

## **Next Steps: The Future of Best Practices in Youth Intervention**

The other documents in this collection focus on the past and present. What research has been done? What are organizations doing now to evaluate programs? This document is about what comes next. Evidence-based models will become more and more crucial in the coming years. Not only is there a greater push from researchers, but policy-makers are also looking toward reform. In a time of scarce funding, being able to prove your organization is effective may mean the difference between getting a grant and losing out.

### **YIPA's Plans**

YIPA is committed to making program evaluation accessible to all our members. We are working closely with the Office of Justice Programs on the new pre- and post-survey. The most immediate goal is to collect data from all YIP programs that have a survey-eligible youth population, which is currently 49 programs (Some programs are unable to participate because they serve youth under age 12 or they serve homeless/runaway youth and cannot procure parental consent). Once the post-surveys are collected and matched to pre-surveys, OJP will begin to have comparison data that will show the outcomes of these programs once a young person has completed the program. At this point, the OJP will analyze this information and show some of the ways in which youth intervention programs can influence young people's lives. YIPA also hopes to use these results at the capitol and with private funders to show the value of early youth intervention.

YIPA is also working on a comprehensive multi-year quality training program in collaboration with the Youth Works Institute. This project (provided it is funded) will begin with a pilot group of organizations which will go through a 18-month, long-term assessment and learning project that provides participants with information, skills, and hands-on support to improve the quality of their youth programs. With the support of project coaches a team of participants will learn more about the essential components of a high-quality youth program and how to create environments that are positive places for young people to develop. At the core of Quality Matters is Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), a nationally recognized observational measurement tool that provides a valid and reliable way to assess program quality. This is an exciting new project, which we hope will make this deeper kind of analysis affordable for youth intervention programs and also specific to their needs.

### **Your Role**

Individuals within youth intervention programs need to stay up-to-date on evaluation. Funding requires it, not to mention that in this economy looking for ways to be more effective and provide better services for your money is key. As an organization, the most important thing is to make sure that you are part of the conversation. This means sharing your techniques and learning from others about theirs. It means participating in trainings about quality and assessment tools. It is also important to staying current with your own results and making sure that funders and policy-makers know about the amazing work that you are doing.

YIPA also wants to know what you are doing for evaluation now. Please share your experiences at the quarterly meeting and continue to participate as YIPA moves this project forward. YIPA cannot learn about early intervention best practices without the help of its members. Keep an eye out for requests for information in the e-newsletter and in other YIPA correspondence.

**Minnesota**

The University of Minnesota is not the only place where people are looking for new answers about best practices. The Juvenile Justice Coalition, YIPA, the Out of School Time Commission and many others are thinking about these same topics. Minnesota is rich with statewide groups that convene all kinds of individuals to generate new ideas about youth development.