

# REPORT HIGHLIGHTS



DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES REPORTING  
PERFORMANCE AUDIT, JANUARY 2019

DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

## CONCERN

The Division of Youth Services' (Division) *Education Outcomes at the Colorado Division of Youth Services (Education Outcomes)* report does not accurately reflect the educational outcomes of the youth discharged during Fiscal Year 2017 due to incorrect calculations resulting in incorrect conclusions and incomplete and unreliable data. The Division's *Recidivism Evaluation of the Colorado Division of Youth Services (Recidivism)* report contains accurate information and generally complies with statute, but does not include all recidivist acts, identify recidivist acts covered by the Victim's Rights Act, or reflect all recidivist convictions occurring within 3 years of discharge.

## KEY FINDINGS

We found problems with both reports that may limit their usefulness to policymakers and make them difficult to understand, including the following:

- The *Education Outcomes* report includes:
  - ▶ INCOMPLETE DATA—The report includes educational outcomes for only 59 percent of youth discharged from the Division's custody in Fiscal Year 2017.
  - ▶ INCORRECT CONCLUSIONS—The report overstates the academic improvement of youth in reading compared to actual results.
  - ▶ INCORRECT CALCULATIONS—The report includes miscalculations of:
    - Percentages of youth showing educational advancement at the time of discharge.
    - Percentage of youth who possessed a General Education Diploma (GED) or high school diploma at discharge, erroneously reporting that 95 percent of eligible youth had attained this achievement when the data show that only 60 percent did so.

In addition, we were unable to conclusively determine if the report accurately reports grade-level advancement due to unreliable data provided by the Division.

- The *Recidivism* report does not:
  - ▶ Include adult misdemeanor crimes adjudicated in the Denver County Court in the recidivism calculation.
  - ▶ Delineate recidivist acts that are included under the Victim's Rights Act versus other crimes, as required by statute.
  - ▶ Include information on all recidivist convictions occurring within 3 years of discharge.

## BACKGROUND

- The Division supervised and treated about 5,100 youth aged 10 to 21 who were involved in the criminal justice system during Fiscal Year 2017.
- Youth are discharged from Division custody upon completion of parole.
- In Fiscal Year 2017, the Division had 13 facilities with varying security levels; 10 were operated by the Division and 3 by contractors.
- Section 19-2-402(3), C.R.S., requires the Division to provide education services to all youth within its custody, including those in facilities operated by contractors.
- The Division defines a "recidivist" as anyone convicted of a felony or misdemeanor within 3 years after discharge from Division custody.
- Beginning July 2018, statute requires the Division to report annually on education outcomes and recidivism rates for youth discharged from the Division.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve the accuracy and completeness of the *Education Outcomes* report by ensuring that contract facilities measure and report on educational outcomes; implementing a means to measure outcomes for youth who test at 12th grade or above at commitment; implementing uniform methods to analyze, report, and maintain documentation; and establishing a quality control process to verify data, calculations, and statements in the report.
- Improve the completeness of the *Recidivism* report by requesting Denver County Court adult misdemeanor data to include in recidivism rates, identifying recidivist acts that are classified as Victim Rights Act crimes, and reporting on all recidivist convictions occurring within 3 years of discharge.

The Department agreed with the recommendations.