

Strengthening community, restoring youth and improving safety: Thirteen years of Restorative Justice in Carlton County

Since 2010, Carlton County has been using restorative justice (RJ) to respond to juveniles cited for criminal behavior before they are charged in the court system. Carlton County Restorative Justice (CCRJ) has grown into one of the leaders in Minnesota, specifically in relationship to demonstrated success with a pre-charge approach, broad eligibility criteria for referrals to their program and the sustainable structure as a county funded program. Being situated within the Community & Family Initiatives Department allows CCRJ maximum flexibility to provide and coordinate effective responses to young people and meet the needs of youth, families and community.

The [CCRJ website](#) describes the program as:

- A trauma informed response and philosophy of work that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by wrongdoing or crime
- Promotes healing, accountability, and making amends
- Focuses on interpersonal relationships, human need, problem-solving, and strengthening the community
- Encourages active participation of those impacted by a specific offense such as victims, community members, concerned parties, and offenders
- Mend relationships and repair the harm caused to community.
- Changes focus from blame to change; from punitive to collaboration; from fault to restoration

CCRJ offers this approach to youthful offenders so they are better supported to learn from their wrongdoing and make amends without developing a criminal record. In addition, RJ allows victims of crime or wrongdoing to decide their level of participation initially and throughout the program. Community members also play a key role in deciding how offenders should be held accountable. By bringing together all of these perspectives in determining meaningful accountability, interpersonal and community relationships are mended, enhanced and strengthened.

CCRJ is committed to transparency, accountability and continual learning as not only values asked of youth referred to the program, but ones modeled in practice by the program. This report builds on annual reports created internally by looking at implementation and outcomes across CCRJ's history. The report structure is organized in accordance with the Fundamental Measures for Juvenile Justice "Key Questions" framework.¹

Context for this report

Researchers from the Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Health at the University of Minnesota's Medical School were selected from a competitive bid process by the Community & Family Initiatives Department to conduct an evaluation of the CCRJ Program.

U of M research expertise related to the specific potential of restorative justice to create meaningful accountability for young people while limiting the harmful aspects of traditional and punitive approaches informs the methods and structure employed in creating this report.

A summary of methods is included as Appendix A.

Findings

Key Question 1: How many youth are involved in various stages of the system?

CCRJ program

Between January 1, 2010 and December 31, 2022, the CCRJ program worked with 630 cases and 502 individual young people. Of the 502 young people 374 (75%) had only one case over this 13 year period, while the remaining 128 had two or more cases. Of the 630 cases referred, 99% (628) were enrolled and **92% (622) were successfully resolved**, with young people **completing their accountability plan over an average of 124 days**.

Comparable data from other agencies

Data shared by the Carlton County Attorney's Office (CCAO) and Arrowhead Regional Corrections (ARC) allow us to provide context for the CCRJ numbers and look at other stages of the legal system in Carlton County. These data are limited to the years from 2019 to 2022.

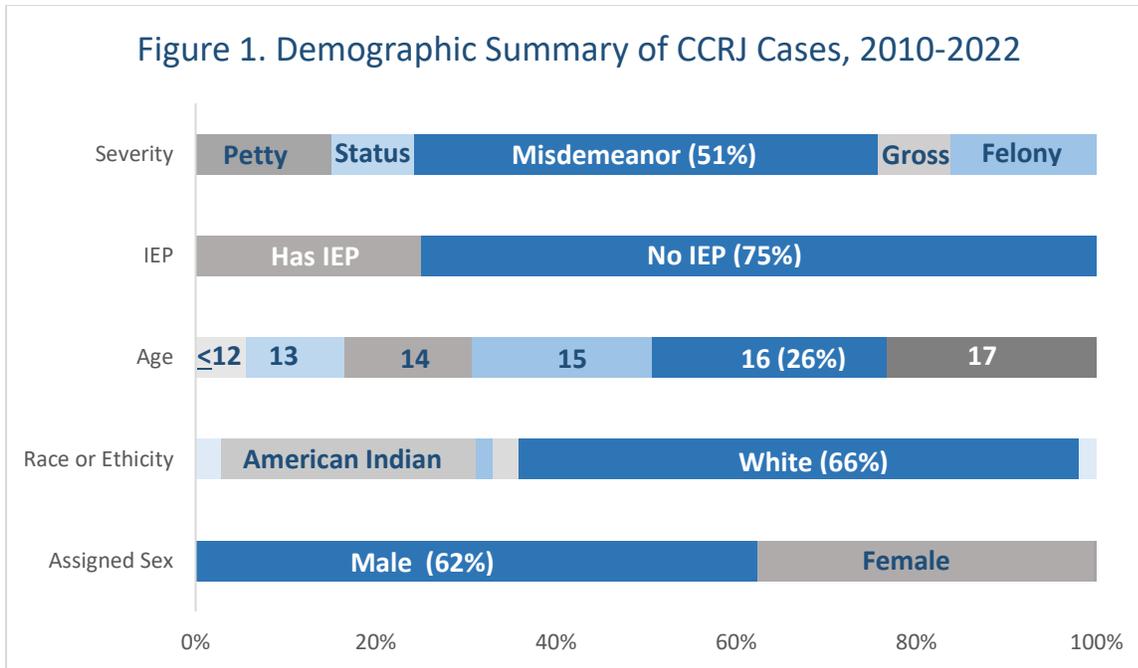
Between 2019 and 2022:

- CCRJ worked with 242 cases, 91% (220) of which were successfully resolved outside of the court system
- CCAO opened 356 juvenile cases in court, nearly half of which were petty misdemeanors, including traffic violations
- ARC reports 158 youth from Carlton County were on probation

Key Question 2: What are the key characteristics of the youth involved?

CCRJ program

Similar to findings in other settings, young people are largely arrested for misdemeanor level crimes, and these levels of arrest peak around age 16 (Figure 1). The majority of cases were from young people who did not have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and who were between the ages of 15-17, white, and male. Males and youth of color are disproportionately referred to CCRJ, compared to their share of the population. For example, males make up approximately 50% of the population but were 62% of youth of referred to CCRJ. Similarly, according to census data, American Indians made up approximately 6% of the Carlton County population, but accounted for 30% of youth referred to CCRJ.



Comparable data from other agencies

The only disaggregated data made available to provide additional context in this report are from ARC. The 2021-2022 ARC Comprehensive Plan includes probation case counts stemming from Carlton County in 2019. Per that report, there were 26 new juvenile probation cases in 2019, with 14 remaining on probation at the end of the calendar year for whom demographic data were shared. Of these 14 youth, 64% (9) were male; 64% (9) were American Indian.² An ARC recidivism study published in 2018 using data from 2015 states 47% of Carlton County juveniles on probation were American Indian.³ Other demographics are not disaggregated by county in either report.

Key Question 3: How did the youth become system involved?

Four law enforcement agencies (Carlton County Sheriff’s Office, Cloquet Police Department, Fond du Lac Police Department, Moose Lake Police Department) bring youth into the legal system in Carlton County. Youth cases are reviewed and diverted to CCRJ by the CCAO. When looking across agency data, the majority of juvenile arrests in Carlton County are for misdemeanor offenses, which is similar to other jurisdictions across the state and country.

CCRJ Program

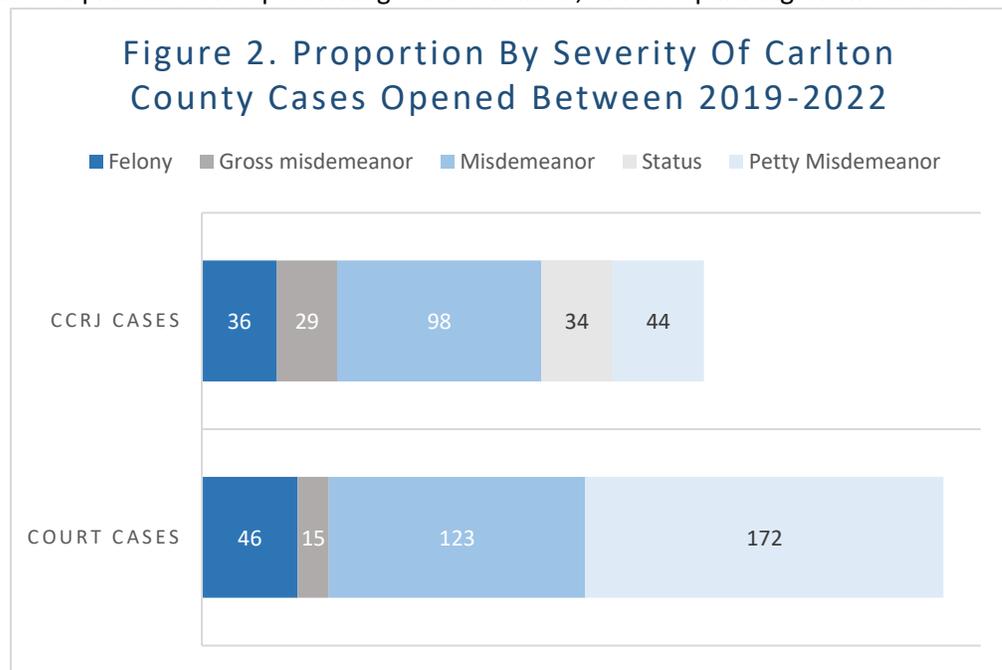
As shown in Figure 1 above, most young people are referred to CCRJ due to a misdemeanor level offense. However, because CCRJ occurs pre-charge, these are potential indicators of seriousness of an offense but not actual charges. Specifically, when looking at the most serious potential charge accompanying a referral across all years, 51% of the 630 cases were for a misdemeanor, 16% were for a felony, 15% for a petty misdemeanor, 9% were for a status offense (e.g., consumption, curfew, tobacco) and 8% were for a gross misdemeanor. Of the cases with felony-level offenses referred to CCRJ, 96%

were successfully resolved. **CCRJ is a leader in demonstrating RJ can be and is an appropriate response for any level of harm by young people.**

Comparable data from other agencies

Data shared by CCAO included descriptors based on severity of cases opened in court between 2019-2022. To compare to CCAO data, we calculated CCRJ results separately for 2019-2022 and again find misdemeanor level offense are the most common potential charge (Figure 2). More juvenile cases were opened in court by CCAO than were diverted to CCRJ in this time period. However, the largest type of case open in court was for petty misdemeanors, which may largely represent traffic offenses that are typically not addressed through RJ programs. Status offenses were not called out separately in the CCAO data, which may be due to a practice of not petitioning status offenses, or not separating them out as a specific type of offense. When charged, many status offenses are filed as misdemeanor or petty misdemeanors petitions.

Overall, misdemeanor cases represented 41% of RJ cases (98 of 241) and 35% of court cases (123 of 256). Felony cases were 15% of CCRJ cases and 13% of court cases.



The ARC report on recidivism also shared offense type data for Carlton County juveniles, noting that of 28 youth who were on probation in 2015, 64% (16) were on probation for a misdemeanor offense and 28% (7) for a felony offense.⁴

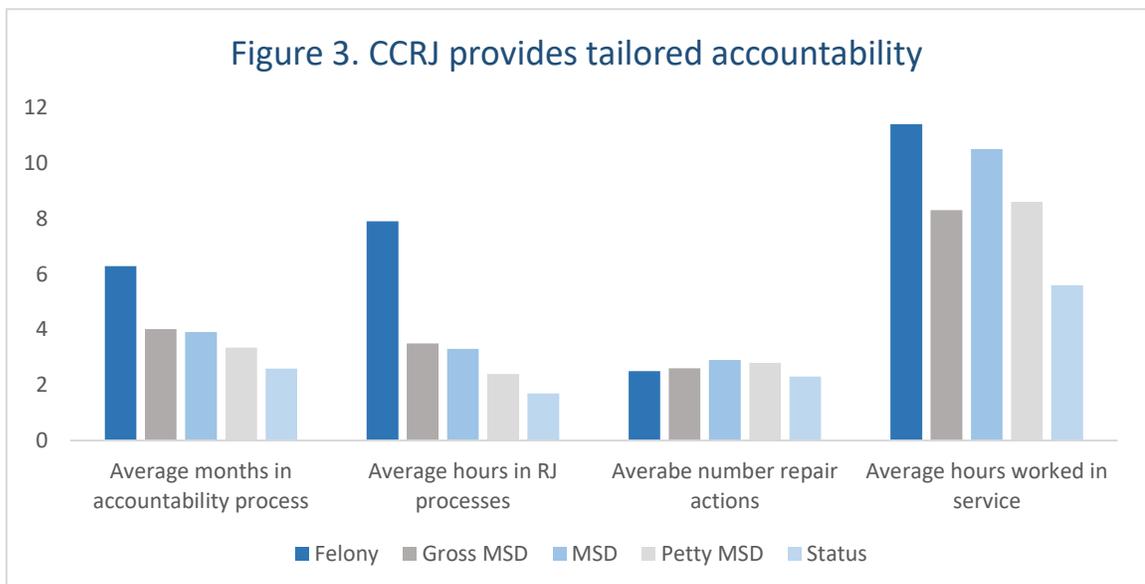
Key Question 4: How do youth move through the system?

There are many decision points that dictate whether and how a given young person’s actions become a legal case that moves through the system. These decision points include arrest, admission to detention, diversion, petition, adjudication and whether to admit to out-of-home placement or place on probation. Because different agencies have discretion at different decision points, to truly answer this question would require data from all relevant agencies, which is far beyond the scope of this report. Thus, for this question we focus on what happens within CCRJ, which is a pre-charge diversion program that provides an alternative to petition and adjudication. This means that when harm caused by a young person is resolved through CCRJ, the potential legal case is declined and there is no court record for that incident.

CCRJ Program

Key indicators of how youth moved through the CCRJ program from 2010-2022 indicate the program provides tailored accountability to meet the needs of people harmed by the behavior as well as the young people and their families. Indicators include:

- **99% of referred youth were enrolled in CCRJ**
- **Youth spend an average of 124 days in the accountability process**, including closer to six months for cases including a potential felony level offense and just over two months for cases including a status offense as the most serious potential charge (Figure 3)
 - Upon enrollment, youth begin a tailored restorative process, which includes a circle or conference process in which they and other community members discuss the what happened, who was impacted and what actions are needed to make things right. These processes frequently occur over multiple sessions, and end once parties have agreed on what youth's obligations are to address the harm and make things right and the youth has completed those obligations.
 - **On average, youth spent 3.8 hours engaged in restorative circle processes**, ranging from 7.9 hours for felony cases to 3.3 hours for misdemeanor cases to 1.7 hours for status offenses (Figure 3).

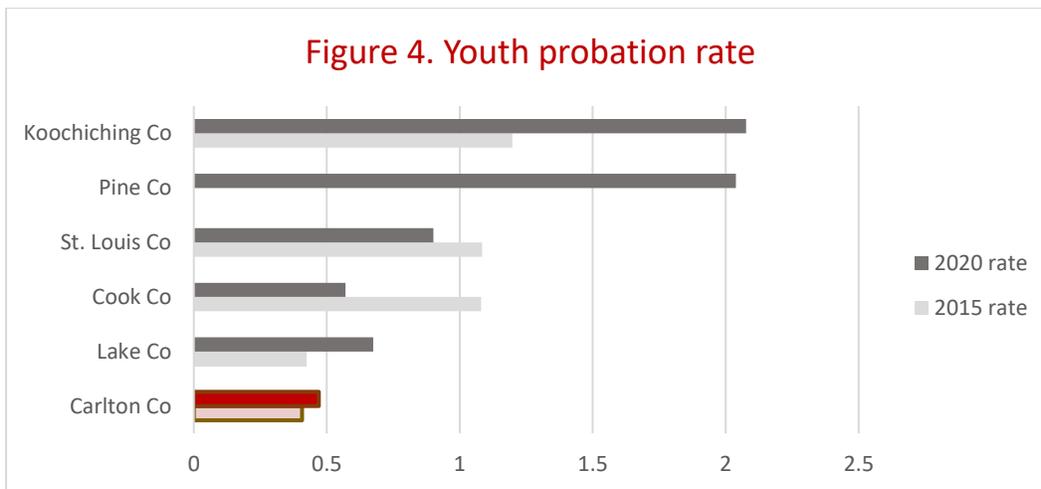


- **92% of incidents were successfully resolved without a court petition**
 - Successful resolution means youth completed both the accountability processes and the obligations in their accountability plans.
 - **On average, youth completed about 3 reparative actions per incident**, regardless of the potential seriousness of the offense (Figure 3). Reparative actions frequently included apology letters in addition to work crews, community service, restitution, getting into treatment that addressed chemical or mental health concerns, or additional classes to understand the impact or potential impact of their actions. While the type of actions did not differ greatly, the average number of hours worked as part of community service or work crew was highest for potential felony level offenses and lowest for status offenses.

- The remaining 8% of cases (those of youth who did not complete their accountability process) would have been returned to county attorney for possible prosecution/petition to court but we do not have information on what decisions were made after cases were returned.

Comparable data from other agencies

To explore whether youth are moving through the system at roughly equal rates among neighboring counties, we calculated youth probation rate. These numbers were calculated based on data published in the ARC recidivism report and data shared via email regarding the total number of youth on probation in each of the ARC counties in 2020, and with data shared via email from Pine County probation. These calculations indicate that in both 2015 and 2020, Carlton County had a lower youth probation rate compared to neighboring counties, with roughly .5% of 10-18 year olds on probation in Carlton County (Figure 4). While we cannot conclude lower Carlton County rates are due solely or even primarily to CCRJ, results demonstrate a comparably low rate of referrals to juvenile probation services, even including the number of youth who are referred to probation as part of diversion/CCRJ services.



*Youth probation rates calculated as number of youth on probation at each time point as proportion of estimated total county population of youth ages 10-18 per 2015 and 2020 census estimates. ARC numbers based on 2015 ARC recidivism report⁵ and data provided by email. Pine County data from 2020 shared via email, 2015 number was not shared/requested.

Key Question 5: Is the system fair?

Fairness frequently is measured by looking at disproportionality across decision points. Disaggregated data across decision points within Carlton County were not available

CCRJ Program

Of the 630 cases referred to CCRJ since 2010, 92% (622) were successfully resolved. To further understand whether there is disproportionality within this number, we disaggregated results by multiple demographic indicators. Results indicate some slight differences between demographic groups, but an overall rate of resolution consistently near 90% (Table 1). The 96% success rate for felony cases and cases on their third referral are especially noteworthy, while the slightly lower rate of success with youth identified as American Indian may be an area worth targeting for improvement.

Table 1. Disaggregated success rates in CCRJ

| Referral Number | Assigned Sex |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1st case: 92% | Male: 92% |
| 2nd case: 89% | Female: 92% |
| 3rd case: 96% | Non-binary: 100% |
| Offense Severity | Race or Ethnicity |
| Felony: 96% | American Indian: 88% |
| Gross MSD: 90% | White: 93% |
| MSD: 92% | All others: 100% |
| Petty MSD: 94% | |
| Status: 86% | |

Beyond high rates of success, CCRJ’s ability to develop and implement tailored accountability plans (as shown previously in Figure 3) also may be considered an indicator of fairness, such that youth who are referred for felony level offense spend an average of two months longer in the CCRJ program, with over twice as many process hours to resolve their case, as compared to youth referred for misdemeanor level offenses.

Comparable data from other agencies

No comparable data were available from other Carlton County agencies.

Other post-charge RJ programs in the region have reported an 82% success rate,⁶ while **a pre-charge RJ program in Minneapolis reported a 55% success rate, including a success rate of 53% with American Indian youth compared to 72% with white youth.**⁷

Key Question 6: How do youth change while in the system?

The CCRJ program does not systematically track data directly related to this question, and we were unable to locate any other relevant data for this question within Carlton County. However, national data for similar approaches may provide helpful context and indicate the kinds of data CCRJ might aim to begin collecting.

Evidence indicates that RJ increases youth skills and connections, making it more effective. Recent research found benefits from restorative practices with youth related to connectedness, peer relationships, connections to family, sense of safety, social and emotional literacy skills, mental health, resilience, and empowerment, and thus concluded that restorative practices can serve as foundations for developing healthy relationships and health-promoting behaviors.⁸ Research has also shown restorative accountability engenders empathy and learning in young people, rather than defiance.⁹ These types of studies may indicate why research consistently finds youth who are referred to the legal system do better when they are initially diverted out and have increasingly worse outcomes the deeper

their involvement goes into the system.¹⁰ Increasingly, evidence demonstrates it is restorative accountability, not just general diversion, that reduces future reoffending among young people more than traditional processes, whether restorative justice occurs in schools,¹¹ after police referrals,¹² in community-based settings with multiple referral sources,¹³ or as an alternative to prosecution¹⁴ or probation.¹⁵ A key benefit of *pre-charge* restorative justice diversion, such as the CCRJ program, is that the benefits of restorative justice are incurred without the collateral consequences of a juvenile petition, which can still impede future achievements of youth, given petition records are kept on file by the BCA until dismissal notices are received and DHS background checks do not distinguish between adult and juvenile records and disqualifications can be based on arrest records alone.¹⁶

Evidence indicates traditional legal system approaches are less likely than RJ to be effective. Conversely, having any contact with law enforcement during adolescence has been demonstrated to increase likelihood of arrest as a young adult by three times.¹⁷ Deeper legal system involvement during adolescence is associated with worse health and lower education,¹⁸ reduced employment opportunities,¹⁹ and sizable costs to society.²⁰ Further, imposed consequences (whether punitive or rehabilitative) engender defiance and disconnection, rather than remorse.²¹

Key Question 7: Does the system meet the needs of youth, their families, and the community?

Restorative justice is an accountability process that is designed to address needs, harms and obligations, distinguishing it from punitive accountability designed to determine blame and assign consequences.

CCRJ Program

While not all relevant data is consistently collected in the CCRJ program data, program leaders indicate identifying and addressing needs are essential elements of restorative processes and accountability plans. Needs that are identified and address include 1) needs of victims that arose because of the harm and are addressed to ensure healing; 2) needs of the community that are addressed to ensure a youth recognizes and reconnects to community expectations for good standing; and 3) underlying needs of youth that may have been contributing factors to the behavior that caused harm are addressed to reduce likelihood of the harmful behavior reoccurring because of persistent unmet needs.

Data that were available from CCRJ program records included a variety of actions in accountability plans. The most common actions included addressing needs of people harmed, community and youths' own needs that may have been underlying causes of behavior (Table 2.)

Table 2. Needs addressed through CCRJ: common accountability actions

| Victim needs | Community needs | Youths' underlying needs |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Apology letter | Community service | Urine analysis |
| Restitution | Attend school | Chemical dependency |
| Restitution through Work Crew | Ripple effect analysis | Therapy sessions or mental health evaluation |
| | | Rule 25 |

While Table 2 shows the variety of actions included in accountability plans, there is not currently sufficient data tracking to assess whether CCRJ approaches truly meet the needs of people who are harmed or adversely impacted by youth behavior. Better tracking of data is recommended, including whether people harmed are directly or indirectly involved in the accountability process and their perceptions of and satisfaction with the process and resulting accountability agreement.

Comparable data from other agencies

Per the 2021-2022 ARC Comprehensive Plan, young people may also be able to access services if they are charged through the court system. For example, assessments are conducted related to youth needs for chemical dependency and mental health services.²² A primary difference in such assessments are frequently the process by which such assessments are conducted, with assessments in correctional agencies often being imposed via court orders whereas assessments within restorative processes become part of the voluntary plan which is assigned via consensus by all involved in the process. We were unable to access data that indicated systematic tracking of victim or community needs being addressed through other agencies.

Key Question 8: What was the experience of youth in the system?

This question is designed to elicit information on the extent to which youth are kept safe and free from psychological or physical harm during system involvement, as well as potentially positive experiences, like growth, learning or bonding with a caring adult.

CCRJ Program

We were not able to conduct a full analysis of youth experiences in the CCRJ program, as qualitative data are not easily extracted from the current database. However, the following reflections or expressions of gratitude shared by CCRJ participants (youth clients, people harmed, volunteers) demonstrate the types of positive experiences that have occurred.

"Thank you for helping me stay on course; even when I was difficult. Because of you and your belief in me and the support given, I quit smoking pot, have stayed sober and graduated." - RJ Client

"I have learned that I can't solve all my problems with my fists." - RJ Client

"Though it's not easy, I'm going to come out on top of this mess a better man. If I take it one day at a time, I know I can do it." - RJ Client

"You helped me become the person you saw in me." - RJ Client

"Restorative Justice taught me who is affected by my decisions and how I can make it better." - RJ Client

"Thank you for being such an instrumental component in these young men's lives while they turn things around I am still moved by that powerful hour last week. What a gift." - Victim statement after participating in an apology conference

“Thank you for supporting the youth involved and my family equally well. I appreciate you communicating to the youth how my husband and I were impacted. The apology letters and restitution received were unexpected but very much appreciated.” – Victim of a home break in

“Thank you for holding the youth accountable in a supportive way that created opportunities for him (the youth) to recognize and reflect upon the harm he caused not only to my property but more importantly to our relationship. Your guidance helped us heal as a family.” – Victim of extensive property damage

“I thought I was volunteering to help youth and my community but discovered that I was the one who received the most. It is truly a blessing to participate in the process of restoration” - RJ Volunteer

Further, because restorative justice is based on principles of community-led and relational accountability, another way to understand youth experiences of this approach is to ensure programs inquire as to whether RJ programs implement with integrity to those underlying principles. Table 3 shares some RJ principles, along with supporting evidence that indicates CCRJ is implementing with integrity, and areas of potential improvement or growth.

Table 3. Indicators of CCRJ program integrity

| Description of RJ principle | Supporting evidence | Areas to improve |
|---|--|---|
| Collective accountability, not imposed consequences | Program leaders describe practices that include multiple perspectives and consensus decisions | Better track who participates in accountability process |
| Responsive, not formulaic | Strong evidence that RJ processes and accountability plans are tailored each individual and circumstance | |
| Aimed at healing, not punishment | Program leaders describe focus of accountability process is on meeting needs of all impacted; Actions described in accountability plans supportive of this claim; Example: stopped doing urine analyses to avoid punitive removal from program | |
| Humanizing, not biased | Broad program eligibility criteria indicates knowledge that higher impact or repeat behavior is generally reflective of higher needs; high success rates across demographic groups indicate welcome and inclusive programming | Continue to expand offering CCRJ to additional young people while also improving on effectiveness |
| Ongoing improvement and learning | Per program leaders, data tracking, staffing and accountability approaches have improved over time; purpose of ongoing evaluation is continual improvement and learning | Ensure succession planning to avoid program becoming less stable if leaders leave |

Comparable data from other agencies

No comparable data were available from other agencies.

Key Question 9: How much does it cost?

The Minnesota Management and Budget Office in 2018 published a Juvenile Justice Benefit-Cost Analysis.²³ The report concluded “diversion with services,” such as CCRJ, is a “proven effective” strategy resulting in \$1,830 of estimated future societal benefits to Minnesota, including reduced costs of \$720 per case, taking into account some of the costs to provide those services. Per the report, “Benefits [from diversion with services] accrue from decreases in crime, in health care expenses, and increases in employment resulting from changes in high school graduation. Because diversion saves money compared to the alternative sentence, probation, we find a negative cost” (p. 34). Cost estimates in the report were based on averages to administer diversion with services (\$830 per case) per a one-year collaboration with ten counties across Minnesota. Without a specific analysis of cost and cost savings comparing traditional and restorative approaches in Carlton County, we cannot be sure these are accurate estimates. Nonetheless, the calculations above allow us to estimate potential cost benefits of CCRJ and costs of CCAO court cases.

CCRJ Program

Applying the OMB numbers to CCRJ data indicates the monetary societal benefits accrued due to 574 successful RJ cases over 13 years would be in the range of \$1,050,420 (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Estimated societal cost benefits generated by 13 years of CCRJ exceed \$1 million



Comparable data from other agencies

Applying the OMB cost analysis to the more recent data for both CCRJ and CCAO illuminates additional contrasts. Specifically, CCAO reported 356 court cases opened from 2019-2022, while CCRJ had 242 successful pre-charge RJ cases in the same time period. The OMB analysis indicated that, on average, court cases have an overall cost to society of \$1,550 compared to pre-charge diversion approaches such as CCRJ, which on average avert \$720 in direct costs, while adding another \$1,110 in future societal

monetary benefits. Figure 6 applies this numbers to 356 court cases and 220 successful RJ cases in Carlton County between 2019 and 2022.

Figure 6: Estimated costs and savings of court vs restorative justice cases from 2019-2022

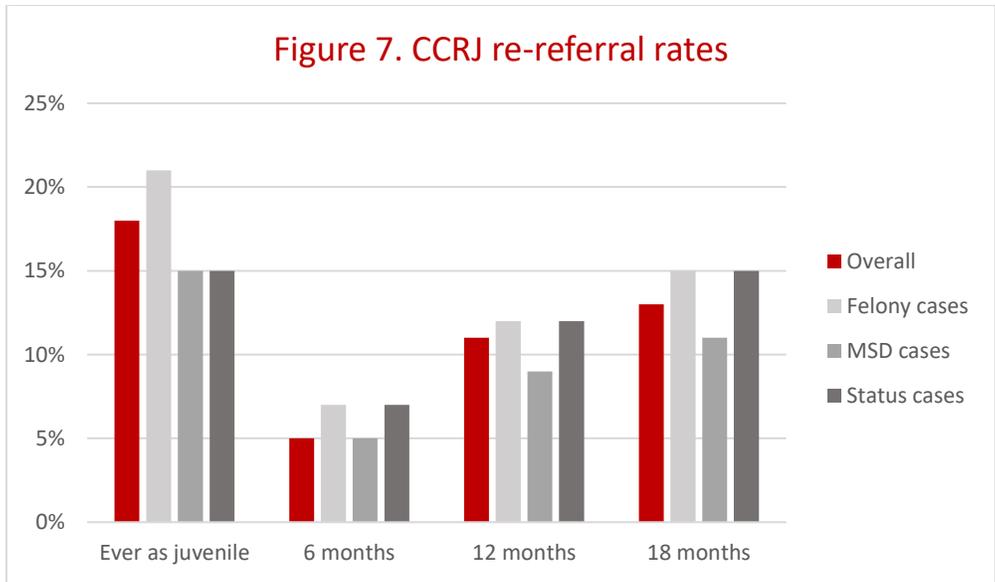


Key Question 10: What are the long-term measures of success?

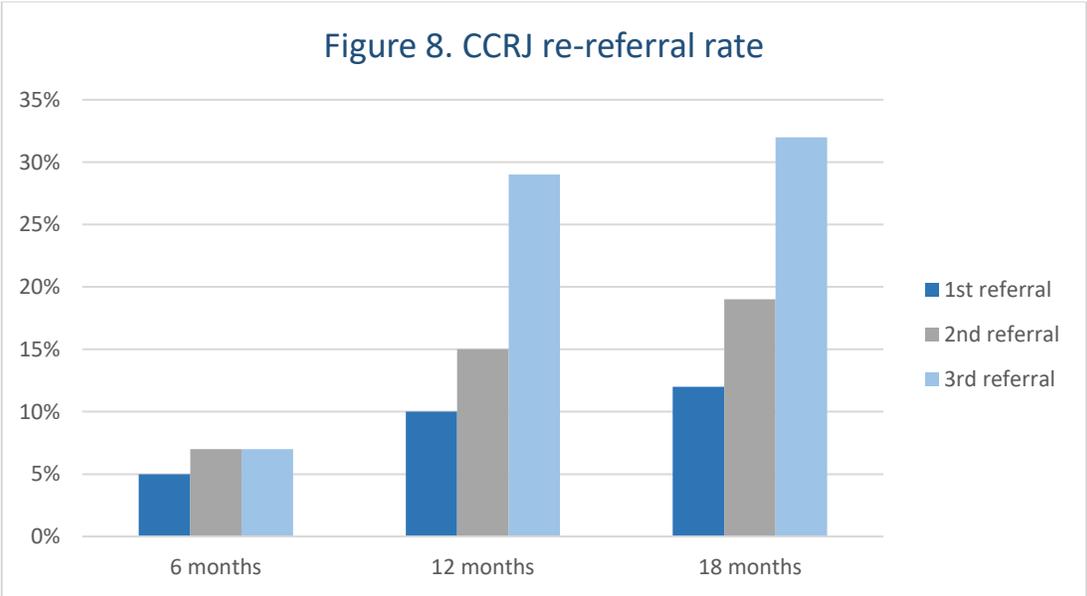
Within the legal system, indicators of success are generally limited to measures of how frequently and in what manner youth return to the justice system. Ideally, there are also positive measures such as employment and graduation, but these are frequently hard to track given data on those indicators exist within other systems and data privacy rules limit sharing. As such, results described here are limited to indicators of return or re-referral to the justice system. We use the term re-referral when discussing the CCRJ return rate, because recidivism generally refers to a youth having been adjudicated a second time after an initial adjudication. However, because CCRJ is a pre-charge diversion program, we cannot say whether either initial or repeat referrals to CCRJ would have resulted in a court adjudication.

CCRJ Program

The overall CCRJ re-referral rate is 18%. This means 82% of youth initially referred to CCRJ did not ever have a second referral as a juvenile. Similar to other data in juvenile systems, these numbers begin with very low re-referral rates within 6 months (5%), and grow slowly to 11% re-referral rate within one year and 13% within 18 months (Figure 7). We also disaggregated re-referral rates within the CCRJ program by the level of offense for which they are referred. Results demonstrate similar re-referral patterns, with only slight differences by offense level.



When disaggregating CCRJ re-referral rates by whether youth are on their first, second or third referral, we see larger differences within different time periods (Figure 8). These numbers especially begin to diverge 12 months after a referral. For example, at twelve months since a referral, youth on their third referral to CCRJ have re-referral rates much higher (29%) than youth on first (10%) or second (15%) referrals. In comparing Figure 7 and Figure 8, results may indicate that it is more important to improve effectiveness of responses for youth who are on their second and third referral, as opposed to by offense level.



Comparable data from other agencies

Given the differences illuminated in Figures 7 and 8, it is important to contextualize these data with available comparison data. However, it is worth noting that few reports publish this level of detail, especially in relationship to referral number. Nonetheless, in Table 4, we compare CCRJ results to several published reports and studies. Data indicate CCRJ appears to have a lower rate of re-referrals across comparable studies.

Table 4. Comparable recidivism and re-referral rates

| Recidivism or re-referral rate from comparable study | Comparable Rate | CCRJ rate |
|---|-----------------|------------|
| Compared to traditional processing | | |
| One-year recidivism/re-referral rate in 2015 (Carlton County probation, ARC recidivism report, p. 16) ²⁴ | 29% | 11% |
| One-year re-referral rate for youth on 2 nd referral (Ramsey County Attorney’s Office, 2010-2019, p. 23) ²⁵ | 57% | 15% |
| National average for traditional processing, overall rate of recidivism (Wilson and Hoge, 2013, p. 504) ²⁶ | 41.3% | 18% |
| Compared to other diversion programs | | |
| Six months no additional involvement in criminal justice system after program completion (Pine County Probation Comprehensive Plan, 2022, p. 16) ²⁷ | 12.5% | 5% |
| One-year re-referral rate for pre-charge diverted youth on 1 st referral (Ramsey County Attorney’s Office, 2010-2019, p. 24) ²⁸ | 12% | 10% |
| One-year re-arrest rate for pre-charge diverted youth overall (Goldstein et al., 2021, Philadelphia public schools) ²⁹ | 16% | 11% |
| One-year re-arrest rate for pre-charge RJ diversion program (Beckman et al., 2023, Minneapolis Police Department, limited to misdemeanor diversion) ³⁰ | 14.5% | 11% |
| National average across 73 diversion programs, overall rate of recidivism (Wilson and Hoge, 2013, p. 504) ³¹ | 31.5% | 18% |

Summary

RJ programs operating within or adjacent to criminal legal systems have a **strategic challenge to implement RJ with integrity while also attending to structural challenges that were designed to perpetuate a more punitive status quo**. As a result, programs such as CCRJ are often saddled with a burden of accountability not applied to traditional system approaches. Thus, readers should recognize the value of such transparency while also exercising caution in interpreting results when direct comparison data are unavailable.

In light of similar evaluations conducted with other jurisdictions in Minnesota and close reading of national and international studies, we note several areas in which the results shared here stand apart from other published and unpublished studies of RJ programs.

Where is CCRJ leading the way?

- Demonstrated success with non-legal system accountability across the spectrum of youth harm, from status offenses to felony cases, including repeat referrals (recognizing youth is a time of repeated mistakes and learning to deal with emotions/challenges).
 - These broad eligibility criteria paired with consistently high rates of success have undoubtedly reduced the rates of youth court cases in Carlton County.
 - Given national studies lower recidivism rates for RJ compared to traditional court, CCRJ has also very likely improved community safety in Carlton County because of lower levels of reoffending than what would have occurred with traditional processing.
- Lower rates of re-referral and recidivism across compared to recidivism rates in other published studies and reports. Unfortunately, none of those studies were conducted in similar geographic areas with pre-charge RJ diversion programs.
- Demonstrated sustainability, with now over a decade of having a growing RJ program that is levy-funded rather than having inconsistent philanthropic funding sources. Further, the organizational structure that allows the program to be adjacent to rather than directly within the legal system may makes it less susceptible to punitive mindsets in the long-term.

Where might CCRJ look to improve?

- Continue to improve approaches for young people who are:
 - Referred for the 3rd time or more
 - Have IEPs
 - Are between ages 10-13
 - Identify as having American Indian heritage

Re-referral rates within CCRJ are higher for these groups compared to other groups, despite being lower than rates from comparable studies. It is worth noting that all of these categories indicate youth who may have higher needs, suggesting both the importance of allowing youth to participate in RJ multiple times as they find their way in potentially difficult circumstances and also assessing whether approaches currently used to identify and address underlying needs could be improved. While society shares much of the culpability of having created inequitable conditions under which some young people are still expected to avoid causing harm in their communities, all system actors, including CCRJ, share the responsibility for finding effective solutions for these young people and their families.

- Involvement (or tracking involvement and satisfaction of) people harmed or impacted.
 - Data shared did not allow assessment of the rate at which victims or other people harmed or impacted participate in accountability processes, nor does it appear there is systematic tracking of satisfaction with processes. Determining how to best include this in ongoing data tracking would be an important addition to future evaluations.
- Finding ways to assess longer term positive outcomes
 - RJ is hypothesized to result in long-term outcomes like stronger relationships, stronger sense of community, and improved skills for young people. While difficult to track, given CCRJs long-term track record of success, designing an evaluation to assess some of these outcomes may be an important and feasible next step.
 - RJ is also based on principles of shared accountability, recognizing that responsibility for harmful behavior is frequently shared by individuals and community members. This is

also a defining purpose of having a separate justice system for juveniles in recognition that children are not fully culpable for their behavior. Consider adapting both program and tracking practices to document when community or system partners share responsibility for harm (such as through school pushout or inequitable access to preventative health or social services) and how they respond to obligations named in accountability plans.

- For sustainability, continue to document practices and policies, expand the volunteer base, and begin to establish a continuity plan, such as through conducting training to expand the pool of restorative practitioners in Carlton County and beginning to mentor the next generation of CCRJ program leaders.

What additional evidence might be needed for broader policy decision-making?

- We recommend policy makers consider requesting additional data from other decision points, especially recidivism rates, to compare effectiveness of responses overall and disaggregated by race, ethnicity, age, referral number and offense severity to better determine whether referrals to CCRJ should be expanded.

REPORT REFERENCES

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- ¹ Deal, T. & Ehrmann, S. (2019). "Fundamental measures for juvenile justice" [interactive database]. Smith, J. [web developer]. Pittsburgh, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice [producer]. Retrieved from <http://www.ncjj.org/fmjj/>.
- ² Arrowhead Regional Corrections, 2021-22 Comprehensive Plan, page 93
- ³ Arrowhead Regional Corrections. (2018). 2015 ARC recidivism report, page 17
- ⁴ Arrowhead Regional Corrections. (2018). 2015 ARC recidivism report, page 17
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Appendix A. Methods summary

- Demographic and programmatic data dating back to the beginning of the program in 2010, for both cases and individuals (de-identified), were pulled from program databases in February 2023 and securely shared with the research team.
- Comparable data from other counties and jurisdictions were requested via personal communication and shared via email or existing published reports, including summary data of cases opened in court between 2019-2022 from the Carlton County Attorney Office (CCAO), and total numbers of cases and days on probation from Arrowhead Regional Corrections (ARC). Data shared from published reports are cited as such.
- To describe program participants, UMN researchers calculated descriptive statistics for all cases referred overall and disaggregated by race, age, gender, special education status, offense severity, and year of referral.
- To analyze program outcomes, UMN researchers used provided data to calculate enrollment rates, success rates, days to enrollment, days to completion, average number of RJ process hours per case, average number of plan actions per case, total value of restitution paid via direct payment or hours worked, and re-referral rates for 6-, 12-, 18- and ever. Descriptive data (frequencies, means) were calculated for each and disaggregated by demographics, referral number, and offense level.
- To contextualize results, data from other counties or jurisdictions were requested. When numbers of youth were shared (for example, number of youth on probation), we calculated per capita rates of probation using census data. When numbers were shared for only more recent years, we recalculated CCRJ rates for those years to compare across similar time periods. We only compare results for which we were able to verify results were calculated using reasonably similar methods.
- Additional details on methods are available upon request.