

OVERVIEW & RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MECKLENBURG COUNTY JUVENILE TASK GROUP

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The juvenile court task group was formed in July 2013 in an effort to bring additional stakeholders into the discussion of how to best respond and, when necessary, intervene in the lives of at-risk youth in Mecklenburg County. The purpose of the task group was originally conceived with the following goals in mind:

- Create an active partnership between the JCPC, the district court judges, and others (CMPD, county, providers, etc.) who are involved with juvenile delinquents;
- Develop an understanding of whether the JCPC funds services that meet the courts needs; and
- Determine whether there are service gaps not met by either JCPC funded programs or other programs available within the County.

As such, the task group brought multiple stakeholders together who have intimate knowledge of the issues presented above. Specifically, district court judges included Judge Best Stanton,^{*} Judge Cureton, Chief District Court Judge Miller, Judge McKoy Mitchell, Judge E. Trosch, Judge L. Trosch, and Family Court Administrator, Elisa Chinn-Gary. The JCPC chair and executive board members included: Sarah Crowder (Chair, representative from CMS), Captain Pete Davis (CMPD representative), Douglas Edwards (local business partner), Dr. Susan McCarter (UNCC researcher), Laura McFern

^{*} Also a JCPC member

(Chief Court Counselor), & Heather Taraska (District Attorney's office). Finally, it was determined that any policy issues or changes should not occur in a vacuum relative to state level initiatives. As such, William Lassiter¹, Director of Juvenile Community Programs and Tom Kilby, Piedmont Area Administrator also participated. Dr. Shelley J. Listwan, an associate professor in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at the University North Carolina Charlotte, was assigned as the facilitator of the task group². Interviews with the task group members occurred during July and August 2013³.

The interviews identified a number of issues; some related to the original purpose of the task group but many more that were ancillary. It quickly became apparent that to maximize everyone's time and precious resources, the task group could tackle a variety of issues that reached beyond the relationship between the court and the JCPC. The group began meeting in September and met monthly through January.

Interviews with each of the task group members produced a variety of concerns and issues. Patterns, however, quickly emerged with regards to four core areas:

- The diversion of youth at several key decision points (i.e., police, school resource officer, and the court) with disproportionality and harm reduction central to this issue;
- The accuracy and usefulness of the assessment process utilized by court counselors;

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² Dr. Listwan has extensive experience in correctional rehabilitation and practices. She has coauthored numerous peer reviewed articles, is the sole author of an *Introduction to Juvenile Justice* text and a co-author of *What Works (and Doesn't) in Reducing Recidivism*, which is designed as a handbook for practitioners seeking to implement 'best practices' in community and institutional settings. She also served as the program monitor for the JCPC in early 2013.

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- The lack of services for youth in the county targeted specifically towards their needs but also the needs of their families and communities;
- The lack of oversight and evaluation of service providers and case outcomes.

Issue #1: Diversion of Low Risk Youth

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Diversion of Lowest Risk & Needs Youth (CMPD):** Assessment of the youth's risk and needs should help guide the decision of who should be eligible for true diversion and the CMPD diversion program;
 - **Action item:** The CMPD may wish to adopt a risk/need screening tool to assist with decision making. The staff should create benchmarks via the assessment that will assist in the decision of when the case may need further assessment and services or referred for formal processing. The department should explore risk/need screening tools that are being utilized in counties across the state. For example, the North Carolina Assessment of Risk (NCAR) tool has been implemented in several jurisdictions. The tool is a very short (10-item) and covers both static and dynamic items. Research supports its predictive validity in that it differentiates between low, medium, and high risk groups via predicted co-varying recidivism rates⁴. The brevity of this tool gives it the advantage of being completed easily by juvenile justice personnel with very little staff training.

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Action item: The Youthful Offender Diversion Program should tailor its services to the most appropriate population. As such, the program may target youth who are “lower” risk and need, however, should be mindful to screen out those who are not in need of the types of services offered.

- **Action item:** Program staff should be mindful that utilizing school resource officers for the task of mentoring should not occur unless the staff members are explicitly trained to provide that type of service.

Training in this area should be developed.

- **Evaluation.** The Youthful Offender Diversion Program staff should track youth and develop performance measures to determine the effectiveness of the diversion process (reducing future contact, reducing disparity).
 - **Action item:** Develop a framework for evaluation immediately and create baseline measures.
 - **Action item:** Develop a secure tracking system with limited access to ensure youth are not treated harshly for having been identified as already participating in the services.
- **Diversion of Lowest Risk & Needs Youth (Court Counselors):** Assessment of the youth’s risk and needs should help guide the decision of who should be eligible diversion. For those cases that score low risk but are retained by the court for processing, a clear justification for type and length of services should be provided.
 - **Action item:** The quality control committee (which will be discussed in the next section) should study these youth on an annual basis to track why

they were retained, the services received, case closure status, and whether the youth returned to court after closure.

Issue #2: Assessment Process & Case Management

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Training:** Court counselors should receive additional training on the risk and needs tools.
 - **Action item:** A schedule for periodic trainings regarding the tools should be developed. Given high staff turnover, it may be necessary for the state to conduct trainings multiple times a year.
 - **Action Item:** The DACJJ is currently in the process of planning trainings on this topic for all court services personnel and JCPC program providers. Training for court counselors is a state responsibility, and it is important in order for the Department to maintain consistency in the data that staff all across the state are trained consistently. Training of court counselors on the need assessment tool is needed and should be centered on using assessment results in crafting standardized case plans. Follow up utilizing the state's established quality control mechanisms (e.g., court services peer review) should be employed.
- **Quality control:** A quality control committee should be formed to discuss the barriers to data collection for the risk and needs tools.
 - **Action item:** The committee should be comprised of staff from multiple agencies including court counselors, JCPC, CMS, and the court.
- **Referrals:** The risk and need tools (and other ancillary information) should be

utilized to guide and structure the case plan.

- **Action item:** The justification for service referrals should be clearly related to the youth's targets or needs for change. The treatment agency should receive a copy of the youth's assessment results or, at a minimum, be clear as to the youth's needs, which warranted the referral.
- **Action item:** DACJJ is presently developing a protocol for Standardized Case Plans. These case plans are to be standardized in the sense of following an established assessment protocol and consistent use of programs and generic services that specifically target priority treatment needs initially identified in the statewide youth and family assessment of needs and strengths. For case planning purposes, this tool requires identification of the three most serious problems to be addressed in the child and family case plan. This tool also requires specification of the youth's major strengths that can be used in case planning. In addition, as part of the assessment, court staffs identify problem areas in which there may be a need for additional, specialized assessments to determine the full extent or nature of a problem that requires more in-depth assessment.
- **Decision Making JPCP:** Assessment of the youth's risk and needs should guide the decision of who is eligible for the JCPC funded programs.
 - **Action Item:** The JCPC funded programs should adopt assessment tool(s) related to both the risk level of the youth and criminogenic need area targeted by the program (e.g., if substance abuse is the target, an SA assessment should be utilized). On the other hand, if other entities are

already collecting this information as part of their assessment process (e.g. court counselors), it can simply be sent to the program with the referral.

- **Action Item:** The JCPC should require their funded programs to report the results of their assessment tools and how many youth were accepted and declined by risk and need level. The SPEP⁵ tool will assist in this area and should assist with monitoring services received.

Issue #3: Targets for Change & Modalities

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Resource Allocation:** Priority should be given to funding services for youth who present with multiple needs (e.g., moderate need youth). In general, rehabilitative services should focus on increasing protective factors or reducing criminogenic factors—also called dynamic risk factors—that include negative peer associations, family relationships, substance abuse, and antisocial attitudes, values, and beliefs supportive of criminal behavior. These services should also be responsive to issues such as gender, age, cognitive ability, mental illness, transportation needs, etc.
 - **Action item:** JCPC should hold a strategic planning meeting to discuss the recommendations in this report. The Council should explore ways that it can assist the county in developing standards and funding services that are critical to the needs of youth in Mecklenburg County.
 - **Action item:** Assessment data indicate that peers, family and schools are

⁵ The Standard Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP) (see Lipsey & Howell, 2012) is a tool adopted by DACJJ to evaluate JCPC funded programs and services.

high areas of need for moderate risk youth in Mecklenburg County. The JCPC should consider these findings when requesting and evaluating proposals.

- **Action item:** The JCPC does not have sufficient resources to provide all of the services youth in Mecklenburg County. The County and the court should develop a system for ensuring that other providers are utilizing best practices.
- **Action item:** The County should develop a guide for selecting providers who submit proposals for funding. The guide should include many of the issues discussed throughout the report.
- **Action item:** Providers who currently operating without oversight from the County should be required to submit to outside monitoring at least annually.
- **Acceptance Criteria:** Treatment programs should be required to identify whom they are designed to accept to ensure that court counselors make appropriate referrals.
 - **Action item:** All programs utilized by the JCPC and court counselors should be required to develop acceptance criteria that includes who they are designed to target (risk/need level) and what they plan to target (criminogenic need(s)).
 - **Action Item:** Court counselors should work with the JCPC to determine the types of programs that should receive priority in funding decisions.
- **Modality:** The County and the JCPC should require programs to justify the

modality they utilize prior to receiving funding or referrals.

- **Action item:** Programs should clearly articulate their modality and produce empirical evidence of how that particular approach is successful for juvenile delinquents.
- **Action Item:** The JCPC should encourage providers to utilize best practices such as cognitive behavioral approaches. The providers, whether they target substance abuse, gang, mentoring, family, etc. could be using CBT in their approaches and be able to demonstrate in their proposals for funding how they are skill based.
- **Action item:** The JCPC should be resolute in providing a full continuum of programs that address the wide variety of elevated treatment needs. DACJJ data consistently show that high risk offenders have multiple treatment needs in multiple developmental domains. Level 2 programs should also be considered in this continuum.
- **Action item:** Mentoring programs should be able to articulate how they are following best practices in this area.
- **Training:** providers who are unfamiliar with cognitive behavioral theory and other best practices should receive training in this area.
 - **Action item:** All providers should be required to attend training if the agency is inexperienced in this area. The JCPC funded programs should receive training in conjunction with the SPEP.

Issue #4: Building Capacity & Monitoring Effectiveness

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Sustainability:** Sustainability partly comes from increased buy-in among staff. Exposing staff to the logic of why certain policies are being implemented can increase this buy in.
 - **Action item:** The DACJJ is holding trainings with the JCPC and the JCPC funded providers to increase understanding of the SPEP process. The training may need to be augmented with additional training on how to implement the strategies identified. For example, understanding the core principles of cognitive behavioral therapy, contingency management programs, and mentoring programs.
 - **Action item:** Programs that do not receive JCPC funds will likely need additional training as suggested above.
 - **Action item:** Community input should be sought via surveys, focus groups or public meetings. The community should be given a voice in discussing their relationship with the “system” (judges, court counselors, providers, etc.). However, these forums should also be utilized to increase buy-in among the community for programs and services. These meetings may also provide opportunities to solicit community mentors and infrastructure (e.g., volunteers for tutoring).
 - **Action item:** Youth and their families should be engaged to allow their voice to inform the process and service availability.
- **Quality Assurance and Fidelity:** Services should be monitored annually.

- **Action item:** the JCPC funded programs are monitored annually. The monitoring via the SPEP should include staff interviews, observation, client interviews, and a review of the program materials. The monitor should have some experience with recognizing the features of effective programs.
- **Action item:** Services, processes, and policies should be continuously evaluated for performance countywide. A best practices monitoring tool (e.g., SPEP, CPC) should be adopted to evaluate program quality for programs that may not be JCPC funded.
- **Action item:** A list of preferred providers utilizing evidence-based practices (relevant to the services offered) should be developed. Information gained during the annual monitoring of the programs should be utilized to update the list.
- **Action item:** An interdisciplinary team or committee should be developed to oversee the implementation of issues identified in this report, brainstorm how to overcome barriers, and identify promising approaches being utilized in other counties across the state. The County should explore designating a point person(s) to lead this committee.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Mecklenburg County is well poised to implement many of the recommendations suggested by the task group. There is important infrastructure in place in North Carolina's DACJJ system as evidenced by the adoption of standardized risk and needs tools, monitoring tools such as the SPEP, and support for initiatives such as Reclaiming

Futures and the Juvenile Justice Treatment Continuum. Other initiatives such as the standardizing of case planning, the use of pre- screening tool to assist with efficient case processing, and planned staff training should assist with the sustainability of the changes.

As the county moves forward, agencies should not feel compelled to only select from a few model programs or tools but rather focus on best practices in juvenile rehabilitation (Lipsey & Howell, 2012). There are lessons that we have learned from the literature and why certain programs, like those suggested by the Blueprints program, are more likely to work. First, the programs target the criminogenic factors that have been shown to reduce criminal behavior. Issues such as attitudes supportive of crime, associating with other delinquent peers, low school achievement, and problems within families are core problems for juvenile delinquents. Second, many of these programs also include the community as part of the treatment approach. The community can include schools, social service agencies, neighborhoods, and networks of support. The recognition that treatment should not simply take place with the individual but also the social context in which the youth lives is key to sustained change. Third, many of these programs are age appropriate, providing services designed to be responsive to the youth's risk and needs as well as their developmental stage. Finally, the programs developed a comprehensive framework to assist with implementation.

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MARCH 2014

I. BACKGROUND

The North Carolina Department of Public Safety, Division of Adult Corrections and Juvenile Justice (DACJJ) has a rich history of developing policies, tools, and initiatives with the goal of system improvement. Spurred by nationally recognized initiatives and research (e.g., Juvenile Alternatives to Detention Initiative), the state empowered local communities to develop community-based alternatives to detention and state run youth development centers. One such initiative, authorized by general statute 143B-543, is the Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils (JCPC). In developing JCPCs, the state recognized that planning should occur at the local level and involve stakeholders from a variety of agencies¹.

According to the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, Division of Adult Corrections and Juvenile Justice (DPSDACJJ) guidelines, the JCPC shall do the following:

- 1. Assess the needs of juveniles in the community, evaluate the adequacy of resources available to meet those needs, and develop strategies to address unmet needs;*
- 2. Monitor the performance of juvenile services and programs in the community;*
- 3. Monitor each funded program as a condition of continued funding;*

¹ Representation from local school system, police department, district attorney's office, defense attorneys, court counselor, area mental health, social services, county commissioner, county manager's office, district court judge, member of the community, non-profit agencies, and members of the public including those under the age of 18.

4. *Develop strategies to intervene and appropriately respond to and treat the needs of juveniles at risk of delinquency through appropriate risk assessment instruments;*
5. *Increase public awareness of strategies to reduce delinquency and the causes of delinquency;*
6. *Ensure that appropriate intermediate dispositional options are available and prioritize funding for dispositions of intermediate and community level sanctions for court-adjudicated juveniles;*
7. *Plan for the establishment of a permanent funding stream for delinquency prevention services; and*
8. *Provide funds for services for treatment, counseling, or habilitation/rehabilitation for juveniles and their families. These services may include court-ordered parenting responsibility classes.*

The state distributes funds each year to the JCPC so they may accomplish the goals noted above within their local communities. In 2013, the Mecklenburg County JCPC received nearly \$1.4 million dollars for this task. The council chose to support 8 services² with these funds.

The juvenile court task group was formed in July 2013 in an effort to bring additional stakeholders into the discussion of how to best respond and, when necessary, intervene in the lives of at-risk youth in Mecklenburg County. The purpose of the task group was originally conceived with the following goals in mind:

- Create an active partnership between the JCPC, the district court judges, and others (CMPD, county, providers, etc.) who are involved with juvenile delinquents;
- Develop an understanding of whether the JCPC funds services that meet the

² LIFT Afterschool Academy; Developing Adolescents Strengthening Homes (DASH) program; Community Service; Family & Child Evaluation Team (FACET); Gang Alternative Principles (GAP) program; a court psychologist; and the CMPD Youthful Offender Diversion Program.

courts needs; and

- Determine whether there are service gaps not met by either JCPC funded programs or other programs available within the County.

As such, the task group brought multiple stakeholders together who have intimate knowledge of the issues presented above. Specifically, district court judges included Judge Best Stanton,^{*} Judge Cureton, Chief District Court Judge Miller, Judge McKoy Mitchell, Judge E. Trosch, Judge L. Trosch, and Family Court Administrator, Elisa Chinn-Gary. The JCPC chair and executive board members included: Sarah Crowder (Chair, representative from CMS), Captain Pete Davis (CMPD representative), Douglas Edwards (local business partner), Dr. Susan McCarter (UNCC researcher), Laura McFern (Chief Court Counselor), & Heather Taraska (District Attorney's office). Finally, it was determined that any policy issues or changes should not occur in a vacuum relative to state level initiatives. As such, William Lassiter³, Director of Juvenile Community Programs and Tom Kilby, Piedmont Area Administrator also participated. Dr. Shelley J. Listwan, an associate professor in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at the University North Carolina Charlotte, was assigned as the facilitator of the task group⁴. Interviews with the task group members occurred during July and August 2013⁵.

The interviews identified a number of issues; some related to the original purpose

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of the task group but many more that were ancillary. It quickly became apparent that to maximize everyone's time and precious resources, the task group could tackle a variety of issues that reached beyond the relationship between the court and the JCPC. The group began meeting in September and met monthly through January. This report will summarize the content of those meetings and identify recommendations and action steps.

There are several other initiatives within the county that share some degree of purpose with this group (e.g., Race Matters for Juvenile Justice initiative, Reclaiming Futures model, Model Courts Project, etc.). While each of these groups maintains their own agendas and membership, their relevance to the current task group is unmistakable. As will be seen in the preceding sections, the ideas and recommendations suggested by the task group are likely to be interchangeable with many of the ideas inherent in these other well-justified projects.

II. FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

As mentioned earlier, interviews with each of the task group members produced a variety of concerns and issues. Patterns, however, quickly emerged with regards to four core areas:

- The diversion of youth at several key decision points (i.e., police, school resource officer, and the court) with disproportionality and harm reduction central to this issue;
- The accuracy and usefulness of the assessment process utilized by court counselors;
- The lack of services for youth in the county targeted specifically towards their needs but also the needs of their families and communities;

- The lack of oversight and evaluation of service providers and case outcomes.

Beyond these core issues, the group expressed frustration over the age of criminal responsibility and lack of treatment services for those who are 16 and 17 year old; the lack of specialized services for sex offenders; the over-diagnosis of mental health issues; the lack of residential/emergency beds; and uncertainty over the closing of MeckLink and the transfer of mental health services to Cardinal Innovations Health Care Innovations group.

This report will put each of the four core issues in context, both from the empirical literature and how the issues unfold within Mecklenburg County. The report will also outline the recommendations from the committee and initial action steps towards reaching those goals.

Issue #1: Diversion of Low Risk Youth

Diverting lower risk and need youth from the system has become an increased priority for many jurisdictions. If we look at the national trends, we see that on average 27% of the cases referred to juvenile courts are handled informally or diverted from formal processing (Knoll & Sickmund, 2012). The issue of diversion, however, is multifaceted and confounded by the use of the word itself. The confusion stems partly from the various systems that may use the word to imply services (e.g., teen court, community service, weekend courses, diversionary programs), a legal status (deferred prosecution/pretrial diversion), a probation status (e.g., diversion plan/contract) or the police decision to arrest.

Regardless, the case for diverting juveniles from the justice system is compelling and rests on several grounds; most notably the finding that processing youth through the

criminal justice system can exacerbate their risk of future delinquency. For example, research by many lifecourse theorists finds that each contact with the system can lead to a further increase (see Schindler & Arditti, 2002) and the trend impacts minority youth to a much greater degree⁶. In the last decade, the concern shifted to the role of the schools⁷, most notably the school resource officer (SRO). The increase in court referrals from this source is leading communities including Mecklenburg County to take a critical look at who is being referred to the courts⁸. Studies suggest that the presence of SROs led to feelings of safety among some students and families but at the same time increased arrest rates increase for minor offenses like disorderly conduct (Theriot, 2009). The concern is further exacerbated by a disproportionate increase in arrest rates among minority youth and those with disabilities (see Petteruti, 2011).

There is one final issue to note with regards to SROs and the JCPC. Some of the JCPC funded programs have had difficulty in the past with obtaining referrals from court counselors. As such, they reach out to SROs to obtain referrals for their programs. If the referral comes directly from the SRO, however, the youth is not assessed with the risk and needs tools utilized by court counselors. As a result, it is unknown whether these youth are appropriate for the services offered by the program. The concerns here range from net widening, potential for disproportionality effects, and potential for harm if low risk youth are being served (JCPC programs must meet with youth for a period of at least 12 weeks).

The issues surrounding SRO decision-making and others is being discussed at a

⁶ The *Juvenile Alternative to Detention Initiative* has been widely successful across the nation at reducing the use of detention, although some disparities remain.

⁷ Coined the 'School to Prison Pipeline'

⁸ Several committees including RMJJ, School Pathways committee, and the School Discipline task force are examining these issues

deeper level among several groups. For example, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges selected Mecklenburg County District Court as one of 16 sites to participate in the School Pathways to the Juvenile Justice System project. The project builds upon the work of Judge Teske who has received national acclaim for addressing the school to juvenile justice system issues in Clayton County, Georgia. In that context, the county has formed a school disciplinary task force to examine the issue more closely. All of these efforts are related to the Race Matters for Juvenile Justice initiative mentioned earlier.

Although there is general agreement that we should be diverting youth, the research findings regarding diversion programs is mixed (see Klein, 1979; Lipsey, Cordray, & Berger, 1981). It is difficult to assess the features or effectiveness of diversion for several reasons. First, services vary in terms of types and intensity. For example, a diversion program may consist solely of community service over a few weekends whereas other diversionary programs may be much more intensive and require the youth to attend treatment groups and complete restitution over a series of months. Second, deciding which juveniles to target for diversion is the source of debate. For example, in many circumstances, diversion programs are reserved for those who commit less serious status offenses or who have issues in school. While charge and history are important to understand, they only paint a small portrait of the youth's life circumstances.

Recent studies are calling into question many of the popular diversion programs for youth (Gottfredson, 2010). For example, a randomized trial of Teen Courts conducted by Denise Wilson and colleagues (2009) found that participation in the court had no effect, and in some circumstances led to worse outcomes among boys. The

researchers concluded that involvement in the criminal justice system, even via a lower level intervention like teen court, led to formal and informal labeling (among parents, peers, teachers). Furthermore, a meta analysis of experimental studies conducted by Craig Schwalbe and colleagues (2012) found that the overall impact of diversion programs on recidivism was not significant. They looked at five types of diversion programs (case management, individual treatment, family treatment, youth court (e.g., teen court), and restorative justice programs). Only family based services led to a significant reduction in recidivism.

What is likely underlying some of these findings is the “who” question. Who are the youth being targeted for diversion? Beyond charge, how much do we know about these youth? For low risk and need youth, placing them into the system can erode their protective factors such as positive relationships parents or other family members (Turner, Hartman, Exum, & Cullen, 2007). Youth who experience high levels of social support (e.g., family, friends, church, mentors, etc.) are less likely to engage in delinquent behavior. Placing a youth into the system and requiring them to attend services or meet with court counselors over a period of weeks and months can erode these relationships and their own positive appraisal of themselves (Matsueda, 1992). For these low risk youth, doing nothing at all is preferable to providing unnecessary services.

With these findings in mind, the task group discussed diversion primarily within the context of the police and the courts. Under State statute, law enforcement officers have the discretion to divert certain crimes if they determined that no further action is needed. The CMPD also runs a diversion program for youth that is currently funded by the JCPC. The Youthful Offender Diversion Program is designed to last 12 weeks and

typically serves juveniles with no arrest history. The program consists of 9 contacts with School Resource Officers (SRO) and 2 Saturday sessions with Youth Development Initiatives staff. The 2-hour Saturday sessions (that includes parents) focuses on career interests and life skills. The program is designed to divert youth who are having trouble in school (truancy, disciplinary issues) or are referred with other minor charges. The program has been operating for approximately 1 year and served nearly 500 youth in 2013.

The next opportunity for diversion comes at the court level. The DACJJ requires that all court counselors complete the North Carolina Assessment of Juvenile Risk of Future Offending and the North Carolina Assessment of Juvenile Needs tools with referred youth. These interview based tools collect information about the youth's circumstances that are used to calculate a risk and a need score. The score is then translated into three categories: low, medium, and high. According to statistics provided by the state, court counselors diverted the majority of the low risk youth from formal processing⁹ (see Appendix A). The data provided do not allow us to examine or track the services given once youth are referred to the court.

Given issues related to the referral of youth into services by SROs is being handled by other committees, the recommendations below will focus on diversion at the police and court levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Diversion of Lowest Risk & Needs Youth (CMPD):** Assessment of the youth's risk and needs should help guide the decision of who should be eligible for true

⁹ Data are only for those with a completed risk/need assessment; data were filtered by taking only the most serious case disposition.

diversion and the CMPD diversion program;

- **Action item:** The CMPD may wish to adopt a risk/need screening tool to assist with decision making. The staff should create benchmarks via the assessment that will assist in the decision of when the case may need further assessment and services or referred for formal processing. The department should explore risk/need screening tools that are being utilized in counties across the state. For example, the North Carolina Assessment of Risk (NCAR) tool has been implemented in several jurisdictions. The tool is a very short (10-item) and covers both static and dynamic items. Research supports its predictive validity in that it differentiates between low, medium, and high risk groups via predicted co-varying recidivism rates¹⁰. The brevity of this tool gives it the advantage of being completed easily by juvenile justice personnel with very little staff training.

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- **Evaluation.** The Youthful Offender Diversion Program staff should track youth and develop performance measures to determine the effectiveness of the diversion process (reducing future contact, reducing disparity).
 - **Action item:** Develop a framework for evaluation immediately and create baseline measures.
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 - **Action item:** The quality control committee (which will be discussed in the next section) should study these youth on an annual basis to track why they were retained, the services received, case closure status, and whether the youth returned to court after closure.

Issue #2: Assessment Process & Case Management

It is believed that assessment is the cornerstone of effective service delivery. Assessments allow courts, agencies, and others to determine who is in need of services but also what type of services may be necessary. As noted earlier, court counselors are required to complete both a risk and need tool on referred youth and these tools do include the majority of the core criminogenic risk and need factors. For example, Don

Andrews and colleagues (1990) found: lower social class origin (poverty), personal distress/psychopathology, educational/vocational achievement, parental/family factors, temperament/personality (e.g., impulsivity), procriminal attitudes, and antisocial associates are important predictors of criminal behavior. However, the top five risk/need factors in the list above are school, family, temperament, pro-criminal attitudes, and peers. A youth is higher risk of future criminal behavior if they have difficulties in multiple areas.

The results of these tools should be utilized for guide service delivery. For example, a youth who is referred to the court for an assault charge and has a history of hostility with parents and teachers may be a candidate for anger management training. A youth who is referred with issues with antisocial peers (with or without gang involvement) may benefit from mentoring programs in addition to other services. However, there are other are responsivity issues that should be assessed as well including exposure to trauma, motivation, and cognitive functioning. Fidelity to the tool and effective case management are the primary factors that can lead to a reduction in the youth's risk and needs.

This structure or philosophy can be seen clearly in the Reclaiming Futures model. In 2011 the state began moving towards statewide implementation of this structure. The basic model calls for assessment driven decision-making and case planning, service coordination, and engagement. The Youth Treatment Court in Mecklenburg County is in the process of adopting this structure for their court process. A study by Jeffery Butts and colleagues found that the structure provided by this model did result in changes in service delivery. Lessons learned from this project and the infrastructure developed will

likely prove very useful in the coming year¹¹.

It should be noted that the DACJJ recommends that assessment be structured as a two-step process. The first step, an immediate pre-screen, should be followed by graduated assessments (increasingly in-depth) for the purpose of developing comprehensive treatment plans. In the first level, a general or global assessment—often called a pre-screen—should be made after collecting information that is readily available from agency records and a short structured interview with the offender, and perhaps significant others, such as parents and teachers. The DJJ Assessment of Juvenile Needs is a best practice pre-screen tool.

The second level of need assessment is for the purpose of treatment plan development. This requires a comprehensive examination of individualized data, including arrest and court history (if any) and these assessments generally include the use of risk and needs assessment instruments. But this in-depth assessment requires more time than a screening instrument; often necessitating more specialized training, and can lead to more definitive conclusions about a youth's presenting behavior. Misuse occurs when in-depth psychological diagnostic methods are used in the first assessment level, that is, the pre-screen stage. For youth not requiring more in-depth assessment (including diversion candidates), the need assessment tool groups offenders into low, medium, and high need, which is useful in setting service priorities and for service matching purposes. The risk and need tools should be used to set benchmarks for selecting diversion cases and in treatment plans, in conjunction with the DJJ disposition matrix.

With regards to the assessment process utilized by the court counselor, nearly

¹¹ It should be noted that another initiative occurring in some places within the state referred to as the Juvenile Justice Treatment Continuum as a model for service delivery. It is a court involved intervention not a diversion program. This model, however, has not been implemented in Mecklenburg County.

every member of the task group expressed concerns about its accuracy. On many levels this is not surprising given the difficult economy and cuts at the state level for hiring, training, and oversight. The first concern regarding the assessment tools utilized by the court counselors appears to be the lack of training and quality control around the tools. Obtaining information from a variety of sources in a timely manner was noted as a chief concern among court counselors. For example, meeting with the parents, interviewing the youth, making contact with the school system and obtaining all of the necessary information within the 30 day window can prove difficult in some cases. The members also expressed concern about the accuracy of the tool, as they often over-rely on the youth's self report. Concerns from the judges also included the accuracy of the information, the degree to which the information was updated in a timely manner, the lack of screening tools for potentially important issues such as trauma, and the usefulness of the recommendations provided by court counselors. As such, some of the judges preferred to rely on the narrative review or have a comprehensive clinical assessment conducted to find out more about the youth and his or her circumstances. This is a key issue for the system given so many groups and agencies rely on these assessment results (e.g., DACJJ, JCPC, judges, etc.). Fortunately, a study by James Bonta and colleagues (2001) finds that training can increase the quality of assessment results.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Training:** Court counselors should receive additional training on the risk and needs tools.
 - **Action item:** A schedule for periodic trainings regarding the tools should be developed. Given high staff turnover, it may be necessary for the state

to conduct trainings multiple times a year.

- **Action Item:** The DACJJ is currently in the process of planning trainings on this topic for all court services personnel and JCPC program providers. Training for court counselors is a state responsibility, and it is important in order for the Department to maintain consistency in the data that staff all across the state are trained consistently. Training of court counselors on the need assessment tool is needed and should be centered on using assessment results in crafting standardized case plans. Follow up utilizing the state's established quality control mechanisms (e.g., court services peer review) should be employed.
- **Quality control:** A quality control committee should be formed to discuss the barriers to data collection for the risk and needs tools.
 - **Action item:** The committee should be comprised of staff from multiple agencies including court counselors, JCPC, CMS, and the court.
- **Referrals:** The risk and need tools (and other ancillary information) should be utilized to guide and structure the case plan.
 - **Action item:** The justification for service referrals should be clearly related to the youth's targets or needs for change. The treatment agency should receive a copy of the youth's assessment results or, at a minimum, be clear as to the youth's needs, which warranted the referral.
 - **Action item:** DACJJ is presently developing a protocol for Standardized Case Plans. These case plans are to be standardized in the sense of following an established assessment protocol and consistent use of

programs and generic services that specifically target priority treatment needs initially identified in the statewide youth and family assessment of needs and strengths. For case planning purposes, this tool requires identification of the three most serious problems to be addressed in the child and family case plan. This tool also requires specification of the youth's major strengths that can be used in case planning. In addition, as part of the assessment, court staffs identify problem areas in which there may be a need for additional, specialized assessments to determine the full extent or nature of a problem that requires more in-depth assessment.

- **Decision Making JPCP:** Assessment of the youth's risk and needs should guide the decision of who is eligible for the JCPC funded programs.
 - **Action Item:** The JCPC funded programs should adopt assessment tool(s) related to both the risk level of the youth and criminogenic need area targeted by the program (e.g., if substance abuse is the target, an SA assessment should be utilized). On the other hand, if other entities are already collecting this information as part of their assessment process (e.g. court counselors), it can simply be sent to the program with the referral.
 - **Action Item:** The JCPC should require their funded programs to report the results of their assessment tools and how many youth were accepted and declined by risk and need level. The SPEP¹² tool will assist in this area and should assist with monitoring services received.

¹² The Standard Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP) (see Lipsey & Howell, 2012) is a tool adopted by DACJJ to evaluate JCPC funded programs and services.

Issue #3: Targets for Change & Modalities

The literature in the area of rehabilitation finds that if certain principles or strategies are followed by agencies, they are more likely to see reductions in recidivism (see for example, Andrews, et al., 1990; Cullen & Gendreau, 2000; Gendreau, Smith & French, 2006; Howell & Lipsey, 2012; Latessa, Listwan, & Koetzle, 2013; Lipsey, 2009; Lipsey & Cullen, 2007; Lipsey & Howell, 2012). These strategies are often referred to as the principles of effective intervention, are recommended strategies and practices that characterize effective service delivery (<http://nicic.gov/ThePrinciplesofEffectiveInterventions>). Many of these strategies were gleaned from the meta analyses conducted by Mark Lipsey over the last several decades (Lipsey, 1992; 1995; 2008; 2009).

Today these principles are often referred to as “best practices” which are closely aligned with the often-interchangeable term “evidence based practices.” While these terms are becoming their own source of confusion, the best practices or evidence based interventions are strategies that have been demonstrated to be effective in reducing recidivism. That could mean a particular approach (Family Functional Therapy or Multisystem Therapy, both of which are empirically supported by research and identified as Blueprint programs¹³) or a particular treatment modality (cognitive behavioral interventions, mentoring) that tends to be effective with certain target behaviors (e.g., antisocial attitudes, sex offending, substance abuse, antisocial peers or gang involvement). The practices or principles identified provide a framework for agencies.

¹³ Blueprints Initiative is designed to identify effective treatment programs and services that could be replicated in communities across the nation. According to its website (<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/index.html>)

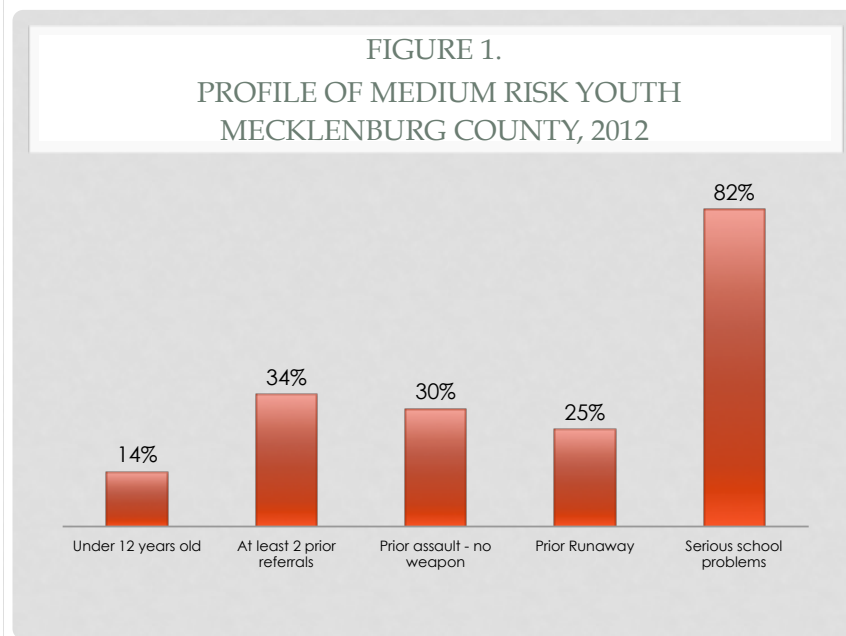
Below is an abbreviated list of the core principles that are relevant to the issues identified by the task group:

- Services should be tailored to the risk and needs of the youth. Low risk clients should receive few if any services; unless a clear need is indicated. However, moderate to high risk youth should receiving services at an intensity commensurate with their needs;
- Therapeutic approaches have shown the most promise in reducing recidivism and should be multimodal, restorative in nature, and focus on skill building and counseling (e.g., individual, family);
- Building community infrastructure and support is important (e.g., family based, mentoring, support services);
- Process and practices should be routinely monitoring for fidelity with feedback routinely provided.

If we are able to divert the lowest risk youth, the remaining youth should receive services at an intensity and dosage that is commensurate with their needs. Studies suggest that we should prioritize intensive interventions for youth who are at a higher risk of future criminal behavior. Those at risk for future delinquent behavior are often those with the greatest number of needs. For the purposes of this report, high(er) risk and needs refers to those youth who are struggling with multiple issues that likely deserve intervention. For example, the existence of school difficulties, family issues, gang involvement, and pro-criminal belief systems put a youth at higher risk (probability) of delinquency. A youth's prior record and seriousness of the offense can also be a significant predictor of future criminal behavior. While predictive, however, these factors

(as well as some issues related to school and families) can be biased against minority youth. The Dismantling Racism workshops spearheaded by Elisa Chinn-Gary and the Race Matters for Juvenile Justice initiative provides a deeper understanding of this issue.

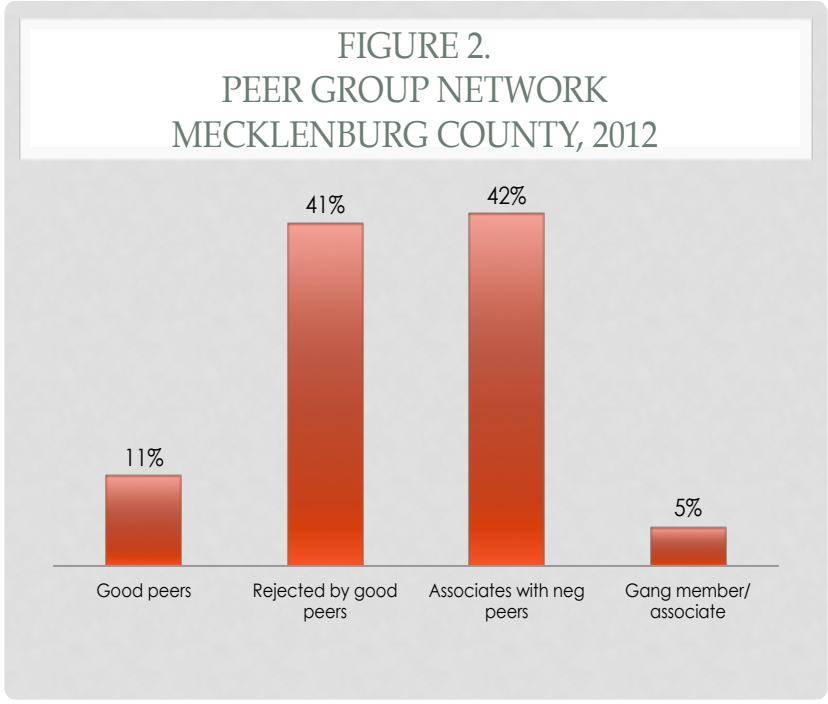
To understand the higher risk youth in Mecklenburg County, data obtained from DACJJ. The data includes only those who scored medium risk on the state's risk tool



(n=349). Figure 1 illustrates that approximately a third had at least 2 prior referrals and a prior record of assault. Twenty five percent had runaway from home at least

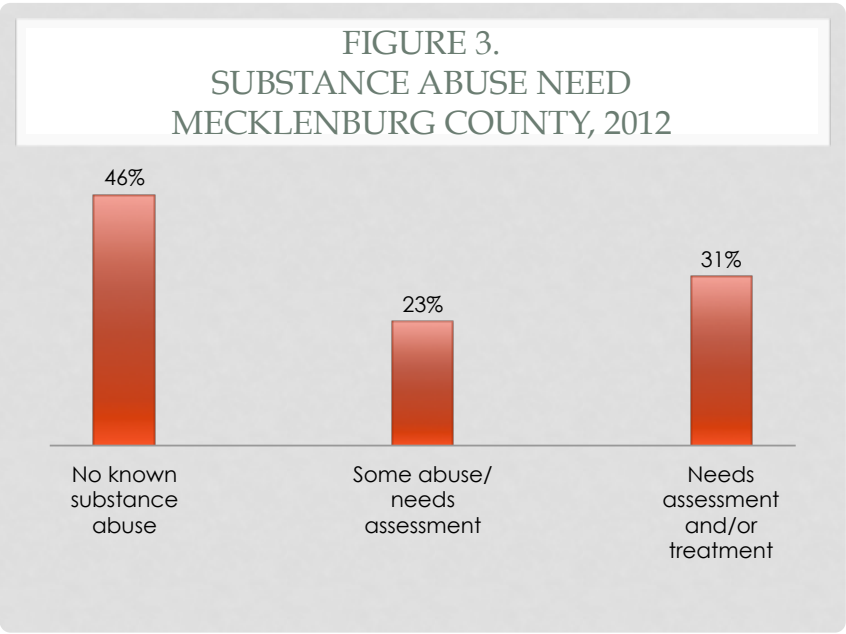
once. The most significant finding is with regards to school problems, with 83% having serious school problems¹⁴

¹⁴ Serious school problems = more than 1 short term suspension or more long term suspension, or more than 10 unexcused absences or have been expelled or drop out. These data are being analyzed by other task groups to determine whether this number is inflated by SRO practices.



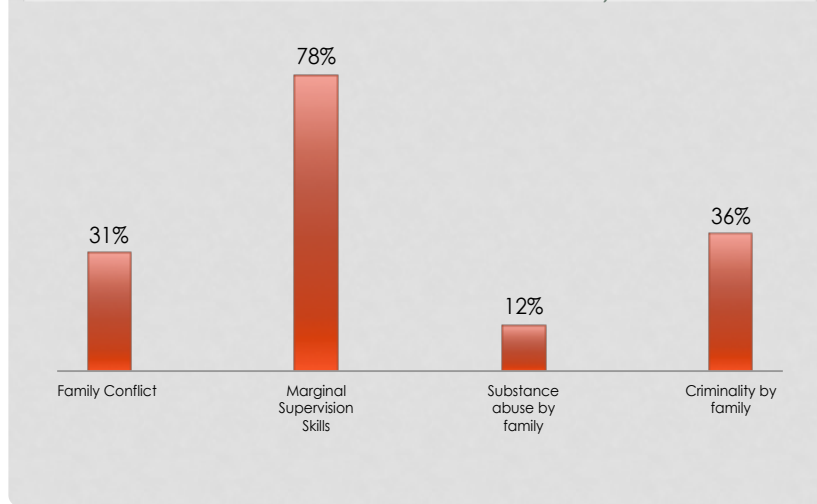
As mentioned, peers tend to be significant driver for criminal behavior among juveniles. Figure 2 illustrates that, for moderate risk youth in Mecklenburg County, this seems to be the trend as well. Over 80% of the

moderate risk youth in Mecklenburg County indicate that they have been rejected by prosocial peers or currently associate with antisocial peers.



With regards to substance abuse, Figure 3, illustrates that over half of the moderate risk youth indicated a degree of substance use.

FIGURE 4.
FAMILY NEEDS
MECKLENBURG COUNTY, 2012



Finally, with regards to parental supervision, Figure 4 illustrates that roughly one-third reported marital or family conflict. Seventy-eight percent had marginal parenting skills.¹⁵ Twelve percent of the youth had

family members with a substance abuse problem (within last three years). And 36% had a parent with a prior record or who is currently incarcerated.

While the constellation of issues is unique for each youth, these charts illustrate that moderate risk youth in Mecklenburg County are presenting with some of the core criminogenic needs found among national samples. Recognizing that peers, substance abuse, family, and school are key risk/need factors for youth still leaves us with the question of how best to respond to those needs.

While this report does not provide an in-depth accounting of the treatment literature, there are some programs and modalities that have shown themselves to be more effective than others that should be noted. For example, cognitive behavioral programs target antisocial thoughts and feelings and teach youth relapse prevention skills to help them avoid high risk situations and people. High risk situations can pertain to antisocial peers, drug use, school, or even parental conflict. Cognitive behavioral

¹⁵ Difficulty enforcing rules, youth engages in inappropriate behavior without parent knowledge, parent does not react with a sanction when rules are broken, or difficulty controlling behavior

programs should contain key elements (sometimes referred to as core correctional practices; see Latessa, et al., 2013, p.64) that help youth deal with these situations. The elements may include restructuring techniques, skill building, contingency management, problem solving, and relapse prevention. These programs can be run in a variety of settings, at various lengths, and target a variety of risk factors (e.g., peers, substance abuse, truancy). Multiple studies have shown this approach can be highly effective with youth (see Lipsey, 2009).

Family based interventions also show stronger effects. Established family based interventions such as Multisystemic Therapy, Family Functional Therapy, Brief Strategic Family Therapy, and Positive Parenting Program (Greenwood & Welsh, 2012; Savignac, 2009) have been found to be effective across a wide range of studies. These approaches focus on the core issues as it relates to delinquency such as poor supervision, conflict in the home, and inconsistent or inappropriate discipline; which are some of the risk factors shown in Figure 4 to be facing moderate risk youth in Mecklenburg County. Many of these programs utilize cognitive behavioral techniques with family members. Lipsey and colleagues (2012) suggest that agencies do not necessarily need to adopt a ‘brand name’ curriculum but can also adopt generic programs that utilize these best practices.

With regards to mentoring, the literature suggests that these types of programs can augment intensive interventions. Mentoring programs not only provide the youth with guidance and support it also can work to reduce the youth’s contact with antisocial peers. Mentoring programs have been found to positively related to school performance, self-esteem and interpersonal skills. Researchers suggest that programs must be careful in how they screen and pair mentors and mentees in such projects (see DuBois & Karcher,

2005). And while these programs are appropriate, they would not serve as a stand-alone intervention for moderate to higher risk youth (see Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008).

As mentioned earlier, this review is not meant to be a comprehensive appraisal of the literature, rather simply to provide highlights of its framework. All of these approaches or programs must take into consideration the dynamic nature of the youth, their families, and their communities. If we consider that planning includes determining “whom” to target through assessment, “what” to target criminogenic issues/needs, and “how” to target those by giving consideration to the empirically validated approaches, the system should be able to be flexible and handle a variety of youth and their circumstances.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Resource Allocation:** Priority should be given to funding services for youth who present with multiple needs (e.g., moderate need youth). In general, rehabilitative services should focus on increasing protective factors or reducing criminogenic factors—also called dynamic risk factors—that include negative peer associations, family relationships, substance abuse, and antisocial attitudes, values, and beliefs supportive of criminal behavior. These services should also be responsive to issues such as gender, age, cognitive ability, mental illness, transportation needs, etc.
 - **Action item:** JCPC should hold a strategic planning meeting to discuss the recommendations in this report. The Council should explore ways that it can assist the county in developing standards and funding services that

are critical to the needs of youth in Mecklenburg County.

- **Action item:** Assessment data indicate that peers, family and schools are high areas of need for moderate risk youth in Mecklenburg County. The JCPC should consider these findings when requesting and evaluating proposals.
- **Action item:** The JCPC does not have sufficient resources to provide all of the services youth in Mecklenburg County. The County and the court should develop a system for ensuring that other providers are utilizing best practices.
- **Action item:** The County should develop a guide for selecting providers who submit proposals for funding. The guide should include many of the issues discussed throughout the report.
- **Action item:** Providers who currently operating without oversight from the County should be required to submit to outside monitoring at least annually.
- **Acceptance Criteria:** Treatment programs should be required to identify whom they are designed to accept to ensure that court counselors make appropriate referrals.
 - **Action item:** All programs utilized by the JCPC and court counselors should be required to develop acceptance criteria that includes who they are designed to target (risk/need level) and what they plan to target (criminogenic need(s)).
 - **Action Item:** Court counselors should work with the JCPC to determine

the types of programs that should receive priority in funding decisions.

- **Modality:** The County and the JCPC should require programs to justify the modality they utilize prior to receiving funding or referrals.
 - **Action item:** Programs should clearly articulate their modality and produce empirical evidence of how that particular approach is successful for juvenile delinquents.
 - **Action Item:** The JCPC should encourage providers to utilize best practices such as cognitive behavioral approaches. The providers, whether they target substance abuse, gang, mentoring, family based, etc. could be using CBT in their approaches and be able to demonstrate in their proposals for funding how they are skill based.
 - **Action item:** The JCPC should be resolute in providing a full continuum of programs that address the wide variety of elevated treatment needs. DACJJ data consistently show that high risk offenders have multiple treatment needs in multiple developmental domains. Level 2 programs should also be considered in this continuum.
 - **Action item:** Mentoring programs should be able to articulate how they are following best practices in this area.
- **Training:** providers who are unfamiliar with cognitive behavioral theory and other best practices should receive training in this area.
 - **Action item:** All providers should be required to attend training if the agency is inexperienced in this area. The JCPC funded programs should receive training in conjunction with the SPEP.

Issue #4: Building Capacity & Monitoring Effectiveness

Another area inherent in the best practices approach is increasing effectiveness by developing performance measures and evaluation. The DACJJ has attempted to monitor the JCPC funded programs by developing state standards and requiring programs to be monitored with regards to certain issues such as program staff education, frequency of contact, length of stay, etc. The JCPC members, however, express frustration that the information has not led to useful knowledge regarding which program is more effective or what types of services should be given priority. The impending SPEP tool should lead to a substantial increase in knowledge of program operations. However, because the SPEP will rely on self-report, the JCPC programs should ensure they have monitors who understand the clinical features of the recommended program types.

In addition, there will be no SPEP-like tool in place for those programs that are not funded by the JCPC. Several states have adopted tools such as the Correctional Program Checklist (CPC) to rate the program's adherence to the principles of effective intervention. Somewhat like the SPEP, the CPC is a tool developed to assess correctional intervention programs,¹⁶ and is used to ascertain how closely correctional programs meet known principles of effective intervention. The tool covers 5 core areas: program leadership and infrastructure, staff characteristics, assessment, treatment components, and quality assurance. Several recent studies conducted by the University of Cincinnati on both adult and juvenile programs were used to develop and validate the indicators on the

¹⁶ The CPC is modeled after the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory developed by Gendreau and Andrews; however, the CPC includes a number of items not contained in the CPAI. In addition, items that were not positively correlated with recidivism were deleted.

CPC and found strong correlations between overall scores and outcomes.¹⁷ Studies highlighting experiences in other states have also found that who have the institutional capacity and support to implement evidence based practices tend to have better outcomes with their offending populations (Greenwood & Welsh, 2012; Lipsey, Howell, Kelly, Chapman, & Carver, 2010; Welsh, Rocque, & Greenwood, 2013).

Some states have utilized these types of tools as a way to improve programs through a series of action steps. For example, Wisconsin Department of Corrections (WDOC) decided to adopt the CPC to improve programs housed in the community and within prisons¹⁸. First, the state brought in researchers from the University of Cincinnati to conduct baseline assessments of a series of programs. Reports were written for each program that outlined both strengths and weaknesses. The staff from each program assessed was invited to attend an action-planning workshop and encouraged to develop goals and action steps regarding the weaknesses identified. To increase sustainability, University of Cincinnati staff trained hand picked staff from the WDOC to act as reviewers for these programs. The staff could then engage with the programs and assist with the implementation of the recommendations. The WDOC appointed a point person within the organization, titled “evidence based program manager” to oversee the entire process.

In addition to monitoring the quality of services is the evaluation of program outcomes. Outcomes can include important indicators such as improvement in school

¹⁷ These studies involved over 40,000 offenders (both adult and juvenile), and over 400 correctional programs, ranging from institutional to community based. All of the studies are available at www.uc.edu/criminaljustice. A large part of this research involved the identification of program characteristics that were correlated with outcome.

¹⁸ The process in Wisconsin occurred for their adult offender population, however, Washington followed a similar process with their programs for juveniles.

achievement, family functioning, or community engagement; but should also include measures of recidivism. Ideally, the programs should eventually be the subject of an outcome evaluation, which can examine their impact with youth over time. If programs are able to utilize this information and see it as a process of improvement (termed continuous quality improvement), they are more likely to see positive outcomes- both in terms of recidivism rates and cost savings (see Carey, 2010).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Sustainability:** Sustainability partly comes from increased buy-in among staff. Exposing staff to the logic of why certain policies are being implemented can increase this buy in.
 - **Action item:** The DACJJ is holding trainings with the JCPC and the JCPC funded providers to increase understanding of the SPEP process. The training may need to be augmented with additional training on how to implement the strategies identified. For example, understanding the core principles of cognitive behavioral therapy, contingency management programs, and mentoring programs.
 - **Action item:** Programs that do not receive JCPC funds will likely need additional training as suggested above.
 - **Action item:** Community input should be sought via surveys, focus groups or public meetings. The community should be given a voice in discussing their relationship with the “system” (judges, court counselors, providers, etc.). However, these forums should also be utilized to increase buy-in among the community for programs and services. These

meetings may also provide opportunities to solicit community mentors and infrastructure (e.g., volunteers for tutoring).

- **Action item:** Youth and their families should be engaged to allow their voice to inform the process and service availability.
- **Quality Assurance and Fidelity:** Services should be monitored annually.
 - **Action item:** the JCPC funded programs are monitored annually. The monitoring via the SPEP should include staff interviews, observation, client interviews, and a review of the program materials. The monitor should have some experience with recognizing the features of effective programs.
 - **Action item:** Services, processes, and policies should be continuously evaluated for performance countywide. A best practices monitoring tool (e.g., SPEP, CPC) should be adopted to evaluate program quality for programs that may not be JCPC funded.
 - **Action item:** A list of preferred providers utilizing evidence-based practices (relevant to the services offered) should be developed. Information gained during the annual monitoring of the programs should be utilized to update the list.
 - **Action item:** An interdisciplinary team or committee should be developed to oversee the implementation of issues identified in this report, brainstorm how to overcome barriers, and identify promising approaches being utilized in other counties across the state. The County should explore designating a point person(s) to lead this committee.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Mecklenburg County is well poised to implement many of the recommendations suggested by the task group. There is important infrastructure in place in North Carolina's DACJJ system as evidenced by the adoption of standardized risk and needs tools, monitoring tools such as the SPEP, and support for initiatives such as Reclaiming Futures and the Juvenile Justice Treatment Continuum. Other initiatives such as the standardizing of case planning, the use of pre-screening tool to assist with efficient case processing, and planned staff training should assist with the sustainability of the changes.

As the county moves forward, agencies should not feel compelled to only select from a few model programs or tools but rather focus on best practices in juvenile rehabilitation (Lipsey & Howell, 2012). There are lessons that we have learned from the literature and why certain programs, like those suggested by the Blueprints program, are more likely to work. First, the programs target the criminogenic factors that have been shown to reduce criminal behavior. Issues such as attitudes supportive of crime, associating with other delinquent peers, low school achievement, and problems within families are core problems for juvenile delinquents. Second, many of these programs also include the community as part of the treatment approach. The community can include schools, social service agencies, neighborhoods, and networks of support. The recognition that treatment should not simply take place with the individual but also the social context in which the youth lives is key to sustained change. Third, many of these programs are age appropriate, providing services designed to be responsive to the youth's risk and needs as well as their developmental stage. Finally, the programs developed a comprehensive framework to assist with implementation.

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Appendix A



Division of Adult Correction & Juvenile Justice
Rehabilitative Programs & Support Services
STATISTICS REQUEST

Research & Decision Support Analysis

Title:	Profile of Juveniles Entering with Complaints in Mecklenburg County: Calendar Year 2012
Reference:	SR1401-21
DATE:	01/31/2014
DATABASE:	NCJOIN
DATABASE DATE:	01/31/2014
DATASET:	

Table 1: Distinct Juveniles with Complaints by Decision Status and Risk and Need Level¹

Decision Status	Risk Level	Need Level			Count By Risk
		High	Medium	Low	
Approved	High	5.8%	12.2%	0.8%	97
	Medium	2.3%	30.1%	11.6%	228
	Low	0.2%	7.5%	29.5%	193
Diverted	High	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	1
	Medium	0.9%	6.7%	6.3%	64
	Low	0.2%	9.7%	76.0%	398
Closed	High	0.3%	0.7%	0.1%	11
	Medium	0.1%	3.1%	2.7%	57
	Low	0.0%	2.4%	90.7%	906

1,955

Key Finding:

Total risk and needs scores varied by decision status such that juveniles with lowest risks and needs scores were closed or diverted; juveniles with higher risk and need scores were approved for court.²

Table 2: Mean Risk & Need Scores by Complaint Decision Status³

Decision Status	N	Mean	STD	DF	SS	F	P
	Risk Score Statistics			ANOVA Statistics			
Approved	518	9.56	5.31	2	14447.10	510.40	<0.0001
Diverted	463	4.44	2.95				
Closed	974	3.09	3.04				
	Need Score Statistics			ANOVA Statistics			
Approved	518	13.74	6.37	2	27755.80	501.59	<0.0001
Diverted	463	8.03	5.14				
Closed	974	4.69	4.63				

Key Finding⁴:

Court approved juveniles had risk scores 5.1 points higher than the score of juveniles diverted and 6.5 points higher than the score of juveniles with complaints closed; juveniles diverted had risk scores 1.4 points higher than the score of juveniles with complaints closed. Needs scores showed the same pattern.

¹ For juveniles with more than 1 compliant, the most restrictive decision of the last compliant decision date was counted.

² F[2]510.40, p<0.0001 for risk score and F[2]501.59, p<0.0001 for need score.

³ Models assessment score equals decision status.

⁴ All comparisons statistically significant p<0.0001.

Reference: SR1401-21

Rev.0

Location: I:\APPS\UNIVERSA\Research\01 IRB@DOC\2013 HSRC\11 PROJECTS\1311-01,LISTWAN,UNCC\DATA



Division of Adult Correction & Juvenile Justice
Rehabilitative Programs & Support Services
STATISTICS REQUEST

Research & Decision Support Analysis

Table 3: Mean Risk & Need Scores by Gender

Gender	N	Mean	STD	DF	t	P
		Risk Score Statistics		T-test Statistics		
Female	583	3.84	4.02	1953	-8.07	<0.0001
Male	1,372	5.66	4.78			
		Need Score Statistics		T-test Statistics		
Female	583	6.70	6.36	1953	-5.30	<0.0001
Male	1,372	8.38	6.45			

Key Finding:

Male scores were approximately two (2) points higher than female scores on each of the risk and needs assessments.

Table 4: Recorded Need Factors of Juveniles by Gender

Select Need Factors	Male 1,372	Female 583	X Chi-square	df	p
Juvenile is a Gang Member	51.0%	37.4%	30.506	1	<0.0001
Functioning Below Grade Level	9.8%	5.7%	9.098	1	<0.01
Substance Use-12mo	25.0%	13.6%	31.687	1	<0.0001
Juvenile is Parent	0.5%	1.9%	8.499	1	<0.01
History of Victimization	9.0%	9.9%	0.402	1	>0.10
Mental Health Issues	51.2%	41.0%	16.955	1	<0.0001
Basic Physical Needs Unmet	0.3%	0.7%	1.563	1	>0.10
Conflict in Home-12mo.	17.4%	13.2%	5.357	1	<0.10
Marginal/Inadequate Supervision	42.6%	38.9%	2.309	1	>0.10
Family Criminality	19.2%	14.6%	5.889	1	<0.10

Key Finding:

Males were significantly more likely than females to have needs related to peer relations, substance use, and mental health.

Table 5: Mean Risk & Need Scores by Reported Ethnicity⁵

Ethnicity ⁶	N	MEAN	STD	DF	SS	F	P
		Risk Score Statistics		ANOVA Statistics			
White	299	4.40	4.43	2	301.10	7.03	<0.01
Black	1,386	5.39	4.79				
Hispanic	244	4.69	3.87				
		Need Score Statistics		ANOVA Statistics			
White	299	7.41	6.80	2	123.74	1.48	>0.10
Black	1,386	8.07	6.48				
Hispanic	244	7.68	5.95				

Key Finding:

Though there was a main effect of ethnicity on risk scores, none of the between group comparisons were statistically significant; there was no main effect of ethnicity on need scores.⁷



Division of Adult Correction & Juvenile Justice
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STATISTICS REQUEST

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Table 6: Recorded Need Factors of Juveniles by Ethnicity

Select Need Factors	White 299	Black 1,386	Hispanic 244	X	df	p
	Chi-square Statistics					
Juvenile is a Gang Member	42.8%	47.2%	52.5%	5.021	2	<0.10
Functioning Below Grade Level	8.7%	8.5%	9.8%	0.456	2	>0.10
Substance Use-12mo	25.1%	20.1%	27.5%	8.735	2	<0.05
Juvenile is Parent	0.3%	0.9%	2.0%	4.515	2	<0.10
History of Victimization	11.7%	9.4%	6.1%	4.919	2	<0.10
Mental Health Issues	47.8%	50.5%	36.9%	15.452	2	<0.01
Basic Physical Needs Unmet	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	3.147	2	>0.10
Conflict in Home-12mo.	18.4%	16.2%	13.5%	2.344	2	>0.10
Marginal/Inadequate Supervision	38.1%	42.9%	39.3%	2.890	2	>0.10
Family Criminality	12.4%	20.5%	11.1%	20.147	2	<0.001

Key Finding:

Consistent with the lack of differences between need assessment scores, juveniles of various ethnicities presented with needs in similar proportions; however, juveniles identifying as Black were significantly more likely to be assessed as having family members with a history of criminal convictions/adjudications or family members currently incarcerated, on probation or parole, or known gang members.

⁵ Models assessment score equals ethnicity.

⁶ Juveniles reporting other ethnicities (n=32) were removed from this analysis due to the relatively low number of observations in these specific ethnic categories.

⁷ Due to large sample size and number of comparisons, between group comparisons significance level set at p<0.0001.