



Comparison of Criminal History in Juvenile Probationers
 2010 Versus 2016
 November 2017

Introduction

The number of juveniles beginning supervision have dropped over the last several years. This decrease appears to have been the result of changes in Department and County policy in who should receive probation services. Among those changes were continued diversion of youth from the system via the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI).

There have been concerns that diversion via JDAI simply delays a youth’s entry into the criminal justice system. If this were the case, the criminal history of youth entering the system would become more severe over time, as those diverted returned to the system with a longer list of offenses. The Office of Policy, Planning and Evaluation (PPE) was asked to compare the criminal histories of youth entering supervision in 2010 and 2016.

Analysis

PPE staff identified cohorts of youth entering supervision in 2010 and 2016 by using the Minnesota Criminal Event Database (MNCED). One of the functions of MNCED is to identify discrete cohorts of youth entering supervision during the course of a year. This includes youth under the supervision of the Juvenile Probation Division and those sentenced to STS only. The youth are unduplicated – that is, if more than one discrete supervision event occurred during a year, the youth is only counted once when identifying cohort members. The number of youth beginning supervision in each year dropped from 2,417 in 2010 to 978 in 2016. This represented a decrease of 59.5%.

To determine the comparative criminal history of the youth in the two groups, MNCEDs Criminal History capability was used to identify offenses prior to the date of the offense for which the youth was in the cohort.

There is essentially no difference in either the severity or the total number of prior offenses between the 2010 and 2016 cohorts.

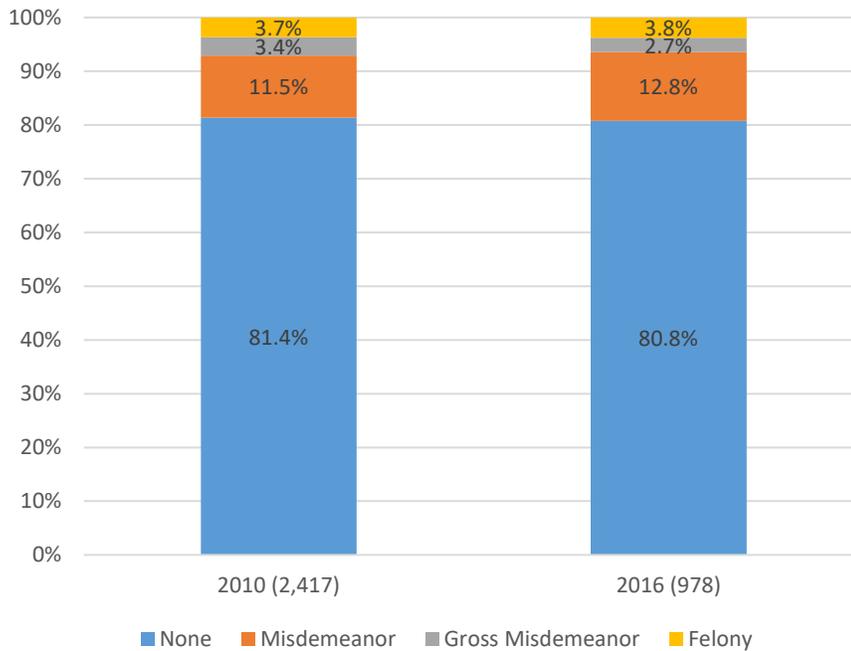
Table 1 shows that the percentage of youth with no prior adjudications was 81.1% in 2010 and 80.8% in 2016. The percentage of youth with different numbers of prior offenses is essentially identical between the two years.

Table 1: Number of Prior Adjudications

	<i>None</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2-5</i>	<i>6-15</i>	<i>Total</i>
2010 (2,417)	81.1%	10.8%	7.5%	0.6%	100.0%
2016 (978)	80.8%	10.4%	8.2%	0.6%	100.0%

Figure 1 shows the percentages of those with a most severe prior offense at the misdemeanor, gross misdemeanor, and felony levels are virtually identical.

Figure 1: Most Severe Prior Offense in Criminal History



These figures are not consistent with the idea that JDAI diversion has increased the severity of the criminal history shown by youths entering supervision.

Jim Ahrens, Principal Planning Analyst, Policy, Planning and Evaluation
Danette Buskovich, Manager, Policy, Planning and Evaluation