

New research shows Juvenile diversion programs work, also curb reoffending tendencies

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Jeff Kretschmar. Credit: CWRU

Juveniles who complete diversion programs for their crimes are less likely to continue their criminal activity as adults, according to new research from Case Western Reserve University.

The researchers got a rare opportunity to examine early adulthood recidivism for juvenile justice-involved [youth](#) with behavioral health issues who participated in a diversion program.

The Montgomery County court system in southwest Ohio was able to provide both juvenile and early adulthood data to researchers from Case Western Reserve's Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences.

Their conclusion: youth diversion programs work.

"We examined data from Ohio's Behavioral Health Juvenile Justice (BHJJ) Initiative, a diversion program for juvenile justice-involved youth with behavioral [health](#) issues," said Jeff Kretschmar, research associate professor and managing director of the Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education.

"When we evaluate diversion programs like this, we typically only have access to juvenile records. We don't know what happens when kids age out of the juvenile system." he said. "We wanted to know. The data out of Dayton (Montgomery County) suggests the effects of juvenile diversion programs extend to [early adulthood](#)."

Three groups were examined for the research: youth appropriate for diversion programs but who did not participate; youth who participated but did not complete treatment; and youth who successfully completed treatment.

Highlights from the research show that compared to the other groups,

youths who successfully completed the juvenile diversion program had lower odds of reoffending as young adults, with fewer young-adult offenses.

Next, Kretschmar said researchers will attempt to gather similar data from other [program](#) sites in an attempt to replicate these findings. "You can imagine the possibilities additional data can bring," Kretschmar said. "With more data, from all over the state, we could see what treatments work best, for whom, and why."

The work was done with colleagues Fredrick Butcher and Krystel Tossone, research associates from the Begun Center, and Barbara Marsh, from the Board of Public Health of Dayton Montgomery County.

Provided by Case Western Reserve University

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