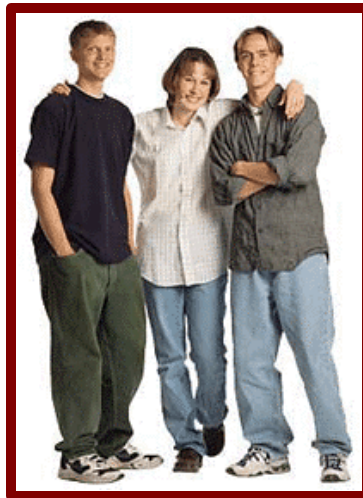




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Strengths-Based Restorative Justice Assessment Tools for Youth: Addressing a Critical Gap in the Juvenile Justice System

FINAL PROJECT REPORT



Juliette R. Mackin, Ph.D.
Judy M. Weller, B.S.
Jerod M. Tarte, M.A.

NPC Research
5200 SW Macadam Ave., Suite 420
Portland, OR 97239-3857
503-243-2436
Fax: 503-243-2454
mackin@npcresearch.com

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Multnomah:

Lee Block (Local and National Advisory Boards)
Laura Burgess (Training Committee)
Fran Carey
Benjamin Chambers (National Advisory Board)
Deena Corso (Local Advisory Board)
Michelle DeShazer (Consultant)
Karl Johnson (Training Committee)
Dave Koch
Dianna Lamb
Tracey Lynch
Canh Nguyen
Thach Nguyen (Local and National Advisory Boards)
Rosemary Owens
Rich Scott (National Advisory Board)
Kurt Squier (Local Advisory Board)
Leslie Taylor
Steve Van Wechel
Steve Walker (Local Advisory Board)
Duane Willhite

Washington:

Nancy Arriaza
Penny Belt
Jon Biles
Erin Calvert
Joe Christy (Local and National Advisory Boards)
Judi Dean-Oakley
Teresa DuValle
Tonya Hartman
LaRoy LaBonte (Local Advisory Board)
Arturo Peraza
Rebecca Pitsch
Laurie Rice (Local and National Advisory Boards)
Charmaine Roberts
Scott Sheffer
Cheryl Vandlac

Clackamas:

Julie Bitz

Bob Cambra (Local Advisory Board)

Linda Castaneda

Marla Conser

Ellen Crawford (Local and National Advisory Boards)

Markus Fant

Steve Houseworth (Local Advisory Board)

Dale Kim

Joan LeBarron

Mark McDonnell (Local Advisory Board)

Merin Paldi (National Advisory Board, Training Committee)

Doug Poppen (National Advisory Board)

Kerri Shockley

Jana Wiseman

Marion:

Mary Ayhan

Craig Bazzi

Laura Coates

Roberta Garcia

Alejandro Guitierrez

Scherie Hansen

Wendy Holihan

Vicky Johnson

Marylin King

Kate Kuenzi

Elva Leon

Roberta Maestas

Jeff McColly

Larry Oglesby

Rene Zipser

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Executive Summary

Project Overview

NPC Research, based in Portland, Oregon, has developed a strengths-based assessment tool and protocol for use in the juvenile justice system that will help youth meet the following three goals:

- A. Support Efforts to Repair Harm
- B. Provide Specific Indicators for Pathways Toward a Healthy Identity
- C. Connect Youth to Community, Family, and Peers

The YCA was not designed to replace existing risk or problem identification tools, but rather to formalize inclusion of positive elements to provide a balanced approach to assessing youth in the juvenile justice system.

The assessment tool and protocol were tested at three pilot sites in Oregon.

Summary of Findings

Benefits of the YCA according to staff

- Helps gather more and different information
- Motivates changes
- Helps identify ideas and resources
- Makes follow-up appointments more enjoyable
- Facilitates quicker completion of court requirements

Challenges of the YCA according to staff

- Finding the right wording for different ages and developmental levels
- Helping parents and youth see positives
- Using the YCA with most appropriate youth
- Finding the balance between the different forms of paperwork and job tasks
- Challenging the mindset of parents, community members, and juvenile justice staff

Pilot Site Youth...

- Rated the first meetings with the department as more positive than did comparison site youth
- Were more likely to say their counselor/probation officer cared about their point of view
- Were more than twice as likely to report that their counselor/probation officer asked them about their strengths

- Were less likely to report that their counselor/probation officer talked about what they did wrong
- Were less likely than comparison youth to believe that they would have been treated differently had they been a different person (however, not on the basis of gender or race)

Pilot Site Parents/Guardians...

- Were more likely to believe their child would have been treated differently if he/she had been a different race/nationality
- Were less likely to believe that their child would have been treated differently for other reasons (besides gender and race)
- Were more likely than the youth to feel that the counselor/probation officer was sensitive to the family's background or culture

Key Stakeholders...

- 46% reported seeing changes or impact they attributed to the project
- 54% said it may have or had affected them or their work
- 40% who reported seeing an impact or change said that the pilot has affected youth

Coding of case files

- Using the YCA substantially increased the amount of information about the three key strengths domains
- The comparison site was better at using strengths identified in the case plan
- The pilot and comparison sites all have strong areas and could benefit from sharing ideas about gathering and incorporating strengths
- Pilot and comparison sites are aware of youth strengths and competencies
- Comparison staff were more likely to report new competencies
- Pilot staff were more likely to report building on existing competencies

Conclusions & Recommendations

Tool and Process Development

During this project we were able to develop and test a strengths-based assessment tool that works within juvenile justice agencies. We believe the YCA has a firm theoretical foundation and has face and content validity. While using the YCA as a stand-alone tool has its benefits, the pilot sites felt that it was more efficient to integrate the new questions and sections into their own assessment tools.

Lessons Learned

Policy and System Level Lessons

In order to successfully implement a strengths-based program using the Youth Competency Assessment tool and protocol, it is important that juvenile departments pave the way with preparatory groundwork, as follows:

Before training staff and implementing the YCA, conceptualize the department's strength-based vision and mission

Managers and supervisors need to be trained, fully understand and buy into the approach

Allow plenty of room and opportunity for discussions

Determine where in your youth assessment protocol the strengths-based questions best fit

Incorporate YCA questions into your existing assessment paperwork

Recognize that some staff members already look for strengths/have a strengths-based approach, but that the YCA is a method of formalizing that effort

A written list of community resources should be available to the counselors/probation officers

An on-site "resident strengths expert" will be a valuable resource and support for other staff

Refresher meetings should be scheduled monthly during the first several months of implementation

Provide information to judges, court personnel, and other related parties

Implementing a strengths-based approach is most effective when it involves entire systems

Schools are a critical partner to the juvenile justice system

A strengths-based approach is a way of empowering youth, families, schools, and other agencies to work in a positive way despite challenges

Training Lessons

It is helpful if the trainer or a member of the training team has juvenile justice experience

Schedule trainings in at least two parts (different days), limiting each session to 2 to 2 ½ hours

The trainer should be familiar with the department's forms and protocol

At the training, give examples of a completed YCA and a sample case plan that builds on strengths gathered in the YCA interview

At the training, present a video that shows a strengths-based assessment interview and one that is not strengths-based

Use real examples of what they are doing now – point out what is going well and what could be improved

Research Lessons

Leave plenty of time at the end of the project for data analyses and re-analyses, writing up findings, and receiving feedback

When implementing a system change or new instrument, like the YCA, allow time for the program or process to mature before attempting to collect outcome data.

Think through all the possibilities of what you might find in your analyses when planning what data you will need

Plan for extra visits to your research sites or for staff to come to you

Next steps

Look for grant and contract opportunities to extend work on youth outcomes

Produce materials for dissemination to broader audiences, and work to share information about the tool to these other potential audiences

Table of Contents

Executive Summary I
 Project Overview..... I
 Summary of Findings..... I
 Conclusions & Recommendations II
 Next steps IV

I. Introduction 1
 Project Overview..... 1
 Case studies of Pilot Sites 3
 Local and National Advisory Boards..... 8
 Literature Review..... 9

II. Methodology 15
 Pilot Site Selection..... 15
 Training and Technical Assistance 15
 Data Collection 16

III. Findings 21
 Focus Groups 21
 Youth and Parent/Guardian Interviews..... 31
 Videotapes of Assessment Interviews 40
 Key Stakeholder Interviews..... 43
 Coding of County Forms 46
 Youth Outcome Data 46
 Summary of Findings..... 65

IV. Follow-up..... 69
 Assessing maturation of the tool and process 69
 Assessing and encouraging fidelity to the model 69
 Dissemination of the tool, process, and model to other jurisdictions 70

V. Training and Training Curriculum..... 71
 Training Manual Contents 71
 Availability of Training Materials 73
 OJDDA 2003 Training Symposium: Human Capital 74
 15th National Youth Crime Prevention Conference: Youth Raising the Standard..... 77
 CSAT Annual Grantee Meeting..... 79

VII. Summary 82
 Tool and Process Development..... 82
 Lessons Learned..... 82
 Next steps 85

References..... 86

List of Tables

Table 1. Sample Sizes for Youth and Parent/Guardian Interviews	31
Table 2. Significant Differences Between Pilot and Comparison Interview Samples	33
Table 3. Choices Regarding Accountability: Pilot Sample	34
Table 4. Descriptive Findings from the Pilot Sites.....	34
Table 5. Youth Race/Ethnicity	47
Table 6. Youth Gender and Age	47
Table 7. Assessment Forms Used.....	48
Table 8. Ratings of YCA Domains in the Assessment Forms	48
Table 9. Supervision Level/Case Plan Type	49
Table 10. Presence of YCA Domains in Case Plan	50
Table 11. Presence of Strengths -Based Goals in Case Plan.....	50
Table 12. Balance of Strengths -Based and Accountability Goals in Case Plan.....	51
Table 13. Activities in Case Plan Based on Strengths from Assessment.....	51
Table 14. Activities in Case Plan Based on Any Strengths	51
Table 15. Short-Term Competency Goals from Assessment in Case Objectives.....	52
Table 16. Case Plan Reflects Individualized Planning	52
Table 17. Case Notes/Objectives Include People in Youth's Natural Environment	52
Table 18. Case Notes/Objectives Include Any People who can Support Youth.....	53
Table 19. Case Plan Encouraged Community Connections	53
Table 20. Case Plan Included Long -Term Goals from Assessment	53
Table 21. Case Plan Included Any Long-Term Goals	54
Table 22. Comparison of Service Types and Proportions by County	56
Table 23. Detailed Services Types by County	58
Table 24. Cumulative Days in Service Per Youth.....	59
Table 25. Types of Services Lasting 50 or More Consecutive Days	59
Table 26. Number of Closing/Case Progress Forms Received by County	60
Table 27. Summary of Closing/Case Progress Form Data.....	62

List of Appendices

Appendix A. Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)	89
Appendix B. YCA Supplemental Questions	108
Appendix C. Domains of the YCA.....	112
Appendix D. Focus Group Questions	114
Appendix E. Youth and Parent/Guardian Interview Materials.....	116
Appendix F. Videotape Coding.....	140
Appendix G. Counselor Feedback Form	149
Appendix H. Key Stakeholder Interview Questions	151
Appendix I. County Coding Template	153
Appendix J. Case Coding Template	155
Appendix K. Services Data Template	158
Appendix L. Closing/Completion Forms – Pilot and Comparison.....	160
Appendix M. Training Materials.....	163

I. Introduction

Northwest Professional Consortium, Inc. (NPC Research) was funded by a three-year grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) that began in September 2000 to develop and test a strengths-based assessment tool for use in the juvenile justice system. The resulting tool is called the Youth Competency Assessment (YCA) and has now been pilot tested in three Oregon counties. In addition, as part of this project, training materials were developed and tested.

Project Overview

In 2000, Dr. Laura Burney Nissen, who serves as director of a comprehensive juvenile justice initiative that places strength-based assessment at the center of its strategy (Reclaiming Futures), approached NPC to assist her with forwarding the cause of implementing strengths-based services in juvenile justice agencies. She shared with NPC her vision and theory behind strengths-based practice and why it was necessary to promote in the juvenile justice system. Competencies, capacities for change, accountability, aspirations, relationships, skills, knowledge, and resources are the foci of this strengths-based approach. The obvious starting place was to develop a strengths-based assessment tool.

Prior to development of the assessment tool and protocol, NPC, working closely with Dr. Nissen, conducted an extensive review of the literature and existing strengths assessment instruments, which provided the foundation for the YCA's framework. Three domains emerged that we believe encompassed the necessary areas for the assessment to cover, and which establish important goals for youth in the juvenile justice system. The assessment needed to 1) support efforts to repair harm, 2) provide specific indicators for pathways toward a healthy identity, and 3) connect the youth to community, family and peers.

The background information was also utilized to help develop a large set of suggested questions to be considered for use in the strengths assessment instrument. These questions were designed to enable understanding of the strengths of the youth and the strengths of the youth's family, peers, and community.

Following a preliminary review by a board of Oregon Juvenile Department Directors, juvenile department staff members, and researchers (the Strengths Local Advisory Board), there was a gathering of national experts (the Strengths National Advisory Board) in areas relevant to the assessment of youth strengths and development of service protocols (e.g., psychometrics, cultural competency, juvenile justice, developmental psychology) in June 2001. The goal of the first meeting of the Strengths National Advisory Board was to agree upon the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of the strength-based instruments and protocol, brainstorm ideas for the surrounding protocol/referral strategy, review the suggested questions for the assessment instrument, and put considerable focus on creating a short, stand-alone strengths-based instrument to be used in juvenile departments. Following that meeting, NPC staff worked with a group of youth to select and refine the questions for the instrument. NPC also gathered feedback from juvenile department line staff and further streamlined the tool that became the Youth Competency Assessment (YCA).

This instrument was not designed to replace existing risk or problem identification tools, but rather to expand, strengthen, and improve the system's capacity to include the positive elements

of a youth, the youth's family, peers, and/or community in a well-balanced assessment and service profile. It is hoped that this tool will form the cornerstone of the development of integrated strategies combining juvenile justice, substance abuse treatment, and family and community interventions that could interrupt the cycle of substance abuse and delinquency.

The assessment tool and protocol were tested at three pilot sites in Oregon starting in February 2002. Each of the sites recruited staff to volunteer to participate in the pilot project. To assist with implementation, NPC project staff provided training to juvenile department staff and community-based service providers about the strengths approach generally and the YCA in particular. NPC began gathering data on a sample of youth from the three sites at implementation. At the same time, the same type of data were gathered from an Oregon comparison site that was not using the YCA.

During this project, NPC gathered data through a variety of activities, including:

1. Focus groups with each pilot site's participating line staff (probation officers/supervision counselors) and managers. A focus group with youth from one of the pilot sites also took place during development of the assessment instrument in order to test the questions and format of that assessment and receive feedback from youth in the juvenile justice system.
2. In-person and phone interviews with youth and their parents/guardians from the three pilot sites and a comparison site.
3. Videotapes of assessments conducted at the three pilot sites and a comparison site.
4. Key stakeholder interviews of people involved in the juvenile justice and youth service systems in each pilot county (such as judges, public defenders, treatment providers, etc.).
5. Collection and coding of the content of assessments and case materials for youth in both pilot and comparison sites.
6. Data collection and coding of hard copy and electronic case files and other materials related to services youth had received through participation in the pilot and comparison juvenile departments.
7. Youth-level follow-up information at case completion or 12 months post assessment.

During implementation and throughout the project, NPC Research staff members met regularly with the Local Advisory Board to gather feedback and information about implementation challenges and progress. The National Advisory Board, Local Advisory Board, and local pilot teams met as a group in February 2003 to review progress to date and to plan next steps.

The National and Local Advisory Boards participated in a final meeting in October 2003, to review the research findings, discuss additional analyses and research, and create a dissemination plan. It is expected that dissemination of the tool, process, and research findings will be shared with other juvenile justice agencies, through articles and other publications, and that additional interested jurisdictions will be identified for training and adoption of the YCA and a strengths-based approach to working with youth and families.

It is hoped that through this project and its process of data collection, feedback, and revision, the YCA and its associated training curriculum has become a useful and effective strengths-based assessment instrument for juvenile justice departments to use.

Case studies of Pilot Sites

Pilot Site I. Multnomah County

Site Description

Multnomah County, encompassing the Portland metropolitan area, has the largest and most diverse racial/ethnic population in Oregon. Multnomah County is home to 660,486 people. According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau report, just under a quarter of the population (22.3%) is less than 18 years of age. The county's median household income is \$51,118. The racial composition of Multnomah is primarily White (82.6%), Hispanic or Latino (7.5%), Black or African American (6.8%) and Asian (6.8%). A small proportion of the population is American Indian or Alaska Native (2.2%) or Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (0.7%).

The Multnomah County Department of Community Justice, Juvenile Services Division, primarily serves three distinct populations of youth: (1) those who are 11 years and under (served through the Early Intervention Unit), (2) pre-adjudicated youth (served through the Diversion Unit), and (3) those adjudicated and/or on probation (served through the Adjudication Unit, by Field Counselors). The juvenile department also has several other units for providing specialized services for distinct groups of youth, including girls and gang involved youth. The Multnomah County Juvenile Department interacts with about 3,000 youth a year.

Implementation

Because Multnomah County tries to work with the whole family, especially siblings, they planned to implement the YCA department-wide. Each of the counselors was asked to try the YCA with all of their cases, but to do it in their own style. The challenge they anticipated, however, was to fit the three domains of the YCA into the five domains of their existing risk assessment tool, the Oregon Juvenile Crime Prevention (JCP) Risk Screen/Assessment. Specifically, they anticipated needing help applying the YCA, as well as thinking about how they would assess clients and families in a different way.

“We finally figured out how to fit it into our continuum of services. We have risk assessment, JCP assessment, and we [didn't] want to have strengths-based be one more assessment, so we fit it in to the adjudication unit so they can write a strengths-based reformation plan to be shared with courts. The [evaluator] talked to the judges so they understand [the reason for using this tool and approach]. The DA and defense attorneys were also there, and so we have their buy-in. We also use it in the field in our probation unit.”

In addition to the 10 juvenile counselors who participated in the pilot, 3 managers regularly participated in the project and represented the department at local advisory board meetings.

Post-implementation: Experiences with the YCA

With its goal to involve the family, Multnomah County found that the YCA is a useful tool for involving families because it helps describe them in terms of their strengths and characteristics. “It's been beneficial for youth, too. Asking those questions on the YCA really opened up a door for the strengths. What they are good at and what motivates them. Parents are often shocked by the strengths-based focus, which is often helpful because sometimes the kids have put them through so much that they are having a hard time seeing the kid's strengths.”

The strength-based focus, however, does not let the youth off “easy” as some feared. The accountability step is a piece of what is going on, and there is effort to link to positive tasks in the

youths' probation. However, the focus is shifted to determining which types of services will have the greatest impact on the youth so he/she doesn't come back into the system. A counselor in one of the pilot sites expressed the hope that "we can figure out what is right on the one day when they go to school rather than what went wrong on the days they didn't. The JCP really tells you what the deficits are, and the idea for this [YCA] is to help figure out what the positives are."

Future Directions

The Multnomah County Juvenile Department has an ambitious training and peer-coaching program planned for the upcoming year, which will attempt to accomplish the following goals:

1. Reorient the intake staff and adjudicators to the strength-based principles as they take up new positions after the reorganization of their division (which occurred in November 2003).
2. Provide intensive assistance and coaching on strengths-based interviewing skills to juvenile court counselors and treatment providers.
3. Help juvenile court counselors and treatment providers integrate motivational interviewing skills with the YCA and other case planning tools, including strength-based reporting.

Due to the success of the YCA reported by the staff who piloted it, Multnomah County has implemented the YCA for all court counselors. Additionally, the department plans to pilot a new case plan format that incorporates the YCA, youth development concepts and the JCP risk assessment.

Pilot Site II. Washington County

Site Description

Located to the West of Portland and including Hillsboro (the home of Intel and many of its employees) as well as rural areas and farming communities, Washington County has a substantial, and growing, Hispanic population. The U.S. Census Bureau reported for 2000 that Washington County has a population of 445,342 people. Over a quarter of Washington County's population is less than 18 years of age (26.9%), and the racial composition is primarily White (84.9%), Hispanic or Latino (11.2%), and Asian (7.9%). A small proportion of the Washington County population is Black or African American (1.6%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (1.4%) or Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (0.6%).

Youth involved with the Washington County Juvenile Department over an extended period of time fall into one of several categories/programs: (1) assessment (intake for lower level offenders), (2) early intervention (which supervises youth involved in lower level offenses but who are identified as high-risk to re-offend), (3) substance abuse program, (4) shelter program, and (5) those youth at the point of adjudication. These youth total about 600-800 a year.

Implementation

Washington County Juvenile Department thought the YCA fit well with the early intervention population they were serving, especially since they have a focus on involving parents in the development and implementation of the child's case plan. The staff at the county who do the case planning seemed the most appropriate people to do the strength-based piece. In addition, the YCA was anticipated to be used with several other groups of youth: (1) the front-end (the youth's first involvement with the department), (2) part of the reformation plan that goes to court, and (3) youth in shelter to determine the impact of that setting on their adjustment and long-term behavior. Further, they planned to conduct it with the youth they transfer to supervision (probation or formal accountability agreements).

The difficulty anticipated by Washington County was making the linkage to services. However, they felt the philosophy itself was empowering. A concern by some staff members was that it would be a challenge to conduct the assessment (because of the length of the interview and explaining terms and concepts) with certain populations, including developmentally delayed youth or very young youth. Additionally, there was some concern that Hispanic/Latino families would view the YCA as invasive and overly focused on asking questions directly to the youth rather than to the elder in the family.

To facilitate the use and role of the YCA, the staff conducting the assessment formed a monthly planning group to illustrate the combined functions of the JCP risk screen/assessment, the YCA, and the case plan. The department director also participated in these planning and feedback meetings and, along with two senior staff members, participated in the project's Local Advisory Board as well.

Post-implementation: Experiences with the YCA

Staff in Washington County felt that in many ways the YCA formalized the type of information they already try to talk with youth about (e.g., "What are your interests?"). Having the YCA format helped staff put the framework into context and helped them define what it was that they wanted to know. Staff members integrated the YCA questions and concepts into assessment templates and other department forms.

The staff noticed that establishing the level of rapport needed for effective communication with the youth seemed much easier when using the strengths-based focus, and changed their perspective of the youth toward the positive. "It forces you to look at their positives. They come in automatically labeled with a crime. This lets us pull up more positives and integrate that."

The Washington County Juvenile Department found that the YCA has been an effective tool in many different ways. Some staff members complete a scaled down version that can be used with youth before court. This helps them obtain information to use in their court recommendations. Additionally, the YCA has been useful during the youth "transfer meetings" (when a youth's case is being transferred from one counselor to another) in which both counselors are present. The YCA in this situation makes the interview feel quite positive and elicits information that otherwise may not have been available in the past.

Future Directions

Washington County Juvenile Department has integrated the strengths-based assessment at key decision points in the organization (including intake, shelter, and court). Case plans are developed using information gathered through tools and interviews that incorporate the YCA

with other assessment questions, including the JCP Risk Screen/Assessment. Department forms have been revised to address strengths in a consistent way, and the advisory team (initially set up to develop and implement the strength-based approach) remains active with responsibility for reviewing and maintaining what is in place systematically.

The emphasis on strengths has become a key element in the department's direction. Its role is prominent in the selection of new staff, and it is addressed in new employee orientations. By-products of integrating the strengths-based approach include the creation of a staff recognition board to acknowledge their own strengths and accomplishments, as well as a resource area for staff to contribute information about strengths-based resources and other ideas to share with fellow staff members and to use in bringing case plans to life.

Pilot Site III. Clackamas County

Site Description

Clackamas County, located to the Southeast of and bordering Portland (Oregon's largest city) is the most economically diverse of Oregon's counties, with residents' incomes ranging from some of the highest to some of the lowest in the state. According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau report, Clackamas County is home to approximately 338,391 people. Over a quarter of the population (26.2%) is less than 18 years of age, and the median household income is \$49,455. The racial composition of Clackamas is primarily White (91.3%), Hispanic or Latino (4.9%), Asian (2.5%), or multi-racial (2.5%). Few persons in Clackamas County are Black or African American (0.7%), American Indian or Alaska Native (0.7%), or Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (0.2%).

The Clackamas County Juvenile Department is structured to handle youth at two levels: (a) Youth with minor offenses are diverted or handled informally and involved with juvenile department staff on a short-term basis, and (b) youth with more serious offenses, those who are high risk and have high needs, are seen by the juvenile department counselors over an extended period of time, averaging 12-18 months. The juvenile department serves about 2,000 youth each year. Youth served, in most cases, remain with the same juvenile court counselor from intake through case completion.

Implementation of the YCA

Clackamas County felt that there would be no real barrier to incorporating the use of the YCA into its intake process. However, the juvenile department did express some concern that it would be difficult to show staff that they were doing something "new" because in their work with youth they already used the placement process to develop protective factors (for instance, related to school issues). Because there was concern that the YCA would be viewed as duplicating the staff's existing efforts, the department worked at showing how, by using the YCA protocol, each unit would be building on what had already been accomplished with the youth.

A final concern of some of the staff at Clackamas County was the protocol of administration. Although counselors agreed that the YCA was a good interview technique to establish rapport with the youth by discussing the youth's strengths, some staff did not feel comfortable talking about social issues until they were able to present the youth's legal issues and court requirements.

Clackamas County solicited volunteers to participate in the pilot project. Three managers, 10 juvenile court counselors, and the information systems staff person participated in team meetings

every other month to implement the project, discuss progress and challenges, and provide feedback to the representatives who served on the project's Local Advisory Board.

Post-implementation: Experiences with the YCA

In order to accomplish the tasks of administering both the required JCP assessment and the YCA, Clackamas County modified their existing assessment template to include strengths-based items from the YCA. To simplify this work for the staff, the information systems person incorporated the revisions into the county's electronic assessment form.

Since there are more areas and items to discuss with youth because of this addition, staff found it took more time to conduct interviews (in part because of the additional information youth were willing to share given this approach). Staff reported that more than one interview is often needed to get through the entire revised assessment.

Staff also observed that the youth who assessed at low risk seemed to be low risk because they have noticeable strengths. The YCA seems to work particularly well with moderate risk youth who have some strengths to build on but not so many issues and concerns that building those strengths cannot be a focus.

Future Directions

The Clackamas County Juvenile Department has established implementation of the strength-based philosophy as a department goal that has been sanctioned by their county commissioners. All initial trainings and introductions of department templates that have incorporated a strengths philosophy (i.e., Intake Assessment, Formal Accountability Agreement, Reformation Plan, and Action Plan) were completed by December 2003. Full implementation, including case plans, is targeted by June 2004.

The Clackamas County Juvenile Department's pilot group will continue to meet and plan the training for the integration of this approach with all staff. The staff were surveyed as to which tools would be most useful in this training, and the top suggestions were watching videotaped strength-based intake interviews and hearing from the pilot group about barriers, as well as what went well.

During the summer of 2003, the department held a two-day training on strength-based philosophies in the juvenile justice field. Present at the trainings were community partners including Oregon Youth Authority, Department of Human Services staff from Family Court (as well as their Foster Grandparent, and Juvenile Drug Court participants), and therapists from Clackamas County Mental Health. In response to the positive feedback from staff regarding the training, a follow-up training (Part II) has been planned for spring 2004.

Finally, the staff at Clackamas County Juvenile Department has developed a database as a training tool for the pilot group to enter strength-based interventions and dispositions. This database was created to be an on-going list that all counselors would be able to access to assist them in strength-based case management.

Comparison Site: Marion County

Site Description

Like the pilot sites, Marion County is located in the Willamette Valley, which is bordered by the Cascade Mountains on one side and the Coastal range of mountains on the other. About an hour's drive South of Portland, Marion County includes the city of Salem, Oregon's capital and the location of the Marion County Juvenile Department. The U.S. Census Bureau reported for 2000 that Marion County is home to 284,834 people. Over a quarter of the population (27.4%) is less than 18 years of age. The county's median household income is \$46,202. The racial composition of Marion County is primarily White (84.6%), followed by Hispanic or Latino (17.1%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (2.6%), Asian (2.4%), Black or African American (1.3%) and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (0.6%).

Local and National Advisory Boards

Local Advisory Board

Juvenile Department Directors from each of the three pilot sites (Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington Counties) were brought together with at least one staff member from each site to form a Local Advisory Board. At its initial meeting on June 13, 2001, the Local Board reviewed the YCA and its proposed questions and made suggestions that were incorporated into the YCA. The Local Board continued to meet monthly throughout the following two years, after which they met approximately every six weeks. As with the initial meeting, the purpose of the Local Advisory Board meetings was to provide the counties' perspectives on the project's efforts in all areas, from data collection to overall project plans. In addition, the county representatives to the Board provided updates about their sites' implementation and use of the YCA and strengths protocol, staff feedback, and changes in departmental culture as a result of incorporating the YCA and the strengths-based protocol into their system.

National Advisory Board

The research team also assembled a National Advisory Board composed of experts in areas relevant to the assessment of youth strengths and development of service protocols (e.g., psychometrics, cultural competency, juvenile justice, developmental psychology), which first met on June 20-21, 2001, in Portland, Oregon. The goal of the first meeting of the National Advisory Board was to agree upon the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of the strength-based instrument and protocol, brainstorm ideas for the surrounding protocol/referral strategy, review the suggested questions for the strengths assessment, and put considerable focus on creating a short, stand-alone strengths-based instrument to be used in juvenile departments. Suggestions from the National Board and the RWJF Project Officer, Kate Kraft, were incorporated into the next version of the assessment questions and protocol.

A second National Advisory Board meeting took place in February 2003, to review the progress of the project to date and hear from a board of representatives from each pilot county about their experiences using the YCA and protocol. YCA components and preliminary results were shared with the board, followed by a group discussion that included next steps and recommendations.

The National Advisory Board met for the final time in October 2003, at which time they were given an overview of the project, new findings, implications, and an update from the Counties. The training curriculum was discussed, as well, with each member receiving a binder of training materials developed and compiled by NPC. The National Advisory Board then contributed to a discussion of dissemination strategies and final project tasks.

Literature Review

Introduction

The basic premise for much of the current research on the causes and correlates of juvenile delinquency is that “offending by most juveniles is the result of forces within an individual (IQ, personality) and forces in an individual’s social environment (parents, siblings, peers) in different contexts (family, school, neighborhood)” (Browning & Loeber, 1999). In other words, youth are affected by many factors and the interaction of these factors. Because internal and external forces influence youth, it is important for assessments and interventions to identify influences at all levels. However, much of this research has followed risk and needs models, which have focused predominantly on the problems a youth has, that is, deficiencies or characteristics of the youth or her/his environment that contribute to negative outcomes. These models, prevalent in medical and psychological research, address dysfunction and what needs to be “fixed.”

On the other hand, youth and their environments are also full of skills, talents, and coping mechanisms that have helped the youth adapt and survive in often-difficult circumstances. It is this idea that forms the premise of the strengths-based approach, which includes positive forces in the equation, rather than looking only at the negative forces.

The strength-based approach is considered to be an organizing principle for a family of theories and practice strategies which all have in common that they are focused on the generally untapped gifts, positive attributes and under-developed capabilities of persons, families and even communities, who are in some way compromised in their abilities, and/or seeking help for problems. Emerging as an alternative to exclusively “problem” or “deficit-based” approaches, the strength-based approach challenged that an alternative was urgently needed to offset the effects of negative labeling and subsequent practitioner-driven interventions that all-too-infrequently led to poor outcomes (Nissen, 2003).

Identifying Youth at Risk

Public attention regularly focuses on the problem of youth crime, yet an understanding of both the scope of the problem and the potential range of solutions is often lacking (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2001). Additionally, issues such as substance abuse and mental illness contribute to the numbers of youth who are finding themselves in the juvenile justice system in need of opportunities to change and redirect their lives (Schiraldi, Holman & Beatty, 2000; Cocozza & Skowrya, 2000).

Presently, juvenile justice and social service systems rely on various traditional risk assessment tools to plan appropriate programming and services for clients and their families. There is a need within these systems for reliable, valid, and useful tools to assess strengths in addition to risk for initial and continuing juvenile justice contact. There is also a need for rigorous psychometric

studies of these tools. Though some work on instrument development and validation for client strength and family resiliency assessment has been done; in general, these tools were designed for clinical and/or social service environments (Cowger, 1992; Cowger, 1994; Dunst, Trivette, & Deal 1994; Leffert et al., 1998) and have left a void for tools that specifically address the unique conditions and need of persons in contact with the juvenile justice system. For example, substance abuse assessments for youth often focus on multiple areas in the youth's life, but are primarily focused on risk for substance abuse and identifying the degree to which the youth has progressed to excessive or regular use. Educational assessments, likewise, may focus specifically on academic and intellectual skills and the environmental factors that may contribute to the youth being at risk for negative school outcomes. Criminogenic risks (i.e., those indicators that identify youth at risk of juvenile justice involvement) include substance abuse and educational factors but also include other areas, such as peer group influences and acting out behaviors.

The appropriate identification of youth at risk of juvenile justice involvement has been recognized as critically important to the effectiveness of juvenile justice intervention and prevention efforts (Johnson, 1999; Wiebush et al., 1995). Appropriate assessment can help to identify criminogenic service needs and thereby help ensure that a youth receives the appropriate level and intensity of treatment. However, assessment that is improperly conducted or that uses criteria without an adequate research base can lead to inappropriate treatment, costly and unnecessary treatment, or denial of services for those youth in need (Wiebush et al., 1995; Zapata & Katims, 1994). Thus, it is important that assessment tools be used in a method that ensures the best possible outcomes for youth.

While the risk and needs assessment literature has now confirmed many criminogenic risk factors, it has become clear that a youth's strengths (either as an individual or in her/his environment) serve as "protective factors," that is, buffers to the negative influence of risks and a base from which to build and grow (B. Seljan, personal communication, October 2003). Without including a full understanding of these factors in an assessment process and service plan, we risk losing out on opportunities to help a youth be successful and progress on a path toward a healthy and pro-social adulthood. Adolescence is a particularly suitable time to help youth identify their interests and future goals, since they are already undergoing dramatic physical and emotional changes and seeking to form their identities.

Adolescent Development

Erikson's (1968) theory of adolescent identity development has traditionally served as the foundation for understanding behavior during this transitional stage into adulthood (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Erikson theorized that each stage of the life cycle occurs as a challenge that requires successful resolution in order to progress on to the next stage. Adolescence, according to Erikson, is marked by the challenge of identity versus identity confusion. Successfully developing a healthy identity is a function of (1) feeling comfortable in "one's own body," (2) "knowing where one is going," (3) being able to successfully manipulate one's environment, and (4) having the capacity to integrate present identifications with future aspirations in order to develop a healthy personal and social identity (Erikson, 1968).

Although individual development and functioning has been the traditional focus of adolescent research, a more recent focus has been on examining the "contexts in which these developments take place" (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). These contexts include families, peer groups, and schools (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Developing a healthy identity, therefore, involves the

integration of past experiences, personal perceptions, and social norms and expectations (Sprinthall & Collins, 1984).

Adolescent social and emotional development includes several “tasks.” In addition to identity development, a crucial area of growth occurs in moral development.

Moral Development

Moral behavior is conceptualized as an interest in and concern for other people (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998). Theories about which factors lead to moral development are varied (e.g., psychoanalytic, behaviorist, socio-cultural, cognitive, and biological). However, it is likely the case that a person’s moral nature is an integration of many aspects of their psychological make-up (Colby & Damon, 1992).

Berkowitz and Grych (1998) theorize that moral development, which is at its most malleable in early childhood, is also, in part, determined by several factors that need to be present in order for morality to develop. These factors, referred to as meta-moral characteristics in earlier works (Berkowitz, 1997), include (1) social orientation, which is rooted in a secure attachment to caregivers, and would in turn provide a greater likelihood that a youth would adhere to family rules (Ainsworth, et al., 1978); (2) self-control, which is developed early on in life as the capacity to resist temptation and suppress impulses, and forms the belief that “moral agents must have some capacity to control their own behavior” (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998); (3) compliance with external standards, an understanding that there are external rules and values which should be adhered to, which helps develop the internalization of societal norms and standards for acceptable behavior; and (4) self-esteem, a sense of one’s own inherent value, which when absent leads to social dysfunctions and mental pathologies (Harter, 1997).

These four factors serve as the foundation for developing the four components of early moral development. These components include: (1) Empathy, which is not only recognizing one’s own emotional reactions, but understanding the emotional reactions of others; (2) Conscience, an understanding and adherence to internalized standards; (3) Altruism, selfless giving to others despite the expense it may cause to oneself; and (4) Moral Reasoning, the ability to think about and resolve moral issues (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998).

The outcomes for youth with poor moral functioning can be troubling. Bennet, DiIulio, and Walters (1996) see the lack of these components of morality as the impetus behind juvenile criminality. Classifying these youth as “radically impulsive, brutally remorseless youngsters” (p.27), Bennet et al., advocated significant incarceration time for these youth. In addition, there has been a strong movement toward a more punitive focus on young offenders (Fagan & Zimring, 2000) as well as a move toward processing some juveniles in adult courts (Feld, 1999; Austin, Johnson & Gregoriou, 2000). However, there is evidence indicating that very tough punishments for youth are not the answer to delinquency. Studies demonstrate that youth who are tried as adults in the criminal justice system typically do not exhibit the “behavior modifications” hoped for. In fact, they tend to recidivate at greater rates (both in frequency and in time after incarceration) than youth in the juvenile system (www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/juvenile/stats).

Again, we find that the problem can be traced to a focus on deficit models rather than strengths-based models. One can interpret a lack of these factors and components of morality as personality or character flaws in some youth. The conclusion reached by some researchers is that

these youth are dangerous and society must be protected from them. On the other hand, it is rare to find youth who are completely lacking in all of these areas or who are not capable of change and growth. A strengths-based model allows us to identify those components the youth does have and draw on them to help encourage moral development. For example, participating in activities that help a youth build, or rebuild, attachments to family members, positive peers, and community members provides a mechanism for allowing growth in social orientation, self-esteem, empathy and altruism, among other benefits. A strengths-based approach provides a mechanism for encouraging healthy adolescent development, and consequently, decreased juvenile (and adult) offending.

Restorative Justice and the Need for a Balanced Approach in Juvenile Justice

There is a growing body of knowledge supporting the use of balanced community-based systems to support restorative sanctions and processes (e.g., community service, victim involvement, mediation, and restitution) and related approaches as catalysts for change in the juvenile justice system (Bazemore & Umbreit, 1994). After more than a decade of research and practical experience with outcome-focused intervention strategies, researchers and practitioners have identified three programming priorities that describe a conceptual framework for intervention practices. These priorities include accountability, community protection, and competency development (Bazemore & Umbreit, 1994). Researchers recommend that to achieve a “balanced approach” a given case must be individualized and based on the circumstances of the offense and the needs and risks presented by the offender. The system balance is achieved when resources are equally allocated among the three program priorities.

Umbreit (1997) defines restorative justice as emphasizing the importance of elevating the role of crime victims and community members through more active involvement in the justice process, holding offenders directly accountable to the people and communities they have violated, restoring the emotional and material losses of victims, and providing a range of opportunities for dialogue, negotiation, and problem solving, whenever possible, which can lead to a greater sense of community safety, social harmony, and peace for all involved. Further, Umbreit (1997) suggests that restorative justice holds a great deal of potential for: 1) diverting a large number of property offenses and minor assaults from the formal justice system, 2) working effectively with offenders once they have entered the correctional system following conviction, 3) reducing the frequency and severity of further criminal behavior (although these data are not yet conclusive), and ultimately 4) redefining and restructuring our justice systems in order to more actively involve and serve crime victims, victimized communities and offenders. A growing body of evidence gathered from across the country suggests that the general public is far more supportive of basic principles of restorative justice than many might think, particularly when applied to property offenders (Umbreit, 1997).

The Role of Strengths

Research is beginning to focus on how resiliency and strengths-based programs have a central place in how society addresses the issues presented in the juvenile justice system. Enhancing strengths such as social competence, problem solving skills, and a sense of autonomy while providing opportunities for pro-social bonding can help ameliorate some social problems often seen in juvenile offenders (Bazemore, 1991; Williamson, 1997), and impact predictors of chronic juvenile offending while reducing juvenile recidivism (Chamberlain & Moore, 1998).

Research has shown that youth and families possess certain traits, or strengths, that can support the youth and their families toward positive change and away from at-risk behavior. Enhancing resiliency in families has been shown to moderate youth developmental outcomes under conditions of high stress (Wyman et al., 1992) and predict positive functioning and social adjustment (Wyman et al., 1993). Additionally, studies in Germany illustrate how resiliency in individuals with serious, cumulative, stressful life events and circumstances impacts the development of juvenile delinquency and antisocial behavior (Losel & Bender, 1992). Program models whose goals are designed to include family and youth resiliency enhancement for the purpose of impacting youth alcohol, tobacco and other drug use have been shown to be effective (Johnson et al., 1998; Norman, 1997).

A focus on the inherent strengths and potential of young people has been implicitly related to many successful and evidence-based innovations in the recent history of the juvenile justice field – implied, if not directly encouraged, in everything from detention reform (Stanfield, 2000), to balanced and restorative justice (Bazemore & Walgrave, 1999), to addressing the problem of substance abuse among juvenile offenders (Nissen, Vandenburg, Embree-Bever, & Mankey, 1999), and to promoting more effective aftercare and transition out of the juvenile justice system (Altschuler & Brash, 2003).

Despite this evidence, there has been a substantive gap in the contemporary juvenile justice literature to explicitly explore and understand the role of the strength-based approach in improving client outcomes, reducing recidivism, and reducing costs to communities. This lack of focus causes under-utilization of a key ingredient to redirecting young lives—their strengths, and those of their families and their communities, and the manner in which those strengths might logically accelerate their transition from anti-social to pro-social activity and identity development (Nissen, 2003).

Need for a Strengths-Based Assessment Tool

While a strengths-based approach is needed throughout the juvenile justice system (and beyond), the logical place to begin that development would be at the beginning of a youth's contact with this system. A strengths-based assessment tool would help set up the expectations, both with juvenile justice staff and the youth and families, of a mutual commitment to focusing on strengths and positive change. This approach to assessment would also ensure that staff begin work with a youth and family not just with knowledge of a youth's charge or misbehavior, but a more complete view of the youth as a person with great potential (Nissen, 2003), skills, and interests.

Although tools for assessing for risk for initial or continued juvenile justice involvement have been developed and are currently used in the field, few have been rigorously evaluated (Johnson, 1999). In addition, existing tools are inadequate because most focus on risk exclusively and neglect to include resiliency, strength, or protective factors and/or they are driven solely by policy considerations without regard to research results (Wiebush et al., 1995). It is clear from the literature on adolescent development and successful strategies for behavioral change that a thorough assessment tool for youth involved in juvenile justice would include components that reflect restorative justice (helping the youth understand harm he/she has caused by her/his actions and allowing her/him to make up for it), engage the youth in positive activities that he/she is interested in and with which he/she can identify, and build on and develop protective factors, such as positive adults and peers to support the youth in meeting her/his goals.

The Youth Competency Assessment (YCA) was developed as a strengths-based assessment tool and protocol to help youth meet the following three goals: (1) support efforts to repair harm, (2) provide specific indicators for pathways toward a healthy identity, and (3) connect youth to community, family, and peers. This instrument is one way to expand, strengthen, and improve the juvenile justice system's capacity to include the positive elements of a youth, the youth's family, peers, and/or community in a well-balanced assessment and service profile. It forms the cornerstone of the development of integrated strategies combining juvenile justice, substance abuse treatment, and family and community interventions that could interrupt the cycle of substance abuse and delinquency.

II. Methodology

Pilot Site Selection

The research team and RWJF staff determined which counties in Oregon would be invited to participate in the strengths project as pilot sites (with Multnomah County being selected as the initial pilot site), based on interest, demographics, and current strengths climate, among other considerations. After initial meetings with the Juvenile Department Director and a group of staff members at each of the three potential sites (Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington Counties), all three sites agreed to participate in the project.

Pilot site participation involved a substantial commitment on the part of the department leadership and staff, and included the following components: 1) participating in training, 2) identifying a group of staff to pilot the tool, 3) testing the tool on a sample of youth, 4) providing the research team with paperwork and case materials related to the sample, and 5) participating in a focus group to provide feedback to the research team. In addition, two or more members of each pilot team participated in a Local Advisory Board that met regularly with the research team, and at least one person from each county represented the department at the National Advisory Board meetings. Some staff also recruited youth and families for videotapes of their assessment interviews that were coded for the research, viewed by the National Advisory Board, and/or viewed at a conference presentation for other juvenile department staff.

After a review of demographic and social characteristics of other counties in the state, a request was made to Marion County to participate as a comparison site, and they agreed to be come a part of this project as well.

Training and Technical Assistance

Training Curriculum

At the beginning of the project, the research team met with Laura Nissen to develop the training curriculum. NPC developed and/or compiled training material to be included in notebooks for distribution to participants in strengths trainings. Initially, the training was envisioned as a one-time workshop to convey the philosophy of the strengths-based approach and to explain the purpose of the pilot project. It soon became apparent that there was too much content for one session, and the material was divided into two main sections. The first trainings were scheduled with Multnomah County for October 2001 and January 2002.

How trainings worked and evolved

As Year 2 of the project began, Youth Competency Assessment (YCA) training materials were being developed, and trainings of juvenile court counselors/supervision counselors/probation officers and others in the project's three pilot counties (Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas) were being scheduled for the first part of 2002.

Trainings were similar in each county, though they were somewhat individualized depending on each county's needs. In each county there was a general (community) training for county employees and others who would not be using the YCA directly, but would potentially be affected by its use, including juvenile department staff not directly involved in the pilot,

community based service providers, etc. The purpose of the training was for participants to gain a general knowledge of strengths-based assessment and service delivery and to introduce the YCA tool. For employees who would be using the tool and protocol directly, there was a two-part training. The first part introduced strengths-based assessment and, depending on the counties' needs and prior trainings, included information about solution-focused interviewing. The second (applied) part of the training addressed specifics of using the YCA in addition to, not instead of, the accountability piece each county also needed to address as part of its assessment and intake process.

Participants in both types of trainings were provided with notebooks of materials and received training in the use of the materials, a variety of exercises and activities designed to increase understanding of strengths-based assessment in general and using the YCA in particular (counselor-youth assessment role play, finding strengths in problem behavior, etc.). In addition, NPC gathered samples of actual assessments (pre YCA) from each county and mapped that information onto the YCA and case plan. This material was used in the training to show how the YCA could be used with county-specific existing tools and to gather information about strengths that is important to building a case plan.

Strengths Experts

Additional training and materials were given to a group of "experts," consisting of two or more representatives from each pilot county to enhance their knowledge of youth competency (strengths) and related areas, such as finding community resources with which youth could connect to build on their strengths. The team of experts was assembled to serve as an in-house source of strengths knowledge and a resource for counselors/probation officers needing help with integrating the YCA into their assessments and process, gathering feedback to convey to the research team, and providing encouragement to staff during this period of change. The experts also became a part of the YCA Local Advisory Board, attended all board meetings for the remainder of Year 2, and continued being part of the Local Advisory Board throughout Year 3.

Judiciary

Another specialized training was given at the request of Multnomah County. This training was for members of the judiciary, to provide them with information about the YCA and protocol so that they would understand the purpose of the new (or increased) emphasis on strengths that these individuals would be seeing in the case plans and in the courtroom.

Training Timeline

Trainings were conducted between January and April 2002. In February 2002, Multnomah County started implementing the tool. By April 2002 all sites were up and running. By June, Washington and Clackamas Counties had integrated the YCA into their assessment tool, although revisions continued throughout the year.

Data Collection

In April 2002, NPC met with the three pilot counties to discuss data collection. One facet of the data collection effort was for each county to provide NPC with approximately 50 youth who had been assessed in their system using the YCA. Similar information was also collected from a comparison county (Marion), which had not received strengths training from NPC nor used the

YCA tool. The purpose of this sample was to have a specified, but potentially limited, number of youth with whom to test the YCA and to use this sample for measuring progress and outcome variables of interest.

Process Outcomes: Assessing the tool and the implementation process

The research team carried out several data collection efforts to answer the following questions:

- Does the YCA help juvenile justice staff become more strengths-based in their work?
- Do the YCA questions work well for all, or work for specific groups of youth?
- Will youth and/or families have a different experience in the pilot counties (with pilot staff)?
- What are the benefits and challenges of using the YCA from the perspective of juvenile justice staff?
- Do other stakeholders in, or working with, the juvenile departments, notice any differences in the pilot counties?

Focus Groups

Youth feedback on the YCA – Development Phase

A focus group of youth from the Multnomah County Juvenile Department was assembled on September 12, 2001, to provide feedback on the proposed assessment questions from the youth's perspective. As a result of the focus group, the order of the questions was changed and the number of questions was reduced.

Staff feedback on the YCA – Implementation Phase

In July 2002, NPC facilitated focus groups (for focus group questions, see Appendix D) with juvenile court counselors and supervisors who were testing the YCA in each of the three pilot counties. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather information about their experiences using the YCA, both positive and negative. Comments from all the focus groups were summarized and distributed to the Local Advisory Board and were used to inform decisions about revisions to trainings and training materials, as well as to provide feedback to the counties about where and what type of additional information and/or resources would be useful. A compilation of their comments may be found in the Findings section of this report.

Youth and Parent/Guardian Interviews

Another major data collection effort involved interviews with 20 youth and their parents/guardians from each of the three pilot counties (Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas) and from the comparison county (Marion). The purpose of youth and parent/guardian interviews was to obtain the youth and parent/guardian's perception of the initial assessment process.

Before interviews began in July 2002, youth and parent/guardian interview questions (Appendix E) were developed and approved by the Local Advisory Board and by Kate Kraft (RWJF). The youth interview questions were piloted with two youth who were not part of the sample. Six interviewers were trained to conduct the youth and parent/guardian interviews, including one bilingual interviewer to conduct interviews in Spanish. In addition, NPC submitted an

application to a local Institutional Review Board, to ensure third party, human subjects protection and review of its interview forms and processes, before collecting data directly from youth and family members.

For Multnomah and Washington Counties, youth were randomly selected from the approximately 50 youth whose names each county provided (see above). Because Clackamas County began its implementation later than the other counties and was not able to provide 50 youth as quickly, each youth that the County did provide and give us permission to interview, was assigned to be interviewed. Marion County contributed 31 youth as the comparison sample. Interviews took place through the end of November 2002. They were primarily conducted in person (72%), though some phone interviews were conducted (28%). Phone interviews were permitted at the request of the participant or in cases where the youth or family had moved to a distant location. All interviews were voluntary, did not impact the youth's case or status with the juvenile department, and were confidential. Youth and their parent/guardian each received an incentive (gift certificate worth \$20.00) for participating in the interview.

An interview database was developed, and information from the interviews was entered into the database as it was received. These data included a quantitative and a qualitative component, and were a rich source of information for this project.

Videotapes

Another data collection task was to videotape interviews between counselors and youth and a parent/guardian (if present) in the YCA pilot counties and in the comparison county. The purpose of the videotapes was to determine if strengths-based practice could be observed, and whether staff trained and provided with the YCA would be more strengths-based than juvenile justice staff in general. NPC developed and tested a coding scheme (Appendix F) and trained coders in observing and coding the videotapes. All videotapes were viewed and coded by a minimum of two evaluation team members.

Participating in a videotaping session was completely voluntary; families who agreed to be videotaped received a \$10.00 gift certificate as a demonstration of our appreciation. Juvenile department line staff or managers recruited families for the tapes. Because of the extreme difficulty in getting both counselors and youth/parents to agree to be taped, our original goal of 10 tapes per county was not reached. Eventually, a total of 14 tapes were obtained, 10 pilot and 4 comparison. The comparison tapes included 3 from the comparison county and 1 from a non-pilot staff member in a pilot county. It turned out that even with fewer tapes than planned, there were striking differences between the strengths-based interviews (YCA) and the more traditional (comparison) interviews.

An interesting addition to the videotape data collection effort was a feedback mechanism. Several counselors whose YCA interviews were videotaped requested feedback about their use of the strengths-based approach during the assessment interview. NPC created a feedback template (see Appendix G) wherein areas where strengths were utilized were pointed out, as well as areas where strengths could be incorporated. Feedback was then provided back to the staff.

Key Stakeholder Interviews

In September 2002, each YCA pilot site (Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties) was asked to suggest key stakeholders in their system or community who would have information or a perspective that they thought should be gathered before recommendations were made for changes to the Youth Competency Assessment (YCA) tool, the strengths process, or the strengths training. The sites were told that implications for case planning and youth outcomes were of special interest. In addition, the sites were asked what they thought was important information to gather, and whether they had specific questions to suggest for inclusion in the stakeholder interviews.

For each person the pilot sites suggested for a stakeholder interview, the sites were asked to provide the following:

- Key stakeholder name
- Job title
- Organization
- Phone/email
- How the person fits in (why he/she is a key stakeholder)

Suggestions for stakeholder interview questions were incorporated into the list of stakeholder questions developed by NPC Research (see Appendix H).

Initial contacts with stakeholders were made at the end of December 2002. Interviews began in January 2003, and continued through April 2003. Seventeen people were suggested by the sites to receive key stakeholder interviews, 13 of whom were interviewed. The other stakeholders declined or were not able to be located.

Coding of County Forms

A coding form (Appendix I) was created to allow coding of the extent to which the assessment and case plan forms each county used included the key domains of the YCA. This form was completed at the county level (one per county) as a research team exercise for purposes of discussion about whether each county was retaining the intent of the YCA.

Case and Youth Outcomes: Testing the Impact of Using the YCA on Case Planning and Changes in Youth Behavior

The research team conducted several additional data collection efforts to answer the following questions:

- Does using the YCA increase the number of strengths identified during the assessment process (or qualitatively change the type of information in the assessment)?
- Does using the YCA increase the use of creative and strengths-based services or resources during case planning and implementation?
- Does using the YCA result in increased focus on strengths during casework?
- Does using the YCA result in more youth with increased competencies by the end of their case?
- Does using the YCA and a strengths-based process decrease recidivism?

Case Coding

With the intent of discovering any impact on the case plan and on youth outcomes due to the YCA and strengths protocol, paperwork from each youth in the pilot and comparison groups was analyzed and coded according to the extent to which the case plan reflected the three domains of the YCA (creating a healthy identity; connecting with family, peers, and community; and repairing harm). Further, information was gathered for each case about whether there was a balance between strengths-based and accountability goals, whether short- and long-term goals reflected strengths that were gathered in the assessment, and other areas having to do with application of strengths in the youth's future plans (for coding template, see Appendix J).

Each county, pilot and comparison, provided any of the following forms that were available in hard copy for each youth in the sample: assessments (including the YCA), formal accountability agreements, case plans, reformation plans, closing notes, etc.

The Case Coding effort also looked at completed Closing/Completion forms (see description below) to see whether the three domains of the YCA were represented there in descriptions of activities and experiences of the youth while his or her case was open, as well as whether the closing/completion forms reflected the use of any strengths-based services and/or activities during the case.

Services Data

The research team created a services data spreadsheet, which was reviewed by the Local Advisory Board, to serve as the basis for collecting youth-level services data from each case file. Data were collected from the electronic (JIN¹, JJIS², and a local data system in the comparison county³) and social (hard copy case) files of each of the youth in the sample to see if there were any differences that might be attributed to the YCA or the adoption of strengths-based philosophy or practices. The data were collected by juvenile department staff in each site except Clackamas (which allowed a research team member to collect the data). The information of interest included any services and/or activities that were a part of the youth's involvement with the juvenile department and whether there was evidence in the file that those same services were completed. We also included services that were mentioned at closing/completion as having been part of the youth's experience while involved with the juvenile department. The services were then coded in various categories and the number and type of services was analyzed across departments.

Closing/Completion

A closing/completion form was created for juvenile court counselors to complete at the time a youth's case closed or at the date 12 months from the initial assessment, whichever came first. The pilot counties (Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas) and the comparison county (Marion) completed different versions of the form for each youth in the sample (the comparison county's version did not include questions about the YCA). The closing form for all counties was intended to provide information from the counselor's perspective about whether the case plan incorporated strengths identified in the YCA, whether the YCA affected the case, and whether the youth developed competencies during her/his juvenile justice involvement.

¹ Multnomah County's Juvenile Information Network that served as their juvenile department data system until their conversion to JJIS in December 2002.

² The Juvenile Justice Information System, a statewide data system in Oregon linking county juvenile departments and the state juvenile justice agency, the Oregon Youth Authority.

³ Used for tracking services to youth on probation.

III. Findings

Throughout this project, the research team collected information from a variety of sources to answer several questions. We monitored the pilot implementation by gathering feedback on the YCA tool (questions and format), the training materials and curriculum, and the integration of the tool and process into the pilot sites. We also measured the impact of the pilot experience, including changes in staff perceptions, experiences, and work products; benefits to youth and families; and transformation of the culture and/or operations of the participating juvenile department systems. In this section, we describe the findings from these varied research activities.

Focus Groups

(See Appendix D for focus group questions)

NPC facilitated YCA focus groups with case managers/supervision or juvenile court counselors/probation officers¹ in Washington and Multnomah Counties during July 2002, and in Clackamas County during August 2002, after their first several months of using the tool. Twelve case managers who had been using the YCA attended the Washington County focus group, 10 attended the Multnomah County focus group, and 9 attended the Clackamas County focus group. After introductions (name and role), the focus group questions were presented. Following are the responses. In cases where more than one person in the same county provided a similar response to one question, the most representative response is quoted below.

1. How is the process going? What is going well?

Washington County:

“There is a lot that I really like; for example, goal setting in the next three months and ‘What makes you feel good?’ It is exciting what comes up. My reports are much larger than they used to be.”

“I think it changes your perspective of youth. It forces you to look at their positives. They come in automatically labeled with a crime, and this lets us pull up more positives and integrate that.”

“I noticed that it has affected the way rapport is established. It is much easier with the strengths-based focus.”

“I have a scaled-down version that I can do in five minutes before court. I have definitely made a change in my recommendations based on it, and it has really helped get more information.”

“‘What changes have you already made?’ is a great first question.”

¹ Note: Job titles are not consistent across the counties.

Multnomah County:

“We are finding more out about the youth with the strengths aspect. Asking those questions on the YCA really opened up a door for the strengths. What they are good at is what motivates them.”

“It puts the kids at ease, too. Because they are expecting to get hammered. Good for parents, too, because sometimes the kids have put them through so much that they are having a hard time seeing the kid’s strengths.”

“We are already doing some of it, and it is just applying it to practice. To just change ‘needs’ into ‘goals.’ To me that is the only difference.”

“It was a surprise to me that they found a second person that they admire besides the parent. It would be a friend, and not an uncle or someone like that...I found everyone admired the peers after the parents.”

“They admire teachers, too, and other people in the community. I didn’t expect that.”

“I had two or three name *me* [as someone they admire].”

Clackamas County:

“Once we get them hooked into it, they go to town.”

“There are some areas that are new that I don’t normally ask about.”

“We have had some successes. I had a kid who had a wood and construction class in high school. We had a summer job program on a construction crew, and I tied it all together and got him a job. Mom said if Richard Scary were to write a book about the best summer job, it would be the job that he got. In the intake I asked about what he wanted to do in the future, and he said “Construction.” Last night we talked about community service, and he wants to do it at Habitat for Humanity. But he also found that he doesn’t want to do construction for a living!”

“It makes you think a little bit more. Focus.”

“I feel like some of my kids don’t have a lot of resources available to them, so if I look at strengths and try to find some resources...”

“A lot of times there are generalized areas in our reformation plan and we expand on them, like school and maybe mentors and other programs for the family. Services that I can encourage them to explore, like health and dental care. Those might seem like small things, but it affects the overall self-esteem. But they aren’t comfortable talking about them. Sometimes it really helps if we focus on their strengths, and then they will be more open to health and dental services and so on. Strengths helps many be more open.”

“The State risk and needs assessment and one [form] our department looked at a couple of years ago...we looked at risk and protective factors, and to me this is just a refresher. So what I am doing now is...it’s not like it changed everything, but I am looking more for activities for the kid to do and sitting down and discussing. One kid wanted to shoot his bow, and we had a big discussion about the family doing this together, and they went on their way home and bought him some new arrows, and he got a job so he could go out and buy himself a new bow. We have always looked at these questions, but still focused a lot on what is the problem. Now I spend more of my time talking or thinking about positive activities.”

“I have noticed that this group is writing things like, “I will try to encourage him to get into an extracurricular activity.” There is that involvement with a positive activity... usually mom and dad would take care of needs, but now we are taking care of his needs by using his strengths. Tapping in to those resources is an important thing.”

“The check-in appointments are a lot more fun! Instead of looking at the reformation plan and asking if they have done each thing, we are talking about things like the job and how it is going. It is more fun for the youth and more fun for me.”

2. What challenges are you facing?

Washington County:

“Some of the questions are hard for the younger kids. I simplified it, but had to be careful not to be leading them.”

“I had a lot of DD⁴ kids, and it was difficult to get through the whole interview with them. It was way too long, and I wasn’t able to do it all at that sitting. I had to explain terms and concepts.”

“Finding the flow in getting the questions answered for the strength-based piece and incorporating the risk tool...sometimes I focus more on one than the other and lose something... Mostly it was finding my own flow.”

“A lot of times they answered things before I asked the questions...For a lot of interviews I don’t want to use the whole tool because I already have that information.”

“I had one family who didn’t finish because it took too long. So now I do food around it—pizza!”

“I never do super long-term goals. I do short-term from one appointment to the next...I don’t think they can see beyond two weeks. The kids are making up stuff for three months and six months.”

⁴ Developmentally delayed

“One-month and three-month goals. Long term is just a year. I found that these kids can project a year, but not five or ten years.”

“I had a client the other day, a 16-year-old female. For many of the strength-based questions she kept saying, ‘I don’t know.’ So I said, ‘These are the most important questions I am going to ask you today,’ and I was silent. When she saw that we weren’t going anywhere until I got some of these answers, then she started talking. She didn’t expect these kinds of questions, but then she started giving good answers.”

Multnomah County:

“For the older girls [16+], it is almost too childish, so I have to reword it.”

“The girls sometimes really have a hard time seeing what they are good at. I try to get them to see beyond, ‘I can play basketball,’ or ‘I can braid hair’ to things like the ability to get to school every day, so that their challenges can come out to be a positive.”

“My biggest problem is with the parents struggling to say positive things. Some appear not to want to say anything nice.”

“My original one [challenge] was procrastination. Then I felt the hammer of [supervisor].”

When asked why she put it off, the case manager’s response was: “The newness. Not clear. Trying to get the right definitions, to focus. It was easier when I saw what a couple of others did.”

“I don’t think it is difficult. My struggle was getting organized and putting it into case plans. For me, it seems repetitive—doing two things [she is referring to the YCA and the risk assessment]. There is a lot of continuous stuff that we have to do. I like to play with my girls and go out and hang out, and it is hard for me to sit at my desk.”

“I find myself...being frustrated with trying to get the others to see the positive things-- because there *are* negative things. I was asked, ‘Why are you so sensitive?’ ...They saw it as rewarding the kid. The frustration is within the community piece now without being called softy and sensitive.”

“Once you get that information, what do you do with it? If it is going to flow, it should flow in that the YCA questions should flow to the probation contract.”

“There is almost a sense of accountability for even our lower risk kids that we shouldn’t be incorporating into our resources. Like getting them into anger management where they are meeting true thugs. When I am doing a thorough assessment and writing these resources, I wonder if someone will be auditing me and say I have done absolutely nothing [the case manager’s concern is that it may look like he has done nothing to hook them up with resources, when the case may be that they don’t need it, being low risk, and getting it may even be detrimental to the youth because of the other youth he will meet].

Clackamas County:

“The only thing I feel pressure by is the timeframes [of the pilot study] and choosing people [for the pilot sample] that I didn’t necessarily think are appropriate for what you want. Like sex offenders—I won’t use them. I have a group of five kids that are 10-11 years old, and it is a first time charge, and I won’t keep their case open. I had a group of five girls that did a burglary, and I had met with them before and didn’t know I could use them [to pilot the YCA], but now I understand that I can. We need more time to do that [recruit the sample] because we haven’t had a lot of referrals.”

“I don’t even have a problem asking families if they want to participate with an interview or tape, but not up front. It is tense and hostile sometimes at first. If I could build a relationship first, that would work better. I think after you have met with some of them a while you will have them open up and be more interactive.”

“I think it is the middle-level kid this works best with. The low risk kid seems to be low risk because they *have* strengths. The high-risk kids we have doing so many things that I find this works best with the middle kids who have some strengths to build on but not so many issues and concerns that we don’t have time to build.”

3. Are there other places where you noticed changes?

Washington County:

“Rapport with the kids. They are so used to ‘What have you done wrong?’ instead of ‘What have you done well?’ It is a different mindset.”

“It affects their motivation, too—an ‘I am going to comply because freedom, family, and my future are important to me.’ That is a whole different motivation for one of the biggest pieces of this.”

“Kids are finishing their contracts quicker than ever before. They seem to be just jumping in and getting it done instead of languishing...”

Multnomah County:

“I don’t think it is this tool as much as it is a lot of stuff...In the bigger picture, it is great, but this is just one more thing to do.”

“As far as meeting the kids, I feel like I have more opportunity because I can say, ‘Why did you lose your job?’ and I can refer back to their strengths... Instead of saying, ‘Damn man, you lost your job *again*.’ It can be an asset if you have that information handy and can organize it.”

“Like so many things that we have been allocated to do, the accountability isn’t there. There are a lot of very independent people doing this job. They have their own styles, and it is difficult to incorporate new things. If [the manager] is being a stickler, then they are doing it. If that doesn’t happen, they won’t do it. A lot do a strengths-based approach anyway.”

“One thing we have been doing in our unit is talk about it and help each other out. I think it has been helpful to discuss this. Someone might say, “This question is repetitive,” and someone says, “There are other ways we can do that.” So I think if the unit could develop this process, it would be good.”

“Institutionally we are introducing the new mindset of strengths. In adjudication where I am, the kids and parents are shocked by the strengths-based stuff. They want a pound of flesh or maybe two.”

Clackamas County:

“Time constraints. I feel like I have to readjust my priorities and put this ahead of what I would have done. I feel pressure to have it all written out when I don’t think it should be the top priority.”

“Typing too much.”

4. Anything else about how the youth and parents react to the process?

Washington County:

[Referring to a Latino youth] “The mom wanted to know why we were asking these [strengths-based] questions. Culturally Latinos don’t normally focus on one skill or ability. They see it more globally. It was asking the kid directly, and that was very different for them...their comfort level was low with the questions because a lot of them point directly to the kid.”

“What I found is that some of it is environment. One had no dreams or goals [when Dad was present], but when I was with her alone talking in the park, she *did* have dreams and goals—and a lot to say about Dad.”

[Referring to a phone conversation with a youth’s father, who was not happy that the counselor (being concerned for the children’s safety) asked the child answering the phone if an adult was at home] “The father was defensive and rude...but when I got around to why I was calling, he said, ‘No problem.’ He remembers the strength-based interview I had with his son, and I think that speaks to the strengths-based interview.”

Multnomah County:

“It is the same process, just more in-depth questions.”

“I am seeing changes with some of the girls. At first they have a hard time identifying strengths unless they have high self-esteem and can tell you their strengths all day long. Over three to four months, I see the girls maturing. Since it is documented, you can see it. Sometimes I didn’t write down a strength right away. Maybe at the third or fourth meeting.”

Clackamas County:

“There is no wrong answer. Every answer you get is helpful.”

5. Have there been any changes in the culture of the juvenile department or your unit?

Washington County:

“A couple of people who aren’t doing it have asked, ‘When are we going to get to do this?’ People are getting interested in it.”

“The strengths-based assessment has been a huge plus in the progress of the kid. We realize it in our bi-weeklies, final evaluations, and in the way we deal with our kids.”

“The follow-up process at residential is much easier.”

“When I am asking strengths-based questions, they are more willing to give me strengths at residential because they have been informed that it will help them. They are *all* willing. None say it is stupid. They know it is important. I tell them it will be beneficial for them in the future, and they have all this time, so why not?”

Multnomah County:

“In our unit, one of the things we try to do as a whole unit is when kids come in we come out and greet them. Even though there is a receptionist. So that when they come in we can all acknowledge them and ask, ‘What is new in your life?’ The reason is that kids don’t hear enough about how well they are doing, and what they do hear is the negative. That is consistent with all the adults in their life. It is really how you say it to them. We are already doing a lot of strengths-based stuff. If people can recognize that, it won’t seem as difficult when you hear strengths-based.”

6. Have there been any unexpected changes or unexpected outcomes, positive or negative?

Washington County:

“A lot of parents are telling their kids that they admire them, and it gets emotional...some start talking about chemical dependency, even their own, and they are going out and

choosing their own resources...a couple got their family into counseling.” When asked what she attributes this to, the case manager said, “Helping them think differently. Taking out the accusing and just discussing it. Now I have parents say, ‘I have problems, too, and so does my kid.’ I don’t tell them what to do, but they call back later and say, ‘We are getting help.’”

[Referring to how the process is going in the court unit] “We have so much material to cover at release, and the goal is to get out of here. On the other hand, it has been good because it helps slow things down a little to say, ‘What goals do you have, and how can we help you?’ and not always be so focused on the crime.”

“Kids are funny, they will say, ‘What will the judge want to see—I will tell you some goals! What would he like me to say?’”

Multnomah County:

“Some of my clients’ interests. I had no idea they had those interests. One couldn’t say anything positive about his mother.”

“I have a kid that is 6’4,” and his interest is babysitting! He walked into my office, and I said, ‘What do you like to do?’ He said, ‘I like babysitting.’ His mom and everyone says he does it well. I am working on getting him certified with CPR, etc. I went to his house and saw him, and he has it organized! He does it a lot. He has been doing it for the last three years and getting paid for it. He is taking care of foster kids who haven’t had a chance to do much, and he takes them to the zoo and OMSI [Oregon Museum of Science and Industry], etc. He takes them on the bus. He and his girlfriend.”

7. Are there any training needs that have emerged or things you know now that you wish you had known earlier?

Washington County:

“To me it was really stressful when I did the first one [YCA] because I didn’t know how to present it. It was so nebulous that no one knew. But it has evolved with everyone. It might be reassuring to let people know that whatever you take out of it...Just give someone a sample and say, ‘This is what the questions are, and these are some samples of end products.’”

“A video of one that was successful would be good.”

“...I talked about my short time span when I work with the youth, and you talked about trying to modify the tool and offered to help me with it. I think that would be helpful. Maybe keeping the door open to help develop it.”

“I think it would be helpful to normalize that it is a struggle because you are developing your own strengths too, because it is an evolution in developing your own strengths. So people need to know that it is normal, but a necessary process.”

“When you ask kids who they can talk to or confide in, I wondered if I should talk to that person and ask the kid if that is OK to do that. But at that time in the conversation I didn’t want to inject some paranoia that I would broaden...was I supposed to help develop that?”

“I had a girl that was interested in hair, and we found out that she can go to the hair design school and sit in. That came up from the tool.”

“Once you identify an adult he admires, then one of your exercises could be to say, ‘I want you to interview this person and here’s a list of questions—find out how they got to where they are.’ I think the adult would enjoy that as well. I will work on that.”

“We haven’t had a forum for how people do case work, so this [case managers’ focus group] has been a positive.”

Multnomah County:

“When you find out their strengths, plugging them into...various connections. Because I am not interested in calling all these people to get the kids hooked up. So that is where I drop the ball. It takes a long time. Some things are hard to hook kids up with.”

“More interview techniques. You get stuck sometimes.”

“Small groups. Not the whole department. A couple of units at a time.”

“How do you apply the strengths-based to the case plan?”

“There are inconsistencies with the JCP [risk assessment] and the YCA. The kids tell you the strengths and then on the risk assessment you get opposite things (on the risk, family is violent; on the strengths, the family is wonderful).”

“Some staff need training because they think they can do one and leave the other behind. They are getting a mixed message from the department.”

“Interview style. This form first, this form second, and then how do you put it into the case plan.”

Clackamas County:

“We know how to ask the questions, but now what? New training from you will help me connect the strengths and make the case progress.”

8. What are some ways we can help staff make those connections?

Clackamas County:

“Searching for resources is a lot of extra work.”

“We could ask the Diversion Board what they are using.”

“We can talk about other things like a concept like a community project, and leave it up to the kid to figure out what he could do. Even just figuring it out, even if he didn’t do, it is a great process.”

“Like Tonya Harding said, change it from ‘detention’ to ‘R&R!’”

Summary of Focus Group Findings

Overall, several themes emerged from the focus groups in Year 2, after the initial implementation of the tool, that can be categorized as benefits and challenges of the YCA.

Benefits of the YCA

- Helps gather more and different information
- Helps youth and family feel more comfortable, share more, and buy into the process (motivates changes)
- Helps identify ideas and resources
- Makes follow-up appointments more enjoyable
- Seems to facilitate quicker completion of court requirements

Challenges of the YCA

- Finding the right questions (wording) for different ages and developmental levels
- Helping parents (and some youth) see positives
- Using the YCA with the most appropriate youth
- Finding the balance between all the different forms (paperwork) and tasks of the job
- Challenging the mindset of parents, people in the community, other juvenile justice staff

Youth and Parent/Guardian Interviews

(See Appendix E for youth and parent/guardian interview questions)

Fifty-four (54) youth who were involved in the pilot or comparison juvenile departments and at least one parent or guardian of each youth (61), were interviewed in person or by phone in order to gather information about their experiences at assessment. Participation was voluntary, and each youth and parent/guardian who participated in an interview received a \$10 gift certificate as an incentive.

Four pilot youth (13.5%) were interviewed without a parent/guardian. Reasons included parent refusal, no parent; youth is 18 years old. Three comparison (4.9%) and 8 pilot (13%) parents were interviewed without their child being interviewed as well. The most common reason was that the youth could not be located or scheduled, followed by youth refusal, guardian refusing to allow youth to be interviewed, and a lawyer refusing to allow youth to be interviewed.

Table 1. Sample Sizes for Youth and Parent/Guardian Interviews

Sample sizes	Youth	Parent/guardian	Totals
Pilot	40	44	84
Comparison	14	17	31
Totals	54	61	115

Demographics

Youth in the interview sample were predominantly male (69%), which is a reflection of proportions found in juvenile justice settings. They ranged in age from 13 to 18 and had a mean age of 16. As would be expected in Oregon, the sample was primarily white (71%). The rest of the sample was Black/African American (10%), Native American (4%), Hispanic (2%), or some other race/ethnicity (4%). Parents/guardians who participated in the interviews were predominantly female (68%).

Significant Differences Between Pilot and Comparison Counties

There were several areas where youth and parent/guardian responses differed significantly between the pilot and comparison samples. These findings are summarized below by question. The youth were more likely to rate their experiences differently between the pilot and comparison sites than the parents/guardians were.

In general, youth from the pilot counties were significantly more positive about their early experiences with their departments than youth from the comparison county⁵. Some significant differences between the pilot and comparison counties were found for both youth and parents/guardians on questions about whether youth would have been treated differently for a variety of reasons (see Table 2). These findings, while interesting, are somewhat complex.

⁵ All of the pilot counties had a greater proportion of youth with felony charges than the comparison county, so these differences are not attributable to the youth being involved in less serious crimes.

The verbatim responses are described later in this section and illustrate the different ways that participants interpreted these questions.

In general, pilot and comparison youth did not differ in their perceptions about whether they would be treated differently on the basis of race or cultural background, though they did differ in their belief that other factors might influence their treatment, with more comparison youth endorsing that belief. Parents/guardians from the comparison county, on the other hand, were more likely to believe their child would be treated differently, with some parents/guardians reporting their belief that some racial/cultural groups received access to more services than others. The direction of the findings were reversed for parents'/guardians' belief that differential treatment might occur for other reasons. In this question, more pilot parents endorsed the belief and none of the comparison parents/guardians did.

Table 2. Significant Differences Between Pilot and Comparison Interview Samples

Question	Youth or Parent/Guardian	Pilot	Comparison	Scale
How positive were the first few meetings?	Youth	Mean: 2.8 Very or somewhat positive: 69.5% Not at all positive: 5.6%	Mean: 2.1 Very or somewhat positive: 41.6% Not at all positive: 16.7%	0 = Not at all positive, 4 = Completely positive
When you came in for the first few meetings, did your counselor/p.o. care about your point of view?	Youth	85% Yes	55% Yes	Yes or No
Did your counselor/p.o. ask you about good things about yourself?	Youth	86% Yes	42% Yes	Yes or No
Did your counselor/p.o. talk about things you had done wrong and what you needed to do to make up for it?	Youth	79% Yes	100% Yes	Yes or No
Do you think you would have been treated differently for any other reason? ⁶	Youth	14% Yes	42% Yes	Yes or No
Do you think your child would have been treated differently if she/he was a different race or had a different skin color or nationality or language?	Parent/Guardian	8% Yes	33% Yes	Yes or No
Do you think you would have been treated differently for any other reason?	Parent/Guardian	19% Yes	0% Yes	Yes or No

⁶ Previous questions had asked about differential treatment due to gender and race/ethnicity. Differences on these questions were not significant.

Descriptive Findings from the Pilot Sites

We also looked at the interviews for the pilot samples specifically, and noted some similarities and differences between the youth and their parents/guardians. When asked whether they were given a say in the things they needed to do for the accountability components (such as choosing community services locations or a mechanism for making money to pay restitution), parents/guardians rated their child's level of choice similarly to their child's rating. Around 40% said the child had no say and about 20% said they had a lot of say. The differences between parents/guardians and youth on this question were not statistically significant. On the other hand, parents/guardians felt that they themselves were given less say than their child.

Table 3. Choices Regarding Accountability: Pilot Sample

	A lot	A little	None
Pilot youth	21.3%	38.3%	40.4%
Pilot parent/guardian – self	21.1%	18.4%	60.5%
Pilot parent/guardian – child	18.4%	36.8%	44.7%

The following table illustrates some other questions where pilot youth and their parents/guardians were similar or different in their perceptions of their early experience with the juvenile department. Almost everyone interviewed felt that their counselor/probation officer was helpful and fair, yet youth were less likely to rate their counselor/probation officer as sensitive to their family's background than parents/guardians were. Most of the youth (83%) who rated the probation officers as not sensitive (3 or less) were Black/African American. Race did not appear as a clear pattern to explain for parents'/guardians' ratings.

Table 4. Descriptive Findings from the Pilot Sites

Question	Youth	Parent/Guardian	Scale
Was your counselor/probation officer helpful?	91% Yes	86% Yes	Yes or No
How fair do you feel your counselor/p.o. was with you/your child?	Mean: 8.3 55.6% rated p.o. as a 9 or 10	Mean: 8.6 76.3% rated p.o. as a 9 or 10	1 = Not fair 10 = Very fair
How sensitive was your counselor/p.o. to your family's background or to experiences you have had because of your race, ethnicity, etc.? ⁷	Mean: 6.9 34.3% said 9 or 10 17.1% said 3 or less	Mean: 8.2 70.2% said 9 or 10 8.1% said 3 or less	1 = Not at all sensitive 10 = Very sensitive

Following is a summary of comments about YCA interview questions whose responses garnered significant differences between the pilot and comparison samples.

⁷ Difference between youth and parent/guardian on this question are approaching statistical significance ($p = .055$) and the Chi-square is significant.

Pilot Group Responses Compared to Comparison Group Responses

Youth Question 2: When you came in for the first meetings, did your counselor/probation officer care about your point of view (your feelings, your side of the story?) Were there things he/she said or ways he/she acted that made you feel this way?

Summary of youth responses to Question 2:

Comments offered by the comparison county youth were almost evenly divided between positive comments about the interview/counselor, such as, “She cares about me,” and less strengths-based comments such as, “He just told me how things were going to go and asked what I thought about that.” A greater proportion of pilot county youth offered positive comments about their interview/counselor than offered neutral or negative responses.

Youth Question 3a: *Did your counselor/probation officer ask you about good things about yourself? What did you talk about?*

Summary of youth responses to Question 3a:

Seven of the 12 comparison youth (58.3%) who responded to this question said that they were *not* asked about good things about themselves. Although one of those youth said, “I don’t know that she ever actually asked me to name them,” the youth also said, “She tells me a lot of good things about me all the time.” Five of the 12 youth (41.7%) were asked about good things, such as: “Goals and stuff,” “How I did in school, and “What my hobbies are.”

Of the 32 pilot youth who responded to this question, only one (3.1%) said he was not asked about good things about himself. Instead, “They just told me what I did wrong and told me I need to write an apology letter and do community service.” Four of the 32 pilot youth (12.5%) could not remember whether they were asked about good things about themselves, and 27 of the 32 pilot youth (84.4%) said that they were asked about good things. These are some of the good things that they talked with their counselors about: “I’m good at getting along with others, “I am good at volleyball, drawing, and working out at the gym,” “My plans for life,” “Good with computers, “I’m into cars and stuff.”

Youth Question 5: *Did your counselor/probation officer talk about things you had done wrong and what you needed to do to make up for it? What did he/she tell you?*

Summary of youth responses to Question 5:

About 79% of the comparison group youth (11 of 14 respondents) made comments indicating that their counselor/p.o. talked about what they did wrong and the consequences. The remaining three comparison group youth (21.4%) mentioned things in addition to accountability, such as “Accountability was not the entire focus of the interview. She also spoke of relationships,” “She focused more on the solution,” and “She would usually just say, ‘It’s in the past,’ and then give me advice on how to do the right thing.”

About 73% of the pilot group youth also said their counselor/p.o. talked about what they did wrong and the consequences, but did not mention other topics of conversation. Seven pilot youth (21.9%) mentioned other things that their counselor talked about, including: “He talked about things other than what I had to do,” “That was never really part of it,” and “Not much focus on this. She spoke of changing stuff.” Two pilot youth mentioned that the counselor talked about

either what they had done wrong or what they needed to do to make up for it, though not both. They said, “He doesn’t talk about what I did, he just talks about what I need to do,” and “She said it, but in a different way. She asked me what happened...She said I was a good kid who was at the wrong place with the wrong people.”

Youth Question 7: *How positive were these first few meetings?*

Summary of youth responses to Question 7:

Two of the seven comments (28.6%) offered by comparison youth said their first few meetings were positive, saying the meetings were “Pretty good,” and “I don’t mind going to see her, because she’s not mean.” Two of those who said their meetings were not positive commented, “At first she was strict and demanding, but it was not very good for me because I kept recommitting crimes,” “Never any positive, just if you do something wrong, I’m going to put you in detention.”

More than half of the pilot youth comments (7 out of 13) indicated that their first few meetings were positive. Comments included, “She [p.o.] smiled and laughed a lot,” “Nothing really bad happened,” and “She was always positive, about everything.” Pilot youth who did not think their meetings were positive said, “His whole attitude. He made me feel so uncomfortable,” “...the meeting was a waste,” and “It was a little bit positive and mostly negative.”

Youth Question 11a: *How do you think your counselor/probation officer would describe you?*

Summary of youth responses to Question 11a:

Twelve of the 14 comparison youth (85.7%) who offered comments in response to this question thought their counselor/probation officer would describe them at least partially in a positive way. For example, “She’d say, ‘Oh, I think he’s a smart young man, but he can get in trouble sometimes,’” “Quiet, but followed the rules,” and, “She’d describe me as a nice person.” Two youth didn’t know how the counselor would describe them, and one comparison youth thought the counselor would have something negative to say.

The majority of the pilot youth also thought that their counselors would describe them positively. Thirty of the 39 youth (76.9%) who commented on this question mentioned positive things that they thought the counselor would say about them, such as: “He’d say I’m a good kid who broke the rules,” “Funny and responsible, yet mischievous,” and, “I am hard working in anything that I do.” Seven of the 39 youth who commented (17.9%) did not know how their counselors would describe them, and two pilot youth (5.1%) thought they would be described at least partially in a negative way, for example: “She’d say I have a bad attitude” and “Very stubborn, very set in my ways and determined.”

Parent/Guardian Question 14a: *Do you think your child would have been treated differently if she/he was a different race or had a different skin color or nationality or language?*

Summary of parent/guardian responses to Question 14a:

Some parents/guardians in the comparison group thought that their children would have been treated differently if they were Hispanic or Black. For example, “If she were Hispanic they would have gotten her an interpreter. They would have babied her and that is not OK,” and, “He

[Hispanic p.o.] went to their house for dinner and would not come to our house for dinner. They are treated better because they are Hispanic.” However, another parent said, “One of the girls in the group is Mexican, and she treats her the same as everyone else.” Still others thought their children would have been treated differently if they were another race, but in a negative way, such as: “She was nice to [daughter, who looks white] until I [mother, who appears to be Black or bi-racial] showed up. Several parents/guardians [both of white and of non-white children] in the pilot groups thought that all children are treated the same, and one thought that her p.o. was “very culturally sensitive.” Another parent thought her child would have gotten more services if she were non-white because her perception was that non-whites would have received more services. One parent in the pilot group thought her child should have been dealt with differently and would have been if she were male or of another race, “but she looks very harmless and sweet to them because she is a blond, pretty girl.”

Youth Question 16b: *Do you think you would have been treated differently for any other reasons [other than if you were a different race, or had a different skin color or nationality or language]?*

Summary of youth responses to Question 16b:

Six of the 7 comparison youth (85.7%) who commented on this question said that they would have been treated differently for other reasons, such as: “...my age,” and “Being a girl, being bi-racial, and being the youngest of six kids” [three of whom had been in trouble also]. Being treated differently was mentioned in a positive light, as well. For example, “If I kept breaking the rules, she would have been more strict on me.” The comparison youth who said that she would not have been treated differently said, “I think if I were American (white), she would still have asked me questions about my family.”

Seven of the ten pilot youth (70%) who commented on this question gave these other reasons for being treated differently, “He’s stricter with kids that give him more trouble,” “I think he treated me a little different because his first impression was that of a good kid who didn’t belong in the juvenile justice system. I view it as a positive,” and “Because of how I look.” This young woman said that they always focus on how pretty she is and not on how intelligent. A similar comment was made by another youth who said, “Some girls are really pretty and they get treated better. They get more privileges...”

Parent/Guardian Question 14b: *Do you think your child would have been treated differently for any other reasons [besides race, skin color, nationality, or language]?*

Summary of parent/guardian responses to Question 14b:

Parents/guardians in the comparison group and in the pilot groups had a variety of “other” reasons why their children would have been treated differently, although none of the responses indicated a difference between the comparison and the pilot groups. Responses from the two groups included one comparison group parent/guardian who thought her children would have been treated differently—perhaps more harshly—because they have a relative working at probation.

Another said of her daughter, “She is very pretty. He [counselor] would give her rides home...” [When asked if her prettiness was the reason he did that, she said, “No.”]

Two parents/guardians of youth in the pilot sample thought that their children would have been treated differently if they committed a bigger or different offense. Two others thought their

children would have been given a more severe sentence [which the parents were in favor of] if they had gotten in trouble previously or if they were Black or Mexican. Another parent/guardian wondered if her child's mistakes were taken as flagrant violations because he is so smart. One parent/guardian was concerned that children whose parents/guardians could not pay would be treated differently by the court because they would have to find a different way to pay for damages.

Youth Question 19: *What could your counselor/probation officer have done to make the first meetings [the assessment process] a more positive experience for you?*

Summary of youth responses to Question 19:

Almost half of the comparison youth who responded to this question said that there was nothing more the counselor could have done to make the first meetings more positive. Suggestions from other comparison youth included, "Not threaten me," "She could've listened more," and "She could have treated me equally no matter my gender or race of my parents."

About two-thirds of the pilot group agreed that there was nothing more that could have been done. Several mentioned, "It was pretty positive." Another youth commented, "...there was a much better feeling when we left...he wrapped it up with, 'We'll get through this. Everything will be okay.'" Suggestions from the pilot youth included, "Talk to me more...instead of my mom," "He could have told me why I was charged with this and help me understand it more," and "She could have been more straight out and fair."

Parent/Guardian Question 16 (corresponds to youth question 19, directly above): *What could your child's counselor/probation officer have done to make the first meetings [the assessment process] a more positive experience for you?"*

Summary of parent/guardian responses to Question 16:

As with the youth, almost half of the parents/guardians in the comparison group who commented agreed that there was nothing more that the counselor could have done to make the first meetings more positive. Suggestions from other parents/guardians included, "Not bring in the race card; previous judgment of sisters and brothers," and, "Put the focus on the family as a whole...they are nice to the abusive, abandoning alcoholic parents, but they did not know what to do with us."

The same proportion of pilot group parents/guardians (2/3) who commented agreed with the pilot group youth that there was nothing else that the counselor could have done. Suggestions for improvement included, "More time between the meeting and court," "Maybe be more direct to [youth] about what he expected," "...have a little more knowledge of the time frames about the procedures of the court," and "He could have been more friendly and willing to listen and answer questions."

Pilot Youth Feedback to Staff

Most youth in the pilot group felt that first meetings were positive and had no suggestions for their counselors. Suggestions from the other youth included:

- Talking more to the youth directly, rather than the parent
- Helping the youth better understand the charges and the reasons for them
- Being more direct and fair

Pilot Parent/Guardian Feedback to Staff

Most pilot group parents/guardians felt positively about the assessment meetings. Suggestions from the others included:

- Having more time between the meeting and court
- Being more direct to the youth about the staff's expectations
- Having more knowledge about the time frames/procedures of the court
- Being more friendly, willing to listen and answer questions

Challenges with the Youth and Parent/Guardian Interviews

Several data issues emerged during the youth and parent/guardian interview process. The first was that the concept of "assessment" was much more complicated than we anticipated. The research team had expected that youth and parents/guardians would come to the juvenile department for an assessment appointment (probably their first appointment), at which time the assessment would take place. We thought it would be an identifiable time referent for families. However, we soon learned, from both staff and families, that "assessment" happens over a period of time, and may encompass several different appointments, some of which include the parent/guardian and some which do not. The assessment appointment and/or process was different in the different counties and even within counties based on the unit within the department or individual staff person that the youth would be involved with. Thus, the concept of the "assessment" was broadened in the interview to be referred to as "the first few meetings."

We also were challenged to identify and reach youth and parents/guardians soon after their "assessment" period. In some cases, the research team did not receive contact information from the county until months after the assessment had taken place, and then we often had a difficult time (translating into additional weeks or months) locating the family and gaining permission to interview them. We believe that in some instances this delay could impact the accuracy of the responses due to decreased memories about the initial meetings or changes in perceptions that occurred in the interim.

Finally, the pilot sample was comprised of a group of youth and parents/guardians who were assessed with the YCA early in the implementation period, before juvenile department staff members were completely practiced and comfortable with it. This timing could have minimized the impact that the YCA had on the assessment process and the youth and/or parents/guardians perceptions of it.

Even with these factors, and a fairly small sample size, we were able to identify significant differences between the pilot and comparison samples in some areas, as were described in this section.

Summary of Youth and Parent/Guardian Interview Findings

These are the highlights of what the first set of youth and parents/guardians who experienced the YCA tool shared with us in Year 2, and reflect significant findings between pilot and comparison families where applicable.

Pilot Site Youth...

- Rated the first few meetings with the department as more positive than comparison site youth
- Were more likely to say that their counselor/probation officer cared about their point of view
- Were more than twice as likely to report that their counselor/probation officer asked them about their (youths') strengths
- Were less likely to report that their counselor/probation officer talked about what they did wrong
- Were less likely than comparison youth to believe that they would have been treated differently if they had been a different person (however, not on the basis of gender or race)

Pilot Parents/Guardians...

- Were more likely to believe that their child would have been treated differently if he/she had been a different race/nationality
- Were less likely to believe that their child would have been treated differently for other reasons (besides gender and race)
- Were more likely than the youth to feel that the counselor/probation officer was sensitive to the family's background or culture

Almost all pilot youth and parents/guardians felt that their counselor/probation officer was helpful and fair.

Videotapes of Assessment Interviews

Prior to videotaping assessment interviews, NPC Research developed a coding plan that contained categories for strengths-based practice, cultural competence, and non-verbal cues/interview atmosphere. Coders who were not familiar with the project or the YCA were trained to view the videotapes and code them according to the coding plan (see Appendix F). Recruiting staff and families to be videotaped during assessment interviews proved to be a challenge, but 10 pilot tapes and 4 comparison tapes were eventually completed.

Coding Plan

Strengths-Based Practice

There are 10 items in the coding plan related to "Strengths-Based Practice."

1. Asks about strengths
2. Points out positives
3. Uses strengths
4. Encourages youth/family involvement
5. Moves toward a positive plan
6. Uses reparation of harm as a learning process

7. Focuses on the future
8. Individualized planning
9. Encourages community connection
10. Encourages development of youth's healthy identity

Each item is scored on the following scale:

0=Absent

1=Minimal

2=Somewhat

3=Mostly/Always

Minus (-)=Does the opposite (e.g., instead of encouraging, actively discourages) [coded as -1]

An interview could receive a Strengths-Based Practice score ranging from -10 to 30.

Each videotape was coded by a minimum of two raters. The raters' scores were averaged and then each tape received a sum score. The groups then were given mean scores.

- ❖ Mean overall Strengths-Based Practice score of the YCA group: **21.5**
- ❖ Mean overall Strengths-Based Practice score of the comparison group: **6.3**

The difference between these two groups is statistically significant.

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence was coded using five items:

1. Language
2. Race/ethnicity
3. Cultural sensitivity
4. Comfortable with difference
5. Age, gender, and culture appropriateness

These items were also coded on the -1 to 3 scale, with the exception of race/ethnicity, which was a yes/no question asking whether the race/ethnicity of the counselor appeared to be matched to the race/ethnicity of the youth/family.

An interview could receive a Cultural Competence score ranging from -4 to 13.

- ❖ Mean overall Cultural Competence score of the YCA group: **11.1**
- ❖ Mean overall Cultural Competence score of the comparison group: **9.2**

The difference between these two groups is not statistically significant. We later received feedback from one of the National Advisory Panel members who has worked closely with the

comparison county that this county has focused considerable resources to address the issue of cultural competence, which could be one reason for the non-significant difference here.

Non-Verbal Cues and Interview Atmosphere

There are six items that comprise this area; however, because a large proportion of the videotapes did not include a parent/guardian, we used only the items that are starred in the analyses.

1. Positive staff qualities/actions*
2. Positive atmosphere*
3. Respectful atmosphere*
4. Acknowledgement of youth and parent/guardian
5. Youth engagement*
6. Parent/guardian engagement

An interview could receive a Non-Verbal Cues and Interview Atmosphere score ranging from -4 to 12.

- ❖ Mean overall Non-Verbal Cues and Interview Atmosphere score of the YCA group: **10.0**
- ❖ Mean overall Non-Verbal Cues and Interview Atmosphere score of the comparison group: **7.3**

The difference between these two groups is statistically significant.

Coding Challenges

Some items in the video coding plan proved to be challenging to code. Because the videotape captured only a portion of the interactions between a youth and her/his counselor/probation officer, and (as mentioned earlier) the assessment actually could take place over several appointments, we were not always sure if information or area was covered outside of the taping time, that is, at a prior or subsequent appointment. Coders were instructed to code only what they observed in the videotape; if an item was not observed, it was coded as “absent.” Strengths-based practice was the most straightforward section to code.

Summary of Videotape Coding Results

While the sample of videos was small, the findings were quite dramatic. It was clear that components of strengths-based practice could be observed and that using the YCA appeared to be more strengths-based than juvenile justice staff members who did not receive strengths training or use the tool.

- YCA tapes were coded as significantly higher on “Strengths-Based Practice” than the comparison tapes
- YCA tapes were not significantly different from comparison tapes on “Cultural Competence”
- YCA tapes were coded as significantly more positive on “Non-Verbal Cues” and “Interview Atmosphere”

Key Stakeholder Interviews

Key stakeholders, as identified by YCA Local Advisory Board members from each pilot county, were interviewed in order to obtain preliminary data about whether the pilot project impacted the juvenile departments beyond the pilot teams. Thirteen key stakeholders, including judges, public defenders, district attorneys, treatment providers, and juvenile department staff not involved in the pilot, were interviewed.

In September 2002, each YCA pilot site (Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties) was asked to suggest key stakeholders in their system or community who would have information or a perspective that they thought should be gathered before recommendations were made for changes to the Youth Competency Assessment (YCA) tool, the strengths process, or the strengths training. The sites were told that implications for case planning and youth outcomes were of special interest. In addition, the sites were asked what they thought was important information to gather, and whether they had specific questions to suggest for inclusion in the stakeholder interviews.

Following are the key stakeholder questions and a summary of their responses.

Key Stakeholder Questions and Summary of Responses

1. What do you know about the strengths-based pilot that is being implemented in your county's juvenile department?

Twelve of the thirteen respondents (92%) had at least heard of the strengths-based pilot, and reported knowledge ranging anywhere from a little to quite a bit. A few mentioned that they went to a training or meetings on the subject. One person did not know anything about it.

2. Have you seen any changes or impact in any way? If so, when did you start to notice this?

Seven of the thirteen respondents (54%) said they have not seen any changes or impact, although one person qualified that by saying that it is too early to see such things. Areas where the remaining six respondents (46%)⁸ saw changes or impact included:

- An effort to look at strengths-based criteria coming from policy.
- Differences in court presentation. No matter what we are in court for, the beginning words are some positives that the youth and family have done. That is an interesting dynamic when we are there on a punishment mode. What I see happening on the juvenile docket is I have counselors coming in asking for a review by the judge to have the kids brag about what they are doing well.
- Overall better assessments.
- They are asking more open questions.
- Counselors' attitude is changing, evolving. They are identifying strengths as opposed to finding weaknesses. They are finding better information, and that is part of their job.
- Although they do think the assessment is long-winded or tedious, they [counselors] are supporting the results.

⁸ Judge, adjudication unit supervisor, juvenile counselor, unit supervisor, counselor & technical services staff, public defender

- Impact on kids and staff.
- Reformation plans being written with strengths-based solutions.
- Deliberate strengths-based interventions.
- Changes in the behavior of the pilot staff.
- Initially...there was a staff survey, and we realized that it affected our focus on the kids' strengths. This puts it in perspective. It helps to frame the questions we ask the kids.

3. Has it affected you or your work? In what way?

Two of the six people who did not think it had affected their work said that they had not seen it enough for it to be helpful. One of the two qualified that by saying that she could be receiving benefits and not know it. A comment was made that the respondent has been using the strengths approach anyway, and the change will be that everyone will be using it.

The six people who agreed that it may have or did affect them or their work (46%)⁹ gave the following examples:

- Beginning to see strengths-based rather than issue-oriented court reports.
- Juvenile court meetings and discussions make sure to use strengths-based models.
- Strengthens the relationship between kid & parent.
- Reinforced my approach to working with kids & families.
- Allows me to frame things. Can identify with counselor's position.
- New faith in kid's ability to complete the program.
- Easier to identify how to match them [youth] up with community resources.
- Incorporating it into the Case Summary, FAA, Case Plan, and Reformation Plan.

4. Has it affected any of the youth you come in contact with? In what way?

This question was not applicable to three respondents (23%) who previously said they had not seen any impact or change. Of the remaining ten respondents, one did not think it affected the youth, two people did not know whether it affected the youth or not, and two have little or no direct contact with the youth. Another person said the strengths-based approach is another name for what they have always done. The four respondents¹⁰ who did think it affected youth said that kids are getting motivated to please counselors, the body language of kids changes, their willingness to talk in court changes, and there are more opportunities for them to go [in the community] where their strengths are. Impact on the counselors was mentioned in response to this question, as well, such as: "Counselors are saying in the courtroom, 'He is doing a wonderful thing...'" ; there is a positive impact on the counselors; there is a change in attitude and approach to kids & families; and staff get to know the kid a little more in terms of family, goals, and strengths. It was also mentioned that the strengths-based approach paints a different picture when a report is read.

⁹ Public defender, judge, adjudication unit supervisor, juvenile counselor, unit supervisor, counselor & technical services

¹⁰ Public defender, judge, unit supervisor, juvenile counselor

5. Do you see the reformation plan or case plan? What do you see reflected in that?

Four of the thirteen respondents either did not see the strengths-based approach reflected in the reformation or case plan(s), did not remember whether or not it was, or did not remember seeing the YCA.

Those who saw the reformation or case plan(s) said that they saw the following impacts of the strengths assessment:

- The kids' interests are on paper so there is no guesswork when they meet the kid.
- Subtle changes on the reformation plan. There is more emphasis on who this individual is, where he/she and/or the family excels and where they struggle.
- Across the board improvement [in the staff]. I see a better report. Everyone has his or her own level of expertise, and I've seen some improvement in everyone, except one counselor who has struggled.
- Some categories have been tightened up. The Reformation Plans are better now.
- Benefits are reflected in the plan. Generally speaking, the YCA wants to focus on the positive things about a kid. You see more strengths instead of deficits and weaknesses, and that sets them up to succeed, and it helps us plan the transition [into the community].

Summary of Key Stakeholder Interviews

The key stakeholder interviews were intended to provide preliminary data regarding whether the pilot project has yet impacted the juvenile departments beyond the pilot teams (after nearly a year of implementation). The comments of the key stakeholders are summarized below.

- 46% reported seeing changes or impact that they attributed to the project in the following ways:
 - Policy changes (more strengths-based)
 - Differences in court presentations and reformation plans
 - Better assessments, better information
 - Changes in staff behavior and attitudes (identifying strengths and finding strengths-based solutions)
 - Impact on kids
- 54% said it may have or had affected them or their work in the following ways:
 - Strengths-based court reports, juvenile court meetings and discussions
 - Strengthens relationship between youth and parent(s)
 - Reinforced their approach to working with kids and families
 - Easier to match youth with community resources
 - New faith in youth's ability to complete program
- 40% of key stakeholders who reported seeing an impact or change said that the pilot has affected youth as follows:
 - Youth getting motivated to please counselors
 - Body language of youth changes
 - Willingness of youth to talk in court changes
 - Expanded opportunities for youth by encouraging staff to be creative about tapping into available, but non-traditional, community resources

- Key stakeholders also noted the following impacts:
 - Staff get to know the youth more (family, goals, and strengths)
 - Strengths-based approach paints a different picture when a report is read
 - More strengths are visible instead of deficits and weaknesses, which sets youth up to succeed, and it helps staff plan the transition into the community

Coding of County Forms

Because each of the pilot counties, at various points during the project, decided either formally or informally to integrate the YCA or strengths-based questions into their existing department paperwork, the research team created a coding form to look systematically at the new forms (see Appendix I). We were interested to see whether—and to what extent—the forms retained the three YCA domains and/or the intent of this strengths-based assessment tool.

In general, the first paperwork to undergo change and integration with the YCA was the department or unit’s assessment form. Strengths areas and questions from the YCA were included, and the three domains were clearly covered. Formal Accountability Agreement forms (FAAs) were the least likely to undergo a structural change, though it is possible that staff completing them were including strengths in their summaries or in their goals. However, FAAs generally represent shorter-term involvements with youth and so may end up remaining essentially a listing of traditional court/department expectations. Case plan forms varied, but did generally include places for a youth’s strengths and strengths-based and/or long-term goals to be listed. Though these forms had potential for areas where short-term competency goals, people in the youth’s natural environment, and community connections could be included, these areas were not always specifically requested on these forms.

The paperwork and policies of each of the pilot counties have continued to undergo revision and refinement, particularly as the counties moved beyond the pilot project and made a more formal, long-term commitment to the integration of a strengths-based approach in their departments. For example, Multnomah County retained use of the original YCA form during the pilot but did alter the case plan form to accommodate strengths areas. Since then, one manager has created a new case plan form to more broadly incorporate the strengths-based model.

Youth Outcome Data

For the following youth outcome data, the sample included a combined total of 142¹¹ youth from the pilot sites and 31 youth from the comparison site. Files were reviewed for case activities and services, and information was gathered from closing (or 12-month case progress) summaries.

This sample, reflecting the demographic composition of Oregon, was primarily white, and equally so in both pilot counties overall and the comparison county. However, the pilot counties as a group had a greater proportion of black/African-American youth compared to a greater proportion of Hispanic/Latino youth in the comparison county.

¹¹ Although there were 142 youth in the original research sample of this project, one youth's records could not be found in the juvenile department’s files, and another youth’s records were expunged prior to completion of this project which meant that for some data collection efforts, the sample size totaled 141, while for the outcome data, the sample size totaled 140.

Demographics

Table 5. Youth Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	White	Black/African-American	Asian	Hispanic/Latino	Native American
Pilot Counties	70.2%	17.7%	1.4%	7.8%	0%
Comparison County	67.7%	0%	3.2%	22.6%	3.2%

As can be seen in Table 6, this sample, as a reflection of juvenile justice involved youth, is predominantly male, and the average age is approximately 16.

Table 6. Youth Gender and Age

Gender and Age	Male	Female	Age (mean)
Pilot Counties	68.8%	31.2%	15.8
Comparison County	61.3%	38.7%	16.1

Case Materials: Coding Assessment and Case Planning Forms for Strengths

Pilot and comparison sites provided case materials for coding (assessments, case plans, Formal Accountability Agreements, closing notes, etc.). Information from that material was coded for the presence of strengths domains and use of strengths information in case planning (see Appendix J for the coding plan). Sites varied greatly in the types of materials they provided for coding. In part these differences were due to the variability in the categories of youth selected for the pilot. Each county determined where in its system the YCA would be piloted and with which staff. They also operated under different policies and procedures related to what information is expected in reports and other court documents and what level of detail is expected in case files and case notes. Consequently, in one county, younger youth and developmentally delayed youth were part of the sample; in another, youth who were in an out-of-home placement were included. Youth ranged in the severity of their offenses and the frequency of prior visits to the juvenile department. This variability made some of the coding comparisons challenging. Codes were summarized for each type of form submitted to NPC. Totals were then computed for each question in the coding plan. Explanations of the codes are included with each table.

Case Materials: Coding Assessments for Strengths

1. Assessment form used (more than one assessment form was used for some youth)

Table 7. Assessment Forms Used

Form Used	Clackamas	Multnomah	Washington	Pilot Group (All 3 Counties)	Comparison Group
YCA	25	51	26	102	0
Other form (Pilot County)	0	0	30	30	0
Other form (Comparison County)	0	0	0	0	31

2. Assessment gathered information about strengths domains (codes: 0=no information, 1=a little information, 2=a lot of information)

Table 8. Ratings of YCA Domains in the Assessment Forms

	Clackamas		Multnomah		Washington		Pilot Group (All 3 Counties)		Comparison Group	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Creating a healthy identity										
No information	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	10.4
A little information	3	12.0	11	21.6	7	14.3	21	16.8	12	38.7
A lot of information	22	88.0	40	78.4	42	85.7	104	83.2	16	51.6
<i>Total</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>125</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>
Connecting with family, peers & community										
No information	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	61.3
A little information	4	16.0	15	29.4	10	20.4	29	23.2	12	38.7
A lot of information	21	84.0	36	70.6	39	79.5	96	76.8	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>125</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>
Repairing harm										
No information	4	16.0	4	7.8	5	10.2	13	10.4	7	22.6
A little information	8	32.0	25	49.0	18	36.7	51	40.8	24	77.4
A lot of information	13	52.0	22	43.1	26	53.1	61	48.8	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>125</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>

Notable findings from the coding of assessment forms are as follows:

Repairing Harm: 49% of pilot counties included “a lot” of information about “Repairing Harm” and none (0%) of the comparison counties did, while 23% of comparison assessments included no information about this domain compared to 10% of pilot assessments.

Connecting with family, peers, and community: 77% of pilot assessments included “a lot” of information about “Connecting with Family, Peers, and Community,” but none (0%) of the comparison assessments did. In contrast, 61% of comparison assessments had no information about this domain, but none of the pilot counties lacked this information.

Creating a healthy identity: Pilot site assessments (83% = "a lot") included more information about "Creating a Healthy Identity" than the comparison site (52% = "a lot"). None of the pilot sites lacked information in this area, though 10% of the comparison assessments did.

Case Materials: Coding Case Planning Forms for Strengths

3. Supervision level/Plan type (0=No, 1=Yes) [for some youth, more than one was used].

Table 9. Supervision Level/Case Plan Type

	Clackamas		Multnomah		Washington		Pilot Group (All 3 Counties)		Comparison Group	
Number of youth in sample	33		51		57		141		31	
	# of reports	% of sample per report	# of reports	% of sample per report	# of reports	% of sample per report	# of reports	% of sample per report	# of reports	% of sample per report
Formal Accountability Agreement (FAA)	6	18.2	0	0	7	12.3	13	9.2	2	6.4
Case Plan/Probation Contract and Plan/Reformation Plan (formal)	15	45.4	51	100.0	13	22.8	79	56.0	31	100.0
Other (court appearance, case note, shelter report)	14	42.4	0	0	39	68.4	53	37.6	5	16.1
<i>Total number of reports</i>	35		51		59		145		38	

4. Extent to which each case plan reflects presence of YCA domains (codes: 0=not at all, 1=a little, 2=a lot)

Table 10. Presence of YCA Domains in Case Plan

	Clackamas		Multnomah		Washington		Pilot Group (All 3 Counties)		Comparison Group	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Creating a healthy identity										
Not at all	1	3.2	1	2.0	0	0	2	1.4	2	6.5
A little	9	29.0	6	11.7	14	25.0	29	21.0	19	61.3
A lot	21	67.7	44	86.3	42	75.0	107	77.5	10	32.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>138</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>
Connecting with family, peers & community										
Not at all	3	9.7	1	2.0	0	0	4	2.9	2	6.5
A little	11	35.5	12	23.5	22	39.3	45	32.6	16	51.6
A lot	17	54.8	38	74.5	34	60.7	89	64.5	13	41.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>138</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>
Repairing harm										
Not at all	2	6.5	8	15.7	13	23.2	23	16.7	2	6.5
A little	13	41.9	25	49.0	24	42.9	62	44.9	8	25.8
A lot	16	51.6	18	35.3	19	33.9	53	38.4	21	67.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>138</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>

5. Are any strengths-based goals present? (Are youth's skills/resources being tapped by case plan goals/objectives?) (codes: 0=no, 1=a little, 2=a lot)

Table 11. Presence of Strengths-Based Goals in Case Plan

	Clackamas		Multnomah		Washington		Pilot Group (All 3 Counties)		Comparison Group	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No	12	38.7	9	17.6	34	60.7	55	39.9	4	12.9
A little	18	58.1	39	76.5	22	39.3	79	57.2	21	67.7
A lot	1	3.2	3	5.9	0	0	4	2.9	6	19.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>138</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>

6. Does the case plan have a balance of strengths-based and accountability-based goals? (codes: 0=no, 1=yes)

Table 12. Balance of Strengths-Based and Accountability Goals in Case Plan

	Clackamas		Multnomah		Washington		Pilot Group (All 3 Counties)		Comparison Group	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No	14	45.2	19	37.3	40	71.4	73	52.9	22	71.0
Yes	17	54.8	32	62.7	16	28.6	65	47.1	9	29.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>138</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>

7a. Are activities in the case plan (referrals to services, goals, etc.) based on strengths identified in the YCA or intake assessment? (codes: 0=no, 1=yes, 7=NA)

Table 13. Activities in Case Plan Based on Strengths from Assessment

	Clackamas		Multnomah		Washington		Pilot Group (All 3 Counties)		Comparison Group	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No	13	41.9	13	25.5	30	53.6	56	40.6	6	19.4
Yes	16	51.6	38	74.5	17	30.3	71	51.4	24	77.4
NA (no YCA or other assessment was provided to NPC)	2	6.5	0	0	9	16.1	11	8.0	1	3.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>138</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>

7b. If no, are they based on any strengths (codes: 0=no, 1=yes, 7=NA)

Table 14. Activities in Case Plan Based on Any Strengths

	Clackamas		Multnomah		Washington		Pilot Group (All 3 Counties)		Comparison Group	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No	6	19.4	11	21.6	30	53.6	47	34.1	5	16.1
Yes	6	19.4	2	3.9	0	0	8	5.8	25	80.6
NA (Activities in the case plan were based on strengths)	19	61.3	38	74.5	26	46.4	83	60.1	1	3.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>138</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>

8. To what extent are short-term competency area goals from the YCA or intake assessment mapped directly into case objectives? (codes: 0=not at all, 1=a little, 2=a lot, 7=NA)

Table 15. Short-Term Competency Goals from Assessment in Case Objectives

	Clackamas		Multnomah		Washington		Pilot Group (All 3 Counties)		Comparison Group	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Not at all	9	29.0	5	9.8	16	28.6	30	21.7	1	3.2
A little	8	25.8	27	52.9	15	26.8	50	36.2	13	41.9
A lot	7	22.6	19	37.3	8	14.3	34	24.6	17	54.8
NA	7	22.6	0	0	17	30.3	24	17.3	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>138</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>

9. To what extent does the case plan reflect individualized planning? (codes: 0=not at all, 1=a little, 2=a lot)

Table 16. Case Plan Reflects Individualized Planning

	Clackamas		Multnomah		Washington		Pilot Group (All 3 Counties)		Comparison Group	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Not at all	4	12.9	1	2.0	8	14.3	13	9.4	2	6.5
A little	20	64.5	22	43.1	32	57.1	74	53.6	12	38.7
A lot	7	22.6	28	54.9	16	28.6	51	37.0	17	54.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>138</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>

10a. Are people in the youth's natural environment (who can help support youth, as identified in the YCA or intake assessment) evident in case notes or objectives? (codes: 0=no, 1=yes, 7=NA)

Table 17. Case Notes/Objectives Include People in Youth's Natural Environment

	Clackamas		Multnomah		Washington		Pilot Group (All 3 Counties)		Comparison Group	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No	10	32.2	26	51.0	25	44.6	61	44.2	17	54.8
Yes	9	29.0	25	49.0	23	41.1	57	41.3	14	45.2
NA (Did not have YCA or other intake information)	12	38.7	0	0	8	14.3	20	14.5	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>138</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>

10b. If no, are there any people who can help support the youth evident in case notes or objectives? (codes: 0=no, 1=yes)

Table 18. Case Notes/Objectives Include Any People Who Can Support Youth

	Clackamas		Multnomah		Washington		Pilot Group (All 3 Counties)		Comparison Group	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No	2	6.5	3	5.9	1	1.8	6	4.3	4	12.9
Yes	6	19.3	23	45.1	22	39.3	51	37.0	13	41.9
NA (There were people who can support youth evident in case notes/objectives)	23	74.2	25	49.0	33	58.9	81	58.7	14	45.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>138</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>

11. Is there evidence that the case plan encouraged the youth to make community connections (in addition to connections with family members)? (codes: 0=no, 1=yes)

Table 19. Case Plan Encouraged Community Connections

	Clackamas		Multnomah		Washington		Pilot Group (All 3 Counties)		Comparison Group	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No	3	9.7	2	3.9	4	7.1	9	6.5	2	6.5
Yes	28	90.3	49	96.1	52	92.9	129	93.5	29	93.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>138</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>

12a. Is there evidence of a youth's long-term goals (from the YCA or intake assessment) in the case plan goals/objectives/conditions? (codes=0=no, 1=yes, 7=NA)

Table 20. Case Plan Included Long-Term Goals from Assessment

	Clackamas		Multnomah		Washington		Pilot Group (All 3 Counties)		Comparison Group	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No	8	24.2	4	7.8	13	22.8	25	17.7	18	58.1
Yes	16	48.5	39	68.4	18	31.6	73	51.8	11	35.5
NA (Did not have YCA or other intake assessment)	5	15.2	7	13.7	11	19.3	23	16.3	2	6.5
Missing	4	12.1	1	2.0	15	26.3	20	14.2	0	0.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>141</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100%</i>

12b. If no, are any of the youth's long-term goals in the case plan? (codes: 0=no, 1=yes, 7=NA)

Table 21. Case Plan Included Any Long-Term Goals

	Clackamas		Multnomah		Washington		Pilot Group (All 3 Counties)		Comparison Group	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No	4	50.0	2	50.0	11	84.6	17	68.0	4	22.2
Yes	2	25.0	0	0.0	1	7.7	3	12.0	5	27.8
NA (Long-term goals were in the case plan)	2	25.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	8.0	2	11.1
Missing	0	0	2	50.0	1	7.7	3	12.0	7	38.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>100%</i>

The following information summarizes how the case plans of the pilot and comparison counties incorporated the three YCA domains:

Repairing harm: 38% of pilot and 67% of comparison plans included this domain.

Connecting with family, peers and community: 65% of pilot and 42% of comparison plans included this domain.

Creating a Healthy Identity: 76% of pilot and 32% of comparison plans included this domain.

While most plans did not explicitly include strengths-based goals, comparison plans were more likely to include strengths-based goals than pilot plans. Nineteen percent (19%) of comparison and 3% of pilot plans were coded as tapping youths' skills or resources (to a great extent) for the case plans' goals or objectives. Pilot plans (47%) were more likely to have a balance of strengths-based and accountability-based goals than comparison plans (29%).

Comparison plans (80%) were more likely to utilize strengths documented in the assessment than pilot plans (56%). Comparison plans were also more likely to use other strengths (even if they were not noted in the assessment), were more likely to incorporate short-term competency goals directly into case objectives, and were more likely to reflect individualized planning. While most case plans included evidence of people who could help support the youth, comparison plans were slightly more likely to include this information.

Almost all plans (94%) in both pilot and comparison sites included information about community connections.

Summary of Findings from Coding Assessments and Case Planning Forms for Strengths

- Use of the YCA by the pilot sites substantially increased the amount of information about the three key strengths domains found in the assessment (Repairing Harm; Connecting with Family, Peers, & Community; and Creating a Healthy Identity).
- However, the comparison site was better at using (or documenting) strengths identified at assessment in the case plan.

The pilot and comparison sites all have strong areas and could benefit from sharing ideas about how to gather and incorporate strengths and competencies into assessment, case planning, and case management. It is clear that the pilot counties are able to collect additional strengths information at assessment, but additional work is warranted related to ideas and strategies for incorporating that information into case plans or for documenting those ideas and strategies.

Case Materials: Coding Activities & Services for Strengths

Hard copy files and electronic records for each youth in the pilot and comparison samples were reviewed and information about their case activities and services was coded and recorded in a services database (for codes, see Appendix K). This information was summarized in order to describe the content of cases in the pilot and comparison sites and to see if there were any differences that might be attributed to the YCA or adoption of strengths-based philosophy or practices.

Case materials in each county were maintained differently and contained varying levels of detail. Differences found between counties in the types and numbers of services/activities may actually reflect the presence or absence of notes or the interpretations of the data collection staff. Local definitions of services in each of the counties may also be impacting these results.

As can be seen in Table 22, pilot youth were more likely to receive social skill development services, community service, and treatment services. Comparison youth were more likely to participate in shelter programs, work programs, or jail tours. Comparison youth had a larger average number of activities recorded per youth than the pilot youth.

Table 22. Comparison of Service Types and Proportions by County

	Clackamas	Multnomah	Washington	All Pilot Samples	Comparison
Number of Youth	33	51	57	141	31
Service Type¹²					
Social Skill Development	12.1%	16.5%	6.0%	10.3%	0%
Educational Skill Development	8.3%	5.1%	6.5%	6.9%	9.9%
Career Development	5.3%	5.1%	.6%	3.2%	0%
Treatment	21.2%	32.9%	49.4%	36.1%	30.2%
Community Service	19.7%	32.9%	17.9%	21.6%	9.3%
Other	33.3%	7.6%	19.6%	21.9%	50.6%
Examples of Other Services	Writing assignments, restitution, surveillance monitoring	Violence prevention	Restitution, writing assignments or mentoring	Restitution, writing assignments, mentoring, surveillance monitoring, Secure shelter/shelter care, work, tour of jail, and/or violence prevention	Secure shelter/shelter care, structured work program, tour of jail
Total number of services provided	132	79	168	379	172
Average number of documented activities per youth	3.00	1.55	2.95	2.69	5.55
Range of numbers of service	1 - 12	1 - 4	1 - 10	1 - 12	1 - 17

¹² Youth are eligible for multiple services.

	Clackamas	Multnomah	Washington	All Pilot Samples	Comparison
Most frequent type of service	Other	Treatment Community Service	Treatment	Treatment	Other
Status (of those with service)					
In Progress	11.7%	11.3%	16.7%	13.9%	5.8%
Partially Completed	12.8%	28.2%	10.4%	15.2%	10.5%
Completed, Participated Fully	75.5%	60.2%	72.9%	70.9%	83.6%
Source of Information					
Hard copy, social file	100%	5.9%	58.2%	60.8%	11.6%
JJIS	0%	0%	4.7%	2.1%	13.3%
JIN	0%	10.6%	0%	2.3%	0%
Local database	0%	0%	0%	0%	65.2%
Multiple Sources ¹³	0%	70.6%	24.1%	25.9%	5.0%
Source not listed	0%	12.9%	13.0%	9.0%	5.0%

¹³ Although not originally an option, many youth had multiple sources of information available, so this field was coded to reflect those multiple sources (which were most often a combination of both JJIS and hard copy files).

Table 23 describes the services that were collected and the categorization that was conducted. Few services could be identified by their descriptions in these files or databases that were clearly strengths-based, though the limited knowledge of all of the different services by the data collectors or research team could have under-reported these types of services. Examples of strengths-based services included volunteering, writing a children's story, mentoring, selecting a role model, fostering ideas of interest or achievement, and working on a video project.

Table 23. Detailed Services Types by County

	Clackamas	Multnomah	Washington	Comparison
Number of Youth	33	51	57	31
Total number of Services Provided	132	79	168	172
Service Type				
Youth Services (Social skills, education, career development)	25.8%	26.6%	13.1%	9.9%
Treatment	21.2%	32.9%	49.4%	30.2%
Required Services (e.g., community service)	19.7%	0%	17.9%	9.3%
Other Services	33.3%	40.5%	19.6%	50.6%
Required/Other Services (e.g., community service, writing assignments, restitution)	53.0%	40.5%	37.5%	59.9%
Strength-Based				
Number of Strength-Based services	5	3	3	3
Examples of Strength-Based services	Volunteering); writing a children's story; selecting role models	Culturally appropriate treatment; working on a video project	Fostering athletic interests; picking role models; mentoring	Volunteering); fostering academic achievement

Sites had a wide range of “days in service,” illustrated in Table 24. Pilot site averages ranged from 68 days in service to 115, and the comparison county average was 300 days. It is important to note that days in service do not indicate days of consecutive service. For instance, if a youth sentenced to 20 hours of community service took 3 months to complete the service, they would have been coded as having 90 days of service. In addition, accountability-related services (such as community service) are included in these averages. This finding could be a reflection of actual

service durations or a function of the minimal recording of service start and end dates that were available in the case materials.

Table 24. Cumulative Days in Service Per Youth

	Clackamas	Multnomah	Washington	Comparison
Number of youth with start and end service dates	19	34	32	27
Number of cumulative days in service	1,300	3,225	3,695	8,115
Average days in service per youth	68.42	94.85	115.47	300.55
Range of days in service	4 – 202	1 – 394	11 – 406	5 – 1,694

Table 25. Types of Services Lasting 50 or More Consecutive Days

	Clackamas	Multnomah	Washington	Comparison
Number of services listed	10	19	23	48
Community Service/work	4		5	21
Custody/Residential Treatment/Detention	2			4
GED, school			1	
Home-based monitoring			1	
Restitution	1			
Treatment/Counseling/assessment	2	5	6	16
Skills building/education (anger management, gender specific skills, violence prevention, etc)	1	8	3	7
N/A, not listed		6	7	

A variety of factors affected the degree to which the research team feels confident in the findings related to the services data. Data were collected by a different person in each county, and each county had different procedures and policies for recording activities and services. These differences limit the reliability of the findings. In future projects, we would recommend implementing a different activities/services data collection process, rather than relying on case reviews.

Summary of Findings from Case Materials: Coding Activities and Services for Strengths

- Pilot youth were more likely to receive social skill development services, community service, and treatment services. Comparison youth were more likely to participate in shelter programs, work programs, or jail tours.
- Comparison youth had a larger average number (5.5) of activities recorded per youth (pilot = 2.7).
- Few services were those (or the descriptions in the case materials were vague) that could be coded as “strengths-based” in either pilot or comparison counties.
- Sites had a wide range of “days in service,” from 68 to 115 for the pilot sites and 300 for the comparison site.

Closing/Completion or Case Progress Summaries

Counselors/probation officers in the three pilot counties and the comparison county were asked to complete a closing/completion form at closing or on the date 12 months after the youth's initial assessment, whichever came first, for youth in the research sample. The purpose of the closing/completion forms was to provide information about whether case plans incorporated strengths identified in the YCA and whether youth had developed competencies during their juvenile justice involvement.

Closing/completion forms were completed for 114 of the 141 youth (81%) in the pilot counties' sample and 31 closing/completion forms were completed for the 31 youth (100%) in the comparison county.

Table 26. Number of Closing/Case Progress Forms Received by County

Counties	Number of Youth in Study	Number of Closing/Completion Statements Completed
Pilot Counties		
• Clackamas	33	16 (48.5%) ¹⁴
• Multnomah	51	43 (84.3%)
• Washington	57	55 (96.5%)
Total pilot counties	141	114 (80.9%)
• Comparison County	31	31
Total comparison county	31	31 (100%)

Most (87%) of pilot closing/completion summaries reported that the YCA affected the case. Staff reported the cases were affected in the following ways:

- Helped establish rapport: 56% of cases
- Provided information about youth or family I wouldn't have otherwise had: 44% of cases
- Balanced strengths and accountability in case plan: 44% of cases
- Provided idea for service referral or activity: 35% of cases

Most counselors reported working on a particular competency or strength during the case (Pilot: 76% of cases, Comparison: 87% of cases). The most frequently cited areas where youth made improvements included:

- Education (attendance, graduation, behavior at school, etc.): 26% of cases
- Better communication/relationships with family: 10% of cases
- Employment/job skills: 9% of cases
- Drug and/or alcohol use/treatment: 8% of cases
- Interacting with positive peers/social skills: 7% of cases

¹⁴ Clackamas County started their implementation later than the other pilot counties, so many of the youth assessed using the YCA had not reached their 12-month follow-up by the end of the study.

There was a difference in ratings of youth competencies at closing/12-month review compared to assessment between the pilot and comparison cases. Comparison counties were more likely to indicate that a youth developed new skills/competencies (58%) than the pilot counties (30%), but less likely to report that the youth built on existing competencies (Pilot: 43%, Comparison: 19%). There was no difference in the proportion of youth who were rated as having no change in competencies (Pilot: 18%, Comparison: 16%) or a worsening of their behavior or situation (Pilot: 16%, Comparison, 16%).

Table 27. Summary of Closing/Case Progress Form Data

Completion/closing questions	Clackamas N = 16		Multnomah N = 43		Washington N = 55		Pilot Total N = 114		Comparison N = 31	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. This form is being completed at:										
a. Closing	13	81.2	26	60.5	40	72.7	79	69.3	24	77.4
Reason for closing ¹⁵ :										
• Completed requirements/released	8	50.0	11	25.6	25	45.5	44	38.6	18	58.1
• Services not needed	2	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	1.8		
• Out of jurisdiction/JD/unit	1	6.3	7	16.3	5	9.1	13	11.4	4	12.9
• Unsuccessful	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	12.7	7	6.1		
• Other (e.g., new charge, turned 18)	2	12.5	0	0.0	2	3.6	4	3.5	1	3.2
b. 12-month follow-up	3	18.8	17	39.5	15	27.3	36	31.6	7	22.6
2. Did the YCA affect this case?										
a. No	4	25.0	12	27.9	4	7.3	16	14.0	NA	
b. Reason why not:										
• Info/strengths assessment not new	0	0.0	7	16.3	5	9.1	12	10.5		
• Did not participate	3	18.8	3	7.0	0	0.0	6	5.3		
• New charge/warrant/new problem	1	6.3	2	4.7	0	0.0	3	2.6		
Yes, this is how the YCA affected this case:										
c. Provided information about youth or family that I wouldn't have had otherwise	2	12.5	15	34.9	33	60.0	50	43.9	NA	
d. Provided an idea for a service referral or activity	4	25.0	13	30.2	22	40.0	39	34.2	NA	
e. Helped establish rapport and/or a positive working relationship	6	37.5	19	44.2	37	67.3	62	54.4	NA	
f. Balanced strengths and accountability in case plan	6	37.5	13	30.2	31	56.4	50	43.9	NA	

¹⁵ Reason(s) for closing were not given for all cases.

Table 27 (cont.). Summary of Closing/Case Progress Form Data

Completion/closing questions	Clackamas N = 16		Multnomah N = 43		Washington N = 55		Pilot Total N = 114		Comparison N = 31	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
g. Other:	2	12.5	5	11.6	2	3.6	9	7.9	NA	
• Looked for community-based, strengths-based services	1	6.3	1	2.3	0	0.0	2	1.8		
• Youth felt more comfortable expressing & pursuing her skills	1	6.3	2	4.7	0	0.0	3	2.6		
• Rapport was built earlier as youth expected a more punitive posture from PO. Youth enjoyed looking at strengths.	0	0.0	2	4.7	0	0.0	2	1.8		
• Helped establish goals	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.6	2	1.8		
3. How would you rate the youth's competencies at completion compared to at assessment?										
a. Youth developed new skills or competencies	4	25.0	9	20.9	21	38.2	34	29.8	18	58.1
b. Youth built on existing competencies	5	31.3	17	39.5	27	49.1	49	43.0	6	19.4
c. No change in competencies	1	6.3	8	18.6	12	21.8	21	18.4	6	19.4
d. Youth's behavior or situation worsened	6	37.5	10	23.3	3	5.5	19	16.7	5	16.1
e. Other:	2	12.5	4	9.3	9	16.4	15	13.2	4	12.9
• Family relationship/situation improved	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.8	1	0.9	1	3.2
• Not new (e.g., youth already doing positive activities, has above average competencies))	1	6.3	1	2.3	0	0.0	2	1.8	0	0.0
• Youth Improved	0	0.0	1	2.3	6	10.9	7	6.1	1	3.2
• Completed Requirements	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.6	2	1.8	0	0.0
• Unsuccessful	1	6.3	0	0.0	2	3.6	3	2.6	0	0.0
• Other (e.g., received outside support, less stigma)	0	0.0	2	4.7	1	1.8	3	2.6	1	3.2

Table 27. Summary of Closing/Case Progress Form Data

Completion/closing questions	Clackamas N = 16		Multnomah N = 43		Washington N = 55		Pilot Total N = 114		Marion N = 31	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
4. Is there a particular competency(s)/strength issue(s) you were working on?										
a. No	5	31.3	13	30.2	6	10.9	24	21.1	4	12.9
b. Yes	11	68.9	28	65.1	48	87.3	87	76.3	27	87.1
c. We were working on: (some youth were working on more than one of the following):										
• Personal skills (e.g., honesty, being consistent, problem solving)	10	62.5	11	25.7	28	50.9	49	43.0	26	83.9
• Social skills	4	25.0	7	16.3	10	18.9	21	18.4	1	3.2
• Education/job	0	0.0	14	32.6	20	36.4	34	29.8	15	48.4
• Family	0	0.0	8	18.6	10	18.9	18	15.8	5	16.1
• Counseling/drug & alcohol issues	1	6.3	7	16.3	9	16.4	17	14.9	4	12.9
• Improved behavior (no new referrals, paid restitution)	1	6.3	1	2.3	3	5.5	5	4.4	0	0.0
5a. In what area(s) did the youth make improvements?										
• Personal skills	7	4.4	12	27.9	28	50.9	47	41.2	14	45.2
• Social skills	0	0.0	4	9.3	0	0.0	4	3.5	0	0.0
• Education/job/community service	2	12.5	16	37.2	22	40.0	40	35.1	14	45.2
• Family	1	6.3	6	14.0	7	12.7	14	12.3	2	6.5
• Counseling/drug & alcohol issues	0	0.0	10	23.3	7	12.7	17	14.9	8	25.8
• Improved behavior	1	6.3	4	9.3	7	12.7	12	10.5	6	19.4
5b. None or not applicable	2	12.5	12	27.9	6	10.9	20	17.5	3	9.7

Summary of Closing/Case Progress Form Findings

Most closing/case progress forms were completed at case closing (Pilot: 69%, Comparison: 77%), with the remainder being completed at the 12-month review. Staff in the pilot sites reported that the YCA affected most cases (87%) in a positive way, and counselors in both the pilot and comparison sites reported working on a strength or competency during most cases (Pilot: 76%, Comparison: 87%). Youth were reported as making improvements in a wide range of areas, and about three-fourths of youth in both the pilot and comparison counties were rated as having built on or developed skills or competencies during their involvement.

Summary of Findings

The varied data collection activities we conducted on this project provided a wealth of qualitative and quantitative information. Here is a summary of what we found in each area.

Summary of Focus Group Findings

Overall, several themes emerged from the focus groups in Year 2, after the initial implementation of the tool, that can be categorized as benefits and challenges of the YCA.

Benefits of the YCA

- Helps gather more and different information
- Helps youth and family feel more comfortable, share more, and buy into the process (motivates changes)
- Helps identify ideas and resources
- Makes follow-up appointments more enjoyable
- Seems to facilitate quicker completion of court requirements

Challenges of the YCA

- Finding the right questions (wording) for different ages and developmental levels
- Helping parents (and some youth) see positives
- Using the YCA with the most appropriate youth
- Finding the balance between all the different forms (paperwork) and tasks of the job
- Challenging the mindset of parents, people in the community, other juvenile justice staff

Summary of Youth and Parent/Guardian Interview Findings

These are the highlights of what the first set of youth and parents/guardians who experienced the YCA tool shared with us in Year 2, and reflect significant findings between pilot and comparison families where applicable.

Pilot Site Youth...

- Rated the first few meetings with the department as more positive than comparison site youth
- Were more likely to say that their counselor/probation officer cared about their point of view
- Were more than twice as likely to report that their counselor/probation officer asked them about their (youths') strengths
- Were less likely to report that their counselor/probation officer talked about what they did wrong
- Were less likely than comparison youth to believe that they would have been treated differently if they had been a different person (however, not on the basis of gender or race)

Pilot Parents/Guardians...

- Were more likely to believe that their child would have been treated differently if he/she had been a different race/nationality
- Were less likely to believe that their child would have been treated differently for other reasons (besides gender and race)
- Were more likely than the youth to feel that the counselor/probation officer was sensitive to the family's background or culture

Almost all pilot youth and parents/guardians felt that their counselor/probation officer was helpful and fair.

Summary of Videotape Coding Results

While the sample of videos was small, the findings were quite dramatic. It was clear that components of strengths-based practice could be observed and that using the YCA appeared to be more strengths-based than juvenile justice staff members who did not receive strengths training or use the tool.

- YCA tapes were coded as significantly higher on "Strengths-Based Practice" than the comparison tapes
- YCA tapes were not significantly different from comparison tapes on "Cultural Competence"
- YCA tapes were coded as significantly more positive on "Non-Verbal Cues" and "Interview Atmosphere"

Summary of Key Stakeholder Interviews

The key stakeholder interviews were intended to provide preliminary data regarding whether the pilot project has yet impacted the juvenile departments beyond the pilot teams (after nearly a year of implementation). The comments of the key stakeholders are summarized below. 46% reported seeing changes or impact that they attributed to the project in the following ways:

- Policy changes (more strengths-based)
- Differences in court presentations and reformation plans

- Better assessments, better information
- Changes in staff behavior and attitudes (identifying strengths and finding strengths-based solutions)
- Impact on kids
- 54% said it may have or had affected them or their work in the following ways:
 - Strengths-based court reports, juvenile court meetings and discussions
 - Strengthens relationship between youth and parent(s)
 - Reinforced my approach to working with kids and families
 - Easier to match youth with community resources
 - New faith in youth's ability to complete program
- 40% of key stakeholders who reported seeing an impact or change said that the pilot has affected youth as follows:
 - Youth getting motivated to please counselors
 - Body language of youth changes
 - Willingness of youth to talk in court changes
 - Expanded opportunities for youth by encouraging staff to be creative about tapping into available, but non-traditional, community resources
- Key stakeholders also noted the following impacts:
 - Staff get to know the youth more (family, goals, and strengths)
 - Strengths-based approach paints a different picture when a report is read
 - You see more strengths instead of deficits and weaknesses, and that sets them [youth] up to succeed, and it helps us plan the transition [into the community]

Summary of Findings: Coding Assessment and Case Planning Forms for Strengths

- Use of the YCA substantially increased the amount of information about the three key strengths domains found in the assessment (Creating a Healthy Identity; Connecting with Family, Peers, & Community; and Repairing Harm)
- However, the comparison site was better at using strengths identified in the case plan
- The pilot and comparison sites all have strong areas and could benefit from sharing ideas about how to gather and incorporate strengths and competencies into assessment, case planning, and case management

Summary of Findings: Coding Activities and Services for Strengths

- Services data were found to be the most difficult to interpret and work with—in future studies, we would avoid case reviews and ask for direct information from staff related to services.
- It appears that the comparison site had greater numbers of activities/services over longer periods of time—it is unclear if this is an artifact of the data, a reflection of pilot cases being shorter, or some other reason.

Summary of Findings: Closing/Case Progress

- Both pilot and comparison staff seem to be aware of youth strengths and competencies. Comparison staff members were more likely to report development of new competencies, while pilot staff were more likely to report building on existing competencies. This difference may be a reflection of the increased strength information that the pilot staff have at assessment.

These findings from each data collection effort informed the development of the tool, the training materials and curriculum, and the research questions and methods we used in subsequent data collection activities. The culmination of all of these results was compiled as a list of lessons learned that are included in the conclusion of this report. They also generated additional research questions described in the following section.

IV. Follow-up

This project served its purpose as a pilot and resulted in the advancing of knowledge and development of an experience base for a better understanding of how strengths-based practice, in the form of strengths-based assessment, can be integrated into the work of juvenile justice professionals. We now have sample questions, a tool, training materials, and a team of staff who have found this approach to be beneficial to them. However, as most pilots do, this project generated as many questions as it answered. There are several areas where additional analyses and additional research would be interesting and valuable. The research team is in the process of investigating various funding options, through Federal agencies, local foundations, and other sources, to obtain grants for undertaking some or all of these potential future projects.

Assessing maturation of the tool and process

As part of this project, particularly based on our original notion that we would be creating a quantitative measure that could be tested for its psychometric properties, we had proposed to conduct an outcome study to see whether youth were better off in a system where they received a strengths-based assessment. Even when we realized that a qualitative tool was more appropriate, we were interested to see if observable outcomes would result. In juvenile justice interventions, the most salient high-level outcome is the presence or absence of new offending.

The first phases of the project, developing a theoretical model and the draft tool, training staff on the model and the tool, and helping them implement the tool into their work, took a substantial amount of time. Practical considerations, including the desire for a 12-month follow-up period to measure recidivism¹⁶, and knowing that we had a commitment from the pilot counties for an established number of youth¹⁷ required that we track outcomes on a sample of youth who had been the very first set assessed with the YCA. In hindsight, and based on the feedback from the pilot counties, we realize that this method did not allow a period of time for the staff to practice using the tool and become comfortable with it, or for department policies and practices to evolve to support its use. These changes did eventually occur, but we do not have a measure of them with the current outcome data.

It is of interest to us and to the pilot sites to see if the youth being assessed now, or at least assessed after that initial implementation period will have different (more positive) outcomes than the initial sample of youth.

Assessing and encouraging fidelity to the model

All three of the pilot counties decided to continue using a strengths-based approach but to do that by incorporating the YCA questions into their existing assessment formats. While this integration means that strengths-based questions are now institutionalized, which is a positive move toward sustainability, it is unclear whether the resulting tools—different in each pilot

¹⁶ This period of time is a standard follow-up measure in recidivism studies.

¹⁷ Pilot counties made a commitment to try the YCA with 50 youth. While the counties planned to continue using the tool and process if it was determined to be beneficial and worth the effort, we did not with a commitment from every county to continue using it beyond the pilot sample.

county—will retain enough of the original model and intent and/or result in the same outcomes as might be achieved with the YCA or as the other counties.

It would be interesting to conduct a follow-up implementation study to see whether staff retain the understanding of the model and continue to implement a strengths-based approach in the integrated system.

Dissemination of the tool, process, and model to other jurisdictions

At least six additional counties in Oregon have approached members of the research and training team to inquire about the possibility of implementing the YCA or a strengths-based assessment process into their departments. Several counties were already in discussions about moving in this direction and heard about this pilot project; others heard from the pilot counties or attended the Oregon Juvenile Department Directors Association conference presentation in September 2003 and became interested in this area. We are investigating whether there may be local or state funding options to allow training in these counties.

We also have shared materials with individuals in New Hampshire, California, Massachusetts, Texas, and with others who attended our conference presentations in February 2004. In addition, a case management program for juvenile offenders in Oakland, CA, is using the YCA as part of its work with its caseload. We look forward to sharing our materials more broadly.

V. Training and Training Curriculum

Training Manual Contents

The Youth Competency Assessment Training Manual evolved from its initial version based on experiences of the researchers while using the Manual for trainings over the course of the YCA Project, from feedback received from participants in those trainings, and from the YCA Local and National Advisory Boards. A YCA Training Manual was given to each participant in the YCA trainings. Because counselors and staff at the pilot counties attended training in two parts, they were given the YCA binder and all the material for Part I at that initial training. The remaining material was distributed at Part II of the training. Other versions of the Manual were compiled for other types of trainings, such as the Strengths Experts training, for which the "Experts" received one binder that included all the material from both Parts I and II of the training, as well as additional information to assist them in their role as resident strengths experts.

By the end of the project, NPC Research had revised the Manual to be similar to the Experts Manual; thus, material from both parts of the training are included in the YCA Training Manual, making it a useful tool for anyone interested in exploring or using the strengths-based assessment tool (YCA) and protocol in the area of juvenile justice.

The Manual is not intended for use without training, however. One of the reasons is that the Manual includes exercises to be done with the group being trained, and the trainer must know and understand their purpose, how they should be used, and how to apply them to the training. To assist trainers with that process, NPC developed a YCA Trainers' Guide that provides a brief discussion of each piece of the Manual and includes descriptions for using each of the exercises.

Contents of the Youth Competency Assessment Training Manual are as follows:

Part I

Table of Contents

Tab 1. Assessing Youth Competency

- Why Focus on Competencies?
- What IS the Youth Competency Assessment?
- Frequently Asked Questions
- The Strengths Perspective
- Overview of Adolescent Development

Tab 2. Branches of the Strength-Based Developmental Approach

Tab 3. Current & Future Models of Screening and Assessment

Tab 4. *Exercise 1: Attitudes About Delinquents Inventory*

Tab 5. The Power of Lenses to Shape Services to Youth: Victim, Villain, or Resource

Exercise 2: Emmanuel

- Case #1
- Case #2
- Implications of Dissonance Between the Two Cases

Tab 6. Strengths Bill of Rights for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System

Tab 7. Youth Competency Assessment in Juvenile Justice: A Strengths-Based Developmental Approach (3 Domains)

Tab 8. Youth Competency Assessment

- Forms:
 - YCA Model
 - YCA Notes Version
 - YCA Short Version
 - YCA Long Version
- Supplemental Interview Questions

Part I Training Feedback Form

Part II

Table of Contents

Tab 1. Using the Youth Competency Assessment for Implementing Competency Development (Case) Plans

- Using the Youth Competency Assessment for Implementing Competency Development (Case) Plans
- Sample Case Progress Notes
- Sample Case Completion Summary

Tab 2. Creating a Community Strengths Resources Guide

Tab 3. Interview Resources

- Types of Skills
- *Exercise 3: Strengths Worksheet*
- Using the Life Circles Assessment to Identify Youth Supports
- Using the Life Circles Assessment to Identify Parent/Guardian Supports
- The Resiliency Quiz
- The Tower of Strengths Maps, Cards, and Discussion Topics

Tab 4. Solution-Focused Interviewing

- Thinking About the Kinds of Questions That We Ask Our Clients
- Helping as Solution Building Rather Than Problem Solving
- Get a Big Head Start in Reducing Resistance Through Solution Building
- Solution-Focused Approaches
- EARS (Elicit, Amplify, Reinforce, and Start Again): A Solution-Focused Guideline and Tool for Practitioners
- Solution-Focused Substance User's Competency Worksheet
- Solution-Focused Questioning Lead-ins for Drug Court Staff

Tab 5. Well-Formed Goals

Tab 6. Dealing with Resistance

- Dealing with Resistant Youth or Youth with Special Considerations
- Dealing with Resistant Parents

Tab 7. 40 Developmental Assets

Tab 8. Monitoring and Managing Cases

- Considerations and Strategies for Monitoring and Management of Cases
- Focusing on Strengths (Taxonomy of Strength-Based Practice Levels)

Tab 9. System Philosophy and Change

- Policy Level Preparations for Using the Youth Competency Assessment (YCA) Instrument and Protocol, a Strengths-Based Approach, in Juvenile Departments
- YCA User Protocol
- Best Practices: Positive Youth Development
- Restorative Justice Signposts
- Strengths-Based Competencies for Alcohol and Drug Services in the Juvenile Justice System

Tab 10. Strengths-Based Approaches at the Community Level

- Five Steps Toward a Strengths-Based Approach in Your Community
- Building Communities From the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets (Maps and Charts)

Part II Training Feedback Form

Contact Information

References from YCA Training Materials

Strength-Based Approaches to Work with Youth and Families: An Overview of the Literature and Web-Based Resources (An Annotated Bibliography of Recent Works and Resources Available on the World Wide Web)

Availability of Training Materials

This training material is available for download from the NPC Research Web site at www.npcresearch.com. Because many components of the training are used with permission of other authors, the research team is working to obtain authorizations to share this material publicly. However, most components of the YCA Training Manual are already available. From the home page, click on the Materials button on the lower left side of the page and select Youth Competency Assessment (YCA) Training Manual. The YCA Trainers' Guide will also be found at the same location.

VI. Conferences

OJDDA 2003 Training Symposium: Human Capital

In September 2003, we presented a workshop representing this project at the Oregon Juvenile Department Directors Association 2003 Training Symposium, an annual conference for state and county juvenile justice system staff, managers, and directors; researchers, and service providers who work with juvenile offenders and other at risk youth. The focus of the training symposium this year was Human Capital.

In our session, Juliette Mackin (project director) and a representative from each of the pilot sites participated. Joe Christy (Director, Washington County Juvenile Department) was the host as well as the final presenter. He talked about policy level considerations and implementation. Laura Burgess (Lead Probation Officer for the Female Gender Team, Multnomah County) and Merin Paldi (Juvenile Probation Officer, Clackamas County Juvenile Department) presented their perspectives of the benefits and challenges of using the YCA.

Youth Competency Assessment: A Strengths-Based Developmental Approach

OJDDA Conference Valley River Center, Eugene, OR

Tuesday, September 30, 2003

1:45 – 3:15 p.m.

Presentation Abstract

A focus on strengths can produce better results for youth, families, and crime victims. It can also improve a probation officer's job satisfaction and even the climate of the organization. In this inspiring and practical workshop, juvenile counselors from three Oregon counties will share an assessment process for identifying a youth offender's strengths, competencies, and capabilities that enables them to collaborate with families and community members to build service and case plans with pro-social competency development goals.

The Youth Competency Assessment is a brief format and process developed by NPC Research for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to implement Dr. Laura Nissen's strength-based model of working with juvenile offenders. The assessment becomes the foundation for an approach that engages youth in positive change by building, reinforcing and mobilizing those qualities and capacities that have the most potential to contribute to positive outcomes. The assessment is designed to be used with the traditional risk assessment, including the Oregon Juvenile Crime Prevention Risk Assessment. The Youth Competency Assessment training will include a video demonstrating strength-based interviewing techniques used by real probation officers with real (and challenging) youth offenders.

This workshop will be particularly valuable for community providers who partner with juvenile departments in providing services to court-involved youth.

Workshop Plan

The following is a description of the content of the session. The actual presentation deviated somewhat, but not substantially, from this plan.

Welcome and Introductions of presenters (Joe Christy [host] & Juliette Mackin) (10 minutes)

(Joe)

- We're all here – from our various backgrounds and roles – because we care about kids and we want to help them, especially the ones who are already having trouble, do better.
- We are facing a time of restricted resources and decreased options (e.g., close custody beds and residential treatment) – we need to be creative and use as many tools as we have available to help youth and families be successful. The Youth Competency Assessment is one of those tools.

(Juliette)

- Many of you have heard about strengths approaches; maybe you've heard a talk or attended a training; or you or your staff already use this type of approach in your work. This presentation will offer information to you based on the experiences of staff in 3 juvenile departments who have pilot tested the YCA and the strengths-based assessment process.

Overview of presentation (Juliette Mackin) (5 minutes)

- Outline (Share vision of approach, why we think a tool is useful, a description of our pilot project, a video with a sample of a few YCA questions in a real interview with a youth, benefits and challenges of the YCA based on our pilot sites' experience, and lessons learned about the policy level implementation of a strengths based approach in juvenile depts. We should have time at the end for questions, but feel free to ask questions or offer comments during the presentation.)
- Presentation goals:
 - Understand the benefits of using a strengths-based assessment process
 - Learn about the YCA model and tool, and how it can be adapted
 - Gain information about what system components are necessary for implementation
- Review of materials in packet

(Introduce the video: Juliette)

Overview of vision: Strengths based approach in juvenile justice (Videotape of Laura Burney-Nissen) (3 minutes) [Laura Nissen is now a faculty member at Portland State University and director of Reclaiming Futures, a juvenile justice and substance abuse project. Her work and that of many others prompted development of this project. She provides an overview of the vision of integrating strengths in juvenile justice settings.]

(Laura Burgess) (5 minutes)

- Why do we need a tool?
 - To make sure that strengths are incorporated into our work in a systematic and consistent way. (So that it isn't just the people who already ask about strengths doing it but everyone does it, so all kids/families benefit)

- To gather important information about youth/family/community strengths and assets at the front end, so we can use that information throughout case planning
- Doesn't it take a lot of time? We can't add one more thing for our staff to do.
 - The YCA is a structured way of gathering information and helping to build a relationship between you and the youth and family. That doesn't happen all at once; it's a process. Yes, building a relationship takes time, but it's worth it – we don't have time not to do it. There are too many kids and too many issues not to be as effective as we can be as early as possible. We don't need kids coming back again or staying in the system for years without improving.
 - It can be incorporated into how we do our work so it really isn't a completely new assessment, but rather is part of our approach.

Brief overview of project (Juliette Mackin) (10 minutes)

- Funded by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation – 3-year project
- 3 pilot sites with a test team within each department, plus a comparison site; Local and National Advisory Boards; began pilot February 2002
- Extensive literature review and piloting of questions; development of a framework and specific items
- Development and testing of tool
- Development and testing of training curriculum
- Collection of data
- Reference to handouts of tool, model, and various formats

(Introduce video: Juliette)

View a portion of a sample video demonstrating the use of Youth Competency Assessment questions. (Videotape of Karl Johnson, Multnomah County Department of Community Justice) (5 minutes) Karl is not part of the pilot team – had a youth who he was having a hard time connecting/communicating with, so was interested in trying something new. This is his first strengths-based interview.

(Comments from Laura Burgess on the video)

Benefits of this approach (Merin Paldi) (15 minutes)

- Buy in from youth and families
- Feel better about your job
- Be successful with fewer resources
- Less need to use sanctions, and more buy in from families when they are needed

What to expect when implementing this approach (AKA Challenges) and What this isn't (Laura Burgess) (5 minutes)

- Not everyone will buy in at first. (Solution: Start with a pilot group of interested staff then broaden to include everyone; make sure management is solidly on board and supportive of staff; create institutional change to make the system – at least within the Concerns about being easy on kids or not getting at accountability. (Clarification: This is not an approach that tries to eliminate the accountability role. It is an augmentation and a tool to help accountability work better, but building it in as a learning process.)

Implementation: How do we develop a strengths based assessment approach in our department?
(Joe Christy) (15 minutes)

- [Policy level guide handout]
- Patience: This is a long-term strategy – strengths based work shouldn't end at the assessment. It sets up a foundation for a *relationship* with the youth and family.
- Integrate into your staff's regular work. (Take something else away or make an effort to minimize the extra burden on staff.)
- Staff need to be supported by management: Management needs to be trained and aware of the process so that they can provide this support and appropriate supervision.

Wrap up and next steps (Juliette Mackin) (2 minutes)

- Youth and parents – engaging and reporting a more positive juvenile justice experience
- Staff find the YCA useful and beneficial to their work
- Project wrapping up and developing a dissemination plan. Looking for sites interested in being the next set of pilot sites to implement the tool/process.
- Resources are available including training material and a user's guide, as well as staff from the 3 original sites who are willing to participate as trainers.

Final questions (15 minutes)

Handouts (in packets):

1. The Strengths Perspective (summary of theory behind strengths-based approach)
2. YCA Model (circular diagram)
3. Two diagrams of juvenile justice system: traditional and with addition of strengths approach
4. YCA tools in different formats
 - a. Original with notes and summary page
 - b. Expanded with space for answers under each question
 - c. Shorter version with just questions and no notes or summary
 - d. Example of YCA questions integrated into other assessment materials (county example)
5. Policy level preparations handout

15th National Youth Crime Prevention Conference: Youth Raising the Standard

In February 2004 we presented this project at the 15th National Youth Crime Prevention Conference. The focus of this year's conference was "Youth Raising the Standard." Though this conference focused on youth as participants, juvenile justice staff and other interested parties also attended.

The following is a description of our presentation. Juliette Mackin and Judy Weller from NPC Research presented with Merin Paldi, Probation Officer from Clackamas County (one of this project's pilot sites).

Strengths-Based Restorative Justice

15th National Youth Crime Prevention Conference and International Forum
February 14–17, 2004
Marriott Crystal Gateway
Arlington, VA

Workshop description

NPC Research in Portland, Oregon, developed a strengths-based assessment tool and protocol for use in the juvenile justice system as part of a comprehensive juvenile justice initiative (Reclaiming Futures) funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Youth Competency Assessment (YCA) instrument was designed to expand, strengthen, and improve the system's capacity to include the positive elements of a youth, the youth's family, peers, and/or community in a well-balanced assessment and service profile. The assessment tool and protocol have been tested in three pilot sites in Oregon during 2002-2003 and have formed the cornerstone of the development of integrated strategies combining juvenile justice, substance abuse treatment, and family and community interventions that could interrupt the cycle of substance abuse and delinquency. This workshop was of particular benefit to a practitioner audience.

Workshop goals and objectives

The goal of the workshop was to provide participants with (1) and understanding of the benefits of using a strengths-based assessment process, (2) information about the YCA model and tool, and how it can be adapted, and (3) to inform participants about what system components are necessary for implementation.

Skills learned during workshop

Designed for practitioners of juvenile justice delinquency prevention, this workshop demonstrated that users of the YCA can develop an intake strategy that would help youth (1) provide specific indicators for pathways toward a healthy identity, (2) connect youth to community, family, and peers in a new way, and (3) support efforts to repair harm.

Uniqueness of workshop

This workshop was unique in that its data was informed from not only the evaluators examining systemic change, but also juvenile justice workers and youth involved with the system. Additionally, this particular workshop prided itself on the inclusion of perspectives from those who use the instrument. This perspective included practical benefits of the YCA approach, including (1) 'buy in' from youth and families, (2) increased job satisfaction of juvenile department staff and related workers, (3) increased successes with fewer resources, and (4) less need to use sanctions.

Handouts available

1. The Strengths Perspective (summary of theory behind strengths-based approach)
2. YCA Model
3. Two diagrams of juvenile justice system: traditional and with addition of strengths approach
4. Youth Competency Assessment instrument

Judging workshop success

Those who attended the workshop had the ability to comment on the usefulness and relevance of the information presented to them by completing anonymous surveys at the conclusion of the presentation. Several participants expressed interest in bringing the YCA and/or the training to their departments/organizations.

CSAT Annual Grantee Meeting

Laura Nissen, Director of Reclaiming Futures, and Juliette Mackin and Judy Weller of NPC Research presented the YCA and the strength-based protocol at the SAMHSA/CSAT Annual Grantee Meeting in February 2004.

CSAT Annual Grantee Meeting
February 23-25, 2004
Renaissance Harborplace Hotel
Baltimore, MD 21202

Following is the presentation outline:

CSAT Grantee Conference Presentation Outline 2/24/04

Time	Speaker	• Content	• Handouts
10:15-10:45	Laura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions of Panel • Overview of workshop goals (In this workshop we will introduce the strengths-based approach, describe the Youth Competency Assessment tool and process, and provide an overview of the findings from the pilot study.) • Overview of the Strengths approach generally and why it is relevant to working with youth with substance use/abuse issues • Introduce how we ended up developing this project (and tool) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths Perspective • Hand out the current and future models • Refer to YCA FAQs
10:45-11:15	Judy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The YCA model – describe the three domains, including examples • How we created the tool and the questions and tested them, what it looked like when we started (including National Advisory Board feedback, Local Advisory Board feedback, and youth focus group). • Distribute the YCA tool (talk about the different versions/formats) and describe the questions and the summary page (how to map this information into a service or case plan). • Talk about the pilot: The three counties that tested this out. • What changed because of this pilot (started with creating a healthy identity and ended up moving repairing harm to the beginning because it worked best when integrating into a juvenile justice setting; counties integrated the questions into their existing assessment processes and forms). We haven't piloted with substance abuse treatment professionals yet, so the original format may work better in your settings – we would appreciate your feedback and thoughts related to this question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YCA Model • YCA tool

11:15-11:45	Juliette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on close collaboration with and feedback from staff and managers from our 3 pilot sites, we compiled the lessons learned and what worked best (or should have been done) related to implementation – developed guidelines for how to implement a strengths-based assessment and process in other settings. We have two other handouts here that are part of the training material and curriculum that describe some of these suggestions in more detail. • We talked to lots of different people to see how the process and tool worked (kids, parents, staff, management and administrators, other key stakeholders). • Describe what staff experience was. What staff thought about it and the <u>benefits</u>. How the sites integrated the tool into their assessment. • We also talked to kids and their parents from the pilot counties and a comparison county and gathered information about the kids. Here’s what we found. • We videotaped assessments conducted with and without the YCA. Research staff coded the tapes (discuss results). • Other data sources: Key stakeholders, coding of assessments, coding of service data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User protocol • Findings handout • Using the YCA (by level) • Policy Level Considerations <p>Final report will be available if anyone is interested in the research side.</p>
11:45-12:00	Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience questions • Summary, wrap-up, and how to get more information, including training and materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to get training/manual

VII. Summary

Tool and Process Development

During this project, and through our close work with the three pilot counties, we were able to develop and test a strengths-based assessment tool that works within juvenile justice agencies. The tool and process were informed by literature, staff experience, and youth feedback, as well as adjustments based on what is practical and feasible in the work of juvenile court counselors/probation officers. We believe the YCA has a firm theoretical foundation and has face and content validity. We also believe that the specific questions can be flexible, based on a counselor's specific caseload (such as very young or much older youth, youth of different cultural backgrounds, or youth with difficulty in comprehension) to meet the needs of different groups of youth or staff, while still covering the main domains and principles.

The primary changes that occurred during this pilot project were a reordering of the three domains and an integration of the questions into existing assessment tools. While the research team liked the approach of starting with "Creating a Healthy Identity," the juvenile justice staff members felt they needed to begin their work with youth and families by clarifying the charges against the youth, the expectations of the court or department, and what the family could expect in terms of the juvenile justice process. These practical considerations meant that starting with "Repairing Harm" was a more natural fit with the existing process.

In addition, while using the YCA as a stand-alone tool has its benefits, particularly for research purposes, the pilot sites felt that for perceived as well as actual efficiencies, it was more conducive to their existing process to integrate the new questions and sections into their own assessment tools.

Lessons Learned

We tried as much as possible throughout this project to implement feedback into the project and to document suggestions for future sites. The following section details the lessons that our pilot sites would like to pass along to other jurisdictions interested in implementing a strengths-based assessment process or other service delivery system.

Policy and System Level Lessons

In order to successfully implement a strengths-based program using the Youth Competency Assessment tool and protocol, it is important that juvenile departments pave the way with preparatory groundwork. The following are suggestions for that groundwork based on the experiences of the juvenile departments that piloted the YCA in Oregon in 2001-2003.

Before training staff and implementing the YCA, the Juvenile Department management staff members need to conceptualize the department's strength-based vision and mission. This process should encompass any policy that may have been created around bringing this approach into the department as a required part of the assessment process, including how they will use the YCA/strengths approach and how it will benefit the counselors/POs, the

department, and the youth they serve. This vision should be imparted to the staff prior to the initial training so that they are aware of its importance to the department and to the work they will be doing in the future. Leadership must be supportive of this approach and encourage its adoption. Leadership must also be willing to recognize and change existing policies or practices that are found to inhibit the full implementation of a strengths-based approach.

Managers and supervisors need to be trained, fully understand the approach, and buy into it. They will be a support and a resource for counselors/probation officers as they incorporate this approach into their daily routine.

Allowing plenty of room and opportunity for discussions (on a regular basis) is helpful for people learning new strategies and for working out questions, clarifying points of confusion, providing peer support, and generating ideas for how the process will best work in a particular department.

Determine where in your protocol of youth assessment the strengths-based questions best fit. Are staff members required to address accountability issues at the beginning of the first meeting? In that case, accountability questions may be followed by youth competency questions. Is there flexibility in when to address various issues during the assessment process? In that case, the counselor/probation officer may want to begin with youth competency questions not only to gather information about the youth's strengths, but as an aid to building rapport at the outset of the youth's relationship with the juvenile department and its staff.

If possible, incorporate YCA questions into your existing assessment paperwork in order to ensure a smooth interview process that has a balance of accountability and strengths.

Recognize that some staff members already look for strengths/have a strengths-based approach, but that the YCA is a method of formalizing that effort and ensuring that those strengths are utilized to help youth toward a healthy life.

A written list (paper and/or electronic) of community resources should be available to the counselors/probation officers to provide them with ideas and contacts that they can use to build on the strengths of the youth, especially when preparing the case plan.

An on-site "resident strengths expert" who is well-informed about the strengths approach and how it is being used in the department, and who has materials and information to share, will be a valuable resource and support for other staff who are using the youth competency assessment and approach.

Refresher meetings should be scheduled monthly during the first several months of implementation so that staff will have an opportunity to discuss their problems and successes, and have an opportunity to share examples of creative ways they are building on the strengths of the youth and contact information for any new resources they may have discovered.

Provide information to judges, court personnel, and other related parties. A one-page summary sheet is a good reminder aid, along with a mini-training on the strengths-based approach. The judges might even have suggestions about what they would like to see and what a strengths-based case hearing might look like.

Implementing a strengths-based approach is most effective when it involves entire systems. Encourage dialogue with the community programs and providers that you work with, to inform them about the approach you are taking and why. Include providers in your trainings

or help to facilitate training for them in another way. Expect services you refer to, and professionals you work with, to be open to learning about and implementing a strengths-based approach as well. If they do not, consider using other providers.

Schools are a critical partner to the juvenile justice system. They also should be encouraged to learn about and incorporate strengths-based principles. Juvenile department staff can gain much cooperation from schools by working to support their difficult youth and families in the schools. For example, a probation officer who responds quickly by showing up at a school where a youth is acting in a disruptive manner, and intervening with that youth, can earn the trust, appreciation, and respect of school personnel.

A strengths-based approach is a way of empowering youth, families, schools, and other agencies to work in a positive way despite challenges.

The following section describes lessons the research team learned during the testing of the training curriculum and process.

Training Lessons

It is helpful if the trainer or a member of the training team is someone who has juvenile justice experience, specifically who has been a probation officer or supervision counselor. These individuals have credibility in the eyes of line staff members who are being trained.

Schedule trainings in at least two parts (different days), limiting each session to 2 to 2 ½ hours. Small groups (10-15 people) work well when possible. Training should have a variety of components: exercises, video, examples, role plays, etc.) in order to hold interest and, most importantly, to involve staff in a variety of learning/practicing experiences that will bring the strengths philosophy from theory into practice.

The trainer should be familiar with the department's forms and protocol for dealing with youth who come into contact with the juvenile department.

At the training, give examples of a completed YCA and a sample case plan that builds on those strengths gathered in the YCA interview (provide two or three examples).

At the training, present a video that shows a strengths-based assessment interview and one that is not strengths-based.

Use real examples of what they are doing now (see if staff members will volunteer to be video or audio taped) as a training exercise – point out what is going well and what could be improved. Depending on training and supervision time and resources, this exercise could be done individually or in small groups. Also, make sure to provide time to practice and provide feedback related to using the assessment information in the creation of case plans, reformation plans, or other goal-oriented documents.

Finally, we would like to share some re-learned lessons from this project that might be helpful to researchers conducting similar pilot projects.

Research Lessons

Leave plenty of time (more than you think you need) at the end of the project for data analyses and re-analyses, writing up findings, and receiving feedback. The extra time contributes to higher quality products. Additionally, it is wonderful if you can also plan time to prepare materials for dissemination or publication.

When implementing a system change or new instrument, like the YCA, allow time for the program or process to mature before attempting to collect outcome data. This idea is not new, but it was reinforced for us on this project.

Plan for extra visits to your research sites or for staff to come to you. We found it invaluable to have regular communication with and feedback from the juvenile justice staff through the Local Advisory Board. It facilitated development throughout the project, as well as additional thinking about the interpretations of those findings.

Next steps

Members of the research team are hoping to continue work based on this project into the future. There are two areas we are still working on: grants (for research and trainings) and publications.

Grants

We have applied for a National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) contract to develop a strengths-based assessment tool for multi-problem youth. This project would draw heavily on the work conducted in this project as well as research we have done on risks and protective factors. It would expand the work from juvenile justice to other areas and would focus on an attempt to integrate, in a systematic way, the risks/needs/strengths areas into one assessment form and process.

We are also looking for grant and contract opportunities, primarily from foundations, for research to extend the work on youth outcomes, as described in this report in the section on "Follow-up." We would love an opportunity to collect additional data from our pilot sites on new youth or on the department as a whole, through either pre-post designs (pre and post YCA implementation) or through comparisons with other counties not yet using a strengths-based model. We are also hoping to find funding so that we will be able to accommodate training and technical assistance requests from new sites interested in guidance related to implementing strengths-based practice and/or the YCA tool.

Publications

There are many reports and articles that may be of interest to others based on this project. We have begun work on two of them. The first is a description of the literature and theoretical underpinnings of this project and the use of a strengths-based approach to assessment and case management in juvenile justice agencies, as well as the gaps in that literature and future research needs in this area. The second is a detailed description of the project, including case studies of the pilot sites and their implementation processes. We will continue to work on producing materials that are suitable for dissemination to broader audiences.

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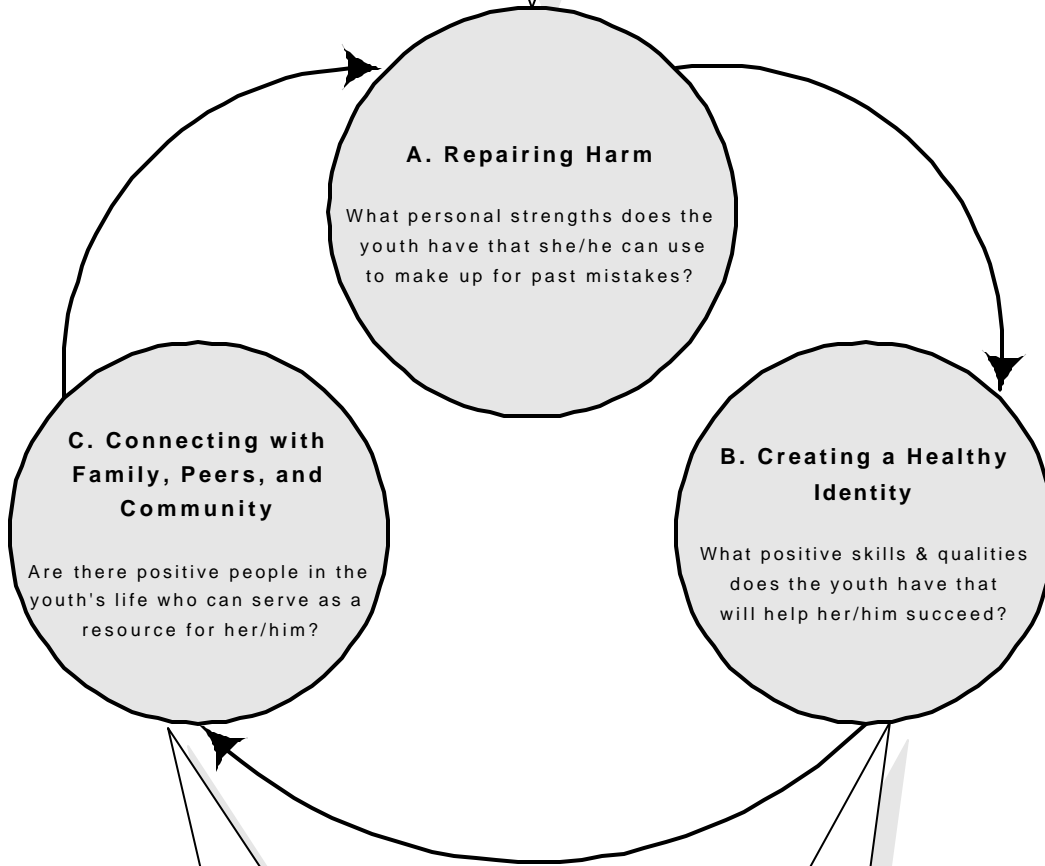
Appendix A. Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)

**YCA Model
Notes Version
Short Version
Long Version**

Youth Competency Assessment (YCA) Model

Sample questions:

1. Where have you learned about how to decide right from wrong (e.g., parent, teacher)? What are some examples of what they taught you?
2. Think about what got you in trouble this last time. Who did it hurt? Is there anything you've already done to make up for your actions? What else could you do?
3. What could you do to show people that you'll make different decisions in the future? How would these choices benefit you?



Sample questions:

1. Who in your life helps you reach your goals or explore your interests? If there isn't someone, what are some ways we could help find someone?
2. Name some people that you respect or that you see doing things you like or appreciate (e.g., teacher, coach, musician, doctor, neighbor). What kinds of things do they do?
3. Tell me about a time when someone did something nice for you, or helped you out, or gave you something you needed. Why did the person do it?

Sample questions:

1. How do you like to spend your free time? Hobbies? Sports? Music/Movies? (These questions look for engagement in productive activities)
2. Are you going to school or working anywhere (or have you ever)? What types of things did you enjoy? What were you good at?
3. What types of skills do you have? (This area might need probing and you might need to provide some suggestions) [Follow up with ... How do you think these skills will help you in your life?]

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Youth Competency Assessment (YCA) [Notes Version]

Introduction: It is likely that you will begin the interview by conducting usual Department/Court business: meeting the youth and any other people who are present, introducing yourself, and providing some information about why the youth is there, what they can expect from their visit today and their involvement with you overall, and what expectations the Department/Court has of them. The YCA has the following purposes and goals: 1) To start the process of understanding harm done and how to repair it, 2) To get to know the youth and her/his strengths, and 3) To decide together on competency areas to develop or explore.

Youth Name/I.D. # _____

Date: __/__/____

Counselor/Staff Name/I.D. # _____

Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)
[Notes Version]

Section A: Repairing Harm

** What personal strengths does the youth have that he/she can use to make up for past mistakes? **

a. Where have you learned about how to decide right from wrong (e.g., parent, teacher)? What are some examples of what they taught you?

b. Think about what got you in trouble this last time. Who did it hurt? Is there anything you've already done to make up for your actions? What (else) you could do?

c. What could you do to show people that you'll make different decisions in the future? How would these choices benefit you?

Section B: Creating a Healthy Identity

** What positive skills and qualities does the youth have that will help her/him succeed? What behaviors does the youth exhibit that reflect a positive identity? **

d. How do you like to spend your free time?
Hobbies? Sports? Music/Movies? (These questions look for engagement in productive activities)

e. Are you going to school or working anywhere (or have you ever)? What types of things did you enjoy? What were you good at?

f. What types of skills do you have? (This area might need probing and you might need to provide some suggestions)
[Follow up with...How do you think these skills will help you in your life?]

g. One of the things we'll be doing together is making some plans for the next few months. What goals would you like to try to achieve in the next _____ (month? 3 months? etc.)? What areas would you like to explore?

h. How would you describe yourself?

i. What is something you like about yourself? (Probe for something more than the superficial)

Notes

Youth Name/I.D. # _____

Date: __/__/____

Counselor/Staff Name/I.D. # _____

Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)
[Notes Version]

Section C: Connecting with Family, Peers, and Community

** Are there positive people in the youth's life who can serve as a resource for her/him? **

j. Who do you spend most of your time with? (Looking for a connection with adults, positive role models)

k. Describe the people you feel most safe with... Who are they? If there isn't someone, what are some ways we could help find someone? What is it that makes you feel safe?

l. Who in your life helps you reach your goals or explore your interests? If there isn't someone, what are some ways we could help find someone?

m. Name some people that you respect or that you see doing things you like or appreciate (e.g., teacher, coach, musician, doctor, neighbor). What kinds of things do they do? Who in your family do you admire most? (Why?) Which friend do you admire most? (Why?)

n. Tell me about a time when someone did something nice for you, or helped you out, or gave you something you needed. Why did the person do it?

o. Tell me about a time you did something nice for someone else, or you helped them out, or you gave them something they needed. What types of things do you enjoy doing for others?

p. Who counts on you? [Follow up with...What do you do for them?]

<p>Notes</p>

Note: If youth is unable to provide positive information about him/herself, it may indicate depression or another underlying issue. Please screen or refer for screening as necessary.

Youth Name/I.D. # _____

Date: __/__/____

Counselor/Staff Name/I.D. # _____

Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)
[Notes Version]

YCA Summary and Plan

1. Youth's skills/resources/strengths (can include community or cultural strengths or supports)

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

2. Short-term competency development/skill building areas:

a. Mentoring others or being mentored: _____

Review date: _____

b. Education or Career: _____

Review date: _____

c. Family or peer relationships: _____

Review date: _____

d. Repairing harm: _____

Review date: _____

e. Other: _____

Review date: _____

3. People who can support youth to develop competencies/skills:

a. Name: _____ Relationship: _____

b. Name: _____ Relationship: _____

c. Name: _____ Relationship: _____

4. Summary of youth's long-term goals/plan for future: _____

Now use this information in designing your case plan.

Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)

[Short Version]

Introduction: It is likely that you will begin the interview by conducting usual Department/Court business: meeting the youth and any other people who are present, introducing yourself, and providing some information about why the youth is there, what they can expect from their visit today and their involvement with you overall, and what expectations the Department/Court has of them. The YCA has the following purposes and goals: 1) To start the process of understanding harm done and how to repair it, 2) To get to know the youth and her/his strengths, and 3) To decide together on competency areas to develop or explore.

Youth Name/I.D. # _____

Date: __/__/____

Counselor/Staff Name/I.D. # _____

Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)
[Short Version]

Section A: Repairing Harm

** What personal strengths does the youth have that he/she can use to make up for past mistakes? **

a. Where have you learned about how to decide right from wrong (e.g., parent, teacher)? What are some examples of what they taught you?

b. Think about what got you in trouble this last time. Who did it hurt? Is there anything you've already done to make up for your actions? What (else) you could do?

c. What could you do to show people that you'll make different decisions in the future? How would these choices benefit you?

Section B: Creating a Healthy Identity

** What positive skills and qualities does the youth have that will help her/him succeed? What behaviors does the youth exhibit that reflect a positive identity? **

Sample Questions:

d. How do you like to spend your free time?

Hobbies? Sports? Music/Movies? (These questions look for engagement in productive activities)

e. Are you going to school or working anywhere (or have you ever)? What types of things did you enjoy? What were you good at?

f. What types of skills do you have? (This area might need probing and you might need to provide some suggestions)

[Follow up with...How do you think these skills will help you in your life?]

g. One of the things we'll be doing together is making some plans for the next few months. What goals would you like to try to achieve in the next _____ (month? 3 months? etc.)? What areas would you like to explore?

h. How would you describe yourself?

i. What is something you like about yourself? (Probe for something more than the superficial)

Section C: Connecting with Family, Peers, and Community

** Are there positive people in the youth's life who can serve as a resource for her/him? **

j. Who do you spend most of your time with? (Looking for a connection with adults, positive role models)

Youth Name/I.D. # _____

Date: __/__/____

Counselor/Staff Name/I.D. # _____

Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)

[Short Version]

k. Describe the people you feel most safe with... Who are they? If there isn't someone, what are some ways we could help find someone? What is it that makes you feel safe?

l. Who in your life helps you reach your goals or explore your interests? If there isn't someone, what are some ways we could help find someone?

m. Name some people that you respect or that you see doing things you like or appreciate (e.g., teacher, coach, musician, doctor, neighbor). What kinds of things do they do? Who in your family do you admire most? (Why?) Which friend do you admire most? (Why?)

n. Tell me about a time when someone did something nice for you, or helped you out, or gave you something you needed. Why did the person do it?

o. Tell me about a time you did something nice for someone else, or you helped them out, or you gave them something they needed. What types of things do you enjoy doing for others?

p. Who counts on you? [Follow up with...What do you do for them?]

Note: If youth is unable to provide positive information about him/herself, it may indicate depression or another underlying issue. Please screen or refer for screening as necessary.

Youth Name/I.D. # _____

Date: __/__/____

Counselor/Staff Name/I.D. # _____

Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)
[Short Version]

YCA Summary and Plan

1. Youth's skills/resources/strengths (can include community or cultural strengths or supports)

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

2. Short-term competency development/skill building areas:

a. Mentoring others or being mentored: _____

_____ Review date: _____

b. Education or Career: _____

_____ Review date: _____

c. Family or peer relationships: _____

_____ Review date: _____

d. Repairing harm: _____

_____ Review date: _____

e. Other: _____

_____ Review date: _____

3. People who can support youth to develop competencies/skills:

a. Name: _____ Relationship: _____

b. Name: _____ Relationship: _____

c. Name: _____ Relationship: _____

4. Summary of youth's long-term goals/plan for future: _____

_____ *Now use this information in designing your case plan.*

Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)
[Long Version]

Introduction: It is likely that you will begin the interview by conducting usual Department/Court business:

- a) Meeting the youth and any other people who are present,*
- b) Introducing yourself*
- c) Providing some information about why the youth is there, what they can expect from their visit today and their involvement with you overall, and*
- d) What expectations the Department/Court has of them.*

The YCA has the following purposes and goals:

- 1) To start the process of understanding harm done and how to repair it,*
- 2) To get to know the youth and her/his strengths, and*
- 3) To decide together on competency areas to develop or explore.*

Youth Name/I.D. # _____

Date: __/__/____

Counselor/Staff Name/I.D. # _____

Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)
[Long Version]

Section A: Repairing Harm

** What personal strengths does the youth have that he/she can use to make up for past mistakes?**

1. Where have you learned about how to decide right from wrong (e.g., parent, teacher)?

Supportive adults/role models:

2. What are some examples of what they taught you?

Think about what got you in trouble this last time.

3. Who did it hurt?

4. Is there anything you've already done to make up for your actions?

Youth Name/I.D. # _____

Date: __/__/____

Counselor/Staff Name/I.D. # _____

Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)
[Long Version]

5. What (else) you could do?

Repairing harm goal(s):

Review date: _____

Review date: _____

Review date: _____

6. What could you do to show people that you'll make different decisions in the future?

7. How would these choices benefit you?

8. Summary of youth's strengths for repairing harm:

Youth Name/I.D. # _____

Date: __/__/____

Counselor/Staff Name/I.D. # _____

Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)
[Long Version]

Section B: Creating a Healthy Identity

** What positive skills and qualities does the youth have that will help her/him succeed? What behaviors does the youth exhibit that reflect a positive identity? **

9. How do you like to spend your free time? Hobbies? Sports? Music/Movies? [These questions look for engagement in productive activities]

10. Are you going to school or working anywhere (or have you ever)? What types of things did you enjoy? What were you good at?

11. What types of skills do you have? (This area might need probing and you might need to provide some suggestions)

12. [Follow up with...How do you think these skills will/could help you in your life?]

Youth Name/I.D. # _____

Date: __/__/____

Counselor/Staff Name/I.D. # _____

Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)

[Long Version]

13. One of the things we'll be doing together is making some plans for the next few months. What goals would you like to try to achieve in the next _____ (month? 3 months? etc.)? What areas would you like to explore?

Suggestions/examples:

a. Mentoring others or being mentored: _____

_____ Review date: _____

b. Education or Career: _____

_____ Review date: _____

c. Family or peer relationships: _____

_____ Review date: _____

d. Other: _____

_____ Review date: _____

14. How would you describe yourself? What is something you like about yourself? (Probe for something more than the superficial)

15. Summary of youth's strengths for creating a healthy identity:

Youth Name/I.D. # _____

Date: __/__/____

Counselor/Staff Name/I.D. # _____

Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)
[Long Version]

Section C: Connecting with Family, Peers, and Community

** Are there positive people in the youth's life who can serve as a resource for her/him?**

16. Who do you spend most of your time with? [Looking for a connection with adults, positive role models]

Supportive adults/role models: _____

17. Describe the people you feel most safe with... Who are they?

People who provide safety: _____

18a. If there isn't anyone, what are some ways we could help find someone?

18b. What is it that makes you feel safe?

Youth Name/I.D. # _____

Date: __/__/____

Counselor/Staff Name/I.D. # _____

Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)

[Long Version]

19. Who in your life helps you reach your goals or explore your interests? If there isn't someone, what are some ways we could help find someone? (Who would you like to get to know better?)

Supportive adults/role models OR possible supportive adults:

20. Name some people that you respect or that you see doing things you like or appreciate (e.g., teacher, coach, musician, doctor, neighbor). What kinds of things do they do? Who in your family do you admire most? (Why?) Which friend do you admire most? (Why?)

People the youth respects/admires:

_____ Why? _____
_____ Why? _____
_____ Why? _____

21. Tell me about a time when someone did something nice for you, or helped you out, or gave you something you needed. Why did the person do it?

Youth Name/I.D. # _____

Date: __/__/____

Counselor/Staff Name/I.D. # _____

Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)
[Long Version]

22a. Tell me about a time you did something nice for someone else, or you helped them out, or you gave them something they needed.

22b. What types of things do you enjoy doing for others?

23a. Who counts on you?

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

23b. What do you do for them?

24. Summary of youth's long-term goals/plan for future:

Youth Name/I.D. # _____

Date: __/__/____

Counselor/Staff Name/I.D. # _____

Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)
[Long Version]

25. Summary of youth's strengths for connecting with family, peers, and community:

Now use this information in designing your case plan.

Note: If youth is unable to provide positive information about him/herself, it may indicate depression or another underlying issue. Please screen or refer for screening as necessary.

Appendix B. YCA Supplemental Questions

Youth Competency Assessment (YCA) Supplemental Interview Questions

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is not a structured interview. It is a 20-item guideline for you to use early in your assessment process with youth that will provide you with strength-based information to incorporate into the Case Plan. Research and practice suggest that gathering information about a youth's strengths in the areas of 1) Creating a Healthy Identity, 2) Connecting With Family, Peers, and Community, and 3) Repairing Harm will provide you with needed strengths-based information for the Case Plan.

■ **Section A: Repairing Harm**

Overall purpose of section: What personal strengths do youth have that they can use to make up for past mistakes?

01. Exploring how it feels to help or hurt others

- Talk about a time you did something for someone else that you felt really good about. Who noticed?
- How did they respond?
- Think of something in the past that you did that hurt someone else. How do you feel about that now?
- What did you do to make it right? If you didn't do anything, what could you have done?
- Is there anything you could do now?

02. Experiences with apology in personal relationships

- Describe a time when someone apologized to you for something they did that hurt you. How did that make you feel?
- How did that change your relationship with that person?
- Describe the last time you apologized to another person. How did that make you feel?
- Did it change the way you acted toward the other person?

03. Knowing right from wrong

- Think about who in your life taught you the most about right and wrong. What are a couple of examples of what that person taught you?
- Are there other people who have also taught you about right and wrong? Are any of these people in your life right now?

04. Willingness to repair harm from the incident

- Think about what got you in trouble this last time. Is there anything you've already done to make up for your actions?
- Do you think there's anything more that you could do?
- On a scale of 1-5 (1=not at all, 5=very), how willing are you to do anything more?

05. Ability to make safe choices

- What are ways that you could show people that you'll make safe choices in the future?
- How would these choices benefit you?

06. Community connections

- Communities are places where people are connected to each other, like a neighborhood, school, or faith-based institution (church, synagogue). What do you like/not like about your community?
- What things can you do in your community that will make it a better place?
- Your recent choices may have affected your community connections—what could help you connect again?
- How can your friends support you in maintaining positive community connections?

■ **Section B: Creating a Healthy Identity**

Overall purpose of section: What kinds of things help youth feel good about themselves and help them succeed?

07. Personal Goals

- What are your goals for yourself?
- What steps are you taking to achieve these goals?
- Is there anything that gets in the way of achieving these goals?

08. Personal Strengths

- What do you think your strengths are? (What are the things you like to do that you feel you are good at?) Name two.
- How can these strengths help you in your future goals?

09. Family Strengths

- What does your family do well?

10. Pride

- What are the things in your life that you are most proud of?

11. Experience Overcoming Challenges

- Describe an experience that you felt was difficult or challenging that you were able to overcome.
- What challenges are you currently working on?

12. Safety

- Describe the people that you feel the most safe with.
- What is it about those people that makes you feel safe?

Section C: Connecting with Family, Peers, and Community

Overall purpose of section: Are there positive people in youths' lives who can serve as resources for them?

13. Admiration

- Who in your family, neighborhood or school do you see doing good things in the community?
- What kinds of things do they do?
- Who would you like to get to know better who would be a positive influence in your life?

14. Problem-solving
 - Who do you turn to when you have a problem?
 - Describe someone you've known who made poor decisions and then got back on track.
15. Helping others
 - Describe a time when someone helped you or gave you something you needed.
 - Why do you think people do things like that?
16. Family as a resource
 - Think about the people you include in your family.
 - What kinds of things are they good at?
 - Who in your family do you admire the most? Why?
17. Friends as a resource
 - Think about your group of friends. What kinds of things are they good at?
 - Who in your group of friends do you admire the most?
 - Why?
18. School or work as a resource
 - Think about your school or where you work. In those places, what do you do the best?
 - What things take the hardest work?
 - Is there anything that keeps you from reaching your goals?
19. Community as a resource
 - Think about your community. Are there things that need to be fixed?
 - What could you do to help fix them?
 - What have you already done in your community to make it better?
20. Experiences teaching, helping, or leading
 - Describe your experiences being a mentor, teacher, or leader for others.

Appendix C. Domains of the YCA

Youth Competency Assessment in Juvenile Justice: A Strength-Based Developmental Approach

Definition: Youth Competency Assessment (YCA) is a brief format and process for identifying strengths, competencies, and capabilities that will enable professionals, family members, and community members to build service and case plans that reflect specific pro-social competency development goals across a variety of juvenile justice settings. Three assessment areas include: A) Support efforts to repair harm; B) Pathways toward a healthy identity; and C) Indicators of mechanisms to connect youth to community, family, and peers. The YCA is designed to be delivered in concert with traditional risk and problem assessment. It is designed to be utilized in conjunction with a parallel community asset and resource inventory process.

Domain A: Support Efforts to Repair Harm

This category is designed to identify those indicators of moral development specifically geared toward making amends for problems, difficulties, pain caused to others due to commission of his/her behavior. Specific attention should be focused on culturally specific ways that wrongdoing is addressed, harm acknowledged, and accountability structures and practices set in motion. Specific resources to provide balanced and restorative justice programming in a culturally congruent framework are needed.

Examples:

- a. Experience with acknowledging wrongdoing.
- b. Remorse, regret.
- c. Capacity for empathy.
- d. Family members, friends who anchor youth in an appropriate sense of right and wrong.
- e. Experiences in which he/she has been wronged and then apologized to.
- f. Experiences with others being empathetic with him/her.
- g. Desire/willingness to apologize.
- h. Ability to dialogue about how he/she might repair damage caused by delinquent activities.
- i. Ability/willingness to link his/her abilities to positive community activities.

Domain B: Pathways Toward a Healthy Identity

This category is designed to identify those resources, interests, and capabilities for pro-social development in his/her environment that are most likely to “grow” positive components to his/her identity and progress towards healthy and successful development and engagement in post-juvenile justice system life. Special attention should be focused on models of culturally specific and relevant models of success and health for a particular youth, family, and a community. Special knowledge of youth-serving community institutions (i.e., schools, youth leaderships, faith communities, and community resources such as Boys Clubs) that are willing to work with youth in the juvenile justice system are required.

Examples:

- a. Previous experience overcoming challenges or accomplishing personal, family, or team goals (however defined by youth).
- b. Skills and abilities (music, math ability, athletics).
- c. Pro-social interests, ideas for activities that both challenge and interest him/her.
- d. Experiences with success.
- e. Positive view of personal future.
- f. Ability to identify places where he/she can feel safe.
- g. Willingness to access known and risk discomfort in developing new pro-social relationships in the community.
- h. Willingness/ability to engage in life planning and development of a positive future action plan.

Domain C: Indicators of Mechanisms to Connect Youth to Community, Family, and Peers

This category is designed to identify those relational capacities or potentials that directly hold the possibility of social relationships in the community with pro-social partners. Specific attention should be focused toward the presence of cultural resources (both for the youth and in the youth’s family and community). This category specifically involves community resources in new ways and requires a careful and in-depth understanding of both traditional and non-traditional community resources, social capital and cultural dynamics in a variety of community settings.

Examples:

- a. Willingness to engage with or experiences with mentoring.
- b. Willingness to engage with or experiences with employment and/or education. Career aspirations and interest in career exploration.
- c. Experiences with leadership.
- d. Experiences with being a teacher or mentor to others.
- e. Experiences with generosity
- f. Presence of pro-social role models in the community – either known or through specific community resources known to youth, family, or professional. Specific focus on former offenders who have turned their lives around in a positive way.
- g. Willingness/interest in offering self in service-oriented activities to the community and others in need.
- h. Willingness/interest in participating in social action/community-building activities.
- i. Willingness/interest in identifying and building on family strengths.
- j. Willingness/interest in identifying and building on peer strengths.

Appendix D. Focus Group Questions

Focus Group

- ❖ Introductions (name and role)
- ❖ Check in: How is the process going?
 - What is going well?
 - What challenges are you facing?
 - How have you addressed challenges that have arisen?
- ❖ What has changed since starting this process?
 - Workload?
 - Youth or parent reactions or receptivity?
 - Judicial or other staff reactions?
 - Community partner reactions?
- ❖ For these changes (if any) – How do you know these changes have occurred?
 - What kinds of things are you hearing, seeing, etc.?
- ❖ Has there been any change in the culture of the juvenile department or your unit?
- ❖ Have there been any unexpected changes or unexpected outcomes?
 - positive or negative
- ❖ What training needs or suggestions do you have?
 - What would have been good to know or have up front? Is there anything you still need?
- ❖ Is there anything that needs to change in how the tool or the process works?
 - If so, what?

Appendix E. Youth and Parent/Guardian Interview Materials

**Contact Log
Parent/Guardian Script
Parent/Guardian Consent
Parent/Guardian Consent (Spanish)
Parent/Guardian Interview
Youth Script
Youth Assent
Youth Letter
Youth Interview
Gift Certificate**

**YCA (Strengths) Project
Youth Interviews
Spring 2002**

ID #:

Name of youth:

County:

Date of Birth:

Age:

Gender:

Race/Ethnicity:

Date of interview:

Interviewer:

Interview start time:

Interview end time:

Contact Log:

Date/time of contact or attempt	Result/notes/follow-up needed

YCA (STRENGTHS) PROJECT

Script for Phone Call to Schedule Interview with Parent

Hello, may I speak to _____, please?

My name is _____. I work with a company called NPC Research. We are working on a project with juvenile departments and would like to get some information from you about your child's experience with _____ Co. juvenile department. Would that be OK?

If "No," say: Could I tell you a little bit more about it before you make up your mind?
[go to *]

If "yes," say:

Great! *What we would like to do is set up an interview with you where we could ask you some questions about your experience with the juvenile department and with the counselor or counselors that you and your child talked to on your first visits. Everything you tell us would be confidential. That means we won't tell anyone else what you say. We will be taking your information and opinions and combining them with what all the people say. Your name will **not** be on that information. Then we'll give that information back to the juvenile departments so that they can get information about how they are doing. That same information will also be given to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the organization that is paying for this project.

It is up to you whether or not you want to be interviewed. Also, you can change your mind at any time. You can decide you don't want to answer any or all of the questions.

If you do decide to do the interview, we will give you a \$20.00 gift certificate.

I would also like to interview your child. S/he will also receive a \$20.00 gift certificate, and s/he doesn't have to answer all of the questions either.

Do you have any questions? Shall we go ahead and schedule the interview? Is there a day when both you and your child will be available so that we can do one interview right after the other one? The interview will take about a 45 minutes. We will come to your house or another place that is easy for you to get to and where we can talk without being overheard. Where would you like to meet? What is the address?

What's a good day for you? What time?

What is a phone number where I can reach you?

I'll give you my number in case you need to call me to reschedule the interview.

My phone number is _____. Again, my name is _____.

Thank you, _____! I will see you at (repeat address) on (repeat date) at (repeat time).

Is your child at home now? I would like to speak with him/her to be sure that it's OK with him/her to do the interview.

If "Yes," say: May I speak to him/her, please?

Thank you! See you soon!

If "No," say: What would be a good time and day to call? Should I call this number?

Thank you! See you soon!

Strengths-Based Restorative Justice Oregon Juvenile Justice Project

You and your child are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Juliette Mackin, Ph.D., and Judy Weller, B.S., at NPC Research. The researcher hopes to learn the extent to which strength-based practices are being used in the juvenile justice system in Oregon. You and your child were selected as possible participants in this study because you were listed as a parent or guardian of a youth who has recently been involved in the juvenile department in _____ County.

If you decide to participate, you and your child will be interviewed, separately, by a research team staff person about your experiences with the first few appointments your child had at the juvenile department. The interviews will take place on the phone, at your home or at another location that is convenient for you and will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. It is also possible that you and/or your child will be asked to participate in a second interview within the next year to hear about your further experiences with the juvenile department.

The interview will ask about your perceptions (and your child's perceptions) of the counselor or probation officer who is working with your child and her or his approach to working with you and your child. It is possible that you (or your child) will think that some of these questions are personal or intrusive; however, you (or your child) may decide not to answer any or all of the questions, and can withdraw your (or your child's) participation at any time.

You will receive a \$20 gift certificate for participating in the first interview. Any future interviews will also provide compensation. In addition, your child will receive a \$20 gift certificate for his/her participation. This study may also help to increase knowledge about juvenile justice services, which may help others in the future.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be linked to you, or your child, or otherwise identify you, will be kept confidential. There are three exceptions to this guarantee of confidentiality: 1) If you or your child tell a research team member about child or elder abuse, 2) If a research team member witnesses child or elder abuse, or 3) If your child tells us he or she plans to hurt her/himself or someone else, the research team member will need to report that information. The research team will be collecting information from approximately 80 families in four different counties. Information from all responses will be combined when we provide feedback to the juvenile departments and if findings from the study are shared or published.

Information is kept confidential by several procedures. Each interview form will have an identification number instead of indicating the name of the person being interviewed. Interview responses will be entered into computers that have password protection. Any forms that include your name or your child's name (such as consent forms and gift certificate receipts) will remain in locked filing cabinets at the research office. All project materials are kept for 3 years after the completion of the study.

Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to take part in the study, and it will not affect your child's involvement with the juvenile department or services your child or family is eligible to receive. You may also withdraw from this study at any time without affecting your child's involvement with the juvenile department or services your child or family is eligible to receive.

If you have concerns or problems about your participation in this study or your rights as a research participant, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and

Sponsored Projects, 111 Cramer Hall, Portland State University, (503) 725-8182. If you have questions about the study itself, contact Juliette Mackin or Judy Weller at NPC Research, 5200 SW Macadam Ave., Suite 420, Portland, OR 97239, (503) 243-2436.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the above information. Please understand that you may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty, and that, by signing, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. The researcher should provide you with a copy of this form for your own records.

- Please check here if you agree to be interviewed.
- Please check here if you allow us to interview your child.

Name of parent/guardian (please print)

Signature of parent/guardian

Name of child (please print)

Name of interviewer (please print)

Signature

Date

Strengths-Based Restorative Justice Oregon Juvenile Justice Project

Usted y su Hijo/a estan invitados a participar en un estudio de investigacion conducido por Juliette Mackin PhD.; y Judy Weller, B.S., de NPC Research En este estudio se espera aprender hasta que punto se practica el trato basado en los valores humanos (strength-based) en los sistemas de justicia juvenil de Oregon. Usted y su hijo/a han sido seleccionados como posibles participantes en este estudio por que usted ha sido reportado/a como padre o guardian de un/a joven que recientemente ha estado involucrado/a con el departamento juvenil en el condado de_____.

Si ustedes decide participar, usted y su hijo/a seran entrevistados separadamente por un miembro del equipo de investigacion y se hablara de sus experiencias en las primeras citas que usted y su hijo/a tuvieron en el departamento juvenil. La entrevista sera realizada en su casa o en algun otro lugar que sea conveniente para usted y tomara aproximadamente 45 minutos. Es posible que les pidamos a usted y a su hijo/a para que participen en una segunda entrevista entre el proximo ano para saber sus experiencias en el futuro con el departamento juvenil.

En la entrevista tambien se le preguntara sobre su forma de pensar o percepcion (y la percepcion de su hijo/a) sobre el consejero o el oficial (probation officer) que esta a cargo de su caso y su forma de dirigirse a usted y a su hijo/a. Es posible que usted o su hijo/a piensen que algunas de estas preguntas son muy personales y ustedes podran decidir no responder algunas de las preguntas o no continuar con la entrevista a cualquier momento.

Usted recibira una tarjeta de compras por U\$ 20 como agradecimiento por participar en la primera entrevista. Cualquier entrevista en el futuro, sera acompanada de una compensacion. Adicionalmente a esto, su hijo/a sera compensado/a con una tarjeta de compras por U\$20 por su participacion. Este estudio podra ayudar a tener un incremento de conocimientos sobre los servicios de la justicia juvenil, lo que ayudara a otros en el futuro.

Cualquier informacion que sera colectada en conexion con este estudio y que puede ser relacionada con usted o su hijo/a, o cualquier cosa que le identifique a usted, sera confidencialmente guardado. Existen tres excepciones a esta garantia confidencial: 1) Si usted o su hijo/a le cuentan a algun miembro del equipo de investigacion sobre casos de abuso infantil o de adultos, 2) Si algun miembro del equipo de investigacion es testigo de abuso infantil o adulto, o 3) Si es que su hijo/a nos dice que esta pensando en lastimarse o lastimar a alguien, el equipo de investigacion, tiene que reportar esa informacion. El equipo de investigacion, estara colectando informacion de aproximadamente 80 familias en cuatro diferentes condados. La informacion de todas las respuestas seran agrupadas cuando demos nuestro reporte al departamento juvenil o cuando compartamos con alguien o publiquemos esta informacion.

La informacion sera confidencialmente guardada de diferentes maneras. Cada entrevista tendra un codigo numerico sin nombres de las personas que fueron entrevistadas. Las respuestas de las entrevistas seran puestas en computadoras que tienen codigos secretos para garantizar la proteccion. Cualquier documento con su nombre o con el nombre de su hijo/a seran guardados en archivos con seguridad en nuestras oficinas. Todos los documentos de este proyecto seran guardados por tres anos despues de que el estudio se haya terminado.

Su participacion es voluntaria. Usted no tiene que participar en este estudio y no afectara en nada la manera que su hijo/a es tratado/a en el departamento juvenil o que tipos de servicios puede recibir de ellos. Usted tambien puede dejar este estudio (entrevista) a cualquier momento sin ninguna mala

consecuencia con el departamento juvenil o con el tipo de servicios que el/ella y la familia pueden recibir.

Si usted tiene quejas o preocupaciones o problemas sobre su participacion en este estudio, o sobre sus derechos como participante de este estudio, por favor contactese con Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, 111 Cramer Hall, Portland State University, (503) 725-8182. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre el estudio en si, contactese con Juliette Mackin or Judy Weller en NPC Research Inc., 5200 SW Macadam Ave., Suite 420, Portland, OR 97239, (503) 243-2436.

Su firma indica que usted a leído y ha entendido la informacion arriba mencionada. Por favor recuerde que usted puede salir del estudio a cualquier momento sin ser penalizado/a y que al firmar, usted no esta renunciando o cambiando ningun reclamo legal o derecho o solucion a su situacion. Usted recibira una copia de este documento del investigador.

ÿ Por favor marque aqui si usted desea ser entrevistado/a.

ÿ Por favor marque aqui si es que usted nos permite entrevistar a su hijo/a.

Nombre del padre o representante (escriba)

Firma del padre/ representante

Nombre del/la hijo/a

Nombre del entrevistador (escriba)

Firma

Fecha

Strengths (YCA) Project

Parent Interview Questions

INTRODUCTION and CONSENT

My name is _____. I work with a company called NPC Research. We are working on a project with juvenile departments and want to get some information from you about your experience with _____ Co. juvenile department.

We are talking to 80 parents of young people involved with juvenile departments in Oregon, 20 from this department. Everything you tell us is confidential. We will be taking your information and opinions and combining them with what all the people say. Then we'll give that information back to the juvenile departments so that they can get feedback about how they are doing. This project is being paid for by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. They will also be getting the summary information about these juvenile departments. Nothing we share will have your name, or the name of your child, included, and nothing will identify you or your child.

You can decide whether or not you want to be interviewed. Also, you can change your mind at any time. You can decide you don't want to answer any or all of the questions.

Before we get started we need to have you sign a form giving us permission to interview you and use the information that you give us without using your name, as we talked about a couple of minutes ago. Would you please take a few minutes to read this consent form, and then sign and date it at on the second page. At the end of this form where you sign your name, there is a place to check off if you agree to be interviewed and also a place to check off if you will allow us to interview your child [youth that was involved with the juvenile department]. *[Interviewer: go over main points verbally.]*

Do you have any questions?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

We are interested in the experiences people have with the juvenile department, particularly the first impressions and experiences with the initial meetings.

*1 [Expectations of first meetings]

Think back to before your child first started meeting with _____ at the juvenile department---, what did you expect it would be like

*2 [Actual experience of first meetings]

When you actually had the meeting(s), what was it like, what happened

[Probe: was it like you expected or different, in what ways, what made you feel that way]

*3a [PO responsiveness to parent point of view]

Did your child's counselor/probation officer care about your point of view

[Probe for details about what made the parent feel this way – were there things he/she said or ways he/she acted that made you feel this way]

*3b [PO responsiveness to parent feelings and wishes]

Did your child's counselor/probation officer care about your feelings

Did he/she care about your desires for what would happen for your child

[Probe for details about what made the parent feel this way – were there things he/she said or ways he/she acted that made you feel this way]

*4a [PO asked youth about youth strengths]

Did your child's counselor/probation officer ask your child about good things about him/herself

[If yes] **What did they talk about**

*4b [PO asked parent about youth strengths]

Did he/she also ask *you* about good things about your child

[If yes] **What did you talk about**

*4c [PO asked youth about family strengths]

Did your child's counselor/probation officer ask your child about good things about your family

[If yes] **What did they talk about**

*4d [PO asked parent about family strengths]

Did he/she also ask *you* about good things about your family

[If yes] **What did you talk about**

*5 [Other strengths]

What strengths does your child (or your family) have that the counselor/probation officer didn't ask about

[Probe: Can you give me an example]

*6a [Accountability]

Did your child's counselor/probation officer talk about things she/he had done wrong and what she/he needed to do to make up for it

[If yes] **What did he/she tell you/your child**

*6b [Choices regarding accountability]

How much did you or your child have a say in the things your child needed to do

[Such as choosing where to do community service, how to make money for restitution, coming up with ideas for apologies, etc.]

[Probe for details, if applicable]

*7 **How positive were these first few meetings**

[Probe: How did you feel at the end] (Circle number on scale below)

- +
0 ----- 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4

Not at all positive (0)

A little positive (1)

Somewhat positive (2)

Very positive (3)

Completely positive (4)

*8 **How do you think your child felt about the assessment process**

[The first several meetings with the counselor/probation officer]

*9a [PO impression of child]

What impression do you think your counselor/probation officer has of your child

[Probe: How would he/she describe your child]

*9b [Accuracy of PO impression of child]

In what ways is the counselor/probation officer's impression accurate and/or not accurate

*9c [PO impression of family]

What impression do you think your counselor/probation officer has of your family

*9d [Accuracy of PO impression of family]

In what ways is the counselor/probation officer's impression accurate and/or not accurate

*10 **How would you describe your child's counselor/probation officer**

*11a **Was your child's counselor/probation officer helpful**

[Probe: What did he/she do that was or will be helpful]

*11b **Is there something else you think s/he could have done**

[to be more helpful]

[If yes, what]

*12 **How fair do you feel your child's counselor/probation officer was with her/him**

[Probe: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is equal to not fair and 10 is very fair, what would you say]

*13 [Different treatment due to gender]

Do you think your child would have been treated differently if she was a boy/he was a girl

[If yes] **What would have been different** [or what would be different now][Probe for whether any differences are viewed as positive or negative]

*14a [Different treatment due to race/ethnicity or other factors]

Do you think your child would have been treated differently if she/he was a different race, or had a different skin color or nationality or language

Do you think your child would have been treated differently for any other reasons

[If yes] **What would have been different** [or what would be different now][Probe for whether any differences are viewed as positive or negative]

*15 [PO cultural sensitivity]

How sensitive was your counselor/probation officer to your family's background or the experiences you have had because of your race, ethnicity, etc. [your culture]

[Probe: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is equal to not at all sensitive and 10 is very sensitive, what would you say]

*16 [Suggestions]

What could your child's counselor/probation officer have done to make the first meetings [the assessment process] a more positive experience for you or your child

*17 **Is there anything else you want to share about the assessment process**

(how you felt, etc.)

I have a few more questions now about other experiences you may have had with the juvenile justice system.

*18a **Have you had other experiences at this or other juvenile departments**

[that is, with a different child, with this child at a different time, at a juvenile department in a different county or state]

[If yes to 18a]

*18b **When was it**

[If yes to 18a]

*18c **Could you please describe what your involvement include d**

[was it for an assessment process, how many meetings did you participate in, what was the duration of your involvement]

[If yes to 18a]

*18d [Differences between prior experiences and this one]

Were there any differences in how you felt about this assessment process and how you felt before

[Probe for details about the differences and what might have accounted for them]

***19a How long ago was it that you had your first interview(s) with _____**
[your child's counselor/probation officer]

If it has been over a month since the first interview(s) and there is time, ask the following questions:

***19b [Changes since first meetings]**

Have any of these things changed in meetings/appointments you have had with your child's counselor/probation officer since the first assessment/meetings

- caring about your point of view
- asking about good things about your family
- talking about things your child did wrong
- how positive you feel about your child's counselor/p.o. or the department
- her/his impression of your child/your family
- your impression of her/him
- how helpful or fair he/she is
- how you are treated, etc.
- how sensitive to your culture

Thank you for taking time today to do this interview! We really appreciate it.

There is a possibility that we may call you again for a follow-up interview—probably in about a year.

I have your \$20.00 gift certificate here for you, and a receipt for you to sign saying that you received it.

Thank you!

NOTES: _____

YCA (STRENGTHS) PROJECT
Script for Phone Call to Schedule Interview with Youth

Please call parent first to ask for permission to interview the youth and to set up an appointment with the parent. At that time, ask to speak to the youth if s/he is in.

Hello, _____.

If you need to make a separate call to the child, proceed as follows:

Hello, may I speak to _____, please?

My name is _____. I work with a company called NPC Research. We are working on a project with juvenile departments and would like to get some information from you about your experience with _____ Co. juvenile department. Would that be OK?

If “No,” say: Could I tell you a little bit more about it before you make up your mind?
[go to *]

If “yes,” say:

Great! *What we would like to do is set up an interview with you where we could ask you some questions about your experience with the juvenile department and with the counselor or counselors that you talked to on your first visits. Everything you tell us would be confidential. That means we won’t tell your parents, your probation officer, or anyone else what you say. We will be taking your information and opinions and combining them with what all the people say. Your name will **not** be on that information. Then we’ll give that information back to the juvenile departments so that they can get information about how they are doing. That same information will also be given to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the organization that is paying for this project.

It is up to you whether or not you want to be interviewed. Also, you can change your mind at any time. You can decide you don’t want to answer any or all of the questions.

If you do decide to do the interview, we will give you a \$20.00 gift certificate.

Do you have any questions? Shall we go ahead and schedule the interview? OK, let’s figure out a day and time that will work best for you. The interview will take about 45 minutes. We will come to your house or another place that is easy for you to get to and where we can talk without being overheard. Where would you like to meet? What is the address?

What’s a good day for you? What time?

What is a phone number where I can reach you?

I'll give you my phone number in case you need to call me to reschedule the interview:

My number is _____. My name is _____.

Thank you, _____! I will see you at (repeat address) on (repeat date) at (repeat time).

Strengths-Based Restorative Justice
Oregon Juvenile Justice Project

Participant Assent Form

Participant's Name:

Your parents (or guardians) have said that it is okay for you to take part in a project about your experiences with the juvenile department. If you choose to do it, you will be asked some questions, which will take about half an hour to 45 minutes.

If you want to rest, or stop completely, just tell me – you won't get in trouble! In fact, if you don't want to do it at all, you don't have to. Just say so. Also, if you have any questions about what you will be doing, just ask me to explain.

If you do want to try it, please sign your name on the line below. Remember – you can stop to rest at any time and if you decide not to take part anymore, let me know.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Strengths-Based Restorative Justice
Oregon Juvenile Justice Project

Dear

My name is Juliette Mackin and I am a researcher at NPC Research I am beginning a study on strength-based practices in the juvenile justice system in Oregon and would like to invite you to participate.

You are being asked to take part because of your involvement in the juvenile department in _____ County. As part of the study, I am interested in your opinions and attitudes about your counselor or probation officer and her or his approach to working with you and your family. I hope that the information I collect will help us to better understand how services from juvenile departments can help young people. If you decide to participate, you and your parent or guardian will be interviewed, separately, by a research team staff person about your experiences with the first few appointments you had at the juvenile department. The interviews will take place on the phone, at your home or at another location that is convenient for you. It will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. It is also possible that you will be asked to participate in a second interview within the next year to hear about your further experiences with the juvenile department.

You will receive a \$20 gift certificate for answering the interview questions.

What you tell us in the interview is confidential. That means we will not tell anyone (including your probation officer or counselor) what you say. Everything you tell us we will keep private, except for three things:

- 1) If you tell a research team member about child or elder abuse,
- 2) If a research team member witnesses child or elder abuse, or
- 3) If you tell us you plan to hurt yourself or someone else.

In these three cases, the research team member will need to report that information.

The research team will be collecting information from approximately 80 families in four different counties. Information from all responses will be combined when we provide feedback to the juvenile departments and if findings from the study are shared or published.

We keep the information you tell us private. The interview form will have an ID number instead of your name. Your answers to the questions will be entered into computers that have passwords. Any forms that have your name (such as consent forms and gift certificate receipts) will remain in locked filing cabinets at the research office. We have to keep all project materials for 3 years after the end of the study.

Your participation is voluntary. You can decide not to participate, or you can withdraw any time you want, and it will not affect your involvement with the juvenile department or services you are eligible to receive. Please keep a copy of this letter for your records.

If you have concerns or problems about your participation in this study or your rights as a research participant, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, 111 Cramer Hall, Portland State University, (503) 725-8182. If you have questions about the study itself, contact Juliette Mackin or Judy Weller at NPC Research, 5200 SW Macadam Ave., Suite 420, Portland, OR 97239, (503) 243-2436.

Sincerely,

Juliette Mackin

Strengths (YCA) Project

Youth Interview Questions

INTRODUCTION and CONSENT

My name is _____. I work with a company called NPC Research. We are working on a project with juvenile departments and want to get some information from you about your experience with _____ Co. juvenile department.

We are talking to 80 young people, 20 from this department. Everything you tell us is confidential. That means we won't tell your parents, your probation officer, or anyone else, what you say. We will be taking your information and opinions and combining them with what all the people say. Then we'll give that information back to the juvenile departments so that they can get feedback about how they are doing. This project is being paid for by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. They will also be getting the summary information about these juvenile departments.

You can decide whether or not you want to be interviewed. Also, you can change your mind at any time. You can decide you don't want to answer any or all of the questions.

Before we get started we need to have you sign a form giving us permission to interview you and use the information that you give us without using your name, as we talked about a couple of minutes ago. We already got permission from _____ (parent/guardian) to do this interview. Would you take a few minutes to read this "Assent Form," and then sign and date it at the bottom. *[Interviewer: go over main points verbally.]* I also have a letter here for you to read that explains more about the study and your involvement with it. *[Interviewer: go over main points verbally.]*

Do you have any questions?

NOTE: DO NOT INTERVIEW YOUTH UNLESS YOU HAVE A SIGNED PERMISSION FORM FROM THE PARENT/GUARDIAN

I'm going to be asking you questions about your counselor or probation officer,
[Name]_____. Think about the first couple of times you met with her/him.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

*1 [Who accompanied youth]

Who came with you when you met with [Name of counselor/probation officer]_____ the first couple of times (your assessment meeting(s)) [if anyone]?

*2 [PO responsiveness to youth point of view]

When you came in for the first meetings, did your counselor/probation officer care about your point of view (your feelings, your side of the story)

[Probe for details about what made the youth feel this way – **were there things he/she said or ways he/she acted that made you feel this way**]

*3a [PO asked about your strengths]

Did your counselor/probation officer ask you about good things about yourself

[If yes] **What did you talk about**

*3b [PO asked parent about youth strengths]

Did your counselor/probation officer ask your parent/guardian about good things about you

[If yes] **What did they talk about**

*3c [PO asked about family strengths]

Did your counselor/probation officer ask you about good things about your family

[If yes] **What did you talk about**

*3d [PO asked parent about family strengths]

Did your counselor/probation officer ask your parent/guardian about good things about your family

[If yes] **What did they talk about**

*4 [Other strengths]

What things are you good at or things that you like about yourself that the counselor/probation officer didn't ask about

[Probe: Can you give me an example]

*5 [Accountability]

Did your counselor/probation officer talk about things you had done wrong and what you needed to do to make up for it

[If yes] **What did he/she tell you**

[Probe as needed. *Intent here is to see if the accountability component was covered in a balanced way or if it was the entire focus of the interview*]

*6 [Choices regarding accountability]

*13b **What else could s/he have done** [to be more helpful]

*14 **How fair do you feel your counselor/probation officer was with you**

[Probe: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is equal to not fair and 10 is very fair, what would you say]

*15 [Different treatment due to gender]

Did you feel that you would have been treated differently if you were a boy/girl

[If yes] **What would have been different** [or what would be different now][Probe for whether any differences are viewed as positive or negative]

*16 [Different treatment due to race/ethnicity or other factors]

Do you think you would have been treated differently if you were a different race, or had a different skin color or nationality or language

Do you think you would have been treated differently for any other reasons

[If yes] **What would have been different** [or what would be different now][Probe for whether any differences are viewed as positive or negative]

*17 **What are the gender and race/ethnicity of your probation officer/counselor**

*18 [PO cultural sensitivity]

How sensitive was your counselor/probation officer to your family's background or the experiences you have had because of your race, ethnicity, etc. [your culture]

[Probe: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is equal to not at all sensitive and 10 is very sensitive, what would you say]

*19 [Suggestions]

What could your counselor/probation officer have done to make the first meetings [the assessment process] **a more positive experience for you**

*20 **Is there anything else you want to share about the assessment process**

(how you felt, etc.)

I have a few more questions now about other experiences you may have had with the juvenile justice system.

[Based on answer to #8, if youth has had other experiences at this or other juvenile departments, answer item #21]

*21a **When was it**

*21b **Could you please describe what your involvement was like**

[what did you have to do, was it for an assessment process, how many meetings did you participate in, how long were you involved]

*21c [Differences between prior experiences and this one]

Were there any differences in how you felt about this assessment process and how you felt before

[Probe for details about the differences and what might have accounted for them]

*22a **How long ago was it that you had your first interview(s) with _____**
[you counselor/probation officer]

If it has been over a month since the first interview(s) and there is time, ask the following questions:

*22b [Changes since first meetings]

Have any of these things changed in meetings/appointments you have had with your counselor/probation officer since the first assessment/meetings

- caring about your point of view
- asking about good things about you and your family
- talking about things you did wrong
- how positive you feel about your work with your counselor/p.o. or the department
- her/his impression of you/your family
- your impression of her/him
- how helpful or fair he/she is
- how you are treated as a male/female, as a person from your racial group, etc.
- how sensitive to your culture

Thank you for taking time today to do this interview! We really appreciate it.
There is a possibility that we may call you again for a follow-up interview—probably in about a year.

I have your \$20.00 gift certificate here for you, and a receipt for you to sign saying that you received it.

Thank you!

NOTES: _____

Strengths Project



NPC RESEARCH

I have received a gift certificate for the amount of _____ as
compensation for taking part in an interview with the Strengths
Project for NPC Research

Print Name:

Signature:

Date: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interview ID #: _____

Gift Certificate Number: _____

Appendix F. Videotape Coding

Permission to Participate in a Program Evaluation
Strengths/YCA Project Observational Coding Cover Sheet
Strengths/YCA Project Observational Coding Template

NPC Research
5200 SW Macadam Ave., Suite 420
Portland, OR 97201-3857
(503) 243-2436

Permission Form to Participate in a Program Evaluation

You are being asked to participate in a program evaluation to review the work of the staff at the _____ Juvenile Department. Your participation is completely voluntary and will have no impact on your status with them.

As part of this project, we are videotaping interviews conducted by staff with participating youth and their families. We are asking for your permission to be videotaped for evaluation purposes only. NPC Research is conducting this evaluation and will receive the tapes. The tape will not remain in your file at _____ or be seen by anyone other than the researchers.

The tape will be reviewed and coded by the researchers and kept in the research offices in a locked cabinet. Once the program evaluation has been completed, the tape will be destroyed (no later than September 30, 2003).

If you have any questions about the project or your participation, please contact Judy Weller at the above address or phone number. She can also be reached at weller@npcresearch.com.

Thank you very much for your participation.

Youth's name (please print): _____

Youth's signature: _____

Parent/guardian's name (please print): _____

Parent/guardian's signature: _____

Date: _____

Interviewer's name (please print): _____

Interviewer's signature: _____

ID # _____

**Strengths/YCA Project
Observational Coding**

County _____ Interview Location: _____

Interview Date: _____ Coding Date: _____

Interview Time: _____ Coder Name: _____

Youth Race/Ethnicity _____ Staff Name: _____

Youth Gender _____ Staff Race/Ethnicity: _____

Youth Age _____ Staff Gender: _____

Others at Interview (i.e., relationship to youth) _____

Which meeting is this with this counselor (e.g., first, second) _____

**Strengths/YCA Project
Observational Coding**

Codes

0=Absent
1=Minimal
2=Somewhat
3=Mostly/Always

Minus (-)=Does the opposite (i.e., instead of encouraging,
actively discourages)
N/A=Not Applicable

Strengths-Based Practice

Code	Asks about strengths:	
		Asks about youth's strengths, interests, and supports
		Draws from family's/youth's perspective
		Is persistent about having the youth/family generate/identify strengths
Observed:		
Code	Points out positives:	
		Provides encouragement when youth/parent does well
		Emphasizes youth/family/community strengths
Observed:		
Code	Uses strengths:	
		Uses strengths that are identified to build on
		Uses strengths as an incentive
		Uses strengths as a starting point for services/activities/competency development
		Uses strengths for their recommendations/plans
Observed:		
Code	Encourages youth/family involvement:	
		Encourages youth/family involvement in developing (and the beginning of implementing) a plan
		Encourages youth/family to do things for themselves (rather than doing for them)
		Encourages youth/family to develop competencies and skills
Observed:		

Code	Moves toward a positive plan:	
		Evidence of moving in the direction of a positive plan that includes strengths and competencies in addition to the standard juvenile justice requirements
		Includes the presence of positive activities in the plan, not just the absence of negative activities
Observed:		
Code	Uses reparation of harm as a learning process:	
		Encourages reconnection to the community
		Uses restitution/apologies in connection with guidance toward an understanding of why they are required and important
Observed:		
Code	Focuses on the future:	
		Spends minimal time on dealing with the charge/crime or dwelling on youth's mistakes
		Turns attention to future behavior and opportunities for positive change
Observed:		
Code	Individualized planning:	
		Responds to youth's individual interests and needs
		Flexible and creative in developing case/probation plans
Observed:		
Code	Encourages community connection:	
		Asks about existing connections, builds on those
		Identifies positive community activities, adults, and opportunities for youth to become involved
Observed:		

Code	Encourages development of youth's healthy identity:
	Helps identify positive peers
	Asks about youth's identity(ies)
	Asks about life goals and future goals for school and work
	Helps plan healthy activities
	Reinforces youth's current lack of substance use or current positive involvements
	Accepts youth's testing of new (safe) identity
	Helps parents to encourage/accept youth's positive identity
Observed:	

Cultural Competence

Code	Language:
	Does the parent/youth understand the language of the interview?
	Does the staff person assess the youth/family's understanding of the language?
	Does the youth/parent respond fully in the language?
	Is a translator present or is one arranged for a subsequent meeting?
	Are forms or other paperwork provided in the youth's/family's primary language?
Observed:	
(Yes or No)	Race/ethnicity:
	Does it appear that race/ethnicity of the youth/family and staff person was matched?
Observed:	

Code	Cultural sensitivity (to include sensitive to disability, age, economic background, family situation, individual needs, etc.):	
<i>Can't use N/A here</i>		Asks about the youth's/family's beliefs, customs, ideas, comfort level with services
		Tries to understand youth's/family's beliefs, customs, needs, values and works them into case plan when possible
		Provides or displays materials reflecting youth's/family's culture
Observed:		
Code	Comfortable with difference:	
		Patient in learning about or understanding areas that may be different
		Seems comfortable working with families of different backgrounds (disabilities, poverty, educational level, mental health or substance abuse issues, culture/race/ethnicity, gender, etc.)
		Treats all youth equally/fairly [non-verbal cues are important here]
Observed:		
Code	Age, gender, culture appropriateness:	
		Conversation, questions, plans, expectations are appropriate for specific youth
Observed:		

Nonverbal Cues and Interview Atmosphere

Code	Interview map/description:	
No Code. Check the appropriate box(es).		Strengths integrated throughout assessment/meeting
		Strengths addressed first, then accountability
		Accountability addressed first, then strengths
		Accountability only
		Other
Observed:		

Code	Positive staff qualities/actions:	
		Encouraging: nods, leans in, sits close
		Connecting: affirms, acts in friendly manner, shakes hands, expresses warmth and empathy
Observed:		
Code	Positive atmosphere:	
		Rapport developed
		Humor used
		Mood of interview is light
Observed:		
Code	Respectful atmosphere:	
		Asks if youth/family have questions, allows for questions
		Uses non-threatening, conversational tone of voice (avoids sounding patronizing, authoritarian)
		Calm manner
		Avoids lecturing
Observed:		
Code	Acknowledgement of youth and parent/guardian:	
		Focuses on youth while appropriately and respectfully involving parent/guardian/family members
		Interviews the youth alone when necessary to get youth's perspective
Observed:		
Code	Youth engagement:	
	Rate youth engagement by end of the interview on a scale of: 0=closed, refuses to share information verbally, or angry/hostile (Note: not participating isn't necessarily closed.) 1=minimal involvement or minimal cooperation 2=moderate involvement or moderate cooperation 3=fully engaged, shares information, willing to participate and agrees to plan	
Observed:		

Code	Parent/guardian engagement:
	Rate parent/guardian engagement by end of the interview on a scale of: 0=closed, refuses to share information verbally, or angry/hostile 1=minimal involvement/cooperation 2=moderate involvement/cooperation 3=fully engaged, shares information, willing to participate and agrees to plan
Observed:	

Notes (e.g., technical difficulties with tape): _____

Coder Comments (e.g., particularly great, difficult, or strong in one area but weak in another; useful as training piece; difficult to code & why. Give overall impression [as an average] plus comment on how arrived at overall impression.):

Appendix G. Counselor Feedback Form

YCA (Strengths)
Assessment Interview Feedback
from NPC Research

NPC Research would like to thank you for participating in the videotaping portion of the YCA/strengths assessment pilot. The videotapes provide us with critical information about the assessments that is not available through looking at paper assessments only. Such information includes body language, setting, rapport, positive and respectful atmosphere, and the integration of strengths into the interview.

Many counselors who were videotaped while doing assessments with youth requested feedback from NPC Research about the degree to which they were using a strengths-based approach. Although the tapes were not made with the intention of evaluating the counselors' use of a strengths-based approach, this information may be useful for those counselors who are interested in our general observations of their participation in this area. This feedback is provided to the individual counselors only; no one else will receive a copy.

To the Counselor:

NPC reviewed your videotape(s) of you doing an assessment interview with a youth in the juvenile department. You may or may not have been using the YCA questions. Following are comments about your use of a strengths-based approach while doing the assessment(s).

These are the components of your interview that seemed very strengths-based:

Components	Comments

Keeping in mind that only part of your assessment process was taped, and that parts using the YCA and/or a strengths-based approach in general may not have been included in the videotape, we did not see much evidence of the following strengths-based components. These are places where you could expand your repertoire of strengths tools:

Components	Comments

If you have questions, comments, or additional information about your experiences using the YCA and/or strengths approach that you would like to share, please contact Judy Weller at NPC Research by phone (503-243-2436) or by email (weller@npcresearch.com).

Appendix H. Key Stakeholder Interview Questions

YCA Stakeholder Interview Questions

2/12/03

NPC Research and _____ County are piloting a strengths-based assessment instrument and process in the County's Juvenile Department. They suggested we contact you, as a person they consider to be a key stakeholder, to ask you just a few questions about any impact you may have noticed as a result of this strengths-based pilot.

Your answers are confidential—your name will not be associated with your responses. Your responses will be compiled along with those of other stakeholders.

1. What do you know about the strengths-based pilot that is being implemented in your county's juvenile department?
2. Have you seen any changes or impact in any way? If so, when did you start to notice this?
3. Has it affected you or your work? In what way?
4. Has it affected any of the youth you come in contact with? In what way?
5. Do you see the reformation plan or case plan? What do you see reflected in that?

Appendix I. County Coding Template

Strengths Project Template Coding Form

County:

Assessment form includes information about strengths domains:

- Creating a healthy identity
- Connecting with family, peers, & community
- Repairing harm

FAA:

Does FAA reflect presence of YCA domains? (codes: 0=No, 1=Yes)

- Creating a healthy identity
- Connecting with family, peers, & community
- Repairing harm

Case plan form (includes probation contract and plan/reformation plan):

Does the case plan form reflect presence of YCA domains (codes: 0=No, 1=Yes)

- Creating a healthy identity
- Connecting with family, peers, & community
- Repairing harm

Is there a place to list or describe the youth's strengths? (codes: 0=No, 1=Yes)

Is there a place for strengths-based goals? (codes: 0=No, 1=Yes)

Is there a place for short-term competency area goals from the YCA? (codes: 0=No, 1=Yes)

Is there a place to note people in the youth's natural environment (who can help support youth)?
(codes: 0=No, 1=Yes)

Is there a place to note community connections (in addition to connections with family members)?
(codes: 0=No, 1=Yes)

Is there a place to record a youth's long-term goals? (codes: 0=No, 1=Yes)

Appendix J. Case Coding Template

Strengths Project Case Coding Form

County: _____
Staff ID: _____
Youth ID: _____

Assessment form used:

- YCA
- Other form (pilot county)
- Other form (comparison county)

Assessment gathered information about strengths domains: (codes: 0= no information, 1=a little information, 2=a lot of information)

- Creating a healthy identity
- Connecting with family, peers, & community
- Repairing harm

Supervision level/Plan type:

- Formal Accountability Agreement {informal}
- Case plan/Probation Contract and Plan/Reformation Plan {formal}
- Other [court appearance, case note, shelter reports]

Extent to which case plan reflects presence of YCA domains (codes: 0=not at all, 1=a little, 2=a lot)

- Creating a healthy identity
- Connecting with family, peers, & community
- Repairing harm

- Are any strengths-based goals present? [Are youth's skills/resources being tapped by case plan goals/objectives?] (codes: 0=No, 1=A little, 2=A lot)

- Does the case plan have a balance of strengths-based and accountability-based goals? (codes: 0=No, 1=Yes)

- Are activities in the case plan (referrals to services, goals, etc.) based on strengths identified in the YCA or intake assessment? (codes: 0=No, 1=Yes, 7=NA)
 - If no, are they based on any strengths? (codes: 0=No, 1=Yes)

- To what extent are short-term competency area goals from the YCA or intake assessment mapped directly into case objectives? (codes: 0=not at all, 1=a little, 2=a lot, 7=NA)

- To what extent does the case plan reflect individualized planning? (codes: 0=not at all, 1=a little, 2=a lot)

- Are people in the youth's natural environment (who can help support youth) [as identified in the YCA or intake assessment] evident in case notes or objectives? (codes: 0=No, 1=Yes, 7=NA)

- If no, are there any people who can help support the youth evident in case notes or objectives? (codes: 0=No, 1=Yes)
- Is there evidence that the case plan encouraged the youth to make community connections (in addition to connections with family members)? (codes: 0=No, 1=Yes)
- Is there evidence of a youth's long-term goals [from the YCA or intake assessment] in the case plan goals/objectives/conditions? (codes: 0=No, 1=Yes, 7=NA)
- If no, are any of the youth's long-term goals in the case plan? (codes: 0=No, 1=Yes)

Update forms, closing notes

- [Looking at the most recent update/progress note/or completion note]: To what extent do progress reports/updates reflect continued focus on strengths? (codes: 0=not at all, 1=a little, 2=a lot)
- If coded 1 or 2, were those strengths:
- The same as identified on the YCA or at intake?
 - New strengths that were identified or focused on later?

NPC Completion form/12-month update form:

When was form completed?

- Case closing: How long was case? _____ months
- 12-months
- [Coding of what case focused on] To what extent do activities described reflect 3 strengths domains? (codes: 0=not at all, 1=a little, 2=a lot)
 - Creating a healthy identity
 - Connecting with family, peers, & community
 - Repairing harm
- Does completion/update form reflect use of any strengths-based services/activities during the case? (codes: 0=No, 1=Yes)

Appendix K. Services Data Template

Appendix L. Closing/Completion Forms – Pilot and Comparison

Please fill this out at closing or on _____, whichever comes first.

CLOSING/COMPLETION (Pilot County)

Counselor Name _____ Date _____

Youth Name _____ County _____

Following are questions that NPC Research would like counselors/POs to answer as part of closing.

1. This form is being completed at:

Closing. Reason for closing _____

12-month follow-up

2. Did the YCA affect this case? (Was there anything that you did differently based on having used the YCA?)

No. Reason why not _____

Yes. This is how the YCA affected this case:

Provided information about youth or family that I wouldn't have had otherwise

Provided an idea for a service referral or activity

Helped establish rapport and/or a positive working relationship

Balanced strengths and accountability in the case plan

Other _____

3. How would you rate the youth's competencies at completion compared to at assessment?

Youth developed new skills or competencies

Youth built on existing competencies

No change in competencies

Youth's behavior or situation worsened

Other _____

4. Is there a particular competency/strength issue(s) you were working on?

No

Yes. We were working on _____

5. In what area(s) did the youth make improvements?

None or Not Applicable

Please return this completed form to Judy Weller; NPC Research; 5200 SW Macadam Ave., Suite 420; Portland, OR 97239 or fax it to her at 503-243-2454. If you have any questions, please contact Judy at 503-243-2436 or weller@npcresearch.com.

Please fill this out at closing or on _____ (date one year from assessment date), whichever comes first.

CLOSING/COMPLETION (Comparison County)

Counselor Name _____ Date _____

Youth Name _____ County: Marion

Following are questions that NPC Research would like counselors/POs to answer as part of closing.

1. This form is being completed at:

Closing. Reason for closing _____

12-month follow-up

2. How would you rate the youth's competencies at completion compared to at assessment?

Youth developed new skills or competencies

Youth built on existing competencies

No change in competencies

Youth's behavior or situation worsened

Other _____

3. Is there a particular competency/strength issue(s) you were working on?

No

Yes. We were working on _____

4. In what area(s) did the youth make improvements?

None or Not Applicable

Please return this completed form to Judy Weller; NPC Research; 5200 SW Macadam Ave., Suite 420; Portland, OR 97239 or fax it to her at 503-243-2454. If you have any questions, please contact Judy at 503-243-2436 or weller@npcresearch.com.

Appendix M. Training Materials

**The Youth Competency Assessment (YCA) Training Manual
is available on the NPC Research Web site
www.npcresearch.com
and
is available in a tabbed binder for \$30.00
(covers the cost of material, assembly, copying, & postage)**

**If you are interested in ordering a YCA Training Manual,
in arranging a youth competency (strength-based) training,
and/or if you would like additional information,
please contact:**

Juliette R. Mackin
Senior Research Associate
or
Judy M. Weller
Research Coordinator

Northwest Professional Consortium, Inc. (dba NPC Research)
5200 SW Macadam Avenue, Suite 420
Portland, Oregon 97239
503-243-2436
mackin@npcresearch.com
weller@npcresearch.com