3 Special Topics

DJJ's Research Unit analyzes data to evaluate DJJ's programs and initiatives. The Research Unit also monitors the approval and progress of external research partnerships. The following studies represent a selection of the projects completed during FY 2019.

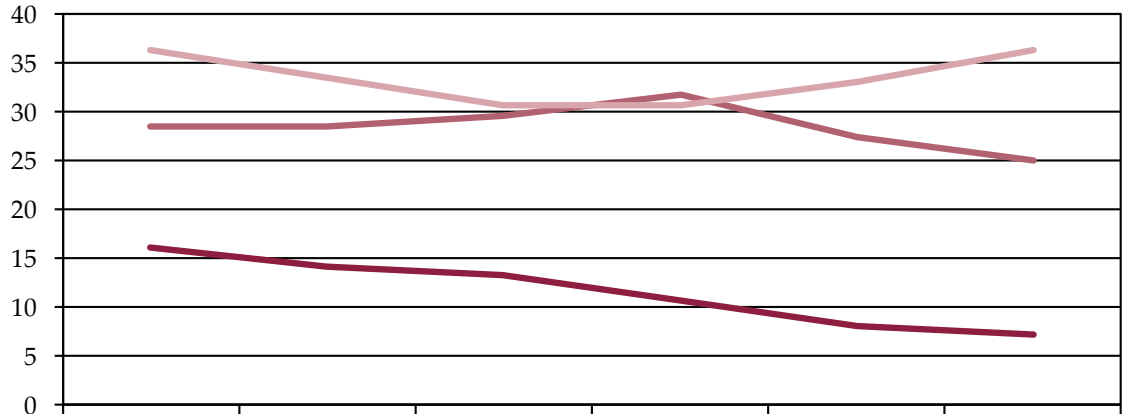
Revision of the LOS Guidelines

In response to research suggesting the average actual LOS of juveniles admitted to DJJ was higher than comparable states and national norms, the Board of Juvenile Justice adopted revised LOS Guidelines, which took effect on October 15, 2015. (See Appendix F.) While 12-18 months was the most commonly assigned LOS for indeterminate admissions under the previous guidelines, 6-9 months is currently the most common LOS. In order to assess the impact of this change, the Research Unit examined actual LOS trends by commitment type, adherence to the revised guidelines, commitment patterns before and after the revision, and 12-month rearrest rates.

The results indicated the average actual LOS for indeterminate releases declined gradually since FY 2014 while the LOS for determinate and blended releases remained relatively stable. Following LOS revision, a higher percentage of juveniles in direct care were released after their ERD but prior to their LRD.

Analyses indicated the percentage of determinate commitments and blended sentences steadily increased from FY 2015 to FY 2019. In addition, the proportion of admissions by MSO tier was stable before and after the LOS revision. The rate of determinate commitments and blended sentences increased slightly for each MSO tier following the LOS revision. In regard to risk level category, the proportion of admissions increased for juveniles in risk level categories B and C. In addition, the rate of determinate commitments and blended sentences increased for each risk level category, particularly for risk level B. The Research Unit continues to monitor LOS trends.

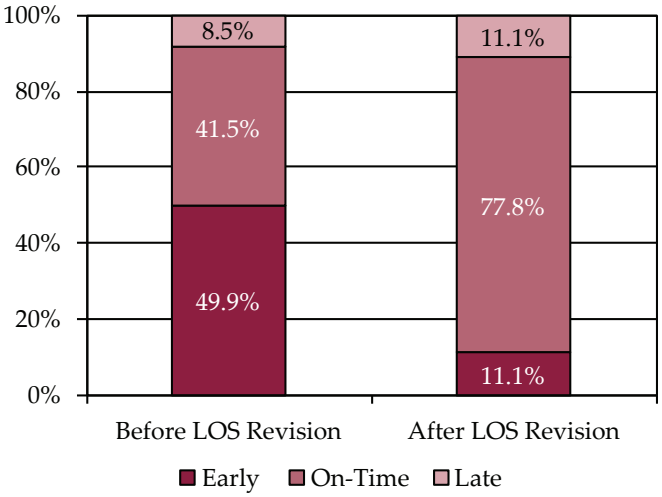
Average Actual LOS (Months) by Commitment Type, FY 2014-2019 Releases



	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Indeterminate	16.1	14.1	13.4	10.7	8.2	7.3
Determinate	28.5	28.5	29.6	31.8	27.4	25.0
Blended Sentence	36.4	33.6	30.6	30.8	33.2	36.3

» The average actual LOS for indeterminate commitments declined from a high of 16.1 months in FY 2014 to a low of 7.3 months in FY 2019.

Adherence to LOS Guidelines*



* "Before LOS Revision" includes released juveniles who were admitted to direct care with an indeterminate commitment from July 1, 2012, to October 14, 2015.

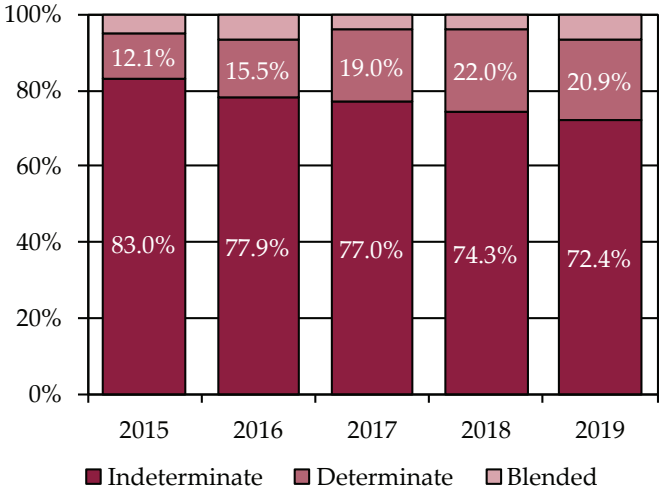
* "After LOS Revision" includes released juveniles who were admitted to direct care with an indeterminate commitment from October 15, 2015, to June 30, 2019.

* Excludes released juveniles with an inpatient or mandatory sex offender treatment need, who are treated as exceptions to the LOS guidelines.

» Before the LOS revision, 49.9% of indeterminate admissions were released early, 41.5% were released on time, and 8.5% were released late.

» After the revision, 11.1% of indeterminate admissions were released early, 77.8% were released on time, and 11.1% were released late.

Commitments by Type, FY 2015-2019*



* Counts are of commitment orders. A single direct care admission may be the result of multiple commitments to DJJ. For these reasons, the number of commitments in a FY may be different from the number of admissions.

» From FY 2015 to FY 2019, indeterminate commitments declined from 83.0% to 72.4%.

» From FY 2015 to FY 2019, determinate commitments and blended sentences increased from 17.0% to 27.6%.

Indeterminate Direct Care Admissions by MSO Tier and Risk Level Category, FY 2015-2019*

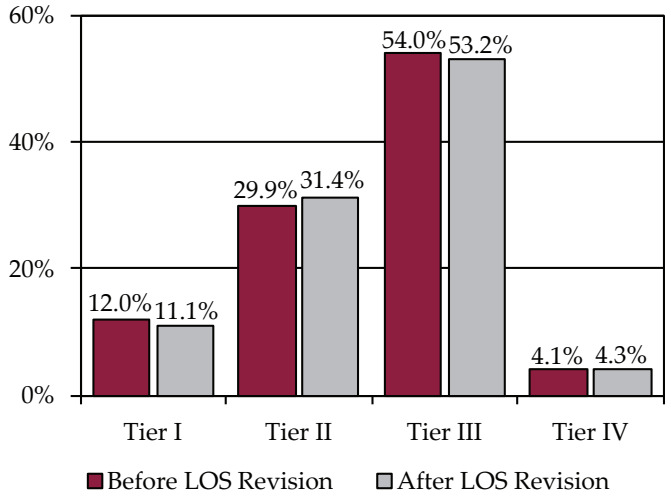
Committing MSO		Risk Level				
		A	B	C	D	Total
Tier I	• Misdemeanor Offenses • Violations of Parole	5	7	14	8	34
Tier II	• Non-person Felony Offenses	9	20	39	21	89
Tier III	• Person Felony Offenses	16	29	49	16	110
Tier IV	• Class 1 and 2 Felony Offenses	2	2	3	0	7
Total		*32*	*58*	*105*	*45*	*240*

* Excludes juveniles with an inpatient or mandatory sex offender treatment need, who are treated as exceptions to the LOS guidelines.

* Violations of probation are categorized by the underlying MSO.

» In FY 2019, 110 juveniles were admitted to direct care with an indeterminate commitment for a Tier III offense (45.8%), and 105 juveniles admitted with an indeterminate commitment were placed into risk level C (43.8%).

Admissions by MSO Tier*

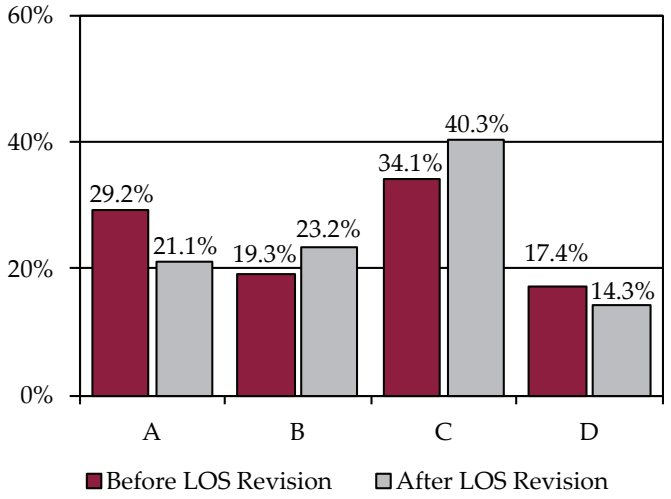


* "Before LOS Revision" includes admissions to direct care from July 1, 2012, to October 14, 2015.

* "After LOS Revision" includes admissions to direct care from October 15, 2015, to June 30, 2019.

» The proportion of all admissions by offense tier was relatively stable before and after the LOS revision.

Admissions by Risk Level Category*



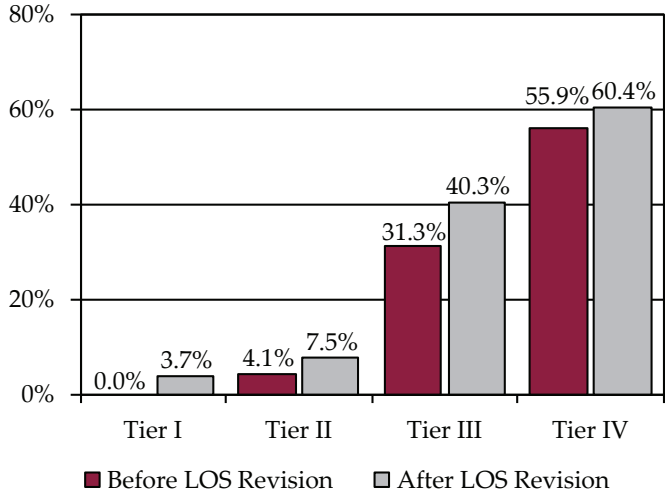
* Juveniles with missing risk information were excluded.

* "Before LOS Revision" includes admissions to direct care from July 1, 2012, to October 14, 2015.

* "After LOS Revision" includes admissions to direct care from October 15, 2015, to June 30, 2019.

» The proportion of all admissions increased for risk level categories B and C after the LOS revision.

Rate of Determinate and Blended Admissions by MSO Tier*

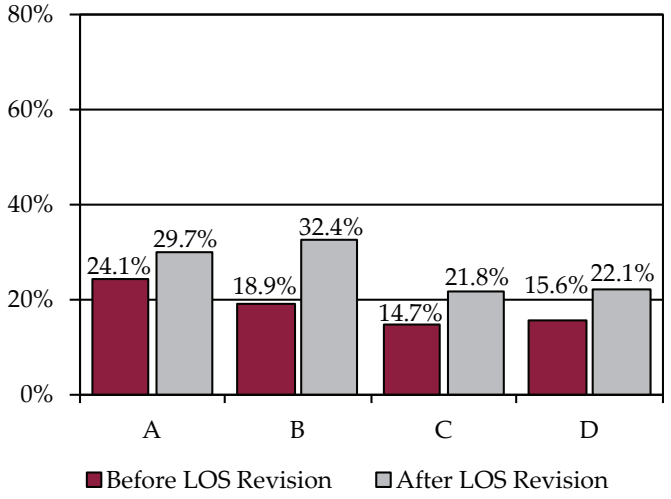


* "Before LOS Revision" includes admissions to direct care from July 1, 2012, to October 14, 2015.

* "After LOS Revision" includes admissions to direct care from October 15, 2015, to June 30, 2019.

» The rate of determinate and blended admissions increased slightly for each MSO tier following the LOS revision.

Rate of Determinate and Blended Admissions by Risk Level Category*



* "Before LOS Revision" includes admissions to direct care from July 1, 2012, to October 14, 2015.

* "After LOS Revision" includes admissions to direct care from October 15, 2015, to June 30, 2019.

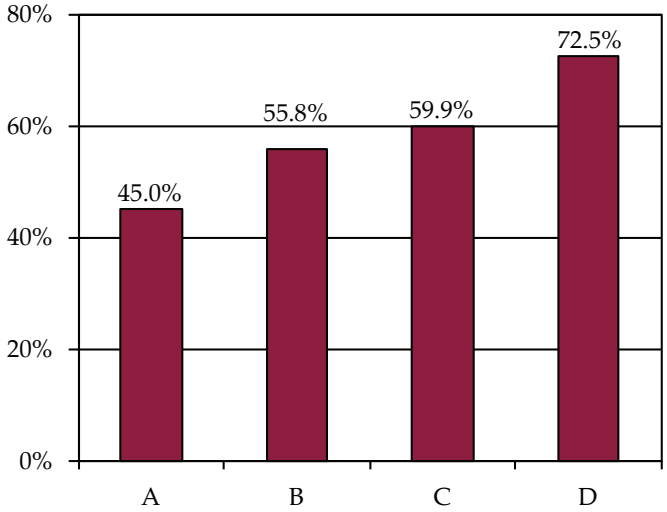
» The rate of determinate and blended admissions increased slightly for each risk level category, particularly for risk level B.

The development of the LOS Guidelines' risk level categories was informed by a recidivism analysis of direct care releases in FY 2013 and FY 2014. That analysis, conducted by AECF, found each progressive risk level category had an increase in its 12-month rearrest rate. For example, risk level D had a higher rearrest rate than risk level C, risk level C had a higher rearrest rate than risk level B, and so on.

The Research Unit conducted analyses to replicate AECF's original findings among indeterminate releases from FY 2013 to FY 2014 and FY 2015 to FY 2017, excluding juveniles with an inpatient or mandatory sex offense treatment need. The findings indicated that 12-month rearrest rates continued to increase with each progressive risk level category, although the differences were less distinct. These findings could hold potential implications on any future revision to the LOS Guidelines, along with the distribution of offense tiers and risk levels at admission. (See page 62). The Research Unit will continue to monitor rearrest rates by risk level category.

12-month rearrest rates from FY 2015 to FY 2017 continued to increase with each progressive risk level category, although the differences were less distinct.

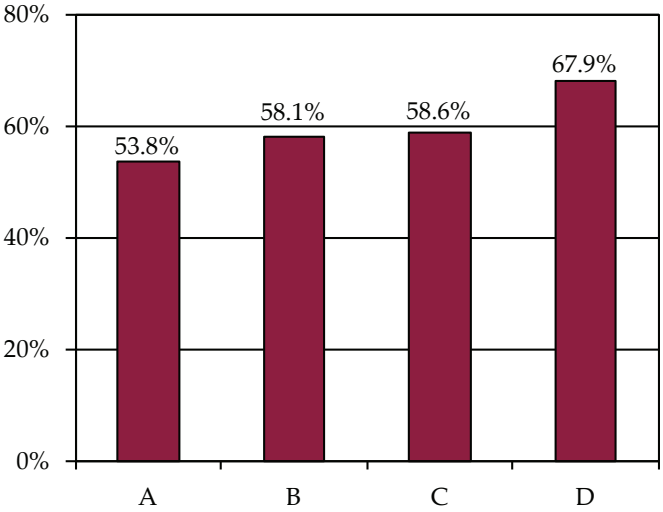
12-Month Rearrest Rates for Indeterminate Direct Care Releases by Risk Level Category, FY 2013-2014*



* Excludes juveniles with an inpatient or mandatory sex offender treatment need, who are treated as exceptions to the LOS guidelines.

» From FY 2013 to FY 2014, each progressive risk level category had an increase in its 12-month rearrest rate.

12-Month Rearrest Rates for Indeterminate Direct Care Releases by Risk Level Category, FY 2015-2017*



* Excludes juveniles with an inpatient or mandatory sex offender treatment need, who are treated as exceptions to the LOS guidelines.

* Includes released juveniles with an indeterminate commitment, regardless of the LOS Guidelines effective at the time of their admission.

» From FY 2015 to FY 2017, 12-month rearrest rates continued to increase with each progressive risk level category, although they were less distinct.

Standardized Disposition Matrix

In partnership with AECF and the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, DJJ developed the SDM, a data-driven tool to help make fair and objective dispositional recommendations to courts. The SDM was developed through a consensus-building process that leveraged the expertise of judges, attorneys, agency leaders, CSU staff, and a wide range of other stakeholders. The SDM aligns with the positive youth development principle of fairness: juveniles need to be held accountable in a manner proportionate to their offenses and similar to other juveniles in their situation. The goal of SDM is to improve consistency, reliability, and equity to ensure that juveniles with similar legal histories and risk levels have appropriate disposition recommendations.

In order to participate in the SDM process, juveniles must have a qualifying offense (see eligibility rules below). The juvenile's risk level and MSO formulate a range of recommended disposition levels. The SDM disposition levels are as follows (see Appendix G for more details):

» Level 1 – Referral(s) and Reporting of Outcomes to the Court, as Required

» Level 2 – Post-D Case Management

» Level 3 – Court-Ordered Probation Supervision

» Level 4 – Court-Ordered Out-of-Home Placement with Case Management or Probation

» Level 5 – Commitment to DJJ

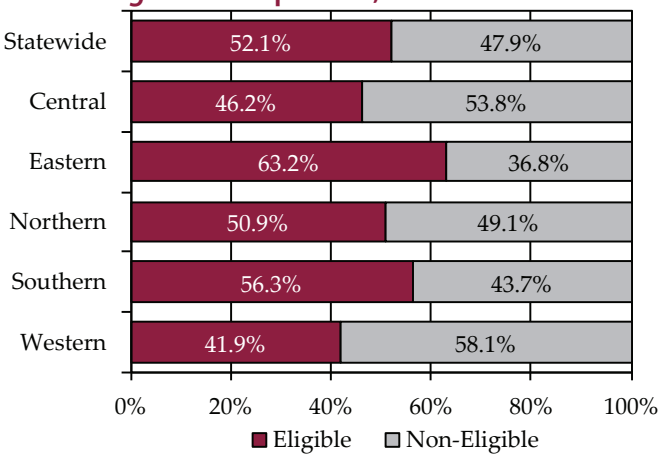
The PO is responsible for selecting the most appropriate level of intervention. The PO first considers the least restrictive disposition level in the range. If the PO deems the level inappropriate, the PO can consider the next least-restrictive disposition level. The PO may recommend a disposition level above or below the recommended SDM range (with approval from the PO's supervisor or CSU director). The PO presents this recommendation to the court during the dispositional hearing, and the judge determines the actual disposition.

Eligibility

A case is eligible for the SDM if it (i) includes at least one petitioned complaint that is a Class 1 misdemeanor or higher, (ii) has not been transferred to circuit court, and (iii) does not involve a sex offense. The following complaints are not eligible for the SDM process: CHINS, CHINSup, violations of a court order, contempt of court, show cause petitions, failures to appear, violations of probation or parole, violations of protective orders, and complaints filed through a court summons.

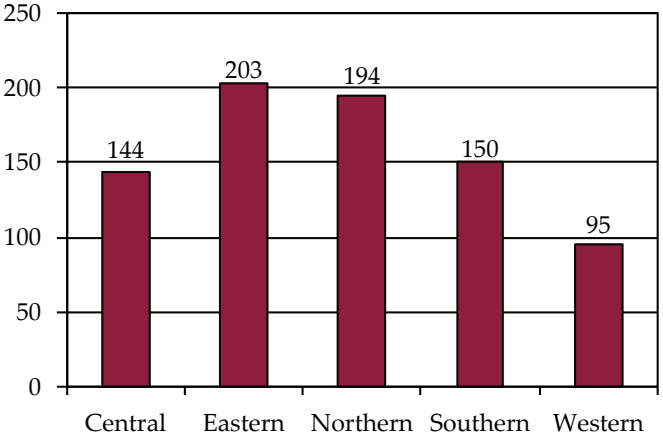
In preparation for statewide implementation, the Research Unit examined the number of petitioned juvenile intake complaints that were eligible for the SDM (i.e., met the three eligibility criteria and had delinquent or pending adjudications).

SDM-Eligible Complaints, FY 2018



» In FY 2018, 52.1% of petitioned complaints were eligible to go through the SDM process, varying by region.

SDM-Eligible Complaints, Average Per Month by Region, FY 2018



» In FY 2018, the monthly average of SDM-eligible complaints ranged from 95 in the Western region to 203 in the Eastern region.

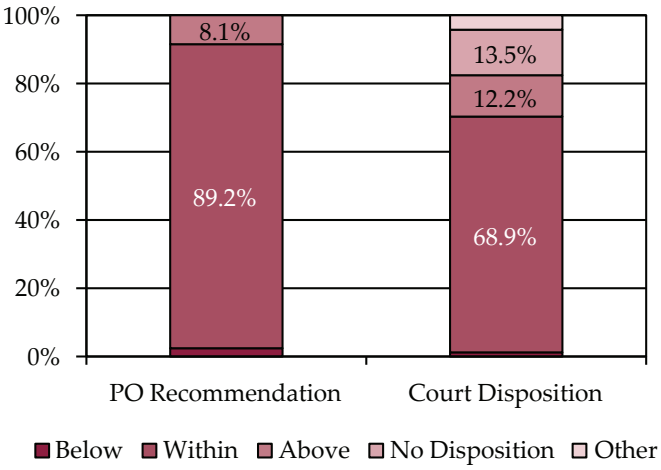
SDM Pilot

During FY 2019, the SDM was piloted in five CSUs: CSU 7 - Newport News, CSU 12 - Chesterfield, CSU 16 - Culpeper, CSU 20W - Warrenton, and CSU 22 - Chatham. The pilot began on September 4, 2018, and ended on March 4, 2019. Full implementation of the SDM is scheduled to begin on January 1, 2020, to allow time for training and stakeholder engagement.

The Research Unit analyzed data from the five pilot sites. It is important to note these are preliminary findings and include small sample sizes. Data will continue to be monitored as the SDM is implemented statewide.

During the SDM pilot, 89.2% of PO recommendations were consistent with the SDM disposition level.

PO Recommendations and Court Dispositions during the Pilot*



* Cases pending a court disposition at the end of the pilot, ineligible cases, and cases where the juvenile or parent declined participation are excluded from the analysis.

» As of April 2019, POs presented SDM recommendations to a judge for 74 cases.

» Of the 74 SDM cases with a PO recommendation:

› 89.2% resulted in a PO recommendation consistent with the recommended SDM range.

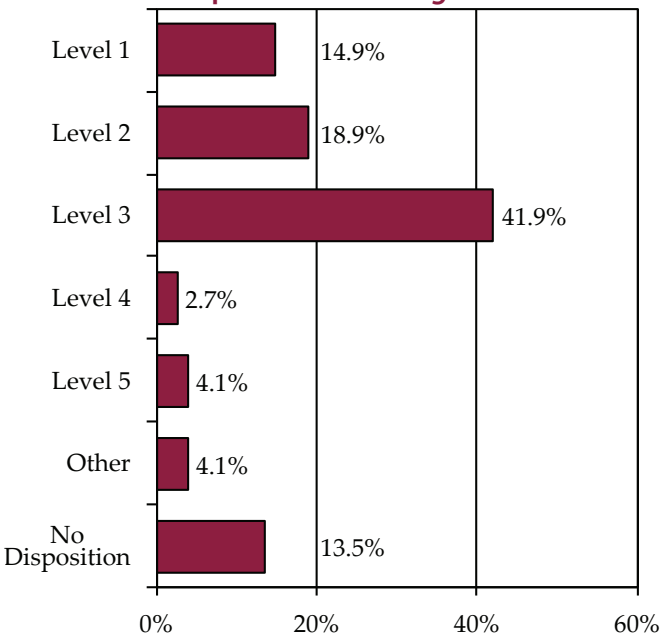
› The majority (68.9%) received a court disposition within the recommended SDM range.

› 12.2% received a court disposition more restrictive than the recommended SDM range.

› 1.4% received a court disposition less restrictive than the recommended SDM range.

› The remaining cases either had no disposition (13.5%) or received a disposition outside of the SDM levels (e.g., adult probation, deferred) (4.1%).

SDM Court Dispositions during the Pilot



» The most common court dispositions during the pilot were Level 3 - Court-Ordered Probation Supervision (41.9%), Level 2 - Post-D Case Management (18.9%), and Level 1 - Referral(s) and Reporting of Outcomes to the Court, as Required (14.9%).

Virginia Longitudinal Data System

VLDS is a mechanism for connecting data across state agencies while ensuring privacy and confidentiality. Participating state agencies provide data, and individuals are matched and then de-identified. After receiving approval, these longitudinal datasets are available for researchers and state agencies to address public policy and research questions. DJJ joined VLDS in FY 2018 and has submitted 19 years worth of data involving over 700,000 juveniles.

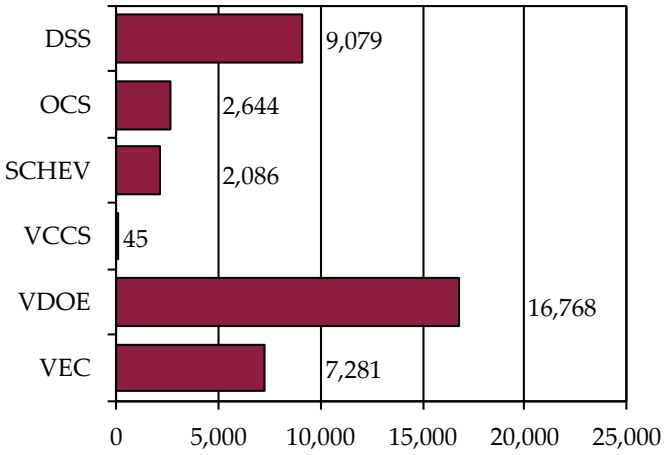
VLDS partner agencies include the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, the Department of Health Professions, DJJ, DSS, OCS, SCHEV, VCCS, VDOE, Adult Education (a sub-unit of VDOE), VEC, and the Virginia Goodwill Network.

The interagency information-sharing system will enable DJJ to better understand justice-involved youth. For example, the Research Unit submitted a research proposal to study the relationship between juveniles who are involved with DJJ and DSS. If approved, the research project will examine the types of DJJ and DSS involvement and prevalence throughout Virginia.

Through VLDS, DJJ also plans to study cross-system involvement and examine topics such as positive youth outcomes, educational outcomes (including post-secondary education), and employment.

To demonstrate the potential capabilities of VLDS, the data displayed indicate the number of juveniles who were involved with DJJ and at least one other VLDS agency during the same CY. For more information about VLDS, visit https://vlds.virginia.gov/.

DJJ Matches by Matched Agency, CY 2016*



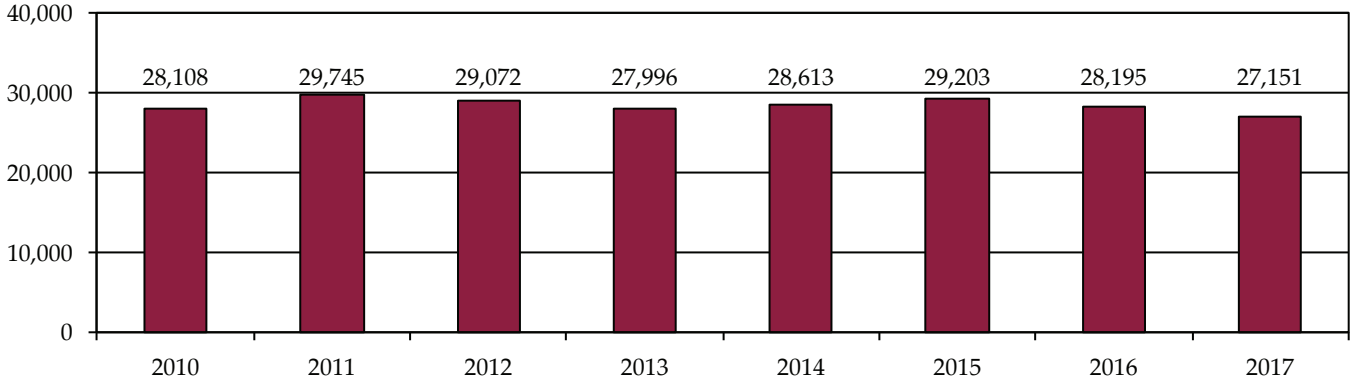
* Juveniles are matched based on the year of service delivery. Juveniles are matched if they had an intake, VJCCCA service, pre-D detainment, post-D detainment (with or without programs), or direct care admission and interacted with a VLDS partner agency during the same CY.

* VDOE and Adult Education are combined.

* DSS data for CY 2016 is incomplete; in CY 2015, there were 12,146 juveniles who had concurrent involvement with DSS.

» Of the juveniles involved with DJJ who matched to a VLDS partner agency during CY 2016, 59.5% matched to VDOE, 32.2% matched to DSS, and 25.8% matched to VEC.

DJJ Matches by Year, CY 2010-2017*



* Juveniles are matched based on the year of service delivery. Juveniles are matched if they had an intake, VJCCCA service, pre-D detainment, post-D detainment (with or without programs), or direct care admission and interacted with a VLDS partner agency during the same CY.

» Between CY 2010 and CY 2017, the number of juveniles involved with DJJ who matched to a VLDS partner agency ranged from 27,151 to 29,745.

» Of the juveniles involved with DJJ who matched to a VLDS partner agency, approximately 43.0% had concurrent involvement with DJJ and DSS each year between CY 2010 and CY 2015.

State Council of Higher Education. (September 2019). VLDS Agency Intersection Report.
Retrieved from: http://dashboards.schev.edu/agency-intersections