

# ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF PROBATION

P.O. Box 98910  
Lincoln, NE 68509  
Phone: (402) 471-2141

## Probation Juvenile Justice Reform Efforts April 2017

### **Juvenile Services Division Outcomes:**

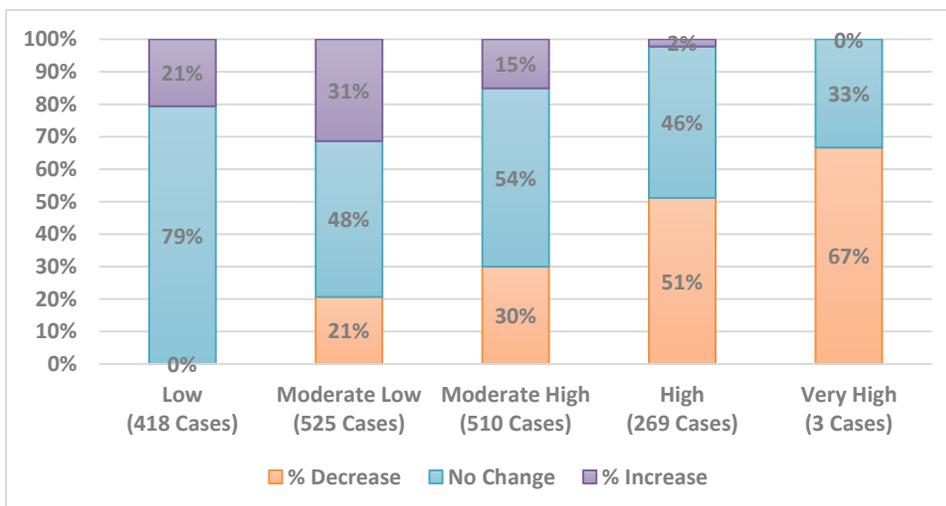
The following outcomes were created by the Juvenile Services Division to include juvenile justice reform elements found in national research. Juvenile Probation's goals for reducing recidivism are accomplished by tracking successful achievement of these outcomes. These three goals focus on preventing youth from returning to the juvenile justice system or entering the criminal justice system by:

1. Engaging juveniles and their families in the juvenile court process;
2. Eliminating barriers to families accessing effective treatment and services; and
3. Partnering with educational and community stakeholders to assure coordinated case management, focused accountability and improved outcomes.

***Outcome 1: Risk Reduction:*** Youth involved in the juvenile justice system will receive targeted services that reduce assessed risk to reoffend upon release from supervision.

The juvenile justice system measures risk for youth under supervision to assist in determining the possibility that the youth will recidivate or return to the system. The assessing of risk also helps a probation officer focus on exactly what a youth is struggling with, for example, substance use. Therefore, to measure if probation is impacting youth, it is essential to evaluate if risk has been reduced during the period of probation supervision.

National research supports this outcome as the number one core principle in a research compilation titled "Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System" authored by the Council of State Governments Justice Center. The first core principle is "base supervision, service and resource-allocation decisions on the results of validated risk and needs assessments."



This outcome is measured by first, categorizing probation cases by the initial and final Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) assessment category, then comparing the initial level for each individual court case, and finally, assessing whether risk increased or decreased during the probation term.

Of the cases discharged in the last six months, 51.1% of cases that scored "High" or "Very High" on the initial risk assessment scored at a lower level on the YLS/CMI preceding probation case closure.

Lower assessed youth can see an increase in risk due to several reasons. Some include: not sharing information upon initial assessment, additional risks identified after being placed on probation and ensuring targeted case management is utilized.

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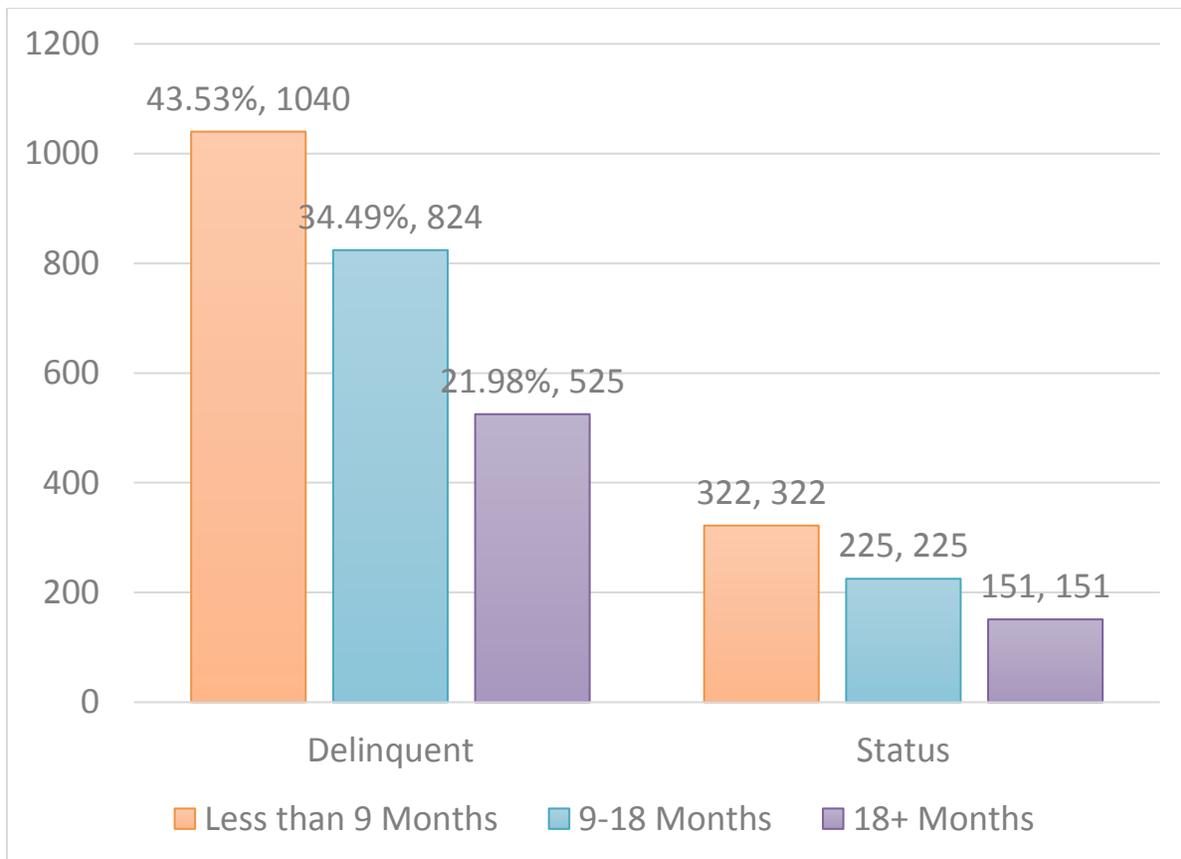
## *Outcome 2: Non-delinquent Status Youth: An increase in status youth who are diverted from the juvenile justice system or who receive a decreased term of probation supervision.*

A status youth is involved in the juvenile justice system for non-delinquent behaviors prohibited by law only because of their status as a minor. Examples include truancy and runaway behaviors. National research has shown better results for status youth when they receive immediate support and intervention which addresses the cause of the behavior and focuses on diverting from the juvenile justice system. Therefore, it is essential that probation officers immediately address the needs of the youth and prioritize diverting from the system or decreasing probation terms.

The Vera Institute of Justice's Status Reform Center released a publication titled "From Courts to Communities: The Right Response to Truancy, Running Away, and Other Status Offenses" which identified five hallmarks for status youth. The five include "Diversion from court; an immediate response; a triage process; services that are accessible and effective; and internal assessment."

This outcome is measured by comparing the length of probation for delinquent youth to non-delinquent status youth.

In the last year, 46.13% of youth on probation for non-delinquent status activities were released from probation in less than 9 months, which is 2.60 % more than delinquent youth. The average length of probation terms for non-delinquent status youth is 373.15 days: which is 4.24% less than delinquent youth.



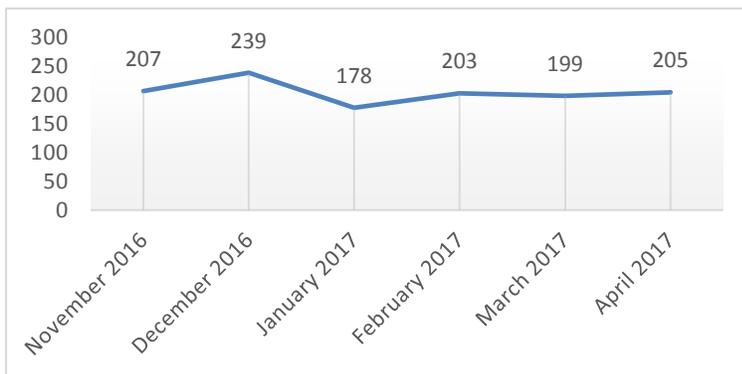
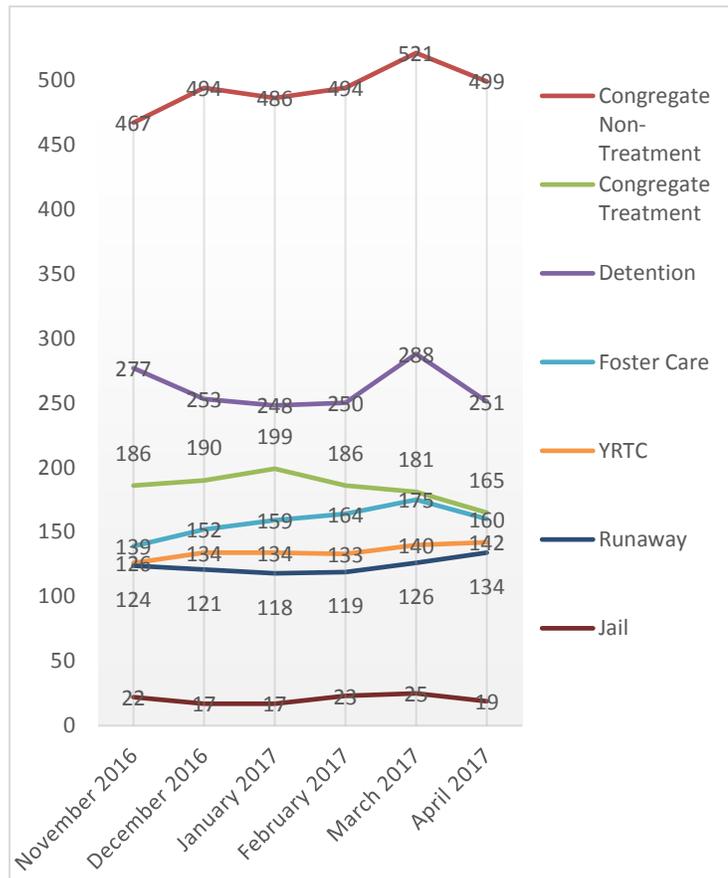
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## Outcome 3: Placement: Utilization of community-based services will reduce the use of out-of-home placements (OHP).

The juvenile justice system was created to assist youth and families in becoming self-sufficient within their own communities. This has also been supported by research, including an increased success for youth that remain in the family home and receive services within their community. The State of Nebraska has a long-standing culture of placing youth out of the family home in hopes of reducing a youth's risk. This is not supported by research and has shown negative results for Nebraska youth and families. Therefore, it is essential that in-home support and services are prioritized by probation officers to assist a youth and family in their own community and reduce a youth's risk of returning to the juvenile justice system.

In the publication *Improving the Effectiveness of Juvenile Justice Programs: A New Perspective on Evidence-Based Practices* by Lipsey, Howell, Kelly, Chapmann and Carver, they find that "research has not supported the effectiveness of large, congregate, custodial juvenile correctional facilities for rehabilitating juvenile offenders." Additionally, they identify three challenges that must be overcome to ensure improved results for juvenile justice youth, the second is "building effective community-based programs for probation, reentry, aftercare, and parole systems to accommodate reductions in secure confinement."



This outcome is measured by analyzing the total number of youth in OHP during any point of the month and the number of vouchers that are issued to pay for community-based services. Community-based services include intensive family preservation (IFP), multisystemic therapy (MST), and family support work (FSW).

Congregate Non-Treatment and Congregate Treatment are now reported as two separate categories. Congregate Non-Treatment include: crisis stabilization, developmental disability group home, enhanced shelter, group home (A and B), maternity group home (parenting and non-parenting), independent living and shelter. Congregate Treatment includes: acute inpatient hospitalization, psychiatric residential treatment facility, short term residential and treatment group home. Foster Care has increased by 15.1% when comparing the last six months. Whereas, the number of youth receiving community-based services continues to fluctuate based on the needs of the current population.

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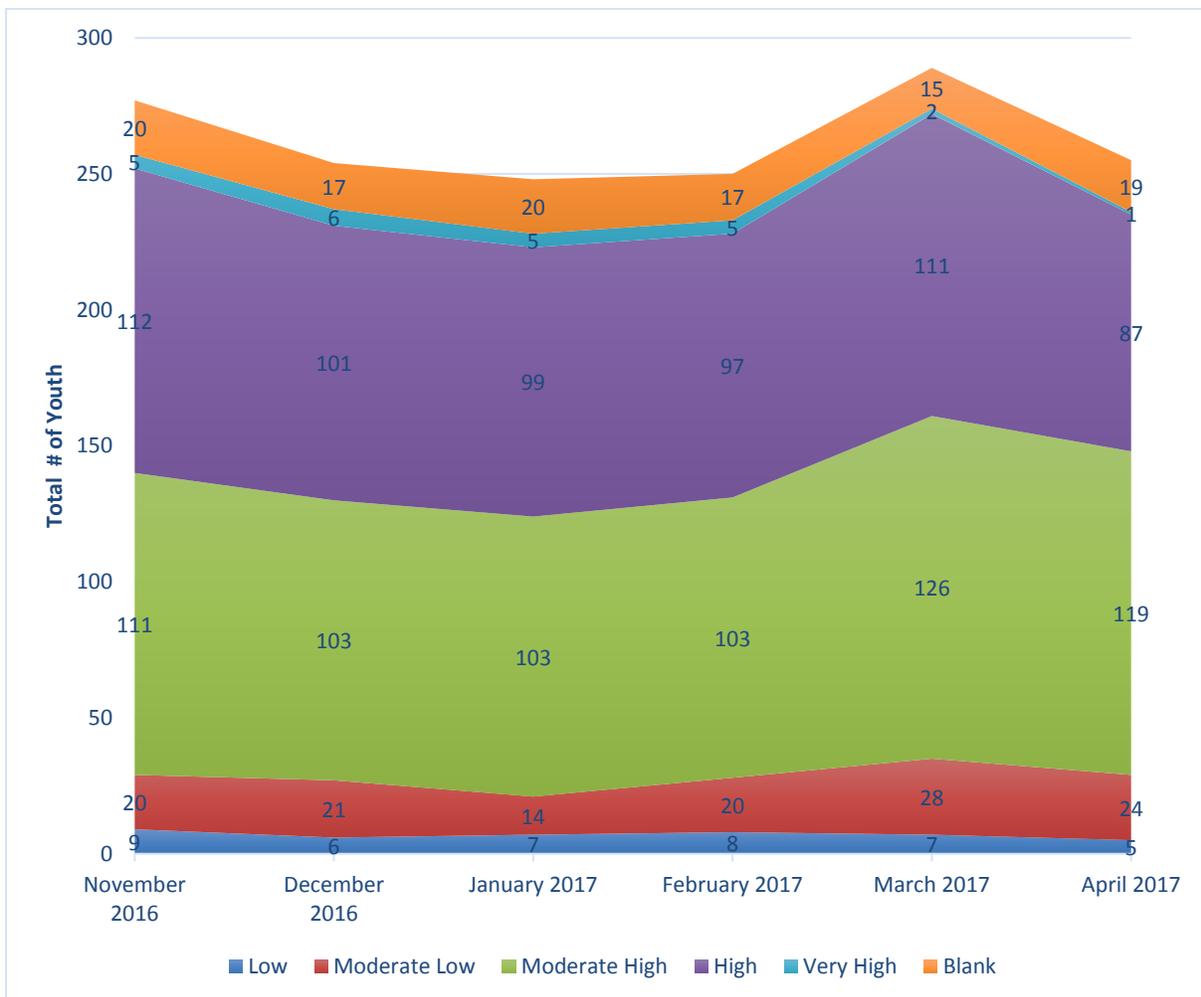
***Outcome 4: Detention: Reduce the number of youth placed in detention who are not at high risk to reoffend.***

The use of detention for youth has been found by research as very harmful. Detention should only be used when a youth is a true risk to the safety of the community. Additionally, low risk youth who are not a risk to the community show negative results when placed in detention. Therefore, probation officers ensure that only high risk youth that are a risk to public safety are placed in the detention centers across the state.

This is further supported by The Annie E. Casey Foundation publication *No Place for Kids: The Case for Reducing Juvenile Incarceration*. As priority number one, "Limit Eligibility for Correctional Placements: Commitment to a juvenile correctional facility should be reserved for youth who have committed serious offenses and pose a clear and demonstrable risk to public safety."

This outcome is measured by reporting the number of youth in detention by their most recent YLS/CMI score. These detention numbers do not include youth who are detained as an 'intake' and are not on probation at the time of detention. Some youth have not completed a YLS/CMI and this accounts for the small number of blank YLS/CMI scored youth.

Detention admissions for Low probation youth remained less than 10 youth per month when comparing the last six months.



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## *Outcome 5: Education and Employment: A higher percentage of youth will be involved in pro-social activities including school and employment.*

Ensuring that a youth is involved in pro-social activities is essential and has shown great outcomes towards successful probation. The two major factors that support this are school and employment. Therefore, assisting a youth in being successful at school and employment is key to a youth not returning to the juvenile justice system. One service that probation offers youth throughout Nebraska is the Rural Improvement for Schooling and Employment (RISE) program. RISE is an AmeriCorps program focused on providing education and employment skills to at-risk youth. Implemented in Nebraska in 2007, RISE Program Specialists support youth in the Nebraska probation system by facilitating a skills-building program centered on improving grades, attendance, and employment opportunities for at-risk youth while improving community safety through reducing recidivism.

The RISE Program was created in response to a 2006 Vera Institute study that showed high risk youth are more successful on probation when education and employment are a key focus. Another core principle identified by the Council for State Governments Justice Center is principle 3 "Employ a coordinated approach across service systems to address youth's needs." This ensures all experts are working together, which is key to long term success.

The RISE Education program helps juvenile probationers decrease behaviors within the school environment that can lead to failing or dropping out, through a skills building curriculum focused on an educational skill set.

New referrals for the program began October 1, 2016 and progress will build over the next several months in each identified area below. The RISE Program also has seven youth involved in their employment services programming.

