

# **Texas At-Risk Youth Services Project (ARYSP)**

Legislative Budget Board  
Criminal Justice Data Analysis Team  
October 2011

# Goal of ARYSP

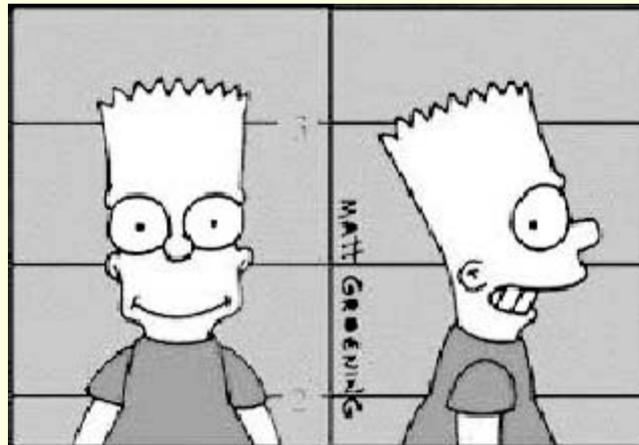
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- Improve the delivery of services to at-risk youth in Texas
- **At-risk youth** – Youth who have significant potential to enter or further penetrate the juvenile justice system

# Goal of ARYSP

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**Find this kid and provide him with services...**



# Goal of ARYSP

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**before he becomes this kid.**

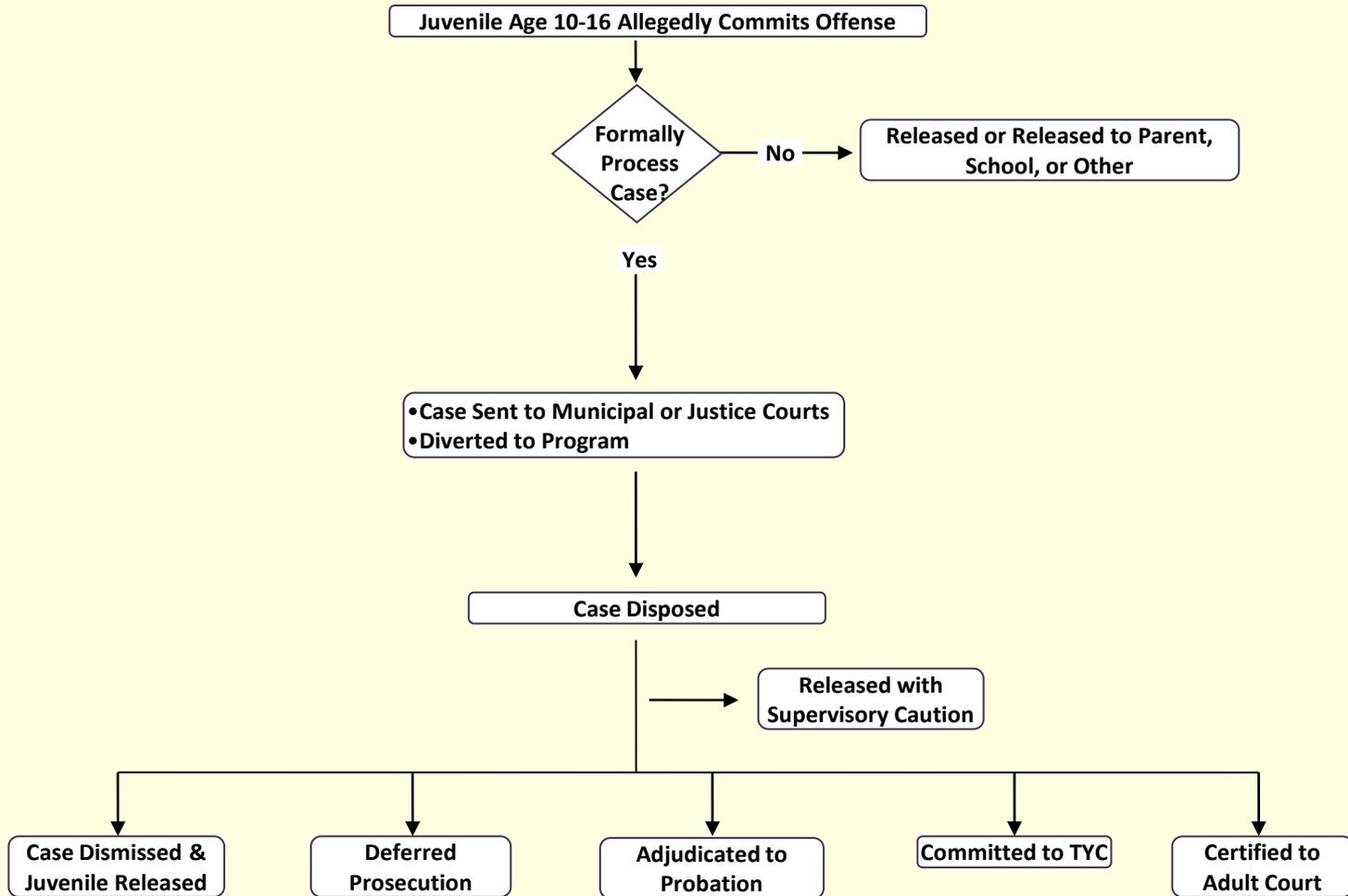


# ARYSP – Related Agencies/Programs

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- **Texas Juvenile Probation Commission (TJPC)** – State agency responsible for monitoring and distributing state funds to local juvenile probation departments
- **Texas Youth Commission (TYC)** – State-operated correctional facilities for youth
- **Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Courage Program** – Program for young offenders in adult prison
- **Juvenile Probation Department** – County-based entity responsible for supervision and rehabilitation of juvenile offenders placed on probation

# Highlights of the Texas Juvenile Justice Process



# How it all started

Fall 2007

- TYC reform
- Significant decrease in TYC populations

Summer  
2008

- Juvenile probation populations expected to grow due to TYC reform, but remained flat

Fall 2008–Spring 2009  
(81st Legislature)

- Where are the kids?
- First venture into juvenile qualitative research – more questions than answers

# How it all started

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- We answered the question “Where are the kids?”
- BUT...
- *What happens to low-level kids who are no longer receiving services from juvenile probation?*

# ARYSP Background Research

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- Many juvenile offenders receive services from other entities prior to juvenile probation referral (CPS, mental health services, school, etc.)
- State funding for prevention and intervention of juvenile delinquency is scattered among various agencies
- Meaningful accountability of prevention/intervention funding is relatively non-existent
- Juvenile justice system is usually the agent of last resort for at-risk kids

# ARYSP Background Research

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- Scattered prevention/intervention funding
- No single entity responsible for delinquency prevention
- Overlapping services
- Overlapping governmental entities (county, state, school district, etc.)

All these things equal...

# ARYSP Background Research

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# ARYSP Methodology

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## **Issues we had to consider:**

- Developing a methodology that crossed over several fields
- Not much prior research done on prevention/intervention in Texas
- Researching a topic in which most entities involved are not held accountable for prevention/intervention

# ARYSP Methodology

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## **High-level approach taken**

- Exploratory design
- Quantitative and Qualitative
- Quantitative component not statistically representative – study design intended for data collection process to illuminate various methods of service delivery
- Eight counties across the state, TDCJ-COURAGE, TYC

# ARYSP Methodology

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- Investigate youth at all levels of juvenile justice system and trace their life histories from birth to present.
- Understand what services youth may (or may not) have received prior to and following delinquency
  - TDCJ-COURAGE
  - TYC
  - Juvenile Probation
    - Deferred prosecution
    - Probation – community
    - Probation- residential

# ARYSP Methodology

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## Quantitative Component

- n = 252 juvenile offender case files
  - 20-30 files from each Juvenile Probation Department, TYC, TDCJ-Courage
- Data extracted: demographics, social history, offense history, social service history, family information, school information, etc.
- Developed timeline for each youth from birth to present through data extraction

# ARYSP Methodology

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## Qualitative Component

- Interviews and focus groups with practitioners and decision-makers:
  - Juvenile justice
  - Schools
  - Private service providers
  - Child protective services
  - Mental health professionals
- Interviews with youth caregivers
  - Sub-sample of juvenile offender case files selected for caregiver interviews
- All interviews were semi-structured

# ARYSP Methodology

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## **Qualitative Component**

- Access to various practitioners and youth caregivers set up through local Juvenile Probation Departments
- Juvenile Probation Departments – Research hubs while on site, “gatekeepers”, etc.

# ARYSP Methodology

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## Final Steps

- Transcribe and analyze all data
- Use research findings to guide legislative recommendations
- Develop a report with findings and legislative recommendations that was published in January 2011 (immediately prior to 82nd Legislative Session)

# ARYSP Findings

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## Quantitative Highlights

- 82% Male
- 58% Hispanic, 22% Black, 18% White
- 53% had substance abuse issue
- 47% had mental health issue
- 33% had both SA and MH issue
- 25% were victims of abuse/neglect at some point

# ARYSP Findings

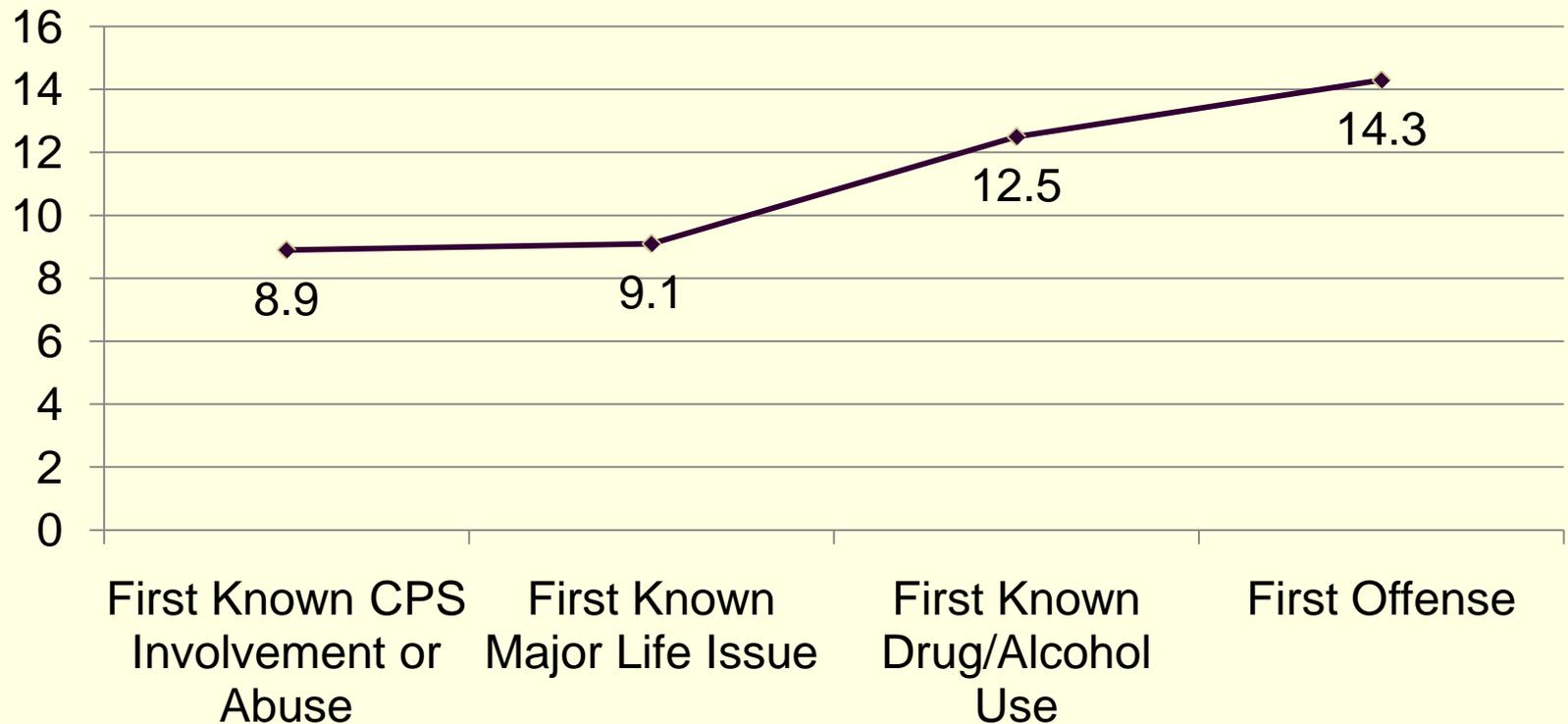
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## Quantitative Highlights

- 22% of the caregivers had involvement with criminal justice system
- 15% had at least one biological parent in prison/jail at the time of their offense
- 34% had failed at least one grade
- 48% had truancy problems
- 21% had special education needs

# ARYSP Findings

## Average Age (in years) at Various Significant Life Events



# ARYSP Findings

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## **Policy Implications**

- Juvenile probation is the most effective route for youth to receive necessary services
- No single entity is responsible or held accountable for providing services to at-risk youth in Texas
- Communication and collaboration among entities who serve at-risk youth are inconsistent across Texas
- Services must be provided early in life to have the greatest positive impact on at-risk youth

# ARYSP Legislative Recommendations

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## Future Study

- Set aside funding to contract with an independent entity to further review current method of at-risk youth service delivery and develop a meaningful accountability structure
  - ARYSP was exploratory – More in-depth analysis needed prior to major policy changes

# ARYSP Legislative Recommendations

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## **Mandatory information sharing**

- Amend statute to require mandatory information sharing among entities that serve at-risk youth
  - Increase efficiency
  - Reduce duplication
  - Encourage collaboration

# ARYSP Policy Considerations

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- Focus resources on and provide prevention/intervention services to at-risk youth as early as possible
- Ensure comparable service delivery for at-risk youth who have not entered the juvenile justice system
- Reduce duplicative services and assessments
- Explore the possibility of using public schools as social service delivery hubs

# ARYSP-Related Outcomes of the 82nd Legislative Session

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- Senate Bill 1106 (Harris) – Mandates information sharing among entities who serve at-risk youth. Signed by the Governor and became law on June 17, 2011.
- No funding allocated for additional study of at-risk youth service delivery methods and accountability

However...

# ARYSP-Related Outcomes of the 82nd Legislative Session

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- Senate Bill 653 (Whitmire) – Directs the merger of TJPC and TYC into the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD)
- Included in the newly-created TJJD is a Prevention and Intervention Division
  - Because new division created, the proposed study became obsolete.

# ARYSP Moving Forward

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- LBB will begin the next phase of the ARYSP. Objectives are:
  - Follow-up research/analysis on changes that occurred during the 82nd Legislative Session
  - Monitor implementation of Prevention and Intervention Division of TJJD
  - Develop performance measures for Prevention and Intervention Division of TJJD
  - Explore possible shift of prevention/intervention funds from other agencies to TJJD

# ARYSP Moving Forward

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- Primarily qualitative
  - Field research, site visits across Texas (Fall 2011 – Spring 2012)
  - Interviews and focus groups with practitioners, decision-makers, and other related entities
- Incorporate findings into upcoming strategic planning process (Spring 2012)
- Develop recommendations based on findings and publish results and recommendations in concert with 83rd Legislative Session (January 2013)



# Questions?

# Facilitated Discussion

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The ARYSP employed a relatively unique methodology for policy research. Are there any thoughts on the strengths or weaknesses of the ARYSP's approach?

# Facilitated Discussion

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The next phase of the ARYSP will begin soon. Are there any areas in which we should focus?

# Facilitated Discussion

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Who is currently conducting research related to juveniles and would like to share? Any one planning future research related to juveniles?

# Facilitated Discussion

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Are there any other organizations or researchers currently focused on juvenile research? Any recent publications about juveniles?

# Facilitated Discussion

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TYC and TJPC will merge into the TJJD. What are some thoughts on the policy implications that may result from the merger?

# Facilitated Discussion

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What outcomes should the TJJD prioritize for the new Prevention and Intervention Division?

# Facilitated Discussion

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Are there any innovative ideas regarding juvenile research the state could employ?

# Facilitated Discussion

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What's the single most important factor in preventing juvenile delinquency?

# How can I be involved in the legislative process?

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- Senate Finance Committee
- House Appropriations Committee
- Senate Criminal Justice Committee
- House Corrections Committee
  
- [www.legis.state.tx.us](http://www.legis.state.tx.us) (Texas Legislature Online)

# Contact information

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