

A Two-State Examination of Measuring for Juvenile Recidivism



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Florida Juvenile Justice System

- Prior to 1994, all “proceedings related to juveniles” fell under control of the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS).
- The agency handled both delinquency cases in which juveniles were charged with criminal acts and dependency action in child abuse cases.
- 1994 marks the point in which Florida began the gradual shift away from the social services model, when the Florida legislature created the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (FDJJ).
- Upon conception of the FDJJ, it absorbed the powers previously vested in HRS, as well as funding and a majority of its staff.
- Since the newly founded FDJJ closely resembled HRS and its foundation, the philosophy of rehabilitating juveniles as trouble youth opposed to punishing them as criminals continued to ring true.

Oregon Youth Authority (OYA)

- In 1995, Oregon’s Legislative Assembly identified the need for a refocused perspective regarding juvenile corrections and established the Oregon Youth Authority, (OYA).
- OYA is an agency within the Oregon juvenile justice system and works to provide youth with opportunities for reformation, either through community parole or probation, or through one of its secure facilities.
- OYA operates five youth correctional facilities and four transitional facilities throughout the state.
- Known as close-custody facilities, approximately 490 youth reside in OYA facilities at any given time and arrive through two different pathways:
 - 1) A juvenile judge can appoint them to reside in one of these facilities
 - 2) An adult can appoint them to the Oregon Department of Corrections, but they are rather re-routed to an OYA facility because of their age and can live in such facility until age 24.

Abstract

Recidivism: by definition, a person’s relapse into criminal behavior, often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous crime.

Problem: with the absence of a nationwide measurement for juvenile recidivism, it is currently impossible to make cross-state comparisons and to export the knowledge from one state’s findings to the next; the states themselves simply do not track the same factors.

- The objectives of this project are to provide new knowledge on how various reoffending measurement strategies affect conclusions about the prevalence and predictors of juvenile recidivism throughout the United States.
- Additionally, it is intended to assist a state juvenile justice agency in developing, implementing, and evaluating a new measurement for juvenile reoffending.
- The project is a 3-year collaborative effort between Florida State University (FSU), the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (FDJJ), and the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA).

Oregon and Florida Predictor Variables

Table 2. Predictor variables available in Florida (FL) and Oregon (OR) data

Predictor	FL	OR	Predictor	FL	OR
Age	X	X	Living arrangements at intake	X	X
Gender	X	X	Household income	X	X
Race and ethnicity	X	X	Family substance use	X	X
Age at first offense	X	X	Family mental health problems	X	X
Prior referrals	X	X	Support network	X	X
Prior commitments	X	X	Family closeness	X	X
Special education student	X	X	Parental supervision	X	X
Prior school suspension/expulsion	X	X	Family conflict	X	X
Enrolled in school at intake	X	X	Parental discipline	X	X
Educational beliefs and attitudes	X	X	Alcohol use history/referrals	X	X
Recent school attendance	X	X	Drug use history/referrals	X	X
School problem behavior	X	X	Suicidal ideation or attempt	X	X
Structured prosocial activities	X	X	History of abuse	X	X
Prosocial leisure activities	X	X	History of neglect	X	X
Employment history	X	X	Mental health diagnosis/treatment	X	X
Employment status at intake	X	X	Anger/irritability	X	X
Positive relationships with adults	X	X	Optimism	X	X
Prosocial friends	X	X	Impulsivity	X	X
Antisocial friends	X	X	Empathy/remorse	X	X
Gang affiliation	X	X	Respect for others	X	X
Current romantic partner	X	X	Attitudes towards the law	X	X
Out-of-home placements	X	X	Aggression	X	X
History of running away	X	X	Social skills	X	X
Family member incarceration	X	X	Emotional skills	X	X

Limitations With Current Measurements

- One of the prime motives of this research project is to develop a nationwide measurement for juvenile recidivism.
- Currently no such measure exists which inhibits vast variations in how each state measures for juvenile reoffending.
- These discrepancies range amongst each state in terms of how they account for the three core measurement factors of recidivism:
 - 1) The measurement strategy utilized: referral, adjudication, commitment, or a combination of two or all these stages.
 - 2) The length in which the state then follows up with that juvenile after completing treatment: whether at 12, 24, or 36 months, or by using a different period of time individualistic to that state.
 - 3) Whether or not the state tracks that juvenile into the adult system.
- The results were determined on a state-by-state basis with many states using unique combinations of these recidivism factors which made their measurement idealistic to that state; however, the states below used the same sequences in measuring for juvenile recidivism.

Measures adjudication, follows-up at 12 months, and tracks into adult system	FL, ID, MA, NE, TN
Measures adjudication, follows-up at 12, 24 and 36 months, and tracks into adult system	AL, CO, GA, ME, OK, SD
Measures referral, adjudication and commitment, follows-up at 12, 24 and 36 months, and tracks into adult system	CA, NJ, NY, TX

References

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