

Executive Summary: An Evaluation of the Behavioral Health/Juvenile Justice (BHJJ) Initiative: 2008-2015

Hamilton County Results

Fred Butcher, PhD | Krystel Tossone, PhD | Jeff M. Kretschmar, PhD



JACK, JOSEPH AND MORTON MANDEL
SCHOOL OF APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES
CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY

Begun Center for
Violence Prevention
Research and Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: AN EVALUATION OF THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH/JUVENILE JUSTICE (BHJJ) INITIATIVE: 2008 – 2015 HAMILTON COUNTY RESULTS

Fred Butcher, Ph.D., Krystel Tossone, Ph.D., & Jeff M. Kretschmar, Ph.D.

Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education
Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences
Case Western Reserve University

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

- ❖ In Hamilton County, 225 youth have been enrolled in BHJJ (70.7% males, 51.7% African American). In the past two years, more African Americans (60.4%) than Whites (39.6%) and males (75%) than females (25%) have been enrolled.
- ❖ Youth averaged 1.9 Axis I diagnoses. Males were significantly more likely to be diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Females were significantly more likely to be diagnosed with Depressive Disorders and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder.
- ❖ Over 34% of males and 26% of females were diagnosed with both a mental health and substance use diagnosis.
- ❖ Caregivers reported that 16.1% of the females had a history of sexual abuse, over 41% talked about suicide, and over 23% had attempted suicide. Over 65% of males and 67% of females had family members who were diagnosed with or showed signs of depression.
- ❖ According to the OYAS, 44.8% of the youth served in BHJJ were moderate or high risk.
- ❖ Nearly 29% of youth had felony charges in the 12 months prior to enrollment.

Educational Information

- ❖ Over 56% of the youth were suspended or expelled from school in the year prior to their enrollment. At termination, 93.7% of youth were attending school. At intake, 16.1% of youth earned mostly A's or B's, while at termination, 26.4% of youth earned mostly A's or B's.
- ❖ At termination, workers reported that 91.8% of youth were attending school more or than or about the same as they were before starting treatment.

Mental/Behavioral Health Outcomes

- ❖ BHJJ youth reported a significant decrease in trauma symptoms of Anger, Posttraumatic Stress, and Dissociation 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 6 month alcohol and marijuana use.
- ❖ At termination, 100% of caregivers reported that they were satisfied with the services their child received and that they were satisfied with the cultural and ethnic sensitivity of BHJJ staff.

Termination and Recidivism Information

- ❖ Over 75% 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 7 months (6.9 months for youth enrolled during previous biennium).
- ❖ Prior to the BHJJ program, 18.3% of youth were at risk for out of home placement. At termination, 16.7% were at risk for out of home placement.
- ❖ 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, 15.7% of successful treatment completers and 25.0% of unsuccessful treatment completers had a new felony charge. Of the youth entering BHJJ with at least one felony charge, 29.6% were charged with a new felony in the 12 months following BHJJ termination.
- ❖ Four of the 217 youth (1.8%) enrolled in BHJJ for whom we had recidivism data were sent to an ODYS facility at any time following their enrollment in BHJJ.