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November 4, 2011

To: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
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From: William T Fujioka
Chief Executive Officer

TRANSMISSION OF A REPORT ANALYZING THE OUTCOMES OF YOUTH EXITING DEPENDENT AND DELINQUENT CARE IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Background

The purpose of this memorandum is to transmit the Executive Summary for a report that the CEO's Research and Evaluation Services (RES) unit has written collaboratively with researchers at the University of Pennsylvania on the outcomes of youth exiting dependent and/or delinquent care in Los Angeles County. The report, which was funded by a grant from the Hilton Foundation, looks at how youth fare in the areas of employment and educational attainment after they exit the County's child welfare and juvenile justice systems and additionally examines their patterns of service utilization, the costs of providing them with needed services, and the extent to which they become involved in the criminal justice system. The analysis provided will be particularly useful to policymakers and stakeholders in their efforts to create an increasingly strong, long-term foundation that facilitates positive transitions to self-sufficient adulthood for youth exiting dependent and delinquent care.

The Populations Studied

The RES/University of Pennsylvania youth exiters report is based on an analysis of two cohorts of young adults, one comprised of youth who exited dependent care or probation supervision at any point during 2002, and one comprised of youth that exited at any point during 2004. Each cohort was divided into three subgroups: (1) A child

welfare (CW) group comprised of youth who exited from a child welfare out-of-home placement between the ages of 16 and 21; (2) a Juvenile probation (JP) group comprised of youth who exited from any type of juvenile probation supervision between the ages of 16 and 21; and (3) a crossover group comprised of youth who exited a child welfare out-of-home placement between the ages of 16 and 21 and who also had a record of involvement with the juvenile probation system. It should be noted that only youth who entered or who had active cases in both the child welfare and juvenile probation systems at or after age 16 were designated crossover youth for this study. This misses persons whose involvement in either system concluded before age 16. As such, the number of youth identified as crossover youth in this study is a lower-bound estimate of the true prevalence of crossover youth.

A Study Based on Data Linked Across Multiple Departments

Outcomes for the two cohorts selected for the youth exiters study were analyzed by linking the administrative records from the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department with records from the departments of Community and Senior Services (DCSS), Health Services (DHS), Mental Health (DMH), Public Health (DPH), Public Social Services (DPSS) and the Sheriff's Department. Data linkage was achieved using RES' Enterprise Linkages Project (ELP) data integration technology and procedures, which de-identifies administrative records and, therefore, enables data to be linked across departments by means that conform to confidentiality laws.

Key Findings and Recommendations

What follows are some of the most critical findings and policy implications and recommendations presented in the RES/University of Pennsylvania youth exiters report:

- ***Crossover youth – i.e. those involved in both child welfare and juvenile justice systems – comprise a particularly vulnerable group of exiters. Policymakers might consider specifically targeting this group for ongoing outreach and intervention in an effort to increase the likelihood that, as adults, they will successfully adapt to and assimilate mainstream norms and expectations.***

Almost every measure considered in this report indicates that crossover youth are at-risk of comparatively negative outcomes after they exit the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. A considerably larger proportion of the observed crossover youth fell into extreme poverty in their young adult years by comparison with those in the JP and CW groups. Additionally, larger proportions of those in the crossover group became incarcerated as young adults, used inpatient, outpatient, and emergency health services, and received treatment for mental health conditions.

Given the relative vulnerability of crossover youth as they enter into adulthood, as well as the comparative costs of providing them with needed services, policymakers might consider taking steps to identify these youth as early as possible so as to provide them with targeted services and supports that would improve their chances of making a successful transition to adulthood and life beyond the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Insofar as improved outcomes for crossover youth would render them less costly for the County as adults, providing them with proactive, targeted attention and services would represent a strategic investment in long-term cost avoidance.

- ***Policies must accommodate the varied outcomes and heterogeneous subgroups that exist among the youths in the study groups.***

The findings presented in this report show that youth exiting dependent and delinquent care in Los Angeles County are diverse with regards to their eventual adult outcomes. At a minimum, one set of policies should address how to ameliorate the heavy services use and related outcomes among the more troubled persons in this group, while another set needs to focus on how to facilitate more of the youth who are capable of completing college and/or sustaining employment.

- ***Identify heavy services users and provide them with intensive services that facilitate better outcomes and generate net cost savings.***

The top 25% of heaviest service users among the youth observed in this study consumed about three-quarters of the services used by the all three study groups. Youth in this quartile had an average cost of over $70,000 per person over the study period, depending on the group and study period. Identifying youth in this quartile, ideally while they are still in the child welfare and/or juvenile justice systems, in order to provide them with housing, coordinated health and mental health care services, and case management, would be a proactive means of supporting successful transitions to adulthood and would provide services in an increasingly cost-effective manner by reducing the wasteful utilization of scarce resources that results when services are offered on a more haphazard, *ad hoc* basis.

- ***There were few clear differences in outcomes between the child welfare and juvenile probation study groups.***

One unique opportunity provided by the data used in this study was to assess whether or not the outcomes for youth exiting the child welfare system differed substantially from probation youth who presumably had stronger ties with their families of origin. For most outcomes, the CW group had similar outcomes when compared to the JP group.

- ***Conduct further research on how (a) time of exit from the child welfare system and (b) the circumstances under which exits are made, affect adult outcomes.***

Late exits were not associated with a decrease in negative outcomes. The impact that the time of exit from the child welfare system has on adult outcomes, as well as the impact of the circumstances under which exits are made, therefore need to be better understood. An understanding of these impacts is especially important given the imminent implementation of California legislation AB 12, which, effective in 2012, extends the period in which a youth may stay in foster care beyond their 18th birthday.

Next Steps

The results presented in the RES/University of Pennsylvania youth exiters report provide a broad overview of outcomes of youth exiting dependent and delinquent care in Los Angeles County. The analysis of these outcomes can help guide proactive policymaking that promotes the self-sufficiency of exiters and reduces their dependence on public services and resources as adults. Additionally, many of the topics examined in this report could be explored in considerable additional detail, with more specific insights and implications for particular aspects of this transition period to adulthood. Additional datasets, from other systems and other geographic areas, can further expand the scope of this project to provide a more comprehensive profile of outcomes among young adults who leave the child welfare and juvenile probation systems.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Trish Ploehn, Assistant Chief Executive Officer, at (213) 974-4532 or via e-mail at tploehn@ceo.lacounty.gov.

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Probation
Public Health
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Young Adult Outcomes Of Youth Exiting Dependent Or Delinquent Care In Los Angeles County

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Introduction

Increasing attention is being given to how youth who "age-out" of the child welfare system fare in their early adult years. These youth, who upon reaching a given age must statutorily leave the child welfare system from out-of-home placements either in foster care or congregate residential facilities, face a particularly challenging transition to adulthood. The difficulties associated with aging-out of the child welfare system manifest themselves for some in undesired adult outcomes, which prior studies have shown to include increased risks for criminal justice involvement, unemployment, teen pregnancy, behavioral health disorders, homelessness and lower educational attainment.

This report investigates the young adult outcomes of youth who age-out of or otherwise exit Los Angeles County's child welfare supervised foster care system and/or juvenile probation system. Two cohorts of young adults from both systems were selected for analysis. Within the two cohorts, this study focuses on three groups of youth exiters: (i) *The child welfare (CW) group* is comprised of youth who exited from a child welfare out-of-home placement between the ages of 16 and 21; (ii) *the juvenile probation (JP) group* is made up of youth who exited from any type of juvenile probation supervision between the ages of 16 and 21; and (iii) *the crossover group* is comprised of all youth who exited an out-of-home child welfare placement between the ages of 16 and 21 and who also had a record of involvement with the juvenile probation system.[1] The adult outcomes of youth in each of these three groups are analyzed by linking their administrative records from Los Angeles County's Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and/or Probation Department (Probation) with administrative databases from seven County departments providing an array of public services to residents of Los Angeles County, as well as from two California statewide agencies.

In performing this investigation, this study features several novel approaches toward examining the adult outcomes of youth aging-out of the child welfare system. While several studies have examined the adult outcomes of this population, there has been no such study looking specifically at adult outcomes among the sub-group of "crossover" youth who are involved in both child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and who may be at a particularly high risk for poor outcomes in adulthood. Despite the concern that has been raised about adult outcomes in this population, no prior studies have looked at adult outcomes of crossover youth, nor among the more general group of children who exit the juvenile justice system as adults. Along with providing findings on the adult outcomes of these latter two groups, this study also provides a basis for outcome

[1] Only youth who entered or who had active cases in both the child welfare and juvenile probation systems at or after age 16 were designated crossover youth for this study. This misses persons whose involvement in either system concluded before age 16. As such, the number of youth identified as crossover youth in this study is a lower-bound estimate of the true prevalence of crossover youth. Crossover youth were 10% of all child welfare exiters (including crossover youth) in the 2002 cohort and 12.5% of all child welfare exiters in the 2004 cohort (including crossover youth). While these estimates are conservative, they align with existing literature on youth exiters, which, as reported by Herz, Ryan and Bilchik (2010), suggests that between 9% and 29% of child welfare involved youth engage in delinquency.

comparisons across the three groups among these outcomes. Here, we can assess the assertion that crossover youth represent a group that stands out among their peers who are only involved with either the child welfare or juvenile justice systems, as a particularly at-risk population for undesirable outcomes in adulthood. Additionally, this study looks at outcomes across a variety of public programs and thus offers an opportunity to better understand the relationship and dynamics between a number of adult domains including the educational, occupational, health, mental health, criminal justice and public welfare systems.

This Executive Summary summarizes a more extensive and detailed full report produced on the young adult outcomes of youth exiting the child welfare and/or juvenile probation system in Los Angeles County. More information on the results reported here, as well as other results not included in this Executive Summary, may be viewed in the full report.

Description of Study Groups

This study focuses on two cohorts of youth who exited from an out-of-home child welfare placement and/or juvenile probation supervision: those who exited at any point during 2002 (JP group n=8,368; CW group n=2,388 crossover group n=268) and those who exited at any point during 2004 (JP group n=8,855; CW group n=2,300; crossover group n=330). Each cohort is divided into the three study groups identified above.[2] Looking at the demographic characteristics of the three study groups, important findings include the following:

- Roughly 80% of JP exiters and two thirds of crossover youth were male, while the majority of CW exiters (about 60%) were female.

- JP exiters were predominantly Latino (57%), while just under one-quarter of these exiters were African-American. On the other hand, the majority of youth (56%) in the crossover group were African-American, and the crossover group had a lower proportion of Latino youth (30%) than either the JP or CW group. The racial/ethnic distribution was more balanced among CW exiters, where about 40% of youth were African-American, slightly more than one-third were Latino, and about 15% were white.

- All three groups averaged about 18 years of age when they exited their respective system of care, although the crossover youth, whose age at exit from the child welfare system was used, were marginally younger.

[2] It was not possible to determine from the available data whether the youth in the crossover group did or did not have a 241.1 hearing to determine which agency would maintain jurisdiction over the case. As such, those included in the crossover group likely include a broader range of youth than those who had a 241.1 hearing. However, all crossover youth were under the supervision of both DCFS and the Probation Department, although at different times.

- JP youth were, on average, 16 years old at the time of their first arrest. CW exiters and crossover youth, on the other hand, were about 12 years old at the time when their last out-of-home placement began.[3]

- In comparing the child welfare system experiences of those in the CW and crossover groups, a few key differences merit attention. First, crossover youth had more DCFS out-of-home placements (i.e. distinct instances of out-of-home placement during which an individual might experience one or more placement changes) and more placement locations (i.e. changed placements more frequently) during their last out-of-home placement than CW exiters. Second, the majority of CW exiters aged-out from the child welfare system, while only about one-third of crossover youth aged-out, and a far greater share of crossover youth exited the child welfare system due to incarceration in either the juvenile or adult correctional system.[4] Third, more CW exiters than crossover youth were residing in a foster home placement or in a relative's home at the time of their exit from DCFS care, while more crossover youth were residing in group homes at their time of exit from DCFS care.

This study takes the approach of comparing the outcomes of the three study groups comprised of JP, CW and crossover youth. Given that much of the outcome data were only available for the period stretching from 2005-2009, and because members of the study groups exited in either 2002 or 2004, Sections 1 and 2 of this report largely take the approach of assessing young adult outcomes in two distinct time periods relative to a youth's exit from care. These two periods, respectively, encompass the initial four years following a youth's exit from the child welfare and/or juvenile probation system (for the 2004 exit cohort) and years five through eight following exit from care (for the 2002 exit cohort). For the 2004 exit cohort, this means that adult outcomes were, with few exceptions and where data was available, assessed using data from the four-year period stretching from 2005 to 2008 (i.e. the initial four years following their exit from care). For the 2002 exit cohort, adult outcomes were assessed using data from the period stretching from 2006 to 2009 (i.e. the fifth through the eighth years following their exit from care).[5]

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[3] Please note that only the last start date for an out-of-home placement was available for each youth observed in this study. For example, if a child had initial contact with the DCFS system at age 5, an out-of-home placement that lasted from ages 7 to 10, and then a second out-of-home placement that lasted from ages 12 to 16, the only start date available for analysis would be the one that started at age 12

[4] Approximately 5% of the CW cohort exited due guardianship arrangements. Eighty-four percent exited as part of the Kin-GAP program and 16% of this group did not qualify for the Kin-GAP program and exited with non-relatives.

[5] For the sake of consistency for all youth in the crossover category, this study counts their exit from the child welfare system as their exit date, regardless of whether the exit came prior to or subsequent to their exit from the juvenile probation system. It should be noted that 66% of the crossover youth in the 2002 cohort had a date of exit from the probation system that came after their date of exit from the child welfare system. However, only slightly more than half (53%) of crossover youth in the 2004 cohort had a date of exit from the probation system that came after their date of exit from the child welfare system.

Section 1-Young Adult Outcomes By Domain

The primary objectives of this section are threefold:

- To assess the extent to which youth in each of the three study groups used adult services administered by Los Angeles County in the domains of public welfare, criminal justice, health, mental health and substance abuse treatment, and how they fared in the areas of employment and education.

- To estimate the costs associated with the use of adult services provided by County agencies in each of the five above described domains for all three study groups.

- To assess the level of secondary and post-secondary educational attainment, as well as the employment and earnings trajectories of youth in the study groups.

Figures ES-1 and ES-2 illustrate the proportions of youth in each of the three study groups who received services in each of the domains described above in years 1-4 and 5-8 following exit from care. The remainder of this section details provides additional details about service use within each of these domains.

1.1 Public Welfare

Public welfare outcomes of youth in each of the three study groups come from data provided by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). DPSS is responsible for administering benefits and services to low-income residents of Los Angeles County. In addition, DPSS data provide information on the use of Medi-Cal.

Noteworthy findings from the analysis of the DPSS data and public welfare outcomes of youth exiters from the child welfare and or/juvenile probation systems include the following:

- In the initial four years following exit from care, more than 1 in 10 youth in the CW group received cash assistance through the County's General Relief (GR) program; 1 in 5 received cash assistance through the California Work Opportunities and Responsibilities to Kids (CalWORKs) program; roughly 1 in 3 received food stamps through the CalFresh program; and more than half were covered by Medi-Cal at some point.

- Roughly one-quarter of the JP group, one-third of the CW group, and one-half of the crossover group experienced a period of extreme poverty during their young adult years, as measured by receipt of the two forms of cash assistance, CalWorks and GR, that were tracked in this study during this period.

1.2 Criminal Justice

Data on criminal justice system involvement include records both of jail stays in the Los Angeles County Sheriff Department jails and adult probation supervision from the Probation Department.

The criminal justice data indicated that:

- Incarceration was particularly prevalent among crossover youth, with almost two-thirds having a jail stay. This was notably higher than the roughly one-half of JP youth who had a jail stay and more than double the one-quarter of the CW youth who experienced a Sheriff Department jail stay.

- Having an episode of adult probation was a less common experience for members of all three groups. Around 7% of the CW group had a probation episode, while roughly 18% of both the JP and crossover group were under adult probation supervision at some point in years 1 to 4 following exit from care.

- Cost estimates indicate that substantial County resources were expended on jail stays for members of all three groups in years 1 to 4 following exit from care. The average per person cost over this entire initial four year period among those who experienced at least one jail stay, was estimated at $18,430 for the CW group, $25,486 for the JP group and $33,946 for the crossover group. The costs associated with probation supervision were minimal.

1.3 Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Treatment

Information on health, mental health and substance abuse treatment come from records maintained by the Department of Health Services (DHS), the Department of Mental Health (DMH), and the Department of Public Health (DPH), Substance Abuse Prevention and Control division (SAPC), who respectively, provide health, mental health and substance abuse treatment services to eligible individuals.

Health Services Utilization

DHS data provide information about the extent and cost of inpatient, outpatient and emergency room utilization by persons in each of the three study groups. The following findings from analysis of the DHS health services data merit special attention:

- There were relatively low rates of inpatient stays among all three groups in the initial four years following exit from care. At 9%, crossover youth had the highest rate of experiencing an inpatient stay, which was about triple the rate of the JP and CW groups.

- The average total cost per user of inpatient services in years 1 to 4 following exit from the child welfare and/or criminal justice systems was slightly higher for the CW

group ($49,761) than for the crossover group ($47,677), and users of inpatient services in the JP group had markedly lower average costs ($34,690). Despite lower rates of inpatient service use, the CW group had higher average costs because the majority of inpatient stays among members of this group occurred in the latter part of this initial four year period, when inpatient services were slightly more costly.

- Crossover youth had the highest rates of inpatient and outpatient service use (9% and 26% respectively), and their rate of emergency department utilization (27%) was about double the rate of emergency department use of the JP group and CW group.

- The general patterns of DHS health services use and associated costs were largely the same in years 5 to 8 as in years 1 to 4, albeit with lower rates of receipt of all treatment modalities for all exiter groups. Specifically, rates of inpatient service utilization declined to 4% for the crossover group, which was still higher than either the CW or JP group. Likewise, rates of outpatient and emergency department use dropped to 18% and 20%, respectively, for the crossover group, although the rate of emergency department use for the crossover group was still twice as high as either the JP or CW group. Average inpatient costs were lower for all three groups. While CW youth continued to have the highest average costs ($37,813), youth in the JP group had higher inpatient costs ($32,629) in years 5 to 8 than did youth in the crossover group ($26,743).

Mental Health Services Utilization

DMH records offer information about the extent and associated cost of mental health treatment provided in inpatient, outpatient and day treatment modalities.[6] A number of results from the DMH data are worth highlighting:

[6] Inpatient treatments are those in which the patient spends at least one night in a clinic or hospital. Outpatient treatments are those in which the patient leaves the hospital or clinic on the same day that the treatment is provided. Day treatment refers to ongoing daily treatment. It should also be noted that a significant portion of DHS data may be mental health-related since DHS operates several psychiatric emergency rooms in Los Angeles County. These facilities also operate inpatient psychiatric beds and some provide outpatient psychiatric visits. Since these services are included in the DHS data, there is the potential for mental health utilization to be understated if only services provided by DMH are counted. Moreover, some DHS-provided mental health services are entered into the DMH information system, so it is possible that services can be double counted. To address these issues in part, inpatient stays in the DHS data that had an accompanying diagnosis code for serious mental illness were isolated for closer analysis. In the end, the number of these stays was not significant. Additionally, to assess how many youth had received treatment for a serious mental illness in DHS or DMH, the percentage of youth who had an episode of service receipt in either system with an accompanying diagnosis for serious mental illness was analyzed. While this does not account fully for all the contingencies presented by potentially overlapping types of service provision and data sets, the latter analysis at a minimum likely provides a good estimate of the proportion of youth who received treatment for a serious illness in either DHS or DMH.

- Receipt of outpatient treatment was by far the most commonly accessed form of DMH treatment. Receipt of inpatient and day mental health treatment was fairly uncommon among members of all three study groups.

- In years 1 to 4 following exit from care, the crossover group had the highest rate of receipt of outpatient mental health treatment, with more than 45% of its members accessing outpatient DMH mental health services. This was more than four times higher than the 10% of the JP group who received outpatient mental health treatment and more than two-and-a-half times the 17% of CW youth who received outpatient treatment.

- The proportion of persons in all three groups who received outpatient mental health treatment dropped dramatically in years 5 to 8. The share of persons in the JP and CW groups who accessed outpatient services in years 5 to 8 was about half as high as in years 1 to 4. The rate of outpatient mental health treatment receipt in the crossover group was only one-third as high in years 5 to 8 as in years 1 to 4.

Drug and Alcohol Treatment

The analysis of SAPC data focuses on detox treatment, outpatient counseling and residential treatment services, which represented the three most commonly accessed forms of SAPC services. Fairly small proportions (roughly 5% of the CW and JP groups in years 1 to 4, as well as years 5 to 8, and 10% of the crossover youth in both periods) had records of treatment through SAPC. These findings are described in detail in the final report.

Summary of Health, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment

Outpatient treatment for health, mental health and drug/alcohol issues were among the most common types of treatment accessed by all three study groups. Rates of DHS emergency department utilization were comparable to DHS outpatient service use rates. By comparison, the use of inpatient/residential forms of health, mental health and substance abuse treatment by youth exiting the child welfare and/or probation systems was fairly uncommon during their young adult years. On the one hand, the low rates of inpatient service use relative to outpatient treatment suggests that some youth exiters are able to access preventative and ongoing forms of care that may be better suited to meet their needs and may help many to avoid making use of inpatient or residential care. On the other hand, the fact that rates of DHS emergency department utilization were comparable to rates of DHS outpatient health services indicates that some youth face barriers in obtaining non-acute health care, and certainly merits closer attention.

1.4. Vocational Training, Employment and Earnings

Data on the vocational training, employment, and earnings of youth come from two sources. Data from the California Employment Development Department (EDD) reported quarterly earnings of youth in the CW and crossover groups. This information

was not available for youth in the JP group.[7] Data from the Department of Community and Senior Services (CSS) showed that very low proportions of the study groups (less than 2% of all three groups in both years 1 to 4 and years 5 to 8) participated in their employment and career services programs. These results may be accessed in the full report.

Employment and Earnings

- Slightly less than one-half of the members of the CW and crossover groups had earnings of any amount in years 1 to 4 following their exit from care. These proportions remained largely unchanged in years 5 to 8.

- The average cumulative earnings in years 1 to 4 following exit from care among members in the CW exiter group were more than $15,000 higher than those of the crossover youth ($29,350 vs. $13,443). Average cumulative earnings were higher in years 5 to 8, by about $10,000 for the CW group and about $5,000 for the crossover group.

- About one-quarter of CW exiters were considered to be consistently employed in years 1 to 4, which was more than double the 10% of crossover youth who were consistently employed. Fewer members of both the CW and crossover groups were consistently employed in years 5 to 8, although the proportion of CW exiters that were consistently employed (10%) was about double the proportion of the crossover group that was consistently employed (5%).

- Average cumulative earnings for both groups and, in particular, for those who were consistently employed, increased noticeably from the initial four-year period following exit from care to the four-year period encompassing the fifth through eighth years following exit from care. In the initial four-year period average cumulative earnings for those who were cumulatively employed were $52,179 for the CW group and $36,367 for those in the crossover group. In years 5 to 8 the average cumulative earnings for persons who were consistently employed increased for both groups, to $78,462 for the CW group and $72,282 for the crossover group.

1.5 Educational Attainment

This section uses data provided by the California Partnership for Achieving Student Success (Cal-PASS) to examine the secondary and post-secondary educational attainment of youth in the three study groups. Cal-PASS records on high school,

[7] The cohort data for the CW exiters was matched with EDD data with Social Security numbers. This information was not available for the JP exiters hence we were not able to link these population with EDD data on earnings and employment. The Probation department does not require Social Security numbers at initial court proceedings. This information is requested by the department at investigations, but they are unable to confirm or validate Social Security numbers. The department has been able to access Social Security numbers since October 2010 though an interface with DCFS and CWS/CMS.

Los Angeles County community colleges, and Los Angeles County four-year university attainment were all provided separately. Robust high school data covered the time period from 2003-2004 academic year until the 2009-2010 academic year, although the high school experiences of most youth in the 2002 and 2004 exit cohorts likely preceded this timeframe. Due to this data coverage problem, findings on high school achievement were largely inconclusive, but findings for post-secondary levels of educational attainment are summarized here.

Higher Education Outcomes

The available community college data allow for the identification of all youth who enrolled in a Los Angeles County community college at any point between 2000 and 2010. Important findings from analysis of the Cal-PASS community college data include the following:

- Slightly less than half (46%) of the CW group enrolled in a Los Angeles County community college. Comparatively, approximately 40% of crossover youth and roughly 32% of JP youth enrolled in Los Angeles County community college.

- A very small minority of the youth observed for this report, approximately two percent of both the JP and CW exiter groups, received Associate's degrees from Los Angeles County community colleges.

- Three percent of the JP group and two percent of the CW group met the credit requirements to transfer from a community college to a four-year University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) school in Los Angeles County.

- Among those who earned enough credits to transfer to a four-year university, about 28% of the JP group and 39% of the CW group matriculated at a four-year university in Los Angeles County.

- Slightly less than 1% of the youth in the JP group enrolled in a Los Angeles County four-year university, compared to the two percent of CW exiters who did so.

- Among youth who matriculated at a Los Angeles County four-year university, 83% of the CW group and 88% of the JP group did so after taking classes at a Los Angeles County community college.

- Looking specifically at youth who attended a four-year university, about 13% of the JP group and 14% of the CW group received Bachelor's degrees at Los Angeles County schools. An additional 6% of youth in both groups received a graduate or professional degree from universities in Los Angeles County.

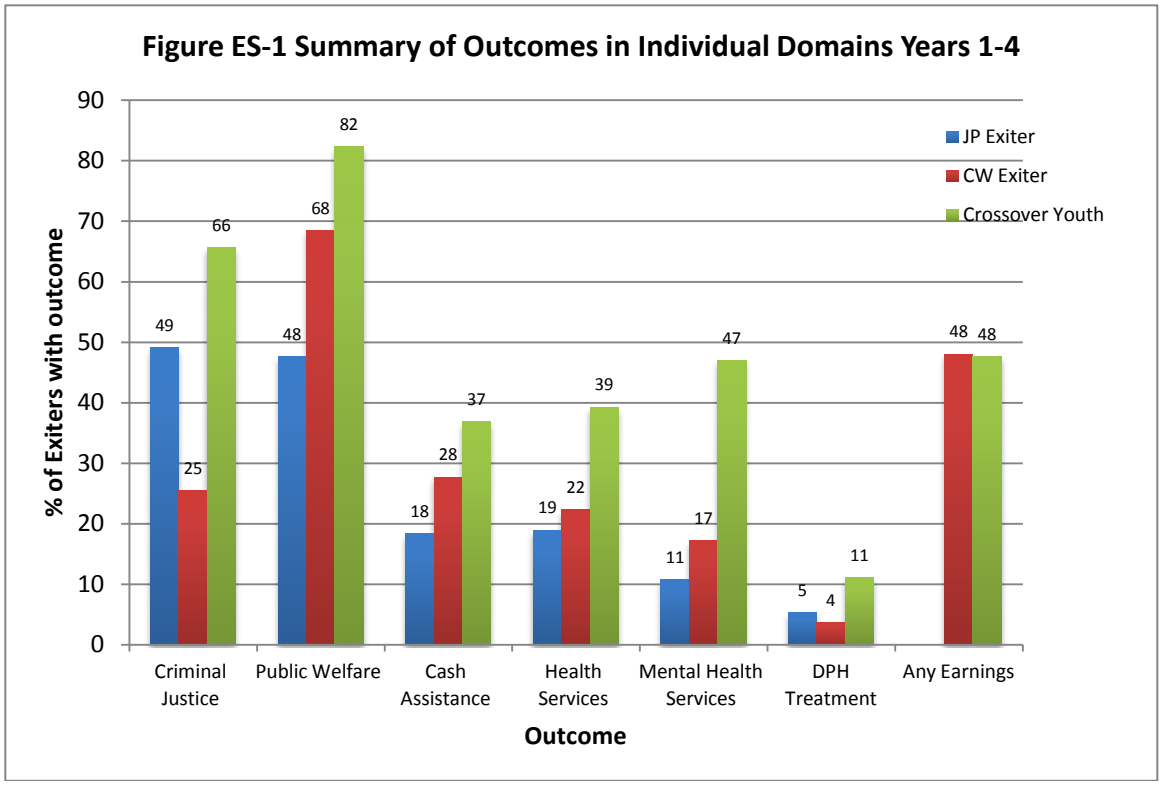
Figure ES-1 Summary of Outcomes in Individual Domains Years 1-4
% of Exiters with outcome
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
JP Exiter
CW Exiter
Crossover Youth
49
25
66
48
68
82
18
28
37
19
22
39
11
17
47
5
4
11
48
48
Criminal Justice
Public Welfare
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Health Services
Mental Health Services
DPH Treatment
Any Earnings
Outcome

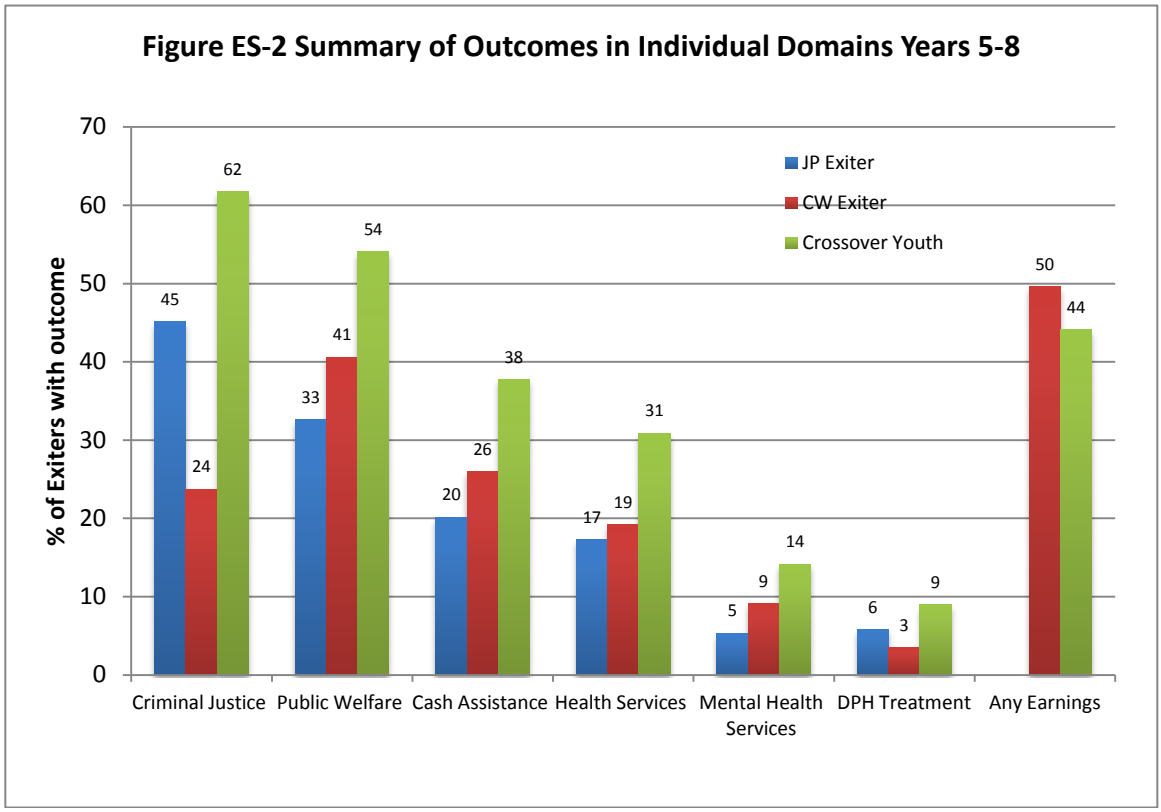
Figure ES-2 Summary of Outcomes in Individual Domains Years 5-8
% of Exiters with outcome
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
JP Exiter
CW Exiter
Crossover Youth
45
24
62
33
41
54
20
26
38
17
19
31
5
9
14
6
3
9
50
44
Criminal Justice
Public Welfare
Cash Assistance
Health Services
Mental Health Services
DPH Treatment
Any Earnings

Section 2-Young Adult Outcomes Across Multiple Domains

This section is focused on addressing the following questions:

- What are the patterns of multi-system use by youth in the CW, JP and crossover groups during their young adult years?

- Among youth who make use of publicly funded services, what is the net impact of such service use and what are the most common patterns of service utilization?

2.1 Outcomes Across Multiple Domains

This section provides an overview of service use by youth in all three study groups across the following domains: 1) public welfare (i.e. any receipt of GR, Calworks, Medi-Cal or CalFresh); 2) criminal justice (i.e. any probation episode or any Sheriff Department jail stay); 3) health services (i.e. any utilization of DHS services); 4) mental health services (i.e. any utilization of DMH services); 5) drug/alcohol treatment (i.e. any SAPC treatment).

Figures ES-3 and ES-4 show the extent to which members of each of the three study groups accessed services in one or more of the five domains mentioned above, in years 1 to 4 and in years 5 to 8 following exit from the child welfare and/or juvenile probation systems. Findings worth highlighting from these figures include:

- In years 1 through 4, a majority of members of all three groups made use of a public service in at least one of the five domains. Nearly 90% of the crossover youth received at least one type of public service, which was higher than the roughly 80% of the CW group and the roughly 75% of the JP group who did so.

- In years 1 to 4, as the number of domains increased, the utilization rates declined for all exiter groups. While 22 percent of the JP group used services in at least three domains, and 17 percent of the CW group used services in at least three domains, 49 percent of the crossover youth used services in at least three domains. Crossover youth consistently had higher rates of service receipt across multiple domains.

- Although the rates of multiple domain service utilization were lower for all three groups in years 5 to 8, the trends that were observed in years 1 to 4 continued in years 5 to 8. A majority of all three groups (80% of the crossover group, and 60% of both the CW and JP groups) received a public service provided in at least one of the five domains, yet there was a consistently higher rate of service utilization in these multiple domains among members of the crossover group.

In looking more closely at the extent of service use across multiple domains, a number of additional findings merit attention:

- Varying combinations of jail stays, health services utilization, and cash assistance receipt represented the most frequently occurring combinations of dual domain service use in both years 1 to 4 and 5 to 8 for members of all three study groups.

- About one-quarter of youth in the crossover group experienced a jail stay and received cash assistance (either GR or CalWorks) in years 1 to 4. This was more than double the proportion of youth in both the JP and CW groups (11% and 10% respectively) who had a jail stay and received cash assistance. These proportions were largely unchanged in years 5 to 8 following exit from the child welfare or juvenile justice systems.

- In years 1 to 4, inpatient service utilization in any system (i.e. a DHS or DMH inpatient hospitalization, or an SAPC detox or residential treatment episode) was limited to a small fraction of members of all three exiter groups. Roughly 13% of crossover youth had some type of inpatient stay, a proportion that was more than double the 5% of the CW and JP groups who experienced an inpatient stay. In years 5 to 8, about 9% of crossover youth had an inpatient stay compared to 5% of JP exiters and 4% of CW exiters.

- Nearly one-quarter of crossover youth received DHS or DMH treatment that was associated with a serious mental illness in years 1 to 4. The comparable figures for the CW and JP groups were 11% and 5% respectively. In years 5 to 8, only 11% of crossover youth received treatment for a serious mental illness, compared to 8% of CW exiters and 4% of the JP group.

- In years 1 to 4 following exit from their respective systems of care, 17% of persons in the crossover group received treatment associated with a drug/alcohol disorder, which was more than double the rate of treatment observed in both the CW group (6%) and the JP group (8%). These figures were largely unchanged in years 5 to 8 following exit.

- Few members of all three study groups received treatment for both a serious mental illness and a substance abuse disorder. However, at 8%, the proportion of crossover youth who received both types of treatment in years 1 to 4 was four times greater than the 2% of both CW and JP youth who did so. In years 5 to 8, only 4% of crossover youth were treated for a serious mental illness and a substance abuse disorder, but this was still more than double the share of the CW (2%) and JP (1%) groups who received both types of treatment.

2.2 Costs of Service Use Across Multiple Domains

Analyzing the cost of service utilization across domains allows for a more comprehensive portrait of the overall impact of youth exiters on public services across multiple systems of care. Tables ES-5 and ES-6 present the average cumulative costs of service utilization per user across the health, behavioral health, public welfare and criminal justice systems in years 1 to 4 and 5 to 8 subsequent to exit from the child

welfare and/or juvenile probation systems. The following information provided by the figures is particularly worth highlighting:

- In the initial four years following exit from their respective County systems, the average per-person public service utilization costs across all domains for the crossover group ($35,171) was more than double that of youth in the JP ($15,985) and CW ($12,532) groups.

- In years 1 to 4, costs associated with involvement in the criminal justice system accounted for the largest single share of the average cumulative cost for all three groups. For the crossover and JP groups, criminal justice costs accounted for, respectively, 55% and 68% of total costs on average, but only 33% for the CW group.

- For the JP and CW groups, public welfare costs (i.e. GR, CalWorks and CalFresh costs) accounted for the second largest share of overall public service utilization costs. Mental health services costs represented the second largest share for the crossover group.

- In years 5 to 8, average per person public service utilization costs were lower for all three groups, but the average cost among youth in the crossover group ($27,272) was still more than double that of the CW group ($10,895) and almost double that of the JP group ($14,324).

- Criminal justice system costs accounted for an even larger share of the average per person costs in years 5 to 8. Among those in the JP group, criminal justice involvement accounted for about 70% of public service costs on average, compared to about 40% for persons in the CW group and 60% for the crossover group. In all three groups, public welfare costs accounted for the next highest share of the average cost per person.

This section also examined the distribution of public service costs and found that relatively small groups of youth in all three study groups made highly disproportionate use of public services. To be more specific, in each study group, the 25% of those who made the most extensive and expensive use of public services accounted for roughly 75% of the overall cost of services used in all three groups. On the other end of the spectrum, the 25% of youth who made the least extensive and least costly use of public services accounted for only about 1% of the overall cost of public services used by members of each of the three study groups. These findings were effectively identical both in years 1 to 4 and in years 5 through 8 following exit from the child welfare and/or juvenile probation systems. Collectively, these findings are important, as they suggest that “heavy” (i.e. extensive and highly costly) service utilization in multiple public systems was limited to a fairly small number of youth exiting the child welfare and/or juvenile probation systems.

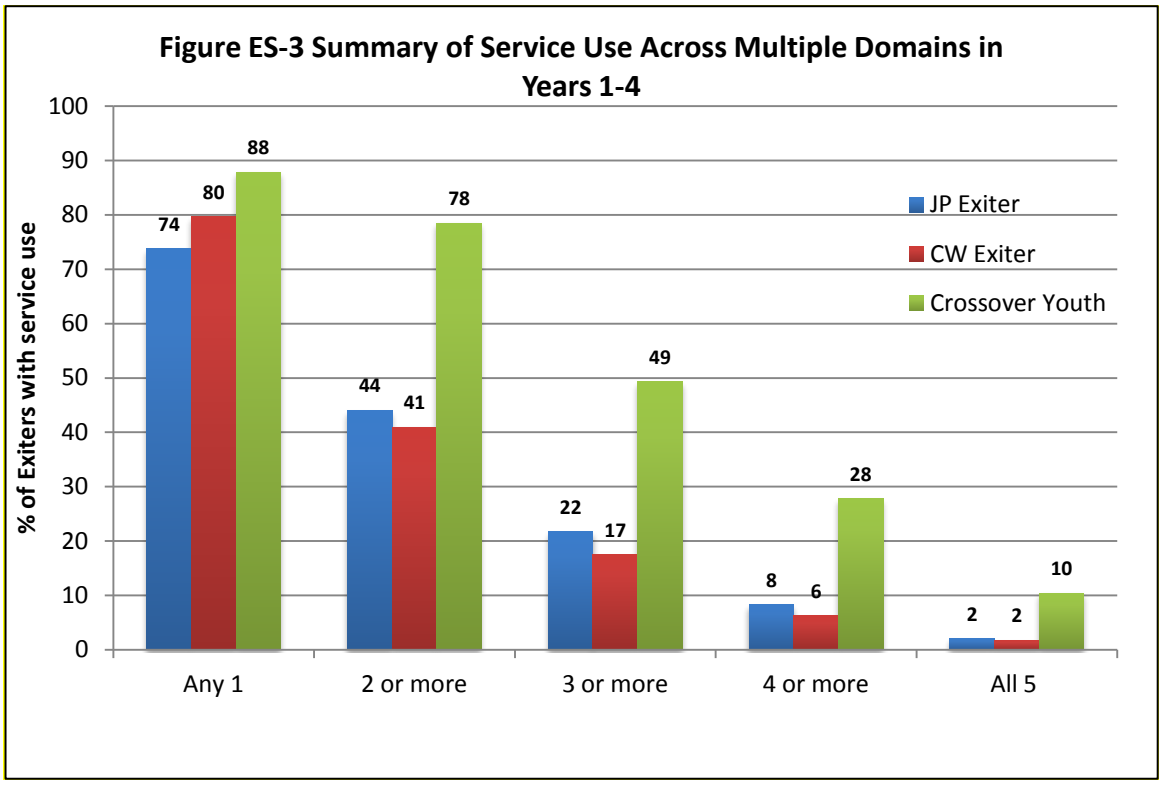
Figure ES-3 Summary of Service Use Across Multiple Domains in Years 1-4
% of Exiters with service use
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
74
80
88
44
41
78
22
17
49
8
6
28
2
2
10
Any 1
2 or more
3 or more
4 or more
All 5
JP Exiter
CW Exiter
Crossover Youth

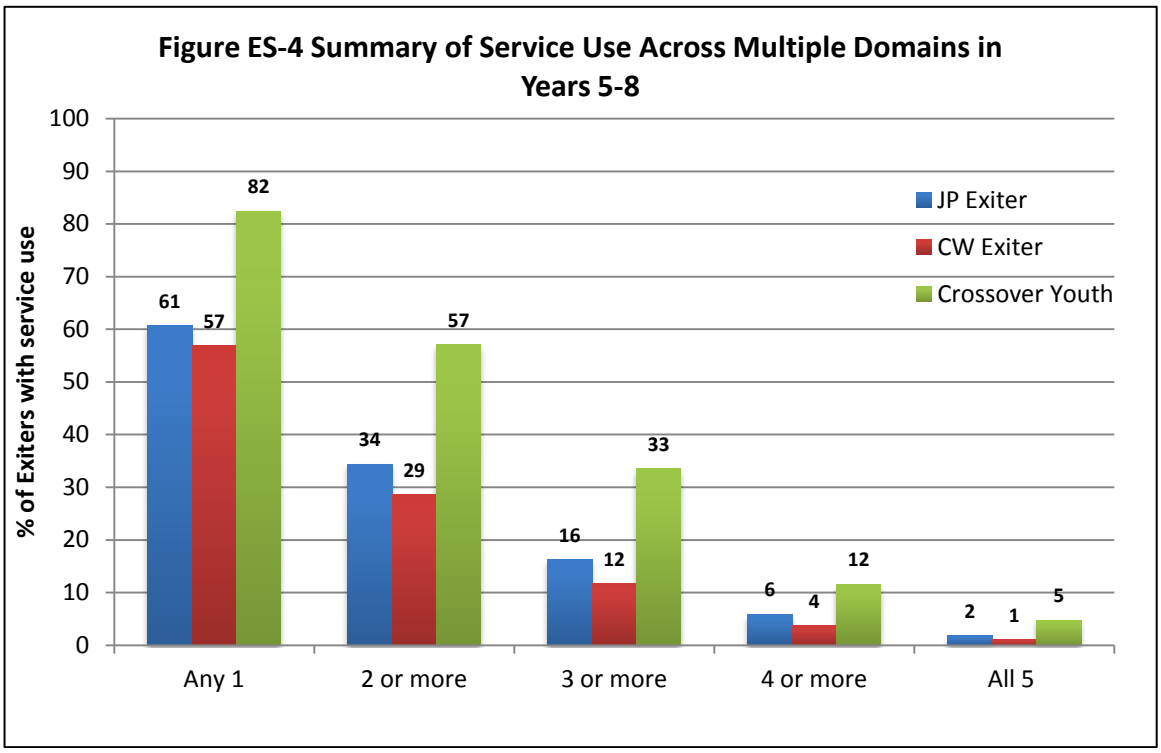
Figure ES-4 Summary of Service Use Across Multiple Domains in Years 5-8
% of Exiters with service use
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
61
57
82
34
29
57
16
12
33
6
4
12
2
1
5
Any 1
2 or more
3 or more
4 or more
All 5
JP Exiter
CW Exiter
Crossover Youth

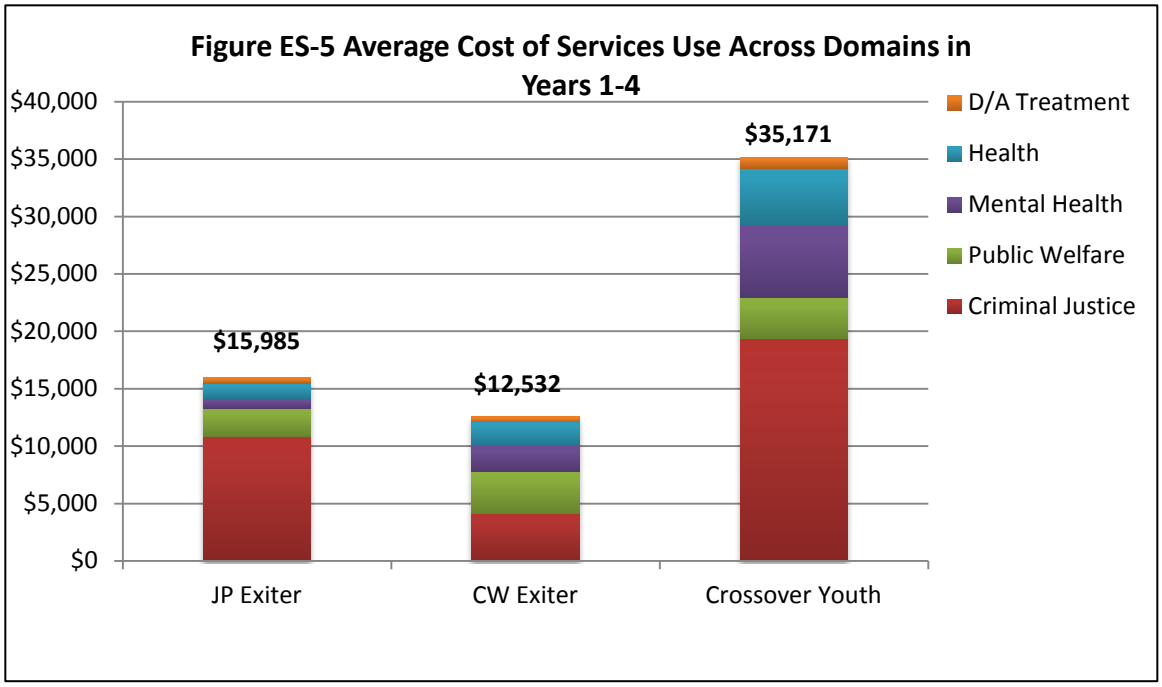
Figure ES-5 Average Cost of Services Use Across Domains in Years 1-4
$40,000
$35,000
$30,000
$25,000
$20,000
$15,000
$10,000
$5,000
$0
$15,985
$12,532
$35,171
JP Exiter
CW Exiter
Crossover Youth
D/A Treatment
Health
Mental Health
Public Welfare
Criminal Justice

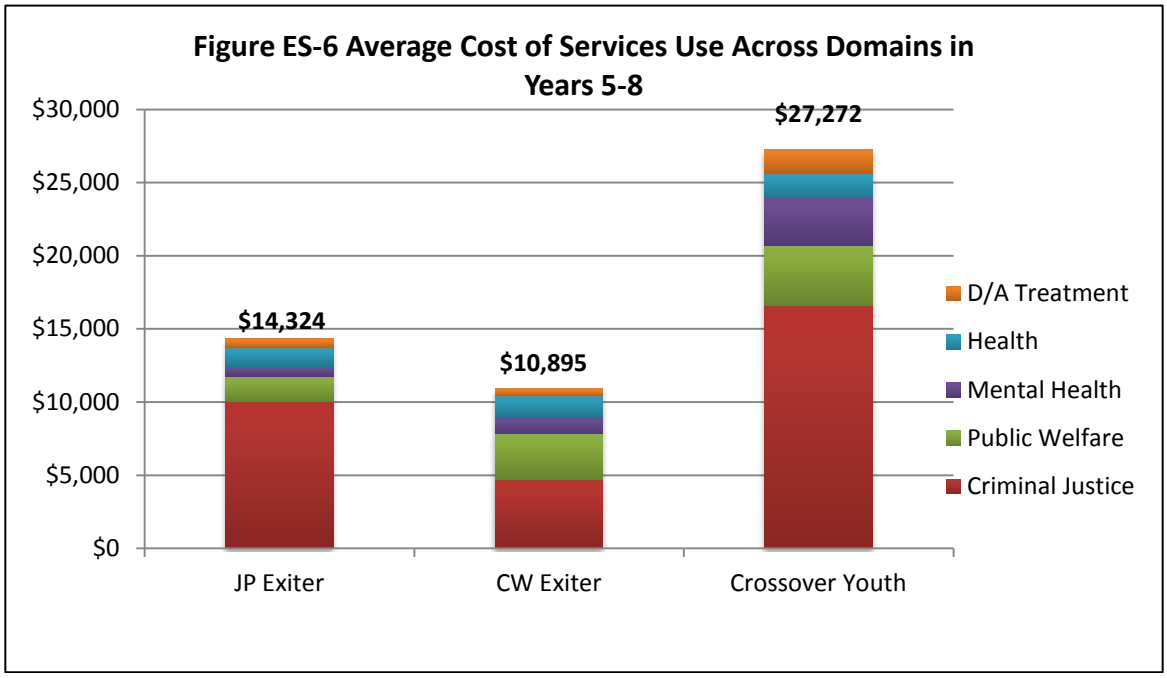
Figure ES-6 Average Cost of Services Use Across Domains in Years 5-8
$30,000
$25,000
$20,000
$15,000
$10,000
$5,000
$0
$14,324
$10,895
$27,272
JP Exiter
CW Exiter
Crossover Youth
D/A Treatment
Health
Mental Health
Public Welfare
Criminal Justice

Section 3: Relationship Between Selective Factors and Young Adult Outcomes

This section aims to answer the following questions:

- Do outcomes vary differentially by involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, or involvement in both systems? Furthermore, are factors such as demographic characteristics, age at entry into care, level of educational attainment, consistent employment, and, where applicable, type of exit and type of placement at exit associated with young adult outcomes, including public service utilization, earnings and employment?

- How does participation in both housing-related and other types of the Independent Living Program (ILP) services affect outcomes of youth exiting the child welfare system?

This section uses multiple regression techniques to examine the relationship between a set of select factors and the following outcomes:

- Total earnings
- Consistent employment
- Total cost of public service use
- Heavy use of public services
- Jail stays
- Timing and use of cash assistance (i.e. GR or Calworks)
- High educational attainment

The multiple regression models provide a sense of the strength of the associations between these factors. Given that some variables were only available for youth who had involvement in the child welfare system (e.g. reason for removal from home), two sets of models were estimated, with one grouping together members of all three study groups, and the second using just youth in the CW and crossover groups.

3.1 Summary of Findings From Regression Models

Key findings from the regression results include:

- ***Membership in the crossover group is a strong and consistent predictor of less desirable outcomes:*** Compared to persons in the JP group, crossover youth had costs associated with public services use costs that were 110% higher, were far more likely to be heavy users of public services and to experience a jail stay, and were 91% less likely to have high educational attainment, which is defined as having either completed an Associate's degree at a community college or having enrolled at a four-year university. Moreover, crossover youth were more likely than JP youth to receive both GR and CalWORKs, suggesting that poverty poses a more substantial problem for members of this group. Similarly, in comparison to the CW group, crossover youth were more than twice as likely to

be heavy users of public services, three times more likely to experience a jail stay, and 1.5 times more likely to receive GR. Crossover youth were also 50% less likely to be consistently employed than their CW counterparts.

- ***Higher educational attainment is associated with positive young adult outcomes:*** There was strong evidence that higher levels of educational attainment were associated with positive outcomes. Earning more credits at a community college was associated with higher earnings, lower public service use costs, a higher likelihood of being consistently employed, and a decreased likelihood of being a heavy user of public services, of experiencing a jail stay, and of receiving either GR or CalWORKs. Moreover, youth who had high educational attainment had drastically lower public services use costs, and were far less likely to be heavy users of public services or to have experienced jail stays.

- ***Consistent employment is associated with positive outcomes:*** While complete employment and earnings data were only available for youth in the CW and crossover groups, consistent employment was an important factor for predicting positive outcomes among these groups. Youth who had a pattern of consistent earnings had public service costs that were 70% lower than their non-consistently employed counterparts. Moreover, those who were consistently employed were far less likely to be heavy users of public services or to have experienced jail stays.

- ***Among child welfare involved youth, older age at entry into care is consistently associated with less desirable outcomes:*** In the models that focused solely on youth in the CW and crossover groups, older age at the time of an individual's last out-of-home placement, which was not necessarily the same as their age at the time of initial contact with DCFS, was associated with lower earnings, a decreased likelihood of consistent employment, higher total costs of public service use, and increased likelihood of experiencing a jail stay.

- ***A history of treatment for a serious mental illness is associated with an increased likelihood of a jail stay, receipt of GR and/or CalWORKs, and lower earnings***: In both sets of models, persons with a history of treatment for a serious mental illness were found to have an increased likelihood of experiencing a jail stay and receiving GR and CalWORKs. In addition, treatment for a serious mental illness was associated with lower earnings and a less consistent pattern of employment.

- ***There is tentative evidence that ILP services providing housing assistance promote positive outcomes, but the relationship between ILP services and outcomes needs to be studied more carefully:*** This study examined the relationship between both housing-related and non-housing-related types of ILP services and young adult outcomes. Here, the findings relative to the relationship between both of these types of ILP services and outcomes should be interpreted cautiously. Findings were strongest and most consistent for housing-related ILP

services, and as such, those findings are described in greatest detail here. Housing assistance in the form of the payment of move-in expenses and/or security deposits for market rate rental units and receipt of Homeless Prevention Initiative (HPI) assistance were fairly consistent predictors of positive young adult outcomes. Receipt of such services was generally associated with favorable outcomes (i.e. higher earnings, more consistent employment, higher educational attainment, lower public service costs, decreased likelihood of jail stays and receipt of cash assistance). However, such findings may be due more so to eligibility criteria for receipt of such services, or to underlying characteristics of recipients that were not controlled for in the model and that also make them predisposed to more favorable outcomes. For example, receipt of assistance through the Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP) requires youth to be attending high school or a vocational training program on a full-time basis. Similarly, a number of ILP mental health-based housing services (e.g. the Athena or B.R.I.D.G.E.S program) require youth to meet certain mental health diagnostic criteria. These criteria mean that participation in certain ILP services is limited to a selected group of youth who have certain characteristics. In turn, these characteristics, rather than participation in the ILP programs themselves, may explain the observed relationship between receipt of ILP services on young adult outcomes.

Section 4 – Implications for Policy and Research

Based on this study's findings, the following nine implications/recommendations represent steps policymakers might consider taking in forming policies intended to improve both immediate and long-term outcomes for youth exiting dependent or delinquent care in Los Angeles County.

1) Crossover youth – i.e. those involved in both child welfare and juvenile justice systems – comprise a particularly vulnerable group of exiters. Policymakers might consider specifically targeting this group for ongoing outreach and intervention in an effort to increase the likelihood that, as adults, they will successfully adapt to and assimilate mainstream norms and expectations.

Almost every measure considered in this report indicates that crossover youth are at-risk of comparatively negative outcomes after they exit the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. A considerably larger proportion of the observed crossover youth fell into extreme poverty in their young adult years by comparison with those in the JP and CW groups. Additionally, larger proportions of those in the crossover group became incarcerated as young adults, used inpatient, outpatient, and emergency health services, and received treatment for mental health conditions.

The statistical models deployed for this report reinforce this picture, showing that membership in the crossover group substantially increases the likelihood of less desirable outcomes. Not surprisingly, then, crossover youth are an especially costly presence within the County when they become adults. In the initial four years following exit from their respective County systems, service utilization costs for crossover youth were more than double those of the JP group and almost triple those of the CW group. Moreover, in years five through eight after exit, service utilization costs for the crossover group were more than double those of the CW group and almost double those of the JP group.

Given the relative vulnerability of crossover youth as they enter into adulthood, as well as the comparative costs of providing them with needed services, policymakers might consider taking steps to identify these youth as early as possible so as to provide them with targeted services and supports that would improve their chances of making a successful transition to adulthood and life beyond the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Insofar, as improved outcomes for crossover youth would render them less costly for the County as adults, providing them with proactive, targeted attention and services would represent a strategic investment in long-term cost avoidance.

2) Sizeable proportions of youth in all three study groups continue to make substantial demands upon public services systems upon reaching adulthood.

This basic finding is consistent with other studies of youth aging-out of the foster care system and underscores the need to adopt policies and programs for youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems that facilitate and support successful transitions

into adulthood. Improved adult outcomes for youth exiting dependent and delinquent care can be reasonably expected to decrease dependency on public services. Preventive policy guided by a long-term perspective can therefore be framed as an investment in both cost avoidance and the promotion of self-sufficiency.

3) Policies must accommodate the varied outcomes and heterogeneous subgroups that exist among the youths in the study groups. The findings presented in this report show that youth exiting dependent and delinquent care in Los Angeles County are by no means monolithic with regards to their eventual adult outcomes. At a minimum, one set of policies should address how to ameliorate the heavy services use and related outcomes among the more troubled persons in this group, while another set needs to focus on how to facilitate more youth completing college and/or sustaining meaningful employment.

4) More focus needs to be placed on the at-risk youth who secure stable employment. Substantial attention has been focused here and elsewhere, on the negative outcomes associated with aging-out of the child welfare system. Less is known about those youth who appear to make positive transitions from the child welfare and juvenile justice systems to adulthood. What are the keys to their success? To what extent do they evince shared characteristics and patterns of programmatic participation? These are questions that should be addressed by future research. Their answers could inform a process of crafting policy and implementing programs that seek to replicate the experiences of successful exiters.

5) Youth enrolled in college present another potential intervention point for services to facilitate successful transitions into adulthood among at-risk youth. Close to half (45%) of the CW group, 40% of the crossover group, and roughly one-third (32%) of the JP group, enrolled in a community college. However, much smaller proportions of each group earned degrees or completed the credit requirements to transfer to a four-year university in the University of California or California State University systems. Policymakers might consider increasing campus-based support services that provide system involved youth with targeted intervention and support that would increase the number who graduate.

6) Identify heavy services users and provide them with intensive services that facilitate better outcomes and generate net cost savings. The top 25% of heaviest service users among the youth observed in this study consumed about three-quarters of the services used by the all three study groups. Youth in this quartile had an average cost of over $70,000 per person, depending on the group and study period. Identifying youth in this quartile, ideally while they are still in the child welfare and/or juvenile justice systems, in order to provide them with housing, coordinated health and mental health care services, and case management, would be a proactive means of supporting successful transitions to adulthood and would provide services in an increasingly cost-effective manner by reducing the wasteful utilization of scarce resources that results when services are offered on a more haphazard, *ad hoc* basis.

This approach, investing in the coordinated, multi-disciplinary care of heavy services users, has been adopted successfully in targeting chronic adult homeless persons in other localities and a similar approach could be adapted and applied to the at-risk in Los Angeles County.

7) There were few clear differences in outcomes between the child welfare and juvenile probation study groups. Another unique opportunity provided by the data used in this study was to assess whether or not the outcomes for youth exiting the child welfare system differed substantially from probation youth who presumably had stronger ties with their families of origin. For most outcomes, the CW group had similar outcomes when compared to the JP group.

8) Conduct further research on how (a) time of exit from the child welfare system and (b) the circumstances under which exits are made, affect adult outcomes. Regression results that show the impact of various CW-only factors on eight adult outcomes. The CW group included all youth who were still in the CW system at age 16 or older (late exiters), and many who ultimately exited the CW system for reasons other than aging-out upon or after reaching adult status. Surprisingly, late exits were not associated with a decrease in negative outcomes. The impact that the time of exit from the child welfare system has on adult outcomes, as well as the impact of the circumstances under which exits are made, need to be better understood. An understanding of these impacts is especially important given the imminent implementation of California Assembly Bill 12, which, effective in 2012, extends the period in which a youth may stay in foster care beyond their 18th birthday.

9) Additional research. The results presented here give a broad overview of the interactions between youth in the child welfare and juvenile probation systems and their risk for subsequent negative adult outcomes. As such, many of the topics examined in this study could be explored in considerable additional detail, with more specific insights and implications for particular aspects of this transition period to adulthood. Additional datasets, from other systems and other geographic areas, can further expand the scope of this project to provide a more comprehensive profile of outcomes among young adults who leave the child welfare and juvenile probation systems.