



Report on the Evaluation of Judicially Led Responses to  
**ELIMINATE SCHOOL  
PATHWAYS TO THE  
JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM**



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF  
JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES

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**Acknowledgments:** Funding for this evaluation and report was provided by the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention through Award #2012-JF-FX-0044 to the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Points of view or opinions expressed are those of the report contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the funder or the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

NCJFCJ would like to offer special thanks to the 16 sites and stakeholder groups who received TA through the *Judicially Led Responses to Eliminate School Pathways to the Juvenile Justice System* TA project, funded by The Atlantic Philanthropies, in conjunction with Public Welfare Foundation and the Open Society Foundation for their willingness to participate in this evaluation.

**Suggested Citation:** National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. (2015). *Report on the Evaluation of Judicially Led Responses to Eliminate School Pathways to the Juvenile Justice System*. Reno, NV: Author.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Between 2014 and 2015, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges conducted an evaluation of a judge led collaborative model to keep kids in school and out of court.**

Termed the “Teske model” after Judge Steven Teske of Clayton County, Georgia the intervention involves leveraging judicial status and authority to convene critical stakeholders (e.g., schools, behavioral health, law enforcement) to reform referral processes that unnecessarily put students at risk for involvement in the juvenile justice system. Sixteen sites were selected to participate in the evaluation. A random stratified assignment and time lag design was employed to facilitate exploration of differences within sites and between groups of sites while controlling for temporal effects. Each site received at least one intensive TA (TA) visit from a judge and/or content expert team to assist in launching or guiding a collaborative to reform school disciplinary practices. Ultimately, variables of interest centered on (a) changes in attitudes and behaviors toward school discipline and collaborative responses by stakeholder

groups, and (b) changes in the number of suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to juvenile court. Using pre and post surveys, evaluators elucidated positive changes in stakeholder attitudes and behaviors after the TA site visit (e.g., improved collaboration). Unfortunately, despite exhaustive efforts to retrieve data from each site to examine trends in suspensions, expulsions, and referrals – only one site was able to provide the requested and required data. Thus, evaluators were unable to determine any changes in practice or outcomes potentially associated with the intervention. This report further discusses the process component of the evaluation and the challenges with data collection for the outcome component of the evaluation. Recommendations for future research and purposeful data collection in this area are presented.

# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

**Over recent decades, school disciplinary practices in this country became increasingly intolerant and punitive.**

Responding to a perceived rise in drug use and violence on campus, numerous schools across the United States enacted what is now known as a zero tolerance philosophy. This philosophy is rooted in the broken window theory — which holds that the consistent and aggressive punishment of all offenses, including relatively minor infractions, will help prevent more serious offenses. Therefore, schools endorsing zero tolerance policies require mandatory intervention for violations, often with limited consideration of severity or actual safety risk of the presenting behavior (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). This policy has greatly increased the number of disciplinary actions against students and has considerably increased students' contact with the juvenile justice system.

One of the goals of a zero tolerance policy is to create safer schools; however, imposing such a policy has produced several unintended consequences. Effects of the policy include the removal of students from the educational system, through expulsions and suspensions, as a disciplinary action. Students who are suspended are more likely to repeat a grade level or fail out of school

in comparison to students who receive alternative punishments (Fabelo et al., 2011). Furthermore, removals from schools eliminate the protective factors that school environments can provide to guard against involvement in delinquent behavior (Fabelo et al., 2011; Insley, 2001).

While zero tolerance policies have been championed in schools across the nation, there is a lack of empirical evidence to support suspensions and expulsions actually promote safer schools and communities. Furthermore, zero-tolerance policies are said to disproportionately affect minority students. That is, African Americans and Latino students have a higher suspension and expulsion rate than Caucasian students (Losen and Martinez, 2013). In addition, African American students are suspended and expelled from schools at rates five times or higher than what they represent in the school population (Smith and Harper, 2015). Lastly, students with disabilities, especially emotional disturbances, are more likely to be punished under zero tolerance policies (Fabelo et al., 2011). They are more than twice as likely to experience one or more

out-of-school suspensions (Education Development Center, 2012).

In 2012, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) received grant funding from The Atlantic Philanthropies, Public Welfare Foundation, and the Open Society Foundation to provide TA to sites planning to begin or continue work with judicially led collaboratives to eliminate school pathways to the juvenile justice system. The goals of the TA grant included engaging and supporting judicial leaders to reduce referrals of youth to juvenile courts for school-based misbehaviors and expanding the use of positive disciplinary practices in schools. As part of this project, NCJFCJ developed TA resources, including an implementation guide (Deal et al., 2014) for judicial officers and systems stakeholders, and trained judge-content expert teams on the “Teske model”. The Teske model, named after Judge Steven Teske from Clayton County, Georgia involves leveraging judicial leadership, status, and authority to convene system stakeholders and engaging them in collaborative problem-solving, understanding their data, developing a shared vision, and institutionalizing a new way of doing business – all with the goal of keeping kids in school and out of court.

To launch the project, NCJFCJ identified potential TA providers consisting of judicial officers and content area experts

to train on the Teske model. In addition, the NCJFCJ staff designed and published a guide to assist TA providers and school-justice collaboratives in responding to school-based offenses and referrals to the juvenile justice system. TA providers were also trained on how to deliver training of the guide to select sites. Responding to a national RFP issued by NCJFCJ, fifty-four sites applied to participate in the project based on an interest in eliminating school-to-juvenile justice referrals. Sixteen sites were selected based on specific program criteria (e.g., judicial commitment, data capacity, etc.), geographic diversity, and size of jurisdiction. The 16 sites include:

## GROUP 1

1. Sixth Judicial Circuit Court of Pasco & Pinellas Counties (Clearwater, FL)
2. Hoopa Valley Tribal Court (Hoopa, CA)
3. Muskegon County 14th Judicial Circuit Court (Muskegon, MI)
4. 26th Judicial District Court of Mecklenburg County (Charlotte, NC)
5. Middletown Superior Court (Middletown, CT)
6. Superior Court of Sacramento County (Sacramento, CA)
7. Middlesex County Juvenile Court (Lowell, MA)
8. Family Court of the State of Delaware (Wilmington, DE)



## GROUP 2

1. Kentucky Statewide Initiative Counties (Fayette & Campbell Counties, KY)
2. Fourth Judicial Circuit Court of El Paso County (Colorado Springs, CO)
3. Fulton County Juvenile Court (Atlanta, GA)
4. Juvenile Court of Memphis and Shelby County (Memphis, TN)
5. Tehama County Superior Court (Red Bluff, CA)
6. Circuit Court for Prince George's County (Upper Marlboro, MD)
7. Tippecanoe County Superior Court (Lafayette, IN)
8. Third Judicial District Court of Dona Ana County (Las Cruces, NM)

The TA providers, also called site facilitators, provided extensive TA to the sites. This TA included training sites on how to deliver the implementation guide to their jurisdictions, identifying the school to juvenile justice pathways, identifying available data sources, and assisting with strategic planning. TA was provided based on unique and expressed needs of the sites

as gathered through a strategic planning request form. The form helped to assess the needs and concerns of sites related to school-to-juvenile justice referrals, capacity of jurisdictions to bring aboard stakeholders, and available staff resources for training and tracking data. As part of this work, there was a plan to assess satisfaction with site facilitators as well as to create a lessons learned document from all the sites.

As there is relatively little evidence in the field about the effectiveness of this judicially led model or the effectiveness of related TA, there was a desire to further evaluate this effort to take the Teske model to scale. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) offered the opportunity to enhance evaluation efforts beyond the original foundation grant by funding NCJFCJ to conduct a small scale process and outcome evaluation of the 16 sites involved in the project.

# STUDY OVERVIEW AND METHODS

**This project seeks to contribute to the current knowledge base by conducting research that has practical applications for developing effective school disciplinary programs and policies.**

The NCJFCJ's evaluation of the school to justice pathways TA was designed to investigate if: (1) Judicially led collaborations to eliminate school pathways to the juvenile justice system will result in decreased out-of-school suspension or expulsion of students, (2) Judicially led collaborations to eliminate school pathways to the juvenile justice system will result in decreased formal juvenile justice referrals, (3) Judicially led collaborations to eliminate school pathways to the juvenile justice system will result in more collaborative and strength-based decision-making systems and policies surrounding potential disciplinary actions, and (4) Judicially led collaborations to eliminate school pathways to the juvenile justice system will result in decreased racial disparities and disproportionate minority contact for students who are formally referred to the juvenile court.

The evaluation used a randomized controlled design for the 16 selected sites. Jurisdictions were randomly assigned to a treatment and control/waitlist group. The

groups were stratified in that there was a balance between the groups in terms of the size and geographic location of the jurisdiction. The original evaluation plan was for the treatment group (i.e., Group 1 identified above) to receive the TA intervention in year 1, and the control/wait list condition (i.e., Group 2 identified above) to receive the TA intervention in year 2. However, project implementation delays associated with scheduling site visits resulted in a shortened timeframe for the groups, with approximately six months between conditions. Group 1 site visits occurred between April 2014 and September 2014 and Group 2 site visits occurred between October 2014 and January 2015. This evaluation design allows for an examination of the impact of the intervention as well as possible temporal effects related to changes in the outcome measures (e.g., fidelity issues surrounding implementation “creep”).

The study included both a process and an outcome evaluation component. The process component examined changes in



the attitudes and behaviors of the school-justice collaborative. The researchers at the NCJFCJ designed pre- and post-collaborative efforts surveys to administer at each site. The collaborative effort pre-survey assessed baseline data on the behaviors and attitudes of collaborative team efforts. The pre-survey was distributed to sites on the first day of the TA site visit. The collaborative effort post-survey was distributed via email three months after the first site visit to all stakeholders who attended the site visit collaborative team meeting to determine any changes in attitudes and decision-making processes. The pre-/post-surveys are intended to evaluate changes from baseline to follow-up in the collaborative process; that is, changes in school-juvenile court dynamics, collaborative and decision-making processes, and experience in the collaborative project.

The outcome evaluation examined changes in practice following TA site visits. A data capacity survey was constructed and emailed to stakeholders to identify available school discipline and juvenile justice data and contact persons at specific agencies. Stakeholders with access to data were asked to send data at three time periods — (1) 6 months prior to site visit, (2) 6 months post-site visit, and (3) 12 months post the initial site visit.

The **school discipline variables** requested by NCJFCJ are listed below. It was requested that all data be reported by race/ethnicity, grade level or age, and sex:

- number of in-school suspensions
- number of out-of-school suspensions
- number of expulsions.

The **juvenile justice referral variables** requested are listed below. Again, it was requested that all data be reported by race/ethnicity, offense, and sex:

- number of cases submitted from school-based incidents (referred, heard, or disposed)
- number of petitions filed for school-based incident
- number of formally handled school-based offenses.

This report will first present the process evaluation results (i.e., the aggregated pre- and post-collaborative efforts changes in behavior and attitudes), followed by the outcome evaluation findings surrounding changes in school discipline (suspension and expulsion) and school-based juvenile justice referral data. Lastly, the report discusses data challenges and limitations as well as lessons learned related to data collection and the evaluation process, and provide recommendations for future evaluations of this type.

# PART 1



# PROCESS EVALUATION FINDINGS

**The process evaluation surveys requested the sites to describe their jurisdiction, their school–juvenile court dynamics, their collaborative and decision–making processes, and their experience in the collaborative project.**

A total of 324 participants across the 16 sites completed the pre-survey, whereas 90 participants across the 16 sites completed the post-survey. The post-survey response rate is sizably lower than the pre-survey response rate. One explanation for the low response rate is the loss of collaborative team members due to resignation. The low response rate is possibly evidence of a breakdown of the collaborative teams over the course of the study. Consequently, the post-survey responses collected for the analyses likely represent sites with continued collaborative efforts. The survey respondents are identifiable only by jurisdictions and therefore, the analyses can examine aggregate changes but cannot assess individual change in perceptions over time. Table 1 illustrates the percentage of respondents by jurisdiction and survey type (i.e., pre- and post-). In regards to the pre-survey, the largest numbers of respondents are from the Family Court of

the State of Delaware in Wilmington, DE, which had 45 total survey respondents, representing nearly 14% of the total of responses. In the post survey, Tehama County Superior Court in CA had the highest number of responses, with 18 participants, representing nearly 22% of the 90 respondents. Table 1 illustrates both the percentage of the overall sample and number of participants for each site, as well as a calculated response rate. The response rate is listed in blue and represents the percentage of persons who responded from the total number of available participants. For example, in Clearwater, Florida (group 1, first listed), 22 of the 38 participants who were present at the site visit responded to the pre-survey, for a response rate of 58% ( $22/38 = .578$ ). In the post survey, only 5 of 38 participants responded, for a response rate of 13% ( $5/38 = .131$ ).

**Table 1. Pre- and Post-Collaborative Survey response rate for each jurisdiction**

	Pre-Collaborative Survey N=324	Post-Collaborative Survey N=90
<b>Group 1</b>		
Sixth Judicial Circuit Court of Pasco & Pinellas Counties (Clearwater, FL)	6.79% (n=22) <b>58% (22/38)</b>	6.02% (n=5) <b>13% (5/38)</b>
Hoopa Valley Tribal Court (Hoopa, CA)	4.01% (n=13) <b>62% (13/21)</b>	4.82% (n=4) <b>19% (4/21)</b>
Muskegon County 14th Judicial Circuit Court (Muskegon, MI)	3.70% (n=12) <b>75% (12/16)</b>	6.02% (n=5) <b>31% (5/16)</b>
26th Judicial District Court of Mecklenburg County (Charlotte, NC)	4.94% (n=16) <b>100% (16/16)</b>	4.82% (n=4) <b>25% (4/16)</b>
Middletown Superior Court (Middletown, CT)	11.73% (n=38) <b>83% (38/46)</b>	6.02% (n=5) <b>11% (5/46)</b>
Superior Court of Sacramento County (Sacramento, CA)	4.63% (n=15) <b>83% (15/18)</b>	2.41% (n=2) <b>17% (2/12)</b>
Middlesex County Juvenile Court (Lowell, MA)	5.56% (n=18) <b>75% (18/24)</b>	4.82% (n=4) <b>17% (4/24)</b>
Family Court of the State of Delaware (Wilmington, DE)	13.89% (n=45) <i>Could not calculate<sup>1</sup></i>	12.05% (n=10) <b>40% (10/25)</b>
<b>Group 2</b>		
Kentucky Statewide Initiative Counties (Lexington & Newport, KY)	12.65% (n=41) <b>84% (41/49)</b>	15.66% (n=13) <b>26% (13/49)</b>
Fourth Judicial Circuit Court of El Paso County (Colorado Springs, CO)	7.41% (n=24) <b>96% (24/25)</b>	2.41% (n=2) <b>8% (2/25)</b>
Fulton County Juvenile Court (Atlanta, GA)	2.47% (n=8) <b>44% (8/18)</b>	3.61% (n=3) <b>17% (3/18)</b>
Juvenile Court of Memphis and Shelby County (Memphis, TN)	2.78% (n=9) <b>35% (9/26)</b>	1.20% (n=1) <b>4% (1/26)</b>
Tehama County Superior Court (Red Bluff, CA)	8.02% (n=26) <b>76% (26/34)</b>	21.69% (n=18) <b>53% (18/34)</b>
Circuit Court for Prince George's County (Upper Marlboro, MD)	2.47% (n=8) <b>44% (8/18)</b>	3.61% (n=3) <b>17% (3/18)</b>
Tippecanoe County Superior Court (Lafayette, IN)	0.00% <b>0% (0/45)</b>	8.43% (n=7) <b>15% (7/45)</b>
Third Judicial District Court of Dona Ana County (Las Cruces, NM)	8.95% (n=29) <b>100% (29/29)</b>	4.82% (n=4) <b>14% (n/29)</b>

*Note.* Response rates are calculated using the number of attendees at the close of the site visit.

When asked to select a category that best describes their organization, for both the pre- (28.1%) and post-collaborative surveys (37.8%), the organizations with the highest percentages identified as a school district (Figures 1 and 2). In terms of the pre-

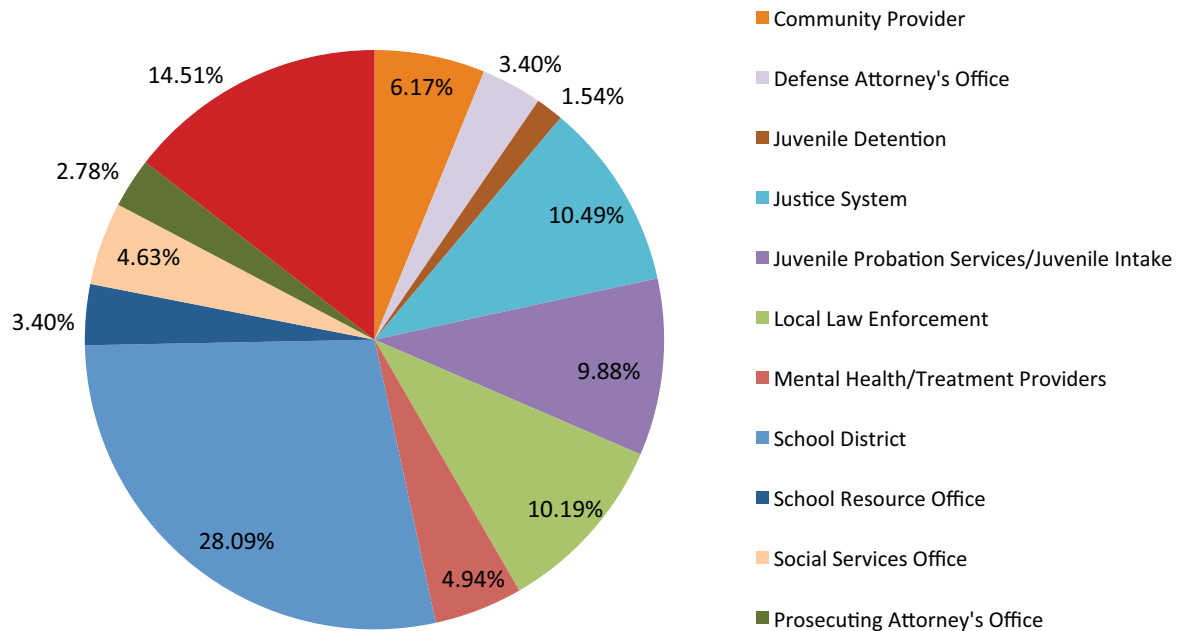
collaborative survey, the categories “other” (14.5%), justice system (10.5%), and local law enforcement (10.2%) have the next highest percentages. In Figure 1, juvenile detention organizations and prosecuting attorney’s offices have the lowest representation of the sample at 1.5% and 2.8%, respectively. In Figure 2, the post-

<sup>1</sup> Response rate could not be calculated in Delaware because the survey was sent to stakeholders beyond those who attended the collaborative meeting. We were unable to get an accurate count of how many stakeholders could have participated in the survey.

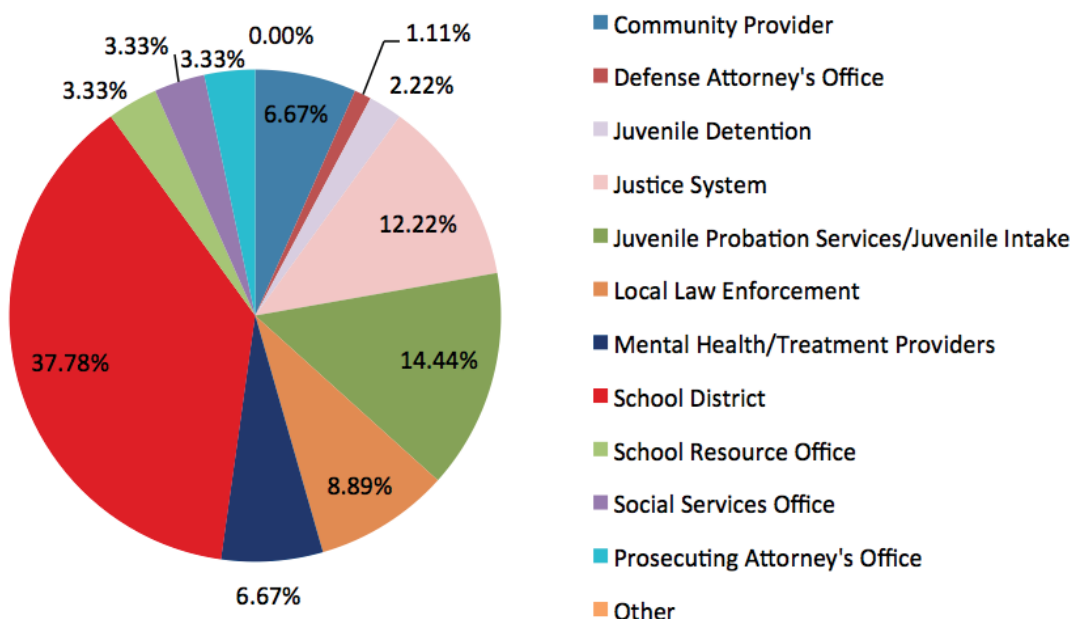
collaborative survey shows that juvenile probation services/juvenile intake (14.4%), justice system (12.2%), and “other” (8.9%) represent the next highest percentages.

Law enforcement (0.0%) and defense attorney’s office (1.1%) represents the lowest percentages for the post-collaborative survey.

**Figure 1. Pre-Survey description of each collaboration**



**Figure 2. Post-Survey description of each collaboration**



## SCHOOL–JUVENILE COURT DYNAMICS

Results from the pre-/post-collaborative efforts surveys are presented below. The goal of these surveys is to determine if there are changes in responses to the six school–juvenile court dynamics questions. Participants were asked to respond to the following questions on a 5 point scale starting at 1 indicating “Strongly Disagree” and 5 indicating “Strongly Agree.”

### IN YOUR JURISDICTION...

1. The role of the juvenile court is clearly understood by the system stakeholders
2. School staff responds effectively to discipline problems
3. School staff has an understanding of what constitutes appropriate school to juvenile court referrals
4. Schools make appropriate referrals to the juvenile courts
5. Schools make timely referrals to the juvenile court
6. School and juvenile justice agencies share data regularly

As noted previously, the same set of systems stakeholders were given an opportunity to respond to the survey items at both an

initial site visit and at a 3-month follow-up. Aggregate responses were compared pre-post to examine any changes that may have occurred in attitudes or understanding of the school justice dynamic. Comparisons were not made at the individual site level due to low response rates.

When asked about the role of juvenile courts being clearly understood by system stakeholders, the majority of participants responded “Somewhat Agree” for both the pre- (44.1%) and post-collaborative surveys (36.3%). Comparing the pre- and post-collaborative surveys, “Strongly Agree” responses show a sizeable increase (18.4%) in the post-survey agreement with the statement. Figure 3 also indicates that approximately one-fourth of the sample answered “Somewhat Disagree” for the both surveys (27.5% and 22.5%). In addition, the percentage of disagreement decreased among the pre- and post-surveys indicating that there was a shift to the belief that stakeholders better understood the role of the juvenile court.



**Figure 3. The role of the juvenile court is clearly understood by the system stakeholders**

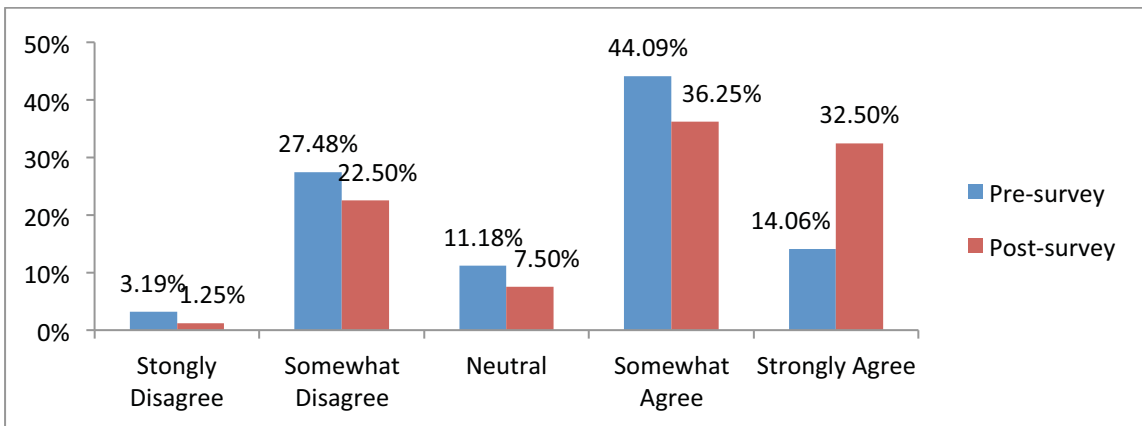
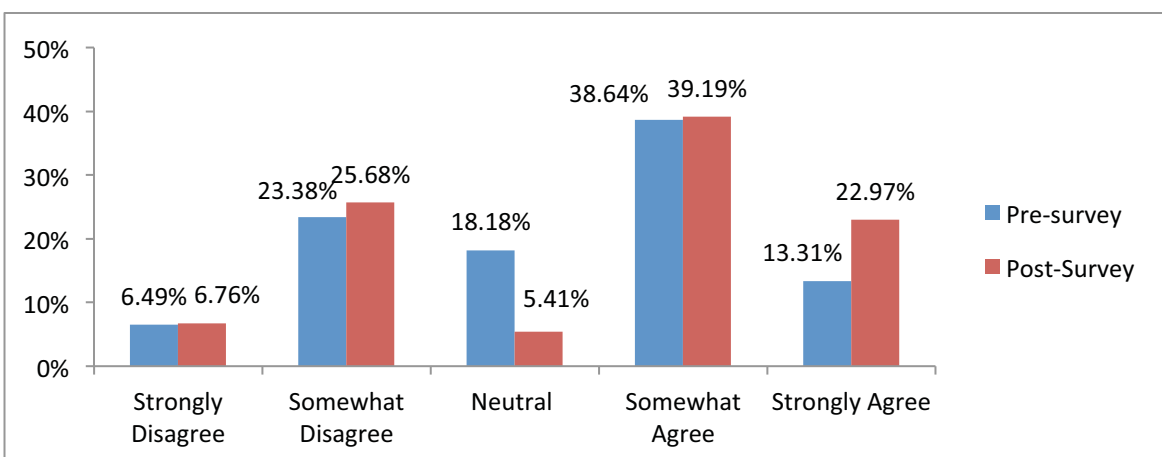


Figure 4 displays the responses of participants concerning whether school staff respond effectively to discipline problems. While most categories remained relatively similar between pre- and post-surveys, the biggest percentage difference occurred among the “Strongly Agree” category. As indicated by the graph, there was a 9.7% increase from pre- to post-survey among

participants who strongly believed that school staff were effectively responding to discipline issues. However, there were still over a third of participants (32.4%) in the post-collaborative survey who indicated disagreement with this statement.

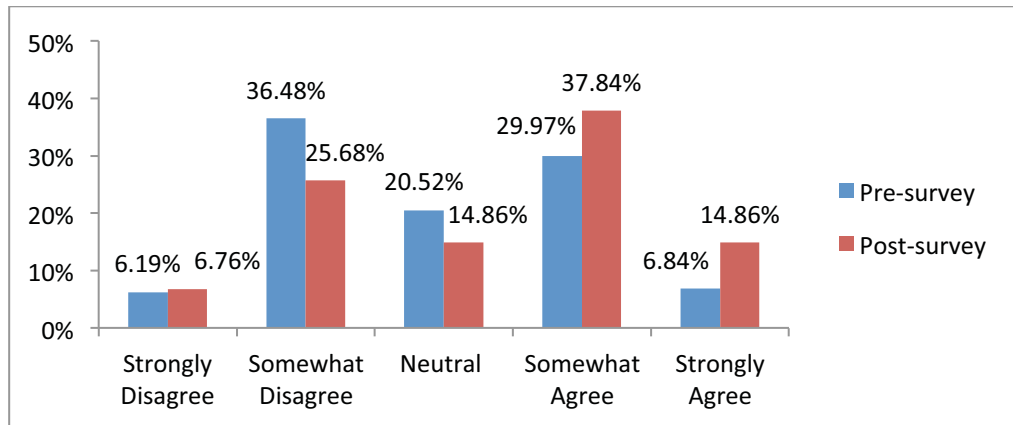
**Figure 4. School staff responds effectively to discipline problems**



In Figure 5, the pre-survey indicated that approximately one-half of the sample (42.7%) responded that they disagreed that school staff had an understanding of what constitutes appropriate school to juvenile court referrals. There was a 10.3% decrease in the percentage of disagreement when comparing the pre- to the post-collaborative

survey. Conversely, over one-half of participants (52.7%) agreed to any extent in the post-collaborative survey. This indicates that more participants believed that school staff understood what student behaviors and actions should be referred to the juvenile court systems after the TA site visit.

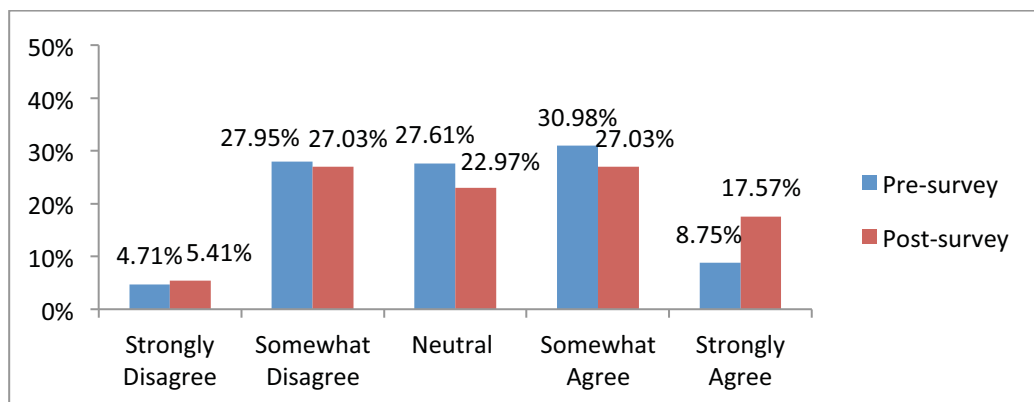
**Figure 5. School staff understands what constitutes appropriate school to juvenile court referrals**



In Figure 6, most participants agreed to any extent in the pre-survey (39.7%) and post-survey (44.6%) that schools make appropriate referrals to the juvenile courts.

However, there was still roughly one-third (32.4%) of participants that disagreed in the post-collaborative survey that schools were employing appropriate referral protocol.

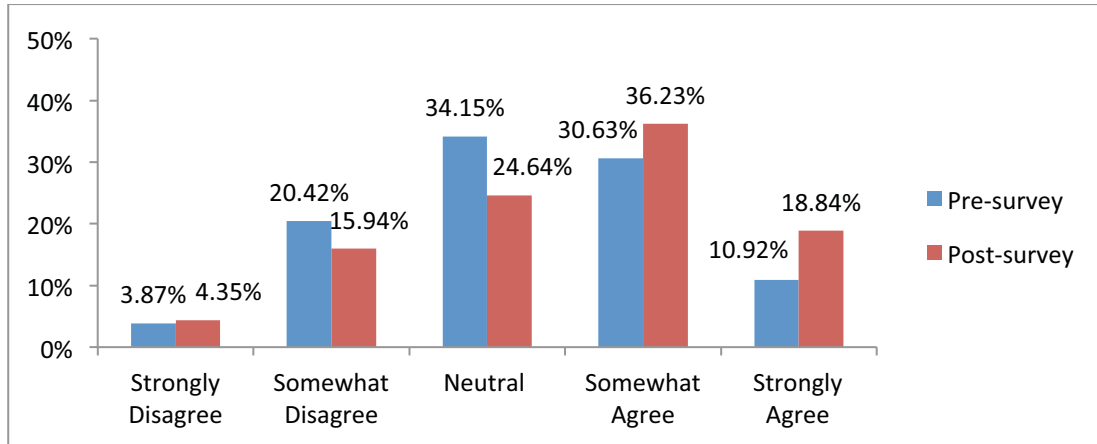
**Figure 6. Schools make appropriate referrals to the juvenile courts**



In the pre-survey, when asked if schools make timely referrals to the juvenile justice court, most responses were neutral on the subject (34.2%); however, in the post-survey, neutrality decreased and most of the respondents were in agreement with the

statement (Figure 7). Furthermore, when comparing the pre- (41.6%) and post-survey changes (55.1%), there was an increase in agreement with the statement on whether schools make timely referrals to the court.

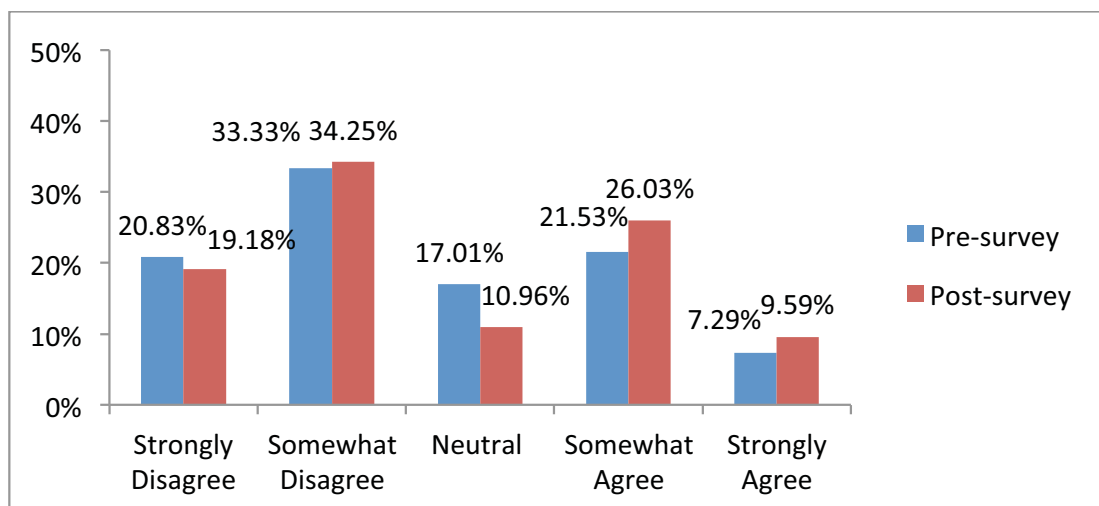
**Figure 7. Schools make timely referrals to the juvenile court**



Between pre- and post-surveys, there was a 6.8% increase on agreement on whether school and juvenile justice agencies share data regularly (Figure 8). However, in the pre-survey (52.4%) and post-survey (53.4%) the majority of participants reported that

they disagreed on whether school and juvenile justice agencies share data regularly. *These results indicate that there is a general disconnect among the school and juvenile justice systems in sharing information such as data.*

**Figure 8. Schools and juvenile justice agencies share data regularly**

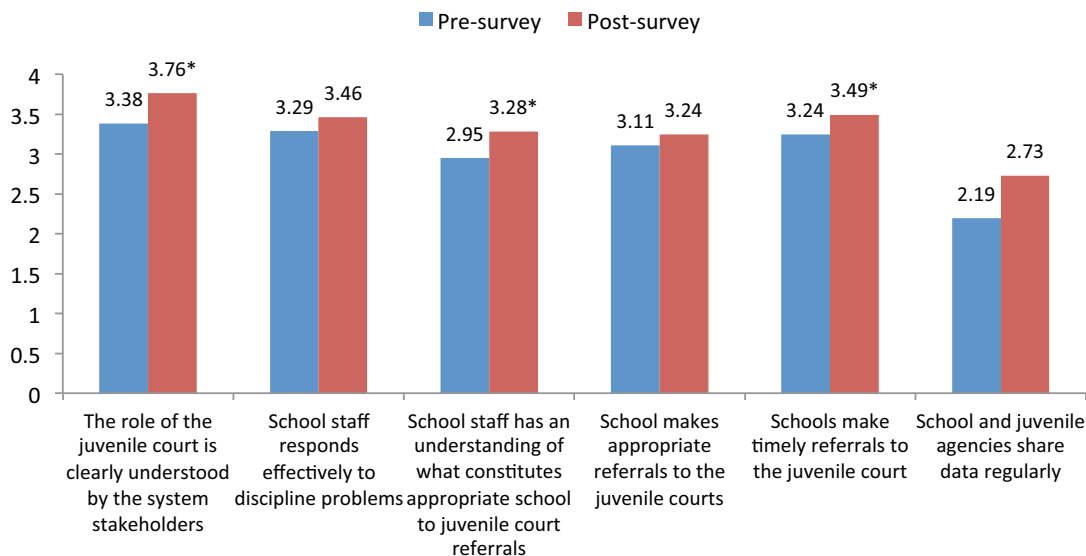


## MEAN CHANGES IN PRE-SURVEY AND POST-SURVEY RESPONSES

In addition to the percentages discussed above, means were calculated for the school-juvenile court dynamics responses and then mean comparison tests (t-tests) were performed to determine if there were significant differences in the means between pre-survey to post-survey responses. The responses to each of these six questions are averaged across all sites to create a scale from 0 to 5, which indicate low to high agreement with the questions. As indicated above, the response rates were too low to meaningfully examine each site individually for changes in attitudes and perceptions. A score closer to 0 indicates all “Strongly Disagree” responses to the question and scores closer to 5 indicate

all “Strongly Agree” responses. Figure 9 shows increases in the post-survey responses when compared to the pre-survey responses. There was a consistent trend for increases in agreement in the post sample; however, only three items demonstrated a statistically significant change in agreement between pre- and post-testing ( $p < .10$ ; noted by \* in Figure 9): (1) *the role the juvenile court is clearly understood by all system stakeholders*, (2) *school staff understand what constitutes appropriate school to juvenile court referrals*, and (3) *schools make timely referrals to the juvenile court*.

**Figure 9. Average pre- and post-collaborative jurisdiction dynamics**



## COLLABORATIVE AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

The collaborative effort pre-post survey also included items specific to the collaborative group attitudes, activities, and decision-making processes. Participants were asked how their collaborative group was formed,

and then they were asked to respond to the following statements using a 5-point scale starting at 1 indicating “Strongly Disagree” and 5 indicating “Strongly Agree.”

## AS A COLLABORATIVE GROUP, AGENCIES IN MY JURISDICTION...

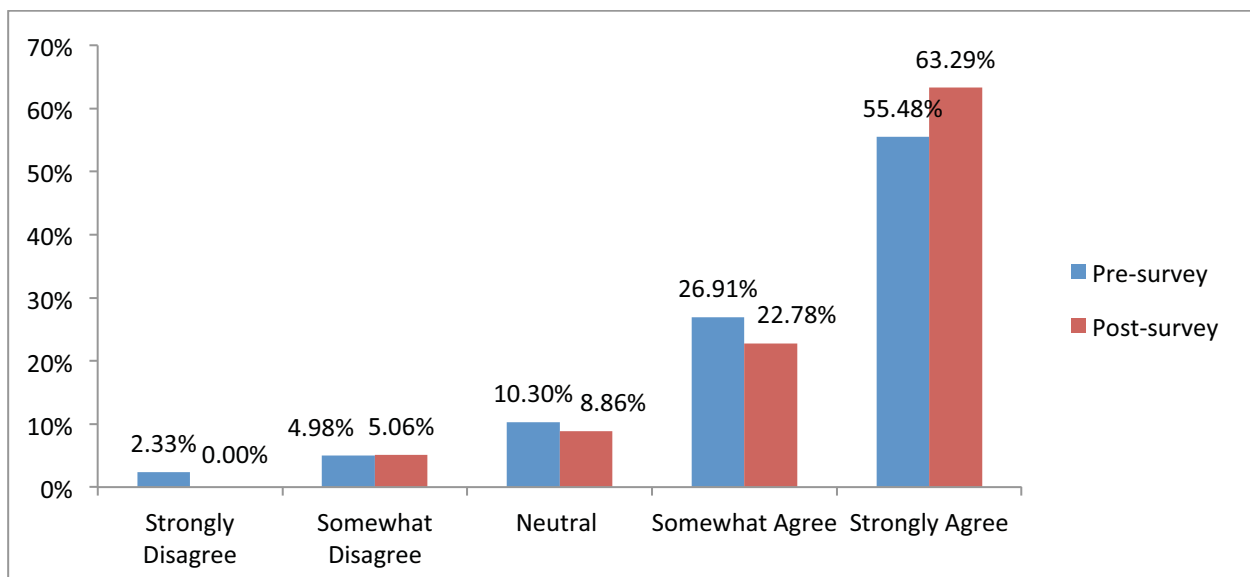
1. Have the support of judicial leadership
2. Communicate well with one another
3. Understand the current issues
4. Have a shared purpose for the collaborative project
5. Have set measurable goals and/or objectives
6. Have identified activities to initiate change
7. Have drafted an action plan
8. Have a plan for monitoring progress (i.e., what data will be collected)
9. Share data with one another

Over one-half of the sample reported that they newly formed a stakeholder group (58.5%) for this project, while others reported that they had established this group from an already existing collaboration (41.2%). No site had complete agreement

regarding whether the collaborative was new or already existing. In fact, results were typically mixed with about one-half of collaborative members indicating it was new and the other one-half saying it was already in existence. This indicates that some participants may not have been aware of the existing collaborative, or potentially did not fully understand the question.

In Figure 10, the majority of respondents provided a positive view on agencies in their jurisdiction as having the support of judicial leadership. They responded either “Strongly Agree” (55.5%; 63.3%) or “Somewhat Agree” (26.9%; 22.7%) in the pre- and post-surveys, respectively. In the pre-survey, only 7.3% reported that they disagreed (strongly disagree and somewhat disagree) and in regards to the post-survey, there were no responses in strong disagreement with the statement. When comparing the pre- and post-survey changes in responses, there was an increase in agreement for the “Strongly Agree” responses.

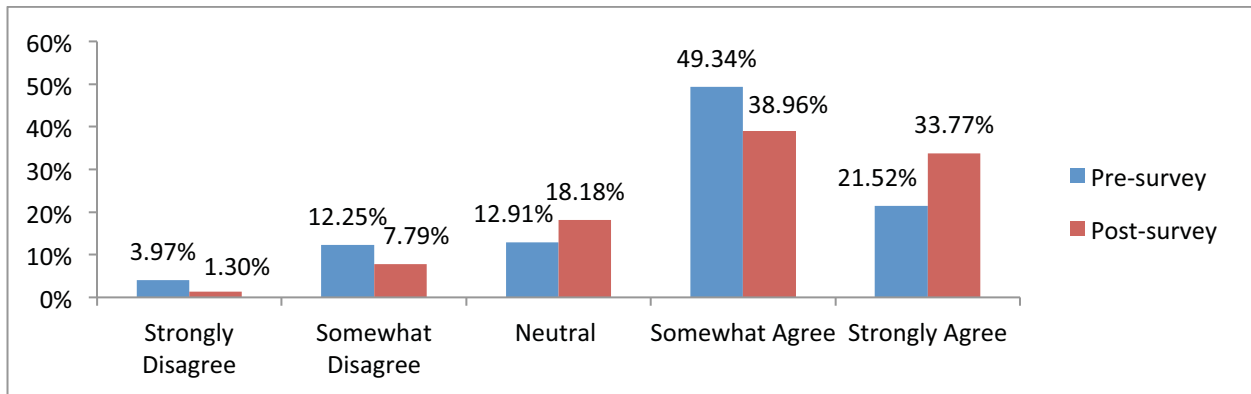
**Figure 10. As a collaborative group, agencies in my jurisdiction have the support of judicial leadership**



In Figure 11, the pre-survey results show that almost one-half of participants “Somewhat Agree” (49.3%) and approximately a quarter (21.5%) responded that they “Strongly Agree” that agencies communicate well with one another. In addition, in the post-survey, a majority of the participants “Somewhat

Agree” (38.9%) or “Strongly Agree” (33.8%) that agencies communicate well with each other. There was a decrease in disagreement and an increase in agreement (Strongly Agree) with the statement when comparing the pre- and post-survey responses.

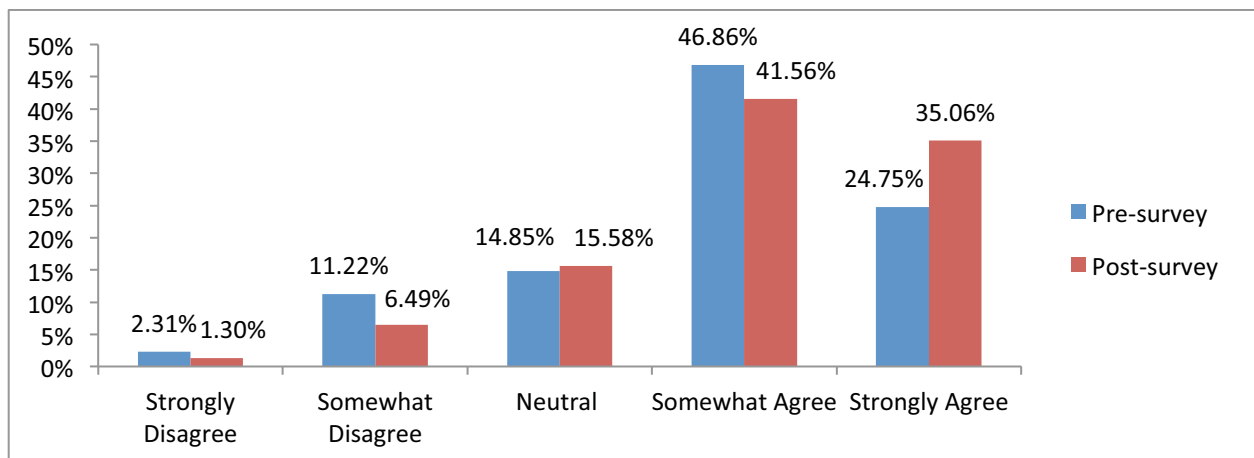
**Figure 11. As a collaborative group, agencies in my jurisdiction communicate well with one another**



In the pre-survey, nearly three-quarters of participants (71.6%) reported agreeing “Somewhat” or “Strongly” that agencies in their jurisdictions understand the current issues (see Figure 12). There was an increase in agreement for the post-survey results — a combined 76.6% of respondents

“Somewhat Agree” and “Strongly Agree.” When pre- and post-survey responses are compared, there was a decrease in the percentage of respondents who reported that they “Strongly Disagree” and “Somewhat Disagree” that agencies understand the current issues.

**Figure 12. As a collaborative group, agencies in my jurisdiction understand the current issues**

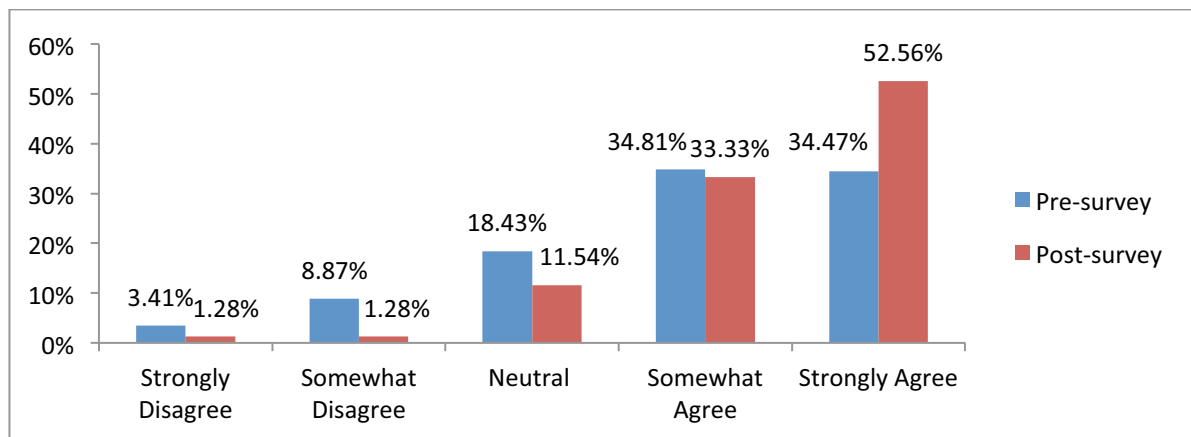




In the pre-survey (see Figure 13), when reporting whether agencies in their jurisdiction have a shared purpose for the collaborative project, those who responded that they “Somewhat Agree” or “Strongly Agree” had the highest percentages, 34.8% and 34.5% respectively. Participants who

answered “Strongly Disagree” (3.4%) or “Somewhat Disagree” (8.9%) had the lowest percentages. A comparison of the pre- and post-survey results show an increase in those who “Strongly Agree” that agencies have a shared purpose (52.6%).

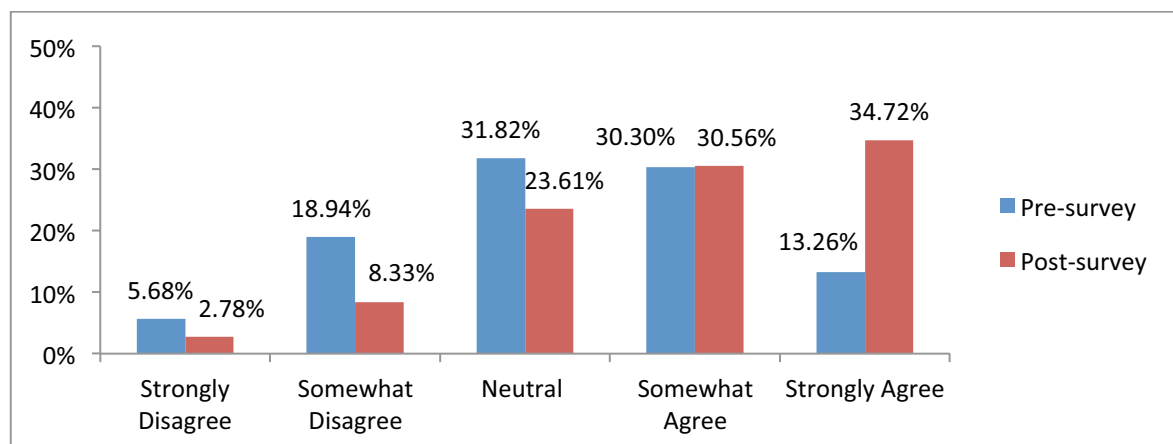
**Figure 13. As a collaborative group, agencies in my jurisdiction have a shared purpose for the collaborative project**



In Figure 14, the largest percentage of respondents reported in the pre-survey that they were “Neutral” (31.8%) on whether agencies in their jurisdictions have set measureable goals and/or objectives. However, in the post-survey, “Strongly

Agree” represents the highest percentage (34.7%). Furthermore, the post-survey results show decreases in disagreement and increases in agreement with the statement on having set measureable plans.

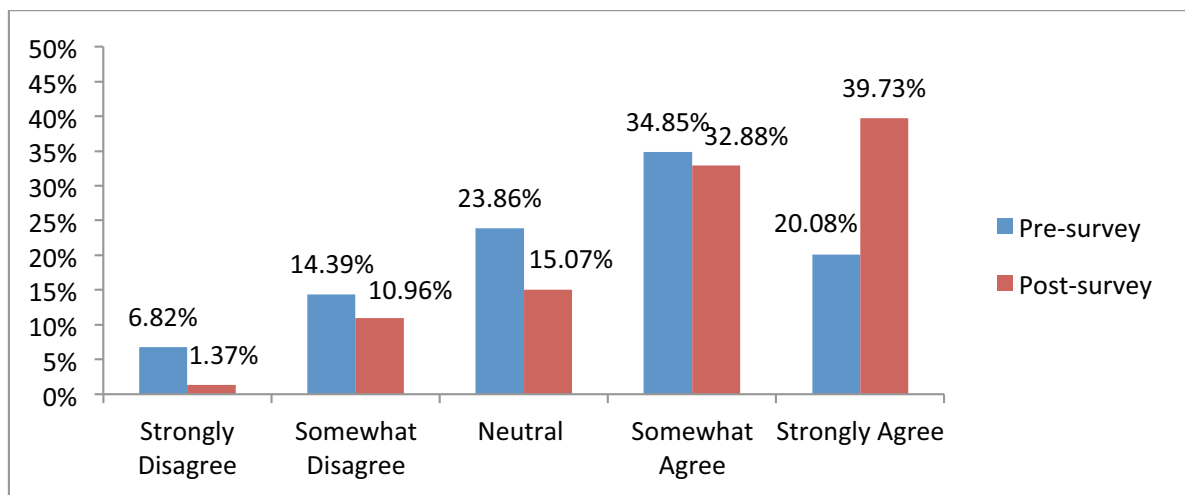
**Figure 14. As a collaborative group, agencies in my jurisdiction have set measurable goals and/or objectives**



When asked if agencies in respective jurisdictions have identified activities to initiate change, in the pre-survey, 34.8% reported that they “Somewhat Agree” (see Figure 15). Those that “Strongly disagree” had the lowest percentage with 6.8%. The

post-survey shows a majority (39.7%) “Strongly Agree” with identifying activities to initiate change. The post-survey response in strong agreement is a sizeable increase when compared to the pre-survey response.

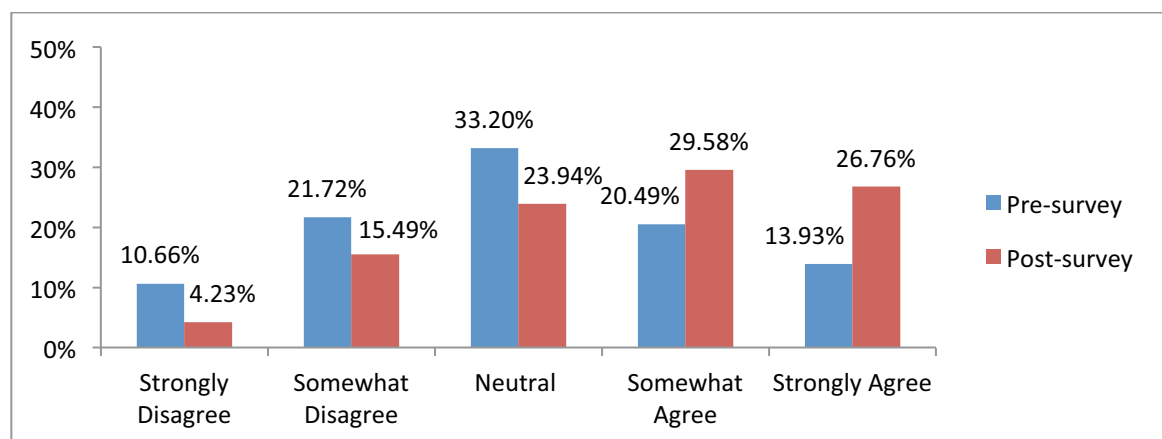
**Figure 15. As a collaborative group, agencies in my jurisdiction have identified activities to initiate change**



In Figure 16, the pre-survey responses show that those who responded “Neutral” when asked if agencies in their jurisdictions have drafted an action plan had the highest percentage (33.2%). The post-survey shows dissimilar findings where “Somewhat Agree”

(29.6%) and “Strongly Agree” (26.8%) were the highest reported responses. Overall, there were decreases in disagreement with the statement on whether an action plan is drafted, when comparing the pre- to post-survey results.

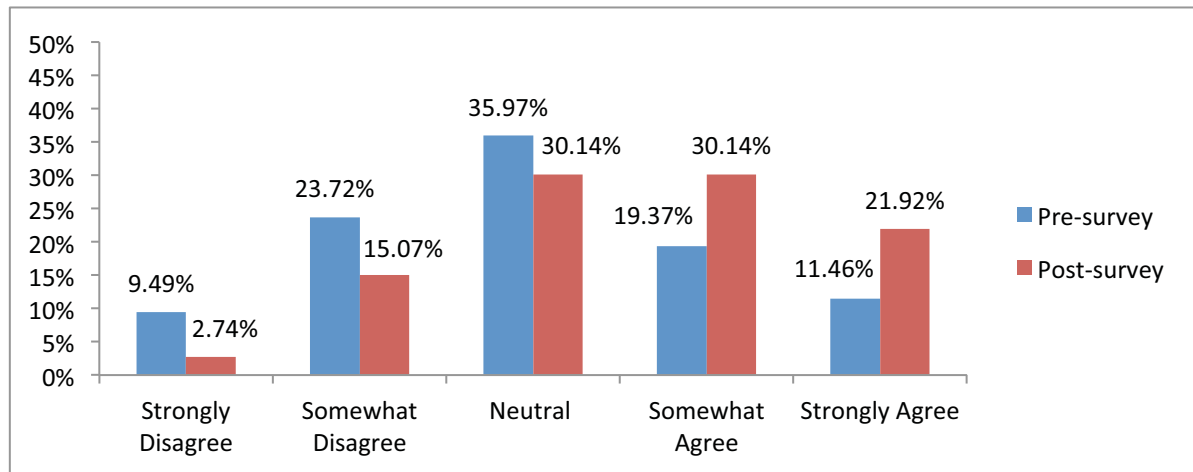
**Figure 16. As a collaborative group, agencies in my jurisdiction have drafted an action plan**



In Figure 17, most of the pre-survey sample was neutral when asked if agencies in their own jurisdictions have a plan for monitoring progress utilizing data (36.0%). A high percentage of the post-survey sample also responded as “Neutral” (30.1%), but a similar percentage reported that they

“Somewhat Agree” (30.1%). However, in the post-survey, when both “Somewhat Agree” and “Strongly Agree” are combined (52.1%), more than one-half of the responses are in agreement with the statement. After the TA site visit, there was an increase in plans for monitoring progress.

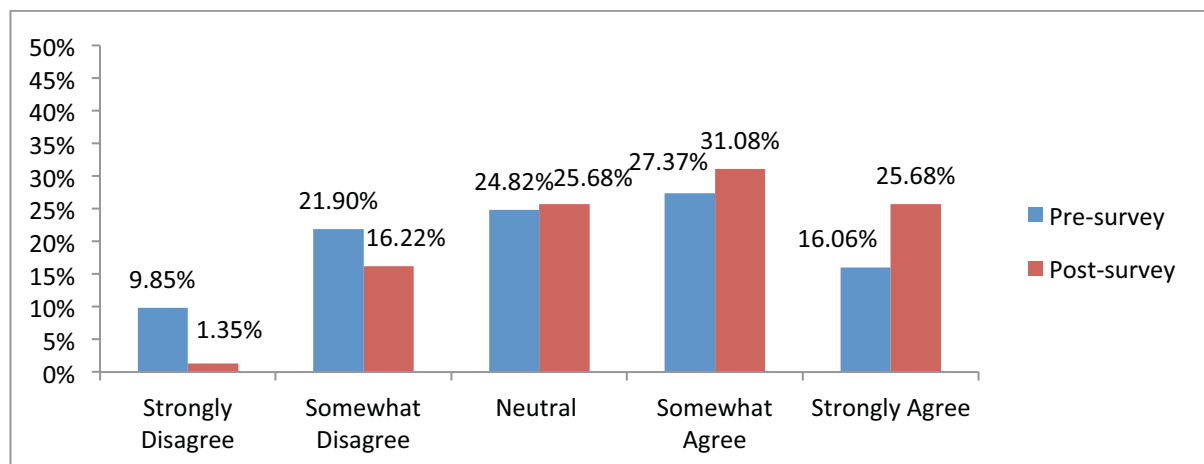
**Figure 17. As a collaborative group, agencies in my jurisdiction have a plan for monitoring progress**



When asked in the pre-survey if agencies in respective jurisdictions share data with one another, over a quarter (27.4%) reported that they “Somewhat Agree” and 24.8% remained “Neutral” on the topic (see Figure 18). Those who responded they “Somewhat Disagreed”

represented 21.9%. However, in the post-survey, the majority of the respondents “Somewhat Agree” (31.1%) and “Strongly Agree” (25.7%) that agencies share data. Post-TA site visits, there was an increase in agreement that agencies share data.

**Figure 18. As a collaborative group, agencies in my jurisdiction share data with one another**

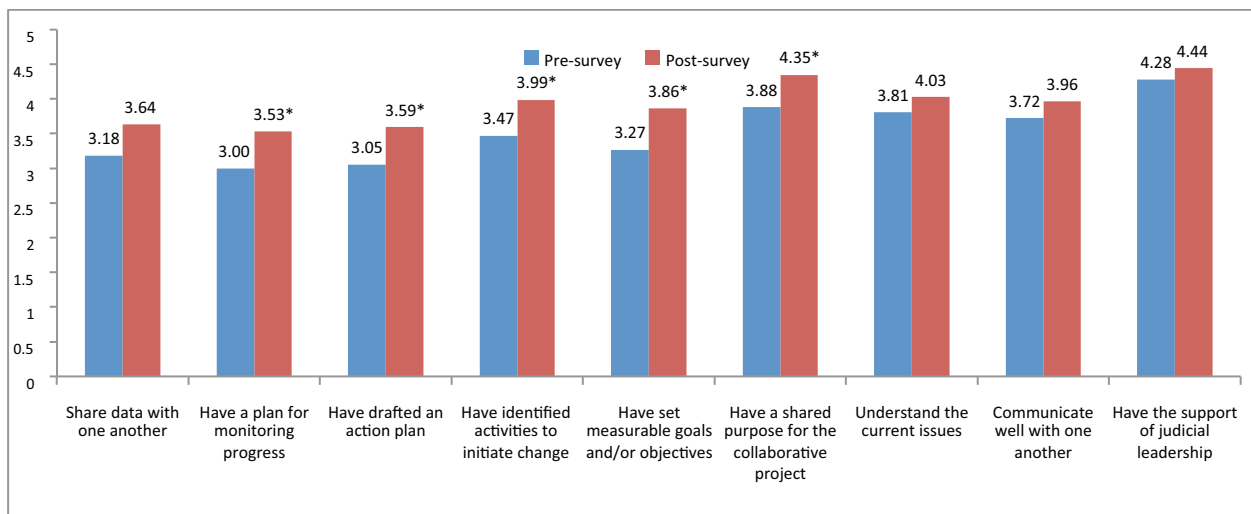


## MEAN CHANGES IN PRE-SURVEY AND POST-SURVEY RESPONSES

Each of the nine collaborative and decision-making processes questions are averaged, separately, to create an overall scale from 0 to 5 for each question. A score closer to 0 indicates that all the responses “Strongly Disagree” with the questions and scores closer to 5 indicate that all the responses “Strongly Agree” with the question. Mean comparison tests (t-test) were conducted to determine differences in the pre-survey and post-survey reasons. Figure 19 shows increases in the post-survey responses when

compared to the pre-survey responses. Five of the nine increases in means are statistically significant ( $p \leq .10$ ): (1) *Have a plan for monitoring progress*, (2) *Have drafted an action plan*, (3) *Have identified activities to initiate change*, (4) *Have set measurable goals and/or objectives*, and (5) *Have shared purpose for the collaborative project*. That is, following the intervention, attitudes toward the collaboration and decision-making process changed toward more positive responses.

**Figure 19. Average Pre and Post Collaboration and Decision-making processes**



## COLLABORATIVE PRE-SURVEY OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

The collaborative pre-survey was given to stakeholders on the first day of site visits by site facilitators. The qualitative portion of the survey allowed researchers to help identify the most pressing issue that stakeholders view as being instrumental in reducing the number of low-risk youth referrals into the juvenile justice system.

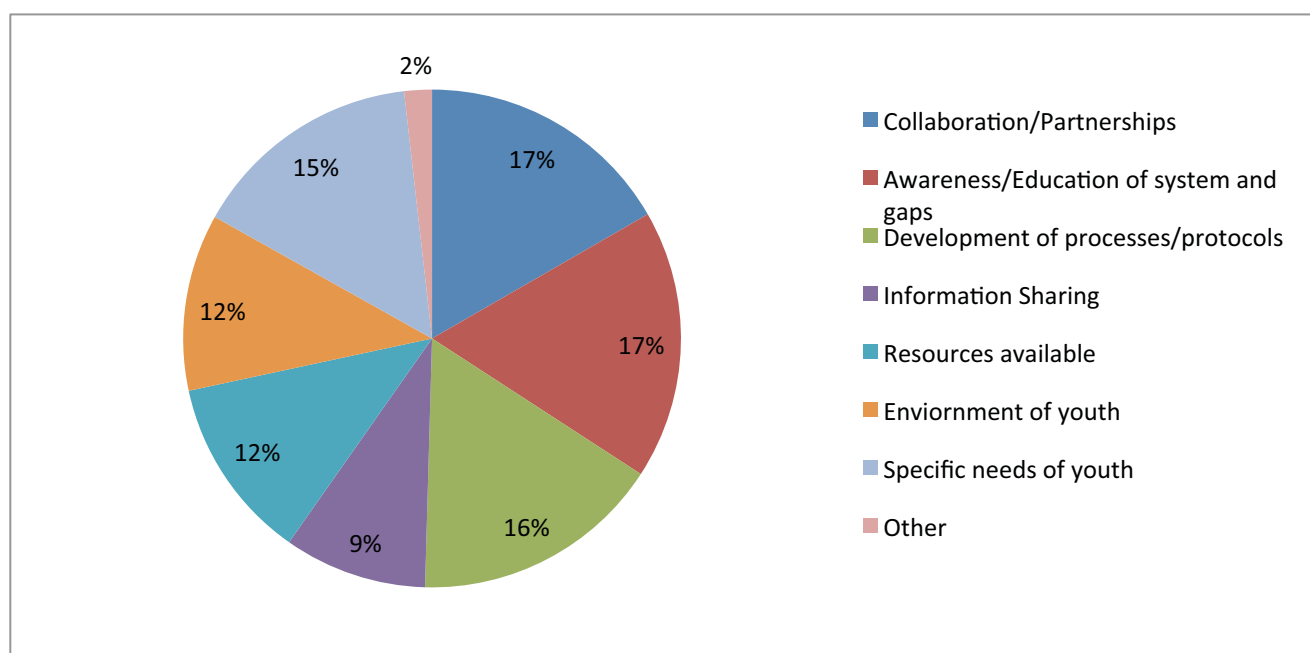
The responses were coded to determine categories or themes, and then a frequency analysis was conducted to determine which themes were the most prominent. This allowed researchers to understand the issues surrounding implementation of the project for the jurisdictions, as well as to better inform site facilitators where they could assist

in the preliminary stages of the project.

The three major themes that were identified included (see Figure 20):

- Development of a multi-system partnership among community entities (17%)
- Education on all current processes of system and identify gaps in care (17%)
- Development of streamlined processes/ protocols for uniformity among entire system (16%)

**Figure 20. Most Critical Issues in Implementing School Pathway Project**



## COLLABORATIVE POST-SURVEY OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

### EXPERIENCE IN THE COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

The collaborative post-survey was distributed to stakeholders three months after the first visit to inquire about the activities and progress of collaborative groups in each jurisdiction. The qualitative questions helped to assess where jurisdictions were in the planning and implementation stages, as well as identify the challenges and successes that stakeholders experienced. These questions were also used to inform site facilitators about general progress in their respective sites, as well

as to see if there was commonality across jurisdictions. Below are the six questions that were asked to gauge participants experience in the collaborative project. Responses were coded to determine categories or themes and then a frequency analysis was conducted to determine which themes were the most prominent.

1. Please list any goals/objectives your collaborative group has tried to accomplish since your first collaborative meeting.
2. Please list any activities your collaborative group has implemented in order to move

forward with these goals/objectives.

3. What strength does your collaborative group possess to make this project successful?
4. What challenges has your collaborative group faced in implementing system change?
5. Has your collaborative group meet for subsequent meetings since your meeting with the site facilitators?
6. How often does your group meet?

## GOALS/OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives that the collaborative groups tried to accomplish since the first meeting were varied. The three top goals and objectives among all jurisdictions were:

- Development of collaborative efforts (information exchanges, communication, meetings, follow-up, etc.)
- Exploring alternatives for punishment of youth for low-status offenses
- Development of a model and/or system for implementation

## ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED

While each jurisdiction has their own unique structure, it was important for researchers to understand how the group as a whole has moved into implementing changes. The three stakeholder activities with the highest percentage of occurrence were:

- Development of initial materials (MOU, checklists, collaborative agreements, resource guide, etc.)
- Continual meetings and/or forums with community stakeholders
- Data assessment and collection

## STRENGTHS OF COLLABORATIVE GROUP

Stakeholders were asked to identify the strengths of their respective collaborative groups. Across jurisdictions there were two main themes:

- Shared passion and commitment of helping youth
- Diversity in representation of community entities

## CHALLENGES FACED

Stakeholders also reported the challenges or issues that have arisen in the three months after the first site visit. While responses were varied, it appeared that there were a few main themes among jurisdictions. These included:

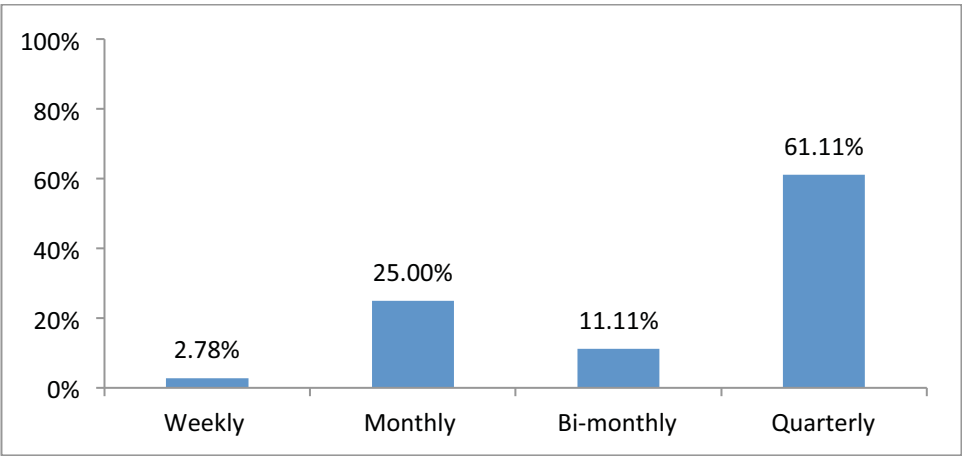
- Lack of time or competing priorities of collaborative stakeholders (27.8%)
- Misunderstanding and lack of clarity on follow-up plans (22.2%)
- Necessity to improve relationships and establish trust among agencies (19.4%)

## COLLABORATIVE MEETINGS

Jurisdictions were asked whether collaborative groups have met for subsequent meetings since meetings with site facilitators. The majority of the responses were that they have met since the meeting (52.9%), while 21.4% said that they have not met, and 25.7% said they did not know if their collaborative group met since meeting with site facilitators. For those who have met with collaborative groups, they tend to meet quarterly (61.1%; see Figure 21).



Figure 21. Frequency of collaborative group meetings



# PART 2





# OUTCOME EVALUATION FINDINGS

**The 16 sites were asked to collect school indicators on the total number of students, number of in-school and out-of-school suspensions, and number of expulsions.**

In addition, these data were requested by race/ethnicity, grade level or age, sex, and status. In addition, sites were asked to provide juvenile justice referral indicators on the number of school-based cases (referred, heard, or disposed), the number of petitions filed from school-based incidents, and/or the number of school-based incidents formally handled. Researchers also requested that these incidents be reported by race/ethnicity, offense, and sex. The evaluation specified the reporting of the data in three increments — 6 months prior to site visit, 6 months post site visit, and 12 months post site visit.

Over the lifespan of the grant, numerous efforts were made to collect outcome evaluation data from the sites. Initially, NCJFCJ staff members emailed the data capacity survey to stakeholders within the 16 jurisdictions to inquire about school discipline and juvenile justice referral data availability, and stakeholders with access to data were asked to submit data to the NCJFCJ research staff. NCJFCJ researchers followed up with the identified data contact points to determine what data were available and discuss if, when, and how data could be provided to NCJFCJ for the study. These identified data persons were contacted regularly through phone calls and emails to try to obtain the needed data for the outcome evaluation. During the outreach to data contacts it became apparent that

data collection was going to be a substantial challenge. Some sites were unresponsive to contact attempts, and others were unable to provide data or identify a new point of contact that might have data. Despite multiple explanations, the majority of the sites seemed to have questions and concerns about the data they needed to report. To increase understanding of the needed data elements and encourage communication and participation of the sites, NCJFCJ staff hosted a webinar in February 2015 on data collection and performance measurement. The webinar sought to further clarify the data needed for the evaluation and to answer questions from the sites on data, data collection, and data reporting. Following the webinar, a representative from OJJDP sent a letter to all project sites encouraging them to submit data to NCJFCJ for the study. A final follow-up was sent to project sites from the school to juvenile justice project director at NCJFCJ to again encourage sites to send data for the study. The NCJFCJ project director for the Judicially Led Responses to Eliminate School Pathways to the Juvenile Justice System project directly emailed the designated contact person (e.g., lead judge, data expert, etc.) at each of the 16 project sites to encourage them to work with their team to submit the data needed for evaluation. It was made clear that data submission was encouraged but also completely voluntary.

As a result of these efforts, approximately one-half of the sites provided some school discipline and/or juvenile justice referral data. Regular follow-up emails and phone calls were made to the non-responsive sites up until the last possible moment to try to encourage data submission. Of those sites that submitted data, most were able to provide only a single reporting period of data (i.e., no comparison data) and few were able to report the data as requested. Only one site was able to provide all of the requested data elements. Because data were not provided as expected it was impossible to make comparisons between sites or pre and post within sites. However, the lessons learned regarding data were valuable. Therefore, data are discussed below to describe the sources and types of data available from these sites, and when possible, frequencies were calculated to illustrate the percentage of students by race with school discipline and school-based referrals to the juvenile justice system.

## SCHOOL DATA

School data were received from nine of the 16 sites. For group 1, the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court of Pasco & Pinellas Counties (Clearwater, FL), Family Court of the State of Delaware (Wilmington, DE), Superior Court of Sacramento County (Sacramento,

CA), Middlesex County Juvenile Court (Lowell, MA), 26th Judicial District Court of Mecklenburg County (Charlotte, NC), and Muskegon County 14th Judicial Circuit Court (Muskegon, MI) submitted data. No submissions were made by Hoopa Valley Tribal Court (Hoopa, CA) and Middletown Superior Court (Middletown, CT).

Table 2 contains descriptions of the data submitted by the Group 1 sites:

### Sixth Judicial Court of Pasco & Pinellas Counties (Clearwater, FL):

- Submitted several years of annual data (1995-2014)
- The site (Pinellas County) submitted data on total enrollment
  - In-school and out-of-school suspensions were broken-down by race (individual race, and black versus non-black), sex, offense type (thirty-nine different incidents), and school level (elementary, high school and middle school)
- No information was reported on expulsions



### **Family Court of the State of Delaware (Wilmington, DE):**

- Statewide data were received for the academic year of 2013-2014
- These data included information on total statewide enrollment
  - The statewide enrollment data are broken-down by district, grade, sex, race, income, and disabilities
  - In-school and out-of-school suspensions were submitted by districts and schools
  - The site did not provide expulsion data

### **Superior Court of Sacramento (Sacramento, CA):**

- This site fulfilled the data and submission phase requirements—data were submitted for January-July 2014, August 2014-January 2015, and February-July 2015
- The site reported total enrollment, in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions by grade, race/ethnicity, and sex

### **Middlesex Superior Court (Middlesex, MA):**

- Submitted annual data on the total number enrolled by race, sex, and disabilities
- Annual data were also received on the total number of students disciplined by race, sex, and disabilities
- Provided data on the number of in-school and out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions by school, race, sex, and disabilities

### **26th Judicial District Court of Mecklenburg County (Charlotte, NC):**

- Submitted data for 2014-2015 total enrollment, in/out of school suspension and expulsion by school, race, sex, and age

### **Muskegon County 14th Judicial Circuit Court (Muskegon, MI):**

- Data were submitted on the total number of students, in/out of school suspensions, and expulsions by school level



**Table 2. Group 1 and 2 submissions for school data**

Sites	Total Suspensions	School Suspensions	In-School Suspensions	Out-School Suspensions	Expulsions
<b>Group 1</b>					
<b>Sixth Judicial Court of Pasco &amp; Pinellas Counties (Clearwater, FL)</b>	Total suspensions; Total suspensions by race (black and non-black; each race), sex, school level, offense type		Suspensions by race, sex, school level, offense type	Suspensions by race, sex, school level, offense type	
<b>Family Court of the state of Delaware (Wilmington, DE)</b>			Combined in-school and out-of-school suspensions by state and district	Combined in-school and out-of-school suspensions by state and district	
<b>Superior Court of Sacramento (Sacramento, CA)</b>	Total number of suspensions by offense type		Total number by sex, race, and grade  By event; total number by grade, race, sex	Total number by sex, race, grade  By event; total number by grade, race, sex	Total number; by sex, race, grade  By event; total number by grade, race, sex
<b>Middlesex Superior Court (Middlesex, MA)</b>	Total disciplined by schools		number and percent in-school suspension by school and by race, sex, disabilities	Percentage of out-school suspension by school then by race, sex, discipline	Percentage of expulsion by school then by race, sex, discipline
<b>26th Judicial District Court of Mecklenburg County (Charlotte, NC)</b>	Total enrollment by school, race, sex, age		By school, race, sex, age	By school, race, sex, age	By school, race, sex, age
<b>Muskegon County 14th Judicial Circuit Court (Muskegon, MI)</b>	Total number by school level		Total number by school level	Total number by school level	Total number by school level
<b>Group 2</b>					
<b>Tippecanoe County Superior Court (Lafayette, IN)</b>	By race/ethnicity, sex, age		By race/ethnicity, sex, age	By race/ethnicity, sex, age	By race/ethnicity, sex, age
<b>Circuit Court for Prince George's County (Marlboro, MD)</b>	Combined suspensions and expulsions				
<b>Fourth Judicial District Juvenile Court in Colorado (Colorado Springs, CO) El Paso and Teller</b>	Total number of suspensions by county, sex, race		By county, sex, race	By county, sex, race	By county, sex, race

For Group 2, school discipline data were received from three sites: (1) Tippecanoe County Superior Court (Lafayette, IN), (2) Circuit Court for Prince George's County (Upper Marlboro, MD), and (3) Fourth Judicial Circuit Court of El Paso County (Colorado Springs, CO). Data were not received from these five sites: (1) Kentucky Statewide Initiative Counties (Lexington & Newport, KY), (2) Fulton County Juvenile Court (Atlanta, GA), (3) Juvenile Court of Memphis and Shelby County (Memphis, TN), (4) Tehama County Superior Court (Red Bluff, CA), and (5) the Third Judicial District Court of Dona Ana County (Las Cruces, NM).

Table 2 contains descriptions of the data submitted by the Group 2 sites:

### **Tippecanoe County Superior Court (Lafayette, IN):**

- Submitted annual (2013-2014) data on in/out-of-school suspensions and expulsions race, sex, and grade level

### **Circuit Court for Prince George's County (Upper Marlboro, MD):**

- Statewide level data on total enrollment and expulsions/suspensions for 2010-2011



### **Fourth Judicial Circuit Court of El Paso County and Teller (Colorado Springs, CO):**

- County level data were received for two terms: 2012-2013 and 2013-2014
- The data accounts for in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions by race, sex, and county

Table 3 provides descriptions (raw numbers and percentages) of suspensions and expulsion data submitted by the sites. Only the sites who met the design criteria and data requirements (submitted data within the sampling frame and provided more than baseline data) of the study will be discussed below. A single site, Superior Court of Sacramento (Sacramento, CA), met all of the design and data requirements.

### **Superior Court of Sacramento (Sacramento, CA):**

The overall number of in-school suspensions decreased and the number of out-of-school suspensions increased from the first reporting period to the second reporting period. Expulsion decreased, but that decrease only represents one student. The percentage of in-school suspensions increased for Black students and decreased for all other races. Out-of-school suspensions decreased for White

and Hispanic students, but increased for Black students and the “Other” category of students. In-school suspensions decreased for males, but increased for females. There was an increase in out-of-school suspensions for males and a decrease for females. Examining the pre-post data yielded mixed results. Though decreases can be seen in some outcomes (e.g., in-school suspensions; White and Hispanic out-of-school suspensions), increases are also evident in other outcomes (out-of-school suspensions; Black student in-school suspension).

**Table 3. Description of number of suspensions and expulsions by sex and race/ethnicity**

Sites	Total Number of Students Enrolled	In-School Suspensions	Out-of-School Suspensions	Expulsions
<b>Group 1</b>				
<b>Sixth Judicial Court of Pasco &amp; Pinellas Counties (Clearwater, FL)</b>	<b>2012-2013</b> N=95312	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2012-2013</b> N=8552 (8.9%)  Male=5662 (66.2%) Female=2890 (33.8%)  W=3237 (37.9%) B=4092 (47.9%) H=789 (9.2%) A=79 (0.9%) IND/AK=26 (0.3%) MR=329 (3.8%)	
	<b>2013-2014</b> N=96131	<b>2013-2014</b> N=10186	<b>2013-2014</b> N=8451 (8.8%) Male=5662 (66.9%) Female=2789 (33.0%)  W=2986 (35.3%) B=4089 (48.4%) H=843 (10.0%) A=84 (1.0%) IND/AK=22 (0.3%) MR=332 (3.9%)	
<b>Family Court of the State of Delaware (Wilmington, DE)</b>	<b>2013-2014</b> N=133369 Male=51.3% Female=48.7%  W=47.7% B=31.3% H=14.5% O=6.6%	<b>2013-2014</b> In/out-of-school suspensions N=48103	<b>2013-2014</b> In/out-of-school suspensions N=48103	<b>2013-2014</b> N=98
<b>Superior Court of Sacramento (Sacramento, CA)</b>	<b>January 2014-July 2014</b> N=42307  Male=21731 (51.4%) Female=20576 (48.6%)  W=8514 (20.1%) B=7518 (17.8%) H=16367 (39.7%) O=9908 (23.4%)	<b>January 2014-July 2014</b> N=4957 (11.7%)  Male=3510 (70.8%) Female=1447 (29.2%)  W= 563 (11.4%) B=2132 (43.0%) H=1701 (34.3%) O=561 (11.3%)	<b>January 2014-July 2014</b> N=1653 (3.9%)  Male=1190 (72.0%) Female=463 (28.0%)  W=251 (15.2%) B=691 (41.8%) H=548 (33.1%) O=163 (9.9%)	<b>January 2014-July 2014</b> N=1  H=1
	<b>August 2014-January 2015</b> N=44890  Male=23115 (51.5%) Female=21775 (48.5%)  W=8875 (19.8%) B=8325 (18.5%) H=17199 (38.3%) O=10491 (23.4%)	<b>August 2014-January 2015</b> N=2479 (5.5%)  Male=1691 (68.2%) Female=788 (31.8%)  W=271(10.9%) B=1232 (49.7%) H=777 (31.3%) O=199 (8.1%)	<b>August 2014-January 2015</b> N=1880 (4.1%)  Male=1383 (73.6%) Female=497 (26.4%)  W=221 (11.8%) B=883 (46.9%) H=580 (30.9%) O=196 (10.4%)	<b>August 2014-January 2015</b> N=0
<b>Middlesex Superior Court (Middlesex, MA)</b>	<b>2013-2014</b> N=7176  Male=3636 (50.7%) Female=3541 (49.3%)  W=3123 (43.5%) B=1082 (15.1%) H=1473 (20.5%) AI/AN=15 (0.2%) A=1373 (19.1%) MR=108 (1.5%) NH/PI=2 (0.0%)	<b>2013-2014</b> N=850 (11.8%)  Male=540 (63.5%) Female=310 (36.5%)  W=230 (27.3%) B=112 (13.2%) H=342 (40.5%) A=151 (17.9%) NH/PI=8 (0.9%)	<b>2013-2014</b> N=760 (10.5%)  Male=515 (67.8%) Female=245 (32.2%)  W=296(36.1%) B=130 (15.9%) H=296 (36.2%) A=93 (11.3%) MR=4 (0.5%)	<b>2013-2014</b> N=0

<b>26th Judicial District Court of Mecklenburg County (Charlotte, NC)</b>	<b>2014-2015</b> N=4691	<b>2014-2015</b> N=10967	<b>2014-2015</b> N=13292	<b>2014-2015</b> N=2
<b>Muskegon County 14th Judicial Circuit Court (Muskegon, MI)</b>	<b>2013-2015</b> N=4691	<b>2013-2015</b> N=2932	<b>2013-2015</b> N=2232	<b>2013-2015</b> N=48
<b>Group 2</b>				
<b>Tippecanoe County Superior Court (Lafayette, IN)</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2013-2014</b> N=353 Male=249 (70.9%) Female=102 (29.1%)  W=169 (48.2%) B=89 (25.4%) H=58 (16.5%) A=0 (0.0%) MR=36 (9.9%) AI=0 (0.0%)	<b>2013-2014</b> N=328 Male=226 (62.1%) Female=102 (31.1%)  W=136 (41.5%) B=114 (34.7%) H=43 (13.1%) A=0 (0.0%) MR=33 (10.1%) AI=2 (0.6%)	<b>2013-2014</b> N=29 Male=18 (62.1%) Female=11 (37.9%)  W=12 (41.4%) B=12 (41.3%) H=4 (13.8%) A=0 (0.0%) MR=1 (3.5%) AI=0 (0.0%)
<b>Circuit Court for Prince George's County (Marlboro, MD)</b>	<b>2010-2011</b> N=852211	<b>2010-2011</b> In/out-of-school suspensions N=95869	<b>2010-2011</b> In/out-of-school suspensions N=95869	<b>2010-2011</b>
<b>Fourth Judicial District Juvenile Court in Colorado (Colorado Springs, CO) El Paso and Teller</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2013-2014</b> N=3121	<b>2013-2014</b> N=6478	<b>2013-2014</b> N=299
W=White, B=Black, H=Hispanic, A=Asian, IND/AK=American Indian/Alaskan, MR=Mixed Race, AI=American Indian, O=Other				

## REFERRAL DATA

Referral data were received from nine of the 16 sites. Three of the sites from the group 1 category submitted data—(1) Sixth Judicial Circuit Court of Pasco & Pinellas Counties (Clearwater, FL), (2) Family Court of the State of Delaware (Wilmington, DE), (3) Superior Court of Sacramento (Sacramento, CA). The remaining five sites with missing data are the 26th Judicial District Court of Mecklenburg County (Charlotte, NC), Hoopa Valley Tribal Court (Hoopa, CA), Muskegon County 14th Judicial Circuit Court (Muskegon, MI), Middletown Superior Court (Middletown, CT), and Middlesex County Juvenile Court (Lowell, MA).

Table 4 contains descriptions of the data submitted by the Group 1 sites:

### Sixth Judicial Circuit Court of Pasco & Pinellas Counties (Clearwater, FL):

- Four sets of county level data for Pinellas were submitted for two six month increments (March to August 2014 and September 2014 to February 2015)—two sets of data represent school related incidents of civil citations and the remaining two represent school related incidents of arrest data

### Family Court of the State of Delaware (Wilmington, DE):

- Submitted data from their school offense diversion program for January to June

2014 and school related criminal charges filed between February to July 2014 and August 2014 to January 2015

- The diversion program data includes information on charges, re-offense in community and school, district, school, grade level, sex, and race/ethnicity
- The school related criminal charges data were submitted by charge type (misdemeanor and felony), sex, race, and county (Kent and Sussex)
- A school conduct report with school crimes and Department of Education (DOE) data were submitted for 2013-2014 by district, state, sex, and race/ethnicity
- Race and sex data were unavailable

### **Superior Court of Sacramento (Sacramento, CA):**

- Sacramento police officers at school/educational facilities reported juvenile arrest/citations on school grounds by age, race/ethnicity, sex, and location for the time period of February 1, 2014 – July 31, 2014. In addition, data on crime type and number of events were reported by police officers
- Another set of data were received for 2014 -2015 for referrals to juvenile justice by sex, race/ethnicity, grade, and date of birth

Six of the eight sites from Group 2 submitted referral data: (1) Tehama County Superior Court (Red Bluff, CA), (2) Tippecanoe County Superior Court (Lafayette, IN), (3) Fulton County Juvenile Court (Atlanta, GA), (4) Fourth Judicial Circuit Court of El Paso County (Colorado Springs, CO), and (5) Juvenile Court of Memphis and Shelby County (Memphis, TN), and (6) Circuit Court for Prince George's County (Upper Marlboro, MD). The two sites from group two who did not provide referral data are Kentucky Statewide Initiative Counties (Lexington & Newport, KY) and Third Judicial District Court of Dona Ana County (Las Cruces, NM).

Table 4 contains descriptions of the data submitted by the Group 2 sites:

### **Tehama County Superior Court (Red Bluff, CA):**

- School to pathways probation referral data of minors were provided for the time period of July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014
- The county level data is broken-down by number of referrals, race, sex, age, agency (e.g., Highway Patrol and Red Bluff police department), and type (e.g., truant and delinquency)

### **Fulton County Juvenile Court (Atlanta, GA):**

- Submitted monthly data on school-based referrals made by school districts for the time period of January 2014 to June 2015.
- The data captured the number of school-related referrals by sex, race/ethnicity, and type of offenses

### **Tippecanoe County Superior Court (Lafayette, IN):**

- County level school pathways project data were available for 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 and included information total school arrest data by race/ethnicity, sex, and age and school arrest by charge is also available by race/ethnicity, sex, and age

### **Fourth Judicial Circuit Court of El Paso County (Colorado Springs, CO):**

- Colorado Springs Police Department submitted 2013-2014 school-related data by offense, school, race, sex, age, and action (arrested, investigated, summons)
- School-based crime data were collected by El Paso County Sheriff's Office — the 2013-2014 data were reported

by crime type and also by race, sex, age, and action (arrested, summons, investigation)

- 2013-2014 data on number of referrals to law enforcement by counties
- Colorado District Attorney's Council school referral data on charges by sex and race
- Reported May 2014-October 2014 and November 2014 to April 2015 pathways Teen Court data on type of offenses by age, race, and sex

### **Juvenile Court of Memphis and Shelby County (Memphis, TN):**

- Number of delinquency complaints/school related referrals for June 2014 to December 2014 resulting in summons or taken into custody

### **Circuit Court for Prince George's County (Marlboro, MD):**

- 2012-2013 school-related offenses by incident type received by the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) broke down by age and race

**Table 4. Description of Group 1 and 2 submissions for school related incident-referral data:**

Sites	Source and Type of Data	
Group 1		
Sixth Judicial Court of Pasco & Pinellas Counties (Clearwater, FL)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Civil citation issued for school related incidents in Pinellas county
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrest for school related incidents in Pinellas county
Family Court of the state of Delaware (Wilmington, DE)	<input type="checkbox"/>	School offense diversion program data by charge, district, school, grade level, sex, race/ethnicity, and re-offense in community and school
	<input type="checkbox"/>	School pathways data by school type criminal charge filed--Defendant data and charge data by county (Kent and Sussex), race, sex
	<input type="checkbox"/>	School crimes and DOE offenses by district, state, sex, and race/ethnicity
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Overall profile of sex, grade, income level and disability
Superior Court of Sacramento (Sacramento, CA)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrests/citations by age, race, sex, location; crime type events
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Juvenile justice referral data by sex, ethnicity, grade, and date of birth
Group 2		
Tehama County Superior Court (Red Buff, CA)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Total number of referrals by sex, age, race, agency, and charge type
Fulton County Juvenile Court (Atlanta, GA)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Number of school-related referrals by sex, race/ethnicity, and type of offense
Tippecanoe County Superior Court (Lafayette, IN)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tippecanoe County School Pathways Project dataset was provided with total school arrests; arrest by race, sex, and age
Fourth Judicial District Juvenile Court in Colorado (Colorado Springs, CO)	<input type="checkbox"/>	By offense, school, race, sex, age, action
El Paso and Teller	<input type="checkbox"/>	Crime type by race, sex, age, action (arrested, summons, investigation)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Number of referral to law enforcement by each county
	<input type="checkbox"/>	School referral data collected by the District Attorney's Council on charges by sex and race
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Number of offenses captured by the pathways teen court by age, race, sex, and offense
Juvenile Court of Memphis and Shelby County (Memphis, TN)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Number of school related referrals by race, age, sex, and charge
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Number of delinquent complaints/truancy referrals resulting in summons or taken into custody
Circuit Court for Prince George's County (Marlboro, MD)	<input type="checkbox"/>	School offense referrals to DJS by incident type, age and race

Table 5 describes the data received by the sites. The total number of school-based offense referrals is described by sex and races. For those sites that provided multiple reporting periods of data, descriptions of the results and any changes in referrals are discussed below.

### **Sixth Judicial District Circuit Court of Pasco & Pinellas Counties (Clearwater, FL)**

#### **CIVIL CITATIONS**

As indicated in table 5, there was an increase of 57 referrals between the two data submission time frames. There was a

substantial percentage increase for males between the two time frames with 58.4% being represented in the first set of data and 73.1% being represented in the second set of data. Referral percentages for race remained similar between the two data sets with the exception of Hispanics. There was an 11.7% decrease in civil citation referrals among Hispanics from first to second data sets.

#### **ARRESTS**

Similarly, there was an increase in arrests (105 arrests) between the two reporting periods. Males represented 67.2% of arrests in the first reporting period and 73% in the second reporting period. In terms of race, the highest percentage differences were

among Whites and Blacks. There was an increase in arrests made for Whites (4.1%) and a decrease in Blacks (4.4%) from first to second reporting period.

### **Family Court of the State of Delaware (Wilmington, DE)**

There was a 5.6% increase in referrals for males from the first reporting period compared to the second reporting period. Among race, it was seen that the highest percentage differences were among White and Black. There was a 1.8% decrease in referrals among Whites and a 2.8% decrease in referrals among Blacks between the two time frames.

### **Tippecanoe County Superior Court (Lafayette, IN)**

School-based arrests decreased for the overall sample. For males, there was an increase in school-based arrest; while females had a decrease in school-based arrests. White and Hispanic students experienced an increase in school-based arrests and Black students had a decrease in arrests.

### **Fourth Judicial District Juvenile Court in Colorado (Colorado Springs, CO)**

#### **LAW ENFORCEMENT REFERRALS (EL PASO AND TELLER)**

In the second data set received, males represented 77.3% of referrals made while females represented 22.7%. The highest percentage of referrals were among White (88%) followed by Asian (12%).

#### **COLORADO SPRINGS TEEN COURT: NOVEMBER 2014–APRIL 2015**

There was a reduction of 129 referrals in the number of total referrals made when comparing data from the first to the second reporting period. Gender representation was relatively even within each data set; however, there was a slight increase in referrals for males (54.5% to 56.6%, respectively) when comparing data sets to one another. Referral percentages for race displayed significant differences between data sets. The percentage of referrals among Whites reduced by 17.2% between data sets; however, there were increases in referrals for Blacks (11%) and Hispanics (8.4%).



**Table 5. Description of total number of school-based offense referrals by sex and race**

<b>Group 1</b>				
Sites	Time Period	Total Number of Referrals	Sex	Race
<b>Sixth Judicial Circuit Court of Pasco &amp; Pinellas Counties (Clearwater, FL)</b>	Civil Citations			
	March 2014–August 2014	77	Male=45 (58.4%) Female=32 (41.6%)	W=31 (40.3%) B=31 (40.3%) H=13 (16.9%) O=2 (2.6%)
	September 2014–February 2015	134	Male=98 (73.1%) Female=36 (26.9%)	W=61 (45.5%) B=63 (47.0%) H=7 (5.2%) O=3 (2.2%)
	Arrests			
	March 2014–August 2014	262	Male=176 (67.2%) Female=86 (32.8%)	W=72 (27.5%) B=168 (64.1%) H=20 (7.6%) O=2 (0.8%)
	September 2014–February 2015	367	Male=268 (73.0%) Female=99 (27.0%)	W=118 (32.2%) B=219 (59.7%) H=26 (7.1%) O=4 (1.1%)
<b>Family Court of the State of Delaware (Wilmington, DE)</b>	January 2014–June 2014	62	Male=59.0% Female=41.0%	W=8 (13.0%) B=46 (74.0%) H=1 (2.0%) PI=1 (2.0%) MR=6 (9.0%)
	February 2014–July 2014	349	Male=198 (56.7%) Female=151 (43.3%)	W=79 (22.6%) B=252 (72.2%) H=14 (4%) A=2 (0.6%) O=1 (0.3%) UK: 1 (0.3%)
	August 2014–January 2015	400	Male=249 (62.3%) Female=151 (37.8%)	W=83 (20.8%) B=300 (75%) H=14 (3.5%) A=1 (0.2%) O=0 UK: 2 (0.5%)
	School Crimes: 2013-2014	78		
	DOE: 2013-2014	1237		
<b>Superior Court of Sacramento County (Sacramento, CA)</b>	February 2014–July 2014	97	Male=84 (86.6%) Female=13 (13.4%)	W=9 (9.5%) B=56 (58.9%) H=22 (23.1%) O=8 (8.5%)
	June 2014–May 2015	100	Male=79 (79.0%) Female=21 (21.0%)	W=6 (6.0%) B=59 (59.0%) H=29 (29.0%) MR=4 (4.0%) AI=2 (2.0%)



Group 2					
<b>Tehama County Superior Court (Red Buff, CA)</b>	July 1, 2013–June 30, 2014	330	Male=242 (73.3%) Female=88 (26.7%)	W=217 (65.8%) B=14 (4.2%) H=90 (27.3%) O=8 (2.4%) UK=1 (0.3%)	
<b>Fulton County Juvenile Court (Atlanta, GA)</b>	January 2014–June 2015	681	Male=491 (72.4%) Female=187 (27.6%)	W=60 (9.7%) B=536 (86.9%) O=21 (3.4%)	
<b>Tippecanoe County Superior Court (Lafayette, IN)</b>	2012–2013	137	Male=73 (53.3%) Female=64 (46.7%)	W=48 (35.0%) B=66 (48.2%) H=12 (8.8%) O=11 (8.0%)	
	2013–2014	96	Male=61 (63.5%) Female=35 (36.5%)	W=38 (37.3%) B=41 (40.2%) H=12 (11.8%) O=11 (10.7%)	
<b>Fourth Judicial District Juvenile Court in Colorado (Colorado Springs, CO)</b>	Colorado Police Department: August 2013–July 2014	1001	Male=702 (72.0%) Female=273 (28.0%)	W=714 (72.7%) B=224 (22.8%) UK=25 (2.5%) A/PI=16 (1.7%) AI/AN=3 (0.3%)	
	El Paso Sheriff's Office: 2013–2014	351	Male=229 (65.6%) Female=120 (34.4%)	W=250 (70.2%) B=49 (13.7%) UK=18 (5.1%) H=37 (10.4%) A=2 (0.6%)	
	Colorado Springs Teen Court: May 2014–October 2014	378	Male=172 (54.5%) Female=206 (45.5%)	W=223 (59.0%) B=60 (15.9%) H=73 (19.3%) A=9 (2.4%) NA=7 (1.9%) O=6 (1.6%)	
	Colorado Springs Teen Court: November 2014– April 2015	249	Male=108 (56.6%) Female=141 (43.4%)	W=104 (41.8%) B=67 (26.9%) H=69 (27.7%) A=4 (1.6%) NA=5 (2.0%)	
<b>Juvenile Court of Memphis and Shelby County (Memphis, TN)</b>	June 2014–December 2014	886			
<b>Circuit Court for Prince George's County (Marlboro, MD)</b>	2012–2013	607		W=15 (2.5%) B=502 (82.8%) H=82 (13.5%) A=5 (0.8%) O/UK=3 (.5%)	

**Note.** Changes in Sacramento County are not described given very different sources of data at each point of measure.

W=White, B=Black, H=Hispanic, A=Asian, IND/AK=American Indian/Alaskan, MR=Mixed Race, AI=American Indian, NA= Native American, PI=Pacific Islander, A/PI=Alaskan/Pacific Islander, AI/AN=American Indian/Alaskan Native, O=Other, UK=Unknown, O/UK=Other/Unknown

# DATA CHALLENGES/ LIMITATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

School Indicators (by race/ethnicity, grade level or age, sex, status – six months prior to site visit, six months after)

- # of students
- # of in-school suspensions
- # out-of-school suspensions
- # of expulsions

JJ Indicators (by race/ethnicity, offense, sex – 6 month prior to site visit, 6 month after, 12 month after)

- # of cases (referred, heard, or disposed) from school-based incident
- # of petitions filed from school-based incident
- # formally handled school-based offenses

## The evaluation design for the School Pathways project required the 16 sites to provide information on school discipline and school-based court referrals.

With the exception of Hoopa, CA each of the sites indicated in their project applications some capacity to collect and report data on school referrals to the court system. However, as the project moved toward collecting baseline data, it became immediately clear that many of the sites were unable to capture or produce the information requested to support the evaluation. While sites struggled to provide information to represent the required timeframes or specific events, many sites ultimately submitted imperfect data that represented related processes or information (e.g., such as number of absences or number of youth referred to diversion programs). Most did not have existing data systems or processes that were able to reliably count youth referred to court from a school-based incident. The following section describes challenges with the data collection for the

evaluation and offer *recommendations* for future evaluations as well as sites wishing to engage in school justice collaborative efforts.

**DIFFERENT DEFINITIONS.** The general terminology used to request data from the sites inspired much discussion between the collaborating agencies. One basic definition that varied across sites was determining the scope of the intervention and evaluation; that is, the school or schools for which information was to be obtained. Many of the participating jurisdictions covered multiple school districts. Some collaborations targeted an entire school district, while others engaged representatives from only one or two specified schools. This variance complicated data collection, especially in jurisdictions for which only districtwide data were easily accessible or where court data systems were

unable to disaggregate case information by school. The general language used to describe the information required for the evaluation was also problematic. For example, some schools consider a “referral” to occur when an administrator or other school authority is requested to provide disciplinary measures to respond to an incident. Many juvenile courts consider a “referral” to occur when law enforcement or another complainant has filed paperwork with the juvenile court to signal the beginning of court processing. Many courts, however, refer to this event as “filing a complaint” and may consider a “referral” to signal referring a youth and/or family for services, such as family counseling or drug and alcohol programming. This example of divergent terminology not only impacted collaboration between partners, but also impacted data collection for the evaluation of the project, as the numbers for “referrals” meant different things for different sites.

Differing definitions also impacted data collection methods. Measures of race and ethnicity are especially at risk for variability in definition and data collection processes. This area is especially important for school-justice partnerships as research has demonstrated disproportionate numbers of non-White youth experiencing suspension and expulsions and entering the juvenile justice system via school discipline procedures. Some stakeholders may collect race and ethnicity as separate variables, assigning a youth both a race and designation of Hispanic or non-Hispanic. Others may treat ethnicity as a race. While these differences are negligible when viewing only one data set, they become challenging when comparing or combining multiple data sets. For example, schools in different districts or states may vary in their processes to collect race and ethnicity data and may differ from how diversion programs or juvenile courts within their own district collect the same information. These differences impact how

the collaboratives interpret their outcomes and the extent to which the data received for the evaluation could be combined.

## **ORIGINAL REFERRAL SOURCE IS NOT CLEAR.**

Each school district and jurisdiction has different protocols in place for how a youth is referred to the juvenile court as a result of a school-based offense. Likewise, each juvenile court data system differs in its capacity to collect the source of the referral with reliability. In the simplest scenario, the evaluator would be able to ask the court for an accounting of cases that originated as school based offenses – for example, youth who end up in front of a judge due to a fight in school, insubordination, or stealing from a classmate. Given the variability across schools in who, when, and how decisions are made to refer youth to court, the differences in how jurisdictions process referrals to court, and the wide variation in court data systems, this simple solution is not always possible. In some school districts, principals and/or school resource officers (SROs) can make the referral directly to the juvenile court, while in other districts, the principal or SRO must contact a local law enforcement official to make the referral to juvenile court. In this scenario, the referral source, from the court’s perspective, becomes law enforcement and the fact that the offense occurred on school grounds is often lost in the data system and only visible in the notes on the court referral paperwork. To further complicate matters, in many jurisdictions, the court referral first must pass through court intake or the prosecuting attorney’s office before it is formally filed in court. In jurisdictions with this type of case processing, the probation department or prosecuting attorney’s office may be possible sources for data related to the initial source of the referral. For example, at the time of their participation in the School Pathways project, the court data system in one of the sites did

not electronically capture whether the offense occurred within the school; however, the district attorney's office was responsible for a diversion program and tracked the type of offense in an Excel spreadsheet, including whether the offense was related to school and the school attended by the youth. While this spreadsheet was limited in its scope (i.e., it only contained youth who were eligible for diversion) it provided a slice of information where there was previously none. Some sites where referral information was not electronically maintained explored querying cases by offenses that were clearly school related (e.g., assaulting a teacher, disrupting public school, weapon on school property); however, it was determined that this strategy yielded an undercount as it did not include many common offenses related to school-based incidents such as assaults, disturbing the peace, and harassment.

### LIMITED CONTEXT AVAILABLE IN DATA SYSTEM.

When data systems do exist, it is rare that additional details and context are easily extracted alongside frequencies. This can be deceiving especially in cases related to school referrals to the juvenile justice system, because most reports coming from disparate data systems are not able to provide a comprehensive picture of the case. The number and type of attempts the school made to address prior behaviors may not be immediately available to the juvenile court when a referral is made. The details of the events leading to the court referral may only be available in narrative form, and the charges may not represent the full story. For example, one site shared a story of a youth referred to the juvenile court by a SRO for disturbing the peace. Upon seeing the case on the docket, the judge planned to dismiss it, as this was the type of case to be diverted from court processes. Before the case could be dismissed, the judge received additional anecdotal information about the numerous

strategies the school had tried with the youth and family. The school believed they had exhausted their resources and needed a heavier hand to coax the family to cooperate with services. The school administration and SRO had decided to charge the youth with disturbing the peace rather than the more severe charges his most recent behavior (i.e., destroying a classroom, throwing a chair at a teacher) could have elicited in order to get the family in front of the judge. Increased communication between the school and the court confirmed that the school was complying with protocol and referring a youth to court only as a last resort. However, neither the information supplied by the school from the data system nor the information about the case contained in the court's information system represented the full story behind the case. The data report was only able to say that the school had referred the youth for disturbing the peace. This not only demonstrates the limitation of using information from the court referral alone to understand the cases referred to court from schools, but also may cause the stakeholders to be suspicious and less trusting of reports of numbers of cases resulting from school-based offenses.

**INFLEXIBLE DATA SYSTEMS.** Even when there was a clear definition of the requested data elements, many existing data systems and processes in the schools and juvenile courts did not have the capacity to easily track or calculate the data elements required for the evaluation. Whether highly sophisticated or basic, data systems are first designed around a finite set of elements. As new interests or information needs arise, systems may not be effortlessly flexible and easily amended; it may require payment to an external software vendor to make changes to a database or reporting program. When information technology resources are present internally, the request may need to concede



to what administrators consider higher priorities. In some cases, sites took it upon themselves to create ad hoc spreadsheets. This method immediately addresses the limited data capacity; however, ad hoc spreadsheets are difficult to sustain through staffing and procedural changes. Whether using an ad hoc spreadsheet or altering the existing data system, all users must be trained to reliably enter the information; this necessary step may delay the ability to obtain high quality information on the added element(s). This creates challenges not only with obtaining current information – changes since the collaborative meeting – but also with capturing baseline data from events occurring prior to the collaborative’s efforts. A few sites expended the resources to complete file reviews and backfill youth information from before the collaborative meeting, but this was rare. Many sites were unable to produce baseline information simply because it did not exist.

### EMERGING CROSS-AGENCY RELATIONSHIPS.

For many sites, participation in the School Pathways project presented an opportunity for the judge to convene a school-justice partnership with representatives from education, law enforcement, and the community for the first time. Newly formed cross-agency relationships often did not have data transfer agreements in place to allow for the exchange of information between agencies. In some sites there were legal or political issues that interfered with the sharing of information. For example, one site lamented that once a youth was referred to a community diversion program, the school was barred from receiving any information on whether the youth completed the program due to legislation intended to uphold privacy. When the idea of having the youth and family sign releases for the programs to exchange information with the school, there were

concerns with how the information might be used against the youth. These feelings of insecurity and suspicion are natural at the beginning of cross-systems collaboration. It may take time and demonstration of progress for the team to build trusting relationships and invest in a shared mission. This “forming” and “storming” process impacts not only data collection, but project outcomes as well, because partnering agencies that are not willing to share information or data collection may also experience delays in building critical relationships, MOUs, etc.

### EXPLORATION OF NATIONAL DATA SOURCES.

Researchers from NCJFCJ and its research arm, the National Center for Juvenile Justice, explored several available state-specific and national data sets to address the gaps in data obtained from the School Pathways sites. These sources included state court reports, state statistical analysis centers (SACs) and education departments, the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS), the National Juvenile Court Data Archive (Archive) and search engines using key terms. The ability to apply the information from these sources was limited, mainly because of challenges described above, but also because the data available from these sources were not current enough to represent the timeframes of interest to the evaluation. State court reports, for example, generally include information on the referral source and offense among other details. Researchers reviewed state court reports for participating jurisdictions that did not submit evaluation data, and of those, two reports included aggregate counts of truancy cases for the prior year, and none included school as a referral source or counts of other school-related offense. Similarly, SACs publish reports and data on key criminal and juvenile justice topic areas; however, none of the SACs representing participating jurisdictions that did not submit evaluation data contained

school arrests or referrals. Researchers were able to find a published report on the specific issues of school discipline and arrests for one participating site that included the indicators required for the evaluation; however, the timeframe of the report did not support the evaluation needs.

Many state education departments are sources of data on disciplinary measures including suspensions and expulsions and often have more current data than what is available from the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights data collection. A few of the participating jurisdictions that did not submit evaluation data did have data available from their state education departments; however, these data were not always disaggregated by race and ethnicity nor by the timelines required for the evaluation and was often limited to information related to truancy.

Data within NIBRS is voluntarily collected from many law enforcement agencies on crime incidents, victims, alleged offenders and arrestees associated with each incident. It also maintains the location of the arrest, with “school” as one of the variables. However, this detail is not reported reliably for all agencies

who report to NIBRS. One of the limitations of this variable is that “school” represents not only public elementary, middle, and high schools, but also universities, and it is not possible to disaggregate the counts. However, it is possible to set age limits that restrict the counts to school-aged youth. Even so, most of the participating sites that did not submit evaluation data were in states that do not fully report to NIBRS, and the timeframe of the most current NIBRS data did not support the evaluation needs.

Finally, researchers reviewed data available from the Archive, a national data collection of juvenile court cases from jurisdictions representing 84% of the juvenile population. The Archive maintains a referral source field, of which school is a variable, and offense labels, many of which can be reasonably associated with school referrals. Three of the participating jurisdictions that did not submit evaluation data are represented in the Archive; however, issues such as missing source of referral, timeframe, and requirements to obtain approval from the state negated the ability to apply this data to the evaluation.



# DISCUSSION

**Due to the unexpectedly severe data limitations on this project, the school pathways evaluation was mostly unable to answer the proposed research questions surrounding outcomes.**

Specifically, from the limited data provided, it was impossible to determine if judicially led collaborations to eliminate inappropriate school referrals to juvenile justice resulted in decreases in suspensions, expulsions, or referrals to the juvenile justice system. While limits on findings due to data challenges are always unfortunate, the study did provide valuable information that could be useful in moving the school justice partnership work forward.

First, researchers learned that there were significant changes in the collaboration participants' attitudes toward and understanding of school discipline challenges and in the collaboration's dynamics following the TA site visit. This indicates that the TA provided to the sites may have helped collaboratives to gain better clarity and understanding of each other's roles. Further, the collaboratives were more likely to agree that the school was making timely and appropriate referrals. This demonstrates an increase in group cohesion that is necessary in a successful collaboration and increases the likelihood of sustainable systems change efforts. Many participants initially identified collaboration as a barrier. The TA provided to sites seemed to be helpful in moving the collaboration forward. There was also a significant change in the collaboration's dynamics following a site visit, as collaboratives were more likely to have identified concrete steps to initiate change, including having a plan for

monitoring progress, having an action plan, and having created measurable goals for their work.

Second, the pre-post survey results identified both barriers to creating successful school justice partnerships and collaborative successes. For example, the primary theme identified by stakeholders was that there was a lack of time or competing priorities for the stakeholders, making it difficult to hold consistent meetings or move the work forward in a meaningful way. Further, there were often misunderstandings or lack of clarity on the follow-up plans. These are important points to note for future TA efforts. Future efforts should seek to identify barriers early on and provide support as needed to help sites get past these hurdles.

Researchers also confirmed that measuring the effectiveness of this work is not a straightforward endeavor. The goal was to examine disciplinary actions and referrals to juvenile justice pre and post TA. However, this did not account for the varied and complex collaborative structures. Collaboratives were at different stages of the work and required different levels and types of TA. They may have already determined what the intervention was that they planned to do and it may not have aligned with the study design. For example, one jurisdiction focused on middle school youth and prevention. While this might have yielded significant changes in future years, the

structure of this evaluation was not designed to determine this, making the data variables of interest impractical. Further, systems change efforts may take time to take hold. The collaborative needs time to become cohesive, brainstorm successful action items, set measureable goals, and begin the work. Outcomes would not be expected to change until a change was actually created at the school or justice system level. Therefore, it may be premature to assume that six months after a collaborative has met for the first time there will be significant changes in practice. In fact, most collaboratives were only meeting quarterly, and taking several meetings to set goals and initiative action plans. Future research efforts need to examine these overall systemic goals of reduction of discipline and referrals, but also need to focus on specific outcomes related to the unique goals of each collaborative. This will provide more robust analysis of the effectiveness of TA as well as the effectiveness of these programs or changes in practices.

Finally, researchers learned that there are significant limitations to obtaining the

necessary data to examine outcomes in this area. While the outcome variables of interest seemed simple to begin with, a host of complexities (described in previous sections) soon emerged. The final dataset, after months of following up with sites and ongoing support, was nearly useless for what it was intended to examine. Those interested in pursuing this work should recognize that sites may not have the capacity or resources to identify or extract needed data elements for a research or evaluation study – even if sites initially believe they have this capacity or can provide sample figures suggesting this capacity. As noted, data at the intersect of schools and justice systems, in practice, are very complex and nuanced. Site visits to assess data capacity will be crucial to identify or confirm what actual data are available and what may be the best way to extract needed information to determine program effectiveness. Without valid and reliable data, it is impossible for the field to answer questions about the effectiveness of judicially led collaboratives to reduce school referrals to juvenile justice.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

**The biggest lessons learned in this study focused on the need for better data and data reporting to support evaluation efforts.**

In addition to data needed to evaluate the training and TA provided as part of the School Pathways project, it's critical that school-justice collaborations have data to substantiate and prioritize issues and to measure and monitor progress to reduce youth referred to court from school-based incidents. Not only does data help to guide action planning, but it can convince skeptics of the need for reform and help to motivate and sustain efforts when the “needle moves.” The following recommendations apply both to future evaluations of school-justice collaboratives as well as sites that are embarking on such efforts.

1. While the vast majority of sites were unable to meet the data requirements for the evaluation, schools and courts may collect other types of information that is helpful in gauging the extent of the issue as well as the impact of collaborative efforts. Because it can be difficult to alter existing data collection systems quickly and to collect baseline information without implementing resource intensive file reviews, future efforts should strongly consider a site's existing data collections. For example, many schools readily collect information on school climate through surveys, may count the number of school hearings to address problematic behavior, or may be required to report specific information on school

discipline or absentee measures to their school board or district. While these measures may not align with the standard indicators required for an evaluation, they may be more meaningful to the specific school(s) and may provide insight on both the extent of the issue and the impact of adjustment to policies and practice.

2. Early in the formation of a school-justice collaboration, it is essential to identify a champion of the data. While data may not be a popular topic for many, there is often at least one person who appreciates the value of quantitatively describing issues surrounding school engagement. This person may not be the “owner” of the necessary data, but as a local representative, they likely have greater influence over the other stakeholders and their proximal location presents the opportunity to be a constant reminder of the need for data. In one site, for example, a staff member from the clerk's office was identified as someone who recognizes the importance of data and who would be willing to lead the charge to collect and regularly monitor data.

3. The joint mission of the collaborative should address the formation of shared definitions of key terms such as diversion, school-based incident, recidivism, and success. Agencies and organizations at the table should come to an agreement on critical pieces of information to collect and monitor, and engage in information transfer agreements. It is not reasonable to assume that the key agencies already have such agreements, or that existing agreements satisfy the needs associated with these efforts. Sites should refer to *School Pathways to the Juvenile Justice System Project: A Practice Guide* for guidance on addressing common perceived barriers to sharing information and data related to students.
4. It is a disservice to require that sites collect and report on only data requested for the evaluation; they should be coached and encouraged to define, collect, and monitor important site-specific measures as well. Training and TA providers should focus on identifying opportunities to close feedback loops between collaborative partners so that there is a communal understanding of the effects and results of the partners' decisions and actions. For example, reporting only on the number of youth who were diverted provides only one-half of the story. There should also be information how many youth were "successful," depending on the collaborative's shared definition, both for reporting on the efforts as a whole and for individual case purposes.
5. Future evaluations and monitoring of school-justice collaborative efforts should include means (e.g., additional resources and time) to review school discipline and case files. As described above, it is often challenging to rely on existing data systems, especially those with limited capacity, to provide a comprehensive picture of the type of youth or type of behaviors and offenses referred to court from a school-based incident. Review of narrative information maintained in discipline or case files provides the opportunity for a richer context through which to understand the pathway from school to court and may offer insight into specific protocols, policies, or situations that need to be addressed. Incidentally, the evaluation plan for the new National Resource Center for School-Justice Partnerships, led by NCJFCJ with funding from OJJDP, includes data capacity assessments that afford the opportunity for file reviews as well as a thorough understanding of the data already collected by the sites.
6. For school-justice collaborations to be successfully sustained and for their impact to be actualized, it is absolutely essential that the groups are well-versed in how to use the data collected

to monitor and enhances processes, and that groups are committed to regularly discussing data to describe their efforts. Training and TA providers can impart the value of monitoring specific data points by modeling regular monitoring and learning from the data with the collaborative. This process encourages buy-in from individual and agency members of the collaborative by demonstrating areas of need and improvements. It also serves to improve data quality, as stakeholders are likely more invested in collecting and reporting accurate information if they know that it is going to be used. For example, sites may benefit from specific assistance around analyzing race and ethnicity data, understanding how the data collection methods may impact the interpretation of the information and how to view or understand the frequencies in the context of the composition of the student population.



# SUMMARY

**Although we were unable to answer all of the proposed evaluation questions due to severe data limitations experienced by the sites, the evaluation did provide information valuable for moving school-justice partnership efforts forward.**

First, we saw evidence that intensive on-site TA by a judge-expert team – even one visit – was associated with improved understanding of school discipline issues, stakeholder roles, and the need for collaboration. Second, we now have a better understanding of the complexities sites face when attempting to track data that crosses multiple systems and sites, as well as potential strategies to improve data collection. To that end, the NCJFCJ will be offering to all original 16 sites an intensive data TA site visit using remaining funds from the original

foundation grants (i.e., The Atlantic Philanthropies, Open Society Foundation, and Public Welfare Foundation). [Middlesex County has already taken advantage of and completed their data site visit.] Lastly, as with any evaluation or research, results of a single study do not constitute a complete fund of knowledge. Ongoing research and replication on interventions to keep kids in school and out of court remains an important objective.



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