

Study Methods for the NCCD Deincarceration Project

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With funding from the Public Welfare Foundation, the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) conducted a national study regarding the dramatic reduction of youth incarceration rates in most US states. NCCD collected information for the study through a literature review, interviews with key stakeholders, listening sessions in five states, a national convening of juvenile justice leaders, and the compilation and analysis of county-level data from five jurisdictions across the country. Each of these study methods is described in more detail below.

Literature Review

NCCD completed an extensive review of existing reports on youth incarceration. Staff searched academic databases as well as websites for criminal justice policy, advocacy, and research organizations that are not associated with universities.

Key Stakeholder Interviews, Listening Sessions, and National Convening

NCCD conducted stakeholder interviews, five state-based listening sessions, and one national convening with 140 individuals across the United States.

Participation is described below.

- One-to-one interviews were held with 50 individuals.

- Five listening sessions involved 90 individuals.
- Participating individuals self-identified with the following categories (number of individuals appear in parentheses).ⁱ
 - » Heads of juvenile justice departments (15)
 - » Deputy heads of juvenile justice departments (12)
 - » Senior staff of juvenile justice departments (10)
 - » Elected officials or their direct (or sub-direct) reports (13)
 - » Heads of national organizations (eight)
 - » Other system stakeholders, including public defenders, judges, prosecutors, or court staff (27)
 - » Non-governmental researchers (nine)
 - » Advocates working in non-governmental organizations (22)
 - » Non-governmental providers of services to juvenile justice youth (10)
 - » Formerly incarcerated individuals (two)
 - » Family member of an incarcerated youth (one)

ⁱ Percentages are not offered, as some individuals identified with more than one category.



- Of the 140 individuals, 33% lived in the Northeastern United States; 23% in the West; 15% in the Southwest; 12% in the South; and 12% in the Midwest.
- Individuals were not asked to define their race, ethnicity, or gender.

The interviews were summarized or transcribed. Focus groups and the national convening were transcribed. All summaries and transcripts were coded for common themes and organized into the project reports.

System Data Analysis

Disposition data were collected from five counties across the country: Summit, Ohio; Alameda, California; Dallas, Texas; Jefferson, Alabama; and Peoria, Illinois. These counties were selected because they represent variation across region and race and ethnicity of youth served. All of the counties serve white and African American youth. Alameda and Dallas counties also serve significant numbers of Latino youth. Each of these counties collects the required data fields and has the organizational capacity to provide individual-level data in a format that can be analyzed by NCCD.

NCCD collected seven variables for 2002 and 2012. The data were collected for individual youth served in the juvenile justice system in each of the study years. NCCD requested the following data fields:

- Unique identifier
- Date of birth

- Race/ethnicity
- Gender
- ZIP code
- A list of offenses and probation violations committed
- A list of court dispositions (the disposition for each offense and probation violation)

NCCD took this information and selected a sample of 250 youth from each study year for each jurisdiction. Data for the sample of 1,250 youth was compiled into one database.

NCCD then created a variable for the total number of referrals per youth per year and manipulated the disposition data in order to create consistent disposition codes for all jurisdictions. NCCD first listed the most serious court disposition per youth per year and then categorized these dispositions as transfer to adult court, sentenced to secure juvenile facility, placed in a non-secure out-of-home facility, formal probation, and informal probation.

NCCD completed descriptive statistics tests, analysis of variance tests, and regression analyses to determine if the numbers of referrals, age, race, or gender were related to the seriousness of the disposition. Statistically significant results were shared in a final report. Rather than reporting the results from the formal statistics tests, NCCD used simple bar graphs and pie charts to make the results accessible to a broad range of readers.

This publication is part of an eight-part series of information sheets and reports developed from a national study on deincarceration conducted by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency. The complete series can be found [here](#).