U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

OJJDP

Jeff Slowikowski, Acting Administrator

May 2010

JUVENILE JUSTICE BULLETIN

Office of Justice Programs Innovation • Partnerships • Safer Neighborhoods *www.ojp.usdoj.gov*

Conditions of Confinement

FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY OF YOUTH IN RESIDENTIAL PLACEMENT

Andrea J. Sedlak and Karla S. McPherson

The Survey of Youth in Residential Placement (SYRP) is the third component in the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's constellation of surveys providing updated statistics on youth in custody in the juvenile justice system. It joins the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement and the Juvenile Residential Facility Census, which are biennial mail surveys of residential facility administrators conducted in alternating years. SYRP is a unique addition, gathering information directly from youth through anonymous interviews. This bulletin series reports on the first national SYRP, covering its development and design and providing detailed information on the youth's characteristics, backgrounds, and expectations; the conditions of their confinement; their needs and the services they received; and their experiences of victimization in placement.

This bulletin presents findings from the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement about the conditions of confinement for youth in a range of different facilities and programs. Results focus on the structural and operational characteristics of these environments and indicate how youth offenders are distributed across various programs and facilities of different size and complexity.

SYRP research provides answers to a number of questions about the characteristics and experiences of youth in custody, including:

- How are youth grouped in living units and programs?
- Which youth are placed together?
- What activities are available in each facility?
- How accessible are social, emotional, and legal supports?
- What is the quality of the youth-staff relationships?
- How clear are the facility's rules?
- How clear is the facility's commitment to justice and due process?
- What methods of control and discipline do staff use?

SYRP's findings are based on interviews with a nationally representative sample of 7,073 youth in custody during spring

A Message From OJJDP

The environment in which juvenile offenders are confined can affect their future behavior and may even contribute to recidivism. To obtain a clearer picture of the conditions of juvenile confinement, OJJDP initiated the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement (SYRP), the first comprehensive national study to gather information about youth in custody by interviewing the detained offenders.

This bulletin draws on SYRP's findings to examine the characteristics of the facilities in which youth are confined and of the programs provided to them. It reports on the security status of these residential facilities and the types of youth offenders in various programs and their placement with other youth. It also describes the physical and program environments, the access offenders have to emotional support and legal representation, the relationship between youth and staff, the clarity of the facility's rules, and the nature of the disciplinary measures used to enforce those rules.

While self-reported data bear certain limitations, the findings reported in this bulletin indicate areas in which some conditions of confinement fail to meet best practice guidelines. The authors provide helpful recommendations to address such deficiencies.

OJJDP is committed to enhancing the conditions of confinement for youth in residential custody. It is our hope that the findings of this study will help facilities in their efforts to address the needs of the youth offenders in their care.

Access OJJDP publications online at *www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ojjdp*

2003, using audio computer-assisted self-interview methodology. Results examined youth offenders' self-reports about conditions in their facility and living unit and in their placement program (i.e., detention, corrections, camp, community-based, or residential treatment). Facility administrators provided additional information by verifying or updating their answers on the most recent Juvenile Residential Facility Census (JRFC) survey,[1] by completing the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement (CJRP) survey[2] (to give administrative data on the sampled youth), and by providing information about facility structure and operations. Using these data, SYRP describes the custody environment at three different levels: the facility's organization and security, the program characteristics, and the specific conditions in a youth's living unit. For more information about data collection in SYRP, see "Surveying Youth in Residential Placement: Methodology" on page 8.

Facility and Program Characteristics

Facilities that hold juvenile offenders vary widely in size, organizational complexity, and layout. Many are single-function facilities, providing only one type of placement program (e.g., a boot camp or a detention center), while others are more complex. The more complex facilities offer various programs in separate groups of living units. These facilities can occupy multiple buildings on a single campus or have housing units at multiple locations. Facilities and their programs also differ in size, security, the types of offenders they hold, and the average length of stay for their residents. Most youth (93 percent) live in facilities that provide a single primary program. The remaining 7 percent of youth are in operationally complex facilities that provide different programs for different groups of residents. The majority (58 percent) of youth in custody are in facilities that house 100 or fewer youth, and most youth (65 percent) are in public facilities.[3] For more information about facility capacity, layout, and ownership, see table 1.

SYRP classifies residential programs into five general categories by grouping together living units that have the same primary function. As table 2 shows, most youth are in either corrections programs (32 percent) or detention programs (26 percent).

Table 1: Youth in Placement, by Facility Characteristics

Facility Characteristic	Estimated Number of Youth	Percentage of Youth (*n*=101,040)
Organizational complexity (number of programs)		
1	93,920	93
2 or more	7,110	7
Facility size (capacity*)		
30 or fewer	16,130	16
31–60	24,200	24
61–100	18,560	18
101–150	13,550	13
151–300	13,760	14
More than 300	14,840	15
Physical layout		
Part of one building	4,900	5
All of one building	30,980	31
Multiple buildings at single site	50,690	50
Multiple campuses or sites	14,470	14
Facility owner/operator		
Government owned and operated	65,680	65
Privately owned and operated	25,620	25
Government owned, privately operated	9,740	10
Total	101,040	100

Note: Estimated totals are rounded to the nearest multiple of 10.

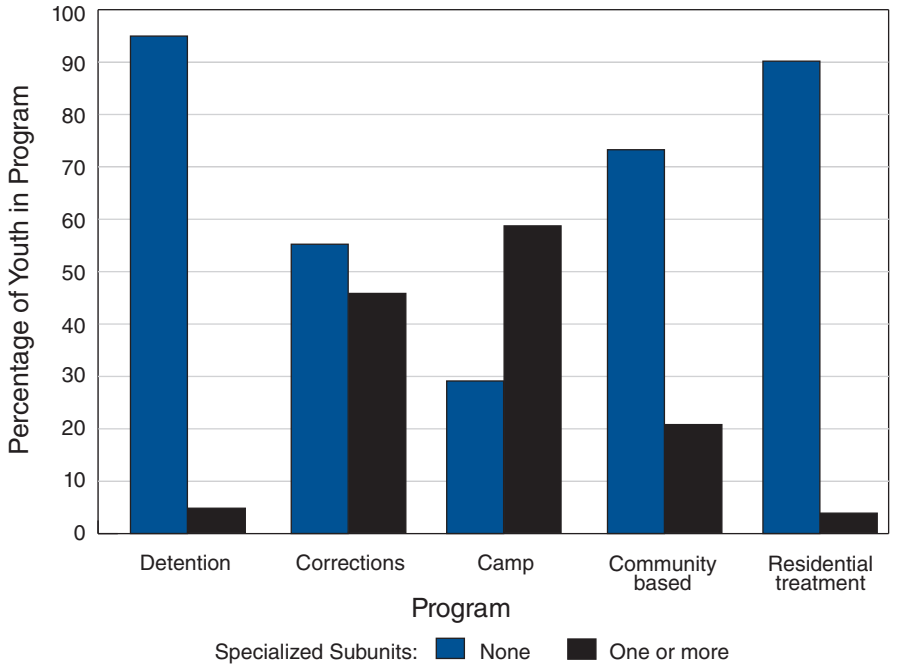
*As measured by the total number of beds.

Table 2: Youth in Placement, by Type of Program

Program Type	Estimated Number of Youth	Percentage of Youth (*n*=101,040)
Detention	26,590	26
Corrections	32,260	32
Camp	9,770	10
Community based	18,360	18
Residential treatment	14,070	14

Note: Estimated totals are rounded to the nearest multiple of 10.

Figure 1: Youth in Each Type of Program Based on Whether Their Program Has Specialized Subunits



The remainder of youth are in community-based programs (18 percent), residential treatment programs (14 percent), or camp programs (10 percent).

Overall, 26 percent of youth in residential placement are in programs that have one or more specialized subunits. Specialized subunits include reception/diagnostic units, targeted treatment units (e.g., for sex offenders, violent offenders, drug treatment), and variations of the primary program (e.g., a camp program that includes both a boot camp and a forestry camp, or a community-based program that incorporates a shelter, group homes, and independent living subunits). Most youth in camps (59 percent) reside in a program with specialized subunits (figure 1).

Security

Facilities are typically classified as "staff secure" or "secure" according to whether locks confine youth in their living units during the day. More than one-third (35 percent) of youth are placed in programs that do not use locks, but almost half (46 percent) are confined by three or more locks during the day. Youth in detention are held most securely, with 83 percent confined by three or more locks during the day. Locks secure youth in buildings (64 percent), in areas within buildings (e.g., corridors, wings, floors) (58 percent), and within external fences or walls (59 percent). Detention and corrections programs use locks for most residents. In addition, 53 percent of youth offenders live in facilities that lock residents into their sleeping rooms under certain conditions.

Types of Offenders in Different Programs

Youth placed in custody have committed a variety of offenses. Including current offenses and past convictions, SYRP shows that all types of offenders are comparably represented in each kind of program.

Some significant, small differences occur across programs. Youth with the most serious career offenses (i.e., murder, rape, or kidnapping) are most prevalent (14 percent or more) in corrections, residential treatment, and community-based programs. Camp programs have the highest percentage of property offenders (30 percent), and detention and camp programs have the highest percentage of drug and public order offenders (11 percent). Female offenders constitute 15 percent of the total youth offender population and are most prevalent in detention (19 percent) and residential treatment programs (29 percent).

Youth Placement With Other Youth

SYRP examined how youth are grouped together in programs and living units and revealed certain imbalances. Placing youth who are different ages or who have dissimilar personal histories or offense records together in programs and living units may not provide these youth with optimal environments for growth and change.

Age

Age differences mark important differences in youth's maturity and experience. These disparities are magnified during childhood and adolescence. Most experts agree that housing young juvenile offenders with older youth is a practice that should be avoided. Separation of adults and juveniles in custody is also one of the core requirements of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act.

SYRP does not include juveniles who are held in adult prisons and jails, but the findings do reveal considerable age mix in juvenile facilities as well as substantial mixing of juveniles with young adults. Mixing juveniles with young adults poses challenges for implementing developmentally appropriate programming and for safety (Committee on Adolescence, 2001; Steinberg, Chung, and Little, 2004).

One-fifth of offenders in juvenile facilities are in living units with others who are 3 or more years older than they are. Moreover, 43 percent of juveniles in placement are housed in living units with young adults. Such units with older offenders tend to have more serious offenders. Juveniles (younger than 18 years old) who are in units with young adults are more than twice as likely as juveniles not living in units with young adults (42 percent versus 20 percent) to be living with youth whose most serious career offense is murder.

Sex

Thirty-six percent of youth in custody live in facilities that house both males and females. Similarly, 35 percent of programs are coed. However, coed placement in living units is uncommon (6 percent). Coed placement predominates in detention programs—86 percent of youth are in a coed program and 17 percent are in a coed living unit.

Race/Ethnic Group

The core requirements of the JJDP Act mandate that states must work to improve their response to disproportionate minority contact. Despite the requirement, SYRP findings on differences in custody rates (Sedlak and Bruce, forthcoming) reconfirm the numerous earlier studies that have demonstrated that minority youth are still disproportionately represented in the placement population (Hsia, Bridges, and McHale, 2004; Pope, Lovell, and Hsia, 2002).

In addition, SYRP reveals that different races and ethnicities tend to be held in different types of programs—more Black/African American youth in placement are in corrections programs compared with other races/ethnicities (42 percent versus 31 percent or less of other races/ethnicities), more Hispanic youth in placement are in camp programs (17 percent versus 7 percent), and more White youth are in residential treatment programs (20 percent versus 9 percent). These findings confirm that the patterns previously observed only in local samples (Cohen, 1991; Drakeford and Garfinkel, 2000; Kaplan and Busner, 1992; Richissin, 1999) also hold at the national level for the total population of youth in custody. SYRP data can provide a resource for examining factors that might explain the observed distributions, such as youth's backgrounds, offense histories, and service needs.

Placement With Other Victims

Results indicate that youth with experiences of physical or sexual abuse tend to be clustered together in the same living units. These patterns could stem from deliberate programming decisions, whereby youth with similar abuse histories are housed together for specialized treatment. Clustering of abuse victims is particularly strong for females. This may reflect the joint influence of two dynamics: females have fewer placement alternatives and they are more likely to have experienced prior physical or sexual abuse.

One-fourth (25 percent) of youth in custody report past experiences (prior to placement) of frequent or injurious physical abuse and nearly one-eighth (12 percent) acknowledge prior sexual abuse. Among youth with physical abuse histories, 77 percent of males and 95 percent of females are in living units where more than 20 percent of residents claim they were physically abused. A similar pattern is evident for prior sexual abuse: victims of both sexes are more likely to be living with higher percentages of other victims (52 percent of male victims and 84 percent of female victims).

Coplacement of Offender Types

SYRP shows that most youth (63 percent) live in units where the majority of other residents are person offenders. Nearly one-fifth of the less serious career offenders (status offenders, technical parole violators, and youth who report no offense) are placed in living units with youth who have killed someone, and about one-fourth reside with felony sex offenders. (For more specific details on how less serious youth offenders are placed with serious youth offenders, see table 3.) Extensive mixing of youth who have dramatically different offense histories raises concern about the safety of the less serious offenders. From another perspective, placing youth together who have committed the same specific kind of offense (e.g., robbery, felony sex, felony drug) can have a reinforcing effect, increasing the probability that a juvenile will recidivate on the shared crime (Bayer, Pintoff, and Pozen, 2004).

These facts may seem somewhat surprising in light of the assumption that more serious offenders are remanded to the more secure placement contexts. However, the career offense categories in this survey depend on self-reports of both prior convictions and current offenses. Current placements will substantially depend on current offenses and assessed risks (Austin, Johnson, and Weitzer, 2005) as well as youth's needs and the types of placements available at the time.

Unlike serious career offenders for robbery or drug offenders, sex offenders are more typically separated. SYRP indicates that youth who are in custody for a current rape offense are in living units where the majority of residents have rape offense histories (55 percent on average), whereas youth who are in custody for current offenses other than rape are in units where just 6 percent of residents (on average) are felony sex offenders. This type of clustering is dictated to a considerable extent by treatment programs geared toward specific types of offenders. In fact, nearly three-fourths (74 percent) of youth in custody for a current rape offense are in specialized living units for sex offenders.

Placement With Nonoffenders

Some facilities house youth who are in custody because the juvenile court wants to protect them (i.e., they have been neglected or abused), they do not have a parent or guardian, or their families have voluntarily placed them in a private facility for specific services, such as mental health or substance abuse treatment. SYRP surveys only offender youth, but administrative data on their facilities also indicate whether they are housed with nonoffender youth. Twelve percent of youth in residential placement reside in facilities that also house nonoffenders. Ten percent participate in programs with nonoffenders, and 8 percent reside in primary living units with nonoffenders.

Physical and Program Environment

The physical features of a facility and the programs it provides define day-to-day reality for youth in custody. SYRP asks youth about their sleeping arrangements, the reasons for any difficulty sleeping, the cleanliness of the environment, the quality of the food and of the recreation and educational programs, and the amount of time they spend watching television.

Sleeping Arrangements

Slightly more than one-third (36 percent) of youth in custody sleep in a private room, so most youth share their room with one or more other residents. About 17 percent stay in a room with 10 or more other residents.

Sleeping arrangements vary with security level—more youth who are locked in during the day have private sleeping rooms (42 percent) compared with youth who are not locked in during the day (23 percent). Sleeping arrangements also vary with type of program. For instance, 60 percent of youth in detention programs have single rooms, whereas 55 percent of youth in camp programs share their rooms with 10 or more other youth.

Difficulty Sleeping

Important changes in sleep patterns occur during adolescence, shifting to later circadian cycles (Carskadon, Vieri, and Acebo, 1993). At the same time, traditional schedules (e.g., the early start of the school day) do not accommodate these new daily cycles, so most teens suffer

Table 3: Placement in Living Units and Programs With Serious Offenders

Youth's Most Serious Career Offense	Estimated Number	Most Serious Career Offense of Others in Living Unit (%)		Most Serious Career Offense of Others in Program (%)	
		Murder	Rape	Murder	Rape
Murder, rape, kidnapping, robbery, assault with a weapon	39,380	35	51	66	78
Assault, no weapon	18,030	27	32	57	63
Burglary, arson, or theft	20,120	28	36	62	69
Other property offense, drug offense, public order offense, or something else	16,850	28	31	62	68
Status offense, technical parole violation, or no offense reported	6,280	19	26	52	64
Total*	101,040	30	39	62	71

Notes: Estimated totals are rounded to the nearest multiple of 10. The "career offense" classification combines all information youth report about their offenses, considering all prior and current convictions (or, for youth not yet adjudicated, offenses youth are accused of committing or are charged with).

*This table excludes 25 youth, representing less than 0.5 percent of those in custody, whose answers could not classify their most serious career offense.

from chronic sleep deprivation (Carpenter, 2001; Carskadon et al., 1998; Carskadon, 2005). Adolescents' sleep problems have been the focus of increased attention in recent years, with some policymakers recommending that schools shift their start times. Researchers have explored the implications of juveniles' sleep deprivation, documenting its association with poorer grades (National Sleep Foundation, 2006), depression (Graham, 2000), behavior problems (Stein et al., 2001), and increased suicide risk (Liu, 2004).

SYRP finds that youth in custody report more sleep problems compared with high school-aged youth in the general population. About one-third (34 percent) of youth in custody say they "often" or "always" have a problem falling asleep at night, whereas only 11 percent of 9th to 12th graders in the general population say they have difficulty falling asleep "every night" or "almost every night." Just 28 percent of youth in custody say they have "no problem" falling asleep, compared with almost half (48 percent) of 9th to 12th graders who "rarely" or "never" have that problem (National Sleep Foundation, 2006).[4] Females tend to have more trouble falling asleep then males. More females report that they have trouble sleeping "often" (23 percent vs. 16 percent) or "always" (20 percent vs. 16 percent), whereas more males say they have no problem falling asleep (30 percent vs. 18 percent).

Youth's View of Facilities and Amenities

SYRP asks youth to describe their facility by choosing characteristics from a list of positive and negative qualities. More than half of youth in custody have polarized views on these items. One-fourth of youth (25 percent) select no positive feature to describe their facility, while just slightly more (29 percent) identify no negative feature. For information about what youth like and dislike about their facilities, and how these likes and dislikes vary between programs, see table 4.

Television

Youth also indicated that they watched an average of 2.9 hours of television on a typical weekday. These numbers are comparable to those in the general American population, where youth watch an average of 2.5 hours of television a day (Woodard and Gridina, 2000). Youth in community-based programs spend the most time watching television (averaging 3.5 hours per day). The number of hours youth say they watch television is unrelated to whether they think their facility has a good recreation program.

Safety

Several questions focus on issues related to youth's safety in their facilities, including whether they know what to do in case of fire or how to get help if they are threatened, whether they ever left their facility without permission, and whether they are afraid of being attacked while living there.

Most youth in custody (78 percent) say they know what to do in case of fire in

Table 4: Youth's Perceptions of the Positive and Negative Features of Their Facilities, Overall and by Type of Program, Security Level, and Youth's Sex

Facility Characteristic	All Youth in Custody (%)	Program (%)					Security (%)		Sex (%)	
		Detention	Corrections	Camp	Community Based	Residential Treatment	Locked	Not Locked	Males	Females
Positive features										
Good food	29	22	18	36	47	38	21	44	31	20
Clean	46	41	34	45	61	62	37	61	nd	nd
Good school program	51	42	52	54	51	65	48	56	nd	nd
Good recreational program	40	32	41	39	40	57	36	48	nd	nd
None of the above	25	32	30	22	16	13	30	16	nd	nd
Negative features										
Dirty sheets, towels, clothes	22	26	26	37	9	11	26	14	23	15
Bad smells	41	42	47	35	31	37	45	32	39	50
Insects or bugs	43	40	53	40	33	44	47	36	42	52
Dirty bathrooms	38	34	46	40	34	28	42	30	nd	nd
Rats or mice	14	7	23	15	12	9	nd	nd	nd	nd
None of the above	29	29	21	30	41	34	25	38	nd	nd

nd = No difference; subgroups that do not differ resemble the overall population of youth in custody.

their facility. Only 5 percent report having left their facility without permission. More than one-third of youth (38 percent) say they fear attack by someone, which includes 25 percent who fear attack by another resident, 22 percent who are afraid that a staff member will physically attack them, and just 15 percent who fear attack by someone coming into the facility from the outside. Ninety percent of youth report that they know how to find help if they are threatened or assaulted. For information about program differences on these measures, see table 5.

More females than males say they fear being attacked (44 percent versus 36 percent). More girls express fear of attack from another resident and from someone outside the facility.

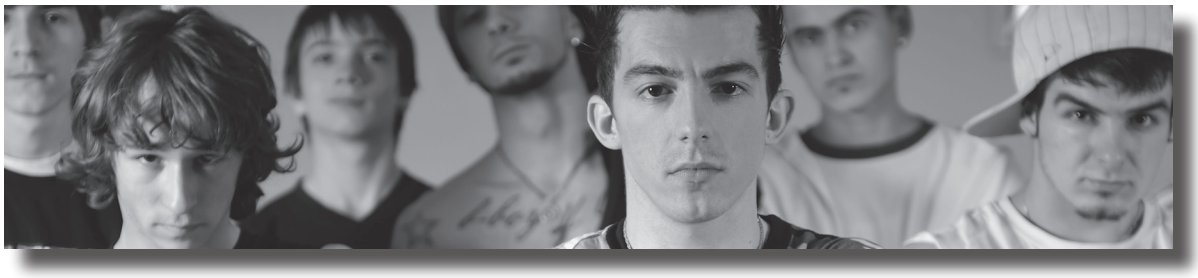
Access to Support

SYRP asks youth about their access to different types of support, including their families, emotional support from facility staff, and legal representation.

Family Contact

The vast majority of youth in custody (92 percent) said that since arriving at their facility, they had some contact with their families, either through phone calls or visits. Nearly 9 in 10 youth talked with their family on the telephone, and more than two-thirds had an in-person visit.

The percentage of youth in contact with family varies by program type. While most youth have spoken on the telephone with their families, fewer youth in detention



(80 percent) and camps (74 percent) have done so compared with those in other programs (93 percent). Fewer youth in corrections (61 percent) and camp programs (63 percent) report in-person visits with their families. Fewer youth in camps (80 percent) have any family contact compared with youth in other programs (camps are commonly in remote locations). Frequency of family contact also depends on the program. Youth in corrections and camp programs are nearly twice as likely to have a low rate of family contact. Thirty-nine percent of corrections and camp youth have family contact less than once a week, compared with 20 percent of youth in other programs.

One-third (33 percent) of youth who have no in-person visits indicate that this is due to time constraints (facility visiting hours are inconvenient) or distance (their family lives too far away). One-fifth of those who have no phone calls or no visits say that their families have resource constraints (e.g., a phone call would be long distance, a visit would cost too much, or the family does not have transportation). About one in seven (14 percent) youth without contact claim that the lack of contact exists because their facility does not allow it. Relatively few youth without contact say it is because they do not want to talk or visit with their family (7 percent) or because their family does not want to talk or visit with them (6 percent).

The majority of all youth in custody (59 percent) say that it would take their families 1 hour or longer to travel to visit them. For more than one-fourth of youth (28 percent), their families would have to travel 3 hours or longer to see them.

Emotional Support From Facility Staff

Eighty-four percent of youth in custody know how to find a staff member to talk to if they are upset. Youth in residential treatment programs are most likely to know how to find this support (93 percent) and

Table 5: Indicators of Youth Safety

Safety Measure	All Youth in Custody (%)	Program (%)					Security (%)	
		Detention	Corrections	Camp	Community Based	Residential Treatment	Locked	Not Locked
Know what procedure to follow if there is a fire	78	59	81	84	89	90	73	88
Ever left their facility without permission	5	2	2	2	12	8	2	10
Afraid of being physically attacked by anyone	38	38	42	35	29	39	40	33
By another resident	25	25	30	22	19	25	27	22
By a staff member	22	22	28	23	13	23	25	17
By someone coming in from outside	15	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Know how to find help if someone assaults or threatens them	90	87	90	87	93	93	88	93

Notes: Estimated totals are rounded to the nearest multiple of 10. All percentages are computed based on youth who answered the relevant question in each row. Data are missing for between 6 and 40 youth across the measures, reducing the estimated population total used in the denominators by <0.5 percent.

nd = No difference; subgroups that do not differ resemble the overall population of youth in custody.

Surveying Youth in Residential Placement: Methodology

The Survey of Youth in Residential Placement (SYRP) is the only national survey that gathers data directly from youth in custody using anonymous interviews. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention designed the survey in 2000 and 2001. SYRP surveys offender youth between ages 10 and 20. It draws a nationally representative sample from state and local facilities that are identified by the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement and Juvenile Residential Facility Census surveys.

SYRP interviewed youth from a representative selection of 205 eligible, responsive facilities listed on the census as of September 2002. The survey team interviewed 7,073 youth between the beginning of March and mid-June 2003. Surveys were electronic and used an audio computer-assisted self-interview system to ask questions and record answers.

When using this system, youth wear headphones and hear a prerecorded interviewer's voice read the words on the screen. Youth indicate their response choice by touching it on the screen. The computer program automatically navigates to the next appropriate question based on the youth's earlier answers, storing all the data anonymously and securely.

Statisticians assigned weights to reflect the sampling probabilities of the facility and the youth respondents and to adjust for nonresponse. In this way, the survey of 7,073 provided accurate estimates of the size and characteristics of the national youth offender population in custody (estimated as more than 100,000 youth).

those in camps are least likely (77 percent).

Legal Counsel

Improving access to legal counsel has been a policy concern (Hsia and Beyer, 2000; Puritz and Scali, 1998), but SYRP shows that youth's access to legal support is infrequent. Only a minority of youth in custody report that they have a lawyer (42 percent), have requested contact with a lawyer (20 percent), or requested and received access to a lawyer (13 percent).

Youth in detention facilities are most likely to have a lawyer (50 percent) and to request contact (28 percent). More females (49 percent) have lawyers than males (41 percent).

Facility Climate

SYRP asks questions about relationships between youth and facility staff, gang memberships, and whether youth were offered contraband.

Youth-Staff Relations

Youth distrust of facility staff and conflict with them can undermine program efforts to alter delinquent career paths and elevate discipline, control, and safety issues. Overall, youth in custody are lukewarm in their ratings of staff. Based on consensus within living units, 43 percent of youth are living in units with relatively poor youth-staff relations. Youth in unlocked units are more than twice as likely to live in units with good youth-staff relations (26 percent versus 12 percent). Those in locked units are almost twice as likely to live where youth-staff relations are poor (53 percent versus 28 percent).

In selecting specific characteristics to describe staff, about one-half of youth (49 percent) feel staff are friendly and 47 percent describe staff as helpful. More than one-third say that staff genuinely seem to care about them (38 percent), are fun to be with (38 percent), and act as good role models (34 percent). In contrast, 40 percent of youth say staff are hard to get along with, 38 percent say staff are disrespectful, and 29 percent describe staff as mean. Youth in community-based and residential treatment programs have the most positive perceptions of staff.

Gangs

The presence of gangs in a facility can exacerbate conflicts and disruptions and complicate facility operations. Nearly one-third of the custody population professes some gang affiliation—a level of gang involvement consistent with rates among high-risk youth (Thornberry, 1998). A majority of youth in custody (60 percent) report that there are gangs in their facilities.

On average, youth in residential placement are in living units where 19 percent of residents are members of gangs in the facility. Most youth (64 percent) are living in units where one-fifth or fewer of the residents are gang members, less than one-third (30 percent) are in living units where between one-fifth and one-half of youth are gang members, and 6 percent are living in units with a majority of gang members.

The presence of gangs can affect the custody environment for all youth present. SYRP reveals that the presence of gangs in a facility is significantly related to the percentage of youth who say they have been offered contraband (24 percent versus 8 percent) and to the percentage of youth who are in living units characterized by poor youth-staff relations (51 percent versus 30 percent). Certain problematic conditions tend to cluster in custody environments. When problems escalate, facilities sometimes engage in last-resort control methods. For instance, when there are gangs in a facility, significantly more youth are in living units where one or more residents say that staff sprayed them with pepper spray (38 percent versus 18 percent).

Contraband

One indicator of disregard for rules involves whether youth can easily obtain prohibited items such as alcohol, drugs, and weapons. Sixteen percent of youth in custody say they have been offered such contraband since they arrived at their facility. Youth most frequently report they have been offered marijuana (12 percent) and other illegal drugs (10 percent). Primarily, youth say other residents offered the contraband (12 percent), rarely implicating staff (6 percent) or someone outside the facility (4 percent).

More residents in community-based programs report offers of contraband (26 percent). These offers are often likely to come from other residents (16 percent) or from outside the facility (13 percent). Additionally, males report being offered contraband twice as often as females (18 percent versus 9 percent).

Rules and Justice

SYRP asks youth whether they understand the rules at their facility, know how to file a complaint, receive fair and reasonable treatment, have been placed in solitary confinement, or have experienced other methods of control.

The Survey of Youth in Residential Placement

Further information about the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement can be found in the *Survey of Youth in Residential Placement: Technical Report* and other bulletins in this series, which include:

- *Introduction to the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement.*
- *Youth's Characteristics and Backgrounds: Findings From the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement.*
- *Youth's Needs and Services: Findings From the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement.*
- *Nature and Risk of Victimization: Findings From the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement.*
- *Highlights From the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement.*

For more complete results of the survey findings on conditions of confinement, see the "Reports" link at www.syrp.org.

Clarity and Consistency of Rules

Youth should be given copies of the facility's rules and should learn and follow them. Seventy-five percent of youth say they received a copy of the facility's rules when they arrived, and 90 percent believe they understand the rules. The majority of youth (68 percent) feel that facility rules are applied equally to all residents.

Access to a Grievance Process

Youth who wish to file a grievance about staff should have access to an adequate grievance process that is readily available, easy to use, and impartial (Roush, 1996). However, the findings reveal that one-third of youth in custody (33 percent) have some type of problem with the grievance process; either they do not know how to file a complaint (19 percent) or are concerned about retribution if they do so (20 percent).

Fair and Reasonable Treatment

Best practice fosters juvenile accountability through principles of balanced and restorative justice (Beyer, 2003), but many youth in custody do not perceive fairness or justice in their facility environments. One-half of youth in custody report that staff apply punishment without cause, and more than one-third claim that staff use unnecessary force. About one-third (34 percent) think that staff treat residents fairly, and less than one-third (30 percent) say punishments are fair. These views are strongly correlated with whether youth live in units that are locked during the daytime. Youth in locked units have more negative views of fair and reasonable treatment in all categories compared with youth in units that are staff secure in the daytime.

Discipline

Common disciplinary measures in a facility involve group punishment, which 49 percent of youth have experienced, and removing special privileges (such as television), which 43 percent have experienced. Twenty-six percent of youth in custody have been confined to their rooms, 24 percent were placed in solitary confinement, 23 percent were given extra chores or work, and 20 percent were moved to another location in the facility. Table 6 shows that youth in different programs are likely to experience different disciplinary measures.

Solitary Confinement

Maintaining discipline and control is critical but challenging, considering that the large majority of youth in custody have previous involvement with the juvenile justice system and most (57 percent) have a history of person offenses (Sedlak and Bruce, forthcoming). Nevertheless, some may find SYRP findings on the prevalence of solitary confinement both surprising and problematic.

More than one-third of youth in custody (35 percent) report being isolated—locked up alone or confined to their room with no contact with other residents. The vast majority of youth who were isolated (87 percent) say this was for longer than 2 hours and more than one-half (55 percent) say it was for longer than 24 hours. Best practice guidelines recommend that solitary confinement exceed 24 hours only if the facility director explicitly approves and that youth who are held in solitary confinement for longer than 2 hours see a counselor (Roush, 1996). SYRP has no information on procedures for approving lengthy times in solitary confinement, but the interview does ask youth whether they talked to a counselor about their feelings or emotions. The majority (52 percent) of those isolated longer than 2 hours indicate that they have not talked to a counselor since coming to the facility.

Control and Use of Restraints

Best practice dictates that restraints should be used only for youth who are out of control (Roush, 1996). More than one-fourth of youth in custody (28 percent) say that facility staff used some method of physical restraint on them—whether handcuffs, wristlets, a security belt, chains, or a restraint chair. Although the questions mean to ask youth about their experiences at the facility, some youth may report being handcuffed or otherwise restrained during transportation to or from the facility, which would be common

for youth in more secure placement environments. This possibility should qualify interpretations of their reports regarding these restraints.

However, this qualification would not apply to youth's answers about experiences with a restraint chair or pepper spray. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Performance-Based Standards program dictates using a restraint chair or pepper spray only as a last resort following appropriate protocol (Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators, 2007). SYRP indicates that these practices, although infrequent, are used—4 percent of youth say that facility staff placed them into a restraint chair and 7 percent report that staff used pepper spray on them.

Apart from these personal experiences, however, SYRP reveals that these practices indirectly affect a much larger segment of youth in custody. Thirty percent of youth in custody live in units where one or more residents experienced the use of pepper spray and more than one in five youth in custody (21 percent) are in living units where staff used pepper spray on more than 10 percent of residents. Twenty-nine percent of youth live with one or more residents who received time in a restraint chair, and 16 percent are in units where more than 10 percent of residents report that staff placed them into a restraint chair.

Conclusion

Although youth's self-reports have limitations, the findings reported here convey internally consistent patterns. Moreover, they portray confinement conditions and raise concerns that have been longstanding issues in juvenile justice (Guarino-Ghezzi and Loughran, 2006), indicating

Table 6: Disciplinary Measures Youth Experience in Their Current Facility

Measure	All Youth in Custody (%)	Program (%)					Security (%)	
		Detention	Corrections	Camp	Community Based	Residential Treatment	Locked	Not Locked
Group punishment	49	37	56	63	44	54	nd	nd
Removal of special privileges, such as television	43	36	47	35	45	50	nd	nd
Confinement to own room	26	36	33	9	13	20	32	15
Solitary confinement	24	33	34	16	6	13	32	9
Extra chores or work	23	10	23	27	34	34	18	33
Forced physical exercise	22	18	20	50	17	25	nd	nd
Moved to different location within facility	20	20	24	18	15	18	22	16
Other	35	25	36	34	43	44	32	41
None	16	25	13	12	17	10	nd	nd

nd = No difference; subgroups that do not differ resemble the overall population of youth in custody.

areas where future policies and practices can measurably improve the custody environments. The findings in this bulletin highlight several areas where confinement conditions do not meet best practice guidelines and where improvement efforts could begin, including the following:

- **Prioritize developmentally appropriate programming and document its implementation and success.** SYRP revealed a considerable age mix within living units. One in five young offenders are housed in living units with offenders who are 3 or more years older than they are, and more than two in five juveniles are housed with young adults who are 18 years or older. These arrangements present barriers to creating developmentally appropriate programming and undermine youth safety. Moreover, no systematic information exists regarding facilities' efforts to implement programs, interventions, or activities designed for specific age ranges or on the success of facilities' efforts.
- **Explore factors that might explain disproportionate confinement of minorities.** SYRP confirms that minority youth continue to be disproportionately represented in the population of youth in custody. The study also reveals that, even within the placement population, different races and ethnicities tend to be assigned to different types of programs. Exploring the information that SYRP collects on youth's backgrounds, offense histories, and service needs may help explain these different placement rates and patterns.
- **Improve understanding of the risks and benefits of mixing different types of offenders versus grouping youth with similar offense histories.** SYRP indicates that a number of less serious offender youth are housed in living units with some of the most serious offenders. It also shows that youth who are grouped together in living units often share common backgrounds, such as membership in a gang or a history of physical or sexual abuse (possibly because the facility contains a specialized treatment program).

  Mixing youth with different offense histories and backgrounds raises safety concerns, but grouping youth who have committed similar offenses may enhance deviancy training (i.e., bonding with other group members around deviance and reinforcing the delinquent behavior). Although studies have demonstrated the negative effects of aggregating offenders, they have also shown that these negative effects do not occur in all circumstances or for all youth (Dodge, Dishion, and Lansford, 2006). Further research should specifically identify how and when deviance training occurs. Such research can help guide recommendations for grouping offender youth to minimize safety issues and avoid deviance training.
- **Ensure that youth know the facility fire safety procedures.** Best practice guidelines dictate that facilities post a clear evacuation plan and hold regular, documented fire drills (Roush, 1996). SYRP results show that more than one in five youth in custody (22 percent) do not know what to do if there is a fire in their facility.
- **Select placement locations that facilitate family contact.** Although family interventions can be more effective with delinquent youth than individual treatment (Perkins-Dock, 2001; Quinn, 2004; Quinn and VanDyke, 2004), involving families is often difficult while the youth is incarcerated. SYRP shows that most youth have contact with their families but indicates that more than one-fourth of youth are placed a considerable distance from their families—requiring the family to travel 3 hours or longer to visit the youth. When assigning youth to placements, the court should consider how the facility's location could affect their family's involvement in an intervention program.
- **Increase access to legal counsel, particularly before adjudication.** The *Juvenile Justice Standards* (Institute for Judicial Administration–American Bar Association, 1980), developed as a result of the 1974 Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (P.L. 93–415), require legal representation for juveniles from the outset of the court process. However, SYRP indicates that less than one-half of all youth in custody (42 percent) have a lawyer and just one-half (50 percent) of those held in detention facilities have a lawyer.
- **Improve the quality of youth-staff relations, require fair treatment, and establish an effective grievance process.** Positive relationships with older, prosocial role models can counteract the negative effects of placing delinquent youth with other youth offenders (Dodge, Dishion, and Lansford, 2006). Unfortunately, poor relations with staff characterize life in custody for more than two in five youth (43 percent). A majority of youth in custody say punishments are unfair, while more than one-third feel that staff use unnecessary force. Similarly, one-third of youth have difficulties with their facility's grievance process—either they do not know how to file a complaint or they fear retribution if they do so. Standards for staff conduct should require that staff treat youth fairly and issue fair and reasonable punishments commensurate with the infraction. The facility should maintain a grievance process that is clear and universally understood and that includes protections for youth who submit complaints.

SYRP Research Questions Addressing Conditions of Confinement for Youth in Residential Placement

General Research Question	Specific Research Questions
Where are youth placed?	◆ How many youth are in the different types of residential programs (detention, corrections, residential treatment, etc.)? ◆ What size are these facilities? What is their physical layout? Their organizational complexity (number of programs, living units, specialized subunits)? Their security provisions? ◆ What types of offenders are placed in different types of programs?
Which youth are placed together?	◆ What types of offenders share living units? ◆ How broad is the age range in a living unit? How many youth are placed with much older youth? ◆ What percentage of youth in placement are in coed programs or facilities? ◆ What percentage of youth are racial/ethnic minorities in their living units or programs? ◆ What types of offenders are placed together in living units or in programs? ◆ What percentage of youth are in facilities that also house nonoffenders? ◆ Do placements tend to group youth together who have similar backgrounds (childbearing, prior abuse)? ◆ Do patterns of coplacement differ for males and females?
What are the physical properties of the placement environment and the availability of activities?	◆ How many youth share a room? What difficulties do they have sleeping? ◆ What are the facility's good qualities? What problems do youth indicate? ◆ How do youth feel about the quality of the recreational program(s)? The school program? ◆ Can they watch TV? How much do they watch TV?
How safe and secure is the environment?	◆ Do youth know what to do if there is a fire? ◆ Do they know how to find help if they are assaulted or threatened? ◆ Have they ever left the facility without permission? ◆ How afraid are they of being attacked in their facility?
What social, emotional, and legal supports are accessible to youth?	◆ Do youth have access to a telephone? ◆ Have they been in touch with their family? How often? When was the last time? ◆ Do youth know how to find a staff member to talk to if they are upset? ◆ Do they have a lawyer? Have they had contact with a lawyer?
What is the quality of the facility climate?	◆ How do youth perceive the staff? What percentages of youth say positive versus negative things about staff? What percentage see resident/staff relations as generally good versus poor? ◆ What percentage of youth say there are gangs in their facility? Are there gang fights? ◆ What percentages of youth are gang members themselves? ◆ How prevalent is contraband? What percentage of youth report having been offered different types of contraband in their current facility? Who offered it to them?
How clear are facility rules and the commitment to justice and due process?	◆ Do youth receive a written copy of the rules? ◆ Do youth understand the rules? If not, why not? ◆ Are the rules fair? Are they applied uniformly to all? ◆ Is there a grievance process? Can youth use it without retribution?
What control and discipline practices are used?	◆ Do youth in placement see punishments as fair? What kinds of punishments are applied? ◆ What percentage of youth have been locked up alone? For how long? ◆ How many youth in placement have directly experienced more intrusive and coercive methods of control (e.g., strip search, restraint chair, pepper spray)?

WesDax: Providing Survey of Youth in Residential Placement Data Online

WesDax is an online query and analysis system that allows users to construct their own results from the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement. The system is designed for audiences without technical or statistical expertise, including policymakers, service providers, and the general public.

The WesDax system:

- Operates in a standard Web browser and requires no special software.
- Offers a tutorial for new users, including a glossary of terms.
- Computes accurate totals and percentages.
- Can provide statistical measures of precision (in the form of standard errors or confidence intervals).

To use WesDax, see the "Online Analysis" link at www.syrp.org.

- **Implement best practice guidelines in the use of solitary confinement and of last-resort control methods of pepper spray and restraint chairs.** SYRP indicates that, contrary to best practice guidelines (Roush, 1996), the majority of youth who were isolated longer than 2 hours did not see a counselor. When youth are held in solitary confinement for longer than 24 hours, facility staff should document the specific circumstances and verify that the facility director explicitly approved the period of confinement in that particular case. Staff should also establish timely records detailing the situations where staff use pepper spray or a restraint chair, verifying that the events warranted these measures and that staff followed appropriate protocol.

Endnotes

1. The JRFC collects data about the characteristics of facilities that house juveniles and the services these facilities provide.

2. The CJRP collects data about the personal characteristics of youth offenders in custody.

3. These findings and others cross-validate well with findings from the CJRP.

4. SYRP has no information about facilities' schedules, so whether or how they may contribute to residents' sleep complaints is unknown. However, the issue deserves further attention in light of the fact that juveniles' sleep difficulties can contribute to or mark a host of other significant problems.

References

Austin, J., Johnson, K.D., and Weitzer, R. 2005. *Alternatives to the Secure Detention and Confinement of Juvenile Offenders.* Bulletin. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Bayer, P.J., Pintoff, R., and Pozen, D.E. 2004. *Building Criminal Capital Behind Bars: Peer Effects in Juvenile Corrections.* Yale University Economic Growth Center Discussion Paper No. 864. Available online: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=44182.

Beyer, M. 2003. *Best Practices in Juvenile Accountability: Overview.* Bulletin. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Carpenter, S. 2001. Sleep deprivation may be undermining teen health. *Monitor on Psychology* 32(9):32.

Carskadon, M.A. 2005. *Pediatric and Adolescent Sleep.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Carskadon, M.A., Wolfson, A.R., Acebo, C., Tzischinsky, O., and Seifer, R. 1998. Adolescent sleep patterns, circadian timing, and sleepiness at a transition to early school days. *Sleep* 21:871–881.

Carskadon, M.A., Vieri, C., and Acebo, C. 1993. Association between puberty and delayed phase preference. *Sleep* 16:258–262.

Cohen, R. 1991. To prisons or hospitals: Race and referrals in juvenile justice. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved* 2:248–249.

Committee on Adolescence. 2001. Health care for children and adolescents in the juvenile correctional care system. *Pediatrics* 107:799–803.

Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators. 2007. *Candidacy Guide.* Braintree, MA: Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators.

Dodge, K.A., Dishion, T.J., and Lansford, J.E. 2006. *Deviant Peer Influences in Programs for Youth: Problems and Solutions.* New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Drakeford, W., and Garfinkel, L.F. 2000. Differential treatment of African American youth. *Reclaiming Children and Youth: The Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Problems* 9(1):51–52.

Graham, M.G., ed. 2000. *Sleep Needs, Patterns, and Difficulties of Adolescents: Summary of a Workshop.* Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Guarino-Ghezzi, S., and Loughran, E.J. 2006. *Balancing Juvenile Justice.* New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Hsia, H.M., and Beyer, M. 2000. *System Change Through State Challenge Activities: Approaches and Products.* Bulletin. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Hsia, H.M., Bridges, G.S., and McHale, R. 2004. *Disproportionate Minority Confinement: 2002 Update.* Summary. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Institute for Judicial Administration–American Bar Association. 1980. *Juvenile Justice Standards.* Washington, DC: American Bar Association.

Kaplan, L.S., and Busner, J. 1992. A note on racial bias in the admission of children and adolescents to state mental health facilities versus correctional facilities in New York. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 149:768–772.

Liu, X. 2004. Sleep and adolescent suicidal behavior. *Sleep* 27:1351–1358.

National Sleep Foundation. 2006. *2006 Sleep in America Poll.* Washington, DC: National Sleep Foundation.

Perkins-Dock, R.E. 2001. Family interventions with incarcerated youth: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 45(5):606–625.

Pope, C.E., Lovell, R., and Hsia, H.M. 2002. *Disproportionate Minority Confinement: A Review of the Research Literature From 1989 Through 2001.* Bulletin. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Puritz, P., and Scali, M.A. 1998. *Beyond the Walls: Improving Conditions of Confinement for Youth in Custody.* Report. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Quinn, W.H. 2004. *Family Solutions for Youth at Risk: Applications to Juvenile Delinquency, Truancy, and Behavior Problems.* New York, NY: Brunner-Routledge.

Quinn, W.H., and VanDyke, D.J. 2004. A multiple family group intervention for first-time juvenile offenders: Comparisons with probation and dropouts on recidivism. *Journal of Community Psychology* 32(2):1–24.

Richissin, T. 1999. Race predicts handling of many young criminals: Care vs. punishment of mentally ill youth correlates with color. *The Baltimore Sun* (June 25):IA.

Roush, D.W., ed. 1996. *Desktop Guide to Good Juvenile Detention Practice.* Research Report. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Sedlak, A.J., and Bruce, C. Forthcoming. *Youth's Characteristics and Backgrounds: Findings From the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement.* Bulletin. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Stein, M.A., Mendelsohn, J., Obermeyer, W.H., Amromin, J., and Benca, R. 2001. Sleep and behavior problems in school-aged children. *Pediatrics* 107:60.

Steinberg, L., Chung, H.L., and Little, M. 2004. Reentry of young offenders from the justice system: A developmental perspective. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 2(1):21–38.

Thornberry, T.P. 1998. Membership in youth gangs and involvement in serious and violent offending. In *Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders: Risk Factors and Successful Interventions,* edited by R. Loeber and D.P. Farrington. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Woodard, E.H., and Gridina, N. 2000. *Media in the Home 2000: The Fifth Annual Survey of Parents and Children.* Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, Annenberg Public Policy Center.

Acknowledgments

Andrea J. Sedlak, Ph.D., Vice President and Associate Director of Human Services Research at Westat, is Project Director of the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement (SYRP). Karla S. McPherson, Ph.D., is a Senior Study Director at Westat and SYRP Analyst. Other Westat staff who made key contributions to the study included David Cantor, Ph.D., John Hartge, John Brown, Alfred Bishop, Gary Shapiro, Sheila Krawchuk, Carol Bruce, Ph.D., Monica Basena, Kristen Madden, and Ying Long, as well as many other dedicated Westat staff too numerous to name here.

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) assisted during the SYRP design and preliminary analyses under a subcontract to Westat. Contributing NCCD staff included Madeline Wordes, Ph.D., Eileen Poe-Yamagata, and Christopher J. Hartney.

Several OJJDP program managers provided support and guidance over the course of the project: Joseph Moone, Barbara Allen-Hagen, and Janet Chiancone. Many members of the SYRP Advisory Board offered constructive advice at critical points. Finally, this study would not have been possible without the generous cooperation of the many state directors and hundreds of local facility administrators who provided the information, space, and staff support needed to conduct the survey and the thousands of youth who agreed to participate and contributed their time and the details of their lives and experiences in answering the SYRP questions.

This bulletin was prepared under grant number 2001–JR–BX–K001 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), U.S. Department of Justice.

Points of view or opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of OJJDP or the U.S. Department of Justice.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the Community Capacity Development Office; the National Institute of Justice; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART).

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Washington, DC 20531

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use $300

PRESORTED STANDARD
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
DOJ/OJJDP
PERMIT NO. G–91