

## youth data archive snapshot

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### **PARTICIPATION AMONG SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT STUDENTS IN PROGRAMS OFFERED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND THEIR FAMILIES**

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#### **Background**

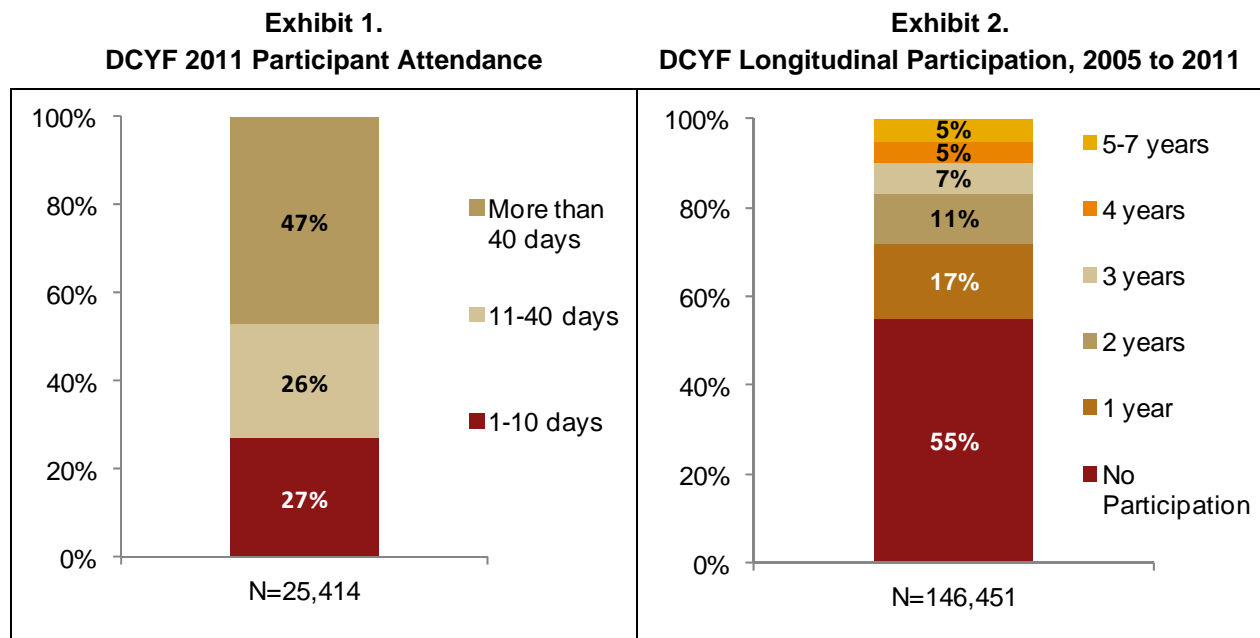
For the past year, the San Francisco Department of Children, Youth, and their Families (DCYF), San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), and the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University (Gardner Center) have collaborated to examine SFUSD student participation in DCYF-funded programs. DCYF aims to ensure the well-being of children, youth, and their families by funding and operating programs in the areas of early child care, academic support, health and wellness, youth workforce development, and cultural enrichment. The goal of this partnership is to help DCYF understand which students its programs serve and better match its programs to students who need the most help. Using the Youth Data Archive, the Gardner Center linked program participation records to SFUSD administrative data on students, including attendance, discipline, demographic, and achievement data, to program participation records from DCYF.

#### **Key findings**

Examining linked program participation and school data from 2005 and 2011, we found:

- DCYF serves a significant proportion of students enrolled in SFUSD. Each year, at least one third of SFUSD students participated in a DCYF-funded program for at least one day.
- SFUSD student participation rates in DCYF programs increased during the study period. In 2011, 44% of SFUSD students participated in a DCYF program for at least one day, an increase of 11 percentage points from the participation rate of 33% in 2005.
- Non-white students in SFUSD were more likely to participate in DCYF programs than white students in SFUSD. In 2011, DCYF participation rates among subgroups of SFUSD students included: 64% for African Americans, 50% for Latinos, 44% for Filipinos, 38% for Chinese students, and 32% for Whites.
- The majority of SFUSD students participating in DCYF programs did so at the highest dosage level. In 2011, 47% of SFUSD students who attended DCYF programs did so for more than 40 days, 26% attended between 11 and 40 days, and 27% attended 10 or fewer days (Exhibit 1).
- Looking across the period from 2005-2011, more than a quarter (28%) of students stayed in at least one DCYF program for one or two years (17% and 11% respectively). Five percent of students enrolled for more than four years and 55% of SFUSD students were never involved with DCYF programs during that time (Exhibit 2).

- Students from subgroups requiring additional academic and behavioral supports were most likely to participate in DCYF programs, including those who had lower achievement, special needs, were suspended, and identified as being at risk for dropping out of high school by SFUSD’s Early Warning Indicator System (see Gurantz, 2011 for more information on the Early Warning Indicator System).



### Implications

The analysis raises key questions about intensity and duration of program participation, which are applicable beyond DCYF. Although recruitment strategies are well researched and are often a focus for providers, practices to keep students engaged and attending programs in high dosages are less well established. Many OST providers have attempted to improve retention by focusing on program quality, though another approach could focus on engaging youth in multiple programs and services, which may require collaboration and communication across youth-serving organizations. There is also a role for funders to incentivize consistent participation. DCYF, for example, has added requirements regarding intensity and duration of participation to its request for proposals from potential contract providers.

Improving data collection is also essential to informing questions about intensity and duration of youth participation. Although all DCYF-funded programs use a data system that allows them to track an individual youth’s participation over time, there are many other programs that do not have this capacity. Rather, most programs that have the ability to track participation can only do so annually, and not across years. Understanding a student’s service history over time can inform strategies to improve attendance and, ultimately, improve youth outcomes that result from program participation.

### References

Gurantz, O., (2011). *Developing Early Warning Indicators for the San Francisco Unified School District*. Stanford, California: The John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities.