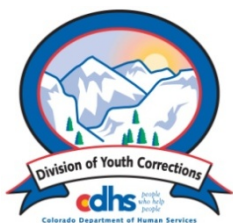


Recidivism Evaluation of Committed Youth Discharged in Fiscal Year 2009–10



Colorado Department of Human Services
Office of Children, Youth and Family Services
Division of Youth Corrections

Working with Colorado Communities to Achieve Justice

January 1, 2012

Any questions concerning the data presented in this report may be directed to:

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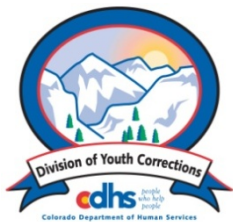
Colorado Department of Human Services
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<http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/CDHS-ChildYouthFam/CBON/1251580877620>

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Division of Youth Corrections

Working with Colorado Communities to Achieve Justice

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Youth Corrections (DYC) prepares a recidivism report on committed youth annually. The current report is submitted in response to two separate Legislative mandates:

- 1) Department of Human Services, Division of Youth Corrections, FY 2011-12, Request for Information (RFI) #7; pursuant to Appendix I of the Appropriations Report prepared for the Colorado Long Bill S.B. 11-209
- 2) Section 19-2-411.5, C.R.S., the legislation authorizing the construction and operation of the Ridge View Youth Services Center

The responses to these two separate Legislative mandates are combined into one report due to the similar nature of the requested information.

The Recidivism Measure

Recidivism is one of the top measures used to determine the level of effectiveness of adult and juvenile justice agencies and systems. Recidivism rates can also be used to infer the expected level of public safety as offenders transition back into the community after a period of detention, commitment, or incarceration. A common goal across justice agencies is to reduce recidivism, therefore the measure is tracked closely and regularly. Generally speaking, the term “recidivism” refers to the re-occurrence of delinquent or criminal behavior. However, the more specific definition of recidivism can vary greatly among states and even among justice agencies within a single state. Prior to 1999, the State of Colorado did not have a standardized definition of recidivism utilized across justice agencies; however, in Fiscal Year (FY) 1999-2000, in response to recommendations resulting from a Legislative audit of the criminal justice system, common definitions were established. The definitions adopted at that time, and utilized by DYC for all reports subsequent to the Legislative audit are as follows:

Pre-Discharge Recidivism: A filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense that occurred prior to discharge (while the youth is under DYC supervision) 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.

Like all recidivism studies, the Division's evaluation is retrospective in nature. Each year the recidivism study examines and reports on the re-offending behaviors of youth who discharged from DYC in the State fiscal year two years prior to the report date. This delay in reporting is due to the agreed upon definition of recidivism, which requires a twelve-month follow-up period to complete the post-discharge recidivism analysis. Youth who discharge near the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 2010) receive the same one-year follow-up period as youth discharged earlier in the year. This is why it was necessary to wait until June 30, 2011 had passed, before data collection could begin for this discharge cohort.

The findings contained in this year's report are based on an evaluation of eight-hundred twenty-two (822) youth discharged during FY 2009-10 (between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010). The term "pre-discharge" is used to identify new offenses filed during the period of time a youth is supervised by DYC in residential commitment or on parole. "Post-discharge" recidivism refers to filings for new felony or misdemeanor offenses that occurred up to one year following discharge from DYC supervision. The analysis includes an examination of pre- and post-discharge recidivism rates as they relate to a number of demographic and risk factors that can predict the likelihood of re-offending.

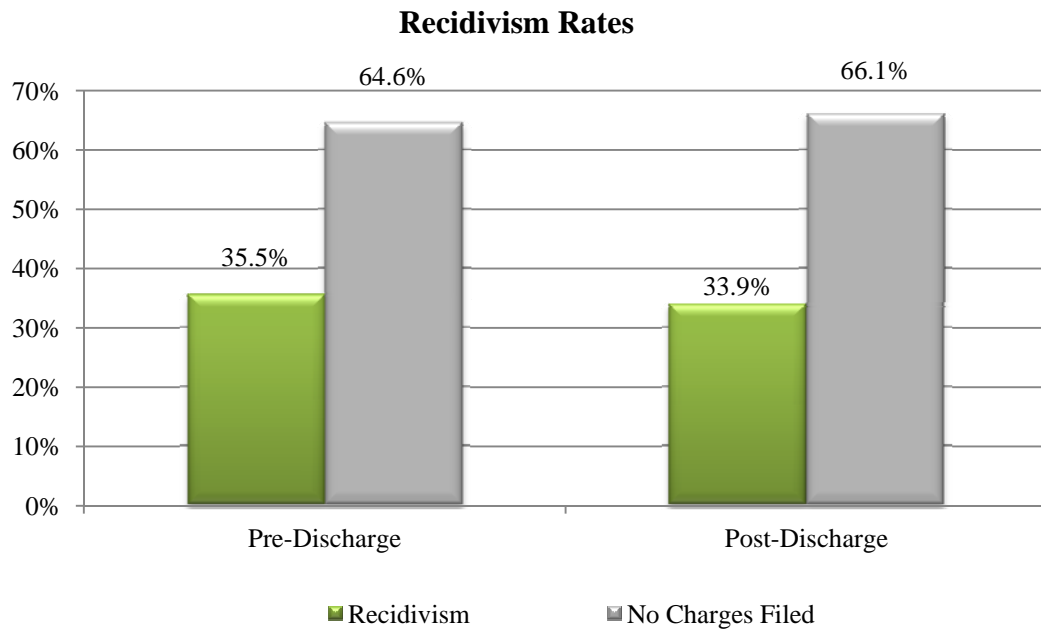
Section One (1) of the report examines the entire discharge census (n=822) of youth, while Section Two (2) pertains to a specific sub-group of clients who were placed at the Ridge View Youth Services Center during their commitment stay (n=236).

SECTION ONE RESULTS: Division of Youth Corrections Recidivism

Overall Results

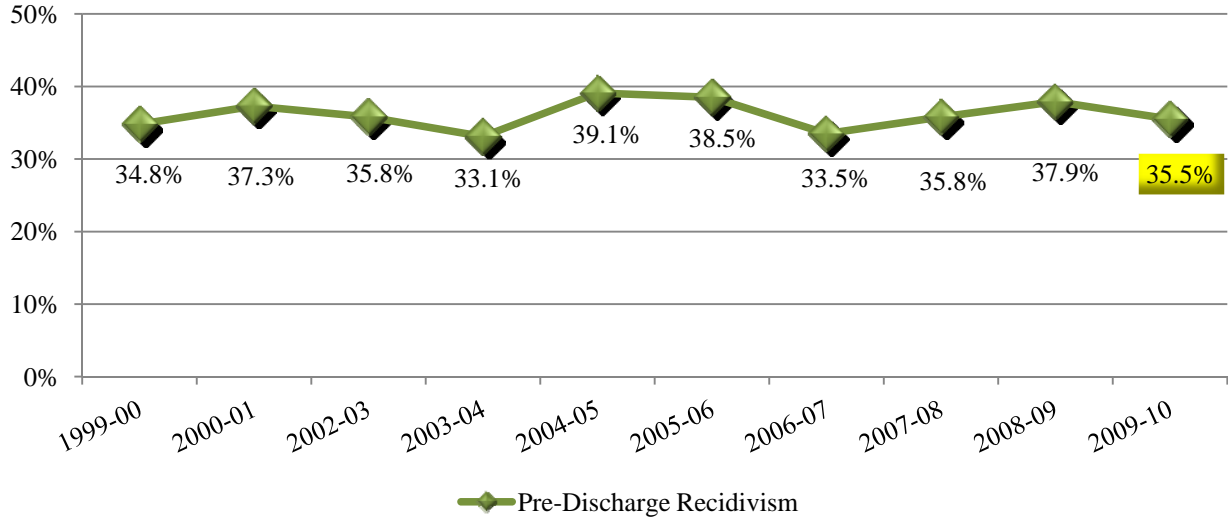
- Thirty-five percent (35.5%) of youth discharged in FY 2009-10 received a new felony or misdemeanor filing prior to discharge (pre-discharge recidivism). This means that nearly sixty-five percent (64.6%) of youth completed DYC commitment successfully, with no new filings.
- Thirty-four percent (33.9%) of youth discharged in FY 2009-10 received a new felony or misdemeanor filing within one year following discharge from the Division (post-discharge recidivism). Sixty-six percent (66.1%) of youth successfully went a full year following discharge without receiving any new filings, which dramatically reduces their likelihood of re-offending as time goes on.

Recidivism Trends



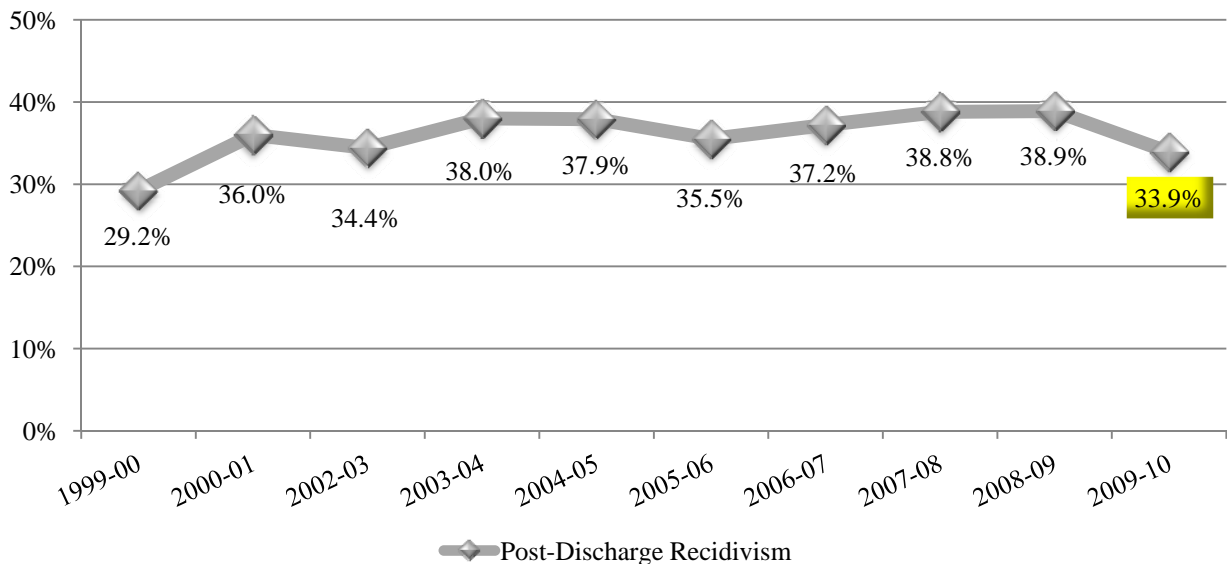
- Pre-discharge rates have not fluctuated significantly over the past four years, and have remained fairly stable for a decade.

Pre-Discharge Recidivism Rates FY 1999-00 through FY 2009-10



- Post-discharge recidivism rates have been fairly stable over the past ten years. Changes across those ten fiscal years are not statistically significant. However, the decline in the post-discharge rate from the previous year is statistically significant. In fact, 33.9% is the lowest rate in nine years, or since 1999-00, when it was 29.2%.

Post-Discharge Recidivism Rates FY 1999-00 through FY 2009-10



Offense Type & Risk Level

- Although recidivism rates have not changed significantly, analysis of offense type indicates a reduction in offense risk level (either no recidivism or less serious criminal activity) for over 86% of youth in the discharge cohort. This statistic is calculated by comparing each youth's initial commitment offense to any recidivist act that occurred in the year following discharge (post-discharge). So, when looking at risk level, the vast majority of youth discharged are showing a reduced risk to public safety.

Adult vs. Juvenile Filings

- Sixty-two percent (62.3%) of pre-discharge recidivists received at least one criminal (adult) filing during their commitment, and 37.7% received only delinquency (juvenile) filings.
- Nearly eighty-eight percent (87.5%) of post-discharge recidivism filings were for criminal (adult) offenses. Adult offenders, if found guilty, would likely receive an adult probation, community corrections, or Department of Corrections sentence.

Gender

- Female offenders discharged in FY 2009-10 received fewer pre-discharge (27.8%) and post-discharge (23.5%) filings than males discharged in that same year (36.8% and 35.6%, respectively).

Ethnicity

- Prior to discharge, fewer White youth received new filings (29.9%) than African-American (40.3%) or Hispanic (39.3%) clients. African-American and Hispanic youth had significantly more new filings while on parole status than white youth. However, no differences between groups were seen in residential placement. The Division has committed to further investigation regarding these disparate rates during the parole period, and plans to release those findings during the next fiscal year.

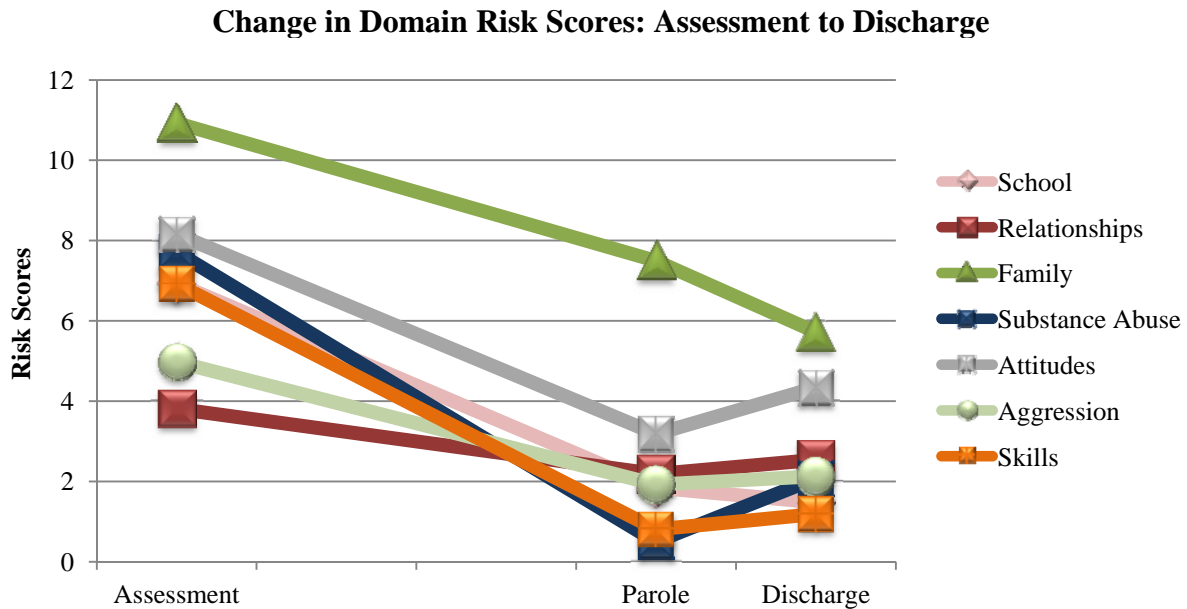
Risk Assessment (CJRA)

- The overall Colorado Juvenile Risk Assessment (CJRA) risk level *at time of commitment* was directionally correlated with pre-discharge recidivism, although not statistically significant. Only three youth were assessed as being low risk to re-offend, and these youth had a 0% pre-discharge recidivism rate. Forty-eight youth (48) were assessed as being moderate risk to re-offend, and the youth had a 16.7% recidivism rate. Lastly, 327 youth were assessed as being high risk to re-offend, and these youth had a 26.6% recidivism rate¹.
- In addition to the overall risk level, one CJRA domain risk scale was significantly predictive of pre-discharge recidivism. Higher scores, at initial assessment, in the “Relationships History” (Domain 6A) scale indicated higher rates of offending prior to discharge.
- CJRA risk assessments conducted *at the time of discharge* from DYC also predicted future criminal behavior. The overall risk level at discharge and the associated post-discharge recidivism rates are as follows: youth assessed at low risk to re-offend (n=52) had a recidivism rate of 25.0%; moderate risk youth (n=222) had a recidivism rate of 25.2%, and high risk youth (n=507) had a recidivism rate of 38.5%². In addition to overall risk level, higher risk scores on four of the thirteen risk scales analyzed were correlated with higher rates of post-discharge recidivism: Relationships (dynamic), Alcohol & Drug (dynamic), Attitudes & Behaviors, and Aggression domains.
- Overall CJRA risk levels were directionally correlated with recidivism rates (both pre- and post-discharge), which lends some initial support for the instrument’s predictive validity. DYC has committed to assessing, to a greater degree, the tool’s reliability and validity in the coming years.
- The following chart shows marked decreases in risk scores from assessment to discharge. These decreases in risk provide probable evidence that without the

¹ Only 378 youth (51% of the discharge cohort) had a valid initial CJRA. For this study, “valid” indicates all domains were fully completed, and the CJRA was given within 90 days following a youth’s commitment date. In total, 719 of the 822 discharges had a completed initial CJRA (87.5%), but many did not meet the 90-day criteria.

² 781 youth had a valid discharge CJRA (95.0%), or within 90 days of discharge (before or after).

provision of treatment services, recidivism rates for this discharge cohort would have likely been much higher.



Prior System Involvement

- Youth who received a new filing during their commitment were younger at the time of their first adjudication (14.18) and had more prior adjudications than youth who did not re-offend prior to discharge (14.51).
- Having more prior out-of-home placements and more runaways prior to NYC commitment was predictive of youth receiving a new pre-discharge filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense.

Sex Offenses

- Youth committed for sex offenses received fewer filings (25.9%) than youth committed for other types of offenses within one year following discharge (35.2%). Moreover, less than three percent of recidivist activity perpetrated by clients committed to the Division for a sexual offense were also sex offenses (both pre-

discharge and post-discharge), and “failure to register as a sex offender” (41.4%) was the most common post-discharge offense committed by these youth.

Mental Health Needs

- Using the CCAR³ instrument, youth entering DYC’s care are assessed as either “requiring professional mental health intervention” or “*not* requiring professional mental health intervention”. Those youth with mental health intervention requirements had a pre-discharge recidivism rate of 55.5%; this is substantially higher than youth with *no* mental health intervention requirements (44.5%).
- Similarly, youth who were assessed as having *Severe* mental health issues had higher rates of pre-discharge recidivism (49.0%) than youth assessed at the *High-Moderate* level (45.6%) or *Low to None* level (32.0%).

Escapes

- Having a higher number of escapes while committed to DYC was correlated with higher levels of post-discharge recidivism.

Place of Re-offense

- Over two thirds of clients (69.1%) who re-offended in residential treatment placements committed their new offenses in contract placements. Contract placements are less secure than State-operated secure facilities and often community-based, therefore, youth have more opportunity for criminal or delinquent activity in these types of programs.

Parole

- Clients who were successful on parole status (excellent parole rating, 26.6%; satisfactory parole rating, 34.5%) re-offended at lower rates following discharge than youth who were unsuccessful (43.2%) during parole.

³ Colorado Client Assessment Record.

Pre-Discharge and Post-Discharge

- Youth in the FY 2009-10 discharge cohort who received a new filing during their commitment also re-offended more often following discharge (38.0%) when compared with youth who did not re-offend prior to discharge (31.7%).

SECTION TWO RESULTS: Ridge View Youth Services Center Recidivism

This year's Ridge View sample consisted of a subset of 236 males from the larger cohort (n=822) discharged from the Division of Youth Corrections in FY 2009-10. These males spent at least 90 days at the Ridge View Youth Services Center (RVYSC) during their residential commitment, and spent at least 66% of their residential commitment at RVYSC. Ridge View recidivism rates were compared with the recidivism rates of males in State and Contract Placement (n=364), as well as a "Shared" group of males (n=107). This "shared" group of youth spent 90 (or more) days at RVYSC, however, did not spend at least 66% of their residential length of service at RVYSC. The above described method of selecting cohorts for the section two portion of this report is notably different from prior years.

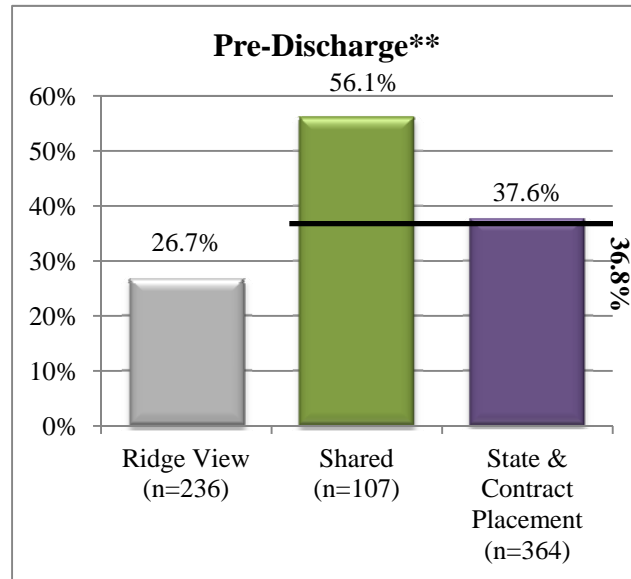
Cohort Comparisons: How Do Youth in the Three Groups Differ?

- The three cohorts compared vary significantly on a multitude of different factors related to recidivism risk.
- The Shared cohort, overall, represents the group with the most risk factors for re-offense. This group's high risk composition makes them more prone to recidivate both during and after commitment.

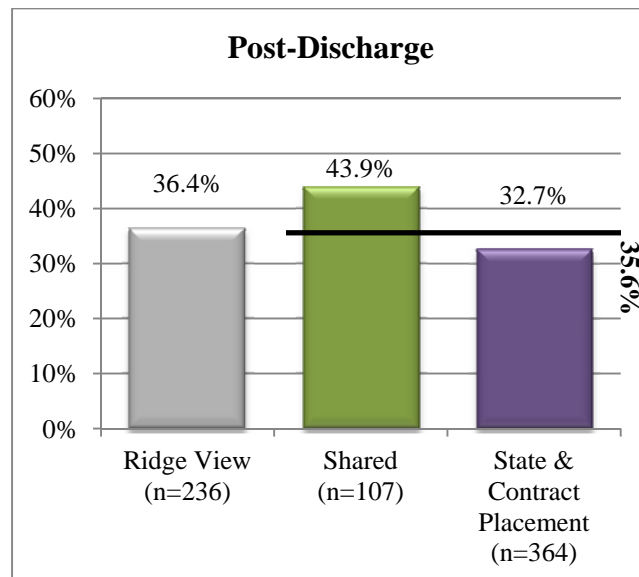
Overall Results

- The pre-discharge recidivism rate for Ridge View youth was 26.7%.
- The post-discharge recidivism rate for Ridge View youth was 36.4%.

- Youth in the RYVSC sample had lower rates of pre-discharge recidivism (26.7%) than State and Contract Placement males (37.6%). The “Shared” group had the highest rate of pre-discharge recidivism (56.1%).



- For post-discharge recidivism, RYVSC’s rate equaled 36.4% and State and Contract Placement males were 32.7%. Once again, the “Shared” group had the highest rate of post-discharge recidivism (43.9%). The differing post-discharge rates between the three groups are not statistically significant.



QUICK REFERENCE TABLES

Pre-Discharge Cohort Comparison

		Pre-Discharge Recidivism FY 2008-09 Discharges	Pre-Discharge Recidivism FY 2009-10 Discharges	Direction
Overall Recidivism Rate (Figure 1)		37.9%	35.5%	-2.4
Gender (Figure 8)	Male:	39.3%	36.6%	-2.7
	Female:	26.5%	27.8%	+1.3
Ethnicity (Figure 10)	African-American:	42.0%	40.3%	-1.7
	Hispanic:	44.3%	39.0%	-5.3
	White:	30.4%	29.9%	-0.5
	Other:	32.3%	41.7%	+9.4
DYC Management Region (Figure 13)	Central:	38.3%	38.0%	-0.3
	Northeast:	41.2%	32.8%	-8.4
	Southern:	37.4%	36.7%	-0.7
	Western:	28.4%	29.1%	+0.7
CJRA Overall Risk at Initial Assessment	Low:	0.0%	0.0%	same
	Moderate:	21.4%	16.7%	-4.7
	High:	27.3%	26.6%	-0.7
CJRA Relationships: Static	Low:	0.0%	25.0%	+25.0
	Moderate:	23.8%	23.6%	-0.2
	High:	33.7%	37.7%	+4.0
CJRA Attitudes and Behaviors:	Low:	6.7%	42.9%	+36.2
	Moderate:	17.9%	21.3%	+3.4
	High:	30.5%	31.9%	+1.4
CJRA Skills:	Low:	25.5%	26.2%	+0.7
	Moderate:	12.8%	26.5%	+13.7
	High:	30.9%	31.9%	+1.0
Number of Detention Admissions (Figure 18)	Zero to Two:	32.2%	33.7%	+1.5
	Three or More:	39.8%	35.9%	-3.9
Number of Prior Adjudications (Figure 19)	None:	31.8%	27.7%	-4.1
	One:	35.5%	39.5%	+4.0
	Two or more:	43.3%	37.2%	-6.1
Age at First Adjudication (Figure 20)	Years:	14.0	14.2	+0.2
Sex Offender Status (Figure 21)	Sex Offender:	27.1%	28.6%	+1.5
	Non-Sex Offender:	39.8%	36.5%	-3.3

Yellow highlight indicates group differences are statistically significant for that particular study

Pre-Discharge Cohort Comparison (continued)

		Pre-Discharge Recidivism FY 2008-09 Discharges	Pre-Discharge Recidivism FY 2009-10 Discharges	Direction
Mental Health Need for Treatment (CCAR) (Figure 23)	Professional Intervention Required:	44.0%	55.5%	+11.5
	Professional Intervention not Required:	30.1%	44.5%	+14.4
DYC Escape (Figure 24)	Yes:	51.0%	52.0%	+1.0
	No:	24.3%	19.8%	-4.5
Runaway (Page 51)	Yes:	69.2%	39.9%	-29.3
	No:	30.8%	26.3%	-4.5

Yellow highlight indicates group differences are statistically significant for that particular study

Post-Discharge Cohort Comparison

		Post-Discharge Recidivism FY 2008-09 Discharges	Post-Discharge Recidivism FY 2009-10 Discharges	Direction
Overall Recidivism Rate (Figure 2)		38.9%	33.9%	-5.0
Gender (Figure 8)	Male: Female:	41.3% 20.4%	35.6% 23.5%	-5.7 +3.1
Ethnicity (Figure 10)	African-American: Hispanic: White: Other:	37.0% 41.8% 37.4% 35.5%	38.1% 32.8% 32.8% 41.7%	+1.1 -9.0 -4.6 +6.2
DYC Management Region (Figure 13)	Central: Northeast: Southern: Western:	34.5% 42.0% 42.3% 40.9%	28.2% 35.7% 40.5% 40.5%	-6.3 -6.3 -1.8 -0.4
Overall CJRA Risk Level	Low: Moderate: High:	35.7% 18.4% 41.0%	25.0% 25.2% 38.5%	-10.7 +6.8 -2.5
CJRA Criminal History – Static	Low: Moderate: High:	30.8% 21.1% 40.8%	48.5% 26.0% 34.7 %	+17.7 +4.9 -6.1
CJRA School Static	Low: Moderate: High:	32.7% 40.1% 43.8%	31.6% 33.3% 38.5%	-1.1 -6.8 -5.3
CJRA School Dynamic	Low: Moderate: High:	28.9% 36.4% 48.4%	33.1% 35.6% 49.1%	+4.2 -0.8 +0.7
CJRA Relationships Static	Low: Moderate: High:	0.0% 23.8% 33.7%	28.6% 30.3% 36.2%	+28.6 +6.5 +2.5
CJRA Relationships Dynamic	Low: Moderate: High:	18.8% 35.8% 45.6%	23.1% 30.8% 39.9%	+4.3 -5.0 -5.7
CJRA Family Dynamic	Low: Moderate: High:	28.3% 41.0% 44.4%	30.4% 42.0% 37.4%	+2.1 +1.0 -7.0
CJRA Substance Abuse Dynamic	Low: Moderate: High:	36.0% 51.9% 41.1%	29.3% 41.1% 54.1%	-6.7 -10.8 +13.0
CJRA Attitudes & Behaviors	Low: Moderate: High:	31.0% 38.2% 44.2%	26.4% 34.6% 39.7%	-4.6 -3.6 -4.5
CJRA Aggression: Dynamic Risk	Low: Moderate: High:	32.8% 38.7% 43.1%	27.5% 36.3% 37.8%	-5.3 -2.4 -5.3
CJRA Skills	Low: Moderate: High:	35.2% 41.8% 47.4%	32.3% 34.6% 40.4%	-2.9 -7.2 -7.0

Yellow highlight indicates group differences are statistically significant for that particular study

Post-Discharge Cohort Comparison (continued)

		Post-Discharge Recidivism FY 2008-09 Discharges	Post-Discharge Recidivism FY 2009-10 Discharges	Direction
Number of Detention Admissions (Figure 18)	Zero to Two:	29.4%	27.3%	-2.1
	Three or More:	42.1%	35.9%	-6.2
Number of Prior Adjudications (Figure 19)	None:	36.4%	26.4%	-10.0
	One:	37.7%	35.7%	-2.0
	Two or more:	41.4%	37.5%	-3.9
Age at First Adjudication (Figure 20)	Years:	14.3	14.3	N/A
Sex Offender Status (Figure 21)	Sex Offender:	29.5%	25.9%	-3.6
	Non-Sex Offender:	40.6%	35.2%	-5.4
Mental Health Need for Treatment (Figure 23)	Professional Intervention Required:	41.3%	43.0%	+1.7
	Professional Intervention not Required:	35.9%	57.0%	+21.1
Any DYC Escape (Figure 24)	Yes:	43.4%	37.9%	-5.5
	No:	34.3%	30.2%	-4.1
Parole Adjustment at Discharge (Figure 30)	Successful:	32.7%	29.5%	-3.2
	Unsuccessful:	48.2%	43.2%	-5.0
	No Parole:	35.4%	24.5%	-10.9
Job/School Status at Discharge	Not Employed or Attending School:	47.6%	33.3%	-14.3
	Employed or in School at Time of Discharge:	35.3%	33.8%	-1.5

Yellow highlight indicates group differences are statistically significant for that particular study

Fiscal Year Differences in Filing Types and Dispositions⁴

		FY 2008-09 Discharges	FY 2009-10 Discharges	Direction
Pre-Discharge				
Type of Filing (Any Charge) (Table 2)	Criminal:	45.8%	42.4%	-20.0
	Delinquency:	37.2%	37.7%	+17.1
	Both:	16.9%	19.9%	+3.0
Disposition On Any Felony or Misdemeanor Filing (Table 3)	Guilty:	86.2%	89.7%	+3.5
	Deferred:	4.9%	2.4%	-2.5
	No Finding of Guilt:	7.4%	6.2%	-1.2
	Other:	1.5%	1.7%	+0.2
Most Serious Felony Filing Type (Table 1)	Person:	25.5%	25.4%	-0.1
	Property:	16.6%	19.6%	+3.0
	Drug:	5.2%	3.1%	-2.1
	Weapon:	0.6%	3.4%	+2.8
	Escape:	15.7%	16.2%	+0.5
	Identity:	2.8%	1.4%	-1.4
	Sex Registration:	1.8%	0.7%	-1.1
	Protection Order:	0.0%	0.3%	+0.3
	Other:	2.2%	0.7%	-1.5
Most Serious Misdemeanor Filing Type (Table 1)	Person:	8.9%	9.3%	+0.4
	Property:	4.9%	6.2%	+1.3
	Drug:	0.0%	0.0%	same
	Weapon:	1.5%	1.4%	-0.1
	Escape:	2.2%	4.5%	+2.3
	Identity:	1.2%	1.0%	-0.2
	Sex Registration:	1.8%	0.7%	-1.1
	DWI/DUI:	0.3%	1.7%	+1.4
	Obstruction:	2.8%	0.7%	-2.1
	Protection Order:	2.5%	1.4%	-1.1
Other:	3.4%	2.4%	-1.0	
Post-Discharge				
Type of Filing (Any Charge) (Table 2)	Criminal:	84.7%	82.1%	-40.6
	Delinquency:	12.3%	12.5%	+29.3
	Both:	3.0%	5.4%	+11.3
Disposition On Any Felony or Misdemeanor Filing (Table 3)	Guilty:	79.0%	81.0%	-3.7
	Deferred:	6.0%	2.9%	-3.1
	No Finding of Guilt:	9.3%	8.6%	-0.7
	Other:	5.7%	7.5%	+1.8
Most Serious Felony Filing Type (Table 1)	Person:	23.1%	21.9%	-1.2
	Property:	26.9%	23.3%	-3.6
	Drug:	8.1%	5.7%	+2.4
	Weapon:	1.2%	3.9%	+2.7
	Escape:	2.4%	1.4%	-1.0
	Identity:	2.4%	3.2%	+0.8
	Sex Registration:	3.3%	2.5%	-0.8
	Other:	3.3%	3.2%	-0.1

⁴ The rates presented in this table are not recidivism rates. The rates sum to 100% and depict pre- and post-discharge filing breakdowns in each area.

Fiscal Year Differences in Filing Types and Dispositions (continued)

		FY 2008-09 Discharges	FY 2009-10 Discharges	Direction
Post-Discharge				
Most Serious Misdemeanor Filing Type (Table 1)	Person:	9.3%	10.8%	+1.5
	Property:	6.3%	8.2%	+1.9
	Drug:	0.6%	0.7%	+0.1
	Weapon:	0.6%	0.7%	+0.1
	Escape:	0.0%	0.4%	+0.4
	Identity:	0.3%	0.4%	+0.1
	Sex Registration:	2.1%	0.7%	-1.4
	DWI/DUI:	3.3%	4.3%	+1.0
	Obstruction:	2.4%	0.7%	-1.7
	Protection Order:	1.5%	2.5%	+1.0
Other:	3.0%	5.4%	+2.4	

Ridge View Section Results

		Ridge View	Shared Youth	State and Contract Placement
Pre-Discharge Recidivism (Figure B)		26.7%	56.1%	37.6%
Post-Discharge Recidivism (Figure C)		36.4%	43.9%	32.7%
COHORT DIFFERENCES⁵				
Risk of Recidivism (Figure 34)	High:	93%	97%	81%
	Moderate:	7%	3%	17%
	Low:	0%	0%	2%
Ethnicity (Table 7)	African-American:	21.2%	18%	15.4%
	Hispanic:	41.1%	42%	33.2%
	White:	36.9%	32%	48.1%
	Other:	0.8%	6%	3.3%
Age at Commitment	Years:	16.7	16.2	16.6
Commitment Offense (Figure 35)	Person:	32.6%	31%	52.2%
	Property:	45.8%	52%	34.9%
	Drug:	8.5%	5%	4.7%
	Weapon:	6.8%	4%	4.1%
	Other:	6.4%	5%	4.1%
Commitment Sentence Type	Non-Mandatory:	69.9%	71%	69.5%
	Mandatory:	22.0%	19%	24.2%
	Repeat:	7.2%	8%	3.3%
	Aggravated:	0.0%	0%	3.0%
	Violent:	0.8%	0%	.00%
Mental Health Need Levels (Figure 39)	Professional Intervention Required:	28%	50%	57%
	Professional Intervention not Required:	72%	50%	43%
Number of Prior Adjudications (Figure 36)	None:	17.4%	22%	30.2%
	One:	33.1%	36%	29.4%
	Two or more:	49.6%	41%	40.4%
Number of Detention Admissions (Figure 37)	Zero to Two:	18.6%	16%	30.8%
	Three or More:	81.4%	83%	69.2%
Number of Prior Placements (Table 6)	Prior Placements:	1.37	2.0	2.20
Number of Placements During Commitment (Table 6)	Commitment Placements	3.9	7.5	4.7
Length of Service (Figure 40)	Months:	17.4	24.5	18.9

Yellow highlight indicates group differences are statistically significant for that particular study

⁵ The rates presented in this section of the table are not recidivism rates. The rates sum to 100% and depict cohort breakdowns in each area.

Ridge View Section Results (continued)

		Ridge View Pre-Discharge Recidivism	Ridge View Post-Discharge Recidivism
Ethnicity (Figure 44)	African-American:	24.0%	40.0%
	Hispanic:	29.9%	33.0%
	White:	24.1%	39.1%
	Other:	50.0%	0%
DYC Management Region (Figure 45)	Central:	25.2%	34.6%
	Northeast:	25.9%	40.7%
	Southern:	34.2%	31.6%
	Western:	20.0%	40.0%
Any DYC Escape (Figure 46)	Yes:	42.2%	44.4%
	No:	17.1%	31.5%
Re-Commitments (Figure 47)	None:	22.6%	38.7%
	One or More:	45.5%	27.3%
	Two or More:	75.0%	N/A
Completion Status (Figure 48)	Completed:	25.0%	36.8%
	Did not Complete:	50.0%	31.3%

INTRODUCTION

The Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Youth Corrections (DYC) prepares an annual recidivism report on committed youth. The current report is submitted in response to two separate Legislative mandates:

- 1) Department of Human Services, Division of Youth Corrections, FY 2011-12, Request for Information (RFI) #7; pursuant to Appendix I of the Appropriations Report prepared for the Colorado Long Bill S.B. 11-209
- 2) Section 19-2-411.5, C.R.S., the legislation authorizing the construction and operation of the Ridge View Youth Services Center

The first section of this report, “DYC Recidivism Rates for Youth Discharged,” is submitted in partial response to RFI #7. Section One provides recidivism outcomes based on new filings for felony or misdemeanor offenses that occurred prior to discharge from DYC (pre-discharge recidivism) as well as recidivism results based on new filings for felony or misdemeanor offenses that occurred within one year following discharged from a DYC commitment sentence (post-discharge recidivism). The text of this Legislative Request for Information 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. The evaluation should include, but not be limited to, the number of juveniles served, length of stay, and recidivism data per placement.

The Division does not typically report recidivism rates by placement, as youth committed to DYC experience multiple residential placements throughout their commitment that may influence future behavior; however the Ridge View Youth Services Center (RVYSC) is an exception because it was designed as a unique treatment option for eligible youth and is intended as the primary placement option for many clients⁶. Since youth who are placed in the Ridge View facility tend to have fewer subsequent placements that could influence re-offending

⁶ Reference Section 2 of this report which describes current methodological challenges of this program-specific RFI.

behaviors, it is more appropriate to report outcome measures for RVYSC that may not be as meaningful if the analysis were conducted for other DYC treatment programs or facilities⁷.

Section Two, “Ridge View Recidivism,” is intended to serve as DYC’s annual response to the legislation authorizing the construction and operation of the RVYSC facility⁸. 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.

The Ridge View Recidivism analysis examines recidivism rates for youth in the overall discharge cohort who were eligible for, and placed at, RVYSC during their commitment. To ensure consistency in how the Division reports recidivism data, this section of the report is prepared using the same standardized definitions of recidivism as used in Section One.

The Recidivism Measure

Recidivism is used as an overall outcome measure for DYC commitment programs. This report is intended to evaluate recidivism results for all youth discharged from DYC during Fiscal Year (FY) 2009-10. Like all recidivism studies, DYC’s evaluation is retrospective in nature. Each year the recidivism study examines and reports on the re-offending behaviors of youth who discharged from DYC in the State fiscal year two years before the report date. This delay in data reporting is because the Division requires a twelve month follow-up period to collect recidivism data for all youth in order to complete the post-discharge recidivism analysis. Youth who discharge near the end of the fiscal year under evaluation (June 30, 2010) receive the same follow-up time as youth discharged earlier in the year; therefore DYC needed to wait until June

⁷ Evaluation of the effectiveness of individual programs requires experimental research designs that incorporate control or comparison groups matched on critical characteristics, and strict procedures to measure program fidelity. These efforts are time and staff intensive endeavors, which are beyond the current resource capacity of the Division.

⁸ Section 19-2-411.5, C.R.S.

30, 2011 to collect filing data on this discharge cohort. For the current study, the sample includes all 822 youth who discharged from a commitment sentence to the Division of Youth Corrections in Fiscal Year 2009-2010.

This report is the thirteenth to apply the following definitions of recidivism to committed youth served by the Division. 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 (while the youth is under DYC supervision) 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.

Recidivism is an amorphous concept. In the absence of a standardized definition of recidivism both in Colorado and nationwide, meaningful comparison across states and agencies is simply not possible. Recidivism outcomes cannot be compared in a meaningful way unless the outcome measures are equivalent. The same is true for analyzing historical recidivism trends within an agency or system – without definitional consistency across time; there is no mechanism for meaningful analysis. While the recidivism definitions previously outlined may be somewhat standardized for the State of Colorado, Colorado is currently one of only two states in the United States of America that uses District Attorney filings as a measure of juvenile recidivism⁹.

Colorado's definition of recidivism (new court filing) is shared by only one other state in the nation; Maryland's Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) uses re-referral (along with arrest and re-conviction) to define recidivism, according to their most recent 2010 Statistical Report, which is technically the same as a court filing. Therefore it is not possible to directly compare recidivism rates from DYC to most other states' juvenile justice agencies. Even within the State of Colorado it is important, when making comparisons, to ensure that the recidivism measures being compared are similarly defined before drawing conclusions. The efforts taken to establish

⁹ Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, Annual Statistical Report (Fiscal Year 2010).

a common definition of recidivism in Colorado are outlined in Appendix A of this report, where definitional and methodological issues are both addressed in more detail.

It is extremely important to consider the definition of recidivism used by the Division while reading this report. The definition of “new filing” is especially important to remember when reading Section Two, as programs vary in their filing practices, and have great discretion regarding when and when not to file charges against a youth. Program policy, philosophy, and practice, as it relates to filings charges on youth, may artificially skew recidivism rates, making program to program comparisons very difficult. It may be one program’s policy to file charges on any and all offenses committed by youth in their program, while another program may rarely file charges on youth.

Study Methodology

Understanding the study methodology used is critical for accurate interpretation of recidivism rates. Since recidivism is defined for both the pre-discharge and post-discharge analyses as “a filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense,” the Division relied upon the Judicial Branch’s Management Information System¹⁰ for determining whether a recidivist act had occurred. Only those filings (felony and misdemeanor) entered into the Judicial data system are included in these recidivism measures¹¹. Traffic, municipal, status, and petty offenses are excluded from this recidivism evaluation.

At NYC’s request the Colorado Judicial Department prepared data containing all filings that occurred between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2011, for all persons under 25 years of age. Filing data is requested as early as July 1, 2004 (five years prior to the first possible discharges) to allow for the detection of each youth’s commitment charge. By capturing the committing

¹⁰ The filing data received from the Judicial Branch comes from the Integrated Colorado Online Network (ICON) database.

¹¹ The Denver County Court System is the only county court system in the State whose data is not captured by the Judicial Department’s data system. Therefore, adult misdemeanor filings processed by Denver County Court are not included in total in this study. Denver County felony filings are captured, because the Denver District Court processes them, which is a part of the Judicial on-line data system. Denver District Court also processes 100% of Denver County juvenile misdemeanor and felony filings.

offense, DYC was able to better ensure that an appropriate match was being made between the DYC commitment records and the Judicial Department's filing records.

The data received from Judicial was matched to DYC records using a high-level match of youths' last names, first initial, and two of three birth date elements. These matches were further examined for evidence of accuracy by a manual review of the full name, gender, and birth date listed by both agencies, plus further checks against the Colorado State Courts – Data Access¹² system for aliases, hyphenated names, etc. Any method to match files is limited by data entry errors, spelling differences, and multiple aliases. Efforts were made to minimize errors through meticulous spot-checking and manual reviews of cases.

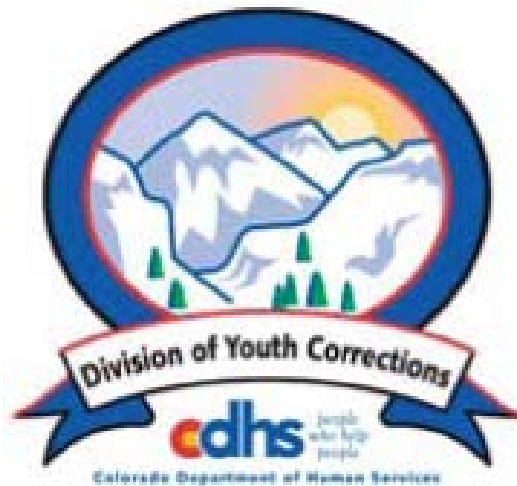
The matched file was used to evaluate pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism rates on all 822 youth discharged from DYC in FY 2009-10. This is the eighth report to include both pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism rates from the same client census¹³.

¹² In prior years the Lexis Nexus Courtlink database was used in the data verification and matching process. In FY 2009-10, the Colorado Judicial Department transferred data access to their own system.

¹³ Seven years ago, the Division modified the sampling methodology for this annual recidivism report. Previously, youth for the pre-discharge group were selected independently from the post-discharge group. The methodology change was intended to provide timelier reporting of recidivism data, and to eventually allow for a more accurate evaluation of recidivism trend data.

SECTION ONE:

Division of Youth Corrections (DYC) Recidivism



SECTION ONE: **DYC Recidivism Rates for Youth Discharged**

The findings contained in this report are based on an evaluation of eight hundred twenty two (822) youth discharged from the Division of Youth Corrections (DYC) between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010. Two types of recidivism are reported in these analyses, pre-discharge recidivism and post-discharge recidivism. The term “pre-discharge” is used to identify new filings for felony or misdemeanor offenses filed during the period of time a youth is supervised by DYC in residential commitment or on parole. “Post-discharge” recidivism refers to filings for new offenses that occurred up to one year following discharge from DYC supervision.

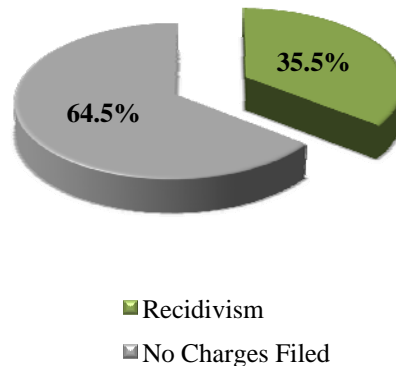
Pre-Discharge Recidivism: A filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense that occurred prior to discharge (while the youth is under DYC supervision) from the Division of Youth Corrections.

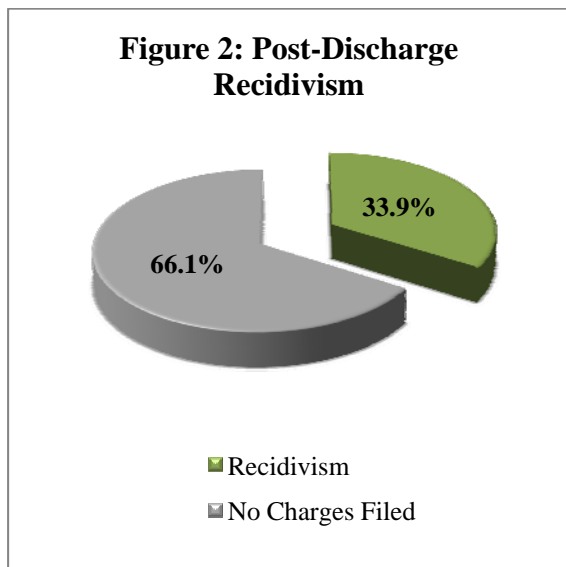
Post-Discharge Recidivism: A filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense that occurred within one year following discharge from the Division of Youth Corrections.

Overall Recidivism Rates for Youth Discharged in FY 2009-2010

As indicated in Figure 1, of the 822 youth discharged during the fiscal year, 292 (35.5%) had a new felony or misdemeanor offense filed prior to leaving DYC’s supervision. Sixty-five percent (n=530) of the discharge cohort did not receive any new filings.

Figure 1: Pre-Discharge Recidivism

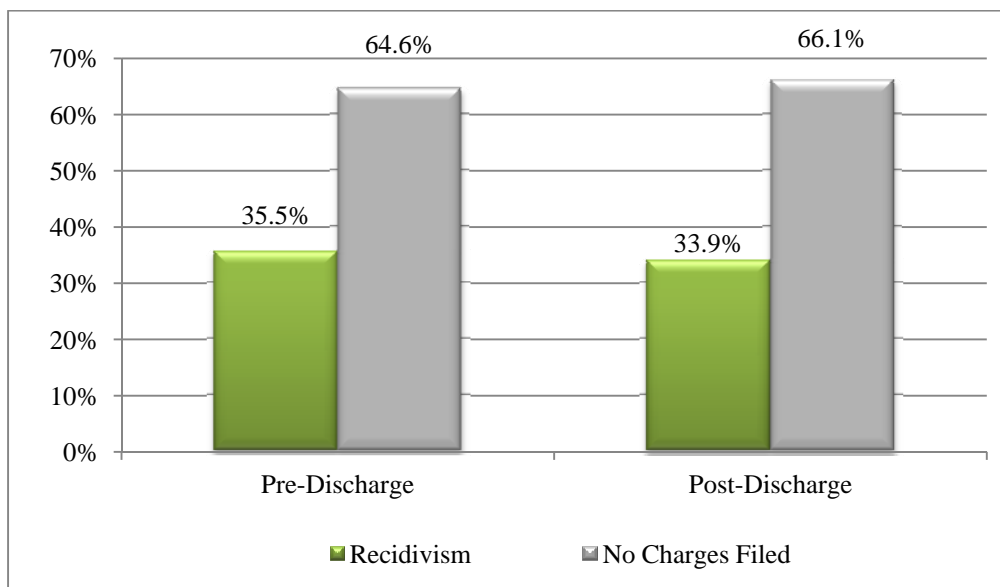




Information on new felony or misdemeanor offenses committed within one year of discharge from the Division resulting in a court filing was also collected on all youth in the discharge cohort. Figure 2 shows the post-discharge recidivism rate. Thirty-four percent of the youth discharged in FY 2009-10 (n=279) received a new filing within one year. Sixty-six percent (66.1%) of youth successfully went a full year following discharge without receiving any new filings, which dramatically reduces their likelihood of re-offending as time goes on.

It is possible for youth to be represented in both the pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism categories, meaning that the same youth could have committed an offense before being discharged from DYC as well as after their discharge date (see Figure 29, pg. 54).

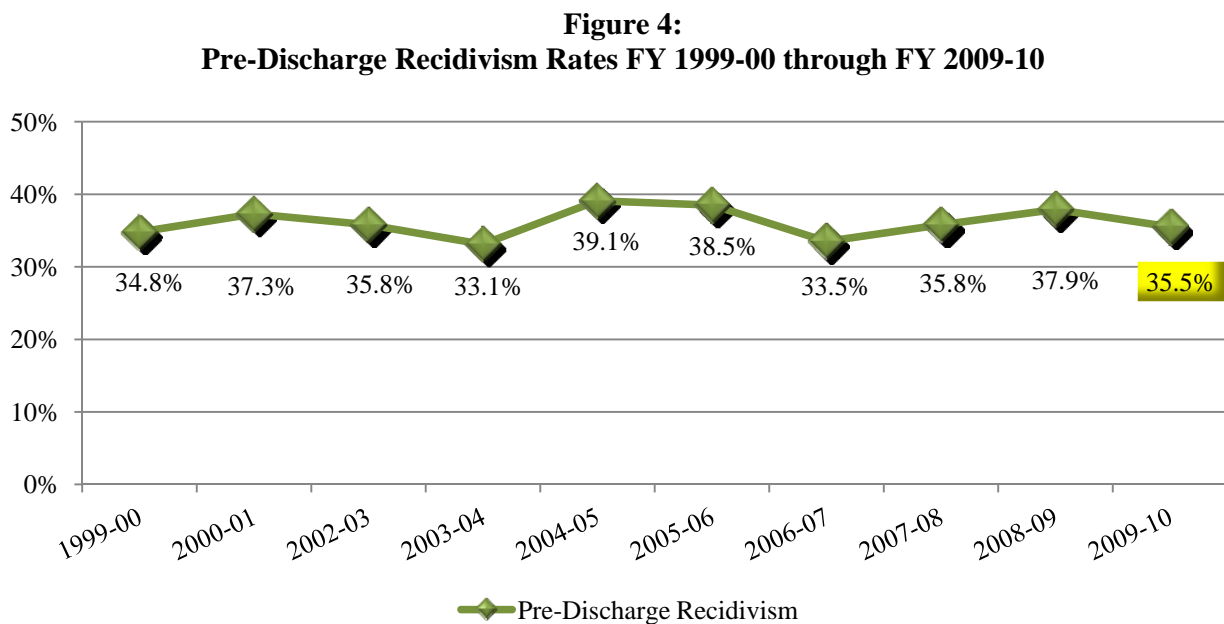
Figure 3: Recidivism Rates



Trends in Recidivism

The following charts outline trends in recidivism rates for the past ten NYC recidivism studies¹⁴. Trend data should be cautiously interpreted, as changes have been made with regard to study methodology, including group selection, data collection, and data verification techniques. Additionally, changes to State and Federal statutes and changes in NYC and State juvenile justice policy, practice, and funding make it difficult to attribute change in recidivism rates to any specific cause. See Appendix A for further discussion of this topic, including how information technology advancements may have increased the detection and reporting of recidivism.

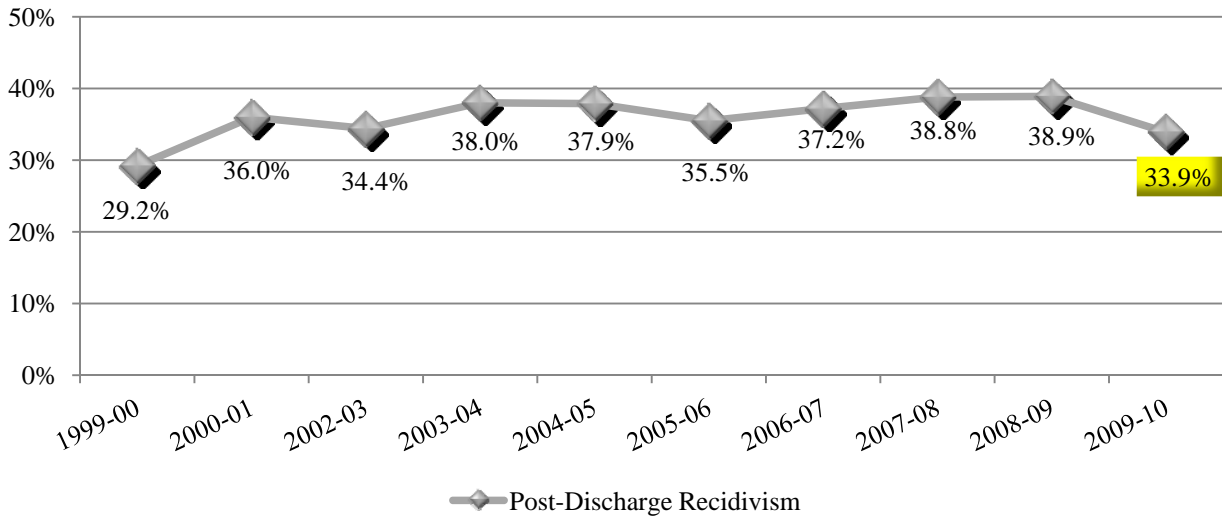
Figure 4 shows the pre-discharge recidivism rates since FY 1999-2000. The pre-discharge recidivism rate reported in the current report (35.5%) shows a slight decrease over the previous discharge cohort.



¹⁴ There was no FY 2001-02 discharge cohort evaluation because of a shift in study methodology to examine pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism rates from the same sample and increase focus on more current recidivism data.

Figure 5 depicts post-discharge recidivism trends for the past ten years. The FY 2009-10 cohort competes for the lowest rate in 10 years, only second to the rate in FY 1999-00. Although recidivism rates for both pre-discharge and post-discharge have shown a slight downward outcome for the most recent study, differences across all ten years are not statistically significant. The decline, however, in the post-discharge rate, is statistically significant from the previous fiscal year¹⁵. In fact, 33.9% is the lowest post-discharge rate in nine years, or since 1999-00, when it was 29.2%.

**Figure 5:
Post-Discharge Recidivism Rates FY 1999-00 through FY 2009-10**



Recidivism Charges Filed

The following table shows the breakdown of filings received prior to discharge and within one year following discharge from the Division of Youth Corrections. Youth often receive multiple charges (even for one incident) when filed upon. The data presented in Table 1 identifies the *most serious* offense each youth was charged with as a measure of the overall severity of recidivist acts that occurred with this cohort.

¹⁵ T=2.1297, df=1678, p<0.05.

Table 1: Most Serious Filing (Offense Type)

Offense	Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism	
	Number	Percent of Total Filings	Number	Percent of Total Filings
Person Felony	74	25.3%	61	21.9%
Property Felony	58	19.9%	65	23.3%
Drug Felony	9	3.1%	16	5.7%
Weapon Felony	10	3.4%	11	3.9%
Escape Felony ¹⁶	47	16.1%	4	1.4%
Identity Felony	4	1.4%	9	3.2%
Sex Registration Felony	2	0.7%	7	2.5%
Other ¹⁷ Felony	2	0.7%	9	3.2%
Total Felony Filings	207	70.9%	182	65.2%
Person Misdemeanor	27	9.2%	30	10.8%
Property Misdemeanor	18	6.2%	23	8.2%
Drug Misdemeanor	0	0.0%	2	0.7%
Weapon Misdemeanor	4	1.4%	2	0.7%
Escape Misdemeanor	13	4.5%	1	0.4%
Identity Misdemeanor	3	1.0%	1	0.4%
Sex Registration Misdemeanor	2	0.7%	2	0.7%
DWI/DUI Misdemeanor	5	1.7%	12	4.3%
Obstruction Misdemeanor	2	0.7%	2	0.7%
Protection Order Misdemeanor	4	1.4%	7	2.5%
Other ¹¹ Misdemeanor	7	2.4%	15	5.4%
Total Misdemeanor Filings	85	29.1%	97	34.8%
Total Filings	292	100%	279	100%

The majority of pre-discharge (70.9%) and post-discharge filings (65.2%) were for felony offenses. This is not surprising, given that all of the youth in this sample have already penetrated far enough into the Colorado juvenile justice system to be committed to the Division of Youth Corrections for a juvenile offense (see Figure 7, pg. 18). District Attorneys possess significant discretion in determining whether to file a felony or misdemeanor charge. Research has indicated

¹⁶ Youth can receive a new commitment from a pre-discharge offense if the adjudication and sentencing occurs following discharge.

¹⁷ Other offenses include misdemeanor traffic offenses, underage alcohol citations, and other miscellaneous offenses.

that persons *with* previous criminal histories are more likely to receive a felony versus a misdemeanor filing for similar crimes committed by persons *without* previous criminal histories¹⁸.

The preceding tables also highlight the “types” of charges for which clients received new filings. Over the past few years there has been a noticeable increase in the percentage of youth filed on for offenses that were traditionally considered to be “other” offenses¹⁹. This may be a result of new laws, changes in the justice system, and potentially stricter enforcement of certain offenses. For example, the legislation requiring the registration of sex-offenders was amended a few years ago²⁰. Further investigation revealed increases in specific offenses or offense types, thereby identifying new categories that could be broken out for offenses that have traditionally fallen into the “Other” category.

To better illustrate the types of offenses for which youth are receiving new charges, new categories were introduced in the three most recent recidivism studies released by DYC. These include escape charges, filings for identity theft or fraud, DWI, obstruction of justice, resisting arrest, and violations of protection orders issued by the court. Increased filings for offenses other than the four main categories reported in the past (person, property, drug and weapon) may result in both an increase in recidivism, as well as increases in the number of miscellaneous other offenses.

Table 1.1 shows the same breakdown of offense type, but separates out the pre-discharge recidivism by residential and parole. Parole recidivists receive more new filings for felony offenses when compared to residential recidivists, but only slightly more.

¹⁸ Gottfredson, Michael R., & Gottfredson, Don M., 1987. *Decision Making in Criminal Justice: Toward the Rational Exercise of Discretion*. Law, Society, and Policy, Volume 3.

¹⁹ Prior to 2009 the DYC recidivism study reported charge types in five main offense categories: *Person, Property, Drug, Weapon, and Other*.

²⁰ Section 18-3-412.5, Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.)

Table 1.1: Most Serious Filing (Pre-Discharge: Residential & Parole)

	Pre-Discharge Recidivism			
	Residential		Parole	
Offense	Number	Percent of Total Filings	Number	Percent of Total Filings
Person Felony	38	25.5%	47	26.7%
Property Felony	14	9.4%	47	26.7%
Drug Felony	2	1.3%	7	4.0%
Weapon Felony	4	2.7%	10	5.7%
Escape Felony ²¹	47	31.5%	12	6.8%
Identity Felony	0	0.0%	2	1.1%
Sex Registration Felony	0	0.0%	2	1.1%
Protection Order Violation	0	0.0%	1	0.6%
Other ²² Felony	1	0.7%	2	1.1%
Total Felony Filings	106	71.1%	130	73.9%
Person Misdemeanor	20	13.4%	10	5.7%
Property Misdemeanor	7	4.7%	13	7.4%
Drug Misdemeanor	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Weapon Misdemeanor	0	0.0%	4	2.3%
Escape Misdemeanor	13	8.7%	1	0.6%
Identity Misdemeanor	0	0.0%	1	0.6%
Sex Registration Misdemeanor	0	0.0%	2	1.1%
DWI/DUI Misdemeanor	0	0.0%	5	2.8%
Obstruction Misdemeanor	1	0.7%	1	0.6%
Protection Order Misdemeanor	0	0.0%	4	2.3%
Other ¹¹ Misdemeanor	2	1.3%	5	2.8%
Total Misdemeanor Filings	43	28.9%	46	26.1%
Total Filings	149	100%	176	100%

Risk Reduction to the Community (Level of Offense Severity)

It is important to note that not all re-offending behaviors are alike. Although all of the offense types shown in Table 1 are, by definition, recidivist acts, when compared side-by-side, some

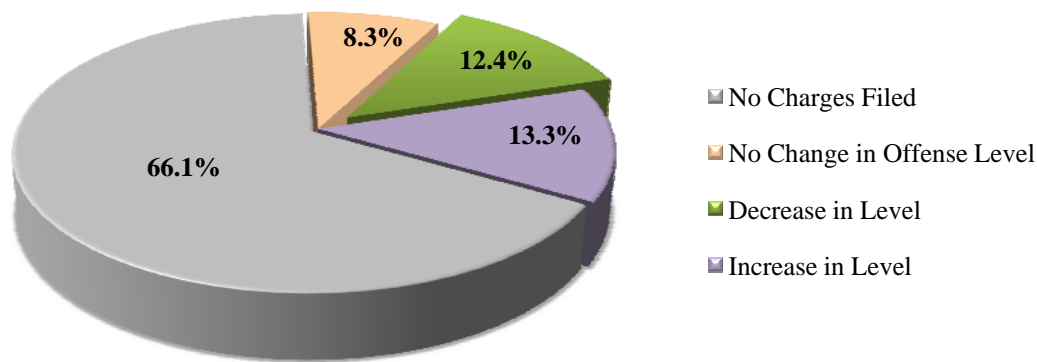
²¹ Youth can receive a new commitment from a pre-discharge offense if the adjudication and sentencing occurs following discharge.

²² Other offenses include misdemeanor traffic offenses, underage alcohol citations, and other miscellaneous offenses.

offenses are more serious than others. For example, a few youth in this study are defined as re-offenders for seemingly trivial offenses. The most serious offense for one youth in this study (identified as a post-discharge recidivist) was a misdemeanor “cigarette burning material on highway” offense. While the definition of recidivism does not differentiate between lower-level and higher-level offenses, a youth whose most serious recidivist act is a misdemeanor “cigarette burning material on highway” offense is a much different concern than a youth with multiple filings for robbery.

Reducing the overall rates of recidivism are important outcome measures for the Division of Youth Corrections. Youth committed to DYC have treatment plans developed that specifically address their individual criminogenic needs in an effort to reduce their likelihood of re-offending in the future. However, because recidivism rates have not changed significantly in the past ten years, it is important to also consider intermediate outcome measures when evaluating the effectiveness of the Division’s treatment programs. The following analysis examines the most serious offense type reported at commitment and compares it to the most serious offense committed within one year following discharge.

Figure 6: Post-Discharge Offense Level Risk Reduction



All of the 822 clients discharged from the Division of Youth Corrections were originally sentenced to DYC for treatment following a felony or misdemeanor adjudication. Figure 6 examines how these same youth, all of whom committed a serious delinquent act prior to

commitment, responded to treatment in the year following discharge from the Division²³. As previously noted, 66% did not receive any new charges in the twelve months following discharge. Another 12.4% of youth re-offended with a lower risk offense than the offense they were originally committed on. Overall, the Division was successful in reducing the level of criminal behavior for 78.5% of youth discharged in FY 2009-10²⁴.

Type of Filings

The type of filing (juvenile delinquency filings versus adult criminal filings) received by youth who re-offended is presented in Table 2. Delinquency charges are filings for offenses committed by youth under the age of 18, while criminal charges are for offenses committed by persons over the age of 18, or more serious offenses where a juvenile could be filed upon as an adult. All charges filed were included in this analysis²⁵.

Table 2: Type of Filing (Any Charge Filed)

Type of Filing	Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Criminal (Adult)	124	42.4%	229	82.1%
Delinquency (Juvenile)	110	37.7%	35	12.5%
Both Adult and Juvenile Filings	58	19.9%	15	5.4%
Total	292	100.0%	279	100.0%

Sixty-two percent (62.3%) of pre-discharge recidivists received at least one adult filing during their commitment (combining the first and third categories in Table 2). An even greater percentage of post discharge filings (87.5%) were adult criminal charges. This is not surprising considering that the decision to file on an offender as an adult or juvenile is primarily dependent

²³ Offense level change is measured by comparing each youth’s committing offense with their most serious post-discharge recidivist act. For example if a youth is committed for a felony person offense and re-offends with a misdemeanor property offense, they are considered to have decreased the severity of their criminal behavior.

²⁴ The remaining twenty-two percent (21.5%) either had no change in offense severity (8.3%) or exhibited more serious criminal behaviors following discharge (13.3%).

²⁵ If a youth received multiple new filings either during commitment or during the follow-up time period after discharge, a youth could receive both a new delinquency filing and a new adult filing depending upon the youth’s age at the time the offense occurred.

on the age of the offender. However, it is important to note that the majority of youth in this cohort who re-offended, either during their commitment or within one year of discharge from DYC, would be sentenced as adults (therefore ineligible to be re-committed to DYC) and given adult probation or Department of Corrections sentences if found guilty.

Filing v. Finding

It is important to realize that not all charges that a youth receives result in a guilty finding. Tables 3 and 3.1 illustrate this concept, and provide disposition data of the charges for which youth received filings. Ninety-two percent (92.1%) of youth were either found guilty of, or received a deferred sentence, for at least one charge prior to discharge. Similarly, eighty-four percent (83.9%) of the post-discharge cohort were found guilty of or received a deferred sentence for at least one offense.

Table 3: Disposition on Any Charge Filed

Finding	Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Guilty ²⁶	262	89.7%	226	81.0%
Deferred	7	2.4%	8	2.9%
No Finding of Guilt ²⁷	18	6.2%	24	8.6%
Unknown ²⁸	5	1.7%	21	7.5%
Total	292	100.0%	279	100.0%

Table 3.1 only shows pre-discharge recidivism, broken down by where the recidivist act occurred. The disposition outcomes are very similar when comparing residential filing dispositions to parole filing dispositions. It is important to point out that youth can be labeled a pre-discharge recidivist by re-offending in residential placement, re-offending on parole, or both.

²⁶ Guilty includes guilty and guilty of a lesser charge.

²⁷ No finding of guilt includes acquitted, charges dismissed, a plea of Nolo contendere, or a not guilty finding.

²⁸ Unknown includes those cases that are still open at the time of this printing.

For this reason, the residential total (n=149) and the parole total (n=176) does not sum to the pre-discharge total (n=292) shown above.

**Table 3.1: Disposition on Any Charge Filed
(Pre-Discharge: Residential & Parole)**

Finding	Pre-Discharge Residential		Pre-Discharge Parole	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Guilty ²⁹	132	88.6%	151	85.8%
Deferred	2	1.3%	6	3.4%
No Finding of Guilt ³⁰	14	9.4%	15	8.5%
Unknown ³¹	1	0.7%	4	2.3%
Total	149	100.0%	176	100.0%

Many states define recidivism as a re-adjudication (juvenile) or re-conviction (adult). If the DYC definition of recidivism were made more consistent with these states' juvenile justice agencies definitions, to only include guilty findings³², the recidivism rates for both pre-discharge and post-discharge would be lower than stated in this report (*31.9% for pre-discharge, and 27.5% for post-discharge recidivism*).

If the DYC definition of recidivism only included guilty findings, the recidivism rates for both pre-discharge and post-discharge would be:

**31.9% - pre-discharge
27.5% - post-discharge**

This, once again, illustrates the need to use common definitions of recidivism when comparing Colorado recidivism rates to other states, or even across Colorado State agencies.

Figure 7 helps to illustrate why recidivism rates vary, based on the definition of recidivism, and why differing rates cannot be easily compared. This figure depicts Colorado's juvenile justice

²⁹ Guilty includes guilty and guilty of a lesser charge.

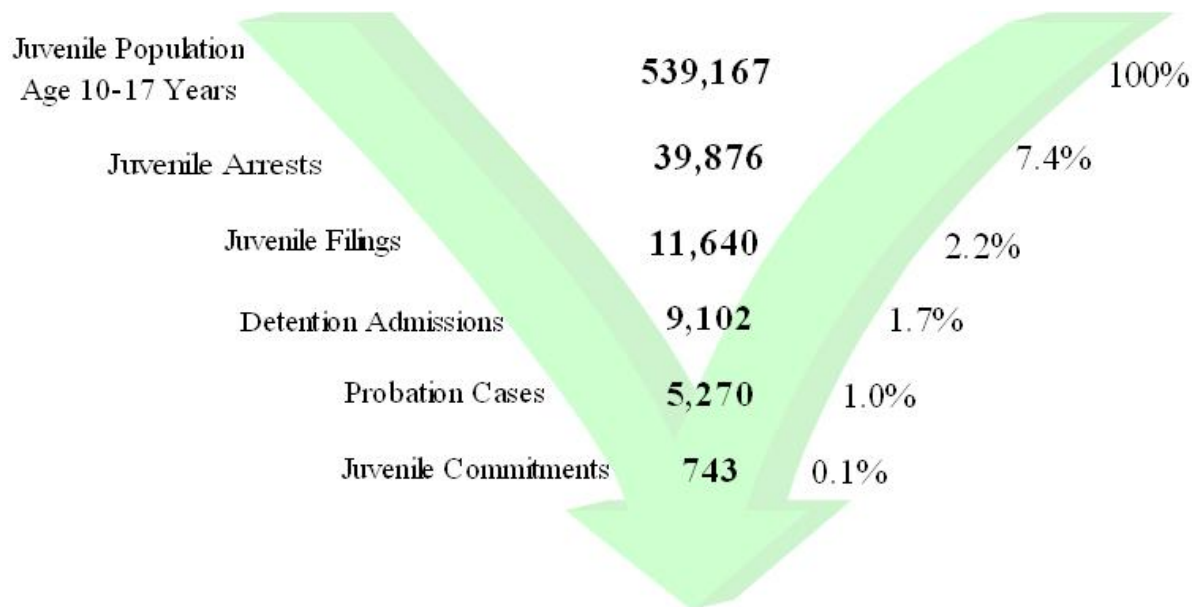
³⁰ No finding of guilt includes acquitted, charges dismissed, a plea of Nolo contendere, or a not guilty finding.

³¹ Unknown includes those cases that are still open at the time of this printing.

³² Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, DJJ Research Quarterly, Volume III, April 2005.

filtering process that takes place when a youth’s delinquent or criminal behavior is brought to the attention of the justice system. Those states or agencies that use re-arrests to represent recidivism will have higher recidivism rates than Colorado, which uses new filings to represent recidivism. Each stage of the juvenile justice system filters out more and more youth, therefore states with similar levels of criminal activity that use reconviction, re-incarceration, or re-commitment will have lower recidivism rates than those that utilize re-arrest, or new filing. For these reasons, it is imperative that system penetration be investigated when recidivism rates are compared.

**Figure 7: Juvenile Justice Filtering Process to Commitment
FY 2009-10**



Demographics

The following demographic data is presented to illustrate differences in recidivism rates by gender, ethnicity, and DYC management region. Throughout this report a finding followed by “**” indicates a statistically significant difference between groups.

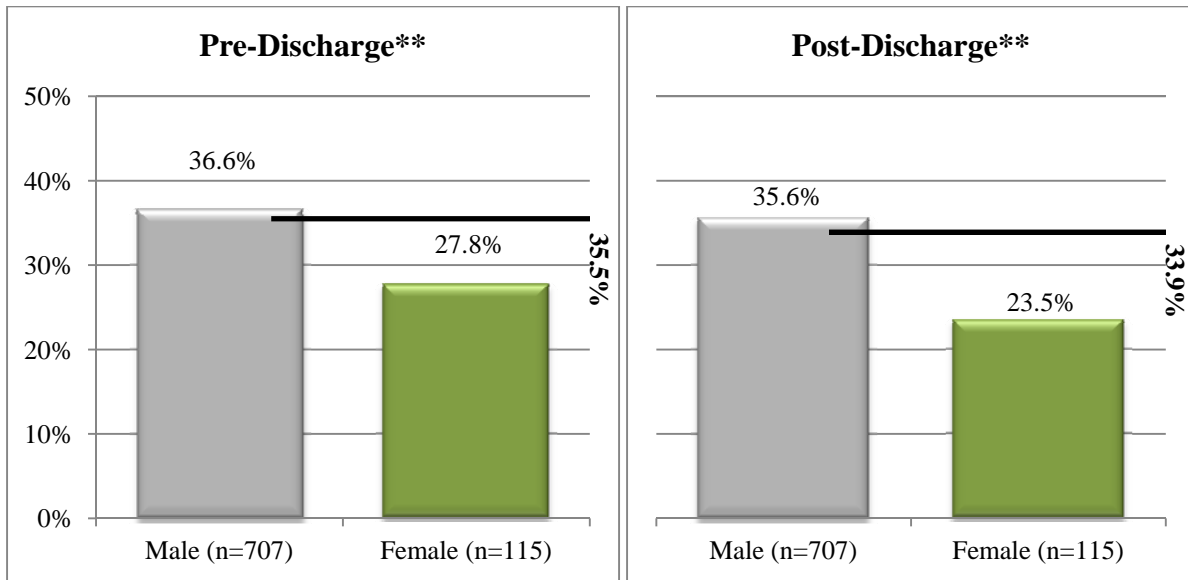
Males discharged in FY 2009-10 had significantly higher rates of pre and post-discharge recidivism, compared with females.

Primary ethnicity was also significantly correlated with pre-discharge recidivism rates.

Gender

Historically, males discharged from the Division of Youth Corrections have been more likely than females to receive a new filing for an offense. Figure 8 shows a breakdown of recidivism results by gender. Gender is a commonly known risk factor for delinquency, where males are significantly more likely than females to be involved in delinquent activities³³.

Figure 8: Recidivism Rates by Gender



**X²=6.055, df=1, p<0.05

**X²=15.961, df=1, p<0.01

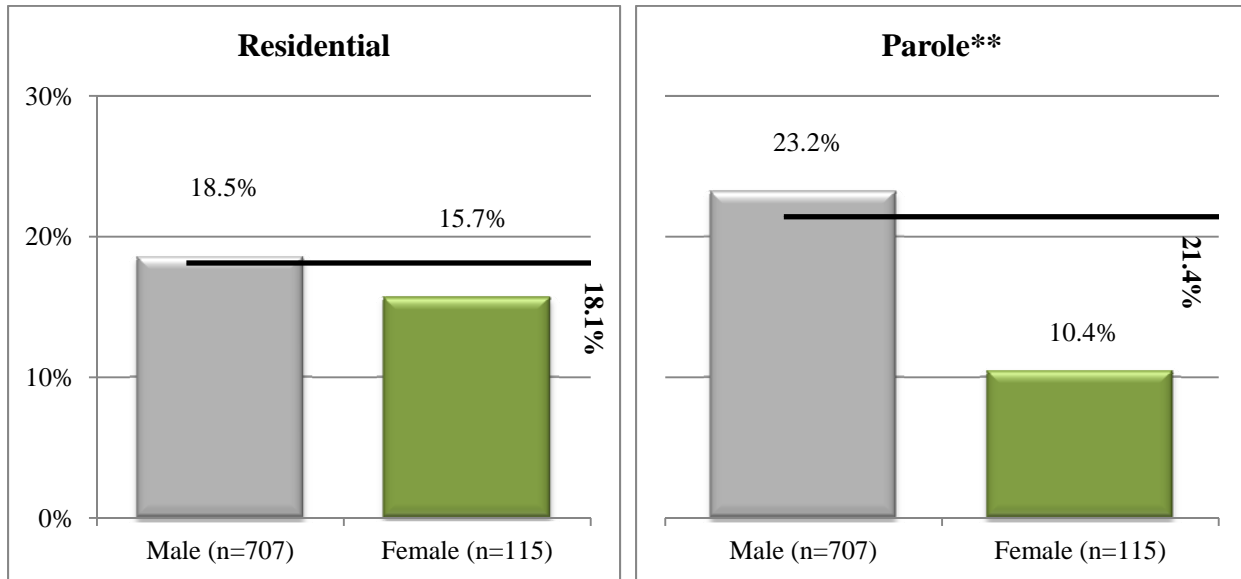
Eighty-six percent (N=707) of the FY 2009-10-discharge cohort was male and 14% (n=115) was female. Males (36.6%) had significantly higher rates of new filings for felony or misdemeanor offenses prior to discharge than females (27.8%) as well as during the year following discharge from the Division (males – 35.6%, females – 23.5%).

The black line running through these charts represents the average recidivism rate for the entire FY 2009-10 discharge cohort. As shown in Figure 9, the pre-discharge and post-discharge rates for males are only slightly higher than the average recidivism rate for the entire cohort, while

³³ Liu, X. & H.B. Kaplan (1999). *Explaining the Gender Differences in Adolescent Delinquent Behavior: A Longitudinal Test of Mediating Mechanisms*. *Criminology* 37:195-215.

recidivism rates for females is significantly below the line. This helps to illustrate how a larger group will have more effect on the average recidivism rate than a smaller group.

Figure 9: Recidivism Rates by Gender (Pre-discharge: Residential and Parole)



** $X^2=9.573$, $df=1$, $p<0.01$

Figure 9 helps to illustrate that males and females differ significantly in their re-offending while on parole. Females recidivate on parole at a rate of 10.4%, while males recidivate on parole at a much higher rate (23.2%). There are no differences, by gender, when looking at recidivism rates in residential placement.

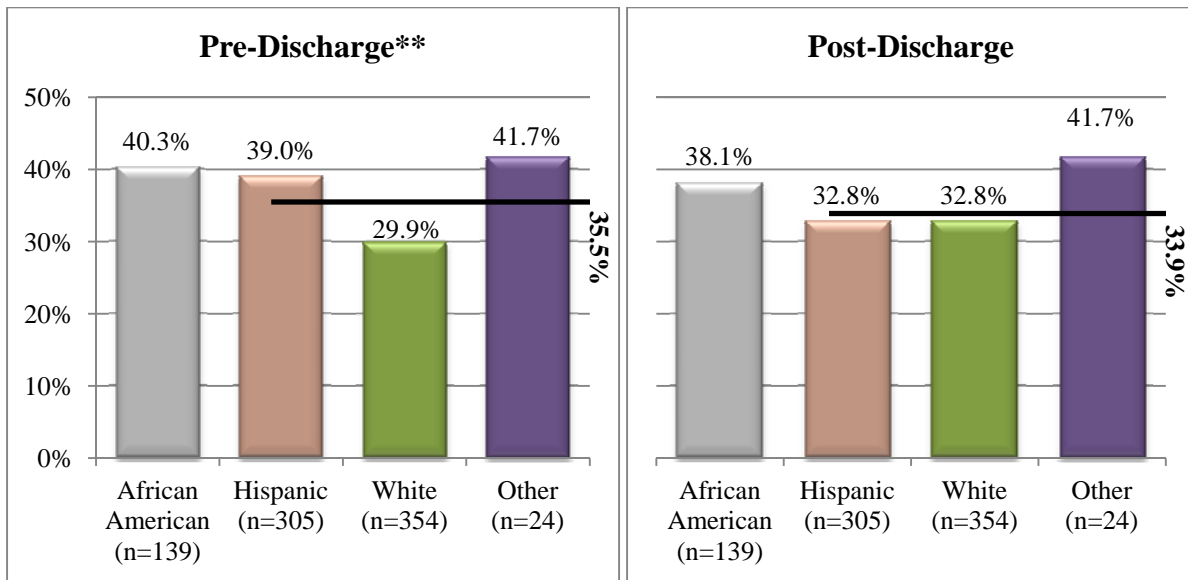
Primary Ethnicity

Figure 10 shows differences in recidivism rates by primary ethnicity. The “other” category includes Native-American and Asian-American youth, as well as multi-racial youth and those identified as “unable to be determined.” These categories are combined simply because of the small numbers of youth in each category. When taken independently, these small “n” sizes do not allow for valid statistical comparisons³⁴.

³⁴ Statistical significance between groups is a calculation that is based on the number of cases in each group as well as the differences between groups; therefore it takes a larger relative difference to be a significant finding (not because of chance) when group sizes are small.

White youth received significantly fewer filings for new felony or misdemeanor offenses prior to discharge (29.9%) than African-American (40.3%) or Hispanic (39.3%) youth in this discharge cohort. Results for the youth in the “other” category should be interpreted cautiously because of the small census size (n=24).

Figure 10: Recidivism Rates by Primary Ethnicity

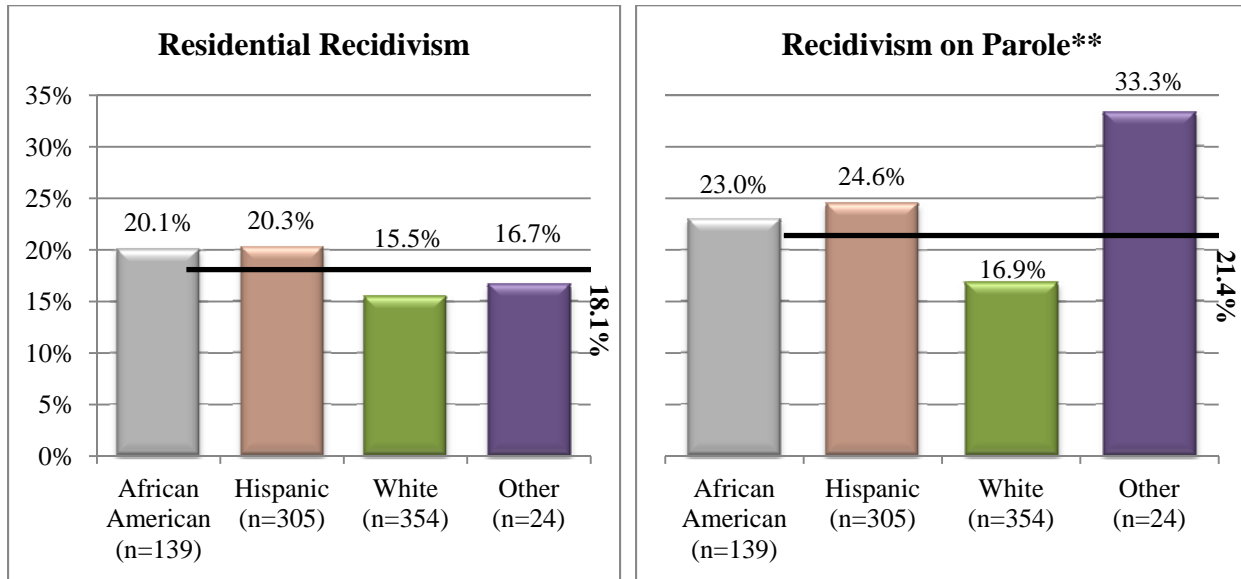


** $X^2=15.292$, $p<0.01$, $df=3$

This finding is concerning for the Division, because it could potentially reflect some biases within the juvenile justice system. While the Division of Youth Corrections does not make the ultimate decision on whether to file charges against a youth who re-offends prior to discharge, there are often decisions made either by client managers, facility staff, or treatment providers to initiate contact with police regarding incidents that occur in treatment facilities.

Interestingly, analyses show that these pre-discharge differences occur while on parole, **not** while in residential placement. This finding implies that the bias does not lie on the residential side of the system, but rather on the parole side. Figure 11 shows that, while on parole, African-American youth (23.0%), Hispanic youth (24.9%), and youth in the “Other” category (33.3%) received significantly more filings than White youth (16.9%).

Figure 11: Pre-Discharge Parole Recidivism by Primary Ethnicity³⁵



** $X^2=8.659$, $df=3$, $p<0.05$

While this could still potentially be caused by some bias in the juvenile justice system, the Division has less influence on initiating contact with police or bringing charges to the District Attorney’s office while youth are in the community on non-residential parole status. Experts in MOR (Minority Over-Representation) issues believe that the disproportionate amount of minority contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems stem from overall “social and economic disparities that exist in society.”³⁶ This sentiment argues that to effectively address system disparity, social risk factors must be identified and ameliorated even before youth reach the justice system. The Division has committed to further investigation regarding these disparate rates during the parole period, and plans to release those findings sometime during the next fiscal year.

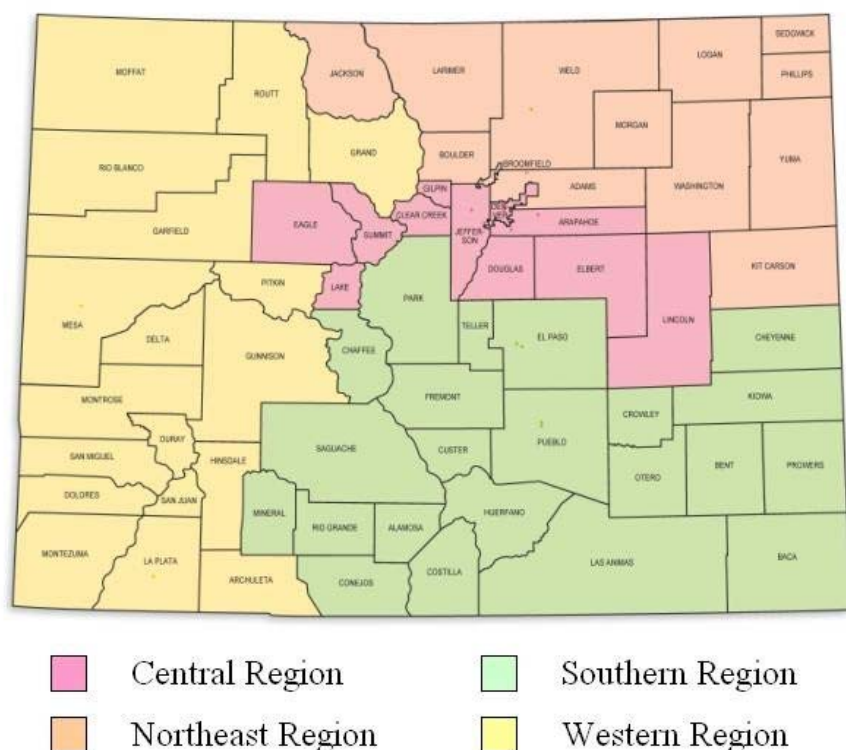
DYC Management Region

The Division of Youth Corrections has a regionally-based management structure, operating from four management regions in the State, as depicted in Figure 12.

³⁵ Percentages do not add up to 100% because some youth committed offenses on both residential and parole status.

³⁶ Stevenson, Phillip, quoted in Daniel Dighton’s (2003) “Minority Overrepresentation in the criminal and juvenile justice systems.” State of Illinois, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. The Compiler.

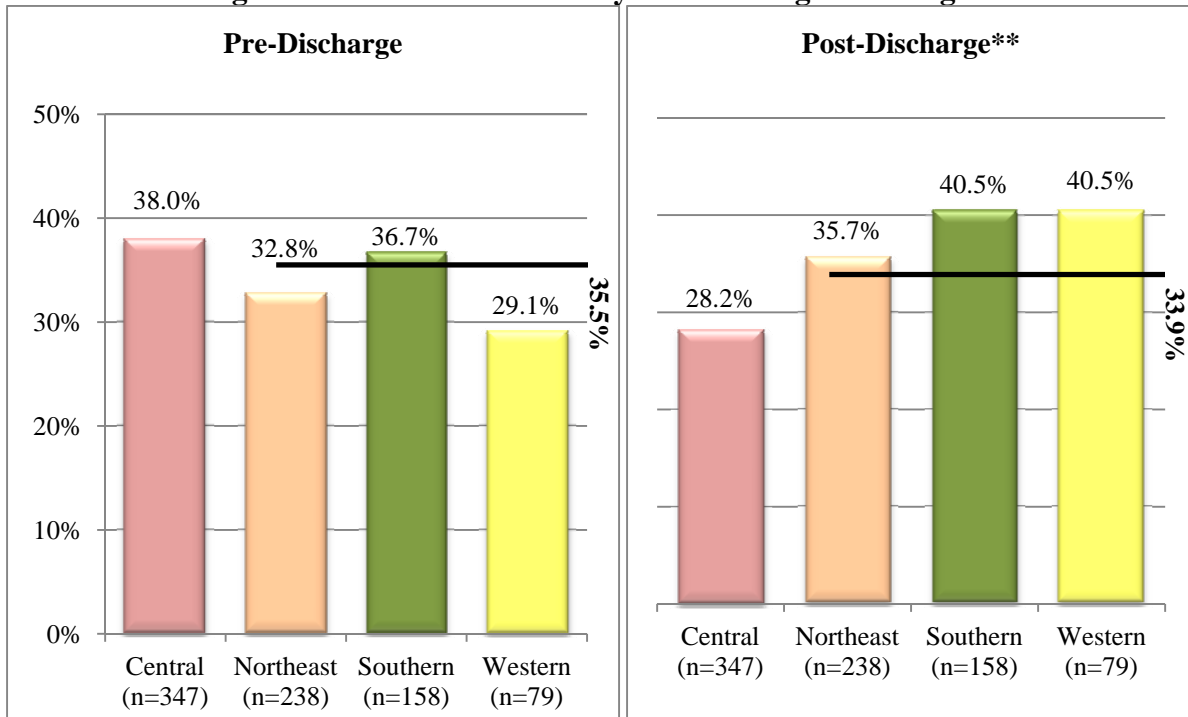
Figure 12: DYC Region Structure



The Central Region consists of four judicial districts and includes 11 counties (major counties: Denver, Jefferson, Arapahoe, and Douglas). The Northeast Region consists of five judicial districts and 13 counties (major counties: Adams, Boulder, Larimer, and Weld). The Southern Region consists of seven judicial districts and 22 counties (major counties: El Paso and Pueblo). The Western Region consists of the six judicial districts on the western slope, and 18 counties (major county: Mesa).

Figure 13 shows a breakdown of recidivism rates by DYC Management Region. There were statistically meaningful differences noted in rates by DYC Management Region when looking at post-discharge recidivism rates. Central region youth (28.2%) receive fewer new filings one year post-discharge than any other region (NR=35.7%, SR=40.5%, WR=40.5%).

Figure 13: Recidivism Rates by DYC Management Region

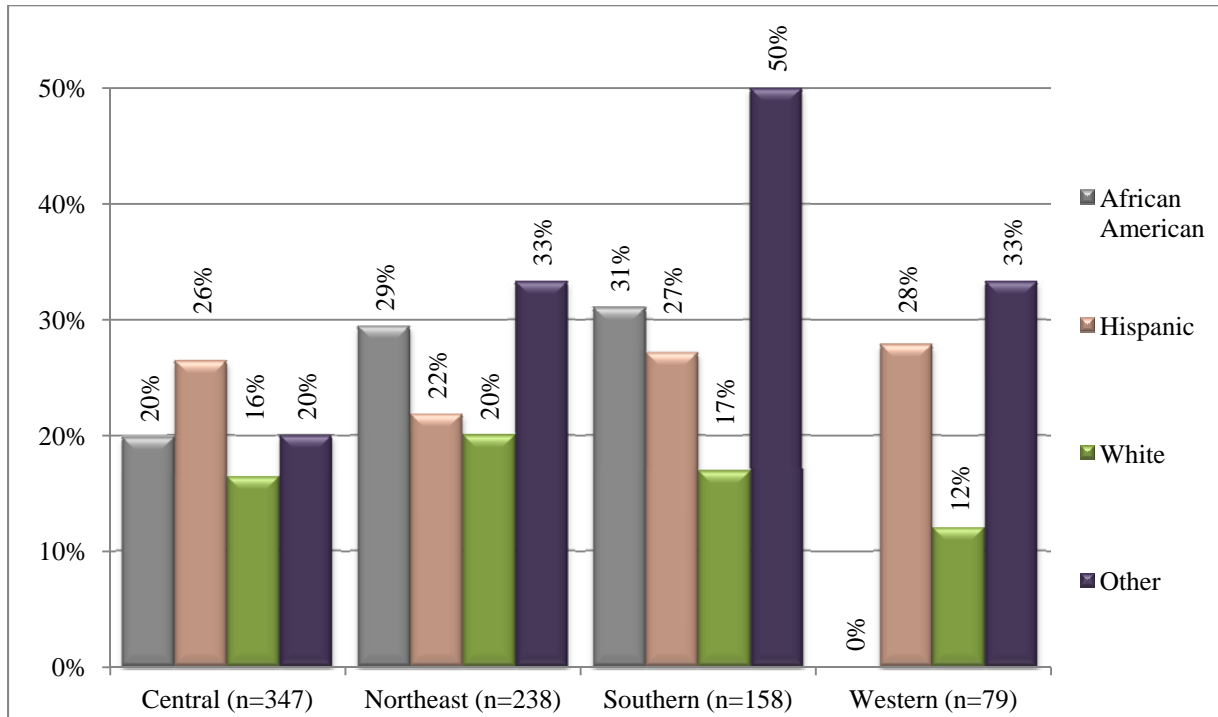


** $X^2=9.916$, $df=3$, $p<0.05$

Because there were disparities in parole recidivism rates when examining youth ethnicity, it prompted another look at this same analysis—by region. Figure 13.1 shows each region’s parole recidivism rates by ethnicity³⁷. While there are no statistically significant findings within the regions, the recidivism rate differences do follow the trend identified previously. White youth received fewer filings on parole than minority youth.

³⁷ Residential recidivism rates by Region and by Ethnicity are not shown. These rates were not significantly different.

Figure 13.1: Parole Recidivism Rates by DYC Management Region by Ethnicity



Risk of Re-Offending

During the first thirty days of commitment to DYC, youth undergo a battery of assessments to determine placement needs, treatment needs, and to evaluate the risk the youth poses to himself or herself (i.e. suicide risk) and the community (i.e. public safety).

Juvenile justice organizations often depend on risk assessment instruments to appropriately assess the likelihood of recidivism and to aid in the case planning process. The Division of Youth Corrections is continuing to redesign its assessment and classification services, with the goal of developing a comprehensive, state-of-the art assessment, diagnostic and classification system that is founded in evidence-based theory and principles. As part of that project, the Division introduced the Colorado Juvenile Risk Assessment Instrument (CJRA) in June 2006. This recidivism study analyzes CJRA risk scores and assesses how well they predict future criminal behavior (i.e. recidivism) and also examines a number of factors that have traditionally

been shown to increase the risk of re-offending, most of which are indicators of previous system involvement.

Colorado Juvenile Risk Assessment

Starting Fiscal Year 2006-07, every youth committed to the Division of Youth Corrections is assessed for criminogenic risk, needs, and protective factors both from a static³⁸ and dynamic³⁹ perspective. The CJRA replaced the Colorado Young Offender - Level of Service Inventory (CYO-LSI) that DYC had used for over a decade.

CJRA overall risk levels, identified at initial assessment, accurately correlated with the likelihood of re-offending *prior to DYC discharge*.

CJRA overall risk levels, identified at time of discharge, accurately predicted the likelihood of re-offending *within a year of discharge*.

The CJRA is used to initially assess, and periodically reassess risk of recidivism at specified points in time during commitment. Initial assessment and re-assessment of risk and protective factors at critical junctures during a youth's commitment sentence allows assessment staff, client managers, and Multi-Disciplinary Teams to accurately assess risk of recidivism and base treatment decisions on each youth's current needs. Figure 14 graphically depicts the mandated initial and re-assessment points required by DYC policy⁴⁰.

Each youth's path along the commitment continuum of care is different. Therefore, not all youth will be subject to the five assessment and reassessment points shown in Figure 14. All youth are given their initial CJRA during the assessment period, and then move on to some type of residential treatment care. There are youth who go directly from assessment to community residential treatment care, skipping secure and/or staff supervised care altogether. Similarly, there are also youth who are never granted parole, and may go straight from secure DYC residential care and discharge into the adult corrections system. The number of CJRA

³⁸ Static risk is based on historical data and cannot be improved with treatment.

³⁹ Dynamic risk is based on a youth's current living and social factors and can be targeted by treatment goals during commitment to reduce risk.

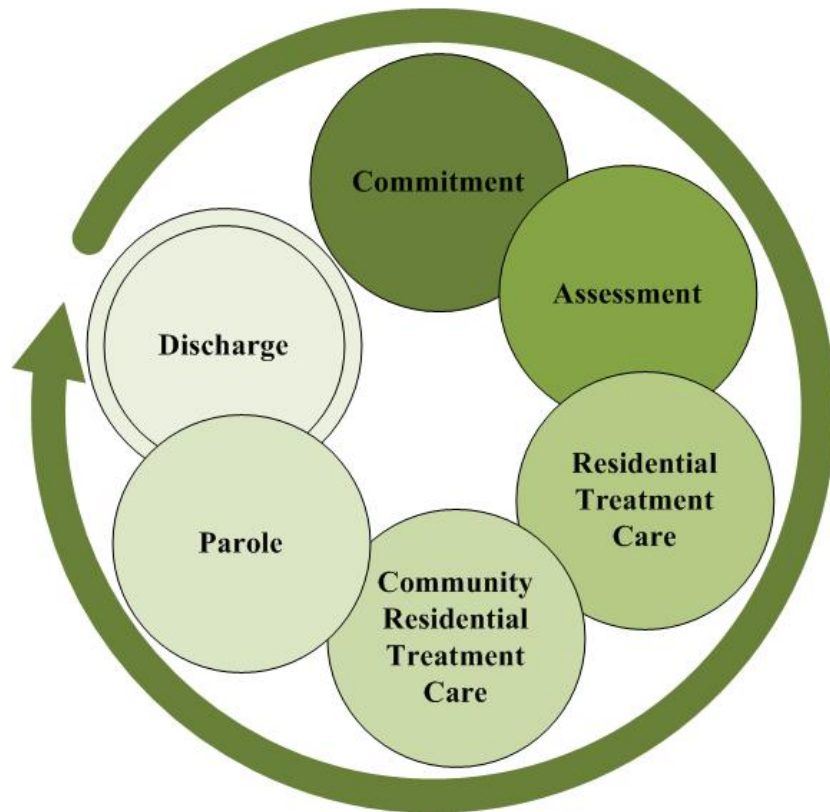
⁴⁰ DYC Policy 21.4.

reassessments required for each youth is totally dependent upon their individual treatment path, case plan, and needs.

Not all youth will be subject to the five (5) assessment and reassessment points shown in Figure 14.

The number of CJRA reassessments required for each youth is totally dependent upon their individual treatment path, case plan, and needs.

Figure 14: CJRA Assessment & Re-Assessment Points



Mandated CJRA Assessment & Re-Assessment Points

- 1) Initial Assessment
- 2) In Preparation for the Community Review Board (CRB) Hearing
- 3) Prior to Transition MDT/Parole
- 4) 30-90 days after Parole begins
- 5) At Discharge
- *) Upon transitioning to a different level of care and at staff discretion

Research has established and reaffirmed that there are a number of factors that strongly correlate with persistent and/or chronic delinquent behaviors. These criminogenic risk factors consist of a host of social, environmental, ecological, psychological and gender-based influences. Although a number of criminogenic risk factors are static and not amendable to treatment interventions (Gender, Criminal History, etc.), the vast majority of these factors are dynamic in nature (Mental Health, Substance Abuse, etc.). Dynamic risk scores are changeable through a targeted treatment plan and include scales where risk scores can be mitigated through treatment that directly addresses a youth's criminogenic needs. Dynamic risk factors, when targeted and treated appropriately, should be followed by a corresponding reduction in delinquent behaviors. The Colorado Juvenile Risk Assessment is rooted in the following 12 criminogenic domains:

1. Criminal History
2. Gender
3. School
4. Use of Free Time
5. Employment
6. Relationships
7. Living Arrangements
8. Substance Abuse
9. Mental Health
10. Attitudes and Behaviors
11. Aggression
12. Skills

The CJRA analysis included in this report focuses on CJRA risk scores at three main points in time: initial assessment, prior to parole, and prior to discharge.

The CJRA and Pre-Discharge Recidivism

Directly following commitment, each youth goes through an assessment period where DYC staff conduct an initial CJRA to determine each youth's level of criminogenic need and risk for re-offense, amongst other assessments. These assessments are used to guide the decision making process for treatment plans and level of security needed to ensure community safety during commitment.

The CJRA provides DYC staff with an overall risk level for re-offense, as well as separate domain-specific risk levels for re-offense. There are three levels of risk to recidivate: 1) low risk, 2) moderate risk, and 3) high risk. It is extremely important to understand that the CJRA only assesses *risk to re-offend*. The instrument was not developed or intended to predict any other type of risk. This is true for the overall risk level, and all the individual domain risk levels.

For example, if a youth scores out as “moderate risk” in the Mental Health domain, this means he or she has a moderate risk for re-offense, based on mental health indicators. This youth may have very serious and severe mental health treatment issues and needs—but this particular CJRA domain is not intended to identify overall mental health needs. The CJRA Mental Health domain is only measuring how a select few mental health factors relate to the likelihood of recidivism. In other words, to what extent does this youth’s mental health issues relate to his or her criminality, delinquency, and re-offending behaviors?

Overall, the CJRA risk level determined at assessment is correlated with a youth’s likelihood to recidivate during commitment (although not statistically significant). Low risk youth (low risk to re-offend) recidivated at a rate of 0%, moderate risk youth had a pre-discharge recidivism rate of 16.7%, and high risk youth had a rate of 26.6%. This is a positive finding that CJRA risk levels were directionally correlated with recidivism rates (both pre- and post-discharge), which lends some initial support for the instrument’s predictive validity. DYC has committed to assessing, to a greater degree, the tool’s reliability and validity in the coming years.

In addition to the overall risk level, there are also nine of the twelve domains previously listed that have risk scales associated with them⁴¹. Many of the scales have both a static risk score (based on historical risk factors which are not changeable) and a dynamic risk score (based on current factors which are changeable).

⁴¹ The Gender, Use of Free Time, and Employment scales are not scored because there is little variance in scores. For example, the Employment Domain Risk score has a maximum of two (2) points with little variability in risk. Gender risk is scored (male=1, female=0), and Use of Free Time has no risk score calculated at all.

Only one CJRA domain was significantly correlated with pre-discharge recidivism for this cohort (see Figure 15). The Relationships (static risk) scale was predictive of pre-discharge recidivism.

The Relationships domain measures a youth's peer relationships. There were few youth who scored low risk on the Relationships static risk scale (n=8). This is not surprising as all of the youth in this study have already been adjudicated delinquent by the State of Colorado. Peer relationships are the primary focus of this domain, and delinquent youth have a tendency to be friends with other delinquent youth. Youth who scored moderate risk in this domain (n=314) had lower rates of pre-discharge recidivism (23.6%) than youth who had a high risk score in this domain (33.7%, n=401).

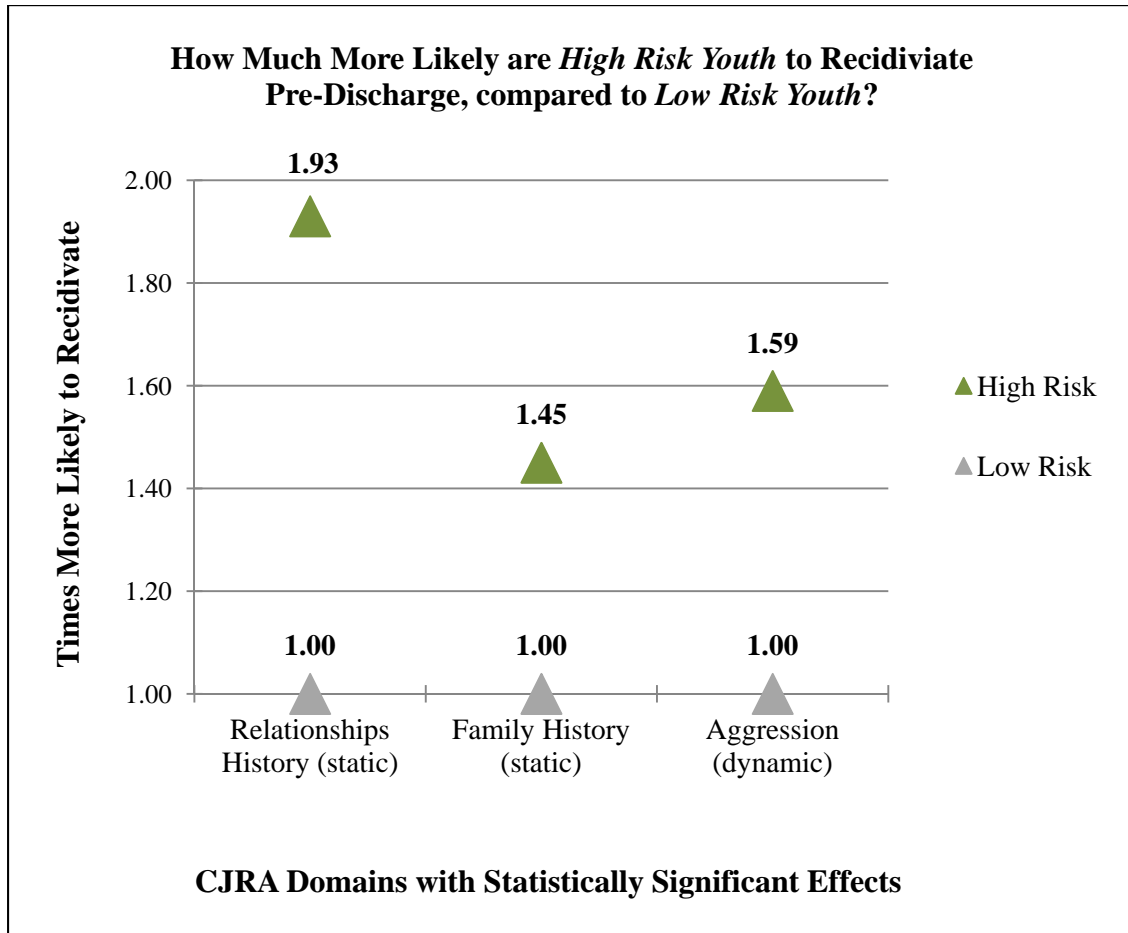
It is extremely important to understand that the CJRA only assesses risk to re-offend. The CJRA does not assess dangerousness, lethality, or help determine youth placement needs.

Additional "Risk Ratios" analysis conducted, provide a unique way of looking at the same data. Similar to odds ratios used to describe someone's minimal chances of winning the lotto ("*odds of winning are one in fourteen million*"), risk ratios describe some youths' greater chances of committing another offense ("*risk of recidivating is two times as likely as other youth with lower risk levels*"). Statistical predictions can be made, using CJRA data combined with recidivism outcomes, to say which youth are more likely to recidivate. Figure 15 helps to illustrate this type of analysis. Youth who score *high risk* on the Relationships History, Family History, and Aggression domains, are more likely to recidivate (pre-discharge) than youth who score out as *low risk* on these same domains.

For example, youth who are assessed as being *high risk* in the Relationships History domain are nearly two times as likely (1.93) to re-offend than youth who are *low risk* in this domain. Youth assessed as being *high risk* in the Family History domain are one and a half times (1.45) more likely to recidivate than *low risk* youth in this same domain. Lastly, youth that score out as *high risk* in the area of Aggression are 1.59 times more likely to recidivate compared to youth scoring

out as *low risk* on Aggression. These comparisons are depicted with the green and gray triangles shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Pre-Discharge Recidivism Risk Ratios (based on domain risk level)



To put this information into perspective, the gray triangles depict the low risk youth in these domains and the green triangles depict the high risk youth in these domains. For instance, looking strictly at the Relationships History domain, low risk youth are positioned at 1.00, as they are the “base-line” for this analysis. When comparing the recidivism rates of these two groups of youth (those scoring *low risk* on this domain vs. those scoring *high risk* on this domain), the results indicate that, on average, high risk youth are 1.93 times (nearly twice) more

likely to recidivate (pre-discharge) when strictly compared to their low risk counterparts on the Relationships History domain.

The CJRA and Parole Recidivism (Pre-Discharge)

As youth prepare to transition onto parole, preparations are made and put into action using an agreed upon parole plan. At this time, youth are also re-assessed, and these subsequent CJRA scores are presented to both the parole board and the MDT for review and consideration. In this cohort, 83% of the youth had a valid “Parole” CJRA⁴². While the Parole CJRA was not significantly predictive of recidivism while on parole status, the directionality of the results is on-target. The vast majority of youth (90.9%) who scored low risk did not recidivate on parole (n=44). Youth who scored out as moderate or high risk re-offended at very similar rates, 21.8% and 21.6%, respectively.

The CJRA and Post-Discharge Recidivism

When youth are discharged from parole following a commitment sentence they are re-assessed one last time. While CJRAs administered during commitment are used to modify treatment plans and monitor readiness for a youth to step-down to lower-security treatment programs, the discharge CJRA is used by the Division to measure risk reduction and treatment gains that were achieved during the youth’s commitment. Figure 16 shows post-discharge recidivism outcomes for youth by each CJRA domain.

Almost all of the youth in this discharge sample received a CJRA re-assessment within 90 days of their discharge date (n=790, 96.1%)⁴³. Post-discharge recidivism rates varied significantly with four of the thirteen risk scales analyzed, and all four are dynamic scales. In other words, elevated scores in these four domains accurately predicted a higher likelihood of post-discharge recidivism.

⁴² A Parole CJRA was selected as valid if it occurred 60 or less days prior to parole date.

⁴³ Some reasons why a discharge CJRA could not be completed on a youth include youth who were under adult corrections supervision, youth institutionalized for a mental health condition, or deported youth.

The four dynamic risk scales that were correlated with post-discharge recidivism rates are: Relationships, Alcohol and Drug, Attitudes and Behaviors, and Aggression. Higher scores on these scales predicted higher instances of post-discharge re-offending (see Figure 16). Overall, the predictive nature of these dynamic risk factors is an encouraging sign for DYC treatment providers. As providers target a youth's individual criminogenic needs during treatment they are hopefully reducing a youth's risk in these specific areas. If through treatment, providers are able to reduce a youth's risk level in the Relationships scale, for instance, that youth will be significantly less likely to re-offend after being discharged from their commitment sentence.

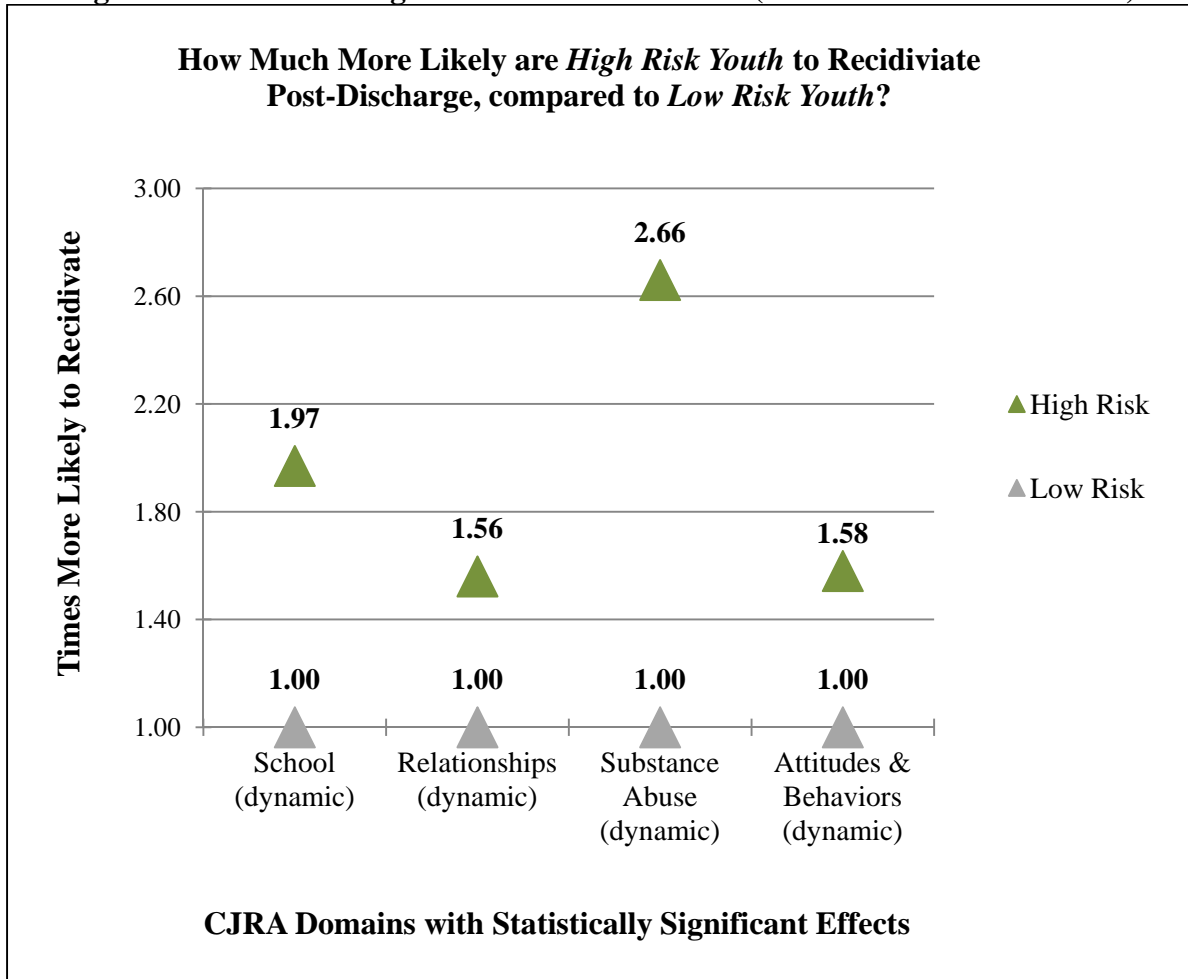
It is extremely important to understand that the CJRA only assesses *risk to re-offend*. The CJRA does not assess dangerousness, lethality, or help determine youth placement needs.

Once again, utilizing risk ratios, it can be determined which youth are more likely to recidivate post-discharge and at what greater chance. It is easy to see, from Figure 16, that youth scoring *high risk* on the Substance Abuse domain are much more likely to recidivate post-discharge than youth scoring *low risk* in this area. In fact, these youth are almost three times as likely (2.66) to re-offend within a year of discharging from DYC, compared to the youth scoring low risk in this Substance Abuse domain. Youth with high risk scores in the other three domains shown are also at increased risk for a new filing. These numbers are depicted with the green triangles shown in Figure 16.

- Youth who are assessed as being *high risk* in the School domain are two times as likely (1.97) to re-offend than youth who are *low risk* in this domain.
- Youth assessed as being *high risk* in the Relationships domain are one-and-a-half times (1.56) more likely to recidivate than *low risk* youth in this same domain.
- Youth that score out as *high risk* in the area of Substance Abuse are 2.66 times (nearly three times) more likely to recidivate compared to youth scoring out as *low risk* on Aggression.

- Lastly, who are assessed as being *high risk* in the Attitudes & Behaviors domain are just over one-and-a-half times as likely (1.58) to re-offend than youth who are *low risk* in this domain.

Figure 16: Post-Discharge Recidivism Risk Ratios (based on domain risk level)



To explain Figure 16, the gray triangles depict the low risk youth in these domains, and the green triangles depict the high risk youth in these domains. Looking specifically at the Substance Abuse domain, low risk youth are positioned at 1.00, as they are the “base-line” for this analysis. When comparing the post-discharge recidivism rates of these two groups of youth (those scoring *low risk* on this domain vs. those scoring *high risk* on this domain), the results indicate that, on average, high risk youth are 2.66 times (nearly three times) more likely to recidivate when specifically compared to their low risk counterparts on the Substance Abuse domain.

Overall, the risk ratio analysis helps to point out some important areas to target: 1) Relationships, 2) School, 3) Substance Abuse, 4) Attitudes & Behaviors, and 5) Aggression. When youth assess as high risk in these five domains, targeted treatment could mitigate some of the dynamic risk presented, help youth progress, and give youth a better chance at success.

Gains Made in Reducing Risk Factors and Increasing Protective Factors

To assess change in criminogenic risk, only youth who were discharged in FY 2009 – 10 and had three CJRA assessments (at initial commitment, at the time of their parole hearing, and at discharge) were included in the analysis. Change in scores, for the CJRA dynamic domains, were calculated between the CJRA conducted at initial assessment and those done at parole and discharge, using raw domain scores. *Increases* in dynamic *protective* factors and *decreases* in dynamic *risk* factors would both be indications of positive youth change.

Figure 17: Change in Domain Risk Scores: Assessment to Discharge

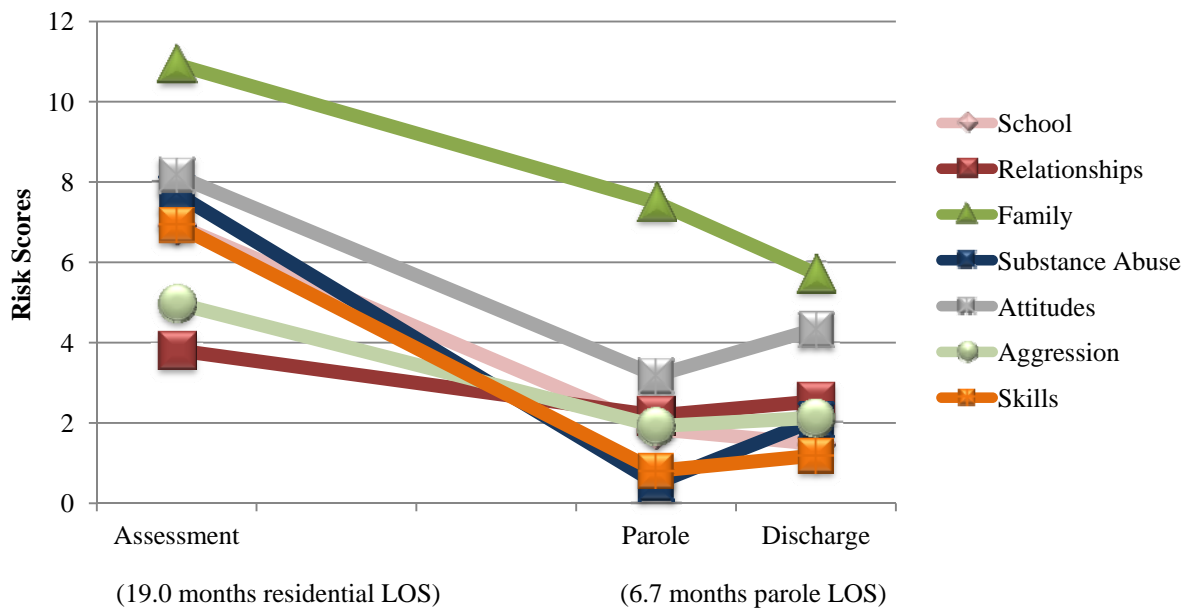


Figure 17 shows the reduction in dynamic risk scores for this discharge cohort by domain. The first point on the graph is the risk score at the time of assessment. The second data point is the average CJRA domain score when clients are released from residential treatment and begin

parole. The third data point is the time in which youth are discharged from DYC. The most dramatic gains are seen between youths' initial assessment and the CJRA administered at the time of parole. When reassessed at discharge, the magnitude of change from initial assessment is slightly less. This is not surprising given that when youth leave the structured and predictable setting of residential commitment and return to their community, some portion of the gains achieved is not maintained. The discharge CJRA scores, however, still show a significant reduction in risk factors and an increase in protective factors (Figure 18) from those measured at time of commitment.

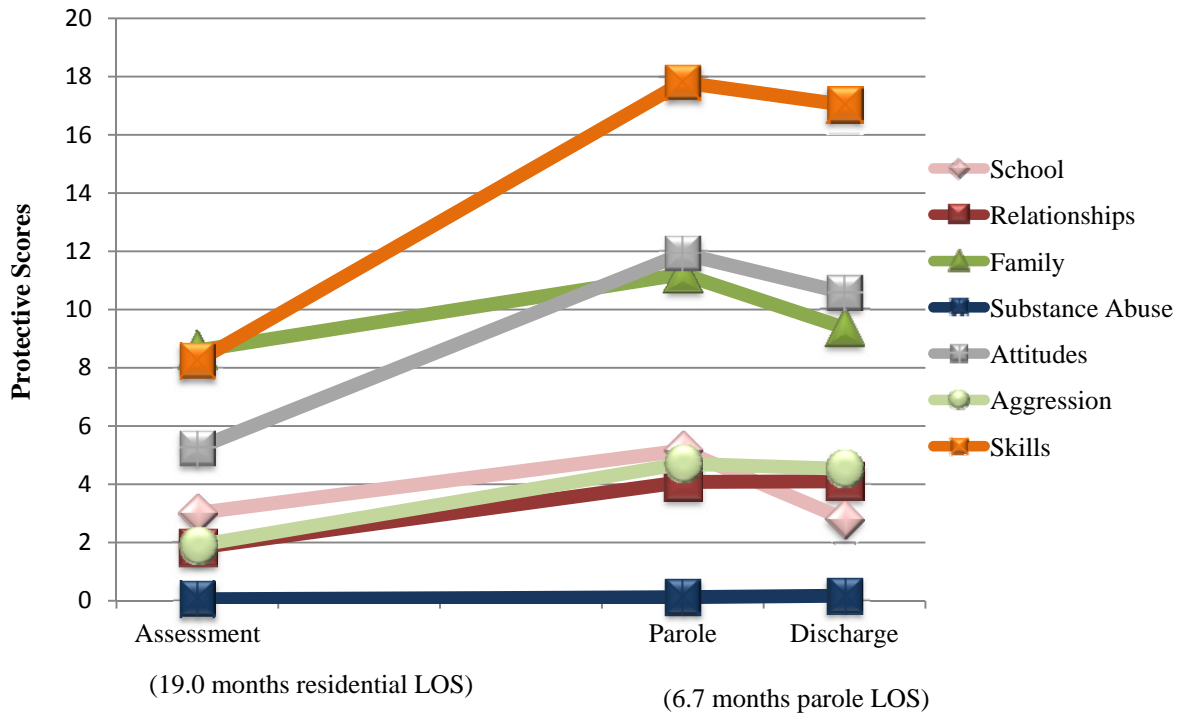
The reduction in domain risk scores shown above are all statistically significant changes, with the exception of the school risk score. An exceptionally low number of youth had school scores at all three points in time, which made the analysis, and the changes shown above for the school domain, less meaningful. The remainder of the risk reductions shown in Figure 17 are, in fact, statistically significant and do illustrate meaningful

changes in risk. If the provision of appropriate treatment services had not reduced this discharge cohort's average risk levels as notably as is seen, the previous analysis suggests that these youth may have experienced much higher levels of post-discharge recidivism.

CJRA scores at discharge show a significant reduction in risk factors and an increase in protective factors from those measured at time of commitment.

Not only is a reduction in risk scores important, but an increase in protective scores also reduces a youth's likelihood to re-offend. Figure 17.1, shows the increase in the dynamic protective scores, from assessment to parole to discharge, for this cohort. Once again, all of the increases shown are statistically significant, with the school domain being the one exception, due to the low number of youth with school data at the time of assessment.

Figure 17.1: Change in Domain Protective Scores: Assessment to Discharge



Prior Juvenile Justice and Other System Involvement

Although the CJRA’s Criminal History scale covers several different measures of “prior system involvement,” a number of individual indicators have been found to be highly predictive of pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism in prior reports. Therefore, recidivism rates are compared for the following measures of prior system involvement: number of prior out-of-home placements, number of prior detention admissions, number of prior adjudications, age at first adjudication, and number of prior commitments. It is anticipated that youth with more prior system involvement will have higher rates of re-offending. Juvenile justice research supports this hypothesis, stating that youth with a history of delinquent activity show an elevated

Individual indicators of prior system involvement were not as predictive as they had been in prior studies.

Prior adjudications were correlated with pre- and post-discharge recidivism.

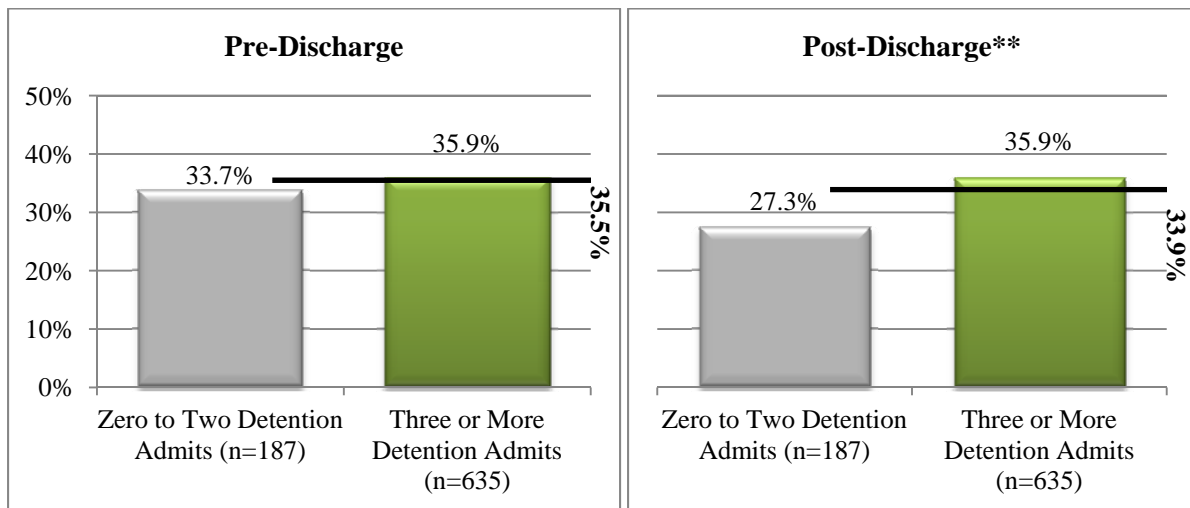
Prior detention admissions were correlated with higher incidences of post-discharge recidivism.

risk of future offending⁴⁴.

Prior Out-of-Home Placements can include inpatient mental health or substance abuse treatment facilities, Child Welfare (Social Service) placements, as well as any prior DYC placements. Pre-discharge recidivism rates were different, depending on the number of prior out-of-home placements. On average, those who received pre-discharge filings had 2.3 prior placements, whereas youth who did not reoffend had 1.8 prior placements⁴⁵. There were no differences in post-discharge recidivism rates by number of prior placements.

Prior Detention Admissions for this discharge cohort ranged from zero up to twenty for a single youth. On average, all committed youth discharged in FY 2009-10 had 4.6 detention admissions prior to their commitment. Breaking the data down into categories of youth with relatively low (zero to two prior detention admissions) and high (three or more prior detention admissions) levels of prior involvement with the Division of Youth Corrections, the results did show significant differences in post-discharge recidivism rates (see Figure 18).

Figure 18: Recidivism Rates by Prior Detention Admissions



** $X^2=4.802$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$

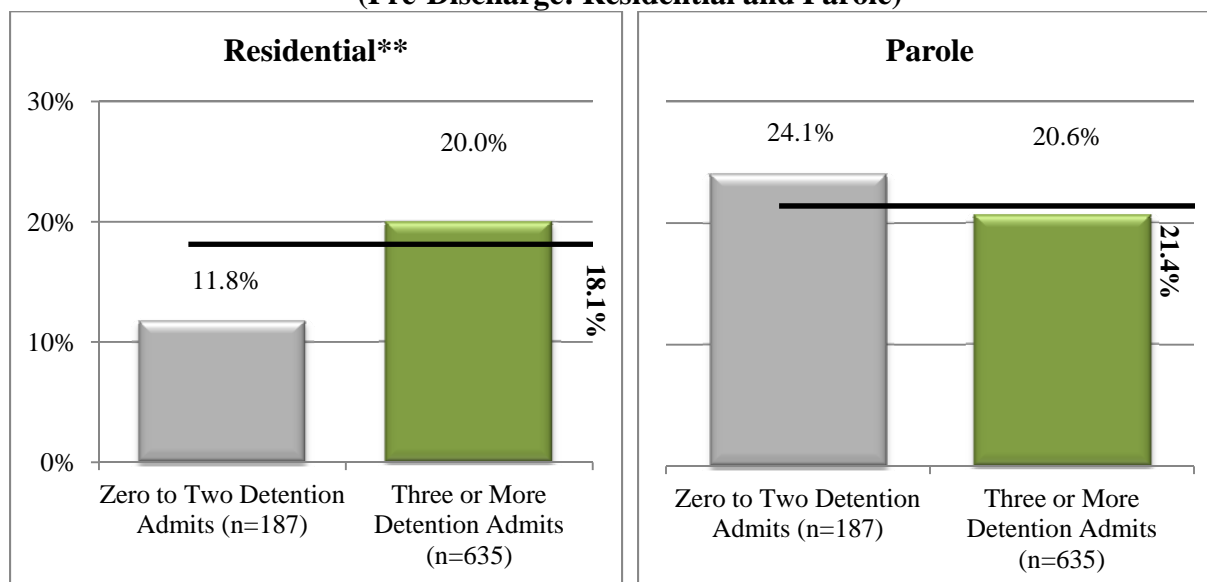
⁴⁴ Andrews, D.A., and Bonta, J. (1994). *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*. Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing, p.165.

⁴⁵ ANOVA:F=6.526, $p<.05$.

Youth with three or more detention admissions received more filings for felony or misdemeanor within one year following discharge (35.9%), when compared to youth with less than three prior detention admissions (27.3%).

While no differences were seen overall in the pre-discharge analysis, when this type of recidivism is broken down into residential and parole, significant differences do appear on the residential side (see Figure 18.1 below). Youth with three or more detention admissions are more likely to re-offend in a residential setting.

Figure 18.1: Recidivism Rates by Prior Detention Admissions (Pre-Discharge: Residential and Parole)



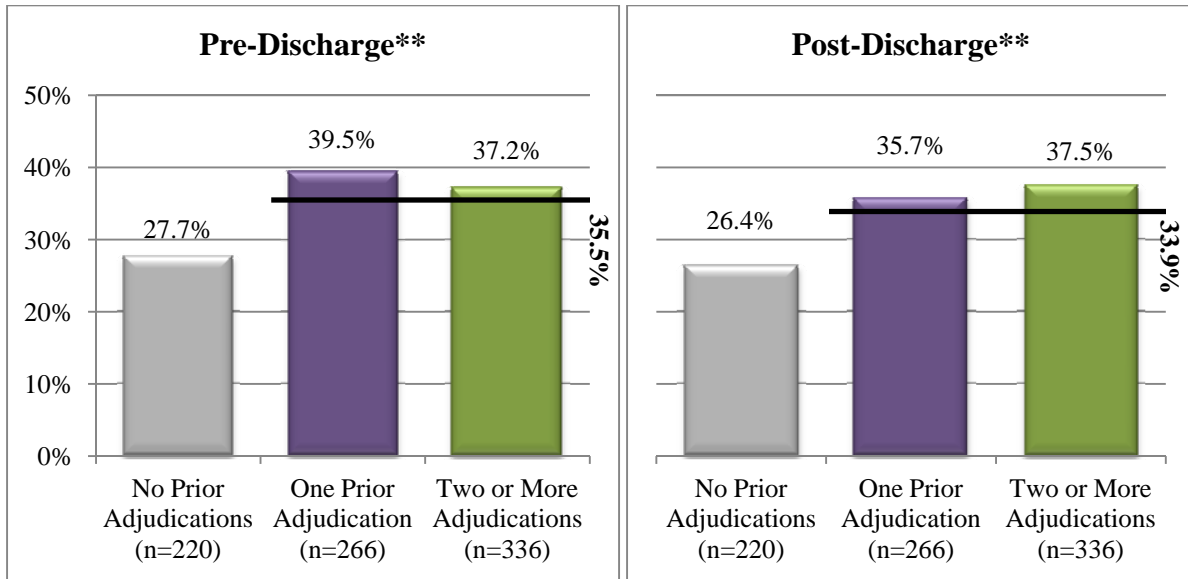
** $X^2=6.602$, $df=1$, $p<0.01$

Prior Adjudications is also a measure of prior involvement in the juvenile justice system, and as such, it is predicted that youth with more prior adjudications would have higher recidivism rates. An examination of pre-discharge recidivism rates found that youth who received a new filing, on average, had more prior adjudications than youth who did not recidivate⁴⁶. The number of prior adjudications was also significantly different for post-discharge recidivists⁴⁷.

⁴⁶ Pre-Discharge: $F=4.338$, $p<0.05$.

⁴⁷ Post-Discharge: $F=6.193$, $p<0.05$.

Figure 19: Recidivism Rates by Number of Prior Adjudications



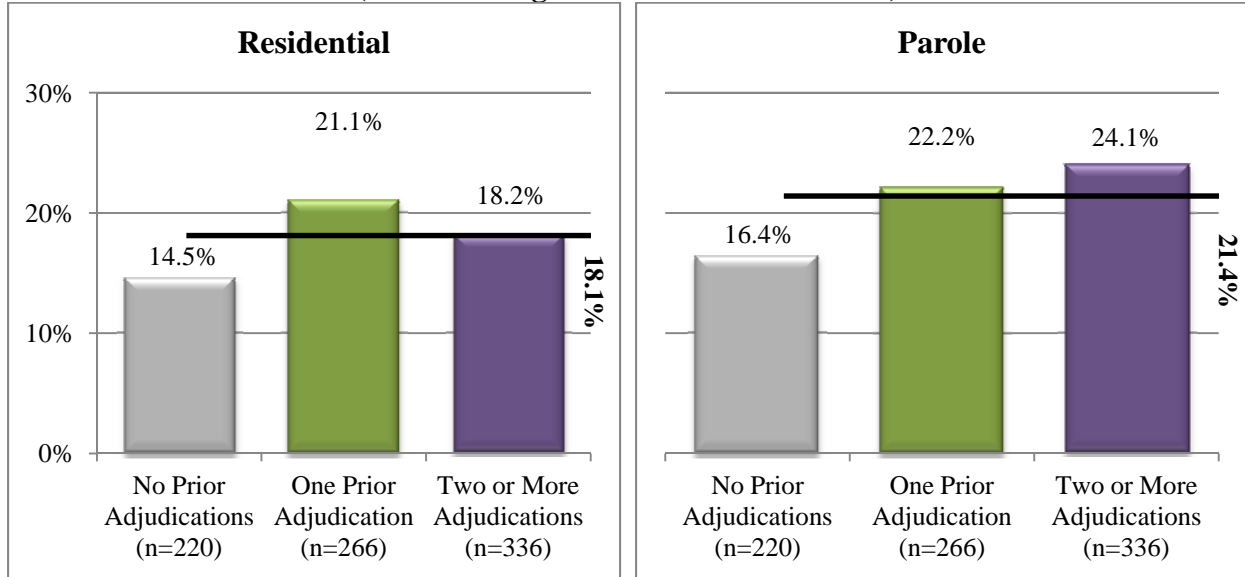
** $X^2=7.403$, $df=2$, $p<0.05$

** $X^2=7.905$, $df=2$, $p<0.05$

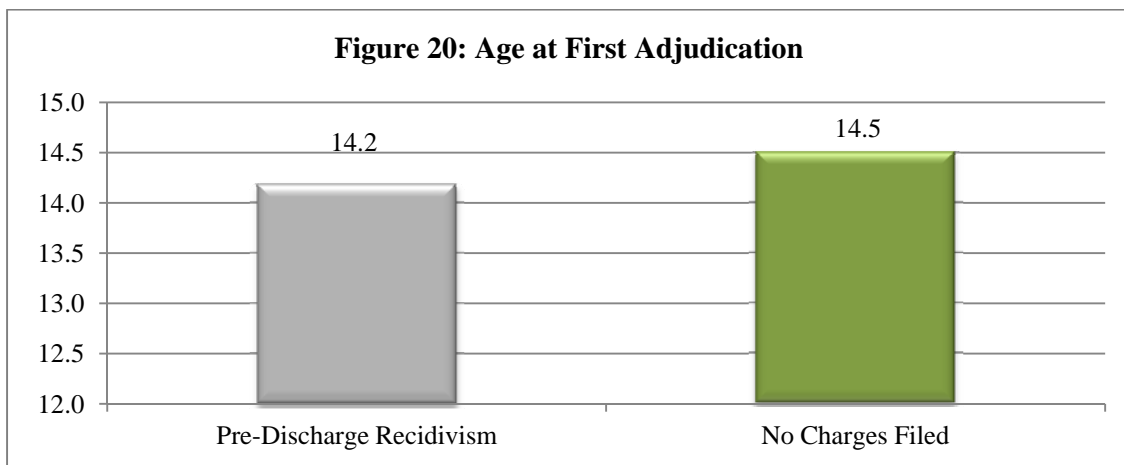
Figure 19 shows pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism rates by the number of prior adjudications for youth discharged in FY 2009-10. Forty-one (40.9%) percent of the youth in this study had two or more delinquency adjudications prior to their commitment to the Division of Youth Corrections. Youth with two or more prior adjudications had significantly higher rates of post-discharge recidivism (37.5%) than youth with zero or one prior adjudication. The pre-discharge rates, although significantly different, are in an un-predicted direction. Those youth with one prior adjudication had the highest rates of pre-discharge recidivism (39.5%) when compared to youth with two or more (37.2%), and no prior adjudications (28.2%).

When examining the number of prior adjudications, in accordance with residential and parole recidivism, the significant differences in rates seen in the overall pre-discharge analysis become diluted. This is illustrated in Figure 19.1.

**Figure 19.1: Recidivism Rates by Number of Prior Adjudications
(Pre-Discharge: Residential and Parole)**



Associated with number of prior adjudications is another primary risk factor for recidivism - *Age at 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 system⁴⁸. The average client age at first adjudication coupled with recidivism outcomes are shown in Figure 20.



**F=7.836, p<0.01 (n=821, missing=1)

⁴⁸ Andrews, D.A., and Bonta, J. (1994). *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*. Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing.

Although the age differences for youth who received a new pre-discharge filing and those who did not were small, they were statistically significant. There was no significant difference in age at first adjudication for youth who received a new post-discharge filing.

Prior Commitments, one last indicator of prior juvenile justice involvement, was also analyzed for this recidivism evaluation. A commitment to DYC represents the furthest potential penetration into the juvenile justice system that youth in this study might have encountered prior to their current commitment. Very few (n=47, or 6%) of the youth in this discharge cohort were committed to the Division of Youth Corrections prior to the commitment examined for this study, and there were no significant differences in recidivism rates by prior commitments.

From a treatment perspective these measures of prior system involvement are static indicators of risk that will not change in a beneficial way to impact risk reduction. Risk factors based on criminal history can only get worse (i.e., as youth acquire additional offenses, penetrate deeper into the system, etc.). Therefore, it is imperative that the Division continues to move in the direction of targeting dynamic risk factors, or those that can be positively effected, when making treatment decisions for youth. Additionally, protective factors may be targeted through treatment services in an attempt to mitigate the risk factors. The Division's Continuum of Care helps focus treatment, specifically transitional services, towards these particular goals. This approach may be partially to credit for the drop in post-discharge recidivism rates seen in this year's study cohort.

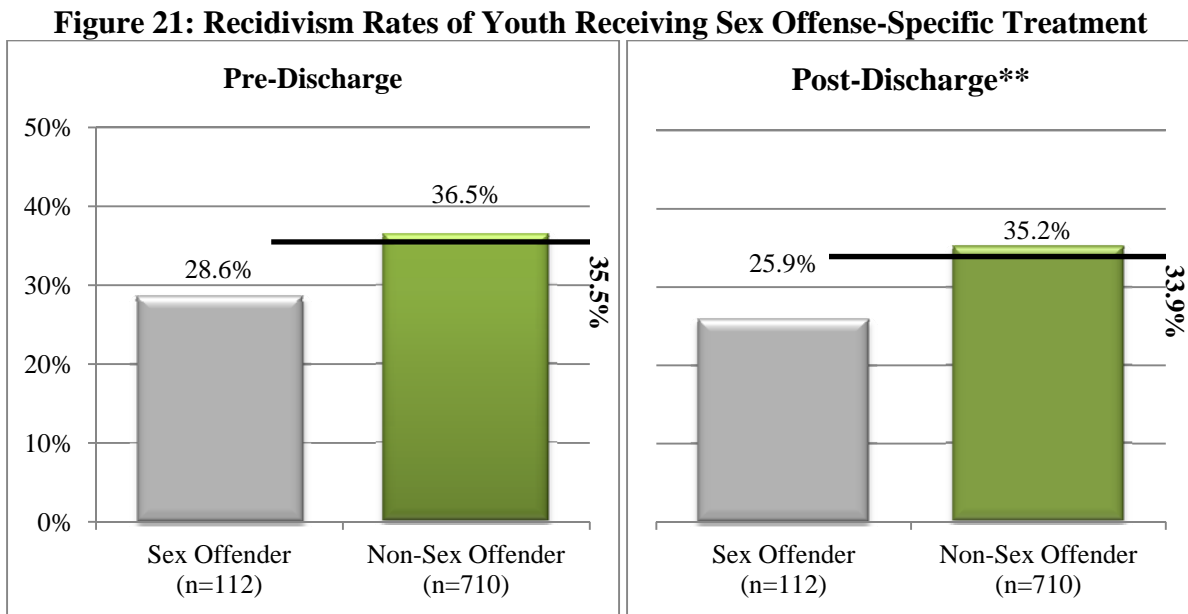
Special Populations

The Division is responsible for treating a number of youth with special needs. Included in these special needs groups are youth receiving treatment for sex offense-specific issues, substance abuse issues, and mental health issues. Recidivism analyses was completed on each of these subpopulations.

Sex offenders received fewer filings for new offenses in residential placement and within one year following discharge when compared with youth committed to DYC for other offense types.

Youth Receiving Sex Offense-Specific Treatment

The Division of Youth Corrections discharged 112 clients who received sex offense-specific treatment during commitment. Clients can receive treatment from DYC if they were adjudicated for a sexual offense, adjudicated for an offense that is non-sexual in nature, but was committed at the same time as a sex offense, or with the intention to commit a sex offense, or if the client or client's guardian request sex offense specific treatment services.

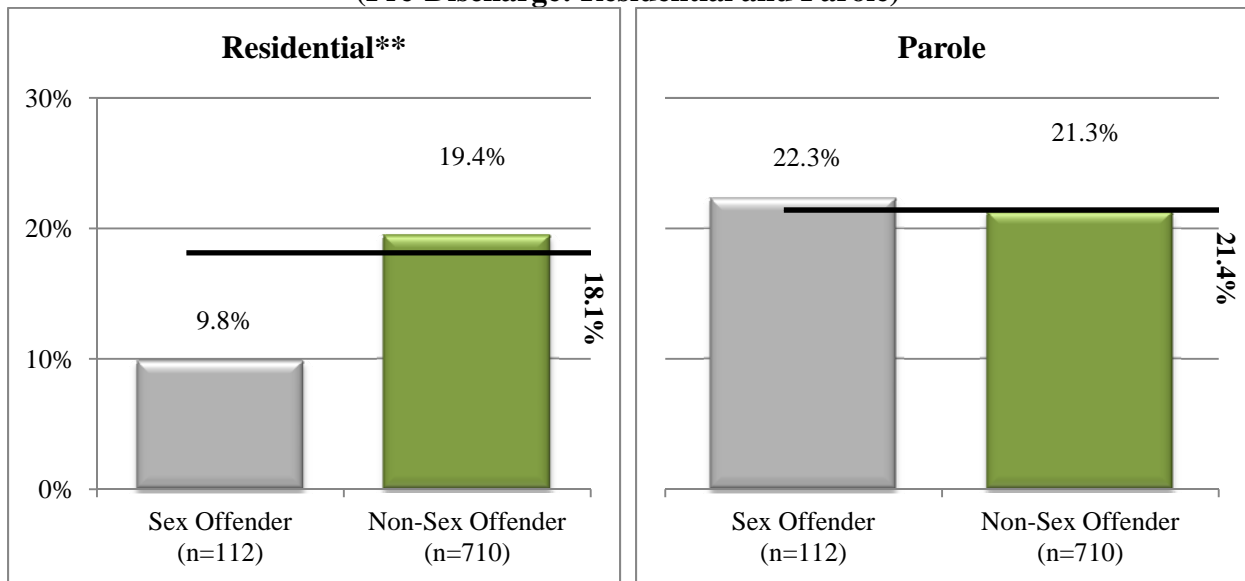


** $X^2=3.747$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$

Figure 21 shows that youth receiving sex offense-specific treatment in this discharge cohort recidivated at much lower rates than other youth in the year following discharge from DYC. Only 25.9% of clients receiving sex offense-specific treatment (n=29) re-offended within a year following treatment, compared with 35.2% (n=250) of youth who did not receive sex offender treatment services.

Once again, additional analysis reveals that significant differences do appear when the overall pre-discharge rates are split into residential and parole rates. Figure 21.1 shows that youth requiring sex offense-specific treatment are far less prone to recidivate in residential settings when compared to other youth. No differences in rates were found for parole recidivism.

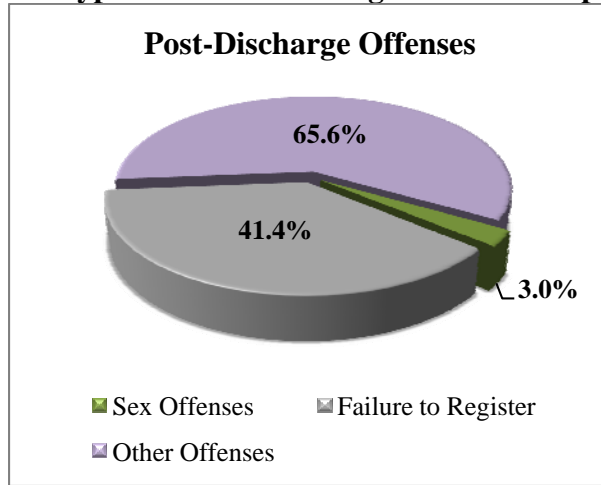
Figure 21.1: Recidivism Rates of Youth Receiving Sex Offense-Specific Treatment (Pre-Discharge: Residential and Parole)



** $\chi^2=6.026$, $df=1$, $p<0.01$

Because of the heinous nature of sex offenses, one primary concern with this population is not only a matter of overall rates of re-offense, but whether these youth recidivate with sexual offenses. Figure 22 shows that the majority of youth who do re-offend do not commit another sex offense (9% pre-discharge and 0% post-discharge). These percentages exclude “failure to register” charges. With “failure to register” charges included, the percentages would be 37.5% and 41.4%, respectively. This equates to over one third of these youth receiving a failure to register as a sex offender filing prior to discharge, and close to half of these youth within a year following discharge.

Figure 22: Offense Type – Youth Receiving Sex Offense-Specific Treatment



** $X^2=3.747$, $df=2$, $p<0.05$

Although the laws on sex offender registration are intended to inform and protect the community, they may also have the unintended consequence of increasing recidivism rates among a specific subset of juveniles. Even with recidivism rates that are inflated by failure to register charges, juveniles receiving sex offense treatment still exhibited significantly lower post-discharge recidivism rates than youth committed for other types of offenses.

Substance Abuse Needs

When youth are assessed at time of commitment, two screens/assessments are used to determine substance abuse treatment need levels (ASAP: Adolescent Self Assessment Profile, and the SUS: Substance Use Survey). These tools help staff determine whether a youth has a need for “prevention” services only, has a moderate need indicating “intervention” is needed, or if the youth has a high need for drug and alcohol use “treatment”. The P-I-T levels were shown to be un-correlated with all types of recidivism (pre-discharge, residential, parole, and post-discharge) for this discharge cohort.

Mental Health Needs

One of the instruments used by the Division to assesses a youth’s need for mental health treatment is the Colorado Client Assessment Record (CCAR) instrument. The Division also uses several other assessment and screening tools, including clinical and neuropsychological referrals

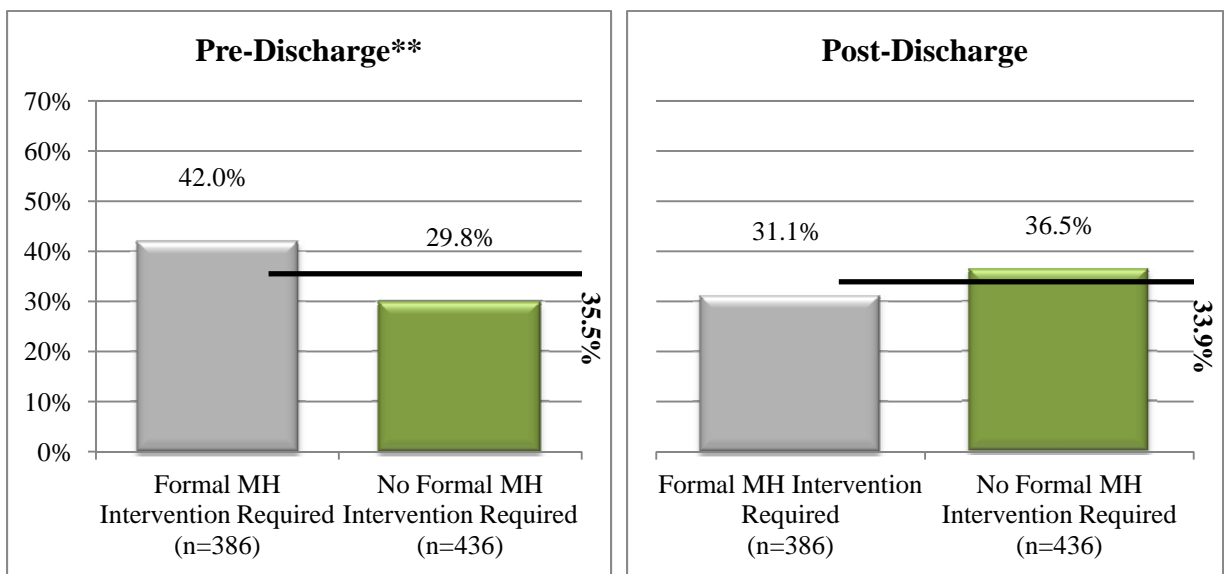
and consultations as needed. The most complete and readily available data, used in this study, comes from the CCAR tool, and is presented below.

Although a valuable tool in a number of ways, the CCAR alone is not an adequate instrument for measuring DYC youth mental health need levels. The mental health need levels of the youth that DYC serves often constitute a complex amalgamation of behavioral, emotional, and relational disruptions. The CCAR is configured to provide a disconnected appraisal of individual domains related to mental health disruption, and does not offer a measurement of how multiple mental health factors converge to represent the youth's level or degree of need. For this reason, the Division encourages readers to interpret CCAR recidivism results with caution.

Although a valuable tool in a number of ways, the CCAR alone is not an adequate instrument for measuring DYC youth mental health need levels.

Youth are assessed as requiring professional mental health intervention by using a scale on the tool called “overall symptom severity”. If a youth is assessed at a five or higher on this scale, it indicates that “symptoms are present which require formal professional mental health intervention.” Using this method, 47% of discharges were assessed as requiring formal mental health intervention.

Figure 23: Recidivism by Mental Health Needs

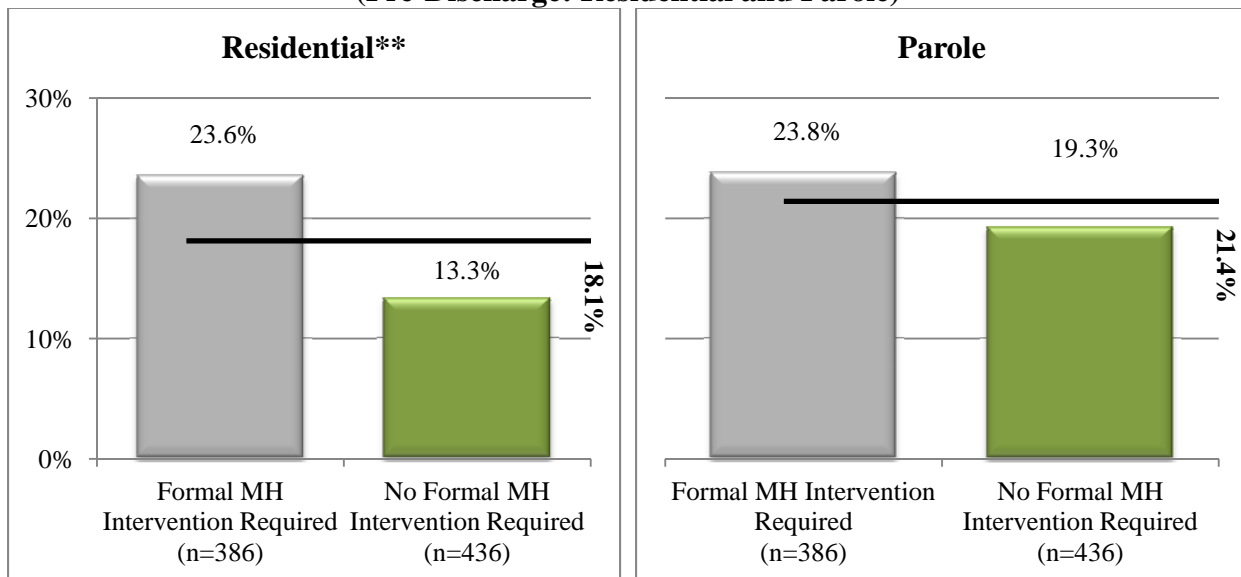


**X² = 13.201, df=1, p<0.01

Looking at recidivism rates, these youth requiring mental health intervention were much more likely to recidivate pre-discharge (42.0%) than youth not requiring intervention (29.8%) in this area. Mental health needs on this scale, however, were not predictive of post-discharge recidivism (see Figure 23).

A closer examination of the pre-discharge rates reveal that youth requiring formal MH intervention recidivate at higher rates in residential placement than youth not requiring any formal treatment in this area. In fact, the re-offense rate difference is substantial. Youth with mental health needs re-offend 23.6% of the time in residential settings, compared to only 13.3% of youth without notable mental health problems. Parole recidivism rates do not vary by need for mental health treatment (see Figure 23.1).

**Figure 23.1: Recidivism by Mental Health Needs
(Pre-Discharge: Residential and Parole)**



** $X^2 = 14.557, df=1, p<0.01$

Research has shown that a large percentage of youth enter the juvenile justice with undiagnosed mental health issues⁴⁹. Clinical services provided to NYC youth during commitment strive to

⁴⁹ Shufelt, J.S. & Cocozza, J.C. (2006) Youth with Mental Health Disorders in the Juvenile Justice System: Results from a Multi-State, Multi-System Prevalence Study. Delmar, New York: National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice.

provide youth with individualized and effective treatment, as well as accurate diagnosis. The provision of these services focuses on mitigating mental health problems, and the results indicate success in this area, as both CCAR measures were not significantly associated with post-discharge recidivism rates.

Commitment

Commitment data presented in this section highlight differences in recidivism rates by various indicators of successful treatment during a youth's commitment sentence.

Escapes from placement were correlated with higher rates of pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism.

Number of Escapes

Escape:

A juvenile who has left a facility's custody without proper authorization; **or**

A juvenile who has not returned to a facility within 4 hours of the prescribed time from any authorized leave.

The Division tracks the number of times a youth escapes from residential placement. The term "escape," however, rarely means an escape from a secure placement. In fact, NYC policy defines an escape as a juvenile who has left a facility's custody without authorization, *or* a juvenile who has not returned to a facility within four hours of the

prescribed time from any *authorized leave* (i.e., work passes, court appointments, home visits, etc.).

Youth with more escapes, as defined by NYC policy, received more new filings for a felony or misdemeanor offenses, both prior to discharge from NYC⁵⁰ and within one year following discharge from the Division⁵¹.

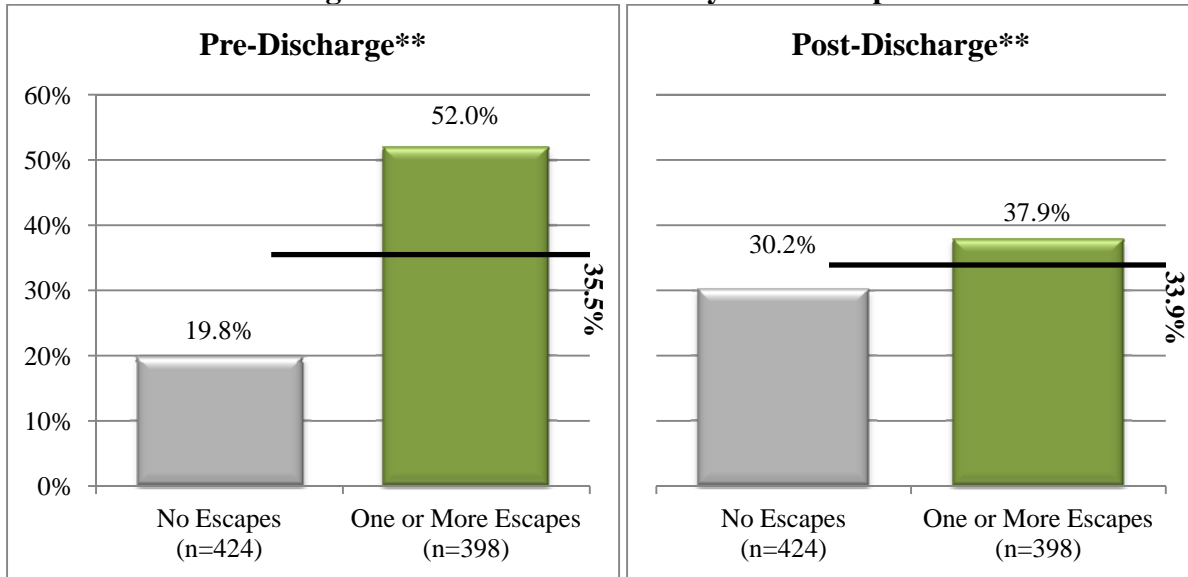
Figure 24 shows recidivism rates for youth who have any escape compared with those youth who have no escapes. Forty-eight percent of all youth in this discharge cohort have at least one escape from a NYC placement; and two youth who have as many as seven escapes. Youth with one or

⁵⁰ Pre-discharge (F=94.021, p<0.01)

⁵¹ Post-discharge (F=4.328, p<0.05)

more escapes re-offended more often prior to discharge (52.0%), as well as within one year following discharge (37.9%), than youth with no escapes (19.8% and 30.2%).

Figure 24: Recidivism Rates by DYC Escape



** $X^2=94.382$, $df=1$, $p<0.01$

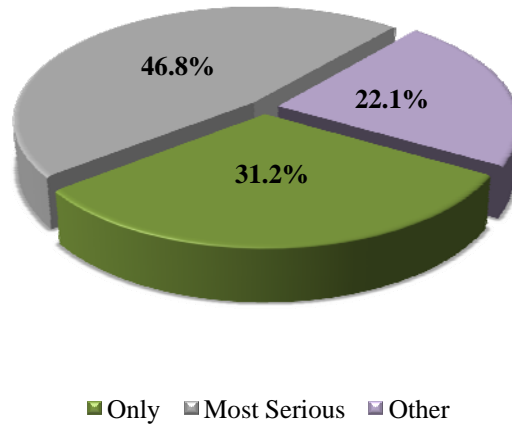
** $X^2=5.501$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$

Only half (52.0%) of the youth with a DYC escape received a new filing during commitment (208 out of a possible 398). Of the 208, only seventy-seven (77) of those youth received a filing for an escape charge. This calculates to only 19% of youth with escapes actually received an *escape* filing.

Figure 25 shows a breakdown of those 77 youth who received escape filings. For 24 youth (31.2%) the escape charge was their *only* pre-discharge filing. For 36 youth (46.8%) the escape charge was their *most serious* pre-discharge filing. In other words, if a youth is charged with an escape during commitment, that charge is likely their most serious or only pre-discharge offense.

Figure 25: Pre-Discharge Escape Filings

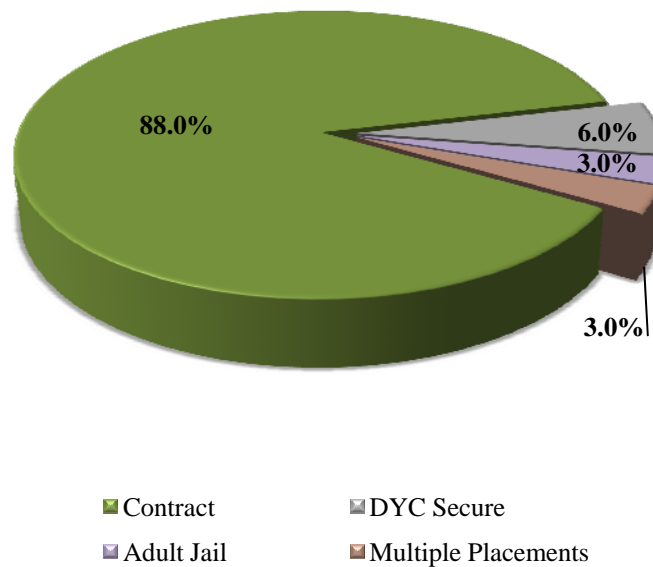
(n=77)



It is important to emphasize that not all youth who are reported as escapees are filed upon, and there are several explanations as to why this is the case. First, many escapes are simply youth who returned to the treatment program on their own, but may have been more than four hours late, per DYC policy. Second, many youth on deferred sentences are filed on for the deferred offense, not the most recent escape. Third, there may be other charge types or codes used by the Judicial Department in lieu of technical “escape” charges. Additionally, local district attorneys have some discretion in regards to filing charges against youth in their jurisdiction.

The majority of youth who did have escape charges filed during their commitment received their filings for escaping from a DYC contract, or non-secure, facility (88.3%, see Figure 26). Six percent of youth with an escape filing escaped from a DYC secure facility, three percent had escapes from both types of facilities, and the remaining three percent had an escape filing from an adult jail.

Figure 26: Pre-Discharge Escapes by Type of Residential Placement
(n=77)



Prior History of Running Away

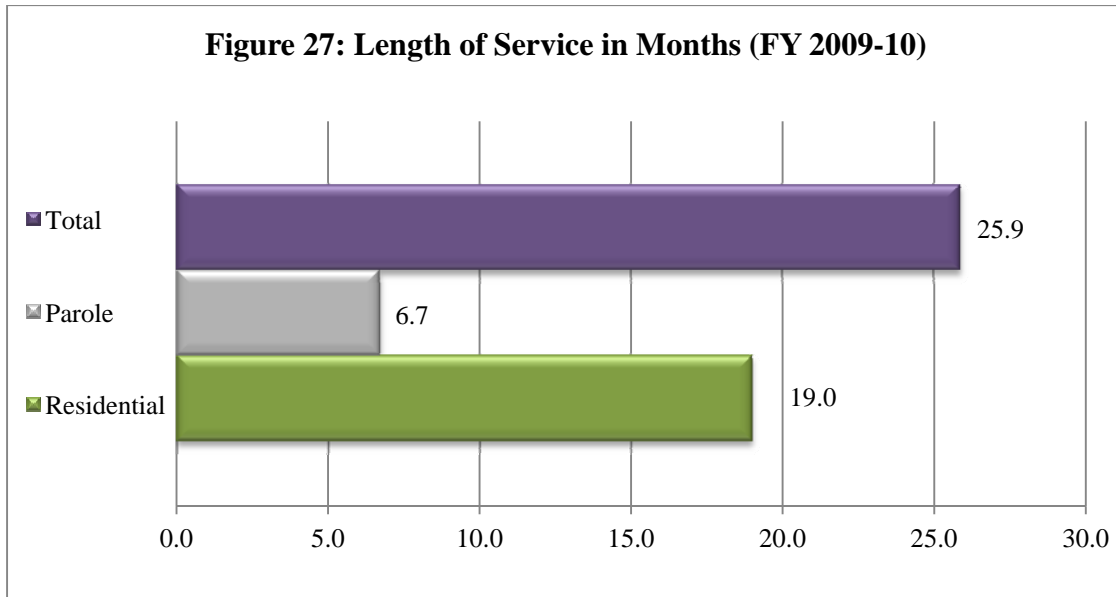
Although altogether different from escapes, a youth’s history of running away (prior to NYC commitment), is correlated with pre-discharge recidivism. Youth with a more extensive history of running away are much more likely to receive a new filing during commitment (39.9%) than youth with little to no runaway history (26.3%).⁵²

Recidivism, Type of Commitment Sentence, and Length of Service

The majority of a youth’s treatment plan is carried out in State-operated secure or contract residential placements. Length of service (LOS) for the entire discharge cohort, broken down by residential, parole and total⁵³, is shown in Figure 27.

⁵² $\chi^2=14.576$, $df=1$, $p<0.01$; $F=14.803$, $df=1$, $p<0.01$.

⁵³ Total LOS will not equal the sum of residential and parole LOS because there are a small number of paroled youth who are regressed back to a residential treatment placement for violations of the terms of parole or for committing a new felony or misdemeanor delinquent act.



Most youth sentenced to DYC commitment receive a non-mandatory sentence length that varies from zero to twenty-four months. Youth with non-mandatory sentences may be referred to Juvenile Parole Board for consideration of parole prior to serving their maximum sentence length. Seventy-one percent (70.4%) of the youth discharged in FY 2009-10 were committed under non-mandatory sentences (n=579). Conversely, there were 243 youth in this discharge cohort required to serve a minimum length of service (LOS) in residential treatment as determined by the court (i.e. mandatory sentences). In rare instances, the minimum LOS could be up to a seven-year commitment sentence for those youth adjudicated as aggravated juvenile offenders (n=12). There were no significant differences in rates of pre-discharge or post-discharge recidivism by sentence type for this discharge cohort.

For youth discharged in FY 2009-10, pre-discharge recidivism was correlated with longer lengths of service in residential placements, on parole, and total LOS. Youth who received a new filing during their commitment (pre-discharge recidivism) had an average of twenty-two (22.3) months in residential placement, compared with 17.2 months for youth who did not recidivate⁵⁴. The same proved true for parole LOS. Pre-discharge recidivists remained on parole longer (7.3 months) than those with no new filings pre-discharge (6.4 months).

⁵⁴ F=65.797, p<0.01

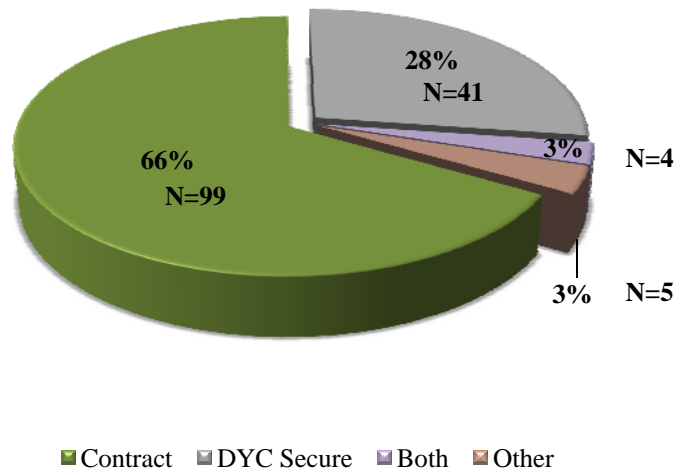
When examining LOS and post-discharge recidivism, it was found that longer parole LOS was associated with youth who were more likely to commit offenses following discharge. Post-discharge recidivists had a 7.4 month average parole LOS, while non-recidivists had, on average, a 6.4 month parole LOS.

It is difficult to infer causality between pre-discharge recidivism and length of service. Because a new filing on residential status or on parole could result in a youth having their parole status revoked or result in a re-commitment, this filing in and of itself is likely to result in a longer residential LOS. This makes it difficult to know whether pre-discharge offenses prolong LOS, or whether prolonged LOS gives youth greater opportunity to receive a new filing while committed.

Recidivism in Residential Placement vs. On Parole

Of the 292 youth who re-offended during their commitment to NYC, fifty-one percent (51.0%; n=149⁵⁵) committed at least one offense while in a residential placement⁵⁶. The majority of these residential offenses (66.4%) occurred in contract placements (see Figure 28).

Figure 28: Pre-Discharge Recidivism in Residential Placements
(n=149)



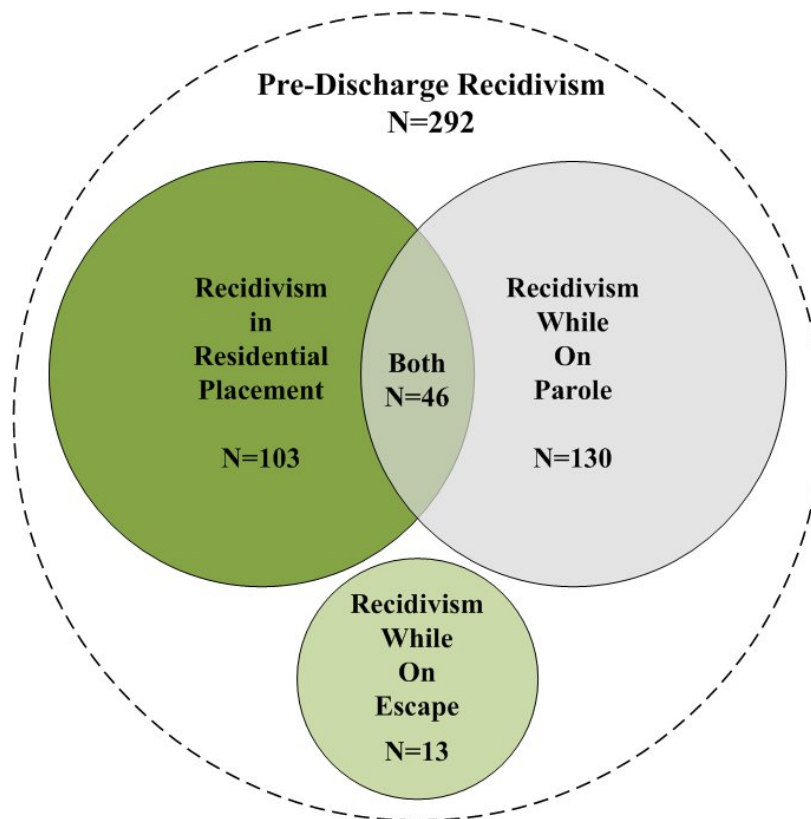
⁵⁵ 149=103 + 46 in Figure 29.

⁵⁶ Other placements primarily include adult correctional facilities or County Jail. If a youth committed an offense while on escape status from a NYC placement, the type of facility the youth escaped from is captured in this chart.

With few exceptions, contract placements are less secure than state-operated secure placements and have fewer physical security devices, relying on 24-hour supervision by facility staff to maintain compliance with treatment program regulations, including retaining custody of the youth. Therefore, clients have more opportunity to commit a new delinquent or criminal act while in a contract treatment facility than in a more secure environment. Twenty-eight percent (28%) re-offended within a state secure facility.

Of the 292 youth who re-offended during their commitment to DYC, sixty percent (60.3%; $n=176^{57}$) committed at least one offense while on parole. Fifty-one percent (51.0%) committed at least one offense in residential placement ($n=149^{58}$). Forty-six youth committed offenses both while on parole and in residential placement. The remainder of the pre-discharge recidivists ($n=13$) committed an offense while on escape from either residential or parole (absconson).

Figure 29: Pre-Discharge Recidivism: Where did the Offense Occur?



⁵⁷ 176=130 + 46 in Figure 29.

⁵⁸ 149=103 + 46 in Figure 29.

Parole: Transitioning Back to the Community

All 822 youth in this discharge cohort were required to serve at least six months of parole under mandatory parole statutes. As seen in Figure 28 (page 40), clients in this discharge cohort spent an average of 6.7 months on parole status. As

Youth who successfully completed their parole requirements had lower rates of re-offense in the first twelve months following discharge from NYC.

mentioned earlier, youth who received a new filing for a pre-discharge offense had a longer parole length of service (7.4 months) than youth who did not re-offend (6.4 months)⁵⁹.

Although youth spent a shorter amount of time on parole (6.7 months) than in residential treatment (19.0 months), a higher percentage (60.3%) of youth re-offended while on parole, in comparison to in residential placement (51.0%)⁶⁰. During parole, youth are often living independently or with family and have varying level of contact with their NYC client managers. Youth have more opportunity to re-offend during parole, therefore it is not unexpected that more re-offending behaviors may occur in a relatively short period of time.

Parole Adjustment (as it relates to Post-Discharge Recidivism Only)

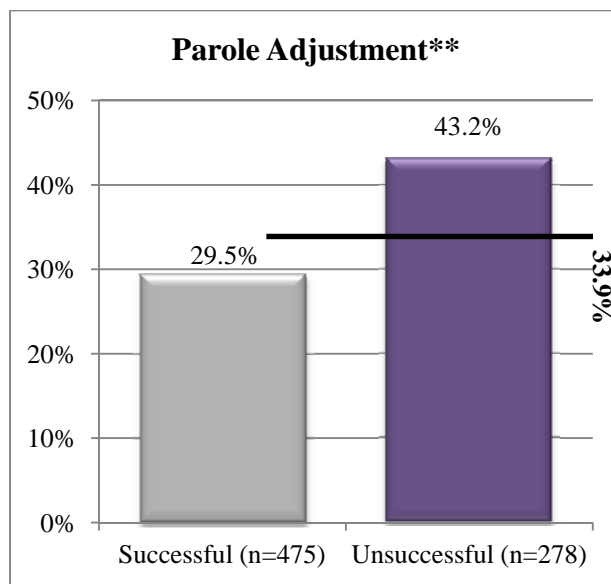
When a youth is discharged from NYC they receive a parole adjustment rating. This rating is used to describe a youth's performance while on parole, transitioning back into the community. It is used as an outcome measure for NYC that reflects the youth's ability to adapt to life in a community setting (as opposed to a restrictive/structured residential placement). It is anticipated 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 were unsuccessful while under parole supervision.

⁵⁹ F=8.351, p<0.01

⁶⁰Due to the 46 youth who committed offenses on both residential and parole status, the sum of 60.3% and 51.0% adds up to more than 100%.

Figure 30 shows post-discharge recidivism rates⁶¹ by parole adjustment rating at the time of discharge from the Division of Youth Corrections. Youth with unsuccessful parole adjustments re-offended at a higher rate (43.2%) than youth who were successful on parole (29.5%). There were a small number of youth who never were placed on parole status (n=49). These youth were under adult court authority, turned 21 years of age, or had their sentences terminated by the Court prior to being granted parole status.

Figure 30: Post-Discharge Recidivism by Parole Adjustment



** $\chi^2=16.737$, $df=2$, $p<0.01$ (n=802, missing=20)

Employment/School Status (as it relates to Post-Discharge Recidivism Only)

This study also investigated recidivism rates for youth who were gainfully employed or enrolled in school at the time of parole discharge, another measure of successful reintegration into the community. Gainful employment and school enrollment are an indication of “buying into” a pro-social lifestyle, therefore it is projected that youth who were enrolled in school or employed at the time of discharge from DYC would have lower rates of recidivism than youth that were not

⁶¹ Pre-discharge recidivism rates were not analyzed for this factor because parole adjustments are not available until a youth is discharged from DYC, therefore having no bearing on pre-discharge recidivism.

enrolled in school or employed. Post-discharge recidivism rates⁶², however, were not correlated with employment or school status for this cohort.

Comparison of Pre-Discharge and Post-Discharge Recidivism Rates

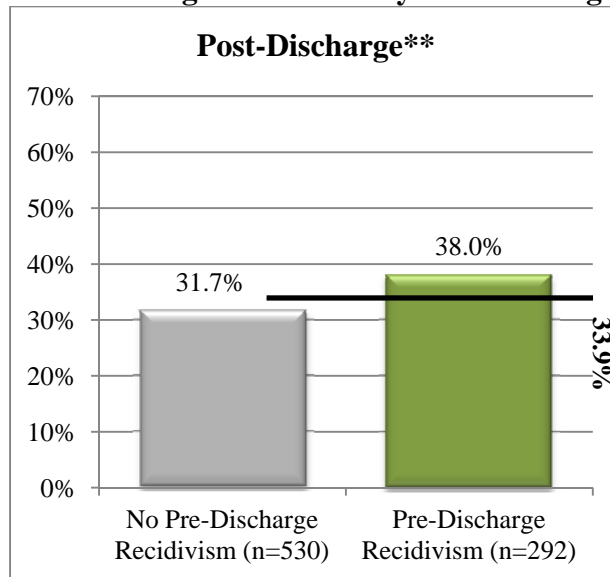
The information in Table 4 and Figure 31 seeks to answer whether pre-discharge failure or success effects a youth’s post-discharge outcomes.

Table 4: Post-Discharge Recidivism by Pre-Discharge Recidivism

Pre-Discharge Recidivism**	No Post-Discharge Recidivism		Post-Discharge Recidivism		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No Pre-Discharge Recidivism	362	68.3%	168	31.7%	530	64.5%
Pre-Discharge Recidivism	181	62.0%	111	38.0%	292	35.5%
Total	543	66.1%	279	33.9%	822	100%

**X²=3.349, df=1, p<0.05

Figure 31: Post-Discharge Recidivism by Pre-Discharge Recidivism



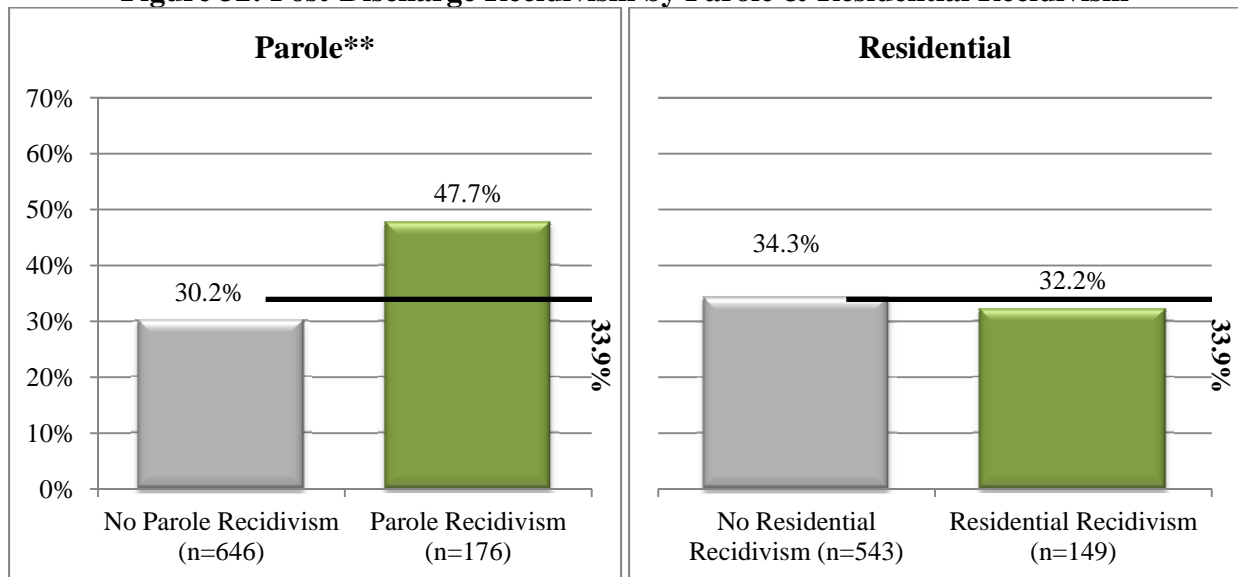
**X²=3.349, df=1, p<0.05

⁶² 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.

Youth in this FY 2009-10 discharge cohort who received a new filing during their commitment were significantly more likely to recidivate following discharge (38.0%) than youth who did not re-offend prior to discharge (31.7%). While this is not surprising, it is interesting to note that 62.0% of the youth who received a filing for a new offense during commitment *did not* receive a new filing within a year following discharge. Therefore, a youth's success post-discharge is not always influenced by their pre-discharge behavior.

Additional analysis reveals that a youth's success while on parole is key to whether or not he or she recidivates after discharging from the Division. What seems to be less important is a youth's success in residential placement. Youth who recidivate while on parole have a post-discharge recidivism rate of 47.7%. Youth who complete parole without receiving a new filing have a post-discharge rate of 30.2%. Figure 32 illustrates these results.

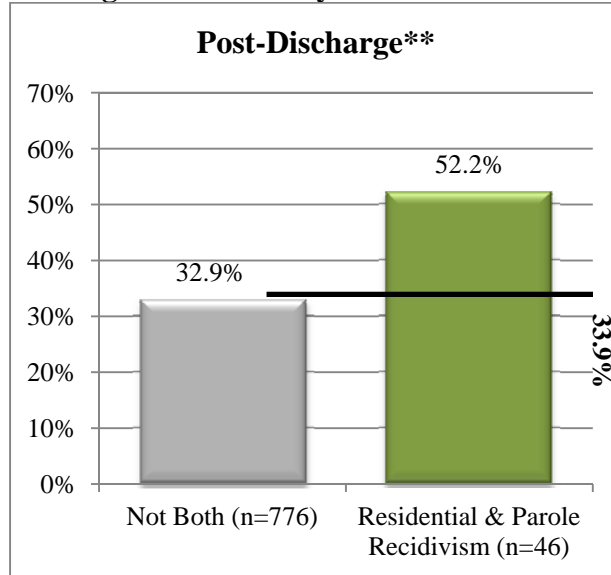
Figure 32: Post-Discharge Recidivism by Parole & Residential Recidivism



** $\chi^2=18.982$, $df=1$, $p<0.01$

As mentioned earlier, there were forty-six (46) youth who received a new filing both in residential treatment and on parole. These youth with both types of pre-discharge recidivism have a post-discharge rate of 52.2% (Figure 32.1).

Figure 32.1: Post-Discharge Recidivism by Residential & Parole Recidivism (Both)

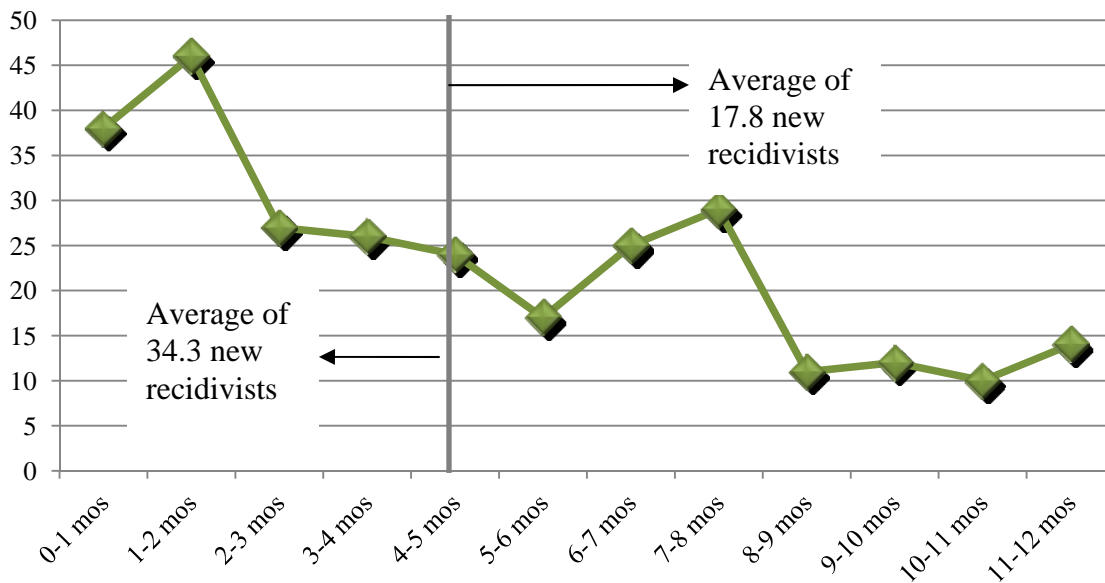


** $X^2=7.224$, $df=1$, $p<0.01$

Time to First Post-Discharge Offense

Figure 33 shows the one-year time period following a youth's discharge from the Division. More specifically, the charts depicts the actual number of youth who recidivated each month after discharge. For the first four months, an average of 34 youth re-offended each month, compared with an average of only 18 youth re-offending during the last eight months of the follow-up period. These averages indicate that if a youth can be successful during the initial months following discharge, they are more likely to succeed in the following months as well.

Figure 33: Time to First Post-Discharge Offense



The transition back into the community can be a tumultuous time for many youth. Discharged youth are often returning to a community with little to no service availability, after spending more than two years, on average, receiving a steady dose of treatment services. If the Division is able to effectively transition youth and refer them to providers in the community where they are able to access and continue receiving similar services, this will help reduce the likelihood of re-offense during those first few months after discharge. The Continuum of Care program continues to target the needs of transitioning youth, and offer as much assistance and guidance as possible to these youth re-entering society.

If a youth can achieve success in the first few months following discharge, the chance of recidivism in the following months is substantially lowered.

SECTION ONE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Division witnessed a year of decline in recidivism rates, both pre- and post- discharge, with the FY 2009-10 discharge cohort of youth. The decline in the pre-discharge recidivism rate was not statistically significant from the prior cohort of discharged youth; however, the post-discharge rate did drop dramatically enough to be statistically significant from FY 2008-09 discharges. In fact, the post-discharge recidivism rate of 33.9% is the lowest DYC has seen in nine years.

Another positive finding relates to risk (to recidivate) reduction and protective factor bolstering with this cohort of youth. Four (4) CJRA domains in particular stand out when examining a youth's potential for success: 1) Relationships, 2) Substance Abuse, 3) Attitudes & Behaviors, and 4) Aggression. These four domains were most predictive of future offending behavior. If the Division can effectively target these specific areas of need and help youth progress, it is anticipated that rates could drop further.

SECTION TWO:

Ridge View Youth Services Center (RVYSC) Recidivism



Ridge View Academy
IMPROVING THE LIVES OF YOUTH

SECTION TWO: Ridge View Recidivism

The Ridge View Sample:

This section of the report looks at recidivism rates for 236 males who were placed at the Ridge View Youth Services Center for at least a 90-day length of service, spent at least 66% of their total LOS at Ridge View, and who discharged in FY 2009-10.

Most youth committed to NYC experience multiple placements throughout their commitment sentence. Because each placement and program has the opportunity to impact each youth's future behavior, it is very difficult to associate youth recidivism outcomes with a specific program.

For this reason, the collection of recidivism outcomes, by program, is not generally useful in measuring the performance of individual programs. However, the Ridge View Youth Services Center was initially designed to be a unique treatment option for eligible youth.

The Ridge View program was originally intended as a primary placement option for certain youth, and those youth originally placed in Ridge View Youth Services Center (RVYSC) tended to have longer lengths of service at RVYSC, and were often paroled directly from Ridge View to the community. Since those clients placed at the Ridge View facility tended to have fewer other placements that could influence re-offending behaviors, it was more appropriate to report outcome measures for this facility at that time. The Division's annual recidivism report does not report on outcomes for any other individual programs or facilities. Although RVYSC was originally designed to be a youth's primary placement, this has not been the case in recent years. Due to this change in program use, the methodology for this section was re-visited and changed for this year's report.

Because the utilization of the RVYSC program by NYC has evolved over the years, there was also a need to evaluate how the cohorts in this section could be more meaningfully and more accurately constructed. During the prior fiscal year, the Division worked in collaboration with Rite of Passage (ROP) and other needed stakeholders to determine how research protocols would be amended to account for these operational changes.

Methodological Challenges and Changes

All previous studies have analyzed rates of recidivism between two groups: 1) youth placed at the Ridgeview Youth Services Center (RVYSC) and 2) an “Other NYC Male” comparison cohort. Comparing rates of recidivism between these groups originally seemed reasonable and appropriate, as these groups were believed to be relatively distinct, with a high level of in-group homogeneity or commonalities. The method for determining which youth were contained in the RVYSC cohort was simply whether a youth had a Length of Service (LOS) at RVYSC greater than ninety (90) days. All other male youth, who had not met this LOS criteria, were placed in the “Other NYC Male” cohort.

For several years, the aforementioned method for determining which youth fell into the two groups appeared methodologically defensible. Particularly, when RVYSC first opened, most youth placed there spent the vast majority of their residential commitment period exclusively at this facility or at another Rite of Passage (ROP) operated facility. Additionally, RVYSC was often the first placement for the youth and subsequent placements were typically the result of a commission of a new offense. There was even a period of time in which the Division instituted a “Fast Track” program, where committed youth were immediately placed at RVYSC upon commitment. Under “Fast Track”, instead of assessing youth at one of the Regional Assessment Centers, youth were screened for appropriateness at detention facilities and sent directly to RVYSC for assessment. Under this program, RVYSC was the only committed residential program some youth ever experienced.

However, as previously mentioned, the use of RVYSC has been changing. Instead of being a youth’s primary placement, RVYSC is becoming more like other NYC contract placements in that some youth who fail in other placements are now being referred to this program. Utilizing RVYSC in this fashion seems consistent with the Division’s Key Strategy of “The Right Service at the Right Time”; as well as the Division’s continuing commitment to the Continuum of Care program. Although there still remains a number of youth whose commitment is exclusive to RVYSC, it is those youth who do not meet this traditional standard that presents some methodical challenges for the purpose of this recidivism study.

For this year's recidivism study, a new methodological strategy was implemented that changes how the cohort samples are constructed. It was determined that the ninety (90) day criteria, in and of itself, was not sufficient enough to distinguish who belonged in the Ridge View cohort. This three-month period was not adequate, as a high percentage of the youth who have met this time requirement at RVYSC have also spent sizeable amounts of time in other placements and programs, which undoubtedly would have had an influence on their future behavior. In an attempt to mitigate much of this "outside" influence, more in-depth selection criteria were introduced. Now, in order to be considered part of the RVYSC cohort, each youth is required to have spent at least 66% (or two-thirds) of their total residential length of service at Ridge View, in addition to the 90-day requirement.

With this new criteria in place, on average, the youth in this report's Ridge View cohort only spent 2.1 months in other residential placements during their commitment, which includes the approximate one-month assessment period. So, in total, most youth in the RV cohort spent a month or less at another program. Additionally, only nine percent (9.3%) of the youth in the RVYSC cohort spent more than six months receiving residential treatment services from other providers (n=22). This change in cohort selection methodology allows for a better comparison between groups in this section, and was necessary to foster more meaningful results overall.

Figure A, on the next page, depicts the new methodology for developing three meaningful comparison groups of males.

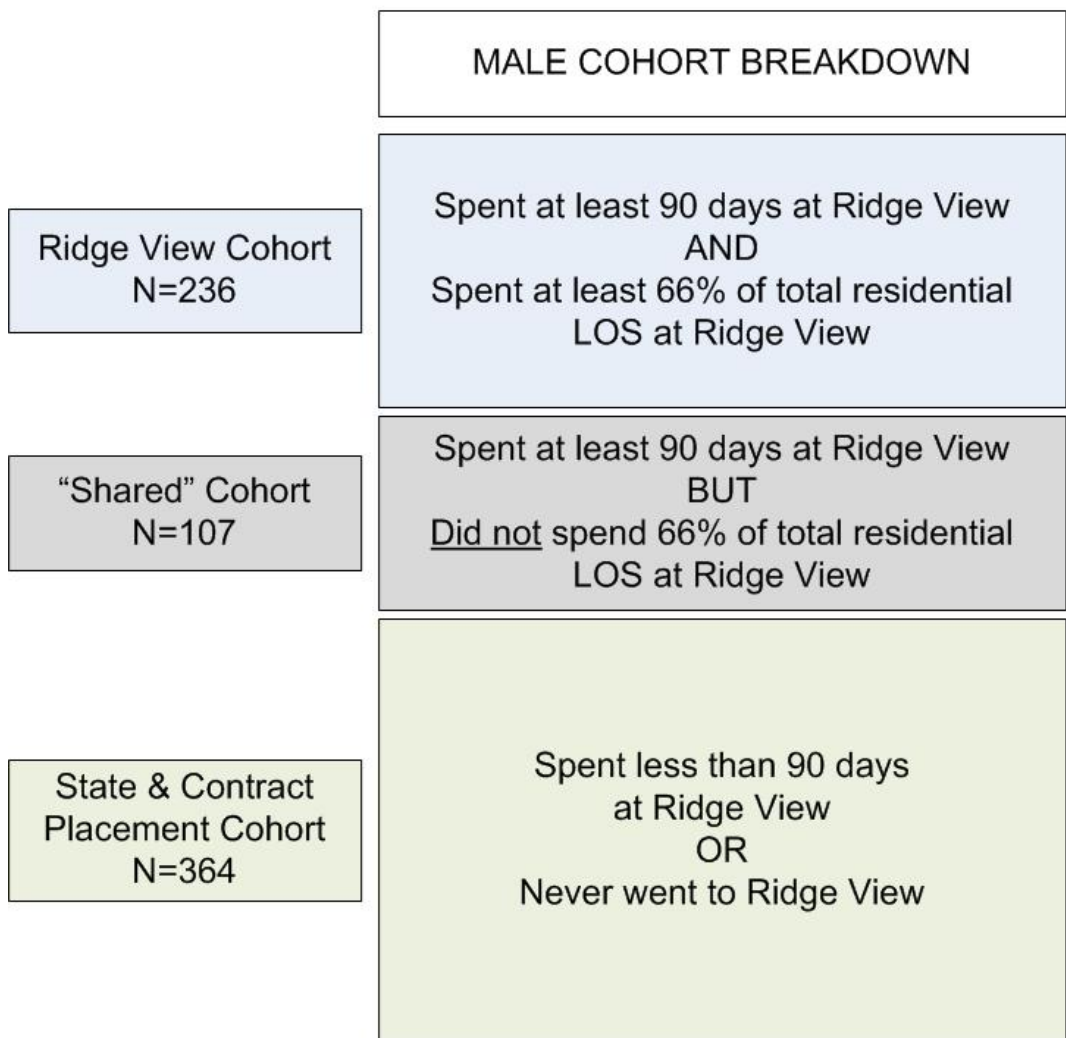
The criteria for selection into the Ridge View cohort was described above. The second cohort is constructed of youth who spent at least 90 days at RVYSC, however, they did not meet the 66% residential LOS requirement. Because these youth spent a substantial period of time at Ridge View, but not two-thirds of their residential LOS, these males are placed in the "Shared" cohort. All other males, who spent less than three months at RVYSC (or never went to RYYSC at all), are then placed into the "State and Contract Placement" cohort. It is important to note that "State and Contract Placement" cohort is not simply all NYC State-Secure facilities. While NYC Secure facilities are included in this group, the cohort is also made up of many contracted staff-supervised and community programs utilized by the Division.

In fact, of the 364 youth in the “State and Contract Placement” cohort, 191 (52.5%) spent at least 66% of their time in a state secure facility. The other 173 youth in this cohort spent the majority of their time in other contract programs.

The State & Contract Placements Cohort:
 This cohort is comprised of two distinct groups: youth who spent the majority of their LOS in a State Secure facility, and youth who spent the majority of their LOS in a Contract Program.

Figure A: Configuration of the Three Cohorts

FY 2009-10 Male Discharges (N=707)



All three groups are compared on a multitude of factors, followed by a recidivism rate comparison. It is important to have a solid understanding of how the youth in each of the three groups differ from each other, and to consider how differing program practices may contribute to outcome differences. Understanding that the definition of recidivism is “new filing” is especially important when reading Section Two, as programs vary in their filing practices.

Program Filing Practices: Programs have great discretion regarding when and when not to file charges against a youth. Program policy, philosophy, and practice, as it relates to filings charges on youth, may artificially skew recidivism rates, making program to program comparisons very difficult. It may be one program’s policy to file charges on any and all offenses committed by youth in their program, while another program may rarely file charges on youth.

The Ridge View Program⁶³

This section of the report examines the cohort of RVYSC (236) youth, provides a program description of Ridge View, and compares the Ridge View group with the other two cohorts of males discharged in FY 2009-10. In addition, recidivism outcome measures will be reported for the youth who were selected into the Ridge View Youth Services Center cohort.

The Rite of Passage organization operates the Ridge View Youth Services Center program under the terms of contract with the Division, and within the framework of a modified positive peer culture⁶⁴. 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 positive change. To ensure compliance with State standards for correctional care, DYC staff closely monitors program operations.

⁶³ For a more historical description of the Ridge View Program, please reference Appendix C of this report.

⁶⁴ As the body of juvenile justice research supporting skill development has grown since 2001, ROP has modified the original peer culture environment.

The focus of the Ridge View program is skill building through academics, vocational training, and athletics, combined with positive staff and peer interactions, as well as 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. Numerous athletic programs are offered including, football, soccer, baseball, wrestling, cross-country, cycling, rugby, track and field, etc. Ridge View students are referred to as "student athletes" as opposed to "clients". The focus on athletics supports the highly modified positive peer culture maintained at Ridge View while developing teamwork and camaraderie.

Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT)

In December of 2006 ROP began developing an integrated assessment and case plan process to be highly compatible with DYC's Colorado Juvenile Risk Assessment (CJRA) tool. The Positive Achievement Change Tool process was fully implemented with reassessments, final assessments, and case plans by May of 2008, and similar to the CJRA, was based on the Washington State Juvenile Court Assessment (WSJCA) instrument.

The PACT is a validated 126-item assessment tool that measures factors highly related to criminal behavior, very similar to DYC's CJRA tool. Once a student is accepted to Ridge View, CJRA data is fed into ROP's Positive Achievement Change Tool, which results in a Measured Achievement Plan; a prioritized set of risk factors shown by research to be predictive of recidivism. This plan guides ROP case managers to specifically target the highest risk factors with ROP's evidence-based programming while youth are in the Ridge View facility.

By prescriptively targeting high-risk areas through the CJRA-PACT system, with evidence based Cognitive Behavioral Training (CBT), ROP staff can hone in on individual issues more effectively. ROP provides an array of CBT curriculum including Pathways for Self Discovery, Thinking for a Change, Aggression Replacement Training, Restorative Solutions and Active Parenting to optimize individual counseling in order to lower associated risks.

A common theme running through the CBT curricula is “Social Skill” development. In 2008, ROP began a program overhaul based on Social Learning Theory, which places more emphasis on targeted social skill acquisition, shown through research to be critical in reducing recidivism. As the body of juvenile justice research supporting skill development has grown since 2001, ROP has modified the original peer culture environment. By incorporating social learning concepts into all aspects of programming including orientation, education, student interaction and daily meetings, the Ridge View program has evolved from a positive peer culture system to a social learning model.

Family Integration

There is also a focus on family integration on the Ridge View campus. Approved family members are encouraged to participate in scheduled family visits. Family visits occur every three weeks on a rotating schedule, and students are allowed to make a brief phone call to approved family members once a week. The amount of phone minutes is based on the student’s status in the program. In addition, family members are encouraged to attend monthly staffing reviews of their son's progress, with the NYC Client Manager and Ridge View staff present. Ridge View also offers the Family After-Care Support and Transition (FAST) group to involved family members. The FAST group meets two times per month, and focuses on youth and their families.

The VALIDATE Model

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

V	- Vocational Training
A	- Athletics
L	- Life Skills
I	- Individual Graduation Plan
D	- Demonstrated Behavioral Changes
A	- Aftercare
T	- Treatment
E	- 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 RAMS (Respect, Attitude, Motivation and Spirit) status for four consecutive months, he is eligible to officially graduate 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 step-down community placements, while others remain at Ridge View until parole, or until another placement is arranged.

Mount Evans Qualifying House (Q-House)

In August 2006, Rite of Passage (ROP) opened a 15-bed group home in Idaho Springs, licensed by the Colorado Department of Human Services as a Residential Child Care Facility (RCCF). The students selected to step-down to ROP’s Q-House are considered part of Ridge View’s “transition” program and are comprised of highly screened graduates of Ridge View Youth Services Center. In addition to Ridge View’s own requirements to be a Qualifying House (Q-House) resident, Clear Creek County maintains a Community Review Board (CRB) that ensures youth are appropriate for this placement from a community perspective. The key characteristics for referral are a lack of appropriate community support and youth who are targeted to be living independently from family or friends while on parole and after discharge.

Q-House students work full time, attend college classes online, perform community service, and participate in the recreational activities Clear Creek County has to offer. Each day ROP staff accompanies students to the workplace or to participate in community service activities. For successful community transitions, Q-House student goals include earning money to repay restitution, saving for independent living and providing meaningful public service.

Some recidivism results, in relation to youth selected for step-down at the Q-House, are presented near the end of this section.

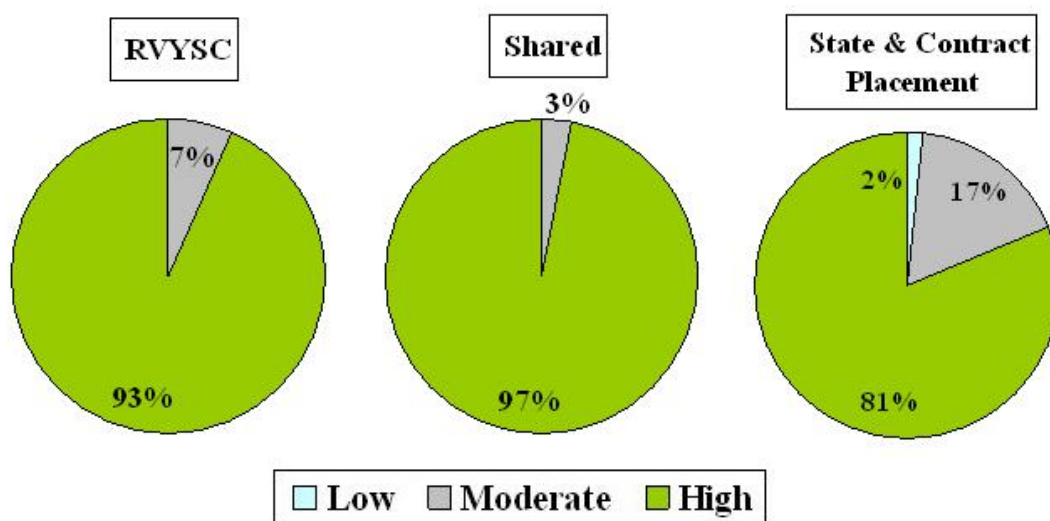
Comparing Ridge View Youth with Shared Youth and State & Contract Placement Youth

The RYVSC group consists of 236 males discharged from the Division of Youth Corrections during FY 2009-10. This section compares youth in the Ridge View cohort with youth in the Shared cohort (N=107) and State and Contract Placement males (N=364) who participated in other state or contract programs during their commitment. All three groups are compared on a myriad of demographic characteristics as well as risk factors for re-offending. It is important to establish how each of the three groups differ from each other, prior to examining and comparing recidivism rates. Recidivism results and variances between groups can often be explained by inherent group differences. In order to accurately and fairly interpret recidivism outcomes, it is imperative that group characteristics be fully disclosed and understood.

Risk of Recidivism

At time of commitment, the Shared youth cohort had the highest percentage of high risk youth (97%), in relation to their likelihood to recidivate. These risk level differences, depicted below in Figure 34, were significant across groups⁶⁵.

Figure 34: Risk to Recidivate Cohort Comparison



⁶⁵ $X^2=12.673$, $df=4$, $p<0.05$

Further investigation on risk levels revealed that the “State and Contract Placement” cohort is not well represented in the figure above. Disparate risk levels, depending on *where* the youth spent the majority of their residential stay, were largely apparent in this group. In other words, the youth attending State Secure facilities were at much higher risk to recidivate (at commitment) in comparison to other males in this same group that attended contracted staff-supervised and community programs. When strictly comparing RVYSC youth and NYC State-Secure youth, there is no significant difference in risk (see Table 5).

Table 5: Disparities in Risk to Recidivate (State and Contract Placement Cohort)**

	State and Contract Placement Cohort					
	NYC State Secure Males		Contract Program Males		Ridge View Males	
Risk Level	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Low	1	1.3%	2	2.1%	0	0.0%
Moderate	9	11.3%	22	22.7%	7	6.7%
High	70	87.5%	73	75.3%	98	93.3%
Total	80	100.0%	97	100.0%	105	100.0%

**X²=21.121, df=6, p<0.01

The significant difference in risk to recidivate, noted in Table 5, is not between Ridge View youth and NYC State Secure youth, as these two groups are statistically the same in this regard. The difference lies in the fact that the Contract Program males risk is so much lower (75.3% high risk) than the other two groups. The purpose of breaking down the State and Contract Placement Cohort this way is to illustrate how combining two distinct groups of males into one cohort can complicate the results. But, in an effort to simplify this section of the report, it was decided to compare the three cohorts, as outlined in the methodology; rather than compare four cohorts across the many factors.

Another analysis conducted, in the area of risk to recidivate, was CJRA domain-specific analysis and comparisons. On average, youth in the Ridge View cohort were high-risk on 8.97 of the 14 CJRA domains. Youth in the Shared cohort had, on average, 8.20 elevated domains. Lastly,

youth in the State and Contract Placement cohort were deemed high-risk to recidivate on 8.21 domains⁶⁶.

Prior out-of-home Placements & Number of Commitment Placements

Some other notable differences that set Shared youth apart from State and Contract Placement youth and Ridge View youth were the number of prior out-of-home placements (before reaching DYC) and the number of placements incurred during the span of DYC commitment.

Prior out-of-home Placements

Another differentiating pattern arose that called for further investigation. State and Contract Placement youth have significantly more out of home placements (before DYC commitment) than Ridge View youth or the Shared youth cohort. This prompted a need to look into the number of placements a youth experienced, during their commitment to DYC.

Number of Commitment Placements (Residential Instability)

Interestingly, the Shared group of youth experienced significantly more commitment placements (7.5) than State and Contract Placement youth (4.7) and Ridge View youth (3.9) while committed (shown in Table 6). This indicates that residential placement stability may play a large role in the future success of youth. Residential Instability, in the larger criminology literature, has been shown to be a main factor contributing to crime and delinquency⁶⁷. Although the research in this area points more towards neighborhood and community instability, it may have some relevance when applied to placement stability in the corrections field as well.

⁶⁶ F=6.296, df=2, p<0.01

⁶⁷ Veysey & Messner (1999). "Further Testing of Social Disorganization Theory: An Elaboration of Sampson and Groves's 'Community Structure and Crime'. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, Vol 36 No. 2.

Table 6: Number of Different Placements Experienced

Level of Residential Instability	Ridge View Average	Shared Youth Average	State & Contract Placement Average	Male Average
Prior to DYC	1.3	2.0	2.2	1.9
During DYC Commitment**	3.9	7.5	4.7	4.8
Total	N=236	N=107	N=364	707

**F=6.413, df=2, p<0.01

Ethnicity

Tables 7 and 8 show differences in the ethnic distribution of Ridge View males and the other two cohorts of males. There were higher rates of minority populations in the Ridge View group and the Shared group, when compared with State and Contract Placement males. Recidivism analyses on ethnicity in Section One of this report showed lower rates of pre-discharge re-offending for White youth, therefore it is possible that there will be higher rates of pre-discharge recidivism for the RVYSC and Shared cohorts, based on that finding.

Table 7: Ethnic Differences between Groups

Ethnicity**	Ridge View Percent	Shared Youth Percent	State & Contract Placement Percent	TOTAL
African-American	21.2%	18.7%	15.4%	126
Hispanic	41.1%	42.1%	33.2%	263
White	36.9%	32.7%	48.1%	297
Other ⁶⁸	0.8%	6.5%	3.3%	21
Total	N=236	N=107	N=364	707

**X²=21.121, df=6, p<0.01

⁶⁸ This category includes Native American and Asian American youth as well as those officially identified as “other.” These categories are combined due to the small numbers of youth in each category. Small “n” sizes make valid statistical comparisons impossible.

Table 8: Differences in Minority Youth between Groups

Ethnicity**	Ridge View Percent	Shared Youth Percent	State & Contract Placement Percent	TOTAL
Minority	63.1%	67.3%	51.9%	410
White	36.9%	32.7%	48.1%	297
Total	N=236	N=107	N=364	707

** $X^2=11.863$, $df=2$, $p<0.01$

Offense & Sentence Types

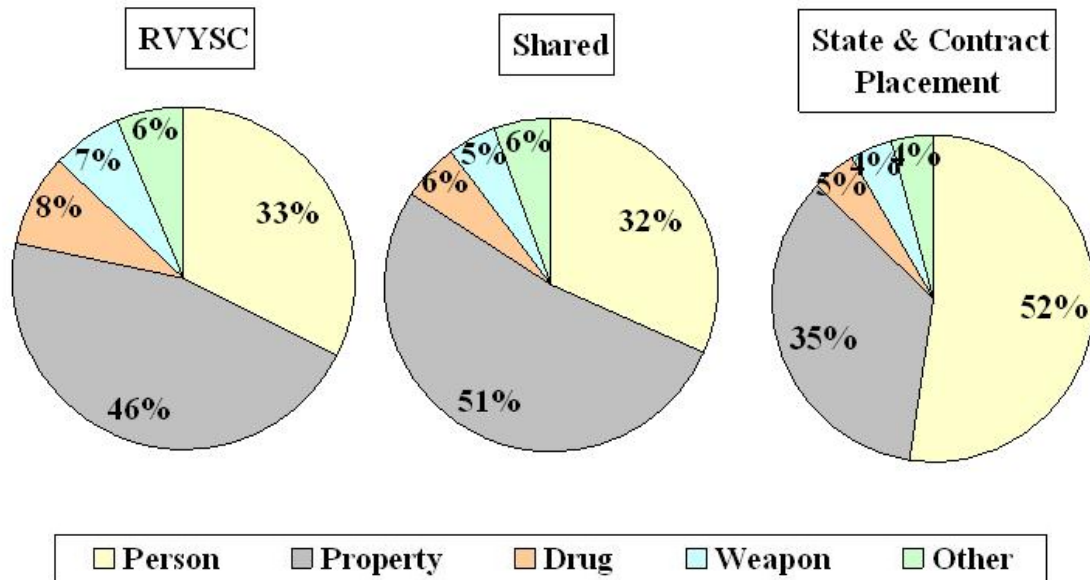
Eligibility restrictions, based on type of committing offense and other factors related to youths' risk and need levels, could potentially lead to differences between youth placed in the Ridge View facility, youth placed in DYC facilities, and youth placed in other contract programs. As Figure 35 indicates, nearly half of the Ridge View sample (46%) was committed for property offenses, compared with 51% of Shared males and 35% of State and Contract Placement males. Similarly, only 33% of males placed at Ridge View were committed for person offenses compared with 52% of youth in the State and Contract Placement group.

The vast differences in types of committing offenses were statistically significant⁶⁹. While the State and Contract Placement cohort contains more youth with serious, person-level offenses, the literature indicates that it's actually property offenders that tend to recidivate at higher rates than person and other offenders⁷⁰. Another argument to consider, however, is whether person-offenders are more difficult to manage in a residential environment than property offenders. While property offenders are more prone to recidivate in the community, person-offenders tend to have aggression issues, which make them a higher risk to youth and staff in a confined environment. All this considered, the recidivism analysis based on commitment offense type, showed no significant results.

⁶⁹ $X^2=31.227$, $df=8$, $p<0.01$

⁷⁰ Howell, James C. (2003). Preventing & Reducing Juvenile Delinquency: A Comprehensive Framework; pg 61. Sage Publications.

Figure 35: Type of Committing Offense**



Another factor that sets these groups of males apart is the types of commitment sentences received⁷¹. The Shared group had a higher percentage of youth with repeat commitment sentences, and the State and Contract Placement group had more aggravated commitment sentences. When looking strictly at the split between mandatory and non-mandatory sentences, there were no differences between the three groups. Since sentence type was not found to be a significant predictor of recidivism rates in the full discharge cohort, no impact on RVYSC recidivism is anticipated.

Age at First Adjudication & Age at Commitment

When examining age at first adjudication, the Shared males group, on average, was significantly younger (13.9) than RVYSC (14.5) and State and Contract Placement males (14.4)⁷². A strong body of literature indicates that youth adjudicated at a younger age tend to recidivate at higher

⁷¹ $X^2=15.023, df=4, p<0.01$

⁷² $F=4.423, df=2, p<0.05$

rates than those whose first adjudication was at an older age. This would suggest that the Shared male cohort could potentially have higher re-offense rates than the other two groups.

This same pattern proved true for age at commitment to DYC. The average age at the time of commitment for youth placed at Ridge View (16.7) and State and Contract Placement (16.6) was significantly older than the Shared cohort of males (16.2)⁷³.

When examining age at first placement at Ridge View, it shows that the majority of youth were 16 (28.4%) or 17 (38.1%) years of age. Table 9 shows the distribution of these youth by age at time of RVYSC placement.

Table 9: Age at Placement in Ridge View⁷⁴

Age	Number Placed	Percent
14	12	5.1%
15	43	18.2%
16	67	28.4%
17	90	38.1%
18	24	10.2%
Total	236	100%

Prior Juvenile Justice System Involvement

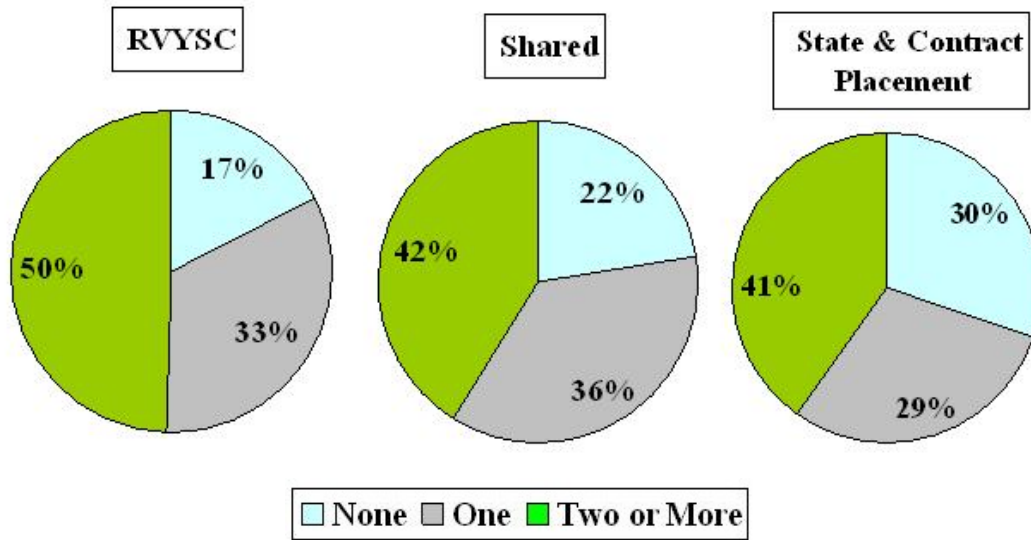
A highly predictive estimation of risk of recidivism is prior involvement in the juvenile justice system. Figure 36 shows a significantly higher proportion of youth in the Ridge View cohort with two or more prior adjudications as compared to the other two cohorts⁷⁵, indicating an elevated risk for recidivism. Prior adjudications were positively correlated with pre- and post-discharge recidivism in the larger discharge cohort.

⁷³ F=6.900, df=2, p<0.01

⁷⁴ Represents age at time of placement into Ridge View, rather than age at the time of commitment. Due to the delay between commitment and placement, no comparison can be made with age at commitment for State & Contract Placement males.

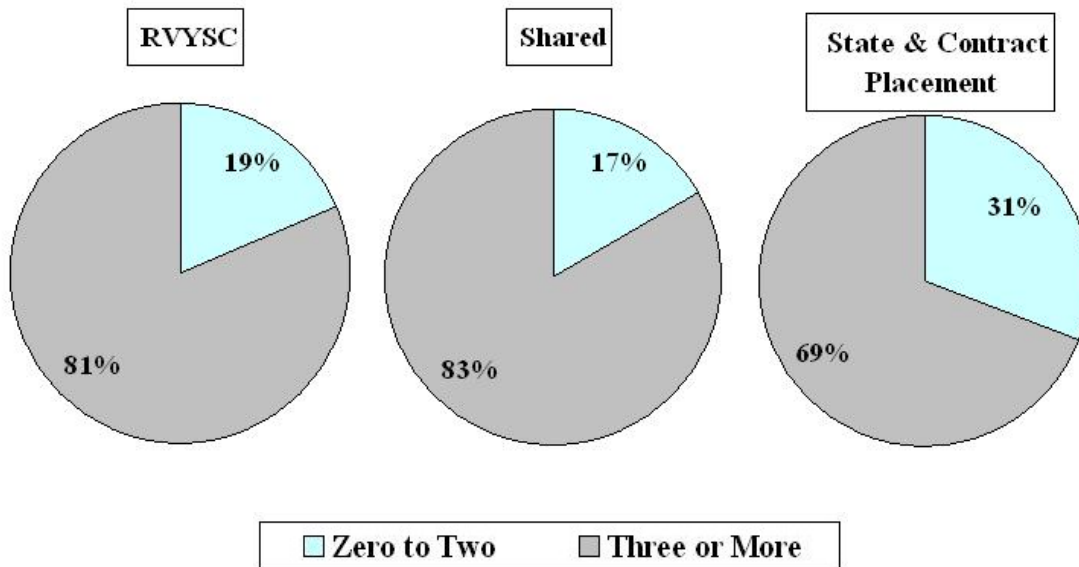
⁷⁵ X²=14.278, df=4, p<0.01; F=3.119, df=2, p<0.05

Figure 36: Number of Prior Adjudications



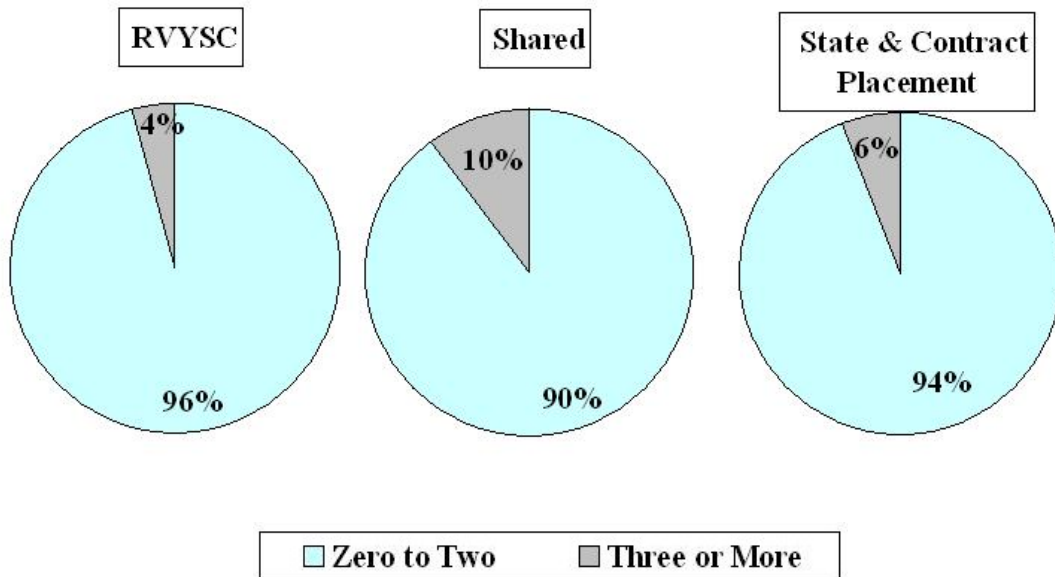
Similarly, a comparison of the number of prior detention admissions between groups (see Figure 37) shows a statistically significant difference in the percentage of Shared group males with three or more prior detention admissions (83.2%) and the Ridge View group with three or more prior detention admissions (81.4%), when compared to State and Contract Placement males (69.2%)⁷⁶.

Figure 37: Number of Prior Detention Admissions**



⁷⁶ $X^2=15.467, df=2, p<0.01; F=5.431, df=2, p<0.01$

Figure 38: Number of Prior Commitments



When examining prior commitments across the three cohorts, no differences were found.

Substance Abuse Issues

The RVYSC cohort also had highest levels of youth with substance abuse treatment need. When youth are assessed at time of commitment, two screens/assessments are used (ASAP: Adolescent Self Assessment Profile and the SUS: Substance Use Survey) to determine whether a youth has a need for “prevention” services only, has a moderate need indicating “intervention” is needed, or if the youth has a high need for drug and alcohol use “treatment”. The P-I-T levels differ across groups, as illustrated in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Substance Abuse Treatment Issues, and Group Differences

Substance Abuse Treatment Level **	Ridge View Percent	Shared Youth Percent	State and Contract Placement Percent	TOTAL
Prevention (low)	7.6%	7.5%	17.6%	90
Intervention (moderate)	28.0%	30.8%	29.9%	208
Treatment (high)	64.4%	61.7%	52.5%	409
Total	N=236	N=107	N=364	707

**X²=18.002, df=4, p<0.01

Some other notable factors that set State and Contract Placement youth apart from Ridge View and Shared youth are mental health needs, family issues, sex offense-specific needs, and length of service.

Mental Health Issues

The differences between RV males and State and Contract Placement males in the realm of mental health needs can be explained by eligibility criteria for admission into RVYSC. Although RVYSC has the resources to serve DYC youth with substance abuse needs, the program does not currently accept youth with high-level or severe mental health treatment needs. As pointed out in the Division’s most recent Continuum of Care program evaluation, youth with mental health needs are increasing, in fact, “*for the past three fiscal years, at least **half** of the newly committed population had mental health needs that required professional intervention.*”⁷³ This statistic is based on each youth’s initial CCAR⁷⁷ score, specifically the overall symptom severity domain. If this domain is a five or higher, it indicates that those youth require professional mental health intervention. “*The percent of youth who met or exceeded this mental health need level at the time of their initial commitment assessment increased across the five successive cohorts between FY 2006 – 07 and FY 2010 – 11.*”⁷⁸ Overall, RVYSC had significantly lower rates of youth with mental health treatment needs, in each of the four areas examined.

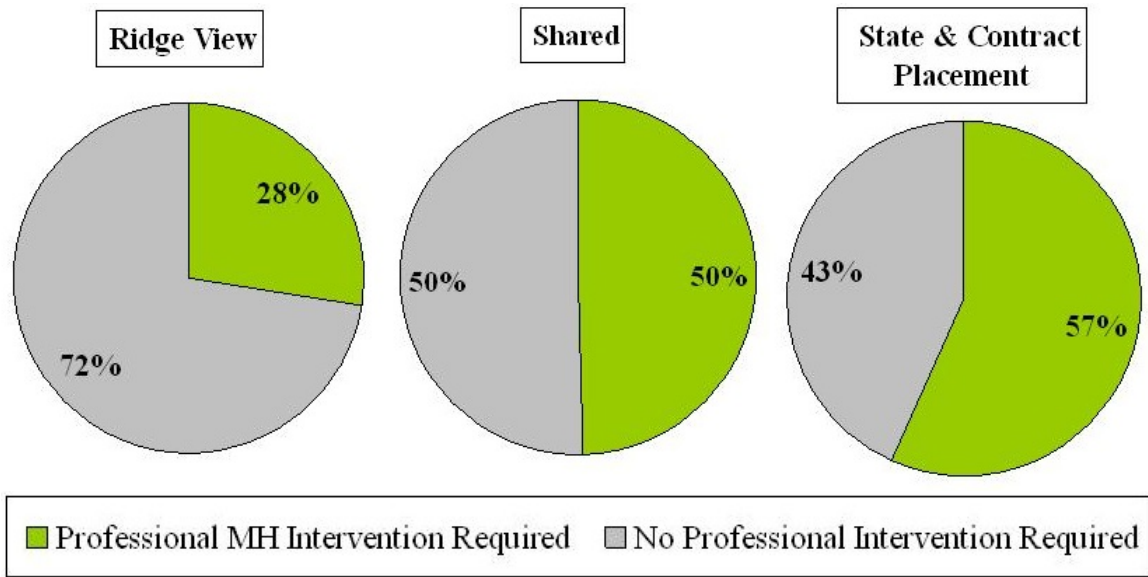
Although a valuable tool in a number of ways, the CCAR alone is not an adequate instrument for measuring DYC youth mental health need levels.

The pie charts in Figure 39 illustrate the differences in cohorts, based on the CCAR “Overall Symptom Severity” scale.

⁷⁷ Colorado Client Assessment Record.

⁷⁸ Center for Research Strategies and Aurora Research Institute (2011). Evaluation of the Continuum of Care Program: Annual Report: Fiscal Year 2010-2011.

Figure 39: Mental Health Intervention Needs, Group Differences



Two additional mental health need indicators, CJRA domains 9A (mental health history) and 9B (current mental health), also confirmed this between-group difference. A higher percentage of State and Contract Placement youth were assessed as high risk on these two domains, as compared to Ridge View youth and Shared youth. Both of these domains indicate that mental health issues may be contributing to a youth’s propensity to re-offend. Unless these issues are addressed through treatment, these males will be more prone to offend in the future, as a result of having unmet mental health issues.

Family Issues

When examining another CJRA domain, Family History (7A), results revealed that the Shared youth group had much higher risk in this area (78.5% high risk). In comparison, State and Contract Placement males had sixty-nine (69.1%) percent of the group assessed as being high risk, and Ridge View had 63.3% of their cohort assessed at high risk in the family history domain⁷⁹. A more complex breakdown of cohorts (dividing the State and Contract Placement cohort into DYC State Secure and Other Contract Programs) showed that the Shared Group (78.5%) and the DYC State Secure youth (75.9%) were equally high risk in this domain, whereas

⁷⁹ $X^2=6.367, df=2, p<0.05$

Other Contract Programs (61.9%) and Ridge View (63.3%) showed significantly lower percentages of high risk youth on this scale⁸⁰.

Sex-Offense Specific Needs

One final cohort distinction to point out before discussing length of service differences is the number of sex offenders served. This difference, once again, can be explained by Ridge View eligibility criteria and treatment resources. The Ridge View and Shared cohorts served significantly less youth with sex offense-specific treatment needs, 2.1% (RVYSC) and 4.7% (Shared) of their total youth, respectively. The State and Contract Placement cohort had nearly thirty percent (27.2%) of their youth with these needs that were served.

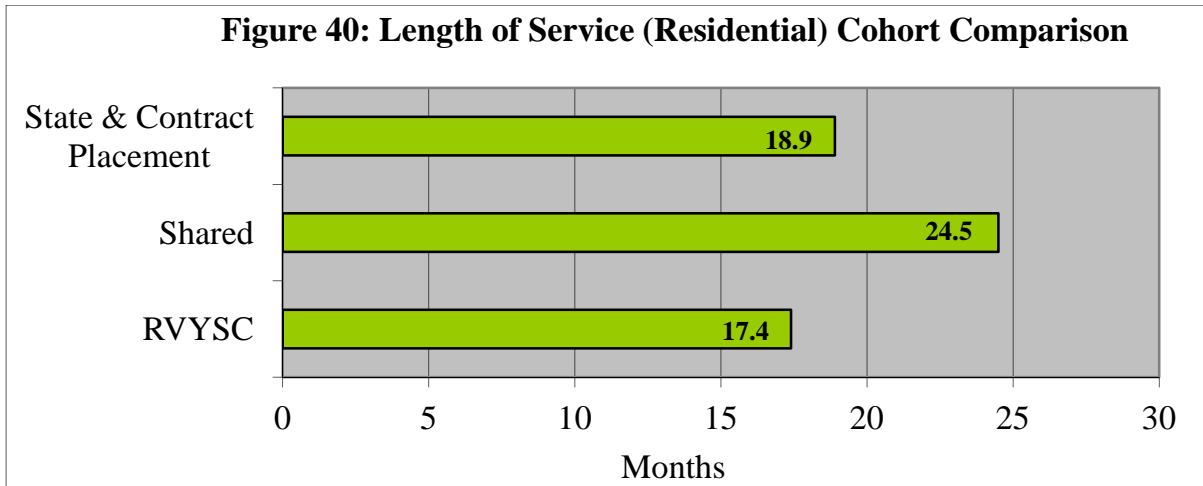
Length of Service (LOS)

The last factor examined, looking for differences across the three groups, was length of service (LOS). When looking at days and months spent committed to DYC, significant differences were found in LOS (total and residential) between the three groups. Total *commitment* length of service includes time spent in a residential placement as well as time spent on parole status. On average, RVYSC youth spent 24.3 months in total, committed to DYC, while State and Contract Placement males spent 26.0 months⁸¹. The Shared males group had the longest commitment LOS' by far, averaging 31.5 months committed to DYC. When looking strictly at *residential* LOS, Ridge View youth spent 17.4 months in placement, compared to 18.9 months for the State and Contract Placement group, and 24.5 months for the Shared cohort⁸². (See Figure 40)

⁸⁰ $X^2=13.519$, $df=3$, $p<0.01$

⁸¹ $F=4.830$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$

⁸² $F=4.024$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$



Each youth, regardless of cohort, were subject to the mandatory parole periods and were required to spend a minimum of six (6) months on parole status, in the community, prior to discharge from the Division. Time spent under parole supervision was found to be similar for the Ridge View sample (6.7 months) when compared with State and Contract Placement males (6.8 months) and the Shared group (7.4 months) of males. With such similar figures, there were no differences in the length of time spent on parole for these three groups.

Summary of Cohort Differences

Although the recidivism outcomes of these three groups are compared side-by-side, keep in mind the many cohort differences described, and the impact those differences could potentially have on recidivism rates.

While there are factors presented that make one group more likely to recidivate (See Table 11), there are a different set of factors that another group possesses making that group higher risk to re-offend. Due to the unique mix of cohort characteristics, it is scientifically difficult to predict future recidivist behavior. For these reasons and more, the following results should be interpreted mindfully.

Table 11: Shared Cohort Differences

In what areas does the Shared Cohort rank Highest Risk?
Ethnicity
Commitment Offense Type
Commitment Sentence Type
Age at First Adjudication
Age at Commitment
Prior Detention Admissions
Number of Commitment Placements
Number of NYC Rec commitments
History of Escape at NYC
Length of Service
Risk to Recidivate
CJRA Family Domain

Ridge View Recidivism Results

This section reports recidivism and other outcome information for the 236 youth discharged from the Division of Youth Corrections between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010, who were placed at Ridge View Youth Services Center (RVYSC) for more than 90 days during their commitment to the Division, and who stayed at RVYSC for at least two-thirds (66%) of their total residential commitment period.

Ridge View Recidivism

Pre-Discharge: 26.7%

Post-Discharge: 36.4%

The Ridge View cohort is compared with all other males discharged from NYC during this same time period who did not spend time at RVYSC (n=364) and to a shared group of males that spent 90 days or more at RVYSC, but did not stay at the program for at least 66% of their total residential LOS (n=107). The term “pre-discharge” is used to identify offenses filed during residential placement and/or parole. The term “post-discharge” refers to offenses filed within one year after the youth was discharged from NYC.

Pre-Discharge Recidivism: A filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense that occurred prior to discharge (while the youth is under NYC supervision) 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.

Figure B, on the next page, shows the pre-discharge recidivism rates for the Ridge View sample, the Shared group, and the State and Contract Placement group.

Ridge View had significantly lower rates of recidivism during commitment when compared with State and Contract Placement males and the Shared group of males. Of the 236 youth in the RVYSC group, 26.7% had a new misdemeanor or felony offense prior to discharge. In comparison, 37.6% of State and Contract Placement group, and 56.1% of the Shared group received a new filing during the span of their commitment. See Figure B for an illustration of how these rates compare across groups.

The most alarming finding is easy to identify. Of the 107 males in the Shared cohort, more than half (60) of those youth received a new filing before discharging from NYC, **56.1%**.

Figure B: Pre-Discharge Recidivism Results by Cohort*

FY 2009-10 Male Discharges (N=707)

Pre-Discharge Recidivism

	RECIDIVISTS	NON-RECIDIVISTS
Ridge View Cohort N=236	26.7% N=63	73.3% N=173
“Shared” Cohort N=107	56.1% N=60	43.9% N=47
State & Contract Placement Cohort N=364	37.6% N=137	62.4% N=227

*Statistically Significant Differences

Post-discharge recidivism rates for RVYSC youth (36.4%) were statistically comparable to the post-discharge rates for State and Contract Placement males (32.7%), and the Shared group of males (43.9%). In other words, although the Shared cohort has a seemingly higher percentage of youth who re-offended post-discharge, this higher raw percentage is not meaningfully different from the other two groups' rates.

Figure C: Post-Discharge Recidivism Results by Cohort*

FY 2009-10 Male Discharges (N=707)

Post-Discharge Recidivism

	RECIDIVISTS	NON-RECIDIVISTS
Ridge View Cohort N=236	36.4% N=86	63.6% N=150
"Shared" Cohort N=107	43.9% N=47	56.1% N=60
State & Contract Placement Cohort N=364	32.7% N=119	67.3% N=245

*No Statistically Significant Differences

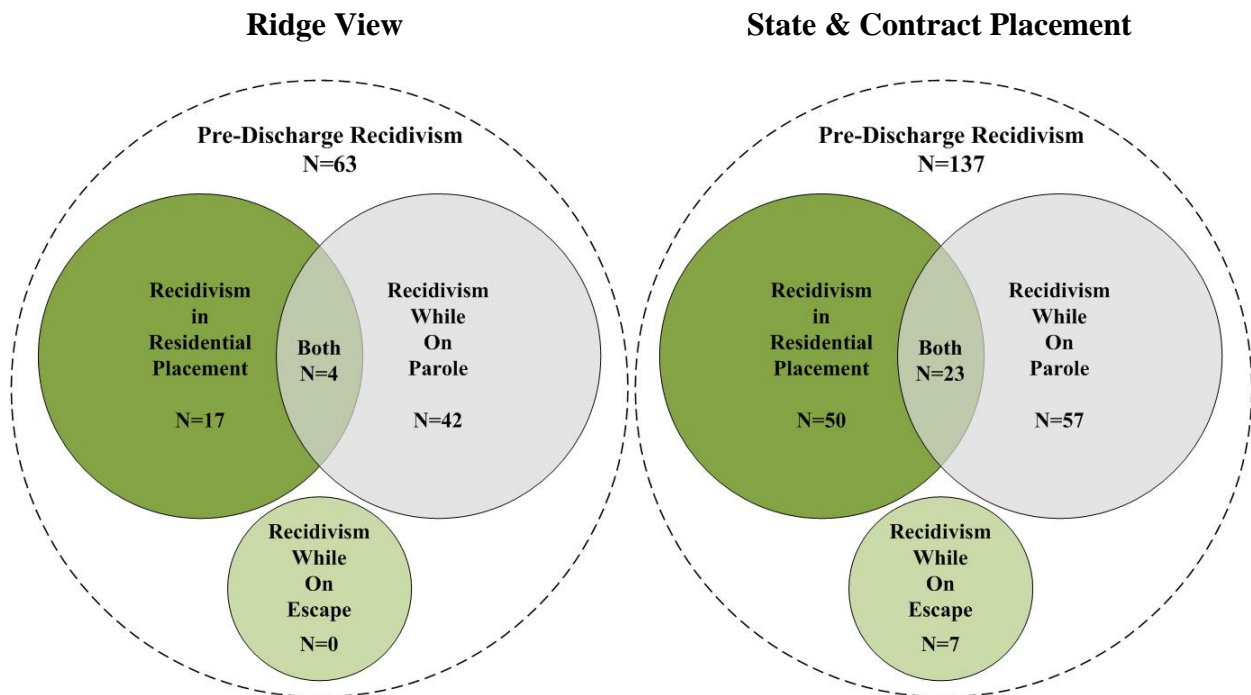
Concerns About the Shared Cohort

There is great concern surrounding the outcomes of the Shared cohort of youth. The recidivism rates themselves are alarming, and a joint issue that both the Division and Ridge View need to understand and trouble-shoot. It is apparent, through the high recidivism rates and the in-depth cohort comparisons conducted, that this Shared group of males has a unique and high-risk composition. The fact that these males are selected into the “Shared” cohort may reveal a piece of the problem—residential instability. Therefore, program failure (not just from Ridge View), resulting in multiple program placements, could have led to the poor outcomes witnessed. If “residential instability” is not to blame for the poor outcomes, there are a whole host of other factors that put this group at increased risk for recidivism (refer back to Table 13).

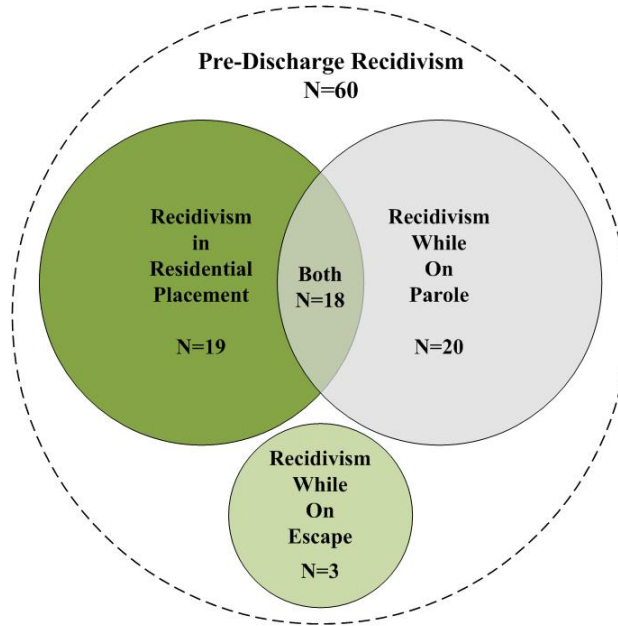
Pre-Discharge Recidivism Outcomes

An important element to consider, when comparing pre-discharge recidivism rates across groups, is where the pre-discharge offense (or offenses) occurred. Figure D depicts these differences.

Figure D: Pre-Discharge Recidivism: Where did the Offense Occur?



Shared



Residential & Parole Outcomes

Table 12 presents the figures (shown also in Figure D) and rates associated with the types of pre-discharge recidivism (i.e., where the offense occurred) by cohort. It is important to note that many youth recidivate both in residential placement and on parole, and a handful of youth commit their offenses while on escape.

Table 12: Pre-Discharge Recidivism: Where did the Offense Occur?

Pre-Discharge Recidivism	Ridge View			Shared Youth			State & Contract Placement		
	N	%	%	N	%	%	N	%	%
None	173	73%	73.3%	47	44%	43.9%	227	62%	62.4%
Residential (only)*	17	7%	26.7%	19	18%	56.1%	50	14%	37.6%
Parole (only)	42	18%		20	19%		57	16%	
Res & Parole (both)	4	2%		18	17%		23	6%	
On Escape	0	0%		3	3%		7	2%	
Total	236	100%	100%	107	100%	100%	364	100%	100%

*X²=12.926, df=2, p<0.01

Residential

Looking specifically at the time period in which a youth is undergoing residential treatment services, the three cohorts do vary significantly in “residential recidivism” rates. Ridge View youth have an 8.9% residential recidivism rate, State and Contract Placement youth have a 20.1% rate, and Shared youth have the highest rate at 34.6% (see Table 13). With these drastic differences, it is important to consider the filings practices of the programs included. While these rates could represent a true re-offending rate discrepancy between cohorts, the differing rates could also be an artifact of program-specific philosophy and filing practices. Some programs file charges on most or all offenses that occur, while other programs may choose to not file charges on youth in certain circumstances, or possibly in most circumstances.

Parole

Looking specifically at the time period in which a youth is on parole, one again the three cohorts vary significantly in regard to “parole recidivism” rates. Following a similar pattern witnessed in residential rates, Ridge View youth have a 19.5% parole recidivism rate, State and Contract Placement youth have a 22.0% rate, and Shared youth have the highest rate at 35.5% (see Table 13). Statistically, the Ridge View cohort and the State and Contract Placement cohort are similar. The high Shared youth rate is what makes this comparison statistically significant.

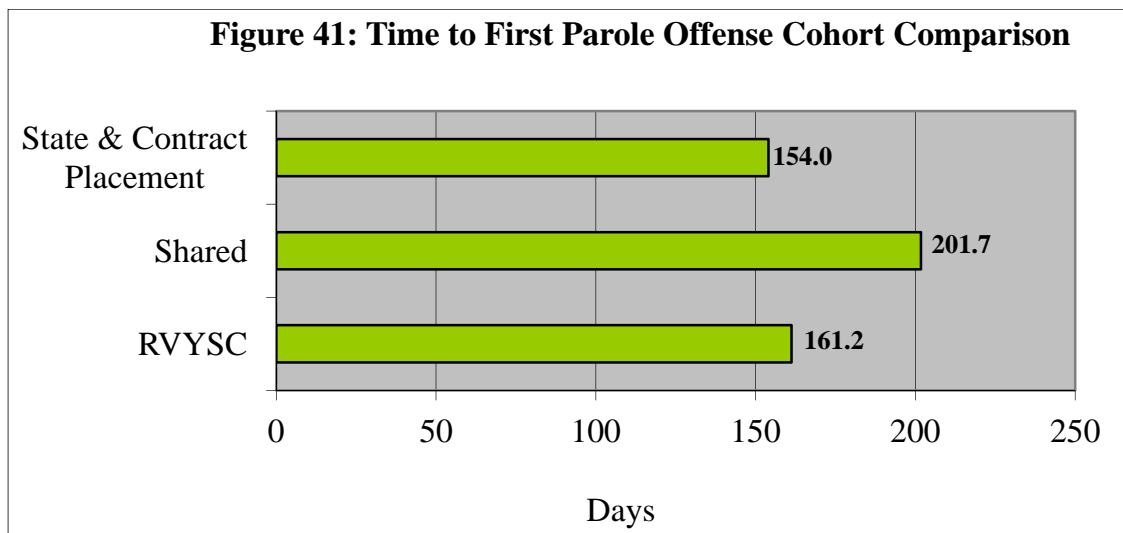
Table 13: Residential & Parole Recidivism Rate Comparison⁸³

Pre-Discharge Recidivism	Ridge View		Shared Youth		State & Contract Placement		TOTAL
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Residential*	21	8.9%	37	34.6%	73	20.1%	131
Parole**	46	19.5%	38	35.5%	80	22.0%	164

* $X^2=33.322$, $df=2$, $p<0.01$
 ** $X^2=11.234$, $df=2$, $p<0.01$

⁸³ Recidivism rates differ from those shown in Table 12, as Table 13 adds- in youth that receive filings **both** in residential placement and on parole. For example, RV residential (8.9%) in Table 13 comes from the sum of 7% (residential-only) and 2% Res & Parole both in Table 12.

Interestingly, although the Shared cohort of youth tend to recidivate at much higher levels on parole, this group “waits” to re-offend longer after their parole start dates, when compared to the other two groups. An analysis of *time to first parole filing* was conducted, and the figure below illustrates the differences across groups. The State and Contract Placement cohort, on average, recidivate 154 days into their parole period. Ridge View youth average 161 days on parole before receiving a filing, and the Shared cohort averages 202 days (Figure 41).



Post-Discharge Outcomes

Risk Reduction to the Community (Level of Offense Severity)

Reducing the overall rates of recidivism is important to all programs, facilities, and professionals that work with the youth in the Division. However, because overall recidivism rates by cohort do not usually change significantly from year to year, it is important to also consider whether or not “level of offense severity” has been reduced, an intermediate outcome measure of recidivism. Similar to Section One, the following analysis examines each youth’s commitment offense and compares it to the most serious offense committed within one year following discharge (post-discharge). If a client is committed to DYC on a felony robbery, and re-offends after discharge with a misdemeanor property charge, this youth’s offense risk level was lowered—a positive

finding—although he or she still recidivated. Table 14 shows the level of offense severity changes by cohort.

Table 14: Level of Offense Severity Changes, Cohort Comparison

Offense Severity Change	Ridge View Percent	Shared Youth Percent	State & Contract Placement Percent	TOTAL
No Post-Discharge	63.6%	56.1%	67.3%	455
Decrease in Severity	12.7%	15.0%	12.6%	92
POSITIVE OUTCOME	76.3%	71.1%	79.9%	547
No Change in Severity	7.2%	8.4%	9.3%	60
Increase in Severity	16.5%	20.6%	10.7%	100
NEGATIVE OUTCOME	23.7%	29.0%	20.0%	160
Total	N=236	N=107	N=364	707

All three cohorts were successful in decreasing offense severity levels. The post-discharge offenses of the youth in the State and Contract Placement cohort were less severe 79.9% of the time; similarly, offense severity was decreased 76.3% of the time in the Ridge View cohort, and 71.1% of the time in the Shared youth cohort.

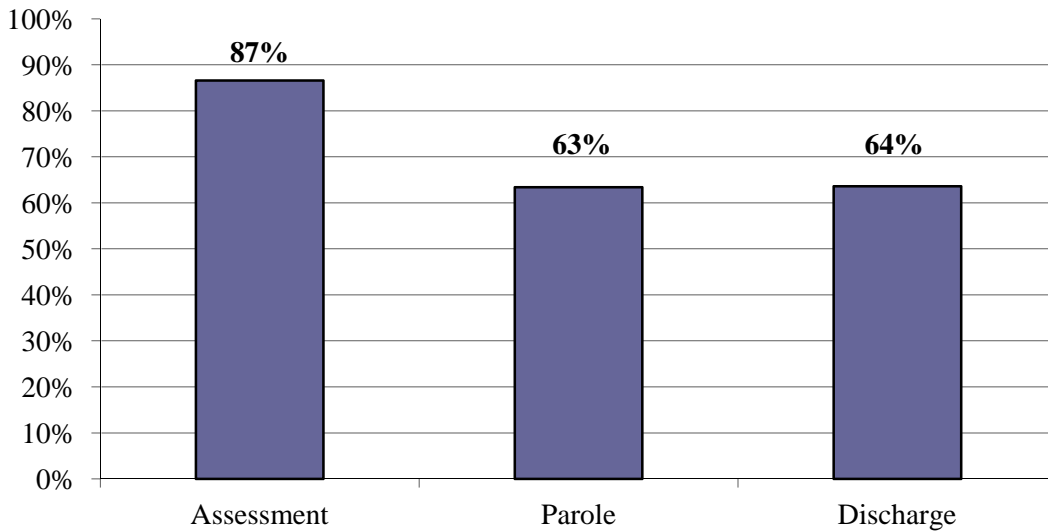
Time to First Post-Discharge Offense

The average time to first post-discharge offense did not vary across the three cohorts. Of the 252 males who received a post-discharge filing, the average amount of time that elapsed after discharge to the first offense was 4.6 months. (State and Contract Placement=4.8 months; Ridge View=4.6 months; Shared=4.2 months)

Risk Reduction: A Shared Success Across All Three Cohorts

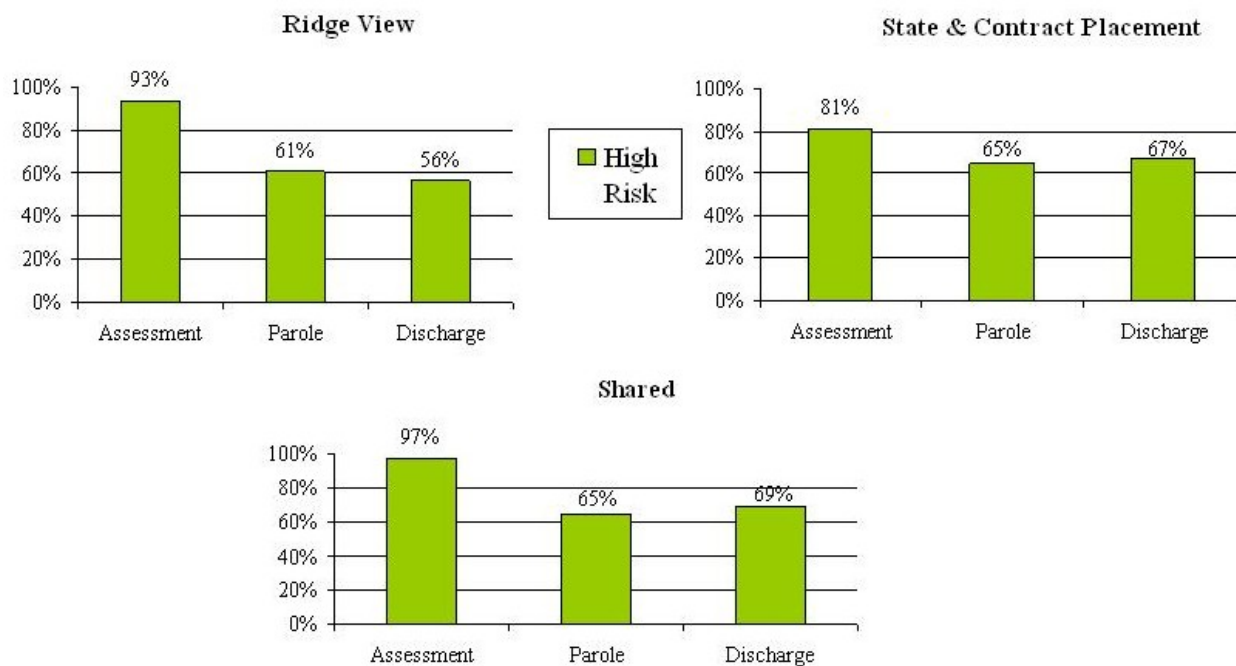
A very positive finding for all three cohorts was the degree to which overall risk levels were impacted from assessment, to parole, to discharge. This outcome indicates that, overall, the goal of reducing risk to recidivate is being accomplished, regardless of cohort assignment. At initial assessment **86.6%** of males in the FY 2009-10 discharge cohort were high risk for re-offense. Approximately 19 months later, at the beginning of parole, **63.4%** were high risk. Finally, at discharge, **63.6%** were assessed as being high risk (See Figure 42).

Figure 42: Percent of Males High Risk to Recidivate



The specific reductions in risk, by cohort, are shown in Figure 43. The percentage of high risk youth was reduced significantly in all three cohorts across time.

Figure 43: Risk Reductions by Cohort



Ridge View Cohort Specific Outcomes

The following sub-sections will show analyses of the Ridge View cohort’s recidivism rates by specific demographic and risk factors. Throughout this report a finding followed by “***” indicates a statistically significant finding.

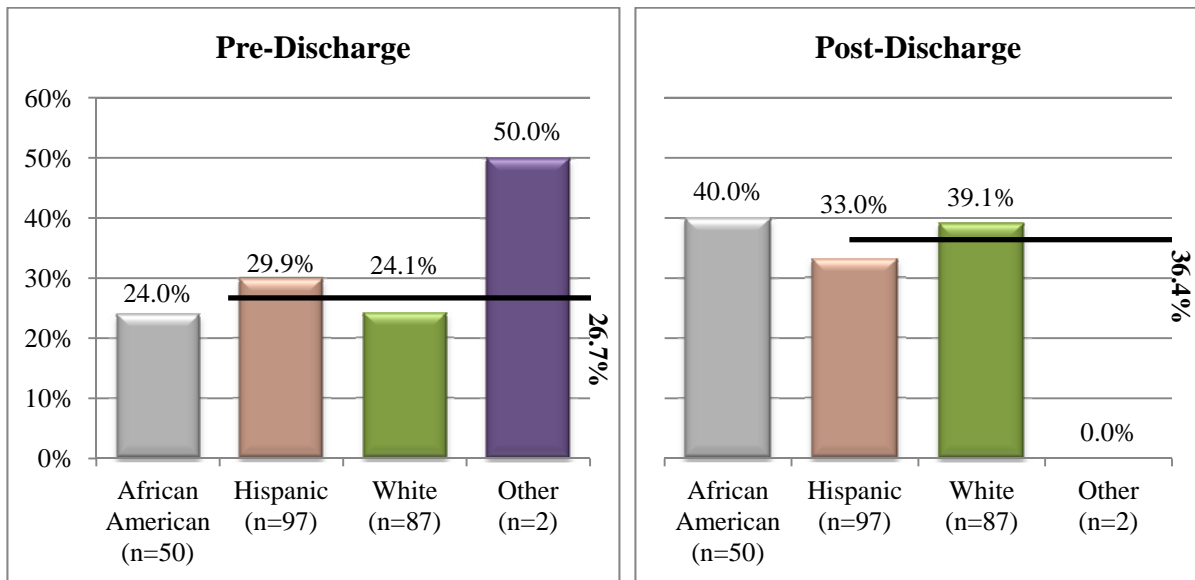
Ethnicity

Figure 44 shows differences in recidivism rates for the Ridge View cohort by primary ethnicity. The “other” category includes Native-American and Asian-American youth, as well as multi-racial youth and those identified as “unable to be determined.” These categories are combined

simply due to the small numbers. The total number of youth in each category is too small when taken independently to make valid statistical comparisons⁸⁴.

The results of this analysis reveal that primary ethnicity is not meaningfully associated with recidivism rates, neither pre- nor post-discharge.

Figure 44: Ridge View Recidivism Rates by Primary Ethnicity



DYC Management Region

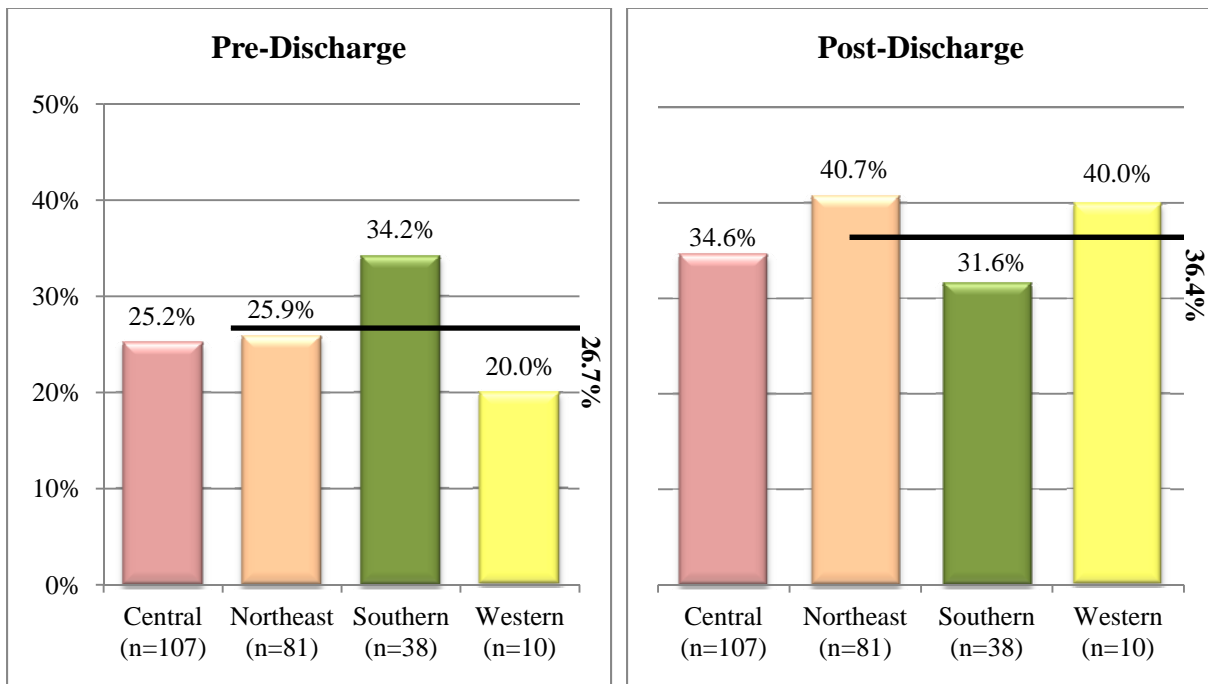
DYC has a regionally based management structure, operating from four management regions in the State (see Figure 12) The Central Region consists of four judicial districts and includes 11 counties (major counties: Denver, Jefferson, Arapahoe, and Douglas). The Northeast Region consists of five judicial districts and 13 counties (major counties: Adams, Boulder, Larimer, and Weld). The Southern Region consists of seven judicial districts and 22 counties (major counties: El Paso and Pueblo). The Western Region consists of the six judicial districts on the western

⁸⁴ Statistical significance between groups is a calculation that is based on the number of cases in each group as well as the differences between groups; therefore it takes a larger relative difference to be a significant finding (not because of chance) when group sizes are small.

slope, and 18 counties (major county: Mesa). Unlike most DYC placements, which are generally contracted separately for each management region, Ridge View Youth Services Center treats clients from all four regions. Figure 45 shows a breakdown of new offenses during and after commitment by DYC management region.

Youth placed at the Ridge View Youth Services Center had similar rates of recidivism, regardless of region.

Figure 45: Ridge View Recidivism Rates by DYC Management Region

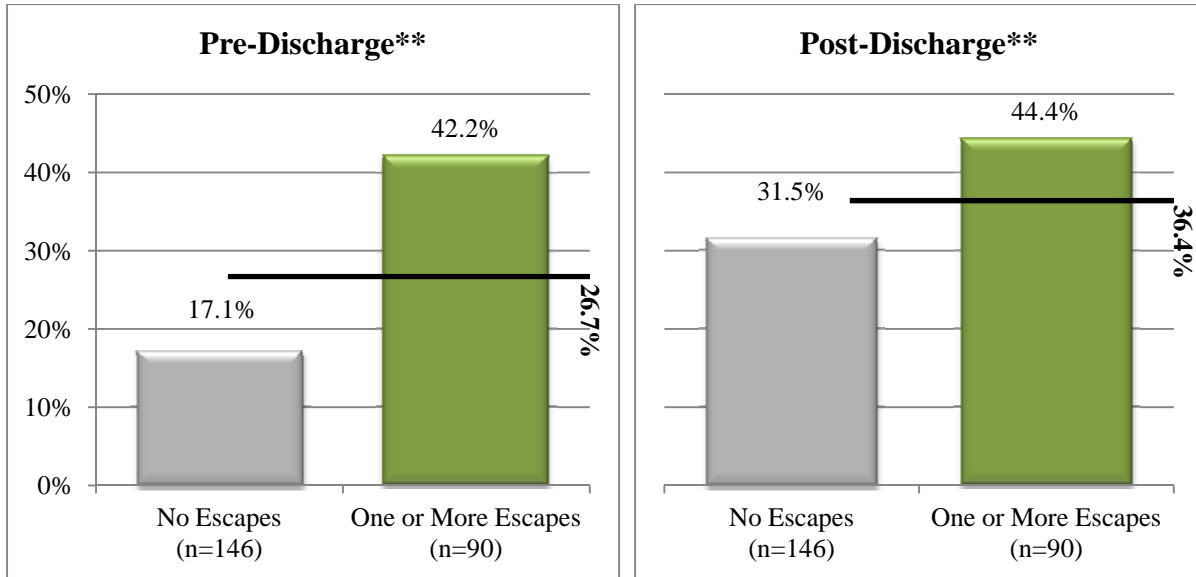


Number of Escapes

The Division of Youth Corrections tracks the number of times a youth escapes from residential placement. Policy defines an escape 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. Ridge View youth with more escapes received more new filings

for felony or misdemeanor offenses prior to discharge from DYC⁸⁵ and within one year following discharge.

Figure 46: Ridge View Recidivism Rates by DYC Escape



**X²=17.924, df=1, p<0.01

**X²=4.024, df=1, p<0.05

When looking at how the three cohorts compare on this factor (Table 15), it is apparent that the youth in the Shared Youth cohort had significantly more incidents of escape, as compared to RVYSC and State and Contract Placement youth.

Table 15: Escapes and Cohort Differences

Escapes During Commitment**	Ridge View Percent	Shared Youth Percent	State & Contract Placement Percent	TOTAL
None	61.9%	31.8%	54.7%	379
One or More	38.1%	68.2%	45.3%	328
Total	N=236	N=107	N=364	707

**X²=27.141, df=2, p<0.01

⁸⁵ F=16.287, df=1, p<0.01

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 inflate the pre-discharge recidivism rates for youth who escape from RVYSC when compared with the other two groups of males who might have escaped in other jurisdictions. Not all escapes will result in a pre-discharge filing. Youth may have escapes from facilities other than Ridge View, or they may have returned of their own accord from an authorized absence after the allotted time, but prior to charges being filed.

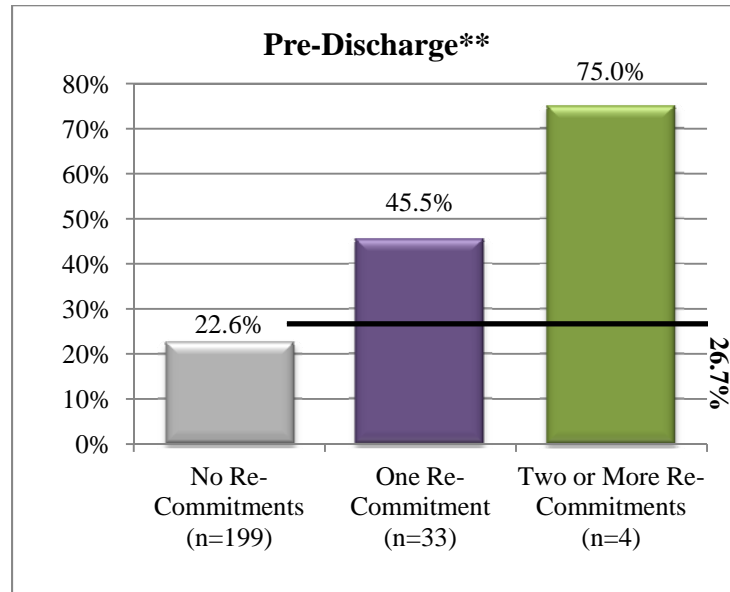
Number of Re-Commitments

DYC also tracks the number of times a committed youth receives an additional commitment sentence while they are currently fulfilling a sentence to DYC. Figure 47 displays the rate of recidivism by the number of re-commitments.

The majority of youth in the Ridge View sample never receive a re-commitment sentence (84.3%). Nonetheless, the pre-discharge recidivism rate is much higher for re-committed youth than the rate for youth that do not have any re-commitments⁸⁶. Most of the youth with multiple re-commitments (75.0%) and one re-commitment (45.5%) received a new filing during their commitment, compared with only 22.6% of those who did not receive any re-commitment sentences. Post-discharge recidivism results were not statistically significant.

⁸⁶ All re-commitments are the product of another charge being filed against the youth, either before (for an offense that occurred prior to their current commitment date) or during their commitment.

Figure 47: Ridge View Recidivism Rates by Number of Re-Commitments



** $\chi^2=12.399$, $df=2$, $p<0.01$

Risk of Recidivism – Prior Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare System Involvement

During the first thirty days of commitment to DYC, 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 that have traditionally been predictive of the risk to re-offend.

Several measures of “system involvement” were analyzed; however, none of them were found to be significantly correlated with recidivism rates for the Ridge View sample. These traditional risk factors examined included *prior detention admissions*, *prior adjudications*, *prior commitments*, and *prior out-of-home placements*⁸⁷. This lack of findings may indicate some level of treatments success. Services provided in treatment are intended to reduce a youth’s level of risk, or to provide a youth with skills that mitigate risk in some way. Effective, targeted treatment may reduce recidivism in youth who are more likely to re-offend without services.

⁸⁷ Prior out-of-home placements can include inpatient mental health or substance abuse treatment facilities, Child Welfare placements, as well as any prior DYC placements.

Ridge View Completion & Graduation

In order for this cohort of youth to officially *graduate* from the Ridge View program, 100% of the VALIDATE model components must be fulfilled, the youth's peer group and staff must formally agree that the youth has fulfilled all of the graduation requirements, and youth must earn and maintain "RAM" status for at least two months. If a youth completes 80-100% of the program requirements, but has not achieved validation by staff and his peer group or achieved and maintained RAM status for the specified period of time, that youth is considered to have *completed* the program, but not graduated from RVYSC.

Graduate/Validate:

- 1) All components (100%) of the VALIDATE model must be completed, AND
- 2) Staff and peer validation must be achieved, AND
- 3) RAM status earned and maintained for at least 2 months

Complete:

- 1) Most components (80-100%) of the VALIDATE model must be completed

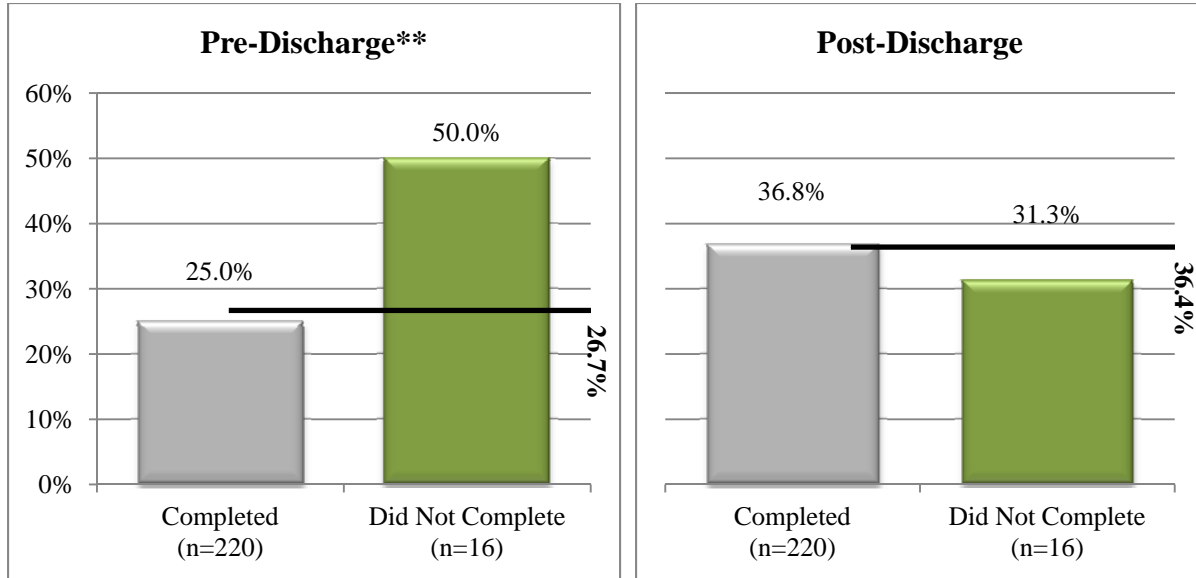
Ridge View Completion

Figure 48 shows the differences in pre-discharge and post-discharge recidivism rates for youth that successfully *completed* the Ridge View Youth Services Center program, compared with youth who did not complete the program⁸⁸. The completed group shown in gray (n=220) includes both graduates (n=96) and completers (n=124). There are only 16 youth who did not complete the RVYSC program (shown in green).

Youth who completed Ridge View Youth Services Center programming received fewer new filings for recidivist acts prior to discharge (25.0%) than youth who attended RVYSC, but did not fully complete the program (50.0%). Pre-discharge differences in recidivism rates by completion status were statistically significant.

⁸⁸ Common reasons for not completing the program are: 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 complete the program to be unsuccessful.

Figure 48: Ridge View Recidivism by Successful Completion of the Ridge View Program



** $X^2=4.764$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$

This measure, however, should be interpreted cautiously. A pre-discharge filing may very well be the reason for program incompleteness, and therefore a somewhat tautological measure for pre-discharge success.

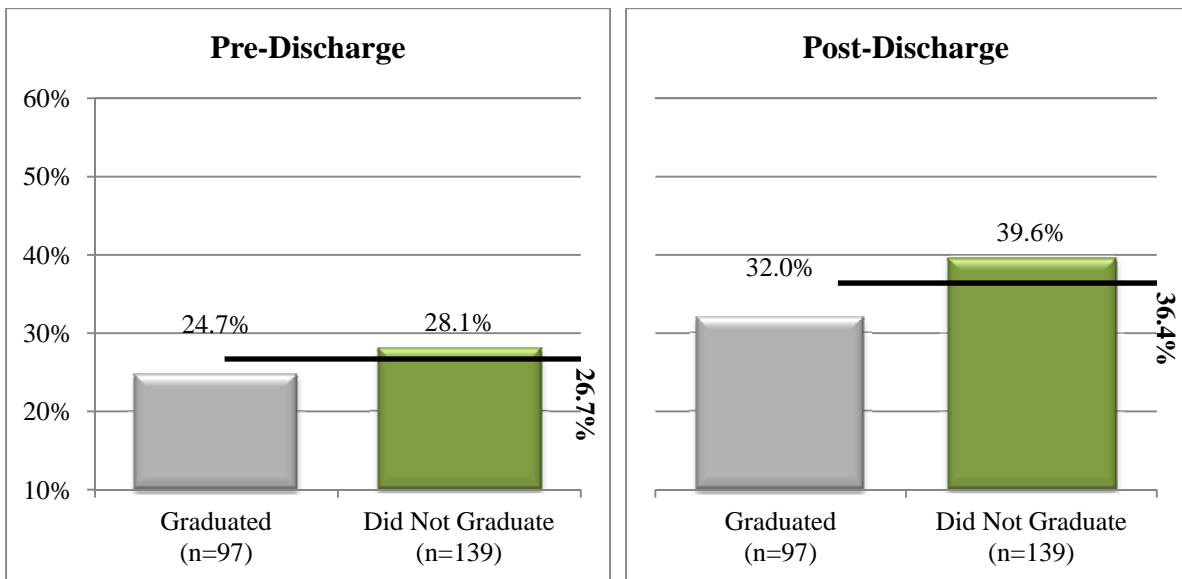
Looking deeper into this outcome, an inverse finding arises when pre-discharge recidivism is broken down into residential placement and parole filings. Youth who complete the Ridge View program have a residential recidivism rate of 6.4%, while non-completers have a rate of 43.8%⁸⁹. However, recidivism rates while youth are on parole prove opposite. Program completers have a parole recidivism rate of 20.0%, while youth not completing the RV program have a rate of 12.5%.

⁸⁹ $X^2=25.717$, $df=1$, $p<0.01$.

Ridge View Graduation

The Graduate/Validate status of Ridge View youth was also analyzed for this study. As explained earlier, graduation from RVYSC is much more than just program completion. In addition to program completion, graduation requires that youth are recognized by staff and peers as having fulfilled all validation/graduation requirements, and also requires that youth achieve and maintain RAM status. All types of recidivism rates (pre-discharge—including residential and parole—, and post-discharge) were shown to be insignificant when comparing graduates to non-graduates. Figure 49 shows these outcomes.

Figure 49: Ridge View Recidivism by Graduation from the Ridge View Program



Step-Down Programs

Rates of parole recidivism and post-discharge recidivism were examined according to whether RV youth went to a “step-down” community program after leaving RVYSC. The data utilized for this analysis was provided by RVYSC staff. This data was not pulled from the TRAILS database. While the analyses proved to be statistically insignificant, the directionality of the parole outcomes, specifically, may prove to be a positive for the program. With regard to parole, twenty-eight (28%) percent of youth who attended a step-down program before discharging re-

offended during that parole period. This is in comparison to 17.9% who re-offended on parole and did not attend any type of step-down program after leaving RVYSC. Further analysis on this subject reveal that by stepping-down to an ROP program (the Q-House), 12.5% of youth re-offended while on parole, in comparison to 19.9% who re-offended attending a different community step-down program.

In relation to post-discharge recidivism and step-down programs, the results are not as promising. Once again, these rates were not found to be statistically significant. Thirty-three (33.3%) percent of youth who attended a step-down program before discharging from commitment recidivated within a year of discharge. This is in comparison to 36.9% of youth who recidivated post-discharge, but did not attend any type of step-down program. Further analysis show that youth who stepped-down to an ROP program (the Q-House) had a 37.5% rate of re-offense, whereas 36.3% of youth who attending a non-ROP step-down program re-offended post-discharge.

These mixed results could suggest that Ridge View YSC accomplished better short-term outcomes with this discharge cohort.

SECTION TWO SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The most notable message in this section of the report is not a finding or an outcome, but the substantial change in methodology from previous years. The way in which the comparison cohorts for this year's report were comprised is much improved. Due to this change, rates reported in this report should not be compared to previous year reports. Trend data must be interpreted with extreme caution.

The most prevalent cohort differences pointed to the high risk composition of the Shared cohort of males. This group of youth proved to have the highest number of factors that would make them significantly more prone to recidivate—and this was shown to be true for both the pre- and the post-discharge recidivism rates. This Shared group also had much higher rates when pre-discharge was broken down into residential and parole re-offending. It is recommended that the Division and Ridge View YSC dedicate more resources to investigating this high-risk group even more.

The most positive outcome witnessed in this section is the shared success across all three groups when it came to risk (to recidivate) reduction. Using CJRA data to assess youth change across three points in time, all three groups were shown to have significantly reduced a number of risk factors, overall and across most domains.

Overall, Ridge View YSC discharges were shown to have the lowest rates of pre-discharge recidivism, as compared to the other two groups. However, all three groups had similar rates when looking at post-discharge recidivism.

An important factor to keep in mind when interpreting these results is program filing practices. Programs vary in their filing practices, and have great discretion regarding when and when not to file charges against a youth. Program policy, philosophy, and practice, as it relates to filings charges on youth, may artificially skew recidivism rates, making program to program comparisons very difficult.

APPENDIX A - Limitations of Recidivism Research

The Definition of Recidivism Varies in Colorado and Across the Nation

Throughout the United States, recidivism is a measure that is often utilized in determining the level of effectiveness of justice agencies and determining the level of public safety that can be expected as offenders are released back into the community. Because a common goal to reduce recidivism exists across justice agencies, the measure seems reasonable and is tracked closely and regularly by most justice agencies. However, due to the varying definitions of recidivism, applying and comparing the outcome measure is an imperfect science. Generally speaking, the term “recidivism” refers to the re-occurrence of delinquent or criminal behavior. However, the more specific definition of recidivism utilized by each agency can vary greatly among states and even among justice agencies within a single state. In the next few paragraphs, the history surrounding the establishment of a common definition of recidivism in Colorado, and also the varied definitions of recidivism existing across the nation will be discussed.

Efforts to Establish a Common Definition of Recidivism in Colorado

In Colorado, efforts to establish a common definition of recidivism dates back to the early 1990s. 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 to develop a common definition of recidivism.

In 1998 the Office of the State Auditor revisited the standardized 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 these definitions of recidivism as outlined by the multi-agency committee.

Recidivism Definition Components

Before describing in-depth the definitional differences in recidivism across the nation, it is important to note that recidivism is a multi-faceted concept. The definition has two main components: 1) the type of system reaction to the delinquent behavior that constitutes “recidivism”, and 2) the length of the follow-up period, or how long the youth are tracked in the community after being released from the agency. The type of system reaction refers to whether recidivism is defined as re-referral, re-arrest, a new charge, a new filing, reconviction, reconviction and return to custody or supervision, re-incarceration, or re-commitment. The length of follow-up is typically 12 to 36 months, with the norm being 12 months. Other important components of the recidivism definition include the type of offense that lead up to the system reaction (delinquent, criminal, felony, misdemeanor, petty, etc.), the systems researched in the follow-up period (juvenile, adult, both), and if a cohort is followed, when that cohort was released from the agency. With the understanding that recidivism is a multi-component concept, it becomes apparent that the meaning of the measure differs from venue to venue, with each agency using varied combinations of the concept.

A Glimpse Across the Nation

According to a study conducted by the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (VDJJ)⁹⁰, twenty-seven states currently measure juvenile recidivism rates statewide. As expected, with the concept of recidivism open for broad interpretation, few states utilize a common definition. This being said, there are some definitional components that are utilized more frequently than others by the states. The most common definitions utilized are *reconviction*, with 13 of the 27 states (48%) using this definition component, *re-incarceration* (41%), *re-arrest* (33%), and *re-commitment* (11%). The least common definitions include *re-referral* or *new filing* (used by Maryland and

⁹⁰ Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, DJJ Research Quarterly, Volume III, April 2005

Colorado), and *reconviction* and *return to custody or supervision* (used by Louisiana). Eight states do not restrict themselves to one measure of recidivism, but instead report on two or more of the measures mentioned above.

Methodological Issues

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 systems⁹¹. 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 systems⁹².

Technical advances and a change in the data validation process (using Lexis-Nexis in place of ICON) have allowed the Division to report on more current recidivism data and overcome limitations on the ability to track case findings over the past few studies. However, there are still some instances where youth, especially those discharged near the end of the State fiscal year, will still have open cases at the time of report publication⁹³. In those cases, there may not be a finding for any of the charges filed against those youth.

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.

⁹¹ Marked improvements have been made to the Judicial Department's data system (ICON/ECLIPSE) as well as to the Department of Human Services' data system (TRAILS).

⁹² Conversely, less than accurate information systems may net lower recidivism rates because of errors associated with data entry or software inconsistencies.

⁹³ Scenarios in which case findings can be delayed include high-profile cases or defendants, filings on more serious charges, or if the youth has failed to appear for his or her court date.

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. 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.

APPENDIX B – Statistical Measures

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. When using a Chi-Square statistic, it is important to define the number of degrees of freedom in the test statistic. Degrees of freedom are the “number of values that are free to vary when calculating a test statistic.”⁹⁴ This number is equal to the number of cells, minus the reduction in degrees of freedom. So, for the above example using gender, there are two cells: male and female; and only one reduction. So, the degrees of freedom would equal one (1) in this instance ($2-1=1$).

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

⁹⁴ Bachman and Paternoster (1997). *Statistical Methods for Criminology and Criminal Justice*.

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. Results that are not statistically significant may provide some initial insight into differences between groups, but should not necessarily dictate changes in policy or decision-making processes.

APPENDIX C – Ridge View 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 for youth management and a staff-supervised environment for security, rather than a traditional fenced-in, secure 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 those requiring a more secure placement⁹⁵.

The authorizing legislation specified that DYC use 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

⁹⁵ In prior years, youth with substance abuse needs were also excluded from Ridge View, however recent expansion in treatment programming allows Ridge View to accommodate certain youth with substance abuse needs.

flexibility of the resulting facility to some extent, it also maximized the functionality of its intended use.