



# SAN MATEO COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT



The Juvenile Assessment  
Center Annual Evaluation  
2019-2020

## About the Researcher

Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a nonprofit social research firm dedicated to helping people build better communities by collecting meaningful data, facilitating information-based planning, and developing custom strategies. The firm was founded on the principle that community improvement, initiative sustainability, and program success are closely tied to assessment needs, evaluation of community goals, and development of appropriate responses.

## Authors

Kim Carpenter, Ph.D.

Manya Jyotishi, Ph.D.

Connie Chu, B.A.

Graphic Design: Jamie Norton

## Locations

### Bay Area:

1871 The Alameda, Suite 180  
San Jose, CA 95126  
tel 408-247-8319

### Central Coast:

55 Penny Lane, Suite 101  
Watsonville, CA 95076  
tel 831-728-1356

### Sacramento:

2351 Sunset Blvd., Ste. 170-187  
Rocklin, CA 95765  
Phone 916-827-2811

[www.appliedsurveyresearch.org](http://www.appliedsurveyresearch.org)

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## Program Description

The Juvenile Assessment Center provides a primary point of entry for intake and assessment of youth who have come into contact with the juvenile justice system via law enforcement, including, but not limited to, youth who participate in Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) funded programs. At the Assessment Center, the process begins when the youth receives a multidisciplinary team risk/needs assessment, including screening for mental health, substance abuse, and other significant risk factors. Based upon the assessment findings, a recommendation that includes a balance of accountability and support/treatment services is completed and discussed with the youth's family by the assigned Deputy Probation Officer (DPO). Recommendations are also made to the Juvenile Court if release from custody is appropriate. Diversion-eligible youths can be referred to a range of programs and services including the Petty Theft Program, Juvenile Mediation Program, Victim Impact Awareness Program, and Traffic Court. Youths may also be placed on short-term (3 months) or long-term (6 months) supervised Probation Diversion contracts.

While this evaluation focuses on youths who were assessed at the Assessment Center, the Center also provides triage services for additional youths (see Appendix A for further details on the full complement of triage services provided by the Assessment Center.) Triage services are largely intended to be brief and to link youths with appropriate community resources to avoid formal court proceedings where possible, while some immediate bridging services are available for youths in crisis in order to stabilize families and optimize chances for success. This allows the Assessment Center to focus efforts on those youths who are at higher risk to reoffend.

### Programmatic Challenges in Fiscal Year 2019-20

In fiscal year (FY) 2019-20, The Juvenile Assessment Center experienced major adjustments in processes and procedures due to COVID-19 restrictions. Initially, only one Deputy Probation Officer remained on-site, while others were approved to telework from their residences. Weeks later, two Deputy Probation Officers were required to be on-site, while the remaining staff continued to telework from their residences. During this unprecedented time, all contacts, assessments, and counseling were successfully managed via telephone, as neither processes nor procedures were delayed. Some families appreciated that they did not have to report in person because it was convenient for them, while other families said they preferred in-person interactions, as they believe they are "more effective" in helping youths focus on the topic at hand. To the staff's credit, they continued monitoring the youths on their caseloads and providing services to youths and their families.

During this time, a minimal number of youths were booked into the Youth Services Center. Additionally, there was a decrease in out-of-custody referrals to the Probation Department.

Some community-based organizations cancelled services for a time, but they later resumed services via communication platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

## Evaluation Methods

Programs funded by San Mateo County Juvenile Probation (Probation) monitor their programs and report client, service, and outcome data to the department and its evaluator, Applied Survey Research (ASR). The methods and tools used to collect these data are:

**Participants and Services:** Grantee programs collect demographic data (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) and service data (e.g., type of services, hours of services, etc.) for individual participants. Program staff entered these data into their own data systems prior to transferring the data to ASR for analysis.

**Risk Factors:** Grantee programs used the Juvenile Assessment and Intervention System (JAIS) to provide a standard measure of risk for youths. The Juvenile Assessment and Intervention System (JAIS) is a widely used criminogenic risk, strengths, and needs assessment tool that assists in the effective and efficient supervision of youths, both in institutional settings and in the community. It has been validated across ethnic and gender groups. The JAIS consists of a brief prescreen assessment (JAIS Risk), in addition to full assessment and reassessment components (JAIS Assessment and JAIS Reassessment). Each assessment has two form options based on the youth's gender. Probation has elected to administer the JAIS to all youths in institutions as well as in community programs. The JAIS Girls Risk consists of eight items, and the JAIS Boys Risk consists of ten items; each assessment yields an overall risk level of low, moderate, or high.

**Outcomes:** Like all Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) funded programs, Assessment Center collects data for several justice-related outcomes for program participants. Probation has elected to report these outcomes at 180 days post entry. The reference or comparison group reflects the past year's cohort of program participants to interpret FY 2019-20 outcomes. In FY 2019-20, the Assessment Center collected the following outcome measures:

- Arrests
- Detentions
- Probation violations
- Probation completions
- Court-ordered restitution completion
- Court-ordered community service completion

The Assessment Center also reports the average daily population in the Juvenile Hall to track progress toward its goal of reducing the number and length of Juvenile Hall stays.

## Evaluation Findings

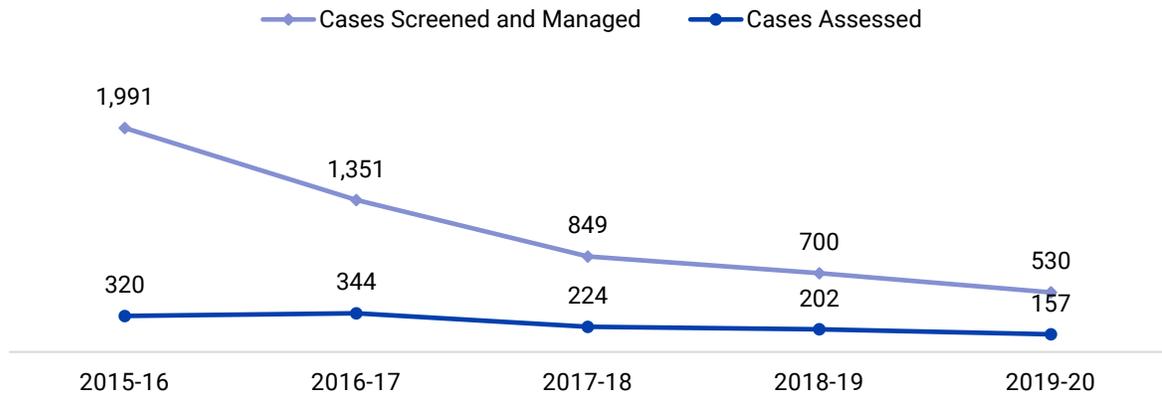
### Fiscal Year 2019-20 Highlights

- The number of youths screened decreased by 24%, from 700 to 530, and the number of youths assessed decreased by 22%, from 202 to 157.
- There was a 61% decrease in the average time spent in the Center (1.5 months).
- The Assessment Center served clients across the risk spectrum: 60% scored Low, 37% scored Moderate, and 4% scored High on the criminogenic risk spectrum.
- The percent of youths with a drug or alcohol problem, a school attendance problem, or suspension or expulsion at entry increased compared with FY 2018-19.

### Profile of Clients Served

In FY 2019-20, the Assessment Center screened and managed 530 cases, which consist of “Section 602”-involved youths (formal wards of the Court or those who have committed criminal law offenses) and “Section 601”-involved youths (those with a history of truancy, running away, or out-of-control behavior at home and/or in school). Figure 1 shows the total number of cases screened and managed each year, showing a clear decline in numbers served over time. For further detail on how each case was processed through the system, please see the Appendix.

Figure 1. Total Number of Cases Screened and Managed, FY 2015-16 to FY 2019-20



The Assessment Center assessed 157 youths during FY 2019-20 (Table 1). Since FY 2015-16, the number of youths assessed by the Center has declined in part due to the changing population in San Mateo County, as well as due to changes in reporting policies at the Center. The demographic and outcome data reported reflects the status of 144 of 157 youths.

**Table 1. Youth Services**

YOUTH SERVICES	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20
<b>Number of Youths Assessed</b>	320	344	224	202	<b>157</b>
<b>Average Time in the Center (Months)</b>	2.4	2.0	2.6	3.8	<b>1.5*</b>

*FY 2019-20 \*n=144 youths with individual data.*

Based on the 144 youths whose demographic data were recorded in FY 2019-20:

- About three out of four (71%) youths served were male, and 29% were female.
- The average age of youths was 16.0 years.
- Of the 141 youths who had race/ethnicity data available, 65% identified as Hispanic/Latino, 20% as White/Caucasian, 14% as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 2% as Black/African American.
- Youths were served for an average of 1.5 months in the Assessment Center.

### Risk Indicators

Assessment Center evaluated certain risk indicators upon entry, including if the youth had a drug or alcohol problem, a school attendance problem, and whether they had been suspended or expelled from school in the past year (Table 2). The findings below indicate:

- In FY 2019-20, 34% of youths had an alcohol or drug problem at entry.
- More than one-quarter (27%) had an attendance problem upon entry.
- One-half (50%) of youths had been suspended or expelled in the past year.
- All indicators increased compared with FY 2018-19.

**Table 2. Youth Risk Indicators at Center Entry**

RISK INDICATORS	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20
<b>Alcohol or Drug Problem</b>	31%	10%	20%	12%	<b>34%</b>
<b>Attendance Problem</b>	32%	36%	20%	16%	<b>27%</b>
<b>Suspension/Expulsion in the Past Year</b>	41%	39%	41%	36%	<b>50%</b>

*FY 2019-20 n=70*

In FY 2019-20, the Assessment Center primarily served youths at the low and moderate section of the risk spectrum, with 60% scoring Low risk and 37% scoring Moderate risk (Table 3). These results have been stable over the past three years of JAIS implementation and are expected given the nature of the Assessment Center’s programs, which focus on diversion programs and informal probation.

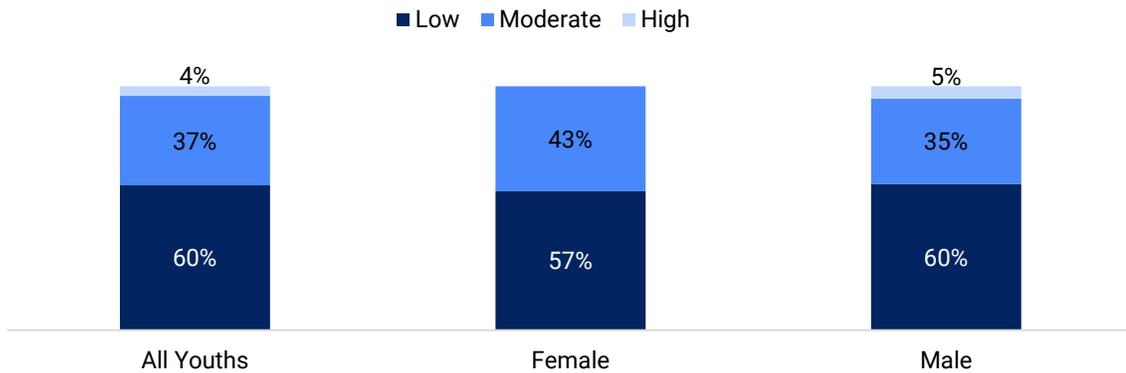
**Table 3. JAIS Risk Level**

JAIS RISK LEVEL	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20
Low	65%	62%	66%	64%	<b>60%</b>
Moderate	29%	30%	30%	34%	<b>37%</b>
High	6%	8%	3%	2%	<b>4%</b>

*FY 2019-20 n=104. Note: Percentages may not total to 100 due to rounding.*

When disaggregated by gender, the vast majority of youth, regardless of gender, had Low (60%) or Moderate (37%) criminogenic risk levels (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Criminogenic Risk Level by Gender**



*All Youths n=104; Female n=21; Male n=83. Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.*

## Justice Outcomes

Table 4 presents justice-related outcomes for 50 youths whose six-month post-entry evaluation milestone occurred in FY 2019-20. Of note:

- The percentage of youths arrested for a new law violation dropped to 0% from 1% in FY 2018-19.
- The percentage of youths detained during their time in the Center also dropped to 2% in FY 2019-20 from 4% in FY 2018-19.

**Table 4. Justice Outcomes**

JUSTICE OUTCOMES	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20
<b>Youths Arrested for a New Law Violation</b>	21%	N/A	13%	1%	<b>0%</b>
<b>Youths with Detentions</b>	20%	22%	8%	4%	<b>2%</b>
<b>Youths with Probation Violations</b>	N/A	N/A	20%	*	*
<b>Completion of Probation at 180 Days</b>	0%	0%	13%	*	*
<b>Completion of Restitution</b>	0%	*	*	*	*
<b>Completion of Community Service</b>	*	*	*	*	*

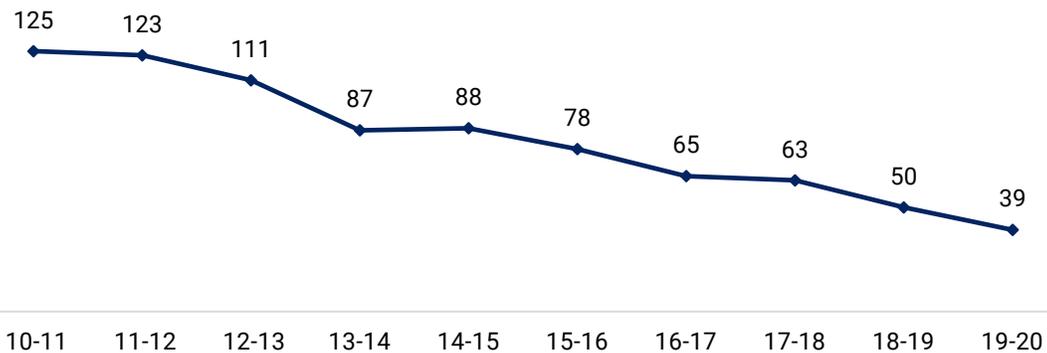
*FY 2019-20 Youths Arrested for a New Law Violation n=50, Youths with Detentions n=50, Youths with Probation Violations n=2, Completion of Probation at 180 Days n=2, Completion of Restitution n=0, Completion of Community Service n=0. \* Indicates that no youths were in that category in the fiscal year or data were suppressed due to a sample size below five.*

### Program-Specific Outcomes

One of the Assessment Center goals is to reduce the number of Juvenile Hall stays by diverting youths away from detention. Between FY 2018-19 and FY 2019-20, the average number of youths in Juvenile Hall declined by 22% from 50 to 39 total youths. Between FY 2010-11 and FY 2019-20, the average daily population decreased 76% (Figure 3).

Several factors seem to influence this trend, such as a decrease in crime overall, fewer bookings for non-violent and less serious offenses, and adjustments based on COVID-19. Though fewer youths are being served, staff report that the needs of youths who are entering Juvenile Hall are complex and require a significant amount of resources and supervision.

**Figure 3. Average Daily Population by Fiscal Year Over the last Decade**



## Client Story

Each year, staff at funded JJCPA programs provide a client story to help illustrate the effect of services on their clients. The following is the client story provided by the Assessment Center for FY 2019-20.

<b>Name of Client</b>	---
<b>Age and Gender</b>	---
<b>Reason for Referral</b>	A youth was arrested for theft over \$400. The youth entered a store, placed numerous items in their bag and attempted to leave the store without paying for the merchandise. The merchandise was recovered, and the youth was cited and released to their parent.
<b>Client's Behavior, Affect, and Appearance When They First Started in the Program</b>	The youth and parent participated in an assessment with a Deputy Probation Officer. The youth and parent were cooperative and forthcoming throughout the process. The youth admitted taking the items and made no excuses for their behavior. After the assessment, which includes information about school, home, and the community, it was determined the youth would participate in the National Association of Shoplifting Prevention (NASP) Program, an approximately four-hour online program. The program gives the youth seven days to enroll and 30 days to complete the program.
<b>Activity Engagement and Consistency</b>	To the youth's credit, the youth completed the program early.
<b>Client's Behavior, Affect, and Appearance Toward the End of the Program</b>	In a latter conversation with the Deputy Probation Officer, the youth apologized for their behavior and indicated that they would not be stealing again.
<b>What the Client Learned as a Result of the Program</b>	The youth explained that they learned a very hard lesson and added that the program was a great reminder how stealing affects not only the person stealing but also the company/store.

## Appendix A: Case Triage Dispositions

DISPOSITIONS	FY 15-16		FY 16-17		FY 17-18		FY 18-19		FY 19-20	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Mandatory court cases	348	17%	13	21%	353	42%	410	59%	365	69%
Booked into secure custody	213	11%	247	18%	176	21%	223	32%	192	36%
Placed in petty theft program	73	4%	51	4%	19	2%	12	2%	10	2%
Placed in Juvenile Mediation/Victim Impact Awareness Program	102	5%	130	10%	38	4%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Screened and referred to Traffic Court	75	4%	86	6%	61	7%	74	11%	44	8%
Referred to youth's county of residence	52	3%	53	4%	72	8%	57	8%	47	9%
Youth Outreach Program families served	225	11%	10	0%	N/A		13	2%	18	3%
Criminal background checks	225	11%	236	17%	243	29%	283	40%	91	17%
Alcohol and Drug assessment	25	1%	30	2%	23	3%	22	3%	17	3%
Received letter of reprimand	32	2%	57	4%	15	2%	36	5%	36	7%
Juvenile record sealing application evaluated for submission to the Court	86	4%	88	7%	88	10%	60	9%	54	10%
Assessed and placed on diversion contracts	40	2%	38	3%	35	4%	26	4%	12	2%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Intervention (90-day contract)</li> </ul>	Data not collected in prior fiscal years				23	3%	17	2%	6	1%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Informal diversion (6-month contract)</li> </ul>					12	1%	8	1%	6	1%
<b>Total Cases Screened and Managed</b>	<b>1,991</b>		<b>1,351</b>		<b>849</b>		<b>700</b>		<b>530</b>	