

October 2003

Balanced and Restorative Justice in Allegheny County Juvenile Court

JUVENILE JUSTICE WEEK
OCTOBER 5—11, 2003

Allegheny County Juvenile Court
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To the Citizens of Allegheny County:

Juvenile Court Report Card

With the passage of Act 33 in Special Session #1 of 1995, the purpose of the Pennsylvania Juvenile Act changed as follows:

“Consistent with the protection of the public interest, to provide for children committing delinquent acts, programs of supervision, care and rehabilitation which provide balanced attention to the protection of the community, the imposition of accountability for offenses committed and the development of competencies to enable children to become responsible and productive members of the community.”

Since this time, our Juvenile Court has been working to integrate Balanced and Restorative Justice principles into our daily operations. Have we been successful? The answer to this question can only be determined based on outcome measurements. Have offender supervision practices contributed to public safety? Has the Court held young offenders accountable to their individual victims as well as the community at large? Has the Court assisted juvenile offenders to become more productive citizens by improving their competencies? Does our Court have the capacity to identify intended outcomes and once identified can we measure those outcomes? Since 1998 we have been accomplishing this task through our case closing reports. Historically, these reports were all narrative, which was next to impossible to extract quantitative information. When the format was changed in 1998, trackable data elements were added to the closing forms. Evaluating success at the point of a case closing is the most comprehensive measure because until the case is actually closed, it is “a work in progress”. This change has enabled our staff to track outcome measures such as, the amount of restitution ordered and paid, the number of community services hours ordered and completed, the number and percentage of offenders who recidivated while under supervision, the length of time an offender was under supervision and many other important outcomes.

I am very pleased to report that our Juvenile Court 2002 Report Card is extremely positive. Some of the highlights for 2002 on cases that were closed are as follows:

Total Cases Closed in 2002: 1485
Number and percentage of offenders who were ordered to pay restitution: 482—32.6%
Number and percentage of offenders who paid restitution in full: 392—81%
Total amount of restitution paid: \$138,979.67
Number and percentage of offenders ordered to complete community service: 1028—69.25%
Number and percentage of offenders completing community service: 993—96.60%
Total number of community service hours completed: 68,791
Number and percentage of offenders who recidivated while under Court supervision: 194—13%
Number and percentage of offenders appearing in Court on a Violation of Probation Allegation: 89—6%
Number and percentage of offenders who completed Victim Awareness Classes: 1164 — 79.38%
Number and percentage of offenders attending Educational/Employment Programs: 1318—88.75%
Number and percentage of offenders participating in Family Relationship Programs: 861—58%
Average length of supervision – Probation: 27.74 months
Average length of supervision – Consent Decree: 7.64 months

Balanced and Restorative Justice at work in Allegheny County:

- **\$138,979.67** Restitution Paid
- **81%** of Restitution Ordered Paid in Full
- **68,791** Hours of Community Service Completed by Youth
- **97%** of Community Service Ordered Completed
- **87%** Successfully Completed Supervision

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Juvenile Court Report Card

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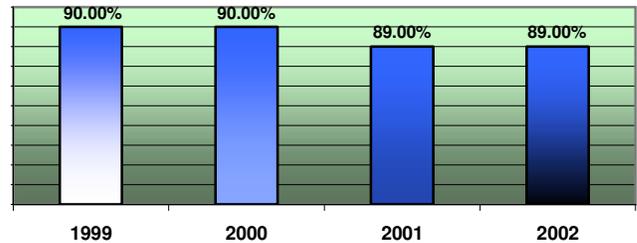
At every stage of the Court process and during offender supervision, victim awareness is stressed through attendance at the victim's curriculum, payment of restitution and completion of community service hours. Allegheny County Juvenile Court, through a partnership with the Center for Victims of Violent Crime, has stationed a Victim's Advocate at Juvenile Court and in each of the Court's five District Probation Offices to assist with victim services.

The value of the community service hours completed by this group of offenders to the citizens of Allegheny County based on the minimum wage is \$354,274.65. Although we frequently use the minimum wage to establish the value of community service hours, Independent Sector, a nonprofit coalition of over 700 national organizations, has established the value of volunteer time at \$16.05 per hour for 2001. When applying this value to the 68,791 hours of community service, this group of juvenile offenders contributed \$1,104,095.55 to the citizens of Allegheny County.

Through the addition of School-Based Probation Officers over the past four years, individual Probation Officer caseloads have continued to decline. The average is now 38 cases for District Probation Officers and 23 cases for School-Based Probation Officers. The reduction in caseload size has enabled Probation Officers to spend more time on issues like restitution as well as providing more intensive supervision of offenders in schools and communities. The above outcome measures clearly demonstrate that the principles of Balanced and Restorative Justice are working. The most common measure of the Juvenile Justice System is recidivism. I am extremely pleased to "report" that 87% of the offenders whose cases were closed in 2002 did **NOT** recidivate while under supervision. Smaller caseloads and the Court's willingness to consistently utilize a system of graduated sanctions are clearly having a positive impact on the offenders under the Court's supervision.

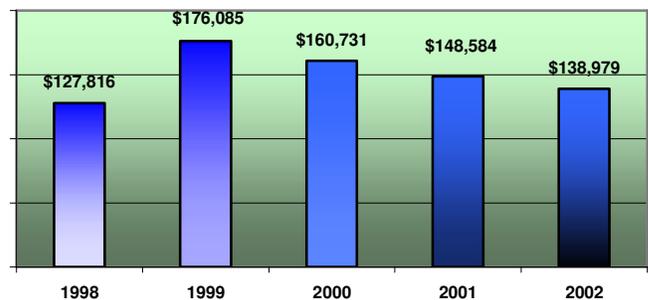
James Rieland, Director
Allegheny County Juvenile Court

Youth Attending Educational/Employment Programs



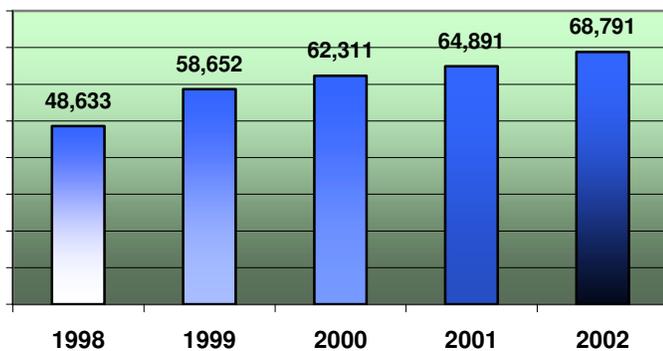
*According to the National Center for Education Statistics and the Social Statistics Briefing Room published by the White House, the average drop-out rate in the United States is 10.9%. The Allegheny County Juvenile Probation Department has made a commitment to develop competencies to enable youth to become responsible, productive and tax paying members of our community.

Restitution Paid to Crime Victims



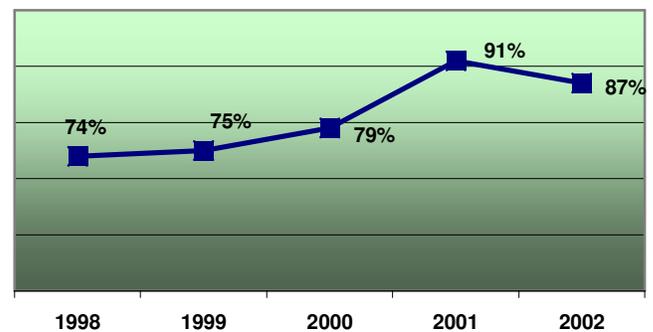
*Although the amount of restitution has gone down in the past few years, the percentage of youth ordered to pay restitution who have paid in full has continued to rise from 67% in 1998 to 81% in 2002.

Community Service Hours Completed



*Although we frequently use the minimum wage to establish the value of community service hours, Independent Sector, a nonprofit coalition of over 700 national organizations, has established the value of volunteer time at \$16.05 per hour for 2001. When applying this value to the 303,278 hours of community service, this group of juvenile offenders contributed \$4,867,611 to the citizens of Allegheny County over the past five years.

Successfully Completed Supervision



*The reduction in Probation Officer's caseloads has enabled them to spend more time on issues like restitution as well as providing more intensive supervision of offenders in schools and communities. The high percentage of youth successfully completing supervision clearly demonstrates that the principles of Balanced and Restorative Justice are working.