

**RISKS, NEEDS, & STRENGTHS SUMMARY REPORT
BUNCOMBE COUNTY JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL (JCPC)
PLANNING COMMITTEE
DECEMBER, 2023**

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Part I. Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) Summary

The Planning Committee reviewed aggregate data from Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) assessments from July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023. This is a measurement tool administered by Juvenile Court Counselors after youth are referred with a complaint alleging that a delinquency act has occurred and before adjudication of the youth. The YASI is an assessment that measures risk, need, and strength/protective factors in youth who are referred to the juvenile justice system, used for measuring risks related to recidivism and developing service plans. The assessment addresses twelve domains: Legal History, Family, Basic Needs, School, Community and Peers, Alcohol and Drugs, Mental Health, Physical Health, Aggression, Attitudes, Skills, and Employment and Free Time.

The full YASI assessment consists of over 100 separate items useful for both predictive risk and case management, so data reported from this review consists of county-level risk factors that may be prioritized by the JCPC for RFP development, as well as for highlighting prevalent issues among court-involved youth that individual programs and community-based organizations will want to consider when working with youth in the county. The aggregate outputs from full YASI assessments are one of the data sources used by the Committee and are the focus of summaries that follow in this document. YASI questions are framed in either a historical context (Legal History, for example), or in some cases, “current” or “prior three-months” timeframes for other, more dynamic, questions.

According to the US Census, the approximate population of youth ages 6 – 17 for Buncombe County is 33,167. During the fiscal year of 2022 – 2023, Buncombe County Juvenile Court Services staff completed 526 YASI assessments. The data provided below is based on the risks, needs, and strengths that are noted at the first assessment by Juvenile Justice at intake:

General Observations and Points of Interest

There is both a pre-screen assessment and a full assessment, however in Buncombe County it is standard practice for all court-involved youth to receive the full YASI assessment at intake.

Risk Level – 65% of the 526 assessed youth exhibited low risks. This is higher than the state’s rate of 39%.

Needs Level – 82% of the 526 assessed youth exhibited very low to low needs. This is higher than the state’s rate of 53%.

Strengths Level – 81% of the 526 assessed youth exhibited high or very high strengths levels. This is higher than the state’s rate of 53%.

Compared to the state, Buncombe County has much higher numbers of youth being referred to DJJ with low risk levels, very low needs, and very high strengths. There are also concerns regarding the high percentage of school-based complaints filed in Buncombe County compared to the state (see “*School Domain, Q3 – School-Based Complaints*” on p.2), and recent reports demonstrating [inequities](#) in school discipline and referrals to court.

Consistent with research across the country, in May 2023 the NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission published a Juvenile Recidivism Study ([linked here](#)), which noted: “the lowest levels of recidivism correspond[] to the least invasive systemic responses of the juvenile justice system, particularly by intervening with youth short of adjudication... this report and past report findings indicate the most efficient and effective investment of sufficient resources is in the community, at the front end of the juvenile justice system.”

YASI Elevated Risks, Needs, & Strengths:

Legal History

Q4 Felony Referrals to DJJ – 14% of the youth assessed had a felony referral. This is significantly lower than the state’s rate of 36%.

Q6 Previous Weapon Offense – 7% of the youth assessed had a previous weapon offense. This is an increase from the previous year (6%) but is lower than the state’s rate of 17%.

Family Domain

Q1 Runaway from Home or Placement – 12% of youth reported incidents of running away. This is a decrease from 15% the previous year. While under the NC average (21%), it is still of concern especially given gaps in community services.

Q4 Family Alcohol/Substance Abuse – 12% of the youth assessed had family members with alcohol and/or substance abuse issues compared to the state’s rate of 15%.

Q4 Family Member Legal History – 33% of the youth assessed had family members with prior history with the criminal legal system compared to the state’s rate of 29%.

Q7 Parent/Custodian Supervision – 94% of youth assessed in Buncombe reported good/some supervision compared to the state’s rate of 78%.

School Domain

Q1/Q10 School Enrollment Status – 2% of youth assessed were suspended at the point of assessment (NC – 3%). However, over the previous 2 years, 74% had been assigned one or more OSS (NC – 65%) and 43% had been assigned one or more ISS (NC – 36%).

Q2 School Attendance – 17% of youth assessed had 5 or more unexcused absences. This is close to the NC average of 26%.

Q3 School-Based Complaints – YASI assessments showed much higher numbers of complaints filed by schools than the state. Only 7% of youth assessed experienced interventions by school administrators – this is down from 17% last year and less than 12% across the state. 49% of youth assessed had police reports filed by school, which is significantly higher than the state average of 27%.

Q4 Academic Performance – 18% of youth assessed had C- or lower grades (NC – 14%), 12% were failing some classes (NC – 18%), and 12% were failing most classes (NC – 17%).

Q12 School Activities – 38% of the youth assessed were interested in school activities but they were not involved in those activities. This is higher than the state’s rate of 29%. 33% of the youth assessed had no interest and were not involved in school activities; which is comparable to the state’s rate of 34%.

Community & Peers Domain

Q1 Peers/Associates – 23% of youth assessed reported spending time with friends who have a negative influence, while 10% of youth assessed reported having no friends or companions.

Alcohol/Drugs Domain – The following data from the alcohol/drug domain represents youth who answered “Yes” to alcohol and/or drug use. Out of youth assessed for Buncombe County, 29% of youth answered “Yes” to alcohol and/or drug use.

Q1 Age at 1st Use – Of the youth who answered “Yes” to alcohol and/or drug use: 11% reported being under 12 years old at first use compared to 10% across the state; 85% reported first use between the ages of 12-15 compared to the state’s rate of 78%.

Q1 Use Disrupts Function – 25% of the youth who answered “Yes” to alcohol and/or drug use stated that the usage disrupted their daily functions – an increase from 18% the previous year. This typically indicates that treatment is warranted. The state’s rate was 29%.

Mental Health Domain – 42% of Buncombe youth assessed answered yes to having mental health problems and to being diagnosed with a mental health disorder, compared with 41% of youth assessed across the state. 29% of youth assessed were currently receiving mental health treatment.

Q5 History of Abuse (by a parent including biological, step, adopted, and legal guardians) – 9% of the youth assessed reported a history of physical abuse, compared with the state’s rate of 10%. 9% of youth assessed reported a history of sexual abuse; higher than the state’s rate of 7%.

Q6 Victimization History (by a peer or older person) – 6% of youth assessed reported experiences of sexual vulnerability.

Aggression Domain

Q1 Violence – Of Buncombe youth assessed, 5% had displayed a weapon (NC 10%), 3% had used a weapon (NC 8%), 9% had indications of bullying/threatening (NC 24%), 7% of destruction of property (NC 14%), 47% of assaultive behavior (NC 41%), and 2% of assault with a serious injury (NC 5%).

Employment and Free Time Domain

Q1 Employment – 24% of youth assessed were currently employed, 66% had never been employed, and 15% reported prior successful employment.

Q5 & Q6 Free Time – 25% of youth assessed participated in one or more structured activities, and 33% participated in one or more unstructured activities.

Part II. Summary of Community Resources

See attached Continuum of Services.

Part III. Summary of Gaps and Barriers in the Continuum of Services

- **Restitution/Community Service** to address needs for positive peer support and provide diversion and restitution pathways for court-involved youth. *Earn and Learn is a necessary service used regularly by court services; not available without JCPC funding.*
- **Comprehensive Clinical Assessments (CCAs) / Individual or Group Counseling / Substance Use Counseling Services** to address the need for youth coming through DJJ to access timely assessments and mental/behavioral health services. *Buncombe County Youth Justice Clinical Program is a new JCPC-funded program to address CCA, individual/ group/ and substance use-related counseling needs.*
- **Teen Court** to address school conflict and the need for positive peer support. *Teen Court is a diversion used regularly by court services that also receives referrals directly from schools.*
- **Interpersonal and Experiential Skill-building** to address school conflict, the need for positive peer support, mental health needs, and conflict in the home. *Kids at Work! and PIVOTPoint are JCPC-funded diversion programs that support building these skills.*
- **Vocational Skill-building**, particularly to address needs for employment and structured activities. *Currently offered through other community programs. JCPC-funded programs The Connection and Kids at Work! include vocational skill building as well.*
- **Restorative Services/Restorative Justice**, particularly to address school conflict, needs for positive peer support, and to provide alternative responses to reduce school-based complaints for youth with low risks, low needs, and high strengths. *Restorative practices are being implemented in some schools, however, there is a need for more Restorative Justice diversion programs / alternative pathways away from court referrals.*
- **Parent/Family Skill Building**, particularly to address histories of abuse and/or victimization, conflict in the home, and the need for family supervision skills. *Currently offered through other community programs. Services addressing problems of sexual behavior are provided by TASK (Treatment Alternatives for Sexualized Kids).*
- **Structured Day / Tutoring / Academic Enhancement / Mentoring**, particularly to address needs related to school conflict, attendance, academic performance, and desire for involvement in activities. *Academic tutoring and mentoring are offered through JCPC-funded Partners Unlimited – Structured Day, and several non-JCPC funded programs.*
- **Runaway / Temporary Shelter** to address needs related to incidents of running away from home or placement, history of abuse, and the need for family supervision skills. *There is not a primary resource for temporary and runaway shelter for youth in Buncombe County. When needed, DJJ is currently using community placements funded by other sources.*

Part IV. Proposed Priority Services for Funding

The committee compared the services needed to address the elevated identified risks and needs with services currently available in the community. Priorities were determined, in part, based on ranking dispositional alternatives as top priorities, then diversion programs, and finally other needed services. Through reviewing the Youth Assessment Screening Inventory (YASI) data, and a community resource assessment, the JCPC has determined that the following services are priorities to serve youth who are court-involved and to reduce/prevent future involvement:

- Priority 1: Restitution / Community Service** (*Earn & Learn*)
- Priority 2: Comprehensive Clinical Assessments (CCAs) / Individual or Group Counseling / Substance Use Counseling Services** (*Youth Justice Clinical Program*)
- Priority 3: Teen Court** (*Teen Court*)
- Priority 4: Interpersonal /Experiential Skills** (*Kids at Work!, PIVOTPoint*)
- Priority 5: Vocational Skills** (*The Connection*)
- Priority 6: Restorative Services / Restorative Justice**
- Priority 7: Parent / Family Skill Building**
- Priority 8: Structured Day/Tutoring/Academic Enhancement/Mentoring** (*Buncombe Structured Day*)
- Priority 9: Runaway / Temporary Shelter**

The Buncombe County JCPC shifted towards a 2-year funding cycle last year, so all but one of the current JCPC programs are funded through the coming FY24 – 25 (the Youth Justice Clinical Program was a new program and so was only eligible for one year of funding). This means that the JCPC funds available to release in FY24-25 will be limited to the funds currently allocated to one program.

Given the limited funds available for FY24-25 and the assessment of current needs and gaps of services, the planning committee recommends the following services in ranked order be approved as funding priorities in FY24-25:

- Priority 2: Comprehensive Clinical Assessments (CCAs) / Individual or Group Counseling / Substance Use Counseling Services**
- Priority 6: Restorative Services / Restorative Justice**

These funding priorities are recommended in response to ongoing mental and behavioral health needs, as well as concerns regarding the high percentage of complaints filed for youth with low levels of risk and need, high strengths, paired with high percentage of school-based complaints. The committee recommends increasing alternative pathways to respond to youth behavior and needs, including through behavioral health and restorative justice opportunities, increasing access to other JCPC-funded programs through direct referrals from community members, and increasing awareness of community-based resources available to support youth.

Part III. Appendix – Additional Data

Overview of Juvenile Court Data – Buncombe County

The Overview of Juvenile Court Data includes information about how programs are used and the legal status of youth when referred to the Buncombe JCPC Programs.

Juvenile Demographics	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Juvenile Population ages 6-17	34,120	34,039	33,440	33,167
Juvenile Population ages 10-17		23,312	22,994	22,736
Juvenile Population ages 16 & 17		5,900	6,028	6,095
Juveniles seen in Intake	337	256	456	385
Juveniles Put on Diversion Plans or Contracts	153	131	261	151
Juveniles Approved for Court	155	125	171	201
Juveniles Adjudicated	68	77	70	106
Juveniles Put on Protective Supervision	22	15	17	16
Juveniles Put on Probation	38	61	51	13
Number of Detention Admissions	54	48	47	5
Number of Juveniles Committed to YDC	1	2	3	1
Number of Juveniles put on Post Release Supervision	1	2	2	5
School-Based Complaints*	49.00%	20.57%	57.61%	48.92%

**Please note: School-based offenses were off by one year in last year's Overview of Buncombe Court Data. All four years have been corrected in this year's information.*

JCPC Program Participants				
Legal Status at Referral to Program				
<i>(Pulled from NC JOIN Data)</i>	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Youth at Risk	35	15	46	37
Court Counselor Consultation	123	15	2	2
Vulnerable Juvenile (<i>youth under age 10</i>)				1
Intake/Diverted	69	35	134	89
Petition Filed	0	2	3	1
Deferred Prosecution	3	0	0	0
Adjudicated Undisciplined, Disposition Pending	0	1	0	0
Adjudicated Delinquent, Disposition Pending	3	3	1	0
Protective Supervision	2	0	0	2
Probation	24	32	14	30
Committed	0	0	0	0
Post Release Supervision	0	0	0	0
Continuation Services	0	0	1	0
Interstate Compact	0	0	0	0
Total	259	103	201	162

Buncombe Program Admissions by Legal Status 22-23 (Pulled from NC ALLIES Data)

Program Name	Court Counselor Consultation	Youth at Risk	Voluntary Juvenile (under age 10)	Intake/ Diverted	Petition Filed	Adjudicated	Probation	Protective Supervision	Referred from District Court	Interstate Compact (ICJ)	Continuation Services	Committed	Total
Buncombe Structured Day		2		5				1					8
Buncombe County Youth Justice Clinical Program	3			1			3						7
Teen Court		19	1	24									44
Earn and Learn				25	1		20	1					47
Aspire - The Connection				5			1						6
Aspire -Kids at Work!		9		25			6						40
Eliada Student Training for Advancement		4		1									5
PIVOTPoint WNC		4		8			3						15
	3	38	1	94	1	0	33	2	0	0	0	0	172