



# Office of Program Policy Analysis And Government Accountability



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## Follow-Up Report on the Community Control Program Administered by the Department of Juvenile Justice

### Abstract

- The Department of Juvenile Justice has revised Community Control procedures so that youth who commit lesser crimes will be diverted to less expensive programs.
- The Department has also revised its guidelines to better supervise Community Control youth.
- The impact of these changes has not yet been measured.

### Purpose

In accordance with s. 11.45(7)(f), F.S., this follow-up report informs the Legislature of actions the Department of Juvenile Justice took in response to our Report No. 95-01, issued July 19, 1995. This report presents our assessment of the extent to which the Department has addressed the findings and recommendations included in our report.

### Background

Community Control is part of a continuum of programs designed to protect the public and deter delinquent youth from committing further delinquent acts. These programs range in restrictiveness: youth who pose low risks to the community are to be diverted from juvenile court, while youth who pose higher risks are to go to juvenile court and may be placed in secure facilities.

Arrested youth are referred to a Department of Juvenile Justice case manager. The case manager meets with the youth, victim, and arresting officer and then makes a recommendation to the State Attorney as to whether a delinquency petition should be filed. If the state attorney does not file a petition, the youth will not move into the judicial system, but could be released or placed in a diversion program such as JASP (Juvenile Alternative Services Program).

If a petition is filed, the youth proceeds to court. When youth plead or are found guilty, the judge considers the placement recommended by the state attorney and the case manager's pre-disposition report, which assesses the youth and recommends an appropriate placement.

The judge makes a placement decision and may order the youth on Community Control. Community Control is the least restrictive of the judicial juvenile justice programs. Youth in the program remain in their homes under the supervision of case managers who monitor their compliance with court-ordered sanctions and services. Youth who successfully complete these requirements are discharged from the program; youth who do not comply are taken back to court.

In fiscal year 1995-96, judges sentenced 24,272 youth to Community Control supervision. The Department does not track Community Control as a separate budget entity, but includes it in case management services, which received approximately \$58 million of the \$454 million budget in fiscal year 1996-97.

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## Prior Findings

Community Control was serving many youth who could have been diverted to less expensive, non-judicial programs. In our sample of case files, 54% of the youth in Community Control had low risk scores and could have been diverted. While judges and state attorneys make the decisions about whether to divert youth, Department case managers contributed to these decisions in two ways. Sometimes they did not provide recommendations to be considered. Other times they recommended Community Control for youth who met the Department's diversion criteria.

We also found that case managers often did not appear to be performing key monitoring activities needed to adequately supervise youth on Community Control. As a result, case managers may not know whether youth are completing court-ordered terms and conditions. In addition, case managers may not be focusing their efforts on youth who pose the highest risks to the community.

Finally, we found that Community Control performance measures should be improved by providing a more appropriate definition of successful program completion, assessing the variations in Community Control youth, and identifying goals for recidivism.

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## Current Status

The Department revisited the Community Control process and made these efforts to address the concerns and recommendations of our report:

- The Department worked with legal staff, case managers, a state attorney, a judge, and a public defender to revise the program manual.

- To improve the pre-disposition report recommendation process, the new manual includes a revised risk instrument. Department Quality Assurance will review the instrument's use.
- The Department has also revised responsibilities related to case management documentation and supervisory review and developed more efficient methods of documentation through automation.
- The Department has trained staff on these new procedures.
- The Department has implemented a better and more consistent definition of successful program completion, and is addressing program performance measures through its participation in performance-based program budgeting.

The criminal histories of youth referred to Community Control and the supervision provided by the program have not been analyzed since the implementation of these new procedures, so their impact is not yet known. The Department's 1997 Quality Assurance Report, which will be issued in February of 1998, should reflect whether these changes have been successful.

This project was conducted in accordance with applicable evaluation standards. Copies of this report may be obtained by telephone (850/488-0021 or 800/531-2477), by FAX (850/487-3804), in person (Claude Pepper Building, Room 312, 111 W. Madison St.), or by mail (OPPAGA Report Production, P.O. Box 1735, Tallahassee, FL 32302).

Web site: <http://www.state.fl.us/oppaga/>

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