# Texas Juvenile Probation Commission

# **Annual Report**

# Fiscal Year 1998



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#### **Texas Juvenile Probation Commission**

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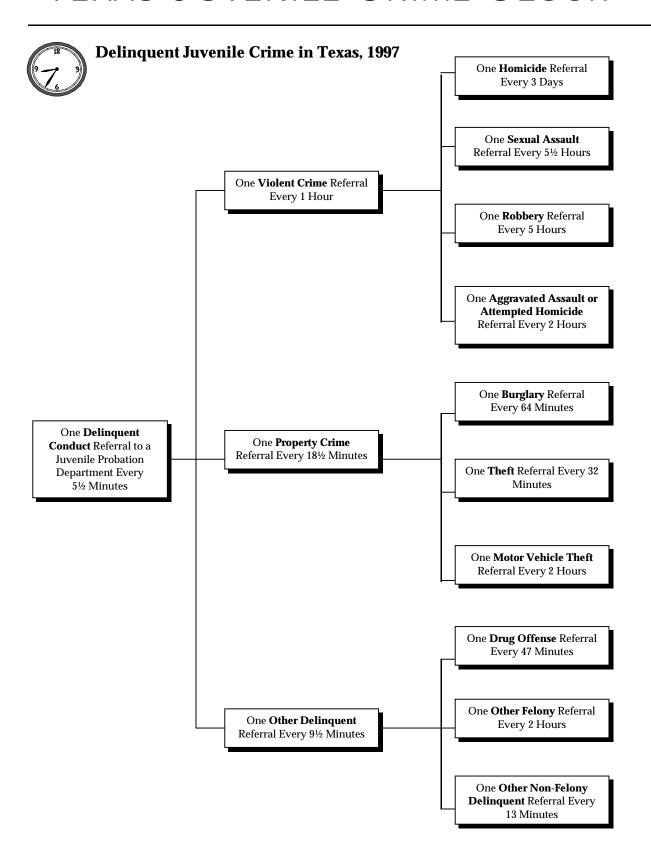
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# Contents

Texas Juvenile Justice Crime Clock	i
The Director's Statement	1
Our Mission	3
Our Philosophy	3
Overview of Projects	4
Commissioners and Advisory Council	10
Organization Chart	11
Fiscal Overview	12
Administrative Operations	15
Field Services	17
Statewide Activity	20
Contributors and Thanks	24

# TEXAS JUVENILE CRIME CLOCK



### The Director's Statement



During fiscal year 1998, the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission worked with those in the health and human services, education, and juvenile justice arenas to create more options and further the opportunities for juveniles in, or at risk of entering, the juvenile probation system.

Much of the effort focused on furthering the work of the 74th and 75th Legislatures by fleshing out the programmatic requirements of progressive sanctions, creating case management standards, creating standards for the operation of juvenile justice alternative education facilities, and

refining the Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Projects. Another endeavor included increasing the level of fiscal support provided to the Border Children Justice Projects. Each of these projects is discussed in this report.

Additionally, the Juvenile Probation Commission made funds available to juvenile probation departments to help them expand the types of intervention programs offered to juveniles and their families. The Strengthening Our Capacity to Care Program along with our Family Preservation grants serve as program models funded by the state, and both include a comprehensive evaluation component. If these programs are determined to be successful for the populations they serve, the Juvenile Probation Commission will continue funding to increase the availability of these programs and to promote the use of research-based programmatic interventions for Texas juveniles. These programs are also reviewed in this report.

As represented by the face on the cover of this report, Texas juveniles come in all colors, shapes and sizes. The juvenile probation system must, to the best of its ability, respond to each juvenile's needs. We can never say that a one-size program fits all.

We can say we will evaluate programs to determine the most effective way to respond to the variety of needs local juvenile probation departments must meet every day and to encourage, through funding, the increased use of those programs.

As we position Texas' juvenile probation system for the next millennium, we must continue to reflect and build on three important relationships. One is with the counties, who provide juvenile probation services; two is with other human service agencies, whom we call upon to assist us in addressing the needs of juveniles; and three is with the education systems, through whose doors each of these youth must pass at some time. At the same time, we must create a vision for the future that can be agreed upon and that will encourage the accountability, responsibility, and successful development of Texas children.

Vicki Spriggs

## Our Mission



TJPC has a mission to work in partnership with local juvenile boards and their local juvenile probation departments to provide a comprehensive range of community based probation services. These locally controlled programs will ensure public safety, offender accountability, and assistance to offenders in becoming productive, responsible, law-abiding citizens.

This mission is accomplished through a continuum of services and programs that:

- include prevention, early intervention, and rehabilitative programs;
- maximize family participation and accountability;
- are community-based, family-oriented and as least restrictive as possible;
- include a mix of residential and non-residential services which reduce commitments to the Texas Youth Commission; and,
- are a balance of public and private services and resources.

# Our Philosophy

TJPC recognizes that youth crime is an issue that transcends neighborhoods, as well as boundaries of city, county, state and federal governments. We believe that local communities should be given the autonomy and local control to develop their own solutions to their unique problems. TJPC can best serve them by providing limited and efficient government through funding, technical assistance, relevant training, and monitoring of standards which are appropriate to the realities of juvenile justice.

We believe that the most effective and efficient philosophy involves the provision of a continuum of care and supervision for each juvenile offender, as well as those at risk of becoming offenders. It addresses the totality of human functioning: physical, emotional, intellectual, social, vocational, and educational. A balanced approach to juvenile justice must be developed emphasizing protection of the community, accountability, and rehabilitation that will enable children to become valued members of society.

Building strong families with members who act responsibly is vital for successful interventions. Policies must focus on social, economic, and behavioral factors related to high delinquency rates, and all sectors of the community should cooperate to reduce juvenile violence and crime while rehabilitating youthful offenders. Delinquency prevention as well as early interception and intervention efforts must have greater emphasis and financial support, thus creating a proactive system as opposed to the traditional reactive system. A distinct division between the county-operated, community-based probation system and the state institutional system must be maintained.

# Overview of Projects

The 74th Texas legislative session, which occurred in 1995, continues to be the landmark for decision making regarding juvenile justice. Mandates from that year continue to shape and dictate decisions and processes utilized today in the juvenile justice system. Some of the following areas were implemented as a direct result of that session, while others were developed for other reasons – but all for the betterment of Texas children.



#### **Progressive Sanctions**

Progressive sanctions are viewed as a realistic sanctions model based on what juvenile justice practitioners believe are appropriate consequences and outcomes for juvenile offenders. From prevention and early intervention programs to secure incarceration, the services are designed to assist youth at each sanction level. The optional guidelines provide a continuum of seven progressive steps designed to balance public protection, offender accountability and rehabilitation.

Each juvenile board in the state opted to adopt progressive sanctions guidelines and is reporting related statistical data to the TJPC. During fiscal year 1998, thirty regional training sessions were conducted across the state to help practitioners more fully understand the guidelines and requirements in reporting. The training was part of a continued effort to improve the understanding of how progressive sanctions applies to every child's case.

#### **Family Preservation Grants**

During fiscal year 1998, the TJPC implemented an innovative project to provide funding for in-home based programs. Six family preservation projects were awarded grants to provide intervention and prevention services. The programs target adjudicated youth at risk of placement outside of

home and their families. Programs focus on preventing

the removal of the child from the home, saving money in placement costs and preventing siblings from entering the juvenile justice system.

TJPC received requests for proposals for up to \$70,000. Bexar, Denton, El Paso, Harris, Kaufman, and Travis Counties received the awards and were each required to match the amount by thirty percent in order to implement the programs. Only departments contracting with TJPC for the Title IV-E Program were eligible to apply. TJPC has contracted with the University of Texas Center for Social Work Research to conduct an intensive independent evaluation of the effectiveness of each local program.

#### **Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs**

In an effort to balance safe schools with local control and to provide for the education of all children, the 74th Legislature required the juvenile justice system and the public education system to work together in partnership. The juvenile boards of the twenty-two largest counties, those with a population over 125,000, were mandated to operate juvenile justice alternative education programs, or JJAEPs, for certain expelled youth.

The twenty-two statutorily mandated and nine non-mandated JJAEPs completed their second year of operation in fiscal year 1998. Preliminary numbers show that approximately 4,500 students were served during the school year. Approximately 70 percent of the students were expelled from the school districts for discretionary reasons, most commonly for serious or persistent misconduct. There was a dramatic increase in the number of entrances for the discretionary expelled students in the spring, while mandatory students' entrances remained consistent throughout the school year.

A JJAEP workgroup consisting of field practitioners and staff from TJPC and the Texas Education Agency was formed to create rules providing minimum standards and a system of accountability consistent with the Texas Education Code, as required by the legislature. The Education Code states that the mission of the JJAEPs is to enable students to perform at grade level. Keeping this mission in mind, the workgroup developed a JJAEP accountability system much like the alternative school accountability system developed by the Texas Education Agency.

#### **Strengthening Our Capacity to Care Program**

The Strengthening Our Capacity to Care Program: Parenting and Youth Life Skills Education Pilot Program (SOCC) is designed as a preventative program aiming to reduce the percent of recidivism among first time juvenile offenders. Fiscal year 1998 marked the second year of the three-year pilot project. Fifty-one counties participate in the project, eighteen of which were added in the second year.

County extension faculty and juvenile probation officers cooperate in the delivery of programs to youth that are at risk or who are involved in the juvenile justice system at progressive sanctions levels 1, 2 or 3. The programs offer parenting education designed to enhance and strengthen parenting skills for families with youth aged ten to fourteen years. Youth life skills designed to enhance self-understanding, communication, problem-solving and conflict resolution are also taught. The Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University will conduct a program evaluation at the end of the third year.

#### **Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Projects**

A bill introduced by the late Representative Dan Kubiak during the 74th legislative session established the Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Project. The Buffalo Soldiers were chosen as the basis of the program because of their rich and significant contributions to our nation and state's history. It is a history of courage and leadership from the perspective of these African-American soldiers.

The project targets at-risk males between the ages of ten and seventeen in Washington, Bexar, Dallas, Tom Green and Tarrant counties. Referrals to the program come from probation departments, schools, churches, and civic groups. Serving predominantly minority youth, the program curriculum is based on eight core elements: empowerment, identification of self and culture, decision-making, team building, community awareness, socialization, values clarification, and expectations for the future.

At the end of fiscal year 1998, the community program providers had completed three cycles, each lasting six months. Evaluation results from the first six-month cycle of fiscal year 1998 showed that programs exceeded required enrollment by twenty-five percent and the completion or participant retention rate was ninety percent.

#### **Substance Abuse Projects**

As a result of the 74<sup>th</sup> legislative session, the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse and TJPC established an interagency agreement providing approximately \$2.1 million per year of the biennium for TJPC to fund substance abuse prevention and treatment services. The funds were re-appropriated for the 1998-1999 biennium.

Substance Abuse Grants, Fiscal Year 1998

Grant County	Grant Award	Grant County	Grant Award	Grant County	Grant Award
Comal	\$200,000	El Paso	\$183,139	Randall	\$65,003
Dallam	\$65,003	Frio	\$64,286	San Patricio	\$205,311
Dallas	\$205,311	Lamb	\$200,000	Tom Green	\$183,139

With these funds, nine prevention and intervention pilot programs have been made fully operational. Programs are administered through Comal, Dallam, El Paso, Frio, Lamb, Randall, San Patricio, and Tom Green Counties, but prevention and intervention services were received in a total of 38 counties across the state through these sites. More than 29,000 juveniles received substance abuse services during fiscal year 1998. In that same period, 70 counties placed 197 juveniles in substance abuse treatment facilities.

The projects use a variety of approaches based on the needs of youth and families in their area. In addition to uniform substance abuse screening and assessment of juvenile offenders, most projects use non-traditional, innovative methods to engage youth and families in services and to interrupt negative behavioral trends.

Each of the involved juvenile probation departments set up alliances with schools and other local agencies to increase the stake of their communities in the projects. They are working together to create a full continuum of substance abuse services for youth and their families.

#### **Construction Bond Projects**

The 74th Legislature authorized \$37.5 million in general revenue bonds to TJPC to assist counties in the construction of secure post-adjudication correctional facilities. Prior to fiscal year 1998, eighteen sites were selected which met the funding requirements set by the Texas Public Finance Authority and other conditions required by the TJPC. The funds were then distributed to the juvenile boards in those counties. During fiscal year 1998, an additional \$1.8 million became available to fund an additional facility in Duval County.

Completion status of the sites varies. By the end of fiscal year 1998, nine of the nineteen sites were operational, with the remaining facilities expected to open during 1999. Once complete, the facilities will add 1,114 new secure beds to the juvenile justice system in Texas, exceeding the 1,000 anticipated when the bonds were appropriated.

#### **Border Children Justice Projects**

Border Children Justice Projects were implemented in 1985 to address crime problems unique to the Texas/Mexico border and to provide a more humane response to Mexican children who violate U.S. laws. The programs also serve children from the U.S. who violate Mexican laws. TJPC provides discretionary funds to these programs to improve the rehabilitative efforts of Texas and Mexican authorities. A substantial economic savings is achieved by combining resources in Texas and Mexico.

I express our wishes to cooperate and to continue working together on the problems faced by border children both delinquent and alien. I will be at your disposal and will continue to see solutions for our problem children along the border.

> Judge Sergio Castillo Gayton Monterrey, Nuevo Leon March 1987



Border Children Justice Projects operated in five Texas counties, but received referrals from counties across the state. During fiscal year 1998, Cameron, El Paso, Starr, Val Verde, and Webb Counties provided services, institutional placement and social work services to approximately 225 juveniles and their families.

In 1987, the Ford Foundation recognized this as one of the nation's most innovative programs for children, and it has since become a model for other U.S. states bordering Mexico.

## Commissioners and Advisory Council

The Commission governs the staff of TJPC and provides administrative direction. Members are appointed by the governor to staggered six-year terms, with three members being replaced every two years. The Human Resources Code mandates that the board be composed of two district court judges, two county judges or county commissioners, and five members of the public who are not employees of the criminal or juvenile justice system.

- ☆ Michael L. Williams, Chair Arlington
- ☆ Robert P. Brotherton, Vice-Chair Wichita Falls
- ☆ Michael Cantrell Dallas
- ☆ Mary Craft Houston
- ☆ Raul Garcia

  Austin

- ☆ Keith H. Kuttler Bryan
- ☆ William E. Miller
  Lubbock
- ☆ Robert Tejeda
  San Antonio

In addition to the Commissioners, an advisory council exists to address the needs and problems of county juvenile boards and departments and to assist the commission in long-range planning. The Texas Advisory Council on Juvenile Services reports to the executive director of TJPC. The twelve member group is composed of two citizens, two judges, three probation officers, two ex-officio members, and one Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, one Texas Education Agency and one Texas Youth Commission employee.

- ☆ Gary Gaston, Chair Andrews
- ☆ Jason Dorsey, Vice-Chair

  Austin
- ☆ Joe Castillo

  Hondo
- ☆ Carey Cockerell Fort Worth
- ☆ Joel B. Johnson

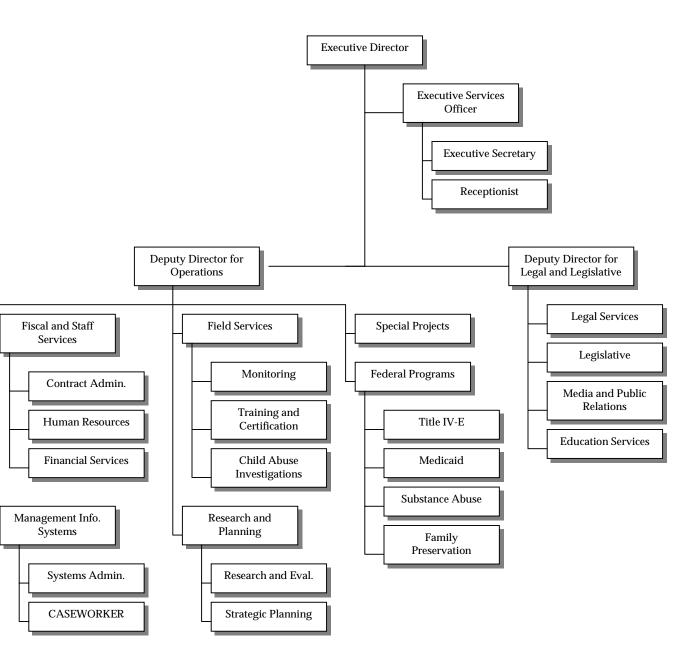
- ☆ Christi Martin Austin
- ☆ Estela Medina Austin
- ☆ Jesus Soto

  Del Rio
- ☆ Melissa Weiss

Beeville Bellville

# Organization Chart

There are 48 full time employees at the TJPC. These employees work within eight different divisions that are structured as shown in the chart below.



#### **Allocation of State Funds to Local Communities**

TJPC works closely with its partners in local communities to help them achieve the highest standards. To do this, TJPC allocates funds to juvenile boards for the operation of their probation department's programs and services for troubled youths and their families. The Commission is the primary agency through which state funding for juvenile justice is channeled to the counties.

In fiscal year 1998, TJPC sent more than one hundred million dollars to county juvenile boards for their local probation departments. Total revenues appropriated to TJPC have increased 452 percent since the beginning of this decade, from \$20,062,039 in fiscal year 1990 to \$90,587,048 in fiscal year 1998.

However, state funding accounts for nearly 37 percent of total funding for juvenile probation. Approximately 63 percent of the total is provided by local Commissioners' Courts from county revenues. Juvenile boards work closely with the Commissioners' Courts to set budgets for the operation of the local juvenile probation departments using both local and state funds.

#### **Budget and Funding, Fiscal Year 1998**

Source of Funds:	
General Revenue	\$ 75,893,872
Interagency Contracts	14,693,176
Total	\$ 90,587,048
Appropriations:	
State Aid	\$ 35,223,016
Community Corrections	40,303,747
Probation Assistance	4,535,456
Juvenile Justice Alternative Education	10,000,000
Direct and Indirect Administration	524,829
Total	\$ 90,587,048

State and Local Funding	of Juvenile Probation System
State Funding:	

Total	\$ 255,738,018
Local Funding	155,697,059
Other	193,582
Prevention Programs	140,000
Family Preservation	210,000
Border Projects	228,839
Buffalo Soldier Projects	250,000
Harris County Delta III Boot Camp	1,000,000
Progressive Sanctions ISP Officers	1,171,320
Challenge Grants	1,305,061
Start-Up Costs of Juvenile Facilities	1,313,737
Operating Costs of Juvenile Facilities	2,304,035
Substance Abuse Projects	3,193,868
JJAEP Start-Up and Construction	4,992,958
Progressive Sanctions Juvenile Probation Officers	5,072,327
Construction of Facilities	8,548,647
Title IV-E Funds	10,445,434
State Aid	29,718,585
Community Corrections	\$ 29,952,566
0	

#### **Community Corrections Assistance Funding**

TJPC dispersed \$40,303,747 of Community Corrections Assistance Funding to juvenile probation departments in fiscal year 1998. The purpose of the funds is to enhance the quality of services available to youth at risk of commitment to the Texas Youth Commission, with a goal of reducing commitments. TJPC must meet mandated performance targets concerning successful completions of probation, intensive supervision programs, and residential diversionary placements.

Completion of a Community Corrections Plan is required of departments before they are eligible to receive TJPC Community Corrections Assistance Funding. The plan requires brief, but specific, information concerning the programs and services to be developed or enhanced.

#### **Small County Diversionary Placement Assistance**

This fund, initiated in 1989, serves juvenile probation departments with juvenile age populations of less than 3,000. Using a portion of the Community Corrections Assistance Funds, the Juvenile Probation Commission reimburses departments for up to six months' placement for a youth when the placement is an alternative to TYC commitment. Smaller probation departments typically do not have as many resources available as larger counties to make alternative placements to places such as private treatment centers, group facilities or foster homes. During fiscal year 1998, TJPC reimbursed 43 small counties for 89 diversionary placements.

#### **Progressive Sanctions Levels 1, 2, and 3 Funding**

The 74th Texas Legislature appropriated an additional \$10.2 million for fiscal year 1998 in the Basic Probation category. Half of these new funds were used to hire an additional 185 juvenile probation officers around Texas to supervise offenders in the first three levels of progressive sanctions. The other half of the new funds was appropriated to allow local departments to create new programs for children in the same progressive sanctions levels. These programs are intended to prevent youth from penetrating deeper into the juvenile justice system. Mentoring programs, community restitution, first offender programs, counseling and parenting programs are examples of some programs and services administered with the new funds.

## **Challenge Grants**

In 1987, the Texas Legislature created the Challenge Grant Program to provide services to multi-problem juveniles who were under the jurisdiction of the juvenile courts and who were also identified as being abused, neglected, mentally ill or retarded. Previously, these types of multi-problem children often were committed to the Texas Youth Commission because the lack of funding and local resources left no locally based alternatives. In fiscal year 1998, the Challenge Grant

Program provided residential and community-based services for nearly 300 children.

## Administrative Operations

#### **Setting Standards and Strategic Direction**

Just over a decade ago in Texas, the scope and quality of juvenile probation services were spotty at best. In some rural communities services were virtually non-existent.

To meet its primary mandate to improve and standardize Texas juvenile probation services, the TJPC, with assistance from local representatives, established juvenile probation standards, juvenile preadjudication secure detention facilities standards, and juvenile postadjudication secure correctional facilities standards. In addition to the standards, twenty financial and accountability assurances were developed which apply to every local juvenile probation agency in the state.

These standards and assurances serve to guarantee uniform, quality probation services across Texas and to further the pursuit of excellence in juvenile justice and delinquency prevention. They are updated and revised as needed. During fiscal year 1998, the TJPC staff, along with field input from various probation departments, drafted numerous amendments to the standards, focusing heavily on child abuse and neglect issues, pre- and post-adjudication facilities, and case management.

The Juvenile Probation Commission works in partnership with local juvenile boards and judges to set strategic direction. Juvenile court judges and juvenile board members participated in the development of TJPC's strategic plans. They, with additional input from chief juvenile probation officers, assist TJPC in focusing our agency direction consistent with local needs and issues.

#### **Caseload Management and Data Collection**

In 1985, TJPC initiated the Juvenile Tracking and Caseload Management System, or *CASEWORKER*, to facilitate and standardize the collecting, storing and retrieving of caseload information. In order to keep up with the changing system, the program has gone through many revisions since it was created, including the latest revision in fiscal year 1997 to CASEWORKER/4. At the end of fiscal year 1998, the system was installed in 154 of the 168 Texas juvenile probation departments.

CASEWORKER is an excellent tool for local departments to use for caseload management and tracking. It also builds a valuable database on juvenile crime and juvenile justice operations in Texas. Much of the CASEWORKER data is available in the annual TJPC Statistical Report.

Beginning in January 1999, case file data will be required on a monthly basis from departments. TJPC will no longer require or accept aggregate data as it is now submitted on the standardized report forms. Departments using the CASEWORKER program will simply submit monthly case file backups, while non-CASEWORKER users will be required to submit selected case file data elements in a compatible format. The expanded fields of data will enable TJPC to undertake more comprehensive analyses of statewide juvenile justice activity.

#### **Assistance and Information**

The Commission is Texas' central clearinghouse for juvenile justice information. It offers legal and technical assistance, information, and consultation to lawmakers, probation departments, judges, prosecutors, reporters, students, researchers, or to anyone with a legitimate request for assistance. TJPC staff includes professionals widely experienced in juvenile law, program development and application, research and data management, personnel development and fiscal planning.

In addition to its law library, TJPC maintains a resource library including textbooks, reports, research papers, news clippings and videotapes. Information is periodically distributed to the juvenile probation field, state agencies and other interested parties in *TJPC News*, a quarterly newsletter.

#### Field Services

#### Monitoring

To insure and facilitate local compliance with its standards, eight TJPC staff members conduct on-site monitoring visits and act as liaisons between the Commission and each of the 168 local juvenile probation departments and their juvenile boards and juvenile judges. They review fiscal and program operations and provide technical assistance and consultation in areas such as case record management, personnel development, budget preparation, fiscal planning, community education and project development.

In response to recommendations by the Sunset Advisory Commission, the 75th Texas Legislature mandated that TJPC adopt case management standards for all probation services provided by local juvenile probation departments. The Case Management Standards Committee was created, consisting of ten representatives from various local juvenile probation departments and five TJPC staff. After actively seeking input from a wide array of juvenile justice professionals, the committee presented recommendations during fiscal year 1998. The case management standards propose the following:

- formalized screening process for all formal referrals;
- Strategies in Juvenile Supervision (SJS) evaluations performed on juveniles on progressive sanctions levels 4 or 5;
- written case plans for all juveniles receiving court ordered supervision;
- periodic review process for written case plans;
- supervision levels determined by written case plans;
- written exit plans for juveniles released from court ordered supervision.

These proposed standards are likely to have significant implications for the state's juvenile probation departments. The most significant implication likely will be with the requirement to provide SJS

evaluations for all juveniles receiving a court ordered period of supervision. In anticipation of this standard, the TJPC launched an aggressive and comprehensive campaign to provide SJS materials and training to all departments.

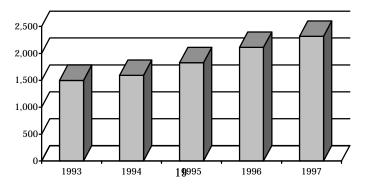
#### **Education, Training and Certification**

The Commission plays a vital role in the professional development of Texas juvenile justice practitioners by requiring continuing education for all probation and detention officers. Training is provided for juvenile judges and all levels of juvenile probation personnel. TJPC requires that all Texas juvenile probation officers are certified as having earned necessary academic degrees and having completed 40 hours annually of approved continuing education. Corrections, detention and institutional childcare personnel are also TJPC certified. Training provided by TJPC is offered at little or no cost to probation staff and judges.

Through the agency's certification and training program during fiscal year 1998, 4,584 Texas probation personnel received 49,465 hours of training. During this time, TJPC's training curriculum was offered in 123 statewide, regional and local workshops. During the fiscal year, TJPC certified 746 juvenile probation officers, 74 corrections officers and 423 detention officers and recertified 588 juvenile probation officers and 208 detention officers.

The number of juvenile probation officers supervising in Texas has increased significantly each year. This is due mostly to additional funding designated for new officers. The following table illustrates the 55% increase in the number of officers between 1993 and 1997.

#### **Number of Juvenile Probation Officers in Texas**



#### **Federal Programs Initiatives**

Since late 1992, TJPC has contracted with the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services to enable local juvenile probation departments to access Title IV-E Federal Foster Care funds. Through this program, departments can be reimbursed approximately 50% of placement costs for eligible placements. Related administrative costs are also reimbursable at 50%, and training expenses at 75%. The amount of reimbursement received by departments has grown exponentially from \$62,000 in fiscal year 1994, to \$9,000,000 in fiscal year 1998. Fifty-eight counties received reimbursement for the placement and related expenses for 530 children during fiscal year 1998.

In addition to the financial benefit, program requirements have led to the enhancement of case management procedures for children in substitute care. Case plans and progress reviews are central to these procedures, as well as maintaining regular contact with all involved parties and placing an increased emphasis on the provision of services to the family.

#### **Medicaid**

In March 1997, TJPC began an interagency pilot project to develop procedures whereby children in the juvenile justice system could be eligible for Medicaid benefits. This project continued in fiscal year 1998, enabling over 500 children who had been placed outside the home by the juvenile court to be eligible for Medicaid benefits, thereby reducing expenses to counties and the state.

Effective July 1, 1998, Texas Medicaid eligibility rules were changed to include more children between the ages of six and nineteen. TJPC arranged with the Texas Department of Human Services to continue the centralized eligibility process for children placed in substitute care by the juvenile court. Counties were provided information regarding eligibility criteria and have been encouraged to assist eligible children and families with obtaining benefits.

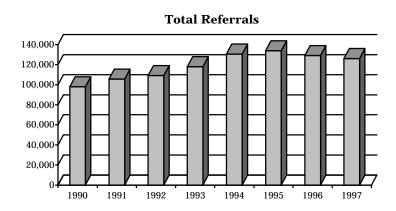
## Statewide Activity

Statistical reports containing county or statewide data are available upon request. The statistics in this section, unless otherwise noted, reflect calendar year 1997.

#### Arrests and Referrals of Juveniles in Texas

Nine out of ten youths entering the juvenile justice system do so via law enforcement referrals. In 1997, police agencies in Texas arrested 179,631 juveniles between the ages of 10 and 17. Of this number, 70,097 were warned and released, handled in magistrate courts or otherwise diverted from the juvenile justice system. The remaining 109,534 were referred to local juvenile probation agencies. An additional 16,598 juveniles were referred by social agencies, schools, parents and the Texas Youth Commission, bringing the statewide total of juvenile referrals in 1997 to 126,132.

Particularly worth noting, for the second consecutive year, total referrals were *down* in 1997 (2.3%). Likewise, most categories of offense referrals also decreased, including violent felonies (down 4.1%), total felonies (down 9.7%), and misdemeanor classes A and B (down 8.4%).

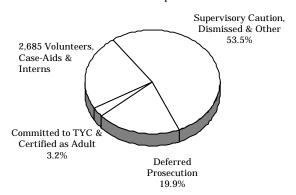


While the total number of referrals decreased for the second time, the number of juveniles referred decreased for the first time in reporting history, by 1.3 percent. Forecasts by the Criminal Justice Policy Council indicate that referrals will decline through 1999, then begin increasing again as the juvenile aged population continues to grow in Texas.

#### There are



#### Juvenile Dispositions



#### **Supervision, Detention and Court Activity**

There are 162 juvenile probation departments in Texas. They employed 2,315 juvenile probation officers in 1997 to cover all 254 counties in the state. In addition, there were 114 corrections officers, 350 residential placement officers and 728 certified detention center personnel, plus 748 part-time or on-call detention staff to assist in supervising juveniles held in the state's county-operated juvenile secure facilities (51 pre-adjudication and holdover facilities and 20 post-adjudication facilities). There were 419 juvenile judges responsible for detention, adjudication, and disposition hearings.

During 1997, 74,272 youths brought to juvenile probation agencies were immediately released to their parents or other responsible adults. The other 51,860 youths were detained prior to adjudication hearings in court. Ninety-five percent of these were held in secure custody detention centers while the others were in non-secure alternative placements such as foster homes and emergency shelters.

Through a variety of services and procedures, juvenile probation agencies disposed of 56,205 cases, diverting them from already burdened juvenile court dockets. Such cases are often closed at intake after counseling with the youth and family. Others may be referred to more appropriate social agencies for guidance or services. Another 15,598 youths agreed to voluntary supervision programs, known as deferred prosecution, under guidelines set by local juvenile boards.

Of the 63,767 youths accused of delinquency and handled by juvenile prosecutors or juvenile courts during 1997, 22,641 were adjudicated to probation. During 1997, juvenile probation departments supervised a total of 100,978 juveniles on some form of supervision, including deferred prosecution, court-ordered supervision,

conditional release from detention and parolees supervised by probation under TYC contract.

In 1997, juvenile courts committed 3,023 juveniles to the Texas Youth Commission, certified 467 to stand trial as adults in the criminal justice system, and disposed of another 31,335 cases through refusal to prosecute, dismissal or consolidation of referrals.

#### **Gangs and Drugs**

Certainly no two phenomena have impacted youth crime and our juvenile justice system as have illicit drugs and gang activity. Even rural communities in Texas feel the impact.

In 1997, 66 percent of the juvenile probation departments clearly identified 2,683 juvenile gangs in Texas. Gang activity represented 11 percent of all referrals and 12 percent of all probationers; however, it represented 34 percent of all commitments to the Texas Youth Commission.

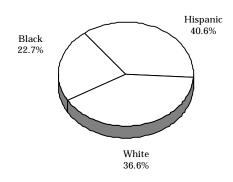
While local probation departments handled fewer referrals last year, the number of youth involved in substance abuse continued to be an alarmingly high number. In 1997, it was determined that 19,272 referrals (nearly one in six) were youths whose involvement in substance abuse was directly responsible for their criminal behavior.

Of the 4,858 placements in substance abuse programs, 1,357 youths were placed in 92 different residential substance abuse facilities, and 3,501 were placed in 86 different non-residential programs.

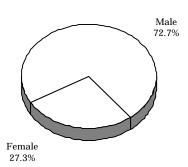
Even with the continued increases in juvenile felony crime and substance abuse, it should be noted that Texas' juvenile probation departments continue to report average probation success rates above 80 percent while

# Age 16 to 17 34.0% Age 14 to 15 46.5%

#### Referral Race



Referral Sex



developing innovative prevention programs attempting to divert increasing numbers of youths from the burden of the state's custody.

#### **Profile of Juvenile Offenders**

Perhaps no question is more often asked, nor more relevant than "who are these kids who commit crimes and end up in our juvenile justice system?"

Statistically, they are between the ages of 10 and 17, with the majority being fifteen or older. About three-fourths are males; about one-fourth are black, with the remaining 75 percent divided almost equally between Hispanic and white youths.

But these numbers fail to capture the most important features of this population.

Although many youths in the juvenile justice system do not match the typical profile, as a population, delinquent youths tend to come from categories that we define as "at risk." The term "child at risk" has become a national buzzword for the growing number of our children whose life conditions place them at high risk for educational, economic and social failure.

They are more likely to come from homes where poverty and despair are ingrained. In their neighborhoods, drugs, crime and violence are part of the everyday landscape.

As a population, delinquent youths tend to have long histories of behavioral and academic failure in school. They lack self-esteem and self-discipline. They often live in homes plagued by family violence and substance abuse.

The good news is that because we can identify these and other risk factors that predispose many children to futures of crime and violence, we have the opportunity to intervene in the downward spiral of trouble and despair which leads to a life of crime.

# Contributors and Thanks

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