



Eckerd Youth Alternatives

*Improving the future,
one child at a time*

Eckerd Youth Alternatives,
Inc.

Improving The Future, One Child At A Time

ECKERD WILDERNESS EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

North Carolina Evaluation Report Fiscal Year 2006

February 2007

www.eckerd.org

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Introduction

Annual program evaluations are required by the North Carolina General Assembly as a condition of program expansion under the 1998 Juvenile Reform Act. This report presents data on the North Carolina Eckerd Wilderness Educational System operated by Eckerd Youth Alternatives (EYA), Inc., a private not-for-profit provider headquartered in Clearwater, Florida. EYA operates seven Outdoor Therapeutic Programs in North Carolina that serve youth referred through the North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Description of Services

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 staff-secure, residential therapeutic programs that provide an alternative to more restrictive settings. Counselor-teachers live with the youth in groups of ten that are designed to promote personal responsibility, problem-solving skills, communication skills, self-discipline and self-esteem. 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 and are assisted with reentry into public schools. The programs are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS / CASI) as a special purpose school. In addition, each program is licensed by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and accredited by the Council on Accreditation.

Family workers provide ongoing services to the parents while their children are enrolled in the program. The family worker is the liaison between programs and the family and provides counseling, crisis intervention, and case management services. These services are directed toward strengthening parental skills to influence their child's learning, improving parental capacity to provide a positive home environment, and helping families connect with community resources. In most locations, family workers also facilitate parent groups. It is EYA's goal to help youth move to a better place in their lives, through the Eckerd Model of treatment.



Data Sources

All data presented in this report reflects information on youth in EYA programs funded by North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Both descriptive data of youth served as well as release and follow-up data are presented.

Three cohorts of youth are reported including:

1. Youth admitted in FY 2006*.
2. Youth released in FY 2006.
3. Youth who completed a program in FY 2005 who were follow-up for one year post service.

The appendix reports on North Carolina Wilderness Commitment youth served since EYA began admitting these youth. This includes:

1. Youth admitted in FY 2004 - FY 2006 (July 1, 2003 - June 30, 2006).
2. Youth released in FY 2004 - FY 2006.
3. Youth who completed a program since FY 2004 who were follow-up for one year post service.

The data on youth was obtained from official records including courts, schools, and interviews with youth and parents. Follow-up data for youth was obtained from contacts with the youth, parents and/or other knowledgeable persons.

Cost comparisons of EYA programs to other residential juvenile justice programs are presented. North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention provided the cost data on non-EYA programs.

Data in this report cover three cohorts of youth: FY 2006 Intakes, FY 2006 Exits and FY 2005 Releases follow-up for a one year period.



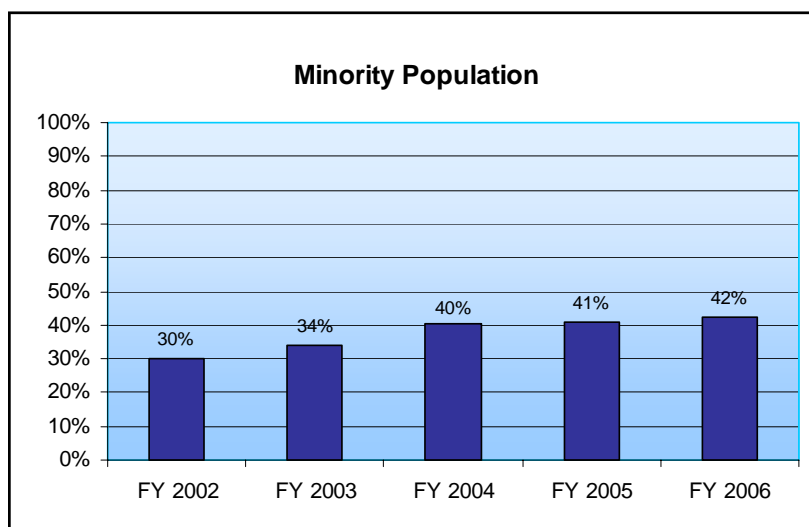
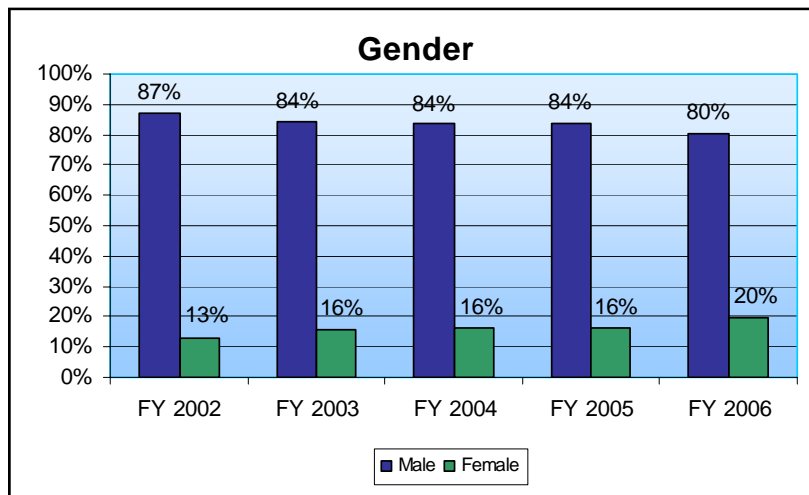
*EYA's fiscal year runs from July 1st - June 30th.

Demographic Profile

The 443 youth who entered EYA programs in FY 2006 had the following characteristics at intake:

- Twenty percent of the youth admitted were females. Over the past five years the percent of females has risen from 13% to it's current high.
- Forty-two percent of the youths admitted were minority (non-white, Hispanic). The percentage of minority youth admitted has increased 12 percentage points since 2002.
- The average age at admission was 14.7. Sixty-four percent of the youth were 14 or 15 years of age.
- The majority of youth (52%) were from two-parent homes, 38% were from single parent homes, and 8% lived in situation where no parent was present.
- While the average age of intakes reflects youth typically placed in the 9th grade, over one-half of the youth (58%) were in the eighth grade or below.
- One in three youth were classified as special education students.
- For youth/parents for whom data were available (n=315), 69% had used alcohol or drugs within the past three months, and 36% had parents who were or had been alcohol and/or drugs users.

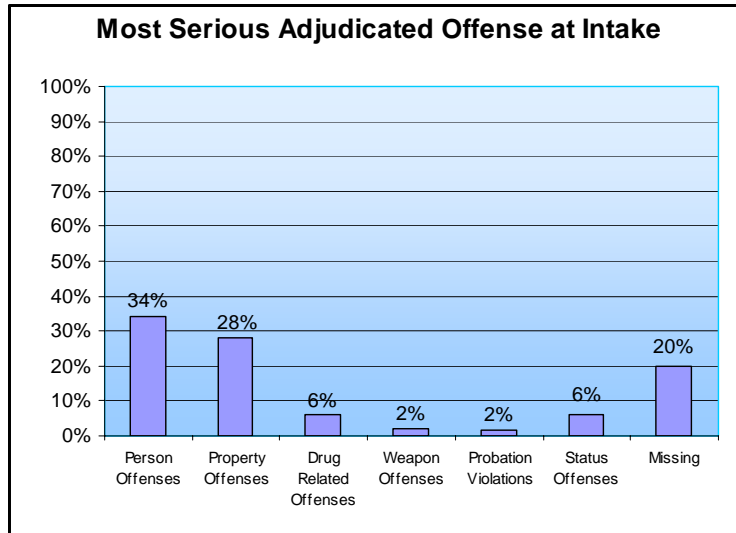
38% of youth came from single parent homes and 8% came from living situations where no parent was present.



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Delinquency Involvement

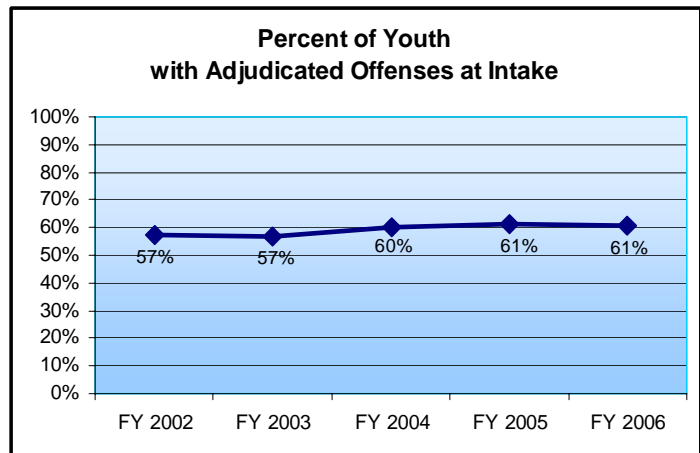
- Sixty-one percent of the youth admitted had been previously adjudicated for a delinquent offense.
- Of the youth with priors, the average number of priors was 2.7 offenses.
- 34% of youth with priors had been adjudicated for a person offense prior to intake.



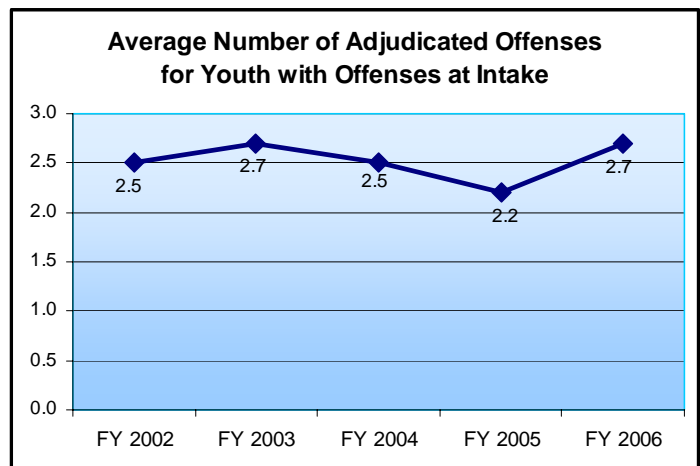
One in three youth who have prior delinquency involvement, have been adjudicated for a person offense.

Prior Delinquency Involvement: Five Year Trends

The percentage of youth with prior delinquent adjudications has remained steady over the past three years with a slight increase from FY 2002 to FY 2006.

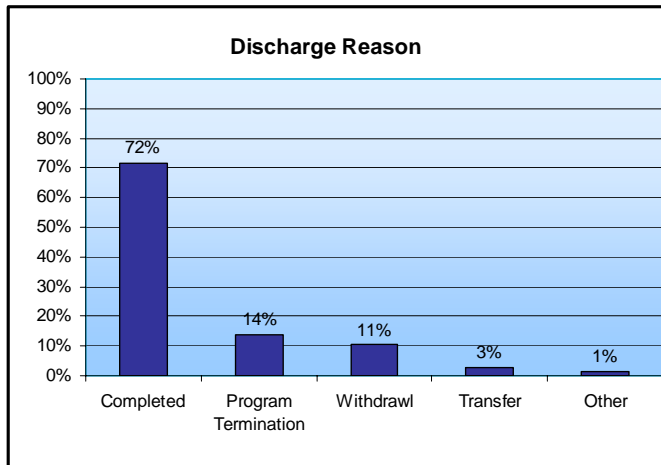


For youth with prior delinquency adjudications, the average number of offenses returned to its five-year high of 2.7.



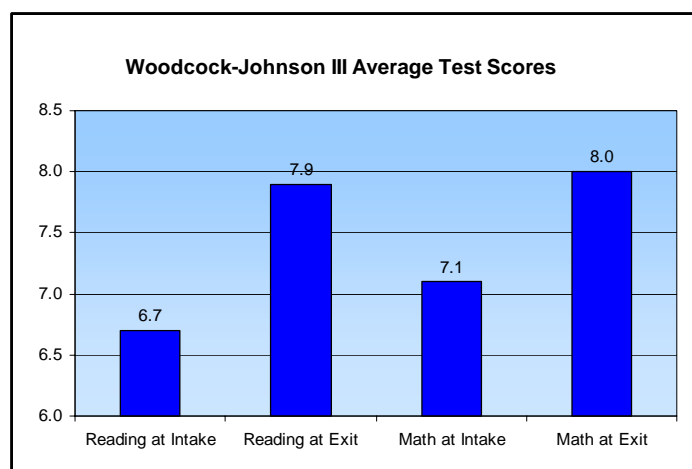
Discharge Reason and Length of Stay

Of the 441 youth exiting programs in FY 2006, 72% completed their identified treatment goals and objectives and completed the program. Fourteen percent were terminated from the program without completing all goals and objectives. The average length of stay for the 316 completers was 11.1 months with a range of 148 days to 466 days. This represents a slight increase over last year's average length of stay of 10.8 months.



Academic Progress

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. Two-hundred and ninety-nine of the youth who completed their program took both the WJIII pre- and post-test. The graph indicates that of youth with a pre- and post-test the average change was 1.2 grade levels in reading and 0.9 grade levels in math during their stay.



The average change from pre- to post-test was 1.2 grade levels in reading and 0.9 grade levels in math.



Outcomes

The annual contract between the North Carolina Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and EYA requires follow-up data be collected at 6-months and 12-months post-release on youths who complete the program. Of the 296 youth who completed in FY 2005, 284 (96%) were contacted during the 12-month follow-up period. Youth's living status, subsequent juvenile justice involvement, mental health services, and educational/vocational status for these youth are reported below.

Living Status	6-Months	12-Months
Two Parent Home	35%	34%
Single Parent	44%	38%
Relative	14%	12%
Foster Home or Group Home	2%	2%
Other Living Status	8%	15%

*Other Living Status includes youth living with friends, in an independent living program, a mental health, delinquency placement, or unknown.

Subsequent Juvenile Justice Involvement (12-Months)	N	%
Adjudication Percentage of youth convicted of new offense or technical violation in either juvenile or adult court	37	13%
Supervision Percentage of youth on probation or under court ordered supervision	19	6%
Placement Percentage of youth placed in a residential setting or more restrictive than the program	8	3%

Subsequent Utilization of Mental Health Services (12-Months)	N	%
Residential Services Percentage of youth utilizing residential mental health services	8	3%
Non-residential Services Percentage of youth utilizing non-residential mental health services	34	12%

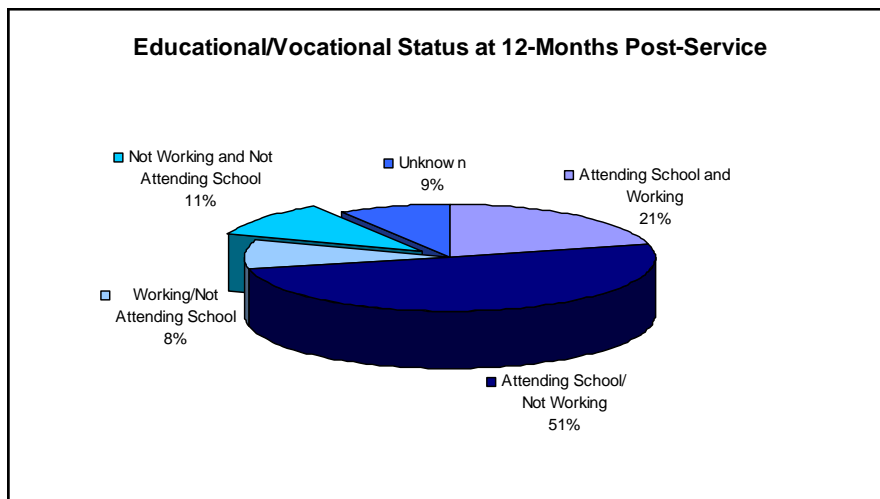
The recidivism rate has remained consistently low over the last five years and was 13% in FY 2006.



Outcomes

The reported educational and vocational status at 6 and 12-months post release indicated that at least 80% were either attending school or working or both.

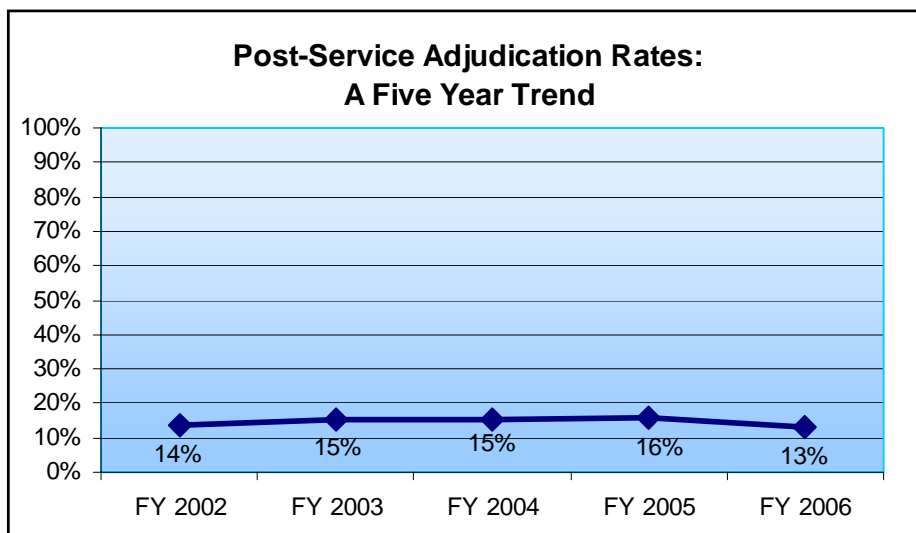
Post-Service Educational/Vocational Status	6-Months	12-Months
Percentage of youth attending school and/or working	85%	80%



At 12-months post-service 80% of youth completing an Eckerd program were either attending school, working or both.

Five Year Trend

Although the percentage of youth with offenses at intake remained virtually unchanged, the post-service adjudication rate decreased from 16% in FY 2005 to 13% in FY 2006.



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Cost Comparisons

The following is a comparison of North Carolina EYA programs and NC DJJDP operated Youth Detention Centers.

DJJDP pays EYA a daily rate of \$121.77 per day per youth (per diem). In contrast, the actual cost per youth per day of a North Carolina EYA program is \$141.00 per day, a difference of \$19.23 per youth per day. EYA continues to subsidize its North Carolina programs to offset the difference between the per diem rate and the actual cost of operating the programs.

The table below presents costs of residential programs in North Carolina. Compared to other residential juvenile justice programs, EYA programs are between \$23 and \$98 less per day.

Eckerd programs are substantially less expensive than other residential programs.

Residential Cost Comparisons	
Eckerd Programs (per diem)	\$122
Secure Detention (daily cost)	\$164
Youth Development Centers (daily cost)	\$220

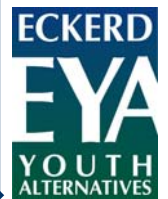


Summary and Conclusions

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 EYA. 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 behavioral problems and continued delinquency.
2. Based on pre-test and post-tests, youth demonstrated progress in academic achievement while assigned to a program.
3. At 12-months post-service over 80% of youth completing an Eckerd program were either attending school, working or both.
4. The Eckerd programs are providing a beneficial service. As one of the few residential alternatives available as an intermediate sanction to all of the juvenile courts, the Eckerd programs are filling an important need in North Carolina's Juvenile Justice System.

Follow-up Data indicates positive life changes for youth served.



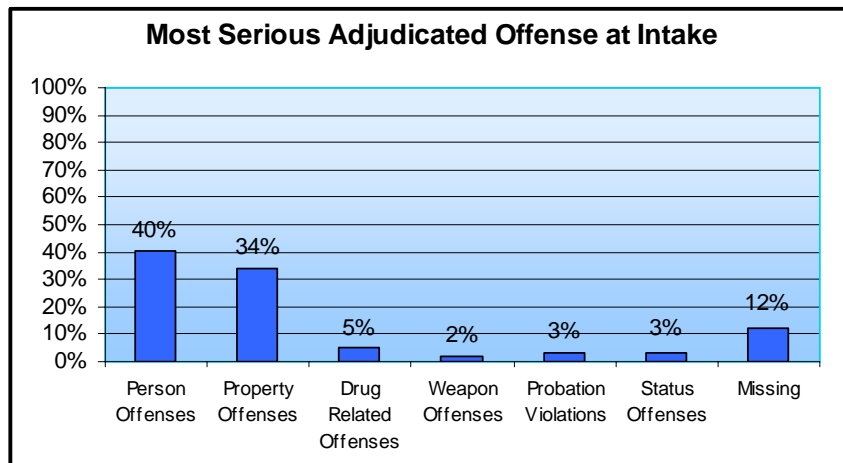
Appendix: NC Committed Youth FY 2004-2006

This appendix reports on the subset of youth served in Eckerd Wilderness Programs who are committed youth.

Between FY 2004 and FY 2006 (7/1/03 and 6/30/06) EYA Wilderness programs accepted committed youth. The 59 committed youth who entered EYA programs during that time the following characteristics at intake:

- Ninety percent of youth were male.
- Seventy-six percent of the youths admitted were minority (non-white, Hispanic).
- The average age was 15.4. Seventy-six percent were 14 or 15 years of age.
- 81% were in the eighth or ninth grade.
- Thirty-nine percent of youth came from a single parent home and 31% lived in situation where no parent was present.
- Approximately one in four (27%) were classified as special education students.
- 88% of youth had an offense at intake.
- The average number of adjudicated offenses for youth with at least one offense was 1.2.
- 40% of youth with priors had been adjudicated for a offense against a person prior to intake.

EYA recently adopted a risk screening instrument. Of the 25 youth who were administered the Youth Assessment and Screening Inventory, 92% were identified as having substance abuse issues.



Exit Information

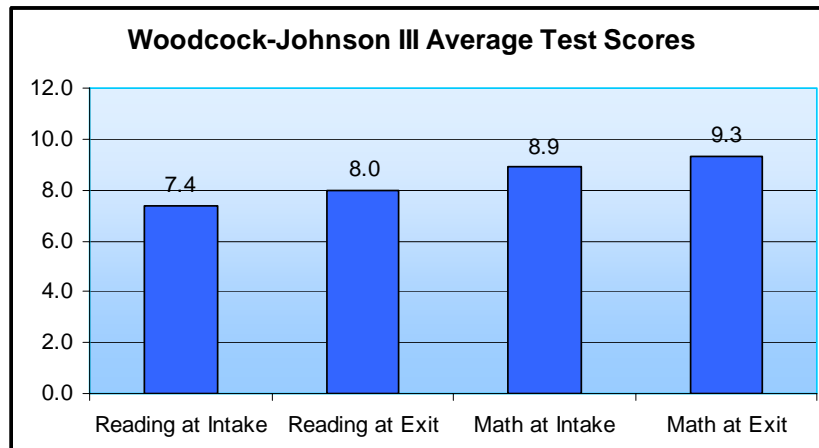
Discharge Reason and Length of Stay

Of the 47 youth exiting programs from 7/1/03 to 6/30/06, 19 (40%) completed their programs. The average length of stay for completers was 10.6 months.

Academic Progress

The Woodcock Johnson III Tests of Achievement (WJIII) is used to measure academic progress in reading and math. Scores indicate the pre-test and post-test scores in terms of grade placement. Seventeen of the nineteen youth who completed their program took both the WJIII pre- and post-test.

- The average change in reading scores for youth with a pre- and post-test was 0.6.
- The average change in math scores for youth with a pre- and post-test was 0.4.



Outcomes

EYA contacts youth for 12 months after release to collect a variety of information including living status, subsequent juvenile justice involvement, mental health services, and educational/vocational status for these youth are reported below. Data was available on eight youth at six months post-service and on seven youth at 12 months post-service.

Living Status	6-Months	12-Months
Two Parent Home	38%	0%
Single Parent	13%	43%
Relative	13%	14%
Foster Home or Group Home	0%	0%
Other*	38%	43%

*Other Living Status includes youth living with friends, in an independent living program, a mental health, delinquency placement, or unknown.

In regard to post-service juvenile justice involvement, at 12 months post-service:

- 25% of youth had been convicted of a new offense or technical violation in either juvenile or adult court.
- No youth were on probation or under court ordered supervision
- 14% of youth were placed in a residential mental health setting (at least as restrictive as the EYA program).

In regard to post-service educational and vocational status:

- At 6-months, five of the eight youth contacted (63%) were working and/or attending school.
- At 12-months, all six of the youth contacted were working and/or attending school.





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