Although juvenile arrest rates have declined over the past three decades, recidivism rates for youth released from correctional institutions have remained high. Studies have found that over 50 percent of juveniles released from residential correctional institutions are rearrested within seven years (Barton, Jarjoura, and Rosay 2012; Mendel 2011; Mulvey, Schubert, and Piquero 2014). To reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for youth returning home from juvenile facilities, the federal government passed the Second Chance Act (SCA) in 2008 to authorize funding to support the development, implementation, and evaluation of juvenile reentry programs.¹

More than 100 juvenile SCA awards have been made to grantees across the US to improve reentry programming and outcomes for youth returning home after placement in juvenile correctional institutions.² Because the care of youth in juvenile justice institutional settings has been disconnected from the services provided to youth in community settings, SCA focuses specific attention on the need to bridge institutional and community services and increase continuity of care. In doing so, SCA programs should support positive youth development by linking youth to educational providers, employment training, and substance abuse and emotional health services (Altschuler 2005; Altschuler, Armstrong, and MacKenzie 1999; Steinberg, Chung, and Little 2004). Second Chance Act grantees also are required to develop strategic and sustainable reentry plans that ensure collaboration among state and local juvenile justice and social service agencies. Of key importance in these efforts is the use of evidence-based practices to guide juvenile and community placements, supervision, and service provision.

In fiscal year 2012, the Urban Institute received funding to evaluate five juvenile SCA grantees, beginning with initial assessments of all five sites’ feasibility for inclusion in an impact evaluation. Two
sites were selected for a full process and outcome evaluation: Tulsa, Oklahoma, and the Tidewater region in Virginia. Major considerations for including the Oklahoma and Virginia sites in the impact evaluation included their similarities in reentry programming, strong data systems, and the use of validated risk and needs assessments. Both sites also had plausible quasi-experimental comparison groups of youth who were being released from the same facilities but returning to comparison jurisdictions.

This brief discusses the implementation and sustainability of the reentry programs in Oklahoma and Virginia. Findings are based on data gathered between 2013 and 2016, including semistructured interviews with grantees and community and state stakeholders conducted during annual process evaluation site visits, phone conversations, and document reviews. We describe the grantees, including the contexts in which they operated; their activities, challenges, and successes; and aspects of the grant programming sustained beyond Second Chance Act funding.

An earlier brief described the implementation and sustainability of two sites not included in the impact evaluation: Sacramento, California, and Houston, Texas (Altschuler et al. 2016). These two sites differed from the outcome evaluation sites in similar ways. In brief, Houston and Sacramento experienced considerable contextual changes because of declining numbers of juvenile commitments and changes to their states’ organization of juvenile justice responsibilities. Though some of these changes reflect positive developments for youth involved in juvenile justice, they posed challenges to implementation of the reentry program during the grant period. Despite these challenges, in Houston, some important aspects of the reentry program were sustained through these developments, especially a partnership between the Houston District Parole Office and the Mayor’s Anti-Gang Office.3

In contrast to California and Texas, the two outcome evaluation sites in Oklahoma and Virginia implemented their juvenile SCA programs largely as intended. They also, to different degrees, sustained the reentry programs beyond their grant funding. This brief concludes with reflections on the different experiences in the sites.

**Tulsa, OK: Youth Services of Tulsa’s Reentry Program**

With SCA funding, Youth Services of Tulsa (YST) implemented a juvenile reentry program in 2011 in partnership with the Oklahoma Office of Juvenile Affairs (OJA), the statewide juvenile justice agency that oversees secure and nonsecure placements, as well as community-based supervision and services. The reentry program aimed to provide comprehensive services, including case management and intensive family services, to support youth transitioning home to Tulsa County from placement in correctional institutions or other residential placements following adjudication on felony charges. Over the grant period (2011–14), YST served more than 220 youth. Much of the reentry program has been sustained beyond SCA funding, and an additional 60 youth had been served as of January 2016.
**Context of YST Program Development and Operations**

The Office of Juvenile Affairs has been the juvenile justice agency in Oklahoma since 1995. In addition to overseeing residential placement and commitments, OJA manages community supervision for probation and parole functions. Once an adjudicated youth is committed to OJA, OJA determines where to place the youth, depending on the type and severity of crime, as well as treatment needs. A youth may be placed in one of 15 group homes or 2 secure correctional facilities. Group homes serve specific populations, including youth with substance abuse or emotional health issues, youth adjudicated on sexual assault charges, or youth who are particularly young. Placements in group homes are fixed at 7 months. Sentences for youth placed in secure facilities are indeterminate, but typically range from 10 to 13 months. All youth placed in secure facilities receive two home passes before release, and youth return home permanently approximately 30 days after the second pass. Release decisions for a youth placed in a secure facility are made by a parole board with input from the OJA case manager, who is assigned to the youth preadjudication. When Tulsa County SCA services began in 2011, over half the youth served by YST returned from placement in a group home facility.

Case planning and service provision for justice-involved youth in Oklahoma has been guided by the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLSI/CMI). The inventory assesses eight domains, including the youth's prior and current offenses, family circumstances and parenting, education and employment, peer relations, substance abuse, leisure and recreation activities, and personality and behavior. Each youth referred to OJA for services receives the assessment. The first assessment occurs while the youth is detained and before adjudication. Subsequently, the inventory is completed by the youth's OJA case manager once the youth is placed in a correctional facility, 30 days after release, and every six months thereafter or until OJA supervision is complete. The Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory does not inform any decisions relative to release.

**YST Juvenile Reentry Operations**

Youth Services of Tulsa has provided community-based services for youth ages 12 to 24 for over 40 years. Approximately 17,000 youth are served annually in at least one of over 18 programs offered, including counseling, programs for runaway and homeless youth, and delinquency prevention and youth development services.

Youth Services of Tulsa first provided services to reentry youth in partnership with OJA in 2007. At that time, reentry services focused on the provision of Multisystemic Therapy services to youth who were paroled and under OJA supervision. After several years of working with reentry youth in the community, YST received approval to provide prerelease counseling services to Tulsa County youth confined in the secure state facilities.

In 2010, Oklahoma applied for Juvenile Second Chance Act (JSCA) funding in response to escalating violence by youth in Tulsa County. Youth Services of Tulsa served its first youth under SCA funding in 2011, the same year that over 50 murders were documented in Tulsa County, the majority of which involved juveniles. With SCA funding, YST expanded its reentry services to include pre- and postrelease
case management and intensive family services (IFS). The IFS program was adapted from Multisystemic Therapy to reduce family conflict. Specific IFS work focused on supporting the healthy development of decisionmaking, communication, and coping skills in youth and families. At the inception of the grant, the reentry program involved three YST case managers and four IFS therapists. The reentry program served all youth returning to Tulsa County from a secure placement, except for youth who needed specialized services for a developmental disability.

PRERELEASE
Youth Services of Tulsa assigned a reentry case manager to each youth upon referral from OJA. Case managers visited youth at least once a month throughout their placement and until release. Prerelase YST visits focused on day-to-day experiences in placement and reentry planning, including anticipated barriers and challenges. Intensive family services therapists also sought to conduct prerelase visits to youth 30 days before release, as well as phone calls with families.

POSTRELEASE
All youth returning to Tulsa County participated in an eight-hour orientation program facilitated by the YST reentry program manager. The focus of this orientation was on facilitating conversation about conflict resolution, decisionmaking, anger management, sexual health, substance use relapse prevention, and employment and independent living skills.

After release, YST case managers visited youth at least once a week. Unless a relationship became strained, the same case manager originally paired with a youth during placement continued working with them until six months postrelease. Postrelease YST visits focused on the day-to-day experiences of returning home and reengaging with friends, families, and communities. Case managers assisted youth in navigating daily needs in the community, including obtaining identification cards and fulfilling license requirements, as well as accessing educational and employment services. The most consistent role case managers played was that of mentor and counselor. These roles were necessarily nuanced because of the variation and complexities of the home situations to which youth returned, as well as their pathways thereafter.

Following release, IFS workers visited youth two or three times weekly and families (parents and guardians) at least once a week. Although IFS workers reviewed OJA referrals, including the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory, these were not the primary basis of IFS plans. Intensive family services case plans and goals were established in conversations with youth and their families and focused on their strengths and needs as assessed through counseling and life skills assessment curriculum completed during the first few visits.

In addition to case management and IFS services, youth who needed more focused relapse prevention and alcohol and substance abuse counseling received these services at YST. The program was intended to support youth for at least six months postrelease, after which youth who still needed services were referred to YST’s home-based services.
Implementation Challenges and Successes

COLLABORATION IN THE COMMUNITY
Juvenile reentry planning was intended to be guided by a solid foundation of communication, coordination, and information sharing across juvenile justice and community agencies. The Office of Juvenile Affairs and YST gathered in person weekly to discuss youths’ case plans and status. These weekly case planning meetings were a significant innovation for facilitating communication across OJA and YST for the benefit of the youth. Because YST case managers supported youth in maintaining their parole requirements, YST and OJA case managers also frequently interacted during the week through youth visitations, in-office meetings, and phone calls. Because maintaining participation in IFS services was often a parole requirement, IFS staff shared goal progress with OJA monthly.

COLLABORATION WITH INSTITUTIONAL CORRECTIONS
Although coordination of community services improved during the grant period, OJA and YST struggled to foster and maintain an open line of communication with correctional staff at secure juvenile facilities. Institutional direct care staff reportedly understood the importance of reentry planning and continuity of care, but they resisted allowing case managers to meet with youth on an individual basis to discuss reentry planning and goals, which did not always incorporate the input or opinions of institutional staff.

NOTIFICATION OF RELEASE DATES
Intensive family services workers were largely unable to begin services with youth or to contact their families before release because of poor communication among agencies about release planning and dates. In only about a quarter of cases were IFS workers provided enough advance notice of a youth’s release to arrange prerelease contact with the family. In cases where release dates were not communicated in advance, IFS workers met with youth over the first week after returning to Tulsa.

The largest gap in YST’s ability to implement the SCA model with fidelity was the tension and lack of communication between institutional staff and community workers, including OJA and YST case managers.

In Oklahoma, the prerelease planning component of the reentry program was not fully implemented as intended. Yet, postrelease services were provided with fidelity to the SCA model.

CHANGES IN MANAGEMENT
Coordination issues between institutional and community workers were complicated by several changes in OJA management. Over the grant period, OJA experienced the turnover of two divisional
directors. Also, the Central Oklahoma Juvenile Center, one of the two secure residential facilities, changed superintendents twice during the grant period.

DECLINING POPULATION
In addition, the number of youth placed in residential facilities decreased considerably over the grant period because of declining rates of juvenile violent crime arrests and commitments (Sickmund and Puzzanchera 2014). The population at Central Oklahoma Juvenile Center dropped almost 50 percent, from 116 youth placements in 2011 to 66 in 2014, a trend most juvenile facilities also experienced during the grant period. Although this appears to be good news for juvenile justice reform and public safety, it posed considerable challenges for implementing a consistent program.

Sustainability after the Grant Program
Though much of the postrelease component of the reentry program was sustained after the end of the grant funding, YST has struggled to secure funding for the reentry program. State support of juvenile justice and community agencies has decreased across the state, with OJA experiencing significant budget cuts in the past decade. But YST receives funds from the local Tulsa community, and YST reallocated funding from other services to support reentry services. Case managers continue to visit youth in and outside facilities, and IFS continues to provide postrelease family services. Following the expiration of the grant funding, the primary changes to the program were that YST reduced the number of IFS workers from four to two and discontinued its eight-hour orientation program.

Tidewater, VA: The Tidewater Youth Services Commission’s Reentry Program
The Tidewater Youth Services Commission (TYSC) implemented the Tidewater Reentry Initiative in 2011, in partnership with the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the sole agency responsible for secure juvenile correctional facilities and parole services in Virginia. The reentry program aimed to provide comprehensive and coordinated services, including individualized case planning and therapeutic services, for high- to moderate-risk youth transitioning home from secure placement to one of seven Court Service Units in the Tidewater region, including the cities of Chesapeake, Franklin, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach, and the counties of Isle of Wight and Southampton. Over the grant period (2011–14), TYSC served over 217 youth. Much of the reentry program has been sustained after the grant period, and an additional 124 youth had been served as of June 2017.

Context of TYSC Program Development and Operations
The Department of Juvenile Justice is the juvenile justice agency in Virginia, responsible for overseeing the juvenile correctional centers (JCCs) and 32 Court Service Units, which provide juvenile intake, predisposition investigation, probation supervision, and reentry services in their local judicial
jurisdictions. Once a youth has been adjudicated and remanded to placement by a judge, DJJ determines where to place the youth, depending on the type and severity of the crime, as well as treatment needs. Services provided to juveniles postrelease are determined by the local Court Service Unit.

Youth commitments to JCCs may be for a determinate or indeterminate amount of time, as decided by the judge. Between 2011 and 2014, most youth commitments were indeterminate and did not exceed 36 months or go beyond age 20. The average length of stay for youth targeted for the TYSC SCA program was 14 months.

When TYSC SCA services began in 2011, some youth assessed as low risk were being placed in JCCs. But state reforms over the next few years restricted placement in JCCs to only moderate- to high-risk youth. Youth who were assessed as moderate to high risk, adjudicated delinquent, and committed to a secure facility were placed into one of eight secure JCCs. Over the grant period, in an effort to reduce the number of youth placed at JCCs, which are all over 100 miles from the Tidewater region, the state consolidated to two secure JCCs: Beaumont and Bon Air. Youth with less than 120 days left in their commitment might be moved from a JCC to a local detention or community placement program to facilitate family reunification and involvement in the reentry transition. Over the grant period, DJJ also began relying more heavily on local detention centers as facilities where youth could be placed to serve the entirety of their sentence closer to home.

The Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) has guided case planning and service provision for justice-involved youth in Virginia since 2006. The instrument assesses the risk, needs, and protective factors of juvenile justice youth in 10 domains, including the youth’s legal history, family circumstances, education and employment, community and peers, substance abuse history, emotional health, attitude, use of free time, and social and cognitive skills. Each youth referred to DJJ is administered the assessment by the parole officer (PO). The first assessment occurs postadjudication before placement in a correctional center. Reassessments occur while the youth is in placement and once the youth returns to the community.

TYSC Juvenile Reentry Operations

The Tidewater Youth Services Commission has provided residential and community-based services to youth in Chesapeake, Franklin, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach and the counties of Isle of Wight and Southampton for over 35 years. More recently, and with the additional support provided by the JSCA grant, TYSC extended some services to youth in Hampton, Newport News, and Norfolk. Services provided by TYSC include housing and shelter, predispositional housing for youth awaiting adjudication, postdispositional housing for youth adjudicated delinquent but not placed in a secure facility, intensive supervision for youth placed on electronic monitoring, diversion services, substance abuse programming, and in-home services such as family counseling. The Tidewater Youth Services Commission also provides financial support for tests of general education development and other academic endeavors.

In 2010, DJJ applied for JSCA funding to address gaps in its continuum of pre- and postrelease services provided to incarcerated youth. Although DJJ and TYSC had collaborated on juvenile projects
in the past, the JSCA partnership marked the first organized effort to establish comprehensive and coordinated reentry services.

Youth who received reentry services through TYSC worked with a reentry case manager during their transition. Tidewater Youth Services Commission case managers generally carried a caseload of six to eight youth who resided in the community and two to four youth who were placed in JCCs. Case managers were assigned to a youth based on the needs of the youth and the strengths of the case managers, though some assignments were made based on geography. Over the project period, TYSC expanded from four full-time case managers to five full-time and three part-time case managers.

**PRERELEASE**

Referrals to TYSC reentry services were made by the parole officer 90–120 days before the anticipated release date for youth assessed as moderate to high risk (per the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument) and returning from a JCC facility to the Tidewater region. Upon referral, TYSC directors visited the youth in the JCC facility to determine their eligibility and interest in the program. Although few declined to participate, some were determined ineligible for SCA services because they refused institutional services and support or needed specialized developmental disability services. Notably, TYSC did not have the capacity to provide services to all youth returning to the Tidewater region. Although TYSC did not have a waiting list, probation staff generally indicated they would have referred considerably more youth to the program had there been greater capacity. Overall, TYSC served about 45 percent of youth returning to the eligible Court Service Units during the program period.

Once a youth was accepted into the reentry program, a TYSC reentry case manager was assigned to work with the youth and coordinate a reentry plan with institutional staff. Reentry planning focused on the top three needs areas prioritized by each youth’s prerelease Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument results, which were incorporated into the individualized service plan. Case managers also focused on family engagement and reunification. Case managers met with the youth’s family or caregiver before their release to address barriers to reentry, such as physical and emotional health needs, educational needs, identification, housing, and transportation.

**POSTRELEASE**

Postrelease service planning was guided by the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument, which was completed by the PO once the youth returned to the community. Parole officers determined which reentry services were required in coordination with correctional counselors and TYSC reentry staff. Once parole requirements were established, a TYSC case manager implemented services and supervised conditions of parole, including electronic monitoring and drug testing for at least the first 30 days postrelease. Violations of electronic monitoring or drug tests were reported to the PO.

Tidewater Youth Services Commission reentry case managers met with youth in the community at least three times a week after reentry. Early meetings focused on building rapport and setting goals, as well as helping youth rebuild relationships with family, friends, and their local community. Case managers also provided transportation to help youth obtain identification cards and fulfill license requirements, as well as access educational and employment services. For services not provided by the
program, referrals would be made to community partners. Case managers typically worked with youth for three to six months postrelease. Contact with youth was typically reduced over time and as they demonstrated progress. Additionally, the JSCA grant provided funding for up to four months of rent for older youth deemed able to live independently in an apartment, but finding transitional housing for youth was a challenge to supporting their independent living goals.

**Implementation Challenges and Successes**

**COLLABORATION IN THE COMMUNITY**
Parole officers generally appreciated the support TYSC reentry case managers provided by supervising youth reentry and electronic monitoring. In this regard, collaboration between POs and TYSC staff strengthened over the grant period. The relationship, however, did pose challenges to the ability of reentry case managers to establish rapport with youth and families, who might become confused by the distinction between the role of the PO and the reentry case manager.

**COLLABORATION WITH INSTITUTIONAL CORRECTIONS**
Tidewater Youth Services Commission found it challenging to collaborate with institutional staff on reentry planning. At the beginning of the grant period, the high number of JCCs made it difficult for TYSC staff to coordinate reentry services across all institutions and their staff. As the state began to consolidate JCCs, coordination remained challenging because of the frequent movement of youth between placements and turnover among JCC staff.

**NOTIFICATION OF RELEASE DATES**
As was the case in Oklahoma, TYSC staff were often not informed of when a youth would be transported to a location closer to home or released back to the community. Lack of communication on release hampered reentry case managers’ ability to contact the youth and his or her family and develop an individualized service plan to guide the transition.

In Virginia, postrelease services were generally implemented as intended by the SCA model, but there were significant challenges to implementing the prerelease planning components with fidelity to the model.

**GEOGRAPHIC DISTANCE**
Geography proved an additional barrier to prerelease reentry planning. Because youth who were placed in JCC facilities were physically removed from the Tidewater region by over 100 miles, TYSC reentry staff could not easily reach them. Youth often did not meet their reentry case managers until after release.
Geography also made it difficult for case managers to work with families in an integrated fashion to prepare for release. When possible, TYSC tried to arrange in-person meetings between youth, family, and case managers, but this was difficult when youth were released directly from the JCC facilities. Reentry planning was typically coordinated through phone calls (sometimes video chats) involving institutional staff, parole officers, community providers, family members, and the youth. In cases where youth returned to local detention or community placement facilities before release, TYSC reentry case managers met with youth and facilitated family meetings and furloughs.

DJJ REFORMS
The Department of Juvenile Justice implemented reforms to reduce commitments to state facilities, shortening the length of secure placement and keeping more youth close to home. These reforms had mixed effects on the ability of TYSC to implement the prerelease aspects of the SCA program. Shorter placements came with more unpredictable release dates, which hampered prerelease planning. Short, less predictable stays at local facilities also impeded DJJ’s ability to deliver services to youth in the facilities. But TYSC reentry case managers reported stronger relationships with JCC institutions and institutional staff when they had fewer institutional facilities to coordinate with. Placing youth in facilities closer to their homes also improved TYSC’s ability to engage them and families before release and to meet with both parties together.

Sustainability after the Grant Program
Once the grant ended, TYSC secured additional funding for the reentry program directly from DJJ, with the potential to renew this funding for an additional two years. Reentry continues to be a priority for DJJ, and funding for the program has continued uninterrupted.

Discussion
Although geographically diverse, Oklahoma and Virginia experienced comparable challenges and barriers to implementing juvenile reentry with fidelity to the SCA model. The most significant prerelease barrier experienced by both sites was difficulty coordinating services with correctional institutions. Virginia was particularly affected by the distance between the Tidewater region and the JCCs, and both sites’ programs were affected by a lack of communication from institutional staff about release dates and reentry planning. A significant postrelease barrier experienced by both sites was difficulty securing employment opportunities for reentry youth, a challenge that has been documented by other organizations that provide reentry services to youth and adults (Baer et al. 2006; Uggen et al. 2014).

Yet, both sites increased collaboration around juvenile reentry and improved the services available to youth. The context in which the programs were implemented supported this effort. In both Oklahoma and Virginia, there was an identified need and strong support for increased juvenile SCA services, and both reentry programs were implemented by service organizations with long-standing partnerships with relevant state juvenile corrections and community supervision agencies. Both sites consistently used validated risk and needs assessments and had strong statewide data systems. The Virginia
program’s data system allowed access across institutional corrections, community corrections, and service providers.

The juvenile SCA models implemented in Oklahoma and Virginia were also fairly similar. Both programs were guided by service organizations that provided inclusive services to support the reentry transition, including intensive reentry case management and family involvement. Oklahoma employed intensive family services case managers, in addition to the reentry case managers, to facilitate family reunification and support. Also, neither Oklahoma nor Virginia applied strict criteria for who could receive reentry services. Exclusion criteria were limited primarily to youth who required specialized services for a developmental disability. In Oklahoma, youth who required specialized emotional health or substance abuse support were linked to services within the organization. In Virginia, these youth received referrals to services in the community.

By the end of the project period, both sites had made considerable advances in reentry coordination and planning at the local level. The programs collaborated with community supervision organizations to support program referral and post-reentry support. In Oklahoma, this partnership included a weekly meeting between POs and reentry staff, held at YST, to facilitate discussion of reentry youth. In Virginia, coordination between reentry case managers and POs was strengthened through TYSC’s supervision of electronic monitoring.

Through the end of 2014, each site had served over 200 youth, and both had sustained at least a portion of their reentry program. Although Oklahoma has struggled with funding and staffing changes, YST continues to provide pre- and postrelease reentry case management services to youth returning to Tulsa County. In Virginia, TYSC continues to provide reentry services to youth returning to the Tidewater region through the strong support of DJJ.

Conclusion

The Second Chance Act was passed by Congress, with strong bipartisan support, and signed into law in 2008. Since then, more than 100,000 men, women, and youth have benefited from SCA grants made by the federal government. This report highlights two sites, Oklahoma and Virginia, that received SCA funding to implement comprehensive reentry programming for youth returning home from secure placements. Both sites experienced many of the challenges of providing youth reentry services with fidelity to the SCA model, including prerelease support, coordinated services between institutional and community supervision agencies and organizations, and access to education and employment opportunities in the community—challenges also reported by juvenile SCA sites not discussed in this brief. Yet, this brief highlights the potential of juvenile SCA programs to increase community awareness, communication, and collaboration around issues related to reentry. Although empirical findings of juvenile SCA grantees have yet to be released, early reports suggest that states such as Oklahoma and Virginia that have invested in reentry programs are now seeing reductions in youth recidivism and improved prospects for educational and career developments among reentry youth.4
Notes


3. In the fifth site, Oakland, California, the juvenile SCA program concerned reentry from local detention and was implemented in partnership with the Oakland Unified School System. The program has been involved in a local evaluation (Jain, Cohen, and Bassey 2013).


References


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