



The Impact of COVID-19 on Youth Justice

2.18.22

“All it took was a deadly pandemic to get kids out of detention.”

- County Stakeholder Interview

Project Scope

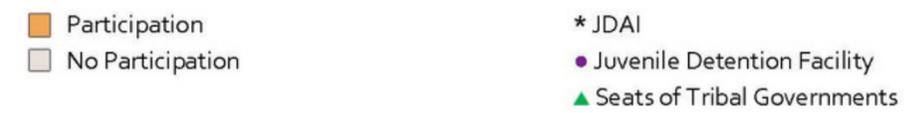
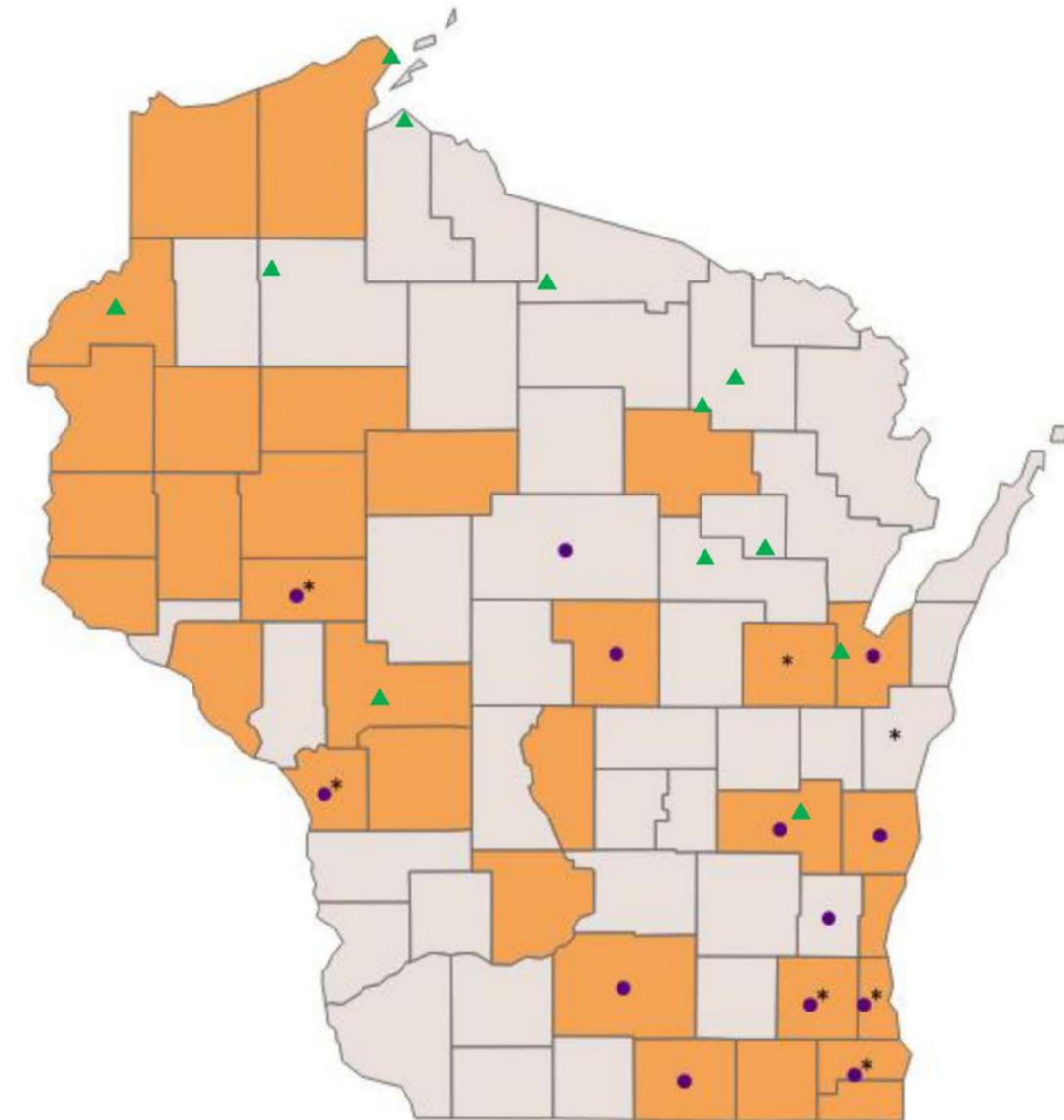


3 Phases of study: 2020-present

- 2019-2021 Referral/ADP Data
- Arrests vs Referrals
- UW-La Follette Project Spotlight

Project Assets & Constraints

COVID-19 Impact on Youth Justice: Project Participation

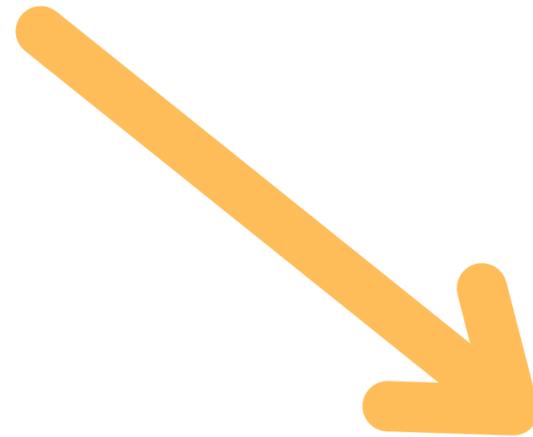


Decline in Referrals



Referrals to Youth Justice Intake: 3 yr Comparison of May

65%



2019 vs 2020

- Increase in 2021 still **27% lower** than pre-pandemic
- Age of youth referred - shifted older
- Truancy referrals - nearly **zero** in 2020- still lower in 2021

Referral Disparity

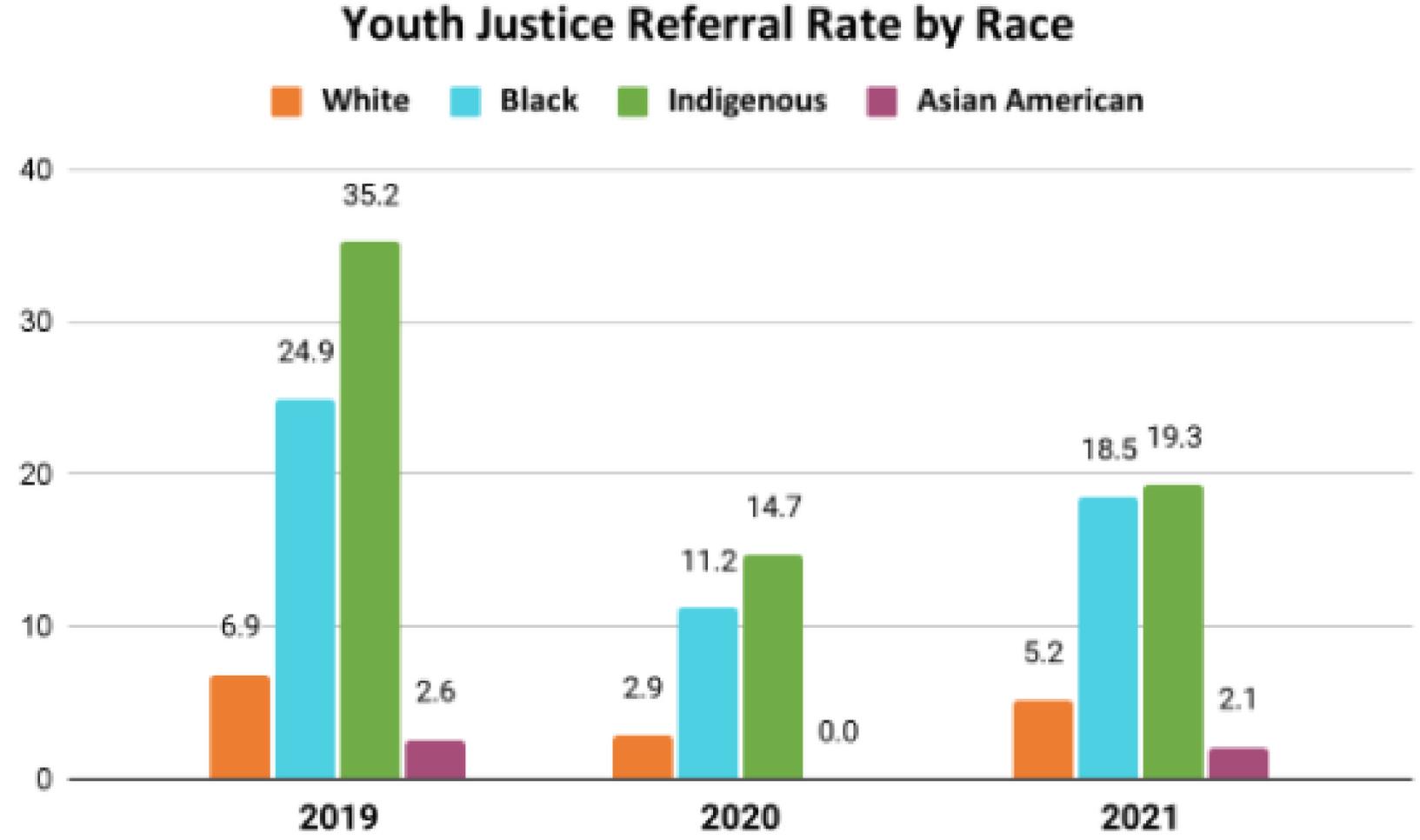


Serious Racial Disparity Rates **Remain Unchanged**

Rate of Referral

5X ↑ **Indigenous Youth**

3X ↑ **Black Youth**

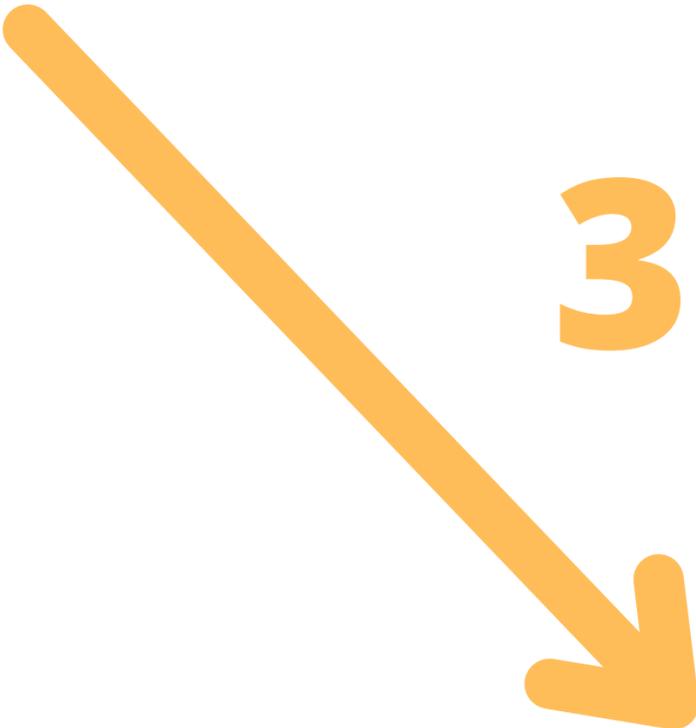


Missing data for Latino and Latina youth - disparity rates not shown

Decline in Arrests



Youth Arrests: Annual Totals 2019 vs. 2020



36%

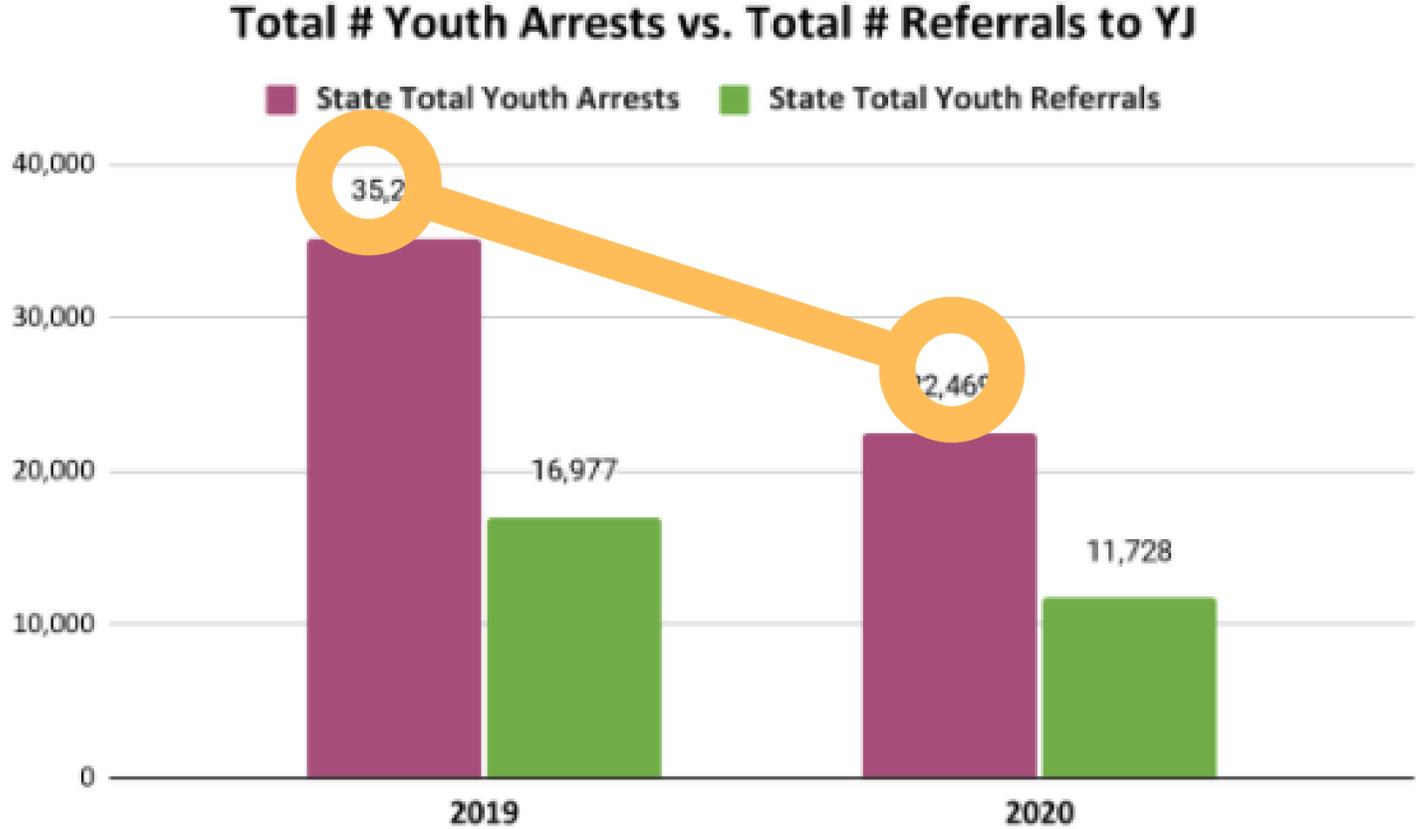


Figure F. Source: Wisconsin Department of Justice, Department of Children and Families

Finding: Diversion



50% arrests **DIVERTED** from Intake

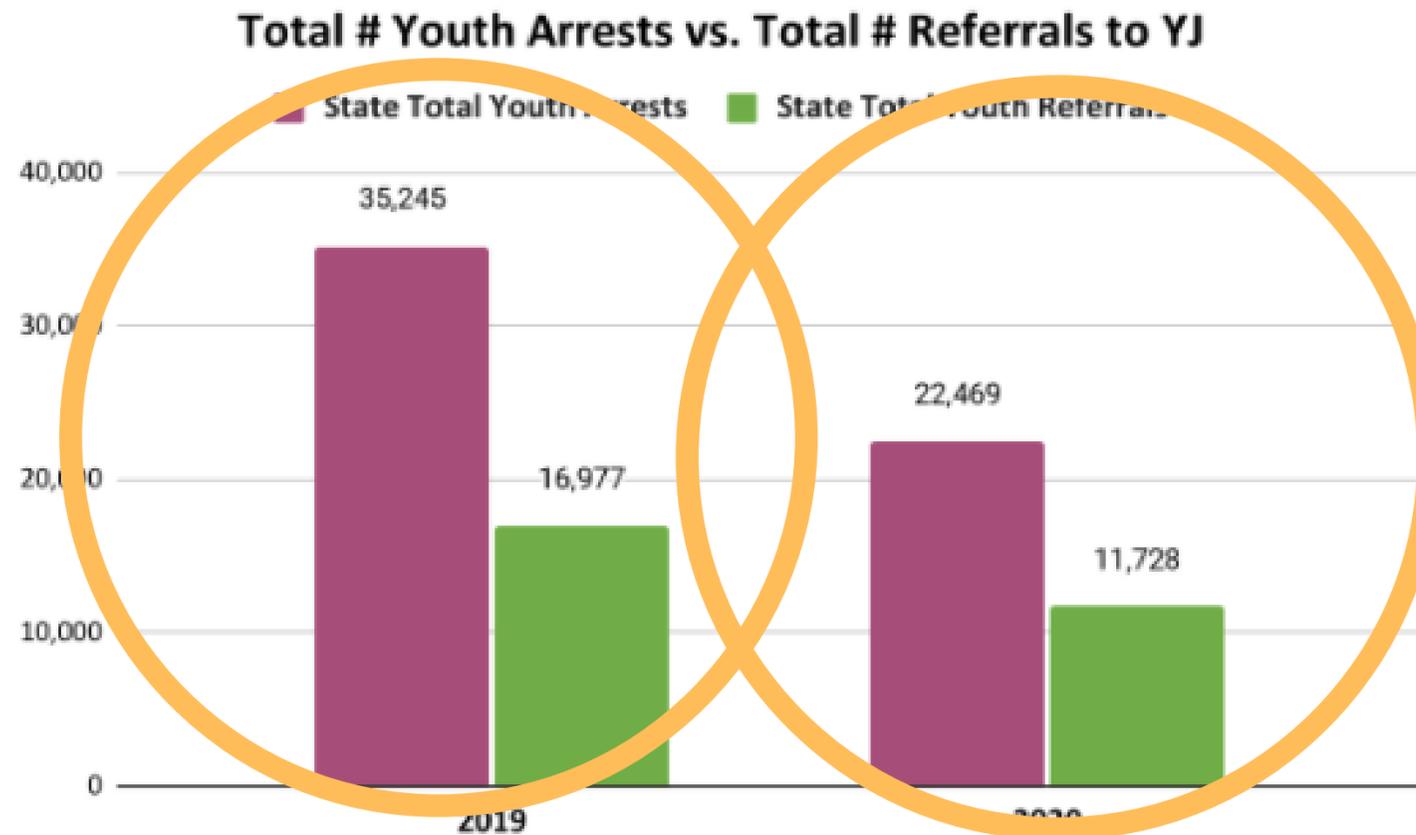


Figure F. Source: Wisconsin Department of Justice, Department of Children and Families

Arrest Disparity



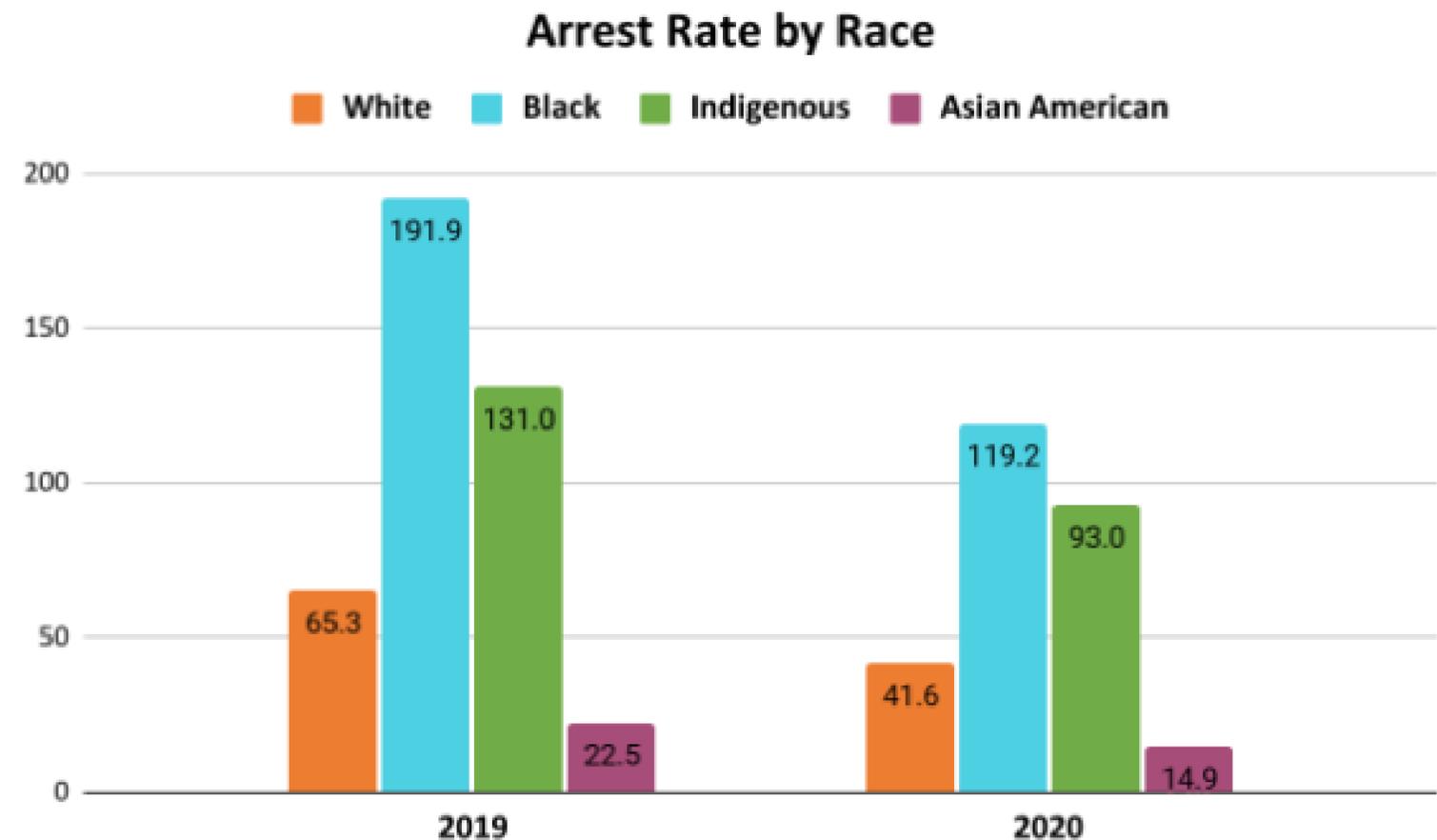
Serious Racial Disparity Rates **Remain Unchanged**

Rate of Referral

3X ↑ **Black Youth**

2X ↑ **Indigenous Youth**

Rate of arrest for White and Asian American youth lower than general youth population arrest



Data does not reflect disparity rate for Latino and Latina youth

System Impact



- Collaboration & communication increased to divert cases away from secure custody
- Resources redirected to prevent & reduce crisis
- Increased consideration of mental health issues
- Phone & video = increased contact/connections
- Serious needs - service gaps more intense
- ***More focus on needs and underlying factors***
- ***Less use of secure custody for non-safety related referrals***

Observations



"I believe there was a collaborative effort by law enforcement, social workers, judges, and detention facilities to only use secure detention when community safety was at risk." - Detention Supervisor

"There seems to be a trend toward different handling of situations by the police in the area, with more situations... being handled without referral to [Youth Justice]. Mental health needs are being factored in, and the mobile crisis is utilized as a resource more now than ever. " - Youth Justice Supervisor

".....We saw more domestic complaints and person crimes as a result that did not rise to community safety threat when law enforcement agencies responded. A crisis line was able to assist in many of these domestic disturbances." - Youth Justice Services Supervisor

"Some grace has been given, vs. criminalizing everything youth may do. Less school issues arise when they aren't in school." - Youth Justice Social Worker

Focus on Supervision



UW- La Follette School Seminar team studied impact of COVID-19 pandemic on fines & fees and community supervision in 5 counties.

- Fines & Fees: no significant change due to pandemic, widespread support for eliminating*
- Community Supervision: increased use of diversion practices, increased contact through virtual & phone; increased access to crisis support in place of confinement*

Virtual appointments removed barriers to participation such as transportation, child care, work schedule conflicts.

Virtual school reduced use of law enforcement when addressing truancy issues- highlighting a pre-existing overreliance on law enforcement in the school setting

County youth justice agencies should use youth and family-centered community supervision practices that include diverse community stakeholders.

Concern & Urgency



DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT for YOUTH of COLOR

Equity in access and use of alternatives for youth of color

Formalizing collaboration & focus on needs could reduce school, community and probation referrals

Increase Diversion



Collaboration: Formalizing & expanding collaboration & practice that more effectively meet the needs of youth and families = increasing diversion

Service Gaps: Using data and evidence-based practices to address = decrease secure custody

Racial Disparities: Look at inequities that are underlying drivers such as access to services/basic need assets and inconsistent diversion

Youth Centered Supervision: Expansion, partnerships, and evaluation

Panelist Questions



What would it take?

To formalize the collaboration, communication, & technology practices that were used in place of secure custody during the pandemic?

To address service gaps & underlying factors that will make diversion more equitable across racial groups and jurisdictions?

*Do these goals require different **Policy? Funding? Inter-agency agreements? Innovation grants to fill service gap? Technical assistance to implement programs?***



***Thank you to the panelists, partners, and attendees for
your interest and time.***

*Thank you to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
and KIDS COUNT®. for their financial support.*

Share the work, share your ideas, stay tuned.