



# OJJDP FACT SHEET

Shay Bilchik, Administrator January 1998 #74

## Counting What Counts: The Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement

by Joseph Moone

Since 1974, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has maintained the *Census of Public and Private Juvenile Detention, Shelter, and Correctional Facilities*, more commonly known as the Children in Custody (CIC) series. In October 1997, OJJDP inaugurated a successor to this series, the *Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement* (CJRP). The new census meets a pressing need for information that can address a wide variety of questions on juvenile detention, corrections, and placement.

### **OJJDP has a responsibility to provide information on juvenile offenders placed in residential settings**

Section 242 of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, as amended (42 U.S.C. 5601 et seq.), charges OJJDP to collect and disseminate information on all aspects of the juvenile justice system. CIC partially filled this information need with regard to juvenile detention and corrections. The data collected included information on the age, race, sex, and offense of both committed and detained youth. The series also collected valuable information on the types of facilities that held these youth and the medical, educational, and counseling services offered.

Over the years, CIC informed many important policy issues. In the 1970's, CIC data were used to show the disturbingly common use of secure facilities—designed and intended for serious delinquent offenders—to hold status offenders (runaways, truants, etc.). As a result of these findings, Congress established an OJJDP program requirement to remove status and nonoffender (dependent, neglected, and abused) juveniles from such settings. In the 1980's, CIC data identified the disproportionate representation of minorities in secure placement. In response, Congress established a requirement to address disproportionate minority confinement (DMC) in plans submitted for OJJDP's Formula Grants Program in 1988, and elevated DMC to a core requirement in 1992.

### **CJRP is the first step in a substantial enhancement of OJJDP's efforts to report on juvenile offenders in residential facilities**

In 1993, OJJDP began a comprehensive examination of its efforts to collect and report information on youth in custody. To determine the information needs of the juvenile justice community and to develop methods to meet those needs, OJJDP consulted with juvenile justice experts, survey methodologists, practitioners, and facility personnel. As a result of this examination, OJJDP concluded that CIC did not fully meet the information needs of the juvenile justice community. In response, OJJDP developed the *Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement*, a comprehensive, manageable, and reliable statistical series covering juvenile offenders in residential placement.

### **CJRP differs fundamentally from CIC**

CIC collected aggregate information on the number of juveniles in custody. It asked each facility to provide the total number of juveniles held in the facility on the reference date—usually February 15. Facilities were also asked to provide the numbers of juvenile delinquent offenders, status offenders, and nonoffenders. Other sections of the census asked for aggregate numbers by age and race. Unfortunately, these aggregate data were inflexible and could not answer significant questions raised by researchers and practitioners.

For each juvenile held in residential facilities, CJRP collects individual information such as date of birth, race, sex, and most serious offense. CJRP also asks questions about the juvenile's legal status, including court of jurisdiction (i.e., criminal court or juvenile court), adjudicatory status (i.e., pre- or postadjudication), and the State or county that has jurisdiction over the juvenile.

## **CJRP will collect information on all juvenile offenders in residential settings**

In designing a statistical series to produce comparable information across jurisdictions, the definition of “juvenile” is critical. For example, while most States define a juvenile as an individual less than 18 years of age, other States set different maximums, such as 16 in New York, Connecticut, and North Carolina, and 17 in 10 other States. The various options for transferring a juvenile to criminal court further complicate the issues. To address this problem, CJRP will request comprehensive information on all offenders less than 21 years of age in the facility. All facilities intended for juvenile offenders will be included in the census.

## **CJRP will continue gathering data as a biennial census**

As with CIC, CJRP will be conducted biennially in odd-numbered years. The reference day for CJRP (i.e., the day on which the information is collected) will be the last Wednesday in October. The Bureau of the Census will continue to act as the data collection agent. The first CJRP was conducted in 1997, with a reference date of October 29.

OJJDP will publish CJRP statistics through a series of Fact Sheets and Bulletins that address juvenile justice issues. Reference tables and general analyses will be published separately.

Special analyses covering such issues as gender, race, and offense types will be published in compendium publications that use several data sources.

## **A note on confidentiality**

OJJDP conducts this survey under the Office of Justice Programs regulations implementing Title 42 U.S.C., Section 3789g. Under this statute, the data from this statistical program are protected against disclosure for any purpose other than statistical or research use. The information collected must be presented in such a way as to guard the privacy rights of the individual. OJJDP will carefully guard against any public disclosure of information that violates the privacy of a person or confidentiality of data agreements entered into with reporting facilities.

## **For further information**

For additional information on the *Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement*, call Joseph Moone, 202-307-5929.

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