



## RECIDIVISM AMONG DISENROLLED YOUTH<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

The purpose of this report is to examine the likelihood that a youth who has been disenrolled from the Dawn Project will reenter the social and health service system after completing the project.

### Methods

The data for these analyses were compiled by the Dawn Project staff and submitted to the evaluation team for coding and analysis. At the time of these analyses, a total of 145 clients had left the project since its inception (through January 26, 2000). The data consisted of qualitative descriptions of long-term outcomes that were subsequently matched, by our evaluation team, with other clinical and demographic data available through the Dawn Project's MIS system. This analysis focuses on the likelihood that a young person who completed Dawn ( $n = 100$ ) would recidivate and return to the system either through the Department of Correction (DOC) or because a CHINS (Child in Need of Services) report was filed. The remaining 45 clients left prior to completing the project (i.e., they ran-away, got involved in the criminal justice system, or refused services). While some might view these individuals as having failed the Dawn Project, these young people also did not receive a complete intervention through Dawn Project and many factors extraneous to the project influenced their departure.

### Results

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of all disenrolled Dawn Project clients ( $N = 145$ ). The columns further differentiate among those who were disenrolled after and before completing the project. Minority male clients were significantly more likely than white male and female clients to have left the program prior to completing it. Premature disenrollment was also more likely to occur among clients who had been referred to Dawn Project by juvenile justice. Our results also indicate that clients who were older when they enrolled in Dawn Project were significantly more likely to drop out before finishing the project.

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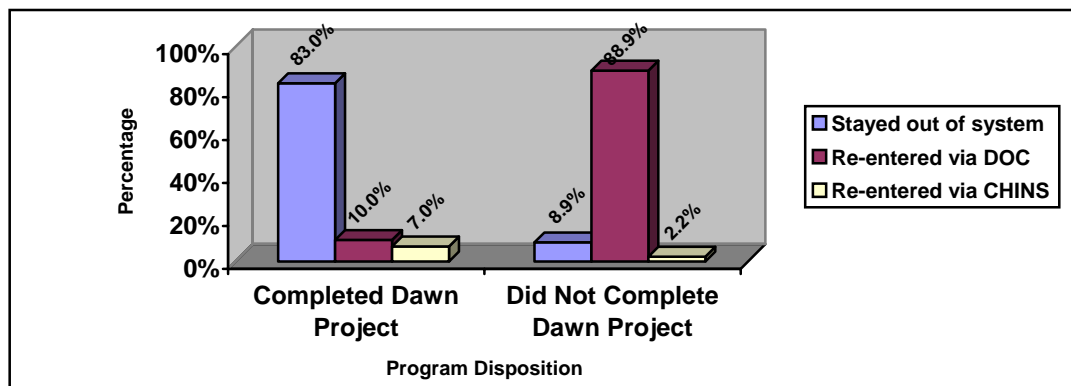
Table 1. Demographic characteristics and referral source of disenrolled clients by program completion status (N=145).

	Disenrolled Clients (N = 145)		Disenrolled Clients who Completed Dawn Project (N = 100)		Disenrolled Clients who Did not Complete Dawn Project (DOC or Runaway) (N = 45)		Completers vs. Non- Completers $\chi^2$
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Males	93	64.14	62	62.00	31	68.89	4.88*
Caucasian males	42	45.16	33	53.23	9	29.03	
Minority males	51	54.84	29	46.77	22	70.97	
Females	52	35.86	38	38.00	14	31.11	0.01
Caucasian females	19	36.54	14	36.84	5	35.71	
Minority females	33	63.46	24	63.16	9	64.29	
Referral Source							9.48***
Juvenile Justice	63	43.40	35	35.00	28	62.2	
Child Welfare	70	48.30	56	56.00	14	31.1	
Education	12	8.30	9	9.00	3	6.7	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>
Age at enrollment	13.23	2.11	12.9	2.4	13.9	1.2	2.80***

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

To understand the full effect of the project on the likelihood of returning to the system, we conducted a series of analyses. First, we compared those who completed the program with those who did not. Completing the program was associated with a significant drop in system-recidivism. Of the 100 completers, 83 (83%) were successful in staying out of the system after leaving the program. In contrast, of those who failed to complete the project ( $n = 45$ ), only 4 (8.9%) managed to remain out of the system while 40 (88.9%) returned through the DOC and 1 (2.2%) because of a CHINS report. Thus, completing the project is associated with a statistically significant drop in the overall rates of recidivism.

Figure 1. Comparison of recidivism rates between youth who completed the Dawn Project and those who did not.



Because demographic and clinical differences could influence the likelihood of a client completing the project, we also used logistic regression analysis methods to examine the odds of a client returning to the system. This methodology allows us to compute the likelihood of recidivism while controlling statistically for clinical and demographic differences among the youth. For this analysis, we included a number of variables including age at enrollment, days since disenrollment, CAFAS enrollment scores, referral source, and Dawn Project staffs' risk factor assessments. The analyses indicated that none of these enrollment variables predicted the likelihood that a client would return to the system. Surprisingly, even having been referred to the project initially from the juvenile justice system did not predict recidivism after controlling for demographic and clinical differences. Indeed, there were only two statistically significant predictors of recidivism. A client who completed the program was approximately 78 times less like to recidivate than a young person who did not ( $O.R. = 0.22, p < .01$ ). At the same time, being out of the Dawn Project longer was statistically associated with a lower likelihood of returning to the system ( $O.R. = 1.00, p < .05$ ). This latter effect, however, should be interpreted with caution since only about half of the sample ( $n = 74$ ) had been disenrolled for a period of six months or longer.

## **Conclusions**

This preliminary analysis suggests that successful completion of the Dawn Project is associated with a significant reduction in the likelihood of returning to the system either through the DOC or because of a CHINS report. At the most general level, the results point to the importance of Dawn Project clients completing the full intervention. There are some limitations to our analysis. We did not compare patterns of recidivism to clients not enrolled in Dawn Project. Rather we compared Dawn Project completers and non-completers. It is possible that there are selection factors influencing who is referred to the Dawn Project.