

# A. Table of Contents

A. Table of Contents	1
B. Letter of Transmittal	
C. Conclusions and Recommendations	3
D. Social Service Agency Survey	4
E. Interviews with Players	6
Juvenile Court	
Multnomah Alternative	10
Tacoma Police Department	12
Pierce County Sheriff's Department	14
Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department	15
F. Navigating Community Services	16
G. Perspectives and Insights	19
A Pro-tem Judge's Observations	19
Somebody Else's Problem	19
First Port of Call	
Early Childhood Intervention	20
H. Graphic Presentations	20
I. Acknowledgements	22

## About “Youth at Risk – Improving the Odds”

As noted in the Letter of Transmittal on Page 2, this report is the work of a 12-member Community Studies group of the City Club of Tacoma. The cover drawing by Jan Karroll illustrates the circular paths that youth-at-risk experience. The graphs by Nina Rook present data the study group reviewed. Peter Baker and Ben Gilbert did the designing and editing. A Remann Hall detainee made the drawing on the inside front cover for the report. Non-members may obtain copies at the City Club office, 1019 Pacific Ave., Suite 1701 for \$10 a copy. Phone 253-272-9561. It will be placed on the City Club web site, [www.cityclubtacoma.org](http://www.cityclubtacoma.org) and provided to area public libraries.

# B. Letter of Transmittal

March 2002

This report, "Youth-at-Risk—Improving the Odds," is the latest study in the City Club of Tacoma's continuing series of examinations of subjects of interest to the Tacoma/Pierce County community. A consensus document, it raises social, economic, and fiscal issues to be addressed in seeking solutions to the many problems posed by troubled youth in our midst. A twelve-member City Club study group spent a year researching the subject and preparing this report.

The study sought to find out whether a Community Assessment Center would be a useful tool to facilitate Tacoma/Pierce County's efforts to deal with its children and youth at risk. We examined the Portland, Oregon metropolitan area use of such a Center to refer its troubled youths to existing community assistance services and away from the criminal justice system.

Comparative figures for the two jurisdictions on the number of youths incarcerated on a typical night proved eye opening. With Tacoma/Pierce County's total population only slightly greater than Portland/Mulnomah County, it was surprising to find that our area is likely to incarcerate many times the number held overnight in the Portland area, an average of 155 here and only 20 in the Portland jurisdiction. Although the Portland Center evidently helped to hold down the numbers of incarcerated youth, crucial differences in approach and philosophy played important roles as well.

City Club of Tacoma has fostered a special interest in issues affecting the area's youth since its founding in 1984. It did two reports and programs on youth problems in 1985, one on a 20 percent dropout rate in Tacoma high schools, and one on "well entrenched" juvenile prostitution. A comprehensive City Club report on youth violence in our community and schools entitled "V Is for Violence; S Is for School" revisited that subject ten years later and provided a useful perspective on an issue that continues to draw attention throughout the Nation.

This report deals primarily with those children and youth who come into contact with Tacoma/Pierce County governmental entities because of criminal behavior, abuse or neglect. Because of limitations of space and time, the report deals only peripherally with social service agencies, both public and private, that every day confront the needs of our youth. A cross-section of those agencies has been surveyed for their views on the Community Assessment Center proposal. The survey results are included.

To the professionals in our community who work with youth-at-risk, we express our appreciation for the time and patience they provided in sharing their observations and educating us on this complex subject. We are also indebted to the members of the study group for their dedication in producing this report. They applied their skills in research, interviewing, writing, editing, graphics, and data-gathering.

A post card is enclosed with the report to give members of City Club an opportunity to express their views about it. Please fill it out and mail it back promptly with your comments. Your feedback will assist future study efforts on issues of concern to our community.

Clearly, further progress is needed to achieve the society we envision for our children and grandchildren. City Club of Tacoma will report to its members and the community at large as it continues to explore the ways this community deals with its children.

Sincerely,

Jim Reardon, Chair of Community Studies Committee

Peter Baker  
Deborah Beglund  
Ben Gilbert  
Jan Karroll

Tom Karwaki  
Linda Pearn  
Joe Quaintance  
Florence Reardon

Jim Reardon  
Nina Rook  
El Vandeberg  
Debbie Winskill

# C. Conclusions and Recommendations

As we listened, we heard the cry for help of youth whose life-long prospects were being compromised. Some of the cries are included in the report in boxed paragraphs. They were written by youth held in Remann Hall's detention facility

We look to the youth of our community to produce tomorrow's leaders - teachers, lawyers, physicians, business executives, legislators and government officials. By nurturing our youth we determine the richness of the harvest of innovative, creative and productive citizens needed to guide this community in the Twenty-first Century.

We interviewed many players who reach out to our youth. Daniel Erker, administrator of the Pierce County Juvenile Court located at Remann Hall, called our attention to the innovative and, in his view, effective way the Portland, OR area connects youthful offenders with the city's support agencies in a Community Assessment Center. Erker helped us focus the topic on his perceived need for such a Community Assessment Center to deal creatively with the youth problems of Tacoma/Pierce County.

The Center would refer youth to appropriate community agencies. A crucial initial choice would be made – whether to refer the youth to Remann Hall for processing under the juvenile criminal justice system or to make use of available non-criminal social service community or governmental resources. Pierce County makes that choice today, but often only after a youth has been booked at Remann Hall by the arresting officer as a purported offender. Youth suspected of involvement in violent crime or sexual offenses would still go directly to Remann Hall. Arresting officers also would retain discretion to by-pass the Center.

## Agencies have shared roles to play

In reviewing basic documents and news media accounts, we encountered not only the incidence of crime and the social conditions that breed crime, but also learned about the shared roles on behalf of our youth-at-risk that governmental and non-governmental agencies play.

Although our community offers many services, those agencies cope with a frustrating reality. There is no central access point to link youth with services to meet both the needs of the youth-at-risk and the broader community.

The study group's conclusion that such a Community Assessment Center would be a valuable resource for Tacoma/Pierce County began to emerge. It could well become the central place to sort out both problems and solutions to the difficult situations that emerge. Thereby it would facilitate the work with troubled youth that both the

governmental and non-governmental sectors strive to carry out as part of their community responsibilities.

As we began to define the study, a telling wake-up call came when *The News Tribune* reported a breakdown of youth-at-risk statistics for the State of Washington (See data on Page 20.) It graphically emphasized that our community faces a crisis. Both teenage pregnancy and juvenile arrests in Tacoma vault above state norms. In Tacoma the percentage of babies born to mothers who fail to receive needed prenatal care exceeds Seattle and statewide levels. Teen pregnancy is more than two times higher in Tacoma than in Seattle or the state overall. This represents a significant shift. In 1988, Tacoma's statistics bettered those of Seattle, especially for a lower level of juvenile arrests.

## "Language of Hope"

In this report are inserts like this one showing work of students in Remann Hall. A Starbucks Foundation "Language of Hope" grant helped support the project. In a joint statement, students and staff noted that it enabled the students "to further their knowledge in literacy and technology; and for that we are deeply grateful."

Tacoma/Pierce County has had a long-time problem with many of its youth. By providing only minimal support, we erode community vitality.

## Heavy reliance on criminal justice system

Currently accepted solutions rely heavily on the criminal justice system. That approach often fails to take

full advantage of available resources, particularly non-profit social agencies striving to assure a better life for those youth. Because of the severe budget crunch, remedies may now be even more difficult to achieve.

Vigorous and proactive intervention with our youth-at-risk will prevent the tragic loss of many of our adolescents and reduce the social and economic costs associated with juvenile crime, the study group believes. Success in rescuing and redirecting youth-at-risk requires community-wide collaboration and commitment. **The study group believes that the projected Community Assessment Center would serve as an important tool in putting troubled youth and community resources together.**

*The study group presents these five major action recommendations to underpin this conclusion:*

## 1. Adopt a policy that places priority commitment on our investment in youth.

A priority focus on youth requires significant financial commitment and a realization by community leaders that we have a responsibility for the welfare of ALL the children of Tacoma/Pierce County.

Children who suffer from numerous ills, including exposure to abuse and neglect, extreme poverty, domestic violence, and homelessness are denied protections and opportunities that no society should tolerate.

Failure to attend to these problems will exert an even heavier burden on our community in the future. Such children often turn into dysfunctional adults with life-long dependency. Choices we make today may shape this community's quality of life for generations.

## **2. Create a Community Assessment Center to steer troubled youth to services.**

Many community agencies, both public and private, are providing important support to youth-at-risk. Programs can be leveraged to assure access to their services and support to program providers. Families and youth in distress need simple, easy to understand ways to get help.

Skilled professionals who can promptly and accurately evaluate an adolescent and make an appropriate referral to community services are invaluable. When easy access to youth services is lacking, navigating can become costly and inefficient.

We recommend establishing a readily accessible, safe, and inviting Community Assessment Center based on the Portland/Multnomah model. Government funded, the Center would be staffed by professionals, and would function 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Center should be readily available to meet the needs of all troubled youth except those who represent dangers to the community because of involvement in violence or serious crime.

Its personnel should be equipped with a state-of-the-art computerized information system to track youth referred to their care and to enroll and monitor young people in area programs. Schools, police, parents and our youth need such a facility now.

## **3. Review Juvenile Court assignments to assure continuity on the bench**

Judges are assigned to Juvenile Court on a rotating basis, usually for no more than one year. Insights and lessons acquired on the bench often leave with them. We recommend increasing the term of service or phasing out rotation so that the assignments in Juvenile Court, where decisions about more than guilt or innocence is required, would go to judges with appropriate interest, temperament, and training.

This Court has a community leadership responsibility. Juvenile judges with more extended terms would become experts in developing and carrying out long-range plans for the youth who appear before them.

## **4. Expand the use of alternatives to detention to serve youth-at-risk more effectively.**

Detention is a costly and often unsatisfactory solution to problems of our youth. Except when necessary to assure the safety of the community, detention should be avoided. For adolescents in custody, such alternatives as electronic monitoring, provide better and less costly supervision as well as better treatment.

We believe more emphasis should be placed on non-criminal alternatives including counseling and guidance. Other alternatives include foster care, group homes, and mentoring.

A large portion of our abused, neglected and misguided youth have committed no serious crime. They need support to put their lives back on track. These youth often

may be better served outside the confines of detention and the Courts.

Managing these issues can be daunting. The children may lack concerned responsible parents. They need caring, sensitive adults including skilled professionals who can access appropriate services and help the youth make better life choices.

## **5. A community board to prioritize the needs of our youth supported in concept.**

We support the concept of having a community board with responsibility to prioritize the needs of youth-at-risk, lead the effort for funding, and ensure delivery of services in a cost effective manner. It would provide a community forum to review new ideas and innovative programs.

This board would act to assure full and open accountability in reaching community targets and enhance the likelihood of achieving sought-after outcomes. Programs that get better results would be recommended for increased funding, with those with less success singled out for improvement or elimination. The board would seek to use its oversight function to prevent duplication of effort.

### **JUVENILE ARRESTS**

Number age 10-17 arrested 1998 to 1998

Source: Washington Kids Count Project

County	1988	1997	1998
Pierce	6.0	6.2	6.9
King	11.4	4.5	5.4
Thurston	8.7	8.3	8.6
Tacoma	11.5	11.8	11.6
Seattle	29.8	9.6	9.6
STATE	8.9	7.9	8.0

The News Tribune, October 26, 2000

## **D. Social Service Agency Survey**

Strong support for community efforts to reduce the rate of youth incarceration in Pierce County was shown by social agencies surveyed for this report. The mail-in survey went to 22 agencies with relevant programs to learn their views on the projected Community Assessment Center. Responses within the two week survey window were received from eight, a response rate greater than 35 %.

Although general support appears to exist for the Center as a concept, concerns were noted about the importance of access and inclusiveness and the need to assure funding in these budget crunching times. Achieving community acceptance was stressed as essential to make that goal a reality. Among the eight respondents were two with direct experience with similar assessment centers.

## Detail of survey responses

The questions and a summary of the responses:

*What effect do you believe that an assessment center such as is used in the Portland area would have on the Tacoma/Pierce County community?*

**Highly beneficial 5**

**Somewhat beneficial 3**

People who thought it would be highly beneficial believed that it would reduce incarceration, with positive results.

“Years and years of incarcerating juveniles leads to years and years of incarcerating adults. Let’s break the cycle” - Kevin Colwell, Safe Place.

“The proper assessment and referral of youth will help reduce the need for incarceration which is expensive” - Alfonso Montoya, Centro Latino SER.

“Handling the initial offence impacts the youth, and sets the pace for future choices” - Janet Richardson, Tacoma Urban League.

**Our respondents who thought it would be somewhat beneficial had concerns about practical inclusiveness and effectiveness.**

“English as 2nd language youth or youth of color may not use center as point of contact. What about county kids?” - Marcia Golubic, Indochinese Cultural and Service Center.

“It would be beneficial if we could take the vast amount of dollars spent and reallocate to do a better job” - Gary Yazwa, Boys and Girls Club.

*What effect do you believe that an assessment center such as is used in the Portland area would have on your specific agency?*

**Highly beneficial 4**

**Somewhat beneficial 3**

**Neutral 1**

Alfonso Montoya wrote that “It will be a resource that ensures that youth are properly assessed and counseled.”

“Referrals could be made from the center for ongoing therapy with families,” noted Kristina McKenzie, Greater Lakes Mental Healthcare.

*Have you had any experience with an assessment center such as is used in the Portland area?*

**Yes 2**

**No 6**

*What were the positive/negative features of that experience?*

Ken Maaz of Faith Homes, who has worked as a Service Provider and Intake Supervisor in a center like Port-

land’s, was neutral: “We won’t get or lose anything due to the existence of a center like the one in Portland.” An assessment center like Portland’s “keeps kids out of detention and gets kids and their families to the services they need,” he said.

J. Michelle Swope, Pierce County AIDS Foundation, found that the center offered “an increased knowledge by youth in need of services of the resources and options available to them. The only negative I have experienced is a lack of resources to refer youth to.”

**By developing widespread support and putting in place an extensive series of alternatives to detention, the Multnomah system has resulted in a much lower rate of incarceration for youth than in Pierce County, even though the demographics are similar.**

*Should reducing the detention rate for youth be a specific objective for Tacoma/Pierce County?*

**Yes 8**

**No 0**

*Why do you think this?*

“Early interventions can prevent future and more severe offenses” -- Kristina McKenzie, Greater Lakes Mental Healthcare.

“Prevention is much preferred to incarceration. Also kids learn more negative behaviors when incarcerated” -- Marcia Golubic, Indochinese Cultural and Service Center.

“Detention should be used judiciously to maximize its effect. It is costly and usually overused” -- Ken Maaz, Faith Homes.

“Police have detained kids for simple domestic incidents, against the parents’ wishes” -- Janet Richardson, Tacoma Urban League.

“Every child (has) needs and has ability; we must connect them with positive role models and opportunities” -- Gary Yazwa, Boys and Girls Club.

“Networking and collaboration are the cornerstones for success in the community that leads to a community of success” -- Kevin Colwell, Safe Place.

“Because incarceration is so expensive, more prevention alternatives have to be developed both for youth and adult” -- Alfonso Montoya, Centro Latino SER.

“This is an admirable goal, however this change would require buy-in from our community law makers, legislators and social service agencies already involved in monitoring the BECCA Bill laws” -- J. Michelle Swope, Pierce County AIDS Foundation.

# E. Interviews with Players

*We interviewed community resource persons for background and guidance. The interview accounts follow:*

## Juvenile Court

*"The mission of Pierce County Juvenile Court, consistent with public safety, is to provide equal justice for those children who come before us, to advocate for those children who have no advocate and to provide leadership on the field of juvenile corrections and rehabilitation. We operate by creating legitimate alternative pathways to adulthood, through equal access to services that are least intrusive, culturally sensitive and consistent with the highest professional standards."*

Early in the study we visited the Pierce County Juvenile Court at Remann Hall on Sixth Avenue in Tacoma. It is Tacoma/Pierce County's clearing house or depository for youths under 18 held on suspicion of involvement in criminal activity. Police take them to Remann Hall, a facility that also handles neglected and abused youth, runaways and truants.

The traffic through Remann Hall is steady and diverse.

Children as young as 11 have been detained, for offenses from shoplifting to murder. The Juvenile Court has exclusive jurisdiction over juveniles who violate criminal laws or who need protection and advocacy because of abuse, neglect or abandonment.

Major functions include intake, investigation, detention, probationary community supervision, and dependency and adoption services. This is the only department of the County government that focuses exclusively on youth. Statistics for year 2000 give an insight into the volume of client flow. Remann Hall operates around the clock, 7 days a week.

### Intake screeners

The Remann Hall experience usually begins when a police officer brings a youth to the center. Intake screeners, part of the Intake/Investigation unit in the Probation and Community Services division, take information from the officer and the youth before admitting the youth. Data is entered into the Juvenile Information System and the youth is fingerprinted and photographed. This file can be viewed by prosecutors, probation officers and detention staff. Whether to send the youth to the diversion program or to arraign the youth before a judge is determined.

Probation officers perform important functions in cases set for Court consideration. They determine whether a youth should be detained prior to the initial Court appearance. They contact parents, school officials, and other community organizations to become aware of the youth's background.

### Deferred disposition criteria

To be eligible for deferred disposition, the youth may have no more than two prior diversions, no prior felonies, and the charge must not involve a sex or violent offense. If the youth complies with Court orders for a year, the judge will dismiss the case to keep the offense off the youth's permanent record.

If the youth fails to qualify for diversion, a prosecutor will present the charges in Juvenile Court. A Court hearing must be held within 24 hours. The probation officer completes a risk assessment and a pre-sentence report.

Normally, a youth will plead not guilty, and a trial date is set. The probation officer makes a recommendation to release the youth to parents or guardians or hold the youth in custody to await trial. Prior criminal history, danger to society, nature of the offense and likelihood of returning for trial are considered. Family cooperation is

taken into account as a vital component. For release, the youth must meet the specified conditions.

Trial dates must be within 30 days for youths in custody and 60 days for released youths. The probation officer prepares a sentencing report describing the crime, prior criminal history, school report and family situation.

A Risk/Needs Assessment may determine what therapeutic services are provided. The Juvenile Court provides three researched-based practices, termed Aggression Replacement Training, Functional Family Therapy, and MultiSystemic Therapy. These intervention services cost the County from \$900 to \$5,000. Affected families are not billed.

The Juvenile Court, although housed at Remann Hall, is an arm of Superior Court with jurisdiction over cases involving delinquent youth and the protection of abused and neglected dependant children. The organization chart for the Remann Hall complex depicts the Superior Court at the top of the chart with the administrator of Juvenile Court services immediately below. Other divisions at Remann Hall report to the administrator.

Currently three courtrooms operate five days a week; a fourth courtroom operates three days a week. A total of 24,739 hearings were docketed in these courtrooms in the year 2000.

### REVIEW TIME

My eyes filled with water,  
my chest filled with pain.  
It's the little things here,  
that are keeping me sane.  
When I call my people,  
They won't answer the phone.  
It's times like this that I feel so alone.  
The things I was doing,  
Were killing me.  
I had chosen the road of fatality.  
Now I have some time to do,  
I now have time to review my life.  
I think about my peers, and how  
they cause me struggle and strife.  
Anthony

# Detention Services

*“It is the Mission of Detention Services to house juvenile offenders in a safe, secure and humane living environment where they are cared for and supervised by professional, well trained staff”*

Detention Services is responsible for the welfare, safety, and security of resident detainees. Tasks include meeting medical, nutritional, and educational needs. It serves three main purposes; community safety and protection, holding juveniles accountable, and skill development.

While providing community protection, the staff also encourages residents to seek constructive and positive change. Remann Hall has a daily average detainee population of 155 youth who are held for many different offenses. Supervision ranges from maximum security where each youth is held in an individual cell, to areas where youth live in dormitory style housing. A behavior level system provides a range of incentives, rewards, and consequences to promote appropriate behavior.

In some circumstances, youths may be released from detention with electronic monitoring. An ankle bracelet emits monitored electronic signals that locate the youth. The juvenile is usually confined to the home and is barred from leaving without the probation officer's permission. Leave is authorized to attend school, counseling, work or medical appointments. If the youth leaves without permission, he would usually be returned to Remann Hall.

## Probation & Community Services

Probation and Community Services is responsible for diversion of low risk individuals, domestic violence intervention, and probation supervision.

### **4000 a year diverted from detention**

Approximately 4000 young persons a year are “diverted” from detention in Remann Hall, a benign solution for youths who have records of no more than two non-violent offenses and no prior felonies or sex offenses. Diversion addresses juvenile offenders who are arrested for such offenses as trespassing, shoplifting, possession of alcohol or marijuana, and malicious mischief.

Each case is scrutinized by a prosecuting attorney prior to referral to Diversion. Volunteer community councils including high school students review the charges with the youth and family members and set the terms of a diversion agreement. These contracts may call for restitution, community service, fines, counseling or other remedies. A diversion staff member guides the process.

### **Many referrals for domestic violence**

Domestic violence averages more than a referral a day for assault or malicious mischief against parents, guardians, siblings or other members of the household. For these youths, the agreement might include counseling, a behavior management class, methods to deal with anger, preparing an apology, or performing community service.

A risk assessment process decides whether the risk to reoffend is low, moderate or high. If the youth is classified as low risk, electronic monitoring may be proposed. One probation officer may handle as many as 280 low risk monitoring cases. If behavior deteriorates, then supervision level will increase and conditions made more stringent.

A significant number are on deferred disposition. If the youth meets all requirements, the original offense and deferred disposition will be dismissed. If the youth fails to follow the order of the Court the youth will be re-sentenced.

The probation supervision unit provides community supervision to juveniles placed on probation by the Court, because of the offense, likelihood to re-offend, family environment, school problems and other factors.

Individualized treatment plans are prepared and may include treatment for drug or alcohol abuse, anger management and family and individual counseling. The probation officer monitors the youth to ensure compliance with Court mandates as well as special programs that target sex offenders, cases of chemical dependency, and domestic violence cases.

During probation the youth is normally required to perform community service, pay restitution or otherwise meet conditions imposed by the Court and probation officer. Probation is designed to alleviate the conditions that led to the crime and rarely goes beyond 12 months.

### **BELOVED MOTHER**

Beloved mother, I apologize for making you cry and telling you lies.  
Making you worry and making you sad, sometimes I wish I never had.  
Being your son is what I would, changing my ways, I know I should.  
I promise to you, I'll change my ways, but without you, it's hard to say.  
I love you with all my heart,  
I don't know where to begin or to start.  
Last time I saw you, I began to think, that without you my life would sink.  
A son is what I will be, so please accept my apology. Cisco

## Dependency Services

Dependency services are managed at Remann Hall for children who have been abandoned, or are abused or neglected. These services are also provided for children who lack a willing or capable parent. Most dependency cases originate with a complaint from a medical professional, school teacher or administrator, member of clergy, social worker or psychologist.

The Child Protection Services (CPS) unit of the State Department of Social and Human Services (DSHS) will file a dependency petition with the Court. The office of the Attorney General will present the evidence of dependency. A probation officer is assigned as Guardian ad litem. A community volunteer may be appointed as a Special Advocate.

The Guardian's task is to protect the minor's interests and to bring to the attention of the Court all relevant information including mental health, medical and school records. Other tasks include preparing a written report, recommending actions and advising the Court of any desires expressed by the child. Ensuring compliance with Court orders and notifying the Court of material changes in circumstances are also duties of the Guardian.

### BECCA assistance for truancy, runaways

The state BECCA program provides assistance and services to families encountering truancy, conflict, drug or alcohol use and runaway problems. Parents may file a petition for Court assistance. School district may file truancy petitions. Court orders are enforceable through Contempt of Court citations. The youth could be punished with up to seven days of detention for each violation.

Parents may file an At-Risk-Youth petition for Court intervention. At-Risk-Youth are defined as youths who have been out of the home for 72 hours without parental consent, those with substance abuse problems and those whose behavior is beyond parental control.

A Child in Need of Services petition may be filed by the parent, child or DSHS when out of home placement is required. The criteria are similar to the At-Risk-Youth program, including concerns about substance abuse, runaway behavior or other behavior that would place the child or others at risk.

## Much more than administration of justice

We found a surprising level and range of activity at Remann Hall. Clearly, dealing with the youths who are referred to the institution involves much more than the administration of justice. Meeting the needs of society as well as the juveniles often requires attention to many complex matters growing out of the home environment and other aspects of the youth's circumstances.

### SMOKIN'

Sometimes I think about my first hit  
and ask myself why?  
Why did I do this to myself?  
Shattered my dreams  
just to get high.  
Sometimes it makes me cry when I look on the road I  
chose to take.  
How many hearts did I break making that last fatal mis-  
take?  
Now I sit in Remann Hall and think  
about all that I have done, they want to  
send me downtown and charge me like  
I had a gun  
I guess when you weigh guns  
and drugs, drugs are just as bad,  
I spent my time smokin the chances  
that I had.  
I now have time by myself I think  
about how the courts treated me,  
I think about my drug of choice and  
how that shit is killing me.

by Anthony

### Judicial Rotation Question

Being a judge in Juvenile Court is a demanding assignment that draws on many factors beyond knowledge of the law. Demands of the assignment include great patience and understanding and a compassionate approach to the responsibility of dealing with children.

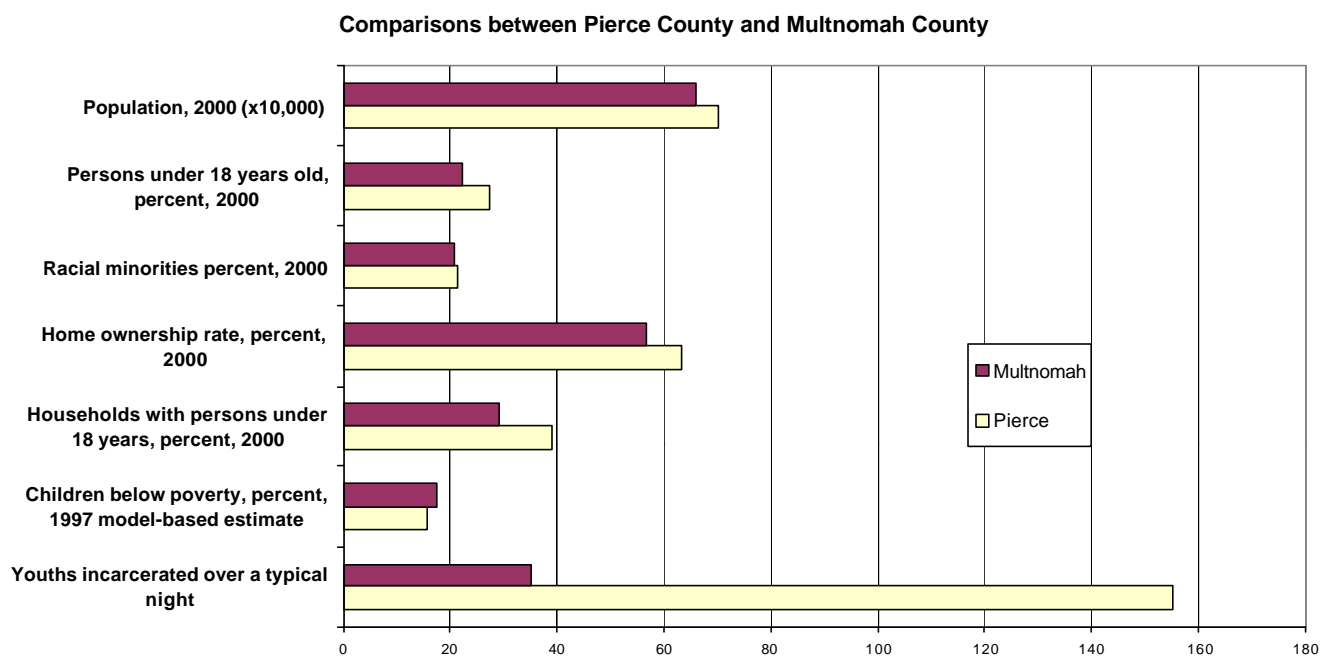
Judicial posts at Remann Hall are not permanently filled. Superior Court judges rotate to Juvenile Court for temporary duty up to twelve months. Because some judges do not want to serve at Remann Hall, the assignment is essentially voluntary. Judges who accept the assignment have

an interest in Juvenile Court, but the limited term of service does not promote permanent judicial advocates or Court stability.

We favor extending the term of service or ending the rotation system and setting up Juvenile Court as a separate judicial branch within the Superior Court. Tacoma/Pierce County need a cadre of permanent juvenile judges equipped by interest, temperament and training to function to serve as leaders of the community effort to cope with youth-at-risk.

Lessons learned during the one-year assignments are lost to the Court as each judge departs. Ability to assure continuity with respect to the Court's practices and policies is a matter of some moment.





(A portfolio of additional data graphs starts on Page 20.)

## An Alternative to Detention

The Annie E. Casey Foundation, the nation's largest philanthropy dedicated exclusively to improving the lives of disadvantaged children and families, developed its Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) in response to growing concerns about chronic overcrowding and deteriorating conditions in many juvenile detention facilities across the country. The Foundation outlines four fundamental objectives of the program:

- To eliminate inappropriate or unnecessary use of secure detention, thereby reducing detention rates and facility crowding;
- To maintain or improve Court appearance rates and to minimize incidence of delinquent behavior with effective community-based alternatives;
- To redirect public finances from expensive secure facilities that are often counter-productive to community-based programming;
- To improve secure detention facility conditions.

Much has already been accomplished with the diversion program at Remann Hall. The accomplishments stop short of becoming a "triage for all kids" like ones fostered by the Casey Family Foundation.

Multnomah County initiated detention reform through a discussion process to address the purposes of the detention program. Ultimately, agreement was reached that security was an essential element, needed to assure the success of

the projected reform. It was designed to provide security for the community, center staff and on occasion, also the youth. The achieved goal was obtaining the full understanding and enthusiastic participation of all parties for the program's underlying philosophy about detention issues.

### New Avenues for Youth Center

As part of the overall detention reform initiative, the Center was put in place in Portland as [New Avenues for Youth](#) (NAFY) Reception and Referral Center. A NAFY brochure explained the program's mission and services:

"We are committed to building bridges between community partners and youth and families. Our goal is to divert youth who do not pose a threat to the community away from the Juvenile Justice system and toward community resources that can provide for their unmet needs.

"Police Referral: The Reception Center is available as a drop off point for youth 17 and under, taken into police custody for status offenses, city ordinance violations, non-person misdemeanors, instate runaways, and for being in unsafe environments."

Erker, Pierce County Juvenile Court administrator, and others speak enthusiastically about the work being done in Portland for its youth-at-risk. They have applauded the successes achieved by the NAFY Reception Center.

### Study group visited Portland Center

The study group made two visits to Portland to learn about that approach to the management of youth-at-risk.

**Most notably, Multnomah detains many fewer youth than Pierce County. In rough terms Pierce County detains approximately 75 percent of offenders, and Portland detains only 25 percent.**

Portland only uses detention for the safety of the community. It seeks alternative solutions in cases where no public safety issue is likely to be present. The Portland system maintains a more distinct separation between minor and more serious offenders than Pierce County, another significant difference. Youth accused of such minor offenses as shoplifting, truancy, substance abuse, and trespassing are directed to the NAFY Reception Center, not to that area's equivalent of Remann Hall.

## How Counselors Approach Cases

Typically, the youth is brought to the Portland center by a police officer and interviewed by a counselor. With furnishings designed to give a home-like atmosphere, counselors strive to provide support and assistance to find the bigger picture the youths face.

The Center is staffed around the clock, seven days a week with twelve social workers. Two counselors are always on duty. The county contributes \$350,000 toward the total annual budget of \$400,000. Rent and telephone costs come from the Police Department budget. The Center is located in the Old Town area of Portland on the light rail line.

Crucial to the Center's acceptance has been the close relationships established with the Portland Police Department. It started in a police station. That helped establish generally excellent relations with area police officers. The first Center director was a former Portland police chief.

Police for the most part strongly endorse the Center. Its staff members clearly attribute that to the Police Department's embrace of community policing. The Center's current executive director attended the community policing training program and periodically attends the Police Department roll call where community issues are discussed.

Although most police officers are supportive, some officers still come in and say, "This kid doesn't need cookies—he needs jail."

### Referrals are at police officer's discretion

The Reception Center processes approximately 120 youth per month. Referral of a youth to NAFY occurs at the discretion of the officers involved. They are able to obtain any existing police records about the individual through a Police Department computer terminal at the Center.

After brief questioning to determine whether the youth is cooperative, the counselor will initiate an intake process and enter case information into a stand-alone computer system. That information is shared with the Police Depart-

ment. The tone of the Center contrasts sharply with the aggressive law enforcement patterns of TV dramas.

A good-guy, bad-guy drama plays out. The youth understands that failure to cooperate can lead them to the Detention Center where more serious offenders are handled. The counselors avoid being confrontational. If a youth acts out, the counselor may ask the youth to leave. Out of control youth are not processed at the Center.

**The Portland/Multnomah program seeks to use detention for youth only when there is a risk to public safety, rather than for punishment.**

The program, differing as it does from the one in Tacoma/Pierce County, is not designed to enable youth to avoid the consequences of their behavior. Portland/Multnomah fosters an extensive and complex matrix of programs to "help youth develop into responsible, respectful, and accountable citizens of the community."

Among its programs are community service work crews, restitution, day reporting centers with structured

supervision, and weekend work camps at Oregon State Parks and US Forest Service sites. There are skill-building programs and anger management programs, as well as gang prevention, truancy reduction and domestic violence prevention.

Half the probation officers in Multnomah County are running programs, rather than managing individual case

loads. The counselors are also able to access related information on a convenient web site. Referrals may be guided by the cost and the client's ability to pay. Counselors attempt to establish trusting relationships with the children and their parents. The center becomes an advocate for these children when necessary.

## Goals of Portland Program

In summary, the NAFY Center's goal is to divert youth who do not pose a threat away from the Juvenile Justice system and toward community resources that can address their unmet needs. While the NAFY Center does not currently function fully as the "triage for all kids," it is a beginning. Erker, Remann Hall administrator, and others regard this as the "missing piece" in Tacoma's management of youth-at-risk and see merit and hope in this model.

Successful centers such as those in Portland and other communities learn that they achieve overall savings when fewer youths are incarcerated, even though other costs for non-criminal services may be incurred.

### MY DUMB MISTAKE

My life has been a huge  
Obstacle in many ways.  
I could never really understand  
How a young person like me  
Could lead such a rocky life  
Going to court in chains  
Being arrested and having  
Handcuffs thrown on my arms Because of my  
dumb mistake.

# Tacoma Police Department

*Lt. Barbara Justice of the Tacoma Police Department provided this interview, summarized below. She spoke to us as commander, Tacoma Sector One. Sector One, with residents of many cultures, covers the Tacoma Waterfront, Tideflats, Downtown, the Hilltop, and part of South Tacoma.*

## Frequently Encountered Youth, Family Problems.

**Drug and alcohol abuse:** Officers encounter many situations where drug and alcohol abuse in the family is apparent, sometimes including abuse by both parents and children. Police must operate without money for a referral/intervention system. Problems include, according to Lt. Justice, limited time for each call, absence of relevant enforceable youth-related criminal codes and lack of placement options other than Remann Hall or a hospital emergency room. Youth often remain in unhealthy environments, or are returned to their parents once they (or their parents) are released by the Court.

**Peer pressure:** Drug and alcohol abuse among youth accounts for lowering of inhibitions and disrespect for the law and parental rules. Linked to chemical influence is the peer pressure and “one-upmanship” often found among juvenile age groups. Lt. Justice related that many officers know kids who would hesitate to violate societal or parental rules, except for the dares received from their contemporaries.

Addictive behaviors (drugs, alcohol, etc.) require a constant source of money. Addicted youth may engage in burglaries, peer extortion or other criminal activities to subsidize their chemical dependencies, according to Lt. Justice.

**Institutionalization:** After release from institutionalization, youth may be less respectful of the system and less responsive to interventions on their behalf, Lt. Justice suggests. Current lack of system integrations and resources for youth often limit appropriate interventions. For example: child victims are placed in Remann Hall alongside violent offenders and others with severe mental health issues.

Incarceration with “hardened” antisocial personalities only teaches at-risk youths to be “better” criminals, to learn ways to escape detection, or how to “plead the system” to reduce the consequences. For relatively stable but developing personalities, the negative impact of being

classified with “crazies” undermines their self-worth and self-confidence, and their predictable, reactive behaviors are not conducive to healthy maturation.

Lack of good role models and rescuers can reinforce negative perceptions of self and society. Youth may look for someone to “blame.” Too often, the scapegoats may be innocent bystanders. Self-absorption and lack of coping skills and maturity may prompt desires for immediate gratification, whether as escape or confrontation.

**Disfunctional families:** When responding to domestic problem calls, officers often find families with multiple issues. Due to constraints of time, staffing and budget, officers provide only limited intervention and assistance.

Both the officers and supervisors recognize a critical need for a “one-stop shopping” referral source that can do crisis intervention, case management and referrals, and provide required follow up services, Lt. Justice acknowledges. Ideally, it would include a crisis line that the officers or a departmental liaison could use to connect family and youth with emergent crisis intervention services and next-day contacts.

Such issues use up policing resources. Officers are frustrated with the lack of effective, proactive system performance and integration needed to resolve chronic situations. Police encounter poor parenting skills and adults who are unable or unwilling to accept responsibility for themselves or their children, thereby perpetuating generational cycles of dysfunctional family organization.

### **Parent-child relationships:**

Lt. Justice believes that parenting is much harder today than in the past. Even many conscientious parents have lost control of their children, and must compete for the child’s attention with peers, media and popular culture. Officers responding to calls cannot intervene beyond the limitations of legal codes. They try to refer families to any relevant helping organizations.

### **Media influence depicted**

Media influence is viewed by Lt. Justice as incredibly detrimental because it

sensationalizes violence, but rarely points out long-term consequences of violent behavior. Youth cannot perform adult-level consequential reasoning. Youth-at-risk seem to have problems realizing how their actions directly affect people around them, as well as their own futures.

Officers try to help youth understand the penalties and consequences – when they can – but see another factor as impeding their interventions: parents who cannot or will not be parents. Lt. Justice shared observations that officers report encountering “too many” families where the parents

### **MISSING HIM**

*Born August 31, 1982*

*Lying in my mothers arms thinking how Un-usual why is this lady looking at me? Every-body is looking at me saying, It's a girl! How nice. two girls, twins!*

*Already 16, wishing I were out holding my boyfriend in my arms*

*Ready to brake down in tears*

*Sitting hear thinking if he's missing me. Think-ing, "What's he doing?" Right now is he work-ing or thinking about me or is he even thinking about me at all?*

*After I get out I'm going to change my life and I'm 'going to keep myself out trouble because I am not the girl to be in this place.*

seem no more responsible or mature than their offspring. Single parent homes may exponentially increase dysfunction with “revolving” partners, lack of parental emotional and financial stability or simply because the parent may not be much more than a child.

The promotion of so many different lifestyle choices may leave youth confused about appropriate behavior, according to Lt. Justice. With no singular, comprehensive standard of behavior and, without strong community and parental expectations, youth-at-risk may follow a course of least resistance. If the current role model is a peer group, or popular culture celebrity, the constant mixed messages they receive can cause anxiety and confusion in already troubled adolescents. With age-related poor impulse control, this further inhibits their ability to evaluate appropriate behavior and the consequences of those actions.

**Law enforcement priorities and responses:** Police are often criticized for not providing “good” services, but officers feel this is caused by erroneous perceptions of their professional role. With community based policing, law enforcement agencies have initiated a variety of youth service programs to supplement others already in existence. Tacoma Police Department has a history of hosting different activities and programs for youth-at-risk, but most of them were quietly phased out over the last two years. According to Lt. Justice, it appears to officers, and others that Tacoma’s City Council and city voters place very little priority on youth matters. Youth-at-risk programs may be treated as “frills,” scarcely competitive to “sexy” issues as economic development and large building projects.

Many officers donate off-duty time to work with youth-at-risk in such programs as coaching athletics and church group activities. These officers occasionally pay for necessities out of their own pockets. An overall impression: the vast majority of officers care about youth-at-risk, but are under orders to respond to calls as police, not social workers. The lack of adequate, integrated intervention and support services for youth and their families is a source of constant frustration to police, the responding officers on duty, supervisors, and command staff, according to Lt. Justice.

**Multicultural issues:** The area covered by Sector One has a high percentage of diverse populations with differences in culture, language and origin. Police note a lack of trust for the “system.” Law enforcement officers may not want to become involved with helping agencies.

Traditional belief systems that encourage families to solve all their problems internally or with authority figures inherited from their native cultures are characteristic of some cultural groups in Tacoma.

Lack of respect for non-English speaking elders by their children who have become acculturated in contemporary American society is encountered. Other factors include differing perspectives on multi-generational communication, illiteracy or lack of ability to read, write, or speak English; cultural heritages where youth and their

psychological or emotional needs historically have not been considered a priority; families composed of itinerant workers who frequently change social service and school districts without notifying caseworkers or schools.

Responding officers often only have time to deal with the most pressing problems. Lt. Justice noted that the department finds that Asian immigrants are often distrustful of law enforcement and may not report being victimized.

Migrants from the former Soviet Union brought with them a distrust of local law enforcement officers and may view police as “the enemy,” Lt. Justice observed. Those striving to “beat the system” with black market activities, may receive special attention from law enforcement officers.

## Criteria for a Resource Center

*Outlined by Lt. Justice:*

- Evaluate current intervention and treatment weaknesses to create a new, comprehensive system integration model.
- Include an effective outreach component as a key element.
- Create an assessment module for parents, siblings and youth-at-risk. Include extended family members involved with care giving and support.
- Allow case managers to create individualized treatment plans.
- Reflect awareness of cultural differences and educate families on the expectations of our society, and how they can integrate their homeland belief systems with American norms, standards and laws.
- Reduce paperwork requirements so more time can be spent with treatment and intervention.
- Have the center operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week with access and response capabilities.
- Don’t mix adjudicated criminals, foster care placements, low risk assessments and temporary custody cases together.
- Provide one-stop shopping to prevent service populations from being lost in the processes.
- Enable officers to process kids directly from the field.
- Create a self-referral support system for youth-at-risk. (This may include a non-threatening recreational or entertainment center.)

*Lt. Justice says a lot of kids get into trouble just due to boredom and a search for excitement.*

---

### ***“Because he was bored!”***

*A youth told police that he destroyed a “No Parking” sign on Broadway at 1 a.m. “because he was bored and just felt like it,” according to The News Tribune. He was arrested on suspicion of third degree malicious mischief and booked into Remann Hall. If he*

*lacked a record of more than two non-violent, non-sexual offenses, he would be considered for diversion and offered a behavior modification contract*

*Police report frequently hearing that refrain about offenses ranging from malicious mischief to far more serious ones. A juvenile convicted of murder in a pre-dawn death in the Wright Park vicinity so declared, according to police.*

---

## Pierce County Sheriff Dept.

*Assistant Chief Eileen Bisson, chief of operations of the Pierce County Sheriff Department, provided this interview.*

Pierce County Sheriff's Department (PCSD) provides police services for unincorporated areas of the county and fulfills policing contracts with such municipalities as Edgewood and Lakewood. The Pierce County Sheriff also administers the County Corrections Department including the jail complex on Tacoma Ave. The sheriff oversees several hundred corrections officers, provides deputies to the Courts and oversees removal of abandoned vehicles in unincorporated areas.

Sharing the County's overall funding shortfall, PCSD has operated with a staffing deficit of both uniformed officers and civilian support staff. To maintain operations at current capacity, without allowing for continuing population growth and crime trends will require an estimated \$6 million, according to Bisson. Because of funding problems, the department will not support a Center if it places additional demand on staff and budget.

PCSD runs community academies for adults and youth each year. In addition to introduction to law enforcement and PCSD, it operates an advanced academy and a youth academy. Other services include Search & Rescue, which uses pre-qualified youth under adult coordinators.

PCSD also partners with the Emergency Services Team, that works with families and youth.

### **Youth-At-Risk and Service Delivery**

Assistant Chief Bisson stated that approximately 15 percent of 911 calls to PCSD are youth-related including complaints of loud music and partying and cases of child abuse and neglect. PCSD is also finding more methadone labs run by youth and young adults, and child victims of lab production of methadone. About 100 cases a month require removal of youths from the home. Meth laboratories produce poisonous waste products.

Trends observed by Bisson include "abuse, neglect, poor parenting skills, poor supervision of youth and children's whereabouts and activities, and a lack of stable

role models." Bisson also stated youth and children are left out of much social planning. Economic factors play a big part of "at-risk" treatment, adjudication and corrections." Fragmented intervention systems are among the most frustrating conditions deputies encounter. Involved are schools, counselors, law enforcement, the Courts, and parents.

Bisson listed these negative impacts on youth:

- Not enough facilities to deal appropriately and individually with each case
- Youth and their families have "too many appointments, too many people" to deal with
- The system is overloaded, and incapable of doing individualized interventions
- The numbers of juvenile offenders and victims are both rising on an annual basis, and
- By the time a juvenile is incarcerated in the system, it is usually too late for that person to re-enter society successfully. Bisson would start interventions on a pre-school level. Focus on the parents first, then the youth.
- Almost all youth-at-risk cases encountered by PCSD would benefit from follow-up within 24 hours and *appropriate* interventions. This is not done due to lack of coordination, staff, money and the multiplicity of system participants.

## A Wish List

*Asst. Chief Bisson listed these services she and her deputies would most welcome:*

- Adequate funding and a budget to deliver a variety of individualized intervention services.
- An outreach component to help youth and families stabilize the home environment, or to investigate missed appointments.
- An integrated referral network to get the types of help and interventions needed.
- An adequate number of well-trained professional staff.
- Safe and affordable respite care where youth, either alone or with their parents, can obtain a "cooling-off" period and diagnosis of the core problem(s).

with youth-at-risk as a priority function. The corps of nurses who conduct in-depth evaluations of home situations is regarded as one of the department's most valuable assets. Nurses are often welcomed more readily than law enforcement officials or social workers, we were told.

## Health Department

The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, a joint agency of Tacoma and Pierce County, regards intervention



These visits provide a window to view family dynamics, general health environment and economic conditions in the home enabling them to diagnose and prescribe solutions.

#### **Department's role with youth expanding**

Traditionally the role of the Health Department in dealing with youth in Tacoma/Pierce County focused on pregnancy, drugs and infection control. This role expanded in the early 1990's with the Gang Reduction Interagency Project (GRIP). Some twenty gang related families were studied with the objective of keeping younger siblings away from gangs. A pilot program, it emerged from other departmental initiatives.

The Tacoma Middle School Project focused on five middle schools that sent large numbers of children to Remann Hall. A department nurse was assigned to each school. Low grades, behavioral problems and poor attendance were factors.

State laws in recent years resulted in two other programs in which the department plays a vital role.

The Moderate Offender Program uses a standard risk assessment tool to evaluate youthful offenders and adopt uniform treatment approaches. The BECCA Program responds to the needs of runaway and truant youth. The department dispatches nurses to homes identified with youth-at-risk.

Multi-level family issues are frequently brought to light and addressed. Nurses perform evaluations and make recommendations that promote successful outcomes, especially through the use of Functional Family Therapy (FFT).

thirty at-risk-families each year are provided Functional Family Therapy. responds to the needs of runaway and truant youth. The department dispatches nurses to homes identified with youth-at-risk. Multi-level family issues are frequently brought to light and addressed. Nurses perform evaluations and make recommendations that promote successful outcomes, especially through the use of Functional Family Therapy (FFT). After completing evaluations, thirty at-risk-families each year are provided Functional Family Therapy.

#### **PRISM addresses violence, substance abuse**

The GRIP study also led to the PRISM Program to address violence and substance abuse among youth through community collaboration. Health Department nurses conduct evaluations with youth identified as uncooperative and frequently offer FFT to the youth and his or her family.

The Health Department also launched the School Violence Reduction Program in cooperation with the Tacoma School District where counselors identify children with violent tendencies.

Youth-at-risk depend on support and services from many public and private organizations in our community. The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department plays a key role in this support network. A

proactive philosophy, early intervention and reaching out to families in crisis has resulted in successful rescue of youth-at-risk in our community.

#### **BUTTERFLY SONG**

I started out as a caterpillar rolled up in a ball.  
Fell asleep in my cocoon, feeling so small.  
Tears run down me as I reflect on my changes,  
One day I'll come back and feel the rearranges.  
Becoming a butterfly, losing all my friends,  
at least I'll be able to fly to the end.  
Eleven months I've been here so far,  
I've so long left that time is in a jar.  
Take it as it comes because one day my wings  
will be strong.

I hope, I pray that it won't be too long.  
I'm the only butterfly still in its cocoon,  
I know, I know I'll descend soon.  
Later days, come my ways, as I'm gone, this is  
my last BUTTERFLY SONG!

Steve



## F. Navigating Community Services

*“REMEMBER: You are not alone. There are people who want to help. There are people who care.”*

-Youth Yellow Pages introductory statement.

Tacoma/Pierce County has an impressive variety of services to children and youth-at-risk.

This section presents services available primarily in the private sector. Many would probably receive referrals from the proposed Community Assessment Center.

The Tacoma and Surrounding Area Qwest Dex directory offers the following:

- ❖ **COMMUNITY SERVICE NUMBERS**, p.49-52, include 18 listings for Child/Youth/Teens, and 5 youth oriented Counseling/Mental Health entries. **Crisis Hotlines**, p.50, provides 7 numbers, none of which appear specifically directed toward youth/teens.
- ❖ **GOVERNMENT LISTINGS**, p.82 has categories for Social Services, United Way, Health Department, and Mental Health:
  - **State social Services** - Approximately 30 listings, 6 directed to youth including Children & Family Services and Juvenile Rehabilitation.
  - **United Way** – (Non-governmental) It is listed in the white page business section and shows a bold, yellow-highlighted helpline number both local and 800 along with business numbers. **Helpline** operates as a referral resource during most business hours with message system for remaining hours. Youth-at-risk related calls are not in the top 10 requests for services information. Those they do receive are generally referred to the Safe Place System or Choice Program.
  - **Health Department/Mental Health** - Under Pierce County Government or specific City under Washington State Government. Pierce County lists Family Support Centers General Information by community.
- ❖ **YOUTH YELLOW PAGES**. A pocket-sized, 30-page booklet. Page 2 lists a Table of Contents with 18 categories, the first of which is **Crisis Hotlines page 3**. Project Safe Place published the current issue in 1997, and a new edition was due out in the fall of 2001. This

booklet is primarily distributed through the Middle and High School systems of Pierce County or to agencies or individuals referred through United Way.

- **Project Safe Place** (Teen Crisis Line) is a hotline listed in the Youth Yellow Pages. This organization, a program of Gateway's for Youth & Family, is nationally sponsored by the YMCA and locally funded through multiple grants. The service provides confidential 24-hour crisis intervention for adolescents 12 to 17 years of age. In addition to phone interaction, providing support and referral services information, personnel will meet or pick up homeless or runaway youth.

Limitations to the service are the lack of shelters for youth under 18. Foster placement, when available, is the only option and requires parental approval. When approval is not available, law enforcement may become involved to access available space in the Crisis Residential Center.

- **Parent Warm Line** (Crisis Line) is another listing in the Youth Yellow Pages. This is a support and referral line providing information about accessing services through Comprehensive, Greater Lakes, or Good Samaritan Mental Health Systems based on zip code. In emergencies, a crisis intervention team can be accessed through a mental health facility by the client or crisis line worker.

As another approach, **COMMUNITY SERVICES for YOUTH** can be categorized according to funding structure or sponsorship as follows: United Way Funded, School District Services, Faith Community Services, Community-based Coalitions, or Government founded/funded including the Juvenile Justice System. These categories might also be viewed as routes or doorways to services.

**UNITED WAY** funds a specific group of programs categorized as youth-at-risk. Youth at-risk-guidelines were defined according to certain risk and protective factors by social work researchers, Hawkins and Catalano, from University of Washington. These factors create two categories of services for children, youth and families:

- ❖ **Intervention mode** characteristically involves 3<sup>rd</sup> party intervention or referral by Juvenile Justice system, school systems, or parents. Specific factors might be crimes, runaway, truancy, or factors due to exposure to a high risk environment.
- ❖ **Prevention mode** involves programs generally accessed by choice and are further identified as youth development programs.

❖ **United Way** funds these Youth-At-Risk programs for 7/1/01 to 6/30/03:

Boy Scouts of America – Pacific Harbors (Scouting/Exploring/Venture for At Risk Youth),  
 Boys & Girls Clubs of Pierce County (Teen Program Support),  
 Camp Fire Boys & Girls-Orca Council (Building Bridges),  
 Centro Latino SER (Youth At-Risk Program),  
 Diaz Art for Youth (New D.A.Y.),  
 Faith Homes (Family Support),  
 Gateways for Youth & Families of Tacoma (Safe Place Teen Resource Center),  
 Girl Scouts – Pacific Peaks Council (Girl Scout Outreach),  
 Indochinese Cultural and Service Center (Youth-at-risk),  
 Tacoma Urban League (MASAI Program),  
 YMCA-Downtown Branch (Late Night).

*An additional 13 programs categorized as Youth Development were also funded.*

**United Way** also prints an extensive [Directory of Community Services](#) available from their office for \$15. This directory is available in public libraries and at United Way's website, [www.uwpc.org](http://www.uwpc.org). The directory contains a 130-page Subject/Keyword Index, a 26-page Alphabetical Program/Service Index, with the remaining 288 pages providing brief program descriptions with contact information.

### FAITH COMMUNITY SERVICES

Local congregations, while offering program/activity-based youth groups, are not generally involved in youth-at-risk outreach programs. While it is estimated that throughout our county 5,000 youth are involved in or influenced by church groups, youth-at-risk do not generally turn to churches for help.

One local large congregation, **Life Center**, opens outdoor and indoor facilities to youth for supervised recreational interaction on a weekly basis. This gathering attracts between 200 to 500 participants per event and includes a short spiritual message.

Broader based organizations such as **Youth for Christ** play an active role with the youth-at-risk population. They provide chaplain services at Remann Hall, and offer, in conjunction with public funding, parenting learning oppor-

tunities in area churches, and participate in a foster care program.

Nationwide **Lutheran Brotherhood** in conjunction with **Search Institute** launched the *Healthy Communities. Healthy Youth (HC.HY)* initiative in 1996 seeks to motivate and equip individuals, organizations, and their leaders to join together in nurturing competent, caring and responsible children and adolescents. Forty developmental assets have been identified as building blocks for healthy development.

### ❖ COMMUNITY BASED COALITIONS

Currently there are eleven Pierce County Human Service Community Collaborations. One example, Lakewood's Promise, is a partner in America's Promise – The Alliance for Youth. This national campaign that was chaired by Colin Powell seeks to provide youth with five fundamental resources:

- An ongoing relationship with a caring adult – mentor, tutor, coach;
- Safe places and structured activities during non-school hours;
- A healthy start for a healthy future;
- A marketable skill through effective education; and
- An opportunity to give back through community service.

Lakewood's program involves a collaboration of community organizations, human services agencies, businesses and individuals.

### ❖ GOVERNMENT FOUNDED/FUNDED

Services specifically for teens and their families can be obtained through Family Reconciliation Services (FRS), division of Children & Family Services that is funded by the state. This line is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with FRS or CPS intake social workers. Either a youth or parents may request assistance. Social workers evaluate and recommend services. Intake information may be taken to initiate no cost services. Crisis situations, with possible impending threat to a youth, would be routed through mental health or law enforcement systems.

Gaps in the systems seem to be in the area of foster, respite, or protective care for teens. Little space is available to meet these temporary needs and indeed troubled youth may end up hanging out at the Department Of Social and Health Services while services are initiated. Frequently few alternatives exist to avoid returning youth to a volatile or abusive environment. Protective intervention requires meeting stringent criteria for youth past 11 years of age. With law enforcement involvement, limited space may be available in



the Crisis Residential Center for youths not currently charged with or on probation for crime. Once a youth is charged with a crime they are dealt with under the Juvenile Justice System.

- **CHOICE**/Pierce County Alliance provides some transitional housing for runaways. Clients come to this program through state referral and already have a caseworker. Other youth-at-risk services are available.

**PROVIDER COLLABORATION** efforts exist in the community. One such effort, the **Commission on Children, Youth and Families**, has been eliminated by the Pierce County Council. Through that process a 14 member ad hoc task force was established to evaluate ongoing critical needs of a commission and develop recommendations. The June 2001 published **Recommendations** state: “The Task Force found that although children, youth and families in Pierce County have many resources to enhance their lives, there is no one point of coordination and information.”

Recommendations include the formation through a design team process of another children’s commission that would ultimately provide a single point of contact for community services apart from fund distribution. (A separate committee would address allocation of levy funds). Development of a countywide strategic plan through community collaboration is proposed. It would address such topics as vision, resources, single-point access and outcome-based evaluation.

The task force vision suggests:

“The Commission develops the countywide strategic plan to strengthen families, children and youth, and advocates for and catalyses collaboration among Pierce County stakeholders for the achievement of that plan. The plan, advancing fundamental principles and guidelines, is research-based, builds on community assets, and recommends best practices.”

## Recurring Themes

*These recurring themes emerged from discussions with social service providers.*

- An easily accessed, good system of family support, with early intervention available to all families is not only essential for the well being of individuals and community, but very cost effective in the long run. Dollars spent at this level of support and intervention avert considerably more costly problems later.
- Continued collaborative efforts and centralized information systems could bring more effective utilization of present services.
- Poor resources and systems at the middle school level need to be addressed before behavior problems become chronic or crimes are committed. Intervention systems for youth-at-risk prior to crime are not readily and easily accessible.
- Our community provides no “drop-in” or assessment facility specifically for teens. There is considerable lack of facility for teens in general, but particularly acute are those required to meet the needs for foster, shelter, protective care, and substance abuse programs.
- Additionally, completely lacking is any facility for intervention at the early level of misdemeanor, and destructive behaviors. Police are left with the decision/responsibility to release, to transport to homes (when a responsible adult is available) or process into Remann Hall detention facility. This leads to the increasing concern and challenge of meeting the escalating space needs for juvenile detention and correction.

## G. Perspectives and Insights

*Committee members' observations and perspectives provide the personal journeys of study group members to the finished product.*

### A Pro-Tem Judge's Observations

*Editor's note: In Juvenile Court, experienced attorneys are sometimes appointed to substitute as a temporary judge (pro tem) when scheduling issues arise. We have some observations from one such pro tem judge who is a member of the task force that prepared this report.*

By Joe Quaintance

When I sit as a substitute judge in juvenile court, I am frustrated that I cannot spend as much time as I wish speaking directly with each child. The children seldom cry. They sit unmoving, quiet, rigid. In court they are obedient and respectful. They usually have nothing to say. Their court appointed attorneys speak for them.

In court I want to address each child personally, hopefully helping him or her to gain the insight that will solve their problems, but the time is not available and the problems are overwhelming. I rely upon the reports in the file and the recommendations from the prosecutor, defense attorney, probation officer and, when they appear, family and community leaders. Sometimes the parents do not show.

I am grateful for the professionalism and dedication of the attorneys, staff, and treatment providers. But I am reminded always there is no substitute for parental involvement.

With these children we take satisfaction in small steps.

### Somebody Else's Problem

By Peter Baker

At first, I was not as excited about this topic as the rest of the committee, feeling it had been addressed in the earlier study "V is for Violence, S is for School," and that there were many other issues, both positive and negative, facing Tacoma that were worthy of our attention. My mind was changed as the pattern emerged of at-risk-youth being "somebody else's problem," handed off, agency-to-agency. The root causes are many, but looming large were such issues as budgetary constraints, demand overload, political and legal issues.

The schools, we found, have contradictory requirements of meeting the needs of all students and zero-tolerance policies, and the resources to meet neither requirement. Juvenile Court (Remann Hall) has become the de-facto drop-in center for families in crisis, putting troubled children in contact with hardened criminals instead of therapists.

Furthermore, the judges presiding at Juvenile Court are rotating volunteers, rather than a more permanent arrangement. The volunteers are motivated and interested in being there, and they do great work, but they burn out and they miss the variety of "real" judicial work. Juvenile Justice as a permanent specialty would provide process ownership for long-term constructive change.

The police, meanwhile, have their hands full with the parents of these kids, and with those youth who commit more serious crimes. When the police are chasing truants and vandals around the city, there is an opportunity cost elsewhere. The Tacoma/Pierce County Health Department has been very aggressive in the area of youth, but demand has frequently outstripped resources.

Last but not least are the families themselves.

We heard from a former teacher that kids move from school to school with alarming frequency and their records, which might be used to get them help, don't always follow them.

We heard from the police about the many issues such as language and a culture of distrust of authority that keep at-risk youth from services.

We heard from the Health Department about family issues such as substance use, grinding poverty, abuse, neglect, and multiple partners that provide the dysfunctional model for the lives of these children.

These parents are the children profiled in the earlier study. The city failed them. Will we fail their children also?

### First Port of Call

By Ben Gilbert

Establishment by Tacoma and Pierce County of a central assessment and referral center for youth-at-risk on the Portland/Multnomah model is a key recommendation of this study. It would become the first port of call for a troubled youth, a place where professional assistance would be available to decide whether to send the offender to the criminal justice system or route him or her for non-criminal treatment. That is based on the premise that a successful outcome is likely if the diversion effort is made early and forcefully enough. (Police officers could still send youth evidently involved in the commission of a serious crime directly to Remann Hall.)

Portland/Multnomah County has successfully devised non-criminal solutions for the great majority of its troubled youth, a jolting contrast with the pattern evident in Tacoma-Pierce County.

As the report points out there is no shortage of Tacoma/Pierce County community agencies with programs for troubled youth beyond Remann Hall in both governmental and non-profit sectors. The way the agencies interface and

reinforce each other may need to be strengthened. For instance, a need for a centralized computer tracking system that would minimize duplication and waste of effort was identified. That would be a 21<sup>st</sup> Century measure to assure that existing community resources and case information are brought into play to assure coordinated case-by-case problem solving efforts.

Seven years ago, another City Club study group prepared a report on youth violence entitled “V is for Violence, S is for School.” That report, revisited with this study, also called for early and forceful intervention actions before the youth get into real trouble. Professionals cautioned in that report “that steps taken after a child’s involvement with the juvenile justice system come too late.” In fact, some research suggests that the pre-school years are not too early for intervention. (See Linda Pearn’s commentary.)

This report’s indictment is even more stern: “Children suffering from numerous ills, including extreme poverty, homelessness, domestic violence, and abuse and neglect at the hands of addicted and irresponsible parents are being denied protections and opportunities that no society should tolerate.”

**The assessment center being proposed is only one step. But its creation would be a way for Tacoma-Pierce County to state that it does not intend to wait another seven years to be reminded again of its obligations to its neglected children.**

## Early Childhood Intervention

By Linda Pearn

*Retired school teacher, administrator of City Club, and a task force member.*

Each and every day, children learn from their experiences at home. There are no weekends off and no summer vacations, as they look to their parents daily to help them interpret the world. This informal learning during the first five years of life is perhaps the most powerful educational experience of all for any child, shaping a child’s values, beliefs, and perceptions of life.

The beliefs of parents are reflected in many of their actions and in what they say to their children. To the extent that these beliefs are healthy, children learn effective coping skills and positive ways to relate to the world. On the other hand, susceptible children may experience many problems as adults if unsound beliefs are internalized.

When this happens, self-esteem, relationships, achievement, the ability to trust, and general views of life may all be adversely affected.

If ever there is a time for revisiting moral education, this may be the best. A glance through the newspaper or a quick look at the evening news will tell us how dearly our children need moral education. What once was taught in home and church is now being left unattended and there just isn’t enough time in a school day to teach the curriculum and handle moral and social development too.

**Observations:** In my 30 years of teaching kindergarten children I saw an increase in the number of children demonstrating frequent outbursts of aggressive behaviors such as hitting, biting and name-calling. The behaviors are disruptive and sooner or later, someone is bound to get hurt. I also saw an alarming increase in drug use amongst very young teens, who became pregnant and passed prenatal drug and alcohol symptoms on to their babies. These children came to school with quick, strike first, aggressive behaviors, and seemingly no remorse for hurting other children in the classroom. They are not able to focus for any length of time and quickly resort to any method to get what they want. “Taking things that don’t belong to us” was seen as the best way to achieve their desire to have it.

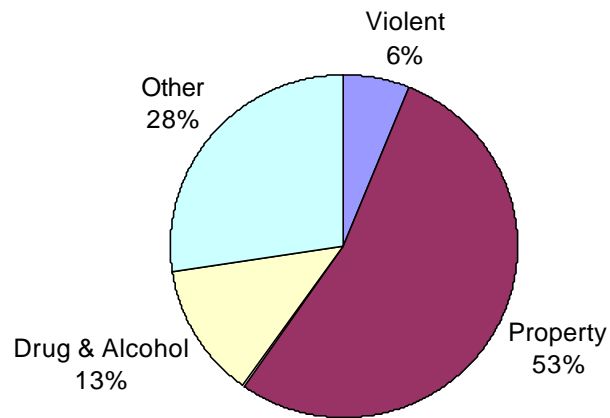
Other children feel that they have no worth in the eyes of an adult if they are not Number One. Outdoing everyone else is the name of the game here even if they have to resort to cheating. When a child is reinforced in ways that excessively link performance to self-esteem, the stage is set for later problems. These children become personally bitter and take their frustrations out on others.

**Solutions:** Although we know that it is quite expensive, focusing our attention and resources on programs that foster positive care from birth to five can and will make a huge difference in a child’s life. It is not easy to speak out against situations that are unhealthy for children, but it is everyone’s responsibility to intervene and become an advocate for the young child. We can not expect a “kinder world” if we do not embrace a healthy, safe environment for all children, regardless of race, economics and environment. An ounce of prevention now will surely lead to less money being spent on correction institutions for the next generation.

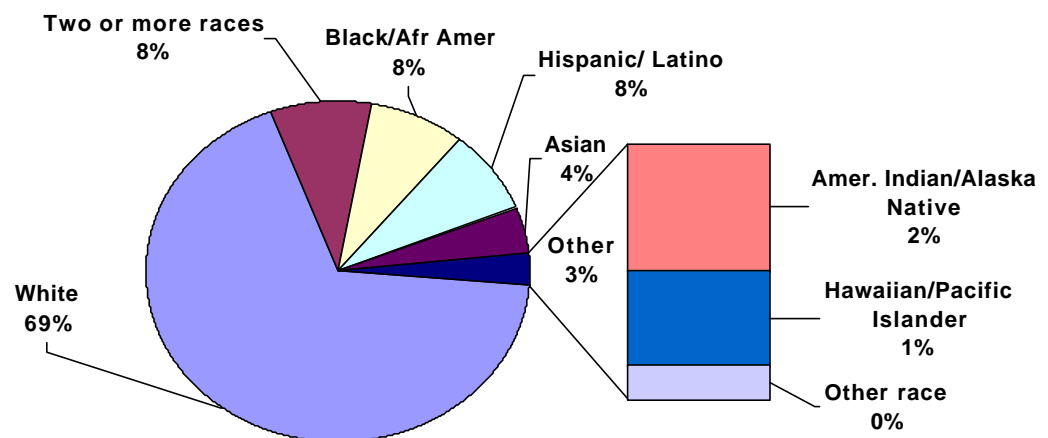
Let’s not wait another seven years

# Demographic and Law Enforcement Graphs

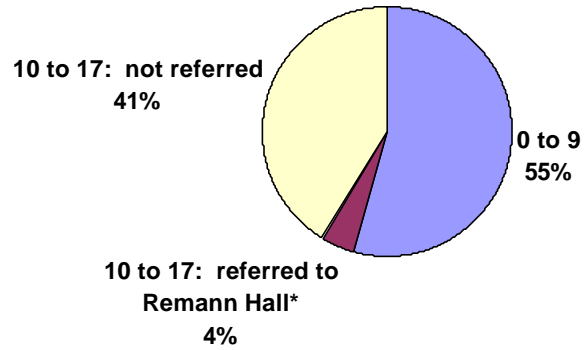
**1999 Juvenile Arrests**



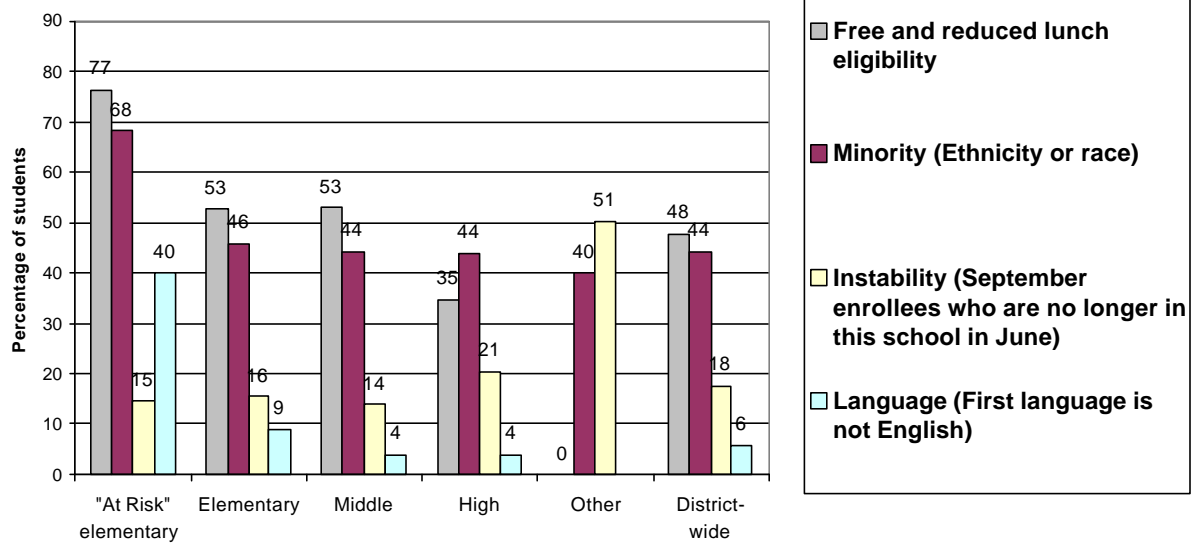
**Pierce County Youth, 0 to 17 years, 2000**



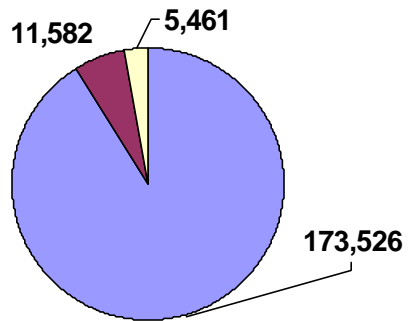
### Youth in Pierce County Referred to Remann Hall



### Social Stresses in Tacoma Public Schools

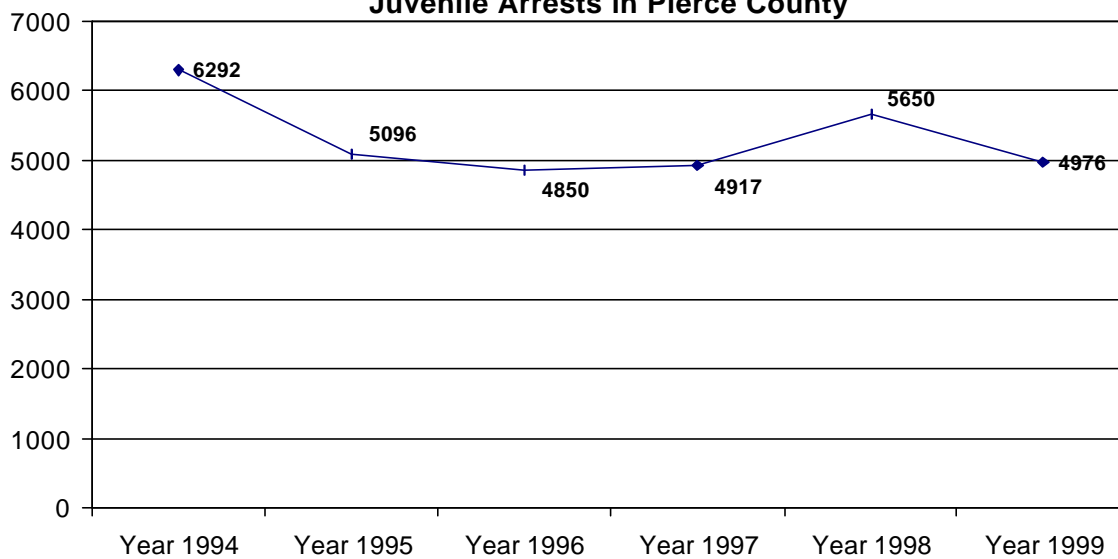


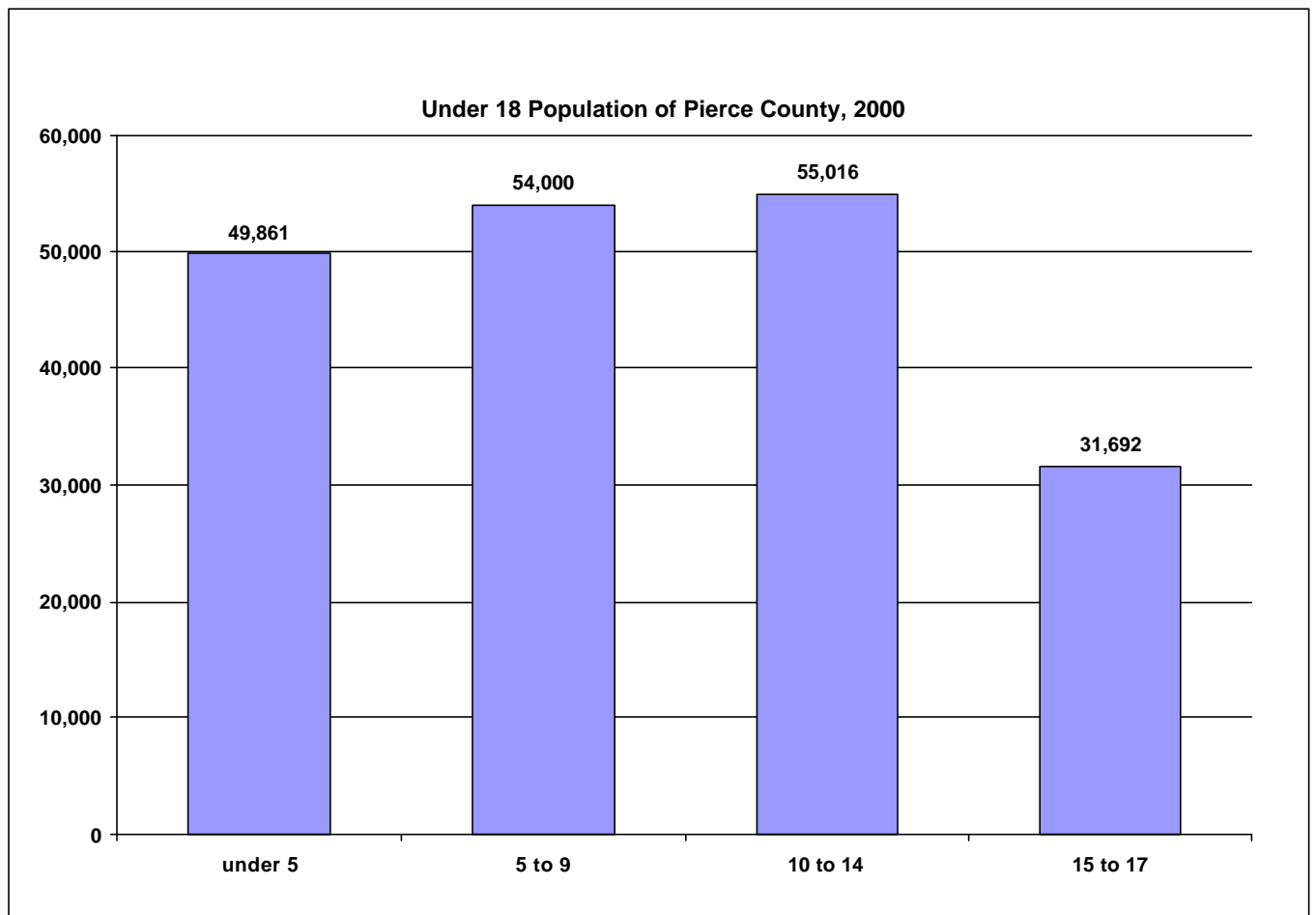
### Where children are in Pierce County, 2000



- Children in households headed by parent
- Children in households headed by relative who is not their parent
- Other (Foster care, institution, living with non-relatives etc)

### Juvenile Arrests in Pierce County





# I. Acknowledgements

*The study committee thanks the following  
for their insights and assistance.*

Eileen W. Bisson, Pierce County Sheriff's Dept.  
Wendell Brown, Pierce County Council  
Kevin Colwell, Program Director, Project Safe Place  
Patrick R. Cooper, Pierce County Prosecutor's Office  
Doug Crandall, Pierce County Human Services  
Dr. Federico Cruz-Uribe, Director, Tacoma-Pierce  
County Health Department  
Daniel J. Erker, Pierce County Juvenile Court  
Marcia Golubic, Executive Director,  
Indochinese Cultural and Service Center  
Beth Hancock, Pierce County Prosecutor's Office  
Ron Hanna, Program Development Specialist  
Rick Jensen, Detention Reform Project  
Multnomah County Oregon  
Barbara Justice, Tacoma Police Department  
Thomas P. Larkin, Pierce County Superior Court  
Dawn Lucien, Community Advisor,  
City Club past president  
Ken Maatz, Faith Homes  
Shelly Maluo, Pierce County Juvenile Court  
Kristina McKenzie, Greater Lakes Mental Healthcare  
Paul D. Mielbrecht, Tacoma Police Department  
Alfonso Montoya, Exec. Director, Centro Latino SER  
J.D. Moore, Family Reconciliation Services  
Eileen O'Brien, Pierce County Prosecutor's Office  
Patrick O'Malley, Pierce County Council  
Mat Reitzug, Pierce County Juvenile Court  
Janet Richardson, Tacoma Urban League  
Mike Robinson, United Way  
Karen Smitherman, Tacoma Public Schools  
Lin Spellman, Pierce County Juvenile Court  
Artie Steffens, Tacoma Public Schools  
James Stegmiller, JDAI Project Assistant,  
Multnomah County Oregon  
J Michelle Swope, Director of Community Programs,  
Pierce County AIDS Foundation  
David Vance, Tacoma Pierce County Health Dept.  
Jack Wigmore, Director, New Avenues For Youth  
Reception Center, Portland, OR  
Beth Wilson, PRISM Project Coordinator,  
Tacoma/Pierce County Health Department  
Joby Winans, Interim Director Children's Commission  
Gary Yazwa, President/CEO,  
Boys and Girls Clubs of Pierce County  
Gregg Zylstra, Helpline Director, United Way





# CITY CLUB OF TACOMA

## Community Studies Reports

- DROPOUT REPORT - 1985
- TACOMA'S 1% FOR THE ARTS PROGRAM  
Financing of public art - 1985
- REVITALIZATION OF PACIFIC AVENUE – 1985
- CHILD PROSTITUTION IN TACOMA – 1985
- A VOTING SYSTEM FOR PIERCE COUNTY – 1985
- DOME TO DEFIANCE, TACOMA'S URBAN WATERFRONT  
Goals for the city's waterfront - 1988
- ARSENIC AND AN OLD SMELTER, ASARCO SITE CLEANUP  
Prospects and problems of the ASARCO site - 1990
- VISIONS FOR ASARCO'S SITE  
A follow-up report on design proposals – 1994
- BEYOND THE BOXES, A vision for Tacoma and Pierce County  
Using the Port's broad development powers - 1994
- **V** IS FOR VIOLENCE, **S** IS FOR SCHOOL  
Coping with unacceptable behavior - 1995
- CROSSING THE NARROWS, A land use issue. Bridge congestion,  
growth and development on the Gig Harbor Peninsula - 1997
- TACOMA'S GOVERNMENT, Should it be changed? Comparing the  
City Council-manager form with a "strong mayor" plan - 1997
- LIVING DOWNTOWN: About increasing the housing supply  
to improve Downtown's livability and viability – 1998
- A BUILDING REBORN: Saga of a Landmark – 1999

## YOUTH-AT-RISK – IMPROVING THE ODDS - 2002