Models for Change

Benton and Franklin Counties Juvenile Justice Needs Assessment Results

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to the many community members who shared their time and their opinions during this needs assessment process. We know you did so in the faith that your voices would be heard and this information would be used by community leaders to better the lives of youth and families in the Tri-Cities area.

We are very grateful to the Benton-Franklin Counties Juvenile Justice Center (BFJJC) and associated Models for Change staff in letting us into your community and your offices, literally. We thank you for your patience as this project unfolded and your support and input as it progressed. We are looking forward to our continued collaboration.

We are forever grateful to the interviewers who sacrificed weekends with family and cut short vacations to canvass the community looking for willing respondents. It was your enthusiasm for this project that made it such a success.

Finally, our gratitude goes to the MacArthur Foundation for being a philanthropic leader in support of juvenile justice reform and making projects like this possible.

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Executive Summary

Overview

This needs assessment grew out of a community engagement process initiated by the Benton–Franklin Counties Juvenile Justice Center (BFJJC), to improve care of justice-involved youth in the Tri-Cities area. This process is being funded by a MacArthur Foundation Models for Change grant as part of Washington State's selection as a model state. The purpose of the MfC grants and of the BFJJC community project is to fundamentally change juvenile justice systems to more effectively and more efficiently serve youth. The MacArthur Foundation became involved in this area during the increases in youth crime in the 1990's. The general reaction to this increase was to heighten punitive responses, such as trying youth as adults in courts and increasing incarceration. However, the MacArthur Foundation's research network on adolescent development found that these punitive responses were not only inappropriate developmentally but also ineffective. Continuing work on effective responses to youth crime have resulted in numerous studies and real-world implementation of community-based programs that both reduce crime and save money.

A first step to accomplishing this goal in the Tri-Cities area was to assess how the community presently felt about the juvenile justice system. Accordingly, the University of Washington, Division of Public Behavioral Health and Justice Policy agreed to conduct a community needs assessment that addressed multiple areas: challenges faced by youth in the community, needed programs or services, truancy, juvenile justice processes and mental health.

The needs assessment consisted of three strategies: the development and distribution of a community survey, focus groups with youth and families who were system-involved and interviews with key informants. To ensure adequate representation of Latino respondents, one of the parent focus groups was conducted in Spanish with Latino parents and Latinos were oversampled in the survey population. The results of this needs assessment are summarized here.

Biggest Challenges

We assessed community perceptions of the challenges uniquely faced by youth in the Tri-Cities both through the survey and in focus groups. Responses from both of these sources were then coded for major themes and the top themes that emerged were
* Gangs
* Alcohol/Drugs
* Truancy
 * Lack of activities
* Violence/Abuse
* Family problems

Needed Programs or Services

Needed programs or services was assessed by asking respondents to both rate a set of given services as to their usefulness and to respond to an open ended question about what would help youth in their community stay out of trouble. The focus group participants were also asked about needed services. We looked across all these sources of information to compile the top most mentioned and emphasized needs for youth:
* Afterschool activities and youth centers to provide adult supervision.
* Job training
* Prevention and early intervention for drugs and truancy
* Gang programs
* Counseling to improve communication and understanding between youth and parents

Truancy

A section of the survey was devoted to assessing why youth might be skipping school, along with the school response to the truancy and perceptions of helpfulness. We also asked about truancy and school problems in the focus groups. The top overall reasons for skipping school were

*hanging out with friends or gangs
*problems at home or lack of supervision.

Latino respondents were more likely to report gangs and friends as a problem as compared to nonLatino White and African American participants.

African American youth were more likely to report not liking school. NonLatino White youth were more likely to report mental health, substance abuse and medical problems as a reason.

The most common responses to truancy in our sample were meeting with a school official and having a court hearing; both were rated as useful by about 50%. The category rated as least helpful was "no intervention for truancy."

Juvenile Justice Involvement

About half of our survey asked questions concerning juvenile justice processes for those respondents who had either been involved in the system as a youth or for parents who had children involved in the system. 35% of our sample reported system involvement, and this was proportional across the different ethnicities.

Respondents were asked to recall their most recent incident with the juvenile justice system. When asked to report the charges against them, Latino respondents were more likely to report assault (31% vs. 13%) and theft charges (25.3% vs. 18.9%) as compared to NonLatino Whites. All 100% of the African American youth reported being charged with assault. NonLatino Whites were more likely than Latino respondents to report drug and truancy charges (20.8% vs. 9.2%; 24.5% vs. 20.7%)

When asked if the juvenile justice process was explained to them and how well they understood it, Latino parents were significantly less likely to report having the process explained to them and had lower levels of understanding when compared to other youth and adult groups. Latino parents were also significantly less likely to report having documents provided in a language they could understand.

Perceptions of fairness were generally high, but differed qualitatively between groups. NonLatino parents emphasized wanting to be able to participate more in the process with their child, having more voice and more rights. NonLatino youth spoke about wanting to understanding processes better. Both Latino youth and adults spoke about their perceptions of race influencing charges, treatment and outcomes.

Mental Health

In asking whether the youth had received a mental health diagnosis and completed recommended treatment, Latinos were less likely to report receiving a diagnosis when compared to NonLatino Whites (16.1% vs. 27.3%). Latino youth were also much less likely to report completing recommended treatments than NonLatino White youth (37.5% vs. 63.6%).

Suggested Improvements

We asked our survey respondents to comment on how the juvenile justice system could be improved. The following responses were the most commonly cited suggestions:

* More community-based programs that provide support.
* More effective punishments
* Counseling services
* Better information and education about the justice process

Next Steps

The Models for Change process in the Tri-Cities includes three workgroups specifically focused on improving mental health, truancy and disproportionate minority contact for justice-involved youth. These workgroups are comprised of individuals representing schools, mental health, law enforcement, parents, youth and court staff who are in the position to make decisions about programs and funding. The University of Washington presented the information from the needs assessment to each of these workgroups and they are currently using this information in conjunction with other data gathering projects, to create priority areas and take action. The UW will continue to consult with the workgroups on research supported programs and guidelines to engage and treat multi-problem youth and families. To learn more about the specific actions being taken by the Models for Change workgroups contact Stephanie McCarl at Stephanie.McCarl@co.benton.wa.us. For further questions about the needs assessment contact Dr. Walker at secwalkr@u.washington.edu or (206) 685-2085.

Introduction

Overview

This needs assessment grew out of a community engagement process initiated by the Benton–Franklin Counties Juvenile Justice Center (BFJJC), to improve care of justice-involved youth in the Tri-Cities area. This process is being funded by a MacArthur Foundation Models for Change grant as part of Washington State's selection as a model state. The purpose of the MfC grants and of the BFJJC community project is to fundamentally change juvenile justice systems to more effectively and more efficiently serve youth. The MacArthur Foundation became involved in this area during the increases in youth crime in the 1990's. The general reaction to this increase was to heighten punitive responses, such as trying youth as adults in courts and increasing incarceration. However, the MacArthur Foundation's research network on adolescent development found that these punitive responses were not only inappropriate developmentally but also ineffective. Continuing work on effective responses to youth crime have resulted in numerous studies and real-world implementation of community-based programs that both reduce crime and save money.

A first step to accomplishing this goal in the Tri-Cities area was to assess how the community presently felt about the juvenile justice system. Accordingly, the University of Washington, Division of Public Behavioral Health and Justice Policy agreed to conduct a community needs assessment that addressed multiple areas: challenges faced by youth in the community, needed programs or services, truancy, juvenile justice processes and mental health.

Methods

The needs assessment consisted of three strategies: the development and distribution of a community survey, focus groups with youth and families who were system-involved and interviews with key informants.

Survey

The 55 item survey was developed in close collaboration with local community members, including court staff, and national MacArthur Foundation partners. It was developed to cover the following areas:
1) biggest challenges facing youth, 2) needed programs or services 3) truancy 4) juvenile justice processes and 5) mental health. The survey was also written to be sensitive to cultural concerns and included items about fairness and language competencies. Two versions of the survey were administered: one for youth and one for adults. We created two different surveys so that adults would be asked about their child's justice involvement and youth were asked to comment on their own justice involvement. The survey was also translated in Spanish and 14.6% of the respondents received the Spanish version.

The surveys were completed in person or over the phone with a trained interviewer. The interview length varied with whether the individual had had contact with the juvenile justice system or not. Non-system involved participants were only asked about challenges, needed services, and truancy. System-involved participants were also asked about their experience during the court process and about outcomes.

Respondents were recruited at community events, such as the Cinco De Mayo festival, at community centers (e.g. Martin Luther King Center), through churches, other community agencies, through neighborhood canvassing and at the Benton-Franklin Juvenile Justice Center. Respondents were thanked for their time with a gift card to a local store. Only individuals residing in the BFJJC jurisdiction were sampled.

Focus Groups

We identified participants for the focus groups by recruiting through already established groups with a high likelihood of system involvement.

The rationale for this strategy was that participants would already have a degree of comfort with each other in talking about sensitive issues like mental health and justice involvement. Also, identifying already established groups facilitated the process of recruiting. An exception to this was the youth group we conducted in the detention facility with incarcerated youth. We conducted four focus groups: two parent and two youth groups.

One of the parent groups was comprised of parent participants in Families Anonymous, a support group for family members of addicts.

The focus group had eight participants, all self-identified as nonLatino White with a mean age of 50. Only one member of the group did not have direct experience with the justice system. Most of the parents currently or very recently had youth involved in the justice system.

The second parent group was recruited from a parent support group run out of Catholic Family Services for Spanish-speaking Latino parents of troubled youth. This focus group had 8 members, with 50 as the average age, 6 females and 2 males. All self-identified as Latino.

The non-detention group was comprised of youth attending a religious, leadership program called PowerZone. PowerZone offers afterschool tutoring and mentoring within a Christian framework. The focus group had 8 youth participants (4 female and 4 male), 1 African-American, 2 American Indian and 8 Latino youth. The average age was 16 years old. The youth in this group had a range of experience with delinquency and courts, with some minor issues to gang involvement.

The detention group was comprised of 3 nonLatino White, 1 African American and 5 Latino youth (2 females and 8 males). The average age was 17. Youth in this group were asked to participate in the group after being told about the purpose of the study. All of the focus group participants read and signed consent forms outlining the purposes of the study and their rights as study participants.
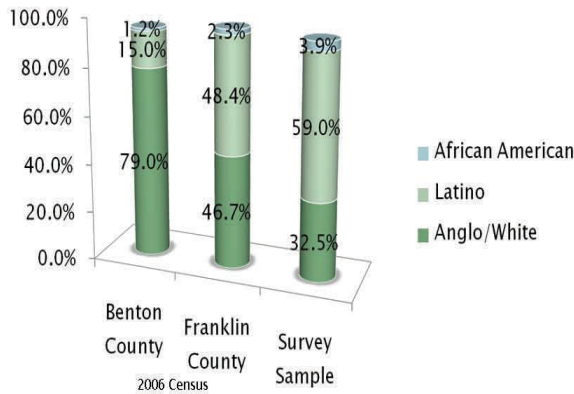
Results

Sample Demographics

The survey sample included 536 respondents. Figure 1 displays the racial breakdown of our sample as compared to the 2006 Census report of Benton and Franklin Counties. We oversampled in our survey to ensure adequate representation of Latino respondents with a final sample of 59% Latino, 32.5% NonLatino White and 3.9% African American. The final 5% included Native American, Pacific Islander, African and mixed race.

We had more adult surveys than youth surveys (59.3% vs. 40.7%) and slightly more female than male respondents (54.9% vs. 45.1%). Amongst adult respondents, we had considerably more females (65.4%), and among youth we had more males represented (61%).

Respondents were about evenly split between Benton and Franklin Counties, with 45% of the sample residing in Pasco, 30.6% in Kennewick and 14.9% in Richland. The remaining 9.5% were from outlying communities such as Prosser.
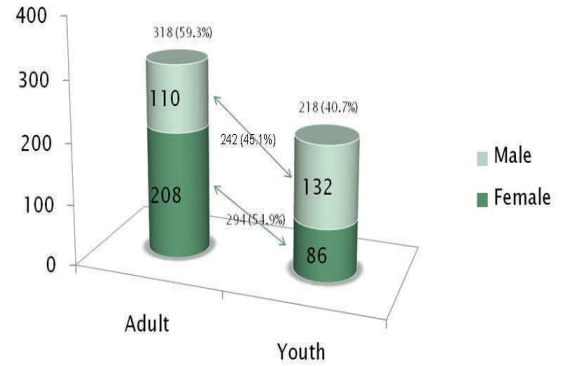
Figure 2

Distribution of Gender and Age (type of survey administered)

Mean adult age = 39.3   Mean youth age = 15.6

Household income was fairly normally distributed: 9.1% reported an income below 10,000 and 8.8% reported income of 80,000 or above, with the bulk of the sample falling in between.

We also assessed country of origin. The majority of respondents reported being born in either the United States (54%) or Mexico (38%), with less than 2% reporting a home country of El Salvador, Sudan, Russia, or Columbia. 78 surveys were completed in Spanish (14.6% of the sample). We did not encounter any respondents who needed a translation besides Spanish. The majority of respondents reported speaking English at home and with their friends, with 32% reporting that they spoke Spanish or some mix of Spanish and English while at home.

Figure 1

Distribution of Ethnicity across Counties and Survey Sample

Surveys completed in Spanish = 78 (14.6%)

Biggest Challenges

We assessed the community's perceptions of the largest challenges facing youth in the Tri-Cities area through an open-ended question in the survey as well as in the focus groups.

The survey question asked "What are the biggest challenges facing youth under 18 in your community?" The array of responses were coded into main categories as shown on Figure 5. We then compared responses among respondent groups: Adult,nonLatino; Youth, nonLatino; Adult, Latino and Youth, Latino. Using this grouping, we found that Adult Latinos, in general, were giving more responses on average per respondent. In other words, they were more likely to report multiple challenges. Drugs and alcohol use was consistently rated as a significant problem across all groups, followed by the lack of activities. Gangs emerged as a significant problem for the Latino respondents, both adult and youth, but not as highly for nonLatino respondents. The following are quotes taken from a sampling of the surveys to this question:

" There's too much gang activity around us . . .we feel pressure to join." (Latino, youth)

" . .. Nothing to do while parents work." (Latino, adult)

" Mental health and substance abuse. These issues are not being addressed." (nonLatino, Adult)

"Drugs and more drugs." (nonLatino, Youth)

The focus groups substantiated the general themes found in the survey and provided a deeper understanding of some of these challenges (Figure 4) . All four groups, when asked this question, repeatedly talked about problems in the home including violence and/or the lack of a strong bond between youth and parents, skipping school and getting into drugs.

Some of the parents specifically talked

Figure 3

Top responses in common

▸ Gangs
▸ Drugs/Alcohol
▸ Truancy
▸ Lack of Activities
▸ Violence/Abuse
▸ Family Problems

about the transition from middle school into high school as a very vulnerable time for their children, saying this was when they began to get involved in drugs and antisocial activities.

One of the female respondents in a youth group talked about having a good bond with her family, but simply being so surrounded by gangs and gang activity (within the extended family) made her feel that this was an acceptable role to fall into.

Both parent groups emphasized the lack of programs and afterschool activities, at least that they were aware of, as problematic for those youth who are left unsupervised by working parents.

The major themes summarized in Figure 3 were identified by looking for the most consistently cited problems or challenges from both the survey and focus groups. These were Gangs, Drug and Alcohol use, Truancy, Lack of Activities, Violence/Abuse in the home and at school and Family Problems.
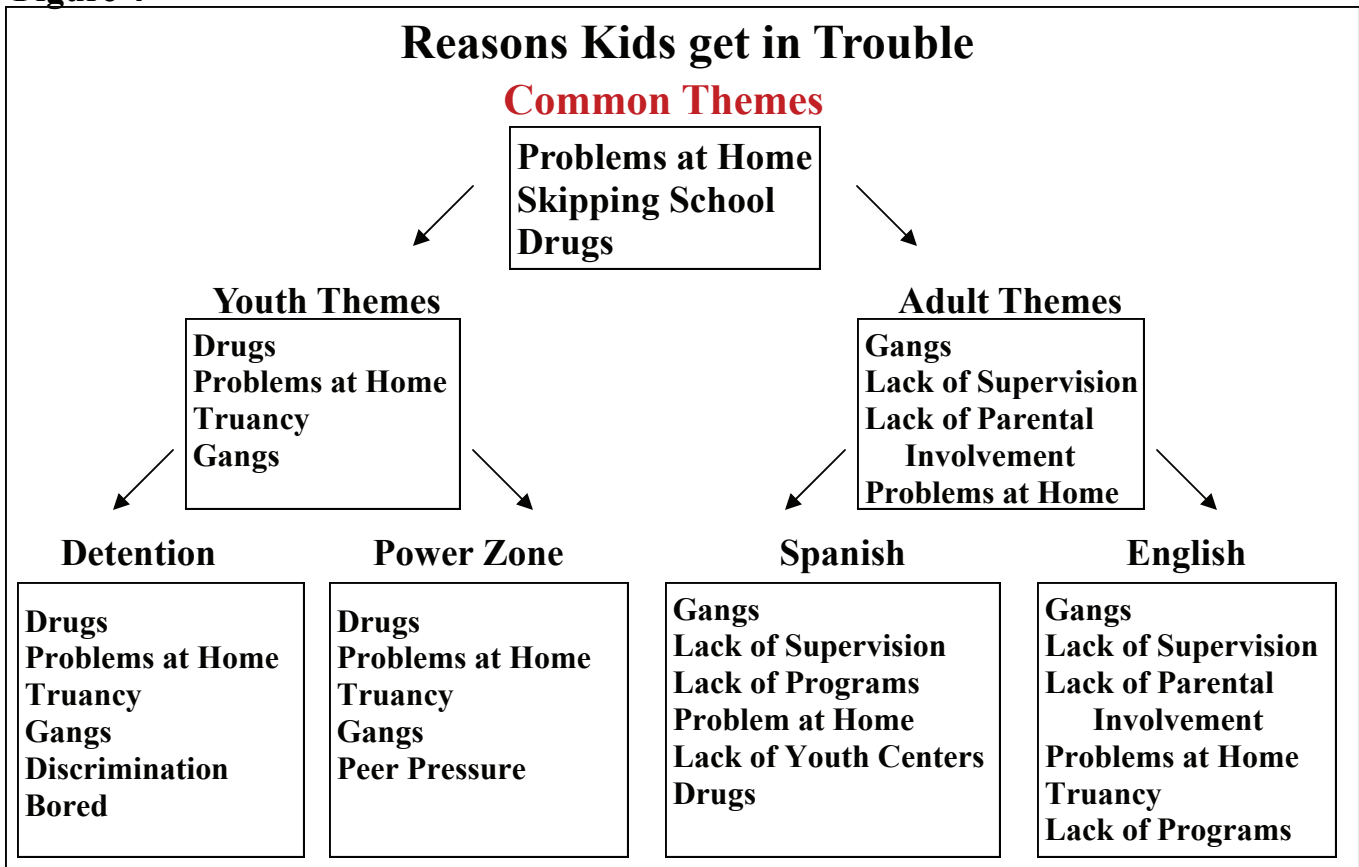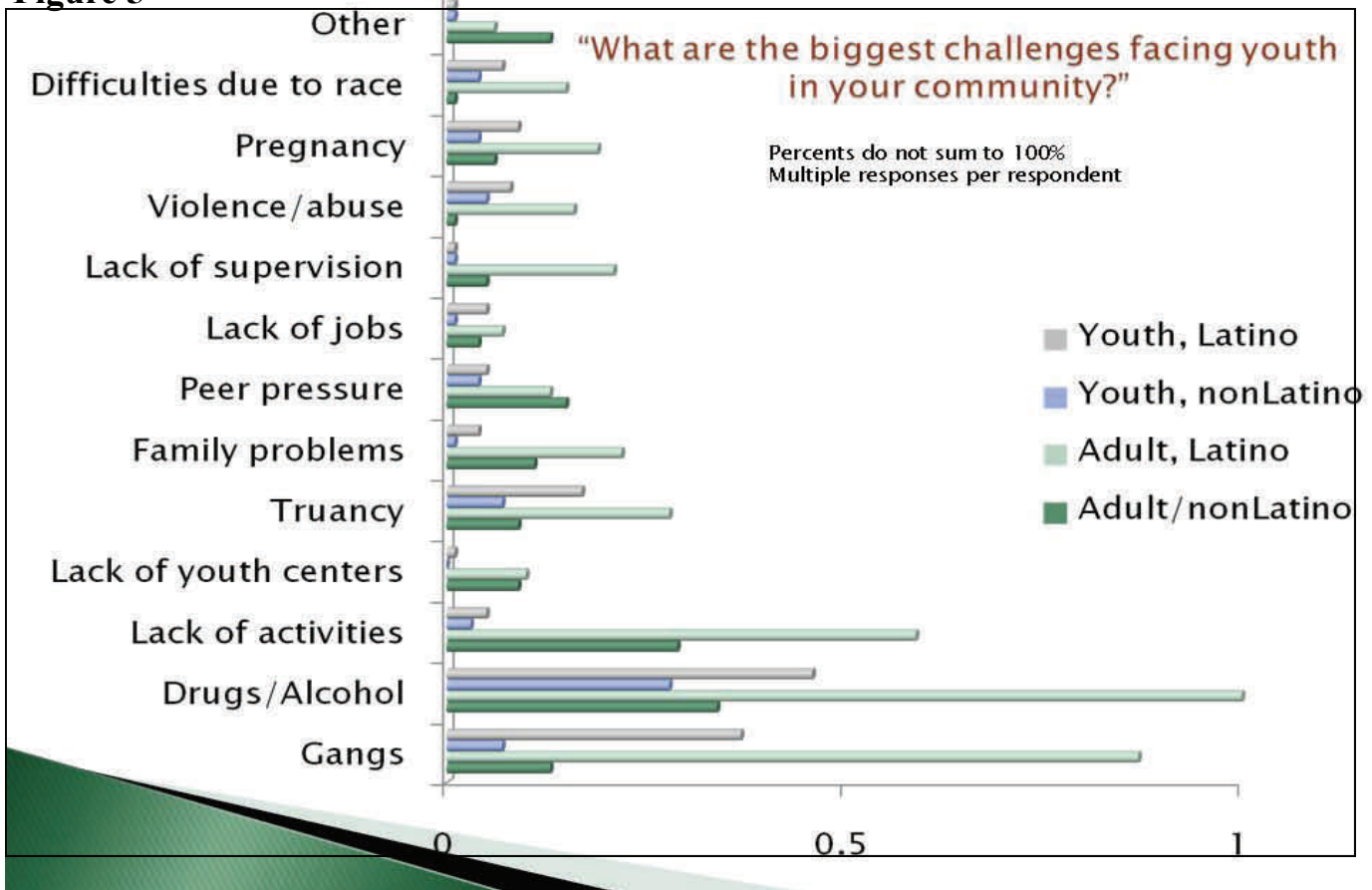
Figure 4

Reasons Kids get in Trouble

Common Themes

Problems at Home
Skipping School
Drugs

Youth Themes

Drugs
Problems at Home
Truancy
Gangs

Adult Themes

Gangs
Lack of Supervision
Lack of Parental
Involvement
Problems at Home

Detention

Drugs
Problems at Home
Truancy
Gangs
Discrimination
Bored

Power Zone

Drugs
Problems at Home
Truancy
Gangs
Peer Pressure

Spanish

Gangs
Lack of Supervision
Lack of Programs
Problem at Home
Lack of Youth Centers
Drugs

English

Gangs
Lack of Supervision
Lack of Parental
Involvement
Problems at Home
Truancy
Lack of Programs

Figure 5

"What are the biggest challenges facing youth in your community?"

Percents do not sum to 100%
Multiple responses per respondent

Legend:
- Youth, Latino
- Youth, nonLatino
- Adult, Latino
- Adult/nonLatino

Categories (top to bottom): Other, Difficulties due to race, Pregnancy, Violence/abuse, Lack of supervision, Lack of jobs, Peer pressure, Family problems, Truancy, Lack of youth centers, Lack of activities, Drugs/Alcohol, Gangs

Programs and Services Needed in the Community.

Needed programs and services in the community was assessed by asking survey respondents an open ended question as well as a rating question. Focus group participants were asked to think about what would help youth stay out of trouble.

Two sections in the survey assessed the need for services. First, respondents were asked "What programs would you like to see offered for youth in your community? What would help them stay out of trouble?" These responses were then coded into major themes which can be seen in Figure 8. Afterschool activities and youth centers were rated consistently high across all groups.

In the second section, interviewers asked the participants to rate 13 services on a scale of not at all useful, a little useful and a lot useful to them personally. The services included

1. Programs to keep kids involved in activities after school.
2. Parenting classes
3. Early intervention or prevention programs
4. Programs to keep kids from dropping out of school
5. Gang prevention programs
6. Services that are provided in the evening or weekends
7. Services that provide childcare
8. Family therapy that involves my spiritual and cultural beliefs
9. Family therapy that involves my extended-family
10. Services that are paid through Medicaid or sliding scale
11. Services close to bus stops or provide transportation
12. Job training
13. Services to educate families and youth about the juvenile justice process, including truancy

Figure 6 shows the top rated services among the four respondent types: Job training, transportation, afterschool activities, and gang prevention.

Summary of needed programs/services

- Afterschool activities and youth centers to provide adult supervision
- Job training
- Prevention and early intervention for drugs and truancy
- Gang programs
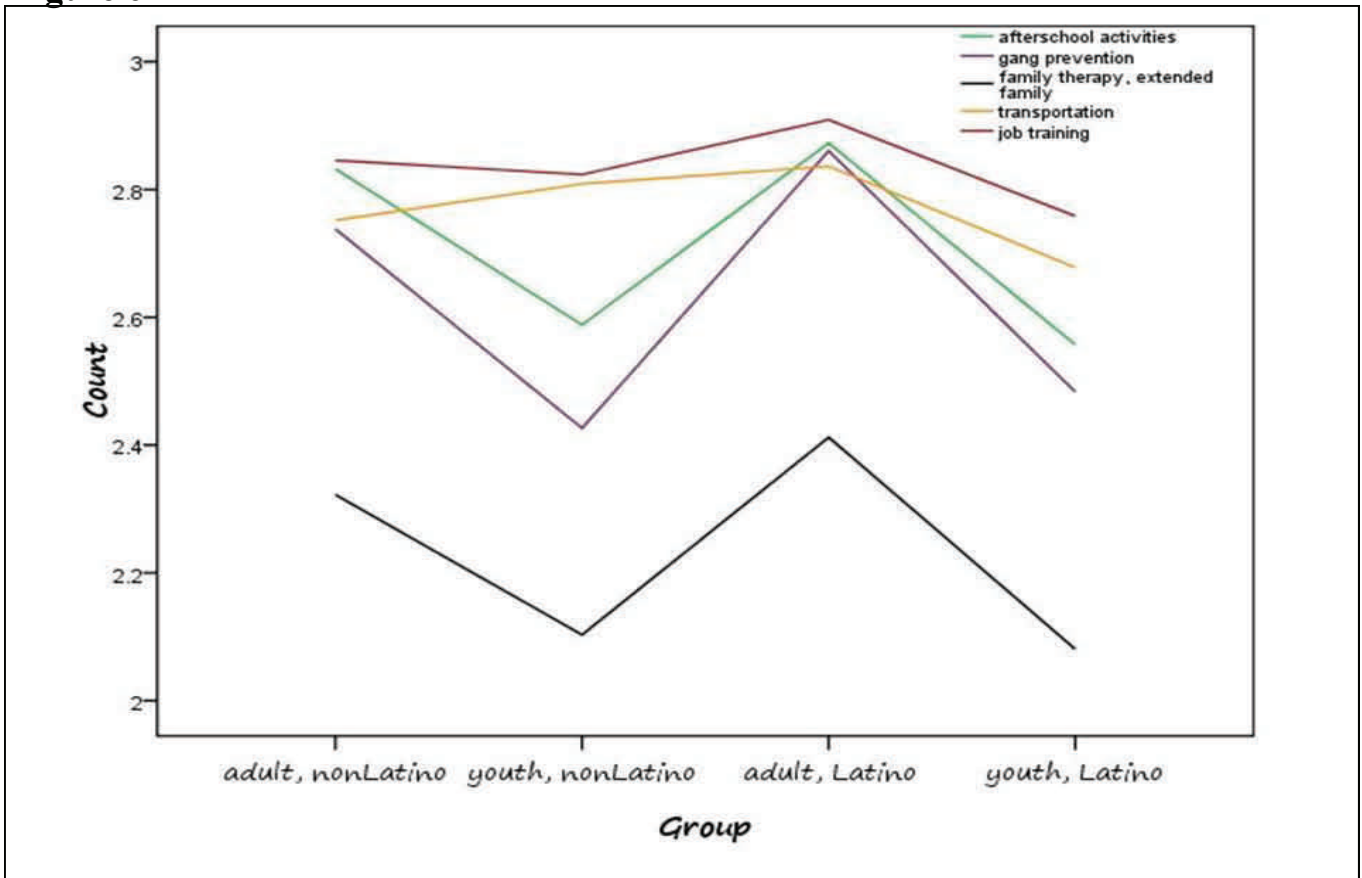- Counseling to improve communication and understanding between youth and parents.

Respondents were then asked to pick the most important service out of all the services, and the percentages for these are displayed in Figure 7. The most identified services were job training, gang programs (especially mentioned by Latino youth), afterschool activities, prevention and education about justice processes.
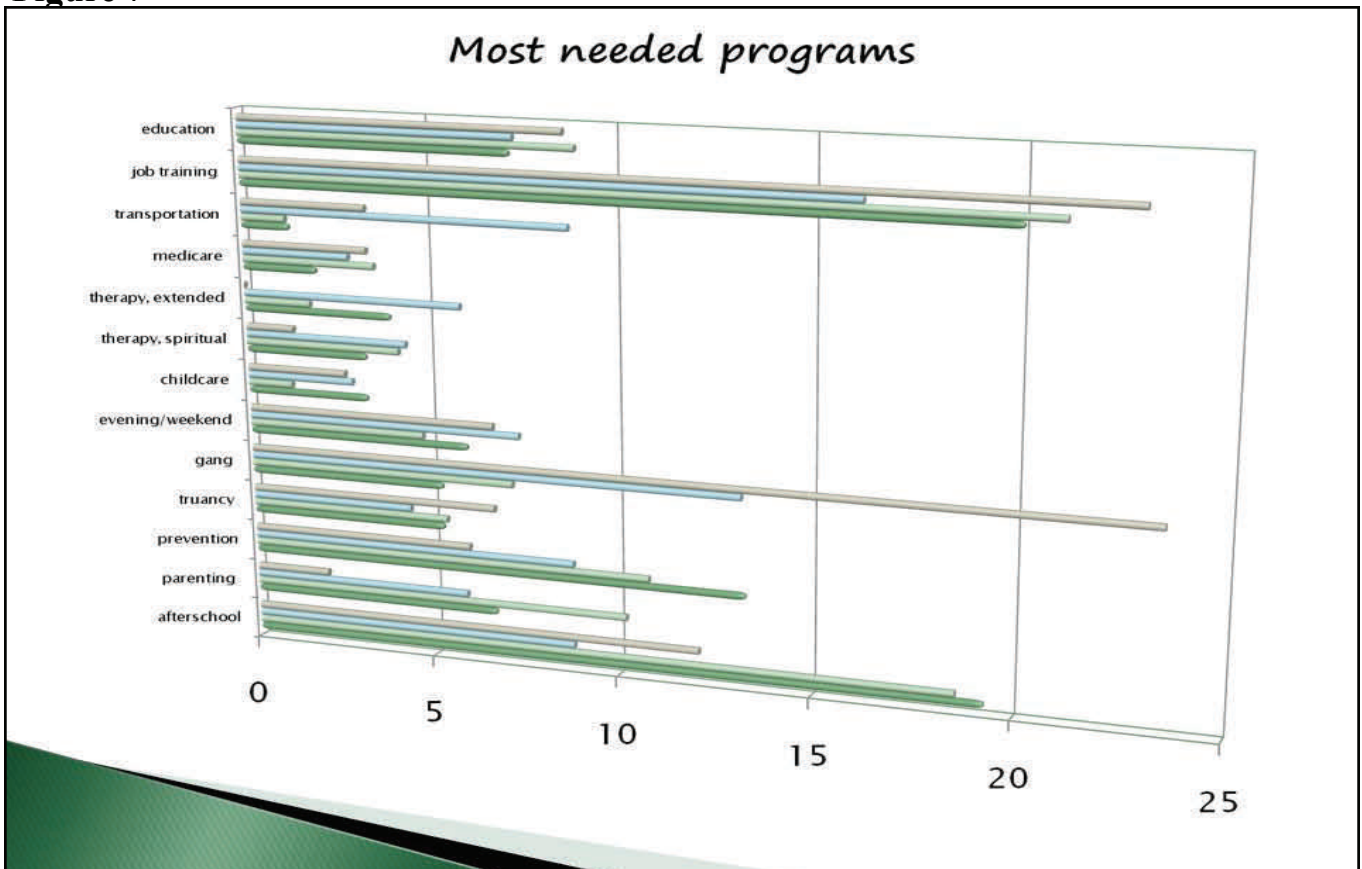
The four focus groups were also asked about what would help youth stay out of trouble. The major themes emerging from these groups included afterschool activities and programs, counseling, family involvement, good friends.

All the this information, from the survey sections and the focus groups were examined to find major cross-cutting themes. These themes are listed in the above figure: Afterschool activities and youth centers, job training, prevention and early intervention for drugs and truancy, gang programs and counseling.
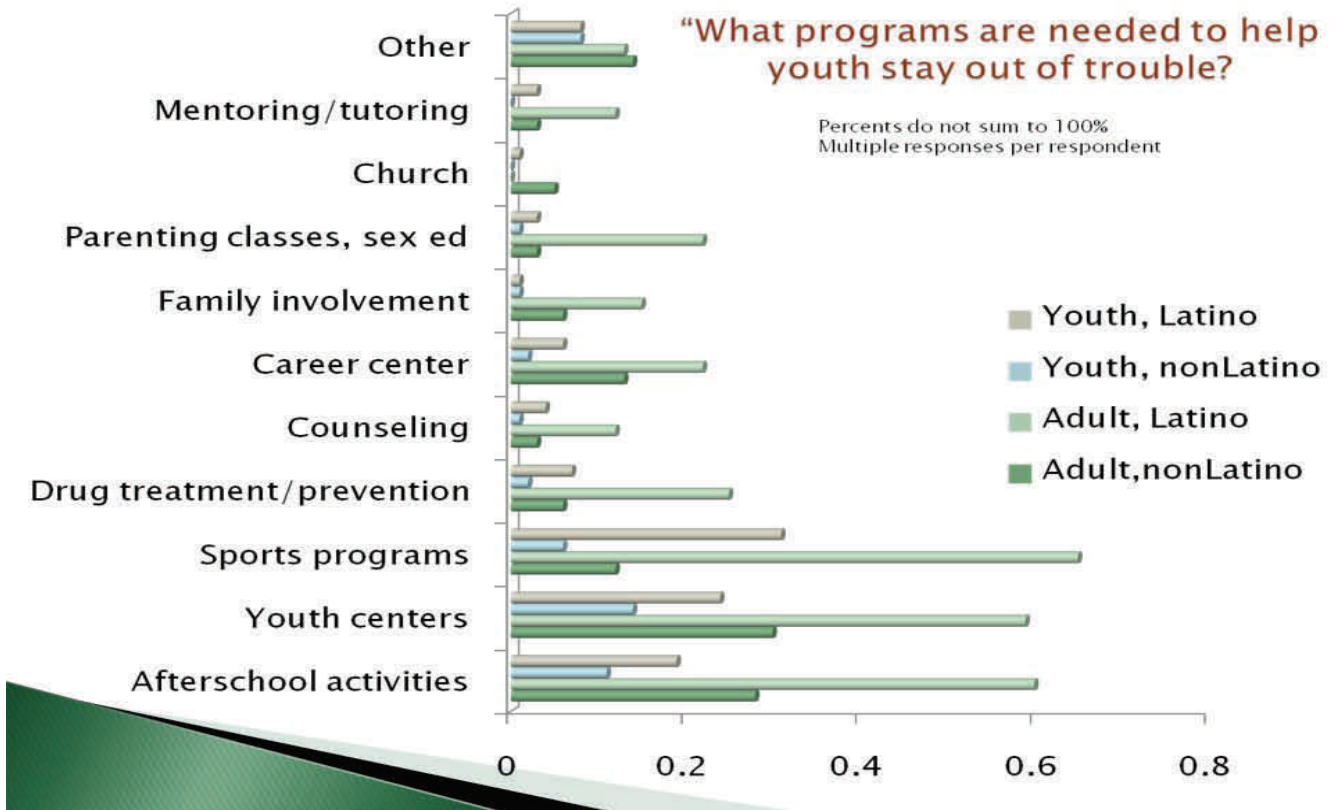
Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 8

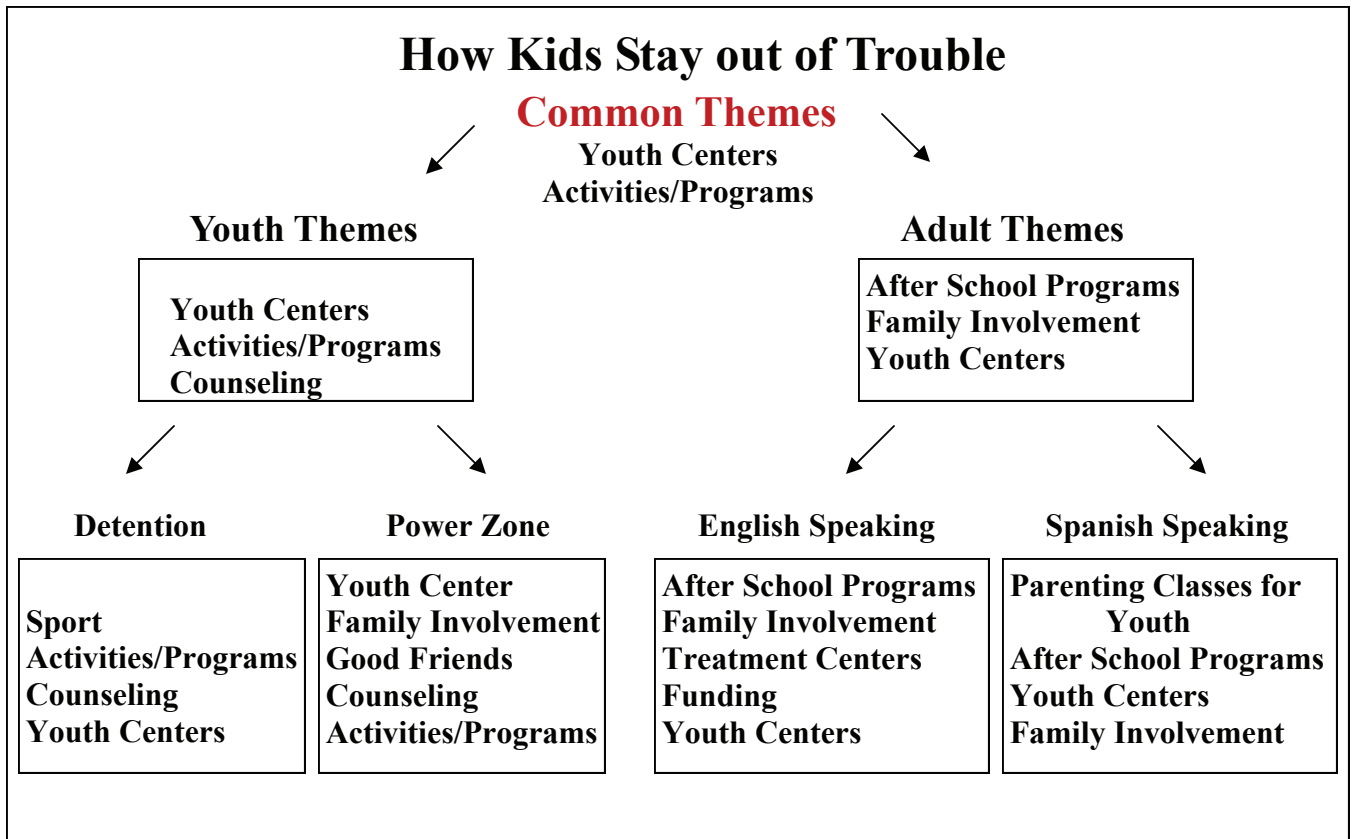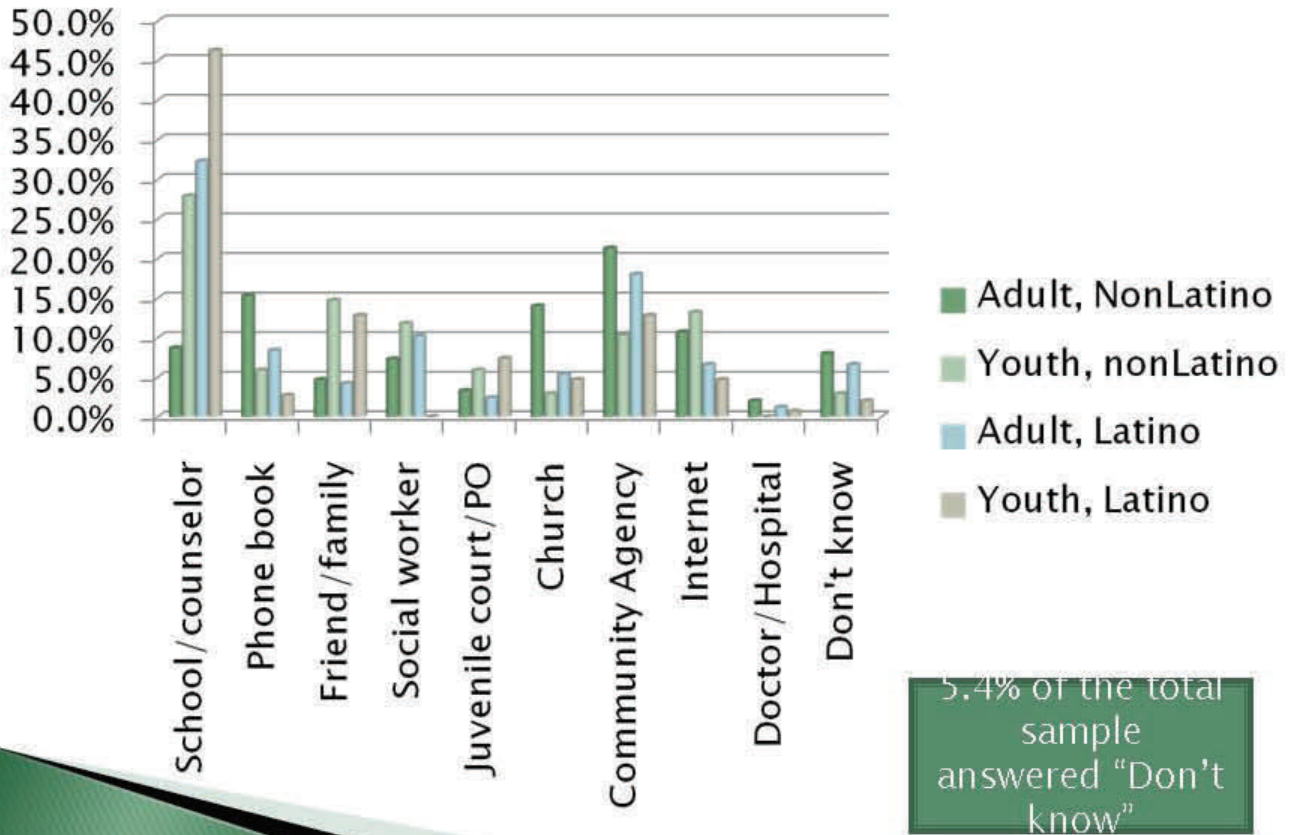"What programs are needed to help youth stay out of trouble?"

Percents do not sum to 100%
Multiple responses per respondent

Categories (top to bottom): Other, Mentoring/tutoring, Church, Parenting classes, sex ed, Family involvement, Career center, Counseling, Drug treatment/prevention, Sports programs, Youth centers, Afterschool activities

Legend:
- Youth, Latino
- Youth, nonLatino
- Adult, Latino
- Adult, nonLatino

X-axis: 0, 0.2, 0.4, 0.6, 0.8

Figure 9

How Kids Stay out of Trouble

Common Themes
Youth Centers
Activities/Programs

Youth Themes

Youth Centers
Activities/Programs
Counseling

Adult Themes

After School Programs
Family Involvement
Youth Centers

Detention

Sport
Activities/Programs
Counseling
Youth Centers

Power Zone

Youth Center
Family Involvement
Good Friends
Counseling
Activities/Programs

English Speaking

After School Programs
Family Involvement
Treatment Centers
Funding
Youth Centers

Spanish Speaking

Parenting Classes for Youth
After School Programs
Youth Centers
Family Involvement

Figure 10

Where do people go to find about services in the community

Legend:
- Adult, NonLatino
- Youth, nonLatino
- Adult, Latino
- Youth, Latino

5.4% of the total sample answered "Don't know"

We also asked people to state where they would go to find out about services provided in the community. The above figure displays the top responses by group type. The most popular response for all groups except nonLatino Adults was the school and/or school counselor. The next most popular, and the highest for nonLatino Adults was a community agency. This included responses such as DSHS, the library, YMCA, various mental health clinics, City Hall, Goodwill. Friends and family, social worker, phone book and the internet were also popular responses. There was a minority, but still about 30 people, in ours sample who stated that they did not know where to go to find out about services.
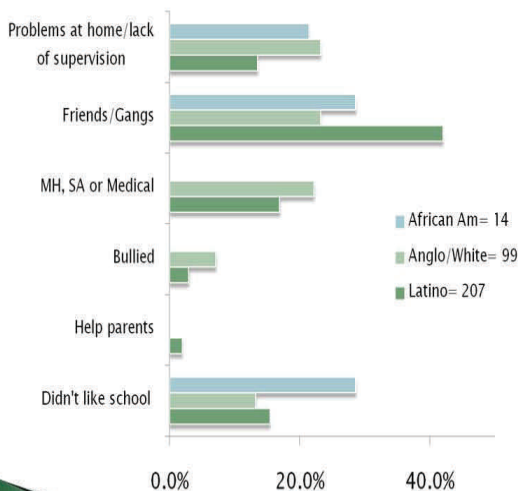
Truancy

Problems with and responses to truancy was assessed with a set of questions in the survey. We asked respondents if they had ever been in trouble for skipping school (for a parent, if their child had been in trouble for skipping school), if so, what was the reason, the response and was the response helpful.

In the total sample, 48.9% reported getting in trouble (or having a child get in trouble) for not attending school, this was proportional across ethnic groups. The most common reasons given for not attending school were hanging out with friends/gangs and problems at home or lack of supervision.

Latino respondents were more likely to report gangs and friends as a problem as compared to nonLatino White and African American participants. African American youth were more likely to report not liking school. NonLatino White youth were more likely to report mental health, substance abuse and medical problems as a reason.
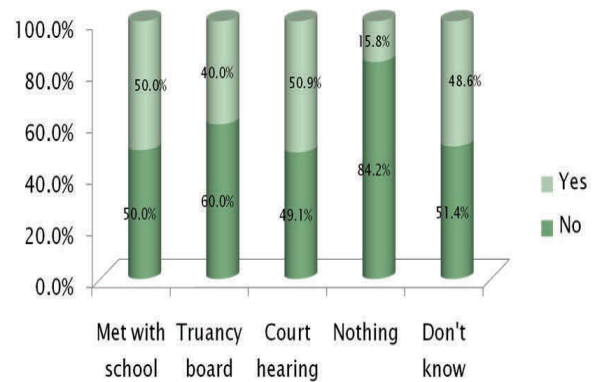
Figure 11

Reason for skipping school

Respondents include youth, and adults who had children experiencing truancy

Figure 12

Was the truancy intervention helpful?

Rates of effectiveness not much different for Latino and nonLatino participants. NonLatino youth *slightly* more likely to report the intervention did NOT work. 64.6% vs. 44.5%. Rates of referral to the types of interventions were similar across ethnicity.

When asked about what happened as a result of the truancy, 34.7% reported meeting with a school official, 6.2% reported going to a volunteer truancy board, 33.2% reported attending a court hearing and 5.6% reported that there was no response. The other respondents did not know if there was a response (could include parents). The rates of truancy response were roughly equal across nonLatino White and Latino groups (34% and 36.8% for meeting school official, 7.2% and 6.2% for truancy board and 30.9% and 32.1% for court hearing). African Americans were more likely to report going to a court hearing (50.0% vs. 7.1% for truancy board and 21.4% for meeting with school official).

For the two highest response to truancy, school official and court hearing, ratings of helpfulness were about equal at 50% (Figure 13). The least helpful response was doing nothing; 84.2% reported this an unhelpful way to deal with truancy.
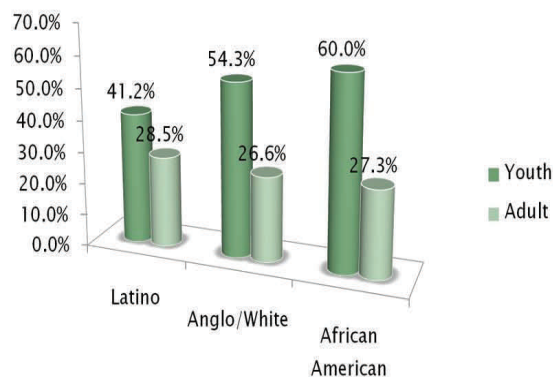
Juvenile Justice Process

Figure 14

One of the primary reasons for the needs assessment was to be able to give the court feedback about perceptions of the juvenile justice process in Benton and Franklin Counties. From the total sample, 187 (34.9%) of respondents had been directly involved in the juvenile justice system, either as a youth or a parent of an involved-youth. Before answering whether they had contact with the juvenile justice system, respondents were read a short summary of what constitutes juvenile justice involvement. Feedback on this summary from an initial focus group of parents about the survey was that the summary was very helpful.

The rates of involvement by age and ethnicity are shown in Figure 13. 41.2% of Latino youth sampled were involved in the juvenile justice system. Overall, the youth were system-involved in our sample at a greater rate than the adults, probably because we recruited more adult surveys at the community events we attended and more youth surveys, proportionally, at the Juvenile Justice Center. Respondents were asked to recall their most recent incident with the juvenile justice system. When asked to report the charges against them,
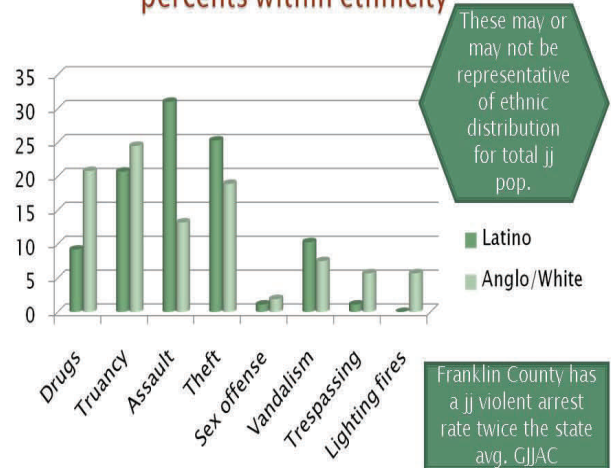
Figure 13

Charts as represented in our sample, in percents within ethnicity

These may or may not be representative of ethnic distribution for total jj pop.

Franklin County has a jj violent arrest rate twice the state avg. GJJAC

All 8 of the African American youth reporting involvement in the system were charged with assault.
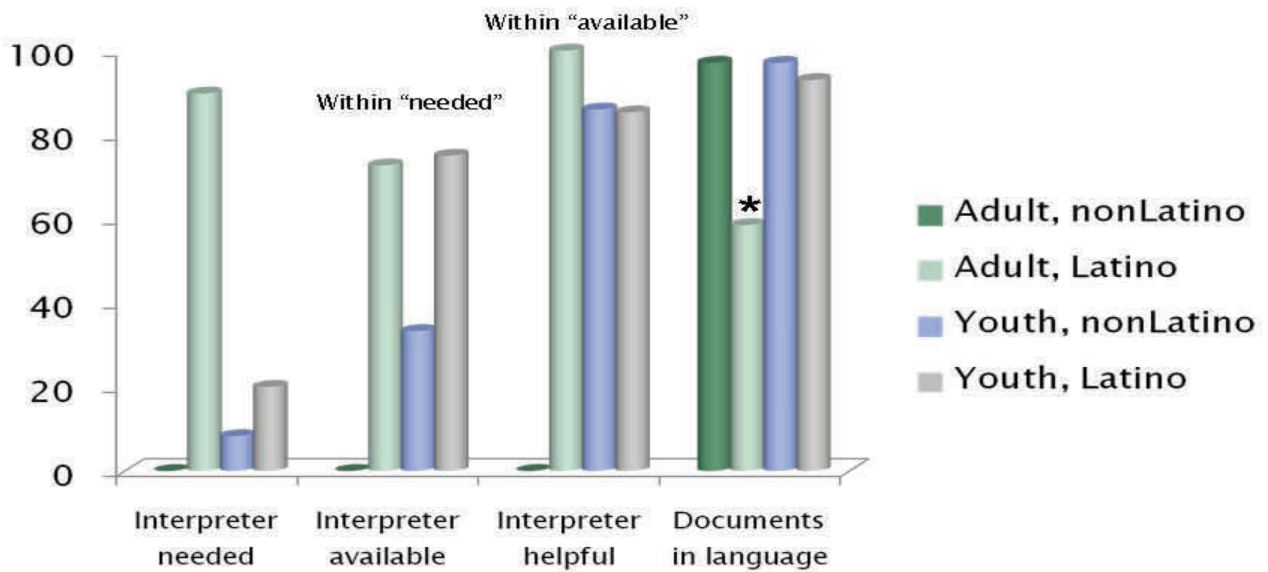
Latino respondents were more likely to report assault (31% vs. 13%) and theft charges (25.3% vs. 18.9%) as compared to NonLatino Whites. All 100% of the African American youth reported being charged with assault. NonLatino Whites were more likely than Latino respondents to report drug and truancy charges (20.8% vs. 9.2%; 24.5% vs. 20.7%)

When asked if the juvenile justice process was explained to them and how well they understood it, Latino parents were significantly less likely to report having the process explained to them and had lower levels of understanding when compared to other youth and adult groups. Latino parents were also significantly less likely to report having documents provided in a language they could understand. (Figures 15 & 16)

Perceptions of fairness were generally high, but differed qualitatively between groups. NonLatino parents emphasized wanting to be able to participate more in the process with their child, having more voice and more rights. NonLatino youth spoke about wanting to understanding processes better. Both Latino youth and adults spoke about their perceptions of race influencing charges, treatment and outcomes.
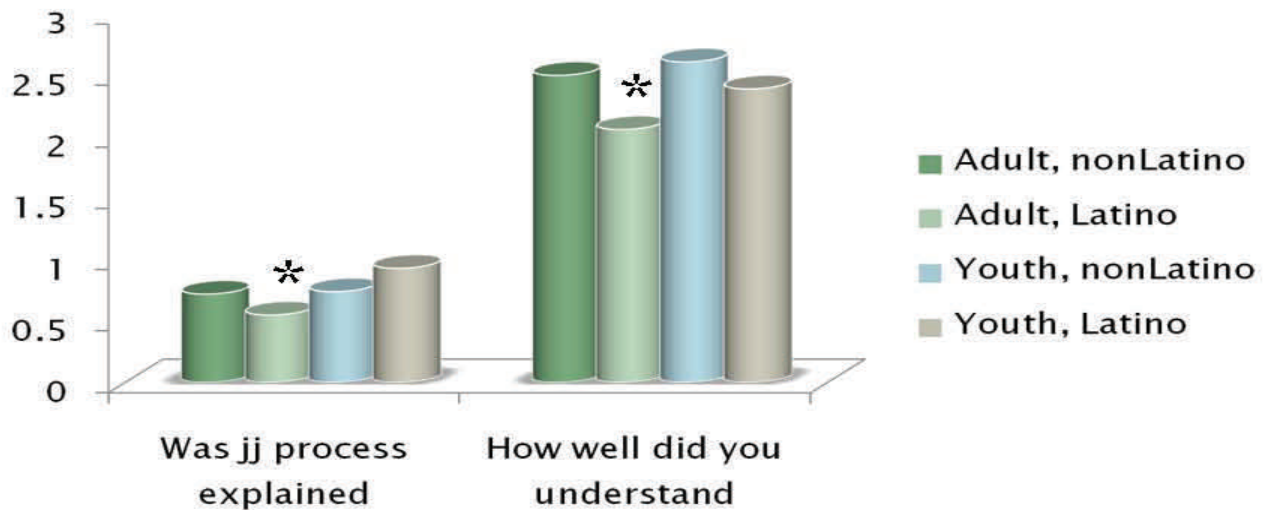

Rate of those who were juvenile-justice involved (for parents, was child involved)

Sample participants with jj involvement = 187 (34.9%)

Figure 15

Need, availability and helpfulness of interpretation/translation services, percents

Within "available"

Within "needed"

Legend:
- Adult, nonLatino
- Adult, Latino
- Youth, nonLatino
- Youth, Latino

Categories: Interpreter needed | Interpreter available | Interpreter helpful | Documents in language

22.5% of jj sample reported needing interpreter services

Figure 16

How well was the jj process explained and understood, comparison of means

Legend:
- Adult, nonLatino
- Adult, Latino
- Youth, nonLatino
- Youth, Latino

Categories: Was jj process explained | How well did you understand

*Adult, Latino respondent score significantly lower than the other respondent scores for both questions. Trend continues for questions about understanding child and parent rights.

Figure 17

Rates of mental health identification and treatment for justice–involved youth, percents

Within those who had received a mh diagnosis.

- Latino
- Anglo/White

Received diagnosis — 16.1, 27.3
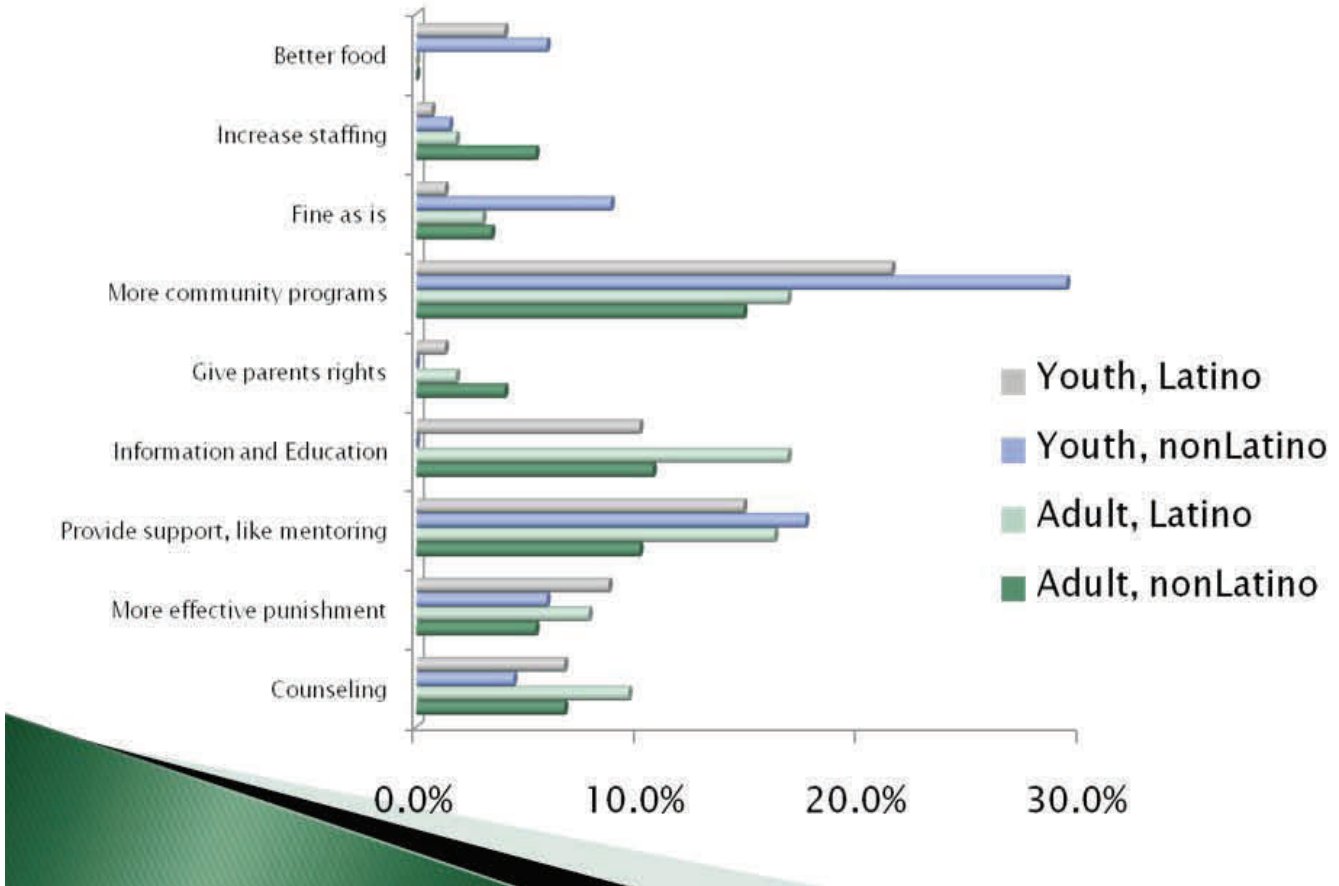Agreed with diagnosis — 45.8, 43.5
Completed treatment — 37.5, 63.6
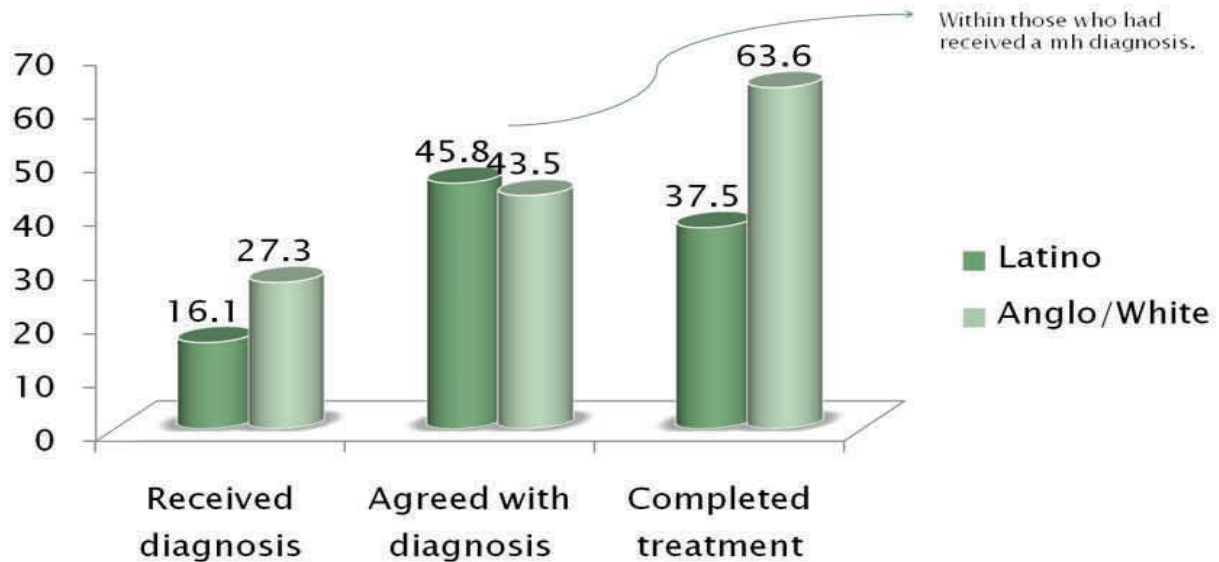
20.2% of jj involved youth reported receiving a mental health diagnosis.

Mental Health

In asking whether the youth had received a mental health diagnosis and completed recommended treatment, Latinos were less likely to report receiving a diagnosis when compared to NonLatino Whites (16.1% vs. 27.3%). Latino youth were also much less likely to report completing recommended treatments than NonLatino White youth (37.5% vs. 63.6%).

Figure 18

How should the juvenile justice system be improved?
All respondents included, by respondent type

Categories (top to bottom):
Better food, Increase staffing, Fine as is, More community programs, Give parents rights, Information and Education, Provide support, like mentoring, More effective punishment, Counseling

Legend:
- Youth, Latino
- Youth, nonLatino
- Adult, Latino
- Adult, nonLatino

X-axis: 0.0%, 10.0%, 20.0%, 30.0%

For our final question on the survey, we asked people to give suggestions as to how the juvenile justice system in Benton Franklin Counties could be improved. The most commonly cited answers are listed above in Figure 18. We list quotes from selected surveys regarding this question on the following pages.

" . . .P.O. should work in conjunction with the schools. Provide better resources for troubled kids and allow kids to feel part of high school and not banned. After kids are in the system have continuous education for them, meaning therapy for kids and their families." (Adult,nonLatino)

"Every time I go in there, I get worse. They put me against my rivals. We learn more things that are worse . . .we may do worse when we come out. Some people just get used to staying in there and don't want to come out. It becomes their second house." (Youth, Latino)

- "I disagree with some of the things like probation. It is set like a trap and they fall and get into problems again or parents get involved and later get into trouble. Kids need to be held accountable for their mistakes and not the parents." (Adult, Latino)

- "When a child gets involved in the system, it's a good idea to keep the parents involved every step of the way. Some of us parents do care about our kids." (Adult, nonLatino)

- " . . . More programs backed by research. Less emphasis on punishment and more on rehabilitation." (Youth, nonLatino)

- "Provide programs that address youth's particular problems; like counseling, perhaps in home counseling to encompass entire family." (Adult, Latino)

- "They need to explain better to parents in a language I understand so I know what I'm signing." (Adult, Latino)

" . . .P.O. should work in conjunction with the schools. Provide better resources for troubled kids and allow kids to feel part of high school and not banned. After kids are in the system have continuous education for them, meaning therapy for kids and their families." (Adult,nonLatino)

"Every time I go in there, I get worse. They put me against my rivals. We learn more things that are worse . . .we may do worse when we come out. Some people just get used to staying in there and don't want to come out. It becomes their second house." (Youth, Latino)

Next Steps

The Models for Change process in the Tri-Cities includes three workgroups specifically focused on improving mental health, truancy and disproportionate minority contact for justice-involved youth. These workgroups are comprised of individuals representing schools, mental health, law enforcement, parents, youth and court staff who are in the position to make decisions about programs and funding. The University of Washington presented the information from the needs assessment to each of these workgroups and they are currently using this information in conjunction with other data gathering projects, to create priority areas and take action. The UW will continue to consult with the workgroups on research supported programs and guidelines to engage and treat multi-problem youth and families. To learn more about the specific actions being taken by the Models for Change workgroups contact Stephanie McCarl at Stephanie.McCarl@co.benton.wa.us. For further questions about the needs assessment contact Dr. Walker at secwalkr@u.washington.edu or (206) 685-2085.