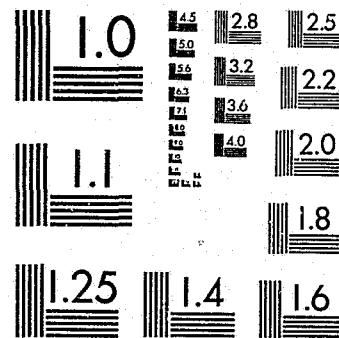


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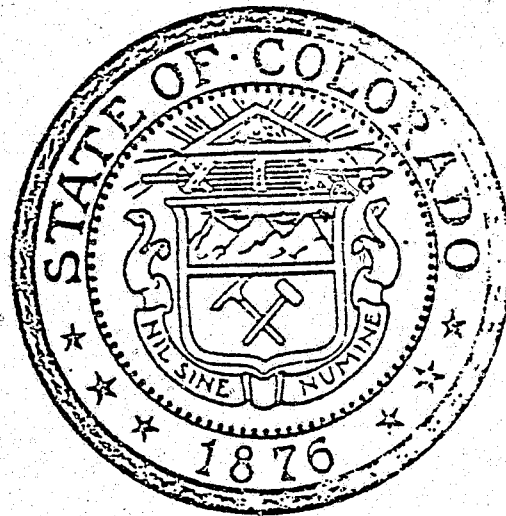
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DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES

ADULT INCARCERATION STUDY  
1975 DISCHARGE COHORT



June, 1980

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Department of Institutions  
  
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ADULT INCARCERATION STUDY  
1975 DISCHARGE COHORT

June, 1980

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ACQUISITIONS

Elizabeth Wilderman, Director  
Planning and Evaluation Unit

Carol J. Garrett, Researcher  
Planning and Evaluation Unit

Division of Youth Services  
4255 S. Knox Court  
Denver, CO 80236

Raymond Leidig, M.D., Director  
Department of Institutions  
3550 W. Oxford Avenue  
Denver, CO 80236

Orlando L. Martinez, Director  
Division of Youth Services

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#### Abstract

Based on the view of juvenile institutions as the last and most significant point of diversion from the adult justice system, a study was done to assess the extent to which Division of Youth Services (DYS) institutions succeeded in accomplishing this end for the youth of Colorado. The study consisted of a five-year follow-up recidivism study of the 420 juveniles released from DYS custody in calendar year 1975, with recidivism defined as incarceration in Colorado adult institutions. The results indicated that 27.6% of the youth were later incarcerated as adults. Significantly higher recidivism rates were found for males than females, for delinquents vs CHINS, for minorities (particularly Blacks), for certain committing counties, for youth committed to DYS at an older age, for youth classified as I<sub>3</sub> Cfc's, for youth in certain DYS institutional cottage placements, for youth who had longer lengths of stays in DYS institutions, and for youth with unsuccessful juvenile parole adjustment ratings. Additional findings were that release placement was not related to recidivism and that the differences in recidivism rates for the various committing counties were not related to the proportions of minorities committed to DYS from each of these counties. This study is the first of ongoing efforts designed to assess the validity of these results and to expand DYS capacity to evaluate the effectiveness of its institutional and aftercare treatment programs.

## Adult Incarceration Study:

### 1975 DYS Discharge Cohort

#### Introduction

As part of a national movement toward more specialized and humane treatment of youth in matters of criminal justice, Colorado established its first juvenile court in 1903 (Survey Report, 1976). Others followed, to create a statewide network of judges specializing in juvenile justice. Since 1961, institutions administered by the Division of Youth Services (DYS) have served as the court's most restrictive alternative for dealing with youth adjudicated delinquent or, until July, 1979, CHINS (children in need of supervision). From a systems perspective, the courts and juvenile institutions together serve as a "last chance" effort to divert youthful offenders from involvement in the adult justice system.

Given the intensive nature of DYS institutional programs, it is likely that they have a more substantial effect on juveniles than any other points in the juvenile justice system. They serve furthermore as the end point in the system, after which the only remaining alternative is processing within the adult justice system. Although it would be difficult to isolate the effects of institutionalization from those of the juvenile court process, it is likely that any observed outcomes are more readily traceable to the former, i.e., to institutionalization.

A commonly employed measure of the effectiveness of juvenile institutionalization is recidivism. The majority of studies define recidivism, however, as re-involvement with the juvenile justice system at some level. Very little evidence on subsequent involvement of persons institutionalized as juveniles with the adult justice system is available. A few studies, nevertheless, have included adult incarceration as a measure of recidivism of former juvenile offenders.

The Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics (1978) reports that 33% of a sample of inmates in adult correctional facilities had past juvenile sentences. This figure is based on self report by a sample of 10,359 inmates nationwide and was complete as of January, 1974. This does not, however, indicate what proportion of juvenile commitments end up as adult commitments.

Goldman (1973) reported on a sample of 1,065 male delinquents over age 16 who were released from New York juvenile institutions in 1969 and 1970 and followed up for an average of three years (2.5 - 3.5 years). His study indicated that 20.5% of these youth were incarcerated in New York adult institutions.

A study conducted by the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitation Services found that, of a 12.5% random sample of 246 youth released to aftercare from Florida's Training Schools in FY 1968-69 and followed up for three years, 33.3% entered the Florida adult correctional system.

Fontaine (1978) reported that, of 342 males detained in Rhode Island juvenile institutions in 1972, 31.9% had been incarcerated in adult institutions (jail and institutions) by the end of the five-year follow-up period.

A study of 399 juvenile offenders in the Chicago court system found that approximately 22.5% were committed as adults (McKay, 1967). Of the 399 juveniles appearing in court, 140 had been committed to juvenile institutions. Although the adult institutionalization rate for the 140 youth committed as juveniles is not available, the Chicago study did state the following:

This study lends support to the view that the criminal career is frequently the result of a gradual process of habituation to forms of illegal behavior. It does not, of course, indicate what proportion of adult criminals developed by this process. However, since more than 60 percent of all juvenile delinquents have adult criminal records, and since a large proportion of these are known to have engaged in serious offenses, this group, in the aggregate, must constitute a large part of



the criminal population. These findings strongly indicate the importance, in crime prevention, of more effective programs for the prevention of delinquency and for the treatment of delinquent boys early in their careers, before they have become habituated to delinquent behavior (pp. 48-49).

In the State of Colorado, DYS is one agency attempting to prevent this habituation to delinquent behavior. Based on the view of juvenile institutions as the last and most significant point of diversion from the adult justice system, the following study was done to assess the extent to which DYS institutions succeeded in accomplishing this end for the youth of Colorado. The study was designed as a five-year follow-up recidivism study of juveniles released from DYS institutions. Recidivism was defined as incarceration in Colorado adult institutions. It was felt that adult institutionalization was the best indication of definite and serious criminality and serves therefore as the most objective and best measure of the possible effects of DYS institutions in diverting youth from a criminal way of life.

#### Methodology

The present study was conducted on all youth discharged from DYS custody in calendar year 1975 and those out-of-state youth who were supervised while on parole in Colorado under the Interstate Compact on Juveniles. "Interstate" youth were discharged by their home state in calendar year 1975. This 1975 cohort was selected because it was the latest group discharged from DYS institutions for which a full five-year follow-up time period had elapsed.

Data were gathered on the following variables: Date of birth, sex, ethnicity, date of commitment to DYS, age at commitment, committing county, commitment status (delinquent, CHINS, Interstate), I-Level, date paroled, institutional time, last DYS placement (cottage) before release\*

\*Throughout this report, the term "release" means release to parole or community placement. The term "discharge" denotes complete termination of DYS custody.

to juvenile parole (or discharge if not paroled), parole placement, parole adjustment, date discharged from DYS custody (i.e., after parole, if paroled), type of discharge, date of admission to adult correctional institutions, and class of felony of the adult commitment offense. Consistent data on parole placement, parole adjustment, and type of discharge were available for delinquents only.

Juvenile data sources included a central linedex (providing identification number, dates of birth, commitment, parole and discharge, and committing county for each youth), parole board minutes, data maintained by each institution, educational records, and individual youth folders. Demographic and institutional treatment information was verifiable by two or more sources (i.e., linedex and institutional records). Information on parole adjustment and type of discharge was based on the parole counselor's report as recorded in the Minutes of the Parole Board.

Information concerning adult incarceration and adult commitment offense was obtained from the Colorado Department of Corrections (DOC). DOC provided access to complete lists of all persons incarcerated in adult prisons (Canyon City, Buena Vista). Additional offense information was obtained on those persons in the 1975 DYS discharge cohort who were located in that complete Adult Data Base. Identification of a juvenile offender in the Adult Data Base was verified by name, date of birth, and ethnicity (when available). Slight discrepancies in date of birth were accepted (i.e., 6/1/57 vs 7/1/57). The Adult Data Base was cross-referenced for aliases.

The present study does not include adult incarceration data on any youth who were committed as juveniles in Colorado and subsequently incarcerated as adults in another state. It was not possible, furthermore,

to follow up female members of the 1975 cohort who had changed names following marriage.

It should be noted that confidentiality was strictly maintained. No individual names were reproduced or utilized beyond the initial data-gathering phase. All data are reported in the aggregate form with no possibility of identifying individual information.

Data gathered on the 1975 cohort were analyzed using primarily the chi square technique. If the distribution of expected frequencies for the total sample did not lend itself to valid analysis, data were grouped or the number of categories involved was limited to those with acceptable expected frequencies. Limited time and resources precluded the use of more sophisticated statistical techniques. All results reported as significant reached the .05 level of confidence. Observed probabilities of less than .05 are reported on a case-by-case basis.

#### Discussion and Conclusions

The major findings of this study of 420 youth discharged from DYS custody during calendar year 1975 are as follows:

1. Of the 420 youth institutionalized as juveniles in Colorado, 27.6% were subsequently incarcerated as adults in Colorado. No female recidivists were identified resulting in a recidivism rate for males only of 34.6%. It is felt that this overall recidivism rate is a conservative figure because it was not possible to trace any youth incarcerated out of state or any female members of the cohort who may have changed names following marriage. It must be remembered, further-

more, that recidivism as defined in this study (actual incarceration in an adult correctional facility) is most stringent. Other evidence of continued criminal activity such as recommitment to DYS institutions, adult arrest, adult court involvement, and adult probation have not been considered.

It is informative to compare these results with those of other studies. It must be kept in mind, however, that many factors relating to the differences in the populations studied as well as in sentencing and in institutional programs affect the validity of the comparisons. Thus, the comparisons should be used only to provide a very general framework for this study and not to provide true "evaluative" information.

Goldman (1973) reported that 20.5% of his sample of male delinquents were incarcerated in New York adult institutions at the end of a three-year follow-up period. Of the 420 youth in our sample, 19.5% had recidivated by three years after release from DYS institutions. Thus, our recidivism rate appears to be similar to New York's.

Factors affecting the comparability of these figures are that the New York sample included only male delinquents, whereas ours included 67% delinquents and 33% CHINS, which would tend to artificially lower the Colorado recidivism rate. Furthermore, since our study does not break out age by outcome by time at risk, it is impossible to gauge what the Colorado three-year recidivism rate is for youth released after age 16. The five-year recidivism rate for Colorado youth released after 16 is 31.8%. Our three-year rate would be lower, but it is unknown how it compares to New York's.

The study of a 12.5% random sample of 246 youth released to aftercare from Florida's Training Schools in FY 1968-69 and followed

up for three years showed that 33.3% of them were subsequently identified in the Florida adult correctional system (Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitation Services). This compares to our three-year recidivism rate of 19.5%. The Florida figure, however, includes adult probation as well as institutionalization as the criteria for recidivism, whereas our Colorado figure reflects only adult institutionalization.

The study completed on 342 males detained in Rhode Island juvenile institutions in 1972 indicates that by five years later, 31.9% were incarcerated in adult institutions (Fontaine, 1978). Again, the five-year Colorado recidivism rate for males was 34.6%, i.e., quite similar to that for Rhode Island. A major factor affecting the comparability of these figures is that the Rhode Island recidivism rate includes incarceration in adult jails as well as institutions, whereas the Colorado rate reflects only adult institutionalization. Again, this tends to artificially lower the Colorado rate in comparison to Rhode Island's rate.

It would appear that the adult recidivism rate of youth committed to DYS institutions is comparable (neither substantially higher nor lower) to that of states in which studies have been conducted. Although these comparisons provide a framework of validity to the present study, further definitions of recidivism and of clients and programs would be needed to justify closer comparisons.

2. As expected, males were more frequently committed as delinquents than as CHINS while females were committed as CHINS as frequently as delinquents. Minorities (Spanish-surnamed and Black) were over-represented in the cohort in comparison to their representation in the 10-19 year old population of Colorado. Minorities of both sexes

were more frequently committed as delinquents than Anglos. These results are consistent with what has been previously reported on the demographic characteristics of institutionalized populations.

3. The proportion of minorities among the adult recidivists is even greater than their proportion of the juvenile institutional cohort. Minority youth recidivated at a significantly higher rate than did Anglo youth. The high rate of Black recidivism appears to account in large part for this result since the adult incarceration rate for Spanish-surnamed youth was not significantly different from that of Anglo youth. Minority representation in the Colorado population as a whole and in the institutional population increases as one moves from the juvenile to the adult justice system.
4. No consistent relationship was found between the proportion of 10-19 year olds in a given county and that county's representation in the discharge cohort. However, significant differences in adult recidivism rates were found, with Denver, El Paso, and Pueblo Counties showing higher recidivism rates than the others.
5. The significant differences in adult recidivism rates between counties were not found to be associated with the proportion of minority juvenile commitments from the counties. It would appear that the basis for differences in recidivism rates by county lies in a complex interaction of characteristics associated with each and not on a simple one-to-one relationship between proportion of minority commitments and recidivism rate.
6. Evidence indicates that the older a youth at the time of juvenile commitment, the greater the incidence of adult incarceration. In this study, age at discharge was not obtained. It is quite possible, however, that younger juvenile offenders, released from DYS custody

at an earlier age, became re-involved with the juvenile rather than the adult system. Youth who were 17 or 18 at the time of discharge from DYS custody would have been more likely to enter the adult justice system directly. Another explanation needing further investigation is that younger juvenile offenders may be more receptive to positive effects of an institutional experience.

7. Among youth in four I-Level and subtype classifications ( $I_3$  Cfm,  $I_3$  Cfc,  $I_4$  Na,  $I_4$  Nx), the recidivism rate of  $I_3$  Cfc's was significantly higher. However,  $I_4$  Nx's who did recidivate were more frequently committed for more serious offenses as adults. While these results are not inconsistent with I-Level theory, the addition of data from future DYS discharge cohorts is needed to provide sufficient numbers for comprehensive analysis of all I-Level and subtype classifications and their relationship to adult recidivism.
8. The last DYS institution at which a youth was placed before parole was significantly related to adult recidivism with CATC having the highest rate followed by LMS, GGYC, LPYC, and Detention respectively. Oak Cottage at LMS had a higher recidivism rate than all other LMS cottages with the exception of Aspen. The reorganization of cottage populations during the period for which data was gathered precludes drawing conclusions about the relative effectiveness of individual placements.
9. The total time spent in a DYS institution was significantly associated with adult recidivism. Recidivists had longer DYS institutional stays, on the average, than did nonrecidivists. Because delinquents had more institutional time than CHINS and were more likely to recidivate, it is possible that this difference is attributable to the seriousness of the offenders. The addition of data from future cohorts will help to clarify the interaction of youth characteristics, length of juvenile

institutional stay, and adult recidivism.

10. No conclusions can be drawn from this study on the overall, objective contribution of the parole experience to risk of adult recidivism. While more recidivists were found among cohort youth who were paroled (or given courtesy supervision if CHINS) than among youth discharged directly from the institution without parole supervision, the results are confounded by the fact that more delinquents than CHINS were paroled, and delinquents were more likely to recidivate regardless of whether or not they received parole supervision. A more detailed examination of parole supervision in relation to adult recidivism will be undertaken in the future.
11. The residential placement of delinquent youth upon release from institutions onto juvenile parole was not significantly related to adult recidivism rates. This result suggests either that release placement decisions were appropriate or that post-institutional residential placement is unrelated to adult recidivism.
12. The parole counselors' subjective rating of parole adjustment of delinquents was strongly associated with outcome. Their reports of excellent, fair, and unsatisfactory adjustment were related to lower and higher adult recidivism rates, respectively.
13. Adult recidivism rates were significantly lower for delinquent youth who were discharged after successfully completing parole or for nonqualitative reasons than they were for youth discharged after an unsuccessful parole. Additional research is needed to assess the significance for adult recidivism of the many types of "nonqualitative" discharge.
14. Data from the 1975 cohort indicate that the majority of youth discharged from DYS institutions who were subsequently incarcerated as adults had been so within three years from date of juvenile parole



(two years from date of discharge from DYS custody). These results suggest that a three-year post-discharge follow-up period will provide valuable information and that future studies could provide more current feedback than the present five-year study.

The present study is a first step in an ongoing longitudinal study of youth released from DYS institutions. The addition of data from future cohorts and on more variables will test the validity of the present results and provide data on trends in the relationships of various juvenile variables to the incidence of incarceration in the adult correctional system.

It is hoped that the present and future longitudinal Adult Incarceration studies will serve to increase our ability to reduce adult criminal behavior through increasing our knowledge of the differential effectiveness of DYS juvenile institutional treatment programs.

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