

# Department of Research, Evaluation, Assessment and Student Information

Prepared for: Memphis City Schools Department of School Safety, Security and Emergency Management

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## Schools Involved

- Cordova High
- Craigmont High
- Craigmont Middle
- Cypress Middle
- Fairley High
- Frayser High
- Hamilton High
- Hamilton Middle
- Hillcrest High
- Kirby High
- Manassas High
- Melrose High
- Mitchell High
- Northside High
- Raleigh-Egypt High
- Ridgeway High
- Sheffield High
- Sherwood Middle
- Treadwell Middle
- Trezevant High
- Wooddale High

## School House Adjustment Program Enterprise (SHAPE): 2011-12 Outcome and Evaluation Study

### SHAPE Background\*

The School House Adjustment Program Enterprise, commonly known by its acronym SHAPE, began in July 2007. Memphis City Schools (MCS) received grant funding through the Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) Pilot Project administered by the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY) to implement SHAPE. The program is a collaborative effort between MCS, the Shelby County Juvenile Court, the Memphis Police Department (MPD), the Shelby County Mayor's Office, the Memphis City Mayor's Office, the Public Defender's Office, and the District Attorney's Office.

SHAPE is a diversion program that seeks to reduce the number of minority youth who are transported and booked into juvenile detention for especially minor charges. The current SHAPE Coordinator's extensive experience with minority and at-risk youth contributes to the successful implementation of the program. To further sustain the program, he continues his work with the DMC Taskforce as the local and statewide chairman. These efforts are integral to remaining informed of issues and strategies related to DMC, which leads to the success and sustainability of SHAPE.

In the proposal, the number of transports to Juvenile Court from each MCS High School and Middle School were counted and prioritized. Using these data, and with considerations of the amount of funding available from TCCY, one middle school and seventeen high schools were selected for inclusion in the program. In subsequent years, new SHAPE schools were added and others

were dropped from the program. The decisions to include reported offenses or to exclude a school from SHAPE were based on local staffing issues and emerging transport trends. The schools with the highest transport number were always targeted and included in the program. Originally, the SHAPE-eligible charges were limited to three types of delinquent offenses: Criminal Trespassing, Disorderly Conduct, and Simple Assault. In 2010–2011, Gambling was also added as a SHAPE-eligible offense. The current SHAPE eligibility criteria are described below.

- Students must have a pending juvenile charge for Criminal Trespassing, Disorderly Conduct, Simple Assault with no serious injuries, or Gambling.
- Simple assault charges involving school personnel are not considered SHAPE-eligible.
- A student must have no felony adjudications, convictions, or pending charges.
- Participants cannot have any violent misdemeanor adjudications, convictions, or pending charges.
- Any other misdemeanor charges that have occurred within the past twelve months make a student ineligible.
- The student must agree to participate voluntarily in the program, and the parent or guardian must give permission.

## Evaluation Methodology

### Data Collection Procedures\*

Admission into the program begins with completion of the intake forms, designed by the original Evaluator and approved by MCS officials. These forms include the SHAPE agreement, background check, and pre-assessment. Site Coordinators collect and track the number of Mendez classes completed, as well as students' attendance, conduct, and grades. These data are needed for evaluation through the use of quantitative and qualitative structured interviews conducted on site at the participating schools throughout the school year. At the conclusion of the program, students complete a post-assessment, parents complete a satisfaction

survey, and the SHAPE Coordinator completes exit forms for each student.

Extreme emphasis was placed on preserving student confidentiality, and all methods discussed here were conducted in accordance with the written protocols approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects at The University of Memphis. Site Coordinators were instructed to utilize a three-digit code assigned to each school. This three-digit number corresponded with the three-digit identification number assigned to the students upon receipt of their information. This was done in order to protect the students' identities. In addition to the individual school code, an evaluation ID code comprising the students' initials, year of birth, and last four digits of the social security number, was used to

mask confidential data. The SHAPE Coordinator collected the interview protocols from the Site Coordinators assigned to the participating schools, while Juvenile Court provided information on the arrests and transports. Data regarding students' grades, behavioral infractions, attendance, and promotion rates for the 2011–12 academic year were provided by the MCS Office of Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Student Information.

### Data Analysis

The final data set for this analysis includes information collected from 272 students. Of these, 200 completed the program successfully. All of these analyses were done using the statistical package, SPSS 18.0™.

### SHAPE Diversion\*

A basic premise of SHAPE is that minority youth experience disproportionate levels of contact at all levels of the criminal justice system and that this situation is unjust. However, all MCS students are eligible to participate in the program, irrespective of ethnicity. Individuals charged with one of the SHAPE-eligible charges are not required to be transported to Juvenile Court. Law enforcement officers have substantial levels of discretion in the decision to transport. SHAPE reinforced the use of discretion and urged officers to instead make use of the juvenile summons rather than transport students with minor charges. In SHAPE, the Pending Document Form precedes an actual juvenile summons. Discretionary use of summonses in lieu of transports to detention is in agreement with juvenile statutes according to Tennessee Code Annotated. This encourages detention only in cases where the juvenile poses a threat to him or herself or the community.

### SHAPE Accountability\*

SHAPE is more than an adjustment in juvenile justice processes; SHAPE is also an early intervention program that includes substantial emphasis on student and parental accountability. Once a parent or guardian has received a Pending Document Form for a SHAPE-eligible charge and the student has met all of the other eligibility requirements, the student is referred to SHAPE. Participation is voluntary. If the student and his or her parent/guardian agree to the program, the youth will avoid a juvenile summons and arrest. The potential summons remains active for six months and can be filed at any time during this period. In addition to reducing the number of minority youth transported on minor charges, SHAPE also seeks to reduce substantially the number of minority youth who make any contact with

Juvenile Court. A true diversion occurs when there is no record of any contact with Juvenile Court. At the end of the six-month period, if the student complies with the program, the juvenile summons is destroyed. Consequently, the student's name never enters any record at Juvenile Court. Holding students accountable for their behavior is a major component of SHAPE.

### SHAPE Curriculum\*

Those students and parents who agree to the SHAPE intervention must complete the SHAPE curriculum. The current curriculum is based on best practice models developed by the Mendez Foundation (see <http://www.mendezfoundation.org/>). The curriculum, known as "Too Good for Drugs and Violence," is a six-week program that meets twice weekly, focusing on the latest research related to resiliency, risk, and protective factors. Each session, which lasts two hours, is designed to equip students with the knowledge and behavioral skills they need to remain drug free, improve decision-making, and achieve positive outcomes. The curriculum is delivered after school; however, accommodations are made for students with special circumstances, allowing them to participate during times when school is not in session. The MCS staff who work with SHAPE are trained to administer the curriculum.

### SHAPE Administration\*

A Site Coordinator at each school staffs SHAPE. In addition to specific training to deliver the Mendez curriculum, Site Coordinators have further training in dealing with at-risk youth. The SHAPE Coordinator, Mr. John Hall, is responsible for the overall administration of the project, including hiring and supervising Site Coordinators, ensuring compliance, monitoring evaluation activities, and serving as a spokesperson for the initiative.

Each month, the Site Coordinator tracks the students' excused and unexcused absences, any incidences of misbehavior while at school (i.e., office referrals, suspensions and expulsions), and academic performance in each class. If a student fails to complete all twelve sessions of the Mendez curriculum, or is otherwise non-compliant with the conditions of the program, the Pending

Document Form can be upgraded to a juvenile summons and filed with the court. If the student completes the program, the Pending Document Form is destroyed and no record of any involvement is ever recorded with the court.

## SHAPE Outcomes

### Participants

Memphis City Schools is Tennessee's largest school district and the 23rd largest public school system in the United States. Demographically, MCS comprises predominantly minority students. Of the more than 100,000 students who were enrolled in MCS during the 2011–12 academic year, 82.2% were identified as African-American and 8.5% as Hispanic. Caucasian students make up only 7.5% of the total MCS student body (TN Department of Education, 2011). Thus, it may not be surprising that minority students account for the largest share of juveniles transported to Juvenile Court from MCS. However, according to statistical data from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the fact remains that minority youth encounter the juvenile and criminal justice systems at a disproportionate rate to non-minorities (National Center for Juvenile Justice, 2009).

**Ethnicity.** During the 2011–12 academic year, African-American students accounted for 98.2% of the students referred to SHAPE, while only 1.1% were Hispanic and 0.7% Caucasian.

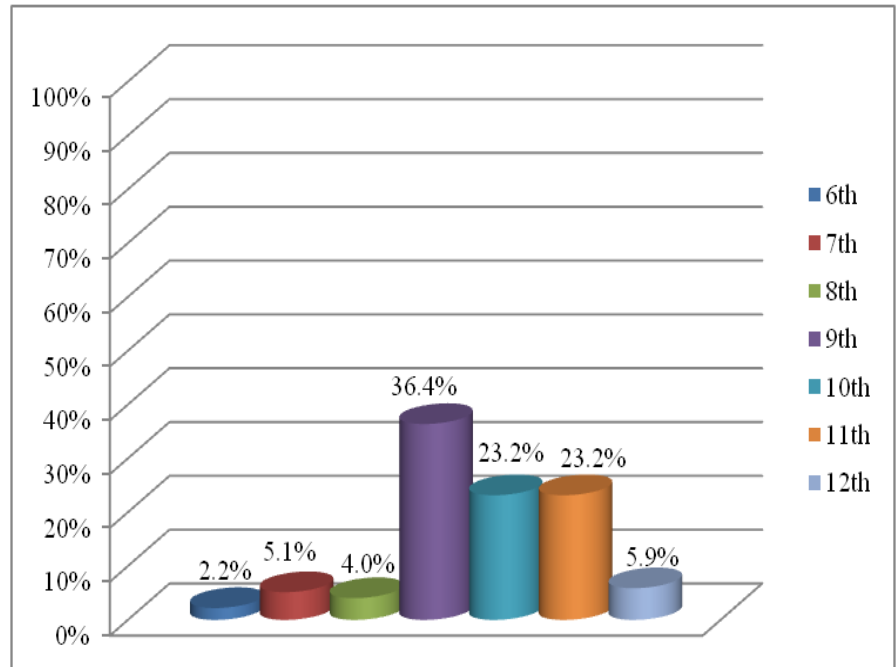
**Gender.** Males and females were equally represented in SHAPE during the 2011–12 academic year (50.4% and 49.6%, respectively). This aligns with the percentage of males and females in the total population in the MCS system (51.2% and 48.8%, respectively).



**Age.** The average age of students referred to SHAPE was 15.2 years old, with a range in age from 12–17 years old.

**Grade in school.** SHAPE receives referrals for students from the 6th through 12th grades. The majority of the 2011–12 referrals (88.6%) came from high schools, while 11.4% came from middle schools (see Figure 1 below for a graphic representation of the distribution of SHAPE referrals by grade in school). The majority of students referred were in the 9th grade.

**Figure 1: Frequency of SHAPE Referrals by Grade in School**



## SHAPE Outcomes cont'd

**Table 1: SHAPE Referral Count by School**

SHAPE School	Count	Percent
Cordova High School	11	4.0
Craigmont High School	29	10.7
Craigmont Middle School	1	0.4
Cypress Middle School	10	3.7
Fairley High School	3	1.1
Frayser High School	20	7.4
Hamilton High School	10	3.7
Hamilton Middle School	4	1.5
Hillcrest High School	9	3.3
Kirby High School	33	12.1
Manassas High School	6	2.2
Melrose High School	5	1.8
Mitchell High School	8	2.9
Northside High School	38	14.0
Raleigh-Egypt High School	28	10.3
Ridgeway High School	2	0.7
Sheffield High School	3	1.1
Sherwood Middle School	8	2.9
Treadwell Middle School	8	2.9
Trezevant High School	16	5.9
Wooddale High School	20	7.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Referring school.** Students attending Northside, Kirby, and Craigmont high schools received the most referrals to SHAPE (see Table 1 for a count of referrals by school).



**Referring agency.** Referrals to SHAPE primarily come from Memphis Police Department officers (95%); however, school administrators can also refer students to the program (5%). Referrals made by administrators are not for criminal offenses; instead, administrators have the opportunity to refer students with excessive behavior problems to SHAPE in lieu of suspension or expulsion. Overall, referrals to SHAPE are down 30% from the previous year. Any of these referrals could have ultimately resulted in a juvenile summons to appear in Juvenile Court. In part, this reduction in referral could be related to the ongoing collaboration and improved cooperation between the participating agencies.

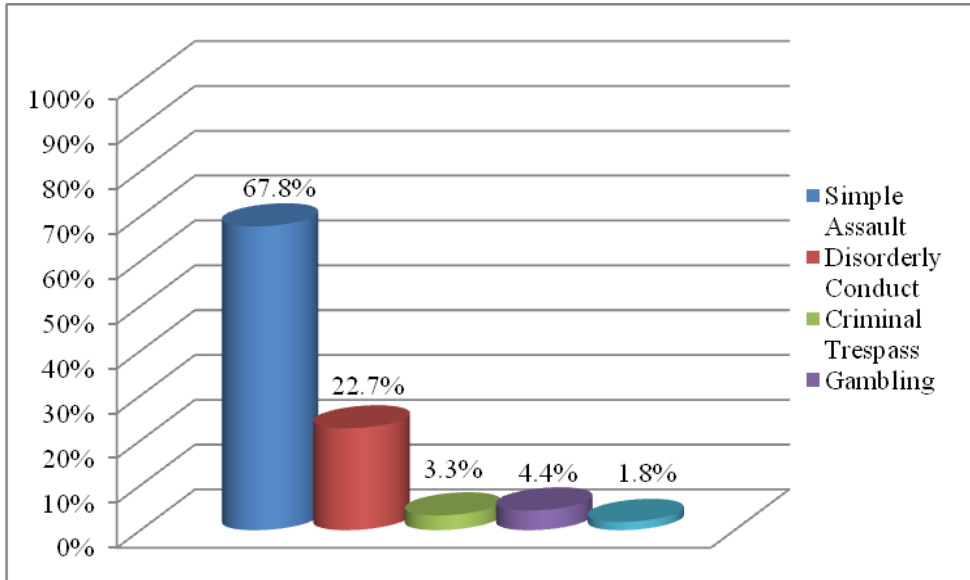


## SHAPE Outcomes cont'd

### Referring Offense

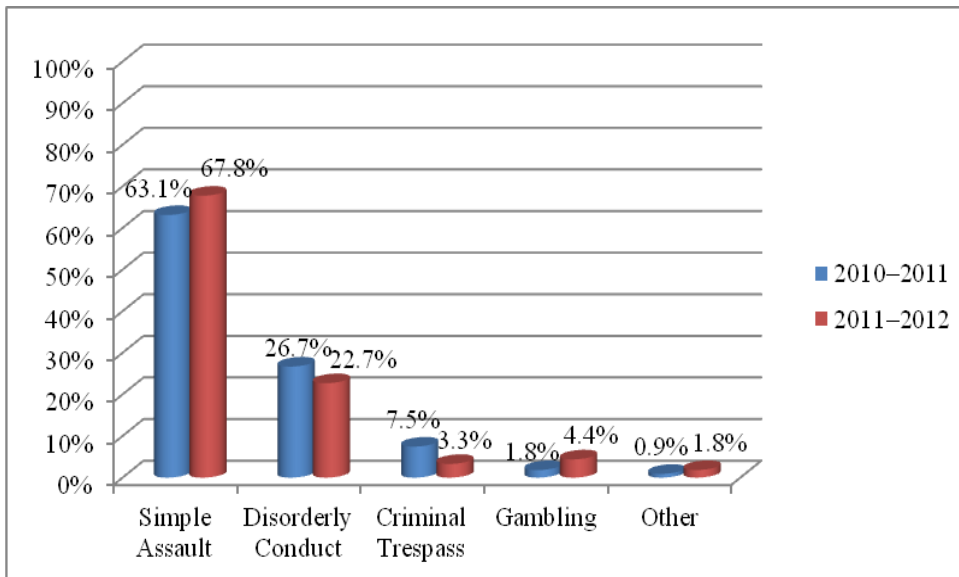
The most common offense for which students were referred to SHAPE was Simple Assault with No Serious Injury (67.8%), followed by Disorderly Conduct (see Figure 2 for a graphic representation of the distribution of SHAPE referrals by offense).

**Figure 2: SHAPE Referrals by Offense**



As shown in Figure 3 below, referrals for Simple Assault with No Serious Injury, Gambling, and other offenses increased from the previous year, while referrals for Disorderly Conduct and Criminal Trespass declined.

**Figure 3: SHAPE Referrals by Offense per Year**



## SHAPE Outcomes cont'd

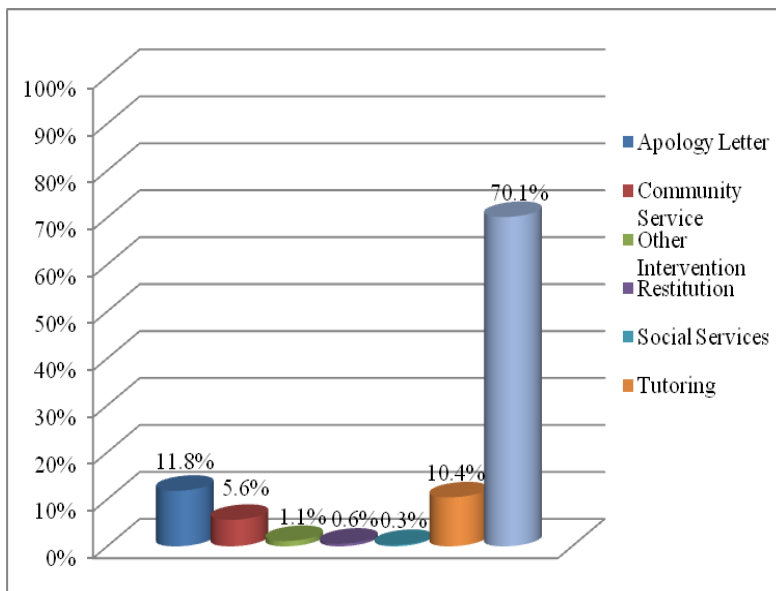
### SHAPE Interventions\*

SHAPE is a diversion and early intervention program. Once a student is accepted into the program, there are a number of interventions that may be imposed in addition to the after-school program and the completion of the Mendez Foundation curriculum (see Figure 4 below for a graphic representation of the distribution of SHAPE interventions). The most common among these is a face-to-face meeting with the Site Coordinator. During this one-on-one interview, the trained school staff member is able to warn the students about the seriousness of their behavior and counsel them directly about the presenting issues. For many students, this initial contact has a significant impact. Looking for positive ways to occupy a student's extracurricular time is another major area of concern for the Site Coordinators. Tutoring and community service are just some of positive activities for which SHAPE participants are referred (10.4% and 5.6%, respectively).



Restorative justice techniques are used in varying degrees in SHAPE. Some schools routinely use circle strategies to discuss how their behavior harms others. These circle strategies are also used by the Site Coordinators to organize the curriculum delivery and to discuss problem behaviors in a group setting. Although restorative justice training was provided to all Site Coordinators and other staff during the 2010–11 academic year, there is a wide difference of opinion on the effectiveness of these strategies. Based on observations of the circle strategies, it is clear that differences in the individual abilities of the circle leaders, and

**Figure 4: SHAPE Interventions**



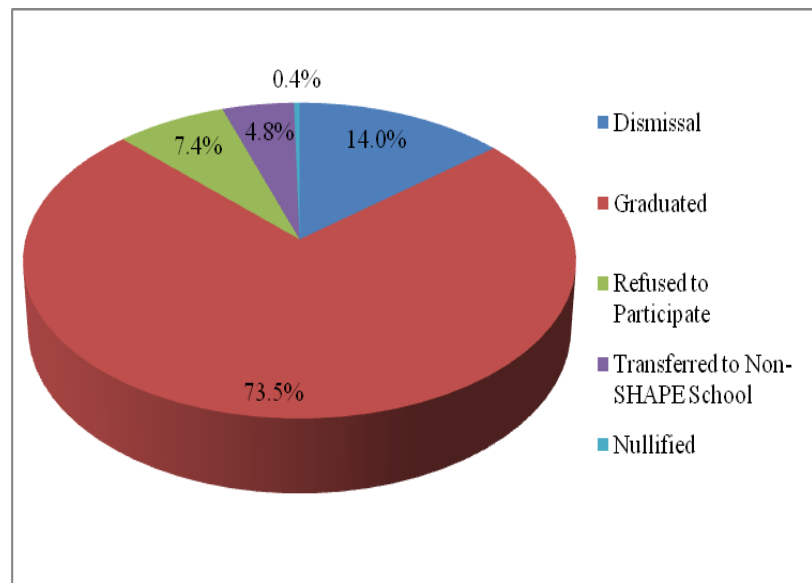
disparities in the overall buy-in to the restorative justice models, have limited implementation success. Certain schools favor the strategy, while others outright reject it. Another strategy is to have students write apology letters for their behaviors. This is also part of the restorative justice approach that defines many parts of SHAPE. Finally, financial restitution is used sometimes as a strategy, though not very often. Less than 1% of SHAPE participants were required to pay restitution as part of their SHAPE participation, largely because most offenses do not warrant this type of action.

## SHAPE Outcomes cont'd

### Completion of the Curriculum

A premise of SHAPE is that exposure to the intervention, especially the Mendez curriculum, will reduce future delinquency and criminal activity. Of the 272 students referred to SHAPE in the 2011–12 academic year, 200 successfully graduated the program (73.5%) by completing at least twelve of the Mendez curriculum sessions and meeting all other requirements of the program. Twenty (7.4%) students referred to the program refused to participate. Another 38 students (14.0%) were admitted to SHAPE but they were discharged prior to completion for non-compliance. These students were usually issued a juvenile summons to appear in Juvenile Court. Thirteen of the students (4.8%) referred to SHAPE were dismissed from the program because they transferred to a school that did not participate in the program. Finally, one referral was nullified because, in addition to the qualifying charge for which the student was referred, the student had a concurrent disqualifying charge.

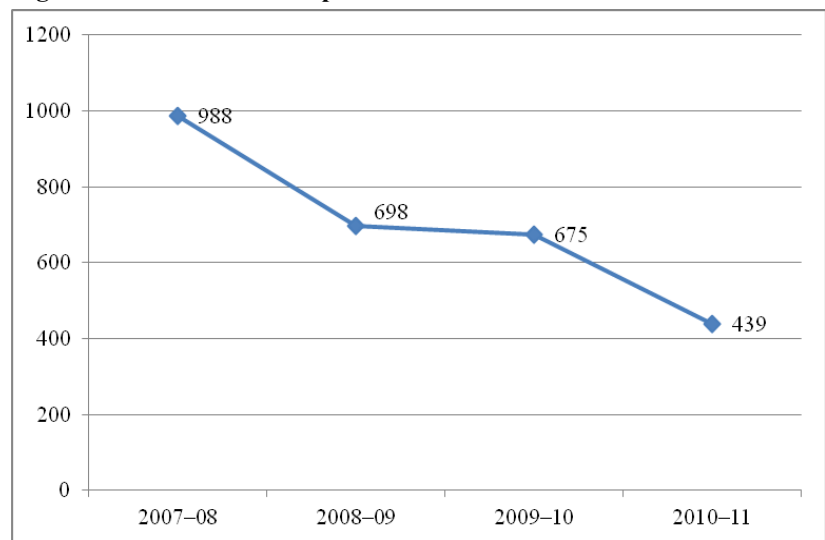
Figure 5: SHAPE Participant Outcomes, 2011–2012



### Transports

Since its inception in 2007, the primary goal of SHAPE has been to reduce the number of minority youth that are transported from MCS and detained for minor offenses at Juvenile Court. As shown in the graph below, SHAPE has clearly been effective in this area. Specifically, in the 2011–12 academic year, there was a 35% reduction in transports from the previous year, and a 55.6% reduction since the program was implemented in the 2007–08 academic year. The reductions shown here are not solely the results of the SHAPE initiative. Gang reduction programs, truancy interventions, and other juvenile programming likely also contributed. Still, the overall reduction in bookings from SHAPE schools shown in Figure 6 does isolate the effects of the program well and illustrates the significant impact SHAPE has had on the number of minority youth transported.

Figure 6: Number of Transports to Juvenile Court from SHAPE Schools



### Future Contact with Juvenile Court

Perhaps the ultimate goal of SHAPE is to reduce recidivism, meaning that all future contact with Juvenile Court will be avoided as a result of completing the program. The evaluation team considered the outcomes of the 200 graduates of SHAPE and found that 93.5% of students had no contact with Juvenile Court after their initial referral to SHAPE. The State of Tennessee does not systematically track juvenile recidivism for diversion or community corrections supervision programs. Moreover, there is no national recidivism rate for juveniles. Nevertheless, based on other states, the comparable average 12-month juvenile recidivism rates are: 55% re-arrest for delinquent/criminal offenses in juvenile and adult systems (Florida, New York, Virginia); and 45% re-referral to court for delinquent/criminal offenses in the adult and juvenile systems (Colorado, Maryland). Conversely, the SHAPE Juvenile Court recidivism rate of 6.5% is far less than these reasonably analogous rates.

## Summary and Recommendations\*

### Summary

In August 2011, SHAPE was recognized by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) as a national DMC Reduction Best Practice (OJJDP, 2011). Being recognized as an evidence-based best practice after only a few years in existence is rare. The SHAPE model is now being considered statewide in Tennessee, and there is significant interest in adopting the program in other states as well. Program officials have participated in national conferences with the, the Coalition on Juvenile Justice, and recently, they have proposed a paper to the OJJDP National Leadership Summit on School-Justice Partnerships sponsored by the New York State Permanent Judicial Division on Justice for Children. Additionally, the SHAPE model was featured in a chapter in a book on DMC current issues and policies (Parsons-Pollard, 2011). All of this work has been made possible because the SHAPE administrator made an early commitment to evaluation and measurement of outcomes. This investment allowed the program to self-correct as issues became apparent and contributed to overall model integrity and credibility.

While the effects of SHAPE have been demonstrated here, many other programs have also had a hand in reducing the juvenile detention population. Perhaps the most important accomplishment of SHAPE has been to affect the culture of detention in this community. The partnership with the Memphis Police Department has been especially gratifying, and SHAPE awareness is now a component of the annual in-service training. MCS administrators are taking advantage of intermediate interventions and diversions like SHAPE more readily, with Juvenile Court, and especially the administrators of the Detention Facility, questioning every single transport. This cultural shift has been a complex process and SHAPE has been an important part.

### Recommendations

While the program has been successful, there are some lessons that administrators could learn from the five years of SHAPE's implementation. First, the curriculum needs to be administered uniformly. The program is necessarily decentralized; consequently, the actual delivery of the curriculum is heavily dependent on the available human resources. Variation in program delivery will affect student outcomes. Second, administrators may need to modify the participant selection criteria. The program may be more successful if it focuses on selecting students who have a history of behavior problems that may contribute to DMC with the Juvenile Court system. Addressing minor behavior problems that tend to be a function of lack of structure, motivation, and skills could better equip students to deal with the negative influences that make them more susceptible to illicit behaviors. Along those lines, starting the program in middle school may help further reduce DMC. Early intervention, skill building, and education would encourage students to focus on accountability and long-term consequences. This could mitigate future, possibly more serious, negative behaviors.

Third, the SHAPE Coordinator can explore the use of additional research-based or evidence-based strategies for addressing problem behaviors in at-risk youth. Additional interventions may improve outcomes for program participants.

SHAPE could provide additional support for the students the program serves by recruiting volunteers from the professional community who have experience working with youth. Additionally, ensuring the appropriate staff are assigned to each school, and that they continually receive training and support, could improve the program's success. This is especially important because of the close relationship and insight the staff have with the students they are assigned to help at each school.

Lastly, there is considerable pressure to make SHAPE accountable for matters that it was not designed to do. SHAPE is primarily a DMC reduction strategy. Communities that replicate this model should consider this matter, or the success of the program may be diffused. The initial years of funding from TCCY have now ended. MCS has provided funding to allow the program to continue without interruption. Although steps have been taken to institutionalize SHAPE, it will be important to sustain and even increase the oversight, particularly since the Memphis City and Shelby County Schools are merging and the program could easily get lost in the mix. Perhaps input from the newly announced partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation can help to continue the progress already realized.

\* The information in these sections was derived from research conducted by Wayne J. Pitts, Ph.D. Dr. Pitts was the External Evaluator for SHAPE until 2011.



## References

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