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Juvenile Justice Commission Summary Data Report 2003

The current issue summarizes select JJC data for 2003, including commitments from the court, intakes into JJC, average daily population and related information, as well as a brief profile of committed youth and probationers placed in JJC residential programs.

Commitments to the JJC

There were 1,161 commitments to the JJC by the Family Court in 2003. Seven counties accounted for four of every five (80.3%) commitments statewide. They included: Camden (32.6%), Essex (10.4%), Hudson (10.2%), Passaic (8.4%), Union & Middlesex (6.5% each), and Mercer (5.8%).

Commitments declined 8.0% between 2002 and 2003, with sixteen of the 21 counties experiencing reductions. However, commitments actually increased 7.1% between 2001 and 2003, and 7.8% over the five-year period of 1999 to 2003.

The commitment *rate* in 2003 was 118 commitments per 100,000 youth ages 10 to 17.* This figure represents a considerable drop from the previous year's figure of 131. Compared with 1999, however, the commitment rate was virtually unchanged.

Profile of JJC Youth

The following is a profile of youth committed to the JJC in 2003, statewide. This profile includes data on the most serious offense leading to commitment, total number of adjudications, and demographic data (i.e., age, gender and race/ethnicity). Profile figures are also provided for probationers placed in JJC residential programs, for comparison purposes.

Committing or Placement Offense. Committed youth were placed with the JJC for a variety of offenses. More than one-third (36.3%) of commitments resulted from a technical violation of probation (VOP) (rather than a new delinquency offense). The most serious category of offense leading to commitment in the remaining cases was: persons offenses (20.2%),

drug offenses (18.9%), property offenses (14.7%), public order offenses, such as disorderly conduct and obstruction of justice offenses (5.5%), and weapons offenses (4.4%). In comparison, *probationers* were less likely to be placed with the JJC on VOP (28.7% vs. 36.3%) and public order offenses (4.6% vs. 5.5%), and more likely to be placed for drug offenses (24.7% vs. 18.9%) and property offenses (17.3% vs. 14.7%).

Total Adjudications. Committed youth had an average of 6.5 separate adjudications of delinquency. *Probationers* entered with an average of 5.5 separate adjudications. Note that any given adjudication in youths' court history might include multiple charges.

Age. The average age of committed juveniles in 2003 was 17.2 years, with more than three-quarters of commitments involving youth 16 and older. More than one-half (55.1%) of commitments were of 16 to 17 year-olds, while an additional 25.4% involved youth 18 or older. An additional 18.1% involved youth who were 14 to 15, while the remaining 1.4% involved youth 13 or younger. There was a gradual but slight increase in the average age between 1999 and 2003, from just under 17 to 17.2 years of age. *Probationers* were slightly younger than committed youth in 2003, with an average age of 16.8 years.

Gender. More than nine out of ten (94.2%) commitments in 2003 involved males. The proportion of commitments involving female juveniles increased considerably between 1999 and 2002 (from 4.1% to 7.0%) and then declined to 5.8% in 2003. The gender breakdown for *probationers* was higher for 2003, with females accounting for 9.3% of the total.

Race/Ethnicity. In 2003, minority youth continued to account for a large majority (84.8%) of commitments to JJC. African American youth accounted for 65.3%, followed by Hispanic youth (18.7%), and last by other minority youth (0.8%), with White youth accounting for 15.2%. The share of commitments involving minority youth declined between 1999 and 2002, down from 85.9% to 83.6%, and then increased in 2003 to 84.8%. With reference to *probationers*, minority youth comprised 86.1% of the total in 2003, a somewhat larger proportion than for committed youth.

JJC Intakes

The number of intakes refers to the actual number of juvenile admissions into JJC reception facilities, including both committed youth and probationers. There were 1,334 intakes of *committed* youth into JJC in 2003. This included intakes of youth committed by the court *and* returns to JJC custody of parole and post-incarceration technical violators. Between 2002 and 2003, intakes of committed youth dropped 9.0%. In addition to intakes of committed youth, there were 588 intakes of probationers to JJC residential and day programs in 2003. This included 324 residential intakes and 264 day program intakes, a decline of 17.1% compared with the prior year.

JJC Average Daily Population (ADP)

The number of JJC youth in institutions and residential facilities on any given day (i.e., average daily population) for 2003 was 1,148, up 0.7% from 2002. This included an ADP for the five secure care institutions of 663; the Life Skills and Leadership Academy with an ADP of 67; and an ADP of 418 in residential programs (including 14 JJC-operated residential community homes, two contract programs and additional beds allotted to the JJC through an interagency agreement with the Department of Health and Senior Services). There was an additional ADP of 98 for six JJC *day* programs.

ADP as Percent of Bed Capacity. Average daily population was also examined in relation to official facility capacities. For 2003, all JJC institutions/residential facilities combined ran near full capacity, at 98%, with the five JJC secure care institutions operating over capacity at 107%.

JJC Bed Need. Overall demand on JJC beds is greater than what is reflected in ADP figures since we must take into account the number of committed youth and probationers *awaiting placement* with the Commission on any given day. On average there were 35 committed juveniles held in county detention facilities awaiting placement during 2003. Also, there

was an average of 37 juveniles on probationer status awaiting residential placements with the JJC. Consequently, taking into account committed and probationer youth awaiting placement, overall demand on JJC beds for 2003 was 1,220, with JJC demand for beds surpassing bed supply by 45 (or 3.8%) for the year.

Concluding Comment

It is worth noting that commitments to the JJC have *increased* somewhat over the last five years during a period of continued decline in juvenile arrests. Planning for the future must take this fact into account, especially in the face of evidence that the downward turn in juvenile arrests may be leveling off. On a positive note, both statewide commitments and JJC average daily population have *declined* in recent months, beginning late in 2003. Time will tell whether the experience of recent months is the beginning of a long-term downward trend.

JJC Commitments by County 2003 and Recent Trends			
County – Rank in 2003	Commit. 2003	% Change 2001- 2003	% Change 2002- 2003
1. Camden	378	37.0%	16.0%
2. Essex	121	-3.2%	-21.4%
3. Hudson	118	10.3%	-7.8%
4. Passaic	97	-19.8%	-23.0%
5. Union	76	10.1%	16.9%
5. Middlesex	76	1.3%	-22.4%
7. Mercer	67	17.5%	-28.0%
8. Atlantic	45	-32.8%	-26.2%
9. Salem	35	59.1%	16.7%
10. Monmouth	34	3.0%	-12.8%
11. Ocean	27	3.8%	-22.9%
12. Bergen	23	15.0%	43.8%
13. Burlington	14	16.7%	-44.0%
13. Gloucester	14	16.7%	-22.2%
15. Sussex	9	50.0%	-10.0%
16. Cumberland	8	-46.7%	60.0%
17. Somerset	6	-53.8%	-33.3%
17. Morris	6	-33.3%	-14.3%
19. Hunterdon	3	-57.1%	-40.0%
19. Warren	3	-70.0%	-50.0%
21. Cape May	1	-50.0%	-83.3%
<i>Total</i>	<i>1161</i>	<i>7.1%</i>	<i>-8.0%</i>

**Commitment rate for 2003 based on extrapolated growth of youth population*