Measuring and Using Juvenile Recidivism Data to Inform Policy, Practice, and Resource Allocation

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National Governor’s Association Juvenile Justice Learning Lab
National nonprofit, nonpartisan membership association of state government officials

 Represents all three branches of state government

 Provides practical advice informed by the best available evidence
Dramatic Progress But More Work Needed

National Arrests Per 100,000 Juveniles Ages 10-17 (1980-2011)

Impact On Recidivism and Other Youth Outcomes

Declines in State Commitment Rates (1997-2011)

*Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

*Juvenile Arrest Rates for All Crimes, 1980-2011, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Policymakers want to know the outcomes for youth in contact with the juvenile justice system.

- When youth are under local or state supervision, what are their rearrest, reconviction, and reincarceration rates?
- How do youth under system supervision fare in terms of academic, employment, and other important outcomes?
- Do youth transition successfully off of system supervision to a crime-free and productive adulthood?
- What if any supervision and service programs and practices are making a positive difference?
Survey of State Juvenile Correctional Agencies

**Purpose:** To assess the status of data collection on outcomes for youth in the juvenile justice system, recognizing that in order to improve recidivism rates and other key youth outcomes, jurisdictions must first be able to measure these outcomes.

**Who was Surveyed:** State Juvenile Correctional Administrators

**Methodology:** CJCA administered the survey online to its members from August to September of 2013.

**Focus of Survey Questions:** The collection, analysis, reporting and use of recidivism and other performance measures for youth in the juvenile justice system.

**Response:** All 50 states and the District of Columbia responded to the survey.

Survey conducted in partnership with:

[PEW Charitable Trusts Logo]
[The Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA) Logo]
Most states track recidivism for youth in their custody, but one in five don’t. Of the 39 states that do, a number of them measure recidivism narrowly.

- **How many states track recidivism rates?**
  - Yes: 39
  - No: 11

- **Of the 39 states, what system events define recidivism?**
  - Multiple system events: 21
  - Single system event: 18

- **Of the 39 states, how many capture key recidivism events?**
  - Into adult criminal justice system: 31
  - Technical violations of parole: 29
  - Re-arrests: 24
Recommendations

- Track the distinct ways in which youth can have subsequent contact with the justice system:
  - Rearrest
  - Readjudication/reconviction
  - Recommitment/reincarceration
  - Technical violations/revocations
  - New offenses processed by the adult criminal justice system
  - New offenses that occur after a youth is no longer under system supervision

- Identify and track other priority youth outcomes such as education, behavioral health, and employment.

In Pennsylvania, the Juvenile Court Judges’ Commission collaborated with the Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers and researchers at Temple University to develop a shared set of juvenile justice outcome measures and establish a common recidivism benchmark across Pennsylvania’s 67 counties.
Most states conduct some analysis of their recidivism data but are limited in their ability to answer key questions about the effectiveness of their systems.

How many states track recidivism rates?

- Yes
- No

Of the 39 states, how many track recidivism according to risk?

- Yes: 21
- No: 11

Of the 39 states, how many analyze recidivism in other key ways?

- By offense: 23
- By locale: 23
- By risk: 20
- By needs: 13
- By length of stay: 12
- By program: 11
Recommendations

- Require recidivism data to account for youth’s assessed risk levels
  - Recidivism rates can and should differ substantially depending upon the risk level of the population of youth served.
  - Requires assessing the risk levels of all youth under supervision effectively using a validated assessment tool, and for this information must be maintained in an electronic record system.

- Analyze recidivism and other youth outcome data according to other key youth characteristics and variables
  - Youth demographic groups
  - Placement type, facility, service provider, and length of stay
  - Youth’s service needs and programs

The Utah Division of Juvenile Justice Services partnered with researchers at the University of Utah to evaluate the quality of service providers and to analyze whether providers produce better or worse recidivism rates than expected based on the risk level of the youth they serve.
Key Findings

States' Ratings of Their Capacity to Collect and Report Juvenile Justice Recidivism Data and Other Key Performance Measures

- Very Strong: 16%
- Strong: 30%
- Average: 28%
- Below Average: 14%
- Weak: 12%

Recommendations

- Develop and maintain the infrastructure necessary to collect, analyze, and report recidivism data.
  - Establish a system-wide electronic case management system.
  - Develop interagency information-sharing agreements.
  - Establish policies and procedures to guide data entry and use.

The Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) developed the Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS) and provides funding and technical support for its continued use by 36 county juvenile justice agencies. The JJIS tracks youth from referral to a juvenile court through secure confinement and reentry and is used by OYA to report on youth outcomes to the state legislature.
The majority of states share recidivism data with at least some key constituents, but significant gaps exist in many states’ reporting practices.

How many states track recidivism rates?

- Yes
- No

Of the 39 states, how many report recidivism to key constituents?

- 29 Public
- 25 The judiciary
- 22 Other state youth-service agencies
- 16 State Advisory Groups
Recommendations

- Require regular reporting of recidivism and other youth outcome data
  - At least annual reports that share recidivism and other outcome trends for youth under system supervision.
  - Formally report these data to all branches of government, court personnel, State Advisory Groups, service providers, other key system stakeholders, and the public.

- Establish methods for sharing data effectively
  - Develop a user-friendly way to report youth outcomes that helps decision makers to focus on and understand a limited, priority set of key indicators of system effectiveness, and use data to guide policy and practice.

The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice publishes all of its juvenile justice data—from prevention through reentry—on a public website that allows users to conduct guided analysis of the data to answer their own key questions. They also share user-friendly reports on priority outcome measures with all branches of government.
Most states use recidivism and other performance measures to some degree to inform policy and resource-allocation decisions, but the majority are not harnessing the full potential of this information.

All States' Use of Juvenile Recidivism Data and Other Performance Measures to Guide Policy, Practice, and Resource-Allocation

- **Primary**: 26%
- **Some**: 58%
- **Very Little**: 10%
- **Not at all**: 6%

39 States that Collect Recidivism Data Use it for Specific Purposes

- **System Monitoring**: 83%
- **Evaluate Progress**: 78%
- **State Oversight**: 58%
- **Facility Evaluation**: 56%
- **Program Evaluation**: 49%
- **Reform Evaluation**: 48%
- **Population Comparison**: 40%
- **Jurisdiction Comparison**: 34%
- **Cost-Benefit Analysis**: 28%
Use recidivism and other youth outcome data to inform juvenile justice policy, practice, and resource allocation

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<th>Recommendations</th>
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<td>Establish formal processes for reviewing recidivism data.</td>
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<td>- Legislative processes to evaluate whether performance is improving overall, and impact of specific reform initiatives.</td>
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<td>- Create a performance-based culture where all staff knows the current outcomes for the youth under their supervision</td>
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<td>Set improvement targets</td>
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<td>- Identify baseline recidivism rates and other youth outcomes and set annual targets for improvement that are ambitious but achievable.</td>
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<td>Use youth outcome data to promote accountability and the efficient use of resources</td>
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<td>- Tie overall agency funding as well as for specific programs and reforms to demonstrated recidivism reductions.</td>
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<td>- Hold agency staff accountable for results and use data to guide staff and agency policy/practice improvements.</td>
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The Washington State Institute for Public Policy evaluated and showed the positive impact of evidence-based programs on recidivism and cost savings. As a result, the state legislature invested $48 million to expand evidence-based programs, which was estimated to save approximately $250 million that the state would otherwise have spent on prison construction and operation.
Key Recommendations

Measure recidivism and other outcomes for all youth involved with the juvenile justice system, considering the multiple ways they may have subsequent contact with the justice system.

Analyze recidivism data to account for youth’s risk levels, as well as other key youth characteristics and variables.

Develop and maintain the infrastructure necessary to collect, analyze, and report recidivism and other youth outcome data.

Make recidivism and other youth outcome data available to key constituents and the general public.

Use recidivism and other youth outcome data to inform juvenile justice policy, practice, and resource allocation.
The core principles offer juvenile justice systems a road map for what to do, and how to do, it to improve outcomes for youth. The issue brief offers guidance on how to evaluate the impact of these efforts.

Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System

MacArthur Foundation
BJA
OJJDP
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Additional Resources:


Juvenile Reentry and Resources: http://csgjusticecenter.org/youth/juvenile-reentry/


For more information, contact Josh Weber (jweber@csg.org)

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