



Teen Court

of **SANTA FE COUNTY**

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Evaluation Report

Prepared for: County of Santa Fe, New Mexico

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Summary

Santa Fe County issued a Request for *Letters of Interest* in October 2014 to perform an evaluation study of Teen Court of Santa Fe County (TC). A contract was awarded to Stuart Castle, LLC on December 1, 2014 to conduct the study.

The evaluation study was designed to address both process and outcome components. The process evaluation focused on five program areas of oversight; referral, intake, case management, program completion and defendant perception. The outcome evaluation focused on how many teens complete the program and the recidivism of teens who were originally referred to the TC program and had subsequent referrals to the Juvenile Probation Office (JPO) of the Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD).

A literature search was conducted to identify other teen court evaluation studies and recidivism rates. Documents were cited in this evaluation report, and included as an appendix with an abstract and relevance to TC.

Methods included diagramming the TC process, interviewing identified TC stakeholders, observing court sessions, analyzing TC defendant records and searching CYFD records for recidivism offenses. Teens referred to TC were matriculated very differently if they had a traffic offense and were referred by Municipal Court, versus those with a delinquent offense and referred from Santa Fe Public Schools (SFPS) or the Juvenile Probation Office (JPO). Decision points, and time intervals, were diagrammed and time intervals were calculated. Most interviews were held in person and conducted in an open discussion format. An agenda was followed and notes were taken in the course of each interview. The evaluator attended teen court sessions to observe the organization and interactions. Many of the TC process evaluation questions were addressed by analyzing the TC defendant files. These files have been maintained in an electronic database for nearly twenty years and provided an excellent history. However, since the TC program is dynamic, the data analyses focuses on the last five fiscal years from FY11 (July, 2010) through FY15 (June, 2015). When a teen completed the TC program, they and their guardian were asked to complete a program survey. Results from this survey were analyzed. Lastly, TC files from those defendants who had been referred by the JPO were matched to the Family Automated Client Tracking System (FACTS) database, maintained by CYFD, to determine which teens had subsequent juvenile referrals after their initial TC offense (i.e., recidivism).

Findings of program **oversight** indicate a high regard for the TC program from referring schools and the judicial sources. Nearly all of the referring agencies felt that an absence of the TC program would place a significant additional burden on SFPS, Santa Fe Police Department, JPO, and the Santa Fe Municipal Court. Interviews also identified some areas in need of improvement, including a more robust method to provide status reports on referred teens. Exit surveys taken upon completion of the TC program indicate a high level of satisfaction of program components by both defendants and their parent/guardians.

During the five year study period, most teens were **referred** to the program by SFPS 893 (36%); JPO 789 (31%); Santa Fe Municipal Court 775 (31%), and 52 (2%) from other agencies. Offenses resulting in a JPO referral were mainly shoplifting and possession of drugs or alcohol. Primary offenses resulting in a referral from SFPS were possession of drugs, drug paraphernalia, or alcohol. Referrals from Municipal Court were virtually all due to traffic citations. Median times from offense to TC referral were less than one day for SFPS; 34 days for JPO and 27 days for Municipal Court referrals. Most defendants were males (64%), with an average age of 15.3 years, and were of Hispanic ethnicity (77%).

Intake occurs during the initial TC interview for teens with delinquent offenses, and during their court hearing for those referred from Municipal Court for traffic citations. Observation of court hearings indicate they are very well organized and efficient. They are held in District Court nearly every Wednesday evening throughout the year. The wait time from initial TC referral to a meeting with TC staff has been declining over the five year period, with the shortest times in FY 14, at about one week. In FY15 those times increased to an average of 11 days. This time frame seems reasonable and is necessary to make contact and arrange a meeting with TC staff, the youth and their guardian. A number of teens cannot be contacted and are referred back to the originating agency. There were 470 teens referred back to originating agency, representing 19% of all referrals during the five year study period. This group faces an increased risk for recidivism.

Case management at TC requires all referred teens to attend a sentencing court session, perform jury duty, attend a DWI prevention class and complete community service hours. In addition, teens who are referred from SFPS or JPO for a delinquent offense are required to submit urine samples for drug and alcohol screening. During the five year study period, of all defendants who were referred to TC and completed the drug screening, 319 (32%) had a positive drug screen. This included those teens who admitted to taking drugs and were not initially tested. However, of those defendants who completed the TC program, 173 (26%) of them had a positive drug screen.

The percent of teens **completing** the TC program was 48% for SFPS, 49% for JPO and 66% for Municipal Court. Unfortunately a number of teens do not complete the TC program and are referred back to the originating agency, or they are terminated due to non-compliance. Most teens who are referral back result from an inability to initially contact the teen by phone or e-mail by the TC staff. The percent of teens referred back varies from year to year, but average 27% for SFPS, 20% for JPO and 9% for Municipal Court. The length of time needed to complete the TC program requirements is important so the teen can associate the experience with their original offense and, hopefully, not reoffend. For SFPS the entire time from referral to TC program completion was 4.2 months, for JPO referrals it was 4.3 months, and for Municipal Court it was 2.6 months.

One of the most important measures of TC program success is the **recidivism** rate. For JPO referrals, the one year recidivism rate was 23%. This is in line with recidivism rates reported in other studies (Butts, 20000), including a study conducted in Dona Ana County, NM between 1994 and 1998 which found a 25% recidivism rate (Harrison, 2001). The current study was not

able to identify an appropriate comparison, or control, group. However, the one year recidivism rate was lower for those completing the TC program (17%), versus those referred back (28%) or terminated (33%). No difference between recidivism rates was observed between males and females.

Recommendations include an updated electronic database that can be used through the internet. The existing database has served TC remarkably well, but a newer web-based system could significantly reduce data input time while increasing data accuracy, and improve the ability of referring agencies to monitor the teen's status at TC. Early identification of high risk teens – particularly those who do not complete the program – is highly recommended. Over the five year study period, these teens consistently had higher recidivism rates than those youth who completed the TC program. Interventions should target these youth. To help reduce the recidivism rates, it is recommended that Santa Fe County consider adding a position to the teen court staff who would be responsible for monitoring all referred defendants and helping them achieve sentence compliance. Lastly, identification of tangible consequences for those youth who do not complete the program is encouraged and is anticipated to have a significant impact on completion and recidivism rates.

Introduction:

Teen court is a nationally recognized early intervention and restorative justice program for juveniles (ages 12 – 17), giving the offender a second chance while holding them accountable for their actions. Teen court programs serve as a community-based intervention/diversion program designed to provide an alternative response for the juvenile justice system. The teen accepts responsibility for their offense, appears before a judge and their peers, and is sentenced. The goal of the teen court program is to interrupt developing patterns of criminal behavior by promoting feelings of self-esteem, motivation for self-improvement and a healthy attitude toward authority.

Teen Court of Santa Fe County (TC) was established in 1994 and is one of over 20 teen courts in New Mexico. The program sees approximately 500 youth and families each year and has served over 9,000 youth since its inception. The Santa Fe program incorporates 16 components which are utilized by incoming youth to address negative individual and family indicators. In October 2014 TC issued a Request for *Letters of Interest* for professional services to conduct an evaluation of the Teen Court program. Stuart Castle, LLC responded to the invitation and was awarded a contract to conduct a process and outcome evaluation study of the TC program. This evaluation did not address the fiscal oversight responsibilities of the TC program.

Evaluation Focus:

TC has been in existence for twenty years. The referral, intake and processing of teens is well established. It is staffed by three positions; a program manager, program coordinator and an administrative support person. Together they track and process approximately 500 teen referrals per year; administer about four dozen evening court sessions held each week of the year; provide attorney training to youth, oversee 18 contracts and participate on at least five standing committees; including the Regional Juvenile Justice Board, Alcohol Abuse Prevention Work Group, New Mexico Teen Court Association, the Santa Fe Prevention Alliance, and the DWI Planning Council. There is little, or no, room for expansion of staff duties, unless some current responsibilities could be removed, or more staff added.

The TC evaluation questions have been organized under the six program categories of: 1) Oversight; 2) Referral; 3) Intake; 4) Case Management; 5) Program Completion and Client Perceptions; and, 6) Recidivism. Under each program category are evaluation questions, methodology used, results and discussion. Over 20 questions were asked in reference to the process evaluation, and additional questions addressed recidivism rates. The questions, methods employed and results are summarized in Appendix A.

Figure 1 is a graphic depiction of the TC program. It traces the course of a teen from initial referral to the desired outcome. The diamond shaped figures identify decision points. The process evaluation asks questions about the outcomes of these decisions and their impact on the teen defendants. The outcome measures focused on recidivism measures at the primary referring agencies; i.e. Juvenile Probation (misdemeanor charges).

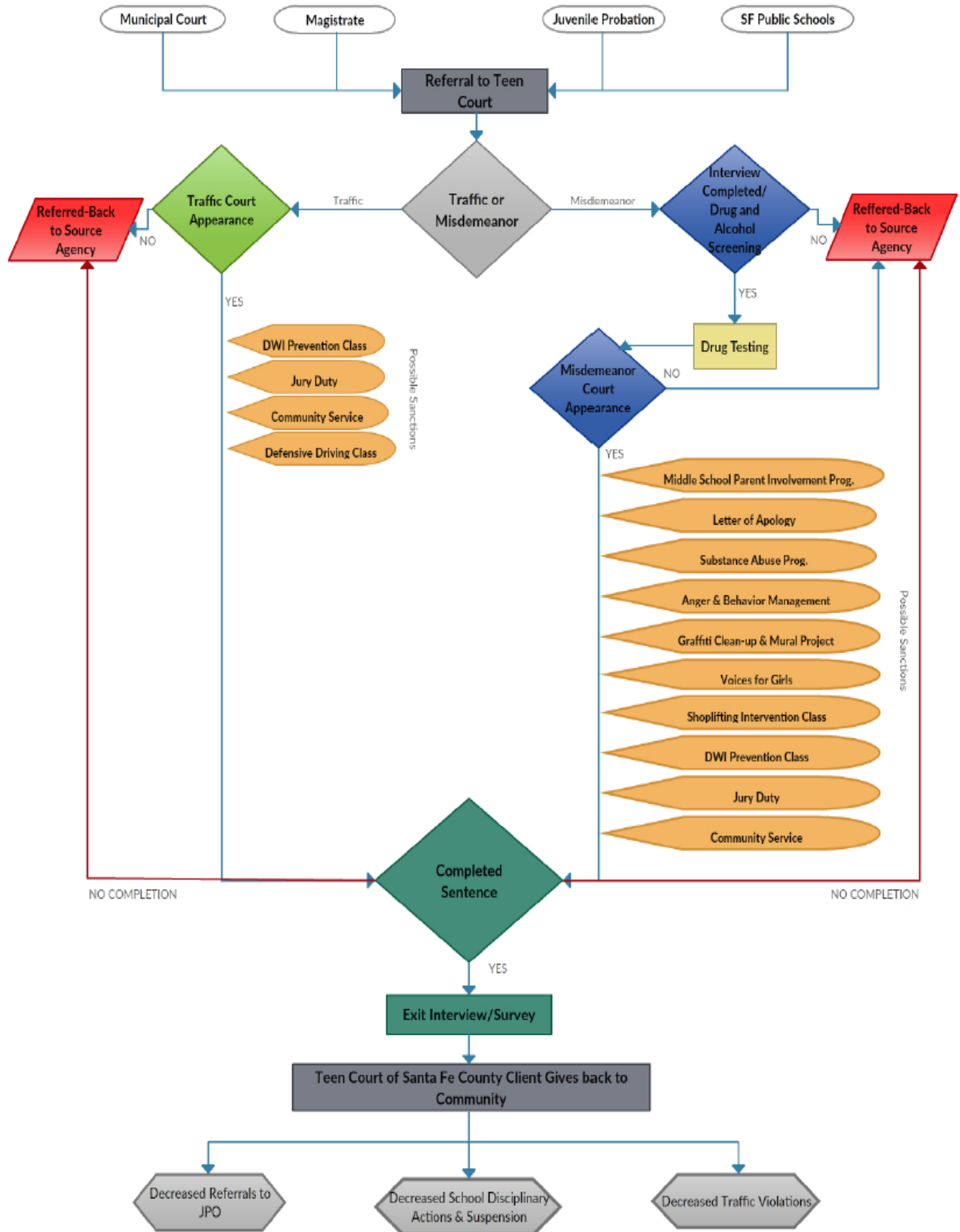


Figure 1. TCSF Processing Flowchart, 2015

Stakeholders: These individuals are directly affiliated with TC and provided the evaluator with either a personal or telephone interview. Included were 5 individuals who routinely provide TC program oversight and direction, 9 people who refer teens to the program, and 5 people who provide services to the teens. Their perspectives and suggestions were recorded and reported in the results sections in this report. Individual interview agendas, and their responses, are included in Appendix C, but names have been removed to retain anonymity.

Table 1. Interviewed Stakeholders		
Individual	Affiliation	TC role
Judge Donna Bevacqua-Young	Magistrate Ct.	Judicial Referral
Tim Burns	Family Night	Provider
Peter DeBenedittis	Substance Abuse Program/ DWI Prevention	Provider
Tony Dixon	Santa Fe Mountain Center	Provider
Marc Ducharme	SFPS/De Vargas Middle School	School Referral
Bob Galano	SFPS/Ortiz Middle School	School Referral
Marlene Garcia	Santa Fe County	Program Oversight/Information technology
Ben Gomez	SFPS/ Capital High	School Referral
Valery Henderson	Dept. of Finance and Admin	Program Oversight
Ted Lovato	Juvenile Probation Office	Referral
Shelley Mann-Lev	SFPS/Prevention Coordinator	Program Oversight/ School Referral
Stan Mascarenas	SFPS/Santa Fe High School	School Referral
April Miller	Private Counseling	Provider
Rachel O'Connor	Santa Fe County	Program Oversight
Mary Louise Romero	Juvenile Justice/ Youth Advocate	Provider
Jennifer Romero	Teen Ct Santa Fe Co	Program Oversight/Program Manager
Judge David Segura	Magistrate Ct.	Judicial Referral
Jon Singh (representing Judge Ann Yalman)	Santa Fe Municipal Court	Judicial Referral
Norma Vasquez	Dept. of Finance and Admin	Program Oversight

Exit Surveys: Teens, and their parent/guardian, were asked to complete an exit survey when they completed the TC program. There were 306 defendant surveys, the first was completed in October, 2013 and the last in December, 2015. There were 99 parent/guardian surveys, the first was completed in January, 2014 and the last in November, 2015. Responses were collected on Survey Monkey™ software, then exported to Excel™ for analyses.

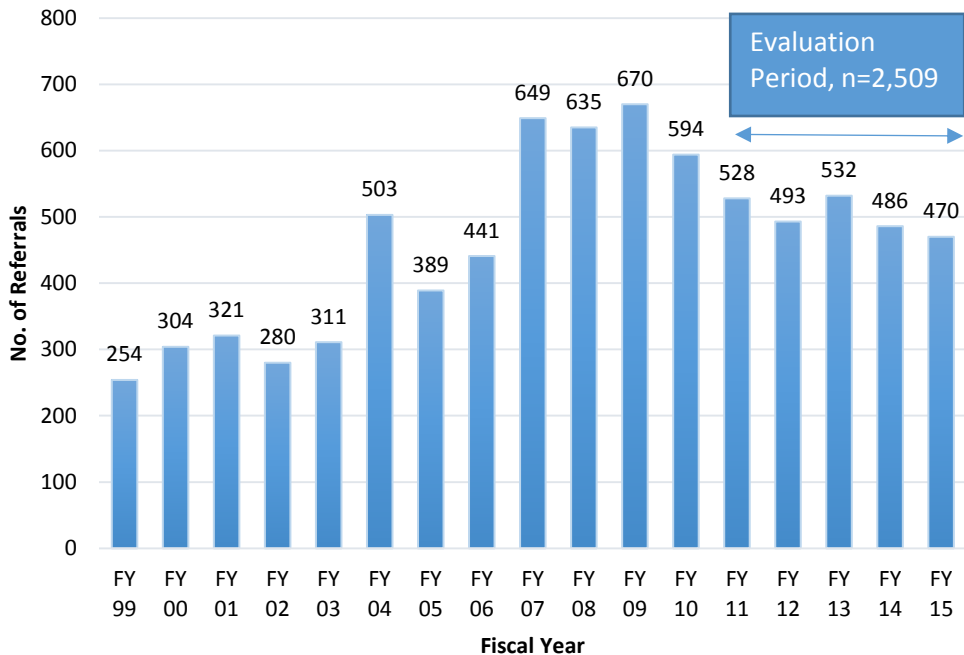
Teen Court Database: A system of record management is essential to tracking referrals to the program and defendant progress. TC has used an electronic database since 1998, and it contained over 9,000 records at the time of this evaluation. The system software is Epi Info V. 3.5.3 and was written by a private consultant. (Appendix E, Epi Info Data Entry Screen Shots).

The County of Santa Fe Information Technology Division prepared an MS Excel™ file for this evaluation analyses. The file contained no defendant names, addresses, date of birth, e-mails or other personally identifying information. It contained 9,299 records. Of those, 7,860 (84.5%) had referral dates (Graph 1). The evaluation period focused on the five years from FY11 (July 1, 2010) to FY15 (most recent case was June 16, 2015), and contained 2,509 records. These records were used to address many of the process evaluation questions and determine how many defendants completed the TC program.

Five processes were performed by the evaluator to assess the quality of the Epi Info database quality, and to create some additional data points. They were:

- **Duplicate Records:** An analysis was conducted in the TC office to examine these records for duplicates (i.e., same record for same defendant, same offense and same referral source). The file was sorted on defendant *Last Name*, *Referral Date*, *Date of Birth* and *Gender*. A file with 2,464 records, with referral dates between FY11 – FY15, was searched for duplicate records. Only three (0.12%) duplicate records were identified.
- **Multiple Referrals for the same person who had been referred to TC multiple times, or by multiple referring agencies:** Records were sorted on *Last Name* and *Date of Birth*. A file with 2,464 records, with referral dates between FY11 – FY15, was searched. There were 151 (6.13%) defendants with more than one record.
- **Missing Referral Dates:** Of the entire file with 9,299 records, 7,860 (84.5%) had TC *referral* dates.
- **Estimation of positive drug screen:** All defendants referred for misdemeanor charges (JPO) or disciplinary actions (SFPS) are required to submit random urine samples for drug screening. However, if a teen admits to recent drug use, the urine test is postponed for at least two weeks and presumed to be “positive” for drugs. In an effort to capture this information, the evaluator created a data element that assigned a positive drug test if the teen did not submit a urine sample until 20 days, or more, had passed since the TC intake date. (Results from the drug testing are reported under Section 5, Program Completion and Client Perceptions).
- **Time Periods:** Many of the evaluation questions focus on length of time between events. The Epi Info database contains dates and the evaluator used the “DATEDIF” function in MS Excel 10™ to calculate time intervals.

**Graph 1. Referrals by Year
Teen Court of Santa Fe County
FY99 - FY15, n=7,860***



*1,439 (15.5%) of all referrals had unknown referral dates.

1. Oversight

Question: *What is needed to effectively provide program oversight, including communication between partners and availability of information?*

Methods: This question was addressed by interviewing stakeholders. All stakeholders were specifically asked about communication with TC staff, feedback on teens referred to TC, and suggestions for program improvement. Additionally, TC staff were interviewed and TC records and files were examined for accessibility and usefulness.

The evaluator observed teen court sessions and teen attorney training. Also, responses from exit interviews, captured on a Survey Monkey® database, were analyzed for teen and guardian perceptions and suggestions.

Results: Interviewees expressed strong support for the TC program. All felt the TC staff are readily available and have a high degree of integrity. Specific program oversight suggestions included:

- A web-based database that could automatically flag outliers, incorporate business rules, be secure and have remote access.
- More feedback on teen progress in TC, particularly those that are failing or taking longer than anticipated to complete the program. It was felt these teens are at highest risk for repeat offenses.
- Try to expand TC outreach into Santa Fe County, possibly including some of the five Native American Pueblos in the County.
- TC develops good life skills and some would like to see the program expanded to younger children.
- The more diverse the funding sources, the better.
- Absence of the TC program would be damaging and place much more of a burden on the district Juvenile Probation Office (JPO), Santa Fe Police and Santa Fe Public Schools. Some interviewees felt that without the TC program there would be many more re-offenses in the schools.

Exit surveys show a high degree of satisfaction with the TC program. Of all defendants who completed the surveys, 236 (81%) reported receiving sentences they felt were “fair”. Responses from parents were similar, with 75(80%) responding that the sentence was “fair”.

Discussion/Recommendations:

TC enjoys remarkable community support and respect, as evidenced by all interviewed stakeholders. Much of this support results from longevity of the program and, more importantly, the dedicated and professional staff. It is noteworthy that during the twenty years of TC existence in Santa Fe County, the program has had only two directors: Alice Sealey and Jennifer Romero. From the evaluator’s experience, this type of staff stability, dedication and passion is remarkable and accounts for much of the broad community support for the program.

TC has wisely reached out to multiple funding sources, including the city and county of Santa Fe, Administrative Office of the Courts, and the Juvenile Adjudication Fund. Certainly this work needs to continue. TC could consider formalizing one of these groups as an advisory board to help identify and expand funding opportunities. A good discussion of teen court advisory boards can be found in the National Youth Guidelines (*Godwin, 2000*), which states in Guideline 3, “*Developing and existing youth courts should establish an advisory committee and/or task force to offer advice on and assistance for program operations and practices and for advocacy.*”

None of the stakeholders, or TC staff, reported a problem with a breach of confidentiality of TC records, or a problem with sharing of defendant information. Regardless, it might be prudent to have the county legal staff look at this issue and possibly modify the form for teens, and their guardians, to sign when they first encounter TC. It would specify that defendant information would remain confidential, but could be shared with program providers, referring agencies and evaluation staff (Mankey, 2006. *Guidelines for Juvenile Information Sharing*).

Santa Fe County should continue use of the *Results Based Accountability*™ model and TC should continue to produce the quarterly Benchmark Report. It is an excellent summary of the program activity and demonstrates ongoing program monitoring and feedback.

Exit interview questions are well written and the responses are easily accessible in the Survey Monkey™ software. Responses should be reviewed periodically, although it is recommended that the responses be exported into an Excel™ database for analyses. Of approximately 480 teens who completed the TC program in the last two years, 306 (64%) completed the exit survey. Further, the surveys are only completed by those defendants who successfully complete the TC program. For these reasons the survey results should be interpreted cautiously. It is not clear why all defendants are not completing the survey. Consider making the evaluation survey a requirement for program completion. However, administering the survey at the end of the TC program is introducing some bias. Only those defendants who complete the program are responding and it is likely that they are providing positive responses since they have completed the program and are feeling a sense of relief. Also, respondents are asked to provide their names on the survey. Lack on anonymity likely introduces a bias toward providing positive responses. It would be desirable if the defendants would complete evaluation surveys as they completed each program component, were anonymous, and automated on a system like Survey Monkey™.

The Epi Info program has served the TC program exceptionally well. It contains all pertinent data on each referral and can easily be analyzed. No security breaches have been reported. Importantly, there are no direct costs associated with the ongoing use of this system, although staff time is occasionally needed from the county information technology personnel to address specific data reporting or performance needs. However, database design has evolved and newer software is available. TC should consider the design and implementation of a new database which would incorporate the following features:

- Develop a data collection and use manual. *The New Mexico Judiciary Drug Court Standards, Revised and Approved September 4, 2013* is a good resource and example.
- The data system should be web based and allow remote access to client records, for authorized users.
- Consider migration to a relational database, using Structured Query Language (SQL). SQL is the industry standard for relational database servers, providing high security and versatility. Free versions are available, but Santa Fe County would need to ensure that either staff, or contract, personnel were available for initial rollout, including installation and training on use. (http://www.ehow.com/facts_6149687_sequel-server_.html). Alternatively, or in combination, consider purchase of a Customer Relation Management (CRM) program, such as *Sales Force*™ or *Client Track*™.
- If no funding is available for a new TC database, investigate upgrading the existing Epi Info system. This software was developed and supported by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Technical support is available at no cost to the user. The newest

versions of Epi Info is 7.0, is web based and can support multiple users. Development of a new Epi Info database will be time intensive and the system was not designed primarily for client management.

- Allow users (referring agencies and providers) to view defendant records for which they have legal access.
- Incorporate business rules to improve data quality by requiring specific data element entry, ensuring logical sequencing of dates, providing drop down lists (rather than open text), and flagging outliers.

Implementation of a new database would be time intensive and have associated costs. However, one of the most consistent issues raised by TC stakeholders was a need for feedback and a status report on teens who had been referred. A sophisticated database could help by providing pre-authorized personnel the ability to remotely access the TC files and view specific defendant progress in the TC program. This could result in significant improvement in communication and follow-up of the teen.

An analyses should be considered which would take into consideration the costs associated with redundant and inaccurate data entry necessary with the existing system. Perhaps the most significant cost associated with the present system is the difficulty of routinely identifying those teens who are lagging in meeting TC program requirements and being placed at an increased risk for further delinquent behavior.

Procurement of a new electronic database will require significant time and expertise in developing information systems. TC should try to identify a project manager, on a short term bases, to ensure this process is followed and the procurement is implemented.

2. Referral

Question: *How effective is the referral process?*

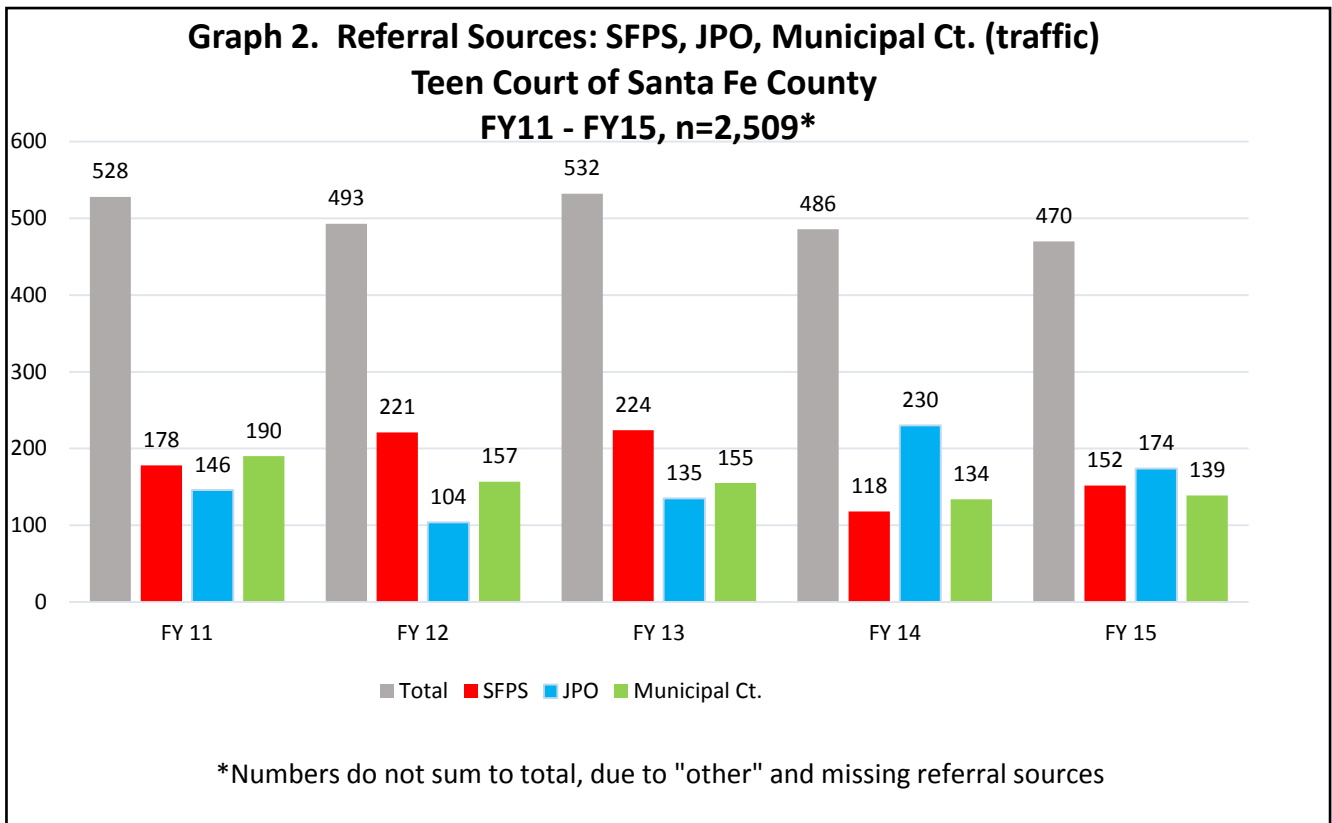
Methods: Individual stakeholders were asked to comment on the referral process. Also the Epi Info database was analyzed to address which agencies were making the referrals, time taken to complete the referral process, and defendant demographics.

Results:

Stakeholders, particularly those working in the referral agencies, felt the referral process was relatively simple and easy to use. However, nearly all referring individuals stated that they were unsure of the teen progress after the initial referral. In some cases they did not know if the teen

ever reported to TC. One judicial interviewee indicated that the sentences associated with traffic violations were far too severe. However, other judicial sources felt the program was appropriate.

Referrals to TC come from multiple sources, but the vast majority (98%) are from SFPS, JPO or Municipal court (Graph 1 and Table 2). During the five year study period, most teens were referred to the program by SFPS 893 (36%); JPO 789 (31%); Santa Fe Municipal Court 775 (31%), and 52 (2%) from other agencies. Those coming from Municipal Court are almost all traffic related citations. In FY11, FY12 and FY13 SFPS made more referrals than JPO, but in FY14 and FY15 there were more referrals from JPO than SFPS. Referrals for traffic violations from Municipal Court were fairly consistent from year to year (Graph 2).

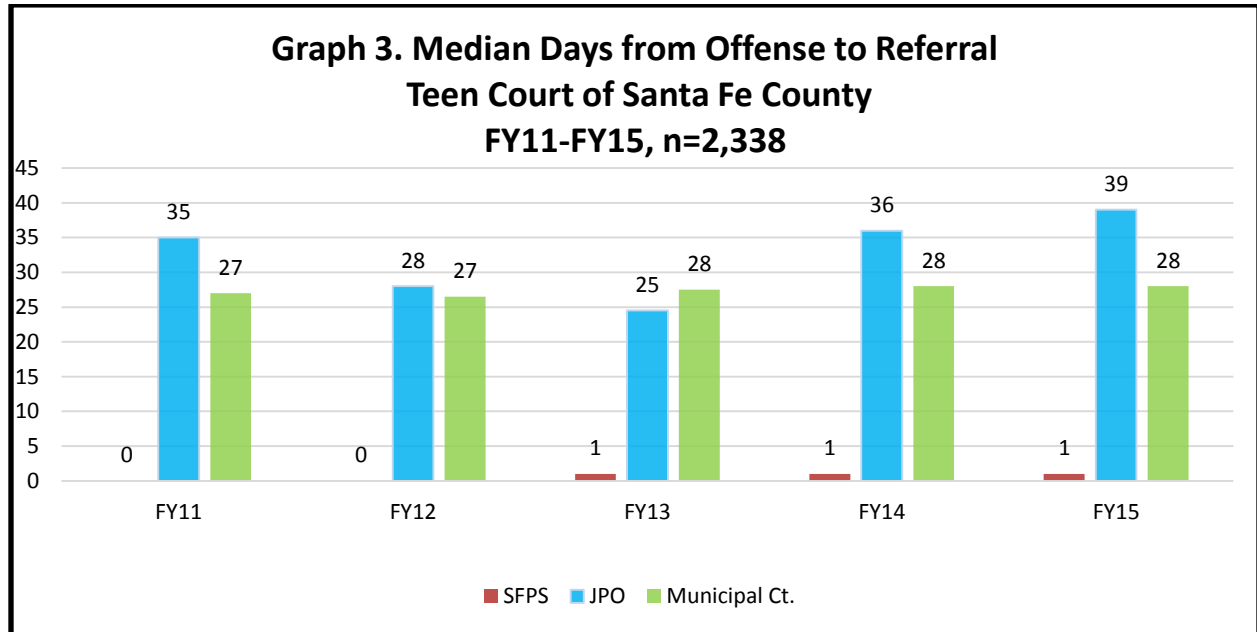


Primary offense resulting in TC referral differs by agency. JPO is most likely to refer for shoplifting and drug or alcohol possession. SFPS is most likely to refer for being ‘under the influence’, or ‘drug and alcohol possession’ (Table 2).

Table 2. Primary Offense, Teen Court of Santa Fe County, FY 11 - FY 15

JPPO			SFPS			Municipal Court		
Offense	No.	%	Offense	No.	%	Offense	No.	%
Property damage	23	2.9%	Property damage	9	1.0%	Traffic	769	99.2%
Assault	17	2.2%	Assault	26	2.9%	Shoplifting	1	0.1%
Other	36	4.6%	Other	82	9.2%	Unknown	5	0.6%
Truancy	3	0.4%	Tobacco	31	3.5%			
Battery	55	7.0%	Battery	31	3.5%	Total for Municipal	775	100.0%
Traffic	22	2.8%	Traffic	2	0.2%			
Shoplifting	230	29.2%	Shoplifting	3	0.3%			
Possession	221	28.0%	Possession	196	21.9%			
Criminal Trespass	14	1.8%	Criminal Trespass	3	0.3%			
Under Influence	47	6.0%	Under Influence	201	22.5%			
Evading Officer	3	0.4%	Evading Officer	1	0.1%			
Disorderly Conduct	6	0.8%	Disorderly Conduct	21	2.4%			
Larceny	18	2.3%	Larceny	6	0.7%			
Littering	1	0.1%	Truancy	99	11.1%			
Unknown	93	11.8%	Unknown	182	20.4%			
Total for JPPO	789	100.0%	Total for SFPS	893	100.0%			

Graph 3 shows median days from offense to referral. This time is generally very short for SFPS, but there is a significant range, as seen on Table 3. Some of this extreme delay can be attributed to an overlap from one school year to another. The median time from offense to referral has consistently been about a month for Municipal Court (traffic citations), but is increasing in FY14 and FY15 for JPO.



Although the median times from offense to referral for SFPS are short, Graph 3a illustrates that the average time is longer.

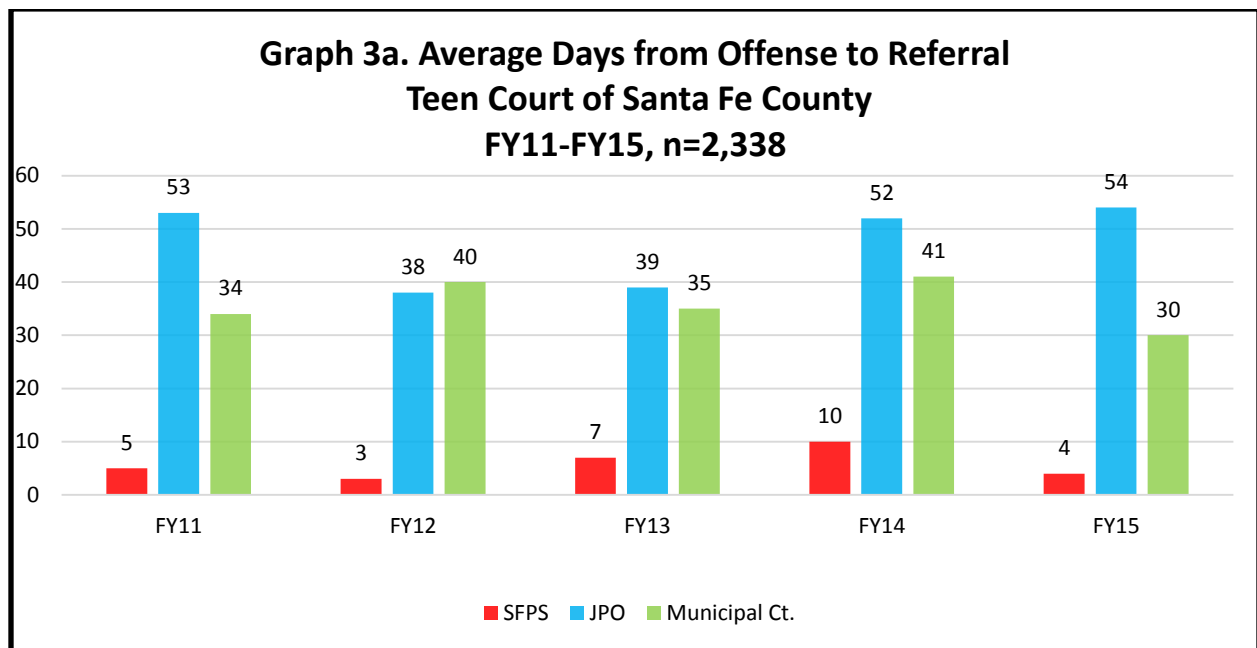


Table 3. Days from Offense to Referral, SFPS, n=828*					
	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15
No. of Referrals	167	202	209	112	138
Average	5	3	7	10	4
Median	0	0	1	1	1
Range	0-169	0-356	0-146	0-395	0-103

*65 defendants had unknown offense dates

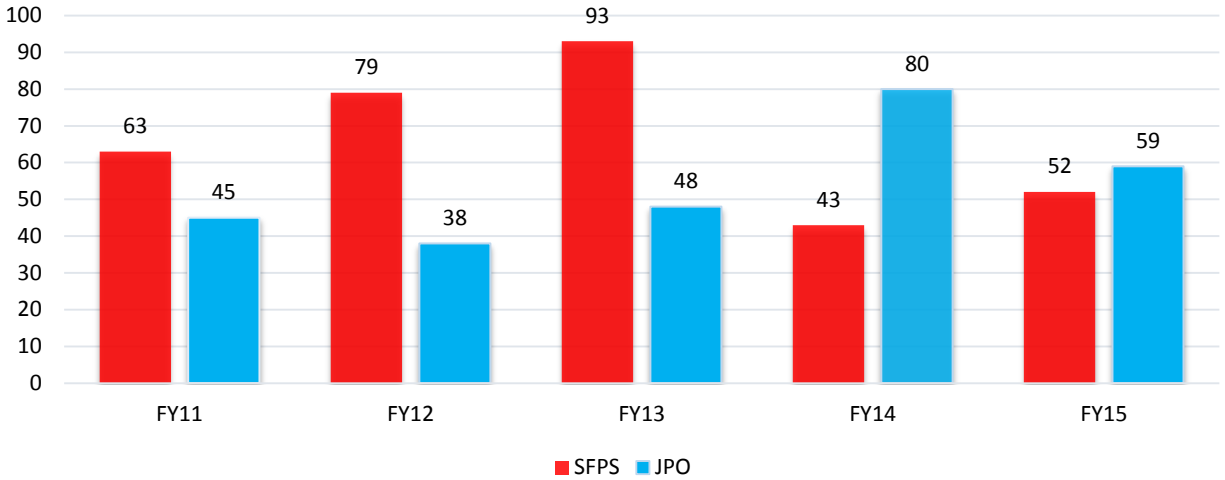
Between FY11-FY15 most defendants were male 1,578 (64.2%) (Table 4). The percent of girls and boys referred by the three agencies did not differ widely.

Table 4. Gender by Referral Source, FY11-FY15								
Gender	SFPS		JPO		Municipal Ct.		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	562	62.9	516	65.4	500	64.5	1578	64.2
Female	330	37.0	270	34.2	274	35.4	874	35.6
Unk.	1	0.1	3	.4	1	0.1	5	0.2
Total	893	100.0	789	100.0	775	100.0	2457	100.0

The question was raised if the number of girls being referred to TC had been increasing. It was found that the percentage of girls being referred to TC by both SFPS and JPO remained relatively stable over the five years, ranging from 45 (30.8%) by JPO in FY11 to 93 (41.5%) by SFPS in FY13. However, the number of referred girls fluctuated from a high of 93 in FY13 to a low of 43 from SFPS in FY14. (Table 5 and Graph 4).

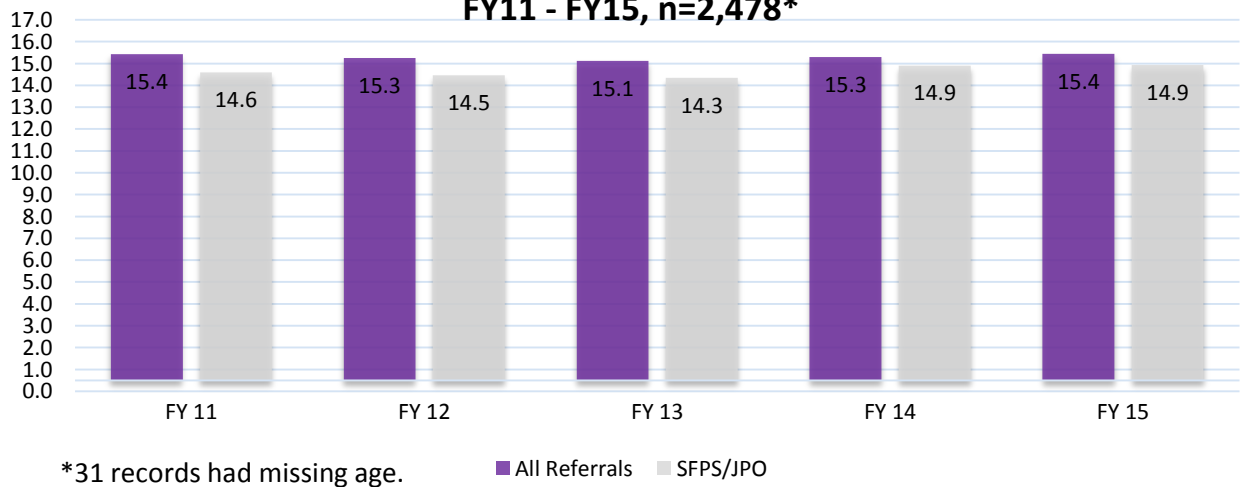
Table 5. Number and Percent of Girls Referred to TC by SFPS and JPO											
	FY11		FY12		FY13		FY14		FY15		total
	SFPS	JPO	SFPS	JPO	SFPS	JPO	SFPS	JPO	SFPS	JPO	
No. of Girls	63	45	79	38	93	48	43	80	52	59	600
All Defendants	178	146	221	104	224	135	118	230	152	174	1682
% Girls	35.4%	30.8%	35.7%	36.5%	41.5%	35.6%	36.4%	34.8%	34.2%	33.9%	35.7%

**Graph 4. Number of Girls Referred from SFPS & JPO
Teen Court of Santa Fe County
FY11-FY15, n=600**



TC defendants had an average age of 15.3 years. Further, the average age at time of referral has fluctuated little over the five years from FY11 to FY15 (Graph 5).

**Graph 5. Average Age at Referral
Teen Court of Santa Fe County
FY11 - FY15, n=2,478***



Hispanic ethnicity is 77% in the TC defendant population, in comparison to 66% in the Santa Fe County¹ population for the age group of 15 to 17 year olds; 78% of all Santa Fe Public School students²; and 82% in referrals to Children, Youth and Families³ for Santa Fe County³.

Table 6. Race/Ethnicity of TC Defendants, Santa Fe Co.				
Race/Ethnicity	TCSFC, FY11-FY15		Santa Fe County, 2014, 15-17 Yr.	
	No.	%	No.	%
American Indian or Alaska Native	45	1.8	209	4.1
Asian or Pacific Islander	0	0.0	73	1.4
Black or African American	25	1.0	49	1.0
Hispanic	1,930	76.9	3,351	65.9
White	257	10.2	1,404	27.6
Other	31	1.2	0	0.0
Unknown	221	8.8	0	0.0
Total	2,509	100.0	5,086	100.0

1. Santa Fe County: <https://ibis.health.state.nm.us/query/result/pop/PopMain/Count.html>
2. SFPS: http://backweb.sfps.info/sfps/data_repos_code/sfpsDashboard/sfpsDashboard.cfm
3. CYFD: https://cyfd.org/docs/JJS_FY14_Completed_AnnualReport_with_Appendix_v2.pdf.

Discussion/Recommendations:

A better system of providing referral agencies with ongoing defendant status would be desirable. Given the limited staff time available at TC and the referring agencies, it is recommended that the use of a web based defendant tracking system be investigated. Such a system could allow those making a referral to log into the system and see a particular teen’s progress through the various TC program components. Such a system could increase communication while reducing the burden of phone calls and e-mails exchanges.

It is desirable to have as short a lag as feasible between a person’s offense and their entry into the TC program (Goodwin, 2000). With SFPS the median time is very short, but there is considerable variability when the average and range of time is examined. Defendants with outstanding time intervals should be flagged and examined for the cause of delay.

The Hispanic population in TC is 77%, compared to 66% in Santa Fe County. TC may want to consider outreach to other schools and Native American Indian Pueblos. More outreach will increase the TC case load, but it may also open additional funding opportunities.

3. Intake

Question: *How effective is the intake process and what percent and number of referred defendants complete the intake process?*

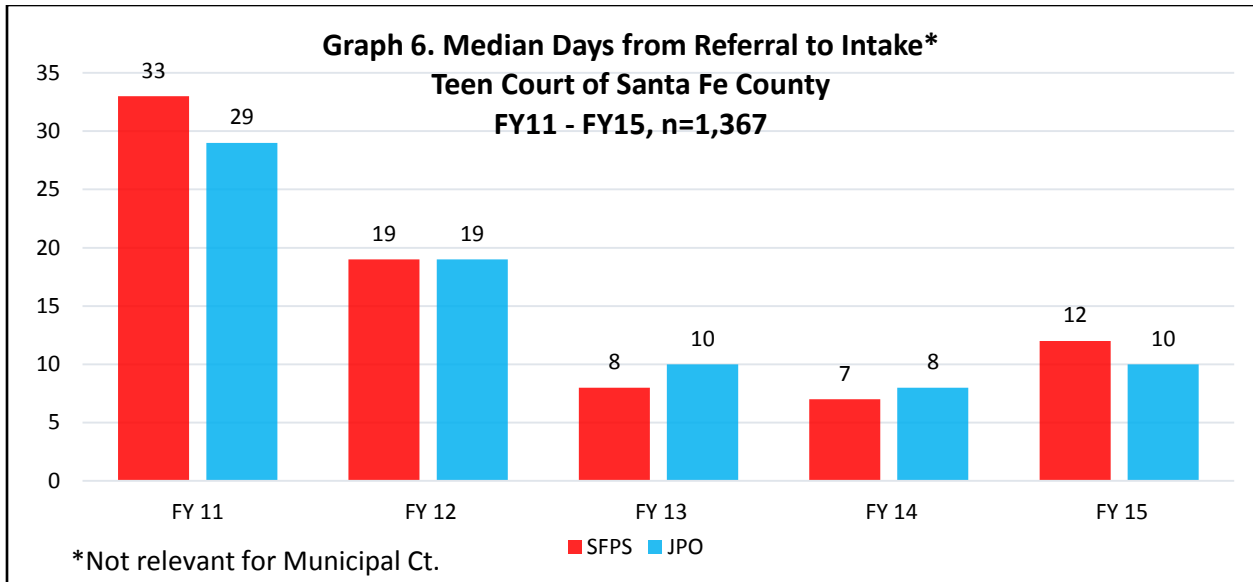
Methods: To address this question interviews were conducted with program staff, TC court sessions were observed and exit surveys were analyzed. Also, TC records were analyzed for time intervals between referral, intake interview and court appearance. It should be noted that Municipal Court referrals for traffic violations do not have “intake interviews” and their first encounter with TC is at their court appearance.

Results: Observation of both traffic and misdemeanor court sessions indicate that they are very well organized, held in the District Court, timely and efficient.

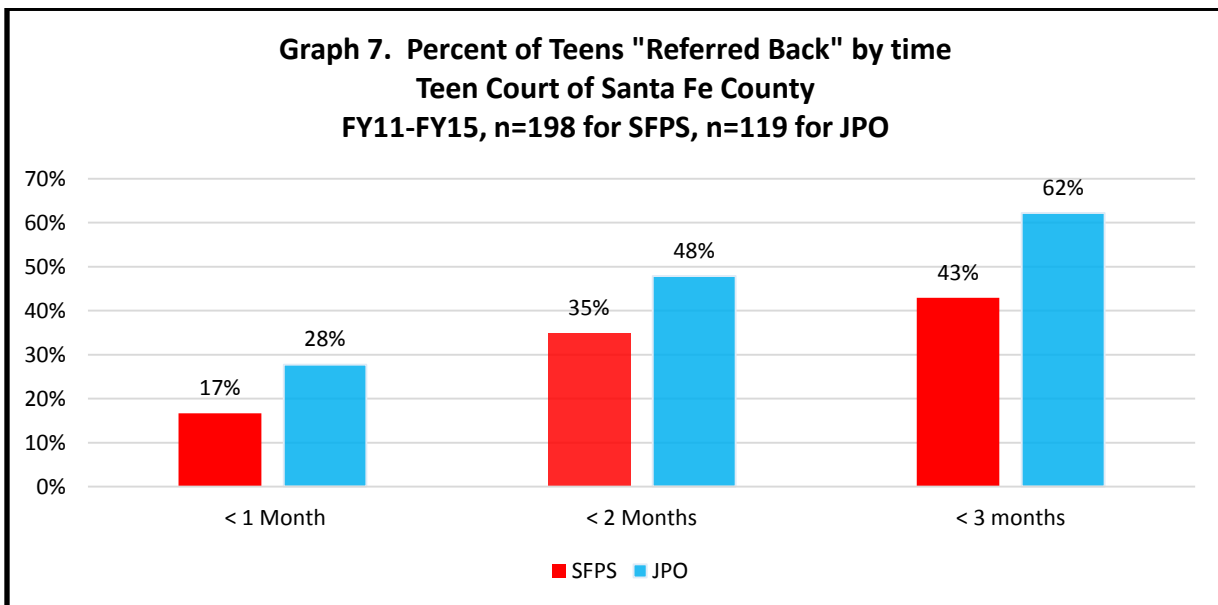
Stakeholder interviews indicated that both school and judicial referring agencies are satisfied with the existing TC referral form and process of e-mailing the information. One SFPS referral authority said they did not know where the TC offices were located. None of the interviewees felt that the lack of Spanish translation was a significant barrier to the teens, but possibly to some of the parents, particularly during the court hearings.

Exit surveys contained an open ended question requesting suggestions on how to improve the TC program. The most frequently mentioned issue involved the court sessions. Some defendants felt the atmosphere in the jury room should be more somber.

The median number of days from referral to intake has dropped from FY11 to FY15, reaching the shortest time in FY14 at 7 days for SFPS and 8 days for JPO referrals (Graph 6). The number of days from referral to intake decreased by approximately two thirds from FY11 to FY13, and has since leveled to about a week and a half for both SFPS and JPO.



For SFPS and JPO referrals from FY11-FY15 there were 317 cases with known dates when they were referred back to the originating agency. Eighty-five (43%) teens from SFPS were referred back to the schools within 3 months of the original referral, and 74 (62%) of the JPO referrals were sent back within 3 months (Graph 7).



Discussion/Recommendations: Intake is an area of considerable concern, given the high percentage of teens that do not make this initial meeting with TC staff and end up being referred

back. These same teens have a higher likelihood of recidivism (as reported in Section 6, Graph 16). If a teen is likely to be “referred back” it would be important to take that action within at least the first three months. Currently this seems to be taking longer for nearly 57% of SFPS referrals and 38% for JPO referrals. The sooner these teens can be identified by the referring agency, the sooner more intensive interventions could be instituted.

At court, consider use of a number system to help ensure order of hearings. This could eliminate some confusion regarding the order and who arrived first.

During interviews, none on the stakeholders felt that language was a barrier for the teen defendants, but some thought it might be for parents. It was suggested that TC consider the purchase of headphones that could be connected to a Spanish language interpreter during court hearings. One interviewee suggested that an interpreter should be “certified”.

The median times from referral to the intake interviews in FY14 and FY15 seem reasonable. This time is needed to contact the teen to schedule a meeting between TC staff, the teen and their guardian.

4. Case Management

Question: *Which programs are defendants required to complete and how long does it take to complete each program?*

Methods: Individual stakeholders, particularly providers, were asked to comment on the program components. Also the Epi Info database was analyzed to address which programs defendants were required to complete and how long that took. Another area of inquiry involved examination of the database for the testing of urine samples for drug use.

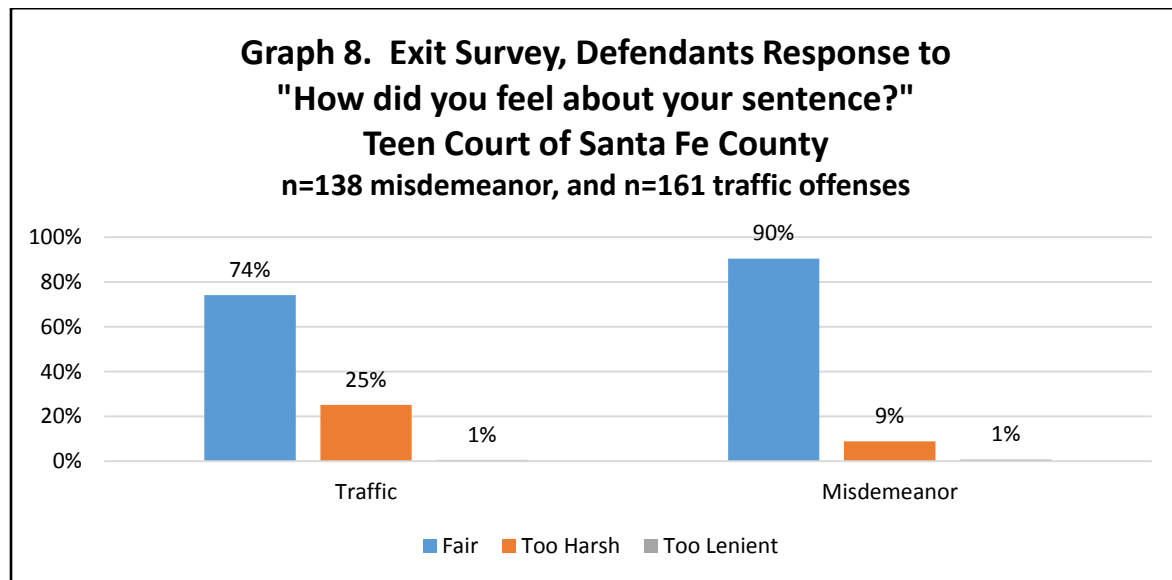
Results: When providers were interviewed about defendant attitudes and program compliance, most indicated that the majority of teens were accepting and responsive to the program. One provider said he occasionally asked disruptive youth to leave his classes. It is not clear what, if any, consequences resulted for the youth.

In exit surveys defendants rated fourteen TC components for usefulness. TC program requirements are very different for defendants with a misdemeanor or traffic charge. Therefore it was desirable to separate these defendant groups when analyzing the survey data. Table 7 shows the response to TC program components for these two groups.

TC Program	Table 7. Exit Survey of Defendants, Responses to TC Program Components							
	Misdemeanor charges, n=136				traffic charges, n=159			
	useful		not useful at all		useful		not useful at all	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
TC initial Appt.	128	96%	5	4%				
TC Hearing	120	94%	8	6%	129	96%	5	4%
Family Counseling	86	81%	20	19%				
Jury Duty	107	88%	15	12%	133	92%	12	8%
Community Service	127	97%	4	3%	148	97%	4	3%
Substance Abuse group sessions	79	80%	20	20%				
Family Night	76	78%	22	22%				
Shoplifting Intervention	56	66%	29	34%				
Defensive Driving Class	na	na	na	na	82	91%	8	9%
DWI Prevention Literacy class	112	90%	13	10%	137	96%	5	4%
Middle Sch. Parent Involvement	47	61%	30	39%				
Strategies for Anger Manag.	43	57%	33	43%				
Restorative Justice Circle	46	61%	29	39%				

*Rows in Table 7 do not always total to entire n for the group due to missing responses.

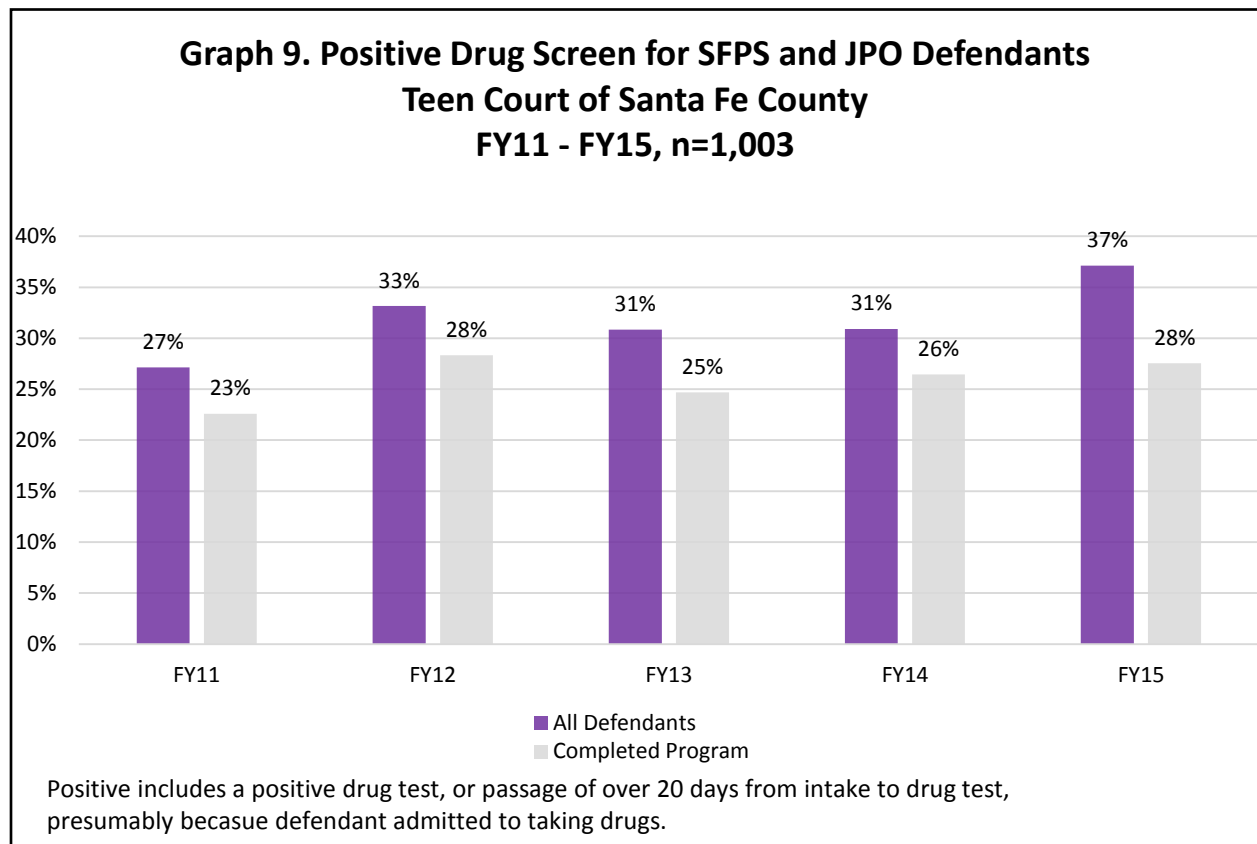
In the exit surveys, defendants with traffic offenses felt their sentences were less “fair” than those with misdemeanor offenses.



In the Epi Info database the list for “agency” is an open text field, with over 650 different entries. It was not possible to efficiently group the agencies and use them in the analyses.

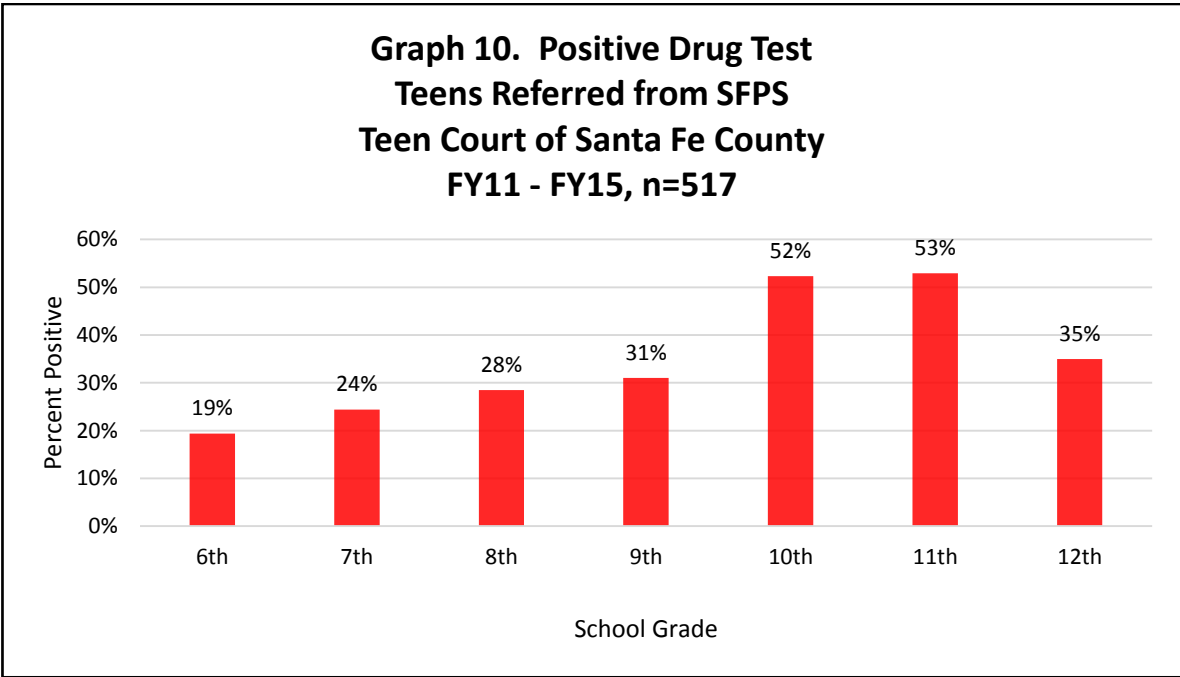
Drug testing of urine samples is required of all defendants referred for non-traffic offenses. However, 656 (39%) of the teens had “missing” drug screen results. These are TC defendants who were referred back or terminated from the program.

During the five year study period (FY11-FY15), of all defendants who were referred to TC and completed the drug screening, 319 (32%) had a positive drug screen (including those who admitted to taking drugs and were not initially tested). However, of those defendants who completed the TC program, 173 (26%) of them had a positive drug screen. The percent of positive results has remained fairly constant for those completing the program, but increased in FY15 for all referrals (Graph 9).



It should be noted that when urine samples were provided and tested “positive” this occurred for 143 (45%) teens, however, 176 (55%) of the positive drug screens resulted from verbal admissions to recent drug use.

Graph 10 shows the percent of youth, referred by SFPS, who tested positive for drugs or alcohol. The highest percentage was in the 11th grade, with the lowest percentages in grades 6, 7 and 8.



*Includes “verbal positive” drug results. Does not include teens who were referred back or had missing values.

Discussion:/Recommendations:

It was difficult to tabulate individual program completion rates because of the way the data was entered as open text in the Epi Info program. In the database, try to remove open text fields and replace them with a list. This makes analyses much more efficient and accurate.

Exit interviews of defendants with misdemeanor charges indicated favorable impressions of “usefulness” for all program components, with the highest percentages for the initial TC appointment, TC hearing at District Court, and Community Service. Programs with a lower percent of favorable responses included Strategies for Teen Anger Management Program, Restorative Justice Circle, and the Middle School Parent Involvement Program. In contrast, those defendants with traffic citations reported finding the Community Service and DWI Prevention/Media Literacy classes most useful. As stated previously in the report section on Oversight, these exit surveys should be interpreted cautiously.

A positive drug screen on all defendants of 32% is in line with self-reported drug use found in a survey of school aged youth in Santa Fe County. The Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey (YRRS) in Santa Fe County, 2011, showed that 39% of the respondents answered positively to the question “offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property”. The observation that those teens completing the TC program had a lower percentage of positive drug use is not surprising and indicative that these youth are more compliant.

5. Program Completion and Client Perceptions

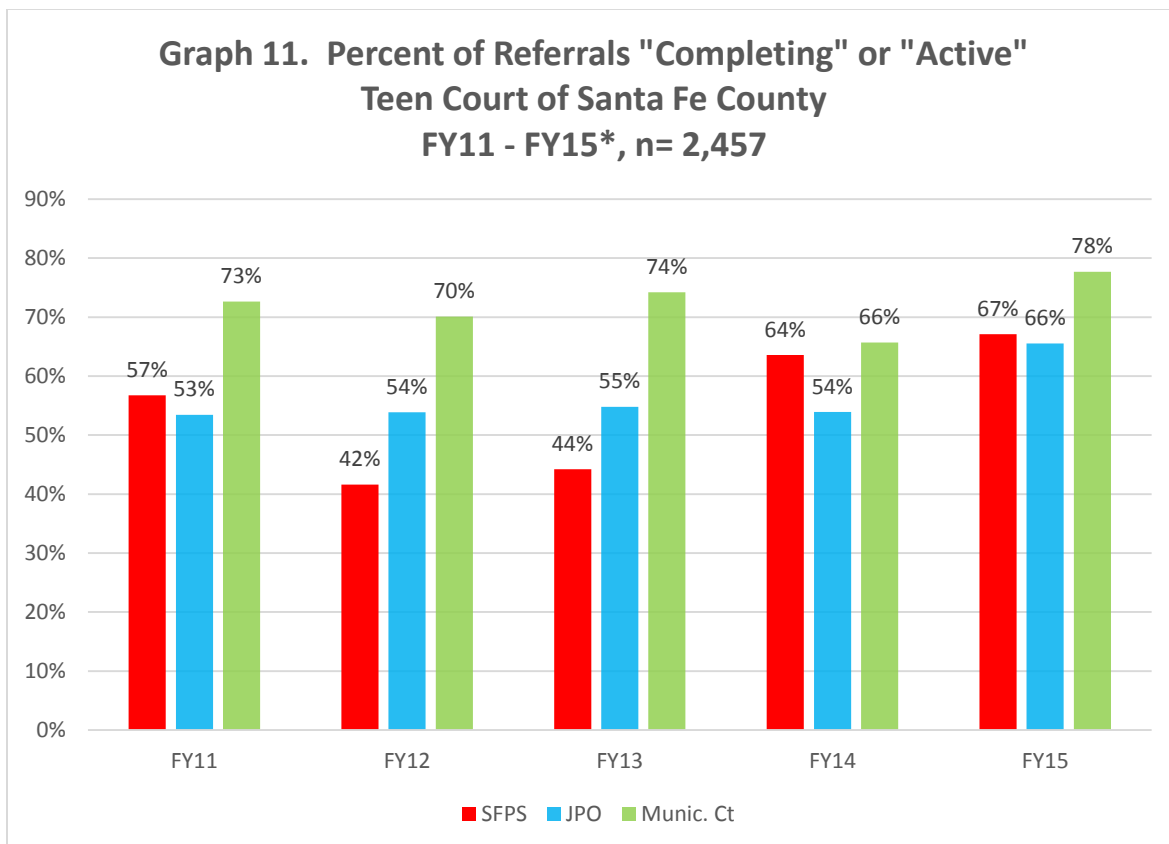
Question: *How many defendants complete their program requirements and are discharged from TCSFC? What are the opinions of the defendants, and their guardians, about the TCSFC experience?*

Methods: The Epi. Info data was analyzed to address the questions regarding program completion and the length of time needed. The database contains many dates; indicating offense, referral, intake, court appearance and completion date and others. Length of time between events was calculated by subtracting date fields in an Excel™ spreadsheet.

Opinions about the TC experience were taken from personal interviews and responses to the Survey Monkey questions answered by 306 teens, and 99 of their parent/guardians, upon program completion.

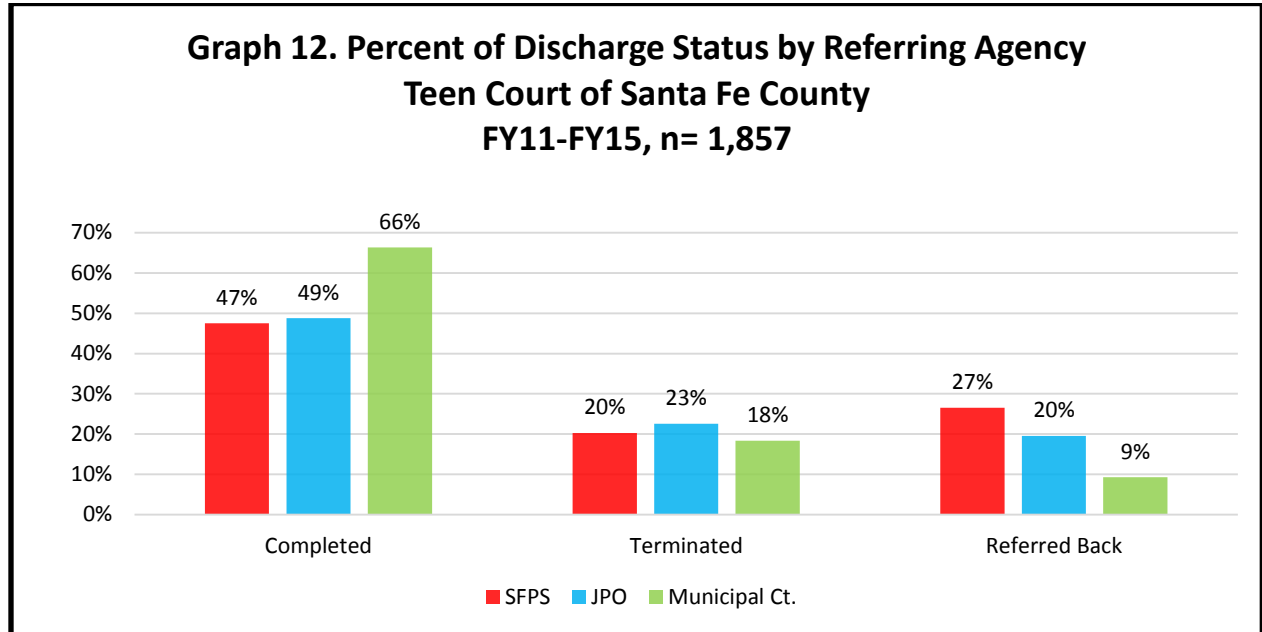
Results:

The percent of teens completing the program from JPO are consistent from year to year, but the percentages from SFPS and Municipal Court increased in FY14.



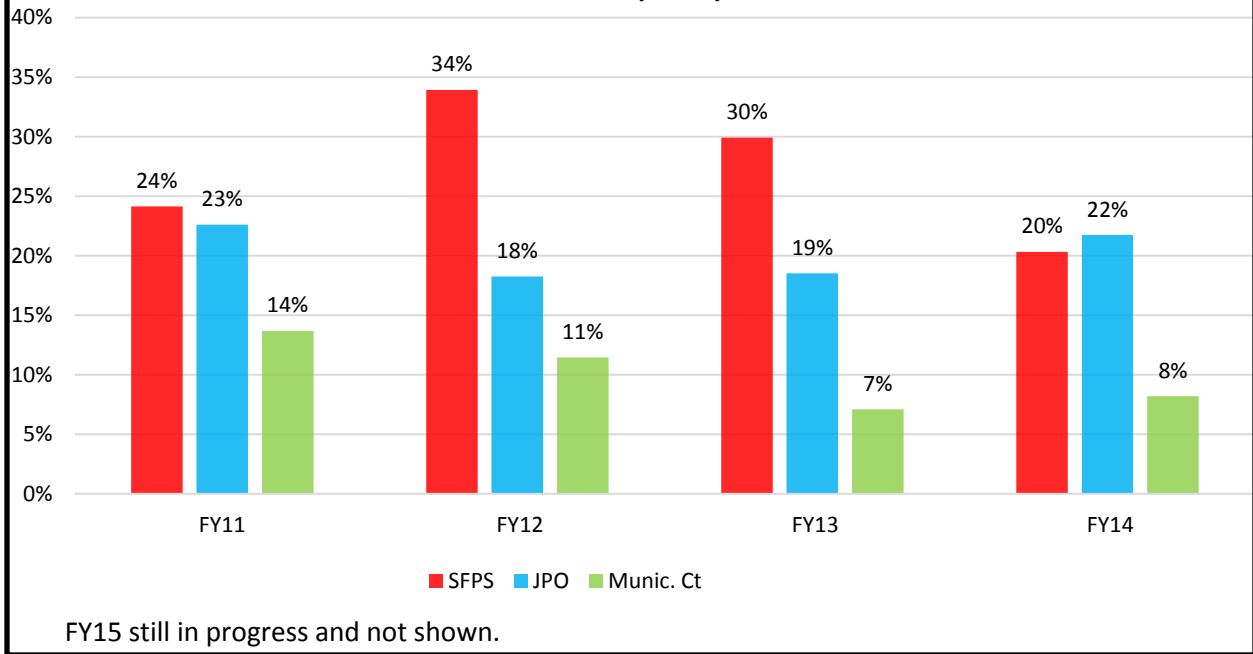
*FY15 in progress at time of data abstraction.

Some teens are referred back to the originating agency (Graph 12). This can result from a number of situations, including an inability of TC to contact the teen, or if the teen’s guardian decides to forego the TC program.



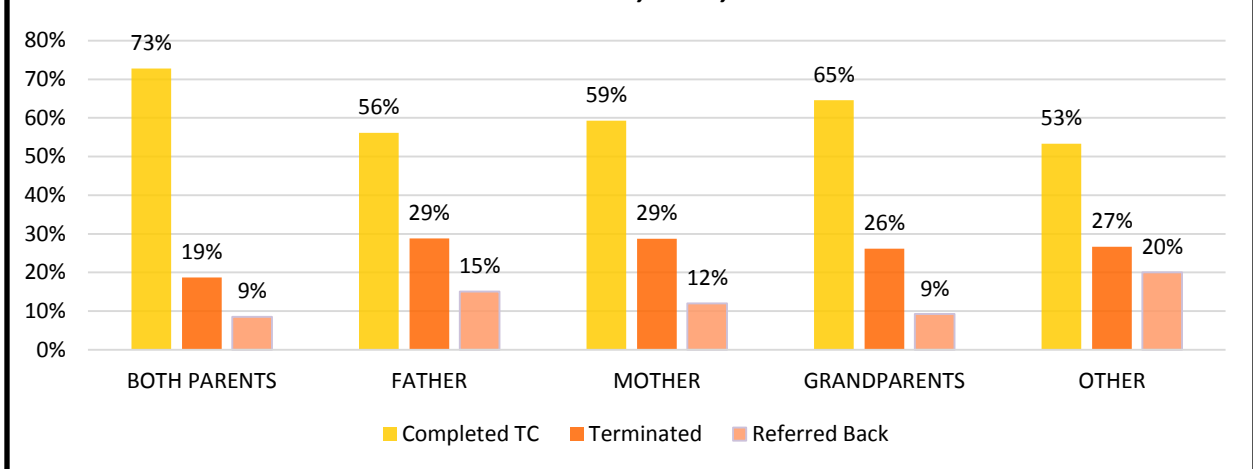
The percent of teens referred back vary from year to year, but average 27% for SFPS, 20% for JPO and 9% for Municipal Court. Those youth referred back from SFPS has been dropping over the past couple fiscal years, and was slightly lower than those for JPO in FY14.

**Graph 13. Percent of Intakes Referred Back to Agency
Teen Court of Santa Fe County
FY11 - FY14, n=1,992***



Most teen defendants live with both parents 951 (50%); followed by those living with their mother 692 (36%); their father 146 (8%); their grandparents 65 (3%); and those who have other living arrangements 45 (2%). Teens living with both parents and grandparents have the highest percentage of TC program completion (Graph 14).

**Graph 14. TC Program Status and Living Arrangements
Teen Court of Santa Fe County
FY11-FY15, n= 1,899**



Processing times are particularly important to program completion. These times differ, depending on the referring agency (Figure 2).

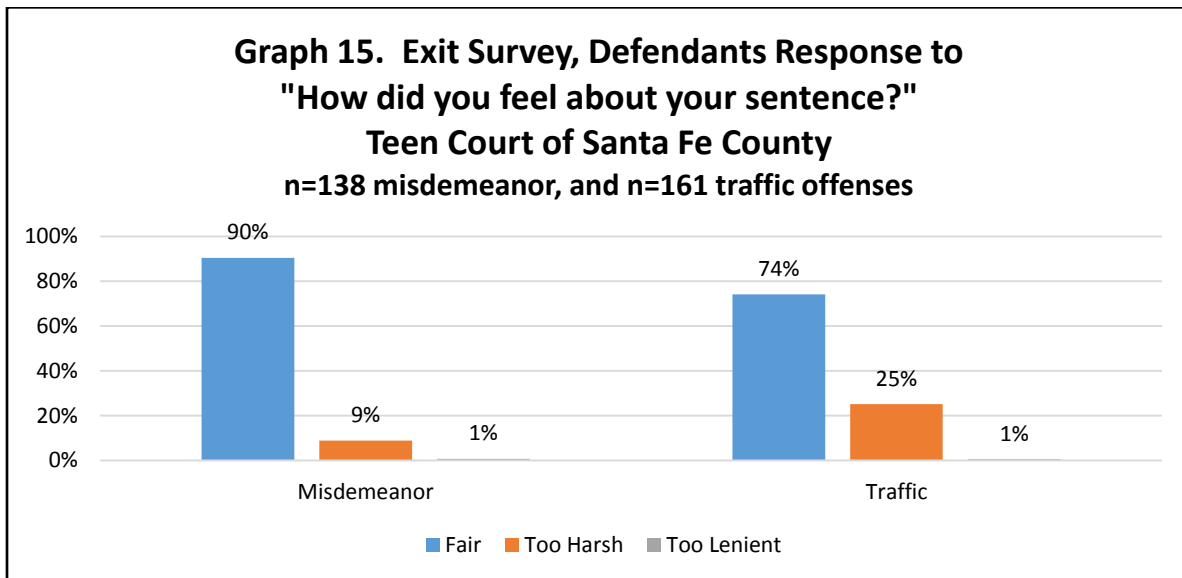
Figure 2. Median and (Average) Processing Times
 Teen Court of Santa Fe County
 FY11 – FY15



Referral Source	Offense to Referral	Referral to Intake	Intake to Court Hearing	Court Hearing to Completion*	Referral to Completion*
SFPS	0 days (4)	15 days (24)	13 days (18)	77 days (103)	131 days (170)
JPO	34 days (41)	13 days (20)	12 days (17)	74 days (94)	122 days (153)
Municipal	27 days (32)	---	----	71 days (111)	78 days (114)

*FY11 – FY14; FY15 not closed at time of data abstraction.

Defendants, and their parents, were requested rate their perception of “fair” when asked about their perception of sentence severity (Graph 15). The majority of respondents with misdemeanor charges indicated that they felt the sentence was fair. A lower percent of defendants with traffic citations felt the sentence was “fair”.



Discussion/Recommendations:

Teens must admit “guilt” for acceptance into the TC program. In exchange for TC program completion, those defendants with traffic citations have them dismissed.

Those teens facing charges from JPO also have those charges dismissed. For teens who do not complete the TC program, there are no immediate consequences. However, the lack of TC completion is noted in their records and they can face harsher consequences if they recidivate. Unfortunately, teens referred from SFPS face limited repercussions from not completing the TC program. Teens understand and discuss these outcomes among themselves (source: SFPS referral interviews). It is important for these teens to have some consequences for not completing the program to increase participation rates. One possible penalty could include in-school suspension in which the youth loses certain privileges, such as lunch breaks.

In contrast to the SFPS teens who face little to no consequences for failing to complete the TC program, are the youth referred by Municipal Court for traffic citations. Teens with traffic citations must complete the program to have those citations purged from their official driving

records. The higher completion rate for Municipal Court referrals is a strong indication that these consequences influence the teens' behavior. More importantly, as seen in the section on recidivism, those teens who complete the TC program are less likely to have subsequent offenses.

It is not surprising that teens living with both parents have the greatest percentage of completing the TC program.

One judicial source felt that the TC sentences for traffic citations are too severe. Additionally, in the exit surveys defendants indicated that they felt the sentence was less fair for traffic than misdemeanor charges. A very basic cost/benefit analyses could be calculated for traffic sentences. Assuming a minimum wage of \$10/hr., an average sentence of 35 community service hours would be worth \$350.00. This is significantly higher than most traffic fines, but does not take into consideration the possible cost to the defendant of increased auto insurance premiums. Although the defendants from Municipal Court, with traffic citations, finish the program in a much shorter time than their JPO or SFPS peers, TC may want to consider reducing sentences for defendants with only traffic violations.

6. Recidivism

Questions: *How many teens, referred to TCSFC by JPPO or SFPS, are not referred back to JPPO or SFPS for disciplinary actions?*

Methods:

Teens are considered *Juvenile Referrals* to Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD) when they commit an act that would be designated as a crime under the law if committed by an adult. Juveniles who are detained and/or arrested are referred to a district Juvenile Probation Officer. At this time they are entered into the CYFD FACTS database. This database was used as the source to identify children who re-offended following their initial TC referral, i.e. recidivists.

CYFD was provided with an Excel file of all teens, referred by JPO to TC, during FY11-FY15. The file contained personal identifiers of the teens and their original referral date and offense. CYFD searched their files for each TC defendant based on first name, last name, date of birth, and gender. (Complete protocol is included in Appendix F)

Offenses reported from the FACTS database were open text and required manual inspection and categorization for tabulation.

Recidivism time periods were designated in three time periods:

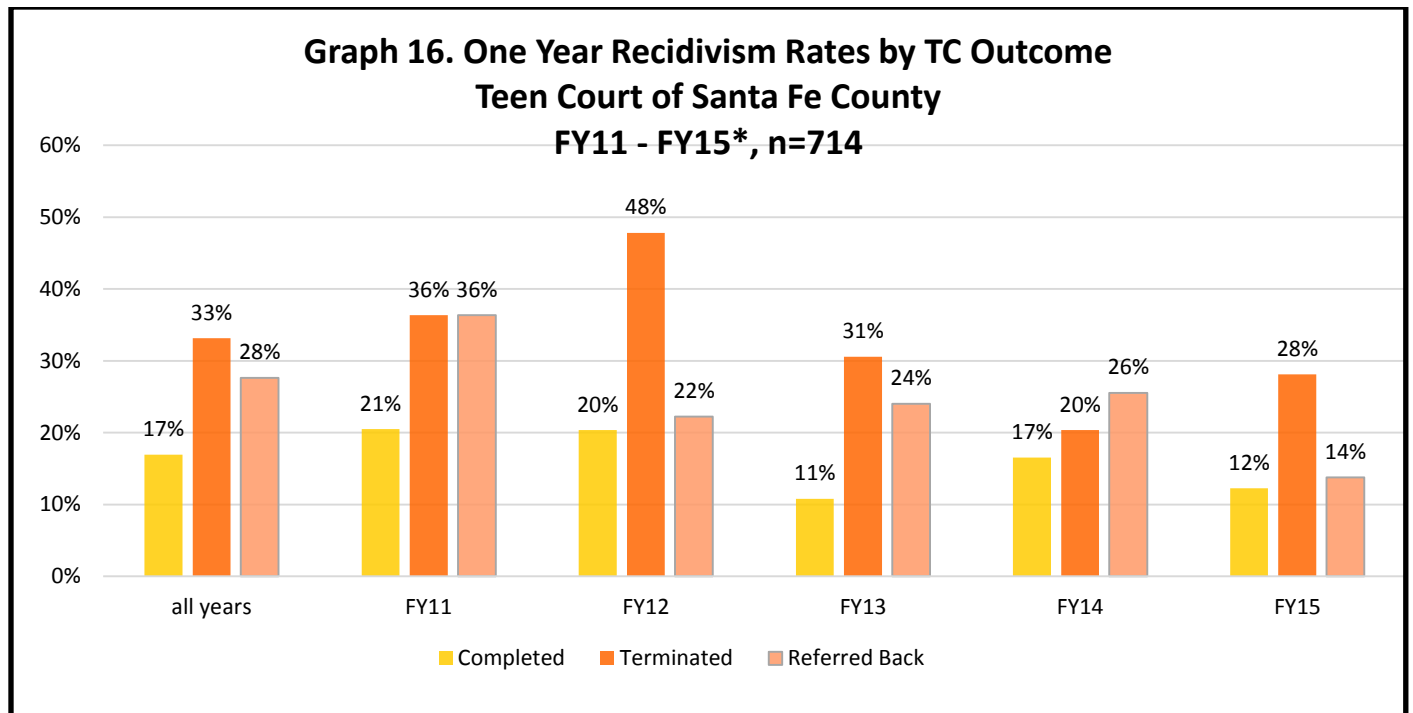
- Any recidivism following the initial TC referral date,
- Recidivism within one year of the initial TC referral date,
- Recidivism within six months of the initial TC referral date.

We were not able to obtain recidivism numbers for juveniles referred from either SFPS or Municipal Court. Neither SFPS nor the NM Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) had the resources to retrospectively search their records for cases that were originally referred to TC.

Results: CYFD was provided with a list containing 762 teens who had been referred to TC by JPO between FY11-FY15. Records for 736 (96.6%) of the referred cases were located in the FACTS database. Three hundred ten (40.7%) of these teens had subsequent offenses. Table 8 shows the recidivism rate for each of the three time periods.

Table 8. JPO Recidivism, FY11 - FY15, n=762										
TC Disposition	total count		Any Recidivism		Recidivated in <=1 Yr.		Recidivated > 1 yr.		Unk. Recidivism time	
	Number		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Completed	384		130	33.9%	65	16.9%	28	7.3%	37	9.6%
Terminated	178		94	52.8%	59	33.1%	19	10.7%	16	9.0%
Referred Back	152		69	45.4%	42	27.6%	8	5.3%	19	12.5%
Active	37		12	32.4%	8	21.6%	0	0.0%	4	10.8%
On-Hold	2		1	50.0%	0	0.0%	1	50.0%	0	0.0%
Unk	9		4	44.4%	4	44.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total	762		310	40.7%	178	23.4%	56	7.3%	76	10.0%

Graph 16 displays the one year recidivism rates by whether the teen completed the TC program, was terminated from the program or was referred back to JPO before completing the TC program. For each of the five year study periods, those teens who completed the TC program had the lower recidivism rates.



*FY15 had a six month follow-up period at time of data pull.

9 cases had unknown TC Outcome status.

Table 9 displays the number and percent of offenses for TC cases originally referred by JPO, along with the recidivism counts for the group. The percent of offenses changed little between original and recidivism, with the notable exception of shoplifting which dropped from 30% of original offenses, to 17% for those not completing the TC program and 12% who did complete.

Table 9. Original and Recidivism Offenses						
Offense	Original Offense		Recidivism Offense*			
	No.	%	Completed TC		Did not Complete TC*	
No.			%	#	%	
Property damage	20	3%	6	5%	1	1%
Assault	15	2%	4	3%	2	1%
Truancy	3	0%	1	1%	2	1%
Battery	52	7%	17	13%	12	7%
Traffic	21	3%	8	6%	5	3%
Shoplifting	230	30%	15	12%	31	17%
Possession	216	28%	40	31%	47	26%
Criminal Trespass	10	1%		0%	1	1%
Under Influence	47	6%	2	2%	6	3%
Evading Officer	3	0%		0%		0%
Disorderly Conduct	5	1%		0%		0%
Larceny	17	2%	2	2%	2	1%
Littering	1	0%		0%		0%
Other	34	4%	19	15%	68	37%
Unk	88	12%	16	12%	7	4%
Grand Total	762		130		184	

*Includes clients who were “referred back”, “active”, “on-hold” and “terminated”.

An equal percentage of boys and girls were found to recidivate within one year of TC program referral (Table 10).

Table 10. TCSFC Recidivism Within 1 Yr. by Gender				
Gender	All JPO referrals		Recidivated	
	#	%	#	%
Female	260	34%	59	33%
Male	499	65%	118	66%
Unk	3	0%	1	1%
Total	762	100%	178	100%

Discussion/Recommendations: Teens who complete the TC program consistently had lower recidivism rates for each of the study years. This is encouraging. However, it is likely that those teens who complete the program have other characteristics which make them more likely to complete the TC program and less likely to recidivate. Results from this study do not necessarily support the hypothesis that TC reduces recidivism. Unfortunately we were not able to design a study with a control group that could be compared with the TC group. Perhaps future study designs could incorporate a randomized trial, but it will face significant legal and ethical challenges. This is well recognized and noted in the literature (Butts, *A Focus on Research*, 2000).

About 41% of all teens referred from JPO recidivate at some time. Those who are referred back to the original agency, or are terminated from the TC program, are at greater risk for recidivism than those who complete the program. This is concerning and suggests that those teens who fail to complete the TC program are at an increased risk for recidivism and should have a higher priority for intervention programs. To help reduce the recidivism rates, it is recommended that Santa Fe County consider adding a position to the teen court staff who would be responsible for monitoring all referred defendants and helping them achieve sentence compliance.

Unfortunately it has been noted in the stakeholder interviews that juveniles who do not complete the TC program face few, if any, repercussions in the JPO or SFPS systems. However, these results suggest that juveniles who do not complete the TC program are at an increased risk for recidivism and comprise a high risk group. Efforts should focus on rapid identification of those youth who do not complete the TC program and intensify interventions.

The persistently high percentage of offenses for possession of drug and alcohol, 28% of original offenses and 26% of recidivism offenses, is concerning. These youth are at high risk and may need more intensive interventions. The drop in shoplifting between pre TC and post TC program is notable. This is suggestive of a strong deterrent effect from the anti-shoplifting program in TC.

These results do not suggest a gender difference for one year recidivism rates.

In the future it might be possible to determine recidivism rates for juveniles with traffic citations. According to the MVD, traffic records can be found by contacting the firm New Mexico Interactive (<http://mvd.newmexico.gov/record-request-services.aspx>). A fee and memorandum of understanding are needed for access to the system.

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