



Formative Evaluation Lessons Learned
*Evaluating the Implementation of the
Youth Transitions Partnership in
Alameda County*

May 2020

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Introduction

This Formative Evaluation Lessons Learned template captures the major findings and lessons learned from the formative evaluation of the Youth Transitions Partnership (YTP) program in Alameda County, California. The YTP program is an intervention built around the core components of intensive case management and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). In partnership with Alameda County's Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), First Place for Youth (FPFY) served as the program provider, bringing overall case and systems coordination to the YTP program, and Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago served as the local evaluator, conducting a comprehensive formative evaluation which included implementing a CQI framework.

The findings below are organized by research question. When applicable, the evaluation team documents their recommendations for potential modifications in the YTP program or evaluation procedures.

Focus of the formative evaluation

The formative evaluation addressed questions about the extent to which process, quality, and capacity investments were deployed to support the installation and initial implementation of the YTP model as well as questions about program engagement and the short- and medium-term outcomes of program participants.

- RQ1: Does the administrative risk assessment process correctly identify members of the target population?
- RQ2: Are enrollment staff able to connect with and enroll youth?
- RQ3: Is the intensive case management component of the intervention being delivered as intended?
- RQ4: Is DBT being delivered to program participants as intended?
- RQ5: Is there evidence that program participants are progressing toward short- and medium-term outcomes?

Formative evaluation data sources

To answer these questions, the formative evaluation team collected and analyzed data from several sources:

- YTP Program Data – The evaluation team received monthly data extracts from Apricot, First Place for Youth's administrative data system. These data include youth demographics and services details as well as the assessments and action plans completed by the YTP Coaches in collaboration with the youth (Appendices A & B).
 - Assessment - The YTP assessment is meant to be administered by the youth's YTP Coach within 14 days of enrollment, every 6 months after enrollment, and at exit. It captures

information about youth strengths and needs and includes the DBT Ways of Coping Checklist (DBT-WCCL) (Appendix C). The initial and exit assessments also include the Outcome Rating Scales.¹

- Action plan - The action plan, which is completed by the YTP Coach in collaboration with the youth, captures the youth's short-term and long-term goals. The action plan is meant to be administered within 45 days of enrollment, at three months post-enrollment, and every 3 months thereafter. Each action plan will also include the Outcome Rating Scales.
- Enrollment tracking spreadsheet – The enrollment tracking spreadsheet, which is updated by the enrollment team at Alameda County DCFS, includes information on all youth screened for recruitment, their key recruitment event dates, and ultimate consent decisions. The evaluation team receives quarterly updates of this spreadsheet.
- Alameda County's child welfare administrative data – Individual child-level child welfare data from California's Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS) are available upon request via the Alameda County Social Service Agency. These data can be linked to the YTP program data via a unique youth ID. The evaluation team has access to these data through DCFS as well as through the Chapin Hall Multistate Foster Care Data Archive (FCDA).²
- DBT Skills Group Integrity Checklists³ – These checklists are completed by expert DBT consultants once per module and serve as a DBT fidelity measure. DBT sessions are scored on their technical skills, relational skills, and content.
- Qualitative data – The evaluation team collected qualitative data via youth focus groups and interviews with coaches, administrators, and child welfare workers (CWWs).
 - Coach and Administrator interviews - During early 2017, interviews were conducted with two administrators and the three YTP coaches employed at that time. During the spring of 2019, all five current coaches were interviewed. These interviews covered the topics of program implementation, program services, youth engagement, and DBT
 - Youth focus groups – Youth focus groups were conducted annually in 2017 through 2019. A total of 34 youth who were active in YTP at the time of the focus groups participated.

¹ Outcome Rating Scales were adapted from First Place for Youth's My First Place outcome rating scales whose development were based on the Self-Sufficiency Matrix. Each outcome scale includes several benchmarks which describe the young person's status at each level. These benchmarks are used to measure the progress along a dimension and are scored on a scale of 1 to 10: 1-2 In-Crisis; 3-4 Vulnerable; 5-6 Safe; 7-8 Stable; and 9-10 Thriving. Snohomish County Self-Sufficiency Taskforce. (2010, August 1). *Self Sufficiency Matrix: An Assessment and Measurement Tool Created through a Collaborative Partnership of the Human Services Community in Snohomish County*. Snohomish County, WA: Author.

² The [FCDA](#) is a longitudinal database developed and maintained by the Center for State Child Welfare Data at Chapin Hall. It contains decades of State data on millions of children in over two dozen states who have spent time in out-of-home placements.

³ McCay, E., Carter, C., & Aiello, A. (2016). DBT to Strengthen Resilience in Street-involved Youth: DBT Integrity Checklists. Unpublished.

McCay, E., Carter, C., Aiello, A., Quesnel, S., Howes, C., & Johansson, B. (2016). Toward treatment integrity: Developing an approach to measure the treatment integrity of a dialectical behavior therapy intervention with homeless youth in the community. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, 30(5), 568-574.

Participants were generally highly engaged in YTP. For example, all the 2019 participants had attended over 50 percent of the DBT sessions to which they were invited, and their average DBT attendance rate for the DBT sessions to which they were invited was 84%.

- CWW interviews - As a part of the evaluation's efforts to better understand YTP's enrollment process and program services, interviews were conducted in 2017 with CWWs who had been involved in the YTP enrollment process. Seventeen CWWs who had some experience with the YTP enrollment process were contacted with an interview request. - These CWWs may or may not have had a youth enroll in the YTP program. Of those seventeen, five agreed to participate in a short (i.e., 15 minute) interview. Interviews focused on the CWW's experiences with the YTP program, enrollment, and program services.
- FPFY employment records - Employment data on the YTP Coaches were provided by FPFY Human Resources and are observed through September 30, 2019.

Formative evaluation sample

YTP serves youth in foster care, ages 14-20, with multiple risk factors for experiencing homelessness, who are currently placed out-of-home care in Alameda County. Risk factors include being at least 14 years old at entry into care, spending at least 18 months in care, experiencing placement instability which was defined as a total of at least 5 placements ever or at least 3 runaway episodes, having mental health indicators in their administrative data records, being currently placed in congregate care, and being a parent. Youth are eligible for enrollment up to their 20th birthday. This ensures that youth will benefit from a full year of participation in the program before turning 21. Youth who leave the YTP program prior to graduation may reenter the program at a later date prior to their 20th birthday.

The YTP program began enrolling youth in March 2016, and 98 youth had enrolled as of April 30, 2019. This includes 11 youth who re-enrolled after exiting. All these youth are included in the formative evaluation which covers program activity through May 31, 2019. The number of youth included in the denominator when calculating time-sensitive measures below is adjusted as appropriate

Findings & Suggested Modifications

The findings section is organized by research question (RQ). Findings are presented for each research question along with suggested modifications and potential usability tests to see if the modification addresses the concern.

RQ1: Does the administrative risk assessment process correctly identify members of the current youth in foster care target population?

Yes, the administrative risk assessment properly identified potentially eligible youth. Below we describe how youth currently in foster care were correctly identified.

During the initial planning phase, a cluster analysis was conducted using administrative data for Alameda County youth in foster care who turned 18 between 2006 and 2010.⁴ Youth with a higher cumulative risk score were statistically more likely to experience subsequent homelessness than those with a lower cumulative risk score.⁵ Homelessness was broadly defined as receipt of a housing or homeless service documented in HMIS or identified as homeless in local public assistance data. Specifically, 45% of youth with four or more risk factors experienced homelessness before age 21 compared to 27% of youth who had three or fewer risk factors. Based on these findings, the YTP planning team identified the need to screen for eligibility for the intervention using an administrative risk assessment.

Each risk factor is scored as a +1 if it is documented in the administrative database (Table 1). Youth placed in Transitional Housing Placement-Plus-Foster Care (THP+FC) receive a protective factor score of -1 because youth in THP+FC receive some form of intensive case management services.⁶ Youth must have a score of at least +2 to eligible for YTP.

⁴ Administrative data used came from California's child welfare system CWS/CMS, Housing Management Information System (HMIS), public assistance data, juvenile probation data, behavioral health data, First Place for Youth, and the National Student Clearinghouse.

⁵ Risk factors examined included time in care, placement instability, mental health, placement in congregate care, parenting status, probation status, and receipt of public assistance.

⁶ Many housing supports for current and former youth in foster care at-risk of homelessness in Alameda County fall under the Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP). Transitional Housing Placement-Plus-Foster Care (THP+FC) provides supportive housing to youth age 18 to 21 who are in foster care.

Table 1. Current Youth in foster care Risk Factors

Risk Factor	Criteria
Age of Entry	Youth entered foster care at the age of 14 or older
Time in care	Youth in the target population age range who have been in foster care for 18 months or longer
Placement instability	Youth has experienced a total of at least 5 placements ever or at least 3 runaway episodes
Mental health	Child welfare administrative data indicates at least one of the following: takes psychiatric medication, takes any medication for a mental health concern, documented behavioral health need, or changed placement due to a Katie A. reason ⁷
Placement in congregate care	Youth currently placed in group care
Parenting	Youth currently identified as receiving an “infant care supplement” associated with the payment for their foster care placement

Potentially eligible youth in foster care may also be identified by CWWs. The Enrollment Specialist has many conversations with CWWs during the enrollment process to confirm a youth’s eligibility and best method of contact. During these conversations, CWWs may alert the Enrollment Specialists to other potentially eligible youth on their caseload with risk factors that are not captured in the administrative data, such as domestic violence, history of pregnancies, substance abuse, at risk of losing extended foster care status, and commercial sexual exploitation. Each of these risk factors is scored +1, and if a youth’s total risk score is at least +2 with these factors included, the youth is deemed eligible for the program and moved forward in the enrollment process.

Suggested modifications

The evaluation finds that the administrative risk assessment is being conducted in a timely manner and is identifying the expected population of eligible youth. No modifications are recommended at this time.

RQ1.1: How often is the administrative assessment being conducted?

Initially, the administrative risk assessment was run approximately every quarter. Between February 2016 and April 2019, the risk assessment was run 14 times. . The maximum time between assessments has been 6 months. Of the 469 14 to 20-year-olds in Alameda who were assessed between February 2016 and April 2019, 258 (55%) were identified as eligible for the program as of May 31, 2019. Since April 2019, the administrative risk assessment has been run monthly.

⁷ Katie A. v. Bonta is a federal class action lawsuit filed on behalf of California youth in foster care and children at risk of out-of-home placement. The Katie A. lawsuit seeks to improve access to effective mental health care and reduce potential trauma from residential settings by ensuring that California’s children and youth at risk of or in the foster care system can receive intensive mental health services in their own homes and communities. An additional intention of the lawsuit is to provide intensive mental health treatment in the home before behaviors escalate beyond the family’s ability to cope so that fewer children will enter foster care. Children may be deemed a Katie A. Subclass members if they are full-scope Medi-Cal eligible children/youth up to age 21 who: 1. Have an open child welfare services case; 2. Meet the medical necessity criteria for Specialty Mental Health Services; AND 3a. Are currently in or being considered for wraparound, TFC, specialized care rate due to behavioral health needs or other intensive EPSDT services, including but not limited to TBS or crisis stabilization/interventions OR 3b. Are currently in or being considered for group home (RCL 10 or above), a psychiatric hospital or 24-hour mental health treatment facility or has experienced three or more placements within 24 months due to behavioral health needs.

Suggested modifications

The quarterly timing of the administrative assessment was found to be too infrequent; it caused peaks and valleys in the number of youth active in the enrollment process. Beginning in April 2019, the administrative risk assessment began to be conducted monthly to allow for a more stable flow of potentially eligible youth into the enrollment process. No other modifications are suggested.

RQ1.2: Is the administrative risk assessment identifying youth with the expected risk factors?

Yes, most identified youth (69%) had a risk score of 2 or 3, with the two most common risk factors being mental health challenges and age of entry into foster care.

The chart below looks at the total risk scores of the 381 youth who were assessed between February 2016 and September 2018 by the year in which they were identified by the administrative assessment. Total risk scores ranged from 0 to 6. The distribution of risk scored was somewhat different each year but most of the youth (69%) had risk scores of 2 or 3, and almost all (87%) had risk scores between 2 and 4.

Figure 1. Total Risk Scores by Year of Administrative Assessment

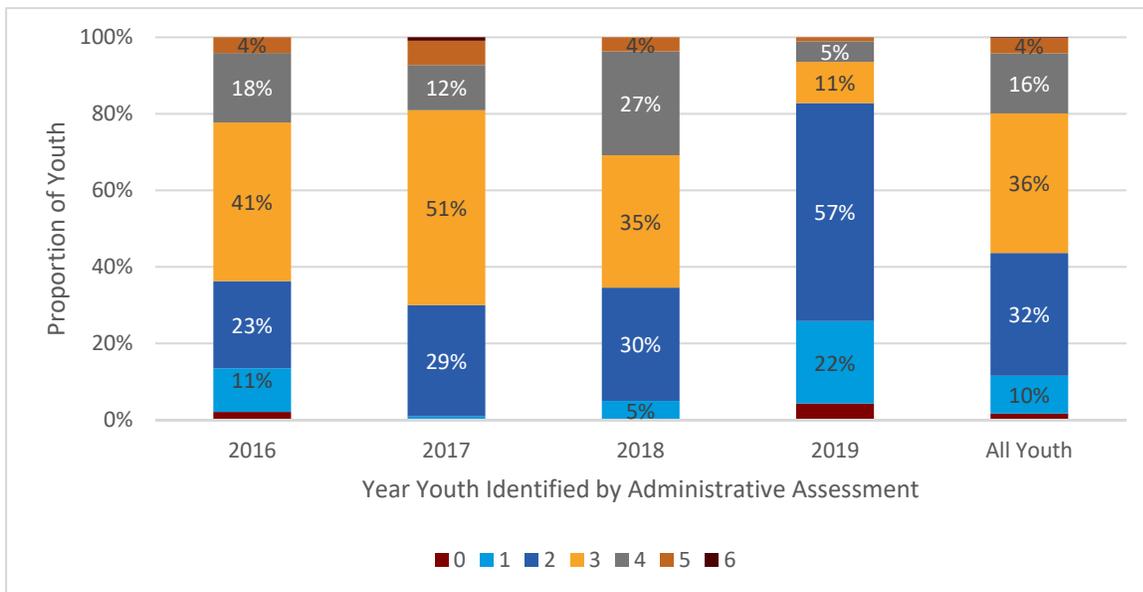
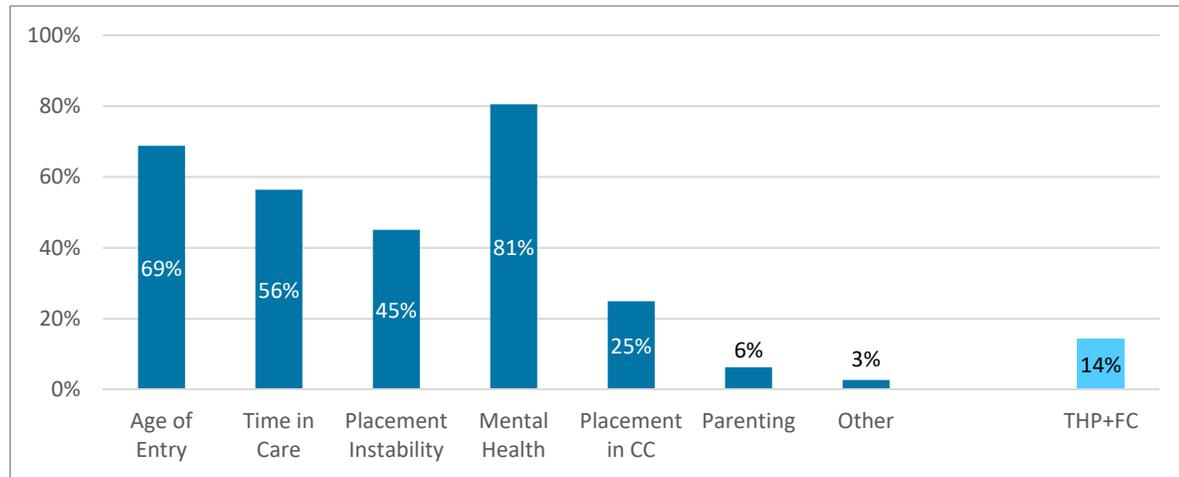


Figure 2 below shows the proportion of the 381 youth assessed between February 2016 and September 2018 with each risk or protective factor. The most common risk factor was mental health challenges (81%). Other common risk factors included older age of entry into foster care (69%), in care for at least 18 months at the time of the administrative assessment (56%), and placement instability (45%). Placement in congregate care (25%) and parenting (as indicated in the child welfare administrative data) (6%) were the least common. Also uncommon was the protective factor of being in a THP+FC placement.⁸

⁸ The THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project is a project of the John Burton Foundation with the goal of reducing homelessness among current and former youth in foster care in California by improving access to safe, affordable and supportive housing. The THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project works to improve access to two vital programs in

Figure 2. Proportion of Potentially Eligible Youth with Each Risk/Protective Factor



Suggested modifications

The administrative risk assessment is currently effectively identifying potentially eligible youth, and the overall process is sufficient. No modifications are suggested.

RQ1.3: How does the risk assessment profile compare with the baseline profile of the youth enrolled?

When comparing the risk factors of all assessed youth compared to just the youth who enrolled in YTP, we observe a similar risk profile – suggesting that youth’s lack of persistence in the enrollment process is not due to high risk scores or for reasons related to the risk factors.

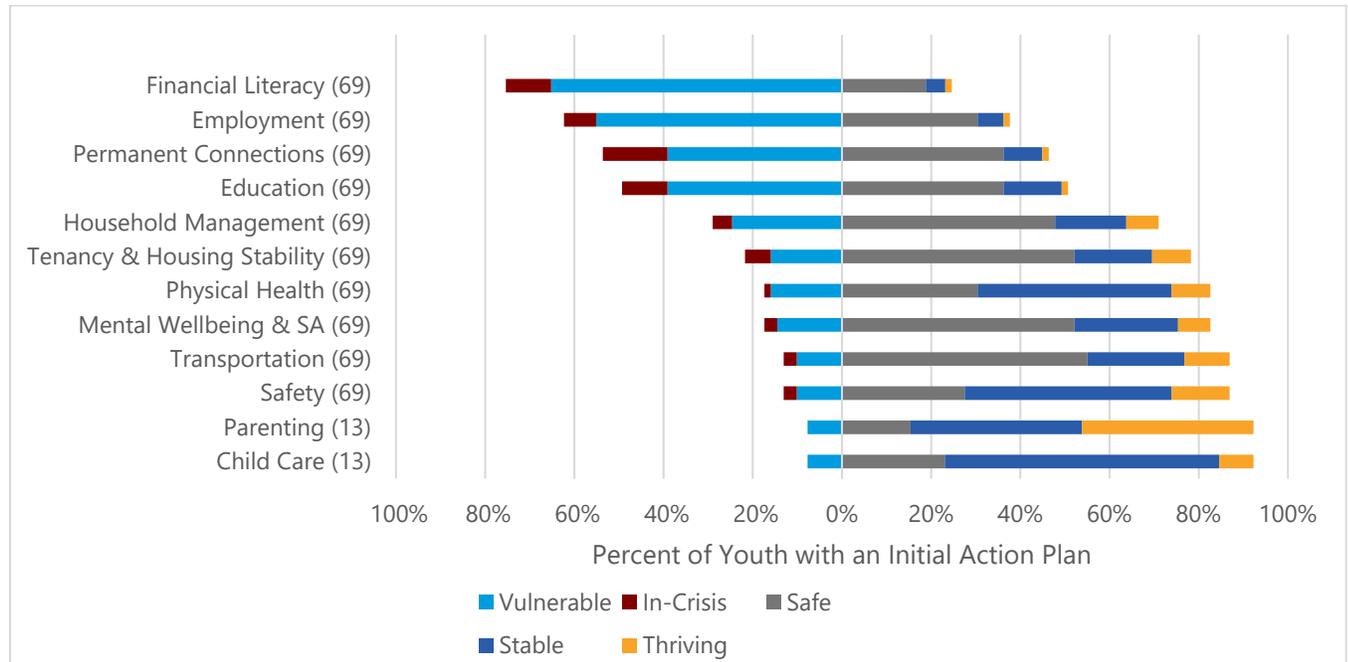
Of the 381 assessed youth, 90 had enrolled in the YTP program as of May 31, 2019. The total risk scores and risk profiles of the enrolled youth is very similar to Figure 1 and Figure 2. Twenty-three percent of the youth had a risk score of 2, 49% had a risk score of 3, and 19% had a risk score of 4. Because youth with scores of 0 or 1 were dropped in the enrollment process, the proportion of youth with each risk factor increased but the most common risk factors were still mental health (87%), older age at entry (71%), placement instability (52%) and longer time in care (52%). The similarity in risk factor profile between assessed and enrolled youth suggests that youth are not dropping off the enrollment process due to high risk scores or for reasons related to the risk factors.

Another way to look at the risk profile of enrolled youth is to review data from the baseline Outcome Rating Scale scores captured at (or, close to) intake. Of the 98 youth who enrolled in the YTP program by April 30, 2019, 69 received at least one set of Outcome Rating Scale scores. For those 69 youth, their first Outcome Rating Scale scores are presented in Figure 3 below. Although mental health was the most

California - THP+FC, which provides supportive housing to youth age 18 to 21 who are in foster care, and THP-Plus, which provides 24 months of supportive housing to former youth in foster care, age 18 to 24.

common risk factor among youth who enrolled in YTP, 17% were rated as being In-Crisis or Vulnerable and 52% were rated as being Safe in the Mental Health and Substance Abuse domain.

Figure 3. Proportion of Baseline Outcome Rating Scale Scores by Outcome Domain



A profile of the demographic characteristics of the 98 youth is included as Appendix D. Many of the demographic characteristics observed were anticipated by the risk scores in the administrative assessment. In Appendix D, we can see that many of the youth:

- Experienced a high level of placement instability - 77% of the youth have moved through 4 or more foster care placements, and 46% have moved through 7 or more.
- Resided in stable housing at the time of intake – 74% of youth reported being in stable housing with 47% in a foster care placement. Only 7 youth reported being in unstable housing at the time of intake.
- Identified as female – 44% of youth identified as female, 32% identified as male, 1% identified as transgender, and 23% were unknown at the time of intake.
- Identified as a youth of color – 35% of youth identified as African American, 15% as bi- or multi-racial, and 9% as Mexican or Latinx. Information about race/ethnicity was not collected from 31% of youth at intake.

Suggested Modifications

The evaluation finds that the administrative risk assessment is identifying the expected population of eligible youth and the youth's overall risk profile does not vary significantly from identification to enrollment. No modifications are recommended at this time.

RQ2: Are enrollment staff and stakeholders able to connect with and enroll youth?

As part of our usability test around enrollment, the evaluation team interviewed key players in the enrollment process for the current youth in foster care target population. These interviews led to an initial mapping of the enrollment process from eligibility determination to enrollment (Appendix E – Enrollment Mapping). This process mapping, alongside continuing discussions with the current enrollment staff, helped illuminate the complex pathways around enrollment and the need for a consistently high level of engagement. Due to the time intensive nature of the enrollment process, we identified the need for at least a full-time Enrollment Specialist. This Enrollment Specialist was hired as of May 2017. An additional part time Enrollment Specialist was hired in July 2017.

The sub-questions below explore the topic of youth enrollment as it relates to various stakeholders: YTP Coaches, child welfare workers (CWWs), Enrollment Specialists, and youth.

RQ2.1: How are YTP Coaches and CWWs engaged in the enrollment process?

During interviews, YTP Coaches described the enrollment process similarly and felt that their engagement in the process was a positive one – particularly their attendance at the enrollment meetings. Additionally, the CWWs we spoke to were largely positive about their role in the enrollment process. However, some felt that communication with youth about enrollment could be improved. Detailed feedback from the YTP Coaches and CWWs is included below.

YTP Coaches

All interviewed coaches described the process similarly: introduction to the SSA enrollment lead/CWW, youth receives general program information, coach provides more specific program information, and the coach/SSA enrollment lead/CWW field questions from the youth about the YTP program.

One coach said that coaches had not initially been part of the enrollment process, but there was a shift in practice, after which coaches began going to the initial meetings and interacting with CWWs at that stage. They considered this a positive and useful change.

Whoever's enrolling that person, and I think it was extremely helpful because if the youth had any questions specific to the program we could answer that directly. Also being able to meet with your coach is really helpful, not just like, "Hey, someone's gonna call you that's gonna be working with you."

That same coach (and another one) discussed the development of a new one-page handout for youth that illustrated the main three components of the program in a concise, youth-friendly manner. Having the YTP Coach present at the enrollment meeting with the youth and distributing the one-page document to youth were integrated as permanent elements of the enrollment process after their introduction in 2017. During CQI meetings, both the YTP Program Supervisor and the YTP Coach Supervisor have described the value of the Coach's presence at the enrollment meeting. Coaches also spoke of the benefit of attending enrollment meetings and working with the Enrollment Specialist. One coach said:

We had a good way of working together, [the Enrollment Specialist] would first speak to the youth, and explain [their] role and talk about the opportunity of the program, and I would come and explain the specifics and what the commitment would be and

leave room for the youth to ask questions or to just express if they feel like that's a good fit for them.

Child Welfare Workers

Four out of the five CWWs spoke positively about the enrollment process. One CWW appreciated how easy it was because it is usually a struggle to enroll youth in services. One CWW who had not had enough engagement in the process declined to comment.

Two CWWs reported no issues in communicating about the program with youth, while three CWWs flagged communication during the enrollment process as a challenge. Two of those CWWs specifically mentioned the need for better communication about the program's DBT component so that it was clear to youth that DBT is a required part of the program. One CWW mentioned that written materials about the program that could be shared with youth would have been helpful during the enrollment process.

These findings should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size and the self-selection of the CWWs. It is quite possible that CWWs who were with less enthusiastic about or engaged with the program did not volunteer to be interviewed. During recruitment, several CWWs stated that time constraints or lack of knowledge of the YTP program prevented them from volunteering.

All CWWs who commented on the enrollment process spoke positively of the general process. However, some felt that communication with youth about enrollment could be improved. These comments were echoed by youth who participated in the 2017, 2018, and 2019 focus groups. These youth originally heard about YTP through a variety of channels, including foster parents, lawyers, social workers, YTP representatives who were conducting outreach by phone, and advertisements on BART. Some focus group participants did not have a clear understandings of what YTP was about and what would be expected of them when they signed up for the program.

And then [they] explained everything about YTP. And like, the way [they] kinda explained it was more so, like, similar to how my lawyer explained it. But when I came and experienced it in real life, it was not how they explained it.

Clear expectations were particularly lacking with respect to Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT). Focus group participants wished they had had more information about DBT at the onset.

I wish I would've known that these meetings were mandatory. ...I found out after I came to the first meeting, and I didn't come for the rest of the module. They told me that I would have to attend the next module or else I would be kicked out.

Although some focus group participants wished they had received more information about the program – and especially about DBT – before enrolling, others felt they had been given sufficient detail to make an informed decision.

The CWWs identified several barriers to youth engagement in YTP including: a negative coach relationship, emotional wellbeing and maturity, time commitments, disinterest in group therapy, childcare, distance, lack of other supports, and language and cultural differences. The CWWs who were interviewed received mixed reviews from youth about the YTP program. To make the program better, the CWWs suggested including improved language and cultural resources, improved communication during

enrollment about DBT, relaxed eligibility criteria, and more lenient inactive criteria – some CWWs felt that the current rule of marking a youth inactive after three weeks of no contact with their Coach was too strict.

Suggested modifications

Based on the feedback provided by the CWWs - and the sentiments echoed in the youth focus groups – we recommend modifications to the communications youth receive during the enrollment process. One potential avenue for change is to elevate youth’s voice in that process. This could be done by inviting youth who have had experience in YTP to share their experiences with the potentially-eligible youth either in-person or through a short video production. Additionally, we suggest reaching out again to CWWs to inquire about their impressions of the enrollment process and the YTP program in general.

RQ2.2: What proportion of youth move through each key enrollment event?

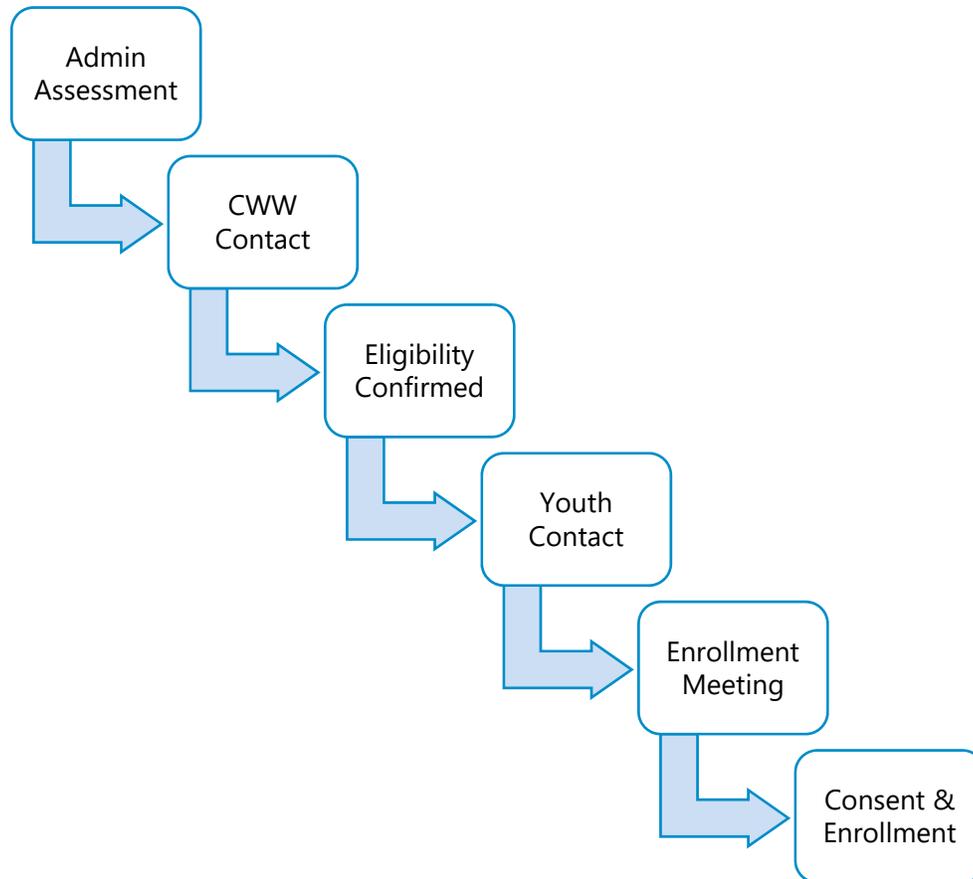
Almost all of the youth identified by administrative assessment progress through having their eligibility confirmed (97%), and ultimately, a third of the potentially-eligible youth went on to enroll in YTP. Contacting the youth directly and having the youth attend the enrollment meeting were the two steps in the enrollment process where the Enrollment Specialist was least likely to engage youth. The Enrollment Specialist successfully contacted about three quarters of the eligible youth, and 68% of the youth who were contacted went on to have an Enrollment Meeting. Almost all the youth (95%) who had an enrollment meeting chose to enroll.

Enrollment Process Data

To address the question of how many youth move from one enrollment event to the next, we focus below on one cohort of 110 youth who were identified by the administrative assessment in 2017. Their enrollment activity was observed through a censor date of May 31, 2019. This window allows for at least 17 months of enrollment activity from date of identification by the administrative assessment to be observed. Additional analysis comparing enrollment trajectories and timing longitudinally will be presented later. This 2017 cohort is meant to provide a general picture of a youth’s enrollment trajectory. Figure 4 presents the key events in the enrollment process.⁹

⁹ In discussions about the enrollment process, we also identified additional data elements that are needed to better track both how long the enrollment process takes and where in the enrollment process youth stop progressing (Figure 4). These data elements were incorporated into an enrollment tracking spreadsheet and have been in use since May 2017.

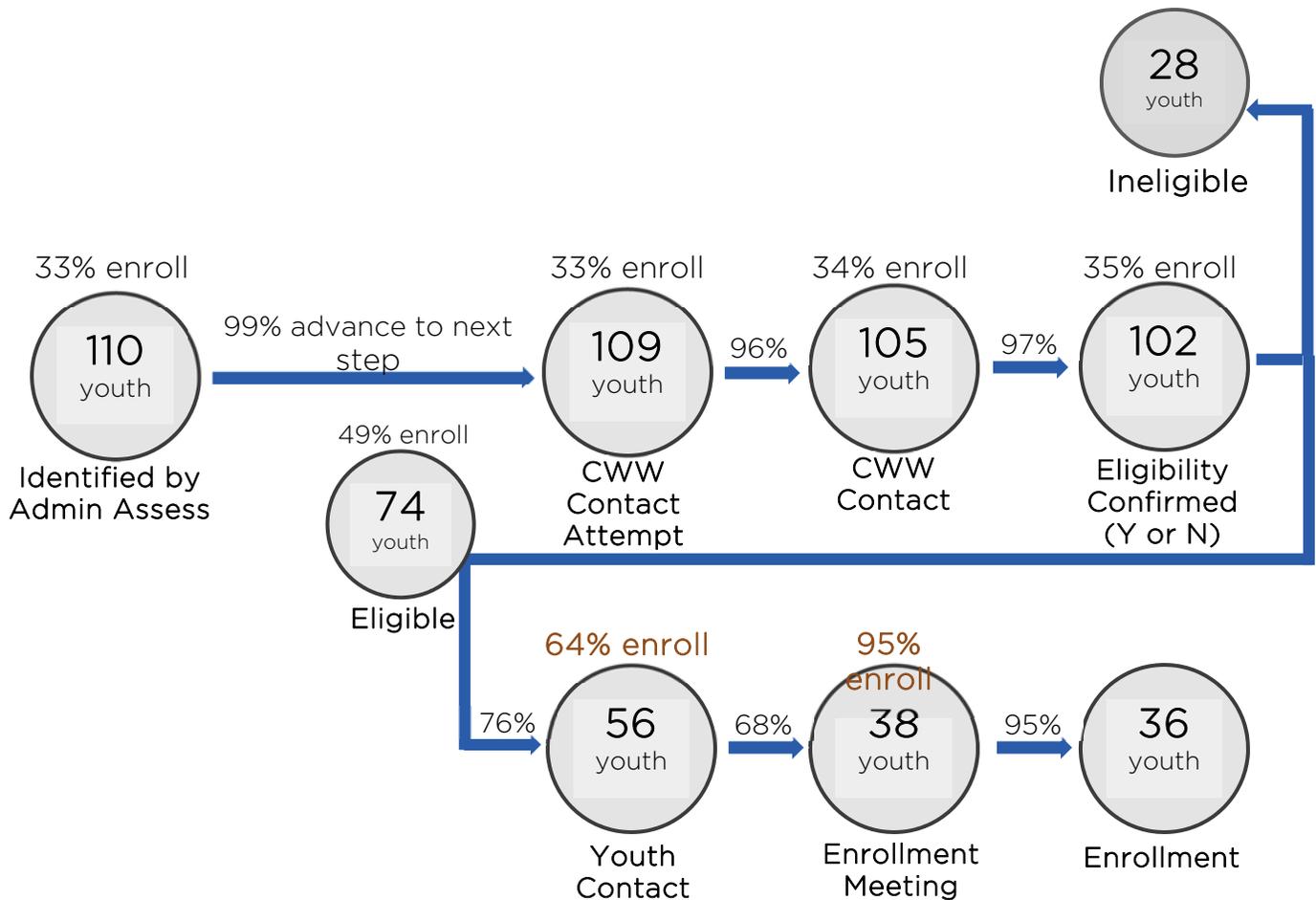
Figure 4. Enrollment Process – Key Events



Enrollment Process Trajectory

The administrative risk assessment uses child welfare administrative data to identify youth ages 14 to 20 who are currently placed in Alameda County and have multiple risk factors (Table 1). An Enrollment Specialist attempts to contact the CWWs for those youth to discuss the program and to confirm the potential participant’s eligibility. The Enrollment Specialist contacts the youth whose eligibility has been confirmed, sometimes through a collateral contact, to explain the program and schedule a meeting with the Enrollment Specialist, the youth, and the YTP Coach from FPFY who will be assigned to that youth. During that enrollment meeting, youth may agree to enroll in the program and participate in the evaluation, and if so, there is a warm hand off to the youth’s YTP Coach. This jumpstarts initial engagement and begins to lay the groundwork for the coach-youth relationship (Figure 4).

Figure 5. Enrollment Trajectory for Youth Identified by Administrative Assessment in 2017



Youth Enrollment Trajectories

Because the enrollment process can be complex and requires a high level of engagement, it is important to understand how youth flow through the process and the key junctures at which they are more or less likely to continue advancing towards enrollment. The following analysis is based on the enrollment tracking data for the 110 youth identified as potentially eligible in 2017.¹⁰

Figure 5 shows that almost all of the youth identified by administrative assessment progress through having their eligibility confirmed (97%), and ultimately, a third of the 110 went on to enroll in YTP.

¹⁰ Of the youth identified via the administrative assessment in 2017, 97% were identified in May 2017 or later, after the enrollment specialist was hired, and all 110 youth had the additional date and data fields completed.

Suggested modifications

Given that currently only approximately 49% of confirmed-eligible youth go on to enroll in YTP, additional efforts could be made to increase youth uptake of the intervention. In addition to the communication suggestions from the previous section, additional analysis could be done to understand the reasons youth are either not contacting the Enrollment Specialist, or, if contacted, not attending an enrollment meeting. With greater understanding of the barriers to these steps in the process, targeted modifications could be considered and made.

RQ2.3: How long does it take for enrollment staff to move through the enrollment process from initial child welfare worker contact to enrollment meeting?

The proportion of youth progressing to each key enrollment event and the amount of time it takes for them to do so has varied over time. Overall, the median length of time from being identified on the administrative assessment to enrollment was 80 days or about 2.5 months.

One of the concerns arising from the enrollment process discussions in 2016 was that there was too much time between key events in the enrollment process and that this could potentially decrease the likelihood that youth would advance towards consent and program enrollment. Table 2 shows duration in days from identification through the administrative assessment to key events for all 110 youth identified by the administrative assessment in 2017. Their enrollment activity was observed through May 31, 2019.

Table 2. Duration in Days from Administrative Assessment to Key Enrollment Events for Youth Identified by the Administrative Assessment in 2017

Enrollment Event	<i>Duration in Days from Administrative Assessment</i>			
	Mean	Median	Min	Max
CWW Contact (n=105)	24	10	0	143
Youth Contact (n=56)	115	66	0	505
Enrollment Meeting (n=38)	135	80	7	505

The proportion of youth progressing to each key enrollment event and the amount of time it takes for them to do so has varied over time. Figures 6 through 8 show the cumulative proportion of youth who progress to key enrollment events at 1 week, 1 month, 3 months, months, 12 months, 18 months and 24 months. Since the enrollment activity is observed through May 31, 2019, not all cohorts of youth have had a chance to be observed at each point in time.

Figure 6 shows that from 2017 onward (after the hiring of the Enrollment Specialist), contacts with the CWW happened quickly. For youth identified in 2019, the Enrollment Specialist had successfully contacted almost all of the CWWs within a month of the youth being identified by the administrative assessment.

Figure 6. Cumulative Proportion of Youth Progressing to a CWW Contact by Entry Cohort and Time Period

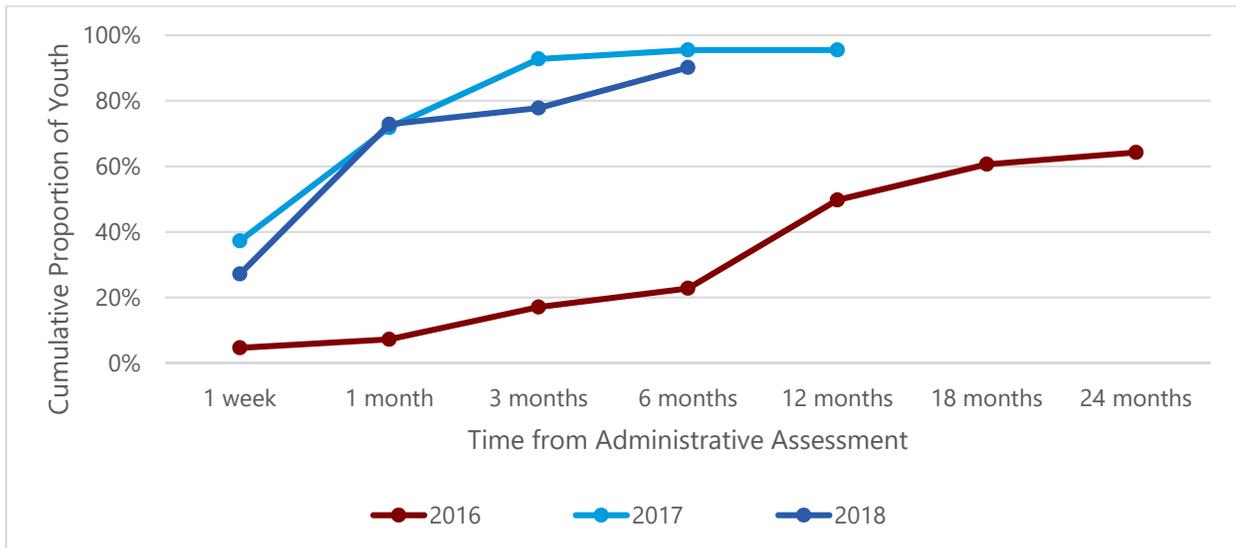
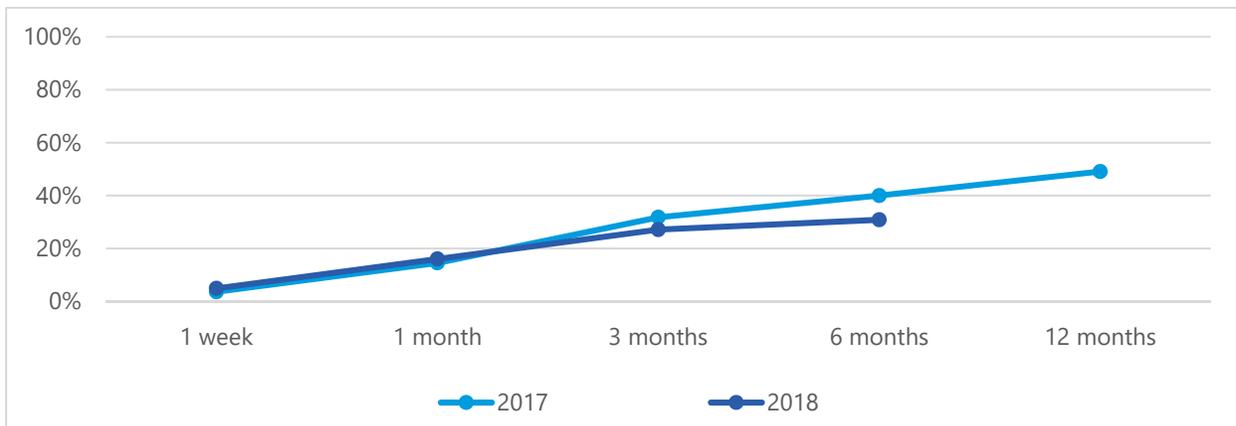


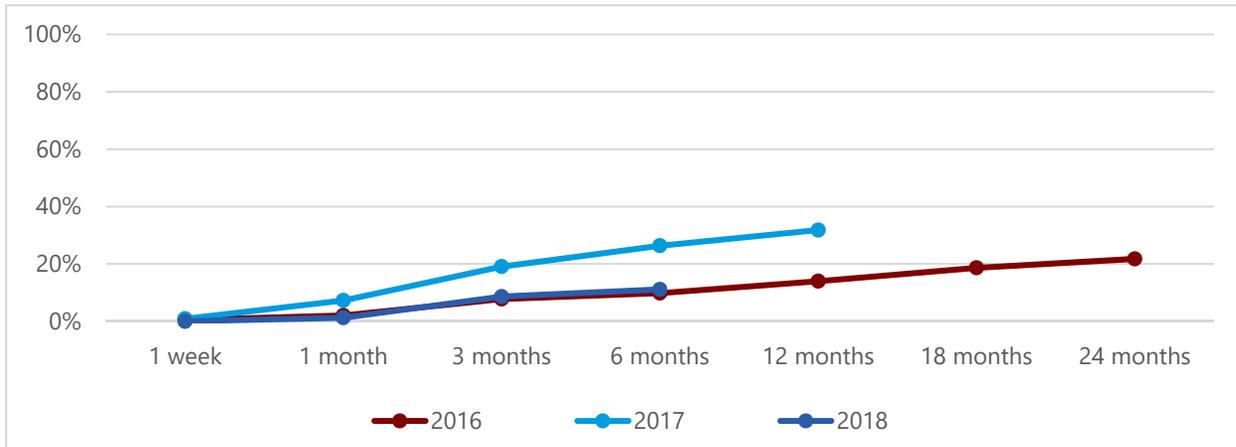
Figure 7 shows the cumulative proportion of youth who had contact with the Enrollment Specialist. About half of the youth identified in 2017 and 2018 had a successful contact with the Enrollment Specialist within a year. The 2016 cohort is not included because youth contact was not tracked reliably prior to 2017.

Figure 7. Cumulative Proportion of Youth Progressing to a Youth Contact by Entry Cohort and Time Period



Finally, Figure 8 shows the cumulative proportion of youth who attended an Enrollment Meeting. Both the rate at which enrollment meetings occurred and the likelihood of their occurring within a year was substantially higher for the 2017 cohort (32%) than for the 2016 cohort (14%). However, the 2018 cohort looks more like the 2016 cohort than the 2017 cohort, at least through the first six months. Only 11% of the 2018 cohort attended an enrollment meeting within 6 months compared to 26% of the 2017 cohort.

Figure 8. Cumulative Proportion of Youth Progressing to an Enrollment Meeting by Entry Cohort and Time Period



Suggested Modifications

The proportion of youth who attended an enrollment meeting was lower for the 2018 cohort than for the in 2017 cohort. Discussions with the Enrollment Specialist may shed some light on possible reasons for this decline. Progress on this issues and the other addresses under RQ2 could be monitored by continued analysis of enrollment data and additional youth focus groups to gather their feedback on the enrollment process.

RQ3: Are intensive case management components of the intervention being delivered as intended?

One of the core components of the YTP intervention is intensive case management and case coordination provided by a YTP Coach. Each youth is assigned a YTP Coach who has a maximum caseload of 13 youth. The coach works with the youth to assess strengths and needs, set and provide assistance for meeting goals, build support networks, and provide case management. YTP Coaches strive to develop strong relationships with youth on their caseload as well as with caregivers and providers. In the section below, we examine various aspects of the intensive case management component of YTP to evaluate whether it is being delivered as intended.

Youth General Feedback on the Coaching Element of YTP

We asked the youth themselves how they felt about and experienced their relationship with their coach. Most focus group participants reported an overall feeling of comfort with their coaches, and a few participants discussed the interpersonal relationships they had with them. A couple of young people felt more indifferent about the coaching experience than others, but those who liked their coaches were emphatic about the quality and benefit of the relationship.

In the focus groups with youth, the participants had a lot to say –primarily positive – about their experiences with their coaches and the intensive case management component of the program.

My worker is pretty much like my best friend. I can tell [them] anything.

Yeah. I have a good relationship with [them]. I wish I can take [them] to [city name] with me when I move for college.

Most participants articulated changes to their coaching relationships over time, typically along a spectrum of comfort and openness with one youth noting, "I feel like I'm more open to [them] now that I know [them] better." Another youth articulated the shift this way:

When I first met my coach...I was like, 'Okay, [they're] cool, but I'm not gonna tell [them] all my business.' ... And then, like I said, [they were] bringing up stuff, and I'm like, 'Oh, [they're] really listening.' So, now I'm more close with [them], but [they're] like, the [person] who works here for the [DBT] group now, so I have to get used to that, too.

Overall, the quality which youth came back to most often when describing the positive elements of their YTP Coach was authenticity. A number of focus group participants also remarked on how the relationships they have with their coaches differ from the relationships they have with other service providers.

They actually [expletive] care. Like, all the people I've met that are coaches here actually [expletive] care. And you can tell if someone's caring is genuine or not.

With most workers or other people in general is that they just kinda treat you like a case, probably, or whatever, so they just come over and they'll be like, 'Oh, are you okay?...But like, they'll just say it, but they don't actually mean it.

Focus group participants reported appreciating being given second chances when they violated program rules.

[They were] telling me about the rules. Like, they give you a couple of chances to get your act together to be in this program. And to me, that means a lot to me, because you know, we all have issues, we all have stuff going on.

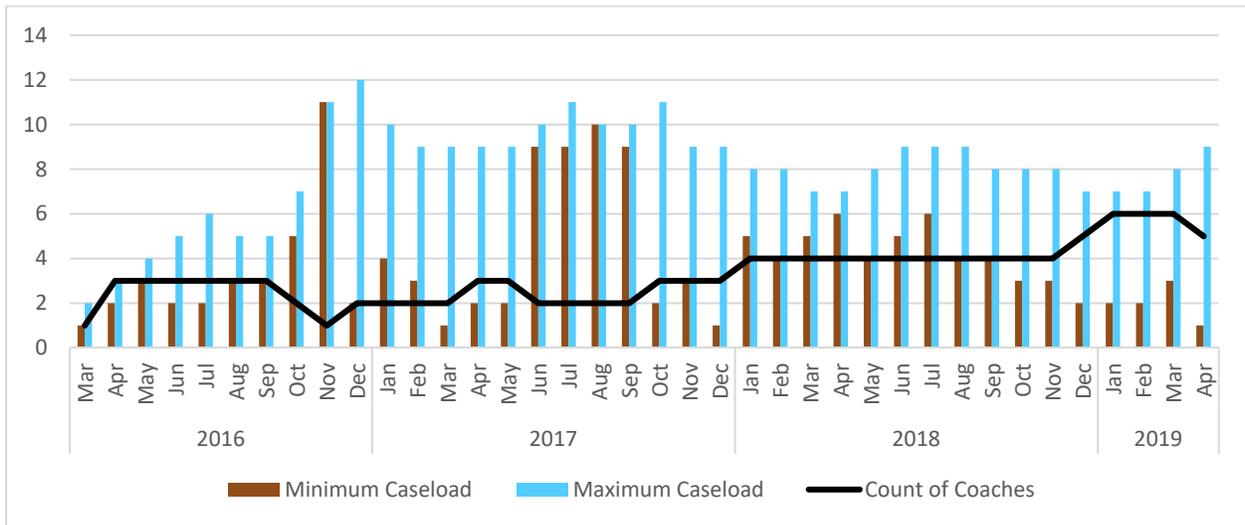
The sub-questions below address distinct elements of the intensive case management component of YTP.

RQ3.1: Are YTP coach caseloads at 13:1 or lower?

Yes, individual coach caseloads have consistently been below the 13:1 level since the beginning of the program in March 2016.

Coach caseloads are reviewed monthly during team CQI meetings. The number of coaches employed by the YTP program has varied from a minimum of two to a maximum of six. Figure 9 shows the number of active YTP coaches along with minimum and maximum caseloads on the last day of each month from March 31, 2016 through April 30, 2019. During the first seven months of the program, the maximum caseload was at or below six youth. The maximum caseload peaked in December 2016 at twelve. During the past year, from May 2018 through April 2019, the monthly maximum caseload has been stable and averaged eight youth.

Figure 9. YTP Coach Capacity and Caseload by Month



At the time of the 2017 and 2019 interviews with coaches, coaches reported caseloads within the 13:1 ratio described above. In 2017, caseloads were between two and nine while in 2019, caseloads were between four and seven. In both years, caseloads were expected to grow over time.

When the number of active coaches drops and caseloads approach the 13:1 level - as they did during mid-to-late 2017 - the YTP Supervisor may take on a small caseload of one to three youth until additional coaches can be hired. The YTP Supervisor’s caseload was transferred to the new coaches once they were fully trained. The YTP Supervisor’s caseloads are not included in Figure 9.

Suggested modifications

Individual coach caseloads have consistently been below the 13:1 level, and no modifications are suggested.

RQ3.2: How prevalent is coach turnover?

Overall, 83% of YTP Coaches stayed employed with the program for over 6 months, and 46% stayed with the program for over a year. Below we examine the details of turnover in YTP.

Staff turnover can impact youth’s experience in services. Most of the youth focus group participants had maintained a relationship with a single coach and valued this consistency. However, some had experienced a coaching change because they exited and reentered YTP or because their first coach departed.

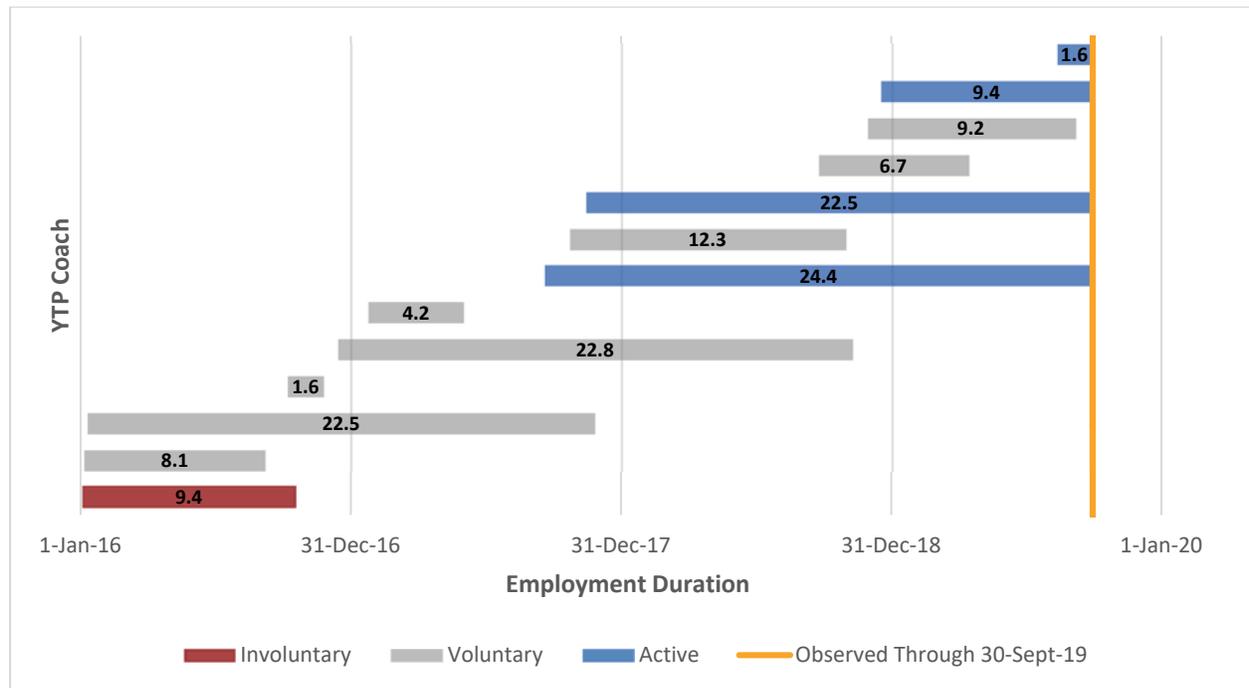
What I look forward to in life is just consistency in general. ... Because the switching [coaches] is just not—it’s not good for the moment.

Of the 77 youth ever enrolled as of May 2018, 69% had only one coach during their time in program, and only 9% had more than two coaches. The maximum number of coaches a youth had was four.

Since YTP began in 2016, FPFY has employed 13 YTP Coaches. The overall median YTP employment term for these 13 coaches was 9.4 months. Of the four coaches active in the program as of September 30, 2019, two were hired in 2017, one in 2018, and one in 2019.

Of those coaches who were hired prior to September 30, 2018 (n=11), 46% (5) stayed with the program for at least one year. Of those coaches who were hired prior to March 31, 2018 (n=12), 83% (10) stayed with the program for at least six months. Figure 10 below displays employment duration for each YTP Coach, in months, by start date and departure reason. As mentioned above, employment was observed through September 30, 2019.

Figure 10. YTP Coach employment duration (in months), by start date and departure reason



When asked why YTP Coaches left the program, the YTP Coach Supervisor reported that one coach left involuntarily, eight coaches left voluntarily, and four coaches were still active in the program. One of the eight coaches that left voluntarily for personal reasons, three left to make a change to/decision about their career trajectory, and four accepted new positions (two elsewhere with FPFY, two with other social services agencies). Six of these eight coaches had been with the agency at least six months at the time of their departure, and three had been with the agency for at least one year.

Suggested Modifications

The vast majority of coaches stay with YTP for over six months, and about half stay past a year. We recommend that coaches continue to be interviewed annually to gather their feedback on their position and the program in general, but do not propose any immediate suggestions at this time.

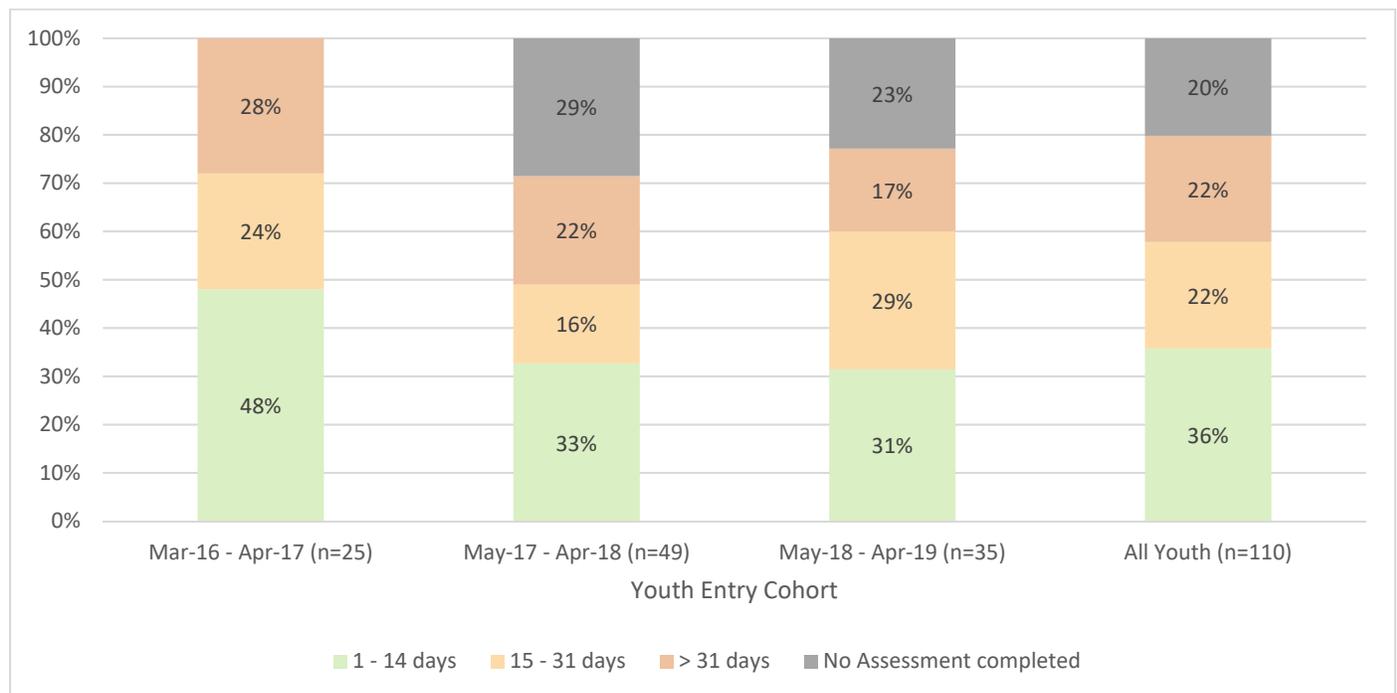
RQ3.3: Are initial assessments and action plans being conducted within 14 and 45 days from enrollment, respectively?

Initial Assessments

Of the 110 youth ever enrolled as of April 2019, 36% completed their initial assessment within 14 days, and 58% completed their initial assessment within one month. Twenty percent of the 110 youth did not have any assessments completed during their time in program.

When youth begin YTP, their coach is responsible for completing an initial assessment and action plan in collaboration with the youth. The assessment captures information about baseline strengths and needs. It also includes the DBT Ways of Coping Checklist (DBT-WCCL), a comprehensive DBT outcome measure and the Outcome Ratings Scales. The initial assessment is expected to be completed within 14 days of a youth’s enrollment. Figure 11 shows the timing of the initial assessment for all youth and by entry cohort.

Figure 11. Initial Assessment Timing from Enrollment by Youth Entry Cohort



The proportion of youth whose initial assessment was completed with 14 days was highest for the cohort of youth who began the YTP program between March 2016 and April 2017. This could reflect the fact that caseloads were lower earlier in the program. From May 2017 forward, about a third of the youth had a timely initial assessment, and about half had an initial assessment within the first month.

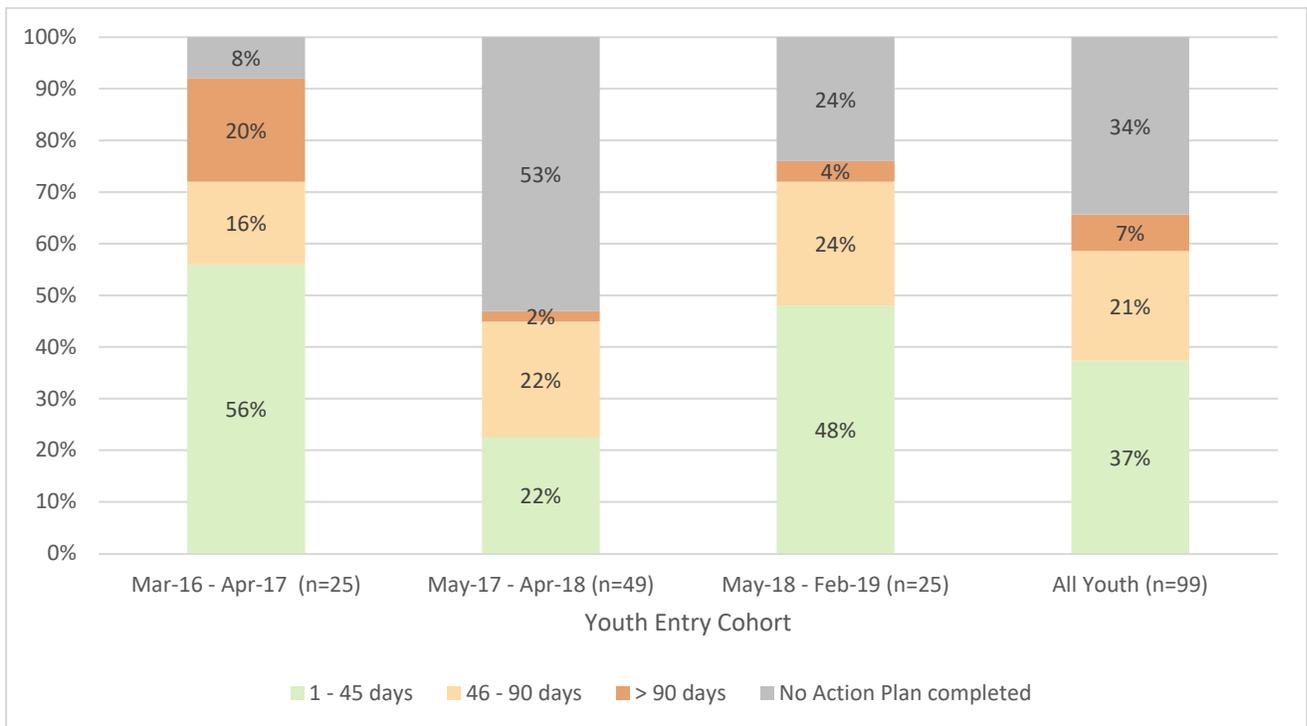
The low proportion of youth whose initial assessment was completed within fourteen days was discussed on multiple occasions by the CQI team. Possible reasons included the difficulty of engaging youth in the early stages of the program and the need to better communicate the importance of timely assessments to the coaches. After debating whether to extend the initial assessment window beyond fourteen days, the CQI team decided to keep the fourteen day goal in place due the belief that earlier initial assessments would lead to better service delivery.

Initial Action Plans

The action plan, which is completed by the YTP Coach in collaboration with the youth, captures the youth's short-term and long-term goals. It also includes the Outcome Rating Scales. The initial action plan is expected to be completed within 45 days of a youth's enrollment.

Our analysis of the timeliness of the initial action plan is based on data for the 106 youth ever enrolled as of February 2019 who had a 90 day window to complete an initial action plan. Thirty-eight of those youth (36%) completed their initial action plan within 45 days and 61 (58%) completed their initial action plan within three months (Figure 12). Thirty-six percent of the 106 youth did not have any action plans completed during their time in program.

Figure 12. Initial Action Plan Timing from Enrollment by Youth Entry Cohort



As with the initial assessments, the proportion of youth with a timely initial action plan was highest for the earliest cohort. Again, this may be due to caseloads being very low during this period. Only 22% of the youth who enrolled between May 2017 and April 2018 completed their initial action plan within 45 days, but this metric improved for youth who enrolled between May 2017 and April 2018. Forty-nine percent of these youth completed an initial action plan within 45 days, and 66% completed one within 90 days.

This improvement was the result of changes made during the CQI process. The delay in completion of the action plans in 2017 was attributed to the fact that coaches were waiting to complete the initial action plan until the first youth team meeting (YTM) was held. A decision was made to de-couple the completion of the action plan from the occurrence of the YTM. This may explain why the action plan timeliness metrics were better for youth who enrolled between May 2018 and February 2019.

Suggested modifications

Given that during the most recent cohort of youth only 31% of youth had an initial assessment completed within fourteen days and 49% had an initial action plan within forty-five days, we suggest that some modifications be made to improve these percentages. Timely completion of assessments and action plans is essential not only for programmatic fidelity but also if YTP is to progress to a summative evaluation. Developing metrics to track the completion of assessments and action on a regular basis - both for the monthly CQI team meetings and for the YTP Supervisor's weekly supervision of coaches - could both identify ways to improve the process and track progress over time. We recommend integrating in-depth assessment and action plan monitoring into monthly CQI efforts. This monitoring could include reviewing with the YTP Supervisor each month a list of youth who have entered in the last 3 months. This monitoring would be useful for understanding why initial measurement completion might be a challenge and for making sure that as many action plans and assessments are happening on time as possible.

RQ3.4: Are follow-up assessments and action plans being conducted as appropriate?

Of the youth enrolled as of April 2019, 79% completed all the expected follow-up assessments, and 68% of those follow-up assessments were timely (i.e., within 190 days of the previous assessment (6 months plus a 7 day grace period). A final assessment was completed within 30 days of exit for 51% of the youth who have exited YTP. Twenty-three percent of youth completed all the follow-up action plans they should have completed based on the number of months they had been enrolled. The sections below analyze follow-up assessment and action plan completion in detail.

Follow-up Assessments

Following the initial assessment, assessments should be completed every six months after enrollment and at exit from program. Forty-three of the 110 youth ever enrolled as of April 2019 were in program for longer than six months, when the first follow-up assessment would be due. Of those 43 youth, 79% completed all the follow-up assessments they should have completed based on the number of 6 month periods they had been enrolled.¹¹ For those 43 youth, the average number of assessments - excluding the initial assessment - per 6 months in YTP was 1.01.

We also examined the timing of the 95 follow-up assessments that were completed to see if they were completed within 6 months of the previous assessment. Of those 95 follow-up assessments, 65 (68%) were completed within 190 days of the previous assessment (6 months plus a 7 day grace period).

Exit Assessments

An exit assessment should be completed for each youth who exits the YTP program. Whenever possible, the exit assessment should be done in collaboration with the youth. If a youth is exiting the program due to disengagement and cannot be contacted, the coach should complete the exit assessment using all available information. The last assessment should occur as close to youth's exit date as possible so that all the progress the youth made while in the program is captured.

Table 3 compares the timing of the last assessment to the program exit date of the 81 youth who had exited the program through May 2019. A final assessment was completed within 30 days of exit for 51%

¹¹ The number of follow-up assessments that should have been completed would be one assessment for every 6 months the youth was in program, excluding the initial assessment. Exit assessments are examined in a later section.

of the youth who have exited YTP. However, a quarter of the youth who exited the program had never completed an assessment, and the proportion of youth exiting without completing an assessment has increased over time.

Table 3. Days between Final Assessment and Program Exit by Exit Year

Days between Final Assessment and Program Exit	Exit Year					Total Youth	Exit Year				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total Youth		2016	2017	2018	2019	Total Youth
0-30 days	3	21	14	3	41	75%	72%	39%	25%	51%	
31-60 days	1	1	5	0	7	25%	3%	14%	0%	9%	
61+ days	0	2	6	5	13	0%	7%	17%	42%	16%	
No Assess. for Youth	0	5	11	4	20	0%	17%	31%	33%	25%	
Total	4	29	36	12	81	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	

Follow Up Action Plans

Follow-up action plans should be completed every three months after the initial action plan is completed. Of the 110 youth ever enrolled as of April 2019, 61 youth were in program for longer than four and a half months, when the first follow-up Action Plans would be due (assuming the first action plan was completed within the first forty-five days). Of those 61 youth, 23% completed all the follow-up action plans they should have completed based on the number of months they had been enrolled.¹² For those 61 youth, the average number of action plans – excluding the initial action plan - per 3 months in YTP was 0.49, which is half of what we would expect to see if an action plan was completed every three months.

We also examined the timing of the follow-up Action Plans that were completed to see if they were completed within 3 months of the previous action plan. Of the 111 follow-up action plans that were completed, 86 (77%) were completed within 100 days of the previous action plan (3 months plus a 7 day grace period).

Suggested modifications

Timely completion of assessments and action plans is essential not only for programmatic fidelity but also if YTP is to progress to a summative evaluation. Developing metrics to track the completion of assessments and action on a regular basis - both for the monthly CQI team meetings and for the YTP Supervisor’s weekly supervision of coaches – could both identify ways to improve the process and track progress over time. Given the low proportion of youth receiving their follow-up assessments and action plans, we recommend also integrating in-depth follow-up and exit assessment and action plan monitoring into monthly CQI efforts. This monitoring could include reviewing with the YTP Supervisor each month a list of youth who have come due for a follow-up measure or exited in the last 3 months. This would be useful for understanding why measurement completion might be a challenge and for making sure that as many action plans and assessments are happening on time as possible.

¹² The number of action plans that should have been completed would be one action plan (excluding the initial action plan) for every 3 months after the first 45 days in YTP.

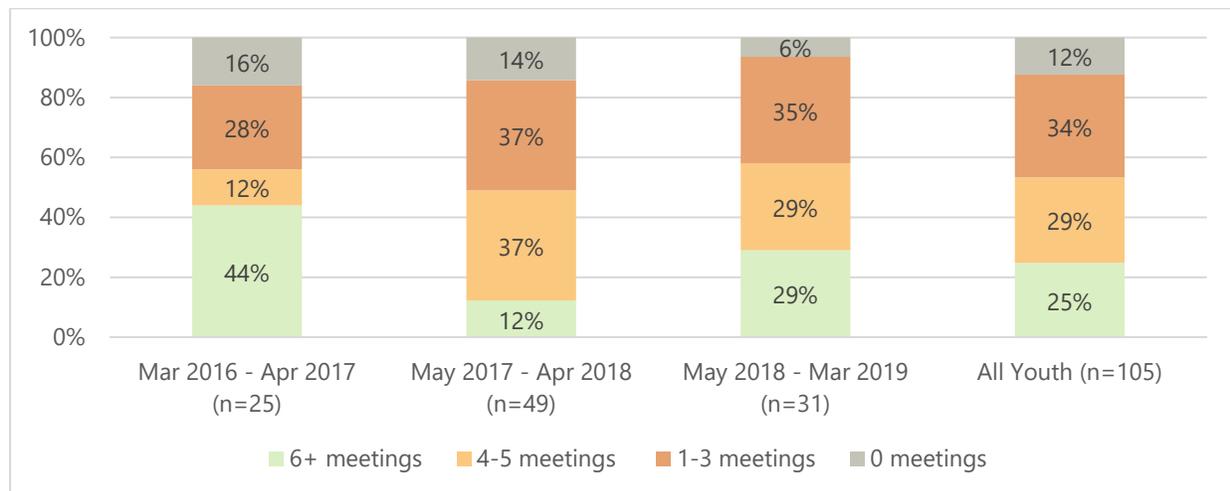
RQ3.5: Do YTP coaches directly engage with youth weekly during the Initial Engagement Phase and biweekly thereafter?

Looking at the most recent entry cohort, 29% of youth had weekly meetings during the Initial Engagement Phase; 58% had at least four meetings during that six week period. For the youth who persisted in YTP after the Initial Engagement Phase, nearly two-thirds (64%) had an average of at least two face-to-face meetings with their coach per month thereafter. The analysis below presents the coach meeting timing for each period in depth.

The first 45 days in program after enrollment is the initial assessment and engagement phase, called the Initial Engagement Phase. However, the length of the Initial Engagement Phase is flexible and depends on how quickly the youth can be fully engaged. During this phase, the coach and youth are developing a relationship, the coach is introducing the DBT skills groups and getting youth’s buy-in to participate, and the coach is developing relationships with providers and supportive adults in the youth’s life to assist with coordination. Coaches attempt to meet with youth at least weekly during this phase.

Figure 12 presents the number of face-to-face meetings between youth and their coaches during the six weeks after enrollment for the 105 youth ever enrolled as of March 2019. These 105 youth include includes data for 7 youth who left YTP less than six weeks after they enrolled. The proportion of youth with at least six meetings during those six weeks varied by entry cohort. Nearly one in three youth in the most recent entry cohort met that mark.

Figure 13. Number of Face-to-Face Meetings within the First Six Weeks after Enrollment - by Entry Cohort



After the Initial Engagement Phase, the youth enters the Active Phase with regular coach engagement, DBT attendance, and service coordination. During the Active Phase, coaches should meet at least bi-weekly with the youth. To examine engagement after the Initial Engagement Phase, we focused on the 86 youth ever enrolled as of March 2019 who persisted in YTP past the third month. Nearly two-thirds of these youth (64%) had an average of at least two face-to-face meetings with their coach per month in the months they were active for the entire month beginning with their third month in the program. The average number of face-to-face meetings per month was 3.3. Figure 14 shows the average number of monthly face-to-face meetings for each of the 86 youth.

Figure 14. Average Number of Face-to-Face Meetings per Month by Youth in the Third Month Post-Enrollment and Onwards

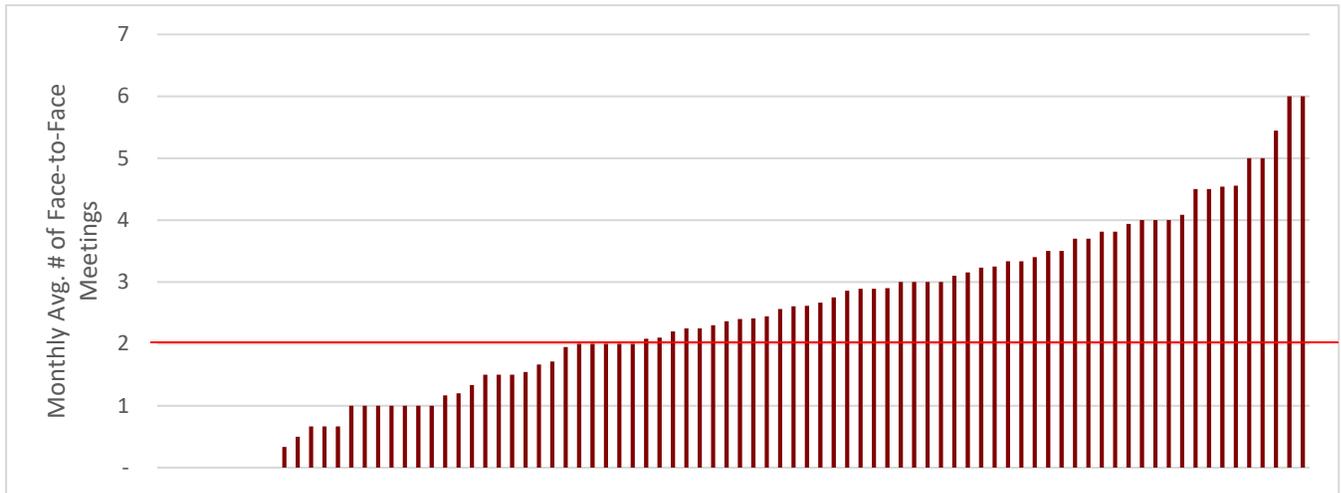
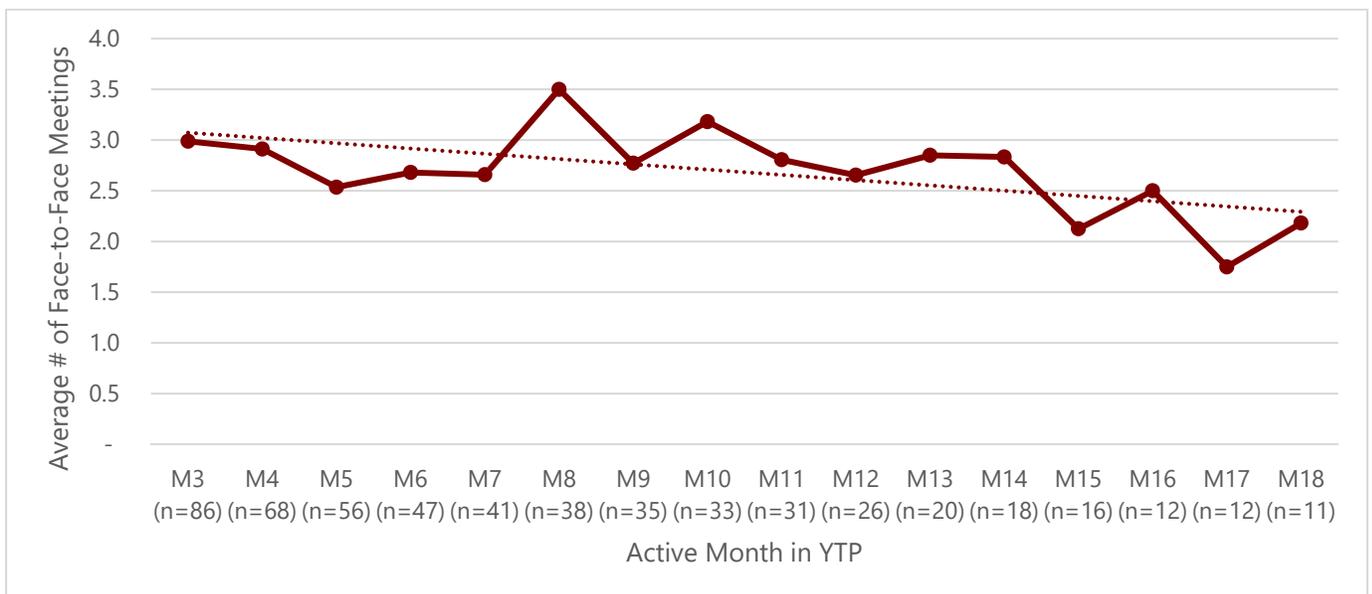


Figure 14 shows how the average number of monthly face-to-face meetings varied over the first 18 months that youth were in program. Overall, there was a gradual decline after month 8, when the average number of monthly meeting peaked at 3.5. This trend coincides with the YTP supervisor’s observation that there tend to be more face-to-face meetings earlier in the program as the youth and coach are establishing their relationship.

Figure 15. Average Monthly Number of Face-to-Face Meetings by Month in Program



Youth focus group participants had mixed feelings about the frequency of contact with their coach. Some wanted more frequent contact while others felt the frequency of contact was just right; no one wanted less frequent contact. In general, focus group participants reported meeting with their coaches weekly. These in-person meetings were described as flexible, occurring in interesting locations (e.g., community events) and at helpful times (e.g., on the way to school or another service provider). In-person meetings

were an opportunity for coaches to help youth take small but important steps toward their goals, such as filling out paperwork or gathering essential documents. Sometimes in-person meetings were supplemented by other communication, more frequently by text than by phone or email.

Suggested modifications

Given that only about a third of youth had weekly meetings during the Initial Engagement Phase, more work should be done to understand the lack of initial engagement so that appropriate supports for youth and coaches can be implemented. Our suggestion is that targeted qualitative data collection could assist in this. Potentially, CWWs of youth who disengaged early could be contacted to understand from their perspective where the disconnect happened.

RQ3.6: Is the YTP program sustaining engagement with youth?

About half of the youth who enroll in YTP stay past the six month mark while half become inactive before that. Older youth (17-20) were more likely to stay in past the six month mark than younger youth, and youth with at least one Thriving outcome rating scale at baseline were also more likely to stay past six months than those youth who did not. Overall, as of May 31, 2019, of all youth enrolled through April 2019, 21 youth persisted in the program to complete one round of DBT, and 7 youth completed the full dosage of two rounds of DBT. Detailed analysis of sustained engagement is below.

The YTP program needs to sustain engagement with youth for over a year in order for youth to complete the DBT component of the intervention (14 months on average). Table 4 shows the number of months youth remained in the program before exiting for three entry cohorts. Two-thirds of the youth in the second entry cohort left the program within the first 6 months compared to only 23% of the youth in the first entry cohort and 45% of the youth in the third entry cohort (which only included 11 youth).

Figures from the first cohort may be due to the lower enrollment numbers at the time – coaches had more time to dedicate to each youth and were less strict about marking youth as inactive in the program. However, this does not explain why the third cohort did better than the second.

Table 4. Number of Months Enrolled Before Exiting through May 31, 2019 by Entry Cohort

Entry Cohort	Total Enrolled Youth (n)	Count of youth who exited within...				Proportion of youth who exited within...			
		0-3 months	4-6 months	7-12 months	>12 months/ still in YTP	0-3 months	4-6 months	7-12 months	>12 months/ still in YTP
Mar16-May17	26	1	5	10	10	4%	19%	38%	38%
Jun17-May18	51	17	17	3	14	33%	33%	6%	27%
Jun18-Nov18	11	3	2	-	-	27%	18%	-	-

To better understand these differences in engagement, we looked at the demographic characteristics and risk criteria of the 43 youth who stayed in YTP for 6 months or more (Table 5).¹³ Among the groups who were less likely to stay in the program for at least 6 months were black or African American youth, youth

¹³ The n’s in Table 5 vary because not all information was gathered from every youth. For example, data on race/ethnicity were collected from 68 of the 88 youth whereas data on sexual orientation were collected from 54 of the 88 youth.

who identify as LGBTQ, and youth who enroll in YTP at a younger age (14-16). Additional work is needed to determine what YTP staff could do to keep these youth engaged.¹⁴

Table 5. Demographic and Risk Characteristics Associated with Engagement for At Least Six Months

	n	Frequency	Percentage
All youth ever enrolled as of Nov-2018	88	43	49%
Race/Ethnicity (n=68)			
Black/African American	32	15	47%
All Other	36	22	61%
Sexual Orientation (n=54)			
LGBQ	19	9	47%
Straight	35	21	60%
Age at YTP Enrollment (n=87)			
14-16	24	8	33%
17-20	63	35	56%
Admin Assess Risk Score (n=88)			
2	21	8	38%
3+	67	35	52%
Number of FC Placements (n=88)			
1-4 placements	27	15	56%
5+ placements	61	28	46%
Number of Permanent Connections at Intake (n=72)			
0-3	16	7	44%
4+	56	36	64%
Number of In-Crisis Ratings at Intake (n=56)			
0	32	27	84%
1+	24	14	58%
Number of Thriving Ratings at Intake (n=56)			
0	36	25	69%
1+	20	16	80%

Chi-square tests of independence were conducted on the differences above. One test indicated that there is a significant relationship between the age of the youth at intake and staying past six months, $X^2(1, n=88) = 3.97, p < .05$. As shown in Table 5, older youth were more likely to stay in program past the six month marker. Another significant relationship was found between having at least one Thriving score on the intake Outcome Rating Scales, $X^2(1, n=88) = 10.04, p < .01$. At least one Thriving score at intake was associated with a greater likelihood of staying in the program past six months. The other demographic and risk characteristics did not show a significant with staying in YTP past six months. However, the

¹⁴ The relationships between engagement and risk criteria were less clear. Youth who scored 3 or more on the administrative risk assessment were more likely to remain in the program for at least 6 months than those who scored less than 3. However, higher risk was not consistently associated with staying in the program for 6 months or more. For example, only 46% of the youth who had experienced 5 or more placements stayed in the program.

sample size is small here, and additional observation is recommended. There may be significant differences which are not yet apparent.

As of May 31, 2019, of all youth enrolled through April 2019, 21 youth persisted in the program to complete one round of DBT, and 7 youth completed the full dosage of two rounds of DBT. However, 17 youth still in program as of May 31, 2019 had not yet completed one round of DBT, and 22 youth still in program had not yet completed two rounds of DBT. These in-program youth may still achieve these milestones over time.

Suggested modifications

Discussions with the YTP Supervisor and coaches could provide some insight as to how the weekly meetings that are held during the Initial Engagement phase could be improved to increase sustained engagement. Progress after improvements are made could be tracked in the monthly CQI meetings.

Additionally, youth focus groups have been successful in eliciting the opinions of highly engaged youth, but additional efforts are needed to understand the views of youth who are not fully engaged. These efforts could include more focus groups or other qualitative data collection activities including reaching out to CWWs who have youth on their caseload who have disengaged early.

RQ3.7: What strategies does the literature support regarding engaging transition-age youth?

In 2018, the evaluation team undertook a review of the literature on engaging transition-age youth (ages 14 to 21) including youth with a history of foster care and complex trauma as well as the relationship between youth engagement and adolescent brain development.¹⁵ Our review found that YTP uses a number of the evidence-supported strategies to engage youth:

- Recruitment – YTP enrollment staff use two of the three primary drivers identified in the literature to engage youth: emphasizing how the youth may benefit and leveraging the youth’s existing network (e.g., child welfare workers, caretakers, therapists) to encourage engagement. However, YTP may be able to leverage the third driver more effectively which is to appeal more to the personal beliefs or motivations of youth.¹⁶
- Supportive Services – YTP provides supportive services to improve youth’s well-being and build up their protective factors in a number of ways. Most prominently, DBT increases self-regulation and relational skills while intensive case management helps youth access a wide range of services based on an assessment of their needs.
- Staffing – Through regular Youth Team Meetings, YTP coaches include youth and their social supports in their goal setting and service planning. However, one element highlighted by the literature missing from YTP is staff with lived experience. Currently, although YTP the coaches and the program supervisor have experience with working with similar populations they do not have lived experience with foster care.

¹⁵ The complete literature review is included as Appendix G.

¹⁶ Hoffman, J., & Staniforth, S. (2007). *The Green Street guide to authentic youth engagement*. Retrieved October 4, 2017 from <http://www.abcee.org/cms/wpcontent/uploads/2011/11/GreenStreetYouthEngagementManual.pdf>

- Timing of Engagement – The literature identifies six factors that are critical to moving transition-age youth toward self-sufficiency.¹⁷ YTP already encourages growth in five of these areas: family supports, education and training opportunities, career-linked employment, adequate health and mental health supports, and supportive relationships. Currently, the program does offer leadership and “senior member” opportunities within DBT skills groups where youth who have completed one module of DBT take a role in modeling skills, explaining concepts, and setting an example in skills groups for youth who are less seasoned in DBT. However, the program could provide opportunities for leadership contributions possibly as a peer mentor.
- Communication Strategies – The YTP program places a strong emphasis on communicating with youth and including them in all planning and decision-making. However, there may be more creative ways to integrate the use of technology and social media into the program’s communications.

Suggested modifications

The YTP program engages youth through many of the strategies outlined in the above which can be reviewed in detailed in Appendix G. However, there are a few strategies which could potentially be a valued addition to the program. In recruitment of youth in the program, there may be areas where the youth’s voice may be integrated more into the decision to initially enroll in the program, possibly finding more ways to appeal to the youth’s personal beliefs or motivation. Regarding program staffing, YTP could make an effort to hire coaches who have lived experience with foster care. Additionally, more work could be done to include opportunities for youth to make community contributions possibly as a peer mentor within the YTP program.

RQ4: Is DBT being delivered to program participants as intended?

DBT, one of the core components of YTP, consists of three parts: the DBT skills groups, DBT expert consultation, and phone coaching. The weekly DBT skills groups, which focus on teaching youth behavioral skills, are run like a class. The group leaders (i.e., the YTP Coaches) teach the skills and assign homework. The skills training is composed of three eight-week modules:

- Module #1 - Distress Tolerance: How to tolerate pain in difficult situations, not change it
- Module #2 - Interpersonal Effectiveness: How to ask for what you want and say no while maintaining self-respect and relationships with others
- Module #3 - Emotion Regulation: How to change emotions that you want to change

The full YTP program dosage is two rounds of these three modules. At any one time, the YTP program has two or three groups, which cycle through the three modules, occurring weekly.

We found that DBT was occurring on schedule and with fidelity, and youth were attending at least 70% of the time they were invited to a group session. However youth are not utilizing the phone coaching aspect

¹⁷ Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. (2011). *The adolescent brain: New research and its implications for young people transitioning from foster care*. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/resources/the-adolescent-brain-foster-care/>

of DBT with any regularity. DBT consultation is also being provided as intended. Detailed looks at these aspects of DBT are presented in this section.

Youth Perspective on DBT Skills Groups

Youth focus group participants had mixed feelings about the helpfulness or usefulness of DBT, but these perspectives seem to include more positive feelings than neutral or indifferent ones. Those who found it a positive experience liked the skills they learned, like breathing exercises, meditation, and coping skills.

It's just, like, when you're emotional you just want to figure out how can ... what could you do to go back to being normal. And that's wise mind. The skills that you learn during the weekly groups they just giving you another way to deal with it. And it's helpful.

Several youth talked about how DBT helped them regulate their emotions.

When I'm in a situation with somebody...it's hard for me to walk away...and I've learned now to think...like when I get into a fight or something where it's like this is not worth it....I'll think about all the good things that I do have...if this was like two years ago I would've socked the [expletive] out of him, but I'm not like that anymore and I'm really proud and happy to say I was able to do that, for like such a long period of time, too.

Focus group participants who did not find DBT to be helpful disliked the mindfulness exercises, thought they had not learned anything new, or felt that they were not taken seriously during groups. One youth said, "I feel like sometimes the skills don't really help in every situation."

Feedback about the DBT groups, themselves, included a desire for instructors to simplify the language used and to hear everyone's opinion or feedback.

So I had to ask questions and I had to clarify exactly what [they were] saying in a version where I can understand but I had to rephrase it and say, 'Is that what you were trying to say?' and [they] would say, 'Yes, exactly.' So I'm like, 'Oh, why couldn't you just say it like that?' That's more simpler for us young people to understand...Big words can just totally throw you off and then that's another conversation. What's that? What's that?

Several focus group participants talked about how their expectations about DBT changed over time. Some youth acknowledged that they initially came to DBT groups because they got free gift cards. In fact, some youth were still coming to DBT groups primarily for that reason.

And sometimes I can take from the lessons that they're talking about, although I'm just here for the gift cards. ... And in the process, I kind of pick up on what they're talking about. So, that's neat.

More common was the experience of youth who began to listen more intently and connect the material to personal situations.

I was kind of skeptical at first...But then like as I started to get more into it like, you know, I realized that it could – like it did help with certain things if you paid attention and you learned what they were teaching, so...it's like as I started to go more it started to become more interesting I guess or more helpful I could say.

Coach Perspective on DBT Skills Groups

Coaches shared their thoughts about DBT and overall reported that they enjoy facilitating the DBT skills groups and seeing the impact the skills have had on both the youth and the coaches themselves.

I love it, I truly value the information and the DBT approach and the material provided, I think it's applicable to everybody, and I love the transparency and being able to share your own personal stories and examples of how this information has impacted you.

They generally described youth are being highly engaged when they are in group, and as being respectful of the facilitators, each other, and the ground rules.

I've enjoyed it, and the youth are really – the youth are warm. The youth are thoughtful, kind. Often the youth are glad to be there, and I see the connections with other youth. So generally it's been good.

They felt that it is important to put one's own spin on the material while facilitating or co-facilitating group and to craft a teaching style of their own. Coaches reported liking the YTP model which pairs DBT group work with individual coaching. This allows them to use their coaching sessions to reinforce rather than teach the material and to identify ways to apply it in real-life. One coach said, "I think [the paired structure is] really effective. It's probably one of my favorite things about this modality in particular."

There was disagreement among the coaches about whether the DBT training they received was sufficient. Some coaches thought their DBT training was sufficient and holistic and appreciated the ongoing support they received. They described the resources they had access to including online training modules, shadowing practices, co-facilitation, adolescent and adult DBT skills textbooks, and a bank of previous templates from other facilitators. However, some coaches did not feel that their DBT training was sufficient and described a "learning as you go" approach to facilitating DBT groups. One coach who completed the 40-hour DBT training but did not receive an additional training around facilitating felt that ongoing training would be beneficial

Pretty much all of the preparation I have had that has helped me has been watching the facilitators in other groups teach the groups and learning from them because they've been doing it for a while. The handbook that we use isn't super helpful personally, and we – so I go off of the curriculum that has been used in the past. It's pretty much a template that we all use, but we change it based on various things to make it more personable, make it relate to the youth, specifically

New coaches also found it challenging to facilitate or co-facilitate groups because of their limited exposure to the material and their limited experience in the role of DBT facilitator.

Coaches appreciated the expertise of the DBT Specialist and agreed that both observation and feedback provided by the specialist was valuable to them and to their development as a DBT group facilitator.

According to the coaches we interviewed, the two biggest and most common barriers to youth DBT attendance and engagement are transportation and scheduling around other activities such as jobs, school, or extracurriculars. Other less frequently reported barriers included: discomfort in the group, transitions (changes in coaches or DBT facilitators), peer conflict, mental health problems (e.g., social anxiety or depression), learning or developmental disabilities, and a lack of intrinsic motivation. Another barrier mentioned not only by coaches but also by youth focus group participants is the physical setup of the space in which DBT sessions are held. That space is a large sterile conference room with a very long table in which some youth also have Family Team Meetings (FTMs).

Supports are provided to youth to help address the challenges to DBT attendance and engagement. YTP provide rides to youth, either through a ridesharing service or from a YTP coach. Some coaches schedule their individual coaching directly before the DBT group to ensure that the youth they are meeting with has a ride to the DBT group. Coaches also provide incentives such as gift cards for attending DBT groups, raffles for gift cards of large value, and food during group.

When asked about the successes of DBT and use of the skills youth learned, coaches described progress in several areas including regulating emotion, identifying emotions without being judgmental, knowing when to take a break and come back to reengage, and taking the initiative to solve problems. Coaches also said that youth were using mindfulness techniques, managing anger more effectively, behaving less impulsively following feelings of anger. Coaches saw a connection between the youth's success with DBT skills and their engagement levels in the DBT skills groups.

The more engaged they are, the more they learn. There's a youth, for example, that's super enthusiastic. Of course, she's going to get a lot out of it. She's engaged the whole time, asking questions, doing her homework. There's other youth who I've actually seen over a longer period of time, I know for a fact that it's improved, and it's not because they were super engaged, but more because they kept coming and it sunk in eventually.

RQ4.1: Are DBT sessions happening along the expected schedule?

Yes, DBT sessions were found to be happening according to schedule. A total of 355 weekly DBT skills groups were held between April 2016 and May 2019. Between June 2018 and May 2019, the average number of DBT skills groups held each month was 11 but ranged from a low of 7 to a high of 14. The low occurred in December when scheduling DBT sessions is always challenging due to the Christmas holiday and coach vacations.

Suggested modifications

DBT sessions were found to be happening according to schedule, so no modifications are recommended at this time.

RQ4.2: Are DBT sessions happening with fidelity?

Yes, DBT sessions were found to be happening with fidelity. Overall fidelity scores were 96.0% on the 20 DBT skills groups measured. Fidelity of the DBT skills groups is assessed using the DBT Skills Group Checklists which are completed by a DBT consultant once per module. The checklists include three subscales: technical skills, relational skills, and content that are used to rate the DBT session. The DBT consultants also use their observations of the skills groups to inform their consultation with the YTP Coaches.

The Relational and Technical Skills subscales are the same for each session. Both use a 3-point Likert scale (1 = not at all adherent, 2 = somewhat adherent, 3 = adherent) to rate the comprehensive application of each item, Relational Skills subscale scores can range from 10 to 30 and Technical Skills subscale scores can range from 8 to 24. For both subscales, higher scores indicate greater adherence. The subscales and scoring details are available upon request from the authors.¹⁸

The fidelity of 20 DBT skills groups was measured between September 2017 - when fidelity monitoring began - and May 2019. Table 6 shows the Relational Skills and Technical Sills subscale scores. . The overall score was calculated by taking the sum of the means of both subscales and dividing by the total possible score (i.e., 54). The rating scores were high for both subscales, and the overall percentage was 96.0%.

Table 6. DBT Skills Group Checklists Relational Skills and Technical Sills Subscales Results for DBT Skills Group Sessions

Checklist Subscales	Group Sessions (n=20)		
	Mean (SD)	Range	Percentage
Relational Skills	29.1 (1.22)	26-30	97.0%
Technical Skills	22.8 (1.55)	19-24	94.8%
Total			96.0%

The Content subscale varies from session to session, but each element is rated on a 2-point scale (0=not covered, 1=covered). Although efforts were made to adjust the Content subscale to YTP's particular curriculum, the DBT consultants filling out the checklists routinely edited the content to be rated – adding and crossing out fields to match what they felt the group was meant to cover. Consequently, the Content subscales did not produce viable data. Additional discussions among the program, evaluation and consultation team about how to use the Content subscale will be needed. However, for each of the 20 skills groups whose fidelity was measured, at least one content element was rated, and only three groups received a score of zero on any of the rated elements.

¹⁸ McCay, E., Carter, C., & Aiello, A. (2016). DBT to Strengthen Resilience in Street-involved Youth: DBT Integrity Checklists. Unpublished.

McCay, E., Carter, C., Aiello, A., Quesnel, S., Howes, C., & Joahnsson, B. (2016). Toward treatment integrity: Developing an approach to measure the treatment integrity of a dialectical behavior intervention with homeless youth in the community. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, 30(5), 568-574.

Suggested modifications

DBT skills groups have been occurring with fidelity related to the Technical and Relational Skills involved, however the Content subscale of the DBT Skills Integrity Checklist needs to be adapted to the YTP program. To do so, the DBT Consultant could review the current curriculum and adjust the Content subscale to match the material and skills taught. The evaluation team could then review and insert this new Content subscale into the DBT Skills Integrity Checklist to be used going forward.

RQ4.3: Are youth attending DBT sessions at least 70% of the time?

Yes, monthly attendance rates increased over the last year, with the average hovering around 80% from December 2018 onward. A detailed look at DBT attendance metrics is below.

To fully engage in and benefit from YTP, youth must regularly attend DBT skills groups. During interviews, coaches noted that regular DBT attendance helped youth gain skills and increased their interest in continuing to attend group.

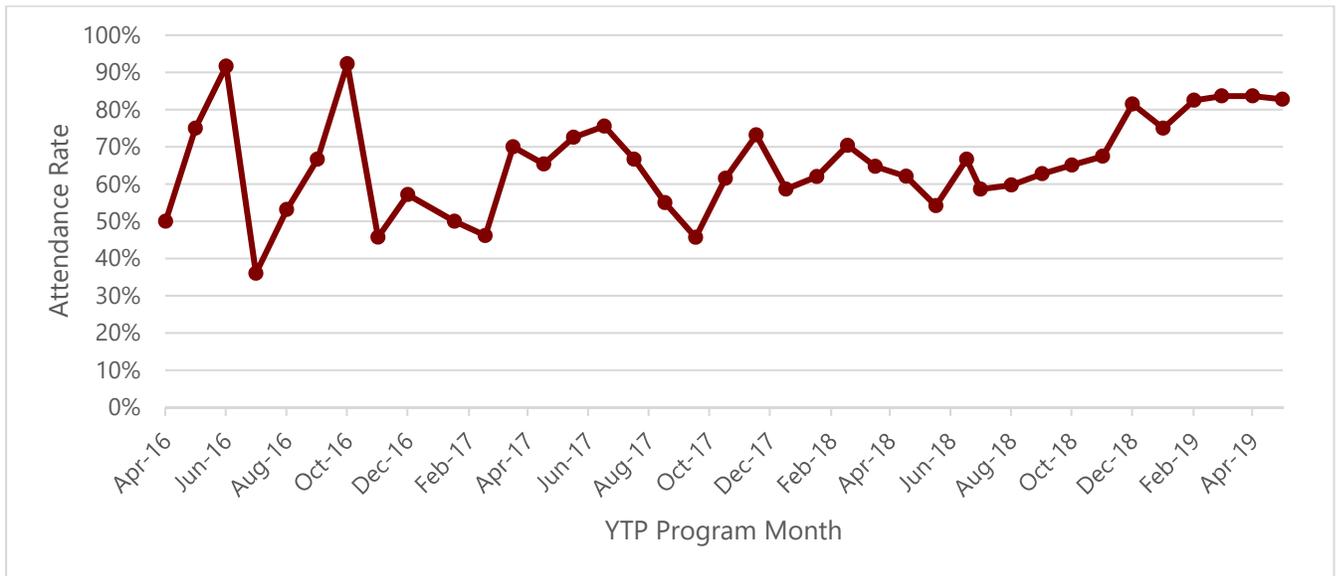
It's good to get to know some of the youth on other caseloads through group and just what I've seen is a lot of people are either really quiet, or unengaged at first, or say they don't want to be there, they're just there for the gift cards, but almost always, like a couple months later, they're like admitting: "This is really helpful. I really love going to group." They're looking forward to it every week.

This sentiment was echoed by several youth.

Once I started listening and I started picking some of the skills up, it started being more interesting to me...I probably just sat out for a good month... But then somebody was talking and I was like, 'Okay, now, I done been through that.' I mean, I started picking it up and started talking more and all this stuff, and it just went from there.

We calculated monthly attendance rates by dividing the total number of DBT skills groups youth attended by the total number of DBT skills groups youth were invited to attend). Figure 16 shows the monthly DBT attendance rate over time. From April 2016 through January 2017, the average monthly attendance rate was 64%, but there was a wide variation due in part to the low number of youth in the program in 2016. In 2017 and 2018, monthly attendance rates averaged 63% with a low of 46% (September 2017) and a high 81% (December 2018). Monthly attendance rates increased over the last year, with the average hovering around 80% from December 2018 onward.

Figure 16. Monthly DBT Attendance Rate by YTP Program Month



Early in the implementation of the program, the YTP CQI team identified DBT attendance as an area that could benefit from usability testing. As a result, a number of activities were undertaken to better understand DBT attendance, including:

- Youth focus groups and YTP Coach interviews that included questions about DBT.
- A literature review that found evidence that DBT groups could provide peer support and that offering incentives could encourage attendance and appeal to the natural tendency of youth to seek rewards.
- A DBT survey of youth in early 2017 which gathered information about barriers to attendance and preferred location. Four of the eleven youth who were surveyed cited transportation as a barrier, and 6 of the 8 youth who had attended their previous DBT skills group had received some assistance with transportation. Other barriers to attendance cited by the youth included location, timing, childcare, and school, work or other commitments. Four of the eleven youth also cited a preference for a different location.

As a result of these activities, a second location for DBT skills groups was added in Hayward, the incentives for attending were increased, and assisting youth with transportation was prioritized by the coaches.

Suggested modifications

Although youth attendance has been improving, it would be worth understanding in more depth why youth do and do not attend. We suggest surveying both coaches and youth to better understand DBT skills group attendance.

RQ4.5: Are youth utilizing phone coaching?

Phone Coaching is a key element of DBT that provides participants with in-the-moment support to effectively cope with difficult situations in their everyday lives. Although YTP youth can call their Coach 24/7 between DBT groups if they need help implementing the skills they've learned, phone coaching has not been heavily used by youth in YTP (Figure 16). In fact, only 28% of the 88 youth ever enrolled as of November 2018 ever used phone coaching, and only 20% used it more than once. Coaches report that it is difficult for youth to engage in phone coaching. It could be that youth are averse to communicating by phone or that youth are already receiving the support phone coaching would typically provide through the coaching relationship.

Figure 17. Count of Phone Coaching Instances per Month



Suggested modifications

Youth in YTP rarely take advantage of the DBT phone coaching. However, this does not seem to be preventing youth from acquiring DBT skills. To understand the lack of phone coaching usage, questions about phone coaching could be included in any upcoming YTP youth focus groups.

RQ4.6: Is DBT Consultation being provided as intended?

Yes, as reported by the YTP Coach Supervisor, DBT consultation is happening on schedule. Every other week, the DBT Consultant attends the DBT group supervision meeting with the YTP Coaches. No modifications are suggested.

RQ5: Is there evidence that program participants are showing progress toward short- and medium-term outcomes?

RQ5.1: Do youth show an increase in engagement in working towards action plan goals?

Youth who stay in the program longer both set and complete more goals. Additionally, youth who stayed in the program longer complete a higher proportion of the goals they set, as shown by their higher

average goal completion rates. Education and employment goals were the most common and the most likely to be completed. Permanency goals were the least common and the least likely to be completed. Coach and youth perspectives on achieving goals as well as analysis of youth's goal attainment are detailed below.

Coach Perspective on Setting and Achieving Goals

Coaches spoke at length about the processes of working with youth to identify their values and relate those values to identified goals. They do this by asking questions such as:

- What matters to you?
- What are your values?
- What do you want to accomplish?
- What do you want to see in their future?

Additionally, coaches discussed the importance of using the DBT mastery staircase to help youth break down goals into smaller, more manageable steps and working on each step until the goal is achieved. Throughout all of this, coaches work to provide the appropriate and tailored level of support.

Coaches also described some of the common barriers to working with youth toward attainment of their goals. Some youth have trouble articulating their goals, the steps that need to be taken to achieve those goals, and barriers they might be facing. It is also not unusual for the motivations of youth to change frequently and for youth to have trouble seeing long-term goals as attainable or rewarding.

"I have a youth who's been working on getting a driver's license for a year and a half and I'm like, 'So have you looked at the book? Are you studying? And let's study together,' and like, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay.' And then the next time, they're like, 'Oh, I don't really wanna drive. I'd have to get a car,' and, you know?"

Other barriers include lack of consistent communication with or conflicting messages from other professionals or service providers and transportation challenges (e.g., youth wanting a job but not being able to get to and from work). Coaches discussed some of the more personal challenges to goal completion that youth deal with such as trauma histories, poor mental health, lack of coping strategies, and difficulties navigating complex systems.

I see other providers or systems... writing young people, especially foster youth, off as being unmotivated or unwilling, unengaged...and we're not taking a good enough look at why that is. ... We don't want to infantilize them and make exceptions to the point where they never really learn to do things for themselves, but it's finding that middle ground where you hold them accountable, and you provide unconditional support.

Youth Perspective on Setting and Achieving Goals

Some focus group participants felt that the support they received from their coach was instrumental to achieving specific goals, such as enrolling in school, getting a job, or obtaining a driver's license. This support takes many forms: walking youth through forms, guiding them through the steps to employment, and identifying and working toward goals.

[They've] already helped me reach out to programs and scholarships and different schools and phone numbers and I've already gotten some people's emails, connected with them. So I think [they're] doing a pretty good job and we've only been with each other for about a month and a half.

In fact, focus group participants talked about how their coaches had helped them establish goals and develop a plan for how to achieve them.

They literally, like, they just, like, show you. Like, you lay down the blueprint of what you wanna do, whether it be getting your license, this and this, and then like, 'Okay, we're gonna set an appointment, we're gonna go and we'll be ready, we're gonna do this, I'll text you before, 'I'm ready, let's go,' this and this, you know?

Some youth credited their coaches—and the program more generally – for their success.

I'm actually getting to the point where I can say I actually think my life is going very well, and I don't think I could've done it without the help of this program and the people I've met through it and also my other providers.

Youth Progress towards Goals

Data are collected in Apricot on the setting and completion of short-term goals.¹⁹ Sixty percent of the 88 youth ever enrolled as of November 2018 had set at least one goal, and 36% had completed at least one goal. Table 7 below presents a summary of goal activity stratified by youth's duration in YTP. As expected, youth who stay in the program longer both set and complete more goals. Additionally, youth who stayed in the program longer were more likely to complete the goals they set, as shown by their higher average goal completion rates. Investigation needs to be done to understand why the data indicate that a few youth set zero set goals. Is this a data entry issue or did these youth truly not set and work towards a goal while in YTP?

Table 7. Goal Overview by Duration in YTP for All Youth Ever Enrolled as of Nov-2018

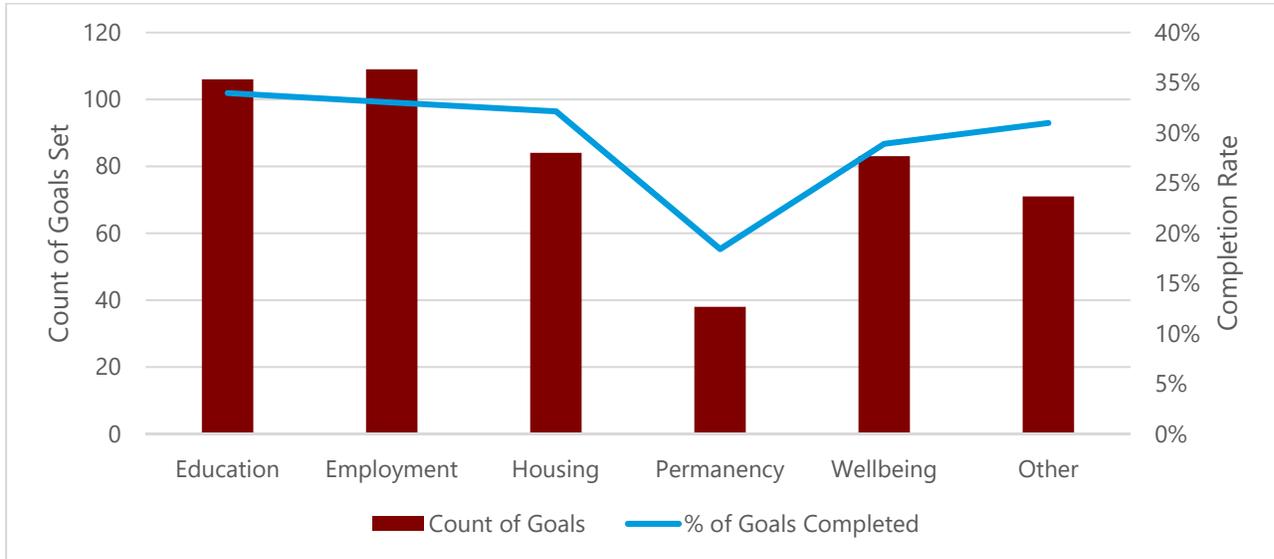
Months in YTP	Number of Goals Set		Number of Goals Completed		Completion Rate
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	
0-3 months (n=21)	0.7	0-9	0.0	0-0	0%
4-6 months (n=24)	3.7	0-15	0.6	0-7	15%
7-12 months (n=16)	5.2	0-11	1.1	0-7	23%
13+ months (n=27)	10.8	0-33	4.4	0-18	37%
All youth (n=88)	5.5	0-33	1.8	0-18	27%

The 88 youth ever enrolled as of November 2018 set a total of 491 goals by May 31, 2019. Thirty-one percent (152) of those goals had been completed. Education and employment goals were the most

¹⁹ Goals related to attending DBT skills groups are excluded from the analysis below (n=89). The analysis instead focuses on goals related to activities outside the YTP program.

common and the most likely to be completed (Figure 18). Permanency goals were the least common and the least likely to be completed.²⁰ A detailed list of completed goals is included as Appendix H.

Figure 18. Count of Goals and Completion Rate by Goal Category



We also looked at the rate of goal completion by how long youth were in YTP and when their goals were set (Table 8). Youth who stayed in the program longer completed a higher percentage of the goals set during their first three months in YTP. For example, youth who were in the program for 7-12 months completed an average of 14% of the goals set during those first three months whereas youth who were in the program for a year or more completed an average of 53%. One interpretation of this difference is that it takes time for youth to complete the goals they set. On average, it took youth 73 days to complete a goal, and this average did not vary considerably based on when the goal was set; goals set in the first 91 days took on average 61 days to complete while goals set in months 7-12 took an average of 91 days to complete. Another interpretation is that youth who complete their goals are motivated to remain in the program longer.

Table 8. Average Goal Completion Rate by Number of Months in YTP and the Timing of Goal Setting

Youth YTP Duration Category	Average Completion Rate for Goals and Average Count of Goals Set During...			
	First 3 months (Avg. # set)	Months 4-6 (Avg. # set)	Months 7-12 (Avg. # set)	After a year in YTP (Avg. # set)
0-3 months (n=21)	0% (0.7)			
4-6 months (n=24)	14% (3.3)	29% (0.3)		
7-12 months (n=16)	22% (2.8)	50% (0.8)	8% (1.6)	
13+ months (n=27)	53% (3.4)	48% (2.1)	25% (2.8)	31% (2.5)

²⁰ The “other” goal category includes goals related to: transportation, physical health, parenting, and financial literacy.

Suggested modifications

First, investigation needs to be done to understand why some youth have zero set goals to understand if it is a data issue or a program element which needs to be addressed. If it is not a data issue and reflective of actual program activity, conversations should be had with the YTP Coach Supervisor and YTP Coaches to understand why goals are not being set so that program modifications or supports can be put in place to aid and encourage the setting and achievement of goals for a larger proportion of youth.

RQ5.2: Do youth show an increase in knowledge of and confidence in their ability to use skills taught in DBT?

Yes, youth showed a significant increase in their use of DBT skills over their time in YTP, although they did not show a reduction in dysfunctional ways of coping. Detailed analysis on these changes are below.

The DBT Ways of Coping Checklist (DBT-WCCL) is the instrument we used to measure changes in DBT skills over time.²¹ The DBT-WCCL is a 66 item measure with two subscales: the DBT Skills Subscale (DSS) that assesses coping using DBT skills and the Dysfunctional Coping Subscale (DCS) that assesses dysfunctional ways of coping. Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (i.e., does not apply and/or not used) to 3 (i.e., used a great deal). We expected to observe an increase in DSS scores and a decrease in DCS scores among YTP participants over time.

The DBT-WCCL was first administered to YTP youth in late August 2017.²² Since then, a total of 49 youth have completed the DBT-WCCL at least once (Table 9). For the 20 youth who have completed the DBT-WCCL two or more times, we conducted a paired-samples t-test that compared their scores on the last DBT-WCCL they completed to their scores on their baseline DBT-WCCL (Table 10). We observed a statistically significant increase in the mean DSS score but no change in the mean DCS score. This indicates that youth had developed DBT skills coping skills but their use of dysfunctional coping skills remained about the same.

Table 10 Because the DBT-WCCL is meant to be completed each time youth complete the YTP assessment, the challenges we have had around completing the YTP assessment in a timely manner also apply to the DBT-WCCL.

Table 9. DBT-WCCL Scores for All Youth Ever Enrolled as of 4/30/2019

DBT-WCCL Subscales	n	Baseline Rating	
		M	SD
DBT Skills Subscale (DSS)	49	1.77	0.51
Dysfunctional Coping Scale (DCS)	49	1.8	0.52

²¹ Neacsiu, A., Rizvi, S., Vitaliano, P., Lynch, T., & Linehan, M. (2010). Dialectical Behavior Therapy Ways of Coping Checklist (DBT-WCCL): Development and Psychometric Properties. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 66(6), 563-582

²² We had initially used the DBT Measure of Adolescent Skills Confidence (DBT-MASC) but found that it relies too heavily on DBT-specific language and scenarios which may not be applicable to our target population. Based on discussions among the CQI team (SSA, FPFY, and Chapin Hall) and a memo crafted by YTP's Technical Assistance team at Mathematica detailing other available, evidence-based DBT measures, we decided to use the DBT-WCCL. Because the DBT-WCCL language is more relatable to our target population and can be easily understood by youth who have no experience with DBT, it would be better suited for an evaluation that includes a comparison group.

For the 20 youth who have completed the DBT-WCCL two or more times, we conducted a paired-samples t-test that compared their scores on the last DBT-WCCL they completed to their scores on their baseline DBT-WCCL (Table 10). We observed a statistically significant increase in the mean DSS score but no change in the mean DCS score. This indicates that youth had developed DBT skills coping skills but their use of dysfunctional coping skills remained about the same.

Table 10. DBT-WCCL Scores for All Youth Ever Enrolled as of 4/30/2019 with At Least Two DBT-WCCL Scores

DBT-WCCL Subscales	n	Baseline Rating		Last Rating		95% CI for Mean Difference		t
		M	SD	M	SD			
DBT Skills Subscale (DSS)	20	1.60	0.55	1.99	0.39	-0.69, -0.09		-2.72*
Dysfunctional Coping Scale (DCS)	20	1.65	0.58	1.66	0.55	-0.29, 0.28		-0.02

* $p < .05$

Although these results are encouraging, they should be interpreted with caution. There is no comparison group, and we don't know how youth might have progressed if they had received "services as usual." Additionally, we are missing a second set of DBT-WCCL for scores for nearly 80% of the youth who had ever enrolled in the program as of April 2019. Some of these youth had completed their initial assessment before we began using the DBT-WCCL and some did not complete a second YTP assessment. The results of our analysis could have been very different depending on the progress these youth had made.

The youth themselves had much to say about the use of DBT skills. In focus groups, many youth recounted specific instances where DBT skills assisted them in coping with a challenging situation, often naming specific DBT skills in the process. Below are quotes from five of these youth.

I'd say about two months ago I got into a fight... I was about to go full on the 100 to where I couldn't like, you know, calm down, but then I caught myself...I didn't do all that YTP stuff for nothing and, like, have them teach me to recognize myself before I get there, 'cause I know it's hard for me to get back down. ... So I'm like, eh, let me catch myself before I go somewhere I don't want to go.

You just stand up and reflect on what you're doing. What was that called again?...Oh, the STOP skill... The stop, take a step back, observe, and proceed?...And a couple other ones I don't know off the top of my head, but it helped a lot.²³

When I'm in a situation with somebody...it's hard for me to walk away...and I've learned now to think...like when I get into a fight or something where it's like this is not worth it....I'll think about all the good things that I do have...if this was like two years ago I would've socked the [expletive] out of him, but I'm not like that anymore and I'm really proud and happy to say I was able to do that, for like such a long period of time, too.

²³ DBT STOP skills include: 1) Stop; 2) Take a step back; 3) Observe; 4) Proceed mindfully.

It's like when you stop and you look and see what's happening and, you know? I think STOP and D-E-A-R-M-A-N really worked for me.²⁴

I feel like these skills are valuable because they come into effect – like sometimes you don't even know – you won't even realize that they're coming into effect but they have. You know, unconsciously. It's just that thing that happens. Sometimes I apply these skills to my real life situations and I would never look at that but then if I like go back in time and I rethink, you know, definitely use a lot of skills in that situation.

Suggested modifications

Continued monitoring of this outcome is encouraged, and capturing a fuller picture of the youth's progress will require more timely completion of assessments and action plans. Suggested modifications for improving this area is included in previous sections.

RQ5.3 Is there evidence that program participants are showing progress toward medium-term outcomes in the four outcome areas (housing, education/employment, permanent connections, and social-emotional well-being)?

Yes, youth showed progress in key outcome areas. For each Outcome Ratings Scale, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the last rating score to the baseline rating score for the sample of 45 youth. We observed a positive change in mean scores on nine of the ten scales, and three of the differences were statistically significant: Employment, Financial Literacy, and Permanent Connections. Detailed analysis of Outcome Rating Scale changes is below.

All Enrolled Youth

The Outcome Rating Scales were used to measure medium-term outcomes in each of the four outcome domains. Each outcome scale includes several benchmarks which describe the young person's status at each level. These benchmarks are used to measure the progress along a dimension and are scored on a scale of 1 to 10. They have been standardized for this analysis to a 5 point scale.

Figure 19. Outcome Rating Scales – Benchmark Progression and Scoring



To measure progress, we compared the last rating score to the baseline rating score for each youth enrolled by May 2018 so that we could observe at least one year of program activity for each youth. Although 77 youth had enrolled in YTP by May 2018, only 47 had at least a second set of Outcome Rating Scale scores that could be compared to their scores at baseline. Twelve of these youth (26%) received their last set of scores within 6 months of enrollment, 17 (36%) received their last set of scores 7 to 12 months after enrollment, and 18 (38%) received their last set of scores at least a year after enrollment.

²⁴ A part of the Interpersonal Effectiveness module, DBT uses the acronym DEARMAN to help youth remember the steps to effectively ask for something or say no. (Describe, Express, Assert, Reinforce, Mindful, Assertive, Negotiate)

For each Outcome Ratings Scale, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the last rating score to the baseline rating score for the sample of 45 youth. We observed a positive change in mean scores on nine of the ten scales, but only three of the differences were statistically significant: Employment, Financial Literacy, and Permanent Connections (Table 11). The negative change on the Mental Wellbeing and Substance Abuse Outcome Rating Scale could reflect the fact that youth become more comfortable disclosing challenges in these areas as their relationship with their coach grows stronger.

Table 11. Outcome Ratings Scales Scores for All Youth Ever Enrolled as of 5/31/2018 with At Least Two Sets of Outcome Rating Scale Scores (n=45; df=44)

Outcome Ratings Scale	Baseline Rating		Last Rating		95% CI for Mean Difference	t
	M	SD	M	SD		
Education	2.56	0.89	2.82	1.22	-0.57, 0.03	-1.82
Employment	2.38	0.83	2.92	1.08	-0.91, -0.19	-3.07*
Financial Literacy	2.2	0.81	2.82	0.96	-0.87, -0.37	-5.01*
Household Management	3.04	1.09	3.24	1.13	-0.55, 0.15	-1.14
Physical Health	3.49	0.99	3.58	0.84	-0.38, 0.2	-0.61
Safety	3.53	1.04	3.78	1.13	-0.58, 0.09	-1.48
Good Tenancy & Housing Stability	3.09	1.04	3.24	1.05	-0.44, 0.13	-1.1
Transportation	3.42	0.84	3.64	1.03	-0.58, 0.13	-1.26
Mental Wellbeing and Substance Use	3.24	0.93	3.20	0.94	-0.21, 0.3	0.35
Permanent Connections	2.42	0.97	2.98	1.06	-0.93, -0.18	-3.02*

* $p < .05$

We repeated our analysis after stratifying the sample based on the timing of the last completed Outcome Rating Scales (Table 12). Youth whose last Outcome Rating Scales were completed over a year after their enrollment experienced the largest gains. This could indicate that the longer youth remain in the program the more their outcomes improve. Alternatively, those who remain in the program longer may have been predisposed to fare better even without the program. More difficult to explain is why youth whose last Outcome Ratings Scales were completed 7-12 month after they enrolled scored lower on several of those measures than they had at baseline, although the differences were not statistically significant.

Table 12. Outcome Ratings Scales Scores for All Youth Ever Enrolled as of 5/31/2018 with At Least Two Sets of Outcome Rating Scale Scores – by Timing of Last Outcome Rating Scale

Last Rating within 6 months of enrollment (n=12; df=11)

Outcome Ratings Scale	Baseline Rating		Last Rating		95% CI for Mean Difference	t
	M	SD	M	SD		
Education	2.08	0.90	2.25	0.87	-0.76, 0.43	-0.62
Employment	2.25	0.75	2.60	0.93	-1.04, 0.34	-1.11
Financial Literacy	2.08	0.29	2.58	0.79	-1.07, 0.07	-1.91
Household Management	2.67	0.49	3.00	0.74	-0.9, 0.23	-1.3
Physical Health	3.25	0.87	3.67	0.65	-0.84, 0.01	-2.16
Safety	3.25	1.14	3.58	1.16	-1.12, 0.45	-0.94
Good Tenancy & Housing Stability	2.75	0.62	3.00	0.74	-0.8, 0.3	-1

Transportation	3.00	0.60	3.75	0.75	-1.14, -0.36	-4.18*
Mental Wellbeing and Substance Use	3.08	0.79	3.00	0.60	-0.42, 0.59	0.36
Permanent Connections	2.08	0.79	2.58	1.16	-1.38, 0.38	-1.25

Last Rating within 7-12 months of enrollment (n=17; df=16)

Outcome Ratings Scale	Baseline Rating		Last Rating		95% CI for Mean Difference	t
	M	SD	M	SD		
Education	2.76	0.97	3.24	1.54	-1.03, 0.08	-1.81
Employment	2.35	0.93	2.71	1.11	-1.02, 0.3	-1.15
Financial Literacy	2.00	0.87	2.47	0.72	-0.88, -0.06	-2.43*
Household Management	3.18	1.13	2.88	1.22	-0.36, 0.94	0.96
Physical Health	3.71	1.16	3.53	1.07	-0.48, 0.84	0.57
Safety	3.65	1.00	3.59	1.06	-0.61, 0.73	0.19
Good Tenancy & Housing Stability	3.18	1.19	3.00	0.94	-0.35, 0.7	0.72
Transportation	3.76	0.83	3.47	1.07	-0.38, 0.97	0.92
Mental Wellbeing and Substance Use	3.12	0.93	2.88	1.05	-0.19, 0.66	1.17
Permanent Connections	2.53	1.01	3.00	1.00	-1.13, 0.19	-1.52

Last rating 13+ months after enrollment (n=16; df=15)

Outcome Ratings Scale	Baseline Rating		Last Rating		95% CI for Mean Difference	t
	M	SD	M	SD		
Education	2.69	0.70	2.81	0.91	-0.64, 0.39	-0.52
Employment	2.50	0.82	3.39	1.04	-1.51, -0.28	-3.09*
Financial Literacy	2.50	0.97	3.38	1.09	-1.3, -0.45	-4.34*
Household Management	3.19	1.33	3.81	1.11	-1.24, -0.01	-2.18*
Physical Health	3.44	0.89	3.56	0.73	-0.51, 0.26	-0.7
Safety	3.63	1.02	4.13	1.15	-0.89, -0.11	-2.74*
Good Tenancy & Housing Stability	3.25	1.13	3.69	1.25	-0.91, 0.04	-1.96
Transportation	3.38	0.89	3.75	1.18	-1.02, 0.27	-1.25
Mental Wellbeing and Substance Use	3.50	1.03	3.69	0.87	-0.67, 0.3	-0.82
Permanent Connections	2.56	1.03	3.25	1.00	-1.29, -0.08	-2.42*

* $p < .05$

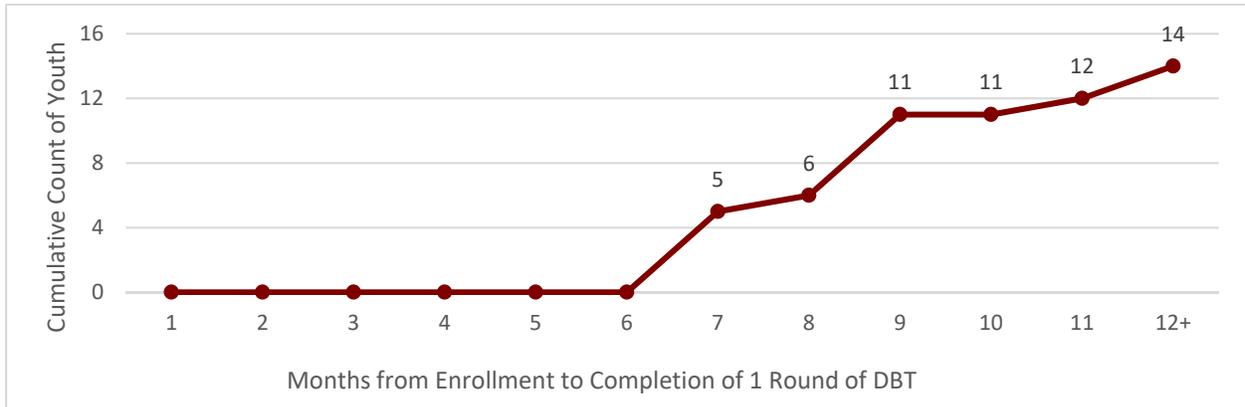
Although these results are encouraging, they should be interpreted with caution. There is no comparison group and we don't know how youth might have progressed if they had received "services as usual." Additionally, we are missing a second set of Outcome Rating Scale scores for nearly 40% of the youth who had enrolled in the program by May 2018. Most of those youth are missing a second set of scores is that they exited the program with six months after they enrolled. The results of our analysis could have been very different depending on the progress these youth had made in each of the outcome domains.

Youth Who Completed One Round of DBT

Although youth do not graduate from the program until they have completed two full rounds of DBT, which takes an average of 14 months. Only seven youth had graduated as of May 2019. However, 21

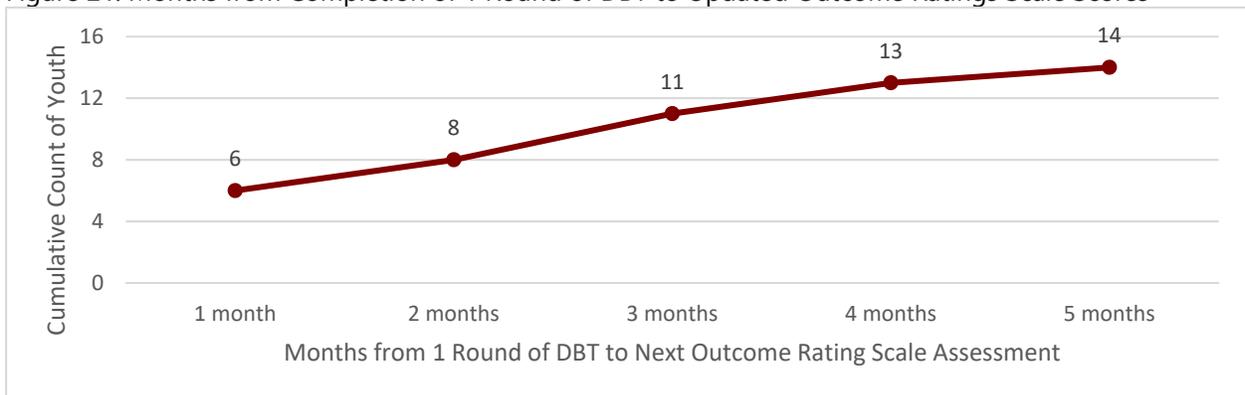
youth had completed at least 1 full round of DBT, and 14 of those youth completed Outcome Rating Scales scores after reaching that milestone. It took those 14 youth an average of 10 months to complete one round of DBT (Figure 20).

Figure 20. Months from Enrollment to Completion of 1 Round of DBT



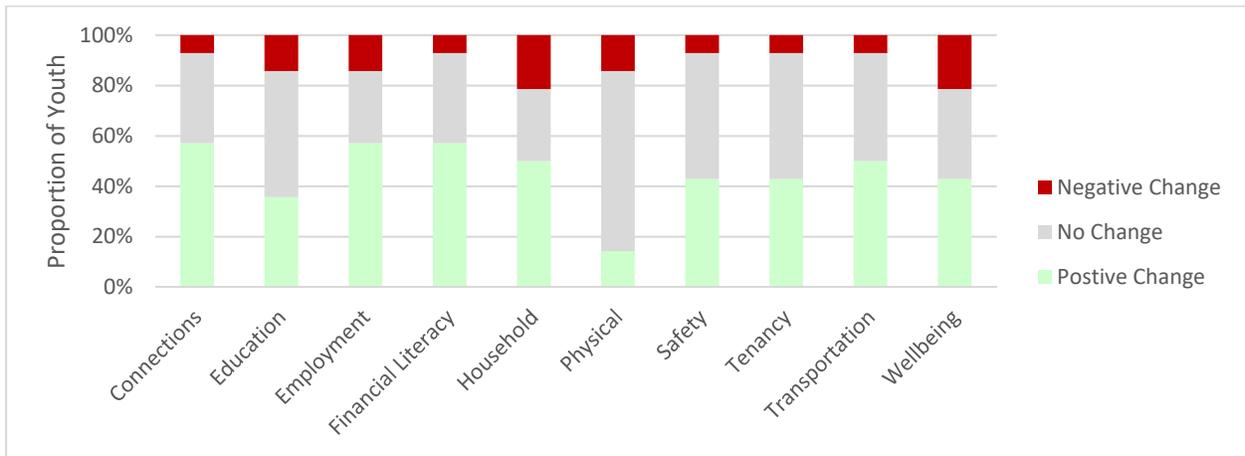
It took 2 months, on average, to update the outcome rating scale scores of those 14 youth (Figure 21).

Figure 21. Months from Completion of 1 Round of DBT to Updated Outcome Ratings Scale Scores



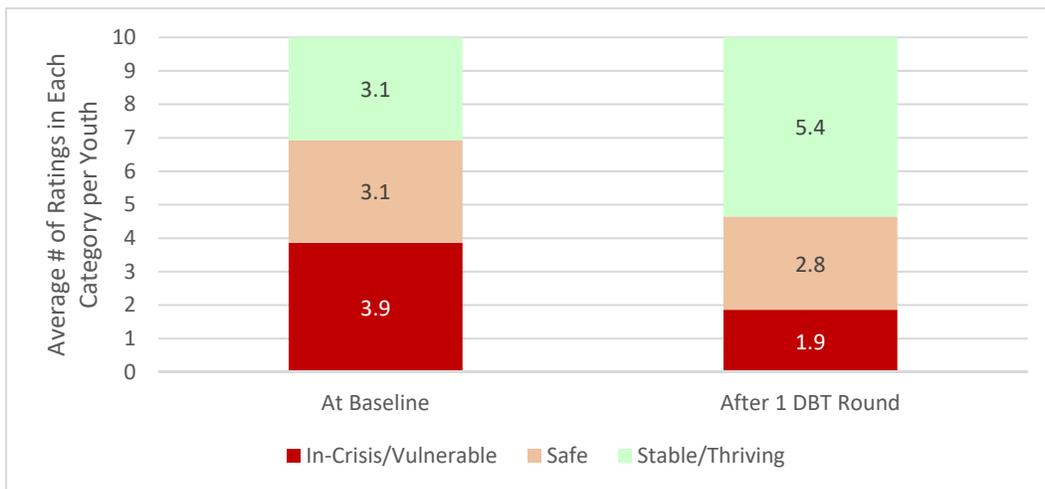
All 14 youth experienced a positive change in at least 1 outcome domain, and 10 youth experienced negative change in at least one outcome domain. Positive changes were most likely to be observed in the following outcome rating areas: Permanent Connections, Employment, Financial Literacy, Household, and Transportation (Figure 22).

Figure 22. Proportion of Youth with a Change in Outcome Rating Scales Scores by Rating Dimension



At baseline, each of the 14 youth had, on average, 3.9 rating scale scores at the In-Crisis or Vulnerable level and 3.1 ratings at the Stable or Thriving levels (Figure 23). After 1 round of DBT, youth had an average of 1.9 ratings at the In-Crisis or Vulnerable levels and an average of 5.4 ratings at the Stable or Thriving levels.

Figure 23. Average Number of Outcome Rating Scales Scores by Category at Baseline and After 1 Round of DBT



Although these results are encouraging, they should be interpreted with caution. At this point, we only have updated outcome rating scales scores for 14 youth, and the scores for three of those youth were not updated until at least four months after they completed their first round of DBT. Additionally, one third of the 21 youth who completed one round of DBT did not receive Outcome Rating Skills scores after they reached that milestone.

Suggested modifications

No modifications are suggested, but continued monitoring of this outcome is encouraged.

RQ5.4: Do youth show increased placement stability?

Running away while in foster care and placement instability have both been found to be associated with an increase in the relative risk for homelessness among youth who age out of care.²⁵ To examine the impact that YTP participation may have had on placement instability and running away, we used child-level California placement data in the FCDA dataset. The FCDA California data include all placement activity from January 1, 2000 through December 31, 2018.

To examine placement instability, we compared the mean number of placements youth experienced 6 months, 12 months, and 18 months prior to YTP enrollment to the mean number of placements they experienced 6 months, 12 months, and 18 months after YTP enrollment (Table 7). We limited our sample to youth whose post-enrollment placement activity was fully observable. Given that we only placement data through December 30, 2018, this meant that youth who enrolled in YTP after June 2018 were excluded.²⁶ We also excluded youth who enrolled in YTP for a second time because of the potential overlap between the 18 months prior to their second enrollment date and their first period of enrollment.

The results suggest that YTP involvement may increase placement stability six, twelve, and eighteen months after enrollment (Table 13). For example, the average number of placements youth experienced was significantly higher during the eighteen months prior to YTP enrollment (3.23) than during the eighteen months after YTP enrollment (1.90).

Table 13. Number of Placements in 6, 12, and 18 Months Pre- and Post-Enrollment for Youth who Enrolled in YTP for the First Time

Outcome	Pre-YTP Enrollment		Post-YTP Enrollment		n	95% CI for Mean Difference	t	df
	M	SD	M	SD				
Placements in 6 months	1.09	1.1	0.7	0.85	75	0.07, 0.68	2.42*	74
Placements in 12 months	2.26	1.82	1.5	1.39	53	0.32, 1.31	3.28*	52
Placements in 18 months	3.23	2.16	1.9	0.8	35	0.65, 2.09	3.89*	34

* $p < .05$

Because the effect of participation in YTP on placement stability may depend on how long youth are in the program, we compared the mean number of placements youth experienced 18 months prior to YTP enrollment to the mean number of placements they experienced 18 months after YTP enrollment for four groups of youth: those who stayed in the program 0 to 3 months, those who stayed in the program 4 to 6 months, those who stayed in the program 7 to 12 months and those who stayed in the program more than 12 months (Table 14). For all four groups, the mean of placements was lower in the 18 months after enrollment than in the 18 months before enrollment. However, we can't say conclusively that this reduction in placement changes was due to YTP. It could be that placement changes normally become less frequent as youth grow older, or, that stable placements made it easier for youth to participate in the

²⁵ Dworsky, A., Napolitano, L., & Courtney, M. (2013). Homelessness during the transition from foster care to adulthood. *American Journal of Public Health, 103*(Suppl 2), S318–S323.

²⁶ For example, if a youth enrolled in YTP on 12/1/2017, their 12 month pre-YTP enrollment observation window would be from 11/30/2016 through 11/30/2017, and their 12 month post-YTP enrollment observation window would be from 12/1/2017 through 12/1/2018. However, this youth would be excluded from the 18 month observation window analysis because their 18 month post-YTP enrollment activity would be incomplete because the FCDA data have a 12/31/2018 censoring date.

program. Key to understanding YTP’s impact on placement stability will be knowing how much placement instability youth typically experience when they receive “services as usual.”

Table 14. Number of Placements in 18 Months Pre- and Post-Enrollment for First Entrants by YTP Program Duration

Placements in 18 Months Duration in YTP	Pre-YTP Enrollment		Post-YTP Enrollment		n
	M	SD	M	SD	
0-3 months	3.75	3.10	3.10	1.50	4
4-6 months	4.40	2.50	2.50	2.74	10
7-12 months	2.80	1.32	1.32	1.03	10
12+ months	2.36	1.80	1.80	1.69	11

While not conclusive, these results suggest that YTP may have a positive effect on placement stability. This is an area that future evaluations should explore.

Suggested modifications

Key to understanding YTP’s impact on placement stability will be knowing how much placement instability youth typically experience when they receive “services as usual.” We suggest an exploration is done of how placement stability changes for youth in Alameda County under business as usual circumstances.

RQ5.5: Do youth show a decrease in AWOLs/runaways?

To examine whether YTP participation was associated with a reduction in the number of times youth ran away, we conducted a paired-samples t-test that compared the mean number of times youth ran away 6 months, 12 months, and 18 months prior to YTP enrollment and to the mean number of times youth ran away 6 months, 12 months, and 18 months after YTP enrollment. Once again, the sample size was adjusted to only include youth whose post-enrollment placement activity was not censored and youth who enrolled in YTP a second time were excluded.

Table 15 shows that the change in means is in the direction of fewer runaways but none of the differences are statistically significant. These results suggest that YTP involvement has not had a significant impact on the frequency of running away within 6, 12 or 18 months after enrollment. However, the number of runaways is generally low which would make it difficult to detect a change.

Table 15. Number of Runaways in 6 Months, 12 Months, and 18 Months Pre- and Post-Enrollment for First Entrants

Outcome	Pre-YTP Enrollment		Post-YTP Enrollment		n	95% CI for Mean Difference	r	t	df
	M	SD	M	SD					
Runaways in 6 months	0.07	0.3	0.2	0.45	75	-0.13, 0.07	0.07	-0.53	74
Runaways in 12 months	0.26	0.65	0.25	0.65	53	-0.23, 0.27	0.03	0.15	52
Runaways in 18 months	0.46	1.04	0.31	0.8	35	-0.26, 0.54	0.21	0.72	34

* $p < .05$

These results should be interpreted with caution due to the lack of a comparison group and differences in the length of time that youth were enrolled in the program.

Suggested modifications

No modifications are suggested, but continued monitoring of this outcome is encouraged.

Appendices

Appendix A – YTP Assessment

Appendix B – YTP Action Plan

Appendix C – DBT-WCCL

Appendix D – Youth Demographics

Appendix E – YTP Enrollment Process Mapping

Appendix G – Transition Age Youth Literature Review Memo

Appendix H – Completed Goal Detail