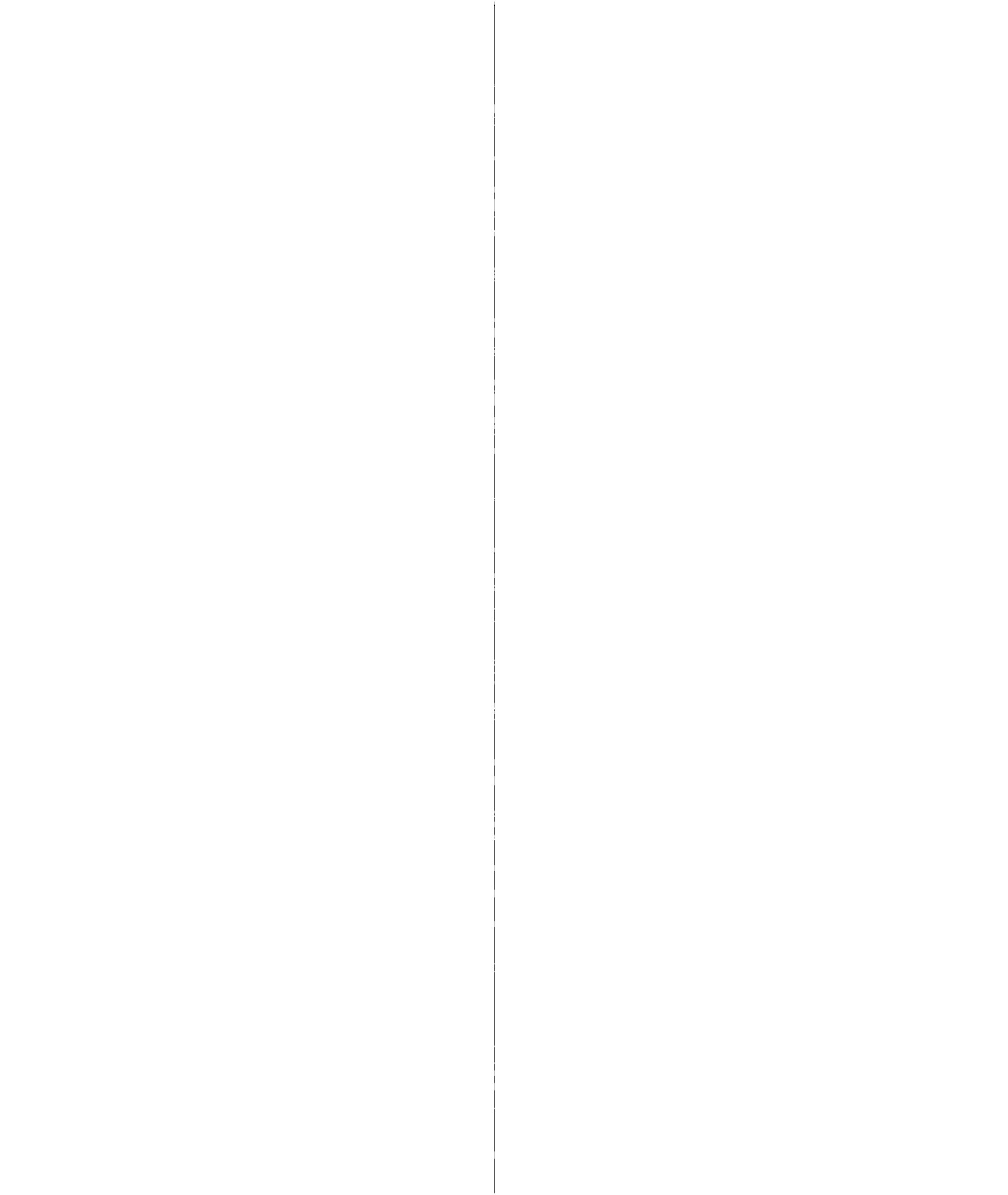


II. Youth Development		
	A. Establish youth development training and practice for those who work with children and youth, as a mechanism for cultural and systemic change in public or private youth-serving contexts.	Begin immediately
	B. Create a Youth Division at Metropolitan Police Department, where a well-trained corps of officers trained in youth development theory and practice will work with youth and youth-serving organizations.	Begin immediately
	C. Create new recreational spaces and enjoyable neighborhood places for youth, using currently vacant and under utilized property across the city.	Begin immediately
	D. Establish a process and protocol for the timely delivery of services after risk assessment processes at child and youth serving agencies.	Begin immediately
	E. Ensure that out of school time programming options are brought in line with scope of need, particularly in the areas of employment and academic mentorship, services for youth transitioning from the juvenile justice system, resources for older high school youth (13-17 years of age), and dropout and truancy prevention.	Begin immediately
	F. Establish high quality substance abuse prevention and treatment program alternatives for youth who need drug counseling, treatment services, and other prevention education services and support.	Begin immediately
	G. Create and maintain an interactive youth services webpage on the District of Columbia website.	Begin immediately

III. Programming in the Juvenile Justice System		
	A. Promote aggressive strategies to simplify and streamline current regulatory policies governing Office of Contracts and Procurement and Office of Personnel Management, as a means to reduce the backlog and burdensome processes related to contracts, procurement, acquisition of equipment and resources, and hiring of personnel and other experts and advisors.	Begin immediately
	B. The Mayor should: 1. Direct the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) to work with Court Social Services (CSS) to design and implement critically-needed "front end" diversion opportunities for youth. 2. Direct financial resources to the Office of Corporation Counsel/Juvenile Section to design diversion programs.	Begin immediately
	C. Continue with plans to construct a secure juvenile detention facility at Mt. Olivet site for pre-trial and pre-disposition youth, consistent with best practices observed for individualized care and attention. Child and youth friendly multidisciplinary care and treatment should constitute the core of this work.	Begin immediately
	D. Promote the development, implementation, and evaluation of various case management strategies utilized in community supervision for probation and aftercare.	Begin immediately
	E. In order to design a facility for committed youth consistent with change from custodial emphasis to treatment-based options, proceed with the demolition of Oak Hill and the building of a facility for committed youth. Implement proposal for construction of a new secure juvenile facility to replace Oak Hill on the Laurel site or a site closer to the District of Columbia, with a central focus on rehabilitation and the preparation of youth for integration into community life.	Begin immediately
	F. Continue with the development of community-based residential treatment facilities in the District of Columbia for PINS and committed youth needing such services; and, develop and implement a work plan for returning youth from out-of-District placements so that they may come back to their home and families.	Begin immediately



IV. Legislative Authority Related to Juvenile Justice System		
	A. The Mayor should not support lowering the age for transfer of juveniles for prosecution as adults under any circumstances.	
	B. Amend Title 16 of the D.C. Juvenile Code to include a purpose clause outlining the underlying principles and values of the juvenile justice system.	Begin immediately
	C. Separate the persons in need of supervision, abuse and neglect, and juvenile delinquency provisions of the D.C. Juvenile Code in a manner consistent with the <i>Family Court Act</i> .	Begin immediately
	D. Amend the persons in need of supervision provisions of the D.C. Juvenile Code (Section 16-2320), so that children who have been charged with truancy and other minor offenses are not detained in secure settings designed for youth charged with more serious offenses.	Begin immediately
	E. Amend Section 16-2323 of the D.C. Juvenile Code related to jurisdiction after commitment, in order for the Youth Services Administration to conduct periodic evaluations of the committed child to determine if the services provided to the child have been effective.	Begin immediately
	F. Establish a requirement under Section 26-2319 of the D.C. Juvenile Code for YSA to conduct an evaluation of each child taken into custody to determine the appropriate services, with a process that requires that an initial assessment occur within fourteen (14) days of custody. An individualized treatment plan should be developed within thirty (30) days of the initial assessment.	Begin immediately
	G. Amend the confidentiality section of the D.C. Code to (Section 4-105.08) permit agencies in the juvenile justice system to provide cooperative and comprehensive solutions as part of a continuum of services to delinquent youth, while protecting the right of confidentiality.	Begin immediately
	H. Establish, by statute, an Inter-Agency Task Force in the Office of the Corporation Counsel/Juvenile Section, enabling representatives from all agencies dealing with court-involved youth or identified at-risk youth to structure a comprehensive community-based juvenile justice program.	Begin immediately
	I. Establish a blended sentencing provision of the D.C. Juvenile Code, which would allow the Superior Court to have the option, upon conviction and transfer of a child or youth to the adult system, to return the youth to the juvenile system for rehabilitation.	Begin immediately
	J. Amend the direct file provisions of the D.C. Code (Section 16-2307) to allow for the transfer of a youth to the adult system, only after he or she has received a judicial hearing.	Begin immediately
	K. Amend and delete the juvenile transfer provisions of the D.C. Juvenile Code- Sections 16-2307 (e-1) and (e-2), in particular- in order to remove the presumption of guilt from the Court's transfer proceedings.	Begin immediately

	L. Amend criteria for detention and commitment outlined in Sup. Ct. Juv. R. 106 to include the guidelines ordered by the Court for the <i>Jerry M.</i> decree for detention of youth.	Begin immediately
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Background and Historical Context

The evolution of governmental oversight for juvenile justice in the nation's capital city originated in conversations about the relative authority of federal and local entities early in the twentieth century. Established in 1906, the juvenile code was amended four times between 1938 and 1969. The changes in 1969, along with the organization and creation of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia in 1970, largely created the oversight and management structure that exists today. These developments included attention to more substantial community-based services for persons in need of supervision, the assigning of various responsibilities for intake and diversion to the Director of Social Services at the Superior Court, and calls for more systematic coordination with local District of Columbia government agencies.

In addition to creating a structure which stands today as a "bifurcated system," where federal and local authorities share different responsibilities in detention and commitment of juvenile delinquents, the 1969 and 1970 changes also raised critical questions about the scope and quality of services. Ultimately, the public debate in 1969 and 1970 resulted in a more tightly defined and condensed juvenile code, better legal representation for youth through the establishment of the Public Defender Service, and the establishment of the Office of Corporation Counsel's right to represent the District in juvenile proceedings before the Superior Court. Debates over the next fifteen years would make it clear that the lack of a more unified system created problems for the

delivery of services to children and youth. The 1969 law also established categories of delinquency, persons in need of supervision, and neglect.

Policy conversations related to the juvenile code from 1969 onward provide a valuable historical note for the evaluation of current challenges, as both the Court and the District of Columbia local government grappled with the practicalities of bifurcation in the context of expanding functions and contests of meaning over jurisdictional oversight. In no other context did this become more hotly debated than in the discussion of federal prosecutorial discretion related to juvenile treatment as adults. Patricia Wald of Neighborhood Legal Services (predecessor to Public Defender Service) informed one Senate hearing related to lowering the age for adult prosecution in 1969 that she did not believe that federal prosecutors supplied the “evidence that our adult criminal system in the District has a better rehabilitation record than our juvenile system, or that prosecutors can pick those that need adult treatment better than judges or social service (sic) persons.”⁴ Wald’s comments have been addressed by contemporary social science research which demonstrates that juveniles incarcerated with adults ultimately have a higher recidivism rate and commit more violent acts upon release from adult facilities.

Wald’s comments were also made alongside others related to the Court disposition process and gaps in services for youth. “Court reform is essential,” the Committee on the District of Columbia heard in 1969, “but even more important is reform in the pretrial detention facilities and improvement in the post-trial correctional

⁴*Crime in the National Capital*, Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Juvenile Court Proceedings, November 18, 1969, p.1858.

institutions." As conditions that compromised life and safety, as well as poor programming, were exposed at Oak Hill and the Receiving Home, the desire for accountability increased. This would become much clearer after a class action lawsuit was filed in 1985 and a panel of experts issued their recommendations.

The *Jerry M.* case stands as a symbol of the challenges surrounding the building of a continuum of care in the District of Columbia. With the historical context of overcrowding and mixing of pretrial and committed populations, escalating lengths of stay, poor alternatives for community placement of status offenders, improper police procedures related to detention, and the poor quality of facilities and programming at the city's Receiving Home and at the Oak Hill Youth Center in Laurel, Maryland, this action should not have surprised city or community leaders (Soler 1986).

Jerry M., et. al. v. District of Columbia, et. al, C.A. No. 1519-85, Superior Court of the District of Columbia, attempts to place some specific obligations on the District of Columbia with respect to number of children in secure detention or secure commitment pursuant to being respondents in the juvenile justice system. It also attempts to impose some specific requirements on the District of Columbia as to the services and treatment afforded to those respondents by the District of Columbia for their care and rehabilitation. In addition, the case attempts to hold the District of Columbia accountable for not complying with these obligations. This is a civil action, so that the obligations are to be forged in the context of litigation with the plaintiffs on one side and the defendants on the other side. The litigation resulted in the entry of a Decree or Judgment by the Court,

which is binding on all parties, primarily and principally the District of Columbia. The parties agreed that children in the system have the right to be housed and provided with services in the least restrictive setting, consistent with safety of the community, the needs of the child and applicable law and court rules.

The Mayor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Youth Safety and Juvenile Justice Reform recognizes that these objectives are all mutually dependent and all must be planned and designed at the same time, so that they all fit together to form one consistent continuum for the care and treatment of children in the custody of or commitment to the District of Columbia. Whereas these objectives are necessary to come in compliance with *Jerry M.*, they are also fundamental to youth safety and juvenile justice reform.

Working with and under the direction of the Mayor of the District of Columbia, the Commission expects that the proposed Youth Services Coordinating Commission will make bolder progress because of the ability to establish accountability in a more collaborative framework. The closing of Cedar Knoll in 1993 and a subsequent order from Judge George W. Mitchell to close the Receiving Home in 1995 resulted in an end to some of the deplorable conditions for some of the city's children in the juvenile justice system, but these actions did not solidify a closer working relationship among the judiciary, Executive branch, DC Public Schools, and other relevant agencies that impact detention and commitment of children.⁵

⁵Bart Lubow and Joseph B. Tulman, "Introduction: The Unnecessary Detention of Children in the District of Columbia," *District of Columbia Law Review* 3 (Fall 1995).

In addition, the Commission accepts that *Jerry M.* is intimately related to the leadership and partnership of the Council of the District of Columbia, which is bound by the judgment and has as much responsibility as anyone else to take immediate action to bring the District of Columbia in compliance with the judgment entered pursuant to the consent of all the parties.

As we all contemplate the recommendations and information set forth in this report, one need only read the original *Jerry M.* panel report dated November 26, 1986 to see that - in addition to the revelations related to deplorable conditions of detention and commitment in 1985- panelists also raised other themes.⁶ Major themes included police/youth relations, stereotyping of youth in the media and among some youth service providers, inadequate diversion opportunities, and a general sense of frustration with a fragmented juvenile justice system. Currently, the District of Columbia and the *Jerry M.* plaintiffs are also working out details for a community-based continuum of care, pending an expert report authorized under Memorandum Order B of the consent decree.⁷ The Commission is also aware of the need to develop a plan to bring youth home who are currently in residential placement out-of-District in facilities where there is poor monitoring and oversight of care.⁸ Still, much work remains to be done to build an effective system of care for youth in the juvenile justice system.

⁶Marty Breyer, Robert E. Brown, and Paul DeMuro, *Report of the Jerry M. Panel*, November 26, 1986.

⁷Libby K. Nealis to Judge Eugene N. Hamilton, September 28, 2001; Vincent Schiraldi to Judge Eugene N. Hamilton, October 3, 2001; Justice for DC Youth! Coalition to Judge Eugene N. Hamilton, August 16, 2001; *Jerry M., et.al., Plaintiffs, v. District of Columbia, et.al., Defendants* C.A.No.1519-85 (IFP), *Forty-fifth Report of the Monitor*, April 1, 2001-June 30, 2001, p.14; *Stipulation Regarding Order B* (See Appendix F).

⁸Anny Shin, "Lost in Transit: The District wants to bring kids home from distant treatment centers. But to what?" *Washington City Paper*, October 12, 2001, pp.21-34; Josephine Murphy, "Protecting Children: The Courts Can Do Better," *The Washington Post*, October 30, 2001, p.A20.

Chapter 1

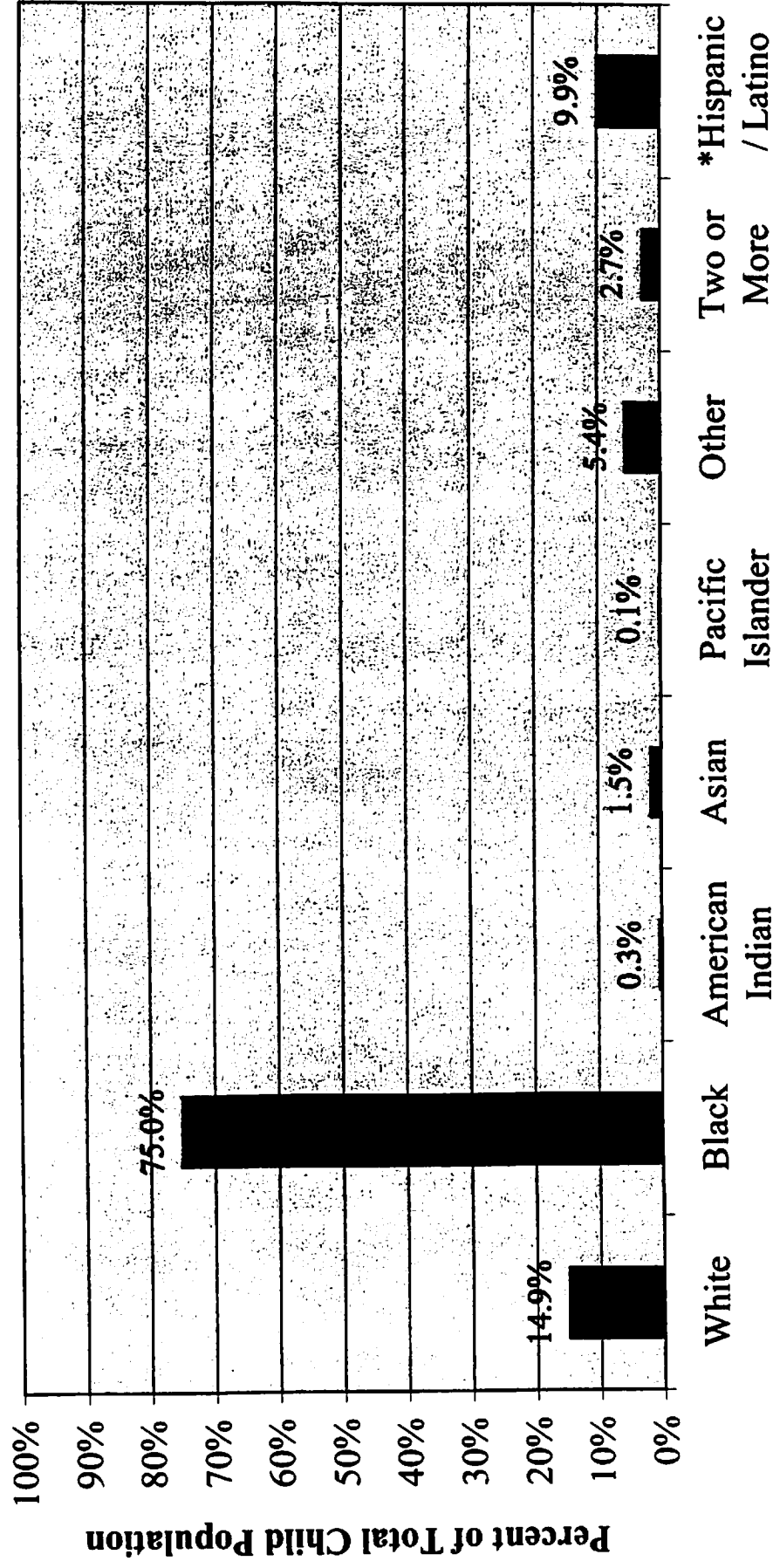
Youth Development: Building and Sustaining a Seamless Network of Services and Opportunities

Youth development has been variously defined as a body of theory and practice that promotes an appreciation of youth assets. In its blueprint for its own local efforts, the Hampton (Virginia) Youth Commission also defines youth development as the process that ensures that children and youth are “ready to become the workforce and community leaders of the twenty-first century.”¹ The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development adds that “healthy youth development strives to help young people develop the inner resources and skills they need to cope with pressures that might lead them into unhealthy and antisocial behaviors” (Dryfoos 1998).

The Youth Development Subcommittee of the Commission was charged with the responsibility to investigate and analyze youth in the context of the broader social, cultural, and geographic environments (See Figures 3 and 4). The main objective was to make recommendations that address strategies to meet the needs for community-based services and opportunities. Subcommittee members discussed public and private strategies of community and youth development, reviewed primary and secondary data bearing on the well-being of children and youth, and analyzed policy recommendations in the context of discussions with public officials, advocates, and youth. Several themes emerged in youth focus groups attended by some Commission members, as well as in

¹ The Hampton, Virginia Youth Commission (materials in Appendix D) integrates youth into many aspects of city planning processes in a very comprehensive manner.

Youth Population (0-17) by Single Race and Hispanic Origin, 2000

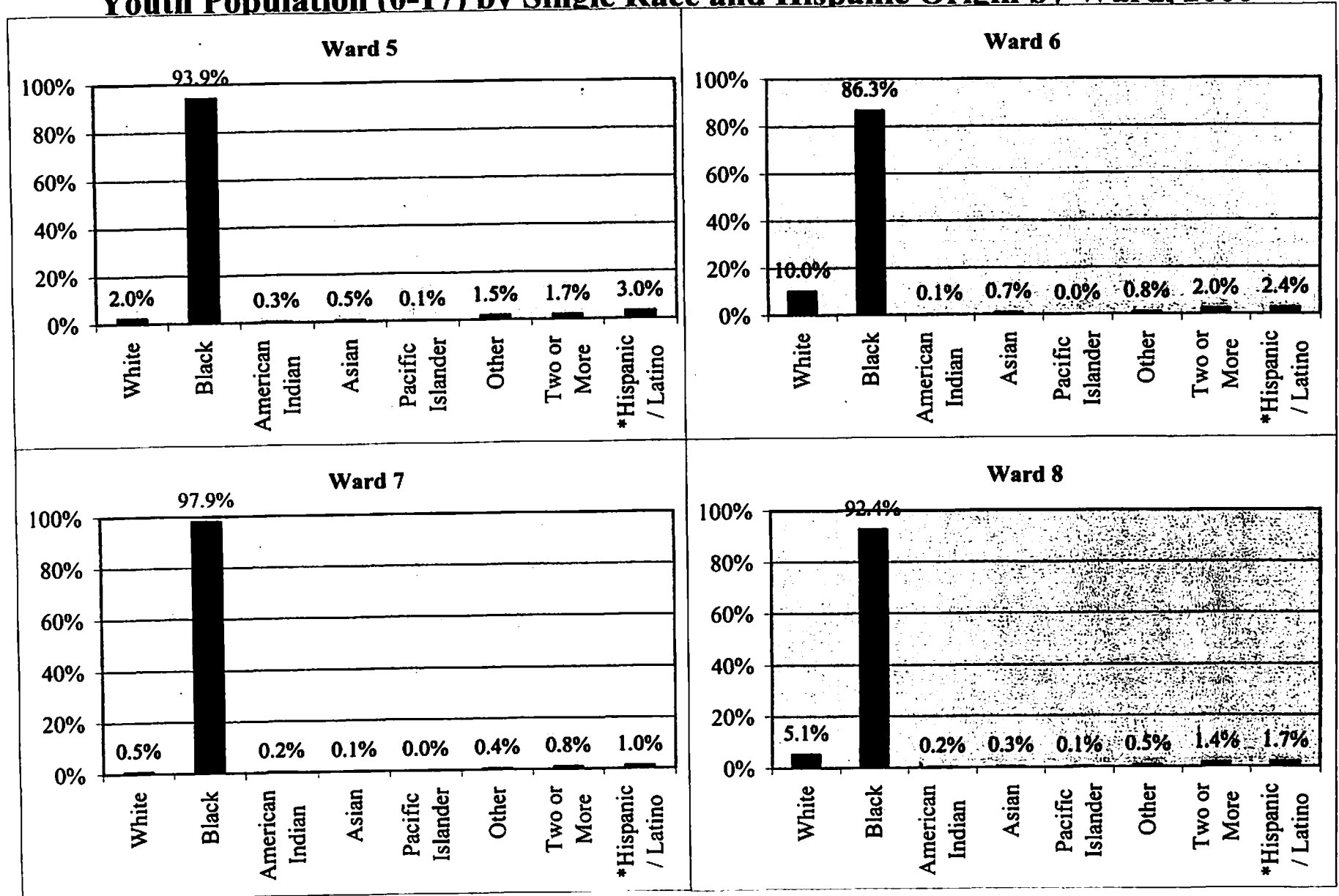


SOURCE: US Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting Data

* Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race

Figure 4

Youth Population (0-17) by Single Race and Hispanic Origin by Ward, 2000



SOURCE: US Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting Data

* Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race

presentations at full Commission meetings. Youth Development Subcommittee members also conducted site visits to Boston, Hampton (Virginia), and New York City to learn more about integrated public and private partnerships and strategies for community and youth development.

Commission members agreed that strategies for youth development must be framed primarily in the context of other healthy community strategies.² For example, children and youth should be viewed as critical components of the District of Columbia's economic development agenda. Employment and housing opportunities sustain options for social and economic mobility for youth and their households. In this context, strategies to assess what to do with vacant and under utilized property targeted for private development should be linked with community and policy conversations related to the assessment of capacity for recreational and community-based programming options. This is also a pervading theme voiced among youth, youth providers, and health and human service providers working to preserve the broader safety net for children, youth, and families.

To summarize, the Youth Development Subcommittee and Commission's prioritization of policy recommendations views the following as foundational to youth development and the preservation of youth safety:

- Youth voices in decision-making and policy processes

²Lola Odubekun, Ph.D., Youth Development Analysis Framework Paper prepared for Youth Development Subcommittee (2001).

- Academic enrichment and mentoring
- Workforce development and training
- Economic and community development and security
- Supportive health and social supports

Data and Information: Measuring Child, Youth, and Community Well-Being

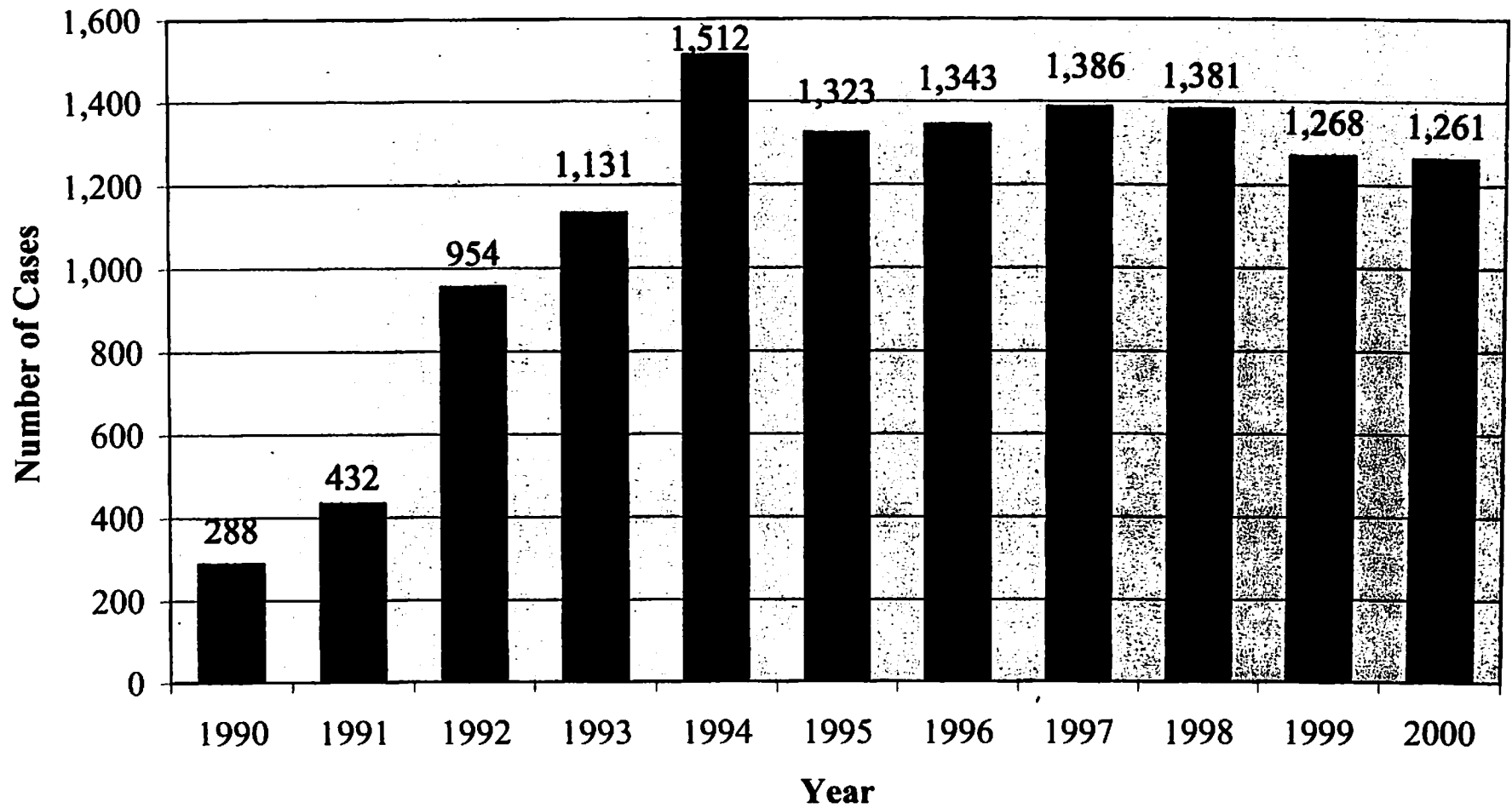
Challenges exist to document needs, opportunities, and policy impacts related to youth development because of the diversity of sometimes incomparable data sets. One of the most important contextual pieces for this discussion has been the 1999 Urban Institute *Capacity and Needs Assessment*. Authorized by the Council of the District of Columbia and conducted by the District of Columbia's Mayor's Office in partnership with Georgetown University, the Urban Institute, and the University of the District of Columbia, the Urban Institute's 1999 report provides important historical information on youth services, capacity, and utilization. Comprehensive in scope, the report covered aspects of youth safety, economic development, child and family services, and juvenile justice.

The Urban Institute's 1999 study is important as an historical marker for certain baseline data related to child, youth, and community well-being, but it does not reflect the impact of more recent policies and programs designed to improve youth safety and expand access and improve the quality of health and social services for youth. Recent downward trends in youth violence and crime, as well as in reported abuse and neglect

cases, suggest that there may be a correlation between human and social services delivery and the recent decline in cases documented at the District of Columbia Courts (See Figures 5 and 6). With respect to "Child Neglect," cases filed declined from a high in 1994 of 1,512 to 1,268 in 1999. Between 1999 and 2000, cases filed declined 18.8%. In the case of "Child Abuse," case filings have fallen from 304 in 1998 to 156 in 2000. While high profile media stories in recent years have singled out extreme examples of juvenile super-predators and bureaucratic and judicial lapses in child welfare (which largely preceded the current Administration), more definitive research is needed on an ongoing basis to assess the specific impact of various factors on child and family well being.

Specifically, longitudinal studies should be designed to analyze how changes in delivery vehicles, the leveraging of public and private investments in new ways, overall population changes, and internal management shifts at the Court and local government have recently impacted outcomes for children and families. Pronounced declines in youth violence and improvement in selected indicators of child and family well-being have also occurred under the guidance of Mayor Williams' human services' team, which has succeeded in bringing the city out of a number of receiverships that impact the delivery of child and family services in community contexts. Marked declines in teenage pregnancy rates and reduction in recipients receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), for example, have occurred since the Urban Institute's study was issued. Major strides in building community-based capacity for recreation and academic enrichment, such as the opening of the Southeast Tennis Center and the launch of a new

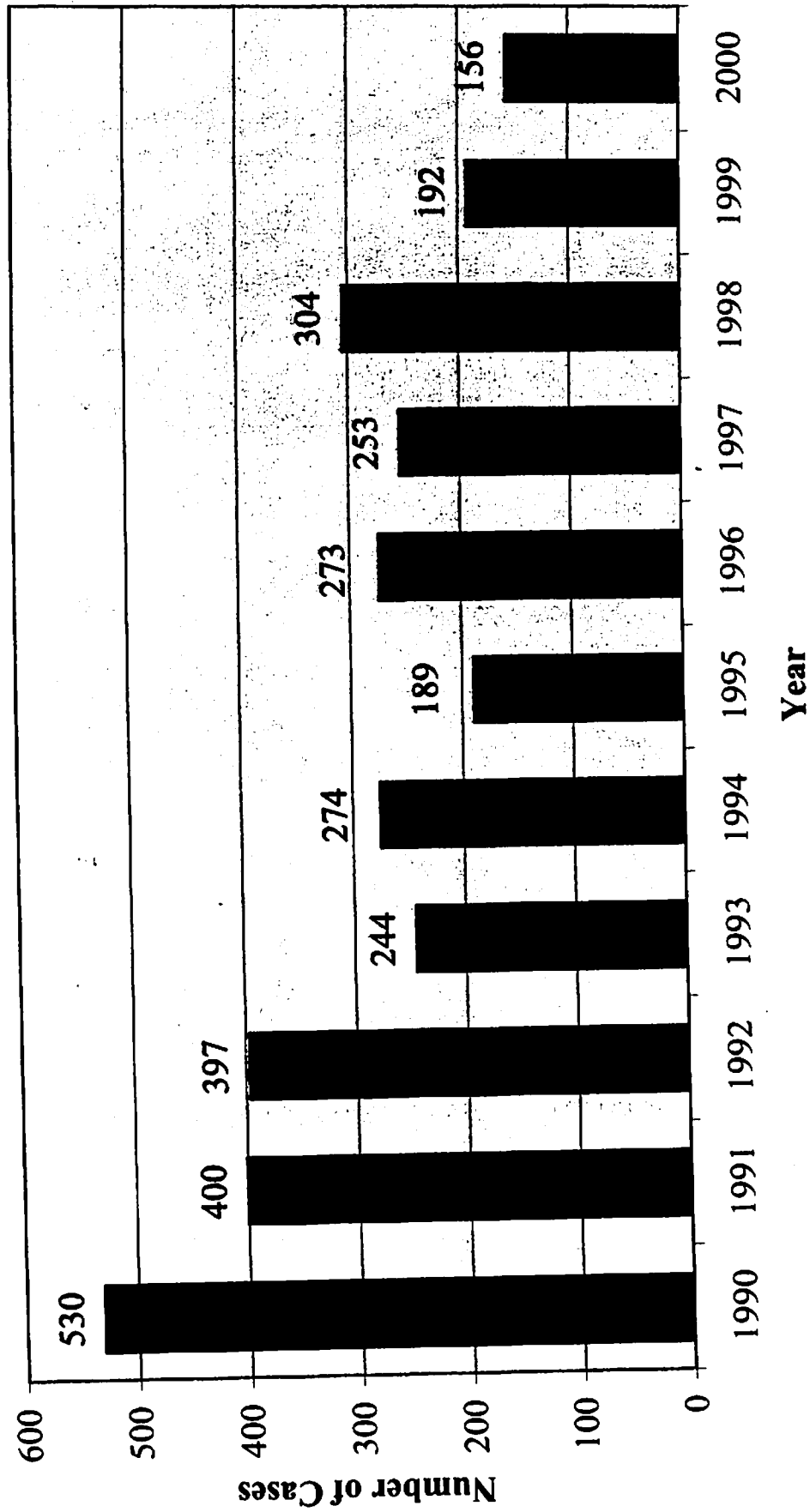
Cases Filed for Child Neglect District of Columbia Courts, 1990-2000



SOURCE: District of Columbia Courts, Annual Reports

Figure 6

**Cases Filed for Child Abuse
District of Columbia Courts, 1990-2000**



SOURCE: District of Columbia Courts, Annual Reports

computer facility at the Bald Eagle Recreation Center, have also taken place. These centers are both in areas earlier identified as in "severe need." This is in addition to broader policy initiatives, such as Medicaid and child insurance coverage expansion, which have been aggressively implemented in communities living below 200% of the federal poverty level.

Demographic Characteristics of Children and Youth in the District of Columbia

Information about the demographic characteristics of youth was pulled from a diverse set of sources, including the District of Columbia Office of Planning, local and national foundations, community-based organizations, and area researchers.

According to the United States Census Bureau's analysis of 2000 Census Data, the District of Columbia Population is 572,059. Approximately 20.1% of the city's population is under the age of 18. Persons under the age of 5 constitute 5.7% of the total youth population (See Figure 3).

In terms of the city's landscape, there is also a noticeable difference in the representation of children and youth as a percentage of each ward's population. The representation of youth as a percentage of the total population ranges from 10.6% and 12.9% in Wards 2 and 3, respectively, to 27.9% in Ward 7 and 36.7% in Ward 8.

When the city's total youth population is analyzed by race and Hispanic origin, White children constitute 14.9% of the total. Black/African American youth constitute 75.0% of the total, American Indian/Alaskan Native 0.3%, Asian 1.5%, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander 0.1%, and Hispanic/Latino 9.9%.

Wards also reflect varied experiences based on race and Hispanic origin. Using the wards with the highest and lowest number of youth as a percentage of total population, White children constitute 23.6% of the Ward 2 population with Black/African Americans representing 60.0%, American Indian/Alaskan Natives 0.6%, Asian 5.5%, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander 0.0%, and Hispanic/Latino 14.0%. In Ward 8, where 36.7% of residents are under the age of 18, White children constitute 5.1% of the total youth population and Black/African American youth represent 92.4%, American Indian/Alaskan Native 0.2%, Asian 0.3%, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander 0.1%, and Hispanic/Latino 1.7%.

In terms of socioeconomic experiences, 25.5% of children in the District of Columbia live in poverty. Stark differences in per capita income among the city's wards are also a good indicator that children in poverty are concentrated in various communities and neighborhoods as well. Children and youth represent 12.4% of the residents in Ward 3, the ward with the highest per capita income of \$63,340, while Ward 8, with 33.2% of its residents under 18 years of age, has the lowest per capita income (\$12,651). The average per capita income for the city is \$29,383, according to 1998 data from the D.C. Office of Planning.

According to more recent surveys and estimates of employment from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, the District of Columbia's 2000 annual average jobless rate stood at 5.8%- higher than the national average of 4.0%. Youth employment figures reflect important labor market trends for young people entering the economy as well. In 1999, the Urban Institute's analysis of United States Census data found that there was a disproportionate impact of unemployment for young people aged 16-19 in Wards 7 and 8. While 24% of total youth unemployed in the District in this age group resided in Ward 8, youth in Ward 3 represented 1% of all of District youth aged 16-19 who were unemployed.

There are other social and educational factors bearing on individual and community well-being, such as educational achievement and family health status, which Commissioners agreed were crucial to understand relative risk in relation to needs and opportunities for the city's youth. Some of the major findings related to arrest and violence declines are analyzed in the next chapter on juvenile justice system interactions, however, the Youth Development Subcommittee's analysis of some of the most important measures of children and youth well-being documented from a variety of public agencies and in the recently-published and comprehensive *DC Kids Count 2000* reflect significant strides. No one measure can capture the varied experiences of children and youth, but the city's children and youth appear to enjoy a higher quality of life during the past few years. Consistent declines in births to single teenage mothers have occurred over the past few years, a finding which has netted the District of Columbia substantial

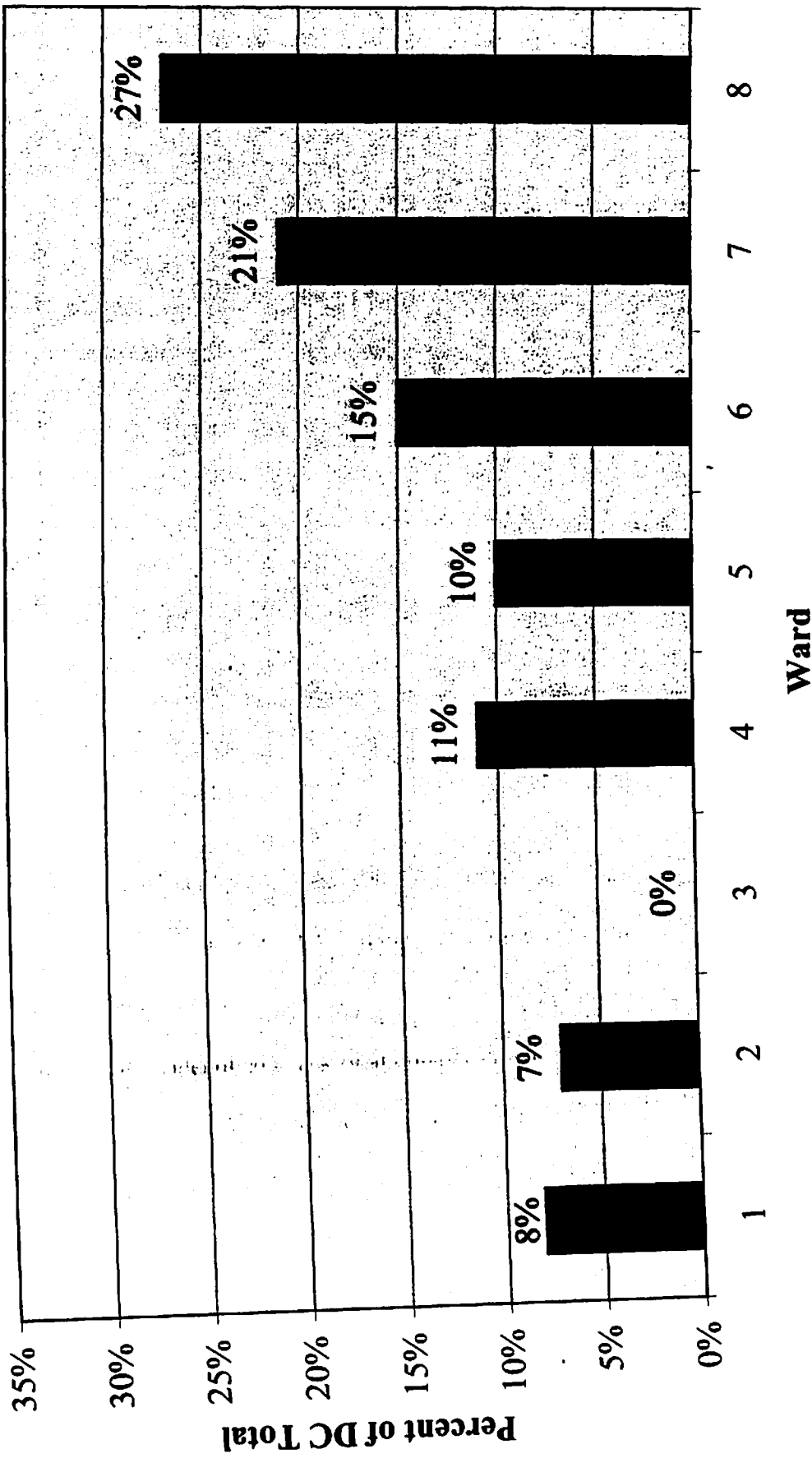
bonuses authorized under federal welfare reform legislation. Notable decreases have also occurred in birth of low-weight babies (risk factor for infant mortality) and a 20% decline in cases of sexually-transmitted diseases among children and youth. In terms of their educational experiences, DC students currently test at or near the national level in the first five grades and score above their peers nationally in 6th and 8th grades. Math scores exhibited similar improvements in 2000, with ten of eleven grades exhibiting gains (See Figure 7). In terms of graduation trends, the rate remains close to 50%.

Despite recent gains in several areas of child and youth well-being, there are also other disparities in economic and living conditions across the city which may help, in part, to explain educational and social disparities, as well as risk factors for delinquency. According to 1998 data, 30% of children in Ward 8 are on cash assistance from the District of Columbia government, while in Ward 3 0% receive the same form of assistance (See Figure 8).

Risk Factors for Youth Crime and Violence

Youth may be put at risk for crime and violence through exposure to a variety of risks. Social science researchers have exhaustively documented the relationship between a number of individual and environmental variables and the incidence of youth crime and violence. Aggression, exposure to violence, abuse, low academic achievement, family disruption and dislocation, socioeconomic status, and race/ethnicity are all strongly correlated with youth crime and violence. In recent years, a number of community-based

Figure 7
Children Failing to Meet Grade 4-5 Basic Math by Ward, 1998



SOURCE: The Urban Institute, Capacity and Needs Assessment (1999)

The Youth Development Subcommittee's and Commission's work related to youth development highlighted four critical areas for enhanced strategies to address identified needs and to strengthen the safety net for youth:

- Police/Youth relations
- Out of School time programming
- Community-based recreational spaces for children and youth
- Supportive health and social services: Substance abuse and Mental health services

Police/Youth Relations

The Commission listened to youth and providers in a variety of contexts regarding the state of police/youth relations in the District of Columbia. Former MPD Chief Rodney Monroe shared his concerns about training and resources with the Commission as well during a fall 2000 meeting and during public hearings in Spring 2001. Prior to his departure, Chief Monroe identified a lack of alternatives to arrest and detention, limited awareness of alternatives to arrest and detention among officers, lack of officer training about youth and youth issues, and truancy as core issues. Subsequent to his departure in mid 2001, the Commission has communicated with Inspector Robin Hoey, the Director of the Office of Youth Violence, and Inspector Lillian Overton, Director of the Youth and Preventive Services Division, to get an understanding of the range of programs that have

According to Chief Shannon Cockett, Director of MPD's Training Programs, efforts to expand role-based training, the recruitment of youth to be role leaders, and the incorporation of more research on how to relate to youth are a part of a new emphasis on youth. Currently, officers receive 39 hours of behavioral science during training, nine of which are spent dealing with "juvenile handling." Training for officers should involve extensive identification of citywide youth programming resources and other community-based services that could assist youth in their personal development.

Youth also share the perception that police officers are not adequately trained to deal with them or their unique issues. During a September 2000 youth panel about experiences in the juvenile justice system, several youth stated that they were often mistreated by police. They said that police do not read them their rights or treat them with respect. Some also felt that police held stereotypes about young people and their propensity for crime based on racist stereotypes. In addition, several youth expressed that they felt that police often are unusually harsh – both verbally and physically.

Four focus groups were conducted in the spring of 2001 to better understand the complex and critical issues regarding youth safety and the state of the juvenile justice system in the District of Columbia. Police/youth relations emerged as a major theme. The focus groups included:

1. Youth gang members and ex-gang members (May 21, 2001)
2. Youth involved with the juvenile justice system (May 22, 2001)

3. Youth service providers and probation officials (May 23, 2001)
4. Youth involved with the juvenile justice system (May 29, 2001)

Regarding youth safety and their relationships with police, each of the subgroups independently identified that the existence of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) is to "serve and protect" all community members equally. But, this theory is not true in practice. Racism, abuse of power, and unnecessary brutality diminish the youth's personal safety and prevent them from having a trusting relationship with the police. Specifically, the various focus groups identified the following perceptions about youth safety and relationships with the MPD:

Unfairness/MPD's Disparity in Treatment of Youth

Youth expressed their disdain for the MPD's disparity in its treatment and targeting of juvenile offenders as evidenced by policing only "[their] neighborhoods" and not Georgetown or Rock Creek. According to the youth, police officers fail to enforce all of the laws such as ticketing taxi drivers who "pass [them] by;" or inform the youth of his/her rights during an arrest. Additionally, police need to respond more expeditiously to service calls from youth.

Youth service providers and probation officers concurred that the MPD is inconsistent in its treatment of youth based on race and class and acknowledged that MPD's hypocrisy often discredits its service.

Racism and Discrimination/MPD's Disparity in Targeting Youth for Juvenile Offenses

Focus groups expressed a belief that police target youth who are “innocently” fraternizing with their friends and harass the group of individuals based on preconceived stereotypes or assumptions. For example, police perform unwarranted searches and pull over vehicles simply because they suspected a youth was allegedly committing an offense. During the search of gang members, police often arrest another individual who was simply passing by the gang on the grounds of “guilt by association” without further investigating his relationship to the group or asking the youth themselves. In many cases, youth articulated how police would also “plant drugs” on them to warrant an arrest.

Classism

Youth identified that the MPD discriminates among different socioeconomic classes and how this classicism often dictates punishment. Whereas wealthier White youth who deal drugs on the streets are merely fined for their offense, Black and Latino youth who commit lesser charges such as possessing drugs are arrested. Juveniles lamented that classism persists because Whites will never be arrested given the fact that Whites are more able to pay their fines. Some youth also contend that when a White juvenile is brought to the court, he/she is usually diverted because the judge will “identify the individual as a member from an outstanding family.” In short, the “rich get off.”

Unnecessary force

Both youth providers and the youth agreed that the MPD use unnecessary force and aggression in its interaction with an alleged offender. Whether it is physical violence (e.g. kicking, hitting, and pushing) or use of weapons during an unwarranted search, youth argue that they have no means of defending themselves. Moreover, the police “put the cuffs on too tight” and “hesitate to get the dogs off you.” Service providers perceive the MPD’s treatment of youth as a more psychological and developmental impediment: police point their guns at the youth far too often, encouraging violence with a deadly weapon and abuse their authority. In their own words, service providers and probation officers stated: “the police are not ‘peace’ officers.” All stakeholders concede that the combination of a “badge and gun” is “deadly.”

Mistrust

Youth providers further described the relationship between youth and MPD as “adversarial and tense.” Police fail to provide a “nurturing” paradigm whereupon youth can build a relationship based on trust and respect. Service providers believe that youth are unable to communicate and express their needs in the absence of a nurturing authority figure. Some youth explained their mistrust for the MPD on the grounds of sexual abuse; a young girl shared her knowledge of friends who have been allegedly raped by officers.

Disrespect

Subjected to unnecessary force, unwarranted searches, and commands, youth generally sense a grave degree of disrespect by the MPD for their general welfare and

safety. This was illustrated in one incident shared by a youth who told everyone that he was stripped outside publicly during an arrest. "Youth distrust for the MPD is justified," remarked youth providers. They concede police are "hung up on their authority" and possess a "lack of respect for youth as citizens."

Cultural Differences

Further discussion among service providers and probation officers led to the identification of cultural differences between police and youth and their families. Specifically, some youth expressed the need to build a bridge between the Hispanic community and the MPD.

With respect to youth culture in particular, it was noted that compromise is difficult given the different cultures among youth, which was characterized as one of survival and that of the police as one of control. The result: adversity.

Alienation from the Community

One of the key themes raised by both youth and service providers is the lack of MPD involvement within the community. While the MPD is present and highly visible