

Executive Summary

An Evaluation of the Behavioral Health/Juvenile Justice (BHJJ) Initiative: 2006-2017

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Begun Center for Violence
Prevention Research and Education



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Juvenile justice-involved youth with serious behavioral health issues often have inadequate and limited access to care to address their complex and multiple needs. Ohio's Behavioral Health/Juvenile Justice (BHJJ) initiative was designed to provide these youth evidence and community-based behavioral health treatment in lieu of detention. Twelve counties participated in BHJJ during the most recent biennium: Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Holmes, Lorain, Lucas, Mahoning, Montgomery, Summit, Trumbull, and Wayne. BHJJ was funded through a partnership between the Ohio Departments of Youth Services (ODYS) and Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS). The Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education at Case Western Reserve University provided evaluation services for the program.

Demographics and Youth Characteristics

- ❖ 4,338 youth have been enrolled in BHJJ (63% males, 53% non-white). In the past two years, more non-whites (58%) than whites (42%) and males (68%) than females (32%) have been enrolled.
- ❖ Youth averaged 2.2 Axis I diagnoses. Females were significantly more likely to be diagnosed with Depressive Disorders, Alcohol-related Disorders, Bipolar Disorder, and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Mood Disorder. Males were significantly more likely to be diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Cannabis-Related Disorders, and Conduct Disorder.
- ❖ 44% of males and 35% of females were diagnosed with both a mental health and substance use diagnosis.
- ❖ Caregivers reported that 26% of the females had a history of sexual abuse, nearly 50% talked about suicide, and over 23% had attempted suicide. Over 60% of males and 68% of females had family members who were diagnosed with or showed signs of depression.
- ❖ According to the OYAS, 67% of the BHJJ youth were moderate or high risk to reoffend.
- ❖ In the current BHJJ counties, 35% of youth had felony charges in the 12 months prior to enrollment, ranging from 11% in Trumbull County to 98% in Summit County.

Educational Information

- ❖ About 66% of the youth were suspended or expelled from school in the year prior to their BHJJ enrollment. During treatment, 35% were suspended or expelled. At intake, 41% of youth

earned mostly A's, B's, or C's while at termination, almost 50% of youth earned mostly A's, B's, or C's. At termination, 85% of youth were attending school.

- ❖ At termination, workers reported that 90% of youth were attending school more or about the same amount as they were before starting treatment.

Mental/Behavioral Health Outcomes

- ❖ BHJJ youth reported a significant decrease in trauma symptoms from intake to termination.
- ❖ Results from the Ohio Scales indicated the caregiver, worker, and youth all reported increased youth functioning and decreased problem severity while in BHJJ treatment.
- ❖ Both males and females reported decreased substance use with respect to most of the commonly used substances, including alcohol and marijuana.
- ❖ Upon entering the program, 56% of the youth were at risk for out of home placement. At termination, 25% of youth were at risk for out of home placement.

Termination and Recidivism Information

- ❖ Nearly 66% of the youth terminated from the BHJJ program completed treatment successfully. The average length of stay in the program was 202 days (169 days for youth enrolled during previous biennium).
- ❖ One year after termination, 18% of successful treatment completers and 24% of unsuccessful treatment completers had a new felony charge.
- ❖ Of the youth entering BHJJ with a felony charge, 27% of successful treatment completers and 36% of unsuccessful treatment completers were charged with a new felony in the 12 months following BHJJ termination.
- ❖ One hundred forty-two of the 3,679 youth (3.9%) enrolled in BHJJ for whom we had recidivism data were committed to an ODYS facility at any time following their enrollment in BHJJ.
- ❖ Using only the direct State contribution to BHJJ of \$22.3 million since 2006, the average cost per youth enrolled in BHJJ was \$5,140. The FY16 per diem to house a youth at an ODYS institution was \$509 and the average length of stay was 11.6 months. Based on these numbers, the estimated cost of housing the average youth at an ODYS facility in FY16 was approximately \$177,132.