

# AVENUES FOR JUSTICE

Andrew Glover Youth Program

Annual Report  
**2021**

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**Philliber**

RESEARCH & EVALUATION

16 Main Street  
Accord, NY 12404

(phone) 845-626-2126 | (fax) 845-626-3206 | [philliberresearch.com](http://philliberresearch.com)

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## Executive Summary

Avenues for Justice (AFJ) is a non-profit community-based program which diverts young people across New York City, ages 13-24, from the criminal justice system to supportive services to help them avoid future crime and build successful lives. AFJ operates programs for two main groups of participants: 1) "Court-Involved" participants who are in the criminal justice system; and 2) "At-Risk" participants who are at-risk of entering the system. Court-Involved includes three sub-groups of participants: a) AFJ's signature long-term Court Advocacy program ("Court Advocacy"), b) a new short-term diversion program for younger participants whose cases are in the NYC Family Court ("Family Court Diversion") and c) a new re-entry program for participants who are incarcerated ("Re-entry").

Services for the Court-Involved and At-Risk programs are provided online and in person through two community centers in the Lower East Side and Harlem and at AFJ's headquarters inside the Manhattan Criminal Courthouse. All participants receive HIRE UP services for job training, communications/civics, life skills, mental health, case management, and educational support. In addition, Court-Involved participants receive court advocacy services with intensive mentoring. AFJ also provides referrals to third party specialists for all participants when needed.

During 2021, AFJ served 257 participants in the Court-Involved program: 191 were in the long-term Court Advocacy program, 51 were in the Family Court Diversion program, and 15 were Re-Entry. One hundred forty-four were served through the Lower East Side site and 113 were served through the Harlem site. This report focuses on the 257 Court-Involved participants.

During 2021, AFJ also served 58 At-Risk participants online and at its Lower East Side (48) and Harlem (10) locations. Additionally, AFJ provided 73 participants with referrals and other short-term assistance.

### Characteristics of the Participants

- 86% of the participants were African American or Hispanic.
- 77% were male, and the majority (71%) were between the ages of 16 and 21 at intake.
- The program enrolled 76 new Court-Involved participants in 2021.

### Participation

- In 2021, AFJ offered over 200 workshops, classes, and training sessions focused on digital literacy, construction safety, videography, mental health, entrepreneurship, job readiness, interpersonal relationships, educational tutoring, communication skills/civics, and legal rights and responsibilities.
- There were 17,066 encounters between AFJ staff and Court-Involved participants in 2021. On average, each participant received 8.3 encounters per month. The monthly median number of encounters was 3.2. On average, each participant who entered the Court-Involved program in 2021 (a "new participant") received 13.5 encounters per month. The monthly median number of encounters for new participants was 9.6.
- 203 referrals were provided to Court-Involved participants.

### Program Outcomes/Recidivism

- Of the cases that had court outcomes during 2021, 71% were adjourned and 13% were dismissed.

- In 2021, 95 Court-Involved participants exited the program; 91 completed the program, with 82 achieving all goals.
- 5% (n=12) of AFJ participants in the recidivism study (n=212) were reconvicted in New York State within three years after enrolling in the program, compared to 59% of New York City parolees from a 2010 study. The three-year reconviction rate among successful graduates of AFJ was 6% (n=8).
- Within six years of enrollment, 18% (n=18) of participants who were enrolled in 2013 or 2014 (n=99) were reconvicted. Among successful program completers, 16% (n=8) were reconvicted within six years of enrollment; 12% (n=5) were reconvicted of a misdemeanor crime and 4% (n=3) were reconvicted of a felony crime.

### **Long-term Follow-up & Participant Satisfaction**

- In 2021, AFJ initiated pilot "long-term follow-up" and "participant satisfaction" surveys to assess the impact of the Court-Involved program beyond recidivism and to obtain participant feedback on the program. While the sample sizes were limited, the responses were instructive and consistent. Nearly all respondents in the long-term follow-up survey stated that AFJ addressed some or all of the causes of their criminal activity. A majority of respondents in the long-term follow-up survey still required one or more types of assistance including economic support. Respondents in the participant satisfaction survey reported that AFJ had given them hope, increased their self-esteem, improved their decision-making and exposed them to new experiences and opportunities. Respondents in both surveys rated the program highly; all respondents said they would recommend the program to peers in the criminal justice system.

## Introduction

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During 2021, AFJ served 257 participants in the Court-Involved program: 191 were in the long-term Court Advocacy program, 51 were in the Family Court Diversion program, and 15 were Re-Entry. One hundred forty-four were served through the Lower East Side site and 113 were served through the Harlem site. This report focuses on the 257 Court-Involved participants.

During 2021, AFJ also served 58 At-Risk participants online and at its Lower East Side (48) and Harlem (10) locations. Additionally, AFJ provided 73 participants with referrals and other short-term assistance.

The first section of this report, **Characteristics of the Participants**, presents a demographic profile of the 257 participants served in the Court-Involved program in 2021. It also provides information about new enrollments.

The second section, **Participation**, presents attendance data and shows length of participation at AFJ, overall program retention, and encounter information. A summary of referrals made by AFJ is also presented.

The **Program Outcomes** section presents court outcome data, the number of participants successfully engaged in work and/or school, and graduation outcomes. A summary of the annual recidivism study is included, as well as data from two new surveys conducted in 2021 involving the collection of long-term follow-up information and participant satisfaction data from small groups of AFJ graduates.

It should be noted the pandemic continued to affect AFJ in 2021. AFJ's two community centers remained closed or had reduced hours throughout the year. This reduced census in the At-Risk program and in-person encounters between AFJ and Court-Involved and At-Risk participants. New York City's courts were operating at reduced capacity in 2021 which likely lowered intake in the Court-Involved program. AFJ's access to jails was impeded by operational problems at the jails (especially Rikers Island) which limited intake for the Re-Entry program.

Even with these constraints, AFJ served a high number of Court-Involved participants. AFJ took in 76 new Court-Involved participants equaling 2019 for the largest number of new intakes in a

year. Program retention, completion and recidivism metrics remained solid and consistent with past years. Several strategies made this possible during the past two years: a) AFJ moved to an online intake system and notified criminal justice agencies they were accepting referrals; b) AFJ moved all program services online, providing laptops to participants to access services; and c) AFJ expanded the HIRE UP programs launched in 2020 so that the full offerings in 2021 included: digital literacy, OSHA 40-hour construction safety, videography including SYEP subsidized training, an eight-week entrepreneurship series led by Slickdeals, job readiness and additional career workshops, mental health group and individual sessions, tutoring and other supports for education including a one-week STEM bootcamp led by Goldman Sachs, civics, and legal rights and responsibilities workshops.

## Characteristics of the Participants

As seen in Table 1, most of the 257 Court-Involved participants served during 2021 were male (77%), identified as African American (44%) or Hispanic (42%), and were 16 to 21 years of age at intake (71%). Seventy-six of these participants were newly enrolled during 2021.

Table 1: Demographics at intake	All youth (n=257)	Newly enrolled participants (n=76)
<b>Gender:</b>		
Male	77%	80%
Female	23%	20%
<b>Race/ethnicity:</b>		
Hispanic	42%	28%
African American	44%	58%
Other/Multiethnic <sup>1</sup>	13%	13%
Not reported	1%	1%
<b>Age:</b>		
15 years and younger	15%	11%
16-18 years	46%	50%
19-21 years	25%	22%
22-24 years	14%	17%
25 years and older	<1%	0%
<b>Living situation:</b>		
Two parents	18%	16%
One parent	55%	63%
Guardian(s), relative(s), foster care	12%	11%
Intimate partner or sibling (no parent)	8%	5%
Self and their child(ren)	<1%	0%
Alone	3%	4%
Other, unspecified (not reported)	4%	1%
<b>Participant or family receives:<sup>2</sup></b>		
Food stamps	39%	45%
Public assistance/welfare	26%	30%
Medicaid	48%	62%
Private health insurance	10%	12%

<sup>1</sup> The other/multiethnic category is comprised of 15 participants who are Hispanic and African American, two Native American, one white, one Asian, one Garifuna, one Arab, one other but not specified, and 11 others who indicated they had multiple ethnicities.

<sup>2</sup> Percentages add to more than 100% because respondents could check more than one response.

A substantial majority of all Court-Involved participants enter the program in the Intensive Phase. Intensive Phase services include court appearances, school visits, regular counseling, curfews, mandatory check-in at centers, and monitoring of individualized services (e.g., substance abuse programming, support services at community sites, and other mandated activities). Supportive Phase services are a step down in the level of intervention from the Intensive Phase and, as such, require less court reporting and reduced frequency of in-person contacts while continuing to provide tutoring and support counseling according to individual need. Participants in both phases receive educational support and HIRE UP services.

In 2021, AFJ entered into a partnership with the NYC Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice and Center for Community Alternatives to serve youth who are incarcerated and/or nearing re-entry from incarceration, serving 15 youth over nine months. These participants are included in the Court-Involved count and information.

Toward the end of 2020, AFJ began working with young people in the New York City Law Department’s Family Court Division’s “Diversion” program. Young people assigned to the Family Court Diversion program are mandated to community-based Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) organizations, such as AFJ, for a specific number of sessions or workshops---typically 4 to 16. Diversion youth must also complete their mandate within a 60-day period. The program targets youth up to the age of 18. Determining whether a youth is eligible for Diversion is at the judge’s discretion, with consideration of several factors such as age, criminal offense, criminal history, and personal situation. Diversion participants receive the same services as other AFJ participants but generally have a much shorter stay. Twenty percent of the 2021 Court-Involved participants were Diversion participants; 42% of the new Court-Involved enrollees in 2021 were Diversion participants. After the 60-day mandate, AFJ offers Diversion participants the option of continuing to receive supportive services in the same manner as other Court-Involved participants.

<b>Table 1 (continued): Demographics at intake</b>	<b>All youth (n=257)</b>	<b>Newly enrolled participants (n=76)</b>
<b>Intake source:</b>		
Self-referred	8%	5%
Family	18%	9%
Court	39%	45%
School	2%	0%
Other	31%	40%
Not reported	2%	1%
<b>Program phase:</b>		
Intensive Phase	78%	88%
Supportive Phase	20%	12%
Not reported	2%	0%
<b>% who were Family Court Diversion participants:</b>	20%	42%

Over the last several years, AFJ's participant population has become much more geographically dispersed. Sixty percent of all 2021 Court-Involved participants lived in Manhattan and 40% lived in the outer boroughs. This trend accelerated in 2021 as only 26% of all new participants lived in Manhattan and 74% lived in the outer boroughs. AFJ's development of digital programs in response to COVID-19 was a major factor for AFJ's expansion into the outer boroughs.

<b>Table 1 (continued): Demographics at intake</b>	<b>All youth (n=257)</b>	<b>Newly enrolled participants (n=76)</b>
<b>Neighborhood:</b>		
Lower East Side	24%	5%
Harlem/Upper Manhattan (Harlem, E. Harlem, Central Harlem, Wash. Heights, Inwood)	27%	18%
Other parts of Manhattan	9%	3%
Outside of Manhattan		
Bronx	16%	23%
Brooklyn	10%	17%
Queens	8%	18%
Staten Island	3%	8%
Other	3%	8%

Most participants come to the program involved in criminal proceedings (78% of all participants and 89% of newly enrolled participants). Sixty-two percent of the participants were enrolled in school or some other educational program at intake and about one quarter had a high school diploma or GED. Five percent of all participants started the program with a need to re-enter school or a GED program and 1% needed help with a college search. Among newly enrolled participants, 20% needed educational assistance. Twelve percent of all participants were employed at intake.

<b>Table 2: Participant criminal history, education, and employment status at intake</b>	<b>All youth (n=257)</b>	<b>Newly enrolled participants (n=76)</b>
<b>Prior criminal history (average numbers):</b>		
Arrests	2.0 (n=212)	2.4 (n=75)
Convictions	0.4 (n=129)	0.6 (n=34)
Misdemeanors	0.8 (n=122)	0.8 (n=28)
Felonies	0.6 (n=118)	0.5 (n=26)
<b>Education and employment status:</b>		
In school/educational program	62%	53%
Have high school diploma	19%	24%
Have GED	4%	4%
Need to re-enter high school or start GED	5%	16%
Need help with college or trade school search	1%	4%
Currently employed	12%	13%



## Participation

### Workshop Attendance

Table 3 shows aggregate AFJ 2021 workshop attendance data. Most of these workshops were developed since the pandemic. In 2021, they focused on mental health, job readiness, interpersonal relationships, and communication skills/civics. All workshops were exclusively virtual in 2021.

Table 3: Topical workshops offered	Total attendance	# of ATI attendees	# of At-risk attendees
Careers – guest speakers	120	15	3
Careers – job readiness	142	42	5
Careers – Slickdeals (entrepreneurship)	31	11	2
Careers – videography	42	13	4
Communications / civics – leadership	12	5	1
Communications / civics – legal responsibilities	146	47	5
Communications / civics – teen empowerment	83	21	3
Communications / civics – writing	100	20	4
Mental health	167	49	5
Mental health – sex ed & relationships	37	14	1
Total <sup>a</sup>	<b>870</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>33</b>

<sup>a</sup>Note: These are duplicated counts – participants may have attended more than one workshop.

On-going online/onsite mental health workshops were led by an MSW AFJ staff member and a consultant psychotherapist to teach coping and anger management skills. Workshops also included sex education and tools to build healthy relationships. Court advocates determined the number of sessions needed for each participant. Also new in 2021, AFJ partnered with a psychotherapist to provide rapid access to individual sessions; 11 participants had over 40 individual sessions.

AFJ expanded the HIRE UP programs launched in 2020 so that the full offerings in 2021 included: digital literacy, OSHA 40-hour construction safety, videography including SYEP subsidized training, an eight-week entrepreneurship series led by Slickdeals, job readiness and additional career workshops, mental health group and individual sessions, tutoring and other supports for education including a one-week STEM bootcamp led by Goldman Sachs, civics, and legal rights and responsibilities workshops. In 2021, 109 Court-Involved and At-risk participants engaged in at least one HIRE UP workshop. These 109 participants had a total of 1,009 encounters, with an average of 10 classes/encounters per participant.

In 2021, through the support of New York Community Trust, AFJ began organizing HIRE UP workshops into a communications series to give participants viable skills in communications, leadership, and personal stability with platforms to publicly express their views and experiences. This series included:

- **Digital literacy:** 26 participants enrolled in digital literacy classes in 2021, with 11 engaging in at least one of 21 testing sessions. These 11 participants took a total of 91 tests, with eight of those 11 passing and earning 34 certifications.
- **Writing skills:** 25 Participants attended one or more of 16 classes held for a total attendance of 100. Writing classes were held January through May 2021. After May 2021, writing skills were incorporated into civics and videography classes.

- **Job readiness:** 65 participants attended one or more of our 38 workshops for a total attendance of 262 including an attendance of 142 for job readiness classes led by First Republic Bank and other corporate partners and an attendance of 120 for career panels with professionals describing their careers and topics on financial stability.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Led by Slickdeals, 13 participants learned to create products and an online web business in May and June 2021.
- **Videography:** When the City selected AFJ to serve as a host site for its Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), AFJ launched a six-week videography class, with subsidized salaries for nine participants, led by advertising and film professional, Gary Wachner. In fall 2021, Mr. Wachner led nine additional afterschool trainings for 17 Participants with a total attendance of 42.
- **Legal Rights & Responsibilities:** To help participants better understand their own court cases and to understand their rights in potential warrantless searches in their communities, AFJ held 17 workshops for 52 Participants with a total attendance of 146.
- **Civic & Leadership Development:** Two partner organizations, the Kalief Browder Foundation and Teen Empowerment, lead workshops on community issues, voting rights, public speaking, podcasts, and other topics to develop leadership skills; Our 16 classes in 2021 reached 30 Participants with a total attendance of 95.

Additional trainings offered in 2021 included:

- **OSHA 40-hour construction safety training:** In 2021 AFJ had eight new enrollees with one earning certification and four obtaining jobs through corporate partners.
- **STEM with Goldman Sachs:** Goldman Sachs led a one-week summer STEM workshop teaching science, technology, engineering, and math. Nine participants completed the series and earned a certification from Goldman Sachs.

### Length of Participation and Retention

Table 4 illustrates the length of participation of AFJ Court-Involved participants seen in 2021. Thirty-four percent of all participants had been in the program for less than one year and 38% had been in the program for one or two years. Twenty-eight percent had been attending for three or more years. On average, participants had been with the program for 2.5 years.

<b>Table 4: Length of participation</b>	<b>Diversion youth (n=51)</b>	<b>Non-Diversion youth (n=206)</b>	<b>All youth (n=257)</b>
Less than 1 year	78%	23%	34%
1 or 2 years	22%	42%	38%
3 or 4 years	0%	14%	11%
5 or more years	0%	21%	17%
Mean # of years	0.7	2.9	2.5

AFJ began serving Family Court Diversion participants in 2020. Of the 51 Diversion participants served in 2021, 37% enrolled in 2020 and 63% enrolled in 2021. Of the 18 Diversion participants who left the program in 2021, the average length of stay was one year. Thus, the inclusion of Family Court Diversion participants has reduced the average length of program stay.

Of the 50 members who enrolled during 2020 and were eligible to be active (did not graduate the program) one year later, the program retained 96%. Of the 20 members who enrolled during 2018 and were eligible to be active three years later, the program retained 75%.

### Participant Encounters

As seen in Table 5, the 257 Court-Involved participants had an average of 66.4 encounters with staff; the median<sup>3</sup> number of encounters was 19. Participant encounters include telephone, electronic, letter, and face-to-face contacts which may involve counseling, tutoring, or workshop attendance. The 76 new participants had an average of 69.8 encounters with staff; the median number of encounters was 42. Monthly median encounters for all Court-Involved participants and for new Court-Involved participants were 3.2 and 9.5 respectively. Monthly median calculations only account for the period in which a participant is active in the program so it is the most accurate measure of the frequency of encounters. By design, AFJ staff intervene with new participants more often than with other participants because that is when most participants are at greatest risk.

AFJ began tracking Diversion participants in 2020. Diversion participants are mandated to AFJ for 4 to 16 sessions (encounters) for a 60-day period. In 2021, 51 Diversion participants were seen an average of 28.4 times; the median number of encounters was 17.

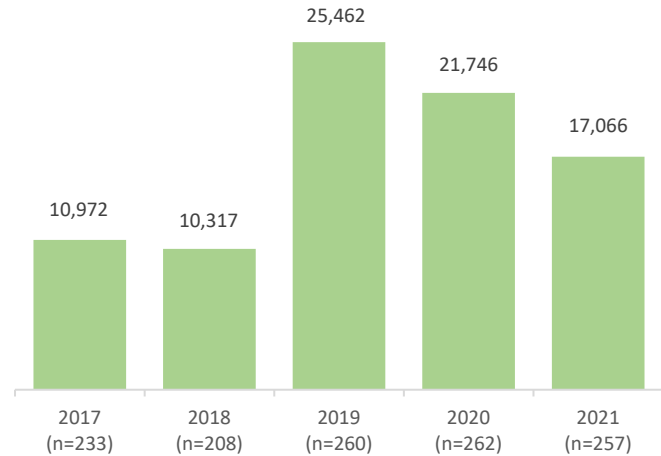
<b>Table 5: Encounters (2021)</b>	<b>Diversion youth (n=51)</b>	<b>Non-Diversion youth (n=206)</b>	<b>New participants (n=76)</b>	<b>All youth (n=257)</b>
<b>Total</b>	1,450	15,616	5,307	17,066
Mean	28.4	75.8	69.8	66.4
Median	17.0	19.5	42.0	19.0
Range	1 to 140	1 to 543	2 to 474	1 to 543
Monthly mean	5.7	8.7	13.3	8.1
Monthly median	3.6	3.1	9.5	3.2

Note: The monthly mean and monthly median are calculated by dividing the number of encounters during the reporting period by the number of months a participant was active during that reporting period.

<sup>3</sup> The mean number of encounters is much higher than the median number of encounters because total encounters for individual participants ranged from one to as many as 543 during 2021. The median is the more accurate way to consider a typical case.

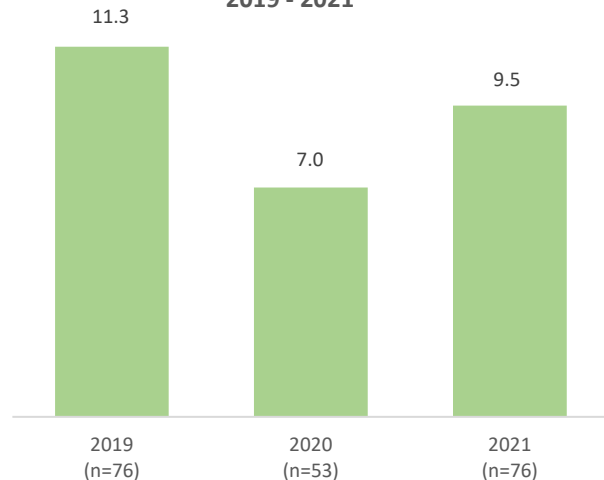
Figure 1 shows the total number of encounters over the past five years. The number of participants is included below each year in parenthesis. The number of encounters increased substantially in 2019 due to improvements in data collection. Starting in 2019, AFJ court advocates recorded all participant contacts separately (in previous years, multiple contacts on a given day were recorded as one encounter). It should be noted that over the past two years the number of encounters decreased somewhat mainly due to two factors. Firstly, the community center closures required by COVID-19 reduced staff/participant interpersonal interactions. Secondly, 42% of AFJ's new participants in the program in 2021 came from a Diversion program run by the Family Court which, by design, is more short-term in nature and calls for fewer encounters. Additionally, 15 participants in 2021 were shorter-term Re-entry participants. It is also possible that encounter data collection was challenged in 2021 by the full year of remote working.

**Figure 1**  
**Number of Participant Encounters**  
**2017 - 2021**



Notably, however, Figure 2 shows monthly median encounters for new participants have been fairly consistent over the past three years (the years in which it was measured). In 2022, AFJ will explore using enhanced technology to facilitate data collection, including the recording of encounters, in all work environments.

**Figure 2**  
**Median Monthly Encounters for New Participants**  
**2019 - 2021**



## Referrals Made by AFJ

Table 6 shows the number of employment, education, substance abuse, mental health, housing, and medical referrals during 2021. During the year, there were 203 total referrals for 73 participants. Employment and education referrals occurred most often. Referrals are used to help prevent further involvement in the juvenile justice system and have become a substantial part of AFJ's work. The number of referrals in 2021 was lower than the number of referrals in pre-pandemic years because COVID-19 disrupted the delivery of health and social services by third party providers during much of the year.

<b>Table 6: Referral type</b>	<b># of participants</b>	<b># of referrals</b>	<b>Avg. # of referrals per participant</b>
Employment	55	117	2.1
Education	23	32	1.4
Substance abuse – inpatient	4	6	1.5
Substance abuse – outpatient	3	3	1.0
Mental health – inpatient	4	9	2.3
Mental health – outpatient	16	29	1.8
Housing	3	6	2.0
Medical	1	1	1.0
<i>Total referrals</i>	73	203	2.8

## Program Outcomes

### Graduation Outcomes

Graduation outcomes for participants who exited the program over the last six years are shown in Table 7. As seen here, successful completions comprise the bulk of participant exits and are occurring at an increasing rate. In 2021, just 4% of Court-Involved participants who exited the program failed to complete the program.

<b>Table 7: Graduation outcomes for participants who exited the program</b>	<b>Successful completion</b>	<b>Completed, not all goals met</b>	<b>Terminated/ incarcerated</b>	<b>Total # of participants who exited the program</b>
2016	27 (71%)	8 (21%)	3 (8%)	38
2017	37 (67%)	17 (31%)	1 (2%)	55
2018	16 (67%)	6 (25%)	2 (8%)	24
2019	32 (63%)	16 (31%)	3 (6%)	51
2020	66 (81%)	12 (15%)	3 (4%)	81
2021	82 (86%)	9 (10%)	4 (4%)	95

Table 8 shows the completion status of the new participants served over the past nine years as of December 2021. Of the 449 new enrollees over this nine-year period, 34% were still active in the AFJ program and 51% successfully completed the program. Far fewer completed the program without meeting their goals or were terminated.

Additionally, of the 53 Court-Involved participants who enrolled in 2020, nearly half (26) successfully completed the program by 2021. Eight of these 26 were Family Court Diversion participants. This demonstrates the shorter duration of the Diversion program.

<b>Table 8: Exit data per newly enrolled cohort over the past nine years</b>	<b>Newly enrolled</b>	<b>Still active</b>	<b>Successful completion</b>	<b>Completed, not all goals met</b>	<b>Terminated/ incarcerated</b>
2013	46	1	38	6	1
2014	53	3	36	10	4
2015	42	6	24	8	4
2016	39	6	23	8	2
2017	32	7	21	4	0
2018	32	10	17	5	0
2019	76	22	45	7	2
2020	53	22	26	3	2
2021	76	76	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>153 (34%)</b>	<b>230 (51%)</b>	<b>51 (12%)</b>	<b>15 (3%)</b>

### Court Outcomes

In 2021, there were 224 court outcomes reported for 77 participants. Some cases may have more than one outcome (for example, a case might have been adjourned and later dismissed; or a conditional discharge might have resulted in a prison sentence later in the year). Most of the court outcomes were adjournments or dismissed cases. An AFJ participant's court case can have multiple adjournments as the court and judge evaluate a participant's progress with the program.

<b>Table 9: Court outcomes (n=224)</b>	<b># (%)</b>
Case adjourned	158 (71%)
Case dismissed	29 (13%)
Adjudicated youth offender	8 (4%)
Sent to probation	6 (3%)
Deferred sentence	5 (2%)
Assigned to AFJ	5 (2%)
Conditional discharge/ACD	4 (2%)
Bail set	3 (1%)
Sent to prison	1 (<1%)
Plead	1 (<1%)
Reduced Sentence	1 (<1%)
Paroled	0 (0%)
Split sentence	0 (0%)
Community service	0 (0%)
Acquitted	0 (0%)
Other	3 (1%)

## Certifications

There were 34 digital literacy certifications earned in 2021 (Table 10). The most commonly earned certifications pertained to email, basic computer skills, Apple and Google applications, and social media.

<b>Table 10: Digital literacy certifications</b>	<b># earned in 2021</b>
Email	4
Basic computer skills	4
Mac OS	4
Social media	4
Google docs	4
Windows 10	3
Internet	3
K-12 distance learning	3
Your digital footprint	2
Career search skills	1
MS Excel Office 2016	1
MS PowerPoint Office 2016	1

## Employment and Education

Employment and education data are collected from participants at intake, on an annual basis while a participant is active (annual follow-up), and at program completion/exit. This provides information about these indicators during program involvement. In 2021, AFJ submitted follow-up data on 152 active participants<sup>4</sup> and exit data on 95 participants.

As seen here, 68 participants were currently in school at last follow-up/exit and 26 identified a need for education and re-entered school at some point during participation in the AFJ program. In total, 64 participants improved their educational situation from intake to last follow-up/exit.

<b>Table 11a: Education</b>	<b>(n)</b>	<b># (%)</b>
Number in school/educational program at intake	257	160 (62%)
Number in school/educational program at last follow-up/exit	181	68 (38%)
Number that had re-entered school/educational program at some point during participation at AFJ (of those with an identified need to re-enter)	87	26 (30%)
Number who had HS diploma or GED at intake	257	59 (23%)
Number who attained a HS diploma/GED from intake to last follow-up/exit (of those without a HS diploma/GED at intake)	143	51 (36%)
Number who had college/trade school diploma at intake	257	0 (0%)
Number who attained a college/trade school diploma from intake to last follow-up/exit	181	2 (1%)
Number who had <u>any</u> improved educational situation from intake to last follow-up/exit	181	64 (35%)

Note: 181 of the 257 active participants had a follow-up and/or exit in 2021.

Note: The sample size for those that re-entered school since intake is far lower since it only applies to those with a 'need' to re-enter school.

As seen below, 68 participants attained employment at some point during participation at AFJ. Twenty-eight participants obtained employment in 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Newly enrolled participants are not yet eligible for follow-up data collection.

<b>Table 11b: Employment</b>	<b>(n)</b>	<b># (%)</b>
Number employed at intake	257	32 (12%)
Number who attained employment at some point during participation at AFJ (among those who were unemployed at intake)	159	50 (31%)
Number who attained employment at some point during participation at AFJ (regardless of employment situation at intake)	181	68 (38%)
Number who obtained jobs in 2021	181	28 (15.5%)

Note: 181 of the 257 active participants had a follow-up and/or exit in 2021.

## Recidivism

A primary focus of ATI programs, such as AFJ, is to keep Court-Involved participants out of prison. AFJ's Court-Involved programs seek to aid participants in desisting from further involvement in crime. AFJ has continuously tracked recidivism over the past decades as an indicia of desistance.<sup>5</sup> In 2017, AFJ launched a new recidivism study. As seen to the right, 212 participants across five cohorts have been included in this new study to date.

Follow-up recidivism data were collected each year (2017 through 2021), and three-year recidivism rates were calculated using the date of enrollment in AFJ as the starting point to three different end points including: 1) rearrest, 2) reconviction, and 3) incarceration.<sup>6</sup> Six-year recidivism rates are also provided for the 2013 and 2014 cohorts. To put the AFJ recidivism rates into some context, comparison data are presented as well.

<b>Year enrolled (cohort)</b>	<b>(n)</b>
2013	46
2014	53
2015	42
2016	39
2017	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>212</b>

<sup>5</sup> A prior recidivism study which ran from 1994-2015 was discontinued in anticipation of this study, which includes more detailed data collection.

<sup>6</sup> To obtain follow up data, AFJ staff searched the NYS Unified Court System's eCourts case tracking service and provided arrest, conviction, and incarceration data to Philliber Research & Evaluation. Documentation of the data presented in this report is stored at AFJ.



### Study Sample

Demographic characteristics were gathered at intake by AFJ staff. As seen in Table 12, the majority of offenders identified as male. The largest percentage were 16-18 years old and the majority were African American or Hispanic.

<b>Table 12: Demographics at intake</b>	<b>2013 cohort (n=46)</b>	<b>2014 cohort (n=53)</b>	<b>2015 cohort (n=42)</b>	<b>2016 cohort (n=39)</b>	<b>2017 cohort (n=32)</b>	<b>Total (n=212)</b>
<b>Gender:</b>						
Male	70%	81%	88%	67%	78%	77%
Female	30%	19%	12%	33%	22%	23%
<b>Race/ethnicity:</b>						
Hispanic	33%	47%	52%	41%	41%	43%
African American	48%	39%	45%	41%	41%	43%
White/Caucasian	2%	0%	0%	3%	0%	1%
Other/Multiethnic	17%	14%	3%	15%	18%	13%
<b>Age:</b>						
15 years and younger	13%	21%	12%	13%	9%	14%
16-18 years	48%	66%	55%	67%	57%	59%
19-21 years	35%	11%	29%	15%	28%	23%
22-24 years	4%	2%	2%	5%	3%	3%
25 years and older	0%	0%	2%	0%	3%	1%

### Recidivism Outcomes

The definition of recidivism varies across studies and across locations. In this study, we calculated three different recidivism rates starting from enrollment in AFJ to 1) first arrest after program enrollment, 2) first conviction after program enrollment, and 3) first incarceration after program enrollment. In general, recidivism declines as the measures progress from arrest, to conviction, to incarceration as each measure relies on the less serious measure. For example, those who were arrested may not have been convicted, and those convicted may not have been sentenced to incarceration.

Within three years of enrollment, 12% (n=24) of AFJ participants were rearrested within New York State, a greater percentage were charged with misdemeanors than were charged with felonies (Table 13). Among successful program completers, 10% (n=13) were arrested within three years of program entry; 7% (n=9) were arrested and charged with a misdemeanor crime and 3% (n=4) with a felony crime.

<b>Table 13: Rearrested within three years of intake</b>	<b>2013 cohort</b>	<b>2014 cohort</b>	<b>2015 cohort</b>	<b>2016 cohort</b>	<b>2017 cohort</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Among entire sample</b>	<b>(n=46)</b>	<b>(n=53)</b>	<b>(n=42)</b>	<b>(n=39)</b>	<b>(n=32)</b>	<b>(n=212)</b>
No new arrest	78%	90%	100%	89%	84%	88%
New misdemeanor arrest	18%	4%	0%	8%	3%	7%
New felony arrest	4%	6%	0%	3%	13%	5%
<b>Among participants who successfully completed program</b>	<b>(n=37)</b>	<b>(n=33)</b>	<b>(n=22)</b>	<b>(n=22)</b>	<b>(n=18)</b>	<b>(n=132)</b>
No new arrest	86%	91%	100%	91%	83%	90%
New misdemeanor arrest	11%	6%	0%	9%	6%	7%
New felony arrest	3%	3%	0%	0%	11%	3%

It's now possible to assess recidivism after six years among the 2013 and 2014 cohorts. As seen below, 24% of participants (n=24) who were enrolled in 2013 or 2014 were arrested within six years of enrollment. Among successful program completers, 20% (n=14) were arrested within six years of enrollment; 14% (n=10) for a misdemeanor crime and 6% (n=4) for a felony crime.

<b>Table 14: Rearrested within six years of intake</b>	<b>2013 cohort</b>	<b>2014 cohort</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Among entire sample</b>	(n=46)	(n=53)	(n=99)
No new arrest	65%	84%	76%
New misdemeanor arrest	26%	8%	16%
New felony arrest	9%	6%	7%
Technical violation misdemeanor	0%	2%	1%
<b>Among participants who successfully completed program</b>	(n=37)	(n=33)	(n=70)
No new arrest	73%	88%	80%
New misdemeanor arrest	19%	9%	14%
New felony arrest	8%	3%	6%

Within three years of enrollment, 5% (n=12) of AFJ participants were reconvicted within New York State (Table 15).<sup>7</sup> Among successful program completers, 6% (n=8) were reconvicted within three years of enrollment; 4% (n=5) were convicted of a misdemeanor crime and 2% (n=3) with a felony crime.

<b>Table 15: Reconvicted within three years of intake</b>	<b>2013 cohort</b>	<b>2014 cohort</b>	<b>2015 cohort</b>	<b>2016 cohort</b>	<b>2017 cohort</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Among entire sample</b>	(n=46)	(n=53)	(n=42)	(n=39)	(n=32)	(n=212)
No new conviction	87%	94%	100%	97%	94%	95%
New misdemeanor conviction	11%	2%	0%	3%	0%	3%
New felony conviction	2%	4%	0%	0%	6%	2%
<b>Among participants who successfully completed program</b>	(n=37)	(n=33)	(n=22)	(n=22)	(n=18)	(n=132)
No new conviction	92%	94%	100%	95%	89%	94%
New misdemeanor conviction	8%	3%	0%	5%	0%	4%
New felony conviction	0%	3%	0%	0%	11%	2%

<sup>7</sup> One case was still pending.

Within six years of enrollment, 18% (n=18) of participants who were enrolled in 2013 or 2014 were reconvicted. Among successful program completers, 16% (n=8) were reconvicted within six years of enrollment; 12% (n=5) were reconvicted of a misdemeanor crime and 4% (n=3) of a felony crime.

<b>Table 16: Reconvicted within six years of intake</b>	<b>2013 cohort</b>	<b>2014 cohort</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Among entire sample</b>	(n=46)	(n=53)	(n=99)
No new conviction	72%	90%	82%
New misdemeanor conviction	22%	4%	12%
New felony conviction	6%	6%	6%
<b>Among participants who successfully completed program</b>	(n=37)	(n=33)	(n=70)
No new conviction	79%	91%	84%
New misdemeanor conviction	16%	6%	12%
New felony conviction	5%	3%	4%

Just 5% of AFJ participants were incarcerated within three years of their enrollment in AFJ (Table 17). This number was consistent among successful program completers as well; 3% (n=4) were incarcerated on misdemeanor charges and 2% (n=3) on felony charges.

<b>Table 17: Incarcerated within three years of intake</b>	<b>2013 cohort</b>	<b>2014 cohort</b>	<b>2015 cohort</b>	<b>2016 cohort</b>	<b>2017 cohort</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Among entire sample</b>	(n=46)	(n=53)	(n=42)	(n=39)	(n=32)	(n=212)
No new incarceration	91%	94%	100%	97%	91%	95%
New misdemeanor incarceration	9%	2%	0%	3%	0%	3%
New felony incarceration	0%	4%	0%	0%	9%	2%
<b>Among participants who successfully completed program</b>	(n=37)	(n=33)	(n=22)	(n=22)	(n=18)	(n=132)
No new incarceration	95%	94%	100%	95%	89%	95%
New misdemeanor incarceration	5%	3%	0%	5%	0%	3%
New felony incarceration	0%	3%	0%	0%	11%	2%

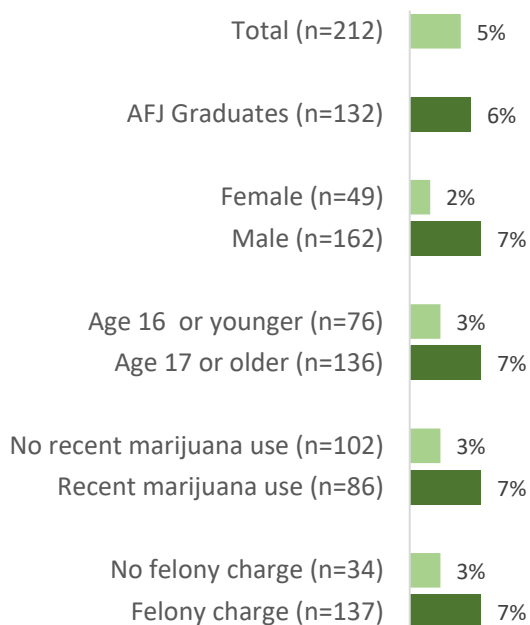
Within six years of enrollment, 15% (n=15) of AFJ participants enrolled in 2013 or 2014 were incarcerated; 10% (n=10) on misdemeanor charges and 5% (n=5) on felony charges. Among successful program completers, 14% (n=10) were incarcerated; 10% (n=7) were incarcerated on misdemeanor charges and 4% (n=3) on felony charges.

<b>Table 18: Incarcerated within six years of intake</b>	<b>2013 cohort</b>	<b>2014 cohort</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Among entire sample</b>	(n=46)	(n=53)	(n=99)
No new incarceration	76%	92%	85%
New misdemeanor incarceration	17%	4%	10%
New felony incarceration	7%	4%	5%
<b>Among participants who successfully completed program</b>	(n=37)	(n=33)	(n=70)
No new incarceration	81%	91%	86%
New misdemeanor incarceration	14%	6%	10%
New felony incarceration	5%	3%	4%

While the sample size is still small (only two cohorts), the six-year recidivism data suggests the gains made by AFJ's Court-Involved participants in desisting from further crime, particularly serious crimes, have been sustainable.

Three-year reconviction rates were examined by participant characteristics at program enrollment (combining all cohorts). Those with reconvictions were slightly more likely to be male, to be older, to have used marijuana recently, and/or to have had a felony charge at enrollment (Figure 3). None of these differences was statistically significant.

**Figure 3**  
**Reconviction rates by subgroup**  
**(3 years after enrollment)**

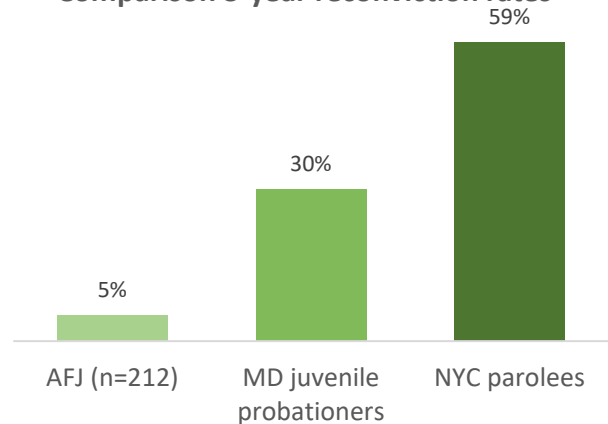


## Comparison Data

This section highlights comparison recidivism data from several studies, but caution should be used when considering such data. The design of a study will affect the reported recidivism rates. For example, recidivism may be defined as rearrest, reconviction, or reincarceration. Some studies may include incarceration for technical violations while others may not. Further, study samples may include only prisoners or probationers, while others may include only juveniles or adults.

Although sampling techniques, sample characteristics, and definitions of recidivism and incarceration vary, published recidivism data suggest AFJ participants have rearrest, reconviction, and incarceration rates considerably lower than comparison samples. The three-year AFJ reconviction rate is 5% compared to other studies (Figure 4). The six-year AFJ reconviction rate is 18% (compared to a 32% reconviction rate among federal offenders released in 2005 after eight years).

**Figure 4**  
Comparison 3-year reconviction rates



The following is a select list showing comparison rearrest, reconviction, and reincarceration rates:

- A study of Maryland juvenile offenders with first-time probation dispositions found that within three years of the start date of community supervision, 57% were rearrested, 30% were reconvicted, and 17% were incarcerated.<sup>8</sup>
- A study published in 2010, found that 69% of New York City parolees were rearrested within three years and 59% were reconvicted within three years.<sup>9</sup>
- Based on 2018 DART data, the New York City rearrest rate within one year was 27% among those who were 16-24 years old at time of arrest in Manhattan.<sup>10</sup>
- A 2016 report from the United States Sentencing Commission found that among more than 25,000 federal offenders released in 2005, 49% were rearrested, 32% were reconvicted, and 25% were reincarcerated over an eight-year follow-up period.<sup>11</sup>
- A 2015 report from the CSG Justice Center compiled recidivism data from 39 states and found that the highest reported recidivism rate (reinvolvement with the justice system) for juvenile offenders was 76% within three years, and 84% within five years.<sup>12</sup>
- Based on a 2005-2014, 30-state recidivism study among those aged 24 or younger the three-year rearrest rate was 76%, the six-year rearrest rate was 87%, and the nine-year rearrest rate was 90%.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Maryland Department of Juvenile Services. (December 2016). *Data Resource Guide: Fiscal Year 2016*. [http://www.djs.maryland.gov/Documents/2016\\_full\\_book.pdf](http://www.djs.maryland.gov/Documents/2016_full_book.pdf). Accessed October 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Hamilton, Z. (2010). *Do Reentry Courts Reduce Recidivism?* [https://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/Reentry\\_Evaluation.pdf](https://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/Reentry_Evaluation.pdf) Retrieved October 2017.

<sup>10</sup> New York City's Data Analytics Recidivism Tool (DART), v1.0. <http://recidivism.cityofnewyork.us>. Accessed June 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Recidivism Among Federal Offenders: A Comprehensive Overview. United States Sentencing Commission. <https://www.usssc.gov/research/research-reports/recidivism-among-federal-offenders-comprehensive-overview>

<sup>12</sup> 2015 CSG Justice Center report. <https://info.mstservices.com/blog/juvenile-recidivism-rates#:~:text=The%20study%20found%20that%20juveniles,the%20numbers%20are%20equally%20high>

<sup>13</sup> United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics (May 2018). NCJ 250875. Special Report – 2018 Update on Prisoner Recidivism: A 9-Year Follow-up Period (2005-2014) <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/18upr9yfup0514.pdf>. Accessed September 2020.

## Long-term Follow-up

In 2021, AFJ began a new study focusing on the following two questions:

1. Aside from the metric of justice-involvement, how are former participants faring in life after leaving the program?
2. How do former participants view their experience at AFJ?

AFJ believes the answers to these questions will help assess 1) the long-term impact of its programs on participants and 2) whether it should modify or supplement its programs to improve participant outcomes. Since spring of 2021, AFJ staff have been contacting past AFJ participants to encourage their participation in an online SurveyMonkey® survey using small monetary incentives. The survey gathers demographic information, as well as information regarding education and employment status, physical and mental health status, substance use, pregnancy, and feedback regarding the AFJ program. As of November 2021, 20 past AFJ participants have completed this survey.

### Describing the Survey Sample

Of the 20 graduates that completed a long-term follow-up survey, half entered the program between 2016 and 2019 and a majority (80%) completed the program within the last four years. The length of time in the program ranged from about 3.5 months to 8.7 years, with a median length of stay of 2.6 years. Eighty-five percent of the graduates successfully completed the program and met all goals, while the other 15% completed without meeting all goals.

<b>Table 19: Participation years and completion status (n=20)</b>		<b>%</b>
<b>Year of program intake:</b>		
2019		10%
2018		5%
2017		20%
2016		15%
2015		5%
2014		20%
2013		10%
2012		5%
2009		10%
<b>Year of program exit:</b>		
2020		20%
2019		25%
2017		35%
2016		15%
2015		5%
<b>Completion status:</b>		
Successfully completed (all goals met)		85%
Completed (not all goals met)		15%

Sixty percent were male and over half (55%) were Hispanic. Nearly half were between the ages of 19 and 21 (the average age was 23 years old, with a range from 19 to 32).

<b>Table 20: Demographics (n=20)</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender:</b>	
Male	60%
Female	40%
<b>Race/ethnicity:</b>	
Hispanic	55%
African American	35%
Other/Multiethnic	10%
<b>Current Age:</b>	
19-21 years	45%
22-24 years	25%
25 years and older	30%

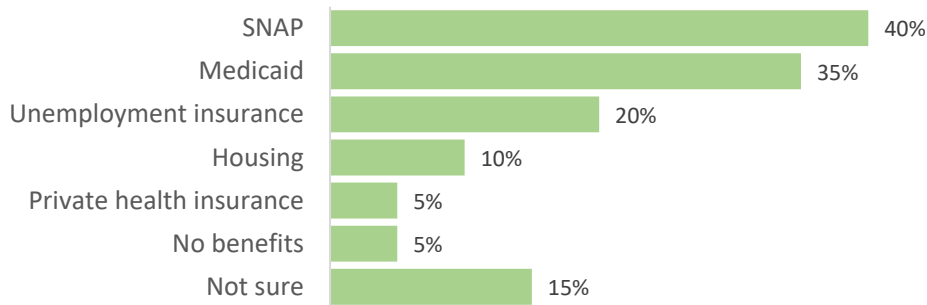
Sixty percent of the respondents were living with one or more parents and a quarter were living with their spouse or significant other. Two-thirds (65%) of the graduates were single and 50% had children. Thirty percent lived in the Lower East Side and another 30% were living in Harlem or Upper Manhattan. Twenty-five percent lived outside of Manhattan.

<b>Table 21: Living situation (n=20)</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Living situation:</b>	
Living with one or more parents	60%
Living with spouse or significant other	25%
Living alone	5%
Living on their own with one or more children	5%
Living with one or more sibling	5%
<b>Relationship status:</b>	
Single	65%
In a committed relationship or married	30%
Partnership	5%
<b>Number of children:</b>	
None	50%
One	50%
<b>Neighborhood:</b>	
Lower East Side	30%
Harlem/Upper Manhattan (Harlem, E. Harlem, Central Harlem, Wash. Heights, Inwood)	30%
Other parts of Manhattan	10%
Outside of Manhattan	
Bronx	15%
Brooklyn	5%
Other	5%
Unknown	5%

Benefits Received in the Past 12 Months

The most frequently received benefit during the 12 months prior to survey completion was Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or food stamps, with 40% reporting receiving this benefit. About a third (35%) received Medicaid benefits and another 20% received unemployment insurance.

**Figure 5: Benefits Received During the Past 12 Months (n=20)**



Education and Employment Status

A high school diploma/GED was the highest level of education attained for 60% of the respondents. Fifteen percent had professional, vocational, technical training, or an Associate degree. Twenty percent had not completed high school.

Table 22: Highest education level received (n=20)	%
Some high school	20%
High school graduate	45%
GED or diploma	15%
Professional/Vocational/Technical Training	5%
Associate degree	10%
Other <sup>14</sup>	5%

Respondents were more likely to have been employed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic than at the time of the survey, 55% compared to 30%, respectively. Still, 10% were unemployed but not looking for work. Two respondents (10%) obtained employment from “prior to COVID-19” to the “current” time period.

Table 23: Employment status	Prior to COVID-19 (n=20)	Current (n=20)
Employed, working 40 or more hours per week	25%	20%
Employed, working 30-39 hours per week	10%	5%
Employed, working 20-29 hours per week	5%	0%
Employed, working 1-19 hours per week	15%	5%
Not employed, looking for work	40%	45%
Not employed, NOT looking for work	0%	10%
Enrolled in school or a training program	5%	5%
Disabled, not able to work	5%	10%
Other	10%	10%

Note: The percentages add to more than 100% because respondents could check more than one response.

<sup>14</sup> The participant who checked ‘other’ wrote “still in school”.

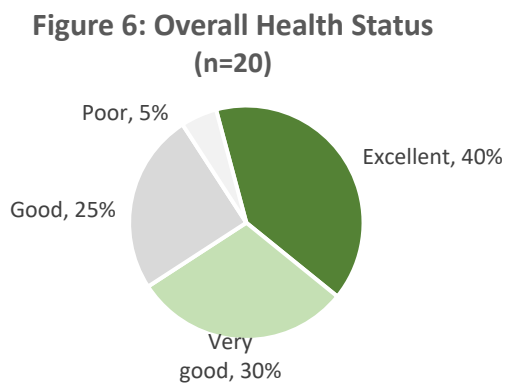


Two-thirds of the graduates were earning \$50,000 or less per year. Thirty percent declined to report this information.

Table 24: Annual income (n=20)		%
Less than \$25,000		45%
\$25,000 - \$50,000		20%
\$50,000 - \$100,000		5%
Not reported		30%

**Physical and Mental Health Status**

Seventy percent of the graduates indicated that their overall health status was excellent or very good and another quarter reported their health as good. Just one participant indicated being in poor health.



During the past 30 days, few respondents reported having many days (ten or more) feeling their physical or mental health status was not good or affected their lives in any way.

Table 25: During the past 30 days...	(n)	# of days				
		0-5	5-10	10-20	20-30	None
Thinking about your health, which includes physical illness and injury, how many days was your physical health not good?	19	47%	-	-	6%	47%
Thinking about your mental health, which includes sadness, stress, anxiety, depression, suicidality, or mania etc., how many days was your mental health not good?	20	40%	15%	10%	10%	25%
Approximately how many days did poor mental health negatively impact your close relationships?	20	30%	10%	5%	10%	45%
Approximately how many days did poor physical or mental health keep you from doing your usual activities, such as self-care, work, or recreation?	20	45%	5%	5%	10%	35%

Just one respondent reported receiving mental health counseling since leaving the AFJ program. Another six (30%) have not received counseling but reported they would like to.

## Substance Use

A quarter of the respondents reported never drinking alcohol and about one third reported never using marijuana. Thirty percent reported not drinking alcohol in the last 30 days and 20% reported not using marijuana in the last 30 days. Respondents were more likely to report weekly use of marijuana than alcohol, with a quarter reporting daily marijuana use.

<b>Table 26: Substance use in the last 30 days</b>	<b>Alcohol (beer, wine, or liquor) (n=20)</b>	<b>Marijuana or cannabis (n=20)</b>
I have never done this	25%	35%
I have not done this in the last 30 days	30%	20%
Once or twice	20%	5%
Once or twice a week	0%	5%
3 or 4 times a week	15%	0%
5 or 6 times a week	0%	10%
Every day	0%	25%
I do not know	10%	0%

Three graduates (15%) reported that they received drug or alcohol counseling since leaving the AFJ program.

## Assessing Program Impact

Three-quarters of the graduates reported one of the reasons they became involved in the criminal justice system before coming to AFJ was bad decision making or impulsiveness. A third reported problems in school and a third reported family problems. One quarter said they didn't have someone to provide good advice. Fewer mentioned mental health issues, needing money, peer pressure, or drug or alcohol use as reasons for their involvement in the criminal justice system (Table 27).

<b>Table 27: Reasons for criminal justice system involvement (n=20)</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Looking back, what do you think were the reasons you became involved in the criminal justice system before you came to AFJ?</b>	
Bad decision making/impulsiveness	75%
Problems in school	35%
Family problems	35%
Lack of someone to set me straight and provide good advice	25%
Mental health issues (including depression, trauma, or anger management)	20%
Needed the money	15%
Peer pressure	10%
Drug or alcohol use	10%

Note: The percentages add to more than 100% because respondents could check more than one response.

Fifty-five percent of the respondents went on to report that AFJ helped them address all of these factors and 30% reported AFJ helped them address some of these factors. However, two participants (10%) said AFJ did not help them address any of these factors (one indicated bad decision making and the other reported problems in school as reasons for criminal justice system involvement).

Half of the respondents said they wished they had received more activities and trips while at AFJ. Another 30% would have liked more educational support.

<b>Table 28: Services received (n=20)</b>		<b>%</b>
<b>While at AFJ, I wish I received more:</b>		
Activities and trips		50%
Educational support		30%
Psychological and/or substance counseling		20%
Vocational support		15%

Note: The percentages add to more than 100% because respondents could check more than one response.

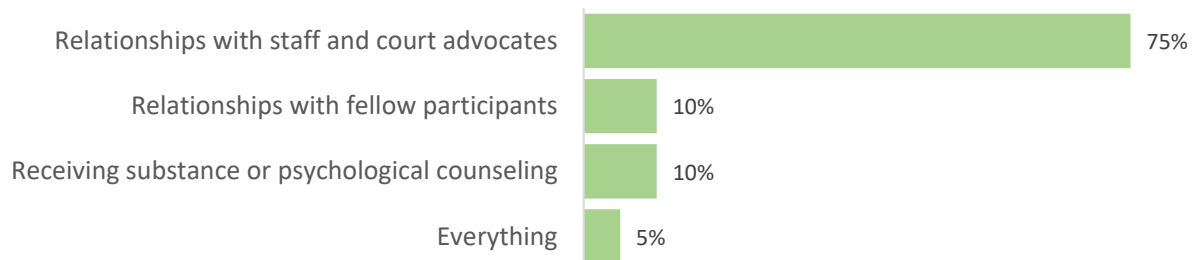
Additionally, at least 25% reported still needing housing assistance, financial assistance, educational assistance, or mental health assistance.

<b>Table 29: Services needed (n=20)</b>		<b>%</b>
<b>Assistance still needed today:</b>		
Housing		40%
Financial (including food)		30%
Educational		25%
Mental health		25%
Social (I feel isolated and want to belong to a group)		20%
Physical health		5%
Substance		5%
Family counseling		5%
Vocational		0%
Other assistance		10%
None of the above		35%

Note: The percentages add to more than 100% because respondents could check more than one response.

Three-quarters of the respondents reported their relationships with staff and court advocates as the most impactful part of their AFJ experience, while fewer felt relationships with fellow participants or receiving substance or psychological counseling had much of an impact (Figure 7). One respondent checked 'other' and wrote in that everything about the program was most impactful.

**Figure 7: Most Impactful Part of AFJ Experience**  
(n=20)



The survey asked graduates to think about the length of their participation with the AFJ program. Eighty percent of the graduates felt the length of their participation was just right, 10% thought it was too long, and 5% thought it was too short. One respondent did not answer this question.

Most of the respondents felt that there was nothing about the program that needed to be changed. One graduate who did offer a suggestion thought that the program could improve on helping participants find their path in life.

*“Improve on guiding the participants to their path. Help them discover their aspirations.”*

*“There would be nothing I would change, couldn’t join a better program!”*

Participants were asked if there was anything else they wanted to share about their experience with the program. Most declined to comment but those that did had positive things to say about the program.

*“... I’m not sure if I would be where I am today without them”*

*“AFJ helped me change my view on life and I hope it can help change others!”*

Using a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is the most favorable rating, respondents rated the helpfulness of the AFJ staff and services very favorably. Respondents rated the entire AFJ program very highly (4.9 out of 5).

<b>Table 30: Ratings</b>	<b>(n)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Average rating</b>
Overall AFJ program rating	20	-	-	-	15%	85%	4.9
Helpfulness of AFJ staff	20	-	-	-	25%	75%	4.8
Helpfulness of AFJ services received	20	-	-	5%	25%	70%	4.7

Lastly, 100% of these 20 graduates would recommend the program to other young people involved with the criminal justice system.

## Participant Satisfaction

In 2021, AFJ began using an online SurveyMonkey® survey to gather satisfaction feedback information from participants who had exited the program to gauge their opinions of the AFJ program regarding the staff, the content of services received, and feelings of program impact. As of October 2021, 13 recent AFJ graduates have completed this survey.

### Describing the Survey Sample

Of the 13 graduates that completed a satisfaction survey, most entered the program in 2019 or 2020 and all but one completed the program during 2021. The length of time in the program ranged from just under one year to 8.5 years, with a median length of stay of 1.3 years. Sixty-two percent were male and over half (54%) were Hispanic. Nearly half (46%) were between the ages of 16 and 18 (the average age was 21 years old, with a range from 16 to 28).

<b>Table 31: Demographics (n=13)</b>		<b>%</b>
<b>Year of program intake:</b>		
2020		53%
2019		31%
2014		8%
2013		8%
<b>Year of program exit:</b>		
2021		92%
2020		8%
<b>Gender:</b>		
Male		62%
Female		38%
<b>Race/ethnicity:</b>		
Hispanic		54%
African American		23%
Other/Multiethnic <sup>15</sup>		15%
Unknown		8%
<b>Current Age:</b>		
16-18 years		46%
19-21 years		8%
22-24 years		15%
25 years and older		31%

Forty-six percent of the respondents were living with one or more parents and 31% were living with their spouse or significant other. Nearly half (46%) of the graduates were single and 39% had children. Forty-six percent of the graduates lived in Harlem or Upper Manhattan and nearly one quarter were living in the Lower East Side. Thirty-one percent lived outside of Manhattan.

<b>Table 32: Living situation (n=13)</b>		<b>%</b>
<b>Living situation:</b>		
Living with one or more parents		46%
Living with spouse or significant other		31%
Alone		15%
Other, unspecified		8%
<b>Relationship status:</b>		
Single		46%
In a committed relationship		38%
Separated		8%
Partnership		8%
<b>Number of children:</b>		
None		61%
1 or 2		31%
3 or 4		8%
<b>Neighborhood:</b>		
Lower East Side		23%
Harlem/Upper Manhattan (Harlem, E. Harlem, Central Harlem, Wash. Heights, Inwood)		46%
Outside of Manhattan		
Bronx		8%
Brooklyn		8%
Other		15%

<sup>15</sup> The 'other/multiethnic' category is comprised of two graduates; one who is African American, Hispanic, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and one Garifuna.

### Rating the Program Content

Using a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is the most favorable rating, graduates rated the assistance they received from the AFJ program. As seen below, each of the services received were rated highly, nine out of ten had an average rating of 4.1 or higher on the 5-point scale. Legal and family counseling assistance were rated the highest, each with an average rating of 4.8 out of 5.0. Physical health assistance was rated lowest, with an average of 3.9. Overall, AFJ services were rated very favorably, on average, 4.7 out of 5.0.

<b>Table 33: Content ratings</b>	<b>(n)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Average rating</b>
The legal assistance you received.	11	-	-	-	18%	82%	4.8
The family counseling assistance you received.	6	-	-	-	17%	83%	4.8
The vocational assistance you received.	9	-	11%	11%	11%	67%	4.3
The substance use assistance you received.	6	-	16%	-	16%	68%	4.3
The housing assistance you received.	5	20%	-	-	-	80%	4.2
The referrals you received to outside agencies.	10	10%	-	20%	-	70%	4.2
The educational assistance you received.	11	-	-	36%	18%	46%	4.1
The financial/food assistance you received.	7	-	14%	14%	14%	58%	4.1
The mental health assistance you received.	8	13%	-	13%	13%	61%	4.1
The physical health assistance you received.	7	14%	-	14%	29%	43%	3.9
<b>The overall services you received at AFJ.</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>4.7</b>

Note: Content ratings are based on those who received these services. In other words, if a graduate did not receive a service, a rating was not provided. Thus, the sample size fluctuates across content ratings.

At intake, two thirds (69%) of the graduates were enrolled in the Intensive Phase of the program and 31% were enrolled in the Supportive Phase. As might be expected, Intensive Phase participants received more services than Supportive Phase participants; on average, Intensive Phase participants received 6.4 services and Supportive Phase participants received 5.5.

### Rating AFJ Staff and Other Aspects of the Program

Using a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is the most favorable rating, graduates rated the helpfulness of the AFJ staff and court advocates, the frequency of contact, and the information provided. As seen below, all of the items listed were rated highly, with each receiving a rating of 4.0 or greater. The highest rating, on average, was given to the helpfulness of the court advocates with a mean of 4.9 out of 5.0.

<b>Table 34: Staff ratings</b>	<b>(n)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Average rating</b>
The helpfulness of the court advocates.	11	-	-	-	9%	91%	4.9
The helpfulness of AFJ staff.	13	-	-	-	15%	85%	4.8
The information provided by court advocates.	12	-	8%	-	-	92%	4.8
The information provided by AFJ staff.	13	-	8%	8%	8%	76%	4.5
The frequency of contact from AFJ staff.	13	-	-	15%	15%	70%	4.5
The frequency of contact from court advocates.	11	9%	9%	9%	18%	55%	4.0

Graduates indicated how helpful they thought the AFJ program was to them regarding numerous mental health concepts, relationships, decision making, peer pressure, education, employment, and managing alcohol/substance use (using a 4-point scale where 1 = 'not helpful at all' and 4 = 'very helpful'). Table 35 shows the percentage of responses within each category, as well as the average item rating. As seen here, the ratings ranged from an average of 2.6 to 3.2 on the 4-point scale. The areas with the highest ratings included: having feelings of hope for the future, being exposed to new possibilities and experiences, and making smart decisions, each with an average rating of 3.2 out of 4.0. Graduates were less inclined to feel the AFJ program helped them with feelings of isolation (rating of 2.6).

<b>Table 35: Helpfulness of the program</b>	<b>(n)</b>	<b>Not helpful at all</b>	<b>Somewhat helpful</b>	<b>Helpful</b>	<b>Very helpful</b>	<b>Average rating</b>
Having feelings of hope for your future	13	-	31%	15%	54%	3.2
Exposure to new possibilities & experiences	13	-	15%	54%	31%	3.2
Making smart decisions	13	-	15%	54%	31%	3.2
Your mental health	13	7%	15%	39%	39%	3.1
Improving your self-esteem	13	-	23%	54%	23%	3.0
Resisting peer pressure	13	-	23%	54%	23%	3.0
Your education	13	15%	23%	8%	54%	3.0
Knowing and expressing your feelings	13	15%	15%	47%	23%	2.8
Improved relationships with family & friends	13	15%	23%	23%	39%	2.8
Feeling part of a community	13	8%	31%	38%	23%	2.8
Your employment/job readiness	12	8%	25%	42%	25%	2.8
Managing alcohol/substance abuse	13	23%	8%	46%	23%	2.7
Feeling less isolated	13	23%	23%	23%	31%	2.6

When asked what they liked best about the program, responses fell into three main categories: the staff and community of people, the support or services received, and the welcoming environment. One participant simply said they liked everything about the program.

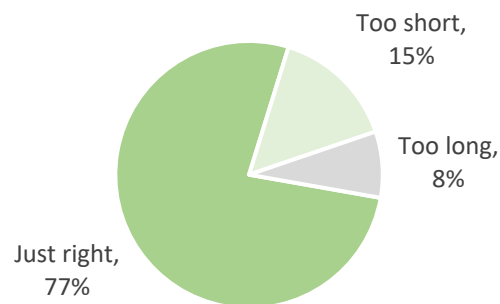
*“{What I liked best about the program was} the staff and the interest they showed in helping.”*

*“The services I received with court advocates.”*

*“The family friendly environment. It’s been years and I still feel like AFJ still treats me like family!”*

Graduates were asked to describe their length of participation at AFJ using the choices, “Too long,” “Too short,” or “Just right.” More than three-quarters (77%) reported their length of time at AFJ was just right (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Length of Participation**



**Assessing Program Impact**

As seen in Table 36, 76% of the graduates agreed/strongly agreed with the statement “My life has improved as a result of AFJ”. Graduates rated this item, on average, at 3.2 out of 4.0 (using a 4-point scale ranging from 1 ‘strongly agree’ to 4 ‘strongly disagree’; this item was reverse coded so higher numbers were more favorable).

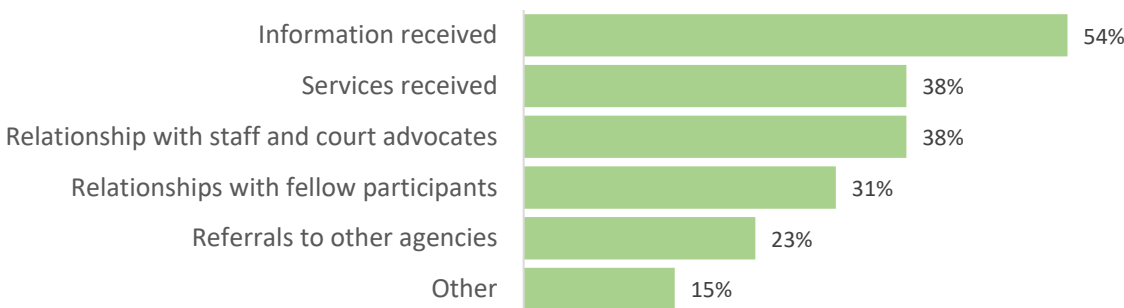
Table 36: Rating impact of program	(n)	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Average rating
My life has improved as a result of AFJ.	13	38%	38%	24%	-	3.2

*“{My court advocate} was nothing but great to me. We also built a personal bond.”*

*“AFJ definitely is a place that kids and youth can look forward to going to after school or when things seem tough. They are always willing to help!”*

Fifty-four percent of the graduates reported the information they received was the most impactful part of their AFJ experience (Figure 9), while fewer felt the referrals to other agencies were most impactful.

**Figure 9: Most Impactful Part of AFJ Experience**



Most survey respondents said they would not change anything at AFJ. A few suggested program changes including: more locations, bigger space, better communication with staff, and offering more programs. Lastly, 100% of these 13 graduates would recommend the program to other young people involved with the criminal justice system.



## Conclusion

This 2021 annual report is the most comprehensive summary of Avenues for Justice activity since data collection began in the early 1990s. This is a direct result of AFJ growth regarding an expanded service area to help youth citywide and an expansion of programs and offerings through online and hybrid platforms.

**Expanded service area:** In 2018-2019 AFJ expanded its service area from Manhattan to citywide. In 2021, while 60% of long-term participants were from Manhattan, 74% of new intakes were from the outer boroughs.

**Participants served:** During 2021, AFJ worked with 257 Court-Involved participants. Additionally, 58 At-Risk participants engaged in HIRE UP virtual and onsite programs through AFJ's two community centers, while another 73 youth received referrals or other short-term assistance. The majority of the Court-Involved youth were Hispanic or African American, male, and/or 16 to 21 years of age at enrollment. There were over 17,000 encounters during 2021 and 203 referrals were provided.

**Broadening scope of services:** In 2021, AFJ expanded its services to work with young people who are incarcerated, nearing re-entry into the community, and also those in the New York City Law Department's Family Court Division's Diversion program. Those from the Diversion division are mandated to attend AFJ for typically 4 to 16 sessions over a 60-day period. In 2021, 42% of new participants were Diversion youth. Current data suggest Diversion youth typically exceed their participation mandate. In 2021, AFJ also served 15 Re-entry participants – these 15 are included in the 257 Court-Involved count and information.

**Expanded program offerings:** AFJ expanded its HIRE UP programs launched in 2020 so that the full offerings in 2021 included: digital literacy, OSHA 40-hour construction safety, videography including SYEP subsidized training, an eight-week entrepreneurship series led by Slickdeals, job readiness and additional career workshops, mental health group and individual sessions, tutoring and other supports for education including a one-week STEM bootcamp led by Goldman Sachs, civics, and legal rights and responsibilities workshops.

**Court advocacy, recidivism, and program completion success:** Of the cases that had court outcomes during 2021, 71% were adjourned and 13% were dismissed.

Recidivism data have been collected for many years and continue to be among the lowest in the nation. The current three-year AFJ reconviction rate is just 5%, while the six-year rate is 18%. Both rates are considerably lower than comparison samples.

In 2021, 96 participants exited the Court-Involved program; 91 completed the program, with 82 achieving all program goals. Just four exited the program without completion.

**Expanded evaluation:** This year marked the beginning of two additional studies designed to gather feedback from AFJ graduates. One study focused on how 20 former participants are faring in life after program completion. These data suggest many graduates are still in need of services and are living below the poverty line. As a result, AFJ plans to continue its emphasis on job training and placement, as well as mental health wellness, which is now mandatory for all new participants. Many respondents noted that they received SNAP or needed food assistance. When community centers reopen, AFJ will continue its food and grocery assistance for participants and graduates, and cooking classes will resume. Many respondents indicated

committing their crimes based on impulse/bad decisions. Future AFJ workshops will incorporate a critical thinking component.

A second 2021 study focused on gathering client satisfaction information from program graduates. While only 13 graduates have participated in this study to date, these past participants gave very favorable ratings to the services they received from AFJ, the staff, program logistics, and feelings of program impact.

Both of these new 2021 studies suggest participants valued their time at AFJ and all would recommend the program to young people involved with the criminal justice system.