

Executive Summary: An Evaluation of Ohio's Behavioral Health/Juvenile Justice (BHJJ) Initiative

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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. **The majority of findings presented here represent data collected between July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2019.**

Demographics and Youth Characteristics

- ❖ Since 2006, 5,338 youth have been enrolled in BHJJ (64% male, 52% non-white). The average age of youth entering the program was 15.6 years old.
- ❖ Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019, 641 youth were enrolled in BHJJ (71% male, 55% non-White). The average age of youth entering the program was 15.3 years old.
- ❖ The most common DSM diagnosis for BHJJ youth was Oppositional Defiant Disorder.
- ❖ 44% of males and 27% of females had both a mental health and substance use diagnosis.
- ❖ Caregivers reported that 21% of the females had a history of sexual abuse, 54% talked about suicide, and 23% had attempted suicide. 56% of females and 53% of males had family members who were diagnosed with or showed signs of depression.
- ❖ 21% of youth reported someone close to them was murdered in the last year.
- ❖ 74% of BHJJ youth scored moderate or high risk to reoffend on the OYAS.
- ❖ 31% of youth had at least one felony charge in the 12 months prior to BHJJ enrollment (counties ranged between 0% and 95%).
- ❖ Prior to BHJJ, 44% of the youth had a history of child welfare involvement, 11% had received substance use treatment, and 69% had received mental health treatment.

Educational Information

- ❖ About 57% of the youth were suspended or expelled from school in the year prior to their BHJJ enrollment. During treatment, 29% were suspended or expelled.
- ❖ 31% of the unsuccessful completers and 60% of successful completers earned mostly A's, B's, or C's at termination from BHJJ. At termination, 86% of youth were attending school.
- ❖ At termination, workers reported that 92% 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 related to anger, anxiety, depression, dissociation, posttraumatic stress, and sexual concerns from intake to termination.
- ❖ Results from the Ohio Scales indicated the caregiver, worker, and youth reported increased youth functioning and decreased problem severity while in BHJJ treatment.
- ❖ Past 30-day alcohol use dropped from 5.1 days to 0.7 days while past 30-day marijuana use dropped from 5.7 days to 3.3 days.

Termination and Recidivism Information (2015-2019)

- ❖ 81% of the youth terminated from the BHJJ program completed treatment successfully. The average length of stay in the program was 197 days.
- ❖ Workers reported that police contacts have been reduced for 79% of the youth.
- ❖ The percentage of youth who reported pushing/hitting/kicking another youth in the last year dropped from 56% at intake to 26% at termination.
- ❖ At intake, 53% of the youth were at risk for out of home placement. At termination, 25.0% of youth were at risk for out of home placement. Of those youth who successfully completed BHJJ treatment, 8% were at risk for out of home placement at termination.
- ❖ One year after termination, 15% of successful completers and 20% of unsuccessful completers had a new felony charge.
- ❖ Since 2015, 3.8% (n = 148) of the youth enrolled in BHJJ for whom we had recidivism data were committed to an ODYS facility at any time following their enrollment in BHJJ.
- ❖ The average number of misdemeanor charges in the 12 months prior to and after BHJJ declined from 1.9 to 0.9. The average number of felony charges in the 12 months prior to and after BHJJ declined from 0.7 to 0.4.
- ❖ Using only the direct State contribution to BHJJ of \$27.6 million since 2006, the average cost per youth enrolled in BHJJ was \$5,170. Based on ODYS data, the estimated cost of housing the average youth at an ODYS facility in FY18 was approximately \$196,000.