

# YOUTH COURTS:

## An Empirical Update and Analysis of Future Organizational and Research Needs

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# I. Introduction

This paper is the third in a series of reports on the status of youth courts in the United States. It, like the two preceding reports, was funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) of the United States Department of Justice. Youth court is also called teen court, peer jury, student court, etc. It is intended to be an alternative to the traditional juvenile justice system and school disciplinary proceedings. It is designed to empower youth and communities to take an active role in addressing the early stages of youth delinquency. There are currently more than 1250 youth courts functioning within the United States. They are located in 49 states and in the District of Columbia.

The first report, published in 2002, was based upon the findings from a study conducted by the Urban Institute. That report included a survey of youth courts and an in-depth analysis of programs in four states. It concluded that youth courts represent a cost effective “promising alternative for the juvenile justice system” ... above all in “jurisdictions that do not, or cannot, provide meaningful sanctions and services for these offenders” (Butts, Buck, & Coggeshall, 2002).

The second report was published in 2005 by the American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF). This research also included a national study and found that, in the United States, youth courts are serving an estimated 110,000 to 125,000 youth offenders each year and offer hands-on leadership and citizenship training for more than 100,000 youth volunteers. Youth courts divert about 9% of the juvenile arrests that would otherwise have to be handled by the traditional, overburdened, juvenile system and they accomplish all of this on an average budget of less than \$50,000. In addition, the AYPF analysis suggested that youth courts provide benefits that extend beyond the youth offender, to their families, the youth volunteers, and to the community.

The program ensures that youth offenders assume responsibility for, and deal with the consequences of their acts. Youth courts offer youth a safe place to serve and learn, and opportunities to develop pro-social leadership skills. They provide youth offenders and volunteers with foundations for competent and responsible citizenship, and help families and communities to assume responsibility for their young people’s behavior while creating a network of support (in other words, building social capital) (Pearson & Jurich, 2005).

The AYPF report did, however, question the viability of youth courts if “sustainable” and simplified funding is not secured and if best practices are not followed. In addition, programs also must have professional development and technical assistance resources to promote high quality, successful programs (Pearson & Jurich, 2005).

This report is an attempt to add to our knowledge of youth courts by looking at questions concerning their operation; the extent of volunteer activity; how they function as they mature; and the amount and types of resources they employ. This report is based on a national survey of youth courts that includes ten (10) questions focused on program outcomes and six (6) operational and administrative questions. From these questions, the OJJDP can provide policy makers and court practitioners with guidance on how to build and sustain an organizational structure that allows youth courts to successfully fulfill their mission of preventing young offenders from repeating antisocial behaviors, while relying on volunteers and even ex-offenders, to be part of the process.

## II. Youth in the Juvenile Justice System

Youth crime is a major problem. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, in 2004, law enforcement agencies in the United States made an estimated 2.2 million arrests of persons under age 18. In that year, juveniles accounted for 16% of all arrests and 16% of all violent crime arrests. The substantial growth in juvenile violent crime arrests that began in the late 1980s peaked in 1994 and has been dropping ever since. As a result, the juvenile Violent Crime Index arrest rate for 2004 was at its lowest level since, at least, 1980 and from its peak, in 1993. The rate of juvenile arrests for the most serious crimes had, by 2004, fallen by 77% (Snyder, 2006). The bad news is that juvenile crime is still a substantial problem. Data on crime in the United States in 2004 from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program include the following:

- Courts with juvenile jurisdiction handled an estimated 1,660,700 cases.
- Juvenile courts handled about 4,500 cases per day.
- The number of delinquency cases processed by the juvenile courts increased by 44% between 1985 and 2004.
- Between 1997 and 2004, the number of public order offense cases increased 16% and drug law violations increased 3%.
- Compared to 1995, juvenile courts handled 78% more liquor law violation cases, 70% more obstruction of justice cases, 48% more nonviolent sex offense cases, 35% more disorderly conduct cases, and 23% more assault cases (Stahl, Puzzanchera, Livsey, Sladky, Finnegan, Tierney, & Snyder, 2007).
- Juveniles were involved in 12% of all violent crimes cleared in 2004—specifically, 5% of murders, 12% of forcible rapes, 14% of robberies, and 12% of aggravated assaults.
- Females accounted for 24% of juvenile arrests for aggravated assault and 33% of those for other assaults in 2004, far more than their involvement in other types of violent crimes.
- Between 1980 and 2004, the juvenile arrest rate for simple assault increased 106% for males and 290% for females.
- Between 1995 and 2004, while juvenile arrests for drug abuse violations fell 8% for males, they increased 29% for females (Snyder, 2006).

While the study of delinquency and juvenile crime has historically focused on males, the number of females has increased since 1981. For violent crime, the arrest rate of young females increased more than that of young males (120% compared with 60%). In 1997, the young male violent arrest rate was slightly under 20% higher than in 1981, but the young female rate was about 90% above 1981 (Snyder and Sickmund, 1999).

## III. Cost of Juvenile Justice System

The cost-benefit relationship in the juvenile justice system is not easy to calculate. The Urban Institute



attempted to outline the problems of estimating cost-benefit in a 2005 white paper. A cost-benefit relationship is arrived at by predicting the outcome of placing a youth in the criminal justice system. If placing a youth in the criminal justice system leads to more certain and longer incapacitation of the juveniles who are most likely to commit future dangerous and expensive crimes, the net economic effect would be economically and socially positive. These positive effects, however, would be mitigated if a new population of relatively low-level juvenile offenders replaced more serious juvenile offenders, in the adult system, or if some adult offenders are crowded out of the adult justice system due to resource constraints and an ever-growing number of juveniles in the criminal justice system.

These costs would be greatest if these juveniles posed less risk to the community than the adults who are crowded out. The point of the system is to reduce the cost to the community of violent crimes, expensive property crimes, or the great number of crimes perpetrated by certain offenders. The question is: From a cost-benefit standpoint, how best can the system predict future behaviors and accomplish effective rehabilitation among offenders most likely to commit future “high cost” crimes (Roman & Butts, 2005)?

While a cost benefit analysis is difficult to accomplish, it is easy to conclude that the cost of the juvenile justice system is very high and steadily increasing. While incarceration costs vary between different facilities and states, all are expensive. The average amount of money it takes to incarcerate a youth for one year is \$43,000. This comes to roughly \$117 per day. High-end programs cost about \$64,000 per year (\$175 per day) and low-end programs cost about \$23,000 (\$63 per day) with much of the money spent on medical care, supervision, and operating costs (Legislative Analyst Office, 2007).

Given the expense and problems associated with the current juvenile criminal justice system many alternatives are being considered. Any reasonable policy decision, therefore, needs to consider how effective the alternative is in terms of dollars spent and the future behaviors of offenders.

## **IV. Philosophy/Framework and Goals of Youth Courts**

Youth courts offer an alternative to the traditional, overburdened juvenile justice system and they encourage and empower youth to take an active role in addressing the early stages of youth delinquency. They provide communities with an opportunity to ensure immediate consequences to first-time youth offenders and allow the offender to take responsibility, be held accountable, and make restitution for violating the law. In addition, youth courts offer youths, who are not part of the criminal justice system, a chance to participate in the decision-making process for stopping juvenile delinquency and improving the juvenile justice system (Pearson & Jurich, 2005).

Typically, youth court offenders are between 11 and 17 years of age, and are usually first-time offenders who are charged with misdemeanor or status offenses. Typical youth court offenses included: theft, vandalism, disorderly conduct, assault, and possession of marijuana. In addition, juveniles have commonly been brought to a youth court for school disciplinary issues, under-age drinking, and tobacco possession. Some programs serve repeat offenders and sometimes they hear non-violent felony cases (Pearson & Jurich, 2005).



While youth court proceedings and sentencing is typically similar to that of a regular juvenile court, youth volunteers (under adult supervision) act as clerks, bailiffs, prosecutors, defenders, jury, and sometimes judges. The waiting-period between when a youth is charged with an offense to the time the case is heard varies from two to four weeks; most hearings last less than one hour, and sentences (usually essays, apologies to victims, workshops, or community service) are normally completed between 30 and 90 days. In addition to punishment, the focus of youth court proceedings and sentencing is on accountability, education, and positive development (Pearson & Jurich, 2005).

The youth court concept has been around for about 30 years, but in the last decade it has become the most rapidly-expanding alternative to the juvenile justice system for non-violent offenses. Youth courts have grown from 78 programs in 1994 to more than 1,250 in March 2006 (National Youth Court Center, 2006). By 2002, 25 states had passed legislation for some type of youth court. Often the legislation is limited to providing appropriations, but at times it lists youth courts as dispositional options for formal courts and occasionally, youth courts are part of a more comprehensive piece of legislation (Heward, 2002).

This expansion in the number of youth courts nationwide in the last decade (1300%) has been phenomenal. According to Scott Peterson, of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the United States Department of Justice, it is the most replicated program to combat juvenile delinquency since the beginning of the Office of Juvenile Justice. The program's goal is to intervene in early antisocial, delinquent, and criminal behaviors to reduce incidents and prevent the escalation of such behaviors.<sup>1</sup>

Also according to Peterson, it is not the job of a youth court to determine guilt<sup>2</sup> and youth courts do not (or are not supposed to) deal with psychological, sexual, or violent cases. It is the job of the youth court to impose a sentence that often takes the form of some type of community service. However, since the rules that govern each court are determined by individual states, guidelines do not universally apply.

The American Youth Policy Forum estimated in 2004 that 110,000 to 125,000 youth offenders are served in youth court programs each year. On average, nine percent of juvenile arrests in a jurisdiction are being diverted from the formal juvenile justice system to youth courts. More than 80% of the youth offenders have completed their sentences successfully and, in many programs, one in five youth offenders return as a volunteer. In addition, another 100,000 youth per year participate in the program as volunteers (Pearson & Jurich, 2005).

The average costs of youth court programs are estimated as \$430 per youth served and \$480 per youth successfully completing a sentence. These low operation costs are maintained through the programs' reliance on adult and youth volunteers (Pearson & Jurich, 2005).

AYPF listed other benefits of youth courts, including:

- To the juvenile justice system—Reduced court backlogs without increasing recidivism.

<sup>1</sup> Definition of the "program's goal" adopted from the National Youth Court Center American Probation and Parole Association, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the U.S. Department of Justice.

<sup>2</sup> In 92% of courts, the offender must admit guilt before the youth court will take the case.



- To youth offenders—An outlet to confront the consequences of their actions and protection from contact with “hard core” offenders as well as avoidance of a juvenile court record that may jeopardize their future.
- To youth offenders and volunteers—Opportunities to learn about responsible citizenship and law, and to develop skills in public speaking, mediation, and pro-social leadership through hands-on experience.
- To families—A chance to re-engage in a positive dialogue with their children, and to learn with them more about the justice system.
- To communities—Recovering losses due to juvenile crime and regaining confidence and pride in local youth.
- Reduced funding and uncertainty about continuing funding were major concerns expressed by youth court coordinators regarding program sustainability (Pearson & Jurich, 2005).

Community service is one of the most popular sanctions administered by youth courts and other juvenile justice agencies. As mandated by a justice agency, community service is typically applied only to misdemeanor offenses and requires an offender to complete work hours at organizations that provide services to a community, such as local non-profits and government agencies (e.g., parks, recreational facilities, street-maintenance, social-service agencies, etc.).

Community service has some interesting possibilities for offenders as well as for the public. At the very least, mandated community service acts as simple punishment, but it also provides juvenile offenders with opportunities to “give back” to those they have harmed, creating a restorative effect on the offenders, their victims, and the community. The end result should be behavioral change.

Social scientists have long known that the best way to change behaviors, attitudes, and values is to put a person you want to change into a positive situation with those you want them to emulate. If an offender develops a “significant other” relationship with non-offenders who are doing similar work this can have a profound positive influence on everyone. If their “significant other” sees them (and what they are doing) as productive and worthwhile, the offender will see themselves as meaningful and productive. Of course, if the offender is placed in a dysfunctional or problematic situation, this could lead to significantly worse problems (Brookover & Schneider, 1975; Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934). Incarceration of first time offenders for minor offenses, therefore, should not be considered a first choice.

It is intended that community service also serves an educational function. The idea is that students who address real community needs with a service-learning project can develop critical-thinking and problem-solving skills; gain a deeper understanding of how to promote constructive change; form meaningful working relationships with people outside their peer and cohort groups; develop a deeper understanding of the causes and effects of community problems; gain a sense of their own effectiveness; and recognize the need for involvement (Constitutional Rights Foundation, Chicago).

## *Earlier Research*

The 2002 Urban Institute evaluation estimated 100,000 as the number of youth diverted yearly to youth courts. AYPF estimated that, by 2004, this number had increased to as high as 110,000 to 125,000 (about 9.2 % of juvenile arrests). Of the disposed cases, 19% were larceny-theft and 7% were vandalism, two offenses frequently diverted to youth courts.

In 2004, the AYPF reported that 327 programs were participating in the youth courts serving a total of 37,277 youth, for an average of 114 youth per program. The AYPF concluded that the backbone of youth courts is students between 13 and 18 years of age who are volunteers. A total of 34,097 youth volunteers were involved in the programs studied by in the AYPF study, for an average 99 volunteers per program. By projecting these results to the total population of youth courts, the AYPF believed it was possible that more than 100,000 youth were volunteers nationwide. These youth volunteers become involved in the program for different reasons, including a desire to serve the community, as part of a school civics lesson, to earn Scout badges, etc. In addition, former defendants also return to the programs as volunteers after successfully completing their sentences. Approximately 30% of the programs participating in the AYPF study reported that one in five program graduates returned to serve as a volunteer.

There are four general models of youth courts: adult judge, youth judge, youth tribunal, and peer jury. Frequently, youth courts adopt one of the four models or a combination of them. In the AYPF study, the adult judge was the most frequently adopted model. This was also found by an analysis of the NYCC database, where 53% of the programs reported using the adult judge model (Godwin, Heward, & Spina, 2000).

Most youth courts are held in actual courtrooms, using the environment to emphasize the seriousness of the proceedings. They are operated by a variety of agencies, including law enforcement, organizations within the justice system, other government agencies, private nonprofit organizations, and school districts. The AYPF reported an expansion of the number of youth courts operated by non-juvenile justice agencies, particularly school-based programs, as well as the growth of programs operated by a combination of agencies (Pearson & Jurich, 2005).

The AYPF study indicated that the rate of offenders who completed the peer-imposed sanction successfully within the previous year averaged about 89%. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggested that recidivism rates are quite good. While this evidence is statistically very weak, it was similar to the evidence presented by the Urban Institute in 2003, based on their case study comparison of teen courts and the traditional juvenile justice system in four states (AK, AZ, MD, and MO). The Institute reported that youth courts have significantly lower rates of recidivism than the comparison group (Butts, Buck, & Coggeshall, 2002).

The best estimates of the dollar cost of youth court programs is that the average yearly budget for youth courts is about \$49,000, which is a “per youth served” cost of approximately \$430 and a “per youth completing sanctions” cost of \$480.24. The budget for youth courts, therefore, represents a very minor portion of the juvenile justice budget (about \$1,635.00 for a youth placed on probation and between \$21,000 and \$84,000 when an offender is placed into the criminal justice system).

## V. Current Youth Courts Study

### *Methods of Study*

Youth court coordinators from more than 1,255 local youth courts, teen courts, student courts and peer courts in forty-nine (49) states and Washington, DC received a survey during September 2007<sup>3</sup>. The primary purpose of this National Youth Court Data Collection Survey is to statistically compile annual outcomes of local youth courts. The survey included ten (10) questions focused on program outcomes and six (6) operational and administrative questions.

Respondents were asked to indicate a calendar year (January – December) or fiscal year (e.g., July 1 – June 30) of program operation and to report data on the following program outcomes:

- The number of referrals to the program
- Number of acceptances into the program
- Number that proceeded into the program
- Number of youth who completed their imposed sanctions
- Number of hours that those youths served in community service or other imposed sanctions
- Number of youth who served as volunteers
- Number of former offenders who served as volunteers
- Number of hours served by all adult volunteers

In addition respondents replied to the following operational questions:

- Demographic data (name, address, phone, email, etc.)
- Type of court (youth, teen, peer, student, etc.)
- Funder of program
- Length of operation
- Number of paid staff
- Annual budget

While all youth court coordinators were asked to respond to the survey, only those who had data for one full year were asked to answer the 10 program outcomes questions (Section One). All others were asked to only answer the questions related to their program's demographics. The survey could be completed over the Internet or by mail.

Out of the potential 1250 respondents, 313 completed the questionnaire. Out of the 313 respondents, 35 were ineligible to complete section one because of the one year rule. Therefore, the results we are reporting from section one are based upon the responses received from 278 eligible coordinators, while the

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire.





results from the demographic questions (section two) are from all 313 completed questionnaires. The small return rate may appear to be a problem and, indeed, we would have been happier with more responses. However, this response rate was not unexpected nor is it without precedence. Most youth courts are very small operations with a very small staff and busy schedules. Keeping and analyzing data has not been a top priority for many coordinators and, therefore, answering the questions may have proven difficult. In addition, the earlier research on youth courts (Pearson & Jurich, 2005) had a similar response rate.<sup>4</sup>

This response rate does not stop us from learning quite a bit about the progress of youth court development across the United States and even from cautiously inferring our results to youth courts, in general (Cornfield, J, & Tukey, 1956). To help in the inference process, we checked the characteristics of our respondents against those who had not responded and by the state where they are located. We received responses from 40 of the 49 States that have youth court programs. Those states that are missing from our data all have very few courts (e.g., Alabama [5], Delaware [3], Hawaii [3], Maine [3], Montana [4], Nebraska [4], Rhode Island [1], Virginia [3], and Wyoming [3]). From most other states, we had return rates of about 25% or more with the exception of South Carolina. (We received only one survey from the 48 youth courts in South Carolina.) In addition to checking location, we checked the literature on youth courts to determine if we could find major differences between our results and the reports from others on such issues as funding, number of staff, and even the number of volunteers (Pearson & Jurich, 2005; Butts, Buck, & Coggeshall, 2002). When we infer our findings to the population of potential respondents, our numbers are consistent with Pearson & Jurich's research.

## Findings

As other research has already indicated, youth courts are called by many names. The most commonly used name is teen court (62.3%) followed by youth court (24.3%), peer court (10.7%), and student court (2.7%). Other names used to describe these courts are drug court, tobacco court, and restitution court.

The current analysis is an attempt to accurately describe the workload, rate of completion of cases, and the use of volunteers during a one-year period. We will then compare this information with the current resources and maturity level of youth courts.

## Workload

The average youth court has the following workload:

- Referrals from 116.703 cases
- Accepted 104.634 cases
- Of the accepted cases, 100.782 advanced in the program
- Of the cases that proceeded, 87.908 youth completed their sentence
- For an individual court, approximately 1734.771 hours of community service

<sup>4</sup> Researchers in the earlier study made the decision to go back to the field, select a sample of non-respondents, and study the differences between non-respondents and respondents. We made the decision that since this had already been done and since we had other methods of checking on the relationship of respondents to non-respondents, we would not pressure coordinators to provide additional information, at this time.

This means that of offenders who were referred to youth courts, the average court accepted 89.6%, of which 96.6% proceeded into the program and, of which 86.3% completed their imposed community service or other sentence. Put another way, of all the offenders who were referred to youth courts, 75.1% completed their sanctions during a one-year period.

If we extend this finding to our best estimate of the youth court population, they have experienced, at a minimum, the following:

- Referrals from 129,540 cases
- Accepted cases totaled 116,144
- Of accepted cases 111,868 proceeded in the program
- Of the cases that proceeded 97,578 youth completed their sentence
- The youth who completed their sentence served a total of 1,925,596 hours of community service
- At the current minimum wage (\$5.85 per hour), youth courts generate about \$11,264,735 in restitution through community service.

### ***Volunteers***

The average youth court used 120.57 teen and adult volunteers during the year of the reported data. The following is a breakdown of volunteers at the average youth court:

- 14.885 are adults
- 105.685 are teens
- 18.56 of teen volunteers are former offenders

Thus, the average youth court used 120.57 volunteers and totaled 360.498 volunteer hours from adults and 1700.346 hours from teens.

Extending this to our best estimate of the population – youth courts have used at least 133,832 volunteers (16,522 adults and 117,310 teens). This estimate includes at least 20,416 former teen offenders

### ***Maturity Level of Courts***

Most youth courts are reaching a fairly high level of experience. The following is the experience level of local youth courts:

- 7% have less than 2 years of experience
- 16.33% have 2 – 5 years of experience
- 35% have 6 – 10 years of experience
- 33.3 % have 11- 15 years of experience
- 4.33% have 16 – 20 years of experience
- 3.67 % have more than 20 years of experience

Therefore, 76.30% of youth courts have been in business for more than six years. This is certainly enough

time to begin to establish practices that work and to begin to make changes to practices that are not effective.

### ***Budgets for Courts***

While experience levels are growing, budget levels are not. The following are the yearly operational budget levels of youth courts:

- 30.67% are operating on less than \$10,000
- 15.67% are operating on \$10,000 - \$20,000
- 6.33% are operating on \$20,000 – \$30,000
- 6.67% are operating on \$30,000 - \$40,000
- 9.00% are operating on \$40,000 - \$50,000
- 6.33% are operating on \$50,000 - \$60,000
- 4.67% are operating on \$60,000 - \$70,000
- 3.67% are operating on \$70,000 - \$80,000
- 2.33% are operating on \$80,000 - \$90,000
- 2.22% are operating on \$90,000 - \$100,000
- 12.33% are operating on over \$100,000

This means that most youth courts have very limited funds. It also means that the number of staff must be very limited. The mean number of full-time staff per court is 1.06 and the mean number of part-time staff is 1.28.

### ***Statistical Analysis***

While the previous findings describe the workload, and the experience and resources of youth courts, they do not describe the relationship between these variables. To this end, we performed several statistical analyses. We ran a correlation matrix on all of the interval data<sup>5</sup> and found that almost all of the survey items have a highly significant positive statistical relationship. We were particularly interested in two items: (1) the number of imposed sanctions that were completed and (2) the number of youth who are recruited as volunteers. For the completed sanctions question, we expected to find a very high relationship to the number of referrals and acceptances and this was, in fact, what we found. We also found that there is a very high positive relationship between sanctions completed, total hours served, the budget of the court, and the number of full-time staff. This might be the result of more resources (especially more time staff can devote to follow up activities) that ensure sentence completion. Given our findings on financial limitations and their potential impact on staffing youth courts, it will be difficult for sanction completions to be maintained if referrals increase.

The highest correlates for total number of teen volunteers are the presence of adult volunteers and the presence of former offenders in the program. This gives the impression that some courts place their emphasis on

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix B.



teen, adult, and former offender service mandates and somewhat less on the referral, acceptance, and sanctions process. This might also be the result of budget considerations. We will leave this for future study.

We did find a significant chi square relationship ( $p=.0047$ ) between the budget categories and program longevity. To better understand how this might be operating, we looked to see if there is a relationship between funding source and years of operation. Respondents were asked about their funding source(s) and provided five alternatives. These were:

- Juvenile/criminal court system
- Local or state government
- Individual or corporate sponsors
- Education
- Other

We found (again using chi-square analysis) that funding from the Juvenile/Criminal Court System, Education, and “Other” sources did not have a significant relationship with years of operation, but that funding by both local/state government ( $p=.0001$ ) and individual/corporate sources ( $p=.0010$ ) are significantly related to years of operation. Both these funding sources tend to fund projects that are more mature and both give much of their funding (39.69% and 46.38%) to programs that have been in existence between 11 - 15 years.

Most youth courts have funding from a single source, but many others have two, three, four, and even five sources of funding. Of the 300 programs from which we have data, 177 (59%) are funded by a single source. Of those 72 (40.68%) are funded at below \$10,000 per year and 126 (76.2%) are funded at below \$50,000. Of the 122 programs that have multiple funding 53 (43%) are funded at above \$50,000 and 30 (26%) receive over \$80,000 per year. This means that program coordinators must often spend much of their time seeking funding, which leaves less time for volunteer recruitment or the referral, acceptance, sanctions process. This may particularly be the case for the 21 (7%) cases who receive less than \$20,000 total from four or five different sources.

Where one gets their funds also makes a difference when it comes to certain operational outcomes. Perhaps the most striking of these outcomes is the ability to attract youth volunteers. In the programs that were not funded by an education agency, the average number of teen volunteers was 88, but in the 32 (7%) that are funded by an education agency, they had an average of 219.

## ***What we know from this study***

Prior research on youth courts has found its potential to help solve major issues related to juvenile justice to be great while its cost have proven to be very modest. The current study agrees with this conclusion. The following are major findings with commentary:

- Youth courts are having a major impact on the juvenile justice system. (Referrals from 116,703 cases)
- Youth courts can no longer be considered to be immature agencies. (76.30% of youth courts have

been in business for more than 6 years)

- Youth courts may have great variability in what they are called and, to some extent in their behaviors, but there are more similarities than differences when it comes to processing cases, bringing them through the system, imposing sanctions, and following the sanctions through to their completion ( $p < .0001$ ).
- Most youth courts exist on very small budgets (68.3% below \$50,000).
- Youth courts have a great deal of trouble being financially viable with only one source of funding.
- Who funds the youth court seems to have a great deal of influence on the priorities of the court. (In the programs that were not funded by an education agency, the average number of teen volunteers was 88, but in the 32 (7%) that are funded by an education agency, they had an average of 219).
- Youth courts have very small numbers of employees. (1.06 full time and 1.28 part time)
- Youth courts have been very successful at the recruitment of teen and adult volunteers. (Youth courts have used, at least, 133,832 volunteers (16,522 adults and 117,310 teens)
- Approximately 97,600 youth completed their service within one year of their sentence.
- Youth who completed their sentence served a total of 1,734,771 hours of community service.
- At the current minimum wage (\$5.85 per hour) youth courts generate about \$11,264,735 in restitution through community service.

## VI. Issues of this Study

The current research has the following issues:

- The response to the questionnaire is very low; eliminating all first year programs further decreased the response rate. Future research might consider accepting data from newer courts. They can always be eliminated after the fact, but having the data could tell us a lot about growth and maturation patterns.
- We would have been much better off using a sample rather than attempting to get the population. A sample would have given us a much better representation of reality for use with inferential statistics. On the other hand, someone should be regularly gathering and analyzing the demographic and organizational data (from all courts) as a matter of public responsibility.
- It is not clear if the questions that were asked are those that coordinators need to build their individual youth courts. All of the current questions clustered around three major themes: 1) flow of activity, 2) volunteers, and 3) demographics of the organization. No questions were asked about recidivism, race, staff turnover, or use of the youth court guidelines.

- The questions asking about the volunteers did not get to the issue of volunteer turnover and recruitment. We know that some courts are doing something, but we do not know why and what they are doing about their continual need to recruit volunteers, the training of these volunteers, and the characteristics of those who are successful.





## VII. Issues of Youth Courts

### A. Recidivism

The question of recidivism remains unanswered. The current report was not mandated to study recidivism and it does not attempt to look at how many youth court offenders become habitual juvenile or adult criminals. This question is not easy to answer. First, youth courts do not have the resources to follow-up on individual cases with the regularity it would take to answer the question. Second, even if the resources were available, most youth courts have not been around long enough to know what took place in the lives of offenders for a prolonged period of time after their sentences are finished. Third, since youth courts tend to deal with first time offenders, and with relatively minor crimes, we may be comparing “apples with oranges” in comparing recidivism rates with the normal juvenile justice system. In addition, those studies that have been performed tend to be more anecdotal than scientific.

A review of the recidivism literature by the Juvenile Justice Bulletin in October 2000 (Butts & Buck, 2002) found that only three published studies used reasonably appropriate comparison groups to measure the possible effects of youth courts on recidivism, and they had mixed results. One of these studies (Hissong, 1991) suggested that teen court participants were significantly less likely to reoffend than the comparison group (24 percent versus 36 percent); a second study (Seyfrit, Reichel, & and Stutts, 1987) found that the comparison group did better after seven months (20 percent of youth court participants had reoffended, compared with just 9 percent of the comparison group); and the third study (Seyfrit, Reichel, & and Stutts, 1987) found that, while recidivism rates were very close, the nod went to the youth court offenders (12 percent of the comparison group recidivated and 10 percent of the youth court defendants). The last two studies were not statistically significant.

What is most interesting in the research on youth courts and recidivism is the large variation found between youth courts. Research has reported that some youth courts have very low rates of re-offending, from 3 to 8 percent within 6 to 12 months of their appearance (Butler-Mejia, 1998); McNeece, Falconer, Bryant, & Shade, 1996), however, other studies found recidivism rates in excess of 20 or 30 percent (Hissong, 1991; Minor, Wells, Soderstrom, Bingham, & D., 1999). Since most youth courts do behave very independently, future research should take a close look at what is going on in different courts that may predict different outcomes. From this research, policymakers can create and alter programs to achieve best practices that are results-based.

### B. Cost

While the current report did look at cost, it did not look at the best ways to spend money or how much money is really needed to do the job. Perhaps it is good enough to say that cost and cost/benefit are difficult to calculate and impossible without reasonably good recidivism data; that all indications are that youth courts (because of volunteers and extremely small numbers of staff) have been quite inexpensive; and while recidivism may be no better than other parts of the juvenile justice system, it is (probably) no worst. Doing at least a comparable job with much less money should make youth court a very strong contender for program of the year. It is important to note, however, that we do not know what youth courts will cost in the future. This is

particularly the case if programs grow beyond the ability of employing only one or two paid staff or if staff decides to leave for better pay and conditions.

### **C. Race**

The current report did not study the relationship between youth courts and the race of offenders. Research has discovered that racial disparity in juvenile offenses is declining. In the late 1980s, the black juvenile violent crime arrest rate was six times the white rate, but by 2003, it had fallen to four times the white rate. During the same period, the black juvenile arrest rate for drug abuse violations fell from five times to less than double the white rate. While this is good news that the gap is closing, it has not yet closed and it continues to be a major cause of concern. The OJJDP looked at this question in 2006 and concluded that, for young people under 18, blacks and males have consistently higher arrest rates than whites and females for both violent crimes and property crimes (Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report).

In 2001, a panel of the National Academy of Science studied this issue and found the following:

- Black juveniles are disproportionately arrested in comparison to their proportion of the population.
- There are major disparities in the extent of involvement of minority youth, particularly black youth, compared with white youth in the juvenile justice system.
- There are questions about fundamental fairness and equality of treatment of these youth by the police, courts, and other personnel connected with the juvenile justice system, which may have substantial consequences for subsequent development and prospects for the future.
- The disproportional confinement of minorities has been recognized as a problem by the federal government, which required states to assess the level of confinement of minority juveniles and to implement strategies to reduce disproportionate minority representation where it was found to exist.
- The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention created the Disproportionate Minority Confinement initiative and funded pilot projects that focus on all aspects of the juvenile justice system rather than only on confinement (Devine et al., 1998).
- Some researchers and commentators focused on racially disproportionate offending behavior patterns as the primary cause of racial disparity, whereas others have highlighted the persistence of biases in the juvenile justice system. The problem with the “behavior versus justice system” debate is that it creates a false dichotomy and the suggestion that these can be viewed as alternatives rather than as a complex processes that feed into one another (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2001).

All of the research agrees that the disproportionate numbers of black males in the juvenile justice system is a problem. There is little agreement on how and why they got into the system and how to fix this complicated issue. For the purposes of the current analysis we do not know if youth courts can be an important tool in overcoming this issue. No one has undertaken a systematic peer-reviewed analysis of the relationship between race and youth courts, so we do not know if youth courts can be used as an early intervention strategy to overcome the legal spiral that so many black male youth encounter. Currently, we do not have adequate evidence to answer the following questions:

- Is the percentage of black male youth who are in youth courts disproportionately high, disproportionately low, or at the same level as the more traditional juvenile justice system?
- Is youth court an effective tool in confronting the issues related to black male offenders?
- Is youth court an effective tool in involving black youth, and especially black male youth, who are not offenders in shaping their future behaviors?

Any future research and programmatic activity related to youth court should give serious consideration to answering these questions.

## **D. Guidelines**

This study did not look at the issue of guidelines. In 2000, the OJJDP, along with the U.S. Department of Transportation: National Highway Traffic Administration and the U.S. Department of Education: Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, published the National Youth Court Guidelines. Guidelines were developed for nine program areas:

- Program planning and community mobilization
- Program staffing and funding
- Legal issues
- Identified respondent population and referral process
- Program services and sentencing options
- Volunteer recruitment and management
- Volunteer training
- Youth court operations and case management
- Program evaluation

The purpose of these guidelines is to help create, evaluate, and set a standard of youth court programs and practices. The guidelines were developed by, field-based persons, with the intention that they be useful and meaningful while not prescriptive. The published guidelines in the nine areas seem complete and useful, but currently there has not been any reported research on the use and success of the guidelines.

## **E. Quality Effective Organizations**

This study did not look at the organizational effectiveness of youth courts. There is a great deal of literature on the building of quality organizations. Some of this literature is reflected in the guidelines published by OJJDP, but mostly it has been ignored by youth courts. As the number and size of youth courts grow, it will be more important than ever that the most effective organizational practices be understood, practiced, and evaluated.

## **F. Staying Power for Staff**

This study did not look at the ability of youth courts to retain and replace staff. As the size and number of youth courts increase and their work load grows, it will be more difficult to keep, replace, or train staff. Research should take a close look at all of these activities.

## ***G. Volunteerism***

The current project did look at volunteer activity in youth courts, but it did not look at who volunteers, why they volunteer, and what would make them choose youth courts when they have literally thousands of alternatives. As the numbers of courts grow, they will have more difficulty finding a sufficient number of replacements for those who move on to other activities. If youth courts are going to maintain a steady stream of high quality volunteers they must enter into arrangements with institutions that can supply them. The institution that has the most potential would seem to be education. We learned in this study that when an educational agency funds a youth court, the average number of teen volunteers goes from 88 to 219. Clearly, there is a lot of potential in strengthening the relationship with schools, but there has not been sufficient research to say how this relationship should be structured to increase the productivity of the relationship for all parties.

## ***H. Relationship to School Safety***

Youth courts appear to be an important way to address school safety. Research by Denise Gottfredson (Gottfredson, 2001) for example, suggests that strategies and programs that focus on developing and maintaining social/interpersonal skills are more effective in changing student behaviors. Such programs are also effective in preventing students from engaging in more serious kinds of disruptive behaviors. Therefore, youth courts should be perused as one of many school safety strategies.





## VIII. Potential Value of Youth Courts

### ***Cost***

While a cost benefit analysis is difficult to accomplish, it is easy to conclude that the cost of the juvenile justice system is very high and steadily increasing. While incarceration costs vary between different facilities and states, all are experiencing high costs. The average amount of money it takes to incarcerate a youth for one year is estimated to be \$43,000. This comes to roughly \$117 per day. High-end programs cost about \$64,000 per year (\$175 per day) and low-end programs cost about \$23,000 (\$63 per day) with much of the money spent on medical care, supervision, and operating costs. Even when an offender is placed on probation, the average cost, within the traditional court system, is about \$1,635.00. The best estimates of the dollar cost of youth court programs is that the average yearly budget for youth courts is about \$49,000, which is a “per youth served” cost of approximately \$430 and a “per youth completing sanctions” cost of \$480.24. This means that the average youth court carries out its mission at about a quarter of the cost of a traditional juvenile court. The cost of operation for an entire youth court for an entire year might equal one traditional juvenile court case. The value of this savings, of course, depends upon what future research tells us about recidivism rates of youth court offenders. If future research finds that recidivism rates for youth courts are better or the same as those in the traditional juvenile justice system (when dealing with first time, non-violent offenders) the cost difference should be obvious to policymakers. If we find that recidivism rates are higher, we will, of course, have to rethink the youth court experience.

### ***Value Added to Juvenile Justice System***

At the very least, youth courts accepted 116,144 cases in the last year. If these cases had gone to the traditional juvenile justice system, the cost of their trial and punishment would have clogged courts’ dockets and carried a very expensive price tag. This is a well-known phenomenon and it is one likely reason that the traditional court system attempts to send about 130,000 cases to youth court each year. This represents nine percent of juvenile arrests in a jurisdiction being diverted from the formal juvenile justice system to youth courts. In addition, the youth court reliance on community service, rather than incarceration, does provide a financial benefit to a locality, rather than the large cost of housing, feeding, and caring for incarcerated offenders.

### ***Value to Individual Offender***

Social scientists have long known that the best way to change behaviors, attitudes, and values is to put a person you want to change into a positive situation with those you want them to emulate. If an offender develops a “significant other” relationship with non-offenders, who are doing similar work, this can have a profound positive influence on everyone. If their “significant other” sees them (and what they are doing) as productive and worthwhile, the offender will see themselves as meaningful and productive. Of course, if the offender is placed in a dysfunctional or problematic situation, this could lead to significantly worst problems. This is the reason that incarceration of first-time offenders, for minor offenses, with “hard time” offenders should not be considered as a first choice.

### ***Value to Individual Non-Offender***

Youth courts provide volunteers with opportunities to have “hands-on” experience in the legal system as well as to participate in a personal growth event. Schools use youth court experiences as a way to teach

civics and citizenship skills. Families of offenders are provided with the opportunity to re-engage in a positive dialogue with their children, and to learn more about the justice system with their children. In addition, the community-at-large is able to receive some restitution for losses as a result of juvenile crime. ■







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# APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE



**National Survey of Youth, Teen, Peer, and Student Courts  
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention  
The Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence**

August 20, 2007

Dear Program Director/Coordinator:

This survey is being mailed to more than 1,250 youth court programs. Please complete this questionnaire and return it in the pre-addressed envelope by September 25, 2007. Alternatively, you may fax the questionnaire (202-496-6244) or complete the survey on-line by simply typing the following into your browser's address bar: [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=ijuijUL4ioty56Hhup1lw\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=ijuijUL4ioty56Hhup1lw_3d_3d)

**Introduction**

Before getting started, please determine the time period you will use to report data for this survey, based on the operation of your program. You need to indicate whether your program operates on a calendar year (January – December) or fiscal year (e.g., July 1 – June 30). *To complete Part I of the survey, you must have data for at least one full year that has transpired by September 21, 2007.* Accordingly, please indicate the calendar or fiscal year for which you will report data below in Part I of this survey. (Please use this date format: m/d/yyyy). Otherwise, please check “Ineligible,” skip Part I, but complete Part II. Then return the questionnaire.

Beginning date:  Ending date:

Ineligible for Part I (Complete Part II, and return the questionnaire.)

**Part I. Program Outcomes**

*Enter numbers here*

a.	During this one-year period, how many referrals were made to your program?	↓
b.	Of those referrals, how many did you accept?	
c.	Of those you accepted, how many proceeded in your program?	
d.	Of those cases that proceeded in your program, how many youth completed their sentence or imposed sanction(s)?	

e.	What was the total number of hours that those youth served, in community service or otherwise, to complete their sentence or imposed sanction(s)?	
f.	How many youth, including former offenders, served in your program as volunteers?	
g.	Of those youth volunteers, how many were former offenders?	
h.	What was the total number of hours served by all youth volunteers (# in item f.) in your program during this one-year period?	
i.	How many adults served in your program as volunteers during this one-year period?	
j.	What was the total number of hours served by all adult volunteers in your program during this one-year period?	

**Part II. Program Description**

a. Please complete the following items based on the most current data you have available.

*(PLEASE PRINT AS LEGIBLY AS POSSIBLE.)*

Coor./Director:		
Program Name:		
Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Phone:	Fax:	
Email:		

b. Which do you use primarily to describe your program? (Select one.)

- Youth Court   
 Teen Court   
 Peer Court   
 Student Court  
 Other (specify):

c. Who funds your program? (Select all that apply.)

- Juvenile/ criminal justice system   
 Individual or corporate sponsors  
 Local or state government   
 Education  
 Other (specify):

d. How long has your program operated?

- Less than 2 years   
 11 to 15 years  
 2 to 5 years   
 16 to 20 years  
 6 to 10 years   
 More than 20 years

e. How many paid staff does your program employ?

Full-time   
 Part-time

f. How large is your annual program budget?

- Less than \$10,000
- \$60,001 - \$70,000
- \$10,001 - \$20,000
- \$70,001 - \$80,000
- \$20,001 - \$30,000
- \$80,001 - \$90,000
- \$30,001 - \$40,000
- \$90,001 - \$100,000
- \$40,001 - \$50,000
- More than \$100,000
- \$50,001 - \$60,000

Please return this questionnaire by **September 25, 2007**, by fax (202-496-6244) or in the pre-addressed envelope. Thank you for your cooperation!

## APPENDIX B: Correlation Matrix

Correlations part A by duration, budget, part time and full time staff

### The CORR Procedure

14 variables: referral accepts proceeds sanctn sanchrs youthvol frmroff ythvhrs  
adultvol adulthrs duration budget fulltim prttime

### Simple Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Sum	Minimum	Maximum
referral	273	116.70330	168.93506	31860	0	1407
accepts	274	104.63504	155.18387	28670	0	1251
proceeds	275	100.78182	151.18417	27715	0	1251
sanctn	272	87.90919	131.70556	23911	0	1047
sanchrs	266	1735	3019	461433	0	29645
youthvol	267	105.68539	189.83675	28218	0	1618
frmroff	263	18.15589	45.05326	4775	0	370.00000
ythvhrs	260	1700	4372	442090	0	62000
adultvol	270	14.88519	31.23692	4019	0	259.00000
adulthrs	260	360.49712	747.57620	93729	0	6500
duration	310	2.23871	1.12105	694.00000	0	6.00000
budget	301	4.31561	3.49238	1299	1.00000	11.00000
fulltim	242	1.06198	1.13794	257.00000	0	8.00000
prttime	254	1.27756	1.47935	324.50000	0	11.00000

### Pearson Correlation Coefficients

Prob > |r| under H0: Rho=0

Number of observations

	referral	accepts	proceeds	sanctn	sanchrs	youthvol	frmroff
referral	1.00000	0.97197	0.94404	0.96297	0.66663	0.30509	0.26112
		<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001
	273	273	273	269	263	264	260
accepts	0.97197	1.00000	0.96096	0.97353	0.66865	0.30768	0.25905
	<.0001		<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001
	273	274	274	270	264	265	261
proceeds	0.94404	0.96096	1.00000	0.97419	0.66796	0.28078	0.24588
	<.0001	<.0001		<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001
	273	274	275	271	265	266	262
sanctn	0.96297	0.97353	0.97419	1.00000	0.70116	0.28839	0.25480
	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001		<.0001	<.0001	<.0001
	269	270	271	272	265	265	262
sanchrs	0.66663	0.66865	0.66796	0.70116	1.00000	0.18101	0.23999
	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001		0.0033	<.0001
	263	264	265	265	266	261	258

Table 1 of 4



Correlations part A by duration, budget, part time and full time staff

The CORR Procedure

Pearson Correlation Coefficients  
 Prob > |r| under H0: Rho=0  
 Number of observations

youthvol	referral	accepts	proceeds	sanctn	sanchrs	youthvol	frmroff
	0.30509	0.30768	0.28078	0.28839	0.18101	1.00000	0.50749
	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	0.0033		<.0001
	264	265	266	265	261	267	262
frmroff	0.26112	0.25905	0.24588	0.25480	0.23999	0.50749	1.00000
	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	
	260	261	262	262	258	262	263
ythvhrs	0.25144	0.24825	0.22990	0.30854	0.39321	0.22365	0.44995
	<.0001	<.0001	0.0002	<.0001	<.0001	0.0003	<.0001
	257	258	259	258	255	258	254
adultvol	0.37346	0.34300	0.31578	0.32504	0.18037	0.58846	0.23956
	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	0.0033	<.0001	<.0001
	267	268	269	268	263	266	262
adulthrs	0.39924	0.39007	0.33399	0.34605	0.30383	0.25824	0.33664
	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001
	257	258	259	258	254	257	254
duration	0.23123	0.23788	0.24176	0.26738	0.32791	0.19700	0.10194
	0.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	0.0013	0.1003
	271	272	273	270	264	265	261
budget	0.46157	0.44076	0.39960	0.42394	0.41844	0.34008	0.24456
	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001
	262	263	264	261	255	258	254
fulltim	0.40025	0.40027	0.35196	0.39236	0.20661	0.20121	0.27112
	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	0.0032	0.0040	0.0001
	206	207	208	207	202	203	199
prttime	0.13025	0.13682	0.14861	0.14875	0.24785	0.21657	0.16182
	0.0526	0.0417	0.0268	0.0274	0.0002	0.0014	0.0181
	222	222	222	220	215	215	213

Table 2 of 4

## Correlations part A by duration, budget, part time and full time staff

The CORR Procedure  
 Pearson Correlation Coefficients  
 Prob > |r| under H0: Rho=0  
 Number of observations

referral	ythvhrs 0.25144 <.0001 257	adultvol 0.37346 <.0001 267	adulthrs 0.39924 <.0001 257	duration 0.23123 0.0001 271	budget 0.46157 <.0001 262	fulltim 0.40025 <.0001 206	prttime 0.13025 0.0526 222
accepts	0.24825 <.0001 258	0.34300 <.0001 268	0.39007 <.0001 258	0.23788 <.0001 272	0.44076 <.0001 263	0.40027 <.0001 207	0.13682 0.0417 222
proceeds	0.22990 0.0002 259	0.31578 <.0001 269	0.33399 <.0001 259	0.24176 <.0001 273	0.39960 <.0001 264	0.35196 <.0001 208	0.14861 0.0268 222
sanctn	0.30854 <.0001 258	0.32504 <.0001 268	0.34605 <.0001 258	0.26738 <.0001 270	0.42394 <.0001 261	0.39236 <.0001 207	0.14875 0.0274 220
sanchrs	0.39321 <.0001 255	0.18037 0.0033 263	0.30383 <.0001 254	0.32791 <.0001 264	0.41844 <.0001 255	0.20661 0.0032 202	0.24785 0.0002 215
youthvol	0.22365 0.0003 258	0.58846 <.0001 266	0.25824 <.0001 257	0.19700 0.0013 265	0.34008 <.0001 258	0.20121 0.0040 203	0.21657 0.0014 215
frmroff	0.44995 <.0001 254	0.23956 <.0001 262	0.33664 <.0001 254	0.10194 0.1003 261	0.24456 <.0001 254	0.27112 0.0001 199	0.16182 0.0181 213
ythvhrs	1.00000 260	0.21243 0.0006 260	0.63376 <.0001 254	0.08932 0.1525 258	0.25064 <.0001 251	0.20279 0.0043 197	0.01662 0.8108 210
adultvol	0.21243 0.0006 260	1.00000 270	0.40971 <.0001 260	0.08976 0.1428 268	0.41355 <.0001 260	0.26491 0.0001 204	0.07263 0.2868 217
adulthrs	0.63376 <.0001 254	0.40971 <.0001 260	1.00000 260	0.05448 0.3825 259	0.35420 <.0001 252	0.31527 <.0001 195	0.09492 0.1665 214
duration	0.08932 0.1525 258	0.08976 0.1428 268	0.05448 0.3825 259	1.00000 310	0.22036 0.0001 301	0.26425 <.0001 242	0.18129 0.0037 254

Table 3 of 4

Correlatiions part A by duration, budget, part time and full time staff

The CORR Procedure

Pearson Correlation Coefficients  
 Prob > |r| under H0: Rho=0  
 Number of observations

	ythvhrs	adultvol	adulthrs	duration	budget	fulltim	prtime
budget	0.25064 <.0001 251	0.41355 <.0001 260	0.35420 <.0001 252	0.22036 0.0001 301	1.00000 301	0.60442 <.0001 233	0.31977 <.0001 248
fulltim	0.20279 0.0043 197	0.26491 0.0001 204	0.31527 <.0001 195	0.26425 <.0001 242	0.60442 <.0001 233	1.00000 242	0.06999 0.3297 196
prtime	0.01662 0.8108 210	0.07263 0.2868 217	0.09492 0.1665 214	0.18129 0.0037 254	0.31977 <.0001 248	0.06999 0.3297 196	1.00000 254

Table 4 of 4

## **APPENDIX C: Methodological Note**

There are approximately 1250 youth courts currently in operation in the United States. For the current analysis, we had 313 respondents. Since 35 had less than one year's data, they were ineligible to answer the operational question. Our findings on the operational conditions of youth courts, therefore, reflect only responses from the 278 eligible coordinators. While we have no reason to believe that those who did not respond are significantly different from those who responded, it is up to the reader to decide<sup>6</sup> if the following information fits the reality that exists (Cornfield, J, & Tukey, 1956).

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<sup>6</sup> Cornfield-Tukey argument for inference

## About the Author

Jeffrey Schneider is currently working with the Hamilton Fish Institute on their Youth Court Study. He has spent nearly four decades studying and creating effective organizations. He has been a Senior Policy Analyst at the National Education Association (NEA), a Scientific Officer at the Office of Naval Research, a Team Leader at the National Institute of Education, and an Assistant Professor at both Brown University and Michigan State University. He has been responsible for issues of safe schools, organizational productivity, understanding personnel turnover, explaining career development, and effective management practices in heterogeneous organizations (i.e., schools and the military). This included research on the impact of internal and external social change, on the organizational environment of both the Navy and Marine Corps, and for ONR sponsored research concerned with Navy and civilian families.

In addition, Jeff was a member of the Research team that created the concept of Effective Schools and he did the original Effective Schools research. He was also the Principal Investigator of a national research project studying the conditions of teaching and learning and how school organizational patterns impact the quality of educational outcomes. From this he developed and coordinated an NEA sponsored school site-based decision making project (“Keys to Effectiveness for Your Schools”) which is currently being used in several thousand schools within the United States and Europe.

Jeff holds a Ph.D. from Michigan State University. He has been married to his wife, Susan, for 43 years. They have two children and four grandchildren.



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