

# ***NORTH CAROLINA SENTENCING AND POLICY ADVISORY COMMISSION***

## **JUVENILE DELINQUENT POPULATION PROJECTIONS *FISCAL YEAR 2005/06 to FISCAL YEAR 2009/10***

**Prepared in Conjunction with  
The North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention**

RELEASED APRIL 2006

### **INTRODUCTION**

North Carolina General Statutes 164-40(b) and 164-42.1(b) direct the North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission (NCSPAC) to prepare annual projections of the juvenile delinquent population and help assess North Carolina's long-term resource needs for juvenile dispositions. The following analysis is based on 8,157 FY 2004/05 juvenile delinquent dispositions extracted from NC-JOIN, the management information system of the North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP).

### **ASSUMPTIONS**

- The projections assume a one percent annual growth in the rate of delinquent adjudications over the five-year projection period. This estimate is based on projections for North Carolina's youth population and several juvenile justice indicators. Population projections prepared by the State of North Carolina's Demographics unit show that the juvenile population (age 6 – 15) in North Carolina is expected to increase at an average annual rate of 1.4% over the next five-year period.<sup>1</sup> Although the youth population has been growing and is projected to continue to grow, recent data show declining trends in juvenile crime and delinquent complaints.<sup>2</sup>
- The five-year projections assume no change in judicial or prosecutorial behavior.
- Over the projection period, the rates of Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 dispositions for juveniles adjudicated delinquent are assumed to match the rates during FY 2004/05 (71.4%, 25.0%, and 3.6%, respectively).
- Youth development center (YDC) length of stay is assumed to match the average length of stay by offense level for juveniles released during FY 2004/05. All juveniles released in this period were adjudicated delinquent under the 1998 reform to North Carolina's Juvenile Code.<sup>3</sup> The average length of stay was 21 months for juveniles adjudicated

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<sup>1</sup> Source: [www.demog.state.nc.us](http://www.demog.state.nc.us)

<sup>2</sup> There has been a decline in the rate of delinquent complaints since the late 1990s. In FY 1996/97 the rate of delinquent complaints was 54 per 1,000 juveniles compared to a rate of 36.2 in FY 2004/05. Criminal complaints (Class A-I felonies and Class A1-3 misdemeanors) decreased 1.2% from CY 2004 to CY 2005. (Source: DJJDP.) In addition, the State Bureau of Investigation reports that from 2000 to 2004, there was a 13% drop in overall arrests for index crimes committed by juveniles under the age of 16. (Source: *Crime in North Carolina-2004 Annual Summary Report of Uniform Crime Reporting Data*, NC Department of Justice, State Bureau of Investigation, [www.sbi2.jus.state.nc.us/crp/public/default.htm](http://www.sbi2.jus.state.nc.us/crp/public/default.htm))

<sup>3</sup> The Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 1998 applies to all offenses committed on or after July 1, 1999.

delinquent for a violent offense, 10 months for juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a serious offense, and 8 months for juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a minor offense. The average length of stay for juveniles committed to YDC due to a technical violation of post-release supervision was 9 months.

- Over the projection period, the proportion of admissions to YDCs resulting from technical violations of probation will match the proportion found during FY 2004/05 (30.2%).

**PROJECTED JUVENILE DELINQUENT POPULATIONS**

Producing the final resource projections is a two-stage process: 1) the “reality check” stage and 2) the projection stage. In the “reality check” stage, the reliability of the data (e.g., commitment rates, revocation rates, length of stay, etc.) is tested using the model to produce the current admissions to YDCs. In essence, the model is used to reproduce today’s reality. Once the model successfully approximates current YDC admissions, the second stage of the process begins. In the second stage, growth rates for the number of juvenile delinquent adjudications are added to the model, producing the five-year projection.

Table 1 shows the projected Level 3 resource needs over the five-year projection period.<sup>4</sup> Level 3 resource needs are projected to increase slightly over the projection period, with a projected need for 446 YDC beds by June 2006 and 480 YDC beds by June 2010. YDC population as of January 1, 2006, was 435. As of April 1, 2006, the YDC population was 474.<sup>5</sup>

**TABLE 1  
LEVEL 3 RESOURCE PROJECTIONS: FY 2005/06 – 2009/10  
JUVENILES ADJUDICATED DELINQUENT**

<b>Fiscal Year Ending</b>	<b>Level 3: Commitment</b>
<b>2006</b>	446
<b>2007</b>	461
<b>2008</b>	470
<b>2009</b>	472
<b>2010</b>	480

SOURCE: FY 2004/05 Disposition Simulation Data, NC-JOIN/NCSPAC

<sup>4</sup> Table 1 does not present available capacity for Level 3 dispositional resources.

<sup>5</sup> YDC population figures include juveniles on-campus and off-campus (e.g., home visit, community commitment, hospitalization, escape).

### *Changes from Previous Projections*

The simulation model used to produce resource projections relies on historical data and other empirical information about how juveniles are processed through the juvenile justice system. Changes in the system that affect the number of YDC admissions, the number of YDC releases, or the YDC length of stay – all critical factors in projecting YDC population – directly impact the accuracy of the projections. While current data indicate that there continue to be fluctuations in these three factors, there are early indications that the system is reaching a post-reform point of stabilization. It is important to note, however, that the system is largely policy-driven and any change in policy and/or practice with regard to the use of dispositional resources greatly influences the accuracy of the resource projections.

The following section highlights YDC statistics showing the year-to-year variations in several key components used in the simulation model.

- ***YDC Admissions*** – Since CY 2000, there has been a 56% decrease in the number of YDC admissions. (See Table 2.) The largest annual decrease in YDC admissions occurred between CY 2000 and CY 2001. From CY 2004 to CY 2005, YDC admissions decreased almost 13%. As intended by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 1998, much of the decrease in YDC admissions can be attributed to the fact that juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a Class 1, Class 2 or Class 3 misdemeanor, except under certain rare conditions, cannot be committed to a YDC. Pre-reform, misdemeanor offenders accounted for about 40% of annual admissions to YDCs. In FY 2004/05, they accounted for about 6% of annual admissions.
- ***YDC Terminations*** – Over the last five years terminations have exceeded admissions. (See Table 2.) In CY 2000, YDCs averaged about the same number of monthly admissions as terminations. However, in CY 2001, there was an average of 73 terminations per month compared to an average of 55 admissions per month. Beginning with CY 2002, the gap between admissions and terminations has been closing. In CY 2005, there was an average of 37 terminations per month compared to an average of 36 admissions per month. While recent data appear to show that there may be some stabilization between admissions and terminations, it is important to note that the number of admissions and terminations is extremely sensitive to changes in policies and practices. These trends will continue to be monitored to help assess the accuracy of the resource projections.

**TABLE 2**  
**YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTER (YDC) ADMISSIONS AND TERMINATIONS**  
**JUVENILES ADJUDICATED DELINQUENT**

Calendar Year	YDC Admissions	Average Number of Admissions Per Month	YDC Terminations	Average Number of Terminations Per Month
2000	975	81	964	80
2001	661	55	881	73
2002	605	50	683	57
2003	479	40	549	46
2004	489	41	526	44
2005	428	36	441	37

Source: North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

- YDC Length of Stay** – While there has been little consistency in average length of stay in the recent past, there are early indications that length of stay may be stabilizing for the largest group of juveniles entering YDCs – those adjudicated delinquent for a serious offense. (See Table 3.) For juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a serious offense, who represented nearly 70% of YDC admissions in FY 2004/05, the average length of stay has remained relatively stable at about 10 months since FY 2002/03. The average length of stay for juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a violent offense decreased from CY 2001 through FY 2002/03, with stabilization beginning in CY 2004. For juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a minor offense, average length of stay steadily increased from FY 1999/00 to FY 2002/03, decreased in CY 2004, and increased slightly in FY 2004/05.

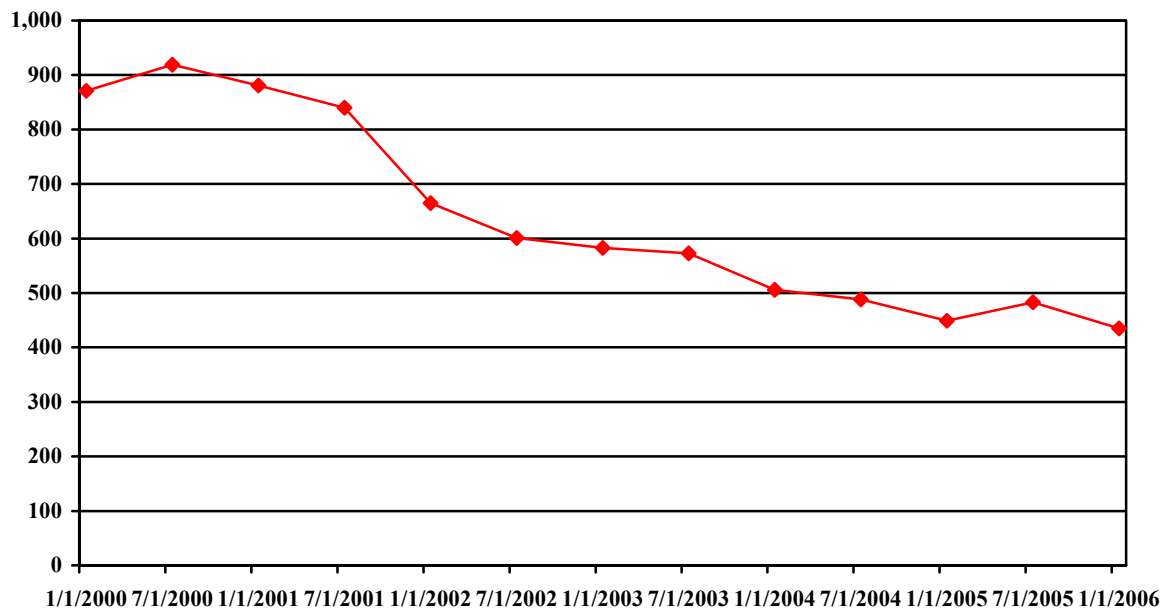
**TABLE 3**  
**AVERAGE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTER (YDC) LENGTH OF STAY**  
**JUVENILES ADJUDICATED DELINQUENT**

Year	Average YDC Length of Stay (Months) for Juveniles Adjudicated of a:		
	Violent Offense	Serious Offense	Minor Offense
FY 1999/00	22.7	9.1	4.4
CY 2001	26.8	12.5	6.5
FY 2001/02	24.9	12.1	7.0
FY 2002/03	23.3	10.4	9.1
CY 2004	21.0	10.0	7.0
FY 2004/05	21.4	10.2	8.3

Source: North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, Disposition Simulation Data

- YDC Resident Population**– The resident population or “stock” is the number of juveniles residing in YDCs at the beginning of the projection period, which is July 1, 2005, for the current projection. “Stock” population is an important component of the model as it represents the starting point of the projection. The model simulates releases for the “stock” population while simultaneously processing YDC admissions to ultimately produce the population projections. As a result of the recent trend showing terminations outpacing admissions, the YDC population has generally declined since July 2000. (See Figure 1.)

**FIGURE 1  
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTER (YDC) POPULATION TRENDS  
JANUARY 2000 – JANUARY 2006**



Source: North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

## DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

Table 4 shows the distribution of the 8,157 delinquent cases by the offense level of the most serious adjudicated offense and the delinquency history level of the juvenile adjudicated. The majority of cases (n=4,207 or 52%) involved a juvenile with a low delinquency history level adjudicated for a minor offense (Class 1, 2, or 3 misdemeanor).

In applying the dispositional chart, the court imposed commitment to a YDC in 3.6% of the cases, ordered Level 2 (Intermediate) dispositions in 25.0% of the cases, and ordered the remaining 71.4% of the cases to Level 1 (Community) dispositions. (See Table 5.) Table 6 combines the information contained in Table 4 and Table 5, showing how judges used dispositional resources given each combination of offense level and delinquency history level. These data form the basis of the five-year resource projections. As a special note related to the use of dispositional resources by the chart, and to the accuracy of the projections in general, there were 613 cases (7.5%) involving a disposition not specified by the dispositional chart. However,

it must be noted that certain provisions of the juvenile code allow a judge to impose a disposition other than those specified by the chart. Under G.S. 7B-2508(e), judges may find “extraordinary needs” and impose a lower level disposition. Under G.S. 7B-2508(g), juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a Minor offense with four or more prior adjudications may be committed to a YDC. Finally, under G.S. 7B-2508(d), juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a Minor offense with a previous Level 3 disposition may be committed to a YDC.

**TABLE 4  
DISTRIBUTION OF CASES BY OFFENSE LEVEL AND  
DELINQUENCY HISTORY LEVEL  
JUVENILES ADJUDICATED DELINQUENT**

OFFENSE LEVEL	DELINQUENCY HISTORY LEVEL			TOTAL
	Low 0 – 1 pt	Medium 2 – 3 pts	High 4+ pts	
<b>Violent</b>	147 (65.6%)	24 (10.7%)	53 (23.7%)	224 (2.8%)
<b>Serious</b>	1,609 (62.9%)	463 (18.1%)	485 (19.0%)	2,557 (31.3%)
<b>Minor</b>	4,207 (78.3%)	706 (13.1%)	463 (8.6%)	5,376 (65.9%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	5,963 (73.1%)	1,193 (14.6%)	1,001 (12.3%)	8,157 (100.0%)

SOURCE: FY 2004/05 Disposition Simulation Data, NC-JOIN/NCSPAC

**TABLE 5  
DISTRIBUTION OF CASES BY OFFENSE LEVEL AND DISPOSITION LEVEL  
JUVENILES ADJUDICATED DELINQUENT**

OFFENSE LEVEL	DISPOSITION LEVEL			TOTAL
	Level 1: Community	Level 2: Intermediate	Level 3: Commitment	
<b>Violent</b>	46 (20.5%)	113 (50.5%)	65 (29.0%)	224 (2.8%)
<b>Serious</b>	1,262 (49.4%)	1,094 (42.8%)	201 (7.8%)	2,557 (31.3%)
<b>Minor</b>	4,521 (84.1%)	828 (15.4%)	27 (0.5%)	5,376 (65.9%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	5,829 (71.4%)	2,035 (25.0%)	293 (3.6%)	8,157 (100.0%)

SOURCE: FY 2004/05 Disposition Simulation Data, NC-JOIN/NCSPAC

**TABLE 6  
DISTRIBUTION OF CASES BY THE DISPOSITIONAL CHART  
JUVENILES ADJUDICATED DELINQUENT**

OFFENSE LEVEL	DELINQUENCY HISTORY LEVEL			TOTAL
	Low 0-1 Point	Medium 2-3 Points	High 4+ Points	
<b>Violent</b> (Class A - Class E)	<b><u>Level 2/Level 3</u></b> Level 1: 37 (25.2%) Level 2: 93 (63.3%) Level 3: 17 (11.5%) n = 147	<b><u>Level 3</u></b> Level 1: 7 (29.2%) Level 2: 11 (45.8%) Level 3: 6 (25.0%) n = 24	<b><u>Level 3</u></b> Level 1: 2 (3.8%) Level 2: 9 (17.0%) Level 3: 42 (79.2%) n = 53	Level 1: 46 (20.5%) Level 2: 113 (50.5%) Level 3: 65 (29.0%) n = 224 (2.8%)
<b>Serious</b> (Class F - Class A1)	<b><u>Level 1/Level 2</u></b> Level 1: 1,034 (64.3%) Level 2: 573 (35.6%) Level 3: 2 (0.1%) n = 1,609	<b><u>Level 2</u></b> Level 1: 164 (35.4%) Level 2: 291 (62.9%) Level 3: 8 (1.7%) n = 463	<b><u>Level 2/Level 3</u></b> Level 1: 64 (13.2%) Level 2: 230 (47.4%) Level 3: 191 (39.4%) n = 485	Level 1: 1,262 (49.4%) Level 2: 1,094 (42.8%) Level 3: 201 (7.8%) n = 2,557 (31.3%)
<b>Minor</b> (Class 1 - Class 3)	<b><u>Level 1</u></b> Level 1: 4,048 (96.2%) Level 2: 159 (3.8%) Level 3: 0 (0.0%) n = 4,207	<b><u>Level 1/Level 2</u></b> Level 1: 350 (49.6%) Level 2: 353 (50.0%) Level 3: 3 (0.4%) n = 706	<b><u>Level 2</u></b> Level 1: 123 (26.6%) Level 2: 316 (68.3%) Level 3: 24 (5.2%) n = 463	Level 1: 4,521 (84.1%) Level 2: 828 (15.4%) Level 3: 27 (0.5%) n = 5,376 (65.9%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	Level 1: 5,119 (85.9%) Level 2: 825 (13.8%) Level 3: 19 (0.3%) n = 5,963 (73.1%)	Level 1: 521 (43.7%) Level 2: 655 (54.9%) Level 3: 17 (1.4%) n = 1,193 (14.6%)	Level 1: 189 (18.9%) Level 2: 555 (55.4%) Level 3: 257 (25.7%) n = 1,001 (12.3%)	Level 1: 5,829 (71.4%) Level 2: 2,035 (25.0%) Level 3: 293 (3.6%) n = 8,157 (100.0%)

SOURCE: FY 2004/05 Disposition Simulation Data, NC-JOIN/NCSPAC

**NOTE:** In FY 2004/05, there were 613 cases (7.5%) involving a disposition not specified by the dispositional chart. However, it must be noted that certain provisions of the juvenile code allow a judge to impose a disposition other than those specified by the chart. Under G.S. 7B-2508(e), judges may find “extraordinary needs” and impose a lower level disposition. Under G.S. 7B-2508(g), juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a Minor offense with four or more prior adjudications may be committed to a YDC. Finally, under G.S. 7B-2508(d), juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a Minor offense with a previous Level 3 disposition may be committed to a YDC.