

# Juvenile Justice Fact Sheet Series: Parole/Probation

February 2015

Prevention

Diversion

Community-  
Based  
Alternatives

Community  
Corrections  
Facilities

Detention

Juvenile  
Correctional  
Facilities

Parole/  
Probation

Reentry

Adult System

## What Is Parole and Probation?

Parole and probation are two post-adjudication (or post-trial) mechanisms for monitoring youth in their communities while they are involved in the juvenile justice system.

- Parole systems monitor youth after they are released from a juvenile correctional facility before their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.
- Probation systems monitor youth who are not sent to juvenile correctional facilities or are released after serving a certain amount of their disposition in a correctional facility. Probation also can be used as a sanction or response by the court, particularly to respond to youth adjudicated delinquent of lower-level offenses who the court believes should be monitored.

Under both probation and parole, youth are assigned a parole or probation officer and given certain rules to follow (e.g., meeting with the officer, drug testing or counseling, attending school, completing community service, paying restitution or fees, or complying with curfew). If a youth does not comply with their probation or parole, the youth can be charged with violating their probation or parole or, depending on the circumstance, a new offense.

## Research on Parole and Probation:

National data on probation are much more prevalent than parole. Probation is typically used for first-time, low-risk offenders, as well as serving as a community-based alternative to institutional confinement for more serious offenders. Nationally, statistics indicate that over 50% of juvenile court cases in 2011 were given probation as their only sanction. A study of probation trends from 1985-2011 shows that the most frequent type of offense for which youth are given probation is a property offense (35%), followed by person and public offenses (26% each), and drug offenses (13%). From 1985, probation trends have changed, with property offenses making up less of the probation population, and person and public order offenses making up a greater share. Although males make up the largest share of the probation caseload (77% in 2011), the female share of cases ordered to probation grew from 15% to 23% between 1985-2011.

A significant disparity appears to exist for youth ordered to probation based on race. In 2011, 64% of cases placed on probation involved White youth, 33% involved Black youth and 3% involved youth of other races, despite the fact that Black youth made up only 14% of the overall youth population.

With both probation and parole, the approach that courts and officers take can affect youth. Research indicates that over-responding to youth, or monitoring youth more than is necessary for public safety, may actually increase recidivism. Additionally, programs that are more control-oriented (i.e., watching for youth to do something wrong) are less effective in reducing recidivism than therapeutic oriented programs, such as connecting youth to programming, providing counseling, and building youth's skills. Therefore, it is critical for parole and probation officers to do individualized assessments of youth to determine their risk and needs, then tailor responses that develop specific, focused, measurable, and time-limited plans for youth to achieve realistic goals.

## Parole and Probation in Ohio:

In Ohio, the juvenile court's jurisdiction extends to age 21, meaning youth can be monitored by the juvenile court for an offense committed before the age of 18 until the youth turns 21. This extended jurisdiction can help youth

access appropriate services and means that youth can be held accountable through the juvenile court system as their development continues. However, it also means that a youth can be placed in adult jails for violating their parole or probation, even for a juvenile court charge, and can allow youth to linger on probation or parole for years for not fulfilling one part of their probation or parole.

Parole for juveniles in Ohio is administered by the Department of Youth Services (DYS). DYS's Parole Division oversees the release of youth placed in DYS correctional facilities and is administered by five regional offices in Dayton, Columbus, Cleveland, Toledo, and Akron. These offices work with youth and their families to oversee the transition of youth back into the community, including helping youth connect with local service providers for housing, public assistance, education, and treatment for medical, mental health, substance abuse.

Parole is relatively well documented in Ohio. As of October 28, 2014, a one-day count showed there were 381 Ohio youth on parole. The vast majority of youth on parole were between the ages of 17 to 19 (83%), male (95%), and African American (60%). The average length of parole for youth was 11.2 months, with male, non-White, and older youth staying on parole for longer amounts of time compared to female, younger, and White youth. The one-day count also showed that 30 youth has been revoked to DYS facility for a parole revocation on their original charge; an additional 6 youth were revoked for a new term or sentence as well as a parole violation. Of the 30 youth who were revoked for a parole violation, 25 were Male, and 21 were Black.

Probation in Ohio is much harder to track as it is administered individually by the 88 counties' juvenile courts. Probation programs differ drastically both between and within counties. For example, one county may have different levels of probation that they offer to youth. Some probation is very intensive and probation officers check on youth several times per week, while other probation programs have only limited contact with youth. The versatility of these programs allow for judges and magistrates to tailor the programs to the needs of individual youth who come before the courts. However, this variety can also lead to unequal treatment because there is little oversight of the system. With the lack of any data, it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of the programs offered. There are no data available on commitments to DYS for probation violations. However, clearer data may be available in counties that use the Ohio Youth Assessment System (OYAS), an objective tool designed to assess a youth's risk of future reoffending.

## Conclusion:

In Ohio, while parole data show interesting trends, such as the overwhelming numbers of African Americans involved in the system, the lack of probation data is concerning. There is no way of knowing how many youth are on probation in Ohio, let alone whether probation programs are actually working for youth and their communities. This is especially concerning because of the large number of juveniles who are placed on probation. Overall, these programs are put in place to help those who have been adjudicated delinquent to rejoin the community. The large number of repeat offenders shows that these programs must be reviewed to develop better systems that can truly support youth involved in the court system to become successful members of society.

## Resources:

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Statistical Briefing Book: Juveniles on Probation - Overview*, May 2014, available at <http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/probation/overview.html>.

Melissa Sickmund, *Juveniles in Court*, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2003, available at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/195420.pdf>.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *OJJDP Statistical Briefing Book - Characteristics of adjudicated cases ordered to probation, 1985-2011*, released May 22, 2014, available at <http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/probation/qa07103.asp?qaDate=2011>.

*OJJDP Statistical Briefing Book*. Online. Available: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/probation/qa07101.asp?qaDate=20030811> (last accessed March 3, 2015).

Desktop Guide to Good Juvenile Probation Practice (2002), Chapter 9, available at <http://www.ncjj.org/Publication/Desktop-Guide-to-Good-Juvenile-Probation-Practice.aspx>.

Lipsey, Dr. Mark, Dr. James C. Howell, Marion R. Kelly, Dr. Gabrielle Chapman, Darin Carver, Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, *Improving the Effectiveness of Juvenile Justice Programs: A New Perspective on Evidence-Based Practice* (December 2010), available at <http://cjjr.georgetown.edu/resources2/cjjrpublications/ebppaper.html>.

**This fact sheet is one of a fact sheet series about Ohio's juvenile justice system by the Ohio Juvenile Justice Association.**

**If you have any questions, please visit [OJJA's website] or contact Erin Davies with the Juvenile Justice Coalition at [edavies@jjohio.org](mailto:edavies@jjohio.org) or 614-400-5548.**