

YouthZone

Program Evaluation Report – Juvenile Diversion & YouthZone Services

Healthy Youth, Strong Communities

YouthZone provides family strengthening services for youth and their parents in Garfield and Pitkin and West Eagle Counties. This independent evaluation report summarizes findings from a study of youths who in the majority came with a legal problem. It describes their case managers' success in promoting youths' personal growth and reduction in behavior that could return them to the attention of authorities.

YouthZone brings individuals, organizations, and community leaders together to nurture competent, caring, and responsible children and adolescents. Helping young people means doing more than just solving an immediate problem. It also means thinking about how communities can foster positive relationships among young people, assisting families and schools with finding needed resources, and creating opportunities that raise youth expectations for a bright future. In towns

where children and youth experience family, school, and community life as positive and where they have relationships with people who guide them, they are much more likely to learn, achieve, mature, and to reach their potential. In this sense then, every child and youth whose faltering well-being is restored contributes to the quality of life where they live. Healthy youth make strong communities.

Life is complex and changing. Necessarily, the approaches for helping youth to regain their positive sense of direction call for keeping up with new ideas and evaluating those that appear to be working. This report contributes to these objectives. It suggests evidence-based ways of looking at common challenges and helps YouthZone be as accountable as possible to its funders, families, and the communities it serves.

Evaluating Community-Based Youth Development Programs

Across Colorado, youth organization staffs are challenged to individualize plans that will meet client and community needs while considering client age, gender, and ethnic diversity, a wide range of family types, and referring problems of varying severity to community services – and doing so within available resources. At YouthZone, staff training and experience with planning services are supplemented by information from the *YouthZone Screening for Positive Youth Development*® (“*Screening*”). The *Screening* tool covers a wide range of youth assets and common risk behaviors. It contains 60 questions, of which seven are identifying and demographic, two ask the youth to assess the quality of their *Screening* answers, and 51 inquire about their assets and risks. It has a 7th-grade reading level and takes about 15 minutes to complete. The *Screening* measures five factors that have been shown during its 18-year development to be sensitive to program effectiveness, client recidivism, and improvement in youth adjustment.

Fig. 1. The Screening Tool Scores

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use

Measures the youth's substance use, the potential harm of use, risk behaviors closely associated with extent of use

(sexual activity and contact with police), and peer use of substances.

Optimism and Problem Solving

Measures the youth's resilience in coping with setbacks in life, confidence, self-efficacy, and important skills for solving problems and setting and achieving goals, and optimism about his or her future.

School and Community Involvement

Measures the youth's commitment to achieving in school, attendance, grades, and satisfaction with school, as well as his or her involvement in non-academic activities in school and the community.

Delinquency and Aggression

Measures the youth's antisocial outlook toward rules and other people, as well as their readiness to engage in verbal and physical conflict and tolerance of use of frankly dangerous substances, e.g., illicitly obtained medication.

Self-Deprecation

Measures the youth's perception of him or herself as a victim of verbal, physical, and sexual abuse, tolerance of substance use, and thoughts and plans to attempt suicide.

In seven results sections below, the Report presents evaluation findings and interpretations.

Results Section 1. Characteristics of Youth in the “Evaluation Sample”

This report concentrates on 579 young people enrolled in YouthZone services between 2013 and 2016 and who completed a pre- and a post-Screening, both with valid results.

Study Group Demographics The 579 children and youth – the “evaluation study sample” – were 34.0% female and 66.0% male. Only 4.7% were 12 years or younger and just 3.5% were 18. The mean age was 16 years. At intake, boys and girls were of similar age. Most (80.4%) attended a public middle or high school, with 2.4% home schooled, 8.8% in alternative school, 2.6% in a GED program and 4.0 % were not currently enrolled in school. Boys and girls were equally likely to be enrolled in a public school. Younger entrants were more often attending a public school.

Most clients were Caucasian (46.5%) or Latino (44.8%). Caucasian and Latino youth were of similar ages. Boys and girls were equally likely to be born in the US, with 13.6% born in another country.

The structure of the families in which referred youth were living ranged widely, nevertheless, 45.3% were living with both of their birth parents and an additional 49.1% were living with one parent and a stepparent, in joint custody with their divorced mother and father, or in a single birth. parent home. Only 5.7% were living in a

setting where neither birth parent was present. Girls and boys were equally likely to come from a home in which both of their biological parents were present. Latino youth were more likely to be living with both of their birth parents. Detailed information about the evaluation study group characteristics can be found in the Appendix of this report.

Source of Referral to YouthZone Of 579 youth 5.2% came to YouthZone from law enforcement, probation, other community agencies or were self-referred. Another 11.9% were referred by county courts, 16.6% from district courts, and 66.3% from municipal courts.

Community of Residence Clients in the evaluation study sample came from 24 communities across Garfield, Pitkin and West Eagle Counties and beyond. As shown in Table 1, those in the immediate area were most often from Rifle, with Glenwood Springs being the second most common community of residence. Girls were seen significantly more often from the Glenwood Springs, Silt, New Castle communities than they were in other communities in the catchment area. About twice as many boys as girls were seen from the Rifle to Parachute area. Caucasian youth were seen less often than Latino youth in the Carbondale area, but about in about equal numbers elsewhere. Age of clients was similar across the city areas.

Table 1. Youth Community of Residence

City Areas	Frequency	Percent
Aspen Area	49	8.5
Basalt Area	12	2.1
Carbondale Area	99	17.1
Glenwood Springs Area	126	21.8
New Castle-Silt Area	74	12.8
Rifle Area	152	26.3
Parachute Area	42	7.3
Other Cities	25	4.3
Total of all communities	579	100.0

The immediate needs of referred clients were not the same in each city area. Table 2 provides a snapshot look into how youth developmental challenges vary and may suggest the importance of ordering program priorities to match local need. Youth reports of use of alcohol and other drugs was greater in Aspen area communities. Optimism & Problem Solving scores were much the same from area to area. School & Community Involvement was

a strength in Aspen and Rifle as compared to other community areas. Delinquency and Aggression behaviors were equivalent area to area. Self-Deprecation was a more significant problem for Aspen area youth, a finding sometimes associated with higher levels of substance use. As will be discussed in a section below, analysis demonstrated that YouthZone clients from different communities all tended to benefit equally from their

YouthZone services. This finding indicated current services worked as well in socio-economically advantaged

and less advantaged areas. More information on these issues is available in Appendix 2.

Table 2. Youth Community of Residence

City Areas	Priority Youth Issues
Aspen, Basalt, Snowmass Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statistically significant greater prevalence of “Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use” and more “Self-Deprecation,” or self-disapproval among youth than in some other community areas Similar to other city areas in developmental challenges with “Optimism,” “Delinquency and Aggression” Youth benefit from greater assets related to stronger “School-Community Involvement”
Carbondale Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Somewhat lower “School-Community Involvement” than in some city areas Overall, similar to other city areas in developmental challenges with “Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use,” “Optimism,” “Delinquency and Aggression,” and “Self-Deprecation”
Glenwood Springs, New Castle, Silt Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Somewhat lower “School-Community Involvement” than in some city areas Overall, similar to other city areas in developmental challenges with “Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use,” “Optimism,” “Delinquency and Aggression,” and “Self-Deprecation”
Rifle, Parachute Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significantly less prevalence of “Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use” than in other city areas Similar to other city areas in developmental challenges with “Optimism,” “Delinquency and Aggression,” and “Self-Deprecation” Greater “School-Community Involvement” among youth

Results Section 2. Youth and their Legal Offenses

Youths’ Type of Legal Offense In the study sample, about 95% of all youths arrived at YouthZone with a recent legal offense. In Table 3, these offenses have been

grouped together across sexes, age, ethnicities and communities to assist with gaining a general overview of the type and seriousness of youths’ legal problems and to facilitate statistical analysis.

Table 3. Type of Youth Legal Offenses at Intake

Offense Type	Frequency	Percent
Offense – Alcohol and Drug Related (possession, use, distribution)	271	49.3%
Offense – Person (assault and battery, harassment and menacing, use of weapons, resisting arrest, sexual assault)	58	10.5%
Offense – Petty Theft (theft of item with value less than \$500)	133	24.2%
Offense – Property (criminal mischief, trespass, motor vehicle theft, breaking and entering)	66	12.0%
Offense – Traffic	11	2.0%
Offense – Miscellaneous (forgery, fraud, conspiracy)	11	2.0%
Total	550	100.0%

Statistical analysis found significant differences in charges against boys and girls. For example, girls had more arrests for alcohol and drug issues and miscellaneous (fraud and forgery) than boys did. Boys were arrested more often than girls were for property-related

offenses. For other types of offenses (offenses against another person, petty theft, and traffic) charges for boys and girls were similar. Traffic-related charges aside, there were significant differences in the average age of clients only with substance-related charges. Half of the

364 youths in the substance offense category were 16 or older. Age was distributed equally among youth with other legal charges.

There were differences statistically among ethnicities and offenses. Caucasian youths were at greater risk for a substance-related charge. Latino clients were referred more often with offenses against other persons and less often regarding property-related offenses.

A youth’s family type could be important for planning and evaluating services. However, evaluation study found that this factor was unrelated to charges incurred by youth.

Evaluation also examined offense data to determine if communities in the YouthZone catchment area were using different criteria to charge youth. Analysis found some statistically significant differences across communities in the offense for which youth were arrested. In the Aspen area there were more arrests for substance-related problems, though arrests for all other types of charges occurred less often in the Aspen area than in other city areas. Officials in city areas arrested youth in equal measures for offenses against person, petty theft, property, and traffic.

Results Section 3. Intake-to-Discharge Changes in Screening Scores

When all 579 clients who completed valid pre- and post-Screenings were compared on their five intake and discharge scores, very highly significant improvements

were revealed. Pre and post means and significance of statistics are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Statistical Significance of Pre-Post YouthZone Screening Score Changes for All Clients

(This analysis included all 579 youth combined. It shows the statistical significance of changes in their mean intake and discharge scores on the Screening survey)

YouthZone Screening Scale	Intake Screening Mean	Discharge Screening Mean	Significance of F Statistic ¹
Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use	23.8	22.2	****
Optimism and Problem Solving	21.0	19.5	****
School and Community Involvement	15.24	14.7	****
Delinquency and Aggression	15.5	14.2	****
Self-Deprecation	9.4	9.3	*

Higher scores indicate lower functioning in the Screening score topics

¹Statistical significance levels: ns = “not significant,” * = p <.10 “borderline significant,” ** = p <.05 “significant,” *** = p <.01, “highly significant” **** = p <.001 “very highly significant”

It is critically important to establish that YouthZone services are equitable, that they work about as well of younger and older, boys, and girls and youth of different ethnicities. The following comparisons help determine program equity.

Pre-to-Post Screening Score Change and Age

- As expected, older clients had higher levels of initial and final substance use than did younger clients. The group of above-the-median age clients was at a greater risk for substance use than were younger clients even at the end of services. Change pre-to-post for these two age groups was the same. Both improved to an equal and statistically significant extent.
- Younger and older clients had similar scores initially on the Optimism and Problem Solving scale. Both younger and older clients improved equally on this Screening scale.

- Younger clients initially reported slightly higher School and Community Involvement scores, but both older and younger clients made very similar gains over time.
- Younger and older clients scored similarly on the Delinquency and Aggression scale when they enrolled. By the time they had completed services, however, younger clients had shown significantly greater improvement pre-post.
- Younger and older youth reported similar level of Self-Deprecation at intake and both groups showed similar degrees of improvement during services.

YouthZone services created benefits that were equal for youth of all ages.

Evaluation studied other client characteristics as these may have influenced their intake and discharge screening scores.

Pre-to-Post Screening Change and Gender

- Boys and girls were at equivalent levels of substance use at intake and girls' reduction in substance use was nearly identical to boys by the time they left YouthZone services.
- Girls reported slightly higher Optimism and Problem Solving when they enrolled than boys did and there was a tendency for girls to improve their scores more than boys by the end of services.
- Girls reported slightly lower initial scores on School and Community Involvement than boys did. There were no differences, however, in the extent of positive change pre-to-post between the sexes. Nevertheless, at the conclusion of services, girls still scored lower than boys on this *Screening* scale.
- Boys and girls showed similar levels of Delinquency and Aggression at intake. Improvement over time was equivalent for clients of both sexes.
- Girls and boys had similar Self-Deprecation scores when they enrolled and both groups improved to similar degrees.

Some differences in program benefits for boys and girls suggest the importance of considering gender when individualizing programs for boys and girls.

Pre-to-Post Screening Change and Ethnicity

- When they came to YouthZone, the level of substance abuse involvement was the same for Caucasian, Latino, and youth of other ethnicities. All groups improved during services and to an equal extent.
- The three ethnic groups: Caucasian, Latino, and Other reported similar scores at intake on the Optimism and Problem Solving scale. All three progressed during services and to an equal extent.
- Latino youth, more than Caucasians or Other ethnicities, scored higher initially on School and Community Involvement and over time, the gaps among the ethnic groups remained the same.
- There were no ethnicity differences in Delinquency and Aggression at intake or in the extent of significant improvement pre to post.
- Only small differences were seen initially in Self-Deprecation scores among ethnic groups. The small changes pre-post that were observed were to a similar degree for all three groups.

YouthZone services have similar benefits for youth of different ethnicities.

Pre-to-Post Screening Change and Type of Legal Offense

Understanding YouthZone's effectiveness in changing the adjustment and risk behavior of clients with different types of legal offenses is also important to planning and evaluating services. Statistical results of this study are arranged in Table 5.

Table 5. Statistical Significance of Pre-Post Screening Within Type of Legal Offense

(This analysis included all 579 youth separated into type of intake legal offense – the columns. It shows the statistical significance of changes in their mean intake and discharge scores on the *Screening* survey)

YouthZone Screening Scale	Significance of F Statistic for Pre-Post Change				
	Substance-Related Offense?	Property Offense?	Person Offense?	Petty Theft Offense?	Misc. or Traffic Offense?
Alcohol, Tobacco, & Other Drug Use	****	***	**	***	ns
Optimism & Problem Solving	****	****	****	****	ns
School & Community Involvement	ns	ns	**	***	ns
Delinquency & Aggression	****	****	****	****	ns
Self-Deprecation	ns	ns	ns	*	ns

¹ Statistical significance levels: ns = "not significant," * = p < .10 "borderline significant," ** = p < .05 "significant," *** = p < .01, "highly significant" **** = p < .001 "very highly significant"

These results can be summarized in the following terms:

- The 271 youth who came to YouthZone with a substance-related offense (see Table 3) made substantial gains in three of five *Screening* scales. They reduced their substance use, though did not eliminate it, their Optimism & Problem Solving self-assessments showed that their sense of self-efficacy rose and the Delinquency and Aggression score improved. They evaluated their School and Community Involvement and Self-Deprecation as unchanged.

- 66 youths with a property or 58 with a person offense showed similar improvements in adjustment and behavior as those with a substance-related offense.
- The 133 petty theft offense clients improved on four of five *Screening* scales: Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use, Optimism & Problem Solving, School and Community Involvement, and Delinquency and Aggression. Their pre-post assessments of Self-Deprecation were unchanged.
- No changes pre-to-post were seen among youth referred with miscellaneous or traffic offenses.

Results Section 4. Individual Program Outcomes

Results Section 3 presented outcomes for all youth combined involved in *all* YouthZone programs. Section 4 studies youth outcomes for individual YouthZone programs. Evaluation measured the significance of pre-to-post *Screening* scales changes among just those clients

enrolled in one of five programs. Programs were selected when they had included at least 25 clients with valid pre- and post-*Screening* surveys. Statistical results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Statistical Significance of Pre-Post *Screening* Score Change for Five Individual Programs

(This analysis compares pre-post changes on the *Screening* tools scales for just clients who were enrolled in specific YouthZone programs)

<i>Screening</i> Scale	Significance of <i>F</i> Statistic for Individual YouthZone Programs				
	Individual Counseling (N = 72)	Substance Use: Class (N = 178)	Substance Use: Individual (N = 37)	Restorative Justice (N = 90)	Useful Public Service (N = 378)
Alcohol, Tobacco, & Drug Use	ns	****	ns	***	****
Optimism & Problem Solving	***	****	***	****	****
School & Community Involvement	ns	**	ns	*	***
Delinquency & Aggression	**	****	ns	****	****
Self-Deprecation	ns	ns	ns	ns	**

¹Statistical significance levels: ns = "not significant," * = p <.10 "borderline significant," ** = p <.05 "significant," *** = p <.01 "highly significant" **** = p < .001 "very highly significant"

YouthZone assigned clients to programs based on an assessment of their needs and other circumstances. Accordingly, the program outcomes shown in Table 6 represent change for those enrolled, for example, in Individual Counseling. (Evaluation found that none of the pre-post changes on *Screening* scales were negative, nor that clients worsened from enrollment to completion of services.)

- Individual Counseling had a very modest effect on youth enrolled in the program. While individual counseling youth reported a more positive outlook and somewhat fewer delinquency attitudes, they were unchanged in other areas assessed by the *Screening* tool.

- The Substance Use Class for substance-using clients was highly effective. Substance use declined and except for Self-Deprecation, other areas of risk and protective attitudes and behavioral improved.
- Individual Education for substance-using clients was the least effective of the five individual programs evaluated. Youth ended these services with a more positive outlook on their lives, but unchanged in other respects that may have brought them into conflict with the law.
- Clients involved in Restorative Justice program showed very favorable responses to their participation. Involved youth concluded with some im-

provement in School and Community Involvement, an area that the current and previous YouthZone evaluation have shown difficult to modify.

- Youth assigned to Useful Public Service reported positive change in all areas of emotion and behavior assessed by the *Screening* tool.

These results show the value of individualizing interventions for youth with legal offense histories.

Results Section 5. *Screening* Scores and Recidivism

On occasion, youths with legal problems who had been enrolled in YouthZone services were again arrested. This results section determined whether intake *Screening* scores would identify youths more at risk for re-offending *during services* than would be expected for clients in general. Statistical analysis identified “red flags” that would draw attention to a boy or a girl client who may relapse. Relapse prediction is shown in Table 6 and 7.

- Only 16 girls with valid pre-surveys reoffended during YouthZone services. Table 6 shows that they were distinguished statistically from girls who did not reoffend by four-of-five *Screening* scores. Girls who had above average substance use scores, were not engaged in school, and who were unusually self-critical formed the group that were likely to be arrested while enrolled in services.

Table 6. Significance of *Screening* Scores in Predicting Girls’ Reoffending

(This table includes 196 girls and shows the significance of the relationships between their intake *Screening* scores and whether or not they reoffended)

<i>Screening</i> Scale	Mean All Girls’ <i>Screening</i> Score	Significance of <i>F</i> Statistic: Reoffense Yes/No
Pre Alcohol, Tobacco, & Drug Use score	24	***
Pre Optimism & Problem Solving score	22	**
Pre School & Community Involvement score	15	***
Pre Delinquency & Aggression score	16	ns
Pre Self-Deprecation score	10	**

¹Statistical significance levels: ns = “not significant,” * = p <.10 “borderline significant,” ** = p <.05 “significant,” *** = p <.01 “highly significant” **** = p < .001 “very highly significant”

Table 7. Significance of *Screening* Scores in Predicting Boys’ Reoffending

(This table includes 381 boys and shows the significance of the relationships between their intake *Screening* scores and whether or not they reoffended)

<i>Screening</i> Scale	Mean All Boys’ <i>Screening</i> Score	Significance of <i>F</i> Statistic: Reoffense Yes/No
1. Pre Alcohol, Tobacco, & Drug Use score	25	****
2. Pre Optimism and Problem Solving Score	21	**
3. Pre School & Community Involvement score	16	***
4. Pre Delinquency & Aggression score	16	***
5. Pre Self-Deprecation Score	9	**

- A total of 67 boys reoffended while in services. In Table 7, the same analytical approach was used with these male clients. Above average scores on all of the *Screening* scores predicted recidivism.

and emotionally than other youth during their enrollment in YouthZone programs.

For boys and girls, above average *Screening* scores not only predicted recidivism, but probably are indicators that above-mean scorers will struggle more behaviorally

Results Section 6. Comparison of Evaluation Results 2013 and 2016

Formal evaluation of YouthZone program outcomes began in 1998. Substantial changes in clients, staffing, programs, and society have taken place during the ensuing 18 years. Differences in program evaluation findings may occur for one or a combination of four reasons. First, as years pass, communities, culture, and youth and families change. For example, 18 years ago when the first YouthZone evaluation was begun, only a small fraction of referred girls were involved in substance use. Today, their use is the same or greater than reported by boys enrolling in services. In other respects, the emotional and behavioral challenges youth bring to the case managers have become more complex. Further, YouthZone may be selected by courts, probation, law enforcement, and other organizations for referral of youth with more serious problems than was the case 10-15 years ago. Third, case manager capacity has changed. Recruitment, training, and supervision are more sophisticated now than in the past. A more skilled staff can be expected to be more effective with youth's emotional/behavioral change. Finally, programs now are more evidence-based and more closely individualized to client needs. All of these influences may alter program outcomes.

- Demographically, differences between 2013 and 2016 were observed. More girls are being referred than in the past. Fewer children under 13 have been enrolled in the last three years. The mean age is rising slightly. YouthZone has continued to serve a balance of Caucasian and Latino youth, with slightly more clients born in the US in the most recent service sample. Family structure of referred clients has changed little over the years. About half live in homes with both birth parents.
- Community referral of youth has shifted very slightly. Relatively speaking, the Aspen area sent

about the same number of youth during 2013-2016. Fewer referrals in the evaluation sample were from Carbondale. The Rifle and Glenwood Springs areas made about the same percentage of total referrals in 2016 as 2013. Courts continued to refer 95% of youth enrolled in services

- Type of legal offense differed somewhat in 2016 as compared to 2013. The percentage of youth with a substance-related offense was slightly less as were offenses against a person, and traffic offenses. More petty theft and property-related arrests led to recent referrals than in 2013.
- Consistently, over the last six years, YouthZone's programs and services have had positive outcomes on *Screening* factors empirically linked with legal reoffending. Overall, positive outcomes have been sustained from 2013 to 2016.
- The 2016 evaluation found better results on the *Screening's* Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug use scale across all offense referral types than occurred in 2013. On the other hand, success with improving School and Community Involvement was less in the 2016 sample as compared to 2013.
- As with analyses for the 2013 evaluation the YouthZone *Screening* tool was a valid predictor of whether a youth in the 2016 sample would reoffend.

On the whole a comparison of 2013 and 2016 evaluation results confirmed consistent service access for youth of different backgrounds, communities of residence, types of legal offenses, and degree of program improvement.

Program Evaluation Summary

Evaluation Purpose and Perspective This report presents findings from an independent evaluation of YouthZone programs that served clients during 2013-2016. The evaluation was designed in the belief that all members of Garfield, Pitkin, and West Eagle County communities have a responsibility for and benefit from the well-being of youth. This is especially true for young people who are struggling with fitting in at school, who have trouble with the law, or suffer from emotional or behavioral problems. Success with helping them overcome their problems means they can enjoy the same good life as their peers and that their communities can enjoy the contributions all young people can make to the lives of every resident. The evaluation is about youth served, but

it is equally intended to empower their communities to contribute where they can to benefit youth and the quality of life of every person young and old.

To accomplish its broad evaluation goal, data collection, analysis and review have taken the perspective of youth and family, communities across the region, program staff, and YouthZone's leadership and board of directors. Further, its methods have explored fully the unique characteristics of youth so they can be understood as individuals. YouthZone programs work in partnership with communities to deliver quality programs. Accordingly, the evaluation considered the organizations referring clients. Further, the evaluation and report have been designed to support the case manager who meets a young

person and their family and recommends promising solutions. The evaluation design and report was intended to direct the YouthZone board and administrators toward program strengths and limitations so that together they can optimize the allocation of limited resources for maximum benefit. Finally, it considers information that would be needed by funders who are concerned with their investments and where additional financial assistance may be worthwhile.

Though its methods and reporting are necessarily technical so that they will align with program evaluation and reporting best practices, the report also summarizes key findings that will be of interest to all stakeholders. Some sections point to issues that will be of interest to community residents in general, others to youth and parents, to referring agencies, funders, and leaders in communities.

Following are some of the most significant implications of the program evaluation.

Parents and Youth Trouble with the police, appearance in juvenile court, and possible probation monitoring are unexpected and highly stressful experiences for youth and parents. Parents may alternate between self-blame and distress with their child. Young people may be confused, embarrassed, angry, and fearful. Though these evaluation findings will do little to ease these emotions, parents and youth can be reassured of excellent support from YouthZone case managers. Evaluation found that when the risk and protective factors related to youth's respect of the law were measured, the average young person showed significant progress. When case manager effectiveness was measured, evaluation found that while some were more successful with certain adjustment problems than others were, all were effective in modifying factors contributing to better youth adjustment.

The evaluation also analyzed whether family type contributed to youth problems and how family type influenced the results delivered by YouthZone services. Evaluation did find that girls and boys were equally likely to come from a home in which both of their birth parents cared for them and that Latino youth were much more likely to be living with both of their birth parents than any other family structure. Results showed that youths' legal misbehavior occurred as often in families with one or two birth parents or when the young person was living with family or others. Change in risk-protective factors related to future legal misconduct was equally positive for youngsters in one and two-birth parent homes, however, it occurred to a much more limited extent when they were living in non-parent situations. Obviously, parent involvement in restorative youth service is critical to eventual outcomes.

Most families will discover that their boy or girl will have a better outlook on themselves and life and more likely to align their behavior with reasonable expectations following participation in YouthZone programs.

Communities and Referring Agencies Clients in the evaluation study sample came from 24 communities across Garfield, Pitkin and West Eagle Counties and beyond. About one-third were living in the Glenwood Springs-New Castle-Silt area, another third in the Rifle-Parachute region, and the remainder in Aspen-Basalt-Carbondale. Only 4.3% came from outside this wide catchment area.

Evaluation results showed that YouthZone provides services that are culturally competent and equitable. Boys and girls were enrolled in all community areas and across regions ages of involved youth were similar. Analysis revealed that the needs of youths varied by community area. Evaluation listed area difference in client needs to give communities a better understanding of their youth needs. Significantly, youth progress in reoffending risk and protective factors was statistically the same, city area to city area. These findings provide YouthZone staff and administration with information on how to tailor services to community. They can assure communities that they are being equitably serviced by YouthZone programs.

Most youth in the evaluation sample came from courts with a small number from community sources including individual law enforcement professionals. Evaluation determined that improvement in reoffending risk and protective factors was equivalent for youth from county, district, and municipal courts.

YouthZone administrators and program supervisors are well informed by the evaluation of program successes and limitations. Communities and agencies can have unique assurance, that youth referred to YouthZone will show a tangible benefit from participation and that services will work as well in socio-economically advantaged and less advantaged areas.

YouthZone Program Staff To assist case managers with individualizing their interventions evaluation generated and reported on the interactions among legal charges and pre-to-post change and showed how client age, gender, and ethnicity might influence outcomes. Data showed that:

- Boys and girls were of similar ages and averaged about 16 years.
- When evaluation looked at legal charges prior to enrollment, it found that it was older youth who were being arrested for substance possession or use. Age was unrelated to the appearance of other legal charges.

- 66% of clients were male and boys were arrested more often than girls were for Crimes Involving Property and Traffic-Related Charges. Girls were more often charged with substance offenses than were boys.
- The dominant ethnicities, Caucasian and Latino were about equally represented.
- Caucasian youths were at greater risk for a Substance-related charge. Latino clients were referred more often with offenses against other persons and less often regarding property-related offenses.

Some of client characteristics were related to intake and response to programs:

- Evaluation found that client age was related to their initial self-assessment results on the *Screening*. Older clients reported more substance use and less involvement in school and community.
- For the most part, however, progress with services was the same for older and for younger clients
- Age was unrelated to a client's tendency to re-offend.

During the past three years only 9.7% of clients in the evaluation sample were rearrested after the initial offense that led to their YouthZone referral and before court-ordered services were completed. Some clients re-offended within days of their admission. Among all YouthZone clients, these are probably at greatest risk for future personal, family, social, and vocational maladjustment. Success with them in the present could avoid much suffering and personal and social costs. For these reasons, evaluation was invested in learning how a case manager could recognize youth at risk of re-offending on their very first day at YouthZone. Findings were definitive with the most appropriate process for this type of screening.

- Statistically, boys were more likely to reoffend than girls.
- Youth age was not correlated with reoffending.
- Older, but not younger, Latino clients were almost twice as likely to be arrested again before their YouthZone services ended.

Evaluation found the most accurate predictors of recidivism were not youths' demographics, but their *Screening* scores at intake:

- Among girls those with relatively poor School and Community Involvement, higher scores on Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug and Self-Deprecation scale were more likely to continue their pre-enrollment course of misconduct.

- With boys, those with the combination of higher scores on all five *Screening* scale were most often found to be reoffenders.
- For boys and girls, interventions that raise school and community engagement and concurrently lower substance use have the greatest promise of supporting a sustained commitment to YouthZone programs.

These results replicate other studies of recidivism among youthful legal offenders. Personal background and the seriousness of offense do not usually assist case managers in deciding on the level of care, on the other hand, review of how clients assess their own beliefs, attitudes, and experiences as compared to self-assessments by other clients can predict their future.

YouthZone Leadership Evaluation demonstrated through analysis of clients, their families, and their communities of origin that there are few "fixed factors" controlling youth progress. Youth are resilient and their progress on entering YouthZone services has much less to do with who they were at admission or where they came from and more with the programs in which they were enrolled and the quality of their interaction with their family and with their case manager. Accordingly, evaluation devoted considerable attention to these two topics.

Evaluation gave extended attention to the issue of case manager effectiveness with the *Screening* scores that predicted both boys' and girls' engagement with services and avoidance of re-offending. Extensive research elsewhere with psychotherapy and counseling has shown professionals vary in their effectiveness.

Psychotherapy research has found that in-service training and other workforce development efforts seldom equalize therapists' effectiveness with clients. Systems have been developed, however, that draw on the expertise of current providers resulting in much less variability between the most and least effective. Evaluation supports exploring these options with staff.

Finally, while evaluation established that, on average, youthful clients gained assets and reduced risk behaviors while receiving YouthZone services, not all clients make these gains and not all clients improved their adjustment equally in all programs. Evaluation calculated the performance of five programs in reducing risk factors, strengthening protective factors, and lowering the likelihood that a client would reoffend. All programs had some effectiveness with these outcomes. Of particular note were findings for YouthZone's group intervention for substance use. Scientific articles on successful interventions with delinquent youth substance use in community agency setting are rare. There is no evidence-based

standard for these interventions. Most diversion programs make some effort to reduce use, however, seldom are these systematized. Evaluation has found in the past that YouthZone's group interventions with substance using youth were not effective. Revision of the program has led to different outcomes. Currently, evaluation determined that not only did youth enrolled in the group intervention designed for them reduce their substance use, they became more optimistic, more involved at school and in the community, and their delinquent and aggressive behaviors declined.

Few youth serving programs in the region – or across the state for that matter – are informed about their programs' effectiveness and where modification is needed and where services are working well. Nearly all service agencies rely on a leap of faith that what they promise, they are delivering. YouthZone, however, has adopted evaluation practices to assist in building evidence-based services and focusing administration, case managers, the organization's board and the community on where additional attention can improve outcomes.

Acknowledgement

Evaluation recognizes current and past case managers and supervisory staff, who have contributed ideas to the design and improvement of the evaluation, and who have been dedicated to following the screening process, that makes this program assessment possible.

Appendix – YouthZone Program Evaluation Data Tables

Evaluation Sample Demographics

This report evaluated delinquency prevention program outcomes with 579 young people whose referral and services involved a pre- and a post-administration of the *YouthZone Screening for Positive Youth Development*®, with valid results. These youths became the “Evaluation Sample,” young people on whom sufficient information was available to complete in-depth statistical analyses of their backgrounds, recidivism, and response to services.

The 579 children and youth, the “evaluation study sample” were 34.0% female and 66.0% male. Appendix Table 1 shows the distribution of client ages.

Appendix Table 1. Distribution of Client Ages

Client Age	Frequency	Percent
11 years	3	.5
12 years	24	4.1
13 years	37	6.4
14 years	77	13.3
15 years	108	18.7
16 years	157	27.1
17 years	152	26.3
18 years	20	3.5
Total	578	99.8
Missing	1	.2
Total	579	100.0

Appendix Table 2. Distribution of Client Ethnicities

Client Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
Anglo	268	46.3
Latino	228	39.4
Other ethnicities	80	13.8
Total	576	99.5
Missing	3	.5
Total	579	100.0

Appendix Table 3. Distribution of Client Family Types

Family Type	Frequency	Percent
Two birth parents	262	45.3
50/50 with divorced parents	36	6.2
Single parent - female	125	21.6
Single parent - male	40	6.9
Step and birth parent	83	14.3
Grandparent(s)	11	1.9
Foster parent(s)	2	.3
No adults	2	.3
Other	18	3.1
Total	579	100.0

Appendix Table 4. Distribution of Youth Community of Residence

Community Area	Frequency	Percent
Aspen Area	49	8.5
Basalt Area	12	2.1
Carbondale Area	99	17.1
Glenwood Springs Area	126	21.8
New Castle-Silt Area	74	12.8
Rifle Area	152	26.3
Parachute Area	42	7.3
Total	554	95.7
Other Cities	25	4.3
Total	579	100.0

YouthZone Screening Findings

Appendix Table 5. Distribution of *Screening* Validity Scores for Clients Completing Pre and Post Surveys ¹

Survey Completion	Frequency	Percent
Completed Pre & Post, Valid Surveys	579	96.2
Completed Pre & Post, One or Both Surveys not Valid	23	3.8
Total	602	100.0

¹ A client with “valid surveys” completed both the pre and post survey process, and on both responded to the Honesty and Understand validity question with “All of them” or “Most of them,” and did not skip any validity questions

Appendix Table 6 Average Intake *Screening* Scores and Statistical Significance of Differences Across Community Areas

Community Area	Alcohol, Tobacco, & Other Drug Use ****	Optimism & Problem Solving ^{ns}	School & Community Involvement ****	Delinquency & Aggression ^{ns}	Self-Deprecation ^{ns}
Aspen	28.0	21.4	12.2	15.5	10.6
Basalt	28.7	19.6	12.9	16.2	10.0
Carbondale	24.7	21.2	14.1	15.6	9.1
Glenwood Springs	24.0	20.8	15.6	15.4	9.5
New Castle-Silt	22.7	21.3	15.5	15.5	9.5
Rifle	22.5	20.6	16.4	15.6	9.2
Parachute	22.2	20.6	15.6	15.5	9.1

Statistical significance levels: ^{ns} = “not significant,” * = p <.10 “borderline significant,” ** = p <.05 “significant,” *** = p <.01 “highly significant” **** = p < .001 “very highly significant”

This table includes all 579 youth. Clients were, separated into their community of residence as shown in the first column. It compares youth from area to area on each of the five *Screening* intake scores. For example, when youth from the seven communities were compared on ATOD use, Aspen and Basalt’s youths’ higher means shown in column two of the Table were found to be significantly greater than ATOD score in the other areas. Significant differences across communities were seen also on School and Community Involvement, but not other scales.

**Appendix Table 7 Statistical Significance of Screening Score
Pre-Post Change within Community Area ¹**

Community Area	ATOD Use	Optimism & Problem Solving	School & Community Involvement	Delinquency & Aggression	Self-Deprecation
Aspen	****	****	****	***	****
Basalt	ns	ns	***	ns	ns
Carbondale	****	****	****	****	****
Glenwood Springs	****	****	****	****	****
New Castle-Silt	****	****	****	****	****
Rifle	****	****	****	****	****
Parachute	****	****	****	*	****
All Communities	****	****	****	****	****

Statistical significance levels: ns = "not significant," * = p <.10 "borderline significant," ** = p <.05 "significant," *** = p <.01 "highly significant" **** = p < .001 "very highly significant"

This table includes all 579 youth. Clients were separated into their community of residence, as shown in the first column. It compares the extent of pre and post change for clients in each area to determine whether their *Screening* score changes were small or statistically significant. For example, when pre-post changes on the five *Screening* scores shown in the Glenwood Springs row were compared statistically, all were found to be significant. By comparison, looking across the Basalt youth row, few attitude and behavioral changes on the five *Screening* scales were significant.

Appendix Table 8 Average Intake Screening Scores and Statistical Significance of Differences Across Referral Sources

Referral Source	ATOD Use ^{***}	Optimism & Problem Solving ^{ns}	School & Community Involvement ^{**}	Delinquency & Aggression ^{ns}	Self-Deprecation [*]
Community (Law enforcement, probation, schools, FACET, Self, Parent)	24.4	21.1	13.8	15.4	10.0
County Court	27.1	20.4	14.9	15.1	9.7
District Court	23.7	21.4	14.1	15.6	9.6
Municipal Court	23.1	21.0	15.7	15.6	9.2

Statistical significance levels: ns = "not significant," * = p <.10 "borderline significant," ** = p <.05 "significant," *** = p <.01 "highly significant" **** = p < .001 "very highly significant"

This table includes all 579 youth. Clients were separated into their referral source, as shown in the first column. It compares youth from referral source to referral source on each of the five *Screening* scales. For example, when youth referred from non-court community sources were compared on ATOD use with youth from other referral sources, column two, it was found that the means were statistically different. County Court youth had much higher substance use scores and their School and Community Involvement were lower than youth referred from

other sources, and they are less likely to be self-critical. County Court youth were more challenging, as measured by their intake *Screenings*.

**Appendix Table 9 Statistical Significance of *Screening* Score
Pre-Post Change Within Referral Source¹**

Referral Source	ATOD Use	Optimism & Problem Solving	School & Community Involvement	Delinquency & Aggression	Self-Deprecation
Community (Law enforcement, probation, schools, FACET, Self, Parent)	****	****	****	****	****
County Court	****	****	****	***	****
District Court	****	****	****	****	****
Municipal Court	****	****	****	****	****

Statistical significance levels: ns = “not significant,” * = p <.10 “borderline significant,” ** = p <.05 “significant,” *** = p <.01 “highly significant” **** = p <.001 “very highly significant”

This table includes all 579 youth. Clients were separated into their sources of referral, shown in the first column. It compares the extent of pre and post change for youth from one referral source to determine whether the change was small or statistically significant. For example, when the pre-post scores of youth referred from County Courts were compared in the County Court row, it was found that they made substantial and statistically significant change on all five *Screening* scales. Generally, County Court youth made changes very similar to those of youth referred by other sources.