

elements of change

highlighting trends and issues in the criminal justice system

vol. 2 / no. 3

Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Research

The Piton Foundation and the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice have embarked on a new research effort, the Juvenile Violence Prevention Research Project, to try to better understand juvenile delinquency. What factors in young people's lives might contribute to juvenile crime or might help protect them from such behavior? Are there indicators to tell us when or where intervention might be effective?

During the past five years, from 1992 through 1996, a quarterly sample of youth at the Gilliam Youth Detention Center (which serves Denver County) was interviewed as part of the National Institute of Justice's Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) Study. Within 48 hours of admission to Gilliam, youth from the sample group (made up of juveniles arrested and detained but not convicted of a crime) were given a survey and tested (urine analysis) for recent drug use. In one-on-one sessions, juveniles were asked anonymously a series of questions regarding drug and alcohol use, family composition, school status, as well as other demographic information. It is important to note that all survey data are self-reported (except for charge information and urine analysis results). Some of these data are presented in this issue of *Elements of Change*.

While we are learning a great deal from these young people, during the next year and a half we'll be discovering even more. An addendum has been added to the on-going DUF survey asking questions regarding the quality of the juveniles' relationships with family, peers, school, and community. Collecting and analyzing this information presents a remarkable opportunity to augment and improve public thinking and dialogue, as well as construct more effective policy and programs regarding juvenile crime prevention and intervention. We hope you enjoy this first of several special *Elements of Change* issues devoted to this important topic.

Sincerely,

Kim English

Research Director, Colorado Division of Criminal Justice

Terri Bailey

Director of Research, The Piton Foundation

Special Report!!!

*The Piton Foundation and the
Colorado Division of Criminal Justice
have embarked on a new research effort:*



Juvenile Violence Prevention
research project

The Juvenile Violence Prevention Research Project Advisory Committee Members:

THE HONORABLE DORIS BURD
Denver County Court

VEL GARNER
Gilliam Youth Services Center

PASTOR TASTONGA GAY
Grace and Truth Pentacostal Church

ALLEGRA (HAPPY) HAYNES
Denver City Council

DAVID HUIZINGA
*University of Colorado-Boulder,
Institute of Behavioral Science*

GRANT JONES
The Piton Foundation

JENNIFER MANKEY
*Denver Juvenile Justice Treatment
Network*

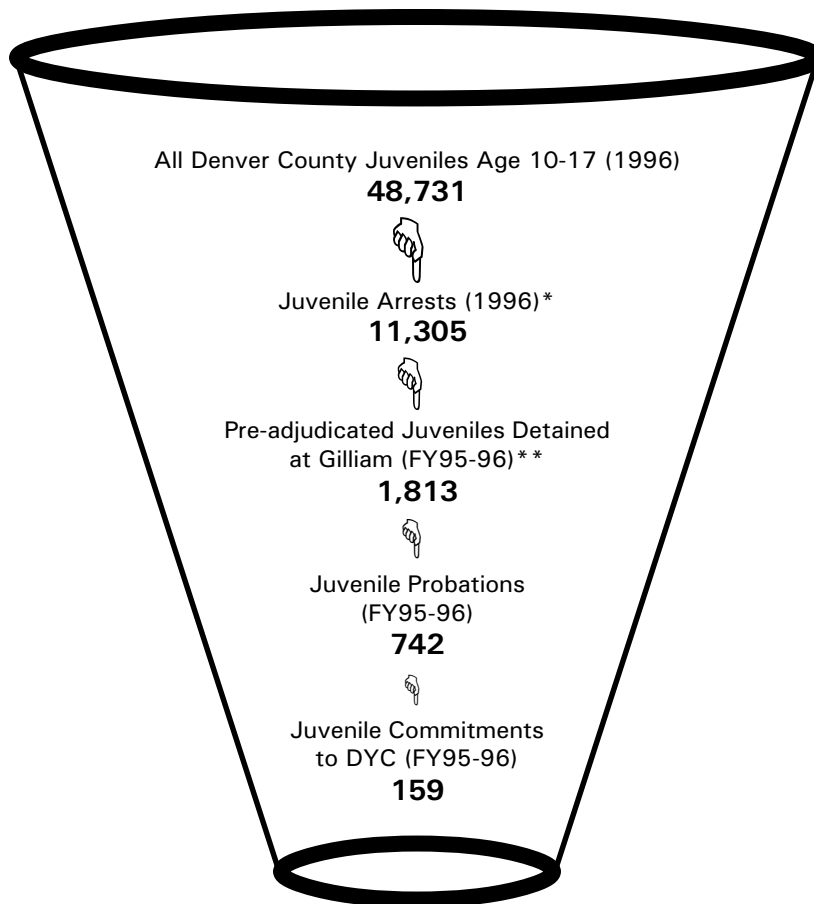
KATHY SANDOVAL
*Neighborhood Resource Center of
Metropolitan Denver*

DAVID DEFOREST STALLS
The Spot

A Small Number of Denver County Juvenile Arrestees Are Detained

Youth can have formal contact with law enforcement on a variety of levels. Many juveniles who are stopped by police are simply lectured and released on the spot. Some might be issued a summons to appear in court, some are arrested and released, while others are arrested and detained. Data show (see figure below) that only a small number of Denver County youth arrested or issued a summons to appear in court are admitted to Gilliam (or another youth detention center). And, just a fraction of those juveniles arrested are convicted of a crime and committed to the Division of Youth Corrections (DYC).

1996 Denver County Juvenile Crime Funnel



* Includes summons to appear.

** Pre-adjudicated detainees: Does not include sentences to detention or backlogged sentences to DYC.

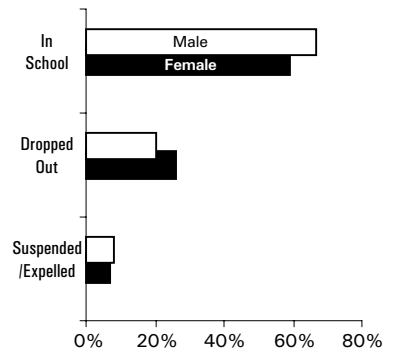
Sources: Population--Colorado Department of Local Affairs; arrests--Denver Department of Safety; detention and commitments--Colorado Division of Youth Corrections; probations--Denver Juvenile Probation Office.

Profiling

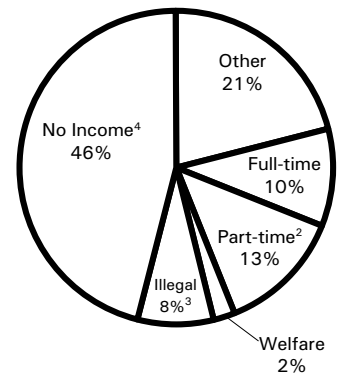
Gilliam Juvenile Detainees

By SCHOOL and GENDER

- * Female detainees are more likely to have dropped out than their male counterparts.
- * Male detainees are more likely to be suspended or expelled than their female counterparts.



By SOURCE OF INCOME¹



¹ Source of income in the month prior to detention. Average %, 1992-1996. (Data collected differently in 1996 than in prior years. This may affect results, particularly in *no income* and *other income* categories.)

² Part-time includes odd jobs.

³ Illegal income includes prostitution, drug sale/dealing, and other illegal sources.

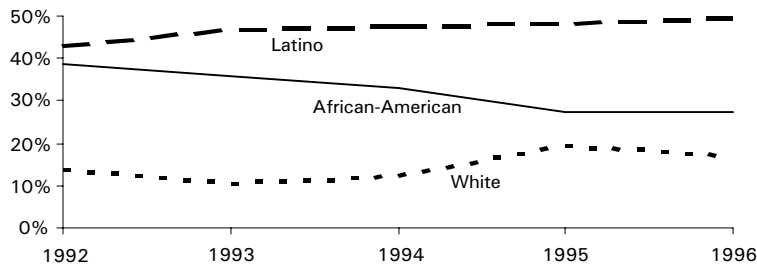
⁴ No income includes in school, in jail or prison, and unemployed.

Source: Denver Drug Use Forecasting data, 1992-96, Division of Criminal Justice.

Who Is Being Detained at Gilliam?

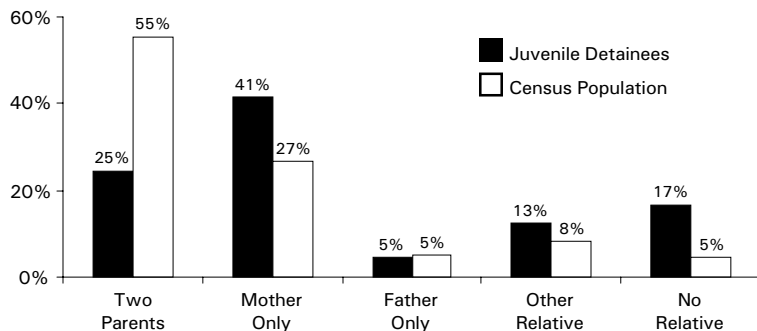
During the past five years, 2,214 juveniles at Gilliam were interviewed as part of the study. Analysis of these data is already painting an interesting portrait of these juveniles. Slightly more than half of those detained were under 16 years of age, with the youngest being nine years old. Females made up about 20 percent of the sample and consistently averaged about a year younger than the males. (It is interesting to note that this trend reverses among adult samples, with female offenders averaging 1-2 years older than males.) During the past five years, Latino juveniles represented the largest segment of the sample (reaching 50% in 1996), while there was a decline in the number of African-American youth (from 39% in 1992 to 27% in 1996) and no clear trend in the number of white juveniles.

Gilliam Juvenile Detainees by Race/Ethnicity



Comparing the family composition of this sample of detained juveniles to the census population, significantly fewer (25% vs. 55%) lived with two parents, significantly more (41% vs. 27%) lived in households headed by their mother, and significantly more (17% vs. 5%) lived with no relative at all (this could mean they lived in foster care, with people not related to them, or on their own).

Family Composition of Gilliam Juvenile Detainees (1992-96) Compared to 1990 Census Population Age 12-17

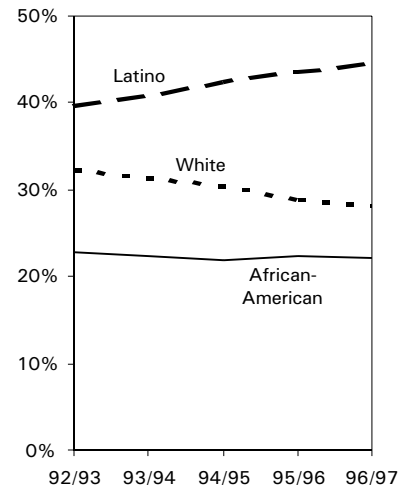


POINT OF COMPARISON

Denver Public Schools Secondary School Membership by Race/Ethnicity (Grades 6-12) *

School Year 1992/1993 - 1996/1997

These Denver Public Schools enrollment data are presented to illustrate that changes in the racial/ethnic makeup of Gilliam detainees cannot simply be explained as a mirroring of trends in the general juvenile population of Denver County (represented here by DPS enrollment data).



* Excludes out-of-school youth and those youth attending private or parochial schools.

Source: Denver Public Schools.

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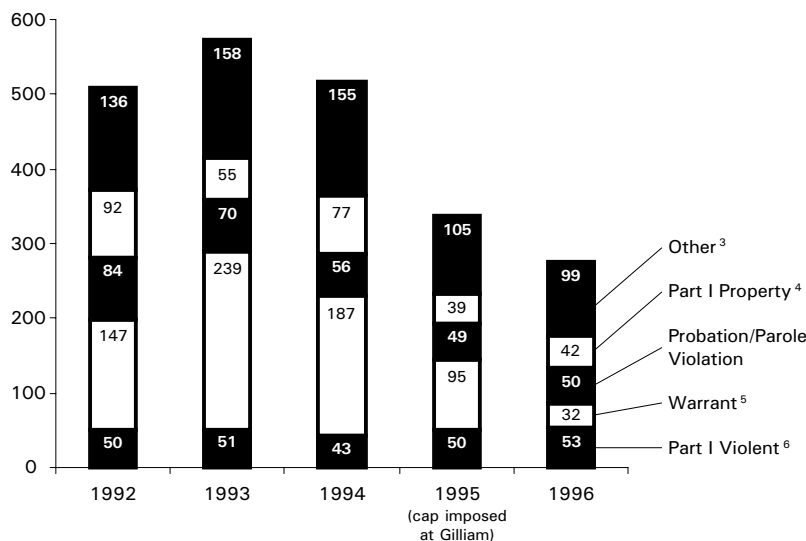
Source: Denver Drug Use Forecasting data, 1992-96, Division of Criminal Justice. Census data from 1990 Census, Colorado State Demographer's Office, Department of Local Affairs.

Why Are Juveniles Detained at Gilliam?

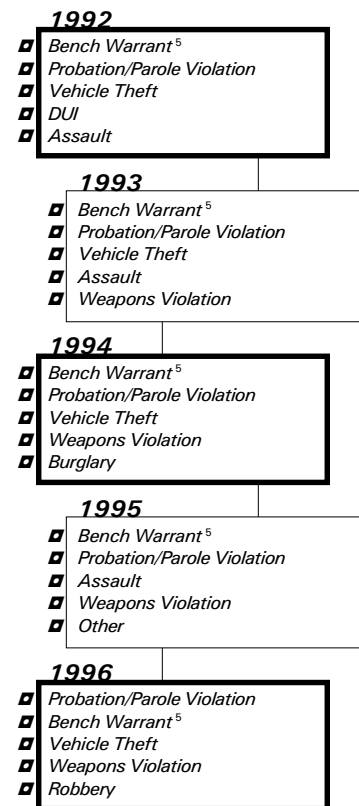
Eleven percent (11%) of those juveniles surveyed at Gilliam in the five years from 1992 to 1996 were detained for Part I violent index offense charges (homicide [excluding negligent manslaughter], forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault [excluding simple assault]). During this same time period, 14 percent of Gilliam juveniles were detained for Part I property index offense charges (burglary, theft, and auto theft). Nearly half (46%) of all Gilliam detainees studied during the past five years were brought in on either bench warrants (primarily issued for flight, escape, or failure to appear, but may also indicate a new crime) or for probation or parole violations.

Exactly who is detained at Gilliam has been notably affected by public policy. In December of 1994, the ACLU and the San Francisco-based National Youth Law Center filed a lawsuit challenging overcrowding at Gilliam that resulted in a cap limiting the number of juveniles in the facility at any one time to 78.¹ Prior to this, daily attendance at Gilliam ran as high as 220. As a result of the cap, programs such as electronic monitoring, staff secure shelters, and home detention were developed or expanded, allowing Gilliam to be used for the placement of more serious offenders. The cap-induced policy changes at Gilliam resulted primarily in a significant decrease in the number of juveniles detained for presumably less serious warrant offenses (from an average of 191 in the three years prior to the lawsuit to 32 in 1996) ("presumably" because an undefined bench warrant *may* indicate a violent offense). The number of juveniles detained for violent index offenses increased only slightly (from an average of 48 in the three years prior to the lawsuit to 53 in 1996).²

Most Serious Offense Charge for Gilliam Detainees, 1992-1996



Top Five Charges for Gilliam Juvenile Detainees 1992-1996



(For all information on this page)

¹ The lawsuit was not concluded (with the cap being formally imposed) until October 1995. But, in anticipation of the outcome, self-imposed policy changes lowered admissions at Gilliam throughout 1995.

² Other coinciding factors also may have contributed to the rise in violent offenders at Gilliam between 1994 and 1996. Media attention and public anxiety regarding youth violence led to a special legislative session at the end of 1993 in which policy changes were enacted focusing on gang activity and youth violence. At about the same time, national attention to the war on drugs, community policing, and other priorities resulted in more law enforcement officers being put on the streets in Denver.

³ Other includes both violent and nonviolent crimes not defined as Part I index crimes by the FBI (see notes below).

⁴ Part I property index crimes (as defined by the FBI): burglary, theft, and auto theft.

⁵ Bench warrants are primarily issued for flight, escape, or failure to appear, but some warrants are undefined and may indicate a new crime -- either nonviolent or violent.

⁶ Part I violent index crimes (as defined by the FBI): homicide (excluding negligent manslaughter), forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault (excluding simple assault).

Source: Denver Drug Use Forecasting data, 1992-96, Division of Criminal Justice.

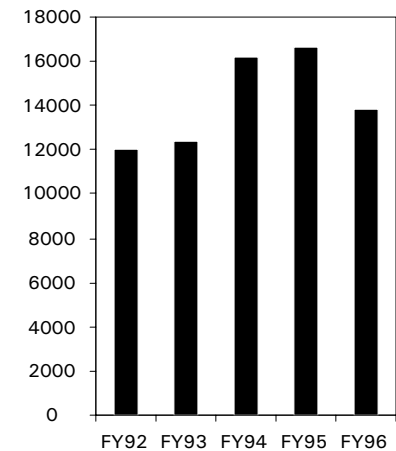
Fitting Gilliam into the Statewide Picture

Since 1992, when the Denver DUF Project began, the only decrease in admissions to secure juvenile detention facilities occurred between FY94-95 and FY95-96 when statewide detention admissions dropped 17% from 16,638 to 13,816. Fully, 89% of this decrease was accounted for by the drop in admissions to the Gilliam Youth Services Center, where admissions decreased by 2,501 (between FY94-95 and FY95-96) from 4,960 to 2,459. This reduction in admissions at Gilliam was due to a population cap policy (resulting from the lawsuit brought against the detention center by the ACLU and the National Youth Law Center) that was filed in December 1994.¹ At the same time, the number of admissions to the Adams County Youth Services Center decreased by 281 (likely the result of proactive efforts to relieve crowding and to avoid a lawsuit of the type brought against Gilliam). However, between FY94-95 and FY95-96, admissions to private contract staff secure detention facilities *increased* by 322. This increase to private contract staff secure detention facilities was likely caused by the displacement of youth who would otherwise have been admitted to either Gilliam or Adams County.

Colorado Juvenile Secure Detention Centers Admission and Population Trends FY91-92 Through FY95-96

Detention Center		FY91-2	FY92-3	FY93-4	FY94-5 ²	FY95-6
Adams	# Admissions ³	1355	1422	2063	2010	1729
	ADP ⁴	41.5	50.8	52.4	56.7	57.7
Gilliam	# Admissions	4184	4477	5523	4960	2459
	ADP	109.9	122.4	132.0	150.9	80.3
Mount View	# Admissions	2845	3034	3618	4009	4008
	ADP	111.4	124.5	119.0	151.0	161.5
Pueblo	# Admissions	1288	1243	1315	1554	1482
	ADP	45.6	40.0	43.8	49.7	49.0
Zeb Pike	# Admissions	1784	1697	1891	2096	2003
	ADP	55.9	49.0	52.5	57.2	58.6
Grand Mesa	# Admissions	426	409	473	603	670
	ADP	14.9	13.7	16.8	21.7	29.0
Private Contract/ Staff Secure ⁵	# Admissions	106	86	1261	942	1006
	ADP	1.4	2.8	47.3	28.2	26.0
Teen Quest	# Admissions	0	0	0	5	4
	ADP	0	0	0	3.0	4.7
Lookout Mt. Bootcamp	# Admissions	0	0	56	464	455
	ADP	0	0	4.0	73.6	74.7
TOTAL	# Admissions	11988	12368	16200	16643	13816
	ADP	380.6	403.2	467.8	592.0	541.5

Total Population of Colorado Juvenile Secure Detention Facilities* FY91-92 Through FY95-96



* Adams, Gilliam, Mount View, Pueblo, Zeb Pike, Grand Mesa, Private Contract/Staff Secure, Teen Quest, Lookout Mountain Bootcamp

Note: The Division of Youth Corrections significantly increased its use of private contract detention in FY1993-94. This increase accounts for almost one-third of the overall juvenile detention population growth between FY1992-93 and FY1993-94.

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1 The lawsuit was not concluded (with the cap being formally imposed) until October 1995. But, in anticipation of the outcome, self-imposed policy changes lowered admissions at Gilliam throughout 1995.

2 During FY94-95, the Division of Youth Corrections also contracted with Arapahoe County Jail for bed space for nine months. During this period, there were 253 admissions which accounted for an ADP (average daily population) of 12.8.

3 Includes all youth admitted to the detention center: Pre-adjudicated juveniles detained, juveniles sentenced to detention, and backlog juveniles sentenced to Division of Youth Corrections.

4 ADP (average daily population).

5 Note: The Division of Youth Corrections significantly increased its use of private contract detention in FY1993-94. This increase accounts for almost one-third of the overall juvenile detention population growth between FY1992-93 and FY1993-94.

(For all information on this page)

Source: Division of Youth Corrections Detention and Commitment Projections for the Period FY1996-97 through FY2001-02, prepared by the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research & Statistics.

Still Ahead...

This cooperative study between the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice and The Piton Foundation provides a unique view into the lives of juveniles and a chance to better address critical questions, such as:

- ? *What can we learn from these youth about their drug and alcohol use, family composition, education and charged crimes?*
- ? *Are there differences based on gender, race, ethnicity and socioeconomic factors?*
- ? *How do particular neighborhood and community factors affect these youth?*
- ? *What factors or patterns emerge that will help us better understand these youth and help keep other kids from engaging in delinquent or violent behavior?*

Over the next year and a half, three additional analyses of data from juvenile detainees at Gilliam will be released in Elements of Change. We'll present information regarding:

- *Alcohol and other drug use (end of 1997)*
- *Use of guns and involvement in gangs (early 1998)*
- *Risk and protective factors (end of 1998)*



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Juvenile Violence Prevention
research project

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