

Executive Summary: An Evaluation of the Behavioral Health/Juvenile Justice (BHJJ) Initiative: 2006-2015

Cuyahoga County Results

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: AN EVALUATION OF THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH/JUVENILE JUSTICE (BHJJ) INITIATIVE: 2006 – 2015 CUYAHOGA COUNTY RESULTS

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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 intended to transform and expand the local systems' options to better serve these youth. Recent emphasis was placed on decreasing the population of ODYS facilities while providing alternatives to incarceration. Twelve counties participated in BHJJ in the newest biennium: Cuyahoga, Franklin, Cuyahoga, Hamilton, Lucas, Summit, Wayne, Holmes, Trumbull, Mahoning, Lorain, and Wood. BHJJ was funded by 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 research and evaluation services for the program.

The BHJJ program diverts youth from local and state detention centers into more comprehensive, community-based mental and behavioral health treatment. The BHJJ program enrolled juvenile justice-involved youth between 10-18 years of age who met several of the following criteria: a DSM IV Axis I diagnosis, substantial mental status impairment, a co-occurring substance use/abuse problem, a pattern of violent or criminal behavior, and a history of multi-system involvement.

Demographics and Youth Characteristics

- ❖ 371 youth have been enrolled in BHJJ (50.7% male, 49.7% African American). In the past two years, more non-whites (74.4%) than whites (25.6%) and males (62.2%) than females (37.8%) have been enrolled.
- ❖ Youth averaged 2.8 Axis I diagnoses. Males were significantly more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD and Cannabis-related disorders. Females were more likely to be diagnosed with PTSD.
- ❖ Over 88% of males and 71% of females were diagnosed with both a mental health and substance use diagnosis.
- ❖ Caregivers reported that 36.7% of the females had a history of sexual abuse, 60.8% talked about suicide, and over 30% had attempted suicide. Over 62% of males and 77% of females had family members who were diagnosed with or showed signs of depression.
- ❖ According to the OYAS, nearly 78% of the youth served in Cuyahoga County were moderate or high risk.
- ❖ Twenty-eight percent of youth served in Cuyahoga County had felony charges in the 12 months prior to enrollment.

Educational Information

- ❖ Over 74% of the youth were suspended or expelled from school in the year prior to their enrollment. At termination, 77.8% of youth were attending school. At intake, 36.6% of youth earned mostly A's, B's, or C's while at termination, 57.4% of youth earned mostly A's, B's, or C's.
- ❖ At termination, workers reported that 62.1% of youth were attending school more than 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 a decrease in past six month alcohol and marijuana use.
- ❖ Youth demonstrated a 70% reduction in the risk for out of home placement at the time of termination. A little more than 7% of successful completers and 52% of unsuccessful completers were at risk for out of home placement at termination.
- ❖ Over 87% of caregivers were satisfied with the services their child received through BHJJ and 94% agreed that the services received were culturally and ethnically sensitive.

Termination and Recidivism Information

- ❖ Sixty-eight percent of the youth terminated from the BHJJ program were identified locally as successful treatment completers. The average length of stay in the program was approximately 11 months (approximately 8 months for youth enrolled during previous biennium).
- ❖ Successful treatment completion in BHJJ produced lower percentages of subsequent juvenile court charges, felonies, misdemeanors, and delinquent adjudications than unsuccessful completion, although both groups demonstrated decreased juvenile court involvement after termination from BHJJ compared to before enrollment.
- ❖ One year after termination, 9.5% of successful treatment completers and 14.3% of unsuccessful treatment completers had a new felony charge. Of the youth entering BHJJ with at least one felony charge, about 21% were charged with a new felony in the 12 months following BHJJ termination.
- ❖ Thirteen of the 354 youth (3.7%) enrolled in Cuyahoga County for whom we had recidivism data were sent to an ODYS facility at any time following their enrollment in BHJJ.