



2021 - 2022

SAN MATEO COUNTY **PROBATION DEPARTMENT**

THE JUVENILE DIVISION – ASSESSMENT
CENTER/INVESTIGATIONS UNIT
ANNUAL EVALUATION



Helping People
Build Better Communities

ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a nonprofit social research firm dedicated to helping people build better communities by collecting meaningful data, facilitating information-based planning, and developing custom strategies. The firm was founded on the principle that community improvement, initiative sustainability, and program success are closely tied to assessment needs, evaluation of community goals, and development of appropriate responses.

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Program Description

The Juvenile Assessment Center/Investigations Unit (ASC/INV Unit) provides a primary point of entry for intake and assessment of youths who have come into contact with the juvenile justice system via law enforcement, including, but not limited to, youths who participate in Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) funded programs. The intake process begins at the ASC/INV Unit, when the youths receive a multidisciplinary team (MDT) risk/needs assessment, including screening for mental health, substance abuse, and other significant risk factors. Based upon the assessment findings, a recommendation that includes a balance of accountability and support/treatment services is completed and discussed with each youth's family by the assigned Deputy Probation Officer (DPO). Recommendations are also made to the Juvenile Court if release from custody is appropriate. Diversion-eligible youths can be referred to a range of programs and services, including the Petty Theft Program (PTP), Juvenile Mediation Program, Victim Impact Awareness (VIA) Program, and Traffic Court. Youths may also be placed on supervised Probation Diversion short-term (three month) or long-term (six month) contracts.

While this evaluation focuses on youths assessed at the ASC/INV Unit, the Unit also provides triage services for additional youths (See Appendix A for further details on triage services provided by the ASC/INV Unit.) Triage services are primarily intended to be brief and link youths with appropriate community resources to avoid formal court proceedings where possible. In contrast, some immediate bridging services are available for youths in crisis to stabilize families and optimize chances for success. This allows the ASC/INV Unit to focus efforts on those youths who are at higher risk to re-offend.

DPOs assigned to the ASC/INV Unit are responsible for intake as well as completing various types of reports for the Court's review and consideration when working with a youth who is subsequently referred to the District Attorney's (DA) Office and involved in a formal court process. Reports completed typically address and include a youth's entire social history, including but not limited to educational, health, and familial information, which are considered when submitting dispositional recommendations.

Programmatic Challenges

For FY 2021-22, youth and families continue to be impacted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, DPOs are providing services similar to previous non-pandemic years. However, with what has been learned through the pandemic, DPOs are creative in how they approach working with and supporting their clients, including the use of teleconferencing. Additionally, many counseling programs continue to be offered via Zoom and/or other video platforms. Otherwise, business practices and the focus on prevention remain the same.

Evaluation Methods

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

- **Participants and Services:** Grantee programs collect demographic data (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) and service data (e.g., type of services, hours of services, etc.) for individual participants. Program staff entered these data elements into their own data systems prior to transferring the data to ASR for analysis.
- **Risk Factors:** Grantee programs used the Juvenile Assessment and Intervention System (JAIS) to provide a standard measure of risk for youths. This individualized assessment is a widely used criminogenic risk, strengths, and needs assessment tool that assists in the effective and efficient supervision of youths, both in institutional settings and in the community. It has been validated across ethnic and gender groups. The JAIS consists of a brief initial assessment followed by full assessment and reassessment components (JAIS Full Assessment and JAIS Reassessment). The JAIS assessment has two unique form options based on the youth's gender. Probation has elected to administer the JAIS to all youths receiving services in community programs for at-risk and juvenile justice involved youth. The JAIS Girls Risk consists of eight items, and the JAIS Boys Risk consists of ten items. Each assessment yields an overall risk level of 'low,' 'moderate,' or 'high.'
- **Risk Indicators:** Grantee programs evaluated certain risk indicators upon entry for JJCPA youths, including if the youth had an alcohol or other drug problem, a school attendance problem, and whether they had been suspended or expelled from school in the past year.
- **Outcomes:** Like all JJCPA funded programs, the ASC/INV Unit reports on five justice-related outcomes for program participants occurring within 180 days post entry. They are:
 - arrests
 - probation violations
 - detentions
 - court-ordered restitution completion
 - court-ordered community service completion

In FY 2021-22, the outcome measures reported for the ASC/INV Unit include Arrests and Probation Violations. The prior year's cohort of program participants serves as the reference or comparison group to interpret FY 2021-22 outcomes.

The ASC/INV Unit also reports the average daily population in Juvenile Hall to track progress toward its goal of reducing the number and length of Juvenile Hall stays.

Evaluation Findings

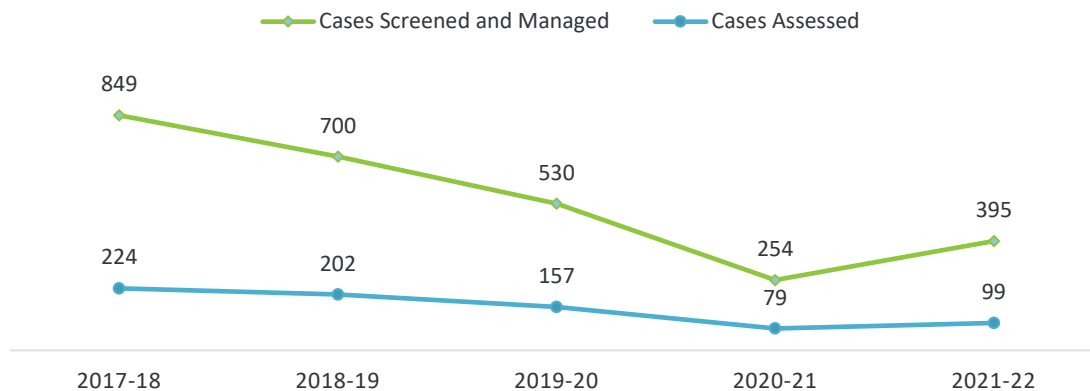
FY 2021-22 HIGHLIGHTS

- The number of youths screened increased by 56%, from 254 to 395, and the number of youths assessed increased by one-quarter (25%), from 79 to 99, compared to the prior fiscal year.
- There was a 36% decrease in the average time spent in the ASC/INV Unit (1.6 months) compared to the prior fiscal year.
- The ASC/INV Unit served clients across the risk spectrum: 67% scored as ‘low’ risk, 25% scored as ‘moderate’ risk, and 8% scored as ‘high’ risk on the criminogenic risk spectrum.
- The percentage of youths with a drug or alcohol problem and suspension or expulsion at entry decreased compared to FY 2020-21.

PROFILE OF CLIENTS SERVED

In FY 2021-22, the ASC/INV Unit screened and managed 395 cases, which consist of youths adjudged under WIC Section 602 (formal wards of the Court or those who have committed criminal law offenses) and youths adjudged under WIC Section 601 (those with a history of truancy, running away, or out-of-control behavior at home and/or in school). Exhibit 1 shows the total number of cases screened and managed each year, demonstrating a clear decline in numbers served over time. For further detail on how each case was processed through the system, please see Appendix A.

Exhibit 1. Total Number of Cases Screened and Managed, FY 2017-18 to FY 2021-22



The ASC/INV Unit assessed 99 youths and served them for an average of 1.6 months during FY 2021-22 (Exhibit 2). Since FY 2017-18, the number of youths assessed by the ASC/INV Unit has declined except for the most recent fiscal year. Declining population in the past was in part due to the changing population in San Mateo County, changes in reporting policies at the ASC/INV Unit, and adjustments based on the COVID-19 booking policies implemented by the state. The increase in this year’s reporting can be attributed to a number of factors including: more youths being booked after booking restrictions were lifted, and an increase in site and release referrals which stalled during COVID-19 and related out of custody reports from police departments are now increasing.

Exhibit 2. Youth Services

YOUTH SERVICES	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	FY 21-22
Number of Youths Assessed	224	202	157	79	99
Average Time in the ASC/INV Unit (Months)	2.6	3.8	1.5	2.5	1.6

Based on the 99 youths whose demographic data were recorded in FY 2021-22:

- Seven out of ten (70%) youths served were male, and 30% were female.
- The average age of youths was 15.3 years.
- For race/ethnicity, 51% identified as Hispanic/Latino, 22% as White/Caucasian, 13% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 7% identified as another ethnicity (Other), and 4% as Black/African American.

RISK INDICATORS

The ASC/INV Unit evaluated certain risk indicators upon entry, including if the youth had an alcohol or other drug problem, a school attendance problem, and whether they had been suspended or expelled from school in the past year (Exhibit 3). The findings below indicate:

- In FY 2021-22, 8% of youths had an alcohol or other drug problem at entry.
- Approximately one in seven (14%) youths had an attendance problem upon entry.
- Almost three in 10 (27%) youths had been suspended or expelled in the past year.
- Compared to the risk indicator findings for youths served in the previous year, smaller proportions of youths evaluated at entry in FY 2021-22 presented with risk indicators for an alcohol or other drug problem, a school attendance problem, and suspension or expulsion from school in the past year.

Exhibit 3. Youth Risk Indicators at the ASC/INV Unit Entry

RISK INDICATORS	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	FY 21-22
Alcohol or Other Drug Problem	20%	12%	34%	26%	8%
Attendance Problem	20%	16%	27%	41%	14%
Suspension/Expulsion in the Past Year	41%	36%	50%	34%	27%

FY 2021-22 n=41-50

In FY 2021-22, two-thirds of the youths served by the ASC/INV Unit scored ‘low’ risk at the initial risk assessment (67%). The remaining youths scored ‘moderate’ risk (25%) and ‘high’ risk (8%; Exhibit 4). Although slightly more youth scored ‘moderate’ in FY 2021-22 compared to the prior fiscal year, the results have been fairly stable over the past five years despite small numbers of youths that make the percentages more susceptible to fluctuations. This is expected given the nature of the ASC/INV Unit’s programs, which focus on prevention, diversion, and informal probation.

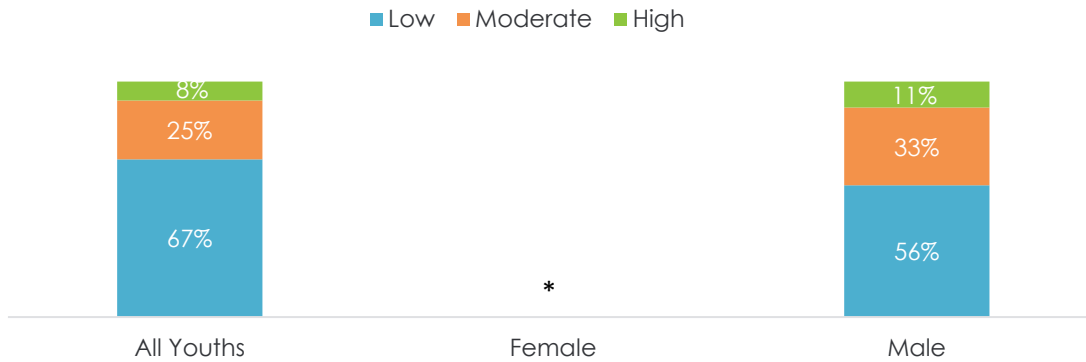
Exhibit 4. JAIS Risk Level

JAIS RISK LEVEL	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	FY 21-22
Low	66%	64%	60%	72%	67%
Moderate	30%	34%	37%	17%	25%
High	3%	2%	4%	11%	8%

FY 2021-22 n=12.

When disaggregated by gender, all self-identifying male youths scored within the ‘moderate’ or ‘high’ risk classifications, comprising 44%. A little over half (56%) of all self-identifying males assessed scored ‘low’ risk (Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5. Criminogenic Risk Level by Gender



All Youths n=12; Female n=3; Male n=9. *Indicates that data were suppressed due to a sample size below five.

JUSTICE OUTCOMES

Exhibit 6 presents justice-related outcomes for 62 youths whose six-month post-entry evaluation milestone occurred in FY 2021-22. Of note:

- The percentage of youths arrested for a new law violation decreased from 8% to 3% in FY 2021-22.
- Too few youths were on formal probation, thus no data are available for probation violations.

Exhibit 6. Justice Outcomes (180 Days Post Entry)

JUSTICE OUTCOMES	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	FY 21-22
Youths Arrested for a New Law Violation	13%	1%	0%	8%	3%
Youths with a Probation Violation	20%	*	*	*	*

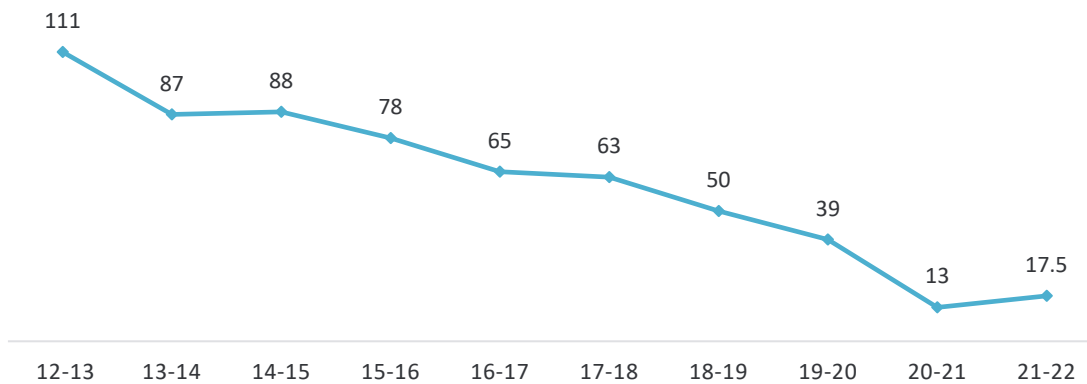
FY 2021-22 n=62 for Youths Arrested for a New Law Violation, n=2 for Youths (on formal probation) with a Probation Violation. *Indicates that data were suppressed due to a sample size below five.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

One of the ASC/INV Unit’s goals is to reduce the number of Juvenile Hall stays by diverting youths away from detention. However, between FY 2020-21 and FY 2021-22, the average number of youths in Juvenile Hall increased by 34%, from 13 to 17.5 total youths. However, between FY 2012-13 and FY 2021-22, the average daily population decreased by 84% (Exhibit 7).

Several factors appear to influence this declining trend, such as a decrease in crime overall, fewer bookings for non-violent and less serious offenses, and adjustments based on COVID-19. After one year of shelter-in-place from the prior fiscal year and resumption of daily operations, the average daily pop has increased slightly. While fewer youths are being served, data collected for the 2020-25 Local Action Plan suggest that the needs of youths who are entering Juvenile Hall are complex and require significant resources and supervision.

Exhibit 7. Average Daily Population by Fiscal Year Over the Last Decade



CLIENT STORY

Each year, staff at JJCPA-funded programs provide a client story to help illustrate the impact of services on their clients. The following is the client story provided by the ASC/INV Unit for FY 2021-22.

Exhibit 8. Client Success Story

Name of Client	Elijah
Age and Gender	15, male
Reason for Referral	Elijah broke the law, a police report was written and subsequently, this report was referred to the probation department. Elijah went to a school campus that he was not enrolled in and stole another student’s bicycle.

<p>Client’s Behavior, Affect, and Appearance When They First Started in the Program</p>	<p>Elijah was respectful, but quite nervous when he first spoke with this officer. He had a history of regularly attending school, he followed his house rules and completed his assigned chores.</p> <p>His mother was open to speaking with this officer and felt her son should have a consequence for his behavior/action. She reported he behaves at home, but she was upset with him for having stolen another person’s bicycle. This officer interviewed/assessed Elijah to see if he would qualify for a diversion program.</p>
<p>Activity Engagement and Consistency</p>	<p>After Elijah’s interview/assessment, he qualified to take part in the petty theft program. Elijah was appreciative and enthusiastic to take and complete this class. Elijah did not procrastinate with enrolling into this class, and he successfully completed it, in a timely fashion. Elijah was in contact with this officer and provided updates regarding his enrollment status and completion of the program.</p>
<p>Client’s Behavior, Affect, and Appearance Toward the End of the Program</p>	<p>When this officer first spoke with Elijah, to his credit, he did not make any excuses or deny taking another person’s bicycle. This officer noticed he became more comfortable and appeared to be less nervous when he held a conversation with this officer.</p>
<p>What the Client Learned as a Result of the Program</p>	<p>Elijah reported to this officer, he recognizes he should not have taken the other person’s bicycle. He informed this officer he had taken the bike, in retaliation, against the other person, as the other person was said to have physically harmed his friend. Elijah reports it was wrong of him, and not worth the consequences. Elijah was also aware of the disappointment his mother felt, when police came to his home to investigate this matter. He reported he would never want to have his mother feel that way about him, ever again.</p>
<p>What the client is doing differently in their life now as a result of the program</p>	<p>Elijah now has a different perspective on how to deal with conflict/retaliation. He expressed the importance of thinking before reacting.</p>
<p>The value of the program in the client’s words</p>	<p>Elijah informed this officer he was appreciative for having the opportunity to take part in a diversion program. He said he learned his lesson and will never steal another person’s property, especially in retaliation of another person’s issues.</p>

Appendix A: Case Triage Dispositions

DISPOSITIONS	FY 17-18		FY 18-19		FY 19-20		FY 20-21		FY 21-22	
Mandatory court cases	353	42%	410	59%	365	69%	191	75%	232	59%
Booked into secure custody	176	21%	223	32%	192	36%	52	20%	116	29%
Placed in petty theft program	19	2%	12	2%	10	2%	1	<1%	6	2%
Placed in Juvenile Mediation/Victim Impact Awareness Program	38	4%	1	<1%	1	<1%	3	1%	3	1%
Screened and referred to Traffic Court	61	7%	74	11%	44	8%	28	11%	20	5%
Referred to youth’s county of residence	72	8%	57	8%	47	9%	18	7%	43	11%
Youth Outreach Program families served	N/A		13	2%	18	3%	14	6%	17	4%
Criminal background checks	243	29%	283	40%	91	17%	86	34%	67	17%
Alcohol and Other Drug assessment	23	3%	22	3%	17	3%	2	1%	5	1%
Received letter of reprimand	15	2%	36	5%	36	7%	25	10%	53	13%
Juvenile record sealing application evaluated for submission to the Court	88	10%	60	9%	54	10%	62	24%	52	13%
Assessed and placed on diversion contracts	35	4%	26	4%	12	2%	9	4%	13	3%
§ Intervention (90-day contract)	23	3%	17	2%	6	1%	4	2%	9	2%
§ Informal diversion (6-month contract)	12	1%	8	1%	6	1%	5	2%	4	1%
Total Cases Screened and Managed	849		700		530		254		395	