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Ridge View Youth Services Center Recidivism Evaluation Report *Fiscal Year 2001-02*

November 1, 2004



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

Working with Colorado Communities to Achieve Justice

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This first annual report on recidivism rates for Ridge View Youth Services Center (RVYSC) provides analysis of pre-discharge recidivism for youth committed in the first six months of Fiscal Year (FY) 2001-02 that were served in a treatment program at Ridge View. The Division of Youth Corrections (DYC) submits this report in response to the legislation authorizing the construction and operation of the Ridge View facility¹. 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.

In December of 1999, after the passage of legislation authorizing the construction and operation of Ridge View Youth Services Center, criminal justice agencies throughout Colorado adopted a new set of definitions of recidivism in response to Legislative audit findings. The current definitions, which are used in the Division's annual Recidivism Report presented to the General Assembly, are as follows:

Pre-discharge Recidivism: A filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense that occurred prior to discharge from DYC

Post-discharge Recidivism: A filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense that occurred within one year following discharge from DYC

To ensure consistency in how the Division reports recidivism, DYC proposed in a letter to the General Assembly that the above definitions be applied to this annual recidivism

¹Section 19-2-411.5, C.R.S.

report for Ridge View Youth Services Center. In the absence of objections from the Joint Budget Committee, the Division has prepared this report using the standardized definitions.

The current report outlines descriptive characteristics and examines pre-discharge recidivism rates for one hundred eleven (111) youth committed to the Division of Youth Corrections (DYC) between July 1, 2001 and December 31, 2001 who were placed in Ridge View Youth Services Center (RVYSC) during their commitment. In addition, the report examines differences between youth that attended RVYSC and other males committed to DYC during the same time period. Post-discharge recidivism rates are not yet available for this facility because only five youth discharged in FY 2001-02 spent any significant time at Ridge View during their commitment.

Characteristics of the Sample

- Youth placed at Ridge View did not differ significantly from other males committed to the Division of Youth Corrections on demographic characteristics including ethnicity and age at time of commitment.
 - Forty percent of the youth placed at RVYSC were Hispanic, 38% were white and 20% were African American.
 - The average age at time of commitment for youth in the Ridge View sample was 16.3 years of age and the average age at time of placement at RVYSC was 16.9 years.
- Ridge View youth did show some significant differences in some risk factors when compared with other males committed to DYC during FY 2001-02.
 - A higher percentage of youth placed at Ridge View had two or more prior adjudications (55%) than other males committed to DYC (39%).
 - Youth placed at RVYSC had a lower average number of out-of-home placements (1.9) compared with other males committed to DYC (2.8).

- Youth placed at RVYSC also had a significantly longer commitment length of stay² (28.3 months) than other NYC males (26.4 months).

Pre-discharge Recidivism Results

Pre-discharge recidivism rates were analyzed for 111 youth committed to the Division of Youth Corrections between July 1, 2001 and December 31, 2001 who were placed at Ridge View Youth Services Center for at least three months during their commitment to the Division. Ridge View youth are compared to all other males committed to NYC during this same time period that did not spend time at RVYSC (n=230). The term ‘pre-discharge’ is used to identify offenses filed during commitment. Commitment includes both residential out-of-home placements and non-residential parole.

- The pre-discharge recidivism rate for youth committed in the first six months of FY 2001-02 who were placed at RVYSC was 27.0%. This rate represents thirty youth placed at Ridge View (of the entire Ridge View sample of 111 youth) who received a new filing for a felony or misdemeanor offense prior to discharge from the Division of Youth Corrections.
 - Ridge View youth were less likely to have a filing for another delinquent act during their commitment (27%) than other NYC males committed during the same time period (41%).
 - There were no statistically significant results for pre-discharge recidivism by ethnicity or NYC management region.
 - Similarly, none of the differences in recidivism rates by criminal history or risk factors were significant, however it is interesting to note that youth who successfully graduated from the Ridge View program did have lower rates of pre-discharge recidivism (17%) than youth who did not meet all of the conditions for successful graduation from the program (36%).

² Length of stay includes time spent on mandatory parole.

Overall there were no statistically significant differences in pre-discharge recidivism rates by demographic or criminal history/risk factors for youth placed at Ridge View.

However, youth who attended treatment programs at Ridge View Youth Services Center were less likely to have a new filing for a misdemeanor or felony offense after admission to the program than other NYC males committed during the same time period.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This first annual report on recidivism rates for Ridge View Youth Services Center (RVYSC) provides analysis of pre-discharge recidivism for youth committed in the first six months of Fiscal Year (FY) 2001-02 that were served in a treatment program at Ridge View. The Division of Youth Corrections (DYC) submits this report in response to the legislation authorizing the construction and operation of the Ridge View facility³. 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.

This legislation was adopted during the 1997 General Session. In December of 1999, after the passage of legislation authorizing the construction and operation of Ridge View Youth Services Center, criminal justice agencies throughout Colorado adopted a new set of definitions of recidivism in response to Legislative audit findings. The current definitions, which are used in the Division's annual Recidivism Report presented to the General Assembly, are as follows⁴:

Pre-discharge Recidivism: A filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense that occurred prior to discharge from DYC

Post-discharge Recidivism: A filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense that occurred within one year following discharge from DYC

³ Section 19-2-411.5, C.R.S.

⁴ The official definition of recidivism uses the terms pre-release and post-release recidivism. DYC uses pre-discharge and post-discharge to denote a discharge/release from commitment status rather than a release from a specific placement.

To ensure consistency in how the Division reports recidivism, DYC proposed in a letter to the General Assembly that the above definitions be applied to this annual recidivism report for Ridge View Youth Services Center. In the absence of objections from the Joint Budget Committee, the Division has prepared this report using the standardized definitions.

The purpose of this report is to outline descriptive characteristics and examine pre-discharge recidivism rates for youth placed at Ridge View. This report evaluates the pre-discharge recidivism rates for one hundred eleven (111) youth committed to the Division of Youth Corrections (DYC) between July 1, 2001 and December 31, 2001 who were placed in Ridge View Youth Services Center (RVYSC) during their commitment. This sample was chosen to mimic the selection criteria for the Division's annual recidivism report that will be submitted to the General Assembly on January 1, 2005. Post-discharge recidivism rates are not yet available for this facility because only five youth discharged in FY 2001-02 spent any significant time at Ridge View during their commitment.

II. STUDY METHODOLOGY

This study uses the same methodology for data collection as will be used for the Division's 2004 recidivism report to be submitted to the General Assembly on January 1, 2005. Since pre-discharge recidivism is defined as "a filing for a new felony or misdemeanor offense," the Division relied upon the Judicial Department's Integrated Colorado Online Network (ICON) database for determining whether a recidivist act had occurred. Data files were obtained from the Judicial Department's ICON data system and matched with DYC data files. Only those filings entered into the Colorado Judicial Department's ICON data system were included in these recidivism measures. Traffic, municipal, status, and petty offenses are not included in the standardized statewide definition of recidivism.

The process for matching files involves a high level match of youths' last name, first initial, and two of the three birth date elements. These matches were further examined for evidence of accurate matches (review of the full name listed by both agencies, further checks against the ICON system for nicknames, etc.). Any method to match files is limited by data entry errors, spelling differences, and aliases. Efforts were made to minimize errors through spot-checking and manual reviews of randomly selected cases in the ICON system.

The Colorado Judicial Department prepared a data file containing filing information that was matched with a DYC data file on committed youth served in fiscal year 2001-02. The matched file was used to evaluate new offenses that occurred during commitment (including parole) for youth committed during the first six months of FY 2001-02 (pre-discharge recidivism) who were placed in Ridge View Youth Services Center during their commitment. Both the Judicial ICON data system and the Colorado TRAILS data system were used to collect follow-up data on committed youth who had not been discharged at the time the Judicial Department's data file was prepared.

Information on offense and filing dates are now available through the Judicial Department's automated data system (ICON), allowing for more accurate reporting of

offense dates and more meaningful analyses of filings for offenses that occur during commitment or following discharge. This report incorporates all available data on offense dates to more accurately assess recidivism rates.

This evaluation compares youth served by Ridge View to all other males served by NYC that were committed during the same time period (July 1, 2001 through December 31, 2001). Females were excluded from the comparison sample because Ridge View serves only male youth and because of differences in demographic, offense, risk and need profiles between males and females committed to NYC. Male youth were included in the comparison sample even if they were ineligible for Ridge View placement in order to illustrate some of the differences that exist between Ridge View youth and the general population. Ten youth that spent a short time at Ridge View, but did not participate in the full programming were deleted from the sample because of their short length of stay (LOS) at the facility (less than 3 months). These ten youth are included as part of the comparison group.

Most youth committed to NYC experience multiple placements, both residential and non-residential, throughout their commitment. Therefore, collection of recidivism outcomes, while useful for understanding the rate of re-offending during the commitment period and monitoring re-offending behaviors by specific sub-populations, is not normally useful in measuring performance of individual programs. However, youth placed in Ridge View Youth Services Center tend to have longer lengths of stay and are often paroled directly from Ridge View to the community with few placements other than their assessment center and Ridge View.

Program evaluations often reveal differences between groups. These differences may be the result of some noteworthy impact, or they simply could have occurred because of random chance. Throughout this study, findings were tested for statistical significance. If it is highly unlikely that a finding (such as a difference between two groups) happened due to chance, it is said that the finding is statistically significant. Significance is measured through interpretation of a “p” value. Two 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 a 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. Throughout this report, the term “significant” is used only to describe findings that are significant at the $p < 0.05$ or $p < 0.01$ levels.

III. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A. Historical Background

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

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

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

DYC used the “design, build, and operate” model so that the private contractor awarded the bid to operate this model program could participate actively in the design and

construction processes. This ensured that the resulting design and construction of the facility was tailored to specific program needs. Additionally, the state gained the advantage of using private sector construction timeframes and costs. While this model did reduce the flexibility of the resulting facility to some extent, it also maximized the functionality of its intended use.

B. The Rite of Passage Program at Ridge View Youth Services Center

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

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

During their stay at Ridge View, youth may progress through four status levels. Youth begin their stay as interns during the orientation process, during which time they are assigned a student mentor. Once a student has successfully completed their status as interns, they become “RAM” (the mascot of Ridge View) pledges. In order to successfully pledge to RAM status, youth must actively participate in the program, complete their treatment contract, interact with their groups (which includes presenting a “life story”), complete 25 hours of community service, consistently model appropriate

appearance and behavior, and complete an initial draft of their graduation plan. The youth's peer group and staff must agree to award a youth's RAM status.

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

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

- √ **V**ocational training
- √ **A**thletics
- √ **L**ife Skills
- √ **I**ndividual graduation plan
- √ **D**emonstrated behavioral changes
- √ **A**ftercare
- √ **T**reatment
- √ **E**ducation

In order to officially "validate," or graduate, from the Ridge View program, each of the above VALIDATE components must be completed. The youth peer group and staff must affirm that the youth has fulfilled each requirement. Once these areas have been completed, and the youth has maintained a RAM status for four consecutive months, he officially graduates from the program. Most case plans are designed so that a youth's graduation date closely coincides with his parole date. However, youth do not always go

onto parole after graduation. Some move to other step-down placements, while others remain at Ridge View until parole, or until another placement is made.

C. Seeding Program for Ridge View Youth Services Center

The contract for the operation of the facility was awarded to the Rite of Passage program in the winter of 1998, following a national competitive bidding process. Rite of Passage began operation of the Ridge View Youth Services Center on July 1, 2001. Because DYCS had already been using a Rite of Passage operated facility in Nevada, it was possible to begin a “seeding” process. Youth would begin their commitment at the existing ROP facility and then transition to Ridge View. The seeding plan began well before the opening of Ridge View and was designed to introduce youth in the first Ridge View cohort to the Rite of Passage program and to the positive-peer-culture model, which focuses strongly on peer influences on youth behavior. It is expected that the youth being served in the facility will strongly impact the normative culture⁵ of the program. The program taps into the natural leadership abilities of some youth in the program and builds those skills in others. Youth are expected to monitor each other’s behavior and use their own behavior to set the tone for the institution. Because the creation of strong, positive peer leaders is the cornerstone of the positive-peer-culture model, it was necessary for Ridge View to begin operations with youth prepared to fulfill these roles. As a result, for the first year of operations, all youth participated in an orientation process in the out-of-state Rite of Passage program before being placed at Ridge View.

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

⁵ In this context, “normative culture” refers to the informal expectations and rules for behavior created through a consensus of the members of a group to follow certain practices.

IV. YOUTH SERVED BY RIDGE VIEW YOUTH SERVICES CENTER

A. Demographic Characteristics

i. Ethnicity

Youth committed in the first 6 months of FY 2001-02 that were served by Ridge View did not differ significantly from all other males committed during that same time period (see Table 1).

**Table 1:
Ethnic Differences Between Ridge View and Other DYC Males**

Ethnicity	Ridge View Youth (n=111)	DYC Males (n=230)	TOTAL (n=341)
Anglo	37.8%	47.4%	44.3%
African American	19.8%	11.7%	14.4%
Hispanic	39.6%	39.1%	39.3%
Other ⁶	2.8%	1.8%	2.0%

ii. Age

The average age at commitment for youth placed at Ridge View was 16.3 years; this is slightly younger than the overall average age at commitment for DYC males (16.5 years). However, the average age at the time youth were admitted to the Ridge View program was somewhat older at 16.9 years. The difference between age at commitment and age at admission to Ridge View can be mostly explained by the fact that most of the youth in this sample (youth admitted to RVYSC in FY 2001-02) were placed in an out-of-state Rite of Passage program prior to admission. The average length of stay in that program was 4.3 months. Additionally, all youth committed to the Division are required to participate in an assessment period of up to 30 days in a secure, state-operated facility prior to any other placement.

⁶ Includes Native American and Asian American youth as well as those officially identified as "other." These categories are not combined because of commonalities among them, but because the numbers of youth in each category are too small when taken alone to make valid statistical comparisons.

The majority of youth were 15 (23%), 16 (22%), or 17 (36%) years of age at the time of first placement in Ridge View Youth Services Center. Table 2 shows the distribution of these youth, by age at time of placement.

**Table 2:
Age at Placement in Ridge View⁷**

Age	Number Placed	Percent
14	4	3.6%
15	25	22.5%
16	24	21.6%
17	40	36.0%
18	17	15.3%
19	1	0.9%

⁷ Represents age at time of placement in Ridge View, rather than age at the time of commitment. Because of the delay between commitment and Ridge View placement, no comparison can be made with age at commitment for other DYCS males.

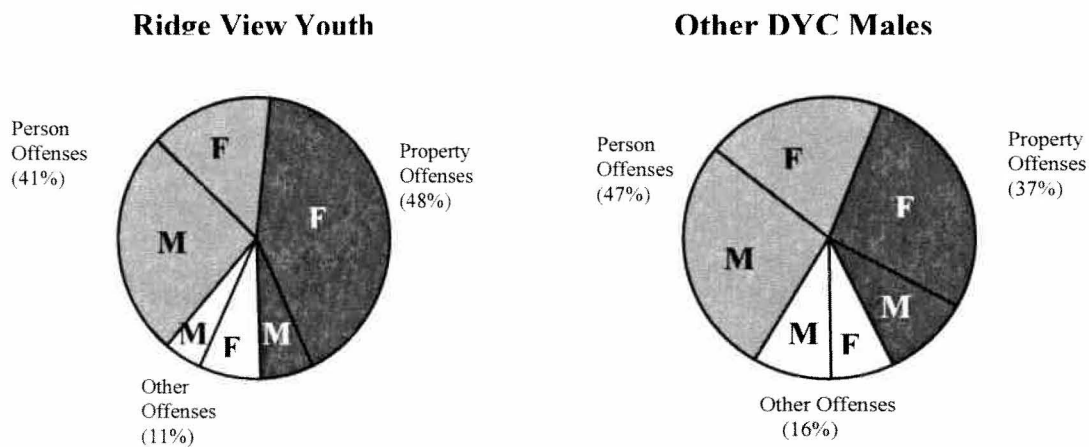
B. Risk Profiles of Youth

As mentioned previously, eligibility restrictions based on type of offense, mental health needs and other factors related to youth's risk and needs levels led to some notable differences between youth placed in Ridge View and the overall DYC male population.

i. Offense Types

Nearly half (48%) of Ridge View youth were committed for property offenses, compared with 37% of the males in other DYC placements. Similarly, 41% of Ridge View youth were committed for person offenses, compared with 47% of other DYC males. Figure 1 shows the differences in types of committing offense between Ridge View and non-Ridge View males committed to DYC. These differences are not statistically significant.

Figure 1:
Type of Offense



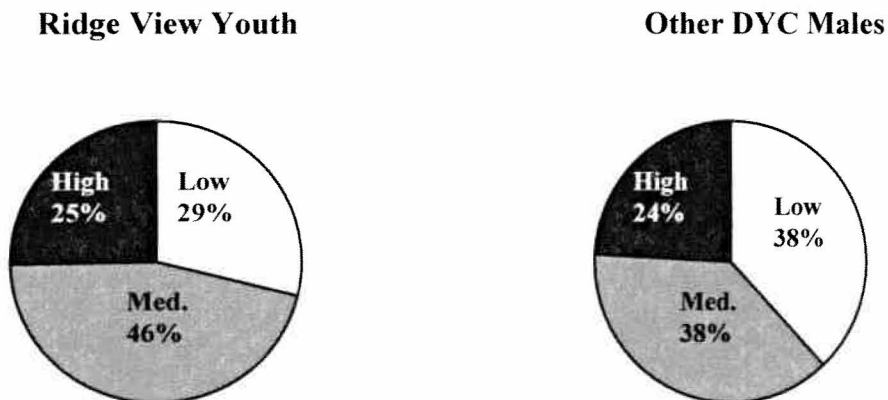
F=felony; M=misdemeanor

ii. Risk of Re-offense

Eligibility requirements for Ridge View placement, based primarily on offense and also on severity of mental health treatment needs, do not translate directly into a significantly lower risk population being served. On some measures, Ridge View youth do exhibit lower risk of re-offense than other males served by DYC. These same youth, however, score higher in other areas.

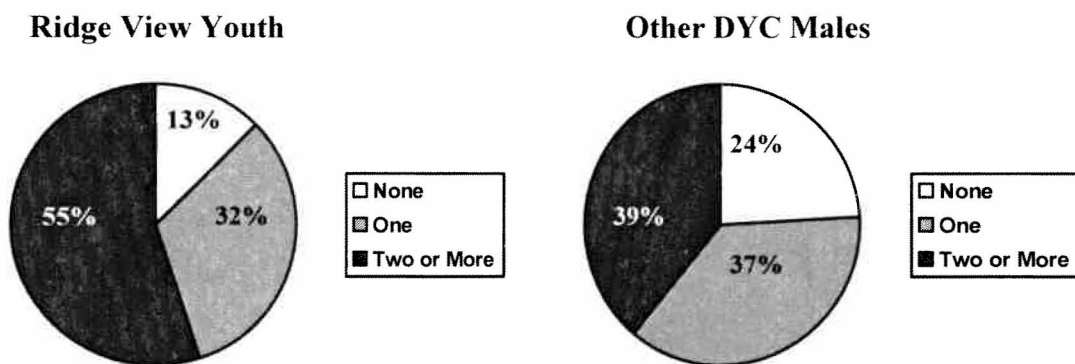
One of the many assessment instruments used at the time of commitment is the objective Commitment Classification Instrument (CCI). Placement needs are calculated by the CCI using the combined risk of re-offense and severity of the offense for which the youth was committed. The risk score is based on factors such as the number of prior adjudications, offense type, prior placement history, and age at first adjudication. Figure 2 shows the differences in risk of re-offense between youth committed in FY 2001-02 that were placed in Ridge View and other DYC males committed during that same time period. These differences are not statistically significant; however, it is interesting that fewer youth with a low risk of re-offending were held at RVYSC than in other DYC placements.

Figure 2
CCI Risk Scores



Another estimation of risk is the number of delinquency adjudications occurring prior to a youth's most recent commitment. A higher proportion of Ridge View youth had two or more prior adjudications than the remaining DYC male population, indicating an elevated risk of re-offending. Conversely, a lower proportion of Ridge View youth had no prior adjudications occurring prior to the current commitment⁸.

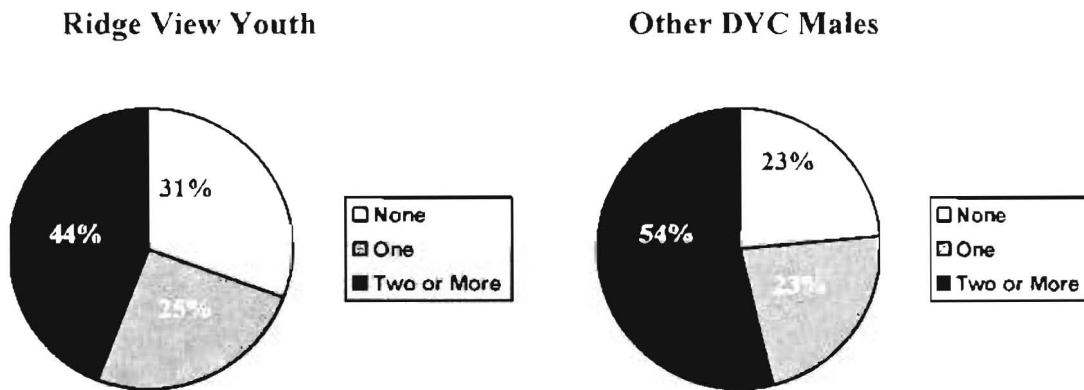
Figure 3
Number of Prior Adjudications



⁸ These differences were significant at $p < .01$.

Despite slightly higher average CCI scores and more prior adjudications, Ridge View youth had fewer previous out-of-home placements than other NYC males. Thirty-one percent of Ridge View youth had no prior out-of-home placements compared with 23% of other NYC males committed during the first 6 months of FY 2001-02. Only 44% of Ridge View youth had two or more prior placements, compared with 54% of other NYC males. These differences were not statistically significant. However, Ridge View youth had an average of 1.9 previous out of home placements (prior to their recent commitment), and other NYC males had an average of 2.8 prior out-of-home placements ($p < .05$).

Figure 4
Number of Prior Out-of-Home Placements



iii. Length of Stay (LOS)

Youth placed at RYVSC had a significantly longer commitment LOS (28.3 months) than other NYC males (26.4 months) committed between July 1, 2001 and December 31, 2001⁹. Commitment length of stay includes time spent on mandatory parole. All youth in these samples were subject to the mandatory parole statutes and would have been required to spend between nine and twelve months on parole status in the community prior to discharge from the Division.

⁹ These differences were significant at $p < 0.01$.

V. RECIDIVISM

A. Limitations of Recidivism Research

Any analysis of recidivism rates must be approached cautiously. Policy makers and juvenile justice practitioners often refer to recidivism as if it were a constant, universal concept. In reality, recidivism is an amorphous concept that is dependent upon its underpinning assumptions. A marked departure from any of these assumptions will result in outcome measures that are significantly disparate. This section of the report will discuss those assumptions that have that greatest potential for influencing recidivism rates¹⁰.

i. 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. For example, the Community Accountability Program, as well as other diversion programs, have been eliminated because of state budget cuts. These programs were designed to provide alternatives to State detention and commitment sentences. The process of shifting populations into other programs which may not be adequately prepared to treat delinquent youth, or alternatively provide more treatment than is required, can both positively and negatively impact recidivism rates.

ii. 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 updating its criminal and juvenile justice information systems¹¹. 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 increasing as a result of actual spikes in criminal behavior, but because of the increased reliability and accuracy of matching offenders between data systems¹².

iii. Policy Changes

The juvenile justice system can be viewed as an intricate network of decision points that is generally governed by statute, policy, or administrative declaration, 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 (DP) 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.

¹⁰ Altering the definition of recidivism can influence wholesale changes in outcome results. This discussion assumes that the definition of recidivism remains constant.

¹¹ Marked improvements have been made to the Judicial's data system (ICON) as well as to the Department of Human Services data system (TRAILS). These improvements are in conjunction with the statewide CICJIS effort that attempts to link individual and stand alone data systems.

¹² Conversely, less than accurate information systems may net lower recidivism rates because of errors associated with data entry or software inconsistencies.

iv. Actual Change in Criminal Behavior

Lastly, changes in the recidivism rate can be the result of actual changes in criminal behavior. As research advances in 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.

B. Pre-discharge Recidivism Results

This section reports pre-discharge recidivism information for 111 youth committed to the Division of Youth Corrections between July 1, 2001 and December 31, 2001 who were placed at Ridge View Youth Services Center during their commitment to the Division. The Ridge View youth are compared to all other males committed to DYC during this same time period who did not spend time at RVYSC (n=230). The term 'pre-discharge' is used to identify offenses filed during commitment. Commitment includes both residential out-of-home placements and non-residential parole.

The sample selected for the current study was restricted to youth committed in the first six months of the fiscal year (FY 2001-02) in order to minimize the proportion of youth that had not been discharged from DYC at the time data collection was finalized for this report. As of September 1, 2004, twenty-one youth (18.9%) from the Ridge View sample had not yet been discharged. Fifty youth in the comparison group (21.7%) had not yet been discharged. As in previous recidivism studies released by the Division, the youth who had not yet been discharged are included in the analyses of new offenses filed during commitment. The rate of new filings is particularly high for this group of youths (59% including the RVYSC and comparison samples), probably in large part because of the longer LOS for these youth (34.5 months) when compared to the 2001 sample as a whole (25.0 months)¹³.

Of the 111 youth in the RVYSC sample, 40 (36.0%) had a new misdemeanor or felony offense filed prior to discharge. Ten of these youth received a filing for a recidivist act that occurred prior to admission to Ridge View so these offenses were not included in the following analyses. When the offenses that occurred prior to RVYSC admission were excluded, the pre-discharge recidivism rate for youth committed in the first six months of FY 2001-02 was 27.0% (n=111). In comparison, 41% (n=230) of males committed to the Division during that same time period that were not placed in RVYSC had a new filing

¹³ Excluding this group would underestimate the rate of filings during commitment for all youth committed during the first six months of the fiscal year. Most of the youth who had not been discharged and not had new charges filed by the time the data collection for this study was completed are nearing the end of their sentence, and will likely be discharged without having received an additional filing during commitment.

for a misdemeanor or felony offense prior to discharge from the Division¹⁴. Table 3 shows a breakdown of pre-discharge recidivism results for each group.

Table 3
Juveniles Committed Between 7/1/01 and 12/31/01

	No Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism		Pre-Discharge Recidivism Following Admission to RV	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Ridge View Comparison Group	71	64.0%	40	36.0%	30	27.0%
	136	59.1%	94	40.9%	N/A	N/A
TOTALS	207	60.7%	134	37.3%	N/A	N/A

The following subsections provide demographic and offense information by pre-discharge recidivism outcomes for youth in the Ridge View sample. These analyses will only include those 30 youth with a new filing where the offense occurred following the youth's admission to Ridge View Youth Services Center because the focus of this report is an evaluation of the Ridge View Program. The ten youth that had a filing for an offense that occurred prior to their placement at RVYSC are excluded. If the program had not served a youth prior to the time the recidivist act occurred, the program in question could not have prevented it.

¹⁴ These difference were significant at $p < 0.05$.

i. Ethnicity

Table 4 provides a breakdown of offenses filed during commitment by ethnicity.

Table 4
New Offenses Filed During Commitment by Ethnicity
Juveniles Committed Between 7/1/01 and 12/31/01

Ethnicity	No Pre-discharge Offense Filed		Pre-Discharge Recidivism Following Admission to RV		TOTALS	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Anglo	30	71.4%	12	28.6%	42	37.8%
African-American	18	81.8%	4	18.2%	22	19.8%
Hispanic/Latino	32	72.7%	12	27.3%	44	39.6%
Native American	1	33.3%	2	66.6%	3	2.7%
TOTALS	81	73.0%	30	27.0%	111	100.0%

Recidivism rates did not differ significantly by ethnic group. African-American youth placed at Ridgeview did, however, exhibit a lower rate of pre-discharge recidivism than Anglo-American or Hispanic youth. The ethnic group that exhibited the highest rates of pre-discharge recidivism was Native Americans (67%). Because of the extraordinarily small sample size of this population (N=3), the results from this finding should be cautiously interpreted.

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

Table 5
New Offenses Filed During Commitment by DYC Management Region
Juveniles Committed Between 7/1/01 and 12/31/01

Region	No Pre-discharge Offense Filed		Pre-Discharge Recidivism Following Admission to RV		TOTALS	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Central¹⁶	7	70.0%	3	30.0%	10	9.0%
Denver	18	75.0%	6	25.0%	24	21.6%
Northeast	22	68.8%	10	31.3%	32	28.8%
Southern	22	68.8%	10	31.3%	32	28.8%
Western	12	92.3%	1	7.7%	13	11.7%
TOTALS	81	73.0%	30	27.0%	111	100.0%

Regional differences in pre-discharge recidivism rates for youth placed at RVYSC were not statistically significant, possibly because of the small sample sizes in the Central and Western Regions. The rates of new offenses filed during commitment ranged from a low of 8% in the Western Region to a high of 31% in the Northeast and Southern Regions.

¹⁶ In July 2003 the Central Region and the Denver Region merged to form one combined Central Region. In FY 2001-02, these regions were still individual entities and recidivism rates for each are reported in these analyses.

iii. Original Commitment Offense Type

The Colorado TRAILS data system includes information on the most serious offense for which youth are committed as it is recorded on the juvenile's mittimus. These offenses have been grouped into 'types' of commitment offenses for purposes of analyses. Table 6 presents a breakdown of original commitment offense-type by pre-discharge recidivism.

Table 6
New Offenses Filed During Commitment by Original Offense Type
Juveniles Committed Between 7/1/01 and 12/31/01

Type of Original Commitment Offense	No Pre-discharge Offense Filed		Pre-Discharge Recidivism Following Admission to RV		TOTALS	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Person	32	71.1%	13	28.9%	45	40.5%
Property	37	69.8%	16	30.2%	53	47.7%
Other	12	92.3%	1	7.7%	1	11.7%
TOTALS	81	73.0%	30	27.0%	111	100.0%

Less than one third of all youth committed for either a person (29%) or property (30%) offense in the first six months of FY 2001-02 and placed at RVYSC had a filing for a new misdemeanor or felony offense prior to being discharged from DYC. These differences were not statistically significant.

iv. Number of Prior Adjudications

Table 7 shows recidivism rates by the number of prior adjudications for youth committed in the first six months of FY 2001-02.

Table 7
New Offenses Filed During Commitment by Prior Adjudications
Juveniles Committed Between 7/1/01 and 12/31/01

Number of Prior Adjudications	No Pre-discharge Offense Filed		Pre-Discharge Recidivism Following Admission to RV		TOTALS	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
None	11	78.6%	3	21.4%	14	12.6%
One	29	80.6%	7	19.4%	36	32.4%
Two or More	41	67.2%	20	32.8%	61	55.0%
TOTALS	81	73.0%	30	27.0%	111	100.0%

Fifty-five percent of the Ridge View pre-discharge sample had two or more prior adjudications. While the differences in recidivism rates are not statistically significant between groups, it would be expected that youth with more prior adjudications would have a higher risk for re-offending. The data above supports this hypothesis as a higher percentage of youth with two or more prior adjudications (33%) received a filing for a misdemeanor or felony offense prior to discharge than youth with zero or one prior adjudication.

v. Prior Out-of-Home Placements

Table 8 shows recidivism rates by the number of out of home placements the youth had before this commitment in the first six months of FY 2001-02.

Table 8
New Offenses Filed During Commitment by Prior Out-of-Home Placements
Juveniles Committed Between 7/1/01 and 12/31/01

Number of Prior Placements	No Pre-discharge Offense Filed		Pre-Discharge Recidivism Following Admission to RV		TOTALS	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
None	26	76.5%	8	23.5%	34	30.6%
One	18	64.3%	10	35.7%	28	25.2%
Two or More	37	75.5%	12	24.5%	49	44.1%
TOTALS	81	73.0%	30	27.0%	111	100.0%

The differences in pre-discharge recidivism rates shown in Table 8 are not statistically significant.

vi. Assessed Risk Score

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

Table 9
New Offenses Filed During Commitment by Assessed Risk of Re-offense
Juveniles Committed Between 7/1/01 and 12/31/01

Assessed Risk of Re-offense	No Pre-discharge Offense Filed		Pre-Discharge Recidivism Following Admission to RV		TOTALS	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Low Risk	26	81.3%	6	18.7%	32	28.8%
Moderate	35	68.6%	16	31.4%	51	45.9%
High Risk	20	71.4%	8	28.6%	28	25.2%
TOTALS	81	73.0%	30	27.0%	111	100.0%

Although the differences in pre-discharge recidivism rates shown above are not statistically significant, youth who scored lower on the CCI risk assessment did exhibit a lower rate of recidivism than youth who scored higher on the instrument.

vii. Ridge View Graduation

In order to officially graduate from the Ridge View program, each of the components of the VALIDATE model must be completed, and the youth peer group and staff must formally agree that the youth has fulfilled all of the graduation requirements. Once these have been completed, and the youth has maintained a RAM status for four consecutive months, he officially validates the program and participates in a graduation ceremony. Table 10 shows the differences in pre-discharge recidivism for youth that officially graduated from the Ridge View program compared with youth who left for other reasons¹⁷.

Table 10
New Offenses Filed During Commitment
by Successful Completion of the Ridge View Program
Juveniles Committed Between 7/1/01 and 12/31/01

Completion Status	No Pre-discharge Offense Filed		Pre-Discharge Recidivism Following Admission to RV		TOTALS	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Graduated	43	82.7%	9	17.3%	52	46.8%
Did Not Graduate	38	64.4%	21	35.6%	59	53.2%
TOTALS	81	73.0%	30	27.0%	111	100.0%

Youth that graduated from the Ridge View program were less likely to have a new filing for a recidivist act prior to discharge than youth who did not fully complete the program. Although this result is not statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level, it is approaching significance ($p = 0.051$). There was no significant difference in LOS in the program for youth at Ridge View that graduated (12.6 months) and youth that did not complete all elements of the VALIDATE model (11.3 months).

¹⁷ Youth who did not graduate may have completed the program, but did not fulfill the requirements for validation. Other types of release include medical release, escapes, client manager referrals to another program, youth paroled prior to completion of the program, or program failures. Ridgeview staff views all releases that did not validate to be unsuccessful in the program.

viii. Charges Filed During Commitment

Table 11 provides a breakdown of pre-discharge recidivism by the most serious type of charge filed for youth in the Ridge View sample.

Table 11
Frequency of Most Serious New Charges Filed During Commitment
Juveniles Committed Between 7/1/01 and 12/31/01

Type of Offense	Original Commitment Offense		New Filings (Recidivism)	
	n	%	n	%
Person Felony	29	26.1%	6	20.0%
Person Misdemeanor	16	14.4%	3	10.0%
Property Felony	46	41.4%	13	43.3%
Property Misdemeanor	7	6.3%	0	0.0%
Other Felony	8	7.2%	4	13.3%
Other Misdemeanor	5	4.5%	4	13.3%
TOTALS	111	100.0%	30	100.0%

Overall, 27.0% of all youth in the Ridge View sample had new charges that resulted in a filing during their commitment. Of these 30 youth, 13 (43%) were charged with property felony offenses as the most serious new offense filed. Six youth (20%) were charged with person felony charges. Twenty-three (77%) of the 30 new charges filed during commitment for this sample were for felony offenses.

ix. Recidivism During Parole

Of the 30 youth in the Ridge View sample that had a new felony or misdemeanor offense filed during their commitment, 77% of those offenses were filed while the youth was on parole status. Youth on parole status are generally supervised in the community, and therefore, are under less restrictive supervision than youth in a residential placement. Table 12 shows the breakdown of pre-discharge offenses for youth in the Ridge View sample by placement status.

Table 12
New Charges Filed During Commitment by Youths' Placement Status
Juveniles Committed Between 7/1/01 and 12/31/01

Placement Status	New Filings (Recidivism)	
	n	%
Residential Placement	7	23.3%
Parole	23	76.7%
TOTALS	30	100.0%

VI. DISCUSSION

A. Pre-Discharge Recidivism Rates

Youth who were placed at Ridge View Youth Services Center were less likely to have a new filing for a misdemeanor or felony offense after admission to the program than other NYC males that were committed during the same time period.

Overall there were no statistically significant differences in pre-discharge recidivism rates by demographic or criminal history/risk factors for youth placed at Ridge View.

However, the factors used during this evaluation have historically influenced recidivism rates in NYC youth. The number of youth that were placed at Ridge View in the sample that received a new filing was relatively small (n=30). As more youth receive treatment at RYVSC, and are included in future evaluations, these factors may produce more significant results.

The seeding process that many of the youth in this study participated in may have had some effect on the pre-discharge recidivism rates of the program. Only youth that had demonstrated progress in the out-of-state Rite of Passage programs and could contribute to a positive environment were selected for initial transfer to Ridge View in order to establish a positive-peer-culture. As a result, the sample of youth used for this report may be slightly skewed towards those who better progressed through the program than their other Rite of Passage counterparts. Future studies will incorporate more youth that were placed directly at RYVSC.

B. Graduation From RYVSC Program

Less than 50% of youth in the Ridge View sample successfully completed the VALIDATE process required to graduate from the program. Over 80% of those youth that graduated, however, did not commit another felony or misdemeanor offense during their commitment. The commitment LOS¹⁸ for youth in the Ridgeview sample (28.3 months) is almost two months longer than youth in the comparison group (26.4 months).

¹⁸ Commitment LOS includes time spent on mandatory parole.

It is possible that the maximum commitment sentence¹⁹ for these youth would not have permitted the longer length of stay in a residential placement required to officially graduate from RVYSC.

C. Case Management (Multiple Placements and Recidivism Rates)

Most youth committed to the Division of Youth Corrections experience multiple placements during their commitment. Youth committed to the Division are assigned a client manager that oversees all treatment and security needs for their clients. While all placements are part of an over-arching case management plan, the placements are made based on treatment need. As youth progress through the system their security and treatment needs change and placements are made to accommodate these changes. For these reasons, the Division does not usually report on recidivism findings for individual placements.

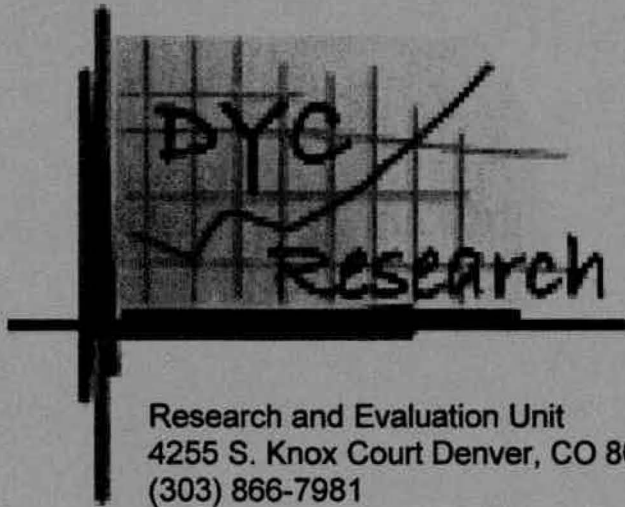
The Ridge View program was designed to be the primary treatment placement for eligible youth, and for many of them represents the first placement after assessment and the last placement before parole. For this evaluation the Division assumes that Ridge View is the primary treatment provider for youth in the Ridge View sample. If this assumption is true, recidivism rates for Ridgeview students may be more meaningful than recidivism rates for youth in other DYC programs that only represent a portion of a youth's overall treatment case plan. If Ridge View is the primary provider for its students, that fact in itself may influence the rates of recidivism between Ridge View youth and other males in the general DYC population.

D. Post-Discharge Recidivism

Post-discharge recidivism rates are not available for youth discharged in FY 2001-02 who were placed at Ridge View Youth Services Center. The Ridge View program did not begin operations until July 2001 and there were only five youth discharged during the

¹⁹ Most youth get a 12-24 month residential commitment sentence from the judge at the time of commitment.

fiscal year that spent more than 3 months at RVYSC. Annual Ridge View reports will begin incorporating data on post-discharge recidivism rates in November 2005.



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