



NORTH DAKOTA JUVENILE COURT

ANNUAL REPORT 2017

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THE FUTURE OF THE JUVENILE COURT

Fundamental to the work of the judiciary is doing individual justice in individual cases, providing a forum for the resolution of legal disputes, deterring criminal behavior and helping to rehabilitate those found responsible for crimes. The work of the juvenile court aligns perfectly with those goals. We are a small subset of the district court and yet our work is critical to the overall mission and core purpose of the judicial branch.

We know that the most important work we perform each day is connecting with youth to make a positive difference in their lives. We do this by talking to youth and their families, assessing the risk level of each youth, assessing individual needs, building a continuum of evidence-based services that can be delivered across urban and rural North Dakota communities, and matching youth with the programs that will benefit them, and their communities. Local law enforcement, county prosecutors, social service workers and school teachers rely on juvenile court staff to identify root causes of issues such as opioid use, child trafficking, and family violence and seek ways to prevent these societal problems from damaging lives and communities.

High performance courts are always looking to identify problems, collect and analyze data and take action. The juvenile court must be flexible, creative and open to new evidence-based solutions such as early assessments, structured decision-making tools and community-based supervision and delivery of services.

**COURTS EXIST TO DO JUSTICE, TO GUARANTEE
LIBERTY, TO ENHANCE SOCIAL ORDER, TO
RESOLVE DISPUTES, TO MAINTAIN RULE OF LAW,
TO PROVIDE FOR EQUAL PROTECTION AND TO
ENSURE DUE PROCESS OF LAW.**

Most youth who run afoul of the law are not on a pathway that leads to adult criminal careers. Most delinquency is self-correcting as youth age and juvenile court intake must assess the likelihood that a youth will become a serious, violent, or chronic offender, identify those pathways early and seek to interrupt them.

North Dakota Juvenile Court is at the front line of societal issues such as child abuse and neglect, addiction, behavioral health and delinquency prevention. The dedicated work of juvenile court staff protects communities, saves lives and saves tax payer dollars that would otherwise be spent on expensive residential treatment or correction confinement. Investing “upstream”, in the juvenile court process of youth assessment, service delivery and supervision that keeps youth out of the correction system

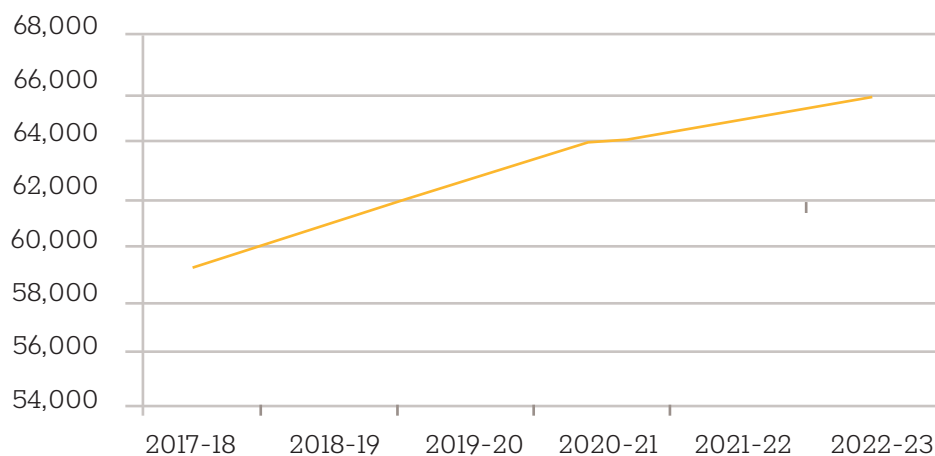
altogether makes good sense. We know that keeping youth at home and engaged in school and family life produces better outcomes for youth, families and our communities.

Data indicates that approximately 14% of all youth are referred to juvenile court for delinquent and unruly behavior. Projections of North Dakota's youth population indicate a steady increase. These factors will play a part in planning for the future of the juvenile court and the resources needed to address the needs of youth, families, victims, and communities.



PROJECTION | GRADES 6-12

BASED ON 2017-18 ENROLLMENT



| GROUP | SCHOOL YEAR | | | % CHANGE FROM | |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|------------|
| | 2007-08 | 2012-13 | 2017-18 | 5 YEARS | 10 YEARS |
| PK-K | 8,884 | 11,890 | 13,788 | 16% | 55% |
| GRADES 1-5 | 37,467 | 42,134 | 47,704 | 13% | 27% |
| GRADES 6-8 | 23,556 | 23,640 | 26,735 | 13% | 13% |
| GRADES 9-12 | 33,406 | 31,837 | 32,452 | 2% | -3% |
| GRAND TOTAL | 103,313 | 109,501 | 120,679 | 10% | 17% |

MISSION STATEMENT

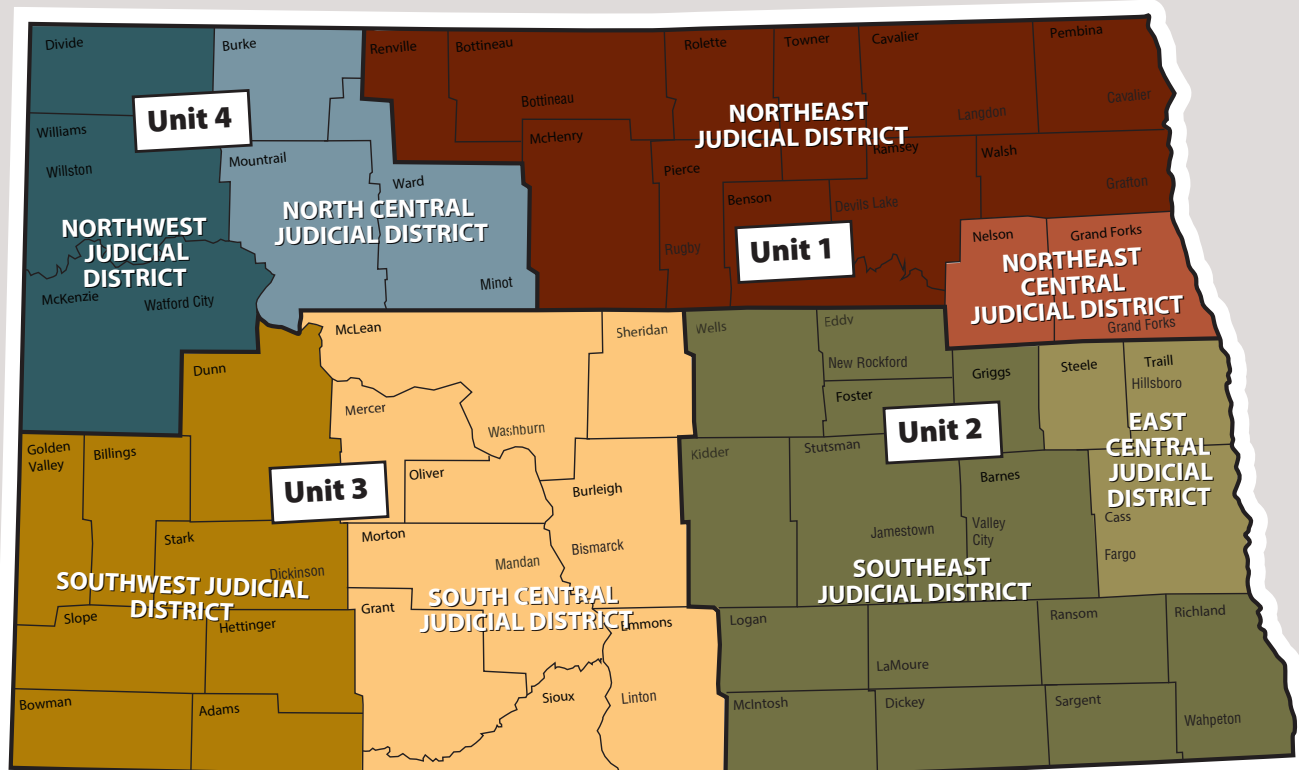
The Juvenile Court protects the best interests of children and addresses the unique characteristics and needs of children that come before the court as deprived, unruly and delinquent matters. Following the principles of Balanced and Restorative Justice, the mission of the North Dakota Juvenile Court is to promote public safety, hold juvenile offenders accountable, and increase the capacity of juveniles to contribute productively to their community. The courts empower victims, encourage community participation, and support parental responsibility.

REPAIRING HARM, REDUCING RISK AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES



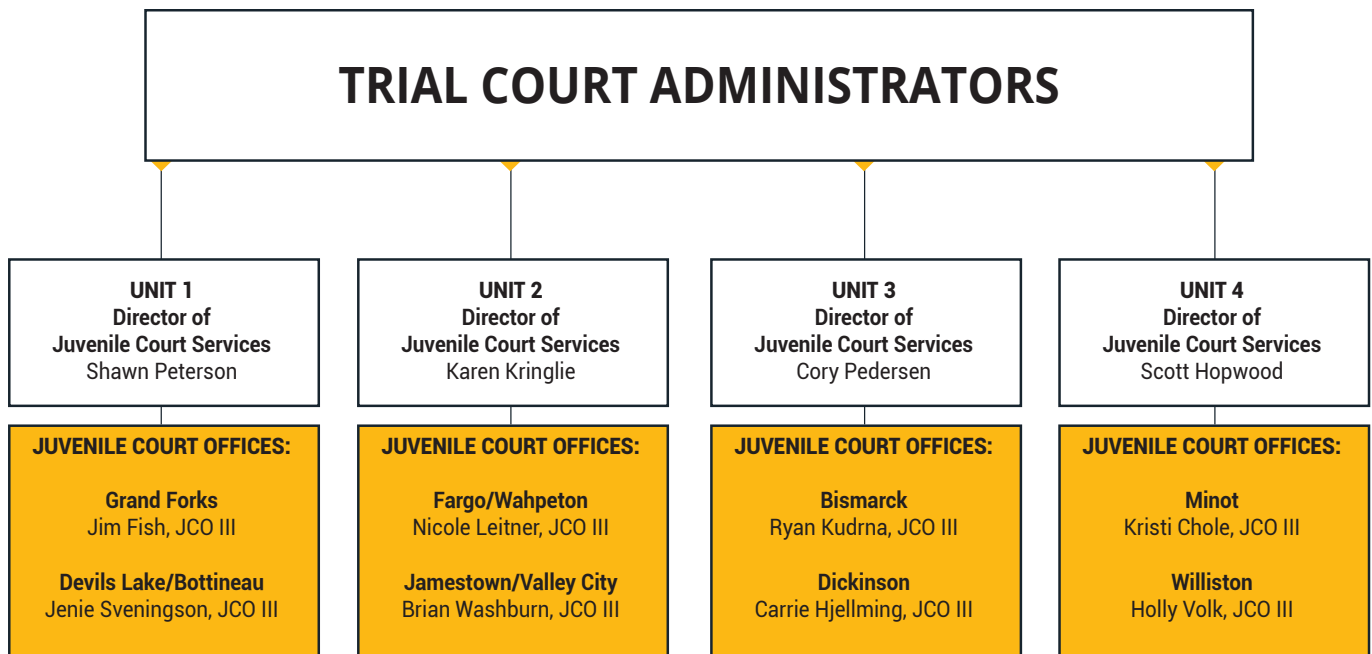
NORTH DAKOTA JUVENILE COURT

North Dakota Juvenile Court Structure: Since 2004, the administration of the Juvenile Courts in North Dakota has been divided into four administrative units, each under the supervision of a Unit Court Administrator. During 2017, state budget cuts caused the judicial branch to reduce positions within the court system. As a result, approximately 20% of juvenile staff positions were impacted by a reduction in force. This included eight (8) juvenile court officer positions and four (4) juvenile administrative support staff positions. The Bottineau juvenile office was closed, and hours open to the public have been reduced in many of the offices as a reduced number of staff are available to cover the phones and counter while in court or on the road.



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Within each unit, there is a Director of Juvenile Court who supervises the juvenile court staff and is responsible for the planning and directing of all juvenile court services in the unit. Under the direction of the Director of Juvenile Court, the JCO III assists in providing advanced investigative, diagnostic, supervisory, and probation services in their designated juvenile court office as well as provides supervision of juvenile court officers and staff.



JURISDICTION

Delinquent and Unruly Case Referrals: In North Dakota, the Juvenile Court has exclusive jurisdiction over youth ages seven to seventeen who are alleged to have committed a delinquent or an unruly act. A delinquent act would be a crime if committed by an adult, while an unruly act is behavior such as truancy from school, runaway, ungovernable behavior, or minor consuming alcohol, all of which are based on age.

Deprived Case Referrals: The Juvenile Court also has exclusive jurisdiction over children from birth through age seventeen who are alleged to be deprived of proper care or control by their parent, guardian, or other custodian. More commonly known as child abuse and neglect, these cases are referred to the courts by the county social service agencies after a child abuse and neglect investigation.



2017 REFERRALS TO JUVENILE COURT

2017 Referrals to Juvenile Court

Juvenile Court Officers screen referrals from law enforcement, schools, and agencies determining how they should be processed; making detention or emergency shelter care decisions on some of them, preparing court recommendations on those that proceed to the formal courts, and processing the vast majority of the cases via an informal adjustment conference or diversion.

Total referrals to the North Dakota Juvenile Courts showed a slight increase from the previous year, increasing by 853 referrals (8.7%) to 10,620. Deprived referrals remain at high levels and the 15% increase from 2016 to 2017 is significant. Over the past five years, North Dakota has seen an increase of 43% in deprivation referrals. The chart below reflects the total number of charges referred to the juvenile courts over the past five years in the three legal categories of unruly, delinquent, and deprived.

TOTAL REFERRALS BY YEAR

| | UNRULY | DELINQUENT | DEPRIVED |
|-------------|--------|------------|----------|
| 2013 | 2792 | 4817 | 2282 |
| 2014 | 2572 | 4433 | 2269 |
| 2015 | 2492 | 4586 | 2714 |
| 2016 | 2467 | 4461 | 2839 |
| 2017 | 2603 | 4744 | 3273 |

*note that referral data in this chart changed slightly as compared to prior North Dakota Juvenile Court Annual Reports due to a change in the way the data was categorized.

INTAKE DECISIONS ARE A CRITICAL FUNCTION OF THE JUVENILE COURT:

Intake of all juvenile referrals is required by North Dakota law to be conducted by the Director of Juvenile Court. Juvenile Court intake staff is knowledgeable about North Dakota criminal and juvenile law as well as the techniques of juvenile treatment and rehabilitation. They screen for probable cause and make decisions regarding the appropriate manner to handle the case whether via diversion, informal adjustment or the formal court process. Whether to detain a delinquent youth or take an unruly or deprived child into protective custody are also authorized powers of the Juvenile Court under the Century Code.

2017 JUVENILE REFERRALS BY CASE TYPE

Delinquent Referrals: Of all the delinquent referrals received in 2017, 85% were misdemeanors, 14% were felonies, and 1% were infractions. The most common delinquent referrals received by the Juvenile Courts were Theft of Property and Shoplifting totaling 14%, followed by Disorderly Conduct which made up 11% of referrals. Simple Assault 10%, Possession of Controlled Substance 9%, and Possession of a Drug Paraphernalia 8%, rounded out the five most common delinquent referrals.

Unruly Referrals: Of all the unruly referrals received in 2017, 28% were for runaway, 24% were referrals of unlawful possession/consumption of alcohol, 24% were for ungovernable behavior, 13% were for school truancy, and 11% were for other unruly referrals including tobacco and curfew violations.

Deprivation Referrals: 37% of deprivation referrals resulted in a formal petition to the Court, 5% involved the filing of a termination of parental rights petition, 1% of cases were youth 18 years and older who chose to remain in foster care or re-enter foster care, and 57% involved cases where the families cooperated with services or the matter was otherwise diverted by social services from the formal court system.



TOTAL REFERRALS BY CASE TYPE

The chart below reflects the total number of charges referred to the juvenile courts, grouped by case type over the past five years. In 2017, Deprivation referrals made up 31% of the total referrals to the Juvenile Court, while Unruly offenses (offenses which only a child can commit) made up 24% of referrals. Delinquent offenses made up 45% of referrals and are broken down into the following case types: Property Offenses 14%, Drug-related Offenses 10%, Public Order Offenses 10%, Offenses Against Persons 9%, and Traffic Offenses 2% of the total delinquent referrals to juvenile courts.

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Against Person Offenses | 845 | 684 | 750 | 834 | 907 |
| Property Offenses | 1676 | 1380 | 1441 | 1327 | 1449 |
| Public Order | 960 | 942 | 1029 | 980 | 1051 |
| Unruly | 2792 | 2572 | 2492 | 2467 | 2603 |
| Deprivation | 2282 | 2269 | 2714 | 2839 | 3273 |
| Traffic | 365 | 315 | 355 | 261 | 239 |
| Drug Related Offenses | 971 | 1112 | 1011 | 1059 | 1098 |

REFERRAL TYPES

Against Person Offenses

all assaults, menacing, harassment, terrorizing, gross sexual imposition, robbery

Property Offenses

shoplifting, burglary, criminal mischief/vandalism, criminal trespass, all thefts,

Public Order

disorderly conduct, disturbance of a public school, failure to appear, resisting arrest

Unruly

curfew, runaway, tobacco, truancy, ungovernable behavior, minor in possession/consumption of alcohol

Deprivation

abuse/neglect of a child, deprived, file 960, no fault deprivation, termination of parental rights

Traffic

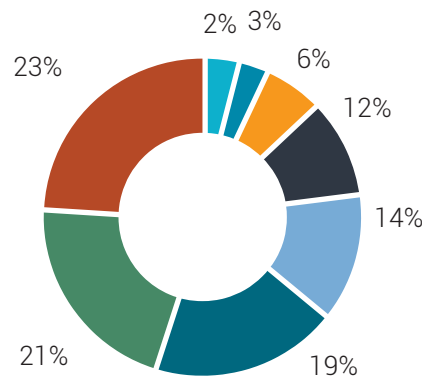
driving w/o a license, driving w/o liability, leaving the scene of an accident

ANALYSIS OF JUVENILE OFFENDERS

The age of criminal responsibility in North Dakota begins at 7 years old. At that age, the legislature has determined that youth can be referred to the North Dakota Juvenile Courts on charges of unruly or delinquent behavior.

In 2017, the most common age of youth referred to the juvenile courts for delinquent or unruly behavior was 17 years of age. Juveniles age 13 and younger accounted for 23% of all referrals to the courts, a percentage that remained consistent from the previous year.

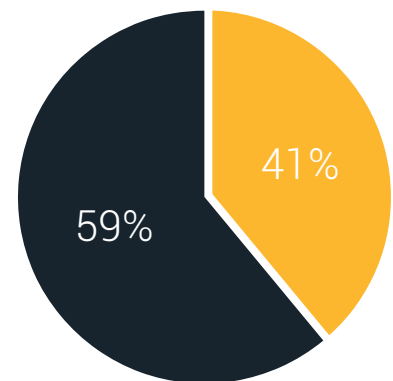
AGE AT TIME OF REFERRAL TO JUVENILE COURT



IN 2017, MALES COMMITTED 59% OF DELINQUENT AND UNRULY ACTS REFERRED TO THE JUVENILE COURTS, WHILE FEMALES ACCOUNTED FOR 41% OF REFERRALS.

MALE
3013

FEMALE
2134



COMMUNITY SAFETY

Detention Screening Tool: The detention risk screening tool is a written checklist of criteria that are applied to rate each youth brought to secure detention to assess if the risk to community is so high as to warrant use of secure detention. The overall score guides the law enforcement officer or intake court officer in making the critical decision of whether to securely detain the youth. The purpose is to ensure release of appropriate youth back into the community with the minimum risk of re-offending or not appearing for a scheduled hearing. The score of the detention screen does not tell the user exactly what course of action should be taken but rather provides objective information, grounded in research, to enhance the decision-making process.

North Dakota law requires that youth securely detained have a detention hearing held within twenty-four hours, excluding weekends and holidays, and on average, most youth spend only hours to a few days in secure detention before lesser restrictive options are achieved.

Alternatives to Detention: Since the use of the detention assessment tool is to help guide the decision to determine whether to place a youth in detention or not, it is important to establish and maintain viable alternatives to detention that are available in communities to maintain community safety and assure that youth will appear for future court hearings on the pending charge or charges. In addition to simple release to parent or non-secure attendant care, another alternative to pre-adjudicatory detention is the use of house arrest either monitored by a Juvenile Court Officer using a voice verification system to confirm a youth's location or in conjunction with GPS electronic monitoring systems. Electronic monitoring is a continuous monitoring device that attaches around a youth's ankle and allows them to stay at home pending further court hearing. Voice monitoring and GPS electronic monitoring have been increasingly used by North Dakota Juvenile Court staff as an alternative to detention. Electronic monitoring can cost as little as seven dollars per day which is much lower than the cost of secure detention and allows the youth to remain in their home and in their community.

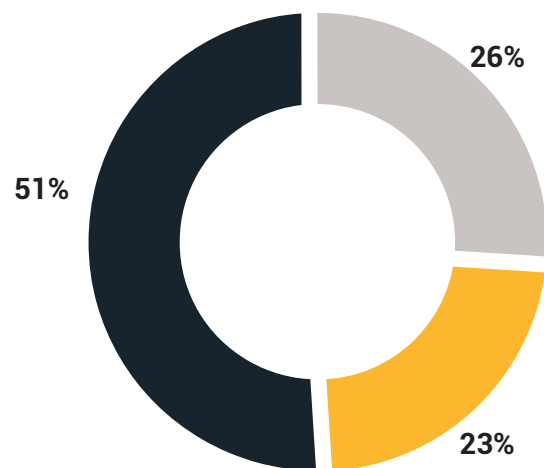
2017 JUVENILE COURT DISPOSITIONS FOR DELINQUENT AND UNRULY CASE TYPES

North Dakota law provides a system whereby the vast majority of juvenile cases are handled quickly and efficiently by juvenile court officers. All juvenile referrals are screened by a juvenile court officer for diversion to a program such as an educational class or counseling, informal adjustment (a meeting of the youth, parents, court officer and victim, if the victim so chooses), or for formal court processing by referring the matter to the States Attorney for the filing of a petition and proceedings before a judge. Most low-level offenses and early offenders are handled via diversion or informal adjustment. This is an advantage for youth, family and victim as diversion and the consent-driven informal adjustment process can address the matter quickly after an offense occurs. Intake occurs consistently across the state as decisions about diversion or use of informal adjustment are guided by adopted state-wide criteria. Typically, felony-level cases, youth requiring placement, and contested matters are heard by a District Court Judge or Judicial Referee.

Juvenile Court Processes for Delinquent & Unruly Case Types

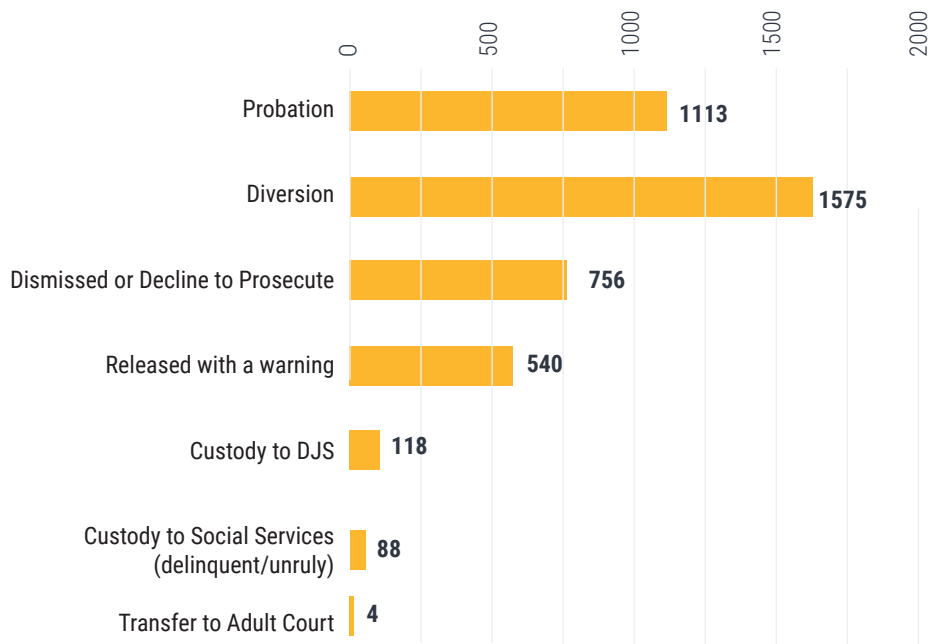
| | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| ■ Diversion to Programs | 1,575 |
| ■ Informal Adjustment | 799 |
| ■ Formal Court Process | 688 |

77% OF ALL JUVENILE CASES WERE HANDLED OUTSIDE OF THE COURTROOM THROUGH EITHER A DIVERSION TO PROGRAMMING OR AN INFORMAL ADJUSTMENT CONFERENCE CONDUCTED BY A JUVENILE COURT OFFICER.



Disposition Types: North Dakota law allows a great deal of flexibility in outcomes once a juvenile has admitted or been found to have committed a delinquent or unruly offense. This allows justice to be administered on an individual basis depending on the child's needs and risks as well as the needs of the victim and community and custody is removed from a parent only as a last resort.

DELINQUENT/UNRULY DISPOSITIONS 2017



Community Supervision: Juvenile probation is the oldest and most widely used means of delivering a range of court-ordered service while supervising the youth within the community. Staff engage behavior change, hold the youth accountable, and increase offender competency at one-tenth of the cost of out-of-home placements. For youth whose primary issue is with addiction, Juvenile Drug Court is an option in six North Dakota cities. Youth in drug court are supervised by juvenile court staff., Juvenile Drug Court is an option in six North Dakota cities. Youth are supervised by juvenile court staff.

Transfer to Adult Court: Studies have shown that transferred youth quickly reoffend and at much higher rates than juveniles kept in the juvenile system. Further, national studies have shown that transferred youth detained pretrial in adult jails are at serious risk of rape, assault, death or suicide. Transfer is an option of last resort, based on, among other factors, the seriousness of the charge and whether the youth appears to be amenable to treatment or rehabilitation as a juvenile. Some youth voluntarily request transfer to adult court as a matter of legal strategy.

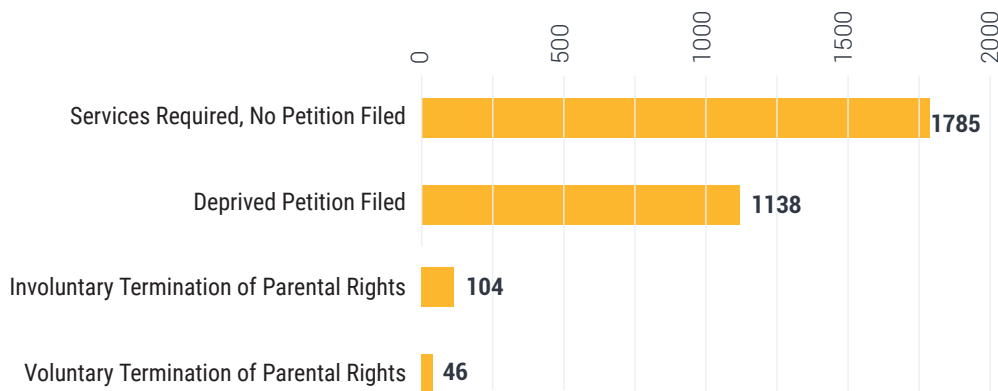
In 2017, only 1 youth was transferred to adult court involuntarily. That case involved a charge of gross sexual imposition with force. There were 3 youth who voluntarily requested transfer. In 2016, there were 7 total transfers to adult court, 1 of these was involuntary and the remainder were granted at the request of the child.



2017 JUVENILE COURT REFERRALS IN DEPRIVED CHILD CASES

Deprivation Cases Referred: In North Dakota, deprivation cases are referred to the Juvenile Court by local county social service departments. The referrals are received after a child abuse or neglect investigation is conducted by a child protective worker. If services are found to be required, the case is referred to Juvenile Court and a decision whether to file a petition is made by the County State's Attorney's office based on information gathered in the investigation. In 2017, 57% of all deprivation cases referred to the juvenile court did not result in a petition for a variety of reasons such as the family was already cooperating with services or the State's Attorney declined to file a petition. In 37% of the cases referred, the States Attorney determined it necessary to file a deprivation petition and a court hearing was scheduled and held before the court. In 5% of all 2017 cases, a termination of parental rights petition was filed, and of those, 31% were at the request of the parents or child's legal custodian (voluntary), while 69% were brought by the State (involuntary).

DEPRIVED CASES 2017



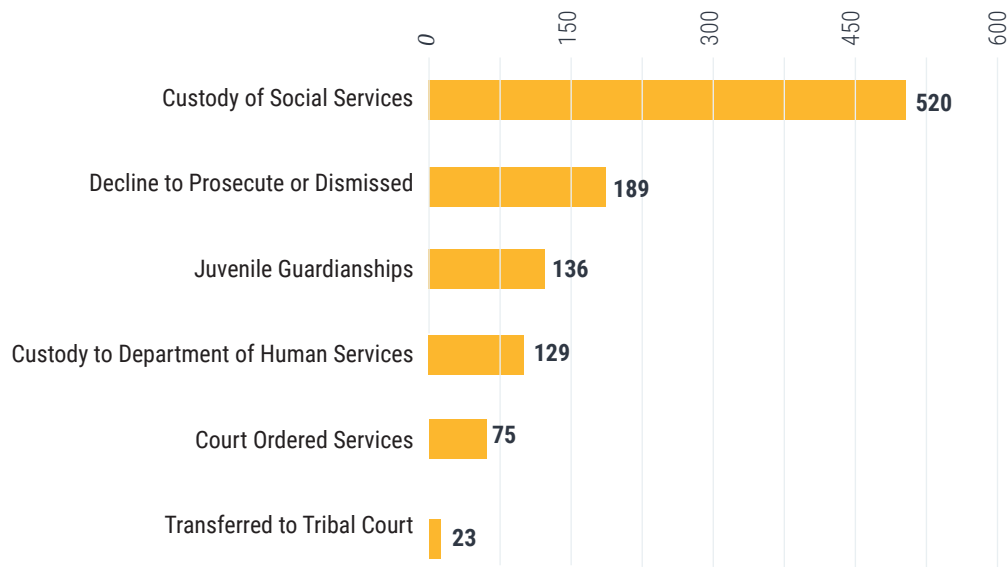
Continued Foster Care: Since 2011, youth ages 18 to 21 who have previously been or are currently in foster care may choose to stay in foster care to support them in continuing with education and make a successful transition to adulthood. In 2016, there were 36 continued foster cases filed in North Dakota, and in 2017 there were 33.

2017 JUVENILE COURT DISPOSITIONS IN DEPRIVED CHILD CASES

Disposition Types: Under North Dakota law, if a child is found to be deprived, the court may order services for the family, place the child with a willing relative or guardian, or place the child with a local county social services agency for foster care placement.

North Dakota law defines a deprived child as a child who is without proper parental care or control necessary for the child's physical, mental or emotional health, or morals, and the deprivation is not due primarily to the lack of financial means of the child's parents, guardian or other custodian. §27-20-02(8) N.D.C.C.

DEPRIVED DISPOSITIONS 2017



NORTH DAKOTA LAW DEFINES A DEPRIVED CHILD AS A CHILD WHO IS WITHOUT PROPER PARENTAL CARE OR CONTROL NECESSARY FOR THE CHILD'S PHYSICAL, MENTAL OR EMOTIONAL HEALTH, OR MORALS, AND THE DEPRIVATION IS NOT DUE PRIMARILY TO THE LACK OF FINANCIAL MEANS OF THE CHILD'S PARENTS, GUARDIAN OR OTHER CUSTODIAN. §27-20-02(8) N.D.C.C.

DUAL STATUS YOUTH PROJECT

Recommendations from the 2016 Council of State Government (CSG) forum were to (1) enhance collaboration between the child welfare and juvenile justice agencies around preventing youth from “crossing over”, (2) developing joint plans for crossover youth and (3) allocating resources. Cross-over youth are juveniles involved in both the child welfare and court systems. A multi-system collaborative agreement was reached to pursue funding to bring the North Dakota Dual Status Youth initiative (DSYI) to North Dakota. Funding was obtained from North Dakota Department of Human Services, North Dakota State Courts, North Dakota Division of Juvenile Services and the North Dakota Juvenile Justice State Advisory Group.

In early 2017, a North Dakota Dual Status Youth leadership committee and subcommittees were formed to gather data about these families, explore legal and policy changes, and develop practices a model to improve the lives of the target population of families and children known as Dual Status Youth.

Recommendations from the statewide effort will be released by June of 2018. There is broad representation on all 3 subcommittees from child welfare, juvenile justice, parents, youth, States Attorney, Defense Attorney, Department of Public Instruction, North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission, Private Non-Profits, and Judicial Referees.

The ultimate goal is to change the trajectory of alleged abused and/or neglected children into the juvenile justice system by establishing child and family-centered multi-disciplinary policies and practices. The target population is youth with an “open assessment” or “services required” finding and an unruly/delinquent referral.

Data collection from the federal fiscal year 2015 indicated that there were 242 children in North Dakota identified as involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice system.

- 58% were white
- 24% were Native American
- 8% were African American
- 10% were Pac. Islander/Hispanic/Asian/ multi race/unknown
- 64% were offered In-home services with county social services
- 74% were in foster care
- 40% were cited unruly or delinquent while in foster care or school
- 33% were on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Parent Data from the 2015 dually identified cases:

- 47% of the children were from single parent homes
- 69% of the parents had a prior arrest or recent incarceration
- 63% of the parents had an identified drug and alcohol problem
- 41% of the parents had an identified mental health issue



COMMUNITY SUPERVISION

Probation is the most widely-used community-based juvenile court program. During the period of probation supervision, a juvenile offender remains in the community and continues normal activities such as school and work while complying with individualized probation rules such as curfew, community service, payment of restitution, and attendance at classes or counseling. The supervision of offenders in their communities enhances community safety and prevents the need for costly out-of-home placement. Juvenile court officers use a system of graduated responses to ensure compliance with informal adjustment agreements or formal court orders and treatment goals. In addition to monitoring compliance, court officers coordinate rehabilitative and treatment services for youth and families. Court officers evaluate the youth's progress toward achieving probation goals and recommend release from probation at the appropriate time.

Making smart choices means providing the right sanctions and services to the right juveniles at the right time without regard to biases or prejudices but based upon each child's unique risks and needs.

North Dakota juvenile court officers are dedicated professionals who believe that all young persons who break the law have the ability to change their behavior. They are dedicated to protecting the safety of the public, while holding youth accountable and restoring them and their families as strong, productive individuals who contribute to the strength of their communities.

Risk and Needs Assessments: Effective community supervision requires a reliable and valid offender assessment to assist the court officer in determining appropriate supervision level and supervision strategies and ensuring proper matching of treatment programming. North Dakota Juvenile Court adopted the Youth Assessment Screening Inventory (YASI) in 2002 to assess the likelihood of recidivism and the specific needs of each child. By using the YASI, court officers make decisions about supervision levels, programs, and treatment needs. Based on each youth's risks and needs, the juvenile court officer develops a case plan in order to focus resources on the factors most likely to cause the youth to reoffend and to refer youth to appropriate programming.

Behavioral Health Assessments: A mental health assessment called the MAYSI-2 is used to assess a broad scope of possible mental health needs. These assessments are conducted immediately upon entry into probation and re-administered as needed. Referrals to behavioral health services, including crisis intervention, are made as appropriate. Court officers also

assess for signs of sex or labor trafficking and make referrals to appropriate services. In 2018, a trauma screening will also be used to assess youth for trauma histories and trauma symptoms in order to connect them with appropriate trauma-based therapy.

Competency Development: In addition to contracted programs available to youth, North Dakota Juvenile Court Officers teach skills and cognitive restructuring programming to probation youth and their families. Examples of some of the staff facilitated cognitive restructuring programming include: Decision Making 101, Risks and Decisions, Anger Management, Relationships & Communication Group, Boundaries Classes, Girls and Boys Groups, and SPARCS, a trauma-based program. Court officers also use one-on-one coaching interactions with youth on probation through use of the electronic Carey Guides, a skills and tool-based youth curriculum.

Youth Cultural Achievement Programs: These are regional specific programs with the goal of addressing culturally specific and individual factors that create barriers to rehabilitation of minority youth. Data collection and analysis of disparate impact on minority youth is a secondary function of this program. The Bismarck region has had a cultural liaison program since 2009. The Fargo program began in 2015 and the Devils Lake program began in March of 2018. These programs will continue to examine disparate impacts for minority youth in Fargo, Bismarck and Devils Lake through data collection, analysis, and intentional focus on system policies and practices which create a lack of trust and unfair system involvement.



RESTORING JUSTICE TO VICTIMS AND COMMUNITIES

Victim Rights in Juvenile Cases: Although Juvenile Court cases are closed to the public in North Dakota, state law allows victims of juvenile crimes the same rights as victims of adult crimes. In petitioned proceedings it is the state's attorney who is tasked with giving all victims notice of the charges filed, hearings scheduled, and their ability to give input as to the disposition. In non-petitioned proceedings, the juvenile court staff contact victims, informing them of their rights, and seeking their active input into the resolution of a case. Victims are invited to attend the Informal Adjustment conference. Some cases are referred to an offender accountability conference for resolution.

Restitution: Youth are required by the Court to pay for the harm they have caused their victims. In 2017, \$160,494 was ordered as restitution. The total amount of restitution collected by juvenile court staff and returned to the victims at the end of the calendar year was \$85,736. Restitution collection is challenging with young people as some are unable to work due to age or placement out of the home. In some cases, victims elect to pursue a civil action against parents as a more viable means of being repaid for losses.

\$85,736 in restitution was collected by probation staff and returned to victims

Community Service: Offenders may also be required to perform community service as a way to repay victims and the community for any harm suffered because of the youth's behavior. The amount of community service hours completed by youth referred to juvenile courts in 2017 was 5,631 hours.

Victim Empathy Seminars and Offender Accountability Conferences: In support of the balanced and restorative justice mission, the courts contract with Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota to provide victim empathy classes, offender accountability conferences, and community circles. The four-hour victim empathy class is educational and helps juveniles and their parents to understand how delinquent behavior impacts others. Accountability Conferences bring together the offender, victim, key supporters and a trained facilitator to discuss the impact of the juvenile's behavior and ways to repair the harm caused. The City of Fargo has a Youth Court that receives diversion referrals from the court. A panel of trained teenagers act as the court staff and jury for each youth referred.

In 2017, 218 juveniles were referred to participate in an Offender Accountability Conference, and 154 juveniles completed a Victim Empathy Seminar in their community.

2017 DIRECTOR'S SUMMARY

The past year has been a remarkable year for the North Dakota Juvenile Court system. Two significant statewide initiatives – the Council of State Governments (CSG) Juvenile Justice Initiative and the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center “Dual Status” Initiative, along with a North Dakota Legislative Interim Committee on Justice Reinvestment study of the North Dakota system, have given the directors an opportunity to learn from national leaders and implement those ideas on a local level.

These opportunities for system change and enrichment arrived at the same juncture as the most significant cuts to juvenile staff in state history took place. The loss of staff makes it more critical to divert appropriate youth away from the system and focus resources on those youth for whom our intervention has the highest likelihood to interrupt a trajectory toward further criminal behavior as an adult.

Key Accomplishments:

1. Enriched probation interactions between court officer and youth by focusing on coaching and promoting positive behavioral change during meetings. In support of this goal, the North Dakota Juvenile Court purchased the electronic Carey Guides and provided training for all court officers in April of 2017. Further supporting this work was a statewide training in September of 2017 by Dr. Edward Latessa, a national expert on evidence-based practices.
2. Established a recidivism definition for the juvenile court system to measure re-offense rates at three time periods and purchased an Oracle Business Intelligence tool to streamline ease of recidivism measurement and reporting.
3. Enhanced collaboration between child welfare and juvenile justice agencies around preventing youth from “crossing over” from child welfare status into delinquency via participation and leadership in a Dual-Status Youth Initiative by the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice.
4. Implemented statewide intake and disposition structured decision-making matrices.
5. Updated employee best practice surrounding the use of the YASI risk assessment tool, most notably, the earlier use of the pre-screen at the informal adjustment and ensuring that formal dispositional recommendations and probation case plans are tied directly to a child's individual assessment of risks and needs.

2017 DIRECTOR'S SUMMARY

2018 Goals:

1. Encourage and support the Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Committee of the North Dakota Legislature as they explore raising the age of criminal responsibility from the age of seven to the age of 10 or 11.
2. Participate in a study of North Dakota's use of the YASI as conducted by the University of North Dakota, Department of Criminal Justice. This will include a validation of the tool and review for implementation of any recommended changes to North Dakota's use of the YASI.
3. Implement a statewide childhood trauma checklist for all youth on probation.
4. Advocate for increased access to behavioral health services for adolescents, rather than utilizing delinquent charging tools to access the same services.
5. Receive recommendations from the RFK Dual Status Initiative, which concludes in June of 2018 and begin new collaborative practices with the Department of Human Services in the Fall of 2018.