

**RISKS, NEEDS, & STRENGTHS SUMMARY REPORT  
BUNCOMBE COUNTY JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL (JCPC)  
PLANNING COMMITTEE  
DECEMBER, 2024**

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**Part I. Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) Summary**

The Planning Committee reviewed aggregate data from Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) assessments from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024. This is a measurement tool administered by Juvenile Court Counselors after youth are referred with a complaint alleging that a delinquency act has occurred and before adjudication of the youth. The YASI is an assessment that measures risk, need, and strength/protective factors in youth who are referred to the juvenile justice system, used for measuring risks related to recidivism and developing service plans. The assessment addresses twelve domains: Legal History, Family, Basic Needs, School, Community and Peers, Alcohol and Drugs, Mental Health, Physical Health, Aggression, Attitudes, Skills, and Employment and Free Time.

The full YASI assessment consists of over 100 separate items useful for both predictive risk and case management, so data reported from this review consists of county-level risk factors that may be prioritized by the JCPC for RFP development, as well as for highlighting prevalent issues among court-involved youth that individual programs and community-based organizations will want to consider when working with youth in the county. The aggregate outputs from full YASI assessments are one of the data sources used by the Committee and are the focus of summaries that follow in this document. YASI questions are framed in either a historical context (Legal History, for example), or in some cases, “current” or “prior three-months” timeframes for other, more dynamic, questions.

According to the US Census, the approximate population of youth ages 6 – 17 for Buncombe County is 33,002. During the fiscal year of 2023 – 2024, Buncombe County Juvenile Court Services staff completed 311 YASI assessments (the previous year there were 526 YASI assessments completed). The data provided below is based on the risks, needs, and strengths that are noted at the first assessment by Juvenile Justice at intake:

## **General Observations and Points of Interest**

There is both a pre-screen assessment and a full assessment, however, in Buncombe County it is standard practice for all court-involved youth to receive the full YASI assessment at intake.

In 2023-2024, Buncombe County saw a decline in the number of youth referred to the Juvenile Justice System from the previous year: the number of youth seen at intake was 254 (FY23=385), and the number of YASI assessments was 311 (FY23=526).

Consistent with research across the country, in May 2023 the NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission published a Juvenile Recidivism Study ([linked here](#)), which noted: “the lowest levels of recidivism correspond[] to the least invasive systemic responses of the juvenile justice system, particularly by intervening with youth short of adjudication... this report and past report findings indicate the most efficient and effective investment of sufficient resources is in the community, at the front end of the juvenile justice system.”

Compared to the state, Buncombe County still has much higher numbers of youth being referred to DJJ with low risk levels, very low needs, and very high strengths, though the percentage of youth with low risks and needs at intake declined since the previous year.

- Risk Level – 55% of the 311 assessed youth exhibited low risks (a decline from 65% the previous year). This is still higher than the state’s rate of 43%.
- Needs Level – 57% of the 311 assessed youth exhibited very low needs (a decline from 65% the previous year). This is higher than the state’s rate of 37%.
- Strengths Level – 73% of the 311 assessed youth exhibited high or very high strengths levels (previous year had been 81%). This is higher than the state’s rate of 55%.

School-Based Offense (SBO) Complaints declined as well (see School-Justice Partnership dashboard on page 9 - [SJP Dashboard | Tableau Public](#) – for interactive data on past three years): In FY24, 181 SBO Complaints were filed, a 49% decrease from 2 years prior (FY23=336, FY22=356). Of the 181 SBO Complaints:

- 40% were filed on Black/African American youth, 45% were filed on White youth, and 11% were filed on Hispanic/Latino youth.
- 90% (162) were misdemeanors:
  - o 46% were filed on White youth, 41% on Black/African American youth, and 8% on Hispanic/Latino youth.
- 10% (19) were felony charges:
  - o 42% were filed on White youth, while 26% were filed on Black/African American youth, and 31% were filed on Hispanic/Latino youth.

There are ongoing concerns regarding the higher percentage of school-based complaints filed in Buncombe County compared to the state YASI data (see “*School Domain, Q3 – School-Based Complaints*” on p.2), as well as [reports](#) and FY23 [Racial and Ethnic Disparity \(RED\) data](#) demonstrating inequities in school discipline and referrals to court from both school and community-based referrals.

The JCPC is requesting updated RED data for FY24. Initial reporting indicates that despite making up 25% of the youth population, BIPOC youth faced nearly 67% of complaints received, and may be as

much as 6 times more likely than their White peers to have complaints filed on them. This is a significant increase from last year's preexisting inequities when BIPOC youth were 3 times more likely than White peers to have complaints filed on them. Some of this sharp increase may be linked to practices of "stacking" complaints on individual youth. "Stacking" can happen when an individual commits a series of related offenses where multiple impacted parties may be involved; for example, if a youth is charged with damaging a number of individual mailboxes over the course of one night. Additionally, even for one incident, a youth may receive several charges for the same incident. As mentioned above, the JCPC is requesting a complete RED data report for FY24 in Buncombe County to be able to look into this more deeply, including looking at rates of inequity by individual youth (as opposed to solely by complaint).

### **YASI Elevated Risks, Needs, & Strengths:**

#### **Legal History**

**Q4 Felony Referrals to DJJ** – 21% of the youth assessed had a felony referral. This is lower than the state's rate of 35%.

**Q6 Previous Weapon Offense** – 10% of the youth assessed had a previous weapon offense. This is lower than the state's rate of 17%.

#### **Family Domain**

**Q1 Runaway from Home or Placement** – 15% of youth reported incidents of running away. This is an increase from 12% the previous year. While under the NC average (21%), it is still of concern especially given gaps in community services. 5% of youth reported being kicked out (NC=5%).

**Q4 Family Alcohol/Substance Abuse** – 9% of the youth assessed had family members with reported alcohol and/or substance abuse issues compared to the state's rate of 13%.

**Q4 Family Member Legal History** – 30% of the youth assessed had family members with prior history with the criminal legal system compared to the state's rate of 26%.

**Q6 Living Arrangements** – 7% of youth assessed were living in foster care, independent living, or another environment rather than living with a parent, sibling, or relative. This is an increase from 4% last year though still less than the NC rate of 9%.

**Q7 Parent/Custodian Supervision** – 89% of youth assessed in Buncombe reported good/some supervision (NC=80%), while 9% reported some/frequently inadequate supervision (an increase from 4% in FY23).

#### **School Domain**

**Q1/Q10 School Enrollment Status** – 4% of youth assessed were suspended at the point of assessment (NC=3%). Over the previous 2 years, 75% had been assigned one or more OSS (NC=66%) and 54% had been assigned one or more ISS (NC=37%).

**Q2 School Attendance** – 16% of youth assessed had 5 or more unexcused absences (NC=21%).

**Q3 School-Based Complaints** – Despite the overall decrease in School-Based Complaints this year, youth who qualified for the School Domain of YASI questions experienced higher percentages of police reports filed by schools than the state average: only 9% of youth assessed experienced interventions by school administrators (NC=12%), while 45% of youth assessed had police reports filed by school (24%).

**Q4 Academic Performance** – 14% of youth assessed were failing some classes (NC=16%), and 12% were failing most classes (NC=15%).

**Q12 School Activities** – 33% of the youth assessed were interested in school activities but they were not involved in those activities (NC=29%). 33% of the youth assessed had no interest and were not involved in school activities (NC=31%).

### **Community & Peers Domain**

**Q1 Peers/Associates** – 29% of youth assessed reported spending time with friends with negative influence, and 14% reported having no friends or companions (an increase from 10% in FY23).

**Alcohol/Drugs Domain** – The following data from the alcohol/drug domain represents youth who answered “Yes” to alcohol and/or drug use. Out of youth assessed for Buncombe County, 34% of youth answered “Yes” to alcohol and/or drug use (an increase from 29% in FY23).

**Q1 Age at 1<sup>st</sup> Use** – Of the youth who answered “Yes” to alcohol and/or drug use: 10% reported being under 12 years old at first use compared to 11% across the state; 74% reported first use between the ages of 12-15 compared to the state’s rate of 78%.

**Q1 Use Disrupts Function** – 27% of the youth who answered “Yes” to alcohol and/or drug use stated that the usage disrupted their daily functions. This typically indicates that treatment is warranted. The state’s rate was 30%.

**Mental Health Domain** – 40% of Buncombe youth assessed answered yes to having mental health problems and to being diagnosed with a mental health disorder, compared with 39% of youth assessed across the state. 26% of youth assessed were currently receiving mental health treatment.

**Q5 History of Abuse** (by a parent including biological, step, adopted, and legal guardians) – 8% of the youth assessed reported a history of physical abuse (NC=9%). 5% of youth assessed reported a history of sexual abuse (NC=6%).

**Q6 Victimization History** (by a peer or older person) – 5% of youth assessed reported experiences of sexual vulnerability, 3% reported experiences of being bullied, and 6% reported experiencing physical assault.

### **Aggression Domain**

**Q1 Violence** – Of Buncombe youth assessed, 7% had displayed a weapon (NC 11%), 4% had used a weapon (NC 8%), 12% had indications of bullying/threatening (NC 23%), 7% of destruction of property (NC 12%), 42% of assaultive behavior (NC 41%), and 3% of assault with a serious injury (NC 5%).

### **Employment and Free Time Domain**

**Q1 Employment** – 24% of youth assessed were currently employed, 68% had never been employed, and 14% reported prior successful employment.

**Q5 & Q6 Free Time** – 33% of youth assessed participated in one or more structured activities, and 43% participated in one or more unstructured activities.

## Part II. Summary of Community Resources

See attached [Youth Resource Guide](#) (Continuum of Services).

### Part III. Summary of Gaps and Barriers in the Continuum of Services

- **Restitution/Community Service** to address needs for positive peer support and provide diversion and restitution pathways for court-involved youth. *Earn and Learn is a necessary service used regularly by court services; not available without JCPC funding.*
- **Restorative Services/Restorative Justice/Teen Court/Conflict Resolution**, particularly to address school conflict, needs for positive peer support, and to provide alternative responses to reduce school-based complaints for youth with low risks and low needs. *While restorative practices are being implemented in some schools, there is a need for more Restorative Justice diversion opportunities and alternative responses when harm has occurred. Teen Court is a diversion used regularly by court services that also receives referrals directly from schools. Umoja and UNETE are in their first year of JCPC funding to provide restorative practices services for youth as well.*
- **Interpersonal and Experiential Skill-building** to address school conflict, the need for positive peer support, mental health needs, and conflict in the home. *Kids at Work! and PIVOTPoint are JCPC-funded diversion programs that support building these skills.*
- **Vocational Skill-building**, particularly to address needs for employment and structured activities. *Offered through some community programs and JCPC-funded programs The Connection and Kids at Work!. More vocational skill-building is an identified need for community-based intervention to prevent future court involvement.*
- **Tutoring / Academic Enhancement / Mentoring**, particularly to address needs related to school conflict, attendance, academic performance, and desire for involvement in activities. *Academic tutoring and mentoring are offered through community programs and are a continued need to address identified needs in the school domain.*
- **Substance Misuse/Individual/Group Counseling Services** to address the need for youth at risk of court involvement and those coming through DJJ to access behavioral health services. *Continued need for increased access to substance misuse/individual/group counseling as a community-based intervention.*
- **Parent/Family Skill Building**, particularly to address histories of abuse and/or victimization, conflict in the home, and the need for family supervision skills. *Currently offered through other community programs. Services addressing problems of sexual behavior are provided by TASK (Treatment Alternatives for Sexualized Kids). Services addressing problems of sexual behavior are provided by TASK (Treatment Alternatives for Sexualized Kid) through Intensive Intervention funds, serving DJJ involved youth.*
- **Runaway / Temporary Shelter** to address needs related to incidents of running away from home or placement, history of abuse, and the need for family supervision skills. *There is not a primary resource for temporary and runaway shelter for youth in Buncombe County. When needed, DJJ is currently using community placements funded by other sources.*

#### **Part IV. Proposed Priority Services for Funding**

The committee compared the services needed to address the elevated identified risks and needs with services currently available in the community. Priorities were determined, in part, based on ranking dispositional alternatives as top priorities, then diversion programs, and finally other needed services. Through reviewing the Youth Assessment Screening Inventory (YASI) data, and a community resource assessment, the JCPC has determined that the following services are priorities to serve youth who are court-involved and to reduce/prevent future involvement:

- Priority 1: Restitution / Community Service**
- Priority 2: Restorative Services / Restorative Justice / Teen Court / Conflict Resolution**
- Priority 3: Interpersonal /Experiential Skills**
- Priority 4: Vocational Skills**
- Priority 5: Tutoring/Academic Enhancement/Mentoring**
- Priority 6: Substance Misuse/Individual/Group Counseling Services**
- Priority 7: Parent / Family Skill Building**
- Priority 8: Runaway / Temporary Shelter**

These funding priorities are recommended in response to ongoing concerns regarding the high percentage of complaints filed for youth with low levels of risk and need, high strengths, paired with high inequities at the point of referral into the juvenile justice system. The committee recommends increasing alternative pathways to respond to youth behavior and needs, including through behavioral health and restorative justice opportunities, increasing access to other JCPC-funded programs through direct referrals from schools and community partners, and increasing awareness of community-based resources available to support youth.

**Part III. Appendix – Additional Data**

**Overview of Juvenile Court Data – Buncombe County**

The information below shows how JCPC programs are used and the legal status of youth when referred.

<b>Juvenile Demographics</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
Youth Population ages 6-17	34,120	34,039	33,440	33,167	33,002
Youth Population ages 10-17		23,312	22,994	22,736	22,660
Youth Population ages 16 & 17		5,900	6,028	6,095	6,095
Youth seen in Intake	337	256	456	385	254
Youth Put on Diversion Plans or Contracts	153	131	261	151	98
Youth Approved for Court	155	125	171	201	128
Youth Adjudicated	68	77	70	106	65
Youth Put on Protective Supervision	22	15	17	16	3
Youth Put on Probation	38	61	51	86	54
Number of Detention Admissions	54	48	47	53	33
Number of Youth Committed to YDC	1	2	3	1	1
Number of Youth put on Post-Release Supervision	1	2	2	5	3
Number of School-Based Complaints		94	401	340	190
Number of Total Complaints		457	696	695	690
Percentage that were School-Based Complaints	49.00%	20.57%	57.61%	48.92%	27.54%

<b>JCPC Program Participants Legal Status at Referral to Program (from NC JOIN Data)</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
Youth at Risk	35	15	46	37	34
Court Counselor Consultation	123	15	2	2	4
Vulnerable Juvenile ( <i>youth under age 10</i> )				1	3
SRO/Law Enforcement Diversion					1
Intake/Diverted	69	35	134	89	52
Petition Filed	0	2	3	1	7
Deferred Prosecution	3	0	0	0	0
Adjudicated Undisciplined, Disposition Pending	0	1	0	0	0
Adjudicated Delinquent, Disposition Pending	3	3	1	0	0
Protective Supervision	2	0	0	2	0
Probation	24	32	14	30	28
Committed	0	0	0	0	0
Post Release Supervision	0	0	0	0	0
Continuation Services	0	0	1	0	0
Interstate Compact	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>129</b>

**Buncombe Program Admissions by Legal Status 23-24 (Pulled from NC ALLIES Data)**

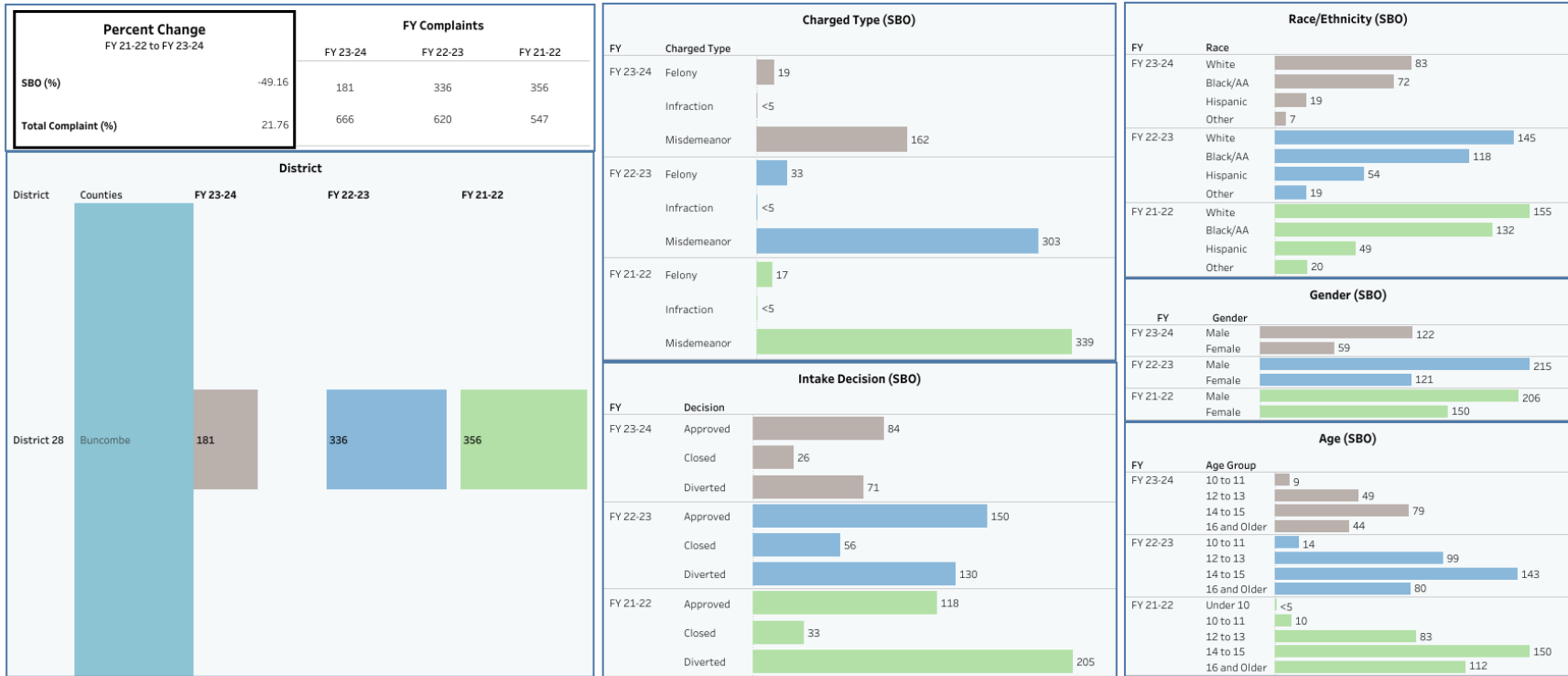
<b>Program Name</b>	<b>Court Counselor Consultation</b>	<b>Youth at Risk</b>	<b>Voluntary Juvenile (under age 10)</b>	<b>Intake/ Diverted</b>	<b>SRO/Law Enforcement Diversion</b>	<b>Petition Filed</b>	<b>Adjudicated</b>	<b>Probation</b>	<b>Protective Supervision</b>	<b>Referred from District Court</b>	<b>Interstate Compact (ICJ)</b>	<b>Continuation Services</b>	<b>Committed</b>	<b>Total</b>
Buncombe Structured Day	2	3	1	3		1								10
Buncombe County Youth Justice Clinical Program				5		3								8
Teen Court		25		16	1									42
Earn and Learn		2		11				13						26
Aspire - The Connection			1	3				3						7
Aspire -Kids at Work!	2	5	1	7		1		2						18
PIVOTPoint WNC				5		2		10						17
	4	35	3	50	1	7	0	28	0	0	0	0	0	128



Buncombe County Risks, Needs, & Strengths Assessment Summary, December 2024

**Delinquent School-Based Offense (SBO) Complaints**  
\*NOTE: "<5" indicates complaint counts between 0 and 4 inclusively.

FY 23-24    FY 22-23    FY 21-22



Reference: North Carolian Department of Public Safety, Juvenile Justice, School-Justice Partnership Dashboard, available at <https://www.ncdps.gov/our-organization/juvenile-justice/datastatisticsreports/school-justice-partnership-dashboard>.