



“Pre- and Post-Assessment of Community-Based Programs and Recidivism Outcomes”

A Proposal by the Tow Youth Justice Institute

University of New Haven

Summary of Scope

Purpose. This proposal is for research to contrast changes in community-based programs, the demographic characteristics of youths served, and recidivism outcomes leading up to and throughout the implementation of Public Act 07-04, known as the Raise the Age (RtA) legislation. This proposal also addresses the legislative mandate stated in Public Act 14-217, which calls for an assessment of community-based programs.

Goals. The TYJI Research Team will 1) request multi-agency data, 2) identify the most commonly used community-based programs for youth under the community supervision of CSSD, DCF, and DOC, 3) identify agency practices for determining program eligibility versus determining program selection for youths, and 4) assess program-specific objectives, program completion, and recidivism.

Recent Juvenile Justice Reform in Connecticut

As the United States has become increasingly concerned with the topic of juvenile justice, many states have made reforms to counteract the “Get Tough Movement” of the mid-

1990s that increased the punitiveness of the juvenile justice system. Since then, there has been an increased number of youths processed by the juvenile justice system and an increased number of youths processed by the adult criminal justice system. This has changed the landscape of juvenile justice and resulted in calls for change from key stakeholders who were concerned about the treatment of youth involved in the juvenile justice system in Connecticut. In response to the call for reform, the legislature in the state of Connecticut enacted Public Act 07-04, which created a plan to revise the juvenile justice jurisdiction in Connecticut to include 16- and 17-year-olds instead of excluding them. Prior to this historic legislation, Connecticut was one of only three states in the United States that automatically excluded 16- and 17-year olds from the juvenile justice jurisdiction. As the implementation of Raise the Age was approaching in 2009, the legislature amended Public Act 07-04 to modify its implementation; 16-year-olds were allowed into the juvenile justice jurisdiction on January 1, 2010, but the inclusion of 17-year-olds were delayed until July 1, 2012. Since 16- and 17-year-olds were included in the juvenile justice system at different points, this allowed for a staggered integration leading up to full implementation for both 16-and 17-year-olds.

In order to oversee the progress of the implementation, the Connecticut legislature passed Public Act 14-217 during its session in 2014, which established the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC). This committee is made up of legislators, law enforcement agencies, and juvenile justice administrators, as well as representatives from education, mental health, child protective services, youth services, and advocacy organizations for youth and their parents. Also included in Public Act 14-217 is a legislative mandate to assess the impact of Raise the Age. According to Section 79(f)(4), the JJPOC is tasked with reviewing the impact of expanding the juvenile justice jurisdiction; specifically, they are interested in changes in age of

youth served, services provided to youth, and types of charges received by youth, as well as gaps in services provided to youth and young adults.

Focus of Study

The population of interest in this study is youths and young adults who are involved with the juvenile justice system and/or the adult criminal justice system in Connecticut from 2005 to present. Information on these youths' involvement with the justice system will come from three sources: Court Support Services Division (CSSD), the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and the Department of Correction (DOC). Depending on the youth's level of penetration into the judicial and corrections processes, information on a youth may be available from one, two, or all three agencies.

Only those youth who have received community-based services will be included in this study. Proponents of community-based programming argue that in addition to costing less and being less disruptive to family supports compared to institutional treatment, community programs have the unique ability to address a youth's problem behavior in the natural context in which delinquency is likely to occur—increasing the likelihood of sustainability. On a similar note, there has been a national shift in progress of practice toward more community-based development. The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2013) and their Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, for example, has shown that with the 33% reduction in the nation's total number of youth in detention. There has also been an overall reduction in juvenile arrests and violent offenses committed by young people. In order to continue down this pathway of progress, therefore, a new emphasis must be placed on maximizing the efficacy of community-based interventions and programming.

Additional data will be requested from youth-serving organizations and agencies providing community-based services in Connecticut so that program specific outcomes can be identified. The outcomes of interest for this study are: 1) whether the youth reached program-specific outcomes relative to the services that they received, 2) whether the youth have completed the service or program that they received, and 3) whether youth were rearrested in a one-year follow-up period.

Methodology

This study will focus its analysis on the following seven questions:

1. What are commonly used community-based programs for youth under supervision?
2. What needs are the programs being implemented designed to meet?
3. How has attendance of those programs varied before, during, and after RtA?
4. What is the overlap between program eligibility and program selection?
5. How have program outcomes varied before, during, and after RtA?
6. What program features are associated with successful program outcomes? Has this changed with the implementation of RtA?
7. Are the fulfillment of program-specific outcomes associated with successful program outcomes?

To address these seven research questions, this study will be conducted in four stages. Each stage allows a different layer information to be gathered to assist with the assessment of RtA's impact on community based programs and recidivism outcomes. In the first stage, data will be requested on youth and the programs they attended programs who were under CSSD, DCF, or DOC supervision from 2000-20015. In the second stage, the details the programs and

services available to youth in Connecticut. Information will be gathered on all community-based programs offered from 2007 to 2015. Distinctions will be made for programs that were available prior to raise the age (through December 2009), programs that were available before the full implementation of Raise the Age (through July 2012), and programs that are currently available (through December 2015 and beyond).

For each program, the descriptions will be reviewed and the intended population for each program or service will be identified. Information will also be gathered to determine the trends in program completion, as well as what program-specific outcomes could be used as indicators of success. A final table will be compiled that identifies changes in program availability over the past decade, as well as similarities or differences in needs met by the programs offered to youth in Connecticut. We will need an inventory of the programs youth under 18 received and the targeted outcomes for each intervention. Also, we would need the pre- and post- data on those particular outcome measures for each youth participating in the program, their completion status, and recidivism data.

The third stage of this study will seek to understand how eligibility for each program is determined, as well as how eligible youth are selected into various programs. To obtain this information, interviews will be conducted with the providers of community-based programs. The goal is detail how different factors, such as risk assessments, location of program, and previous criminal justice history, are considered leading up to program placement. This information will increase understanding about how similarly situated youth are sent to similar or different programs, as well as how different programs operate with youth of varying need levels.

The fourth and final stage of this study will be a statistical analysis reviewing data on programs and outcomes. Program data collected in the first stage will be used to categorize programs by needs addressed, in addition to the risk level served. The analysis will provide information on the prevalence of service types and comparisons will be conducted to contrast several characteristics (age, race, and gender) of the youth. CSSD, DCF, and DOC will be able to provide data on subsequent offending that will be used to measure recidivism of the youth for a one-year follow-up period. Multiple measures of recidivism will be considered: rearrests for the same crime, rearrests for a new crime, new adjudications in juvenile court, and new convictions in adult court. Additional analyses will be conducted to determine what program features, behavioral indicators, and youth demographics are associated with program completion and recidivism.

If youth are receiving evidenced-based programming which are targeted to improve certain areas of functioning (i.e., substance use, problem solving), this design will allow for an examination of which of these factors have the strongest associations with re-arrest within one year (Lipsey, 2009). This study design would include not only all youth under age 16 who have been participating in programming under the juvenile system, but also those youth ages 16 and 17 both before and after RtA in 2010 and 2012, respectively. Utilizing both pre- and post-outcomes for these youth in their respective programs dating back to 2007, we will be able to investigate 1) program specific outcomes for 16- and 17 year-olds pre- and post- RtA and 2) whether the addition of these older youth had any impact on the outcomes for the youth already receiving programming in the juvenile system. In other words, are youth aged 16 and 17 showing better outcomes in programming in the juvenile system than the adult system? Are youth under 16 showing worse outcomes due to the inclusion of 16- and 17-year-olds?

Limitations of the Study

This study will provide findings on the impact of the implementation of Public Act 07-04. Each research question presented earlier addresses a different layer of information needed to inform Connecticut's policy-makers and other key stakeholder about the effect of including 16- and 17-year-olds in the juvenile justice system. Some of the data needed for this study to be completed has not been released to the research team. Although general information on each program is available, the researchers have yet to determine what programmatic data exists that would provide information on who is being served, what services are being offered, whether those services achieved their intended goals, or whether the services or goals changed over time. The researchers are committed to working with agencies and service providers to create a network on information that best allows the research questions to be addressed.

Anticipated Contribution

The findings of this study will help answer seven research questions constructed based on the legislative mandate in Public Act 14-217. Connecticut's legislators will also be provided with up-to-date information about 1) the community-based programs being utilized by CSSD, DCF, and DOC to address youths' needs, 2) the process of determining eligibility for programs and of selecting into programs, and 3) the rates for completion and recidivism by program, as well as what program features are best predictors of higher completion rates and lower recidivism rates. An additional focus on disproportionate minority contact will be continued throughout the study, providing information on the process and the outcomes associated with youth and young adults involved in the juvenile and adult justice systems.

Areas Not Under Review

This focus of this research does not extend beyond youth who have received community-based services while under the supervision of CSSD, DCF, or DOC. Youth are identified as individuals who are 17 years or younger at the time that services were initiated. The follow-up period for recidivism data may extend beyond a youths 18th birthday. Private programs and programs not offered under the state supervisions are not within the scope of this research.

Timeline for the Study

December 2015-March 2016. Present scope to agencies. Present scope to JJPOC. Proceed with request for IRB approval from UNH (Expedited). Finalize data agreements with agencies and providers.

April-June 2016. Compile information about programs. Interview staff from agencies and providers about eligibility and selection process.

August-September 2016. Conduct statistical analyses using information on programs and information on youths' program completion and recidivism rates.

October 2016. Present findings to JJPOC.

November-December 2016. Finalize report to JJPOC.

January 2016-March 2017. Create academic publication(s).