



SAN MATEO COUNTY **PROBATION DEPARTMENT**

JUVENILE SERVICES COURT/DIVERSION UNIT
ANNUAL EVALUATION

2022-2023



ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

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

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Program Description

The Juvenile Services Court/Diversion Unit provides a primary point of entry for intake and assessment of youth who come into contact with the juvenile justice system via law enforcement. The Juvenile Services Court/Diversion Unit DPOs conduct intake appraisals of youth entering the juvenile justice system. Utilizing a dynamic needs/barriers assessment system and a multidisciplinary-team approach, DPOs determine the course each case should follow, from diversion and informal probation programs to direct referrals to the District Attorney's Office when involved in a formal court process. The DPOs write a variety of reports for the judge to consider in rendering the courts dispositional decisions. These reports provide valuable background details of the youth, which include, but are not limited to educational, health and social history as well as familial information.

The intake process begins with reviewing law enforcement referrals to determine if youth will be triaged (See Appendix A for further details on triage services) and diverted through one of the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) funded programs, or if the youth would benefit from a supervised Probation Diversion short term, 90 day or 6 month, contract through a collaborative effort involving the Probation Department, the Human Services Agency (HSA), Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS), and Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) services. The multidisciplinary team (MDT) assess the youth's risk/needs by conducting an interview with the parent/guardian and youth, along with a screening conducted by BHRS for mental health, substance abuse, and other significant risk factors. Based upon the assessment findings, a recommendation that includes a balance of accountability and support/treatment services is completed and discussed with each youth's family by the assigned Deputy Probation Officer (DPO). Diversion-eligible youth are then referred to a range of programs and services, including but not limited to the Petty Theft Program (PTP), Juvenile Mediation Program, Victim Impact Awareness (VIA) Program, and Youth Outreach Program (YOP). During the period of the short-term contracts, the youth and families are provided these services under the supervision of the probation officer and the Human Services Agency YOP team.

While this evaluation focuses on youth assessed at the intake level, the overall goal, is to bridge services for youth, stabilize families and optimize chances for success.

Programmatic Challenges

In FY 2022-23, the Probation Department shifted to generalized caseloads to allow for a continuum of care for youth under supervision. In this new structure, a youth is assigned one DPO from the time they are booked into the Youth Services Center – Juvenile Hall, through the Court process and until they complete supervision. In this new structure, DPOs are able to provide better case management to youths and their families by following their case for the duration of their supervision. Specifically, DPOs carry a caseload from the intake/diversion process through investigations, supervision, and ultimately termination from wardship. Learning multiple assignments and the many processes were the challenges faced during this fiscal year. The learning curve was to be expected, but the DPOs continued with best business practices, while maintaining the focus on prevention. DPOs continue to assess the needs of the youths and their families with whom they work and provide referrals for services as needed.

Evaluation Methods

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

- **Participants and Services:** Funded programs collect demographic data (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) and service data (e.g., type of services, hours of services, etc.) for individual participants. Program staff entered these data elements into their own data systems prior to transferring the data to ASR for analysis.
- **Risk Factors:** Funded programs used the Juvenile Assessment and Intervention System (JAIS) to provide a standard measure of risk for youths. This individualized assessment is a widely used criminogenic risk, strengths, and needs assessment tool that assists in the effective and efficient supervision of youths, both in institutional settings and in the community. It has been validated across ethnic and gender groups. The JAIS consists of a brief initial assessment followed by full assessment and reassessment components (JAIS Full Assessment and JAIS Reassessment). The JAIS assessment has two unique form options based on the youth's gender. Probation has elected to administer the JAIS to all youths receiving services in community programs for at-risk and juvenile justice involved youth. The JAIS Girls Risk consists of eight items, and the JAIS Boys Risk consists of ten items. Each assessment yields an overall risk level of 'low,' 'moderate,' or 'high.'
- **Risk Indicators:** Funded programs evaluated certain risk indicators upon entry for JJCPA youths, including if the youth had an alcohol or other drug problem, a school attendance problem, and whether they had been suspended or expelled from school in the past year.
- **Outcomes:** Like all JJCPA funded programs, the Juvenile Services Court/Diversion Unit reports on five justice-related outcomes for program participants occurring within 180 days post entry. They are:
 - Arrests;
 - Probation violations;
 - Detentions;
 - Court-ordered restitution completion; and
 - Court-ordered community service completion.

The outcome measures reported for the Juvenile Services Court/Diversion Unit include Arrests and Probation Violations. The prior year's cohort of program participants serves as the reference or comparison group to interpret FY 2022-23 outcomes.

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

Evaluation Findings

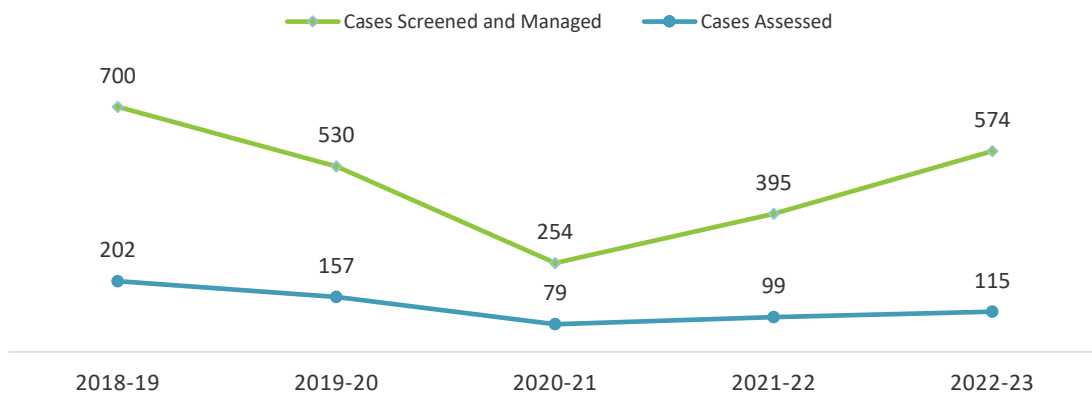
FY 2022-23 HIGHLIGHTS

- The number of youths screened increased by 45%, from 395 to 574, and the number of youths assessed increased by 15%, from 99 to 115, compared to the prior fiscal year.
- There was a 69% increase in the average time spent in the Juvenile Services Court/Diversion Unit (2.7 months) compared to the prior fiscal year.
- The Juvenile Services Court/Diversion Unit served clients across the risk spectrum: 83% scored as ‘low’ risk, 11% scored as ‘moderate’ risk, and 6% scored as ‘high’ risk on the criminogenic risk spectrum.
- The percentage of youths with a drug or alcohol problem, attendance, and suspension or expulsion at entry decreased compared to FY 2021-22.

PROFILE OF CLIENTS SERVED

In FY 2022-23, the Juvenile Services Court/Diversion Unit screened and managed 574 cases (Exhibit 1). Caseloads for total cases screened and managed included Assessment Center/Investigations (159), Court (331), and Diversion (84). The Juvenile Services Division underwent a merger and formerly specialized caseloads became more generalized; the Assessment Center that was merged with Investigations in FY21-22 became the Juvenile Services Court/Diversion (CRT/DIV) Unit. Cases screened and managed continued to consist of youths adjudged under WIC Section 602 (formal wards of the Court or those who have committed criminal law offenses) and youths adjudged under WIC Section 601 (those with a history of truancy, running away, or out-of-control behavior at home and/or in school). For further detail on how each case was processed through the system, please see Appendix A.

Exhibit 1. Total Number of Cases Screened and Managed, FY 2018-19 to FY 2022-23



Note: Data before FY 2022-23 includes cases screened and managed through the Assessment Center/Investigations Unit.

The Juvenile Services Court/Diversion Unit assessed 115 youths and served them for an average of 2.7 months during FY 2022-23 (Exhibit 2). Between FY 2018-19 and FY 2020-21, the number of youths assessed by the Juvenile Services Court/Diversion Unit declined, whereas there has been an increase in youths served in the

most recent fiscal years. Declining population in the past was in part due to the changing population in San Mateo County, changes in reporting policies at the Juvenile Services Court/Diversion Unit, and adjustments based on the COVID-19 booking policies implemented by the state. The increase in this year’s reporting can be attributed to a number of factors including: more youths being booked after booking restrictions were lifted, and an increase in site and release referrals which stalled during COVID-19 and related out of custody reports from police departments are now increasing.

Exhibit 2. Youth Services

YOUTH SERVICES	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	FY 21-22	FY 22-23
Number of Youths Assessed	202	157	79	99	115
Average Time in the JUV SVCS CRT/DIV Unit (Months)	3.8	1.5	2.5	1.6	2.7

Based on the 115 youths whose demographic data were recorded in FY 2022-23:

- About half (54%) of the youths served were male, and 46% were female.
- The average age of youths was 16 years.
- For race/ethnicity, 65% identified as Hispanic/Latino, 18% as White/Caucasian, 8% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 4% as Black/African American, 3% identified as multi-racial/ethnic, and 2% identified as another ethnicity (Other).

RISK INDICATORS

The Juvenile Services Court/Diversion Unit evaluated certain risk indicators upon entry, including if the youth had an alcohol or other drug problem, a school attendance problem, and whether they had been suspended or expelled from school in the past year (Exhibit 3). The findings below indicate:

- In FY 2022-23, 2% of youths had an alcohol or other drug problem at entry.
- One in ten (10%) youths had an attendance problem upon entry.
- Almost one in ten (11%) youths had been suspended or expelled in the past year.
- Compared to the risk indicator findings for youths served in the previous year, smaller proportions of youths evaluated at entry in FY 2022-23 presented with risk indicators for an alcohol or other drug problem, a school attendance problem, and suspension or expulsion from school in the past year.

Exhibit 3. Youth Risk Indicators at the Juvenile Services Court/Diversion Unit Entry

RISK INDICATORS	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	FY 21-22	FY 22-23
Alcohol or Other Drug Problem	12%	34%	26%	8%	2%
Attendance Problem	16%	27%	41%	14%	10%
Suspension/Expulsion in the Past Year	36%	50%	34%	27%	11%

Note: FY 2022-23 n=100.

In FY 2022-23, an estimated five in six youths (83%) served by the Juvenile Services Court/Diversion Unit scored “low” risk at the initial risk assessment (Exhibit 4). The remaining youths scored “moderate” risk (11%) and “high” risk. Similar to past fiscal years, fewer youths were assessed as “moderate” and “high” year over year and these results have been fairly stable over the past five years despite small numbers of youths that make the percentages more susceptible to fluctuations in prior fiscal years. This is expected given the nature of the Juvenile Services Court/Diversion Unit’s programs, which focus on prevention, diversion, and informal probation.

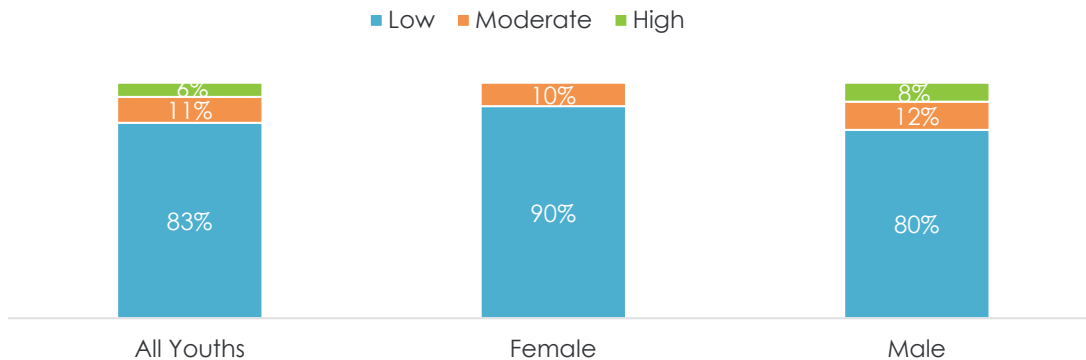
Exhibit 4. JAIS Risk Level

JAIS RISK LEVEL	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	FY 21-22	FY 22-23
Low	64%	60%	72%	67%	83%
Moderate	34%	37%	17%	25%	11%
High	2%	4%	11%	8%	6%

Note: FY 2022-23 n=35. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

When disaggregated by gender, youths self-identified as males scored across the criminogenic risk spectrum, with eight in ten (80%) youths assessed as “low” risk, and fewer youths who scored “moderate” (12%) and “high” (8%) risk (Exhibit 5). In contrast, no self-identifying female youths scored “high” risk, with nine of ten (90%) female youths who assessed as “low” risk while one female youth scored “moderate” an initial risk assessment.

Exhibit 5. Criminogenic Risk Level by Gender



Note: All Youths n=35; Female n=10; Male n=25.

JUSTICE OUTCOMES

Exhibit 6 presents justice-related outcomes for 121 youths whose six-month post-entry evaluation milestone occurred in FY 2022-23. Of note:

- The percentage of youths arrested for a new law violation decreased from 3% to 1% in FY 2022-23.
- Too few youths were on formal probation, thus no data are available for probation violations.

Exhibit 6. Justice Outcomes (180 Days Post Entry)

JUSTICE OUTCOMES	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	FY 21-22	FY 22-23
Youths Arrested for a New Law Violation	1%	0%	8%	3%	1%
Youths with a Probation Violation	*	*	*	*	*

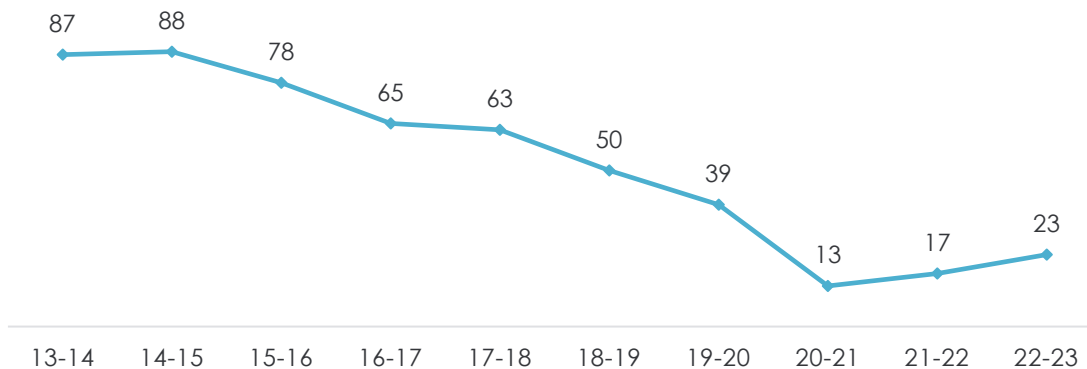
Note: FY 2022-23 Total N=121; N = 1 for Youths Arrested for a New Law Violation, N = 0 for youths on formal probation.
 *Indicates that data were suppressed due to a sample size below five.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

One of the Juvenile Services Court/Diversion Unit’s goals is to reduce the number of Juvenile Hall stays by diverting youths away from detention. However, between FY 2021-22 and FY 2022-23, the average number of youths in Juvenile Hall increased by 35%, from 17 to 23 total youths. However, between FY 2013-14 and FY 2022-23, the average daily population decreased by 74% (Exhibit 7).

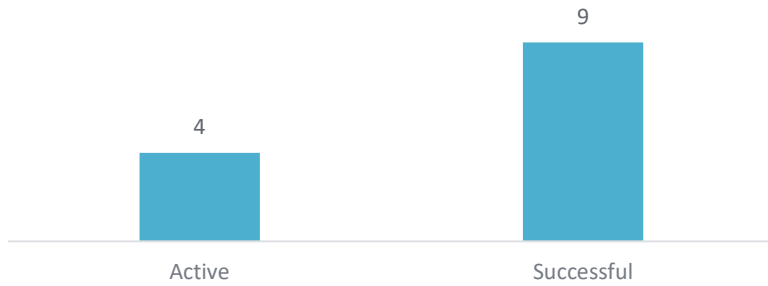
Several factors appear to influence this declining trend, such as a decrease in crime overall, fewer bookings for non-violent and less serious offenses, and adjustments based on COVID-19. While fewer youths are being served, data collected for the 2020-25 Local Action Plan suggests that the needs of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

Exhibit 7. Average Daily Population by Fiscal Year Over the Last Decade



Regarding diversion contracts in the Juvenile Services CRT/DIV Unit, there were 13 diversion contracts in FY 2022-23, all of which were 90-day intervention contracts. Out of the 13 contracts, nine closed as *Successful*, four remained *Active* (Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8. Number and Status of Diversion Contracts



Source: Diversion data from Juvenile Services CRT/DIV Unit.

While 13 diversion contracts appear to be a low count, this is only one of many programs that divert youths from Juvenile Hall. Youths also are diverted through other programs such as Victim Impact Awareness (VIA), letter of reprimand, mediation, Petty Theft program, referred out-of-county, traffic court, and Youth Outreach program offered through Child Welfare Services.¹

CLIENT STORY

Each year, staff at JJCPA-funded programs provide a client story to help illustrate the impact of services on their clients. The following is the client story provided by the Juvenile Services Division for FY 2022-23.

Exhibit 9. Client Success Story

Name of Client	Roy (pseudonym)
Age and Gender	16, male
Reason for Referral	Roy was referred to the probation department after having contact with law enforcement for threatening a teacher aide.
Client’s Behavior, Affect, and Appearance When They First Started in the Program	Roy initially presented as anxious. He blamed his mother for being harsh and strict on him. Before his intervention contract, Roy had two incidents where he threatened to kill another student. Roy had poor communication with his mother and did not follow his parent’s rules at home. He was also not attending school, ran away from home and went to live at his girlfriend’s house.

¹ There has been a recent shift in the juvenile justice system, with fewer referrals to Probation compared to the past few years. San Mateo Police Department (SMPD) diverts cases before even getting to Probation. The referrals that get sent to Probation are more severe cases and can be sent to the District Attorney’s (DA) office based on the type of the offense.

<p>Activity Engagement and Consistency</p>	<p>Roy was open to participating in the Youth Outreach Program and received counseling services. He and his mother met during dyadic therapy sessions to increase positive communication between them. He met and communicated with the community worker during his contract. Roy also worked part-time after school.</p>
<p>Client’s Behavior, Affect, and Appearance Toward the End of the Program</p>	<p>Roy presented with a happy mood, as evidenced by him smiling and interacting more positively with his mother. He seemed more aware of his triggers and was able to use learned coping skills to manage impulses and negative feelings, which arose when interacting with his mother. He also appeared to communicate more effectively with his mother as they continued to meet during dyad sessions.</p>
<p>What the Client Learned as a Result of the Program</p>	<p>Roy was able to improve his relationship and communication with his mother. He also was more willing and able to follow his mother’s rules at home and appeared more respectful. He also worked on his relationships with his siblings and family.</p>
<p>What the client is doing differently in their life now as a result of the program</p>	<p>Roy communicates more with his parents, especially his mother. He continues to work part time and he is on track to graduate successfully from high school.</p>
<p>The value of the program in the client’s words</p>	<p>Roy stated that he, “learned that everything in life has a solution, but you need the support from loved ones and services like probation and the Youth Outreach Program to be able to reach goals and be successful in life.”</p>

Appendix A: Case Triage Dispositions

DISPOSITIONS	FY 18-19		FY 19-20		FY 20-21		FY 21-22		FY 22-23		
Mandatory court cases	410	59%	365	69%	191	75%	232	59%	326	57%	
Booked into secure custody	223	32%	192	36%	52	20%	116	29%	144	25%	
Placed in Petty Theft Program	12	2%	10	2%	1	<1%	6	2%	21	4%	
Placed in Juvenile Mediation/Victim Impact Awareness Program	1	<1%	1	<1%	3	1%	3	1%	25	4%	
Screened and referred to Traffic Court	74	11%	44	8%	28	11%	20	5%	32	6%	
Referred to youth’s county of residence	57	8%	47	9%	18	7%	43	11%	71	12%	
Youth Outreach Program families served		13		2%	18	3%	14	6%	17	4%	9
Criminal background checks	283	40%	91	17%	86	34%	67	17%	45	8%	
Alcohol and Other Drug assessment	22	3%	17	3%	2	1%	5	1%	16	3%	
Received Letter of Reprimand	36	5%	36	7%	25	10%	53	13%	79	14%	
Juvenile record sealing application evaluated for submission to the Court	60	9%	54	10%	62	24%	52	13%	42	7%	
Assessed and placed on diversion contracts	26	4%	12	2%	9	4%	11	3%	13	2%	
§ Intervention (90-day contract)	17	2%	6	1%	4	2%	4	1%	13	2%	
§ Informal diversion (6-month contract)	8	1%	6	1%	5	2%	7	2%	0	0%	
Total Cases Screened and Managed	700		530		254		395		574		

Note: The total cases screened and managed for FY 2022-23 include all caseloads from ASC/INV, DIV, and CRT. The numbers reported for Petty Theft Program, Juvenile Mediation, and Victim Impact Awareness programs are from assigned diversion cases in FY 2022-23.