

Evaluation of California's State-Level Data Systems for Incarcerated Youth

by

John L. Worrall

and

Pamela Schram

School of Social and Behavioral Sciences
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407-2397
Tel: (909) 880-7741

jworall@csulb.edu

January 2000

This report was produced with the help of a 1999-2000 contract from the California State University Faculty Research Fellows Program for the California Senate Office of Research (SOR). Kim Connor, SOR Consultant, assisted in the production of this report. The opinions taken in this report do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the California Senate Office of Research. The Coordinator of the Faculty Research Fellows Program is Professor Robert Wassmer, Center for California Studies, California State University, Sacramento. Information on the Faculty Research Fellows Program, and a list of all previous reports, can be found at <http://www.csus.edu/indiv/w/wasmerr/facfelou.htm>.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....4

Findings and Policy Recommendations.....5

Introduction.....6

 Background.....6

 Overview7

 Stakeholders.....9

A Focus on County Probation Departments..... 11

The Case for Focusing on Serious Offenders..... 13

 Legal Considerations..... 14

An Evaluation of Existing Data Systems 18

 Juvenile Court and Probation Statistical System 18

 Critique 19

 Monthly Arrest and Citation Register 19

 Critique 20

 Offender-Based Information Tracking System..... 20

 Critique 21

 Other Data Systems..... 22

 Local Records 23

Recommendations for Improving Existing Data Systems 24

 Juvenile Delinquency and Social History..... 25

 Problems in School..... 25

 Problems with Families..... 27

 Problems with Peers 28

 Problems with Substance Abuse and Alcohol..... 29

 A Continuum of Deviance 29

Recommended Data Elements	31
Demographic Data.....	32
Social History Data.....	32
Pre-sentence Reports: The Ideal Source for Data	34
The Need for a Standardized Form.....	35
Data Entry Considerations	35
Validity Considerations	37
The Need for a Legal Mandate.....	37
What Agency Should Compile the Data?	38
The Usefulness of Interagency Collaboration	38
Developing Information Sharing Systems.....	42
Oklahoma.....	44
Virginia.....	45
Minnesota.....	45
Conclusion	46
References.....	49

Appendices are not available here, but are available from the authors upon request.

Appendix A: San Bernardino County Pre-sentence Report Form

Appendix B: Sacramento County Pre-sentence Report Form

Appendix C: Los Angeles County Pre-sentence Report Form

Appendix D: Orange County Pre-sentence Report Form

Appendix E: Riverside County Pre-sentence Report Form

Appendix F: Legal Issues Governing Access to Juvenile Data in California

Appendix G: Model Interagency Agreement

Appendix H: Sample Information Sharing Protocol

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report addresses one specific question: What can be done to improve state-level data on at-risk juveniles in the state of California? In response to the question, this report: (1) evaluates existing state-level data systems for juveniles; (2) makes recommendations for improving and expanding the capacity of data systems currently in place; (3) suggests possible means of data collection; and (4) discusses options for interagency access to data on at-risk juveniles.

First, we evaluate a number of existing data systems in California. We call attention to the weaknesses and limitations associated with each data system, paving the way for our recommendations. We argue that most existing data systems at the state *and* local level contain insufficient data on juvenile offenders.

The second and primary focus of this report is on recommendations for expanding and improving existing data systems, with particular emphasis on social history data (i.e., data on family problems, substance abuse, mental health, and similar variables). Social history data are currently unavailable in various data systems used by criminal justice agencies in the state of California. The importance of social history data is supported by the criminal justice literature, which reveals that numerous factors influence delinquency, including school, family, peers, and substance abuse. We thus encourage expanded and improved collection of social history data. Social history data are needed in order to determine the needs of at-risk juveniles.

Initially our proposal was going to make recommendations on developing a viable state-level data system by encouraging interagency collaboration and information sharing. However, during the development of this report, we discovered that county-level pre-sentence reports are an untapped data source that contains a wealth of social history data that are unavailable on a statewide level. Thus, the third major component of our report is our recommendation to encourage those pre-sentence reports be used as a source for comprehensive demographic and social history data on at-risk juveniles.

Fourth, we emphasize the value of accessing social history data by discussing various interagency information-sharing efforts across the country. We do this in order to support our position that developing a state-level database is essential for the various stakeholders, such as policy makers, practitioners, researchers, and, of course, the juveniles themselves. Some of the efforts discussed may also provide a valuable resource to assist in the implementation of the data system as recommended in this report. We discuss such issues as confidentiality, legislative mandates, training for data entry, standardization of data on a state-level, and agency support. When developing information sharing systems, the most frequently mentioned barrier to such an initiative involves confidentiality statutes and regulatory provisions. Some jurisdictions have addressed these issues and have formed successful interagency partnerships. One suggested approach to establishing interagency partnerships is to build on the informal partnerships that most likely exist and subsequently develop interagency agreements for information sharing.

FINDINGS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings. Of the existing data systems in California, none contain detailed demographic and social history data pertaining to juveniles. Each of these systems are also unique compared to the others in that one may include certain categories of offenders or data while another may not. The variability between data systems and the limitations associated with each make it difficult to formulate informed policies aimed at serving at-risk youth. In short, there have been few concerted efforts to mandate the collection of detailed demographic and social history data on at-risk youth in California. Our recommendations are designed to overcome this problem.

Recommendations. Our recommendations for expanding and improving existing data systems include collecting demographic data such as contact information on the minor and parents/guardians, offense description, physical description, and criminal history. The major focus of these recommendations, however, is to collect social history data, particularly the following:

- *Family history/residence:* type of residence, length of occupancy, parents'/guardians' marital status, family income level, parents'/guardians' occupational status, sibling information, physical altercations with family and sexual or physical abuse history.
- *School information:* enrollment status, grade level and number of schools attended, special educational needs, summary of school performance, problems in school.
- *Peer information:* gang activity, problems with peers outside of school/home, crimes committed with peers.
- *Alcohol/Drugs:* nature of alcohol use, nature of drug use.
- *Other:* minor's employment status, physical health problems, mental health problems, and safety concerns (e.g., weapons in the home).

Rather than initiating a new bureaucracy or governmental agency to collect the data, we recommend utilizing pre-sentence reports for juveniles designated as 602s under the Welfare and Institutions Code. Pre-sentence reports are recommended because of the detailed demographic and social history data they contain. This report focuses on county probation departments, pre-sentence reports, and 602s for the following reasons: (1) the juvenile justice system operates primarily on a county-level basis rather than regional or state; (2) pre-sentence reports are generated from those juveniles designated as 602s; and (3) there are fewer legal barriers to obtaining information on 602s compared to 601s or 300s (the other two designations for delinquent/problem youth).

We recommend that the state of California standardize pre-sentence reports and mandate that they be codified and entered into existing county level data systems. Subsequently, these records can be transmitted to the appropriate state-level agency to be compiled and analyzed. We emphasize the importance of the full support and participation of all 58 counties in California. One recommended approach to such participation is a mandate that such social history data be collected and forwarded to a central source.

INTRODUCTION

A 1996 report by the California Task Force to Review Juvenile Crime and the Juvenile Justice Response (California Task Force to Review Juvenile Crime and the Juvenile Justice Response, 1996) called attention to the lack of state-level juvenile (those youth under the age of 18) justice data in California. The task force recommended reinstating the former Bureau of Criminal Statistics' Juvenile Court and Probation Statistical System (JCPSS) with data from every county in California. The system was discontinued in 1990 because of budget cuts, but has recently been reinstated, signaling a heightened interest to improve data collection for juvenile offenders. The reinstatement of JCPSS is progressing slowly and, as such, has prompted requests for recommendations to improve and speed up the process. The Faculty Fellows Program request for proposals—Juvenile Justice: Educational History and Characteristic Data for Juvenile Offenders—was indicative of a desire to do precisely this.

Background

The RFP expressed concerns about California's juvenile justice system. In particular, it lamented the lack of data on (1) the number of juveniles in the system at a given point in time and (2) the characteristics of the juveniles who are in the system. These concerns are well justified. Also, they are exacerbated by the fact that several public agencies are charged with serving and/or monitoring juvenile offenders. These agencies include the California Youth Authority and county probation departments. In addition, the recent passage of Proposition 21 brings an increasing number of youth under control of the Department of Corrections. Because so many agencies are responsible for juvenile offenders in the state of California, data collection and analysis is especially difficult.

The Welfare and Institutions Code, which defines three broad categories of “problem” juveniles, further complicate the juvenile justice system in California. First, juveniles who have committed crimes come under section 602, and are handled by the county probation departments. Juveniles who are not committing crimes, but who are beyond the control of their parents or are habitually truant come under the provisions of section 601 of the Welfare and Institutions Code. The probation department also manages these juveniles. Finally, juveniles who are the victims of abuse and neglect come under section

300. They are managed by the Department of Social Services. This three-tiered system presents at least three problems for policymakers: (1) Who should be considered a juvenile offender? (2) How many 602s, 601s, and 300s are currently being served in the state of California; and (3) Who exactly are these individuals?

Given that numerous agencies are responsible for providing services to juveniles—and that there are several categories of juvenile offenders—improved data collection is essential. In the ongoing effort to reduce juvenile crime, the various agencies charged with serving juvenile offenders need to consider how many juveniles are being served by the system. Unfortunately, California’s effort to collect data on juvenile offenders has bordered on a failure. This is due in part to the complex nature of California’s juvenile justice system. It is also due to the fact that there have been few, if any, concerted efforts to mandate data collection throughout the state. The result has been that policymakers at the state-level are uncertain as to how many juveniles are currently served by the system. Moreover, policymakers have few indications (at least at the state-level) concerning the characteristics of these juveniles.

Accordingly, the RFP asked researchers to answer one of two questions: (1) what early childhood programs meet the needs of at-risk juveniles and (2) what can be done to improve state-level educational and related data about at-risk juveniles. As initially expressed in our proposal, we have chosen to respond to the second question. In response to that question, we have been asked to accomplish four goals with this report: (1) evaluate existing state-level data systems for juvenile offenders; (2) make recommendations for improving and expanding the capacity of data systems currently in place; (3) suggest possible means of data collection that do not involve the creation of a new bureaucracy or other government agency; and (4) discuss options for interagency access to data on at-risk juveniles.

Overview

First, we critically evaluate existing databases. California currently has in place a number of sophisticated data systems within the criminal justice system. Each serves a valuable purpose, but each also has limitations. We will examine the important features of these state-level current systems, seeking to incorporate them into our recommendations; however, we will also discuss the limitations and

shortcomings associated with these data systems. There is not, as yet, any comprehensive data system in place which is intended to gather detailed data (particularly detailed demographic and social history data) on juveniles currently being served by California's juvenile justice system. We will also review a small selection of county-level data systems that bear resemblance to state systems.

Second, we will make recommendations for improved data collection at the state-level. This will be accomplished by reviewing the juvenile justice literature with special attention to the links between social history and delinquency (e.g., family history, abuse, etc.). Most of California's current data systems include basic demographic information, not social history data. The literature suggests that social history data helps predict juvenile crime, so, to the extent that the purpose of data collection is to improve services to at-risk juveniles, it is essential to have access to social history data. In other words, a comprehensive data system designed to track the extent of the juvenile crime problem should include information on more than just basic demographic variables and/or criminal histories.

Third, we will make recommendations for *how* to go about collecting the necessary data. We argue that the easiest way to gather comprehensive data on at-risk juveniles is to rely on county probation officers, the individuals who routinely have the most contact with problem kids. Specifically, we recommend the state-level adoption of a standardized pre-sentence report for all counties that could be easily entered into an automated database. Unfortunately, pre-sentence reports are not completed for 601s and 300s. Thus, we make recommendations strictly for improved data collection on 602s. We offer two reasons for this: (1) legal considerations limit interagency access to data on 601s and 300s, which means it is difficult to access, compile, and share data on "non-criminal" juveniles because of confidentiality concerns, and (2) 602s represent a more serious "threat," as they are considered the most serious offenders in the state of California. With regard to the latter point, if policymakers seek to prevent juvenile *crime*, it makes sense to focus on juvenile criminals, not necessarily troubled kids, although it can certainly be argued that the latter may eventually become the former. Either way, the extent of information available regarding 602s is enough to encourage careful data collection for them, not so much 601s and 300s.

Finally, we discuss the value of interagency collaboration and information sharing and make suggestions for improving interagency access to juvenile history data in the state of California. We examine various interagency information sharing efforts across the country to illustrate (a) the benefits of improved interagency access to data on juvenile offenders and (b) the issues that need to be considered when making data accessible to other agencies. In addition, we recommend means to improve access to the information that would interest other public entities (e.g., the Department of Education).

The RFP envisions one eventual goal for California's juvenile justice data collection problem, namely the creation of a *single* statewide data system for juvenile offenders, preferably one that will mandate data collection from all counties in the state of California. Currently no such system is in place. And, to the extent that JCPSS is a statewide database, counties are not *required* to provide juvenile history data. In other words, participation is voluntary.

Stakeholders

Who are the stakeholders who would benefit from improved statewide data collection for youthful offenders? First and foremost, the legislature would benefit from the implementation of a single statewide database for youthful offenders. Too often policies are implemented without sufficient information, but a comprehensive database would serve as a useful source for legislators to develop an improved understanding of the needs of youthful offenders. Services to juvenile offenders and prevention policies can be better tailored to the needs of kids with a clearer picture of the characteristics and backgrounds of today's at-risk youth.

Improved data collection would also prove a godsend to program administrators and managers. State officials cannot effectively serve juvenile offenders without a clear conception of how many juveniles fall within the system or what their needs are. Perhaps more problematic, program directors and administrators, without adequate information, may encounter difficulties securing funding for future services. If, for example, a chief probation officer approaches the legislature for program funding but does not have up-to-date and accurate data about the population s/he serves, the chief becomes vulnerable, and perhaps runs the risk of losing a potentially valuable source of income.

Improved data collection would also assist academic researchers. There is a growing, and much needed, trend from the federal to the local level to evaluate various programs and policies addressing the problems associated with juvenile offenders. Developing a more extensive and comprehensive database would provide researchers with an essential tool that would improve evaluation studies of such programs and policies. In this vein, enhanced evaluation research utilizing such a database would subsequently assist state and local policymakers in future decisions concerning how to best address the problems associated with juvenile crime in the state of California.

Other stakeholders include the public. There is a great deal of mythology and misinformation regarding juvenile crime. Proposition 21 is evidence of this; despite an overall decline in juvenile crime in recent years, the California voters recently just passed legislation that takes a very punitive and conservative approach to youthful offenders. With accurate data regarding the extent of juvenile crime as well as the characteristics and backgrounds of juvenile offenders, it is possible that alternatives that are more reasonable could be pursued. Since juvenile delinquency has much to do with what happens in the family and schools, improved information would help individuals at the local level (e.g., families and schools)—in addition to state and local policymakers—address the needs of at-risk youth.

Another, though certainly not the last group of stakeholders in this project is the population of juveniles in California. Given the disorganized, complex nature of the current juvenile justice system, it is no mystery why people perceive there to be problems. However, if state and local policymakers and other decision-makers have in their possession good data about juvenile offenders, the juveniles will benefit by being the recipients of programs designed to divert them from lifestyles of crime and deviance. Our intentions are not to criticize the juvenile justice system's approach to juvenile crime. Yet, clearly, when it is not known how many juvenile offenders are being served by the system or *who* those juveniles are, no one suffers as much as the juveniles themselves. Improved information would thus benefit juveniles as well as all the individuals, agencies, and institutions whose duty it is to serve them.

A final group of stakeholders includes the juvenile courts. Judges and prosecutors at who deal routinely with problem juveniles would be well served by a database that contains detailed information on

juvenile offenders. Indeed, our communications with certain county judges confirmed that there is a general lack of data on problem youth.

A FOCUS ON COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENTS

Despite the fact that juvenile offenders in California are served by numerous agencies, it is important to note that the “center” of the juvenile justice system in this state is the county. Specifically, county probation departments are the agencies that juvenile offenders and other at-risk youth first come into contact with (even the Juvenile Courts are found at the county level within the Superior Court system). Probation officers recommend whether to file petitions with the courts and have a great deal of discretion in terms of what eventually happens to troubled youth who come before them. Probation officers also make recommendations for placement, supervise juveniles in and outside of juvenile hall, and refer juveniles to other social service agencies, among other things. In serious cases, law enforcement officers may refer juveniles to the adult authorities, but, by and large, the counties are most responsible for serving youthful offenders.

The means by which juveniles are exposed to county probation departments differ depending on their designation under the Welfare and Institutions Code. The 602s, the most serious juvenile offenders, first come into contact with the police who either issue citations to or arrest such individuals. Police officers are the gateway to the juvenile justice system. They have the discretion to arrest, release, or issue a citation, but their “duty” to the juvenile generally ends at this point. If an arrest or citation is issued, though, the minor will be required to meet with the probation department in his/her respective county. Once the juvenile arrives at the probation department (or is already in juvenile hall), the probation officer responsible for the intake of cases will also make a discretionary decision: release the juvenile, counsel the juvenile and close the file, recommend informal supervision, or refer the case to the deputy district attorney assigned to the juvenile court.

The 601s, children who are beyond the control of their parents or habitually truant, can also be subjected to some form of intervention by the probation department. Most efforts to control 601s are carried out on an informal basis, but probation departments, instead of other public agencies, are most

likely to intervene initially with 601s. Probation officers also have at their disposal the ability to recommend that 601s become wards of the juvenile court and be required to participate in counseling or some other service.

The 300s, on the other hand, initially meet the Department of Social Services. Because they are the abused and/or neglected children, they are not considered juvenile offenders at the same level of risk of 601s or 602s. They are considered the least serious of the three designations. The state perceives there are other alternatives (in addition to probation) for juveniles at this stage of their development.

Given the important role county probation departments play with regard to juvenile offenders, it is eminently sensible to recommend that data collection begin at the county level. In fact, the Juvenile Court and Probation Statistical System (JCPSS) relies on data supplied by officials at the county level. Our recommendations follow this pattern, but we encourage improved (and mandated) data collection at the county level. In particular, we encourage policymakers to give more attention to the social histories of at-risk juveniles throughout the state.

The *only* way to develop an adequate picture of the juvenile crime problem in California is to mandate data collection and submission by each of the 58 counties. Local law enforcement officials certainly possess juvenile arrest data, just like local schools possess data on truancy and student performance, but data that are considerably more meaningful and detailed can be found through county probation departments. Because of their important role in California's juvenile justice system, probation officials are in a unique position to supply a wealth of valuable information to policymakers in Sacramento.

THE CASE FOR FOCUSING ON SERIOUS OFFENDERS

Having built our case for focusing on county probation departments, we need to further limit our focus. In other words, we need to “define” the juvenile population for which we intend to recommend improved data collection. Naturally, it is impossible to gather data on all juvenile offenders (some juveniles never come into contact with authorities), which is why we need to specify *a priori* the contours of our recommendations.

In short, we recommend that county probation departments engage in improved data collection for 602s, not 601s. Three reasons are offered for this. First, 602s are the more serious offenders, those who have encountered the police at least once. As such, a clear paper trail is in place once they encounter criminal justice officials. Second, juveniles who are officially designated as 602s (as opposed to possible 602s, i.e., those who have not yet been “convicted”) have been “convicted” and sentenced in a juvenile court proceeding. This means, presumably, that careful attention has been paid to the youth’s background and the best possible course of action for him or her. Such attention can only be given when there is an adequate history available to the judge. We recommend tapping into this historical information. Finally, because of legal restrictions, it is considerably difficult in California for social service agencies to access the records of 601 “status” offenders.

With regard to the paper trail, once a juvenile has been exposed to the police, and then referred to probation, the probation intake officer can then ask the District Attorney to prepare a petition to declare the minor a ward of the juvenile court. The petition includes a statement of the charges against the minor. Once the DA prepares a petition, a three-stage process begins. At every stage of this process data gathering occurs, and essentially becomes cumulative. By the time the juvenile reaches court (if he or she does), officials are expected to possess detailed information about each youth they meet.

First, there will be a detention hearing. The detention hearing is where the youth is brought before the Juvenile Court so the judge can determine whether the minor should remain in custody or be released to his or her parents. After this initial hearing is a jurisdiction hearing. The jurisdiction hearing consists of two phases, an arraignment, and a trial. The judge, not a jury decides whether to convict. The

convicted juvenile will then appear in a disposition hearing, the juvenile justice system's equivalent of an adult sentencing hearing. This hearing is only held if the juvenile admits committing a crime or is convicted at trial. The hearing is designed to decide on the best course of action to hold the juvenile accountable for his/her wrongdoing.

The probation officer who has worked with the juvenile prepares a pre-sentencing report to assist the judge in making his/her decision. Finally, the judge decides on one of four potential sentences: (1) informal probation (2) wardship in the home; (3) wardship out of the home, as in a group home; or (4) the California Youth Authority. The latter outcome, the most serious, is where the juvenile is forced to enter an institution or camp maintained by CYA. Commitment can be for several months or several years. Once the juvenile is sentenced, s/he is officially considered a 602.

A convenient byproduct of the process of declaring a juvenile to be a 602 is a lengthy paper trail. Since the juvenile will have come into contact with numerous criminal justice officials—police, probation, courts—a wealth of information about his/her record and background will have been gathered along the way. The pre-sentence report (the central focus of our eventual recommendations), for example, contains a veritable gold mine of demographic and social history data that could easily be coded, entered into a database, and supplied to the appropriate state-level agency.

Legal Considerations

As indicated above, there appears to be extensive data available for 602s. Options for data collection with 601s and 300s, however, are severely restricted. This is because several laws designed to ensure confidentiality and restricted access to sensitive records protects low-level juvenile offenders. The law does not expressly prohibit access to juvenile records. Rather, it authorizes data collection for compiling annual statistics, but also limits access to and reporting of personal information depending on the juvenile's designation under California's Welfare and Institutions Code.

California law provides that the Department of Justice is authorized to collect data from "all persons and agencies dealing with delinquency and delinquents" (Penal Code Section 13020). The statistics are required to detail the extent of juvenile crime, trends in juvenile crime, and the need for

legislative action in the form of policies and programs to reduce juvenile crime (see sections 13010.5, 13010, 13012, and 13020). Significantly, though, these provisions fall under the Penal Code, not the Welfare and Institutions Code, the latter of which governs access to juvenile data.

Section 285 of the Welfare and Institutions Code expressly provides: “All probation officers shall make such periodic reports to the Bureau of Criminal Statistics as the bureau may require and upon forms furnished by the bureau, provided that no names or social security numbers shall be transmitted regarding any proceeding under Section 300 or 601.” A literal interpretation of this statute suggests that no meaningful identifying information can be shared for 300s and 601s, especially *across counties*. This poses a profound obstacle for the collection of data on at-risk juveniles.

Current law does not permit a single identifier that would be the same across counties. Instead, counties are forced to develop their own identifiers (such as booking numbers, not social security numbers or names), which, while helpful in preventing duplicative entries at the county level, does not facilitate data entry across counties. In other words, there is no way under existing law governing data collection for 601s and 300s to develop a central data depository consisting of individual-level records that can be accessed and updated by all counties.

Unfortunately, Section 285 of the WIC only permits data to be reported in the aggregate or without identifying information. While aggregate statistics are certainly valuable unto themselves, individual-level data are essential, particularly if the goal is to develop a comprehensive picture of the extent of the juvenile crime problem in California. If, for example, a juvenile were a 601 in one county, then moved to another county, then became a 601 in that county, the law would prohibit linking both incidents together under a single identifier within a single statewide database. The outcome would be that county A would have its records on the juvenile and county B would have its records on the juvenile. Unfortunately, both records could not be linked together in a cumulative or longitudinal fashion at the state-level because of legal restrictions.

The legal picture is decidedly more optimistic for 602s, fortunately. Section 285 of the Welfare and Institutions Code remains silent as the confidentiality (if any) enjoyed by 602s. However, Section

204(b) provides in relevant part that: “This section shall not be construed to prohibit the Department of Justice from transmitting fingerprints, photographs, or physical description and identification data of a minor to a law enforcement agency for the purpose of obtaining identification of the minor or from requesting the history of the minor from the agency.” In other words, DOJ is not barred from requesting personal information about 602s from other public agencies.

One might then interpret this statute (since it is silent on the issue) to mean that other public agencies (e.g., probation) are free to supply personal information about 602s to the Department of Justice. It is important to note that 204(b) does not expressly refer to 602s, only minors arrested or taken into custody, but since there are no specific provisions restricting access to personal information of 602s (as there are under Section 285 for 601s and 300s), there would seem to be a great deal of freedom available to share, compile, and track the criminal histories of 602s.

Not everyone can enjoy unfettered access to the records of 602s. Section 827 of the Welfare and Institutions Code limits access to juvenile records to the following persons: (1) court personnel; (2) the district attorney, city attorney, or prosecutor; (3) the accused minor, parents, or guardians; (4) attorneys for the parties; (5) the judge or hearing officer; (6) the probation officer; (7) law enforcement officers actively involved in a case against the minor; (8) members of the child protective agency; (9) members of a minor’s multidisciplinary team; (10) persons or agencies providing treatment or supervision of the minor; and (11) any other person designated by court order. Researchers and laypersons, without express court permission, cannot access the information. However, nearly every party engaged in anyway with the 602 (everyone from parents to probation officers) can access the information under the law.

Thus, Section 827 does nothing to inhibit *most* interagency access and information sharing, an important consideration in light of the movement toward increased access to and sharing of information regarding the nation’s troubled youth. And, to the extent that researchers and other interested individuals desire to access the records of 602s a court petition is all that is necessary, assuming the court grants it. Finally, 827 does provide access to other parties, including schools and social service agencies (see Section 827 for specific restrictions).

Regardless of who accesses the data, though, Section 827 does prohibit the dissemination of information. In other words, juvenile records need to stay in the hands of those authorized by Section 827 to access it. This is sensible in light of WIC 201(d), which states: “Juvenile courts and other public agencies charged with enforcing, interpreting, and administering the juvenile court law [must] consider the safety and protection of the public and the *best interest* of the minor in all deliberations pursuant to [the code].” All necessary means should be taken, then, to ensure that juvenile records, particularly the dissemination thereof, are kept private to the extent possible.

We do not claim to be legal authorities, but a direct reading of the laws governing access to juvenile records suggests that the only viable state-level data system is one that contains data on 602s, not 601s and 300s. Simply put, if a state-level data system which contains detailed offense and social history data is to serve as a depository for all agencies affiliated with the juvenile justice process, then the database must be limited to 602s. Because identifiers for 601s and 300s are impermissible, limiting data collection for these individuals to the aggregate level, they must necessarily be excluded.

The only way for a statewide database to serve the needs of *all* juveniles falling under any Welfare and Institutions Code designation, the legislature will need to change the law. A focus on 602s, however, can proceed without changes to laws already on the books. It is unfortunate that existing law restricts access to the records of 601s and 300s, as troubled (but not necessarily criminal) youth often end up turning into serious offenders. Data collection would seem sensible to understand the characteristics of this at-risk population in order to prevent crime *before* it occurs. But until the law is changed this is not a viable option. A single, statewide database for juvenile offenders must, by law, be restricted to the most serious juvenile offenders, namely 602s.

One other potential legal hurdle governing access to juvenile data can be found in Section 793(c) of the California Welfare and Institutions Code, which provides: “If the minor has performed satisfactorily during the period in which deferred entry of judgment was granted, at the end of that period the charge or charges in the ward ship petition shall be dismissed and the arrest upon which the judgment was deferred shall be deemed never to have occurred and any records in the possession of the juvenile

court shall be sealed...” The fact that the WIC requires records to be sealed at a certain point is potentially problematic because, as we mentioned earlier, identifiers are probably needed in any statewide database in order to minimize duplicative data. Fortunately, Section 793(c) goes on to state “...the prosecuting attorney and the probation department of any county shall have access to these records after they are sealed for the limited purpose of determining whether a minor is eligible for deferred entry of judgment pursuant to Section 790.” It seems, given this exception, that certain officials can would be able to have access to the data we propose; however, it would also seem that if the data are to be made available to other criminal justice officials (or the public) identifiers would need to be removed. We cannot offer a solution to this potential problem. Instead, we merely wish to point out that any concerted effort to improve statewide data for juvenile offenders will probably have to confront Section 793(c) of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

AN EVALUATION OF EXISTING DATA SYSTEMS

In this section we undertake a brief critique of existing state-level data systems utilized to track the various facets of California’s crime problem. A comprehensive statewide database containing detailed demographic and social history data on the state’s juveniles is desired, and, unfortunately, no existing data systems quite fulfill this criterion. Most existing data systems fall short in some fashion (e.g., by excluding social history data and/or certain categories of offenders).

Juvenile Court and Probation Statistical System

The Juvenile Court and Probation Statistical System (JCPSS) is the closest to a comprehensive social history and demographic database currently being operated in the state of California. There are two purposes of JCPSS: (1) to collect and report data on the juvenile justice process in California and (2) to provide detailed information concerning juveniles’ transformation from the early referral stages to final disposition. In 1990, the system was discontinued because of budget cuts. In August 1996, however, the system was reinstated. Data are transmitted monthly (on a voluntary basis by counties throughout the state) electronically or on disk, depending on technical capabilities. Law enforcement agencies at the county level submit data to the county probation department on arrests and citations. As the courts make

decisions, the courts also send data to probation departments. Upon receipt of this data, the participating county probation departments enter the data into the JCPSS system then report the data to the Department of Justice Bureau of Criminal Information and Analysis.

The counties report three basic data elements: (1) data on delinquency referrals disposed prior to court action; (2) referrals that result in court action; and (3) closures from active status. These data are entered into the statewide database to create delinquency histories of the juveniles processed by the system. Data entry at the state-level (as opposed to the county level) is carefully undertaken to minimize duplicate information. Additional demographic data are also reported, and can include: (1) personal characteristics; (2) demographic characteristics; (3) department status; (4) source of referral; (5) court data; (6) final disposition; and (7) case status.

Critique

The JCPSS system suffers from three significant flaws. First, little more than half of the counties in the state report data. This is because several counties lack the hardware and/or software capabilities necessary to compile and deliver the needed data. Second, county participation is voluntary; counties are not mandated to report data. As such, JCPSS cannot paint a comprehensive picture of the juvenile crime problem. Finally, the data elements included in JCPSS, while informative unto themselves, do not account for juveniles' social histories at all. The system contains only basic demographic and case "handling" data, not social history data. Our recommendations are to improve the collection of social history data, data that are essential for the development of preventive policies. A data system that does not include detailed background information on youth being served by the juvenile justice system is of limited utility to state and local policymakers.

Monthly Arrest and Citation Register

Adult and juvenile arrest data for misdemeanors and felonies are reported by law enforcement agencies throughout California to the Bureau of Criminal Information and Analysis (BCIA) on JUS 750 forms and other media. These data, called the Monthly Arrest and Citation Register (MACR), are published annually by BCIA in *Crime and Delinquency in California*. An MACR record contains the

offender's name and a few demographic characteristics and specifies the "most serious" arrest offense. "Arrest" includes not only formal arrest, but cases where a juvenile (or an adult) is transported to the officer's headquarters and an arrest or booking report is taken. This includes juveniles who are issued citations and later required to appear in court, before the probation department, or another official. Even law enforcement contacts where the juvenile's responsibility for a crime is clear, but the incident is closed at the end of the initial contact, are considered arrests for purposes of the MACR.

Specific data reported by law enforcement agencies for the MACR include: (1) a local reference number; (2) the offender's name, age, sex, and race/ethnicity; (3) date arrested; (4) arrest level (felony or misdemeanor) and the arresting agency; (5) highest arrest offense; and (6) the law enforcement disposition.

Critique

Like JCPSS, MACR suffers from a few noteworthy problems. First, and most importantly, it is limited to arrest data. This means that most informal dispositions (e.g., verbal reprimand and/or referral to probation by non-law enforcement party) are neglected. The result is an incomplete picture of the juvenile crime problem. Second, although local law enforcement agencies are required to follow strict guidelines with respect to reporting "arrests," it is probable that there is some confusion about the definition of "arrest" set forth in MACR guidelines. Also, the definition of arrest varies from county to county, which may pose additional problems for data accuracy. Third, MACR contains limited data, namely basic demographic data and no social history. This makes its ability to contribute to crime prevention rather minimal. A final problem is that law enforcement officials are required to only report the most serious offense for which there was an arrest, not all offenses. The MACR provides a wealth of useful data concerning arrests throughout California, but the system's utility is little more than descriptive.

Offender-Based Information Tracking System

The California Youth Authority (CYA) runs the Offender-Based Information Tracking System (OBITS). It contains data on the backgrounds and characteristics of wards, their movements, progress,

confinement time, and other variables. Data are entered into the OBITS system by CYA Case Services staff after a written referral comes in from the local court or probation department. The referral marks the point at which the youth becomes a CYA ward. Data collection then continues throughout the ward's term of confinement and/or supervision (e.g., parole).

The OBITS database consists of several different files. These include (1) offender characteristics (e.g., demographic characteristics such as age, sex, and ethnicity); (2) institution movements (i.e., all the movements of the juvenile while under CYA's supervision); (3) referrals (i.e., information regarding the nature of the offense for which the ward was convicted and the jurisdiction); (4) parole movements (length of parole and progress on parole); and (5) board order file data (e.g., data from Youthful Offender Parole Board hearings held during the ward's confinement).

Critique

OBITS is one of the more sophisticated juvenile databases currently in operation in California. However, OBITS has two inherent (and obvious) limitations. First, it only contains data on CYA wards. Unfortunately, wards represent the tip of the proverbial iceberg. As we have seen, there are numerous alternatives for dealing with juvenile offenders; CYA wardship is truly the last resort, an option reserved for the most serious offenders. Numerous 602s, even though "convicted" for their crimes, will become probationers or even be sentenced to informal probation. This form of sentence need not take place in a CYA facility; it can take place in the juvenile's home or in another setting outside the juvenile's home (e.g., a group home).

The second limitation that OBITS suffers from is by now a familiar one—the failure to include social history data. While OBITS contains data on wards' demographic characteristics, the system contains precious little data about the offenders' (non-criminal) backgrounds, such as family problems, abuse, drug problems at home, and so on.

Other Data Systems

Indeed, California maintains other state-level data systems within the criminal justice system, but most either do not serve the juvenile population or suffer from serious limitations that preclude the increased utilization of each system in a manner consistent with the recommendations made in this report. For example, the Automated Criminal History System (ACHS) includes all adult felony and retainable misdemeanor arrest and disposition events reported to the state Department of Justice. Significantly, the system is limited to the adult population and does not contain data on juvenile arrests. Also, the system does not contain demographic and background data of the kind necessary to formulate policies of a preventive nature.

Another example is the Judicial Branch Statistics Information System (JBSIS). The JBSIS system is designed “to provide the foundation for planning, research, and evaluation programs that are generated from within and outside of the judicial branch through the collection and dissemination of case-related data about the work of the state courts.” Though not yet running to full capacity, the system will contain data on caseloads, case management, case flow, and workload. The system will contain a great deal of data concerning juveniles (e.g., the number of juveniles who are the subjects of dependency petitions, and the number of juveniles under the jurisdiction of the courts). Like all the aforementioned data systems, though, JBSIS is not designed to include social history data.

Yet another statewide source for juvenile data derives from Juvenile Detention Surveys. Juvenile Detention Surveys are administered by the California Board of Corrections for understanding the capacity of California’s detention facilities; the demands on juvenile halls in terms of arrests, bookings, commitments, and populations; and the relationships between facility capacities and populations. Each county completes a monthly *Juvenile Detention Survey* that includes data from all facilities within that county for the particular month. Since the surveys are primarily geared toward workload-related issues, they contain virtually no information concerning the demographic characteristics and/or social histories of juveniles occupying detention facilities.

Still other statewide data systems include the Foster Care Information System (FCIS), which tracks children while in foster care; The Child Welfare Service/Case Management System (CWS/CMS), which manages and assesses California's state welfare services program, the Children's Services Archive for California (CSAC), which contains longitudinal data from foster care and child abuse records; and the California Safe Schools Assessment (CSSA), which is designed to help understand crime and safety issues confronting students, teachers, administrators, and community members. The main limitation associated with all these systems is that they contain limited social history data and apply to a specific (and limited) segment of the delinquent population, adult *or* juvenile.

Local Records

Most, if not all counties in California maintain their own data systems designed to monitor and track problem juveniles. We do not attempt to review or describe each of these systems because of two conditions: (1) the large number of counties in the state and (2) the possibility that individual counties operate multiple data systems. For example, with regard to the second condition, Los Angeles County probation itself (not to mention courts, law enforcement and other criminal justice agencies) operates no less than five data systems for juveniles. These include the Juvenile Automated Index, the Juvenile Caseload Management System, the Probation Detention System, the Intake and Detention System, and Conditions of Probation System, and the Consolidate Criminal History Reporting System. The list expands when one accounts for Los Angeles County's data systems for adult probationers.

We assume that most county-level data systems contain generally the same information. Moreover, it is not likely that any individual county-level data system is more comprehensive and inclusive than the state-level systems already reviewed. To this end, we briefly describe two county-level data systems operated by probation departments in San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

San Bernardino County's data system for juvenile probationers is called "J-Net." The system contains detailed data on the criminal histories and backgrounds (almost exclusively demographic) of juvenile probationers served by the county. Probation officers in the county have access to the records and status of juvenile probationers within the jurisdiction of the county, but the system does not provide

for the entry of social history data or detailed non-criminal background information. J-Net is basically a workload-case history system that does little more than supply information concerning the number of offenses committed by and case histories of juvenile probationers.

The Riverside County Probation Department uses two types of data sources for obtaining information on juveniles. First, the Department has access to JENSIS which is maintained by the court. This data system includes the official records (e.g., court petitions) of juvenile cases. Second, the Department maintains the Client Management System (CMS). CMS consists of all chronological entries of probation officers such as changes in caseloads, adjustment in school, and probation officer contacts. An essential component to CMS is placement. The placement of a juvenile requires strict accounting; probation officers have to carefully scrutinize those juveniles who are placed in some type of facility. Like J-Net, both Riverside systems contain minimal social history data.

In all likelihood, there is one county-level data system that emulates what we propose in this report, but we did not have the resources needed to undertake an exhaustive review of existing county-level data systems. We believe, though, that most existing data systems underestimate the importance of social history data, particularly data regarding a juvenile's family, school, and peer-related experiences. If there is anything we know from the literature on juvenile justice, at-risk youth tend to commit crimes not necessarily out of free and independent will, but because of trouble in their homes, schools, and relationships with peers and other individuals.

Given the importance of social history, we undertake a review of the juvenile justice literature pertaining to the links between social histories and delinquent behavior. It is essential for state and local policymakers to develop an understanding of the non-criminal backgrounds of juveniles throughout the state so that preventive (as opposed to reactive) policies can be formulated. Too often state and local policymakers (and the citizens they serve) are content to react to the juvenile crime problem in a "knee-jerk" fashion. The recent passage of Proposition 21 in California is a shining example of this. We do not intend to critique the conservative nature of such policies, but instead argue that more attention needs to be given to the characteristics of problem youth within the state of California.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING EXISTING DATA SYSTEMS

As indicated, our recommendations for expanded and improved data collection for juvenile offenders will make liberal use of pre-sentence reports. However, before we begin a discussion of the values of the pre-sentence report, we briefly review the literature on the links between juvenile delinquency and social history. The reason for doing this is to pave the way for a discussion of specific data elements that we recommend be included in any future statewide database. The review also builds a strong case for focusing on pre-sentence reports, which, with some exceptions, contain a great deal of social history data.

As our critique of existing data systems revealed, there is little, if any social history data gathered at the state-level. This is a startling omission insofar as the main purpose for a separate juvenile justice system is to give special attention to the *needs* of problem youth. It becomes impossible to develop specific policies and programs aimed at reducing juvenile crime without careful attention to the histories of the juveniles being served in the system.

Juvenile Delinquency and Social History

Youngsters who experience problems in school, with their families and peers as well as dangers or potential dangers to their health and development have been identified as “at-risk” youth. These “at-risk” youth can experience such negative consequences as delinquency, school failure, poor physical health, and substance abuse. Policies emphasizing the reduction of juvenile crime need to address the variety of environmental factors that affect juveniles’ propensities toward delinquent behavior.

Problems in School

There is an increased awareness of the central role that schools can play in preventing delinquency. Research has revealed that youth who do not perform well in school, or do not like school, are more likely to be involved in delinquent behavior (Thornberry, Lizotte, Krohn, Farnworth & Joon Jang, 1991; Wolford & Koebel, 1995). There is considerable empirical support that schools do not consistently and uniformly provide a positive atmosphere for adolescent development. Many of the youths who are serious delinquents find their school experiences to be very negative (Pink, 1984).

Various indicators have been identified as major obstacles to providing a positive school environment for youth including truancy, dropout rates, and school safety.

Although there are no national data on the extent of truancy, various cities indicate that unexcused absences among youth is a significant problem. Truancy is considered to be the first indicator that a youth is in some type of trouble. The U.S. Department of Education (1996) noted that high rates of unexcused absences are associated with high daytime burglary rates and vandalism. Youths who do not complete high school face numerous consequences that can potentially influence their adult lives including an increased chance of unemployment and receipt of public assistance. In addition, our nation's prisons and death row inmates consist of a disproportionate number of high school dropouts (Harlow, 1994) and slightly less than fifty percent of adults arrested have not completed high school (Drug Use Forecasting, 1995).

Kaufman, Klein, and Frase's (1999) report on dropout rates in the United States revealed various background characteristics associated with dropout rates:

1. About five out of every 100 young adults, approximately 454,000, enrolled in high school in 1996 left school before October of 1997 without successfully completing a high school program. This estimate of 4.6 percent was similar to those reported over the last ten years, but is lower than in the early 1970s.

2. Hispanic students were more likely than white and black students to leave school short of completing a high school program; in 1997, 9.5 percent of Hispanics were dropouts compared with 3.6 percent of white and 5.0 percent of black students. The disproportionate number of Hispanics dropping out of high school is considerable when comparing the percent of all Hispanic students dropping out of high school (26.3 percent) with the total percent of Hispanic students in the population (12.5 percent).

3. In 1997, youth living in families with incomes in the lowest 20 percent of all family incomes were nearly 7 times as likely as their peers from families in the top 20 percent of the income distribution to drop out of high school. Specifically, while students coming from low income families make up about 13.9 percent of the student population, the percent of low income students dropping out of high school is

37.8 percent. Alternatively, thirty percent of the students from high-income families make up only 11.7 percent of the students who dropped out.

In recent years, criminal activity in schools has been brought to national attention. School safety continues to be a crucial issue for many of our nation's schools (Hunter & Elias, 1998). One major concern is students' increased fear of victimization and the subsequent consequences of this fear. While student victimization rates have remained relatively stable over previous years, students continue to report an increased fear of victimization (U.S. Department of Justice, 1989; 1995). In 1989, 6 percent of students ages 12 through 19 reported that they feared being attacked or harmed while in school; in 1995, this number increased to 9 percent. There was also an increase in students' fear of being attacked while going to and from school. Students have also reported avoiding one or more places at school because they feared for their safety.

Problems with Families

In 1997, there were approximately 984,000 victims of child maltreatment (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Over 50 percent of these children suffered neglect; approximately 25 percent of these children endured physical abuse and 12 percent were sexually abused. Infants were the largest age group who suffered some form of maltreatment. Over 950 children known to state child protective services agencies died because of maltreatment.

Adolescents who experience such abuse suffer a range of both emotional and physical problems. These youths have difficulty in seeking help for these problems and rarely talk about these experiences (Libbey & Bybee, 1979). Youths who were severely punished feel extreme guilt and express feelings that they deserved such punishment (Amsterdam, Brill, Bell, & Edwards, 1979). In their study on sexual victimization and delinquency, Widom and Ames (1994) reported that childhood sexual abuse victims were at a higher risk of being arrested as juvenile runaways. The arrest rates for children who suffered neglect have been almost as high as the arrest rates for children who suffered physical abuse (National Institute of Justice, 1999).

Children exposed to domestic violence also display negative behaviors such as aggressive behavior and difficulties in school and with peers. These difficulties can place them at greater risk for delinquency. It is estimated that between 3.3 million and 10 million children are exposed to violence between adult intimate partners every year (David and Lucile Packard Foundation, 1999). Findlater and Kelly's (1999) study revealed that domestic violence occurred in a least one-third of the families in the child protective services system. Being exposed to such violence can result in children learning that violence is acceptable, can disrupt the positive parenting that children need, and has been linked to children's increased likelihood to also being subjected to family violence (Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999).

Problems with Peers

Delinquency among an adolescent's peers continues to be a significant factor in his or her involvement in criminal activity (Farrington & West, 1990; Reiss, 1992). A significant problem related to peers is gang involvement. Spergel (1995) suggested that youths join gangs for various reasons such as personal safety, excitement, financial gain, and a substitute family. An adolescent's family situation has been cited as one of the several factors related to a youth's increased likelihood to join a gang (Thornberry, 1998). An adolescent is more likely to join a gang if he or she comes from a family with low involvement, low parental control, or monitoring, poor affective relationships between parent and child, and parental conflict. Male adolescents are also more likely to join a gang if they grow up in a disorganized and violent neighborhood. Consistent with the above discussion of schools, low expectations for success in school, low commitment to school, and low attachment to teachers are also predictors for gang membership. There are few predictors for female adolescents joining a gang. Some predictors for increased likelihood in gang membership, however, are similar to males including growing up in a disorganized and violent neighborhood and low expectations for school success.

Curry and Thomas (1997) recommend that community organization efforts need to focus on (a) increasing linkages between agencies within the community, (b) implementing research to study the nature of local interagency relations, (c) improving the quality of information being disseminated to

significant actors in local networks, and (d) beginning to expand organizational efforts to a national-level network (pp. 424-426).

Problems with Substance Abuse and Alcohol

While a majority of serious delinquents are also serious drug users, only about one-third of serious users are serious delinquents (White, Pandina, LaGrange, 1987). The widespread use of drugs by serious delinquents is supported by survey findings that 60 percent of juveniles in state-operated institutions report using drugs regularly, and nearly 40 percent report being under the influence of drugs at the time of arrest (Beck, Kline & Greenfeld, 1988). Since 1990, the Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) study has collected information on substance abuse among juvenile male detainees and arrestees. Based on data from detention centers in twelve cities, the rate for juveniles testing positive for at least one drug ranged from 19 percent to 58 percent (National Institute of Justice, 1997). Thus, juvenile justice practitioners are often faced with the need to provide drug treatment services to delinquents, particularly for older adolescents and for those who began using drugs at an early age (Elliott, Huizinga, & Menard, 1989).

A Continuum of Deviance

Delinquency and juvenile delinquents incorporate a continuum of definitions and perceptions. Some perceive juvenile delinquency as any youth who has violated the law. Others perceive juvenile delinquency as youths who repeatedly commit serious offenses. Status and minor offenders would be categorized as different types of offenders. While the news media has greatly influenced the public's perceptions about the prevalence of juvenile crime, there are indications that actual juvenile crime is not accurately reflected in the media's portrayal of youth violence (Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 1997).

The current attention concerning juvenile delinquency has essentially focused on serious, chronic, and violent offenders. In an attempt to improve our understanding of serious and violent juvenile offenders, Loeber and Farrington (1998) studied juveniles who had committed at least one of several violent offenses or who committed a serious offense. Their research revealed that within the context of officially recognized juvenile delinquents, there were various subgroups. The group of serious and violent juvenile offenders included some youth who were continually involved with the justice system.

These youth were identified as chronic offenders. Some youths were involved with serious offenses but they were not identified as either violent or chronic offenders.

In addition to understanding different subgroups of chronic, serious, and violent juvenile offenders, research has demonstrated that serious and violent delinquency is not similarly experienced in all parts of the United States. For instance, arrests for violent juveniles offenses are more common in New York, Florida, New Jersey, Maryland, and California (Snyder & Sickmund, 1995). Homicides by juveniles are also heavily concentrated in certain cities rather than being evenly distributed across the country. Twenty-five percent of homicides by juveniles occurred in five cities: Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Detroit, and New York (Snyder, Sickmund, & Poe-Yamagata, 1996).

During the mid-1980s, the Orange County California Probation Department conducted a cohort study to examine recidivism among a group of chronic juvenile offenders (Schumacher & Kurz, 2000). The study consisted of different phases. During the first phase, over 3,000 youths were selected from two data sets—juveniles referred to the probation department during the first six months of 1985 and 1987. Each cohort was tracked for three years. During the second phase, a sample of the 1987 cohort was selected to assess differences between three groups: (a) *non-recidivists*—youth with one referral for a criminal offense or probation violation during the three-year study period; (b) *low-rate recidivists*—youth with two or three referrals during the three-year study period; and (c) *chronic recidivists*—youth with four or more referrals during the three-year study period.

The results revealed that 73 percent of the juveniles who committed one offense were no longer in the system. Nineteen percent of the juveniles had committed a second offense and subsequently were no longer in the system. The remaining 8 percent were repeat offenders. This group has been referred to as the “8% problem.” This “8% problem” consists of chronic recidivists in the juvenile justice system. These chronic offenders move deeper into the system and most often use all of the juvenile probation system’s fiscal and personnel resources.

Based on the findings of this study, Schumacher and Kurz concluded that:

1. The number of chronic juvenile recidivists in Orange County can be reduced through a coordinated program of aggressive early intervention and treatment of youth, high-risk juvenile offenders, and their families.

2. A significant proportion of chronic juvenile offenders can be accurately targeted for early intervention the very first time they are referred from juvenile justice system handling. The problems in their lives...are evident *before* they are influenced by the juvenile justice system or involved in further crimes.

3. Significant risk factors are often overlooked at key points in the processing of youth through Orange County's juvenile justice system due to a lack of critical information. Information sharing among youth-serving agencies and improved risk assessment techniques holds significant potential for increasing overall system effectiveness.

4. Cooperative, concerted efforts to empower and build the families of high-risk youth can pay major dividends for years to come. More than half of the families of high-risk youth studied for this report had significant problems impeding their ability to provide adequate supervision, structure, or support to their children (p. 99).

Clearly, juveniles face pressures from a number of fronts. Schools, families, drugs, and peers combine to influence the potential for delinquent behavior. The agencies charged with serving juveniles must then tailor programs to minimize these harmful influences. Two important steps in this direction include improved data collection and information sharing. The best approach to preventing juvenile crime is to determine the needs of the individual offenders prior to serious and chronic involvement in the system.

Recommended Data Elements

Most existing data systems contain a wealth of demographic information. Accordingly, we briefly cover the important demographic data that ought to be included in any future state-level data system. Our review of the links between social history and delinquency (and our critique of existing data systems), however, revealed that there are several variables for which there is no state-level data

presently. Therefore, we also discuss specific data elements of the social history variety that should most certainly be included in any state-level data system aimed at developing informed, preventive juvenile crime control policies. Social history data are also needed to best tailor programs to serve the needs of at-risk juveniles.

Demographic Data

At its most basic level, a state-level data system for 602s ought to contain the following data elements: (1) the minor's name, address, and phone number; (2) parents' (or guardians') names, address, and phone number; (3) a discussion of the offense for which the juvenile was found guilty and/or pled guilty to; (4) basic descriptive information such as aliases, height, weight, hair color, eye color, ethnic origin, sex, distinguishing marks, date of birth, social security number, grade level, health, employer; and (5) and a detailed criminal history which includes, but is not limited to information on the juvenile's current status within the juvenile justice system, his/her behavior leading up to the disposition hearing, and a history of referrals and/or contacts with other juvenile justice and social service agencies.

Social History Data

Careful attention also needs to be given to social history data, as our foregoing review attests. Our recommendations for gathering social history data are considerably more detailed than our recommendations for gathering demographic data. The latter are not our focus. Social history data, on the other hand, are essential, and they have been neglected for the most part in California's endeavors to account for and describe the characteristics of juvenile offenders. Our review of the links between juvenile delinquency and social history focused on four categories of variables: (1) families; (2) schools; (3) peers; and (4) alcohol and substance abuse. Continuing with this categorization scheme, we propose that a state-level data system for juvenile offenders contain the following data elements:

1. Family history/Residence:
 - a. type of residence
 - b. length of occupancy
 - c. parents' marital status

- d. family income level
- e. parents' occupational status
- f. sibling information (number, ages, histories, sex, etc.)
- g. physical altercations with family, if any
- h. sexual or physical abuse history, if any

2. School Information

- a. enrollment status
- b. grade level and number of schools attended
- c. special educational needs, if any
- d. summary of school performance
- e. problems in school (e.g., physical altercations), if any
- f. suspensions and expulsions, if any

3. Peer Information

- a. gang activity, if any
- b. problems with peers outside of school/home, if any
- c. crimes committed with peers, if any

4. Alcohol/Drugs

- a. nature of alcohol use, if any
- b. nature of drug use, if any

5. Other

- a. minor's employment status
- b. physical health problems, if any
- c. mental health problems, if any
- d. disabilities, if any
- e. safety concerns, such as weapons in the home
- f. primary language

Indeed, we have overlooked other data elements. However, the foregoing are arguably the most important data elements that focus on social history. If state and local policymakers have access to this type of information (as opposed to basic demographic data), then they can more capably address the needs of juveniles. If, for instance, most 602s come from families with a history of physical abuse, then, hopefully, policies designed to mitigate the destructive effects of abuse in the home can be formulated.

It may seem like something of a tall order to request that data be collected on all these categories of social history. Fortunately, however, there exists a valuable source of such data. The source—county level pre-sentence reports—has been largely overlooked as a means of providing state and local policymakers with detailed information regarding the peer, family, school, and drug/alcohol histories of juveniles who come into contact with probation officials. We recommend expanded and improved usage of this valuable and largely untapped data source currently available in counties across the state.

Pre-sentence Reports: The Ideal Source for Data

We recommend improving and modifying procedures already in place in order to develop a clearer picture of the juvenile crime problem in California. We do not deny that our recommendations may prove costly (particularly when written records are to be entered into computer files then forwarded to the appropriate state-level agency), but we take care to ensure that that data we recommend collecting is already being gathered.

As indicated, we recommend enhanced use of pre-sentence reports. Specifically, our recommendation is that the state of California standardize pre-sentence reports and mandate that they be codified and entered into existing county level data systems, such that the records can be transmitted to the appropriate state-level agency for further compilation and analysis. This recommendation conveniently avoids the creation of a new bureaucracy (which we believe to be unnecessary) while, at the same time, permits the use of a rich source of data that has been largely neglected by officials at the state-level.

The Need for a Standardized Form

Each county in California maintains its own pre-sentence form. We have attached examples of five of these as Appendices A (San Bernardino County), B (Sacramento County), C (Los Angeles County), D (Orange County), and E (Riverside County). Pre-sentence report forms range from brief to rather lengthy. For example, Orange County's pre-sentence report is two pages long whereas Los Angeles County's form is 15 pages in length.

Each form varies also in terms of its format. Sacramento County's pre-sentence form contains a number of open-ended questions, whereas San Bernardino County's form asks many closed-ended questions. As far as content goes, each form is essentially similar. Each form asks basic demographic information (such as offense history, identifying information, age, race, sex, family status, and so on). Each form asks at least one question concerning social history, although some forms do this better than others. For example, Orange County's pre-sentence report reserves a short section near the end of the form for social history whereas San Bernardino County's form reserves nearly an entire page for social history data.

If the goal is a state-level database for juvenile offenders, and if the data are to be supplied by probation departments on pre-sentence forms, then, obviously, the forms need to be standardized across the state. Clearly, each county has its own objectives in mind, which are responsible for the varying content in and format of existing pre-sentence reports. However, given that each form we have attached to this report (and, most likely, each report form in the remaining counties across the state) contains the same basic information, it should not prove too difficult to adopt a standardized form. Of course, such an endeavor requires a legal mandate, and state and local policymakers will almost certainly encounter some resistance at the county levels, but the only way for pre-sentence reports to serve as a data source that can be supplied to state officials is for there to be a standardized form.

Data Entry Considerations

Naturally, some consideration needs to be given to how the data will be entered and to what type of pre-sentence form lends itself to doing so with relative ease. We recommend the adoption of a form

very similar to San Bernardino County's pre-sentence form. This is not because San Bernardino is the county in which we are situated, but because their current form is easier to code and enter into a computer than some of the other county forms. Sacramento County's form, which contains several pages of open-ended questions, would prove especially difficult to codify and/or enter into a computer.

San Bernardino County's pre-sentence form (see Appendix A) contains an entire page of questions addressing "Health and Safety Issues." Each question is followed by a simple "now," "past," or "none" response. For example, Section I, question K asks about "Family History of Mental Illness." The probation officer preparing the report need only check one of the three boxes (and describe the treatment if necessary). Questions such as these are directly related to social history, and they lend themselves nicely to simple codification; most of San Bernardino County's pre-sentence report could be entered into a computer; minimal revisions are necessary. The Section on Personal History alone contains several important social history-related questions, the responses to which could serve as a valuable source of data for state and local policymakers.

None of the forms we have attached to this report are perfect, but our point is that if a standardized form is adopted, state and local policymakers will need to give careful consideration to data entry. The ideal standardized pre-sentence report form is one that is (1) brief and succinct and (2) relatively painless to enter into a computer system.

Not only will a state-level database need to consider utilizing standardized pre-sentence reports, but additional issues will also need to be addressed. These issues include (a) implementing an automated system that is compatible with all of the counties, (b) developing a training procedure for those collecting and entering the data, and (c) outlining confidentiality issues and procedures pertaining to computerized data.

Incidentally, Orange County has moved to an automated system for its pre-sentence report. In personal communications with officials in that jurisdiction, we found that they have recently begun to enter pre-sentence data into a computer system. Their form is brief (similar to San Bernardino County's), and the layout of the form suggests that data entry should not be difficult. If our recommendations are

followed up upon, then it would be advisable for Orange County to be contacted regarding its experiences with this process.

Validity Considerations

Additional consideration needs to be given to the validity of pre-sentence reports. Certainly some probation officers are more careful than others when they complete pre-sentence reports. However, knowing that the fate of juvenile hinges largely on the information supplied to the court by the probation officers, it is reasonable to conclude that most forms are completed with a high degree of accuracy. Either way, policy makers ought to consider the accuracy and validity of pre-sentence reports. If they are inaccurate, then the result will be a flawed state-level data system for juvenile offenders.

There are perhaps more accurate means for supplying certain social history data. For example, data for education histories supplied by the schools (as opposed to the probation officer who has presumably contacted the schools) are probably more accurate, but this creates additional problems for data collection. It is difficult enough to improve the supply of data from one governmental entity (as the ongoing JCPSS process attests). To require multiple public agencies to supply social history data for juveniles to the appropriate state level agency would prove to be a logistical nightmare. One of the main reasons for focusing on pre-sentencing reports is that a wealth of data can be supplied from a single source, despite potential problems concerning validity.

The Need for a Legal Mandate

Another consideration associated with using pre-sentence reports to create a state-level data system for juvenile offenders comes in the form of a question: What can be done to ensure that data are supplied? We believe that a legal mandate is necessary. Currently, most state-level data systems rely on data that is voluntarily supplied from the various counties throughout California. For example, as we have mentioned, the JCPSS system currently receives data from only about half the counties across the state. If a state-level data system is to portray an accurate image of the problem of juvenile crime in California, it is essential that state and local policymakers mandate data collection. In other words, if

probation departments will supply the data, they need to be required by law to submit the data. Only then can a complete state-level data system be developed.

We do not make specific recommendations as to how to change the law. We leave this up to the appropriate policymakers, assuming our recommendations are even taken to heart. A change to the law might prove to be something of a serious undertaking, and there might be other alternatives. For example, if the law proves difficult to change, there is probably something the state government can do to “encourage” county governments, particularly county probation departments, to supply the data it requests. If, for example, states neglect to follow up on requests by the federal government, they can be denied funding (such as for highway improvements). A similar process may work in California. Regardless, though, of how the process materializes (if at all), counties must be *required* to submit data. A data system based on voluntary submission will prove inadequate and all but useless.

What Agency Should Compile the Data?

We were asked to recommend which state-level agency could most capably oversee the collection of the data we propose. We believe that the Department of Justice Bureau of Criminal Information and Analysis is the agency most capable of doing this. The reason for this is that DOJ currently oversees the JCPSS system. The Department of Justice is familiar with the process to data collection at the county level. Also, if a data system based on pre-sentence reports is developed, then the JCPSS system may become antiquated. It would be more or less redundant to maintain two similar state-level data systems. The JCPSS system is not likely to fizzle out soon given the concerted effort to get it up to full capacity, but we still believe that the Department of Justice should serve as the state-level data depository for the data we propose collecting.

THE USEFULNESS INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

We now begin our discussion of interagency collaboration and information sharing. Originally, our proposal was going to offer recommendations as to how the various agencies charged with serving juvenile offenders in California could supply data to a state-level data system. That was before we discovered the value of county-level pre-sentence reports. Our recommendations were going to

emphasize the importance of interagency access and information sharing that would be necessary to develop a viable state-level data system. We have overcome the need for interagency data sharing, as our recommendations encourage state and local policymakers to exploit a single data source, namely county-level pre-sentence reports. Nevertheless, it is important to discuss the movement toward interagency access and information sharing because numerous agencies besides the Department of Justice are probably going to be interested in the data supplied in the form of pre-sentence reports. In short, we offer recommendations as to how other public agencies throughout California besides county probation departments and the state Department of Justice can have access to the data system we propose be developed.

While we have developed these recommendations within the specific context of California, it is essential to recognize that various states across the country are developing different interagency collaborations and information sharing systems. We briefly discuss some of these efforts to support our position that developing a state-level database is essential for the various stakeholders previously mentioned in this report. Furthermore, some of the efforts discussed below may provide a valuable resource to assist in the implementation the data system as recommended in this report on such issues as confidentiality, legislative mandates, training for data entry, standardization of data on a state-level, and agency support. The RFP expressed interest in interagency information sharing regarding juvenile justice data. Indeed, the RFP explicitly asked that we discuss how the various agencies charged with serving youthful offenders could contribute to a single statewide database. This would be a logistical nightmare, hence the reason for our focus on county-level pre-sentence reports. Nevertheless, we briefly review the various efforts, both nationally and locally, to improve interagency communication and information sharing. This discussion reveals the diverse approaches being implemented to achieve a general objective: enhanced interagency information concerning juvenile justice data. Accordingly, we conclude our report with a brief discussion on (a) the value of accessing this information and (b) the issues that need to be considered in order to make data accessible.

We also offer specific recommendations for improved access to our proposed data system throughout the state of California. A data system built on pre-sentence reports will serve not only the needs of state and local policymakers in the juvenile justice arena, but in other areas of public service as well (e.g., education, social services).

While our recommendations primarily emphasize that the county probation departments implement the data collection and entry, such information would not be limited to the use of the juvenile justice system. Rather, the dissemination of this information could be provided to relevant agencies such as education, public health, mental health, and child protective services. Thus, the dissemination of such information would develop, or enhance, interagency collaboration.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, there has been an increased understanding that interagency information sharing and collaborative agency networks are needed in order to provide necessary services for “at risk” juveniles:

[C]ollaboration and information sharing may provide for multidisciplinary, multi-agency approaches to comprehensively address problems posed by juveniles who are at risk of or have already committed serious delinquent or criminal acts. Information-sharing programs also present a way to further partnerships between agencies that are currently engaged with each other to serve these same juveniles, their siblings, or their families (Slayton, 2000, p. 1).

Information-sharing also provides agencies working with juveniles an additional tool to assist in securing services and treatment, enhance decision making and feedback concerning these youths, and eliminate the potential for some children to “fall through the cracks” (p. 2).

There have been various efforts to improve and enhance information sharing for at-risk juveniles. Some of these efforts specifically target certain types of offenders or at-risk youth. Examples of such programs are Partnerships Against Violence Network (PAVNET) and Community Integrative Service System (CISS) projects.

With the collaborative efforts of the National Institute of Justice and additional federal agencies, PAVNET was developed with the purpose of providing information about youth anti-violence programs

operating throughout the country (Alpert & Reardon, 1995). PAVNET centralizes this information and makes it easily accessible for users across the country.

In the early 1990s, Dr. Mareasa Isaacs coordinated a workshop to explore collaborative agency approaches to address violence involving African-American children, their families, and their communities (Isaacs, 1992). An overriding theme of this workshop was the need to develop and enhance interagency coordination on local, state, and federal levels.

In 1993, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau funded nine CISS projects (Waskis, Lam, & Kane, 1994). The primary focus of these CISS projects has been to address problems concerning infant mortality as well as to enhance the health of all women and children in the United States. Ten specific principles guided and were incorporated in these service systems: family-centered, community-based, coordinated, culturally-competent, comprehensive, collaborative, universal, accessible, developmentally appropriate, and accountable (p. 5).

To further illustrate the various approaches to developing collaborative efforts, Wagner, Fiester, Reisner, Murphy, and Golan (1997) identified additional comprehensive strategies in place across the country:

1. Walbridge Caring Communities (St. Louis, Missouri), New Beginnings (San Diego, California), and I.S. 218 (New York City) are examples of community-sponsored initiatives to revitalize schools and their surrounding communities by delivering a variety of child and family services at neighborhood schools.

2. Kentucky's Family Resource/Youth Service Center initiative, New Jersey's School-Based Youth Services Program, Georgia's Initiative for Children and Families, and California's Healthy Start school-linked services initiative demonstrate state leadership in reforming systems of service delivery for children and families on a state level.

3. The Securing the Health and Safety of Urban Children initiative, supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and Community Partnerships for Healthy Children, sponsored by the Sierra Health Foundation, demonstrate the commitment of private philanthropic foundations to community-

based strategies for developing and integrating local resources in support of children and their families (p. 6).

Developing Information Sharing Systems

In their report, *Glass Walls: Confidentiality Provisions and Interagency Collaborations*, Mark Soler, Alice Shotton, and James Bell of the Youth Law Center (1993) noted that while there has been an increasing interest to develop and to enhance interagency cooperation and collaboration, there have been some systemic barriers. The most frequently discussed barrier involves confidentiality statutes and regulatory provisions. They noted, however, “such provisions are obviously not insurmountable obstacles to collaborative work, since agencies in a number of states and local communities around the country have formed successful interagency partnerships” (p. 2). A major focus of their report was to select certain jurisdictions (i.e., California, Iowa, New York, and Washington) that provided a significant range of confidentiality statutes, regulations, and practices. In this vein, these jurisdictions also included a number of interagency efforts that could function as models for other jurisdictions (see Appendix F for specific issues pertaining to the state of California).

Slayton (n.d.) identified key points necessary to developing and maintaining a multidisciplinary information-sharing system (“MDISS”) for at-risk juveniles. First, when developing a MDISS, agencies need to be knowledgeable of the issues pertaining to confidentiality. Slayton argued that, in most instances, there are no legal barriers to sharing information; rather it is the policies pertaining to these laws or the narrow interpretation of these laws and policies that raise confidentiality problems. Federal laws specifically relevant for developing a MDISS include the following:

1. Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. § 522 (a); 1 CFR § 425.1 *et seq.*)
2. Youthful Offenders Law (18 U.S.C. §5038)
3. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99)
4. Computer Matching and Privacy Protection Act of 1988 (5 U.S.C. § 522a)
5. Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Act (1970) and Drug Abuse and Treatment Act (1972) (42 U.S.C. §290ee-3; 42 CFR § 2.1 *et seq.*)

6. Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Adoption Reform Act (1977) (42 U.S.C. § 5106a(b)(4); 45 CFR § 1350.14(j))

No single MDISS prototype is best. Rather, the model will depend on available resources and the various agencies in the community. Slayton (n.d.) emphasized that since “informal networks frequently exist already, interagency partnerships should, where possible, begin by building upon existing methods of information sharing” (p. 8, see Appendix G). Citing Melaville and Blank (1991), Slayton (2000) emphasized that additional factors need to exist before an interagency information system can be implemented:

1. The climate in which the initiative begins
2. The processes used to develop trust and handle conflict.
3. The people involved.
4. The policies that support or inhibit their efforts.
5. The availability of resources to enable their effects to continue (p. 3).

The next step is identifying and recruiting members. Potential MDISS members include all agencies involved in the juvenile justice system (juvenile courts, probation, prosecutors, law enforcement), funding agency officials, legislative staff, management information system experts, child welfare agencies, public housing, community representatives, and parents.

After the potential members have been identified and recruited, it is essential to develop common goals and create a protocol (see Appendix H). Additional issues essential to establishing a MDISS include providing technical assistance, obtaining legislative and political support, securing necessary funding, and evaluating implementation and effectiveness of the system.

In their *Interagency Information Sharing: Resource Package*, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention included information on how various states have developed plans to establishing some type of information-sharing initiative. These initiatives include memoranda of understanding and state statutes.

Oklahoma

The state of Oklahoma initiated an effort to develop an information-sharing system designated the Children's Coordinated Data System (CCDS). Significant milestones within an approximate three year period were outlined as essential steps to developing this system. These milestones included the following: legislative approval and funding; interagency agreements completed; charter steering committee, issue equipment purchase order; begin CCDS development; complete data matching phase; begin pilot resource directory/intake phase; deploy resource directory/intake phase statewide; and deploy assessment phase.

Legislative support for CCDS includes 10 Okl.St. Ann. §601.50. This legislation mandates for a plan to develop the coordination of special services to children and youth. This plan includes the following:

1. Delineation of service responsibilities and coordination of delivery of services to the eligible population by the agencies subject to the provisions of the act;
2. Guidelines for assigning responsibilities to appropriate agencies and means whereby appropriate agency personnel are involved in the development of services;
3. Establishment of service regions, delineation of organizational structures or other means whereby coordination required by this act will be accomplished at the local and regional level.

One purpose of the CCDS Interagency Agreement is "to provide for the transfer of data between the agencies that are party to this agreement while protecting the confidentiality of the data which is transferred." In reference to the exchange of data, the Interagency Agreement noted that:

1. Each party to this agreement shall respond to requests for data from the other party within a mutually agreed upon period of time following the receipt of the request for data and/or information.
2. Upon mutual consent of the parties interested in the particular request, the twenty (20) day time may be shortened or lengthened.
3. The response to the request shall be mailed or hand delivered to the requesting agency at the address listed.

The agencies mandated involvement in this project included the following: the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth, the State Department of Education, the Office of Juvenile Affairs, the State Department of Health, the Oklahoma Health Care Authority, the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, the State Department of Rehabilitation Services, and the Office of State Finance.

Virginia

In the state of Virginia, the legislature supported the Serious or Habitual Offender Comprehensive Action Program (SHOCAP), which is a multi-disciplinary interagency case management and information sharing system. The various agencies involved in SHOCAP include the juvenile and criminal justice system, schools, and social service agencies. This program focuses specifically on certain types of juvenile offenders—serious or habitual offenders who must meet the following criteria:

(1) Adjudicated delinquent or convicted of murder or attempted murder, armed robbery, any felony sexual assault or (2) malicious wounding or convicted at least three times for offenses which would be felonies or Class 1 misdemeanors if committed by an adult.

According to the statute, each SHOCAP is mandated to supervise these offenders in the community as well as those under probation or parole supervision; enhance current behavior control, supervision and treatment efforts to provide a more coordinated public safety approach to serious juvenile crime; increase the opportunity for success with juvenile offenders; and assist in the development of early intervention strategies.

The legislature also mandated that all SHOCAP members disclose information to other SHOCAP members. Disclosure of the information may be made to other staff from member agencies as authorized by the SHOCAP committee for the furtherance of case management, community supervision, conduct control and locating of the offender for the application and coordination of appropriate services. The confidentiality provisions of this article will govern staff from the member agencies that receive such information. SHOCAP committees are made up of representatives from local law enforcement agencies,

schools, attorneys for the Commonwealth, juvenile court services, juvenile detention centers or group homes, mental and medical health agencies, state and local children and family service agencies, and the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Minnesota

In the state of Minnesota, various statutes were enacted to encourage more collaborative and information-sharing efforts to address the problems associated with at-risk youths. For example, Minn. Stat. §626.558 outlines the establishment and duties of multidisciplinary child protection teams. Each county is to establish a multi-disciplinary protection team that should include such agency members as the director of the local welfare agency, the county attorney, the county sheriff, health and education, mental health, and parent groups. A major duty of the multidisciplinary protection team is case consultation. Case consultation involves reviewing cases and making recommendations for services to identified children and their families.

Minn. Stat. § 245.493 outlines the requirements of local children's mental health collaboratives. A children's mental health collaborative is required to include such representatives as parent groups; community, civil, and religious organizations; private and nonprofit mental and physical health care providers; culturally specific organizations; local foundations and businesses, a school district or special education cooperative; one mental health entity; and one juvenile justice corrections entity. These representatives are required to meet the following:

To establish a local children's mental health collaborative and develop an integrated service system; to commit resources to providing services through the local children's mental health collaborative; and to develop a plan to contribute funds to the children's mental health collaborative. A major goal of a mental health collaborative is to reduce the amount of overlap of both services and information gathering.

Minn. Stat. §124D.23 outlines the establishment of family services and community-based collaboratives. These collaboratives include similar representatives as the mental health collaboratives with additional members primarily from community-based organizations. Again, major goals of these

collaboratives is to integrative services and establish comprehensive planning as well as coordinating family services to reduce duplicative and overlapping assessments and intake procedures.

CONCLUSION

We have endeavored to outline a procedure for improved juvenile delinquency data collection in the state of California. We began by building a case for a focus on 602s (the most serious Welfare and Institutions Code offense designation for juveniles in the state of California) as well as county probation departments. First, 602s are preferable because of confidentiality and other legal considerations governing access to data for less serious offenders and/or wayward youth. Second, counties were the target for our recommendations because the crime problem in the state of California is almost exclusively handled at that level.

Prior to making our recommendations, we briefly evaluated and critiqued existing data systems, including the Juvenile Court and Probation Statistical System, the Monthly Arrest and Citation Register, the Offender-Based Information Tracking System, and other state and local data systems. Next, we argued for improved data collection, particularly improved social history data collection. Most existing data systems have concentrated on basic demographic data, neglecting important background information that can explain juvenile delinquency. To this end we reviewed the juvenile justice literature, particularly the linkages between school problems, family problems, peer relationships, drug/alcohol use and juvenile delinquency and argued that social history data need to be gathered if the needs of juvenile delinquents are to be adequately served. A limited focus on demographic data does not help state and local policymakers formulate preemptive and preventive crime control policies.

To go about collecting social history data, we recommended the utilization of county-level pre-sentence reports. Traditionally, county probation officers have been responsible for completing pre-sentence reports to assist judges in making their decisions in juvenile court disposition hearings. We argued that in addition to assisting judges, pre-sentence reports should be tapped because of the wealth of demographic and social history data that they contain. Specifically, we recommended that all counties in California adopt standardized pre-sentence reports. Also, we advocated mandated pre-sentence report

data submission to the appropriate state-level agency, most likely the California Department of Justice. Pre-sentence reports have been an under-utilized data source and would serve as a valuable data source concerning the juvenile crime problem in California.

Finally, we concluded our report with a discussion of interagency collaboration. We overcame the problem of having multiple agencies supply data on juvenile offenders by focusing on pre-sentence reports; however, improved interagency collaboration and information sharing is essential. Because, for example, the Department of Education does not have exhaustive data on the students being served by California schools, pre-sentence report data may serve as a supplement because probation officers generally investigate juveniles' educational attainment and experience as a part of the reporting process. Thus, we briefly reviewed various examples of how interagency collaboration efforts have been implemented across the country. This discussion revealed that access to such information provides agencies involved with juveniles a valuable and much needed resource when working with these youth. Furthermore, this overview of various interagency efforts illustrates the importance of a coordinated and well-developed plan if such an effort is undertaken. As Slayton (2000) emphasized, an environment conducive to such an initiative needs to be in place and policies need to be implemented to enhance these efforts. We maintain that these factors are also essential if our recommendations for implementing a statewide database are translated into action.

In all likelihood, there will be some groups who oppose our recommendations. We encourage expanded collection of sensitive data, so naturally, some juvenile advocacy groups will be cautious about revealing such information. In defense of our recommendations, data *can* be collected and compiled at the state level without identifying information. That is, counties can submit their data without identifiers, although this poses a problem for minimizing duplicative records if a juvenile has a record in two or more counties.

REFERENCES

- Alpert, J., and Reardon, J. (1995). Partnerships against violence: Reducing youth violence through information sharing. *Research in Action. National Institute of Justice Journal*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice.
- Amsterdam, B., Brill, M., Bell, N., & Edwards, D. (1979). Coping with abuse: Adolescents' views. *Victimology*, 4, p. 281.
- Beck, A.J., Kline, S.A., & Greenfeld, L.A. (1988). *Survey of Youth in Custody, 1987*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- California Department of Corrections. (1999). *California Prisoners and Parolees, 1997 & 1998*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Corrections.
- California Task Force to Review Juvenile Crime and the Juvenile Justice Response. 1996. *Final Report*. Sacramento, CA: Department of Youth Authority.
- Coalition for Juvenile Justice. (1997). *False images? The news media and juvenile crime*. Washington, DC: Coalition for Juvenile Justice.
- Curry, G.D. & Thomas, R.W. (1997). Community organization and gang policy response. In G.L. Mays, ed., *Gangs and gang behavior*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, pp. 424-426.
- David and Lucile Packard Foundation. (1999). Domestic violence and children: Executive summary. *The Future of Children*, 9.
- Drug use forecasting: 1994 Annual report on adult and juvenile arrestees*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, 1995.
- Elliott, D.S., Huizinga, D.H., & Menard, S. (1989). *Multiple Problem Youth: Delinquency, Substance Use, and Mental Health Problems*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Fantuzzo, J.W., & Mohr, W.K. (1999). Prevalence and effects of child exposure to domestic violence. *The Future of Children*, 9, 21-32.
- Farrington, D., & West, D. (1990). The Cambridge study in delinquent development: A long-term follow-up of 411 London males. In H.J. Kerner and G. Kaiser, eds., *Criminality: Personality, behavior, and life history*. Berlin: Spinger-Verlag, pp. 282-314.
- Findlater, J.E., & Kelly, S. (1999). Child protective services and domestic violence. *The Future of Children*, 9, 84-96.
- Harlow, C.W. (1994). *Comparing federal and state prison inmates, 1991*. Washington, DC: Department of Justice.
- Hunter, L., & Elias, M. (1998). School violence: Prevalence, policies, and prevention. In A.R. Roberts, ed., *Juvenile justice: Policies, programs, and services*. (2d ed.). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Isaacs, M.R. (1992). *Violence: The impact of community violence on African American children and families*. Arlington, VA: National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health.

- Kaufman, P., Klein, S., & Frase, M. (1999). *Dropout rates in the United States: 1997*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Libbey, P., & Bybee, R. (1979). The physical abuse of adolescents. *Journal of Social Issues*, 35, 101-126.
- Loeber, R., & Farrington, D.P. (eds.). (1998). *Serious and violent juvenile offenders: Risk factors and successful interventions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Melaville, A.I., & Blank, M.J. (1991). *What it takes: Structuring interagency partnerships to connect children and families with comprehensive services*. Washington, DC: Education and Human Services Consortium.
- National Institute of Justice. (1997). *Drug Use Forecasting: 1996 Annual Report on Adult and Juvenile Arrestees*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice.
- National Institute of Justice. (1999). *The Cycle of Violence Revisited: Research Preview*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (n.d.). *Interagency Information Sharing: Resource Package* (Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grants Training & Technical Assistance Program). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.
- Pink, W.T. (1984). Schools, youths, and justice. *Crime and Delinquency*, 30, 439-461.
- Reiss, A. (1992). Co-offending and criminal careers. In M. Tonry and N. Morris, eds., *Crime and Justice*, 10, pp. 51-97.
- Schumacher, M., & Kurz, G. (2000). *The 8% solution: Preventing serious, repeat juvenile crime*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Slayton, J. (2000). Establishing and maintaining interagency information sharing. *Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grants Program Bulletin*. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Slayton, J. (n.d.). *Forming a multidisciplinary information-sharing system*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Snyder, H.N. & Sickmund, M. (1999). *Juvenile offenders and victims: 1999 National report*. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Snyder, H.N., Sickmund, M., & Poe-Yamagata, E. (1996). *1996 Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1996 Update on Violence*. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Soler, M.I., Shotton, A.C., & Bell, J. (1993). *Glass walls: Confidentiality provisions and interagency collaborations*. San Francisco, CA: Youth Law Center.
- Spergel, I.A. (1995). *The youth gang problem: A community approach*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Thornberry, T., Lizotte, A., Krohn, M., Farnworth, M., & Joon Jang, S. (1991). Testing interactional theory: An examination of reciprocal causal relations among family, school, and delinquency. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 82, 3-35.
- Thornberry, T.P. (1998). Membership in youth gangs and involvement in serious and violent offenders. In R.Loeber and D.P. Farrington, eds., *Serious and violent juvenile offenders: Risk factors and successful interventions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- U.S. Department of Education/U.S. Department of Justice. (1989). *Manual to combat truancy*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Truancy>.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Child maltreatment 1997: Reports from the states to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Department of Justice. (1989). *School crime supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.
- U.S. Department of Justice. (1992). *School crime supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.
- Wagner, M., Fiester, L., Reisner, E., Murphy, D., & Golan, S. (1997). *Making information work for you: A guide for collecting good information and using it to improve comprehensive strategies for children, families, and communities*. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates, Inc., and SRI International.
- Wasik, B.H., Lam, W.K.K., & Kane, H. (1994). *The 1993 Community Integrated Service System Projects: A report of the initial plans and implementation efforts*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, The School of Education.
- White, H.R., Pandina, R.J., & LaGrange, R.L. (1987). Longitudinal predictors of serious substance use and delinquency, *Criminology*, 25, 715-740.
- Widom, C.S., & Ames, M.A. (1994). Criminal consequences of childhood sexual victimization. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 18, 303-318.
- Wolford, B., & Koebel, L. (1995). Kentucky model for youths at risk. *Criminal Justice*, 9, 5-55.