



★ Valley Star Community Services ★

Valley Star Interagency Youth Resiliency Team (IYRT) Program

BRIEF REPORT from the Department of Research and Program Practices

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The Valley Star Interagency Youth Resiliency Team (IYRT) Program served system-involved young people and their caregivers through mentoring, workshops and training. The program had two goals: 1. Help youth and caregivers build an understanding of the negative impact of grief, loss, and exposure to violence and trauma on youth; 2. Help youth and caregivers build knowledge, skills and connections to services and resources needed to help cope with these issues. The Valley Star IYRT, supported by the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), was part of an MHSA Innovation* (INN) project in at the Department of Behavioral Health of San Bernardino County. Over 120 youth and 51 caregivers were served by Valley Star from the start of the program in July 2012 until the project ended in June of 2015. Here in this **BRIEF REPORT**, we present outcome highlights from the most recent year and a half (January 2014 to June 2015).

Participants:

Youth participants were system-involved (79%) or at high risk for system involvement (21%) in either child welfare (76%), juvenile probation (11%) or both (13%). Youth were from Redlands, 24%; City of San Bernardino, 21%; Colton, 17%; Highland, 11%; Yucaipa, 11%; Mentone, 7%; and Rialto, 6%. They were 60% male and 40%; with 39% identifying as Latino, 23% as African American, 23% as White, 3% as Asian, and 11% as other or declined to respond. Ages of youth ranged from 11 to 22; the median age was 16 years.

The caregiver participants (or “resource providers”) mentored in the program were biological parents (51%), foster parents (6%), group home providers (10%), adopted parents (3%), and other relatives in caregiving roles (29%). Other key people such as child welfare workers and probation officers were welcome to participate in workshops as professionals.

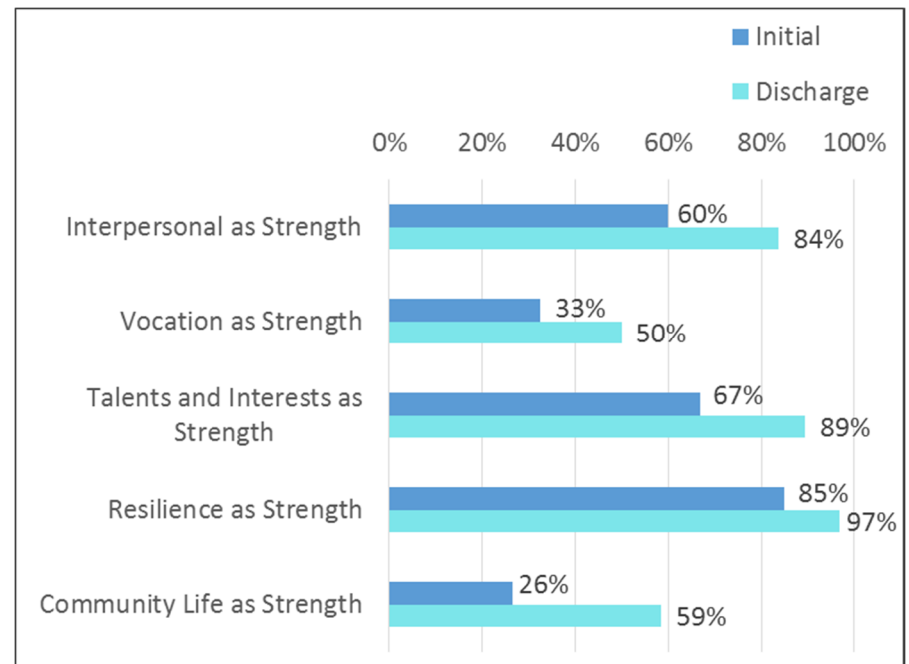
Over the span of the program, youth and caregivers were mentored by 27 youth mentors and 9 caregiver mentors and attended workshops and events. Workshop topics for mentors and mentees included assertiveness training, positive youth development, pro-social skill development, skill-rehearsal, and the impact of trauma on youth. The mentors were selected to have common lived experiences with the child welfare system, with the juvenile justice system and with mental health issues, as well as having similar cultural backgrounds to the mentees and a passion for mentoring.

Outcomes:

Building an understanding:

Youth and caregiver participants both reported that they now understood how experiencing grief and loss, and experiencing trauma can have very negative effects on youth, creating unresolved

Youth Strengths Improved Between Initial and Discharge Measures (improvement seen as increase; CANS-SB, n=117)



emotional and behavioral issues. At the same time, they also learned that with help from people you can trust and sometimes with professional counseling, things can get better (*Youth Participant Survey*):

Q13. I think that getting help makes it easier to cope with problems. 92% agreed or strongly agreed

Caregivers reported they understood youth's grief and loss better, and felt more able to connect with their youth (*Caregiver Participant Survey*):

Q23. I am more knowledgeable about the negative effect of grief, loss, and trauma on youth. *80% agreed or strongly agreed*

Q22. I am more likely to discuss difficult issues with youth. *100% agreed or strongly agreed*

Connections to family and community, and linkage to needed services, and emotional and behavioral well-being:

As described in the goals of the program, IYRT was first an effort to build understanding; then second, to let that understanding lead the way to better coping and better relationships, both interpersonally and to the community.

In the CANS-SB results, we can see that **youth's issues with social functioning and issues related to family both decreased during participation (chart on second page). Furthermore, youth's ability to create and maintain long-term relationships (interpersonal strengths) and ability to participate fully in community (community life as strength) both improved during participation (chart on first page).** The youth in our program clearly benefitted on the program's emphasis on community and building long-term meaningful relationships.

With participation, youth expressed greater willingness to get help through friends, family and professional counseling when they needed it (*Youth Participant Survey*):

Q12. I know where I can get help for a personal or emotional problem. *92% agreed or strongly agreed*

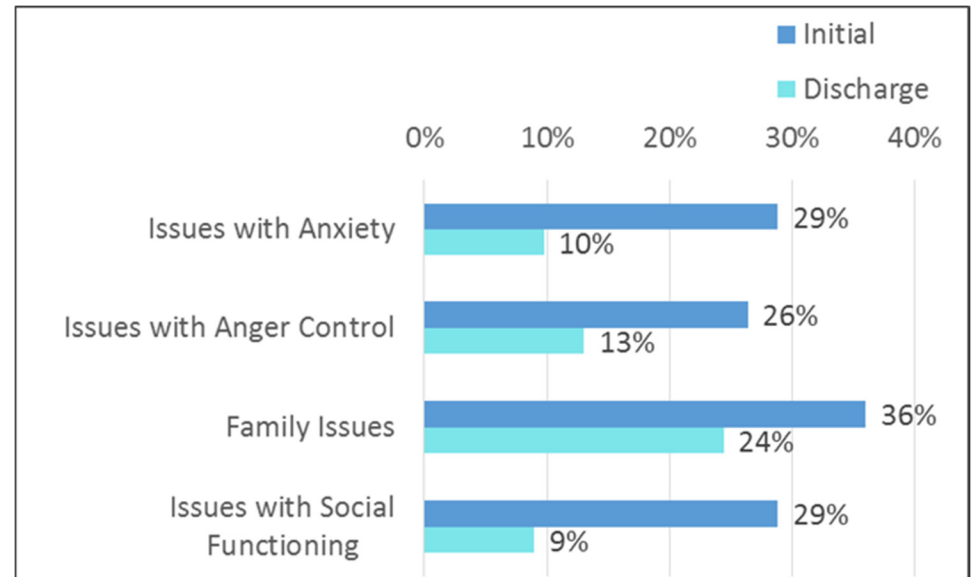
Q15. I feel better about asking a friend or relative for help with a personal or emotional problem. *92% agreed or strongly agreed*

Caregivers also expressed a greater willingness to get help from friends and family (80%), and from professional counseling (73%); in fact, 43% of surveyed caregiver mentees engaged in mental health services as a result of taking part in the Valley Star IYRT program.

Importantly, caregivers also felt closer with the youth they cared for:

Q 25. I have built a better attachment with youth. *(80% agreed or strongly agreed)*

Youth Issues Improved Between Initial and Discharge Measures (improvement seen as decrease; CANS-SB, n=117)



Emotional well-being now and in the future:

Youth built on their strengths during program participation, and took on their emotional and behavior issues. **The strengths of vocational involvement and youth's talents and interests became significantly stronger; youth's resilience, already strong, became stronger still (chart on first page).**

Likewise, the youth's issues with anxiety and anger, the most severe of the emotional issues seen in participants, both decreased significantly (chart on second page). Youth recognized that they had improved in how they coped with the effects of the hardships they had experienced (*Youth Participant Survey*):

Q26. I handle feelings of grief and loss better. (100%)

Graduation: **Of those youth who participated, 56% successfully graduated** (19% left without explanation and 25% left after disengaging). Youth felt the experience was worthwhile (*Youth Participant Survey*):

Q17. My life has improved. (88% agreed or strongly agreed)

We at Valley Star are very impressed with the strength and resilience of the youth we served, and look forward to contributing further to the wellness of the whole community in future projects!

*The Valley Star Interagency Youth Resiliency Team (IYRT) was part of the County of San Bernardino's Department of Behavior Health Innovation (INN) IYRT project. The Innovation projects are supported by the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) and the California Department of Health Care Services. IYRT (INN-05) was intended to increase the access of system-involved youth to behavioral health care. Valley Star IYRT and Valley Star Community Services are part *Stars Behavioral Health Group* (SBHG), a statewide provider of behavioral health care and related educational and social services to children, adolescents, young adults and adults and their family members.