

**Youth
in
Minnesota
Correctional
Facilities:**

**Responses to the 2007
Minnesota Student Survey**

July 2009



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Responses to the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey

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Juvenile Correctional Facilities Participating in the Minnesota Student Survey

- Anoka County Juvenile Center, Pines School
- Arrowhead Juvenile Center, Arrowhead Academy
- Boys Totem Town
- Chisholm House, Woodland Hills Academy
- Dakota County Juvenile Services Center, Riverside School
- Hennepin County Home School, Epsilon Program
- ITASKIN Juvenile Center, ITASKIN Education Center
- Many Rivers Juvenile Detention Center, Campus School
- Minnesota Correctional Facility Red Wing, Walter Maginnis High School
- Minnesota Correctional Facility Togo, Alice O'Brien School
- Northwestern Minnesota Juvenile Center
- Ramsey County Juvenile Detention Center
- West Central Regional Juvenile Center
- Woodland Hills, Woodland Hills Academy

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) is a 126 item questionnaire administered every three years to public school students that includes questions about a wide variety of 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. During the most recent survey administration in 2007, 91 percent of public school districts in Minnesota participated in the survey.

Fifteen juvenile correctional facilities also administered the MSS within their school programs. The responses from 587 youth in juvenile justice out-of-home placements were compared to a same-sized sample of youth from mainstream schools. For the first time in the history of this report, students were matched to each other on age, gender and race/ethnicity. Comparing two “mirror image” groups of students helps to ensure that differences in survey responses are not attributable to demographic differences.

Exploring similarities and differences between 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 educate the reader on risk-factors associated with delinquency and to present validated, strength-focused responses.

While some similarities existed between the student groups, the majority of responses were statistically different:

- Youth in correctional facilities were substantially more likely than mainstream youth to live with only their mother (44%) as compared to the 45 percent of mainstream youth who lived with both biological or adoptive parents. All youth were equally likely to say that their parents and other relatives cared for them “quite a bit” or “very much.”

- Nearly three quarters of youth in correctional facilities (74%) reported receiving Free or Reduced Priced Lunch at school in the past year and over half (53%) reported that they have had an Individualized Education Plan requiring special education services. These rates are at least twice those of youth in mainstream schools.
- Youth in correctional facilities reported liking school as much as mainstream youth. Mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities were also victimized at school at similar rates. Nevertheless, youth in correctional facilities reported more chronic truancy, more school changes, and feeling less cared for by teachers than their mainstream peers.
- Generally, more youth in correctional facilities report having tried alcohol and drugs, and they have done so at an earlier age. Youth in correctional facilities also reported twice as many problems in their families connected to drug and alcohol abuse.
- Youth in correctional facilities were twice as likely as mainstream youth to have been a victim of domestic abuse and to have been a victim of sexual abuse. Self-reported mental and emotional health needs of youth in correctional facilities were nearly two times higher than mainstream youth including anger, depression, stress, worry and hopelessness.
- Youth in correctional facilities self-report more delinquency. While approximately one-quarter of mainstream youth report having shoplifted, damaged property, or hit or beat up another; this is true of over half of all corrections involved youth. In addition, those who reported these behaviors among the youth in correctional facilities had done so with much greater frequency.

Additionally, results of data analysis show that girls in correctional facilities report many more risk factors than their male counterparts. Girls reported more substance abuse, more mental health problem indicators, less family attachment, and significantly more physical and sexual victimization than boys. Specifically, over half of girls in correctional facilities reported being a victim of physical abuse, sexual abuse or dating

Executive Summary

violence. Nearly 70 percent of girls in correctional facilities reported having run away from home in the past year.

Risk factors that predicate involvement in the juvenile justice system have remained consistent over time. The benefit of consistency is that interventions have been developed, piloted and replicated to address these risk factors. Comprehensive delinquency reduction strategies and interventions must occur at all levels of society: the micro-level (individuals and families), the mid-level (organizations and agencies), and the macro-level (communities and public policy). The following strategies have demonstrated outcomes in delinquency prevention in each area:

- For individuals and families, public health nurse visits for first time mothers have helped to reduce child abuse, neglect and endangerment that would otherwise later require mental health interventions. For youth and families already experiencing problematic behaviors, Cognitive Behavioral Treatment (CBT) aimed at changing anti-social thinking patterns and Multisystemic Therapy (MST) focused on strengthening and repairing families have demonstrated outcomes in reducing future delinquency and chemical abuse, and managing mental health.
- At the agency and organizational level, schools that create a positive climate and utilize restorative justice alternatives to suspension and expulsion keep students both safe and engaged. Schools and community organizations that offer academic, recreational and cultural programs accessible to all youth have been shown to reduce risk factors including violence, victimization and drug use. Furthermore, these programs strengthen school and community connectedness and promote academic achievement. Model programs include culturally competent practices, gender specific services, and staff persons who reflect the population served.

- At the community level, delinquency can be reduced by bringing multidisciplinary community partners together to prioritize how community resources and efforts will be concentrated. Cultural shifts within communities, agencies, and society as a whole are effective in systemically reducing racial and ethnic disparities evident in the juvenile justice system. Addressing violence as a public health issue using public health strategies, and returning management of mental health to families, health care providers and communities can alleviate strain on the juvenile justice system. Data collection, program outcome measurement, and legislative initiatives round out activities at this intervention level.

Nation-wide research and program evaluation have yielded many promising interventions. When these practices are implemented at each level and done so in a manner consistent with tested program models, the risk-factors for youth delinquency can be diminished while maximizing the protective factors inherent in individuals, families and communities. Youths' experiences and perceptions, the voices of families and communities, and the observations of human services professionals are integral to implementing effective delinquency prevention and intervention. Programs and services should be held accountable to using evidence-based practices and culturally competent strategies to meet the needs of the populations served. Additionally, state level agencies have a collective responsibility to serve all Minnesota youth and ensure that the services, training, and funding communities need to address delinquency are known and available statewide.

Minnesota Student Survey Overview

The Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) is a 126 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.¹ The survey originated in 1989 with the most recent administration occurring in 2007.

Content of the Minnesota Student Survey is collaboratively determined by the Minnesota 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 2007, 91 percent of school districts participated. In total, 72 percent of 6th, 9th and 12th graders (roughly 142,000 students) took the 2007 MSS.²

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 state-wide representation, they also supplement and enhance other state level data sources and show trends in student behaviors and attitudes over time. The Minnesota Student Survey provides students, parents and their communities a dynamic vehicle for on-going 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.³

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. By Minnesota Statute, the 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.⁴ Youth placed in secure facilities are also 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.⁵ 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.

Authorship of the report on youth in correctional facilities has changed over time. The first report was written by the Minnesota Department of Education, followed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services in 1995. In 1998, the report was a collaboration between the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota Department of Children, Family and Learning. No report on youth in correctional facilities was written in 2001 or 2004, though data was collected and data tables were made public in these years.

Introduction

While varying authorship of the report is in part indicative of the collaboration and data sharing between several state-level child serving agencies, it also reveals that Minnesota lacks a centralized agency for reporting on data, research, and issues pertinent to youth in the juvenile justice system. Consequently, at the state level, reporting on corrections involved youth is technically the responsibility of everyone, and no one. In 2006, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety contacted juvenile correctional facilities to encourage participation in the 2007 MSS in the interest of re-establishing the report on youth in correctional facilities. It is the hope that this report will continue to be a priority at the state level following future survey administrations.

Purpose

The goal of this report is to examine how youth in correctional facilities who took the 2007 MSS responded 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 their 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 are facing. These similarities may inform widespread prevention efforts. This analysis will also seek to identify strengths and protective factors Minnesota youth possess.

Regrettably, many MSS questions are asked from a problem-oriented perspective rather than one of youth strengths. For example, youth are asked how many

times in the past month they have used drugs but not how many times in the last month 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.

A secondary objective of this report is to educate the reader on risk-factors associated with delinquency and to present validated, strength-focused responses. Each data section in this report will be preceded by a brief synopsis of research that explains how certain MSS questions may be related to delinquency. The student responses to the survey questions will then illustrate the extent to which risky attitudes, behaviors and experiences are present among Minnesota youth. At the end of the report is a discussion of strength-based prevention and intervention strategies with demonstrated outcomes for addressing the risk factors identified in the survey data.

While many best practices and Model Programs have been designed, implemented and evaluated for effectiveness, only a sampling can be included in this report. To highlight that support for Minnesota youth and communities is everyone's responsibility, the strategies in this report are presented at multiple levels of society. Micro-level strategies are prevention and intervention efforts that focus on individuals and families; mid-level strategies are approaches for organizations and agencies; and macro-level strategies are changes that must occur within communities and public policy. It is through intentional, multi-level efforts that all Minnesota youth can receive the sustained support needed from family, schools, community and government to continue their developmental journey safely.

Methodology

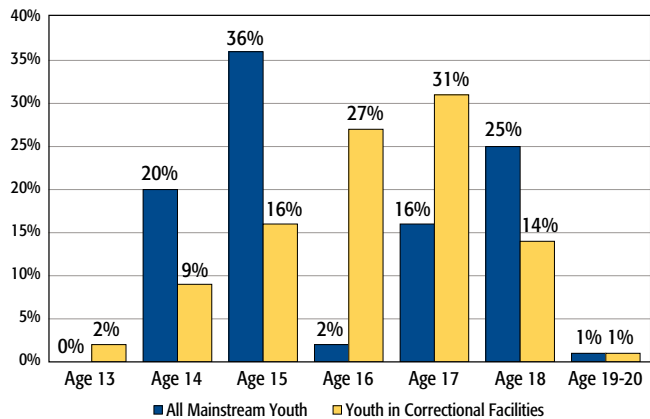
Fifteen juvenile correctional facilitiesⁱ licensed by the Minnesota Department of Corrections administered the MSS to youth in their school settings. Locked or “secure facilities” were specifically encouraged to participate because youth in secure placements were least likely to have had the opportunity 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 the majority of facilities had secure programming, it was not a requirement for survey participation or inclusion in this report.

Data presented in this report comes from comparing the survey responses of youth in correctional facilities (n=587) to those of a random sample of youth respondents in the mainstream school population (n=577).ⁱⁱ For the first time in the history of this report, the mainstream sample of youth reflects the same age, gender and race/ethnicityⁱⁱⁱ as respondents in the juvenile correctional 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.^{iv}

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 are roughly equally male and female (49% and 51%, respectively), youth in correctional facilities during the 2007 MSS administration were 82 percent male and 18 percent female.

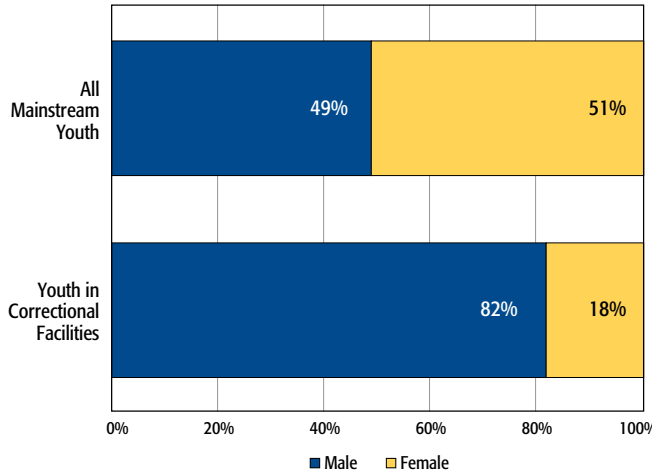
With regard to age, because the mainstream school respondents were in 9th and 12th grades, over half of respondents were either 15 or 18 years old. In correctional facilities, the majority of residents were 16 or 17 years old. The student matching process neutralizes response differences that might be affected by the respondents’ gender or age.

2007 Minnesota Student Survey: Respondent Age



- ⁱ Of these facilities, 11 had secure programs whereas three had only non-secure programs. In this manner, responses from youth in correctional facilities in this report predominantly reflect youth who met the criteria for secure placement. One participating correctional facility could not be identified, as they did not provide their facility name. These responses are included in the data (n = 13) but the facility name is not on the list of participants. Because the facility name is unknown, neither the secure or non-secure status of the facility could be verified, nor the type of programming offered. Any further information about participating facilities in this report does not include the attributes of this facility. 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 many not have been surveyed because of the high turn-over 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 characteristics of participating survey sites, please see Appendix A.
- ⁱⁱ 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 populations refused to participate or had previously taken the survey in their local education setting.
- ⁱⁱⁱ For the remainder of this report, the term “race” will be used in place of the terms “race and ethnicity”.
- ^{iv} 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 ($\chi^2 < .05$).

2007 Minnesota Student Survey: Respondent Gender



Another important variable to consider is respondent race. The mainstream student population that completed the 2007 MSS was 78 percent white and 22 percent youth of color.⁶ As a racial distribution, this fairly accurately matches U.S. Census Bureau population projections for youth in Minnesota.⁷ In juvenile correctional facilities, however, the racial landscape looks much different: At the time of the 2007 MSS, youth from correctional facilities were 66 percent youth of color and 33 percent white.

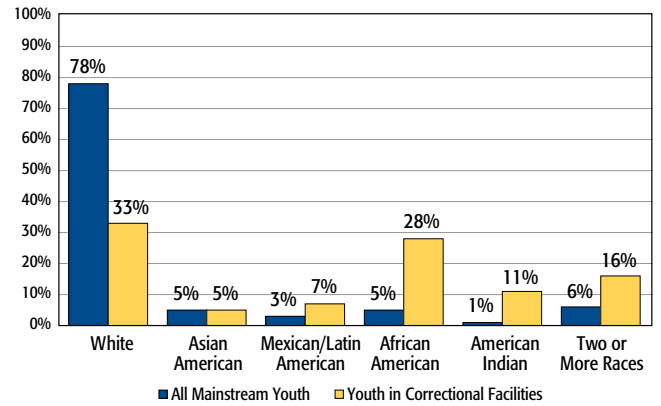
For this reason, the mainstream sample group used in this report also has the same racial composition as the youth in correctional facilities. Comparing two “mirror image” groups of students helps ensure that differences in their survey responses cannot be attributed to racial differences.

In 2007, white youth in Minnesota made up over two-thirds of all juvenile arrests, including those for serious and violent offenses.⁸ At the time of the MSS, however, white youth were only one-third of respondents from juvenile correctional facilities.

When compared to their rate of arrest, even for serious and violent offenses, youth in juvenile correctional facilities disparately over-represent youth of color. This phenomenon, in which youth of minority races are over-represented at the various decision-making points of the juvenile justice system relative to their

percentage in the general population, is called Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC). The reasons for DMC are complex, but a brief synopsis of factors contributing to this reality in the justice system is available through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.⁹ In addition, reducing DMC as a prevention strategy is outlined in the discussion section of this report.

2007 Minnesota Student Survey: Respondent Race



Boys Versus Girls

Research strongly suggests that males and females are involved in the justice system for different reasons. In 2007, females accounted for one-third of juvenile arrests in Minnesota. Girls were roughly half of arrests for the “status offenses” of curfew and runaway, however. Specifically, girls account for 60 percent of all arrests for runaway, one of the only offenses for which girls are arrested at higher rate than boys.¹⁰

To explore how gender may affect reasons for juvenile justice system involvement, this report will examine differences in responses between boys (n=480) and girls (n=107) within the juvenile correctional facility population. The responses from boys and girls from the correctional facility sample were analyzed using the same statistical tools to isolate risk factors that might be affected by respondent gender. Statistically significant differences between boys and girls will be highlighted throughout the report for easy identification.

School Staff Interviews

After the MSS was administered at each correctional facility, the Office of Justice Programs contacted a representative from each school for a semi-structured telephone interview about their academic program and services. Thirteen persons were interviewed, one of whom spoke on behalf of two facilities. Interview participants included principals, education directors, social workers, lead teachers, special education teachers and other administrative titles.

These interviews were conducted in the interest of providing a setting and context to the data, as well as to see if professional experiences mirrored youth responses. In addition to facility and educational program information, school representatives were asked about their perceptions of safety, mental health issues, obstacles to service provision, and myths about corrections involved youth. Responses to open-ended questions were coded by themes. Qualitative and quantitative data from these interviews will be included as relevant throughout the report under the headings “Educator Insights”.

Data Limitations

Youth Representation and Generalizability

While the juvenile correctional facilities that participated in the 2007 MSS have statewide representation, not all secure 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 residential correctional placements in any given year.

Racial and Ethnic Distinctions

This report preserves the racial distribution of youth in correctional facilities on the day of the 2007 MSS. It does not examine the responses of racial or ethnic groups separately for differences between unique racial populations. African Americans are the largest popu-

lation 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 7 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 short time parameters have been excluded from analysis. Effort has been made to identify responses that may be impacted by youths’ placement in the report.

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 unless it is required to provide context about the question itself. 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 in this report cannot reliably be compared to previous reports on youth in correctional facilities. In addition, the landscape of juvenile services in Minnesota has been changing over the past ten years. At least five juvenile correctional facilities that participated in the 1998 survey have either closed or substantially changed their programming since then. The 1998 facility sample also included a larger number of facilities providing only non-secure residential programs.

Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

Family Connectedness

For most, the 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.¹¹

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 antisocial behaviors, and family disruptions, children are more likely to engage in future delinquency and antisocial behavior.¹² 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.¹³

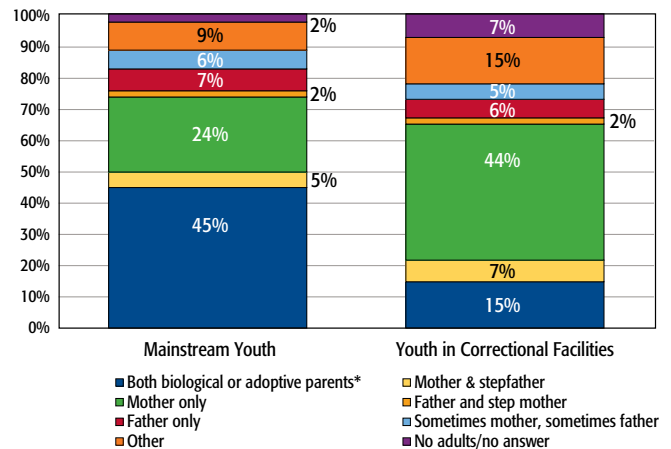
Family structure alone, namely single-parent households, does not cause delinquency. While single-parent families often have greater challenges associated with finances, poverty and supervision of children, one of the most consistent protective factors for youth is a positive relationship with a parent.¹⁴ If parents role-model or promote pro-social attitudes and behaviors, they will more likely be present among their children regardless of family composition.

Living Arrangement

Youth in mainstream schools are significantly more likely to live with both biological/adoptive parents than their peers in juvenile correctional facilities.^v Forty-five percent of the mainstream youth sample lived with both biological/adoptive parents. Comparatively, only

15 percent of youth in correctional facilities lived with both biological/adoptive parents. Youth in correctional facilities were substantially more likely to live with only their mother (44%) than the matched sample of mainstream youth (24%).

Respondent Living Arrangement



*Adoptive parents were reported in less than 2% of both student populations.

Boys in correctional facilities were statistically more likely to live with both biological or adoptive parents than girls in correctional facilities (17% vs. 6%).

Across both student samples, the rate of youth living with their father alone (6% to 7%); their father and step-mother (2%); and joint custody arrangements between their mother and father (6% to 7%) were similar, albeit low. There was no statistical difference between the student groups on living with their father.

Youth in correctional facilities were more likely to select "other" as a living arrangement than the mainstream matched sample (22% vs. 11%). While foster-parents, and grandparents are included in this category, it may also include alternative living arrangements with other family members, friends, or placements. No further information can be derived from the MSS about living arrangement.

^v In all three populations, two adoptive parents accounted for 1.5 percent or fewer of living arrangements.

Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

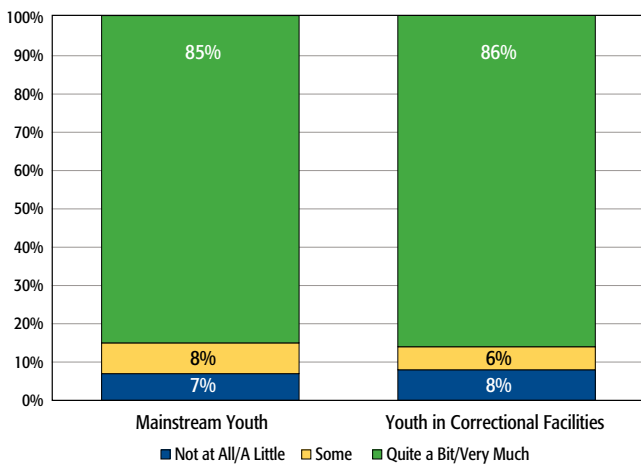
Girls in correctional facilities were statistically more likely to indicate that they have an “other” living arrangement than boys in correctional facilities (22% vs. 13%).

Boys in correctional facilities were statistically more likely to say they could talk to their mothers “some” or “most of the time” (81%) than girls in correctional facilities (64%).

Familial Support

Despite different living arrangements for mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities, there was no statistical difference between the two groups on whether or not they felt their parents cared for them. Both groups reported that their parents cared about them “quite a bit” or “very much” 85 to 86 percent of the time.

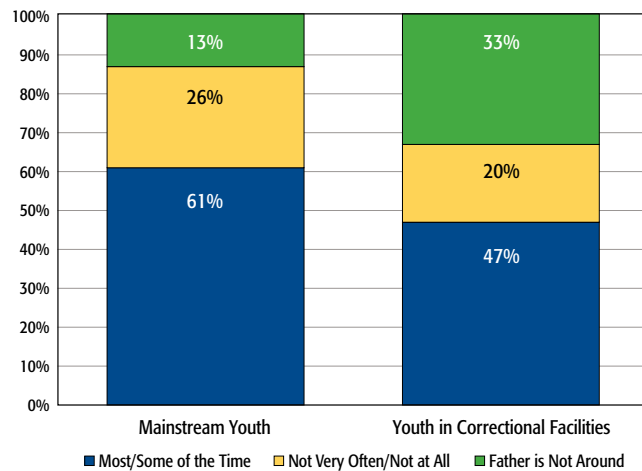
How Much Youth Feel Their Parents Care About Them



Girls in correctional facilities were more likely than their male peers to say that their parents cared about them “not at all” or “a little” (18% vs. 6%).

When specifically asked if they could talk to their parents about problems they were having, over 73 percent of youth in both groups reported that they could talk to their mother “most” or “some of the time.” In both student groups, fewer youth expressed being able to talk to their fathers about problems they are having. Thirty-three percent of youth in correctional facilities indicated their “father was not around” compared to 13 percent of mainstream youth. As a result, fewer than half (47%) of youth in correctional facilities felt they talk to their father for support with problems, versus 61 percent of mainstream youth.

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.¹⁵ The professional fields of juvenile delinquency prevention and juvenile corrections acknowledge extended family involvement as an important contribution to indigenous, holistic support systems.¹⁶

As with their relationships with parents, there was no statistical difference between mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities on whether or not they felt other adult relatives cared about them. Eighty percent of mainstream youth felt other adult relatives cared “quite a bit” or “very much,” as did 76 percent of youth in correctional facilities. In both groups, a similar percentage (10% and 9%, respectively) felt that their adult relatives cared for them “a little” or “not at all.” While extended family supports were rated highly, youth perceptions of parental care were nevertheless higher than the other adult relative category.

Educator Insights

While the professionals representing juvenile correctional education programs were not asked specifically about family involvement in youth interventions, 50 percent did speak to the importance of family involvement in educational plans and transition planning. Facility administrators and teachers spoke of the obstacles to getting family involvement while their child is in placement such as travel time, distance, or lack of transportation. School personnel also lamented that families and children had often become disengaged from one another. Despite this professional observation of family dynamics, youth in correctional facilities report feeling as cared for by their parents as any mainstream youth.

As an additional consideration to family participation, culturally competent programming that has racial, ethnic or other community representation can increase youth and family engagement. Having staff that represent the gender, race and cultures served can not only contribute to youth engagement, but also aid the family-worker relationship.¹⁷ School representatives resoundingly identified the over-representation of youth of color in their facilities. Some facility staff estimated their typical population of youth of color to be as high as 80 to 90 percent; the lowest estimated population was 35 to 45 percent.

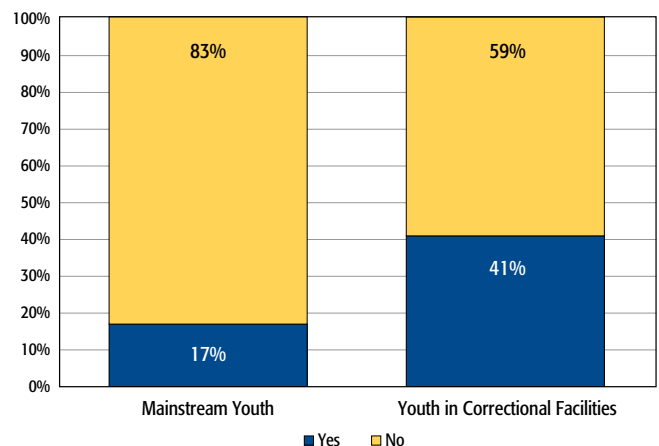
When asked if teachers and classroom paraprofessionals were representative of the racial categories served, twelve of the thirteen interviewees resoundingly said “no”. Of those, four facilities offered that their teachers were exclusively white. Furthermore, youth in correctional facilities were 80 percent male but, on average, the teacher and aide population was predominantly female. Two facility respondents specifically mentioned challenges in attracting diverse staff to their facility from their community.

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 physical and sexual abuse of children in families where chemical abuse is present and 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. When parents particularly are experiencing addiction, youth are often prematurely pressured into caretaking roles for parents, siblings and household upkeep.¹⁸ In addition, the presence of drug and alcohol abuse can normalize chemical use and lead to earlier exposure, access and experimentation by youth themselves.¹⁹

Youth in correctional facilities reported substantially more problems associated with family member drug and alcohol use than did youth in the mainstream schools. While 17 percent of youth in the mainstream sample reported that alcohol use in their families had repeatedly caused family, health, job or legal problems, youth in correctional facilities reported that this was the case almost two-and-one-half times more often (41%).

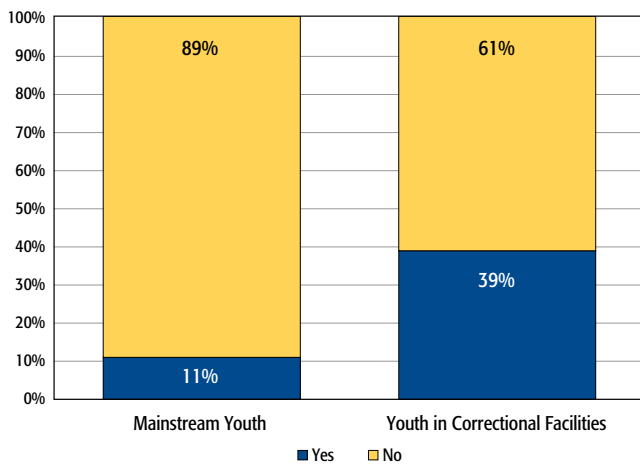
Whether Alcohol Use by a Family Member Has Repeatedly Caused Family, Health, Job or Legal Problems



Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

Drug use by a family member causing significant problems was less common than alcohol abuse for mainstream youth (11%). For youth in correctional facilities, however, again nearly four in 10 reported repeated consequences associated with drug use by a family member (39%). Drug abuse appears as pervasive as alcohol abuse in the families of youth in correctional facilities.

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



Six percent of youth in the mainstream matched sample reported both a drug and alcohol problem by a family member versus 24 percent of youth in corrections facilities. In total, drug or alcohol problems in families touched nearly six in 10 youth in correctional facilities. Clearly a large percentage of youth in correctional facilities come from family systems where drug and alcohol use is not only present but is causing significant harm.

Girls in correctional facilities were more likely than boys to express that drug and alcohol use in their families had caused significant harm: Of girls, 56 percent felt drug use was causing repeated problems in their family and 63 percent felt alcohol use was causing repeated problems.

Boys in correctional facilities reported a family member's drug or alcohol as repeatedly problematic 35 percent of the time for both questions.

Section Summary

- Mainstream youth were most likely to live with both biological/adoptive parents compared to youth in correctional settings, who were most likely to report living only with their mother. Reports of living with only one's father were low and comparable for the mainstream population and youth in correctional facilities.
- Youth in correctional facilities and mainstream youth felt equally cared for by their parents and by other adult relatives. Mothers were universally viewed as a parent to talk to about problems over fathers in both student groups.
- Youth in correctional facilities were significantly more likely than mainstream youth to report that drug or alcohol use by a family member had caused repeated family, health or legal problems. Youth in correctional facilities also reported more problems with alcohol and drug use in their families than mainstream youth.
- Girls in correctional facilities were least likely to live with both parents; least likely to feel that their parents cared for them; and most likely to have an "other" living arrangement as compared to their male peers.
- Youth of color and male youth are over-represented in juvenile correctional facilities in Minnesota based on their percentages in the general population. Educators in correctional facilities acknowledge these racial disparities and that staff are not always representative of the populations served.

Other Social Supports and Community Connectedness

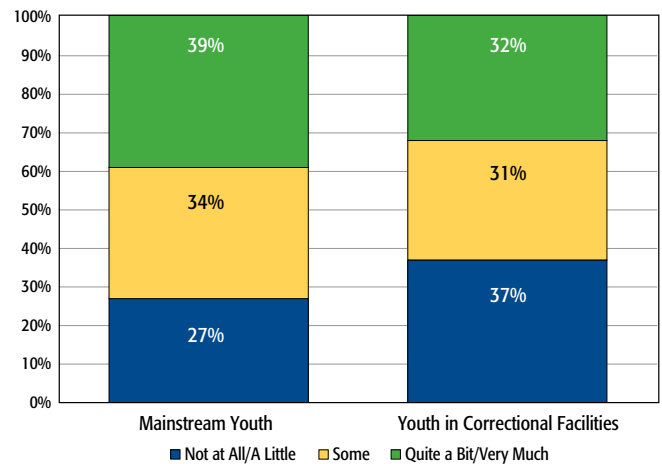
Teachers, religious leaders, friends, and community members are also recognized as important support people for youth. Connections to teachers and religious leaders are deemed to be a protective factor for youth against delinquency. Peers can have either a protective effect or contribute to delinquency, 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 unchallenged or unnoticed by community members.²⁰ Youth completing the MSS are asked to indicate the degree to which they felt cared for by these non-familial supports.

Teacher Connectedness

There was no statistical difference between the student groups on whether or not they felt teachers were interested in them as people. Forty-one percent of mainstream youth, and 45 percent of youth in correctional facilities reported that “most” or “all” teachers were interested in them. Similarly, both student groups felt that teachers show respect for them at similar rates. Between 67 of mainstream youth and 62 percent of youth in correctional facilities felt that “all” or “most” teachers respected them.

Despite these similarities between interest and respect, it did not equally translate to a sense of teacher caring. While 62 percent of youth in correctional facilities felt “all” or “most” teachers were respectful, only 32 percent felt teachers or other adults at school cared for them “quite a bit” or “very much.” 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. Youth in mainstream schools reported a statistically higher level of teacher caring than youth in correctional facilities.

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



Religious Leader Connectedness

There was no statistical difference between youth in correctional facilities and the mainstream sample in their perception of religious leader caring. At least four in ten youth from each group expressed that religious leaders cared for them “quite a bit” or “very much.” Conversely, about four in ten youth from each sample expressed that religious leaders cared for them “a little” or “not at all.”

Peer Connectedness

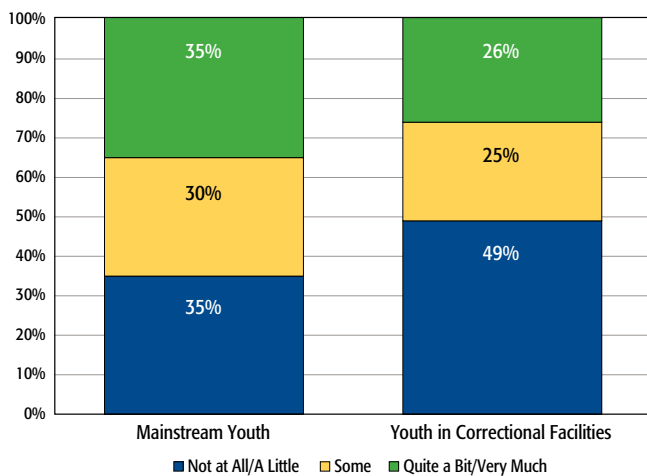
Just over half of youth in correctional facilities (56%) felt their friends cared for them “quite a bit” or “very much” whereas 20 percent reported that felt their friends cared for them “a little” or “not at all.” Two-thirds (66%) of the mainstream youth sample felt their friends cared for them “quite a bit” or “very much,” and less than 12 percent cared for them “a little” or “not at all.” There is a statistical difference between youth in correctional facilities and mainstream youth on perceived level of care from their friends.

There are no other questions about peers in the MSS with the exception of the degree to which one perceives their peers would approve or disapprove of drug and alcohol use. These perceptions are addressed in the section on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Community Member Caring and Community Safety

While nearly one-half of youth in correctional facilities (51%) felt at least somewhat cared for by adults in their community, this is the case for two-thirds (65%) of mainstream youth. Mainstream youth were more likely to say that adults in their community cared for them “quite a bit” or “very much” than youth in correctional facilities (35% versus 26%, respectively).

How Much Youth Feel Adults in Their Community Care About Them



As it relates to community safety, there was also a statistically significant difference between the student samples: Eighty-eight percent of mainstream youth “agree” or “strongly agree” that they feel safe in their neighborhood, as compared to 81 percent of youth in correctional facilities.

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, youths’ actions that have contributed to community strain, or frequent transitions between communities impacting youth attachment. The two groups of students are having different attitudes about their communities for reasons that cannot be fully determined by the MSS.

Section Summary

- Mainstream youth felt more cared for by non-familial adults such as teachers/other adults at school, and adults in their community than youth in correctional facilities.
- Both sample groups reported that teachers were “respectful” and were “interested in them as people” at similar rates. This did not, however, translate into equal rates of perceived “teacher caring.”
- Both groups of students indicated that their friends cared for them more than any other non-familial support.
- The lowest level of perceived care for both youth groups came from adults in the community. Youth in correctional facilities felt less cared for compared to youth from the mainstream sample.
- There was no difference between boys and girls in correctional facilities on their perception of caring by non-familial adults or peers.

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 have been shown to be directly related to juvenile delinquency and have been correlated with drug and alcohol use at school.²¹ 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.²²

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.²³

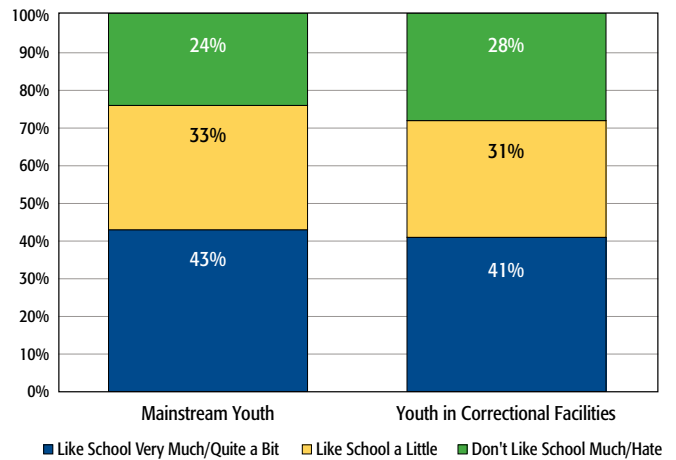
An additional specific school risk factor for delinquency is poor academic performance. Low achievement has been found to be related to the prevalence, onset, frequency, and seriousness of delinquency even when individual intelligence and attention problems are taken into account. It is likely that children 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.²⁴

Attitude Toward School

Statistically speaking, youth in mainstream schools and youth in correctional facilities reported liking school equally well. Forty-three and 41 percent from each group, respectively, stated they liked school "quite a bit" or "very much." There was 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, the non-time specific nature of this question followed by questions about overall school goals makes it more likely that they are responding to how they feel about attending school in the community.

How Youth Feel About School



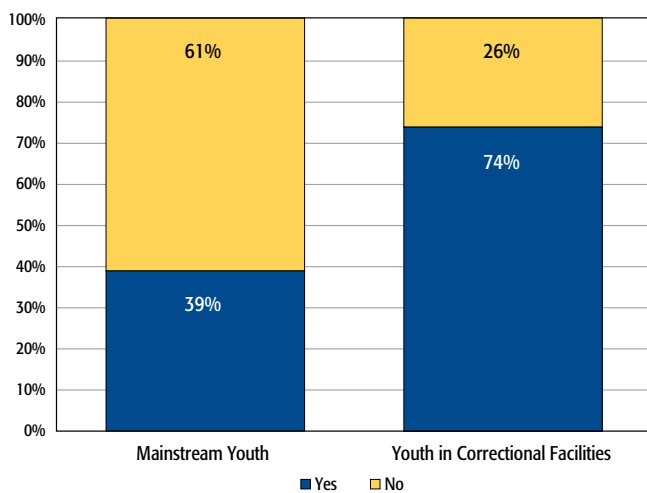
Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program (FRPL)

According to the Annie E. Casey Kids Count Data Center, 12 percent of all Minnesota youth in 2007 were living in poverty. A greater number, 33 percent, met household income or other criteria to receive Free or Reduced Priced Lunch at school.²⁵ While the mainstream student population is close to that figure (39%), nearly three-quarters of youth in correctional facilities (74%) indicated they receive Free or Reduced Priced Lunch at school. Those involved in correctional placements may disproportionately represent youth in lower income families.

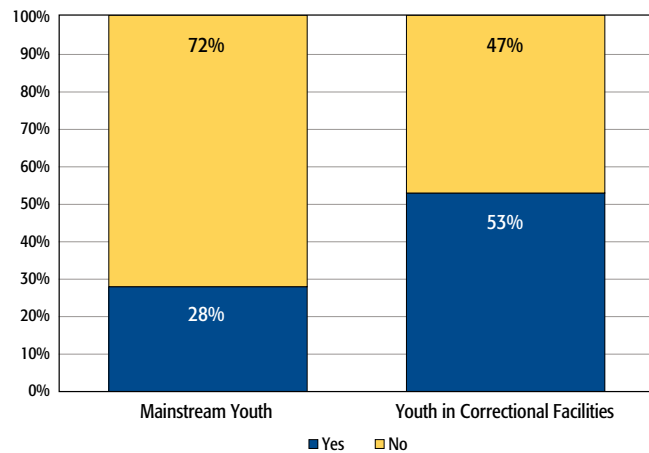
Technically, all youth placed in residential facilities receive FRPL. This is largely an administrative process, however, and it is unlikely that youth in correctional facilities would have an awareness of a new FRPL status. As such, it is most likely that youth in correctional facilities are reporting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

Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

Youth Who Receive Free or Reduced Price School Lunch



Whether Students Have Ever Had an IEP



Boys in correctional facilities were more likely to have an IEP than girls at 55 percent and 42 percent, respectively.

Individualized Education Plans (IEP)

Individualized Education Plans 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.²⁶

Minnesota has thirteen 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.²⁷ 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.”²⁸

Over half of youth in correctional placements (53%) reported that they have had an IEP 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 if it is related to behavior, learning disability, or physical disability.

Educator Insights

Correctional facility school staff echoed student accounts of high numbers of IEPs in their schools. Twelve out of thirteen interview participants estimated that 40 to 60 percent of their students were on IEPs. Correctional schools, like a mainstream public school settings, are bound to the same protocols when it comes to updating and following IEPs, which places an additional strain on their staff and resources due to the concentrated need.

To respond to the special education needs in the classroom, eight of the correctional facilities employed only Special Education licensed teachers, while the remainder had mixtures of Special Education teachers, Highly Qualified general education teachers, and Title I teachers geared at improving remedial skills. As a further stabilizing factor, interview participants reported little teacher turnover in their schools.

“We have strong teachers. These are not new ones or ones who aren’t working out; we have the best.”

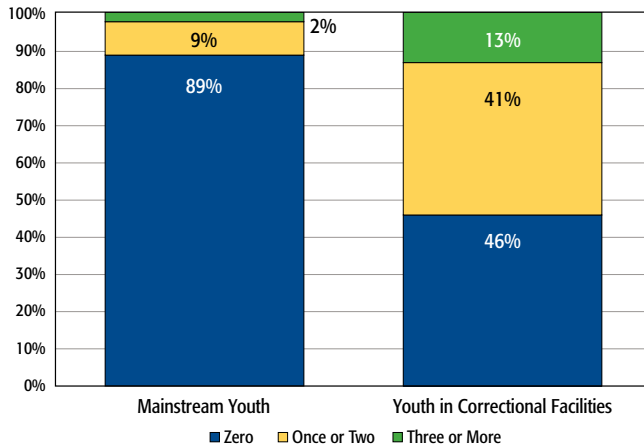
“Good staff to student matches is your greatest asset; it will only improve with more Special Education teachers on staff.”

Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

School Mobility

Over half of youth in correctional facilities (54%) reported that they have changed schools one or more times since the beginning of the school year. This was true for only 11 percent of the matched sample of mainstream youth.

How Often Youth Have Changed Schools Since Beginning of School Year



It is possible that youth in the correctional facilities are counting their move from their mainstream school into the correctional facility. Nevertheless, 13 percent of youth in correctional facilities reported three or more school changes, as compared to two percent of the mainstream student matched sample.

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, they may be indicative of academic moves required to provide the appropriate level of services for their IEP, or they may be 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.

Educator Insights

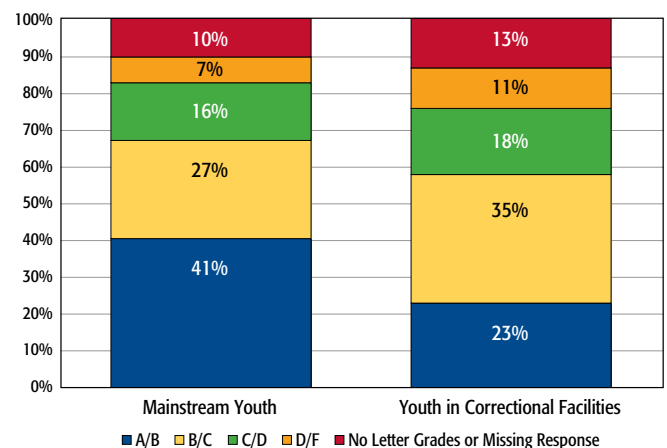
Based on interviews, school professionals collectively reported that the largest obstacle to obtaining a youth's academic records while they are in a correctional facility pertains to the degree to which they have changed or withdraw from school programs. The lack of academic stability leads to lost and missing credits and a lesser understanding of a youth's educational needs. One interview respondent expressed the need for a state-wide academic database for timely and accurate information on a child's academic progress and educational needs regardless of their school mobility.

Academic Achievement

Mainstream youth were more likely to report receiving grades of As and Bs than youth in correctional facilities. Youth in correctional facilities were most likely to report receiving Bs and Cs.

A higher percentage of youth in correctional facilities report receiving failing grades. While not graphed, one percent of mainstream students in both samples reported receiving "only Fs" versus two percent of youth in correctional facilities. Generally, lower achievement and failing grades were more prevalent in the sample of youth in correctional facilities than the mainstream youth sample.

Grades Received



There was no self-reported difference in academic achievement between boys and girls in correctional facilities.

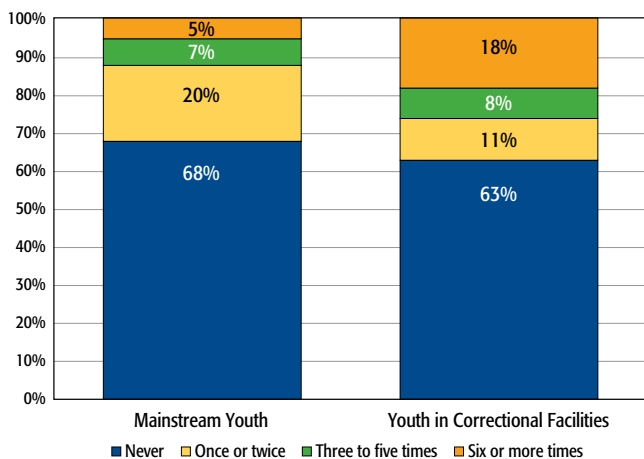
Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

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. While 68 percent of mainstream youth and 63 percent of youth in correctional facilities reported not skipping at all in the past 30 days, youth in correctional facilities were much more likely than mainstream youth to report chronic skipping. In fact, of youth in correctional facilities who have skipped school, about half (47%) had skipped six or more times in the 30 days prior to the survey. The high 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.

There are no questions in the MSS related to “lower level” truancy behavior such as skipping classes or arriving late. These behaviors can also substantially impact academic achievement and trigger truancy referrals to the juvenile court.

How Often Youth Have Skipped School in Past 30 Days



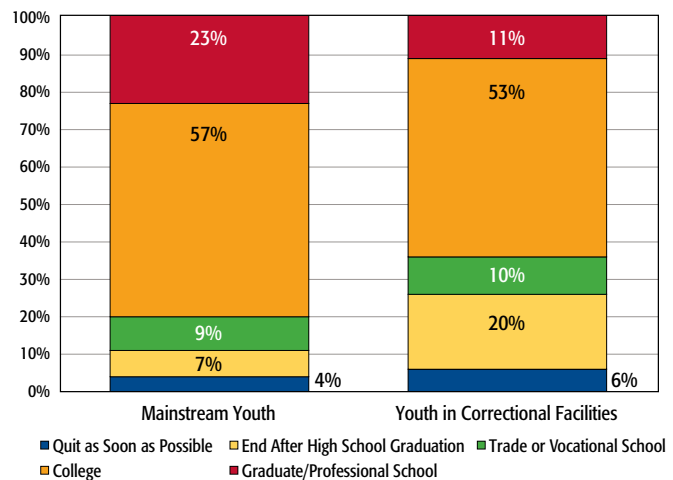
Girls in correctional facilities were more likely than boys to have skipped school three or more times in the past 30 days (36% vs. 23%). Two-thirds of boys (66%) stated they haven't skipped at all in the last 30 days versus one-half of girls (51%).

School Plans

Over one-half of youth in correctional facilities and their mainstream match plan to continue their education until they finish college (53% and 57%, respectively). A comparable percentage of youth from each student group also report planning to attend a vocational school as their highest educational goal (10% and 9%, respectively).

Twice as many youth in correctional facilities plan to end their education after completing high school (20%) as compared to nine percent of the mainstream sample. In contrast, mainstream youth are twice as likely to have educational goals involving graduate or professional school than youth in correctional facilities (23% versus 11%, respectively). Six percent of youth in correctional facilities and four percent of mainstream youth plan on quitting school “as soon as possible.”

School Plans



Boys in correctional facilities were more likely to have trade or vocational school as a school goal than girls (12% vs. 5%).

Nearly one-quarter (23%) of girls in correctional facilities expressed wanting to attend college or graduate school, significantly more than the boys (9%).

Educator Insights

Schools in correctional settings attempt to meet the educational needs and goals of youth. Of those sites interviewed, 10 offered GED (high school equivalency degree) pre-testing and six offered GED final testing. Four provided vocational training, and eight were able to accommodate different skill levels and interests through on-line learning programs. Ten facilities indicated they had computer labs and nine had internet access, which are valuable learning tools. Five programs indicated they offered arts of some kind, though many had said their arts programs are offered sporadically or require volunteer efforts to stay viable. Vocational programming and health classes were similarly subject to budget and staffing cuts. Said school representatives:

"Most kids, after they settle in, gain pride in getting a GED or a diploma. All the disruptions in their community disrupt their education. (Here they have) a safe environment, small classes and a lot of support."

"We get kids to see school as important. Help a kid who feels helpless about school graduate and feel hope. Their life does turn around here—the world opens up."

Helping youth in correctional facilities to improve their education and to accomplish academic goals was a significant point of pride for staff. The most frequently reported misconceptions about schools in a correctional setting were that the programs lack academic rigor; that outsiders underestimate how much they do for their students; or a perception that the youth engage in "busy work." School representatives were adamant about dispelling these myths:

"[A strength] is academic rigor coupled with small classes. In nine months we can improve 3 to 4 years worth of skills and overcome huge deficits."

"Everyone gets to attend here and we meet the needs of every kid where they are at."

"It is not a watered down curricula. They don't know how hard we work as a school and a network to provide education services to these kids."

"Set the bar high. Knowing what you expect of them [students] is what they will give you."

Section Summary

- Mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities reported similar levels of liking school.
- There was little difference between mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities when it came to two or four year degree aspirations. A higher percentage of mainstream youth plan to pursue post-collegiate degrees however, and more youth in correctional facilities plan to end their education after high school.
- Over half (53%) of youth in correctional facilities reported having had an Individualized Education Plan presently or in the past compared to 28 percent of the mainstream matched sample.
- Similar numbers of youth in correctional facilities and mainstream youth reported having skipped a full day of school in the 30 days prior to the survey. Youth in correctional facilities, however, were much more likely to have reported chronic absenteeism of six or more days in the past month.
- Youth in correctional facilities were more likely than mainstream youth to have changed schools three or more times since the beginning of the school year.
- Correctional schools meet the needs of their students by employing special education teachers, providing GED preparation and testing, and using individualized instruction to meet the needs and goals of their students.

School Safety

The degree to which youth feel connected to their schools and attend may be impacted by whether or not they feel safe at school. Bullying behaviors 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 engage in a variety of delinquent and anti-social behaviors into adulthood.²⁹

As it relates 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.³⁰ Research suggests that school violence is also influenced by school policies regarding discipline, security, dropping out, and by small group interactions that develop within the school.³¹

Safety at School

Overall, Minnesota youth report that they do feel safe at school: 88 percent of mainstream youth stated that they “agree” or “strongly agree” to feeling safe. Of youth in correctional facilities, 84 percent reported feeling safe at school, which is statistically less than mainstream youth.

Between 88 and 92 percent of all youth reported feeling safe going to and from school. There was no statistical difference between the two groups on this question. Between eight and 11 percent of students in correctional facilities and their mainstream matched sample, however, stated that they had missed days of school in the past month because they either did not feel safe at school, or going to or from school.

Victimization at School

Mainstream students and youth in correctional facilities may have similar perceptions of school safety because they report comparable rates of victimization while at school. The most common victimization at school was to experience bullying as defined as “another

student or group of students making fun of, teasing or excluding you from friends or activities.” Bullying directly affects one-third of the student sample and affects four to six percent of students in both sample groups on a daily basis.

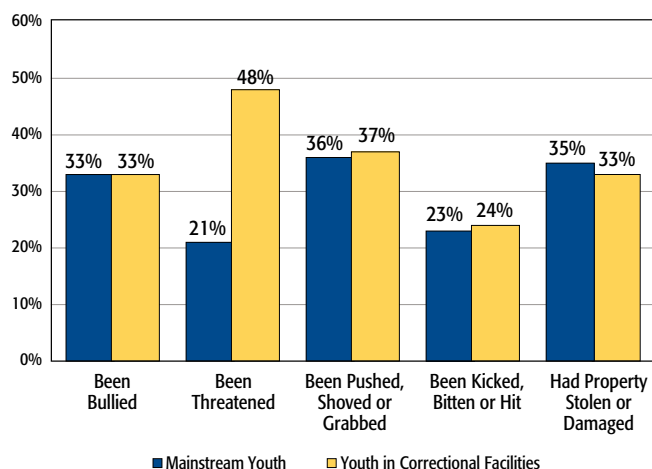
Two-thirds (67%) of girls in correctional facilities self-reported bullying others at least once in the past month versus slightly over half (55%) of boys in correctional facilities.

When it comes to chronic semi-weekly and daily bullying behavior, boys and girls bullied others at comparable rates (21% to 23%).

Approximately one-third of both populations have had their property stolen or deliberately damaged at school in the last year. Mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities report the same rates of having been pushed, shoved or grabbed at school; and having been kicked, hit or bitten. There was no statistical difference between the two groups on these indicators.

Youth in correctional facilities, however, reported having been threatened at school at a rate over twice that of youth in mainstream schools (48% versus 21%). 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.

Victimization at School in the Past Year

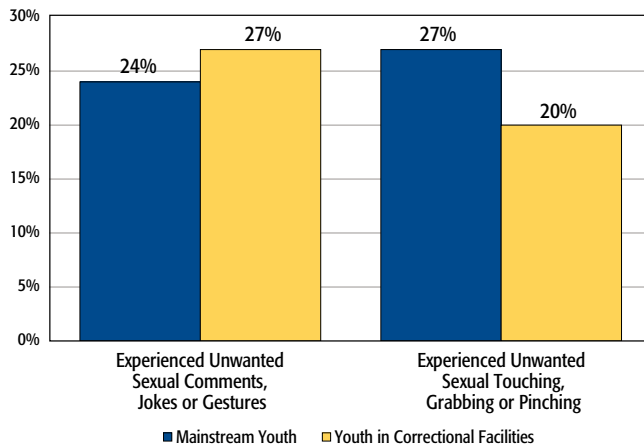


Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

Sexual Victimization at School

There was no statistical difference between the two youth groups on having been sexually harassed or victimized at school. Approximately one-quarter of all students reported having experienced unwanted sexual jokes, comments and gestures, as well as unwanted sexual touch at school.

Sexual Victimization at School in the Past Year



Girls in correctional facilities were more likely to report having experienced sexual comments or jokes (55%) and unwanted touch (35%) than boys (21% and 17%, respectively).

Weapons At School

The vast majority of all students do not bring weapons to school.^{vi} Eleven percent of students in the mainstream sample reported having brought a weapon other than a gun on school property in the last 30 days. The rate was almost twice that for youth in correctional facilities (18%).

Twice as many youth in correctional facilities (10%) reported that they have brought a gun to school in the last 30 days, compared to five percent of youth in mainstream schools. In both groups, of those who reported bringing a gun to school, at least half were bringing the gun four or more days per month.

With regard to victimization, youth in correctional facilities reported twice the rate of having been stabbed or having a gun fired at them on school property in the past year. Nine percent of youth in correctional facilities reported having been a victim of a stabbing or a shooting, compared to four percent of the mainstream population.

Boys in correctional facilities were more likely than girls to have brought a gun to school at least once in the past 30 days (12% vs. 3%) and to have been stabbed or had a gun fired at them on school property in the past year (11% vs. 2%).

Educator Insights

When professionals who work in juvenile correctional facilities were asked the degree to which they feel safe at their school, the perception was unequivocally positive. Of 27 comments made related to safety, 12 expressed that their school was a safe environment or that safety was a non-issue, and six commented on the safety that comes from the structure, accountability, and clear expectations:

"This feels like the safest place I've ever worked."

"This is quite a safe environment even with the high risk kids because of the structure."

"There really isn't a lot of behavior. It is like night and day between in here and on the outs because their basic needs are getting met."

School staff did speak of the quick access to the corrections staff members in the event of an emergency, but all respondents reported that safety and security problems in the school environment were rare, if they had any memory of them occurring at all.

^{vi} The term "weapon" is not defined for youth in the MSS except in that it is to exclude guns.

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 were 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 were twice as likely to report having been threatened at school and to have been stabbed or shot at on school property. Youth in correctional facilities were also twice as likely to report having brought a gun or other weapon to school.
- Due to the accountability, structure and basic needs of youth getting met in a correctional environment, staff from schools in correctional facilities report that they have a very safe teaching and learning environment.

Activity Participation and Free Time

The hours between the end of the school day and when care-givers typically return from work is a risky time for young people. Between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., juveniles are at the highest risk for accidental injury, auto accidents and victimization. These are also prime hours for criminal activity, drug and alcohol use, and sexual behavior.³²

Quality after-school programs are widely supported as a buffer against delinquency. Participation in extra-curricular activities is related to a decrease in school dropouts; reduced rates of criminal offending; and lower levels of substance abuse. Participation promotes greater academic achievement and positive educational trajectories in middle to late adolescent development.³³ Despite their viability as a protective factor, there can be a lack of affordable, accessible after-school opportunities in many communities.

Conversely, time spent in unstructured activities or “hanging out” can increase the odds of delinquency. Longitudinal studies of youth have shown that youth who spend more time in unstructured socializing strongly relate to crime and delinquency, heavy alcohol use and use of marijuana and other illicit drugs. While one theory is that more delinquency emerges because of more time with delinquent peers, it has also been demonstrated that the more time one spends without adult supervision in unstructured activities, the more youth encounter opportunities for deviance.³⁴

Overall Activity Availability and Participation

There was a statistical difference between youth in correctional facilities and their mainstream matched sample on program availability (real or perceived). A small percentage of mainstream respondents (less than 6%) stated that programs were not available in their communities or schools. However, between 11 percent and 18 percent of youth in correctional facilities stated activities were not available to them, especially through school.

Of respondents who utilized programs, there were few differences in participation between mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities at the monthly and

Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

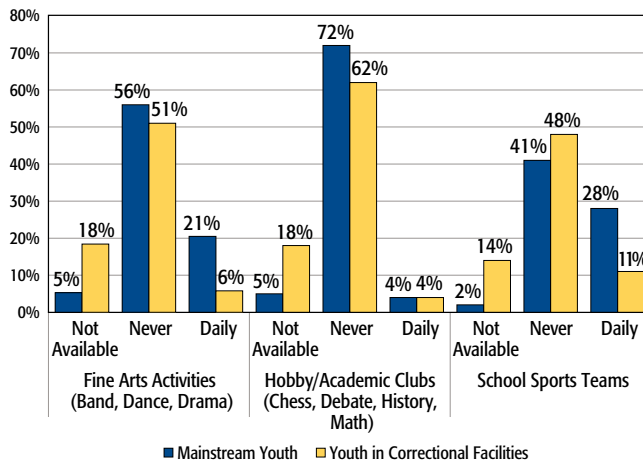
weekly levels. As such, these time categories have been excluded from the graphs. There were, however, differences in program availability, rates of “never” participating and “daily” participation, which have been graphed and described.

School Based Activities

Youth in correctional facilities were more likely to express that school based programs were not available. Nearly 20 percent expressed that fine arts activities and academic/hobby clubs were not available versus five percent of the mainstream student match. In addition, 14 percent of youth in correctional schools stated they did not have sports opportunities at school. The lack of extracurricular activities through school may be the result of limited resources at their schools or the limitations of smaller/alternative learning settings. Of the activities provided on the MSS, school sports garnered the highest number of participants from both student groups.

As it relates to participation, low daily attendance could be the result of lack of interest, transportation barriers, lack of knowledge about extracurricular activities, or academic achievement requirements to participate. Just over one-quarter of youth in correctional facilities report grades that are below a “C” average, which may make them ineligible for school related activities. There was no statistical difference in use level between boys and girls in correctional facilities.

Participation in School Based Activities in the Last 12 Months

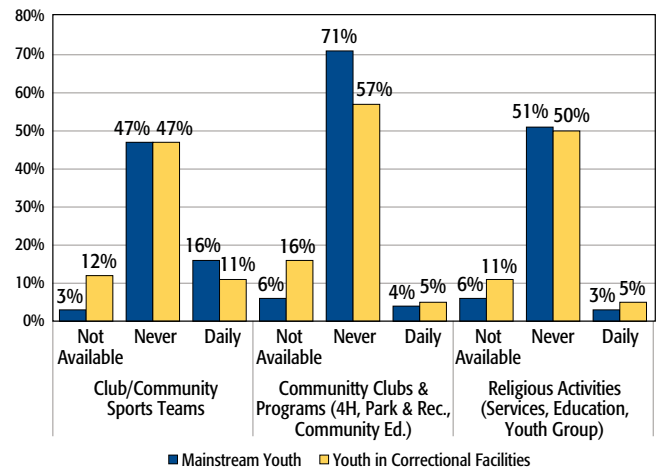


Community Based Activities

Youth in correctional facilities also reported fewer activities available in their community. Participation rates between the mainstream and correctional youth are again comparable until the “daily” use level. As was the case in schools, club/community sports had the highest level of participation. In all activities, there was no statistical difference in participation levels by boys and girls in correctional facilities. Youth in correctional facilities appear more likely to use community based clubs and recreation opportunities than mainstream youth.

Participation levels in community programs can also be affected by community resources such as community tax bases, the engagement of non-profits and business sponsors, and grant money availability. Community based programs can also have transportation obstacles for youth and fees applicable to participation.

Participation in Community Based Activities in the Last 12 Months



Other Free Time

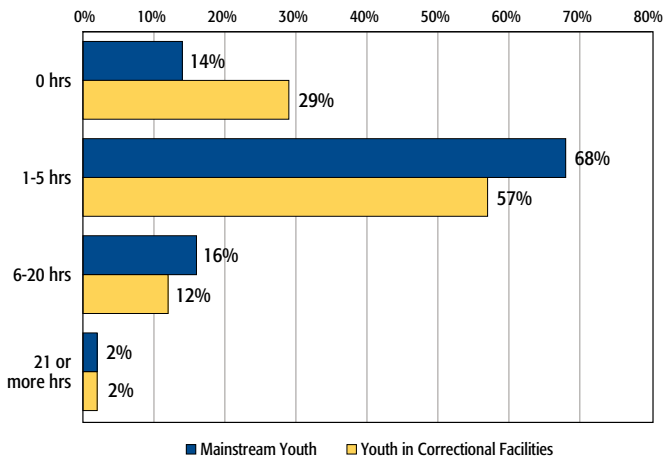
The MSS asks youth to report the amount of time they spend in a “typical week during the school year” engaging in certain unstructured activities. While answers could be impacted somewhat by youths’ placement in a correctional facility, the large timeline likely captures youth’s recreational choices while in their communities. Youth had six time ranges from which to choose, which have been collapsed into four time categories.

Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

Home Work/Studying

For both youth in correctional facilities and mainstream youth, the most frequently reported amount of time spent on homework and studying per week was 1-5 hours. Nearly three in 10 youth in correctional facilities (29%) reported that they do no homework or studying in a typical week versus 14 percent of mainstream youth. Comparable numbers of mainstream and youth in correctional facilities report engaging in six to 20 hours of studying, and intensive studying of 21 hours per week or more. There was no statistical difference between the male and female populations within juvenile correctional facilities.

Typical Week: Hours Doing Homework/Studying



Electronic Entertainment

It was more common for youth in correctional facilities than mainstream youth to report that they have spent "0 hours" in a typical week: watching TV or videos, playing video games, talking on the phone or texting, or engaged in other on-line activities. Though purely speculative, the economic disadvantages of youth in correctional facilities may lead to less access to computers, games and individual electronic devices than other youth. Youth placement in a correctional facility may also impact this response category.

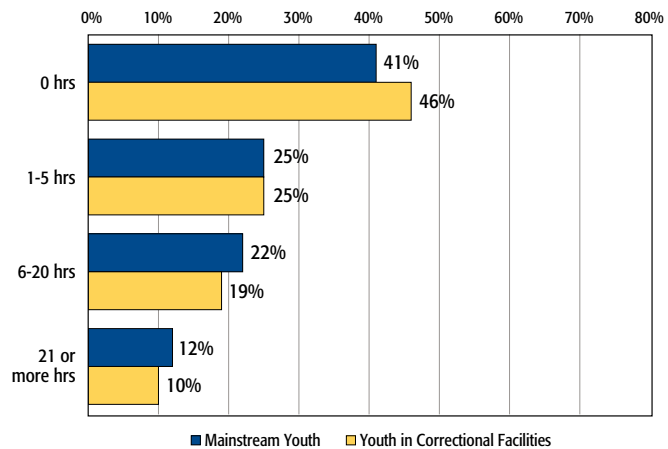
For all student groups, the most common response category for each electronic entertainment activity was one to five hours per week. In both the mainstream and youth in correctional facility populations, 10 to 15 percent of youth reported engaging in these activities for 21 hours or more on a typical school week.

Boys in correctional facilities were more likely to spend 21 hours or more on video games whereas girls were more likely to spend 21 or more hours talking on the phone or texting.

Work for Pay

There was no statistical significance between mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities related to work for pay. In both groups, over half of youth worked for pay in a typical week, with 10 to 12 percent working 21 hours or more. There was no statistical difference between boys and girls in correctional facilities.

Typical Week: Hours Working for Pay

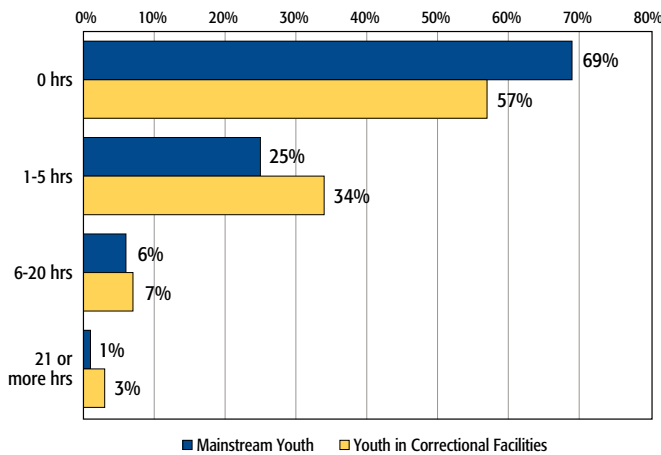


Volunteering and Community Service Work

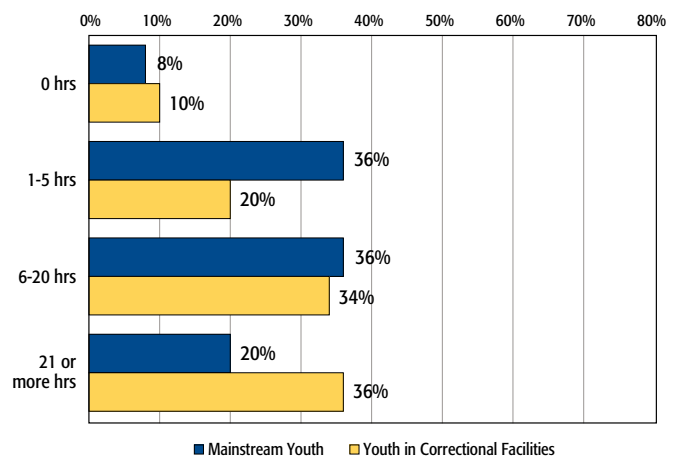
Youth in correctional facilities were statistically more likely than mainstream youth to report having done community service during the week in a typical school year. This may not be impacted as much by their placement in correctional facilities as their involvement in the juvenile justice system in general. Community work service is one of the most common court ordered dispositions or conditions of probation. Time spent completing community service typically earns money to be paid directly to victims for restitution or to repair community harm.

Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

Typical Week: Hours of Volunteering/CSW



Typical Week: Hours "Hanging Out"



Reading for Pleasure

Youth in correctional facilities were statistically more likely to report reading for pleasure than their mainstream counterparts in all time categories. One third (34%) of youth in correctional facilities stated they never read for pleasure during a typical school year versus nearly one-half (48%) of the matched mainstream youth sample. Again, independent reading can be affected by confinement to a correctional facility. Conversely, reading could be a replacement activity in lieu of time spent in other structured activities or on electronic entertainment.

Hanging Out

"Hanging out" is a term that is correlated with no structured activities and time spent with one's friends. While hanging out is an integral part of social development, it is also associated with delinquency and chemical use due to a lack of supervision. Youth involvement with delinquent peers is a significant contributor to delinquency, whereas youth involvement with positive peers is a protective factor against delinquency.³⁵ Youth in correctional facilities report more time hanging out in a typical week than mainstream youth, especially in the 21 hours or more category.

While the difference between boys and girls in correctional facilities was not statistically different related to hanging out with peers, more girls reported spending 21 or more hours a week with friends than boys (42% vs. 34%). Conversely, boys were more likely to report no time spent hanging out with friends in a typical week than girls (12% vs. 4%).

Section Summary

- Youth in mainstream schools reported more opportunities available for structured activities both at school and in their communities. Mainstream youth were more likely to report participating in these activities on a daily basis.
- Mainstream youth reported more time spent on homework and studying, and on electronic entertainment than youth in correctional facilities.
- Youth in correctional facilities were more likely to report spending time reading, doing community work service, and "hanging out" than mainstream youth.
- Rates of working for pay were not statistically different between mainstream youth or youth in correctional facilities.
- Males and females in correctional facilities reported similar levels of activity involvement and similar uses of their free time.

Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use

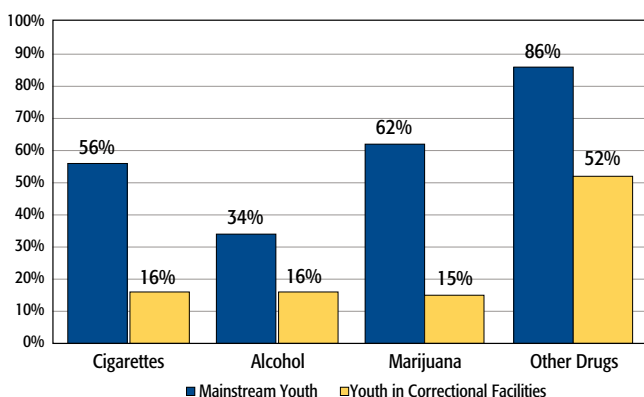
Persistent substance abuse among youth is often accompanied by an array of problems including academic difficulties, health-related consequences, poor peer relationships, and mental health issues. Declining grades, absenteeism from school and other activities, increased potential for dropping out, and 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.³⁶

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 specifically than general property crimes. Additionally, those under the influence are more likely to act in a group during the commission of illegal acts.³⁷

Patterns of Chemical Use

Youth in mainstream schools have refrained from ever using cigarettes, alcohol and drugs at a rate that is consistently higher than youth who are in correctional facilities. For mainstream youth, alcohol was the most tried substance; for youth in correctional facilities, marijuana was the most tried substance. Over half (52%) of youth in correctional facilities have never tried "other drugs" compared to 86 percent of mainstream youth. Less than 16 percent of youth in correctional facilities have refrained from ever using cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana.

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

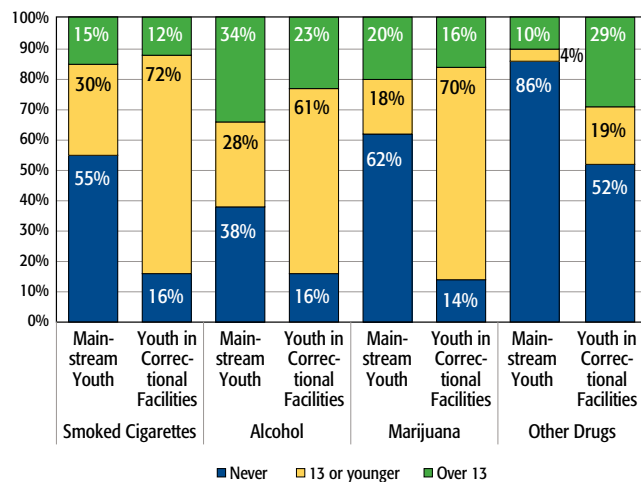


Age at First Chemical Use

In addition to more youth having tried chemicals, youth in correctional facilities began using at a significantly younger age than their mainstream peers. Early onset of drugs and alcohol is associated with greater abuse and dependency and can result in greater developmental and neurological deficits than those who delay using.³⁸ Among youth in correctional facilities:

- 72 percent tried cigarettes before age 13, versus 30 percent of the matched sample of mainstream youth.
- 61 percent tried alcohol before age 13, versus 28 percent of the matched sample of mainstream youth.
- 70 percent tried marijuana before age 13, versus 18 percent of the matched sample of mainstream youth.
- 19 percent tried "other drugs" before age 13, versus 4 percent of the matched sample of mainstream youth.

Age at First Use: Alcohol, Cigarettes and Other Drugs



Peer Approval

Peer approval for all substances was higher for youth in correctional facilities than for youth in mainstream schools. The chemical with the highest peer approval rating for both groups was marijuana. Among mainstream students, the use of "other drugs" and pack a day smoking had the lowest peer approval ratings.

Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

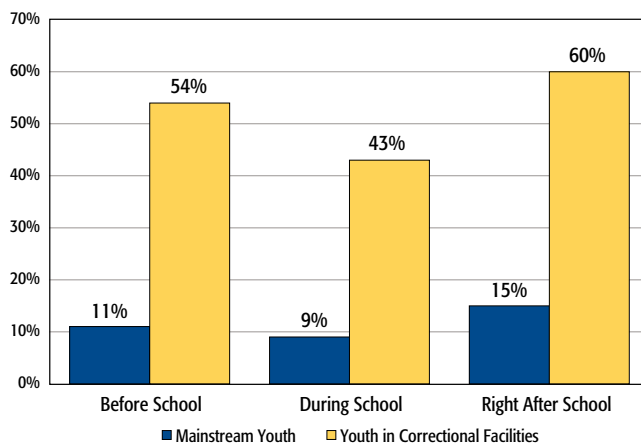
Nine percent of mainstream youth said their peers would approve if they used marijuana weekly, outpacing approval for weekly alcohol use (6%) and pack a day smoking (4%). In the youth in correctional facilities sample, however, perceived peer approval for marijuana use was 30 percent. More than two-thirds (68%) of youth in correctional facilities reported that their friends would either “approve” or “not care at all” if they smoked marijuana once or twice a week.

With regard to binge drinking, almost 20 percent of youth in correctional facilities feel their friends would approve if they consumed five or more drinks in one sitting, as opposed to only five percent of mainstream youth. Youth in correctional facilities are reporting greater tolerance for and approval of chemical use than mainstream youth.

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 reported using drugs or alcohol, a much higher percentage of correctional facility youth reported using before, during or after school, with after school as the most frequently reported time. There was no statistical difference between boys and girls in correctional facilities around chemical use connected to school.

When Youth Use Alcohol or Other Drugs (Percent Yes)



Girls in correctional facilities self-report more drug and alcohol use than boys. The statistical differences between males and females were plentiful and can be examined in greater detail by visiting the correctional youth data tables at the Minnesota Department of Education website. The following, however, are some key differences:

- More boys than girls report that they have abstained from alcohol and “other drug” use in the past year. Rates of marijuana abstinence for boys and girls were comparable.
- Girls report more daily cigarette use than boys especially in the “1 to 5 cigarettes daily” and “1/2 to 1 pack a day” categories.
- Considerably more girls reported trying “other drugs” at least once than boys (61% vs. 45%).
- Girls report more abuse of prescription medicines and pain killers than males.
- Girls reported more alcohol and “other drug” use in the last 30 days than boys, though this time parameter should be interpreted with caution as their length of stay in the correctional facility can impact this response. Rates of marijuana use were again comparable.

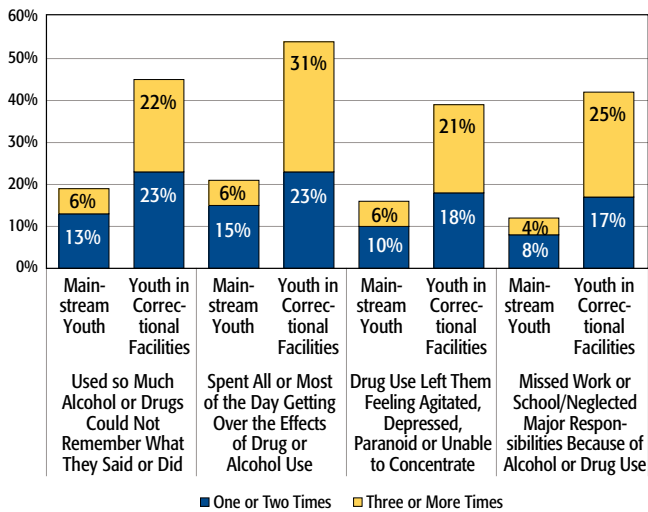
Consequences of Using

Consistently, an average of one-quarter of youth in correctional facilities who have used drugs or alcohol, self-report on-going 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.

Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

Although youth in correctional facilities were 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 was most often reported consequence of using by both student groups. The majority of mainstream youth who reported using chemicals have had ill effects from using once or twice in the past year, while youth in correctional facilities report having these effects three or more times.

Consequences of Drug and Alcohol Use



- More girls in correctional facilities than boys report that using alcohol or other drugs has left them feeling depressed, agitated, paranoid, or unable to concentrate (58% vs. 35%).
- Girls in correctional facilities are more likely than boys to report having neglected work, school or other major responsibilities three or more times during the last 12 months due to drug or alcohol use (41% vs. 21%).
- Girls in correctional facilities are more likely than boys to have used alcohol or other drugs so much that they could not remember what they had said or done three or more times during the last 12 months (34% vs. 18%).

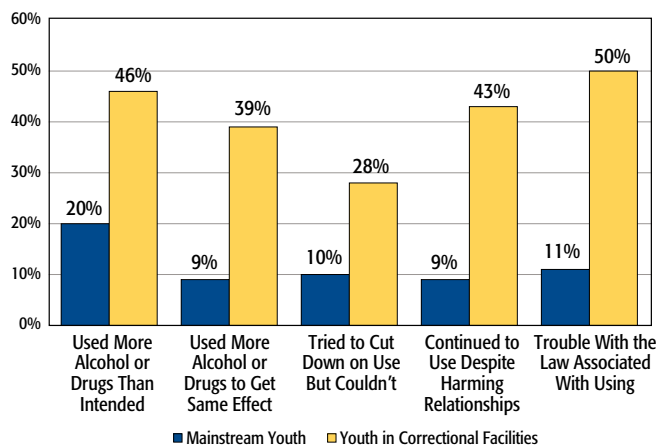
Abuse and Dependency Indicators

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 assessments. Again, youth in correctional facilities articulated many more issues with their drug and alcohol use than mainstream students.

Of youth who report having used drugs or alcohol in the last 12 months: Roughly four in 10 youth in correctional facilities expressed using more drugs or alcohol than they intended to in the past year (46%), and requiring more use to get the same effects (39%). Three in 10 youth in correctional facilities report having tried unsuccessfully to cut back their use (28%). More than four in 10 youth in correctional facilities acknowledged that their use has harmed their relationships yet they continue to use (43%). Half of youth in correctional facilities (50%) report having had trouble with the law in the last year related to their drug or alcohol use.

Conversely, mainstream youth who have used chemicals in the past 12 months reported fewer abuse and dependency indicators. Twenty percent stated they had used more alcohol or drugs than they intended, indicative of difficulty setting limits, but on average only 10 percent reported any of the other consequences.

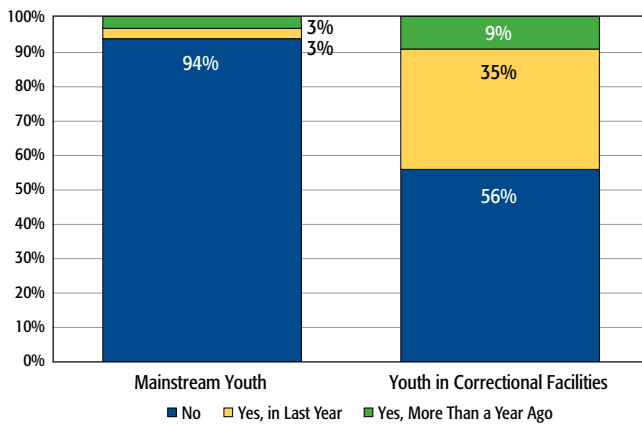
Indicators of Drug or Alcohol Abuse and Dependency: “Yes” Responses in the Last 12 Months



Drug and Alcohol Treatment

While most youth in mainstream schools have not received treatment for alcohol or other drugs (94%), nearly half of youth in correctional facilities (44%) 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 youth received treatment.

Whether Youth Have Ever Been Treated for an Alcohol or Other Drug Problem



There was no statistical difference between boys and girls in correctional facilities for having been treated for a drug or alcohol problem in their lifetime at 43 percent and 50 percent, respectively.

Educator Insights

Staff within correctional facility schools were not asked specifically about alcohol or drug use by their students, in part because it is so common as to be assumed. Several comments made by interview respondents, however, noted the benefits of attending school in a correctional facility including regular meals, exercise, plenty of sleep, and the absence of drugs and alcohol impacting mood, decision making and cognition.

Section Summary:

- The majority of youth in correctional facilities (60 to 70%) report that cigarette, alcohol and marijuana use began before the age of 13. This is true for 30 percent or fewer of mainstream youth.
- Almost half of youth in correctional facilities (48%) have tried “other drugs” compared to 14 percent of mainstream youth.
- For both mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities, “other drug” use has the lowest peer approval rating. Weekly use of marijuana has the highest perceived peer approval rating for both groups.
- Youth in correctional facilities report many more consequences associated with using drugs and alcohol including negative impacts to their health, memory, relationships and major responsibilities.
- Youth in correctional facilities report more dependency indicators than mainstream youth including increased tolerance, inability to cut back, using despite harming relationships, and problems with the law associated with their use.
- Over four in 10 (44%) youth in correctional facilities report having received treatment for drug or alcohol use in the past, versus six percent of their mainstream student match.
- Girls in correctional facilities self-reported more drug and alcohol use than boys and more negative consequences associated with their use, at times dramatically so.

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 after being bounced from one system to another.³⁹

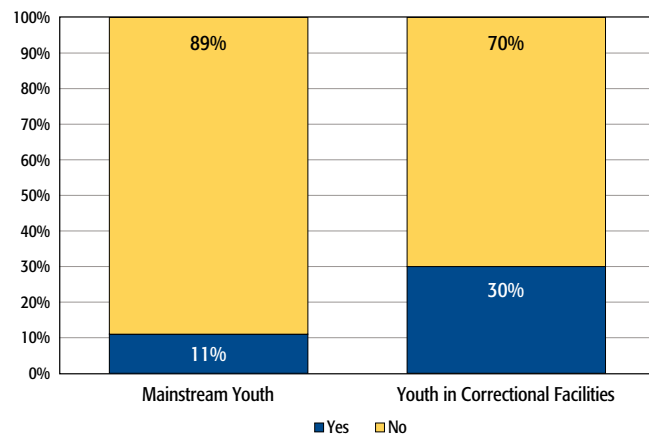
The lack of effective treatments for youth in the community increases the burden on juvenile justice facilities. Other trends may also contribute to an increased need for mental health services in juvenile justice facilities: decreasing public funds for services in the community, rising numbers of uninsured children, and increasing numbers of youth entering the juvenile justice system.⁴⁰ Females have far greater mental health needs and greater risk factors than males, creating a need for gender-specific services.⁴¹

Mental Health

There is a significant difference in the percentage of youth in correctional facilities (30%) and those in mainstream schools (11%) who self-reported a mental or emotional health problem that has lasted at least 12 months.

Girls in correctional facilities were more likely than boys to report a mental or emotional health condition lasting at least 12 months (41% vs. 27%).

Whether Youth Have a Mental or Emotional Health Problem That Has Lasted at Least 12 Months

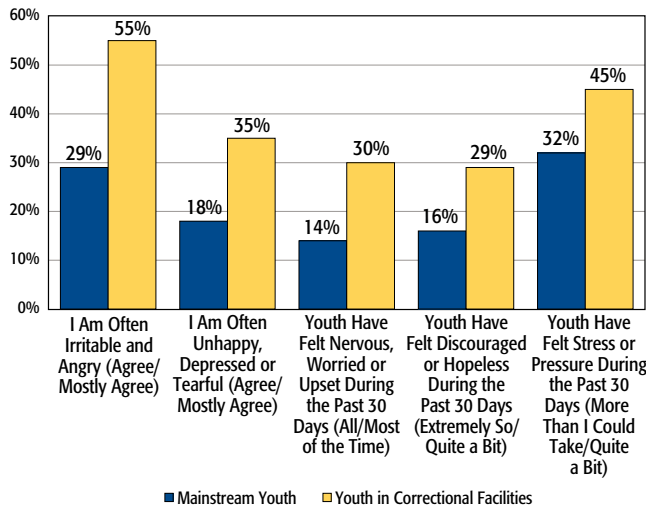


Youth in correctional facilities were significantly more likely than youth in mainstream schools to “agree” or “mostly agree” with statements designed to gauge mental and emotional health. More than one-half of youth in correctional facilities self-reported restlessness (50%); trouble concentrating (55%); trouble falling and staying asleep (53%); and acting before thinking (63%). 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 by 33 to 42 percent of students.

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 their illegal behavior, the legal process, or the placement itself upon youth. Responses from youth in correctional facilities may over-represent a degree of emotional stress and vulnerability that is not necessarily always present when these youth are in the community.

Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

Emotional Health Indicators



Nevertheless, even mainstream youth are reporting dealing with anger (29%), depression (18%) and stress (32%). While youth in correctional facilities may require heightened support and interventions, these emotional experiences may be an unfortunate condition of adolescence such that all youth could use support.

More girls in correctional facilities reported agreement with potentially problematic emotions than boys. On all emotional measures, female responses were 20-30 percent higher than males.

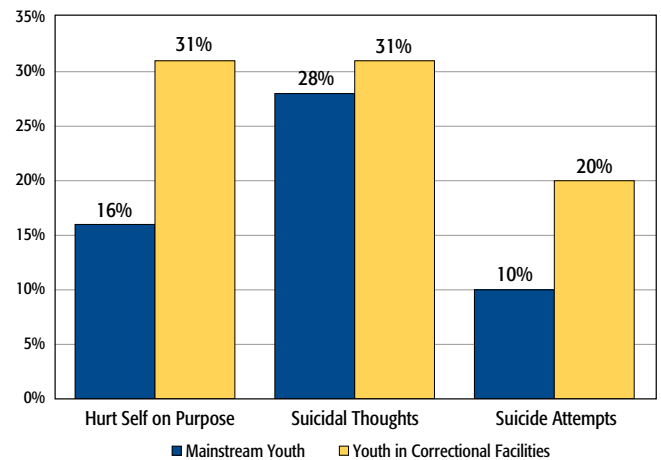
- 79 percent of girls, versus 50 percent of boys, reported they are often irritable or angry.
- 51 percent of girls, versus 25 percent of boys, reported they have felt sad “all” or “most of the time” in the past 30 days.
- 62 percent of girls, versus 42 percent of boys, reported experiencing substantial stress in the past 30 days.
- 47 percent of girls, versus 27 percent of boys, reported feeling nervous, worried or upset “all” or “most of the time” in the past 30 days.

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.⁴² An early indicator of a problem includes suicidal ideation.

There was a slight statistical difference between mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities on whether or not they have ever had suicidal ideation, which affects 28 to 31 percent of all youth.

Reports of Self Harm (Percent Yes)



There were significant differences, however, between youth in correctional facilities and youth in mainstream schools when it came to reports of self-harm and suicide attempts. Thirty-one percent of youth in correctional facilities reported purposeful self-harm in their past and 20 percent reported an actual suicide attempt. Both reports of self-harm (16%) and attempted suicide (10%) for mainstream youth were one-half that of youth in correctional facilities.

Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

Girls in correctional facilities have more self-harm indicators than boys:

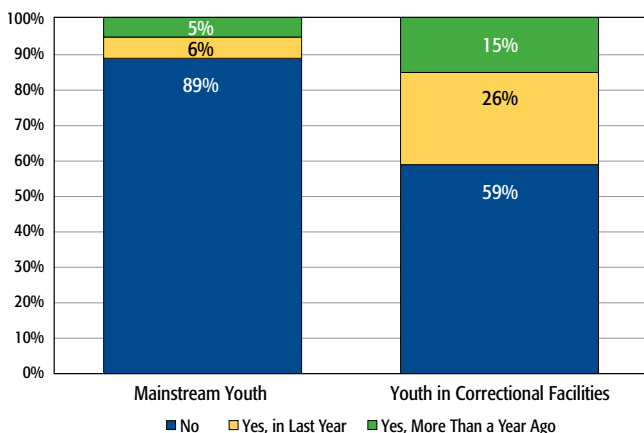
- 59 percent of girls, versus 24 percent of boys, reported hurting themselves on purpose.
- 61 percent of girls, versus 26 percent of boys, report suicidal thoughts.
- 41 percent of girls, versus 15 percent of boys, report a past suicide attempt.

Mental Health Treatment

On the matter of having received treatment for a mental or emotional health issue, there was a statistically significant difference between the two student groups.

Youth in correctional facilities were most likely to have received treatment for mental or emotional health: Nearly 40 percent of youth in correctional facilities reported receiving a treatment intervention at some point in their lives versus 11 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



Girls in correctional facilities are more likely than boys to have received treatment for a mental or emotional health problem (56% vs. 38%).

Educator Insights

Correctional school professionals concur with the mental health conditions articulated by their students and captured in the research. When asked to speak to the topic of mental health, six respondents reported that mental health issues are a growing concern; five suggested more mental health resources are needed; four expressed concern that youth wind up in correctional facilities because of a lack of other mental health resources; and four expressed concerns that mental health issues are falling through the cracks because of a lack of formal diagnosis or awareness. Overall, correctional school staff felt that they are progressively doing a better job serving kids with mental health needs but that there is still room for improvement.

"Schools provide routine and predictability, and are a positive component of mental health. School is a structure that mental health kids understand. Other therapeutic needs require tons of resources where schools are a built in stabilizer."

"(We serve) the same kids as a mental health setting, there's no real difference. Kids who have gone all the way through the system have more mental health and special education issues."

"(Mental Health) is a huge part of a kid's life if you go back to the root of why we exist. As a care and treatment facility it is especially relevant to us."

"We are not a psychiatric setting but once kids burn their bridges they wind up here. There is a lack of mental health services."

"We are getting better and more prepared with psychologists and mental health people on site. We know the problem is there even if it has not been diagnosed."

Section Summary

- Youth in correctional facilities self-report the presence of more mental and emotional health symptoms including restlessness, impulsivity, poor concentration, anger, depression, stress, and self harm than mainstream youth.
- 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 report receiving treatment for a mental or emotional health problem four times more than mainstream youth.
- Girls in correctional facilities report substantially more mental and emotional health symptoms than boys.
- Those working in correctional education programs see mental health as a growing concern that requires resources and expertise to manage. They also feel that a lack of other mental health resources for youth contributes to their correctional placements.

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 public 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 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."⁴³ Petty offenses are often addressed with fines, community service, 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 2007, there were 44, 615 juvenile arrests in Minnesota, only a fraction of which result in an out-of-home placement.^{44, 45} Many factors are taken into account before placing a child in a secure 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 secure correctional facilities based on a score from an objective risk assessment instrument.⁴⁶

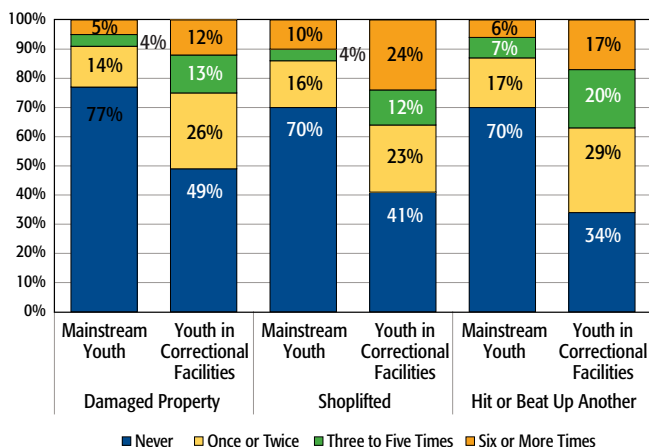
Delinquent Behavior

Not surprisingly, youth in correctional facilities who responded to the MSS have higher rates of delinquent behavior than a matched sample of mainstream peers. Overall, more than half of the youth in correctional facilities reported engaging in physical violence,

Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

property damage and theft at least once in the past 12 months. By comparison, less than one-third of the mainstream matched sample of youth reported engaging in these behaviors. Other than weapon possession at school and chemical use, these are the only illegal behaviors explored in the MSS.

Delinquent Behavior in the Last 12 Months



Youth in correctional facilities also reported higher rates of chronic delinquency. Youth in correctional facilities reported having damaged property, shoplifted, or physically assaulted another on six or more occasions in the past year, a rate that was 2.5 times higher than mainstream youth.

There was no statistical difference between boys and girls in correctional facilities on these delinquency indicators.

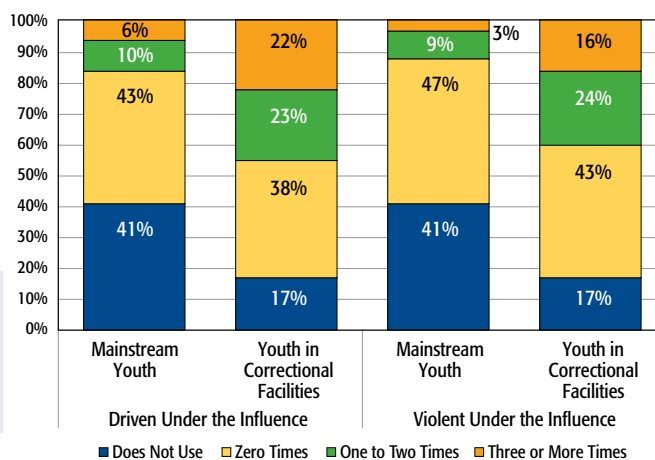
Public Safety Impact of Alcohol and Drug Use

Youth taking the MSS were asked a series of questions about the consequences of alcohol or drug use, some of which were 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.⁴⁷

Forty-five percent of youth in correctional facilities who have used alcohol or drugs in the past year reported driving a motor vehicle under the influence at least once; 22 percent have driven under the influence three or more times in the past year. Comparatively, 16 percent of mainstream youth who have used drugs or alcohol in the past year reported driving under the influence with six percent having done so three or more times.

Forty percent of youth in correctional facilities self-report having become violent under the influence in the past year, versus 12 percent of youth in mainstream schools. Again, a higher number of youth in correctional facilities (16%) report having become violent under the influence three or more times, as compared to 3 percent of the mainstream matched sample.

Public Safety Consequences of Chemical Use in the Past Year



There was no statistical difference between boys and girls in correctional facilities on driving while under the influence or becoming violent under the influence.

Educator Insights

While youth's behavior in the community that is harmful to themselves, their families, or the public often instigates involvement in the juvenile justice system, professionals from correctional schools felt it important to portray the other side of these youth. The labels and

stigma that come with being involved in the justice system prevent community members from seeing the person as distinct from their behavior. Said interview respondents:

“These kids get seen as different even within the school district community. They go from being a normal high school kid to a corrections kid. We have to separate the deed from the doer.”

“People think they just need their asses kicked and they’ll be fine. They need tons of support and flexible structure.”

“Have a holistic look at the child—develop and build on the skills and talents from a strength-base, without denying the reasons they are here.”

Section Summary

- More than 70 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 have engaged in delinquent activities and they have done so with much greater frequency than mainstream youth.
- The public safety consequences of alcohol and other drug use were more serious for youth in correctional facilities. More than 40 percent of youth in correctional facilities who have used drugs or alcohol in the past year reported driving under the influence and becoming violent under the influence.
- Boys and girls in correctional facilities did not statistically differ in their self-report of delinquent behavior or behaviors when under the influence of chemicals related to public safety.

Victimization

It is well established that youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system are also victims of violence at disproportionate rates. 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 with others. 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.⁴⁸

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.⁴⁹ 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. As youth age, the percentage of youth victims increases but the percentage of youth victimized by a family member decreases.⁵⁰

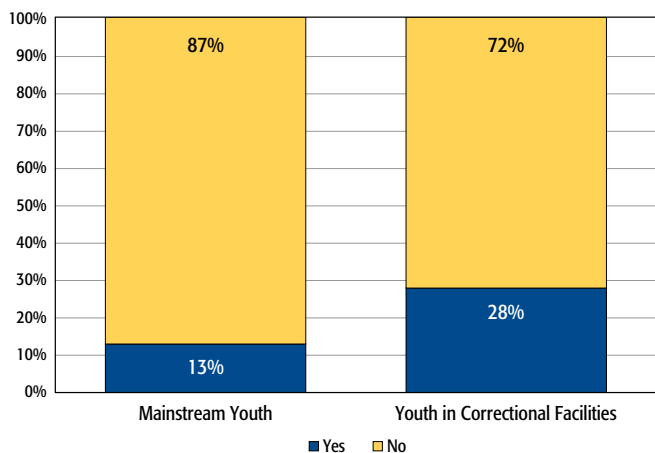
Not everyone who experiences trauma suffers adverse consequences. Several factors appear to protect children, such as positive attachments with supportive adults and having a sense of purpose or meaning. Personal traits that help to promote resilience include positive self-concept, sense of self-control, relationship-building skills, emotional regulation skills, and problem-solving skills.⁵¹ Increasing these skills and youths’ sense of self efficacy are cornerstones of cognitive-behavioral treatment offered in correctional facilities.

Physical Family Violence

Youth in correctional facilities reported being victims of family violence at rate twice that of youth in mainstream schools. Nearly 30 percent of youth in correctional facilities report having experienced physical violence at the hands of an adult in their household.

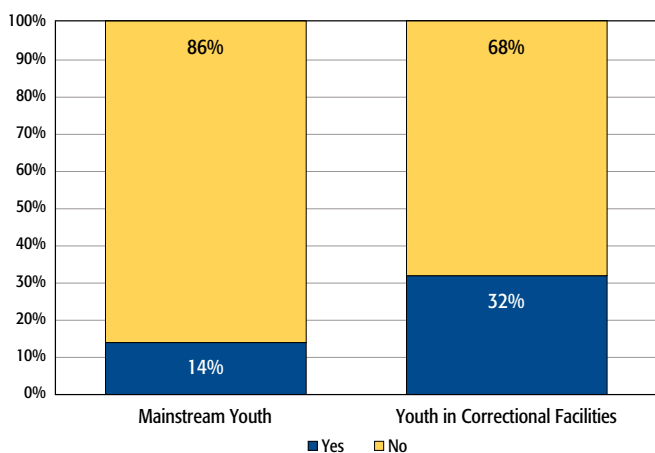
Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

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



Witnessing domestic violence can also have adverse affects on youth. Again, just over three in ten youth (32%) in correctional facilities have witnessed physical abuse directed at someone else in their family.

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



Girls in correctional facilities were more likely than boys to report that they had been physically harmed by an adult in their household (51% versus 23%), and to have witnessed physical abuse in their household (52% vs. 27%).

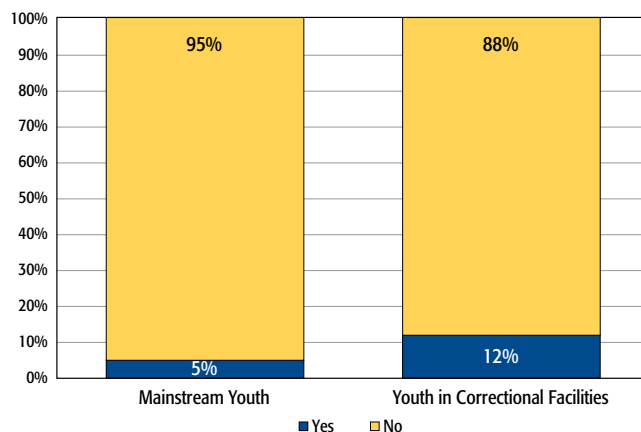
Sexual Abuse

Children and adolescents who have been sexually abused can suffer a range of psychological and behavioral problems ranging from mild to severe. 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.⁵²

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 in their adult sexual functioning. Re-victimization is also 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.⁵³

Twice as many youth in correctional facilities reported experiencing familial sexual abuse than their mainstream matched sample.

Whether Youth Have Been a Victim of Familial Sexual Abuse

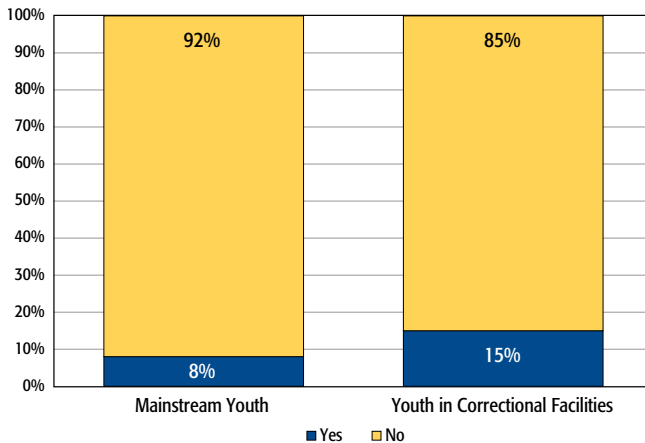


Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

Girls in correctional facilities are most often the targets of sexual abuse over their male counterparts. Twenty-eight percent of girls in facilities reported having been touched sexually against their wishes by someone in their family versus eight percent of boys.

More mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities reported being sexually victimized by a non-familial perpetrator. Youth in correctional facilities, however, were almost as likely to be victimized by a family member (12%) as a non-family member (15%).

Whether Youth Have Been a Victim of Non-Familial Sexual Abuse



Nearly four in ten (39%) of girls in correctional facilities reported being touched sexually against their wishes by an adult or person outside their family, versus nine percent of boys.

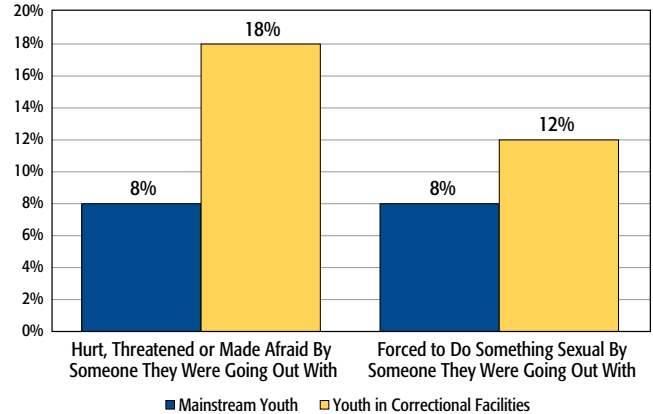
Half (49%) of girls in the correctional facility sample reported having been sexually abused either by someone in the family or outside the family. Of those, 17 percent experienced both types of sexual abuse.

Dating Violence

Youth in correctional facilities also report more violence in their dating relationships. Eighteen percent of youth

in correctional facilities were physically hurt or made afraid by someone they were going out with and 12 percent were forced to do something sexual with a dating partner that they did not wish to do. These experiences affected eight percent of the students in the mainstream matched sample.

Dating Violence



Half of girls in correctional facilities (50%) reported that someone they were going out with hit them, hurt them, threatened them, or made them feel afraid. This was true for 11 percent of boys.

Almost four in 10 girls (37%) reported that they were forced to do something sexual they didn't want to do in a dating relationship versus seven percent of boys.

Runaways

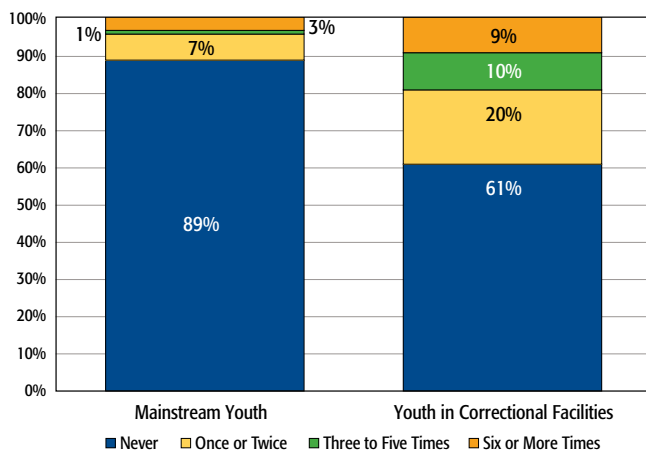
Homelessness has serious consequences for young people and is especially dangerous for those between the ages of 16 and 24 who do not have familial support. Living in shelters or on the streets, unaccompanied homeless youth are at a higher risk for physical and sexual assault or abuse, and physical illness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

Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

Overall, homeless youth are also likely to become involved in prostitution, to use and abuse drugs, and to engage in other dangerous and illegal behaviors.⁵⁴ Youth often must engage in “survival sex,” which refers to the selling of sex to meet subsistence needs. It includes the exchange of sex for shelter, food, drugs, or money. The dangers inherent in survival sex make it among the most damaging repercussions of homelessness among youths.⁵⁵

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 (39%) have run away from home at least once in the past 12 months as compared to only 11 percent of youth in the mainstream schools. Of youth in correctional facilities, 10 percent reported running away three to five times in the past year and an additional nine percent reported running away six times or more. The reasons youth have elected to run away or the length of time away from home are unknown.

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



Girls in correctional facilities run away from home significantly more often than their male peers. While one-third (33%) of boys had run away in the past year, this was true for nearly 7 in 10 girls (68%). Of those girls, 22 percent had run away six or more times.

Educator Insights

Staff working in correctional facilities are often able to see the full range of experiences affecting youth behavior. When asked about the “greatest misconceptions” about the youth they see in their school setting, six respondents stated there is misconception that they are bad or dangerous kids; two stated that they are not any different than any other kids; and five respondents alluded to the effects of their past including mental health issues, trauma and survival needs.

“[Some youth didn’t value school] because their biggest concern wasn’t school, it was eating, or staying safe...”

“There is a perception that they must be awful kids. If you knew where they came from and what they have been through you would look at them totally differently. They have amazing resilience, smarts and survival skills.”

Section Summary

- Twice as many youth in correctional facilities report both experiencing and witnessing family violence than mainstream youth. Half of girls in correctional facilities report having experienced physical abuse in the home.
- Youth in correctional facilities report twice as much sexual abuse by both family member and non-familial perpetrators compared to mainstream youth. Again, half of girls in correctional facilities reported experiencing sexual abuse.
- Rates of dating violence are higher among youth in correctional facilities. Half of girls in correctional facilities report having experienced dating threats or violence and nearly four in 10 reported sexual force or coercion by a dating partner.
- Significantly more youth in correctional facilities report having run away from home than mainstream youth and they have done so with greater frequency. Seven out of 10 girls in correctional facilities report having run away from home at least once in the past year.

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.⁵⁶

Children who have been sexually abused, 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 the 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.⁵⁷

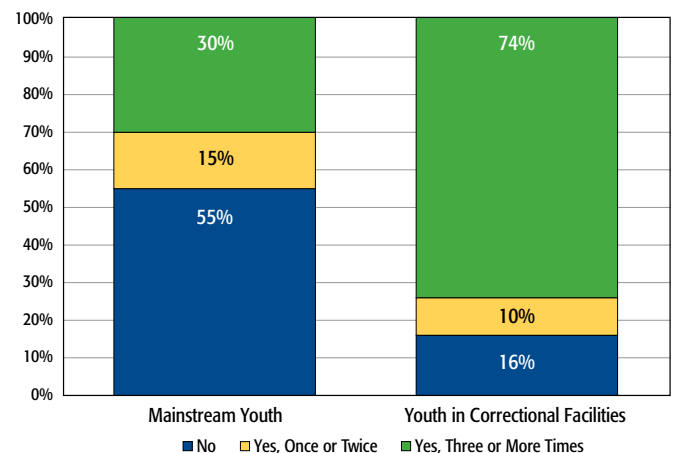
Sexual Activity

Youth in correctional facilities and their mainstream student match were 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-four percent of youth in correctional facilities report they have had sex at least once – 74 percent of whom have had sex three or more times. Conversely, fewer than one-half (45%) of mainstream students have had sex. Just under one-third (30%) of mainstream youth have had sex three or more times.

Of both the mainstream students and youth in correctional facilities populations who report having had sex, there is no statistical significance between them in terms of the number of partners they have had. Mainstream males were compared to males in correctional facilities, and mainstream females compared to females in correctional facilities. It was found that mainstream males had a similar number of partners as males in correctional facilities, and mainstream females had a similar numbers of partners as females in correctional facilities. Males in both the mainstream and correctional facility samples were more likely to report having four or five sexual partners (the highest selection allowed) than females.

Whether Youth Have Had Sexual Intercourse



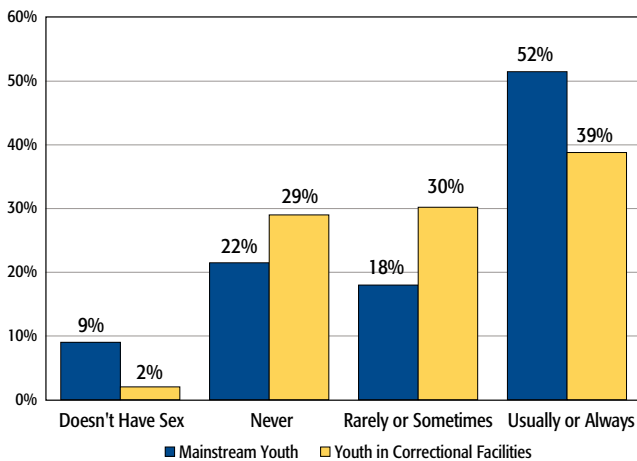
The very last question of the MSS inquires why youth chose not to have sex. Students were allowed to check all selections that applied to their decision to not have sex. In both groups, the four most selected reasons for not having sex (out of 14 options) were: not wanting to get an STD, fear of pregnancy,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

Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

Use of Birth Control

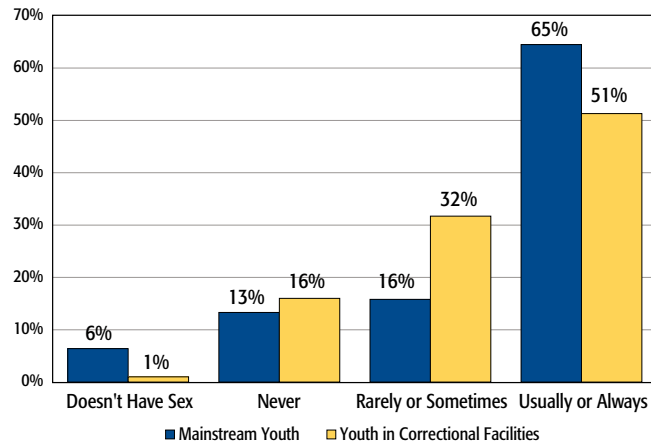
Consistent use of birth control is lacking in both the mainstream and the youth in correctional facility population. Approximately one-half (52%) of mainstream youth who have had sex report using birth control “usually” or “always.” For youth in correctional facilities, the consistent use of birth control was lower still at 39 percent. Of youth who have had sex, two in 10 mainstream youth (22%) and three in 10 youth in correctional facilities (29%) report that they never use any birth control method.

How Often Youth Use Any Birth Control Method



As it relates to condom use specifically, 65 percent of mainstream youth and 51 percent of youth in correctional facilities who have had sex, report that they “usually” or “always” use condoms. Thirteen to 16 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 less than one-half of correctional youth (47%). 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 when having sex.

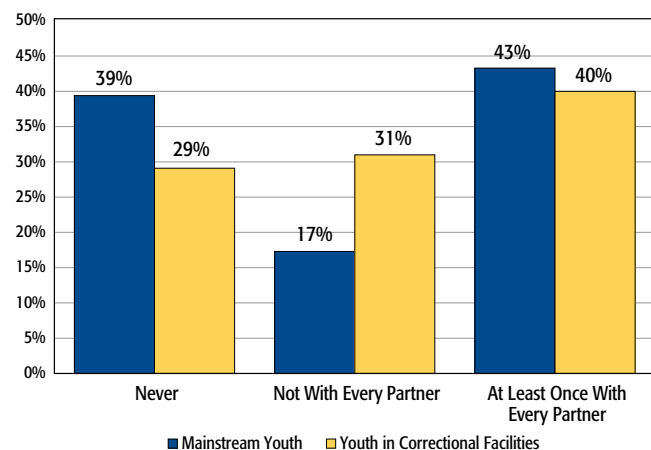
How Often Youth Use Condoms



Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV Prevention

Mainstream youth were only slightly more likely to talk with every sexual partner about STDs and HIV than youth in correctional facilities at 43 and 40 percent, respectively. Conversely, mainstream youth were more likely than youth in correctional facilities to report that they never talk to their sexual partners about STDs/HIV at 39 and 29 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 Youth Who Have Talked to Partners About STDs/HIV



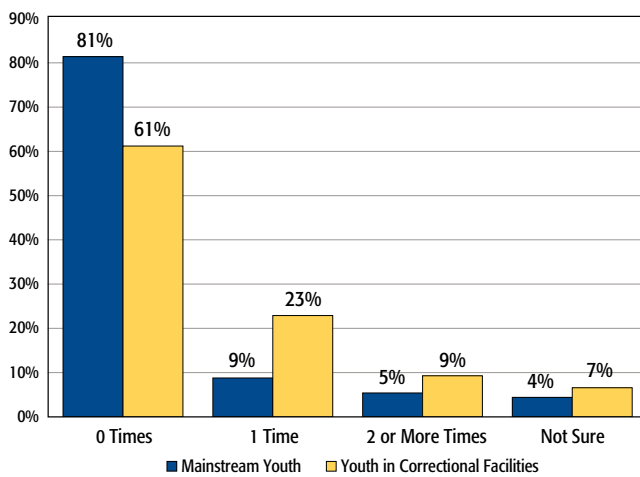
Youth in Minnesota Correctional Facilities: Data Findings

Pregnancy

One-half of mainstream youth (52%) reported that they talk to every sexual partner about preventing pregnancy compared to 37 percent of youth in correctional facilities. An equal percentage of each population (34% and 35%) reported that they never talk to their partners about pregnancy prevention.

Over twice as many youth in correctional facilities reported having been pregnant or having gotten someone pregnant as mainstream youth (32% versus 14%). Five percent of mainstream youth have been pregnant or have gotten someone pregnant two or more times versus nine percent of youth in correctional facilities. These are both statistically significant differences between mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities. There are no questions on the MSS regarding the number of students who are parents.

Number of Times Been/Gotten Someone Pregnant



There were almost no statistical differences on sexual activity and sexual health questions between boys and girls in correctional facilities. Boys and girls were very similar in reporting whether they have had sex, with what frequency, and the degree to which they have talked about STDs/HIV and pregnancy with their partners. Boys and girls were even fairly well aligned on knowing if they had been or had gotten someone pregnant. There was no statistical difference between boys and girls on reported use of condoms and other birth control.

The only statistical difference between boys and girls in correctional facilities occurred where one would expect it: males reported having more female partners and females reported having more male partners.

Section Summary

- More youth in correctional facilities report having had sex and having done so with greater frequency than youth in mainstream schools. The number of sexual partners youth have is not statistically different between mainstream youth and youth in correctional facilities.
- Boys in both the mainstream sample and the correctional facility sample report having more sexual partners than their female counterparts.
- Youth in correctional facilities were less likely than mainstream youth to use birth control. That being said, just over half of mainstream youth reported that they “usually” or “always” use birth control.
- Of mainstream youth, 52 percent report that they always talk to their sexual partners about preventing pregnancy and 43 percent always talk to their partner about preventing STDs/HIV. Youth in correctional facilities were statistically less likely to talk to every partner about preventing pregnancy (37%).
- Boys and girls in correctional facilities had no notable statistical differences in their sexual experiences and behaviors.

A Special Note on Girls

This report illuminates that girls in juvenile correctional facilities have risk factors that exceed those of boys. Girls are reporting more substance abuse; more mental health indicators; less family attachment and significantly more physical and sexual victimization than their male peers. These issues require interventions that are specifically geared for the unique needs of females and are delivered in a manner that females can relate to and integrate. Programming that addresses a history of trauma is useful for all youth in correctional facilities, but is especially relevant to girls.

It is not the intention of this report to reinforce the media driven “girls gone wild” myth. It is worth repeating that girls make up less than one-quarter of admissions to secure juvenile facilities in Minnesota, which is why assessments and services are typically designed for male clientele. The reasons why females enter the juvenile justice system are different than males even though the symptoms of the problem at times look the same. Objective risk-assessment tools designed for females, parity in programming and services, culturally responsive programming and gender-specific interventions will help support females who are involved with the juvenile justice system. Gender-specific programming will be explained further in the following section on best practices.

Discussion and Best Practices

While changes in methodology prohibit statistical comparison of the 2007 responses of youth in correctional facilities to those who took the MSS in years past, even a cursory reading of the 1998 report on youth in correctional facilities reveals that risk factors related to out-of-home placement have remained constant over time.

As in this report, results from 1998 illustrate that youth in correctional facilities were disproportionately youth of color, came from single-parent homes, were much more likely to have been physically and sexually abused, came from families with high rates of drug and alcohol abuse, and had higher rates of chemical abuse, delinquent behavior, and psychological distress themselves.⁵⁸ Based on the data, the authors of the 1998 report made the following recommendations:

- Substance abuse screening and treatment access for juveniles;
- Substance abuse treatment for parents of youth;
- Comprehensive, tailored assessments for physical and sexual abuse and mental health care, as needed;
- Therapeutic services in which youth could develop healthier choices;
- Programs to build on youth assets, possibly those including skill-building mentors;
- And services sensitive and responsive to diverse backgrounds and the developmental needs of males and females.⁵⁹

Indeed, the recommendations of a decade ago are still germane to youth in out-of-home correctional placements today. The benefit of such consistency is that there has been sufficient time to develop, pilot and replicate programs and interventions to address these risk factors. The experiences and attitudes Minnesota youth in correctional facilities possess are not unique and are well addressed in literature and research on delinquency. There are prevention and intervention programs, as well as theoretical approaches, that have shown reductions in youth risk factors and increases in youth and family efficacy in many areas simultaneously.

The terms Best Practices and Evidence Based Programming refer to the use of intervention strategies and program models that consistently reduce risk factors and promote pro-social behaviors and attitudes. These interventions are considered “evidenced based” because they have been through repeated trials and outcomes assessments using credible research methods. When these practices are implemented in a manner consistent with the program models, the risk factors for youth delinquency can be diminished and the protective factors inherent in individuals, families and communities can be maximized. Evidence based interventions can yield positive outcomes at all levels of society: micro, mid-level and macro. The following sections highlight a few, of many, credible strategies at each system level.

Micro-Level Strategies

Micro-level interventions are those that work with individuals, families and small groups to foster changes within personal functioning and social relationships.⁶⁰ Many of the risk factors for youth in correctional facilities are present at the individual and family level. Conversely, many protective factors for both youth in correctional facilities and their mainstream counterparts come from their positive connection with parents and family, and the ability to receive support from loved ones.

MSS findings demonstrate that families of corrections involved youth specifically need assistance to minimize conflict, to address domestic violence and chemical dependency, and to manage the stressors that accompany low-income or single-parent households. Youth involved in the juvenile justice system require access to services and interventions that address their unique mental health and chemical dependency needs, promote goal setting and attainment, and combat anti-social decision-making and behavior. Best practices at the micro-level include involving youth and families in matters that affect them.⁶¹ The following are three examples of micro-level prevention and intervention models that could reduce risk factors illuminated by the MSS:

The Nurse Family Partnership

A very early prevention strategy aimed at creating healthy living environments, healthy development, and early parent-child bonding are home visits for certain first-time mothers by registered nurses. The program was originally developed to address the underlying causes of antisocial behavior beginning at an early age, which are more likely to be severe than antisocial behavior that begins in adolescence.

Women who were visited by registered nurses until their child turned two years old were more aware of the community services available to them, received significantly fewer months of public assistance, had significantly fewer health care encounters in which injuries were detected in children. Participating mothers also had significantly fewer beliefs about child-rearing that were associated with child abuse and neglect (such as lack of empathy, belief in physical punishment, and unrealistic expectations for infants). Public health interventions such as these can prevent early abuse, neglect, and endangerment of young children that can lead to maladaptive behaviors, trauma, and juvenile justice system involvement later.⁶²

Multisystemic Therapy (MST)

For families already experiencing conflict and difficulty managing youth behavior, Multisystemic Therapy (MST) provides intensive family treatment while youth remain in the community. Qualified therapists address risk factors known to be related to delinquency and strive to promote behavior change in the youth's natural environment. MST is a solution-focused intervention that maximizes the strengths of family, peers, school, neighborhood, and built-in supports. The major goals of MST are to empower parents with the skills and resources needed to address the difficulties in raising their children. MST also empowers youth to manage family, peer, and school problems. Intervention strategies typically include family therapy, parent training, and cognitive skill development. Evaluations of MST have resulted in reductions in long-term rates of re-arrest; reductions in out-of-home placements; extensive improvements in family functioning including violence reduction; and decreased mental health problems for serious juvenile offenders.⁶³

Cognitive Behavioral Treatment

Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment (CBT) is an approach designed to help youth identify and change the beliefs, thoughts, and patterns of behavior that contribute to their problems. Its underlying principle is that thoughts affect emotions, which then influence behaviors. With cognitive therapy, youth are taught to recognize and change faulty or maladaptive thinking patterns. Studies have found that replacing negative behaviors with positive behaviors is a well-known change strategy. It is particularly effective when the new behavior is positively reinforced. The strategies of CBT have been successfully used to stall the onset, severity, and long-term consequences of problem behaviors. It is especially effective in managing violence and criminality, substance use and abuse, teen pregnancy, risky sexual behavior, and school failure.⁶⁴ With trained facilitators, CBT group programs are flexible enough to cover a wide variety of topics in a wide variety of venues such as schools, private practices, community groups, and correctional facilities. CBT is a cost effective intervention that can be tailored to low, medium or high-risk youth.

Mid-Level Strategies

Mid-level interventions create changes in groups, organizations and the network of service delivery. Changes occurring at this level often include changes to an organization's structure, goals and functions.⁶⁵ When the school system, community, and government deliver services to individuals and families in a strength-based, culturally appropriate manner, they can keep all parties engaged. A key to risk reduction and delinquency prevention is utilizing practices that keep youth and families connected to institutions and service providers, rather than having to rebuild trust and engagement once it is lost.

Results from the 2007 MSS demonstrate that youth in correctional facilities report many more risk factors associated with youth serving institutions. In school, youth reported lower academic achievement, greater truancy, more weapons violence, and substance use. Youth in correctional facilities were less likely to feel connected to their communities, less likely to have access to or to utilize school-based and community-based programs, and more likely to report acts of theft, vandalism and violence at school and in their community. All youth experienced violence and victimization at school at roughly equal levels demonstrating that improvements in this arena could benefit all youth. The following are examples of best practices that are effective in preserving youth and family involvement with institutions at the mid-level.

Positive School Climate

Schools that implement and maintain a positive school climate can have an effect on youth behavior both during and after school hours. School climate research shows that safe, caring, connected, participatory and responsive school climate is associated with positive youth development, effective risk prevention efforts and academic achievement.⁶⁶ Staff and student relationships are a significant part of positive school climate. Problems are reduced in schools where staff have caring attitudes for youth, set high expectations for student success, and role-model positive

interactions. Youth themselves benefit from a clean and orderly environment, and a school that they perceive to be physically and emotionally safe.

Creating such an environment requires respect for diversity, clearly communicated rules about peer interactions, bullying intervention, and consistent and equitable enforcement of rules and expectations.^{67, 68} When youth feel respected, heard and connected to their school environment, attendance and academic achievement rise while disciplinary incidents and disregard for school property decline. This change largely occurs within the mission and vision of the school as the values of the administration, teachers and staff are emulated by the student body.

After School and Community Based Programs

After school programs come in all shapes, sizes and delivery modalities. Some programs concentrate on recreational activities while others address academics or cultural enrichment. School and community based programs, especially during after school hours, can fill unsupervised time when delinquency, chemical use and victimization peak for adolescents. While the supervision alone reduces risk, quality programs have been shown to contribute to youth excelling in other areas of their lives. Efforts should be made to reduce systemic barriers to participation and engage the greatest number of youth possible.

Programs that yield positive outcomes for youth start with clear goals, a solid organizational structure and effective management. Staff in effective programs are qualified and committed, have appropriate experience, and can interact productively with school staff whether the program is school-based or not. Additionally, programs must be safe, close to home, and accessible to all children and youth who want to participate. The most effective programs have a strong family involvement, effective partnerships with community-based organizations, and draw on all of a community's diverse resources. The participation of youth in program planning is a best practice related to youth program design and operation.⁶⁹

Cultural Competency

Cultural competence to serve the unique needs of Minnesota's ethnic communities and other sub-populations can greatly contribute to connecting youth and families to schools, communities, services and juvenile justice systems workers. The term culture refers to "integrated patterns of human behavior – including thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions – associated with particular racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups".⁷⁰ Cultural competence is defined as:

*"The process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each."*⁷¹

Providing cultural competency training is one way in which agencies can increase the effectiveness of staff at all levels. Training can create a deeper awareness of cultural factors such as differences in communication styles, body language and demeanor, language use, beliefs about the family, attitudes toward authority figures. Training in cultural competence can also alter the beliefs and behaviors of juvenile justice personnel, system administrators, elected officials, and the general public in far-reaching ways.

Likewise, staffing practices can be a powerful tool for strengthening an organization's capability to deliver culturally competent services. Agencies should hire, promote, and retain at all levels qualified, culturally competent personnel who belong to the minority groups that these agencies serve.⁷² Additionally, assessment tools and program curricula that have been normed for white youth are often presumed to be equally effective on different races and cultures. Given the over-representation of youth of color in the juvenile justice system and out-of home placements, cultural competence is essential for meaningful, effective service delivery in Minnesota agencies.

Gender Specific Programming (GSP)

While distinct from culturally competent programming, gender-specific programming operates from the same principle that the experiences, needs and culture of girls are unique and distinct from male youth. GSP represents a concentrated effort to assist all girls (not only those involved in the justice system) in positive female development. GSP takes into account the developmental needs of girls at adolescence, a critical stage for gender identity formation, while acknowledging the risks that come with being female including sexism and victimization.

Essential elements of effective gender-specific programming for adolescent girls include: space that is physically and emotionally safe, and separate from boys; opportunities for girls to develop relationships of trust and interdependence with other women; programs that tap girls' cultural strengths; mentors who share experiences and who exemplify survival and growth; education about women's health, including female development, pregnancy, contraception, diseases and prevention; opportunities for girls to define healthy sexuality on their own terms (rather than as victims); and giving girls a voice in program design, implementation, and evaluation.⁷³ Given the high levels of risk that were shared by girls in correctional facilities, Gender Specific Programming is essential for youth in correctional facilities to address histories of trauma and repair damaged familial relationships.

Macro-Level Strategies

Some issues identified by MSS respondents and school staff interviews point to higher order issues of the social, political and economic environment. For example, low income families often experience strain and greater instability; policies around school discipline and juvenile justice have contributed to minority overrepresentation in both systems; and changes to the availability of mental health services have left youth and families with limited treatment options. Generally, a retributive model of delinquency focused on individual responsibility and consequences is still pervasive even when there is evidence that communities as a whole are at risk due to macro-level, or community wide, conditions.

Macro-level interventions facilitate social change through work with neighborhoods, communities and society as a whole. At this level, change is accomplished through community planning and development, public education and social action. Activities at the macro-level include community organizing, government participation, and shaping social and economic legislation in reaction to widespread social problems. The following are policies and activities at the macro-level that can affect systemic contributions to youth involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Local Coordinating Councils and Community Mobilization

One of the oldest community-based strategies for combating delinquency is the formation of local partnerships, coordinating councils, and steering committees. Interdisciplinary teams that include local law enforcement leaders, schools, social services officials, and other community representatives can collectively implement community-based campaigns against delinquency. Activities can range from neighborhood watch groups to city level political activities. Their enduring appeal may, in part, stem from their emphasis on reorganizing or reallocating community resources and the use of community volunteers. This approach is often more feasible for

low-income neighborhoods than introducing new programs or institutions.⁷⁴

Community mobilization fosters change within the community to alter the basic patterns of social interaction, values, customs, and institutions in ways that will significantly improve the quality of life in a community. Community mobilization attempts to change the everyday environment in communities in ways that will result in better outcomes for everyone.⁷⁵ Community mobilization is similar to a “grass roots movement” where community members assert how they want their community to be and take action around that vision. Community-based initiatives have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing crime through gang violence prevention, volunteering and youth mentoring, and providing after school recreation opportunities for youth.⁷⁶

Restorative Justice in Schools

Federal “Zero Tolerance” legislation in schools generally requires mandatory suspension or expulsion for students caught possessing a weapon, engaging in violent behavior, or using/possessing drugs. In many cases the use of such policies is necessary, however, increasingly reports show that students have been suspended or expelled for behavior beyond the purview of the law. In addition to extremes of application, the question of bias arises as zero tolerance policies disparately affect minority and special education youth. Because of zero tolerance policies in our nation’s schools, many juvenile courts have experienced substantial increases in delinquency cases originating from schools – including many for behaviors that were once managed within the school setting.⁷⁷

Many schools have developed School Referral Reduction Programs or implemented restorative justice practices that focus on repairing the harm of students’ actions. Problem-solving circles, mediation, and peer courts preserve school engagement rather than funnel youth into the justice system. Effective and promising alternatives to zero tolerance also include violence prevention curricula, social skills training and conflict

resolution skill-building, and early intervention strategies that target low levels of inappropriate behavior before they escalate.⁷⁸ Systemic changes in a school's or district's approach to discipline and behavioral intervention can significantly impact school climate. Schools implementing effective strategies have reported reductions in office discipline referrals by 20 to 60 percent.⁷⁹

Mental Health Services

It is evident from the MSS data that youth in correctional facilities experience personal trauma at higher rates, use and abuse drugs and alcohol at higher rates, and express symptoms associated with mental health issues much more often than their mainstream peers. Over the past 20 years, juvenile justice has become the primary referral for youths with mental health disorders in many states, due to the collapse of public mental health services for children and adolescents. Child welfare agencies often terminate services to adolescents who get arrested or adjudicated delinquent, leading these youth to suffer harsher outcomes than other court-involved teens. A disproportionate share of public school students referred to juvenile justice under zero tolerance policies are youth with educational disabilities.⁸⁰

Serving youth with mental health needs must occur at the micro, mid-level and macro level. Youth require access to treatment in their community and insurance to cover costs associated with treatment interventions and medications. Youth must be screened for mental health problems as they enter the juvenile justice system (if not sooner) and have follow up to screenings by qualified staff and mental health practitioners. Communities must provide mental health services in a community-based, non-residential setting such as community diagnostic centers.⁸¹ Until the public health issue of mental health care is addressed outside of the juvenile justice system, it is likely that youth whose behavior is the product their mental health will continue to require justice system involvement.

Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) And The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI)

It is well established that racial and ethnic minorities are over-represented in the juvenile justice system compared to their percentage of the general population, a phenomenon that is evident in the results of the 2007 MSS and the responses of correctional facility educators. Racial disproportionality occurs at every contact point within the juvenile justice system from arrest to out-of-home placement. Moreover, what happens to youth during their initial contacts with the juvenile justice system influences the outcomes at the later stages, leading to an amplification where the disparity grows greater as minority youth progress deeper into the juvenile justice system.⁸²

DMC is the result of a number of complex decisions and events, and the reduction of DMC requires a sustained, comprehensive, balanced, and multidisciplinary approach. It also requires the partnership of all stakeholders, public and private, at the local, state, and federal levels.⁸³ Specific types of system change to reduce DMC include altering basic procedures, policies, and rules that define how a juvenile justice system operates. Activities related to DMC reduction include community assessments, data driven reduction plans, program development or expansion, promoting cultural competency in the juvenile justice, implementing objective decision-making tools, and implementing new legislation.⁸⁴

The *Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative* specifically is an Annie E. Casey Foundation effort that is one of the nation's most effective, influential, and widespread juvenile justice system reform initiatives. JDAI focuses on the juvenile detention component of the juvenile justice system because youth are often unnecessarily or inappropriately detained at great expense, with long-lasting negative consequences for both public safety and youth development. JDAI promotes changes to policies, practices, and programs

to: reduce reliance on secure confinement; improve public safety; reduce racial disparities and bias; save taxpayer dollars; and stimulate overall juvenile justice reform. Since its inception in 1992, JDAI has repeatedly demonstrated that jurisdictions can safely reduce reliance on secure detention. There are now approximately 100 JDAI sites in 24 states, three of which are currently operating in Minnesota.⁸⁵

Crime and Violence as a Public Health Matter

The United States Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control include youth violence, domestic violence and sexual violence among their efforts, approaching violence as a public health issue. Through this lens, the focus of interventions is less in response to the actions of individuals and instead examines collective risk factors in communities as a public health concern.

The public health model offers a community-based approach to promoting and maintaining health. To identify problems and develop solutions for entire population groups, the public health approach first uses data to establish the nature and the prevalence of the problem. Through analysis of risk and protective factors associated with the problem, the model develops and evaluates the effectiveness and generalizability of interventions. Finally successful models are disseminated as part of a coordinated effort to educate and reach out to the public.⁸⁶ Using this model could help the juvenile justice system to focus less on individuals and families and more on addressing community risk factors including poverty, early childhood development, substance abuse, and access to mental health services.

Conclusion

Risk factors that predicate delinquency are well known and repeatedly evident in the lives of youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system. Youth in correctional facilities who responded to the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey self-reported many more individual, family, school and community-based risk factors than comparison samples of mainstream youth. Furthermore, girls in correctional facilities reported significantly more risk factors than boys in correctional facilities.

The findings of this report demonstrate that individuals and families can benefit from support to promote healthy functioning and strong connections to one another and the community at large. Violence, victimization, chemical abuse, poverty, under-treated mental health needs, and school and community disengagement continue to put individuals, families and communities at risk.

Research and program evaluation have yielded many promising interventions related to the way delinquency is defined and addressed at the micro level (individuals and families), the mid-level (organizations and agencies), and the macro level (communities and public policy). Thoughtful implication of programs and policies, which have demonstrated outcomes related to delinquency reduction, are the key to addressing the complexity of risk factors as they are currently understood.

Youths' experiences and perceptions, the voices of families and communities, and the observations of human services professionals are integral to implementing effective delinquency prevention and intervention. Programs and services should be held accountable to using evidence-based practices and culturally competent strategies to meet the needs of the populations served. Additionally, state level agencies have a collective responsibility to serve all Minnesota youth and ensure that the services, training, and funding communities need to address delinquency are known and available statewide.

Appendix A: Characteristics of Participating Facilities

Appendix A: Characteristics of Participating Facilities

A representative from the education program in each survey site was contacted following the survey to provide additional information about the services offered in their facility and educational program. The following information was provided by these representatives:

- Eleven participating facilities had secure beds and three had only non-secure beds. Of the 11 secure facilities, five also had a non-secure residential programming.
- Five facilities were in the seven-county Twin Cities Metro area; the remainders were in Greater Minnesota.
- Six facilities had populations over 30 youth; three had populations over 80 youth; and four facilities had populations of over 100 youth.
- Three facilities accept youth statewide; three served primarily youth from their own county; and seven facilities served multi-county regions. One facility accepted youth from out-of-state.
- Ages of youth in programs ranged with varying admission criteria. The minimum age of admission was 10 years old and the maximum age was 19. Age criteria are determined in part by the risk-level served and programs offered.
- Three facilities served only males. None of the participating sites housed exclusively females. In all facilities accepting both males and females, boys and girls are housed and programmed separately, consistent with best practices.
- Nine facilities provided both pre-dispositional detention and post-disposition residential placement; four facilities were post-disposition residential placement only. Facilities providing only pre-adjudication detention were not surveyed because they lack formal education programs.

- The youth length of stay in the facilities ranged from a few days to over 15 months. Many offered short-term and long-term treatment programs including programming specifically for chemical dependency and sexual offenders.
- All participating facilities provided full day educational services on site.
- In all but the three facilities the school administrators and teachers were employees of the local school district. In the others, employees were either of the county or the Minnesota Department of Corrections.

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