

BERKS COUNTY PROBATION & PAROLE JUVENILE PROBATION OFFICE

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



We are Committed to Public Safety, Justice for Victims, the Reparation of the Community and Accountability and Personal Development of Offenders, with Respectful Treatment for All Involved.



**Honorable Scott. E. Lash
Administrative Judge, Juvenile Court**

**Honorable Eleni Dimitriou Geishauser
Juvenile Court Judge**

**Daniel C. Heydt, M.S., M.P.A.
Chief Probation Officer**

**Prepared by:
Christine Anderton, M.S.
Quality Assurance Supervisor**

BERKS COUNTY PROBATION & PAROLE JUVENILE PROBATION OFFICE

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Travis V. Johnson – Deputy Chief
Eric B. Burkholder – Assistant Chief
Lisa Lewis – Assistant Chief
Daisy Holston, M.S. – Assistant Chief
Andre Castiglioni – Assistant Chief
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Court of Common Pleas of Berks County

**Twenty Third Judicial District of Pennsylvania
633 Court Street, Reading PA 19601
Daniel C. Heydt - Chief Probation & Parole Officer**

It is my privilege to present the 2024 Annual Report for the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office. This report provides a transparent and detailed look into the work being done by our department to ensure the safety of our communities, hold youth accountable, support victims, and help young people make positive behavioral change. Each statistic, program, and outcome highlighted in this report reflects the dedication, compassion, and hard work of the men and women who serve in our department.

This past year presented both new challenges and continued growth. While our overall referrals decreased from 2023, our office still processed 436 referrals from 31 police departments, district judges, and other counties and states. These cases represent real lives—families, victims, and youth who are often navigating incredibly difficult situations. Behind every number is a story, and our goal remains the same: to help ensure those stories have a chance to change course for the better.

Our Focus on Early Intervention and Diversion

One of the most meaningful ways we support youth and prevent deeper system involvement is through diversion programming. In 2024, more than 400 youth were served through programs such as the Community Youth Aid Panel (CYAP), Informal Adjustments, and Consent Decrees. These programs give youth, especially first-time or low-risk offenders, a chance to make amends and receive services without acquiring a formal record. Notably:

- The CYAP and Summary Diversion Programs diverted 204 youth in 2024, with a strong success rate and ongoing community volunteer involvement.
- Our Informal Adjustments and Consent Decrees involved structured expectations, treatment, and support, and more than 70% of those youth completed their supervision successfully or remain in compliance.

Enhancing Public Safety Through Accountability and Supervision

While we prioritize diversion when appropriate, we also remain committed to accountability and public safety. In 2024, our officers managed 64 adjudications of delinquency and oversaw 48 delinquency placements. These decisions are not made lightly—they are guided by the seriousness of the offense, risk assessments, and input from families and provider partners. Even in these cases, our focus remains on rehabilitation and reintegration.

It's worth noting that our recidivism rate—the rate at which juveniles reoffend after their cases close—continues to fall well below the state average. Berks County's most recent recidivism rate is 7.8%, compared to 20% in 2007. This is the direct result of our department's commitment to evidence-based practices and individualized supervision.

Utilizing Data to Drive Change

Over the past decade, our department has adopted a wide array of evidence-based tools that allow us to better assess, supervise, and support the youth we serve. These tools help our officers identify risk, tailor interventions, and build relationships that lead to positive behavior change. In 2024 alone:

- We completed 584 Youth Level of Service (YLS) assessments, helping us match services to individual risk and need.
- We facilitated 1,589 EPICS (Effective Practices in Community Supervision) sessions, building key cognitive and behavioral skills in our youth.
- We conducted 167 trauma screens, ensuring that those experiencing trauma receive the right support early in the process.

We also utilized graduated responses—a structured way of reinforcing positive behavior and addressing rule violations without unnecessary punishment. Our use of 760 incentives and 243 sanctions is part of a broader strategy that helps youth succeed while maintaining accountability.

Innovative and Specialized Services

The youth we serve often face complex challenges that extend far beyond the courtroom. That's why we've built and sustained a variety of specialized units and partnerships to meet those needs head-on:

- Our Problem Sexual Behavior Unit provides critical oversight and therapeutic services for youth struggling with sexually inappropriate behaviors.
- Our Special Supervision Unit works with youth involved in or at risk for gang involvement, helping to reduce violence and build safer neighborhoods.
- Our Community-Based Probation Officers work directly inside local schools to provide support, monitor progress, and build meaningful connections.

We also continue to partner with outstanding community providers who offer counseling, job readiness, family reunification services, and more.

Addressing System Gaps and Resource Limitations

Despite our many successes, we continue to face systemic challenges—most notably, the ongoing shortage of detention beds across Pennsylvania. Our department has had to adapt, using GPS electronic monitoring, shelter care, and even housing youth temporarily in our probation office, to ensure public safety and due process. In July 2024, the Berks County Youth Center shelter reopened, which has helped address this challenge, but the road ahead remains challenging. The need for available detention beds to ensure community safety remains a primary concern for the department.

A Department Defined by Dedication

None of this work would be possible without the people behind it. I want to extend my gratitude to Christine Anderton, our Quality Assurance Supervisor, who compiled this report with precision, accuracy and a belief in the value of our officers' work. Her efforts help our department see clearly where we are and more importantly, where we need to go to help youth under probation supervision make positive changes to their behavior.

Most of all, I want to thank the officers, support staff, and leadership of the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office. Every day, they show up, not just to supervise youth, but to mentor, coach, guide, and advocate for change. They do this work with empathy, with professionalism, and with a deep belief in second chances. Their impact ripples through families, schools, and communities across our county.

We remain committed to the core values of the Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy (JJSES), which guides our strategy of utilizing evidence-based practices (EBPs) at every stage, from intake to case closure. Decades of research has shown that when applied with fidelity, evidence-based practices reduce recidivism. As we move forward, our department will continue to evaluate, adapt, and innovate to meet the evolving needs of the youth and families we serve. Thank you to our county leaders, judges, law enforcement partners, school officials, service providers, and, most importantly, the youth and families of Berks County. Your trust and partnership allow us to do this important work. Together, we are building a safer, healthier, and more hopeful future for our youth and our community.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Heydt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Daniel C. Heydt, M.S., M.P.A.
Chief Probation Officer

REFERRALS RECEIVED IN 2024

In 2024, the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office received a total of 436 referrals from 31 police departments and several local magisterial district justices. Also included in that number were referrals received from other juvenile probation departments within Pennsylvania as well as other states.

Charges Received by Department (Referral Source)

Amity Township	3
Bally Borough	1
Bern Township	2
Bethel Township	7
Birdsboro Borough	5
Brecknock Township	2
Caenarvon Township	12
Central Berks Regional	10
Cumru Township	16
Berks County District Attorney's Office	5
Eastern Berks Regional	11
Exeter Township	29
Fleetwood Borough	5
Hamburg Borough	10
Kutztown Borough	1
Laureldale Borough	2
Magisterial District Judges	45
Muhlenberg Township	20
Northern Berks Regional	11
Pennsylvania State Police	27
City of Reading	111
Robeson Township	1
Shillington Borough	8
Sinking Spring	5
South Heidelberg Township	11
Spring Township	27
Tilden Township	1
Transfer from Another County	21
Transfer from Another State	7
Tulpehocken Township	1
West Reading Borough	4
Womelsdorf Borough	2
Wyomissing Borough	12

436

Most Serious Alleged Charge

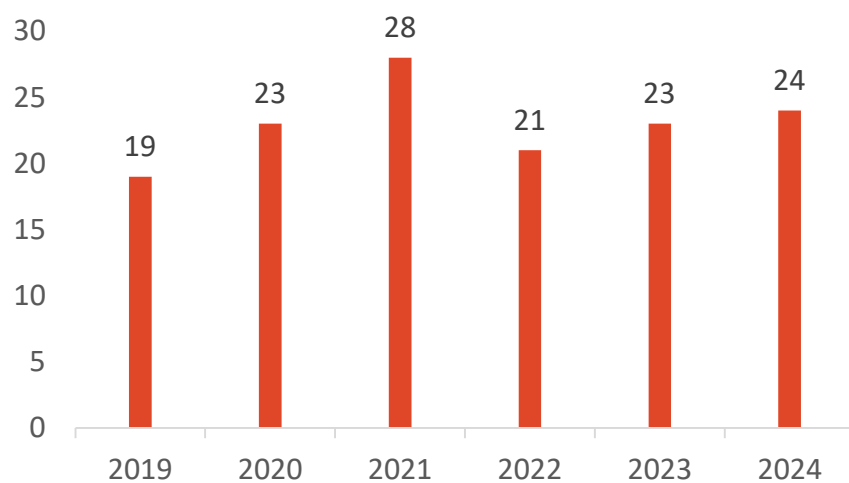
Access Device Fraud	1 (M) 2 (F)
Accidents Involving Damage (M)	1
Aggravated Assault (F)	33
Aggravated Indecent Assault (F)	1
Assault of a Law Enforcement Officer (F)	3
Burglary (F)	12
Criminal Contempt - Violation of a PFA Order (M)	1
Criminal Homicide / Murder (H)	6
Criminal Mischief (M)	1
Criminal Trespass	8 (M) 8 (F)
Cruelty to Animal (M)	1
Disorderly Conduct (M)	6
Driving Under the Influence (M)	11
Escape (M)	3
Evading Arrest/Fleeing or Attempting to Elude Police	5 (M) 4 (F)
False Identification to Law Enforcement (M)	1
Firearms: Persons Not to Possess	1 (M) 2 (F)
Firearms: Possession with Altered Mfgr. Number (F)	2
Firearms: Possession of a Firearm by a Minor (M)	6
Firearms: Carried without a License (F)	7
Harassment (M)	2
Homicide by Vehicle (F)	1
Involuntary Deviant Sexual Intercourse (F)	1
Impersonating a Public Servant (M)	7
Indecent Assault (M)	3
Indecent Exposure (M)	1
Institutional Vandalism (M)	3
Intimidation of a Witness (M)	1
Loitering and Prowling (M)	4
Non-Payment of Fines and Costs	45
Obstructing the Administration of Law (M)	1
Offensive Touching (M)	1
Open Lewdness (M)	3
Possessing Instruments of Crime (M)	1
Possession of a Controlled Substance (M)	1
Possession of a Small Amount of Marijuana (M)	22
Possession of a Weapon on School Property (M)	13
Possession of Drug Paraphernalia (M)	3
Possession with the Intent to Deliver a Contr. Sub. (F)	2
Prohibited Offensive Weapons (M)	1
Rape (F)	1
Resisting Arrest (M)	5
Retail Theft (M)	13
Risking a Catastrophe (F)	1
Robbery (F)	1
Sexual Assault (F)	1
Sexual Extortion (M)	2

Simple Assault (M)	52
Stalking (M)	1
Strangulation (F)	1
Terroristic Threats	26 (M) 1 (F)
Theft/Receiving Stolen Property	26 (M) 50 (F)
Transmission of Sexually Explicit Images (M)	4
Unlawful Use of a Computer (F)	1
Unauthorized Use of an Automobile (M)	8
	436

Top 5 Referred Offenses in 2024



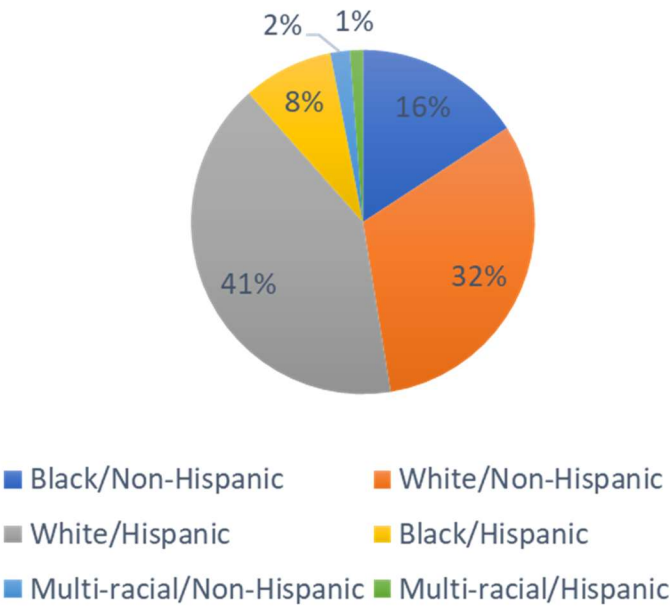
Juveniles Referred with an Offense/s Involving a Firearm



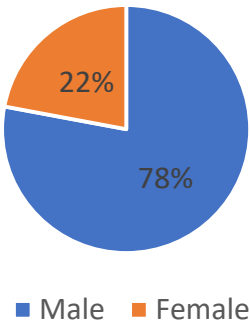
Referral Demographics

Of the 391 misdemeanor and felony referrals received by the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office in 2024, 329 of those referrals were unique juveniles. The data below describes the demographic information on the 329 unique juveniles that received misdemeanor or felony charges in Berks County in 2024.

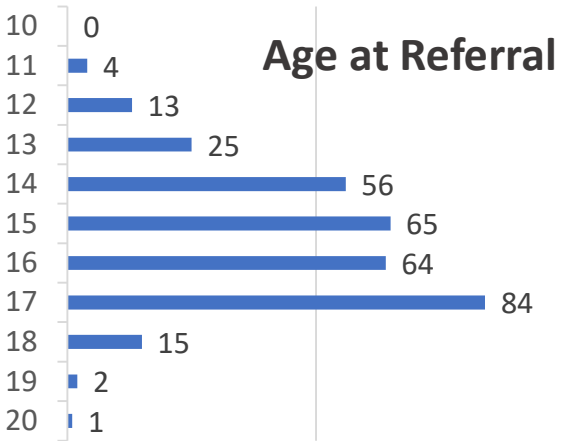
Race & Ethnicity



Gender



Age at Referral



Berks County Total Estimated Population (2024)¹ **439,117**
 Berks County Juvenile Population (ages 10 to 17 years) (2024)² **95,727**

¹U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program, Population estimates, July 1, 2024
²U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program, persons under 18 years, 21.8%, July 1, 2024

2024 DISPOSITIONS

Accepted Courtesy Supervision	5
Adjudication of Delinquency	64
Allegation or Petition Withdrawn or Dismissed	31
Change of Placement	13
Community Service Only	2
Consent Decree	156
Continuance of Previous Disposition	190
Continuance of Placement	82
Court Supervision/Case Closed Prior to Disposition	112
Court Supervision/Case Closed, Summary	26
Disposition Pending	12
Fines/Costs – Non-Court Ordered	22
Informal Adjustment	40
Juvenile Delinquency Placement	48
Released from Placement	39
Transferred to Another Juvenile Court	57
Transferred to Criminal Court	1
Warned/Counseled & Fast Track	14

914

Other Dispositions/Services

Summary Offenses – Magisterial District Judges

The department provides an alternative sanctioning program for County Magisterial District Judges, giving them the option of ordering community service hours in lieu of fines and costs for summary convictions. In 2024, 146 summary offenses were disposed of through this program.

ACT 53

ACT 53 provides parents and legal guardians a means by which to engage their child in drug and alcohol treatment, either inpatient or outpatient, with the assistance of the Court. These youth are not placed under supervision, rather just guided into treatment.

In 2024, 22 requests for ACT 53 services were handled by the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office. There were three youth whose families requested ACT 53 services multiple times. These requests resulted in 6 drug and alcohol evaluations through T.A.S.C., and 5 ACT 53 Court Hearings which Ordered further treatment involvement and/or Children & Youth Services to open a case to assist with the process.

DIVERSION PROGRAMS

Juvenile diversion is an intervention strategy, which may occur at various formal and informal contact points, that redirects youth away from traditional processing or deeper juvenile justice involvement, while still holding them accountable for their actions.¹

Diversion is based on research which indicates formal system processing and/or incarceration of juveniles leads to a greater likelihood of future criminal behavior, and that alternatives such as decriminalization, deinstitutionalization, and diversion are better for long-term youth development. By creating informal channels to navigate juveniles (generally those who have committed non-violent, first-time, or status offenses) away from traditional processing, diversion programs serve as opportunities to correct youths' antisocial behaviors with the assistance of their families and the community, rather than through the justice system.²

Studies show diverting youth who have committed minor offenses is a more effective way of reducing recidivism that prevents future delinquent behavior. Diversion gives youth an opportunity to alter their trajectory without unnecessary punitive consequences. Formally processing youth through the juvenile justice system does more harm by labeling the youth as delinquent, which may create a self-fulfilling prophecy and expose youth to circumstances within placement facilities that may ultimately increase delinquency.³ Additionally, implementing diversion programming for youth reduces system costs and allows resources for handling youth involved with more serious crime.⁴

Some benefits of diversion are:

- a reduction of premature involvement in the “deep end” of the juvenile delinquency system
- a reduction in out-of-home placements, especially for younger children
- maintaining youth connectedness and engagement in the community by keeping the youth in their environment
- a reduction in cost compared to court processing and/or secure placement.⁵

Berks County diverts youth in several ways. A case may be diverted prior to being referred officially, through the Community Youth Aid Panel, or after official referral by way of an Informal Adjustment or a Consent Decree.

¹ Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers, Diversion Committee, n.d.

² [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Diversion Programs I-Guide, Brief Background on Diversion Programs](#), n.d.

³ Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, National Youth Screening and Assessment Project, & Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps, 2011.

⁴ <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/juvenile-justice/diversion-programs>, n.d.

⁵ Dembo, Wareham & Schmeidler, 2005; Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justices, National Juvenile Defender Center, National Youth Screening and Assessment Project & Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps, 2022

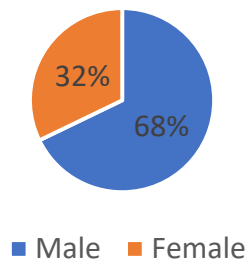
Community Youth Aid Panel



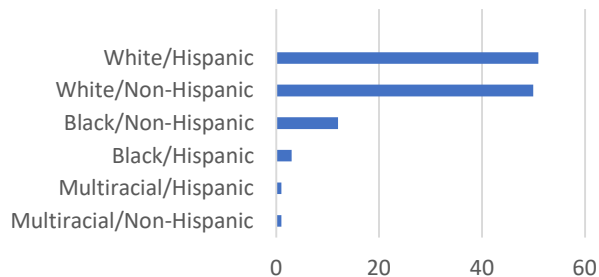
The Community Youth Aid Panel is a diversion program that provides juveniles who have committed a chargeable offense an alternative to traditional case processing. Juveniles and their parents/guardians meet with a panel of community volunteers, trained by the Juvenile Probation Office, to discuss the incident and provide basic background information. This allows for the creation of a contract to hold the juvenile accountable, increase competencies, and provide victim reparations. Upon successful completion, their case will be closed, and their record will be expunged.

In 2024, 118 cases were diverted to 9 Community Youth Aid Panels across Berks County. These cases consisted of 3 felonies, 114 misdemeanors and 1 summary offense. As of December 31, 2024, 66 youth successfully completed the program, 29 youth were pending completion of the program, 17 were pending their initial meeting and 6 cases were sent back to the referring source as unsuccessful. A total of 70 community volunteers were involved with the program in 2024.

Gender



Race/Ethnicity



**No new charges:
within 1 year & 2 years**

2024	118 cases	66 successfully completed; 46 active; 6 unsuccessful	N/A	N/A
2023	294 cases	268 successfully completed	259 (97%)	N/A
2022	318 cases	294 successfully completed	290 (99%)	279 (95%)
2021	185 cases	169 successfully completed	163 (96%)	161 (95%)
2020	140 cases	125 successfully completed	120(96%)	118 (94%)

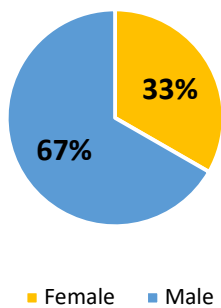
Number of community service hours ordered: 167

Amount of restitution collected: \$3,803.91 | 3rd Millennium classes ordered: 55

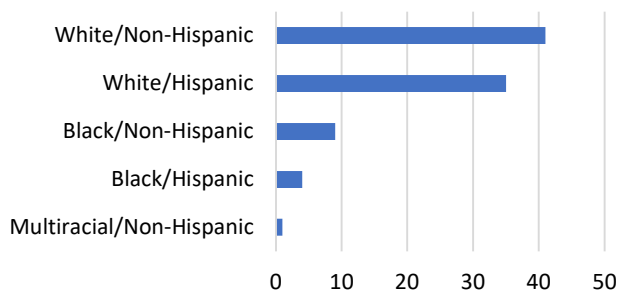
Summary Diversion Program

In 2024, the Juvenile Probation Office began the Summary Diversion Program which allowed for youth to be diverted even prior to the Community Youth Aid Panel for most summary and some misdemeanor offenses. These cases were processed by the Community Youth Aid Panel liaisons and youth were required to complete minimal obligations to have their cases successfully closed. 90 cases were referred to the Summary Diversion Program, 86 for summary and 4 for misdemeanor offenses. Of those 90 referrals, 50 youth successfully completed the Summary Diversion Program, 35 were pending completion by the end of 2024, 4 were transferred to the Community Youth Aid Panel, and 1 was returned to the police unsuccessfully.

Summary Diversion Referrals
by Gender



Summary Diversion Referrals
by Race



Amount of Restitution Collected: \$257.49 | 3rd Millennium courses completed: 64



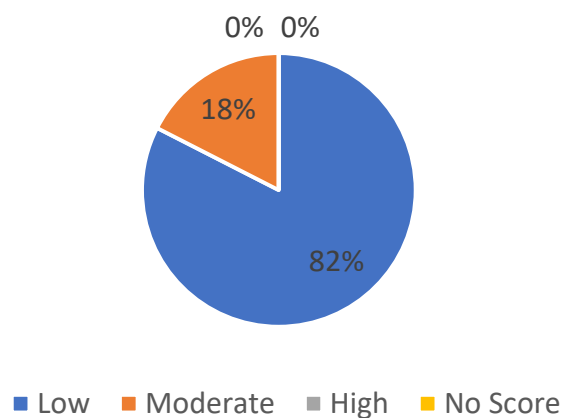
Informal Adjustment

An Informal Adjustment is typically utilized with low to moderate-risk youth, with little to no history of delinquency. These youth are held accountable by participating in a variety of programming and treatment. This level of supervision can last up to six months and can be extended an additional three months by Order of the Court if necessary. After completing an Informal Adjustment, the juvenile will have no formal record.

In 2024, 40 juveniles were placed on an Informal Adjustment.

- 7 were for Felony Offenses; 33 were for Misdemeanor Offenses
- 15 were female (37.5%); 25 were male (62.5%)
- 17 were White/Hispanic (42.5%); 15 were White/Non-Hispanic (37.5%); 4 were Black/Non-Hispanic (10%); 3 were Black/Hispanic (7.5%); 1 was Multi-racial/Non-Hispanic (2.5%)
- 24 successfully completed their supervision and had their case closed (60%)
- 13 still have their case open and are in compliance with their supervision (32.5%)
- 3 had their Informal Adjustment failed due to either receiving new charges or non-compliance (7.5%)

Risk Level
Informal Adjustment



Risk levels at case closing for the 24 juveniles who had their case closed:
LOW – 23 (96%), MODERATE – 1 (4%)

Consent Decree

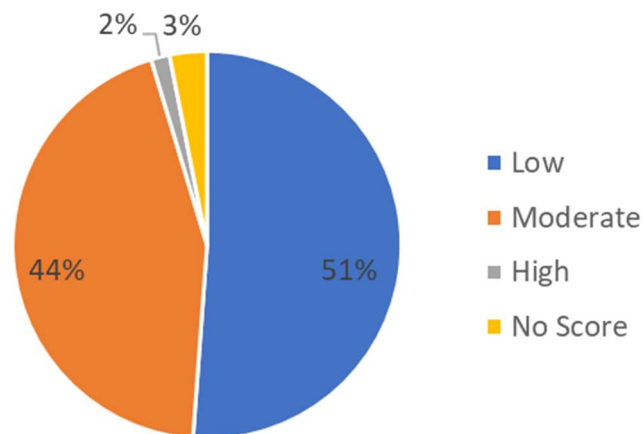
A Consent Decree is given by the District Attorney's Office and is typically granted to low to moderate-risk, non-violent offenders, with limited to no involvement within the legal system. The juveniles afforded an opportunity to complete a Consent Decree are held accountable through a variety of programming and treatment. Juveniles are typically on a Consent Decree for up to six months and can be extended an additional six months if they have not fulfilled their obligations to the Court during the initial time period. Once a juvenile successfully completes their Consent Decree, they will have no formal record.

In 2024, 156 Consent Decrees were granted to 129 juveniles.

- 113 Misdemeanor Offenses (72%); 43 Felony Offenses (28%)
- 109 were male (70%); 47 were female or identified as female (30%)

- 42 successfully completed their supervision and had their case closed (32.5%)
- 76 still have their case open and are compliant (59%)
- 11 had their Consent Decree revoked (8.5%) (9 were subsequently adjudicated delinquent and 2 were placed on temporary supervision)
 - 2 revoked due to receiving new charges (18%)
 - 9 revoked due to Violations or non-compliance (82%)

Risk Level - Consent Decree



Risk Levels at case closing for the 42 juveniles that had their case closed:

LOW – 35 (83%), MODERATE – 5 (12%), HIGH – 0, NO SCORE – 2 (5%)

COURT DISPOSITIONS

Adjudication of Delinquency

An adjudication of delinquency occurs when a juvenile has a significant history of legal involvement or presents with a serious or violent offense/s. Some of these juveniles have previously been offered a diversionary program such as an Informal Adjustment or Consent Decree and were not successful. Juveniles that are adjudicated delinquent are held accountable through intensive programming and treatment. Formal supervision lasts an average of 11 months, but juveniles who have been adjudicated delinquent may be under supervision until they are 21 years of age. An adjudication of delinquency may also contribute toward a prior record score as an adult. There is a process for expungement that some adjudicated juveniles will qualify for, which occurs in most cases within 5 years of case closure.

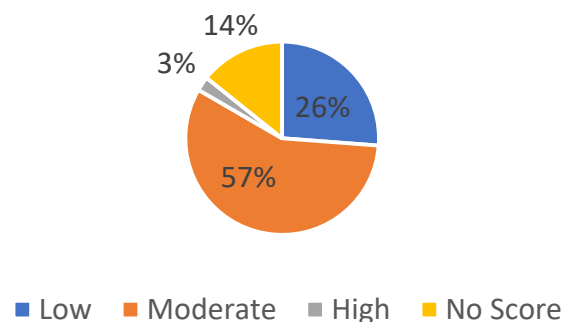
In 2024, 64 adjudications of delinquency occurred on 42 juveniles.

- 48 Misdemeanor Offenses (75%)
- 16 Felony Offenses (25%)
- 37 were male (88%); 5 were female (12%)

Of those 42 juveniles placed under supervision (not placed initially):

- 4 successfully completed their supervision and had their case closed (10%)
- 38 are still under supervision (90%)
- 6 returned to Court after being adjudicated and were placed (14%)
 - 3 were placed due to violations (50%)
 - 3 were placed due to receiving new charges & violations (50%)

Risk Level - Adjudication of Delinquency



Risk Levels at case closing for 4 juveniles that had their case closed:

LOW – 2 (50%), MODERATE – 1 (25%), NO YLS – 1 (25%)

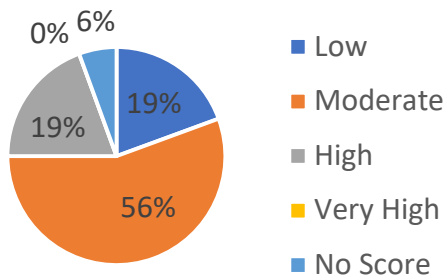
Delinquency Placement

Juvenile delinquency placements are utilized as a last-resort for those juveniles that present with serious and/or violent offenses or have unsuccessfully exhausted all community-based programming and treatment. These residential programs focus on the needs of the juvenile identified in the YLS as well as criminal offending behaviors. The goal of a juvenile delinquency placement is rehabilitating the juvenile and reintegrating them back into their home.

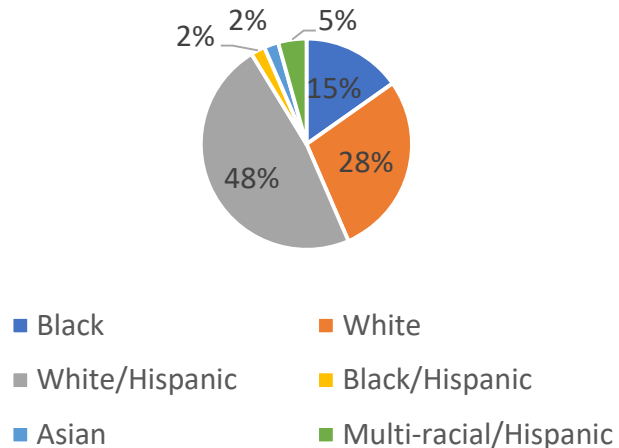
In 2024, 48 delinquency placements were ordered for 46 juveniles

- New Charges – 24 (50%)
- Violations – 14 (29%)
- Failure to Adjust from Another Placement – 1 (2%)
- Transfer to Another Placement – 6 (13%)
- Review Hearing – 3 (6%)

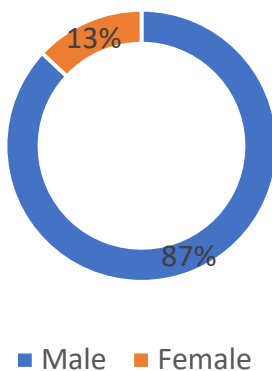
Risk Level at Time of Placement



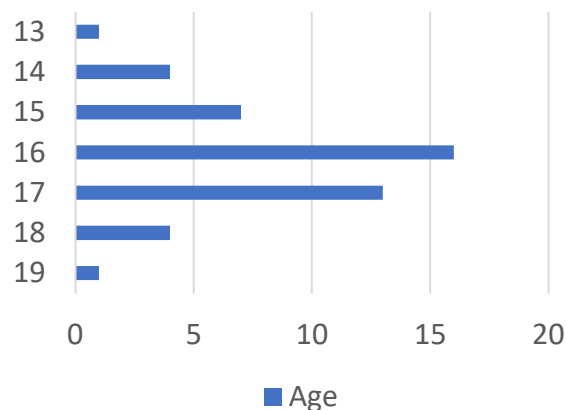
Race & Ethnicity



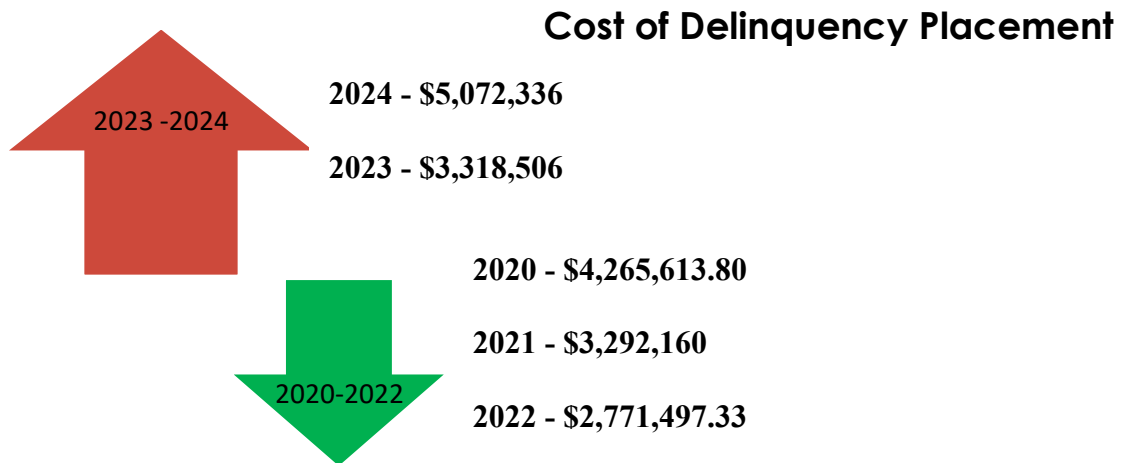
Gender



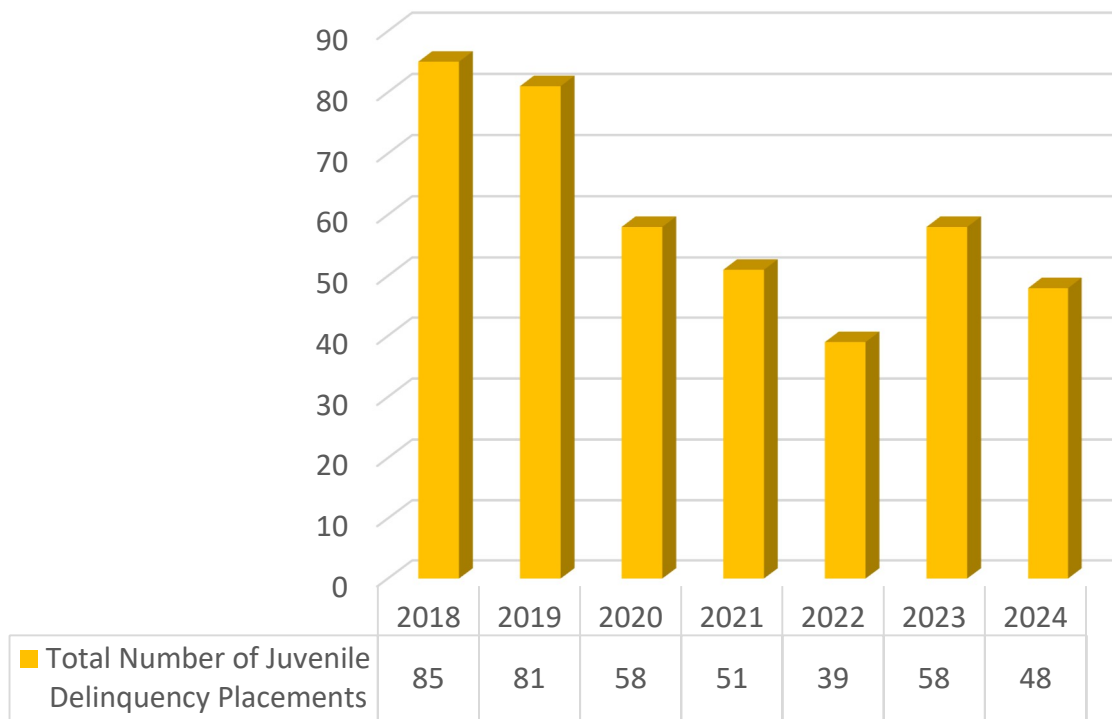
Age



Despite the decrease in juveniles entering into delinquency placements in 2024 compared with 2023, the department saw an increase in per diem rates from providers coupled with some juveniles requiring longer stays in treatment facilities. This resulted in a significant increase in the cost of delinquency placements.



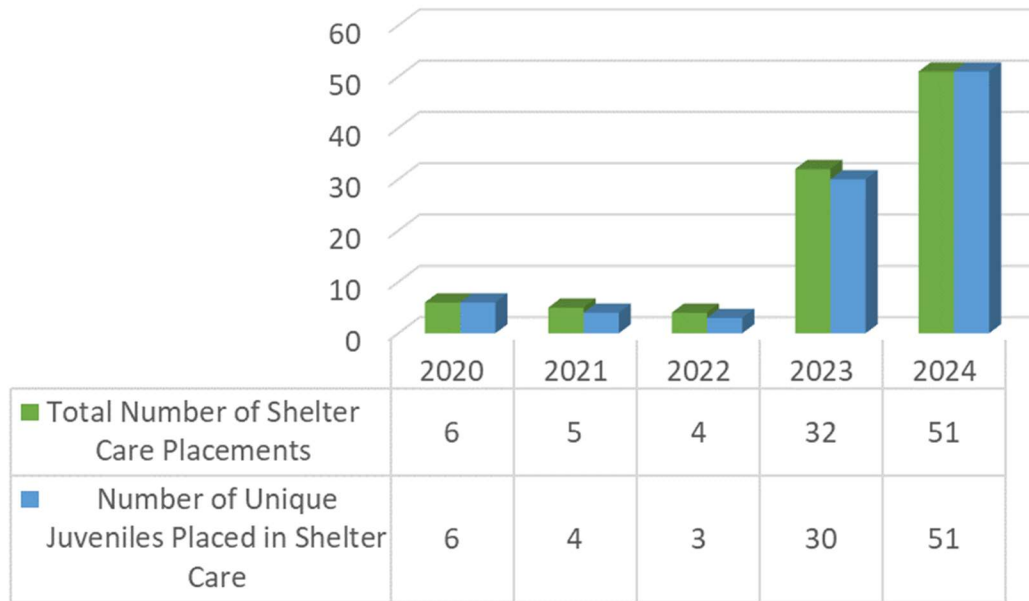
Total Number of Delinquency Placements



USE OF SHELTER CARE

The use of shelter care has traditionally been an alternative to placing youth in secure detention. In 2024, Berks County's increased use of shelter care continued due to the lack of availability in detention centers.

Shelter Care Placements



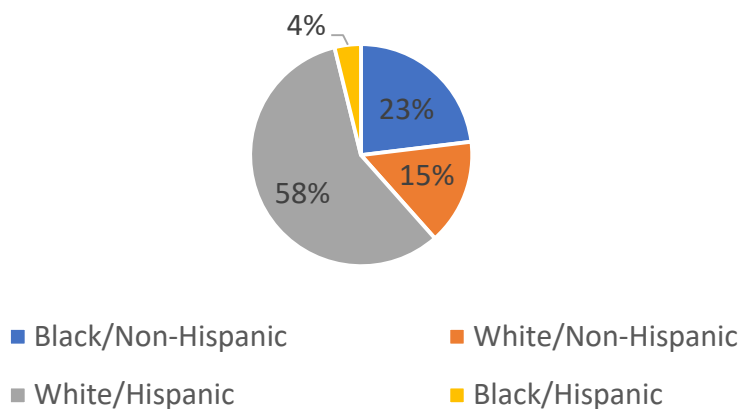
USE OF SECURE DETENTION

In 2024, 57 juveniles were placed in secure detention by the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office; 5 juveniles were already in secure detention at the start of the year.

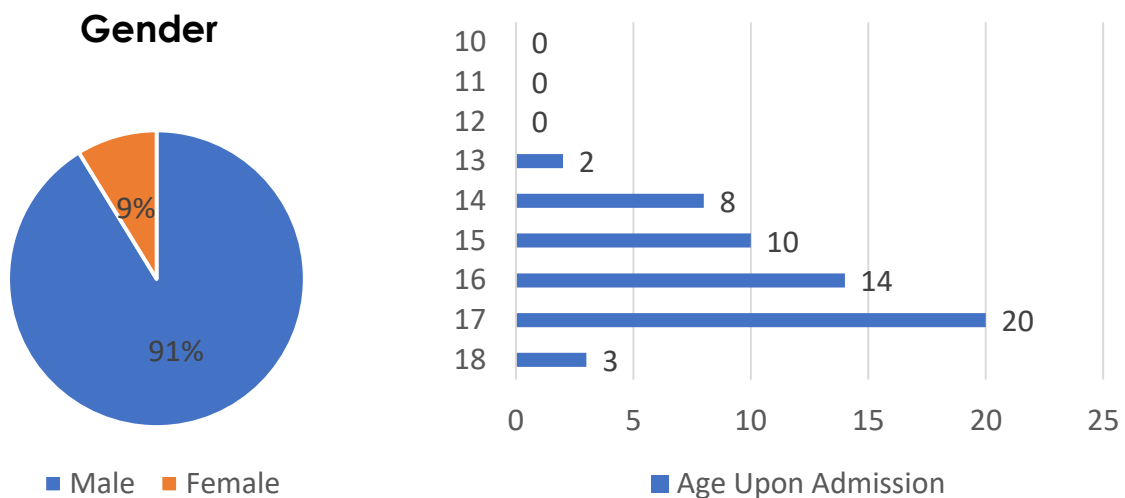
Reasons for placement in secure detention:

- New Allegations – 37 (65%)
- Warrant – 7 (12.2%)
- Court Order – 3 (5.2%)
- Violations of Supervision – 5 (8.7%)
- Failure to Adjust at a Juvenile Placement – 2 (3.5%)
- New Allegation & Violations of Supervision – 1 (1.8%)
- Requested by Another County/State – 1 (1.8%)
- Inadequate Supervision in the Home – 1 (1.8%)

Race & Ethnicity



Age Upon Admission

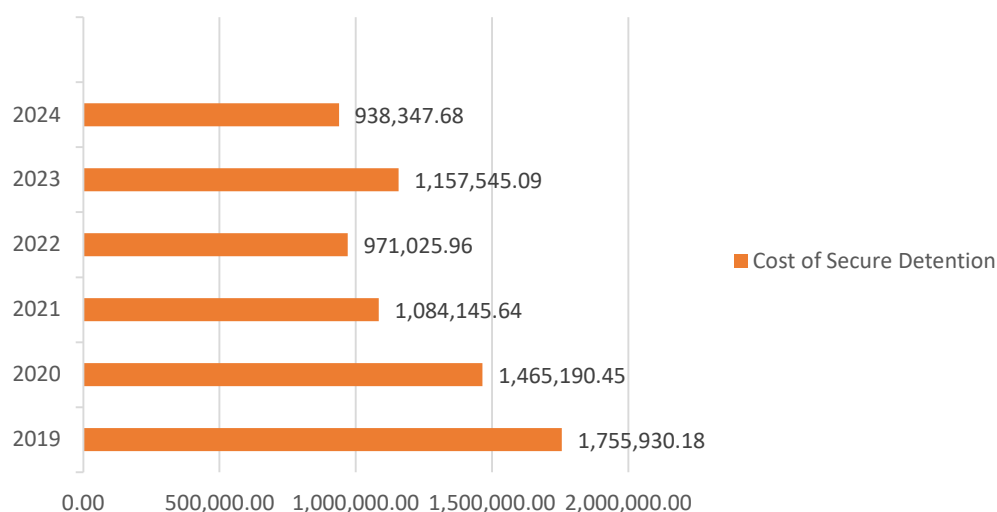


Over the past 6 years, the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office's use of secure detention has fluctuated similar to that of juvenile delinquency placements. In 2024, there were less juveniles placed in secure detention than in 2023. This is likely correlated to the overall 25% decrease in juvenile referrals.

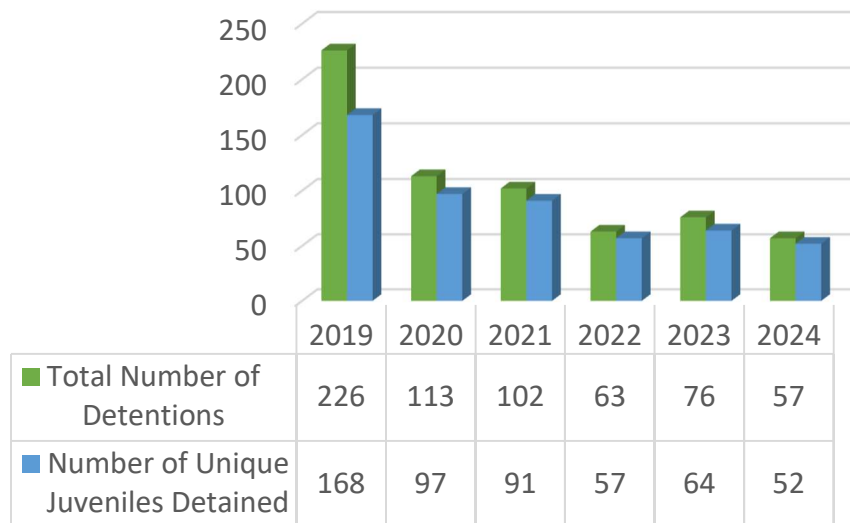
There were also 15 instances in 2024 when a juvenile should have been detained, based on the serious nature of the allegations, but were not due to their being no available detention beds. In those instances, alternatives to secure detention are utilized, such as placing a youth on GPS electronic monitoring or in shelter care.

Here is a snapshot of the last 6 years:

Cost of Secure Detention



Total Number of Detentions



In the Interest of Justice Cases

In December of 2018, the Juvenile Justice Reform Act (JJRA) of 2018 was signed into law, reauthorizing and substantially amending the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP Act) originally enacted in 1974. One of the most impactful amendments is the requirement, as of December 21, 2021, that any child under the age of 18 who is being processed through criminal proceedings must be separated by sight and sound from adult inmates and may not, except under limited circumstances, be held pretrial in a jail or lockup for adults.

In Pennsylvania, this requirement applies to individuals who are either “direct filed” to adult proceedings, or those who are transferred or certified to the adult criminal justice system. In these situations, if the juvenile is not released pretrial on bail or otherwise, they may be held securely in a facility licensed by the Department of Human Services as a juvenile detention center, but not in an adult jail or lockup. The exception to this requirement occurs when a court holds a hearing and finds that keeping the juvenile in an adult facility is **“in the interest of justice.”**¹

To determine whether detaining a child in an adult jail or lockup is in the interest of justice, the court must weigh seven factors:

- (I) the age of the juvenile;
- (II) the physical and mental maturity of the juvenile;
- (III) the present mental state of the juvenile, including whether the juvenile presents an imminent risk of self-harm;
- (IV) the nature and circumstances of the alleged offense;
- (V) the juvenile’s history of prior delinquent acts;
- (VI) the relative ability of the available adult and juvenile detention facilities to not only meet the specific needs of the juvenile but also to protect the safety of the public as well as other detained youth; and

(VII) any other relevant factor.

If the court renders a decision to detain the juvenile in an adult facility after weighing these factors, a hearing must be held every 30 days to review whether the placement in an adult jail is still in the interest of justice. Juveniles held in adult facilities under the interest of justice exception are still protected by the Department of Justice's Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards for Youthful Inmates.

19 juveniles from Berks County were held in adult facilities across Pennsylvania in 2024, as Interest of Justice Cases.

¹ Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Michael Pennington, 2021

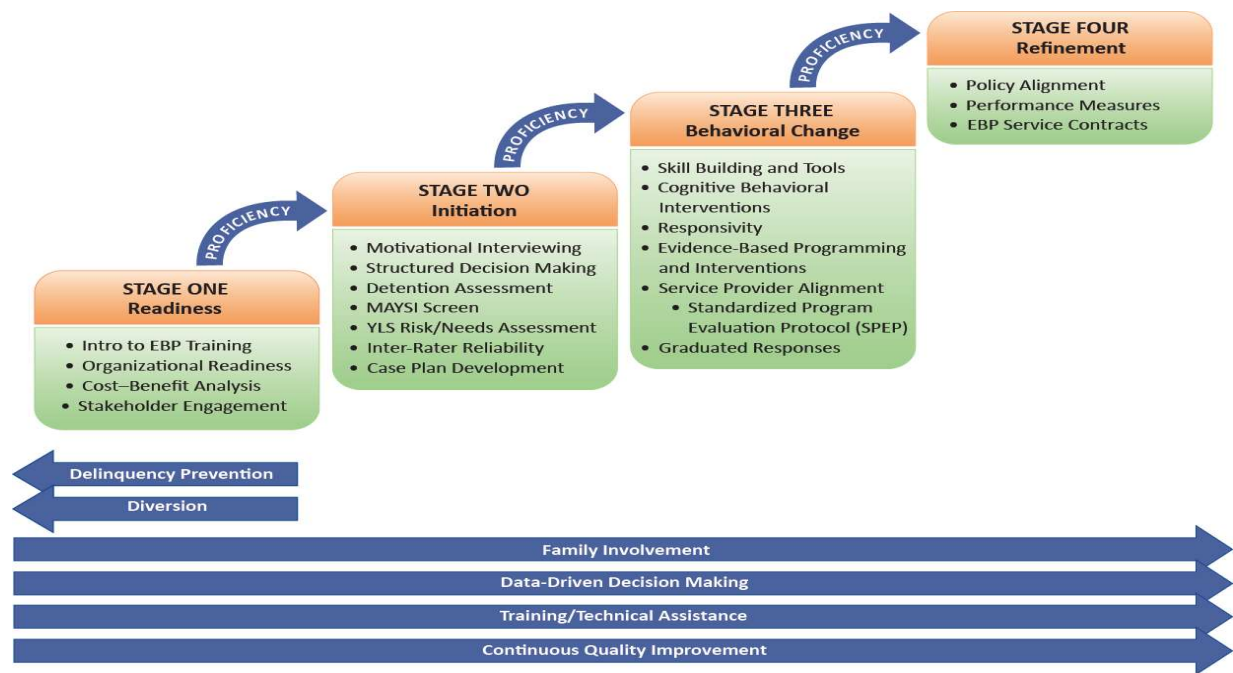
Leadership within the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office have contributed to the initial implementation and refinement of the State's Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy. Many of our successes are attributed directly to adhering to this model and philosophy. The section below describes the strategy and details specific services the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office delivers.



Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy (JJSES)

We dedicate ourselves to working in partnership to enhance the capacity of Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice System to achieve its balanced and restorative justice mission by:

- Employing evidence-based practices with fidelity, at every stage of the juvenile justice process.
- Collecting and analyzing the data necessary to measure the results of these efforts; and, with this knowledge,
- Striving to continuously improve the quality of our decisions, services, and programs.
- Ensuring that fundamental fairness, including the reduction of racial and ethnic disparities is addressed across all elements of the juvenile justice system.



EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES EMPLOYED

Risk/Needs Assessments

Pennsylvania Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (PaDRAI): A risk assessment that objectifies decisions regarding placing youth in secure detention. The assessment aids in the decision-making process to target the use of secure detention for youth who pose a significant risk to community safety or are at risk of not appearing for their juvenile court hearing and are at risk of committing additional offenses. The PaDRAI is designed to provide fundamental fairness, increase consistency, ensure unbiased detention decisions, minimize admissions to secure detention and explore alternatives to secure detention when appropriate. *In 2024, The Berks County Juvenile Probation Office completed 392 PaDRAIs.*

Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory™: A risk/needs assessment and case management tool that provides a detailed survey of the risk and needs of a youth. Use of the YLS allows for a more standardized and uniform approach to the task of gathering and processing information. The YLS assists in determining the overall level of risk to recidivate and identifies areas of criminogenic need as well as strengths. The results of the assessment allow for the targeting of interventions to reduce risk and provide commensurate levels of

supervision. *In 2024, the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office completed 584 YLS's.*

Massachusetts Youth Screen Instrument (MAYSI-2): A brief behavioral health screening tool designed especially for juvenile justice programs and facilities. It identifies youths 12 through 17 years old who may have important, pressing behavioral health needs. It is a self-report inventory of 52 questions. The questions ask the youth to answer YES or NO to having experienced various thoughts, feelings, or behaviors in the past few years. *In 2024, the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office completed 158 MAYSI-2 screenings.*

Child Trauma Screen: A screening tool that identifies children who may be suffering from trauma exposure and need more comprehensive assessment and treatment. *In 2024, the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office completed 167 Child Trauma Screens.*

Motivational Interviewing

Motivational interviewing is a way of communicating with people about change and working to enhance intrinsic motivation. Officers are taught the true meaning of change talk versus resistance, drawing on the juvenile's values, goals, and strengths to further this meaningful behavioral change. Employing the skills of open-ended questions, affirmations, reflection, and summarizing (OARS) as well as professional alliance, acceptance, compassion, and evocation in all aspects while working with juveniles has proved to promote successful rehabilitation. *Berks County Juvenile Probation Officers as well as administrative staff, are all trained in the use of motivational interviewing.*

Effective Practices in Community Supervision (EPICS)

EPICS is a structured way to conduct sessions with youth under supervision, targeting criminogenic needs through emphasizing the link between thoughts and behaviors, social learning and skill building while using cognitive behavioral interventions and core correctional practices. Examples of core correctional practices include relationship skills, teaching skills, problem-solving and effective reinforcement, and disapproval. *In 2024, the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office conducted 1,589 EPICS sessions.*

Case Planning

Case Plans target strategies and interventions that address the top criminogenic needs identified for youth, identified in their Youth Level of Service (YLS). The case plan evolves as juveniles move through supervision and is a working document for the juvenile. Building upon the juvenile's strengths and needs can reduce the likelihood of recidivism and support positive behavioral change. The case plan process is highly collaborative and requires active involvement from the youth, the family, the probation officer, and other stakeholders from start to finish. ***In 2024, the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office developed 128 case plans and conducted 350 case plan reviews.***

Graduated Responses

Through a structured process that accounts for a juvenile's level of risk, needs and responsivity, graduated responses recognize and reinforce positive behaviors and provide proportional responses to negative behaviors to improve short and long-term outcomes. The use of graduated incentives and sanctions foster positive behavior change to facilitate successful completion of probation. This approach helps juveniles become productive, law-abiding citizens and also prevents the unnecessary use of secure detention and residential placement. ***In 2024, the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office utilized 1003 graduated responses. These included 760 graduated incentives and 243 graduated sanctions on a total of 234 juveniles.***

Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP™)

The Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP) is a validated, data-driven rating system that assesses how well a community-based or residential program matches the research evidence regarding recidivism risk reduction. SPEP focuses on assessing and improving service delivery with respect to program philosophy and type, the quality of service being delivered, the amount of service and the juvenile's risk level. Its results are a reflection of the quality of service delivery and how the service is utilized by the juvenile court system. SPEP also includes the

development of a performance improvement plan to implement recommendations that improve the service quality and program use. *In 2024, the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office was involved in the ongoing SPEP process for 19 programs with 7 different providers across the state.*

- Abraxas Academy
- Clear Vision Residential Services
- Community Solutions, Inc.
- Concern Treatment Unit for Boys (CTUB)
- JusticeWorks YouthCare
- Olivet Boys and Girls Club of Reading and Berks County
- Recovery Coaching Services, Inc.

SPECIALIZED SUPERVISION

Drug and Alcohol Specialists

Several probation officers are certified from the Pennsylvania Certification Board to work with youth and families experiencing substance use disorders. If a juvenile presents with substance abuse concerns, they receive additional support from one of the department's certified drug and alcohol probation officers. Drug and alcohol specialist probation officers have extensive knowledge of community providers, inpatient facilities, and other resources, as well as the ability to make appropriate referrals for care.

Special Supervision Unit

Caseloads within this unit are comprised of juveniles who are at high-risk to become involved with a gang, juveniles who have been identified as gang members, and juveniles who self-report gang membership. Most of the juveniles being actively supervised within the Special Supervision Unit belong to local hybrid street gangs, with a small percentage belonging to well-known national gangs.

To effectively supervise the Special Supervision caseload, probation officers implement traditional community supervision methods such as frequent and non-traditional contacts, electronic monitoring, as well as evidence-based interventions such as Effective Practices in Community Supervision (EPICS), Graduated Responses to Behavior, Multi-Systemic-Therapy (MST), Aggression Replacement Training (ART®) and skill building. These specialized probation officers are also certified as gang professionals through the East Coast Gang Investigators Association. In 2024, they attended trainings on street gang investigations, Outlaw Motorcycle gang investigations, and on the Trinitarios gang. The unit continued their dedicated work towards public safety by working enforcement and crime suppression details with local law enforcement partners through Operation Nightlight, monthly Gang suppression details, warrant details, and through information sharing meetings with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.



In 2024, the Special Supervision Unit completed over 17 property searches of juveniles due to violations of probation, recovering 10 firearms which included several with devices that turned the firearm into an automatic weapon, as well as one homemade explosive device. Additionally, the unit also presented on gang activity and how juveniles become involved in the gang lifestyle at local colleges including Kutztown University, Penn State Berks and Alvernia University, as well as providing training to the employees of Reading High School and the Berks County Intermediate Unit.

In 2024, 73 juveniles were under the supervision of the Special Supervision Unit.

Problem Sexual Behavior Unit

This unit consists of probation officers that have extensive knowledge and training to work with youth that have exhibited problem sexual behavior (PSB). If appropriate, they will also supervise youth that have experienced sexual victimization and/or trauma. These specialized probation officers are heavily involved with the juvenile's treatment.



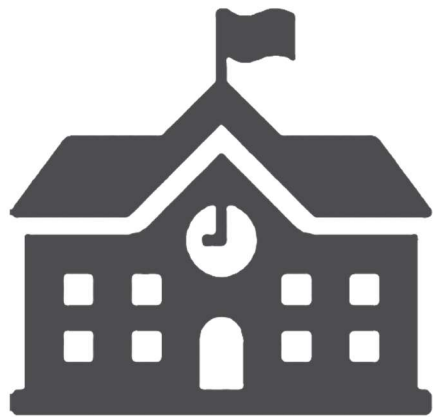
Youth involved with the PSB unit attend specialized outpatient treatment as part of their supervision. This typically consists of individual and group therapy on a weekly basis. Evaluators, along with a specialized treatment provider, determine what course of treatment is most appropriate for the juvenile. Depending on circumstances, some youths have been recommended to complete counseling on sexual education including consent, healthy relationships, and boundaries. The traditional curriculum used is Pathways: A Guided Workbook for Youth Beginning Treatment by Timothy J. Kahn, and other assignments deemed necessary. Outpatient treatment typically takes between 9 and 12 months to complete. Youth are given assignments on a weekly basis. Clinical safety plans are created for school, sports, employment, special events (birthday parties, family gatherings), etc. These safety plans include high-risk situations, warning signs, and negative self-talk, as well as counterthoughts and positive behaviors designed to assist the youth in staying safe in the community and maintaining an offense-free lifestyle. Other assignments completed are sexual fantasy logs, recognizing the offense cycle, writing a clarification letter, and developing relapse prevention plans. Youth are also expected to refrain from using pornography and social media while in treatment.

Throughout treatment, polygraph testing is utilized a tool to collect sexual history, to ensure compliance with probation/treatment conditions (maintenance exams), or in cases where denial is present. A sexual history polygraph is conducted after a few months in treatment to ensure that the treatment is tailored to specific offending behavior. Information gathered on the sexual history polygraph includes, but is not limited to, prior offending behavior, victimization, and past deviant behaviors. Identifying information is not gathered during the exam to protect from self-incrimination. Maintenance polygraphs are used to gauge if a juvenile has been complying with treatment and probation rules, e.g., pornography use, contact with minors/victims, etc. Denial polygraphs are utilized if a juvenile is denying the charges against him/her after being found involved with or admitting to a sexual offense in court.

In 2024, there were 104 juveniles under supervision with this unit.

School-Based Probation

Several schools throughout Berks County have provided office space for the probation officers assigned to their school district in one of their buildings. This allows the probation officer to work alongside with teachers, school staff, administrators, and security to form a united front in working with the juveniles under supervision in that school district. Probation officers also frequently participate in Student Assistance Program (S.A.P.) meetings as well as school activities and events. In addition, officers frequently conduct presentations to students on various topics such as prevention and careers in probation.



INTERNAL SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

SSD Macarena

SSD Macarena ("Rena") is a certified facility dog from Susquehanna Service Dogs, an organization accredited by Assistance Dogs International. A 4.5-year-old yellow Labrador Retriever, Rena was born into the "Popular Dance" litter. Thanks to her calm temperament and strong genetic traits, she was also selected for SSD's breeding program, where she whelped her own "Popular 70's Music" litter.

Rena officially began her career on February 26, 2024, and has since become an integral member of both the Adult and Juvenile Probation Departments. In 2024 alone, she was called upon nearly 50 times. Whether attending court hearings or joining office visits, Rena provides comforting support to individuals, both juveniles and adults, who may feel nervous or overwhelmed by their circumstances.

Beyond her day-to-day work, Rena proudly represents the Departments at community events and makes monthly visits to the Berks County Youth Center, where she brings smiles and stress relief to the kids placed there. Rena has an extraordinary ability to detect stress and anxiety, offering just the right kind of support when it's needed most. She has helped countless individuals navigate the emotional challenges within the justice system. Equally important, she has become a source of comfort for staff members who regularly face vicarious trauma due to the emotionally demanding nature of their work.



You can follow
Rena on Instagram
[@SSD.Macarena](https://www.instagram.com/SSD.Macarena)

Drug Testing

Drug testing youth for substance use is critical to assessing and monitoring youth. Results provide probation officers valuable information and insight for risk assessment, determining the need for drug and alcohol evaluation, treatment and/or other programming, and for case planning.

1,649 drug tests were administered to juveniles under supervision or pending Court in 2024. Of those tests, 53% (875) of them were negative for all substances, while 47% (774) were positive for one or more substance. Of the positive drug tests, 41% of them were positive for marijuana, 3% were positive for amphetamines, 2% were positive for alcohol, while less than 1% each were positive for cocaine, fentanyl, or morphine. Additionally, 34 juveniles under supervision have a documented medical marijuana card.

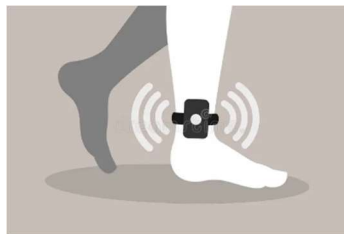
Electronic Monitoring

Electronic Monitoring is a tool that can be used in lieu of placing a juvenile in secure detention or throughout the course of supervision as a graduated sanction. It allows probation officers to monitor the whereabouts of a juvenile under supervision and address concerns regarding curfew, school attendance, etc.

In November of 2023, the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office shifted to primarily using Loc8xt GPS monitors to better track our client's whereabouts. This allows probation officers to set up exclusion zones to know when a client is in an area that they are not allowed to be in. The department still utilizes the Homeguard 2020 units for Level 1 clients only.

Juveniles Placed on the Electronic Monitor by Year:

2024 → 119
2023 → 114
2022 → 98
2021 → 112
2020 → 127
2019 → 217



EXTERNAL SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

3rd Millennium Online Courses

Evidence-based online courses grounded in the most effective strategies for changing attitudes and behavior.

- Conflict-Wise
- Marijuana 101
- Nicotine 101
- Respect & Resolve
- STOPlifting
- Under the Influence

In 2024, 145 youth under supervision in Berks County completed at least one 3rd Millennium course.

Aggression Replacement Training ®

Aggression Replacement Training (ART) is a cognitive behavioral intervention program to help children and adolescents improve social skill competence and moral reasoning, better manage anger, and reduce aggressive behavior. ART is administered in a group setting by JusticeWorks YouthCare.

In 2024, 20 youth under supervision in Berks County were engaged with Aggression Replacement Training.

Counseling

Juveniles under supervision are referred for counseling services when deemed necessary. Counseling can take the form of individual or group sessions. It can also be generalized counseling or target specific areas of need such as drug and alcohol, trauma-focused and/or problem sexual behaviors.

DREAM

Discovering Reality Easily and Meaningfully (DREAM) is a program run by the Olivet Boys & Girls Club of Reading specifically for juveniles under probation supervision. DREAM provides a structured environment and life skills education to assist youth in making positive decisions while also building on their social skills.

In 2024, 17 youth under supervision in Berks County were engaged with the DREAM Program.

Family Reintegration Services

The Reintegration Service is family-focused and begins at Court when a youth is referred to a delinquency placement and is administered by JusticeWorks YouthCare. While the youth is in placement, the Reintegration Specialist will assist the family with case management, transportation, video conferencing, parenting and in-person visits with the youth and regular contact with the treatment team. Parenting covers topics such as teen behavior, constructive communication, and consequences and rewards.

In 2024, 36 youth under supervision in Berks County and their families were engaged with Family Reintegration Services.

Impact of Crime Classes

405 individuals were victimized by juvenile offenders in Berks County in 2023. In working with these juveniles, part of their probation likely includes participating in and completing the Impact of Crime Class, facilitated by JusticeWorks

YouthCare. *In 2024, 109 juveniles under supervision completed the Impact of crime Class.*

The goals of the class are to:

- Acknowledge how victims, their families, friends, and various community members are impacted by crime.
- Identify the impact of their crimes on their victims and communities.
- Accept responsibility for the harm they caused and their obligation to repair.

JusticeWorks Youthcare

The casework counseling program offered by JusticeWorks YouthCare is designed to help families to maintain stable lifestyles and to identify safety, permanence, and wellbeing of the family. Families are assisted by being connected with community resources, demonstrating/teaching skill building techniques all while encouraging choices that enhance their quality of life, systematically accomplishing established goals.

In 2024, 143 youth under supervision in Berks County participated in casework counseling with JusticeWorks YouthCare.

Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST®)

Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST®) is a scientifically proven intervention for at-risk youth. Therapists work in the home, school and community and provide caregivers with the tools they need to transform the lives of troubled youth. In Berks County, MST is delivered by Community Solutions, Inc.

In 2024, Berks County supported 14 youth under supervision and their families to participate with Multi-Systemic Therapy.

Recovery Coaching Services

Recovery Coaching Services, Inc. serves individuals and families in their journey of recovery by providing individualized recovery coaching for juveniles under supervision suffering from drug or alcohol addiction.

In 2024, 20 youth under supervision in Berks County were engaged with Recovery coaching Services.

Voices

The Voices Program model, a structured support group for girls and young women ages 12-18, integrates relational theory, resiliency practices, and skills training in a specific format designed to increase positive connection, personal and collective strengths, and competence. It aims to counteract social and interpersonal forces that impede the participant's growth and development by promoting an emotionally safe setting and structure within which girls and young women can develop caring relationships and use their authentic voices. Based on the realities of the participant's lives and the principles of gender responsiveness, it is also grounded in theory, research, and clinical experience. The Voices group is delivered by JusticeWorks YouthCare.

In 2024, 28 youth under supervision in Berks County participated in the Voices Program.

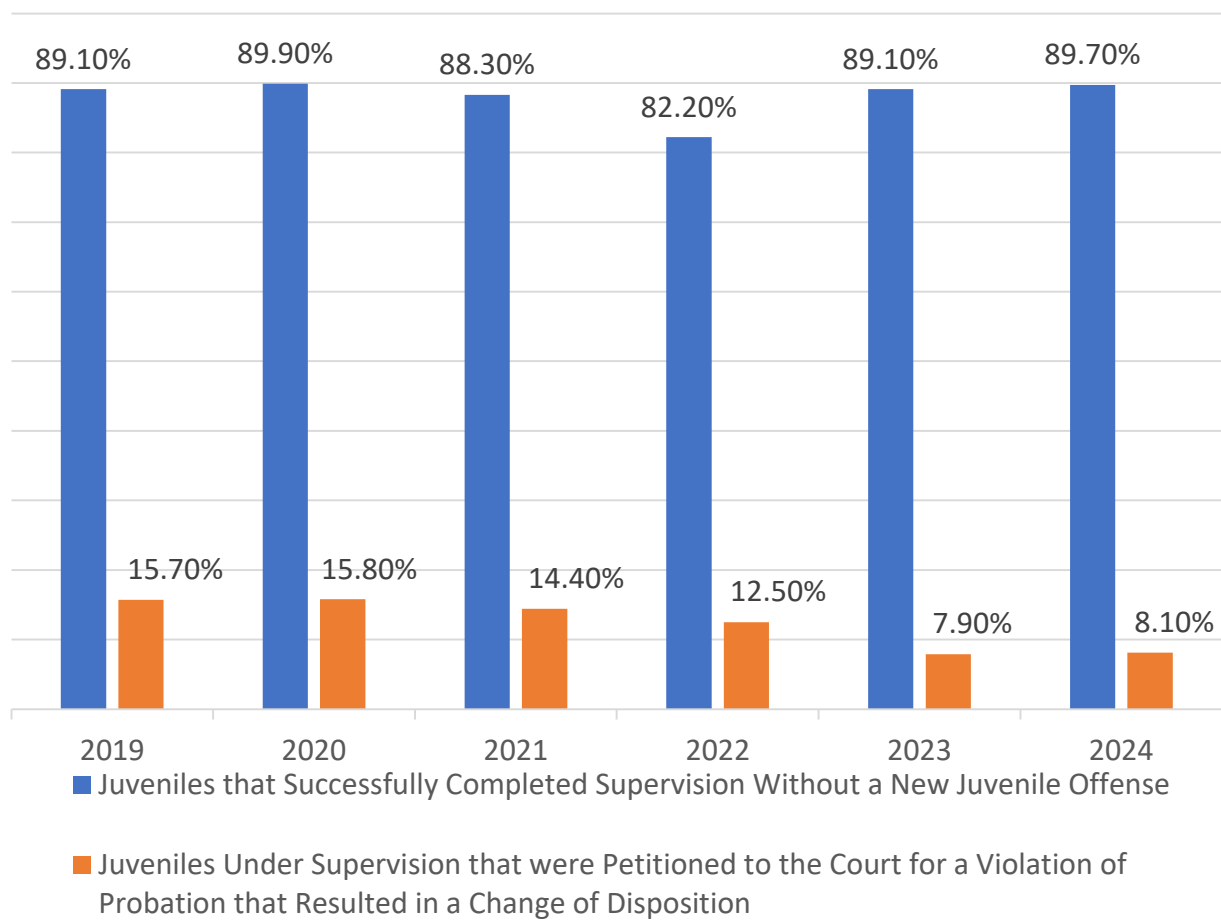


2024 DEPARTMENTAL OUTCOME MEASURES

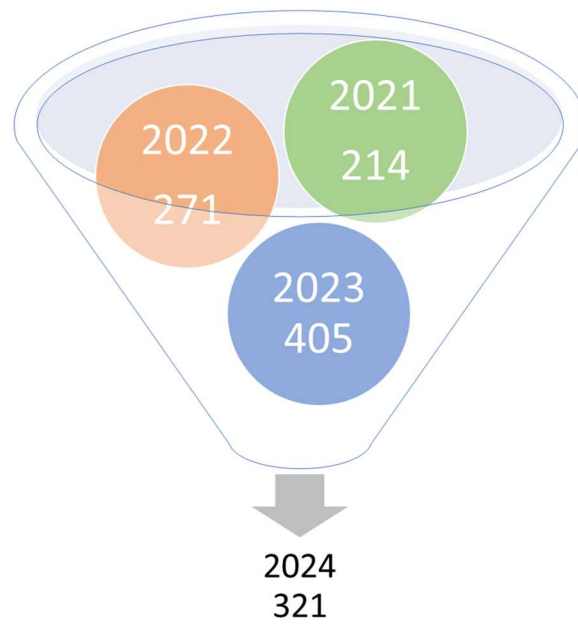
The department has compiled statistical information relative to significant outcome measures for youth exiting the system since 2002. Outcome or performance measures more accurately reflect how well we are performing as a system. The charts and graphics that follow reflect data from 223 cases that were closed throughout 2024.

COMMUNITY PROTECTION

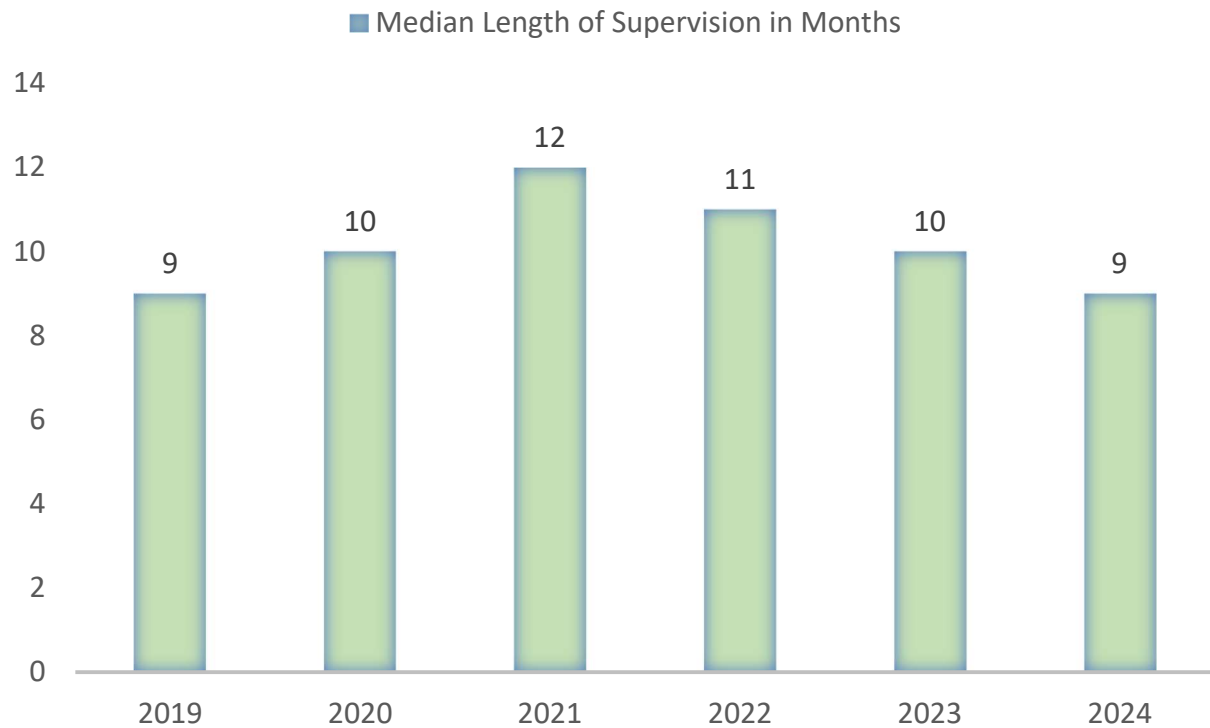
Juvenile Offenses While Under Supervision



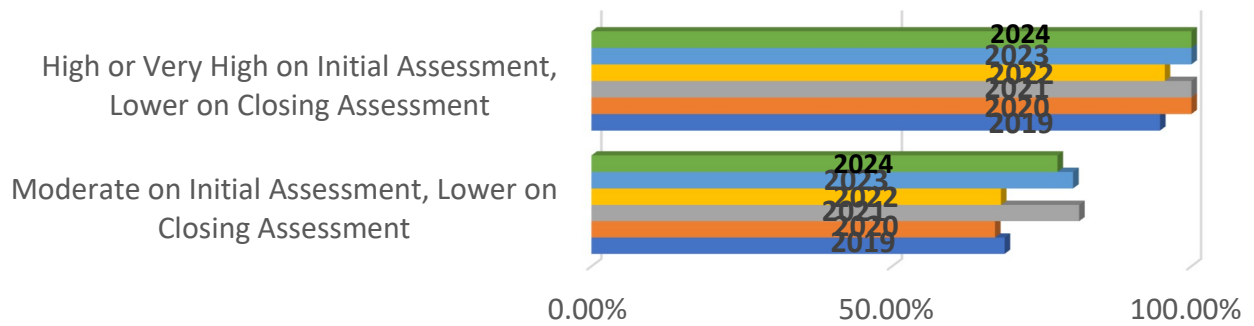
Number of Victims



MEDIAN LENGTH OF SUPERVISION



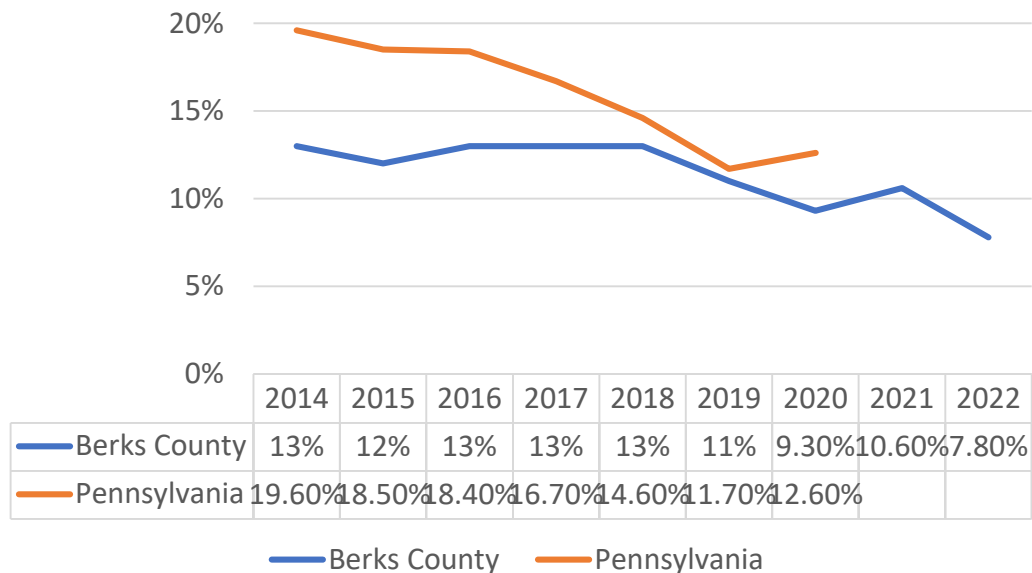
Reduction in YLS Risk Level



	Moderate on Initial Assessment, Lower on Closing Assessment	High or Very High on Initial Assessment, Lower on Closing Assessment
2024	77.50%	100%
2023	80.10%	100%
2022	68.10%	95.50%
2021	81.10%	100%
2020	67.10%	100%
2019	68.70%	94.70%

Recidivism Rates in Berks County Compared with the State of Pennsylvania

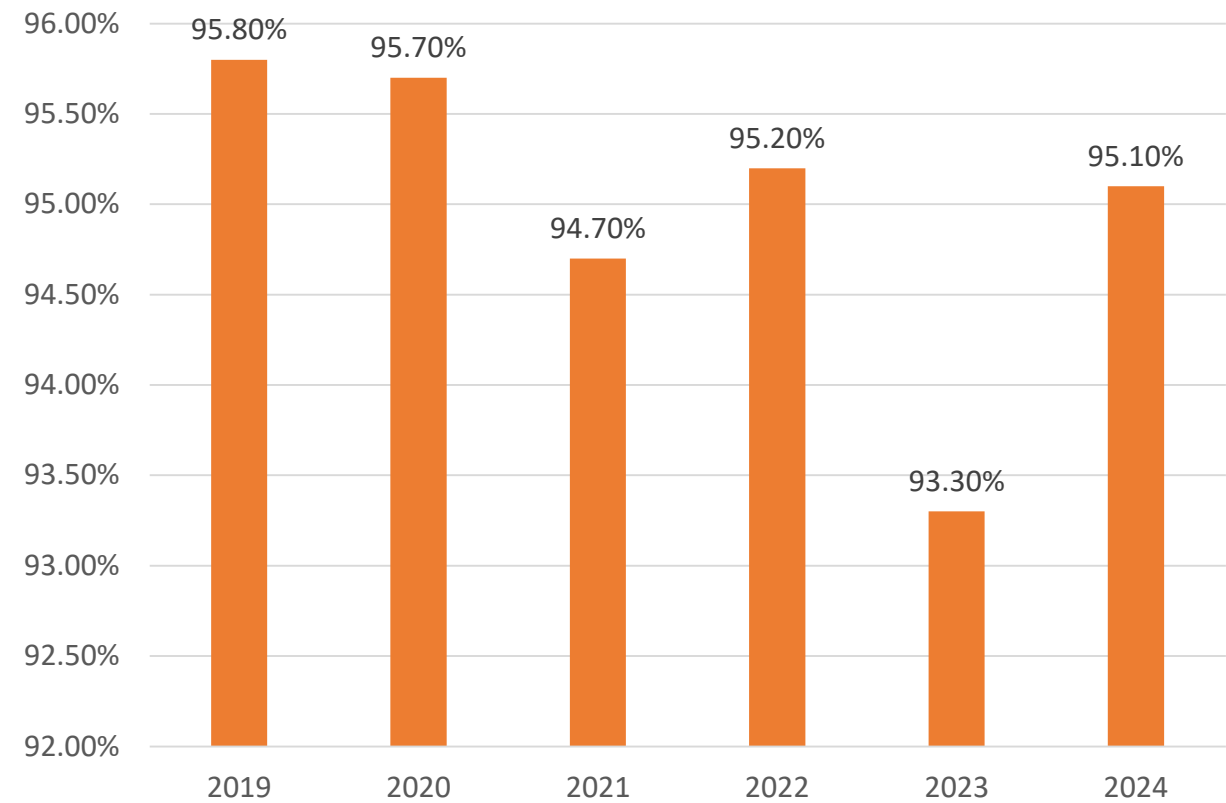
*Recidivism as defined by those juveniles committing a new offense after case closure, within 2 years.



COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT

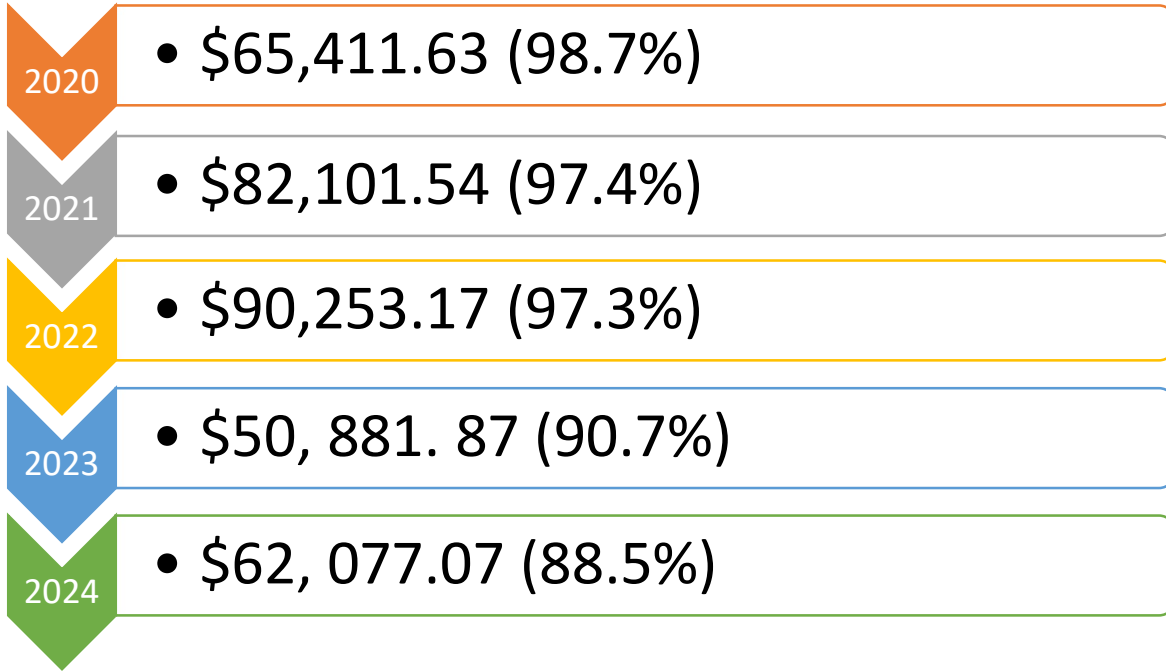


Percentage of Juveniles Employed or Actively Engaged in an Educational or Vocational Activity at Case Closing

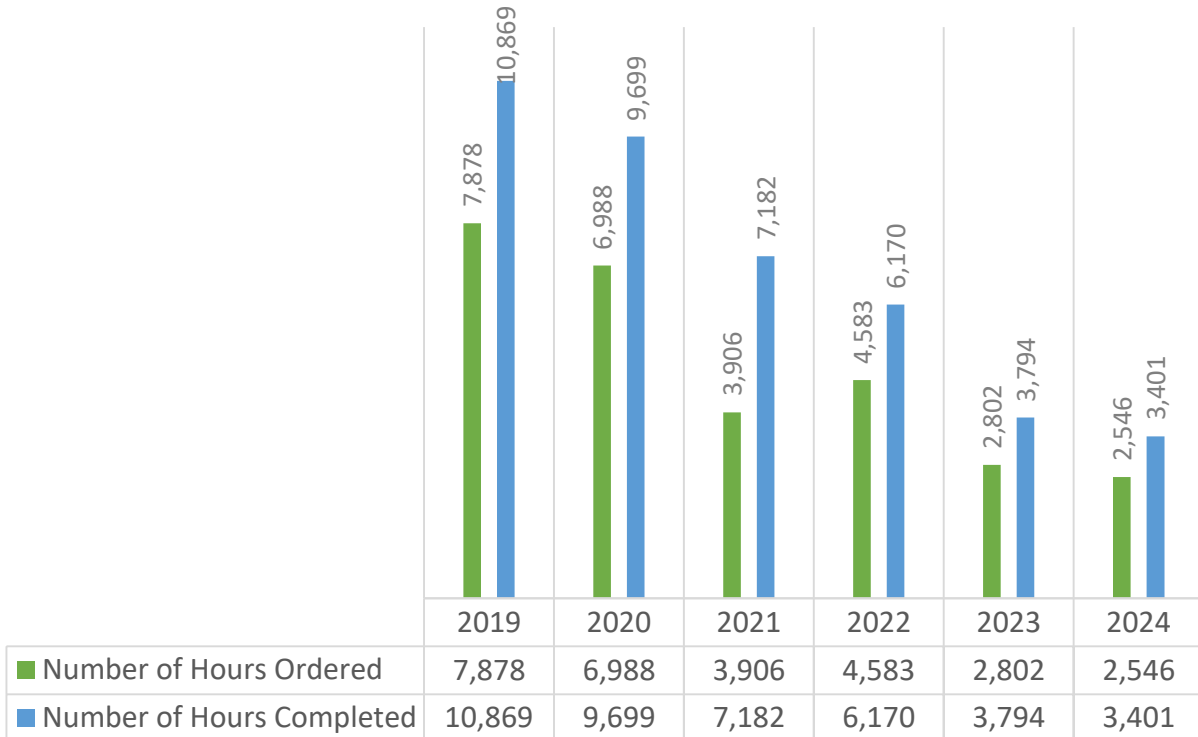


ACCOUNTABILITY

Restitution Collected and Paid to Victims



Community Service Hours Ordered vs. Completed





**Berks County Probation & Parole
Juvenile Probation Office**

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(610)478-3200

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