Defining and Measuring Juvenile Recidivism

American Correctional Association
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Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA)

- National non-profit organization formed in 1994 dedicated to improvement of youth correctional services and practices so youths succeed when they return to the community
Today’s Presentation

Working toward common definitions and measurement

Maine’s experience
The Story

- Contemporary demands for recidivism data
- Agencies are judged successful or not based on rates indicating to what extent kids commit crime after services
- Program impact evaluations include recidivism

**CURRENTLY**

- A “fruit salad” of comparisons – states and rates

**THEREFORE**

- Yearbook recidivism survey started in 2004
- Development of a CJCA consensus
Demands for Recidivism Rates

- Historic measure carried over from adult correctional practices and approaches to juvenile justice

- Measure of failure; what doesn’t work rather than a measure of success
CJCA National Consensus Conferences October 2008-2009

- OJJDP sponsored national meetings with all state agency directors
- Consultation with data and recidivism experts
- Two approaches developed: recidivism (negative failure measure) and positive youth outcomes (linkages, skills, competencies)
Why Standardize?

• Different Measures produce Different Rates

ARREST

ADJUDICATION

PLACEMENT
Why Standardize?

Average One Year Recidivism Rates – youth released from incarceration in several states

- Rearrest: 55%
- Referral: 45%
- Reconviction: 33%
- Reincarceration: 25%

• Different Measures produce Different Rates

*Source: Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, *Juvenile Recidivism in Virginia*
Why Standardize?

- Different Kids Produce Different Rates

Maine Youth One Year Recidivism Rate by YLS-CMI Risk Level, 2008 Cohort

- Low Risk: 14.1%
- Moderate Risk: 26.3%
- High Risk: 32.3%
Why Standardize?

- Different Time Frames produce Different Rates
Director’s View in Sum

- There is value in collecting and using recidivism data as long as the definitions, uses and meanings are clear.
- Aggregating data up to the State level, and then comparing States, although often required by policy makers, is not helpful in developing a broad knowledge about “what works”.
- There is value in collecting information relating to Positive Youth Outcomes, especially as it can be linked to program objectives.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on the internal use of consistent data, over time, to learn more about program effectiveness.
Recidivism Working Group

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NATIONAL RECIDIVISM MEASURE.—Section 251 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(h) NATIONAL RECIDIVISM MEASURE.—The Administrator shall—

“(1) establish a data collection protocol instrument and technology that States shall use to report data on juvenile recidivism on an annual basis;

“(2) establish a common national juvenile recidivism measurement system; and

“(3) make cumulative juvenile recidivism data that is collected from states available to the public.”
Introduction

Need for Standardization

Current Practices

Recommendations for Standardization

Uses of Recidivism Measures

Goals of measurement: reduce re-offending, increase support for evidence-based, effective programs and enhance continuous quality improvement
CJCA Yearbook 2010
State Agencies Tracking Recidivism

Year | Agencies Tracking Recidivism | Agencies Do Not Track
--- | --- | ---
2005 (n=43) | 32 | 11
2006 (n=47) | 37 | 10
2007 (n=50) | 38 | 12
2008 (n=51) | 40 | 11
2009 (n=48) | 38 | 10

(Note: The number of agencies per year is in parentheses.)
CJCA Yearbook 2010
Population measured

- All youths who have left secure care: 8%
- All youths discharged from agency care, including both residential and non-residential programs: 39%
- A specific subgroup of youths selected based on another criteria: 34%
- Released with aftercare/parole: 18%
Most states use more than one action/one piece of data to measure recidivism.
Fruit Salad

Recidivism AKA:
- Re-did-ivism (arrested again)
- Re-commit-ivism (committed again someplace)
- Re-adjudicate-ivism (back to court)
- Returnrate-ivism (back some place)
- Re-violate-ivism (messed up on parole again)
- Re-incarcerate-ivism (locked up someplace)
About half of the states track a youth for 12 months and longer.
CJCA White Paper: Defining and Measuring Recidivism

- Goals of measurement: reduce re-offending, increase support for evidence-based programs and enhance continuous quality improvement

- Issues needing to be standardized: population being studied, action and data defining the recidivist and establishing the tracking period

- Other issues for future consideration: counting youths committed to adult system, separating parole violators (technical violations) from those returning as a result of new offenses committed.
Core Recommendations

1. Specify the population represented
   e.g. Age, gender, race, first-time offender, secure care program, special needs, mental health, offense type, risk score (offer protocol)

2. Always include conviction/adjudication; adult convictions, too

3. Provide multiple measures

4. Specify the length of follow-up (2 years min.)

5. Measure status offenses and technical violations separately from new delinquent or criminal offenses

6. Clearly identify sources of data
Recommendations for Standardizing Recidivism Measurement

**Population**
- Specify population demographics:
  - Age, gender, race/ethnicity
  - Placement - secure care, community with/out supervision
  - Offense type - property, person, weapons, misdemeanors
  - Risk items - age at first adjudication, number of prior offenses, substance abuse/mental health

**Action/data**
- Include a measure of adjudication or conviction
- Use more than one measure to increase opportunities for comparison (adjudication plus)
- Separate categories of cases (re-commitment based on new offenses, released home, released on probation)

**Tracking period**
- Track at periodic intervals for at least 24 months
- Record dates of:
  - adjudication
  - conviction
  - release to community
  - discharge from court
  - date of offense
Model for Levels of Reporting Recidivism

Each level of reporting builds on the previous by adding additional recidivism event types, offense characteristics and individual characteristics according to multiple population types.
Overview of Draft Levels of Reporting Recidivism

**Level One**
Population: Youths released from juvenile agency’s custody

Individual Characteristics: Age, Sex

Recidivism Event: Adjudications and Convictions

Tracking Period: 24 months from date of release to the community

**Level Two**
Population: Youths released from juvenile agency’s custody; Youths committed directly to probation or community-based program

Individual Characteristics: Age, Sex, Committing Offense, Race/Ethnicity

Recidivism Event: Adjudications and Convictions; Filing of charges; Arrest

Tracking Period: 24 months from date of release or disposition

**Level Three**
Population: Youths released from juvenile agency’s custody; Youths committed directly to probation or community-based program; Youths released from custody who have completed aftercare/parole

Individual Characteristics: Age, Sex, Committing Offense, Race/Ethnicity; Risk Level; Special Needs; Placement Type

Recidivism Event: Adjudications and Convictions; Filing of charges; Arrest; Commitment to juvenile or adult facility (post adjudication/conviction); Commitment to juvenile or adult facility (due to technical violation)

Tracking Period: 24 months from date of release, disposition or completion of aftercare or parole
Recidivism in Maine

How CJCA is guiding Maine’s Recidivism Research, and how Maine can use this data to inform policy and practice
Recidivism in Maine

- History of reporting recidivism
- State/University Partnership
- Collaboration with Department
Maine’s Current Research Context

- Moving towards outcome measurement
  - Desire to dig a little deeper to examine DJS performance, CQI measure process

- Commitment to EBPs
  - But no statewide outcome evaluation

- CJCA White Paper recommendations guide recidivism research
Research Process

- Using CJCA recommendations as a guide
  - Identify variables
  - Identify population

- Preliminary findings shared
  - Division of Juvenile Services, Juvenile Management Team feedback

- Recidivism subgroup
  - Report feedback
Maine Research Development

Facilitators

- Associate Commissioner Leadership
- MDOC Culture
- CORIS
- State-University Partnership
- Continuous Quality Improvement
Maine Research Development

Challenges

- CORIS - Dept. of Corrections M.I.S. system– data extract
- Consensus among group and buy-in
  - Different interests
- Population characteristics
  - With small numbers, what can we really say about some subgroups?
Maine Research: Selection Criteria

Where we started

1. All first adjudicated youth (1998-2005 cohorts)

Where we are

2. Youth placed under supervision
   (released January, 2011)

3. Youth who are discharged from supervision
   (to be released 2011)

4. Youth who are released from confinement
   (Refining data extract)

5. Youth who are diverted
   (Developing data extract)
Maine’s Data

- **Data sources**: MDOC’s CORIS (juvenile and some adult), MDPS (adult tracking)
- **Tracking period**: Three years decision point (adjudication, discharge, release from commitment, diversion)
- **Recidivism event**: Re-adjudication (juvenile)/re-conviction (adult)
- **Timeframe**: Date of adjudication to date of re-offense
- **Population characteristics**: gender, age, race, county
- **Offense characteristics**: Number, most serious class, most serious type - at first and second adjudication
- **Risk levels**: YLS-CMI (Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory) scores
- **Three years of data**: 2006-2008 cohorts
What we can do with Maine’s data

- Examine recidivism rates by different groups (demographic, offenses, risk levels)
- Examine recidivism rates over time
- Recent reports establish baselines
- Measure department’s impact
Comparing groups: supervised youth to discharged youth

Youth in transition most at risk to recidivate

![Bar graph showing recidivism rates for discharged and supervised youth over different time periods.](image-url)

- Six Months: Discharged 13.0%, Supervised 13.5%
- One Year: Discharged 22.5%, Supervised 21.1%
- Two Years: Discharged 31.4%, Supervised 31.4%
- Three Years: Discharged 39.0%, Supervised 39.0%
Findings and implications

Supervised youth:
- Inform policy: services quickly put in place upon entering supervision
- Inform policy: discharge planning important ensure services available post discharge
- Evaluation: Did number of youth who recidivate in first six months decrease?
Findings: Risk Level and Time to Recidivate

Not only do high risk youth recidivate at higher rates, they also do so more quickly.
Findings: Policy Implications

Recidivism by risk level –
- Inform policy: assess risk quickly to identify high risk youth
- Inform policy: Assessment, Case Planning and Interventions need to start quickly
- Evaluation: Did recidivism rates among high risk youth decrease? Did time to recidivate among high risk youth increase?
Lessons Learned Guiding Recidivism Work

- We can standardize data, definitions and systematic measurement
- We can compare practices and programs using common data, definitions
- Data can serve as catalyst for change;
- Continuous reporting and analysis of information can sustain improvements though changes in leadership and funding cycles
Conclusion:

- Increasing the ability of juvenile justice agencies to communicate clearly about recidivism will require the use of a common language, common definitions and systematic measurement;

- Standardization of definitions and measures of recidivism will:
  - Increase the juvenile justice agency’s capacity to learn about effective programs and practices,
  - Allow agencies to implement programs and allocate resources in a cost effective manner,
  - Will help protect the public from future criminal acts and to build support for collaborative problem solving through information sharing and strategic planning.
FMI: Maine Recidivism Research

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