

NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Mission.

DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



Pete Ricketts, Governor

December 15, 2021

Patrick O'Donnell, Clerk of the Legislature
State Capitol, Room 2018
P.O. Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Mr. O'Donnell:

Nebraska Revised Statute §43-407 requires the Office of Juvenile Services to implement evidence-based practices, policies, and procedures. Thereafter, on December 15 of each year, the office shall submit to the Governor, the Legislature, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, a comprehensive report on its efforts to implement evidence-based practices. The report shall include at a minimum:

- The percentage of juveniles being supervised in accordance with evidence-based practices;
- The percentage of state funds expended by each respective department for programs that are evidence-based, and a list of all programs that are evidence-based;
- Specification of supervision policies, procedures, programs, and practices that were created, modified, or eliminated; and
- Recommendations of the office for any additional collaboration with other state, regional, or local public agencies, private entities, or faith-based and community organizations.

I am submitting this report to fulfill the above requirements.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark LaBouchardiere".

Mark LaBouchardiere
Director of Facilities
Department of Health and Human Services

Attachment

OJS Evidence-Based Practices Report

Nebraska Revised Statute §43-407 details expectations for the treatment and programming for all youth committed to the Office of Juvenile Services for placement at a Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center (YRTC).

The focus of this report is to give an accounting of progress YRTCs have made toward implementing strategies to meet the expectations of the stated legislation.

The YRTCs collectively spent \$49,092.64 on evidence-based programming in fiscal year 2020/2021. This accounts for less than 1% of the annual operations budget, and includes training costs as well as materials and supplies. All youth at all YRTC campuses are expected to participate in evidence-based treatments.

Currently, all juveniles (100%) at the YRTCs in Kearney and Hastings and the Lincoln Facility participate in evidence-based programming.

All staff (100%) at YRTC-Kearney, YRTC-Hastings and the Lincoln Facility receive internal training in Motivational Interviewing (MI), an evidence-based clinical approach used to help youth move forward through the change process. Additionally, all staff receive internal training on the impact of trauma on brain development and related behaviors, and on de-escalation strategies so that physical interventions can be avoided.

Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) is an additional treatment component incorporated into the YRTC-Kearney, YRTC-Hastings and the Lincoln Facility programming. MRT was granted "Promising Practice Status" by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment in 2015.

YRTC-Kearney has a total of five licensed mental health practitioners who provide substance abuse, mental health, and family therapy services to youth on campus. YRTC-Kearney also has a mental health supervisor. The YRTC system continues to employ a Clinical Program Director to oversee the mental health and programming services offered at all three YRTC facilities.

YRTC-Kearney continues to move forward implementing evidence-based practices. In order to treat youth with substance abuse issues, YRTC-Kearney has fully implemented the Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach (ACRA), an evidence-based treatment approach with positive research findings, which works within the framework and structure of the facility. All licensed mental health practitioners at YRTC-Kearney are trained in the ACRA model, with two of the practitioners serving as trainers in the model.

ACRA is a skills-based approach to treating substance use disorders by increasing family, social and educational reinforcements that support recovery from substance abuse. ACRA involves three types of sessions including individual sessions with the youth, individual sessions with the parent or caregiver, and joint sessions with the youth and caregiver. ACRA is utilized in more than 270 organizations across the country and is on SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices.

YRTC-Kearney has also implemented Aggression Replacement Training (ART), which has been shown to reduce recidivism in an adolescent population. ART is a 10-week cognitive behavioral treatment protocol that addresses three interrelated components: Social Skills Training, Anger Control Training, and Moral Reasoning. Each component focuses on a specific prosocial behavioral strategy that is learned through repetitive exposure to the material.

YRTC-Geneva was officially closed due to severe staffing shortages in 2021. At that time, the Department of Health & Human Services began the process of relocating the YRTC female program to the Hastings location, which

previously housed the Hastings Juvenile Chemical Dependency Program. Direct care staff and clinical staff at Hastings were trained on all YRTC policies and procedures to include the MRT and TARGET programming as noted above.

Staff in Hastings were also trained in the female specific curriculum of VOICES, which has been incorporated into the YRTC-Hastings programming. VOICES is based on the realities of girls' lives and the principles of gender responsiveness, and is grounded in theory, research and clinical experience. This program advocates a strengths-based approach and uses a variety of therapeutic approaches including psychoeducational, cognitive-behavioral, mindfulness, body oriented and expressive arts. All activities are designed to be "trauma sensitive." The VOICES participant's journal utilizes a research based process called Interactive Journaling ® which is listed on SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence Based Programs and Practices.

The Lincoln Facility was opened in February of 2020 as a specialized program designed to treat youth with high-acuity behavioral needs. Youth are first assessed at the YRTC-Kearney facility or the YRTC-Hastings facility and, based on their needs, the treatment team may recommend that the youth relocate to the Lincoln facility to receive specialized programming. The Lincoln facility accepts both male and female youth, who are housed separately in the facility. The goal of the Lincoln Facility is successful completion of the program and transition back to the community. Treatment at the Lincoln Facility includes treatment for mental health conditions such as conduct disorders, oppositional defiant disorders, borderline personality disorders, disruptive mood dysregulation disorders, ADHD and PTSD.

The Lincoln Facility utilizes Applied Behavioral Analysis programming which includes the evaluation of the youth by a Board Certified Behavioral Analyst who develops an individualized Behavioral Support Plan based on their strengths and areas of need. The youth is provided hourly feedback and rating on the goals related to their individual target behaviors. A psychiatrist is on site at the Lincoln Facility multiple times a week to provide more intensive psychiatric consultation and supervision for the youth in the program as needed. The Lincoln Facility includes programming developed to serve the needs for both male and female youth with high behavioral acuity and/or high mental health needs and includes intensive behavioral modification programming, family treatment and family support, as well as individual and group therapy sessions.

The Lincoln Facility program has also initiated Love Notes into their clinical programming. Love Notes is an evidence-based program which focuses on healthy relationship. The main goal of the program is to establish healthy relationship boundaries and to prevent unplanned pregnancy by providing teens with information to make wise relationship choices. This program teaches skills to be used in all relationships, but emphasizes romantic relationships. Love Notes programming is delivered through group discussion, PowerPoints, workbooks, exercises, role-play and creative activities within 13 sessions. Love Notes groups are facilitated by clinical staff members who have received special training in this curriculum.

The Lincoln Facility and YRTC-Hastings programs have implemented Trauma Affect Regulation Guide for Education and Therapy (TARGET©) model for intensive behavioral modification. The TARGET© model is endorsed by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. TARGET© is a psychosocial intervention that provides education about the impact of complex traumatic stress on the brain's stress response system, and strengths-based practical skills for re-setting the trauma-related alarms/survival reactions that occur in complex PTSD.

Another focus this fiscal year was on continuing to use evidence-based assessment tools to measure not only an individual youth's progress, but also overall program efficacy. Currently being utilized is the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment Scale (URICA), a well-established evidence-based tool which assesses youth's feelings when starting therapy or approaching problems in their lives. The Inventory of Callous/Unemotional traits (ICU) has also been used since 2016 to assess the personality trait of callousness and also to measure changes in this

personality construct over time as it is re-administered periodically throughout a youth's stay at all YRTC's. Although this instrument remains in the developmental stages and is not yet published with normative data, it is used with permission from the test developer and thus far has provided us with a moderately reliable indicator of internal changes taking place with our youth.

The Home and Community Social Behavior Scales is an objective screening and assessment tool that is designed as a rating scale to be completed by caregivers. It simultaneously provides a reliable and valid measure of both social competence and antisocial behavior. It will be utilized on the front end of treatment to get baseline measurements of both social skills and antisocial behavior and will also be utilized toward the end of treatment to measure changes in social competence and antisocial behavior.

The YRTC's continue to enhance the case planning process to align with an evidence-based philosophy. Staff have been working towards making treatment goals and objectives comply with the SMART standard (goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound). The YRTC's have chosen to utilize the evidence-based Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) as the assessment tool that will drive the development of treatment goals and objectives. The YLS/CMI is a risk/needs assessment that was designed as a tool to help identify treatment needs and aid in case planning. It can also be used as a measure of progress as it can be re-administered toward the end of a youth's treatment to determine if risk/need levels have improved. This is the same assessment tool that is used by the Administrative Office of Probation across the state.

Future Directions

DHHS will take a three-pronged approach in developing the YRTC System, utilizing the existing YRTC-Kearney for male youth, YRTC-Hastings for female youth and the Lincoln Facility for higher acuity male and female youth.

The YRTC facilities recently sent seven clinical staff, from all three facilities, to initial training for Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). DBT is a type of cognitive therapy that is evidence-based and can be used to treat many conditions. Skills training for DBT will continue in December of 2021. The YRTC facilities also continue to have clinical staff go through training to provide Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). EMDR is an evidence-based psychotherapy intervention which is used to address distress associated with past traumatic experiences.

Staff from the YRTC facilities will also be attending Families Thrive trainings in December 2021. This is an evidence-based program that actively supports learning and collaboration to address the specific needs of children, youth, and families impacted by trauma. Families Thrive also supports agencies and organizations to build more trauma-informed workplaces through building our capacity to promote safety, healing, and resilience for staff, programs/organizations, and the children and families they serve.