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UW Medicine

**[PROCESS AND IMPACT EVALUATION:
FAMILY INTERVENTION AND RESTORATIVE
SERVICES CENTER (FIRS)]**

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Sarah Cusworth Walker, Ph.D.
University of Washington, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

Introduction

Background

In 2015, the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, King County Superior Court/Juvenile Court, King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention, and the City of Seattle partnered to launch the Family Intervention and Restorative Services Center (FIRS). Designed to provide an alternative to court filing and detention placement for youth arrested for juvenile domestic violence, the program provides a pathway to services outside of formal court processes. The program was informed by jurisdictional efforts across the country to reduce the number of youth placed in detention for home conflict, including the Pima County, Arizona's Domestic Violence Alternative Center¹. The FIRS program is both a pathway to services outside of a court filing as well as a physical place offering short term respite apart from juvenile detention. Youth can access one or both of these options. FIRS began its pathways to services launch in January 2016 while the respite center was being refurbished. The respite portion of FIRS then became available in June 2016.

In the fall of 2015, the University of Washington initiated a process of supporting data infrastructure development for the FIRS program through a City of Seattle contract. The culmination of this process is the current report on early outcomes of the program. The outcome evaluation draws on services and psychosocial history data collected by the FIRS program as well as data available through the court tracking database, JIMS, on criminal history and subsequent offenses. State level data on court reoffenses (re-referrals to court) for two counties similar in demographics and size was also accessed to provide a cross-jurisdictional comparison of recidivism.

This report summarizes the study's findings. We begin with a review of the FIRS program model as reported to us through interviews with staff and supervisors followed by a brief overview of the research and program literature on similar efforts to place the findings in context. We then present the quantitative findings, including the objectives, methods, analytic

¹ <http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/prosecutor/news-media-center/news/2016/june/firs-opening.aspx>

approach and findings. The report concludes with some actionable recommendations based on these early outcomes.

Approaches to Juvenile Domestic Violence Diversion

King County's efforts to reduce youth detention are longstanding. King County was the first in Washington State to adopt the principles of the Annie E Casey Foundation Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) in 1998. The county subsequently reduced its detained population by nearly 70%, and today has the second lowest youth detention rate in the country.² King County is also the birthplace of the Step Up program, the first known program developed to specifically address youth to family/parent violence.³ The King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office also has a history of innovation to reduce formal court filings for youth. In 2014, the Prosecuting Attorney's Office partnered with the community to create a weekend diversion program for eligible offenses (180 Program). The goal of the program is to divert up to 300 youth a year from formal court filings.⁴

King County's efforts to reduce court filings and detention placements specifically for events related to home conflict (termed juvenile domestic violence in King County, and variously termed adolescent family conflict, adolescent family violence in the literature) comes at a time of increasing focus on this type of juvenile crime. In March 2015, the National Center for Juvenile Justice published a national review of promising practices for address juvenile domestic violence.⁵ The brief highlights the innovations of four jurisdictions to address JDV: Pima County, AZ; DuPage County, Illinois; King County, WA; and the state of Florida. Innovations include offering specialized JDV services (DuPage, King), creating alternative spaces for youth processing with (Florida) or without (Pima County) residential respite services. The brief predated the FIRS program, and highlights King County's efforts to provide specialized JDV services. As highlighted in the brief and elsewhere, the challenge of addressing JDV outside of detention is the immediacy of needing to de-escalate a conflictual and often violent situation. The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice has addressed this by contracting

² <http://kingcounty.gov/depts/facilities-management/major-projects-capital-planning/current-projects/children-family-justice-center/juvenile-justice.aspx>

³ *Evaluation Report: Step-Up*. Seattle, WA: Northwest Resource Associates; 2001.

⁴ <http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/prosecutor/youth-programs/180-program.aspx>

⁵ Siegel, G., & Halemba, G. (2015). Promising practices in the diversion of juvenile domestic violence cases. Pittsburgh, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice.

with over 60 facilities throughout the state to provide respite beds in therapeutic facilities as an alternative to detention. A FDJJ report on early outcomes found that using respite was associated with a lower probability of re-arrest for domestic violence and felony offenses.⁶ Following de-escalation, juvenile courts are not traditionally equipped to handle the dynamic of juvenile domestic violence, specifically. As noted in an earlier paper on JDV, this type of conflict does not fit with traditional concepts of perpetrator and victim.⁷ Accordingly, interventions offered to families experiencing JDV are often not sensitive to the power dynamic involved in the parent/youth conflict. In the juvenile justice system, youth may be released to families without adequate support because the court assumes the parent is able to effectively exert control over their child when necessary. The ineffectiveness of this view is seen in the challenges some detention centers encounter when parents are reluctant or refuse to pick youth up from detention centers following a conflict.⁸

Prior to FIRS, King County was already implementing a court diversion JDV services model led by the Step Up program. In this model, all misdemeanor domestic violence cases filed by the prosecutor were sent to Step Up under a court diversion agreement and youth taken into custody for JDV were placed in detention for respite. Step Up would conduct a safety assessment and develop an intervention plan that included the Step Up program (a family group intervention focused specifically on JDV) or recommended more intense services based on presenting needs (e.g., for serious mental health or substance abuse treatment needs). Prior evaluations on Step Up suggest it is a promising approach to reducing subsequent justice involvement, and more rigorous evaluations of the program are forthcoming. The program has been widely replicated and adapted nationally and internationally.

⁶ Greenwald, M. A., & Wolff, K. (2014). Briefing Report: Effectiveness of the Domestic Violence Alternative Placement Program (pp. 1-11). Florida: Department of Juvenile Justice.

⁷ Downey, L. (1997). Adolescent violence: A systematic and feminist perspective. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 18(2), 70-79.

⁸ <http://www.columbialegal.org/falling-through-gaps-how-stay-detention-can-lead-youth-homelessness>

The FIRS Program

FIRS Assessment and Referral

Youth are referred to the FIRS program through in custody and out of custody arrests. Youth are referred by law enforcement officers directly when youth are brought to the center immediately following a conflict or by the prosecutor's office when a law enforcement officer sends referral for a domestic violence incident in which the youth was not taken into custody. The program differs from previous practice in that the case is not filed by the prosecutor. Otherwise, the process of conducting a family safety assessment and intervention plan remain largely the same but with an expanded target population as now all cases previously unfiled by prosecutors (e.g., when a parent did not want to file charges) are able to access family safety plan and intervention services if desired. The practice of the prosecutor's office is to not file on these cases regardless of success in completing recommended services.

Step Up social workers begin to work with the families of youth detained for family domestic violence as soon as possible, contacting parents while the youth is detained and before first appearance (first hearing before a judge) if a youth is in custody. If a youth is held at first appearance, Step-Up social workers and the assigned juvenile probation counselors (JPC) meet with youth and the family to develop a preliminary plan within 48 hours. If a youth is released at first appearance calendar, the youth and family will be required to meet with the social worker and the probation counselor within three days. The social workers will also meet with families and youth not detained but for whom the prosecutor's office receives a report from law enforcement involving a DV incident. The primary role of the social workers is to assess and address family violence/safety concerns, assess service needs, and work with the JPCs to develop and implement a specific plan for safety and services. Typically, a FIRS social worker will contact the parent/guardian and youth to review the option to participate in FIRS. If the family agrees, the social worker will complete a family assessment focused on safety risk and treatment needs and work with the FIRS Juvenile Probation Counselor to develop a services agreement with the family. After the agreement is signed, the case is transferred to a JPC in the geographical area of the family to offer case management, support

and additional services if necessary.

Financial support for services is provided by both county and city resources as state dollars are currently allocated only to juveniles with filed cases. Due to the pre-file status of the FIRS cases, the court had to find resources outside of traditional funding sources. The court is able to fund the following intervention programs for families who opt into the program.

Services available through FIRS

Step Up is a group parenting and youth program specifically developed to address adolescent family violence. Families attend sessions with other families and modules include parent only, youth only and combined content. The model components include respectful communication, problem-solving, restorative justice, coping skills and safety planning. The program runs 21 weeks, although families who appear to be making good progress in advance of 21 weeks are able to complete the program early. Step Up groups were just recently begun in the Seattle area and are most accessible to families living in the southern rather than northern part of the county. The program currently runs in Seattle and two other cities within the county (Bellevue and Kent).

Functional Family Therapy is a family-based counseling program involving home visitation. The program typically lasts four months and follows four phases: Engagement/Motivation, Relational Assessment, Behavior Change and Generalization. The model is built around principles of respectful communication and problem-solving within the family system. FFT is available to families throughout Seattle. The court currently contracts with one provider of Functional Family Therapy which serves the entire county (Institute for Family Development). The estimated caseload is 120 families a year.

MultiSystemic Therapy/Family Integrated Transitions (MST-FIT) is a family- based support and counseling program also involving home visitation and 24 hour crisis support as needed. MST is based on an ecological model of youth development and therapist/coaches work with the family to address systemic issues in order to support youth well-being and reduce

delinquency. This support includes, but is not limited to, helping families connect youth with school and community activities while setting family goals and introducing communication and problem-solving skills. MultiSystemic Therapy is provided through Therapeutic Health Services in Seattle and serves the entire county. The estimate caseload is 36 families a year.

Parent Youth Connection Seminar (PYCS) is a two day training for parents and youth on resources available in the community as well as strategies for resolving conflict. It is facilitated out of the YMCA off site from the court.

Aggression Replacement Training (ART) is a group program for youth focusing on three areas of skill building: Social Skills, Moral Reasoning and Anger Management. Anger management skills involve emotional coping strategies and problem-solving. Moral reasoning involves empathy building and consequential thinking. Social skills assist youth in generalizing prosocial behaviors to real life scenarios. The program lasts 10 weeks and is held 3 times a week. ART Groups are available to youth throughout King County at the central and satellite probation offices.

A family services plan may also include a referral to individual counseling or a continuance of individual counseling if a family is already enrolled in services.

Data Development

The University of Washington supported the development of performance monitoring infrastructure development in close collaboration with the Step Up program, the court research and data analyst, FIRS supervisor and staff. This involved coordinating meetings in 2015 and throughout 2016 as the FIRS program was being launched to bring data collected in various departments into a unified FIRS tracking database. The court had already developed data infrastructure to track decisions regarding FIRS eligibility, referral and engagement in the existing court contact database, JIMS. The data development workgroup also set up an online youth and parent survey to assess post-services outcomes including perception of services and

levels of home conflict. However, the logistics of beginning the new FIRS program and evolving responsibilities of Step Up and FIRS probation vs. field probation officers resulted in these surveys not being implemented. The table below lists the data development goals for the workgroup given the evaluation targets.

For the analyses conducted in this study, the University of Washington used data provided by the juvenile court in February 2017, representing youth who were identified as eligible for the FIRS program between January and December 2016. In June 2016, youth also began to access the respite center. Data on respite center use was still being developed and checked for accuracy at the time of the February 2016 data pull and is not included in this report. From the data obtained, the FIRS program processed 312 cases in the first year of operation, representing 245 unique youth.

Table 1: Data Map for Addressing Process

FIRS Process Points	Evaluation Question	Data Source
All misdemeanor DV cases booked into detention are staffed by FIRS team	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the reasons for not accepting a booked misdemeanor DV case into FIRS? 2. Is the rate of FIRS staffing rejections higher for youth of color? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interviews with screening staff 2. JIMS data on FIRS rejection
Step Up reaches out to all 'accepted' FIRS cases.	What is the percent of successful contact with the families by race/ethnicity, age and gender and by in or out of custody referral?	1. JIMS: Signed FIRS agreement
Youth characteristics of FIRS referred and enrolled cases	What is the level of previous maltreatment, mental health, history of family assault and level of parental fear for contacted families?	1. FIRS tracking database: items from violence safety assessment and behavior checklist
FIRS signed families referred to services based on level of need	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How many contacted families refused services? 2. What services do the families agree to in the FIRS agreement? 3. What percent of services are existing or new to the family? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. JIMS: reason for rejection 2. FIRS database: Reason no Step Up 3. FIRS database: Program information 4. FIRS database: Program information
Youth participates in community services. *	What is the percent of successful service completion by service type and race/ethnicity?	FIRS database: Program completion
Family completes FIRS agreement *	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Was the family satisfied with the FIRS process? 2. Did the youth's behavior improve? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Online satisfaction 2. Online behavior checklist
Rate of referral (recidivism) for youth accessing FIRS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does recidivism differ between those engaged in FIRS services vs. those not. 2. How does recidivism compare to misdemeanor DV cases in other jurisdictions? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. JIMS: Prior referrals, rereferrals by type and frequency 2. State data on court contacts for misdemeanor DV arrests

*Notes: *Data was not collected due to insufficient data or data of sufficient integrity to warrant analysis.*

Study Objectives and Methods

The present study was commissioned by the City of Seattle as part of its investment in the county-based FIRS program. The FIRS program cooperated in the data development and outcomes study but did not directly request the study; consequently, the process of identifying targets for evaluation was developed using a formative and action evaluation philosophy for the purpose of program improvement. At the same time, data analysis on re-referral appears to be of sufficient quality to support generalizable conclusions about the FIRS program if adopted in other jurisdictions. The following sections review the results of interviews with program and detention screening staff, and quantitative analyses.

Methods

Process Evaluation

Staff interviews

The purpose of the staff interviews was to assess reasons why a youth who was otherwise eligible might not be referred or accepted in the FIRS program. The interviews also addressed areas for potential program improvement. Between June and November 2016, UW staff interviewed the two FIRS probation officers, the Step Up supervisor, two Step Up social workers, and three detention screeners who were the first line of contact with parents about whether youth could be transferred to the respite facility (at the time of interviews, FIRS practice was for youth to be brought to the detention center and then triaged to respite). Interviews with parents experiencing the FIRS program were conducted for another contract focused on, specifically, Black and East African families, and are summarized elsewhere⁹. UW conducted interviews with 9 parents from an initial pool of 14 families identified by the court as willing to discuss the program with UW, ethnicity (as noted) and stratified by what services the family was offered as part of the FIRS agreement.

⁹ Walker, S.C., Gran, S., Stubblefield, M. (2017). *Culturally Responsive Resources and Needs to Address Adolescent Family Violence in Seattle: African American and East African Communities*. Report for the City of Seattle Human Services Division.

Administrative data

The process evaluation focused on the potential for ethnic or gender disparities in the rate of FIRS referral and engagement in the eligible population, as well as characteristics of youth likely to be identified for the FIRS program. These descriptives include the most commonly identified victim, the severity of youth behavior by levels of identified victim, referral to program based on severity of youth behavior, referral to programs based on demographic characteristics, and characteristics related to a successful engagement in FIRS defined as a signed FIRS agreement. Service completion data was not included in the analysis because the number of open cases and need to update completion data at the time of the data request did not allow for conclusive statements about completion at the time of this report.

Impact Evaluation

The impact evaluation focused on the re-referral rates between youth with signed FIRS agreements and those without agreements, as well as the re-referral rates between youth offered the FIRS program compared to youth identified for misdemeanor DV in two other large counties in Washington State. The impact evaluation between youth with and without signed FIRS agreements examine balance between the groups on prior referrals, severity of presenting charge, age, race, and gender. The analyses found the two groups did not differ significantly on any of these domains. Failing to find any significant differences between the group on variables otherwise traditionally associated (and associated in the current study) with recidivism suggests that the factors involved in signed FIRS versus a not signed FIRS agreement were largely random for misdemeanor cases and can be used to study the effects of the intended FIRS process compared to a concurrent group of youth who for unknown reasons did not access FIRS (likely due to timing or other reasons unrelated to recidivism risk). In both cases, however, the program cannot be compared to youth who had a case filed in court. This analysis is conducted with the cross county comparison.

Two counties, Snohomish and Pierce, were selected due to their relative similarity to King County in demographics and size (although King County is the densest county in the state by a significant margin). UW also selected two counties rather than comparing King County to all other counties in the state after reviewing the re-referral rates for all counties (data from all counties was requested from the Washington State Center for Court Research/Administrative

Office of the Courts) and finding significant variation in recidivism by county. Given the observed differences in likelihood of re arrest by county, selecting a smaller number of comparison sites reduces the statistical variation due to factors outside of a court's control (e.g. law enforcement arrest rates, county level "true levels" of domestic violence). Selecting two counties with urban and rural areas, such as King County, also increased the likelihood that law enforcement practices would be similarly affected by population density.

Measures

FIRS Tracking Database

The FIRS tracking database collected information from multiple sources: Step Up screening and assessment information, probation counselor services information and parent responses to the Youth Behavior Checklist.

Step Up safety assessment is a semi structured psychosocial history of the youth and family background. For the FIRS tracking database, the following items were collected:

- Victim relationship in most current incident
- History of mental health needs (yes/no)
- Known Diagnosis
- Victim of violence/abuse
- Safety concerns (how fearful is parent of youth)
- Behavior checklist (how often has youth engaged in conflict, abuse, disruptive behavior in the past month, scale 0-5, 5 daily; appendix).

Case management information included:

- What services the youth/parent agreed to in the FIRS agreement
- Why Step Up was not referred (if not)

JIMS Database

Information about youth referral to FIRS, reason for rejection/refusal, whether the parent/youth signed an agreement and completion was inputted by probation case managers into the court tracking database, JIMS. Information on re-referral/recidivism for FIRS youth was also obtained from the King County JIMS Database.

State Court Contact Database

Information on prior referrals, age, ethnicity, gender and subsequent re-referrals/recidivism for youth in Snohomish and Pierce Counties were obtained from a state database managed by the Washington State Center for Court Research. A comparison sample was identified by selected all referrals with a domestic violence flag in 2014 and 2015 from these two counties. Criminal history and recidivism information was then appended to the identified comparison sample from all court contacts on file.

Findings and Implications

Findings: Process Evaluation

Staff Interviews

Interviews with screening staff and FIRS staff revealed that initial parent refusals for FIRS services are often reconsidered after more information about the program is provided. The time of engagement into FIRS often feels overwhelming for parents. During the initial phone consultation between the JPC and the parent/ guardian, the parent/guardian receives information when “parents may not have complete understanding – right at the moment...” since most are feeling overwhelmed, anxious, fearful, extremely vulnerable, in crisis, severely overwhelmed, and not able to absorb new information. Some parent/guardians will informally reject the FIRS option during this time stating “I’m not sure about this...” Later, parents often change their minds. This was particularly true for parents whose children were taken to detention first and then moved to FIRS respite. Policies around where a youth is taken to first have changed and youth can often be taken directly to respite, likely reducing the number of parent refusals for placement.

Additional reasons offered by the FIRS Center’s staff for parent’s/guardian’s’ refusal of FIRS’ programs include: 1) safety concerns for their son/ daughter and their family; 2) fear their son/daughter will run away; 3) parent’s/guardian’s fears about the lack of consequences in a non-secured facility; and 4) parent’s/guardian’s decisions to keep their child in a secured facility -

often to impose “structure and accountability.” If a youth has severe mental health issues, (e.g., suicidality, is severely toxic, detoxing from drugs or alcohol), they may be identified as ineligible for respite by the FIRS team.

FIRS probation counselors Step up caseworkers and detention screeners describe the following FIRS benefits to families: 1) no charges filed; 2) no criminal history for youth; and 2) an opportunity to identify community and counseling services outside of the formal court process/hearing. As one FIRS staff mentioned, it “takes work to explain to kids and parents and for them to think about what no contact with courts [means].” Screeners inform parents about the FIRS Center and its options, i.e., youth will be placed in a non-secured detention alternative. The screeners affirmed that FIRS “may not always be a good option” based on reasons mentioned earlier: some parent(s) fear their child may run, some youth may have severe mental health issues, or extremely toxic from drugs or alcohol or both.

If youth and parents do not agree or reject the FIRS respite, youth will stay or be transferred to detention, but will still have the opportunity to access the program again pre-filing.

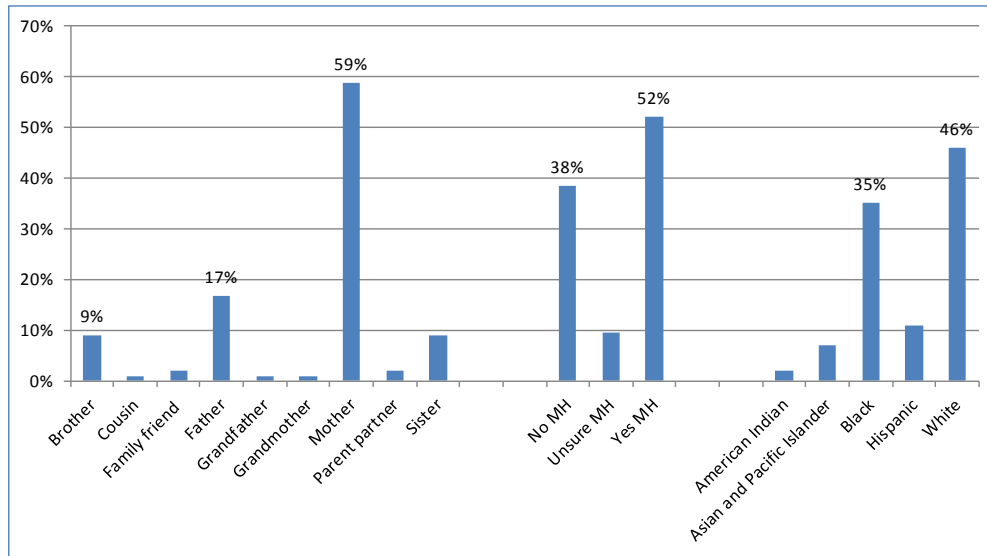
Administrative Data and FIRS Decision Points

Just under 50% of the youth referred to FIRS are White-nonLatino. As with the general juvenile population, Black youth were significantly overrepresented in FIRS compared to their representation in the King County population (35% referred to FIRS vs approximately 6% in county population).

Slightly more than half of youth (52%) referred to FIRS had identified mental health needs (as reported by parents), and 78% of youth with reported mental health needs reported more than one identified diagnosis. The most common identified victim in a FIRS incident is a mother (59% of all referrals), followed by a father and then a sibling (Figure 1). This matches documented trends in national studies.¹⁰

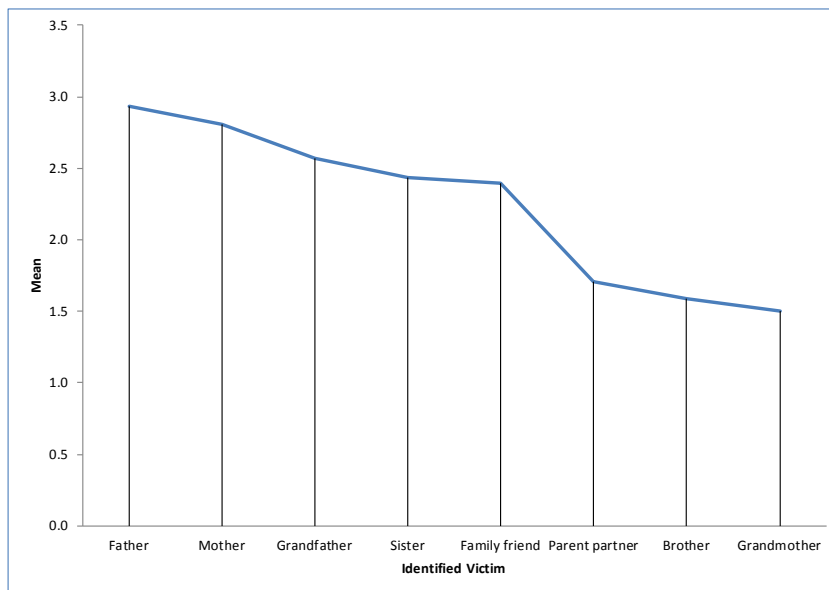
¹⁰ Snyder, H. N., & McCurley, C. (2008). Domestic assaults by juvenile offenders. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

Figure 1: Demographics of Youth Referred



Youth with the most disruptive behavior at home (as measured by the Behavior Checklist score) are more likely to have a parent identified as a victim (father or mother; Figure 2) with an average of one threatening or violent act a month.

Figure 2: Severity of Youth Violence and Identified Victim



FIRS Engagement and Signed Agreements

Of the 245 unique youth referred to FIRS (excluding re-

referrals), 33.3% of parents and youth signed FIRS agreements (n = 119). The primary reasons for not signing an agreement was a decline from a parent (41%) followed by nonresponse from the family (e.g., when the FIRS staff reached out to offer services in non respite cases, the family

did not respond; Figure 3). Notes from case files for parent refusals were qualitatively coded to examine more detailed responses for parent nonresponse. The top three reasons for parent refusing FIRS services (all 25% each, total 75%) included the youth was already in services (including inpatient treatment), the youth was no longer at home (location not always indicated), and the parent reported that the youth was better/no need for additional intervention. The remaining reason for refusal was the parent wanting formal charges brought so youth took the issue seriously (n = 7).

Figure 3: Reasons for Failure to Sign FIRS Agreement

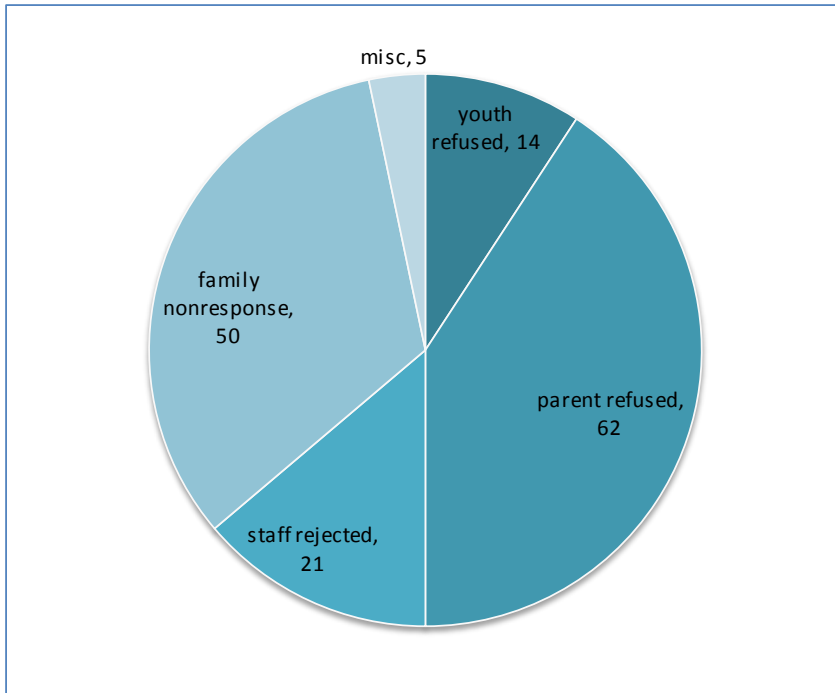
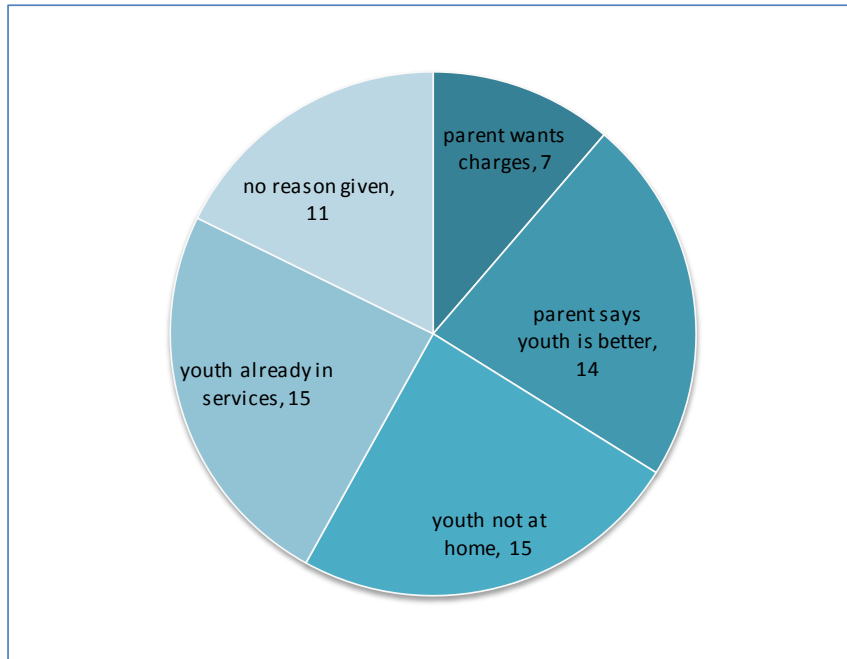


Figure 4: Reasons for Parent Refusal



A binary logistic regression was calculated to assess the relationship between staff rejection for FIRS eligibility (Table 2). Every week, FIRS staff and county prosecutor would review incoming FIRS cases to determine eligibility. The default for all misdemeanor cases was the offer of FIRS except in cases when a youth was already engaged in probation or staff determined that the youth's needs exceeded the capacity of FIRS services. Variables included in the model as predictors were youth age, prior court referrals for any matter, ethnicity compared to white youth, the grade of the current offense, and gender. The model found that youth with prior referrals were 1.5 times more likely to be rejected through staffing, Asian youth were significantly less likely than White youth to be rejected in a staffing. No other variables were predictive of rejection through staffing.

Table 2: Youth Characteristics Associated with FIRS Staffing Rejection

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Black	-0.269	0.683	0.155	1	ns	0.764
Latino	0.200	0.909	0.049	1	ns	1.222
Asian, Other	-18.249	7968.793	0.000	1	ns	0.000
Age	-0.170	0.193	0.782	1	ns	0.843
Offense severity	-0.595	0.453	1.724	1	ns	0.552
Prior referrals	0.444	0.110	16.278	1	0.000	1.559
Male	0.254	0.671	0.143	1	ns	1.289
Constant	1.076	3.795	0.080	1	ns	2.934

An analysis of signed FIRS agreements by youth characteristics found no significant differences in ethnicity, gender, age or prior referrals to juvenile court for any matter (DV or non DV related; Table 4). While female youth were somewhat less likely to have a signed FIRS agreement (34% compared to 45% for males), this did not reach statistical significance. Compared to males, female youth more likely to have parents report that they were “better,” not living at home (with others or whereabouts unknown), already in services or have parents not respond to requests. Males with no signed FIRS agreement were more likely than females to refuse services (regardless of parent input), have parents who wanted to file charges, and be rejected by staff for having too many needs/higher risk.

Table 3: Signed FIRS Agreement by Race, Gender and Age

	Not Signed		Signed		X2
	n	%	n	%	
Race/Ethnicity					1.41, ns
American Indian	4	3%	2	2%	
Asian/PI	10	6%	8	7%	
Black	56	36%	38	32%	
Hispanic	14	9%	15	13%	
White	70	45%	54	46%	
Gender					3.5, ns
Female	70	45%	40	34%	
Male	84	55%	77	66%	
Age	m=15.5	sd=1.74	m=15.8	sd=1.63	F=1.96, ns
Prior referrals	m = 1.14	sd = 2.31	m = 1.01	sd = 1.70	F=0.27, ns

Table 4: Linear Regression Examining Correlates of Signed FIRS Agreement, n = 245

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Black	-0.064	0.301	0.045	1	ns	0.938
Latinx	0.259	0.479	0.292	1	ns	1.295
Male	0.351	0.281	1.557	1	ns	1.420
Race other	-0.400	0.474	0.713	1	ns	0.670
Offense	0.621	0.206	9.063	1	0.003	1.861
Age	0.121	0.083	2.125	1	ns	1.129
Constant	-4.953	1.655	8.957	1	0.003	0.007

FIRS Program Referrals

The most commonly referred program in FIRS service agreements was Step Up (37%), followed by individual counseling services (37%; Figure 5). The followed the court’s model to refer to Step Up as the primary FIRS service except in cases of more serious treatment needs or low risk for re-offense. An analysis of the past month severity of youth threatening or violence behavior confirmed that referral to services was appropriate based on the assessed level of youth needs (Figure 6). The youth with more than monthly incidents (mean = 2), were more likely referred to in home counseling and support services (MST, FFT), Psychiatric Evaluation, and Step Up. Youth with less past month incidents were more likely referred non-family based (ART, Drug/Alcohol Eval, Individual counseling) and brief (PYCS) programs.

Figure 5: Percent of Referred Programs

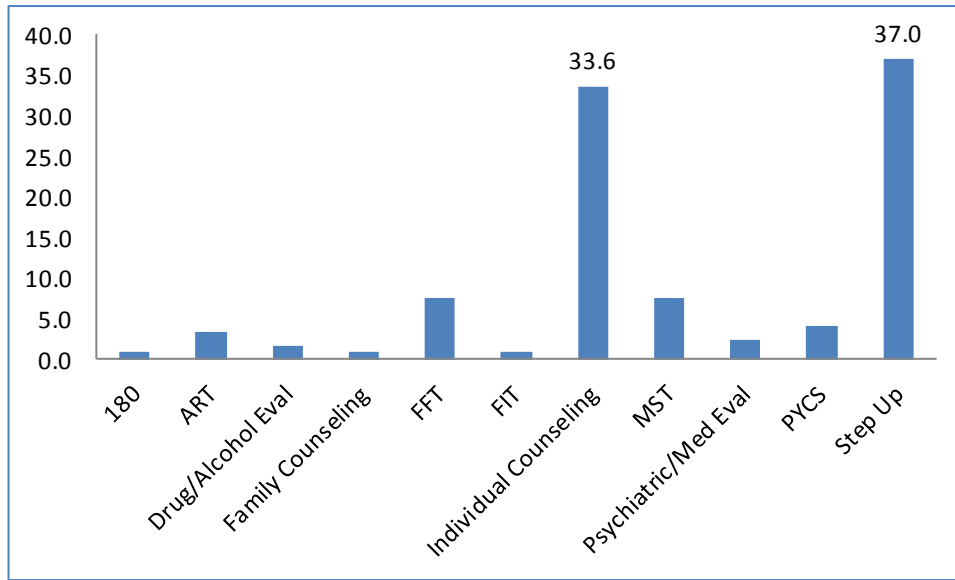
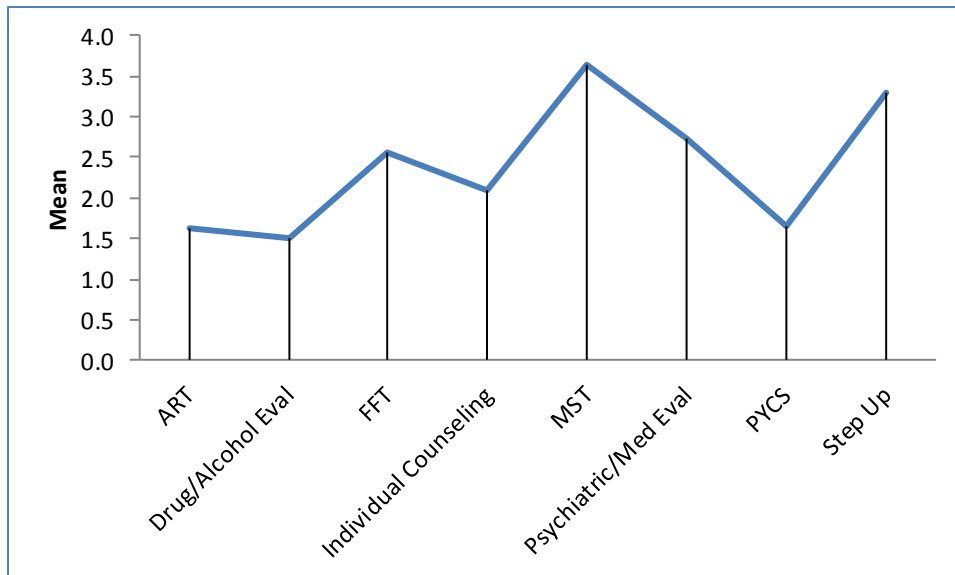


Figure 6: Severity of Youth Behavior by Referred Program



Findings: Program Impact

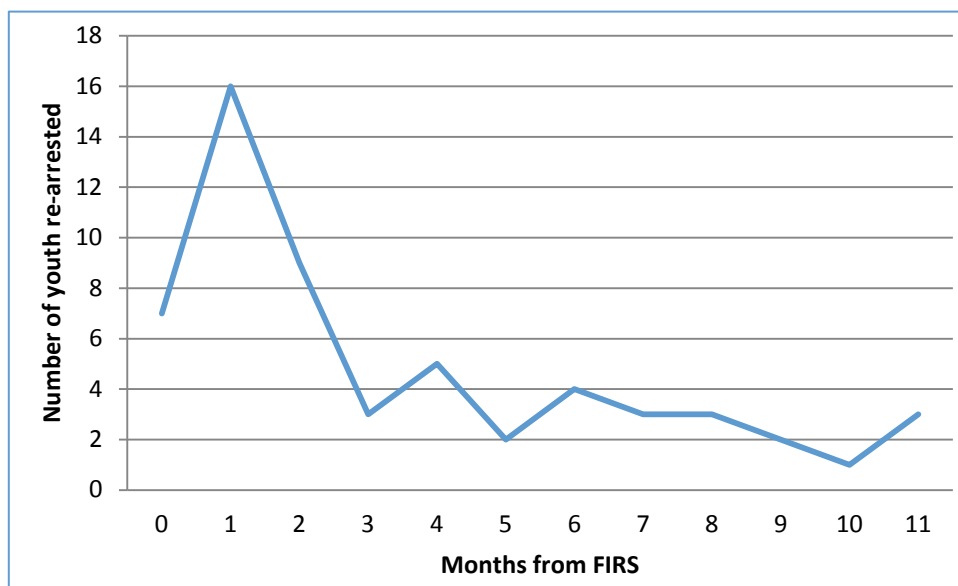
Analysis of program impact began a comparative analysis of youth with signed FIRS agreements and those with no agreements. Because no significant differences were found between the two groups on prior referrals, offense grade and youth characteristics, the distribution between these two groups appeared to be suitable for a quasi-experimental analysis examining the benefit of engaging parents and youth in subsequent services as part of the FIRS program.

The analytic sample for the recidivism analyses was a smaller sample of youth with a minimum observation window of 6 months from the time of FIRS referral to February 2016, $n = 179$. These youth were referred to the FIRS program, 86 who did not sign a FIRS agreement (48%) and 93 who did sign a FIRS agreement (52%).

The total re-offense rate for all youth in this timeframe was 31%. Of the youth with signed FIRS agreements, 22.6% were re-referred to juvenile court for another criminal matter within 12 months compared to 39.5% of youth without a signed FIRS agreement, chi square = 6.03, $p < .05$.

For youth who were referred back to juvenile court within 12 months, re-offenses were most likely to occur within the first two months of the FIRS referral (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Time to First Re-Referral Post FIRS for Offending, Truncated Sample, $n = 58$



The results of a Cox Regression survival analysis found that youth with signed FIRS agreements, controlling for youth characteristics predictive of re-offense, were over 1.5 times more likely to remain crime free (survival probability of 1.78) within 12 months (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Comparison Between Youth with Signed FIRS Agreements and No Signed Agreements in Time to Re offense (12 months) for Truncated Sample, n = 179

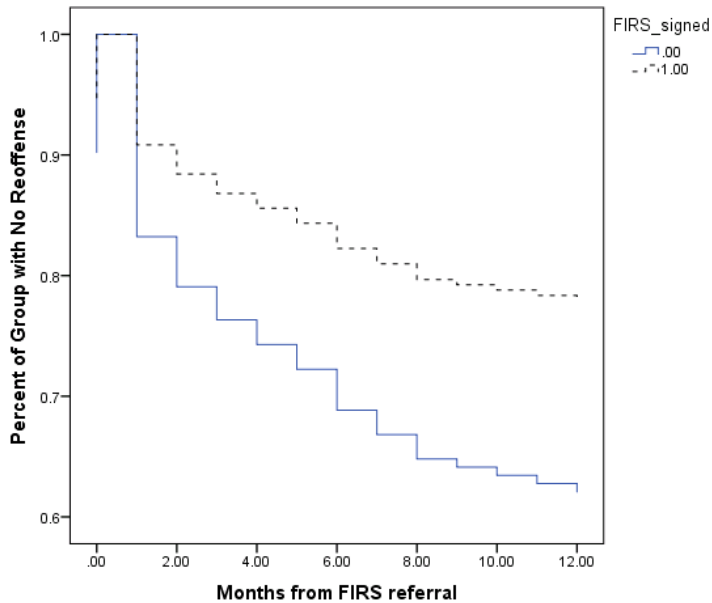


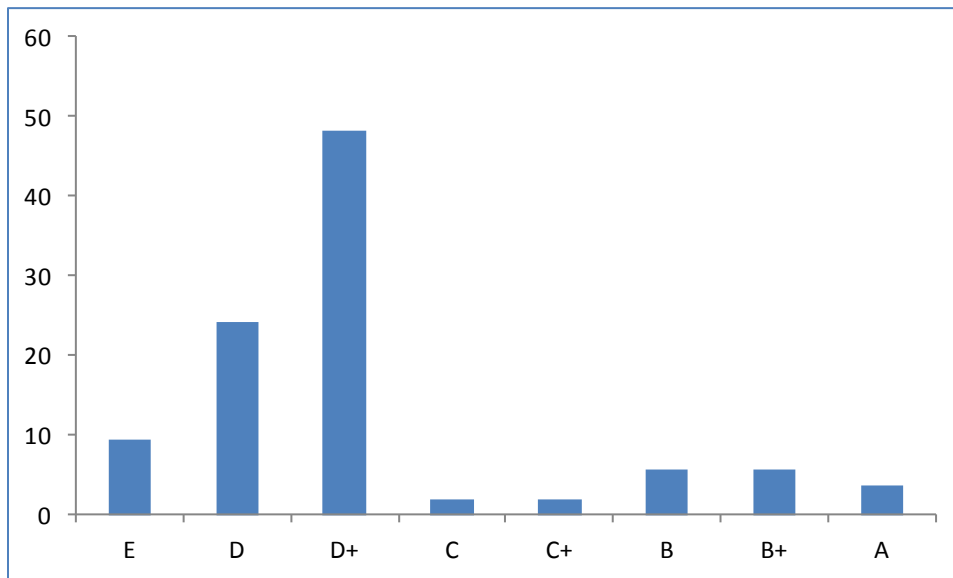
Table 5: Cox Regression Coefficients for Survival Analysis in Re Offense post FIRS for Truncated Sample, n = 179

	B	SE	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Race_other	-0.10	0.51	0.04	1	ns	0.91
Black	-0.42	0.31	1.79	1	ns	0.66
Latinx	-0.59	0.45	1.77	1	ns	0.55
Age	-0.07	0.08	0.66	1	ns	0.93
Offense severity	-0.10	0.17	0.36	1	ns	0.91
Male	-0.13	0.29	0.21	1	ns	0.88
FIRS_signed	0.58	0.29	3.90	1	0.05	1.78

The most common re-offense types were misdemeanors at a classification of D+ or below, which is just lower than the threshold eligibility for correctional placement (Figure 9).¹¹

¹¹ http://www.cfc.wa.gov/PublicationSentencing/SentencingManual/Juvenile_Disposition_Manual_2014.pdf

Figure 9: Distribution of Offense Seriousness post FIRS referral (in percent) for Truncated Sample, n = 179



Bivariate correlations between youth characteristics and re-offense severity did not identify any significant relationships predictive of future offense seriousness. Of youth with reoffenses (signed and unsigned cases), only 9.1% of reoffenses involved DV. Of these, there was no statistically significant difference between signed and unsigned cases on the rate of DV recidivism: 42.9% of youth with FIRS signed vs. 52.9% of youth without signed FIRS.

Cross county comparisons

As noted, the study used youth referred for a DV offense between 2014 and 2015 in Snohomish and Pierce Counties as the comparison sample, n = 322. A matched comparison sample was constructed using propensity score matching (PSM). Propensity score matching is a widely used technique for balancing comparison groups on client variables that might otherwise bias results. The need for matching was assessed by examining differences in youth variables between King and the comparison counties for FIRS youth in the follow up time period (n = 179). The groups were significantly imbalanced on age, prior referrals, and black ethnicity. The FIRS sample was further restricted to youth with at least one prior referral (as all the youth in the comparison sites had at least one prior referral). A propensity score was created by running a logistic regression predicting county (King vs. comparison) with all available youth characteristics as predictors (age, gender, prior referrals, ethnicity). The propensity score was used to create a 1:1 matched

dataset using fuzzy matching without replacement and a tolerance of .20 in the propensity score. The resulting sample (n = 152 with 76 in each group), was balanced on black ethnicity (higher in King) and prior referrals (higher in comparison sites). These variables are subsequently included in all analysis to control for remaining imbalance between the groups.

A binary logistic regression, predicting the likelihood of any re-referral to juvenile court within a one year observation period found no significant relationship between youth engaged in the FIRS program and those in the comparison counties. Youth referred to the FIRS program had a nonsignificant, lower rate of re-offense (41%) than comparison (49%). A higher number of prior referrals was significantly related to re-offense (odds = 1.32, $p < .01$). A second logistic regression model replaced county with whether a FIRS contract was signed. While a signed FIRS contract had a stronger, negative relationship to re-offense than King county alone, the relationship was not statistically significant (odds = 0.55 compared to odds = 0.80, ns).

Table 6: Logistic Regression Predicting Re-Referral to Juvenile Court within 12 months for Matched Sample

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Black	0.64	0.37	2.97	1.00	ns	1.89
Prior referrals	0.28	0.09	10.12	1.00	0.00	1.32
King	-0.23	0.36	0.40	1.00	ns	0.80
Constant	-1.13	0.39	8.43	1.00	0.00	0.32

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study examined the early process and impact outcomes of a pre-court filing diversion and alternative placement program for youth referred to court for domestic violence incidents, the Family Intervention and Restorative Services Center (FIRS). The study contributes to a growing literature examining that effect of non-court or detention alternatives for handling family conflict charges for youth. The FIRS program is of particular interest given its focus on not filing charges regardless of whether the youth and family agree to participate in services. The study began by examining the process and decision points of FIRS followed by an evaluation of impact on re-referrals to court (recidivism) within one year of contact. The evaluation examined the impact of agreeing to FIRS services on recidivism as well as a cross county comparison of impact on recidivism for a matched sample.

Process Evaluation

- **Active parent refusals** is a significant reason FIRS service agreements are not signed after an arrest incident; followed by parent non response. Active parent refusal made up 41% of all nonsigned cases with the top reasons evenly split between a youth being already engaged in services, the parent's opinion that the youth did not need services, or the youth was not residing in the home any longer. A smaller proportion requested the youth be charged due to the perceived seriousness of the behavior. The FIRS program is continuously improving communication about the program to encourage increased engagement in FIRS services. Continuing to find avenues to engage families in services, particularly those who believe the youth's behavior is better, wants charges brought, or are not responding to requests, is likely to improve the overall effectiveness of the FIRS program recidivism outcomes.
- **Staff refusals**, when controlling for prior referrals (criminal history), are not significantly discriminating against black or male youth. However, because black and male youth have more prior referrals they are more likely to be identified as inappropriate for FIRS. Examining ways to meet the needs of higher risk cases will

ensure that the program does not increase disproportionality in the formal criminal justice system.

- **Signed FIRS agreements** were equally distributed across youth age, race and gender. Offense seriousness of the presenting charge was the only significant predictor of a signed agreement (youth facing felony charges had a 100% FIRS signing rate). While girls were slightly less likely to have a FIRS signed agreement, this did not reach statistical significance. Girls without signed agreements were somewhat more likely to not be living at home, already in services or have parent refusals because behavior was better. Boys without signed agreements were modestly more likely to have refused participation, have been rejected by a staffing or have parents who wanted charges filed. No ethnicity differences were found.
- **Intensive service** referrals were consistent with the levels of threatening and violent behavior reported by parents for the past month. This suggests that the FIRS program referrals are likely well-matched to the needs of the youth.

Impact Evaluation

- **A signed FIRS agreement** was significantly associated with less re-referrals to juvenile court for any criminal matter over 12 months. No association was found for reducing DV offenses more than general offenses, which suggests that the services provided through FIRS have a general recidivism reduction effect; although more program specific evaluations of services offered would be needed to confirm this finding.
- **No statistical difference** was found between the FIRS pre-filing diversion process and recidivism outcomes in the comparison counties suggesting that the filing of charges may not be necessary for reducing reoffending for this population. While FIRS signatures further decreased the likelihood of re-offense compared to comparison counties, this did not reach statistical significance in the matched samples

model. A review of the services offered to youth with DV charges was not in the scope of the review and it is not possible to disentangle whether the services received between the counties were comparable. This suggests, however, that filing or even the threat of filing may not be necessary as deterrent for reducing re-offense in the general population of youth arrested for misdemeanor domestic violence charges.