Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities:

Responses to the 2010 Minnesota Student Survey

September 2011

Department of Public Safety
Office of Justice Programs

Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Responses to the 2010 Minnesota Student Survey

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Acknowledgements

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Juvenile Correctional Facilities Participating in the 2010 Minnesota Student Survey

- Anoka County Secure Juvenile Center, Lino Lakes, Pines School
- Anoka County Non-Secure Shelter Facility, Lino Lakes, Pines School
- Arrowhead Juvenile Center, Duluth, Arrowhead Academy
- Boys Totem Town, St. Paul
- Dakota County Juvenile Services Center, Hastings, Riverside School
- East Central Regional Juvenile Center, Lino Lakes, Pines School
- Hayward Group Home, Albert Lea
- Heartland Ranch, Benson
- Hennepin County Home School, Minnetonka, Epsilon Program
- Hennepin County Juvenile Detention Center, Minneapolis, Stadium View School
- ITASKIN Juvenile Center, Grand Rapids, ITASKIN Education Center
- Kids' Peace Mesabi, Buhl, Mesabi Academy
- Mille Lacs Academy, Onamia
- Minnesota Correctional Facility: Red Wing, Walter Maginnis High School
- Minnesota Correctional Facility: Togo, Alice O'Brien School
- Northwestern Minnesota Juvenile Center, Bemidji, First City School
- Prairie Lakes Juvenile Detention Center, Willmar, Prairie Lakes School
- Ramsey County Juvenile Services Center, St. Paul
- Red Lake Juvenile Detention Center, Red Lake Nation
- Southwest Youth Services, Magnolia
- Village Ranch, Cokato
- Washington County Juvenile Detention Center, Stillwater
- West Central Regional Juvenile Center, Moorhead
- Woodland Hills, Duluth, Woodland Hills Academy

For a map of participating and non-participating facilities in Minnesota, see Appendix B. In order to participate in this study, sites had to provide residential detention or correctional services and have an education program onsite.

Executive Summary

The Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) is a 127-item questionnaire administered every three years to 6th, 9th and 12th graders in Minnesota public schools. The survey includes a wide variety of questions related to youth attitudes, behaviors and health indicators. Questions reflect a range of protective factors including connectedness to school, family and community, as well as risk factors such as drug and alcohol use, violence and victimization. The survey originated in 1989 with the most recent administration occurring in 2010. In 2010, 88 percent of school districts participated. In total, 71 percent of 6th, 9th and 12th graders (roughly 131,000 students) completed the 2010 MSS.

Twenty-four residential juvenile correctional facilities with onsite education programs also participated in the 2010 MSS. In this report, the responses from 584 youth in correctional facilities were compared to a same-sized sample of youth who took the MSS in mainstream schools. Students were matched to one another on their gender, age, race and Hispanic ethnicity. Comparing two "mirror image" groups of students helps to ensure that differences in survey responses are not attributable to demographic variables.

Exploring differences between the two student groups can provide information on what challenges youth in correctional facilities are facing, and what targeted intervention efforts may alleviate their personal or situational difficulties. Similarly, areas in which survey responses are the same for both groups can illuminate protective factors all youth possess, or risk factors to which all youth are vulnerable.

A secondary objective of this report is to demonstrate how the MSS data findings support the need for best practices across youth-serving disciplines. The following sections are selected findings from the report.

Common Protective Factors

- Both mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities express comparable, high levels of feeling cared for by their parents and other adult relatives. Following family members, peers are identified as their next greatest support.
- Youth in correctional facilities and mainstream youth are equally likely to report that they like school; feel safe at school; and feel safe in their neighborhoods. The most common educational goal for both populations is to go on to college.
- The majority of students in both populations have not tried drugs other than alcohol and marijuana. Illicit drug use and the use/abuse of prescription medications affects a smaller percentage of each population as compared to alcohol and marijuana.

Common Risk Factors

- Youth in both groups report feeling least cared for by adults in their community.
- Both youth populations report comparable levels of experiencing property crime at school, as well as physical and sexual victimization at school. Both populations report similar levels of experiencing dating violence.
- Both populations of youth report engaging in some degree of illegal or anti-social behavior, including the use of alcohol, marijuana and other drugs. Theft, vandalism, fights and driving under the influence are also present among both student populations.
- In both groups, sexually active students reported infrequent, inconsistent use of birth control or STD/HIV prevention.
- Both groups express experiencing mental and emotional stress. Youth report feeling anger, depression, worry and stress. Difficulties with concentration, restlessness and impulsivity also come through in each population of students. Youth in both populations report engaging in self-harm and suicidal ideation.

Executive Summary

Risk Factors Unique to Youth in Correctional Facilities

- Youth in correctional facilities are significantly more likely than mainstream peers to report living in a single-parent household; receiving Free or Reduced Priced Lunch (FRPL) at school; and having an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- Youth in correctional facilities report experiencing physical and sexual abuse by an adult in their family at rates over twice those of mainstream peers. Responses to questions that gauge emotional health reveal that youth in correctional facilities are significantly more likely to report emotional health concerns than mainstream youth in most categories. Youth in correctional facilities are more likely to self-report an ongoing mental health condition and receiving mental health treatment.
- Youth in correctional facilities are more likely to report that their parents or other family members have issues with alcohol or drugs that cause ongoing health, job or legal problems. Youth self-report using more drugs and alcohol than mainstream youth beginning at a significantly earlier age. Youth in correctional facilities report substantially more instances where their own drug or alcohol use has caused problems with their health, responsibilities, relationships and the law.
- Youth in correctional facilities report engaging in more illegal and anti-social behavior than peers, including the commission of property crimes and interpersonal violence. Risk-taking and impulsivity appear to be higher among the population of youth in correctional facilities in most areas. While youth in correctional facilities report more theft, property damage and fights, they also report more truancy and running away from home.

Practice Implications

Risk factors that predicate involvement in the juvenile justice system have remained consistent over time. The responses of youth in correctional facilities to the 2010 MSS were very similar to those most recently gathered in 2007. The benefit of consistency is that interventions have been developed, piloted and replicated to address these risk factors. As such, best practices and model programs have been developed to target specific youth and issues.

- The common protective factors in both populations illustrate that youth-serving practitioners can invoke and build upon family caring and connectedness to further youth success. Parents and families ought to be given ample opportunities to participate in youth activities, goals and case plans.
- Minnesota youth largely perceive their school and neighborhood environments as safe, which is a key factor in providing safe spaces for youth to engage in leadership and citizenship.
- Adolescents have strong connections to peers as they differentiate from their parents. Youth-serving agencies that understand the importance of peer relationships and tap into peers as supports can promote positive outcomes for youth.
- The common risk factors in both populations illuminate where youth-serving agencies can assist and support all youth. Minnesota youth in general report challenges with emotional stress, and with alcohol and marijuana use. Cognitive-behavioral interventions related to decision-making, social skills, and drug and alcohol use are effective in reducing risk-taking behavior.
- Consequences for actions that are appropriate to the level of infraction and take into account youth's developmental capacities are best practices.

- Youth in correctional facilities specifically need access to Trauma Informed Care that acknowledges the effects of experiencing and witnessing physical and sexual victimization on social-emotional development. This population of youth has a drug and alcohol onset that occurs during or before middle-school, also consistent with trauma. Youth need access to mental and chemical health services, and treatment designed for adolescents.
- Anger management, social-skill development, problem-solving and decision-making skills can be taught and modeled trough cognitive-behavioral curricula. Family functioning can be improved significantly through home-based family therapy models.
- Finally, systems level work that addresses intergenerational poverty, racial bias, and how these affect those involved in the justice system can help to make the system more equitable.

The strengths and needs of Minnesota's youth cross many professional disciplines, including health, public health, human services, education and juvenile justice. Furthermore, the most effective interventions include the participation of and collaboration with families, schools, communities, community-based providers and government-based services. Youth-serving agencies at all levels must act collectively to implement best practices to support justice system-involved youth and families across the state.

Please watch for additional *Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Responses to the 2010 Minnesota Student Survey* publications. Reports are planned specifically for exploring the response of girls in correctional facilities, and the response of youth in facilities who report having experienced personal victimization or trauma.

Introduction

Minnesota Student Survey Overview

The Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) is a 127-item questionnaire administered every three years to 6th, 9th and 12th graders in Minnesota public schools. The survey includes a wide variety of questions related to youth attitudes, behaviors and health indicators. Questions reflect a range of protective factors, including connectedness to school, family and community, as well as risk factors such as drug and alcohol use, violence and victimization.[i] The survey originated in 1989 with the most recent administration occurring in 2010.

Content of the MSS is collaboratively determined by Minnesota's departments of Education, Health, Human Services and Public Safety. Many of the questions are dictated by state or federal data collection requirements. Participation in the survey is voluntary such that school districts elect to participate and any individual student may refuse to participate for any reason. Participation in the MSS has historically been high: In 2010, 88 percent of school districts participated. In total, 71 percent of 6th, 9th and 12th graders (roughly 131,000 students) took the 2010 MSS.

The MSS is an invaluable tool as it collects information on myriad topics in an anonymous, self-report format. Not only do MSS responses stand alone as a valuable data set with statewide representation, they also supplement and enhance other state-level data sources, and show trends in student behaviors and attitudes over time. The MSS provides students, parents and their communities a dynamic vehicle for ongoing communication about issues vital to the health, safety and academic success of youth. It is a valuable tool for school districts, county agencies, and state agencies in planning meaningful and effective ways of supporting students and families.

History of the Report on Youth in Correctional Facilities

A unique subset of Minnesota students are those receiving an education outside of the "mainstream" school setting, including youth placed in juvenile correctional facilities. Minnesota has both secure (locked) juvenile facilities and non-secure facilities. By Minnesota statute, placement of youth in secure facilities is reserved for youth accused of a delinquent act who are deemed to be a risk to self or others, to not appear for court, or to not stay in the lawful custody of the person to whom they are released.[1] Youth placed in correctional facilities also include those who have been adjudicated delinquent and court-ordered to complete a correctional placement by a judge.

The first survey of students in juvenile correctional facilities occurred in 1991 after legislation directed the Minnesota Department of Education to survey "special populations," including Juvenile Corrections/Detention Centers.[2] By 1995, public schools and correctional facilities were on the same three-year administration calendar. Historically, the report on youth in correctional facilities has consisted of comparative analysis between the survey responses of youth in correctional facilities and those of mainstream school youth of the same age and gender. In 2007, the matched sample was expanded to include matches on race and Hispanic ethnicity.

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[i] To view the full content of the Secondary MSS (9th-12th grades) as seen by participating students, visit the following web page: http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/groups/SafeHealthy/documents/Publication/014981.pdf.

Introduction

Purpose

The goal of this report is to examine how youth in correctional facilities who took the 2010 MSS responded similarly or differently to the survey than a matched sample of youth from the mainstream student population. While the MSS is not expressly written or designed to monitor juvenile delinquency, it does shed light on attitudes and experiences that often precede anti-social behavior or delinquent activity.

Differences between the two student groups can provide information on what challenges youth in correctional facilities are facing that might have contributed to their involvement in the juvenile justice system and out-of-home placement. With this knowledge, intervention efforts can be targeted at youth with the greatest level of need. Conversely, areas in which the survey responses are the same for both groups can illuminate challenges all youth face. These similarities may inform widespread prevention efforts. This analysis also seeks to identify strengths and protective factors Minnesota youth possess.

Many MSS questions are asked from a problem-oriented perspective rather than one of youth strengths. For example, youth are asked how many times they have used drugs but not how many times they have had the opportunity to use and have chosen not to. Problem-oriented questions tend to result in interventions that are problem-driven rather than strength- and solution-focused. For each risk factor, there may also be a protective factor at work keeping youth safe, healthy and connected. In addition, survey data may show what youth are doing or how they are feeling, but it does not capture the why behind them.

Methodology

In 2010, 24 of 29 residential juvenile correctional facilities with an onsite education program participated in the MSS. Twenty-three facilities[ii] were licensed by the Minnesota Department of Corrections and one facility operates under tribal authority. This represents a participation rate of 83 percent of juvenile correctional facilities. There are additional licensed residential correctional programs in Minnesota, but the youth in these placements attend public schools where they would have the opportunity to take the MSS along with other youth.

Locked or "secure" facilities were specifically encouraged to participate because youth in secure placements are least likely to have had the opportunity to take the survey in their home school district. In addition, youth who meet the criteria for admission to secure correctional facilities represent some of Minnesota's highest-risk juvenile offenders. While some of the participating facilities have secure programming, it was not a requirement for survey participation or inclusion in this report. As such, participating facilities represent secure and non-secure facilities, as well as facilities having both secure and non-secure programs. For additional information about the characteristics of participating facilities, see Appendix A.

Data presented in this report come from comparing the survey responses of youth in correctional facilities (n=584) to those of a matched sample of youth respondents in the mainstream school population (n=584).[iii] As was developed in 2007, the mainstream sample of youth reflects the same age, gender and race/ethnicity[iv] as respondents in the juvenile correc-

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ii Of these facilities, 11 had secure beds only; five have secure and non-secure beds; and eight have non-secure beds only. Responses from youth in correctional facilities represent a mixture of youth meeting criteria for secure placement and those for whom a non-secure setting is adequate to meet their needs. Schools within correctional facilities were permitted to administer the survey in a manner that was logistically feasible to their operation. Youth held in detention following arrest or pending court may not have been surveyed because of the high turnover rate of these youth. As such, the sample of youth in correctional facilities may also over-represent youth who are in the facilities on longer term, residential placements. For specific information about the characteristics of participating survey sites, please see Appendix A.

iii Approximately three percent of all mainstream school surveys and five percent of juvenile correctional facility surveys were omitted from the final datasets because gender was missing or response patterns were frequently inconsistent or highly improbable. It is unknown how many youth in the facility population refused to participate or had previously taken the survey in their local education setting.

iv For the remainder of this report, the term "race" will be used in place of the terms "race and ethnicity."

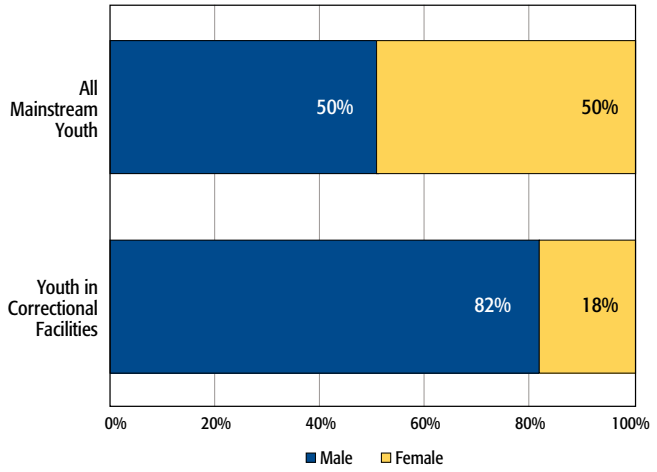
v Unless otherwise noted in the text, data in this report will be presented when there is a statistically significant difference based on the Pearson Chi-Square Coefficient ($x^2 < .05$).

tional facilities. Using an analysis tool known as a "chi-squared test of independence," true statistical differences between youth in correctional facilities and the matched sample of mainstream youth can be identified.[v]

The Importance of Matching

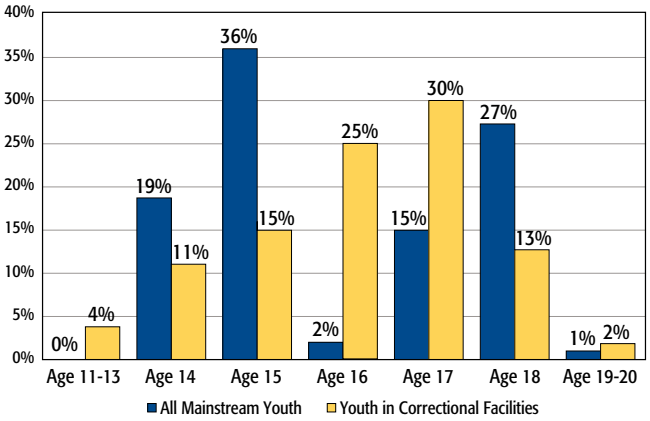
Creating a matched sample of mainstream youth is important because, demographically, youth in correctional facilities are different from the mainstream student population in Minnesota. For example, while mainstream youth were equally male and female (50% each), youth in correctional facilities during the 2010 MSS administration were 82 percent male and 18 percent female. The matching process neutralizes response differences that might be attributable to gender. The gender distribution for mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities is the same in 2010 as it was in 2007.

2010 Minnesota Student Survey: Respondent Gender



With regard to age, because the mainstream school MSS respondents were in 9th and 12th grades, nearly two-thirds (63%) were either 15 or 18 years old. In correctional facilities, the majority of residents (55%) were 16 or 17 years old. The student matching process neutralizes response differences that might be attributable to respondents' age. The age distribution for mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities is essentially the same in 2010 as it was in 2007.

2010 Minnesota Student Survey: Respondent Age

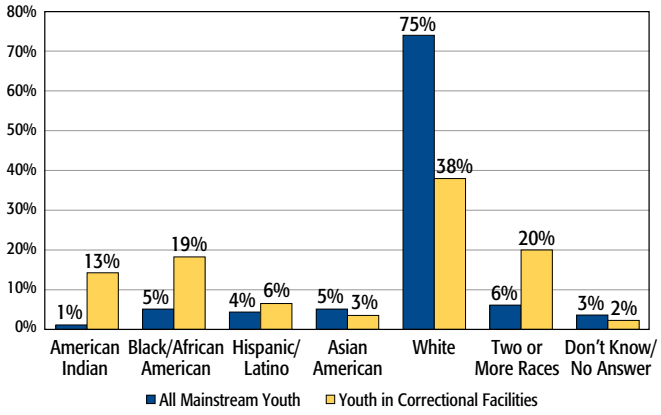


Another important variable to consider is respondent race. The overall mainstream student population that completed the 2010 MSS was 72 percent White and 23 percent youth of color.[3] As a racial distribution, this fairly accurately matches U.S. Census Bureau population projections for youth in Minnesota. White, non-Hispanic youth constitute just over 80 percent of youth ages 14 to 18 statewide according to census bureau estimates.[4] In juvenile correctional facilities, however, the racial landscape looks much different: At the time of the 2010 MSS, youth from correctional facilities were 61 percent youth of color and 38 percent White.

For this reason, the mainstream sample group used in this report also has the same racial composition as the youth in correctional facilities. Comparing two "mirror image" groups of students helps ensure that differences in their survey responses cannot be attributed to race.

The racial distribution of youth in correctional facilities in 2010 is somewhat different than in 2007. The percentage of White youth increased from 33 percent to 38 percent; African American youth decreased from 28 percent to 19 percent; and the percentage of youth selecting two or more races increased from 16 percent to 20 percent. The remaining race categories are comparable to the 2007 report.

2010 Minnesota Student Survey: Respondent Race



Boys Versus Girls

Research strongly suggests that males and females are involved in the justice system for different reasons. To explore how gender may affect reasons for juvenile justice system involvement, a separate report will examine differences in responses between boys (n=481) and girls (n=103) within the juvenile correctional facility population. The responses of boys and girls in correctional facilities will be analyzed using the same statistical tools as in this report. Please watch for this subsequent report on gender to be published in fall 2011.

Data Limitations

Youth Representation and Generalizability

While the juvenile correctional facilities that participated in the 2010 MSS have statewide representation, not all facilities participated. There may be some regional representation lacking that may affect demographic distributions in the data.

While a sufficient number of individual students were analyzed to be statistically valid, these samples still reflect a small portion of the Minnesota youth population and a small percentage of youth who experience detention or residential correctional placements in any given year. In addition, many youth are involved in the juvenile justice system who are *not* placed out of the home or removed from their mainstream school setting. The *majority* of youth involved in the justice system remain in their communities. The responses of these youth are within the mainstream school data or the data on youth in Alternative Learning Centers.

Racial and Ethnic Distinctions

This report preserves the self-reported racial distribution of youth in correctional facilities on the day of the 2010 MSS. Due to small numbers, it does not examine the responses of racial or ethnic groups separately for differences between unique racial populations. African Americans are the largest population of color in Minnesota and are the largest population of color in juvenile correctional facilities. In this manner, the experiences of African American youth in this sample may be more pronounced than the experiences of other racial groups.

Effect of Youth Placement on Survey Responses

The MSS is designed to be taken by students while in their community. As such, some questions are asked with short time parameters such as "in the last seven days" or "in the last 30 days." When youth in correctional facilities respond to such questions, they may be reporting on their behaviors and experiences while in the facility, rather than in the community. As such, most questions with these short time parameters have been excluded from analysis. Effort has been made to identify responses that may be impacted by youths' placement when they are included.

Survey Question Limitations

Many responses given by the students naturally lead to additional questions by researchers and readers. This report is limited to providing responses to questions that were asked in the MSS and does not generally provide additional data from outside sources. If there appears to be a gap in some content areas or a focus on others, it is the result of the MSS questionnaire content.

Trend Analysis

Due to changes in methodology, data collected in 2007 and 2010 cannot be compared to reports from previous years. Also, a larger sampling of correctional facilities participated in the 2010 MSS as compared to 2007. Differences between the 2007 and 2010 data could be attributable to facilities serving different risk levels, security needs or treatment needs. While two data sets do not make a trend, relevant differences and similarities between 2007 and 2010 data will be highlighted as are relevant throughout the report.

Family Connectedness

For most, family is the primary social influence during the formative years of early childhood. Families provide emotional support, learning opportunities, moral guidance, self esteem and physical necessities. Parents are a critical factor in the social development of children. Countless studies have produced empirical findings that parental behavior can either increase or decrease an adolescent's risk for delinquency and other problem behaviors. Supportive parent–child relationships, positive discipline methods, close monitoring and supervision, and parental advocacy for their children consistently buffer youth against problem behaviors.[5]

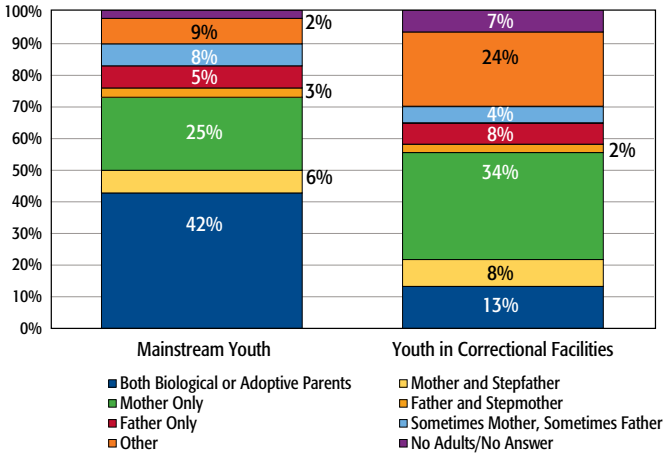
Family disorganization and discord, on the other hand, can have the opposite effect on children. In families in which there is violence, favorable attitudes toward criminal or anti-social behaviors, and family disruptions, children are more likely to engage in future delinquency and anti-social behavior.[6] The behaviors need not be extreme to yield negative outcomes. Even poor family management practices such as failure to set clear expectations for behavior, poor monitoring and supervision, and inconsistent discipline are predictive of later delinquency and substance abuse.[7]

Family structure or composition alone does not cause delinquency. While single-parent families often have greater challenges associated with finances, poverty and supervision of children, one of the most consistent protective factors for youth is a positive relationship with a parent.[8] If parents model or promote pro-social attitudes and behaviors, these will more likely be present among their children regardless of family composition.

Living Arrangement

Youth in mainstream schools are significantly more likely to report living with both biological/adoptive parents than peers in juvenile correctional facilities.[vi] Forty-two percent of the mainstream youth sample lives with both biological/adoptive parents. Comparatively, only 13 percent of youth in correctional facilities live with both biological/adoptive parents. Youth in correctional facilities are substantially more likely to live with only their mother (34%) than the matched sample of mainstream youth (25%).

Respondent Living Arrangement



Across both student samples, the number of youth living with their father alone (5% to 8%) and a parent and step-parent (9% to 10%) are similar. Joint custody arrangements between their mother and father also apply to between 4 percent and 8 percent of youth in both student groups.

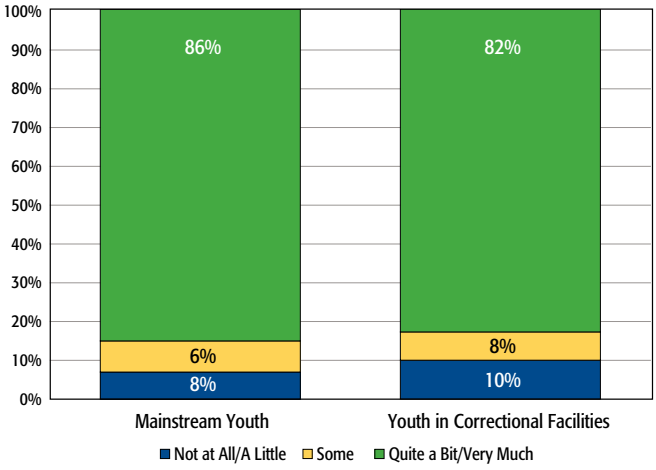
Youth in correctional facilities are more likely to select "other" as a living arrangement than the mainstream matched sample (24% versus 9%). While foster-parents and grandparents are included in this category, it may also include alternative living arrangements with other family members, friends or out-of-home placements.

Familial Support

Despite different living arrangements for mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities, there is no statistical difference between the two groups on whether or not they feel their parents care for them. Both groups report that their parents care about them "quite a bit" or "very much" 82 percent to 86 percent of the time. These response rates are quite comparable to those in 2007.

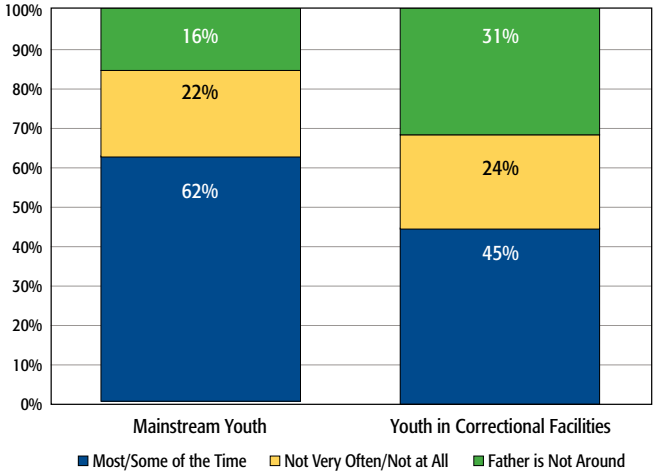
[vi] In both populations, two adoptive parents accounted for 2.6 percent or fewer of living arrangements.

How Much Youth Feel Their Parents Care About Them



When specifically asked if they can talk to their parents about problems they are having, over 70 percent of youth in both groups report that they can talk to their mother "most" or "some of the time." In both student groups, fewer youth express being able to talk to their fathers about problems. Thirty-one percent of youth in correctional facilities indicate their "father is not around" compared to 16 percent of mainstream youth. As a result, fewer than half (45%) of youth in correctional facilities feel they can talk to their father for support with problems, versus 62 percent of mainstream youth. These responses are nearly identical to the 2007 matched sample results.

Whether Youth Can Talk to Their Father About Problems They Are Having



Other Family Supports

In conjunction with parents, extended family members such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins are important assets to youth. Social service providers generally recognize extended family as the most preferred caregiver in the event a parent is unable to care for their child and often bring extended family members in to provide support when caregivers are under strain.[9] The professional fields of juvenile delinquency prevention and juvenile corrections acknowledge extended family involvement as an important contribution to indigenous, holistic support systems.[10]

As with their relationships with parents, there is no statistical difference between mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities on feeling cared for by other adult relatives. Eighty-one percent of mainstream youth feel other adult relatives care for them "quite a bit" or "very much," as do 76 percent of youth in correctional facilities. In both groups, similar percentages (10% and 11%, respectively) feel that their adult relatives care for them "a little" or "not at all." While extended family supports are rated highly, youth perceptions of parental care are nevertheless higher than the other adult relative category. These responses are nearly identical to the 2007 matched sample results.

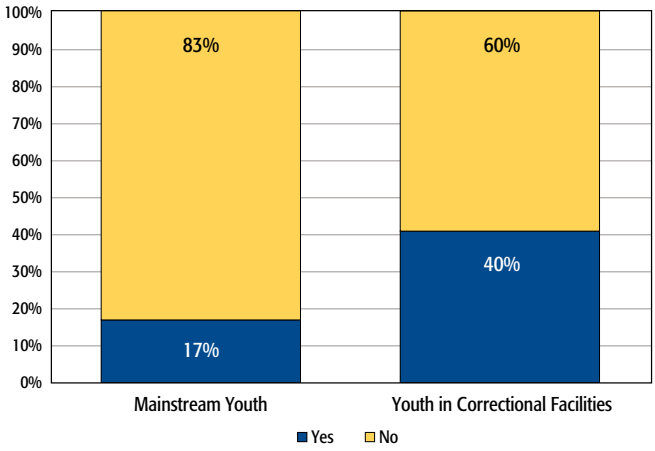
Family Drug and Alcohol Use

Chemical use and abuse within families can be extremely destructive to family cohesion and one's sense of safety. Research shows that there are higher rates of child physical and sexual abuse in families where chemical abuse is present and, in these situations, youth can engrain feelings of responsibility for their parent's abuse or feel the need to protect family members from the consequences of their using. Particularly, when parents are experiencing addiction, youth are often prematurely pressured into caretaking roles for parents, siblings and household upkeep.[11] In addition, adult drug and alcohol abuse can normalize chemical use and lead to earlier exposure, access and experimentation by youth themselves.[12]

Youth in correctional facilities report substantially more problems associated with family member drug and alcohol use than do youth in the mainstream schools. While 17 percent of youth in the mainstream sample report that alcohol use in their families has repeatedly caused family, health, job or legal problems, youth in correctional

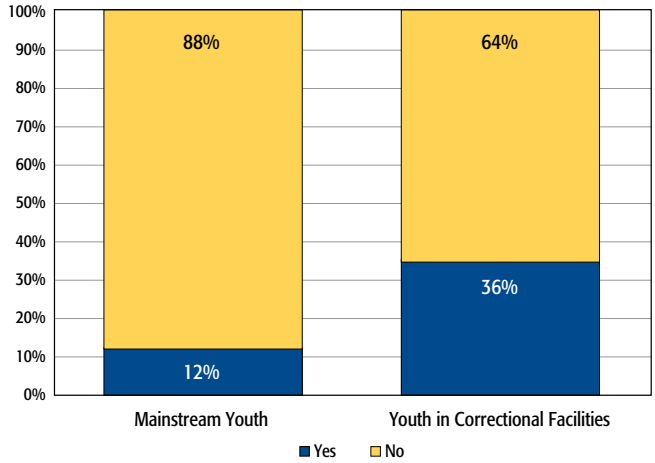
facilities report that this is the case almost two and a half times more often (40%). These responses are nearly identical to the 2007 matched sample results.

Whether Alcohol Use By a Family Member Has Repeatedly Caused Family, Health, Job or Legal Problems



Problematic drug use by a family member is less common than alcohol abuse for mainstream youth (12%). For youth in correctional facilities, however, the rate is three times higher than mainstream youth with 36 percent reporting repeated consequences associated with drug use by a family member. Drug abuse appears nearly as pervasive as alcohol abuse in the families of youth in correctional facilities. Slightly more youth in correctional facilities reported family drug issues in 2007 (39%) as compared to 2010; mainstream response rates remained nearly the same.

Whether Drug Use By a Family Member Has Repeatedly Caused Family, Health, Job or Legal Problems



Eight percent of youth in the mainstream matched sample report *both* a drug and alcohol problem by a family member versus 25 percent of youth in correctional facilities. These responses are nearly identical to the 2007 matched sample results. In total, drug *or* alcohol problems in families touch 42 percent of youth in correctional facilities. This is a decline from nearly six in 10 youth in 2007. The reason for the self-reported decline is unknown. Nevertheless, a large percentage of youth in correctional facilities come from family systems where drug and alcohol use is not only present but is perceived by the youth themselves as causing significant harm.

Section Summary

- Youth of color and male youth are overrepresented in juvenile correctional facilities in Minnesota based on their percentages in the general population.
- Mainstream youth are most likely to live with both biological/adoptive parents compared to youth in correctional settings, who are most likely to report living only with their mother.
- Youth in correctional facilities and mainstream youth feel similarly cared for by their parents and by other adult relatives. Mothers are universally viewed as a parent to talk to about problems over fathers in both student groups. This is in part due to greater reports by both student populations that their fathers are not available.
- Youth in correctional facilities are significantly more likely than mainstream youth to report that drug or alcohol use by a family member has caused repeated family, health or legal problems. Youth in correctional facilities also report more problems with alcohol *and* drug use in their families than mainstream youth.

Other Social Supports and Community Connectedness

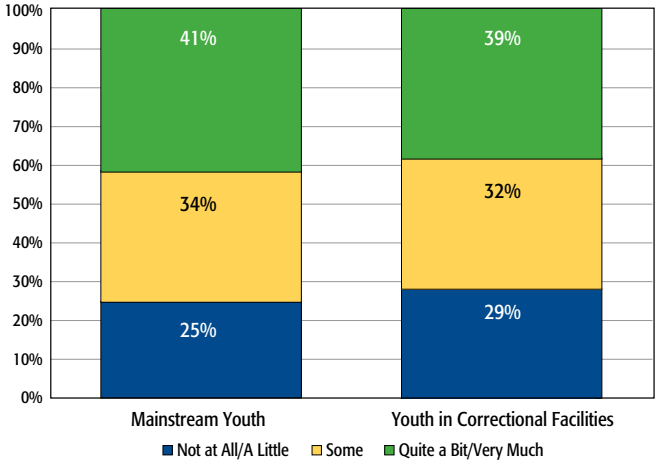
Teachers, religious leaders, friends and community members are also recognized as important support people for youth. Connections to teachers and religious leaders are deemed to be a protective factor for youth against delinquency. Peers can have either a protective effect or contribute to delinquency, depending on the peer group one chooses and the values and behaviors promoted therein. Finally, delinquency is often found in high-poverty neighborhoods and those where delinquent behavior goes un-confronted or unnoticed by community members.[13] Youth completing the MSS are asked to indicate the degree to which they felt cared for by these non-familial supports.

Teacher Connectedness

There is no statistical difference between the student groups on whether or not they feel teachers are interested in them as people. Forty-two percent of mainstream youth, and 48 percent of youth in correctional facilities report that "all" or "most" teachers are interested in them. Youth in correctional facilities are statistically less likely to report that teachers are respectful to students. Seventy-two percent of mainstream youth, as compared to 65 percent of youth in correctional facilities, state that "all" or "most" teachers are respectful. There has been a slight increase in perceived teacher interest and respect since 2007 for both student groups.

A third question asks students whether they feel their teachers or other adults at school care about them. While 65 percent of youth in correctional facilities feel "all" or "most" teachers are *respectful,* only 39 percent feel teachers or other adults at school *care for them* "quite a bit" or "very much." The gap is even larger for mainstream youth with 72 percent reporting teachers as respectful but only 41 percent reporting teachers as caring. Respect and interest may be one piece of the connectedness equation between students and teachers, but it does not always progress to the level of feeling cared for. Overall there is no statistical difference between mainstream youth and those in correctional facilities as it relates to whether they perceive teachers or other adults at school care for them.

How Much Youth Feel Teachers/Other Adults At School Care About Them



Religious Leader Connectedness

There is no statistical difference between youth in correctional facilities and the mainstream sample in their perception of religious leader caring. At least four in 10 youth from each group express that religious leaders care for them "quite a bit" or "very much." Conversely, 35 percent to 41 percent of youth from each sample state that religious leaders care for them "a little" or "not at all."

Peer Connectedness

There is no statistical difference between youth in correctional facilities and mainstream youth on perceived level of care from their friends. Six in 10 youth in correctional facilities (60%) feel their friends care for them "quite a bit" or "very much" whereas 18 percent reported that they feel their friends care for them "a little" or "not at all." Two-thirds (65%) of the mainstream youth sample feel their friends care for them "quite a bit" or "very much," and less than 14 percent care for them "a little" or "not at all." These responses are comparable to the 2007 matched sample results.

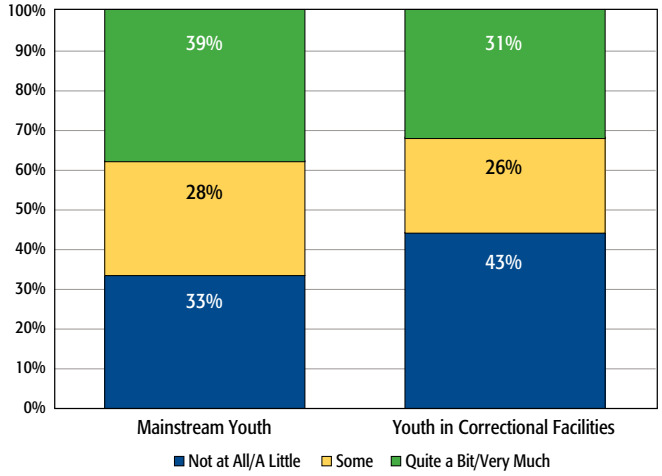
There are no other questions about peers in the MSS. In 2007, there was a question asking about the degree to which one perceives their peers would approve or disapprove of drug and alcohol use. This question was changed in 2010 to perceived *parental* approval or disapproval of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use.

Community Member Caring and Community Safety

Mainstream youth are statistically more likely to say that adults in their community care for them "quite a bit" or "very much" than youth in correctional facilities (39% versus 31%, respectively). While over half of youth in correctional facilities (57%) feel at least somewhat cared for by adults in their community, this was the case for two-thirds (67%) of mainstream youth. Youth in correctional facilities responded slightly more favorably to these community connectedness questions in 2010 as compared to 2007.

As it relates to community safety, 89 percent of mainstream youth "agree" or "strongly agree" that they feel safe in their neighborhood, as compared to 85 percent of youth in correctional facilities. While the difference is not great, it is a statistically significant finding. Again, youth in correctional facilities responded slightly more favorably to the neighborhood safety question in 2010 as compared to 2007.

How Much Youth Feel Adults in Their Community Care About Them



It is difficult to know the reasons youth in correctional facilities feel less safe and less cared for by adults in their community. Factors could include attributes of the communities in which they live, youth's actions that have contributed to community strain, or frequent transitions between communities impacting youth attachment.

Section Summary

- Both student groups report that teachers are interested in them as people at similar rates. This does not, however, translate into equal rates of perceived "teacher respect" or "teacher caring." Both student populations report "teacher caring" as the lowest of the three teacher connectedness questions.
- Both groups of students indicate that their friends care for them more than any other non-familial support.
- The lowest level of perceived care for both youth groups comes from adults in the community. Youth in correctional facilities feel less cared for by adults in the community than youth from the mainstream sample.

School Connectedness

School is a significant area that can either be a protective factor or a risk factor for youth. The lack of positive feelings for and identification with one's school has been shown to be directly related to juvenile delinquency and have been correlated with drug and alcohol use at school.[14] Children with low commitment to school, low educational aspirations, and poor motivation are also at risk for general offending and for child delinquency. Other risk factors include academic failure and dropping out of school.[15]

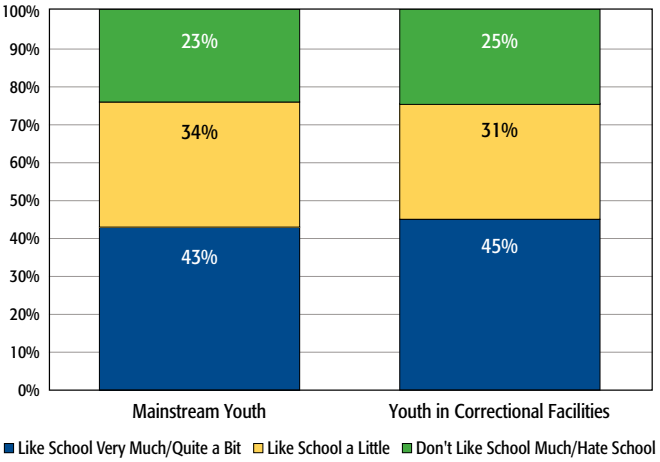
Truant students specifically are at greater risk than non-truant students for involvement in drug and alcohol use, violence and gang activity. Reasons for truancy cited by students in a different study include boredom, loss of interest in school, irrelevant courses, suspensions and bad relationships with teachers.[16]

An additional specific school risk factor for delinquency is poor academic performance. Low achievement has been found to be related to the prevalence, onset, frequency, and seriousness of delinquency even when individual intelligence and attention problems are taken into account. It is likely that children who perform poorly on academic tasks will fail to develop strong bonds to school, will have lower expectations of success and will have shorter school plans.[17]

Attitude Toward School

Statistically, youth in mainstream schools and youth in correctional facilities report liking school equally well. Forty-three percent and 45 percent from each group, respectively, state they like school "quite a bit" or "very much." There is no statistical difference between the groups on this question suggesting that school satisfaction is more or less an equal protective factor for both student groups. It could be that youth in correctional facilities are responding to how they feel about school within the correctional setting, however. These responses are nearly identical to the 2007 matched sample results with a slight increase in school satisfaction among youth in correctional facilities.

How Youth Feel About School

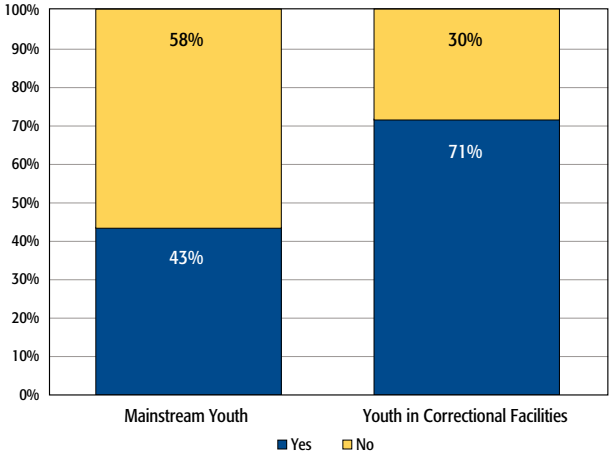


Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program (FRPL)

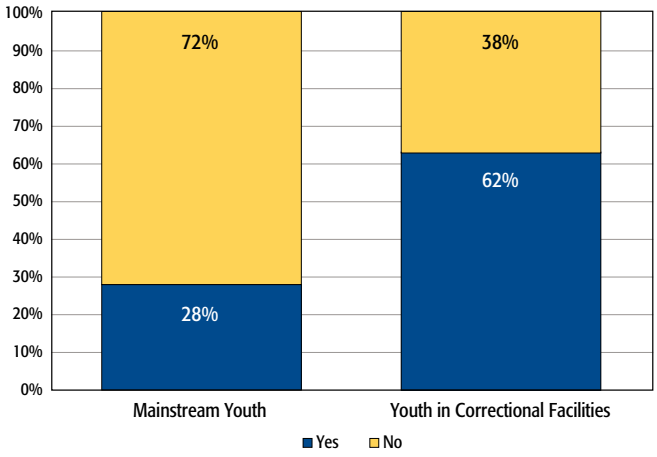
According to the Annie E. Casey Kids Count Data Center, 14 percent of all Minnesota youth in 2009 were living in poverty. A greater number, 37 percent, met household income or other criteria to receive Free or Reduced Priced Lunch at school in 2010.[18] While the mainstream matched student population is close to that figure (43%), nearly seven in 10 youth in correctional facilities (71%) indicate they receive Free or Reduced Priced Lunch at school.[vii] Those involved in correctional placements may disproportionately represent youth in lower income families. These responses reflect a slight increase in FRPL for mainstream youth and a slight decrease in FRPL for youth in correctional facilities compared to 2007.

[vii] Technically, all youth placed in residential facilities receive FRPL. This is largely an administrative process, however, and it is unlikely that youth in correctional facilities would have an awareness of a new FRPL status. As such, it is most likely that youth in correctional facilities are reporting their FRPL status in their community school when answering this question.

Youth Who Receive Free or Reduced Priced Lunch



Whether Students Have Ever Had An IEP



Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

Individualized Education Programs are required by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) for students who have physical, cognitive, emotional or behavioral disabilities that impact their ability to learn. Those who meet criteria for an IEP are eligible for additional resources and support to ensure that they receive a free, appropriate public education.[19]

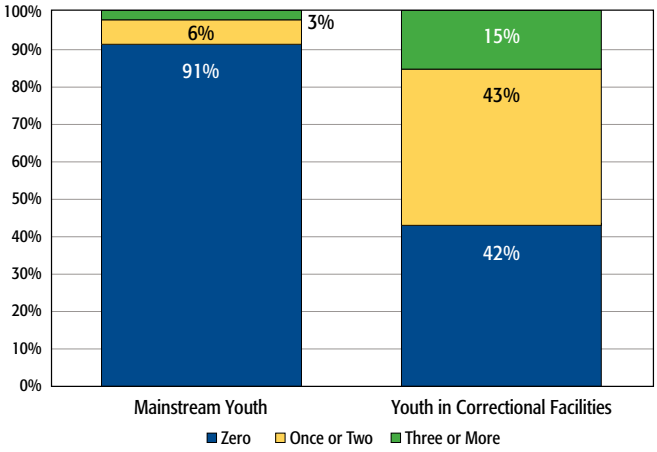
Minnesota has 13 categorical disability areas. A team of qualified professionals, including parents, determines whether a student meets criteria in one of the disability areas and is in need of special education services.[20] The term "special education" is defined in Minnesota as, "any specially designed instruction and related services to meet the unique cognitive, academic, communicative, social and emotional, motor ability, vocational, sensory, physical, or behavioral and functional needs of a pupil as stated in the IEP."[21]

Over six in 10 of youth in correctional placements (62%) report that they have an IEP either now or in the past. This is statistically different than the matched sample of mainstream youth (28%). There is no information in the MSS on the nature of the IEP as to its relation to behavior, learning disability or physical disability. While the rate of mainstream students in the sample who report having had an IEP stayed the same between 2007 and 2010, the rate rose 9 percent for youth in correctional facilities from 53 percent to 62 percent. This may be the result of different facilities participating in the 2010 administration.

School Mobility

Nearly six in 10 youth in correctional facilities (58%) report that they have changed schools one or more times since the beginning of the current school year. This is true for only 9 percent of the matched sample of mainstream youth. It is possible that youth in the correctional facilities are counting their move from their mainstream school into the correctional facility. Nevertheless, 15 percent of youth in correctional facilities report *three or more school changes,* as compared to 3 percent of the mainstream student matched sample. School mobility rates are slightly higher for youth in correctional facilities in 2010 as compared to 2007.

How Often Youth Have Changed Schools Since the Beginning of School Year

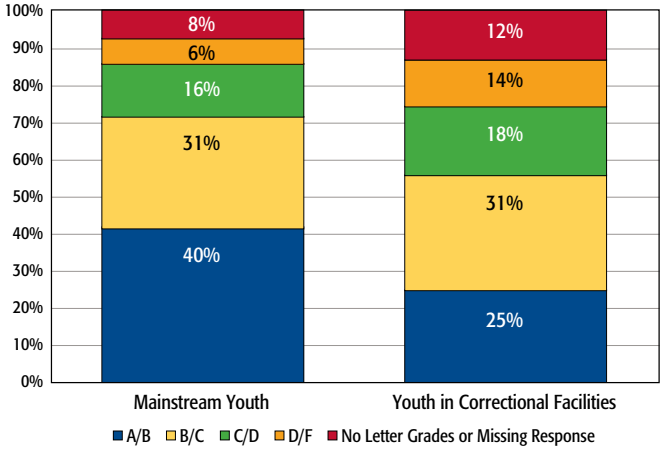


The reasons for school mobility reported in the MSS are unknown. They may be indicative of behavioral issues that result in suspension or transfer to other schools, academic moves required to provide the appropriate level of services for their IEP, or related to geographic moves by a caregiver either within or between school districts. The necessity of changing locations to find employment and affordable housing would likely have a greater impact on single-parent households and lower-income families, which clearly impacts a larger percentage of youth in correctional facilities.

Academic Achievement

Mainstream youth are more likely to report receiving grades of As and Bs than youth in correctional facilities (40% versus 25%). Youth in correctional facilities and mainstream youth report receiving Bs and Cs, and Cs and Ds at comparable rates. A higher percentage of youth in correctional facilities report receiving failing grades: fourteen percent of youth in correctional facilities report receiving Ds and Fs compared to 6 percent of mainstream youth. While not graphed, 1 percent of mainstream students report receiving "only Fs" versus 3 percent of youth in correctional facilities. Generally, lower achievement and failing grades are more prevalent in the sample of youth in correctional facilities than the mainstream youth sample.

Grades Received



Truancy

The MSS has one primary measure of truancy where students self-report how many times they have missed *full days of school* in the last 30 days. The programmatic structure of correctional facilities does not typically allow refusal to participate in educational programming so it is likely that youth were responding to this question based primarily on their community behavior.

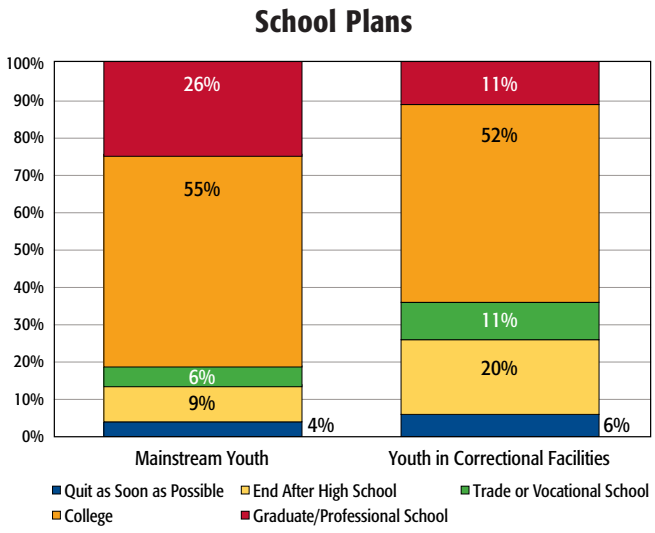
While 64 percent of mainstream youth and 66 percent of youth in correctional facilities report not skipping at all in the past 30 days, youth in correctional facilities are more likely than mainstream youth to report chronic skipping. In fact, of youth in correctional facilities who have skipped school, over half (51%) have skipped six or more times in the 30 days prior to the survey. Of mainstream youth who have skipped school in the past 30 days, 16 percent report skipping six or more times.

There are no questions in the MSS related to "lower level" truant behavior such as skipping classes or arriving late. These behaviors can also substantially impact academic achievement and may trigger truancy referrals to social services, corrections and juvenile court.

School Plans

Over half of youth in correctional facilities and their mainstream peers plan to continue their education until they finish college (52% and 55%, respectively). Nearly twice as many youth in correctional facilities plan to attend a vocational school as their highest educational goal than mainstream youth (11% versus 6%).

Twice as many youth in correctional facilities plan to end their education after completing high school (20%) as compared to 9 percent of the mainstream sample. In contrast, mainstream youth are over twice as likely to have educational goals involving graduate or professional school than youth in correctional facilities (26% versus 11%, respectively). Six percent of youth in correctional facilities and 4 percent of mainstream youth plan on quitting school "as soon as possible." Changes in the area of school plans are small since 2007.



Section Summary

- Mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities report similar levels of liking school.
- Seven in 10 youth in correctional facilities report receiving Free or Reduced Priced Lunch as compared to just over four in 10 of the mainstream youth sample. Free and Reduced Priced Lunch is the only socio-economic indicator on the MSS.
- Well over half of youth in correctional facilities (62%) report having an Individualized Education Program presently or in the past, compared to 28 percent of the mainstream matched sample.
- There was little difference between mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities when it came to a two- or four-year degree as their highest educational aspiration. However, a higher percentage of mainstream youth plan to pursue post-collegiate degrees and more youth in correctional facilities plan to end their education after high school.
- Similar numbers of youth in correctional facilities and mainstream youth report having skipped a full day of school in the 30 days prior to the survey. Youth in correctional facilities, however, are much more likely to report chronic absenteeism of six or more days in the past month.
- Youth in correctional facilities are more likely than mainstream youth to have changed schools three or more times since the beginning of the school year.

School Safety

The degree to which youth attend and feel connected to their schools may be impacted by whether they feel safe at school. Bullying behavior and sexual harassment at school lead to negative psychological consequences for victims, can escalate to threats and violence, and create a school environment where students feel these interactions are acceptable. Students, particularly boys, who engage in bullying are more likely to continue to engage in a variety of delinquent and anti-social behaviors into adulthood.[22]

With regard to physical violence, research suggests that most violence between students is unrelated to school itself, but may be precipitated or aggravated by the school environment. Physical assault between students is the most common type of violence in school.[23] Research suggests that school violence is also influenced by school policies regarding discipline, security, dropping out and by small group interactions that develop within school.[24]

Safety at School

Overall, Minnesota youth report that they do feel safe at school: 91 percent of mainstream youth state that they "agree" or "strongly agree" to feeling safe. Of youth in correctional facilities, 88 percent report feeling safe at school, which is right at the mark of statistical significance. Both populations report a higher school safety sentiment in 2010 as compared to 2007.

Furthermore, over 90 percent of all youth in both groups report feeling safe going to and from school. There is no statistical difference between the two groups on this question.

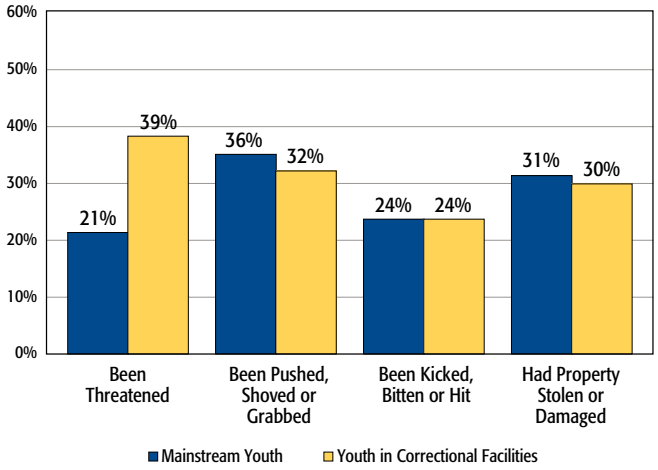
Victimization at School

Mainstream students and youth in correctional facilities may have similar perceptions of school safety because they report comparable rates of victimization at school. The most common report of victimization at school in the MSS is bullying defined as "another student or group of students making fun of, teasing or excluding you from friends or activities" in the past 30 days. Bullying affects one-third of both student populations; 4 percent to 6 percent of students in both student samples report being bullied on a daily basis. The

30-day timeframe of this question series means results should be interpreted with caution for youth in correctional facilities. Nevertheless, these response rates are nearly identical to those reported in 2007.

Approximately three in 10 youth in both populations have had their property stolen or deliberately damaged at school in the last year. Mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities report comparable rates of being pushed, shoved or grabbed at school; and being kicked, hit or bitten. There is no statistical difference between the two groups on these indicators. These rates are comparable, albeit slightly lower, to 2007.

Victimization at School in the Past Year

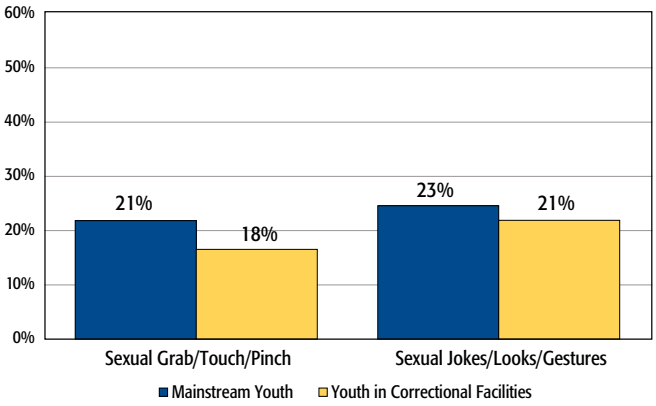


Youth in correctional facilities, however, report having been threatened at school at a rate nearly twice that of youth in mainstream schools (39% versus 21%). Nevertheless, this rate is 9 percent lower than 2007 when 48 percent of youth in correctional facilities reported being threatened at school. The mainstream rate remained unchanged between 2007 and 2010. Data regarding the extent to which survey respondents report perpetrating physical violence and property crime at school (and elsewhere) are included in a later section on public safety.

Sexual Victimization at School

There is no statistical difference between the two youth groups on being sexually harassed or victimized at school. Approximately two in 10 youth in both student populations report experiencing unwanted sexual jokes, comments and gestures (23% and 21%), as well as unwanted sexual touch at school (21% and 18%). There has been a decrease in self-reported sexual victimization at school among both populations since 2007.

Sexual Victimization at School in the Past Year



Weapons at school

The vast majority of all students do not bring weapons[viii] to school. Ten percent of students in the mainstream sample report having brought a weapon *other than a gun* to school property in the last 30 days. The rate is 15 percent for youth in correctional facilities.

Nearly one in 10 youth in correctional facilities (9%) report that they have brought a gun to school in the last 30 days, compared to 4 percent of youth in mainstream schools. In both groups, more than half of those who brought a gun to school did so on four or more days per month. The 2010 reports of bringing a gun or other weapon to school are similar to the 2007 responses for both student groups. Weapons questions have a 30-day timeframe and, as such, must be interpreted with caution.

With regard to victimization, there is no statistical difference between youth in correctional facilities and mainstream youth as to whether they report being stabbed or having a gun fired at them on school property in the

[viii] The term "weapon" is not defined for youth in the MSS except in that it is to exclude guns.

past year. Six percent of youth in correctional facilities report having been a victim of a stabbing or a shooting, compared to 4 percent of the mainstream population. The 2010 rates are lower for correctional youth than those reported in 2007.

Section Summary

- The vast majority of youth from both student samples report feeling safe at school, as well as en route to and from school.
- School victimization rates are similar for both populations with regard to having been shoved, pushed or grabbed; hit, kicked, or bitten; and sexually touched, pinched or grabbed. Youth in correctional facilities are twice as likely to report being threatened at school.
- The vast majority of students do not bring guns or other weapons to school. Youth in correctional facilities, however, are twice as likely to report bringing a gun to school as their mainstream peers.

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use

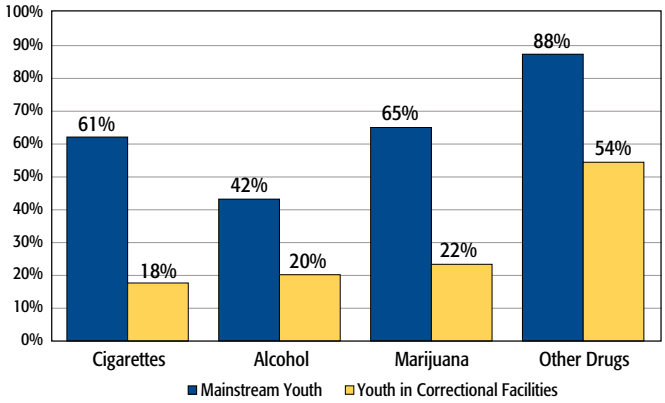
Persistent substance abuse among youth is often accompanied by an array of problems including academic difficulties, health-related consequences, poor peer relationships and mental health issues. Declining grades, absenteeism from school and other activities, increased potential for dropping out, and other school-related problems are associated with adolescent substance abuse. Because substance abuse and delinquency are inextricably linked, arrest, adjudication and intervention by the juvenile justice system are eventual consequences for many young people engaged in such behavior.[25]

Furthermore, chemical use impairs judgment, decision-making and analysis of consequences. Research suggests that youth are more likely to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol during the commission of crimes against people than general property crimes. Additionally, those under the influence are more likely to act in a group during the commission of illegal acts.[26]

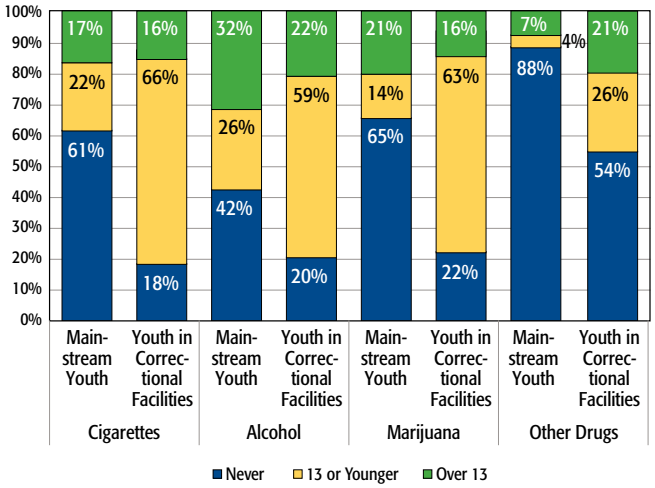
Patterns of Chemical Use

More youth in mainstream schools have abstained from using cigarettes, alcohol and drugs than youth who are in correctional facilities. Alcohol has one of the lowest abstinence rates for both student populations. Youth in correctional facilities, however, are as likely to use marijuana as alcohol. Over half (54%) of youth in correctional facilities state they have never tried “other drugs” compared to 88 percent of mainstream youth. Cigarette use is also much higher for youth in correctional facilities (82%) as compared to mainstream youth (39%). Youth are slightly more likely to report abstinence from alcohol and other drugs in 2010 as compared to 2007.

Percentage of Youth Who Have Never Used Cigarettes, Alcohol or Other Drugs



Ages at First Use: Alcohol, Cigarettes and Other Drugs



Age at First Chemical Use

In addition to more youth trying chemicals, youth in correctional facilities begin using at a significantly younger age than their mainstream peers. Early onset of drug and alcohol use is associated with greater abuse and dependency and can result in greater developmental and neurological deficits than those who delay using.[27] Among youth in correctional facilities:

- 66 percent tried cigarettes before age 13, versus 22 percent of the matched sample of mainstream youth.
- 59 percent tried alcohol before age 13, versus 26 percent of the matched sample of mainstream youth.
- 63 percent tried marijuana before age 13, versus 14 percent of the matched sample of mainstream youth.
- 26 percent tried "other drugs" before age 13, versus 4 percent of the matched sample of mainstream youth.

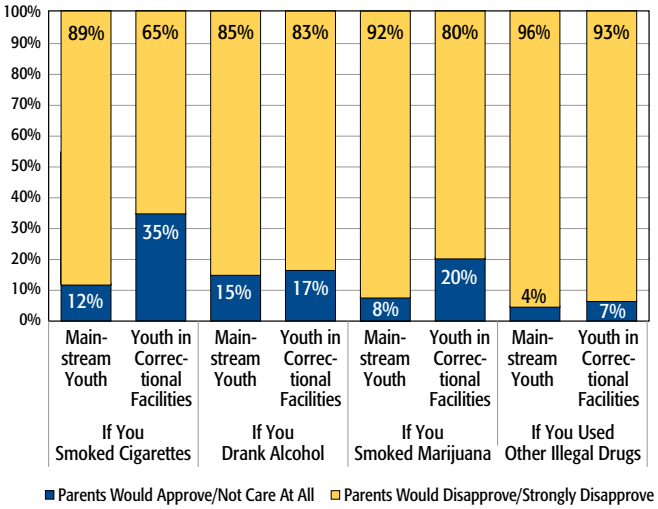
The percentage of youth who tried cigarettes, alcohol or marijuana before age 13 has generally declined in both populations since 2007. It is unknown if this represents longer abstinence among this student group as compared to three years ago, or if a lower-risk population of justice system involved youth is affecting outcomes. The percentage of youth in correctional facilities who reported using "other drugs" before age 13 increased since 2007.

Parental Perceptions of Chemical Use

In 2007, youth were asked the degree to which their peers would approve of them using drugs or alcohol. In 2010, this question was changed to gauge perceived parental approval of drug and alcohol use. Youth in correctional facilities are more likely than mainstream youth to believe that their parents would either "approve" or "not care at all" if they use chemicals.

Cigarette use has the highest perceived parental approval/neutrality rating for youth in correctional facilities (35%) followed by marijuana use (20%). There is no statistical difference between mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities in their perception of parental acceptance of alcohol use (15% and 17%, respectively). For mainstream youth, alcohol has the highest perceived approval/neutrality rating of any substance, including cigarettes.

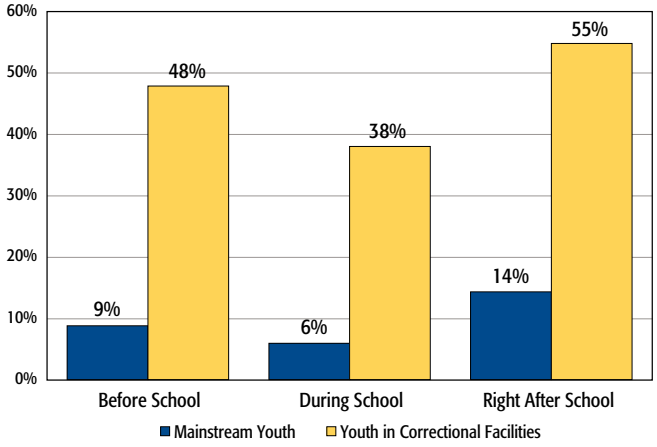
Perceived Parental Approval/Disapproval of Chemical Use



School-Related Use

Only one question on the MSS specifically asks about when or where youth are using drugs or alcohol and that question is related to use at school. Of those youth who report using drugs or alcohol, a much higher percentage of correctional facility youth report using before, during or after school. Nearly half of youth in correctional facilities (48%) report using before school and over half (55%) report using right after school. Reports of drug use associated with school are several points lower than in 2007. It is unknown if this represents a true decline or is affected by a different population of survey takers in the correctional facilities.

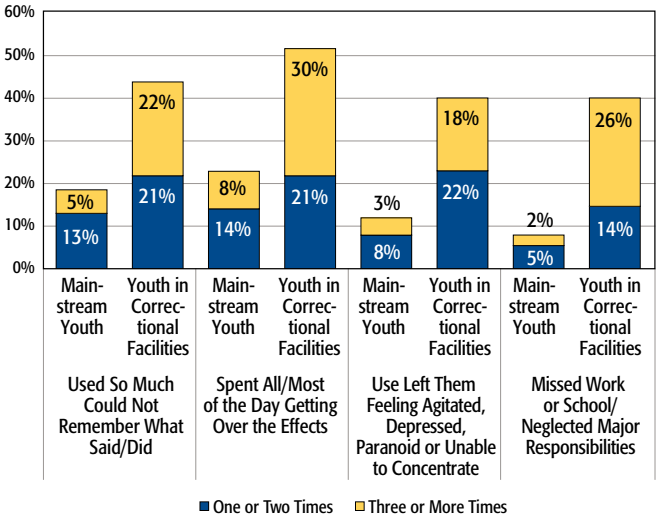
Drug and Alcohol Use: School Hours



Consequences of Using

Consistently, an average of one-quarter of youth in correctional facilities who report using drugs or alcohol self-report consequences "three or more times in the past year" associated with their use. These consequences include memory loss, hangovers, missing major responsibilities, and feeling agitated or depressed. These same issues regularly applied to 10 percent or fewer of their mainstream counterparts. Although youth in correctional facilities are more likely than mainstream youth to state they have spent "all" or "most of the day" getting over the effects of drug or alcohol use, this is the most reported consequence of using by both student groups. Consequences associated with chemical use are slightly lower in 2010 than in 2007 for mainstream youth; rates for youth in correctional facilities have remained similar.

Consequences of Drug and Alcohol Use



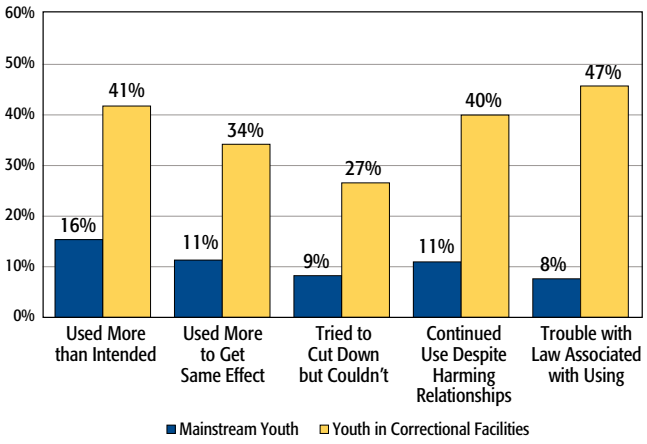
Abuse and Dependency Indicators

While by no means a comprehensive assessment of drug or alcohol problems, some questions on the MSS are geared towards understanding the degree to which youth have insight and control over their use. These questions are related both to use patterns and concrete consequences associated with using. These or similar questions are frequently components of formal chemical abuse screening tools or assessments. Again, youth in correctional facilities articulated many more issues with their drug and alcohol use than mainstream students.

Of youth who report using drugs or alcohol in the last 12 months, roughly four in 10 youth in correctional facilities express using more drugs or alcohol than they intended to in the past year (41%), and requiring more use to get the same effects (34%). Nearly three in 10 youth in correctional facilities report trying unsuccessfully to cut back their use (27%). Over four in 10 youth in correctional facilities acknowledge they continue to use despite it harming their relationships (40%). Nearly half of youth in correctional facilities (47%) report trouble with the law in the last year related to their drug or alcohol use. These numbers are all slightly lower than in 2007, but not markedly.

Conversely, mainstream youth who report chemical use in the past 12 months report fewer abuse and dependency indicators. Sixteen percent state they have used more alcohol or drugs than they intended, indicative of difficulty setting limits, but on average only one in 10 youth report any of the other consequences.

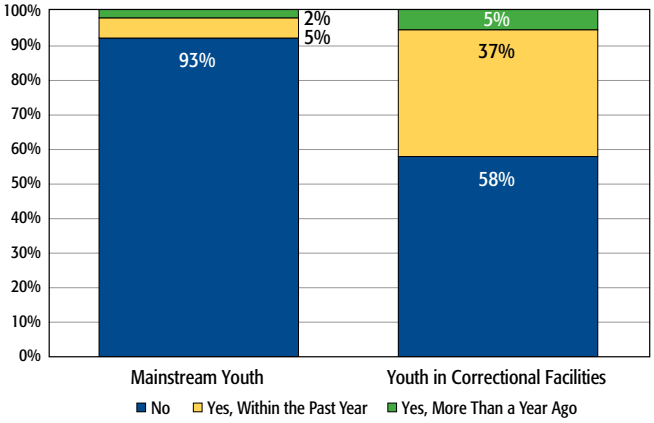
Indicators of Drug or Alcohol Abuse and Dependency in Last 12 Months: "Yes" Response



Drug and Alcohol Treatment

While most youth in mainstream schools have not received treatment for alcohol or other drugs (93%), over four in 10 youth in correctional facilities (42%) have received treatment either in the past year or more than a year ago. There is no information in the MSS regarding treatment completion rates, satisfaction or effectiveness. It is also not possible to determine for which substance(s) youth received treatment. Treatment self-reports are comparable to those reported in 2007 by both student populations.

Whether Youth Have Been Treated for Alcohol or Other Drug Problem



Section Summary

- More mainstream youth report abstinence from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs than youth in correctional facilities.
- The majority of youth in correctional facilities (59% to 66%) report that cigarette, alcohol and marijuana use began before age 13. This is true for 26 percent or fewer mainstream youth.
- Nearly half of youth in correctional facilities (46%) have tried "other drugs" compared to 11 percent of mainstream youth.
- Youth in correctional facilities are statistically less likely than mainstream youth to indicate that their parents would disapprove of cigarette, marijuana or other drug use. Alcohol use, however, has the same perceived parental disapproval rating in both student populations.
- Youth in correctional facilities report many more consequences associated with using drugs and alcohol, including negative impacts to their physical and emotional health, memory, relationships and major responsibilities.
- Youth in correctional facilities report more chemical dependency indicators than mainstream youth, including increased tolerance, inability to cut back on use, using despite it harming relationships, and problems with the law associated with their use.
- Over four in 10 (42%) youth in correctional facilities report receiving treatment for drug or alcohol use in the past, versus 7 percent of their mainstream student match.

Mental and Emotional Health

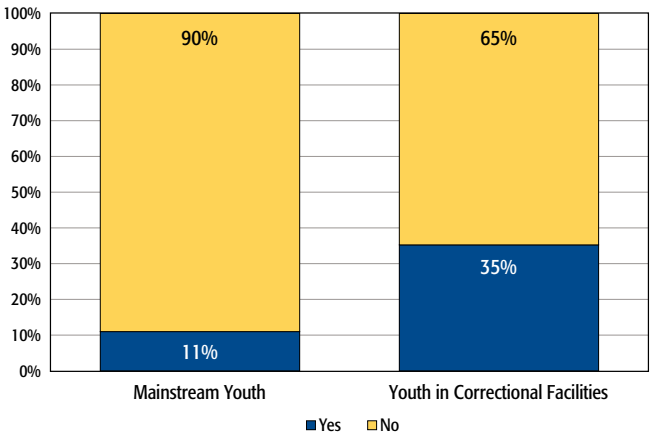
Identifying and responding to the mental health needs of youth in contact with the juvenile justice system is recognized as a critical issue at the national, state and local levels. Often, a youth's disruptive or inappropriate behavior is the result of a mental health disorder that has gone undetected and untreated. Mental health screening data and several well-constructed studies suggest that up to 70 percent of youth in correctional facilities suffer from mental health disorders, many with multiple and severe disorders, including co-occurring disorders of substance use and mental health. For some youth, contact with the juvenile justice system is often the first and only chance to get help. For others, it is the last resort.[28]

The lack of effective treatments for youth in the community increases the burden on juvenile justice facilities. Other trends may also contribute to an increased need for mental health services in juvenile justice facilities: decreasing public funds for services in the community, rising number of uninsured children, and increasing number of youth entering the juvenile justice system.[29]

Mental Health

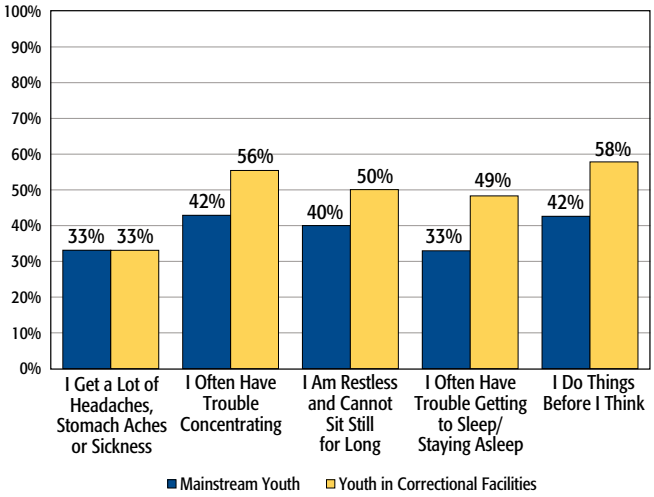
There is a significant difference in the percentage of youth in correctional facilities (35%) and those in mainstream schools (11%) who self-reported a mental or emotional health problem that has lasted at least 12 months. This number is 5 percent higher for youth in correctional facilities in 2010 as compared to 2007.

Whether Youth Identify a Mental or Emotional Health Problem that Has Lasted at Least 12 Months



Youth in correctional facilities were significantly more likely than youth in mainstream schools to "agree" or "mostly agree" with statements designed to gauge mental and emotional health concerns. Over half of youth in correctional facilities self-reported restlessness (50%); trouble concentrating (56%); trouble falling and staying asleep (49%); and acting before thinking (58%). Impulsivity, specifically, is frequently viewed as connected to delinquent and risky behavior because of the lack of consequential foresight. Within the mainstream matched population, these indicators were selected 10 percent to 15 percent less often than by youth in correctional facilities.

Emotional Health Indicators

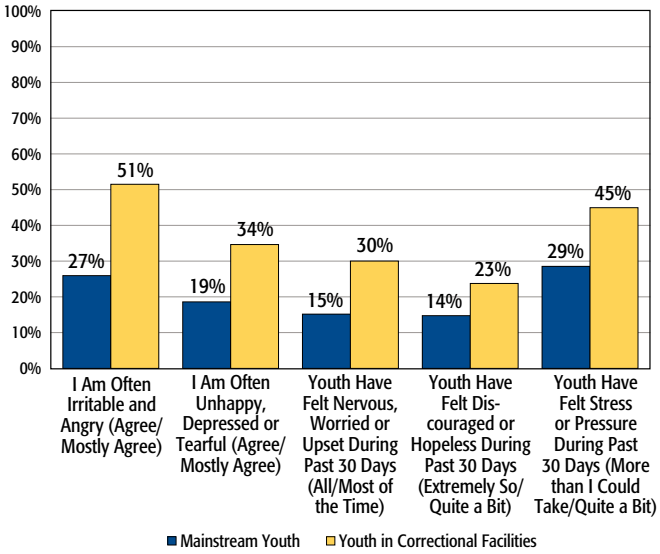


Survey participants were also asked to describe their mood "during the last 30 days." Youth in correctional facilities reported significantly higher rates of feeling angry, depressed, nervous, hopeless and stressed. One cannot rule out the effects of their illegal behavior, legal process, or placement itself upon the emotional health of youth in correctional facilities. Responses from youth in correctional facilities may over-present a degree of emotional stress and vulnerability that is not necessarily always present when these youth are in the community.

Nevertheless, even mainstream youth are reporting dealing with anger (27%), depression (19%) and stress (29%). While youth in correctional facilities may require heightened support and interventions, emotional distress may be an unfortunate condition of

adolescence for which all youth could use support. Student responses in 2010 were not markedly different from those reported in 2007 for either student population.

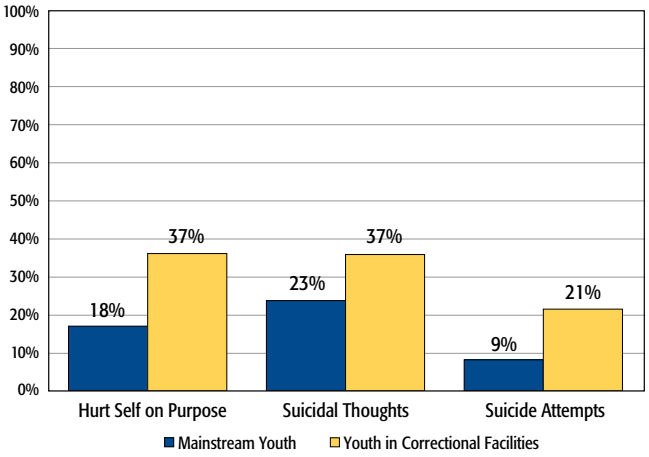
Emotional Well-Being Indicators



Self-Harm and Suicide

Several factors can put a person at risk for attempting or committing suicide, but having these risk factors is not always predictive of suicide. Risk factors include previous suicide attempt(s), history of depression or other mental illness, alcohol or drug abuse, family history of suicide or violence, feeling alone, and having access to lethal suicide means.[30]

Reports of Self-Harm/Ideation (Percent Yes)

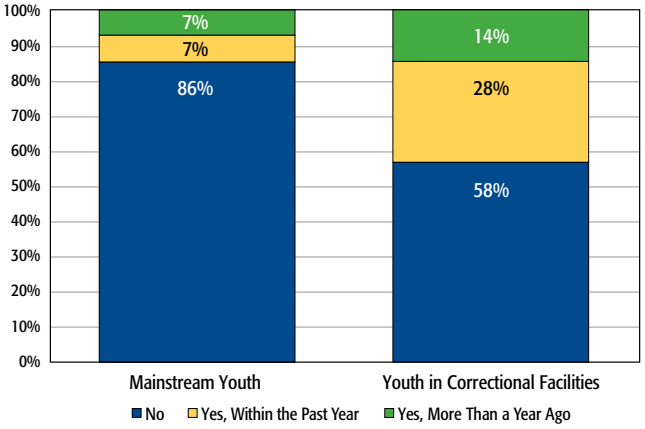


Mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities had statistically significant differences in their responses across this question series. Over one-third of youth in facilities reported having suicidal thoughts (37%) or engaging in self-harm, including cutting, burning or bruising (37%). Two in 10 reported a suicide attempt in their life (21%). Rates are lower for the mainstream youth with two in 10 engaging in self-harm (18%) or suicidal ideation (23%), and one in 10 reporting a past suicide attempt (9%). Since 2007, more youth in correctional facilities report engaging in self-harm and suicidal ideation (a 6% increase in both questions). Conversely, mainstream youth report a 5 percent decrease in suicidal ideation, further widening the gap between mainstream students and those in correctional facilities.

Mental Health Treatment

On the matter of having received treatment for a mental or emotional health issue, there is a statistically significant difference between the two student groups. Youth in correctional facilities are most likely to have received treatment for mental or emotional health: just over 40 percent of youth in correctional facilities report receiving a treatment intervention at some point in their lives versus 14 percent of mainstream youth. The MSS does not provide any information about youths' diagnosis, or information on treatment effectiveness, compliance or completion.

Whether Youth Have Ever Been Treated For a Mental or Emotional Health Problem



Section Summary

- Youth in correctional facilities self-report the presence of a mental or emotional health problem three times more often than mainstream youth.
- Youth in correctional facilities self-report the presence of more mental and emotional health symptoms than mainstream youth, including restlessness, impulsivity, poor concentration, anger, depression, stress, and self-harm.
- Youth in correctional facilities report engaging in self-harm and suicide attempts at rates twice that of mainstream peers.
- Youth in correctional facilities report receiving treatment for a mental or emotional health problem three times more than mainstream youth.

Public Safety

It goes without saying that youth typically become involved in the juvenile justice system following behaviors that are illegal or are an affront to community safety. Youth can become involved in the juvenile justice system for a wide range of behaviors. Some behaviors fall under the rubric of *Children in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS)* such as truancy and running away from home. The ultimate goal when addressing these types of behavior is to reconnect youth to schools and families.

Petty offenses are non-violent, misdemeanor-level offenses such as low-level theft, disorderly conduct, or possession of drug paraphernalia. Offenses which are illegal solely because of one's status as a minor but are not illegal for adults (i.e., curfew, drinking and smoking) are also petty charges and are often referred to as "status offenses."[31] Petty offenses are often addressed with fines, community service/restitution or education classes.

The terms "delinquency" and "delinquent," from a legal standpoint, are reserved for acts committed by juveniles that are more serious than petty offenses and would also be unlawful if committed by an adult. Delinquent acts, depending on their severity, are labeled as misdemeanors, gross misdemeanors or felonies.

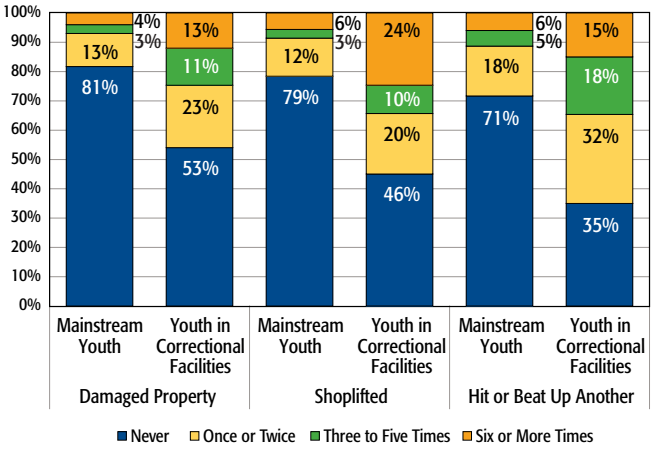
In 2010, there were 38,793 juvenile arrests in Minnesota,[32] only a fraction of which resulted in an out-of-home placement. Many factors are taken into account before placing a child in a correctional setting, only one of which is the offense itself. Additionally, efforts are underway in Minnesota to further scrutinize and refine admission criteria to ensure that youth are admitted to correctional facilities based on scores from objective risk assessment instruments.[33]

Illegal Behavior

Not surprisingly, youth in correctional facilities who responded to the MSS have higher rates of self-reported illegal behavior than a matched sample of mainstream peers. One-half to two-thirds of the youth in correctional facilities reported engaging in physical violence, property damage and theft at least once in the past 12

months. By comparison, 20 percent to 30 percent of the mainstream matched sample of youth reported engaging in these behaviors.

Delinquent Behavior in the Last 12 Months



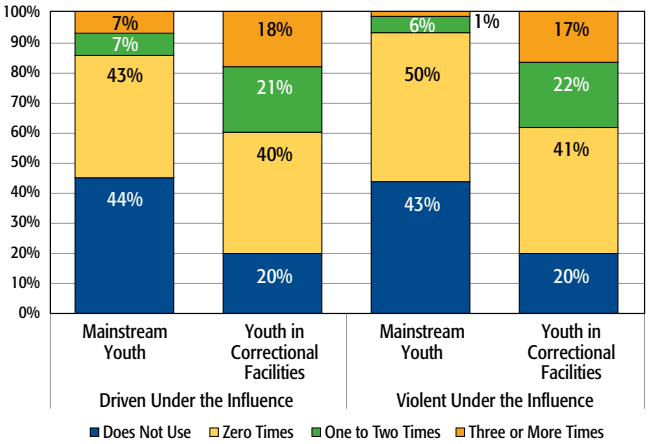
Youth in correctional facilities also reported higher rates of repeated illegal activity. Youth in correctional facilities report damaging property, shoplifting, or physically assaulting another on six or more occasions in the past year at a rate two to three times higher than mainstream youth. This shows a greater propensity towards anti-social behavior as well as results in an increased risk of being identified by the juvenile justice system.

Public Safety Impact of Alcohol and Drug Use

Youth taking the MSS are asked a series of questions about the consequences of alcohol or drug use, some of which are related to public safety. The connection between substance use and delinquent behavior has long been established as the use of alcohol and drugs decreases inhibitions and diminishes foresight. The effects of some substances, alcohol specifically, can contribute to amplifying aggressive behavior. Some interventions, such as Juvenile Drug Courts, focus specifically on addressing a youth's chemical use as a key to decreasing delinquent behavior.[34]

Nearly 40 percent of youth in correctional facilities report driving a motor vehicle under the influence at least once in the past year. Of those, 18 percent have driven under the influence three or more times. Comparatively, 14 percent of mainstream youth who have used drugs or alcohol in the past year report driving under the influence with 7 percent having done so three or more times.

Public Safety Consequences of Chemical Use in the Past Year



Nearly 40 percent of youth in correctional facilities self-report becoming violent under the influence in the past year, versus 7 percent of youth in mainstream schools. Again, a higher number of youth in correctional facilities (17%) report becoming violent under the influence three or more times, as compared to 1 percent of the mainstream matched sample. These figures reflect a slight decline comparable to behavior reported by both student populations in 2007.

Section Summary

- Over 70 percent to 80 percent of mainstream youth have not damaged property, shoplifted or beat up another in the 12 months prior to the survey. Conversely, one-half to two-thirds of youth in correctional facilities have engaged in these behaviors.
- More youth in correctional facilities engage in illegal activities and do so with greater frequency than mainstream youth.
- The public safety consequences of alcohol and other drug use are more serious for youth in correctional facilities. Roughly 40 percent of youth in correctional facilities report driving under the influence and becoming violent under the influence in the past year.

Victimization

It is well established that youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system are also victims of violence at disproportionate rates. The specific consequences of trauma depend on the age of the child, but early exposure can interfere with age-appropriate development, place a child at greater risk of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression and conduct disorders. Traumatized children may develop disconnected and distorted ways of processing emotions such as anger and fear, and have difficulty forming healthy relationships. Teenagers who have symptoms of PTSD are at greater risk for a variety of other problems, including alcohol and drug use, suicide, eating disorders, school truancy, criminal activity and dating violence.[35]

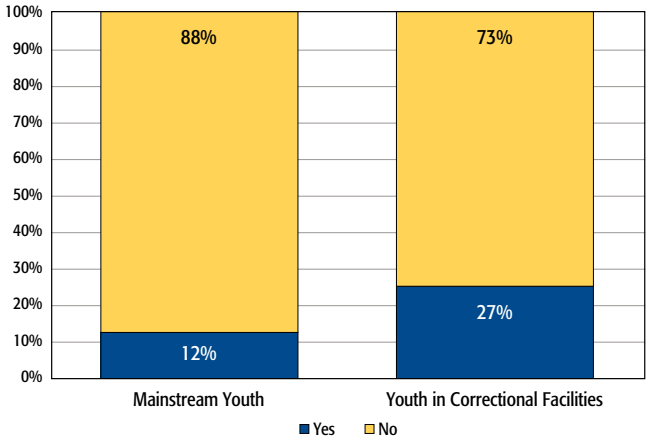
Juveniles are collectively at risk for certain types of victimization. The most common offenses against juveniles are simple assault, larceny (theft) and sex offenses. More than 70 percent of reported sex offenses have a youth as the victim.[36] In 2000, national data showed that adults were responsible for over 50 percent of juvenile victimizations and that family perpetrators made up 20 percent of all victimizations of juveniles.[37]

Not everyone who experiences trauma suffers adverse consequences. Several factors appear to protect children, such as positive attachments with supportive adults and having a sense of purpose or meaning. Personal traits that help to promote resilience include positive self-concept, sense of self-control, relationship-building skills, emotional regulation skills and problem-solving skills.[38] Increasing these skills and youths' sense of self-efficacy are cornerstones of cognitive-behavioral treatment offered in correctional facilities and community-based settings.

Physical Family Violence

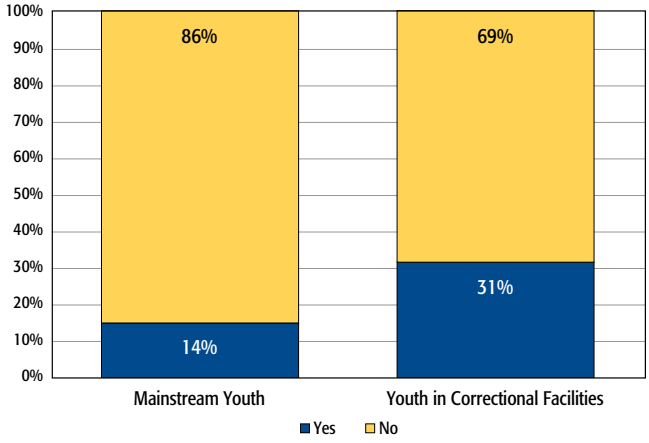
Youth in correctional facilities reported being victims of family violence at a rate over twice that of youth in mainstream schools. Nearly three in 10 youth in correctional facilities (27%) report experiencing physical violence at the hands of an adult in their household. Twelve percent of the mainstream youth sample report experiencing domestic violence. These figures are very close to 2007 responses for both populations.

Whether an Adult in the Youth's Household Has Ever Hit Them So Hard or Often They Had Marks or Were Afraid of that Person



Witnessing domestic violence can also have adverse affects on youth. Again, just over three in 10 youth in correctional facilities (31%) have witnessed physical abuse directed at someone else in their household. Mainstream youth witnessed domestic violence at a rate less than half that of youth in correctional facilities (12%). These figures are nearly identical to those reported by both populations in 2007.

Whether Anyone Else in the Youth's Household Has Ever Been Hit So Hard or Often that They Had Marks or Were Afraid of that Person



Sexual Abuse

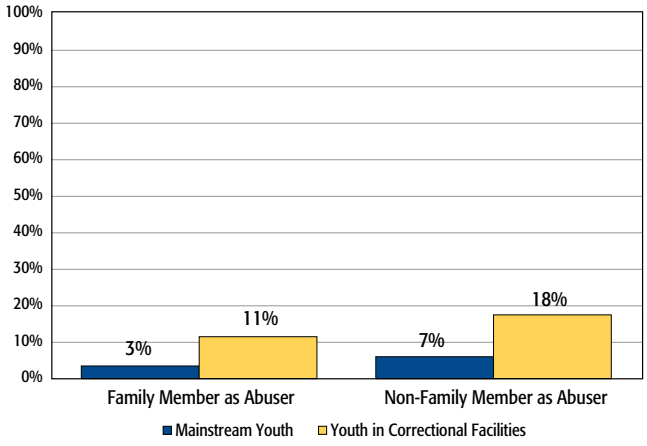
Children and adolescents who have been sexually abused can suffer a range of psychological and behavioral problems. These problems typically include depression, anxiety, guilt, fear, sexual dysfunction,

withdrawal and acting out. Depending on the severity of the incident, victims of sexual abuse may also develop fear and anxiety regarding the opposite sex or sexual issues, and may display inappropriate sexual behavior.[39]

The negative effects of child sexual abuse can affect the victim for many years and into adulthood. Adults who were sexually abused as children commonly experience depression. Additionally, high levels of anxiety in these adults can result in self-destructive behaviors, such as alcoholism or drug abuse, anxiety attacks, situation-specific anxiety disorders and insomnia. Many victims also encounter problems in their adult relationships and adult sexual functioning. Re-victimization is a common phenomenon among people abused as children. Research has shown that child sexual abuse victims are more likely to be the victims of rape or to be involved in physically abusive relationships as adults.[40]

Nearly four times more youth in correctional facilities report experiencing familial sexual abuse as compared to their mainstream matched sample. More mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities report being sexually victimized by a non-familial perpetrator. Youth in correctional facilities, however, are over twice as likely to be victimized by a non-familial perpetrator as mainstream youth (18% versus 7%). Reports of familial sexual abuse declined slightly for mainstream youth since 2007, but reports for non-familial sexual abuse of youth in correctional facilities rose slightly since 2007 from 15 percent to 18 percent.

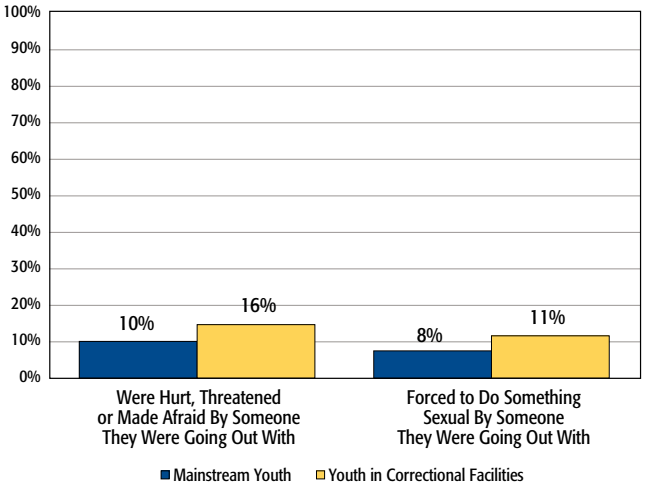
Youth Who Report Being Touched Sexually Against Their Wishes or Being Forced to Touch Someone Else Sexually: Percent "Yes"



Dating Violence

Youth in correctional facilities also report more violence in their dating relationships. Sixteen percent of youth in correctional facilities have been physically hurt or made afraid by someone they were going out with versus 10 percent of mainstream youth. Of youth in correctional facilities, 11 percent have been forced to do something sexual with a dating partner that they did not wish to do, as compared to 8 percent of students in the mainstream matched sample. There is no statistically significant difference between youth in correctional facilities and mainstream youth when it comes to forced sexual activity in dating relationships. These data are comparable to dating violence reports from these populations in 2007.

Dating Violence: Percent "Yes"



Runaways

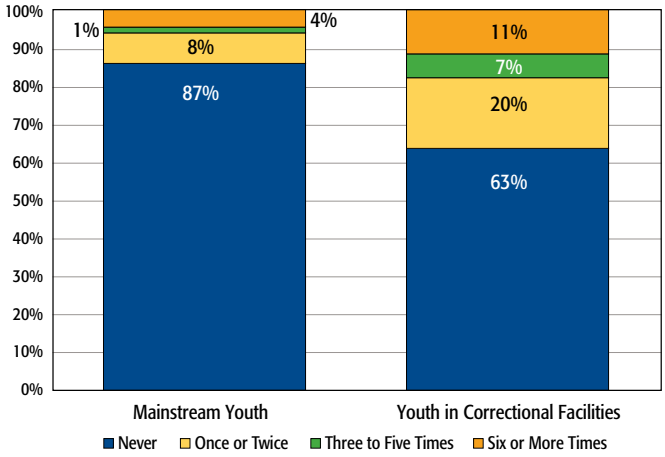
Homelessness has serious consequences for young people and is especially dangerous for those between the ages of 16 and 24 who do not have familial support. Living in shelters or on the streets, unaccompanied homeless youth are at a higher risk for physical and sexual assault or abuse, and physical illness including HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, homeless youth are at a higher risk for anxiety disorders, depression, PTSD, and suicide due to increased exposure to violence while living on their own.[41]

Homeless youth are also likely to become involved in prostitution, use and abuse drugs, and engage in other dangerous and illegal behaviors. Youth often must

engage in "survival sex," which refers to the selling of sex to meet subsistence needs such as shelter, food, drugs or money. The dangers inherent in survival sex place it among the most damaging repercussions of homelessness among youth.[42]

While the MSS does not ask how many youth are homeless at the time of the survey, it does inquire how often youth have run away from home. Almost four in 10 youth in correctional facilities (37%) have run away from home at least once in the past 12 months as compared to 13 percent of youth in the mainstream schools. Of youth in correctional facilities, 7 percent report running away three to five times in the past year, and an additional 11 percent report running away six times or more. The reasons youth have elected to run away, the length of time away from home, and where they stay while gone are unknown. Self-reported running away behaviors in 2010 are comparable to rates reported by both populations in 2007.

How Often Youth Have Run Away from Home in the Past 12 Months



Section Summary

- Over twice as many youth in correctional facilities report both experiencing and witnessing family violence than mainstream youth. Nearly three in 10 youth in correctional facilities report having experienced physical abuse in the home.
- Four times more youth in correctional facilities report sexual abuse by a family member and over two times more sexual abuse by a non-family member as compared to mainstream youth.
- Rates of non-sexual dating violence are higher among youth in correctional facilities. Reports of forced sexual behavior in dating relationships, however, are not statistically different between youth in correctional facilities and their mainstream matched sample.
- Significantly more youth in correctional facilities report running away from home than mainstream youth, and with greater frequency.

Sexual Behavior

The final section of the MSS asks students in 9th and 12th grades about sexual activity. The World Health Organization defines sexual health as:

"A state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled."

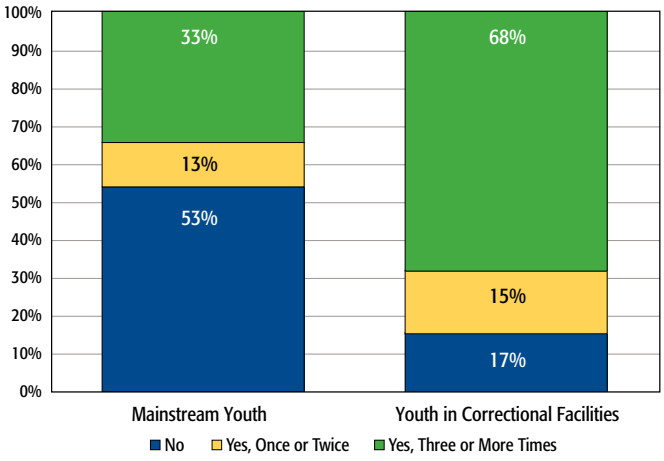
The process of sexual maturation and experimentation, while often discouraged for young adults, is a healthy, normal part of psychosocial development. Dr. Gisela Konopka, a pioneer in the field of youth development, believed that several key concepts are associated with adolescence, including the experience of physical sexual maturity, re-evaluation of values and experimentation.[43]

Sexually abused children, however, can experience disruptions to their sexual development and engage in sexual behavior that puts them at risk of unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. Some researchers view risky sexual behavior of abuse victims as an effort to gain control over a childhood experience in which they felt violated and powerless. Others note that the experience of incest and sexual abuse can make it difficult for victims to form healthy, intimate relationships. The sexualization of affection may lead one to seek closeness through repeated sexual encounters. Studies find a clear and consistent link between early sexual victimization and a variety of risk-taking behaviors, including early sexual debut, drug and alcohol use, more sexual partners and less contraceptive use.[44]

Sexual Activity

Youth in correctional facilities and their mainstream student match are statistically different on virtually all questions related to sexual attitudes and activity. The greatest difference between the two groups is the number of youth who report having had sexual intercourse. Eighty-three percent of youth in correctional facilities report they have had sex at least once—68 percent of whom have had sex three or more times. Conversely, less than one-half of mainstream students (46%) have had sex. One-third (33%) of mainstream youth have had sex three or more times. The 2010 responses are nearly identical to 2007 for both student populations.

Whether Youth Have Had Sexual Intercourse

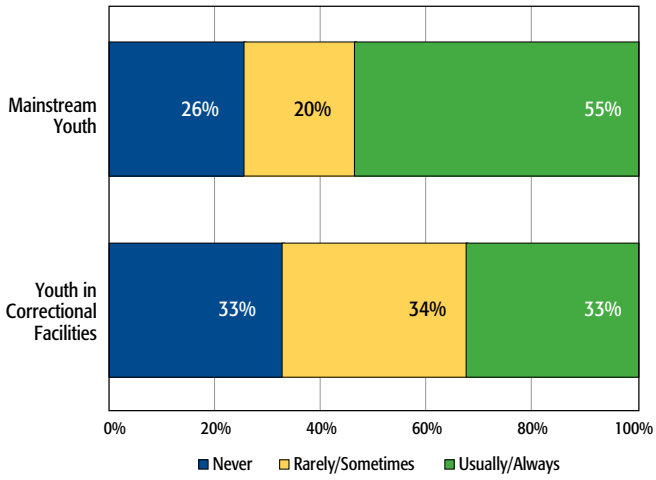


The very last question of the MSS inquires why youth choose not to have sex. Students are allowed to check all selections that apply to their decision to not have sex. In both groups, the four most selected reasons for not having sex (out of 14 options) are: not wanting to get an STD, fear of pregnancy, because their parent(s) would object and "other reasons." These are the same primary reasons selected in 2007. No questions on the MSS are geared at understanding why youth do choose to have sex.

Use of Birth Control

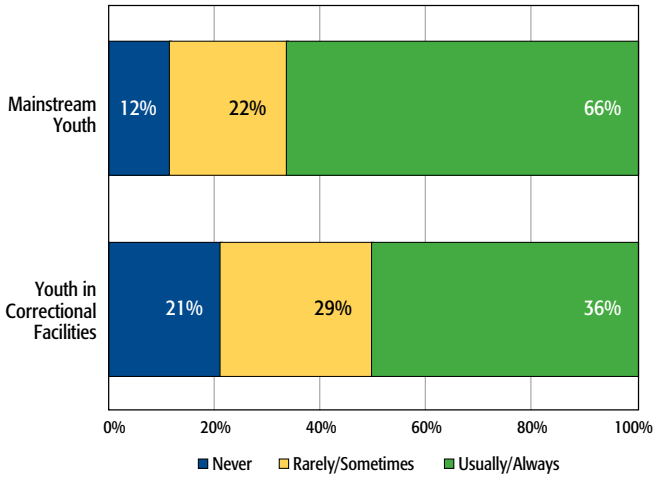
Consistent use of birth control is lacking in both the mainstream and the youth in correctional facility population. Approximately one-half (55%) of mainstream youth who have had sex report using birth control "usually" or "always." For youth in correctional facilities, the consistent use of birth control is lower still at 33 percent. One-quarter to one-third of students in both populations report they never use any birth control method.

Sexually Active Youth: How Often Use Any Birth Control Method



As it relates to condom use specifically, 66 percent of mainstream youth and 44 percent of youth in correctional facilities who have had sex, report that they "usually" or "always" use condoms. Twelve percent to 21 percent of youth in both groups state that they never use condoms. When asked if they used a condom the last time they had sex, a question that is generally regarded as a better assessment of behavior, two-thirds of mainstream youth said they did (66%) versus four in 10 correctional youth (38%). These reports of actual behavior fairly closely reflect the aforementioned self-reports of condom usage. There are no questions on the MSS that provide any information on why youth do not use condoms or other birth control methods.

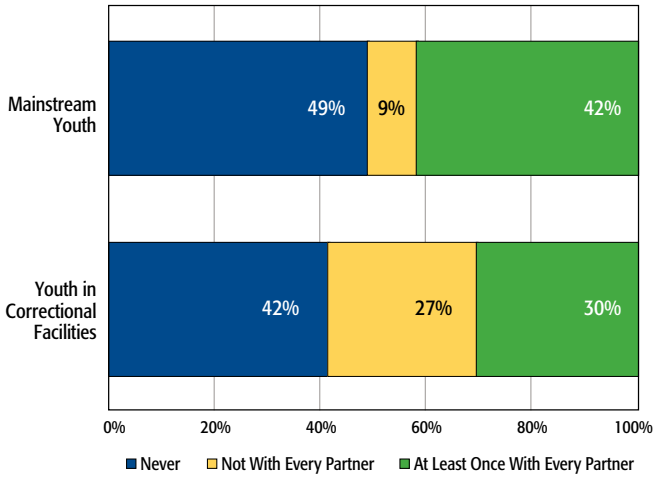
Sexually Active Youth: How Often Use Condoms



Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV Prevention

Sexually active youth in correctional facilities are less likely to talk with every sexual partner about STDs and HIV than mainstream youth at 30 percent and 42 percent, respectively. Conversely, sexually active mainstream youth are more likely to report that they never talk to their sexual partners about STDs/HIV than youth in correctional facilities at 49 percent and 42 percent, respectively. The lack of discussion around STDs and HIV, coupled with sporadic condom use, places youth at risk for sexually transmitted infections.

Percentage of Sexually Active Youth Who Have Talked to Partner(s) About STDs/HIV

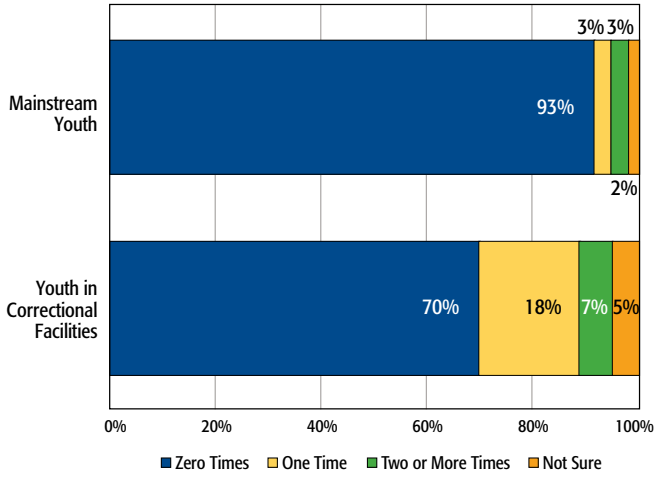


Pregnancy

Over four in 10 sexually active mainstream youth (44%) report they talk to every sexual partner about preventing pregnancy, compared to 30 percent of youth in correctional facilities. A fairly equal percentage of each population (44% and 41%) report they never talk to their partners about pregnancy prevention.

Over three times as many youth in correctional facilities as mainstream youth report having been pregnant or having got someone pregnant (25% versus 6%). Three percent of mainstream youth have been pregnant or have got someone pregnant two or more times, versus 7 percent of youth in correctional facilities. These are both statistically significant differences between mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities. Self-reported pregnancy rates are 8 percent lower in 2010 as compared to 2007 for both student populations.

Number of Times Been Pregnant/ Got Someone Pregnant



Section Summary

- More youth in correctional facilities have had sex, and have done so more times than youth in mainstream schools.
- Youth in correctional facilities are less likely than mainstream youth to routinely use birth control. That being said, only half of mainstream youth report that they "usually" or "always" use birth control.
- Of mainstream youth, 44 percent report that they always talk to their sexual partners about preventing pregnancy and 42 percent always talk to their partner about preventing STDs/HIV. Youth in correctional facilities are statistically less likely to talk to every partner about preventing pregnancy (30%) or STDs/HIV (30%).
- Youth in correctional facilities are significantly more likely to report having been pregnant/got someone pregnant than mainstream youth.

Discussion and Practice Implications

Exploring similarities and differences between youth in mainstream schools and youth in out-of-home correctional placement is useful to practitioners in several ways. To begin, despite the many differences, *there are common protective factors present in both student populations.* These protective factors reflect personal resiliencies or perceived system strengths that can be built upon by many youth-serving entities.

Secondly, *there are common risk factors present in both student populations.* These are behaviors or attitudes that all youth possess to some degree, which may compromise their pro-social development, personal safety or safety of the community. Addressing socially ubiquitous risk factors involves universal education, prevention, or intervention methods provided by many youth-serving agencies.

Finally, *there are certain risk factors pervasive among youth involved in the juvenile justice system.* These speak to the unique experiences and needs of justice system-involved youth and inform targeted intervention strategies. While many youth-serving agencies partner in these efforts, service delivery most often falls upon (or is coordinated by) the juvenile justice and child welfare systems.

The following commentary organizes the findings of this report into three aforementioned categories. These groupings are followed by practice implications, or how the MSS data affirm the need for best and promising practices in youth work. Many of the strategies presented are drawn from the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's *Model Programs Guide.* This online resource is an excellent place to learn about background research, effective interventions and effective youth-serving programs (see Appendix C).

Common Protective Factors

1. Mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities report **comparable, high levels of feeling cared for by their parents.** Out of all the supports listed, **youth feel most cared for by their parents and other adult relatives.**

   Practice Implications:

   - When working with both mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities, tapping into the articulated care and support of parents and extended family is a best practice. Programs and services with active family participation components garner greater success than those that operate in isolation with youth. Specifically, acknowledging that parents are the "experts" in their families and treating them as such is critical to family investment. Programs and policies ought to ensure that parents and extended family have meaningful opportunities for active roles in educational plans, treatment plans and case plans.[45]
   - Even though youth in correctional facilities are less likely than mainstream youth to live with two parents; are more likely to report alcohol and drug use by family members; and are more likely to report abuse by a family member, both student populations regard parents and other relatives as equally caring. Practitioners cannot assume a lack of family connectedness even when there is evidence of neglect or abuse. Family-focused interventions that reinforce the child-parent bond and strengthen family-functioning are best practices.[46]
   - Preserving and strengthening family connections is one of the most important protective factors for youth.[47] Minnesota statutes and Rules of Juvenile Procedure establish that when youth are placed out of the home, the least-restrictive environment necessary to meet their health and welfare needs be used.[48] Unbiased tools that assess youths' risk to self or others[49] and emphasize family preservation and kinship care are best practices.[50]

2. Following family and extended family, both youth populations report that **peers are their next biggest support.**

   Practice Implications:

   - Youth often feel most comfortable going to people their own age for guidance with personal problems or difficult decisions. Youth may be approached by friends for support with physical or sexual victimization, bullying, sexuality, grief, illness or moral dilemma. Peer-based initiatives, including support groups, problem-solving groups, skill development groups and mentoring can help youth support one another.[51]
   - All youth need safe spaces to congregate and recreate. When large groups of youth are disenfranchised, development of spaces and activities that promote positive youth-gathering can be effective. Adequate adult supervision is a necessary aspect of youth programming in spaces such as these to ensure they foster pro-social norms and standards for behavior. Quality bonds to peers, community and culture are essential for healthy adult development.[52]
   - Association with an anti-social peer group is a known criminogenic risk factor.[53] If a youth's peers are engaged in illegal activity or drug and alcohol use, redirecting youth to a more positive peer culture can buffer the effects of exposure to delinquent peer influences.[54]

3. Mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities are **equally likely to report liking school.** The majority of both groups of students agree that **teachers and other adults at school respect them and are interested in them as people.** The vast majority of both student groups **feel safe at school, en route to and from school, and in their neighborhoods.**

   Practice Implications:

   - One of the greatest predictors of school success is school engagement. Youth who feel safe and respected at school, and who have a positive disposition towards school, are more likely to attend and be successful. Lack of positive feelings toward school has been directly related to delinquency.[55] Minnesota has a strong school safety sentiment and many positive school climate resources upon which to build. Educators can be active agents in strengthening the bond between students, families and schools. Fostering safe, respectful, nurturing school climates benefits an entire student body but does not occur by chance. A large body of literature exists around how to establish, evaluate and preserve positive school climate.[56]
   - The vast majority of Minnesota youth report feeling safe in their communities. This sense of safety is a key to the development of pro-social youth activities and overall community engagement. Youth are more likely to engage in delinquency when they live in "disorganized" neighbor hoods with more crime and fewer social controls.[57]

4. **The most common academic goal for both populations is to go to college.** While a larger percentage of mainstream youth plan to go on to graduate school, **both populations have an emphasis on continuing education.**

   Practice Implications:

   - Education appears to be a collective value of youth in Minnesota. The American School Counselor Association has identified key strategies and responsibilities for school counselors in supporting student goals and achievement.[58] Targeted strategies also help youth prepare for post-secondary education and support populations that most often elect not to continue their education.[59]

5. The majority of youth in both correctional facilities and mainstream schools have **not tried drugs other than alcohol and marijuana.** Generally, **youth in both student populations report their parents would "disapprove" or "strongly disapprove" of them using drugs and alcohol.**

   Practice Implications:

   - Drug and alcohol use is a risk factor that affects every aspect of youth functioning. The battle against illicit drug use and medication abuse, however, does not appear to be the primary public health problem among Minnesota youth. Most youth report that they are electing not to use illegal drugs or misuse medications.

- A strength that can be built upon is parental disapproval of chemical use. Parents must send a balanced message that they disapprove of drug or alcohol use, but are not so rigid that communication about the issue is shut down in the event their child develops a problem. Research indicates that parental attitudes favorable to behaviors such as alcohol use predict use of alcohol and drugs by youth.[60] Parent-based groups/training that help parents to respond to their children's behaviors and chemical use are effective intervention practices.[61]

Common Risk Factors

1. Of all the potential support people listed, mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities are **least likely to report that adults in their community care for them.**

   Practice Implications:

   - All youth can benefit from meaningful opportunities to be civically engaged. Action steps related to fostering community connections and caring include: providing opportunities for youth to be involved in community-level decision-making; strengthening youth access to adults; providing community-level opportunities to share talents and interests; and taking a strength-based approach toward youth, rather than having a deficit- or problem-oriented focus.[62,63]
   - Local campaigns and initiatives to enhance youth voice and youth-led initiatives can foster community relationships and citizenship. Positive Youth Develpment (PYD) practices encourage states to develop legislative children's cabinets, youth caucuses, and public/private partnerships to engage youth in civil processes.[64]

2. Youth in both student samples report **similar levels of physical and sexual victimization at school.**

   Practice Implications:

   - While the vast majority of both student populations report feeling safe at school, victimization does occur. School climate initiatives to reduce bullying, sexual harassment, and interpersonal violence benefit all students. Disciplinary policies that support school community restoration, such as peer courts, victim offender mediation, restorative circles and school-based community service, help to hold youth accountable in the school environment without severing school connectedness as suspension and expulsion can.[65]
   - Overall school climates of inclusion and respect are best practices. School teachers and staff at every level must practice and model positive interactions. Staff must have a consistent, measured, unbiased response to school disciplinary incidents to further school climate initiatives.[66,67]

3. Another area where **both populations report victimization is dating violence.** Youth in both populations state they have been hurt, threatened or made afraid by someone they were going out with. **A comparable percentage of both student groups state they have been forced to do something sexual by someone they were going out with.**

   Practice Implications:

   - Both student populations need support around establishing safe and healthy intimate relationships that are free of violence and coercion. Efforts that shift the attitudes and expectations around relationships for both males and females can benefit all youth. Males especially need to hold one another accountable around sexual violence and coercion, and both males and females need to commit to non-violence in their relationships. Abusive relationship patterns can be established early and persist into adulthood, especially for girls.[68]

4. While youth in correctional facilities naturally report more illegal conduct with greater frequency, **youth in mainstream schools also engage in behavior that victimizes others or compromises public safety.** Shoplifting, property damage, and interpersonal violence are reported by both mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities.

   Practice Implications:

   - When holding individuals accountable to choices and behaviors, timely and consistent responses are effective. Consequences must be meted out with a graduated, measured response that is appropriate to the level of infraction. Recognition for positive decision-making and pro-social change are also essential components of behavior change.[69]
   - Risk-taking is a natural part of adolescence. Research on adolescent brain development demonstrates that youth overestimate the benefits and underestimate the risks and consequences associated with their choices.[70] Because this is an inherent characteristic of development, system responses to anti-social behaviors ought to take decision-making capacity into account.[71]
   - Consequences that permanently stigmatize youth can impede future opportunities. "Zero tolerance" policies in schools, for example, do not allow for flexibility and can have severe long-term consequences. Disciplinary alternatives to zero tolerance should be utilized.[72]
   - Efforts to minimize youth's involvement in the formal juvenile justice system through diversion programming can help prevent youth from future court involvement and avoid stigmatization that accompanies system involvement.[73] Again, victim restoration activities that repair harm to victims, communities and youth offenders themselves are consistent with best practices.[74]
   - Youth who do enter the system ought to have opportunities to overcome their delinquency history through the reduction of "collateral consequences" that affect future education, employment, military and housing opportunities.[75]
   - Ongoing messages and curricula about respectful, pro-social behavior and conflict resolution can potentially benefit all youth. Cognitive–behavioral strategies which include practicing social skills are more effective than lecture/education delivery techniques. These programs can be administered effectively in school settings.[76]

5. While youth in correctional facilities express agreement with many more indicators designed to gauge mental health concerns than mainstream youth, **mainstream students also frequently report emotional challenges** Mainstream youth also express feeling angry, under stress, depressed, worried and hopeless. Youth in both populations report having trouble concentrating, experiencing restlessness and acting before thinking.

   Both populations report experiencing suicidal ideation and self-harm. While youth in correctional facilities have higher rates than mainstream youth, these behaviors are present at a concerning level in both groups.

   Practice Implications:

   - These findings support that adolescence can be a challenging time for all youth as they navi-

gate their relationships, goals, rapid development and differentiation processes.[77] Public health initiatives can help families, educators and youth know what "normal" emotional challenges are as compared to levels of depression, stress, or anxiety that may require attention or services of mental health professionals.[78]

- Access to mental health services can also be an issue affecting adolescents. Therapeutic interventions may be viewed as stigmatizing, and availability of professionals who specialize in working with adolescents may be limited. Poverty and lack of insurance coverage also compromise access to services. In addition, there is a shortage of mental health professionals who reflect the race, culture and values of diverse communities.[79]
- Mental health screenings should be a routine aspect of a child's primary medical care to isolate concerns and refer to support services in a timely manner.[80] Furthermore, youth in the justice system often receive mental health screenings but are less likely to receive full assessments and services following a positive screen.[81]

6. **Alcohol and marijuana are the most widely used substances by both mainstream students and youth in correctional facilities.** Marijuana has the lowest perceived risks associated with using in both student groups.

   Practice Implications:

   - Alcohol and marijuana abuse can have destructive effects on youth health and development. Universal education and prevention efforts around both legal and illegal drugs are beneficial to all youth.[82]
   - The drug abuse prevention field suggests that certain types of school-based curricula can effectively reduce substance abuse in adolescence. Effective prevention consists of curricula delivered in an interactive format with smaller groups of young people; curricula that give students the tools to recognize internal pressures (like stress or anxiety) and external pressures (like peer attitudes and advertising); and those that help students develop and practice personal, social and refusal skills in order to effectively resist these influences.[83]

7. **Youth in both populations who report having sex express inconsistent use of birth control and condoms.** Likewise, conversations with sexual partners about pregnancy prevention and STD/HIV prevention are lacking.

   Practice Implications:

   - The MSS does not provide information on why use of birth control and condoms has been declining among youth. It is also unknown why conversations about STDs and HIV appear to be happening with less frequency than before. Further exploration into this topic could provide public health services with important information as to how to re-establish these prevention techniques.
   - Data show that comprehensive sex education programs delay sexual activity, increase contraceptive use, and reduce unprotected sex as compared to "abstinence only" programs.[84]

Risk Factors Unique to Youth in Correctional Facilities

1. Youth in Minnesota juvenile facilities are more likely to be male and of a racial or ethnic minority.
   - Being male is a factor often associated with delinquency, but a causal relationship has not been consistently demonstrated. Males are more likely than females to be aggressive; to be hyperactive; and to be exposed to violence which are drivers for delinquency. Research indicates that males are higher risk even when controlling for other variables, suggesting some biological or biological-environmental interaction.[85] Because there are more males in the juvenile justice system, most programs, curricula and assessments are normed for males. Gender-specific programs and assessments are needed to meet the unique needs of females in a predominantly male system.[86]
   - Race is often cited as a risk factor for delinquency, but many studies demonstrate that when other factors are taken into account and controlled (such as poverty, neighborhood disadvantage, family structure, and exposure to gangs, violence, and crime), an individual's race has no significant effect on delinquency. The evidence suggests that the link between race and violence is based largely on social rather than biological differences.[87] Nevertheless, the higher percentage of youth from communities of color in Minnesota's juvenile justice system emphasize the importance of culturally competent programs and services, and the obligation to explore contributing factors to the overrepresentation issue known as Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC).[88]

2. Youth in correctional facilities are considerably more likely than their mainstream peers to **live in a single-parent household, especially with only their mother.** The only indicator of economic status on the MSS is the FRPL variable. **Over 70 percent of youth in correctional facilities report that they receive FRPL.**

Practice Implications:

- While a single-parent family is not a pronounced risk factor for youth, it does increase the likelihood that a child will be at a socio-economic disadvantage compared to families with two working parents. Single-parent households often provide less supervision than two-parent families, and parental monitoring is an important component in reducing both criminal behaviors and chemical use among adolescents. Provided the single parent is not promoting anti-social behavior and there are not poor parent-child relations, family composition has a small delinquency effect.[89]
- Family involvement is extremely important to children's success in school, treatment and rehabilitation efforts. Prevention and intervention initiatives for justice system-involved youth must involve parents and important family members to the greatest ability possible, and be flexible enough that parents can participate even when their work, transportation and other obligations make it difficult. Some ways in which systems can adapt to the needs of families include home-based therapy and services; evening and weekend meetings or visitation hours; reminder phone call systems; and non-traditional court hours.[90]
- Poverty or low socio-economic status is a risk factor related to delinquency, especially if youth are living within an economically disadvantaged community. Rather than focusing only on children who have infringed the law, comprehensive prevention strategies should address broader social and economic injustices.[91]

3. While alcohol and drug abuse by family members are present to some degree in both the mainstream and correctional facility population, youth in correctional facilities self-report significantly more family issues with drug and alcohol use than their mainstream peers. Many youth in correctional facilities express that someone in their household uses alcohol or drugs in a manner that has caused ongoing family, health or legal problems.

Practice Implications:

- Drug and alcohol abuse by family members can be a primary barrier to family functioning and attachment. As much as a justice system-involved youth may need help with their own chemical abuse, they may have a parent, sibling or other caregiver in the household who also needs services. Because drug and alcohol use is connected to heightened risk of domestic violence and reduced supervision, a child's success on probation can be thwarted by the environment created by a substance-using caregiver. For youth whose problem behaviors and risk is largely associated with their parents' drug abuse, interventions seem to be most successful when explicit drug treatment for parents is combined with effective family intervention components.[92,93]
- Access to chemical health services for youth and their family members can be an obstacle both because of socio-economic status and geographic location of services. Suggestions to address these disparities include: ensuring that efforts focus not only on equalizing access to treatment but also on outcomes of care; aggressively monitoring progress towards an equitable system of mental healthcare for children of color; and moving beyond policy interventions in the healthcare system to more socio-educational approaches, where government agencies are agents of support.[94] It is important that practitioners and policy-makers evaluate the state for equitable resource distribution and address any access and service delivery issues.

4. **Youth in correctional facilities self-report more truancy and more frequent school changes than mainstream youth.** It is more common for youth in correctional facilities to report changing schools at least once in the past year than to report no school change at all. More than one in 10 youth in correctional facilities have changed schools three or more times in the past year.

Practice Implications:

- To the greatest extent possible, school stability should be emphasized for youth. School changes strain academic learning and require significant social adjustment. If the reason a youth must change schools is a parent move from an area or district, explore if there are options to keep the child attending their present school through waivers or transportation options.[95] If the issue is related to discipline, early problem-solving and disciplinary practices that promote restorative justice rather than mandatory suspensions and expulsions can keep youth connected to their schools.[96]
- Truancy prevention initiatives are most effective when they provide meaningful sanctions for truancy and meaningful incentives for attendance. Involving the family and community-based resources in truancy prevention is also a best practice. When youth are suspended for truancy or have participation in other school activities connected to attendance, further student disenfranchisement can occur. Best practices include having youth serve in-school suspension with academic work, in-school mentoring, family meetings, and the involvement of Truancy Courts.[97]

5. **Youth in correctional facilities have chemical use behaviors that greatly exceed those of their mainstream peers, especially relating to cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana.** Youth in correctional facilities are more likely to report trying drugs and alcohol at least once. Also, **the age of onset of chemical use for youth in correctional facilities is most likely to be under age 14.**

   Youth in correctional facilities also report more personal and interpersonal problems connected to their chemical use. These youth continue to use despite consequences and report having difficulty controlling how much they use.

Practice Implications:

- The prevention and intervention window for justice system-involved youth is largely prior to high school. Research shows that early use of drugs and alcohol are correlated with later delinquency and addiction.[98] Furthermore, chemical use must be evaluated and understood in context of the youth's mental health and trauma history.[99]
- Effective drug and alcohol interventions exist and can be implemented in placements or in the community. They require active engagement of all pertinent parties, well-trained providers, transition plans and aftercare services. Juvenile Drug Courts also focus on the underlying chemical abuse issue that often keep youth in the justice system.[100]

6. **Youth in correctional facilities report witnessing more domestic violence and experiencing more physical violence in the home than mainstream peers. The experience of sexual abuse perpetrated by both familial and non-familial adults is also more prevalent among youth in correctional facilities.** At least one-third of youth in correctional facilities report having run away from home at least once during the past year. **Many youth respondents in the correctional facility population had run away multiple times in the past year.**

   Practice Implications:

   - Professionals working with youth in correctional facilities must be aware of the high rates of physical, emotional and sexual abuse experienced by youth. Mental health workers trained in Trauma Informed Care and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder should assess youth and refer them to proper services. The root feelings and experiences behind both acting-out behavior and chemical use need to be explored in context of trauma. Trauma-focused cognitive behavior therapy is a best practice in working with youth.[101,102]
   - Children run away from home for myriad reasons, including a violent or unsafe home environment. Youth who experience homelessness are more likely to find themselves in situations to be abused and exploited.[103] Finally, family functioning assessments and safety planning are key components of "family-centered practice" to anticipate and prevent family escalation and crisis.[104]

7. While all youth report some mental or emotional health concerns, **youth in correctional facilities more often self-report an "ongoing mental health issue" or that they have received mental health treatment.** Over half of youth in correctional facilities report trouble controlling their anger, trouble concentrating, impulsivity, restlessness and difficulty sleeping.

   Practice Implications:

   - Youth in correctional facilities need assistance in understanding and regulating emotions. The focus is often on anger (as that is one of the more outwardly expressed and problematic emotions), but youth also struggle with anxiety and depression. Cognitive-behavioral programming and therapy that focus on social skills and managing emotions is an evidence- based practice, as is Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) for youth with more intensive emotional dysregulation issues.[105]
   - Mental health screening tools and assessments help identify more serious mental health issues and appropriate interventions. Recommendations around mental health issues in the juvenile justice system include identification and diversion of youth with mental health issues out of the juvenile justice system; understanding the co-morbidity of mental health issues, chemical abuse and delinquency; and improved mental health services for juvenile justice system- involved youth, including adequate screening and treatment.[106]
   - Use of pharmacological interventions for youth to manage mental health issues must be prescribed and monitored by a professional with experience treating psychiatric illnesses in children and adolescents. Psychiatric interventions are a part of a comprehensive psychiatric treatment plan resulting from a diagnostic assessment. Youth and families must understand the purpose of the medication, potential side effects, and risks of using alcohol and drugs while medicated.[107]

8. A significantly greater percentage of **youth in correctional facilities report that they have been sexually active** compared to mainstream youth. Both student populations report **inconsistent condom and birth control use, placing them at risk for STDs/HIV and pregnancy.** Youth in correctional facilities are **more likely than mainstream youth to report having been pregnant or having got someone pregnant.**

   Practice Implications:

   - Youth in correctional facilities need access to comprehensive sex education and reproductive health services. Sex education must be delivered in a sensitive manner that understands justice system-involved youth may have been sexually abused or exploited. Cognitive–behavioral interventions have been shown effective in forestalling sexual activity and addressing the needs of sexually active youth.[108]
   - While the MSS does not ask how many youth taking the survey have children, it is very possible that youth in correctional facilities are parents themselves. Teenwise Minnesota, an organization dedicated to promoting adolescent sexual health, cites six core services for teen parents and their children including: flexible, quality schooling for teens to complete high school or GED; case management and family support services; prenatal care and reproductive health services; parenting/life-skills support; and father-involvement supports.[109]

Conclusion

As was the case in 2007, youth in correctional facilities who participated in the 2010 Minnesota Student Survey reported risk-taking attitudes and behaviors at rates significantly higher than a matched sample of mainstream peers. Furthermore, the responses of youth in correctional facilities to the 2010 MSS were very similar to responses collected from youth in correctional facilities during the 2007 MSS administration. These commonalities over time suggest that child-serving systems can anticipate the issues most critically affecting youth in correctional out-of-home placements in Minnesota.

Among these critical issues is the knowledge that youth in correctional facilities:

- experience more physical and sexual abuse by both familial and non-familial perpetrators
- have greater indicators of mental health concerns
- report more issues and consequences associated with drug and alcohol abuse.

Behaviorally, these youth:

- demonstrate more delinquency and interpersonal conflict
- are more likely to be truants or runaways
- use more chemicals beginning at an earlier age
- are more likely to be sexually active than mainstream youth.

Demographically, youth in correctional facilities are more likely than their mainstream peers to:

- live in a single-parent household
- receive FRPL and Individualized Education Program services at school
- come from communities of color
- be male.

MSS information can support targeted interventions and support strategies for justice system-involved youth to reduce certain unique risk factors that may contribute to continued system involvement.

Conversely, youth in correctional facilities and youth in mainstream schools report similar protective factors in some areas. Both student populations:

- feel cared for by their parents and other adult relatives
- reported liking school and having educational goals that include post-secondary schooling
- name peers as their greatest support next to their family
- feel safe in their schools and neighborhoods.

These are strengths upon which all youth-serving entities and communities can build to engage youth and enhance their learning, development and citizenship.

Finally, both populations of youth report some similar risk factors in some areas. All youth report:

- common levels of victimization at school
- the presence of violence in dating relationships
- the least connection to adults in their community
- mental and emotional health concern
- suicidal ideation and self-injurious behavior
- alcohol and marijuana use
- sporadic attention to STD/HIV and pregnancy prevention.

These behaviors and attitudes are ones that all youth-serving entities and communities can focus upon to reduce risk factors and build resiliency for all youth.

The strengths and needs of Minnesota's youth cross many professional disciplines including health, public health, human services, education and juvenile justice. Furthermore, the most effective interventions include the participation of and collaboration with families, schools, communities, community-based providers, and government-based services. Youth-serving agencies at all levels must act collectively to implement best practices to support justice system-involved youth and families across the state.

Coming Soon

Please watch for additional *Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Responses to the 2010 Minnesota Student Survey* publications. Reports are planned specifically to explore the response of girls in correctional facilities, and the response of youth in facilities who report having experienced personal victimization or trauma.

Appendix A

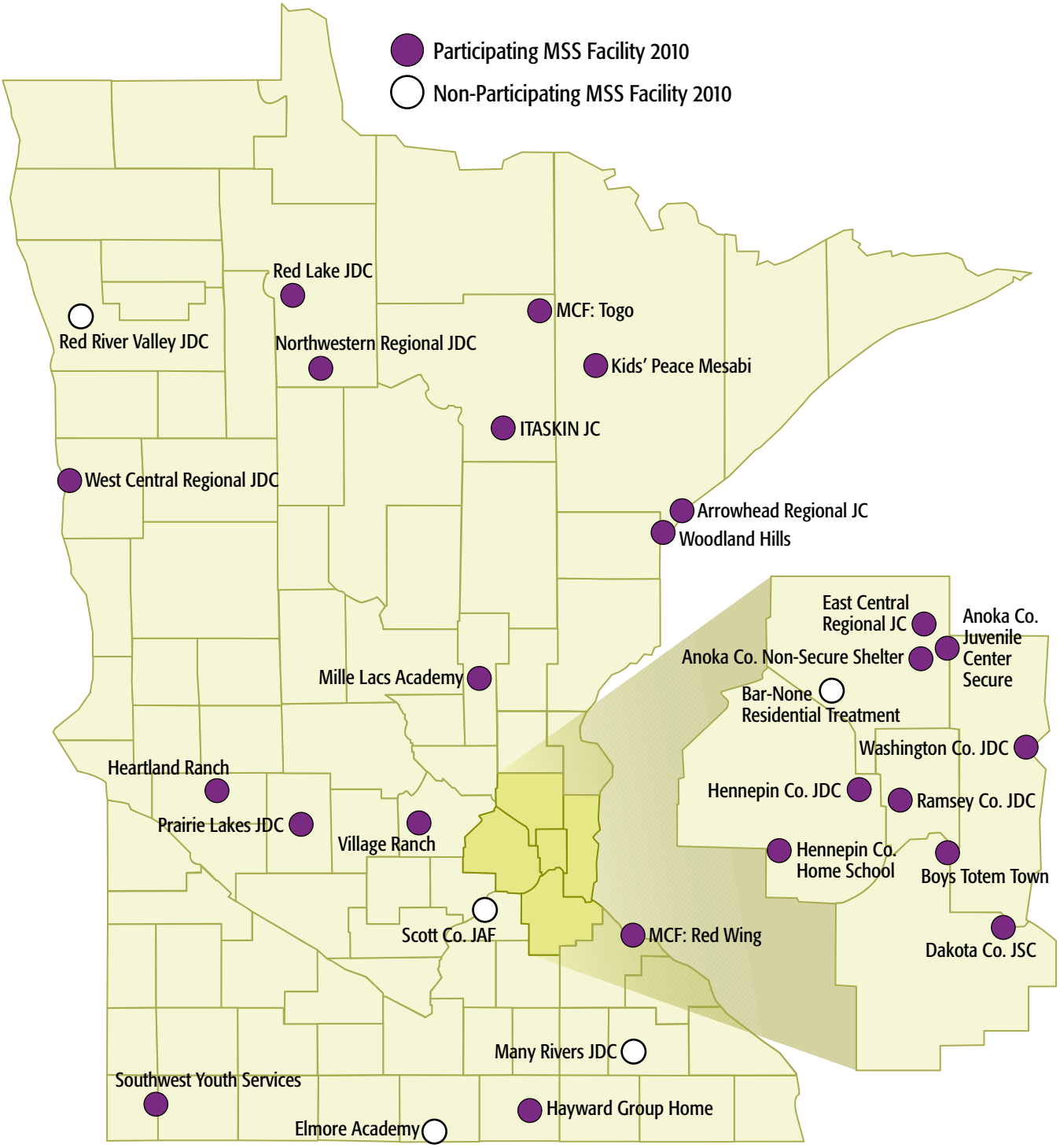
Characteristics of Participating Facilities

Based on licensing information maintained by the Minnesota Department of Corrections, participating facilities had the following characteristics in 2010:

- Eleven participating facilities have secure beds only; five have both secure and non-secure beds; and eight have only non-secure beds.
- Nine facilities were in the seven-county Twin Cities Metro area; the remaining facilities were in greater Minnesota.
- Eight facilities have maximum populations of fewer than 30 youth; eight facilities have maximum populations of 30 to 65 youth; and eight facilities have maximum populations of more than 80 youth.
- Ages of youth in the program vary with admission criteria. Generally, the minimum age of admission is 10 and the maximum age is 19. Age criteria are determined in part by the risk-level served and programs offered.
- Seventeen facilities house both male and female youth; six facilities house only males; and one facility houses only females. In facilities that accept both males and females, boys and girls are housed and programmed separately, consistent with best practices.
- Seventeen facilities provide pre-dispositional detention and post-dispositional residential placement; six facilities were post-disposition residential placement only. Only one facility offers pre-adjudication detention only.
- The youth length of stay in the facilities can range from a few days to more than a year, depending on treatment services offered and whether youth are pre- or post-adjudication holds.

Appendix B

Location of Youth Correctional Facilities Eligible for MSS Participation



Appendix C

Model Programs and Best Practices

While many agencies and organizations evaluate and compile best practices on youth prevention and intervention, the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) focuses on programs relevant to justice system-involved youth.

OJJDP maintains an online resource list of model programs that have demonstrated effectiveness with youth. Services are divided into five categories based on a youth's level of system involvement: Prevention, Immediate Sanctions, Intermediate Sanctions, Residential and Re-entry.

The Model Programs Guide provides information on the following issues as they relate to juveniles, many of which are relevant to findings in this report. The OJJDP Model Programs Guide can be accessed at http://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/Default.aspx.

- Academic Skills Enhancement
- Afterschool/Recreation
- Alternative Schools
- Classroom Curricula
- Community Awareness/Mobilization
- Drug/Alcohol Education
- Gang Prevention
- Leadership and Youth Development
- Mentoring
- Parent Training
- School/Classroom Environment
- Truancy Prevention
- Wraparound/Case Management
- Family Therapy
- Drug/Alcohol Therapy
- Teen/Youth Courts
- Restorative Justice
- Conflict Resolution/Interpersonal Skills
- Cognitive Behavioral Treatment
- Day Treatment
- Drug Court
- Home Confinement
- Probation Services
- Group Homes
- Residential Treatment
- Wilderness Camps
- Aftercare
- Re-entry Court
- Vocational/Job Training

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