

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE WATAUGA COUNTY RISK AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

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Part I. Risk Assessment Summary

The Risk and Needs Assessment Committee reviewed data gleaned from the Juvenile Risk Assessment instrument administered by Juvenile Court Counselors after juveniles are referred with a complaint alleging that a delinquent act has occurred but prior to adjudication of the juvenile. The Juvenile Risk Assessment is an instrument used to predict the likelihood of the juvenile being involved in future delinquent behavior. For some youth, some of the individual item ratings may be heavily dependent upon information reported by the juvenile or the parent(s). For these items (*represented by percentages with a star next to them*), there is a likelihood of under-reporting the incidence of a particular behavior, and the actual incidence may be higher than suggested by these figures. In those cases, the figure should be interpreted as a measure of the minimum level of occurrence.

Overall Risk Observations

- Risk Level 3 for 2018-19 is elevated at 42%, higher than any other risk level and higher than the State at 35%. This figure is higher than for any of the previous 3 years. Additionally, 20% of the assessed youth have a risk level of 5 for future delinquent behavior. This is a mild increase from the previous year's rate and is higher than the state's rate of 14%. For Watauga youth assessed, 95% fall into Risk Levels 3, 4, or 5, versus 82% for the state overall. This higher level fluctuates mildly over time, but is a consistent finding over several years.

Watauga County Risk Factor Observations: FY 2018-2019

- R3 Most Serious Prior Adjudication – The four-year trend shows a steady increase for Watauga youth of Prior class 1-3 misdemeanors, from 12% to 19%, then 25%, and 29% last year. State levels have ranged from 13%-17% over the same period. More serious prior adjudications have been consistent with State figures, while the number of Watauga youth with no prior adjudications has fallen from 82% four years ago, down to 64% the last two years. This compares to the State figure of 73%.
- R6 Substance Use/Abuse – Substance use and/or abuse has remained above the State average over the last four years: 49%, 37%, 35% and 40%. State levels over the same period were between 30%-32%.
- R7 School Behavior Problems – Watauga remains high in the moderate to serious category of school behavior problems (largely reflecting suspensions & absences) with 84%, 77%, 81% and 77% over the 4-year period, while the State ranged from 74-77%.

- R8 Relationship with Peers – Youth who lack pro-social peers and sometimes associate with delinquent peers remained high over the four-year period: 51%, 59%, 65% and 58%, while the State ranged from 40%-42%.
- R9 Parental Supervision – The number of parents willing but unable to supervise is still significantly higher than the State figure of 14% in 2018-19. Percentages for Watauga were 51%, 48%, 39% and 42% respectively over the previous four years.

Part II. Needs Assessment Summary

The Risk and Needs Assessment Committee also reviewed data gleaned from the Juvenile Needs Assessment instrument administered by Juvenile Court Counselors prior to disposition in court. The Juvenile Needs Assessment is an instrument used to examine a youth's needs in the various domains of his life: The Individual Domain, The School Domain, The Peer Domain, and the Community Domain. This instrument was designed to detect service intervention needs as an aid in service planning. As with the Juvenile Risk Assessment, some of the individual item ratings may be heavily dependent on information reported by the juvenile or the parent(s). For these items (*represented by percentages with a star next to them*), there is a likelihood of under-reporting the incidence of a particular behavior, and the actual incidence may be higher than suggested by these figures. In those cases, the figure should be interpreted as a measure of the minimum level of occurrence.

Overall Needs Observations

- The percentage of youth with medium needs in Watauga is higher than for the State, and consistently has been higher. In 2018-19 Watauga's medium needs percentage was 53% versus the State's 33%. In the high needs category Watauga has decreased from 15% in 2016-17 to 7% in 2018-19, versus 4% for the State in 2018-19.

Watauga County Elevated Needs Observations: FY 2018-2019

- Y1 Peer Relationships – The percentage of youth showing some association with Delinquent Peers has risen sharply over the 4-year period (30%, 32%, 42%, and 40%), versus State figures ranging from 27-30%. Combining those with either Some or Regular association with Delinquent Peers, Watauga is consistently higher than the State, with 62% versus 40% last year. Youth rejected by Positive Peers also remained somewhat higher than for the State over a four-year period, ranging from 18%-23% versus a consistent 15% for the State. Association with Positive Peers has been substantially lower in Watauga than for the State overall the past 4 years, with Watauga ranging from 16%-25% versus 33%-39% for the State.
- Y2 School Behavior – Serious school behavior problems has risen from 46% in 2015-16 to 53% in 2018-19. This mirrors the State rise over the same period from 44% in 2015-16 to 51% in 2018-19.
- Y4 Substance Abuse – Youth needing substance abuse treatment has ranged from 22%-27% over the four-year period – showing an undesirable trend – compared to the State average of 12%-14%.

- Y6 Abuse/Neglect History – The percentage of youth with a history of abuse was consistently higher than the State. Watauga ranged from 38%-54% over the four-year period versus the consistent State figure of 23%. An encouraging finding was that the vast majority of those facing abuse had some support: in Watauga 36%-42% with support versus 2%-15% without.
- Y8 Mental Health Needs – Youth with unmet mental health problems has risen sharply in Watauga over the 4-year period (54%, 71%, 79%, and 71% consecutively) while the State figure last year was 34%, and consistent over time (ranging only from 34%-35%).
- F1 Conflict in the Home – The rate of youth experiencing conflict in the home has risen over the period and consistently has been higher than for the State over the last four years (28%, 37%, 40%, and 36%). The State showed 21%, 21%, 20%, and 19% over the same four-year period. Domestic Violence is low and consistent with the State: 4% vs. 5%.
- F2 Family Supervision Skills – The percentage of Watauga families with marginal supervision skills over the past four years was 69%, 63%, 69% and 67%, compared to the State at 48%-53% over the same period.
- F4 Family Substance Abuse – Family substance abuse over a four-year period in Watauga ranged from 25%-33%, compared to the State average of 12%.
- F5 Family Criminality – The percentage of families with a criminal history has been pretty steady over the four-year period (45%, 46%, 48% and 47%), and generally has outpaced the State. The State also remained consistent over this period (37%, 40%, 39% and 38%).

Part III. Resource Assessment Summary

See attached Continuum of Services.

Part IV. Summary of Gaps and Barriers in the Continuum of Services

Community Day Programming: An elementary day treatment program is available. Transportation in the County is still a need for accessing resources.

The County underutilizes mediation services.

Undocumented youth and families lack access to State-funded mental health or substance abuse treatment, and good alternatives are limited.

Enhanced mental health services are not available to youth who lack either Medicaid or Health Choice coverage, or are undocumented. VAYA does not fund either Day Treatment or Intensive In-Home in this situation. Adjudicated delinquent youth do have access to Functional Family Therapy (FFT) through AMI Kids.

A resource to help divorced or separated parents with co-parenting is a need. Improved access to in-home services may help.

Pro-social resources and afterschool activities are needed in the community. Transportation is also needed to access such resources. Watauga Community Recreation Center is being constructed and services are being planned. Anticipated time for opening is the spring of 2020.

Language is seen as a barrier to using resources. Additional Hispanic and language resources are needed, including support groups for Hispanic parents and children. There has been improvement in this area, but still a gap.

Enhanced education on the prevention of substance abuse is needed for the high school.

Vaping is prevalent at the high school and seen as a problem. No services currently exist to help counter this.

Generally, access to mental health services is available; however, getting youth/parents to come to the services is a problem. School-based therapy (SBT) through Daymark addresses this; however, there have been cutbacks in the available service due to financial constraints, making it less available and serving fewer children. The high school now has only very limited SBT services through Daymark, with only two group sessions per month. The high school continues to be served by the ASC Center, but this consists of clinicians in training rather than seasoned professionals.

Part V. Proposed Priority Services for Funding

The Committee compared the services needed to address the elevated Juvenile Risk Factors and Juvenile Needs with the services currently available in the community. Services which are currently available in the community and sufficiently meet the needs of court-involved youth (or those youth at risk for court involvement) are not considered a priority for JCPC funding.

The JCPC proposes that the following services be approved as funding priorities for FY 2020 – 2021 (in order of priority, starting with the highest):

- Parent Education & Skill Building
- Interpersonal Skill Building and an Interpersonal Skills program that specifically delivers Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT)
- Experiential Skills
- Mediation
- Community Service/Restitution
- Home-based Family Counseling specific to undocumented and “underinsured” youth
- Vocational Skills
- Substance Abuse Treatment
- Temporary Shelter Care
- Teen Court/Restorative Justice
- Tutoring and Academic Enhancement