

Allegheny County Office of Developmental Supports:

Improving Outcomes from START to LeCSI

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Background

- ▶ Is there a problem?
- ▶ Access to justice: Equity necessarily entails accessibility
- ▶ Civil (and all) rights easily lost when assumptions are made about disabilities
- ▶ Lack of knowledge can lead to unintentional weaponization
- ▶ Sensory difficulties / overstimulation being misperceived as “behavior”
- ▶ Holistic and family-based approach

Some General Definitions

- ▶ Disability – abbreviated from ADA § 12102(1)(A-C)
 - ▶ “A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.”
- ▶ Intellectual Disability – abbreviated from DSM-V
 - ▶ A neurodevelopmental disorder with three criteria:
 - ▶ Deficits in intellectual functioning [usually IQ 70 or below]
 - ▶ Deficits in adaptive functioning; and
 - ▶ The onset of these deficits prior to the age of 22.
 - ▶ **Note that some resources/programs may require additional eligibility criteria.

Some General Definitions

- ▶ Autism – abbreviated from DSM-V
 - ▶ Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are lifelong conditions severely impairing social skills and autonomy.
 - ▶ Core features are:
 - ▶ Persisting deficits of social communication and interaction;
 - ▶ restricted and repetitive behaviors, interests, activities.
- ▶ Both of these diagnoses are neurodevelopmental—they are not symptomatic, episodic illnesses that can be cured.
- ▶ But both still follow a lifelong developmental trajectory—it just may look different from expectations.

ADA Accommodation

*<https://www.pacourts.us/judicial-administration/court-programs/ada-coorinatorods>

**<https://www.pacourts.us/judicial-administration/court-programs/americans-with-disabilities-act>

- ▶ Each UJS entity has an ADA Coordinator* and a written policy to receive and process requests** for reasonable accommodations
- ▶ DOJ Civil Rights Division: Disability Rights Section
 - ▶ Obligation to accommodate communication differences
 - ▶ What about when those communication differences are classified as criminal?
 - ▶ Language and communication are not the same thing!
 - ▶ Problematic practice of anyone with a personal stake in the case translating for the individual (staff who are “victims,” etc.)

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Article 13

Article 13

Access to justice

1. States Parties shall ensure effective access to justice for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others, including through the provision of procedural and age-appropriate accommodations, in order to facilitate their effective role as direct and indirect participants, including as witnesses, in all legal proceedings, including at investigative and other preliminary stages.
2. In order to help to ensure effective access to justice for persons with disabilities, States Parties shall promote appropriate training for those working in the field of administration of justice, including police and prison staff.

Unverifiable Statistics*

Need more research!

Intellectual Disability	Autism
2-13% general population	1 in 36 (8-year-olds)**
4-80% incarcerated population	10-60% incarcerated population
Parents: 10-15% child welfare cases	ASD Parents: Unknown
80% removal rate	
Children: Unknown	ASD Children: 18% child welfare cases
ID Adults with guardian: 30%	ASD Adults with guardian: 34%
ID/A Adults with guardians: 56.1%	

Office of Developmental Supports

- ▶ Program Office within the Department of Human Services
- ▶ Administrative Entity for the PA Office of Developmental Programs
- ▶ ODS Eligibility:
 - ▶ ID; ASD; DD; MCC
 - ▶ Must include significant adaptive deficits
 - ▶ Unable to work with other cognitive disabilities, but will facilitate warm handoffs as much as possible
- ▶ Lifelong services: not symptomatic, episodic illnesses

START

START = Systemic, Therapeutic,
Assessment, Resources and Treatment)

A national model, supported through
the University of New Hampshire

Active in over 20 states

START

24-hour community-based crisis response and clinical consultation team

Unlike other crisis response teams, specifically intended for those with intellectual disabilities and/or autism spectrum disorder and co-occurring behavioral health needs.

START

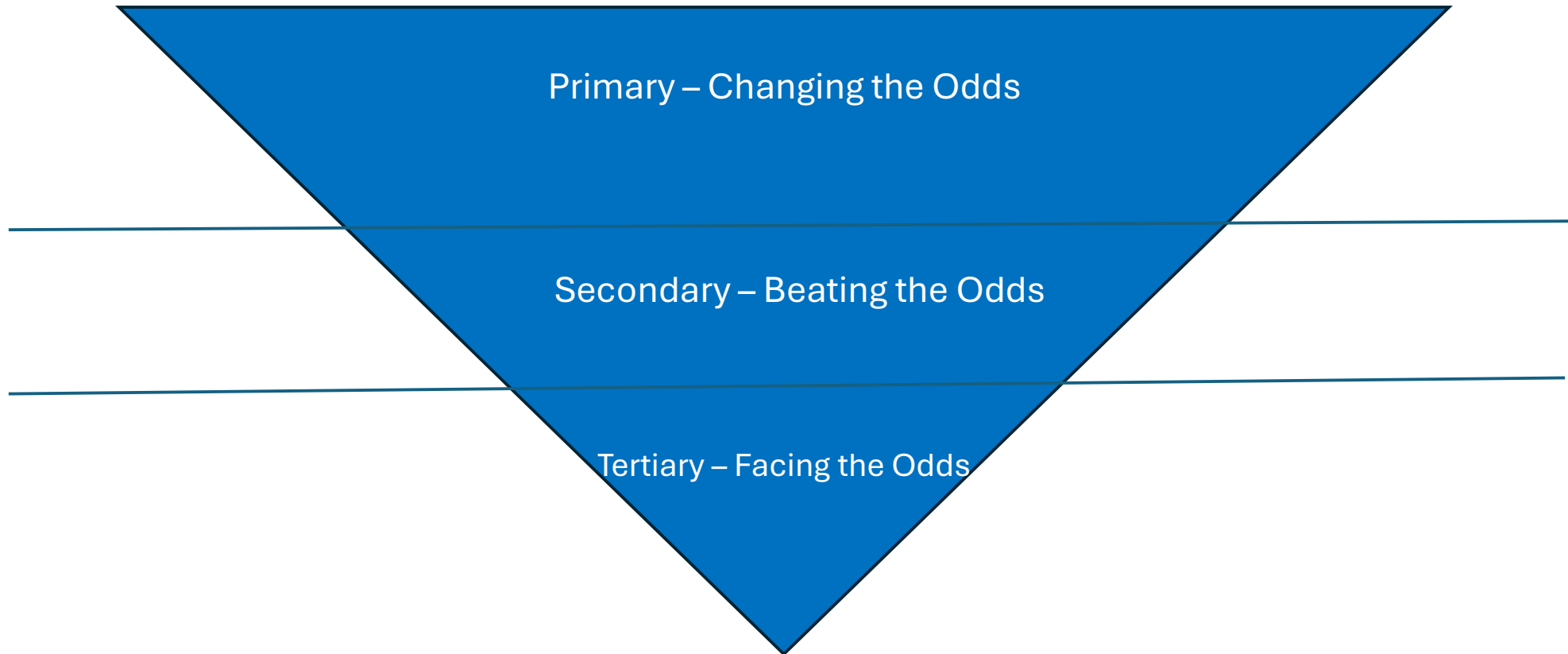
Three areas Allegheny County wants to address:

- Multiple Psychiatric inpatient hospitalizations
- Revolving residential placements (including jail)
- Overuse of intense community supports that have no impact on quality of life

Allegheny County has over 6,200 individuals registered.

Approximately 2% of our population would be targeted for this model.

START – A Tertiary Model



START

▶ Challenges:

- ▶ A lot of investment in training the START team members
- ▶ A different kind of model to explain well
- ▶ Provider refusal to partner
- ▶ Family refusal to partner

START

▶ Successes:

- ▶ Established early partnerships with local police
- ▶ Accomplished some neighborhood education through actual crisis intervention situations
- ▶ Developed partnerships with local crisis response agencies and teams
- ▶ Successfully diverted individuals from arrest to treatment.

Case Studies



Grant

Angela

Manny

Reggie

Legal Connection, Support, and Intervention

- ▶ Origins: inspired by problem solving courts, has since expanded to all divisions
- ▶ Goals:
 - ▶ Bridging and translating between two (or more) disparate systems
 - ▶ Accommodating disability and allowing for realistic collaboration
- ▶ Values:
 - ▶ Everyone deserves the opportunity to be understood and to learn and grow
 - ▶ Avoiding overuse of and inappropriate services

LeCSI –Individual Participant Support and Legal System Resource

- ▶ Assists individuals registered with ODS who are involved in the court system in any capacity
 - ▶ Providing direct support in all settings
 - ▶ Follow along services after disposition
- ▶ Resource to courts and attorneys when a case involves someone with ID/A
 - ▶ Information about disabilities and how to recognize them
 - ▶ Accommodations
 - ▶ Appropriate and available resources

LeCSI – Legal System Partnership

- ▶ Respect for an individual’s autonomy and agency
 - ▶ Protecting the individual’s choice is paramount (HIPAA Order)
 - ▶ Not a “get out of jail free” card
- ▶ Support, accountability, accommodating disability
 - ▶ What is meaningful for this person?
 - ▶ Where is the best environment to effect change?

LeCSI Program Coordinator

- ▶ Type of Blended Case Manager / Peer Support Specialist
 - ▶ Relationship with the participant, importance of *their* desired best outcome: health, safety, and growth
 - ▶ Active cases – expectations, practical preparation, support during proceedings
 - ▶ Resolved cases – ongoing resource and point of contact, continued visits
 - ▶ Collaboration with different service systems
- ▶ Resource to the court
 - ▶ Description of current services (or lack thereof)
 - ▶ Plans for unmet needs
 - ▶ Explanation of service options

Statistics*

▶ October, 2020

(Tracking and communication only.)

- ▶ 26 individuals from preliminary hearings through probation
 - ▶ 16 cases at MDJ level
 - ▶ 11 cases at CCP level
 - ▶ 2 probation cases

Statistics*

▶ October, 2020

(Tracking and communication only.)

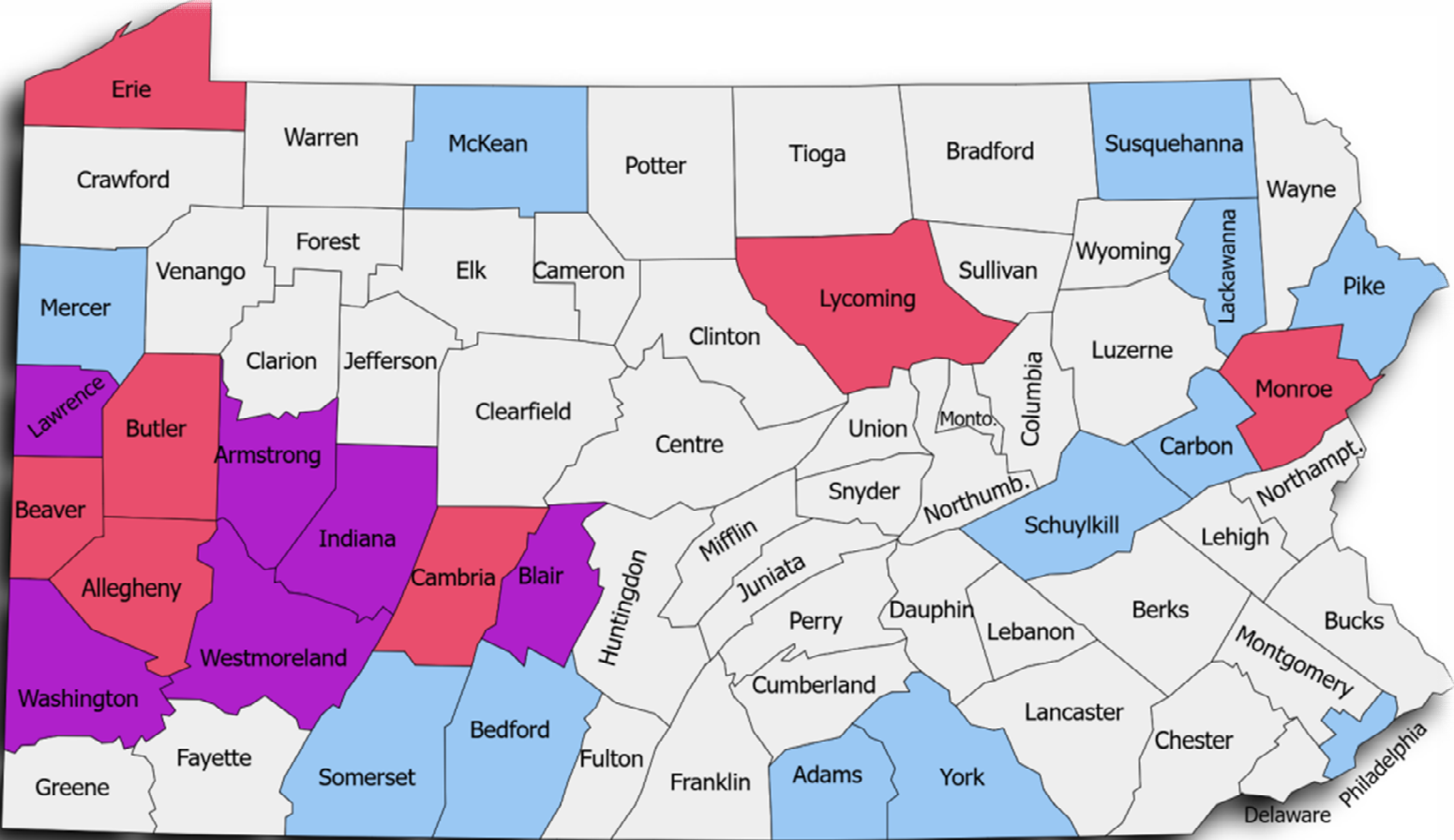
- ▶ 26 individuals from preliminary hearings through probation
 - ▶ 16 cases at MDJ level
 - ▶ 11 cases at CCP level
 - ▶ 2 probation cases

▶ October, 2024

- ▶ 167 individuals from investigation through unpaid fines and restitution
 - ▶ 91 active participants with program coordinators
 - ▶ 41 cases at MDJ level (+40 summaries)
 - ▶ 34 cases at CCP level
 - ▶ 37 probation cases

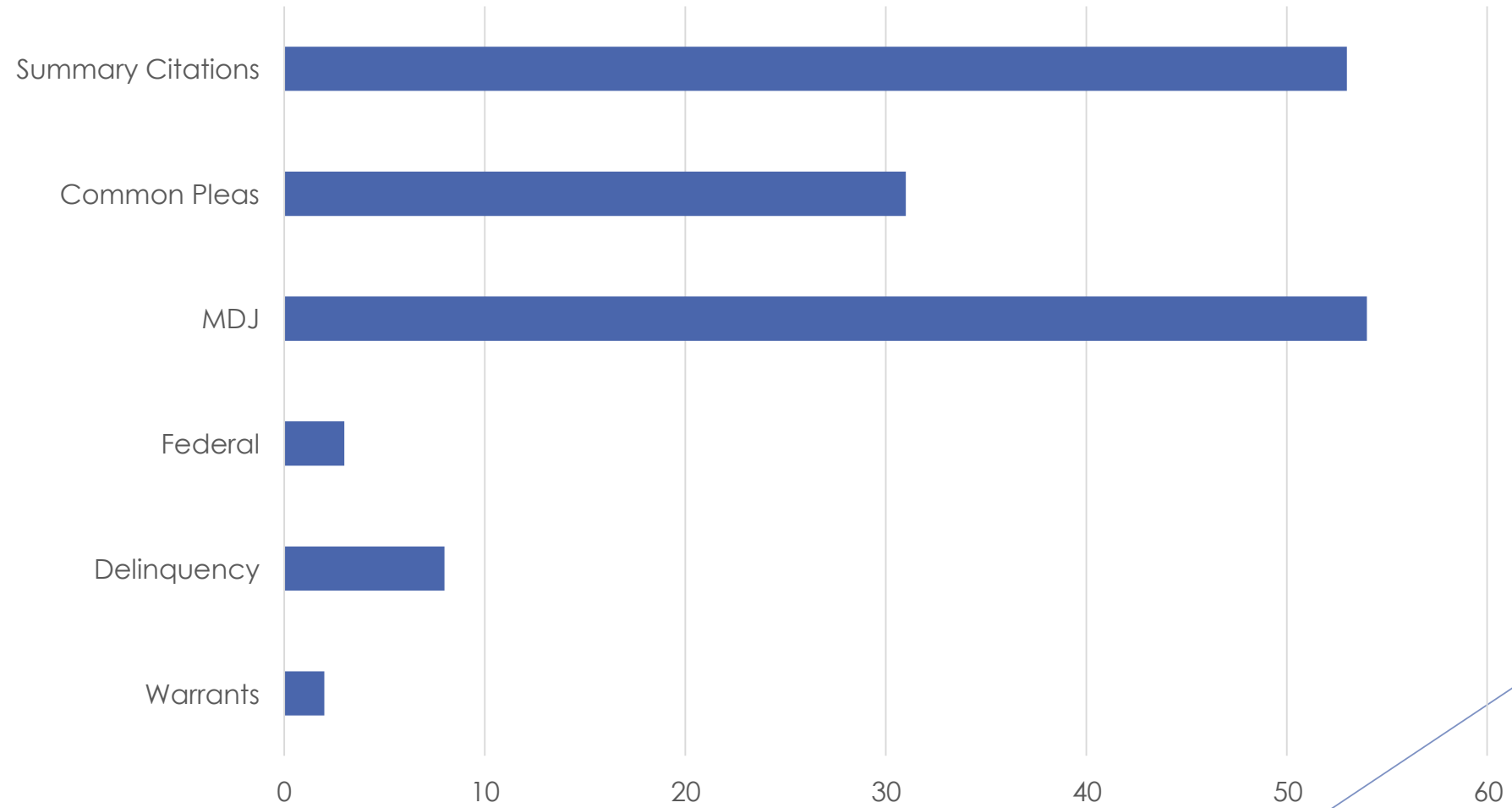
*886 individuals identified from 2007 - 2024, but an accurate accounting is likely impossible

Cross-County Interaction

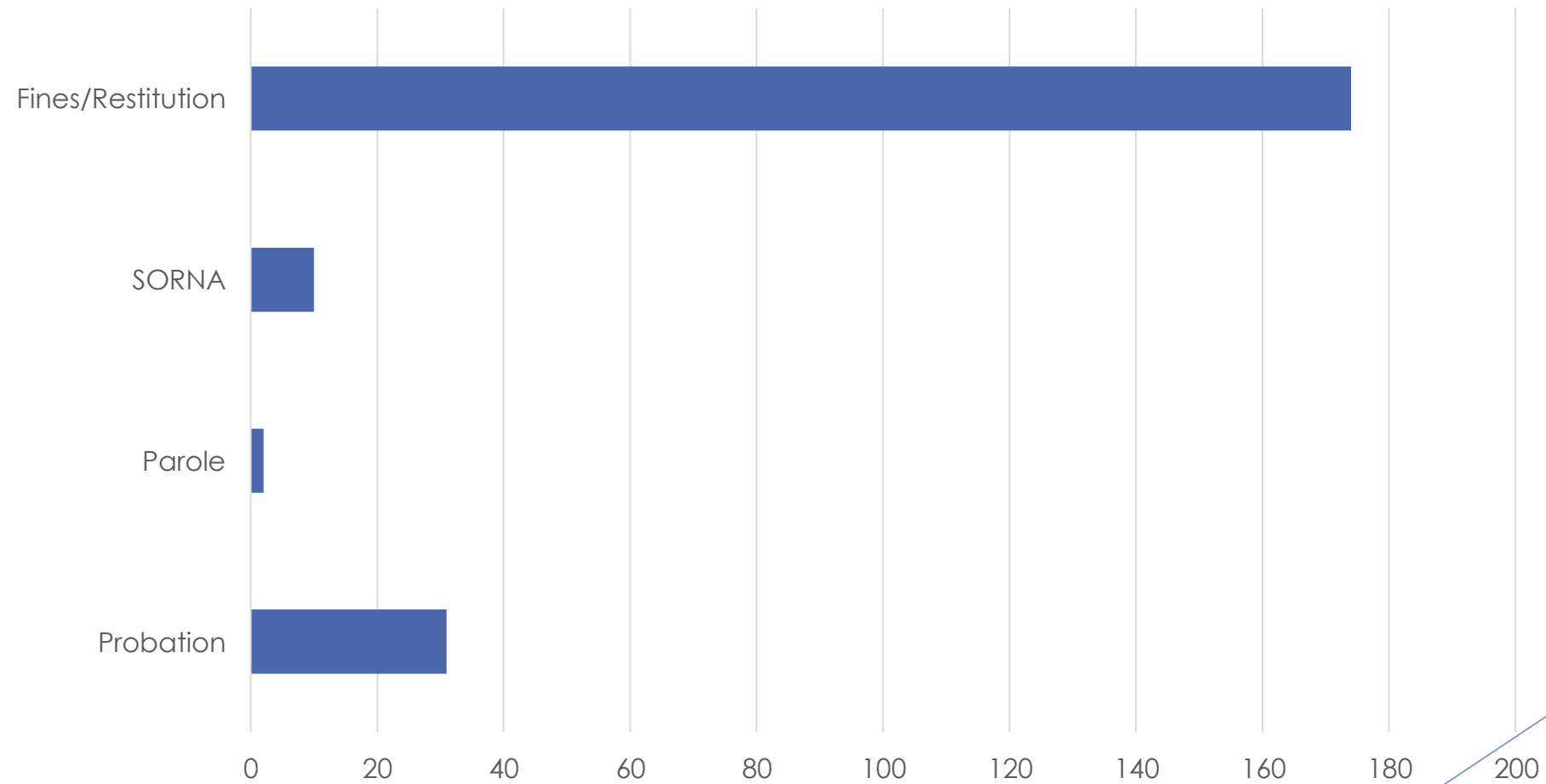


- Charging
- Both
- Registration

Venue



Post-Conviction

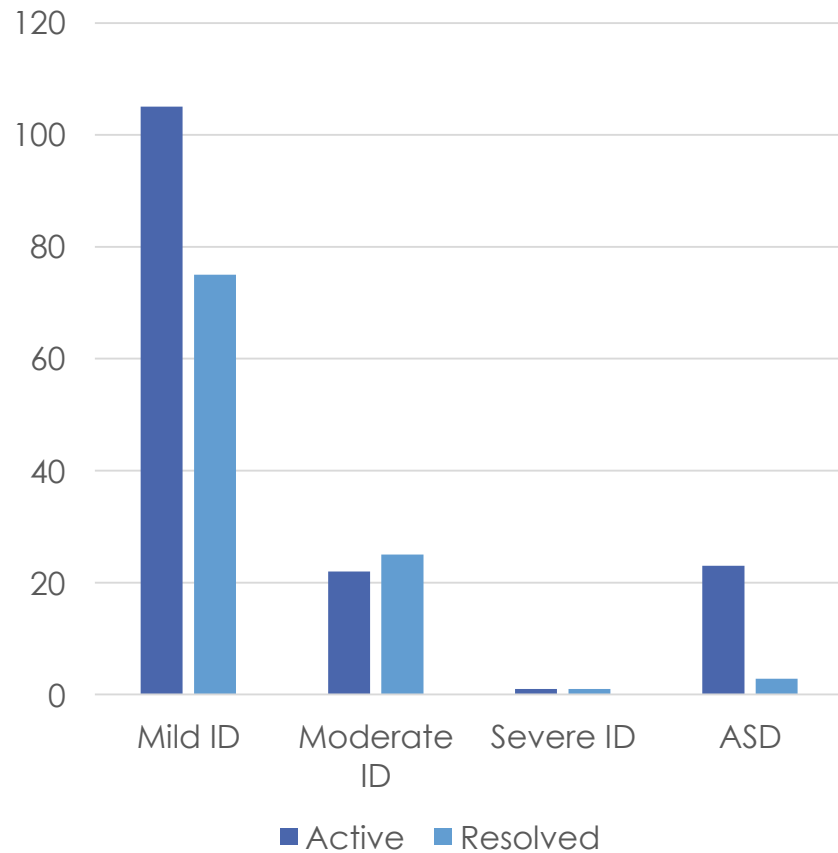


Demographics

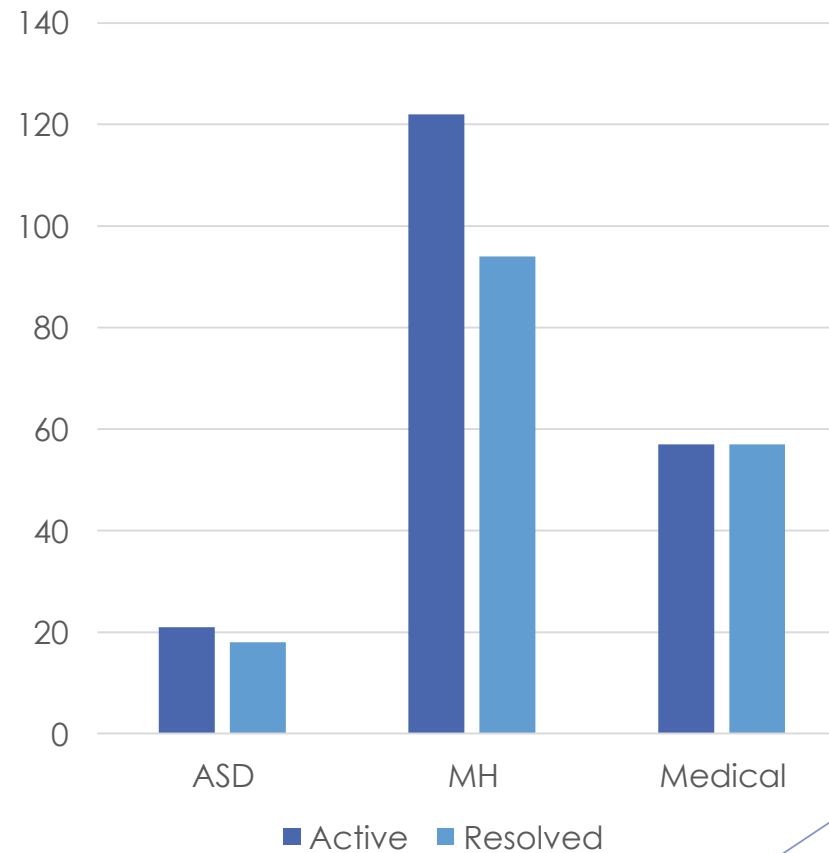
Gender	214 identify as Males			111 identify as Females			NBT
Ethnicity	6 Hispanic			2 Hispanic			0 Hispanic
Race	B/AA-116	White-88	Other-10	B/AA-57	White-47	Other-7	B/AA-4
>18	4	2	1	2	0	0	0
18-26	50	38	4	17	18	4	1
27-35	42	23	5	30	15	1	2
36-44	16	9	0	5	5	1	1
45+	4	16	0	3	9	1	0

Diagnostic Statistics

Primary Diagnosis



Comorbidities



Learning Experiences and System Gaps

- ▶ Intermediate hybrid facility
- ▶ Recidivism
- ▶ Programs for meaningful accountability
- ▶ Overstaffing
- ▶ Understaffing and lack of providers

Successes

Taryn

Simultaneous family and criminal divisions

Lucas

Delinquency / dependency crossover

Jamar

A decade of incarceration before identification

JJ

Importance of pre-arrest and summaries involvement

Possible Immediate Action Steps

- ▶ HIPAA Order / Communication between organizations / relationships
- ▶ Accommodations
 - ▶ Walkthrough arraignments, courtroom adjustments, social stories
 - ▶ Visits with individuals who have been incarcerated
 - ▶ Translational services to individuals, family, and staff
- ▶ Questions to ask
- ▶ Competency evaluations
- ▶ Restorative justice and meaningful rehabilitation
- ▶ Immediate resources

I would like to express our family's appreciation for the legal services through LeCSI. Mathew B. has made an important impact in moving through the court system. With our special needs individuals, calm, compassion, and consistency are vital components of overall care and support. Mathew has connected with our grandson in a very positive manner. His communication with the family has been a lifeline, effectively communicating at all stages of progression with the case.

We are grandparents raising our grandchildren to the best of our ability. With our special needs population, change is very difficult, especially unfamiliar people and environments. This entity provides direction and explanation, and personal supports, including in person, greatly reducing the uncertainty and stressors that accompany these unfortunate circumstances. If only we could have more Mathews!

--Linda P., grandmother of LeCSI participant

“The LeCSI program has become an essential partner to the Behavioral Assessment Unit (BAU), significantly enhancing the identification and support of individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism who become involved in the criminal justice system. In addition to their collaboration, LeCSI provides invaluable information and education to the courts, informing attorneys, judges, and court administration about available resources and supports for these individuals. As a result, our psychiatrists are able to deliver more comprehensive competency evaluations to the courts and offer well-informed recommendations. The BAU greatly values this partnership and looks forward to continuing to work together to better serve this vulnerable population.”

--Laura Spicer, BAU Manager, Allegheny County Pretrial Services

“It cannot be said enough about how invaluable the LeCSI project has been to ensuring that our office provides zealous holistic representation for this client population. These clients are some of the most vulnerable, and yet often missed, because of their invisible disabilities. The close working relationship with the LeCSI team not only eliminates the barrier of identification but also educates participants throughout the court system on the unique needs and services of this client population. And, most importantly, clients feel more at ease about the legal process because they have a trusted LeCSI team member with them at every stage of the process from fingerprinting at arraignment to probation violation hearings.

“The LeCSI project continues to provide our office with education for our attorneys on how to identify possible ID/A concerns and how to meet this client population “where they are at.” Having more aware and educated attorneys will help all clients receive the benefits of holistic representation whether they meet eligibility criteria for LeCSI or not.”

--Samantha Sridaran, Managing Attorney, Supportive Representation Unit,
Allegheny County Office of the Public Defender