



Redirection as Effective as Residential Delinquency Programs, Achieved Substantial Cost Avoidance

at a glance

Although it experienced several start-up challenges, the Redirection program is generally performing as directed and has met its contract performance measures. The pilot sites also successfully involved judges, state attorneys, and public defenders, as well as youth and their families.

Preliminary results indicate that the Redirection pilots are as effective as residential programs in reducing subsequent arrests and operate at a considerably lower cost. The initial pilot counties, Dade, Broward, and Escambia, experienced a significantly greater reduction in commitments for non-law violations of probation than other counties. Redirection appears to have achieved a \$2 million cost savings for the state in its first year of operation.

While youth on electronic monitoring were somewhat less likely to commit a new crime while they were being monitored, this effect was not statistically significant.

Judges and prosecutors in the original pilot counties recommend expanding the Redirection eligibility criteria to include appropriate youth who are being committed to residential programs for misdemeanors and some violent offenses. If 245 additional youth were diverted from residential commitment to Redirection, the state could save an additional \$2.3 million.

Scope

In its 2004 and 2005 sessions the Legislature directed OPPAGA to conduct a longitudinal evaluation of the effectiveness of the Redirection pilot program for juvenile offenders.¹ This report presents preliminary data on the program and its effectiveness, addressing the following questions:

- Is the pilot program operating as intended by the Legislature?
- Has the program reduced commitments for non-law violations of probation in the counties where it was implemented?
- How does the program compare with residential commitment in reducing arrests?
- Does the use of electronic monitoring improve program results?
- Has the program reduced juvenile justice costs?
- Would additional youth benefit from the program?

A subsequent report will analyze program results when outcome data is available for a larger group of youth over a longer period of time.

¹ General Appropriations Acts of 2005 and 2006.

Background

The Legislature authorized the Redirection pilot program in response to a growing trend of juvenile offenders committed to residential delinquency programs for non-law violations of probation.² Non-law violations occur when a youth does not follow court-ordered probation requirements such as keeping a specified curfew or attending school. The Redirection pilot program is intended to reduce costs by diverting appropriate youth who commit non-law violations from residential programs to therapy-based community programs.³

The Legislature specified that Redirection provide Multisystemic Therapy and Functional Family Therapy.⁴ These therapy models have been identified as Blueprint Programs for Violence Prevention by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, meaning that they have the highest level of experimental research showing sustained reductions in recidivism for serious and violent offenders compared to residential treatment programs. The programs provide therapy in the home and focus on helping parents implement more effective ways to communicate with, monitor, and discipline their adolescent children.

The pilot program initially operated in Dade, Broward, and Escambia counties in Fiscal Year 2004-05, as these counties had high rates of commitment for non-law violations. These counties also already had Functional Family Therapy and Multisystemic Therapy providers, so the program could build on their experience rather than starting from scratch. The program subsequently expanded to include Pinellas, Hillsborough, Brevard, Orange, Seminole, and Osceola counties for Fiscal Year 2005-06.

² *More Youth Are Admitted for Less Serious Offenses, in Part to Meet Treatment Needs*, OPPAGA [Report No. 03-76](#), December 2003.

³ Youth are not eligible for Redirection if they have been adjudicated or convicted of a prior violent crime or first-degree felony or otherwise have a criminal history of such offenses.

⁴ Multisystemic Therapy is an intensive family-based treatment that addresses multiple causes of serious antisocial behavior in youth; it generally lasts four months. Functional Family Therapy is a family-based treatment that focuses on family dynamics and accountability; it generally lasts three months.

Questions and Answers

Is the program operating as intended by the Legislature?

Although it has experienced several challenges, the Redirection program is generally performing as directed and has met or exceeded its contract performance measures. The program had initial difficulty in meeting its goal for number of youth served, but is on target now. Key stakeholder groups, including judges, state attorneys, and public defenders report that pilot administrators worked with them successfully to develop protocols for identifying and diverting appropriate youth to the program, and most families were willing to participate in therapy with their children.

Most required program components were included. The program was intended to include therapy, electronic monitoring, and residential stabilization services. To administer the program's therapeutic component the department contracted with Evidence-Based Associates.⁵ As directed by the Legislature, the program included as a comparison group some pilot youth who were placed on electronic monitoring, and the department contracted with Behavioral Interventions, Inc., to provide electronic monitoring for this sample of youth. However, while the Legislature also directed that a second comparison group of youth be sent to residential stabilization for a short period of incarceration similar to detention, the department did not receive responsive bids to the request for residential stabilization providers, so this service was not provided.

⁵ Evidence-Based Associates subcontracted for Functional Family Therapy with Camelot Community Care, Children's Psychiatric Center, The Starting Place, Vision Quest, and Community Solutions, Incorporated. For Multisystemic therapy it contracted with Henderson Mental Health Center, the Henry and Rilla White Foundation, and Community Solutions, Incorporated.

Program stakeholders were highly involved. Legislators involved in establishing the pilot project indicated that it was very important that program staff work closely with stakeholders in the courts system. To meet this directive, program administrators held several meetings with judges, state attorneys, and public defenders to develop pilot protocols for serving appropriate youth.

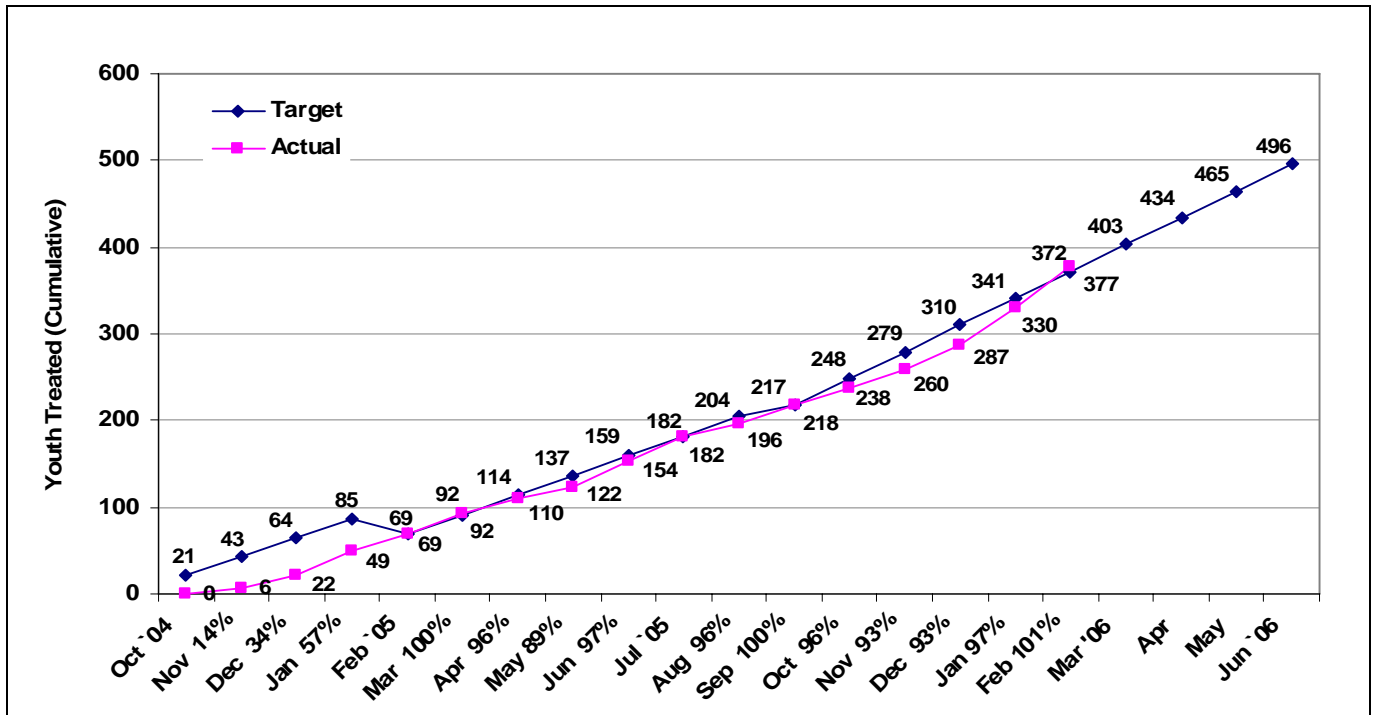
Families generally agreed to participate. As the program’s therapeutic design (Functional Family Therapy and Multisystemic Therapy) focuses on the family, it was critical for the pilot sites to secure parent agreement to participate in their children’s program. While a few families chose not participate when offered this option (with the child or family not attending the initial meeting), most were willing to make the effort. Of the 377 families that the program served, only 19 (5%) were unsuccessfully discharged because the provider was not able to involve the family. Department staff reports that most parents were positive about the results of the program and the parenting skills they acquired.

Program was slow to meet goal for youth served. The program had initial difficulty meeting its goal for number of youth to be served, but it is on target now. As shown in Exhibit 1, the program did not serve the targeted number of youth in its initial months of operation. This slow start occurred for number of reasons, including the time required to contract for the services, hire and train staff, coordinate with judges and state attorneys, and identify and process appropriate youth.

The program is monitoring therapeutic fidelity. The developers of the therapies used in the program took several steps to ensure that the pilot sites implemented the intended therapies correctly. The developers provided training to all new staff, held periodic telephone and peer consultations, and monitored the pilot sites for adherence to the treatment model. The providers are currently collecting data on their adherence to the therapeutic design, and our second report will analyze its effect on program outcomes.

Exhibit 1

Redirection Has Had Difficulty Meeting Its Goal for Number of Youth Served But Is on Target Now



Source: Evidence-Based Associates data.

Pilot sites are meeting performance standards. The department established several performance measures for the Redirection program. As shown in Exhibit 2, the program was meeting or exceeding four of the five standards as of March 1, 2006. It is too soon to determine the outcome for the fifth measure, percentage of youth committing new crimes within one year of program completion.

**Exhibit 2
Redirection Has Met or Exceeded Four of Its Five Contract Performance Measures**

Measure	Performance
100% of youth shall have written specific treatment plans	100%
75% of youth shall not commit a new law violation while in the pilot	89%
70% of youth shall successfully complete treatment	71%
70% of youth shall demonstrate improvement in criminogenic factors as evidenced by Back on Track assessment/reassessment	79%
60% of youth shall not be adjudicated or convicted of a new law violation within one year of release from the pilot	NA

Source: Evidence-Based Associates data.

Has the program reduced commitments for non-law violations of probation in the counties where it was implemented?

The counties with pilot sites have experienced significantly fewer commitments for non-law violations of probation than other counties.

As shown in Exhibit 3, admissions to residential programs from each of the three pilot counties that were in full operation in Fiscal Year 2004-05 were reduced by over 50% compared to the 2002-03 fiscal year. During the same time period there was a smaller statewide drop in residential admissions, 24%, reflecting the reductions in youth on probation and in residential commitment.

How does the program compare with residential commitment in reducing arrests?

Preliminary results indicate that the Redirection pilots are as effective as residential programs in reducing subsequent arrests and operate at a considerably lower cost. Redirection results may even exceed those of residential programs, but more time is needed to determine if the difference is statistically significant.

We compared juvenile and adult arrests for a six-month period following program completion for the first 60 youth who completed Redirection and a comparison group.⁶ Our comparison group controlled for five variables significantly related to reoffending for this population: gender, race, age, region of the state, and number of prior juvenile referrals.

⁶ Youth in the matched pairs comparison group were committed to residential programs for non-law violations of probation and released during the same time period. Five youth in the group of successful completers were dropped from the study because they could not be matched to a comparison group youth with approximately the same number of prior referrals who was close to the same age.

**Exhibit 3
Counties with Redirection Sent a Reduced Number of Youth to Residential Programs**

Fiscal Year 2002-03			Fiscal Year 2004-05		
County	Number Youth	Rank	County	Number Youth	Rank
Pinellas	118	1	Pinellas	103	1
Dade	77	2	Hillsborough	59	2
Duval	71	3	Duval	47	3
Escambia	68	4	Pasco	44	4
Pasco	65	5	Volusia	37	5
Volusia	60	6	Dade (-57%)	33	6
Broward	57	7	Escambia (-51%)	33	7
Hillsborough	40	8	Lake	29	8
Santa Rosa	32	9	Bay	28	9
Okaloosa	30	10	Broward (-53%)	27	10

Source: OPPAGA analysis of Department of Juvenile Justice data.

As shown in Exhibit 4, the youth who went to the Redirection program did as well as those who were committed to longer, more expensive residential programs in terms of overall arrests or felony arrests after program completion. In fact, Redirection youth had fewer arrests than the control group; however, due to the small number of cases involved, this difference is not statistically significant. A larger group of youth would need to be tracked for a more definitive assessment of outcomes to be reached; we anticipate more complete results by July 2006. Nonetheless, these preliminary results are encouraging since they represent early program implementation and it is likely that outcomes will improve as therapists gain experience.

Exhibit 4
Although the Difference Between Groups Is Not Statistically Significant, Early Results Are Promising (N = 60 matched pairs)

Study Group	Youth Arrested After Program	Percentage with an Arrest After
Redirection treatment group	19	32%
Matched pairs comparison group	23	38%

Source: OPPAGA analysis of DJJ and FDLE data.

Consistent with other research on these evidence-based programs, there was a greater difference in felony arrests than in overall arrests, as shown in Exhibit 5. If these trends continue, the Redirection program would significantly reduce felony arrests compared to residential commitment.

Exhibit 5
Youth in Redirection Had Fewer Felony Arrests Than The Comparison Group ¹ (N=60 matched pairs)

Study Group	Youth with a Felony Arrest After	Percentage with a Felony After
Redirection treatment group	9	15%
Matched pairs comparison group	16	27%

¹ Because of the small number of cases, the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant.

Source: OPPAGA analysis of DJJ and FDLE data.

A majority of Redirection youth also showed an improvement in the risk factors that research indicates contribute to crime. We analyzed the Back on Track risk/needs assessment scores for youth starting and completing Redirection.⁷ As shown in Exhibit 6, a majority of youth showed improvement on these criminogenic factors. The smallest improvement occurred in drug-related behavior. According to Redirection staff, this may be because youth are more willing to admit their drug use and start trying to address this problem during therapy. While the program contract required that at least 70% of youth demonstrate improvement in these areas, 78% of youth had as of March 1, 2006.

Exhibit 6
Redirection Youth’s Criminogenic Factors Improved

Risk Indicators	Description	Percentage Showing Improvement
Skills	Control of anger and impulsive behaviors and skills in dealing with others	79%
School status	Enrollment, conduct, attendance, attitudes toward school	70%
Attitudes	Empathy for victims, acceptance of responsibility for behavior, optimism for future	63%
Family situation	Reduced conflict within the family, improved parental supervision	61%
Current relationships	Positive adult relationships, pro-social friends and community ties	59%
Aggression	Reduced tendency to misinterpret actions as hostile, higher tolerance for frustration	55%
Current Drug Use	Reduced alcohol and drug use	23%

Source: Back on Track assessment data.

Does the use of electronic monitoring improve program results?

While youth on electronic monitoring were somewhat less likely to commit a new crime while they were being monitored, this effect was not statistically significant.⁸ As shown in Exhibit 7, we compared arrests for 54 youth on electronic monitoring with 179 youth who went through Redirection without electronic

⁷ Back on Track is an assessment for juvenile offenders that has been validated to be predictive of juvenile recidivism.

⁸ We estimate that for a sample size of 50 youth, a difference of 15% or more would be statistically significant.

monitoring. Youth on electronic monitoring wore the bracelets for their first 30 days in the program because that was considered the most likely period to offend. Although the difference between the groups was not statistically significant, youth on electronic monitoring were less likely to offend while being monitored than the control group, but were more likely to commit a new offense during the following month when the monitor was taken off. Our second report will examine whether electronic monitoring had a long-term deterrent effect.

**Exhibit 7
Youth on Electronic Monitoring Were Less Likely to Reoffend While Monitored, But Had Increased Arrests in the Month Following Monitoring¹**

Study Group	No Electronic Monitoring	Electronic Monitoring
Number of youth	179	54
Arrests within 30 days	20 (13%)	4 (8%)
Arrests within 60 days	18 (12%)	10 (19%)
Combined	38 (25%)	14 (26%)

¹ While there are differences between the group on electronic monitoring and the control group, they are not statistically significant.

Source: OPPAGA analysis of DJJ data.

According to probation officers, families also reported some difficulties in using the monitors. The monitors work by the youth’s home phone collecting and transmitting signals from an ankle bracelet worn by the youth. However, some youth spend time at two different households because their parents do not live together, but the unit can only be installed at one location. To participate, the youth had to stay with one parent during monitoring. Also, all other features of the phone, such as the ability to access the Internet (an important function for school children), must be disconnected for the electronic monitor to work.

Has the program reduced juvenile justice costs?

The program appears to have been successful in reducing state costs. As of March 1, 2006, a total of 157 youth had successfully completed the Redirection program. The cost for youth served

was approximately \$1,239,000.⁹ In contrast, the state would have paid approximately \$3,393,000 if the 157 youth had instead been committed to residential delinquency programs. As initial outcomes (reduction in subsequent arrests) of the Redirection program compares favorably to residential programs, Redirection appears to have achieved a \$2 million cost avoidance for the state in its first year of operation.

Would additional youth benefit from the program?

Judges and prosecutors in the original pilot counties recommend expanding the Redirection eligibility criteria to include more youth. If 245 additional youth were diverted from residential to Redirection, the state could avoid an additional \$2.3 million in costs.

The proviso establishing Redirection currently excludes youth who are being committed to residential programs for misdemeanors as well as those with prior histories of misdemeanor assault and battery or first degree or violent felony adjudications.¹⁰ However, judges and state attorneys note that youth with these backgrounds are already placed in the community on probation and therefore could be appropriate for Redirection.

In Fiscal Year 2004-05, in the nine counties where the Redirection program is available, 256 youth were committed to residential programs for misdemeanors who otherwise met Redirection eligibility criteria, and an additional 639 youth with prior violent histories were committed because they were excluded from the Redirection program.¹¹ The Redirection program does not have the capacity to expand to serve all of these youth this fiscal year, and not all of them would be appropriate. Therefore, if the Legislature wishes to revise eligibility to include youth beyond those before the court for non-law violations, it has two options. First, it

⁹ Costs include costs for youth who did not successfully complete the program.

¹⁰ The proviso states, “Youth who have been adjudicated or convicted of a violent crime or first-degree felony, or otherwise have a criminal history of such offenses, shall not be eligible for placement into the pilot project.”

¹¹ One hundred and eighty-five youth were committed for non-law violations and 454 youth were committed for misdemeanors had histories of violent offenses.

could authorize the department to use its new risk assessment instrument to identify additional appropriate youth that include misdemeanants. Second, the Legislature could authorize the department to use the risk instrument to identify both appropriate misdemeanants and youth with prior violent offenses, particularly those related to domestic violence.

The department recently has begun using a nationally recognized and validated risk assessment instrument that measures 12 dimensions of risk. The assessment includes factors in addition to criminal history, such as aggressive behavior, that give additional information to assist judges and prosecutors in making placement decisions rather than relying on criminal history alone. This would be useful because crime categories cover a wide range of behaviors and risk levels, and eligibility criteria based only on categories of current and previous crimes can be misleading. For example, a misdemeanor assault and battery charge may reflect throwing an eraser at school, an inappropriate response to abuse, or a serious problem of violent behavior.

Many delinquent youth in commitment programs, particularly girls, have experienced abuse or neglect and exhibit aggressive behavior. The type of therapy provided by the Redirection program (Multisystemic Therapy and Functional Family Therapy) addresses this behavior by teaching youth and families better skills for communication, problem-solving, anger management, and conflict resolution.¹²

Our February 2006 report on girls' programs recommended that the Legislature expand Redirection eligibility to appropriate girls with prior violent offenses as well as misdemeanants.¹³ We noted in that report that \$1.7 million could be shifted from 50 residential beds to fund four community-based programs,

including \$420,000 for Redirection Multisystemic Therapy for an additional 50 girls.

If the Legislature revised Redirection eligibility to include misdemeanants or misdemeanants and youth with prior violent histories, and 195 additional youth were determined through screening to be suitable for the program, the cost of serving these 195 youth would be \$1 million, or \$1.9 million less than residential commitment. Redirection administrators report that the program has ability to add eight additional therapists at its existing sites to serve the additional 245 youth.¹⁴ If 50 girls received Multisystemic Therapy through the Redirection program, as recommended in our February 2006 report, and an additional 195 youth were served with expanded eligibility criteria at existing sites, the total cost of serving these 245 youth would be \$1.5 million, or \$2.3 million less than residential commitment.

Agency Response

In accordance with the provisions of s. 11.51(5), *Florida Statutes*, a draft of our report was submitted to the Secretary of the Department of Juvenile Justice for review and response. The Secretary's written response is reproduced in its entirety on the following page.

OPPAGA supports the Florida Legislature by providing evaluative research and objective analyses to promote government accountability and the efficient and effective use of public resources. This project was conducted in accordance with applicable evaluation standards. Copies of this report in print or alternate accessible format may be obtained by telephone (850/488-0021 or 800/531-2477), by FAX (850/487-3804), in person, or by mail (OPPAGA Report Production, Claude Pepper Building, Room 312, 111 W. Madison St., Tallahassee, FL 32399-1475). Cover photo by Mark Foley.

Florida Monitor: www.oppaga.state.fl.us

Project supervised by Kathy McGuire (850/487-9224)

Project conducted by LucyAnn Walker-Fraser (850/487-9168),

Jason Gaitanis, and Steve Harkreader

Gary R. VanLandingham, OPPAGA Director

¹² *Gender Specific Services for Delinquent Girls Vary Across Programs, But Help Reduce Recidivism*, OPPAGA [Report No. 05-13](#), March 2005. Of girls with known histories of abuse and domestic violence, 82% exhibited aggressive behavior, compared to 18% of girls without such histories.

¹³ *Effective Community Programs Could Reduce Commitments of Girls to Residential Programs*, OPPAGA [Report No. 06-13](#), February 2006.

¹⁴ Redirection could add the following therapists to its existing sites: Pinellas - 1 FFT therapist; Hillsborough - 1 FFT therapist; Escambia - 1 MST therapist; Dade - 1 FFT therapist; Orange and Osceola - 1 FFT therapist; Brevard and Seminole - 2 MST therapists; Broward - 1 FFT therapist.



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE
Jeb Bush, Governor Anthony J. Schembri, Secretary

March 23, 2006

Ms. Kathy McGuire, Deputy Director
Office of Program Policy Analysis and
Government Accountability
The Claude Pepper Building
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Ms. McGuire:

Thank you for the opportunity to review OPPAGA's draft report on the Redirection Program. Your report provided an extensive and thoughtful review of this innovative new program serving as an alternative to Residential Commitment. Like you, we are encouraged at the results of this promising new program.

Your report provides valuable information on the outcomes for youth served during the beginning of the program and trends for youth for whom recidivism rates are not yet available. As the therapists and program staff become more experienced, we believe outcomes will only improve. We questioned if the results of the use of electronic monitoring meant that it was not an effective use of the state's resources. However, the report notes that this issue will undergo further, more extensive evaluation. We look forward to that analysis.

As discussed in your report, a number of stakeholders have requested an expansion of the Redirection admission criteria. As you know, the program serves youth who are in the community and placed on Probation, Conditional Release or Post-Commitment supervision. We do not believe that modification of the admission criteria will present any increased risk to public safety, particularly since courts, state's attorneys and attorneys for the children are involved in this decision making process.

I look forward to your continuing review of this and other community-based programs. If we can answer any questions, please contact Darryl Olson, Assistant Secretary for Probation and Community Corrections, at (850) 487-9575.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A.J. Schembri", written over a horizontal line.

Anthony J. Schembri
Secretary

AJS/pcc/lat

2737 Centerview Drive • Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3100 • (850) 488-1850

The mission of the Department of Juvenile Justice is to protect the public by reducing juvenile crime and delinquency in Florida.