information across all system components.

**Case Management**

Case management for youth in short-term detention will most often be focused on behavior management, addressing immediate health needs, finding appropriate services in the community, and discharge planning. This shifts substantially, however, for youth who remain in detention for 2 weeks or longer. Case management for these youth should mirror systems used in youth correctional settings and should include development of a case plan covering treatment and program needs, periodic reclassification based on adjustment, and—at least quarterly—multi-disciplinary staffing to assess current needs and youth progress toward goals outlined in the case plan. Staffing should include counselors, security staff, teachers, mental health staff (if involved) and, if the youth is close to release, probation. Parents should be notified and invited to participate by phone if they are not able to get to the facility. To help reduce recidivism, the youth need to be prepared for their eventual release; emphasis on education and/or vocational programs is needed.

**Educational Services**

Historically, it has been challenging to provide meaningful educational services for youth in short-term detention. Today, however, computerized curricula, matched to a student’s current capabilities and needs, provide an excellent alternative to traditional school programming. These programs allow youth to continue to make progress, no matter how remedial, while confined. Computerized curricula allow baselines to be quickly established, allowing even short-term educational goals to be established and progress assessed for all youth.
Again, youth detained for longer periods will need access to meaningful education and/or vocational programs responsive to their assessed needs and abilities. Youth facing longer detentions will require comprehensive assessment, appropriate mental health treatment, educational and vocational programming, and regular multi-disciplinary staffings to assess ongoing needs.

**Programming**

Best contemporary practice recognizes the need to keep youth active and involved in activities, filling their days with educational/vocational programming, treatment, and recreation. Ensuring that such resources are available to all youth in detention in Cook County is a critical component of detention practice, whatever the setting. Programming should follow a predictable schedule that is available to youth and largely fills the out-of-school time.

**Recommendations**

*Assessment should be substantially expanded—at least for youth likely to be in custody for more than two weeks.* Because the detention center houses both short- and long-term residents, a two-phased assessment and case-management process is needed. Educational, vocational, and mental health assessments are critical for youth who remain in detention for longer periods.

*Assessment tools should be coordinated system-wide with information shared to provide continuity of care.* Appropriate merging of assessment, case-management, and data-reporting capabilities across departments of the juvenile justice system will help create a continuum of care so that goals, objectives, expectations, and accountability are shared at every program level.

*Case-management services for youth detained more than three months should mirror that in traditional correctional facilities.* Appropriate case management must include comprehensive assessment, appropriate mental health treatment, multi-faceted educational and vocational programming, and regular multi-disciplinary staffings to assess ongoing needs consistent with the expectations of all long-term residential facilities.

*Educational programs for short-term detainees should incorporate computerized curricula matched to their current capabilities.* Computerized curricula can help to ensure that youth do not lose ground during confinement and can use this time to address specific academic deficits.

*All youth in detention need to be kept consistently active and involved in activities, including, but not limited to, educational programming and recreation.*
Physical Facility

Current Facility

Reducing the population of youth in secure detention in Cook County is the first step in addressing the myriad problems raised by the ACLU lawsuit. Many of the additional concerns center on the limitations of the physical plant of the JTDC and its capacity to provide safe and effective detention. We begin this section by discussing status of the current facility and go on to make recommendations regarding more effective approaches to physical facilities for juvenile detention in Cook County.

Limitations of Physical Facility

The current facility was built over 30 years ago and does not comply with contemporary juvenile justice practice standards. The facility has a significant number of blind spots and other design flaws that increase the potential for violence and abuse, particularly when youth are moved from one area of the facility to another. Long hallways and elevators create challenges for staff charged with supervising youth movement. Additionally, problems with ceilings and doors are well documented. Youth have been able to remove ceiling panels and climb up into the area above the ceiling, and glass doors have been seriously damaged. Both of these problems are currently being addressed through renovation, but issues like these will continue to emerge over time and additional renovation expenditures seem likely. With the substantial efforts to reduce the number of youth detained in Cook County, the facility is also substantially larger than appropriate.

The Transitional Administrator has attempted to manufacture updated design and supervision technology by adding cameras and creating pods within the facility with three pods functioning as a unique “center” operating in many ways independent of other units of the facility. This is clearly an improvement in that it limits movement, reduces contact between youth, and creates a safer institution. However, using pods within the current design does not yield efficiencies that would be attained in a facility designed to accommodate small, self-sufficient units. In a facility designed to keep juveniles separated, the pods are much more self-contained, with classrooms and food service available in each pod, providing better control of the environment.

Finally, the current location of the detention center is not conducive to maintaining family contact. Many families have limited resources and live some distance from the detention center, making travel to and from the facility problematic.

Nonetheless, several of those interviewed stressed that having the detention center in the same building that houses the Juvenile Court is a major advantage. The close proximity to the court avoids transportation costs and reduces staff time needed to transfer youth to the juvenile court. This is indeed an advantage and an important factor to consider. Significantly, however, this factor is only relevant for youth being tried in the main juvenile court and does not pertain to ATs or youth being tried in the suburban courts.
Opportunities for Reform

Everyone we interviewed acknowledged that the detention center facility has major flaws that create problems for staff and for youth. Most feel the existing facility is too big, too old, and so poorly designed that it will never meet the needs of the county, even with substantial renovation. A few others, however, believe that focusing on the limitations of the facility diverts attention from other, more pressing issues. Their view is that even poorly designed facilities can work if the right programs and well-qualified staff are in place. They are reluctant to recommend new construction, based on the assumption that new construction inevitably means adding beds to the system and risking “net widening.” In fact, the number of youth confined in detention centers and state facilities has declined in most jurisdictions in recent years. As a result, facilities have been closed in many of these locations, including those that have undertaken new construction. At least in recent years, evidence indicates that new construction has not led to net widening.

Despite these concerns, the general consensus—and the opinion of NCCD—is that a number of smaller, strategically located facilities would best serve the interests of youth in Cook County. However, in challenging fiscal times, the cost of construction might be considered prohibitive. One alternative might be to save money in upfront costs by renovating existing structures.

Although there is considerable variation in the cost of construction and operation of detention facilities across the country, the experience of other jurisdictions does provide some guidance. First, renovating existing structures is generally less expensive than new construction. Schools that have been closed represent a viable option, as classrooms and (often) recreation space are already central features of these buildings. Two or three schools could provide enough space for small, strategically located detention centers.

To address the interrelated questions of new construction versus retrofitting and remodeling existing buildings, we conducted a review of recent detention construction projects and of operational costs in several jurisdictions. The findings from this review follow.
The Cost of Construction

NCCD’s review of the cost of constructing new detention facilities in other large, urban communities found enormous variation in expenditures. In Detroit, for example, a new 188-bed facility was constructed for $39 million, a per-bed cost of $207,500. Alameda County, California (Oakland), built a 360-bed facility for $176 million, a cost of just under $500,000 per bed. Most projects fall within this range. Some of the variation in cost is due to differences in land-acquisition costs. Property in the Bay Area, for example, is very expensive, which undoubtedly contributed to the $500,000 per-bed cost of the new detention center in Oakland.

Some jurisdictions have retrofitted existing structures, such as school buildings. This is often far less costly than building a new facility. Seneca County, Ohio, for example, turned an existing school building into a detention center for just over $120,000 per bed.

Prior to construction, most jurisdictions undertake a comprehensive planning study to ensure that the new facility will fully meet their needs. Such studies often include a full review of current policy and practice as well as population and arrest trends, and provide projections of future bed needs based on a variety of policy scenarios. These studies can be expensive, but if done well, they can help the jurisdictions select the best option at the lowest overall cost.

Regardless of the approach taken, construction is a costly undertaking. However, a well-designed facility can reduce staffing requirements, lowering the cost of operations. Certainly, this trade-off in costs needs to be factored into any discussion of the merits of constructing a new detention facility in Cook County.

Operational Costs

Despite the design flaws noted in the Cook County Detention Center, the overall cost of operations falls in the middle of the range of costs incurred in other jurisdictions. Like the cost of construction in other urban centers, operational costs varied widely. This is due in large part to differences in salaries and benefits paid to employees. New York City, where labor costs exceed those found in most other jurisdictions, reports one of the highest costs of operations, $594 per day per youth, or about $214,000 per youth per year. In Maryland, per-youth cost is less than half the amount expended in New York City, just over $100,000 per year. It should be noted that detention in Maryland is state-operated and the figures reported here include facilities in Baltimore and in less urbanized areas of the state. In smaller jurisdictions, operational costs are often well under $100,000 per bed.

Using figures from the 2009 county budget, NCCD computed the annual per-youth cost of detention at $128,000 per year in Cook County. This assumes an average daily population of 320 youth and does not include functions, such as detention screening, that are the responsibility of Cook County Juvenile Probation.

Because of the design limitations of the current facility, per-youth operational expenditures will probably increase significantly if the detention population decreases further. Removing low-risk, low-needs youth means those who remain will have a higher needs profile. Thus, service needs will not decrease at a level commensurate with the decline in population.
New construction offers the distinct advantage of state-of-the-art technologies, which may reduce operational costs. In general, if the cost of operating any correctional facility exceeds construction in about 3 years, and if the annual cost of operations can be reduced by 10 to 20%, then design of the facility and construction costs can be entirely offset in less than 10 years.

**Recommendations**

The current facility should be replaced with two or more smaller facilities, ideally located around the community, with a total capacity of 240 beds.

- **One facility should be structured as a longer-term facility dedicated to meeting the needs of youth being tried as adults.** These youth remain in detention far longer, and require specialized assessment, case management, and educational and vocational programming.

A comprehensive feasibility study is required to address issues of cost, location, renovation of existing buildings versus new construction, and potential reductions in operating costs that could be realized with state-of-the-art design.
Information Systems

Recently, the Probation Department has taken the impressive and potentially important step of creating a research consortium with local universities and researchers. This consortium is intended to increase access to the Court’s data; improve the system’s ability to understand the impact of its interventions; and to develop important partnerships with local research professionals. While this is an exciting initiative, it will not obviate the need for the Court to have its own effective management information system for day-to-day routine monitoring of court and probation processes and activities. Such a system will be critical not only for the system to understand and evaluate its own activities, but also to allow for appropriate routine public reporting.

Current Information Systems

Currently, data essential to the operation of the juvenile justice system in Cook County reside in at least three different databases that do not exchange information. These are the Juvenile Electronic Management System (JEMS), which contains court data; a detention center database developed by and licensed from a vendor located in Minnesota; and the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) system (also operated by a private firm), which contains assessments and case-management data on probation cases. The detention center is currently investigating replacing its system, as the vendor currently offers only limited support of the existing system.

Many of those interviewed for this report were critical of the court’s information system (JEMS), questioning both the reliability of data contained in the system and its limited reporting capability. The county made a substantial investment in this system both financially and in staff time; as a result, there is substantial frustration related to the system’s limitations. Reliability of data contained in the YASI (probation) system was questioned largely because it currently is only sporadically used for decision making and has limited impact on daily responsibilities of probation officers. NCCD have found that unless those charged with entering data rely on that data on a daily basis, data integrity suffers. This may well be the situation in Cook County where, at present, detention uses only 20 to 30% of the system’s functional capacity. It is also based on old technology, which the vendor no longer fully supports. Despite these problems, we found greater reliability than anticipated—data obtained for this study had few missing values and relatively few coding errors.

Opportunities for Reform

Two major problems need resolution. First, the reporting capabilities of these systems must be enhanced. No agency can claim to be data-driven or evidence-based without easy access to critical information for evaluating performance. Judges, administrators, and staff need accurate, timely data in order to monitor and evaluate case progress, actions of staff, and compliance with directives and practice standards. With few exceptions, this capability does not exist in Cook County.
Second, data from these systems must be integrated if they are to be of significant value to users. Currently, there is no information exchange between these systems. When a youth enters detention for a probation violation, assessment information (from YASI) is not available to intake staff. The intake unit estimated that it takes 24–48 hours to obtain probation information. It takes even longer to obtain school data. Consequently, many cases are released before probation or school information data can be obtained.

Cook County and the Administrative Office of Illinois Courts have invested substantial funds in the existing systems. Replacing these systems—especially with a more integrated approach—would be an expensive undertaking. However, there are solutions that would provide the necessary information and improve the integrity of data within each of the systems. In the short term, Cook County should consider using a data-mining approach that collects information entered in all three systems, creates the data tables needed, and generates reports for detention, the courts, and probation. This approach has been implemented in several large child welfare agencies around the country and at least one juvenile justice agency. It is relatively inexpensive and requires no additional expenditures for hardware or software. A number of organizations could provide data mining and/or management reporting services. Such a system could allow real-time monitoring of issues that impact probation, court services, and detention so that administrators can take corrective action before significant problems emerge. This type of system could be implemented and functioning within 3 to 6 months.

This approach could also be used to create case records that would be immediately available to staff at every level of the system. For example, when a young person is admitted to detention on a probation violation, assessment data, the probation case plan, and problems recently encountered when the youth was on probation could be immediately accessible to intake workers in detention. At release, detention records could be immediately available to probation staff. This type of system would also allow timely sharing of information with schools (as appropriate) and other social service agencies providing assistance to the youth. Based on our experience with such systems, we estimate that this could be implemented for $150,000 to $250,000 per year. (Information on data mining, reporting, and its impact on operations, including actual data presentations available on a real-time basis in other jurisdictions, can be found in Appendix D.)

A long-term option would be web-based or hosted applications that could integrate data needs of detention, the court, and probation and fully replace the current Cook County systems. Revamping the existing systems to meet the needs of Cook County will be prohibitively expensive. As an alternative, more and more counties are choosing to contract for data services because (1) it requires little or no investment in hardware or technical support; (2) the confidentiality issues have been resolved; (3) it is far less expensive because developmental cost is shared across agencies and over time; and (4) if better options become available, agencies can walk away from a system without having to justify the millions of dollars already invested.

This approach would involve replacing the three data systems that currently exist with a web-based integrated system. These systems are substantially easier to install than traditional systems (such as JEMS), but it will require time to solicit bids, customize software, train staff, and convert existing
data. Over the long term, however, it is critical that Cook County develop a functional integrated data system if juvenile justice is to be data driven. A web-based system, as mentioned above, avoids many of the risks encountered with the JEMS system in that it does not require the significant investment in hardware and technical support the county encountered with JEMS.

Two of the best companies we have encountered are Cúram, a Dublin-based firm that has an expansive COTS (commercial off-the-shelf) application for juvenile justice (which could be a hosted application) and an application developed by Automon, a Phoenix-based company that works with a number of counties in California and New York. Automon has a contract with Lake County, Illinois and thus presents an opportunity for a first-hand view of a web-based system as a solution to the county’s information needs. Cúram has the only child welfare COTS system approved by the U.S. Administration for Children and Families. There are undoubtedly others, but a track record is important. There is no doubt that this is the future direction for data services in the human services field. A few of these systems are so well developed that they could be implemented on a schedule that would preclude the need for data mining. Sinking additional funds into existing systems would be unwise.

Although data mining may be the least expensive and best short-term option, eventually, Cook County will need to explore development of an integrated case-management system that efficiently combines court, probation, and detention data and provides timely data for planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. A web-based (cloud-based) approach will prove far more affordable than a customized system developed specifically for and operated by Cook County.
Recommendations

Cook County should invest in new data technology to allow for timely data to ensure that policies are followed, that practice standards are met, and that youth are receiving the services and supervision required to ensure community safety. Currently, data are captured in at least three separate databases that do not exchange information. Immediate action needs to be taken to provide reliable basic data about the system, though ultimately a longer-term solution will be required.

- **On a short-term basis, data-mining approaches should be explored to provide the Cook County juvenile justice system with timely, accurate information at all program levels.** Current data systems are incapable of providing meaningful, timely data to guide decision-making. Data mining offers an immediate alternative to address this deficit.

- **Over the long term, the county must invest in new data technology, perhaps exploring web-based options, to fundamentally redesign its data systems.** Such a redesign is critical to allow for timely data to monitor compliance with county policies and practice standards, to ensure that youth are receiving the services and supervision required to ensure community safety, and to evaluate the impact of court intervention. Web-based models could offer a relatively inexpensive alternative.
Summary Recommendations for a New Vision for Detention in Cook County

The primary goal of this review is to determine what detention services will best serve Cook County in the future. The enormous progress of recent years provides a wonderful platform to build on; this progress includes a 50% reduction in the number of youth detained on any given day, a wide array of alternatives to detention, major improvements in mental health services and educational programming provided to youth in detention, increased protections of youth in the use of room confinement, a new structure utilizing pods to create smaller centers within a center, and significant improvement in the qualifications of detention center staff.

Our discussions with judges, attorneys, administrators, staff, advocates, and academics made it clear that the future of detention must be discussed within the context of the entire Cook County juvenile justice system. Actions taken by one component of the system have consequences for every other component. While such a conclusion may seem obvious, current circumstances in Cook County (i.e., the federal court order appointing a Transitional Administrator) compelled everyone interviewed to emphasize the need for system-wide cooperation and communication.

This raises one important issue, while somewhat outside the purview of this study, which repeatedly arose during our interviews—the need for coordination between Probation and the JTDC. Ensuring that critical data are shared and that youth are provided a consistent continuum of care as they move from one program to another requires careful and consistent coordination. Without this level of coordination, it is difficult to ensure that all components of the system, including detention-alternative programs, are appropriately utilized. In order to achieve this, the juvenile justice system is best viewed as a single system; separating the administration of probation and court services from detention with no shared vision or responsibilities leads to inefficiencies, inhibits essential communication, and can thwart the development of shared objectives.

But even within a fully integrated system, resolution of issues related to the four domains discussed above—detention population and practice, program management, physical facility, and management information systems—will be key to developing an optimal system for the future. Much more input and study is needed, but based on what we learned in this process, we present the following vision and recommendations for detention in Cook County:


**Vision**

The vision that we have developed for detention in Cook County rests on the conviction that secure detention for youth must be one element of a cohesive juvenile justice system that includes efficient case processing, a range of alternatives to avoid unnecessary confinement, and equity for children of all races and ethnicities.

Cook County should maximize community safety and the health and well-being of its youth and families by:

- reserving secure detention for only those youth who present a real threat to the safety of the community;
- providing youth who must be detained with meaningful assessment, case management, and programming;
- detaining youth in small, safe, community-based facilities consistent with best practice; and
- ensuring that decision making is guided by timely, accurate information about the youth and all aspects of the juvenile justice system.

The specific recommendations that follow are intended to allow the court to move toward the vision we have articulated even as discussions continue about the administration and future direction of the court.

**Recommendations Related to Detention Population and Practice**

Secure detention should be used only for youth who represent a threat to the safety of the community or a risk of flight.

- Develop and utilize a risk assessment instrument to identify youth most likely to fail to appear for a court date and those most likely to reoffend prior to sentencing to guide decision making based on empirical data on Cook County youth.
- Use the information gained from a risk assessment instrument to reduce the number of youth detained on warrants and court holds.
- For youth identified as high-risk to fail to appear, special services should be provided which go beyond the current postcards to include reminder calls and transportation to court when needed.
- For first-time failures to appear, an administrative approach—possibly including a meeting with a probation officer within the court building to develop a plan to ensure the youth appears at the next scheduled hearing—to securing a new court date should be developed.
- Convene judges, particularly those with high detention rates, to identify alternatives to detaining youth, especially those who score as lower-risk based on a formal risk assessment.
- Create small, staff-secure alternatives to secure detention for girls and younger boys.
A thorough analysis of the disproportionate minority confinement (DMC) issue in Cook County is needed. This analysis, based on the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s guidelines, should focus on policies, practices, and programs needed to keep African American youth in the community as has been accomplished for their white peers.

Officials should continue to push to reduce long case-processing times for youth being prosecuted in adult court. The extended stays of transfer cases challenge the capacity of juvenile detention to appropriately meet programming needs.

**Recommendations Related to Program Management**

*Assessment should be substantially expanded—at least for youth likely to be in custody for more than two weeks.* Because the detention center houses both short- and long-term residents, a two-phased assessment and case-management process is needed. Educational, vocational, and mental health assessments are critical for youth who remain in detention for longer periods.

*Assessment tools should be coordinated system-wide with information shared to provide continuity of care.* Appropriate merging of assessment, case-management, and data-reporting capabilities across departments of the juvenile justice system will help create a continuum of care so that goals, objectives, expectations, and accountability are shared at every program level.

*Case-management services for youth detained more than three months should mirror those in traditional correctional facilities.* Appropriate case management must include comprehensive assessment, appropriate mental health treatment, multi-faceted educational and vocational programming, and regular multi-disciplinary staffings to assess ongoing needs consistent with the expectations of all long-term residential facilities.

*Educational programs for short-term detainees should incorporate computerized curricula matched to their current capabilities.*

*All youth in detention need to be kept consistently active and involved in activities, including, but not limited to, educational programming and recreation.*
Recommendations Related to the Physical Plant

The current facility should be replaced with two or more smaller facilities, ideally located around the community, with a total capacity of 240 beds.

- One site should be structured as a longer-term facility dedicated to meeting the needs of youth being tried as adults. These youth remain in detention far longer, and require specialized assessment, case management, and educational and vocational programming.

A comprehensive feasibility study is required to address issues of cost, location, renovation of existing buildings versus new construction, and potential reductions in operating costs that could be realized with state-of-the-art design.

Recommendations Related to Information Management

Cook County should invest in new data technology to allow for timely data to ensure that policies are followed, that practice standards are met, and that youth are receiving the services and supervision required to ensure community safety. Currently, data are captured in at least three separate databases that do not exchange information. Immediate action needs to be taken to provide reliable basic data about the system, though ultimately a longer-term solution will be required.

- On a short-term basis, data mining approaches should be explored to provide the Cook County juvenile justice system with timely, accurate information at all program levels. Current data systems are incapable of providing meaningful, timely data to guide decision-making. Data-mining offers an immediate alternative to address this deficit.

- Over the long term, the county must invest in new data technology, perhaps exploring web-based options, to fundamentally redesign its data systems. Such a redesign is critical to allow for timely data to monitor compliance with county policies and practice standards, to ensure that youth are receiving the services and supervision required to ensure community safety, and to evaluate the impact of court intervention. Web-based models could offer a relatively inexpensive alternative.
Appendix A

Cook County Screening Form
Circuit Court of Cook County
Juvenile Justice Division

Screen Date: ____________ Screen Time: ____________ A.M./P.M. Screen: ____________

DETECTIVE: __________________________ District: __________________________

MINOR RESPONDENT: __________________________ DOB: ____________ AGE: ____________ GENDER: M F

RACE: WHITE / BLACK / HISPANIC / ASIAN / OTHER

RD#: ____________ IR#: ____________ FF#: ____________

FACTOR SCORE
1. MOST SERIOUS INSTANT OFFENSE:
   (Choose only one item indicating the most serious charge)
   Automatic Transfer Cases: ................................................................. 15
   Violent Felonies: Agg Batt - Bodily Harm, Agg Battery with/Firearm, AggCrimSexAsslt, Agg Discharge of a Firearm, Agg Vehicular Invasion, Armed Robbery w/ Handgun, Armed Violence W/Firearm, Home Invasion, Murder, UUW-Gun) ................................................................. 15
   Agg Batt against Police Officer, Agg Domestic Battery, Domestic Battery W/Bodily Harm, Agg Robbery, Agg Stalking, Child Pornography, Hate Crime W/ Bodily Injury, Hate Crime @Place of Worship, Heinous Batt, Residential Arson ................................................................. 12
   Other Forcible Felonies - (Agg Batt, CrimSexAbuse, Hate Crime, Intimidation, Kidnapping, Robbery, Vehicle Invasion) ................................................................. 10/12*

   Other Offenses: *ALL SUBSEQUENT POLICE REFERRALS FOR THESE OFFENSES
   Felony Sale of Cannabis (Class 1 or 2 felony amount), Arson, DCS ........................................... 10/12*
   PCS w/int deliver, Residential Burglary, UUW (not a gun), Possession Explosives ......................... 7/10*
   Felony Possession of Narcotics/Drugs for Sale or Other Felonies ............................................ 5/7*
   Misdemeanor Possession of Narcotics/Drugs or Other Weapons Possession ............................... 3
   Other Misdemeanors ...................................................................................................................... 2

2. PENDING / PAST FINDINGS OF DELINQUENCY - CLOSED PROCEEDINGS (Choose only one item)
   Prior IDOC Commitment .............................................................................................................. 10
   IDOC Commitment Vacated ............................................................................................................. 8
   Pending / Past Finding of Delinquency on a violent felony as listed above ................................ 8 / 10
   Pending / Past Finding of Delinquency on a forcible felony as listed above ............................. 6 / 8
   Pending / Past Finding of Delinquency on a felony as listed above .......................................... 4 / 6
   Pending / Past Finding of Delinquency on a misdemeanor as listed above ............................. 2 / 4

3. CURRENT CASE STATUS (Choose only one item)
   Criminal Court Case Pending ........................................................................................................ 10
   IPS .............................................................................................................................................. 7
   Probation (#_____): .................................................................................................................... 4
   Supervision (#_____): ................................................................................................................... 2

4. DETENTION ALTERNATIVE RESTRICTIONS
   Electronic Monitoring ........................................................................................................................ 10
   Shelter Care Facility ....................................................................................................................... 9
   Evening Reporting Center ............................................................................................................ 7
   Home Confinement .......................................................................................................................... 5

5. WARRANT DETENTION ................................................................................................................ 15

   TOTAL SCORE ___

DECISION SCALE
   Score 0-9 ............. AUTHORIZE RELEASE (with notice of prioritized date for 5-12 Conference)
   Score 10-14 .......... COMPLETE NON-SECURE DETENTION OPTIONS FORM
   Score 15 + ............... AUTHORIZE DETENTION (for minors 13 years of age and older)

(Complete non-secure custody options for minors under 13 years of age before placement into secure detention unless Minor is charged with UUW-Firearm in or on school grounds)

ADMINISTRATIVE OVERRIDE: YES NO REASON: ________________________________

FINAL DECISION: DETAIN RELEASE RELEASE WITH CONDITIONS

MR lives at: __________________________ Apt. _____ City: CHGO/ ____________ IL/ ____________ Zip: ____________

MR lives with: ____________________________________________________________________________

Relation: ______ Phone: 312 / 630 / 708 / 773 / 847 · ____________

06-07-07 rev.
Appendix B

OJJDP DMC Reduction Cycle
I. Identification

• The primary purpose of this phase is descriptive—it provides a quantitative answer to whether there are differences in the contact that youth have with the JJ system, based on race and ethnicity.

• Identify the critical decision points within the JJ system: (a) arrest; (b) referral; (c) diversion; (d) detention; (e) petitioned/charges filed; (f) delinquent findings; (g) probation; (h) confinement in secure correctional facilities; (i) transfer to adult court.

• Task: Collect local data within the JJ system and examine them specific to overrepresentation of minority populations within the system. OJJDP utilizes the relative rate index (RRI) method.

II. Assessment/Diagnosis

• The goal of the assessment phase is to determine whether DMC exists in the JJ system and at what decision points, and to identify the factors that contribute to DMC at those decision points.

• This phase is a search for factors that contribute to DMC, with the goal that the results may lead to strategies or interventions to reduce DMC.

• The assessment process looks more carefully at the decision points that the identification process has targeted to determine how DMC is created or amplified, specifying the mechanism(s) at work in a particular jurisdiction. The outcome of the assessment study should result in an understanding of the DMC process that will permit policymakers to make choices about strategies for reducing DMC.

• Stages: (1) Generate possible explanations; (2) identify the types of data and the pattern of results needed; (3) obtain the data; 4) analyze the data and identify the most likely mechanism(s) creating DMC.

III. Intervention

• The goal at the intervention phase is to address the DMC factors that were identified during the assessment phase by developing a comprehensive set of interrelated interventions/strategies to reduce minority overrepresentation in the system.

• A jurisdiction initiates this phase by developing an intervention plan that serves as a road map for how it will proceed to reduce minority overrepresentation in its JJ system.
• Approach: (1) Establish guidelines for choosing strategies and developing an intervention plan; (2) present a conceptual framework for use in plotting a course through the mixture of programs, services, and activities to determine the most appropriate strategy for targeting the specific DMC contributing factor(s) identified.

• DMC strategies fall into three arenas: (a) direct services; (b) training and technical assistance; and (c) system changes.

• Five guidelines to consider in developing an intervention plan: (1) Design a comprehensive, multimodal approach; (2) prioritize strategies to focus on critical decision points; (3) choose interventions that the community is ready to implement; (4) use evidence-based strategies and draw on the successful experiences of current DMC initiatives; (5) evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.

IV. Evaluation

• Two common approaches to assessing the performance of an intervention are performance measurement and evaluation, both of which are important when examining DMC.

• Performance measurement is a subset of evaluation concerned with collecting information to determine whether an intervention is achieving its objectives.

• Outcome measures are data used to assess the achievement of objectives and goals.

• Evaluation is similar to performance measurement in that it too uses output and outcome measures to track progress. Evaluation, however, focuses on how an intervention achieves outcomes.

• OJJDP has both mandatory and non-mandatory performance measures specific to DMC.

V. Monitoring

• It is important to maintain continuous monitoring of this issue across the JJ system once you have been able to alleviate the overrepresentation condition.
Appendix C

Outline of Educational Assessment Needs
Effective Educational Programming for Students While in Custody

- Identify education team members for each student (including pertinent non-education staff)
- Use youth strengths and needs assessment
- Use valid, reliable measures to regularly assess reading, math, and writing skills
- Develop individualized education programs (IEP) for special education students
- Implement monitoring practices to assess educational progress

Four Essential Elements of Effective Educational Programs for Youth in Juvenile Justice

1. A meaningful educational reception process;
2. Effective educational programming for students while in custody;
3. Educational services related to the youth’s transition into the community; and
4. Continual education program monitoring for student academic outcomes within the facility, during transition, and after transition.

Meaningful Educational Reception Process

The reception process needs to systematically gather information about each youth at the time of admission to a facility. The following are examples of critical data required to effectively plan for a student’s learning in a new setting.

- Grade-level status
- High school credits earned to date
- Special education status
- Reading ability
- Math ability
- Attendance records
- Behavior records and suspension/expulsion records
- IEP
- Standardized test results
Appendix D

NCCD’s Data-mining Experiences
Decoding Data to Help Youth Workers

Little-known analytic system makes case monitoring better and faster.

By John Kelly

In juvenile justice and child welfare, it is usually the extremes — sweeping reforms and devastating scandals — that garner attention.

Either end of that spectrum is often arrived at because of the way workers execute their most fundamental duties: timely contact with youths, families and courts.

A little-publicized brand of technology called SafeMeasures® has made monitoring and scheduling those contacts far easier, some state and county leaders say, by maximizing one of the most valuable commodities in youth work: time.

The data analysis system, owned and operated by the Children's Research Center (CRC), provides a tickler system for caseworkers and allows supervisors to monitor performance nearly in real time. Leaders in New Jersey, California and Virginia have come to swear by the technology as cuts in budgets and staffs put pressure on their systems to do more with less.

The Beginning

The seed for SafeMeasures was planted in the late 1990s, when the Department of Health and Human Services started to require that states report performance on outcome measures related to the stability of foster care and ability to connect children to permanent placements. The feds helped states pay for and develop reporting systems that would send better information up the chain to HHS.

The problem was that none of that information got back to the local offices that actually do the work. “The information stayed at high levels, and most of the work to improve will occur at local offices,” said Pete Quigley, who oversees SafeMeasures as vice president of information services for the Madison, Wis.-based CRC, which is a division of the nonprofit National Council on Crime and Delinquency.

“Our thought process was, if we could analyze the data, we could feed it back on a rapid cycle to line workers, office managers and supervisors,” Quigley said. “Rapid” was the key word, because offices would “have to know what’s going on with cases now in order to act” on the information.

Case information “becomes ancient history” in a couple weeks, said Scott Reiner, the head of juvenile probation for the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice.

In 2002, CRC signed its first contract to implement SafeMeasures for the child welfare system in Orange County, Calif. It now serves the child welfare departments of almost every county in California, all of New Jersey and Hennepin County (Minneapolis) in Minnesota. Virginia was the first state to adopt SafeMeasures on the juvenile justice side (for all of its probation offices), and the Virginia child welfare system has since contracted with CRC as well.

How It Works

When a site contracts to use SafeMeasures, Quigley and his team spend a few months connecting that state or county’s databases to their own analytics system, which is housed at the NCCCD Children’s Research Center in Madison.

Once they are connected, CRC is periodically sent huge quantities of information. What comes into the Madison office would be essentially useless to an individual caseworker or probation officer, said Molly Armstrong, a consultant who used to serve as the director of policy and planning at the New Jersey Department of Children and Families.

The state database “collects an enormous amount of data, but most of it is invisible to a manager,” Armstrong said. “You could look at an independent case, but the database is not organized to do tracking.”

CRC staff members then aggregate and analyze the state’s information, and return it in a web-based format. The state sends CRC information for all of the counties at once, but CRC returns the data broken down by counties or regional units.

This process reveals compliance information from the top down. Take meetings between probation officers and juvenile offenders in Virginia, for example:

Twice a week, when Reiner gets his update from SafeMeasures, he knows what percentage of all court-ordered meetings between probation offic-

SafeMeasures® At a Glance

Who Does It: The nonprofit Children’s Research Center, Madison, Wis.

Cost: $100,000 to $500,000 per year, depending on size of county and amount of customization.

Current Clients:
- California Department of Social Services (54 of 58 counties)
- Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice
- Virginia Department of Social Services
- New Jersey Department of Children and Families
- Hennepin (Minneapolis) County Child Protection Services

Benefits:
- For state leadership: View performance at the state level and drill down to view the performance of regional or county managers.
- For supervisors: Gauge performance of their office against others on a number of measures. For child welfare systems, this generally includes visits and court appearances. Juvenile justice systems can monitor probation contacts, detention admissions and length of stay for youths in the system.
- For line staff members: View which youths in their caseload are due for contact.
- In emergencies: SafeMeasures has added mapping capabilities, which some California counties have used to monitor children in care near forest fire areas. In a more common emergency, such as an apartment fire, a supervisor could use SafeMeasures to quickly determine which children lived in the building.
cers and juveniles took place. In Loudoun County, Va., court services unit director Mark Crowley and probation supervisor Mark Alexander can see how many meetings were missed by their 14 probation officers (they have lost four officers this past year to budget cuts). And those probation officers can log into SafeMeasures to find out two things: what meetings they might have missed, and what juveniles are due for meetings in the near future.

The problem that SafeMeasures can solve for both child welfare and juvenile justice systems becomes clear when one considers what came before the technology. In Virginia, probation directors had to review all cases every 90 days. "All agencies have standards and procedural practices to ensure quality services: how often probation kids are seen, families are met, case files reviewed, whether a child is being incarcerated," said Reiner. "Those are the regulations that make sure we do at least a minimal quality job."

The Old Paper Chase

One of Reiner’s regional directors, Tom Spry, said he had made up his own system to review cases in the five counties he oversees. The Spry system involved a lot of travel time and paper chasing.

"I had to be where the folder and case were to look at folders and review them," he said. Spry would visit each office regularly. On every case he reviewed during a visit, he’d write the next date he intended to review that case on the top of the folder. The staff at that office was responsible for pulling the folders scheduled for review next time he visited that office.

Child welfare caseworkers in New Jersey and California had to pick through the state database or their own paper files to stay organized on what cases needed attention next.

At best, those tasks took forever to complete; at worst, they weren’t completed, and the work of people on the front line was unchecked and unorganized.

"In theory, you could do this stuff by paper [files], but anyone who tells you that everything gets done when it’s on paper is full of you-know-what," said Armstrong, the former New Jersey official. "You have all these hearings, all these services, all these events. Every case has 100 things you have to manage."

SafeMeasures has essentially eliminated those problems, clients said. Supervisors can check the progress of all workers, from their desks, through reports that arrive twice (or more) a week. Caseworkers and probation officers need not craft a schedule of visits out of their folders.

"It’s a supervisor’s dream," said Alexander. "It allows us to look at the work that people are doing without hundreds of files. It should also be a dream for all probation officers, because they can check their own work by sitting in front of a computer."

Workers who still let crucial contacts lapse do so at far more peril. "All these things that we monitor are required," said Reiner. "You can’t hide anymore, and you shouldn’t have been able to hide before."

It isn’t about threatening workers’ jobs as much as knowing who needs help, said Wayne McLelland, who oversees probation for three Virginia counties. "It allows us to see who we need to help and who might be mentors to other workers. I can take a seasoned worker and help bring someone else along."

Without SafeMeasures, he said, it "takes you longer to figure some of this stuff out."

In New Jersey, the fact that workers can see one another’s information on SafeMeasures has fostered a healthy dose of competition and peer pressure in child welfare offices.

"Everyone knew someone in their unit who sat in their chair and didn’t go out in the field," Armstrong said. "All of a sudden, that became very difficult."

Is System for Everyone?

Is bringing in SafeMeasures a no-brainer?

New Jersey paid CRC to implement SafeMeasures when it agreed to reforms to settle a class-action lawsuit, knowing the state would need to track progress on some outcome measures.

There are some limitations. For starters, the service provided by CRC is only as good as the data sent to it.

"When I got [to New Jersey], they were not using it for much of anything," Armstrong said. That was because the data sent back by CRC was obviously inaccurate. "If the underlying data isn’t good, people stop paying attention."

Armstrong had to persuade supervisors to commit to tracking information on SafeMeasures and on paper for a while to figure out where the miscommunication was occurring. It turned out that many caseworkers had not been trained on how to enter visits into the state system, and a few of the screen pages were unnecessarily complicated.

That is a common experience, Quigley confirmed. "Part of what we do is help sort out what is just bad data," he said. "It’s kind of important to help people understand that some improvement is just improved data."

There is also the question of money. Quigley said SafeMeasures costs around $100,000 on the low side and $400,000 on the high side, depending on the size of a system and the amount of customized reports the jurisdiction wants. That is an annual cost; CRC does not sell the technology.

The cost-effectiveness of Virginia paying CRC in perpetuity for SafeMeasures "has been the subject of some discussion here," Reiner acknowledged. "Paying for development and then bringing it in house... is not an option we were presented with when we got started."

The other option, Reiner said, was for Virginia to build its own system, which meant that once it was built it would require the state only to pay the salaries of the people doing the analysis.

"I believe our in-house staff could do a decent job of developing a comparable product," Reiner said, "but they have had numerous other priorities as well."

Michigan chose to build its own, said Armstrong, who is now assisting that state in its attempt to make changes as a result of a lawsuit. "Michigan [Department of Human Services] happens to have an unbelievably talented head of its data unit, and to have folks on staff that can do this kind of work," she said.

New Jersey did not have the same internal advantages, and Armstrong said CRC’s price and motivation made it easy to choose outsourcing.

“They’re not trying to make millions off the product,” Armstrong said. "And they’re very, very customer-service-oriented. They just work with you."


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Child Protective Services Agencies

Turn Data Into Action Using Quality Tools

by Janet Jacobsen

As they made the six-hour car trip from Madison, Wisconsin, to visit a client in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Peter Quigley and Tim Connell of the Children’s Research Center (CRC) passed the miles brainstorming ideas to meet the needs of their child protection agency clients. When the discussion turned to state automated child welfare information systems (SACWIS), which at the time were newly mandated by the federal government, both men shared the opinion that the feedback loop for end users was inadequate. These large-scale systems didn’t provide the timely, reliable feedback needed by child protection workers. As Quigley, director of information systems explains, there were a lot of data going into the systems, but not a lot coming out that managers could readily use. He, Connell, and their colleague Joel Ehrlich exchanged ideas for creating a system similar to the Bloomberg Index for the financial markets. The new system would provide quality tools as well as quick feedback to child protection agencies on critical performance indicators—this was the birth of SafeMeasures® in 1998.

About the Children’s Research Center

CRC is a private, nonprofit agency created by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD). To help federal, state, and local child welfare agencies reduce child abuse and neglect, CRC develops case management systems and conducts research to improve service delivery to children and families. Operating as a subsidiary of the NCCD since 1993, CRC works with agencies to implement structured decision-making systems for child protection to:

- Provide simple, objective, and reliable tools and protocols for workers to use in making decisions in individual cases.
- Supply managers with case information for improved planning and resource allocation.

What is SafeMeasures?

A team of experts with deep understandings of database systems, analytical methods, federal outcomes, and case practice standards is at the core of the SafeMeasures service. Their experience with agencies across the country enables CRC to provide customized reports for each state within a common presentation and navigation framework. Currently, CRC has 52 SafeMeasures contracts, including 47 in California alone, as well as others with state agencies in New Jersey, Virginia, and Minnesota.

Using a client agency’s existing database(s), SafeMeasures provides a reporting environment that can identify the underlying source of a problem in detail, not just its symptoms. Requiring no additional data entry, SafeMeasures provides a Web-based analytical service, a data warehouse, and Internet security.
Child welfare agencies need only to provide periodic updates to the CRC data warehouse. Authorized users with Internet Explorer from administrators through caseworkers interact with SafeMeasures reports by using point-and-click capabilities to:

- Display trend, comparative, and present-time performance/outcome metrics.
- Filter to any level within the organization.
- Drill down to underlying cases and extensive case histories.
- Combine the drill-down capability with near real-time reporting (1-5 days), allowing agencies to identify problem cases or caseloads and take corrective action before they turn into failed outcomes.
- Utilize descriptive statistics such as cross tab, median, and mode.

Cutting Through Data Fog to Find Root Causes

SafeMeasures not only shows a child welfare agency how it is performing in meeting state and federal standards, but it also reveals what cases are on the verge of noncompliance. "With SafeMeasures you are not relying on random sampling in hindsight and coming up with a percentage of errors, but rather you are looking prospectively and finding all the cases that are on the verge of going out of compliance while you still have a chance to do something about it," notes Dr. Raelene Freitag, director of the CRC.

Quigley explains that when data are analyzed in the human services field, those data may suggest service problems, when in fact the issue might be one of poor data quality. SafeMeasures helps child protection agency personnel detect what areas need improvement and how much of the issue is simply a case of incomplete or incorrectly entered data. "SafeMeasures helps them see through the ‘data fog’ and to really analyze the level of service provided," notes Quigley. He defines data fog as a database state where questions may not be confidently answered because of the uncertainty about the accuracy and timeliness of data entry. Data fog results from data in one of three states:

- Data are absent.
- Data are partially entered.
- Data are incorrectly entered.

To properly assess whether staff are actually adhering to standards, agencies must take action to identify and fix records that are in each of these states. Only after this step has been completed can management really "see" services that are not being provided because of a lack of resources, poor assessments, failure of staff to follow standards, or other reasons.

The CRC’s service helps lift data fog by enabling users to identify offices, units, and cases that are not complying with service delivery standards. It distributes complex analyses to all levels of management—administrators, managers, supervisors, and line staff—by using built-in tools to filter down to any level, including caseloads, and identify cases with data problems. Further, with analyses conducted and communicated at least weekly, and sometimes daily, detecting and fixing errors in near real time becomes possible.

Making Quality User-Friendly

By designing the SafeMeasures quality assurance reporting tool from the perspective of a child protective services manager rather than an IT professional, the CRC offers an unintimidating approach to quality. As Freitag observes, "People don’t get into this field [social work] because they like statistics." She and her staff understand the need to communicate the value of data and provide updates in a nonthreatening, easy-to-use manner because, in this field where the health and even the lives of children are at risk, data and reporting tasks are easily left to the end of the week, or worse, the end of the month.

To make the service user-friendly, SafeMeasures utilizes a variety of pie and trend charts. "People love the pie charts and seeing how they are doing. It’s perfect when you have a lot of young staff members who are used to computers and computer-based games," notes Donna Younkin, director of quality and analysis and information for New Jersey’s Department of Children and Families. Her agency has used the SafeMeasures service since 2004.

With SafeMeasures used at every level of the New Jersey agency—from the commissioner’s office to front-line caseworkers—more than 3,000 employees work with quality tools each day. Younkin says that employees now embrace SafeMeasures since overcoming any original fears and learning to trust the accuracy of the data.

Using Quality to Improve Data and Results

While state and federal regulators use several metrics to assess agency performance, monitoring compliance is difficult for most agencies, as they are already overtaxed with expanding caseloads. SafeMeasures makes monitoring easier by refreshing most reports twice weekly and making them available online within five days of entry into the system.

Dramatic improvements in contact levels quickly became apparent in California’s San Francisco County after beginning to use the SafeMeasures service in 2004. As shown in Figure 1, starting in the third quarter of 2004, the first quarter after the county
implemented SafeMeasures, the number of face-to-face timely social worker contacts began to rise. By the fourth quarter of 2005, just over a year after signing on to the service, the county’s contact rate increased to more than 90%, where it remains at this time. Using this information, the agency can consistently monitor, improve, and maintain high case contact compliance rates. The vertical line indicates the quarter when the county adopted SafeMeasures and provides a comparison of performance before and after implementation.

Quigley cautions that understanding the meaning of the chart is important. It appears that no case contacts were made in nearly 35% of cases prior to implementing SafeMeasures. In reality, because of “data fog” only a portion of those cases had no contact at all, while many others did have face-to-face contacts that were simply not recorded or were not recorded correctly. SafeMeasures helps sort out these cases, bringing data-reporting issues to light and giving workers the chance to enter missing information and to correct documentation errors. The workers receive the credit they deserve and the agency benefits from a much better picture of case practice and service delivery.

Social services agencies using SafeMeasures also employ data to track and improve their response time for investigating reports of possible child abuse or neglect. Once an agency receives a report, it assigns a priority—in California that becomes either a 24-hour highest priority or a 10-day period. Fresno County had always shown timely responses on 24-hour investigations, but low compliance for 10-day investigations. Dramatic improvement in response time for 10-day investigations became evident once the county began using SafeMeasures, as shown in Figure 2. By the fourth quarter of 2004, just one quarter after implementing SafeMeasures to track agency compliance in meeting state and federal regulations, the county reached and has maintained a compliance rate of between 90-95%. Again, the vertical line indicates when SafeMeasures was implemented.

Across the country in New Jersey, where child welfare is the responsibility of the state, quality assurance teams from the Department of Families and Children visited field offices to provide refresher and updated training on SafeMeasures in late 2006. In Figures 3 and 4 the vertical line represents the approximate time that the Mercer South and Camden Central offices completed the training. As Figure 3 shows, the Camden Central staff achieved additional and significant gains in compliance after the 2006 training. For the Mercer South staff, the training served as a springboard for more effective use of SafeMeasures, and thus corresponding improvements in contact compliance, as depicted in Figure 4.

When agency personnel have available both current and forward views of cases, they can understand trends, which makes them better equipped to serve children and families. Spotting and preparing for emerging trends, for instance, means having enough foster homes available during months of peak referrals or employing sufficient staff in counties with growing numbers of investigations to handle. Quigley notes that, over time, the SafeMeasures tools help agencies reach a point where they can effectively monitor compliance with federal and state performance and outcome indicators and assess the impact of their actions.

Figure 1—San Francisco County improvements in contact levels

**AB 636 Measure 2C: Timely Social Worker Visits**

Were the required contacts made during the last month of the selected quarter?

Voluntary Guardianship Cases default to a six-month contact schedule.

**Cohort:** All cases that were open in the last month of each quarter, except cases that are not supervised by the Child Welfare Department, cases in which the child is 22 years old or older, cases in which the child is missing, or cases in which the child is placed out of state.

**San Francisco**

Extract Date: 05/22/2007

Analysis Date: 05/24/2007

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![Graph](image)

This report from the SafeMeasures system shows a dramatic increase in San Francisco County’s contact rate once SafeMeasures was implemented.

Figure 2—Fresno County improvements in response time for 10-day investigations

**AB 636 Measure 2B: Timely Response to 10-Day Referrals**

Was contact made in a timely manner for 3-, 5-, and 10-day referrals?

**Cohort:** All 3-, 5-, and 10-day referrals received during the selected quarter.

**Fresno**

Extract Date: 03/26/2007

Analysis Date: 03/28/2007

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![Graph](image)

Since implementing SafeMeasures in late 2004, the Fresno County, California, agency has made and sustained improvement in meeting state and federal requirements for timely investigation of reports of possible child abuse or neglect.
programs and services, something that in the past was difficult to measure because of poor data.

Clients, of course, benefit when child protection workers meet or exceed service standards, whether results come in the form of timely completion of investigations of child abuse or neglect or moving legally free children quickly toward adoption. “It all comes back to the fact that you have to see the children to get the job done and this tool [SafeMeasures] helps you do that,” Younkin says.

For Additional Information:

• To learn more about SafeMeasures, visit http://www.nccd-crc.org/crc/c_sfm_about.html.
• Additional information on the work of the Children’s Research Center is available at http://www.nccd-crc.org/crc/c_index_main.html.
• Further information about the National Council on Crime and Delinquency can be found at http://www.nccd-crc.org/nccd/n_index_main.html.
• Contact Dr. Raelene Freitag, director of the CRC, via e-mail at RFreitag@mw.nccd-crc.org.
• To reach Peter Quigley, director of information systems, send an e-mail to: PQquigley@mw.nccd-crc.org.
• Contact Donna Younkin, director of quality analysis and information for the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, via e-mail at donna.younkin@dcf.state.nj.us.
• Read the companion case study on the pilot program for teaching an advanced curriculum on SafeMeasures.
• For additional information about the ASQ Community Good Works program, visit http://www.asq.org/communities/good-works/ or contact Jeannine Becker at jbecker@asq.org.

About the Author

Janet Jacobson is a freelance writer specializing in quality and compliance topics. A graduate of Drake University, she resides in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Figure 3—Camden Central, New Jersey, improvements in compliance

Permanency Cases: Monthly Staff Contacts With Children
Contacts with children made in month.
Cohort: All children in a case open during the selected month. [Children with only investigation services are excluded.]
Camden
Extract Date: 07/17/2007
Analysis Date: 07/19/2007

After completing a refresher training course on SafeMeasures, the staff at New Jersey’s Camden Central office made and sustained gains in compliance with state and federal requirements such as monthly contacts with children in permanency cases. The vertical line indicates the approximate time of the training.

Figure 4—Mercer South, New Jersey, improvements in contact compliance

Permanency Cases: Monthly Staff Contacts With Children
Contacts with children made in month.
Cohort: All children in a case open during the selected month. [Children with only investigation services are excluded.]
Mercer-Burlington
Extract Date: 07/17/2007
Analysis Date: 07/19/2007

Once refresher training was completed at the Mercer South office, compliance for one measure quickly increased. The vertical line indicates the approximate time that the SafeMeasures training was conducted.
Improving Child Protective Services

Using Quality Tools

by Janet Jacobsen

Imagine the hectic, pressure-filled days of child protective services workers as they visit children who have been referred to them because of a report of neglect or abuse. When not making case visits, they meet with clients’ teachers or doctors or perhaps juggle court appointments. It’s not surprising that entering vast amounts of data into a case management system, let alone analyzing or learning from the data, is often left to the end of a long, stressful day. However, in the world of social work, the case management system could present one of the best opportunities for continuous quality improvement.

Social work has become increasingly complex with overwhelming case management systems, as well as state and federal regulations that sometimes become obstacles to efficiently serving the needs of clients. Quality can address these obstacles by providing tools to better equip social workers to ease the barriers that burgeoning systems place in their way.

About the Children’s Research Center and SafeMeasures

Based in Madison, Wisconsin, the Children’s Research Center (CRC) is a private, nonprofit agency created by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD). To help federal, state, and local child welfare agencies reduce child abuse and neglect, CRC develops case management systems and conducts research to improve service delivery to children and families. One innovative tool offered by the CRC is SafeMeasures®, a Web-based quality assurance reporting service that uses data from a complex relational database system and applies Internet technology to present meaningful graphical displays for various outcome measures.

Introducing Quality to Child Protective Services Agencies

Dr. Raelene Freitag, director of the CRC, noticed an effort to introduce quality systems in child protective services agencies nearly six years ago. Unfortunately, what was identified as quality systems was, in reality, primarily limited to audit functions. “I knew there was more to it, so I began researching the topic and came across the ASQ Web site,” Freitag recalls.

Eventually her research led her to ASQ’s Community Good Works (CGW) grant program, which provides matching funds and technical assistance to nonprofit community-based groups for use in improving their organizations and services (see sidebar “ASQ Grant Provides Funds for Quality Training” for more information on the CGW program). Freitag saw the value in building a curriculum to teach her SafeMeasures clients the quality concepts she’d uncovered.
The CRC applied for and received a CGW grant to help prepare a curriculum, which Freitag describes as a set of basic quality tools that she felt could translate well into the child protection field. "The idea was to go into a jurisdiction, pull together a team, and teach basic principles of quality through an improvement project," Freitag explains.

**Equipping Agencies to Use Data-Driven Improvement Techniques**

With the training curriculum prepared, Freitag was ready to take an existing client beyond the traditional way of using SafeMeasures—using the service to open a set of reports, checking the status of performance measures, and then working to fix issues for cases that are out of compliance or in danger of becoming noncompliant. "This takes us to another level by going to SafeMeasures with a question already in mind—How can we do better at something?—then searching for the root cause and using system data to test different hypotheses about the root cause," says Freitag.

**ASQ Grant Provides Funds for Quality Training**

As its name implies, ASQ’s Community Good Works (CGW) grant program provides financial and technical assistance to nonprofit community-based groups for use in improving their organizations and services. In the case of the Children’s Research Center (CRC), which received a $55,000 matching CGW grant from ASQ, the funds played an integral role in creating an advanced training curriculum to teach child protective services agencies how to use quality tools to improve processes and performance.

The grant awarded to the CRC is an excellent example of how ASQ, through its CGW program, seeks to utilize quality tools, technology, and concepts to effectively, efficiently, and visibly demonstrate the value of quality in community improvement projects and activism while leveraging ASQ’s strong volunteer base. As quality experts, ASQ members use their knowledge and skills to design and implement quality-improvement plans. To date, the CGW program has also helped reduce the effects of crime and delinquency, aided an organization that works with low-income single mothers to help them become financially independent, and partnered with an educational initiative that utilizes the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria in the classroom.

For additional information about the ASQ CGW program, visit http://www.asq.org/communities/good-works/ or contact Jeanine Becker at jbecker@asq.org.

While working on another project with California’s Santa Cruz County Department of Family and Child Services, Freitag invited the agency to participate in the pilot program for the advanced training. Dr. Judy Yokel, director of family and child services for the county, jumped at the opportunity to learn more about improving performance through quality tools.

A quality work team was formed, consisting of 10 employees representing a cross-section of agency program areas. The work team is now learning quality tools by focusing on a specific area for improvement—actuarial risk assessments that agency personnel are required to complete at the conclusion of every referral. These assessments are designed to help guide decisions about which families should receive ongoing services. SafeMeasures data illustrate that risk assessments are completed nearly 90% of the time in this county located 65 miles south of San Francisco. However, the importance of moving that figure to 100% is underscored by data that also show recurrence rates for maltreatment (a second report of abuse or neglect of the same child six to 12 months after the original referral) were higher than the state average. Furthermore, data suggest that in cases where the risk assessment is not completed, those families are more likely to have a recurrence of child abuse or neglect within six months.

"There seems to be a connection between the risk assessment being completed and recurrence rates, so we want to learn why and improve the numbers," explains Yokel, who has worked in social services for 16 years.

**Stocking the Quality Tool Chest**

With the goal of improving completion rates for risk assessments to 100% and ultimately reducing the recurrence of child maltreatment, Freitag began the first of four training sessions with the Santa Cruz County quality work team in April 2007. The group began by adopting a project charter. This is the first of a 10-step process, shown in Figure 1, from Nancy Tague’s *Quality Toolbox*.

As they work through the 10-step process during four separate training sessions, Yokel says the quality team is learning to use a variety of quality tools that they can employ again and again, such as:

- Flowcharts of agency processes
- Affinity diagrams
- Nominal group technique
- Plan-do-study-act (PDSA) cycle
- Relations diagrams
- Is/Is not matrices
- Pareto charts

**Figure 1—Freitag’s training course follows the 10-step process found on p. 36 of The Quality Toolbox, 2nd ed., ASQ Quality Press, 2005.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Language</th>
<th>Quality Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What do we want to accomplish?</td>
<td>Identify charter and make initial plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Who cares and what do they care about?</td>
<td>Identify &quot;customers&quot; and requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What are we doing now and how well are we doing it?</td>
<td>Assess current state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What can we do better?</td>
<td>Define preferred state, gaps between current and preferred state, and improvement opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What prevents us from doing better? (What are the underlying problems?)</td>
<td>Identify barriers and root causes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What changes could we make to do better?</td>
<td>Develop improvement solutions and plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do it.</td>
<td>Implement plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How did we do if it didn’t work, try again.</td>
<td>Monitor results; recycle if necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. If it worked, how can we do it every time?</td>
<td>Standardize.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. What did we learn? Let’s celebrate!</td>
<td>Conclude project, identify lessons learned, and recognize accomplishments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While the focus of the work group, improving the completion rate for risk assessment to help reduce the reports of recurrence of maltreatment, is a worthwhile task, Yokel says that learning how to apply a variety of quality tools for performance improvement will be the greatest benefit of the advanced training from the CRC.

Spreading the Quality Message

The pilot training with Santa Cruz County is primarily designed to test the effectiveness of the training structure. “I know the quality process can work; what I don’t know is the best way to teach it—such as the number of training sessions, the size of the work group—those are the kinds of questions that I’m testing with the pilot phase,” Freitag says. Once the Santa Cruz County work group finishes the 10-step process and the training is evaluated, the CRC will make the training available to other child protection agencies, perhaps as early as the fall of 2007.

Through the training curriculum, Freitag hopes to equip more child protection agency workers with the skills to search for root causes to problems and to use data-driven techniques to test potential solutions. By using the 10-step process for continuous quality improvement, social workers will be better prepared to change and improve inefficient, burdensome case management systems. “We can learn from quality professionals that the answer to everything isn’t ‘We need more money or smaller caseloads.’ Those can help, but we can also make significant improvements by just knowing how to operate more efficiently and effectively with the resources that we have,” says Freitag.

For Additional Information:

- Contact Dr. Raelene Freitag, director of the CRC, via e-mail at RFreitag@mw.nccd-crc.org.
- To reach Dr. Judy Yokel of the Santa Cruz County Department of Family and Child Services, send an e-mail to judy.yokel@hra.co.santa-cruz.ca.us.
- Read the companion case study, “Child Protective Services Agencies Turn Data Into Action Using Quality Tools.”

About the Author

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Juvenile Detention in Cook County: Future Directions

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