

# **ALTERNATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAM**

## **FY23 ANNUAL REPORT**

(JULY 2022 – JUNE 2023)

# **A SECOND DECADE OF SERVICE TOWARD YOUTH DIVERSION FROM THE COURT SYSTEM**



# ALTERNATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAM

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PARTNERS

FY23 began the Alternative Accountability Program's (AAP) second decade providing community-based diversion services to eligible youth, thus providing them with a second chance. The AAP is a multi-agency collaborative partnership among relevant Fairfax County government agencies and a nonprofit partner. FY23 brought a significant increase in the number of cases and youth served by the AAP. We also had a significant increase in cases involving multiple offenders and multiple offenses. Case complexity also increased greatly. Collectively, those contributed to an increase in the amount of time each case took to complete. This included time spent contacting all parties, preparing, and guiding them through the process, and coordinating joint meeting times. As in years past, we continued to see high success rates and low recidivism.

Restorative Justice (RJ) cases fully returned to in-person; however virtual meetings were offered when necessary to accommodate parties with extenuating circumstances. Educational interventions continued to be offered virtually based on the number of non-Fairfax County residents referred to the Shoplifting Offender Class, and the need to address transportation issues. This also allows more youth to be served more quickly, as it eliminates the need to offer classes at various locations throughout the County.

Participation in AAP continues to be positively regarded by victims, offenders and community members who take part in RJ conferences and educational interventions. AAP continues to serve as a model for other jurisdictions and agencies seeking an alternative way to address criminal offenses among young people.

We've worked hard to keep AAP in the forefront with professional partners, stakeholders, and the community so it remains an option to address crimes committed by first-time juvenile offenders.



# ALTERNATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNERSHIP OVERVIEW

## AAP Governance

The Alternative Accountability Program (AAP) is an inter-agency collaboration that employs restorative justice practices and education as an alternative to traditional criminal justice for first-time juvenile offenders in Fairfax County. The AAP Program partners are:

Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD)  
Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS)  
Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court (JDRDC)  
Fairfax County Neighborhood & Community Services (NCS)  
NVMS Conflict Resolution Center (NVMS)

## AAP Mission

To help victims of juvenile crimes to overcome the harm that has been done to them; to hold first-time juvenile offenders accountable for their crimes; and to lower the number of juveniles entering the justice system in Fairfax County.

## Core Goals/Objectives

- Providing victims with a voice in the process to repair the harm they experienced
- Holding youth accountable for the harm they caused
- Reducing the number of juveniles enmeshed in the formal justice system, including youth of color
- Decreasing recidivism



# AAP PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## Referral Process

All complaints involving juveniles are submitted to Juvenile Intake and screened for AAP eligibility. All eligible cases are automatically referred instead of being handled within the traditional juvenile justice system.

Eligibility requires the following:

- Evidence of an eligible crime
- Under 18 years old at the time of the offense
- No prior criminal involvement with AAP or Juvenile Intake
- Juvenile accepts responsibility for their actions and is willing to participate in AAP

**AAP has two intervention tracks – Restorative Justice and Education.**

## Restorative Justice (RJ)

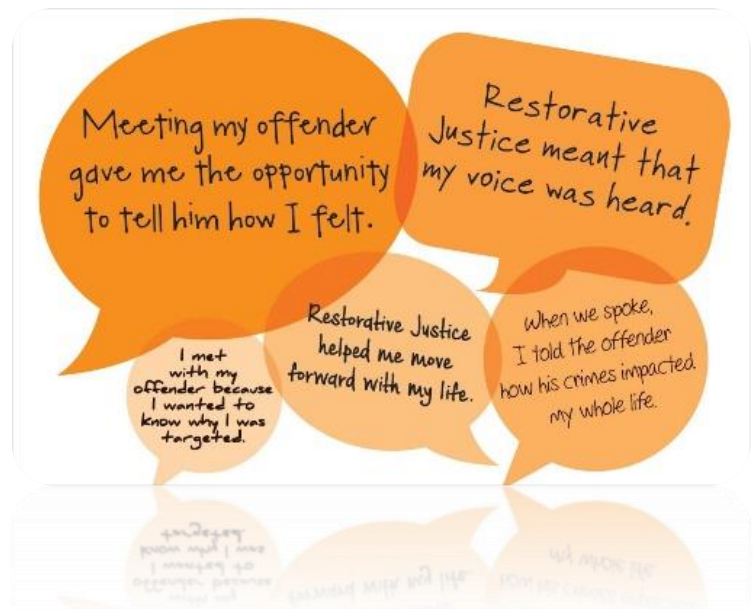
AAP utilizes a victim-centered family group conferencing RJ model. Offenders and their parent(s) are brought together with victims (and their parent(s) when applicable), as well as other stakeholders who were directly or indirectly impacted by the incident. When the direct victim is unable to participate, the referring law-enforcement officer may participate on their behalf. Conferences are facilitated by skilled RJ practitioners and focus on the following:

1. What happened?
2. Who was harmed?
3. How can the harm be repaired?

The goals of the conference are to achieve a greater understanding between the victim and offender and develop a mutually agreed upon resolution to the matter. Conference agreements are determined by the parties and may result in an apology, completion of community service, financial restitution, etc.

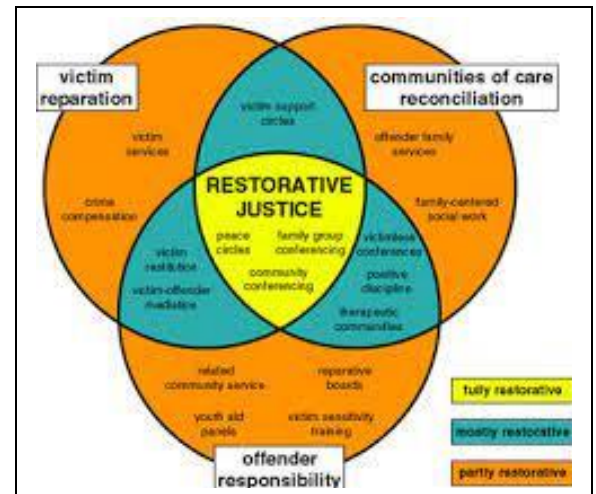
## Education

AAP utilizes two educational interventions – Core Values and a Shoplifter Offender Class. Educational interventions are used when parties are unable to participate or decline to participate in RJ.



## Core Values

Core Values is a one-hour seminar facilitated by trained staff who work one-on-one with offenders. Offenders are asked to identify their personal core values and then engaged in a guided conversation that explores whether the actions that got them in AAP align with those values. The conversation concludes with a discussion of how the offender can keep their values at the forefront of their considerations when making future decisions, thus resulting in better decision making and reduced recidivism.



## Shoplifter Offender Class

The shoplifter offender class is team-taught by trained staff and a law-enforcement officer. The focus of the class is to educate offenders on the far-reaching impacts of shoplifting. Offenders are given a homework assignment of writing a letter of apology to the store(s) they stole from. Letters are reviewed for appropriateness and then forwarded to the store's representative.

## BENEFITS OF AAP

### For the victim:

- Provides an opportunity to be actively involved in the resolution of their case (RJ participants)

### For the offender:

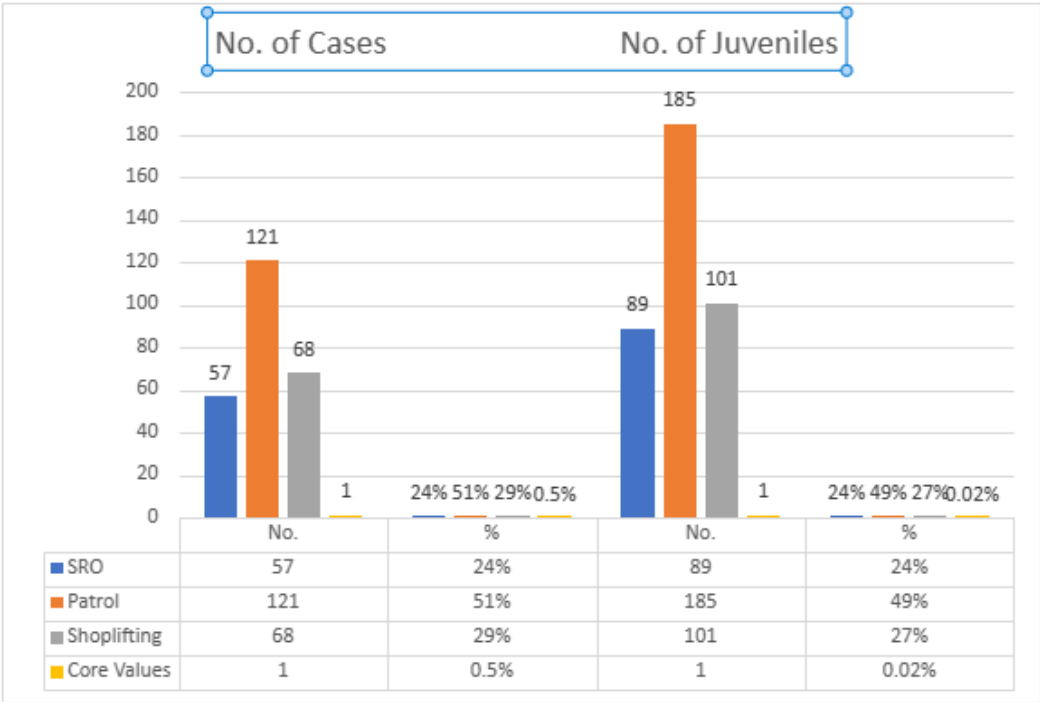
- Provides an opportunity to acknowledge their behavior, learn about its impact on the victim, develop increased empathy and social awareness, and build character
- Avoid long-term risks associated with involvement with the traditional criminal justice system

### For the community:

- Provides an alternative response to juvenile crime
- Creates a stronger society by reducing juvenile recidivism of harmful behavior and criminal acts

# METRICS AND OUTCOMES

Cases are separated by the offense location. Events that occur in the school are submitted by School Resource Officers (SRO) and events that happened in the community are submitted by Patrol Officers.

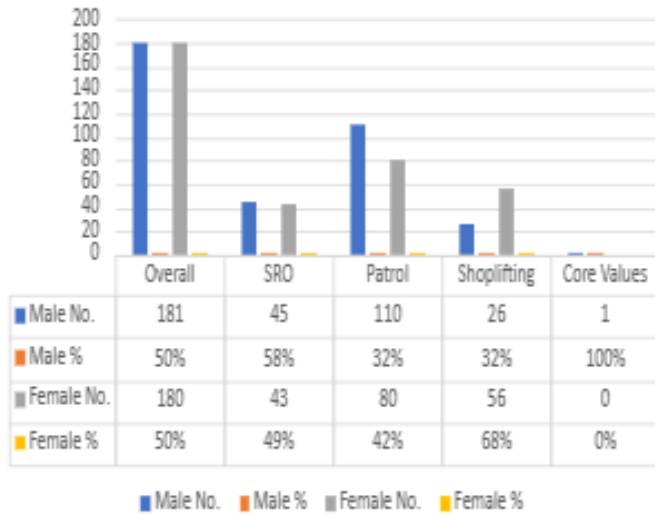


No. Cases: 237, up 31%  
No. of Juveniles: 361, up 55%

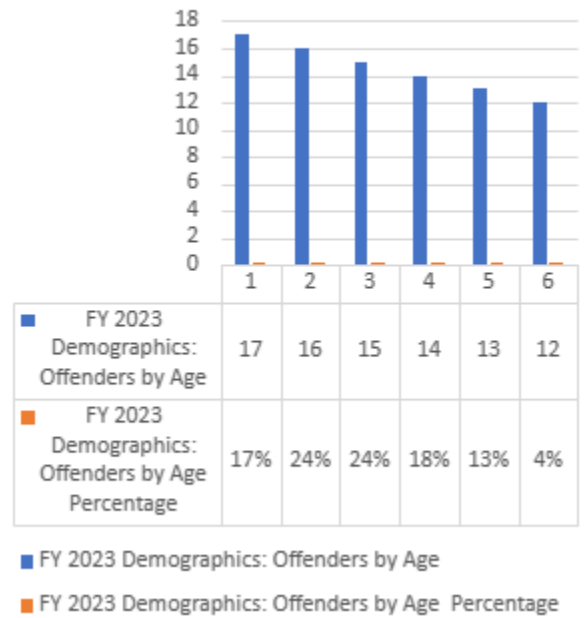




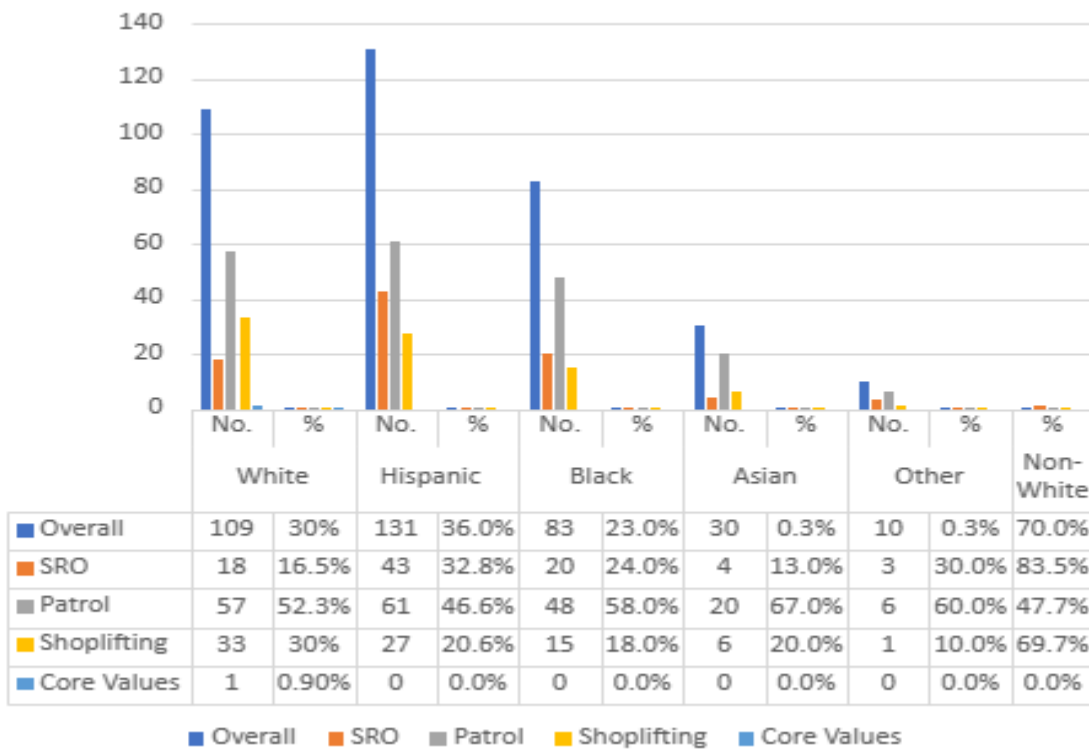
### Demographics: Offenders by Gender



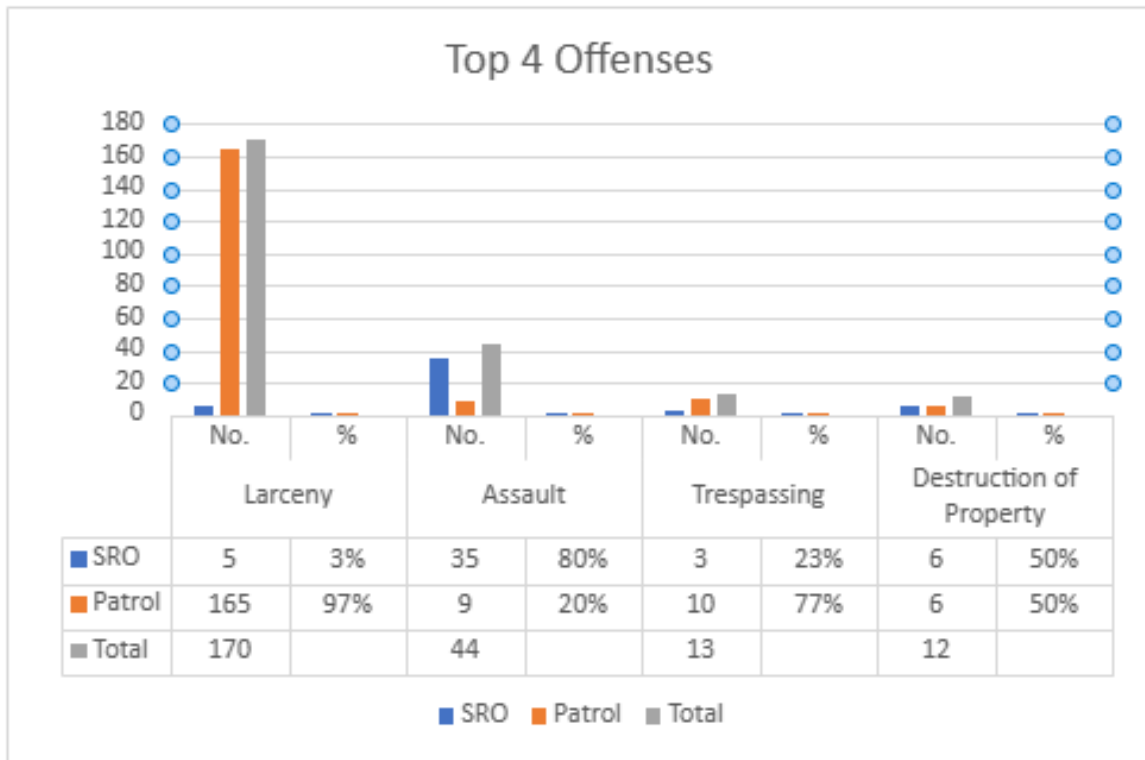
### Demographics: Offenders by Age

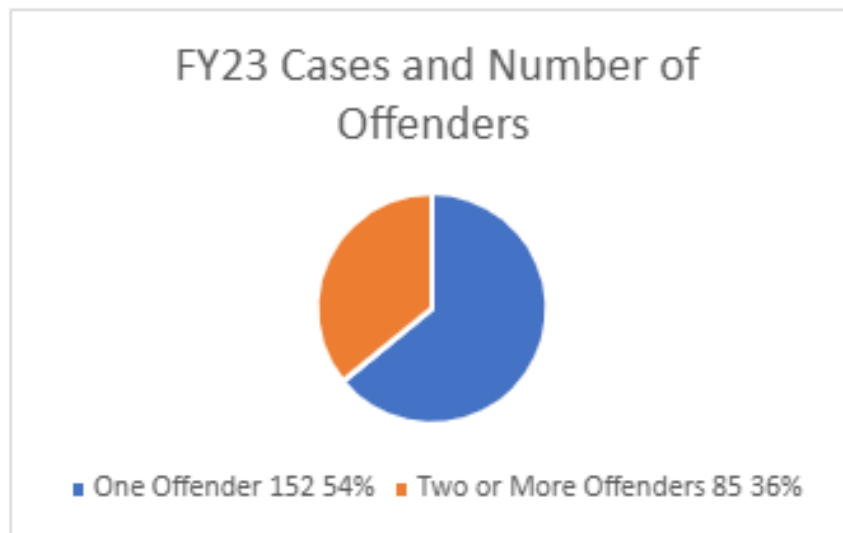


### Demographics by Race/Ethnicity

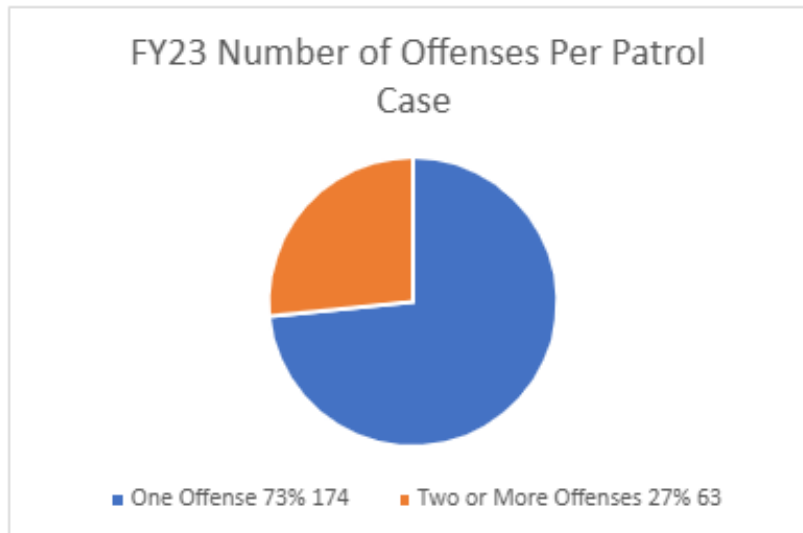








36% of total cases in FY23 included **two or more offenders**, compared to 17% in FY22. Cases with two or more offenders require significantly more case management time compared to solo offender cases.



27% of total patrol cases in FY23 included **two or more offenses** compared to 14% in FY22. Cases with two or more offenses increase the coordination time compared to solo offense cases.

## IMPACT

**Youth:** “Something that I find the most helpful in this process is that I was able to speak my mind but also like understand and learn the good I can do. Apologize for my actions and bad I’ve caused.”

**Youth:** “It helped me realize what I was holding inside and allowed me to reflect on my actions in a peaceful manner. I had to relive a bad decision I made, and it helped me breakdown what I could do better in that situation.”

**Youth:** “I am truly sorry for shoplifting and I understand that stealing is wrong. I have always known that stealing is wrong but I did what I did out of peer pressure, incorrectly normalizing my actions without really thinking that I stole. Not only did I steal, but it was a significant sum and I realize that if I was older this situation could have negatively impacted me much more, so I am grateful that I was able to take advantage of the online shoplifting course, allowing me to reset, think about my actions, and express my remorse.”

**Youth:** “I realize the actions have probably affected my mom the most. I hurt her and everyone else around me in the childish , immature activities I partook in. But I’ve come to the conclusion that yes my life hasn’t been the best and I’ve had to deal with things , but I can use that as an excuse to make bad decisions that are going to affect my life forever or I can use it as an excuse to rise up and become the best version of myself.”

**Parent:** “The most helpful thing about the RJ process is hearing the voices of others and getting a broader understanding of the event and outcomes.”

**Parent:** Thank you for the program. Because of this program I have peace and less worries. My son will not make that kind of mistake again. I am very optimistic that I will have a good relationship again with my son and more importantly that i will trust him again.”

**Patrol Officer:** “...gives the juvenile an opportunity to understand how they can correct their actions, and how to interact with others.”

**Victim:** “The questions asked by the facilitators helped all parties to dig for deeper answers of why and see the extended impacts. I feel satisfied with the communication and answers received.”

## SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS

- Resilience/adaptations regarding goals and outcomes
- Full implementation of the intake “clearinghouse” to mitigate potential bias in case referral
- Increased referrals in FY23
- 31% increase in the number of cases
- 55% increase in the number of juveniles served.
- Training of new RJ certification trainers
- Panel presentation on behalf of the State Department’s International Visitors Leadership Program

## GOALS FOR FY24

- Promote AAP in a wider community
- Increase number of restorative justice conference facilitators
- Increase the number of referrals
- Increase the number of victims and youth offenders who agree to participate in a restorative justice conference
- Help cases and clients be successful in RJ
- Refine and hone the skills of practitioners
- Continue to strengthen the relationship between public schools and law-enforcement to provide alternatives to traditional juvenile justice

Restorative Lens			
Focus on the harm and consequent needs of victims, communities, and offenders	Address the obligations of the offender, community, and society.	Use inclusive collaborative processes.	Involve legitimate stakeholders (victims, offenders, community members, and society, and seek to right the wrongs.