

JUVENILE ASSESSMENT CENTERS

Richard Dembo, Ph.D.
Criminology Department
University of South Florida
Tampa, Florida

Jennifer Cristiano, M.A.
ACTS, Inc.
Director, Hillsborough JAC
Tampa, FL

What are they and What do they do?

- Juvenile Assessment Centers (JACs) are centralized adolescent receiving, processing and intervention facilities.
- Many, like the Hillsborough County, FL JAC are 24-hour operations.
- Their development reflects an appreciation that an effective juvenile justice system necessitates inter-agency, collaborative efforts.



What are they and What do they do? – Cont'd

JACs provide creative solutions to four major programmatic needs:

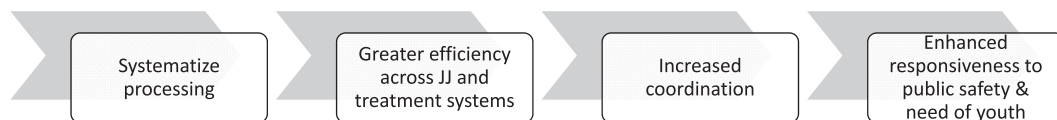
1. Help law enforcement achieve expeditious disposition of juveniles, permitting their return to law enforcement functions; and help resolve difficulties in making clinical decisions on appropriate placement of youth.
2. Locating youth who are not eligible for secure detention and accomplishing the screening, assessments, and processing required to support judicial and non-judicial dispositions.
3. Problems experienced by clinical staff in achieving child and family compliance to participating in assessments needed to guide dispositional recommendations to juvenile court.
4. Problems experienced by the State Attorney's office and Juvenile Judges in affecting meaningful dispositions without an adequate range of dispositional alternatives.

What are they and What do they do? – Cont'd

- These problems are not the result of lack of motivation or commitment by participating agencies. Rather, they reflect infrastructure problems that can be improved greatly by co-locating relevant agency operations to permit simultaneous accomplishment of required legal and social service interventions.
- These include:
 1. Preliminary screening, and, if indicated
 2. In-depth assessment, followed by
 3. Referral for additional evaluation or treatment

What are they and What do they do? – Cont'd

- This multi-agency collaborative approach helps systematize the processing of juveniles, resulting in greater efficiency across the juvenile justice and treatment service systems, their increased coordination, enhanced responsiveness to public safety, and, ultimately, to the needs of troubled youth and their families.



What are they and What do they do? – Cont'd

- JACs represent an important opportunity to identify the problems of troubled youth and promptly involve them in helping services and intervention programs. These facilities are an innovative service at the front end of the juvenile justice system in the communities in which they operate
- JAC operations are support by a comprehensive MIS
- JACs are in operation throughout Florida and in several other locations in the U.S. (e.g., Kansas).

Brief History of JACs

- Following a 15-month development period, involving extensive discussions and collaboration with various community stakeholders, the first Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC) was established in Hillsborough County (Tampa), Florida, in 1993. Federal block grant funded (competitive).
- Historical development
 - Tampa JAC opened its doors to truant youth in January 1993
 - May 1993, the JAC began accepting youth arrested on felony, and weapons misdemeanor, charges
 - In July 1994, the JAC opened its doors to all arrested youth.

Brief History of JACs



Brief History of JACs – Cont'd

- In June 1993, a special session of the Florida Legislature was held to address the issue of prison overcrowding.
- Prior to this special session, the head of the Florida House of Representatives, Appropriation Committee, visited the Tampa JAC with his wife. Impressed with the center, he was instrumental in including \$1.2 million in the special appropriation budget resulting from this special session to establish three additional JACs.
- In 1994, the Florida Legislature established the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice and added an additional \$2 million to the budget to set up 8 more JACs in the state.

Brief History of JACs – Cont'd

- In the mid to late 1990s, word about the Tampa and other Florida JACs (e.g., Orlando, Miami, Tallahassee) spread, and several other states expressed an interest in opening similar facilities in their jurisdictions (e.g., Colorado and Kansas).
- Since this early period, JACs have spread throughout the United States. In 2003, there were approximately sixty operating JACs in the United States (Davis, OJJDO, personal communication, 2004).
- Currently, there are 18 operating JACs in Florida.

Key Elements of JACs

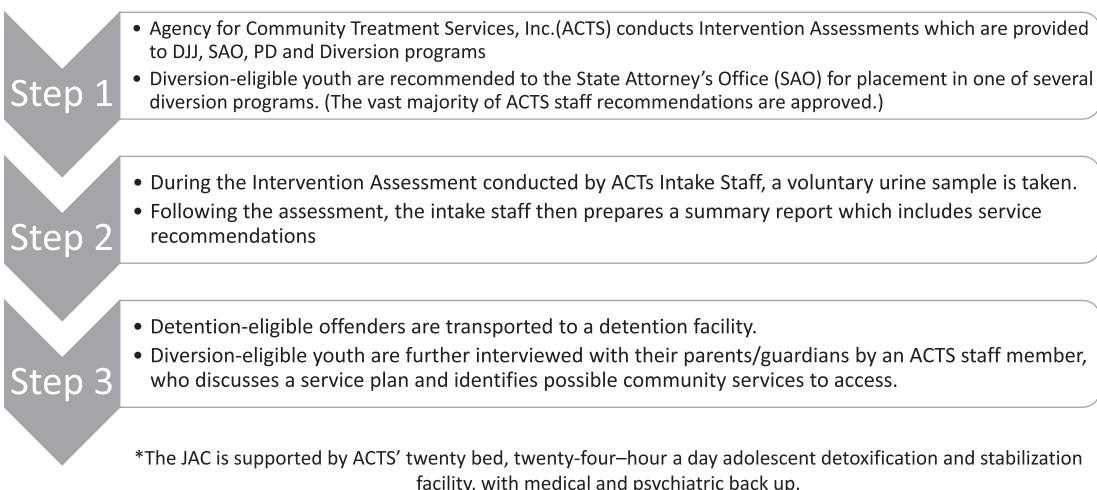
Although JACs may differ in a number of ways (e.g., organizational structures, staffing patterns, operating schedules), they generally share a number of common elements (Oldenettel & Wordes, 2000):

1. *Single point of entry*: There is a 24-hour centralized point of intake and assessment for juveniles who have come or are likely to come into contact with the juvenile justice system.
2. *Immediate and comprehensive assessments*: Service providers associated with the JAC make an initial broad-based screening; and, if necessary, a later, in-depth assessment of youths' circumstances and treatment needs.
3. *Management information systems*: Needed to manage and monitor youth, they help ensure the provision of appropriate treatment services and to avoid the duplication of services.
4. *Integrated case management services*: JAC staff use information obtained from the screening and assessment processes, and the management information systems, to develop recommendations to improve access to services, complete follow-ups of referred youth, and periodically reassess youth placed in various services.

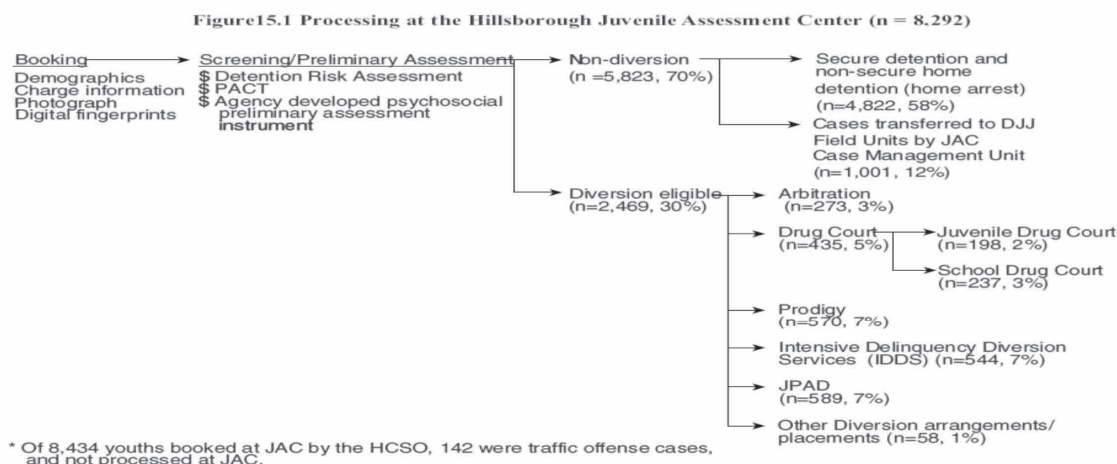
The JAC Flow-Through Process

- Brief Description of the Hillsborough County Juvenile Assessment Center
- All youth less than 18 years of age arrested in Hillsborough County are processed at the JAC.
- Youth aged 18 and over that are currently on DJJ supervision charged with violation of supervision and/or OTIC/warrants.
- Following booking:
 - Youth receive a Detention Risk Assessment to determine eligibility for diversion to the community (charged with a Misdemeanor offense or nonviolent Felony offense with a limited history) OR
 - Transferred to the Department of Juvenile Justice as a secure detention case or home detention case (DJJ: arrested for a serious felony or misdemeanor offense and/or having an extensive criminal history).

The JAC Flow-Through Process Cont'd



The JAC Flow-Through Process Cont'd



The JAC Flow-Through Process Cont'd

- As an example, Figure 1 schematically presents the flow of arrested youth through the JAC in 2010.
 - Each arrested youth is expected to be processed within six hours of entry.
 - All youth entering the JAC are booked by the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office.
- Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office detention deputies operate the secure wing of the JAC. Following booking, processed youth are administered a Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (DRAI).
 - The DRAI collects information on the instant offense, offense history, and aggravating and mitigating circumstances surrounding the current arrest, which is used to determine a youth's eligibility for diversion or transfer to DJJ.
 - Youth are, then, administered the Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT) screening instrument and undergo an intervention assessment.

The JAC Flow-Through Process Cont'd

An ACTS developed intervention assessment collects information on the following domains:

1. Substance use history (ever used, current use, age first used, frequency/amount of use of alcohol and 18 illegal drugs);
2. Psychiatric history (prior psychiatric treatment, history of trauma, psychiatric medications, current emotional/behavioral problems);
3. Mental status (assessor's rating of mood, affect, alertness, judgment, insight, or evidence of specific mental health condition);
4. Physical health history and current medications (current medications, history of nineteen health conditions, chronic illness);
5. Legal history (number of previous arrests, gang association, current probation or other case, number of prior JAC admissions);
6. Educational/vocational history (grade completed, learning disabilities, school suspensions); and
7. Risk and protective factors (checklist of 39 risk factors and 22 protective factors).

The JAC Flow-Through Process Cont'd

- In addition, the JAC intake assessor administers a Risk Assessment Questionnaire with the following human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) risk behavior items:
 - Injected drugs
 - Had sex while using drugs or alcohol
 - Engaged in transactional sex
 - Had sex with another male (MSM) or a female having sex with an MSM
 - Had unprotected intercourse
- Processed youth twelve years of age or older are also able to participate in free sexually transmitted disease (STD) testing, and indicated follow-up treatment, as part of a JAC collaboration with the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County (We shall have more to say about this collaboration in another presentation.)

The JAC Flow-Through Process Cont'd

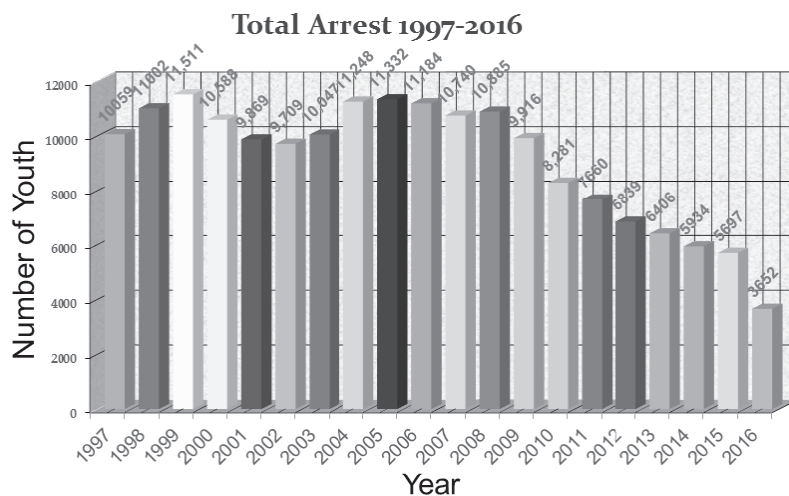
- At this point, the youth is either assigned to:
 1. DJJ – for placement in detention center or on non-secure home detention (home arrest)
 2. The JAC case management unit, which further evaluates the youth, and recommends to the SAO that he/she be placed in a diversion program. The report that is sent to the SAO includes the youth's drug test results. (Some youth, especially those arrested on misdemeanor property charges, may have their case file sent directly to a court diversion program for admission.)
- As an example, as Figure 1 shows, for the 8,292 cases processed at the JAC (in 2010), 5,823 of the youth were determined to be non-diversion cases, with nearly a third being recommended for placement in one or another diversion program.
- Prodigy, Intensive Delinquency Diversion Services (IDDS), and a Juvenile Post Arrest Diversion Program (JPAD) were most often recommended, followed, at a lower rate of referral, by drug court and arbitration.
- It is important to note that 18% of the 2,469 diversion eligible youth were referred to the drug court program.
 - While the diversion programs referred to have changed somewhat over time, the flow model remains.

Demographic & Charge Data for November 2016 Booked Cases

- Total intake: n= 388
- Gender
 - Male: 81%
 - Female: 19%
- Ethnicity
 - African American: 61%
 - Anglo: 20%
 - Hispanic: 19%
- Age
 - <10-11: 0.6%
 - 12-13: 11%
 - 14-15: 35%
 - 16-17: 50%
 - 18+: 4%
- Charge type
 - Felony: 29%
 - Misdemeanor: 31%
 - Court Order: 40%

*The demographic characteristics of JAC processed youth, as reflected above, have remained stable over time.

Stats through August 2016



Program Placement Recommendations for JAC Processed Youth

Youth in non-diversion cases are assigned to DJJ, and they are assigned a Juvenile Probation Officer as their cases are being processed through the juvenile court system. Each of these placements is discussed briefly below.

- Placement in Detention: Youth scoring twelve or more points on the DRAI need to be placed in secure detention.
 - They are transported to a detention center from the JAC by a van operated by DJJ twenty-four hours a day.
 - The law requires that these youth appear before a juvenile court judge within twenty-four hours of placement in detention, at which time a decision is made to retain the youth in detention while their cases are being processed by the court or release them to the community.
- Placement in Non-Secure Detention (Home Arrest): Youth who score between seven and eleven points on the DRAI are released to a parent or guardian, and they are required to make scheduled court appearances until their cases are resolved by the court.

Program Placement Recommendations for JAC Processed Youth – Cont'd

- Cases Assigned to Department of Juvenile Justice Field Units by the JAC Case Management Unit: Youth initially assigned to the JAC case management unit for recommended placement in a diversion program are not found to be diversion eligible (i.e., do not meet the criteria for placement in any diversion program).
 - Case management staff transfer these youth to DJJ field units for assignment to a Juvenile Probation Officer for case supervision.
- For each of these categories of youth, the results of their JAC intake and assessments, including their drug test results, are shared with their assigned juvenile probation officers, who will include such information in community-based service program or residential commitment program plans that are formulated for them.

Program Placement Recommendations for JAC Processed Youth – Cont'd

Diversion Cases

- Youth processed for diversion are not assigned to DJJ, but rather are recommended by the JAC case management unit to the SAO for placement in one of four approved diversion programs.
 - Each of these programs is discussed briefly below.

Program Placement Recommendations for JAC Processed Youth – Cont'd

Juvenile Drug Court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 years of age (must be more than 6 months of turning 18) • Drug/alcohol issues/drug related charges • Cannot be drug dealing offenses (with intent to sell/deliver)
School Drug Court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 years of age (must be more than 6 months of turning 18) • School related drug offenses only • Cannot be drug dealing offenses (with intent to sell/deliver)
JDAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 and under • Misdemeanor 1st or 2nd offense; Felony 3rd degree 1st offense • Must meet 2 out of 4 criteria on checklist • May still be eligible without signed waiver
Arbitration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st offense only • No GTA charges • No waiver needed on misdemeanor offenses; previous non-file still eligible
Long Distance Diversion (LDD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st time misdemeanor offender • Waiver must be signed • Live more than 2 hours away

Program Placement Recommendations for JAC Processed Youth – Cont'd

Juvenile Drug Court is designed as a 12-month program, divided into several phases, including:

1. **Assessment:** The primary focus of assessment is to determine the level of services that are appropriate for the youth. It includes an orientation to the program, interviews with the youth and family members, urinalyses, and a review of the youths' JAC packet.
2. Several treatment phases, with decreased frequency of court appearances based on clean urine screens and good program performance (e.g., attending TX sessions), culminating in program completion/ graduation.
3. Once a client successfully completes the Juvenile Drug Court Program, his/her current charges will be dismissed.

School Drug Court is very similar to Juvenile Drug Court, with the school recommending youth to the program.

- Youth placed in School Drug Court are charged with simple possession of marijuana on school grounds or felony possession of a controlled substance on school grounds.

Program Placement Recommendations for JAC Processed Youth – Cont'd

JDAP (formerly known as Intensive Delinquency Diversion Services)

- A 5-7 month program designed to serve the higher-risk portion of the youth population.
- Contracted case management services are provided by a local agency. Continuous and extensive contact with the youth, parents, guardians, school, employer, and an assigned case manager, among other service providers, are considered essential to the youth's success in the JDAP program.
- Whether or not a youth is deemed a "success" or a "failure" depends upon the youth's performance in the program, his/her level of progress, and an assessment of his/her future threat to the community.
- Youth who do not successfully complete the program are referred back to the SAO for formal prosecution of the original charge(s).

Program Placement Recommendations for JAC Processed Youth – Cont'd

Arbitration

- The parents or guardians and the juvenile appear at a hearing before a court counselor.
 - The court counselor explores the details of the case by interviewing the juvenile.
 - The court counselor also conducts a risk assessment and obtains information from the parents.
 - The court counselor makes a decision as to the most appropriate sanctions for the particular set of circumstances, imposes these sanctions on the juvenile, and sets a deadline date.
- The Court Counselor monitors completion of assigned sanctions.
 - Compliance with program rules (e.g., consistent school attendance, acceptable behavior at home) is also monitored and can result in program extension or unsuccessful completion from the program.
- Although program involvement can last up to a year, on average, youth complete the program in ten weeks.
- Youth who complete all that is asked of them are deemed program “successes,” and their case is closed. Youth who do not complete the assigned sanctions are considered “failures,” and their cases are referred back to the SAO for formal prosecution of the original charge(s).
- The victim has the right to be notified throughout the process and can choose to be present at the initial interview to provide input.

Further Opportunities to Serve Youth with Substance Use and Related Problems

- It is important to realize that JACs serve youth at the high end of community risk continuum.
- As we just discussed:
 1. Many arrested youth entering the Hillsborough JAC, and arguably other JACs as well, are drug involved
 2. Programs have been developed to serve these youth.
- At the same time, other opportunities exist for JACs to serve other target groups of youth involved in drug use or experiencing problems often related to their drug use. Following is a discussion of two such target groups.

Truant Youth

- Truancy represents a growing epidemic in academic settings across the United States. Unfortunately, efforts to address truant behavior are all too often sanction and procedure oriented, with truant youth being treated as disciplinary and management problems.
- Interventions that do not target the root causes of such behavior fail to address the problems that can lead many seriously troubled truant youth to move into the juvenile justice system. However, some truancy programs, such as the Hillsborough County, JAC Truancy Program, have started to move away from one-dimensional strategies by involving collaborative and holistic approaches.
- Truant youth represent a challenging, yet very promising, group of at-risk youth to serve. In addition to having problems in school, they frequently experience troubled family situations, failing grades, psychosocial difficulties (including substance use), and contact with the legal system.

Truant Youth – Cont'd

- Reaching these youth before they become seriously involved in drug use and other delinquent behavior provides an excellent opportunity to reduce the likelihood they will move into the juvenile justice system. It is least often the case that youth are picked up for truancy because they are in the wrong place at the wrong time; rather, their behavior makes them visible to official agencies such as law enforcement.
- Available studies involving selected samples of truant youth indicate these youth are often experiencing serious interrelated problems in regard to a stressed family life; alcohol or other drug use; emotional/psychological functioning problems; and educational functioning issues (e.g., low grades, high rates of being retained in grade or placed in remedial or special programs).
- Truant youth tend to be young and primarily involved in the use of alcohol or marijuana, and they are at risk of becoming seriously involved in drug use. Involving these youth in early intervention services holds promise of redirecting their patterns of behavior in more salutary directions in a shorter period of time, at less cost, and with greater effectiveness, than treating older adolescents who are involved in the use of other drugs such as hallucinogens and cocaine.

Truant Youth – Cont'd

- We recently completed a study of 300 truant, funded by NIH/NIDA.
- Eligible youths met the following criteria:
 1. Age 11 to 17
 2. No official record of delinquency or up to two misdemeanor arrests
 3. Some indication of alcohol or other drug use, as determined, for example, by a screening instrument (Personal Experience Screening Questionnaire [PESQ, Winters, 1992]) or as reported by a Hillsborough County school social worker
 4. Lived within a 25-mile radius of the Truancy Center

Truant Youth – Cont'd

- Depending on date of project enrollment, follow-up data were collected on the youths 3 months, 6 months, 12 months, and 18 months following completion of the intervention.
- Follow-up data at all time points, through 18-month follow-up, were available on $n = 215$ youths.
 - High, overall completion rates of 94.0%, 93.7%, 92.1%, and 88.5% were achieved for the 3-month, 6-month, 12-month, and 18-month follow-up interviews, respectively
- Most youths in the study were male (63%), and averaged 14.80 years in age ($SD = 1.30$).
- Thirty-seven percent of the youths were Anglo, 26% were African American, 29% were Hispanic, 1% were Asian, and 7% were from other, mainly multi-ethnic backgrounds.

Truant Youth – Cont'd

- Only 17% of the youth lived with both biological parents, with 33% living with their mother alone.
- 93% of parents reported family experience of stressful/traumatic events:
 - Death of a loved one (58%), unemployment (50%), parent divorce (39%)
 - Serious illness (31%), legal problem resulting in jail time or detention (26%)
 - Overall, an average of 2.99 stressful/traumatic events were reported (SD=1.76)
- Overall, the families in the project had modest annual incomes:
 - Annual income of \$25,000 or less: 40%
 - Annual incomes between \$40,000 and \$75,000: 23%
 - Annual incomes were greater than \$75,000: 10%

Truant Youth – Cont'd

- A review of official records indicated the youth received an average of 0.89 arrest charges (range=0 to 6) (SD=1.04) prior to enrollment in the project.
- In addition:
 - a) 19% of truant youth reported being sent to live away from home (mainly for behavior problem reasons—e.g., difficulty getting along with father)
 - b) 17% reported having an alcohol/other drug abuse problem (mainly marijuana)
 - c) 48% reported receiving services for emotional/behavior problems

Truant Youth – Cont'd

- The youths reported relatively high rates of delinquency during the year prior to their initial interviews.
 - High prevalence rates were reported for index offenses (50%)
 - Crimes against persons (75%), general theft (75%), drug sales (29%), and total delinquency (94%).
 - Further, from 1% to 15% of the youths reported engaging in the offenses (represented by the various indices) 100 times or more; some reported many hundreds of offenses.
- The youths reported high rates of sexual risk behavior:
 - a) Reported they had sexual intercourse: 67%
 - b) Had sexual intercourse without using a condom: 33%
 - c) Having 2 or more sexual partners: 30%

Truant Youth – Cont'd

- Urine tests indicated 46% of the youths recently used marijuana.
 - Little use of other drugs was found.
 - Relatively few youths reported use of amphetamines, barbiturates, cocaine, opioids, hallucinogens, PCP, Club Drugs (e.g., Ecstasy), and inhalants
 - Urine tests confirmed the very low, recent use of amphetamines, cocaine, and opiates.
 - We found significant validity problems in the youths' reported use of alcohol. Analysis showed that, at each time point, over 90% of youth found to be UA positive for marijuana but denied use of the drug, also denied the use of alcohol.
- At baseline, there are mixture of positive and negative attitudes towards school, although negative attitudes are more often reflected in the youths' replies to these questions. For example, truant youth indicated:
 - 80% of the truant youth reported finishing school is important
 - 53% indicated school feels good
 - On the other hand, 83% of the youth can't wait until school is over
 - 56% don't like thinking about school
 - 81% indicated they get bored in school
 - 71% felt school had too many rules.

Truant Youth – Cont'd

- Our study used a brief intervention for substance abuse among youth developed by Winters and his associates that integrates techniques from Motivational Interviewing (MI), Rational-Emotive Therapy (RET), and Problem-Solving Therapy (PST).
 - **MI:** is a client-centered counseling technique developed specifically for substance abuse intervention (Miller, 1983).
 - The techniques of MI include increasing self-efficacy and increasing readiness for change.
 - MI has demonstrated effectiveness with treating substance-abusing adolescents.
 - **RET:** is a form of cognitive behavior therapy that focuses on correcting negative and self-defeating emotions that interfere with an individual's abilities to achieve goals.
 - While little research on RET, itself, has examined its effect on reducing substance use among adolescents, specifically, research has demonstrated RET has a significant impact on problem behaviors among youth.
 - **PST:** recognizes that problem-solving skills are key to an individual's ability to cope, and focuses on applying general problem-solving and coping skills to various situations.
 - Has demonstrated promise for adolescent substance use relapse prevention.
- By integrating techniques from MI, RET, and PST, the brief intervention encourages the development of adaptive beliefs and problem-solving skills to promote abstinence from substance use and prevent relapse among youth populations. This brief intervention has demonstrated effectiveness in reducing substance use among adolescents in a school setting.

Truant Youth – Cont'd

- We tested the effectiveness of the Brief Intervention on the youths' marijuana use. Brief interventions are promising solutions for substance use treatment among truancy populations, because they are low cost, and offer short-term treatment options that are easily transportable to various settings.
 - Brief interventions can be as brief as a single, 15-minute discussion, but typically they range between 2 to 4 standard-length sessions.
- The study was a prospective, longitudinal, intervention study of substance-involved truant youth, involving random assignment of youth to assess the impact of two Brief Intervention strategies (1. BI-Youth [2 sessions] and 2. BI-Youth [2 sessions] plus Parent [1 session]) in comparison to Standard Truancy Services (STS)(control condition) on the youth's marijuana use.
- Following the completion of the consent and assent processes and baseline interviews, the youth and parent/guardian were randomly assigned to one of three project service conditions: (1) BI-Youth (BI-Y), (2) BI-Youth plus Parent (BI-YP), or (3) the Standard Truancy Services (STS).
- ***The results of the indicated that, overall, truant youth receiving Brief Intervention services, experienced a significant reduction in marijuana use at 18 month follow-up (one-tailed test). Relatedly, truant youth receiving BI-Youth services were significantly less likely to be involved in marijuana use at 18 month follow-up, than truant youth receiving Standard Truancy Services. The effect sizes were in an appreciable range, -0.509 and -0.941, respectively.***

The Olivia Project – A Prevention Service

- This is a non-arrest, prevention service.
- Began in 2014 at Hillsborough JAC
- Ms. Brown receives referrals from the community as well as program staff. Parents call into JAC asking for help with troubled youth. Parents are referred to Ms. Brown.
- Ms. Brown is a licensed Life Coach. She serves as a mentor and advocate for the youth.
- She completes a JAC Intervention Assessment with the youth (including urinalysis), and meets with the parents/guardians, to clarify the issues the child is experiencing
- Then, speaks with child and family, often resulting in recommendations for referral to community agencies to address the child's specific issues (e.g., drug use, grief)
- Ms. Brown will also work with some youth on specific issues they are facing—such as low self-esteem, problems with authority, bullying.
- The free services include continuing support after initial appointment
- All youth, and parents, are contacted by Ms. Brown for follow-up, either via phone or face to face, so she can learn how they are doing and provide any assistance needed to serviced the family

Final Note: The Importance of JACs

- **JACs provide an extremely valuable opportunity to complete legally required processing activities**
- **As well as identify the problems of troubled youth and involve them in community-based, public health and behavioral health services and intervention programs.**
- **These single intake facilities have transformed the front end of the juvenile justice system in the communities in which they operate. Involving the collaboration of law enforcement, juvenile justice, public health, and human service agencies, JACs reduce duplication of effort, and overcome workload and juvenile justice “systemic” problems. They continue to represent an exciting, innovative development in juvenile justice.**

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