

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTER POPULATION PROJECTIONS: FISCAL YEAR 2019 TO FISCAL YEAR 2023

Introduction

North Carolina General Statutes §§ 164-40(b) and 164-42.1(b) direct the North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission to develop a computerized simulation model to be used to prepare Youth Development Center (YDC) population¹ projections and to help assess North Carolina's long-term resource needs for juvenile dispositions. The projections are prepared in conjunction with the North Carolina Department of Public Safety's Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice (DACJJ). The computer simulation model used to project the juvenile population relies on empirical information about how juveniles are processed through the juvenile justice system using data extracted from the North Carolina Juvenile Online Information Network (NC-JOIN), DACJJ's juvenile management information system.

The YDC projections contained herein were completed in two parts. The Sentencing Commission prepared YDC population projections for all juveniles adjudicated delinquent and disposed on or after July 1, 2018 (new population) and for all juveniles committed to a YDC as of June 30, 2018 (YDC stock population), the beginning of the current projection period. The final combined projections take into account the decline of the stock population and the buildup of the new YDC population (new YDC commitments that occur through the imposition of a Level 3 disposition or as a result of a probation violation or a revocation of post-release supervision (PRS)).

Youth Development Center Population Projections and Capacity

In 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Act (JJRA).² The JJRA increases the age of juvenile jurisdiction so that most 16- and 17-year-olds facing criminal charges may have their cases disposed through the juvenile justice system rather than the adult criminal justice system.³ In addition, the JJRA includes other provisions intended to affect who comes in contact with the juvenile justice system, such as school-justice partnerships designed to reduce school-based referrals to juvenile courts and juvenile justice training for law enforcement officers.⁴

The changes to the juvenile justice system with the JJRA are expected to have an impact on YDC admissions, YDC releases, and length of stay (LOS) – all critical factors in projecting the YDC population. Raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction will increase the number of youth in the juvenile justice system by adding a new population of 16- and 17-year-olds and by extending the number of years available for

¹ Throughout this document, any reference to the YDC population includes juveniles on-campus and off-campus (e.g., home visit, community commitment, hospitalization, escape).

² North Carolina Session Law (hereinafter S.L.) 2017-57, s. 16D.4. Additional information can be found at: https://www.nccourts.gov/assets/inline-files/JuvenileReinvestmentFactSheet_05012017.pdf.

³ The increase in the age of juvenile jurisdiction will apply to 16- and 17-year-olds at the time of their alleged offense who have no prior adult convictions and are charged with Class H or Class I felonies or non-motor vehicle misdemeanors. This change in jurisdiction applies to offenses committed on or after December 1, 2019.

⁴ S.L. 2017-57, s. 16D.4.(aa) and (bb).

youth to be under the jurisdiction of the system. Any shifts in policy and/or practice with regard to the implementation of the JJRA, as well as budgetary allocations for and use of dispositional resources (e.g., community programs) will likely impact the accuracy of the projections. Empirical information on these practices will not be available until complaints are processed through the juvenile justice system under the new law.

For new admissions, two populations are being projected – the population of 10- to 15-year-olds currently under juvenile jurisdiction and the population of 16- and 17-year-olds who will be under juvenile jurisdiction beginning in December 2019. The projected population of 10- to 15-year-olds is based on FY 2018 delinquent disposition and YDC stock data; the projected population of 16- and 17-year-olds is based on FY 2018 adult conviction data.

Table 1 shows the projected YDC population and capacity over the five-year projection period. YDC capacity was provided by DACJJ. These YDC population projections take into account the extension of juvenile jurisdiction, which occurs during the second year of the projection period (FY 2020). Resource needs are expected to increase over the period with a projected YDC population of 213 YDC for FY 2019 and 287 for FY 2023.⁵ A comparison of the projections with YDC capacity indicates that the projected YDC population will be within available YDC capacity during the projection period. The YDC stock population was 220 on June 30, 2018, and 217 on November 28, 2018.⁶

The current projection is higher than the previous projection primarily as a result of a 25% increase in Level 3 dispositions over the past year (from 80 to 100). A decrease in the rate of YDC releases and an overall increase in the YDC population also contributed to a higher projection. Substantial changes from year to year on key components of the projections (e.g., admissions, releases, and LOS) can affect their accuracy.

Figure 1 illustrates the historical accuracy of the first year of the juvenile resource projections for the previous five projections in relation to the actual minimum and maximum YDC populations for each fiscal year. Given the small population in YDCs and the substantial fluctuations over the course of the year, the accuracy of the juvenile projections is assessed by examining the projected population within the context of the lowest and highest YDC populations over the fiscal year. Ideally, the projection should be closer to the highest population of the fiscal year. In examining the projections since FY 2014, the projected YDC population was typically within the range of the lowest and highest YDC populations for any given fiscal year and usually closest to the highest population.

⁵ Separate housing units are required for male and female juveniles. Of the projected YDC beds needed for each year of the five-year projections, 92% are for males.

⁶ DACJJ's *Committed Youth Report*.

Table 1
Youth Development Center (YDC) Population Projections and Capacity

Fiscal Year	YDC Population as of June 30 ⁷				YDC Capacity ⁸	Difference between Current Projection and Capacity ⁹
	Previous Combined Projection ¹⁰	Current Juvenile Justice Population	Expanded Juvenile Justice Population	Current Combined Projection ¹⁰		
2019	180	213	N/A	213	248	35
2020	201	219	13	232	278	46
2021	245	225	51	276	278	2
2022	254	227	56	283	308	25
2023	N/A	230	57	287	308	21

Note: Prepared in conjunction with the Department of Public Safety's Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice

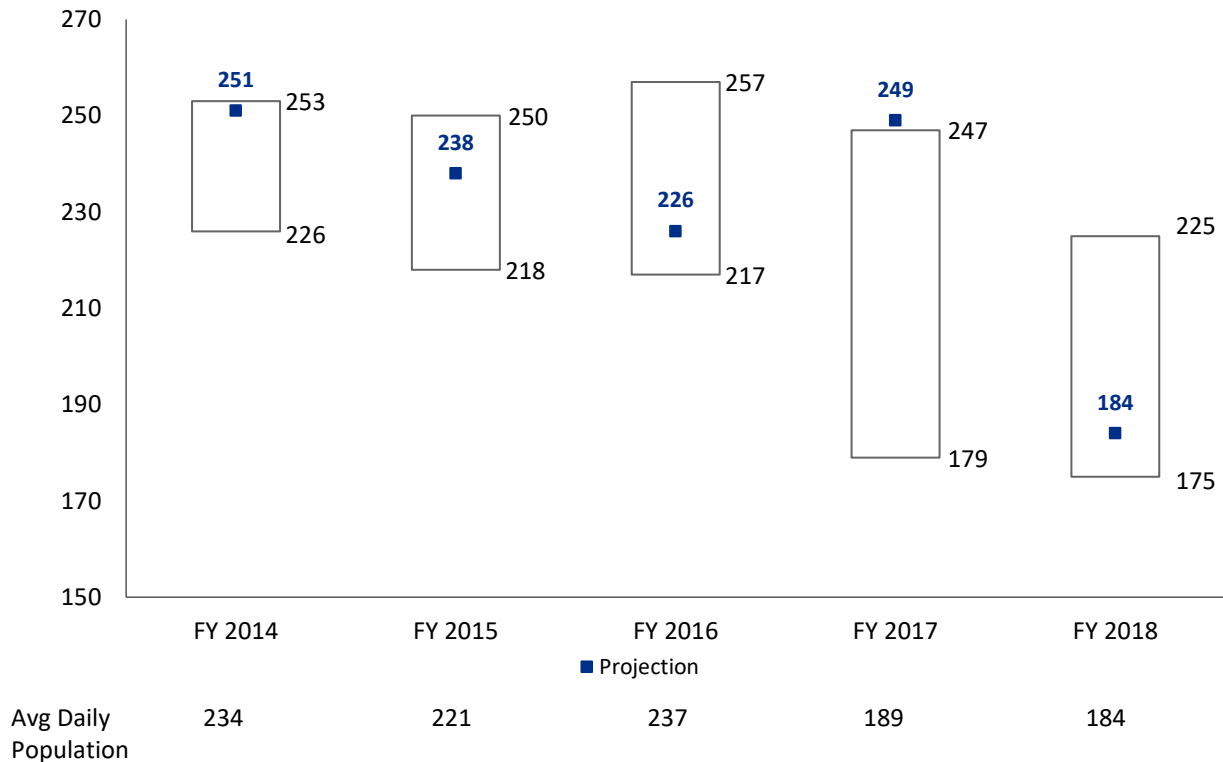
⁷ These projections include juveniles on-campus and off-campus (e.g., home visit, community commitment, hospitalization, escape).

⁸ YDC capacity is contingent on staffing patterns in order to meet required ratios. YDC capacity does not include community commitment placements or transition step down beds, which are alternatives to YDC placement for some juveniles in this population, for all or part of commitment. Per S.L. 2017-57, a new YDC will be constructed (Section 36.2 (d)), and is expected to open in February 2022.

⁹ Positive numbers indicate that the current projected population is lower than capacity, while negative numbers indicate that the current projected population is higher than capacity.

¹⁰ Includes both the current juvenile justice population (10- to 15-years-old at age of offense), and beginning in FY 2020, the expanded juvenile justice population.

Figure 1
A Comparison of the Actual Minimum and Maximum Population with the Projected YDC Population
FY 2014 to FY 2018 Projections



Note: YDC population figures (projected and actual) include juveniles on-campus and off-campus (e.g., home visit, community commitment, hospitalization, escape).

SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission; NC Department of Public Safety, Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice

Assumptions

The projections are based on the following assumptions that were determined using empirical data from the most recent fiscal year (FY 2018):

- **Growth Rates:** The projections assume no growth in delinquent dispositions for the first year, one percent growth in the second year, and two percent growth for the remaining years of the projection period. The growth rates are based on census projections for North Carolina’s youth population,¹¹ juvenile justice indicators,¹² and the implementation of the JJRA beginning in 2019.
- **YDC Admission Type:** In FY 2018, 47% of all YDC admissions resulted from a delinquent complaint, 44% from a probation violation, and 9% from a revocation of PRS. The distribution of

¹¹ www.demog.state.nc.us (2018).

¹² In FY 2014, the rate of delinquent complaints was 22 per 1,000 juveniles compared to a rate of 19 per 1,000 in FY 2018, with overall declines noted since the late 1990s (DACJJ). From CY 2012 to CY 2016, overall arrests for index crimes committed by juveniles under the age of 16 dropped 24% (*Crime in North Carolina – 2016*, State Bureau of Investigation, <http://crimereporting.ncsbi.gov>). Delinquent complaints (Class A-I felonies and Class A1-3 misdemeanors) decreased 17% from FY 2014 to FY 2018 and 3% from FY 2017 to FY 2018 (DACJJ).

YDC admissions is assumed to match the distribution from FY 2018. The median lag-time between the imposition of a probation disposition and commitment to a YDC for a probation violation was 10 months. The median lag-time between release from a YDC onto PRS and revocation was 5 months.

- *Level 3 Dispositions:* In FY 2018, 3% of juveniles adjudicated delinquent received a Level 3 disposition (i.e., YDC commitment). Over the projection period, the rate of Level 3 dispositions for juveniles adjudicated delinquent is assumed to match the rate from FY 2018.
- *YDC Length of Stay:* The YDC average LOS was 13 months for all adjudicated juveniles, including juveniles committed to a YDC for a new adjudication, probation violation, or a revocation of PRS. The YDC average LOS for the projection period is assumed to match the average LOS for juveniles released during FY 2018.
- *JJRA:* Until empirical data are available on how complaints are processed under the JJRA, the anticipated increase in the age of juvenile jurisdiction requires several assumptions. The estimate for the number of 16- and 17-year-olds who will come under juvenile jurisdiction originates from adult conviction data and assumes that juveniles will be equally likely to receive an adjudication as an adult conviction.¹³ The YDC commitment rate for 16- and 17- year-olds is assumed to match the five-year average rate, using data on 15-year-olds where possible. The projections also assume that resources currently available for 10- to 15-year-olds will also be available for 16- and 17-year-olds (e.g., dispositional alternatives to commitment).
- *Court Practices and Policy Changes:* Although the five-year projections account for the increase in the age of juvenile jurisdiction, the projections assume no other changes in judicial or prosecutorial behavior. In addition, the projections do not incorporate any potential increases or decreases in the YDC population due to budgetary or policy-driven changes implemented by DACJJ and/or other agencies that provide services for juveniles.

FY 2018 Juvenile Delinquent Dispositions

The Juvenile Disposition Chart (see Table 2) and the empirical data from the latest available fiscal year (for 10-to 15-year-olds and assumptions for 16- and 17-year-olds), in conjunction with the June 30, 2018 stock population, form the basis of the five-year resource projections. This section details information on the 3,780 delinquent dispositions in FY 2018, including offense classification, delinquency history level, and disposition level.¹⁴

The court's selection of dispositional alternatives is governed by statute through a graduated sanctions chart that classifies juvenile offenders according to the seriousness of their adjudicated offense (i.e., offense classification) and the degree and extent of their delinquent history (i.e., delinquency history level). A Level 1 or community disposition offers the court less restrictive dispositional alternatives (e.g., probation, community-based programs). A Level 2 or intermediate disposition is generally more

¹³ In FY 2018, there were 2,517 convictions for 16- and 17-year-olds who had no prior adult convictions and were convicted of Class H or Class I felonies or non-motor vehicle misdemeanors.

¹⁴ A delinquent disposition is identified from NC-JOIN records as the disposition imposed for the most serious adjudicated offense for a given disposition hearing date during a fiscal year. Using this definition, 9% of the juveniles with a delinquent disposition in FY 2018 were represented in the disposition data more than once.

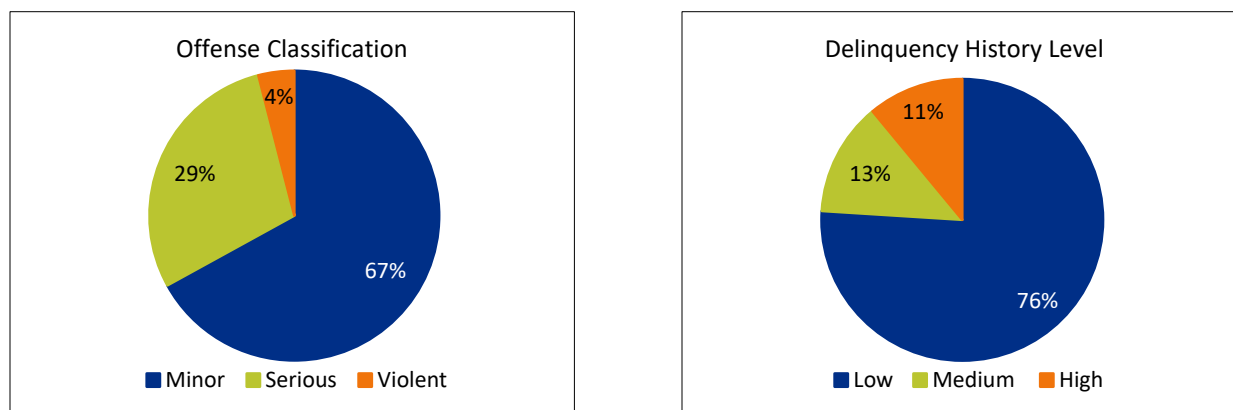
restrictive than a Level 1 disposition and includes options such as intensive probation, group home placements (e.g., multipurpose group homes), regimented training programs, and house arrest. A Level 3 or commitment disposition provides the most restrictive sanction available to a juvenile court judge – commitment to the DACJJ for placement in a YDC.

Table 2
Juvenile Disposition Chart

Offense Classification	Delinquency History Level		
	Low 0-1 Points	Medium 2-3 Points	High 4 or More Points
Violent Class A-E Felonies	Level 2 or 3	Level 3	Level 3
Serious Class F-I Felonies Class A1 Misdemeanors	Level 1 or 2	Level 2	Level 2 or 3
Minor Class 1, 2, 3 Misdemeanors	Level 1	Level 1 or 2	Level 2

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the 3,780 delinquent dispositions by offense classification and delinquency history level. Of the juveniles adjudicated delinquent in FY 2018, 4% were adjudicated for a violent offense, 29% for a serious offense, and 67% for a minor offense.¹⁵ Further, 76% of the dispositions involved a juvenile with a low delinquency history level, 13% involved a juvenile with a medium delinquency history level, and 11% involved a juvenile with a high delinquency history level.

Figure 2
Dispositions by Offense Classification and Delinquency History Level
Juveniles Adjudicated Delinquent

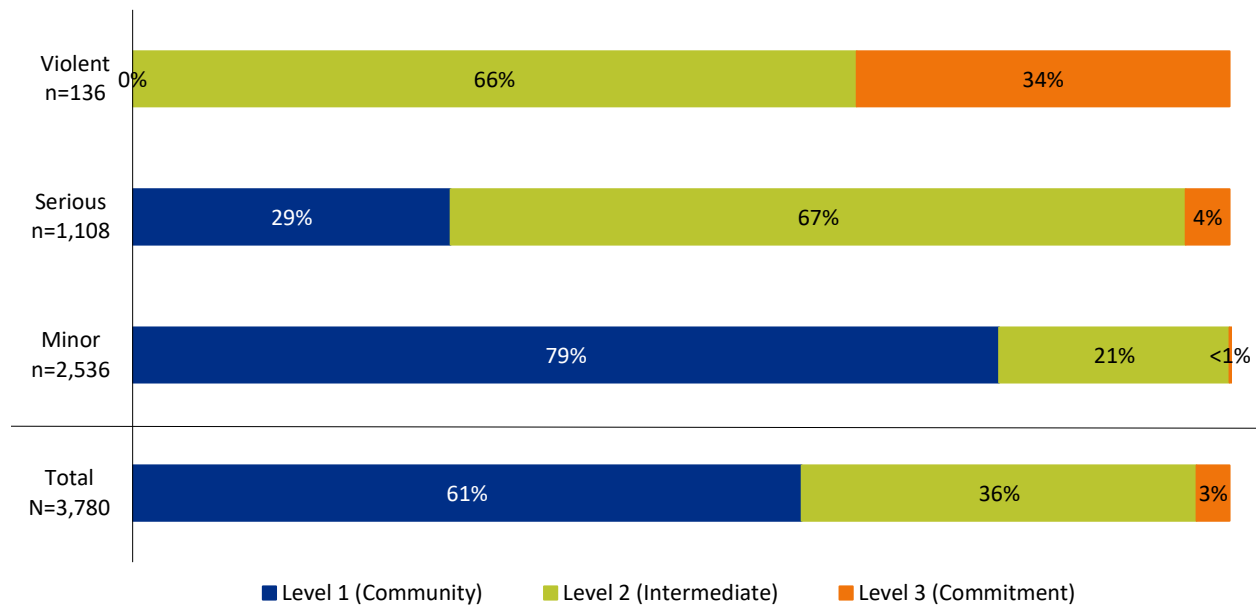


SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2018 Disposition Simulation Data

¹⁵ Overall, 75% (or n=2,847) of the 3,780 dispositions were for misdemeanor offenses. Of the 1,108 adjudications for a serious offense, 28% (or n=311) were for Class A1 misdemeanor offenses. The remainder were for Class F-I felony offenses.

Figure 3 summarizes dispositions imposed in FY 2018 by offense classification and disposition level. Overall, the court ordered Level 1 dispositions for 61% of the juveniles adjudicated delinquent, Level 2 dispositions for 36% of the juveniles adjudicated delinquent, and Level 3 dispositions for 3% of the juveniles adjudicated delinquent. Juveniles adjudicated for a minor offense were most likely to receive a Level 1 disposition (79%). Juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a violent or serious offense were more likely to receive a Level 2 disposition (66% and 67% respectively). Of the 100 Level 3 dispositions in FY 2018, 46% (n=46) were the result of an adjudication for a violent offense, 44% (n=44) for a serious offense, and 10% (n=10) for a minor offense.

Figure 3
Dispositions by Offense Classification and Disposition Level
Juveniles Adjudicated Delinquent



SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2018 Disposition Simulation Data

Table 3 shows how judges used dispositional resources given each combination of offense classification and delinquency history level. As indicated by the vertical “Total” column, the likelihood of the imposition of a Level 3 disposition increased as the seriousness of the offense classification increased (also see Figure 3). Similarly, the likelihood of the imposition of a Level 3 disposition increased as the delinquency history level increased. Overall, more than half (n=2,025) of the 3,780 dispositions involved juveniles with low delinquency history levels who were adjudicated for minor offenses (Class 1-Class 3 misdemeanors).¹⁶

¹⁶ There were 107 dispositions (3%) with a disposition not specified by the dispositional chart. These dispositions were used in the projections as imposed.

Table 3
Dispositions by the Dispositional Chart for Juveniles Adjudicated Delinquent

Offense Classification	Delinquency History Level			Total
	Low 0-1 Point	Medium 2-3 Points	High 4+ Points	
Violent A-E Felonies	Level 2/Level 3 Level 2: 77 (78%) Level 3: 22 (22%) n = 99	Level 3 Level 2: 7 (58%) Level 3: 5 (42%) n = 12	Level 3 Level 2: 6 (24%) Level 3: 19 (76%) n = 25	Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 0 (0%) Level 2: 90 (66%) Level 3: 46 (34%) n = 136 (4%)
Serious F-I Felonies A1 Misd.	Level 1/Level 2 Level 1: 320 (42%) Level 2: 447 (58%) n = 767	Level 2 Level 1: 5 (3%) Level 2: 161 (95%) Level 3: 3 (2%) n = 169	Level 2/Level 3 Level 2: 131 (76%) Level 3: 41 (24%) n = 172	Level 1/Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 325 (29%) Level 2: 739 (67%) Level 3: 44 (4%) n = 1,108 (29%)
Minor 1-3 Misd.	Level 1 Level 1: 1,953 (96%) Level 2: 72 (4%) n = 2,025	Level 1/Level 2 Level 1: 40 (13%) Level 2: 262 (87%) n = 302	Level 2 Level 1: 4 (2%) Level 2: 195 (93%) Level 3: 10 (5%) n = 209	Level 1/Level 2 Level 1: 1,997 (79%) Level 2: 529 (21%) Level 3: 10 (0%) n = 2,536 (67%)
Total	Level 1/Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 2,273 (79%) Level 2: 596 (20%) Level 3: 22 (1%) n = 2,891 (76%)	Level 1/Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 45 (9%) Level 2: 430 (89%) Level 3: 8 (2%) n = 483 (13%)	Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 4 (1%) Level 2: 332 (82%) Level 3: 70 (17%) n = 406 (11%)	Level 1/Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 2,322 (61%) Level 2: 1,358 (36%) Level 3: 100 (3%) N = 3,780 (100%)

Note: In FY 2018, there were 107 dispositions (or 3%) with 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(d), juveniles adjudicated delinquent for an offense with a previous Level 3 disposition may be committed to a YDC. Finally, 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.

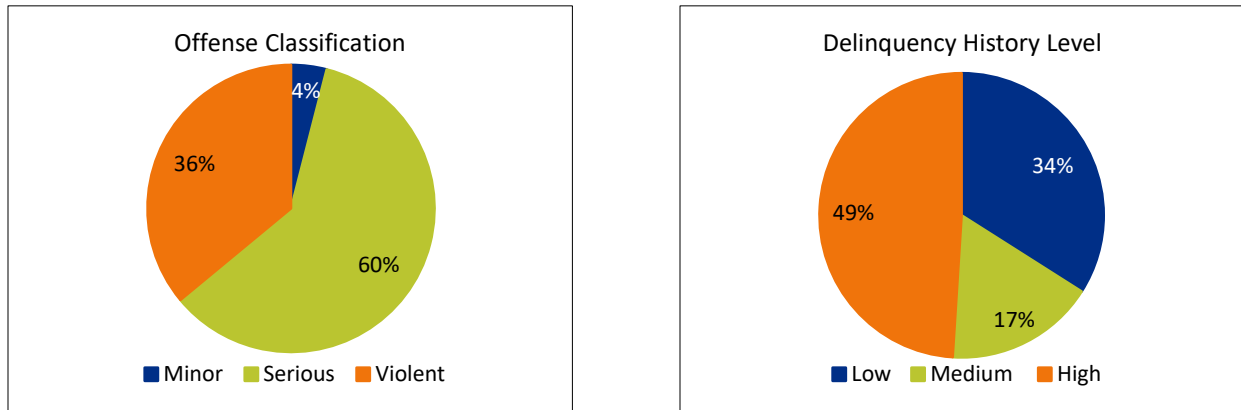
SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2018 Disposition Simulation Data

YDC Stock Population on June 30, 2018

The committed population or stock population – which represents the starting point of the projection – is the number of juveniles committed to a YDC as of June 30, 2018, the beginning of the current projection period. Figure 4 shows the distribution of the 220 juveniles committed to a YDC on June 30, 2018 by offense classification and delinquency history level. Almost all of the committed juveniles (92%) were adjudicated with a felony as their most serious offense; 36% were adjudicated for a violent offense, 60% for a serious offense, and 4% for a minor offense. Forty-nine percent of the juveniles had a high delinquency history level, 17% had a medium delinquency history level, and 34% had a low

delinquency history level. Overall, 52% were committed to a YDC due to a new delinquent complaint, 41% for a probation violation, and 7% for a revocation of PRS.

Figure 4
YDC Stock Population



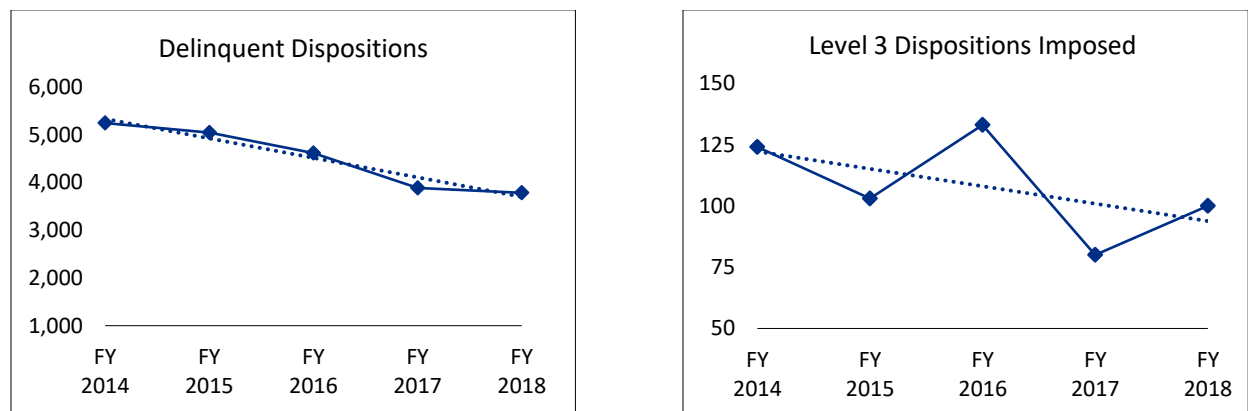
SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2018 Disposition Simulation Data

Juvenile Justice Trends

Changes in the juvenile justice system that affect the number of YDC admissions, the number of YDC releases, or the YDC LOS directly impact the accuracy of the projections. This section highlights juvenile justice statistics showing the year-to-year variations in several key components used to produce the projections.

Figure 5 presents trend data on delinquent dispositions and Level 3 dispositions imposed. Over the past five fiscal years, the number of delinquent dispositions has decreased 28% (from 5,240 in FY 2014 to 3,780 in FY 2018). After declining 16% between FY 2016 and FY 2017, delinquent dispositions decreased 3% in the past fiscal year. Level 3 dispositions imposed have generally trended downward, with fluctuations every year, over the past five years. Notably, the number of Level 3 dispositions fluctuated between a high of 133 in FY 2016 and a low of 80 in FY 2017.

Figure 5
Juvenile Disposition Trends



SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2014 - FY 2018 Disposition Simulation Data

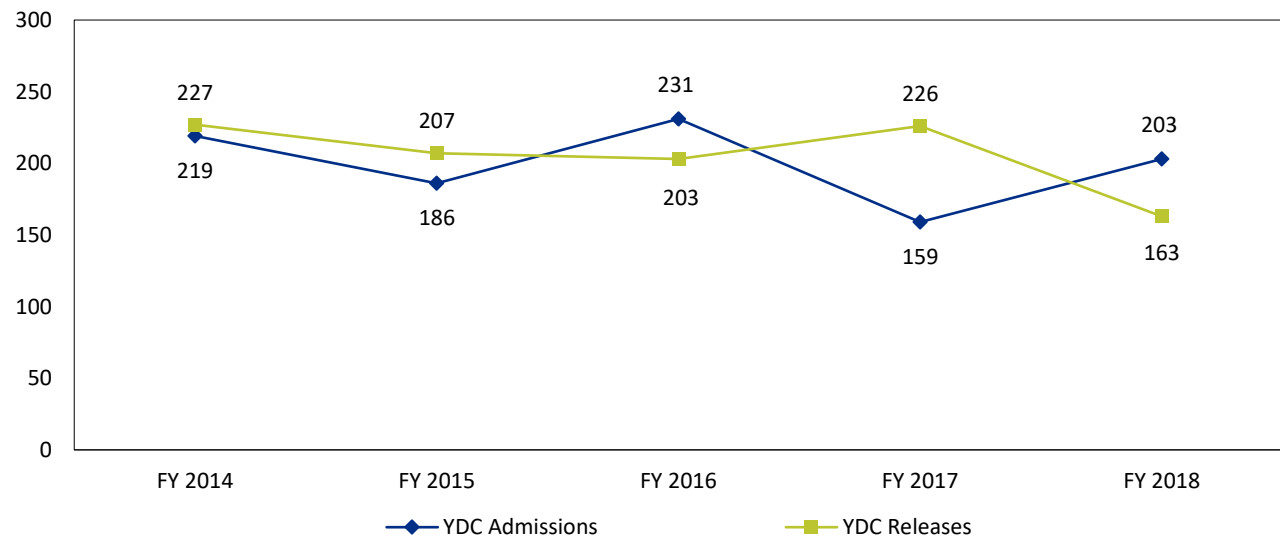
Admissions to YDCs and releases from YDCs decreased between FY 2013 and FY 2015. Since that time, YDC admissions and releases have fluctuated widely (see Table 4 and Figure 6). FY 2017 was notable for a 31% decrease in admissions and an 11% increase in releases compared to the year before. In FY 2018, however, admissions and releases reversed course with admissions increasing 28% and releases decreasing 28%. In FY 2018, the average number of YDC admissions per month was 17, while the average number of YDC releases per month was 14. The number of YDC releases (n=163) was the lowest in recent years.

Table 4
YDC Admissions and Releases

Fiscal Year	YDC Admissions			YDC Releases		
	Total Number	Percent Change	Average Number Per Month	Total Number	Percent Change	Average Number Per Month
2014	219	-4	18	227	-11	19
2015	186	-15	16	207	-9	17
2016	231	24	19	203	-2	17
2017	159	-31	13	226	11	19
2018	203	28	17	163	-28	14

SOURCE: NC Department of Public Safety, Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice

Figure 6
YDC Admissions and Releases



SOURCE: NC Department of Public Safety, Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice

Compared to the declines in delinquent dispositions and the fluctuations in Level 3 dispositions, YDC admissions, and YDC releases, the LOS of committed juveniles has remained more stable. In FY 2018, the

overall average LOS was 13 months, with little variance noted over the past five fiscal years (see Table 5). This year, the average LOS for juveniles adjudicated for a violent offense was 16 months. For juveniles adjudicated for a serious offense, the average LOS was 12 months, the lowest average in five years. The average LOS for juveniles adjudicated for a minor offense was 7 months, the lowest average since FY 2014.

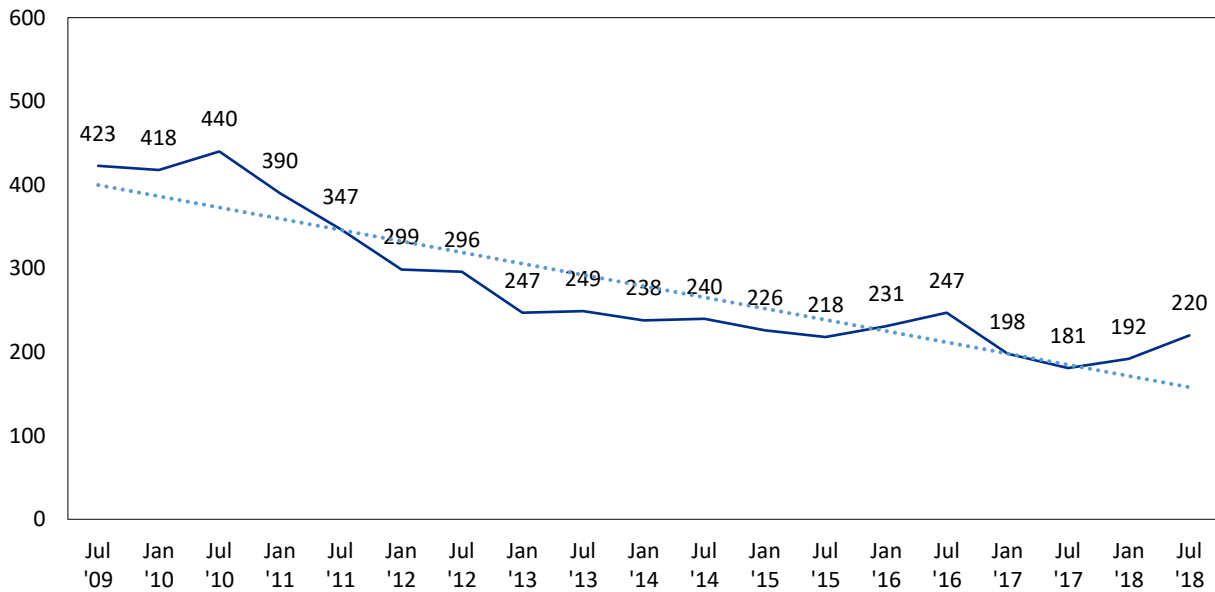
Table 5
Average Length of Stay for YDC Releases

Juveniles Adjudicated of a:	Length of Stay (in months) by Fiscal Year					% Change	
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	FY 2017 to FY 2018	FY 2014 to FY 2018
Violent Offense	17	19	17	16	16	0	-6
Serious Offense	13	13	13	14	12	-14	-8
Minor Offense	7	8	10	8	7	-13	0
Overall	13	14	14	13	13	0	0

SOURCE: NC Department of Public Safety, Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice

Figure 7 provides a historical examination of North Carolina’s YDC population. The YDC population has decreased 48% in the past ten years. The leveling off of the population between FY 2013 and FY 2016 was followed by another period of decline in population in FY 2017. However, FY 2018 showed an uptick in population back to levels closer to FY 2013 through FY 2016.

Figure 7
YDC Population Trends: July 2009 - July 2018



SOURCE: NC Department of Public Safety, Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice, *Committed Youth Report*