

Using Data to Guide Deep End Juvenile Justice Reform

A Foundational Manual for Local Jurisdictions

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION



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Introduction

Each year in the United States, thousands of children are placed into youth corrections facilities and various other forms of congregate, out-of-home residential placements following a court disposition or sentence. As documented in great detail in [*No Place for Kids: The Case for Reducing Juvenile Incarceration*](#), in the aggregate these out-of-home placements have a deeply troubling track record: high rates of recidivism; exorbitant costs; frequent harm to the health and safety of the youth (and staff) who are confined in them; and poor outcomes in terms of youth development. Adding insult to injury, local, state and national data suggest that, far too often, out-of-home placements of young people are minimally related to the severity of their offenses or the risk they pose to public safety.

However, in recent years national trends in juvenile confinement have shifted, as many jurisdictions have begun to reduce, sometimes significantly, their reliance on out-of-home placements – without compromising public safety. Increasingly, states and localities are recognizing that many of the young people currently confined could be safely and more effectively supervised and rehabilitated in their own communities, at a much lower cost. As jurisdictions look to safely reduce out-of-home placements or deepen or sustain current reductions, the question is: *How?*

As Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) sites begin to expand their focus to the dispositional or “deep end” of the system, this guide aims to help jurisdictions answer the “how” question by echoing a familiar JDAI refrain: *look to the data*. This guide is the first in a series of tools designed to assist practitioners and policymakers prioritize and target deep end reforms. Specifically, the guide walks through a step-by-step process of data collection and analysis, addressing throughout *why* it is important to collect certain data, *what* it can and should tell you, and *how you can use it* to problem-solve and inform system reform.

As you review the information contained here, keep in mind that this guide is intended as a basic, yet critical, *starting point* for examining and transforming the deep end of your juvenile justice system. Future guides will help you *continue* to dig deeper into targeted areas and match your initial findings with promising reform strategies and practices.

Step 1: Establish the Framework for Deep End Reform

Lasting reforms must be built on a solid foundation of reliable data. Building that foundation at the outset, and strengthening it over time, are critically important tasks and as such need to be organized and staffed appropriately.

✓ **Assemble a data working group**

Sites should assemble a data work group that includes representatives of the major agencies participating in the reform effort, especially those responsible for the data systems from which your effort will be drawing. This working group will be responsible for completing some important deliverables at the outset of the reform effort, but it should also become part of the landscape over the longer term – so you have to build it quickly, but should also build it to last.

To get the right mix of agency representation on your working group, think about which agencies are going to play important roles in your reform effort. Think about which agencies have the most relevant data – not just data about dispositions and placements, but also about what comes before and after those decision points (e.g. probation and aftercare; arrests and juvenile court intakes; decisions to file a petition or to divert a case for informal handling). Think about which agencies' staff records that data, and who stores or maintains it; whose staff look at the data all the time, and whose staff need to become more familiar with it.

The working group also needs to be equipped with the right mix of skills. It will be the forum through which data gets connected to policy and practice, and therefore needs people with policy/programmatic expertise, quantitative analytical skills and the technology skills and access to be able to tap the data sources. Of course no individual should be expected to wear all of these hats, but collectively the work group needs to include people with this mix of skills and authorities. This speaks to the need to have strong facilitation of the work group, too, so that people with these diverse perspectives can work together effectively.

Finally, recognize that it will be important for the data working group to communicate well with others across your reform effort. To be effective, the working group must not devolve into a “boiler room” that only data practitioners know about or participate in. It needs to be seen as a resource for everyone involved in reform, as a place where relevant questions get a rigorous, fair hearing and where problems get solved. To that extent, the members of the working group should see themselves as ambassadors between the working group and their “home” agencies.

✓ **Define “out-of-home placement”**

Delving into the group's objectives will require—from the very beginning—clarity and agreement among working group members as to how your jurisdiction defines “out-of-home placement.” Different

jurisdictions using this guide (or even discrete entities within the same jurisdiction) may have different ideas about what “out-of-home placement” encompasses. For example, in some jurisdictions, the term “placement” may refer to any youth sentenced by the Family Court to a residential facility under either local county or state custody at the end of the dispositional continuum. Elsewhere, “placement” may be an option for youth on probation or for status offenders or juvenile delinquents sent to congregate care-like settings under local custody, and “commitment” may be the term reserved for a sentence to either a secure or congregate care setting under state custody.

Regardless of the local terminology used, all youth in your jurisdiction who are placed out-of-home in residential facilities (whether under probation, local, or state custody; whether the facility is publicly or privately run; and across security types and levels) at the point of a juvenile or family court disposition (or sentence) should be examined as part of your “deep end” reform process and are referred to, for purposes of this guide, as the “out-of-home placement” population. (Note: “Out-of-home placements,” in this context, do not include admissions to short-term detention facilities, except when these facilities are used to house youth who have received a placement disposition.)

✓ **Develop testable hypotheses about how out-of-home placement is currently being used in your jurisdiction.**

It is difficult to effectively identify where stakeholders want and need to go with any reform effort until they first understand where their jurisdiction is now. What is the starting point? In this particular area of work, that means asking the following (inter-related) questions:

1. How do recent trends in the use of out-of-home placement relate to (look similar to or different from) trends at earlier points in the juvenile justice system (e.g., arrests, court referrals, detention admissions)?
2. What factors are driving the use out-of-home placement?
3. How does the use of out-of-home placement differ across demographic groups (by race, ethnicity, gender, and geography) and what might explain those differences?

To answer the above questions, the data working group should collect and analyze a certain set of descriptive data on its current system. The data you will need to gain a comprehensive and useful baseline picture of your system and the processes of collection and analysis are further outlined in Steps 2 and 3. To best guide and tailor your efforts, however, your working group will want to develop testable hypotheses related to these broad questions. The hypotheses can help the working group understand and prioritize which data are most needed, and render analyses more meaningful and useful.

In this section of the guide, we present ten core hypotheses that any jurisdiction engaging in deep end reform should use to help guide its data collection process, and describe how localities should then add to, and expand upon, those core hypotheses as needed.

Core Hypotheses

States and localities that have taken on deep end reform acknowledge that there are some common reasons that youth may be removed from their home inappropriately. **Building on that knowledge, at a minimum, any jurisdiction attempting to engage in an analysis of deep end practices should include and test ten core hypotheses, noted below.**

1. Changes in the number of out-of-home placements over the past five years are proportionate to changes that have occurred further upstream in the juvenile justice system (e.g., at arrest, referral to court, and detention).

As you begin to explore the guiding questions and develop hypotheses, it may be helpful to create a detailed flowchart or system map to elicit ideas from members about how youth arrive at out-of-home placement through various system decision-making points.

2. Youth with more serious offenses (in terms of the type of offense—e.g., weapons, the severity of the offense—e.g., felony versus misdemeanor, and/or the presence of violence) are more likely to be placed out of the home than youth with less serious offenses.

3. Nonetheless, youth with less serious offenses still account for a significant proportion of out-of-home placements.

4. Youth classified by a dispositional risk assessment instrument as “high” risk are more likely to be ordered to out-of-home placement than youth classified as “low” or “mid” risk.

5. Nonetheless, youth not classified as “high” risk still account for a significant proportion of out-of-home placements.
6. Compared to white youth with similar characteristics, youth of color are more likely to (a) receive a disposition of out-of-home placement; (b) be sent to out-of-home placement for probation violations; (c) be sent to secure facilities (versus non-secure facilities, or congregate care facilities); and (d) be held for longer periods of time in out-of-home placement facilities.
7. Youth who present with a social service need (or needs) are sometimes ordered to out-of-home placement when, in the absence of those needs, they would have remained in the community.

8. A significant number of youth acting out in ways that place them in violation of their conditions of probation, such as missing school or failing to appear for counseling—known commonly as “technical violations of probation”—are ordered to out-of-home placement.
9. Youth who are in secure detention at the time of disposition are more likely to be placed out of the home than youth who remain in the community during the pendency of the case.
10. Youth sent to out-of-home placement have higher rates of recidivism than youth with similar characteristics who remain in the community.

Additional Hypotheses

While the above hypotheses are central to any deep end analysis, they are certainly not exhaustive. Rather, they provide a foundation upon which each locality can build and expand. Given the variance in local infrastructures, resources, and philosophies, it is encouraged that each working group develop additional, more probing and precise hypotheses, or hypotheses that are simply unique to a jurisdiction. (See sidebar for a sample of County X’s additional hypotheses.) Developing these more tailored and locally-specific hypotheses will be a critical part of your process; it is important to tap into your various stakeholders’ perspectives to gain a sense of what they see on the ground every day, in their own backyard, and what they believe is leading to out-of-home placement.

Sample Additional Hypotheses (County X)

11. The majority of misdemeanors that result in out-of-home placement scored high-risk on a dispositional risk assessment instrument and were charged with assaults and weapons offenses.
12. Youth placed out of the home on a technical violation of probation tend to have serious underlying (or original) charges.
13. Youth placed out of the home on non-violent offenses tend to have more than one prior felony adjudication.
14. Placed youth who score low or mid risk on a dispositional risk assessment instrument tend to be involved in the child welfare system.

Step 2: Define and Collect the Data Needed to Understand Your System, Test Your Hypotheses, and Guide System Reform

Reaching for the Stars

The data collection approach outlined in this guide is one that, while ambitious, is enormously beneficial and, with dedication and time, should be feasible for all jurisdictions. For those localities that would like to aim even higher, however, there are two additional approaches to consider:

- ❖ **Gold Star:** Create a dataset that contains detailed youth-level information from the point of arrest through the court's disposition (or sentence). This would place you in a position to later analyze how young people proceed through the juvenile justice system, identify the precise pathways into out-of-home placement, and examine how similarly situated youth (by factors such as race, ethnicity, and offense severity) are perhaps receiving different outcomes at various points of the system. While ideal, this approach is often challenging and may be untenable, in the short-term, without additional resources and support.
- ❖ **Silver Star:** In addition to creating the detailed dataset on all dispositions, as recommended in this guide, produce similar datasets for earlier points in the system, particularly arrests and court referrals. While these datasets will not be able to “speak” to each other or track individuals through the entire system, as is the case in the “gold star” option, they will allow for nuanced and in-depth analyses.

Too often, the process of collecting data can take on a life of its own and become divorced from the system change it was intended to inform. **What you collect should be directly tied to your working group's primary goal: *To examine how your jurisdiction is currently using out-of-home placement, and to identify and implement strategies for safely reducing that use.***

Let's begin with the first component of the goal—examining your use. What data (and data infrastructure) do you need to *begin* to reach a clear and objective understanding of when, how, and for which youth you are currently using out-of-home placement? This guide describes, in detail, a two-part approach: (1) create a detailed, youth-level dataset on all court dispositions (for the most recent year available), and (2) simultaneously collect statistics—aggregate data—for key juvenile justice system points (over a five-year period).

This section of the guide outlines this approach, starting with a description of the recommended dispositional dataset, and following with the aggregate statistics. Throughout, we highlight why each area of data is important—looping back to the guiding questions and core hypotheses. To close the section, the guide lays out how jurisdictions should go about identifying the sources for and availability of the needed data, and offers suggestions for short-term fixes if and when some of the information is not readily accessible.

As you read this section, keep in mind that the process described here should not be viewed as

a one-time endeavor. The data you collect, and the infrastructure you use to house that data, should be seen as the foundation—and baseline—for ongoing system analysis and a central part of your reform planning, implementation, and monitoring efforts over the long-term. In addition, while the below offers guidelines for what to collect, you should feel free to add to, and expand, your data collection effort as appropriate and needed.

✓ **Create a comprehensive dataset on all dispositions**

Your dataset—a file in Excel or some other format—should include detailed information on *all* youth who received a court disposition in the most recently available year—both youth who were placed out of the home and those who received various other dispositional outcomes, as defined in your locality. Having a youth-level dispositional dataset will lay the foundation for ongoing and nuanced analyses that go far beyond simple statistics on the number of youth in out-of-home placement, and allow your jurisdiction to gain a multi-dimensional understanding of who these young people are.

To work towards a comprehensive picture of your out-of-home placement population, you should aim to incorporate each of the following data elements into your dataset. (See sidebar at right, for a summary of the needed data elements and Appendix A for a data elements “cheat sheet”; see pages 16-19 for guidance on identifying sources for and determining the availability of the data.) Each data variable will comprise a column of the dataset, with individual youth representing the rows. (See Appendix B for a sample dataset.)

Summary of variables to include in your dispositional dataset

- ✓ Demographics
- ✓ Disposition type
- ✓ Dispositional risk level and attributes
- ✓ Detailed offense
- ✓ Prior offense history
- ✓ Dispositional needs attributes
- ✓ Release status at the time of disposition (detention vs. in the community)
- ✓ Detention risk level
- ✓ Judge, defender and probation officer at time of disposition
- ✓ For youth with out-of-home placement dispositions only:
 - Type of residential setting/security level
 - Presence of a violation of probation

- **Demographics:**

What? Critical to any meaningful data collection process in the juvenile justice system is the inclusion of demographic information, including, at the minimum, the below areas:

- Race and Ethnicity (see side bar on page 8)
- Gender
- Age
- Geography

Why? Looking at the demographics of youth will help you begin to understand your population at the most basic level. Who are the youth that are entering your system, outside of their legal status? Are they white? Black? Latino? How old are they? Are they boys? Girls? And what neighborhoods do they come from? Most importantly, including this information from the very beginning in your dataset will allow you to examine all other variables (see below—e.g., disposition type, offense severity, risk to public safety) through the lens of race, ethnicity, geography, gender, and age, to begin to ascertain if, as outlined in hypothesis 6, youth who present similar legal characteristics but “look” different have different patterns of dispositional outcomes.

Defining race and ethnicity:

It is best to collect race and ethnicity data separately and to allow for self-identification on the part of the youth. However, the ability to be precise about this information will depend upon what data your jurisdiction collects and how. If you are relying on race and ethnicity categories that already exist in your administrative data, you should become knowledgeable about how terms were defined at the time of the original collection (were race and ethnicity coded separately, or as one piece of information?) and how the information was gathered (did youth self-report or did the person entering the information attempt to determine visually the race/ethnicity?). For future data collection purposes, it is recommended that you follow the guidelines put forth by the [National Center for Juvenile Justice](#) on recording race and ethnicity of youth.

- **Disposition type:**

What? Each locality will likely have a unique array of dispositional options. For example, County X’s options may include probation, “placement” (out-of-home placement under either local social service custody or state custody, where the youth is housed in either a government-operated placement facility, a privately-operated placement facility, or, in some cases, a local detention facility), and adjournment in contemplation of dismissal (ACD). The particular disposition for each and every youth should be clearly recorded and included in the dataset.

Why? It is not enough to know what the out-of-home placement population looks like. Looking at all dispositions allows you to examine how youth in out-of-home placement compare to youth who are allowed to remain at home in the community.

Can we create a dataset that tracks information by case, rather than by youth?

Yes. It is ideal to build your dispositional dataset at the youth-level (with individual youth perhaps accounting for multiple “cases” or “events”); however, this may be challenging for some localities. As an alternative, it is fine and still incredibly helpful to build your dataset at the case-level.

- **Dispositional risk level and attributes:**

What? If your jurisdiction uses a risk assessment tool to inform and guide dispositional decisions, you will want to include in your dataset the risk level denoted by that tool. (Note that right now we are only referring to information from a *dispositional* risk assessment instrument, designed to measure the youth’s long-term risk to public safety following a court disposition, not a detention risk assessment instrument, designed to measure the youth’s short-term risk of flight and re-arrest. See page 11 for a discussion of the latter.) In addition, if available, you should include the relevant risk attributes, as defined and tracked by your instrument. For example, if, based on research, your instrument includes chronic use of illegal substances as a risk attribute or factor, you would want to include in your dataset whether or not the youth presented with that attribute.

Measuring Risk

Dispositional risk assessment instruments are one important way to measure—in a standardized and consistent manner—risk to public safety. In addition, however, several jurisdictions have begun to insert the use of those instruments within a more comprehensive and nuanced structured decision-making process. If your jurisdiction has such a process in place, and that process would offer additional forms of data not outlined in this guide, you should absolutely include those other variables in your dispositional database.

Why? As noted earlier, to explore whether out-of-home placement is being used appropriately, you will want to examine the extent to which youth who do not pose a significant risk to public safety are being placed out of the home. A dispositional risk assessment instrument can help jurisdictions determine which kinds of youth are most likely to be re-arrested, *one* important factor to consider when understanding risk to public safety. The risk scores (or classifications) collected on an instrument will allow you to begin to test hypotheses 4 and 5 (and other related additional hypotheses) by analyzing how many (and what proportion of) youth in out-of-home placement received a low, mid, or high risk score, respectively, and how these numbers and proportions compare to youth who are allowed to remain at home.

- **Detailed offense:**

What? You will want to track information on the youth’s “top” (primary and most serious) adjudication charge for which they received their disposition. (This information, along with prior offense history—see below—may be captured and available through your dispositional risk assessment instrument, if you use one.)

At a minimum, you will want to include information on the penal law code and/or common description of the youth’s offense—for example, 140.20, Burglary in the 3rd degree. By

capturing charge in this most specific format, you lay the groundwork for sorting the data into the following three additional categories *and* leave room open to conduct more detailed analyses later as needed, given your particular hypotheses. (If other offense categories are already used in your jurisdiction and would be more beneficial in testing your particular hypotheses, feel free to use those in addition to, or instead of, those below.)

- *Offense Severity:* Felony versus misdemeanors
- *Type of Offense:* E.g., Property, person, weapon, drug, sex offenses. (Creating these categories can be more complicated than first anticipated. It is encouraged that you draw upon categories that have already been defined and used locally, for prior juvenile justice reform efforts or other purposes.)
- *Aggravating Factors:* Some jurisdictions have formally identified, through law or policy, factors that require special consideration. For example, the possession of a gun while committing an offense, a statutory designation of certain offenses as acts of violence, or a special category of designated felonies for offenses deemed especially egregious. When such policies exist in a jurisdiction, it is critical to include them alongside the specific offense, offense severity and offense type.

Defining Top Charge & What About VOPs?

Most jurisdictions will have an already established process in place for determining the “top” charge in a case. Make sure you clearly communicate that process to everyone involved in the data collection process to ensure transparency and consistency.

Some jurisdictions may include violation of probation (VOP) as an offense. In that event, please see “Violation of Probation” section on page 13.

- **Prior offense history:**

What? At a minimum, you will want to collect data on youths’ prior adjudications and out-of-home placements, including the total number of events and offense information. If available, you should also collect data on the presence and severity of prior arrests, prior warrants, and/or probation dispositions, as well as whether a young person is on probation at the time of arrest and/or disposition. Even though some of this information may be captured in a dispositional risk assessment instrument, the official offense history should still be included in this analysis.

Why (detailed offense and prior history)? While each jurisdiction will differ in terms of all of the information available at the point of disposition, every system will consider a young person’s offense history when determining whether a community or residential disposition is appropriate.

- **Dispositional needs attributes:**

What? If your jurisdiction collects information about the needs of youth at disposition (through a needs assessment instrument or some other method), add that information to your database as well. Pertinent areas of information, if collected, might include the following:

- Child welfare involvement, past or present (e.g., direct involvement in foster care, complaints, investigations)
- Mental health (e.g., diagnoses, management)
- Substance abuse (e.g., severity of abuse, treatment)
- Education (e.g., grade, special education)
- Family (e.g., criminal justice involvement, parental substance abuse)
- Housing (e.g., homeless)

Why? Following hypothesis 7, you will want to know if youth are being removed from their homes not because they pose a significant risk to public safety, but because the judge has determined that they have social service needs that cannot or will not be met adequately in the community. Information on young people's needs, coupled with the previously described data on disposition type, demographics, and risk, may allow your jurisdiction—through careful analyses—to identify groups of placed youth who do not need to receive an out-of-home disposition but may need some community-based alternative services and support.

- **Release status at time of disposition:**

What? If the data are available, it is important to know whether, at the time of disposition, the youth was in detention or in the community. This can be included in the dataset as a simple in/out distinction.

Why? Research has shown that a stay in detention can increase the likelihood that a young person will be placed out of the home at the time of a court disposition, even after controlling for other legal factors. This assumption is captured in core hypothesis 9. Including in your dataset the release status of youth will allow you to test that hypothesis on your own population.

- **Detention risk level:**

What? For youth who were screened earlier in the juvenile justice system using a detention risk assessment instrument (RAI), you should include that risk score (or level) in your dataset.

Why? While RAIs are not designed to predict long-term risk in the community and should not be used to inform dispositional decisions, it is useful for jurisdictions to understand how their

RAI scores and recommendations are correlated with (or related to) dispositional recommendations and decisions.

- **Judge at time of disposition:**

What? If there is more than one judge who makes dispositional decisions in your jurisdiction, it will be useful to include the name of the judge hearing each case in your dataset.

- **Defense representation:**

What? Did the young person have legal representation during the adjudication and disposition in the case? If so, was defense a private attorney, public defender or something else? (Note: this may be especially difficult to obtain, but if available, may offer important insight)

- **Probation Officer presenting dispositional recommendation (if pertinent):**

What? If it is the role of the local probation department to present dispositional recommendations in your jurisdiction, you should include the name of the probation officer who presented the recommendation and what that recommendation was.

Why (judge, defense representation and probation officer)? While you can choose with whom you share this information, it is important to understand what dispositional recommendations and final decisions look like across the board, how those recommendations and decisions may differ depending on the various parties involved in the case, and if those recommendations and decisions align with a dispositional risk assessment instrument, if one is in use.

- ***For youth with out-of-home placement dispositions only:***

- **Type of Residential Setting/Security Level:**

What? Finally, for youth that received a disposition of out-of-home placement, ideally, you will want to include the type of residential setting in which youth were placed. The options may look differently from one jurisdiction to the next. For example, County X may have three different types, or levels, of out-of-home placements: “secure” custody (locked facilities with surrounding barbed wire), “non-secure” custody (unlocked but staff-secure, meaning that youth are told that if they leave, a warrant will be issued), and residential treatment centers (unlocked facilities focused on providing intensive treatment for substance abuse and/or mental health needs). In this scenario, the county would want to collect information on which of these three types of placement youth received.

Why? By including information on security level, you will be in a better position to determine whether youth are being placed in the least restrictive setting possible, in line with their level of risk. In particular, you will be able to test hypothesis 6, relating to the security level for youth of color.

- **Violation of Probation:**

What? It is also important to capture in your database whether the youth was placed out of home as a result of a violation of probation (VOP). VOPs may result from an arrest on a new offense or a youth's failure to comply with conditions of probation (as noted earlier, these are referred to as technical violations). Unfortunately, identifying whether a youth was placed due to a VOP may be difficult, in part because many jurisdictions only track a youth's original arrest charge. In undertaking your reform work, your working group should, at a minimum, track (1) the presence of a VOP; (2) the original offense, prior to the violation (including the specific offense description as well as the severity—misdemeanor versus felony); and (3) the type of violation—technical versus new arrest—and the behavior underlying each (e.g., truancy).

What if we don't have all of this data?

Many jurisdictions may not collect all of the data elements outlined in this section, including dispositional needs attributes and violations of probation. For additional guidance on how to conduct a data diagnostic and create a plan for collecting missing information, consult pages 16 –19.

Why? Out-of-home placement of youth as a result of a technical violation of probation, rather than an immediate concern for public safety, is a common concern nationally and is central to hypothesis 8. While this level of information is often not collected in a standardized fashion in jurisdictions, it is an absolutely critical piece of the puzzle as you begin to analyze your system operations and attempt to understand who receives a placement disposition and why, and begin to identify strategies for ensuring that only those youth who pose a significant risk to public safety are removed from the home.

- ✓ **Gather five-year high-level statistics on all juvenile justice system points**

Collecting information on dispositional decision-making is an important starting point in your effort to understand how your jurisdiction is using out-of-home placements. But there are myriad system points prior to disposition. What occurs at those earlier points directly affects which youth reach a court room and what happens when they do. For example, if a jurisdiction has a good track record of safely diverting youth from court

Defining and Prioritizing High-Level Statistics

Each system has a different vocabulary and case process for its various decision points. The key thing here is to clearly define the critical decision points and prioritize the breadth and depth of data collection. Perhaps you decide to capture total arrests and intakes, but due to data collection challenges, it will be sufficient to drill deeper on intakes alone. Jurisdictions will have to use their own judgment to find the delicate balance between being thorough and overkill.

through community-based services and programs, there are fewer youth entering the court system and, therefore, fewer youth at risk of being removed from the home. By looking closely at the characteristics of youth at each major system point, and how the population changes as you move from one point to the next, you can begin to get a sense of how earlier decisions may be affecting the types and numbers of youth ending up in placement.

In order to place the dispositional data in context and begin to lay the foundation for a broader and deeper examination of your system as a whole, it is recommended that you collect *high-level* statistics at six decision-making points, for juvenile delinquency cases:

- Arrest/Booking
- Intake/Referral
- Formal Petition
- Detention (use JDAI data)
- Disposition
- Out-of-home Placement

For *each* decision point in question, you will want to gather, at a minimum, the below aggregate data—annually, going back in time to cover a five-year period. (For a sample template, see Appendix C.)

Total volume of cases:

What? For each system point, you will want to collect aggregate statistics for the number of cases, or “events.” For example, the number of arrests, the number of court diversions, regardless of whether some youth account for multiple events.

Why? Core hypothesis 1 surmises that out-of-home placement trends mirror trends seen further upstream in the juvenile justice system (i.e. at arrest, referrals to court, and detention). Data on the frequency and flow of cases through the various system points over a span of several years will help you, like County X, test that hypothesis, determine whether the number of cases at each point is increasing or decreasing over time, and ascertain whether out-of-home placement are echoing earlier trend lines.

What do we mean by high-level statistics and how does that differ from having to create a dataset?

High-level statistics refer to data that have already been totaled and represent the *whole* picture, rather than the granular pieces that comprise that picture.

The dispositional dataset will offer you information at a more detailed level that you can later analyze and aggregate in a number of ways. For the system-wide analysis, this guide is asking you to collect already aggregated—high level—data. This is not to say that more detailed collection of the data would not be useful (see the ideal data collection scenario on page 6), only that the aggregate statistics should be the bare minimum of this phase of the self-assessment.

- **Number and percent of cases by demographics:**

What? Whenever possible, each of the demographic categories outlined in the dispositional dataset should be included in the aggregate statistics, for each system point:

- Race and Ethnicity
- Gender
- Age
- Geography

It will be helpful to include both the aggregate number within each category as well as the proportion of total cases that number represents (for example, County X reported that six hundred, or 83 percent of, court referrals were for black youth).

- **Number and percent of cases by offense severity and type:**

What? For the aggregate statistics, you will want to include information about both the severity of the offense and the presence of violence, each defined similarly as in the dispositional dataset.

Why (demographics and offense)? It is important to understand if and how the representation or proportion of certain categories of youth (for example, youth of color or youth charged with a misdemeanor) changes as young people penetrate deeper into the system. Again, while the aggregate data won't allow you to directly link and tie one system point to the next, you can begin to see broad relationships and similar or diverging trends.

Defining "Offense" across System Points

In collecting aggregate data across the system, it will be important to define "offense" clearly and appropriately, based on the decision-making point in question. For example, you will want to use:

- ✓ Arrest charge when collecting data on the points of arrest, court diversion, and detention (if the admission occurred immediately at the time of the arrest and prior to a court petition being filed);
- ✓ Petition charge for the point of a formal court petition;
- ✓ Adjudicated charge for the points of adjudication and detention (if the admission occurred following adjudication).

In addition to the above statistics for each system point, for those youth who were placed out-of-home, you will also want to collect aggregate data in the following areas, if available:

- **Number and percent of cases by security level:**

What? You will want to know, for each year, the breakdown of out-of-home placements by security level, with each security level defined similarly as in the dispositional dataset.

Why? While it is important to look at all out-of-home placements, there is often a stark difference between secure and non-secure settings. It will be important for you to understand how your overall out-of-home placement trends carry out by security level. Are your placement decreases (or increases) only occurring in non-secure settings? Or vice versa?

- **Average length of stay:**

What? You will want to track the average length of stay (in days) of all out-of-placements, and then break that down by each security level, if available.

Why? Deciding whether to remove a young person from his/her own home is an important decision. How *long* that person remains out of the home, in a residential facility, is equally important. As such, it is critical to understand how long youth are in facilities and how those trends differ by security level.

- **Recidivism:**

What? If your jurisdiction has collected recidivism data, that information should be included in your aggregate statistics. Ideally, you would include recidivism statistics both for youth who are placed out of the home and for youth who remain in the community. However, include what you have available, even if it does not capture the full dispositional population. Just be sure to clearly articulate how you are defining recidivism and what population of youth was included in the analysis.

Why? While recidivism is certainly not the only outcome that can and should be measured, it is the one that is often the most central to local and state conversations and assessments. It is important to know the efficacy of your out-of-home placements, and this is one measure that can begin to help you do that.

✓ **Identify the sources for and availability of the needed data**

As you set out to create your dispositional dataset and gather aggregate statistics for the system as a whole, it will be important to have a clear understanding of (1) what information—from the lists outlined previously—is readily available, (2) what is available but in a form not easily accessible or

usable, and (3) what is currently non-existent. To answer these questions, it is recommended that you undertake a simple **data diagnostic**—gathering together your juvenile justice agency stakeholders, each of which should already be present on your working group, to discern and document the current availability of, quality of, and sources for, each of the necessary pieces of information.

You should start the data diagnostic by **creating two simple tables (in either Word or Excel)**. One table will act as the data diagnostic for the dispositional dataset; the other for the aggregate system-wide statistics. The columns for each table should have the following headings:

- *Column 1: Type of Data Needed*
List each necessary data category, as outlined earlier in this section.
- *Column 2: Current Availability Status*
Track availability using three general categories:
 1. “Readily and Immediately Available” (defined for purposes of the dispositional dataset as currently included in a court-based and accessible database that can be used as part of the deep-end reform process; defined for purposes of the aggregate system-wide statistics as currently available, in aggregate form, by one or more local entities)
 2. “Available but Not in Easily Accessible Form” (defined for purposes of the dispositional dataset as available from a local entity in disaggregated form, but not currently included in the above mentioned court-based and accessible database; defined for purposes of the aggregate system-wide statistics as currently available in disaggregated form by one or more local entities, but in paper or otherwise fragmented form)
 3. “Not Available” (defined for all purposes as not currently recorded or available by any local entities)

Table 1: County X’s Sample Data Diagnostic Table for the Dispositional Dataset					
Column 1: Type of Data Needed	Column 2: Current Availability Status			Column 3: Source of Data	Column 4: Perceived Data Quality
	Readily and Immediately Available	Available, but Not in Easily Accessible Form	Not Available		
Demographics: race	Yes			Court database	Missing roughly 20% of data

- *Column 3: Source of Data*

List the source of each type of data (the entity that has the data currently and the format of the data—paper, database, etc.). If more than one agency has access to the same data (for instance, if both the probation department and Family Court have information about court referred youth), determine who has the most complete and accurate information.

- *Column 4: Perceived Quality of the Data*

While it is not expected that your jurisdiction will be in a position to conduct an in-depth review of the quality of each source of data, through conversations and quick scans of the information in question, you should be able to document an approximate account of the quality. For example, it might be known that your local probation department tracks court diversions, but that local leadership within the department express concerns that race and ethnicity data are infrequently entered. You would still want to collect this information, but do so with the understanding of its potential limitations.

✓ **Make any necessary data requests and create a plan for how to, in the future, collect missing information**

As you review your diagnostic findings, you will need to identify clear next steps for situations where the data are not available or are available but not in a user-friendly format. Below are some suggested next steps for each of the three data availability categories; as you review these categories, keep in mind that you will want to prioritize what to collect based on, first, what is most needed to test the ten core hypotheses expected of all jurisdictions and, second, what is most relevant and needed to test any additional, locally-tailored hypotheses.

“Readily and Immediately Available”—Simply ensure that you have the appropriate permission to use the data for the dispositional dataset, and formally request the aggregate statistics from the agencies that have been identified as the source/s (*see side bar, next page, for tips for requesting data*).

“Available but Not in Easily Accessible Form”—In the case of the dispositional dataset, you will need to formally request (from the appropriate agencies) that the additional disaggregated data be folded into the already existing dispositional database (*see side bar for tips when requesting data*). When it comes to the data needed for your system-wide trend analysis, you would ideally (depending on resources) transfer the “available” but not readily “usable” data (from, for example, paper files) into a simple excel spreadsheet to be in a better position to aggregate, and include, that information now and going forward. This process of retrospectively collecting the information from paper files can be time consuming and challenging for a number of reasons, not the least of which may be limited resources. **As such, you should carefully and judiciously prioritize which categories of information are most needed, based on your hypotheses, and which will be most difficult to transfer.** For example, if VOP data are

missing, you will want to prioritize capturing this information since it falls within the core hypotheses that every jurisdiction will need to test.

“Not Available”— You will want to move ahead with your analysis, for the time being, without the missing information. However, simultaneously, you should draft a plan for collecting the needed data prospectively—that is, going forward. You can do so directly in the dispositional dataset, for future collection and analyses. For the areas missing from the system-wide trend analyses, you may want to begin with the design of a data-collection template or form that contains the needed factors. You should then specify a population and period for collecting this data. For example, the data-collection tool will be completed for all youth referred to court for six months. The data can then be entered into an electronic database or spreadsheet in preparation for analysis.

For each of the above areas, you will want to create a **work plan** that specifies who is responsible for the specific next steps and within what timeframe. Ideally, working group members will designate points of contact from each agency to provide the appropriate data within a set period.

Tips for Requesting Data

Once you have identified the data you need from particular agencies and organizations, the next step is to make a formal data request to each entity. Too often, data requests are made in a vague and general manner with little specificity included; the person requesting the information is later disappointed when what he/she gets in return is different from what was anticipated and/or desired.

To prevent this from happening, when making the request, be precise in how you define each data point, how you want the information broken down, and what period it should cover. For example, when thinking about race, you should request (if feasible) that race and ethnicity be shared and reported separately, and that the racial and ethnic definitions and categories be consistent with your other data collection efforts (again, to the extent this is possible). Similarly, rather than requesting “offense” data, be specific in what you want and need—“top” charge offense severity, indicating how that is defined and from where in the system it should be pulled (e.g., arrest charge, petition charge, adjudicated charge).

In addition, you should make absolutely clear in what format you would like the data. For information that you need to add to your dispositional dataset, you will need to make clear that you are requesting individual-level data that includes identifiers. As part of any individual-level data requests, make sure the necessary data sharing agreements are in place—a critical aspect of any identifiable information exchange and one that can be time consuming.

Step 3: Analyze and Use the Data to Drive Reform Planning

In the juvenile justice arena, data are only as good as their use. In other words, the information you have worked so hard to collect becomes meaningful *only* when you actively and intentionally use it to inform and drive your work. What do the data tell you? How do the findings relate to your goals? What findings please and/or trouble you? And what are the next steps? Taking time to reflect on these questions can help you begin to understand your current system and ensure that efforts to collect extensive data are not wasted.

This section of the guide provides a step-by-step process for actively using your data to guide deep end reform efforts in three ways:

1. ***Uncover the narrative of your system:*** Use the data to paint a picture of how your jurisdiction is currently utilizing out-of-home placement, test your hypotheses, and pinpoint areas for further examination and reform;
2. ***Identify tangible next steps for action:*** Use the narrative to guide conversations about policy and practice reforms that may safely reduce any identified inappropriate use of placement; and
3. ***Monitor progress and ongoing areas of need:*** Continue to collect and use data to evaluate your ongoing reform efforts, troubleshoot as needed, and identify new areas of focus.

County X's individual fact-finding process will be highlighted throughout to illustrate and model this approach. The first area—uncovering the narrative—will receive the greatest amount of attention as this will lay the foundation for ongoing reform planning and evaluation.

A note up front about scope, style, and presentation: As you set out to analyze your data, assemble the interesting findings into a narrative, and share that narrative with your working group, it is important that you keep in mind the purpose for the information—that is, to understand the factors that are driving out-of-home placement and inform practical conversations about how to reduce it. Data analyses, and the visual presentations of these analyses, should be focused and designed for this purpose; graphs and charts should be simple, clear, and uncomplicated, and the narrative weaved between them easy-to-follow so that working group members can home in on the story that is most relevant to policy and practice reform. As such, the following tips should be followed when analyzing and presenting your data:

How to Use This Section of the Guide

The case study presented in this section of the guide offers examples of *only some* of the analyses that you should conduct and *only some* of the findings that may surface as most interesting and useful. It does not aim to illustrate the full array of analyses needed, nor does it illustrate the testing of each of the ten core hypotheses. Rather, it highlights the “process” of questioning the data, digging deeper, and finding the story that is most telling. You should follow this general process, but go much deeper, critically analyze and examine your data in every way possible, and uncover your unique and local narrative. It may take you places that are not described or offered here.

In addition, it is recommended that you use the sample graphs and “takeaway boxes” as examples of how to present and share data to your working group. The guide offers various types of graphs and visualizations, based on the particular findings.

Finally, for purposes of providing simple and clear examples, the case study groups all out-of-home placements together. Ideally, some jurisdictions will be in a position to conduct similar types of analyses by each level of placement (e.g., secure commitment, non-secure congregate care).

- **Tip #1: Keep it focused.** It is easy to become overwhelmed by data when its purpose is unclear. Sometimes, your analysis may reveal information that doesn’t necessarily tell you a story or serve your goals. As you analyze your data, continuously ask yourself how the analysis and the findings relate to your goals. If there is no good answer to this question, presentation and discussion of that particular information may be unnecessary. Analyze as much as you can, but prioritize and keep what you share and discuss limited to the most interesting and pertinent findings. By doing so, you can use data more effectively and help your working group immediately see its worth.

- **Tip #2: Keep it simple and visual.** What data you as a locality choose to present and how you choose to present it at working group meetings will directly impact to what extent you actively use the data to inform and guide your work. In other words, we’ve all been to meetings where several pages of data lists are handed out and the “data” portion of the

meeting ends there. It is highly recommended that you stay away from crowded lists, tables, and graphs—while they show that you are working diligently to collect (and analyze in every manner) data, which is indeed a good thing, they can often have a somewhat paralyzing effect. People don’t know what to focus on and they eagerly and often anxiously want to move on. Try to present your data in a simple and visual manner that tells a story.

Visualizing data simply can drive home “the bottom line” of your analysis. Presenting *simple* charts and graphs can highlight the important information and its relationship to your underlying goals. For example, a simple chart showing placements by charge type can quickly highlight that a locality is placing a large number of youth on misdemeanor charges, revealing one direction for further inquiry.

Remember, the data should convey a message that is accessible and useful to practitioners and policymakers.

Throughout the case study of County X presented below, the guide employs and illustrates these tips, keeping analyses focused on the jurisdiction’s hypotheses and goals, and depicting charts and graphs that are simple, and visually easy to understand and use.

✓ **Uncover the narrative of your system**

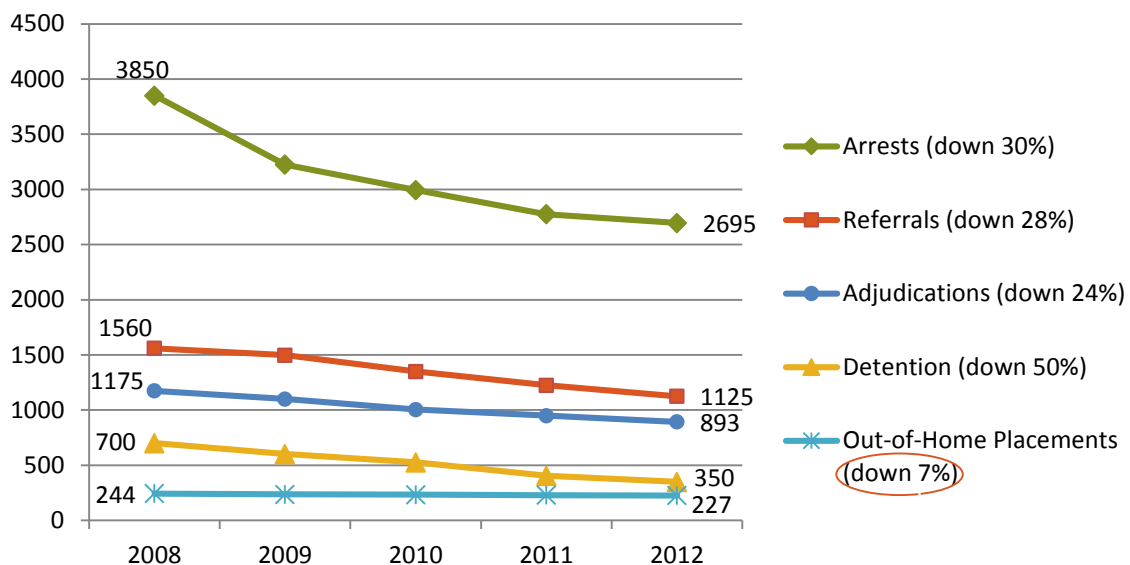
The workgroup’s first and primary charge in conducting data analysis is to understand how out-of-home placement is currently being used in the jurisdiction. This includes understanding the total volume of youth being placed (and how that compares with overall system trends), as well as understanding the characteristics (demographics, risks, and needs presented) of these youth. This information will help your working group begin to identify areas of focus—points where placement is being used but may not be necessary.

To uncover your narrative, it will be important to start broad, zoom in on the findings that are most telling and pertinent (in other words, what looks “off” or problematic to you?), and then dig deeper into those findings to get to a more nuanced picture of what is occurring. County X’s “zooming in” process is highlighted below.

To start, as indicated above, you will want to find out if out-of-home placement has tracked or been influenced by other trends further upstream in the juvenile justice system (for example, a decline in arrests or a rise in referrals to court). To do this, you should look at the aggregate statistics you have gathered on the various system points to examine how many youth enter out-of-home placement each year, and how this compares to youth passing through earlier decision-making points.

Case Study: To test the first core hypothesis—that the changes in the number of out-of-home placements over the past five years are proportionate to changes that have occurred further upstream in the juvenile justice system—County X analyzed and plotted on a graph five year trends for juvenile arrests, court referrals, detention admissions, adjudications, and out-of-home placements. Figure 1 illustrates that while out-of-home placement has been decreasing in the jurisdiction for a number of years—a trend leading some working group members to have earlier questioned the need for further reducing placement—that decrease has not been proportionate to the significant decrease in volume of youth at earlier system points. In presenting this information to the working group, the county inserted a text box below the graph, providing the key take-away in a simple and clear manner.

Figure 1: Juvenile Justice System Trends, 2008-2012



Out-of-home placements declined, but at only a fraction of the much larger changes in other system indicators. Over the last 5 years, arrests have decreased by 30 percent, detention admissions by 50 percent and adjudications by 24 percent. In that same period, out-of-home placements declined by only 7 percent. This means that, overall, a young person arrested or adjudicated in 2012 was now *more likely* to be sent to out-of-home placement than in 2008.

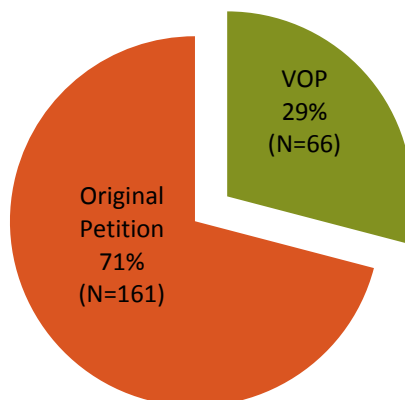
The takeaway points from the above chart raised concerns among County X stakeholders. Sure, out-of-home placements had declined, but the decline was much smaller than one would expect from a quick glance at trends in arrests, adjudications and especially detention admissions. These findings led County X stakeholders to question why changes in the number of out-of-home placements had failed to keep pace with other earlier system indicators. Using hypotheses 2 thru 9 (*see pages 4-5*) they decided to take a much closer look at the 2012 data.

County X wanted to understand *why* young people were being ordered to out-of-home placement (i.e. new adjudications vs. violations of probation), *who* they were (e.g. offense, risk, demographics) and *how* they compared and contrasted to those who were ordered to probation instead? Irrespective of trends in arrests and adjudications, was out-of-home placement being used for the right kids and for the right reasons? Was offense severity and risk of re-arrest driving decisions about out-of-home placement and would the data reveal opportunities to safely reduce placements?

County X stakeholders determined that before diving into the characteristics of the young people sent to out-of-home placements, they first needed to break down how they got there. More specifically, they

posited that there were two main ways in which youth might be ordered to out-of-home placement: (1) at disposition for an adjudicated delinquent offense or (2) as the result of a violation of probation.

Figure 2: Out-of-Home Placements by Type of Admission, 2012



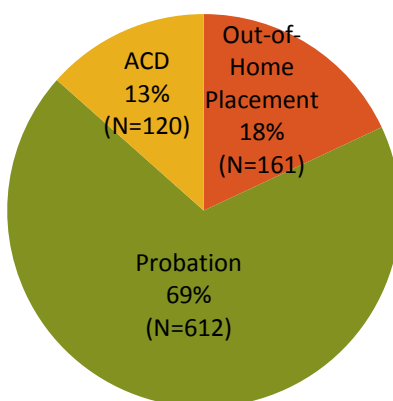
Roughly seven in 10 out-of-home placements in 2012 were for new cases adjudicated as delinquent, but a still significant number of out-of-home placements were for violations of probation (29%).

Understanding these two populations would require different questions, analyses and, as is the case in many jurisdictions, different data sets altogether. County X decided to start with an analysis of original dispositions that resulted in out-of-home placements (as well as dispositions to community-based options) and would follow with a detailed analysis of violations of probation (*see page 39*).

To provide a foundation for comparing your out-of-home placement population to youth receiving other dispositions (which can help you understand factors that may be leading certain youth to be placed out of the home instead of otherwise disposed), you will next want to look more closely at the use of various dispositional options. This is where your dispositional dataset comes into play. Because of the youth-level nature of the dataset, you will be able to examine the data in a number of ways, starting broad and then zooming in more narrowly.

Case Study: Knowing from the previous analyses that out-of-home placements accounted for 161, or 18% of, all new petitions resulting in adjudication in 2012, County X set out to compare that number and rate to other dispositional options, namely probation and adjournment in contemplation of dismissal (ACD), as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Disposition Type, 2012



The wide majority—69%—of adjudications resulted in a disposition of probation supervision. The remaining adjudications resulted in out-of-home placements (18%) and adjournments in contemplation of dismissal (13%).

This, alone, does not say a great deal; however, it provides a foundation for the county to take a closer look at how the probation and out-of-home placement populations differ from one another, offering key insights into County X's dispositional decision-making. (It also signals to the working group to pay close attention in later analyses to what is happening further downstream with the large proportion of cases that result in a probation disposition—at what rate are these young people subsequently being placed out of the home due to a technical violation of their probation conditions? It's frequently the case that reducing the number dispositions to placement means increasing the number of dispositions to probation. This poses the risk that a high rate of probation violations and revocations can undermine, or even negate, the impact of dispositional reform.)

Commitments vs. Placements

For purposes of simplification, this case study combines all out-of-home placements into one category. In your system, understanding the drivers of out-of-home placement may prove to be incomplete without exploring the differences between the use of commitment and other kinds of out-of-home placement (residential treatment, group homes, etc.) at disposition. Each jurisdiction will be different and needs to decide for itself how to determine which dispositional options, and at what level of detail, to include as discrete categories for this analysis.

Following the core hypotheses, you will next want to zoom in on both your placement and probation populations and conduct an analysis of these cases by objective measures of risk to public safety to begin to investigate the appropriateness of your out-of-home placements and identify if and how youth removed from the home are similar to or different from those who remain in the community (hypotheses 2, 3, 4, and 5). This type of analysis is often referred to as a cross-tabulation. Table 2 below gives an example of County X's crosstabs that helped shape its analyses (Note: from these crosstabs, County X calculated most of the percentages and rates that are used throughout the rest of this section). Put simply, this means that you are examining two or more variables (or column categories) in your dataset at once (for example, case disposition *by* risk level). Essentially, this is a way to analyze the data in a multi-layered and in-depth fashion.

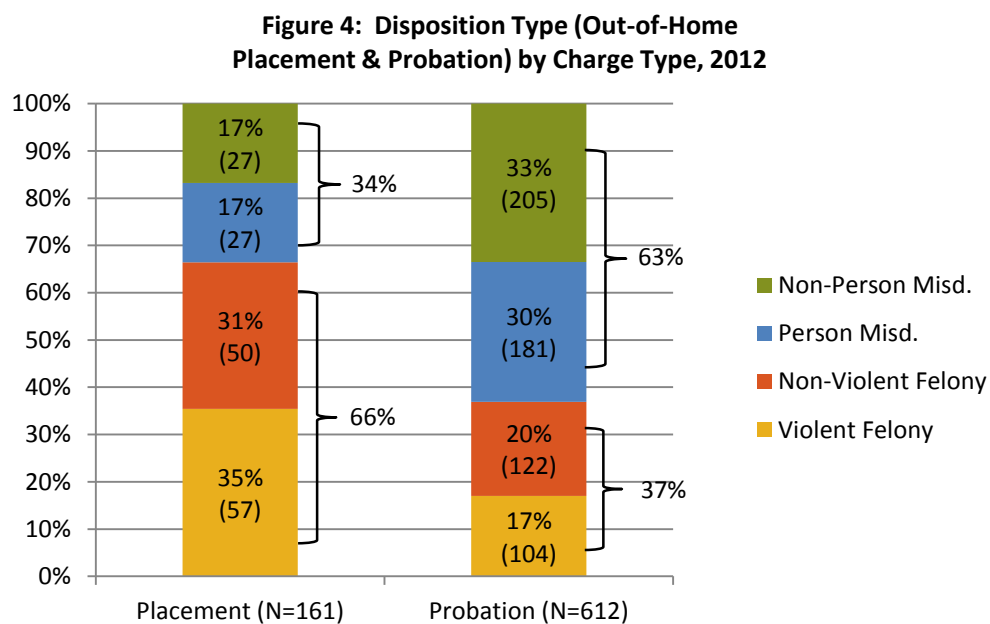
Table 2: County X Dispositional Crosstabs

Offense Severity	Risk Level	Total	Placement	Probation	ACD
Violent Felony	High	88	33	55	0
	Mid	58	20	36	2
	Low	20	4	13	3
Non-Violent Felony	High	70	18	49	3
	Mid	83	25	48	10
	Low	39	7	25	7
Person Misdemeanor	High	59	7	47	5
	Mid	129	17	104	8
	Low	45	3	30	12
Non-Person Misdemeanor	High	32	2	25	5
	Mid	127	22	80	25
	Low	143	3	100	40
Total Dispositions		893	161	612	120

(See Appendix D for the full County X crosstabs that were used to create the charts and tables in this section – including percentages)

As described previously, you should have in your dataset a number of variables that address the question of risk, including detailed offense information (severity, type, and presence of violence), prior offense history, and dispositional risk levels (if you use a dispositional risk assessment tool). You will want to run analyses of your out-of-home placement and probation populations (and other important dispositional options) by each of these variables—separately and in combination with each other—and pull out what is most telling.

Case Study: To test core hypotheses 2 and 3—that youth with serious offenses are more likely to be placed than youth with less serious offenses, but that youth with less serious offenses are still accounting for a significant proportion of out-of-home placements—County X decided to examine its out-of-home placement and probation populations by the most basic characteristic first, charge severity. The county examined charge severity data in a number of ways, and chose the below two visuals as the most interesting and pertinent to share with the working group. The first graph (Figure 4) shows the results of layering three variables on top of each other—disposition type *by* misdemeanor/felony *by* type of offense (person vs. non-person). The column on the left illustrates the percentage of the placed population that were adjudicated on a violent felony, non-violent felony, person misdemeanor, and non-person misdemeanor; the column on the right shows the same break-down for youth who received a disposition of probation supervision.

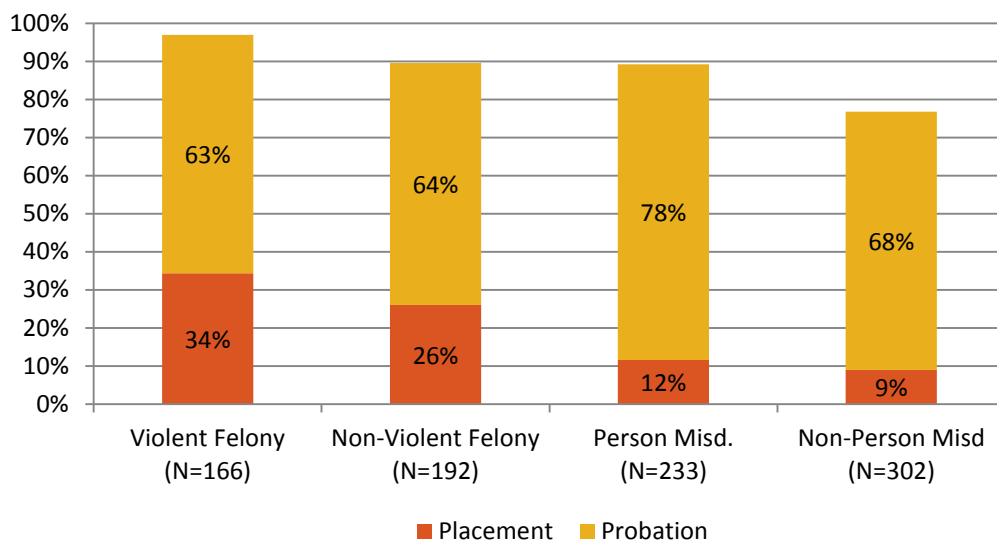


Roughly a third (34%) of youth who received a placement disposition were removed from the home on a misdemeanor adjudication; an additional 30% were removed in response to a non-violent felony. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of youth who remained in the community on probation supervision were adjudicated on a misdemeanor offense; the remaining third (37%) were adjudicated on a felony.

Figure 4 provided County X with important information about the makeup of the placement and probation populations with respect to most serious current offense. But they were equally interested in understanding what the data tell them about the *likelihood* that a young person adjudicated for each type of offense is ordered to out-of-home placement vs. probation. Figure 5 demonstrates how the same data can offer a different, but also critical perspective. In this case, it offers insight into dispositional decision-making that Figure 4 alone cannot do. For practitioners and policy-makers, analyzing the data in this manner can sometimes feel more intuitive—“When my county is faced with a

certain ‘type’ of case (in this instance, defined by charge severity), what do we do? What decision do we make?” (Note, the graph does not include dispositional options other than out-of-home placement and probation; therefore, the bars do not add up to 100 percent.)

Figure 5: Charge Severity by Disposition Type (Out-of-Home Placement & Probation), 2012

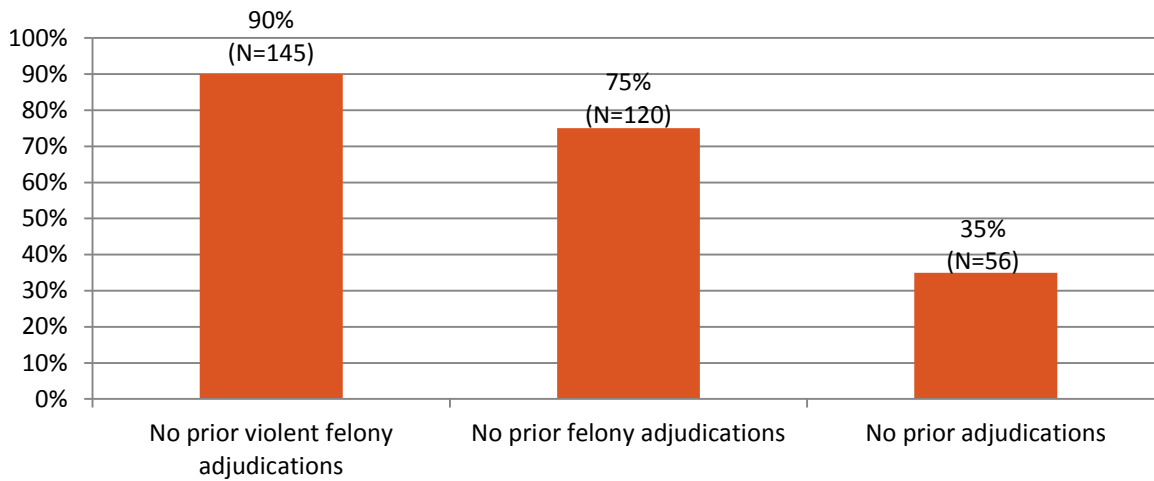


Not surprisingly, violent felony adjudications had the highest likelihood of out-of-home placement (35%). Youth adjudicated for non-violent felonies were placed at a slightly lower rate (26%). While youth were far less likely to be placed for misdemeanors, a significant percentage received an out-of-home placement disposition (12% for person, 9% for non-person). In every offense category the most common disposition was probation supervision.

In reviewing Figures 4 and 5 together, County X began to gain an understanding of both the composition of its out-of-home placement population (i.e. percentage with each offense) and dispositional decision-making (i.e. likelihood of placement for each offense). However, severity of current offense was just a first step. The experiences of those working in the system suggested that prior offense history may be a key factor to help explain how dispositional decisions are made, and would perhaps shed light as to why 65% of dispositions to out-of-home placement were for charges no more serious than a misdemeanor or non-violent felony.

With this hypothesis in mind – that offense history also influences the decision to order a young person to out-of-home placement – the county analyzed all placements by legal history factors, as shown in Figure 6. (Note that while we present here only one analysis in this particular area, that of legal history for *all* out-of-home placements, County X—and you should do the same—ran numerous analyses on legal history, including by charge severity of prior offenses and by other dispositional options.)

Figure 6: Out-of-home Placements by Prior Adjudications, 2012

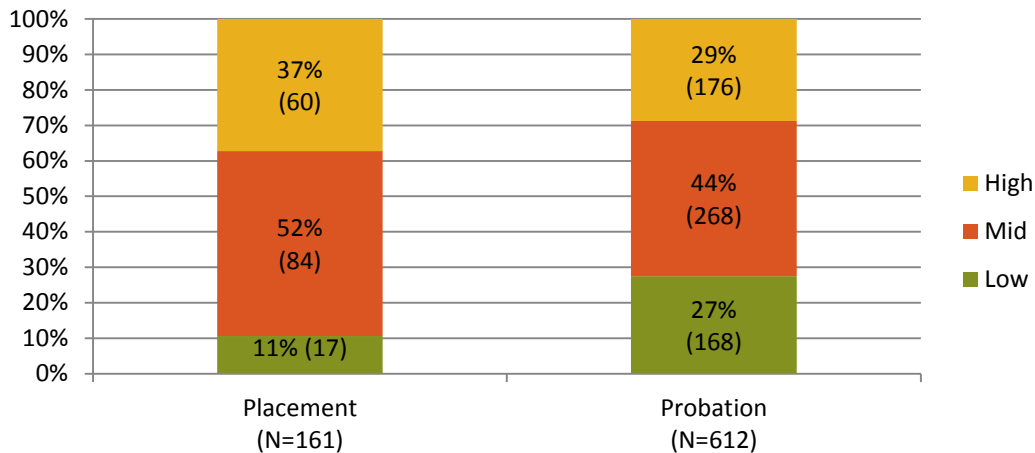


Prior offense history does not appear to be a major factor in the current use of out-of-home placement. Nine in 10 (90%) placed youth had no prior violent felony adjudications and 75% had no prior felony adjudications of any kind, while more than a third (35%) of all youth placed out of the home had no prior adjudications.

Having found that a number of youth in out-of-home placement were adjudicated for lower-level offenses, as shown previously, and that a significant percentage of youth in out-of-home placement have no history of adjudications (and therefore no obvious legal history explaining their out-of-home placement), the County X next turned to its formal dispositional risk assessment (hypotheses 4 and 5). The tool is completed by the local probation department to inform judicial placement decisions; it combines legal history and other factors found by researchers to significantly impact the likelihood of re-arrest.

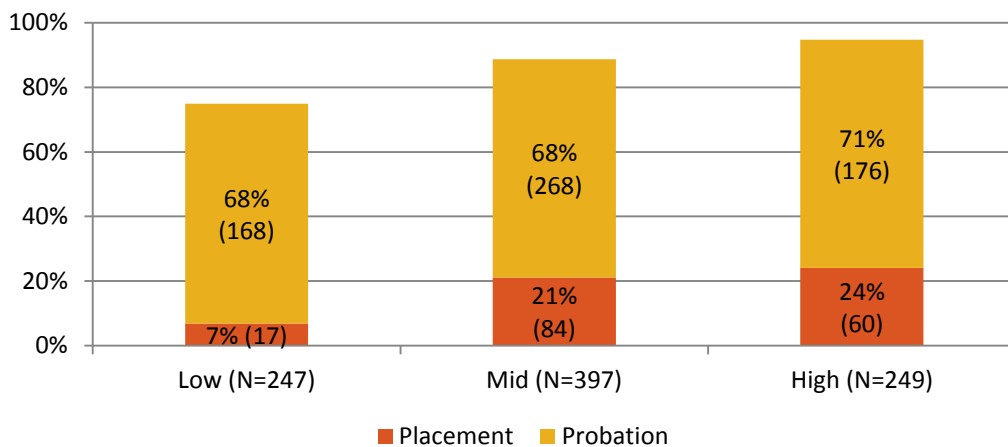
Similar to the offense severity analyses, the county examined its risk data in two related ways; first, and as captured in Figure 7, by looking at the composition of out-of-home placement and probation dispositions by risk (e.g. what % of probation cases are low-risk) and, second, as captured in Figure 8, looking at the likelihood that youth with each risk level are ordered to probation vs. out-of-home placement (e.g. what % of low-risk youth are put on probation).

Figure 7: Disposition Type (Out-of-Home Placement & Probation by Risk Level), 2012



When it comes to risk level, the placement and probation populations are not as different as the county would expect. Barely a third (37%) of youth sent to out-of-home placement were deemed high risk to reoffend, while more than half scored low (11%) or mid risk (52%) on the county's dispositional risk assessment instrument. Young people ordered to probation were more likely to be low risk (27%), but only slightly less likely to score mid (44%) or high (29%).

Figure 8: Risk Level by Disposition Type (Out-of-Home Placement & Probation), 2012



A relatively low number (and proportion—7%) of low-risk youth received an out-of-home placement disposition. However, the *likelihood* of being removed from the home was relatively similar for mid- and high-risk youth—21% of mid-risk youth were placed, compared to 24% of high-risk youth. The probation rate was roughly the same by risk level.

Through these analyses, County X at least partially confirmed its core hypotheses (2 thru 5) related to offense and risk.

- Offense severity matters in dispositional decision-making, but more than a third of placements are for misdemeanors, and at both the felony and misdemeanor levels, type of offense (violent/non-violent or person/non-person) had little impact on the likelihood of out-of-home placement.
- Young people identified as low-risk to reoffend are unlikely to be placed and comprise a small portion of the out-of-home placement population, but the rate of out-of-home placement is nearly identical among mid- and high-risk youth, with those identified as mid-risk making up more than half of the placement population.

Being Transparent About Missing Data

If and when there are missing data, be sure to include that in your presentation to the working group. For example, if 30 percent of the cases in your dataset are missing information on race and ethnicity, write that into your graphs and tables. It is important for people to know when information is not available so that they can be conscientious about collecting the data more effectively in the future and they can understand the limitations of the findings you're presenting

These findings led County X to take the analysis a step further. They sought to better understand what differentiates the low, mid and even high-risk youth (and youth with different offense types) in out-of-home placement from those on probation; that is, what is it about the youth in placement that precluded them from a disposition of probation?

To begin to answer this question, County X set out to examine how risk level and offense severity **interact** with each other and, specifically, to analyze each risk category within both out-of-home placement and probation. If risk of re-arrest and offense severity are, when considered individually, related to the likelihood of commitment, what new insights are gained by analyzing risk and offense together?

Focusing on the placement population, Table 3 breaks down the total number of out-of-home placements by both charge severity (indicated in the rows, using the same categories as previously outlined—violent felony, non-violent felony, violent misdemeanor, and non-violent misdemeanor) and risk level (indicated in the columns, using low, mid, and high). Each section of the table shows the number of cases that fall within that particular cross-tabulation (or analysis) along with the percent of all placed youth that number represents. For example, low-risk youth who were adjudicated on a violent felony offense accounted for four (or 2%) of all placed youth. (Note that, when combined, each cell of the table adds up to 100 percent, accounting for the full out-of-home placement population.)

Table 3: Out-of-home Placements by Risk Level and Charge Severity, 2012
(N=Youth Placed on Original Petition, 161)

Offense Category	Low-Risk (N=17)	Mid-Risk (N=84)	High-Risk (N=60)
Violent Felony	4 2%	20 12%	33 20%
Non-Violent Felony	7 4%	25 16%	18 11%
Person Misdemeanor	3 2%	17 11%	7 4%
Non-Person Misdemeanor	3 2%	22 14%	2 1%

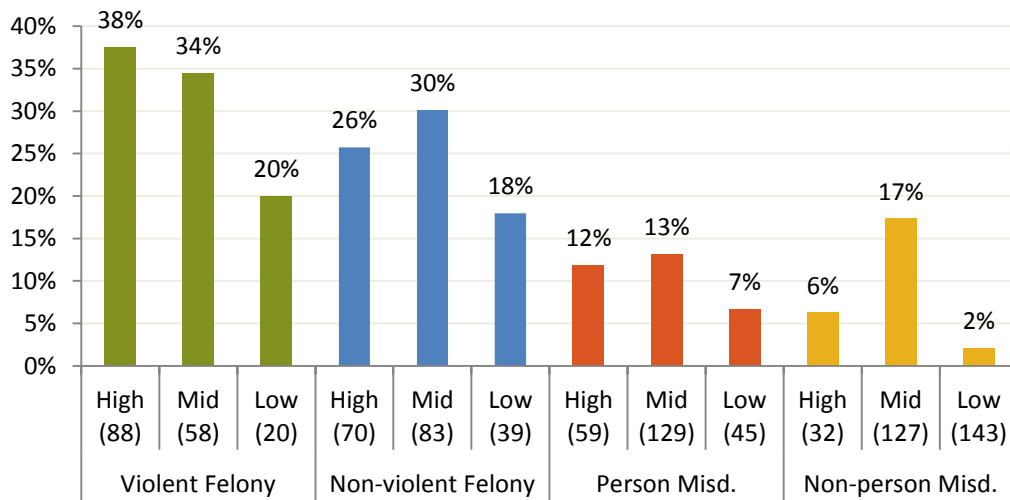
High-risk youth who committed a violent felony made up the largest proportion of out-of-home placements (20%). However, mid-risk youth adjudicated on a non-violent felony (16%) or non-person misdemeanor offense (14%) were a close second and third. *In total, youth who had neither a violent felony nor were deemed high risk to reoffend, accounted for half (49%) of all out-of-home placements (See shaded part of Table 3).*

Looking at the interaction of offense and risk allowed County X to really zone in on a key point. If risk to public safety was primarily a function of offense severity and risk of re-arrest, it was troubling to find that half of young people sent to out-of-home placements lacked either the highest offense severity or highest risk level.

Another way for County X to look at the above data was to examine the *likelihood* of out-of-home placement within each combination of risk level and charge severity. To do this, the county calculated an out-of-home placement rate (i.e. the percentage of adjudicated youth within a category that were placed out of the home) within each combination of factors (for example, low-risk/violent felony).

Figure 9 offers an illustration of out-of-home placement rates for each of the 12 risk/offense categories. Whereas Table 3 offers insight into the population of youth sent to out-of-home placements by risk and offense, Figure 9 is especially useful for shedding light on patterns of dispositional decision-making by adults in the system.

Figure 9: Likelihood of Out of Home Placement by Charge Severity & Risk Level, 2012



Placement rates for youth assessed as high risk or low risk follow the pattern that the county expected to see: placement rates are higher at each successive level of offense severity, and within each level they are significantly higher for high risk youth than for low risk youth. However, those patterns do not hold for youth assessed as mid risk: they have the highest placement rates of any youth within three of the four offense severity classes, and their placement rates vary less by offense severity than is the case for high and low risk youth.

In addition to legal status information like offense severity and risk, demographic information such as gender, geography and race/ethnicity must be considered in order to gain a more comprehensive and in-depth picture of *who* these young people being placed out of the home are, and to continue to question and uncover *why* they are being removed from their homes. For JDAI sites, using data analysis to better understand disparities is a familiar practice. Doing so in the deep end is equally critical, but even more layered, as you will need to consider all of the key decision points upstream (e.g. arrest, diversion, detention) that impact disparities in out-of-home placement.

Be mindful of small numbers as your analyses get more detailed

In Figure 9 (and in other analyses), some of the numbers within particular breakdowns of the data are quite small. While this is fine, and can and should still be shared with your working group as part of your findings, simply be transparent about the numbers and explain to your working group that small numbers can sometimes inflate percentages (for example, if a percentage is 100, but the N is only 5, it is wise to read the 100 percent with a grain of salt).

Case Study: Laying the foundation for this phase of analysis, County X began by examining its out-of-home population by each of the demographic categories in its dataset: race, ethnicity, gender, age, and geography. The jurisdiction was unsurprised by its findings on age and gender: most of the youth entering out-of-home placement were males around age 16-17, which mirrors the county's arrest population. The most interesting of the county's demographic findings were in the area of race and ethnicity. In particular, the county found that 72 percent of its out-of-home population was black.

In an effort to place that finding in a broader context, the county then looked at race and ethnicity data across five points in the juvenile justice system—arrests, referrals to court, detention admissions, adjudications, and probation dispositions—and compared those points to the general youth population and to the out-of-home placement dispositions. See Table 5. (Note that this particular county had a very low Latino population, across the board. The same was true in many other racial and ethnic categories; for this reason, the working group chose to include in the table only the two most predominant racial categories—white and black, and to group all other races into “other.” Be sure to populate your table based on the racial and ethnic categories that are most applicable to your local area and system.)

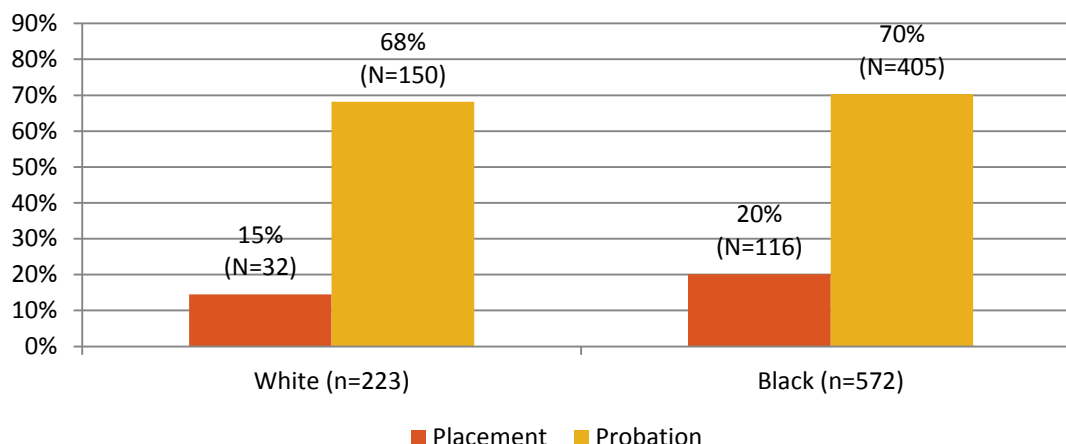
Table 4: Juvenile Justice System Decision-Making by Race, 2012

	White	Black	Other
General Population	57%	30%	13%
Arrests	36%	53%	11%
Referrals	29%	60%	11%
Detention	23%	67%	10%
Adjudication	24%	66%	10%
Probation	25%	66%	9%
Out of Home Placement	20%	72%	8%

While black youth comprise only 30% of the youth population, they accounted for a majority of youth at all juvenile justice system points. Furthermore, their representation increased with deeper penetration into the system, moving from 53% of arrests to 60% of formal referrals to 66% of adjudications to 72% of out-of-home placements.

To further analyze the out-of-home placement data by race, the county examined the likelihood, or rate, of out-of-home placement for white and black youth who reached disposition, and compared that to the likelihood of probation supervision. See Figure 10.

Figure 10: Likelihood (Rate) of Out-of-Home Placement by Race, 2012



Among young people whose cases reached disposition, black youth were more likely than white youth to be placed out of the home (20% vs. 15%) and equally likely to receive probation supervision (70% vs. 68%). Note: the black placement rate here is 33% higher than for whites, but this disparity would grow much greater if, instead of dispositions, the denominator used was all referrals (75% higher) or arrests (146% higher).

Some stakeholders in the county found this surprising: because black youth make up more than twice as large a share of the placement population as they do of the general population, some expected to see a larger difference between the placement rates for white and black youth. What this analysis shows is that the scope of racial disparities extends far beyond the point of dispositional decision making. Black youth in the county are arrested at higher rates; when arrested they are more likely to be referred to court; and when referred they are more likely to be adjudicated. Those disparities at each step accumulate to produce the very large disparities in the placement population.

Yet the analysis also points to a large opportunity: *even if disparities were unchanged at every other point in the system and eliminated only at the point of disposition, the number of black youth placed would go down by about one-fourth.*

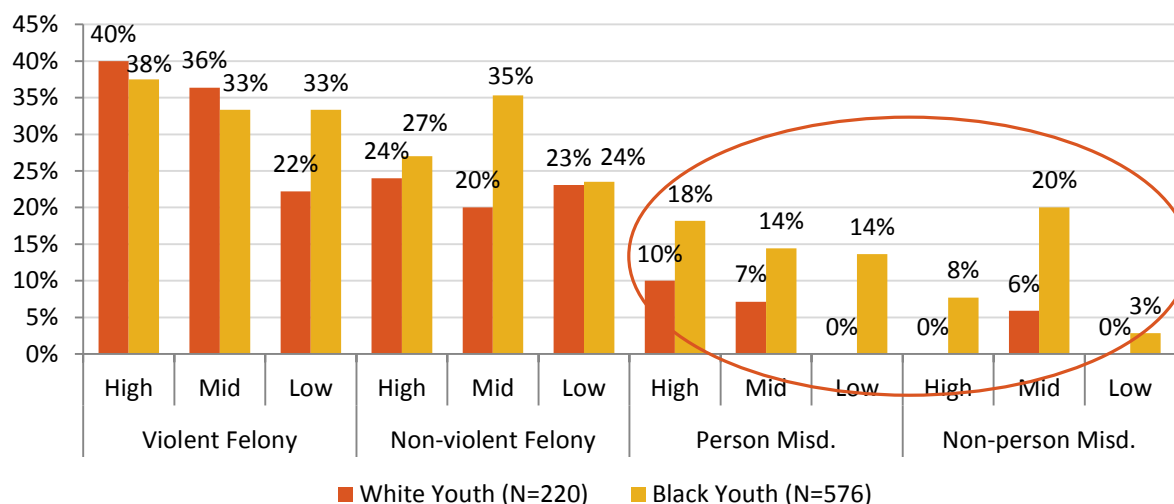
With the information from the preliminary analyses on risk, offense and demographics in hand, you will want to combine these areas of analysis, and dig deeper into any questions (raised to this point) about the appropriateness of your current use of out-of-home placement. It's one thing to know that black (or Latino) youth are over-represented among your out-of-home placement population, but what you really want to know is the extent to which youth with similar behavior (i.e. offense) and likelihood for future delinquent behavior (i.e. risk) are receiving disparate dispositional outcomes across racial and ethnic groups.

Case Study: As a next step, County X zoomed more deeply into the previous areas of analysis (risk, offense severity and race), and combined them to see if, and how, risk and charge severity may be factors in the racial differences. The first section of Figure 11 to the left of the graph shows the rate at which black and white youth adjudicated on a violent felony within each of the three risk categories (low, mid, and high) are placed out of the home. For example, 38% of all high-risk, black youth with violent felonies were placed, compared to 40% percent of all white youth with the same offense severity and risk level. The section to the right of that looks at the non-violent felonies, followed by person misdemeanors, and non-person misdemeanors. While complicated, this analysis allowed the county to “level the playing field” by comparing black and white youth within the same offense and risk categories. (Note, each category had both white and black youth represented—in other words, there were no situations where a category did not include any white youth. This is important to note since some people may ask if a zero percent finding in some categories may have been due to a lack of white youth. In this case, the answer is no.)

Using complicated charts in your jurisdictions

Figures 11 and 12 explore much more deeply the extent of racial disparities in County X – they are busy graphs, but tell interesting stories. It can be a good idea to use more complex graphs like these to tell some stories, but never assume that they can stand alone. It is part of the lead data analyst's responsibility to present complex material like this to their workgroup, to carefully and patiently walk through it with them to be sure they understand how to navigate it and interpret it.

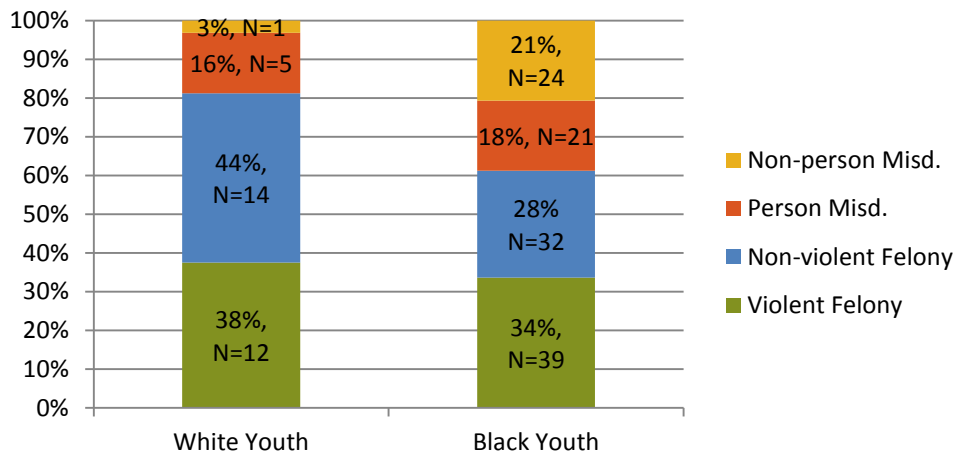
Figure 11: Likelihood (Rate) of Out-of-Home Placement for White and Black Youth by Risk and Charge Severity, 2012



Racial disparities in the rate of out-of-home placement differ a great deal by risk and offense severity. Overall, white and black youth are placed at relatively similar rates when adjudicated for violent (34% vs. 36%) or non-violent (22% vs. 30%) felonies, but black youth are more than twice as likely to be placed for a misdemeanor (12% vs. 5%). Black youth assessed as mid risk are about twice as likely to be placed as their white peers, in every offense category except for violent felonies. Placement rates are also much higher for black youth than for white youth who are assessed as low risk, when the adjudicated charges involve offenses against persons (violent felonies, person misdemeanors).

Figure 11 presents a striking picture of how racial disparities differ across offense and risk levels in County X. In particular, it shows large disparities in out-of-home placement rates for misdemeanor offenses. Still, this graph only hints at the impact that these varying placement rates must have on the *composition* of the white and black out-of-home placement populations. Figure 12 offers a different take on the same data, by showing the distribution of offense for white and black youth sent to out-of-home placement.

Figure 12: Offense Distribution of White and Black Youth Sent to Out-of-Home Placement, 2012



Amount young people ordered to out-of-home placement, black youth are *twice as likely* as white youth to be placed for a misdemeanor (39% vs. 19%). But the percentages actually understate the disparity by offense. Notably, while black youth placed for felonies outnumbered white youth by more than a 2:1 margin (71 vs. 26), the ratio jumped to nearly 8:1 for misdemeanors (45 vs. 6).

The above finding illustrated to County X that its hypothesis about possible disparate treatment of youth of color at particular points of the dispositional decision-making process (#6) was surely true, at least when looking at youth who fell within similar charge and risk categories. What was still unknown was: *why* the disparate treatment? The county had hoped to analyze social service need data to begin to test hypothesis 7—that youth who present with a social service need (or needs) are sometimes ordered to out-of-home placement when, in the absence of those needs, they would have remained in the community. Unfortunately, as is the case in many jurisdictions, the county’s data systems collected very little of this kind of “needs” data. The county’s first round of analyses, presented here, therefore simply noted this deficiency and made the case to the county’s stakeholders that it was important to begin collecting this data going forward.

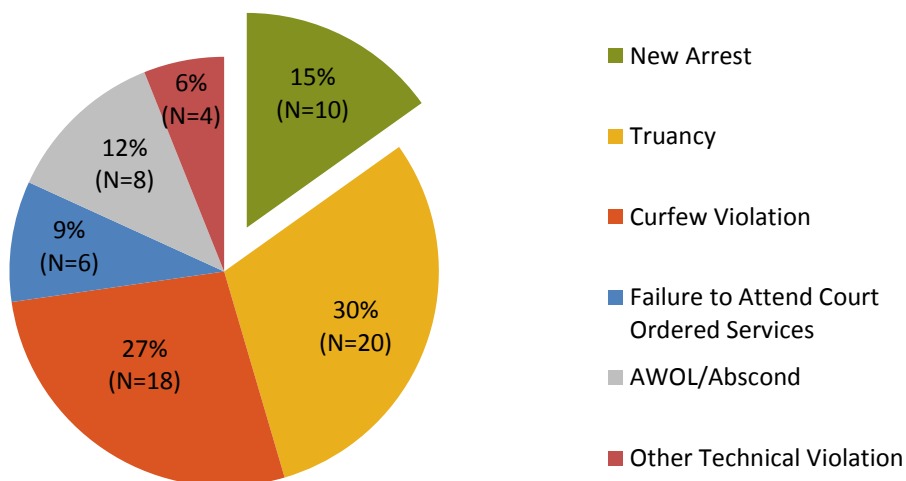
Repeat after me: percentage, numbers and rates

In the event that your county has some of the more expansive data that County X was lacking (individual risk and needs factors, detention status, judge, etc.), you’ll want to follow the same approach described throughout the document. How do the percentage and number of youth ordered to out-of-home vs. probation differ by attribute (e.g. MH diagnosis, detained)? Among youth with different needs, detention status, etc., how does their likelihood of placement compare?

To this point, all analysis of out-of-home placements has been based on those youth placed as part of a new adjudication for a delinquent case. But similar to many jurisdictions, Figure 2 showed that nearly a third of out-of-home placements in County X were for probation violations. As a way to further your understanding of who the young people placed out of the home are, why they are ending up there, and, in particular, as is the case in County X, why some of them appear to be removed from their homes without having exhibited a serious risk to public safety, it will be important to examine the extent to which probation violations may be driving the number of placement dispositions. This is especially critical given that, in most jurisdictions, a large number of youth receive a probation disposition. This type of analysis is yet another way to examine the various conduits to placement.

Following the finding in Figure 2 that 29% of out-of-home placements were for violations of probation, County X next took a closer look at the nature of violations that resulted in an out-of-home placement. This was especially important because there were widely-held assumptions that most violations were for new arrests and that the underlying offenses for youth placed on a technical violation were typically quite serious. Figures 13 and 14 paint a very different picture.

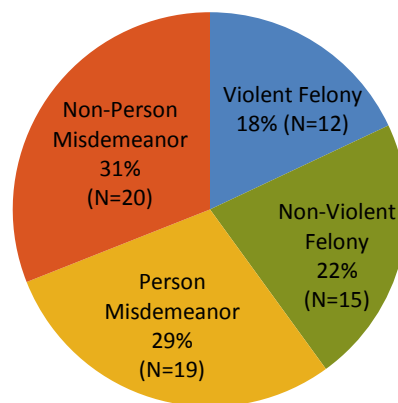
Figure 13: VOPs by Type, 2012



Just a small fraction (15%) of probation violations resulting in out-of-home placement were the result of a new arrest. The wide majority of violations were technical in nature, most commonly for truancy (30%) and curfew violations (27%).

The above finding confirmed core hypothesis 8 for County X, much to surprise of many stakeholders. The realization that nearly all of their VOPs that received a placement disposition were technical in nature prompted them to take a closer look at prior offense history and underlying charge (from the original petition) for these cases, as seen below in Figure 14.

Figure 14: VOPs by Instant Charge, 2012



A majority (60%) of youth ordered to out-of-home placement for probation violations were originally placed on probation for a misdemeanor offense, while only 18% had an underlying violent felony charge.

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The County X case study is not meant to be an exhaustive analysis of every driver of out-of-home placements. You will hopefully have a wider array of data variables that can tell you more about your dispositional population. But following County X's *process* and the specific substantive inquiries of import to your particular jurisdiction, the above *types* of analyses, combined, will place you in a good position to begin to use your data to actively guide reform planning and implementation, explored in the next section.

✓ **Identify tangible next steps for action**

Once you have used your data to uncover the narrative of your system—how your jurisdiction is currently using out-of-home placement—it is time to use what you have learned to guide conversations about policy and practice reforms aimed at addressing and safely reducing any inappropriate uses of out-of-home placement.

As a first step, your working group should review and summarize the key lessons you have learned from analyses about your jurisdiction's current use of out-of-home placement.

Case Study: What did County X learn through the analyses completed above?

- ***The likelihood of out-of-home placement for a young person who is arrested, prosecuted or adjudicated has increased over the last five years.*** Yes, out-of-home placements are down, but contrary to what was hypothesized, placements have declined at a much slower rate than juvenile justice indicators occurring further upstream in the system. Given what the county learned about its juvenile crime trends, they would have expected much steeper declines in out-of-home placements.
 - ***Offense matters at disposition, but youth are most frequently placed for misdemeanors and non-violent felonies.*** At the point of disposition, youth with violent felonies are more likely to be placed (34%) than youth with non-violent felonies, and far more likely to be placed than youth with misdemeanors (10%). Still, youth with violent felonies comprise barely a third (35%) of youth who are placed, with misdemeanors (34%) and non-violent felonies (31%) making up the lion's share of placements.
 - ***The risk assessment instrument is not influencing placement decisions as much as stakeholders expect, with little distinction in dispositional outcomes for mid- and high-risk youth.*** Not only do mid-risk youth account for half (52%) of placements, but their *likelihood* of placement barely differs from that of high-risk youth (21% vs. 24%)
 - ***Especially at the low-end of the offense spectrum, black and white youth exhibiting similar behavior and posing similar levels of risk for future offending are treated very differently at disposition.*** Black youth are represented in greater and greater proportions, the further along they move through the juvenile justice case processing continuum. At disposition this is especially jarring for young people adjudicated for misdemeanors. Not only is the placement rate for black youth with misdemeanor adjudications more than double the rate for white youth, but while white youth represent 36% of arrests, they account for just 12% of arrests for misdemeanors.
 - ***More than one third of youth are placed out of the home as a result of violations of probation, and the wide majority of these violations are technical in nature.*** More specifically, 85% of youth placed out of the home on violations of probation are placed upon technical violations (e.g. truancy, curfew, etc.). Contrary to speculation of many County X stakeholders, these young people were usually on probation in the first place for only a misdemeanor offense (60%).
-

Considering what you have learned, the next step is to identify and prioritize areas of reform moving forward. Looking at your various findings about current system practice and uses of out-of-home placement, you should ask yourselves as a group what this information means for policy and practice. Reviewing and reacting to the analyses, your working group should consider what the appropriate use of out-of-home placement *is*, and if, where, and how the analyses conducted suggest that the jurisdiction is using out-of-home placement inappropriately. The group's shared understanding of the appropriate use of out-of-home placement and current inappropriate uses can then serve as a baseline for identifying areas for reform. In doing so, the group should ask itself what policy and practice issues may be leading to these inappropriate uses of out-of-home placement, and what strategies might be implemented to address them.

It is probable that, like County X, you will have uncovered a number of distinct issues in your system, each of which is contributing to inappropriate increases in out-of-home placement. The working group may not be able to tackle all of these issues at once, and should develop a list of reform priorities from the areas of need revealed. In prioritizing reform targets, the working group should consider both which issues are of most pressing concern, as well as the group's collective power and ability to address the issues presented. Further guides and toolkits created by the Foundation will cover how to tackle specific reform areas such as those prioritized by County X, below.

Case Study: Of the areas of concern revealed by its analyses, County X developed the following list of reform *priorities*:

- **Priority #1: Develop a structured decision-making approach to more explicitly link dispositional decisions to offense severity and risk of re-offense.** With nearly half of all youth ordered to out-of-home placement in spite of neither having a violent felony offense nor being deemed high risk to re-offend, it was clear that many placed youth could be safely supervised in the community. The group committed itself to define which youth were truly “*place-able*,” with the goal of greatly reducing the number of youth sent to out-of-home placement who were not a public safety risk.
- **Priority #2: Work to reduce technical violations of probation by implementing a series of probation practice and policy improvements.** The county discovered through its analyses that a third of youth in out-of-home placement are placed for violations of probation, and that 85 percent of these youth were violated for technical non-compliance. The county understood that it needed to create administrative barriers to filing a violation of probation (e.g. supervisory approval, case staffing) but that those changes would not alone be sufficient. There was also a commitment to look more comprehensively and critically at probation practice (e.g. case planning, graduated response), as the group expressed concern that the

number of VOPs reflected an approach to probation that was too focused on compliance instead of behavior change and that failed to effectively engage youth and families.

- **Priority #3: Evaluate the success of attending to priorities #1 and #2 by continuing to analyze racial disparities.** If implemented properly, County X hypothesized that a new approach to dispositional decision-making that more intentionally used risk and offense should significantly reduce racial disparities, but that this would need to be something that should not merely be assumed, but rather should be followed closely through quarterly data analyses.

As earlier, during planning, data collection, and analysis, it will be critical to establish a work plan for addressing each of these priority areas, including one designated individual responsible for coordinating with pertinent agencies and reporting back to the working group on progress. Before setting out on reform efforts, the working group chair(s) should secure buy-in among all participating agencies on agreed-upon priority action items, and ensure that each agency designate a point of contact to work with on implementation of strategies to reduce identified inappropriate placement.

✓ **Continue to monitor data following policy and practice changes to evaluate progress**

As noted earlier, data analysis is not a one-time affair. Rather, the analyses you have completed using this guide are a starting point and platform for system change—one that you will build upon as you move forward with reforms. To track the success of your reform efforts, and evaluate their effectiveness in safely reducing your out-of-home placement population, you will need to conduct ongoing and regular analyses of your data to monitor your progress. Further, initial analyses may prove irrelevant over time as the system changes and new issues impacting out-of-home placement arise. To keep system reform efforts fresh and effective, they must be continually informed by current data analyses aimed at serving your ongoing goal—the safe reduction of out-of-home placement.

Conclusion

As jurisdictions across the country increasingly set out to examine and improve the deep-end of their juvenile justice system, it is critical that local leaders actively use data to inform and guide the planning and implementation process. Why is it so important to collect data? What exactly should you collect? And what does it mean to actively *use* it once you have it in hand? This guide attempts to begin to answer these questions, offering practitioners and policy-makers a step-by-step process for thoughtfully and effectively conducting an assessment of when, why, how, and for whom their locality currently uses out-of-home placement.

The process is not an easy one; on the contrary, it demands a great deal of time and energy. In following this guide and using the strategies and tips it provides, however, jurisdictions will be in a much better position to identify the most pressing local needs, and begin to ensure that out-of-home placement is reserved for only those youth who present the most serious risk to public safety and that youth who do not present such risk are allowed to remain at home, in their community, with appropriate supervision and support.

Appendix A: Purpose and Scope of Deep End Quantitative Self-Assessment

Framework for the Dispositional Dataset

Assemble a dataset of all dispositions during a recent 12-month period of time. The dataset should be accompanied by documentation including: a definition of how “disposition” is defined in your site (e.g. does a single disposition respond to a single charge/complaint or can it respond to more than one); what decisions and cases the dataset includes and does not include (e.g. does it include dispositions of VOPs as well as new offenses); where the data were captured and stored, and by whom (e.g. entered by what types of staff, stored in which databases); and definitions of each data element or field in the dataset. Data elements should include:

- Youth & case identifiers (solely for purposes of obtaining unduplicated counts – the dispositional dataset is for analysis only and does not need to include confidential, individually identifying information)
- Disposition information, including:
 - Type of disposition (e.g. probation, local residential placement, commitment to state custody)
 - For dispositions to out-of-home placement, level of security or restrictiveness
- Youth demographics, including:
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Race/ethnicity
 - Neighborhood of residence
- Legal information, including:
 - Adjudicated offense type & severity
 - Prior offense history
 - Pre-adjudication detention
- Probation information, including:
 - Probation status at the time of disposition
 - Whether the disposition is based on a technical VOP, as opposed to a new offense
 - For dispositions based on a technical VOP, the type of misconduct or basis for the VOP
- Assessment information, including:
 - Dispositional risk level and risk factors (as identified in the risk assessment instrument)
 - Prior history of social services
 - Evaluated service needs (e.g. educational, behavioral, mental health, substance abuse, family functioning)
 - Dispositional recommendations (e.g. P.O., SRO, prosecutor, court psychologist)
- Formal roles on the case, including:
 - Judge or calendar / docket
 - Probation officer or probation caseload
 - Defense representation (or an indicator of whether the youth waived counsel)
 - Prosecutor

Framework for the High-Level Statistics

Assemble, for roughly five recent years, annual counts of youth and/or cases processed through your jurisdiction's major juvenile justice decision points:

- Decisions to apprehend a youth for a delinquent act or status offense (e.g. counts of arrests, bookings, or juvenile court / juvenile probation intakes);
- Decisions to respond to misconducts by youth on probation (e.g. VOPs, probation revocation filings)
- Decisions to respond formally or informally (e.g. diversions, petitions, filings);
- Determinations that a youth is culpable for an offense and/or in need of services (e.g. adjudications)
- Decisions about how to respond to youth who are held culpable and/or in need of services (e.g. dispositions)
- Decisions to respond with out-of-home placement and/ or commitment to custody of a public agency (e.g. admissions to out-of-home placement, commitments to state custody)

These aggregate counts should be broken down into subtotal counts by factors relevant to evaluating the use of out-of-home placement. Factors that are relevant, and for which data are available, will vary at each decision point. But the factors you examine should include as many of the dispositional data elements as feasible, and should at a minimum include:

- For all decision points:
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Race/Ethnicity
 - Geographic factors (e.g. community of residence, place where an offense occurred, community where a youth is placed)
 - Offense type and severity (recognizing that the offense recorded at one decision point may differ from the offense recorded at another, e.g. the arresting offense may differ from the petitioned offense, which may differ from the adjudicated offense)
- For out-of-home placements or commitments:
 - Type of placement / level of security
 - In addition to counts of youth, also obtain:
 - Average length of stay
 - Average / aggregate rates of recidivism by placement type

Appendix B: Sample Youth-Level Dispositional Dataset

ID	Sex	Race	Ethnicity	Age	Zip Code	Offense Type	Offense Severity	Risk Level	Disposition Date	Disposition Type	Prior Arrest	Release Status	VOP	VOP Type
1	M	Black	Non-Latino	15	11111	Property	Felony	Medium	01/01/2013	Probation	No	Community	No	NA
2	F	White	Latino	13	11112	Drug	Misdemeanor	High	01/01/2013	Placement	Yes	Detention	Yes	Technical Curfew
3	M	Black	Latino	15	11113	Person	Misdemeanor	High	01/02/2013	Probation	Yes	Community	No	NA
4	F	Black	Non-Latino	16	11111	Property	Misdemeanor	Low	01/04/2013	ACD	No	Community	No	NA
5	F	Asian	Non-Latino	13	11113	Drug	Felony	Medium	01/02/2013	Placement	Yes	Detention	No	NA
6	M	Indian	Non-Latino	17	11114	Person	Felony	High	01/05/2013	Placement	No	Detention	Yes	New Arrest
7	F	Black	Latino	14	11112	Person	Misdemeanor	Medium	01/01/2013	Probation	Yes	Detention	No	NA
8	F	White	Latino	15	11111	Disorder	Misdemeanor	Low	01/06/2013	ACD	No	Community	No	NA
9	M	White	Non-Latino	14	11115	Person	Misdemeanor	Low	01/02/2013	ACD	No	Community	No	NA
10	F	Asian	Non-Latino	12	11113	Drug	Felony	Medium	01/03/2013	Probation	Yes	Community	Yes	Technical Truancy

Note: This sample data file provides an example of how you may want to structure your dispositional dataset at the youth level. Note, however, that this example does not include all of the information that is required nor does it follow the same precise order laid out in the guide. Rather, it is meant to simply provide an illustrative, visual example of how the data might look row by row and column by column. This can be captured in any number of formats (e.g. Excel, Access, SPSS, etc.), as long as they allow you to effectively analyze the data.

Appendix C: High-Level Statistics Template

HIGH LEVEL STATISTICS											
Statistical Categories		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Arrests/Bookings											
Intakes/Referrals											
Formal Petitions											
Detention Admissions											
Dispositions											
Out of Home Placements: State											
Out of Home Placements: Local											
DISAGGREGATED STATISTICS											
ARRESTS/BOOKINGS											
Race/ Ethnicity	White, Non-Hispanic										
	White, Hispanic										
	Black, Non-Hispanic										
	Black, Hispanic										
	Other, Non-Hispanic										
	Other, Hispanic										
Gender	Male										
	Female										
Age	12 and under										
	13-14										
	15										
	16 and above										
Geography	Community X										
	Community Y										
Most Serious Offense*	Felony Person										
	Felony Property										
	Felony Drugs										
	Felony Weapons										
	Other Felony										
	Misdemeanor Person										
	Misdemeanor Property										
	Misdemeanor Drugs										
	Misdemeanor Weapons										
	Other Misdemeanor										
	Status Offense										
	Other Offense/Missing										
	Violation of Probation										

Note: This template provides an example of how best to structure your high-level statistics, and, as such, only includes a breakdown of one statistical category. The depth and breadth of statistical information available will vary among sites. You should use your best judgment around what is necessary to include. Additionally, you may include more information than that presented here or you may wish to categorize your information in a different manner. For example, you may choose to categorize race/ethnicity into more specific categories not presented here.

*Specific offense may differ at various points in the system (e.g. arresting charge, petitioned offense, adjudicated offense). Use the offense that is most relevant at each system point.

Appendix D: County X Dispositional Cross-Tabs

Dispositional Outcomes by Offense, Risk and Race in County X

Offense	Risk	Dispositional Outcomes by Race											
		All races				Black				White			
		Total	Placement	Probation	ACD	Total	Placement	Probation	ACD	Total	Placement	Probation	ACD
Violent Felony	High	88	33	55	0	64	24	40	0	15	6	9	0
	Mid	58	20	36	2	39	13	25	1	11	4	6	1
	Low	20	4	13	3	6	2	3	1	9	2	7	0
Non-Violent Felony	High	70	18	49	3	37	10	26	1	25	6	17	2
	Mid	83	25	48	10	51	18	30	3	25	5	16	4
	Low	39	7	25	7	17	4	11	2	13	3	9	1
Person Misd.	High	59	7	47	5	11	2	9	0	40	4	33	3
	Mid	129	17	104	8	111	16	90	5	14	1	10	3
	Low	45	3	30	12	22	3	12	7	16	0	13	3
Non-Person Misd.	High	32	2	25	5	13	1	12	0	12	0	9	3
	Mid	127	22	80	25	100	20	65	15	17	1	10	6
	Low	143	3	100	40	105	3	82	20	23	0	11	12
All Dispositions		893	161	612	120	576	116	405	55	220	32	150	38

Note: Figures 3-5 and 7-12 and Tables 2-4 were all produced using the data in the table above. The subsequent pages of Appendix D will include percentages calculated from this table. Please see the attached Excel file to see how these statistics were converted into the graphs and tables within the body of the guide.

Appendix D: County X Dispositional Cross-Tabs

Offense	Risk	Dispositional Outcomes by Race (Column Percentages = % of Dispositions for Each Offense/Risk Category)											
		All races				Black				White			
		Total	Placement	Probation	ACD	Total	Placement	Probation	ACD	Total	Placement	Probation	ACD
Violent Felony	High	10%	20%	9%	0%	11%	21%	10%	0%	7%	19%	6%	0%
	Mid	6%	12%	6%	2%	7%	11%	6%	2%	5%	13%	4%	3%
	Low	2%	2%	2%	3%	1%	2%	1%	2%	4%	6%	5%	0%
Non-Violent Felony	High	8%	11%	8%	3%	6%	9%	6%	2%	11%	19%	11%	5%
	Mid	9%	16%	8%	8%	9%	16%	7%	5%	11%	16%	11%	11%
	Low	4%	4%	4%	6%	3%	3%	3%	4%	6%	9%	6%	3%
Person Misdemeanor	High	7%	4%	8%	4%	2%	2%	2%	0%	18%	13%	22%	8%
	Mid	14%	11%	17%	7%	19%	14%	22%	9%	6%	3%	7%	8%
	Low	5%	2%	5%	10%	4%	3%	3%	13%	7%	0%	9%	8%
Non-Person Misdemeanor	High	4%	1%	4%	4%	2%	1%	3%	0%	5%	0%	6%	8%
	Mid	14%	14%	13%	21%	17%	17%	16%	27%	8%	3%	7%	16%
	Low	16%	2%	16%	33%	18%	3%	20%	36%	10%	0%	7%	32%
All Dispositions		893	161	612	120	576	116	405	55	220	32	150	38

Offense	Risk	Rate of Each Dispositional Outcomes by Race (Row Percentages = % of Offense/Risk Category Receiving Each Disposition)											
		All races				Black				White			
		Total	Placement	Probation	ACD	Total	Placement	Probation	ACD	Total	Placement	Probation	ACD
Violent Felony	High	88	38%	63%	0%	64	38%	63%	0%	15	40%	60%	0%
	Mid	58	34%	62%	3%	39	33%	64%	3%	11	36%	55%	9%
	Low	20	20%	65%	15%	6	33%	50%	17%	9	22%	78%	0%
Non-Violent Felony	High	70	26%	70%	4%	37	27%	70%	3%	25	24%	68%	8%
	Mid	83	30%	58%	12%	51	35%	59%	6%	25	20%	64%	16%
	Low	39	18%	64%	18%	17	24%	65%	12%	13	23%	69%	8%
Person Misdemeanor	High	59	12%	80%	8%	11	18%	82%	0%	40	10%	83%	8%
	Mid	129	13%	81%	6%	111	14%	81%	5%	14	7%	71%	21%
	Low	45	7%	67%	27%	22	14%	55%	32%	16	0%	81%	19%
Non-Person Misdemeanor	High	32	6%	78%	16%	13	8%	92%	0%	12	0%	75%	25%
	Mid	127	17%	63%	20%	100	20%	65%	15%	17	6%	59%	35%
	Low	143	2%	70%	28%	105	3%	78%	19%	23	0%	48%	52%
All Dispositions		893	18%	69%	13%	576	20%	70%	10%	220	15%	68%	17%