



2021 - 2022

SAN MATEO COUNTY
**PROBATION
DEPARTMENT**

THE ART OF YOGA PROJECT
ANNUAL EVALUATION



ASR
*Helping People
Build Better Communities*

ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a nonprofit social research firm dedicated to helping people build better communities by collecting meaningful data, facilitating information-based planning, and developing custom strategies. The firm was founded on the principle that community improvement, initiative sustainability, and program success are closely tied to assessment needs, evaluation of community goals, and development of appropriate responses.

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Program Description

The Art of Yoga Project (AYP) provides trauma-informed and gender-responsive programming emphasizing health education, character development, yoga, breathing techniques, meditation, creative arts, and writing for youths in detention in San Mateo County. AYP's evidence-based proprietary curriculum, *Wise Inside*, invites youths to develop accountability, well-being, and reflection through monthly themes. These include setting intention, living peacefully, celebrating diversity, respecting ourselves, building resilience, honoring gender expansiveness, telling the truth, caring for ourselves, knowing ourselves, taking responsibility, managing our emotions, and growing healthy relationships. This evidence-based curriculum guides each class and is delivered by well-trained, seasoned yoga and art instructors. The classes are delivered 2-3 times per week on all the units at the Youth Services Center-Juvenile Hall (Pine 4/5 and Forrest 3) and at the Margaret J. Kemp Camp for girls (Camp Kemp).

Programmatic Challenges in Fiscal Year 2021-22

The major challenges this year were brought about by outbreaks of COVID-19 in the facility. Almost all challenges were related to program delivery in this context. Communication about COVID-19 outbreaks was sometimes lacking and staff would show up onsite only to learn the unit was experiencing an outbreak. By working more closely with the facilities staff, AYP was able to pivot and provided programming in a virtual live stream format through Zoom.

Virtual teaching provided other challenges. Often it was difficult for teachers to hear students because of the combination of masks and proximity to the camera and microphone. The youths were often easily distracted by what was happening in the room, and the AYP staff found it challenging to redirect attention back to the practice because they were not in person with the youth. The youth seemed genuinely grateful to continue their yoga practice each week despite the challenges, and they were always very appreciative when AYP was back in person.

Evaluation Methods

Programs provided by AYP are funded by San Mateo County Juvenile Probation's (Probation) Youthful Offender Block Grant (YOBG). AYP reports client, service, and outcome data to Probation and its evaluator, Applied Survey Research (ASR). The methods and tools used to collect this data include:

- ***Participants and Services:*** Grantee programs collected demographic data (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) and service data (e.g., type of services, hours of services, etc.) for individual participants. Program staff entered these data into their own data systems prior to transferring the data to ASR for analysis.
- ***Outcomes:*** AYP also collected three program-specific outcome measures to track progress toward the goal of improving the youths' outcomes:
 - percentage of youths who report using tools for emotional regulation outside of class
 - percentage of youths who report an improvement in interpersonal skills and pro-social behavior
 - percentage of youths who report increased self-awareness and self-respect
- ***Evidence-Based Practices:*** YOBG-funded programs are encouraged to follow evidence-based practices. To augment Probation's knowledge of which programs are implemented by funded partners, each funded program provided a catalog of its practices. After receiving this information, ASR runs all cataloged practices reported through several clearinghouses to determine whether the practices were:
 - evidence-based theory or premise
 - evidence-based model, shown by multiple experimental or quasi-experimental studies to be effective
 - evidence-based practice or modality shown to promote positive outcomes
 - evidence-based tool or instrument that has been validated (concurrent and predictive)

Evaluation Findings

FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2021-22 HIGHLIGHTS

- AYP served 78 youths, who spent an average of 3.3 months in the program and received an average of 14.6 hours of service.
- AYP met its target goals for all three performance measures.

PROFILE OF YOUTHS SERVED

AYP served 78 youths for an average of 3.3 months in the program, and 14.6 hours of service per youth in FY 2021-22 (Exhibit 1). Six in 10 youths (60%) identified as Hispanic/Latino, 13% identified as Black/African American, 12% identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, 5% identified as White/Caucasian, and 10% identified as another ethnicity (Other). Eight in 10 youths self-identified as male (80%), 18% self-identified as female, and 1% as transgender/other. The average age of youths was 16.3 years old.

Exhibit 1. Youth Services

YOUTH SERVICES	FY 20-21	FY 21-22
Youths Served	40	78
Average Hours Served	15	14.6
Average Time in Program (Months)	6	3.3

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

AYP met all of its target goals for its performance measures for FY 2021-22 (Exhibit 2). Eighty-three percent (83%) of youths reported using tools for emotional regulation outside of class, 84% reported improved interpersonal skills and prosocial behavior, and 85% of youths reported increased self-awareness and self-respect.

Exhibit 2. Program Specific Outcomes

PERFORMANCE MEASURES	FY 20-21 RESULTS	FY 21-22 TARGET	FY 21-22 RESULTS
Percentage of youths who report using tools for emotional regulation outside of class	85%	75%	83%
Percentage of youths who report an improvement in interpersonal skills and pro-social behavior	87%	75%	84%
Percentage of youths who report increased self-awareness and self-respect	94%	75%	85%

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

In FY 2021-22, YOBG programs were asked to provide the practices and curricula they employed. ASR then evaluated the cataloged programs to determine whether they were evidence-based or promising practices by running them through several evidence-based practice clearinghouses. Exhibit 3 details the practices and curricula that AYP used in its programs.

Exhibit 3. Evidence-based Practices

PRACTICE	IMPLEMENTATION	RATING
<p>Neuro-sequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT)</p>	<p>Wise Inside Curricula (based on Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics): AYP combines yoga, meditation, and expressive arts as part of essential therapeutic interventions to regulate traumatized individuals’ nervous systems and bring them back into balance. The program is based on the Child Trauma Academy’s evidence-based Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT) to address the particular needs of system-involved youths. NMT guides AYP’s class sequencing by addressing emotional dysregulation, common in traumatized youths. Their class structure mirrors “bottom-up” brain development by first regulating the brainstem (“survival brain”) through sensory integration and self-regulation, then the limbic system (“feeling brain”) through relational activities, and finally the prefrontal cortex (“learning brain”) through cognitive activities. Another way to explain this sequencing is with the “three R’s” described in the NMT — Regulate, then Relate, then Reason.</p>	<p>Although not recognized as evidence-based or promising practice on its own, curricula is informed by evidence-based model.¹</p>
<p>Trauma-Informed Practice</p>	<p>AYP brings mindfulness-based practices to system-involved youths for their healing and empowerment. All instructors are trained in the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics which included trauma-informed practice.</p>	<p>The Trauma-Informed approach is evidence-based practice according to SAMHSA.²</p>

CLIENT STORY

Each year, staff at funded programs provide client stories to help illustrate the effect of services on their clients. The following is a client story provided by AYP for FY 2021-22 (Exhibit 4).

¹ Perry, B.D. (2009). Examining child maltreatment through a neurodevelopmental lens: Clinical application of the neurosequential model of therapeutics. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 14, 240-255. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15325020903004350>

² SAMHSA. (2014). SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, p10. Pub ID#: SMA14-4884. <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/SAMHSA-s-Concept-of-Trauma-and-Guidance-for-a-Trauma-Informed-Approach/SMA14-4884>

Exhibit 4. Client Success Story

Name of client	Angel
Age and gender	17, male
Reason for referral	Angel is in detention at YSC-JH, Forrest 3 unit and attends programming on a bi-weekly basis on the unit.
Client’s behavior, affect, and appearance when they first started in the program	Angel works out regularly, and when he first came to the program, he told the instructors he expected to ‘work out’ for the hour. In one of his early classes where the discussion was on cycles, the youths were asked about a cycle in their life. Angel shared how he keeps returning to YSC-JH. The instructor noted that the first part of shifting a cycle is noticing it.
Activity engagement and consistency	Yoga and creative expression classes are optional for the YSC-JH youths to attend twice a week on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Angel has participated in yoga every week, twice a week, for most of the time since he was first placed on the unit more than a year ago. Angel is often the first youth to greet the teachers when they arrive on the unit. He helps set up the mats and engages in the initial greeting and exchange, setting an example for the newer youth. Physically, Angel enjoys a challenge. Once he mastered some of the basic yoga poses, Angel began asking for more challenging poses, such as arm balances. Not only does Angel show up to class physically, but he is also engaged in the other aspects of programming: NMT warm-ups, check-in questions, and the journaling, discussion, and other opportunities for creative expression. He is particularly engaged in the journaling and self-inquiry part of the class, demonstrating particular introspection on areas of personal challenge.
Client’s behavior, affect, and appearance toward the end of the program	With regular participation in the program, Angel has become quite proficient at difficult poses like crow pose, which require both strength and balance, as well as a willingness to let go and trust one’s body. Angel applies what he has learned by teaching, leading, and demonstrating yoga poses to new youth on the unit. He can often be heard advising others in a kind and attentive manner. The instructors have noted how inquisitive Angel is, for example, asking intelligent questions about science and how the body works. This curiosity inspired the instructors to bring in a life-sized skeleton and lead a science-based class about human anatomy and the skeletal system. Angel’s engagement in the class helped to stimulate a wonderful conversation.
What the client learned as a result of the program	Although initially focused on yoga as exercise, Angel has come to appreciate stretching, breathing, and learning to calm his mind and nervous system through yoga. In the program, Angel also has developed an awareness of aspects of his life that he needs to change and a willingness to do that work. In one class, he participated in a Doors of Destiny exercise, where he had to envisage three aspects of his future as doors and consider the keys he needed to open those doors. He expressed a tangible career goal and recognized that to achieve that goal, he would need to complete his high school certificate. He also wanted to have a family, so he would have to work on his relationship with the guards and other personal behaviors in order to “get out.”

<p>What the client is doing differently in their life now as a result of the program</p>	<p>Angel's instructors have recognized that he is willing to do better and to be better. This does not mean that he does not have some areas of growth, but that he has demonstrated genuine interest in, and curiosity for, how to live life in a different way. Angel is actively applying the skills he has developed from his participation in the program: leadership, kindness, strength, critical thinking, and perseverance. Continued nurturing of these valuable traits will help Angel to have a bright and productive future.</p>
<p>The value of the program in the client's words</p>	<p>Angel takes the time to express his gratitude for the yoga class. When the instructors are leaving, he will often say, "Thank you so much for taking time out of your day to come teach us." When a long-time instructor was leaving, Angel made a point of letting her know his deep appreciation for being there to teach him for so long.</p>