

# ModelsforChange

Systems Reform in Juvenile Justice

## DOORWAYS TO DELINQUENCY:

Multi-System Involvement of Delinquent Youth  
in King County (Seattle, WA)

Gregory Halemba and Gene Siegel  
National Center for Juvenile Justice

September 25, 2011



# ModelsforChange

Systems Reform in Juvenile Justice

## DOORWAYS TO DELINQUENCY: Multi-System Involvement of Delinquent Youth in King County (Seattle, WA)

Gregory Halemba and Gene Siegel  
National Center for Juvenile Justice

September 25, 2011

© National Center for Juvenile Justice  
3700 South Water Street, Suite 200  
Pittsburgh, PA 15203  
[www.ncjj.org](http://www.ncjj.org)

This report was prepared by the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ), the research division of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) and funded with a grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation in support of the Foundation's Models for Change (MfC) Initiative.

An earlier version of this report was released in June 2011 under the title of:

*"King County (Seattle, WA) Uniting for Youth: Prevalence of Child Welfare and BECCA (Status Offender) Involvement Among Youth Referred to the Juvenile Court on Delinquency Matters."*

## Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Foreword.....	i
Executive Summary.....	iv
Background.....	1
Study Design.....	4
History of Children’s Administration Involvement.....	6
History of Becca Involvement.....	11
History of Children’s Administration and Becca Involvement – Combined.....	13
Timing of Cross-System Involvement – Which Came First?.....	14
Age at First Involvement with the Juvenile Court on Offender Matters.....	15
Extent of Juvenile Justice System Involvement.....	18
Two-Year Recidivism Rates by History of CA Involvement.....	19
Recidivism among First-Time Offenders.....	22
Two-Year Recidivism Rates by History of Becca Filings and CA Involvement.....	24
Analysis of Youth with CA Placement History.....	26
Concluding Remarks/Summary of Key Findings.....	30

## Foreword

On behalf of Uniting for Youth (King County, Washington), we are very appreciative of the many partners who made this ground-breaking study possible. In particular, the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ), who authored the study, and the MacArthur Foundation, who provided financial support through its Models for Change Initiative, and Casey Family Programs deserve special recognition. This study would not have been attempted, let alone completed, without them. Our partners from the Center for Children and Youth Justice and the Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts also played key roles in supporting data collection across organizations and administrative systems that are not designed to readily share with each other.

As you will see in the pages that follow, the results of the study have major implications for youth involved in the juvenile justice system in King County. Many youth arrive at the front door of the juvenile justice system having already interacted with the child welfare system. Moreover, these “cross-over” youth experience worse outcomes, such as higher recidivism and spending more time in detention, than other juvenile justice youth. This foreword will highlight why Uniting for Youth requested this study and how it will influence our work in the future.

### *Uniting for Youth – A Partnership of Youth-Serving Systems in King County*

In 2003, a group of leaders in King County’s youth-serving systems came together out of shared frustration that the juvenile justice and child welfare systems too often were failing to work effectively together to serve youth who were involved in both systems and who frequently needed mental health, education, and other services. Based on the strength of their experiences and with support from Casey Family Programs and Child Welfare League of America, these leaders launched The King County Systems Integration Initiative (later renamed Uniting for Youth). Their purpose was to examine opportunities for improving outcomes for cross-over youth through more seamless and coordinated case planning, case management, and delivery of services across these youth-serving systems.

Despite having limited data about cross-over youth, Uniting for Youth has made significant progress over the past eight years. Accomplishments include creating and sustaining a collaborative leadership group to guide its work; development and wide-spread dissemination of an information-sharing resource guide; implementing protocols for coordinating case planning and services for youth involved in juvenile justice and child welfare systems; conducting regular “cross-system” trainings for staff from various youth-serving systems; improved mental health and substance abuse screening and assessment process for juvenile justice youth; and designing and piloting a school dropout retrieval and retention program.

### *The Need for a Prevalence Study*

While Uniting for Youth has made good progress, we feel strongly that, without an in-depth understanding of the prevalence of cross-over youth in King County and the characteristics and outcomes of these youth, our future progress would be limited. We also need to know more about the characteristics of cross-over youth and how they differ from other youth who come into contact with and progress through our respective systems. Such information can help us improve our response to the needs of cross-over youth, particularly at the earliest points possible, and sharpen our focus in specific areas of concern including racial and ethnic disparities and the gender specific needs of girls and boys. We also need a baseline picture of the outcomes for cross-over youth against which we can measure our progress.

In 2008, with the support of the MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change Initiative, Uniting for Youth worked with NCJJ to develop an overall vision for a series of prevalence studies. The following report is the first of these studies.

### *The Compelling Results*

While we continue to review the results of this report, they confirm our professional experience that there is an important connection between the juvenile justice and child welfare systems for many youth and their families. However, we are taken aback about the extent of this connection and its potential implications for the well-being of cross-over youth. As noted by the authors, about two-thirds of youth referred to King County's juvenile justice system on an offender matter in 2006 have had some form of involvement in our state's child welfare system. Moreover, involvement in child welfare is related to worse outcomes in the juvenile justice system on many levels – such as time spent in detention and recidivism – when compared to youth with no or limited involvement in the child welfare system. These outcomes, particularly for youth of color and females, worsened if the youth had more extensive involvement in the child welfare system.

### *Renewed Purpose*

The compelling results of this study will help shape the future work of Uniting for Youth. They are timely in refining our direction and renewing our purpose as a cross-system collaborative even as our respective organizations face severe budget challenges. With the support of our partners, we will be mining data from this study to improve cross-system approaches in key areas such as disproportionate minority contact, gender-specific responses, court diversion, and recidivism.

The current report describes only part of the picture. It primarily focuses on a group of youth entering the juvenile justice system and their involvement with the child welfare system. For a more complete picture of these youth, we will be working with our partners to conduct additional studies that incorporate other service systems such as education, mental health, and substance abuse. We will also examine a group of youth at the point they entered the child welfare system and follow how many came into contact with other service systems to inform us on how to respond early and shift their trajectory away from the juvenile justice system.

### *Beyond King County*

The good news is that across Washington State and the nation there is a growing interest to better understand and respond to the needs of cross-over youth. We hope that this study encourages other jurisdictions not only to conduct similar research but also to join the effort to develop effective multi-system approaches for cross-over youth. As is often the case, a report dealing with a complex and important social issue leaves us with as many questions as it provides answers. We look forward to sharing our experiences and learning from others.

Co-Chairs, Uniting for Youth Executive Steering Committee

Bruce Knutson, Director of Juvenile Court Services, King County

Joel Odimba, Regional Administrator, Region 4 DSHS – Children’s Administration

## Executive Summary

This executive summary highlights findings from a study conducted by the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) that examines the prevalence of multi-system involvement (specifically, child welfare and Becca)<sup>1</sup> among youth referred to the King County Juvenile Court on offender matters during the 2006 calendar year. The study examines how this varies demographically and how juvenile justice trajectories/outcomes vary by level of multi-system involvement.

The target population for the current study reflected a time-limited snapshot of youth referred to the King County Juvenile Court on one of more offender referrals during calendar year 2006.<sup>2</sup> The study cohort included 4,475 youth and their history of court and child welfare involvement was tracked through the end of the 2008 calendar year.<sup>3</sup>

### Summary of Key Findings

***Two-thirds of King County youth referred for offender matters in 2006 have had some form of Children's Administration involvement.***

While, it was anticipated that a number of youth referred on offender matters in 2006 had some Children's Administration (CA) involvement, it was not anticipated that this would have been the case for two-thirds of the overall study cohort. The 2006 study population is divided into four subgroups that reflect an increasing continuum of Children's Administration involvement. Most data and findings presented in this report are organized along this continuum.

- Group 1: Youth with no record of any history of CA involvement – 33% of the youth referred for offender matters in 2006 were in this group (n = 1,462).
- Group 2: Youth with a CA system identification number ((CAMIS ID) but no detail on the extent of agency involvement – 30% of the 2006 offender cohort were in this group. In most instances, these juveniles only had some very limited involvement with the agency (n = 1,358).

---

<sup>1</sup> In 1995, in response to the deaths of three runaway children, the State Legislature passed the "Becca Bill" (SB5439) named after one of the deceased children. This statute governs issues related to three types of status offenders/non-offenders – at-risk youth (ARY), truants, and children in need of services (CHINS). While each of these categories of status offenders is considered a different type of case filing and the court process in each differs, these are all commonly referred to as Becca matters in Washington State.

<sup>2</sup> This could be for either a referral that was eventually dismissed, accepted for diversion, or a referral that was filed on and formally prosecuted through the court.

<sup>3</sup> This included any history of involvement with the King County court system as well as courts in other Washington jurisdictions on offender/criminal, dependency and Becca matters. Child welfare involvement included any Children Administration (CA) history pertaining to moderate/high risk child protection referrals accepted for investigation, legal actions taken by the agency on behalf of these children, and historical records reflecting any custody, legal status and placement events/changes while in agency care. Children's Administration is the child welfare arm of the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services.

- Group 3: Youth who had been named on one or more moderate to high risk child protection referrals that were accepted for investigation. Another 21% of the study cohort were in this group (n = 939).
- Group 4: Youth who had a history of CA-initiated legal activity/placement. These youth had a dependency petition filed or were otherwise placed in CA custody and typically placed out of home – 16% of the study population were in this group (n = 716).

***The more extensive the history of CA involvement, the greater the proportion of females and minority youth (specifically, African-American and Native American youth).***

- Females constitute 27% of the population of youth with no CA history and this steadily increases to 40% among juveniles with a “History of CA Legal Activity/Placement.”
- The proportion of African-American youth increases almost three-fold as the extent of CA involvement intensifies – from 16% of the “No CA History” cohort to 45% of all youth with a “History of CA Legal Activity/Placement.” For Native American youth, the trend is even more pronounced – a four-fold increase from 1% to 5%.

***The likelihood of at least some history of CA involvement increases even more dramatically when controlling for prior history of offender referrals***

- 59% of youth referred a first-time for an offender matter during 2006 had at least some history of CA contact/involvement.
- For youth with two or more prior offender referrals before 2006, this percentage increases to 89% overall, and upwards of 90% for African-American and Native American youth.

***Youth with multi-system involvement begin their delinquent activity earlier and are detained more frequently (and for longer periods of time) than youth without such involvement.***

- Multi-system youth, particularly those with a history of CA legal activity/placement, start their delinquent careers a year or more earlier than youth with no CA involvement.
- Youth with a history of CA legal activity/placement are typically first detained at an earlier age, are detained far more frequently, and spend substantially more time in detention compared to youth with no multi-system involvement (an average of 70 days compared to 19 days, respectively).

***Youth with no history of CA involvement were referred on offender charges much less frequently compared to youth with more extensive CA involvement.***

- Youth with no history of CA involvement were referred on offender charges an average of 2.1 times compared to an average of 5.8 times for youth with a history of CA legal activity/placement – a difference of almost three-fold.

***Youth who experience multiple offender referrals are much more likely to have records of Becca and CA involvement than youth without such records.***

- Overall, 72% of all youth referred to the King County Juvenile Court in 2006 on offender matters had some history of Becca petition filings and/or history of Children's Administration involvement (either prior, during or subsequent to calendar year 2006).
- The percent of youth with a history of Becca petition filings and/or CA involvement increases to 94% for youth referred on two or more offender referrals prior to CY 2006.

***A multi-system youth's first offender referral often precedes the filing of a 1<sup>st</sup> Becca petition.***

- In a slight majority of cases, a truancy or ARY petition was filed after a juvenile's first offender referral (52% and 51% of the time, respectively).
- In 71% of the 106 instances in the study cohort in which a youth was petitioned to the court on a CHINS matter, this petition was filed *after* his/her first offender referral.

***There is a strong correlation between recidivism and history of CA involvement.***

- Youth with no history of CA involvement were far less likely to be referred on a new offender matter *within two years* than youth on the far end of the CA involvement continuum – 34% compared to 70%, respectively.
- Two-year recidivism rates for the two less extensive CA categories (CAMIS ID only and history of CA investigation only) fall in between these two ends of the continuum but generally track closer to recidivism rates for the history of CA legal activity/placement subset of 2006 offenders.
- In the most extensive CA involvement category (the history of CA activity/placement cohort), two-year recidivism rates for African-American and Native American youth were 75% and 79%, respectively. These were considerably higher than for other racial groups.
- For females, two-year recidivism rates rose substantially as the analysis controlled for level of CA involvement – from 27% for females with no CA history to 63% for females with a history of CA legal activity/placement.

***1<sup>st</sup>-time offenders with records of multi-system involvement have much higher recidivism rates than youth without CA involvement.***

- 30% of 1<sup>st</sup>-time offenders with no history of CA involvement were referred on a new offender matter within two years compared to 57% of 1<sup>st</sup>-time offenders with a history of CA legal activity/placement.
- The more extensive the history of CA involvement, the greater the proportion of 1<sup>st</sup>-time offender females. Females constitute 30% of the 1<sup>st</sup>-time offender population with no CA history and almost half (47%) of all 1<sup>st</sup>-time offenders with a "History of CA Legal Activity/Placement."
- The proportion of 1<sup>st</sup>-time offender African-American youth increases almost three-fold as the extent of CA involvement intensifies – from 15% of the "No CA History" 1<sup>st</sup>-time offender cohort to 43% of similar youth with a "History of CA Legal Activity/Placement." A similar trend is evident among Native American youth.

*Youth with histories of both Becca and CA involvement have high recidivism rates.*

- Two-year recidivism rates rise dramatically as the analysis controls for histories of, both, Becca petition filings and CA involvement. Among juveniles with no history of either, the two-year recidivism rate was 31%.
- On the other end, youth with a history of, *both*, Becca petition filings and a history of CA legal activity/placement, the two-year recidivism rates spike to 75%.

*Multi-system youth experience frequent placement changes and there are substantial costs associated with such placements.*

- Multi-system youth who were placed in out-of-home placements experienced, on average, 12 placement changes including an average of three AWOL episodes during the study period. Very little time during this three-year period was spent at home or not in CA-related care.
- It is conservatively estimated that placement costs averaged approximately \$38,000 per youth during this time. For the 226 youth included in this part of the analysis, the estimated total cost of placement approached \$8.6M.

The study suggests the need for earlier, more effective and more timely interventions in multi-system cases, and presents opportunities for further analysis to more closely examine the following topics:

- ✓ An examination of current diversion practices and outcomes for multi-system cases;
- ✓ Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) implications;
- ✓ Gender specific implications;
- ✓ Additional recidivism measures;
- ✓ Expanded DSHS/CA outcome analysis;<sup>4</sup>
- ✓ Expanded placement analysis;
- ✓ Age of youth at first contact with the child welfare system;
- ✓ Analysis of a truant youth cohort; and
- ✓ Current court handling/case processing practices.

---

<sup>4</sup> The Washington State Department of Health and Human Services (DSHS, the department that oversees Children's Administration) is in the formative stages of launching a series of multi-system pilot projects in a number of counties in Washington State. As the Uniting for Youth effort in King County continues to move forward, it makes sense for Uniting for Youth, at a minimum, to maintain communication with DSHS administration so that each is aware of the other's important system change and ongoing research efforts.

## **Background**

First established in 2003, the King County Uniting for Youth (formerly the King County Systems Integration) Initiative is a collaboration of state and local community agencies and organizations that have come together to examine and improve integrated program development, policy development, and service delivery for children, youth, and families served by the child welfare and juvenile justice systems as well as other youth-serving entities (such as education and the mental/behavioral health communities).<sup>1</sup>

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, in collaboration with others including the Seattle Field Office of Casey Family Programs, has provided funding for this initiative since the start and continues to support this effort through the Foundation's Models for Change (MfC) Initiative.<sup>2</sup>

During the ensuing eight years, initiative accomplishments have been impressive. Uniting for Youth committees/task forces have tackled a number of difficult issues including development of information-sharing protocols/resource guides; specification of the technological functionalities needed to facilitate the sharing of information on multi-system youth; an assessment of the local mental health service continuum; design of a dropout retrieval system and recent implementation of a pilot project based on this design; and development of cross training and joint policy/procedural protocols to facilitate cross-system case work.

Additionally, in October 2008, King County initiated the Kent Dual System Youth Pilot Program, a program designed to improve cross-system case assessment, case planning, and case management for dually-adjudicated youth (i.e., youth who have been adjudicated for delinquency and dependency matters and who are simultaneously involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems).<sup>3</sup> This effort has been well-received and, in the past year, the program has been expanded county-wide.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In the past year, the initiative has taken on a new name "Uniting for Youth" to better reflect the unique partnership between local and state youth-serving agencies that is the defining characteristic of this effort of enhanced cross-system coordination and integration.

<sup>2</sup> Models for Change is a national initiative funded by the [John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation](#) to accelerate reform of juvenile justice systems across the country. Furthering reforms in cross-systems coordination and integration is a staple of the Models for Change approach to juvenile justice reform. The initiative is rooted in an evidence-based approach to juvenile justice reform, and promotes a variety of systems reform models that are grounded in the core principles of fundamental fairness; developmental differences between youth and adults; individual strengths and needs; youth potential; responsibility; and safety.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the Kent pilot program, please see G. Siegel. *The King County (Washington) Systems Integration Initiative: A First Look at the Kent District Dual System Youth Pilot Program*. [Juvenile and Family Court Journal](#) 60, no. 4 (Fall), 2009. National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

<sup>4</sup> The expanded cross-system youth project in King County is typically referred to as the "Crossover Youth Practice Model" or CYPM. King County is one of a number of CYPM pilot sites in the country that are being supported with technical assistance and training from Georgetown University's Center for Juvenile Justice Reform.

In late 2006, the King County Uniting for Youth Initiative established an Evaluation Subcommittee to embed a research component within the initiative. One of the priorities of this subcommittee was to develop strategies to provide empirical support to the initiative's various policy/protocol development and implementation activities.

A growing body of research examining the crossover youth<sup>5</sup> population continues to confirm the important challenges presented by these cases. These include considerably higher recidivism rates (markedly so for female offenders); earlier onset of delinquent behavior; more and longer detention stays, deeper and faster juvenile justice system penetration; substantially higher out-of-home placement rates; frequent placement changes; poor permanency outcomes; and substantial costs in the face of shrinking budgets.

In support of this internal evaluation capacity-building effort and with funding provided by the Seattle Field Office of Casey Family Programs, the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) in 2007 began work to design a strategy to conduct research on the prevalence of multi-system involvement among youth referred to the King County Juvenile Court on offender (delinquency),<sup>6</sup> Becca (truancy, ARY and/or CHINS),<sup>7</sup> and/or dependency matters. This included development of preliminary specifications on how to proceed in obtaining the necessary administrative data from the various stakeholder organizations/agencies required to conduct such a study.

NCJJ staff met with a wide array of individuals from the King County Juvenile Court, Children's Administration (CA)<sup>8</sup> and other key system stakeholders. A range of options were explored regarding how best to proceed in collecting the requisite case-level data needed to develop a baseline profile of multi-system youth similar to that produced by NCJJ as part of the Arizona Dual Jurisdiction Study completed in 2004.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> A number of terms (e.g., crossover youth, dually involved, dually adjudicated) are often used somewhat interchangeably in reference to youth with a history of cross-system involvement. Herz, Ryan and Bilchik call for more clarification in the utilization of these terms and view designations of dually involved and dually adjudicated as essentially subgroups of the more encompassing population of crossover youth population. In the broadest sense, crossover youth are adolescents who have come to the attention of, both, the child welfare and juvenile justice systems but with no temporal or level of involvement designations. "Dually involved youth represent a subgroup of crossover youth who are simultaneously receiving services, at any level, from both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems." Dually adjudicated youth constitute a subgroup of dually involved youth who are concurrently adjudicated as both dependent and delinquent and who are actively involved with the juvenile court on both matters. Please see Denise C. Herz, Joseph P. Ryan and Shay Bilchik, *Challenges Facing Crossover Youth: An examination of Juvenile-Justice Decision Making and Recidivism*, **Family Court Review** (2010, vol. 48, No. 2, pp. 305-321).

<sup>6</sup> "Offender" is the term used by the Washington State juvenile justice system for delinquent behavior.

<sup>7</sup> In 1995, in response to the deaths of three runaway children, the State Legislature passed the "Becca Bill" (SB5439) named after one of the deceased children. This statute governs issues related to three types of status offenders/non-offenders –at-risk youth (ARY), truants, and children in need of services (CHINS). While each of these categories of status offenders is considered a different type of case filing and the court process in each differs, these are all commonly referred to as Becca matters.

<sup>8</sup> Children's Administration (CA) is the division of the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) responsible for handling matters related to maltreated children.

<sup>9</sup> Please see G. Halemba et al., *Arizona Dual Jurisdiction Study: Final Report*, NCJJ (2004). The full report, executive summary and a slide presentation examining the characteristics of dual jurisdiction youth in Arizona (that is, youth on probation and active with the court on a formal dependency matter) can be downloaded from NCJJ's website at: <http://ncjj.servehttp.com/NCJJWebsite/publications/topical/topicaldual.htm>.

The focus in King County, however, was to conduct this study primarily using administrative data extracted from various automated systems<sup>10</sup> – statewide systems maintained by the Administrative Office of the Courts (specifically, SCOMIS and JCS), a local juvenile court case management system utilized by the King County Juvenile Court (JJWEB), and the Children’s Administration (CA) automated system (CAMIS). It was envisioned that this multi-system prevalence study would:

1. Result in the development of a baseline summary that profiles critical case characteristics of multi-system involved youth who come into contact with the juvenile court (on an offender, Becca and/or dependency matter) and provides some reliable estimates of the size of this population.
2. Support the development of specific coordinated/integrated intervention strategies with various sub-populations of multi-system youth based on case characteristics highlighted in the baseline profile summaries.<sup>11</sup>
3. Provide the ability to examine (at least preliminarily) the degree to which these interventions are having an impact on case outcomes and to provide the empirical basis for more rigorous future evaluations.
4. Provide a local template on how to conduct future research of this type on an on-going basis and to engage the local expertise needed to provide such research support without the need for outside consultants.

The research strategy eventually proposed<sup>12</sup> provided a reasonably feasible scenario in how to go about requesting, extracting, linking and analyzing administrative data from the King County Juvenile Court, AOC and Children’s Administration data sources to examine three primary questions:

1. What is the prevalence of multi-system involvement among youth referred to the juvenile court on offender, Becca and/or dependency matters? This includes an estimation of the degree to which there is some sequential pattern to this involvement as well as an estimation of the frequency with which this involvement appears to be concurrent.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Rather than to primarily rely on manual review of case files as was the case in Arizona.

<sup>11</sup> One purpose of this study is to help inform the Uniting for Youth effort in identifying additional promising interventions and strategies that may improve outcomes for these challenging cases.

<sup>12</sup> Please see Gregg Halemba and Gene Siegel, “King County System Integration Initiative: Examining the Case Characteristics of Multi-system Involved Youth: Cross-System Data Collection and Analysis Strategies,” (NCJJ, June 2007)

<sup>13</sup> Informal child protective services and family reconciliation services involvement through Children’s Administration is also factored into this analysis.

2. To what degree do the characteristics of multi-system involved youth (including demographics, presenting needs, family dynamics and placement stability) contrast with those youth who only have a history of involvement in one system?
3. Are outcomes of multi-system youth generally poorer than youth who only have a history in one system? Also, to what degree does this vary among multi-system youth whose cross-system involvement is sequential rather than concurrent.

This report summarizes findings specific to the prevalence of multi-system involvement (specifically, child welfare and Becca) for youth referred to the King County Juvenile Court on offender matters, how this varies demographically, and how juvenile justice trajectories and outcomes vary by level of multi-system involvement. The report also begins to examine temporal issues related to the onset of juvenile justice, child welfare and Becca involvement.

The data set has considerable potential to allow for more in-depth analysis in this regards and subsequent summaries are planned that will take a closer look at differential outcomes for first-time offenders, females, and minority youth, among others.

Also, The Washington State Center for Court Research (WSSCR) has identified youth in the current study who were administered the Washington State Juvenile Court Risk Assessment (WSJCA) instrument at some point during their court involvement on an offender matter. WSSCR has recently initiated an analysis examining differences in various risk and protective domains for these youth controlling for a history of multi-system involvement.<sup>14</sup>

Lastly, NCJJ and WSSCR plan to examine differential patterns of multi-system involvement for all youth referred to the court on dependency and Becca matters in a fashion similar to what is presented herein for youth referred on offender matters.<sup>15</sup>

## **Study Design**

Working closely with WSSCR, NCJJ staff in late 2007 began to develop specifications for the various AOC, King County Juvenile Court and Children's Administration (CA) data sets that eventually were generated, individually

---

<sup>14</sup> Approximately one-third of youth in the NCJJ study summarized herein also have WSJCA data in WSSCR's Assessment Research Database (ARD). WSSCR's development of the Assessment Research Database was also funded through a MacArthur Foundation MfC grant.

<sup>15</sup> Currently, NCJJ only has court histories (offender, dependency and Becca) and CA/JRA histories on youth referred on offender matters in calendar year 2006. NCJJ does not have similar histories of youth petitioned on a truancy, ARY, or CHINS matter in 2006 who were not also referred that year on an offender matter. The same is true for youth active with the court on a dependency matter in 2006 who were not also referred on an offender matter during that same year.

analyzed and then linked to examine the frequency of cross-system involvement, juvenile justice system trajectories and outcomes.

The target population for the current study reflected a time-limited snapshot of youth referred to the King County Juvenile Court on one of more offender referrals during calendar year 2006. This could be for either a referral that was eventually dismissed, accepted for diversion, or a referral that was filed on and formally prosecuted through the juvenile court.

Selection was limited to youth referred in 2006 to allow for the retrospective tracking of case progress and outcomes (specifically, subsequent court involvement and CA involvement) for a minimum of two years – through the end of calendar year 2008.

Examining and linking offender data maintained in JJWEB by the King County Juvenile Court and JCS data maintained by the Washington State AOC, WSSCR staff identified a beginning cohort of approximately 4,800 youth referred to the King County Juvenile Court in CY2006. For these youth, records containing key information on all offender, Becca and dependency court-related actions in any Washington State county through December 2008 were merged into one large data set, and sent to NCJJ for more detailed review and analysis.<sup>16</sup> A separate record was included in this data set for each offender referral and each Becca and/or dependency petition.<sup>17</sup>

Ultimately, NCJJ identified an overall study cohort of 4,475 youth referred to the King County Juvenile Court for offender matters in 2006. All youth included in the study cohort had to be at least eight years old at the time of the 2006 offender referral. Also, youth only referred to the court on minor infractions in 2006 (that is, primarily for tobacco, drivers license and local ordinance infractions) were excluded from the study.<sup>18</sup>

WSSCR provided the names and identifying information on these youth to DSHS. The agency's Information Technology (IT) staff then developed the programming routines to identify which of these juveniles had a history of Children's Administration involvement and extracted individual case-level data on all moderate to high risk child protection referrals accepted for investigation, records reflecting any legal actions taken on behalf of these children,

---

<sup>16</sup> This data set contained approximately 30,000 records. Additionally, WSSCR staff provided NCJJ with the raw JJWEB data file provided by the King County Juvenile Court. This file contained slightly more than 2,000 diversion records that were found in JJWEB that could not be linked to specific youth in the primary data set. A number of these appeared to be duplicate events that were reflected in both the JCS and JJWEB databases but with slightly different referral dates. Ultimately, slightly less than half of these were merged into the full database after offense dates were closely reviewed to ensure that no duplicate records were introduced into the study's working research database.

<sup>17</sup> For example, if a youth was referred on 10 offender referrals and petitioned on two truancy matters, one ARY matter, one CHINS matter and one dependency matter prior to the end of CY2008, there would be a total of 15 individual records in the data set representing that juvenile's entire court history through CY2008. This included not only matters filed with the King County Juvenile Court but also with juvenile courts in other Washington State counties as well as in municipal and/or superior court (primarily if a youth turned 18 sometime before the end of 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Also, any offender referrals for these minor infractions and any offender referrals prior to the age of eight were excluded from the research database and, as such, are not reflected in a youth's overall juvenile justice history.

and historical records reflecting any custody, legal status and placement events/changes while in their care. CA history data were also current through December 2008.

Additionally, agency ID numbers were provided on a substantial number of youth in the 2006 study cohort (approximately 30%) for which DSHS had some limited record of prior child protective services involvement. These children were known to the agency, assigned an agency identification number, and had at least some demographic information posted in the CAMIS system. However, no additional detail history of that involvement was provided.

Upon further discussion, it appears that most of these children were only peripherally involved with Children's Administration with either referrals for investigations considered low-risk and diverted through an alternate response option or named as "collaterals" on a case. Lastly, in a very small number of instances, there were children involved with the agency in the late-1980's and early-1990's whose records were not fully migrated to the new Children's Administration case management system and database installed in the early 1990's by DSHS.

NCJJ staff analyzed, aggregated and eventually merged these CA records with the court history files previously constructed to conduct the final data runs summarized in the sections that follow.

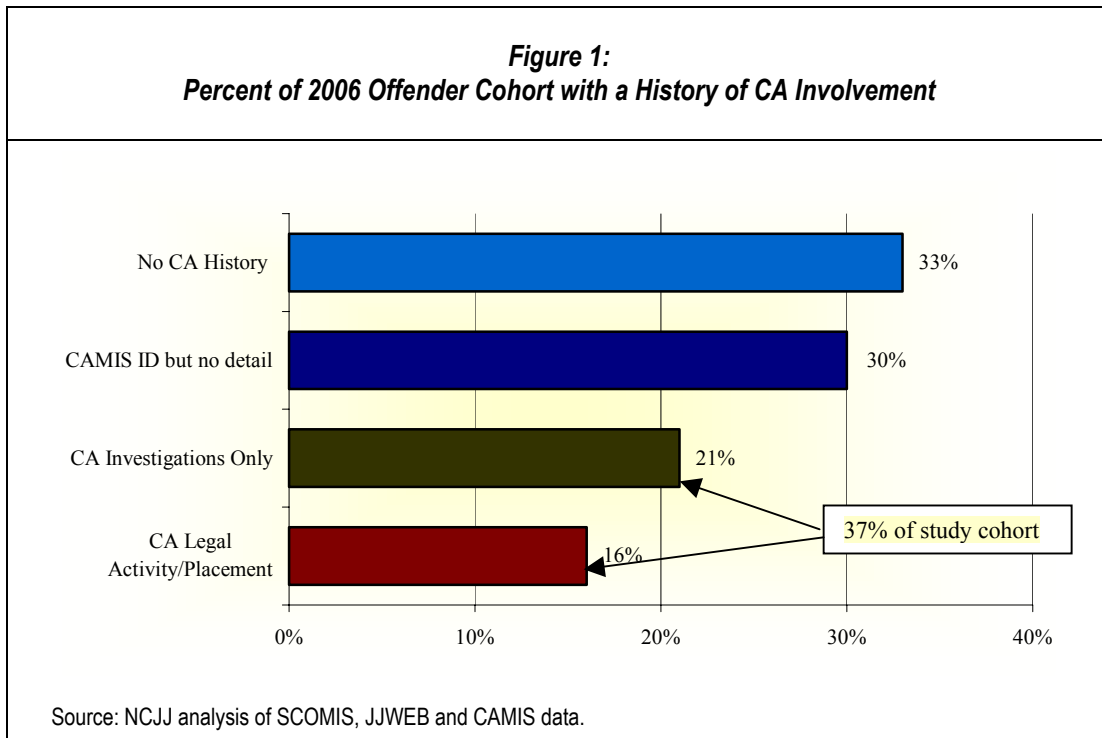
### **History of Children's Administration Involvement**

The final Prevalence Study cohort included a total of 4,475 juveniles referred in King County on offender charges in calendar year 2006 and their history of court and child welfare involvement was tracked through the end of the 2008 calendar year.

While, it was anticipated that a number of these youth would have had some CA involvement, it was not anticipated that this would have been the case for two-thirds of the overall study cohort (Figure 1). The 2006 study population is divided into four subgroups that reflect an increasing continuum of Children's Administration involvement.

- There was no record of any history of Children Administration involvement for 33% of youth referred in 2006 (n = 1,462).
- 30% of 2006 the study cohort had a CAMIS ID number but no detail on the extent of agency involvement was provided on these youth. As indicated earlier, in most instances, these juveniles only had some very limited involvement with the agency (n = 1,358).

- Another 21% had been named on one or more moderate to high risk child protection referrals that were accepted for investigation.<sup>19</sup> (n = 939).
- Lastly, 16% of the study population had a history of CA-initiated legal activity. That is, a dependency petition was filed or a child was otherwise placed in CA custody<sup>20</sup> and typically placed out of the home (n = 716).<sup>21</sup>



These four CA categories (none, ID only, investigations history, and history of legal activity/placement), represent the primary way findings in this report are organized. Some tables and charts will examine history of Becca involvement and will overlay types of Becca involvement (e.g., history of truancy, ARY and CHINS petitions) on the level of CA involvement, but much of this analysis will be left for a future report.

<sup>19</sup> That is, a referral that was accepted for investigation with a risk level of three or higher (risk level five rated as in need of most immediate attention). These investigation referrals could have occurred at any point prior to the end of 2008.

<sup>20</sup> For example, placed out of the home temporarily due to a voluntary agreement. As was the case for investigations records, the timing of CA legal activity and/or placement could have occurred at any point prior to the end of 2008.

<sup>21</sup> There were a few instances in which the CA database only contained placement information. In these instances, the juvenile was also assigned to the CA legal activity/placement cohort.

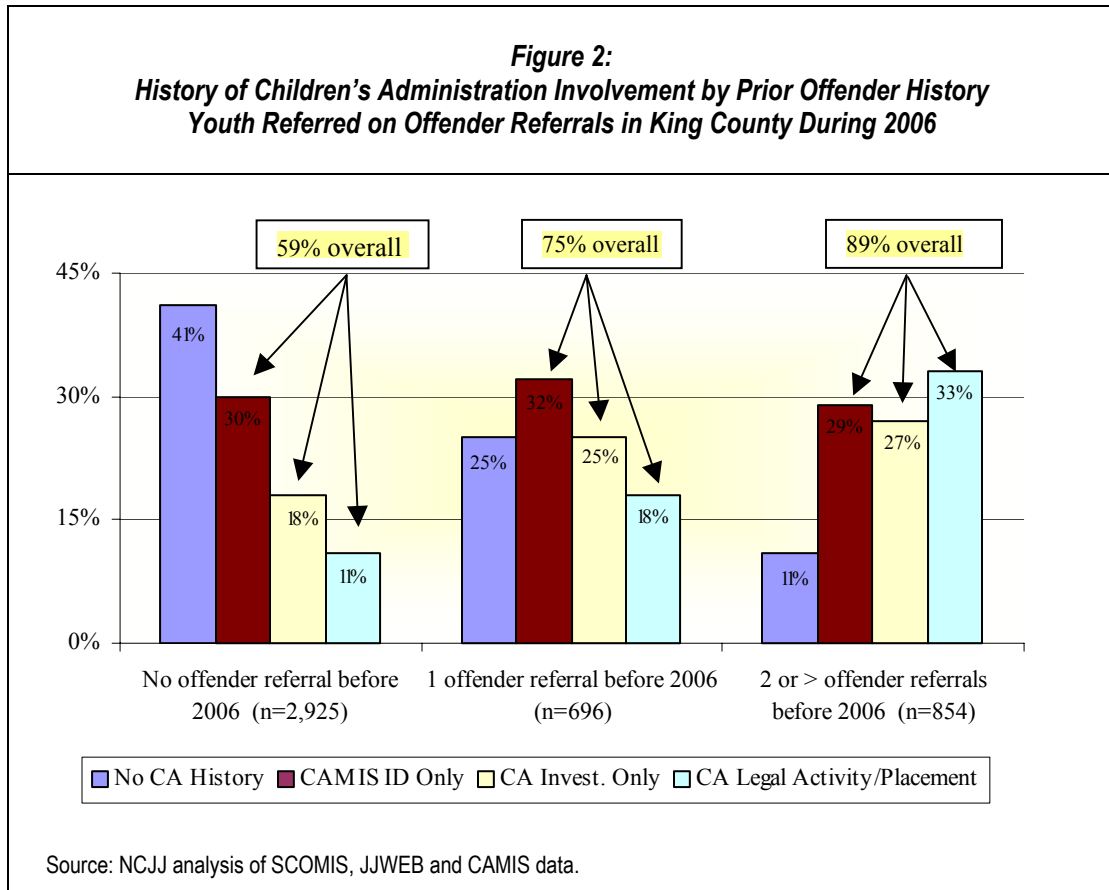
Demographic comparisons of these four cohorts are provided in Table 1. Some notable trends include:

- The more extensive the history of CA involvement, the greater the proportion of females. Females constitute 27% of the population of youth with no CA history and this steadily increases to 40% among juveniles with a “History of CA Legal Activity/Placement.”<sup>22</sup>
- The proportion of African-American youth increases almost three-fold as the extent of CA involvement intensifies – from 16% of the “No CA History” cohort to 45% of all youth with a “History of CA Legal Activity/Placement.”
- While, Native American youth represent a very small portion of the overall population of youth referred to the King County Juvenile Court in 2006, the trend is even more pronounced for this minority population – a four-fold increase from 1% to 5%.

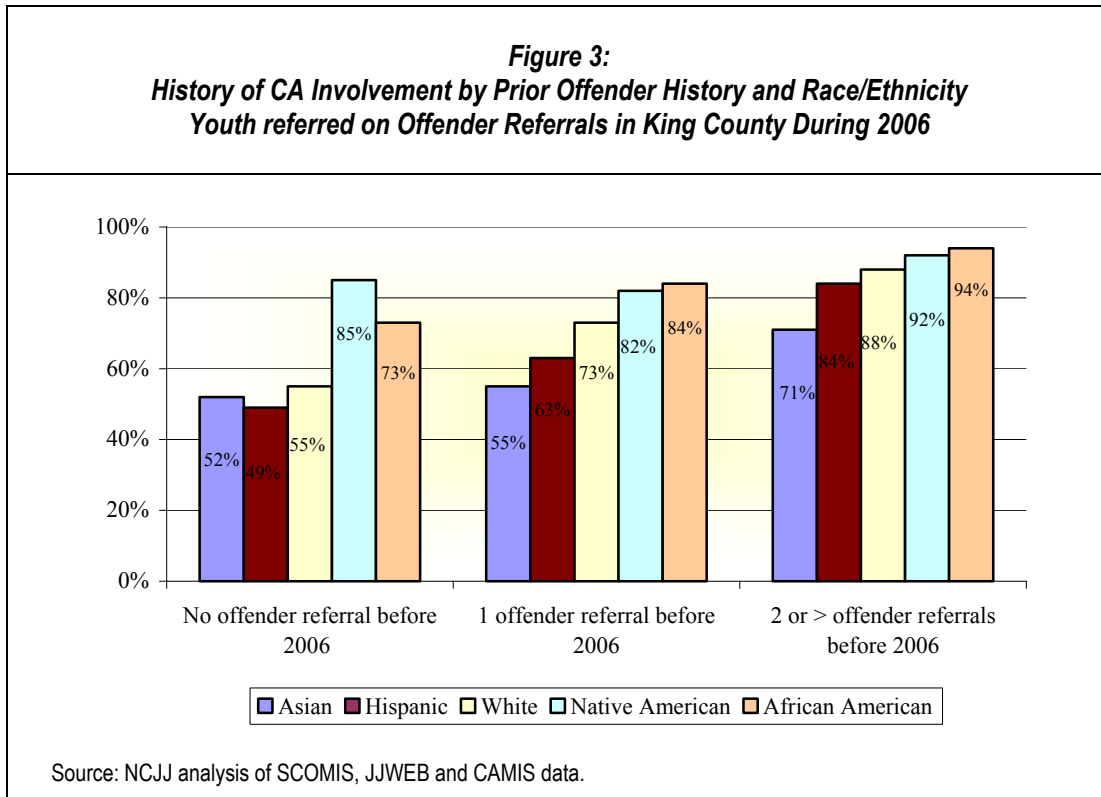
<b>Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the 2006 Offender Study Cohort By History of CA Involvement</b>				
<b>Demographic Characteristics</b>	<b>No CA History (n=1,462)</b>	<b>CAMIS ID but no detail (n=1,358)</b>	<b>CA Investigations Only (n=939)</b>	<b>CA Legal Activity and/or Placement (n=716)</b>
<b><u>Gender</u></b>				
Female	27%	32%	35%	40%
Male	73%	68%	65%	60%
<b><u>Race/Ethnicity</u></b>				
Anglo	59%	56%	47%	42%
African-American	16%	26%	33%	45%
Hispanic	11%	7%	8%	5%
Asian	12%	9%	8%	3%
Native American	1%	2%	5%	5%
Unknown	1%	1%	0%	1%
Avg. Age on Jan. 2006	15.7 years	15.6 years	15.1 years	15.4 years
Source: NCJJ analysis of SCOMIS, JJWEB and CAMIS data.				

<sup>22</sup> Nationally, 27% of all juveniles referred to the juvenile court in 2007 on delinquency matters were females. Please see, Puzanchera, C. and Kang, W. (2010). "Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics: 1985-2007." (NCJJ, 2010) Online. Available at: <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/ezajcs/>

The likelihood of at least some history of CA involvement increases even more dramatically when controlling for prior history of offender referrals (Figure 2). That is, 59% of youth referred a first-time for an offender matter during 2006 had at least some history of CA contact/involvement. For youth with two or more prior offender referrals before 2006, this percentage increases to 89%. The percentage of youth with a history of CA legal activity/placement history also increases three-fold (from 11% to 33%).



The cross-system prevalence rates are even higher for African-American and Native American youth when controlling for prior history of offender referrals – upwards of 90% (Figure 3).<sup>23</sup>



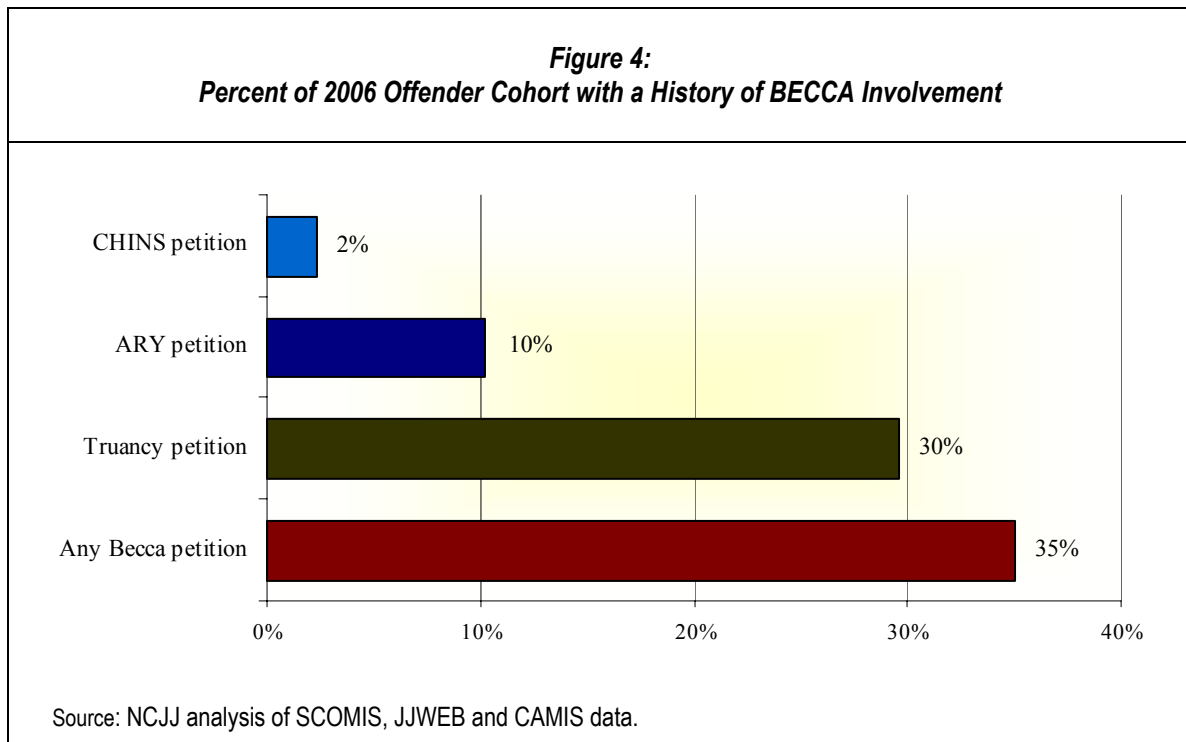
The vast majority of youth who were referred in 2006 on offender charges were referred for misdemeanor offenses. This is the case not only for first-time offenders (82%) but also for youth with a history of CA legal activity/placement (74%). First-time offenders for misdemeanor offenses are, by Washington statute, automatically eligible for diversion. Washington statutes give the prosecutor discretion with regards to diversion for second-time misdemeanants – many of whom are offered diversion.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> 44% of African-American youth with 2 or more prior (pre-2006) offender referrals had a history of extensive CA involvement (that is, CA legal activity/placement). Similarly, 45% of Native American youth in our study with two or more pre-2006 offender referrals had a history of extensive CA involvement.

<sup>24</sup> This has considerable implications for cross-system screening and the array of diversion options and services available to first and second time offenders. The limited availability of mental health services and EBPs at the diversion stage and possible statutory barriers that inhibit early access to EBPs, are important issues for cross-system cases. By the time most youth are eligible for EBPs, they have typically been referred three or more times – a population of juvenile offenders who almost invariably have some history with Children’s Administration and often one that includes court involvement and out-of-home placement. While most courts, including King County, have established diversion programs for juveniles who meet the statutorily-defined criteria (i.e., first and possibly second-time misdemeanants), these programs focus on community service, restitution, counseling, education programs, and other more traditional juvenile justice interventions. Given the high recidivism rates of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> time offenders with a history of CA involvement (please see pp. 20-26), it appears that such

**History of Becca Involvement**

Truancy petitions were the most frequent type of Becca filing with 30% of the study population (1,332) also having a history of one or more such filings.<sup>25</sup> ARY petitions had been filed on 10% of the study population (460 youth) and 2% of the study cohort had been involved with the juvenile court on a CHINS matter (106 juveniles in total).<sup>26</sup> Overall 35% of youth (1,563) in the study population had a history of at least one type of Becca petition filed prior to the end of calendar year 2008.<sup>27</sup>



traditional approaches are unlikely to be the most effective way to intervene with cross-system youth, particularly those who have the most extensive level of CA involvement.

<sup>25</sup> Approximately a quarter of all youth with a history of truancy petition filings had two or more such petition filings. That is, 332 of the 1,332 youth with a truancy petition history.

<sup>26</sup> Few youth with history of ARY and/or CHINS petitions had more than one such filing – 12% of the 460 youth with a ARY petition history had more than one such petition filed and 21 of the 106 youth with a CHINS history had two or more such petition filings (20%).

<sup>27</sup> Data presented in Figure 6 indicates that in a number of instances, a Becca petition was filed after a youth’s first referral on an offender matter – this was often the case for truancy and ARY petitions.

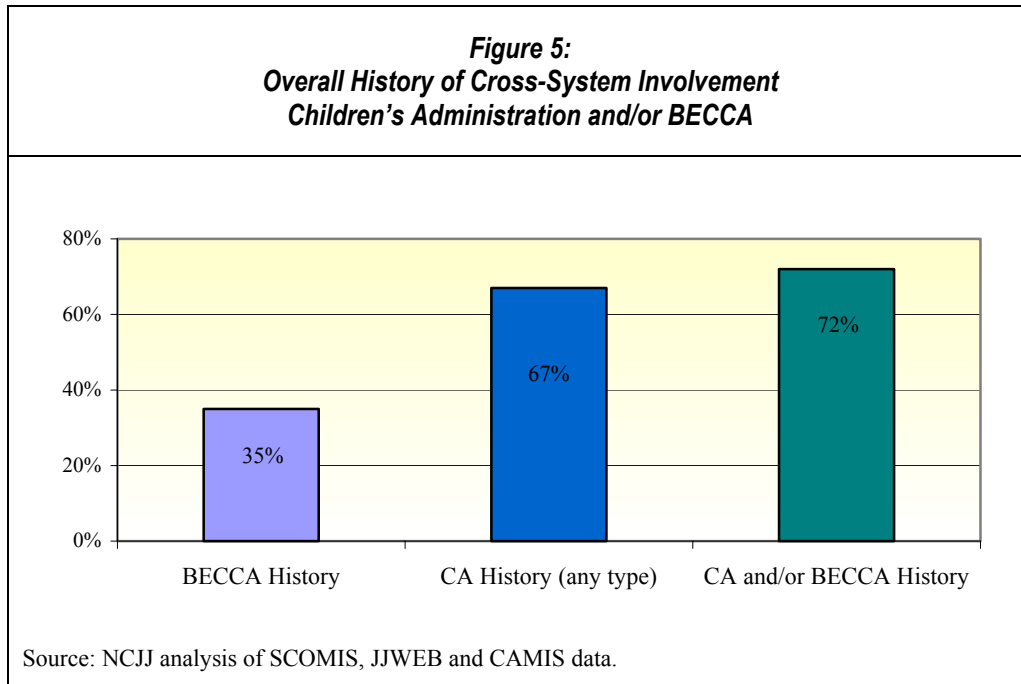
A demographic comparison of these four Becca cohorts is provided in Table 2. Two noteworthy trends include the following:

- Females constitute a somewhat larger percentage of juveniles with a history of ARY and CHINS petitions than they do for youth with no Becca history (that is, 41% for both of the former compared to 31% for the latter)
- The proportion of African-American and Native American youth in the three Becca groupings are also somewhat higher than for the “No Becca History” category. However, the differences across these categories are far less pronounced than the racial/ethnic differences found within the history of CA involvement continuum (see Table 1).

<b>Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of the 2006 Offender Study Cohort By History of BECCA Involvement</b>				
<b>Demographic Characteristics</b>	<b>No BECCA Petition (n=2,912)</b>	<b>Truancy Petition (n=1,332)</b>	<b>ARY Petition (n=460)</b>	<b>CHINS Petition (n=106)</b>
<b><u>Gender</u></b>				
Female	31%	33%	41%	41%
Male	69%	67%	59%	59%
<b><u>Race/Ethnicity</u></b>				
Anglo	56%	45%	54%	54%
African-American	25%	31%	29%	33%
Hispanic	7%	11%	7%	6%
Asian	9%	9%	8%	4%
Native American	2%	4%	2%	4%
Unknown	1%	1%	0%	0%
Avg. Age on Jan. 2006	15.5 years	15.5 years	15.6 years	15.5 years
Source: NCJJ analysis of SCOMIS, JJWEB and CAMIS data.				

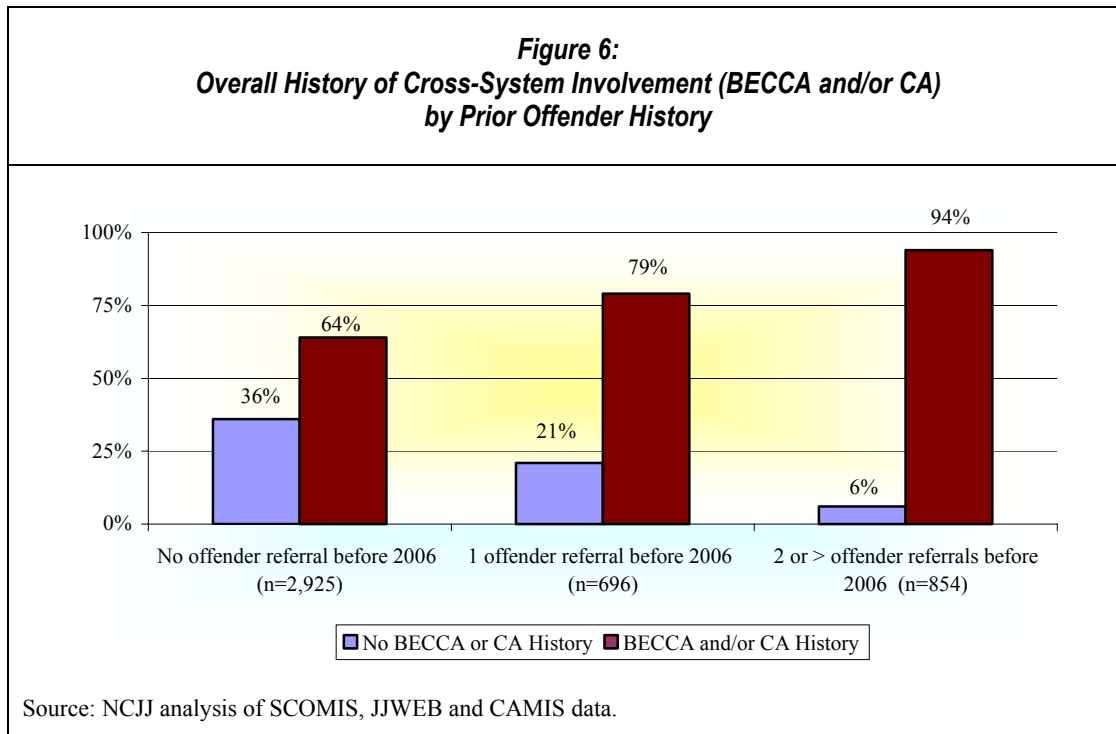
**History of Children’s Administration and Becca Involvement – Combined**

Overall, 72% of all youth referred to the King County Juvenile Court in 2006 had some history of Becca petition filings and/or history of Children’s Administration involvement either prior, during or subsequent to calendar year 2006 (Figure 5).<sup>28</sup>



The percent of youth with a history of Becca petition filings and/or Children’s Administration involvement increases to 94% for youth who had been referred on two or more offender matters prior to calendar year 2006 (Figure 6).

<sup>28</sup> Becca and CA history current through end of 2008.



For African-American and Native American youth with two or more priors, the percentage with a history of Becca and/or CA involvement increases to 97%.<sup>29</sup>

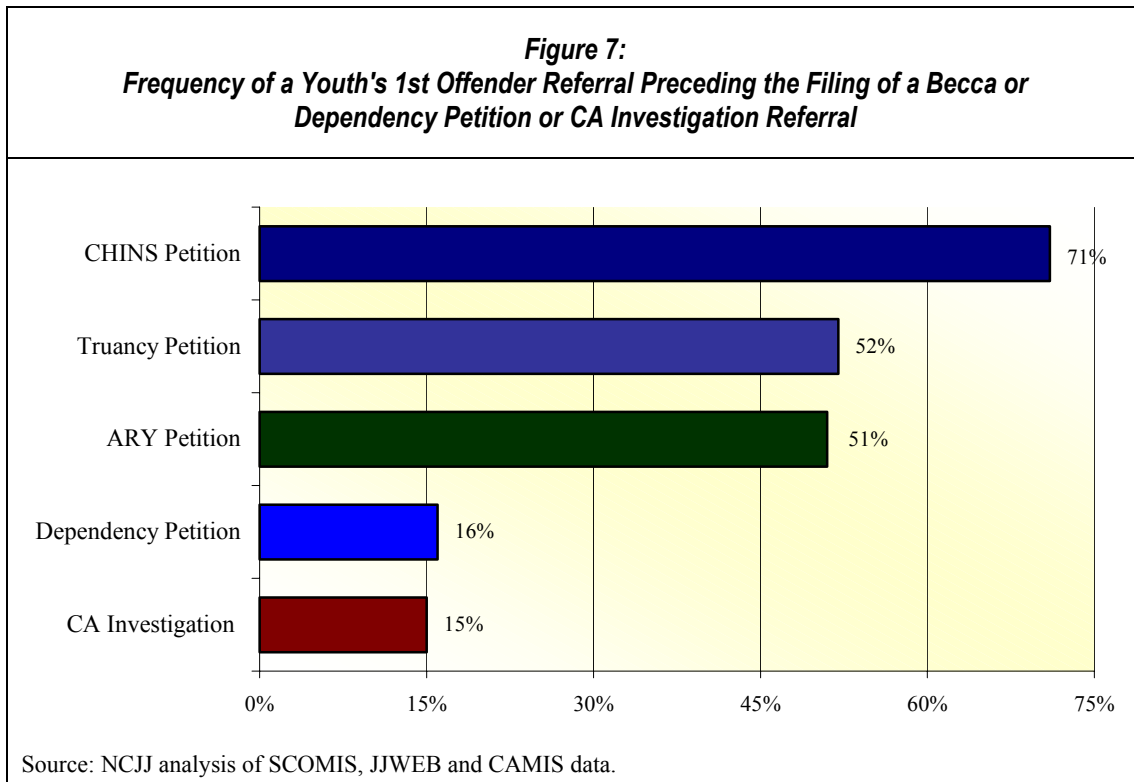
### **Timing of Cross-System Involvement – Which Came First?**

One cannot assume a linear or sequential trajectory in a youth’s history of cross-system involvement. As reflected in data presented in Figure 7, it is not uncommon for a youth’s first offender referral to *precede* the filing of a Becca petition.

- In a slight majority of cases, a truancy or ARY petition was filed *after* a juvenile’s first offender referral (52% and 51% of the time, respectively).
- In 71% of the 106 instances in our study cohort in which a youth was petitioned to the court on a CHINS matter, this petition was filed *after* his/her first offender referral.

<sup>29</sup> These data are not displayed graphically in this report. The prevalence of a history of Becca and/or CA involvement for white and Hispanic youth with 2 or more offender priors is 93% and 89%, respectively.

- Dependency petitions typically preceded the onset of a juvenile’s offender referral history. Only 16% of the time was the reverse true.
- Additionally, the timing of a Children’s Administration investigation of a moderate to high risk referral usually occurred prior to a youth’s first offender referral. Only 15% of the time was the reverse true.

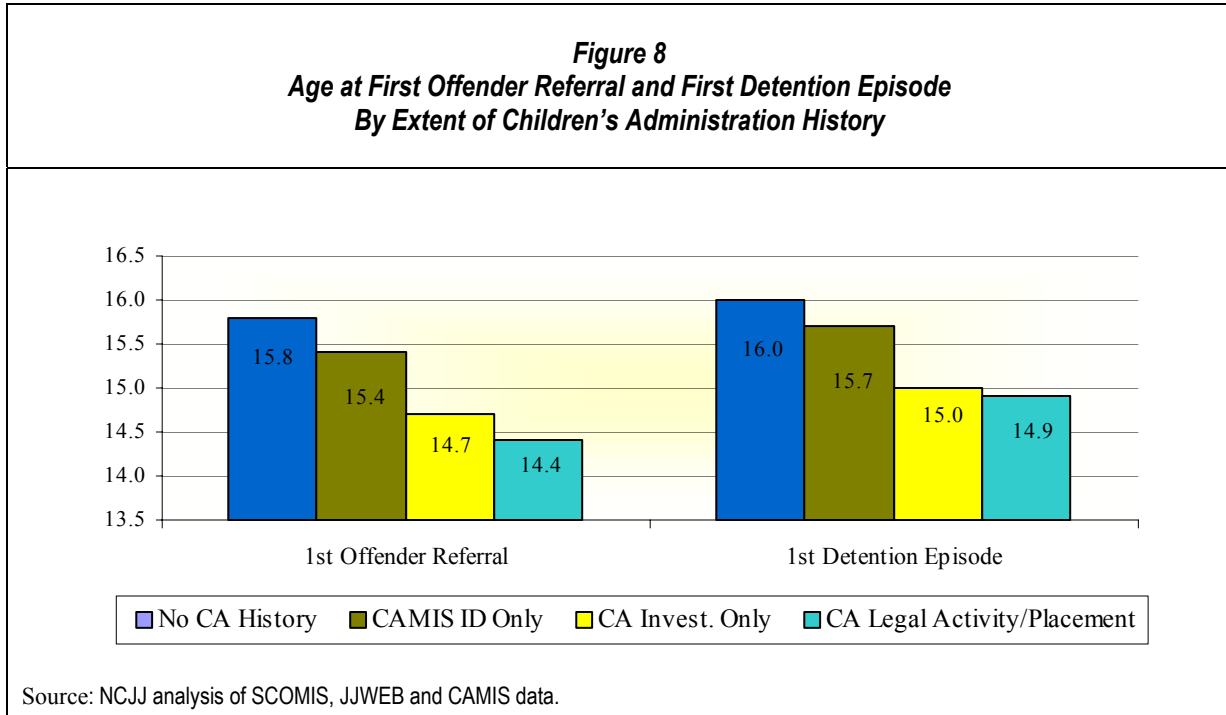


**Age at First Involvement with the Juvenile Court on Offender Matters**

Youth with a history of CA involvement were first referred on offender charges and were first detained at an earlier age than youth with no CA history. As data in Figure 8 reveal, this correlation is linear and inverse. The more extensive the history of CA involvement, the earlier, on average, a youth’s first offender referral and the earlier a youth’s first detention episode – by more than a year in each instance.

- Youth in the study cohort with no history of CA involvement were, on average, first referred on an offender matter at 15.8 years of age compared to 14.4 years of age for youth with a history of CA legal activity/placement.

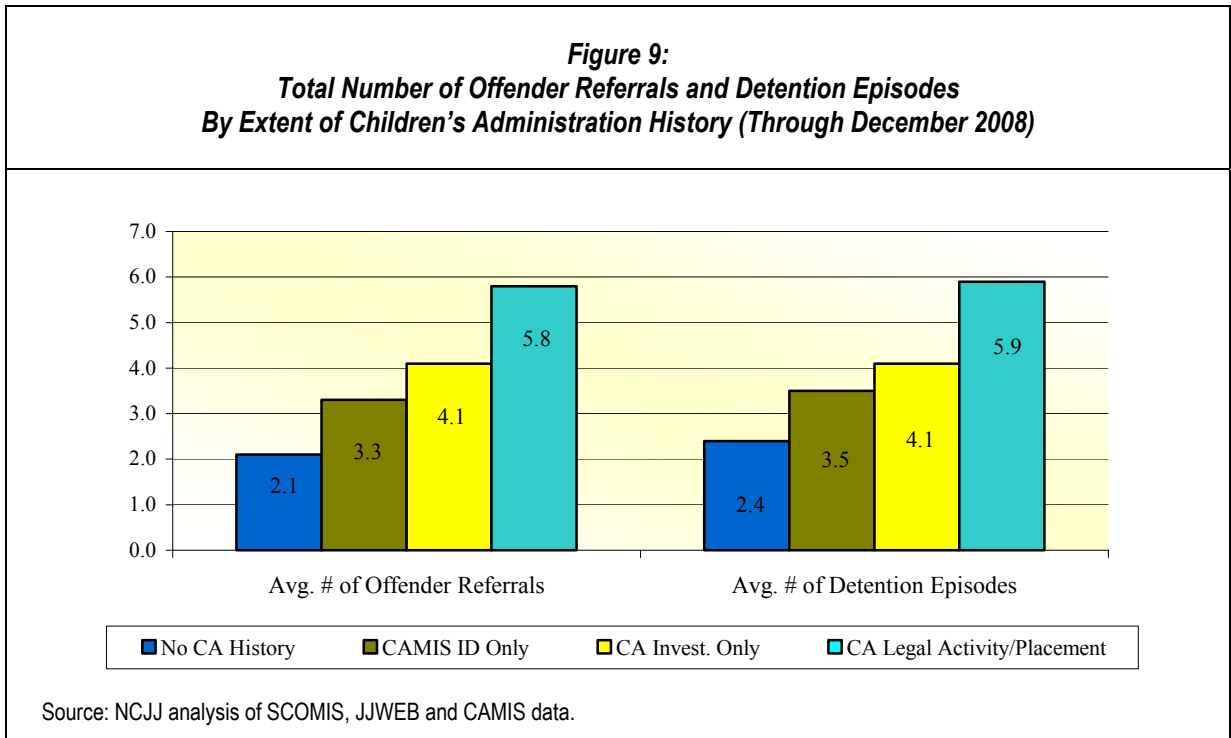
- Similarly, youth with no history of CA involvement were first detained at an average age of 16.0 compared to 14.9 years of age for youth with a history of CA legal activity/placement.<sup>30</sup>



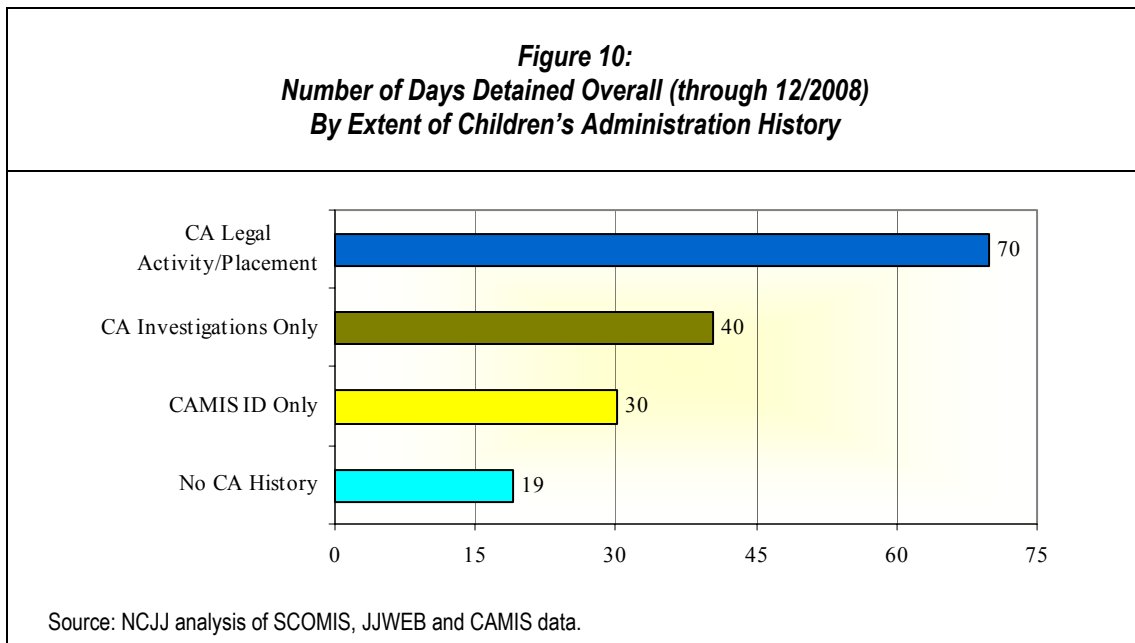
A similar pattern was identified when examining the frequency of offender referrals and detention episodes (Figure 9). That is, youth with a history of CA involvement were more frequently referred on offender charges and detained.

- Youth with no history of CA involvement were referred on offender charges an average of 2.1 times compared to an average of 5.8 times for youth with a history of CA legal activity/placement – a difference of almost three-fold.
- Similarly, the average number of detention episodes ranged from 2.4 for youth with no CA history to 5.9 for youth on the other end of the CA involvement continuum – a difference of close to two and half times.

<sup>30</sup> Overall, 45% of all youth on our 2006 study cohort experienced at least one episode in detention. However, the likelihood that a youth was detained at least once prior to the end of 2008, varied from 22% for youth with no history of CA involvement to 73% for youth with an extensive history of CA involvement. For the two middle categories (CAMIS ID only and CA investigation history), likelihood of ever being detained was 46% and 58%, respectively.



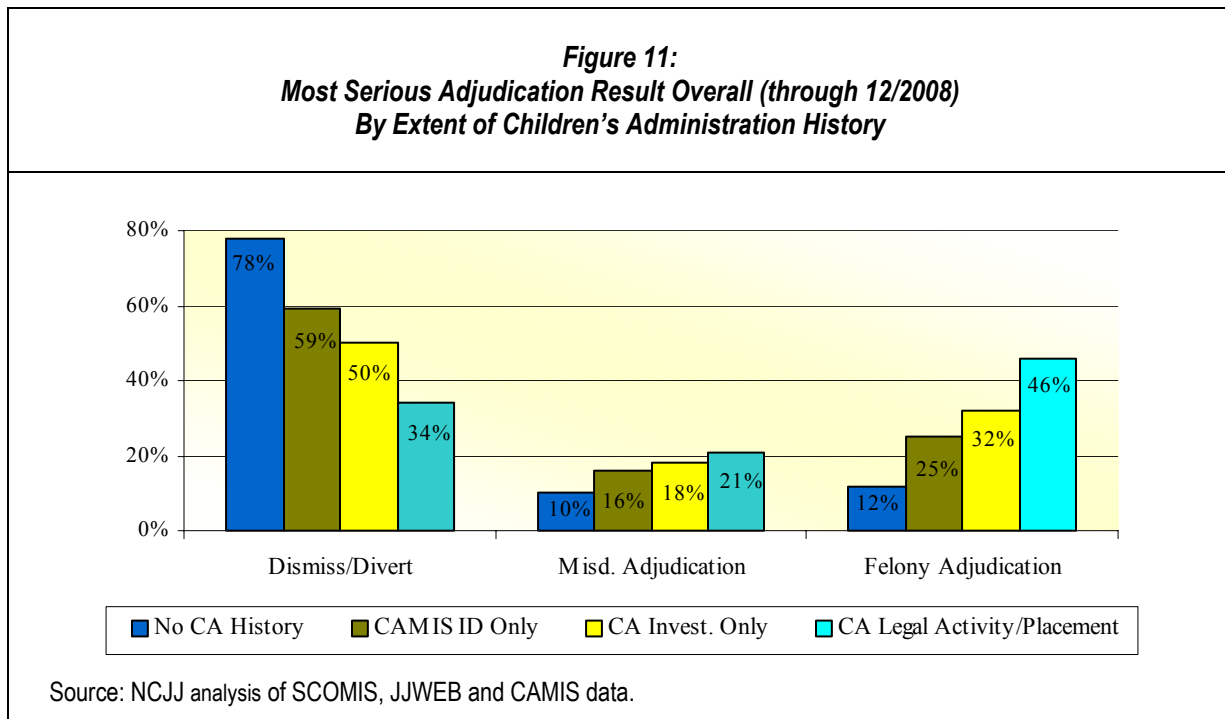
Not surprisingly, youth with a history of CA involvement, on average, spent considerably more overall time in detention than juveniles with no history of CA involvement (Figure 10). At the two ends of the CA involvement continuum (no CA history and history of CA legal activity/placement), the difference is striking – 19 days compared to 70 days, respectively.



**Extent of Juvenile Justice System Involvement**

Data presented in Figure 11 indicate that youth with a history of CA involvement are considerably more likely to be adjudicated on a felony offense at some point in their juvenile justice careers.<sup>31</sup>

- For the vast majority of youth with no history of CA involvement, the most serious result of an offender referral was dismissal or diversion (78%). Only 10% of these youth were eventually adjudicated on a misdemeanor offense as their most serious offender referral result. Another 12% were at some point in their juvenile justice careers adjudicated on a felony charge.
- The reverse is true for juveniles on the other end of the CA involvement continuum. Close to half of youth with a history of CA legal activity/placement were at some point adjudicated on a felony matter. For another 21% of these youth their most serious offender referral result was a misdemeanor adjudication.



<sup>31</sup> In Washington State, the threshold of a felony adjudication is particularly critical in that an adjudication for a Class C felony is a minimum requirement for potential commitment to the state's Juvenile Rehabilitation Agency (JRA). The number of prior adjudications also factor into this determination with prior felony adjudications weighted four times that of prior misdemeanor adjudications. The applicable sentencing grid and options are statutorily described in RCW 13.40.0357. Please see the Washington State Sentencing Guidelines Commission's *Juvenile Disposition Manual* which can be downloaded at: [http://www.sgc.wa.gov/PUBS/Juvenile/Juvenile\\_Disposition\\_Manual\\_2005.pdf](http://www.sgc.wa.gov/PUBS/Juvenile/Juvenile_Disposition_Manual_2005.pdf).

## **Two-Year Recidivism Rates by History of CA Involvement**

The database constructed for the King County Prevalence Study contains detailed information on all juvenile offender matters referred to the court through the end of calendar year 2008 as well as any criminal matters referred to municipal, district and superior courts.<sup>32</sup> This allows for a minimum of two years of recidivism tracking of all juveniles included in the 2006 study cohort regardless of age at the time of a youth's first 2006 referral on an offender matter.

Consistent with data presented to this point, there is a strong correlation between recidivism and history of CA involvement. Data presented in Figure 12 trends recidivism rates in six-month intervals by level of CA involvement.

- Youth with no history of CA involvement were far less likely to be referred on a new offender matter *within six months* than youth on the far end of the CA involvement continuum – 17% compared to 42%, respectively.
- *At the two-year mark*, 34% of the youth with no history of CA involvement had been referred on at least one new offender referral compared to 70% of youth with a history of CA legal activity/placement.
- Recidivism rates for the two less extensive CA categories (CAMIS ID only and history of CA investigation only) fall in between these two ends of the continuum but generally track closer to recidivism rates of the history of CA legal activity/placement subset of 2006 offenders.
- For example, 51% youth with only a CAMIS ID had recidivated within two years – a rate considerably higher than the no CA history cohort.

---

<sup>32</sup> This includes date of offense, offense description and category (misdemeanor, felony, etc.) , offense severity ranking, date referred or petitioned, adjudication and disposition dates, disposition result, and the level of court responsible for handling the matter.

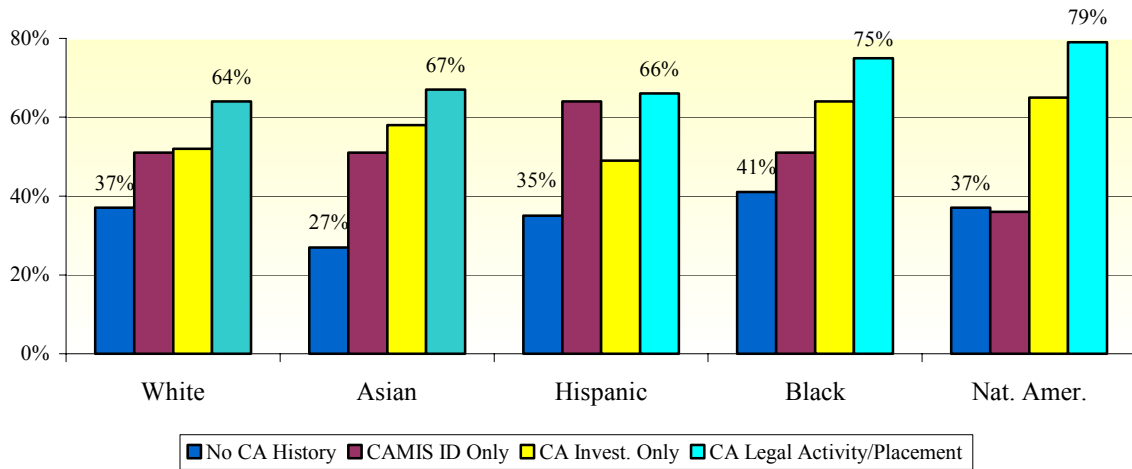
**Figure 12:**  
**Percent Recidivating Within Two Years of 2006 Offender Referral**  
**By Extent of Children’s Administration History**



Source: NCJJ analysis of SCOMIS, JJWEB and CAMIS data.

Two-year recidivism rates for African-American and Native American youth were generally higher across all four CA involvement groupings (Figure 13). In the most extensive CA involvement category (the history of CA activity/placement cohort), two-year recidivism rates for African-American and Native American youth were 75% and 79%, respectively. These were considerably higher than for Asian, White and Hispanic youth with similar CA histories which hovered somewhere in the mid-60 percentiles.

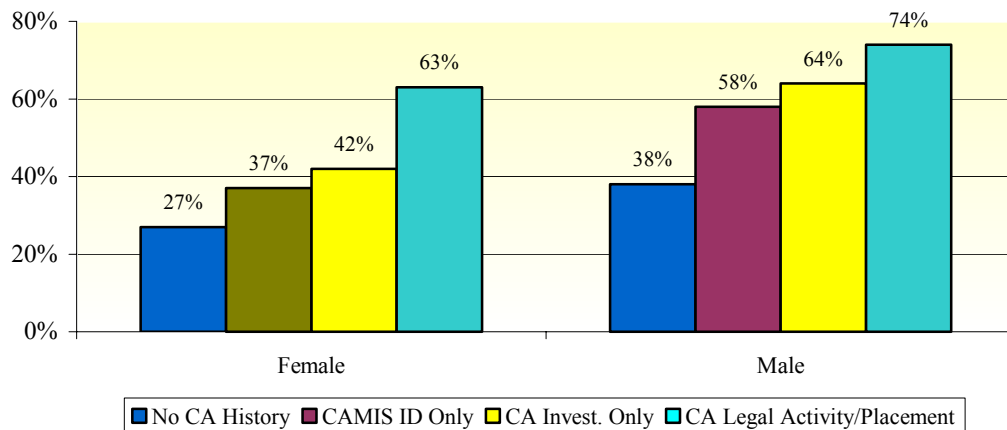
**Figure 13:**  
**Percent Recidivating within Two Years**  
**By Extent of Children's Administration History and Race/Ethnicity**



Source: NCJJ analysis of SCOMIS, JJWEB and CAMIS data.

For females, two-year recidivism rates rose substantially as the analysis controlled for level of CA involvement – from 27% for females with no CA history to 63% for females with a history of CA legal activity/placement (Figure 14).

**Figure 14:**  
**Percent Recidivating within Two Years**  
**By Extent of Children's Administration History and Gender**



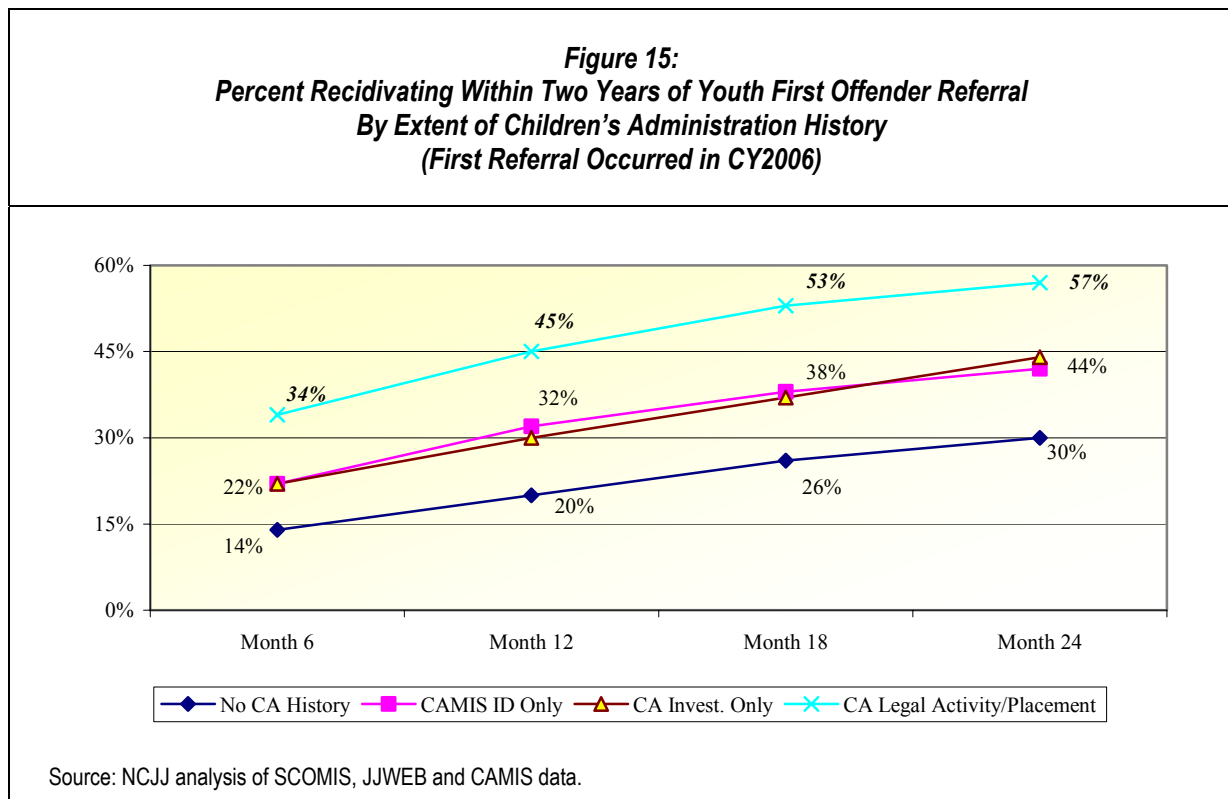
Source: NCJJ analysis of SCOMIS, JJWEB and CAMIS data.

**Recidivism Among First-Time Offenders**

First-time offenders represent 65% of all juveniles in the overall study cohort of youth referred to the King County Juvenile Court on an offender referral in 2006.<sup>33</sup> The vast majority of these youth were referred on misdemeanor offenses (82%). Almost invariably, 1<sup>st</sup>-time offender referrals were diverted or disposition was deferred (96%).

Two-year recidivism trends for 1<sup>st</sup>-time offenders are provided in Figure 15. These recidivism trends tend to mirror those for the overall 2006 offender population.<sup>34</sup>

- 14% of 1<sup>st</sup>-time offenders with no history of CA involvement were referred on a new offender matter within six months compared to 34% of 1<sup>st</sup>-time offenders with a history of CA legal activity/placement.
- The two-year recidivism rates for these two 1<sup>st</sup>-time offender groupings were 30% and 57%, respectively.



<sup>33</sup> That is, 2,925 of the 4,475 youth in the overall study cohort.

<sup>34</sup> Please see Figure 12.

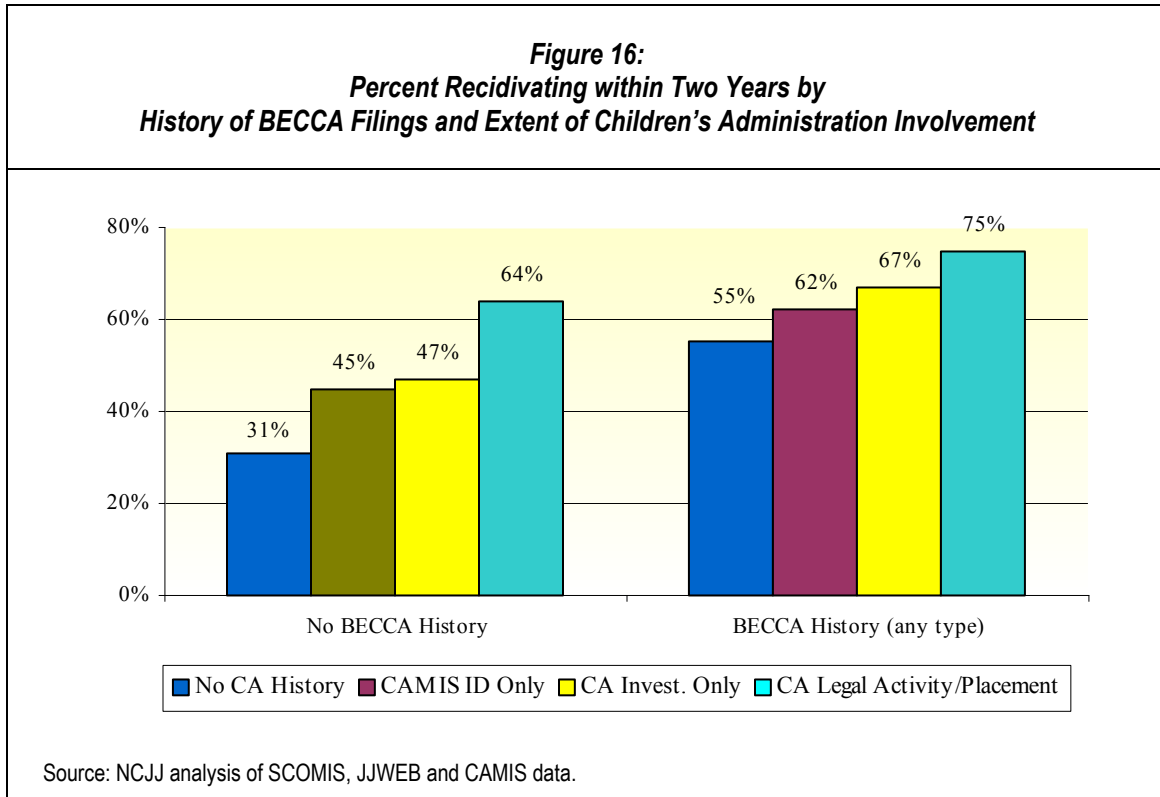
Demographic comparisons of this population of 1<sup>st</sup>-time offenders across the four CA involvement cohorts are provided in Table 3. Three noteworthy findings include:

- The percent of young/very young 1st-time offenders increases as the extent of CA involvement increases. Adolescents 12 years of age or younger represent 2% of the “No CA History” population and 8% of the “CA Legal Activity/Placement” cohort – a four-fold increase. The size of the 13 – 14 year old 1st-time offender population also tends to increase in similar fashion.
- The more extensive the history of CA involvement, the greater the proportion of females. Females constitute 30% of the 1st-time offender population with no CA history and almost half (47%) of all 1st-time offenders with a “History of CA Legal Activity/Placement.”
- The proportion of African-American youth increases almost three-fold as the extent of CA involvement intensifies – from 15% of the “No CA History” 1<sup>st</sup>-time offender cohort to 43% with a “History of CA Legal Activity/Placement.” A similar trend is evident among Native American youth.

<b>Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of First Time Offenders By History of CA Involvement</b>				
<b>Demographic Characteristics</b>	<b>No CA History (n=1,193)</b>	<b>CAMIS ID but no detail (n=886)</b>	<b>CA Investigations Only (n=538)</b>	<b>CA Legal Activity and/or Placement (n=308)</b>
<b><u>Age @ 1<sup>st</sup> Referral</u></b>				
12 or less	2%	4%	8%	8%
13 – 14	22%	23%	37%	30%
15 – 16	45%	49%	41%	44%
17	31%	24%	14%	18%
<b><u>Gender</u></b>				
Female	30%	36%	42%	47%
Male	70%	64%	58%	53%
<b><u>Race/Ethnicity</u></b>				
Anglo	61%	57%	50%	44%
African-American	15%	24%	29%	43%
Hispanic	11%	7%	7%	6%
Asian	11%	9%	10%	3%
Native American	1%	2%	4%	4%
Unknown	1%	1%	0%	1%
Source: NCJJ analysis of SCOMIS, JJWEB and CAMIS data.				

**Two-Year Recidivism Rates by History of Becca Filings and Extent of CA Involvement**

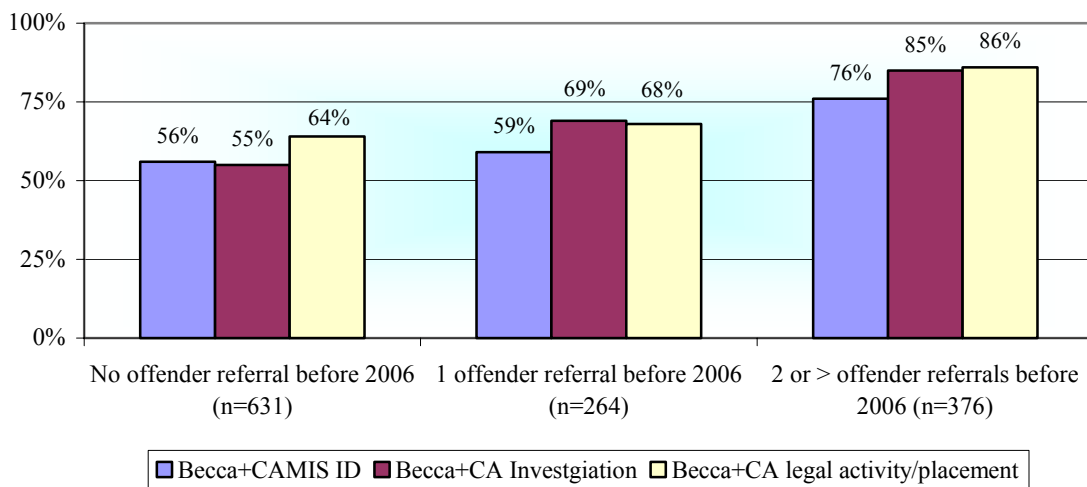
As Figure 16 depicts, two-year recidivism rates rise dramatically as the analysis controls for histories of, both, Becca petition filings and Children’s Administration involvement. Among juveniles with no history of either, the two-year recidivism rate was 31%. On the other end of the continuum, youth with a history of, both, Becca petition filings and a history of CA legal activity/placement, the two-year recidivism rates spike to 75%.



There are a total of 1,351 youth in the 2006 study cohort who have, both, a history of at least one Becca petition filing and some level of involvement with Children’s Administration. Figure 17 presents two-year recidivism data on these Becca/CA youth while also controlling for prior offense history.

- Among 1<sup>st</sup>-time offenders (no offender referral before 2006), the two-year recidivism rates range from 56% for youth with a Becca history and limited CA involvement (CAMIS ID only) to 64% for youth with a Becca history and a history of extensive CA involvement (CA legal activity/placement).<sup>35</sup>
- The two-year recidivism rates increase to 76% for Becca – CAMIS ID only youth with two or more pre-2006 offender referrals and to 86% for Becca – CA legal activity/placement youth.

**Figure 17:**  
**Percent Recidivating within Two Years**  
**Juveniles with History of BECCA Filings and CA Involvement**  
**by Prior Offender History**



Source: NCJJ analysis of SCOMIS, JJWEB and CAMIS data.

<sup>35</sup> There are 631 such youth in the prevalence study data set.

### **Analysis of Youth with a CA Placement History**

In this final section of the report, placement data on youth who spent extended time in one or more CA-related (tracked) placements in 2006 are examined. DSHS provided data on all CA-related placement events and episodes<sup>36</sup> on a total of 669 youth in the overall study cohort.<sup>37</sup>

Of these, 34% (226 in all) spent 30 or more days in one or more CA-related placements in calendar year 2006, and most of these youth also spent time in a CA-related placement in 2007 and, possibly, in 2008.<sup>38</sup>

Placement histories were compiled for these 226 youth from the start of 2006 through the end of 2008 or their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, whichever came first. The amount of time tracked varied by juvenile but, on average, spanned 27 months. The number of individual placement changes were tallied for each youth (including the number of AWOL events) and the amount of time spent in various types of placements was examined.

This 30 or more days in placement threshold generally tracks closely to the out-of-home/shelter care placement measure in the WSJCA instrument for all youth petitioned on an offender matter (Domain 7A, item 1).<sup>39</sup> This measure is also tracked in the shortened pre-screen assessment used “to more quickly assess a juvenile’s level of risk early in the adjudication process.”<sup>40</sup>

An analysis of a somewhat similar set of 204 dually involved youth in Arizona in 2004, found that these youth (on average) experienced frequent placement changes, multiple AWOLs, spent much of their time in congregate care and detention/juvenile corrections, and very little time at home.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> A placement episode can span multiple placement events. An episode begins at the time a youth is placed out-of-the home and ends when (s)he either returns home or when CA involvement ends.

<sup>37</sup> All of these youth are considered to be in the fourth or highest category of CA involvement (i.e., history of CA legal activity/placement).

<sup>38</sup> That is, 76% percent (172/226 youth) spent time in a CA-related placement in 2007 and/or in 2008.

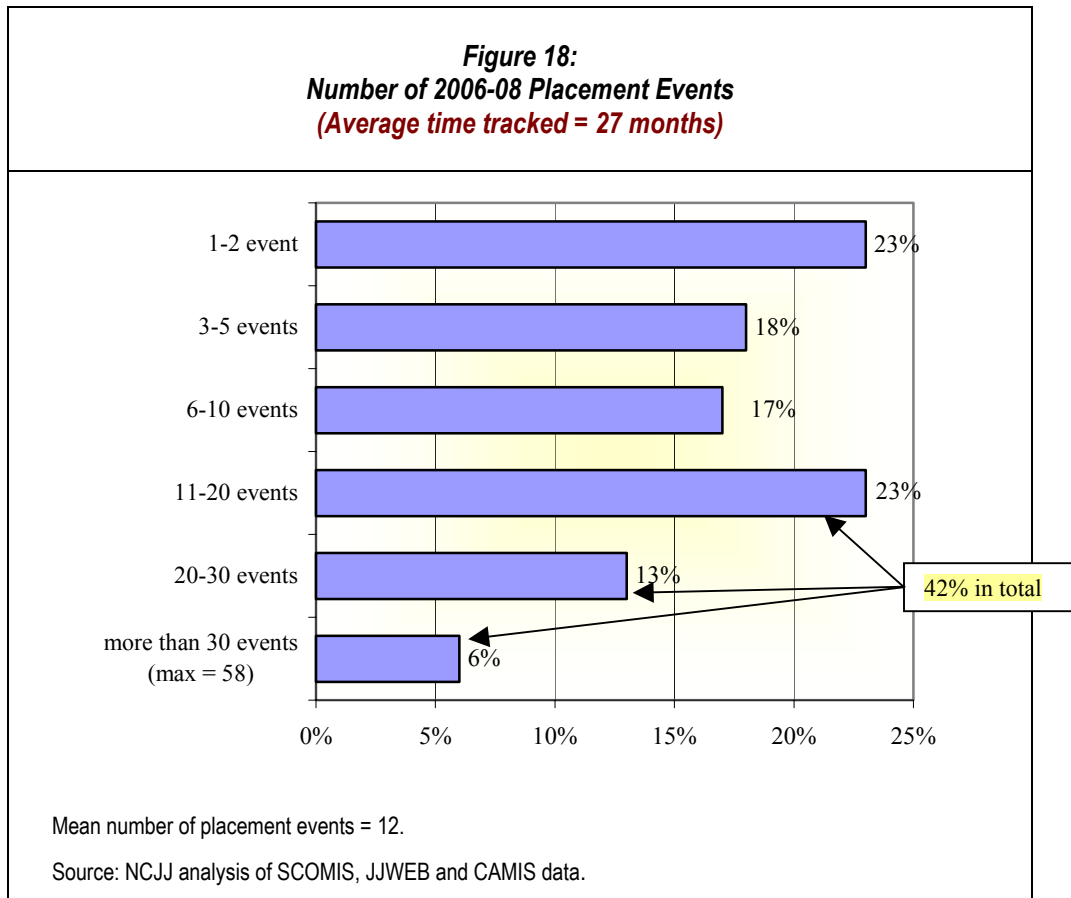
<sup>39</sup> The WSJCA does not include days spent in JRA, detention and time spent AWOL. This study, however, does include counts of placement days for these three categories. If WSJCA criteria would have been applied, the study sample for this analysis would have been reduced by approximately 5%.

<sup>40</sup> Please see Washington State Institute for Public Policy. *Washington State Juvenile Court Assessment Manual, Version 2.1*. (March 2004, pg. 16).

<sup>41</sup> Please see G. Halemba et al., *Arizona Dual Jurisdiction Study: Final Report*, (NCJJ 2004, pp. 46-49). A total of 204 youth were involved in this study. These youth were active with the court on a dependency matter and also concurrently involved with the court on delinquency matter (and on probation). The average amount of time tracked was 30 months and these youth experienced an average of 11 placement changes during that period.

The King County analysis produced similar findings to the Arizona study. Data summarized in Figure 18 reveal that only 23% of these youth experienced one to two placement events during the three year-period 2006-08 (or until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday). These events could have included stays in detention and JRA.<sup>42</sup> *On the other end of the continuum, 42% experienced 11 or more placement changes (again, this includes AWOL events).*

*On average, these 226 youth experienced 12 placement changes. This translates into some type of placement change every 2.2 months (66 days) – not counting placement changes that involved a return home.*



<sup>42</sup> Any placement changes that result in return to parents or, more generally, not in CA-related care, were excluded from this total.

AWOL events were a common occurrence among these youth – an average of three. Overall, 20% experienced six or more AWOLS – with 15 youth having 10 or more (one youth totaled 21 such events).

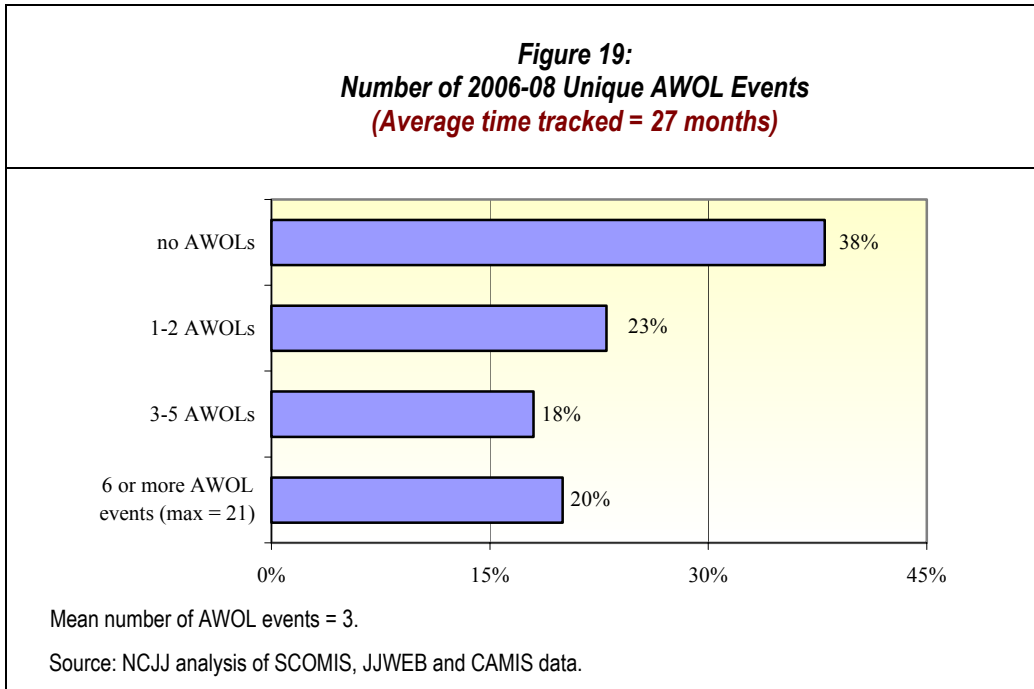


Table 4 presents data on the percent of youth in the 2006 CA placement cohort who spent time in various types of placements:

- Group and foster homes were the most frequently listed type of placements utilized – 65% of the placement cohort spent time in a group home and 59% in a foster home.
- About half of all youth also spent time in a detention facility (51%) and 5% were placed in JRA for part of the three-year period under consideration.
- Consistent with data presented in Figure 19, 62% spent time on AWOL status.
- 58% of youth in the 2006 cohort spent at least some time at home or not in CA-related care. *However, the flip-side of this means that 42% of the 226 youth in the study cohort spent 100% of their time in some type of placement and/or on the run.*<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> That is for the three years starting in January 2006 or until they reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

<i><b>Table 4: Time Spent in Various Placements by Type (Average time tracked = 814 days)</b></i>			
<b>Type of Placement</b>	<b>Ever in Placement Type (during 2006-08)</b>	<b>Average Days in Placement Type</b>	<b>% of Overall Days</b>
Parents/not in care	58%	140	17%
Relative Placement	39%	143	18%
Foster Home	59%	169	21%
Group Home	65%	110	14%
CRC	37%	11	1%
Detention	51%	42	5%
JRA	19%	42	5%
AWOL	62%	115	14%
Other	26%	42	5%

Source: NCJJ analysis of SCOMIS, JJWEB and CAMIS data.

Overall, the 2006 placement cohort spent little time at home or not in CA-related care – on average, only 140 days of the 814 days tracked. Youth spent, on average, more time in foster homes and relative placement settings (169 and 143 days, respectively) and almost as much time in group homes (110 days) and on AWOL status (115 days).

In Table 5, some beginning estimate of the placement costs associated with these challenging cases is presented. This initial estimate takes a hypothetical youth and, in the aggregate, uses the average time spent in various placements as reflected in Table 4 to calculate preliminary cost figures. Average days in placement are converted to months and an average monthly rate is estimated. These estimated monthly costs are intended to be preliminary, should be considered conservative, and offer a starting point for closer future analysis.

The preliminary estimate of placement costs for one hypothetical cross system youth is approximately \$38,000. Extrapolating this estimate to all 226 youth in the analysis who spent at least 30 days in one or more CA-related placements in 2006, the overall placement cost estimate is almost \$8.6M through the end of calendar year 2008.<sup>44</sup>

**Table 5:**  
**Estimated Placement Costs**  
**(For Hypothetical Cross System Youth in King County)**

<u>Placement Type</u>	<u>Months</u>	<u>Avg. Monthly Rate</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>
Foster Home	5.5	\$ 750	\$ 4,125
Relative Care <sup>45</sup>	4.7	250	1,175
Group Home/CRC	4.0	\$4,500	18,000
AWOL	3.8	0	0
Detention/JRA	2.8	4,500	12,600
Other	1.4	1,500	2,100
Parents/Out of Care	4.6	0	0
<b>Overall</b>	<b>26.8</b>		<b>\$38,000</b>

**Concluding Remarks/Summary of Key Findings**

The final Prevalence Study cohort included a total of 4,475 juveniles referred in King County on offender charges in calendar year 2006 and their history of court and child welfare involvement was tracked through the end of the 2008 calendar year. While, it was anticipated that a substantial percentage of these youth would have had some history of CA involvement, it was not anticipated that this was the case for two-thirds of the overall study cohort.

<sup>44</sup> That is, 226 youth x \$38,000 = \$8,588,000.

<sup>45</sup> Assuming that approximately a third of this time is spent in reimbursed licensed relative care (1/3 of estimated the foster home rate).

The 2006 study population was eventually divided into four subgroups that reflected an increasing continuum of Children's Administration involvement:

- No history of CA involvement (33%)
- Assignment of a CAMIS ID but no detailed agency history (30%)
- History of CA investigation of moderate/high risk referrals (21%)
- History of CA legal activity/placement (16%).

Demographic comparisons of these four history of CA involvement cohorts revealed that the percent of female offenders increased as the history of agency involvement intensified. Likewise, the proportion of African-American youth increased almost three-fold as CA involvement deepened. The same is true for Native American youth.

*Perhaps most striking was the fact that for youth with two or more prior offender referrals before 2006, the likelihood of at least some history of CA contact/involvement increases to 89% and upwards of 90% for African-American and Native American youth. When taking into account, both, a history of Becca petition filings and any level of CA involvement, the percent of African-American and Native American youth with two or more prior offender referrals increased to 97%.*

A wide array of data were presented that confirm in a very definitive and unambiguous fashion, that youth with histories CA involvement do poorly on most measures of juvenile justice system involvement including age at first referral, various detention measures and on recidivism (likelihood, velocity and seriousness). Some of the most striking data findings include:

- Youth with cross system involvement, particularly with a history of CA legal activity/placement, start their delinquent careers a year or more earlier than youth with no CA involvement.<sup>46</sup>
- Youth on the far end of the CA involvement continuum are typically first detained at an earlier age, are detained far more frequently, and spend substantially more time in detention compared to youth with no cross system involvement (an average of 70 days compared to 19 days, respectively).<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Please see pp. 16-17 and data presented in Figure 8.

<sup>47</sup> Please see pp. 17-18 and data summarized in Figures 9-10.

- Short and longer-term recidivism rates correlate very closely with increasing history of CA involvement. Six-month recidivism rates for youth on the far end of the continuum are approximately two and half times higher than for youth with no history of CA involvement. At the two-year mark, recidivism rates are more than twice as high.
- Additionally, recidivism rates rise dramatically as the analysis controls for histories of, both, Becca petition filings and Children’s Administration involvement. Among juveniles with no history of either, the two-year recidivism rate is 31%. On the other end of the continuum, youth with a history of, both, Becca petition filings and a history of CA legal activity/placement, the two-year recidivism rates spike to 75%.

The findings of this study suggest the need to more effectively intervene at earlier stages with these young people. This includes the need to carefully re-examine and possibly augment current intake screening protocols that appear to rely primarily on self-reports from juveniles and/or family members. Prior/concurrent involvement with Children’s Administration – regardless of duration and intensity – can provide intake screeners with a simple surrogate measure of familial dysfunction/turmoil, behavioral concerns and possibly episodic or long-standing patterns of neglect. In essence, screening for CA involvement can serve as a flag that quickly identifies instances in which further scrutiny is warranted.

The current study clearly demonstrates that youth referred on misdemeanor offenses who have any history of cross system involvement (regardless of how fleeting) are considerably more likely to recidivate than youth referred for misdemeanors with no such history.

Most youth referred on a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> misdemeanor offense are typically diverted. Given the elevated recidivism rates found among cross system misdemeanants, it would seem prudent to carefully examine additional and perhaps non-traditional diversion options for, at minimum, certain segments of this population (e.g., younger youth, females, and youth of color).

Additionally, the velocity with which cross system youth recidivate highlights the fact that the timing of interventions is as important as the types of interventions. Consistent with earlier studies in Arizona and California, the findings in King County suggest that the delinquent careers of cross-system youth often quickly spiral out of control. Taking four to six weeks and possibly longer to respond to a cross-system youth’s first offender referral is too long.<sup>48</sup> A “sense or

---

<sup>48</sup> Please see Gene Siegel and Gregg Halemba, “The Importance of Timely Case Processing in Non-Detained Juvenile Delinquency Cases,” NCJJ, July 2006.

*urgency*” needs to permeate any coordinated/integrated response to effectively intervene with cross-system youth – especially cross-system youth referred for the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> time on a misdemeanor referral.<sup>49</sup>

The last section of the report examines the placement histories of offender youth with extensive CA involvement – specifically, youth who spent at least 30 days in a CA-related placement in 2006. Placement histories are tracked through the end of 2008 or till their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday which ever came first. These youth experienced, on average, 12 placement changes including an average of three AWOL episodes. Very little time during this three-year period was spent at home or not in CA-related care and it is conservatively estimated that placement costs averaged approximately \$38,000 per youth during this time. For the 226 youth included in this part of the analysis, the estimated total cost of placement approached \$8.6M.

Digesting these data, prioritizing various subgroups to target for special emphasis (e.g., 1<sup>st</sup>-time offenders, females, minority youth, etc), and developing coordinated/effective cross-system intervention responses represent monumental but important challenges that can re-shape how the juvenile justice and child welfare systems are viewed by the larger community. More importantly, the future of our most troubled youth lie in the balance, many of whom have experienced periodic (if not, repeated) episodes of neglect and sometimes abuse and who often lack even the basic familial and community supports that they truly need and deserve as they approach adulthood.

The data set constructed for this analysis has considerable potential to allow for more in-depth analysis of various subpopulations of cross over youth. Subsequent summaries are planned that will take a closer look at differential cross-system trajectories and outcomes for first-time offenders, females, and minority youth, among others.

Lastly, the Washington State Center for Court Research (WSSCR) has initiated an analysis of Washington State Juvenile Court Assessment data on the 2006 study cohort with plans to examine, in some detail, the differences in various risk and protective domains for these youth while controlling for a history of cross system involvement. Lastly, NCJJ and WSSCR plan to examine differential patterns of cross system involvement for all youth referred to the court on dependency and Becca matters in a fashion similar to what is presented herein for youth referred on offender matters.

---

<sup>49</sup> The authors recommend that a detailed analysis be undertaken of how the intake screening and diversion process unfolds in King County as well as the length of time needed for adjudication/disposition in offender matters that are formally petitioned. This effort should also include an examination of the amount of time needed for provision of services.