

Executive Summary: An Evaluation of the Behavioral Health/Juvenile Justice (BHJJ) Initiative: 2009-2015 Lucas County Results

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: AN EVALUATION OF THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH/JUVENILE JUSTICE (BHJJ) INITIATIVE: 2009–2015 LUCAS 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

- ❖ 218 youth have been enrolled in BHJJ (75% males, 54.3% African American). In the past two years, more Non-Whites (71.6%) than Whites (28.4%) and males (81.2%) than females (17.9%) have been enrolled.
- ❖ Youth averaged 2.05 Axis I diagnoses. Females were significantly more likely to be diagnosed with Depressive Disorders.
- ❖ Over 15% of males and 12.2% of females were diagnosed with both a mental health and substance use diagnosis.
- ❖ Caregivers reported that 31.4% of the females had a history of sexual abuse, 51% talked about suicide, and nearly 22% had attempted suicide. Over 69% of males and 64% of females had family members who were diagnosed with or showed signs of depression.
- ❖ According to the OYAS, 74.6% of the youth served in BHJJ were moderate or high risk.
- ❖ In the 12 months prior to enrollment, 48.2% of youth enrolled in Lucas County were charged with a felony.

Educational Information

- ❖ Nearly 72% of the youth were suspended or expelled from school in the year prior to their enrollment. At termination, 78.8% of youth were attending school. At intake, 35.1% of youth earned mostly A's, B's, or C's while at termination, 40.7% of youth earned mostly A's, B's, or C's.
- ❖ At termination, workers reported that nearly 87% 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 decrease in trauma symptoms from intake to termination in the Dissociation and Sexual Concerns domains.
- ❖ Results from the Ohio Scales indicated that caregiver, worker, and youth all reported increased youth functioning and decreased problem severity while in BHJJ treatment.
- ❖ Lucas County youth reported a decrease in past six month alcohol and marijuana use from intake to termination.
- ❖ Fifteen percent of successful completers and 83.3% of unsuccessful completers were at risk for out of home placement at termination.
- ❖ Over 85% of caregivers agreed that they were satisfied with the services their child received through BHJJ and about 98% agreed that the services received were culturally and ethnically sensitive.

Termination and Recidivism Information

- ❖ Seventy-three percent of the youth terminated from the BHJJ program were identified locally as successful treatment completers. Nearly 78% (77.4%) of youth enrolled in the past biennium were identified as successful treatment completers. The average length of stay in the program was approximately 4.8 months (3.8 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.
- ❖ Of the youth entering BHJJ with at least one felony charge, 25% were charged with a new felony in the 12 months following BHJJ termination.
- ❖ Ten of the 183 youth (5.5%) enrolled in BHJJ for whom we had recidivism data were sent to an ODYS facility at any time following their enrollment in BHJJ.