



# Research Abstract

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## **Recidivism Among Youth Released From the Youth Leadership Academy to the City Challenge Intensive Aftercare Program**

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## Recidivism Among Youth Released From The Youth Leadership Academy To The City Challenge Intensive Aftercare Program

A previous report<sup>1</sup> recommended that the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) develop, implement, and evaluate comprehensive program models that provide graduated transitions from residential confinement to community living, ensure continuity of programming across service settings, provide substantially enhanced aftercare, and place greater emphasis on family interventions. The integrated program sequence consisting of the Sergeant Henry Johnson Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) and the City Challenge (CCh) Intensive Aftercare Program was cited as potentially worthy of further study, because it already appeared to incorporate many of the recommended features.

The present study examined recidivism among 323 male juvenile delinquents from New York City who were released from the Sergeant Henry Johnson Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) to the City Challenge Intensive Aftercare Program (CCh) from May 1992 through June 1999. The primary purpose of the study was to determine whether efforts to improve the design and implementation of the YLA/CCh sequence had been accompanied by reductions in post-release recidivism.

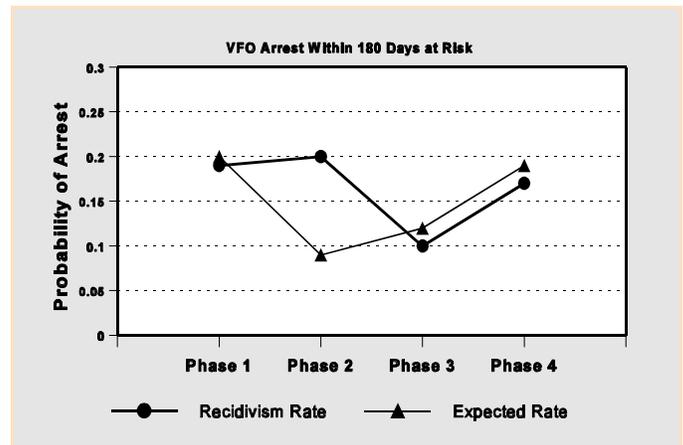
### Historical Development of the YLA/CCh Program

The YLA/CCh sequence consists of approximately 5 to 8 months of residential care at the YLA, followed by post-residential day treatment in the CCh program for the remainder of the youth's placement in state custody, usually totaling twelve to eighteen months. Based on interviews with program managers, the historical development of the YLA/CCh program sequence was divided into four phases:

- 1. YLA Development (May 1992 - March 1996):** This period was characterized by steady development and refinement of the YLA component, accompanied by persistent instability in the CCh component.
- 2. CCh Development (April 1996 - March 1997):** By the end of this phase, a stable location, some key staffing changes, and collaboration with outside consultants culminated in a CCh component that continued the essential features of the YLA program and was considered by program managers to be consistent with the principles of the federally-sponsored Intensive Aftercare Program model.
- 3. First CAS Contract (April 1997 - May 1998):** Family services were enhanced through a contract with the Children's Aid Society (CAS). CAS staff tended to provide therapy to selected families directly rather than refer family members to existing services.
- 4. Second CAS Contract (June 1998 - June 1999):** The role of CAS staff shifted to the present focus on conducting in-depth psycho-social evaluations of family circumstances. On the basis of these evaluations, CAS staff arrange access to needed services.

### Methods

Analyses of changes in recidivism rates controlled for changes in the distribution of youth characteristics and circumstances, including age, race, length of residential stay, time at risk, 2 measures of academic achievement, 4 measures of prior record, 4 measures of youth attitudes and behavior, 4 measures of youth's home environment, 5 measures of local crime and arrest rates, and 6 measures of local population and housing characteristics. These measures were combined in multivariate statistical models to produce scores reflecting the *a priori risk* of recidivism for each individual.



### Findings

After controlling for changes in a *a priori risk*, the study found no reduction in overall recidivism, as measured by post-release arrests for any criminal offenses. The study did find a statistically significant reduction between the second and third phases for certain measures of violent recidivism. The effects were strongest for short-term recidivism, that is, for rearrests for violent crimes within the first 6 months following release. During the second phase, the observed rate of violent recidivism within six months at risk had been more than double the rate expected on the basis of average *a priori risk*, but it dropped to levels slightly below *a priori risk* during the third and fourth phases. Despite this relative reduction, though, the absolute level of violent recidivism for the fourth phase was still high—17% within 6 months and 31% within 12 months.

### Conclusion

Patterns in the detailed findings suggest that the relative reduction in violent recidivism was probably not due to changes in the characteristics and circumstances of participants, changes in pre-arrest revocation rates, changes in local arrest rates, or improvements in the YLA component. Among the most salient explanations, the most plausible is that the reduction was due primarily to improvements in the City Challenge Intensive Aftercare Program.

<sup>1</sup>Frederick, B. (1999). *Factors Contributing To Recidivism Among Youth Placed With The New York State Division For Youth*. Albany, NY: New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services.