

**Department of Juvenile Justice
Human Research
FY 2020**

Regulations

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. These regulations require the establishment of a Human Research Review Committee and set out the conditions required for approval of external research proposals. 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 a human research review committee 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 committee 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 committee.

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

In reviewing the human research proposal, the committee will consider the potential benefits and risks to the human subjects, and shall recommend approval only when the benefits outweigh the risks. In addition, the committee shall recommend approval only when:

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

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

A. The department may approve research projects only when it determines, in its sole discretion, that:

1. The department has sufficient financial resources and staff to support the research project, and that on balance the benefits of the research justify the department's involvement;
2. The proposed research 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 proposed research 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 Human Research Review Committee shall submit to the Governor, the General Assembly, and the director at least annually a report on human research projects approved by the committee and the status of such research, including any significant deviations from the proposals as approved.

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

Human Research Review Committee

During FY 2020, the Department of Juvenile Justice's (DJJ) Human Research Review Committee (HRRC) was comprised of members from various backgrounds.

- Jessica Schneider, Ph.D. (Chair) – Research Manager, DJJ
- Robin Binford-Weaver, Ph.D. – Director, Behavioral Services Unit, DJJ
- Vince Butaitis – Director, 15th Court Service Unit, DJJ
- Will Egan – Policy Analyst, Virginia Commission on Youth
- Michael Favale – Legislative & Policy Director, DJJ
- Alan Hulette – Superintendent, Roanoke Valley Juvenile Detention Center
- Rebecca Smith – Graduate Student, Virginia Commonwealth University
- Lara Todd – Education Administrative Hearings Specialist, DJJ

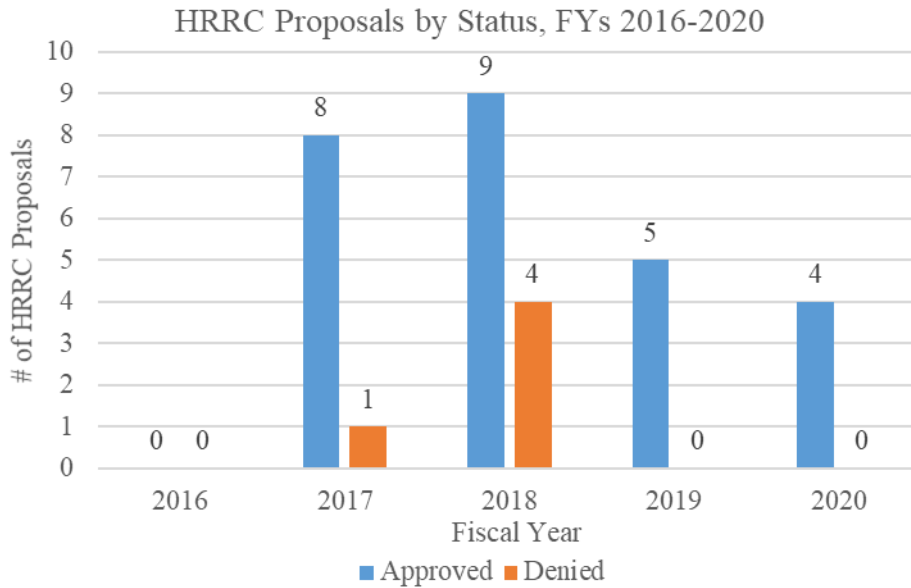
DJJ Research Analyst Dhara Amin, Ph.D., serves as the Coordinator of External Research.

In addition to reviewing the human subjects research studies as defined in the Regulations, a sub-committee of the HRRC reviews research proposals involving de-identified case-specific data. The following report includes research projects involving either human subjects or de-identified case-specific data.

In accordance with § 32.1-162.19, *Human research review committees*, an executive summary of completed projects can be found in Appendix A.

I. Research Proposals

In fiscal year (FY) 2020, DJJ received seven research proposals. Of these, the HRRC and the Director approved four. At the time of this report, two proposals were pending a review decision, one proposal was administratively closed, and no proposals were denied.



*The graph above represents the number of research proposals. Proposals were counted by the most recent submission date, including amendments.

*The two research proposals pending and one research proposal administratively closed in FY 2020 are not included in the graph above.

II. Active Studies

In addition to the studies approved in FY 2020, 12 research studies approved in previous years remained active. The 16 active studies are summarized below:

Evaluation of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) FY 2010 Second Chance Act Juvenile Offender Reentry Demonstration Projects

Researcher: Akiva Liberman

Institution: Urban Institute

Approval Date: July 21, 2014; amended: May 5, 2015

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of five OJJDP FY 2010 *Second Chance Act* juvenile demonstration programs, including the Tidewater, Virginia, Reentry Initiative. The researcher conducted implementation and cost analyses through process evaluations of program materials, evaluations on the use of evidence-based practices, interviews with staff and stakeholders, and focus groups with program participants and their parents. The researcher evaluated the impact of the program by interviewing youth within 45 days of release from a juvenile correctional center (JCC) and again within eight months of release. Outcome measures, including satisfaction levels, recidivism, and school data, were used to evaluate program impact and

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performance. The results indicate youth who participated in the Juvenile Second Chance Act projects had lower rearrest and reconviction rates.

Cognitive Behavioral Interventions for Medium- and High-Risk Juvenile Offenders: Practitioner-Researcher Partnership Project

Researcher: KiDeuk Kim

Institution: Urban Institute

Approval Date: April 17, 2015

The purpose of the study was to examine the implementation and impact of two treatment modalities, Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART) and modified Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), on committed youth's attitudes, behaviors, and recidivism. Youth designated as having an aggression management treatment need were randomly assigned to participate in one of the two treatment modalities. Staff members who provided treatment participated in interviews regarding their experiences and perceptions of the treatment modalities. There were 429 surveys collected from youth who participated. The researcher found DBT moderately reduced rearrest rates; however, the differences were not statistically significant. A draft of the report was submitted to the funder and is pending approval.

Examining Probation Outcomes and Changes in Risk

Researchers: JoAnn Lee, Faye Taxman, and Mark Murphy

Institution: George Mason University and DJJ

Approval Date: March 7, 2016

The purpose of the study is to examine the effects of youth's risk-need profiles, changes in risk-need profiles, and services on youth's probation outcomes. Youth's risk-need profiles are the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) risk and protective scores and legal, family, and substance use domain scores. The researchers will examine probation outcomes in the form of recidivism data for one full year. DJJ delivered data to the researchers on July 20, 2017, and an updated data set on June 29, 2018. As of June 2019, the researchers have begun to analyze the data. In January 2020, the researchers submitted a preliminary report regarding the latent class analysis conducted to identify subgroups of youth on probation. The researchers identified seven subgroups, in which four were consistent with previous studies: youth with low needs, high needs, substance abuse services needs, and mental health service needs. The researchers also found distinct sex-specific high need groups and a group for youth with low protective factors.

Toward a Pedagogy of Possibility: Justice System Involved Youth Read and Write Alternative Texts

Researcher: Judith Dunkerly-Bean

Institution: Old Dominion University

Approval Date: March 20, 2017

The purpose of the study is to qualitatively examine how justice-involved youth living at the Tidewater Youth Services Crisis Center read, respond to, and create alternative texts, while also improving youths' reading and writing skills and motivations. In the present study, the researcher administers informal reading inventories to assess youth's reading level and interests and then assigns selected readings intended to improve reading comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. The researcher also provides reading support and intervention to youth as needed. The researcher and

youth then participate in group-based discussions about the reading. Finally, the youth respond to the text by creating their own alternative text, specifically a 'zine (magazine), or another self-selected representation of self-expression. The researcher focuses on helping youth improve written literacy proficiencies as well as developing their identities as writers. The researcher also administers reading inventories to obtain post-intervention data for those youth who remained at the Crisis Center for a sufficient amount of time to collect post-data. The program is still active and was transformed into a collaborative venture with eligible youth.

Social and Psychological Predictors of Delinquency in Youth in the DJJ System

Researchers: Aradhana Bela Sood and Mark Murphy

Institution: Virginia Commonwealth University Health System and DJJ

Approval Date: May 18, 2017

The purpose of the study is to examine the demographic, social, and psychological characteristics that relate to juvenile delinquency and recidivism. The researchers are investigating the extent to which mentoring relationships mitigate and mental health issues exacerbate juvenile delinquency. The researchers found that gender was associated with trauma and mental health presence; however, there was no association between sociodemographic characteristics and the total dynamic risk. The results also indicated that no relationship was found between the YASI family domain and mental health and substance abuse. Race and dynamic substance abuse risk were associated with 12-month arrest. It is notable that this study only examined three domains from the YASI. The Coordinator of External Research contacted the researchers for an executive summary.

Vision 21: Linking Systems of Care for Children and Youth

Researchers: Laurie Crawford

Institution: Virginia Commonwealth University

Approval Date: May 26, 2017; amended May 17, 2019

The purpose of the study is to pilot the Virginia Victimization Screen (VVS), a screening tool used to assess victimization, associated symptomatology, and protective factors. Court Service Unit (CSU) directors selected DJJ staff to become VVS administrators. The VVS is utilized for all youth who are diverted or placed on probation with a moderate or high-risk YASI score. The VVS administrators also make referrals to appropriate partner agencies as needed. The researchers hope to validate this screening tool by requesting case specific, de-identified data from other standard screening tools (i.e., YASI, Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Instrument, Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire). In addition, VVS administrators meet with researchers for regular meetings that include ongoing technical assistance. During these meetings, the researchers invite DJJ staff to participate in pre- and post-surveys. Participants reported the training to be effective for various professional positions, the Spanish form needed to be refined to include commonly used language, and their objection to the work "victimization" being commonly used in this tool, but alternatives were not suggested. The Coordinator of External Research contacted the researchers for an executive summary.

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Multi-State Validation of Youth Risk and Needs Assessments

Researchers: Zachary Hamilton
Institution: Washington State University
Approval Date: November 7, 2017

The purpose of the study is to first validate Virginia's juvenile risk assessment instrument, YASI, and then compare the tool's validity across multiple states that use the same or similar instruments. The researcher weighed YASI fields and/or scores differentially based on locality in order to improve the tool's predictability. The researcher is requested de-identified, case-specific data for all YASI items for youth placed on probation or released from direct care between FY 2013 and FY 2016, as well as demographic information, treatment information, and recidivism rates at multiple follow-up periods. The researcher found support for all of their hypotheses and provided six main recommendations, including accounting for and reducing individual items in the risk assessment tool that often associated with non-White youth.

Evaluation of a Comprehensive Community-Level Approach to Youth Violence

Researchers: Derek Chapman and Diane Bishop
Institution: Virginia Commonwealth University
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. In the proposed study, 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 CSU 13 between 2012 and 2016. The researchers requested data on intake decisions, youth demographics, offense information, Detention Assessment Instrument (DAI) ranking, select YASI items, length of stay (if applicable), and recidivism rates. Since the researchers are interested in low-income neighborhoods of Richmond, such as Mosby Court, Gilpin Court, and Creighton Court, they are requesting 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. At the end of FY 2020, DJJ staff finalized the data request for this study.

Virginia Personal Responsibility Education Program Innovative Strategies (VPREIS)

Researcher: Amanda Dainis
Institution: James Madison University
Approval Date: February 20, 2018; amended: March 29, 2019

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the *Vision to You* program, an evidence-based teen pregnancy program. The program's main outcomes include the following: (i) to reduce the frequency of sexual activity; (ii) to reduce the number of sexual partners; and (iii) to increase contraceptive use among participants. Another goal of this project is to increase knowledge related to healthy sexual practices. The program is collaborating with seven juvenile detention centers (JDCs) throughout the state. Eligible youth are asked if they would like to participate, and the research staff collects parental consent information. Once the youth complete the online program, they have the opportunity to participate in three post-program surveys. Notably, youth can simply participate in the program or participate in the program and the surveys. The researcher submitted two amendments in order to incorporate questions recommended by the grant monitor. There have

been 70 participants across seven JDCs. The researcher is continuing enrollment at the detention centers.

Third National Survey of Youth in Custody (NSYC-3)

Researcher: David Cantor

Institution: Westat

Approval Date: June 14, 2018; amended: July 23, 2018

The purpose of the study was to collect data for the National Survey of Youth in Custody, as required to meet the mandates of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). The two primary objectives of the survey are to: (i) identify facilities with the highest and lowest rates of victimization, and (ii) provide data for the development of national standards for preventing sexual victimization in correctional facilities. This will be the third of four surveys. The researchers' sample frame included either state-owned or operated facilities that hold at least 10 adjudicated youth (and the adjudicated youth comprise more than 25% of the total youth population in the facility) or contract facilities that house at least 10 adjudicated youth (including at least one state-placed adjudicated youth). DJJ and/or the selected detention centers participated in the parental consent process in some form; however, in order to accommodate the selected facilities, the process and Westat's involvement may vary. Youth with parental consent who have been in the selected facility longer than four weeks were invited to participate in the survey. The HRRC committee voiced concern with the study's alternative questions as they are sensitive in nature and may make some youth uncomfortable. However, the committee also recognized the inconvenience of requesting that Westat change their entire survey instrument for one state. Out of the 276 youth who were enrolled among the six facilities in Virginia, 164 youth participated in the survey. The Research Unit discussed a protocol violation with Westat. Their progress reported that Spanish forms were utilized; however, Spanish forms were not submitted to HRRC to review nor approved for use in Virginia. The organization stated that the Spanish would have been available upon request; however, the issue was that Spanish forms were never a part of the approved protocol. The study's teams worked with the Research Unit to ensure the protocol will be followed in future years. See Appendix B for additional details.

Connection, Safety, Fairness, and Purpose: A Follow-Up Study

Researchers: Ryan Shanahan

Institution: Vera Institute

Approval Date: July 26, 2018

The purpose of the study was to provide a follow-up to the surveys the researcher administered to committed youth in 2015. The researcher administered surveys related to connection, safety, fairness, and purpose to youth and staff in the JCC. Residents were asked to provide the contact information for a family member whom the researcher could contact and potentially recruit to participate in a telephone interview. Once the surveys and interviews were completed, the researchers conducted collaborative research meetings with residents and staff at the JCC to discuss the findings and possible contributing factors for the findings. The researcher did not submit the required progress report. The Coordinator of External Research reached out to the researchers on multiple occasions but did not receive a response. DJJ was informed that the institution went through a reorganization and the conditions in the Research Agreement Form will not be met for this study.

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

Researchers: Kelly Murphy

Institution: Child Trends

Approval Date: August 10, 2018; amended: May 7, 2020

The purpose of the study is to conduct an in-depth evaluation of DJJ's Regional Service Coordinator (RSC) model. The goal of this project is to provide feedback and recommendations to DJJ. 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 would be conducted over a period of four years, including a pilot study in the first year. The researchers conducted 17 interviews with Direct Service Providers and three focus groups with CSU staff. The researchers worked with the Deputy Director of Community Programs to increase recruitment efforts with the CSU staff.

Brief Alcohol and Dating Violence Prevention Program for Court-Involved Youth

Researchers: Christianne Esposito-Smythers and Caitlin Williams

Institution: George Mason University

Approval Date: August 22, 2018

The purpose of the study is to provide a dating violence and alcohol prevention program for court-involved youth. The researcher delivered a four-hour group workshop utilizing didactic instruction, motivational interviewing, and cognitive-behavioral skill building to increase skills and knowledge in order to avoid high-risk alcohol and dating violence situations. This study aims to (i) integrate materials from two existing, evidence-based prevention programs and develop manuals for the interventions, training, and fidelity and (ii) conduct a pilot to evaluate the therapeutic potential of the proposed program. The researchers conducted the focus groups but due to recruitment issues are considering expanding the recruitment efforts to alternative locations. The researchers are exploring options to re-initiate recruitment for this study.

Resident and Staff Perceptions of Safety and Engagement with the Community Treatment Model (Part II)

Researchers: Sarah Jane Brubaker and Hayley Cleary

Institution: Virginia Commonwealth University

Approval Date: April 10, 2019

The purpose of the study is to conduct a follow-up to the researchers' original study. The researchers will examine perceptions of safety and levels of engagement among staff and youth under the Community Treatment Model (CTM), which has been fully implemented in the JCC. The researchers expanded the original study by including feedback from various DJJ staff. Furthermore, the study is being conducted again because the original study may have been impacted by the closure of one of the JCCs. Now that staff and youth have had time to become acquainted with the Bon Air JCC, the researchers hope to gain a better understanding of their current perceptions.

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

Researchers: Jeff Swanson
Institution: Duke University
Approval Date: August 19, 2020

The purpose of the proposed 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 researchers 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 researchers plan 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 researchers provided DJJ with Letter of Supports from the other agencies to ensure the feasibility of this study.

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

Researchers: Kelly Murphy
Institution: Child Trends
Approval Date: October 30, 2019; amended: March 9, 2020

The purpose of the proposed 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. This study is being funded by the NIJ. The proposed evaluation would be conducted over a four-year period, including a pilot period. The evaluation would include focus groups with various stakeholders, such as DJJ's Reentry Advocates, parole officers, JCC counselors, and more. The researcher submitted amendments to account for administrative changes to the key informant and family and youth interview protocol and create a standalone interview protocol for the Family Engagement Committee.

III. Proposed / Pending Studies

The Impact of Dental Operatory Color on Anxiety in Adolescents in Juvenile Detention

Researchers: Tegwyn H. Brickhouse and Matilda Sullivan
Institution: Virginia Commonwealth University
Approval Date: N/A

The purpose of the proposed study is to examine the impact of color on patients in the juvenile correction center's dental facility rooms. Previous studies have indicated in private dental facilities, the color in dental operatories can influence the patient's anxiety levels. The researchers aim to determine if a similar result is found in a juvenile correctional center, specifically at Bon Air JCC, which is a gap in existing literature.

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

Researchers: Allison Chappell

Institution: Old Dominion University

Approval Date: N/A

The purpose of the proposed 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 aims to gather qualitative data at CSU 4 (Norfolk) to assist with creating a formal survey instrument, which will allow the researcher to collect statewide data on staff's and other stakeholder's views on cognitive-communicative impairments and their impacts.

IV. Denied Proposals

No human research proposals were denied during this fiscal year.

V. 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 requests for revisions.

The Relationship between Attitudes and Beliefs of Juvenile Probation Officers and Detention Decisions Concerning Juvenile Offenders in the Commonwealth of Virginia

Researchers: John Goss, III and Julius Reynolds, II

Institution: Shenandoah University

Approval Date: N/A

The purpose of the proposed study was to examine how implicit bias may influence probation officers' decision-making, and how this related to the disproportionality of Black probationers involved in the Virginia juvenile justice system. Due to recruitment issues and unclear data collection procedures, the Coordinator of External Research provided the researchers with feedback for consideration in October 2019. The researchers have not submitted a revised proposal and therefore the proposal has been closed.

Appendix A: Executive Summaries of Completed Human Research Projects from the Researchers*

* Executive summaries are completed by the researchers, and the content is not revised by DJJ.

Evaluation of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) FY 2010 Second Chance Act Juvenile Offender Reentry Demonstration Projects' Executive Summary

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to use a staged evaluation approach to evaluate juvenile sites funded by the Second Chance Act (SCA) in FY 2010 to support reentry for high risk youth. One site was in the Tidewater area of Virginia. An evaluability assessment identified Tidewater as a strong site for an intensive process evaluation and a quasi-experimental impact evaluation. The impact evaluation used a comparison site design to estimate the effects of SCA program participation on recidivism. Recidivism of program participants in Tidewater was compared to the recidivism of similar youth released in the Richmond area, while using propensity score weighting to control for extraneous differences between the geographic samples.

Summary/Takeaways

The Urban Institute conducted a staged evaluation of JSCA sites funded by OJJDP in 2010. A process evaluation was completed in four sites, and an impact evaluation was completed in two sites (Tidewater, VA and Tulsa, OK). These sites were chosen based on several considerations, including having common reentry programs, strong potential for geographic comparison groups of youth returning from the same facilities to different jurisdictions, statewide risk and needs assessment, and strong statewide data systems. In both impact evaluation sites, the JSCA programs were primarily based on intensive case management.

In Virginia, the SCA site was comprised of several Court Service Units (CSUs) in the Tidewater area (CSUs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8, and excluding CSUs 2a and 6), which included the cities of Chesapeake, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, Norfolk, Newport News, Hampton, Franklin, and Suffolk, and the counties of Southampton and Isle of Wight. The SCA program was delivered by the Tidewater Youth Services Commission. The geographic comparison site was comprised of several CSUs in the Richmond area (CSUs 12, 13, and 14), with a similar case flow.

In Virginia, 127 reentry youth were interviewed, including 67 participants in the SCA program and 60 youth in the comparison site. Interviews with reentry youth found that youth in the SCA program perceived more robust reentry planning before release than youth in the control site, which may have been offset by reportedly less assessment conducted after release. SCA youth also reported receiving more help from their POs and case managers in the transition to the community, and reported more positive attitudes toward their POs and case managers.

In the Tidewater site, fewer than half of released youth were enrolled in the JSCA program; these youth comprised the treatment group. To assess program impact on recidivism, propensity score weighting (PSW) was used to control any sample differences between JSCA youth and youth released to the comparison site. Rearrest, reconviction, and reincarceration were examined at 6, 12, 18, and 24 months after release. Descriptively, JSCA youth generally showed somewhat lower recidivism over time, although none were significant in logistic regression models. Time to rearrest, reconviction, and reincarceration was then examined using survival models, and JSCA youth showed longer time to rearrest and reconviction, which were marginally significant ($p < .10$). Additional exploratory analyses suggested that observed delay in recidivism for SCA participants was primarily found among youth who were 18 or older (adults) at the time of release.

In sum, there is some indication of program benefit in VA and particularly among those released as adults, but the effect was not very robust. We note that the comparison groups were also receiving validated risk and needs assessments and some pre-release planning, perhaps somewhat attenuating the comparison.

VA recidivism rates were distressingly high even with SCA youth. By 24 months after release, 80% had been rearrested and almost half had been reincarcerated (47%). The SCA model being implemented, for which the central component was intensive case management, may not have been intense enough for these youth.

Recommendations/Next Steps

The high recidivism rates for these youth suggests that more robust reentry initiatives for serious offenders may be warranted. The current study suggests that a next step may be to combine intensive case management with a more robust set of therapeutic evidence-based programs that have shown demonstrated impact on recidivism, and which are focused on areas of need for each youth that are identified through risk and needs assessments.

Multi-State Validation of Youth Risk and Needs Assessment's Executive Summary

Problem investigated: In nearly every state and in the vast majority of juvenile justice agencies, risk assessments are incorporated into diversion, case management, supervision, and placement practices. Despite two decades of use within the juvenile justice system, research regarding the methods of risk assessment development is rarely translated to the field. Many contemporary tools are implemented *off-the-shelf*, meaning that tools were developed with a unique set of methods, including selection and weighting of items used in the prediction of a specified sample of youth. However, once adopted, many jurisdictions fail to make adjustments specific to their respective population of youth. What is not known is how the various designs, methods, and circumstances of tool development impact predictive performance following implementation.

Purpose of project: The proposed project sought to isolate, test, and evaluate the relative impact of seven notable risk assessment development variations, namely 1) item selection technique, 2) response weighting, 3) gender-responsivity, 4) race-ethnicity neutrality, 5) outcome specificity, 6) prediction duration, and 7) jurisdiction variation. An additional hypothesis (8) test optimized, or combined the effects of multiple variations, was also examined.

Approach: Using a large, 10-state sample of youth assessed using the same assessment, we developed risk assessment models using the seven development methods outlined. Where required, boosted regression models were used for identifying predictive items and provide coefficient weights. In addition, several sub-samples were created to examine and compare approaches between gender and race/ethnic groupings. Furthermore, comparisons were made between the 10-site unified sample and models created to capture individual site differences. To identify model performance, k-fold validation was completed and industry standard predictive performance metrics are provided.

Findings and Relevance: Findings identify consistent and substantial improvements with each of the eight hypothesized variations, with outcome and jurisdiction specific models identifying more than a full effect size improvement. Additionally, we identified an optimized set of models for the 10 sites, representing customized tools based on each data set with the ability to be implemented and improve predictive performance. Recommendations outline *best practices*, describing how the field may make similar adjustments to off-the-shelf tools in an effort to optimize predictive performance.

**Appendix B: Memorandum from the Bureau of Justice Statistics
(Westat Study)**



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Justice Programs

Bureau of Justice Statistics

Washington, DC 20531

June 9, 2020

Jessica Schneider, Ph.D.
Research Manager
Central Office
Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

RE: Third National Survey of Youth in Custody (NSYC-3)

Dear Dr. Schneider,

On behalf of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), I would like to thank you and your team for sharing with Erica Smith and me the concerns the Human Research Review Committee has had about the protocols for the third National Survey of Youth in Custody (NSYC-3) and for allowing us the opportunity to address those concerns. I would also like to apologize for the communication difficulties that you experienced with Westat, BJS's data collection agent for the NSYC-3.

BJS staff have discussed these concerns with Westat and we see several opportunities for improvement that BJS will pursue in future iterations of NSYC —

- First, BJS will require that any future data-collection agent administering the NSYC appoint a single primary point-of-contact (POC) for the state. Any additional survey administration coordination would run through that POC, who would have the responsibility for working directly with your agency. We hope this will prevent the disjointed communications you experienced with the NSYC-3.
- Second, BJS will establish a central repository of survey materials approved by any external IRB responsible for reviewing the NSYC protocols and documents for human subjects protections. This will allow BJS staff direct access to both IRB-approved and OMB-approved materials, so that BJS can directly review and fulfill any requests for documentation.
- Third, BJS will explore options to receive affirmative information from parents regarding the need for a Spanish language survey instrument or the presence of a Spanish-speaking interviewer. For parent feedback, the previous protocol relied upon the parent sending back a signed consent form in Spanish. In future iterations of the NSYC, we will consider directly asking parents about the need for Spanish language materials, regardless of which consent form they sign.
- Fourth, BJS will also consider adapting the consent and assent protocols used at the outset of the interview to verify the need for any Spanish language support. We hope this is responsive to

the concerns you raised about ensuring that youth had an opportunity to self-request Spanish language survey supports.

- Lastly, we will consider adding a field to the facility roster for the sampled youth where facility staff can indicate if Spanish language materials or a bilingual interviewer are needed for a particular youth. This would serve as an additional check on the need for language supports for a youth to participate in the survey.

We are eager to implement these changes to ensure the effective implementation of the NSYC in Virginia and maintain your valued support.

Once again, I thank you for the helpful feedback you have provided to us and for your continued partnership. If you would like to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at amy.lauger@usdoj.gov or 202-307-0711.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amy D. Lauger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amy D. Lauger
Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Program Manager
Chief, Institutional Research and Special Projects Unit
Bureau of Justice Statistics