



**Pre-Adjudication Coordination and Transition  
(PACT) Center**

**Outcome and Process Evaluation**

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Department of Juvenile Services**

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Young M.A., and Sara Betsinger, M.A.**



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#### **Introduction**

When youth are arrested and referred to the juvenile justice system, officials may elect to detain them in secure facilities while their cases are processed. Policymakers and researchers agree that detaining youth in facilities prior to adjudication should be an option of last resort only for serious, violent, and chronic offenders and for those who repeatedly fail to appear for scheduled court dates. However, research has shown that this is often not the case—many low level and status offenders are often confined in detention facilities. This is particularly troubling given that use of secure detention has been scrutinized based on the great financial costs to the system and social costs imposed on the affected youth and families. Youth who are held in secure detention pending adjudication become disconnected from their families, schools, and communities.

Detention facilities are often criticized for being overcrowded, lacking educational and treatment services, and for housing a disproportionate number of minority youth (Bishop and Frazier, 1996; Bortner and Reed, 1985; Secret and Johnson, 1997; Schutt and Dannefer, 1988; Wu, 1997; Wu and Fuentes, 1998; Wu, Cernkovich, and Dunn, 1997). In addition, research has shown that holding youth in pre-adjudicatory detention increases their chances of subsequently receiving harsh court dispositions, independent of other case characteristics (Bortner and Reed, 1985; Fagan, Slaughter, and Hartstone, 1987; Frazier and Bishop, 1985; McCarthy, 1987; Wu, 1997).

Alternatives to detention (ATDs) were created to address issues associated with the use of secure detention. These community-based programs are designed to work with youth who would have otherwise been detained; they typically provide some level of supervision to ensure that the youth appear in court and remain delinquency-free while awaiting their court hearings. Programming options also allow youth to receive services prior to or upon adjudication. Community-based services are better able to address individualized needs of youth through developmentally-appropriate, family-focused, strength-based and culturally competent services without exposing them to unnecessarily restrictive, and often traumatizing, settings. In addition, these programs can be used with targeted efforts to reduce detention crowding, cut the costs of operating juvenile detention centers, reduce detention-based racial disparities, help juveniles avoid associating with youth who have more serious delinquent histories, and maintain positive ties between the juvenile and his or her family and community. To date, few empirical studies have evaluated the effectiveness of ATDs in the juvenile justice system.

ATDs are often described along a continuum from least restrictive to most restrictive based on the risk level of youth they target. Less restrictive ATDs, which serve youth with lower risk for flight and/or reoffending, include structured shelter care programs and community detention in the youth's home. More restrictive ATDs include community detention with electronic monitoring and evening reporting centers (ERCs). An ERC is a short-term, non-secure detention alternative program intended to supervise, assist and serve juveniles and their parents while they await an adjudication hearing.

## **The PACT Center**

### *Program Overview and Objectives*

The Pre-Adjudication Coordination and Transition (PACT) Center is an ERC in Baltimore City that combines intensive supervision with community-based service coordination for male juveniles who would have otherwise been placed in secure detention facilities awaiting adjudication. Started in June 2007, the program operates in partnership with the Department of Juvenile Services' (DJS) Community Detention program, the Mayor's Office of Employment Development, and the Family League's DMC Reduction Initiative. The objectives of the PACT Center are 1) to reduce unnecessary and inappropriate use of secure detention of minority males; 2) to ensure that youth appear at the scheduled court hearing; 3) to ensure that youth are not rearrested prior to that court appearance; and 4) to ensure youth go to court with a comprehensive needs assessment and service plan (individual service plan or ISP).

### *Eligibility*

The PACT Center is open to detention-bound male youth between the ages of 14 and 17 who reside in a targeted catchment area on the West side of Baltimore. The West side location was selected based on an analysis of detention admissions for Baltimore City—program planners specifically targeted a location with high detention rates to facilitate the diversion of youth from detention to a program in their neighborhood. Although planners initially intended to replicate the program on the East side as well, they were unable to do so due to a lack of funding. Rather than devoting time and resources to transporting youth from the East side to the Westside Youth Opportunity (YO) Center, where the PACT Center operates, the decision was made to continue to restrict participation to youth living in all zip codes on the West side of Baltimore City.

The PACT Center typically serves 10 to 12 youth on any given day and the program's capacity is 15. Youth are referred to PACT by judicial order. The court order occurs at an emergency arraignment for youth who are detained at intake at the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center (BCJJC), soon after arrest. Youth are excluded from participation in PACT if they require hospitalization for mental health and medical needs, require inpatient substance abuse treatment, or have a current offense involving arson, the use of a hand gun, or a sex offense. With a lone exception, PACT accepts back into the program youth who have previously attended and failed in the program; one youth was denied readmission due to having previously demonstrated a propensity to engage in violent behavior while at the program. Only youth who are court-ordered for electronic monitoring (EM) are eligible for PACT, and the youth and parent must agree to the EM requirements (provided by DJS' Community Detention program). Additionally, because the PACT Center operates within the YO Center, participants must sign an agreement to abide by the YO Center rules, and they also must submit to being searched upon arrival at the Center.

#### *Programming and Service Planning*

Youth stay in the PACT program from the day of the court order through their adjudication hearing. PACT is designed as a three to six week program and most youth stay in the program from 20 to 25 days, according to program managers. The PACT center serves youth Monday through Friday from 3pm to 9pm, the time period in which the majority of juvenile crimes occur. Two vans are used by the program to pick up and deliver youth to the YO Center. In addition to a PACT reception room and staff offices, the program makes use of a number of rooms in one wing of the YO facility, including a large meeting area, classrooms, rooms fit with computer work stations and recording equipment, a fitness center, a small library, and a dining room.

Upon drop-off at the YO Center, youth meet in the designated PACT room, sign in, and are searched for prohibited items such as cigarettes and lighters; cell phones and other electronic devices (e.g., iPods) that are regarded as distractions are confiscated during the program and returned when the youth is dropped off at home at the end of the night. After sign in, participants are typically divided into two groups to receive programming, which includes academic tutoring, project-based reading labs, recording studio production sessions, fitness training regimens, life skills development workshops, and technology classes. After a period of 30 to 45 minutes, the two groups switch. After this initial programming period, the group dines with the staff members. After dinner, there is another programming session involving the whole group. For the last 50 minutes to hour of the program, youth participate in social activities (e.g., video games,

playing cards). Fridays are generally more relaxed, with youth participating mostly in recreational activities within the Center or being taken out to play basketball. Youth are returned to their homes by 8:45 at night; upon dropping the youth off, the driver calls the youth's community detention (CD) worker to indicate that electronic monitoring should resume.

In the week or two prior to the youth's scheduled adjudication hearing, PACT's staff social worker meets with the youth and prepares his individual service plan. The completed ISP is provided to DJS staff and court personnel and is intended to inform DJS recommendations and the judge's determinations at the adjudication and disposition hearings, as well as subsequent supervision and service plans of DJS case managers. The PACT ISP documents progress that may be considered at the hearings and includes recommendations related to home and family, education, employment, peers, and the community. PACT employs a variety of standardized instruments in developing the ISP, including the Problem Oriented Screening Instrument for Teenagers (POSIT), Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Survey, test for Adult Basic education, Beehive (career assessment), physical, personal interview, home visit, and POSIP (for parents).

#### *PACT Staffing and Management*

For the most part, PACT is managed and staffed by African-American males, in keeping with the demographics of the youth population the program is designed to serve. The full-time Center Assistant Manager, responsible for program oversight, and the PACT Supervisor have been with the program since its inception, and both bring extensive experience working with at-risk youth. With the exception of a full-time security officer and employment advocate, other PACT staff work part-time due to funding constraints. These include a van driver, fitness instructor, and recording studio technician. Part-time female staff include the social worker, an LCSW who devotes 12 hours weekly from Tuesday through Thursday, and a literacy instructor. PACT oversight is also provided by the YO Director, who, along with the Center Assistant Manager and PACT Supervisor, are employees of the Mayor's Office of Employment Development. These three staff are members of the PACT Management Team, which is also comprised of directors and managers from the Family League of Baltimore, Department of Juvenile Services, and Baltimore City Office of the Public Defendant. On occasion, a representative of the Baltimore City Police Department has joined the Management Team. This group meets quarterly to review PACT's status, including programmatic and budgetary issues.

### *Sanctions, Violations, and Terminations from PACT*

Youth may be formally sanctioned for inappropriate behavior (e.g., cursing, defacing property) through verbal and, subsequently, written warnings. Staff members typically attempt to have discussions with youth about such behaviors or make use of other informal means of punishment (e.g., taking away recreational time) rather than going through formal sanctions. In severe instances such as physical altercations, youth may be required to stay under house arrest until they agree to return to the program and behave appropriately. Youth are considered to be in violation of the PACT program if they walk out; violations that occur outside of PACT operating hours are considered DJS Community Detention (CD) violations, since all PACT youth are on CDEM. In instances in which the youth does not show up to PACT, staff members contact the parent and, if necessary, the CD worker to see if there has been a miscommunication or an emergency; if not, the youth is considered to be in violation of CD.

Youth are released from the PACT Center per court order, generally issued at the adjudication hearing. On occasion, the youth's case may be postponed and the master or judge will order that the youth continue attending the PACT Center; discussed further below, this outcome can be distressing for the youth. Following release from PACT, the program provides a 30-day aftercare service to any youth or DJS case manager who seeks assistance in making the transition from PACT to formal DJS supervision.

### *Performance Measures*

The PACT Center collects performance measures to assess progress toward explicit objectives:

1. At least 120 youth will be diverted from detention per year by participation in the PACT Center.
2. Less than 15 percent of participating youth will be re-arrested prior to their pending court hearing.
3. At least 85 percent of participants will appear as required for their pending court hearing.
4. One hundred percent of participating youth will have an individualized service plan at their court hearing to assist them, their family and DJS case managers to identify community resources that will assist them to avoid further delinquent activity.

## **The PACT Center Evaluation**

### *Purpose*

This evaluation assesses PACT’s success in achieving its key objectives—little to no recidivism, high appearance rates at court hearings for youth served, and disproportionate minority contact (DMC) reduction. Participant outcomes are assessed relative to those of comparable groups of youth who were awaiting court hearings and supervised in the community under other circumstances. We also report findings on program operations and implementation issues from interviews with PACT administrators and staff and reviews of program documents.

### *Method*

Data for this evaluation were collected for youth admitted to the program since its inception (data collection started in July 2007), as well as two comparison groups: 1) youth who participated in another Baltimore City ERC operated by DJS, and 2) youth who were placed on CDEM but had no additional program attendance or surveillance conditions during the period between arrest and adjudication. Youth data were obtained from the PACT Center, DJS, and Baltimore City’s Court System (Quest). We utilize DJS’ detention risk assessment instrument (DRAI) data to examine the relative risk of reoffending and failure to appear (FTA) in court across PACT youth and the comparison groups. We also compare the groups on basic demographic and offense-related information. The primary outcomes for this evaluation include re-referral to DJS<sup>1</sup> between program admission and release date<sup>2</sup>, new detentions between admission and release, and FTA for the adjudication hearing.

In addition to analyzing quantitative outcomes, we conducted a limited assessment of program implementation. To this end, we toured the PACT center, conducted onsite interviews of the two administrators responsible for program oversight and the PACT supervisor, and reviewed documents descriptive of the program and its policies and procedures. Discussed below, this review was used to identify barriers to implementation and suggest efficiencies, and provide the context needed for interpreting findings from the outcome analysis.

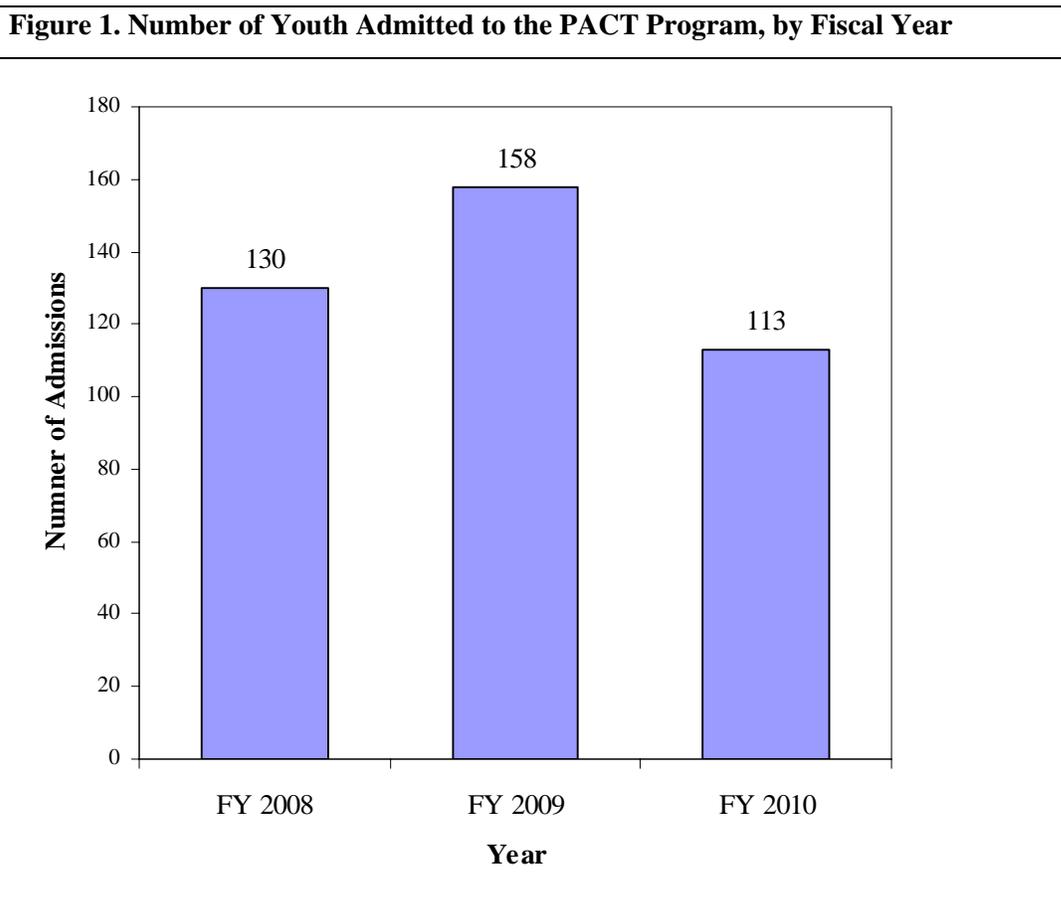
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<sup>1</sup> Future evaluations should include new arrests in the adult criminal justice system. These data were not available for this evaluation.

<sup>2</sup> The program release date coincides with adjudication date, but adjudication dates were not available on many youth. Future evaluations should use adjudication date as the date boundary in these measures.

*Descriptive Statistics*

According to program data, 401 youth were admitted to the PACT program from July 2007 through March 2010. As shown in Figure 1, PACT has achieved its objective of serving at least 120 youth per year in Fiscal Years 2008 (n = 130) and 2009 (158) and is on track to meet this objective in Fiscal Year 2010 (n = 113 as of March 2010). Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for all youth included in the evaluation. Almost all (99%) of the youth have been African American males, ranging in age from 14 to 18 years old. The majority of youth are referred to the PACT Center with a drug offense as their most serious charge (60.8%), followed by violent (17.2%), property (11.7%), and other charges (10.7%). On average, PACT participants had approximately six prior referrals to DJS. The average DRAI score was approximately eight, which is considered the highest risk level according to the DRAI risk scale.<sup>3</sup>



\*Note that FY 2010 only includes data from June 2009 through March 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Data from the Detention Risk Assessment Instrument were only available from April 2008 through the present. Thus, only 250 youth in the PACT Center, 371 youth in the DJS ERC, and 929 youth in CDEM had DRAI information for this analysis.

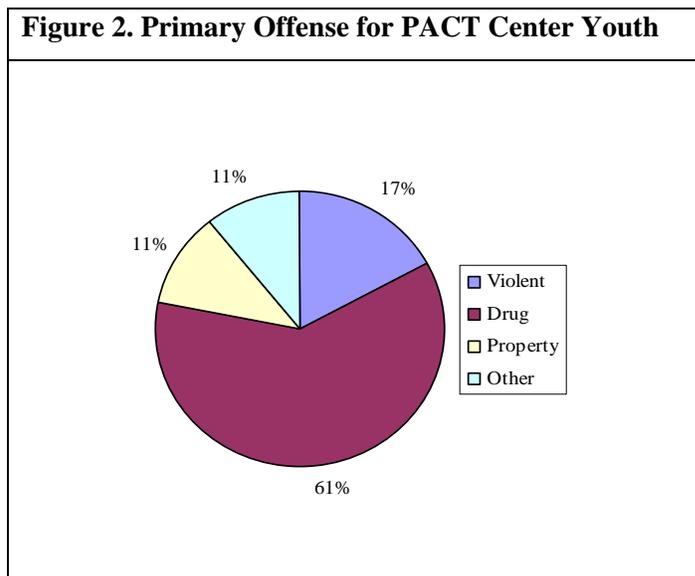
PACT youth outcomes are compared to those of 248 youth admitted to DJS' ERC prior to adjudication<sup>4</sup> and 1549 youth placed on CDEM while awaiting their adjudication during the same time frame as the PACT sample (from July 2007 through March 2010). Note that the PACT and ERC samples include some youth who entered these programs up to two and three times between July 2007 and March 2010 (all stays are included in the analysis), whereas the CDEM sample only includes youth on their first CDEM admission during this time frame. The ERC and CDEM programs are two detention alternatives that also serve youth in need of supervision prior to adjudication, and these samples provide two comparison groups with similar risk levels for this analysis. Although CDEM may be used for both males and females, only males are included in this analysis to be consistent with the PACT Center and DJS ERC programs, which only serve male juveniles. As shown in Table 1, PACT youth are slightly older than ERC and CDEM youth, and they are generally comparable in terms of racial distributions. On the other hand, PACT youth have more serious delinquency histories than ERC and CDEM youth; to some extent this difference, and that finding that PACT youth have higher DRAI risk scores than youth placed only on CDEM, was expected since PACT is viewed as a relatively intensive detention alternative program.

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<sup>4</sup> DJS also operates a Day Reporting Center at the same site as the ERC. Some youth are enrolled in both programs; these youth are not included in the analysis.

<b>Table 1. Descriptive Statistics, Youth in ATD Programs July 2007 – March 2010</b>			
<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>PACT</b>	<b>DJS ERC</b>	<b>CDEM</b>
<i>Descriptive Characteristics of Participants</i>			
Number of Youth Served	401	248	1549
Male	100%	100%	100%
Mean Age (standard deviation)	16.5 (1.0)	15.9 (1.3)*	16.1 (1.3)*
Race			
Black	99.5%	98.0%	95.2%
White	0%	2.0%	3.9%
Other	0.5%	0%	0.9%
Number of Prior Referrals	6.5 (4.4)	4.8 (3.6)*	4.6 (4.1)*
DRAI Score	7.9 (3.7) (n = 250)	7.4 (3.9) (n = 157)	6.3 (4.1)* (n = 929)
<i>Program Involvement</i>			
Length of Stay (days)	25.6 (14.8)	31.0 (23.9)*	32.6 (22.8)*
CDEM Supervision	100%	53.2%	100%
CDEM Violations between Program Admission and Release	20.9% (84)	33.8% (45)*	22.8% (353)

\*Average is significantly different from the PACT youth mean or percentage at the  $p < .05$  level.



With regard to program involvement, PACT youth were enrolled in the program for an average of 26 days. ERC and CDEM youth stay in their respective programs for five to six days longer on average (31 and 32 days, respectively). As mentioned earlier, all youth admitted to PACT are

also supervised with CDEM, but only a little more than half of the youth participating in the ERC are also supervised by CDEM. Of those under CDEM supervision, PACT youth and CDEM youth received CD violations at similar rates (20.9% and 22.8%, respectively), whereas ERC youth had a significantly higher rate of CD violations (33.8%). CD violations consist primarily of runaways, new charges while in the program, and judicial violations.

*Program Outcomes*

Table 2 shows the outcomes for youth who participated in the PACT, DJS ERC, and CDEM programs prior to adjudication between July 2007 and March 2010. Conventional statistical tests were used to compare results, including independent sample t-tests to detect significant differences between program mean scores, and Z-tests for two proportions to compare percentage estimates.

Despite evidence that shows PACT youth present higher levels of risk for reoffending and failure to appear at their adjudication hearing, these youth had significantly lower re-referral rates to DJS (7.7%) compared with youth who participated in the DJS ERC (14.5%) and youth only supervised by CDEM (12.9%).<sup>5</sup> Further, only 1.5% of youth supervised by the PACT Center failed to appear at their adjudication hearings, compared with 3.6% of youth supervised by DJS’ ERC and 5.0% of youth supervised with CDEM only during their involvement with these programs. Youth in ATD programs could ultimately be placed in detention for committing a new offense or violating program conditions. In this regard, PACT youth also had significantly lower rates of detention during their involvement with PACT (13.5%), compared with youth in the DJS ERC (30.6%) and youth in CDEM (18.7%).

<b>Table 2. Program Outcomes, Youth in ATD Programs July 2007 – March 2010</b>			
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>PACT</b>	<b>DJS ERC</b>	<b>CDEM</b>
Referred to DJS between program admission and release	7.7% (31)	14.5% (36)*	12.9% (200)*
Failure to appear at court hearing between program admission and release	1.5% (6)	3.6% (9)	5.0% (77)*
Detained between program admission and release	13.5% (54)	30.6% (76)*	18.7% (290)*

\*Significantly different from the PACT estimate at the p < .05 level.

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<sup>5</sup> New arrests made by law enforcement account for the great majority of new ‘referrals’ to DJS, but these also include citizen and school complaints of delinquent offenses.

The PACT Center operates as a DMC reduction program. Given that the program has served mostly African American youth who would have been detained in the absence of PACT, the program is meeting this goal.

### *Program Issues*

Several issues have emerged in our ongoing discussions with members of the PACT Management Team and interviews with PACT managers that deserve particular attention because they appear to be barriers to program effectiveness or efficiency. Where appropriate, we offer recommendations for resolving these issues, often by building on PACT efforts that have already been undertaken. We raise and discuss these with the caveat that this account is based almost entirely on the very limited perspective provided from these few hours of discussions and interviews with PACT management and a brief program document review. Given more time and resources—the opportunity to interview and hold focus groups with current and past participants, review case files, obtain and analyze more extensive DJS data, and conduct site observations and additional line staff interviews—this account would assuredly be more accurate, objective, nuanced, comprehensive, and conclusive.

Client targeting. Programs serving as alternatives to detention are only effective if their participants would be ordered to detention in the absence of the program. Although PACT administrators and the Master for Juvenile Causes presiding over most of the emergency detention hearings that result in a PACT court order indicated their belief that PACT youth are at the “high end of the risk spectrum,” there appears to be no systematic, objective protocol in place for assessing this, and for ensuring PACT participants are indeed detention-bound. PACT managers reported that the program is not directly involved in identifying candidates, and these managers and the Master indicated they rely on the DJS liaison assigned to the program to recommend a youth for the program. For some period, DJS and PACT used scores on DJS’ DRAI to identify candidates, but we heard from multiple sources that the DRAI criteria led to *higher* risk youth being screened from consideration and this practice was suspended and replaced by the current case-by-case decision-making process. Again, while we have no evidence to suggest youth who are not detention-bound are being admitted to the program, and anecdotal reports suggest this is not the case (and the DRAI data support the view that PACT youth are at the high end of the risk continuum), it is recommended that PACT, DJS, and relevant court personnel employ an objective means of ensuring that PACT youth meet this important criterion.

Maintaining client capacity. A concern was expressed by one interview respondent that the program is rarely at capacity, and others indicated that the vast majority of court orders for the program originate from a single Master for Juvenile Causes and that capacity problems would occur if any changes were made to the assignments of masters and judges. It was also reported that the program relies heavily on the lone DJS liaison to make referrals; while this process works smoothly, referrals can plummet when the liaison takes a vacation or is otherwise out of the Justice Center for any period. Capacity issues are not due to a lack of information or communication among key players, as PACT keeps a nightly attendance log that is relayed to DJS and the Court so they are aware of available slots. Further efforts could be made, however, in educating more judges and masters about the program. While we understand there has been a meeting with the judiciary over the past year to discuss sanctioning and violation procedures, and we were told that PACT has invited judges and masters to visit the facility, increased efforts to familiarize the Court with PACT programming and service planning might lead to increased referrals. The favorable findings from the present report might present a serendipitous opportunity to introduce the program and develop a dialogue with judges and masters about the benefits of using the program and ATDs in general.

PACT and CDEM violations. Since all PACT youth are also on CDEM, they are effectively under dual supervision. With the assistance of the judiciary at the BCJJC, PACT and CD administrators appear to have made commendable strides in addressing some of the inevitable conflicts that may arise under these circumstances. It was reported that there is a clear, consensus policy that PACT participation is given priority between the hours of 3 and 9 pm, and PACT managers noted that they successfully lobbied to acquire cell phones for their van drivers and other select personnel—the only such staff in the YO Center to have employer-purchased cell phones—largely for the purpose of maintaining live contact with CD case managers. Protocols for ensuring PACT-CD communication, such as the phone call placed to CD at the end of the day, noted above, and procedures for maintaining contacts when staff are absent or off duty, have been developed and appear to be routinely implemented. PACT managers also appeared attuned to the more subtle aspects of overlapping supervision, noting that they encourage CD staff to inform them when youth are exhibiting problematic behavior, so PACT staff can “lean on” the youth and reinforce messages coming from the CD case manager. Despite these efforts at PACT-CD collaboration, one issue that requires additional attention concerns PACT youth who are issued CD violations. Youth are much more likely to acquire a CD program violation than a

PACT violation. In many cases, these youth will continue to attend PACT if not picked up on a warrant (which is usually a low-level warrant that takes about two weeks to process). CD staff are concerned this undermines their authority, while PACT staff believe it is best to keep their door open to these youth and keep them engaged in the program until they are removed from the community. CD and PACT administrators must jointly acknowledge, discuss, and resolve this issue. Perhaps such youth could continue in PACT while being assigned a unique status involving some reduction in privileges or closer monitoring. Additionally, while program documents suggest PACT and CD administrators have paid considerable attention to graduated sanctions protocols, extensive ongoing communication regarding the integration of these procedures across the agencies, to the extent possible, appears in order.

A somewhat similar issue was raised in a recent PACT progress report; we only note this briefly here as deserving attention, as we did not gather any information about the issue in our interviews. It was reported that DJS probation case managers have made unscheduled visits with PACT youth during program hours under their supervision. This can be disruptive to PACT programming and presents to youth a picture of disconnection between supervisors. It is self-evident that this matter needs to be added to the agenda of discussion items between PACT and DJS' Baltimore City community case management administrators and staff, and probation visits should be scheduled when PACT is not operating, or at least through a consented pre-arrangement with PACT.

Utilizing ISPs. We heard from several sources that ISPs are not used to their potential. It was reported that there is some motivation to make ISPs generic and cursory because a single negative detail, such as the youth not completing a service referral or having problems at home, could lead to the case being held open or worse (i.e., a more punitive disposition). The other, perhaps related, concern raised by program managers was that ISPs seem to “fall into a black hole”—PACT staff rarely hear any feedback or get queries about the content or use of the ISPs, and there is no evidence to indicate the ISPs are considered in subsequent case management or service planning or are even read by DJS staff who are responsible for supervising PACT youth. Again, PACT has developed a paper protocol aimed at diffusing any communication issues with ISPs which includes a “PACT Court Feedback Form” designed to be completed by DJS staff at or after the hearing to indicate if the ISP was ordered to be implemented and further PACT follow-up is needed. The form has apparently not resolved concerns about making full use of ISPs. Improved relations and greater understanding of the program and its strengths by masters and judges, as

discussed above, may have the additional benefit of making ISPs more credible and PACT recommendations, even when accompanied by a piece of negative information, more likely to be followed by the court. It may also be advisable to develop PACT ISPs in two stages—an initial, more general plan for use in court, and a more detailed assessment and service plan that would be reviewed by DJS staff and incorporated into the DJS service plan created by the probation (or aftercare) case manager. Minimally, it appears that further dialogue among Baltimore City-based DJS case managers and the PACT social worker and managers would facilitate greater use of the ISP and perhaps also the 30-day transition programming available to PACT clients.

PACT termination. Two issues were raised in our interviews regarding court decisions to terminate youth from PACT. One was simply that the program does not reliably learn about the outcomes of the adjudication and disposition hearing, and the youth’s status vis-à-vis PACT. The paper protocol described above regarding ISP and follow-up outcomes is designed to also address this need for information on program termination; as with ISP results and feedback, PACT managers said it was “hit or miss” as to whether they were informed of program status. It is evident that DJS staff or court personnel at the BCJJC should be assigned to reliably perform this simple and—given the relatively small numbers of PACT youth processed any given week—not especially time consuming task.

A more challenging issue appears to stem from the success of PACT, and concerns youth whose hearings are postponed, often for no fault of the youth or his behavior while under PACT and CD supervision. In these cases, the judge or master will typically order the youth to continue attending PACT during the postponement period. This sends mixed messages to the youth who feels he has “succeeded” in the program, but is required to continue to report to and participate in it daily. Aware of this issue, PACT managers note this is one of the reasons they do not have graduation ceremonies or otherwise draw participants’ attention to a particular success criterion. Nonetheless, some additional efforts appear in order to resolve these situations. Again, this would appear to require joint acknowledgment and discussion between the judiciary and the program; perhaps these youth, too, could be placed on a special PACT status that would require reporting and participation at some reduced level.

PACT outreach. Our discussions and reviews of program reports pointed to a few other areas that we only note briefly here because we did not have the opportunity to pursue them in any detail in our interviews. One was that participation by the Baltimore City Police Department in

PACT management team meetings has been inconsistent (and indeed, the PACT manual we were provided did not list the BCDP as team members). It was also surprising to us that there is no representation on the team from the Baltimore City Public Schools. Clearly, efforts are needed to reach out to these agencies, as they play critical roles in the lives of PACT youth. Commendably, PACT administrators have begun to make efforts to include parent and community representatives on the management team. PACT efforts to systematically obtain feedback on the program from parents and youth participants as they leave from the program appear to be positive steps.

### *Summary*

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess PACT's success in achieving its key objectives—little to no recidivism, high appearance rates at court hearings for youth served, and DMC reduction. PACT has established measurable objectives with regard to recidivism and FTA rates, and the findings in this evaluation indicate the program is achieving these objectives. Overall, only 7.7% of the youth who have participated in PACT since its inception have been re-referred to DJS prior to their adjudication hearings (the program had a target of less than 15%). It is also notable that this recidivism rate is significantly less than that of youth supervised by CDEM or the other ERC, despite the fact that PACT youth have more serious delinquency histories. PACT youth also have very low rates of failure to appear in court (the PACT goal is less than 15%), though these rates were low for the other two ATDs as well. PACT is also achieving success as a DMC reduction program that would reduce the number of minority youth in detention—almost all program participants to date have been African American males who would have otherwise been sent to detention. Finally, although not the focus of this evaluation, PACT has been successful in meeting its program participation goal of at least 120 youth per year, despite the fact that the program is not always full to capacity.

Though very limited by time and resource constraints, our brief, first-hand exposure to PACT pointed to several factors that likely underlie PACT's record of performance on these measures. Among these were clear, detailed documentation of key protocols, policies, and job functions; efforts to coordinate programming to engage the interests of youth in the catchment area; and an apparent commitment and shared vision among the program staff regarding the capacity for PACT youth to become productive citizens. Another commendable attribute we observed was PACT managers' willingness to identify program areas needing improvement. A consistent theme here concerned the need to enhance judges' and masters' familiarity with and support for

the program. Improved communication and collaboration with DJS staff at several points—client selection, joint supervision with CD and probation officers, the use of PACT ISPs—would also benefit the program.

We also wish to note limitations to the data used in the report; these will hopefully be addressed in future evaluations. For one, the recidivism outcome only accounts for re-referrals to DJS and not arrests that were processed in the adult criminal justice system. Secondly, we examined recidivism during the duration of the program rather than prior to adjudication because many cases missing court hearing dates in the data provided. Although the court date and ATD release data should be similar, if the program stay extended beyond the adjudication hearing date, this analysis may show slightly higher rates of recidivism reflecting delinquency behaviors post-adjudication. It would be beneficial for future analyses if ATD programs keep more comprehensive and complete data records, not only of the information reported in this evaluation but also of other factors we were not able to assess, such as the current offense (only PACT reports these data), other types of program violations, incidents of AWOL, and termination status (e.g., successful, unsuccessful). Despite these limitations, PACT appears to be a promising alternative to detention and DMC reduction program.