

Public comment:

One public comment was received regarding the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement (CJRP) data collection. Judith Storandt of the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) submitted a letter requesting that OJJDP revise the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement (CJ-14) form—and the companion Juvenile Residential Facility Census (CJ-15) form—to provide “appropriate definitions for each of the facility-type categories” under the relevant question for each form. Ms. Storandt’s letter stated that the lack of definitions “reduces the significance and usefulness of the data.” Ms. Storandt also offered to “serve on a work group to assist in drafting definitions for this purpose.”

Response:

The issue of how best to address juvenile facility classification in OJJDP’s corrections data collections is an ongoing challenge. Facility classifications (without specific definitions) were first developed by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) in the initial 1971 Children in Custody (CIC) Census, formally known as the Census of Public Juvenile Detention and Correctional Facilities. (Private facilities were later added to this collection.) In these collections, facilities classified themselves.

To address the lack of specificity in definitions, and the variability of facilities within self-defined facility types, an attempt was made to address this problem initially, analytically, through the creation of complex algorithms to reclassify all facilities into short-term/long-term, open/institutional environments using a number of descriptive and analytical variables from the data set. This process provided somewhat greater clarity in terms of a more consistent, uniform grouping, but the feedback received from the juvenile justice field was that they did not recognize themselves, or other facilities, with this new construct. So, OJJDP discontinued this classification process.

Later, an effort to resolve the classification problem was undertaken by the Census Bureau in the mid-1990s as part of the redesign of OJJDP’s correctional statistics program. OJJDP worked with the Census Bureau to conduct cognitive testing of the facility classification structure in the development of the Juvenile Residential Facility Census (JRFC) and the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement (CJRP). The results from this effort found even more variability in classification as facilities had begun taking on multiple functions within a single residential campus/building (such as a single facility serving both pre-adjudicatory and post-adjudicatory placement functions, either of which could include both detained and committed youth in either functional unit). As a result of this research and testing, a decision was made to allow facilities to check all of the functions that they performed (per the self-classification criteria).

OJJDP has also taken efforts to clarify the facility classification of “residential treatment center.” This classification was in the original CIC collection, but was later removed as a facility type because response analysis indicated that respondents were selecting this category because it appeared more positive than other options (e.g., “training school”). It also became evident that many facilities were selecting it, even when no treatment services were being provided. Following the cognitive testing that accompanied the

collection redesign in the mid-1990s, the “residential treatment center” category was put back in to the new CJRP in 1997, with additional options (with and without on-site mental health care). To provide further clarity, in 1999, “residential treatment center” was removed as a category in the self-classification list and instead there was a set of lead in items added to the data collection: “does this facility provide on-site residential treatment?” and if so, “what kind of treatment is provided?” with a list of types. In 2003, the “residential treatment center” option was added back to the self-classification list (and the lead-in questions remained). Since then, no additional changes have been made to this part of the forms.

Proposed Resolution

While OJJDP does not provide definitions in the CJRP for respondents, OJJDP’s Statistical Briefing Book glossary does include general definitions for users (see <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp/asp/glossary.asp#FacilitySelf>). To provide guidance to respondents, OJJDP will provide a link to these definitions in the CJRP 2010 form; these definitions provide general characteristics for the different facility types. Providing more definitive definitions would require a more in-depth analysis and would not be possible in time for the 2010 collection. OJJDP has not recently conducted a detailed assessment of what specific characteristic(s) would be used to categorize facilities, or, recategorize a detention center into a residential treatment center and vice versa. However, the development of an improved facility classification scheme could be put on OJJDP’s corrections research agenda. In addition, since OJJDP recently announced the desire to have practitioner feedback through a juvenile custody advisory board, Ms. Storandt’s offer to provide guidance through this process would be welcomed. OJJDP would anticipate that the results of a detailed assessment and feedback from the field would be conducted over the next 12-18 months and be available for implementation by the next (post 2010) CJRP data collection.