

OKLAHOMA JUVENILE JUSTICE

at a glance

March 2014

The number of youth coming into contact with the juvenile justice system has been decreasing in recent years within Oklahoma and in the nation. This is partly attributable to the great strides the state has made in increasing diversion services and treatment programs to youth struggling with addiction, mental illness and other behavioral issues. However, Oklahoma still has work to do. Data routinely show children in our state suffer trauma that impact them throughout their lives. This can be seen in the state's high rates of parental incarceration, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, mental illness and substance abuse. All of these factors increase the likelihood a child will have involvement in the juvenile justice system.



NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

MENTAL HEALTH

Youth in the juvenile justice system experience mental health disorders at a rate more than **three times** higher than that of the general population. Approximately **70%** of youth in the juvenile justice system experience mental health disorders with **20%** experiencing a severe mental condition.¹ Nearly two-thirds (**64%**) of youth committed to a secure facility were found to have a mental health disorder.²

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Substance abuse among youth in the juvenile justice system range from **25%** to **50%** depending on where in the criminal process the teen is assessed.³

CHILD WELFARE HISTORY

Studies have shown anywhere between **26%** and **85%** of youth involved in the juvenile justice system have past child welfare involvement. These children often have higher recidivism rates than juveniles with no past child welfare history.⁴

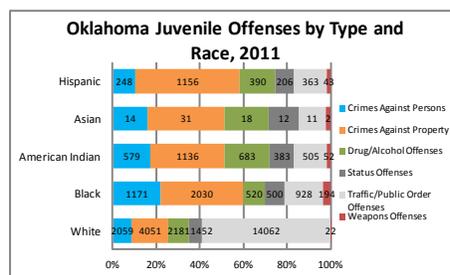
RACE MATTERS

More than **18,000** Oklahoma youth were arrested in 2011 for crimes ranging from minor to violent offenses. Of those youth coming into contact with the juvenile justice system, the following trends were seen:

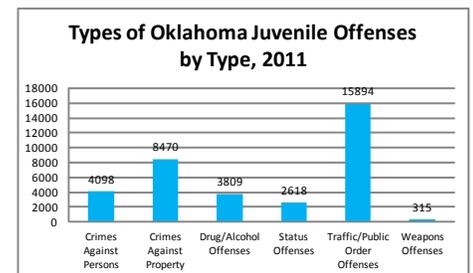
- African American youth are over-represented in arrests and detention when compared to other racial/ethnic groups. They make up only **11.4%** of the child population, but represent **35.1%** of detention admissions. They often come into contact with law enforcement for minor offenses.
- American Indian youth are over-represented in arrests for drug and alcohol offenses.
- Hispanic youth come into contact with law enforcement most frequently for property crimes.

OTHER TRENDS

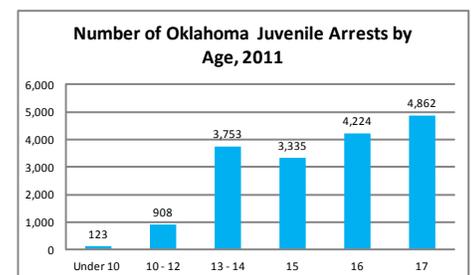
- Juveniles accounted for **12%** of all persons arrested for all Oklahoma crimes in 2011.
- The majority of juveniles arrested were between 15 and 17 years old.
- More than **1 in 10** juvenile arrests were drug and alcohol related.
- Fewer female juvenile offenders are placed in detention (**80.5%** males vs. **19.5%** females).



Source: Office of Juvenile Affairs



Source: Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation



Source: Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation

	White	Black	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic
Percent of Population under 18 years (CY 2011)	72.0%	11.4%	13.6%	2.4%	15.0%
Percent of Youth Arrests (CY 2011)	33.2%	13.4%	3.3%	0.2%	5.1%
Percent of Youth in Detention (FY 2011)	40.1%	35.1%	14.0%	N/A	10.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation, Office of Juvenile Affairs



INSTITUTE FOR CHILD ADVOCACY

PUBLIC SUPPORTS REHABILITATION SERVICES FOR YOUTH

A statewide poll of registered voters conducted by the Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy in January 2014 shows the majority of respondents support funding services to children who commit crimes including:

- Educational services that assist youth in obtaining a high school education;
- Vocational and job skills training;
- Mental health treatment and family counseling;
- Mentoring and professional counseling services; and
- Juvenile detention facilities.

RISK FACTORS

High poverty rates, low academic achievement and high rates of trauma and maltreatment among children in Oklahoma further increase the probability children will become involved in the criminal justice system. Without completing their education, youth in the juvenile justice system will struggle to navigate a course into responsible adulthood.

For **67%** of the 17-18 year-olds in the Office of Juvenile Affairs (OJA) facilities, this is the first time they have been in school for a number of years.

Of youth 17 years and older in detention, 1 in 5 (**21.8%**) failed a literacy assessment in SFY 2011. More than half (**51%**) of youth enrolled in OJA education programs required special education services due to specific learning disabilities, emotional disturbances or other health impairments that impede the ability to learn.

MOVING FORWARD

IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION AND DATA SHARING

In order for Oklahoma to begin expanding the implementation of best practices and evidence-based programs, there must be a clear picture of the problems we are facing. That is why data collection and data sharing are so important to the future of Oklahoma's children. Data points to where prevention and diversion efforts should be applied, where money should be diverted or invested, and where disparities exist in the current system. While Oklahoma has made strides in disseminating and collecting certain types of juvenile justice data, more must be done. It is recommended that the Juvenile Online Tracking System (JOLTS) be extended to include municipal courts in order to better capture more rich data about past involvement with the system.

INCREASE STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION & COMMUNICATION

Oklahoma must continue to leverage resources available in order to make the greatest impact on improving the juvenile justice system. To accomplish this goal, stronger coalitions must be built with representatives from a broad range of disciplines focusing on statewide issues. Improved communication with stakeholders and the general public is also needed to impact change on the state level. Oklahoma must continue to break down institutional silos that restrict agency information sharing and hinder the provision of needed services to youth in custody. Furthermore, additional statewide training and professional development offerings should be provided to juvenile justice stakeholders to further encourage communication and the idea exchange.

REDUCE RELIANCE ON UNNECESSARY DETENTION

Oklahoma remains the only state in the nation that does not have a system in place to establish youth competencies before trial and detention. This must change in order to reduce unnecessary detention and divert youth to the appropriate services needed. Additional attention must also be placed on the implementation of a universal risk and needs assessment to be used in all districts throughout the state. A universal assessment will assist child-serving organizations in referring youth and their families to community-based services that better fit their needs. Such diversion services offer a significant avenue to reduce reliance on unnecessary detention placements.



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DATA SOURCES:

- 1 The National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2010 State Advocacy, State Statistics: Oklahoma: <http://www.nami.org>
 - 2 Juvenile Justice Information Exchange: <http://www.jjje.org>
 - 3 The Future of Children, Juvenile Offenders and Substance Use and Abuse: <http://futureofchildren.org>
 - 4 Models for Change, Guidebook for Juvenile Justice & Child Welfare System Coordination and Integration Office of Juvenile Affairs Annual Report, SFY 2012: <http://www.ok.gov/oja/documents/AR2012.pdf>
- Office of Juvenile Affairs 2012 Three-Year Plan: https://www.sagtraining.org/media/state_files/plan/plan_OK.pdf
U.S. Census Bureau
Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation