



## DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF YOUNG PEOPLE ENROLLED IN THE DAWN PROJECT

Harold E. Kooreman, M.A., Jeffery A. Anderson, Ph.D.,  
Eric R. Wright, Ph.D., & Lyndy K. Kouns, B.A.

### Introduction

The main impetus for the development of systems of care in communities throughout the United States has been to provide a broad array of coordinated services to young people with severe multi-system needs (Stroul and Friedman, 1986). The purpose of this short report is to briefly describe the demographic make up of the young people served by the Dawn Project, a system of care in Marion County, Indiana. The demographic characteristics of two populations will be discussed: 1) the entire group of young people served by the Dawn Project from May 1997 through August 1, 2005 and 2) the subset of young people enrolled in the Dawn Project after October 31, 2000 that has participated in the federally-funded longitudinal evaluation.

### Methods

Over the course of this evaluation, children and families have been referred to the Dawn Project from a number of different sources: Marion County Department of Child Services (MCDCS), Marion County Department of Child Services Pilot (MCDCS-Pilot), Juvenile Court/Probation (JCP), Juvenile Court/Probation Pilot Program (JCP-Pilot) Department of Education (DOE), Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS), Larue Carter State Hospital Pilot Program (LCSH-Pilot), and Department of Correction Pilot Program (DOC-Pilot). As of August 1, 2005, 1106 youth have received Dawn Project services. MCDCS made 402 standard referrals and 61 MCDCS-Pilot referrals; DOE referred 65 youth (DOE did not make any Dawn Project referrals from spring 2000 until fall 2001); and IPS referred 149 youth. JCP referred 296 youth through their standard program and 61 youth were referred through the JCP-Pilot program. LCSH-Pilot referred 39 youth, and DOC-Pilot referred 33 youth. The total number of youth enrolled in the Dawn Project reflects all enrollments since May 1997 and includes youth with multiple enrollments from different referring agencies.

### Results

The majority of young people referred to the Dawn Project are African-American or biracial males ( $n = 444$ , 40.1%), followed by Caucasian males ( $n = 330$ , 29.8%), African-American or biracial females ( $n = 189$ , 17.1%), and Caucasian females ( $n = 143$ , 12.9%). Gender and ethnic makeup varies somewhat, based on referral source. Youth referred to the Dawn Project from DOE and LCSH-Pilot are more likely to be Caucasian males ( $n = 34$ , DOE;  $n = 19$ , LCSH-Pilot). JCP, DOC-Pilot and JCP-Pilot are more likely to refer young people who are Caucasian or minority group males ( $n = 221$ , JCP;  $n = 22$ , DOC-Pilot;  $n = 44$ , JCP-Pilot). Youth

accepted into the Dawn Project from MCDCS, MCDCS-Pilot and IPS are likely to be minority males ( $n = 142$ , MCDCS;  $n = 21$ , MCDCS-Pilot;  $n = 100$ , IPS).

The average age at enrollment for Dawn youth varies somewhat across referral source. MCDCS-Pilot youth are the youngest, being typically 11.17 years at enrollment. IPS referrals are just slightly older at 11.85 years. Referrals from the LCSH-Pilot are approximately 12-and-a-half –years old at enrollment. Youth entering the Dawn Project from MCDCS, JCP, JCP-Pilot, and DOE are all approximately 13-years-old at enrollment. Youth entering the Dawn Project from DOC-Pilot are the oldest of any referral source, being at least 15-years-of-age at enrollment.

Young people entering the Dawn Project generally have a variety of presenting problems at the time of enrollment. The most commonly reported presenting complaints involve conduct problems or involvement with law enforcement (80.4%); school-related problems (57.7%); family problems (56.1%); mental health-related concerns (55.0%); physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect (50.8%); and alcohol/drug abuse (13.4%). These presenting concern categories are not exclusive and young people typically have challenges in more than one category (see Tables 1-3).

*Table 1. Demographic characteristics of Dawn Project population and original referring agencies.*

	All Youth ( $N = 1106$ )		MCDCS ( $N = 402$ )		JCP ( $N = 296$ )		DOE ( $N = 65$ )	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	%
Minority males	444	40.14	142	35.32	117	39.52	20	30.77
Caucasian males	330	29.84	98	24.38	104	35.14	34	52.31
Minority females	189	17.09	97	24.13	40	13.52	5	7.69
Caucasian females	143	12.93	65	16.17	35	11.82	6	9.23
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	12.84	2.64	12.74	2.85	13.35	1.68	13.14	2.52
Months in Dawn Project	13.08	8.48	15.53	9.99	14.98	7.96	18.12	7.81
Risk Factors <sup>1</sup>	<i>N = 965</i>	%	<i>N = 347</i>	%	<i>N = 251</i>	%	<i>N = 55</i>	%
Mental Health	531	55.00	206	59.40	125	42.20	33	60.00
School	557	57.70	166	47.80	152	60.60	45	81.80
Alcohol/Drugs	129	13.40	47	13.50	45	17.90	6	10.90
Family Problems	541	56.10	207	59.70	151	60.20	30	54.50
Abuse	490	50.80	254	73.20	108	43.00	31	56.40
Conduct/Law Enforcement	776	80.40	237	68.30	242	96.40	41	74.50

<sup>1</sup>Percentages based on young people who had data available. Young people can have more than one risk factor.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of pilot programs established in 1999.

	MCDCS-Pilot (N = 61)		LCSH-Pilot (N = 39)		DOC-Pilot (N = 33)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Minority males	21	34.40	8	20.50	12	36.40
Caucasian males	11	18.00	19	48.70	10	30.30
Minority females	16	26.20	7	17.90	8	24.20
Caucasian females	13	21.30	5	12.80	3	9.00
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	11.17	3.61	12.45	2.71	15.88	1.21
Months in Dawn Project	7.86	5.11	13.70	6.29	9.04	5.66
Risk Factors <sup>1</sup>	<i>N</i> = 56	%	<i>N</i> = 38	%	<i>N</i> = 27	%
Mental Health	22	39.30	24	63.20	11	40.70
School	29	51.80	20	52.60	14	51.90
Alcohol/Drugs	8	14.30	1	2.60	9	33.30
Family Problems	36	64.30	24	63.20	17	63.00
Abuse	42	75.00	15	39.50	10	37.00
Conduct/Law Enforcement	34	60.70	34	89.50	25	92.60

<sup>1</sup>Percentages based on young people who had data available

Table 3. Demographic characteristics of pilot programs established in 2002.

	JCP – Pilot (N = 61)		IPS System of Care (N = 149)		Overall Statistics
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	$\chi^2$
Minority males	24	39.34	100	67.11	Race Gender
Caucasian males	20	32.79	34	22.82	
Minority females	9	14.75	7	4.70	
Caucasian females	8	13.12	8	5.37	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	F
Age	13.30	2.08	11.85	2.74	
Months in Dawn Project	7.55	4.61	11.19	6.92	
Risk Factors <sup>1</sup>	<i>N</i> = 54	%	<i>N</i> = 137	%	
Mental Health	19	35.20	91	66.40	
School	38	70.40	93	67.90	
Alcohol/Drugs	8	14.80	5	3.60	
Family Problems	30	55.60	46	33.60	
Abuse	12	22.20	18	13.10	
Conduct/Law Enforcement	51	94.40	112	81.80	

<sup>1</sup>Percentages based on young people who had data available

Youth Enrolled In The Evaluation. Enrollment into the longitudinal evaluation was discontinued on June 30, 2004. Three hundred fifty-nine (359) youth and their families have been enrolled in the evaluation. Males from a minority background make up the largest group of youth enrolled (39.6 %) followed by Caucasian males (31.2%), minority females (15.3%) and Caucasian females (13.9%). The typical youth is 12-and-a-half years of age at enrollment and most likely was referred to the Dawn Project by either the MCDCS or JCP. The most frequently reported presenting concerns for the youth in the evaluation were conduct/law enforcement problems (82.5%) school-related problems (61.7%) and family problems (54.6%).

To determine the degree to which the sample of young people enrolled in the evaluation are representative of the overall Dawn population, young people in the evaluation were compared with all young people enrolled in the Dawn Project on demographic variables. No differences were found in regards to race, gender, age at time of enrollment, or length of stay in the Dawn Project. On the other hand, a significantly smaller percentage of youth in the evaluation come from MCDCS and DOE when compared to the rest of the Dawn population. A significantly larger percentage of the youth enrolled in the Dawn Project come from the LCSH-Pilot, and the JCP-Pilot when compared to youth in the evaluation. These findings reflect the varied starting dates of each pilot project, as well as changes in the rates of referrals from various agencies over time.

Young people in the evaluation were generally similar to the overall Dawn Project population on presenting concerns with the only exception being abuse-related concerns. Dawn Project service coordinators rated young people in the evaluation as having a significantly lower level of abuse-related concerns at enrollment than the overall Dawn Project population (see Table 4).

Considerations for Analysis. As can be seen in table 4, only a small number of young people in the evaluation were referred from the MCDCS-Pilot program, the JCP-Pilot program, the DOC-Pilot program, and DOE. For the purpose of analysis, referral sources were collapsed into four broader categories: Child Welfare, composed of both MCDCS and MCDCS-Pilot program referrals; Juvenile Justice, composed of JCP, JCP-Pilot program and DOC-Pilot program referrals; Education, composed of DOE and IPS referrals; and Mental Health, which represents young people referred from the LCH-Pilot program.

## **Conclusions**

The young people served by the Dawn Project have a wide range of needs that cut across several of the child serving agencies in Marion County, Indiana. The Dawn Project was initially established in order to provide services to those young people in the community with the most severe needs. A review of the demographic characteristics of the young people who have participated in the Dawn Project shows that the Dawn Project is indeed providing services to the group of young people it was designed to target.

Table 4. Comparison of youth in the Dawn Project and those in the evaluation.

	Enrolled Youth ( <i>N</i> = 359)		All Youth ( <i>N</i> = 1106)		$\chi^2$
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Minority Males	142	39.60	444	40.14	.034
Caucasian Males	112	31.20	330	29.84	.24
Minority Females	55	15.30	189	17.09	.61
Caucasian Females	50	13.90	143	12.93	.24
MCDCS	110	30.60	402	36.35	3.88*
JCP	105	29.20	296	26.76	.84
DOE	6	1.70	65	5.88	10.40***
MCDCS-Pilot	20	5.60	61	5.52	.00
LCH-Pilot	23	6.40	39	3.53	5.55*
DOC-Pilot	8	2.20	33	2.98	.57
JCP-Pilot	35	9.70	61	5.52	7.93***
IPS	52	14.50	149	13.47	.24
Risk Factors <sup>1</sup>	<i>N</i> = 337	%	<i>N</i> = 965	%	$\chi^2$
Mental Health	178	52.80	531	55.00	.49
School	208	61.70	557	57.70	1.65
Alcohol/Drugs	39	11.60	129	13.40	.72
Family Problems	184	54.60	541	56.10	.22
Abuse	143	42.40	490	50.80	6.96***
Conduct/Law Enforcement	278	82.50	776	80.40	.70
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>
Age at Enrollment	12.67	2.59	12.84	2.64	1.11
Months Enrolled	13.05	7.37	13.08	8.48	.06

<sup>1</sup>Percentages based on young people who had data available

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .