

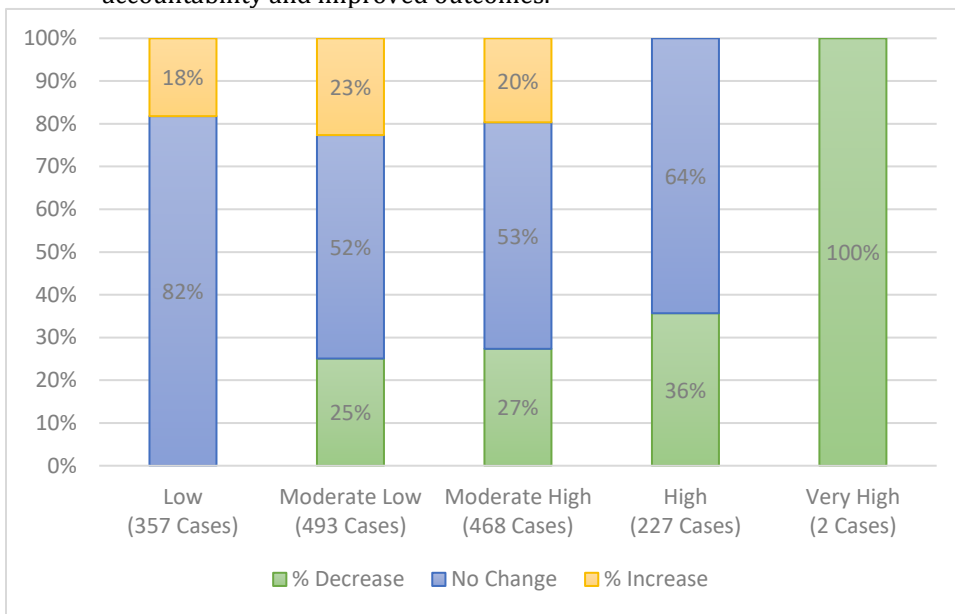


**Probation Juvenile Justice Reform Efforts**  
March 2019

**Juvenile Services Division Outcomes:**

The following outcomes were created by the Juvenile Services Division to include juvenile justice reform elements found in national research. Juvenile Probation’s goals for reducing recidivism are accomplished by tracking successful achievement of these outcomes. These goals focus on preventing youth from returning to the juvenile justice system or entering the criminal justice system by:

1. Engaging juveniles and their families in the juvenile court process;
2. Eliminating barriers to families accessing effective treatment and services; and
3. Partnering with educational and community stakeholders to assure coordinated case management, focused accountability and improved outcomes.



**Outcome 1: Risk Reduction:** Youth involved in the juvenile justice system will receive targeted services that reduce assessed risk to reoffend upon release from supervision.

The juvenile justice system measures risk for youth under supervision to assist in determining the possibility that the youth will recidivate or return to the system. The assessing of risk also helps a probation officer focus on exactly what a youth is struggling with, for example, substance use. Therefore, to measure if probation is impacting youth, it is essential to evaluate if risk has been reduced during the period of probation supervision.

National research supports this outcome as the number one core principle in a research compilation titled “Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System” authored by the Council of State Governments Justice Center. The first core principle is “base supervision, service and resource-allocation decisions on the results of validated risk and needs assessments.”

This outcome is measured by first, categorizing probation cases by the initial and final Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) assessment category, then comparing the initial level for each individual court case, and finally, assessing whether risk increased or decreased during the probation term. There is a small portion (<=1%) of youth that do not have a YLS/CMI assessment completed during an abbreviated time on Probation. These youth are excluded from the analysis above.

Of the cases discharged in the last six months, 36.2% of cases that scored “High” or “Very High” on the initial risk assessment scored at a lower level on the YLS/CMI preceding probation case closure. Lower assessed youth can see an increase in risk due to several reasons. Some include: not sharing information upon initial assessment, additional risks identified after being placed on probation and ensuring targeted case management is utilized.

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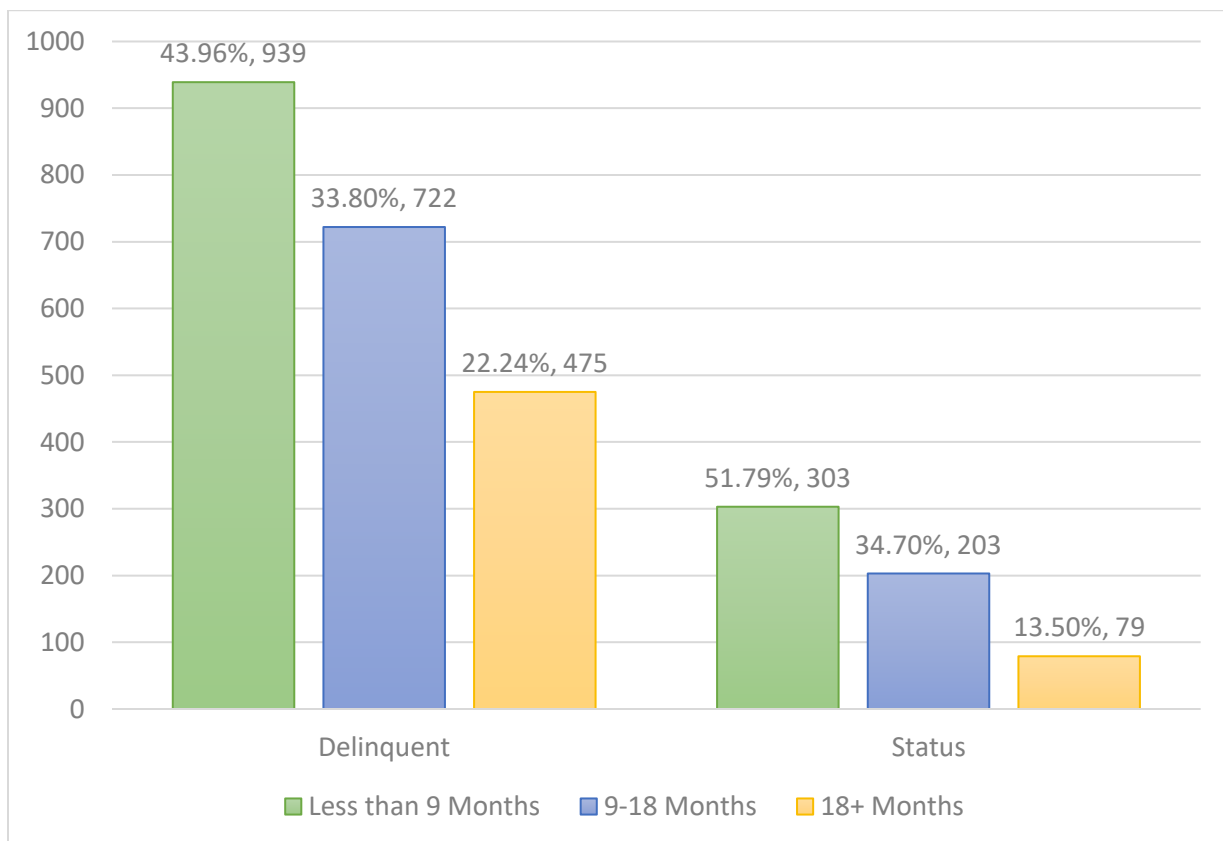
***Outcome 2: Non-delinquent Status Youth: An increase in status youth who are diverted from the juvenile justice system or who receive a decreased term of probation supervision.***

A status youth is involved in the juvenile justice system for non-delinquent behaviors prohibited by law only because of their status as a minor. Examples include truancy and runaway behaviors. National research has shown better results for status youth when they receive immediate support and intervention which addresses the cause of the behavior and focuses on diverting from the juvenile justice system. Therefore, it is essential that probation officers immediately address the needs of the youth and prioritize diverting from the system or decreasing probation terms.

The Vera Institute of Justice's Status Reform Center released a publication titled "From Courts to Communities: The Right Response to Truancy, Running Away, and Other Status Offenses" which identified five hallmarks for status youth. The five include "Diversion from court; an immediate response; a triage process; services that are accessible and effective; and internal assessment."

This outcome is measured by comparing the length of probation for delinquent youth to non-delinquent status youth.

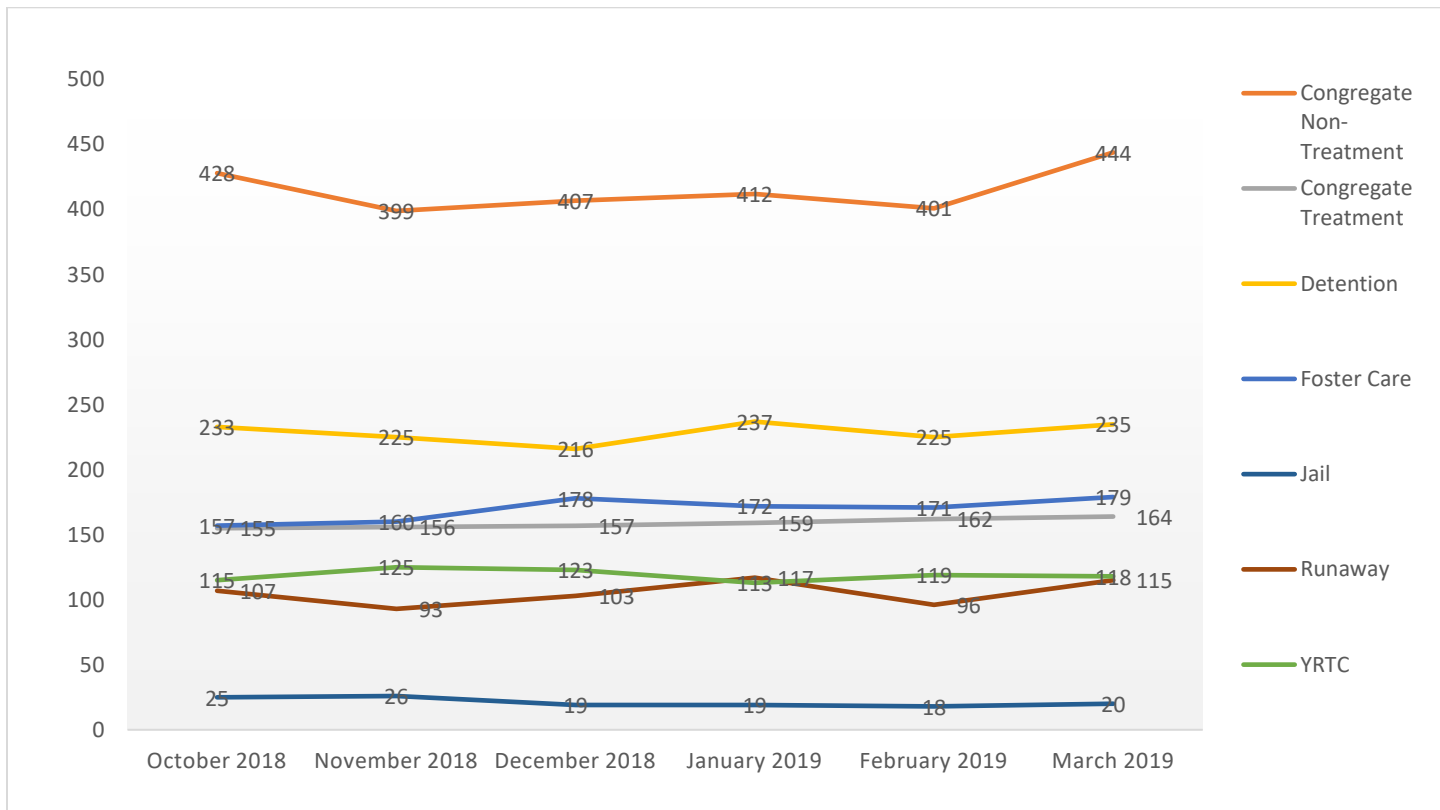
In the last year, 51.79% of youth on probation for non-delinquent status activities were released from probation in less than 9 months, which is 7.83% more than delinquent youth. The average length of probation terms for non-delinquent status youth is 330.55 days: which is 17.29% less than delinquent youth.



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***Outcome 3: Placement: Utilization of community-based services will reduce the use of out-of-home placements (OHP).***



The juvenile justice system was created to assist youth and families in becoming self-sufficient within their own communities. This has also been supported by research, including an increased success for youth that remain in the family home and receive services within their community. The State of Nebraska has a long-standing culture of placing youth out of the family home in hopes of reducing a youth's risk. This is not supported by research and has shown negative results for Nebraska youth and families. Therefore, it is essential that in-home support and services are prioritized by probation officers to assist a youth and family in their own community and reduce a youth's risk of returning to the juvenile justice system.

In the publication *Improving the Effectiveness of Juvenile Justice Programs: A New Perspective on Evidence-Based Practices* by Lipsey, Howell, Kelly, Chapmann and Carver, they find that "research has not supported the effectiveness of large, congregate, custodial juvenile correctional facilities for rehabilitating juvenile offenders." Additionally, they identify three challenges that must be overcome to ensure improved results for juvenile justice youth, the second is "building effective community-based programs for probation, reentry, aftercare, and parole systems to accommodate reductions in secure confinement."

This outcome is measured by analyzing the total number of youth in OHP during any point of the month and the number of youth that are receiving in-home services.

OHP includes a variety of categories. Congregate Non-Treatment includes: crisis stabilization, developmental disability group home, enhanced shelter, group home (A and B), maternity group home (parenting and non-parenting), independent living and shelter. Congregate Treatment includes: acute inpatient hospitalization, psychiatric residential treatment facility, short term residential and treatment group home.

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Outcome 3: Placement (continued)

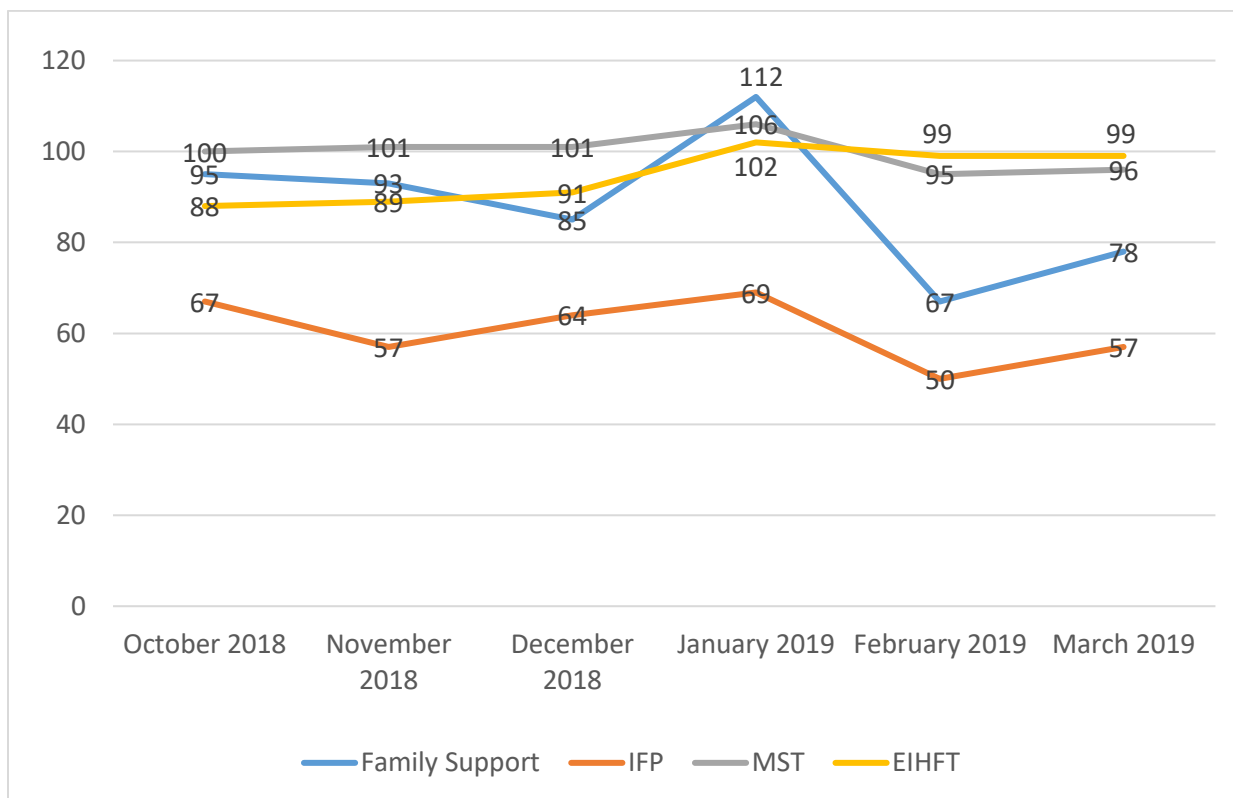
Multisystemic Therapy, otherwise known as MST, has been launched in multiple sites across Nebraska. This service, supported by the Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation, is key to successful juvenile justice reform. The statewide implementation began May 1, 2017, and includes intensive training and support from MST International. As a key piece of Nebraska’s reform efforts, the introduction of MST increases access for youth in the juvenile justice system by expanding services supported by evidence.

The expansion of MST is the first step to ensure youth and families in the juvenile justice system receive needed support, thereby reducing recidivism and keeping youth in their communities and family homes. The Initiative will also expand an in-home model created by Boys Town, the Ecological In-Home Family Treatment, which also shows promising evidence.

In-home services are assessed in two separate ways:

- Family Support Work (FSW) and Intensive Family Preservation (IFP) are tracked through the Probation voucher system by the number of youth that received that service during the specified month.
- MST and the Ecological Model are monitored through an extensive reporting process that accounts for youth that might have received services with Probation funding or through Medicaid funding.

As with all reporting categories, youth may be represented in more than one category if more than one type of service was provided in a month. However, youth are only counted one time in each of the separate categories.



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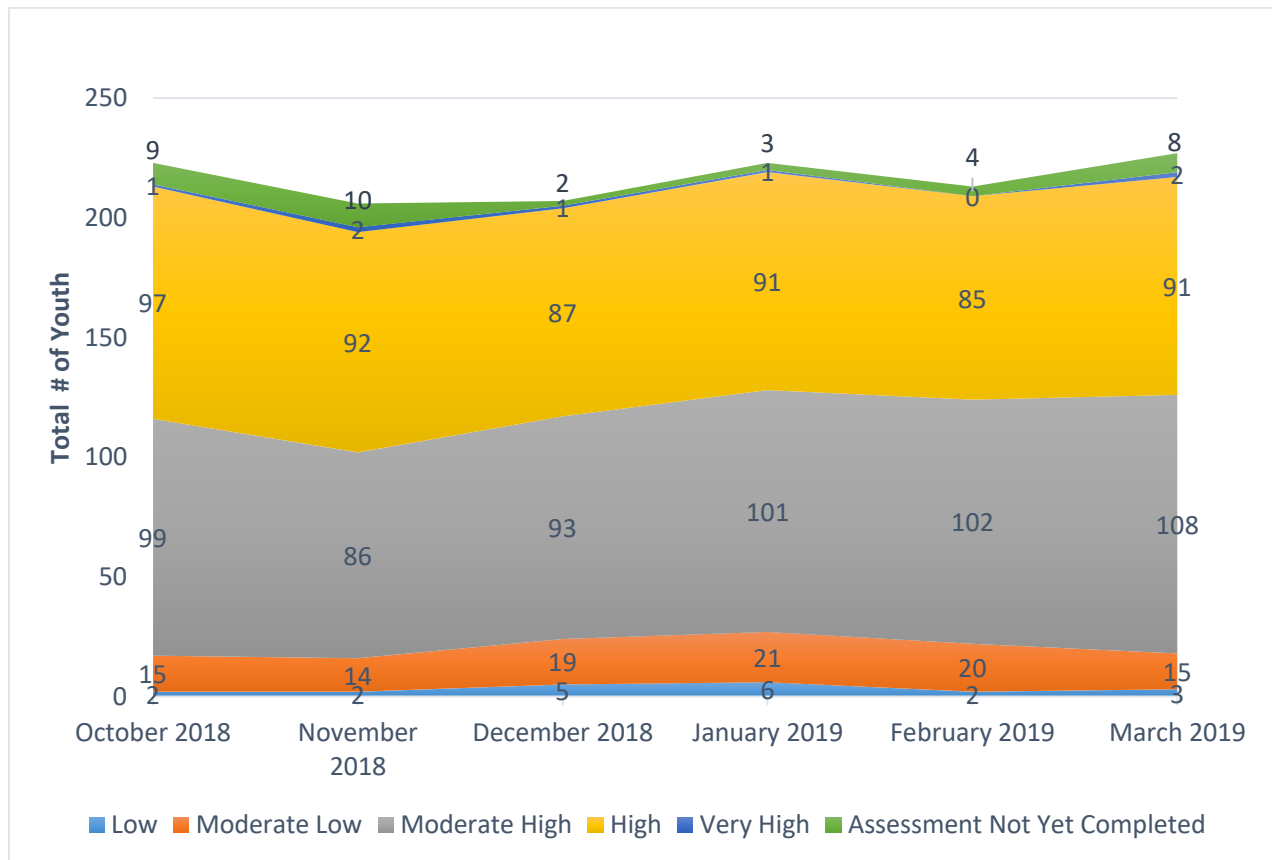
**Outcome 4: Detention: Reduce the number of youth placed in detention who are not at high risk to reoffend.**

The use of detention for youth has been found by research as very harmful. Detention should only be used when a youth is a true risk to the safety of the community. Additionally, low risk youth who are not a risk to the community show negative results when placed in detention. Therefore, probation officers ensure that only high risk youth that are a risk to public safety are placed in the detention centers across the state.

This is further supported by The Annie E. Casey Foundation publication *No Place for Kids: The Case for Reducing Juvenile Incarceration*. As priority number one, "Limit Eligibility for Correctional Placements: Commitment to a juvenile correctional facility should be reserved for youth who have committed serious offenses and pose a clear and demonstrable risk to public safety."

This outcome is measured by reporting the number of youth in detention by their most recent YLS/CMI score. These detention numbers do not include youth who are detained as an 'intake' and are not on probation at the time of detention. Some youth have not completed a YLS/CMI and this accounts for the small number of *blank* YLS/CMI scored youth.

Detention admissions for Low risk probation youth remained less than 10 youth per month when comparing the last six months.



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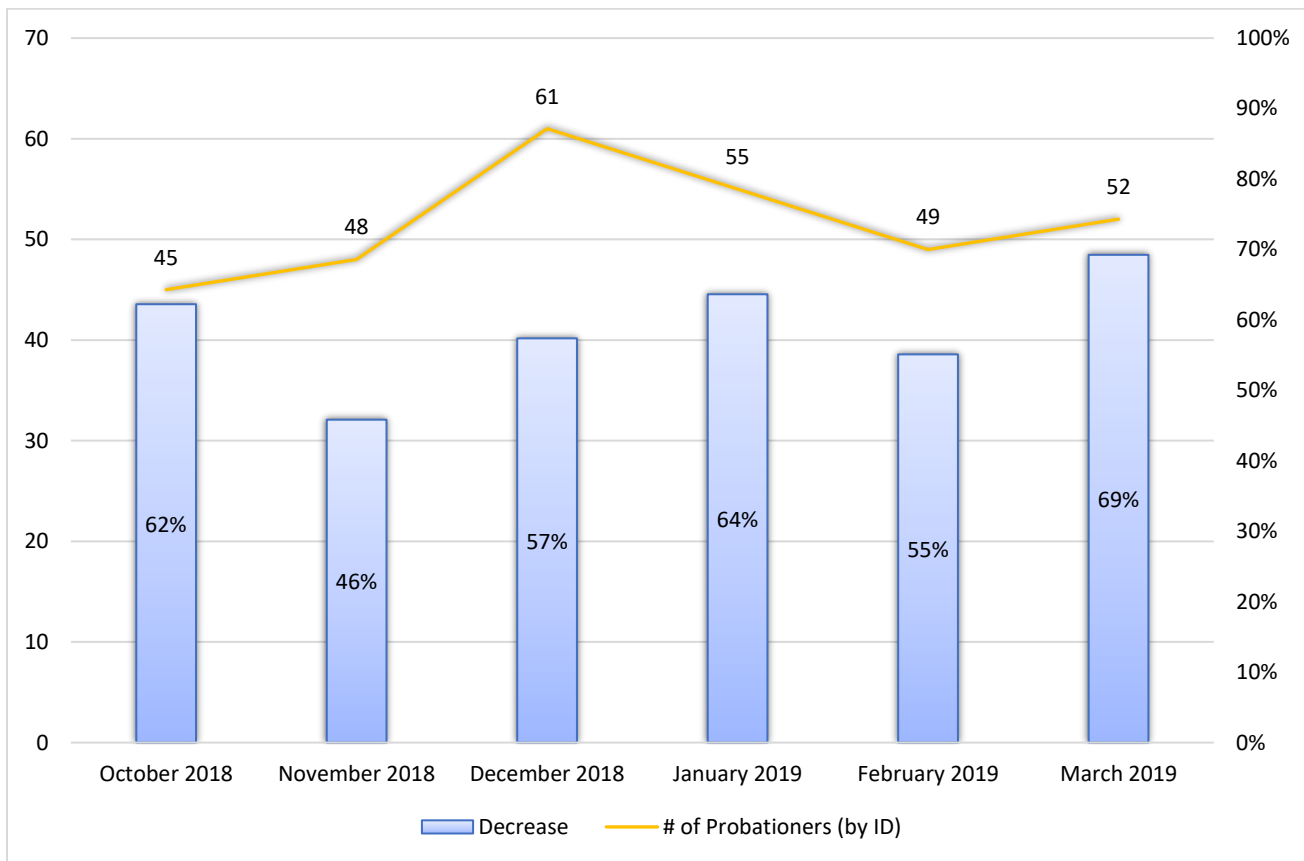


***Outcome 5: Education and Employment: A higher percentage of youth will be involved in pro-social activities including school and employment.***

The final priority is to focus on how pro-social activities can impact youth by supporting successful educational and employment opportunities. Research has shown that with this type of support, youth are more successful on probation, as well as in their future. Therefore, building a pro-social network for youth is not only an evidence-based practice, but also core to each youth's individual case management.

One service that Probation offers youth throughout Nebraska is the Rural Improvement for Schooling and Employment (RISE) program. RISE is an AmeriCorps program focused on providing education and employment skills to at-risk youth. Implemented in Nebraska in 2007, RISE Program Specialists support youth by facilitating skill-building groups centered on improving school skills such as grades, attendance and performance, as well as employment opportunities.

Additionally, the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory or YLS/CMI is a validated assessment instrument used to identify youth risk to recidivate. One of the areas the tool identifies is the risk level as it relates to education and employment. Probation officers receive specialized training in the utilization of this assessment tool and how to focus case management strategies that reduce risk. The graph below represents youth who have discharged from probation supervision in each month listed. The discharged youth were initially placed on probation with a high YLS/CMI score for education and employment and represents the percentage of youth that reduced their risk related to those key areas by the end of the probation term.



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