

Nebraska Center for Justice Research

Evaluation of the Crossover Youth Practice Model (Youth Impact!): Executive Summary

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UNIVERSITY OF
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Executive Summary

This project evaluated the Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM) – now Youth Impact! (YI!) – in Douglas County, Nebraska. The goals of the project were: a) to conduct an outcome evaluation of the initiative (does YI! decrease recidivism and increase prosocial outcomes among youth?), b) to conduct a process evaluation of the initiative (how does YI! achieve these goals?), c) conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the initiative, and d) explore a broader systems analysis of the impact of YI! on juvenile justice in Douglas County. The findings from the evaluation are presented below, and recommendations are provided as well.

Data and Methodology: This evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, which included quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data includes three separate groups: the comparison group (n=562, consisting of crossover youth one year prior to the YI! implementation in Douglas County; these youth did not receive an intervention and represents a “business as usual” approach to responding to dually-involved youth); the CYPM-Full Treatment group (n=215; this group received the full intervention, including a YI! team/decision meeting, case plan, interagency meeting, and multidisciplinary meeting), and the CYPM-Eligible group (n=127; these youth were YI! eligible, but for various reasons, were unable to have a team/decision meeting, case plan, interagency or multidisciplinary meeting). Additionally, qualitative data was gathered from 13 YI! team members approximately 3 years after implementation (Spring 2015).

Outcome Evaluation: Is Youth Impact! Effective?

The evaluation assessed several specific outcomes of Youth Impact! (see Appendices B-E for full results). We found that YI! is effective regarding several indicators of case processing, recidivism, and social and behavioral outcomes (see the boxes below). Recidivism included arrests for: assaults, drug/alcohol use or possession, theft, property offenses, weapons, arson, disorderly conduct/disturbing the peace, DUI/DWI, obstruction, robbery, providing false information, and criminal mischief/attempt.

Case Processing Outcomes	Recidivism Outcomes	Social/Behavioral Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in number of youth diverted or dismissed • Increase in numbers of delinquency & dependency case closures post-identification • Reduction in new sustained JJ petitions post-identification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced likelihood of receiving any new arrests 9 months after identification • Fewer numbers of new arrests 9 months after identification • Longer time to recidivate • Arrested for less serious or less violent crimes (theft) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better living situation 9 months post-identification (at home) • Fewer group home/congregate care placements • Fewer detention or correctional facility placements • Improved prosocial behavior

Process Evaluation: How Is Youth Impact! Effective?

The process evaluation sought to understand how YI! achieves positive results (see Appendices F-G for full results). Primarily, Youth Impact! achieves its goals by increasing communication, collaboration, and information sharing between decision-makers who work in the juvenile justice system (Juvenile Assessment Center, Nebraska

Probation, Douglas County Attorney), **the child welfare system** (Department of Health and Human Services, Nebraska Families Collaborative), **and other service providers** (e.g., Nebraska Family Support Network, Omaha Public Schools, etc). The “team” meets regularly and often (once a week) to discuss new and ongoing crossover cases. They share information that is often available to only one agency (e.g., DHHS) with others involved in the decision-making and case planning process. This information sharing allows attorneys, case managers, and so forth **to get a better “whole picture” of the youth’s situation**, which in turn, leads to better, more-informed, and timely case-processing decisions (e.g., to file, divert, or enhance services for the crossover youth) and case-management oversight. YI! team members reported that the **reduction in information silos across agencies improved decision-making and service delivery, reduced duplication of services and resources, and enhanced agency personnel and crossover youth satisfaction with the process.**



Cost-Benefit Analysis: Is Youth Impact! Cost-Effective?

The cost-benefit analysis sought to determine the relative costs and benefits of the program as compared to the previous handling of crossover youth. This analysis assesses “system” costs to determine if the added burden of agency collaboration in the YI! initiative is offset by cost-savings due to lowering formal court processing and use of Juvenile Probation. Findings (see Appendix H for full details) estimate YI! implementation costs of \$59,752, annual costs of administration at \$212,264, and annual benefits of \$385,425. Thus, **YI! results in a net benefit of \$173,161 per year and paid for the costs of its implementation within the first year of operation.** It is estimated that the need for four full-time probation officers for high-risk youth are avoided as a result of YI! and saves approximately \$1,475 in court costs per youth in Douglas County who are diverted. Our estimates are conservative but point to the fiscal benefit of YI!

Systems Analysis: What Impact Does Youth Impact! Have on Juvenile Justice in Douglas County?

The Youth Impact! initiative is largely considered a mini-collective impact, defining “collective impact” as “bringing people together in a structured way, to achieve social change” (The Collective Impact Forum). This is because YI! brings together multiple agencies from different systems (juvenile justice and child welfare) to collaborate and share information in order to better respond to and serve crossover youth in Douglas County. **The initiative has brought meaningful change to juvenile justice in Douglas County, primarily by increasing trust and enhancing relationships between juvenile justice and child welfare professionals, by increasing communication and information-sharing between the two systems, and by reducing the number of filings of youth in the system** (see Appendix I for full results). Further, personnel from both systems reported that they have learned a lot about: a) other agencies’ roles and responsibilities, b) problems faced by crossover youth and their families, c) trauma-informed services, and d) case management/planning for crossover youth. The team members also reported that cross-agency trainings and brown-bag sessions enhanced their understanding of systematic, team-oriented, and family-oriented responses to crossover youth in Douglas County. **Overall, team members agreed that responses to crossover youth’s problems were more accurate and that decisions about whether to file, divert, or enhance services to these youths were better informed.** A significant negative impact to be addressed is the costs and personnel time



required for the YI! to run efficiently, and the perceptions by naysayers that the initiative is only temporary or is too soft on delinquency and does not hold youth accountable.

What Do These Results Mean?

The Youth Impact! initiative is creating meaningful and positive change for the way multi-agency cases are handled in Douglas County. Given that justice-involved youth often experience a multitude of social and family problems (e.g., poverty, school problems, mental health, and/or violence), a multi-systems response is needed so that professionals from various backgrounds and expertise can respond more effectively. Our conclusions are as follows:

1. **Youth Impact! is Effective.** This evaluation found that YI! was effective across several levels of juvenile justice and child welfare: a) **system level** (e.g., better decisions, cost-benefit), b) **case-level** (e.g., more efficient case processing, case closure, fewer new sustained petitions, higher diversion and dismissals, reduced entrenchment in the system), c) **team-level** (e.g., improved relationships, decisions, and satisfaction), and d) **youth-level** (e.g., more dismissals/diversion, lower recidivism, better living situation post-identification, improved behavioral performance). Sharing information about crossover cases not only leads to better, more well-informed decisions, but the process also strengthens working relationships and trust among those involved.
2. **Youth Impact! is Cost-Effective.** Initial implementation in Douglas County is estimated to have cost \$59,752. Of this total, \$25,500 was data system costs and the remainder was staffing costs for implementation meetings. In addition, a systematic calculation of system costs and benefits provide an annual estimate of Net Benefit of \$173,161, suggesting that YI! more than pays for itself within the first year of administration.
3. **Youth Impact! Represents a “Best Practice” for System Integration and Collaboration.** YI! represents a better way to respond to crossover youth. The more research that is being conducted nationwide suggests that cross-systems collaboration and information sharing is vital to the improvement of case processing, management and services for crossover youth.

Recommendations: We have several specific recommendations for Youth Impact! (see Appendices J-K):

1. **Continue to Support Youth Impact! in Douglas County.** More generally, more counties in Nebraska should adopt and implement CYPM efforts. Further, Nebraska counties which are implementing CYPM efforts should look to the Douglas County YI! initiative for consultation.
2. **Give Youth Impact! support and formal organization in Douglas County** with: a) a formal management/leadership team, b) dedicated staff positions (for case processing, case management/planning, and data analysis), and c) inter-agency institutionalized policies that allow for across-agency information sharing and collaboration.
3. **Support “succession planning” activities** for Youth Impact!, including: a) creating and maintaining policy and procedure manuals so that even new members can “learn the ropes” quickly; b) have multiple persons in leadership positions (like the chair and co-chair) in case turnover occurs, and c) provide adequate resources to crossover positions to make these positions desirable as long-term careers.
4. **Administrators should consider treating crossover positions as specialty positions.** The complexities of the cases and dual involvement truly necessitate a deeper understanding of issues involving trauma, abuse, family dysfunction, and delinquency. As such, crossover staff should be trained to tackle these issues and provided an understanding of the other system(s) in which the youth is involved. A specialty position (one of commensurate pay, benefits, and the necessary training and education) may also have less turnover than other staff positions.
5. Encourage JJS and CWS administration to **continue to think of and support creative ways to overcome barriers to system integration**, including ways to identify crossover youth, easily share sensitive case information, institutionalize multisystems collaborations, and foster cross-agency trainings.





For more information on the contents of this report, please contact:

Emily M. Wright, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, School of Criminology & Criminal Justice
Associate Director, Nebraska Center for Justice Research
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Phone: 402.554.3898
emwright@unomaha.edu

Ryan Spohn, Ph.D.
Director, Nebraska Center for Justice Research
University of Nebraska at Omaha
6001 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68182-0310
Phone (402) 554-3794

Joselyn L. Chenane, M.A.
Ph.D. Candidate, School of Criminology & Criminal Justice
Research Assistant, Nebraska Center for Justice Research
University of Nebraska at Omaha

www.justiceresearch.unomaha.edu