



CHANGE IN RESTRICTIVENESS OF PLACEMENTS OVER TIME

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Introduction

A central objective of the Dawn Project is to reduce the amount of time young persons spend receiving services in highly restrictive settings and increase their presence in community-based settings. This brief report provides information on changes in the restrictiveness of placements over time for young people enrolled in the Dawn Project Evaluation Study (DPES).

Methods

Data about the living arrangements of the young people participating in the DPES were collected during evaluation interviews using the Restrictiveness of Living Environments Scale – Revised (ROLES). The ROLES asks caregivers to list all the places their child has lived during the past six months. Using a key, the research interviewer assigns a restrictiveness score to each living situation. Restrictiveness scores can range from 1 (independent living) to 26 (juvenile correctional facility). Higher scores indicate a more restrictive living environment. To aid in analysis, the ROLES was collapsed into a 8-point scale with the following categories: 1 = independent living; 2 = living with at least 1 biological parent; 3 = living with extended family or adoptive family; 4 = living with a foster family; 5 = living in a group shelter or group home; 6 = living in a residential treatment facility; 7 = living in a psychiatric hospital; and 8 = living in a juvenile detention/correctional facility.

The placements included in the analysis represent where a young person was living at the time of each evaluation interview from enrollment through 24 months. The impact that factors such as age, gender, and ethnicity have on the level of restrictiveness of placements over time was explored using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM).

Results

At the time of enrollment into the DPES, the majority (69.9%) of young people were living in a family setting with a biological parent (39.3%), a relative or adoptive family (18.5%), or a foster family (12.1%). When compared to young people from mental health, young people from both the juvenile justice system and the education system were living in significantly less restrictive placements (see Figure 1). Additionally, evaluation participants who were younger when they entered the DPES were living in less restrictive placements than those who were older at entry (see Figure 2).

Figure 1. Baseline restrictiveness score by referral source.

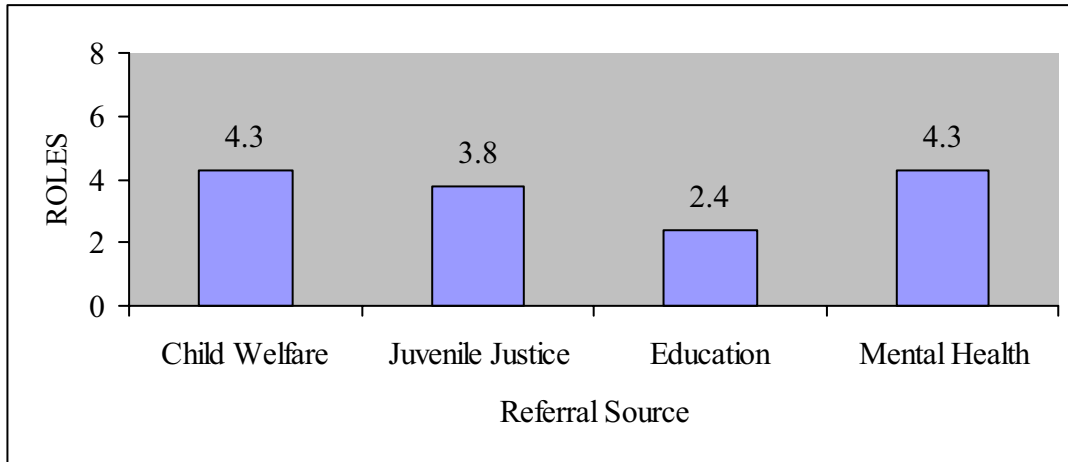
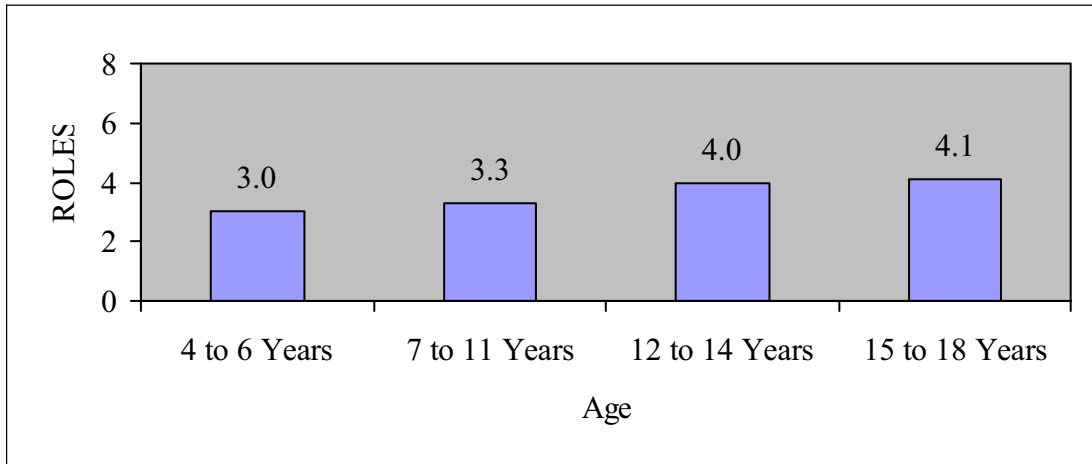


Figure 2. Baseline restrictiveness score by age.



Though restrictiveness of placements did not change significantly over time for the DPES population as a whole, referral source did affect placement restrictiveness over the 24-month study period. When compared to young people from mental health, DPES participants referred from juvenile justice experienced an increasing level of placement restrictiveness over time. Similarly, young people from education also experienced an increase in the restrictiveness level of their placements over time when compared to young people referred from mental health. For both young people from juvenile justice and young people from education, the predicted level of restrictiveness remains within the range of some type of community-based, family setting (see Figures 3 & 4).

Figure 3. Comparison of the level of restrictiveness of youth referred by juvenile justice to all other youth over time.

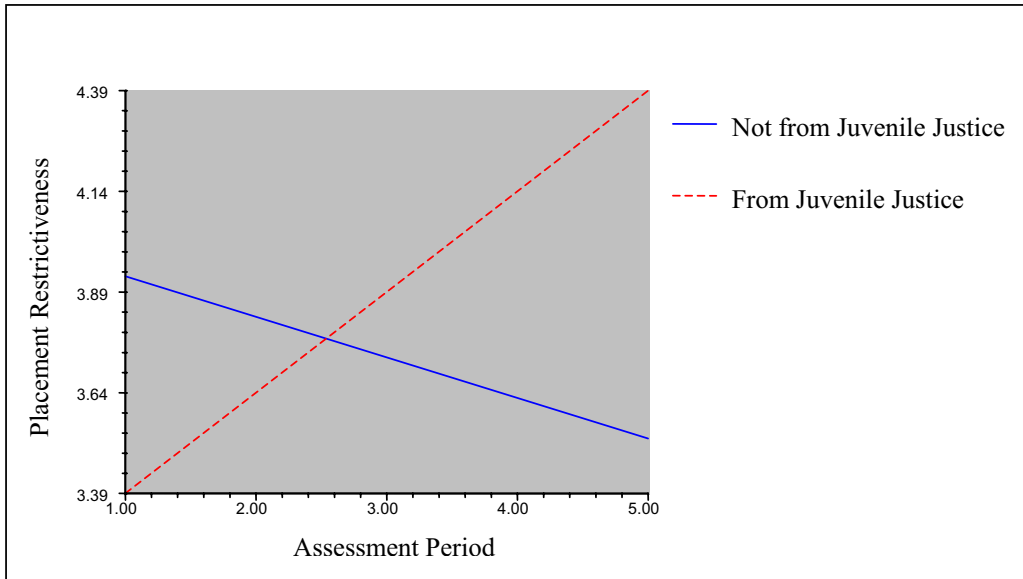
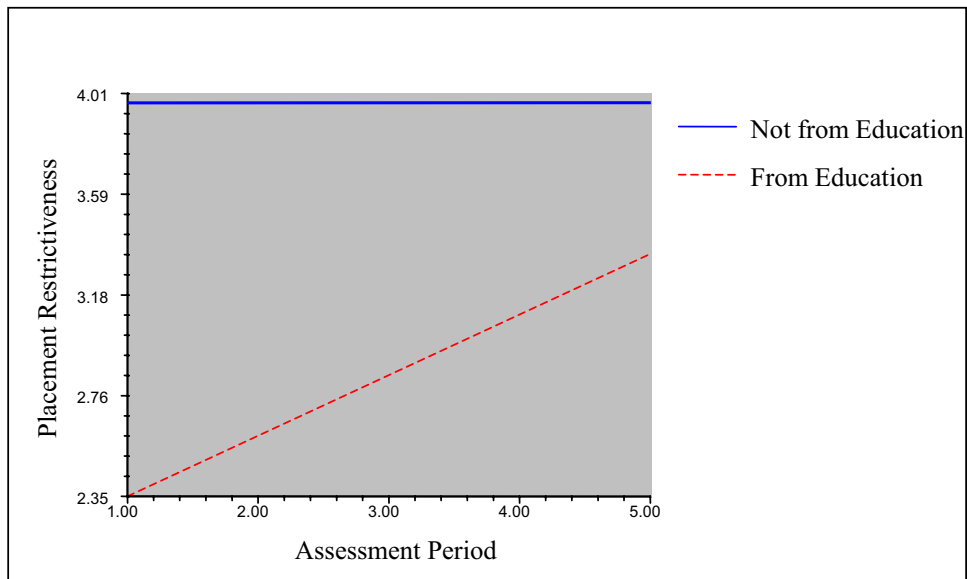
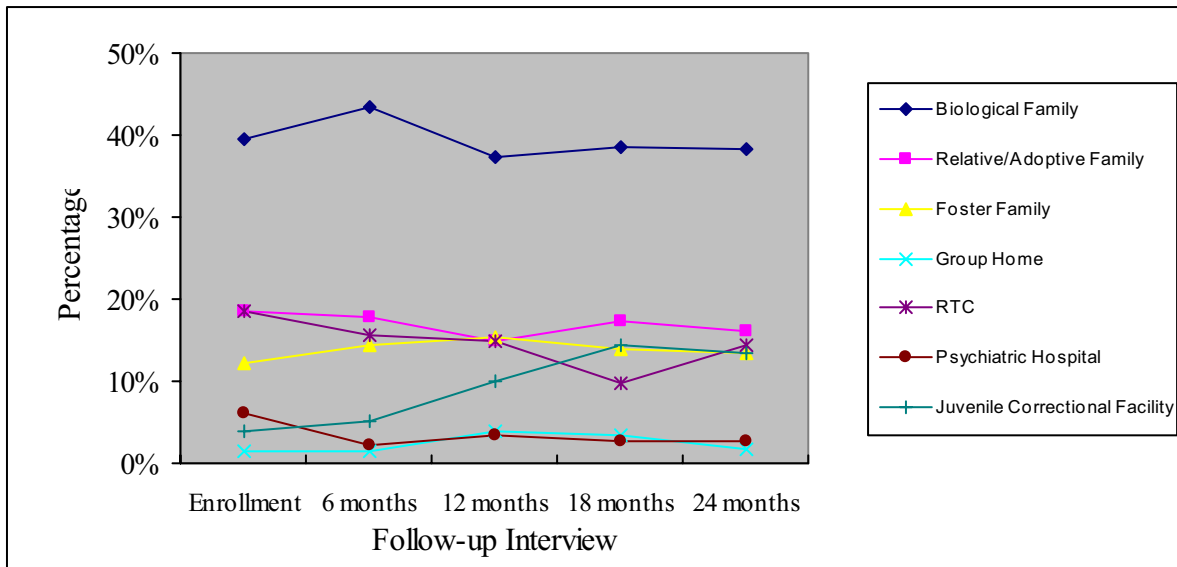


Figure 4. Comparison of the level of restrictiveness of youth referred by education to all other youth over time.



Overall, time did not affect the placement restrictiveness of DPES participants. A cross-sectional inspection of the mean restrictiveness scores at each data collection interval indicate that as a whole, most young people in the DPES remained in community-based, family living situations characterized by low to moderate restrictiveness (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Percentage of youth in placements over 24-month follow-up period.



Conclusions

Analyses of the available placement data suggest that the Dawn Project is successful in keeping youth in community-based settings. Longitudinal reductions in the use of residential treatment and hospitalization are observed. While some referral sources are associated with increasing levels of restrictiveness, placements tend to remain at the community level as opposed to more restrictive settings. The exception appears to be the use of correctional placement, which may be more closely associated with legal mandates than the system of care values. Overall, however, it appears that Dawn is indeed reducing the use of highly restrictive types of services for adolescents who have a history of such placements.