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Hall County Detention Utilization Study 2015-2020

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Hall County
Detention Utilization Study

2015 – 2020

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HALL COUNTY
DETENTION UTILIZATION STUDY

2015-2020

August 2021

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Layout by Tara Grell, UNO Center for Public Affairs Research

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past twenty-five years, the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative®, or JDAI, has worked closely with local jurisdictions to examine the appropriate use of juvenile detention.

The University of Nebraska at Omaha's Juvenile Justice Institute (JJI) has been in the forefront of juvenile justice reform and policy work since it was legislatively created in 2002. JJI staff and faculty have completed detention utilization studies in other Nebraska JDAI sites and play an active role in statewide JDAI committees and committees in local jurisdictions.

The recommendations from this report are designed to help Hall County professionals decide the best use of detention and where changes can be made to better serve youth and possibly realize cost savings. This work aligns with the core values of JDAI by analyzing whether low risk youth are being detained, identifying opportunities to reduce length of stay, and by determining whether racial and ethnic disparities exist in detention.

DATA

In order to examine the use of juvenile detention in Hall County, we requested and received two datasets from the Administrative Office of Courts and Probation (AOCP). The first dataset indicated that 590 intakes (358 individual youth) were completed between January 2015 and December 2020. In the State of Nebraska, the AOCP is required to have a standardized screening tool and training for all probation officers. Probation officers screen youth using the Nebraska Juvenile Intake Screening Risk Assessment prior to determining whether to detain the youth.

The second dataset included every instance where a youth was detained. After eliminating cases that did not occur between January 2015 and December 2020, this dataset ultimately contained 484 detention events (210 individual youth).

Ideally, every youth placed in secure or staff secure detention would have an intake completed. However, by cross checking the intake dataset with the detained dataset, we found that on 207 occasions a youth was detained but did not appear in the intake dataset. On 22 occasions, a youth had an intake completed between 2 days to a month of admission to detention. Similarly, on 56 occasions the intake data indicated a youth was placed in detention, but there was no record of detention in the detained dataset. A total of 31 times, the youth appeared to be released based on the intake dataset but was found in the detained dataset.

Finally, in many of the sections below, we make a distinction between staff secure and secure detention, but for practical purposes, both are detention facilities.

METHODOLOGY

Data were imported into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Prior to conducting our analysis, we examined each of the variables for accuracy, missing values, and that the variables met the assumptions for multivariate analysis.

We recoded the data elements related to race and ethnicity. Many agencies collect information about ethnicity (Hispanic/Latino) separately from information regarding race. Recoding the variables allows us to accurately merge these different ways of tracking race/ethnicity data into a common variable.

Data analyses included frequency distributions, cross tabs and regression analyses. Definitions and examples of how to interpret these data are provided below:

- Frequency Distribution: The number of times the various attributes of a variable are observed. For example, 50% of the sample was male, and 50% of the sample was female.
- Cross Tabs: Presents the relationship between two variables. For example, comparing the detention rates of males vs. females.
- Regression Analysis: Explores the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. Regression analysis allows us to identify which factors/variables are significant in predicting outcomes.

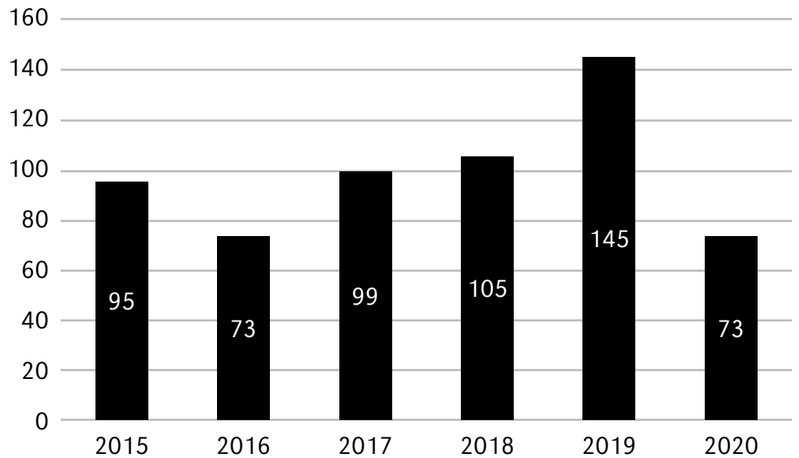
Throughout this report there are references to whether or not differences are statistically significant. Below are explanations of the significant tests referenced throughout the report:

- ANOVA (analysis of variance): Provides a statistical test of whether or not the means of several groups are equal.
- A chi-square statistic presents a relationship between two variables. The chi-squared statistic tells you how much difference exists between an observed count, compared to what we would expect. For example, if 10% of a population identifies as Hispanic, then we would expect that approximately 10% of the population enrolled in school identifies as Hispanic.
- Significance Levels: A significance level indicates how likely a result is due to chance. The indication that an analysis is significant at *p*.

INTAKE SCREENING

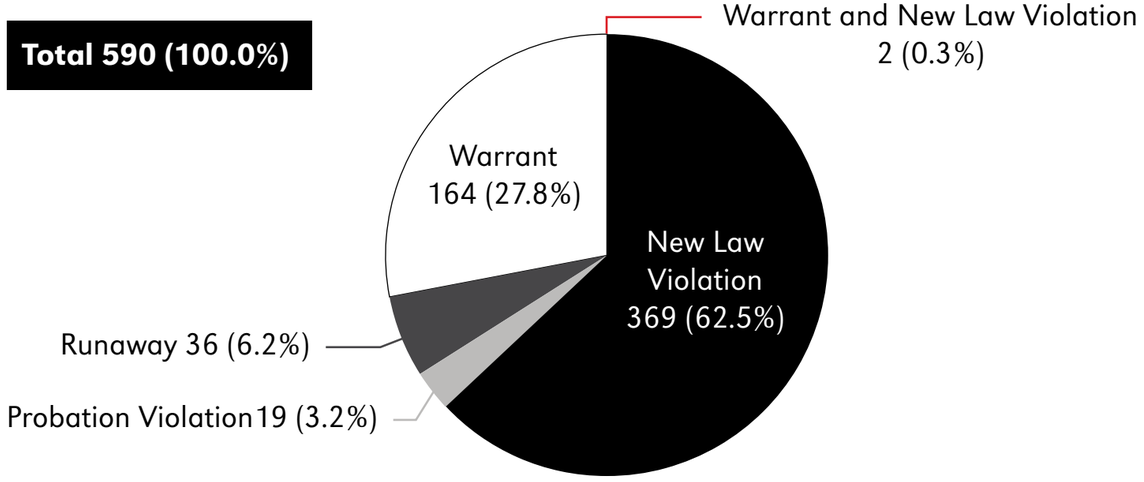
From January 2015 through December 2020, there were 590 times a youth was screened for detention intake by probation officers via the Nebraska Juvenile Intake Screening Risk Assessment 590 times. From 2015 through 2019, the number of intakes increased by 53.6%. However, intakes dipped slightly in 2016 and again in 2020, dropping to 73 intakes for each of those years.

Figure 1: Number of Detention Intakes Per Calendar Year



The primary reason that youth were brought in for an intake was a new law violation, accounting for 62.5% of all intakes during the six-year period (n = 369). Warrants were the second most common reason, accounting for 27.8% of all intakes (n = 164). Runaway youth accounted for 6.1% of intake reasons (n = 36); and 3.2% of intakes involved a probation violation (n = 19).

Figure 2: Reason for Intake



DEMOGRAPHICS

Of the total 590 intakes, 368 youths were screened for intake between 2015 and 2020. The majority of intakes were conducted on Hispanic youth, at 48.0% (n = 283). White youth accounted for 40.5% (n = 239); 8.8% were Black youth (n = 52), 1.5% were American Indian (n = 9), and 1.1% were bi-racial or another race or ethnicity (n = 7).

Table 1: Percent of Intakes: Race & Ethnicity Compared to Hall County Demographics

Hall County	N	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian or Alaska Native	Black or African American	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	Two or More and Other
Census	12,429	42.8%	0.9%	1.0%	3.9%	0.1%	49.6%	1.8%
Intake	590	48.0%	0.0%	1.5%	8.8%	0.0%	40.5%	1.1%

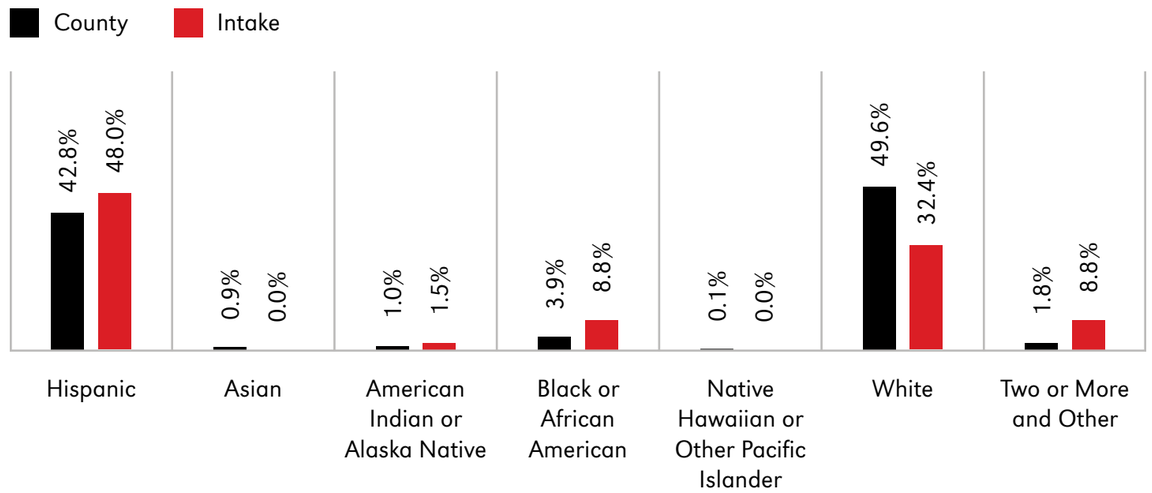
AGE & GENDER

Age was calculated at the day of intake. The average age of youth screened for detention was 15.4 years of age, ranging from 10 to 18. Males were slightly younger, at 15.4, while females were an average of 15.5 years old.

MINORITY OVERREPRESENTATION

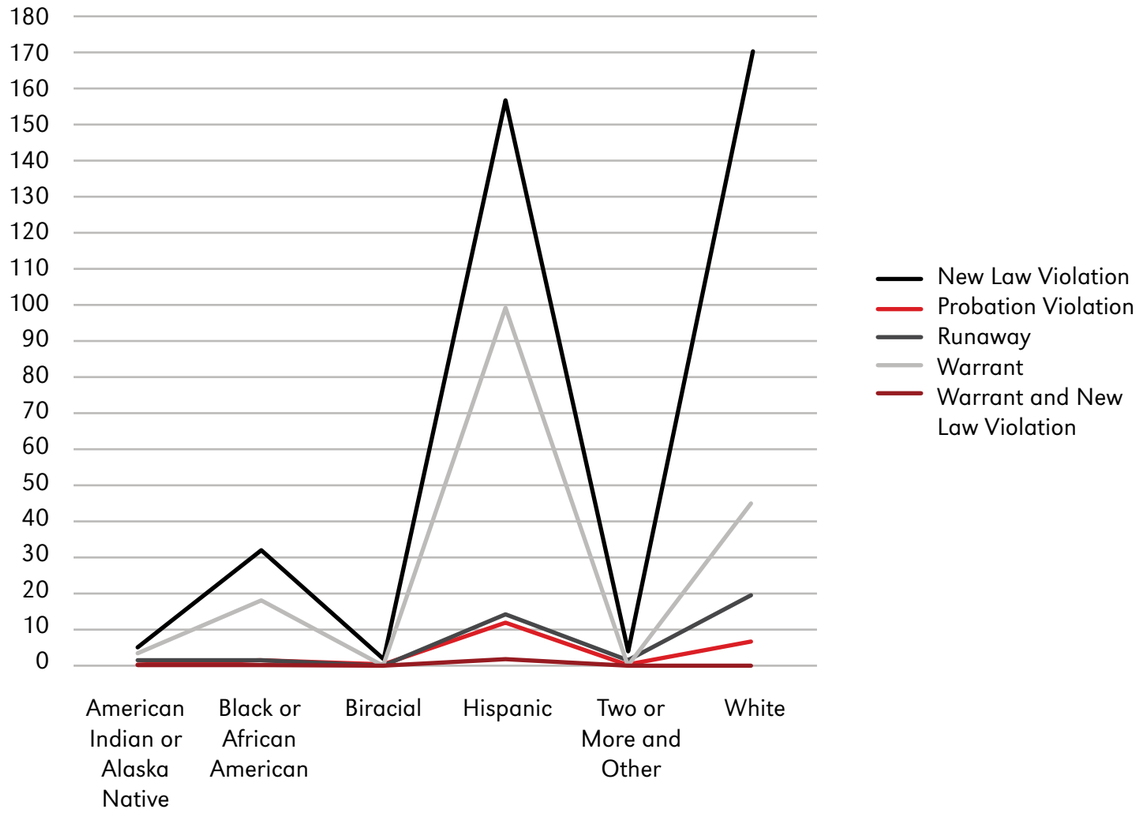
As compared to 2018-2019 census data for Hall County, youth between the ages of 10-17 and were Hispanic, Black or Native American youth were overrepresented in detention intakes, while White and Asian youth were underrepresented.

Figure 3: Comparison of County Population to Intakes



Males were overrepresented in detention intakes, accounting for 68.1% (n = 402) of intakes, compared to 53.4% of the juvenile population in Hall County. Females accounted for 31.9% of the intakes (n = 188), compared to 46.6% of the youth population. The average age for both males and females who went through an intake was 15.9 years old at intake.

Figure 4: Intake Reason by Race & Ethnicity

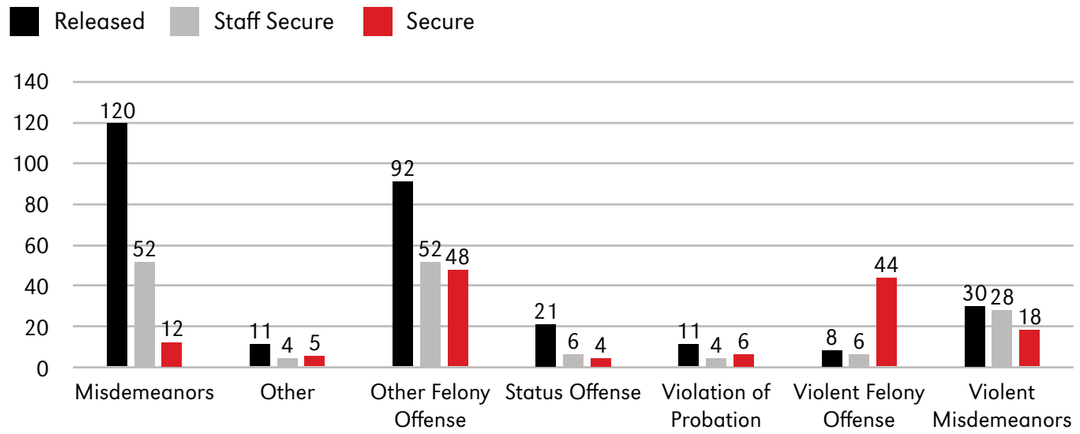


Although Hispanic youth were more likely to have an intake for a probation violation, there were very few intakes for violations (n = 19), and the data indicates this intake reason was not used after September, 2018. Both Hispanic and Black youth were overrepresented in intakes on warrants. White youth were slightly over represented on intakes for running away.

LAW VIOLATIONS & OFFENSES

Probation records the most serious offense for those who are brought in for an intake. For youth who are released or placed in a staff secure facility, the most serious offense was most often a misdemeanor. The most common offense for those who were sent to a secure facility was an "Other felony offense."

Figure 5: Most Serious Offense by Placement

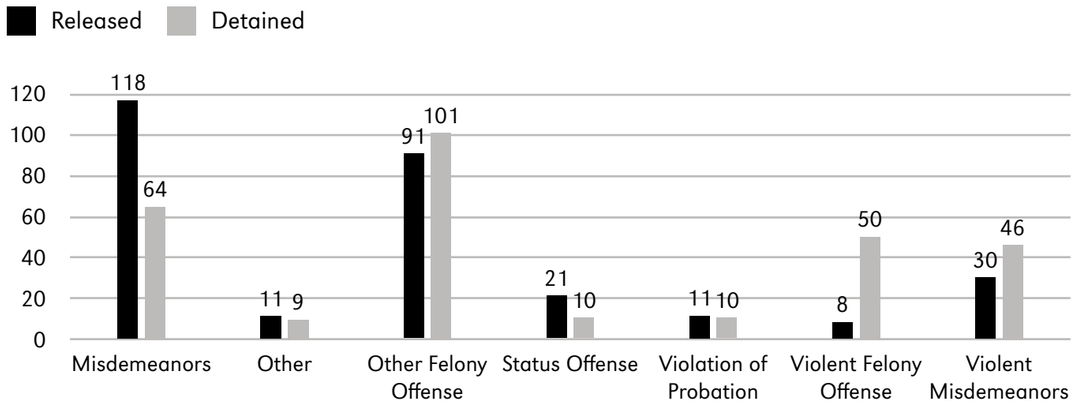


Note: Due to missing data, offenses do not total 590.

Other felony offenses included: attempt of a class 3 felony, tamper with witness/informant/juror, terroristic threats, intent to distribute counterfeit controlled substance, theft - over $5,000, burglary, unauthorized computer access to deprive $1,500-$5,000, distribute controlled substance to minor, possess controlled substance, accessory to Class 2 or 2A felony, criminal mischief $5,000, conspiracy to commit a felony, assault on an officer, and harboring an escaped juvenile.

We conducted a chi-square test to examine whether the most serious offense influences whether a youth is detained. The results suggest that youth whose most serious offense was classified as a misdemeanor or status offense were more likely to be released. Youth whose most serious offense was classified as a violent felony were more likely to be detained (X^2 = 54.476, df = 6, p < .001). There were no significant differences between youth whose most serious offense was classified as a violent misdemeanor, violation of probation, other felony, or other and their detainment. This means that youth whose most serious offense was classified as violent misdemeanor, violation of probation, other felony, or other were similarly detained or released.

Figure 6: Most Serious Offense for Youth at Intake



Note: Due to missing data, offenses do not total 590.

NEBRASKA JUVENILE INTAKE SCREENING RISK ASSESSMENT SCORE

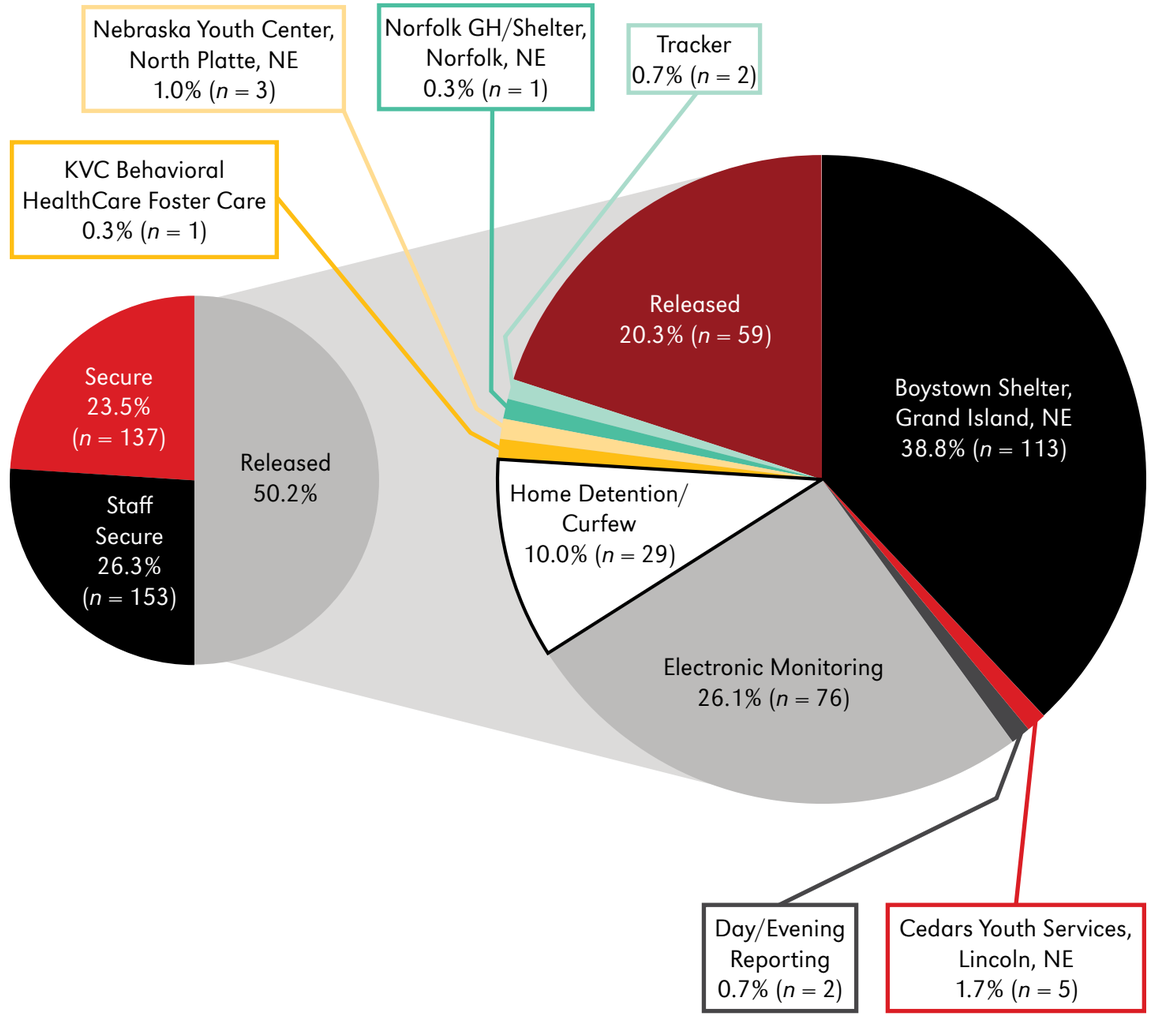
Intake Screening Risk Assessment scores ranged from -3 to 20, with an average score of 8.73 (*SD* = 3.59). Males had statistically significant risk scores, averaging 9.1 (*n* = 401) as compared to females, who averaged 7.9 (*n* = 187). Intake Screening Risk Assessment scores were not significantly different for youth of different races and ethnicities.

PLACEMENT AFTER SCREENING

To capture the youth's placement accurately, we examined both where the assessment tool recommended the youth be placed as well as where an override indicated the youth was placed.

Of the 590 intake screenings, 50% resulted in the youth being released to their home, a shelter, or a placement. Many also incorporated a detention alternative like a tracker or electronic monitor. Fifty percent (50%) of intakes resulted in detention to either a staff secure (*n* = 153, or 26% of intakes) or secure (*n* = 137, or 24% of intakes) facility.

Figure 7: Youth Detained (Secure and Staff Secure) and Sites Released



Of the youth who were not detained, roughly 40% were placed in a shelter, including Boystown Shelter in Grand Island (*n*=113), CEDARS in Lincoln (*n*=5), or a shelter in Norfolk (n=1). The remaining youth were placed at the Nebraska Youth Center in North Platte (*n*=3), or a KVC Group Home (*n*=1).

Only 10% of intakes resulted in home detention with curfew (*n*=29), while 13.2% were placed at home with an electronic monitor or tracker (*n*=78). The remaining cases were marked as "Other" Placement (*n*=8). There were 59 cases where no placement was indicated. It appears these youth were released home without any restrictions.

THE USE OF DETENTION

Between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2020, there were 484 times that a youth was detained (210 individual youth) in either a staff secure or a secure detention facility. There were 259 admissions to secure detention (54%), and 225 admissions to a staff secure facility (46%).

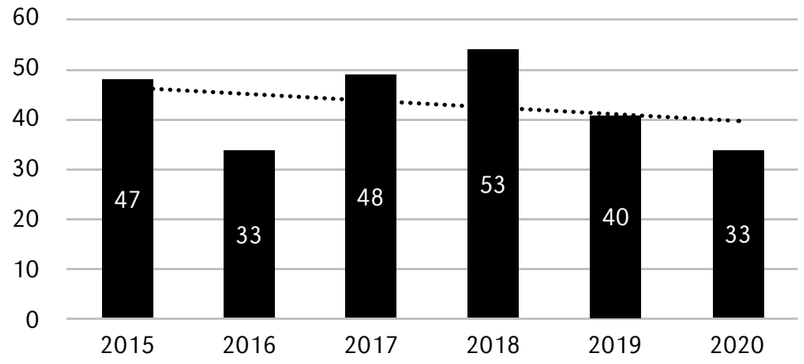
Staff Secure – 225 (46%)

Secure Detention – 259 (54%)

ADMISSION PATTERNS

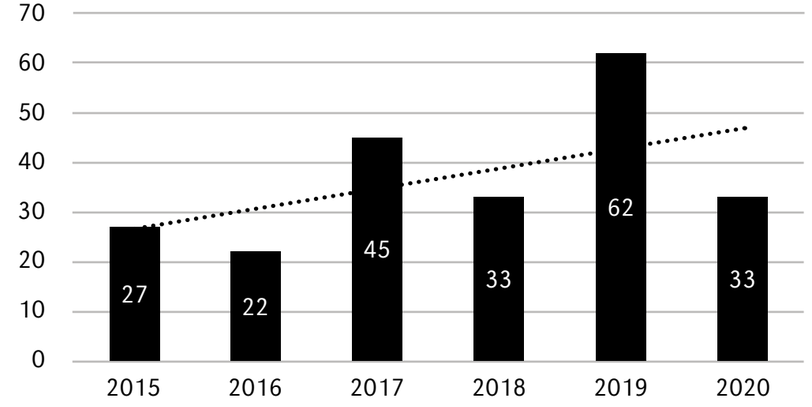
Over the past six years, admissions to secure detention have had a gradual downward trajectory, with a total of 47 admissions in 2015, rising to 53 in 2018, then trending down (including during the COVID-19 pandemic.) Because some youth were admitted in 2014, the number of annual admissions displayed in the bar graph below is slightly lower than the overall total admissions.

Figure 8: Admissions to Secure Detention



However, during this same time frame, admissions to staff secure have trended upwards, with a total of 27 admissions in 2015, rising to 62 in 2019, then trending down during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 9: Admissions to Staff Secure



DUPLICATED ADMISSIONS TO DETENTION

On average, youth who were detained had an average of 3.7 detentions each from 2015 to 2020 (n = 484, SD = 2.26). Youth who were admitted to secure detention had a slightly higher average number of detentions, at 3.9 (n = 259, SD = 2.27), as compared to youth who were admitted to staff secure, who averaged 3.5 detention events (n = 225, SD = 2.22).

MINORITY OVERREPRESENTATION

Black youth were overrepresented both at intake and for youth detained in a secure facility after intake. Hispanic youth were overrepresented at intake. White youth were underrepresented at both intake and secure detention.

Table 2: Hall County Juvenile Population Ages 10-17 Compared to Intake and Secure Detention

Hall County	N	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian or Alaska Native	Black or African American	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific islander	White	Two or More and Other
Census	12,429	42.8%	0.9%	1.0%	3.9%	0.1%	49.6%	1.8%
Intake	590	48.0% ↑	0.0%	1.5%	8.8% ↑	0.0%	32.4% ↓	1.5%
Staff Secure	225	48.0% ↑	0.0%	0.4% ↓	6.7% ↑	0.0%	42.7%	0.9% ↓
Secure Detention	259	43.0%	0.0%	2.7%	14.3% ↑	00%	38.8% ↓	1.2%

AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY

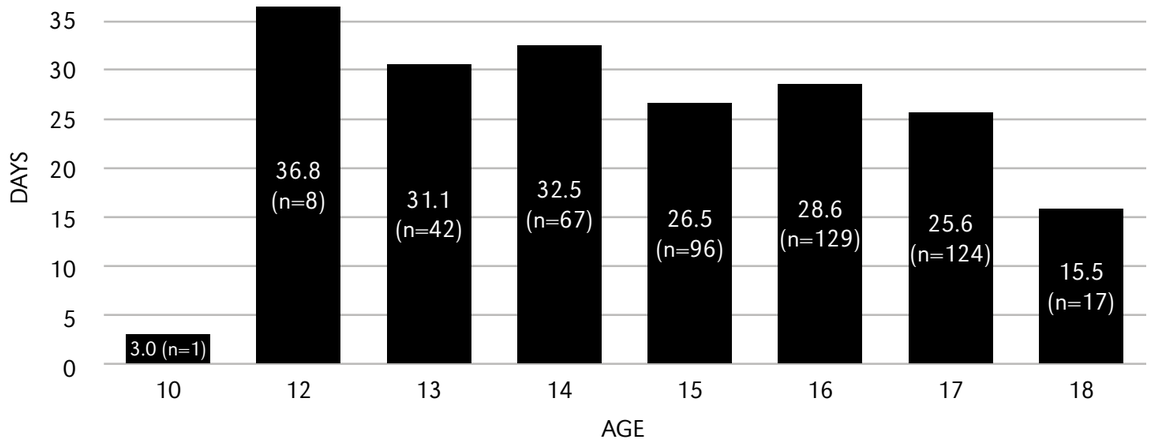
The average length of stay (ALOS) was calculated by subtracting release date from admission date for all instances where a youth was placed in detention. Our length of stay are conservative calculations. In some instances, we can see that a youth moved from staff secure to secure, so from a youth's perspective, the detention would feel like both stays. In the data, it appears the LOS starts over.

The ALOS for detentions under Hall County's jurisdiction during this six-year period was 27.7 days ($n = 484$, $SD = 29.3$). There was a significant difference in length of stay, depending on whether a youth was placed in a secure or staff secure facility ($F(1,479) = 10.15$, $p = .002$). Youth in secure remained in the facility for an average of 31.9 days, compared to youth in staff secure who remained in the facility for 23.2 days.

Although males spent an average of 3 days longer in detention, there was no statistical difference for ALOS by gender: males spent an average of 28.7 days per each detention event ($n = 341$, $SD = 31.8$), and females spent an average of 25.3 ($n = 140$, SD 21.6) days per detention event.

There was also no statistical difference for ALOS by age of youth. Despite no statistical difference, younger individuals appear to stay longer in detention: 14 year old's spent an average of 32.5 days ($n = 67$), 13 year old's spent 31.1 days ($n = 42$), and 12 year old's spent 36.8 days ($n = 5$), in secure or staff detention, as compared to 18 year old's, who spent an average of 15.5 days ($n = 17$) in secure detention.

Figure 10: Average Length of Stay by Age of Youth at Admission



There was also no statistical difference for ALOS by race or ethnicity of youth. White youth spent the least time in detention, at 26.0 days ($n = 196$), as compared to Hispanic youth, who spent an average of 29.1 days ($n = 220$) in secure or staff secure detention.

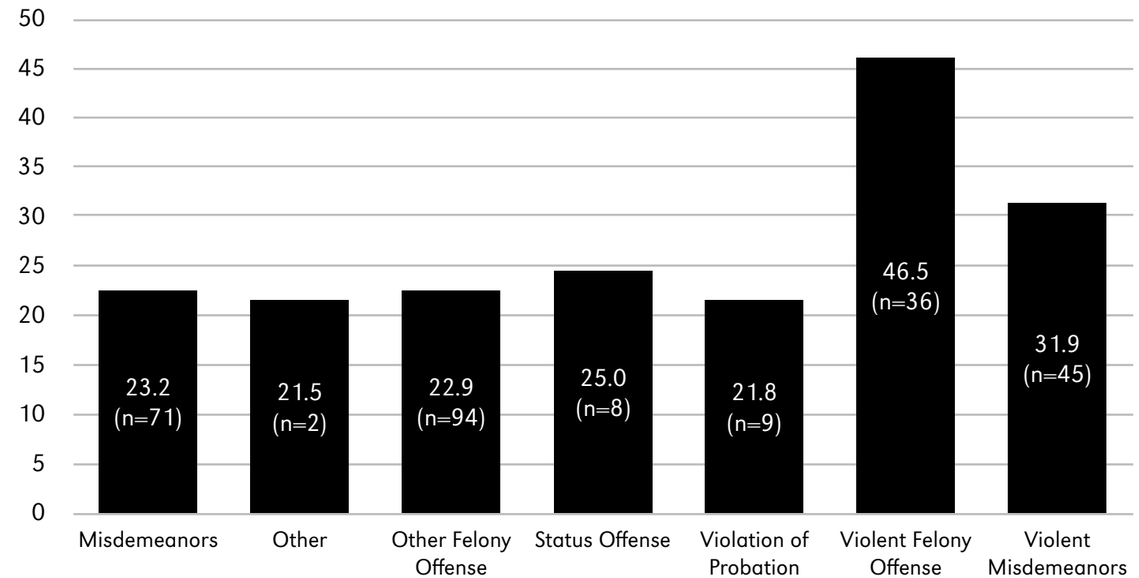
Table 3: Average Length of Stay by Race and Ethnicity of Youth

Race	ALOS	N	Std. Deviation
American Indian Or Alaskan Native	30.6	8	15.4
Bi-Racial	20.7	3	10.4
Black or African American	29.0	52	21.2
Hispanic	29.1	220	33.9
Other	30.8	5	27.2
White	26.0	196	26.2
Total	27.8	484	29.3

In order to examine the length of stay as it relates to the most serious offense the youth committed, JJI had to merge the two datasets. Unfortunately, as we noted in the introduction, the number of cases did not align perfectly. We "matched" cases that had an intake within 1 day. For example, if a youth showed an intake on 1/1/2015 and then a placement to staff secure on 1/2/2015, we assumed it was the same event. Despite this, the number of youth in detention did not match the youth who showed an intake. Consequently, the numbers do not align.

From this merged dataset, youth who had a violent felony offense listed spent an average of 46.5 days in detention or staff secure, while youth who had "Other" listed spent an average of 21.5 days in detention or staff secure. Serious felony offenses included: Assault, strangulation, use of a deadly weapon to commit a felony, murder, carry concealed weapon, terroristic threats, burglary, obstruct or assault a police officer, sexual assault/ child, criminal mischief - $500-$1,500, kidnapping, and robbery.

Figure 11: Average Length of Stay by Type of Offense



Notably, youth whose most serious charge was a status offense spent more time in detention/staff secure than all other youth, except those who came in with a violent felony or violent misdemeanor offense.

AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY BY DETENTION FACILITY

We then examined length of stay by the facility where the youth was sent after intake. Because the detained dataset did not contain the specific facility name, the numbers below do not total to 484 events. On average, youth who were sent to the secure or staff secure facilities in Madison, Nebraska spent an average of 38.9 days in secure and 24.1 days in staff secure. Youth sent to Lincoln spent an average of 31.2 days in detention, while youth sent to the Justice Center in Papillion had shorter stays, at 21.8 days.

Table 4: Length of Stay by Distance to Facility

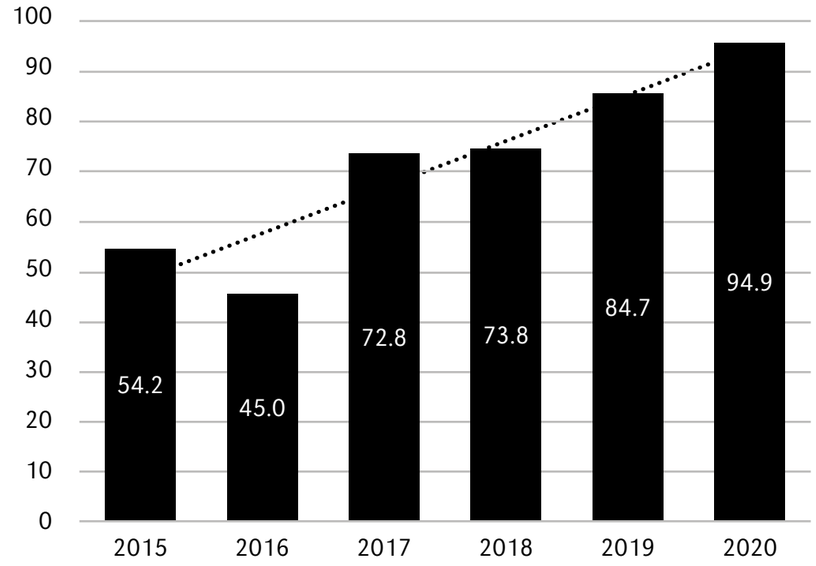
Facility	LOS	Number of Stays	Distance
Juvenile Justice Center, Papillion, NE	21.8	47	130 miles
Douglas County Youth Center	1.0	3	131 miles
Northeast Nebraska Juvenile Services (Secure), Madison, NE	38.9	70	86 miles
Northeast Nebraska Juvenile Services (Staff Secure), Madison, NE	24.1	81	86 miles
Youth Services Center (Secure), Lincoln, NE	23.8	32	95 miles

AVERAGE DAILY POPULATION

The average daily population (ADP) was calculated using the daily population for all youth placed in any secure facility. Because Hall County places youth in both secure and staff secure facilities statewide, this average is across all facilities, and reflects the utilization by month and year.

Despite fewer intakes, the average daily population for staff secure and secure was highest in 2020, coming in at 94.9 days of occupied detention or staff secure space.

Figure 12: Average Daily Population by Year



When we examined use of detention by month (from 2015-2020), February, March and April are the months where detention is utilized the most.

Figure 13: Average Daily Population by Month (2015-2020)

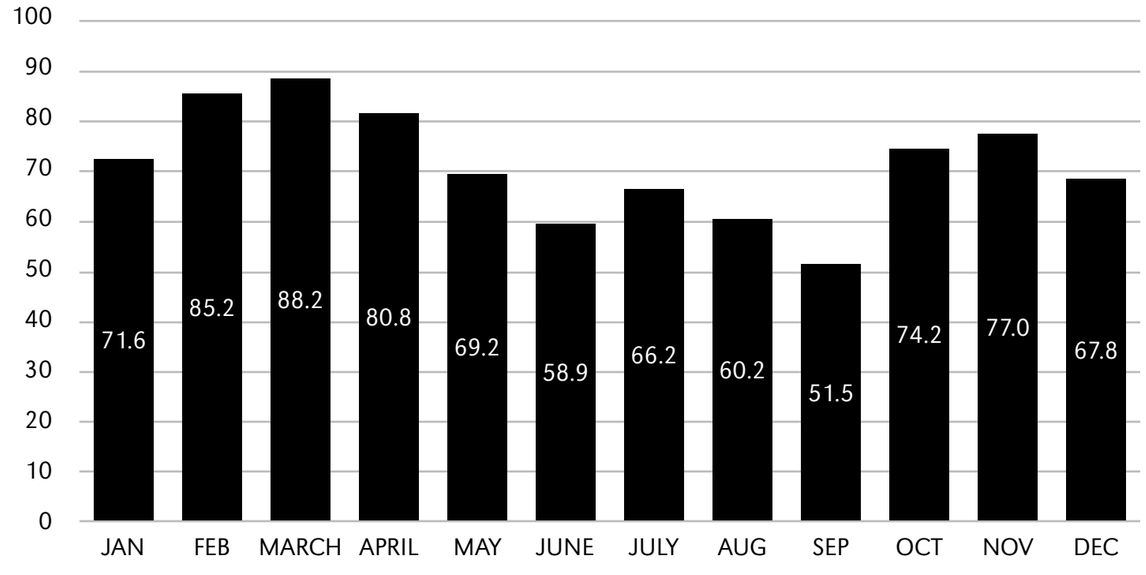
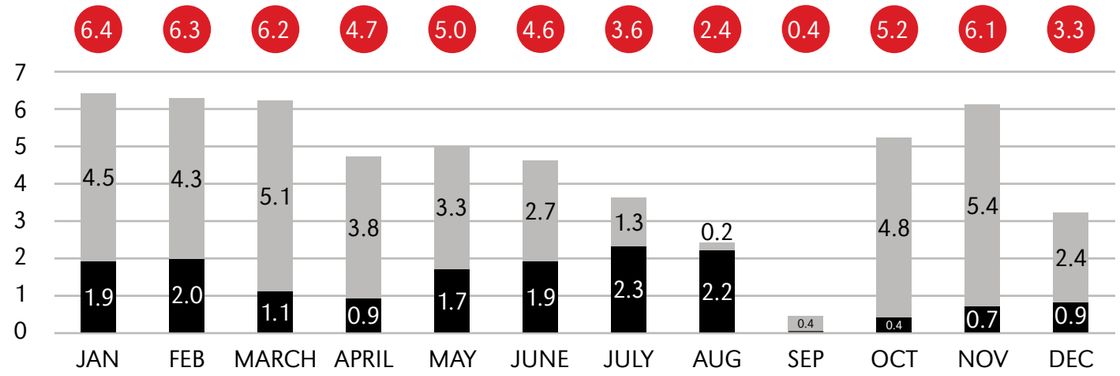


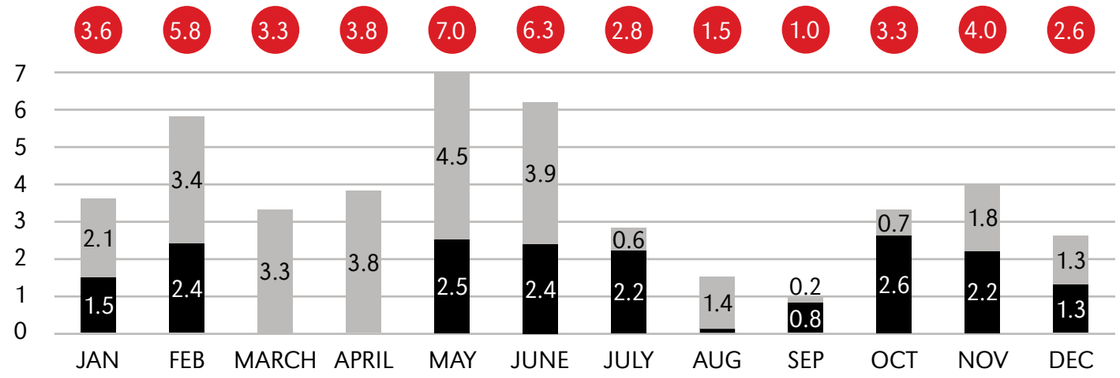
Figure 14: Average Daily Population by Year

Total Secure Staff Secure

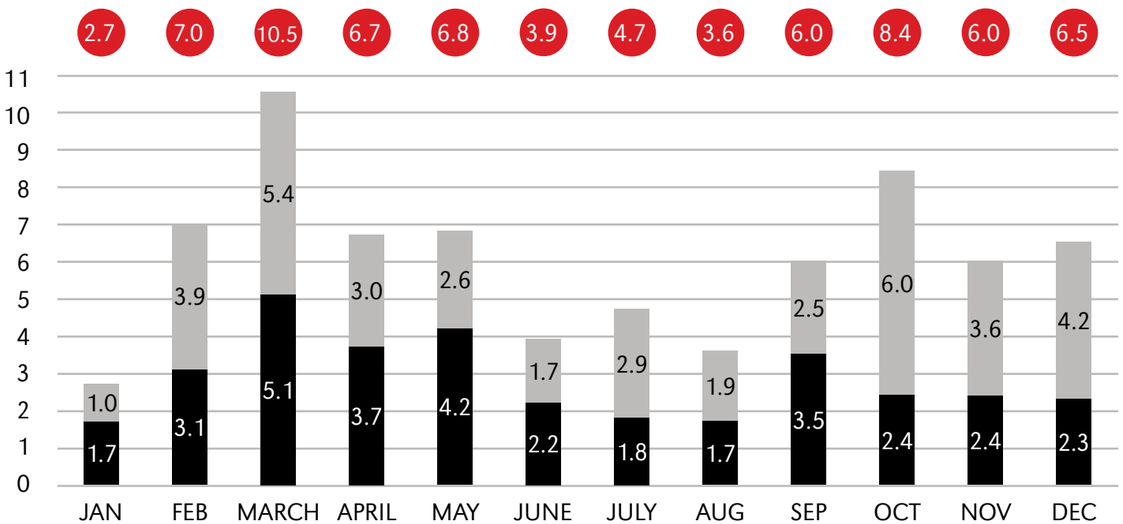
2015 Populations by Month



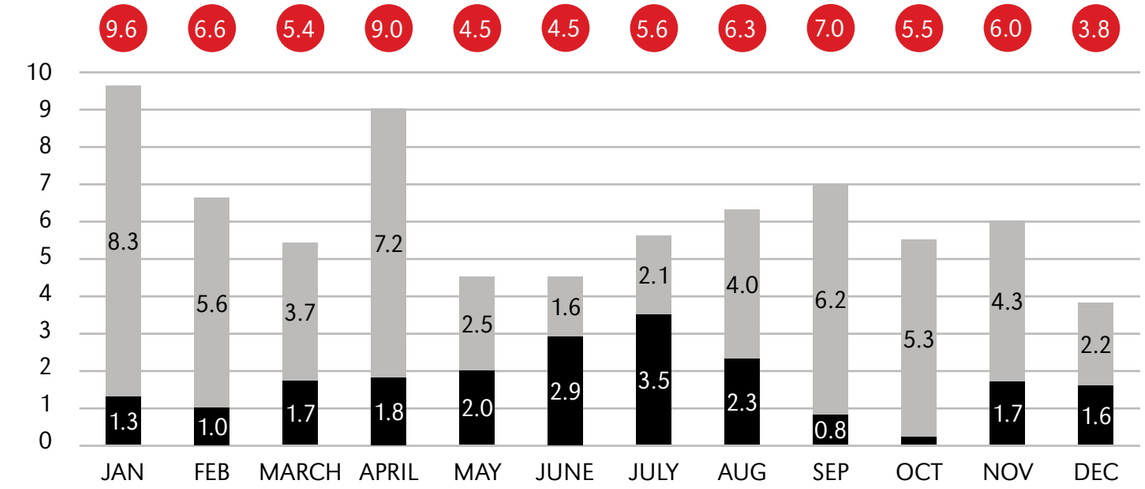
2016 Populations by Month



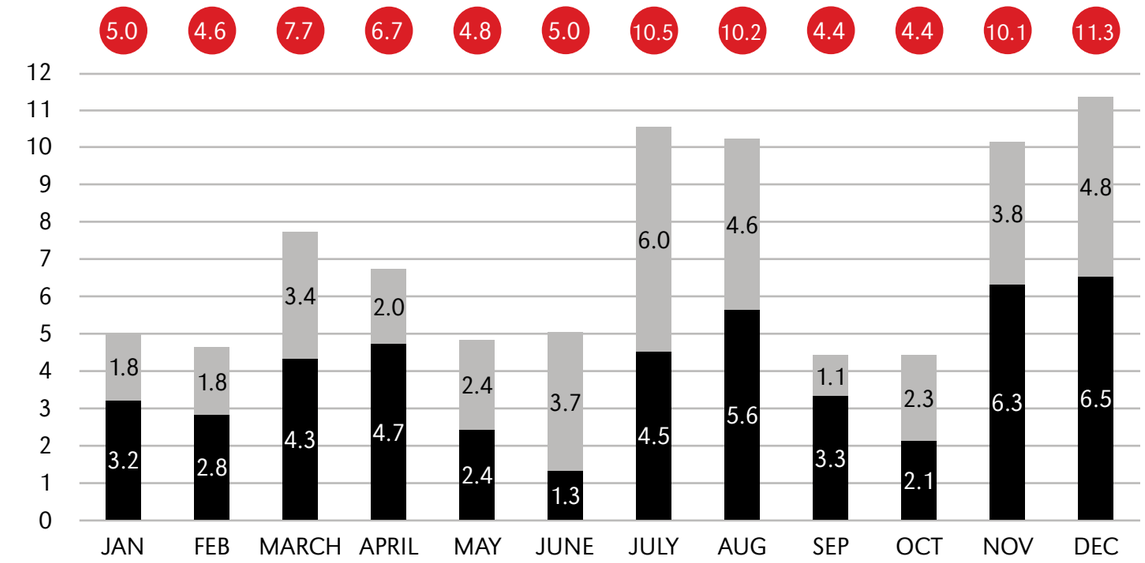
2017 Populations by Month

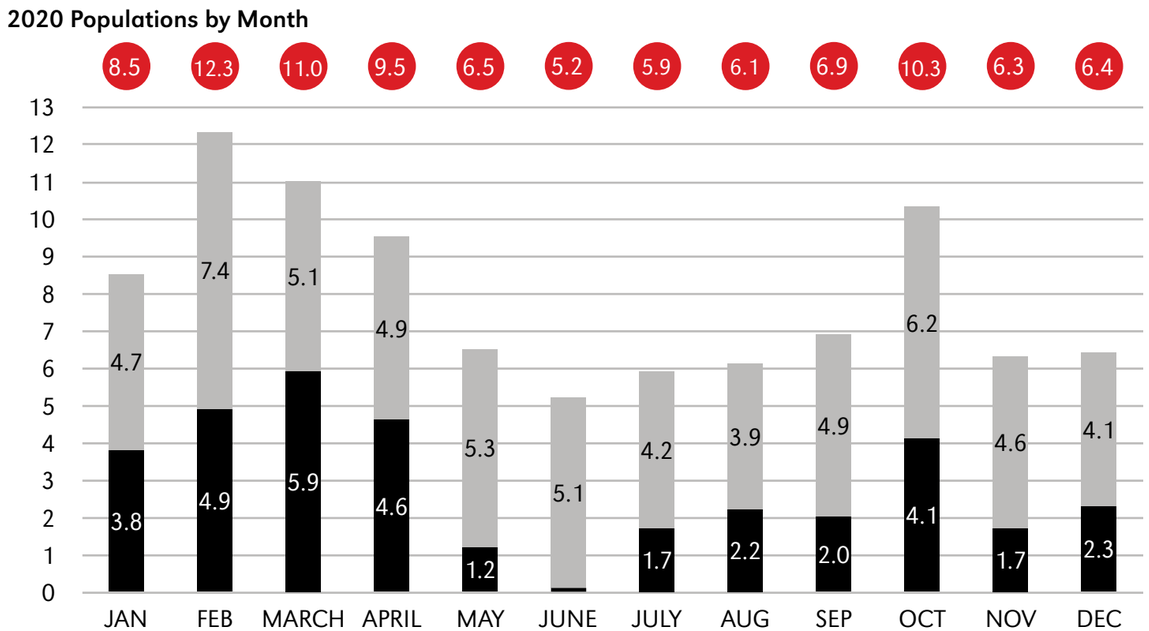


2018 Populations by Month



2019 Populations by Month

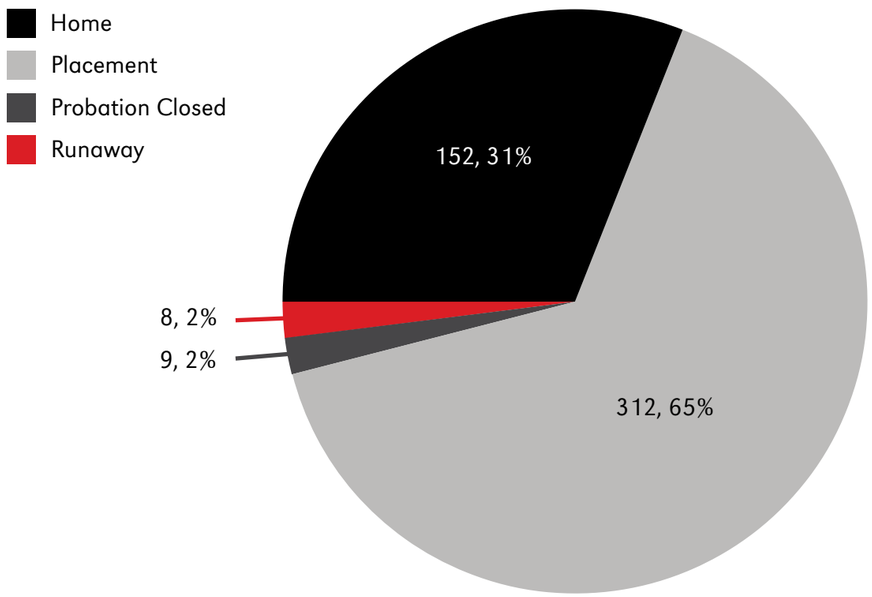




PLACEMENTS AT RELEASE

Almost a third of youth held in a secure or staff secure facility (31%) went home directly after detention (n = 152), while 65% went to a placement after being released from the facility (n = 312). A handful of youth ran away while being transported from the court hearing.

Figure 15: Location of Release After Detention or Staff Secure



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this report was to present data on how Hall County has used juvenile detention in the past six years. The work is just beginning for this iterative process. We hope that our findings generate additional questions, which in turn seeks verification through data, then further discussion and opportunities for reform. This deeper dive should always culminate in additional analysis to see if our reforms had the intended outcomes. To this end, our recommendations include the following:

1. Ideally, every youth placed in detention or staff secure would have an intake completed. However, by cross checking the intake dataset with the detained dataset, we found that 44% of the youth detained, did not appear to have an intake completed. Stakeholders should confirm the types of cases where an intake was not completed. Data entry may also be an issue: on 56 occasions the intake data indicated a youth was placed in detention, but there was no record of detention in the detained dataset. The AOCP and District 9 probation office should conduct a data fidelity review of cases quarterly, to ensure that all detained youth have completed an intake.
2. Roughly 20% of the youth who were screened for detention were placed in a shelter (the majority went to Boystown in Grand Island) after being screened. Data was not available on where the youth went after the shelter, nor how long the youth remained in the shelter. However, generally shelters are short term, and often youth do not receive in depth services. Hall County stakeholders should explore whether other placements or services can be developed to better serve these youth.
3. The majority of youth who were detained committed an “other felony offense” as their most serious offense. These offenses are often high-level theft and property offenses, accessory and attempt to commit a felony. Hall County leaders may want to explore whether youth charged with these offenses can be served outside of detention and staff secure.
4. Youth whose most serious offense was a status offense spent an average of 25 days in detention. The situations that led these youth to be placed in detention should be reviewed closely, to determine whether those youth should have remained in detention.
5. Many of the youth returned home after being detained. The average length of stay for the youth that returned home from secure or staff secure detention was 26 days. For those whose cases were closed by probation, the youth remained in detention for 78 days. Hall County should examine whether services can be put in place that will allow those youth to safely return home more quickly, or have their case closed early by probation, rather than have the youth remain in detention.
6. As compared to their population in the community, Black youth were overrepresented both at intake and commitment to detention; Hispanic youth were overrepresented at intake. Hall County stakeholders should examine the specific cases where minority youth were overrepresented, to examine the factors that lead to those youth being detained. Stakeholders may wish to examine whether culturally specific alternatives can impact the number of minority youth placed in detention.

APPENDIX

2015 Populations by Month

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Secure	4.5	4.3	5.1	3.8	3.3	2.7	1.3	0.2	0.4	4.8	5.4	2.4
Staff Secure	1.9	2	1.1	0.9	1.7	1.9	2.3	2.2	0.0	0.4	0.7	0.9
Total	6.4	6.3	6.2	4.7	5	4.6	3.6	2.4	0.4	5.2	6.1	3.3

2016 Populations by Month

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Secure	2.1	3.4	3.3	3.8	4.5	3.9	0.6	1.4	0.2	0.7	1.8	1.3
Staff Secure	1.5	2.4	0.0	0.0	2.5	2.4	2.2	0.1	0.8	2.6	2.2	1.3
Total	3.6	5.8	3.3	3.8	7.0	6.3	2.8	1.5	1.0	3.3	4.0	2.6

2017 Populations by Month

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Secure	1.0	3.9	5.4	3.0	2.6	1.7	2.9	1.9	2.5	6.0	3.6	4.2
Staff Secure	1.7	3.1	5.1	3.7	4.2	2.2	1.8	1.7	3.5	2.4	2.4	2.3
Total	2.7	7.0	10.5	6.7	6.8	3.9	4.7	3.6	6.0	8.4	6.0	6.5

2018 Populations by Month

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Secure	8.3	5.6	3.7	7.2	2.5	1.6	2.1	4.0	6.2	5.3	4.3	2.2
Staff Secure	1.3	1.0	1.7	1.8	2.0	2.9	3.5	2.3	0.8	0.2	1.7	1.6
Total	9.6	6.6	5.4	9.0	4.5	4.5	5.6	6.3	7.0	5.5	6.0	3.8

2019 Populations by Month

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Secure	1.8	1.8	3.4	2.0	2.4	3.7	6.0	4.6	1.1	2.3	3.8	4.8
Staff Secure	3.2	2.8	4.3	4.7	2.4	1.3	4.5	5.6	3.3	2.1	6.3	6.5
Total	5.0	4.6	7.7	6.7	4.8	5.0	10.5	10.2	4.4	4.4	10.1	11.3

2020 Populations by Month

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Secure	4.7	7.4	5.1	4.9	5.3	5.1	4.2	3.9	4.9	6.2	4.6	4.1
Staff Secure	3.8	4.9	5.9	4.6	1.2	0.1	1.7	2.2	2.0	4.1	1.7	2.3
Total	8.5	12.3	11.0	9.5	6.5	5.2	5.9	6.1	6.9	10.3	6.3	6.4

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