

Criminal Justice System Involvement of System of Care Youth

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Vermont Youth in Transition Grant
Bridging gaps for young adults in VT
www.youth-in-transition-grant.com

Abstract

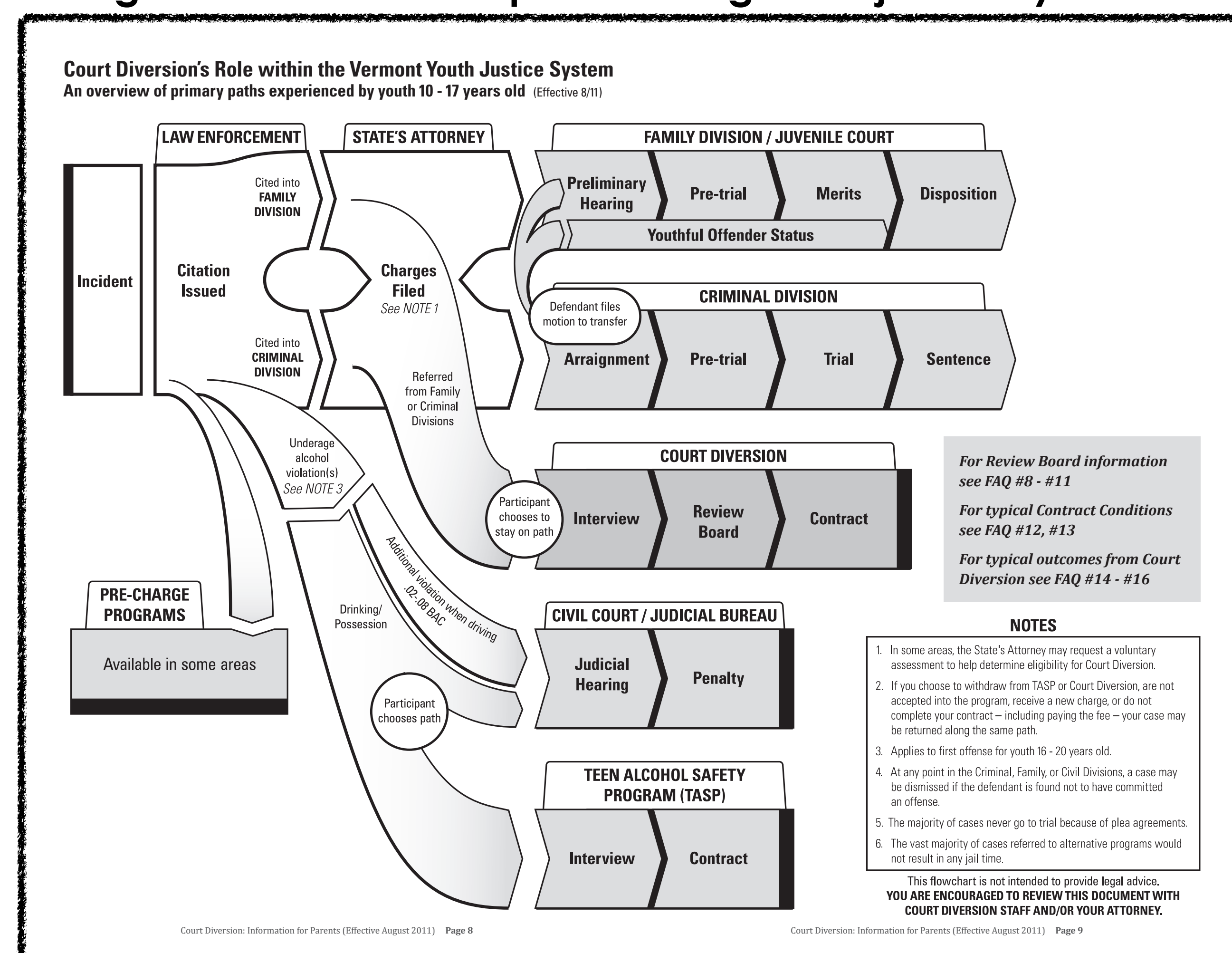
To our knowledge the current study is the first empirical examination of justice system involvement of system of care youth (16 to 22 years) using the sequential intercept model. Youth responses were used to determine their (a) involvement in illegal behaviors, (b) level of involvement at multiple sequential intercept points, and (c) perceived outcomes from justice system involvement. Findings are shared to explore the utility of this approach to identify areas of need and progress in Vermont's system of care.

Introduction

One of the primary goals of Vermont's system of care for transition age youth (16 to 22 years) with serious emotional disturbance (SED) is to decrease their involvement in the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Most studies that have examined justice system involvement of youth with SED have defined involvement as (a) any contact with the police, courts, or correction (Cauffman et al., 2005; Foster et al., 2004) or (b) as single types of involvement such as police referral (Stoep et al., 1997), number of charges (Pullmann, 2009), or detention (Scott et al., 2002).

Recently, policy advocates have encouraged the field to consider the level of justice system involvement along a continuum. The sequential intercept model outlines several levels of justice involvement with each seen as an opportunity to intercept youth with SED and divert them to more supportive services (Munetz & Griffin, 2006).

The figure below outlines paths through VT's justice system



Method

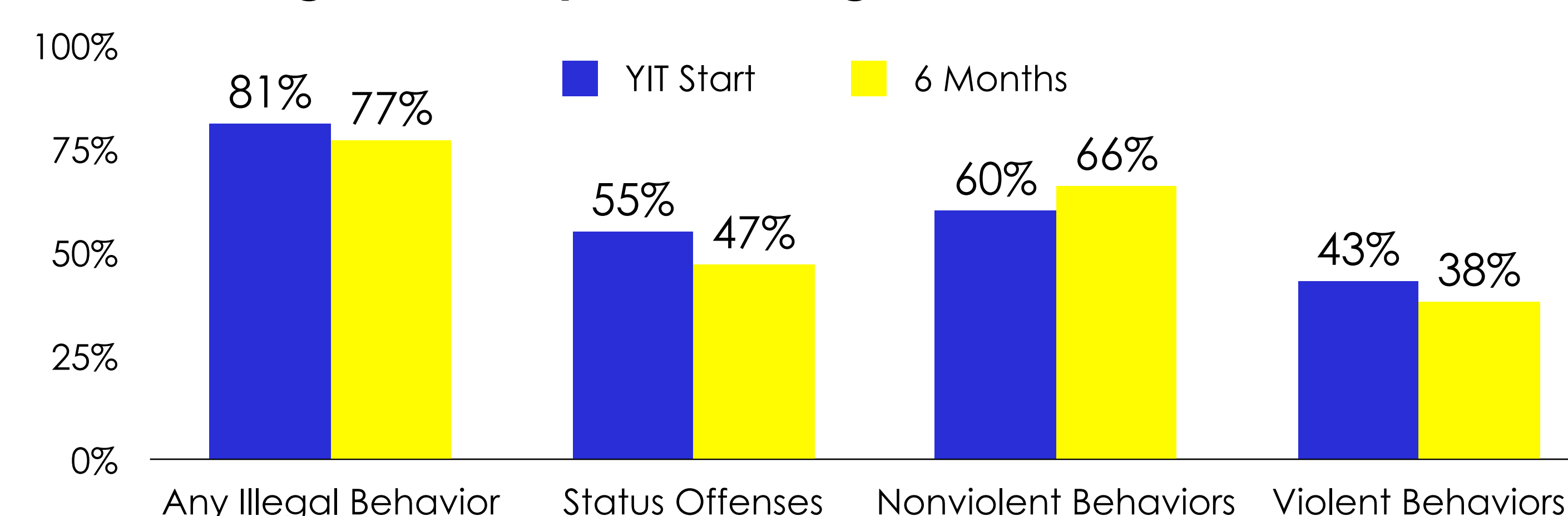
Participants This study included 47 young adults participating in the 2-year longitudinal national evaluation of CMHS for Vermont's system of care grant. This sample was selected because they had completed interviews at the start of YIT services and 6 months later.

Gender	Female 47%	Male 51%	Transgender 2%
Age	M = 19.4	SD = 1.3	range = 16 to 22
Race / Ethnicity	White 94%	American Indian 11%	Asian 2% Hispanic 2%

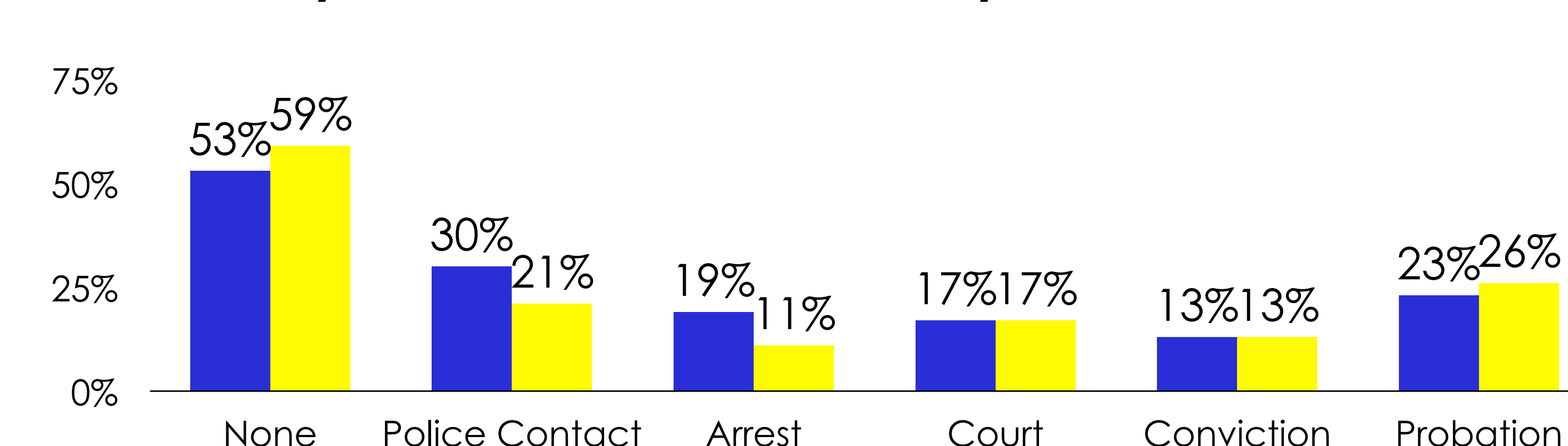
Measures Participants provided self-reports of their behaviors and experiences over the previous 6 months on the *Delinquency Survey Revised* & *Substance Use Survey Revised*.

Findings

Young Adult Reports of Illegal Behaviors - Past 6 Months



Any Involvement in Justice System - Past 6 Months



Changes in Justice System Involvement After 6 Months

	None	Police Contact	Arrest	Court	Conviction	Probation
Increased	4	2	1	0	0	NA
Stayed the same	21	2	0	0	0	9
Decreased	NA	3	1	1	1	2

More than half (62%, highlighted in green) decreased their involvement or remained uninvolved with justice while 19% showed increased involvement. The remaining 19% continued to receive probation services which was judged as neither positive nor negative without additional information.

Activities Resulting from Justice System Involvement

	YIT Start	6 Months
Met with probation officer or law enforcement	82%	83%
Received mental health services	27%	33%
Received substance abuse treatment	18%	25%
Other (e.g., attend school, job, curfew)	36%	42%

How many avoided further contact because of these activities?	
YIT Start	6 Months
50%	80%

How many successfully followed their probation agreements?	
YIT Start	6 Months
91%	82%

Discussion

These findings raise important considerations for using the sequential intercept model in VT's system of care. Most young adults' highest sequential intercept points were at the extremes (no involvement or probation), and did not show much change at 6 months. Youth receiving probation report it helped them avoid increased involvement with the justice system. This raises the question of whether probation is a positive strategy that should gain wider use, or if it represents a failure to meet the needs of youth with SED before they progressed through higher sequential intercepts. Next steps include (a) completing data collection to take advantage of the two years of longitudinal follow-up data, (b) linking youth status on the sequential intercept model to specific offenses so pathways can be examined over time, and (c) using established measures of strengths and functioning to predict involvement.

Contact Information

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To learn more about YIT:
www.youth-in-transition-grant.com



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