

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

## **JUVENILE DELINQUENT POPULATION PROJECTIONS *FISCAL YEAR 2007/08 to FISCAL YEAR 2011/12***

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

RELEASED: APRIL 2008

### **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 7,973 FY 2006/07 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 North Carolina's State Demographics unit show that the juvenile population (age 6 – 15) in North Carolina is expected to increase at an average annual rate of 1.3% over the next five years.<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.<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 2006/07 (69.8%, 27.0%, and 3.2%, 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 2006/07. The average length of stay was 17 months for juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a violent offense, 12 months for juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a serious offense, and 9 months for juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a minor offense. The average length of stay for juveniles

---

<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 35 in FY 2006/07. (Source: DJJDP.) In addition, the State Bureau of Investigation reports that from 2002 to 2006, there was a 24% drop in overall arrests for index crimes committed by juveniles under the age of 16. (Source: *Crime in North Carolina-2006 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).) However, criminal complaints (Class A-I felonies and Class A1-3 misdemeanors) increased 5.6% from CY 2005 to CY 2006. (Source: DJJDP.)

committed to YDC due to a technical violation of post-release supervision was 10 months.

- Over the projection period, the proportion of admissions to YDCs resulting from technical violations of probation will match the proportion found during FY 2006/07 (40.2%).

## 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 and stock population data are added to the model, thereby producing the five-year population projection.

Table 1 shows the projected Level 3 resource needs over the five-year projection period.<sup>3</sup> Level 3 resource needs are projected to increase slightly over the projection period, with a projected need for 470 YDC beds by June 2008 and 499 YDC beds by June 2012. The YDC population was 494 on July 1, 2007. On January 1, 2008, the YDC population was 413.<sup>4</sup>

**TABLE 1  
LEVEL 3 RESOURCE PROJECTIONS: FY 2007/08 – 2011/12  
JUVENILES ADJUDICATED DELINQUENT**

<b>Fiscal Year Ending</b>	<b>CURRENT Level 3: Commitment</b>	<b>PREVIOUS Level 3: Commitment</b>
<b>2008</b>	470	492
<b>2009</b>	481	496
<b>2010</b>	491	503
<b>2011</b>	494	518
<b>2012</b>	499	N/A

SOURCE: FY 2005/06 and FY 2006/07 Disposition Simulation Data, NC-JOIN/NCSPAC

### *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

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

<sup>4</sup> YDC population figures include juveniles on-campus and off-campus (*e.g.*, home visit, community commitment, hospitalization, escape).

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** – From CY 2002 to CY 2007, there has been a 27% decrease in the number of YDC admissions. (See Table 2.) As intended by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 1998, much of the initial 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. By 2007, they accounted for 4% of annual admissions. After a 14% increase in the number of YDC admissions from CY 2005 to CY 2006, YDC admissions decreased by 10% from CY 2006 to CY 2007.
- **YDC Terminations** – From CY 2002 to CY 2007, terminations decreased by 30%. (See Table 2.) Terminations exceeded admissions for each of those years except for CY 2006. In CY 2007, the average number of terminations per month was 40.

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
2002	605	50	683	57
2003	479	40	549	46
2004	489	41	526	44
2005	428	36	441	37
2006	486	41	459	38
2007	437	36	476	40

SOURCE: North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

- **YDC Length of Stay** – In FY 2004/05, there appeared to be 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.) However, that trend shifted in FY 2005/06 and has remained constant for this fiscal year. For juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a serious offense, who represented 69% of YDC admissions in FY 2006/07, the average length of stay was 11.5 months, similar to the 11.8 months in FY 2005/06. The average length of stay for juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a violent offense steadily decreased from FY 2001/02 through FY 2004/05 with an additional decrease of almost four months in FY 2005/06. However, this decrease slowed from FY 2005/06 to FY 2006/07, with an average length of stay of 17.6 months and 17.2 months, respectively. For juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a minor offense, the average length of stay has fluctuated, with a decrease of over 2 months from FY 2005/06 to FY 2006/07.

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

Year	Average YDC Length of Stay (Months) for Juveniles Adjudicated of a:			
	Violent Offense	Serious Offense	Minor Offense	Overall
<b>FY 2001/02</b>	24.9	12.1	7.0	N/A
<b>FY 2002/03</b>	23.3	10.4	9.1	N/A
<b>CY 2004</b>	21.0	10.0	7.0	13.3
<b>FY 2004/05</b>	21.4	10.2	8.3	12.9
<b>FY 2005/06</b>	17.6	11.8	11.2	13.2
<b>FY 2006/07</b>	17.2	11.5	8.9	12.5

NOTE: Beginning in CY 2004, data entered into DJJDP's NC-JOIN was used to calculate the average YDC length of stay.

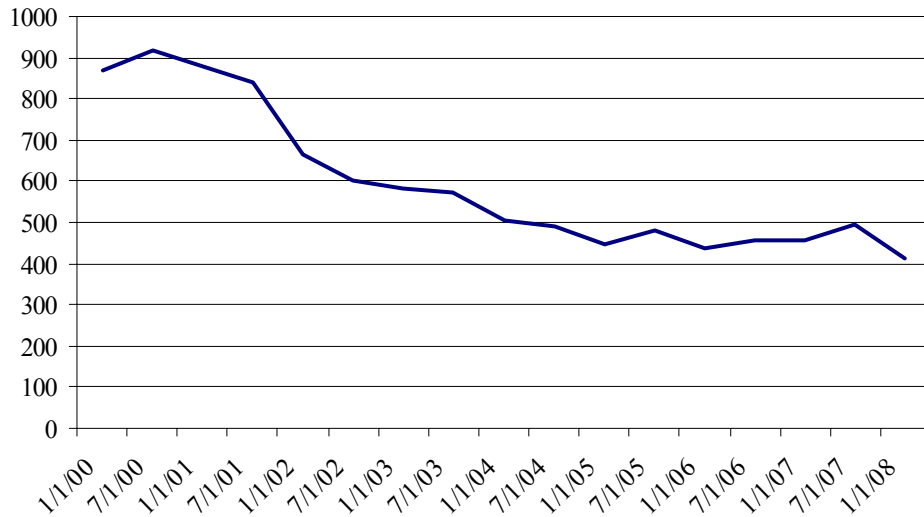
SOURCE: North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, Disposition Simulation Data and North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

- **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, 2007, 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 produce the population projections. As a result of the trend showing terminations outpacing admissions, the YDC population has generally declined since July 2000. (See Figure 1.)

On July 1, 2007, the stock population consisted of 494 juveniles committed to a YDC. As of January 1, 2008, the stock population had dropped to 413 committed juveniles – a 16% decrease. If this is a seasonal trend, the resident population of juveniles residing in YDCs will be expected to return to the previous levels of recent years. If, on the other hand, the recent decrease in the stock population represents any changes in policy and/or

practice with regard to the use of juvenile resources, it is expected to affect the accuracy of the projections and will require a downward adjustment of the projected populations.

**FIGURE 1**  
**YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTER (YDC) POPULATION TRENDS**  
**JANUARY 2000 – JANUARY 2008**



SOURCE: North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

## DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

Table 4 shows the distribution of the 7,973 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=4,108 or almost 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 a Level 3 disposition (commitment to a YDC) in 3.2% of the cases, ordered Level 2 (Intermediate) dispositions in 27.0% of the cases, and ordered the remaining 69.8% 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 715 cases (9.0%) 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>	145 (58.2%)	37 (14.9%)	67 (26.9%)	249 (3.1%)
<b>Serious</b>	1,528 (63.3%)	408 (16.9%)	478 (19.8%)	2,414 (30.3%)
<b>Minor</b>	4,108 (77.4%)	714 (13.4%)	488 (9.2%)	5,310 (66.6%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	5,781 (72.5%)	1,159 (14.5%)	1,033 (13.0%)	7,973 (100.0%)

SOURCE: FY 2006/07 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 (18.5%)	119 (47.8%)	84 (33.7%)	249 (3.1%)
<b>Serious</b>	1,135 (47.0%)	1,124 (46.6%)	155 (6.4%)	2,414 (30.3%)
<b>Minor</b>	4,387 (82.6%)	906 (17.1%)	17 (0.3%)	5,310 (66.6%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	5,568 (69.8%)	2,149 (27.0%)	256 (3.2%)	7,973 (100.0%)

SOURCE: FY 2006/07 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)	<u>Level 2/Level 3</u> Level 1: 41 (28.3%) Level 2: 76 (52.4%) Level 3: 28 (19.3%) n = 145	<u>Level 3</u> Level 1: 0 (0.0%) Level 2: 21 (56.8%) Level 3: 16 (43.2%) n = 37	<u>Level 3</u> Level 1: 5 (7.5%) Level 2: 22 (32.8%) Level 3: 40 (59.7%) n = 67	Level 1: 46 (18.5%) Level 2: 119 (47.8%) Level 3: 84 (33.7%) n = 249 (3.1%)
<b>Serious</b> (Class F - Class A1)	<u>Level 1/Level 2</u> Level 1: 895 (58.6%) Level 2: 632 (41.3%) Level 3: 1 (0.1%) n = 1,528	<u>Level 2</u> Level 1: 144 (35.3%) Level 2: 262 (64.2%) Level 3: 2 (0.5%) n = 408	<u>Level 2/Level 3</u> Level 1: 96 (20.1%) Level 2: 230 (48.1%) Level 3: 152 (31.8%) n = 478	Level 1: 1,135 (47.0%) Level 2: 1,124 (46.6%) Level 3: 155 (6.4%) n = 2,414 (30.3%)
<b>Minor</b> (Class 1 - Class 3)	<u>Level 1</u> Level 1: 3,896 (94.8%) Level 2: 212 (5.2%) Level 3: 0 (0.0%) n = 4,108	<u>Level 1/Level 2</u> Level 1: 337 (47.2%) Level 2: 377 (52.8%) Level 3: 0 (0.0%) n = 714	<u>Level 2</u> Level 1: 154 (31.5%) Level 2: 317 (65.0%) Level 3: 17 (3.5%) n = 488	Level 1: 4,387 (82.6%) Level 2: 906 (17.1%) Level 3: 17 (0.3%) n = 5,310 (66.6%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	Level 1: 4,832 (83.6%) Level 2: 920 (15.9%) Level 3: 29 (0.5%) n = 5,781 (72.5%)	Level 1: 481 (41.5%) Level 2: 660 (57.0%) Level 3: 18 (1.5%) n = 1,159 (14.5%)	Level 1: 255 (24.7%) Level 2: 569 (55.1%) Level 3: 209 (20.2%) n = 1,033 (13.0%)	Level 1: 5,568 (69.8%) Level 2: 2,149 (27.0%) Level 3: 256 (3.2%) n = 7,973 (100.0%)

SOURCE: FY 2006/07 Disposition Simulation Data, NC-JOIN/NCSPAC

**NOTE:** In FY 2006/07, there were 715 cases (9.0%) 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.