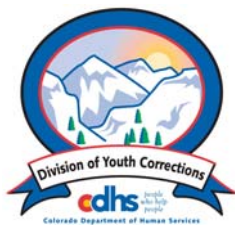


# Recidivism Evaluation of Committed Youth Discharged in Fiscal Year 2003-04



**Colorado Department of Human Services**  
**Division of Youth Corrections**

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*Working with Colorado Communities to Achieve Justice*

January 1, 2006



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Division of Youth Corrections (DYC) submits annual reports of recidivism outcomes on committed youth. The current report is submitted in response to Footnote 83 of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2005-06 Long Appropriations Bill (SB05-209). Additionally, this report is intended to serve as DYC's annual response to the legislation authorizing the construction and operation of the Ridge View Youth Services Center (Section 19-2-411.5, C.R.S). The response to these separate legislative mandates is submitted in this one report because of the similar nature of the requested information.

Recidivism is a measure that is often utilized in determining the level of effectiveness for juvenile justice agencies. However, the definition of recidivism can vary greatly among states and even among justice agencies within a single state. In response to recommendations resulting from a Legislative audit of the criminal justice system, Colorado established a common definition of recidivism in FY 1999-00. The definition that was adopted and is used for this report is as follows:

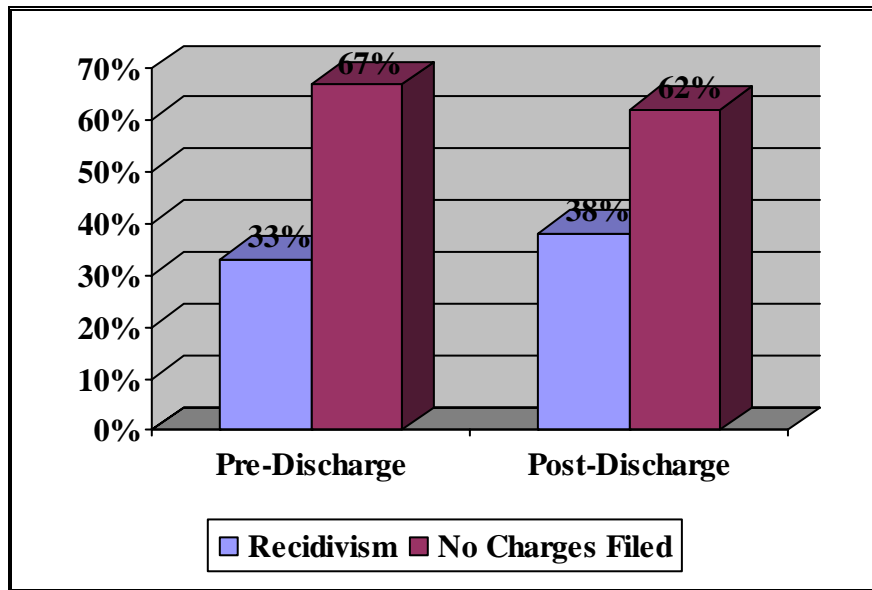
**Pre-Discharge Recidivism:** A filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense that occurred prior to discharge from Division of Youth Corrections.

**Post-Discharge Recidivism:** A filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense that occurred within one year following discharge from Divisions of Youth Corrections.

The sample for this year's report includes 1,003 youth discharged from DYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004 (State Fiscal Year 2003-2004). The current report analyzes pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism rates using a number of demographic and risk factors (risk of re-offending) for the entire fiscal year (FY) 2003-04 discharge sample as well as for a sub-sample of youth who were placed at the Ridge View facility during their commitment stay (N=299).

## **Recidivism Results**

- Thirty-three percent of youth discharged in FY 2003-04 received a new felony or misdemeanor filing (i.e., recidivated) prior to discharge. Over 80% of pre-discharge filings were for offenses that occurred while youth were on parole status.
- Thirty-eight percent of youth discharged in FY 2003-04 received a new felony or misdemeanor (i.e., recidivated) within one year of discharge from DYC.



- Approximately thirty percent of new charges filed for youth discharged in FY 2003-04 were for property felony charges. Thirty-one percent of new filings that occurred during commitment and 29% of post-discharge recidivism filings were for property felony offenses.
- The majority of youth who received new filings during commitment or within one year of commitment discharge received filings on multiple charges. Although relatively few were found guilty on their most serious charge (55% pre-discharge and 38% post-discharge), 84% of youth with any pre-discharge filings were found guilty for at least one charge and 76% of youth with any post-discharge filing were found guilty of at least one charge.
- Males were more likely to receive a post-discharge filing for a new offense (40%) than females (27%). Risk (of re-offending) analysis of males compared to females

shows that females scored significantly higher on DYC's risk assessment tool at the time of commitment. Therefore, it would be expected that females also have higher rates of re-offending than males. This was not true for this discharge cohort, and historically, the rates of re-offending for females committed to DYC have been lower than for males.

- Youth committed in the Western Region were statistically less likely to recidivate within one year following discharge (27%) than youth committed in other regions. The highest rates of re-offending post-discharge were seen in the Southern Region (48%). A risk analysis by DYC management region shows that youth in the Southern Region scored higher on DYC's risk of re-offending assessment instrument than youth in other regions and youth in the Western Region had more youth scoring low on the risk scale.
- The number of escapes was significantly higher for youth who recidivated (pre-discharge and post-discharge) than for youth who did not receive a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense during commitment or within one year following commitment.
- Youth who did not have any commitments during their commitment were significantly less likely to have a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense prior to discharge than youth that did get recommitted.
- Youth who obtained a poor or unsatisfactory parole adjustment rating were significantly more likely to recidivate within one year following discharge (46%) than youth with a satisfactory to excellent parole adjustment rating (34%).
- Having a job or attending school at the time of discharge was also positively related to a youth's recidivism rate. Youth who were employed or enrolled in school at the time of discharge were significantly less likely to have received a new filing within one year of discharge (35%) than youth who were not employed or enrolled (44%).
- Youth who had more prior contacts with the juvenile justice system (prior detention admissions and prior adjudications) were more likely to recidivate prior to discharge than youth with no prior contacts. However these factors did not have significant effects for the post-discharge recidivism analysis.

- Age at first adjudication was significantly lower for re-offending youth, both pre-discharge and post-discharge, than for youth that did not receive a new filing during commitment or within the one year follow up period.
- Higher risk scores on the Commitment Classification Instrument (CCI) were also highly correlated with a youth having a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense prior to discharge, but recidivism rates post-discharge were not significantly different by risk of-re-offending as assessed at the time of commitment.
- Receiving a pre-discharge filing was significantly related to re-offending after discharge from NYC. Half (50%) of the youth who received a new filing prior to discharge received a filing within one year after discharge also, compared with only 32% of youth that did not recidivate before leaving NYC commitment. Although it is interesting that half of the youth who showed an inclination towards future offending (pre-discharge recidivism) did not re-offend following discharge from the Division.
- Survival analysis, shows that youth in the sample were most likely to receive their first post-discharge filing within the first 9 months following discharge. The growth in the recidivating population increases more than the average growth rate in the first 40 weeks following discharge and the growth rate after that time is lower than the average.
- Many of the traditional risk of re-offending factors did not produce significant differences in post-discharge recidivism rates (e.g., prior detention admissions, prior adjudications, risk assessment tools). These results may be a positive indicator of success for the Division's treatment programs. One possible explanation is the influence of case planning and the provision of appropriate surveillance and treatment services. To the extent that these services ameliorate risk factors and augment protective factors, the probability of re-offense will be markedly different for a youth upon discharge as compared to when that youth was originally committed. If the Division successfully reduces a youth's risk of recidivism, it should not be surprising that those risk factors identified at the beginning of a juvenile's commitment sentence are no longer significantly correlated with recidivism post-discharge.

## ***Ridge View Youth Services Center***

There were some notable differences in males that attended the Ridge View program (N=299) when compared with other NYC males discharged during FY 2003-04 (N=562).

- There were higher rates of minority populations served at Ridge View (58%) when compared with all other males discharged from NYC during the same time period (49%).
- Youth placed at Ridge View were more likely to have been committed for a property offense (55%) than other NYC males (42%). Juvenile justice research has shown that property offenders recidivate at higher rates than youth who commit person offenses.
- The Ridge View sample had more youth with medium (42%) and high risk (of re-offending) scores (31%) based on the CCI than other NYC males (39% and 26%, respectively). Additionally youth in the Ridge View sample had more detention admissions and prior adjudications than the comparison group.
- All of these factors suggest that youth in the Ridge View sample should be at a higher risk for recidivism than youth in the comparison sample. However, there were no statistically significant differences found between the two groups on pre discharge or post-discharge recidivism rates.
- The pre-discharge recidivism rate for the Ridge View sample was 32% (compared to 35% for other NYC males).
- The post-discharge recidivism rate for the Ridge View sample was 36% (compared to 42% for other NYC males).
- There were no significant differences found for pre-discharge or post-discharge recidivism rates on the risk factors analyzed for youth who were placed at Ridge View. The demographic and commitment factors that did show significant differences, NYC management region and number of escapes, mirrored the results shown in the full recidivism analysis.
- Youth that successfully completed the Ridge View program did not have significantly lower recidivism rates than youth who did not graduate from the program; however, the recidivism rates for graduates was in the expected direction.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Youth Corrections (DYC), prepares an annual recidivism report on committed youth. The current report, along with the Division's annual Management Reference Manual (MRM), are submitted in response to Footnote 83 of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2005-06 Colorado Long Appropriations Bill (SB05-209).

Footnote 83 reads:

*The Division is requested to continue its efforts to provide outcome data on the effectiveness of its programs. The Division is requested to provide to the Joint Budget Committee, by January 1 of each year, an evaluation of Division placements, community placements, and nonresidential placements. This evaluation should include, but not be limited to, the number of juveniles served, length of stay, and recidivism data per placement.*

This report is also intended to serve as DYC's annual response to the legislation authorizing the construction and operation of the Ridge View Youth Services Center (RVYSC) facility<sup>1</sup>. This legislation specifies that:

*Beginning twelve months after the juvenile facility constructed pursuant to this section begins operations, and annually thereafter, the Division of Youth Corrections shall calculate the recidivism rate for juveniles who complete the program offered by the juvenile facility. In calculating the recidivism rate, the division shall include any juvenile who commits a criminal offense, either as a juvenile or as an adult, within three years after leaving the facility. The Division shall report the recidivism rate to the general assembly.*

Given the similarity of the information requested in these separate legislative mandates, the Division is submitting this single report in response in compliance with the multiple legislative directives.

The Division's annual recidivism report has not traditionally been intended to report on outcomes for individual programs or facilities; however, the Ridge View Youth Services Center is a unique treatment option for eligible youth. Most youth committed to DYC

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<sup>1</sup> Section 19-2-411.5, C.R.S.

receive multiple treatment interventions, both residential and non-residential, throughout their commitment. Therefore, collection of recidivism outcomes, while useful for understanding the rate of re-offending during the commitment period and monitoring re-offending behaviors by specific sub-populations, is not generally useful in measuring the performance of individual programs. However, the Ridge View program is intended as a primary placement option for youth, and youth placed in the Ridge View Youth Services Center tend to have longer lengths of stay in their initial placement (RVYSC) and are often paroled directly from Ridge View to the community. Since the youth that are placed in the Ridge View facility tend to have fewer alternative treatment programs that could influence re-offending behaviors, it is appropriate to report outcome measures for this facility that may not be as meaningful if the analyses were conducted for other NYC treatment programs.

Recidivism is used as an overall outcome measure for NYC commitment programs. This report is intended to evaluate recidivism results for all youth discharged from NYC during FY 2003-04. The results of this report are divided into two sections: 1) NYC Recidivism Outcomes provides recidivism outcomes on new filings for charges that occurred prior to discharge from NYC (pre-discharge recidivism) as well as recidivism results on new filings for felony or misdemeanor offenses that occur within one year following discharge from a NYC commitment sentence (post-discharge recidivism); and 2) RVYSC Recidivism Outcomes examines pre and post-discharge recidivism rates for youth in the sample who were eligible for and attended the Ridge View Youth Services Center during their commitment. To ensure consistency in how the Division reports recidivism data, this report is prepared using the standardized definitions (a one-year follow-up period for the Ridge View sample).

Last year the Division modified the sampling methodology for its annual recidivism report. This was intended to provide timelier reporting of recidivism data, and to eventually allow for a more accurate evaluation of recidivism trend data over time. This is the second report to include both pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism rates from the same client sample.

# RECIDIVISM IN COLORADO

Before providing the results of this year's study, it is important to outline the evolution of recidivism as a criminal and juvenile justice outcome measure in Colorado.

## ***Recidivism as an Outcome Measure***

Throughout the United States, recidivism is a measure that is often utilized to determine the level of effectiveness of juvenile justice and criminal justice agencies. This seems reasonable since there is an implied public expectation that youth who leave the care of a juvenile justice agency will present a lesser threat to public safety. However, the definition of recidivism can vary greatly among states and even among justice agencies within a single state. Defining recidivism and applying it as an outcome measure is an imperfect science. In the criminal justice literature, recidivism has been defined as broadly as “any new arrest” (including petty offenses) to as narrowly as “the adjudication for the same or similar offense” (whereby ignoring other offenses), or even “readmission to the same correctional program.”<sup>2</sup> In discussing recidivism, consistency in definition is perhaps as important as how recidivism is defined. A common definition of recidivism allows for meaningful comparisons of performance data among agencies; as well as providing a mechanism for analyzing historical performance trends (either for a single agency or for the juvenile justice system as a whole)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, DJJ Research Quarterly, Volume III, April 2005.

<sup>3</sup> While efforts to develop standard definitions of recidivism across correctional agencies should produce more consistency in data collection and reporting, some differences will still exist across agencies due to differences in programs, levels of security imposed (e.g., residential versus non-residential) and procedures used to regress or sanction youth.

## ***Establishment of a Common Definition in Colorado***

In Colorado, a common definition of recidivism dates back to the early 1990's. In FY 1990-91, the Office of the State Auditor reviewed various components of Colorado's juvenile justice system. Among numerous other recommendations, the State Auditor's Office recommended to the Legislature that a common definition of recidivism be established. This recommendation eventually resulted in a footnote to the Long Bill that mandated DYC, the Judicial Department, the Division of Criminal Justice, and the Division of Child Welfare develop a common definition of recidivism.

In 1998, the Office of the State Auditor revisited the definition of recidivism. In its review of the juvenile probation system, the Office of the State Auditor recommended that the definition of recidivism be less restrictive and incorporate juvenile, as well as adult offenders. Based on this recommendation, the Legislature approved a footnote that required the Judicial Branch to consult with the Departments of Human Services, Public Safety, and Corrections to consider a newly revised and common definition of recidivism. A multi-agency committee was formed and a collaborative report was submitted in June 1999. In this report, a two-tiered definition of recidivism was proposed. The first tier focuses on re-offending during supervision (pre-discharge recidivism), while the second tier looks at the rates of re-offending once an individual successfully completes the term of his or her sentence (post-discharge recidivism). The Division of Youth Corrections adopted the common definitions of recidivism as outlined by the multi-agency committee. The definitions used in this report are as follows:

**Pre-Discharge Recidivism:** A filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense that occurred prior to discharge from the Division of Youth Corrections.

**Post-Discharge Recidivism:** A filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense that occurred within one year following discharge from the Division of Youth Corrections.

This report is the seventh to apply the above definition of recidivism to committed youth served by the Division of Youth Corrections. While these definitions may be the common definition of recidivism for the State of Colorado it is interesting to note that Colorado is currently the only state to use DA filings as a measure of recidivism<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, it is not possible to compare recidivism rates from DYC to those of other states' juvenile justice agencies.

## **STUDY METHODOLOGY**

The source of data is critical for determining recidivism rates. Since recidivism is defined for both the pre-discharge and post-discharge samples as “a filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense,” the Division relied upon the Judicial Department’s Integrated Colorado Online Network (ICON) database for determining whether a recidivist act had occurred. Only those filings entered into the Colorado Judicial Department’s ICON data system are included in these recidivism measures. Traffic, municipal, status, and petty offenses are not included.

The Colorado Judicial Department prepared a data file containing filing information that was matched with a DYC data file on committed youth served in FY 2003-04. The process for matching files involves a high level match of youths’ last name, first initial, and two of the three birth date elements. These matches are further examined for evidence of accurate matches (review of the full name listed by both agencies, further checks against the ICON system for nicknames, etc.). Any method to match files is limited by data entry errors, spelling differences, and aliases. Efforts are made to minimize errors through spot-checking and manual reviews of randomly selected cases in the ICON system.

The matched file was used to evaluate pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism rates on youth discharged from the Division between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004. In the

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<sup>4</sup> Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, DJJ Research Quarterly, Volume III, April 2005.

past, the Division has reported pre-discharge recidivism from a cohort of newly committed youth. Increases in lengths of stay over the years produced higher percentages of youth in the new commitment cohorts that were still not discharged at the time recidivism reports were prepared.

Last year the Division changed the sampling methodology in an effort to alleviate some of these data issues and also to provide timelier outcome data to assist with internal management decisions. The current report uses the same methodology as the 2004 report and provides pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism results for the FY 2003-04 discharge sample<sup>5</sup>. The following table outlines what the changes in the study methodology mean for this year's recidivism report comparing the current sample selection methodology with that used prior to FY 2002-2003<sup>6</sup>.

**PRE-DISCHARGE RECIDIVISM**

*- Change in Methodology Associated with Cohort Sampling and Time Frame*

	Previous Methodology	Current Methodology
Cohort Sample	Only those youth committed in the first six months of the Fiscal Year.	All youth who discharged from parole in a Fiscal Year.
Time Frame	July 2002 to December 2002	July 2003 to June 2004
N= Size	443	1003

**POST-DISCHARGE RECIDIVISM**

*- Change in Methodology Primarily Associated with Time-Frame*

	Previous Methodology	Current Methodology
Time Frame	All youth who discharged from parole in FY2002-2003.	All youth who discharged from parole in FY2003-2004.
N= Size	779	1003

**ANALYSIS OF SHIFT IN METHODOLOGY**

	Description	Comparative Advantage
More Recent Data	Previous methodology pulls from a sample that is two years old. The current methodology utilizes a 1 year old sample.	A timelier sample more accurately conveys current levels of performance. Less of a time-lag in receiving recidivism data.
Sample Size	When comparing the current to the previous methodology, the pre-discharge sample size is over twice as large and the post-discharge sample is nearly 1/3 larger.	A larger sample provides higher levels of statistical confidence.
Consistent Sample	The previous methodology utilized two independent samples, while the current methodology utilizes a consistent sample (i.e., the same youth are in both the pre- and post-discharge samples).	A consistent sample of the same youth is used for both the pre-discharge and post-discharge samples. Enables the Division to "pin-point" more precisely when recidivist acts occur.

<sup>5</sup> To focus on more current data, recidivism rates for youth discharged in FY 2001-02 have not been analyzed and are not included in this or past reports.

<sup>6</sup> The increase in sample size for the post-discharge recidivism sample is more an influence of the reduced length of stay (LOS) on parole as a result of the lowering of the mandatory LOS from nine months to six months, rather than the change in sampling methodology. This change in policy resulted in a larger number of youth being discharged in FY 2003-04 than the Division usually experiences.

## ***A Note Regarding Statistical Significance***

Evaluation studies often reveal differences between groups. To this end this report uses two common statistical computations to identify differences in recidivism rates.

Most of the analyses in this report look at differences between categorical groups of youth. For example 'Gender' is a categorical measure. Youth can be in one of two groups, either male or female. To examine differences in categorical factors statisticians use a measure called Chi-Square.

Another statistical measure used in this report is an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). ANOVA's are used to determine differences in the means, or average amounts, of interval or ratio level data. This means that for each number in a series the scale is the same, or each number is exactly the same distance from the previous and subsequent number in the series. Age is a good example of ratio level or continuous data. From the time you are born your age continues to increase at a constant rate, and the difference between any two ages can be identified and measured to any fraction (ratio) of time. Prior adjudications is an example of interval level data. The difference between one and three prior adjudications is the same as the difference between 12 and 14 prior adjudications, but an individual could never have only a part (or fraction) of an adjudication. The numbers can only increase at regular whole intervals.

Differences identified between groups may be the result of some noteworthy impact, or they simply could have occurred because of random chance. Throughout this study, findings are included with their statistical significance. If it is highly unlikely that a finding (such as a difference between two groups) happened due to chance, it is said that the finding is statistically significant. Significance is measured through interpretation of a "p" value. Two "p" values are reported here ( $p < 0.05$  and  $p < 0.01$ ). A "p" value less than 0.05 would mean there is less than a 5% chance that the finding is random (due to chance, rather than the existence of a real relationship or cause). A "p" value less than 0.01 would mean there is less than a 1% chance that the finding is random. Social Science research traditionally accepts findings at the  $p < 0.05$  level or lower as being

sufficiently significant to accept those findings as valid and true. Throughout this report, the term “significant” is used only to describe findings that are significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level or lower.

## **DYC RECIDIVISM RATES FOR YOUTH DISCHARGED**

The findings contained in this report are based on an evaluation of youth discharged during the State of Colorado’s fiscal year (FY) 2003-04. The term ‘pre-discharge’ is used to identify new offenses filed during the period a youth is on commitment status. For purposes of this report, the period of commitment includes both residential out-of-home placement and non-residential parole. ‘Post-discharge’ recidivism refers to filings for new felony or misdemeanor offenses that occurred up to one year following discharge from the Division.

**Pre-Discharge Recidivism:** A filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense that occurred prior to discharge from the Division of Youth Corrections.

**Post-Discharge Recidivism:** A filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense that occurred within one year following discharge from the Division of Youth Corrections.

In an effort to provide more current recidivism data, and allow for better comparisons of pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism rates, DYC has modified the sample selection criteria for its annual recidivism report. Prior to 2004, samples for the pre-discharge sample were selected independently from the post-discharge sample. This report uses the same sample for both pre and post-discharge samples.

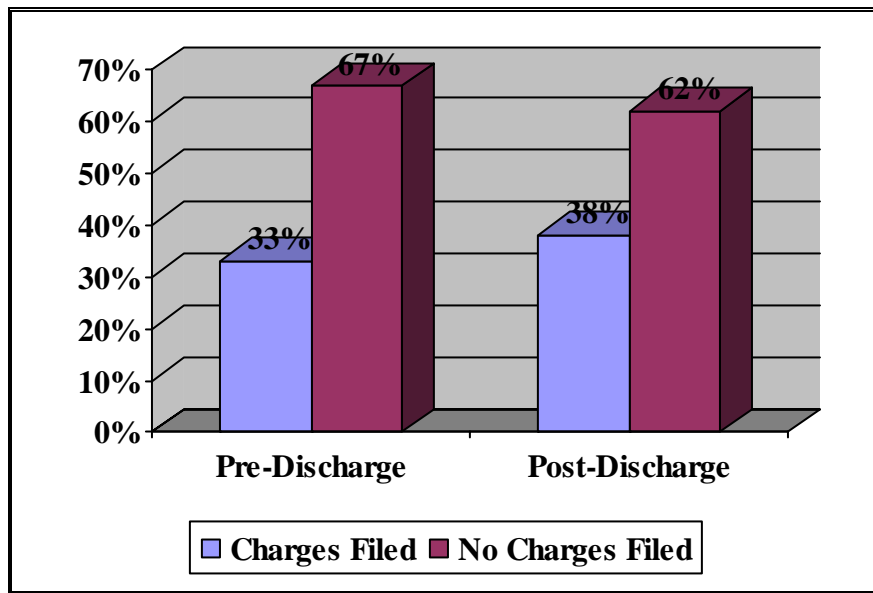
The sample consists of all youth discharged from commitment to the Division of Youth Corrections during FY 2003-04. Using the Colorado Judicial Department’s ICON database, filing data was collected for offenses that occurred during commitment (pre-discharge) and offenses that occurred within a one-year time period following each youth’s discharge date (post-discharge).



## **Overall Recidivism Rates for FY 2003-04**

The FY 2003-04 NYC recidivism sample consists of 1,003 youth discharged from commitment status between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004. Of the 1,003 youth, 332 (33.1%) had a new misdemeanor or felony offense filed prior to discharge, while 66.9% had no new filing prior to discharge. Follow-up information on new misdemeanor or felony offenses committed within one year following discharge from NYC, resulting in a court filing, and entered into the Judicial Department's ICON data system, was also collected on all 1,003 youth discharged in FY 2003-04. Thirty-eight percent of youth discharged received a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense within one year following discharge.

**Figure 1**  
**All Juveniles Discharged from July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004**

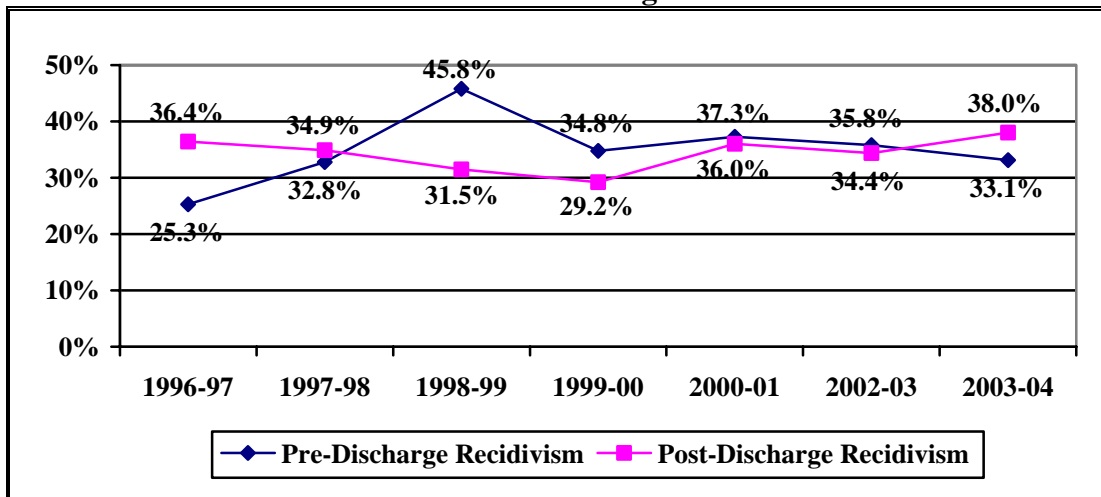


Recidivism results for this cohort show slightly higher post-discharge recidivism rates than pre-discharge recidivism rates. Youth can be represented in each category, meaning that the same youth could have committed an offense while they were on commitment status as well as after their discharge date.

## Trends in Recidivism

The following chart outlines trends in recidivism rates for the past seven DYC recidivism studies<sup>7</sup>. Pre-discharge recidivism rates have been on a slight downward trend over the past few studies, and post-discharge recidivism rates is now the highest it has been since the adaptation of the current definitions of recidivism.

**Figure 2**  
**Recidivism Rates**  
**Fiscal Years 1996-97 through FY2003-04<sup>8</sup>**



Trend data should be cautiously interpreted. It is important to remember that changes have been made with regard to study methodology, including sample selection and data collection techniques. Additionally, changes in DYC and the juvenile justice system in Colorado, including the reduction in treatment services available to delinquent, committed and paroled youth as a result of the State's budget issues, make it difficult to attribute change in recidivism rates to any specific cause. For example, mandatory parole legislation was instituted for all youth committed on or after January 1, 1997. Since that time the length of mandatory parole has been subsequently lowered from 12 months to 9 months, and the current length of time a youth must remain on parole status is 6 months. Treatment options that were available to committed youth in FY 1999-00 may not be the

<sup>7</sup> This is the seventh DYC recidivism study to include Colorado's common definitions for pre and post-discharge recidivism

<sup>8</sup> There is no fiscal year 2001-02 sample because of the shift in study methodology to study pre and post-discharge recidivism rates from the same study sample and increased focus on current recidivism data.

same as the treatment options available in FY2003-04. All of these factors could potentially influence recidivism results over time.

### **Charge Types**

The ‘types’ of charges for which youth receive new filings are presented in Table 1. Approximately 70% of the youth who received a filing for a new offense were filed upon for a felony offense<sup>9</sup>.

**Table 1**  
**Most Serious Filing (Offense Type)**  
**Juveniles Discharged From DYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

<b>Offense</b>	<b>Pre-Discharge Recidivism</b>		<b>Post-Discharge Recidivism</b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Person Felony	60	18.1%	61	16.0%
Property Felony	102	30.7%	111	29.1%
Drug Felony	25	7.5%	44	11.5%
Weapon Felony	3	0.9%	11	2.9%
Other <sup>7</sup> Felony	43	13.0%	32	8.4%
<b>Total Felony Filings</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>70.2%</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>68.0%</b>
Person Misdemeanor	42	12.7%	45	11.8%
Property Misdemeanor	24	7.2%	23	6.0%
Drug Misdemeanor	1	0.3%	0	0.0%
Weapon Misdemeanor	1	0.3%	5	1.3%
Other <sup>10</sup> Misdemeanor	31	9.3%	49	12.9%
<b>Total Misdemeanor Filings</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>29.8%</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>32.0%</b>
<b>Recidivism Totals</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Over the past few years the percentage of youth filed on for offenses that are considered to be ‘other’ offenses has grown. This may be a result of new laws and potentially stricter enforcement of certain offenses. For example, the legislation requiring the registration of sex offenders was recently amended<sup>11</sup>. This has resulted in both an increase in recidivism, especially post-discharge recidivism, and increases in the number of miscellaneous other

<sup>9</sup> District Attorney’s possess significant discretion in determining whether to file a felony or misdemeanor charge. Research has indicated that persons with previous criminal histories are more likely to receive a felony versus a misdemeanor filing.

<sup>10</sup> Other offenses include escapes, DUIs, failure to register as a sex offender, and other miscellaneous offenses.

<sup>11</sup> Section 18-3-412.5, C.R.S.

offenses. Seventeen youth in this year’s study (4.5%) are considered to have recidivated within one year of discharge solely for the charge of ‘failing to register as a sex offender.’ In prior years these youth would not have been included as re-offenders.

This example also illustrates how changes in the criminal justice system can influence recidivism rates. In years prior to the legislation mandating sex offender registration, these youth would not have been included as recidivates. With these offenses removed, the rate of post-discharge recidivism would be 36% instead of 38%. Similarly, over the past few years higher numbers of youth in the sample have been filed on for DUI charges. Whether this is a result of more police officers on the street, tougher enforcement, or more youth driving under the influence, the increases in DUI filings and the new sex offender registration requirements have clearly increased the rate of both pre and post-discharge recidivism.

### ***Filing v. Adjudication***

It is important to realize that not all filings resulted in a guilty finding. Table 2 shows that 86% of any charge filed upon for youth prior to discharge, and 82% for the post-discharge sample resulted in a guilty adjudication by the time of this printing.

**Table 2**  
**Guilty Adjudication**  
**Juveniles Discharged From NYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

<b>Finding</b>	<b>Pre-Discharge Recidivism</b>		<b>Post-Discharge Recidivism</b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Guilty Adjudication	280	85.6%	291	82.4%
No Finding of Guilt <sup>12</sup>	47	14.4%	62	17.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

(Pre-Discharge Missing N=5; Post-Discharge Missing N=28)

<sup>12</sup> No finding of guilt includes youth who received at least one filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense, however all charges were subsequently dismissed, received a deferred adjudication, or the youth was found not guilty on the filing.

If the definition of recidivism were made more restrictive, to only include guilty findings, the recidivism rates for both pre-discharge and post-discharge using this sample would be under 30% (28% pre-discharge and 29% post discharge). This illustrates the need to use common definitions of recidivism when comparing Colorado recidivism rates to other states or even within state agencies. If another state, that defined recidivism as a guilty adjudication for a felony or misdemeanor offense within one year of discharge, were to compare their rate of 29% post-discharge recidivism with DYCS's 38% rate, they might conclude that their juvenile justice treatment programming was more effective than Colorado's. In reality, if they were to use the same definitions and collection methods used by DYCS their recidivism rate could be the same or even higher than those reported here.

It is also important to note that 28 youth who received a filing for a new offense within one year following discharge have no finding associated with any of their charges. The change in sampling methodology, which allows the Division to report on more current recidivism data, also limits the ability to track the resulting findings for some of these cases. If a youth is discharged near the end of the fiscal year and is filed upon for a new offense near the end of the one year follow up period, the case may still be open. Other reasons that could result in a case that has not been closed include high-profile cases, filings on more serious charges, or if the youth has failed to appear for his or her court date.

## ***Demographics***

The following demographic data is presented to illustrate differences in recidivism rates by gender, ethnicity, and DYCS Management Region.

### **Gender**

Recidivism results in this section are presented with pre-discharge recidivism results (filings for a new misdemeanor or felony offense during commitment) in the top half of each table and post-discharge recidivism results (filings for new misdemeanor or felony offenses within one year following commitment discharge) in the bottom half.

Over the last several years the Division has made efforts to increase the quantity and quality of female-responsive treatment options, including the construction of a new facility for female offenders, the Betty K. Marler Youth Services Center on the campus of the Mount View Youth Services Center. Table 3 shows a breakdown of recidivism results by gender.

**Table 3**  
**Recidivism Rates by Gender**  
**Juveniles Discharged From NYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

Gender	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male	576	65.8%	299	34.2%	875	87.2%
Female	95	74.2%	33	25.8%	128	12.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>66.9%</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>33.1%</b>	<b>1,003</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Gender	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male	528	60.3%	347	39.7%	875	87.2%
Female	94	73.4%	34	26.6%	128	12.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>62.0%</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>38.0%</b>	<b>1,003</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

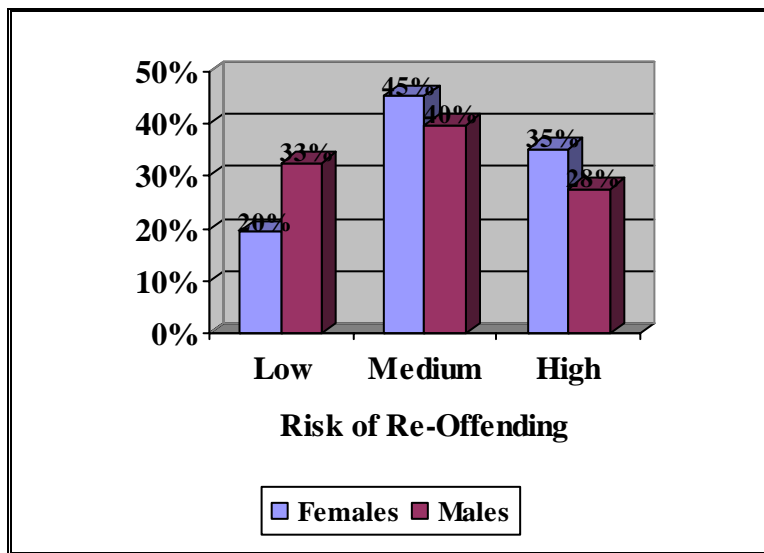
Eighty-seven percent of the FY 2003-04 discharge sample was male. Males (39.7%) were statistically more likely to receive a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense within one year following discharge (post-discharge) than females (Chi-Square=7.582;  $p < 0.01$ ). Although males also had higher rates of pre-discharge recidivism (34.2%) when compared with females (25.8%), the rates of filings for new offenses were not significantly different. Post-discharge recidivism rates for female offenders were a little higher than has been reported for this population in the past (13% to 22% over the past six studies). It will be important to keep monitoring the recidivism rates for this population to see if this is just a deviation from the norm for this year's sample.

The lower rates of recidivism for these youth, when compared with their male counterparts, could indicate differences in treatment effectiveness for males and females,

or it could indicate that girls committed to the Division have fewer risk factors and are at a lower risk of re-offending from the outset.

Figure 3 compares males and females on the overall risk of re-offending as determined during the assessment process when a youth is first committed to the Division. Risk of re-offending is measured using the risk score calculated by the objective Commitment Classification Instrument (CCI), one of the many assessment instruments used at the time of commitment. This risk score is a composite score based on factors such as the number of prior adjudications, offense type, prior placement history, and age at first adjudication.

**Figure 3**  
**Risk of Re-Offending by Gender**  
**Juveniles Discharged From NYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**



(N=988; Missing N=15)

Figure 3 shows that while there are differences in risk of re-offending by gender, the differences are not as would be expected, given the lower recidivism outcomes exhibited by the females in this sample. Significantly fewer females were assessed as low risk of re-offending when compared with males in the same discharge sample (Chi-Square=9.148;  $p < 0.05$ ).

## Primary Ethnicity

Table 4 shows differences in recidivism rates by primary ethnicity. The ‘other’ category includes Native-American and Asian-American youth, as well as those officially identified as “other.” These categories are not combined because of commonalities among them, but because the numbers of youth in each category are too small when taken alone to make valid statistical comparisons.

**Table 4**  
**Recidivism by Primary Ethnicity**  
**Juveniles Discharged From NYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

Ethnicity	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
African-American	84	62.7%	50	37.3%	134	13.4%
Hispanic	224	64.2%	125	35.8%	349	34.8%
White	337	69.6%	147	30.4%	484	48.3%
Other	26	72.2%	10	27.8%	36	3.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>66.9%</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>33.1%</b>	<b>1,003</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Ethnicity	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
African-American	76	56.7%	58	43.3%	134	13.4%
Hispanic	219	62.8%	130	37.2%	349	34.8%
White	300	62.0%	184	38.0%	484	48.3%
Other	27	75.0%	9	25.0%	36	3.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>62.0%</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>38.0%</b>	<b>1,003</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

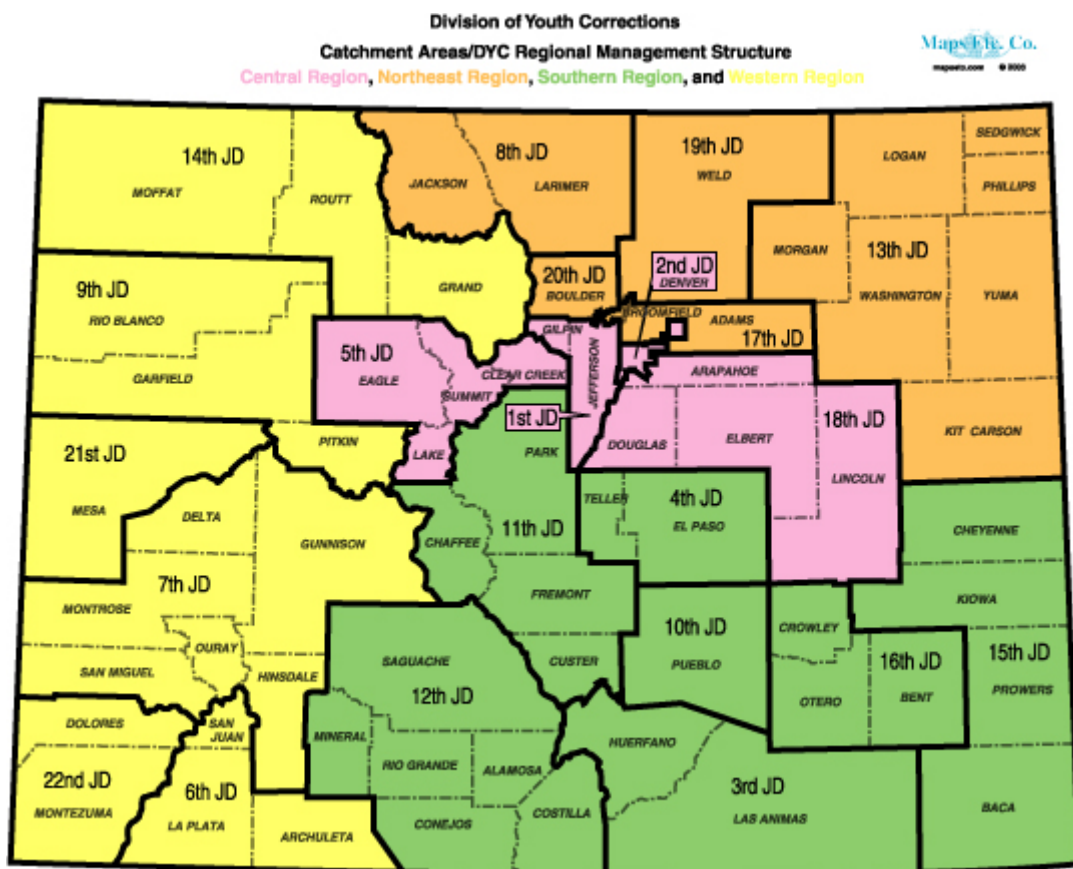
Although African-American youth in the sample have slightly higher rates of pre discharge (37.3%) and post-discharge (43.3%) recidivism than Hispanic or White youth, these differences were not statistically significant<sup>13</sup>. The lowest rates of recidivism were noted among youth identified as ‘Other’ (27.8% pre-discharge recidivism, 25.0% post-discharge recidivism). Past studies have found these youth to have higher rates of recidivism than the three largest ethnic groups; however, this category is also historically the smallest in number. Results for the youth in the ‘Other’ category should be interpreted cautiously because of the small sample size (N=36).

<sup>13</sup> No risk analysis was done on this population because there were no statistically significant differences found in the recidivism analyses



## DYC Management Region

DYC has a regionally based management structure, operating from four management regions in the state. The Central Region<sup>14</sup> consists of four judicial districts and includes the major counties of Denver, Jefferson, Arapahoe, and Douglas. The Northeast Region consists of five judicial districts and includes the major counties of Adams, Boulder, Larimer, and Weld. The Southern Region consists of seven judicial districts and includes the major counties of El Paso and Pueblo. The Western Region consists of the six judicial districts on the western slope including the major county of Mesa.



<sup>14</sup> In July 2003 the Central Region and the Denver Region merged to form one combined Central Region.

Table 5 shows a breakdown of new offenses filed by DYC management region.

**Table 5**  
**Recidivism by DYC Management Region**  
**Juveniles Discharged From DYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

Region	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Central	256	67.9%	121	32.1%	377	37.6%
Northeast	168	66.4%	85	33.6%	253	25.2%
Southern	148	61.4%	93	38.6%	241	24.0%
Western	99	75.0%	33	25.0%	132	13.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>66.9%</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>33.1%</b>	<b>1,003</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

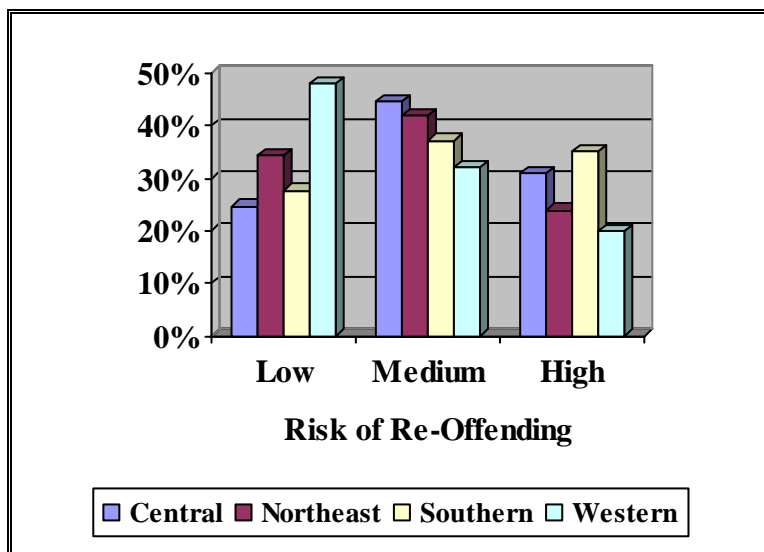
Region	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Central	248	65.8%	129	34.2%	377	37.6%
Northeast	151	59.7%	102	40.3%	253	25.2%
Southern	126	52.3%	115	47.7%	241	24.0%
Western	97	73.5%	35	26.5%	132	13.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>62.0%</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>38.0%</b>	<b>1,003</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

As in prior studies, the Western Region had the lowest recidivism rate of the DYC management regions. Twenty-five percent of youth in the Western region received a new filing for a misdemeanor or felony offense committed prior to discharge, and 26.5% received a filing within one year following discharge. The highest rates of pre and post-discharge recidivism were found in the Southern Region (38.6% pre-discharge recidivism, 47.7% post-discharge recidivism).

While the differences found in the rate of pre-discharge filings were not found to be statistically significant, differences in the rates of post-discharge recidivism were (Chi-square=19.918; p<.01). Youth in the Western Region were less likely to receive a filing for a new offense within one year of their discharge from DYC commitment than youth discharged from one of the other three DYC management regions, and youth in the Southern Region were more likely to receive a filing for a new offense than youth discharged from one of the other three regions.

There are a number of potential reasons why regional rates might differ from one another. Enforcement practices could be different and the decision to file on a particular offense is a discretionary practice by District Attorneys that might vary across the state. The amount of delinquent or criminal activity that may be accepted or tolerated in a given community may differ across regions. Additionally, there might be more treatment options or resources for youth in highly populated areas like the Central Region that are not as readily available to the other regions.

**Figure 4**  
**Risk of Re-Offending by Region**  
**Juveniles Discharged From DYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**



(N=988; Missing N=15)

A comparison of risk scores for these youth by region (Figure 4) shows that there may be a good reason why the Southern Region has the highest rates of recidivism in the State. The Southern Region also has a significantly higher percentage of youth with a high risk of re-offending (35%) based on the risk scores from the CCI assessment instrument. Similarly, the Western Region's low recidivism rates appear to be correlated with having the lowest percentage of high-risk youth (20%) committed in that region (Chi-Square=33.361;  $p < 0.01$ ).

The Central Region also shows a fairly high percentage of youth with medium to high risk of re-offending (75%); the combined percentage is even higher than the Southern Region (72%), however, the Central Region's recidivism rates are below the State average.

## ***Commitment***

Commitment data presented in this section illustrates differences in recidivism rates by type of commitment sentence, offense category, and various indicators of successful treatment. Additionally, post-discharge recidivism rates are compared using two indicators of successful parole completion. It would be counter-intuitive to analyze these for pre-discharge recidivism, because the offense would have occurred prior to the youth's completion of their parole sentence.

## **Commitment Sentence Type**

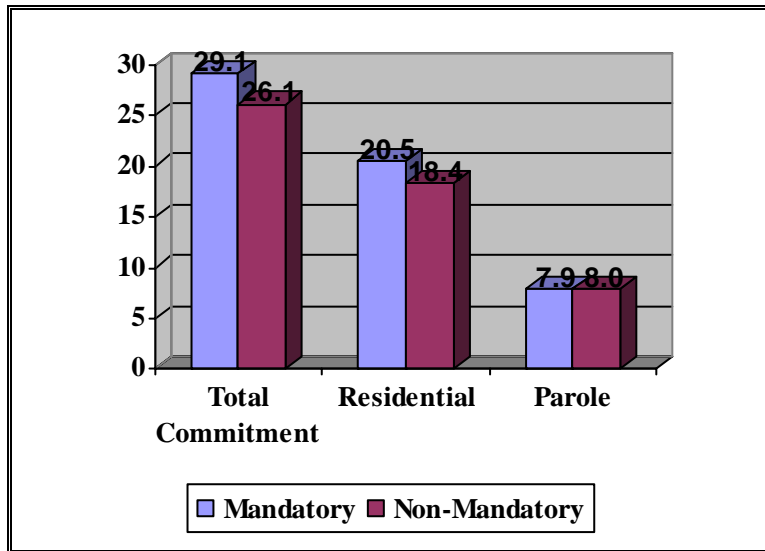
Most youth sentenced to NYC commitment receive a non-mandatory sentence length that varies from zero to twenty-four months. Youth with non-mandatory sentences may be referred for Juvenile Parole Board consideration prior to serving their maximum sentence length. Almost three quarters (73.4%) of the youth discharged in FY 2003-04 were committed under non-mandatory sentences (N=736). Conversely, there were 267 youth who were required to serve a minimum length of stay (LOS) in residential treatment as determined by the court. In rare instances, the minimum LOS could be up to a seven-year commitment sentence for those youth adjudicated on an aggravated mandatory sentence.

Youth serving mandatory sentences have a significantly longer length of stay (average of 29.1 months, including residential placements and parole supervision) than youth serving non-mandatory sentences (average of 26.1 months)<sup>15</sup>. Because of the longer lengths of stay for youth serving mandatory sentences, it is expected that a greater percentage of these youth would receive a new filing prior to discharge from NYC (pre-discharge recidivism), simply because of the greater length of time at risk.

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<sup>15</sup> ANOVA=20.386; p<0.01.

**Figure 5**  
**Length of Stay by Commitment Sentence Type**  
**Juveniles Discharged From NYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**



(N=1,003)

Figure 5 shows, however, no statistical differences between the amounts of time these groups spent on parole status, which is when the majority of pre-discharge offenses occurred (see Table 6). The average LOS on parole for mandatory sentences was 7.9 months, compared with 8.0 months for youth who received non-mandatory sentences. The rates of pre-discharge recidivism for these two groups were almost identical (33.2% for non-mandatory sentences, and 33.0% for mandatory offenses). Post-discharge recidivism rates for youth were also not significantly different by commitment sentence type. Youth serving mandatory sentences had a slightly lower rate of filings for new felony or misdemeanor offenses (37.1%) than youth serving non-mandatory sentences (38.3%).

## Mandatory Parole

Over 80% of youth that received a filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense prior to discharge from the Division committed at least one of their offenses while on parole status (see Table 6). Sixteen youth (5%) received new filings for multiple offenses that occurred both prior to parole and while on parole supervision in the community. These findings highlight one of the biggest changes to the juvenile justice system in regards to influence on pre-discharge recidivism rates.

**Table 6**  
**Commitment Status of Youth at the Time a Recidivist Act Occurred**  
**Pre-Discharge Filings for Juveniles Discharged From NYC between**  
**July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
New Offenses Pre-Parole Only	60	18.1%
New Offenses On Parole Status Only	256	77.1%
New Offenses Pre-Parole and on Parole Status	16	4.8%
<b>Pre-Discharge Recidivism Totals</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Prior to mandatory parole legislation, almost half of the youth committed to NYC spent their entire commitment sentence in residential placements. While a required period of parole in non-residential settings may facilitate the successful reintegration of the juvenile back into the community, thus potentially reducing rates of post-discharge recidivism, it may also artificially inflate pre-discharge recidivism rates because of the increased opportunities to offend that are not available to youth in a residential placement. All 1,003 youth in this sample were required to serve at least 6 months of parole under mandatory parole legislation. The average length of stay (LOS) on parole for the sample was 8.0 months. Over the past three years, non-residential parole services were reduced 74% because of State budget constraints. Given that most pre-discharge recidivism filings were for offenses committed while a youth was on parole status, better service delivery, supervision, and treatment during parole may help to lower recidivism rates in the future.

The Division has identified transition services as a priority and is attempting to increase the resources available to youth on parole. This fiscal year the State Legislature has allowed DYC some flexibility to spend up to 10% of its residential funding on transition services for youth returning to the community. The Division has identified a sample of youth who might benefit from increased services on parole and intends to begin using the funding flexibility allowed by the Legislature to increase transition services to youth in FY 2006-07.

### Commitment Offense Type

The Colorado TRAILS data system includes information on the most serious offense for which youth are committed, as it is recorded on the juvenile's mittimus. These offenses have been grouped into general types of commitment offenses for purposes of analyses. Table 7 presents a breakdown of original commitment offense-type by recidivism outcomes.

**Table 7**  
**Recidivism by Original Committing Offense Type**  
**Juveniles Discharged From DYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

Offense Type	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Person Offenses	256	69.6%	112	30.4%	368	39.7%
Property Offenses	280	65.4%	148	34.6%	428	46.2%
Drug Offenses	28	59.6%	19	40.4%	47	5.1%
Weapon Offenses	12	63.2%	7	36.8%	19	2.0%
Other <sup>16</sup> Offenses	43	66.2%	22	33.8%	65	7.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>66.8%</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>33.2%</b>	<b>927</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Offense Type	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Person Offenses	224	60.9%	144	39.1%	368	39.7%
Property Offenses	274	64.0%	154	36.0%	428	46.2%
Drug Offenses	27	57.4%	20	42.6%	47	5.1%
Weapon Offenses	10	52.6%	9	47.4%	19	2.0%
Other <sup>11</sup> Offenses	39	60.0%	26	40.0%	65	7.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>61.9%</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>38.1%</b>	<b>927</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

(Missing Data: N=76)

<sup>16</sup> Includes escapes, DUIs, failure to register as a sex offender, and other miscellaneous offenses.

Differences in the recidivism rates shown by offense type are not statistically significant. The highest rate of pre-release recidivism was seen in youth with an original charge for a drug offense (40.4%). The highest rates of post-release recidivism occurred when the youth was committed for a weapons offense (47.4%). There were also no differences found when comparing felony offenses with misdemeanor offenses.

### **Number of Escapes**

The NYC TRAILS database tracks the number of times a committed youth escapes from placement during commitment. NYC policy defines an escapee as a juvenile who has left a facility's custody without proper authorization, or a juvenile who has not returned to a facility within four hours of the prescribed time from any authorized leave.

As expected, youth with more escapes were more likely to have received a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense both prior to discharge from NYC and within one year following discharge from NYC commitment<sup>17</sup>.

Pre-release recidivism rates were investigated further because youth who escape from placement are often charged with an 'escape' offense that may be their only pre-discharge filing. Not all youth who are reported as escapees are filed upon, since many escapes are simply youth who returned to the treatment program on their own, yet still long enough after their prescribed return time to count as an escape under NYC policy. Upon further review, 90% of youth with an escape recorded in TRAILS that recidivated prior to discharge received filings for an offense that was not an escape from custody placement.

### **Number of Recommitments**

The NYC TRAILS data system also tracks the number of times a committed youth receives an additional commitment sentence while they are still sentenced to NYC. Since all recommitments are the product of another charge being filed against the youth, either

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<sup>17</sup> Pre-discharge (ANOVA=66.959; p<0.01); Post-discharge (ANOVA=14.942; p<0.01).



before<sup>18</sup> or during their commitment, it is expected that recommitted youth will have higher rates of pre-discharge recidivism than youth that have no commitments.

**TABLE 8**  
**Recidivism by Number of Reccommitments**  
**Juveniles Discharged From NYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

Number of Reccommitments	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
None	535	70.3%	226	29.7%	761	75.9%
One	113	60.4%	74	39.6%	187	18.6%
Two or More	23	41.8%	32	58.2%	55	5.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>66.9%</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>33.1%</b>	<b>1,003</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Number of Reccommitments	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
None	479	62.9%	282	37.1%	761	75.9%
One	111	59.4%	76	40.6%	187	18.6%
Two or More	32	58.2%	23	41.8%	55	5.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>62.0%</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>38.0%</b>	<b>1,003</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The majority of youth committed to NYC never receive a recommitment sentence (76%). Nonetheless, the pre-discharge recidivism rate for recommitted youth is higher than the rate for youth that do not have any commitments (Chi-Square=23.140; p<0.01). Although youth with commitments also had higher rates of post-discharge recidivism than youth with no commitments, these results were not statistically significant.

**Parole Adjustment at Time of Discharge (Post-discharge only)**

When a youth is discharged from NYC they receive a parole adjustment rating. This rating is used to describe a youth's performance while on parole transitioning back into the community, and is used as an outcome measure for NYC that reflects the youth's ability to adapt to life in a community setting. It is expected that youth who successfully reintegrate into community settings would be less likely to receive a new filing for a post-discharge offense than youth who received a less than satisfactory adjustment rating.

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<sup>18</sup> A youth could receive a recommitment for an offense that occurred prior to their current commitment date. A recommitment occurs whenever a youth currently serving a commitment sentence is committed to NYC for another offense, regardless of the date of the offense.

Table 9 shows post-discharge recidivism rates<sup>19</sup> by parole adjustment rating at the time of discharge from NYC.

**Table 9**  
**Post-Discharge Recidivism by Parole Adjustment Rating at Discharge**  
**Juveniles Discharged From NYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

Parole Adjustment at Discharge	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Poor/Unsatisfactory	189	54.5%	158	45.5%	347	35.3%
Satisfactory/Excellent	406	66.3%	206	33.7%	612	62.3%
Unknown	14	60.9%	9	39.1%	23	2.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>609</b>	<b>62.0%</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>38.0%</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

(Missing Data: N=21)

Over sixty percent of discharged youth received a satisfactory or better parole adjustment rating at the time of discharge from the Division of Youth Corrections. Youth who received a poor or unsatisfactory parole adjustment rating were more likely to have received a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense post-discharge (45.5%) than youth who received a satisfactory or better rating (33.7%) (Chi-Square=13.265; p<0.01). This finding suggests that parole officers (client managers) are accurately identifying those youth who are having difficulty transitioning to the community. These youth are more likely to receive a new filing within one year following their discharge date. This finding also suggests that some youth could benefit from a longer time on parole. Client managers may petition the Juvenile Parole Board for an extension order for youth who are having trouble during parole for specified committing offenses<sup>20</sup>.

### **Job/School Status at Time of Discharge**

This study also investigated recidivism rates for youth that were gainfully employed or enrolled in school at the time of parole discharge, another measure of successful reintegration into the community. It is expected that youth who were going to school or employed at the time of discharge from NYC would have lower rates of recidivism than

<sup>19</sup> Pre-discharge recidivism rates were not analyzed for this factor because parole adjustments are not available until the youth is discharged from NYC commitment status.

<sup>20</sup> Section 19-2-1002, C.R.S.

youth that were not in school or employed. Post-discharge recidivism rates<sup>21</sup> are shown in the table below.

**Table 10**  
**Post-Discharge Recidivism by Job/School Status at Discharge**  
**Juveniles Discharged From NYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

Job/School Status at Discharge	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not Employed or Attending School	146	56.2%	114	43.8%	260	27.7%
Employed or in School at Time of Discharge	439	64.6%	241	35.4%	680	72.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>62.2%</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>37.8%</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

(Missing Data: N=63)

As expected, youth that were employed or attending school at the time of discharge were less likely to have received a filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense within one year following discharge (Chi-Square=5.653; p<0.05). This finding validates the Division’s ongoing efforts to promote educational and vocational opportunities for committed youth.

### ***Risk of Re-Offending***

During the first thirty days of commitment to NYC, youth undergo a battery of assessments to determine placement needs, treatment needs, and to evaluate the risk the youth poses to himself (i.e. suicide risk) and the community (i.e. public safety). This recidivism study examined a number of factors which have been shown to increase the risk of re-offending, including number of prior out-of home placements, number of prior detention admissions, number of prior adjudications, age at first adjudication, number of prior commitments, and risk scores (for re-offending).

This section will show the significant findings for the risk factors studied compared to pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism results.

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<sup>21</sup> Pre-discharge recidivism rates were not analyzed for this factor because employment and school status at the time of discharge are not known prior to the youth being discharged from NYC commitment status.

## **Prior Out-of-Home Placements**

Out-of-home placements can include inpatient mental health or substance abuse treatment facilities or Child Welfare placements, as well as any prior NYC placements. In prior recidivism studies, youth with more prior out-of-home placements were found to have higher rates of recidivism prior to discharge as well as within one year following discharge.

In this year's study, analyses of variance on prior placement history shows that youth who received a pre-discharge filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense had, on average a similar number of prior placements (2.8) as youth that did not receive a new filing (2.4 prior placements). The post release recidivism comparisons were similar; youth that did receive a filing for a new offense within a year of discharge had 2.7 prior placements, compared with 2.5 for youth that did not recidivate after their discharge from NYC.

Although these results are slightly higher for youth that recidivated, the results were not statistically significant.

## **Prior Detention Admissions**

The number of detention admissions prior to commitment for this sample ranged from zero to twenty-three prior detention admissions. On average, all committed youth discharged in FY 2002-03 had 4.9 detention admissions prior to their commitment. Statistically, youth who received a filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense, both prior to discharge and within one year following discharge, were more likely to also have had more detention admissions than youth who did not receive a filing. These results were significant at the  $p < 0.01$  significance level.

Although youth who received a new filing during their commitment or within one year following discharge were more likely to have more detention admissions than youth who did not recidivate, this finding is not necessarily meaningful. Results that are not meaningful may provide some initial insight into differences between groups, but should not necessarily dictate changes in policy or decision-making processes.

A categorical look at the number of detention admissions by pre-discharge recidivism (see Table 11) shows that only 22.5% of youth with less than three prior detention admissions (N=236) received a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense prior to discharge. Youth with three or more detention admissions (N=767) were much more likely to receive a filing for a pre-discharge offense (Chi-Square=10.500; p<0.01). Thirty-six percent of youth with three or more detention admissions received a new filing prior to the conclusion of their commitment sentence. Although a similar pattern was seen in the post-discharge recidivism analysis (32.6% of youth with less than two detention admissions recidivated after discharge compared with 39.6 percent with two or more admissions), those results were not statistically significant.

**Table 11**  
**Recidivism by Number of Detention Admissions**  
**Juveniles Discharged From NYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

Number of Detention Admits	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Zero to Two	183	77.5%	53	22.5%	236	23.5%
Three or More	488	63.6%	279	36.4%	767	76.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>66.9%</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>33.1%</b>	<b>1,003</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Number of Detention Admits	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Zero to Two	159	67.4%	77	32.6%	236	23.5%
Three or More	463	60.4%	304	39.6%	767	76.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>62.0%</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>38.0%</b>	<b>1,003</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Using these results, a decision maker in a facility could identify a youth with four prior detention admissions (i.e. more than two) as being at greater risk of committing another delinquent act while in placement.**

## Prior Adjudications

Table 12 shows pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism rates by the number of prior adjudications for youth discharged in FY 2003-04. Since the number of prior adjudications is a measure of previous involvement in the juvenile justice system, it is expected that youth with more prior adjudications would have higher recidivism rates.

**Table 12**  
**Recidivism by Number of Prior Adjudications**  
**Juveniles Discharged From NYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

Number of Prior Adjudications	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
None	184	74.2%	64	25.8%	248	24.7%
One	198	68.0%	93	32.0%	291	29.0%
Two or more	289	62.3%	175	37.7%	464	46.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>66.9%</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>33.1%</b>	<b>1,003</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Number of Prior Adjudications	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
None	156	62.9%	92	37.1%	248	24.7%
One	183	62.9%	108	37.1%	291	29.0%
Two or more	283	61.0%	181	39.0%	464	46.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>62.0%</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>38.0%</b>	<b>1,003</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Forty-six percent of the youth discharged in FY 2003-04 had two or more delinquency adjudications before their commitment to the Division of Youth Corrections. While the pattern of pre-discharge recidivism rates shows the expected result, youth with no prior adjudications were less likely to receive a new filing prior to discharge (Chi-Square=10.592;  $p < 0.01$ ), post-discharge recidivism rates were fairly stable across groups.

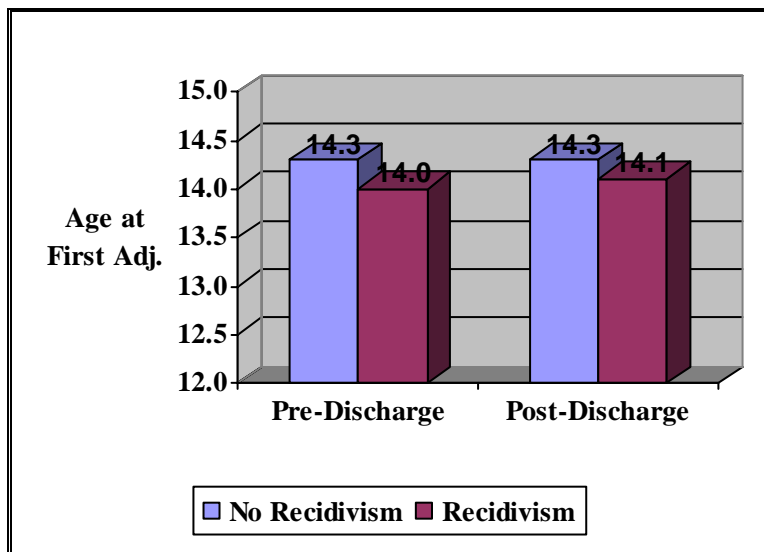
The absence of any group variance for post-discharge results, when compared with the significant findings for the pre-discharge analyses, suggests that something has happened to this sample of youth that has mitigated this risk factor for recidivism during or after their commitment. This finding potentially indicates some level of treatment success with this cohort of youth. Juvenile justice research shows an elevated risk of future offending

for youth with a history of delinquent activity (Andrews and Bonta p. 165)<sup>22</sup>. The pre-discharge recidivism results show that this is still true for this sample, at least while they are still in commitment (prior to the completion of their treatment programs). However, this risk factor is no longer applicable after these same youth have left DYC commitment programs. Youth with multiple prior adjudications are re-offending after discharge at approximately the same rate as youth that had not been adjudicated for any delinquent acts prior to this commitment.

### Age at First Adjudication

Another primary risk factor for recidivism is the age at the time of the youth's first adjudication. Juvenile justice research has shown that youth who become involved with the criminal justice system at younger ages are more likely to recidivate than youth who are older at the time of their first contact with the system (Andrews and Bonta p. 165)<sup>23</sup>. The average age at time of first adjudication is shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6**  
**Age at First Adjudication**  
**Juveniles Discharged From DYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**



(N=1,003)

<sup>22</sup> Andrews, D.A., and Bonta, J. (1994). *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*. Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing Co.

<sup>23</sup> Andrews, D.A., and Bonta, J. (1994). *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*. Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing Co.

The results of this analysis show that youth who received a filing for a new offense prior to discharge and following discharge were both slightly younger at the time of their first adjudication than the group of youth that did not recidivate. Both of these analyses yielded statistically significant differences in the mean age at the time of first adjudication (pre-discharge  $p < 0.01$ , post-discharge  $p < 0.05$ ).

### Assessed Risk Score

The objective Commitment Classification Instrument (CCI) is one of the many assessment instruments used at the time of commitment. The CCI calculates placement needs using the combined risk score and severity of the offense for which the youth was committed. The risk score is a composite score based on factors such as the number of prior adjudications, offense type, prior placement history, and age at first adjudication.

**Table 13**  
**Recidivism by Assessed Risk Score**  
**Juveniles Discharged From NYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

Risk of Re-offending	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Low	223	73.1%	82	26.9%	305	30.9%
Medium	264	66.0%	136	34.0%	400	40.5%
High	176	62.2%	107	37.8%	283	28.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>663</b>	<b>67.1%</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>32.9%</b>	<b>988</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Risk of Re-offending	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Low	199	65.2%	106	34.8%	305	30.9%
Medium	234	58.5%	166	41.5%	400	40.5%
High	181	64.0%	102	36.0%	283	28.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>62.1%</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>37.9%</b>	<b>988</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

(Missing Data: N=15)

The pre-discharge recidivism results presented in Table 13 appear to validate the risk scores obtained by the CCI. Youth assessed as having a low risk of re-offense were significantly less likely to receive a new filing for an offense prior to discharge (26.9%) when compared with youth assessed at the medium (34.0%) or high (47.8%) risk levels (Chi-Square=8.308;  $p < 0.05$ ).



The post-discharge recidivism analysis shows no statistical difference between youth in the three risk groups. Even considering that the differences found were not statistically significant it would be expected that youth who were assessed at a high-risk for future offending would have the highest rates of post-discharge recidivism. However, youth in the high risk group recidivated at approximately the same rate as youth in the low risk group. The highest rates of post-discharge recidivism were seen in the youth assessed at a medium risk for re-offending.

The risk factors that were evident at the time of commitment, when the CCI is currently administered, were factors that predicted pre-discharge recidivism, but these same youth showed no difference in post-discharge recidivism by initial risk score. These results, combined with the results of the analysis on number of prior adjudications, continue to lend support to the theory that treatment during commitment, or some other intervening act, is successfully mitigating these risk factors for re-offending.

Additionally, the lack of significant findings in these post-discharge analyses also indicates a need for re-assessment of youth. Treatment plans based upon assessment tools administered during the first month of commitment may no longer be accurate after six months or a year of commitment. Re-assessment at regular intervals could help the Division more effectively modify treatment plans as the youth is progressing through the system, and may eventually positively influence the Division's overall recidivism rates. The Division is currently evaluating other objective classification instruments that could support re-assessment of youth at regular intervals during commitment.

## Comparison of Pre-Discharge and Post-Discharge Recidivism Rates

The shift in the sampling methodology for this report allows comparisons of post-discharge recidivism rates by pre-discharge recidivism. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 14.

**Table 14**  
**Post-Discharge Recidivism by Pre-Discharge Recidivism**  
**Juveniles Discharged From NYC Between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No Pre-Discharge Recidivism	456	68.0%	215	32.0%	671	66.9%
Pre-Discharge Recidivism	166	50.0%	166	50.0%	332	33.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>62.0%</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>38.0%</b>	<b>1,003</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

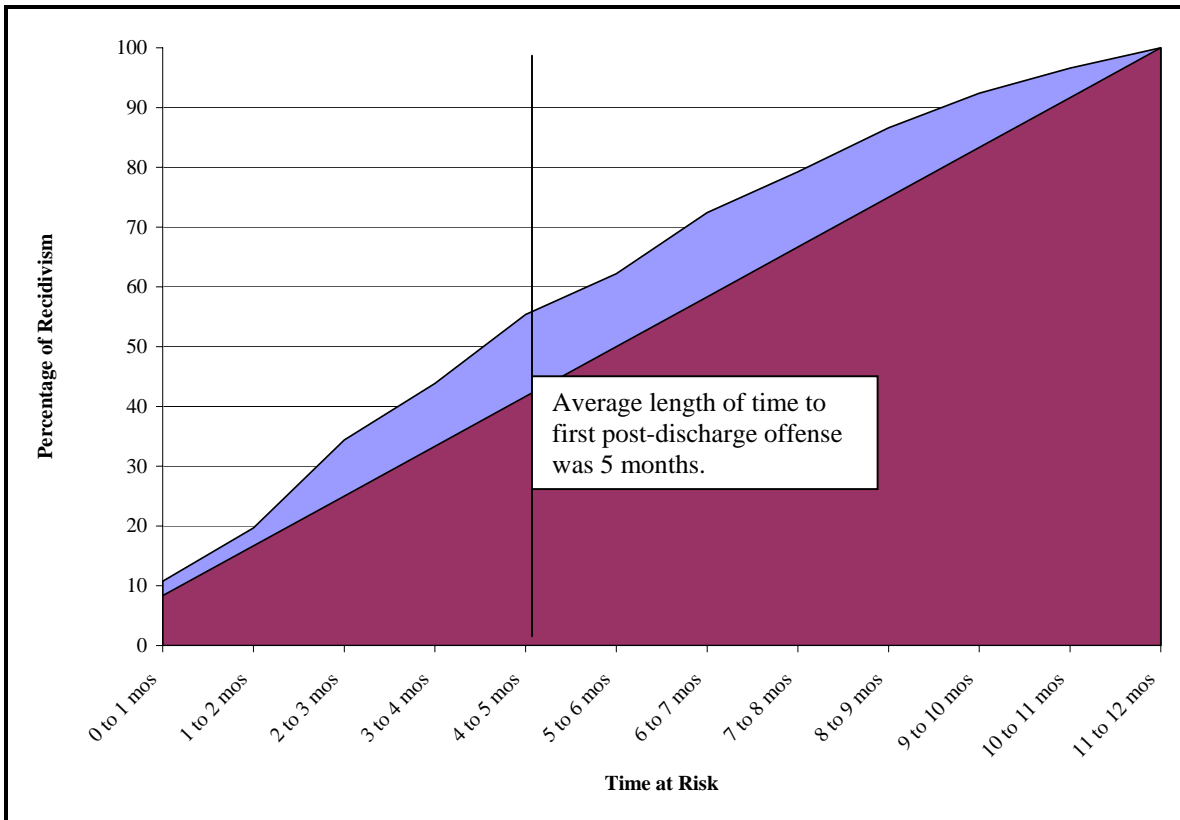
Youth in the sample who received a new filing during their commitment were, as expected, also more likely to have recidivated following discharge (Chi-Square=29.650;  $p < 0.01$ ). While this is not surprising, it is interesting to note that 50% of the youth who received a filing for a new offense during commitment did not receive a new filing within a year following discharge.

These findings may be an artifact of the supervision that a youth receives while in residential placement and while on parole, and the likelihood that they will be caught. However, it may also reflect the successful treatment and reintegration back into their communities of youth who had previously been filed upon for a pre-discharge offense. One possible explanation is the influence of case planning and the provision of appropriate surveillance and treatment services. To the extent that these services ameliorate risk factors and augment protective factors, the probability of re-offense will be markedly different for a youth upon discharge as compared to when that youth was originally committed.

## Time to First Post-Discharge Offense

An analysis of time to first offense shows that 62.2% of youth that received a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense committed that offense within the first 6 months after their discharge date. Almost 80% committed their first offense within 9 months following discharge. The average amount of time following discharge date to first offense that a youth received a filing for was 5 months (151 days). Half of the youth that received a post-discharge filing for a new offense received their first filing for an offense that happened within 142 days (4.7 months) following discharge.

**Figure 7**  
**Time to First Post-Discharge Offense (Survival Analysis)**  
**Juveniles Discharged from NYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**



The red area in Figure 7 shows a linear growth rate in recidivism over one year for the sample. If youth were to recidivate at an equal rate from the day they are discharged to the last day of the follow up period that is what it would look like graphically. The blue area shows the actual growth in recidivism from the day of discharge through one year

following discharge. This analysis shows that youth in this sample appear to recidivate approximately as expected for the first two months following discharge. The rate of growth is accelerated from two months to three months and then grows at a fairly even rate up to approximately nine months after their discharge date. The rate of growth slows down after this time, although it does continue to grow.

**Figure 8**  
**Survival Analysis/Variation from Linear Growth Line**  
**Juveniles Discharged from NYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

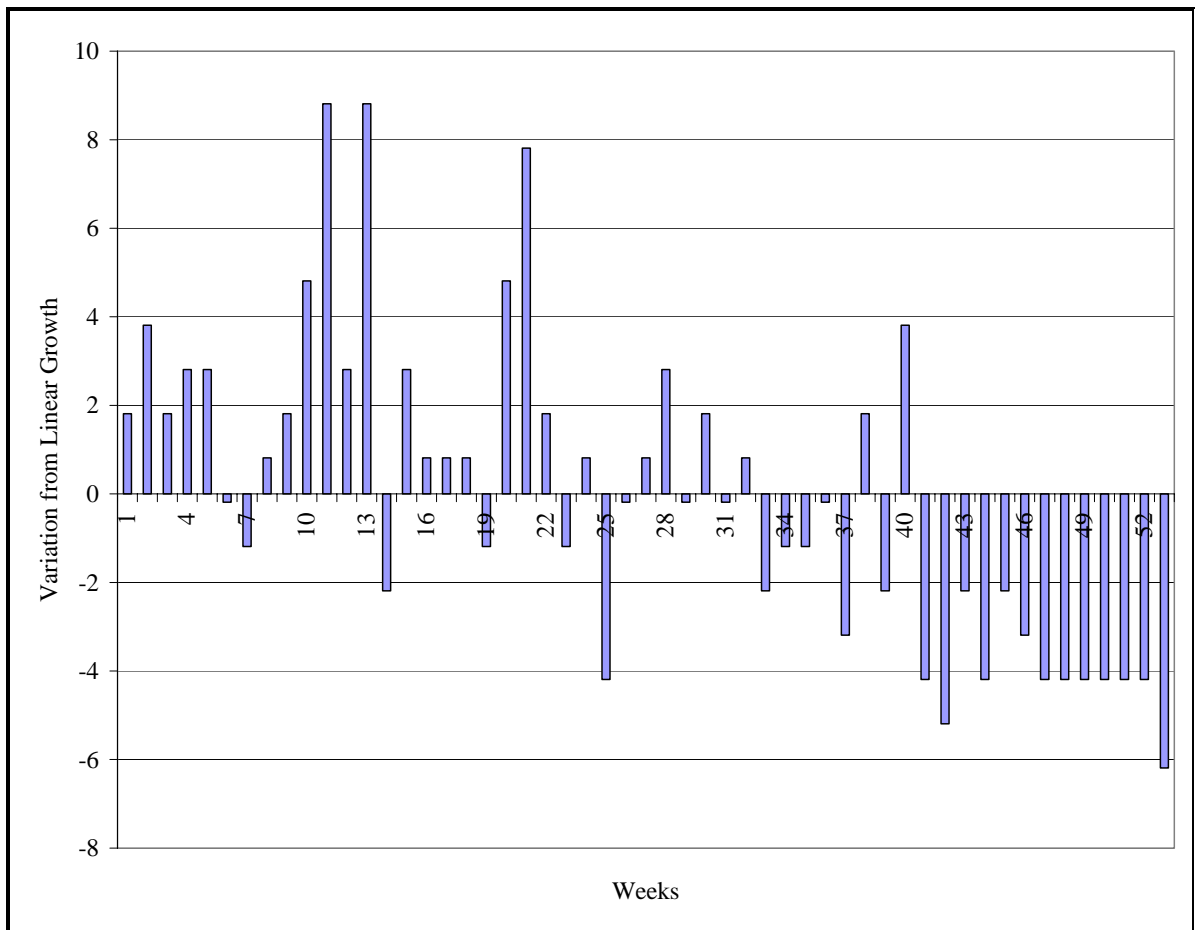


Figure 8 shows the variation in growth from the linear growth line shown in Figure 7 (red area). The bars show variation from the expected growth. Any number above “0” shows the number of youth above the average weekly new recidivates. A number below “0” is the number of youth below the weekly average. Through the first 40 weeks of the follow-up period almost every week has more new post-discharge offenders than would be

expected given the average weekly growth. However, starting in week 41 the actual growth is below the average, illustrating the reduction in the number of youth committing their first offense after this time.

These analyses indicate that the majority of growth in the recidivist population (youth who receive filings for new offenses) occurs within the first nine months following discharge. After nine months the rate of growth begins to decline. Therefore, it is not expected that if the follow-up time were extended beyond one year that recidivism rates would continue to increase significantly.

## **THE RIDGE VIEW SAMPLE**

The Division's annual recidivism report has not traditionally reported on outcomes for individual programs or facilities; however, the Ridge View Youth Services Center is a unique treatment option for eligible youth. Most youth committed to DYC experience multiple placements, throughout their commitment. Therefore, collection of recidivism outcomes, while useful for understanding the rate of re-offending during the commitment period and monitoring re-offending behaviors by specific sub-populations, is not generally useful in measuring the performance of individual programs.

However, the Ridge View program is intended as a primary placement option for youth and youth placed in Ridge View Youth Services Center tend to have longer lengths of stay in their initial placement (RVYSC) and are often paroled directly from Ridge View to the community. Since the youth that are placed at the Ridge View facility tend to have fewer alternative treatment programs that could influence re-offending behaviors it is appropriate to report outcome measures for this facility that may not be as meaningful if the analyses were conducted for other DYC treatment programs.

This next section will look at a sub-sample of youth that were discharged from the Division in FY 2003-04. These are youth who attended the Ridge View Youth Services Center (RVYSC) for at least a ninety day length of stay during their commitment. This

section will provide a program description for Ridge View and also compare the Ridge View sample with a control group of males from the FY 2003-04 discharge sample that did not attend RVYSC. Finally, some recidivism outcome measures will be reported for the youth who were treated at the Ridge View Youth Services Center.

## ***Program Description***

### **Historical Background**

During the 1997 Legislative Session, the General Assembly authorized the Division of Youth Corrections to contract for the design, construction and operation of a 500-bed juvenile facility in the Denver metro area. The goal of the project was to create an academically driven program, within a state-of-the art facility, to serve committed male offenders. The project was designed to use a positive-peer-culture and a staff-supervised environment for security, rather than a traditional fenced-in structure. This was to emphasize a campus environment and to stress the overall academic mission of the program.

The original impetus for the Ridge View project was a sharp increase in the need for commitment beds, which often resulted in placement of youth in out-of-state facilities. DYC determined that the target population for such a facility would be best managed in the previously described staff-supervised environment. The primary goals stated in the original project description were “gaining control of anti-social behavior, developing new pro-social behavior, and assuring the development of academic, vocational, social and life skills in committed youth.”

The size of the facility, up to 500 beds, dictated that the program would have to serve a large proportion of the youth being committed to DYC. For this reason, the original concept of the facility called for the design of a campus and a program for male committed youth, representing a moderate level security risk, when compared to the DYC male population as a whole. As a result, it was acknowledged that the program would not be appropriate for all DYC youth; particularly those requiring treatment for sexual

offenses, severe mental health needs, or substance abuse issues, or those requiring a more secure placement.

DYC used the “design, build, and operate” model so that the private contractor awarded the bid to operate this model program could participate actively in the design and construction processes. This ensured that the resulting design and construction of the facility was tailored to specific program needs. Additionally, the State gained the advantage of using private sector construction timeframes and costs. While this model did reduce the flexibility of the resulting facility to some extent, it also maximized the functionality of its intended use.

### **The Ridge View Program**

The Rite of Passage organization operates the Ridge View Youth Services Center Program under the terms of a contract with the Division, and within the framework of a positive-peer-culture. This framework recognizes the strengths and potential of all youth in the program, and relies on the strong peer normative environment as a mechanism for control and positive influences on youth behavior. The program focuses on long-term behavior change in youth, rather than just immediate control while in the facility. It uses peer group influence, staff role modeling, and skill development as the primary mechanisms to affect such change. To ensure compliance with state standards for correctional care, DYC staff closely monitors program operations.

The focus of the Ridge View program is skill building through academics, vocational training, and athletics, combined with positive peer and staff interactions and counseling opportunities. A unique feature of the program is that the facility holds a charter with Denver Public Schools (DPS), allowing students to graduate with a diploma from a DPS high school, rather than an alternative school. In addition, Ridge View students who have earned sufficient privileges can compete with other area high schools in various sports.

During their stay at Ridge View, youth may progress through four status levels. Youth begin their stay as interns during the orientation process, during which time they are

assigned a student mentor. Once a student has successfully completed their status as interns, they become “RAM” (the mascot of Ridge View) pledges. In order to successfully pledge to RAM status, youth must actively participate in the program, complete their treatment contract, interact with their group (which includes presenting a “life story”), complete 25 hours of community service, consistently model appropriate appearance and behavior, and complete an initial draft of their graduation plan. The youth’s peer group and staff must agree to award a youth’s RAM status.

To maintain RAM status and to be eligible for Varsity RAM status, youth must maintain a 2.5 GPA with no failing grades, mentor intern students, complete 100 hours of community service, remain actively involved in the program and act as positive role models for their peers. In addition, youth must actively work on treatment issues identified in the individual case plan, participate in a drug and alcohol counseling program, enroll in a leadership program, complete a Thesis assignment, solidify a graduation plan, and give a VALIDATE speech to the entire student body. Once they complete these requirements, youth may move to Varsity RAM status if they continue to exhibit strong leadership skills and are elected by existing Varsity members.

The core of individual youth case plans is the VALIDATE model, with each letter representing an area every student must work on:

<b>V</b>	- Vocational Training
<b>A</b>	- Athletics
<b>L</b>	- Life Skills
<b>I</b>	- Individual Graduation Plan
<b>D</b>	- Demonstrated Behavioral Changes
<b>A</b>	- Aftercare
<b>T</b>	- Treatment
<b>E</b>	- Education



In order to officially “validate,” or graduate, from the Ridge View program, each of the above VALIDATE components must be completed. The youth’s peer group and staff must affirm that the youth has fulfilled each requirement. Once these areas have been completed, and the youth has maintained a RAM status for four consecutive months, he officially graduates from the program. Most case plans are designed so that a youth’s graduation date closely coincides with his parole date. However, youth do not always go onto parole after graduation. Some move to other step-down placements, while others remain at Ridge View until parole, or until another placement is made.

### **Seeding Program for Ridge View Youth Services Center**

The contract for the operation of the facility was awarded to the Rite of Passage program in the winter of 1998, following a national competitive bidding process. Rite of Passage began operation of the Ridge View Youth Services Center on July 1, 2001. Because DYC had already been using a Rite of Passage operated facility in Nevada, it was possible to begin a “seeding” process, whereby youth would begin their commitment at the existing ROP facility and then transition to Ridge View. The seeding plan began well before the opening of Ridge View and was designed to introduce youth in the first Ridge View cohort to the Rite of Passage program and to the positive-peer-culture model, which focuses strongly on peer influences on youth behavior. It is expected that the youth being served in the facility will strongly impact the normative culture<sup>24</sup> of the program. The program taps into the natural leadership abilities of some youth in the program and builds those skills in others. Youth are expected to monitor each other’s behavior and use their own behavior to set the tone for the institution. Because the creation of strong, positive peer leaders is the cornerstone of the positive-peer-culture model, it was necessary for Ridge View to begin operations with youth prepared to fulfill these roles. As a result, for the first year of operations, all youth participated in an orientation process in the out-of-state Rite of Passage program before being placed at Ridge View.

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<sup>24</sup> In this context, “normative culture” refers to the informal expectations and rules for behavior created through a consensus of the members of a group to follow certain practices.

This seeding process may have had an effect on the overall evaluation of the program. Only youth that had demonstrated progress in the out-of-state Rite of Passage programs, and could contribute to a positive environment, were selected for initial transfer to Ridge View. As a result, the sample of youth used for this report, which includes some youth from the first year of operation, may be slightly skewed towards those who were more successful in the out-of-state Rite of Passage program.

### ***Comparing the Ridge View and Control Samples***

The Ridge View sample is a sub-sample of the entire population studied in the section on NYC recidivism results. Youth were selected to the Ridge View sample if they were discharged from NYC during the State FY 2003-04 and had a length of stay (LOS) of at least 90 days at Ridge View Youth Services Center (RVYSC) during their commitment. If a youth had less than 90 days LOS at Ridge View they were excluded from the analyses. These youth were not included in the comparison group because it is possible that their length of stay in the program was related to program failure or misbehavior. Including these youth in the comparison group could artificially inflate the recidivism rates for that cohort. The RVYSC sample consists of 299 males discharged from NYC in FY 2003-04 that attended the Ridge View facility for at least 90 days during their commitment.

The comparison group for the Ridge View Sample includes 562 other males (not RVYSC) that were discharged from NYC during FY 2003-04. The next section looks at how this group compares to the Ridge View sample on a variety of demographic characteristics as well as on some risk factors for re-offending.

## Youth Served by Ridge View Youth Services Center

### Demographic Characteristics

#### *Ethnicity*

Table 15 shows differences in the ethnic distribution of youth discharged from the Division of Youth Corrections during FY 2003-04 who were served by the Ridge View program and all other males discharged during the same time period.

**Table 15**  
**Ethnic Differences between Ridge View and Other DYC Males**  
**Males Discharged from DYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Ridge View Youth (N=299)</b>	<b>DYC Males (N=562)</b>	<b>TOTAL (N=861)</b>
Anglo	41.8%	51.1%	47.9%
African American	16.7%	11.4%	13.2%
Hispanic	37.5%	34.7%	35.7%
Other <sup>25</sup>	4.0%	2.8%	3.3%

There were higher rates of minority populations in the Ridge View sample when compared with other DYC males discharged during FY 2003-04. These results were statistically significant (Chi-Square=8.927;  $p < 0.05$ ); however, since there were no differences in pre-discharge or post-discharge recidivism attributed to ethnicity in the larger sample of all youth discharged in FY 2003-04, this finding is not expected to influence the comparison of recidivism rates between the Ridge View sample and other DYC males. There were no significant recidivism differences by ethnic group for either of these samples.

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<sup>25</sup> This category includes Native American and Asian American youth as well as those officially identified as "other." These categories are not combined because of commonalities among them, but because the numbers of youth in each category are too small when taken alone to make valid statistical comparisons.

### *Age*

The average age at commitment for youth placed at Ridge View was 16.3 years; this is slightly younger than the overall average age at commitment for NYC males (16.6 years). However, the average age at the time youth were admitted to the Ridge View program was somewhat older at 17.0 years. The difference between age at commitment and age at admission to Ridge View can be mostly explained by the fact that many of the youth in this sample were placed in an out-of-state Rite of Passage program prior to admission to Ridge View. Additionally, all youth committed to the Division are required to participate in an assessment period of up to 30 days in a secure, State-operated facility prior to any other placement.

The majority of youth were 16 (27%), or 17 (38%) years of age at the time of first placement in Ridge View Youth Services Center. Table 16 shows the distribution of these youth, by age at time of placement.

**Table 16**  
**Age at Placement in Ridge View<sup>26</sup>**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Number Placed</b>	<b>Percent</b>
13	1	0.3%
14	8	2.7%
15	46	15.4%
16	80	26.8%
17	112	37.5%
18	50	16.7%
19	2	0.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

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<sup>26</sup> Represents age at time of placement in Ridge View, rather than age at the time of commitment. Because of the delay between commitment and Ridge View placement, no comparison can be made with age at commitment for other NYC males.

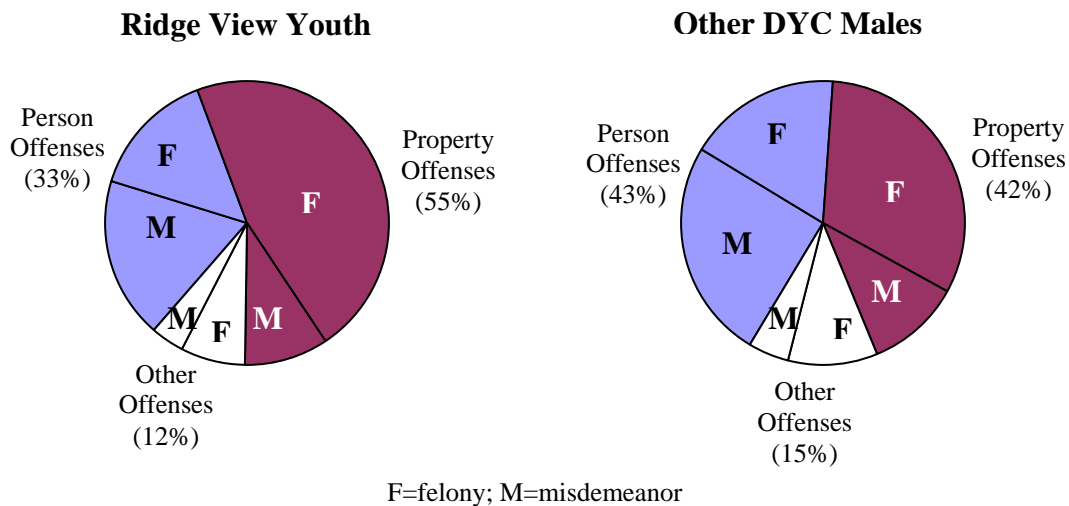
## Risk Profiles of Youth

Eligibility restrictions based on type of offense, mental health needs and other factors related to youths' risk and needs levels could potentially lead to some differences between youth placed in Ridge View and the overall DYC male population.

### *Offense Types*

More than half (55%) of Ridge View youth were committed for property offenses, compared with 42% of the males in other DYC placements. Similarly, 33% of Ridge View youth were committed for person offenses, compared with 43% of other DYC males. These differences between groups were statistically significant (Chi-Square=12.709;  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Figure 9**  
**Type of Offense**  
**Males Discharged from DYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**



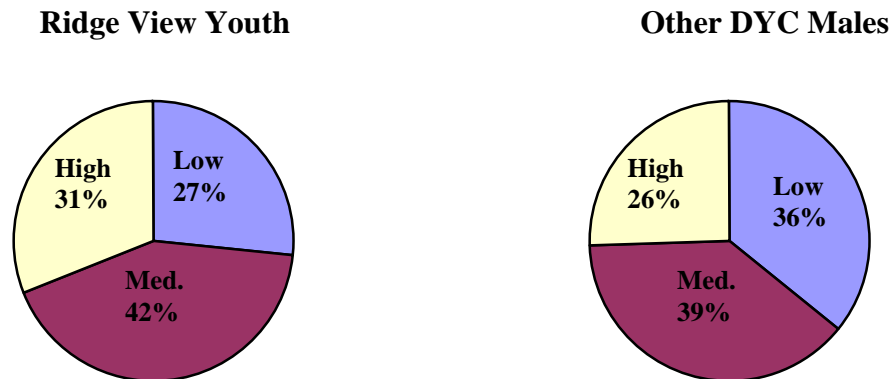
Since property offenders tend to recidivate at higher levels than other offenders it would be expected that youth in the Ridge View sample might have a higher risk of offending than other DYC males. However, because differences were not significant in the larger analyses of all youth discharged in FY 2003-04, these differences are also not expected to influence recidivism rates for these two groups.

### ***Risk of Re-offense***

Eligibility requirements for Ridge View placement, based primarily on offense and also on severity of mental health treatment needs, do not translate directly into a significantly lower risk population being served. For example, sex offenders tend to rank low on most risk of re-offense scales, and therefore since these youth are not eligible for placement at Ridge View this could result in higher risk youth being placed at RVYSC. On every measure where there was a statistically significant difference, Ridge View youth score higher for risk of re-offending than other NYC males discharged during FY 2003-04.

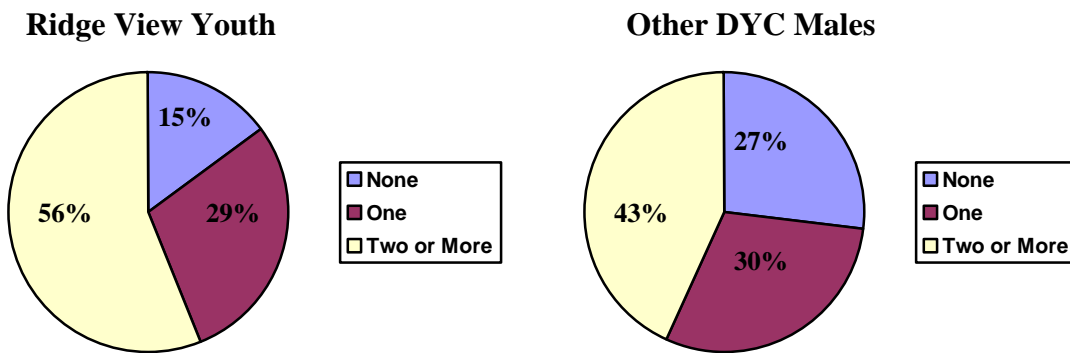
One of the many assessment instruments used at the time of commitment is the objective Commitment Classification Instrument (CCI). Placement needs are calculated by the CCI using the combined risk of re-offense and severity of the offense for which the youth was committed. The risk score is based on factors such as the number of prior adjudications, offense type, prior placement history, and age at first adjudication. Figure 10 shows the differences in risk of re-offense between youth discharged in FY 2003-04 that were placed in Ridge View and other NYC males discharged during that same time period. These differences are statistically significant (Chi-Square=7.740;  $p<0.05$ ) and it is especially interesting that the Ridge View sample contained a higher percentage of youth with high and medium risk of re-offending than males treated at other NYC placements.

**Figure 10**  
**CCI Risk Scores**  
**Males Discharged from NYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**



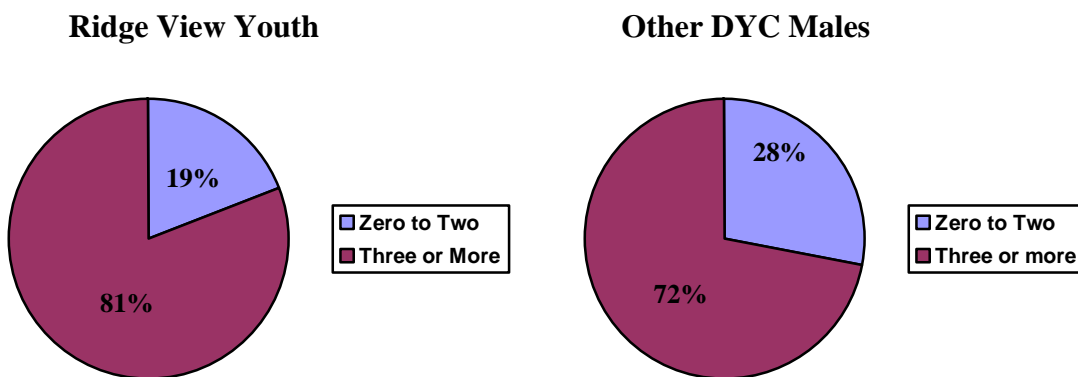
Another estimation of risk is prior involvement in the juvenile justice system. A higher proportion of Ridge View youth had two or more prior adjudications than the remaining DYC male population, indicating an elevated risk of re-offending. Conversely, a lower proportion of Ridge View youth had no prior adjudications occurring prior to the current commitment (Chi-Square=19.191;  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Figure 11**  
**Number of Prior Adjudications**  
**Males Discharged from DYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**



Similarly a higher percentage of Ridge View Youth had more than two prior detention admissions than other DYC males (Chi-square=8.056;  $p < 0.01$ )

**Figure 12**  
**Number of Prior Detention Admissions**  
**Males Discharged from DYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**



### ***Length of Stay (LOS)***

Youth placed at RVYSC had a significantly longer total commitment LOS (28.6 months including parole time) than other NYC males (26.3 months) discharged between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004<sup>27</sup>. Commitment length of stay includes time spent on mandatory parole. As shown in Figure 10, youth admitted to RVYSC are at a higher risk for future offending; thus, the increased risk may necessitate a longer LOS for these youth in order to successfully reintegrate them back into the community at large. All youth in these samples were subject to the mandatory parole statutes and would have been required to spend between six and twelve months on parole status in the community prior to discharge from the Division.

### ***Ridge View Recidivism Results***

This section reports recidivism and other outcome information for the 299 youth discharged from the Division of Youth Corrections between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004 who were placed at Ridge View Youth Services Center (RVYSC) during their commitment to the Division. The Ridge View youth are compared to all other males discharged from NYC during this same time period who did not spend time at RVYSC (n=562). The term ‘pre-discharge’ is used to identify offenses filed during commitment. Commitment includes both residential out-of-home placements and non-residential parole. The term ‘post-discharge’ refers to offenses filed within one year after the youth was discharged from a NYC commitment sentence.

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<sup>27</sup> These differences were significant at  $p < 0.01$ .



Table 17 illustrates differences in pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism rates for the Ridge View sample and the comparison sample.

**Table 17**  
**Recidivism Rates**  
**Males Discharged From NYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Ridge View	204	68.2%	95	31.8%	299	34.7%
Other NYC Males	365	64.9%	197	35.1%	562	65.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>66.1%</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>33.9%</b>	<b>861</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Ridge View	193	64.5%	106	35.5%	299	34.7%
Other NYC Males	326	58.0%	236	42.0%	562	65.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>60.3%</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>39.7%</b>	<b>861</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Of the 299 youth in the RYVSC sample, 95 (31.8%) had a new misdemeanor or felony offense filed prior to discharge<sup>28</sup>. In comparison, 35.1% (n=197) of males in the comparison group had a new filing for a misdemeanor or felony offense prior to discharge from the Division. Youth in the Ridge View sample also had lower rates of post-discharge recidivism (35.5%) compared with other males discharged from NYC during FY 2003-04 (42.0%). Although the recidivism rates for Ridge View youth were lower than for other NYC males in both categories (31.8% pre-release, and 35.5% post-release) these results were not statistically significant. Considering that the RYVSC sample appeared to have proportionately more youth with increased risk for recidivism, even the lack of significant results in this analysis implies some level of treatment success with these youth.

Since the overall recidivism results for Ridge View youth compared with other NYC males were not significantly different, the following sub-sections will only show the analyses where results for the Ridge View sample were significantly different by specific

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<sup>28</sup> Filings on offenses that occurred prior to a youth's admission to the RYVSC facility are not included in these analyses. If the program had not served a youth prior to the time the recidivist act occurred, the program in question could not have prevented it.

factors for risk of re-offending. Analyses were conducted on all factors identified in the primary recidivism study, however very few showed significant differences for the Ridge View sample.

### DYC Management Region

DYC has a regionally based management structure, operating from four management regions in the state. The Central Region<sup>29</sup> consists of four judicial districts and includes the major counties of Denver, Jefferson, Arapahoe, and Douglas. The Northeast Region consists of five judicial districts and includes the major counties of Adams, Boulder, Larimer, and Weld. The Southern Region consists of seven judicial districts and includes the major counties of El Paso and Pueblo. The Western Region consists of the six judicial districts on the western slope including the major county of Mesa. Unlike most DYC placements, which are generally contracted separately for each management region, Ridge View Youth Services Center treats youth from all four regions. Table 18 shows a breakdown of new offenses during commitment by DYC management region.

**Table 18**  
**Recidivism by DYC Management Region**  
**RVYSC Youth Discharged From DYC between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

Region	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Central	69	65.1%	37	34.9%	106	35.5%
Northeast	53	70.7%	22	29.3%	75	25.1%
Southern	55	63.2%	32	36.8%	87	29.1%
Western	27	87.1%	4	12.9%	31	10.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>68.2%</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>31.8%</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Region	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Central	74	69.8%	32	30.2%	106	35.5%
Northeast	45	60.0%	30	40.0%	75	25.1%
Southern	49	56.3%	38	43.7%	87	29.1%
Western	25	80.6%	6	19.4%	31	10.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>64.5%</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>35.5%</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

<sup>29</sup> In July 2003 the Central Region and the Denver Region merged to form one combined Central Region.

The results of this analysis are similar to the results for the main recidivism study. The Western region has the lowest rates of pre and post-discharge recidivism (12.9% and 19.4%, respectively). The highest rates of pre and post-discharge recidivism were found in the Southern Region (36.8% pre-discharge recidivism, 43.7% post-discharge recidivism). While the differences found in the rate of pre-discharge filings were not found to be statistically significant, the rates of post-discharge recidivism were (Chi-square=8.044;  $p<.05$ ). As with the full recidivism sample, youth in the Western Region were less likely to receive a filing for a new offense within one year of their discharge from NYC commitment.

### **Number of Escapes**

The NYC TRAILS database tracks the number of times a committed youth escapes from placement during commitment. NYC policy defines an escapee as a juvenile who has left a facility's custody without proper authorization, or a juvenile who has not returned to a facility within four hours of the prescribed time from any authorized leave.

As expected, Ridge View youth with more escapes were more likely to have received a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense both prior to discharge from NYC and within one year following discharge from NYC commitment<sup>30</sup>. These results are also similar to the results of the full recidivism sample. It is important to note that the District Attorney's Office in Arapahoe County, where Ridge View is located, has a policy of always filing charges on escapes. This could artificially increase the recidivism rates for youth who escape from the RYSC facility when compared with other NYC males who might have escapes in other jurisdictions.

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<sup>30</sup> Pre-discharge recidivism by number of escapes (ANOVA=29.814;  $p<0.01$ ).  
Post-discharge recidivism by number of escapes (ANOVA=6.203;  $p<0.05$ ).

## Risk of Re-offending

There were no significant differences for pre-discharge or post-discharge recidivism rates for the Ridge View Youth Services Center sample on any of the risk factors analyzed.

This lack of significant findings could be an indicator of treatment success. It would be expected that youth who score higher on these factors would be more likely to recidivate.

The fact that this is not the case, suggests that there have been some intervening measures during commitment that has kept these youth from receiving a filing for a new offense.

## Ridge View Graduation

In order to officially graduate from the Ridge View program, each of the components of the VALIDATE model must be completed, and the youth's peer group and staff must formally agree that the youth has fulfilled all of the graduation requirements. Once these have been completed, and the youth has maintained a RAM status for four consecutive months, he officially validates the program and participates in a graduation ceremony.

**Table 19**  
**Recidivism by Successful Completion of the Ridge View Program**  
**RVYSC Youth Discharged between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004**

Completion Status	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Graduated	123	73.2%	45	26.8%	168	61.3%
Did Not Graduate	67	63.2%	39	36.8%	106	38.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>69.3%</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>30.7%</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Completion Status	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Graduated	110	65.5%	58	34.5%	168	61.3%
Did Not Graduate	66	62.3%	40	37.7%	106	38.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>64.2%</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>35.8%</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

(Missing N=25)

Table 19 shows the differences in pre-discharge recidivism for youth that officially graduated from the Ridge View program compared with youth who left for other reasons<sup>31</sup>.

Although youth that graduated from the Ridge View program had lower rates of new filing for a recidivist act both prior to discharge (26.8%) and following discharge from DYC (34.5%) than youth who did not fully complete the program, these results were not statistically significant.

The results are in the expected direction however, and last year's Ridge View report did show that graduates were significantly less likely to receive a new pre-discharge filing. Therefore, the Division will continue to monitor these results in future years to see if the results continue to indicate improved results for youth who successfully complete their treatment program at Ridge View Youth Services Center.

## **DISCUSSION**

### ***Recidivism Results***

Before discussing the results presented within this report, it is important to realize that any analysis of recidivism rates must be approached cautiously. Policy-makers and juvenile justice practitioners often refer to recidivism as if it were a constant, universal concept. In reality, recidivism is an amorphous concept that is dependent upon its underpinning assumptions. A marked departure from any of these assumptions will result in outcome measures that are significantly disparate. There is a brief discussion of those assumptions that have the greatest potential for influencing recidivism rates<sup>32</sup> included as an appendix to this report.

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<sup>31</sup> Youth who did not graduate may have completed the program, but did not fulfill the requirements for validation. Other types of release include medical release, escapes, client manager referrals to another program, youth paroled prior to completion of the program, or program failures. Ridge View staff views all releases that did not validate to be unsuccessful in the program.

<sup>32</sup> Altering the definition of recidivism can influence wholesale changes in outcome results. This discussion assumes that the definition of recidivism remains constant.

## **DYC Recidivism**

Overall, thirty-three percent of the youth discharged in FY 2003-04 received a new filing for an offense that occurred prior to discharge, and 38% received a new filing for an offense within one year after their discharge from DYC commitment. Pre-discharge recidivism rates have been slowly declining over the past three studies, while post-discharge recidivism rates seem to be rising over that same time period.

Although pre-discharge recidivism rates for this sample are slightly lower than in previous years, it is still interesting to note that 77% of all youth who received a new filing prior to discharge committed new offenses only while on parole status. While supervision and services provided during parole are intended to monitor the youth and facilitate the juvenile's transition back into the community, non-residential parole status does provide more opportunities for juveniles to commit delinquent acts than in a residential setting. Over the past three years, non-residential parole services have been reduced 74% because of State budget constraints. Given that most pre-discharge recidivism filings were for offenses committed while a youth was on parole status, better service delivery and supervision during parole may lead to fewer youth recidivating in the future.

At least a portion of the increase seen in this year's post-discharge recidivism rates could be linked to one specific change in policy. There were seventeen youth in the study who were considered to be recidivates based solely upon a charge of failure to register as a sex offender. The legislation requiring sex offender registry was amended fairly recently, and prior to this study, these youth would not have been included as post-discharge recidivates.

### ***Indicators of Treatment Success***

The results of this year's recidivism analysis identify a number of potential indicators of DYC's success in mitigating the risk factors that youth present with at the time of assessment (the first 30 days of a commitment sentence).

Over the last several years the Division has made efforts to improve the treatment opportunities available for females committed to DYC. The results of the gender analysis of recidivism rates suggest that these efforts have had some level of success. Although female offenders are assessed as being higher risk of re-offending than males at the time of commitment, they have significantly lower post-discharge recidivism rates (27%, compared with 40% for males).

Additionally, the lack of significant findings for youth presenting high-risk for re-offending in the post-discharge sample are encouraging. Youth who scored higher on the objective Commitment Classification Instrument (CCI) risk scales were significantly more likely to recidivate prior to discharge, however the differences seen in the post-discharge sample were not significant. In fact, youth with a high risk of re-offending according to the CCI received filings for new offenses post-discharge at approximately the same rate as youth assessed as having a low risk of re-offending. Recidivism findings by the number of prior adjudications, historically a strong predictor of re-offending, were similar. Pre-discharge recidivism rates were higher for youth with more prior adjudications, but the post discharge recidivism rates were almost the same across all categories.

These results may be a positive indicator of success for the Division's treatment programs. The juvenile justice literature has clearly established a linkage between elevated risk and need factors and the increased probability of re-offense (Andrews and Bonta, p. 164)<sup>33</sup>. The results of this recidivism study did not generate findings consistent with this well-established theorem. One possible explanation is the influence of case planning and the provision of appropriate surveillance and treatment services. To the extent that these services ameliorate risk factors and augment protective factors, the probability of re-offense will be markedly different for a youth upon discharge as compared to when that youth was originally committed. If the Division successfully reduces a youth's risk of recidivism, it should not be surprising that those risk factors

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<sup>33</sup> Andrews, D.A., and Bonta, J. (1994). *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*. Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing Co.

identified at the beginning of a juvenile's commitment sentence are no longer significantly correlated with recidivism post-discharge.

The lack of significant findings may also indicate a need for re-assessment of youth at specified times during commitment. Treatment plans, based upon assessment tools administered during the first month of commitment, may no longer be accurate after six months or a year of commitment. Re-assessment at regular intervals could help the Division modify treatment plans more effectively as the youth is progressing through the system, and may eventually positively influence the Division's overall recidivism rates.

### **Ridge View Recidivism**

While youth in the Ridge View sample were not statistically less likely to recidivate than other DYC males discharged in FY 2003-04, the results of this comparison still indicate that the RVYSC program has been successful in reducing the likelihood of re-offending. Where there were differences in the Ridge View sample compared with other DYC males on risk factors for re-offending, the Ridge View youth scored significantly higher. Ridge View youth had higher overall risk scores on the CCI, more prior adjudications, and more detention admissions than the comparison group. Therefore, it would be expected that these youth would also have higher rates of recidivism than the comparison group. Although the differences in pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism were not statistically significant, Ridge View youth showed slightly lower rates of recidivism (32% pre-discharge, 36% post-discharge) than other males (35% pre-discharge, 42% post-discharge) discharged from DYC commitment during FY 2003-04.



## **APPENDIX**

### ***Limitations of Recidivism Research***

#### **Population Shifts**

In the juvenile justice system, the concept of risk is invariably connected to the probability of re-offending; as such, an “at-risk youth” is a youth who presents a greater than average chance of committing a criminal act. If a juvenile justice agency suddenly realizes a significant realignment of the risk potential of its population, then that realignment can result in differing recidivism rates when all other factors are held constant. For example, if a certain juvenile justice program or project is eliminated because of budget constraints, then youth who would have been directed to that program are then re-directed to other programs. This process, which most often directs youth deeper into the juvenile justice system, has occurred in Colorado. For example, the Community Accountability Program, as well as other programs designed to intervene with youth at earlier stages of the juvenile justice system, have been eliminated or seriously impacted because of State budget cuts. These programs were designed to provide alternatives to DYC detention and commitment sentences. The lack of capacity for delinquent youth in a community placement drives these youth into the DYC population, creating a need for increased treatment services, and overcrowding state-run commitment facilities. The process of shifting delinquent populations into other programs which may not be adequately prepared to treat these youth, or alternatively provide more treatment than is required, can both positively and negatively impact recidivism rates.

#### **Information Technology Advances**

Most juvenile and criminal justice agencies rely upon official records to determine recidivism rates. To the extent that these official records are considered accurate and complete, each agency is able to determine their respective rates of recidivism. It should be noted that the completeness and accuracy of official records have been questioned in the past. In response to these concerns, Colorado has devoted significant resources to

updating its criminal and juvenile justice information systems<sup>34</sup>. An unexpected consequence of updating these information systems is that recidivism rates may begin to increase in the future. These rates of recidivism are not necessarily increasing as a result of actual spikes in criminal behavior, but possibly because of the increased reliability and accuracy of matching offenders between data systems<sup>35</sup>.

## **Policy Variations**

The juvenile justice system can be viewed as an intricate network of decision points that is generally governed by statute, policy, or administrative regulation, but where key decision-makers are allowed considerable discretion. Clearly, one of the key decision-makers in the juvenile justice system is the District Attorney. The District Attorney (DA) has considerable discretion in whether a Delinquency Petition is filed with the Court. A DA may choose not to file on a case because the case is considered to be without significant merit or because appropriate alternatives exist that can otherwise effectively discharge the case (e.g., a Diversion Program). Because of this discretion, there exist significant differences in filing practices throughout the State. In some jurisdictions, the DA may choose to file upon the majority of cases and allow the judicial process to determine the relative merits of a case. In other jurisdictions, in an attempt to manage the limited resources of the DA's Office or the Court, a DA may only file on those cases where the merits of a case have undergone careful examination. In either scenario, it is policy, not necessarily criminal activity that determines a filing; which in turn influences recidivism data and rates in Colorado.

## **Actual Change in Criminal Behavior**

Lastly, changes in the recidivism rate can be the result of actual changes in criminal behavior. As research advances juvenile justice programming, it is generally believed that these advances will eventually result in better short-term and long-term outcomes.

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<sup>34</sup> Marked improvements have been made to the Judicial Department's data system (ICON) as well as to the Department of Human Services' data system (TRAILS). These improvements are in conjunction with the statewide Colorado Integrated Criminal Justice Information System's (CICJIS) effort that attempts to link individual and stand alone data systems.

<sup>35</sup> Conversely, less than accurate information systems may net lower recidivism rates because of errors associated with data entry or software inconsistencies.

Quantitative evidence of these enhanced outcomes may require years to be realized. Until causal links can be firmly established in data, claims that actual criminal behavior patterns have changed (either positively or negatively) should be made cautiously. This is not to suggest that annual recidivism rates should be ignored. Recidivism rates provide a basic barometer in how the system is reacting. Minimally, changes in recidivism rates should prompt policy-makers to question whether actual behavioral changes have occurred or whether the fluctuation in rates is an artifact of some other change occurring elsewhere in the juvenile justice system.