



OFFICE OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY ATTORNEY
JOHN J. CHOI

January 30, 2026

Dear Ramsey County Community,

In 2019, we set out on an ambitious journey, together with our public defender colleagues and restorative practitioners from communities most impacted by justice involvement. Our vision was to transform our youth justice system in Ramsey County to one that was more restorative, that better understood and addressed underlying causes of justice involvement, offered more options to people who had been harmed (victims), and decreased the likelihood of re-referrals for delinquent behavior.

By shifting our paradigm from administering legal consequences to meeting the needs of families and young people; developing a collaborative review process to determine how best to respond by systematically evaluating harms, needs, and youth development; and sharing power with our community in co-designing, governing, decision-making, and responding, we have made significant progress.

In July of 2021, we launched our collective vision with a focus on continuous improvement. At that time, we had a recently completed baseline data analysis from the University of Minnesota that examined racial disparities, young people's experience in the legal system (aged 10-17), and how that affected their likelihood of ending up in the adult system. They found that traditional legal system responses were:

- 1 – **not meeting the needs of young people** - the more often a young person was referred to the legal system, the less effective the responses were, as they became more likely to be re-referred, both as youth and as adults;
- 2 – **least effective responding to serious behaviors**, as youth with more serious charges ended up with felony charges (most often multiple felony charges) as adults at higher rates than youth with only less serious charges, and
- 3 – **especially ineffective for Black, Latino, and Indigenous youth**, as these youth were most likely to be re-referred, and racial disparities increased with greater involvement in the legal system.

With the release of this new report analyzing recidivism outcomes after three years of RJY implementation, we can confidently say our system is improving through this innovative change made in July of 2021. Young people are doing better – having opportunities to make things right without the collateral consequences of a conviction, learning and growing from their experiences, and returning to the legal system much less often after engaging in community-based accountability. Youth are having honest conversations with caring, trusted adults and learning how to repair harm with family members, friends, and peers. Parents are reporting improved relationships with their children. Youth referred for assaults are making significant strides, consistent with research about the effectiveness of restorative practices in situations of interpersonal violence. We also have promising results around eliminating the substantial and persistent racial disparities in the system, having decreased racial gaps with respect to which youth were offered community-based accountability and which youth succeeded in it.

This progress is a testament to our collaborative review process and community providers' ability to successfully engage young people. The University of Minnesota researcher/evaluators analyzed 10 years of our data for our baseline assessment; we know how critical it is to continue to measure at least 10 years going forward, as we strive to sustainably embed these practices in our youth justice system. We are now almost halfway there.

We cannot thank enough the members of our RJY leadership team, collaborative review team, and community providers. Your contributions have been invaluable. To the broader Ramsey County community, we thank you for sticking with us through this change even when it seemed difficult or hard at the beginning of this journey. We are immensely proud of the evaluation and outcome data, which demonstrates these changes have made our community safer and better for those that have been harmed, who universally want bad behavior to stop and youth with improved trajectories. Together, we will continue to improve, learn, grow, and center our families and youth in our decision-making. You and our young people deserve a better tomorrow and nothing less.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John J. Choi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "J" and a trailing flourish.

John J. Choi
Ramsey County Attorney

(Re)Imagining Justice for Youth Impact Report: Increased Access, Reduced Recidivism

**Assessing three years of shared power and
increased community accountability**

**Submitted to:
John Choi, Ramsey County Attorney**

Report authors: Kara Beckman, MA, & Rebecca Freese, MS

January 2026





Corresponding Author's Contact Information

Kara J. Beckman, MA
Center for Healthy Youth Development, Division of Adolescent Health and Medicine,
Department of Pediatrics, University of Minnesota
717 Delaware Street SE 3rd Floor West
Minneapolis, MN 55414-2959
Office: 612-626-2511
Email: beckm118@umn.edu

Suggested Citation

Beckman, K. and Freese, R. (2026). (Re)Imagining Justice for Youth Impact Report. Center for Healthy Youth Development, Department of Pediatrics and Clinical and Translational Science Institute, Biostatistical Design and Analysis Center; University of Minnesota Medical School, Minneapolis, MN.

Acknowledgement

With community elders who have helped lead the efforts shared in this report, the authors recognize the ideas and practices described here, especially those related to community interconnectedness, restorative justice and the recognition of the full humanity of all people, are based on Indigenous wisdom and resilience. We [acknowledge](#) that the University of Minnesota stands on Miní Sóta Makhóche, the homelands of the Dakhóta Oyáte. We commit to deepening our understanding, shared healing, and becoming good relatives to each other, the land, and all beings.

The authors gratefully acknowledge Dr. Iris Borowsky and Dr. Barb McMorris for their support and assistance throughout this project and Glyis Shea and Jenna Baumgartner for help with content and graphic design. The research was supported by Ramsey County Attorney's Office and the National Institutes of Health's National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, grant UM1TR004405. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health's National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences nor of the Ramsey County Attorney's office.

This report follows *(Re)Imagining Justice for Youth: Year One Evaluation Report* published in 2023 which provides additional context, data analysis, description of RJY processes, and scientific justification for the RJY initiative.

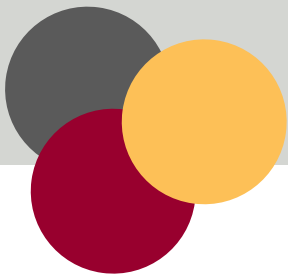
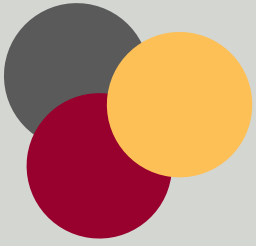
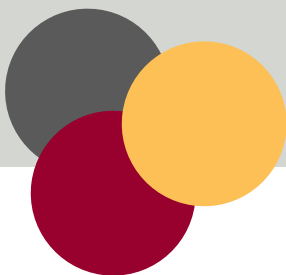


Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction.....	7
(Re)Imagining Justice for Youth	10
Assessing the Impact of RJY	14
Measures and definitions.....	15
Analysis	16
Results.....	18
Finding 1. More types of cases are resolved in community	19
Finding 2. Community accountability results in lower recidivism than traditional court	26
Conclusion	38
References	41
Appendix.....	44



Executive Summary

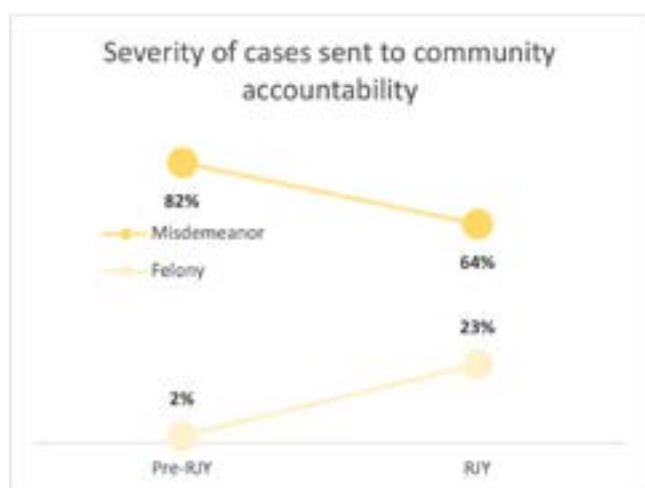
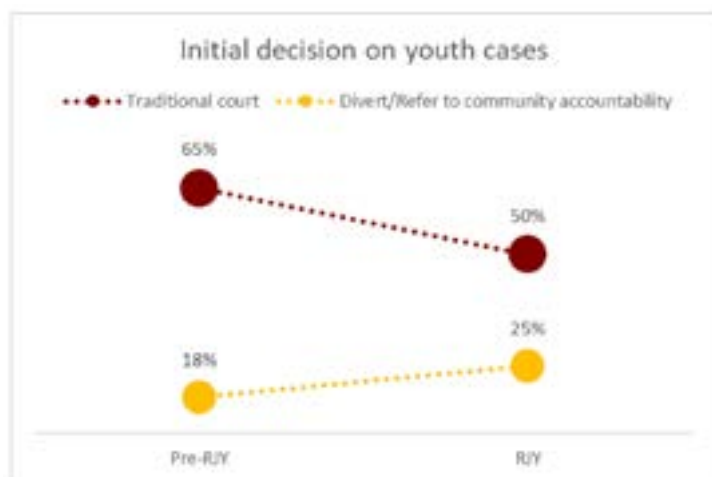


This report represents the first impact analysis of (Re)Imagining Justice for Youth (RJY), the Ramsey County Attorney's Office (RCAO) initiative to improve legal system outcomes for young people. Researchers from the University of Minnesota assessed whether more types of cases were resolved in community accountability without further system processing and whether community accountability achieved better outcomes than court-based processes.

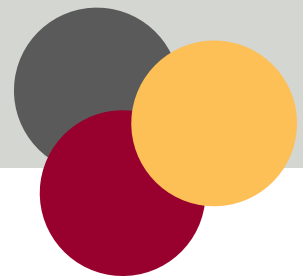
Methods. Data from youth cases submitted to the RCAO between 2010 and 2024 were analyzed descriptively and using matching analyses. Rigorous matching analyses were conducted to examine recidivism rates among similarly situated youth whose cases were resolved in community compared to those processed in traditional court.

Increased Access Results. The percent of cases RCAO referred to community accountability increased from 18% to 25% of all submitted cases. The types of cases RCAO referred to community accountability also expanded. For example, felony cases accounted for 2% of diverted cases before the start RJY and 23% of community accountability cases since RJY launched.

Racial disparities decreased in terms of who was referred to and successful in community accountability.



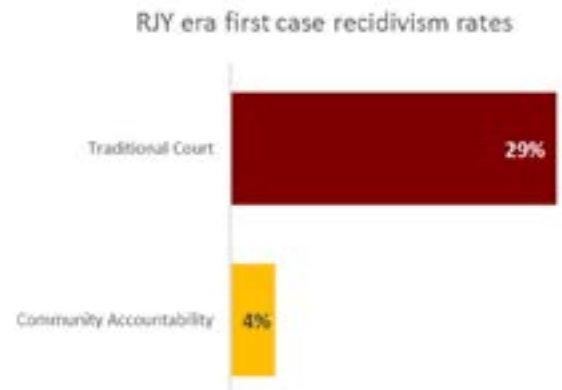
In the RJY era, community accountability is no longer just for misdemeanors



Outcome Results. Overall, in 2022-2023 the 12-month recidivism rates for youth whose first cases were resolved in community accountability (4%) was far lower than those resolved in traditional court in the same period (29%), and also lower than youth whose first cases were resolved in community in 2017-2018 (7%) or 2012-2013 (10%).

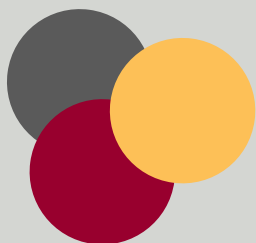
To test for causality of this difference, three separate “apples-to-apples” comparisons of matched samples were conducted. All analyses indicated community accountability was just as effective as traditional court and, in certain cases, significantly outperformed it.

Specifically, for youth referred to the RCAO for the first time for an assault offense, those whose cases were resolved in community accountability had **1/3 the risk of recidivism** compared to matched cases processed in traditional court.

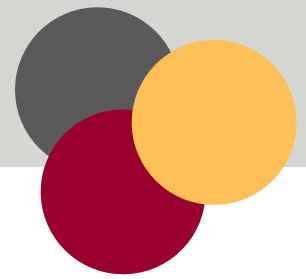


Among first cases that were felony or gross misdemeanor offenses, youth whose cases were resolved in community accountability had half the risk of recidivism compared to matched cases processed in traditional court.

Conclusion. By revamping and increasing access to community accountability, RJY has lowered recidivism rates and established a process that ensures fewer future victims, increased graduation rates, higher employment rates, and a healthier community. The report ends with a recommendation that RJY be continued and expanded.



Introduction



The Ramsey County Attorney's Office (RCAO) launched the (Re)Imagining Justice for Youth (RJY) initiative in July, 2021. The initiative is grounded in a commitment to sharing power with community and providing expanded opportunities for what is proving to be one of the most effective legal system responses for youth with legal system contact: community-led restorative justice practices. The urgency of finding more effective solutions for youth with legal system contact has only increased since we released our year one report.

- Youth who have interactions with law enforcement and the legal system remain more likely to experience additional arrests,¹⁻³ poor education outcomes,⁴ and worse health⁵ and employment outcomes¹ as adults.
- **Evidence continues to emerge that restorative justice has higher rates of victim satisfaction and perceptions of procedural justice.**⁶
- Synthesized, cross-disciplinary evidence has demonstrated the potentially transformational impacts of these types of initiatives, such as the likelihood of reducing intergenerational poverty⁷ and improving health and wellbeing.⁸
- Research has shown the values undergirding initiatives such as RJY are in line with changing attitudes among the U.S. public, who desire more nuance, compassion and responses from the legal system that address the root causes of crime.⁹
- A continued gap between the promise of legislation that enables restorative practices and a system that mostly upholds a more traditional and punitive status quo resulted in a call for more systemic and holistic models of restorative justice implementation.¹⁰

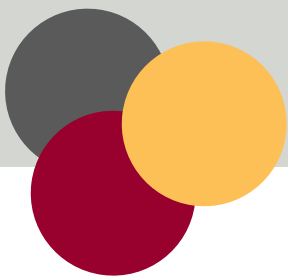
Evidence also shows the RCAO is not alone in rethinking and expanding diversionary processes. Across the country, jurisdictions including states¹¹ and county prosecutors offices¹²⁻¹³ have described their approaches

and rationale for diverting youth and older adolescents/young adults from the justice system in ways that seek to meet their needs, restore harm, and prevent the collateral consequences and long-term harm of the legal system. After finding that **diversion is both essential to improve justice and drastically underutilized**,¹⁴ The Sentencing Project described many initiatives to divert youth from deeper legal system involvement and produced briefs to help guide practitioners' decision-making.¹⁵

The Hennepin County Attorney's Office has a similar initiative. Read about their [youth diversion approach](#).

The urgency to improve legal system outcomes also stems from persistent racial disproportionality. Disproportionality based on race refers to calculations of differences in outcomes across groups compared to their proportion of the population. Minnesota data shows persistent racial disparities in outcomes for people of color across most indicators of well-being, many of which have compounding impact. For example, racial disparities in post-secondary education impact later disparities in earnings from employment.¹⁶ Large racial disparities in poverty impact racial disparities in arrests, which later influence racial disparities in the prison population.¹⁷

There is a growing consensus that such disproportionality is the result of historical and structural racism,¹⁸ functioning less through explicit bias, and more through implicit and hidden layers within systems.¹⁹ In the youth legal system in particular, one example of implicit bias is in policies that focus on



offense-based criteria for making charging and sentencing decisions, rather than seeking to understand and respond to the interplay of a youth's behavior and the particular circumstances of the youth's context.

Such policies also do not reflect current evidence demonstrating risk-taking is a normative and necessary part of adolescence that manifests differently between youth based on their social context.²⁰⁻²¹ Further, research has now shown **offenses which occur during adolescence are not predictive of future behavior** and therefore should not be used to drive policy decisions.²²

The continued reliance on offense-based policies funnels youth who already experience disproportionate levels of poverty into a court system that separates them from the people in their families and communities most capable of providing meaningful accountability for their actions.

Approaches like RJY begin to redress this historical injustice, by creating policies and practices that seek to understand and respond effectively to the interplay of a youth's behavior and their particular context, including their developmental trajectory.

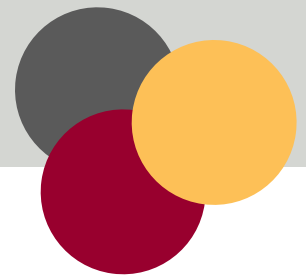
However, to become sustainable, the policies require a thorough reassessment of many beliefs and practices. Therefore, they remain vulnerable to challenges from forces seeking to maintain the status quo. Thus, it is essential to continually assess progress, including progress towards ending racial disparities, so that **we can build a system and society in which a person's racial identity can no longer be used to predict their outcomes.**

In summary, there continues to be a need for rigorous studies on the impact of expanded diversion practices that pay particular attention to racial disparities. This first analysis of RJY's impact on legal system outcomes begins to address this gap.

Offense-based policies, including those that limit diversion to first time, minor offenses disproportionately impact young people of color



(Re)Imagining Justice for Youth



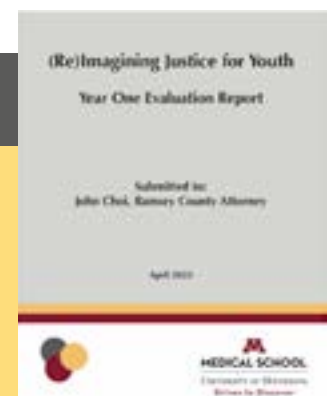
As detailed in our year one report, RJY represents systemic changes for RCAO including:

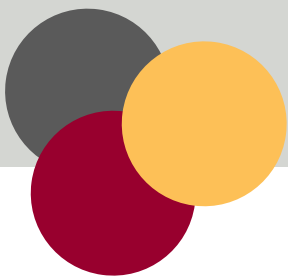
- **How prosecutors and others in the legal system think about the causes of and responses to youth behavior that results in legal system contact.** New training and review processes require decision-makers to consider a broader range of possible responses by thinking about who has been harmed and what their needs are, and the developmental needs of the young people involved and their day-to-day context.
- **How the decision about whether to refer a given case to community accountability is made.** In about 40% of cases that move forward after an initial legal review, a collaborative review team comprised of a community member, public defender, and prosecutor make the decision, rather than a prosecuting attorney alone.
- **How young people experience “community accountability” vs “diversion.”** In the RJY era, diversion is called “community accountability,” reflecting providers that now include more agencies who specialize in restorative justice, youth development, and the lived experiences of young people. “Community accountability” refers to a response that moves beyond traditional diversion to:
 - provide youth meaningful opportunities to make right the harm they have caused and promote healing for everyone involved;
 - engage the people most impacted by a youth’s harmful behavior;
 - engage family members or other supportive adults to understand and address underlying youth needs and co-determine developmentally-appropriate responses that so harm is less likely to reoccur;
 - support positive youth development and build connections to school, community, and caring adults thus helping youth overcome adversity and realize their full potential.
- **How RCAO partners with/supports community accountability providers.** RJY created a more collaborative and supportive partnership so that all providers were increasing their use of structured processes that are developmentally-tailored and restorative.

To reflect these system level changes, this report contrasts data from the “Pre-RJY” and “RJY” eras.

Learn more

RJY is committed to transparency, learning, and growth. [Our year one report](#)²³ provides a detailed explanation of the history and vision of RJY along with a comprehensive review of local and national evidence. We have also produced annual data updates that demonstrate progress on key metrics of implementation. Finally, a detailed protocol of the RJY processes provides information on the internal structures and agreements that others could use to replicate this initiative. All resources are available [online](#).





RJY Champions: Community Accountability Provider Generation 2 Generation

Who they are. Generation 2 Generation Inc (G2G), led by founder and CEO Dr. Tamara Mattison is a professional training and development organization committed to educating, empowering, and equipping youth by developing the next generation of culturally competent leaders and closing disparity gaps in Minnesota and throughout the U.S. They also have a training team that works with organizations to build restorative and inclusive climates. Dr. Mattison has been a leading voice for youth justice in the Twin Cities and is a founding member of RJY's leadership team.

How it works. G2G's multigenerational services restore youths' relationships in families, school, and community after harm, and support the ongoing emotional and social development of youth within the context of their familial support systems.

Referral: A G2G team member reaches out to the youth and family, makes introductions and listens to the stories of the youth and their family members, to understand from their perspectives what happened, what were underlying factors, and what might be needed to make amends.

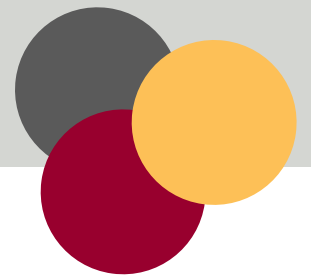
Victims: When contact information is provided, the G2G team reaches out to people harmed or otherwise impacted by the youth's behavior to hear what happened, how they were impacted, and what might be needed to make things right.

Accountability Plan Process: G2G then curates a tailored process that helps all parties come to an agreement about an accountability plan that guides the youth's actions to repair harm, address underlying needs, and curate initial steps to a future they want.

Restorative Circle: G2G facilitates a gathering of the youth, their family members or other support systems, a community member, and the people harmed to share what happened from their perspective and agree a plan for how to make things right and restore everyone to good standing in the community.

"Circle is a safe space for them to just open up. What we've seen is a lot of healing between kids and parents."

- G2G Executive Director



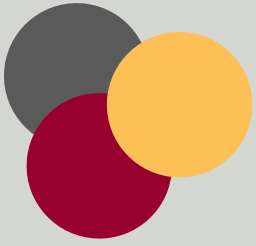
RJY Champions: Community Accountability Provider Generation 2 Generation

The Accountability Plan: Created collaboratively, it includes direct actions to repair the harm with the community and actions to ensure the youth is on track for their preferred future, such as re-connecting with a school guidance counselor or participating in weekly G2G mentoring and social learning groups.

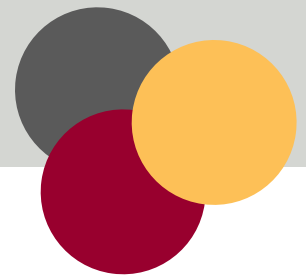
"We resolved a case related to an auto theft where the young man involved was able to hear from the person whose car was stolen the impact it had on her in terms of not being able to go to work because she didn't have her car. And I think for him that was something he never thought of. He didn't think beyond a joyride."

- G2G Executive Director

On-going support and monitoring: The G2G team tracks completion of the plan and reports back to RCAO once repair steps are completed and additional actions are underway.



Assessing the Impact of RJY



To assess RJY's impact, we centered our inquiry on two primary questions:

1. To what extent has decision-making changed on cases submitted to RCAO since RJY launched? In other words, are more or different types of cases being resolved in community without further system processing? Is there indication that racial disparities are impacted in terms of who experiences each type of response?
2. Is community accountability getting better outcomes than traditional court processes?

Data sources

An RCAO data analyst extracted all data from cases submitted by law enforcement to RCAO between 2010 and 2024 from the RCAO database (PbK) and shared de-identified data files with UMN researchers in February 2025. Non-delinquency cases (e.g., traffic, child protection cases) were excluded from analyses as were cases of individuals not between 10 and 17 years of age, as outlined by the Minnesota statute defining the age of delinquency in effect during this period.

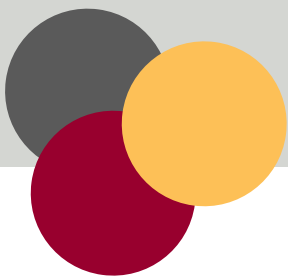
Measures and definitions

The research team flagged all cases that occurred prior to July 2021 as “Pre-RJY” era cases and those after as “RJY” era cases. We used randomly assigned person identifiers to create a case count variable that allowed us to calculate whether, when, and how many additional cases occurred among the same individual. For our primary outcomes, **we define “recidivism” as a new charged case** for the same individual that results from any new submitted case for an offense seven or more days beyond an initial incident. **We define “re-referrals” as a new submitted case** for any offense seven or more days beyond an initial incident, which may or may not have resulted in a new charged case. We used the seven-day marker to model existing practices in which cases occurring within seven days are considered part of the same “spree” and frequently end up processed as one case.

In terms of different prosecutorial responses, we use “community accountability” to refer to the *pre-charge* processes during the RJY era already described. Prior to RJY, community accountability was referred to as “diversion” and was a more standardized model often including an imposed consequence based on offense type. This might have included required health classes for drug or alcohol offenses, or doing community service in response to a theft case.

Both community accountability and diversion refer to processes that happened pre-charge, attempt to avoid legal system processing, and require a report back to the RCAO about whether the youth was “successful” in programming, meaning they participated in and completed the process.

Conversely, we use “traditional court” to refer to the process that occurs if a prosecutor petitions a case to court (i.e., charges the case). Court processes may result in a number of final case decisions or “dispositions.” All court dispositions are grouped together for this study, given that our focus is on the effectiveness of prosecutorial decision-making as opposed to the different pathways that can occur once a case is under the jurisdiction of the courts.



Finally, the third primary category of prosecutor responses is to “decline” a case. This most often happens at the point of initial legal review after a case is submitted by law enforcement for reasons related to whether there is enough evidence to move a case forward or due to the use of discretion by the prosecutor.

Analysis

Changes in decision making

We calculated overall and disaggregated differences between the Pre-RJY and RJY eras in how often cases were diverted or referred to community accountability and the rates of success in community accountability. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means) were calculated by case (e.g., offense type, response type) or individual (e.g., demographics, referral number.) Descriptive statistics calculate percentages directly without accounting for other factors that may influence results. In other words, they do not attempt to indicate causality but instead describe the data that are accounted for in more rigorous statistical models.

Differences in outcomes

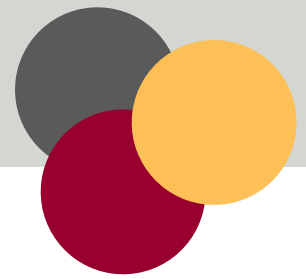
To determine whether community accountability achieved better outcomes compared to traditional court, we conducted descriptive analyses that calculated whether recidivism occurred within one year of the date of the original offense and limited our inquiry into cases that occurred in or before 2023, as the data cut-off point did not allow us to calculate recidivism for offenses that occurred in 2024.

In determining the best model for rigorous statistical analyses, we drew from results of the initial descriptive analyses which indicated the RJY era processes had resulted in greater changes to RCOA responses for assault cases, felony and gross misdemeanor cases, and second referral cases.

In essence, the RCOA had conducted a “natural experiment” in which similarly situated cases had been treated differently over a relatively short period of time. This created a situation in which an “apples to apples” matching analysis paired with logistic regression analysis would provide a strong statistical test of whether community accountability resulted in lower recidivism than traditional court processes.

Matching analysis

Matching is a statistical technique in which youth with specified person, offense, and/or response characteristics are matched with other youth with those same characteristics. This technique is used when a randomized controlled study is not feasible, and provides fairer comparisons of similarly situated youth who experience different responses in the legal system. Once the matching algorithm creates groups of similar youth, logistic regression analysis is then used to determine whether a given outcome is different for each group when accounting for other factors that may also influence the outcome. Specifically, logistic regression identifies patterns in data where multiple factors may influence the outcome (dependent variable – e.g., recidivism). In this model, we focused on whether the predictor of interest (i.e., response type) was associated with the dependent variable (i.e., re-referral, recidivism) while controlling for the other independent variables. The model produced a prediction of the relative risk of each outcome.



We conducted three separate matching analyses among:

1. all first referral assault cases;
2. all first referral gross misdemeanor or felony cases; and
3. all second referral cases.

We limited analyses to first or second cases only to ensure an individual youth only appeared once in each data set and to avoid matching a youth with themselves. We also excluded all declined cases from these analyses because cases are declined for distinct reasons (often because there is not sufficient evidence of a crime by a given person) and to avoid interpretations that might result in net-widening. Net-widening is when more young people end up in formal legal system responses than would have been included otherwise.

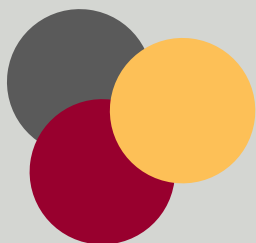
Match parameters

For each set of cases, we applied matching algorithms to match individuals whose cases experienced a successful diversion to similar cases that were processed in traditional court. For all models, matching was on:

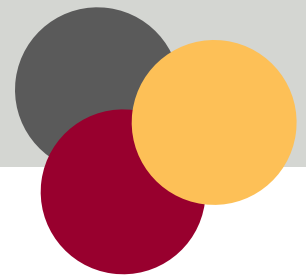
- referral year (± 3 years)
- age (± 6 months)
- gender (exact match)
- race
- severity (felony, gross misdemeanor, misdemeanor or petty misdemeanor) and
- custody status (whether detained after the offense).

For first referral assault cases, matching also included degree (± 1 degree). For felony and gross misdemeanor and second referral cases, matching included offense type (exact match) but did not include degree. The custody status variable was only available in the RCAO data for cases since 2019. Practically, this limited the matching analysis to cases occurring since 2019, meaning findings are reflective of the most current practices.

With the matched samples, we then conducted logistic regression to calculate a relative risk (RR) of being re-referred or recidivating, along with the 95% confidence interval (CI) and p-value. The RR can be interpreted as the risk of a re-referral or recidivism for successful diversion compared to court processing, when accounting for other possible factors. The model was fit weighted on the probability of being successfully diverted calculated in the matching algorithm, used successful diversion (vs not) as the predictor of interest, and further adjusted for the same variables used in matching to account for any remaining imbalance between groups. **When $p < .05$, we have strong evidence to suggest the difference is true and not due to random chance.**



Results



We describe results in two findings sections that correspond to the evaluation questions. The first section contrasts responses to cases, case submissions, and success rates in community accountability between the Pre-RJY and RJY eras. The second section examines differences in recidivism and re-referral outcomes for community accountability and the traditional court system, employing both descriptive and matching analysis.

Finding 1. More types of cases are resolved in community

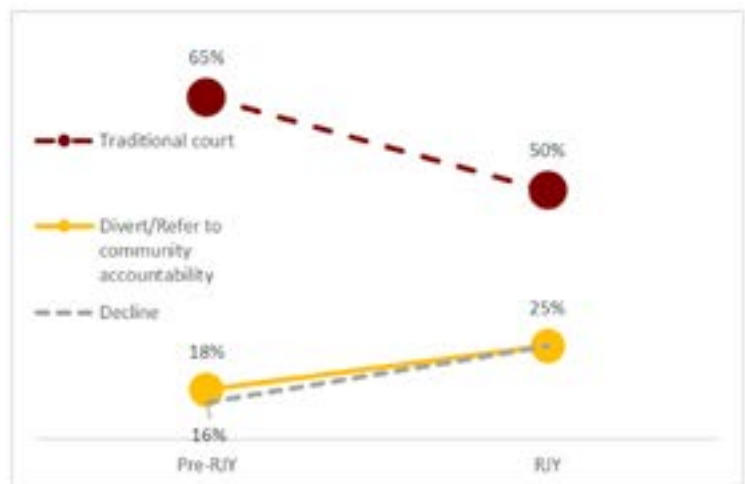
Our first finding is based on comparisons between the Pre-RJY and RJY eras on responses to cases submitted to RCAO by law enforcement, the types of cases referred to community accountability, and success rates in community accountability.

During the RJY era, a larger proportion of cases were initially referred to community accountability

In terms of whether RCAO responses changed during RJY, there is indication that initial decisions shifted towards community accountability, as shown in Figure 1. Specifically, Figure 1 indicates a decreasing use of traditional court (65% Pre-RJY compared to 50% in the RJY era) and increasing referral to community accountability (18% Pre-RJY compared to 25% during RJY). The rate of cases initially declined also increased from 16% to 25%.

Table 1 provides additional details for cases sent to traditional court and community accountability during both eras. For example, in the Pre-RJY era, theft cases made up 24% of 27,046 total cases, 21% of 17,484 charged cases, 43% of 4,893 diverted cases. In the RJY era, theft cases made up 14% of 4,495 total cases, 10% of the 2,221 charged cases, and 23% of 1,135 cases referred to community accountability.

Figure 1. Initial decisions on youth cases



Color coding in Table 1 matches the colors in Figure 1. To contrast the eras, compare the percentages from columns with the same header in a given row. Larger differences of case proportions overall between eras and between Pre-RJY diverted cases and RJY community accountability cases are highlighted.

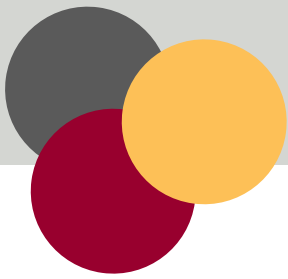


Table 1. Descriptions of charged and diverted/community accountability cases by Pre-RJY and RJY eras

	Pre-RJY			RJY		
	Total cases	Charged	Diverted	Total cases	Charged	Diverted
	27046	17487	4893	4495	2221	1136
Top offense types						
Theft	24%	21%	43%	14%	10%	23%
Disorderly conduct	14%	15%	15%	7%	6%	11%
Assault	10%	12%	1%	15%	13%	19%
Drugs	5%	4%	7%	1%	1%	1%
Alcohol	4%	3%	11%	2%	0%	3%
Property	5%	4%	4%	9%	8%	9%
Mv tran or MV theft	4%	4%	2%	12%	17%	7%
Weapon	4%	4%	1%	8%	13%	2%
All other	30%	32%	17%	33%	33%	25%
Referred Level						
Petty misdemeanor	8%	7%	12%	2%	1%	3%
Misdemeanor	62%	60%	82%	42%	30%	64%
Gross misdemeanor	9%	11%	3%	9%	9%	10%
Felony	20%	22%	2%	46%	59%	23%
Unknown	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Referral Number						
1st	46%	37%	83%	49%	32%	76%
2nd	16%	18%	11%	15%	16%	13%
3rd	9%	11%	3%	9%	11%	5%
4th or more	28%	34%	4%	27%	41%	6%
Age Groups						
10-12	6%	6%	7%	5%	3%	8%
13-14	23%	23%	23%	25%	24%	29%
15-17	71%	71%	70%	69%	73%	63%

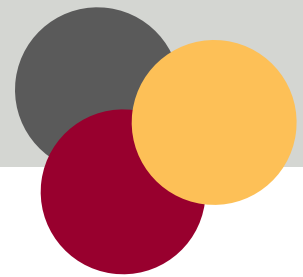


Table 1. Descriptions of charged and diverted/community accountability cases by Pre-RJY and RJY eras continued

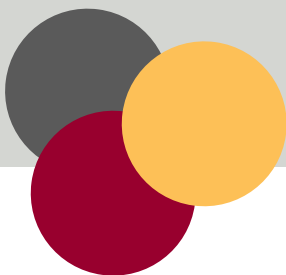
	Pre-RJY			RJY		
	Total cases	Charged	Diverted	Total cases	Charged	Diverted
	27046	17487	4893	4495	2221	1136
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%
Asian/Pacific Islandert	5%	5%	7%	6%	7%	4%
Black/African American	63%	67%	45%	58%	63%	52%
Hispanic/Latino	5%	5%	6%	4%	4%	5%
Multiraciall	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%	3%
Other	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
White	21%	18%	33%	11%	8%	15%
Unavailable	4%	3%	7%	16%	14%	19%
Gender						
Female	29%	27%	43%	28%	20%	42%
Male	71%	72%	57%	71%	79%	57%
Non-binary	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Unavailable	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%

In Table 1, comparing proportions of total cases between eras indicates that in the RJY era, cases became more severe on average. The RJY era saw lower proportions of theft and disorderly conduct cases. There were also lower proportions of petty misdemeanor and misdemeanor cases, as depicted in Figure 2.

Conversely, the RJY era had higher proportions of assault, motor vehicle theft or tampering, and felony cases. Table A in the Appendix provides additional detail, including the total numbers of cases and percentages for these case descriptors between eras. The lower levels of case submissions of petty misdemeanors and misdemeanor cases during the RJY era indicate that had decision-making about diversion remained the same, far fewer cases would have been referred to community accountability during the RJY era. The higher average case severity might also be perceived to indicate the possibility of increased recidivism during the RJY era.

Figure 2. In the RJY era, youth cases submitted to RCAO were more severe, on average





The next comparison of interest in Table 1 is rates of Pre-RJY diverted cases to those referred to community accountability during the RJY era. The largest increases in proportions of diverted cases were among cases that were submitted as assaults, and in cases submitted as felony offenses, as depicted in Figure 3. There was also a decrease in the proportion of cases diverted on their first referral.

Table 1 also shows decreasing racial disproportionality with respect to whose cases are diverted, with proportions of community accountability cases with respect to race being more similar to their overall cases proportions in the RJY era compared to those diverted in the Pre-RJY era. Specifically, during the RJY era, the proportions of community accountability cases of both Black and White youth was much closer to their overall proportions of cases as opposed to during the Pre-RJY era when the respective differences between their overall and diverted proportions was much larger.

The data shared in Table 1 indicate that changes initiated during RJY have led to more types of cases being referred to community accountability. Specifically, we find larger proportions of felony cases, assault cases, cases of youth not on their first referral, and cases of Black youth were initially diverted to community accountability.

During the RJY era, success rates in community accountability decreased overall but increased among newly diverted cases

Next, we assessed the rate at which cases referred to community accountability were successfully resolved. When cases are returned successfully after community accountability, they are considered resolved. When returned unsuccessfully, they may be either declined or petitioned to traditional court (i.e., charged). The overall pre-RJY diversion success rates were 61% compared to RJY era success rates for community accountability of 57% (Figure 4).

Figure 4 also shows increases in community accountability success rates for assault and felony cases. Assault case success rates increased from 32% pre-RJY to 69% during RJY. Felony case success rates increased from 37% pre-RJY to 53% during RJY. Additional breakdowns of success rates in community accountability are available in Appendix Table B.

Figure 3. In the RJY era, community accountability is no longer just for misdemeanors

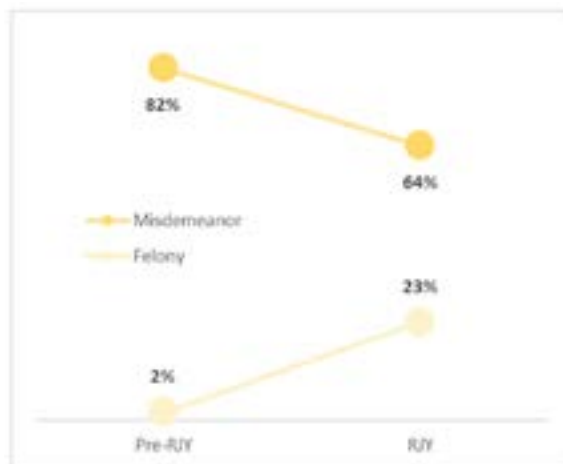
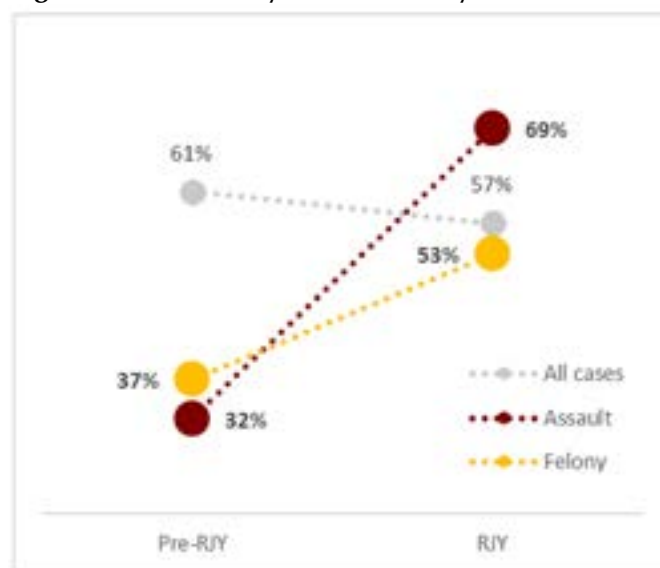
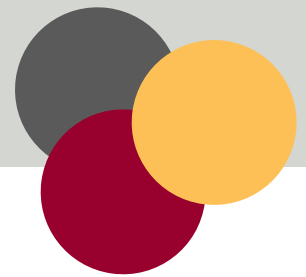


Figure 4. Community accountability success rates



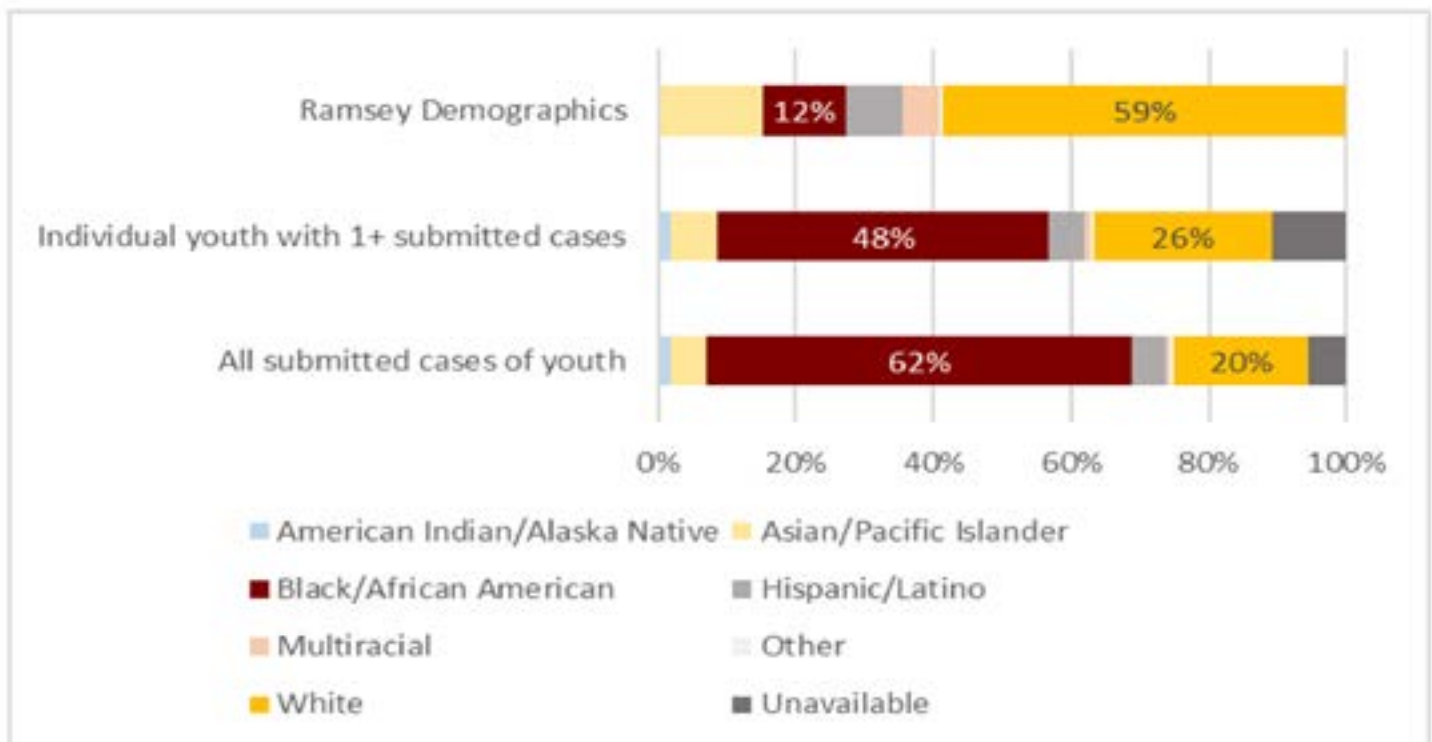


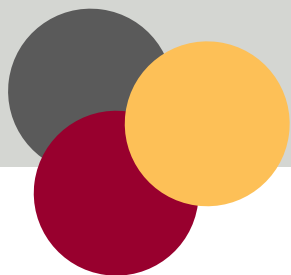
The overall decrease in success rates led to a smaller increase in cases fully resolved outside of the traditional court system compared to the increase in the number of cases initially referred to community accountability. Specifically, excluding transfer of venue and pending cases, during the RJY era, the RCAO petitioned 53% of cases to court, declined 31% of cases, and resolved 16% of cases in community accountability. In the Pre-RJY era, the comparable numbers were 69% petitioned to court, 19% declined, and 12% successfully diverted.

RJY processes had a positive impact on racial disparities

Figure 5 shows the large racial disparities that occur at the point of cases submitted to the RCAO compared to their proportion of the population. The data show the overall population of Ramsey County which is 12% Black or African American and 59% White.²⁴ The population of individual youth with one or more submitted cases to the RCAO across all years of data studied is approximately 48% Black or African American and 26% White. (Table C in the Appendix details the demographics of all individual youth with a submitted case overall and across eras.) The disparity gets worse when looking at all case submissions rather than only individuals. Of all cases submitted, 62% were among Black youth and 20% were among White youth. There was some lessening of this disparity in the RJY era (as seen in Table 1), when 58% of cases were of Black youth.

Figure 5. Racial disparities in submitted





Unidentified racial backgrounds

There is also a large increase in unidentified racial backgrounds in the RJY era, which raises a critical question about the differences between a person's own self-affiliation with a particular racial and ethnic group and the potential of being racialized or perceived as a member of a racial and ethnic group. We do not know the extent to which race data on submitted cases represent a person's self-reported racial identity or their perceived racial identity. However, the increased number of unidentified racial backgrounds may indicate that among a youth population that is increasingly multi-racial, practices to identify and track racial background will need to change if we are to persist with understanding the impact of policies on racial disproportionality.

To explore racial disparities within the decision-making practices of the RCAO, we focused on disparities in access to and success in community accountability. Figures 6 and 7 depict changes, with the center line of 0% representing equitable proportions. The percentage shown is the difference between proportions from one decision point to the next.

To quantify these disparities, we define “equity” as a match to the proportion of population at the prior decision point. If young people with a specific identity are 5% of the population, in an equitable system they would represent 5% of youth at each decision point. In other words, they would be 5% of youth who have a case submitted to the RCAO, 5% of youth whose cases are referred to community accountability, and 5% of youth whose cases are successful in community accountability. This chart describes those differences:

Zero: there is little/no disproportionality/racial disparities.

Negative numbers: the group is under-represented,

Positive numbers: the group is over-represented.

First shown, in Figure 6, we see that during the RJY era, the overrepresentation of White youth in access to community accountability fell from +12% to +4%. Conversely, the underrepresentation of Black youth in proportion of cases referred to community accountability decreased from -18% Pre-RJY to -6% during the RJY era.

These movements towards proportionality are present in success rates within community accountability as well, though to a lesser degree (Figure 7).

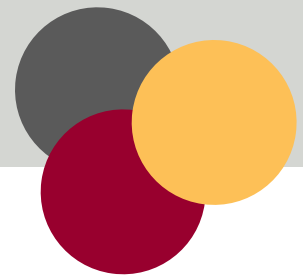


Figure 6. Changes in Racial Disparity for Youth Offered Community-Based Accountability: Pre-RJY and RJY

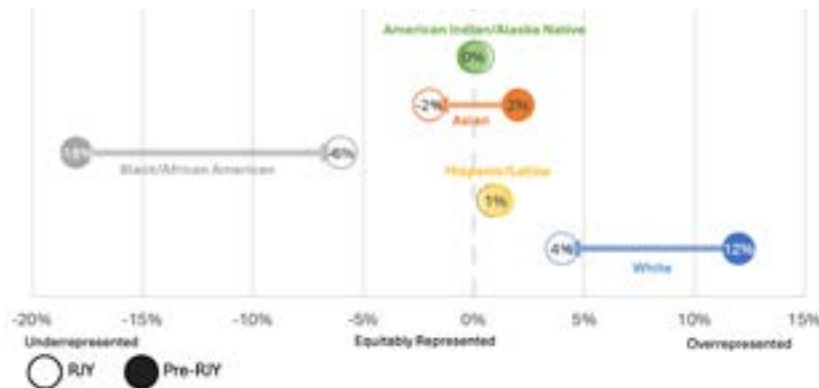


Figure 6 numbers are calculated from the percentages shown in Table 1, showing the differences between the proportions of youth diverted to community accountability compared to their overall proportions of cases submitted to RCAO. For example, in the Pre-RJY era, 21% of cases referred to RCAO were of White youth as were 33% of diverted cases. The difference between 33% and 21% is 12%, shown in Figure 6. During the RJY era, 11% of all cases were of White youth as were 15% of community accountability cases, a difference of 4%. Conversely, in the Pre-RJY era, 63% of all cases were of Black youth as were 45% of diverted cases, a difference of -18%. During RJY, the difference of -6% results when subtracting the 58% of all cases from the 52% of community accountability cases that were of Black youth.

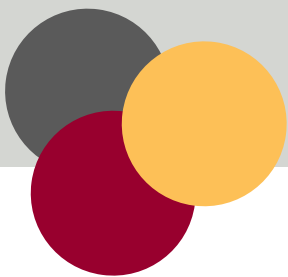
Figure 6 & 7 results indicate that reductions in disproportionality are possible.

Figure 7. Changes in Racial Disparity for Youth Succeeding in Community-Based Accountability: Pre-RJY and RJY



Figure 7 numbers are the calculated differences in proportions of youth successful in community accountability compared to their proportions of cases referred to community accountability. For example, in the Pre-RJY era, 33% of diverted cases were of White youth as were 39% of successfully diverted cases. The difference between 39% and 33% is 6%, shown in Figure 7. During the RJY era, 15% of all community accountability cases were of White youth as were 17% of successful community accountability cases, a difference of 2%. Conversely, in the Pre-RJY era, 45% of all diverted cases were of Black youth as were 36% of successfully diverted cases, a difference of -9%. During RJY, the difference of -7% results when subtracting the 52% of all cases from the 45% of community accountability cases that were of Black youth.

Data in Figure 7 show disparities in how successful the different approaches to community accountability were for different populations of youth, depicting the differences between the proportions of youth who got access to community accountability and those whose cases were successfully resolved in community accountability. During RJY, overrepresentation of White youth in success rates for community accountability fell from +6% to +2%. Conversely, the underrepresentation of Black youth in proportion of cases successful in community accountability decreased from -9% Pre-RJY to -7% during the RJY era.



Finding #1 Summary

In this section, we described the cases submitted to RCAO and the decisions RCAO made during the Pre-RJY and the RJY eras. We noted:

- Cases have gotten more serious on average during the RJY era.
- A larger proportion of cases are initially referred to community accountability in the RJY era.
 - These increases are largely due to more assault and felony cases, and to a lesser degree, more cases of youth not on their first referral, being referred to community accountability.
- Success rates in community accountability cases have experienced a slight decrease, meaning there is only a small increase in the proportion of cases fully resolved in community accountability.
 - However, success rates have greatly increased during RJY among the newly referred types of community accountability cases (i.e., assault and felony cases).
- Racial disparities in access to and success in community accountability have decreased.

We now turn to observations of the recidivism data to explore the impact of these changes.

Finding 2. Community accountability results in lower recidivism than traditional court

To explore recidivism and re-referral rates, we first review overall patterns in the recidivism data by looking at one-year recidivism, defined as another charged case within 12 months. These analyses demonstrate a few of the broader patterns in legal system data that need to be accounted for when seeking to establish causality. We then review results of the matching analyses.

12-month recidivism

12-month recidivism results show data for two-year time periods, rather than across the broader eras. We do this for multiple reasons. First, to show how time could be a factor in the results as there is a clear trend of lower recidivism over time. Second, to avoid including 2024 data in our RJY era recidivism calculations, which could result in an artificial deflating of the recidivism rates due to a lack of follow-up data. Third, to avoid using data most impacted by the COVID-era, especially from 2020, when far fewer cases were submitted.

Recidivism rates have fallen over time but increase with each referral

Figure 8 depicts 12-month recidivism following a first, second, and third submitted case for three time periods (two during the Pre-RJY era and one during the RJY era.) Specifically, Figure 8 shows 12-month recidivism ranged from 16-21% across all three time periods after a first case. For second cases of a given youth, the 12-month recidivism rates jump to between 37% and 41%. By the time a youth is on their third case, the recidivism rates are near 50% for each time period.

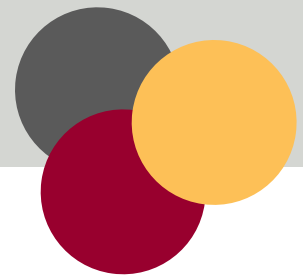


Figure 8. Overall 12-month recidivism rates by referral

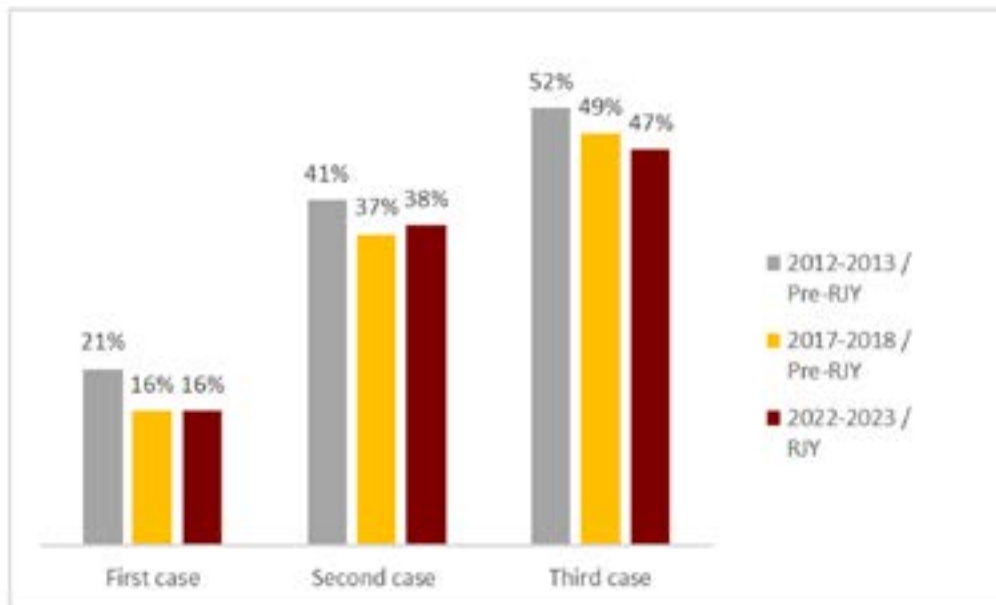


Figure 8 shows a consistent pattern across time periods that recidivism rates are lowest after a first referral but increase with each subsequent submitted case, a common pattern in legal system data. There is also a clear pattern that recidivism rates appear to be declining over time, and are the lowest during the most recent time period which occurred during the RJY era. This tells us that accounting for both time and referral number is critical for any study seeking to assess how responses might impact recidivism.

Recidivism rates have declined more among successfully diverted/community accountability cases

Disaggregating and comparing the cases that were successful in community accountability to those processed through traditional court exposes an additional layer in our exploration of recidivism rates. Figure 9 depicts these results, comparing differences in recidivism rates of successfully diverted cases and cases charged in court across the time periods for first and second cases. Third referral cases are not depicted due to the small number of third referral cases diverted in either time period. Cases processed in traditional court include those initially diverted but later charged.

Figure 9 reveals a new pattern of lower and decreasing recidivism among cases that are successfully resolved in community over time. For example, during the RJY era in 2022-23, the 12-month recidivism rate among first cases that were successful in community accountability was 4%, compared to 29% among first cases processed in traditional court in the same time period. The same 12-month recidivism rate of 4% for successful community accountability first cases was also lower than successfully diverted first cases in prior time periods.

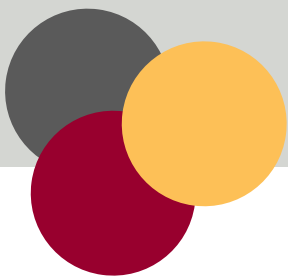
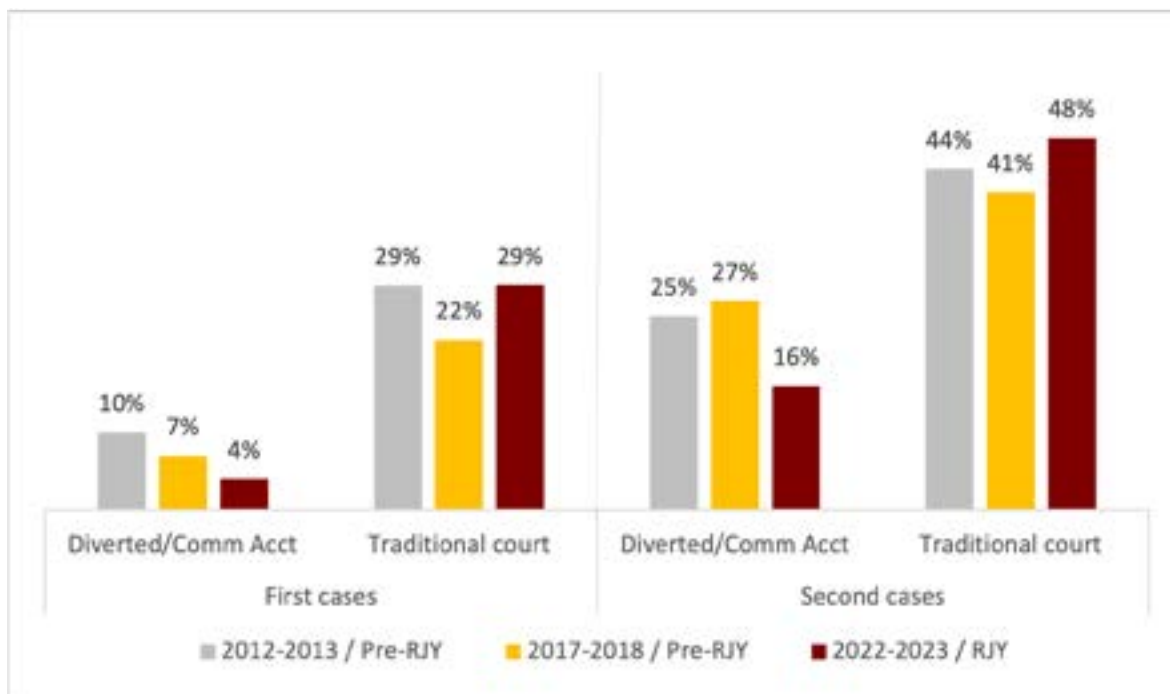


Figure 9. 12-month recidivism rates by referral number and response



Note: Third referral percentages not shown as in each two-year period there were less than 15 diverted cases.

A similar pattern holds for diverted second cases. Thus, despite an increase in the types and severity of cases being diverted, recidivism rates among successful community accountability cases were lowest during the RJY era in 2022-23.

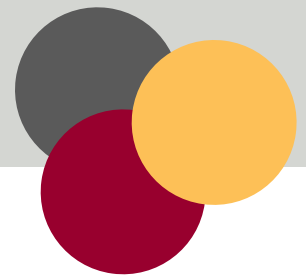
Additionally, Figure 9 indicates there is no longer a clear pattern of decreasing recidivism rates over time when looking only at cases processed in traditional court.

The patterns depicted in Figures 8 and 9 begin to describe some of the factors (demographic data, case data, time, responses, etc.) that may influence recidivism rates. Statistical analysis that accounts for these multiple factors is needed to provide an understanding of whether the observed patterns in recidivism rates have a potentially causal relationship to the decision of whether to respond to a case through community accountability or traditional court.

Matching analyses demonstrate community accountability outperforms traditional court

We conducted three matching analyses comparing young people whose cases were successful in community accountability to those whose cases were processed in traditional court. The three models were among:

1. First referral assault cases
2. First referral felony or gross misdemeanor cases
3. Second referrals



This section describes results for each model. Re-referral and recidivism rates in these models are not limited to a specific time period, given that both age and year are accounted for in the matching algorithms and logistic regression models.

First referral assault cases

Overall, there were 10,599 non-declined first referral cases between 2011 and 2024. Of these, 1,071 assaults were identified, 300 of which occurred since 2019 (indicating availability of custody status data) and 118 of which were successfully diverted. The matching algorithm started with the 118 cases of successfully diverted first referral assaults and matched them to similar cases that were not declined cases and were charged in court either immediately or after an unsuccessful diversion. Matching was on referral year (± 3 years), age (± 6 months), gender (exact match), race, assault degree (± 1 degree), severity, and custody status. Table 2 shows characteristics for the matched sample, demonstrating 117 of 118 youth successful in community accountability (CA) were matched to similarly situated youth whose cases were processed in traditional court. We were unable to find a suitable match for one case.

Table 2. Matched sample of first referral assault cases

	Successful CA	Traditional Court
N	117	117
Year		
Mean (SD)	2022.9 (1.1)	2022.1 (1.5)
Median[Range]	2023.0 [2020.0, 2024.0]	2022.0[2019.0, 2024.0]
Age		
Mean (SD)	14.7 (1.6)	14.7 (1.7)
Median [Range]	14.7 [11.4, 17.9]	14.5 [11.4,18.0]
Reported Gender, N (%)		
Female	53 (45.3)	53 (45.3)
Male	64 (54.7)	64 (54.7)
Reported Race or Ethnicity, N (%)		
American Indian/Alaska Native/ Native Hawaiian	2 (1.7)	5 (4.3)
Asian/Eastern Indian	8 (6.8)	4 (3.4)
Black/African American	58 (49.6)	58 (49.6)
Hispanic/Latino	7 (6.0)	8 (6.8)
Multiracial	4 (3.4)	3 (2.6)
Other/Unavailable	24 (20.5)	20 (17.1)
White	14 (12.0)	19 (16.2)

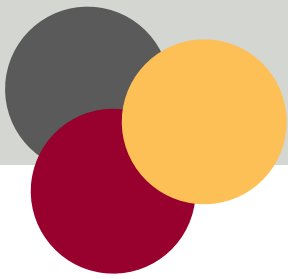
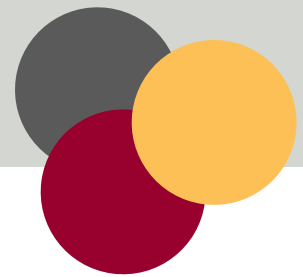


Table 2. Matched sample of first referral assault cases continued

	Successful CA	Traditional Court
N	117	117
Assault Degree, N (%)		
1st	0	0
2nd	1 (0.9)	2 (1.7)
3rd	6 (5.1)	4 (3.4)
4th	3 (2.6)	10 (8.5)
5th	107 (91.5)	101 (86.3)
Severity, N (%)		
Felony	9 (7.7)	19 (16.2)
Gross misdemeanor	1 (0.9)	9 (7.7)
Misdemeanor	107 (91.5)	89 (76.1)
Custody Status, N (%)		
In-custody	2 (1.7)	19 (16.2)
Out of custody	114 (97.4)	89 (76.1)
Transfer of venue	1 (0.9)	9 (7.7)
Rereferred, N (%)		
No	101 (86.3)	80 (68.4)
Yes	16 (13.7)	37 (31.6)
Recidivated, N (%)		
No	110 (94.0)	91 (77.8)
Yes	7 (6.0)	26 (22.2)

As shown, matched samples are identical for gender (as required by the algorithm) and nearly identical for age and race. The vast majority of successful community accountability assault cases were 5th degree and misdemeanors and the algorithm was able to find an exact match for most. In terms of custody status, the majority in both samples were out of custody, but a slightly larger portion of the traditional court group was in custody.

Re-referral rates for each group show 13.7% of youth in the community accountability sample experienced an additional submitted case to the RCAO compared to 31.6% in the matched comparison sample of youth whose cases were processed in traditional court. The recidivism rates for each group



are **6%** for the successful community accountability youth and **22.2%** for the youth whose cases were processed in traditional court.

When the above samples are entered into the logistic regression model with all independent variables accounted for (i.e., year, age, gender, race, degree, severity, & custody status), the differences in re-referral and recidivism rates are both statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level (Table 3).



Table 3. Regression results

Outcomes	RR	95% CI	P-value
Rereferred	0.50	(0.3, 0.85)	0.011
Recidivated	0.34	(0.16, 0.76)	0.008

of a re-referral.

The interpretation of the RR for re-referred would be that those who had a successful community accountability referral had 0.50 times the risk of a re-referral compared to those processed in traditional court and that this effect is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. That is, **those who had a successful community accountability referral had half the risk**

Those that had a successful community accountability referral had 0.34 times the risk of recidivism (or of having an additional charged case) compared to those whose cases were processed in court. This effect is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. That is, **those who had a successful community accountability referral had one-third the risk of a future charged case.**

First referral felony or gross misdemeanor cases

Of the 10,599 non-declined first referrals identified between 2011 and 2024, 2,942 were identified as felony or gross misdemeanor referrals. Of these, 1,112 were cases that occurred since 2019 and 179 were successful in community accountability. We used a similar matching method to match first referral felony or gross misdemeanor successful community accountability referrals to similarly situated cases processed in traditional court. Matching was done on referral year (± 3 years), age (± 6 months), gender (exact match), race, severity, offense type (exact match), and custody status. Table 4 shows the characteristics for the matched sample. We were unable to find a suitable match for the remaining cases.

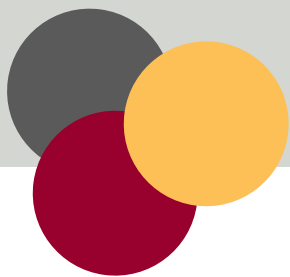


Table 4. Matched sample of first referral gross misdemeanor or felony cases

	Successful CA	Traditional Court
N	140	140
Year		
Mean (SD)	2022.4 (1.1)	2022.4 (1.3)
Median[Range]	2023.0 [2020.0, 2024.0]	2023.0[2019.0, 2024.0]
Age		
Mean (SD)	15.6 (1.5)	15.7 (1.6)
Median [Range]	15.9 [12.0, 18.0]	15.9 [11.7,18.0]
Reported Gender, N (%)		
Female	42 (30.0)	42 (30.0)
Male	98 (70.0)	98 (70.0)
Reported Race or Ethnicity, N (%)		
American Indian/Alaska Native/ Native Hawaiian	0 (0.0)	2 (1.4)
Asian/Eastern Indian	11 (7.9)	10 (7.1)
Black/African American	67 (47.9)	75 (53.6)
Hispanic/Latino	8 (5.7)	6 (4.3)
Multiracial	2 (1.4)	3 (2.1)
Other/Unavailable	28 (20.0)	24 (17.1)
White	24 (17.1)	20 (14.3)
Severity, N (%)		
Felony	98 (70.0)	105 (75.0)
Gross Misdemeanor	42 (30.0)	35 (25.0)
Custody Status, N (%)		
In-Custody	17 (12.1)	46 (32.9)
Out of Custody	117 (83.6)	72 (51.4)
Transfer of Venue	6 (4.3)	22 (15.7)

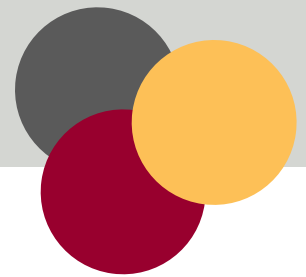
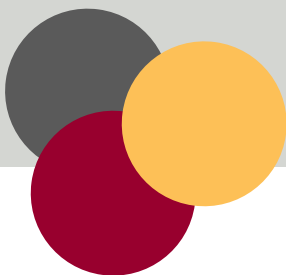


Table 4. Matched sample of first referral gross misdemeanor or felony cases continued

	Successful CA	Traditional Court
N	140	140
Offense Type, N (%)		
Aggravated Robbery	14 (10.0)	14 (10.0)
Assault	7 (5.0)	7 (5.0)
Burglary	5 (3.6)	5 (3.6)
Criminal Sexual Conduct	4 (2.9)	4 (2.9)
Fleeing a Police Officer	1 (0.7)	1 (0.7)
Fraud	10 (7.1)	10 (7.1)
Motor Vehicle Theft	1 (0.7)	1 (0.7)
Motor Vehicle Tampering	3 (2.1)	3 (2.1)
Obstruct Legal Process	14 (10.0)	14 (10.0)
Property	43 (30.7)	43 (30.7)
Riot	9 (6.4)	9 (6.4)
Simple Robbery	1 (0.7)	1 (0.7)
Stalking/Harassment/Offensive Behavior	1 (0.7)	1 (0.7)
Theft	20 (14.3)	20 (14.3)
Threats of Violence	13 (9.3)	13 (9.3)
Weapon	3 (2.1)	3 (2.1)
Rereferred, N (%)		
No	115 (82.1)	100 (71.4)
Yes	25 (17.9)	40 (28.6)
Recidivated, N (%)		
No	126 (90.0)	105 (75.0)
Yes	14 (10.0)	35 (25.0)



As shown, matched samples are identical for gender and offense type (as required by the algorithm) and nearly identical for age, race, and severity. There is a larger portion of the group processed in traditional court that was in custody.

Re-referral rates show 17.9% of youth in the successful community accountability sample experienced another submitted case to the RCAO compared to 28.6% in the matched traditional court sample. The recidivism rates are **10.0%** and **25.0%**, respectively.

When the above samples are put into the logistic regression model with all independent variables accounted for (i.e., year, age, gender, race, offense type, severity, & custody status), the difference in re-referral rates is not statistically significant but the difference in recidivism rates is statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level (Table 5).



Table 5. Regression Results

Outcome	RR	95% CI	P-value
Rereferred	0.76	(0.46, 1.23)	0.263
Recidivated	0.48	(0.28, 0.83)	0.009

The interpretation of the RR for re-referred would be that there was not statistically significant difference in risk levels for having another submitted case between those successful in community accountability and those processed in traditional court. However, those that were successful in community accountability had 0.48 times the risk of

recidivism compared to those whose cases were processed in court. **That is, those who were successful in community accountability had half the risk of having a future charged case.**

Second referrals

Overall, there were 3,731 non-declined second referral cases between 2011 and 2024. Of these, 948 occurred since 2019 and 128 were successful community accountability referrals. For this analysis, matching was on referral year (± 3 years), age (± 6 months), gender (exact match), race, severity, offense type (exact match), and custody status. Table 6 shows characteristics for matched sample, demonstrating 84 matches of successful community accountability youth to similarly situated cases processed in traditional court. We were unable to find a suitable match for the remaining cases.

Matched samples are identical for gender and offense type (as required by the algorithm) and nearly identical for age and race. There are slight differences in offense severity (higher proportion of cases traditional court cases are felonies) and custody status (higher proportion of traditional court cases are in custody).

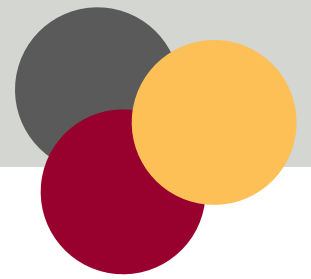


Table 6. Matched sample of second referral cases

	Successfully diverted	Traditional court
N	84	84
Year		
Mean (SD)	2021.9 (1.4)	2021.7 (1.7)
Median [Range]	2022.0 [2020.0, 2024.0]	2022.0 [2019.0, 2024.0]
Age		
Mean (SD)	15.5 (1.5)	15.5 (1.5)
Median [Range]	15.5 [12.0, 17.9]	15.5 [12.3, 18.0]
Reported Gender, N (%)		
Female	36 (42.9)	36 (42.9)
Male	48 (57.1)	48 (57.1)
Reported Race or Ethnicity, N (%)		
American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian	1 (1.2)	0 (0.0)
Asian/Eastern Indian	2 (2.4)	6 (7.1)
Black/African American	52 (61.9)	50 (59.5)
Hispanic/Latino	6 (7.1)	1 (1.2)
Multiracial	1 (1.2)	4 (4.8)
Other/Unavailable	11 (13.1)	13 (15.5)
White	11 (13.1)	10 (11.9)
Severity, N (%)		
Felony	8 (9.5)	18 (21.4)
Gross misdemeanor	8 (9.5)	5 (6.0)
Misdemeanor	63 (75.0)	60 (71.4)
Petty misdemeanor	5 (6.0)	1 (1.2)
Offense Type, N (%)		
Alcohol	1 (1.2)	1 (1.2)
Assault	17 (20.2)	17 (20.2)
Disorderly Conduct	15 (17.9)	15 (17.9)
Domestic Assault/Abuse	2 (2.4)	2 (2.4)
Drugs	2 (2.4)	2 (2.4)
False Name	1 (1.2)	1 (1.2)
Motor Vehicle Theft	4 (4.8)	4 (4.8)
Motor Vehicle Tampering	3 (3.6)	3 (3.6)
Property	6 (7.1)	6 (7.1)

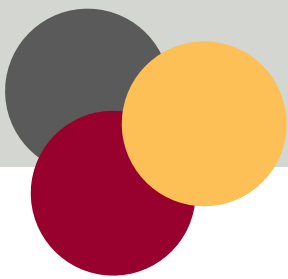


Table 6. Matched sample of second referral cases continued

	Successfully diverted	Traditional court
	84	84
Offense Type, N (%) Continued		
Theft	25 (29.8)	25 (29.8)
Trespass	2 (2.4)	2 (2.4)
Weapon	1 (1.2)	1 (1.2)
Custody Status, N (%)		
In-Custody	7 (8.3)	14 (16.7)
Out of Custody	56 (66.7)	47 (56.0)
Transfer of venue	21 (25.0)	23 (27.4)
Rereferred, N (%)		
No	51 (60.7)	41 (48.8)
Yes	33 (39.3)	43 (51.2)
Recidivated, N (%)		
No	57 (67.9)	48 (57.1)
Yes	27 (32.1)	36 (42.9)

Re-referral rates show 39.3% of youth in the successful community accountability sample experienced another submitted case to the RCAO compared to 51.2% in the matched traditional court sample. The recidivism rates are **32.1%** and **42.9%**, respectively.

When the above samples are put into the logistic regression model with all independent variables accounted for (i.e., year, age, gender, race, type, severity, & custody status), neither the differences in re-referral or recidivism rates are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level (Table 7).

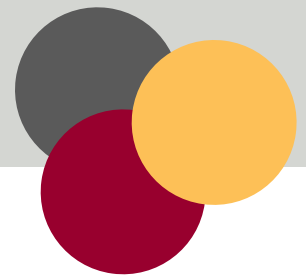
Table 7. Regression Results

Outcome	RR	95% CI	P-value
Rereferred	0.81	(0.63, 1.03)	0.087
Recidivated	0.78	(0.57, 1.06)	0.116

to custody status. In the logistic regression, differences in risk for re-referral remained insignificant, but



A sensitivity analysis which limited the matching algorithm to only cases that occurred during the RJY era matched 74 successfully diverted cases to similarly situated youth whose cases were processed in traditional court, all since July 2021. In this analysis, matched sample case characteristics were similar but there was more balance with regard to offense severity and more imbalance with regard

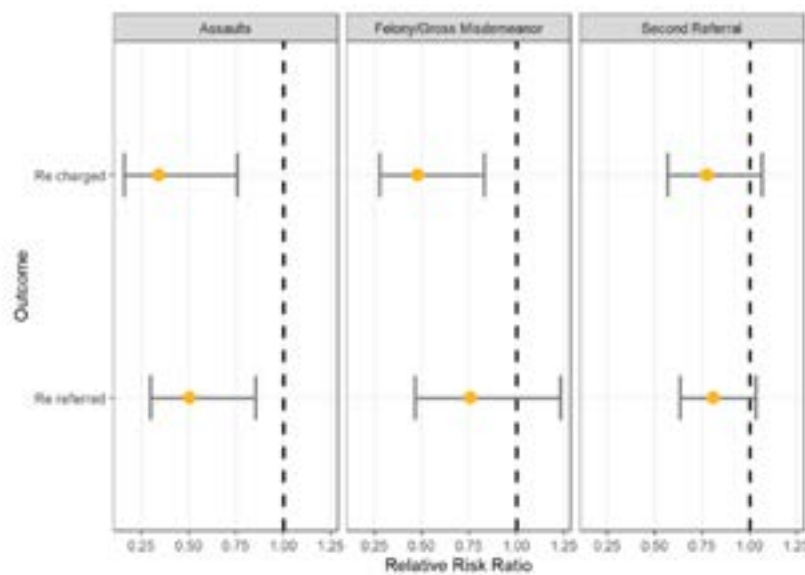


recidivism rate differences were significant and showed successful community accountability youth had .61 times the risk of recidivism compared to those whose cases were processed in traditional court during the RJY era.

Model figure

Figure 10 depicts the risk ratios with 95% CIs for the three matching schemes and models described above. CIs that do not cross the vertical dashed line at 1.00 are considered statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Figure 10. Risk ratios of re-referral and recidivism (re-charged) with 95% confidence intervals

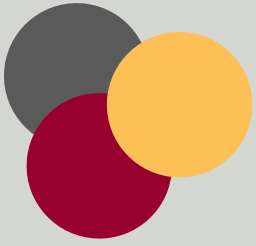


Finding #2 Summary

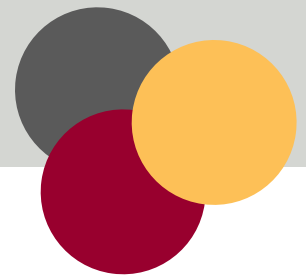
In this section, we reviewed patterns in recidivism data that indicate recidivism rates are lower in the RJY era, especially among diverted cases. We then shared results from rigorous statistical analyses that provide compelling evidence that community accountability results in lower recidivism rates among similarly situated cases or is at least as effective as the traditional court system, when controlling for other possible factors that may have explained these differences (i.e., year, age, gender, race, degree, level, & custody status).

Specifically, we found that youth who are successful in community accountability after being referred to the RCAO for the first time for an assault case or for a felony or gross misdemeanor have less than half the risk of recidivism compared to similarly situated youth who instead have their case addressed in the traditional court system. Successful community accountability also results in less than half the risk of a re-referral for youth referred for a first assault case.

We also found that for youth on their second cases, re-referral and recidivism rates were not significantly different between those who were successfully diverted and those processed in traditional court.



Conclusion



The purpose of this report was to conduct an initial impact analysis of the RJY initiative. Using pre-post RJY era data and both descriptive and matching statistical analysis, we demonstrated that:

1. **More cases and more types of cases are being referred to and resolved in community accountability during the RJY era than were diverted in the Pre-RJY era. Racial disparities have decreased in access to and success in community accountability.**
2. **When controlling for relevant factors, RJY's community accountability processes outperform or are equally as effective as traditional court processing in terms of re-referral and recidivism.**

Specifically, the RJY era has seen:

- meaningful expansions in access to community accountability, driven by increases in the numbers of submitted assault and submitted felony cases referred to community accountability;
- slight decreases in overall community accountability success rates, compared to success rates of diversion in the Pre-RJY era;
- large increases in community accountability success rates among assault and felony cases; and
- incremental changes in final case decisions.

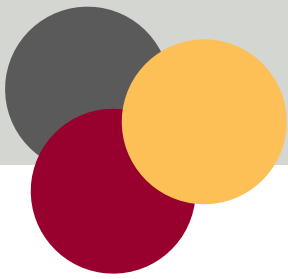
We noted these results were achieved during the RJY era when referrals of youth cases have gotten more serious and there has been a large increase in race and ethnicity being “unidentified” or “unavailable.”

These changes represented a natural experiment allowing us to conduct matching analyses. We found:

- youth whose first referral assault cases were resolved in community accountability had half the risk of a re-referral and one-third the risk of recidivism compared to similar cases processed in traditional court;
- youth whose first referral felony or gross misdemeanor cases were resolved in community accountability had half the risk of recidivism compared to similar cases processed in traditional court; and
- no models indicated youth whose cases were processed in traditional court had lower rates of recidivism or re-referrals than similarly situated youth successful in community accountability.

The findings from this report provide compelling evidence of initial effectiveness of the RJY initiative and of the potential for additional expansion. **Our findings specifically demonstrate that policies which limit diversion to first-time, minor offenses are not grounded in evidence and likely exacerbate racial disparities.** Through new policies, practices, and community partnerships, RJY provides an example pathway for mitigating the harmful racial disparities in our legal systems while also enhancing community safety.

Our findings also intersect with other research that has shown positive impact of community accountability models due to their ability to intervene more quickly,^{13,23} and to provide helpful supports that impact the social conditions that largely determine health.⁸ Further, approaches like RJY result in higher levels of victim satisfaction,⁶ due to victims being meaningfully engaged throughout the process, the emphasis on their healing, and the focus on prevention of additional harm to themselves or others.



Per a 2018 Minnesota Management and Budget cost-benefit analysis, approaches like RJY are also a sound financial investment. That report named diversion a “proven effective” strategy that results in societal benefits of \$1,830 per case accrued from “decreases in crime, in health care expenses, and increases in employment resulting from changes in high school graduation.”²⁵ **An estimate of the future benefits to society accrued due to the 647 successful community accountability cases since 2021 would now be estimated at \$1,184,010.**

In conclusion, our findings add to a growing evidence base that community-based restorative justice diversion, such as RJY, is one of the most effective options for responding to youth with legal system contact whose cases might otherwise be processed through the traditional court system.

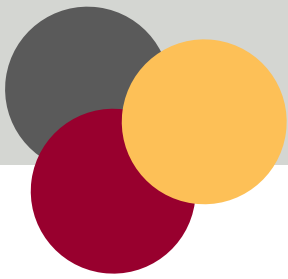
Recommendations

These findings warrant strong recommendations that RJY be continued and expanded. We have yet to find a population for whom there is evidence that RJY processes are less effective than traditional court processes. Given the high stakes, RJY should also continue to place emphasis on improving success rates of cases referred to community accountability. Continued research is also warranted to understand longer-term impacts of this initiative on the youth themselves and on sustained progress towards improving outcomes and ending racial disparities in the legal system.

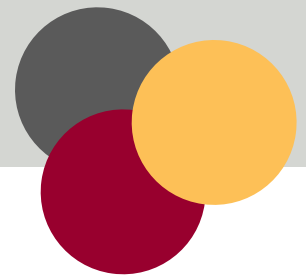
In summary, while this report provides strong evidence that community accountability outperforms traditional court processing, improving outcomes within the youth legal system continues to be a work in progress. RCAO and RJY leaders should continue their resolve to make and sustain systemic changes to how youth legal system leaders understand, address, and involve community in responding to youth with legal system contact.



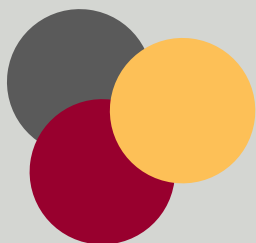
References



1. Lopes, G., Krohn, M. D., Lizotte, A. J., Schmidt, N. M., Vásquez, B. E., & Bernburg, J. G. (2012). Labeling and cumulative disadvantage: The impact of formal police intervention on life chances and crime during emerging adulthood. *Crime & Delinquency*, 58(3), 456–488. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128712436414>
2. Cauffman E, Beardslee J, Fine A, Frick PJ, Steinberg L (2021). Crossroads in juvenile justice: The impact of initial processing decision on youth 5 years after first arrest. *Development and Psychopathology*, 33, 700–713. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S095457942000200X>
3. Beckman, K. J., Jewett, P. I., Gacad, A., & Borowsky, I. W. (2024). Reducing Re-arrest Through Community-Led, Police-Initiated Restorative Justice Diversion Tailored for Youth. *Crime and Delinquency*, 70(10), 2780–2802. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00111287231158569>
4. Cavendish, W. (2014). Academic attainment during commitment and postrelease education–related outcomes of Juvenile Justice-involved youth with and without disabilities. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 22(1), 41–52.
5. Barnert, E. S., Dudovitz, R., Nelson, B. B., Coker, T. R., Biely, C., Li, N., & Chung, P. J. (2017). How does incarcerating young people affect their adult health outcomes? *Pediatrics*, 139(2), e20162624. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2016-2624>
6. Fulham, L., Blais, J., Rugge, T., & Schultheis, E. A. (2025). The effectiveness of restorative justice programs: A meta-analysis of recidivism and other relevant outcomes. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 25(5), 1486–1512. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17488958231215228>
7. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2024). *Reducing Intergenerational Poverty*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/27058>
8. González, T. (2023). Restorative Justice Diversion as a Structural Health Intervention in the Criminal Legal System. *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 113(3), 541–591. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48743665>.
9. Cundiff, D. R. (2024). The Transformation of Crime and Punishment Beliefs in America. *International Journal of Law and Criminology* (4): 9, 7-12. OCLC – 1121105677
10. Banwell-Moore, R. (2024). Restorative justice: Adopting a whole system approach to address cultural barriers in criminal justice. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 24(5), 1028–1046. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17488958241268005> (Original work published 2024)
11. Garrett, D., Tosto, S. A. & Cooper, D.T. (2024). Connecticut's juvenile review boards: a piece of the puzzle in restorative front-end diversion efforts, *Contemporary Justice Review*, DOI: 10.1080/10282580.2024.2444903
12. Embry, V., Montagnet, C., Bechtel, K., Inkpen, C., and Walker, A. (2024). *Prosecutor- Led Diversion Unveiled: Lessons and Insights From Implementing Project Reset in Two Jurisdictions*. RTI Press Publication No. OP-0092-2409. Research Triangle Park, NC: RTI Press. <https://doi.org/10.3768/rtipress.2024.op.0092.2409>
13. Beckman, K., Hanson, A., & McMorris, B. J. (2025). *Reimagining Youth Justice in Hennepin County: Modeling the Impact and Effectiveness of Prosecutorial Responses*. Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Health, School of Medicine, University of Minnesota.
14. Mendel, RA. (2022). *Diversion: A hidden key to combating racial and ethnic disparities in juvenile justice*. The Sentencing Project, Washington DC. <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/diversion-a-hidden-key-to-combating-racial-and-ethnic-disparities-in-juvenile-justice/>
15. Mendel, RA. (2024). *Protect and Redirect: Best Practices for Juvenile Diversion (Issue Brief #2)*. The



- Sentencing Project, Washington DC. Available with other briefs at: <https://www.sentencingproject.org/diversion-the-next-frontier-in-reforming-youth-justice/>
16. Leibert, A. (2021, March). How the deck is stacked: Racial and ethnic disparities in earnings following High School Graduation in Minnesota. https://mn.gov/deed/assets/DeckIsStacked_tcm1045-475382.pdf
 17. Frase, R. S. (2009). What explains persistent racial disproportionality in Minnesota's prison and jail populations?. *Crime and Justice*, 38(1), 201-280.
 18. Scott, B.A., Stilwell, S.M., Pearson, Z.V., Hsing-Fan, H., & Heinze, J. (2025). Interventions to Address Racism in Disciplinary Actions in K-12 Schools: A Systematic Review. *Prev Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-025-01855-2>
 19. Kania, J., Kramer, M. & Senge, P. (2018). The water of systems change. FSG. https://www.fsg.org/resource/water_of_systems_change/
 20. Scott, E., Duell, N., & Steinberg, L. (2018). Brain development, social context, and justice policy. *Washington University Law Journal of Law & Policy*, 57, 13. https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_journal_law_policy/vol57/iss1/8
 21. Steinberg, L. D. (2014). *Age of opportunity: Lessons from the new science of adolescence*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
 22. Mulvey, E. P., Steinberg, L., Piquero, A. R., Besana, M., Fagan, J., Schubert, C., & Cauffman, E. (2010). Trajectories of desistance and continuity in antisocial behavior following court adjudication among serious adolescent offenders. *Development and Psychopathology*, 22, 971–971.
 23. Beckman, K., Steward, D., Gacad, A., Espelien, D., & Shlafer, R. (2023). (Re)Imagining Justice for Youth: Year One Evaluation Report. Healthy Youth Development • Prevention Research Center, Department of Pediatrics, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.
 24. Minnesota Compass. 2025. <https://www.mncompass.org/profiles/county/ramsey>
 25. Merrick, W., Shuey, K., & Bernardy, P. (2018). Juvenile justice benefit-cost analysis. Results first. Minnesota Management and Budget. P. 34. <https://mn.gov/mmb-stat/results-first/juvenile-justice-report.pdf>



Appendix

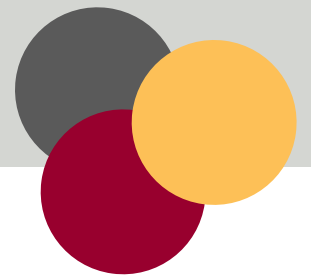


Table A. Case descriptors

	Overall		Pre-RJY		RJY Era	
	31541		27046		4495	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Top Offense Types						
Theft	7105	23%	6478	24%	319	7%
Disorderly Conduct	4149	13%	3830	14%	319	7%
Assault	3336	11%	2671	10%	665	15%
Drugs	1374	4%	1321	5%	53	1%
Alcohol	1253	4%	1183	4%	70	2%
Property	1614	5%	1230	5%	384	9%
Mv Tam or Mv Theft	1678	5%	1151	4%	527	12%
Weapon	1377	4%	1006	4%	371	8%
All other	9655	31%	8176	30%	1479	33%
Referral Number						
1st	14641	46%	12431	46%	2210	49%
2nd	5065	16%	4400	16%	665	15%
3rd	2910	9%	2526	9%	384	9%
4th or more	8925	28%	7689	28%	1236	27%
Counts submitted						
1	26446	84%	22904	85%	3542	79%
2	4064	13%	3347	12%	717	16%
3+	1031	3%	795	3%	236	5%

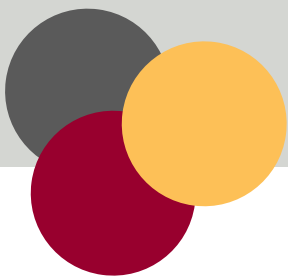


Table B. Disaggregated success rates in diversion and community accountability

	Pre-RJY	RJY Era
All cases	61%	57%
Offense type		
Theft	57%	51%
Disorderly conduct	60%	56%
Assault	32%	69%
Property	48%	59%
All other	61%	56%
Offense level		
Misdemeanor	60%	59%
Felony	37%	53%
Referral number		
1st	63%	62%
2nd	55%	46%

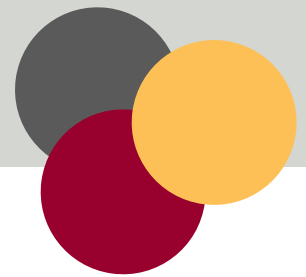


Table C. Individual descriptors at first referral

	Overall		Pre-RJY		RJY Era	
	12389		10179		2210	
	N or average	SD or %	N or average	SD or %	N or average	SD or %
Age (Average, SD)	15.6	1.69%	15.6	1.7%	15.5	1.67%
Age Groups						
10-12	1045	8.4%	861	8.5%	184	8.3%
13-14	3068	25.8%	2481	24.4%	587	26.6%
15-17	8276	66.8%	6837	67.2%	1439	65.1%
Reported Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian/Alaska Native	214	1.7%	165	1.6%	49	2.2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	840	6.8%	709	7.0%	131	5.9%
Black/African American	5966	48.2%	4966	48.8%	1000	45.2%
Hispanic/Latino	669	5.45	550	5.4%	119	5.4%
Multiracial	59	0.6%	38	0.4%	41	1.9%
Other	83	0.7%	82	0.8%	1	0.0%
White	3186	25.7%	2844	27.9%	342	15.5%
Unavailable	1352	10.9%	825	8.1%	527	23.8%
Reported Gender						
Female	4586	37.0%	3816	37.5%	770	34.8%
Male	7759	62.6%	6338	62.3%	1421	64.3%
X or non-binary	5	0.0%	*(<5)	0.0%	*(<5)	0.1%
Unavailable	39	0.3%	23	0.2%	16	0.7%
Total cases referred (Average, SD)	2.1	2.82	2.2	3.02	1.6	1.5
Maximum number of cases referred						
1	8275	66.8%	6582	64.7%	1693	76.6%
2	1779	14.4%	1518	14.9%	261	11.8%
3	779	6.3%	681	6.7%	98	4.4%
4	409	3.3%	351	3.4%	58	2.6%
5+	1147	9.3%	1047	10.3%	100	4.5%
Rates of second referral	4114	33.2%	3597	35.3%	517	23.4%