

# **Family and Youth Services Detention Survey:**

## **A report of 2001 findings**

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**May 14, 2004**



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**SP-02-01**

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# **Preliminary Report of Clark County Department of Family and Youth Services Incarcerated Youth: Spring 2001**

## **Introduction**

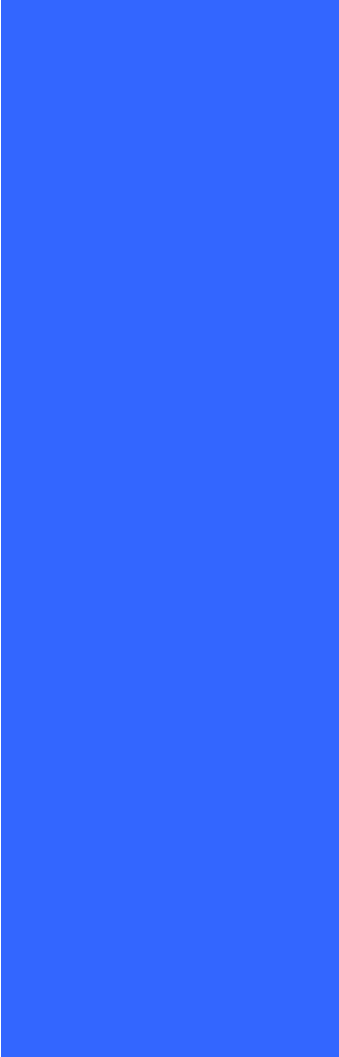
A variety of institutional and aftercare programs aimed at helping juvenile offenders develop into useful, law-abiding citizens have been developed. Unfortunately, most remain largely ineffectual and recidivism continues to be unacceptably high. New programs are needed that successfully help juvenile offenders re-enter society without re-establishing a pattern of delinquency. An important part of program development is asking participants what they think would be effective to help them succeed once they are released from detention or have completed the terms of their parole.

This study was conducted in collaboration with the Clark County Department of Family and Youth Services (CCDFYS) to understand youth perceptions of their detention experience and to aid in the development of in-facility and community re-entry programming. The data for this study were obtained from surveys of incarcerated youth in the state of Nevada's Spring Mountain and CCDFYS youth detention facilities. Youth responded to a survey designed to assess perceptions of the overall facilities, staff, and future programming. Many of the items included in the survey were developed as a result of two youth focus group discussions. Youth were informed that their participation in the survey was voluntary and that they could skip any item they wanted. To insure accurate and honest responses, the surveys were anonymous and confidential.

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## **Demographics**

The sample was composed of 93 male detainees from Spring Mountain and 104 male and female detainees from CCDFYS Detention. Table 1 shows the demographic composition of the survey participants from each facility. At Spring Mountain, 64.5% of the respondents were sixteen years of age or older, and 98.9% were male. Approximately one-third of the respondents were European-American (32.6%) and one-third (32.6%) were Hispanic-American. Most (43.8%) reported living with mother only, while 16.9% reported living with both biological parents before their incarceration. Eighty-three percent had been



incarcerated in the facility for six months or less, and 93.1% of the youth reported having been arrested 3 or more times. Approximately 45% of the youth said they spend some or a lot of time with a gang.

Of the youth from CCDFYS Detention (Table 1), 62.4% of the respondents were sixteen years of age or older, and 79.2% were male. Approximately 45% of the respondents were European-American, 22.7% were Hispanic-American, and 17.5% were African American. Approximately one-third (32.3%) reported living with mother only, while 19.2% reported living with both biological parents before their incarceration. The majority (98.9%) had been incarcerated in the facility for six months or less, with 54.3% of those being incarcerated less than one month. More than two-thirds (67.8%) of the youth reported having been arrested 3 or more times. Approximately 40% of the youth said they spend some or a lot of time with a gang.

At Spring Mountain, physical abuse was reported by 45.6% of the youth and 5.6% reported sexual abuse. Physical abuse was reported by 54.1% of the youth from CCDFYS Detention, with 17.8% reporting sexual abuse (Table 1). Even though only 11.5% of the total sample from both facilities were girls, they represented almost 50% of those reporting sexual abuse.

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**Table 1. Demographic characteristics of survey participants.**

Demographic Characteristics	Facility			
	Spring Mountain		CCDFYS Detention	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
<b>Age</b>				
13 years of age	6	6.5%	5	5.0%
14 years of age	8	8.6%	11	10.9%
15 years of age	19	20.4%	22	21.8%
16 years of age or older	60	64.5%	63	62.4%
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	0	0.0%	21	20.8%
Male	91	100.0%	80	79.2%
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
European-American	28	32.6%	43	44.3%
Hispanic-American	28	32.6%	22	22.7%
African-American	12	14.0%	17	17.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander-American	4	4.7%	3	3.1%
Native American	1	1.2%		
Multi-ethnic	13	15.1%	12	12.4%
<b>Family Makeup</b>				
Both biological parents	15	16.9%	19	19.2%
Only mother	39	43.8%	32	32.3%
Only father	8	9.0%	11	11.1%
Mother and stepfather	12	13.5%	19	19.2%
Father and stepmother	6	6.7%	2	2.0%
Foster parents/Guardians	1	1.1%	4	4.0%
Grandparents	7	7.9%	3	3.0%
None of the above	1	1.1%	9	9.1%
<b>Time Detained</b>				
Less than one month	6	6.5%	50	54.3%
1 – 2 months	13	14.0%	25	27.2%
3 – 6 months	58	62.4%	16	17.4%
7 – 12 months	14	15.1%	1	1.1%
1 – 2 years	2	2.2%		
<b>Number of Arrests</b>				
Once	2	2.3%	9	10.3%
Twice	4	4.7%	19	21.8%
3 – 5 times	33	38.4%	23	26.4%
6 or more times	47	54.7%	36	41.4%

(Table 1. continued)

Demographic Characteristic	Facility			
	Spring Mountain		CCDFYS Detention	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
<b>Crime</b>				
Violation of probation/parole	23	25.6%	19	20.7%
Robbery/burglary	22	24.4%	15	16.3%
Drugs	19	21.1%	10	10.9%
Stealing cars	12	13.3%	10	10.9%
Other jurisdiction	4	4.4%	15	16.3%
Assault/battery	7	7.8%	11	12.0%
Sexual offense	1	1.1%	7	7.6%
Fighting			3	3.3%
Truancy	1	1.1%	2	2.2%
Vandalism	1	1.1%		
<b>Gang Involvement</b>				
Not in gang, no friends in gang	9	10.1%	32	32.7%
Not in gang, friends in gang	40	44.9%	28	28.6%
Spend some time with gang	14	15.7%	19	19.4%
Spend a lot of time with gang	26	29.2%	19	19.4%
<b>Experienced Sexual Abuse</b>				
Yes	5	5.6%	18	17.8%
No	85	94.4%	83	82.2%
<b>Experienced Physical Abuse</b>				
Yes	41	45.6%	53	54.1%
No	49	54.4%	45	45.9%

## Rating of facility

Participants were asked to rate the facility they were in during detention. At Spring Mountain (Table 2a), approximately three-fourths (71%) said that the food was *bad* or *very bad*. The general facilities, which included their rooms, common areas, etc., were rated as *good* or *very good* by 45.4% of respondents, while 54.5% rated them as *bad* or *very bad*. Over half (57.2%) rated treatment by staff as *good* or *very good*, and 56.7% said treatment by other youth was *good* or *very good*. Entertainment and recreation was rated as *good* or *very good* by 73% of respondents, while 66.3% said that the clothing was *bad* or *very bad*. School was rated as *good* or *very good* by 63.7% of respondents.

At CCDFYS Detention (Table 2b), 78.2% said that the food was *bad* or *very bad*. The general facilities, which included their rooms, common areas, etc., were rated as *good* or *very good* by 64.7% of respondents. Approximately three-fourths (71.6%) rated treatment by staff as *good* or *very good*, and 62.3% said treatment by other youth was *good* or *very good*. Entertainment and recreation was rated as *good* or *very good* by 68.6% of respondents, while 71.3% said that the clothing was *bad* or *very bad*. School was rated as *good* or *very good* by 69% of respondents.

**Table 2a. Respondents' rating of Spring Mountain facility.**

Category	Very Good		Good		Bad		Very Bad	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Food	1	1.1%	26	28.0%	20	21.5%	46	49.5%
Facilities (room, etc.)	6	6.8%	34	38.6%	23	26.1%	25	28.4%
Treatment by staff	12	13.2%	40	44.0%	27	29.7%	12	13.2%
Treatment by other youth	1	1.1%	50	55.6%	22	24.4%	17	18.9%
Entertainment/Recreation	22	25.9%	40	47.1%	12	14.1%	11	12.9%
Clothes	5	5.6%	25	28.1%	11	12.4%	48	53.9%
School	8	8.8%	50	54.9%	20	22.0%	13	14.3%

**Table 2b. Respondents' rating of CCDFYS Detention facility.**

Category	Very Good		Good		Bad		Very Bad	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Food	1	1.0%	21	20.8%	46	45.5%	33	32.7%
Facilities (room, etc.)	7	6.9%	59	57.8%	19	18.6%	17	16.7%
Treatment by staff	17	16.7%	56	54.9%	20	19.6%	9	8.8%
Treatment by other youth	7	6.9%	56	55.4%	25	24.8%	13	12.9%
Entertainment/Recreation	18	17.6%	52	51.0%	23	22.5%	9	8.8%
Clothes	6	5.9%	23	22.8%	35	34.7%	37	36.6%
School	14	14.0%	55	55.0%	20	20.0%	11	11.0%

**Programs that would be helpful inside the facility**

Participants were asked their opinion about activities that could be provided inside the facility that would help youth succeed when they are released from detention. At Spring Mountain (Table 3a), most items were to rated to be potentially *very helpful* or *helpful* by most respondents, with the five highest rated activities being job training (88.1%), recreational activities (80%), counseling with parents (73.2%), computer training (72.1%), and arts and crafts activities (69.3%).

At CCDFYS Detention (Table 3b), all items were rated to be potentially *very helpful* or *helpful* by most respondents, with the five highest rated activities being job training (83.2%), counseling with parents (79.1%), books/reading materials (78%), recreational activities (76%), and computer training (71.3%).



**Table 3a. Youths' opinion on inside facility programming at Spring Mountain that would be helpful.**

Inside Facility Programs	Very Helpful		Helpful		Kind of Helpful		Not Helpful	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Personal time with staff	28	30.4%	28	30.4%	23	25.0%	13	14.1%
Group counseling	11	11.8%	33	35.5%	28	30.1%	21	22.6%
Classroom instruction	13	14.3%	35	38.5%	34	37.4%	9	9.9%
Computer training	45	48.4%	22	23.7%	15	16.1%	11	11.8%
Job training	64	69.6%	17	18.5%	6	6.5%	5	5.4%
Recreational activities	41	45.6%	31	34.4%	17	18.9%	1	1.1%
Individual counseling	28	31.5%	30	33.7%	22	24.7%	9	10.1%
Arts and crafts activities	30	34.1%	31	35.2%	21	23.9%	6	6.8%
Books/reading materials	41	45.1%	19	20.9%	18	19.8%	13	14.3%
Counseling with parents	18	43.9%	12	29.3%	8	19.5%	3	7.3%

**Table 3b. Youths' opinion on inside facility programming at CCDFYS Detention that would be helpful.**

Inside Facility Programs	Very Helpful		Helpful		Kind of Helpful		Not Helpful	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Personal time with staff	30	29.4%	42	41.2%	20	19.6%	10	9.8%
Group counseling	27	26.7%	29	28.7%	23	22.8%	22	21.8%
Classroom instruction	17	16.7%	47	46.1%	22	21.6%	16	15.7%
Computer training	43	42.6%	29	28.7%	14	13.9%	15	14.9%
Job training	62	61.4%	22	21.8%	5	5.0%	12	11.9%
Recreational activities	49	49.0%	27	27.0%	19	19.0%	5	5.0%
Individual counseling	44	44.0%	26	26.0%	19	19.0%	11	11.0%
Arts and crafts activities	44	44.0%	25	25.0%	24	24.0%	7	7.0%
Books/reading materials	50	50.0%	28	28.0%	8	8.0%	14	14.0%
Counseling with parents	26	60.5%	8	18.6%	6	14.0%	3	7.0%

**Programs that would be helpful outside the facility**

Participants were asked their opinion about activities that could be provided outside the facility that would help youth succeed when they are released from detention. At Spring Mountain (Table 4a), all items were rated to be potentially *very helpful* or *helpful* by most respondents, with the five highest rated activities being job training (93.6%), having a safe place from family (81.3%), social skills classes (71.6%), conflict management

classes (70.4%), and mentoring by caring adults (61.1%).

At CCDFYS Detention (Table 4b), all items were rated to be potentially *very helpful* or *helpful* by most respondents, with the five highest rated activities being job training (90.1%), having a safe place from family (87.2%), conflict management classes (71.3%), drug and alcohol programs (70.3%), and family counseling (69.3%).

**Table 4a. Youths’ opinions on outside facility programming at Spring Mountain that would be helpful.**

Outside Facility Programs	Very Helpful		Helpful		Kind of Helpful		Not Helpful	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Job training	69	74.2%	18	19.4%	3	3.2%	3	3.2%
Conflict management	23	25.3%	41	45.1%	21	23.1%	6	6.6%
Drug/alcohol program	33	37.5%	20	22.7%	17	19.3%	18	20.5%
Mentoring by caring adults	15	16.7%	40	44.0%	26	28.9%	9	10.0%
Family counseling	25	27.8%	24	26.7%	29	32.2%	12	13.3%
Individual counseling	24	27.8%	29	32.6%	23	25.8%	13	14.6%
Social skills classes	29	33.0%	34	38.6%	21	23.9%	4	4.5%
Having a safe place from family when needed	48	52.7%	26	28.6%	12	13.2%	5	5.5%

**Table 4b. Youths’ opinions on outside facility programming at CCDFYS Detention that would be helpful.**

Outside Facility Programs	Very Helpful		Helpful		Kind of Helpful		Not Helpful	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Job training	74	73.3%	17	16.8%	3	3.0%	7	6.9%
Conflict management	41	40.6%	31	30.7%	19	18.8%	10	9.9%
Drug/alcohol program	53	52.5%	18	17.8%	14	13.9%	16	15.8%
Mentoring by caring adults	35	34.7%	34	33.7%	18	17.8%	14	13.9% <sup>9</sup>
Family counseling	38	37.6%	32	31.7%	17	16.8%	14	13.9%
Individual counseling	43	43.0%	25	25.0%	20	20.0%	12	12.0%
Social skills classes	39	38.2%	28	27.5%	24	23.5%	11	10.8%
Having a safe place from family when needed	65	64.4%	23	22.8%	7	6.9%	6	5.9%

## **Discussion and conclusions**

The youth who participated in this initial survey were primarily:

- 16 years old or older,
- detained for 6 months or less,
- arrested 6 or more times,
- detained for probation/parole violations, and
- had experienced some degree of physical or sexual abuse.

These demographics indicate a need for intervention programming aimed at assisting this high risk population successfully break the cycle of criminal behavior.

Based on youth perceptions of what programs they thought would help them succeed, there are several areas that present opportunities for programming. Job training and computer training, both as inside and outside of facility programs, were activities that were rated highly as being important in helping youth succeed outside of detention. This indicates that youth are eager to receive training that will help them prepare for and obtain a job once they are released. Another programming option that was highly rated for outside the facility was having a safe place for youth to go when needed. This finding suggests that youth need additional positive options outside of their family.

The highly positive ratings of several items by the majority of youth in this study reflect their desire to participate in constructive programs. Although offering programs to incarcerated or recently released youth presents a unique set of challenges, it is evident that there is tremendous need and opportunity. Not preparing these youth to succeed means running the risk of having them repeat past mistakes, because, as studies have shown, youth who are incarcerated have a greater likelihood to become incarcerated adults. Communities have a responsibility to try and



help youth not travel this path. A collaborative effort between the juvenile justice system, and resource and programming professionals could help curb this trend, and help this high risk population succeed at reaching their fullest potential.

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