

Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Anchorage Youth Court

Prepared for:
Anchorage Youth Court

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Executive Summary

"We play with live ammo around here."

On the television series *The West Wing*, this famous line was delivered to a new White House attorney who was shocked to learn the President of the United States would act on her recommendation. The line captures something of what it is like for middle- and high-school students who are youth-court volunteers. Student attorneys, prosecutors, bailiffs and judges deal with real crimes and have a measurable impact on the future of the defendants and on the larger community. Learning to meet those responsibilities also has an impact on the volunteers. All of this adds up to a popular and wide-spread criminal-justice strategy with significant positive payback.

Major Findings

The Anchorage Youth Court (AYC) creates a complex set of benefits for participating defendants, youth volunteers, and the larger community. In addition to producing economic benefits significantly in excess of its cost, AYC conducts substantial education and life-skills training, and its structure and processes contribute to social-emotional growth for both defendants and volunteers.

The practice of peer justice—with youth volunteers exercising maximum responsibility for, and control over, the court process and sentencing—contributes to AYC's success. This approach requires more intensive volunteer training and participation than more adult-dominated youth courts typical of many other states.

AYC's one-year re-referral rate (a proxy for recidivism) was 16 percent, while that of a comparison group of juvenile defendants who committed offenses similar to those of youth court participants and received informal probation was 39 percent. A "re-referral" occurs when law enforcement refers a youth to the Alaska Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) for a new offense.¹ The percentage of youths who complete AYC and are subsequently re-referred to DJJ for another offense also compares favorably with re-referral rates for other youth courts as reported in a recent study published by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Based on the premise that the AYC and informal-probation comparison groups are fundamentally similar, AYC's lower re-referral rate means the Anchorage community experienced an average of 40 fewer crimes per year between 2009 and 2012 than it would have if all of AYC's defendants had simply received informal probation.²

¹ At the time a youth is re-referred to DJJ, the youth's guilt or innocence has not yet been established. A re-referral is therefore not identical with recidivism, which is a term for an actual re-offense.

² The number of crimes avoided is calculated as the difference between 16 percent and 39 percent of AYC participants committing one additional crime within 12 months during the four-year period.

- Each of the 40 crimes averted saved an estimated \$3,900 in victim, criminal justice, and law enforcement costs for a total of \$156,000 saved annually.
- The largest economic benefit of AYC is the value to young offenders of not having a criminal record. The net present value of this additional income over a working lifetime is approximately \$116,000 for each defendant who avoids the stigma of a criminal record as a result of his or her AYC experience. The number of AYC defendants who benefit each year in this way is estimated to be between 2 and 4, for a total annual benefit of between \$232,000 and \$464,000.

AYC produces other benefits to the Anchorage community in addition to less crime. In 2013, the quantifiable portion of these benefits was worth an estimated \$80,450 and included:

- Nearly 3,750 hours of community service by offenders, worth, at minimum wage, approximately \$29,000.
- 1,470 hours of youth volunteer time to conduct court proceedings, worth an estimated \$16,000.
- More than 400 hours of legal education worth \$21,000 plus another \$12,000 in pro-bono legal services donated by adult attorneys and judges for a total of \$33,000 in services donated by adult volunteers.
- \$2,450 in donated classroom facilities.

The reduction in crime attributable to AYC, together with the quantifiable benefits not related to crime reduction, add up to an estimated net economic benefit (over and above the cost of the program) of between \$185,450 and \$417,450 per year.

Table 1. Summary of AYC Quantifiable Annual Economic Benefits

Category	Amount
Reduced Cost of Crime	\$156,000
Improved Defendant Earnings Potential	232,000 - 464,000
Community Service, Education, and Volunteer Value	80,450
Total Economic Benefits	468,450 – 700,450
Less Cost of AYC Operations	<283,000>
Net Annual Benefit in Excess of Costs	\$185,450 - 417,450

Participation in AYC fosters important academic and life-skills advancement for both youth volunteers and defendants. Long-term educational and employment data are not available to quantify this impact, however, the community of Anchorage benefits in the following ways:

- In 2013, youth volunteers participated in 5,600 hours of legal training, field trips, board meetings, presentations and other educational activities provided by AYC.

- In interviews with AYC volunteers, some credited the program with inspiring higher post-secondary education and career achievement, including decisions to work in law and law-related fields.
- Even without considering AYC's effects on crime, the cost of AYC compares favorably with that of Anchorage School District activities such as cheerleading, debate, drama, and many team sports. Student participation levels for youth court and many school activities are similar.

Excluding the benefit to the State of Alaska and to individuals who move away from Anchorage, the quantifiable average annual benefit to the Anchorage community alone from AYC operations is \$198,800 in savings in the cost of crime plus \$80,450 in the value of adult and youth volunteer time and defendant community-service time, for a total annual benefit of \$279,250. In addition, the Anchorage community receives the educational and life-skills benefits of approximately 5,600 hours of legal training and other activities provided by AYC to its youth volunteers.

To obtain this estimate of Anchorage community benefits, the study team adjusted (reduced) the overall cost-of-crime benefit (Table 1, above) by \$50,000, which represents an estimate of the benefit realized by the State of Alaska in reduced probation and court costs. The remainder of the cost-of-crime calculation represents savings to Anchorage crime victims and Anchorage law enforcement.

Study Overview

This analysis examines the extent to which the benefits of the Anchorage Youth Court may be quantified and how those benefits compare to the costs of operating the program. It also addresses less quantifiable benefits. The study draws on a review of national literature, analysis of AYC program data, analysis of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) data on juvenile offenses, and interviews with experts on AYC and Alaska juvenile justice.

Anchorage Youth Court

PROGRAM STRATEGY

A statewide evaluation commissioned by DJJ in 2010 found that Alaska has a strong system of youth courts with potentially far-reaching effects.³ Alaska youth courts are unusual in that they are grounded in state statute. They also confer a high degree of responsibility on the youth volunteers. The 2010 evaluation further found that making effective use of peer justice is the most important reason Alaska youth courts are effective. Findings from this Anchorage Youth Court (AYC) study support that conclusion.

Other factors besides peer justice inherent in youth court strategies include:

- Procedural justice -- offenders feel the system is fair and are more likely to comply with sanctions
- Labeling – offenders avoid the stigma of a criminal record

³ McDowell Group, "Alaska Youth Courts Evaluation and Impact Assessment," 2010, for the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Juvenile Justice.

- Restorative justice and repentance – community-based process elicits repentance and a willingness to accept responsibility
- Law-related education – better understanding of citizenship and the role of law
- Skill-building – more effective life skills, including conflict resolution, communication, public speaking, and group problem solving

Law-related education and skill-building are benefits that accrue to both defendants and youth court volunteers.

Deterrence—quick delivery of meaningful punishment—is another significant strategy component. The average time between a referral and a hearing for AYC in 2012 through 2013 was 13 days. AYC sentences are determined by a highly structured process that employs detailed sentencing guidelines.

PROGRAM OPERATIONS

In calendar year 2013:

- 469 students were members of AYC’s Bar Association. Of those, 260 volunteered for nearly 1,500 hours of court proceedings and participated in another 5,600 hours of trainings and other educational activities, including filling 12 of 19 seats on the AYC board of directors. In total, this represents an average of nearly 28 hours of participation per volunteer.
- Adult volunteers contributed another 416 hours, primarily legal mentoring and training.
- AYC handled 100 juvenile cases involving 123 charges. During State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2013 (July 1, 2012 to June 30 2013), AYC handled 13 percent of all Anchorage misdemeanor referrals.
- AYC defendants provided 3,744 hours of community service in addition to other sentencing requirements such as training classes, reflective essays, and for some, restitution.
- AYC’s professional staff includes an executive director, legal advisor, events and communications coordinator, volunteer coordinator, and an office assistant, for a total of 3.5 full-time-equivalent positions. A sentencing coordinator is shared with, and employed by, Volunteers of America.
- AYC’s primary sources of funding⁴ were:
 - Municipality of Anchorage – \$115,000
 - Private and business support – \$97,300
 - State of Alaska – \$56,000
 - Other income – \$14,700

⁴ Source: AYC unaudited budget-to-actual report for CY 2013.

TYPES OF CASES

Approximately 80 percent of the cases referred to AYC over the past four years involved theft. Most of the remainder were associated with minors consuming alcohol or in possession of a controlled substance. Most AYC cases have no individual victim. However, between 2001 and 2013, AYC handled shoplifting or other offenses that affected a variety of Anchorage retailers, including:

Ace Hardware, Best Buy, Brown Jug, Burlington Coat Factory, Carrs-Safeway, Claire's, Costco, Famous Footwear, Footlocker, Fred Meyer, Gottschalk's, JC Penney, Kohl's, Sagaya, Nordstrom, Oaken Keg, Office Depot, Sam's Club, Sears, Sports Authority, Sportsman's Warehouse, Sunglass Hut, Title Wave, Value Liquor, Value Mart, Walmart, Zumiez, the Eielson Air Force Base Exchange, and others.

Juvenile crime defendants in Alaska are the purview of the Department of Health and Social Services Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). Anchorage has its own DJJ Regional Probation Office, which handles approximately 40 percent of the state's delinquency referrals. DJJ collaborates in a variety of ways to provide appropriate options for juvenile offenders, including, among others, programs with McLaughlin Youth Center, diversion programs⁵ such as Anchorage Youth Court, Victim-Impact Classes, treatment-focused supervision, family therapy and coaching, and special provisions for very young offenders.

Youth courts offer the justice system a formal, research-based option when traditional courts are either unavailable or inappropriate to deal with a juvenile defendant. Experts agree that the traditional justice system does not have the capacity to respond formally to every minor juvenile crime. In the absence of youth courts, many more juvenile offenders would receive minimal or even no significant attention from the legal system. Perhaps more important, a growing body of research finds that diversion programs lead to better outcomes than formal intake into the criminal justice system for juveniles who have committed minor offenses.

Alaska youth courts are unique in that they are defined in state statute and unusual in the degree to which their youth volunteers are invested with a high level of responsibility and autonomy. A statewide evaluation of Alaska youth courts (McDowell Group, 2010) found that this focus on youth volunteers is an important reason for the success of Alaska youth courts. Findings from this Anchorage Youth Court (AYC) study support that conclusion. This approach can require more intensive volunteer training and coordination than youth court models where adults supervise hearings and determine sentences.

Study Purpose

This study examines the qualitative and quantitative benefits that result from operation of AYC and compares them to the cost of those operations. AYC benefits a variety of stakeholders, including:

- Local businesses, law enforcement, and community members, who experience less crime.
- Court and juvenile justice agencies, which experience reduced demand for services.
- Youth defendants, whose future earnings and potential to contribute to society are improved, and their families.
- Adult volunteers, whose lives are enriched by their involvement.
- Youth volunteers, who experience educational and social-emotional growth from their participation.

⁵ Diversion programs, including youth courts, address juvenile criminal behavior outside the formal court/justice system. Typically, a defendant must plead guilty to be eligible for a diversion program.

Questions addressed by this study include:

- Is AYC a more effective method of treating certain juveniles than the traditional justice system?
- What would be the impact on juvenile crime in Anchorage if there were no AYC?
- What is the full range of benefits produced by AYC, including benefits to the Anchorage community, the defendants, and the AYC volunteers?
- Do the benefits of AYC exceed its costs?

Study Method

LITERATURE SEARCH

The study team reviewed a variety of information relevant to youth courts including:

- Studies of the benefits and costs of juvenile crime and incarceration
- Analyses of the design, use and proliferation of youth courts and other diversion programs
- Findings from youth court evaluation processes
- Reports on the levels, values and outcomes of youth and adult volunteerism
- Literature on other types of education, behavioral, and justice programs

The team used several estimates from past studies to help calculate economic benefits of AYC. These estimates are footnoted in the report. A selected bibliography may be found in Appendix 3.

JUVENILE JUSTICE DATA

- The Anchorage Youth Court provided data on volunteer participation and defendant referrals and outcomes, as well as financial and operating information.
- DJJ provided statistics from the Juvenile Offender Management Information System (JOMIS) about the charges and outcomes of youths diverted to the Anchorage Youth Court and about a group of comparable youths who instead were diverted to informal probation.⁶

The Anchorage School District provided information about educational expenditures.

OTHER RESEARCH

The study team also met with AYC staff, observed a court preparation session, and attended an AYC Bar Association meeting that included a presentation by a Juvenile Probation Officer (JPO).

The study team thanks the many individuals who provided additional information, including representatives of the Anchorage Police Department, DJJ, the Alaska court system, Anchorage businesses, and AYC youth volunteers and board members. To preserve confidentiality, no juvenile defendants or their families were contacted for the study. However, the study team reviewed redacted versions of defendants' personal essays and surveys from AYC records.

⁶ The JOMIS data did not include personally identifiable information and was further protected by confidentiality agreements.

Anchorage Youth Court

Youth courts have been recognized as a useful diversion alternative to “system processing” for juvenile defendants for more than 30 years. For example, a meta-analysis by The Campbell Collaboration (Petrosino, et. al. 2010) found that diversion (in general) produces better outcomes (lower recidivism) than formal intake into the criminal justice system for all low-level offenses by juveniles. A study of local youth courts by the Lane County (Oregon) Department of Youth Services found that youth court is more effective and cost efficient than a non-response (i.e., a warning letter from the Department of Youth Services).

Juvenile Justice in Alaska

Youth courts play an important role in juvenile justice in Alaska, but they are far from the only way the State handles youthful offenders. When a juvenile is referred by law enforcement to DJJ for an offense (a “delinquency referral”), DJJ first conducts an intake investigation to decide how the case will be handled. The JPO at DJJ then has a number of options, including:⁷

Dismissal at Intake – if there is not suitable proof to proceed.

Informal Probation – a contract with consent of the juvenile and guardians that may include restitution and community work or referral to other agencies for services. The initial contract is for six months and may be extended up to six more months with everyone’s agreement.

Informal Adjustment – Less serious cases may be diverted to a program outside the justice system or handled through an informal agreement by the juvenile to make restorations to the victim.

Screening and Service Referral – informal referral to one or more community support services.

Delinquency Petition – the beginning of a formal court action to secure a suitable supervision plan.

Adjudication – After a petition is filed, the JPO will schedule a court hearing. At this hearing, the judge will talk to the people concerned, look at evidence and evaluation results, and consider the youth’s history. The judge will order an outcome (“disposition”) for the case. This may be probation, institutionalization, formal diversion, or holding the charges in abeyance (delaying application of the disposition).

Formal Diversion – a formal agreement with the juvenile and guardians under which the juvenile will participate for up to 12 months in youth court or another diversion program.

Waived to Adult Court – under specific circumstances, referral for prosecution in adult court.

⁷ Information in the list of options that follows was derived from the Alaska DJJ web page: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/djj/Pages/GeneralInfo/system.aspx#Adjudication>.

Dismissal or Charges Withdrawn – at the discretion of DJJ if new information arises.

Treatment – in a DJJ facility if ordered by a judge after a formal court hearing.

Probation Supervision – formal oversight of the juvenile by a JPO to monitor specific conditions imposed by the court.

The mission of DJJ is to hold juvenile offenders accountable for their behavior, promote the safety and restoration of victims and communities, and assist offenders and their families in developing skills to prevent crime. At the heart of DJJ's approach is the concept of restorative justice, which rests on the following premise:

Crime is a violation or harm to people and relationships. The goal of justice is to identify obligations, meet needs, and promote healing (for both victims and offenders) through a process that involves victims, offenders, and the community.⁸

Youth courts add other components to the concept of restorative justice. In the first major study of youth court effectiveness, the Urban Institute identified seven theoretical bases for youth court impacts on offenders⁹:

1. Peer justice – interaction with pro-social peers makes offenders less likely to reoffend
2. Procedural justice -- offenders feel the system is fair and are more likely to comply with sanctions
3. Deterrence – quick delivery of meaningful punishment
4. Labeling – offenders avoid the stigma of a criminal record
5. Restorative justice and repentance – community-based process elicits repentance and a willingness to accept responsibility
6. Law-related education – better understanding of citizenship and the role of law
7. Skill-building – more effective life skills, including conflict resolution, communication, public speaking, and group problem solving

Peer justice, which has similar roots to tribal justice, is the factor most often mentioned in reflective essays by AYC offenders who have been through the youth court process. This suggests that, when practiced with decorum, preparation, and thoughtfulness, and by a court such as AYC that is truly operated by its youth volunteers (and not by adult overseers), peer justice can be highly effective. In a 2011 article for the New York State Bar Association Journal,¹⁰ Jeffrey Butts, who led the Urban Institute study, makes a case for the idea that peer acceptance and approval are important factors in youth court effectiveness, but says there is insufficient research thus far to conclude that youth courts where adults play a prominent role are inherently less effective than those more like AYC.

⁸ Adapted from Zehr, Howard, "Restorative Justice: The Concept," *Corrections Today*, 1997

⁹ Ibid. Page 9.

¹⁰ Butts, Jeffrey A. and Jennifer Ortiz, "Teen Courts – Do They Work and Why?", *NYSBA Journal*, January 2011.

Basis for Alaska Youth Courts

Alaska is the only state with a statute governing youth courts.¹¹ AYC operates under AS 47.12.400, which authorizes youth courts to hear, determine, and dispose of cases involving a minor whose alleged act is, or carries similar penalties to, a Class A misdemeanor. For defendants who agree to participate and who complete the youth court process, court records pertaining to the offense are sealed and may not be used in the future.

Alaska's approach has fostered a statewide youth court system where youth volunteers assume a good deal of responsibility. AYC volunteers act as defense and prosecuting attorneys, bailiffs, and judges. The volunteers determine, within guidelines, the nature and severity of sentences, and they fill more than half of AYC's 16 director seats. Alaska is one of very few states that authorize youth courts to determine guilt or innocence. The vast majority of AYC proceedings have been sentencing hearings rather than full trials, but AYC plans to conduct a limited number of trials in the upcoming year.

Defendants are referred to AYC by DJJ and are typically, though not uniformly, first-time offenders.¹² The state officials who make the referrals are Juvenile Probation Officers (JPOs). AYC defendants nearly always plead guilty or no contest, and the AYC court proceeding is held to impose an appropriate sentence. Final disposition of AYC's findings in a case are determined by the Referring Authority (i.e., DJJ).

AYC Strategy

AYC provides an alternative to the criminal justice system based on the following principles for youths accused of minor offenses:

*Anchorage Youth Court gives youth offenders personal accountability, youth attorneys good training and the opportunity to make a significant difference in others' lives, and the public an effective and comprehensive public safety system.*¹³

To accomplish its complex, restorative strategy, AYC relies extensively on two types of volunteers: 1) school-age youths who undertake a course of study and training to develop and apply an understanding of the law and peer justice, and 2) attorneys, judges, law enforcement personnel, and other adults with applicable expertise who train and mentor youth volunteers and participate with them on the AYC board of directors.

Youth volunteers must pass a Bar Exam in order to participate in court proceedings in a lead role. The Anchorage Youth Court Bar Association holds regular meetings where members participate in activities designed to give them a broader and richer perspective on the judicial system, including workshops, lectures, mock sentencing exercises, films, etc.

¹¹ Butts, "The Impact of Teen Court on Young Offenders," 2002. Page 3.

¹² This occurs subsequent to the initial referral of the defendant to DJJ by local law enforcement.

¹³ <http://www.anchorageyouthcourt.org/>

Overview of Program Participation, Administration and Funding

In 2013, AYC handled 100 juvenile cases involving 123 offenses. During that year, the AYC Bar Association had 469 members, but not all members are active in cases at the same time. For example, in the fourth quarter of 2013, 144 youth volunteers engaged in AYC activities, and 50 of those volunteers participated in court proceedings. All told in 2013, 260 active AYC members volunteered an average of nearly 28 hours each. More than half (170) volunteered more than 25 hours, and 20 invested more than 75 hours.

On average, approximately one-fifth of all youth-volunteer time was spent in court proceedings. The remaining four-fifths involved training and other educational activities, exam and case preparation, participation as AYC board members, and AYC Bar Association meetings.

In 2013, 36 adult AYC volunteers provided 500 hours of professional support, primarily training and legal advising.

AYC is managed by a full-time executive director assisted by a staff legal advisor, a part-time events and communications coordinator, a part-time volunteer coordinator, a part-time office assistant and a pool of volunteer legal advisors. Total paid staff is the equivalent of 3.5 full-time positions (FTEs). A sentencing coordinator, employed by Volunteers of America (VOA), is the primary contact between AYC and the JPOs. This arrangement began in the mid-1990s as a way to amplify AYC's record-keeping expertise.

AYC's administrative activities are housed in a small suite of rented offices across the street from the Alaska Superior Court (Nesbett State Courthouse) on West Fourth Avenue in Anchorage. Space in the courthouse for hearings is donated by the State of Alaska.

AYC funding comes from a variety of sources, the most important of which is an annual grant from the Municipality of Anchorage. The table shows AYC's cash revenues in 2013.

Table 2. AYC 2013 Funding Sources

Funding Source	2013 Amount
Municipality of Anchorage	115,000
State of Alaska (DJJ)	56,000
United Way ¹⁴	40,300
Individual Contributions	16,100
Business Contributions	26,700
Fundraising Events	14,200
Other Revenue	2,700
Total Revenues	\$271,000

The difference between this revenue total and AYC's total operating expenditures for 2013 of \$283,000 results from in-kind contributions and the timing of certain income. For practical purposes, AYC's revenues and expenses balanced for the year at approximately \$283,000.

¹⁴ United Way funding includes an \$11,000 grant. The balance is individual workplace donations.

AYC Impacts on Young Offenders

This section discusses the results of an analysis by DJJ and McDowell Group of juveniles who were accepted as AYC cases, either completed or failed to complete the AYC process, and subsequently were re-referred to DJJ for a new offense. Note that the new offenses were not always convictions. In fact, 16 percent of the re-referral offenses were dismissed. Nevertheless, all re-referrals were counted in the analysis as part of the “re-referral rate.”¹⁵

Youth Diverted to AYC

DJJ provided McDowell Group with demographic and re-referral data for youth who went through the AYC diversion process between the second half of calendar year 2011 and the third quarter of calendar year 2013. This sample represents all the DJJ records for which consistent information is available to allow the defendant’s participation in AYC to be accurately linked to his/her subsequent referral history in DJJ’s Juvenile Offender Management Information System (JOMIS).

The JOMIS data covers 345 juveniles. Between them, the cases involved 427 total charges. Though, in principle, AYC diversion is only available to youths who have no prior offenses, 69 of the juveniles in the JOMIS sample had been referred to DJJ in conjunction with a prior charge. More than one-third of the charges against those juveniles were dismissed. However, it is possible they represent a population somewhat more likely to reoffend, on average, than other AYC participants. All 69 were nevertheless included in the re-referral analysis pool.

Table 2 shows the outcome of the referrals covered by the AYC sample data.

¹⁵ The Fall 2011 issue of the Journal of Juvenile Justice includes a comprehensive article on tracking and reporting recidivism. Harris, et al, “Measuring Recidivism in Juvenile Corrections,” points to lack of consistency in how recidivism is defined, both in terms of time-frame and what constitutes an “offense.” For example, should offenses committed during a program or confinement be included? And should probation violations be considered an offense? The article presents standards developed by the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA). Because this AYC cost-benefit study is primarily concerned with economic, rather than criminal justice, outcomes, no formal system of recidivism measurement was imposed. The assumptions that guided the research for this report are described in the text.

Table 3. JOMIS Sample of AYC Cases

AYC Cases	2011		2012		2013		Grand Total	
Case Outcome								
Unaccepted Referral*	2	2%	1	1%		0%	3	1%
Juvenile Unable to Complete**		0	2	1		0	2	1
Successful – Sentence Completed	105	89	114	79	64	77	283	82
Unsuccessful – Did Not Appear	2	2	2	1	1	1	5	1
Unsuccessful – Failure to Complete	4	3	13	9	10	12	27	8
Withdrawn by Referrer	5	4	13	9	8	10	26	8
Total Cases	118		145		83		346	
Degree of AYC Charges								
Misdemeanor A	74	56%	99	52%	55	53%	228	53%
Misdemeanor B	57	44	93	48	49	47	199	47
Total Charges	131		192		104		427	

*AYC declined to accept the case

**The juvenile was unable to complete the youth court process/sentence for reasons beyond his/her control.

Table 3 shows the number and percent of defendants who were referred to AYC during 2011 or 2012 and who were re-referred for a subsequent offense. The analysis is designed to highlight the one-year re-offense rate. Defendants initially referred in 2013 are not included because data on re-referrals was not available to cover a full year after their participation in AYC ended.

Table 4. Unduplicated Juveniles Re-referred to DJJ after AYC involvement

Time to First Re-referral	2011	2012	Total	% Re-referred	Cumulative %
3 months	7	8	15	5.9%	5.9%
6 months	4	6	10	4.0	9.9
9 months	3	2	5	2.0	11.9
One Year	4	6	10	4.0	15.8
More than One Year	9	4	13	5.1	20.9
Total Re-referred	27	26	53		
Total Juveniles	114	139	253		

Note that during 2011-2012 there were ten defendants who were re-referred during their AYC participation. These defendants did not complete AYC, and therefore did not receive the full benefits of the program. They were removed from the analysis.

Comparison of AYC with Informal Probation

To place the AYC re-referral rates in context, efforts were made to calculate re-referral rates for a comparable group of juvenile defendants who did not experience AYC. Because JPOs try to offer AYC diversion whenever they believe it is appropriate, there is no group of juvenile offenders that is strictly similar to the AYC cases. Consultation with DJJ indicated the group most similar to AYC participants, and for whom comparable data is available, consists of juveniles with relatively minor offenses who had been placed on “Informal Probation.”

Juveniles referred for informal probation may have prior offenses and may be accused of offenses that are somewhat more serious than those typically referred to youth court. The study team addressed those differences, to the extent practicable, by screening out roughly half of the cases for which DJJ provided informal probation data. The screening process is described below.

Defendants who agree to informal probation typically receive consequences similar to those for cases referred to AYC, but without the benefit of the AYC process. Under informal probation, the juvenile and his or her parents enter into a voluntary contract with the JPO with the understanding that if the terms of the contract are not met, the defendant will be referred to the formal justice system. The initial term of informal probation is six months and the term may be extended to a maximum of 12 months. The JPO is required to document the informal supervision plan. As with AYC defendants, the plan may include restitution or community service, and the defendant and/or family may be referred to other agencies for classes or services.¹⁶

Following is a comparison of re-referral rates for AYC and the “comparison group” of informal-probation cases from the same time period.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH

To make the analysis as balanced as possible, McDowell Group excluded from the comparison group any juveniles charged with an offense that would typically be considered inappropriate for AYC, for example, arson. In addition, to avoid bias based on time available to reoffend, any individual with an initial referral on or after January 1, 2013 is excluded from both groups.

The initial file of informal probation cases provided by DJJ included 212 individuals. Of those, 84 individuals were excluded because of inappropriate charges and an additional 19 were excluded due to a first offence after January 1, 2013. This left 109 individuals in the comparison group.

¹⁶ <http://dhss.alaska.gov/djj/Pages/GeneralInfo/system.aspx#Informal>

DATA ANALYSIS STEPS

DATA PREPARATION

- Step 1** The comparison group charge data was provided by DJJ in three tables (“Prior”, “Informal”, and “Re-Referral”). These three tables were merged into one table.
- Step 2** Charge descriptions were linked to a table of reference charges, where ineligible charges were identified.
- Step 3** A list of juveniles was created that contains all of the juveniles identified in the table “Informal” and matches the list of juveniles provided in the comparison-group data set.
- Step 4** Any juvenile associated with an ineligible charge, at any time, was excluded from further analysis.
- Step 5** Any juvenile with an initial referral date occurring on or after January 1, 2013 was excluded from further analysis.
- Step 6** For demographic analysis by age, the truncated age of the juvenile at their initial referral is used. This is calculated as (Date of Referral – Date of Birth) divided by 365.25.

DATA ANALYSIS

- Step 1** Demographic profiles by age, gender and ethnicity were treated as independent variables.
- Step 2** Re-referral rates were calculated based on the time of first re-referral. In other words, if a juvenile had a total of three separate charges, the “time to re-referral” is the time between the first and the second charge.
- Step 3** Time frames are reported in 3-month blocks using 30-day months with the exception of 12 months, which reflects 365 days. (3 months = 90 days; 6 months = 180 days; 9 months = 270 days; 12 months = 365 days.)

Overall, the comparison group and the AYC group do not differ significantly by age or gender. However, the proportion of Alaska Native/American Indian youth referred to the Anchorage Youth Court was about half that of the comparison group.

Note that the set of AYC defendants used in this analysis is slightly different from the one shown in the previous section. This results in slight demographic differences between Table 4 and Table 2.

Table 5. Selected Demographics of AYC and “Informal Probation” Comparison Samples

Age at Time of Referral	Anchorage Youth Court		DJJ Comparison Group	
	# Juveniles	Percent	# Juveniles	Percent
9 years	1	0%	1	1%
10	3	1	2	2
11	8	3	2	2
12	13	5	9	8
13	15	6	20	18
14	47	18	18	17
15	50	19	20	18
16	61	23	22	20
17	62	24	15	14
18	3	1	0	0
Average Age	15.1 years	100%	14.5 years	100%
Gender				
Female	98	37%	41	38%
Male	165	63	68	62
Ethnicity				
Alaska Native/Am Indian	23	9%	20	18%
Asian	14	5	5	5
Black/African American	27	10	11	10
Hispanic	8	3	0	0
Multirace	31	12	12	11
Native Hawaii/Pacific Islander	29	11	4	4
Unknown	9	3	10	9
White/Caucasian	122	46	47	43
Total Juveniles	263	100%	109	100%

Columns may not add precisely due to rounding.

Comparison of One Year Re-referral Rates

The AYC data used for this comparison showed a one-year re-referral rate of 16 percent (40 of 253 individuals) for the AYC cases. Data for the comparison group who received informal probation shows a one-year re-referral rate of 39 percent (43 of 109).

Table 6. Re-referral Rates for Comparison Samples

Re-referral within:	AYC	DJJ Comparison Group
0 to 3 Months	15 (6%)	18 (17%)
3 to 6 Months	10 (4%)	9 (8%)
6 to 9 Months	5 (2%)	9 (8%)
9 to 12 Months	10 (4%)	7 (6%)
Re-Referrals Within 1 Year	40 (16%)	43 (39%)
Total Individuals	253	109

Note: AYC records show another 10 individuals who were re-referred “during AYC”; due to the variable length of time that a juvenile can spend within AYC, these cases were removed from the analysis.

The analysis also showed that re-offense rates are not significantly correlated with age, gender or ethnicity. The average age is 14.5 years for both groups. The gender proportions are similar to those in the 2010 study of all Alaska youth courts by McDowell Group. No ethnic group in the AYC comparison was any more or less likely to have been re-referred. This is also similar to the 2010 Alaska statewide findings.

CONCLUSION

Juveniles in the informal-probation comparison group were more than twice as likely to be re-referred within a year of their first offense as AYC participants. The data strongly suggests that, for qualifying juveniles, youth courts can be a more effective approach than informal probation and that Anchorage experiences less juvenile crime as a result of AYC operation. The implications of this difference in re-offense rates between AYC and informal probation are discussed below in “Economic Impacts of AYC.”

AYC Impacts on Youth Volunteers

Types of Volunteer Impacts

The middle-school and high-school students who pass the AYC Bar exam, conduct court proceedings, and take leadership roles on the board of directors, benefit from their experience in many ways. Data from periodic surveys conducted by AYC indicates its youth volunteers especially value the following benefits of their youth court experiences:

- Learning about the legal system and exploring career options
- Meeting role models, making contacts, and finding mentors in the legal services and law enforcement sectors
- Practicing public speaking and learning to organize and present information in a formal setting
- Acquiring administrative skills such as budgeting, record keeping, and conducting meetings
- Understanding new perspectives and life experiences that may be very different from their own
- Seeing defendants decide to make positive changes in their lives

Any one of these impacts is potentially life-changing. In interviews and newsletter articles, past volunteers have credited AYC with helping them go to college, motivating and shaping their career choices, nurturing long-lasting professional relationships, and giving them skills that helped them be successful in their personal and professional lives.

AYC's surveys also ask about a long list of volunteer attitudes toward their youth court experiences. Statements that elicited the strongest agreement from the volunteers included:¹⁷

- I am treated with respect by everyone at AYC.
- It is important for me to be a law-abiding citizen.
- I understand that crime has consequences.
- I feel it is important to help others.
- I feel that the law is fair.
- I am glad I participate in youth court.

Nearly all volunteers agreed or strongly agreed that after youth court, "I feel better prepared for my future," and many say the process has helped them make better decisions and have more self-confidence.

Youth court is not a panacea, however. Survey respondents were split on whether youth court had made them more likely to talk to their parents or to resolve conflicts by talking to their peers.

¹⁷ The survey results described represent 32 volunteers and cover the first half of 2013.

Value of Volunteer Impacts

Many youth volunteers are already high-achieving students when they come to AYC and many qualify as low-income (155 in 2013). To the extent that AYC experiences help these students to attend or perform well in college or to obtain or succeed in a job, those experiences certainly have an economic impact. Even students who learn through youth court that the legal arena is not one they enjoy have realized an important benefit. Not enough data exists, however, to isolate the youth-court impacts from other career-related factors or to quantify them in economic terms.

It would be of particular interest, though, to know whether volunteer participation in AYC (or other youth courts) measurably improves the academic or economic prospects of otherwise disadvantaged youth. This would be a complex research project, however, and the study team is not aware of any such analyses in the national literature.

Interviews conducted for this study highlighted one more positive impact of youth court, which is to teach both defendants and volunteers that they can have an impact on their system of laws and government. Simply being exposed to a jury-selection process, for example, can be a valuable lesson in both interpersonal dynamics and political theory. Youth court is one of the only avenues available to secondary students to play a positive role in the criminal justice system.

Economic Impacts of AYC

AYC produces a range of societal benefits. Some are due to lower re-offense rates. Others derive from the process AYC follows with defendants and from the participation of its youth and adult volunteers. In this section, we calculate a number of AYC's economic benefits and compare them with the cost to operate the program. The section also includes discussion of benefits that are demonstrable but more difficult to quantify. Overall, we estimate a net benefit (in excess of program costs) of between \$185,450 and \$417,450 per year due to the activities of AYC.

The economic benefits of AYC operation are of two basic types: a reduction in the cost to society of crime and an increase in the value to society of volunteer participation and education.

Reduction in the cost of crime includes:

- Savings to victims
- Property savings
- Lower law enforcement costs
- Value to a juvenile offender of not having a criminal record
- Lower court costs
- Lower prosecution and incarceration costs

Value to society of volunteer participation includes:

- Value of adult volunteer time
- Value of youth volunteer time
- Value to youth of education and participation experiences

“There are approximately 27 million shoplifters (or 1 in 11 people) in our nation today. More than 10 million people have been caught shoplifting in the last five years. Most non-professional shoplifters don't commit other types of crimes. They'll never steal an ashtray from your house and will return to you a \$20 bill you may have dropped. Their criminal activity is restricted to shoplifting and therefore, any rehabilitation program should be "offense-specific" for this crime. Habitual shoplifters steal an average of 1.6 times per week.”

National Association for
Shoplifting Prevention (NASP)

Reduced Cost of Crime

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, AYC lowers the re-referral rate for certain types of juvenile offenders. Precisely how AYC or other youth courts accomplish this reduction in crime is beyond the scope of this study, but research suggests a combination of peer-justice and restorative-justice factors are involved.

This analysis compares economic benefits of AYC on the basis of the difference in re-referral rates between defendants who complete AYC and the comparison group described in the previous section. Under this scenario, the one-year re-offense rate is assumed to be 16 percent (the AYC average) if youths are diverted to AYC and 39 percent (the comparison-group average) if they are not.

The difference in re-referral rates is dramatic. Juveniles placed on informal probation for offenses that are similar to those who participate in AYC are nearly two and a half times more likely to be re-referred for another offense within a year than those diverted to AYC. As noted earlier, AYC and informal probation cases/defendants are not identical, and that may explain part of the difference in re-referral rates. However, if we accept that the comparison cases (after adjustment for the type of crime) are reasonably similar to AYC cases, then diverting to AYC all the informal probation juveniles with AYC-type offenses between 2009 and 2012 would have resulted in an average of 40 fewer re-offenses per year thereafter. (The analysis assumes AYC would have had the capacity to handle them within its current operating budget.)

The figure of 40 fewer re-offenses per year may even be conservative because it is calculated on the basis of a single re-offense. It does not take into account the possibility that, for some individuals, participation in AYC deters a future stream of multiple offenses that might last many years. Further, the economic analysis assumes that the only offenses deterred by participation in AYC are minor property crimes, even though it is likely that some would be more serious crimes.

The sections immediately following discuss several different economic benefits that derive from a reduction in crime based on the difference in re-referral rates of 39 percent and 16 percent per year.

Value to Defendants of Not Having a Criminal Record

Even though approximately one quarter of the adult workforce has a criminal record, having been arrested makes it demonstrably harder to get a job.¹⁸ People with criminal records are half as likely to receive a call-

I don't want to mess it up (my future) because of one bad mistake that I chose to do. I plan on going to the University of Washington majoring in nursing and being a pediatric nurse or nurse practitioner.

AYC Defendant

back from a job interview and are much more likely to be unemployed.^{19,20} Many employers require applicants to undergo a criminal record check, and many explicitly require no criminal history as a condition of employment, even though such a policy may represent illegal discrimination.²¹ As access to criminal records becomes easier (online, for example), employment challenges grow. The labor market outcomes of ex-offenders are a public finance concern not only because of the lost labor contribution, but because failure to gain legitimate employment after prison release often leads to more re-offenses.²²

¹⁸ Rodriguez and Emsellem, "65 Million Need Not Apply," 2011.

¹⁹ Finlay, "Effect of Employer Access to Criminal History Data on the Labor Market Outcomes of Ex-Offenders and Non-Offenders", 2009. citing research by Pager (2003).

²⁰ Actual data comparing unemployment rates for people with a criminal record and people without are unavailable. Based on various research articles looking at the likelihood of advancing through a job interview, the unemployment rate (including those who would remain in the labor force if there were employment opportunities) could be in the order of five times that of someone without a criminal record. Finlay (2009) reports "Ex-offenders are significantly less likely than non-offenders to be employed (59% versus 72%, respectively)."

²¹ Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, employers cannot discriminate based on race or gender or in a way that is effectively discriminates certain groups. Several lawsuits have been brought forward arguing that discrimination based on the presence of any criminal record is effectively discrimination.

²² Finlay (2008)

While not viewed as negatively by society as adult crime, a juvenile criminal conviction still carries a significant negative stigma into the labor force. The presence of a juvenile criminal record is associated with earnings that are roughly nine percent less than average.²³ In Alaska, this works out to approximately \$4,500 per year.²⁴ Applied across the working lifetime of an offender, which for a juvenile potentially extends from age 18 to age 65, this is a net-present value of \$116,000 of lost wages per offender using a 3% discount rate.²⁵

Since data for this study was limited to re-referrals within a year of the initial offense, the analysis does not directly address lifetime impacts on defendants. However, it is reasonable to conclude that, if AYC substantially reduces the probability of an offense within one year, then it also reduces the probability of future offenses. If just two individuals each year avoid ever having a criminal record as a result of their AYC participation, then the annual benefit in additional wages is two times \$116,000 or \$232,000. If AYC diverts four youth each year from ever having a criminal record, this results in an annual benefit of \$464,000.

Savings to Victims

Estimating the cost of crime to victims is difficult because the cost includes not just the monetary value of the crime but also indirect costs associated with increased security expenditures, anxiety, fear, and personal harm. Victim cost-estimates for severe offenses can be very complex. Since crimes associated with AYC are relatively minor, these financial estimates are more straightforward and significantly lower than values typically associated with criminal activity.

Research suggests an average value of \$2,200 for victim costs associated with an AYC case, which is typically a property crime, predominantly shoplifting. Included in the victim-cost total is an estimate of the national average value of merchandise associated with a shoplifting event, \$129.²⁶ The remainder is lost time, security expenditures, personal suffering, etc.²⁷

The victim-cost estimate does not include law enforcement and criminal justice costs. It is an estimate of the financial benefit to Anchorage residents or businesses due to one less property crime.

²³ Allgood, Sam, David Mustard, Ronald Warren, Jr., "The Impact of Youth Criminal Behavior on Adult Earnings," 2003. The unadjusted difference in earnings is 27 percent but after taking into account a host of variables, the impact of the juvenile criminal record is between nine and thirteen percent.

²⁴ DOLWD, average monthly earnings 2013.

²⁵ Two factors are taken into account to adjust the lifetime earnings; the first is inflation, which is corrected by holding the financial impact constant, and the second is a discount rate to capture the human preference of something today over something tomorrow. Phrased another way, a dollar today is worth more than a dollar tomorrow.

²⁶ Heaton, Paul. "Hidden in Plain Sight, What Cost-of-Crime Research Can Tell Us about Investing in Police," RAND Center on Quality Policing, 2010. Accounting based method shows burglary about \$5,000 and larceny \$2,800 (citing Cohen and Piquero 2009; this report assigns \$1,700 in Criminal Justice costs for a net of \$2,200 in Victim and Productivity costs).

²⁷ Other than theft, the most prevalent AYC cases are Misconduct Involving a Controlled Substance (MICS) and Assault. The former typically have no victim costs, while the costs suffered by an assault victim may vary from small to very large. In view of this wide variation with respect to non-theft juvenile offenses, the study team believes the property-crime value is a reasonable proxy for all AYC cases.

Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Savings

Fewer crimes means lower enforcement costs for the Municipality of Anchorage and possibly for Alaska State Troopers. Due to the relatively small number of offenses handled by AYC in comparison with total Anchorage crimes, it is unlikely that the reduction in re-offenses accomplished by AYC results in fewer officers on the force (i.e. a realized reduction in police department expenditures). However, the time saved does allow for redeployment of enforcement assets and therefore more effective police services overall. This redeployment is a legitimate benefit, as resources that were being used for juvenile offenders will be used elsewhere. For example, the Municipality of Anchorage currently spends \$3 million per year to fund 18 police officers stationed in schools.

The Anchorage Police Department estimates the fully loaded cost of a patrol officer to be \$132 per hour and the amount of time needed to respond to a juvenile offender call 45 minutes, for an enforcement cost per AYC referral of approximately \$100. This figure does not capture other police costs, such as follow-up administrative time associated with a juvenile arrest or patrol-officer time associated with responding to juvenile complaints that do not result in an arrest. The latter, however, is likely to be minimal in the case of shoplifting or other minor property crimes. When an officer is called, the juvenile is usually present and the intent is to press charges.

Criminal justice costs are borne by the State of Alaska and include court and DJJ costs as well as the costs of diversion programs such as AYC and, when imposed, incarceration costs. The Justice Policy Institute has estimated that the cost of incarcerating a juvenile in Alaska is \$252 per day.²⁸ DJJ estimates the average sentence imposed for the small number of prosecuted cases is 23.75 days, and that an average of four youths per year are sentenced.²⁹ This is a total annual cost for juvenile incarceration of \$23,940, but this amount pertains predominantly to more serious cases than those handled by AYC. However, the UAA Justice Center reports the average JPO requires twice the hours to manage an Informal Probation referral compared to making a referral to AYC.

Because data on actual law enforcement and criminal justice costs for AYC cases is incomplete, the study relies on national research, which indicates a value of \$1,700 per offense for applicable law enforcement and criminal justice costs combined.³⁰ The total annual savings from this source from a reduction in crime of 40 cases is therefore \$68,000.

Total of Crime Costs Averted through AYC

Altogether, the quantifiable costs of crime to victims and law enforcement (described above) result in a value per offense of \$3,900. This is the crime savings associated with each juvenile offense averted because of AYC. We have estimated that AYC operations result in approximately 40 fewer juveniles reoffending each year compared to the comparison group who received informal probation. This means that between 2009 and

²⁸ Justice Policy Institute, "The Costs of Confinement: Why Good Juvenile Justice Policies Make Good Fiscal Sense," May 2009.

²⁹ DJJ incarceration costs provided by AYC.

³⁰ Conservative value derived from Cohen and Piquero, "New Evidence on the Monetary Value of Saving a High Risk Youth," (2009). \$1,700 for larceny and \$2,300 for burglary.

2012, AYC produced an annual average savings in the cost of crime of approximately \$156,000, or a total of \$624,000 for the four years. This does not include the \$116,000 in potential earnings accruing to each juvenile who avoids having a criminal record (described above).

Net Program Benefit – Crime Perspective Only

Purely in terms of crime prevention, therefore, AYC yields an estimated benefit of between \$388,000 and \$620,000 per year, with the biggest component being the earnings that would otherwise be lost if AYC defendants were treated only with informal probation and, as a result, reoffended and thereby obtained a criminal record. As noted above, other benefits are likely understated because they are calculated on the basis of just a single re-offense. In practice, a juvenile who reoffends once is likely to reoffend multiple times thereafter, however this study did not have access to that data.

Table 7. Summary of Annual Benefit and Costs Associated with AYC Crime Prevention

Annual Benefits	Estimated Value
Victim Savings	\$88,000
Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice	68,000
Not Having a Criminal Record	232,000 - 464,000
Total Crime Prevention Benefit	388,000 - \$620,000
Cost of AYC 2013 Operations	283,000
Net Crime Prevention Benefit	\$105,000 - \$337,00

Estimated Actual Costs If AYC Did Not Exist

It is not possible to know precisely how other agencies (or defendants) would react if AYC ceased operations. The following short-term implications seem likely, however:

- Based on interviews for this study, an estimated 98 percent of the cases currently referred to AYC would either be referred to a less comprehensive diversion, such as Juvenile Anti-shoplifting or Thinking Patterns classes, or informal probation, both at relatively low cost, or dismissed at no cost. The informal probation cases would require additional JPO time, approximately 21 hours versus 9.2 hours for an AYC referral, according to DJJ estimates. The remaining small number of cases would go to juvenile court, with costs of approximately \$34,000.
- The number of juveniles who avoid having a criminal record from their first offense would initially remain approximately the same, since the defendants currently referred to AYC would either have their records expunged through informal probation or some other diversion, or would simply find

their charges dropped. However, this figure would rise over time because of the higher re-referral rate for juveniles who experience informal probation rather than AYC.

- Police, businesses, and the broader community would experience an overall increase in juvenile crime of perhaps 40 cases per year, based on the different re-referral rates for AYC and informal probation.

The expense of AYC's annual operating budget obviously would be avoided if the organization did not exist. Any short-term savings would be dwarfed, however, by subsequent, long-term losses. The 40 or so defendants who would not have reoffended if they had participated in youth court, would instead find themselves back in the criminal justice system at a later date. The number and cost of those subsequent cases is difficult to estimate, as some, possibly many, would occur after the defendants reach adulthood, and would therefore be more expensive to society and to the defendants than juvenile offenses. Those defendants would also experience the lost wages and other social stigma associated with a criminal record.

Other Benefits of AYC

Reduction in the cost of crime is only one type of AYC impact. AYC produces other benefits. Some are more easily quantified than others, but all are significant. *The First Report to the Nation* (Global Issues Resource Center, 2009) lists the following contributions to society by youth courts:

- Serve as a prevention and early intervention program
- Hold juvenile offenders accountable for their actions
- Provide another option on the continuum of services available to youth
- Promote restorative justice principles
- Educate youth about the legal system
- Offer an opportunity for young people to connect positively with adults and youth from their community
- Encourage and teach civic responsibility

All these contributions are relevant to the crime rate, but several go far beyond it. In addition to reducing a negative social influence, crime, AYC helps build positive social capital through youth and community development. Such benefits include offender community service, the value of adult volunteerism, and, most importantly, the impacts, on themselves and others, of AYC's corps of youth volunteers.

Benefit of Offender Community Service Hours

Three quarters of the young offenders processed through AYC each year complete community service hours. On average, this amounts to 3,744 community service hours annually.³¹ Typical community service includes working at a Boys & Girls Club, an animal shelter, a soup kitchen, or similar labor. If we assign the value of

³¹ AYC Data, Completed Community Service Hours for 2010, 2011 and 2012.

Alaska's minimum wage (\$7.75 per hour) to this service, community service represents an annual benefit of \$29,000.

Value of AYC Adult Volunteerism

AYC is more than a criminal-justice diversion program. It is a significant education program and provides valuable volunteer experience to young people. Lawyers and judges teach young people about the legal system, provide training to youth-court volunteers, and act as legal advisors.

The number of lawyers volunteering to support AYC is relatively small, representing two percent of the 1,887 active lawyers in Anchorage, but they play an important role. Their main contribution is in the form of education and training. Attorneys teach legal courses to AYC youth volunteers throughout the year. In 2013, they volunteered an estimated 416 hours teaching about the legal system. Based on a typical value for pro-bono teaching time (\$50 per hour), those services have a value of \$21,000. Lawyers and judges provided another \$12,000 worth of legal aid to the court process, valued at \$150 per hour, less an estimated 17 hours of paid clerk time at \$35 per hour.³² Altogether, adult volunteerism represents an annual benefit of \$33,000.

Value of AYC Youth Volunteerism

During 2013, AYC youth members contributed 1,470 hours to conducting youth court proceedings. Although these youth are volunteering as lawyers, judges, clerks, bailiffs and other professional roles, it would be inappropriate to apply those wages to the value of the volunteer time. Rather, using a value of \$11 per volunteer hour, the annual benefit of the youth-time volunteered for court proceedings is estimated at \$16,000 for 2013³³.

In addition, the youth members participated in a total of 5,600 hours of legal training, field trips, board meetings, presentations and other related activities. The monetary value of providing this education is captured in the donated teaching time of the adult, legal professionals who volunteer for AYC (above). There is undoubtedly substantial value to AYC's youth members inherent in the educational experiences made available to them by AYC. Data to quantify this benefit does not exist. However, the section immediately following discusses AYC purely as an educational experience in comparison with other education activities.

AYC Educational Benefits

AYC is not primarily an education program, but education figures heavily in its strategy and operations. AYC educates defendants about the legal system, how it functions and what it requires of citizens. It also teaches defendants about themselves and their relationships—to their peers, their families, their victims, and the community.

³² Time provided is from AYC records. Pro bono values were determined after consultation with the Alaska Bar Association.

³³ The Municipality of Anchorage uses an average value of \$21.79 per volunteer hour. The Independent Sector uses a value of \$26.50 for Alaska in 2013. Calculations using Volunteering America data for Alaska work out to \$22.11 per volunteer hour in 2012. \$11 per hour is a conservative value, roughly half the Municipality of Anchorage average value.

AYC also educates its youth volunteers in similar ways—by requiring them to pass a bar exam, to prepare for cases, and to conduct themselves properly and thoughtfully in the courtroom. AYC volunteers experience personal growth comparable to the “life lessons” that students learn on the sports field, on the debating team, in the drama society, or in other structured activities where they must work toward a defined goal in a challenging situation. In these ways, AYC has parallels with both behavioral and cognitive therapy as well as education programs.

It is instructive, therefore, to think about youth court in the context of school sports and academic programs. All are recognized as being “protective” in that they place students in a healthy environment during times when they might otherwise engage in risky behaviors. AYC is especially protective because it proactively reaches out to low-income students.

The table below shows costs and participation for selected programs provided by the Anchorage School District (ASD) for FY13 compared with AYC’s total budget. Even without considering the value of AYC’s impacts on juvenile offenders, AYC’s cost per student volunteer is comparable to other youth activities.

Table 8. FY13 Costs for Selected Anchorage School District Student Activities

Activity	Total cost to provide	# students participating	Cost per student*
Basketball	\$587,000	574	\$1,023
Debate, Drama, Forensics	105,000	137	766
Swimming and Diving	499,000	335	1,490
Volleyball	335,000	438	765
Cheerleading	246,000	507	485
AYC (total budget, including in-kind)	300,000	469**	640

Source: Activity costs and student participation provided by the Anchorage School District

*The number of student-contact-hours varies among these activities. No attempt was made to adjust per-student costs to account for the number of hours spent, on average, by a student in each activity.

**This is the number of youths who were members of AYC in FY13 and therefore had access to its educational services. AYC records show 260 of its members actively participated in court or other activities during the year. Cost per student for those active members would be \$1,154. Adding the 100 juvenile offenders who participated in AYC in FY13 would place the cost per student at \$833.

ASD costs per student for individual academic courses were not readily available. However, FY13 costs published for high schools in a Colorado school district (Poudre) were roughly \$500 per student for math and somewhat more for English. Athletic costs for the Colorado high schools averaged between \$700 and \$760 per athlete.

Classroom space for many of AYC’s educational activities is donated by the School-Business Partnership at an estimated value of \$2,450.³⁴

Table 9. Summary of Other AYC Benefits

Other Benefits of Anchorage Youth Court	Estimated Value
Community service	\$29,000
Adult volunteerism	33,000
Youth volunteerism	16,000
In-kind donation of classroom space	2,450
Total	\$80,450

What Young Defendants Say about Their AYC Experience

AYC conducts surveys of defendants at the end of their participation. When defendants were asked what they liked most about their youth court experience, the most common answers had to do with being judged by peers and treated with respect. Following are typical comments:

- Everyone was around my age, so it wasn’t so nerve-wracking, and I felt better having judges my age.
- I was being sentenced by a board of my peers. I felt I was understood more because of it.
- I was judged by my peers and treated with respect.
- How they made it seem so real and the way it was all teenagers running it.
- I liked how only teens were in AYC, and they understood.
- I liked how teenagers are the judges, defense attorneys, etc.
- That it is run by a bunch of teenagers, therefore they understand me way more than older people.
- They didn’t look down on me.
- They treated me like a person and not another case.
- The kids in youth court were fair and took their job seriously.
- That people were very respecting and understanding.
- My attorneys were thoughtful and respectful.

I don’t want everybody to think all teenagers are bad, because they’re not. People make mistakes and hopefully learn from them like I did.

An AYC defendant who subsequently passed the AYC bar exam and joined AYC as a volunteer

When defendants were asked what they disliked about their AYC experience, the most common answer was “nothing.” Most said the experience was good. The next most common answer was “feeling bad about being in trouble.”

³⁴ The Anchorage School Business Partnership is a program in which the Anchorage School District partners with business for educational purposes. Roughly half of the AYC legal courses are taught in a classroom provided through the Partnership.

Most defendants had no suggestions to improve AYC, but those who did offered ideas such as:

- More explanation of the youth court process.
- Be sure (youth) court personnel and attorneys are prepared, on-time, and professional.
- Have defendants meet with their attorneys sooner in the process.

Summary of AYC Benefits to the Anchorage Community

A conservative estimate of the quantifiable average annual benefit to just the Anchorage community based on AYC operations between 2009 and 2012 is \$198,800 in savings in the cost of crime, plus \$80,450 in the value of adult and youth volunteer time and defendant community-service, for a total community benefit of \$279,250. In addition, the Anchorage community receives the educational and life-skills benefits of approximately 5,600 hours of legal training and other activities provided by AYC to its youth volunteers.

To compute the benefit to the Anchorage community, first the estimate of total savings to law enforcement and the criminal justice system has been reduced by \$50,000, which is roughly the value of savings to the criminal justice system alone.³⁵ The criminal justice system (consisting of juvenile probation officers, court personnel, etc.) is operated by the State of Alaska and not by the Municipality of Anchorage. The remainder is savings to Anchorage law enforcement. Second, the economic benefit to individuals without a criminal record is reduced by 60 percent to account for people who benefit from AYC, but subsequently move away from Anchorage. This figure is based on Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development migration data showing people aged 15 to 18 in 2000 and where they lived in 2010.³⁶

Savings from reduced crime are estimated at minimum to be \$198,800 per year:

- Savings to victims from 40 fewer crimes per year – \$88,000
- Lower law enforcement costs from 40 fewer crimes per year – \$18,000
- Value to juvenile offenders who live in Anchorage of not having a criminal record – \$92,800 to \$185,600

Additional benefits created by AYC for the Anchorage community through its volunteer activities and defendant community-service hours are valued at \$80,450:

- Value of adult-volunteer time – \$33,000
- Value of youth-volunteer court-room time – \$16,000
- Value of community service by defendants – \$29,000
- Value of donated classroom space – \$2,450

³⁵ The available data does not allow us to isolate law enforcement costs from criminal justice costs precisely. We estimate law enforcement costs represent roughly one quarter of the \$68,000 in total benefits to both systems from reduced crime attributable to AYC.

³⁶ Alaska Economic Trends, March 2013.

Appendix 1 - AYC Log Frame

The diagram on the next page is a schematic used by evaluators to help understand program strategies and impacts. This log frame represents the study team's analysis of how AYC's program strategy works. It shows AYC's objectives, indicators of success, data sources for verification, and strategic assumptions.

Log frames for youth courts tend to be similar. However, the strategy illustrated in AYC's log frame, like those for most other Alaska youth courts, confers more responsibility on youth volunteers than in most other states.

Anchorage Youth Court Log Frame

Program Objectives	Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
Goals: Reduced juvenile and adult crime Increased civic involvement and responsibility	Crime statistics Volunteer hours Defendant and volunteer attitudes	JOMIS and APSIN data Program records Adult and youth volunteer, defendant, parent, and victim surveys	No major changes in community: Economic stability Law enforcement activities
Outcomes: Knowledge of justice system Offenders held accountable Victims see justice process working Parent involvement increased Offender social emotional growth Volunteer social emotional growth Community networks Cost of crime reduced Cost of justice system reduced	Participant, parent and victim attitudes Value of future contributions to society by participants % sentences completed % defendants who complete the whole process Measures of social emotional growth Value of justice system resources saved Cost of crime averted	Volunteer, defendant, parent, and victim surveys Program records JOMIS and APSIN data Average cost of juvenile crime Municipal crime and policing data State justice system cost data	Suspects are identified and apprehended Defendants participate in youth court Defendants perform sentences Sentences are appropriate and part of a system with "graduated sanctions" (TAB#25) Process is timely Other integrated services are available when needed
Outputs: Defendants processed Sentences performed Volunteers trained Volunteer hours Interactions with parents, defendants, JPOs	# defendants processed # sentences performed Quality of sentencing Quality of written apologies Quality of community service # volunteers trained Quality of training # hours volunteered (youth and adult)	Program records Volunteer, defendant, parent, and victim surveys Notes from post-proceeding debriefings	Enough youth and adult volunteers are available. Court space is available JPOs make proper referrals Offenders complete sentences
Activities: Hearings held JPO referrals JPO/YC interactions Volunteer trainings Administrative	# and timing of hearings Quality of hearings # and quality of referrals # and quality of interactions # trainings offered Quality of training	Program and DJJ records Hearing observations Volunteer and defendant surveys Interviews with YC staff, JPOs and court system personnel	Continued commitment by DJJ to the youth court process Uniform JPO referral criteria and processes
Inputs: Youth volunteers Adult volunteers Court and administrative space Administrative staff DJJ staff time			

Appendix 2 – Cost of Crime Estimates

The following table was developed by the RAND Center on Quality Policing.

Table 1
Cost-of-Crime Estimates from Three Studies

Index Crime Type	Accounting-Based Methods		Contingent-Valuation Method	Average
	Cohen and Piquero (2009) ^a	French, McColister, and Reznik (2004)	Cohen, Rust, et al. (2004)	
Homicide	5,000,000	9,339,330	11,608,317	8,649,216
Rape	150,000	219,973	283,626	217,866
Robbery	23,000	51,117	127,715 ^b	67,277
Serious assault	55,000	122,943	83,771	87,238
Burglary	5,000	4,370	29,918	13,096
Larceny	2,800	1,478	N/A	2,139
Motor-vehicle theft	9,000	9,158	N/A	9,079

NOTE: Figures are in 2007 dollars. N/A = a crime type that was not examined in the given study.

^a This study is based on the highly cited study by Miller, Cohen, and Wiersema (1996) but updates the cost estimates to include criminal justice costs and lost offender productivity.

^b Cohen et al. (2004) focus on armed robbery, while other studies and the UCR program focus on robbery more generally, which includes less severe forms of robbery. Cohen and Piquero (2009) separately calculate cost estimates for both armed robbery and robbery and find the cost of a typical armed robbery to be 2.2 times the cost of a typical robbery. We thus adjust the Cohen et al. (2004) number by dividing it by 2.2 to approximate the cost of a generic robbery.

VALUE TO DEFENDANTS OF NOT HAVING A CRIMINAL RECORD – IMPACT ON LIFETIME EARNINGS

A criminal record can impact the wages paid even after adjusting for the likelihood of getting a job. In other words, if there are two employees with the same skills and qualifications but one of them has a criminal record, that person is likely to be paid less. Other researchers have estimated this gap to be between nine and 13 percent.³⁷

To estimate the lifetime impact of these lower wages, the financial difference is summed over the working lifetime. Due to the preference for a dollar today over a dollar tomorrow, the loss of wages in the future is discounted using a social discount rate of three percent.

	No Criminal Record	With Criminal Record	Difference	Discounted Value
Year 1	\$50,000	\$45,000	\$4,500	\$4,500
Year 10	\$50,000	\$45,000	\$4,500	\$3,449
Year 20	\$50,000	\$45,000	\$4,500	\$2,492

Assuming a working lifetime of 47 years, ages 18 through 65, a nine percent impact on earnings has a net present value of \$116,221 with a three percent discount rate.

³⁷ Allgood, Sam, David Mustard, Ronald Warren, Jr., "The Impact of Youth Criminal Behavior on Adult Earnings," 2003.

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