

The Second Chance Act: Juvenile Reentry

Background

More than 1.3 million youth cycle through delinquency courts each year,¹ which has a significant impact on their development and prospects for long-term success. As a result, juvenile reentry involves not only post-incarceration services for youth, but is also a process that (a) begins the moment a young person comes into contact with the juvenile justice system, and (b) is engineered to help youth transition from system supervision to a crime-free, productive adulthood. Young people typically face many challenges in making this successful transition. They may not receive the necessary support from their families, peers, schools, and communities. They may struggle to connect with aftercare treatment for mental health and/or substance use disorders when they return to their communities after confinement, or they may face barriers to enrolling in an appropriate educational and/or vocational setting. The majority of youth under system supervision face one if not many of these challenges to their successful reentry:

- **Mental Health.** Between 60 and 70 percent of youth involved with the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable mental disorder and more than 27 percent have a serious mental health disorder that impairs their ability to function.²
- **Substance Use.** Between 25 to 50 percent of youth involved with the juvenile justice system have significant substance use disorders,³ often co-occurring with mental disorders at rates of 60 percent or more.⁴
- **Child Welfare.** Up to 65 percent of youth in the juvenile justice system may have past or current involvement with the child welfare system.⁵
- **Education.** Youth involved with the juvenile justice system are significantly more likely to receive suspensions or expulsions, have academic skills well below their grade levels, possess learning or developmental disabilities, and drop out of school.⁶

The Second Chance Act

In April 2008, Congress passed the Second Chance Act, first-of-its-kind legislation enacted with bipartisan support and backed by a broad spectrum of leaders in law enforcement, corrections, courts, behavioral health, and other areas. The Second Chance Act represents a federal investment in strategies to reduce recidivism and increase public safety, as well as to reduce corrections costs for state and local governments. The bill authorized up to \$165 million in federal grants to state, local, and tribal government agencies and nonprofit organizations.

About the Second Chance Act Grant Program

Since 2009, nearly 600 Second Chance Act grant awards have been made to government agencies and nonprofit organizations from 49 states for reentry programs serving adults and juveniles. Approximately 20 percent of these grants were awarded to agencies and organizations serving a juvenile justice population.¹¹ Grantees provide vital services—including case management, education, substance use and mental health treatment, family therapy, housing, mentoring, vic-

Key Facts

- 1.3 million youth cycle through juvenile courts each year.⁷
- An estimated 60,000 youth are confined in juvenile detention and correctional facilities on any given day.⁸
- 50,000 youth are supervised on probation annually.⁹
- Recidivism rates for youth with the most serious offense histories are often 40 to 70 percent.¹⁰

Federal Funding of Second Chance Act Programs

FY2009	\$25 million
FY2010	\$100 million
FY2011	\$83 million
FY2012	\$63 million
FY2013	\$67.5 million
FY2014	\$67.7 million

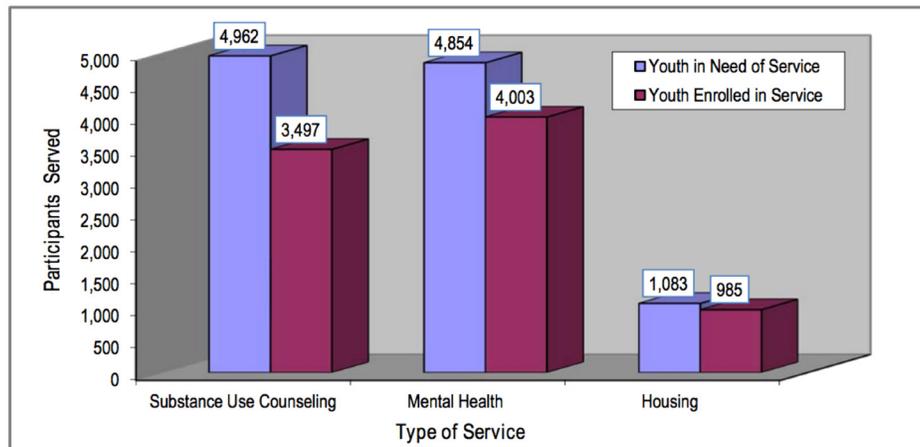
tim support, and others—to make a youth’s transition from system supervision safer and more successful. Between July 2009 to June 2013, more than 17,000 youth received services from Second Chance Act funding.¹² Out of the 4,962 youth who were identified as needing substance use counseling, 3,497 received this service; in addition, 4,003 eligible youth received mental health

services, and 985 youth obtained housing (see figure 1). Second Chance Act grants also support improved corrections and supervision practices that aim to reduce recidivism. The grant programs are funded and administered by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs (OJP).

Examples of Second Chance Act Grant-Funded Juvenile Reentry Initiatives

- Indiana.** The Aftercare for Indiana through Mentoring (AIM) program provides comprehensive reentry support services to young people in the custody of the Indiana Division of Youth Services. While they’re in confinement, AIM connects these youth with adult mentors, and when they return to their communities, they receive life skills training, educational and employment services, and housing support. A 4-year follow-up study of youth enrolled in AIM found that 43 percent of participants were re-incarcerated compared to 62 percent of non-participating youth.¹³
- San Francisco.** The Juvenile Collaborative Reentry Unit (JCRU) provides pre- and post-release case management services to youth returning from juvenile probation camps and correctional facilities. Case managers develop a reentry plan that includes goals for strengthening family relationships; improving housing, education, and employment opportunities; and enhancing substance use treatment and pro-social activities. In the first 3 years of the pilot program, probation violations fell 14 percent, rearrests declined 17 percent, and new convictions dropped 57 percent.
- The Texas Juvenile Justice Department.** The Second Chance program provides family-focused reentry services to gang-affiliated youth. The program supports comprehensive case management services based on the individual needs of each young person, including cognitive behavioral therapy, anger management, education, and employment. According to a recent study of program participants, approximately 80 percent had no further contact with the juvenile justice system within 4 to 6 months of release.

Figure 1. Types of Services Provided to Eligible Youth through Second Chance Act Funding: July 2009–June 2013



Source: The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. "Fact Sheet on OJJDP Second Chance Act Grant Program Accomplishments."

Notes

- Melissa Sickmund, Anthony Sladky, and Wei Kang, "Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics: 1985-2010," (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2013), available at ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezajcs.
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- Hilary Hodgdon, "Juvenile Offenders and Substance Use and Abuse," *The Future of Children* 18, no. 2 (2008), available at futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/highlights/18_02_Highlights_05.pdf.
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- Denise C. Herz, Miriam Krinsky, and Joseph P. Ryan, "Improving System Responses to Crossover Youth: The Role of Research and Practice Partnerships," *The Link: Connecting Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare* 5, no. 1 (2006): 1, available at cwla.org/programs/juvenilejustice/thelink2006summer.pdf.
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- Sickmund, Sladky, and Kang, "Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics: 1985-2010."
- Melissa Sickmund et al., "Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement," (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2013), available at ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp.

- Sickmund, Sladky, and Kang, "Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics: 1985-2010."
- At this time, there is no nationally accepted juvenile recidivism rate, however, individual reports from many states show recidivism rates for high-risk youth in the community as high as 60–70 percent.
- Since 2009, 100 of the 586 Second Chance Act grants awarded by the OJP target youth in the juvenile justice system.
- The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. "Fact Sheet on OJJDP Second Chance Act Grant Program Accomplishments." Accessed June 18, 2014. <https://www.ojjdp-dctat.org/help/SCAFactSheetJan2009Jun2013.pdf>.
- G.R. Jarjoura, "They All Come Back: Reflections on Juvenile Reentry Initiative" (paper presented at the ACJJ Statewide Conference on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2003) in Ashley Nellis and Richard Hooks Wayman, *Back on Track: Supporting Youth Reentry from Out-of-Home Placement to the Community* (Washington, DC: Youth Reentry Task Force of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coalition, 2009), available at sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/CC_youthreentryfall09report.pdf.