



# CREATING

# RESULTS

## WITH YOUTH & THEIR FAMILIES

### **Annual Evaluation**

THE JUVENILE  
ASSESSMENT CENTER

San Mateo County  
Probation Department

Juvenile Justice  
Coordinating Council (JJCC)



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## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Juvenile Assessment Center provides a primary point of entry for intake and assessment of youth who have come in contact with the juvenile justice system via law enforcement, including but not limited to, youth who participate in JJCPA programs. At the Assessment Center, youth receive a multidisciplinary team risk/needs assessment, including screening for mental health, substance abuse, and other significant risk factors. Background checks from multiple agencies including Child Protective Services, Mental Health, and Juvenile Justice are conducted. Based on the assessment findings, a recommendation that includes a balance of accountability and support/treatment services is discussed with the family. Recommendations are also made to the Juvenile Court if release from custody is appropriate. Diversion-eligible youth can be referred to a range of programs and services including the Petty Theft Program, Juvenile Mediation Program, Victim Impact Awareness Program, and Traffic Court; youth may also be placed on shorter-term (3 months) or longer-term (6 months) supervised Probation Diversion contracts.

It is important to note that Assessment Center services are provided to other youth in addition to those reported in this report. Services are largely intended to be brief and to link youth with appropriate community resources to avoid formal court proceedings where possible and to focus probation efforts on those youth who are at higher risk to reoffend. Some immediate bridging services are available for youth in crisis in order to stabilize a family and optimize its chances for success.

In FY 2015-16, the Assessment Center screened and managed approximately 1,991 cases which include “602” youth (formal wards of the Court or those who have committed criminal law offenses) and “601” youth (those who have issues of truancy, runaway history, or out-of-control behavior at home and/or in school). Table 1 presents the extent of these services and how youth cases have been triaged since 2011.

**Table 1. Disposition of cases triaged by the Assessment Center, 2011-2016**

Case Triage Dispositions	FY 11-12	FY 12-13	FY 13-14	FY 14-15	FY 15-16
Number of cases screened and managed	1,942	2,152	2,152	1,491	1,991
<b>Triage Results:</b>					
Mandatory court cases	514	455	307	325	348
Booked into secure custody	342	322	217	235	213
Placed in Petty Theft Program	126	110	97	143	73
Placed in Juvenile Mediation/Victim Impact Awareness Program	145	239	89	116	102
Screened and referred to Traffic Court	210	234	137	60	75
Referred back to youth’s county of residence	---	41	52	85	52
Families with “601” youth at risk served through the Youth Outreach Pilot Program	109	129	180	240	225
Criminal background checks	167	321	221	221	225
Alcohol and Drug assessment	92	93	37	8	25
Brief intervention services to increase engagement in treatment	34	12	3	13	2
Received letter of reprimand	30	32	71	41	32
Juvenile record sealing application evaluated for submission to the Court	143	138	131	113	86
Assessed and placed on diversion contracts	156	91	68	115	40

## Programmatic Challenges in FY 2015-16

Due to budgetary constraints and department reorganization, there was a decrease in the number of Deputy Probation Officers (DPO) assigned to the Assessment Center (from 8 full-time positions to 5.5) during FY 2010-11. Between FY 2011-12 and FY 2014-15, the number of DPOs fluctuated between 4.5 and 5.5, with 5.0 DPOs assigned last year. In FY 2015-16, the unit lost one full-time Probation Officer and one full-time Group Supervisor as the department down-sized.

## EVALUATION METHODS

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Programs funded by San Mateo County Juvenile Probation (SMCJP) monitor their programs and report client, service and outcome data to the department and its evaluator, Applied Survey Research (ASR). The methods and tools used to collect this data are described below:

**Clients and Services**—Grantee programs collected and entered demographic (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity) and service data (e.g., types and hours of service) for individual clients and entered these in their own data systems prior to transferring the data to ASR for analysis.

**Risk Factors**—In FY 2015-16, SMCJP implemented two new measures of client risk level, the pre-JAIS and the CANS. Funded programs were asked to complete these measures with existing clients beginning January 2016 and at intake with all new clients subsequently. The Assessment Center only collects the pre-JAIS.

- The **Juvenile Assessment and Intervention System (JAIS)** is a risk, strength and needs assessment designed to assist workers to effectively and efficiently supervise youth, both in institutional settings and in the community. It is reliable and has been validated across ethnic and gender groups. The JAIS consists of a brief prescreen assessment (**pre-JAIS**) in addition to full assessment and reassessment components; SMCJP has elected to administer the pre-JAIS to provide an initial indicator of recidivism risk. The pre-JAIS consists of 8 (girls) or 10 (boys) items and yields an overall risk level of low, moderate, or high.

**Outcomes**—In FY 2015-16, the Assessment Center collected the following outcome measures:

- JJCPA-funded programs are also required to report data on the following six mandated justice-related outcomes for program participants: 1) arrest rate, 2) incarceration rate, 3) probation violation rate, 4) probation completion rate, 5) court-ordered restitution completion rate and 6) court-ordered community service completion rate. San Mateo County has elected to report these outcomes at 180 days post-entry with the reference group being the past year's cohort of program participants (i.e., whose six-month milestone occurred in FY 2015-16).
- Additionally, many programs elected to collect their own program-specific outcome data. The Assessment Center collects two additional measures to track progress on its goal of reducing the 1) number and 2) length of juvenile hall stays.

## EVALUATION FINDINGS

### FY 2015-16 Data Highlights

- The number of clients served decreased by more than 21% compared to last year continuing a downward trend over the last 5 years, although the Assessment Center triaged nearly 2,000 youth, a 34% increase from FY 2014-15 but similar to the three years prior to that (see Table 1)
- Most participants were at low risk, but about one third (35%) had moderate to high levels of criminogenic risk on the pre-JAIS, and 30-40% had substance and/or school problems at program entry

### Profile of Clients Served

This year Assessment Center served 332 youth, all of whom had demographic data (see Table 2). A majority of participants were male (66%) and identified predominantly as Latino (62%), followed by White/Caucasian (15%), Filipino/Pacific Islander (9%) and Black/African American (9%). The average age of clients was 15.7 years. Data on hours of services provided were unavailable due to a change in data recording procedures that occurred at the beginning of 2015. Data was available on dates of program entry and exit, as well as types of supplemental services provided, which were primarily Risk (29%), Individualized Treatment Plan (10%), and Mental Health (5%).

Table 2. Client Demographics, FY 2015-16

Metric	FY 11-12	FY 12-13	FY 13-14	FY 14-15	FY 15-16
<b>Clients &amp; Services</b>					
Number of clients served	580	504	454	423	332
Average number of hours of service	6.7	8.4	8.3	7.0	N/A <sup>a</sup>
Average time in the program (months)	1.7	2.1	2.3	3.0	2.4
<b>Risk Indicators</b>					
<b>Pre-JAIS Risk Level<sup>b</sup></b>	Data not collected in prior fiscal years				
Low					65%
Moderate					29%
High					6%
<b>Risk Indicators at Program Entry<sup>c</sup></b>					
Alcohol or drug problem					31%
Attendance problem					32%
Suspension/expulsion in past year					41%
<sup>a</sup> Units of service data were unavailable. <sup>b</sup> n = 248 clients with pre-JAIS data. <sup>c</sup> n = 332 clients with risk indicator data.					

### Risk Indicators

In FY 2015-16, the Assessment Center served clients across the risk spectrum. The 248 participants assessed with the pre-JAIS had criminogenic risk levels predominantly at the Low (65%) and Moderate (29%) levels. In addition, nearly one third of all participants had an alcohol or drug problem (31%) or an attendance problem (32%) at program entry, and two-fifths (41%) had been suspended or expelled from school in the past year.

## Justice Outcomes

Table 3 presents Justice-related outcomes for 317 youth whose six month post-entry evaluation milestone occurred in FY 2015-16. Thus, data presented in this section are for youth who enrolled in the program in the 2015 calendar year. Only 4 youth were on formal probation at program entry, and only 33% of the cases (83) had escalated to formal probation at six months after entry. Rates for Arrests and Incarcerations decreased slightly and the rate of Probation Violations (PVNs) increased slightly compared to FY 2014-15. No youth completed court-ordered Probation, Restitution nor Community Service this year, though sample sizes were very small which can lead to unstable results.

Table 3. Justice and Program-Specific Outcomes, FY 2015-16

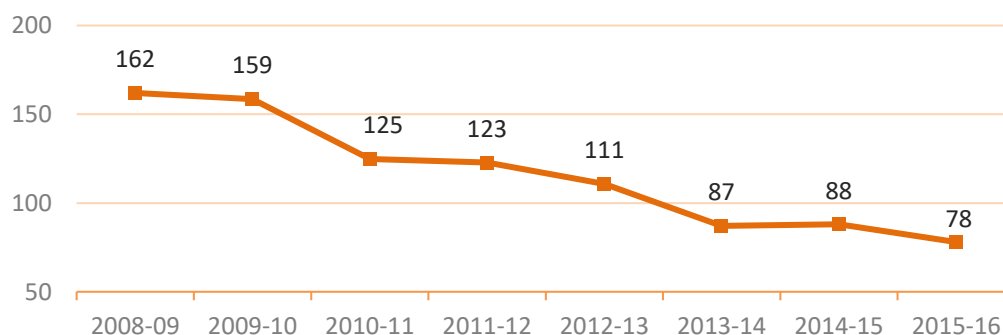
Metric	FY 11-12	FY 12-13	FY 13-14	FY 14-15	FY 15-16
<b>Outcomes</b>					
<b>Justice Outcomes<sup>a</sup></b>					
Arrests (for a new law violation)	16%	10%	14%	24%	21%
Incarcerations	13%	9%	13%	21%	20%
Probation violations	19%	14%	18%	29%	33%
Completed court-ordered probation	0%	1%	4%	0%	0%
Completed court-ordered restitution	17%	5%	16%	33%	0%
Completed court-ordered community service	11%	2%	9%	N/A	0%
<b>Program-specific Outcomes</b>					
Average Daily Population in Juvenile Hall	123	111	87	88	78

<sup>a</sup> Sample sizes vary for each FY and indicator; for FY 2016, n = 317 for Arrests and Incarcerations, n = 83 for Probation Violations and Completed Probation, n = 9 for Completed Restitution, and n = 3 for Completed Community Service.

## Program-specific Outcomes

One of the goals of the Assessment Center is to reduce the number and length of juvenile hall stays. The result for the local outcome shows a generally steady decrease since FY 2008-09 (see Figure 1). Between 2014-2015 and 2015-2016, the average number of youth in juvenile hall declined 11% to 78. There are a number of factors that could possibly influence this declining trend (e.g., decrease in crime overall, fewer bookings for less serious offenders, etc.), though Assessment Center is unable to say with certainty which factor is most influential. Though fewer youth are being served, the needs of youth entering Juvenile Hall are complex and require high amounts of resources and supervision.

Figure 1. Average Daily Population in Juvenile Hall, 2008-2016





## Client Vignette

Assessment Center staff provided the following client vignette to help illustrate the extent to which its services impacted its clients.

<b>Name of focus client:</b>	Youth's name is confidential.
<b>Age and sex of client:</b>	The youth is a 15 year old female.
<b>Reason for referral:</b>	The youth was referred to the probation department for Assault & Battery.
<b>Client's behavior, affect and appearance when they first started your program:</b>	When the youth was first placed on informal contract, the youth appeared to be manipulative as she would take advantage that her parents had poor communication with each other. The youth had poor communication with her parents and with Community Worker Acevedo, she skipped class and counseling sessions, and did not follow curfew. The youth's mother described her as being out of control and aggressive.
<b>What activities did your client engage in and was their engagement consistent?</b>	The youth attended and completed Victim Impact Awareness (VIA) Classes. The youth attended individual and group sessions at E1 Centro de Libertad for Anger Management and Alcohol and Drug Counseling. The youth was required to enroll or continue to participate in a "pro-social" activity. The youth enrolled in boxing at Gladiators Boxing Gym and trained 3 to 4 times a week.
<b>Describe client's affect, behavior or appearance toward the end of your program, noting any ways in which they changed.</b>	Toward the end of the youth's contract, the youth has become more responsible, active, determined to work toward her career goals, and has improved her communication with her parents. The youth's communication with Community Worker Acevedo also improved significantly.
<b>What did your client learn as a result of this program?</b>	During an office visit the youth tested positive for marijuana, but thereafter tested negative every month. As a result of being on informal probation the youth learned to control her urge to smoke marijuana. The youth has focused her attention in achieving her goals and understands that drugs will take her nowhere. According to Manuel Ebejer at El Centro de Libertad, the youth developed a good time out plan to reduce high risk situations. The youth aspires to one day work in law enforcement.
<b>What is your client doing differently in their life as a result of the program?</b>	<p>The youth is staying busy with her boxing classes at Gladiators Boxing Gym. The youth reported that she plans to continue her boxing classes and is excited to participate in a competition in the future. The youth appeared motivated in continuing the sport of boxing.</p> <p>The youth expressed an interested in finding employment. Her community worker referred the youth to Jobs for Youth. There the youth will learn how to write a resume, gain interviewing skills and receive job referrals. The youth was excited to attend the Jobs for Youth Preparation Workshop.</p> <p>The youth has made great improvement toward her communication with her parents. The youth informs her father when she has arrived at her mother's house so that her father does not worry and inclusively send him a picture to show that she is okay. The youth's parents reported that</p>



	<p>the youth is abiding by curfew and have noticed a positive change in the youth. The youth reported that she will be attending Redwood High School temporarily for extra credit to obtain her High School diploma.</p>
<p><b>What does your client say is the value of the program for them?</b></p>	<p>The positive impact is shown in the youth's behavior, confidence, communication, and motivation. Also, the youth's parents have expressed the positive change they have observed in their daughters behavior since she has been on informal probation. The youth is staying active with her boxing classes, is looking for a job, is working toward finishing high school credits to obtain her high school diploma, and has improved her communication with her parents.</p>