

Department of Juvenile Justice
Human Research & De-Identified Case Specific Data Requests
Annual Report FY 2023

Administrative Code

On February 9, 2005, 6 VAC 35-170, *Minimum Standards for Research Involving Human Subjects or Records of the Department of Juvenile Justice*, adopted by the Board of Juvenile Justice, became effective. This Administrative Code requires the establishment of a Human Research Review Committee (HRRC) and sets out the conditions required for approval of external research proposals. The Administrative Code was most recently revised on June 24, 2021. Select sections of the regulations are included below to provide an overview of the review process:

6VAC35-170-130. Human Research Review Committee

A. In accordance with § 32.1-162.19 of the *Code of Virginia*, the department shall establish an HRRC composed of persons of various backgrounds to ensure the competent, complete, and professional review of human research activities conducted or proposed to be conducted or authorized by the department. No member of the HRRC shall be directly involved in the proposed human research or have administrative approval authority over the proposed research except in connection with his role on the HRRC.

6VAC35-170-150. Committee review of human research proposals.

In reviewing the human research proposal, the HRRC shall consider the potential benefits and risks to the human subjects and shall recommend approval only when:

1. The benefits to the human subjects outweigh the risks;
2. The methodology is adequate for the proposed research;
3. The research, if nontherapeutic, presents no more than a minimal risk to the human subjects;
4. The rights and welfare of the human subjects are adequately protected;
5. Appropriate provisions have been made to get informed consent from the human subjects, as detailed in 6VAC35-170-160;
6. The researchers are appropriately qualified;
7. The criteria and means for selecting human subjects are valid and equitable; and
8. The research complies with the requirements set out in this chapter.

6VAC35-170-50. Conditions for department approval of external research and data requests.

A. The department may approve research projects and data requests only when it determines, in its sole discretion, that the following conditions have been met:

1. The department has sufficient financial and staff resources to support the request, and, on balance, the benefits of the request justify the department's involvement;
2. The request will not interfere significantly with department programs or operations, particularly those of the operating units that would participate in the proposed research; and
3. The request is compatible with the purposes and goals of the juvenile justice system and with the department's organization, operations, and resources.

6 VAC 35-170-190. Committee reports required.

A. In accordance with § 66-10.1 of the *Code of Virginia*, the HRRC shall submit to the Governor, the General Assembly, and the director at least annually a report on human research projects approved by the HRRC and the status of such research, including any significant deviations from the proposals as approved.

B. The HRRC also shall submit annually to the Board of Juvenile Justice the same report as required by subsection A of this section.

Human Research Review Committee

During fiscal year (FY) 2023, the Department of Juvenile Justice’s (DJJ) HRRC was comprised of members from various backgrounds. The following members were active as of June 30, 2023:

- Nina Hyland (Chair) – Research Manager, DJJ*
- Robin Binford-Weaver, Ph.D. – Director, Behavioral Services Unit, DJJ*
- Lara Todd – Records and Legal Support Manager, DJJ*
- Rebecca Westfall – Policy and Legal Support Coordinator, DJJ*
- Betsy “Katie” Baldacci – Probation Officer I, 9th Court Service Unit, DJJ*
- Will Egen – Policy Analyst, Virginia Commission on Youth
- Rebecca Smith, Ph.D. – Principal Research Associate, The Pew Charitable Trusts
- Erin K. Maloney – Superintendent, Northwestern Regional Juvenile Detention Home

*Members also served on the internal sub-committee that reviewed de-identified case-specific data requests.

DJJ Senior Research Associate, Peter Gregory, Ph.D., served as the Coordinator of External Research.

In addition to reviewing the human subjects research studies as defined in the Administrative Code, an internal sub-committee reviews requests for de-identified case-specific data, including those made through the Virginia Longitudinal Data System (VLDS) where DJJ is the sponsoring agency. The following report includes projects involving either human subjects research or de-identified case-specific data.

In FY 2023, DJJ approved four studies, and, as of June 30, 2023, two proposals were still under review. The following sections summarize the ten studies that were active during FY 2023, including those approved in prior years, as well as the two proposed/pending studies. (Amendment dates indicate the most recently approved amendment; several projects involve multiple amendments over the course of the project.)

In accordance with § 32.1-162.19, *Human research review committees*, an executive summary of completed projects must be included in this report. No research projects were completed during this fiscal year.

I. Active Studies

Evaluation of a Comprehensive Community-Level Approach to Youth Violence

Researchers: Derek Chapman and Diane Bishop

Institution: Virginia Commonwealth University

Study Type: De-Identified Case-Specific Data Request

Approval Date: November 28, 2017; amended January 28, 2020

The purpose of the study is part of a larger project aimed at learning more about youth violence in low-income neighborhoods of Richmond, Virginia. The researchers will examine retrospective, de-identified data for youth between the ages of 10 and 24 who were associated with an intake case at Richmond City Court Service Unit (CSU) between January 2012 and December 2019. The researchers requested data on intake decisions, youth demographics, offense information, Detention Assessment Instrument (DAI) ranking, select Youth Assessment & Screening Instrument (YASI) items, length of stay (if applicable), and recidivism rates. Since the researchers are interested in low-income neighborhoods of Richmond (e.g., Mosby Court, Gilpin Court, Creighton Court) they requested individual block-level geographical data. The researchers trained the DJJ Research Unit staff on how to clean and geocode the data manually. The researchers identified the variables they need from DJJ, and the data and the data dictionary were delivered to the study's researchers in July 2020. The researchers reviewed the data, and data analysis and reporting is underway. The researchers plan to ask for the remaining data (2020 and 2021) and expect to complete this study in 2024 after the data are obtained, analyzed, and described in an updated fact sheet.

Process Evaluation of the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice Regional Service Coordinator Model

Researcher: Kelly Murphy

Institution: Child Trends

Study Type: Human Research

Approval Date: August 10, 2018; amended August 26, 2022

The purpose of the study is to conduct an in-depth evaluation of DJJ's Regional Service Coordinator (RSC) model by conducting focus groups and semi-structured interviews with CSU staff, RSC staff, and youth as well as analyzing administrative data. The study has three primary objectives: (i) conduct a process evaluation of the RSC model to understand the extent to which it is being implemented as intended; (ii) provide an initial assessment of the extent to which implementation of RSC model is associated with youth outcomes; and (iii) translate and disseminate findings to target audiences, such as DJJ, other systems that are interested in similar models, and stakeholders. This evaluation is planned to be conducted over a period of four years. The researcher conducted 17 interviews with direct service providers and 14 focus groups with CSU staff. The researcher worked with the Deputy Director of Community Programs to increase recruitment efforts with the CSU staff. The researcher was unsuccessful in recruiting youth to be interviewed. In addition, after some outreach assistance from DJJ, the researcher paused judge interviews due to COVID-related limitations. The researcher is also continuing her work to develop a web-scraping tool to create maps depicting youth's needs and available service providers.

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice
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Rigorous Evaluation of the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice’s Second Chance Act Reentry Reform

Researcher: Kelly Murphy

Institution: Child Trends

Study Type: Human Research

Approval Date: October 30, 2019; amended May 24, 2023

The purpose of the study is to conduct an evaluation of DJJ’s reentry reform efforts. The researcher aims to examine (i) the extent to which DJJ is implementing the recommendations developed during the Second Chance Act Juvenile Reentry Reform Planning Grant, (ii) the extent to which the agency’s services align with the youth’s needs, (iii) what the youth’s participation in reentry services look like, and (iv) how the implementation of the reforms have impacted youth outcomes. The evaluation will be conducted over a four-year period, including a pilot period. The evaluation includes focus groups with various stakeholders, such as DJJ’s reentry advocates, parole officers, juvenile correctional center (JCC) counselors, and more. The researcher also created a VLDS data request to examine long-term outcomes for youth involved with the juvenile justice system, which was submitted and approved as a separate project proposal.

Juvenile Delinquency and Adult Gun Sales: Comparative Effect of Different Minimum Age Standards for Firearm Purchase

Researcher: Jeff Swanson

Institution: Duke University

Study Type: De-Identified Case-Specific Data Request

Approval Date: August 19, 2020

The purpose of the study is to conduct a comparative analysis of three southern states with different laws regarding juvenile delinquency records and the minimum age standards for gun sales. The researcher selected three states that have differing thresholds for the minimum age of gun purchase for people with juvenile criminal records. By working with multiple state agencies, the researcher plans to conduct a longitudinal comparison of gun-related adverse outcomes in order to provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of the minimum-age standards in preventing gun violence and suicide. The researcher provided DJJ with letters of support from the other agencies to ensure the feasibility of this study and are coordinating the logistics of the various data requests. Currently, the researcher is integrating the three datasets they received from Virginia state agencies and are waiting to receive the dataset from the fourth and final agency, Virginia Department of Health.

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice
Human Research, FY 2023

Exploring Perceptions of Juvenile Court Service Personnel: Do Cognitive-Communicative Skills Impact Outcomes for Juvenile Offenders?

Researcher: Allison Chappell

Institution: Old Dominion University

Study Type: Human Research

Approval Date: December 9, 2021

The purpose of the study is to examine CSU staff's views on the relationship between youth's communication skills and the legal process, including outcomes and decision-making. Existing research found that nearly half of juvenile offenders have a cognitive-communicative disorder that can impact their ability communicative effectively and appropriately. The researcher gathered qualitative data at CSUs 2 (Virginia Beach) and 4 (Norfolk) on staff and other stakeholder's views on cognitive-communicative impairments and their impacts. The researchers expect to complete data collection and analysis in 2023 and share a final report with DJJ by February 2024.

Optimizing Supervision and Services Strategies to Reduce Reoffending: Accounting for Risks, Strengths, and Developmental Differences

Researcher: Gina Vincent

Institution: University of Massachusetts Medical School

Study Type: De-Identified Case-Specific Data Request

Approval Date: December 30, 2021; amended May 10, 2022

The purpose of the study is to (i) identify which risk and protective factors are most strongly associated with reduction in recidivism to inform supervision practices, (ii) examine which services and supervision practices facilitate positive youth development and reduce reoffending, and (iii) assist with capturing data regarding protective factors, service usage, and reoffending to inform decision-making. The researcher is requesting archival data from 2015-2017 to serve as a baseline, to include risk assessment, demographic, offense history, case management, service, and recidivism data. The researcher is also requesting prospective data from five CSUs, which are piloting a protective factors survey for comparison purposes and to understand how services impact youth outcomes. The researcher has requested recidivism data from DJJ and anticipates the project will be completed in Fall of 2024.

National Juvenile Court Data Archive Project

Researchers: Melissa Sickmund and Sarah Hockenberry

Institution: National Center for Juvenile Justice

Study Type: De-Identified Case-Specific Data Request

Approval Date: August 15, 2022; amended February 6, 2023

This study is not a traditional research study. Rather, its purpose is to contribute data to an archive that creates national estimates of juvenile court delinquency, status offenses, and case processing. Historically, DJJ has participated in the data archive project; however, due to revised internal processes, the HRRC requested an updated amendment packet for consideration. The researchers requested data from calendar years 2021-2023 and did not request any sensitive identifiers.

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice
Human Research, FY 2023

Research on Juvenile Reoffending

Researcher: Zachary Hamilton

Institution: Nebraska Center for Justice Research, University of Nebraska – Omaha

Study Type: De-Identified Case-Specific Data Request

Approval Date: August 31, 2022

The purpose of this study is to examine YASI risk and needs profiles in relation to gender, race, ethnicity, family structure/type, rural and urban settings, and poverty. The study aims to advance the researcher's original work in a previously approved project by analyzing additional variables. The original study examined data from 10 states' risk assessments and identified advancements for state, agency, or youth-specific gender responsiveness and outcomes. In addition to the main goals, the researcher will provide DJJ with a state recidivism comparison, a task which DJJ's Research Unit is unable to complete due to various barriers that the researcher can overcome with direct access to other states' data. The researcher requested data from FY 2015-2021, to include risk assessment, demographic, offense history, treatment need, supervision location, case management, and recidivism data.

Identifying Variation in Juvenile Judicial Sentencing

Researcher: Karen Kitchens

Institution: Virginia Tech

Study Type: De-Identified Case-Specific Data Request through VLDS

Approval Date: October 19, 2022

The purpose of this study is to use existing BADGE and VLDS data to identify if variation in sentencing exists, and if so, which sentencing/programs lead to the best outcomes. The study population is juveniles in the state of Virginia who interacted with the court system as identified through the BADGE system during the years 2010 to 2020. To account for changes in the court system as a result of COVID-19, the study does not include juveniles whose first encounter with DJJ occurred after the start of the pandemic.

Rigorous Evaluation of the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice's Second Chance Act Reentry Reform (VLDS)

Researcher: Kelly Murphy

Institution: Child Trends

Study Type: De-Identified Case-Specific Data Request through VLDS

Approval Date: October 19, 2022

The researcher is conducting an in-depth evaluation of DJJ's Second Chance Act (SCA) reentry reform efforts to better understand the quality of implementation and effectiveness. This multi-year evaluation is already ongoing. The purpose of this project is to add VLDS data to the ongoing analysis to investigate educational outcomes through data matched with the Department of Education.

OJJDP Juvenile Justice System Reform Initiative: Virginia

Researcher: Rebecca Cohen
Institution: Council of State Governments Justice Center
Study Type: De-Identified Case-Specific Data Request
Approval Date: November 15, 2022

The purpose of this study is to support DJJ in conducting a comprehensive assessment of the “front-end” (e.g. diversion and intake) of Virginia’s juvenile justice system. The assessment will identify system strengths and support DJJ in coming to consensus on opportunities to better align system referral, screening, and diversion policies, practices, and funding with what research shows works to improve community safety, improve youth outcomes, and reduce disparities.

II. Proposed / Pending Studies as of June 30, 2023

Fostering Responsible Parents in Virginia

Researcher: Mariellen Keely
Institution: Virginia Department of Social Services
Study Type: Process Improvement
Approval Date: September 22, 2023

The purpose of this study is to measure the impact of an online curriculum intended to increase the accuracy of knowledge surrounding the emotional, social, logical, and financial realities of parenting by young adults who are currently residing at Bon Air JCC. This is program evaluation. Youth will be offered the opportunity to participate and can decline if desired and will be able to return to their unit upon request. Participants will individually take pre- and post-tests consisting of 25 questions prior to and after completing the online module curriculums. The curriculum will be presented in a group setting with little to no discussion.

Analysis of DAI in Fairfax County

Researcher: Courtney Porter
Institution: Marymount University
Study Type: De-Identified Case-Specific Data Request
Approval Date: Pending

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the public safety impact of the Detention Assessment Instrument (DAI) in Fairfax County. The public safety impact will be examined by looking at the rates of new offenses and failures to appear in court for the youth released or under various forms of community supervision as detention alternatives. The researcher notes that it is important to reassess that the instrument continues to be used correctly with minimal bias. The researcher is requesting data from FY 2013-2022, to include intake, demographic, DAI, and offense data.

III. Denied Proposals

No research proposals were denied during this fiscal year. Projects withdrawn by the researcher are not included in this report.

IV. Administratively Closed Proposals

Administratively closed proposals include proposal packets the Coordinator of External Research or the HRRC reviewed, but the agency did not hear back from the researcher(s) after providing feedback and/or requesting revisions. No research proposals were administratively closed during this fiscal year.