

Youth Development Center Population Projections: Fiscal Year 2018 to Fiscal Year 2022

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, 2017 (new population) and for all juveniles committed to a YDC as of June 30, 2017 (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: http://www.nccourts.org/News/Documents/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 and use of dispositional resources will likely impact the accuracy of the projections. Empirical information on these changes 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 2017 delinquent disposition and YDC stock data; the projected population of 16 and 17 year olds is based on adult conviction data.⁵

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 third year of the projection period (FY 2020). Resource needs are expected to increase over the period with a projected need for 184 YDC beds by June 2018 and 254 YDC beds by June 2022.⁶ 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 182 on June 30, 2017. The YDC population on November 27, 2017 was 182.⁷

The current projection is lower than the previous projection as a result of a substantial decline in dispositions (-16%) and a corresponding decline in Level 3 commitments (-40%). An increase in the rate of YDC releases and an overall decline in the YDC population also contribute to a lower projection this year. These types of changes in the juvenile justice system can affect the accuracy of the projections.

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 population 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 2013, 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 The projections use a five-year average of convictions imposed for 16 and 17 year olds.

⁶ Separate housing units are required for male and female juveniles. Of the projected YDC beds needed for each year of the five-year projections, 90% are for males.

⁷ DACJJ's *Committed Youth Report*.

Table 1
Youth Development Center (YDC) Population Projections
December 2017

**Prepared by the NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission in Conjunction with the
Department of Public Safety's Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice**

Fiscal Year End	YDC Population as of June 30 ^a				YDC Capacity ^c	Difference between Current Projection and Capacity ^d
	Previous Projection ^b	Current Juvenile Justice Population	Expanded Juvenile Justice Population	Current Projection		
2018	260	184	N/A	184	248	64
2019	261	180	N/A	180	248	68
2020	263	180	21	201	248	47
2021	266	183	62	245	308	63
2022	N/A	186	68	254	308	54

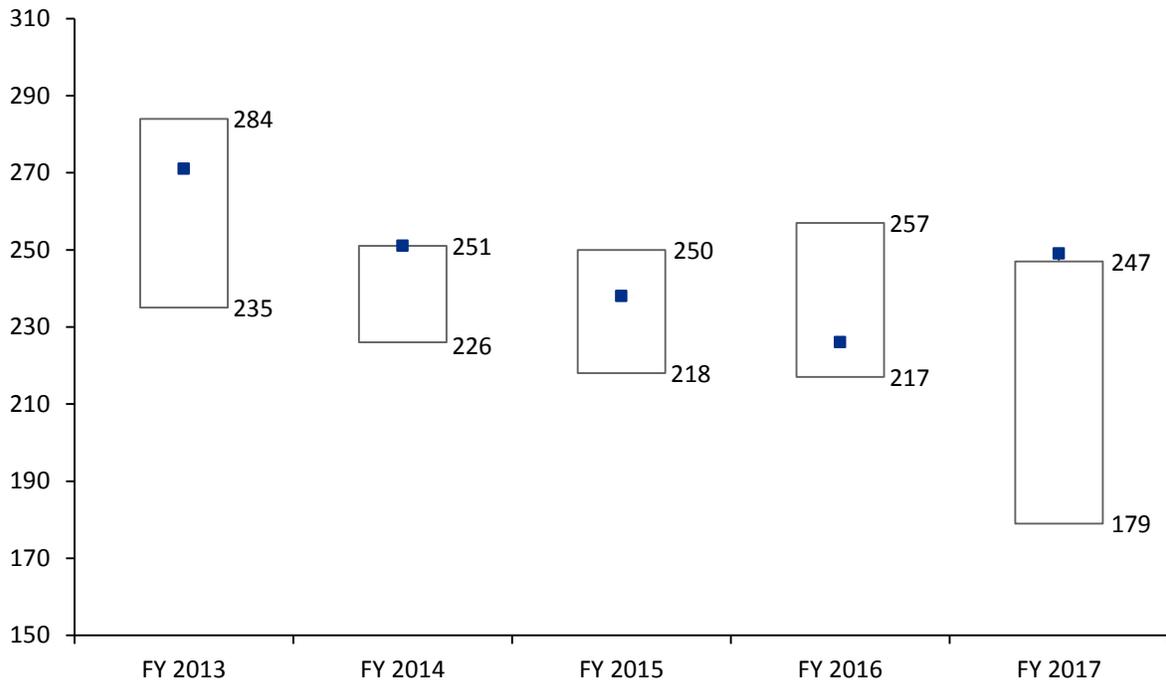
^a These projections include juveniles on-campus and off-campus (e.g., home visit, community commitment, hospitalization, escape).

^b Based on the current juvenile justice population (10 to 15 years old at age of offense).

^c 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 2021. This 60-bed facility is designed to allow for flexible use of housing units, either for detention or commitment purposes.

^d 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.

Figure 1
A Comparison of the Actual Minimum and Maximum Population with the Projected YDC Population
FY 2013 to FY 2017 Projections



▪ Projections: 271 251 238 226 249

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 2017):

- **Growth Rates:** The projections assume no growth in delinquent dispositions for the first two years, one percent growth in the third year, and two percent growth for the remaining two years of the five-year projection period. The growth rates are based on census projections for North Carolina’s youth population⁸, several juvenile justice indicators⁹, and the implementation of the JJRA beginning in 2019.

⁸ www.demog.state.nc.us (2017).

⁹ In FY 2013, the rate of delinquent complaints was 23 per 1,000 juveniles compared to a rate of 20 in FY 2017, with overall declines noted since the late 1990s (DACJJ). In addition, from CY 2011 to CY 2015 overall arrests for index crimes committed by juveniles under the age of 16 dropped 26%. (*Crime in North Carolina – 2015*, State Bureau of Investigation, <http://crimereporting.ncsbi.gov/>.) Delinquent complaints (Class A-I felonies and Class A1-3 misdemeanors) have decreased 16% from FY 2013 to FY 2017 and 6% from FY 2016 to FY 2017 (DACJJ).

- *YDC Admission Type:* In FY 2017, 44% of all YDC admissions resulted from a delinquent complaint, 41% from a probation violation, and 15% from a revocation of PRS. The distribution of YDC admissions is assumed to match the distribution from FY 2017. 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 6 months.
- *Level 3 Dispositions:* In FY 2017, 2% of juveniles adjudicated delinquent received a Level 3 disposition (or YDC commitment). Over the projection period, the rate of Level 3 dispositions for juveniles adjudicated delinquent is assumed to match the rate from FY 2017.
- *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 2017.
- *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 a an adult conviction.¹⁰ 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.
- *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 2017 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 to 17 year olds), in conjunction with the June 30, 2017 stock population, form the basis of the five-year resource projections. This section details information on the 3,884 delinquent dispositions in FY 2017, including offense classification, delinquency history level, and disposition level.¹¹

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 and the degree and extent of their delinquent history. 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 restrictive than a Level 1 disposition and includes options such as intensive probation, group home placements (e.g., multipurpose group homes), regimented

¹⁰ In FY 2017, there were 2,780 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.

¹¹ 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 2017 were represented in the disposition data more than once.

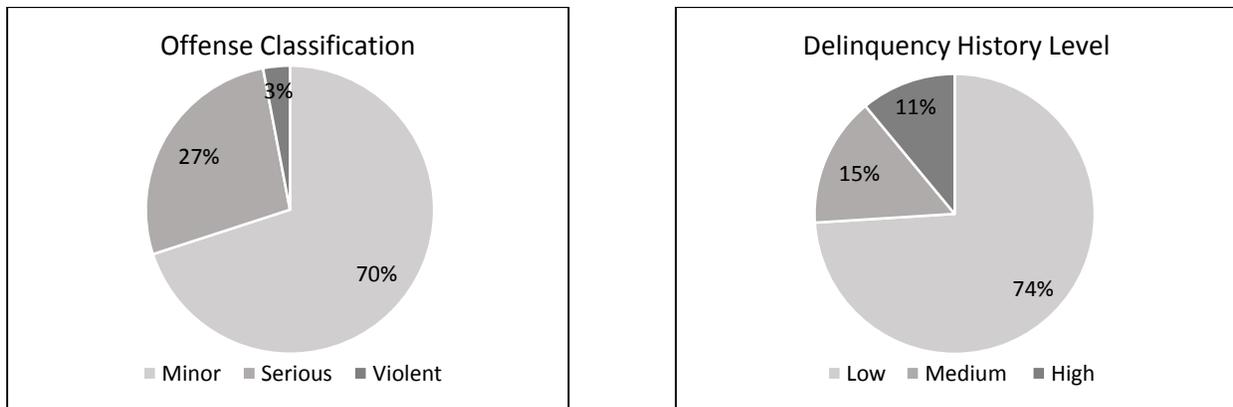
training programs, and house arrest. A Level 3 or commitment disposition provides the most restrictive sanction available to a juvenile court judge – commitment to the DACJJ for placement in a YDC.

**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 3,884 delinquent dispositions by offense classification and delinquency history level. Of the juveniles adjudicated delinquent in FY 2017, 3% were adjudicated for a violent offense, 27% for a serious offense, and 70% for a minor offense.¹² Further, 74% of the dispositions involved a juvenile with a low delinquency history level, 15% 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**



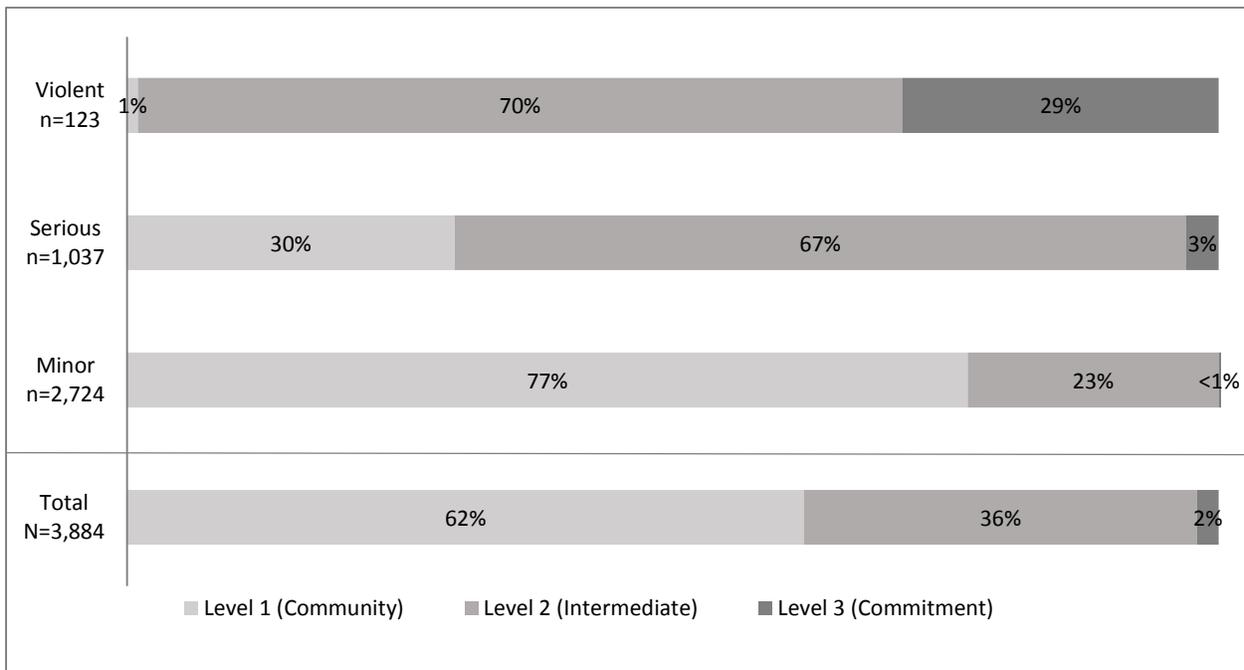
SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2017 Disposition Simulation Data

Figure 3 summarizes dispositions imposed in FY 2017 by offense classification and disposition level. Overall, the court ordered Level 1 dispositions for 62% of the juveniles adjudicated delinquent, Level 2

¹² Overall, 78% (or n=3,035) of the 3,884 dispositions were for misdemeanor offenses. Of the 1,037 adjudications for a serious offense, 30% (or n=311) were for Class A1 misdemeanor offenses. The remainder were for Class F-I felony offenses.

dispositions for 36% of the juveniles adjudicated delinquent, and Level 3 dispositions for 2% of the juveniles adjudicated delinquent. Juveniles adjudicated for a minor offense were most likely to receive a Level 1 disposition (77%). Juveniles adjudicated delinquent for a violent or serious offense were nearly equally likely to receive a Level 2 disposition (70% and 67% respectively). Of the 80 Level 3 dispositions in FY 2017, 45% (n=36) were the result of an adjudication for a violent offense, 39% (n=31) for a serious offense, and 16% (n=13) for a minor offense.

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



SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2017 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.¹³ Overall, more than half (n=2,099) of the 3,884 dispositions involved juveniles with low delinquency history levels who were adjudicated for minor offenses (Class 1 – Class 3 misdemeanors).

¹³ There were 106 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 1: 1 (1%) Level 2: 67 (81%) Level 3: 15 (18%) n = 83	Level 3 Level 2: 13 (62%) Level 3: 8 (38%) n = 21	Level 3 Level 2: 6 (32%) Level 3: 13 (68%) n = 19	Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 1 (1%) Level 2: 86 (70%) Level 3: 36 (29%) n = 123 (3%)
Serious F-I Felonies A1 Misd.	Level 1/Level 2 Level 1: 298 (44%) Level 2: 385 (56%) n = 683	Level 2 Level 1: 9 (5%) Level 2: 168 (94%) Level 3: 1 (1%) n = 178	Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 2 (1%) Level 2: 144 (82%) Level 3: 30 (17%) n = 176	Level1/Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 309 (30%) Level 2: 697 (67%) Level 3: 31 (3%) n = 1,037 (27%)
Minor 1-3 Misd.	Level 1 Level 1: 2,039 (97%) Level 2: 60 (3%) n = 2,099	Level 1/Level 2 Level 1: 51 (14%) Level 2: 322 (86%) Level 3: 1 (0%) n = 374	Level 2 Level 1: 1 (0%) Level 2: 238 (95%) Level 3: 12 (5%) n = 251	Level 1/Level 2 Level 1: 2,091 (77%) Level 2: 620 (23%) Level 3: 13 (0%) n = 2,724 (70%)
Total	Level1/Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 2,338 (82%) Level 2: 512 (18%) Level 3: 15 (0%) n = 2,865 (74%)	Level1/Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 60 (10%) Level 2: 503 (88%) Level 3: 10 (2%) n = 573 (15%)	Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 3 (1%) Level 2: 388 (87%) Level 3: 55 (12%) n = 446 (11%)	Level1/Level 2/Level 3 Level 1: 2,401 (62%) Level 2: 1,403 (36%) Level 3: 80 (2%) N = 3,884 (100%)

Note: In FY 2017, there were 106 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 2017 Disposition Simulation Data

YDC Stock Population on June 30, 2017

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, 2017, the beginning of the current projection period. Figure 4 shows the distribution of the 182 juveniles committed to a YDC on June 30, 2017 by offense classification and delinquency history level. The majority of the committed juveniles (86%) were adjudicated with a felony as their most serious offense; 30% were adjudicated for a violent offense, 66% for a serious offense, and 4% for a minor offense. Sixty percent of the juveniles had a high delinquency history level, 15% had a medium delinquency history level, and 25% had a low delinquency history level. Overall, 47% were committed to a YDC due to a new delinquent complaint, 43% for a probation violation, and 10% for a revocation of PRS.

Figure 4
YDC Stock Population



SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2017 Disposition Simulation Data

YDC Population Trends

As previously mentioned, 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 YDC statistics showing the year-to-year variations in several key components used to produce the projections.

From FY 2013 to FY 2016, admissions to YDCs, and correspondingly, releases from YDCs generally decreased (see Table 4). However, in FY 2017, YDC admissions declined more sharply (-32%) than previous years and reversed the 12% increase from FY 2015 to FY 2016. In FY 2017, the average number of YDC admissions per month was 13, while the average number of YDC releases per month was 19. The number of YDC releases was the highest since FY 2014 and marked the first year-over-year increase in recent years (11%). These developments will continue to be monitored given their influence on the resource projections.

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
2013	229	-20	19	255	-16	21
2014	219	-4	18	227	-11	19
2015	206	-6	17	207	-9	17
2016	231	12	19	203	-2	17
2017	158	-32	13	225	11	19

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

In FY 2017, 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, the lowest average in five years. For juveniles adjudicated for a serious offense, the average LOS was 14 months, a slight increase from previous years. Following an increase in FY 2016, the average LOS for juveniles adjudicated of a minor offense was similar to those found in FY 2013 through FY 2015.

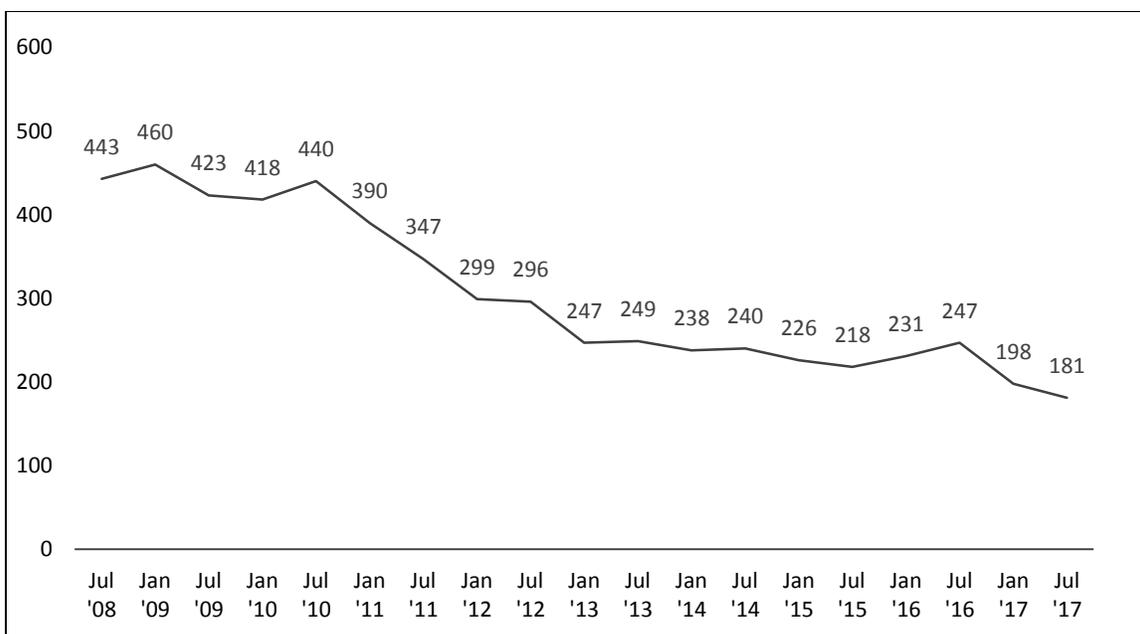
Table 5
Average Length of Stay for YDC Releases

Juveniles Adjudicated of a:	Length of Stay (in months) by Fiscal Year					% Change	
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	FY 2016 to FY 2017	FY 2013 to FY 2017
Violent Offense	18	17	19	17	16	-6	-11
Serious Offense	13	13	13	13	14	8	8
Minor Offense	7	7	8	10	8	-20	14
Overall	14	13	14	14	13	-7	-7

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

Figure 5 provides a historical examination of North Carolina’s YDC population. The YDC population has decreased nearly 60% over the past ten years. The leveling off of the population between FY 2013 and FY 2016 has been followed by another period of decline in population. In FY 2017, the YDC population declined steadily, ranging from a high of 247 (in July 2016) to a low of 179 (in June 2017).

Figure 5
YDC Population Trends: July 2008 - July 2017



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