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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: EVALUATION OF THE ILLINOIS  
STATUS OFFENDER SERVICES PROJECT

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THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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## INTRODUCTION

The following is a summary of the program evaluation of the Illinois Status Offender Services (ISOS) project and of research related to it. The report focuses on ISOS's efforts to deinstitutionalize status offenders, mainly through its Alternatives to Detention program, during the first two years of operations, July 1976 through June 1978, when ISOS was a specially funded program in the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Some later data on detention for the period after ISOS became part of the Illinois Commission on Delinquency Prevention (ICDP) are also provided.

The Illinois Status Offender Services project was designed to create an alternative pattern for dealing with "detainable" status offenders, that is, youths charged with a status offense who would otherwise have been referred to secure detention (in jails, police lockups, or juvenile detention centers). Runaway or ungovernable youths, curfew violators, truants, and young drug or alcohol users were to be provided with alternative community-based services, for a limited time, including crisis intervention, foster or shelter care, and general supervision or counseling. A major effort was made to serve youths in their own homes as much as possible.

ISOS, intended as a statewide effort, was one of eight major projects--only four statewide--around the country which sought to deinstitutionalize status offenders, mainly at the preadjudicatory stage of justice system processing. Deinstitutionalization was mandated by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974. These "special emphasis" programs were the vehicle to implement the mandate and were funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) of the U.S. Department of Justice.

ISOS also comprised a Service Demonstration program for Minors in Need of Supervision (MINS) violators in two (former) DCFS regions, Chicago South and Decatur, during the first program year. A network of services was to include: needs assessment, counseling (family and youth), advocacy, group home, shelter care/runawayhome, alternative education, independent living facility, specialized foster care, and home maker service. This program was funded by the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission (ILEC). The evaluation and associated research were also funded by LEAA and ILEC, and small grants were received from DCFS and ICDP.

The findings of the interrelated studies are based on different sources of data and units of analysis, including not only status offenders but agency administrators, direct service workers, police, court officials, and adult residents in various counties and local communities. Although the research is comprehensive, we did not investigate everything we thought relevant, for example, the worker's counseling relationship, the foster care process, or cost-benefit ratios of the two programs. We centered attention on status offenders in four counties, mainly in Cook County, where the great majority of detainees were originally located and where the program was most active, and in Macon, LaSalle, and McLean counties. We also obtained considerable statewide information, especially on program services.

The executive summary is organized in ten sections: Project Development, Client Characteristics, Services, Program Outcomes, Changes in Detention, Changes in Local Police Arrest Patterns, Community Youth Service Systems, Community Resident Views, Types of Youth Offender Careers, and Conclusions and Recommendations.

## I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

In Illinois interest in alternatives to institutionalization and community-based programs for juvenile offenders dates at least from the beginning of the Chicago Area Project in the 1930s and has continued through the introduction of Youth Service Bureaus and the Unified Delinquency Intervention Services project (UDIS) in the late 1960s and early 1970s. During the past decade there have been major efforts by the legislature, and juvenile justice system, the Department of Corrections, the Illinois Commission on Children, and other agencies and groups to reduce the number of youths referred to secure detention.

The concept of the Illinois Status Offender Services project was developed mainly by professionals associated with the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. The Service Demonstration concept was formulated first. A proposal modeled after UDIS recommended that a full range of services be provided for chronic status offenders, mainly MINS violators, over approximately a six-month period. Services were to be purchased from local organizations and individuals and arranged or managed by ISOS coordinators.

The second concept, which became the basic one, was that of the Alternatives to Detention program. Developed in response to LEAA's initiative to deinstitutionalize status offenders, it was to be a crisis-oriented program dealing with preadjudicated status offenders. The Department of Children and Family Services accepted responsibility for the two programs organized as a single project, and juvenile justice

system and community-based agencies demonstrated extensive interest and support for them.

The project encountered significant start-up problems--fiscal, organizational, and planning--but most of these were substantially resolved by the end of the first program year. Twenty-one months after starting operations, ISOS was providing services in fifteen of eighteen (former) DCFS state regions. It was active in 35 out of 102 counties where the problem of detention for status offenders was most severe. The attempt to develop a statewide network of community-based services resulted during this period in contracts with 246 programs or agencies, mainly private, including some foster parents and individual advocates or therapists. Most youths were served through large agencies.

In the original proposal, it was estimated that the Alternatives to Detention program would serve "approximately 2,763" youths during the first year; after about thirteen months, 2,672 Alternatives cases had been served. The number of Service Demonstration cases was projected at 180 during the first year; 172 were served. At the end of twenty-one months of operations, ISOS had served 4,081 cases, involving approximately 3,100 youths.

Although the project planners and administrators were quite accurate in projecting the numbers of youths to be served, more youths were served from Cook County and fewer from the downstate counties than originally planned. Also, more youths, approximately 54%, were placed in foster and shelter/group home care than originally estimated, although there was considerable variation among sites.

The Alternatives to Detention program substantially achieved its operational objectives, but whether the Service Demonstration did so is not clear. The Service Demonstration did not receive as much attention and development as the Alternatives program, in part because of funding and staffing problems. There was some lack of clarity about program objectives and designs. Planned originally as a comprehensive program of services for more serious status offenders, it became largely a follow-up service for Alternatives to Detention youths. Its activities were mainly advocacy and counseling for youths in their own homes. Funding for the program expired at the end of the first year, and youths who would have been referred to it were again served by the regular DCFS program in the two areas.

In the course of the two-year project period, the Alternatives to Detention program obtained a good deal of visibility. It was supported by justice system agencies, which viewed it as a significant resource of services for status offenders; by youth agencies interested and concerned with additional services to status offenders; and by a variety of reform groups, community organizations, legislators, and the Governor's office. The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, burdened with the need for resources to maintain its mandated programs and some ambivalence toward ISOS, refused to accept further responsibility for the program. The Alternatives to Detention program was transferred to the Illinois Commission on Delinquency Prevention on July 1, 1978.

## II. ISOS CLIENT CHARACTERISTICS

The basic evaluation sample comprised 1,515 evaluated cases from the two programs and their respective comparison groups: 699 in Alternatives to Detention, 170 in the Service Demonstration, 493 in the Comparison Group Alternatives (a sample in detention during the prior year charged with a status offense), and 153 in the Comparison Service Demonstration group (the population of mainly MINS violators in DCFS and the court during the prior year).

The samples used for various aspects of the study were different. For example, the sample used to analyze demographic, family, and offense characteristics of youth cases in the program statewide is 2,824; the sample used to analyze services is 1,708; but the sample used to analyze outcome for Alternatives youth at 12-month risk (after the instant offense or entry into the program) is only 305.

The findings in this section are based on 2,824 cases (2,261 different youths) out of the statewide program population. In the first 18-month period approximately 20% of these youths were repeaters, i.e., they were in the Alternatives program one or more times. Cook County supplied the largest proportion of youth cases to the project, 72.7% (56.8% from Chicago and 15.9% from suburban Cook communities). The remainder of the program population came mainly from the northern urban half of the state, including Winnebago County and the city of Rockford, 7.5%, Macon County and the city of Decatur, 5.0%.

The statewide program case samples were 61.9% female and 38.1 male. The gender distribution by DCFS region varied from a low of 55.4% girls in

the Joliet region to a high of 63.6% girls in the Decatur region. ISOS served more whites, 51.9%, than blacks, 41.3%, statewide. A small proportion of the cases was Latino, 5.5%, including Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Spanish surname youth. The other racial or ethnic groups comprised a very small percent of total youths, 1.3%. The largest concentration of black youths in the project was from the DCFS Chicago South, 61.5%, and Chicago East, 83.7%, regions.

The mean age of the state program population was 15 years (14.996 years), although three age cohorts, 14, 15, 16 year olds, accounted for 73.4% of all cases referred to ISOS. Somewhat younger age youths came from Chicago than from the Cook County suburbs or downstate.

Youths were living in a variety of family arrangements just prior to program entry: 49.7% in two-parent households, 31.2% with mother only, 5.9% in extended families with no parents, 2.1% in foster care. There was considerable variation by region as to family structure of youths referred to the program. Youths from two-parent families ranged from a high of 65.0% in the Joliet region to a low of 36.8% in the Chicago East region. The highest proportion of youths, neither from a two-parent or single parent household was from the Aurora (24.2%) and Decatur (20.7%) regions. Referral source affected who was referred and how the program was used.

The family socioeconomic status of youths was lower than that of the general population. The proportion of families receiving public assistance benefits was 45.04%, the proportion of unemployed male adults was 26.3%, the male parent unemployment rate, in Chicago, was 30.9%. It was lower in suburban Cook County, 12.2%, and in Macon County, 16.0%.

Most of the youths in the Alternatives program were referred by the police, 73.0%. There was considerable variation by site however. The police referred 86.1% of the youths in Chicago, 90.2% in the Cook County suburbs, but only 30.5% in Macon County. Other major sources of referral were the court, Detention Centers, DCFS, and the youth agencies. Most of the youths in the Service Demonstration program were referred through the court, 77.5%.

The youths in the Alternatives program were charged mainly with running away from home. However, girls were more often charged with running away, 76.5%, than boys, 61.4%; and boys were more often charged with being ungovernable, 36.2%, than girls, 20.9%. A small proportion of youths in the program, mainly from the Decatur area, were charged with truancy.

### III. SERVICES

This section deals primarily with a comparison of services received by three of the evaluated groups: Alternatives to Detention program, Service Demonstration program, and Comparison Service Demonstration program. The Comparison Alternatives group is not included, since it consists of youths who were in secure detention and by definition not receiving comparable community-based services. The primary unit of analysis is still the case; a youth may appear in more than one group.

The Alternatives group was expected to receive mainly crisis intervention, foster home, shelter care, or group home placement, as well as brief general supervision or counseling. The Demonstration

group originally was to have received a more comprehensive set of services over a period of up to six months. The Comparison Service Demonstration group was expected to have received less comprehensive services than the Service Demonstration group. As indicated in Section I, as the project developed, the Service Demonstration became mainly a follow-up program for Alternatives youth. Furthermore, there was a shift from comprehensive to limited services, mainly counseling of the youth and his or her family in the home.

In the present analysis we are interested in three questions: What is the difference in pattern of services received by youths in the two programs? Do demographics or presenting problems make a difference in type of service received? What evidence is there, based on program re-entry, that the program was successful?

The three groups received different patterns of services, not quite as expected. The Alternatives youth entered the program an average of 1.3 times and received 2.3 service units over a total period of 18.8 days. The Service Demonstration youth entered the program an average of 1.0 times (interruptions for arrests and re-referrals did not result in further intake) and also received 2.3 services but over a longer period, 142.2 days. The Comparison Service Demonstration youth entered the prior DCFS or court program 3.3 times and received an average of 3.3 services over a slightly shorter period of 135.7 days.

Each program produced a different distribution of types of services as follows:

	Alternatives	Service Demonstration	Comparison Service Demonstration
			(in percentages)
Crisis Intervention	57.9	3.8	0.3
Shelter Home	2.8	0.6	4.7
Group Home	2.9	2.8	19.0
Foster Home	23.3	19.1	22.8
Outreach (Supervision)	12.8	46.3	32.2
Counseling Only	0.1	20.6	9.6
Other	0.2	6.9	11.4
Total services (n)	3770	320	342

The Alternatives to Detention service was brief and crisis oriented. The Service Demonstration was longer, more continuous, and focused on in-home services, including counseling or general supervision. The Comparison Service Demonstration pattern seemed the most comprehensive in terms of variety of services, although they were somewhat discontinuous; it was most oriented to residential care. There were also important differences by site or region. Status offenders received relatively more residential services in the Cook County area than in the Decatur region, particularly Macon County, both before and after the start of ISOS. In fact the differences by site were at least as great as the differences among programs.



Our findings on the relationship of demographic, family, and offense characteristics to service patterns indicated the following: girls are more likely to receive placement services, particularly foster care; boys are more likely to receive counseling services; blacks more often tend to receive foster care services, whites to receive institutional placement, particularly in Cook County. Younger children more often than older children are placed in foster home or institutional facilities. There does not seem to be any relationship between family structure or family status and type of service received by the youth. However, type of offense is associated with service pattern. The runaway, whether boy or girl, is more likely to be placed in a foster home or institution than a youth charged with ungovernability.

Our analysis revealed also that there was no relationship between severity of the youth's problem, at least as indicated by number of prior contacts with the justice system, and whether he or she would receive a home-based or a placement service. A youth was as likely to receive a home-based or a placement service, whether she or he had 0 or 3 more prior contacts with the justice system. Also, service was generally not provided to youths close to their homes. Our estimate based on the two largest programs in Cook County was that only 15% of youths received an advocacy service by an agency located within two miles of their homes. Placement service was often ten or more miles away, or even in an adjoining county. Focus of the Alternative program was on deinstitutionalization, not service to the youth in her neighborhood or home town.

It was also important to obtain some idea about the success of the program, particularly the Alternatives to Detention sample (n=782) in preventing another status offense. Law enforcement and justice system officials were concerned about the youth who might run away again, especially while in custody. There was little to distinguish the chronic from the one-time runaway or program entrant. There was little or no evidence based on gross data that the chronic status offender was a "special type." Sixty eight percent of the Alternatives entered the program only once. Thirty-two percent returned one or more times, but most of the repeaters, 25.4%, were in the program only twice; 6.6% were in the program three or more times. Furthermore, our data indicate that 17.9% of the repeater group, or forty youths, re-entered the program within seven days of the first program contact; 12.5%, twenty-eight youths, within eight to fifteen days; and 15.6%, or thirty-five, within sixteen to thirty days. If we assume that any youth who returns to the program within a two-week period represents a failure, then the over-all "program failure rate" would be 8.7%.

#### IV. PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The goal of the Illinois Status Offender Services project was to demonstrate the effectiveness of:

- A. a program of community-based services as an alternative to secure detention for status offenders, mainly at the preadjudicatory level (Alternatives to Detention); and

- B. a program of community-and-home-based services as an alternative to pre-existing services mainly for MINS violators at the postadjudicatory level (Service Demonstration).

The key evaluation questions are: Does it make a difference in terms of subsequent justice system experience or self-reported offense behavior whether a status offender is sent to detention or to the Alternatives program? Does it make a difference whether a MINS violator (or his or her equivalent as defined in certain counties) receives a DCFS/court-type or an ISOS-type special treatment program? Finally, does it make a difference whether a youth receives the short, crisis-oriented services of the Alternatives program or the longer, "follow-up" services of the Service Demonstration program?

The present section, first, highlights similarities and differences in justice system experience for the program and comparison groups; second it briefly compares self-reported deviant behavior for the two program groups over time, third, it summarizes perceptions of youths about their problems and their views about the helpfulness of the program; fourth, it provides findings on the relations of services and the community-based character of agencies to outcome; and fifth, it indicates that there may be different kinds of program offender careers.

The sources of data are official police and court records, client self-reports, and special youth interviews. For our purposes, a justice system contact was defined as a contact with either police or court for a specific offense charge. A risk period of twelve months after the instant offense was established to measure subsequent juvenile justice

system contact, self-reported offense behavior, and youth perceptions of social adjustment. The unit of analysis is the individual youth.

Youths in the Alternatives program and its pre-program comparison group differed significantly in experience with the juvenile justice system. ISOS attracted youths to the Alternatives program who had significantly fewer prior contacts with the justice system, fewer times in detention, and fewer days in detention. On the other hand, analysis of Comparison Service Demonstration and Service Demonstration youths revealed that they were remarkably similar in terms of prior justice system history, as were Alternatives and Service Demonstration program youths.

It was necessary to control statistically for prior justice system experience of youths in the Alternatives program and pre-program Alternative groups. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the effect of number of prior contacts, number of prior detentions, and number of prior days in detention, as well as age, race, sex, area of residence (Chicago, Cook County suburbs, and Decatur region), and whether or not the youth was in the program on subsequent justice system experience.

The most significant predictors of subsequent justice system contacts were age and number of prior contacts with the juvenile justice system. Younger youths and youths with more prior contacts with the juvenile justice system were more likely to have subsequent contacts with it. Whether the youth was in the Alternatives to Detention program or secure detention made no difference (it explained less than 1% more of the variance). Thus, there appears to have been no significant difference

between the Alternatives program and secure detention in their effects on youths' subsequent contacts with the juvenile justice system.

Considering all of the independent and control variables together explains only 16% of the variance in youths' subsequent contacts with the juvenile justice system.

When we consider just youths with three or more prior contacts with the justice system, we find again that only 16% of the variance in subsequent contacts is explained. For these youths, too, there appears to be no difference between the effects of being in the Alternatives program and those of being in secure detention. Further, nearly identical results are obtained when we consider only youths with fewer than three prior contacts with the justice system. The independent and control variables again explain only 16% of the variance, and the variable distinguishing youths in the Alternatives program from those in secure detention explains no additional variance once the control variables have been considered.

The analysis of youths in the Service Demonstration and Comparison Service Demonstration groups, using a similar regression analysis, revealed their subsequent justice system experience to be even more similar, with even less variance accounted for. A final set of comparisons between youths in the Alternatives and Service Demonstration groups, the two ISOS program groups, again revealed no difference in subsequent justice system experience.

The analysis suggested the following conclusions. Secure detention is not a greater deterrent to subsequent justice system contact than the Alternatives to Detention program. Neither the Alternatives to

Detention, Service Demonstration, nor Comparison Service Demonstration programs have differential effects in terms of subsequent justice system contacts. It was not possible to determine whether either of these programs or secure detention is better than non-intervention, since there was no control group. Each of the approaches was equally effective or ineffective.

It is important, however, to point out that there was a reduction in justice system contacts for status offenses generally by youth in the various groups after the instant offense or program entry. This effect did not occur for person or property crimes. One important exception was that the number of subsequent contacts with the justice system by white girls under 15 years of age increased slightly. They were doing significantly worse, however, than the Comparison sub-group in secure detention. This could have been a result of the character of the program and justice system processing--widening of the control net--which especially affected this group.

It was clear generally that not only the number of offenses but the number of offenders declined after intervention regardless of type of intervention. Of special interest was the finding that while the proportion of status offenders generally declined, the proportion of delinquents rose after intervention for each of the evaluated groups. A higher proportion of girls than boys were status offenders, and a higher proportion of boys than girls were delinquents. After the instant offense or program entry, there was little evidence of pattern change for girls but considerable change for boys who became relatively more oriented to

delinquency. However, status offenses remained the dominant pattern for girls or boys at each of the time periods examined, but the relative intensity of these patterns varied. Over their history of justice system contacts, most youths were mixed offenders, but girls were more likely than boys to have committed status offenses.

Furthermore, based also on self-report questionnaires administered to program youths over two or three time periods, there is evidence that offenses or deviant behaviors generally declined, although certain behaviors, such as drinking, marijuana use, and sexual relations, increased. There is evidence, moreover, that the quality of life of these youths improved following the interventions. The youths reported consistent improvement in their ability to cope with family, school, and law enforcement officials. Approximately 90% of all youths interviewed indicated that the ISOS programs had been somewhat or very helpful to them.

Fourth, a series of analyses as to the influence of services on outcome was carried out. A variety of statistical controls were employed. The findings strongly suggested that youth in the various programs, particularly the Alternatives program, who received crisis intervention and/or counseling services had as many or fewer subsequent contacts with the juvenile justice system and fewer subsequent detentions than those youths receiving foster home or institutional, including shelter and group home, service. In other words, there was some likelihood that the less intrusive the alternative service, the fewer the subsequent justice system contacts for the youths.

It was possible also to classify agencies by their community-based structural character, e.g., limited geographical scope of service, dependence on other local agencies, use of volunteers, and strong commitment to client decision-making in agency affairs. There was some evidence that the more community-based the organization, the fewer the status offenders it served would return to the justice system. Finally, we observed that there were distinctive justice system career patterns for boys and girls, blacks and whites. Girls tended more often to be chronic status offenders. Boys were more often mixed status and delinquent offenders. Blacks, particularly boys, tended most often to be classified as delinquents or mixed offenders. There was also a significant proportion of youths apprehended as status offenders referred to detention or the programs and the court who had no prior and would have no subsequent contact with the court. This proportion ranged from 7.6% to 11.8%, depending on the particular evaluated group. In other words, there was a substantial group of youths who should probably not have been detained either in the program, in detention, or in the court. The largest category of career offender was the mixed delinquent and status offender, ranging from 48.5% to 65.7% of the number of youths in the four evaluated samples. Extremely few chronic delinquents or violent offenders were in the samples studied. Also, less than two percent of charges against youths in any of the four sample groups, prior or subsequent to the instant offense, were for dependency or neglect.

## V. CHANGES IN DETENTION

It was important to determine the extent and character of changes in the use of secure detention, especially for status offenders, before and after the start of ISOS. Data were gathered by means of aggregate tallies, populations and samples of offenders in detention from Cook, Macon, LaSalle, and McLean counties. Cook, Macon, and LaSalle counties together accounted for approximately 70% of detained status offenders statewide at the start of the program.

In its Alternatives to Detention program ISOS was generally, but not exclusively, concerned with in-county resident preadjudicated status offenders, and, particularly in Cook County, it achieved its objective of deinstitutionalizing such youths immediately through a court order. Once the program began mainly adjudicated status offenders and out-of-county runaways were detainable in Cook County. The original goal of the project proposal was the deinstitutionalization of all in-state status offenders in secure detention, although operational emphasis was on preadjudicated status offenders.

A comparison of the first program year with the pre-program year shows a sharp reduction in secure detention for in-county resident status offenders: 60.8% in Cook, 25.0% in Macon, and 68.2% in McLean, but an increase of 71.1% in LaSalle County. The aggregate decline for the four counties was from 1,638 to 733 during the first program year. In other words, there were almost 1,000 fewer status offenders in detention, and most of the decline was accounted for by Cook County.

During the second program year, there was an increase over the first program year of 17.9% in Cook, but a further decline of 59% in Macon and a reversal of trend in LaSalle, where there was a decline of 42.0%, so that detention was back to pre-program levels. During the first nine or ten months of the third program year, through March and April 1979, detention in each of these three counties was stabilized at levels almost identical with those of the previous nine- or ten-month period. Nevertheless, in these counties some youths apprehended for status offenses were still being detained. In the 12-month period ending December 31, 1979, 3,461 status offenders had been placed in secure detention statewide.

Nevertheless, ISOS clearly had a positive influence on the youths it specifically served. At the instant offense only 24.5% of ISOS youths were in detention at some point of justice system processing. By definition all youth in the pre-program sample were in detention. In other words, the detention reduction rate was 75.5%. Furthermore, for subsequent status offenses, the comparative reduction rate for the program group was 43.7% over the pre-program group's rate.

A comparative sample analysis suggests clearly the direct influence of ISOS on aggregate status offender detention in Cook County. While detention of in-county status offenders declined by 60.8%, that of out-of-county and out-of-state status offenders (not eligible for the program) declined by only 8.2%. Also, there was a slight increase of 3.8% in delinquents detained during the same period. The change can be traced mainly to the impact of the Cook County court order mandating referral of detainable status offenders to ISOS. The effects of the

court order and ISOS appear to be inseparable in Cook County. Court orders in the other counties were largely discretionary during the first year and a half of the program. Youths charged with status offenses could still be referred to detention at the discretion of law enforcement and probation officers. The decline in Macon County appeared to result from an over-all reduction in juvenile arrests and referrals to court. Also, the available evidence does not indicate that ISOS was directly responsible for the rise in detention of status offenders in LaSalle County. We did not attempt to analyze the basis for change in McLean County because the number of cases was exceedingly small.

In general, there was little to distinguish the characteristics of status offenders in detention before and after the program was initiated in the four counties. Females and whites continued to be a majority of those in detention, except in Cook County, where there were slightly more blacks than whites detained at both periods. The age distribution did not vary: about two-thirds of those detained were over 14.5 years of age during the year prior to and the year after the start of ISOS.

The most important change in detention for status offenders, in addition to the general reduction, was that the decrease was relatively smaller for females than for males. Also, females were spending more time in detention for subsequent status offenses. We have already noted above that younger white females in the program did worse than their counterparts in secure detention. In general, males seemed to profit more from the program than females.

An important system processing change also occurred in Cook County. Judges, rather than law enforcement officials, were primarily responsible for referring status offenders to detention. This change in procedure may account for the increase in mean number of days in detention for status offenders, from 6.45 to 9.85. Also judges at custody hearings were now referring more detained status offenders back to detention. Judges were more concerned with status offenders on warrant than earlier.

#### Widening of the Control Net

The research also attempted to determine whether the presence of the program contributed to increased contact by status offenders with the police and court. Apparently this did occur in Cook County, and to some extent in Macon County. Although there was a sharp reduction in the number of status offenders in detention, there was at the same time an increase in "detainable" status offenders known to the Cook County Juvenile Court, that is, those eligible for referral to ISOS. There was a general increase of 16.6% in status offenders arrested by the police. The relative increase for the "detainable" status offender category was 5.4%, while there was a relative decrease in the other disposition categories: release to parents, referral to a community agency, and court referral under parental custody.

Further, in Cook County the number of status offenders referred to complaint screening at the juvenile court increased by 6.2%, while the number of delinquents referred decreased by 3.1%. On the other hand, in Macon County there was a diversion effect--at least at the police level. Fewer status offenders (and delinquents) in Macon County were

arrested by law enforcement officials during the first program year than during the pre-program year. Yet, there was a large increase in detainable status offenders referred to ISOS at the court level by social agencies, including DCFS, in Macon County. In other words, while status offenders in Macon County and delinquents in Cook and Macon counties were being diverted by the police from the justice system, relatively more status offenders were being processed by the court in Cook and Macon counties. It was clear that more status offenders were considered detainable than would have been the case before ISOS.

#### VI. CHANGES IN LOCAL POLICE ARREST PATTERNS

ISOS was expected to relieve the police of some responsibilities for status offenders so they would have more time to deal with delinquents. However, this change did not seem to occur. In Cook County, arrests for status offenders increased more than arrests of delinquents, although in Macon County arrests of both delinquents and status offenders declined.

It was also anticipated that ISOS would have a differential effect at the local community level. ISOS might be more active in certain communities, and police dispositions would vary from one community to another. This did seem to occur.

Data were gathered on a cohort of 1,888 police decisions in four community clusters in the Chicago South DCFS region and in Decatur's "inner" and "outer" city. The focus was on changes in police decisions, including charges and referrals of youths to service agencies. The term

"cohort" refers here to decisions of the police, particularly youth officers, with respect to an aggregate of youths whom they contacted over two comparable three-month periods before and after the inception of ISOS. The unit of analysis was the case rather than the individual youth.

The findings indicated the possible influence of the youth's race, gender, socioeconomic status, and local community on police decision making. Fewer white females were likely to be arrested, and they were mainly for status offenses. Black males had the highest arrest rate, mainly for delinquencies. Police referred relatively more youth, both status offenders and delinquents, to the court, in lower socioeconomic status (SES) communities than in the higher SES communities. In the middle-income black and white communities, relatively more offenders were community adjusted than before the program began. ISOS was more active in the lower SES communities.

ISOS and other community-based programs, particularly in Chicago, may have contributed to narrowing the control net for both status offenders and delinquents in higher SES communities and to widening it in lower SES communities. The availability of programs such as ISOS may stimulate direct use of local resources in higher SES communities but encourage more contacts with the court in lower SES communities. Type of community may influence the police in deciding whether they will community adjust a youth charged with a delinquent or status offense or refer him to court. The police officer is more likely to community adjust a youth with two or more prior offenses, if he or she is from a higher SES community.

What is more, regardless of type of community, a youth officer is more likely to community adjust a delinquent with a prior record than a status offender with a prior record. The chronic status offender is more likely than the chronic delinquent to be considered for detention and to end up in court. (However, the status offender and the delinquent are usually considered for detention or court referral for different reasons.)

#### VII. COMMUNITY YOUTH SERVICE SYSTEMS

Since the primary goal of ISOS was deinstitutionalizing status offenders by providing community-based services, a substantial research effort was devoted to analyzing the community-basedness of services, or more precisely of a local service system, available to deal with deviant youths, particularly status offenders. The unit of analysis for this study was aggregated youth-serving organizations in four community clusters in the Chicago South DCFS region and the city of Decatur. Responses were obtained from administrators and direct service workers in 170 organizations, including schools, churches, public and private agencies, and community organizations, at two times: the start of the program and about a year and a half later. Since our samples of agencies were quite small in one of the communities, and since a new analytic technique, smallest space analysis, was employed, the findings should be treated cautiously.

We found that type of community service system varied along five sets of dimensions: community-basedness, objectives, service patterns, tolerance for deviant behavior, and coordination. First, the lower the

socioeconomic level and more problem-ridden the local community, the less community-based the service system. A service system was considered less community-based when its geographic scope of service was larger, when it relied less on other local organizations, when it had lower proportions of volunteers associated with its programs, and when more staff had professional credentials in terms of higher education. Furthermore, there seemed to be little change in the ranking of the various community service systems over time of these indicators, with the exception of a transitional community in Chicago which became more community-based.

Second, it was possible to classify organizational objectives into three categories: client change; organizational change or community development; and solidarity (community identification). The vast majority of organizations were concerned with individual client change goals. The higher SES communities, however, were relatively more concerned with organizational change or community development and solidarity goals than the lower SES communities. Organizational services also reflected these differences. The communities with more serious youth problems emphasized specific rehabilitative services. Organizations in the higher SES communities were relatively more interested in educational, recreational, and more generalized youth developmental programs. As a result of ISOS, specific concern by agency administrators for status offenders may have increased substantially in the lower SES communities, whereas that in the higher SES communities declined slightly.



In response to a questionnaire containing a list of youth misbehaviors or crimes, administrators in the various communities differed little in their ordering of the deviant acts by seriousness. Person crimes brought more disapproval than property crimes, which in turn brought more disapproval than drug offenses. Status offenses were least disapproved. However, the level of acceptance of deviant youth behaviors varied somewhat by community. The lower the SES of the community, the more tolerant agency administrators appeared to be toward the different categories of youth deviancy. There was also evidence that the more problem ridden the community, the less differentiated were the attitudes toward various types of offenses.

Finally, we attempted to determine whether patterns of integration and coordination varied in the different communities. We were especially interested in the factor of "social distance" or "connectedness" among local organizations in each community. Smallest space analysis revealed that the lower the SES of the community, the more fragmented the pattern of communications, contacts, and relationships among organizations. The organizations in the higher SES communities were less specialized in their interagency relations. For example, in the lower SES communities, juvenile justice agencies were mainly in communication with other juvenile justice agencies. In the higher SES communities, they had a much broader range of contacts. Thus they could perhaps draw on a greater variety of local resources for deviant youths, and there was greater opportunity for informal communication and exchanges among local organizations. Less labeling of deviant youths might accompany this more generalized approach to serving them in the higher SES communities.

#### VIII. COMMUNITY RESIDENT VIEWS

While we had obtained information from local agency personnel about the prevention and treatment of juvenile problems, we were not sure to what extent these views represented those of residents of the community. We were also interested in the kind of agency that adult residents sought when confronted with a status offender problem. For example, to what extent did residents seek help from the local community and from more "normalizing" institutions such as churches, schools, and relatives, rather than from official agencies such as the police?

A twenty-minute telephone survey of 300 randomly selected adults in three of the community clusters described above was conducted at the close of the evaluation. Respondents were asked, among other things, what they would like to see done if a youth engages in certain kinds of misbehavior or crime—for example, assault, motor vehicle theft, drug use, running away, ungovernability. The categories from which the respondent could select were: "nothing," "a police warning," placement under "justice system supervision," and referral to a "correctional facility." Again we were trying to tap community tolerance attitudes, this time directly from the residents themselves.

The responses were remarkably similar across communities. The similarity of attitudes among residents regarding the appropriate degree of control or punishment for different kinds of offenses was even more striking than that of agency personnel. Residents indicated, for example, that a youth committing an assault should receive a much higher degree of control or punishment than a status offender, at least a runaway. The appropriate severity of response to other kinds of offenses, such as

theft or drug use, was viewed as intermediate. Thus, the responses of adult residents were similar to those of agency administrators both within and across communities regarding the seriousness of different kinds of misbehavior or offenses.

Of particular interest, however, was the response of adults to the problem of ungovernability. In all communities, residents indicated that such behavior should be controlled or treated more harshly than running away. Apparently they viewed ungovernability as a more serious status offense. Our data above (Section II) indicates that the chronic status offender or MINS violator or his or her equivalent was more likely than a youth in the Alternatives to Detention program to be charged with being ungovernable; youths in the Alternatives program were more likely to be runaways. Thus, both community residents and representatives of the justice system regarded conflict of youths with parents as a more serious form of deviant behavior than running away.

The differences found among the communities were not in the attitudes of residents toward deviancy, but in the kinds of agencies they would choose for help. Respondents were asked an open-ended question about where they would go for help "if their child was a runaway from home." The answers were grouped in four categories: criminal justice agencies, that is, police and juvenile court; mental health and social agencies; churches and schools; and relatives. More adults in the low-income black community were likely to seek assistance from the representatives of the criminal justice system, 55.2%, compared to those in the middle-class black community, 42.6%, and adults in the middle-class white community, 35.7%.

On the other hand, adults in the white community were more likely to seek help from churches and schools, 30.2%, and relatives, 14.0%, compared to 20.2% and 9.9%, respectively, in the middle-class black community and 17.3% and 9.7%, respectively, in the lower-income black community. Adults in the middle-class black community were more likely to go to a mental health or social service agency for help than adults in the two other communities. Perhaps adults in the most problem-ridden area sought representatives of justice system or "outside" agencies because there were fewer alternative resources available. The higher SES communities may have had more or better local resources for dealing with status offenders. However high or low, SES of the residents was insufficient to explain the different findings.

The data obtained from our separate analyses show considerable consistency. The findings indicate that communities differ in their status offender problems and in their capacities to deal with them. Strong local institutions independent of the socioeconomic status of the local residents appear to be either directly or indirectly responsible for mitigating deviant youth behavior or at least official reactions to it.

#### IX. TYPES OF YOUTH OFFENDER CAREERS

That the status offender is distinct from the delinquent was one of the principal assumptions in the creation of ISOS and similar programs. The evaluators were interested in three questions: Are status offenders

different from delinquents? Are certain demographic, family, and community differences associated with certain offender types? What is the scope of planning required, especially for the chronic status offender?

The data used in this analysis are taken from the Time I and Time II police decision analyses described in Section VI, above, but now based on offenders rather than offenses.

We identified the distribution of offenders by most serious offense at each contact and by prior police history in the Chicago and Decatur communities combined over the two selected periods. The result is a sample of 1,625 offenders classified into various categories according to the most serious charge. Youths were charged with committing a delinquent act--felony or misdemeanor--in 78.1% of the cases and with a status offense in the other 21.9% of the cases. Youths most frequently contacted were first-timers (43.0%) and/or chronic delinquents (33.9%), although there was a sizable group of youths with a mixed (status and delinquent) offense history (16.7%). Only a relatively small group of youths contacted by the police were chronic status offenders (6.5%). Of the first-timers, only 9.5% were status offenders. In other words, while 21.9% of the youths contacted by the police at the two sites committed status offenses during the two time periods combined, only 16.0% could be classified as a first-time or chronic status offender based on instant offense and prior record.

When we examine the sequence of types of principal offenses for an individual youth in his first two recorded contacts with the police, we

notice a high degree of specialization. A child who begins with a delinquent offense is likely to be charged with a second delinquent offense. A child who begins with a status offense is relatively more likely to be charged with a second status offense. Since there are more delinquents in our cohort sample, we would expect 77.9% of the children who were charged with an initial delinquency to be charged with a subsequent delinquency. In fact, 86.6% were so. We expected 22.1% of the children who were charged with a status offense the first time to be charged with a status offense the second time. In fact, 53.6% were so charged.

There is an even stronger tendency toward specialization when we take the first three offenses into account. The likelihood of a child with two prior delinquencies being picked up for a third delinquency is .92, and the probability of a youth with two prior status offenses being picked up for a third status offense is .72. These findings strongly suggest there is a group of delinquents who will be mainly charged with delinquencies and a group of status offenders who will be charged mainly with status offenses, at least according to official records. Nevertheless, it is important to recall that the procedure for classifying the youth's offense was based on the most serious charge per police contact. However, in the large majority of cases only one charge is levied against the youth. In the final analysis the police cohort was a better basis for estimating offender career probabilities than the program samples, which may have been pre-selected as mixed and chronic status offenders.

In an effort to explain this apparent tendency to specialization of juvenile offender patterns, we compared chronic status, chronic delinquent, and mixed offender types among youths with a sequence of at least three police contacts. We wished to determine whether the different offender types are characterized by different personal and environmental conditions. Our data indicate that gender is very strongly related to offense career pattern. Males are much more likely to be chronic delinquents, while females are much more likely to be mixed or chronic status offenders. While males are more than three times as likely as females to be labeled chronic delinquents, females are more than nine times as likely as boys to be classified as chronic status offenders.

Race or ethnic group appears to influence offense career. Black and Latino children are more likely to be arrested as chronic delinquents than white children. White children are more likely to become mixed offenders. However, the probability of a youth becoming a chronic status offender does not vary by race or ethnicity.

Age appears to be unrelated to offense career. This finding must be regarded with some caution, however, since the analysis was not based on birth cohort data. Nevertheless, there is a slight tendency for chronic delinquents to be younger and chronic status offenders to be older.

The data suggest that family structure may make some difference in career type. Surprisingly, whether a youth comes from a nuclear or single-parent family makes no difference. However, there is a tendency for chronic delinquents to come more often from nuclear or single-parent

families and chronic status offenders to live with a relative other than a parent or in a foster home, although the majority of status offenders were still living with one or both natural parents. The family structure of the chronic status offender appears to be slightly weaker than that of the chronic delinquent.

There are also interaction effects among variables. Females are much more likely to become status offenders in the higher SES communities. Females in lower SES communities are relatively more likely to follow chronic delinquent and mixed offense patterns. Race seems to make no difference in offense pattern for females, while local community does. On the other hand, race makes a difference for males, and local community per se has little influence on their career pattern. The highest proportion of chronic male delinquents is black.

In sum, our data suggest that chronic status offense behavior is mainly a sex role and to some extent a family problem, and also that the pattern is relatively more likely to occur in the higher SES communities. However, this does not mean that status offense behavior in general is distributed more widely in the higher SES communities, although relatively more chronic status offense behavior, mainly of females, seems to be present.

Finally, we observe that if special programs are addressed to chronic status offenders, that group will comprise from 6.5% to 11.5% of all offenders contacted by the police, depending on prior status offense history. Furthermore, certain types of mixed offenders, who should also be subject to special programs, comprise from 16.7% to 20.4% of youths

contacted by the police. A cautionary note is in order for mixed offenders, however. While our data show that a mixed offender is less likely to be charged with a delinquency than would be expected, when he is so charged it is more likely to be with a felony than with a misdemeanor.

In general, the data in this section, as in our previous sections, suggest that while the gender variable plays a dominant role, family and community organization also play a part in the development of the chronic status offender. The higher SES communities seem also to have some effect on preventing more serious offense careers. They make relatively less use of official juvenile justice and relatively more use of family and local agency resources.

#### X. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our research has been extensive and complex. A substantial amount of analysis has been completed, and we can draw some conclusions about status offenders and the Illinois Status Offender Services project:

1. On the basis of police decision data, reflecting a cross-section of youth contacted for all types of offenses, status offenders are a very small group and appear to be somewhat distinct from delinquents, mainly in terms of gender and race, although there is considerable overlap. If rearrested, the chronic status offender will most likely be charged with another status offense. However, most youths in the program had mixed offense careers, particularly the males. The females were relatively more likely to be chronic status offenders.

2. Local communities and different counties have distinctive ways of dealing with the status offender problem. Service systems--for example, the police, the court, the Illinois Commission on Delinquency Prevention, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, private agencies, churches, and relatives--may be used differently in different counties or communities. Low socioeconomic status and the lack of community-based organizations are associated with a more widespread status offender problem.

3. The Illinois Status Offender Services project substantially achieved its key service and detention reduction objectives in the development of its Alternatives to Detention program for preadjudicated status offenders. It is less clear that key service objectives were adequately formulated or implemented in its Service Demonstration program, mainly for MINS violators or adjudicated chronic status offenders.

4. Services for youths in the Alternatives to Detention program consisted mainly of crisis intervention, emergency foster placement (more than originally planned), and general supervision. Services for youths in the Service Demonstration program consisted mainly of individual or family counseling to the youth in his or her home. The Comparison Service Demonstration group (principally the program of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services for MINS violators) comprised a more comprehensive but discontinuous set of services emphasizing relatively more residential care.

5. Youths who entered the Alternatives to Detention program tended to be less serious status offenders than those in the pre-program comparison group. Some of the Alternatives youths would not have been considered for detention in the pre-program period.

6. There was essentially no difference in the characteristics, including prior justice system experience, of youths in the Alternatives to Detention, Service Demonstration, or Comparison Service Demonstration groups.

7. There was no general difference in outcome for youths in the Alternatives to Detention group compared to youths in the pre-program secure detention status offender group, in terms of subsequent numbers of justice system contacts, times in detention, or days in detention over a twelve-month risk period, controlling for such characteristics as age, race, sex, and prior experience with the justice system. Younger white girls did worse than all other groups in the program.

8. Similarly, there was no difference in outcome between youths in the Alternatives to Detention program and those chronic status offenders in the Service Demonstration, or between youths in the Service Demonstration and those chronic status offenders in the Comparison Service Demonstration, using the same outcome measures. Moreover, the less intrusive community-based service, crisis intervention and/or counseling, was at least as or more effective than placement service, including foster care.

9. The number of status offenders in secure detention declined sharply in the evaluated sites during the first year of the project.

The decline leveled off during the second and third years. However, the sharp decline in secure detention for status offenders in Cook County was accompanied by additional police contacts with status offenders and by more referrals to the program and the court than anticipated--a widening of the net. The reduction in detentions for subsequent status offenses was greater for males than for females. Also the average length of detention for status offenders in Cook County increased.

10. Evidence from self-reports indicates that juvenile misbehavior, including status offense behavior, declined comparably for youths in the Alternatives and Service Demonstration group, at least from time of entry into the programs until 12 months later. Moreover the quality of life of these youths improved over time. Youths were increasingly able to cope with a variety of difficulties at home, school, and with justice system authorities.

On the basis of these findings we offer the following policy and planning recommendations:

1. The status offense and offender problem should be dealt with by family and local community service systems rather than primarily by the juvenile justice system or the public child welfare system.

2. State law should eliminate the category of the status offender from the juvenile justice system, thereby not only removing all status offenders from detention but from the jurisdiction of the court, as well.

3. Distinctions among preadjudicated, post-adjudicated, detained, and not detained status offenders are overdrawn. For purposes of effective

and efficient service delivery, it seems appropriate to regard all status offender cases as primarily the responsibility of local community-based agencies. The police should assist in the referral of status offenders directly to these local agencies.

4. It is important to view the problems of such youths as transitional and amenable to crisis intervention and limited program services of an "outreach" and highly responsive character. Comprehensive, long-term community-based or residential services may be unnecessary and indeed inappropriate except possibly in a very small number of cases, where the child is neglected, dependent, or abused.

5. Public responsibility for the coordination and development of local programs dealing with chronic status offenders should be assigned to a separate state agency. Possibly a youth services type department, comprising staff with special interests and skills in work with difficult adolescents. In this regard DCFS should probably phase out its responsibility for dealing with MINS.

6. It would seem appropriate to test the value of these policy recommendations through a series of steps and perhaps demonstration efforts.