

RAMSEY COUNTY:  
DEEP END SYSTEM  
ASSESSMENT  
September 12, 2017



THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

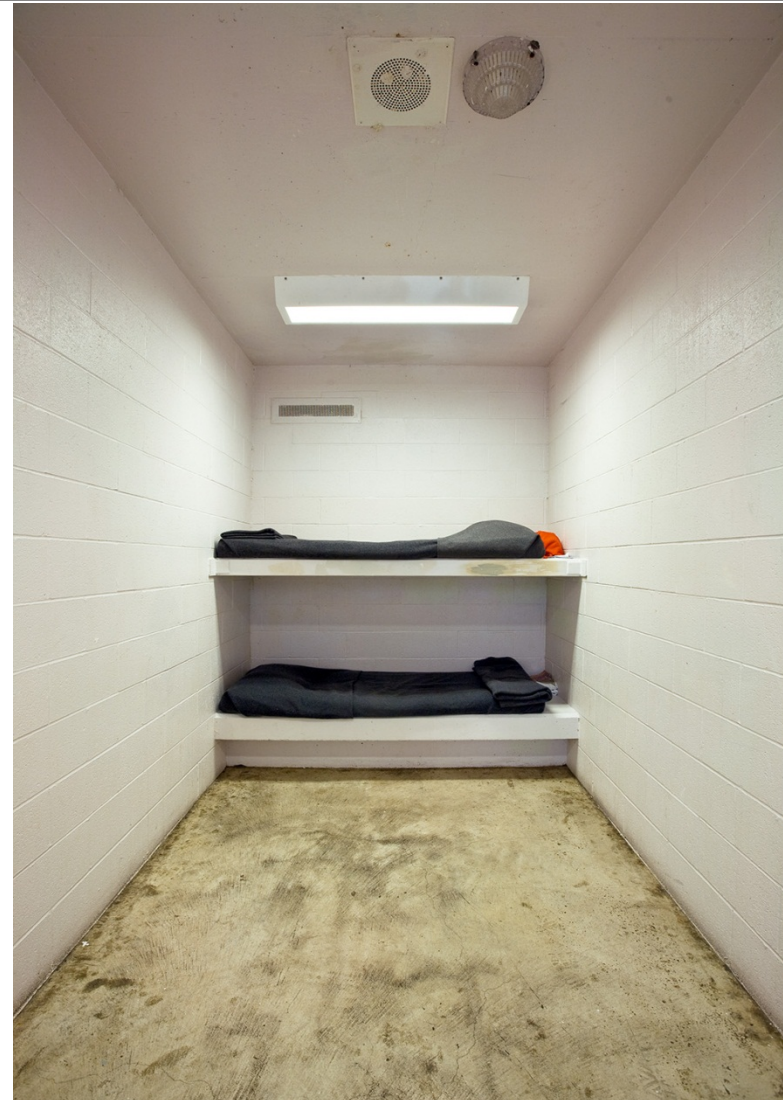
# Thank You

- This report would not have been possible without extraordinary analysis, sleuthing, input, coordination, and support from Ramsey County practitioners, advocates, families, and young people.
- Thank you for sharing your time and your knowledge with us, and thank you for everything you have done to identify opportunities to strengthen your juvenile justice system and achieve better outcomes for young people, families, and communities.
- Special thanks are due to the County Board of Commissioners and the juvenile bench, especially Judge Robert Awsumb, Judge Jeffrey Bryan, and Judge Patrick Diamond. We are also extremely grateful for invaluable contributions by Culture Brokers LLC and by Leah Bower, Melinda Donaway, Michelle Finstad, Judith Franklin, Craig Hagensick, Tama Hall, Ed Hauck, Amanda Jameson, John Klavins, Ryan O'Connor, Brian Portzen, Kate Richtman, and Jennifer Shuster-Jaeger.

# JDAI Foundations

Through JDAI, Ramsey has used a data-driven, collaborative approach – with strong community partnerships – to reduce juvenile confinement at the front end of the system. As a result, detention admissions have dropped by more than 70%.

Ramsey is now embarking on the next step: applying JDAI principles from the “front end” to reduce confinement at disposition – the “deep end” of the system.



## Before we go any further, what do we mean by “Deep End”?



A youth is in a Deep End placement if he or she is:

- 1) Placed out-of-home in a facility, including a group home
- 2) As the result of a delinquency adjudication
- 3) Pursuant to a court order related to the delinquency case.

In Ramsey, this includes at least 35 placement facilities, including Red Wing, Boys Totem Town, 22 other facilities in Minnesota, and 11 additional institutions in Iowa, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Arizona.



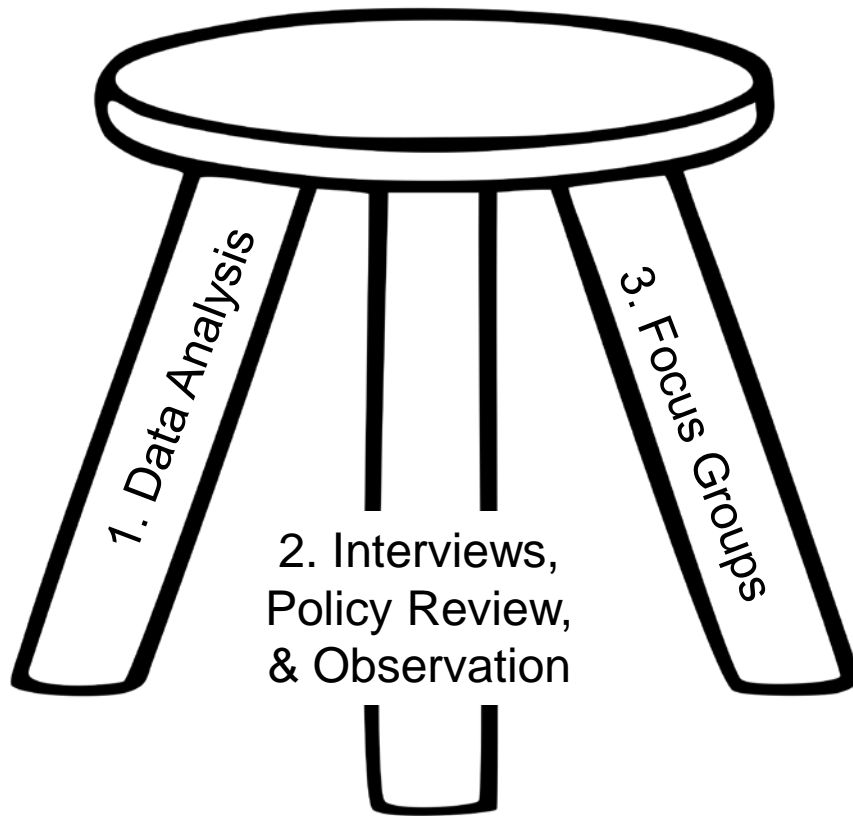
# Before starting a new journey, need to know two things....

Origin	Destination
 City or airport 	To safely and significantly reduce placements, especially for youth of color

## Confirming a shared destination

2014	Ramsey County applies to join the Deep End network. AECF defers selection due to significant leadership transitions underway and on the horizon, but ultimately accepts Ramsey as one of seven new sites.
2015	Teams from Ramsey attend two Deep End intersite launch meetings: a Data Workshop in June and a Kick-Off in August. Significant leadership changes continue in Ramsey.
2016	Leadership changes continue through November. Toward the end of the year, Ramsey sends a team to the Deep End Conference, withdraws from the joint facility planning process with Hennepin County, and makes significant progress on the data analysis underlying this report.
2017	AECF assessment team visits Ramsey County for system-mapping meeting, interviews, PO focus group, and courtroom observation. Ramsey County contracts with Culture Brokers to conduct focus groups with youth and families. System Assessment presentation.

Because each site's starting point is different, the Deep End work begins with a system assessment that relies on three sources of information



Three essential sources of information:

- 1) What do the data say?
- 2) What do system stakeholders say?
- 3) What do young people and families say?

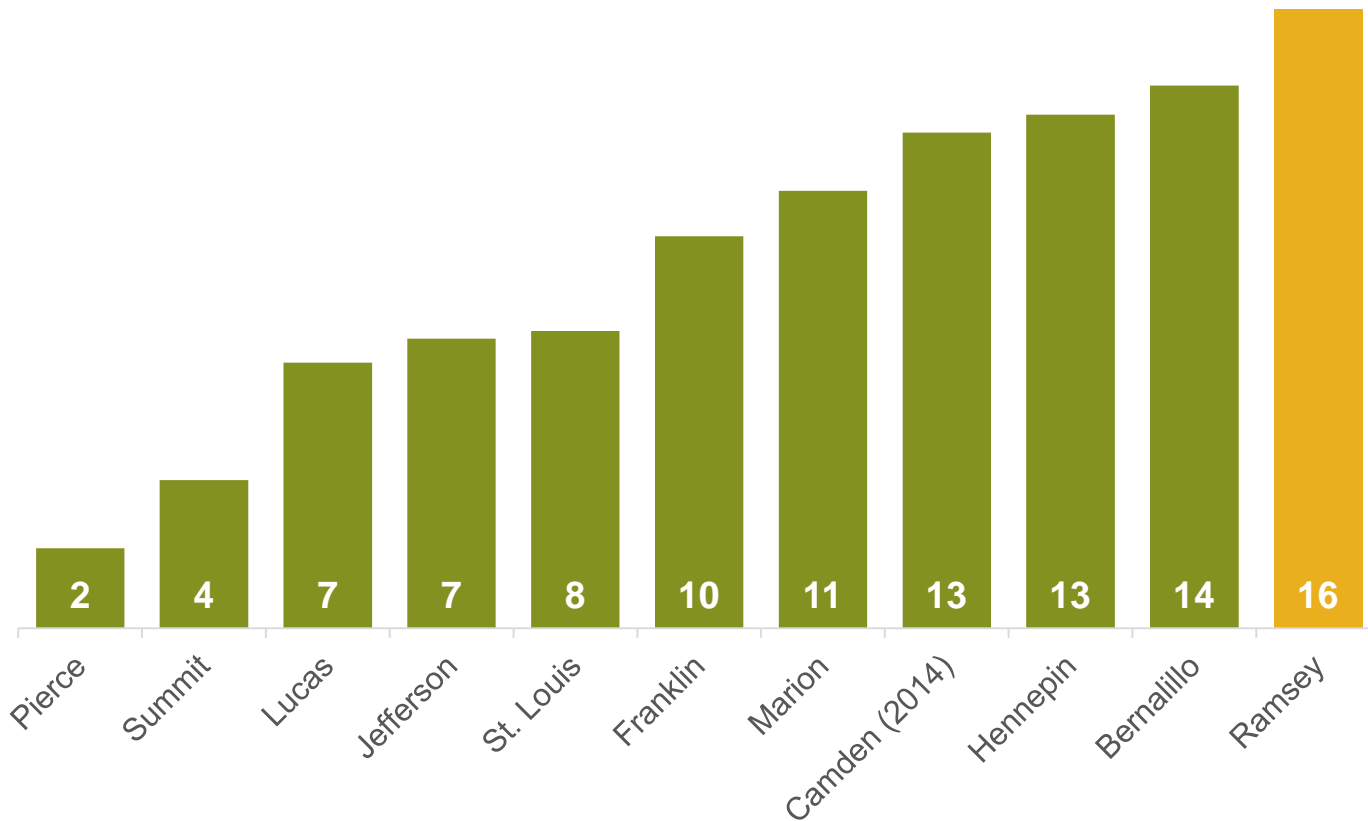


Our assessment revealed striking and pervasive racial disparities throughout the system. In talking about these disparities, we have tried to balance candor with sensitivity.



The Deep End sites vary in their reliance on out-of-home placement.

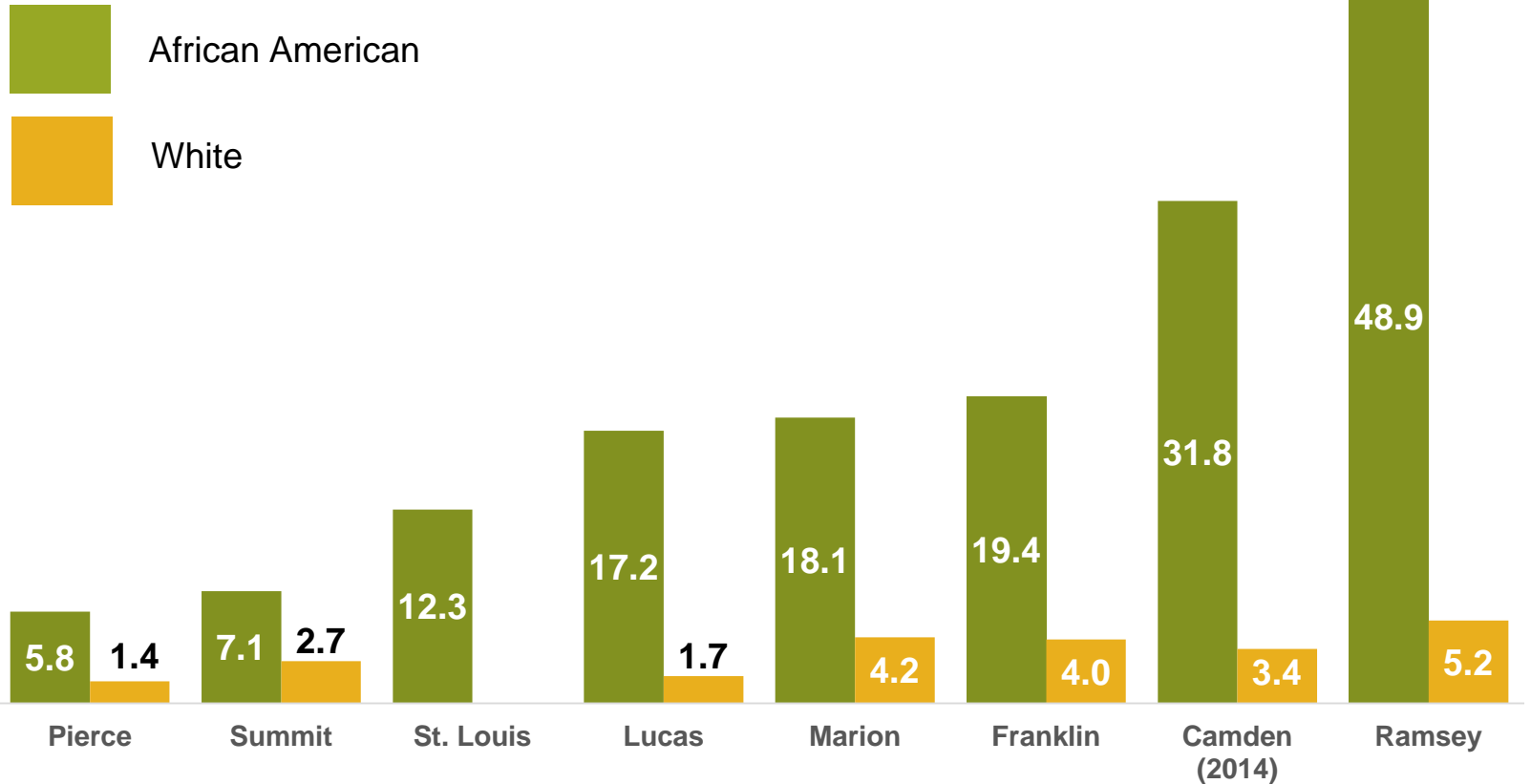
### PLACEMENT RATES IN DEEP END SITES (2016)



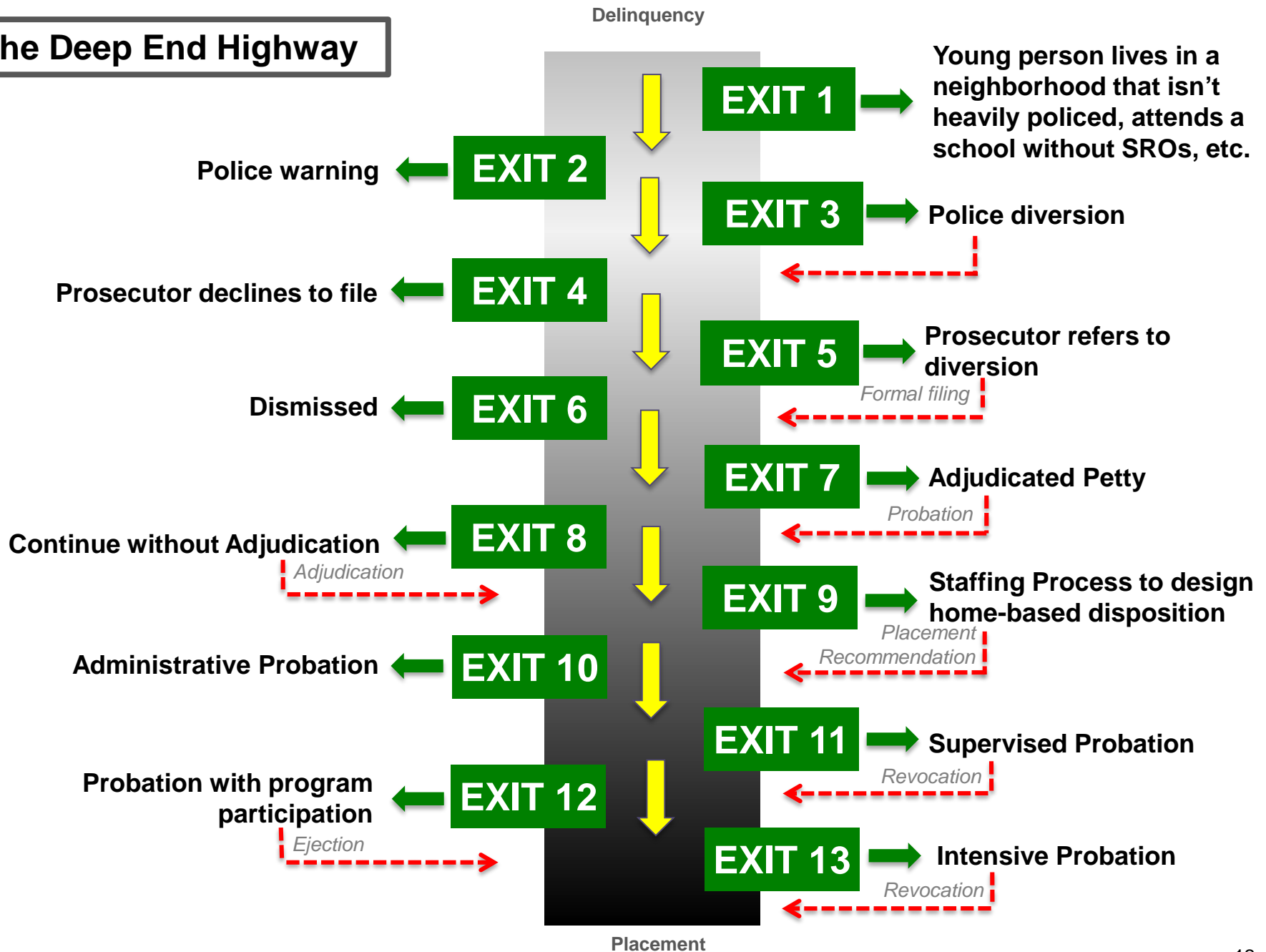
This graph shows the number of placements for every 10,000 young people (under 18) in the jurisdiction's overall population in 2016 (unless otherwise noted).

# Population-based placement rates: African American v. White.

## PLACEMENTS PER 10,000 JUVENILE POPULATION (2016) – AFRICAN AMERICAN V. WHITE YOUTH



# The Deep End Highway



In most juvenile justice systems, delinquency cases can be diverted from formal handling at 3 decision-points: arrest, charging, and guilt.

Before Arrest (Exits 2 & 3)  
Decision made by Law Enforcement

Not examined in this assessment:  
presents huge equity opportunity going forward.

After Arrest/Before Filing (Exits 4 & 5)  
Decision made by Prosecutor

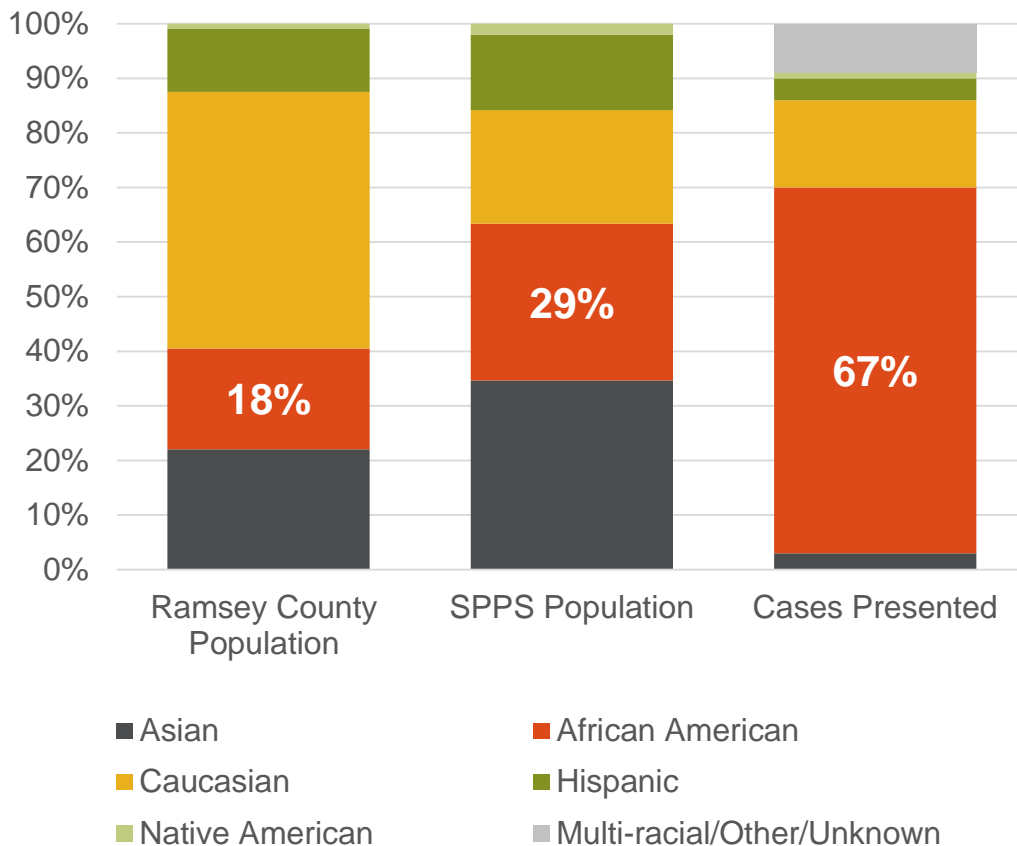
Generally underutilized, disproportionately used  
for white youth, and eligibility unclear. Another  
huge opportunity going forward.

After Filing/Before Finding of Guilt  
(Exits 6-8)  
Decision made by Court

Unclear. Court data shows that 50% of filings exit  
before disposition (consistent with national  
average for court diversion), but stakeholders  
struggled to describe the process.

# Racial disparities in Ramsey's system begin well before the County Attorney's Office.

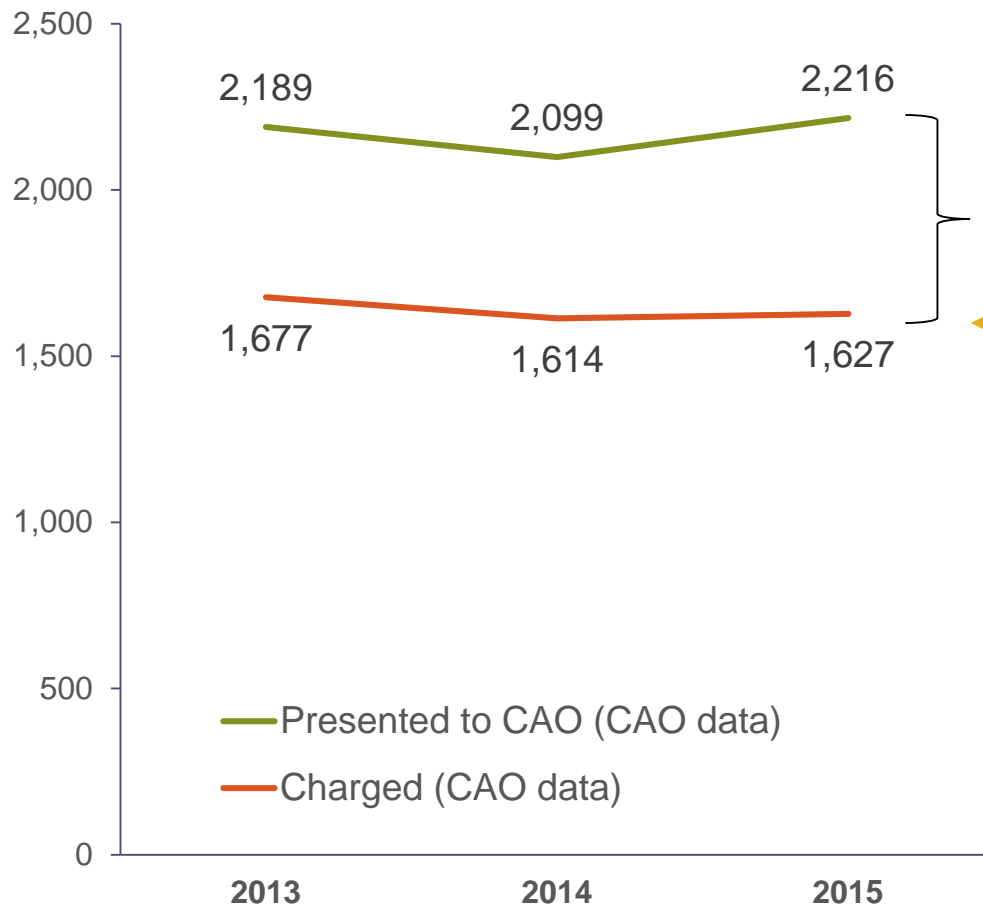
**RACE/ETHNICITY AS PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION (2015)**



- In 2015, African Americans accounted for 18% of the Ramsey County population, and 29% of enrollment in the St. Paul Public Schools.
- Yet, African Americans accounted for 67% of cases presented to the County Attorney's Office.
- The Deep End assessment did not include an analysis of law enforcement diversion. Equity-informed diversion practice would be a critical step toward reducing disparities.

Once a case is presented, the County Attorney's Office reviews and decides whether to decline, divert, or charge.

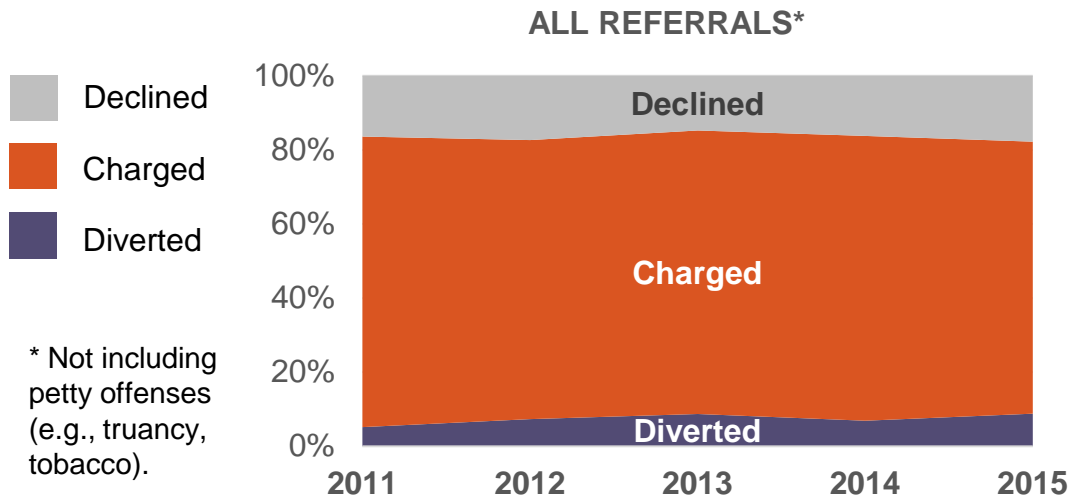
**DELINQUENCY TRENDS (2013-15)**



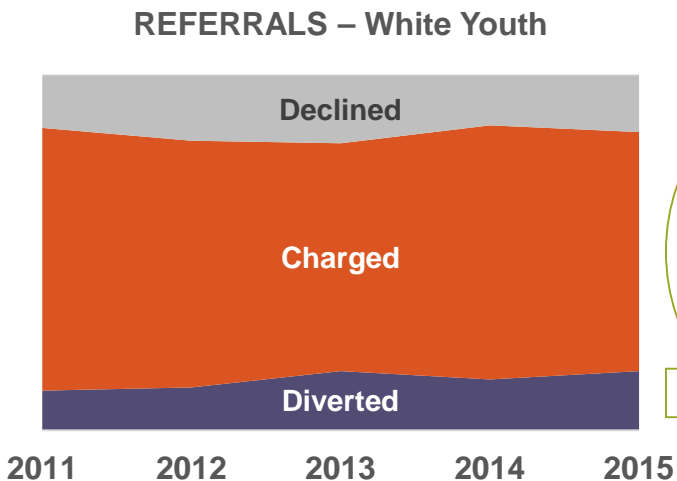
CAO decisions guided 27% of cases off the Deep End Highway in 2015.

A disproportionate number of those cases involved white youth.

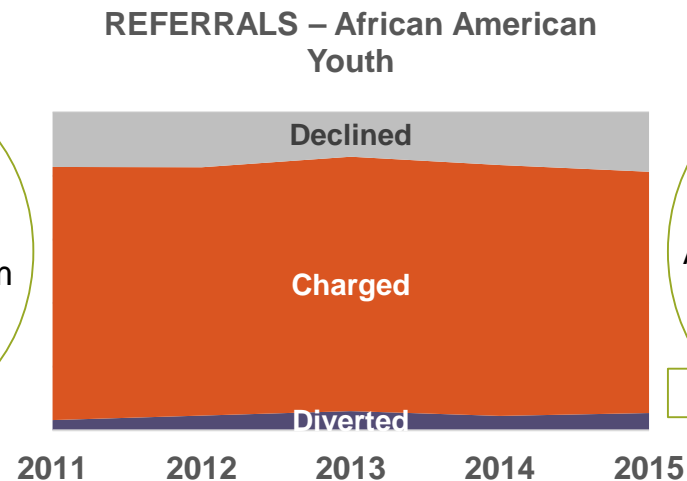
# Prosecutorial discretion offers a powerful opportunity to help counter and correct disparities.



- The most recent data available suggests that CAO decisions are aggravating disparities instead of mitigating them.
- Diversion has increased, but was still very low at 9% in 2015.



Diversion of white youth increased from 11% to 17%

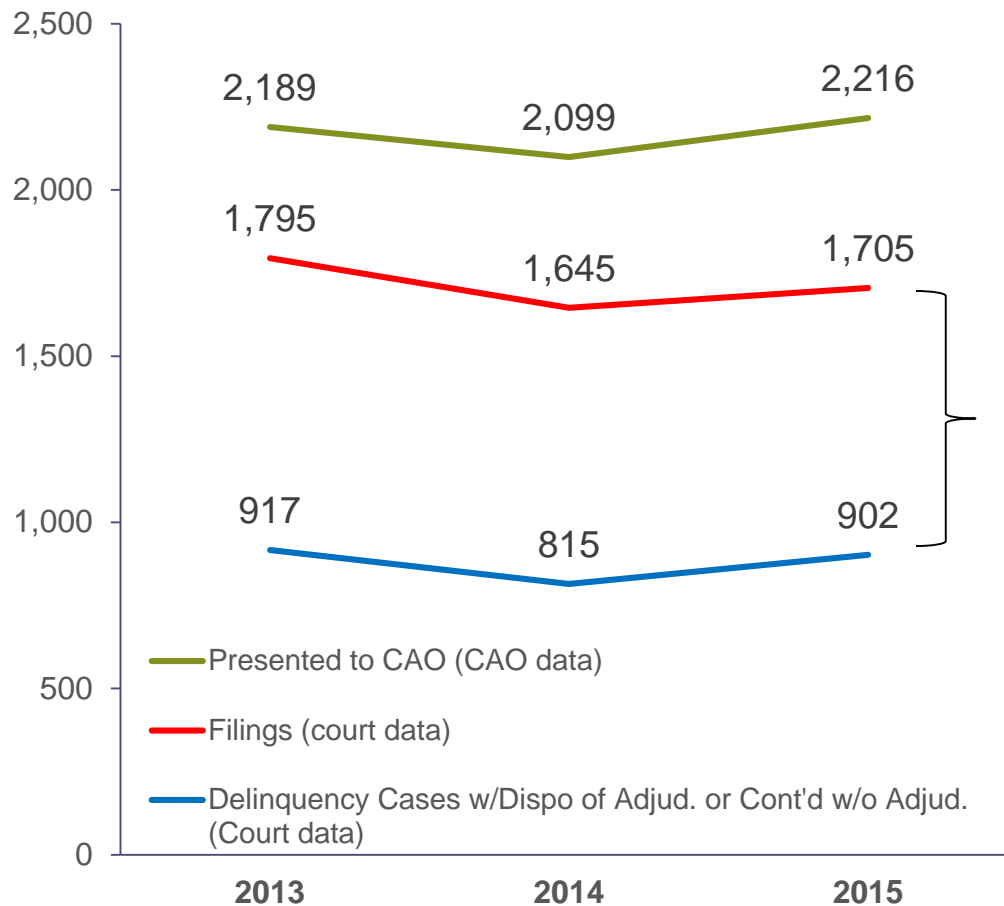


Diversion of African American youth increased from 3% to 5%



Of all cases charged and filed, only half continue to a disposition that could involve supervision or placement, but the processes by which the other half exits the highway is not clear.

### DELINQUENCY TRENDS (2013-15)



About 50% of filings exit the highway before Corrections.

The exit ramps are not clear, but it appears that the main options are adjudication as a petty offense and dismissal.

# Interviews and focus groups confirmed a overall lack of knowledge and transparency around diversion.

## Strengths to Build upon

- Diversion by the County Attorney's Office (CAO) has increased since 2011.
- CAO has begun seeking feedback from youth and families.

## Challenges:

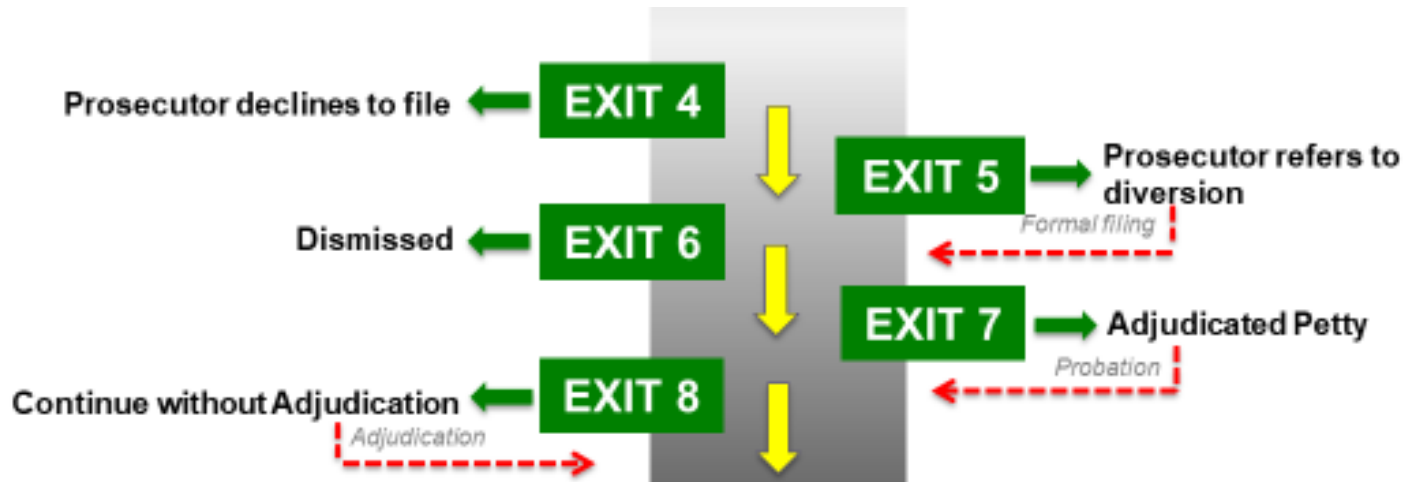
- The criteria for diversion eligibility are unclear.
- Diversion is not used to counter racial disparities.
- Absence of transparency around diversion subjects those decision points to greater likelihood of biases and inequity.

Diversion offers a powerful opportunity for law enforcement, prosecutors, and courts to help counter and correct disparities arising from systemic inequities.

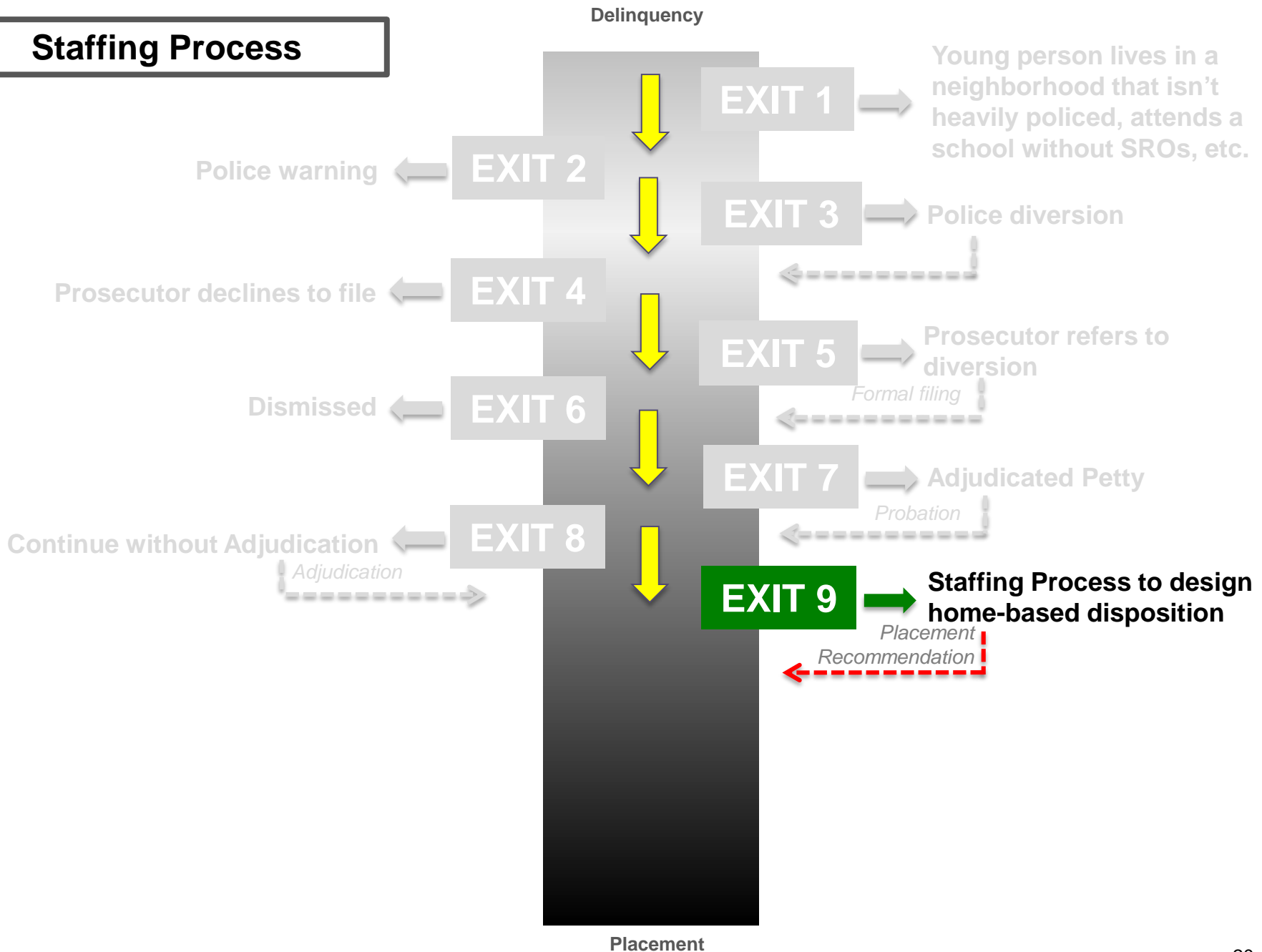
By expanding access to and increasing transparency around Exits 4-8, Ramsey County could build a more equitable system and improve outcomes for young people, families, and communities.

## Recommendations:

- Investigate opportunities for more diversion by law enforcement.
- Clarify eligibility criteria for diversion by County Attorney's Office and continue to increase access to diversion.
- Continue & build on CAO practice of seeking feedback from youth/families.
- Establish county-level expectation of transparency at all levels of diversion.

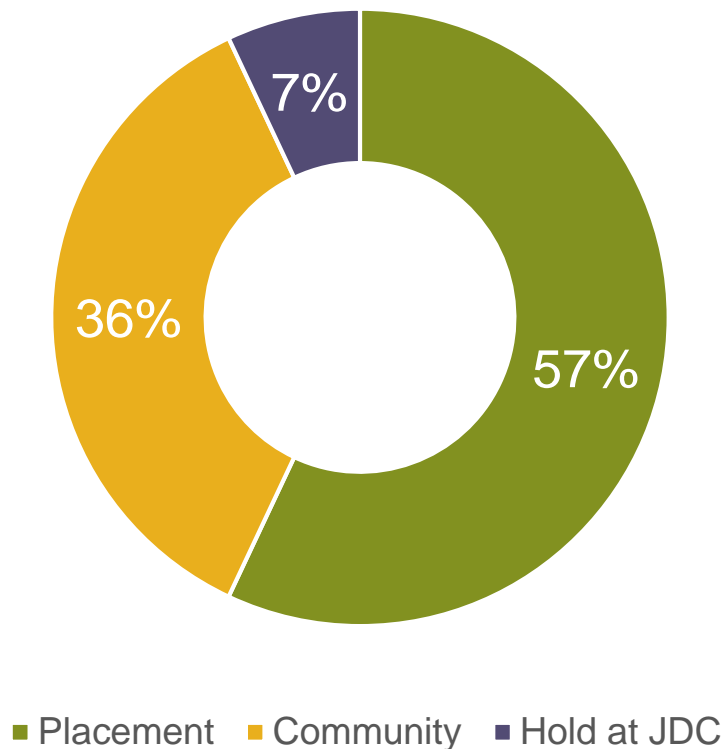


# Staffing Process



For some youth, Corrections uses a staffing process to develop recommendations to the Court. The Court nearly always accepts the committee's recommendation, which is usually for placement.

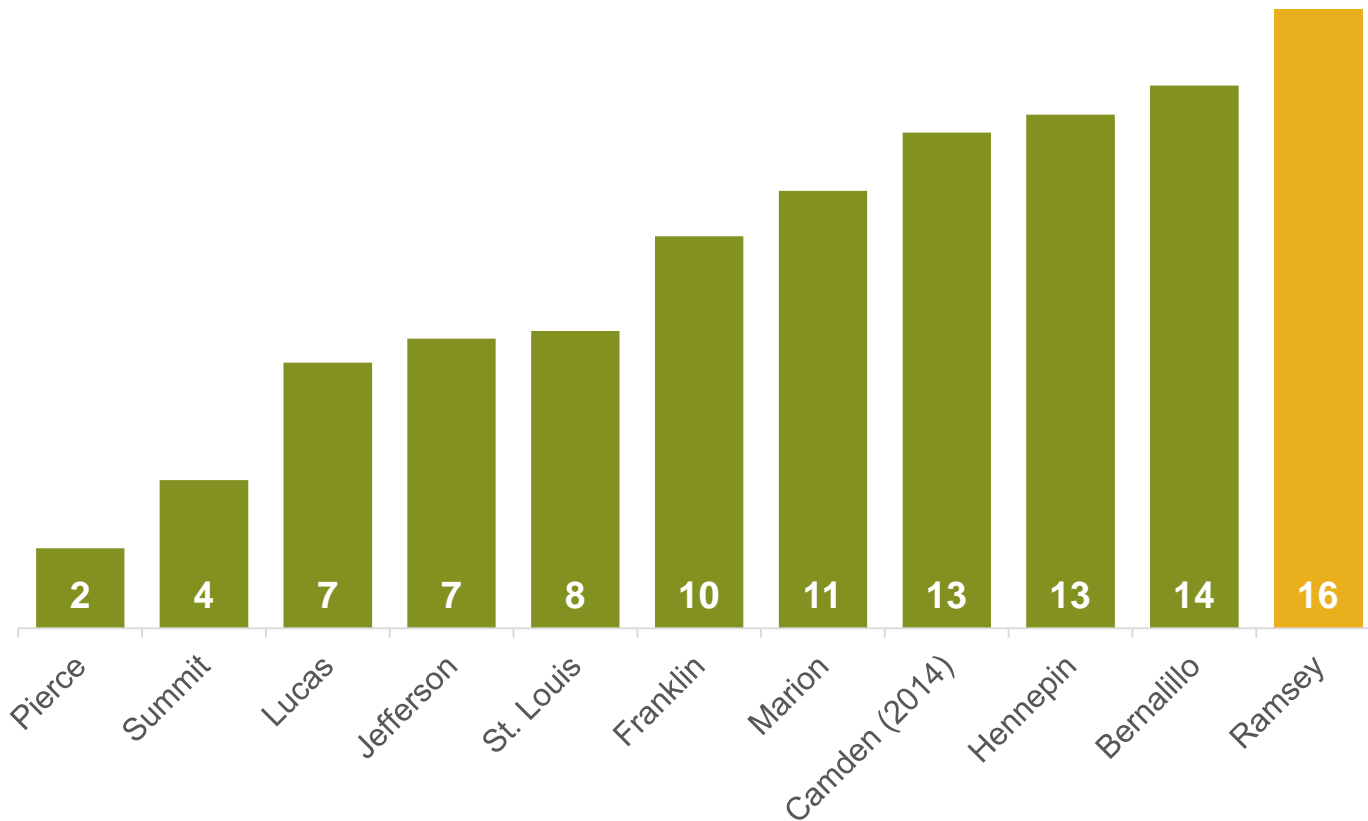
**STAFFING COMMITTEE  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
(2016)**



- **Judges agree with the staffing committee's recommendation in 94% to 97% of cases.**
- Corrections has already begun to strengthen the staffing process.
- Due to ambiguities in eligibility criteria, data collection, and variation in who gets staffed (and when), this analysis should be taken as a first step.

Jurisdictions like Summit County, Ohio, are explicit that the purpose of a staffing meeting is to avoid an out-of-home placement and design an effective, community-based option.

### PLACEMENT RATES IN DEEP END SITES (2016)



This graph shows the number of placements for every 10,000 young people (under 18) in the jurisdiction's overall population in 2016 (unless otherwise noted).

Focus groups with parents showed that there is room for improved engagement and understanding.



The school and the court knew my daughter had trauma. Rather than trying to help, they criminalized her. It felt routine.

Don't sucker parents.  
Be honest and straight-forward.

They view [my daughter] based only on her file folder.



[The system] did not follow through on the plan they made [for my daughter]. They stopped showing up and gave is no explanation why.

Difference in treatment shows up in school. Their policies make it easy for them to criminalize our kids



The staffing process may be used to reduce reliance on out-of-home placements, especially for youth of color.

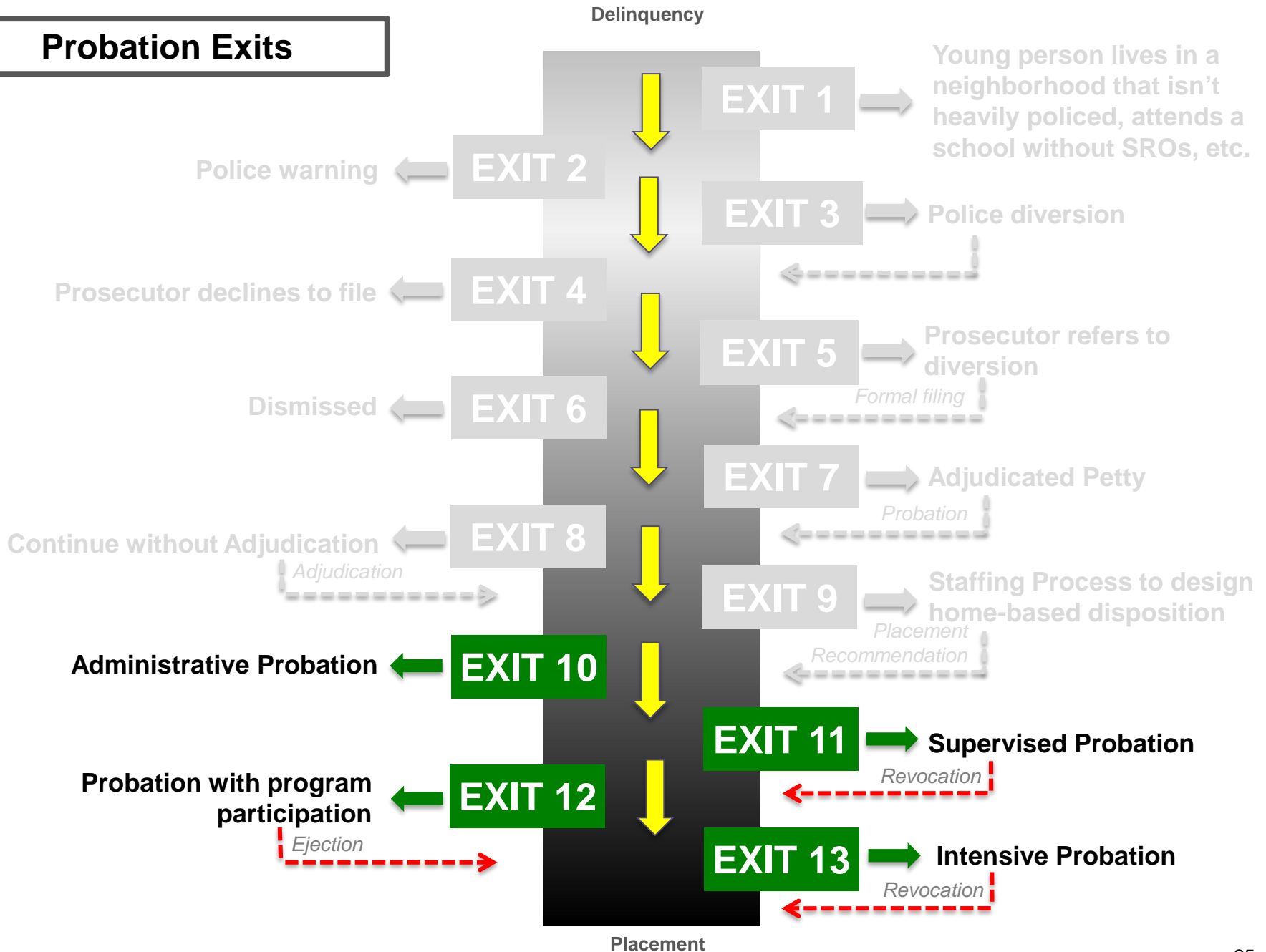
## Recommendations:

- Establish clear expectation that the purpose of a pre-disposition staffing meeting is to avoid placement and develop an individualized, home-based disposition. Staffings should be in partnership with youth, families, and communities of color and include options for culturally-centered, community-based services.
- Clarify criteria for staffing eligibility and set clear expectations for transparency in decision-making.
- Improve data collection and CQI measures









# Probation Exits



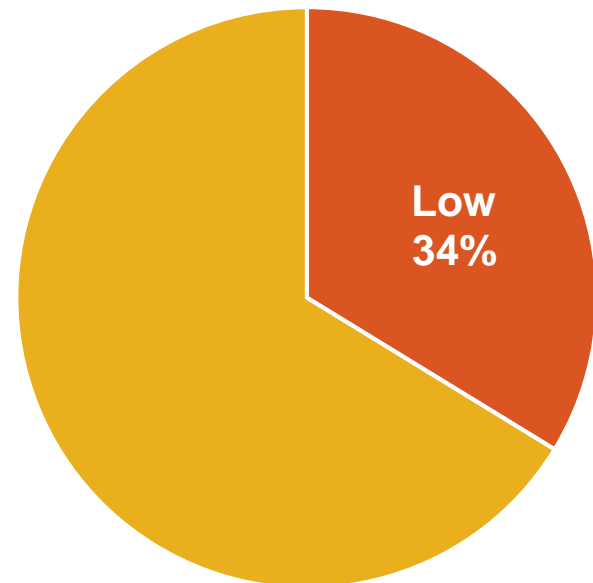
Probation is the last exit on the highway, so it is critical to focus on the right youth and use family and community assets in a more intentional way.

Traditional Probation in the US		Effective Probation	
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Default disposition: “Gotta do something”</li> <li>Used to “get the attention” of low risk youth</li> <li>Last chance for high risk youth</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No low-risk youth on probation</li> <li>No low-level offenses</li> <li>Small caseloads</li> </ul>
Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PO as monitor, focused on compliance &amp; surveillance</li> <li>Long lists of conditions/rules</li> <li>One-size-fits-all programs</li> <li>Sanctions/incarceration for non-compliance</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PO as coach, focused on progress &amp; growth</li> <li>Relationship-based intervention</li> <li>Individualized case plans</li> <li>Probation violations ≠ probation failure</li> <li>Incentives to motivate real change</li> <li>No court-ordered conditions</li> </ul>
Families & Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimally engaged by the system</li> <li>Viewed as part of the problem</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partners in changing youth behavior</li> <li>Viewed as part of the solution</li> <li>Treated as experts</li> </ul>
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep the trains running</li> <li>React to bad cases</li> <li>Avoid conflict</li> <li>Top-down management</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sets vision for organization</li> <li>Manage continuous improvement and change</li> <li>Constant outreach to other stakeholders – both within the system and in the community</li> <li>Meaningfully engages staff at every step</li> </ul>

## One in three youth disposed to probation is low risk.

- When diversion fails to steer low risk youth away from the formal system, probation departments can create Administration Probation caseloads to conserve resources.
- By over-intervening with low-risk youth, systems undermine youth success.
- Corrections policy directs that low-risk youth be assigned to Administrative Probation, but stakeholders were open that they regularly exceed contact standards.
- The extra attention to low-risk youth is well-intended, but ultimately damaging at a youth and systems level.

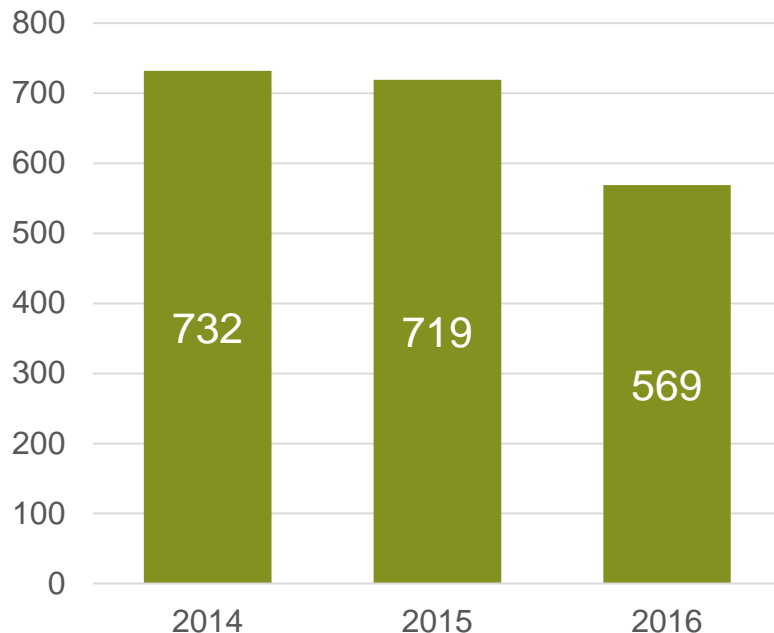
DISPOSITIONS TO PROBATION  
(2016) (N=569)



Under current practice, probation is a significant driver of placements.

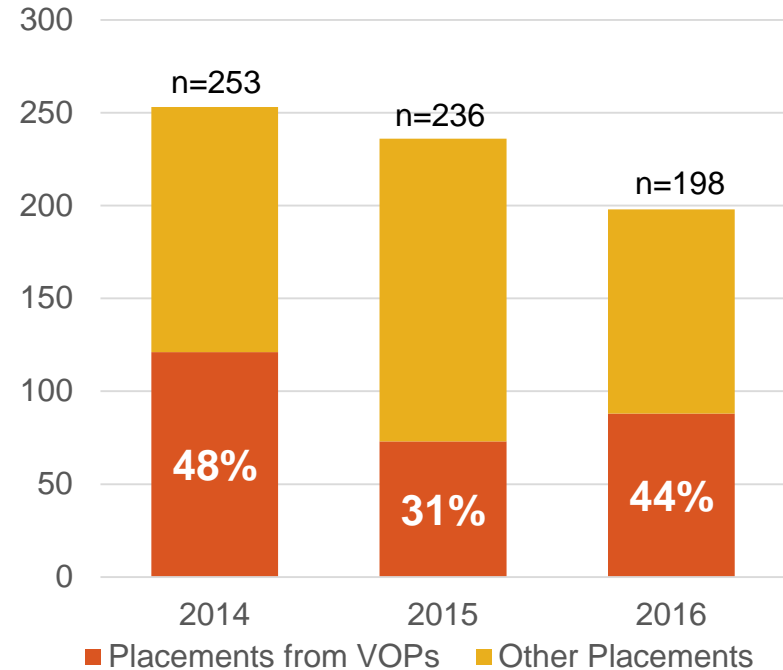
**Fewer young people are being disposed to probation....**

**DISPOSITIONS TO PROBATION  
(2014-16)**

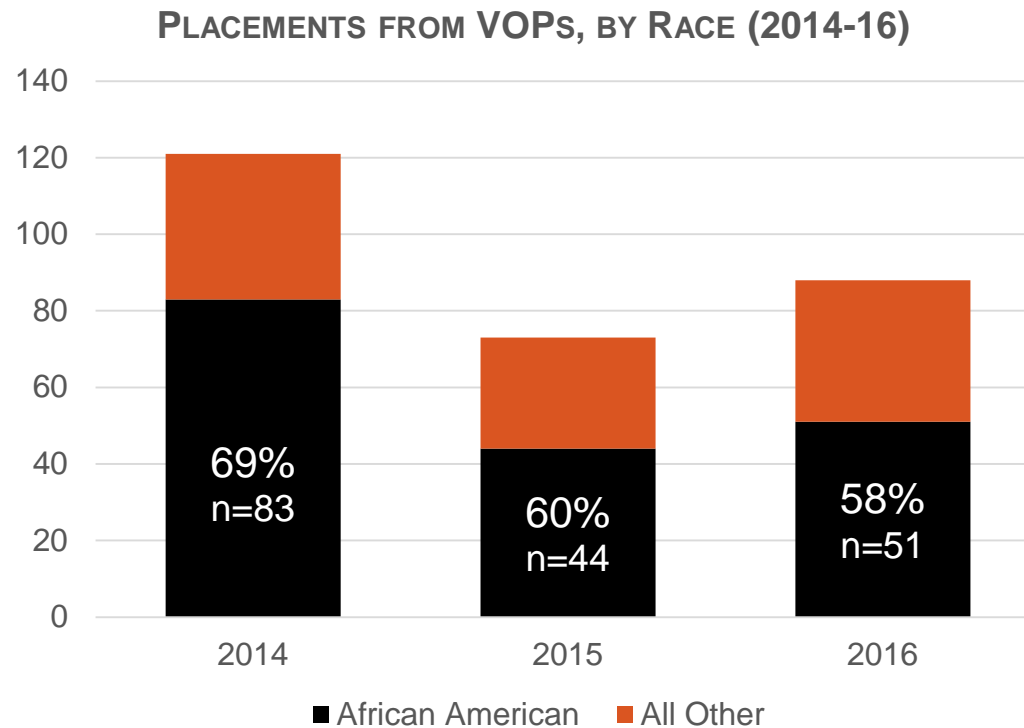


**...but technical violations still account for 44% of placements.**

**PLACEMENTS ARISING FROM VOPs AS  
SHARE OF ALL PLACEMENTS (2014-16)**



Most placements arising out of VOPs involve African American youth, but the # and % share are trending in the right direction.



Focus groups with youth showed that the quality of the relationship between the youth and PO matters.



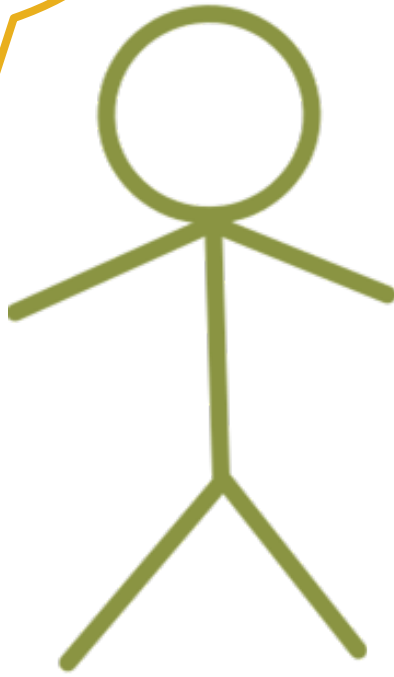
[In Saint Paul] I got a great case worker – with heart. She disappeared and I got another worker who wanted me in jail.

College tour while on probation at JDC showed me people who look like me can be successful.

Probation officer got me into good programs, like getting ready for college, tour black colleges. She helped me get a job.

My first probation officer was awesome – helped. That person left with no word. My second P.O. never showed up.

I don't know why I am being placed out of home. Don't know what is going to happen.



System makes us feel if you don't have money, you don't exist or deserve any better.



Strong and supportive leadership in probation can help overcome systemic challenges that are making it difficult for Ramsey County probation officers to build essential relationships with young people and their families.

## Challenges of Probation

### Conflicting Expectations of Probation

- Monitoring youth vs. facilitating a process of behavior change
- Intermediate success or failure vs. long-term success or failure
- Are POs seen as part of the intervention or purveyors of services?

### Barriers to Meeting Expectations

- Uneven implementation of best practices
- Heavy workloads
- Too much time spent on low risk youth or administrative caseloads

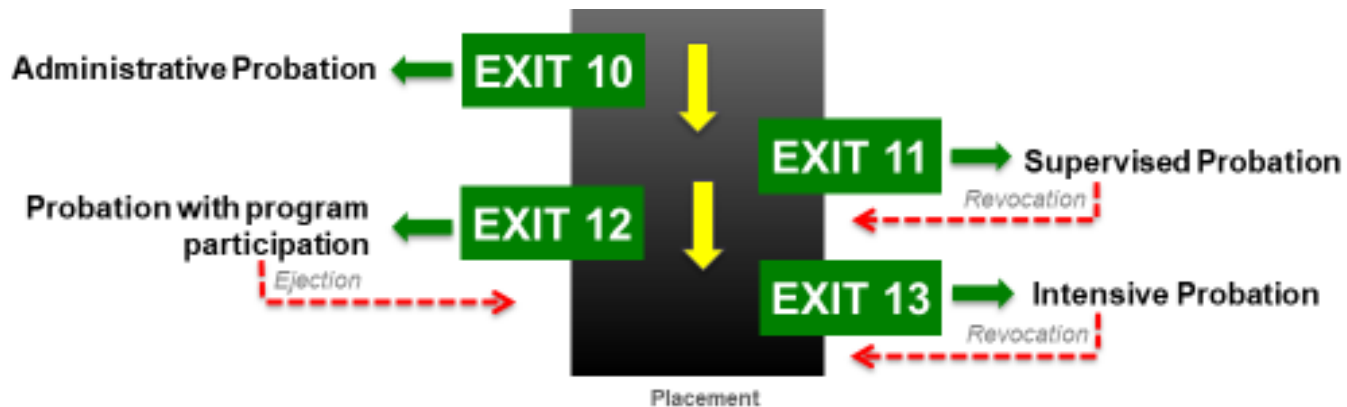
### Unintended Consequences of Reform

- Low PO morale due to heavy workloads and feelings of distrust from other system stakeholders
- Some stakeholders do not buy into reform philosophy

# Probation leadership can make or break a reform effort. Leadership in Ramsey is more than up to the challenge.

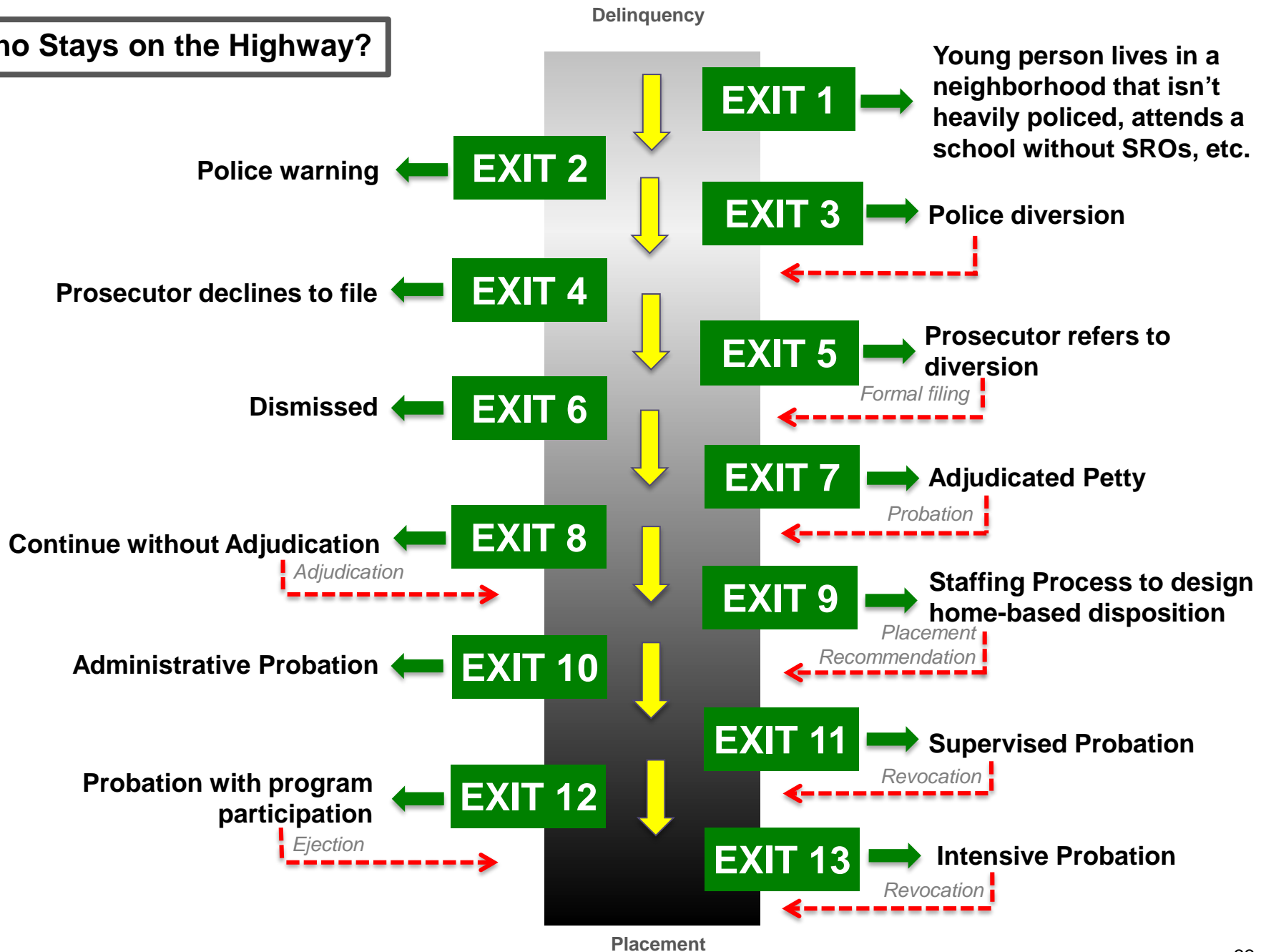
## Recommendations:

- Reconvene purpose of probation conversation to build a collaborative understanding of juvenile probation as an intervention focused on building positive community connections and promoting long-term behavioral change.
- Revisit and enforce policies and procedures around Administrative Probation to steer low-risk youth to that caseload and conserve resources for the youth who need them.
- Provide the training and support necessary for probation officers to engage in individualized, family-engaged case planning.
- Streamline standard probation order to remove laundry list of conditions.
- Dramatically reduce placements due to technical violations.
- Be intentional about collaborative leadership.



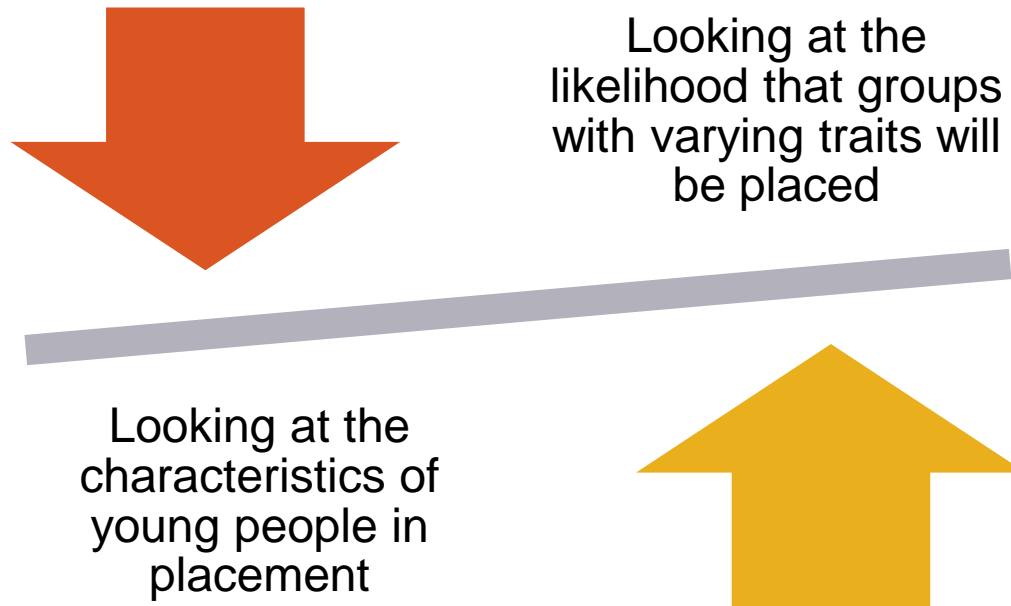


# Who Stays on the Highway?



The following slides are based on a Corrections dataset of youth who were open/served by Ramsey County Juvenile Probation in 2015 on a misdemeanor level or higher.

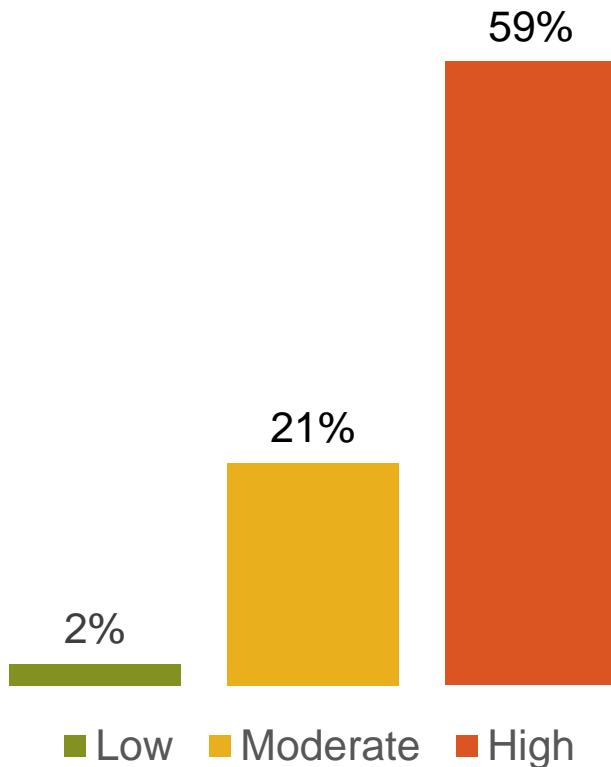
We can look at placements from two angles....



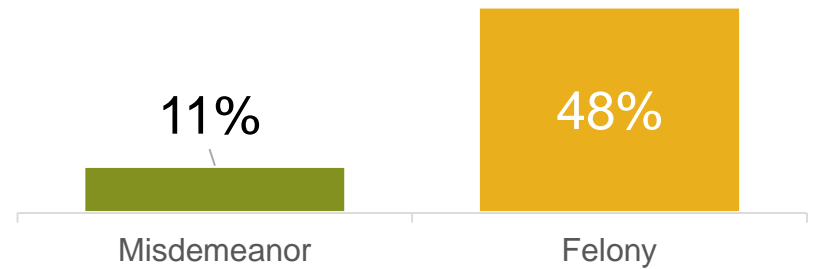
**Remember that technical violations accounted for 31% of all placements in 2015 and 44% of all placements in 2016.**

# Risk and offense are considered relevant to placement.

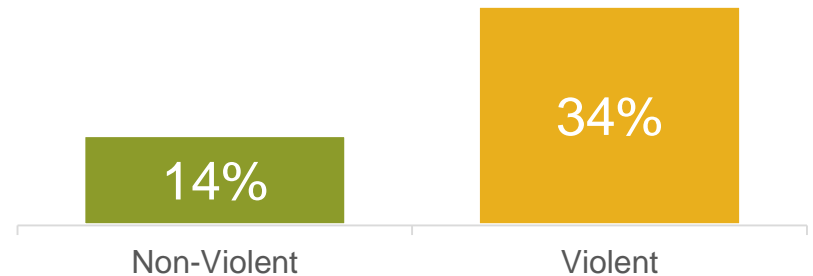
**% OF CASES RESULTING IN PLACEMENT, BY YLS RISK LEVEL (2015)**



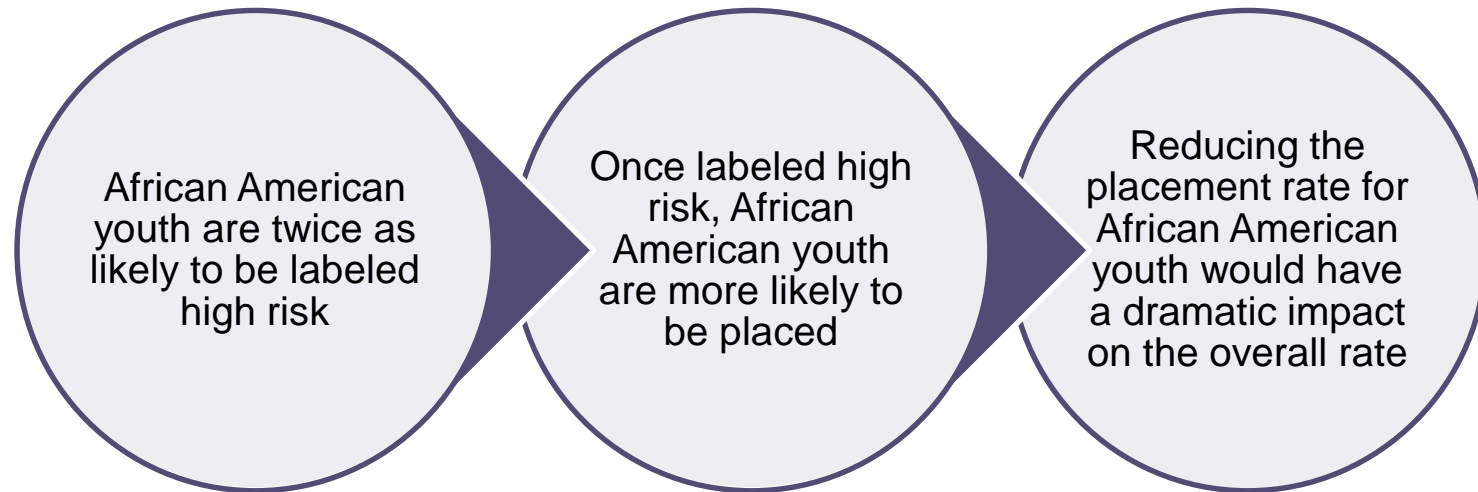
**% OF CASES RESULTING IN PLACEMENT, BY MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE CATEGORY IN 2015**



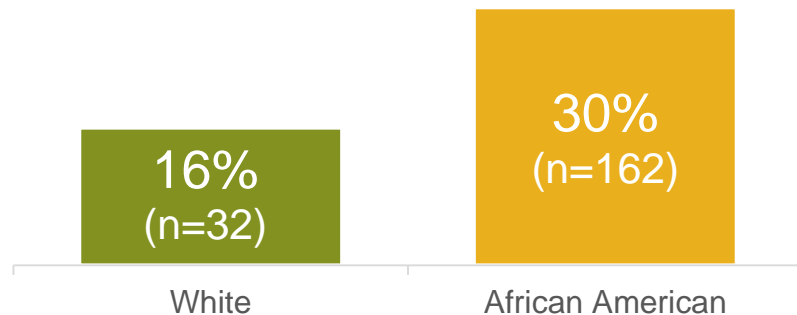
**% OF CASES RESULTING IN PLACEMENT, BY MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE TYPE IN 2015**



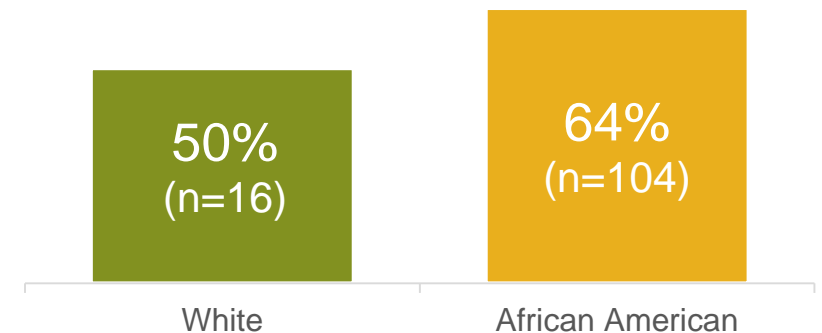
Because risk assessment operates in a racialized context,  
risk is not race-neutral.



**% OF ASSESSED YOUTH LABELLED HIGH RISK, BY RACE (2015)**

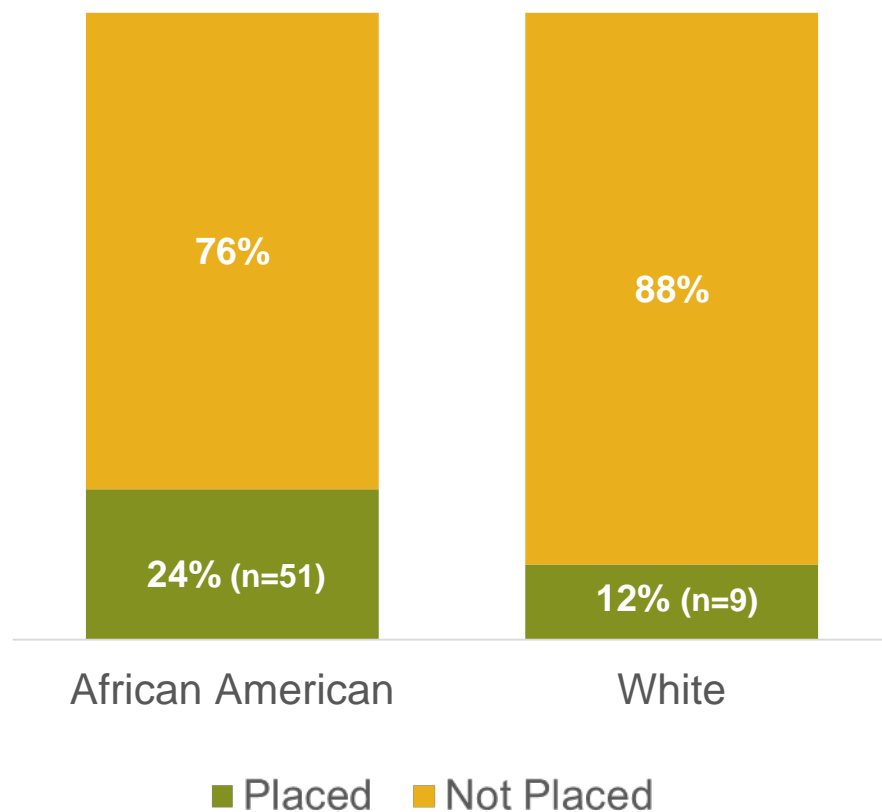


**% OF HIGH RISK YOUTH PLACED, BY RACE (2015)**



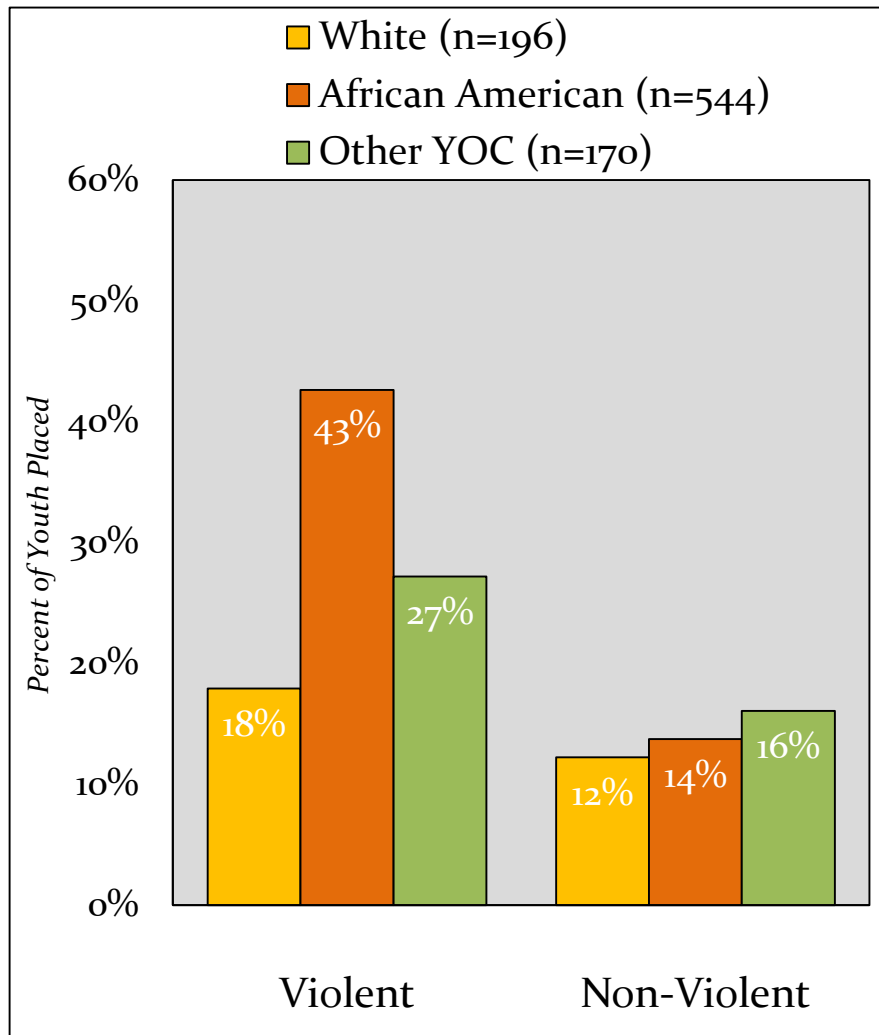
African American youth assessed as moderate risk are twice as likely to be placed out-of-home than their white counterparts.

% OF MODERATE RISK YOUTH PLACED,  
BY RACE (2015)



Among moderate risk youth, about 1 in 10 white youth are placed, compared to nearly 1 in 4 African American youth.

## Racial disparities are also apparent within offenses types (e.g., violent v. non-violent).



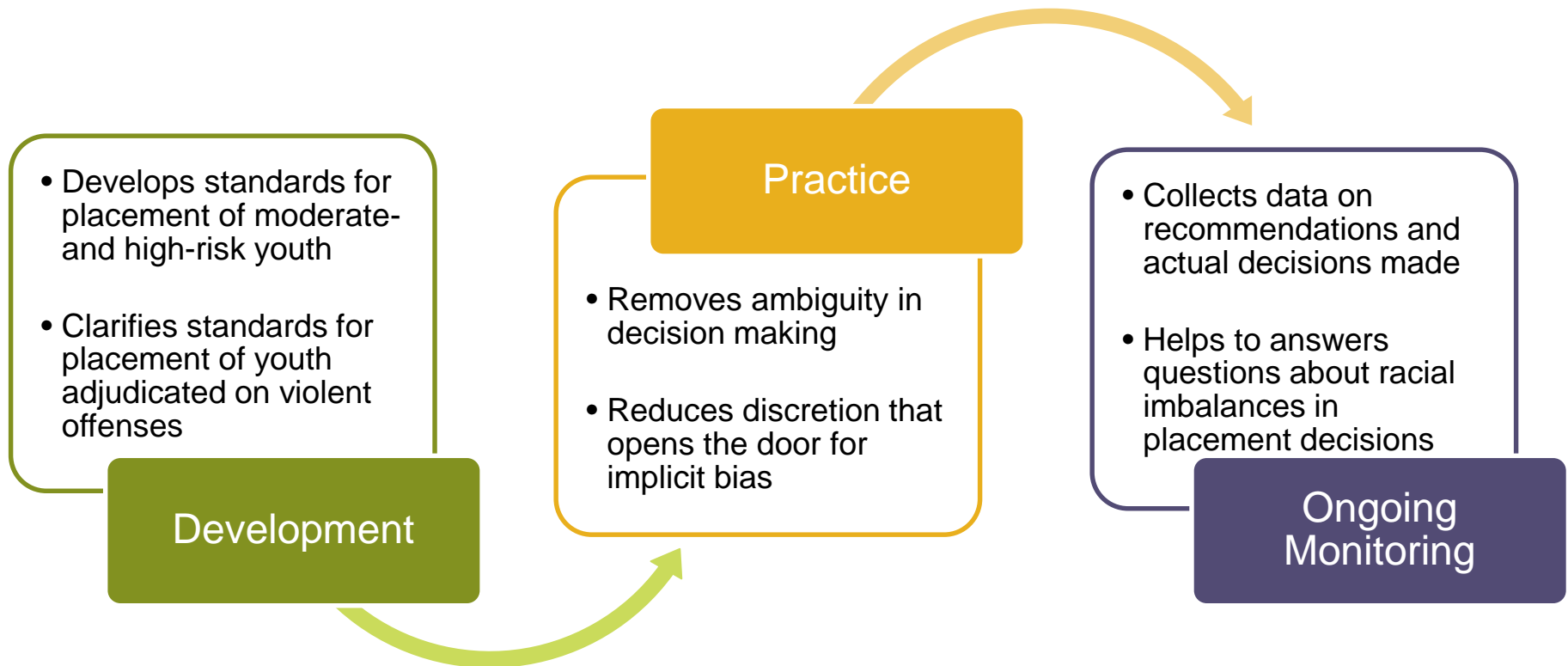
- For white youth, the placement rate is fairly low, regardless of whether the offense is categorized as “violent” or “non-violent”.
- For white youth, the “violent” label increases the odds of placement very slightly, from 12% to 18%.
- For African American youth, however, the “violent” label has a dramatic impact – nearly tripling the odds of placement, from 14% to 43%.

A dispositional matrix would allow stakeholders to develop a collaborative, data-driven, and transparent vision to help target limited resources and illuminate disparities.

	<b>Very High</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>Violent Felony</b>				
<b>Non-Violent Felony</b>				
<b>Gross Misd</b>				
<b>Misd</b>				

A dispositional matrix could help even out the likelihood of placement for moderate and high risk youth across racial groups. It can also help make the penalty for a “violent” offense more consistent across groups.

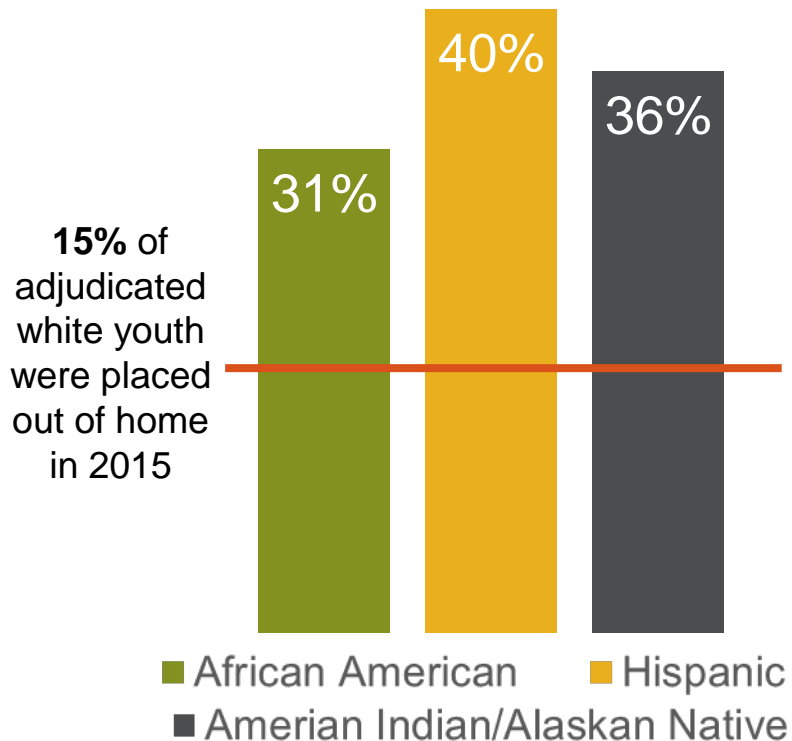
Matrices are powerful through the development process, in practice, and at the system level.



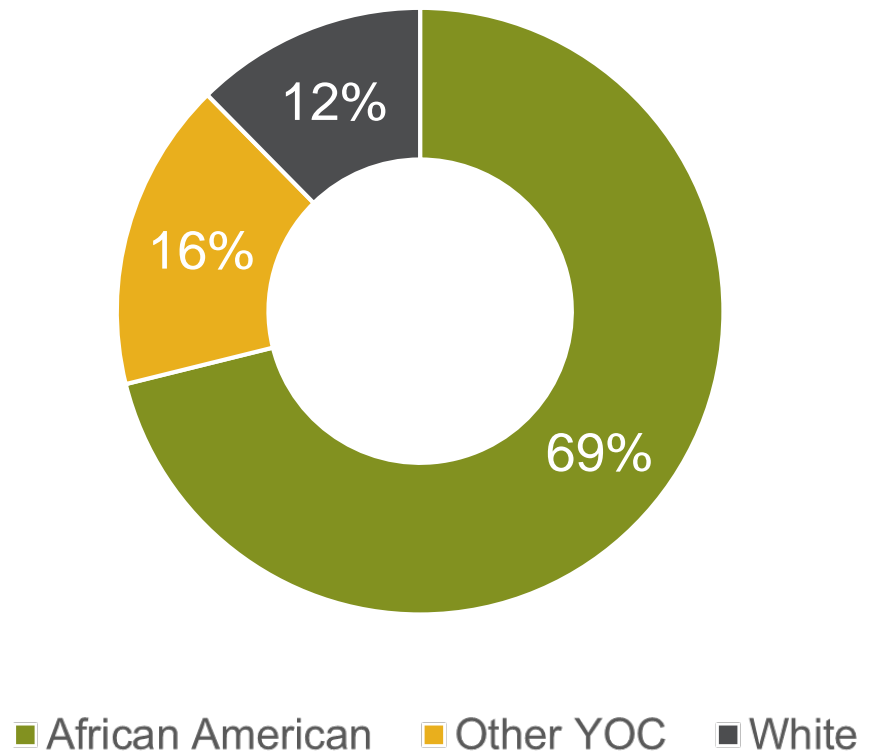


Youth of color are placed out of home at over double the rates of their white counterparts. African American youth account for 69% of placements, but are only 20% of Ramsey County's population under 18.

**PERCENT OF YOUTH PLACED OUT-OF-HOME BY RACE/ETHNICITY (2015)**

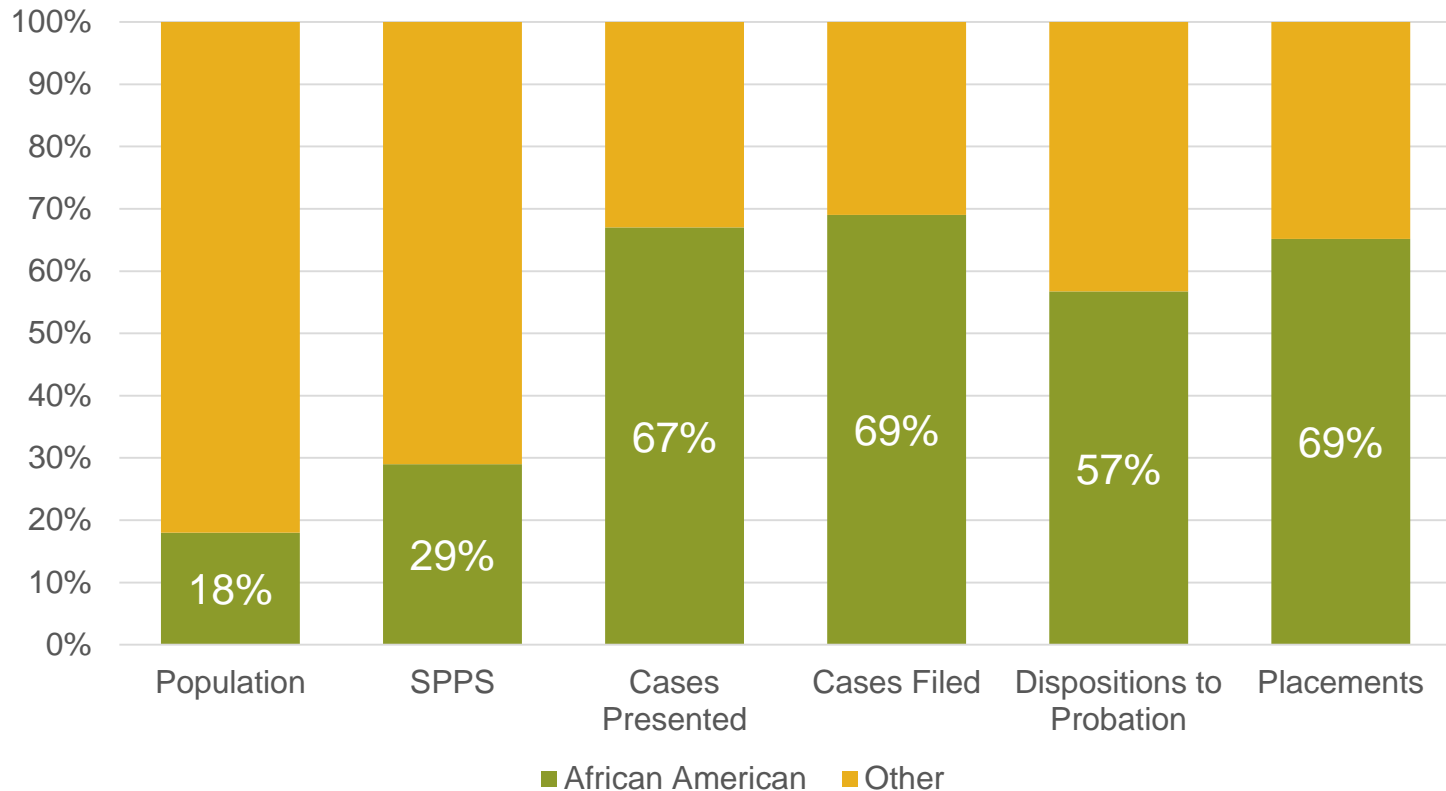


**DISTRIBUTION OF YOUTH IN PLACEMENT BY RACE/ETHNICITY (2015)**



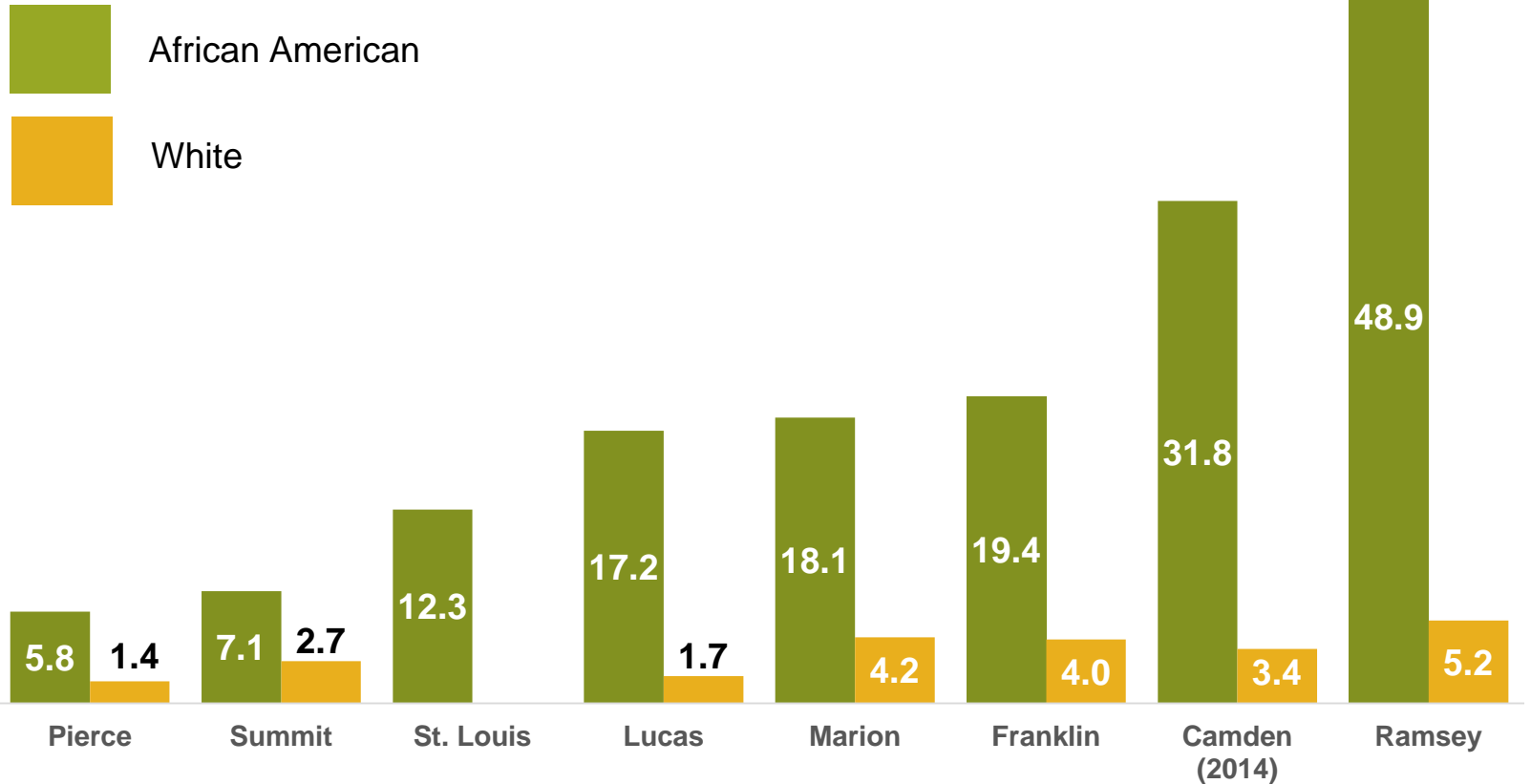
# Disproportionality by Decision Point

## % AFRICAN AMERICAN, BY DECISION POINT (2015)



# Population-based placement rates: African American v. White.

## PLACEMENTS PER 10,000 JUVENILE POPULATION (2016) – AFRICAN AMERICAN V. WHITE YOUTH



# Summary of Recommendations

Related Exits	High-Level Recommendations
Exits 2-8	<b>Diversion:</b> Explore opportunities to counter disparities, expand access to all diversion exits, clarify eligibility for each, increase transparency
Exit 9	<b>Staffing:</b> Establish that the purpose of a staffing committee meeting is to avoid placement and develop individualized, home-based dispositions, clarify eligibility for/timing of staffing, meaningfully engage young people and families
Exits 10-13	<b>Leadership:</b> Set tone for strong collaborative leadership between probation and the judiciary by jointly hosting an inclusive conversation about the purpose of probation
Exits 10-12	<b>Low-Risk Youth on Probation:</b> Revisit, revise, and adhere to Administrative Probation policies establishing default assumption that all low risk youth disposed to probation will be assigned to the administrative caseload
Exits 11-13	<b>Case-Planning:</b> Implement family-engaged case-planning, beginning with training for supervisors and officers
Exits 10-13	<b>Technical Violations:</b> Narrow the on-ramps from probation back to the highway by streamlining the standard probation order and establishing probation policies to restrict placements due to technical violations
Exits 7-13	<b>Dispositional Matrix:</b> Develop a collaborative, data-driven, Ramsey-specific dispositional matrix

# Questions?

## Contact Information

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# APPENDIX

# System Assessment Methodology – Parts I & II

## I. WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE DATA?

- Analysis of dispositions for all youth who were under Corrections supervision at some point in 2015, with information on:
  - Demographics
  - Offense severity
  - Dispositional risk levels
  - Risk domains
  - OOHP y/n
- Multiple years of aggregate data on diversion decisions, adjudications, probation, and placements
- Deep End Performance Measure data for 2014-2016

## II. WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM YOUTH AND FAMILIES?

- Contracted with Culture Brokers LLC to conduct focus groups with young people and families

# System Assessment Methodology – Part III

## III. WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM SYSTEM STAKEHOLDERS?

- Interviewed 27 juvenile justice stakeholders including:
  - Probation Administration
  - Probation Supervisors
  - Law Enforcement
  - Prosecution
  - Juvenile Defense
  - Judiciary
  - Court Administration
  - Child welfare/social services
  - State Juvenile Corrections
  - Residential Providers
  - Community Providers
  - Schools
  - County Officials
- Interviews supplemented by:
  - Focus group with probation officers
  - Observation of court
  - Observation of staffing
  - Walk-Through of Boys Totem Town