



Research and Evaluation Services

Multnomah County Department of Community Justice
501 SE Hawthorne Blvd., Suite 250
Portland, OR 97214
<http://www.co.multnomah.or.us/dcj/evaluation.shtml>

Juvenile Case Processing Study: 2002 and 2004

August 25, 2006

Kim Pascual
Research & Evaluation Analyst 2
Charlene Rhyne, PhD
Supervisor, Research & Evaluation Unit

Juvenile Case Processing Timeline Study

Executive Summary

Reducing the length of time it takes to process a juvenile criminal referral can be an indicator of successful juvenile counseling processes. Research studies indicate that the quicker the resolution in a juvenile criminal case, the better a youth can understand and associate their delinquent behavior with the consequences. Additionally, a delay in the processing of a case can delay a youth's access to appropriate treatment services.

Professional standards suggest that the length of time for formal cases to reach disposition in large jurisdictions should be a maximum of 90 days. Two studies conducted in 1999 began the process of determining the length of time occurring between key points in Multnomah County's processing of juvenile cases. Findings from these studies pointed to areas of improvement that could be made to help reduce the time between the adjudication process and a youth's first meeting with a Juvenile Court Counselor.

Within the timeline for processing a criminal referral case, there are areas which DCJ has more control over than others. Other decision points in the process are more under the control of the District Attorney's office and the courts. However, coordination and collaboration between all partners in the juvenile justice system is an on-going process and serves to help improve the overall process.

Using data from 2002 and 2004, this study compares youth who were held in custody on a new law violation prior to a hearing and those youth with a new law violation that were not in custody. For youth who in custody prior to the hearing, the average number of days between the referral date and the petition file day was under two days for both the 2002 and the 2004 samples. This length of time falls within department policy which aims to ensure that youth are not held in detention any longer than necessary. Overall, the length of time from the date of referral to adjudication was about 50 days. It appears though that there was an increase in the length of time between referral and the date of first contact with a Juvenile Court Counselor (JCC). This was also true for the non-custody youth, where on average it was just over 5 months between the date of referral and the date of first contact with a JCC.

Areas where the department would like to see improvement would include the length of time from referral to petition filing date as well as the length of time between the petition filing and the first adjudication date. It would be beneficial for all juvenile justice partners to collaborate around solutions for reducing the length of time between these key decision points. The department would also like for the length of time between the final disposition date and the date of first contact with a JCC to be five days or less. Ideally, a JCC should have contact with a youth or their family within a day of the disposition date. It would be useful for Juvenile management to work with JCCs on a plan for meeting this goal.

Purpose of Study

The Department of Community Justice (DCJ) has a commitment to a continuous quality improvement (CQI) process that will determine the average length of time it takes a youth to be processed between the various decision points in the juvenile justice system.

This study is intended to continue the CQI process by comparing the path and average timeframe of juveniles between key decision points and through the system prior to 2002 with juveniles in the system in 2004. This analysis will allow us to explore possible effects of the re-organization that took place in 2003 on case processing.

Methodology

Data used in this analysis were from an extract built specifically for this study using data imported from the State Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS). The established methodology for the extract creation for this study will allow the department to run these analyses annually.

The extract includes only criminal referrals that were felony or misdemeanor charges for which a police report was filed. The extract also contains variables which make it possible to determine which youth were in custody either prior to the petition filing date or for a period of time after the petition filing date. Additionally, it is possible to determine those cases which had an attempt at an informal hearing as well as those cases where the petition was dismissed. Only cases which had a petition filing were included in the analyses. A complete data dictionary is attached in the appendix and includes all variables used in this study and how they were derived.

For both years under study, data were split into two groups: Youth who were not in custody at any time during the timeline and youth who were in custody for a new law violation prior to the Petition Filed Date. Determination of which youth were in custody for a new law violation prior to the Petition File Date was done manually using JJIS.

The average number of days between points in the timeline was sometimes affected by extreme values. The median, and the minimum and maximum are listed in the tables below as an additional means of comparing these data. The median is the number where one-half the data fall above and one-half of the data fall below. It is a good measure of central tendency that is less affected by extreme values.

Limitations

A conversion from DCJ's Juvenile Information System to JJIS occurred in 2003. As a result, the 2002 data are missing the First Submitted to DA Date and the Last DA Returns Case Date. Therefore, for the purposes of comparison between 2002 and 2004, the length of time between Referral Received Date and the Petition Filing date was calculated for all cases.

Date of first contact with a Juvenile Court Counselor (JCC) was not readily available to download into the extract. For this reason, a sample of youth not already on probation or committed to OYA was drawn from each of the groups and case notes were reviewed manually to determine the date of either first phone or face to face contact with a JCC after the date of Disposition.

Results

The comparable decision points between 2002 and 2004 include the time between:

- Incident Report Date to Referral Received Date
- Referral Received Date to Petition File Date
- Petition Filed Date to 1st Adjudication with Finding Date
- 1st Adjudication with Finding Date to Last Disposition with a Disposition Date
- Last Disposition with a Disposition Date to 1st appointment with JCC Date.

Also included were calculations of the length of time between Referral Received Date and 1st Adjudication with Finding Date and time between Referral Received Date and 1st contact with JCC Date. These calculations provide an idea of the total length of time for processing a case.

	2002 Non-Custody Youth			2004 Non-Custody Youth				2002 (n=121) Pre-File Custody Youth			2004 (n=99) Pre-File Custody Youth		
	Mean	Median	Min- Max	Mean	Median	Min- Max		Mean	Median	Min- Max	Mean	Median	Min- Max
Incident Rpt Date to Referral Date	0.10	0.00	0-26	8.14	1.00	0-240		0.25	0.00	0-21	0.32	0.00	0-8
Referral Date to Petition Filed Date	60.37	49.00	0-328	39.99*	21.00	0-286		1.74	1.00	1-27	1.72	1.00	1-8
Petition Filed Date to 1st Adj. Date	77.24	63.00	3-406	81.18	63.00	0-427		46.69	36.50	4-776	40.23	35.00	2-130
1st Adjud. Date to Last Disp. Date	1.54	0.00	0-189	2.27	0.00	0-153		0.00	0.00	0	0.29	0.00	0-21
Last Disp. Date to JCC 1st Contact**	32.73	23.00	0-186	17.75	11.00	0-119		27.32^	16.00	9-108	26.07^	21.00	0-87
Petition File Date to Petition Dismiss	71.15	56.5	0-368	76.39	60.00	0-364		84.38	50.00	0-567	71.11	47.50	0-567
Referral Date to 1st Adjud. Date	125.39	110.0	4-378	118.65	98.50	7-495		50.13	39.00	5-777	49.10	37.00	3-357
Referral Date to JCC 1st Contact**	156.66	133.00	24-383	162.57	145.00	15-470		65.18	61.00	9-144	77.62	78.00	11-202
Petition Date to JCC 1st Contact**	102.5	93.00	22-306	104.02	83.00	14-369		62.71	56.50	8-141	73.46	75.50	10-163
<p>*Excludes cases that had an informal intervention attempt.</p> <p>**Date of 1st JCC contact data is a sample of the overall data set. First contact dates were collected from JJIS notes and included either the JCC's first direct phone contact with either the youth or the family or a face to face contact with youth or family after adjudication/disposition. 2002: n=125 (19%), 2004: n=107 (16%)</p> <p>^Caution should be used with these numbers as sample sizes are small. 2002 sample: n=34 (28%), 2004 sample: n=27 (27%)</p>													