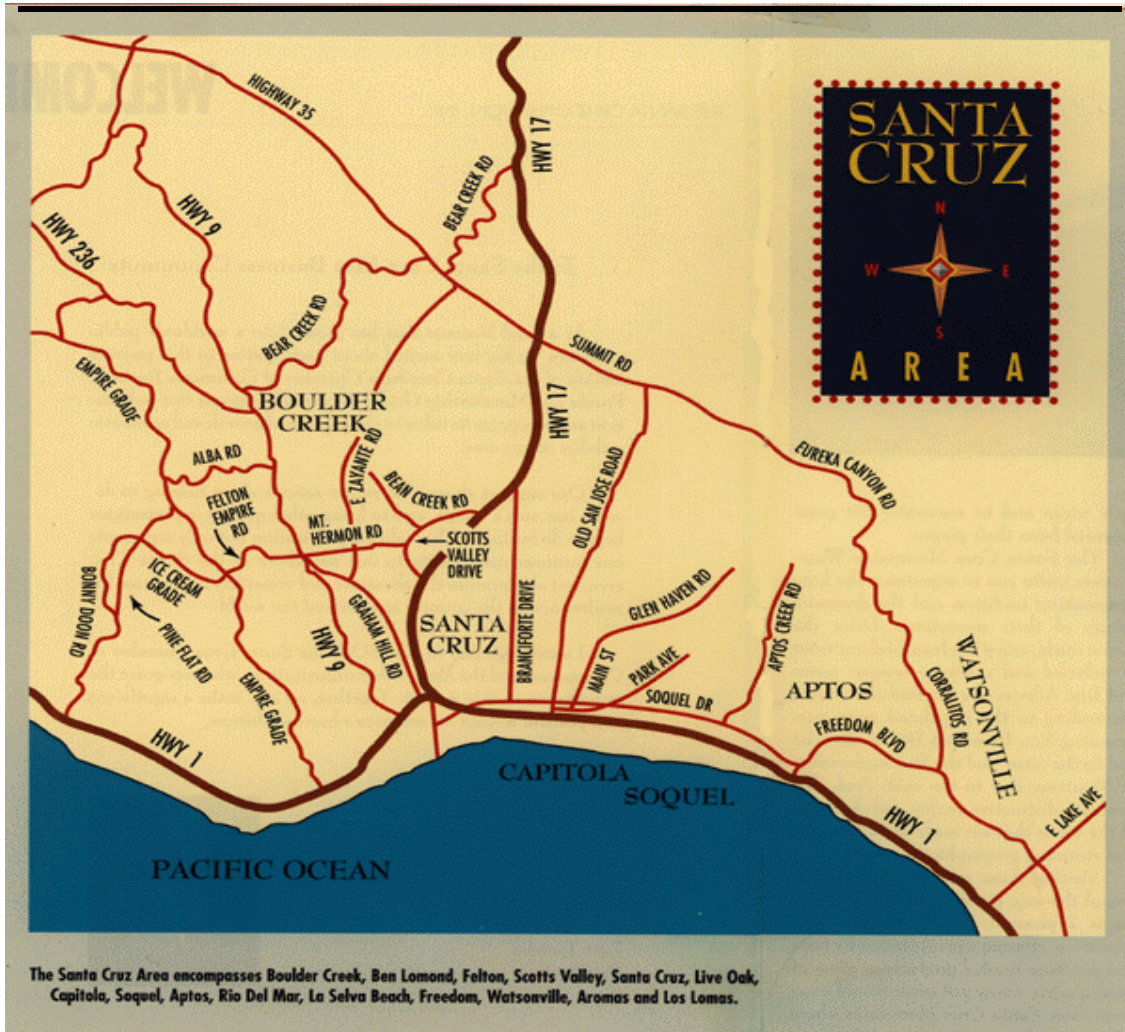

RWJ RECLAIMING FUTURES IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY:
INITIAL POLICY REPORT



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Purpose of the Report

This report provides an initial and purposely brief presentation of key findings from the Robert Wood Johnson Reclaiming Futures project in Santa Cruz County, California. The purpose of the report is to highlight selected findings pertaining directly to efforts at systemic change in Santa Cruz. The data collected in this evaluation are extensive, and further reports will delve much more deeply into the details of how services evolved and changed within the county during the implementation of Reclaiming Futures.

The driving premise behind the indicators and analyses selected for this report is that changing and evolving services at the systemic level can be expected to have direct impacts on specific types of variables and indicators. Altering referral practices for youth on probation and providing community based mental health and substance abuse services in lieu of incarceration or placement may well result in less involvement with the probation system, but may not impact directly on mental health related symptoms. Though system change may ideally create a wide range of positive outcomes, the perspective taken in this evaluation is that obtaining positive results on system focused indicators is sufficiently challenging to merit thorough analysis and constitutes the most central and realistic set of results regarding the Reclaiming Futures Initiative in Santa Cruz County. The results presented in this report are intended to be the most direct and essential measures of whether the county achieved the goals of Reclaiming Futures. Additional reports will explore more distal indicators of success, including individual mental health and substance abuse outcomes.

Background: Reclaiming Futures in Santa Cruz

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded Reclaiming Futures Santa Cruz County initiative sought to make significant changes in the service delivery system for youth involved in the delinquency system and struggling with problems with drugs and alcohol. These changes, if successfully implemented, were believed to have the capability to fully integrate alcohol and drug treatment services into the juvenile justice system and result in improved outcomes for the children and families who come before the court. In Santa Cruz County, the goal of Reclaiming Futures is to

provide more treatment, better treatment and move beyond treatment to reconnect and strengthen youth and families within their communities, so that they may overcome alcohol, drugs and crime.

In Santa Cruz, many young people have problems with drugs and alcohol. Seventy-one percent of high school juniors have reported using alcohol. In 2002, it was reported that 1,700 teens were abused or were dependent on drugs. A 1998 survey of incarcerated teens in Santa Cruz County reported that 44% used marijuana daily, and 17% used heroin daily. Yet, only 30% of them received treatment.

Too many families lack the financial resources, necessary to pay for treatment. This, coupled with insufficient public funding, present significant barriers to Santa Cruz County teens seeking to access treatment services. Many of these teens do not receive the help that they need to address their alcohol and drug problems until they enter the juvenile justice system, creating a situation whereby the juvenile justice system becomes the default treatment system for these youth. Historically, and unfortunately for these youth, the juvenile justice system has operated without the expertise and orientation to recognize that teenage alcohol and drug use is a public health concern that cannot be resolved through incarceration.

Essential processes for identifying these youth were missing from both the juvenile justice and treatment systems. Screening and assessment protocols, when conducted, were not shared between agencies. Treatment services were fragmented, under-funded, reliant on an adult treatment model and scarce. The juvenile court and its officers, including probation, lacked sufficient training in emerging and effective practices, faced the frustration of the dearth of treatment services and experienced the diverse viewpoints of a tolerant community, divided on the issue of how best to impact youth substance use.

Reclaiming Futures in Santa Cruz was designed to create system reform by introducing effective substance abuse interventions within our System of Care framework and continuum of services. In the beginning of this initiative, there were eight goals or benchmarks identified, which guided many of the system changes that ensued. Examples of improved quality of treatment services for youth

and families (Benchmark #1), Providing more clinical and rehabilitative services for youth and their families with substance abuse problems within the juvenile justice system (Benchmark #2) and Creating comprehensive asset-based system of care for teens in the juvenile justice system (Benchmark #6) are infused throughout the chronology of improvements noted later in this report. In March 2005, the Reclaiming Futures Coordinated Individualized Response -Community Directed Engagement Model was introduced thus merging the eight benchmarks of the strategic plan with the elements of the six-stage model. This allowed us to clearly identify the numbers of youth who benefited from the system improvement efforts. Youth screened by the Placement Screening Committee were tracked through the stages of the Reclaiming Futures model beginning March 1, 2003.

Listed below is a selected and not complete chronology of the improvements made as a result of the Reclaiming Futures Initiative in Santa Cruz.

- January 2003, set up a management structure with five work groups including the youth, family, treatment providers, natural helpers and quality assurance and evaluation working groups. This structure continues to exist today to support future efforts.
- In January of 2003, the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs (GAIN) was adopted as the assessment instrument for alcohol and substance abuse with the County Alcohol and Drug Program taking the lead.
- March 2003, Initiated CSAT funded Adolescent Residential Treatment aftercare program (Los Puentes).
- July 2003, Youth from REAL (Reforming Education Advocating Leadership) were represented on the Steering Committee and made recommendations that included informing the Court of the number of negative drug tests and positive ones, using a strength based strategy.
- September 2003, Probation began using the Back on Track Alvest evidence-based assets and risk assessment instrument to assist in case management.
- September 2003, motivational interviewing was implemented and used by various trained Probation staff.
- March 2004, the Juvenile Court Video was completed and distributed to agencies working with youth and families.
- June 2004, residential treatment staff was trained in the 7 Challenges and begins implementation.

- August 2004, the CRAFFT was adopted by Probation as an alcohol and drug screening instrument at all intakes.
- August 2004, Wraparound program begins with a capacity for 12 clients with Probation taking the lead. This effectively reduced the need for more restrictive residential care, and was especially important because in September 2004, the STAR Residential treatment facility closed based on the Mental Health Agency's recommendation.
- October 2004, Motivational Approaches to Success grant begins providing substance abuse treatment to chronic marijuana users.
- November 2004, new Project Director assigned.
- November 2004, the Mental Health Services Act begins, the purpose of which is to expand and improve services to the community.
- March 2005, Healthy Returns Initiative begins, to provide better reentry physical and mental health interventions for youth transitioning from Juvenile Hall.
- April 2005, Luna Evening Center opens as an alternative to incarceration and response to probation violations, which are frequently related to substance use and relapse. It also provides enhanced services to youth who are returning from out of home placement or are in wraparound services and require additional support.
- April 2005, Thinking For a Change implemented at the Luna Evening Center
- July 2005, planning for Cara y Corazon (family strengthening curriculum) training begins. An all day presentation for 200+ participants including a lunch was planned and sponsored by Reclaiming Futures and various community partners.
- September 2006, Placement Screening Committee reforms implemented to include youth and family participation whenever possible. Criteria established for family conferences and meetings.
- September 2006, CRAFFT screening implemented for all new Children's Mental health youth over age 12.
- September 2006, the Youth Involvement Work Group and REAL prepares to survey local youth about drug and alcohol involvement to determine area of need. Ceres Policy Research Principal, Angela Irvine, PhD. assists youth in the evaluation and analysis as well as in the development of the survey tool. Results will be presented to the community at a later date.
- September 2006, the Youth Summit, led by REAL, focuses on relapse and recovery. This was held at the Simpkins Swim Center where there was the sharing of stories on recovery and a presentation of an audio documentary on intergenerational drug and alcohol use.
- October 2006, the three part series of parent information pamphlets are completed in both English and Spanish. This was a result of the Family Involvement Work Group's request to

create specific informative pamphlets around youth in treatment, how to handle youth relapsing and how to identify symptoms of drug use in youth who are under the influence.

- October 2006, the Project Connect community and business forum was held with Congressman Sam Farr and Dr. Laura Burney Nissen speaking on behalf of providing jobs and natural helpers for youth. The forum was hosted by REAL and Above the Line youth. This was the second time Dr. Nissen came to speak in support of the local effort.
- November 2006, Ceres Policy Research was contracted to assist in writing a gender specific grant from the California Corrections Standards Authority that was awarded in April 2007 to the Santa Cruz County Probation Department.
- November 2006, applied for the Mentally Ill Offender Crime Reduction (MIOCR) grant program from California Corrections Standards Authority to provide services in the northern part of the county and as a sustainability strategy to continue the system change work of the project director. The one million dollar grant was awarded to Santa Cruz County in January 2007.
- November 2006, the Drug and Alcohol Abuse Task Force of Santa Cruz County, developed a plan to implement a one-month countywide snapshot study of Methamphetamine use and its impact on services providers throughout the county. The goal of the data collection was to determine the size of the problem and areas of unmet need for new or expanded services for the community. The Project Director was a key participant in the study providing Probation's input.
- January 2007, youth presentation at the Santa Cruz Rotary Club asking for jobs for youth and natural helper volunteers.
- January 2007, youth and families participated in the taping of a Public Service Announcement (PSA) in English and Spanish promoting the Cara y Corazon family strengthening classes through Community TV. The PSA is scheduled to air throughout the year in various time slots.
- February 2007, co-sponsored a Family Conference Day held by Pajaro Valley Unified School District's Migrant Education Department. Over 400 families attended an all day event.
- February 2007, Sixty-five professionals attended two-day certification training on the Seven Challenges by Richard Barr, an authorized trainer in the curriculum funded by Reclaiming Futures. Santa Cruz is now an accredited site.
- March 2007, the Youth Involvement Work Group and REAL presents the findings of the youth led survey on drug and alcohol use in the Youth Hype presentation held at the County Office of Education.
- March 2007, the Probation Department participates in a daylong training on Working With Latino Families, a Cultural Competency training led by Jaime Molina.
- April 2007, a System of Care retreat funded by the HRI grant provides cross training to all partners in a daylong team-building event.

Evaluation Scope and Design

The evaluation of Reclaiming Futures in Santa Cruz County relied heavily on indicators of systemic change. The basic design involved utilizing two groups for comparative purposes: (1) A total of 142 youth who entered probation and related services provided subsequent to initiation of Reclaiming Futures in 2003 in Santa Cruz (The Reclaiming Futures Group) and (2) A total of 141 youth who went through a placement screening committee process prior to 2003 and initiation of reclaiming futures (The Pre-Reclaiming Futures Group). The placement screening committee process was selected as the pool of youth for the Pre-Reclaiming futures group because it was a similar process that provided a gateway to services for Reclaiming Futures, thereby creating two groups of youth who would hopefully be similar with regard to socio-demographic characteristics, severity of criminal activity, and need for mental health and substance use services.

The design is essentially an historic control, where youth who received services after initiation into Reclaiming Futures were compared to youth who received services prior to initiation of Reclaiming Futures. However, since system change evolves over time, cohorts were also examined based on the year in which youth entered services, creating more detailed comparisons by year.

The data collected cross probation and mental health/substance use indicators collected at a fine grain of detail and with significant guidance from the RWJ Reclaiming Futures national evaluation. These data consist of the following:

- ***Justice Events***, including detailed tracking of intake, initiation of probation and appointments, missed appointments, initiation and release from residential care and detention, and details regarding the justice event such as the type of intake;
- ***Court Events***, including detailed tracking of hearings, adjudications, dispositions, case review, referrals, dismissals, placement status, wardship status, and charges from the police report, from the original petition, and final charges sustained in court.

- ***Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Utilization***, including gender, age, diagnosis, type of service provide, service location, date of service provision, and number of minutes of service provided.
- ***GAIN***, the GAIN was administered to youth in the Reclaiming Futures group at intake and subsequent follow-ups.

The probation data were abstracted by hand from computer screens and printouts and the mental health and substance abuse data were obtained from electronic data systems. The GAIN was administered by clinical staff trained and certified on its use. The research team at UCSF was blind to identifying information, so unique Identifiers were maintained by Santa Cruz staff. These unique identifiers permit matching at the individual level of all data sets.

The resulting data sets include over 120,000 unique records of mental health and substance abuse services for a total of 283 (141 pre and 142 post) youth. The Court and Justice Event records total well over 5000 unique records for the 283 youth. The GAIN was collected on 110 of the 142 post reclaiming futures youth.

Analysis and Results

This report focuses on results from the probation and mental health/substance abuse data sets. The first set of results provides information on the characteristics of the pre and post reclaiming futures groups to confirm that the two groups are comparable with regard to basic demographics. The second set of results addresses the question of how mental health and substance abuse services evolved during the implementation of reclaiming futures. The final set addresses questions revolving around the involvement of youth in probation and how that involvement changed during the implementation of reclaiming futures.

Characteristics of the Comparison Groups:

All service utilization and probation related data was collected for the life of the youth. The Post-Reclaiming Futures group consisted of all youth who were screened under the Reclaiming Futures initiative. The Pre-Group consisted of all youth who were sent to the Placement Screening

committee through probation. The group was created by enrolling youth back in time from 2003 until a sufficient sample of 141 youth was achieved, which was approximately three years. Table 1 provides an overview of the two groups.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Pre- and Post- Reclaiming Futures groups

	Pre-Reclaiming Futures	Reclaiming Futures
Mean Age (first court involvement)	15.3	15.5
Percent Male	79%	78%
Percent Latino	55%	55%
Percent Anglo	34%	41%

Clearly, both the Pre Reclaiming Futures and Reclaiming Futures groups are almost identical with regard to basic demographic characteristics. Especially of note is the significant number of Latino youth as well as the relatively young, for probation services, mean age of youth at first court involvement. There are additional similarities between the groups that will become evident with regard to service utilization patterns.

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Utilization

The data for Mental Health and Substance Abuse utilization can provide information on virtually all services used by the youth in the study at the level of each individual service contact, exact service type and location and program, and time and date of service. There are virtually countless ways to analyze these data. For purposes of this report two fundamental types of analyses were conducted: (1) Contact level of analysis, where each individual record or contact served as the basic unit of analysis; and (2) Individual level of analysis, where records or contacts were aggregated to indicators attached to individuals. Each provides a different perspective on patterns of mental health utilization.

The fundamental goal was to increase the amount of services for youth in Reclaiming Futures when compared to youth who were not in Reclaiming Futures. This increase in community based substance abuse and mental health services were considered necessary to avoiding placement and criminal justice involvement.

Though many indicators are possible, two key indicators were created to reflect “amount” of service:

- Contacts or records which reflect service intensity or, more precisely, frequency. The more records, the more frequent the contact with youth, though the amount of contact might vary by service.
- Staff time which reflects the total quantity of services provided. This is different than contacts or records since an individual contact could involve limited quantity (e.g. a 15 minute medication visit) or more extensive quantity (e.g. day treatment). Staff time can include co-staff time where someone works in collaboration with the primary staff person (e.g. two therapists running a group session).

Record Level Analyses

The first simple question is whether youth in the Reclaiming Futures group had more contacts or a higher frequency of services than youth in the Pre-Reclaiming Futures group. Youth in the Reclaiming Futures group had almost 20,000 more contacts than youth in the Pre-Reclaiming Futures group (69,838 compared to 48,882 total records respectively). A more detailed examination of the number of records is presented in Table 2, which provides the number of records by year in which the record occurred and by whether the youth was in the Pre Reclaiming Futures or Post Reclaiming Futures group:

Table 2: Number of Service Records by Year and Pre-Post Reclaiming Futures

Year of Service	Pre Reclaiming Futures	Post Reclaiming Futures	Total
1995	202	17	219
1996	854	25	879
1997	1038	132	1170
1998	1436	764	2200
1999	2378	834	3212
2000	5985	1233	7218
2001	11722	2067	13789
2002	12319	5983	18302
<i>2003 (RF Starts)</i>	<i>6278</i>	<i>13251</i>	<i>19529</i>
2004	3359	15075	18434
2005	2106	16706	18812

2006	1199	13747	14946
Total	48832	69838	118720

It is important to note that 2003 (in italics in the table) is the start of Reclaiming Futures Implementation. *The main difference between the two groups is that the Reclaiming Futures group maintained a high level of service contacts from 2003 through 2006, a total of four years of service use over 10,000 contacts. This was not true of the Pre-Reclaiming Futures group, which maintained a high level of service contacts over 10,000 only for two years (2001 and 2002).*

Table 3 shows that youth in Reclaiming Futures received considerably more total contacts at the older age groups, especially 16 and 17, than youth who were not in Reclaiming Futures.

Table 3: Total contact counts by age

AGE	PRE-RF	RF	Total
7	2	4	6
8	14	111	125
9	56	406	462
10	121	391	512
11	238	453	691
12	1344	1158	2502
13	2507	2496	5003
14	2857	4803	7660
15	7598	10759	18357
16	12051	19461	31512
17	13761	19585	33346
18	4901	9600	14501
19	1280	464	1744
20	1216	130	1346
21	743	17	760
22	183	0	183
23	10	0	10
TOTAL	48882	69838	118720

More detailed analyses of service types demonstrate that the services provided changed significantly between the two groups due to implementation of new service programs and options after Reclaiming Futures was implemented. These findings were later examined to determine if these results could be due to differences in timing between the two groups where some youth “age out” of services, however this was clearly not the case.

The initial conclusion, confirmed in the analyses to follow, is that youth in Reclaiming Futures received more mental health and Substance Abuse contacts than similar youth who were not in Reclaiming Futures. Furthermore, the pattern of results by year indicate that this is not due to the Pre-reclaiming futures youth simply receiving less services, rather they appear to receive fewer contacts as time goes on when compared to the Reclaiming Futures youth.

Individual Level Analyses

The mental health utilization data were aggregated by youth to create the potential for analyses at the individual level. Contact or frequency data were counted by youth to create total numbers of records for each child. Total staff hours per child were also calculated. The results of these analyses add to those presented at the record level.

With regard to contacts, as would be expected from the analysis to this point youth in the Reclaiming Futures group had an overall higher average number of contacts (491) when compared to youth in the Pre-Reclaiming Futures group (351).

Table 4 presents the average number of contacts by age for the Pre and Post Reclaiming Futures groups. As shown in Table 4, the number of contacts is roughly the same between groups until age 14, when the Post Reclaiming Futures group has close to an average of 100 more contacts than the Pre-Reclaiming Futures group. ***Youth in Reclaiming Futures has more contacts with mental health and substance abuse services than youth who were not in Reclaiming futures during the critical 14-17 year age range.***

Table 4: Average number of lifetime mental health/substance use service contacts by Age

Age	Pre Reclaiming Futures	Reclaiming Futures
12	809	727
13	531	570
14	366	537
15	406	510
16	262	355
17	163	241

As was the case for number of contacts, the total number of hours of services received by youth was calculated. The youth receive a large number of total hours of service over the course of their life in the service system. *The average number of hours was higher for youth in the Reclaiming Futures group when compared to youth not in the Pre-Reclaiming Futures group (1,114 for Pre-Reclaiming Futures, 1303 for Post-Reclaiming Futures). The Reclaiming Futures group had on average close to 200 more hours of mental health and substance abuse services than did the Pre-Reclaiming Futures group.*

Involvement with Probation

Unlike mental health and substance abuse services, the goal in Santa Cruz under Reclaiming Futures was to reduce the involvement of youth with the probation system. Reduced involvement with law enforcement is a primary outcome for the Reclaiming Futures Initiative in Santa Cruz. The Data presented to this point demonstrate that the amount and frequency of mental health and substance abuse services in Santa Cruz were, as expected, higher for youth in Reclaiming Futures than for the Pre-Reclaiming Futures comparison group. These sets of analyses are designed to determine whether there was a corresponding effect in the Probation data where involvement in probation was lower for youth in Reclaiming Futures.

An overall indicator of involvement with probation is the total number of records in the court events data set. This indicator reflects all sustained petitions, filed petitions, and police charges. At the record level, there were 5,421 total sustained and filed petitions and police charges for the Pre- and Reclaiming Futures youth. There were indeed fewer overall petitions and charges for the Reclaiming Futures youth: 2,371 total petitions and charges for the Reclaiming Futures youth compared to 3047 total for the Pre-Reclaiming Futures youth. An examination of the total records by age presented in Table 5 reveals the most important finding from the probation data in Santa Cruz County.

Table 5: Total numbers of charges, petitions filed and petitions sustained by age

Age	Pre Reclaiming Futures	Reclaiming Futures
13	72	40

14	194	225
15	488	486
16	810	712
17	811	564
18	534	312

This analysis shows that youth had similar numbers of offenses and charges up through age 15 for both the Reclaiming Futures and Pre-Reclaiming Futures groups. However, there was a drop in total number of offenses for the Reclaiming Futures youth from age 16 to 17 while the total number of offenses for the Pre-Reclaiming Futures group remained the same. Offenses were lower overall in the Post Reclaiming Futures group when compared to the Pre-Reclaiming Futures group, but only for youth aged 16 and older. The patterns were identical for sustained offenses, for petitions filed, and for police charges.

Extensive analyses were conducted to assure that this was not due to the youth aging out from involvement in Juvenile Probation in the Post-Reclaiming Futures group. The end of data collection, combined with the end of services under reclaiming futures, meant that very few youth aged out before data collection ended. Consequently, this effect appears robust. Furthermore, the numbers of youth at each age are virtually identical across the pre- and post- reclaiming futures groups, so this effect is not due to larger numbers of older youth in the pre-group.

Individual analyses were conducted to examine the mean number of charges for the two groups. Interestingly, though the means are somewhat lower for the Post-RF group, they are not as low as would be expected. An examination of the data revealed that the variance and distribution of these data make the mean not an especially suitable mechanism for analysis. This illustrates the need to conduct analyses with these data that are more sophisticated and best presented in future reports. The finding presented in Table 5 is the most robust and interpretable of the many analyses run with these data to this point.

Table 6: Mean number of charges Pre- and Post

	Sustained	Police charges	Petitions filed
PRE RF	2.96	3.31	3.44

RF	2.71	2.76	2.94
Total	2.84	3.05	3.20

Summary

The key findings in this report are summarized below:

Equivalence of Comparison Groups

- Both the Pre Reclaiming Futures and Reclaiming Futures groups are almost identical with regard to basic demographic characteristics. Both groups were almost identical with regard to service use and probation involvement during the pre-adolescent/early adolescent years. These data indicate that the two groups can be used for comparative purposes.

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

- Youth in Reclaiming Futures received more mental health and Substance Abuse contacts than similar youth who were not in Reclaiming Futures. Furthermore, the pattern of results by year indicate that this is not due to the Pre-reclaiming futures youth simply receiving less services, rather they appear to receive fewer contacts as time goes on when compared to the Reclaiming Futures youth.
- The Reclaiming Futures group maintained a high level of service contacts from 2003 through 2006, a total of four years of service use over 10,000 contacts. This was not true of the Pre-Reclaiming Futures group, which maintained a high level of service contacts over 10,000 only for two years (2001 and 2002).
- Youth in Reclaiming Futures has more contacts with mental health and substance abuse services than youth who were not in Reclaiming futures during the critical 14-17 year age range.
- The average number of mental health and substance use service hours was higher for youth in the Reclaiming Futures group when compared to youth not in the Pre-Reclaiming Futures group (1,114 for Pre-Reclaiming Futures, 1303 for Post-Reclaiming Futures). The

Reclaiming Futures group had on average close to 200 more hours of mental health and substance abuse services than did the Pre-Reclaiming Futures group.

Probation Involvement

- Youth had similar numbers of offenses and charges up through age 15 for both the Reclaiming Futures and Pre-Reclaiming Futures groups. However, there was a drop in total number of offenses for the Reclaiming Futures youth from age 16 to 17 while the total number of offenses for the Pre-Reclaiming Futures group remained the same. Offenses were lower overall in the Post Reclaiming Futures group when compared to the Pre-Reclaiming Futures group, but only for youth aged 16 and older. The patterns were identical for sustained offenses, for petitions filed, and for police charges.

Conclusion

The most straightforward, though simplified, goal of Reclaiming Futures in Santa Cruz was to create systemic changes that increased the effectiveness and efficiency of community based substance abuse and mental health services for youth who had extensive involvement with juvenile probation so that youth would have less involvement with probation. Extensive data were collected to address this question, and precise details regarding how the mental health/substance abuse services and juvenile probation services and involvement changed across the Pre-Reclaiming Futures and Reclaiming Futures group will be presented in future reports. However, this initial policy report demonstrates that Reclaiming Futures youth received more mental health and substance abuse services and had less involvement in juvenile probation when compared to Pre-Reclaiming Futures youth during the critical early to mid-adolescent years. The charts presented below provide an illustration of the data presented earlier in this report. The Pre-Reclaiming Futures and Reclaiming Futures groups both show similar patterns of mental health/substance abuse contacts and Probation Involvement until early adolescence. After that point, Reclaiming Futures youth receive more community based services and have less criminal justice involvement. These results mirror the original goals of the Reclaiming Futures initiative in Santa Cruz.

Graphical Summary of Two Core Findings for Reclaiming Futures in

Santa Cruz

