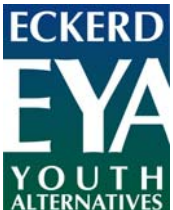




Eckerd Wilderness Educational System

Evaluation Report - Fiscal Year 2005
NORTH CAROLINA



Eckerd Youth Alternatives, Inc.
Improving The Future, One Child At A Time

Eckerd Wilderness Educational System Evaluation Report (FY 2005)

Introduction

As a condition of program expansion in the 1998 Juvenile Reform Act, the North Carolina General Assembly requires annual evaluations of many of the programs that are approved for funding.

This report will examine the North Carolina Eckerd Wilderness Educational System by looking at:

- Services provided to the clients
- Demographics of those served
- Behavioral changes and academic growth of youth while in the programs
- Follow-up evaluation of the programs' long-range impact
- Cost benefits to the state

Services Provided

The North Carolina Eckerd programs serve boys and girls, ages 10 through 16, with behavioral, emotional and delinquency problems. The Eckerd Wilderness Educational System offers year-round, staff-secure, residential therapeutic programs, providing an alternative to more restrictive settings. Counselor-teachers live with the youth in groups of ten that are designed to promote self-esteem, personal responsibility, problem-solving skills, communication skills, and self-discipline. Group activities are the medium for problem-solving and interpersonal skill development. Youth learn immediate cause and effect relationships as they live with the natural consequences of their own decisions, choices, and behaviors.

Experiential education and individual instruction promote positive attitudes towards learning while strengthening basic skills. Youth earn educational credits during the program and are assisted with reentry into public schools. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accredits the North Carolina programs as experiential learning centers. In addition, each program is also fully accredited by the Council on Accreditation and licensed by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

Family workers provide ongoing services to the parents while their children are enrolled in the program. These services are directed toward strengthening parental skills and abilities to influence their child's learning, improving their capacity to provide a positive home environment, and connecting with community resources. The family worker is the liaison between programs and the family and provides counseling, crisis intervention, and case management services. In most locations, family workers also facilitate parent groups.

Youth Profile

Youth who enter EYA North Carolina programs come with a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge. They are often absent from school in the months prior to admission due to truancy, suspension, or expulsion. They have difficulty with anger management, verbalizing their thoughts and feelings, and self-esteem. Relationships with their families, peers, and adults in authority are often difficult for them. They tend to rebel against rules and structure, some by running away, some through aggression, and some by withdrawing emotionally. They arrive at the programs unhappy with themselves and troubling to others. With all of this in mind, it is EYA's goal to help youth move to a better place in their lives, through treatment and understanding.

Fiscal Year 2005

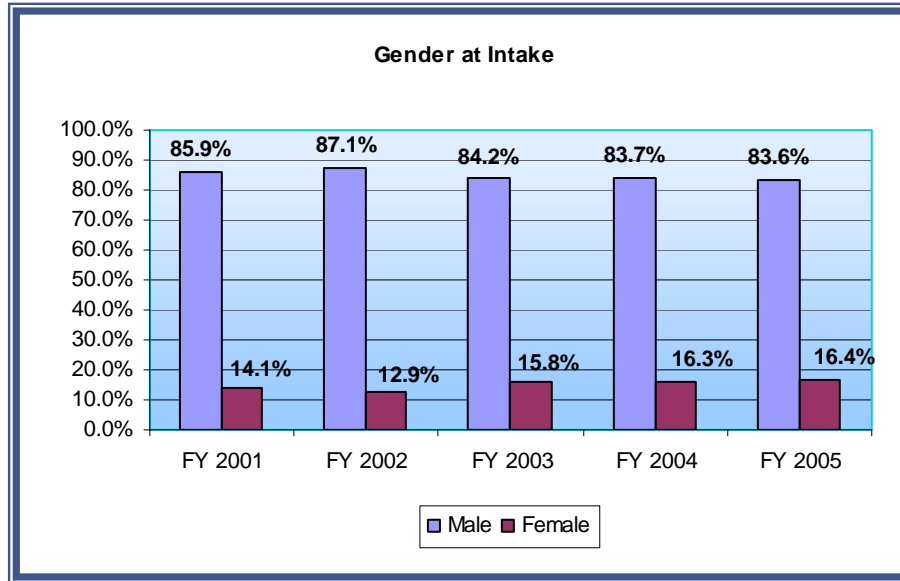
In FY 2005, 384 of the youth that entered EYA North Carolina programs were funded by the North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. This total included 22 committed youth who would have otherwise been assigned to the State's training schools. Note: EYA's fiscal year runs from July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2005.



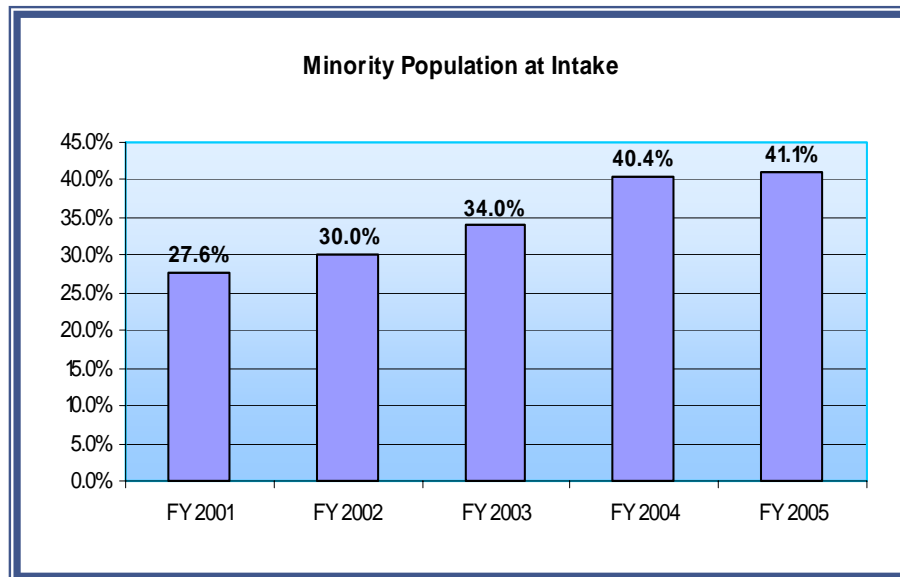
Demographics at Intake

Youth who entered EYA North Carolina programs had the following characteristics at intake:

- Average age of 14.6, average grade level of 8.1
- 61.2% were 14 or 15 years of age and 83.3% were in the seventh, eighth, or ninth grade
- 45.1% came from single parent homes and 10.2% came from a home where no parent was present
- 26.3% were identified as having substance abuse issues, 31.3% had parents who abused alcohol and/or drugs and 16.7% have had at least one parent incarcerated
- 34.4% were classified as special education students



The percentage of females (16.4%) is the highest in the last five years.

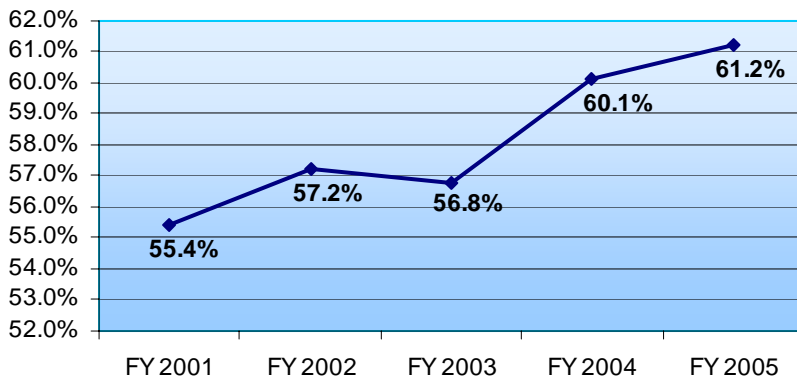


The percentage of minority youth has increased over the last five years from 27.6% in FY 2001 to 41.1% in FY 2005.

The percentage of minority youth has increased 13.5 percentage points since FY 2001.

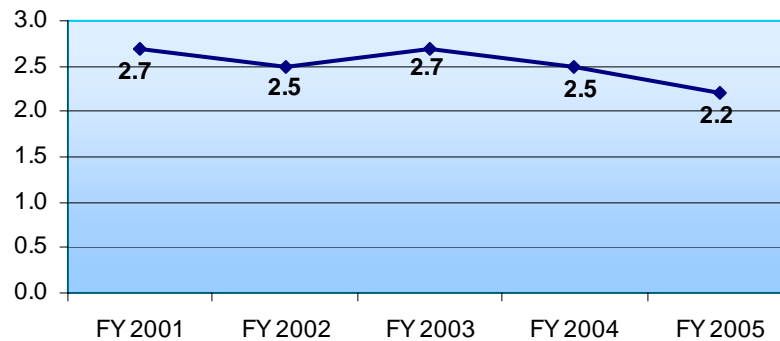


Percent of Youth with Offenses at Intake



The percentage of youth with offenses in FY 2005 increased to 61.2%, the highest rate in five years .

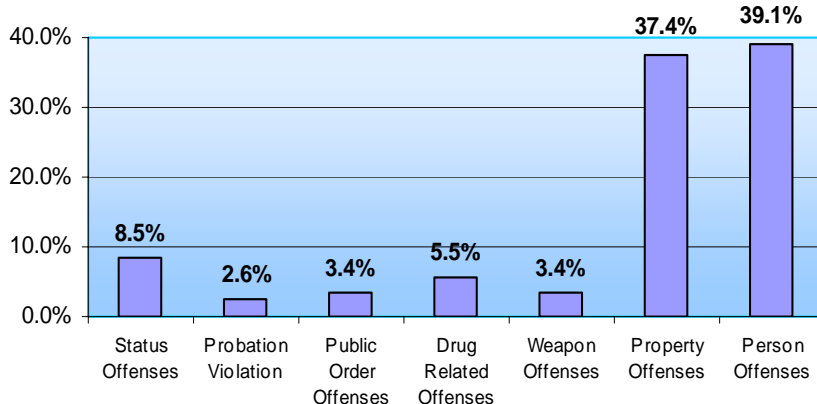
Average Number of Offenses for Youth with Offenses at Intake



The average number of offenses for youth with at least one offense continues a downward trend to the lowest in the last five years at 2.2.

45.1% of youth came from single parent homes and 10.2% came from homes where no parent was present.

Most Serious Offense at Intake

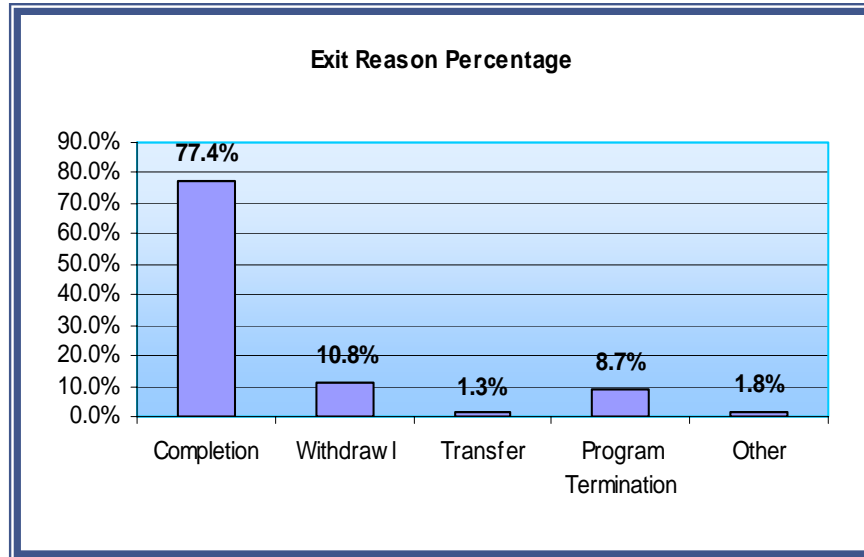


Of youth with offenses at intake, 76.5% have person or property offenses. This number is slightly up from the 74.4% that committed property or person offenses in FY 2004.



Exit Information

Of the 380 youth exiting programs in FY 2005, 77.4% completed their identified treatment goals and objectives. The average length of stay for all graduates was 10.8 months. This was very close to last year's average length of stay of 10.7 months.

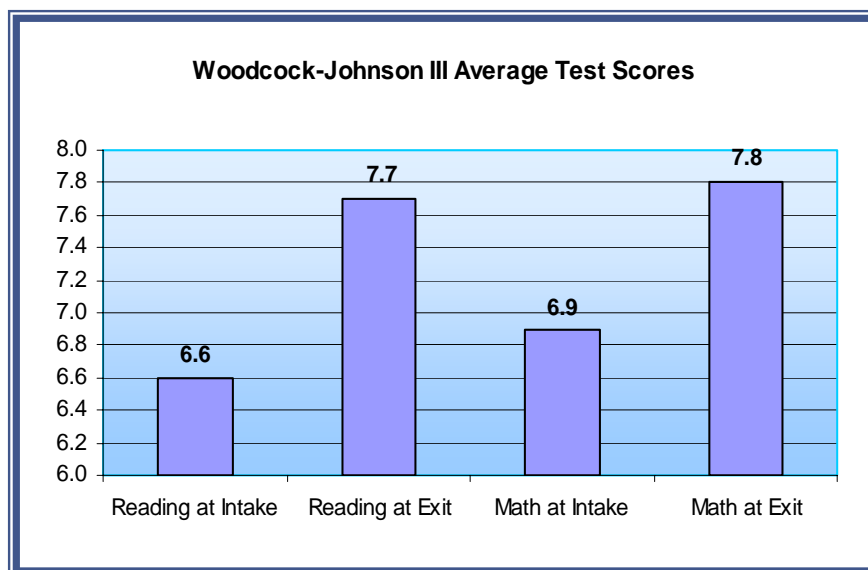


Behavioral Changes

The Piers Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale is a brief, self-report test designed to aid in the assessment of self-concept in youth. An increase in total score from pre-test to post-test indicates gains in self-esteem. For FY 2005 the average pre-test total score was 51.8, the average post-test total score was 60.5 and the overall average percentage gain from pre-test to post-test was 19.7%.

Academic Growth

The North Carolina contract provides that youth served by Eckerd show progress in academic achievement while assigned to a program. The experiential learning component that is built into all aspects of the program is designed to ensure that youth do not lose ground when they return to their home schools. The Woodcock Johnson - III Tests of Achievement is used to measure academic progress in reading and math. Scores indicate the pre-test and post-test scores in terms of grade placement. The graph below indicates that students advanced an average of 1.1 grade levels in reading and 0.9 grade levels in math during their stay.



Students advanced an average of 1.1 grade levels in reading and 0.9 grade levels in math during their stay.



Long Range Benefits at 6 and 12 Months Follow-up

North Carolina Completers from July 1, 2003–June 30, 2004

The annual contract between the North Carolina Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and Eckerd Youth Alternatives, Inc., requires Eckerd to conduct follow up evaluations at 6-month and 12-month intervals on each completer.

The most recent follow-up report shows the 6-month and 12-month contact with completers from FY 2005. Data was collected at 6-month follow-up for 292 graduates and at 12-month follow-up on 278 graduates. This report provides a summary of living status, subsequent delinquency, mental health services, and educational/vocational status for youth who complete the program.

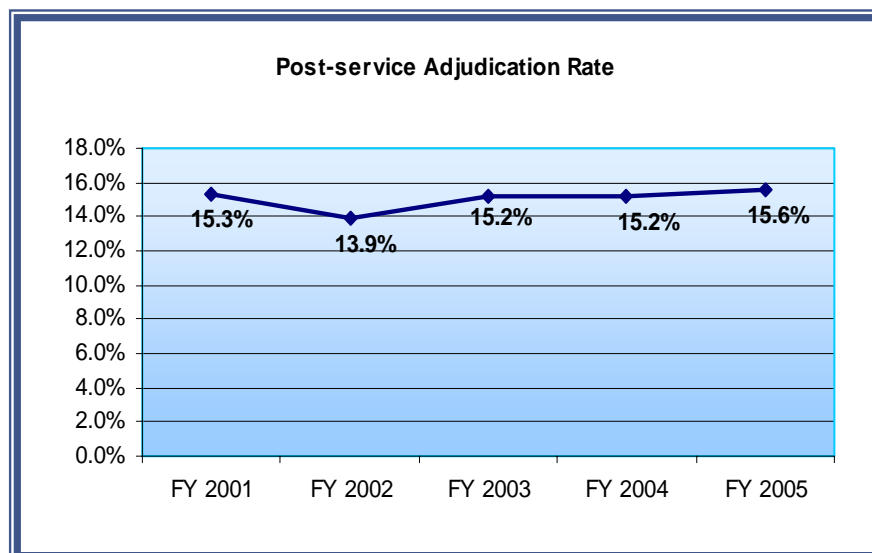
Living Status at 6 and 12-Months Post-Service	6-Months	12-Months
Two Parent Home—Biological and/or Adoptive	15.4%	16.9%
Single Parent	47.3%	41.0%
Parent and Step—Parent or Partner	24.0%	21.6%
Relative	5.8%	9.7%
Foster Home or Group Home	2.1%	2.9%
Other*	5.5%	7.9%

*Other is defined as Independent Living, Living with a Friend, Mental Health Placement or Delinquency Placement.

Subsequent Delinquency within 12-Months of Completion

Post-Service Adjudication Percentage of youth convicted of any new offense or technical violation in either juvenile or adult court	15.6%
Post-Service Supervision Percentage of youth on probation or under court ordered supervision	5.9%
Post-Service Placement Percentage of youth placed in a residential setting as or more restrictive than the program	4.3%

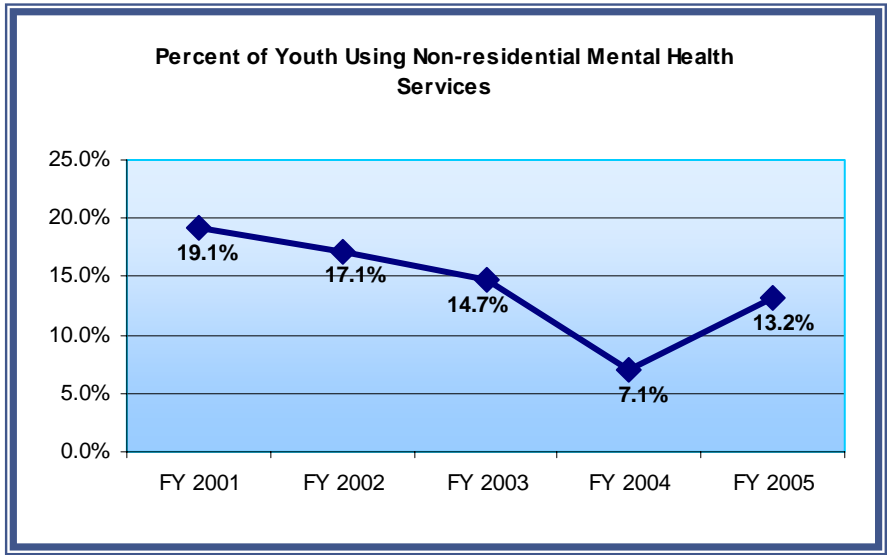
Although the percentage of youth with offenses at intake continues to increase, the post-service adjudication rate has remained fairly consistent over the last five years with a slight increase in FY 2005.



The recidivism rate has remained consistently low over the last five years and is 15.6% in FY 2005.



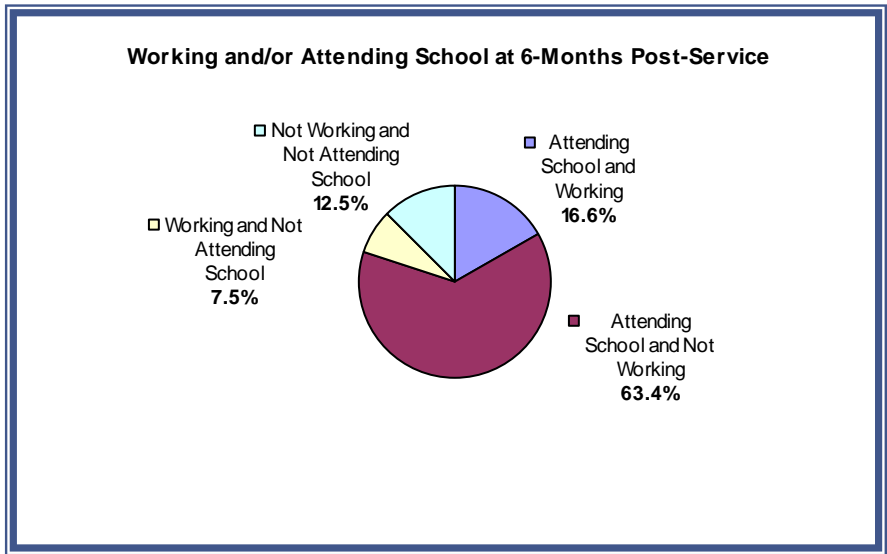
Mental Health Services within 12-Months of Completion	
Mental Health Service - Residential Percentage of youth utilizing residential mental health services	3.0%
Mental Health Service - Non-residential Percentage of youth utilizing non-residential mental health services	13.2%



The percentage of youth using non-residential mental health services anytime during the 12-month follow-up period has increased this past fiscal year returning rates to their normal level.

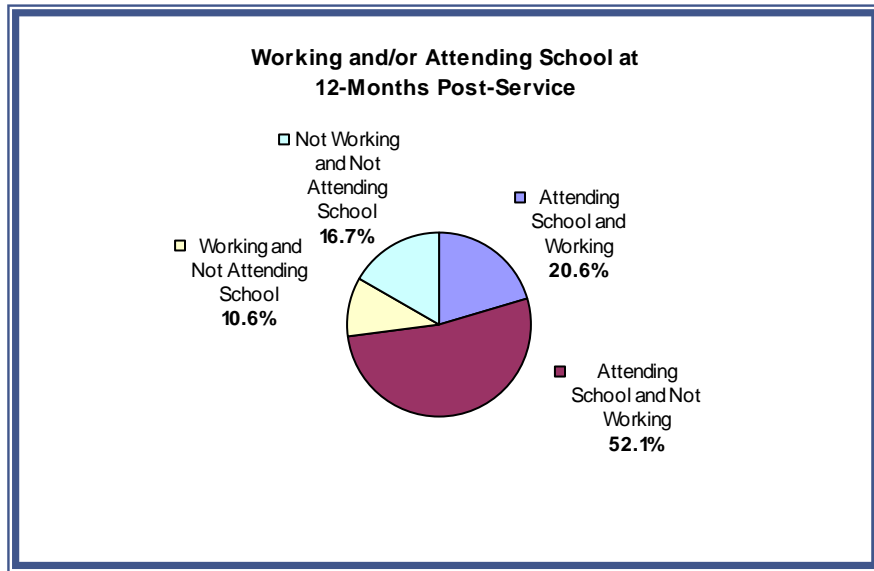
16.5% of youth utilized mental health services during the 12-Month post-service follow-up period.

Educational/Vocational Status at 6 and 12-Months Post-Service	6-Months	12-Months
Percentage youth working and/or attending school. Youth in a delinquency placement at the post-service period are not included.	87.5%	83.3%



At 6-months post-service 87.5% of youth who completed their program were working and/or attending school.





At 12-months post-service 83.3% of youth who completed their programs were working and/or attending school.

At 12-Months post-service 83.3% of youth completing an Eckerd program were either attending school, working or both.

Cost Benefit

Youth made significant gains while in programs and adjusted well once they returned to their families and communities. The per diem base rate for youth served in North Carolina Eckerd Programs is \$96.96 with an educational supplement of \$13.45 a day; together these total a per diem rate of \$110.41. The average length of stay for graduates of 10.8 months. To assess the relative value of this program, please refer to the juvenile justice residential costs comparison chart below. Cost comparison data of non-Eckerd programs were obtained from the North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Residential Cost/Per Diem Comparison	Daily Cost / Per Diem
Eckerd Programs—base per diem	\$96.96
Educational Supplement—per diem	\$13.45
Eckerd Programs Total—per diem	\$110.41
Secure Detention—cost	\$164.96
Youth Development Centers—cost	\$228.00



Summary and Conclusions

This report reviewed the Eckerd Wilderness Educational System that is operated under contract between the North Carolina Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and Eckerd Youth Alternatives, Inc., a private not-for-profit provider headquartered in Clearwater, Florida.

Conclusions that are supported by this evaluation are:

1. The programs serve a high-risk group of youth whose behavior makes them likely candidates for further behavior and delinquency problems.
2. Based on pre-tests and post-tests, the programs have had a positive impact on the social skills, academic achievement, and basic attitudes of the youth served.
3. Based on pre-test and post-tests, youth served by Eckerd show progress in academic achievement while assigned to a program.
4. At 12-months post-service over three-quarters of youth completing an Eckerd program were either attending school, working or both.
5. The Eckerd programs are providing a clearly beneficial service. As one of the few residential alternatives available to all of the juvenile courts as an Intermediate Sanction, the Eckerd programs are filling an important need in North Carolina's Juvenile Justice System.

Follow-up evaluation shows that behavior and attitude changes are resulting in long-range improvements for the youth served.





Improving the Future, One Child at a Time

Eckerd Youth Alternatives, Inc.

100 North Starcrest Dr

Clearwater, FL 33765

(727) 461-2990 phone

(727) 442-5911 fax

www.eckerd.org

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