

Fiscal Highlights

Behavioral Health Needs of At-Risk and Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth - Clare Tobin Lence

At the July interim meeting of the Executive Offices and Criminal Justice (EOCJ) Appropriations Subcommittee, the Division of Juvenile Justice Services (JJS) presented a report on the [behavioral health needs of at-risk and juvenile justice-involved youth](#).

JJS utilized data from the [Student Health and Risk Prevention \(SHARP\) Statewide Survey](#) to identify behavioral health needs in the general population of Utah youth. According to the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, the administering agency, "the survey is administered every two years, to students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 in most public and certain charter school districts across Utah. The survey was designed to assess adolescent substance use, anti-social behavior, and the risk and protective factors that predict these adolescent problem behaviors." JJS reported that about 20 percent of youth in Utah have "one or more mental, emotional or behavioral disorders that cause some level of impairment within a given year" and that fewer than 20 percent of those individuals receive mental health services. Among youth with anti-social behaviors, gang involvement, or aggressive tendencies, the need for mental health treatment was as high as 37 percent. Additionally, youth suicide rates have increased from 3.0 to 8.5 individuals per 100,000 since 2007.

For juvenile justice-involved youth, JJS provided data from a screening tool given to individuals admitted to Youth Services and Detention Centers, called the MAYSI-2, which is designed to assess alcohol/drug use, angry-irritable/depressed-anxious tendencies, somatic complaints, suicide ideation, and thought disturbance. Youth are flagged as "critical" based on certain criteria in the screening. Screenings identified 60 percent of those in Youth Services and 47 percent of those in Detention as "critical." JJS uses another tool, the Protective Risk Assessment, for those in JJS custody programs. Among youth in Community Placement, 45 percent had one or more mental health problems and 57 percent had an alcohol or drug issue; among youth in Secure Care, 48 percent had one or more mental health problems and 71 percent had an alcohol or drug issue.

JJS provides mental health and substance abuse treatment for youth in custody. In 2016, mental health treatment cost \$354 on average per youth per day. Substance abuse treatment cost \$125 on average per youth per day. These costs have risen in recent years, as shown in the chart below.

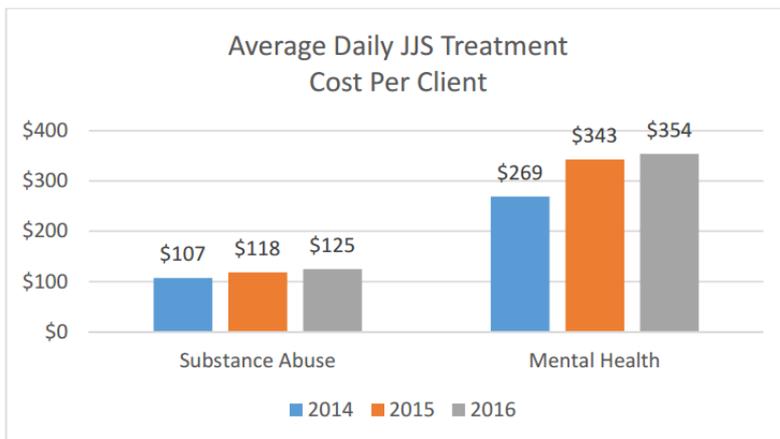


Figure 1: Average Costs of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment for JJS Youth

The Utah juvenile justice system is currently undergoing an evaluation by the Pew Charitable Trusts, in conjunction with a statewide task force, the [Utah Juvenile Justice Working Group](#). The group is charged with "protecting public safety, holding youth accountable, containing costs, and improving outcomes for youth, families, and communities." Statutory, budgetary, and policy changes that result from the working group's efforts are expected to mirror the recent changes in the adult correctional system through the [Justice Reinvestment Initiative](#) (JRI), passed as [H.B. 438 \(2015 General Session\)](#). Increased funding for mental health and substance abuse treatment is a major component of JRI, and based on the data presented by JJS to EOCJ, will likely be an important aspect of juvenile system reform as well.