

WV Juvenile Court Statistics: 2001-2003

Cynthia A. Hamilton, M.S.

Stephen M. Haas, Ph.D., Director

Erica Turley, B.S., Research Analyst

The West Virginia courts of original juvenile jurisdiction processed approximately 6,819 juveniles in 2003. Most of the juveniles processed by the courts were charged with a delinquency offense, however the majority of these charges involved misdemeanor offenses. The majority of juveniles processed had no prior delinquency or status offenses and only 8.0% of the juveniles were detained prior to adjudication in 2003.

The average age at referral was 15.3 years of age. Younger juveniles (10 years and younger) were more likely to be charged with a status offense than older juveniles (11 years and older). The majority of juveniles processed by the court reported living in a single parent home (50.2%) and being enrolled in a mainstream educational setting (72.1%) at the time of referral. Only 5.3% had reported dropping out of school.

Males were overrepresented in the population of youths processed by the juvenile courts compared to their proportion of the juvenile population in WV. While males comprised 51.5% of the juvenile population ages 10 to 17 in WV, they represented 66.8% of youths processed by the courts in 2003. Moreover, males were more likely than females to be charged with a delinquency offense. An estimated 73.5% of males processed by the courts

were charged with a delinquency offense, compared to 56.0% of females youths.

Nonwhite juveniles were also overrepresented among the population of juveniles processed by the courts in 2003. While nonwhite juveniles represent 5.8% of the youth population ages 10 to 17 in WV, they accounted for 11.0% of all juveniles processed by the court in 2003. In addition, nonwhite juveniles were more likely than white juveniles to be charged with a delinquency offense. An estimated 77.8% of nonwhite juveniles were charged with a delinquency offense compared to 66.7% of white juveniles.

In 2003 there were 5,960 new referrals handled by probation officers involving 8,075 new offenses. Most of the cases referred to the juvenile courts involved delinquency offenses. Law enforcement officers referred the majority of delinquency offense cases. Parents and schools referred the majority of status offense cases.

Most cases entering the juvenile courts in 2003 were handled in an informal manner. Of the 5,960 cases referred to the juvenile courts in 2003 with a known case disposition, 2,703 (45.4%) were given an informal disposition. Approximately one-third (31.8%) of cases that received an informal disposition were referred to

State of West Virginia
Department of Military Affairs & Public Safety
Division of Criminal Justice Services

Report Highlights

- In 2003, nearly three-quarters (73.5%) of male youths processed by the juvenile courts in WV were charged with a delinquency offense, compared to 56.0% of female youths.
- While nonwhite juveniles comprise only 5.8% of the juvenile population in WV, they accounted for 11.0% of the juveniles processed by the courts in 2003.
- Only 11.8% of juveniles processed by the juvenile courts in 2003 were charged with a felony offense.
- Over 90.0% of the juveniles processed by the juvenile courts in 2003 had no prior record of arrests or adjudications for a status or delinquency offense.
- Less than ten percent (8.0%) of youths processed by the juvenile courts were detained prior to adjudication in 2003.
- The total number of cases referred to juvenile courts in 2003 decreased by 10.6% and 8.5% from 2002 and 2001, respectively.
- One-half (49.6%) of all cases referred to the juvenile courts in 2003 were adjudicated delinquent by plea.
- Only 3.8% of the cases referred to the juvenile courts in 2003 were sentenced to a juvenile correctional facility.
- In 2003, the total number of person and property offenses disposed by juvenile courts decreased compared to 2001 and 2002 estimates.
- Nearly fifty percent (45.4%) of delinquency offense cases disposed in 2003 received a formal disposition, compared to 51.7% of status offense cases.

diversion. Approximately 29.3% of the cases receiving a formal disposition were placed on probation. An estimated 14.0% of the cases referred to the courts were given an improvement period and 11.0% of the cases were dismissed. Less than one percent (0.2%) of 2003 cases were transferred from juvenile to criminal court jurisdiction.

There were 5,922 cases disposed in 2003 (4,034 delinquency offense cases and 1,888 status offense cases). An examination of delinquency and status offense case dispositions showed a decline in these numbers between 2002 and 2003. While assault was the most frequently charged delinquency offense, truancy was the most frequently charged status offense. Whereas delinquency cases were more likely to be handled in a formal manner, status offense cases were more likely to be given an informal disposition.

This report examines data from the Juvenile Probation Database (JPDB) on cases referred to and disposed of by juvenile courts in WV. The JPDB is the primary source of data gathered on juvenile court referrals and dispositions in WV. It is comprehensive in that it includes information on all delinquency and status offense cases referred to juvenile probation.

Nevertheless, while juvenile probation serves as a primary point of intake for a vast majority of cases referred to juvenile court, not all cases are handled by juvenile probation. In particular, juvenile probation may not become aware of some status offense and less serious delinquency cases that are immediately diverted from the system by a referee or magistrate. As a result, the JPDB may not reflect the

total number of minor delinquency and status offense cases handled by juvenile courts in WV.

This report is divided into four major sections. The first section discusses the population of youths processed by the juvenile courts in WV. The analysis includes *all juveniles referred to and/or receiving dispositions from* the juvenile courts in 2003. The analysis focuses on describing the demographic and legal characteristics of the population.

The second section examines the flow of cases *referred to* the juvenile courts in 2003. Analysis focuses on major decision points within the system including case referrals, predispositional detention and adjudication decisions, as well as dispositional outcomes.

The third section investigates delinquency and status offense cases *disposed of* in 2003. Analysis focuses on both the volume and rates of cases disposed of in 2003 by broad and specific offense categories. In addition, we also highlight any trends in the nature and volume of cases disposed between 2001 and 2003.

The final section of this report focuses on the total number of delinquency and status offense cases reported for the 55 counties in WV. Delinquency and status offense case rates for 2003 are calculated based on the total number of cases referred to probation in each county.

Population Characteristics of Youth Processed by the Juvenile Courts in 2003

This section of the report examines the population characteristics of youths processed by the courts of original juvenile jurisdiction in 2003. Youths referred to the juvenile courts by a complaint/petition dated from January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003 *and/or* youths having a formal or informal disposition date from the juvenile courts during the same time period are included in this analysis.

Since a juvenile may be involved in more than one case involving more than one offense during the calendar year, we restricted our analysis to each youth's most serious offense contained within their last delinquency or status offense referral in 2003. Hence, each youth processed by the juvenile court for that year is counted only once. It should be noted that, in some instances, cases receiving dispositions in 2003 represent cases pending from previous years. In addition, many cases referred in 2003 did not receive dispositions in 2003 and are considered to be pending.

Demographic Characteristics

The juvenile courts processed 6,819 juveniles in 2003. Of the 6,819 juveniles processed by the juvenile courts, 2,196 were charged with a status offense and 4,623 were charged with a delinquency offense. The demographic characteristics of the youths processed by the juvenile courts in 2003 are described in terms of their gender, race, age, educational placement, and living situation (see Table 1).

Gender. Males are overrepresented among the youth

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Juveniles Processed by the Juvenile Court, 2003

	N	%
Gender		
Male	4,558	66.8
Female	2,261	33.2
Total	6,819	100.0
Race*		
White	5,968	89.0
Nonwhite	739	11.0
Total	6,707	100.0
Age at referral		
10 or younger	178	2.6
11 to 12	565	8.3
13 to 14	1,862	27.3
15 to 16	2,761	40.5
17 to upper limit	1,453	21.3
Total	6,819	100.0
Age at referral		
Mean	15.3	
Standard Deviation	1.9	
Educational placement**		
Mainstream	4,369	72.1
Alternative	426	7.0
Special education	680	11.2
GED/graduated	154	2.5
Drop Out	320	5.3
Other	110	1.8
Total	6,059	100.0
Living Situation***		
Parents/Step parents	2,603	39.4
Single parent	3,317	50.2
Other relative	378	5.7
DHHR approved	229	3.5
Detention center	3	0.0
Transient	5	0.1
Other	75	1.1
Total	6,610	100.0

*Includes Black, Asian, Native American, multiracial and other racial categories. Race was unknown in 112 of the cases.
 **Unknown or missing in 760 cases.
 ***Unknown or missing in 209 cases.

population processed by the juvenile courts compared to their proportion of the WV juvenile population. While males make up 51.5% of the juvenile population in WV, they accounted for two-thirds (66.8%) of youths processed

by the juvenile courts in 2003. Conversely, females were underrepresented in the youth population processed by the juvenile courts. While females comprise nearly fifty percent (48.5%) of the juvenile population in

WV, they represented only 33.2% of the youths processed by the juvenile courts in 2003 (see Table 1). WV population estimates are based on US Census 2000 data.

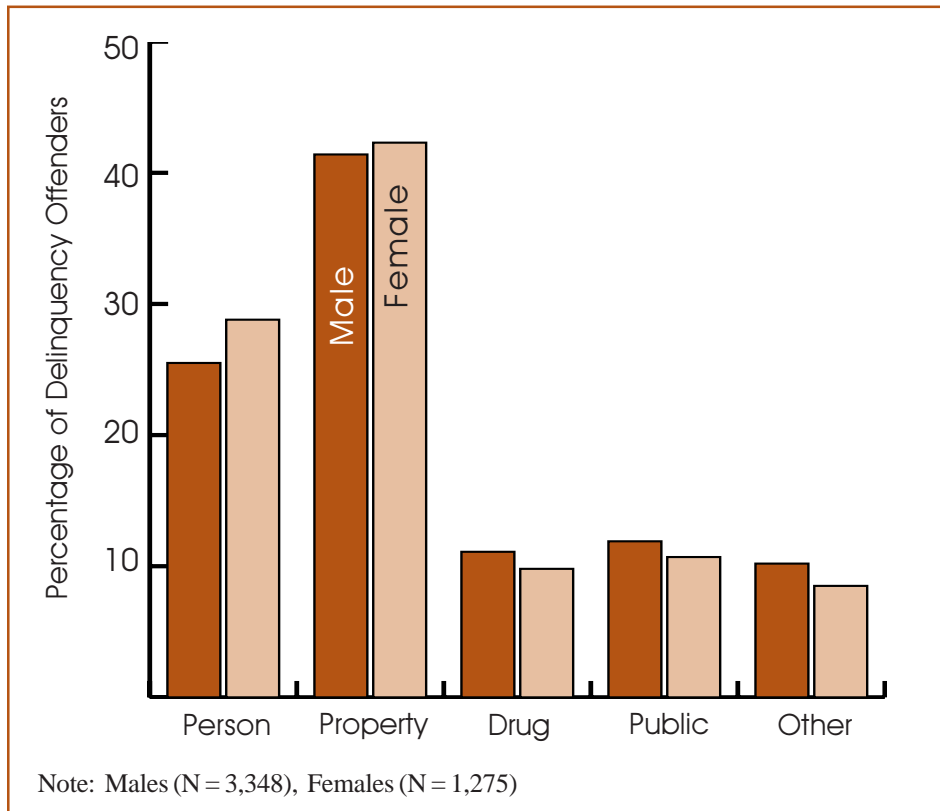
Males and females also differed by the type of offenses for which they were charged in 2003. Consistent with national statistics reported by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ), males were considerably more likely to be charged with a delinquency offense compared to females. In 2003, nearly three quarters (73.5%) of male youths processed by the juvenile courts in WV were charged with a delinquency offense, compared to only 56.0% of female youths.

Although male youths accounted for a greater proportion of total delinquency offenses in 2003, females were more likely to be referred to juvenile court for a person or property offense. Graph 1 compares the distribution of delinquent offenders by broad offense category (e.g., person, property, public, drug, and other offenses) and gender group.

As indicated in Graph 1, a higher proportion of female delinquent offenders were charged with a person or property offense compared to males. Of all female youths referred to juvenile probation for a delinquency offense, 28.8% were charged with a person offense and 42.3% were charged with a property offense. In comparison, only 25.5% of male delinquent offenders were charged with a person offense and 41.4% were charged with a property offense.

For all other offenses, male delinquent offenders were slightly more likely to be charged than females. Thus,

Graph 1
Percentage of Delinquency Offenders by Gender and Offense Type, 2003



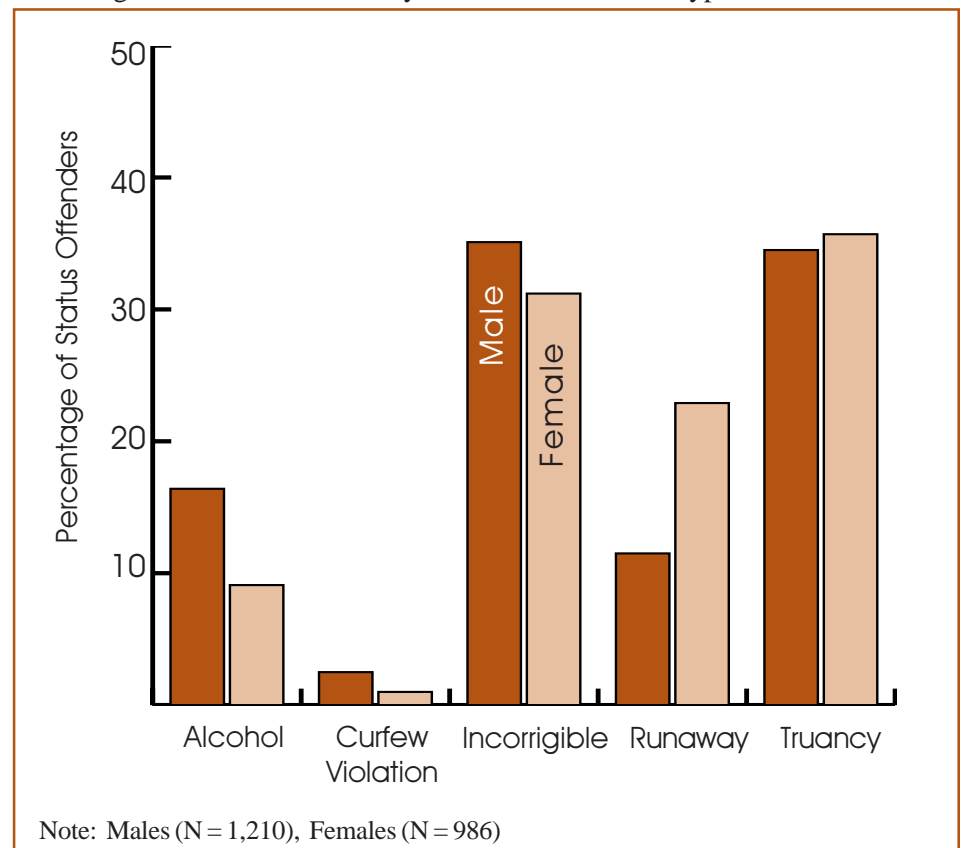
On the other hand, male status offenders were nearly twice as likely to be charged with underage consumption/possession of alcohol than female status offenders. Approximately sixteen percent (16.4%) of male youths were charged with underage consumption/possession of alcohol compared to 9.1% of female youths. Males were also slightly more likely to be charged with incorrigibility than females. Over one-third (35.1%) of males and females (31.2%) were charged with incorrigibility.

Race. Nonwhite youths were overrepresented among the population of juveniles processed by the juvenile courts in 2003. Table 1 summarizes the percentages of white and nonwhite youths processed by the courts. While nonwhite juveniles represent 5.8% of the youth population ages 10 to 17 in WV,

a higher percentage of males were charged with public (11.9%), drug (11.1%), and “other” (10.2%) offenses. Only 10.7% of all female delinquent offenders were charged with a public offense, while 9.8% and 8.5% of females were charged with drug and “other” offenses, respectively.

Graph 2 compares the percentage of male and female status offenders by type of status offense. As indicated in Graph 2, 22.9% of female status offenders were charged with a runaway offense compared to 11.5% of male status offenders. As a result, female youths were nearly twice as likely as male youths to be charged with a runaway offense. Female status offenders were only slightly more likely to be charged with a truancy offense compared to male youths.

Graph 2
Percentage of Status Offenders by Gender and Offense Type, 2003



they accounted for 11.0% of the juveniles handled by the court.

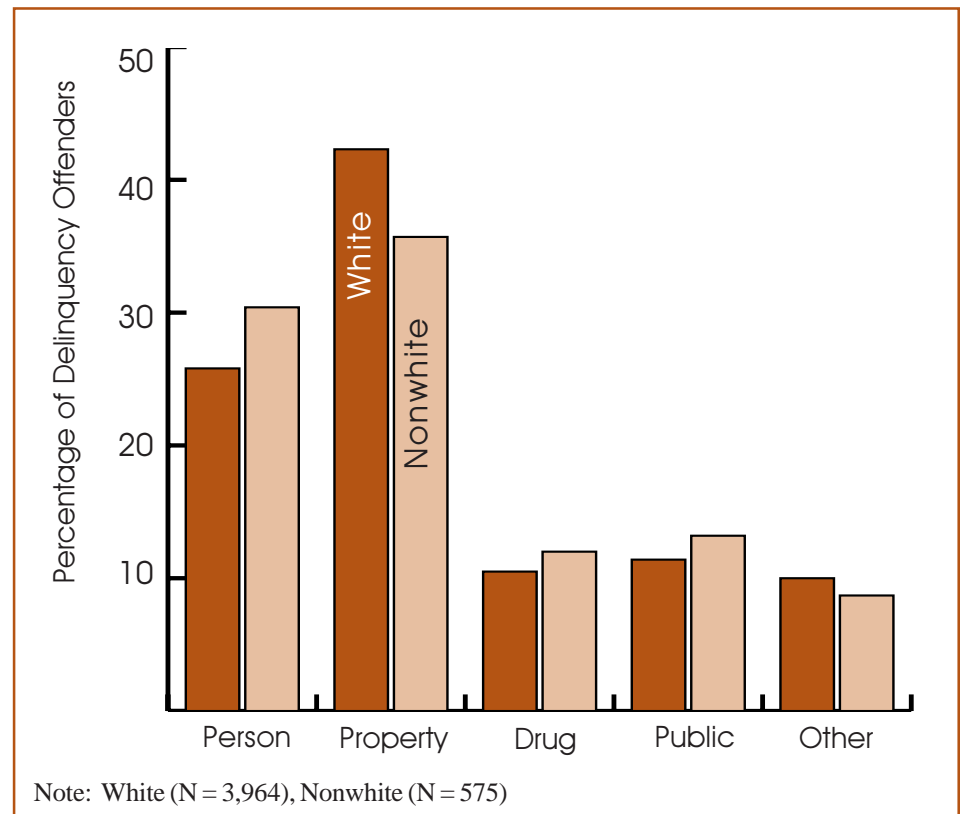
On the other hand, white youths were underrepresented among the youth population processed by the juvenile court. While white juveniles represent 94.0% of the juvenile population in WV, they constituted less than ninety percent (89.0%) of the youths handled by the juvenile courts.

In terms of offense characteristics, white and nonwhite juveniles differ by the type and severity of offense for which they were charged in 2003. White youths were more likely to be charged with a status offense than nonwhite juveniles. Conversely, nonwhite juveniles were more likely to be charged with a delinquency offense. For instance, nearly eighty percent (77.8%) of nonwhite juveniles were charged with a delinquency offense compared to two-thirds (66.4%) of white juveniles.

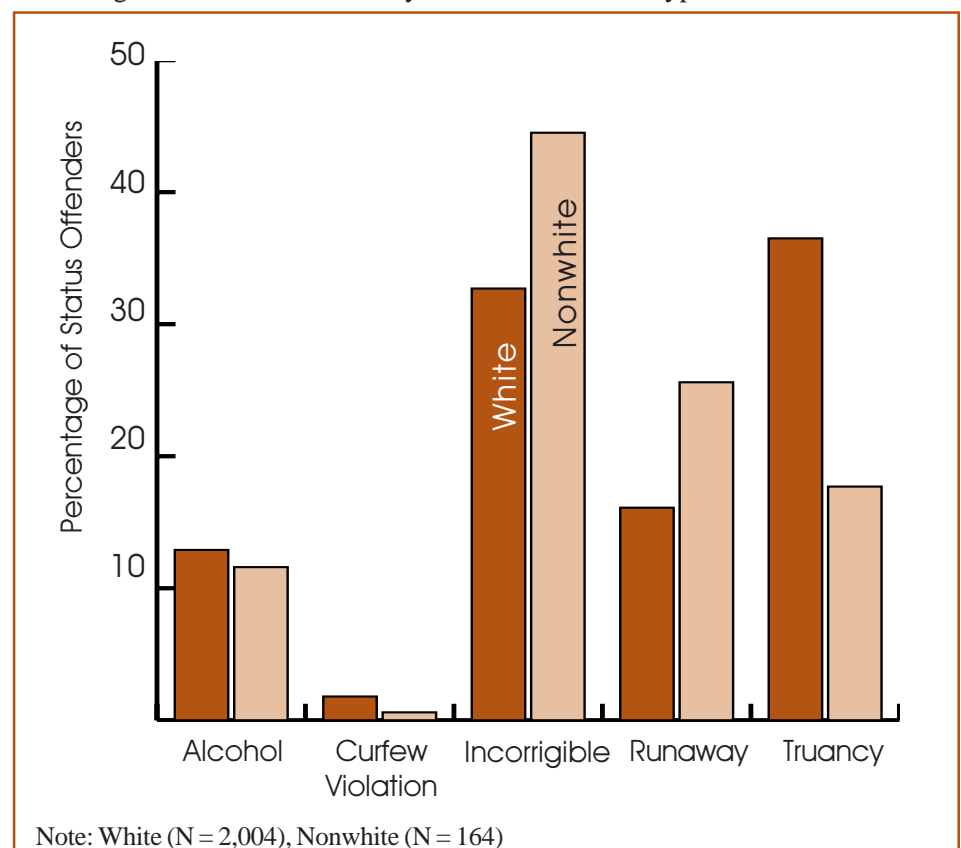
Graph 3 compares the percentages of white and nonwhite delinquency offenders by delinquency offense category. As shown in Graph 3, a higher percentage of nonwhite juveniles were charged with person, public, and drug offenses compared to white juveniles. Over thirty percent (30.4%) of nonwhite youths were charged with a person offense compared to one-quarter (25.8%) of white juveniles. Alternatively, a higher percentage of white juveniles were charged with property and “other” offenses than nonwhite juveniles. An estimated 42.3% of white juveniles were charged with property offenses compared to 35.7% of nonwhite juveniles.

In a similar analysis, Graph 4 compares the percentages of white and nonwhite status offenders by offense

Graph 3
Percentage of Delinquency Offenders by Race and Offense Type, 2003



Graph 4
Percentage of Status Offenders by Race and Offense Type, 2003



type. A higher percentage of white juveniles (36.5%) were charged with truancy compared to the percentage of nonwhite juveniles (17.7%). Conversely, a higher percentage of nonwhite juveniles were charged with incorrigible (44.5%) and runaway (25.6%) status offenses compared to the percentage of white juveniles (32.7% and 16.1%, respectively). These percentages should be interpreted with caution due to the low frequency of nonwhite status offenders.

Age. Age at referral represents the age of the individual at the time the complaint/petition was signed (see Table 1). The average age of juveniles processed by the juvenile court in 2003 was 15.3 years of age. The age category with the highest number of juveniles processed by the juvenile court was 15 to 16 years of age (40.5%). The second most frequent age category was 13 to 14 years of age (27.3%). Approximately eleven percent (10.9%) of the juveniles were younger than 12 years of age. Youths 17 years or older accounted for slightly above twenty percent (21.3%) of the youths handled in 2003.

In terms of offense seriousness, younger juveniles were more likely to be charged with a status offense than older juveniles. Approximately, 43.3% of youths 10 years old or younger were charged with a status offense. In comparison, 35.8% of juveniles 11 to 12 years of age, 37.0% of juveniles 13 to 14 years of age, 33.4% of juveniles 15 to 16 years of age, and 21.0% of juveniles 17 years of age or older were charged with a status offense.

Educational Placement. Over seventy percent (72.1%) of youths processed by the juvenile courts in 2003

were enrolled in a mainstream educational setting (see Table 1). An additional 20.0% of juveniles were placed in an alternative, special education, or other educational setting. Most other youths were enrolled in some form of home-bound instruction either from their caretaker or the State. Slightly greater than five percent (5.3%) of the youths were school dropouts. Less than three percent (2.5%) had graduated or obtained a GED.

Living situation. As shown in Table 1, the majority of youths handled by the juvenile courts in 2003 were living with a single parent (50.2%).

Approximately 4 in 10 youths were living in two parent households, (i.e., both parents or one parent and a step-parent).

At the same time, approximately six percent (5.7%) of youths handled by the juvenile courts were living with a relative. The most frequently identified “other” relative was a grandparent. Fewer than four percent (3.5%) of youths were residing in a “DHHR approved” living situation. The remaining 1.1% of youth reported a living situation designated as “other”. Other living situations included

Table 2
Case Characteristics of Juveniles Processed by the Juvenile Court, 2003

	N	%
Offense Severity*		
Felony	727	11.8
Misdemeanor	3,215	52.1
Status offense	2,155	34.9
Probation violation	75	1.2
Total**	6,172	100.0
Adjudication		
Yes	1,990	54.8
No	1,645	45.2
Total	3,635	100.0
Predispositional Detention		
Yes	533	8.0
No	6,134	92.0
Total	6,667	100.0
Type of Disposition		
Informal	2,841	43.6
Formal	3,672	56.4
Total	6,513	100.0

*Offense severity is unknown in 647 cases.
 **Column totals may vary due to missing data or unknown values. Percents are based on column totals.

independent living or residing with a friend.

Legal Characteristics

Tables 2 and 3 display the case and legal characteristics of youths processed by the juvenile courts in 2003. While 97.0% of the youths handled by the juvenile courts had only one case processed during 2003, 3.0% had two or more cases processed.

Table 2 summarizes the case characteristics of youths processed by the juvenile courts in 2003. For this analysis, offense severity represents the most serious offense for each youth's last court referral. Since this measure of offense severity was not included in the JPDB for cases referred to probation prior to 2003, this value was unknown for 647 cases processed (referred to and/or disposed of) in 2003.

As indicated in Table 2, over fifty percent (52.1%) of juveniles processed by the courts in 2003 were charged with a misdemeanor offense. Meanwhile, approximately thirty-five percent (34.9%) of youths were charged with a status offense. Only 11.8% of juveniles were charged with a felony, while less than two percent (1.2%) of juveniles were charged with a probation violation as their most serious offense.

Over one-half (54.8%) of the youths processed by the juvenile courts in 2003 had their cases formally adjudicated. As shown in Table 2, the number of cases that were formally adjudicated in 2003 was similar to the total number of cases given a formal disposition (56.4%). However, it should be noted that youths can receive both an informal and formal disposition for the same case. Thus, for the purposes of this report, cases with both formal and informal dispositions were counted as formal dispositions.

Table 3

Prior Legal Characteristics of Juveniles Processed by the Juvenile Court, 2003
(N = 6,819)

	N	%
Prior adjudication for status offense		
No	6,467	94.8
Yes	352	5.1
Prior adjudication for delinquent offense		
No	6,163	90.4
Yes	656	9.6
Prior arrest		
No	6,356	93.2
Yes	463	6.7
Prior probation		
No	6,304	92.4
Yes	515	7.5

Table 2 further shows the distribution of youth processed by the juvenile courts in 2003 that were detained prior to adjudication. A vast majority of youths did not receive a predispositional detention. In fact, less than ten percent (8.0%) of all youths processed by the courts in 2003 were detained prior to adjudication.

The prior legal characteristics of youths processed by the courts in 2003 are shown in Table 3. Over ninety percent of the juveniles handled in 2003 had no prior arrests or adjudications for a status or a delinquency offense. Only 5.1% of juveniles had a prior adjudication for a status offense and 9.6% had a prior adjudication for a delinquency offense. Less than seven percent (6.7%) of youths processed by the juvenile courts in 2003 had a prior arrest. Likewise, less than ten percent (7.5%) of youths had ever served a period on supervised probation.

Estimates of Delinquency and Status Offense Case Referrals

This section of the report examines case referrals to the courts of original juvenile jurisdiction during 2003. The following analysis includes only those cases in which the date of the complaint/petition filed was from January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003. In addition, this section focuses on unique cases as opposed to individuals. Thus, youths having multiple cases may be represented more than once. In 2003, there were 5,960 known complaints/petitions filed with the juvenile courts, according to juvenile probation.

The primary focus of this analysis is on the flow of cases through the various stages of the juvenile court process (i.e., from case referral to disposition). However, in an effort to highlight any trends or changes in the nature of cases referred to juvenile

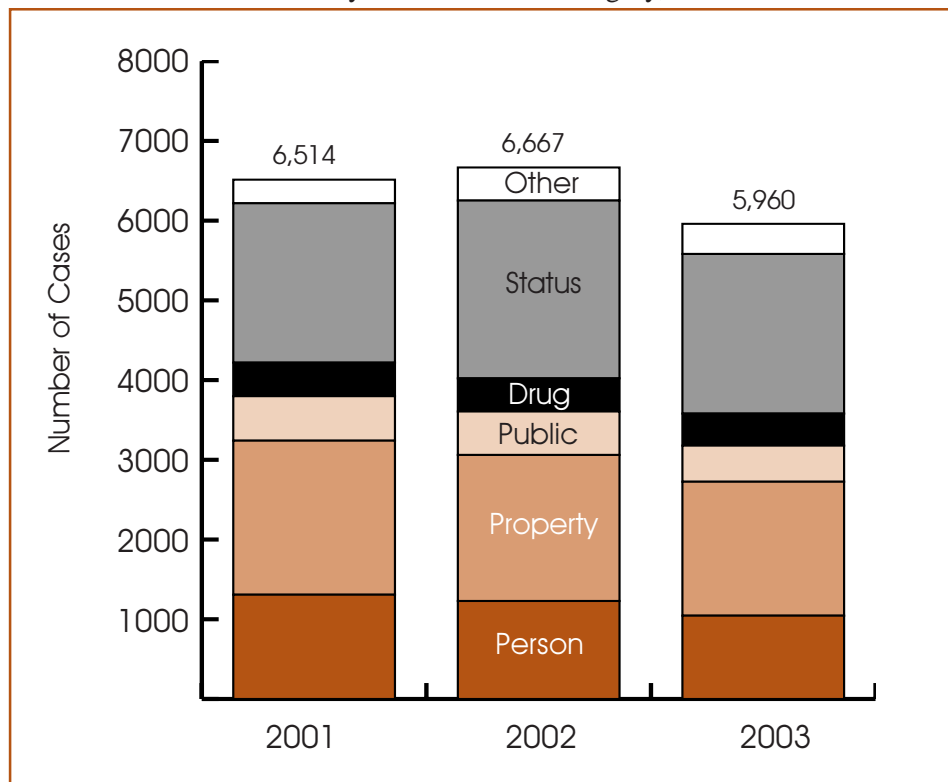
probation, we also examine referrals by broad offense category between 2001 and 2003.

Graph 5 shows the total number of cases referred to the juvenile courts between 2001 and 2003 by broad offense category. Overall, there was a modest decrease in the number of cases referred to the courts in 2003 compared to 2001 and 2002 estimates. These reductions translated into nearly a nine percent (8.5%) decline in case referrals between 2001 and 2003 and roughly an eleven percent (10.6%) decrease between 2002 and 2003.

The peak for the total number of case referrals over the three-year period occurred in 2002. A close examination of case referrals by broad offense category between 2001 and 2002 suggests that the increase may be partially explained by a greater number of referrals for status offense and “other” offense cases. While the number of person, property, public, and drug offense cases declined between 2001 and 2002, the number of status offense cases referred to the court increased by 11.6%. Moreover, there was also a 40.2% increase in the number of “other” offenses in 2002 when compared to 2001 figures.

Graph 5

Number of Cases Referred by Broad Offense Category, 2001-2003



In addition, the number of status offense cases in 2002 was also greater than the total number reported in 2003. As a result, there were fewer cases referred to the juvenile courts in 2003 in every broad offense category (e.g., person, property, public, drug, and other offense) when compared to 2001 and 2002 estimates, except for status offense cases.

Table 4 summarizes the status offense cases referred to the juvenile courts by offense type for the years 2001 to 2003. As noted above, the peak in total offenses and status offenses occurred in 2002. Truancy referrals accounted for much of the increase in status offending in 2002. There were 917 truancy offense cases in 2002, compared to 720 in 2001 and 693 in 2003. The rise in the number of truancy offense cases in 2002 translated into a

Table 4

Status Offense Cases Referred by Offense Type, 2001-2003

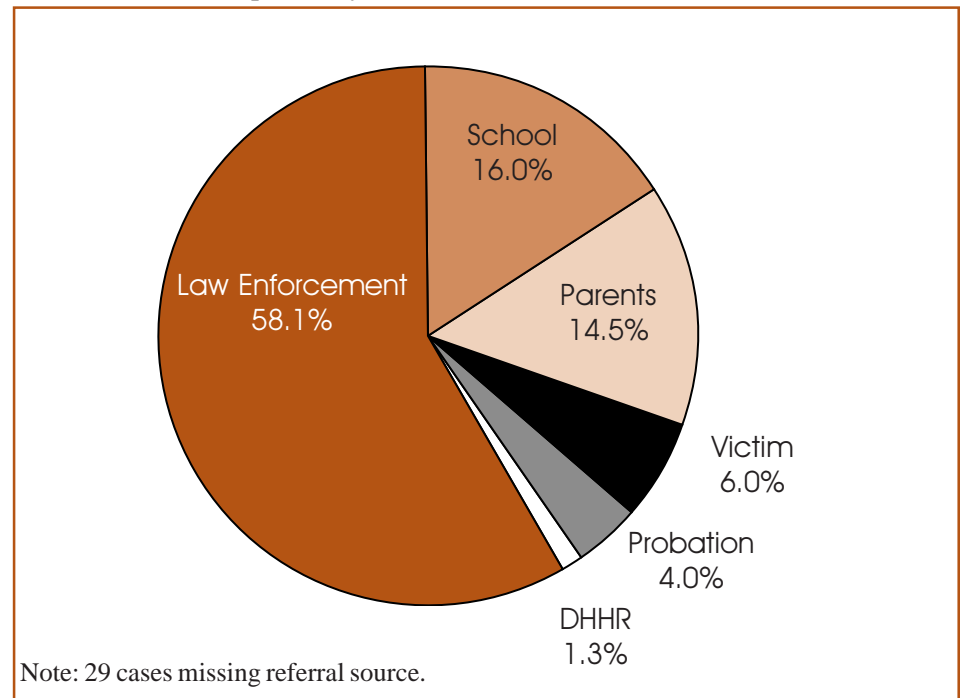
Status Offense	N	2001	2002	2003
Total Status Offenses	6,231	1,999	2,230	2,002
Liquor law violation	792	261	276	255
Incorrigible	1,944	639	632	673
Runaway	1,033	347	342	344
Truancy	2,330	720	917	693
Curfew Violation	132	32	63	37

27.4% increase from 2001 and was 32.3% higher than 2003 reports.

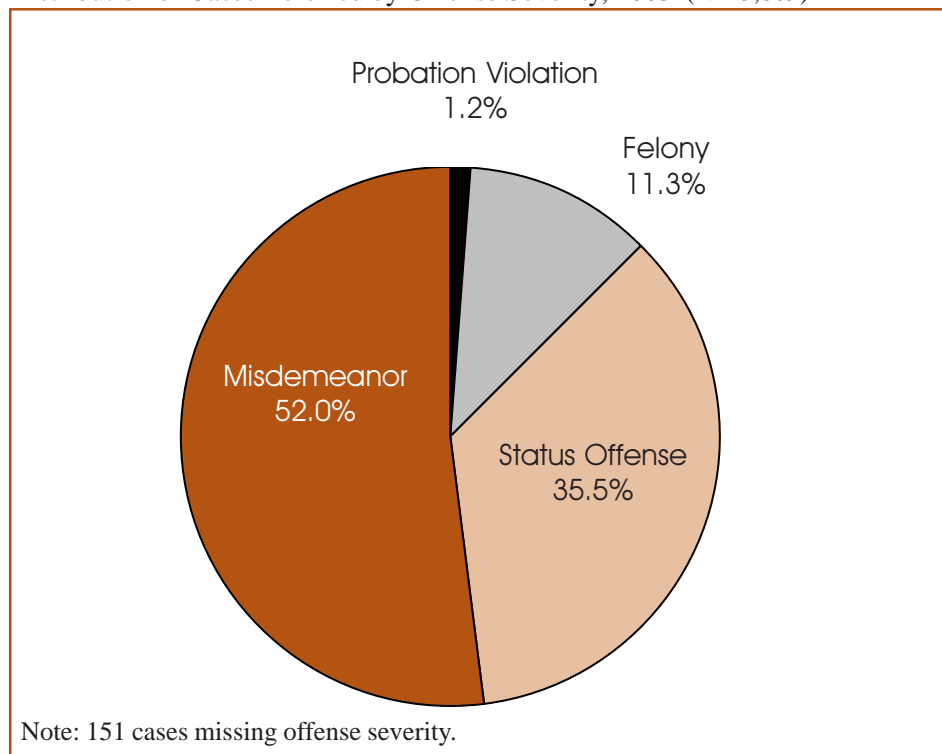
Although the numbers are much smaller, there was also considerable fluctuation in the number of curfew violations over this three-year period. Similar to truancy referrals, the greatest number of cases charged with curfew violations occurred in 2002. The number of case referrals for curfew violations nearly doubled between 2001 and 2002, then dropped back to near 2001 levels in 2003.

Offense severity. Of the 5,960 complaints filed with the juvenile courts in 2003, the vast majority could be considered “nonserious.” Over eighty-five percent (87.5%) of cases handled in juvenile court (and known by juvenile probation) listed a misdemeanor or status offense as the most serious offense.

Graph 7
Distribution of Complaints by Referral Source, 2003 (N = 5,931)



Graph 6
Distribution of Cases Referred by Offense Severity, 2003 (N = 5,809)



Graph 6 illustrates the offense severity for cases referred to the juvenile courts in 2003. Of the 5,809 case referrals for which the offense severity was known, 52.0% were for a misdemeanor, 35.5% were for a status offense, and 1.2% of the cases involved a probation violation. Only 11.3% of the cases referred in 2003 involved a felony offense.

Referral source. Juvenile cases are referred to the juvenile courts by law enforcement, the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), schools, parents, victims, probation officers, and other sources by filing a complaint with the court alleging a delinquency or status offense. Graph 7 shows the distribution of complaints by referral source.

There were 5,960 referrals to the juvenile courts in 2003. Law enforcement officers filed nearly sixty percent (58.1%) of the complaints.

School officials (16.0%) and parents (14.5%) were the second most frequent complainants. Finally, less than twelve percent of the cases were referred by victims (6.0%), probation departments (4.0%), and DHHR (1.3%).

An examination of referral sources from 2001 to 2003 indicates that the number of complaints filed by law enforcement officers decreased by 6.5% in 2002 from 2001. Meanwhile, the number of referrals from other sources (e.g., parents, schools, victims, and probation departments) increased during the same period.

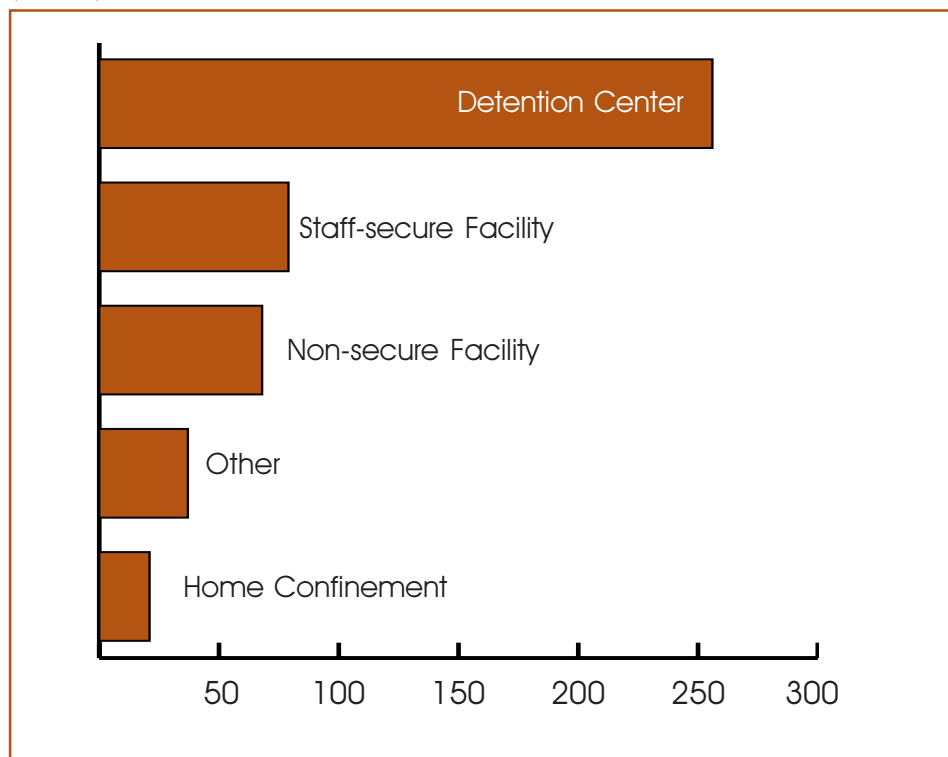
Interestingly, the rise in non-law enforcement referrals between 2001 and 2002 coincided with an increase in status offense referrals in 2002. For example, of the cases referred to the courts in 2002, there was a significant increase in the number of truancy offense cases. At the same time, truancy offense cases were more likely to be referred to the courts by school officials.

Predispositional detention. Of the 5,960 cases referred to the juvenile courts in 2003, only 7.7% of the cases received a predispositional detention. Graph 8 shows the distribution of cases that received a predispositional detention by location.

Over one-half (55.5%) of those detained were held in juvenile detention centers. An estimated 17.1% of those detained were held in staff-secure facilities, while 14.8% were held in nonsecure facilities. Approximately four percent (3.9%) of the cases were assigned to home confinement and less than seven percent (6.8%) were placed in other facilities. Other predispositional detention placements included foster care and probation.

Graph 8

Distribution of Predispositional Detention Cases Referred by Location, 2003
(N=461)



Informal dispositions. Prior to formal filing of a juvenile petition with the court a case may be handled “informally.” Informal dispositions were more likely than formal dispositions for the cases entering the juvenile courts in 2003. Table 5 shows the distribution of cases by type of informal disposition.

Of the 5,960 cases referred to the juvenile courts in 2003 with a known case disposition, 2,703 (45.4%) were given an informal disposition. In slightly less than forty percent (38.1%) of the cases handled informally, the case was closed and/or the complaints was withdrawn or resolved.

Table 5

Distribution of Cases Referred by Type of Informal Disposition, 2003

Informal Dispositions	N	%
Case closed/resolved	1,029	38.1
Held open w/out further action	123	4.6
Referred to community agency	154	5.7
Referred to DHHR	40	1.5
Referred to diversion	859	31.8
Informal supervision by probation	359	13.3
Other	139	5.1
Total	2,703	100.0

For those cases not closed or resolved prior to adjudication, the most frequent informal disposition was diversion. Approximately one-third (31.8%) of cases referred in 2003 were diverted from the juvenile courts. Nearly fifteen percent (13.3%) were placed on informal supervision through the probation department. Meanwhile, approximately six percent (5.7%) of the cases were referred to a community agency and 1.5% of the cases were referred to the DHHR.

Interestingly, nearly five percent (4.6%) of the cases referred in 2003 were held open without further action. The most frequent “other” informal dispositions included a period of community service and/or the juvenile was required to write a letter of apology to the victim(s). A small proportion of juveniles were also referred to substance abuse treatment. It should be noted that 53 cases were given both a formal and an informal disposition. These cases were counted as formal dispositions.

Improvement period. An improvement period may be granted by the court prior to an adjudicatory hearing. Approximately fourteen percent (14.1%) of the 5,960 cases referred to the juvenile courts in 2003 were given an improvement period.

Adjudication. Of the 5,960 complaints filed in 2003, 2,017 cases had a known adjudication status. Table 6 shows the distribution of cases by adjudication decision. Of the 2,017 cases with a known adjudication status, nearly one-third (32.5%) were dismissed. Approximately one-half (49.6%) of the cases were adjudicated delinquent by plea. Very few of the cases were deemed guilty by plea (36) or guilty by trial (7).

In addition, over ten percent (11.7%) of cases referred in 2003 were adjudicated as a status offender. Meanwhile, less than one percent of all cases adjudicated were found not guilty by trial (0.1%), adjudicated not a status offender (0.4%), or adjudicated not delinquent (0.5%).

Investigations. Investigations were ordered in 787 cases in 2003. Predispositional reports were conducted

in 575 cases. Violation reports were completed in 212 of the cases.

Formal dispositions. The most frequent formal disposition, other than an improvement period discussed above, was probation (Table 6). Nearly thirty percent (29.3%) of the case referrals in 2003 were sentenced to probation. Just over ten percent (11.0%) of the cases were placed in DHHR custody combined with probation and only 0.4% of the cases were given home confinement and probation.

Table 6
Distribution of Cases Referred by Adjudication Decision and
Formal Disposition Type, 2003

Adjudication Decisions	N	%
Case dismissed *	655	32.5
Adjudicated NOT a status offender	8	0.4
Adjudicated NOT delinquent	10	0.5
Adjudicated status offender	236	11.7
Adjudicated delinquent by plea	1,001	49.5
Adjudicated delinquent by trial	62	3.1
Found not guilty by trial	2	0.1
Guilty by plea	36	2.2
Guilty by trial	7	0.3
Total	2,017	100.0
Formal Disposition Type	N	%
Monitor compliance	42	1.9
Community service	6	0.3
Fine/restitution	36	1.6
Improvement period	839	37.2
Referred to DHHR	132	5.9
Probation	658	29.3
DHHR custody	148	6.6
DHHR custody & probation	247	11.0
Home confinement & probation	8	0.4
Mental health processing	2	0.1
DJS custody	87	3.9
Transferred to adult court	5	0.2
Other	32	1.4
Total	2,242	100.0

*Includes cases dismissed at the preliminary hearing, dismissed without prejudice, dismissed with prejudice.

Only a small proportion of the cases were referred to DHHR (5.9%) or given DHHR custody (without probation) (6.6%). Custody was given to the Division of Juvenile Services (DJS) in 87 or 3.9% of the cases. A disposition of mental health processing was given in very few (0.1%) instances. A small number of cases were given the disposition of monitoring compliance (1.9%), community service (0.3%), and fine/restitution (1.6%). No information is provided in the JPDB on the “other” formal dispositions.

Criminal court transfers. Only five cases were transferred from juvenile to criminal court jurisdiction. All of the cases transferred to criminal court involved serious offenses. The most serious offenses charged included two cases of first degree murder, one case of first degree robbery, one case of first degree sexual assault, and one felony drug law violation (manufacture/delivery).

It should be noted that these numbers represent only the most serious offenses charged. Two of the cases had more than one offense charged. All but one of the cases involved crimes against the person. Four of the five cases had prior adjudications for delinquency. Three of the five cases received predispositional detention in a detention center prior to trial.

In terms of demographic characteristics, all of the cases transferred from juvenile to criminal court jurisdiction involved male juveniles. The juveniles ranged in age from 15.2 to 18.2 years of age at referral with an average age of 17.0 years. The racial distribution of the juvenile defendants was two white and three black defendants.

Estimates of Delinquency and Status Offense Case Dispositions

This section of the report examines delinquency and status offense cases disposed in 2003. This analysis includes cases that were given an informal or

formal disposition date from January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003. Since this analysis examines cases rather than individuals, a single youth with multiple cases disposed in 2003 will be represented more than once. While the following analysis focuses primarily on the nature of cases disposed in 2003,

Table 7
Distribution of Disposed Cases by Specific Offense Category, 2001-2003

Most Serious Offense	Total Cases	2001	2002	2003
Total Delinquency	12,529	4,112	4,383	4,034
Person Offenses	3,427	1,205	1,192	1,030
Homicide		2	12	3
Sexual Abuse/Assault		83	57	52
Robbery		37	28	20
Assault		1,080	1,091	953
Kidnapping		3	4	0
Child Abuse/Neglect		0	0	2
Property Offenses	5,336	1,793	1,846	1,697
Burglary		324	261	280
Theft		838	939	845
Motor Vehicle Theft		140	140	118
Arson		18	30	28
Property Damage		369	371	314
Trespassing		57	69	72
Stolen Property Offenses		47	36	40
Public Order Offenses	1,503	479	558	466
Obstruction of Justice		61	89	91
Disorderly Conduct		97	115	113
Weapons Offenses		104	94	78
Privacy Violation		24	62	45
Traffic		101	102	79
Other Public Order Offenses*		92	96	60
Other Sexual Offenses**	43	11	19	13
Drug Law Violations	1,170	340	405	425
Other Offenses	1,050	284	363	403
Miscellaneous Offenses***		77	100	111
Probation Violation		191	202	208
Other****		16	61	84

*Other public order offenses include extortion, fraud, animal offenses, hate crime, escape, and treason.

**Other sexual offenses include indecent exposure, procurement, and prostitution.

***Miscellaneous offenses include unsuccessful informal adjustment, unsuccessful improvement period, possession of tobacco by a minor, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, conspiracy to commit a felony/misdemeanor, accessory to a crime, civil rights violation, computer crime, violation of a protection order, Safe School Act violation, interstate detainer (limited), white cane laws violation

****Other offenses include those offenses for which there is no code for juveniles, a failed informal disposition, or a violation of an improvement period.

we also highlight any changes in the nature and volume of cases disposed between 2001 and 2003.

Estimates of Delinquency Cases

In 2003, the juvenile courts disposed of 4,034 delinquency cases and 1,888 status offense cases. Most of the delinquency cases were referred to the juvenile courts by law enforcement agencies, while most of the status offense cases were referred by parents and schools.

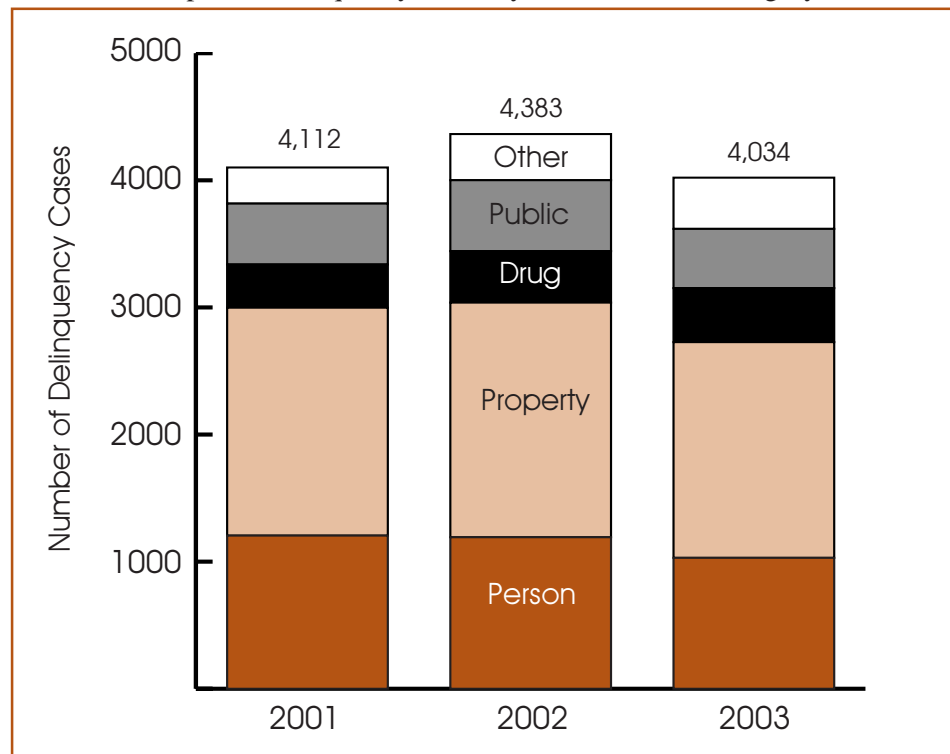
Counts and trends. Between 2001 and 2003 the number of delinquency cases disposed of by the juvenile courts was 12,529 (see Table 7). This number represents the sum of known case dispositions for each year. However, it should be noted that this number does not represent a true measure of delinquency offenses committed because multiple offenses could be included in each case.

The total number of delinquency cases disposed in 2003 decreased compared to 2001 and 2002 figures. Most of these reductions are accounted for by decreases in person and property cases reported in 2003. Changes in the total number of cases disposed between 2001 and 2003 by specific offense category are shown in Table 7. Caution should, however, be taken when comparing the yearly percentage changes for individual offenses due to the low number of cases disposed for many of these offenses.

Person offense cases. The total number of cases that involved person offenses in 2003 decreased by nearly fifteen percent compared to 2001 and 2002 estimates. Moreover, nearly every offense within the person offense category decreased in 2003 compared

Graph 9

Number of Disposed Delinquency Cases by Broad Offense Category, 2001-2003



to 2001 and 2002 reports. As a result, person offense cases decreased 13.6% from 2002 and 14.5% from 2001.

Perhaps the most significant decrease in person offense cases was for assaults. There were 138 fewer assault cases in 2003 compared to 2002. This corresponded to nearly a thirteen percent (12.6%) reduction in assault cases disposed. Sexual abuse/assault cases decreased by 31 cases in 2003 from 2001 figures.

In addition, homicide cases decreased between 2002 and 2003. There were only three homicide cases in 2003 compared to twelve cases in 2002. Although less significant of a decrease, robbery also declined in 2003. There were no kidnapping cases and only two child abuse/neglect cases reported in 2003.

Property offense cases. There were also reductions in the total number of delinquency cases involving property offenses in 2003. The number of property offense cases decreased by 5.4% and 8.1% compared to 2001 and 2002, respectively (see Graph 9).

The largest decrease in property offense cases occurred in the number of property damage cases disposed. The number of property damage cases disposed in 2003 decreased by 57 cases from 2002 and 55 cases from 2001. This resulted in roughly a fifteen percent decrease in property damage cases compared to 2001 and 2002 estimates.

Motor vehicle theft offense cases also decreased in 2003. There were 22 fewer motor vehicle theft cases in 2003, compared to 2001 and 2002. Although theft offense cases decreased by 96 cases in 2003 compared to 2002, the

number of theft offense cases in 2003 is similar to the number of cases disposed in 2001.

For the period between 2002 and 2003, there were steady increases in the number of trespassing and arson cases. There was over a twenty-five percent (26.3%) increase in the number of trespassing cases and over a fifty percent (55.5%) increase in the number of arson cases during this three-year period.

Public offense cases. Public offense cases decreased in 2003 compared to 2001 and 2002. In terms of percentage reductions, the number of public offense cases decreased 16.5% from 2002 and 2.7% from 2001 (see Table 7).

In addition, there were fewer weapons offense, traffic offense, and “other” public offense cases in 2003. The most significant decreases occurred in the number of weapons offense and traffic offense cases. Weapons offense cases declined by 26 cases in 2003 from 2001 and by 16 cases from 2002. Traffic offense cases declined by 22 cases in 2003 from 2001 and by 21 cases from 2002.

Several other offenses increased over the three-year period. Obstruction of justice cases increased in 2003 and 2002, compared to cases in 2001. The

number of disorderly conduct cases also increased in 2003 and 2002, compared to cases in 2001. Although the number of privacy violation cases in 2003 was lower than 2002 estimates, both have increased when compared to 2001 figures.

Other sexual offenses. The “other sexual offense” category may include offenses broadly categorized as person or public offenses. For example, it includes indecent exposure, which is categorized as a public offense. It also includes procurement of a minor, which is classified as a person offense. For the purposes of this report, this category was not classified as a public or person offense, but as “other sexual offenses.”

The number of other sexual offense cases decreased in 2003 when compared to 2002. In 2003, thirteen other sexual offenses cases were disposed, compared to nineteen in 2002. At the same time, however, the number of other sexual offenses cases in 2003 was similar to the number reported in 2001. A total of eleven other sexual offense cases were disposed in 2001. Percentage changes were not calculated because of the low case frequencies within this category.

Drug law violation cases. Although the total number of cases disposed declined in 2003, the number

of drug offense cases increased compared to 2001 and 2002 (see Table 7). In fact, drug offense cases increased by 25.0% between 2001 and 2003. The largest percent increase occurred between 2001 and 2002 at 19.1%. This trend shows a steady growth in drug law violations disposed over the past three years.

Other offense cases. “Other” offense cases include offenses categorized as miscellaneous, probation violations, and other offenses. There was an increase in other offense cases in 2003 when compared to 2002 and 2001. The number of other offense cases increased 11.0% from 2002 and 41.9% from 2001. All three of the other offense categories increased in 2003 when compared to 2001 and 2002 (see Table 7).

Estimates of Status Offense Cases

The following analysis focuses on status offense cases referred to the juvenile court and disposed of in 2003. The unit of count for this section of the report is the number of cases disposed of either informally or formally within the stated year. This section examines the volume and rate of status offense cases and the type of offenses.

Counts and trends. Between 2001 and 2003 the number of status offense cases disposed by the juvenile

Table 8
Distribution of Disposed Status Offense Cases by Type of Offense, 2001-2003

Status Offense	N	2001	2002	2003
Total Status Offenses	5,770	1,739	2,143	1,888
Liquor law violation	759	238	259	262
Incorrigible	1,793	576	598	619
Runaway	957	319	334	304
Truancy	2,133	579	888	666
Curfew Violation	128	27	64	37

Table 9
Distribution of Disposed Cases by Type of Disposition, 2003

Case Dispositions	Delinquency Offense Cases		Status Offense Cases	
	N	%	N	%
Informal	1,478	36.6	977	51.7
Formal	1,831	45.4	614	32.5
Case dismissed	725	18.0	297	15.7
Total	4,034	100.0	1,888	100.0

Table 10
Distribution of Disposed Cases by Type of Informal Disposition, 2003

Informal Dispositions	Delinquency Offense Cases		Status Offense Cases	
	N	%	N	%
Complaint resolved and/or Juvenile counseled	460	31.1	292	30.0
Held open	71	4.8	57	5.8
Referred to community agency	53	3.6	100	10.2
Referred to DHHR	7	0.5	32	3.3
Referred to Diversion	577	39.0	316	32.3
Informal Supervision	238	16.1	120	12.3
Other	72	4.9	60	6.1
Total	1,478	100.0	977	100.0

courts was 5,770. This number represents the sum of known case dispositions for each year. The distribution of cases by type of status offense from 2001 to 2003 is shown in Table 8.

Despite a decrease between 2002 and 2003, there was an overall 8.6% increase in the number of status offense cases disposed over the three-year period between 2001 and 2003. Between 2002 and 2003, the volume of status offense cases decreased from 2,143 to 1,888. This corresponded to an 11.9% reduction between these two years. However, the number of status offense cases disposed in 2003 remained 8.6% higher than 2001 figures.

During the period between 2001 and 2003, there was an increase in the number of liquor law violations, incorrigible offenses, truancy cases, and curfew violations disposed. These increases accounted for a large proportion of the growth in case dispositions for status offenses.

Although the actual volume of curfew violations was low, there was a 37.0% increase in the number of these cases reported between 2001 and 2003. In the same regard, the number of truancy cases increased by 15.0% over the three-year period, while liquor law violations increased by 10.1%. The number of incorrigible offenses also increased by 7.5% between 2001 and 2003.

Runaway cases were the only status offense cases to decline during this three-year period. The number of runaway cases decreased by 4.7% between 2001 and 2003. The largest percent decrease occurred between 2002 and 2003 at 9.0%.

Variation in Case Dispositions for Delinquency and Status Offense Cases

The following analysis examines the type of dispositions given to delinquency and status offense cases in 2003. The court has two separate mandates for delinquency offense versus status offense cases, therefore the type of case disposition should vary by type of offense. Table 9 compares the type of

case disposition for delinquency offense and status offense cases.

As anticipated, it appears that delinquency cases are more likely to be handled in a formal manner compared to status offense cases. Of all the cases disposed in 2003, the majority of delinquency case dispositions (45.4%) were formal while the majority of status offense case dispositions (51.7%) were informal.

Table 10 displays the distribution of informal dispositions for delinquency offense and status offense cases disposed in 2003. As indicated in Table 10, the most frequent informal disposition for both delinquency offense cases (39.0%) and status offense cases (32.3%) was diversion. Moreover, it appears that both delinquency offense cases and status offense cases were equally likely to have the complaint resolved and/or the juvenile counseled,

to be held open, or to receive an “other” disposition.

On the other hand, status offense cases were more likely to be referred to a community agency or DHHR than delinquency offense cases. Meanwhile, delinquency offense cases were slightly more likely to receive informal supervision by the probation department compared to status offense cases.

Table 11 shows the number of delinquency offense and status offense cases by type of formal disposition. As indicated in Table 11, the most frequent formal disposition for both delinquency offense cases and status offense cases was an improvement period.

It appears that both delinquency offense and status offense cases were equally likely to receive an improvement period (36.6% and 37.0%, respectively). An improvement period is a pre-adjudicatory disposition. In terms of post-adjudication, however, delinquency

offense cases were more likely to be referred to non-custodial probation, while status offense cases were more likely to be referred to DHHR. Approximately six percent (5.4%) of delinquency offense cases received DHHR custody compared to 8.3% of status offense cases.

As expected, delinquency offense cases were far more likely to be given DJS custody than status offense cases. Less than one percent (0.7%) of status offense cases were sentenced to DJS custody, compared to nearly six percent (5.8%) of delinquency cases in 2003. Delinquency offense cases and status offense cases were equally likely to receive formal dispositions of mental health processing and home confinement with probation.

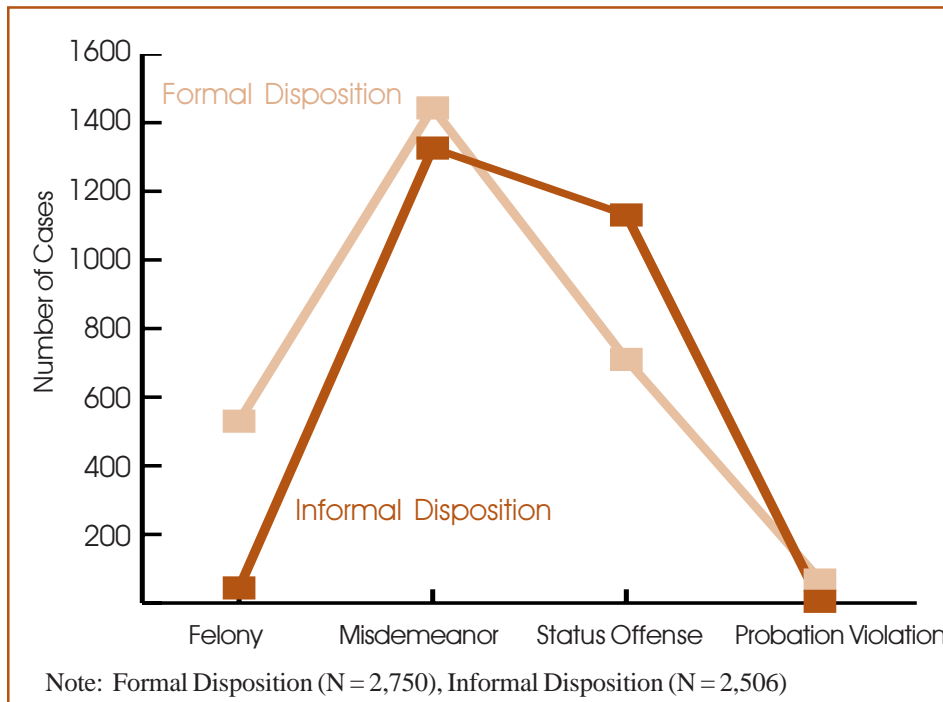
Further examination illustrates how the type of disposition varies by offense severity. Graph 10 depicts the number of felony, misdemeanor, status offense,

Table 11
Distribution of Disposed Cases by Type of Formal Disposition, 2003

Formal Dispositions	Delinquency Offense Cases		Status Offense Cases	
	N	%	N	%
Monitor compliance	35	1.9	15	2.4
Improvement period	670	36.6	227	37.0
Referred to DHHR	12	0.7	132	21.5
Probation	595	32.5	130	21.2
DHHR custody	99	5.4	51	8.3
DHHR custody & probation	207	11.3	34	5.5
Home confinement & Probation	10	0.5	3	0.5
Mental health processing	2	0.1	1	0.1
DJS Custody	107	5.8	4	0.7
Other*	94	2.3	17	2.7
Total	1,831	100.0	614	100.0

*Other dispositions include the following categories: “other,” community service, fine/restitution, and transferred to criminal court.

Graph 10
Distribution of Cases by Offense Severity and Type of Disposition, 2003



and probation violation cases that received informal and formal dispositions. Approximately 92.3% of felony cases and 93.1% of probation violation cases received formal dispositions in 2003. Thus, it appears that felony and probation violation cases are more likely to be handled formally rather than informally.

On the other hand, there is a great deal of variation in how misdemeanor offense cases are disposed. In fact, misdemeanor cases had nearly the same chance of receiving an informal versus a formal disposition in 2003. Slightly over fifty percent (52.1%) of misdemeanor cases in 2003 received a formal disposition while just less than fifty percent (47.9%) received an informal disposition.

Finally, status offense cases were much more likely to be handled in an informal rather than a formal manner in 2003. Roughly two-thirds (61.4%) of status offense cases in 2003 were disposed in an informal manner.

Delinquency and Status Offense Case Rates by County

Estimates for the number of delinquency and status offense cases are based on the number of known cases disposed in 2003. Thus, cases for which there is either an informal or formal disposition date from January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003 are included in this analysis. Juvenile population estimates are based U.S. Census 2000 estimates for youths 10 to 17 years of age.

Table 12 reports juvenile delinquency offense case rates and status offense case rates by county for 2003. The statewide juvenile delinquency case rate was 21.3, meaning that courts with original juvenile jurisdiction can expect to dispose of approximately 22 cases per 1,000 youths. The statewide status offense case rate, at 10.0 cases per 1,000 youths, was much lower than the

delinquency offense case rate in 2003. It should be noted, however, that this number represents *cases* not individuals since a juvenile can have more than one case disposed in a given year. Moreover, each case can include multiple offenses.

In 2003, the county with the highest juvenile delinquency case rate was Cabell (52.9). Cabell County was followed closely by Brooke (51.7), Randolph (45.9), and Ohio (44.7) counties. The county with the highest status offense case rate was Ohio County (33.8).

Most of the counties had delinquency case rates less than the expected statewide case rate. Six counties (these counties include: Clay, Jackson, McDowell, Mercer, Pendleton, and Webster) had no delinquency cases disposed in 2003 or had a rate less than 1 case per 1,000 youths.

Overall, five counties had status offense case rates approximately three times greater than the state average. These counties included: Ohio (33.8), Logan (30.8), Brooke (29.7), Randolph (29.7), and Raleigh (28.9). Although Cabell County had the highest delinquency case rate of 52.9, it had a very low status offense case rate at 1.7.

Several counties (these counties include: Calhoun, Clay, Doddridge, Fayette, Hampshire, Jackson, Mason, McDowell, Mercer, Mingo, Pendleton, Pleasants, Tyler, Webster, and Wirt) reported no status offense case dispositions or had a rate less than 1.0.

Clay, McDowell, Mercer, Pendleton, and Webster counties had no reported delinquency or status offense case dispositions in the year 2003. Since some case dispositions may be unknown or still pending, this result should not be interpreted as an absence of juvenile referrals.

Table 12

Delinquency and Status Offense Disposed Cases and Case Rates by County, 2003

	Delinquent Offenders					Status Offenders					
	Population		Rate		per 1,000	Population		Rate		per 1,000	
	Number	per 1,000	Number	per 1,000							
Barbour	1,748	19	10.9	18	10.3	Mineral	3,041	42	13.8	18	5.9
Berkeley	8,986	100	11.1	119	13.2	Mingo	3,317	22	6.6	1	0.3
Boone	2,708	28	10.3	25	9.2	Monongalia	6,716	15	0.2	41	6.1
Braxton	1,654	27	16.3	5	3.0	Monroe	1,410	7	5.0	4	2.8
Brooke	2,456	127	51.7	73	29.7	Morgan	1,481	48	32.4	14	9.5
Cabell	8,737	462	52.9	15	1.7	Nicholas	3,095	76	24.6	25	8.0
Calhoun	901	6	6.7	0	0.0	Ohio	4,878	218	44.7	165	33.8
Clay	1,290	0	0.0	0	0.0	Pendleton	846	0	0.0	0	0.0
Doddridge	948	1	1.1	0	0.0	Pleasants	831	5	6.0	0	0.0
Fayette	4,835	27	5.6	1	0.2	Pocahontas	926	15	16.2	23	24.8
Gilmer	753	9	12.0	1	1.3	Preston	3,495	26	7.4	21	6.0
Grant	1,145	4	3.5	3	2.6	Putnam	5,935	75	12.6	22	3.7
Greenbrier	3,501	90	2.6	28	8.0	Raleigh	8,032	331	41.2	232	28.9
Hampshire	2,443	11	4.5	0	0.0	Randolph	3,029	139	45.9	90	29.7
Hancock	3,171	100	3.2	48	15.1	Ritchie	1,149	7	6.0	2	1.7
Hardy	1,332	27	2.0	3	2.3	Roane	1,811	17	9.4	3	1.7
Harrison	7,501	211	28.0	56	7.5	Summers	1,308	24	18.3	17	13.0
Jackson	3,216	3	0.9	0	0.0	Taylor	1,820	27	14.8	48	26.4
Jefferson	4,676	50	10.7	20	4.3	Tucker	757	9	11.9	5	6.6
Kanawha	19,444	751	38.6	62	3.2	Tyler	1,121	7	6.2	0	0.0
Lewis	1,735	20	11.5	11	6.3	Upshur	2,537	43	16.9	34	13.4
Lincoln	2,459	10	4.0	27	11.0	Wayne	4,738	109	23.0	67	14.1
Logan	3,895	84	21.6	120	30.8	Webster	1,097	0	0.0	0	0.0
Marion	5,542	79	14.3	22	4.0	Wetzel	2,051	39	19.0	19	9.3
Marshall	3,891	125	32.1	103	26.5	Wirt	746	4	5.4	0	0.0
Mason	2,725	14	5.1	0	0.0	Wood	9,542	323	33.9	265	27.8
McDowell	3,236	0	0.0	0	0.0	Wyoming	2,813	21	7.5	12	4.3
Mercer	5,988	0	0.0	0	0.0	Total WV	189,438	4,034	21.3	1,888	10.0

Data Source: Census 2000, US Census Bureau
 Rates based on 10-17 year old population.

Methodology

This report is based on data from the West Virginia Juvenile Probation Database (JPDB). The JPDB is based on reports filed by county probation officers throughout the State of West Virginia. Only youths referred to probation and only those cases reported to the JPDB are included in this report. The JPDB is a cooperative partnership

between the Division of Criminal Justice Services' Statistical Analysis Center and the WV Supreme Court of Appeals Probation Services.

Unit of count. The JPDB assigns a unique identifying number to each juvenile entering the juvenile court, thereby allowing us to examine individual level data as well as case level data. In this report, we use unique juvenile and case number information

to count the number of offenses and cases referred, the frequency of case dispositions, and the number of youth handled.

Each "unit of count" has its own merits as well as disadvantages. For example, an examination of *case referrals* does not allow us to describe individual characteristics. Conversely, an individual unit of analysis does not capture the volume and characteristics

of cases processed by the court in a given year.

Thus, this report is organized in a manner that provides a general description of the youth population *processed or handled* by the court in 2003 as well as the volume and characteristics of case referrals and case outcomes or dispositions.

Juveniles *processed or handled* by the court include all juveniles with a complaint/petition referred to the juvenile court from January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003 and/or juveniles receiving informal or formal dispositions within the same time frame.

Cases *referred* to the juvenile courts include all cases with complaints/petitions dated from January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003. Cases *disposed of* by the juvenile courts include all cases with an informal or formal disposition date from January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003. Examining both referrals and dispositions captures both the volume of cases handled, as well as the variation in how cases are processed by the juvenile courts.

Population estimates. U.S. Census 2000 figures were used to estimate the juvenile population in WV. For the purposes of this report, we utilized estimates of the population based on youths 10 to 17 years of age.

West Virginia's juvenile courts are the courts of original jurisdiction for juveniles below the age of 18. However, the oldest age over which the juvenile court may retain jurisdiction for dispositional purposes in delinquency cases is 21. The lower age limit is not defined in statute. However, given the low frequency of cases below the age of 10, the lower limit of the population estimates is set at age 10.

Delinquency and status offense case rates per 1,000 juveniles were derived from the total number of cases divided by the population estimate for either the state or the county.

Racial categories. The JPDB includes the following categories of race: White, Black, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Native American, multiracial, unknown or other. Since there is a relatively small number of minorities in WV, for the purposes of this report, we collapsed the categories of Black, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Native American, multiracial and other into the generic racial category of nonwhite. Juveniles of Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race and are not included as a category in the race variable. Hispanic youths were generally identified in the "other" category.

Broad offense categories. The JPDB classifies cases by broad offense category using a modified version of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) National Crime Information Center (NCIC) offense classifications. Offenses are broadly classified as person, property, public order, drug, status offense, probation violation, and other offenses.

Definitions

Delinquency offenses: Delinquency offenses are offenses that, if committed by an adult, could result in criminal prosecution.

Status offenses: Status offenses are acts that are illegal only because of the person's status as a juvenile. In other words, adults cannot be arrested for status offenses.

Case: A case is initiated when a complaint or petition alleging a delinquency or status offense is filed with the court. All offenses alleged within a 24 hour period are included in a single case. For the analyses contained in this report, however, the most serious offense alleged is used in cases with multiple offenses. A juvenile may have more than one case processed in a given year.

Referral: A referral refers to a complaint or petition alleging a delinquency or status offense filed with the court.

Disposition: A disposition refers to either an informal or formal decision of the court regarding a particular case. An informal disposition generally precedes adjudication and is designed to minimize a juvenile's penetration into the system. A formal disposition typically follows an adjudicatory hearing and reflects the decision of the court regarding the placement of the juvenile. A juvenile may be given an informal disposition and later be given a formal disposition. For the purposes of this report, these cases were counted as having a formal disposition.

Handling/processing: These terms are used interchangeably and refer to cases or youths processed by the juvenile court from referral to disposition.

Data Sources

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Funding Source

This report was prepared under Grant 03-JF-FX-0054 from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the authors and may not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Justice or the Division of Criminal Justice Services.

Recommended Citation

Hamilton, Cynthia A., Haas, Stephen M., & Turley, Erica (2004, September). *WV Juvenile Court Statistics: 2001-2003*. Charleston, WV: Criminal Justice Statistical Analysis Center, Division of Criminal Justice Services, Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety. Available online at www.wvdcjs.com/statsanalysis.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Michael Lacy, *Director of Probation Services* and all county probation officers for developing the JPDB and collecting the juvenile data used in this report.

The Statistical Analysis Center would also like to acknowledge the following DCJS juvenile justice staff: Angela Saunders, *Sr. Justice Programs Specialist*; Jason Carlson, *Justice Programs Specialist*; April Dickenson, *Justice Programs Specialist*; and Matt Arrowood, *Juvenile Justice Compliance Monitor*.

The Division of Criminal Justice Services is the designated state criminal justice planning agency. The Division is responsible for fostering public safety in West Virginia by providing planning, system coordination, grant administration, training & technical assistance, monitoring, research, statistical services and law enforcement training.

The Criminal Justice Statistical Analysis Center's mission is to generate statistical and analytical products concerning crime and the criminal justice system for the public and justice system professionals and policymakers, establishing a basis for sound policy and practical decisions for the criminal justice system in West Virginia.

DCJS Administration

J. Norbert Federspiel, *Director*
Michael Cutlip, *Deputy Director - Programs*



1204 Kanawha Boulevard, East
Charleston, West Virginia 25301
(304) 588-8814 phone
(304) 558-0391 fax
www.wvdcjs.com
