

The Youth Protective Factors Study: Risk, Strengths, and Reoffending

October 2, 2024

**Youth
Protective
Factors
Study**



Berkeley Public Policy
The Goldman School



Justice Center
THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

The Youth Protective Factors Study: Risk, Strengths, and Reoffending

Gina M. Vincent, PhD, Professor, Law & Psychiatry Program, UMass Chan Medical School

Jennifer Skeem, PhD, UC-Berkley

Josh Weber, MPA, The Council of State Governments Justice Center

Research Team:

Emily Rogers, CSG Justice Center

Luyi Jian, PhD

Rachael Perrault, MA; Karlie Rice, MA; Jennifer Pendleton, MA; and Kayla Carew, BA

<https://www.umassmed.edu/lawandpsychiatry/law-and-psychiatry-research/NIJ-Youth-Protective-Factor-Study/>



Justice Center
THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

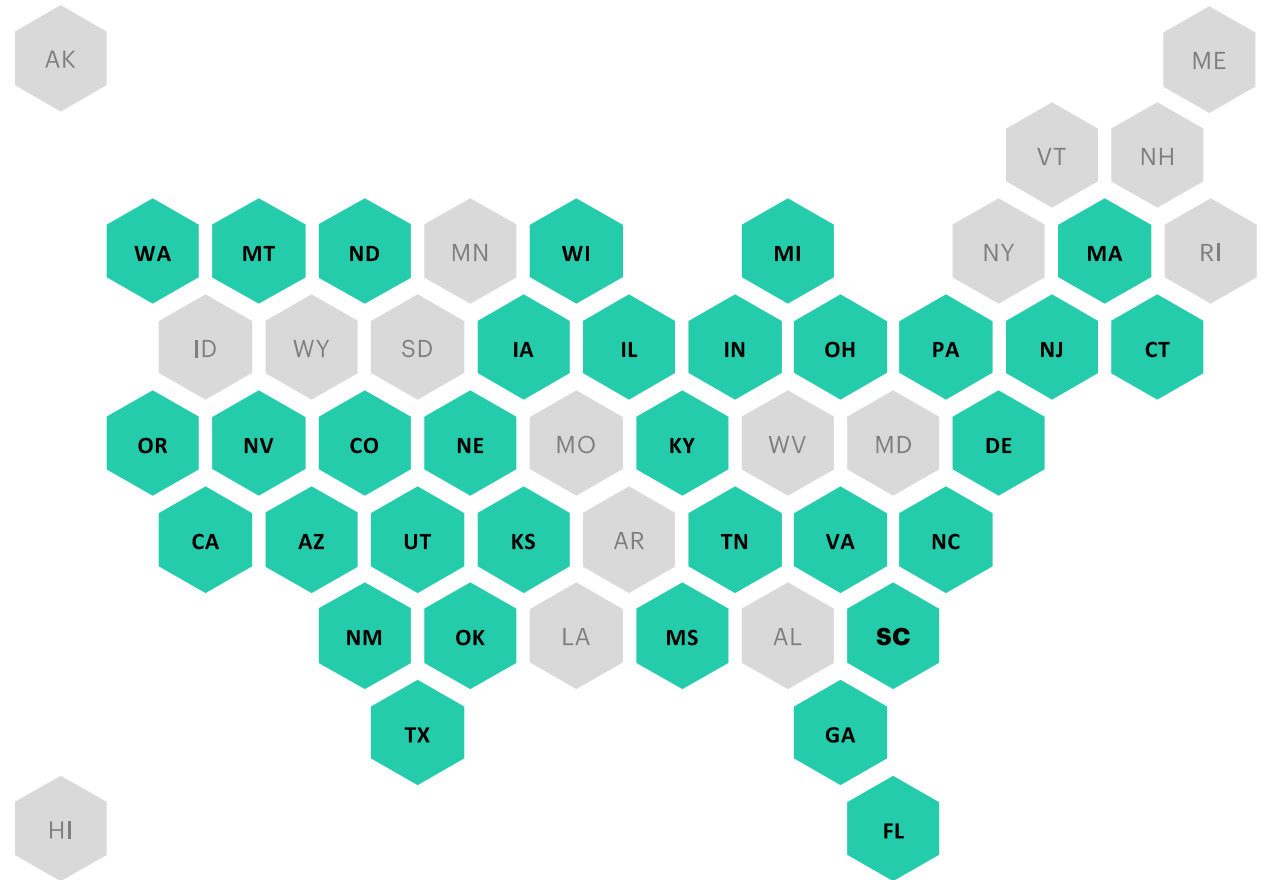


About the CSG Justice Center

A national, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that combines the power of a membership association, representing all three branches of state government, with policy and research expertise to develop strategies to increase public safety and strengthen communities



We've helped improve outcomes for millions of youth and families in contact with the juvenile justice system across the country, navigating increasingly partisan politics.




Why does the Youth Protective Factors Study matter?

Public concern, media coverage, and political divisiveness on youth crime and violence is currently at levels not seen since the mid-1990s.

2 BALTIMORE
WPMAR

HOMEPAGE SHOWCASE

'You can't keep letting them get away with it': Addressing juvenile crime



MOJO 360

Opinion

Opinion: To fix our juvenile justice system, we need accountability for offenders

Montgomery County has an obligation to fill the gaps to prevent recurring incidents

by **Dawn Luedtke**
November 18, 2023 11:00 am

Some say - it all starts at change. Either way, every carjackings shouldn't be c Adrian Inniss. "You can't k changes and they're hurt down. It's bad," said Linda

By: Elizabeth

At our Oct. 30 County Council Public Safety Committee

READER

NEWS & POLITICS

Politics of fear: Are youth really to blame for the car-jacking spike?


Cops say masked teens with a thirst for violence and

are ter
reveals
al evide

Dukmas
2021

ACTION NEWS 5

Lawmakers looking to hold parents accountable for their children's crimes



THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Juvenile Crime Surges, Reversing Long Decline. 'It's Just Kids Killing Kids.'


Violence among children has soared across the country since 2020. One consequence: a mounting toll of young victims.

By [Dan Frosch](#) and [Zusha Elinson](#) | Photographs by José A. Alvarado Jr. for *The Wall Street Journal*
Jan. 23, 2023 10:06 am ET

2 BALTIMORE
WPMAR

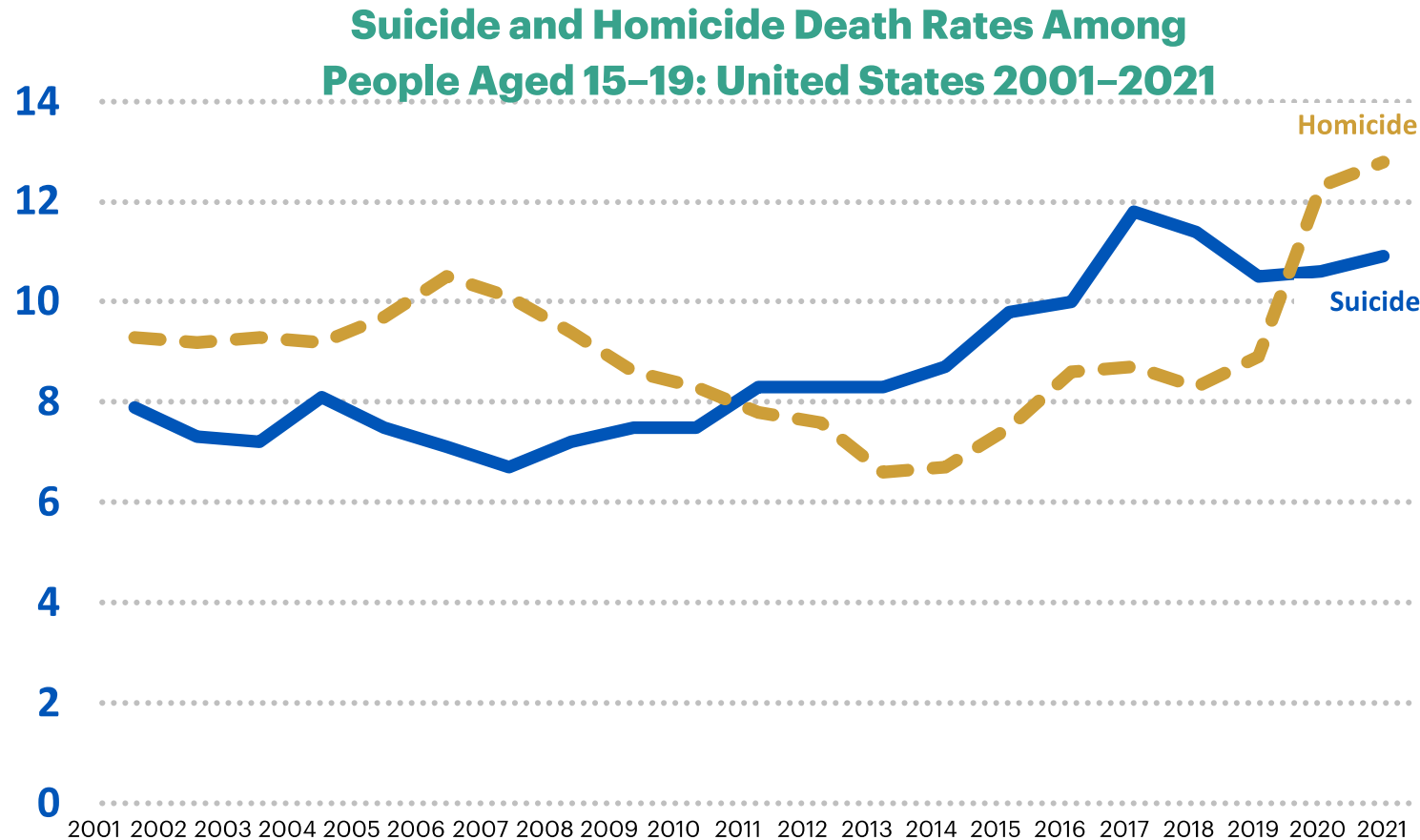
IN FOCUS

Governor wants juvenile justice bills to focus on accountability



boy ran th
by two tee
ying to ope
ed onto the
back point
ar-old Kyh
en wings an
bullet stru
ced her sto
ital 2 miles
ong childre
decadeslor
omicides cr
earlier, whi
nber of kill
o decades.

Homicide and suicide are now the leading causes of death among children and young adults, particularly among youth of color.



- In half of all cases in which a minor committed a violent crime, the victim was also a minor.
- The rate of firearm deaths among Black youth is 20 times higher than White youth.
- Rates of gun violence victimization for Black youth in rural areas are now equal to urban areas.

Justice system involvement negatively affects the entire course of young people's lives.

Youth formally processed by the juvenile justice system experience far worse outcomes in the 5 years after arrest as compared to similar youth who were diverted:

- X More likely to be rearrested and incarcerated
- X More engaged in violence
- X More peers involved in delinquency
- X Lower school attainment and graduation rates
- X Fewer skills to manage their emotions
- X Lower perception of opportunity

Elizabeth Cauffman et al., "Crossroads in juvenile justice: The impact of initial processing decision on youth 5 years after first arrest," *Development and Psychopathology* (2020): 1–14. <https://faculty.lsu.edu/pfricklab/pdfs/juvenilejustice-pdfs/dpcauffmanetalmaincrossroadsweb.pdf>



Adolescents are experiencing unprecedented mental health challenges, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.



29%

Reported that their **mental health was not good** “most of the time or always.”



20%

Seriously considered attempting suicide.



40%

Felt sad or hopeless, compared to 26% in 2009.
This includes 53% of girls and over 65% of LGBTQ youth.



109%

Increase in adolescent drug overdose deaths during the pandemic.

Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System 2023, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm>.

Public agencies and providers are facing significant staffing challenges that are further undermining their ability to address youth's needs.

> 85%

Cite moderate or severe challenges in hiring and retaining staff.

> 80%

Report moderate or severe staffing challenges among service providers, significantly impacting service availability.

< 10%

Felt their state had a plan to address these staffing challenges.

Josh Weber and Christina Gilbert, "Systems in Crisis: Revamping the Juvenile Justice Workforce and Core Strategies for Improving Public Safety and Youth Outcomes" (CSG Justice Center, 2023), <https://projects.csjusticecenter.org/systems-in-crisis/systems-in-crisis-brief/>.

Juvenile justice and related systems need to be more judicious than ever about supervision, service, and resource allocation decisions.

1.

Match youth to the most appropriate level and type of supervision and services based on their individual risks, needs, and *strengths*.

2.

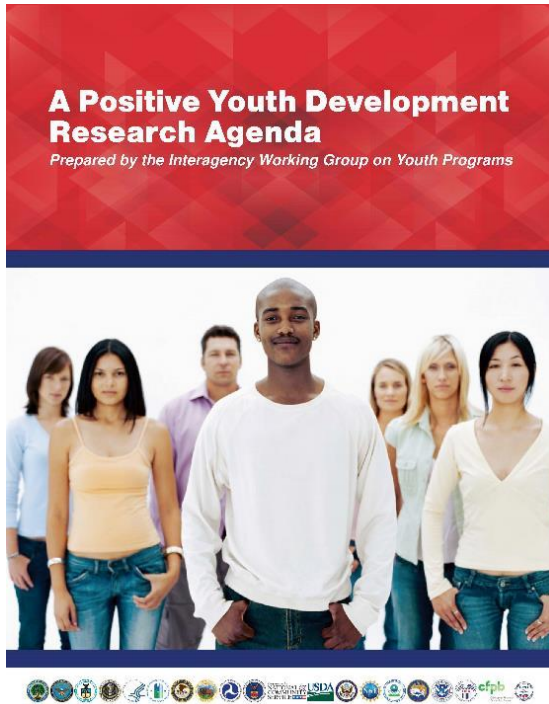
Invest limited financial and staffing resources in programs, services, and supports that reduce reoffending and improve other youth outcomes.

3.

Collect and analyze supervision, service, and recidivism data, and use this data to guide public safety and resource allocation decisions.

About the Youth Protective Factors Study

Youth Protective Factors Study Key Research Questions



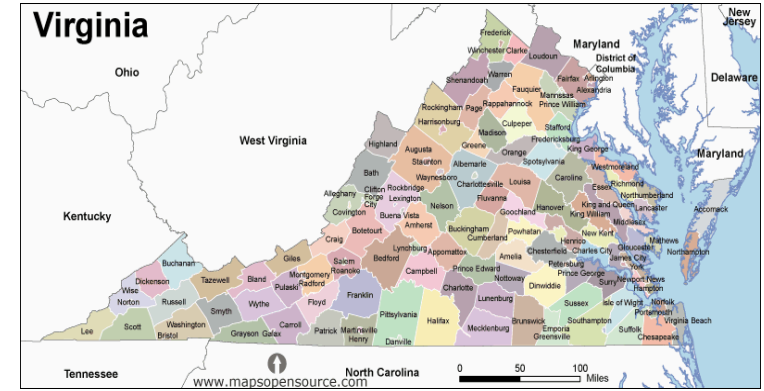
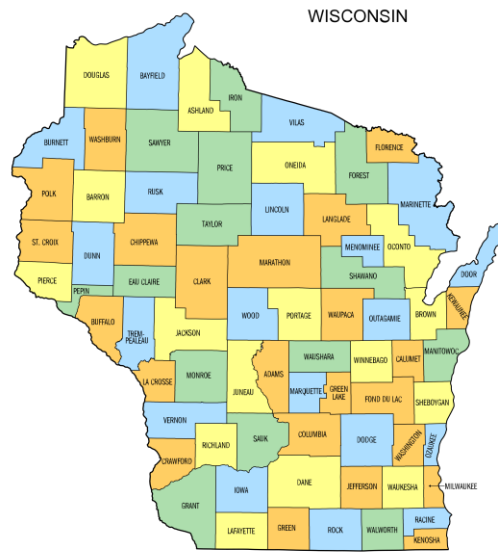
Risk-Need-Responsivity



Youth Protective Factors Study Goals

Goal 1	Identify the risk and protective factors and types of services most strongly associated with reduced reoffending to inform supervision and service practices (examines RNR and positive youth justice).
Goal 2	Build data tracking capacity to accurately measure recidivism reduction and success.
Goal 3	Examine all questions by youth age to promote more effective responses for different populations.

Youth Protective Factors Study State Participants and Methods



- What were 4 to 5 jurisdictions in each state asked to do?
 - Implement a protective factors survey at intake (9 measures).
 - Expand service data tracking capacity—add strengths-based services.

What are key lessons learned from the Youth Protective Factors study process?

Service data tracking at baseline was relatively poor but improved significantly in the study states.

Service Data 2 Years Before vs. 2 Years Into Study

	State #1		State #2	
	Before	After	Before	After
# Services Entered	1,638	5,705	1,652	1,072
# Services per Youth	.30	2.84	.40	1.31
% Strength-Based	.8%	25.6%	0%	9.8%
% Risk Reduction	15.6%	73.1%	14.8%	43.2%
% Responsivity	17.8%	56.7%	15.8%	33.9%

Service-to-youth ratio more than doubled

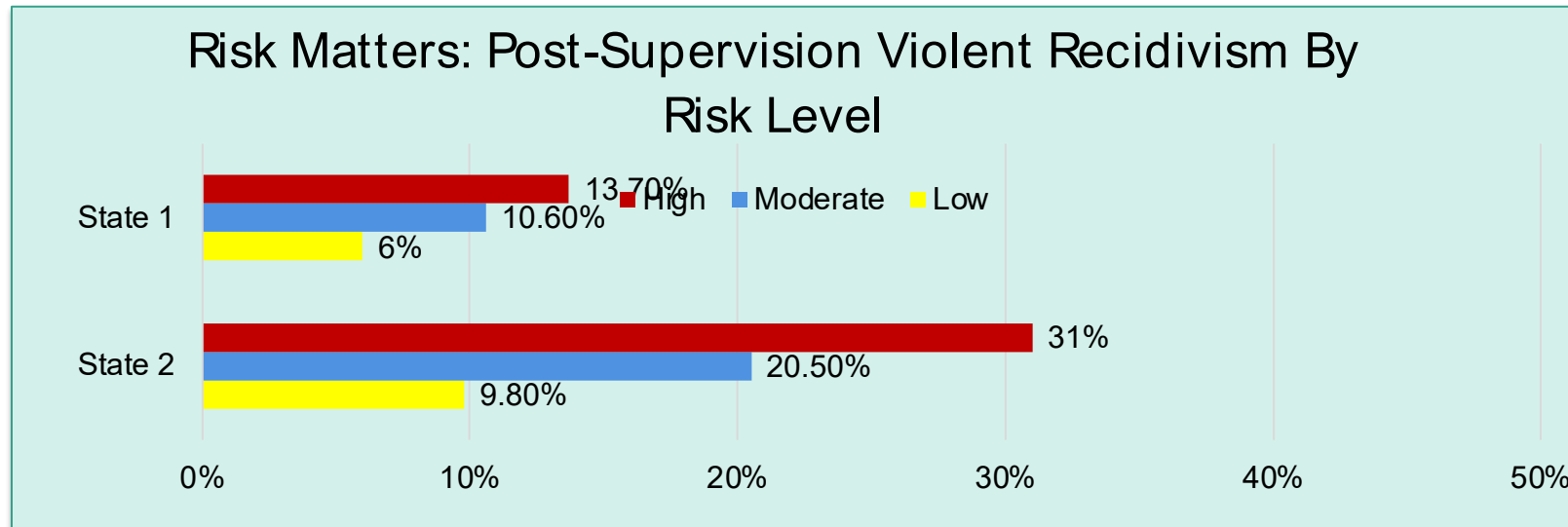
Strength-based services not entered before

Ongoing quality assurance of service tracking is essential!

What are the most striking or important findings from our initial analysis and this first study brief?

How Worried Should We Be About Young People's Risk of Violent Reoffending?

- Most youth were NOT classified as High-Risk:
 - State 1 = 5% high risk
 - State 2 = 22% high risk
- LIMITED violent reoffending post-supervision > 2 years
 - State 1 = 7% violent reoffending rate
 - State 2 = 16% violent reoffending rate



Violent recidivism = any violent petition/complaint (excluding dismissed) after completion of JJ involvement over an average 2.5 years

Are Systems Targeting the Right Youth for Supervision?

- A fair portion of youth being referred to the system are still LOW risk
- Risk levels only decreased in one state following JJ involvement

State 1	Beginning Supervision	End Supervision
Low	57.3%	73.5%
Moderate	37.5%	22.3%
High	5.2%	4.2%

State 2	Beginning Supervision	End Supervision
Low	26.9%	27.0%
Moderate	51.1%	46.9%
High	22.0%	26.1%

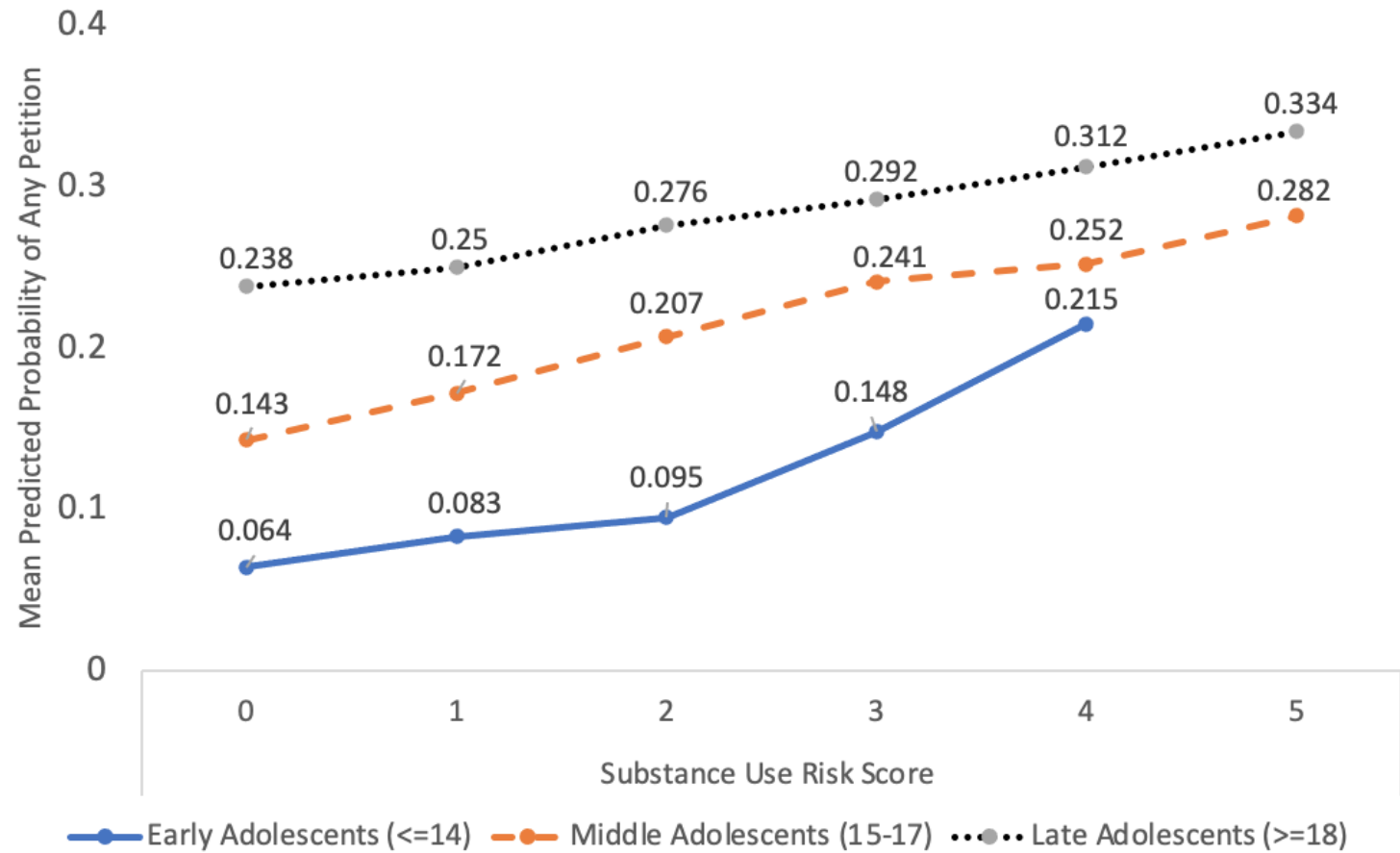
**NOTE: Many of these low-risk youth were handled informally

What Are the Strongest Predictors of Violent Recidivism After Juvenile Justice System Involvement?

- Youth's most common risk factors were NOT the strongest predictors of violent recidivism

Most Common Risk Factors for Youth	Strongest Predictors of Violence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor Use of Leisure Time (1 state) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behavioral Problems/Traits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substance Misuse (both states) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Circumstances
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behavior Problems in School (1 state) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negative Peer Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behavior Problems in School

Age matters: Substance abuse is a stronger signal of recidivism risk for early adolescents than their older counterparts



What is the next phase of the Youth Protective Factors Study?

Future findings and briefs will focus on assessing the added value of protective factors and strengths-based services to recidivism reduction.

- Which protective factors matter most, for assessment and targeted services?
- Do strengths-based services add value to the risk-based approach?
- How should we adapt our services and supervision, based on young people's developmental stage?

Youth Protective Factors Study