

THE HYCF PROJECT  
**Data Assessment and Research Directions**

Prepared by

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**Introduction**

The HYCF (Hawai`i Youth Correctional Facility) Recidivism Project is being conducted by the Department of the Attorney General, contracted by the Office of Youth Services. This report is the first of four specified for the project. Its purpose is threefold: to provide a written assessment of available data to be used in the project, to discuss information provided by relevant juvenile justice agencies that is pertinent to the project, and to consider subsequent research directions influenced by the aforementioned information. The second report will provide a profile of youths committed to the HYCF and an analysis of recidivism. The third report will focus on comparing the goals and objectives that juvenile justice practitioners throughout the state perceive for the HYCF. The fourth and final report will contain a detailed analysis of factors that are likely to affect recidivism, accompanied by identification of issues that the HYCF may need to address to reduce recidivism. The information contained in the present report is instrumental for directing and facilitating each of the subsequent efforts.

**Work Completed**

Preliminary data collection was conducted for approximately eight weeks at the HYCF to determine the size of the data set being considered, the nature of the data available from the facility, and to become familiar with the facility and its staff. Archived files were available for wards released between calendar years 1995 and 1999. It was initially agreed that, in order to allow enough release time to measure recidivism, the studied cases would be those who were released from the facility between fiscal years 1996 and 1998. This time period covers about 518 cases. However, because the initial data collection process was less time-consuming than predicted, all cases from 1995 to 1999 were collected to create a baseline data set that contains just over 800 cases. This larger data set will be used to provide a more comprehensive profile of youths committed to the HYCF, but will not be part of the recidivism analysis.

Relevant juvenile justice agency representatives were interviewed statewide, in order to discover the nature and accessibility of each agency's data and to solicit suggestions for the project. These interviews proved highly effective in terms of gaining access to data and making connections that will be useful for the third report, which will require extensive interviewing.

Additionally, brief tutorials were given by the Department of the Attorney General's Juvenile Justice Information System and Hawai'i Criminal Justice Data Center staff to gain familiarity with their respective databases; these systems will be instrumental for gathering data needed for the project.

### **Assessment of Available Data**

The data required for the project constitute three main categories: pre-commitment, commitment, and post-release. Each of these types are necessary for the second and fourth reports specified for the project. This report provides an assessment of available data, naming each data source, the quality of the data available, and its applicability to each subsequent report.

As anticipated, no single agency is capable of providing all of the information needed to conduct the project. Instead, several different agencies' data sets must be utilized, as each provides a unique slice of the juvenile justice experience. Because the HYCF is a state facility, utilized by each of Hawai'i's four counties, different record keeping practices between the counties confound data accessibility and reliability. Additionally, since this project will analyze confidential juvenile data that are several years old, the records purging criteria of some agencies make accessing archival data from these agencies problematic. The primary data sources that will be used are: the HYCF, the county police departments, the county prosecuting attorneys offices, the Family Courts, the JJIS, and the Offender-Based Transaction Statistics (OBTS) system. See Table 1 at the end of this section for an overview.

#### HYCF

Records available at the HYCF exist in three formats. First, there is a computer database containing basic demographic information and commitment-related data. Second, located in the maintenance workshop, are the file folders of non-current wards. These contain a wide range of data from detailed demographic information to copies of court records and facility documentation. Finally, ward record cards, kept in files in the main administrative office, record commitment-related data such as current commitment offense(s) and movements such as furloughs and paroles. These cards also tally misconducts, escapes, and returns. The data retrieved from the HYCF are lacking in some areas but, for the most part, are crucial to the project as no other agency is in possession of such information. Following is a more detailed description of each of these sources.

## Computer Database

The HYCF maintains an in-house database on all youths who come through the facility. This data source contains basic demographic information such as name, gender, date of birth, and ethnicity. It also contains a wealth of information relating to the juvenile's commitment(s) to the facility categorized into a Commitment Log, an Escape Log, a Furlough Log, and a Discharge Log (see Appendix A).

## File Folders

Ward file folders reviewed at the HYCF for wards released during calendar years 1995 through 1999 contain a great deal of useful data. Some records contain detailed court and police documents as well as progress reports and updates from service providers. However, others contain none of these types of reports, making their use, for research purposes, problematic. The data found most consistently in these files fall mainly into three categories: demographic, offense-related, and commitment-related (see Appendix A).

### *Demographic Data*

Data extracted from wards' files at the HYCF provide information on age, ethnicity, gender, and birthplace. In addition, these data describe each juvenile's life in the community, such as where they live, with whom, the number of siblings, where they went to school, and the last grade achieved. Other demographic data concern possible problematic experiences the youth have encountered such as marijuana, alcohol, or ice use, age of first substance use, gang membership, assaultive history, pregnancy history, and sexual abuse history. Most of these data were found consistently throughout wards' files on a form called the Pertinent Information Sheet. It should be noted that much of this information was self-reported by the juvenile and apparently not confirmed through existing data, as contradictory information was often found elsewhere in the file folders. The Pertinent Information Sheet is initiated by the child's social worker following sentencing and accompanies the ward to the facility, where it is usually completed by HYCF staff upon intake processing. However, since court records are often not available at the facility at this time, there is no way of checking self-reported data with juvenile history.

### *Offense-related Data*

The offense-related data found in the HYCF files provide an overview of each youth's past and present encounters with the juvenile justice system. Index Sheets and Social History Reports or Social Studies (reports prepared by Family Court prior to sentencing) found in many of the files may give a count of referrals prior to the current offense. However, inclusion of these data is often lacking. When Index Sheets are present, they often do not represent the ward's complete juvenile record, containing only offenses related to the current commitment, negating their

usefulness. Also, the Record of Referrals section of the Social History Report or Social Study, prepared by a probation officer, varies greatly in its scope. This section may only give the number of referrals, with no breakdown or listing of offenses, or may list the offenses without noting the degree of each offense, making distinguishing between felonies and non-felonies impossible. Preliminary data collection revealed that roughly thirty percent of all cases were lacking in one or both of these areas. This information was more complete when retrieved from other sources, specifically police and prosecutor records.

The file folders were more useful in determining the instant offense(s) and information relating to conviction and sentencing. Court documents such as the Mittimus, Petition, and Decree were present in almost all files. These contain the sentence length and stipulations, and the court and judge involved in current and past commitments.

#### *Commitment-related Data*

Data related to the commitment of the ward, such as the dates of commitment and release, the security level during confinement, previous commitment dates and offenses, type of release(s), misconduct reports, and visitor log are important features of the case files. This information is present in almost all files, but the scattered nature of its filing makes it confusing, increasing the likelihood of data input mistakes, thus making other data sources, such as the HYCF computer database, more useful.

#### Ward Record Card

Another HYCF data source is the ward record card. This form contains much of the same demographic information found in the files (useful for cross-checking purposes) and a detailed log of movements (furloughs, paroles, escapes, days off, transfers, returns, etc.) and misconducts as well as information regarding the commitment offense(s). Records of each misconduct or movement can be found throughout the folder, filed by the date on which they occurred. However, the central location of these data on the ward record card makes collection from this form less time-consuming and decreases the probability of input error.

#### JJIS

The Juvenile Justice Information System is a statewide database of juvenile information administrated and maintained by the Department of the Attorney General. In this system, data from each of the Family Courts, police departments, departments of the prosecuting attorney, and the HYCF will be merged to create a comprehensive record of juvenile offenders' histories and records. Unfortunately, for the purposes of this research project, the present usefulness of the JJIS is limited. The system is in the process of bringing many of the aforementioned agencies online, so not all information is currently available through the system. To date,

Honolulu, Kaua`i, and Hawai`i County Police Departments and the Honolulu Department of the Prosecuting Attorney are the only activated agencies. Comprehensive juvenile records input by the Honolulu Police Department and the Honolulu Department of the Prosecuting Attorney can be retrieved through the JJIS, however certain data conversion issues make data input by the other actively participating agencies problematic.

As agencies from different counties go online, the extent of their inputted archival data varies. Some agencies have only input current cases and closed cases where the subject is still a minor. This excludes many of the cases being examined in this study. Such is the case with the data converted by the Kaua`i and Hawai`i County Police Departments.

Although the JJIS contains data that are useful to this project, it is not a comprehensive source. The system holds great potential for future projects that will require accessing current or archival information.

### Family Court

The Family Court in each of the state's four circuits is connected to an electronic database, the Juvenile Statewide Information System (JUSTIS). This system is a rich source of data on juveniles' encounters with the justice system. It contains information about each contact with the law, the charge and disposition, and the outcome of any punishment or compulsory treatment. However, because of the legal issues concerning juveniles, the Family Courts must adhere to a strict set of purging criteria that are applied to their JUSTIS database and hard copy files. These criteria are as follows:

- at age **18** for youth not adjudicated
- at age **22** for youth adjudicated of misdemeanors and petty misdemeanors
- at age **25** for youth adjudicated of felonies or two or more crimes of violence or drug sales
- at age **30** for youth adjudicated of murder, 1<sup>st</sup> degree Robbery, 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> degree Sex Assault, 1<sup>st</sup> degree Criminal Property Damage

Due to the fact that over 30 percent of cases being examined in this study have been purged or will be purged during the project period, the Family Courts do not qualify as a usable data source.

### Police Departments

The four County Police Departments keep records on each juvenile offender they have contact with. These are in the form of hard copy files (typically arranged by name or police report number) and a computer database. Printouts from the

databases contain a list of arrests and referrals for each juvenile. These printouts will provide a count of police contacts prior to and following each HYCF commitment. Additionally, these contacts can be categorized by types of offenses and time between first contact and eventual commitment calculated. Unfortunately, the sheer bulk of the hard copy files combined with the fact that each county has different organizational and filing techniques makes data collection from the hard copy files unfeasible.

### Prosecuting Attorneys

Like the police departments, each Department of the Prosecuting Attorney keeps hard copy and computer records on each juvenile that passes through their office. Several of these offices have agreed to provide printouts of needed data. The hard copy files kept by these offices also are of such bulk and variety that a large scale data retrieval effort is beyond the scope of this project.

### OBTS

The Hawai'i Criminal Justice Data Center, a division of the Department of the Attorney General, is the home of the Offender-Based Transaction Statistics (OBTS) system, a database containing adult criminal information. Since over 90 percent of the cases in this study have reached the age of 18 or greater, the OBTS will be instrumental in determining whether HYCF "graduates" have continued law-violating behavior as adults. This system also contains information concerning the current criminal status of offenders, i.e., if they are in prison, on probation, or otherwise under the state's jurisdiction.

**Table 1: Agency and Quality of Data**

Type of Data	Pre-commitment				Commitment-related				Post-release			
	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
HYCF	◐	◐	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	◐	◐	◐
JJIS	●	○	○	◐	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	◐
Police	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	●
Prosecutor	●	◐	●	○	○	○	○	○	●	◐	●	○
Family Court	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
OBTS	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	●	●	●	●

○ = incomplete; ◐ = partially complete; ● = mostly complete; n/a = not applicable

### **Interview Data**

In addition to locating and assessing available data sources for the HYCF Recidivism Project, interviews were conducted with staff from relevant statewide juvenile justice agencies. Representatives from these agencies were questioned about the directions they would like to see this research project take and how they recommend that the findings be applied. They were also asked about their agency’s philosophy toward the use of the HYCF.

#### **Research Directions**

Those interviewed did not provide a great deal of suggestions regarding research possibilities. However, nearly every respondent iterated certain hopes for the study. One of these hopes was for a delineation of “what works.” Another hope was that the project will be successful in identifying factors that influence recidivism. The juvenile justice practitioners are also concerned with determining what, if anything, is being done that most impacts the behavior of youths that come through the system. Similarly, they are interested in developing strategies to identify juveniles who are most likely to reoffend. The primary goal of juvenile justice in Hawai`i, most of the interviewees stated, is to allow troubled children an opportunity to change their behavior in a positive way and avoid subsequent law-breaking behavior. Does the

<sup>1</sup> In Hawai`i, the four judicial circuits correspond to the four counties in the following manner: Honolulu County is the First Circuit, Maui County is the Second Circuit, Hawai`i County is the Third Circuit, and Kaua`i County is the Fifth Circuit.

HYCF accomplish this? Learning this, according to those interviewed, would be an ideal outcome of the project.

## HYCF Philosophy

The third report to come out to the HYCF Recidivism Project will provide a comparison of the goals and objectives that Family Court staff, prosecutors, legislators, HYCF administrators, and others in the juvenile justice system perceive both for youths committed to the HYCF and for the HYCF as a state agency serving those youths. To gather baseline data for the purposes of developing a survey instrument for the aforementioned report, the interviewed juvenile justice practitioners were asked about the purpose and function they perceive for the HYCF. The responses were varied and often conflicting, further demonstrating the need for consensus regarding the HYCF. Some feel that the number of available beds should be increased, while others believe that overcrowded conditions are caused by misuse of the facility. Some claim that the HYCF is utilized as part of an overall treatment plan, but others see the facility as an option in cases where all other interventions have failed. Still others view an HYCF commitment as a powerful tool for shaking up juvenile offenders to deter future lawless behavior, while some believe that using the facility as part of a “scared straight” approach as ineffective.

## **Research Directions**

Each of this project’s three subsequent reports are designed to address different aspects of the HYCF and the juvenile justice system.

The next report will focus on a profile of youths committed to the HYCF and a description and analysis of the recidivism rate of those youths. To accomplish this, two kinds of data will be used. The first is demographic data describing social characteristics of the youth, such as ethnicity, family makeup, and education. These data are easily accessible through the HYCF records. The second type of data concerns the juvenile records pertaining to law violations prior to and following the HYCF commitment. These data sets will be used to develop a statistical profile of HYCF committees. In addition, the juvenile records will be used to determine the extent of law-violating behavior following release from the HYCF, thereby providing various calculable recidivism rates.

The third report will pertain to the perceptions of relevant juvenile justice practitioners in the state. These include judges, police officers, service providers, probation officers, and others who play a part in youths’ experience in the juvenile justice system. The data already gathered in the preliminary interviews will be used to create a series of questions and lines of inquiry to be put toward future interview subjects. As the preliminary interviews revealed a great deal of contrast between

individual perceptions of the HYCF, further questioning may allow better understanding of the nature of this contrast.

The final report will utilize all previously collected data to form a comprehensive look at the HYCF. This report will provide an analysis of factors that affect recidivism, including, but not necessarily limited to, familial, demographic, cultural, educational, treatment, and protective factors; an evaluation of the outcomes of incarceration, as measured by recidivism, as a term of probation and commitment to the age of majority; and, to what extent practicable, an identification of the pertinent issues that HYCF may need to address in order to reduce the recidivism rate of those committed to its care.

**Appendix A**

**Data elements available through the HYCF computer database**

Commitment Log	Escape Log
<p>date of commitment  name  date of birth  sex  location (Hookipa or SCF)  ethnicity  age at commitment  family court  judge  type of commitment      ST      minority      age 19      age 20      parole returnee      recommitment          ST          minority          age 19          age 20</p> <p>offense(s)</p>	<p>date of escape  name  escaped from:      grounds      off-grounds          day off          furlough          Olomana Youth Center          other</p> <p>date apprehended  name/title escaped from  time of escape</p>
Furlough Log	Discharge Log
<p>date of furlough  name  commitment type  furlough  re-furlough  date returned</p>	<p>date of discharge  name  type of discharge      short term      minority      age 19      age 20      parole      re-parole      other (early release, waived, etc.)</p> <p>most recent commitment date  length of stay</p>

**Data elements retrieved from hard copy files at the HYCF**

Demographic Data	Offense-Related Data	Commitment-Related Data
Date of birth Age at commitment Gender Ethnicity Number of Siblings Last school/grade Last residence Home zip code Birthplace Marijuana use Alcohol use Ice use Gang affiliation Suicide indicators Assaultive history Escapes/Runaways Pregnancy Sex Abuse	Probation revocation Instant offense (including type of offense and count of charges) Offense history (broken into types of offenses) Judge County of commitment Compact supervision Additional sentence probation community service restitution	Commitment date Release date Sentence Security level Previous commitments commitment offense commitment date release date sentence Misconduct reports Visitors Type of release