



SYSTEMSTATS

North Carolina Criminal Justice Analysis Center

Governor's Crime Commission

Juvenile Structured Day Programs for Suspended and Expelled Youth: A Statewide Assessment

Introduction

Soon after his inauguration Governor Easley charged the Governor's Crime Commission (GCC) to address the issue of providing continuing education for students who are either suspended or expelled from the state's public school systems. Nationally, such programs are referred to as alternative schools or alternative learning programs (ALPs). These schools or programs offer education and training for a plethora of different students who, for reasons such as prior dropout, suspension, expulsion, pregnancy, substance abuse problems, learning disabilities, or other reasons, do not perform well, or are not accepted into the traditional mainstream academic classroom setting.

The Commission accepted Governor Easley's challenge and eagerly solicited grant proposals from state and local agencies. Given the federal limitations on how grant funds, which are administered by the Crime Commission can be awarded, these grants focused specifically on those students who are either suspended or expelled, or have had prior, or current, involvement with the juvenile justice system. Juvenile structured day programs (JSDP) best match the intent of the Governor's charge and the more restrictive Federal funding requirements. In 2001 the Commission recommended funding for 21 exemplary JSDPs across the state with a total federal allocation of \$5.6 million.

This SystemStats issue will present the findings from a study which sought to evaluate the process of operating and maintaining a juvenile structured day program as well as to assess the impact that these programs have on their participants. Fiscal analyses will also be discussed in order to explicate the relationship between the costs associated with these programs relative to their perceived impact and benefits.

North Carolina's Juvenile Structured Day Programs

One specific type of alternative learning program is the juvenile structured day program (JSDP). Structured day programs are designed to offer programs to expelled and suspended youth and are often sanctioned by the courts. These programs are part of a community corrections and juvenile rehabilitative effort. While structured day programs offer academic and life skills to the students, much like other alternative learning programs, they offer many more services to the students and their families as well.

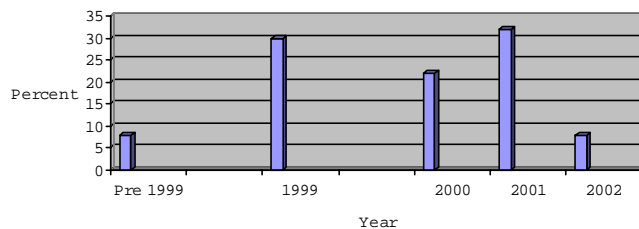
In accordance with North Carolina General Statute §7B-2506(16), the State Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention defines structured day programs as non-residential programs that provide intervention and prevention services to juveniles in a closely supervised, safe environment. The target population of these programs are juveniles that are adjudicated delinquent or undisciplined, intake diverted or at-risk. A structured day program is made up of many components and serves youth in a community based setting. These programs should be highly structured and provide accountability for the students.

Structured day programs provide youth with a variety of different opportunities for personal growth, as well as provide academic training. A plan of care that outlines the services that should be provided to the student is one of the first components of the program. This should detail the responsibilities of each person involved with providing the services to the student. The plan of care should also include goals for the youth, which are developed jointly with the youth and their families, and a timeline for completion of these goals. Community involvement, counseling, educational enrichment services and family participation are important components of a structured day program.

In addition to offering full-time, site based educational services, another component of the structured day programs is instruction in areas such as anger management, social skills, problem solving, and other areas that are helpful in dealing with stresses of everyday life. Substance abuse education, awareness, and treatment should also be offered at these programs. This may or may not include supervision and a written plan that the court counselor, the juvenile and family members agree to follow. Structured day programs should also include a component that offers referral services for youth who may need counseling or other community services. Another important component of these programs is offering a transition plan to help the youth readjust to being back in the traditional classroom and the community.

A recent survey by juvenile justice planners at the Governor's Crime Commission found that most of the structured day programs in the state are relatively new. Only eight percent began before 1999. Thirty percent of the programs began in 1999, while 22 percent started in 2000 and 32 percent began in 2001. Last year there were an additional three programs initiated across the state. (Refer to Figure 1 below).

Figure 1 North Carolina's Juvenile Structured Day Programs (Initial Year of Operation)



Referrals to the JSDPs come from a variety of agencies and sources. Most programs receive referrals from the juvenile courts (86%) and the school system (70%). Other referrals also come from the following sources: law enforcement (27%), mental health (16%), parent/guardian (11%) and other sources (8%).

Methods

This study was conducted as a collaborative effort be-

tween members of the Commission's Analysis Center, juvenile justice planners, and grants managers, as well as two graduate student interns. The group met periodically to determine survey questions, review draft documentation, conduct site visits and to propose relevant policy implications and recommendations based upon study findings. This divergent group proved to be beneficial and helped to improve the validity of the study and its findings by gaining the proper perspectives of researchers, planners, grants managers and independent non-GCC parties.

Results

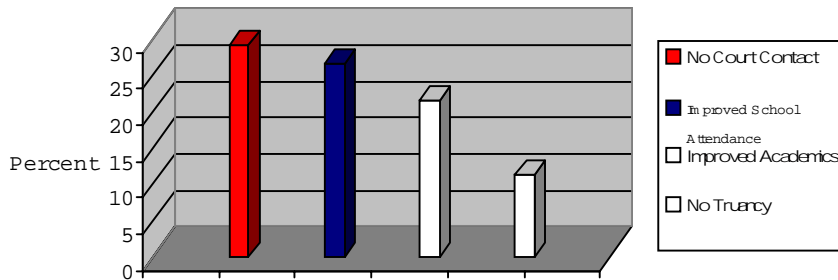
Program data, provided by the respondents, indicate that a total of 1,803 suspended/expelled students were served during 2001. Service provision ranged from zero students to 488 students with an average of 85.9 students being served per year by the participating JSDPs. The average daily attendance during this period was 13.8 students per program. Data for the first quarter of 2002 indicate that 851 children attended those JSDPs, which participated in the survey, with an average of 38.7 students per program during the first quarter of this year. It is anticipated that enrollment figures will rise as several of the new JSDPs become fully operational and begin offering services to more suspended and expelled youth.

Survey respondents were asked to provide statistics on the number of their 2001 students who had no further court contact and truancy as well as the number who improved their academic performance and school attendance. Of the 1,803 suspended/expelled students, who attended the JSDPs in 2001, at least 521 (28.9%) were reported to have had no further contact with the juvenile courts after leaving the program. At least two hundred of these students (11.1%) were reported to have had no further truancy incidents while at least

477 (26.5%) JSDP students were reported to have improved their school attendance. Improvements in academic performance were reported for at least 383 (21.3%) students.

Commenting on the most beneficial aspect of operating and maintaining a JSDP, 31.8 percent of program staff noted that the programs offered a viable and much needed form of structured supervision for at-risk juve-

Figure 2 Program Statistics 2001 JSDP Students



Most JSDPs offer a similar set of services and programs with the percentage of JSDPs which offer a particular type of service or program being substantially high. Individual counseling and conflict/anger management were the most common services offered (95.8%) followed by life/social skills training and meals/snacks (91.7%). Seventy-five percent or more of the JSDPs reported offering all of the services, which were included in the questionnaire, with the exception of faith based initiatives. Only 14.3 percent of the JSDPs offered faith related programs and services. Other services which were provided included community service projects, field trips, behavior management and teens against pregnancy programming.

Operating and Maintaining a Juvenile Structured Day Program (Process Evaluation)

Survey respondents were asked to rate the nature of their respective JSDP's interactions with numerous state and local agencies. Overall, the interactions were best described as positive with an average of 67.3 percent of the respondents reporting helpful interactions across the nine different state and local agencies on which they were asked to comment. Specifically, the most helpful interactions were found to exist between the JSDPs and the state Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP) and the local Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils (JCPCs).

niles. Twenty-seven percent of those responding to the survey suggested that the rich, collaborative and supportive relationships, which developed between JSDP personnel and staff from the local schools and juvenile courts, were the most beneficial process related aspects of their programs. Other process related benefits of JSDPs include: the supportive and nurturing environment which is created and maintained by program staff, the individualized attention that the children receive, as well as the fact that these factors interact and coalesce to produce heightened student accountability. Nearly one-quarter of survey participants reported transportation as the most difficult and challenging aspect of operating a JSDP. The lack of transportation and/or an inability to use conventional public school buses was commonly noted as a significant challenge. Challenges and obstacles, which inhibit the process of running a more effective and efficient structured day program, tend to cluster around two primary focal areas – staffing and financial issues and interagency relationships.

Numerous responses were obtained which delineated staffing patterns and funding concerns as significant challenges that JSDP educators and administrators face on a daily and on-going basis.

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The following comments reflect the concerns that were voiced by the JSDP respondents:

- § "Staff turnover due to part-time temporary status - soft money"
- § "Finding the right staff who can work with at-risk kids"
- § "Staff/student ratio - need more staff"
- § "Inadequate staffing and funding"
- § "Finding permanent funding in tight fiscal times"
- § "Finding a certified teacher because local school board will not place one"
- § " We have had to turn students away because we do not have enough money to hire more staff"

Maintaining and culturing open and positive relationships between JSDP staff and other key stakeholders was also noted as a substantially challenging aspect of operating a JSDP. Survey responses included the following insightful comments:

- § "The lack of parental involvement and accountability has been problematic"
- § "Most challenging aspect is the general lack of support received from the public school system' i.e. obtaining computers and NovaNet connectivity"
- § " Meeting the needs of our behaviorally and emotionally disturbed students"
- § " Maintaining contact with the student's school of origin for follow-up and data"
- § "Convincing school systems to be a team player without having control"
- § "Educating juvenile justice agencies about our existence"

Twenty-eight percent of the JSDP staff did not have any significant concerns or problems regarding the process of operating and maintaining their structured day programs. Continuation funding was cited as the most pressing and frequent concern among the respondents with the provision of transportation also being expressed as a problem for the juvenile structured day programs.

Survey participants were given the opportunity to freely comment on the process of operating and maintaining their respective JSDPs with an overwhelming number discussing the positive and beneficial features almost at the exclusion of mentioning negative program aspects; thus providing sound testimony on the strong utility of these programs and on the devotion that JSDP staff demonstrate. Numerous comments were made regarding the programs' warm and nurturing family atmospheres, their programs' flexibility and adaptability, as well as the remarkable level of community support which some JSDPs have experienced since becoming operational. While some saw the lack of available guidelines or blueprints as a stumbling block others noted that this turned out to be a blessing in disguise as the JSDP was allowed to exercise more creativity and to tailor its services to the specific needs of the community and its at-risk children.

JSDP survey participants offered critical and sound advice on how to strengthen their existing programs and on what they would do differently if given the chance to start their respective programs over from scratch. Pragmatic advice was offered and is reflected through the sample of responses listed below:

- § "Need more stable funding, prearranged continuation funding"
- § "Need more structure; i.e. policies and procedures, manuals, standards and training before starting the JSDP"
- § "Should have separate program for behaviorally and emotionally disturbed students"
- § "Observe and model successful programs as a guide to implementation"

Assessing the Outcomes and Impact of Juvenile Structured Day Programs

Survey respondents were asked to rate their perceptions of JSDPs in terms of the extent to which these programs, for at-risk suspended and expelled children impact on the participants themselves as well as on a variety of societal, familial, community and academic indicators. Respondents were also asked to rate the effectiveness and utility of these programs, on the same factors, and were asked to comment on both the most beneficial and disappointing outcomes of JSDPs. Questions were posed to elicit suggestions on how JSDPs can be improved in order to increase both their effectiveness and their future impact on at-risk children.

Table 1 presents the participants' perceptions regarding the extent to which the state's juvenile structured day programs have impacted the local community, delinquency rates, the youth and their parents and the local schools. Respondents were asked to rate the impact of JSDPs on a scale from 1 (no impact) to 10 (great impact). As the figure shows perceived impact was high for all five measures with the greatest impact being reported on the participating at-risk

children (\bar{X} =9.0), followed by delinquency rates (\bar{X} =8.32) and the local schools (8.14). Of the five measures impact on the youth's parents received the lowest average rating (7.0) but still suggests a significant contribution on the part of the JSDPs for beneficially affecting the parents of program participants.

Commenting specifically on the impact of juvenile structured day programs, survey participants offered insight on the mechanics of how these programs produce such consistently high benefits or have such a profound impact on the students and their communities. The JSDPs are responsible for improving at-risk students' self-esteem and self-image through counseling which in turn positively impacts their academic behaviors, attendance, grades and ultimately their intrinsic motivation to remain in school. These programs also increase social awareness and a sense of belonging by allowing the children to participate in various community service projects; projects which allow them to strengthen their community ties and give something back to the community versus preying upon it.

Table 1

Average Impact Rating of Juvenile Structured Day Programs	Rank
At-risk youth	9.0
Delinquency rates	8.32
Local Schools	8.14
Local Community	8.0
Youth's parents	7.0

Table 2

Average Effectiveness Rating of Juvenile Structured Day Programs	Rank
Improved school attendance	7.78
Truancy Reduction	7.57
Dropout Reduction	7.27
Reintegration into public school	7.13
Improved academics	7.0

Table 3

Average Effectiveness Rating of Juvenile Structured Day Programs	Rank
Improved self-esteem	8.35
Delinquency reduction	8.17
Improved relationships with authority	7.87
Reduction other behavioral problems	7.48
Improved graduation	6.42

As Tables 2 and 3 document survey participants consistently rated the effectiveness of JSDPs as being substantially high on a variety of different academic and social behaviors. Respondents were asked to provide an effectiveness score, for each of the listed measures, ranging from 1 (No effect) to 10 (Great effect). JSDPs were perceived as having the most effect on improving students' self-esteem ($X=8.35$) and on reducing delinquent behavior ($X=8.17$). JSDPs were also perceived as highly effective programs for improving students'

relationships with authority figures ($X=7.87$), improving school attendance ($X=7.78$), reducing truancy ($X=7.57$) and reducing other undesirable behavioral problems ($X=7.48$). Juvenile structured day programs were also rated as being fairly effective on two long-term academic outcome measures. Respondents noted that JSDPs were somewhat effective for improving graduation rates ($X=6.42$) and had a modest effect on improving students' chances of attaining a post secondary education ($X=6.33$).

Other positive and beneficial effects, which were noted in the survey responses, included:

- § "Improved family relationships"
- § "Keeps kids off the streets"
- § "Teaches prosocial and acceptable conflict resolution techniques"
- § "Helps educators identify secondary problems, mental/medical/dental concerns"
- § "Keeps the community safe"

Juvenile structured day programs have not been immune to unintended and in some cases even deleterious consequences during the course of their operations. Survey responses indicate that problems have arisen surrounding the transitioning of at-risk suspended/expelled students from the JSDP back into the original public school. JSDP staff noted that much of their hard work and progress could be undermined once the children return to their original public schools because staff at these schools hold preconceived negative stereotypes based upon the children's prior antisocial and disruptive behaviors. In many cases, this "reverse halo effect" interacts with the loss of individualized attention and contributes to a desire, on the part of JSDP participants, to not want to return to public school.

The lack of parental support, and in some cases a lack of support from the local schools, was also reported as an unexpected outcome. Admission guidelines and criteria were also seen as problematic with some JSDPs reporting that they were inundated with referrals, due to the courts and schools erroneously ignoring their eligibility and screening criteria; while other JSDP educators complained about the lack of referrals because the local juvenile justice system personnel were not aware of the JSDP's existence and program mission.

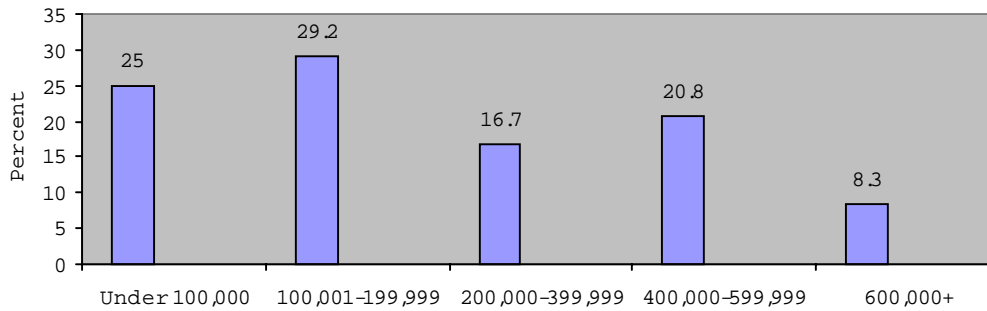
Respondents were asked what could be done to improve the efficacy of the state's JSDPs. The following suggestions were offered as a means for further intensifying the positive impact of these programs and for producing even more beneficial results and successful program outcomes.

- § "Provide funding for facilities"
- § "Increase funding, reduce competition for funding"
- § "Stakeholders must work together more and share resources"
- § "Mandate cooperation between local and state education departments"
- § "Develop and adopt statewide guidelines and standards in conjunction with DPI"
- § "Create a uniform program assessment methodology which all counties must use"
- § "DPI and DJJDP should sign a memorandum of agreement for working together and for sharing resources and funding"
- § "Create separate programs for at-risk 12-15 year olds"

Fiscal Analyses

Total annual operating budgets varied considerably between the 24 JSDPs in the study sample with a range from \$46,266 to \$800,000 (Figure 6, page 8). The average annual operating budget was \$266,978. The average budgetary expenditure, per student, also varied considerably and ranged from a low of \$561 to \$27,864 with this variance being dependent on the types of services provided at each JSDP. The reported mean annual expenditure per child was \$5,599 which is slightly less than the average per pupil expenditure, for

Figure 3 Annual JSDP Operating Budgets
(Survey Respondents = 24)



public school students, of \$6,280 (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2001). An additional analysis indicates that the respondents reported cost per child are higher than the cost obtained by adding the JSDP budgets and dividing by the number of children served in 2001 (\$2,533).

Respondents indicated a variety of funding sources, exclusive of the GCC, for their programs with county and local school system funds being the most commonly reported sources. JQPC funds and other state funds were also commonly cited as providing revenue for the JSDPs. City block grants, private and corporate donations, as well as fund raising activities were also listed as sources for project income. On the average the JSDP's

resident county government(s) contributed 20.2 percent of the JSDP's total operating budget. On the average, funding from other sources accounted for 51.7 percent of the JSDP's annual operating budget. Assuming full disclosure this implies that the GCC contributes 48.3 percent of the typical JSDP's annual operating budget.

Thirty-seven percent of the JSDPs obtained GCC and county funding simultaneously while only 12.5 percent had received county funding prior to the receipt of a GCC grant award. Three (12.5%) JSDPs in the sample did not receive funding from the GCC while eight, or 33.3%, did not receive any county funding. Only one respondent (4.2%) reported that their JSDP did not receive either GCC or county funding.

Selected JSDP-Related Programs

Guilford County Structured Day Program
 W aynesville Police Department
 Martin County Schools - Project Success
 Randolph Co. Juvenile Day Reporting Center
 Rockingham County Youth Services - ALP Day Center
 Isothermal Planning - 29th District JJ Collaborative
 PALS Program
 Positive Impact - Union County

NC A&T - New Light Intergenerational Outreach
 Kerr-Tar Regional COG - NCAY
 W ilson County Schools - Project SIRIDE
 Alamance Co. JDRC
 Craven County - Area Structured Day Reporting Center
 Durham Co. JDRC
 Edgecombe County - Twin County JDRC
 New Hanover County - Intercept



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(919) 733-4564
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Michael F. Easley
Governor

Linda W. Hayes
Chair, Governor 's Crime
Commission

Renee Hoffman
Public Affairs Director

Navin Puri
Information Systems Planner

Richard Hayes
Senior Research Analyst

Bryan E. Beatty
Secretary

David Jones
Executive Director

Douglas Yearwood
Analysis Center Director

James Klopovic
Lead Evaluator

Charlene Coppersmith
Data Analyst
Desktop Publisher

Yu Li Hsu
Information Processing Assistant

Policy Recommendations/Implications

Based upon the study findings, and comments from JSDP educators and administrators, the following policy recommendations are offered in an effort to strengthen existing programs, expand the JSDP concept and to provide guidance for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of these programs on attaining their goals and objectives.

- § Explore federal, state, local and private foundation funding sources for the purpose of providing increased, and continuation, funding for JSDPs. Further exploration should be conducted to ascertain the feasibility of pursuing and obtaining appropriation funding from Congress and/or the state General Assembly.
- § Expand the number of JSDPs across the state with an emphasis on placing new programs in those LEA districts with excessively higher than average suspension/expulsion rates.
- § Increase the number of full time JSDP staff and recruit more volunteer staff to include college interns, retired educators and juvenile justice system personnel, parents and members of the JSDP's community organizations.
- § Expand program capacity to enable more suspended/expelled students to have the opportunity to attend juvenile structured day programs. A 1999 report by the state Department of Public Instruction found that only 52 percent of long term suspended students actually received placement within an alternative learning program (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 1999). Coupled with the fact that long-term suspensions grew by 22 percent from 1999/2000 to 2000-2001 the need for more JSDPs becomes even more imperative (Department of Public Instruction, 2002).
- § Effort should be directed to fully automating the data collection and student tracking systems for those JSDPs which lack this technological capability.
- § The issue of transporting suspended/expelled students to, and from, JSDPs needs further inquiry with an emphasis on identifying promising strategies and cost-effective means of providing this service.
- § Increase and strengthen both parental accountability and involvement in these programs.
- § Conduct detailed longitudinal research studies and program evaluations to assess the long-term benefits of JSDPs with an emphasis on tracking former students through the educational and criminal justice systems.
- § Strengthen the collaborative efforts between D.P.I. and the local JSDPs.
- § Develop new, and clarify existing procedures, for transitioning JSDP students back into the mainstream public classroom.



North Carolina Governor's Crime Commission
 1201 Front Street, Suite 200
 Raleigh, North Carolina 27609

The Governor's Crime Commission was established in 1977 by the North Carolina General Assembly under G.S. 143B-479. Its primary duty is "to be the chief advisory body to the Governor and the Secretary of the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety for the development and implementation of criminal justice policy." The Crime Commission is always open to comments and suggestions from the general public as well as criminal justice officials. Please contact us and let us know your thoughts and feelings on the information contained in this publication or on any other criminal justice issue of concern to you.

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Senator Eric Reeves North Carolina State Senate	Michael Schweitzer, Asst. Secretary Youth Development Division Juvenile Justice & Delinq. Prev.	Judge John J. Snow, Jr. Chief District Court Judge	Timothy Spear Clerk of Court
William H. Stanley Brunswick County Official	Secretary George L. Sweat Juvenile Justice & Delinq. Prev.	Mitt Tepper Youth Member	Sheriff Moose Butler Cumberland Co. Sheriff's Office
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Commission Members as of 3/31/03

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- North Carolina General Statutes, § 7B-2506(16) (1999).
- The latest SystemStats and reports include:
- Effective Strategies for Domestic Violence Shelters: Strengthening Services for Children
- Geographic Information Systems for Small and Medium Law Enforcement Jurisdictions (SystemStats)
- Dispositional Outcomes of Domestic Violence Ex-Parte and Domestic Violence Protective Orders (SystemStats)
- Domestic Violence Shelters and Minorities
- Domestic Violence: Dispositional Outcomes of Protective Orders in the Courts
- A Process and Impact Evaluation of the North Carolina Communities that Care Initiative
- Geographic Information Systems for Small and Medium Law Enforcement Jurisdictions: Strategies and Effective Practices
- Perceptions of Crimes Affecting North Carolina's Latino Residents: Results from a Qualitative Crime Prevention Needs Assessment (SystemStats)
- National and State School Crime Trends (SystemStats)
- Disproportionate Minority Overrepresentation in the Juvenile Justice System
- Law Enforcement Tools for Latino Communities
- North Carolina Citizens' Perceptions of Crime and Victimization (SystemStats)
- Juvenile Day Treatment Centers - Strategies and Effective Practices
- Law Enforcement Domestic Violence Units: Handbooks
- Some of these reports can also be found on the Governor's Crime Commission website below:
- <http://www.gcc.state.nc.us>
- Analysis Center's areas of current study:
- Children's Services/Domestic Violence Project
- Engaging Elementary School Children and Their Parents: Promising and Effective Practices in Parental Involvement
- Cybercrime
- Recruitment and Retention of Public Safety Personnel
- Evaluation of Juvenile Structured Day Programs