

The Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP™):

Service Score Results: Baseline SPEP™ ID and Contact Time: 0351-T01

Agency/Program Name: Lehigh County Juvenile Probation/Behavior Change Program

Service Name: Forward Thinking

Cohort Total: 24

Cohort Time Frame: Youth that began the service on/after May1, 2022 and ended on/before March 1, 2023

Referral County(s): Lehigh

Feedback Report Delivery: September 7, 2023

County/Probation Officer(s) Involved: Tracie Henry, JPO II and Eva Frederick, JPO II - Lehigh County Juvenile Probation

EPIS SIS(s): Lisa Freese

The Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department is responsible to the community for delivering necessary and appropriate services for juveniles and families that come before the juvenile court. Whenever possible, all attempts will be made to keep youth in the community and at home, as opposed to an out of home placement. Lehigh County Juvenile Probation is actively engaged in Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy (JJSES). Consistent with this reform effort, officers have received in house training on the delivery of groups and are utilizing such groups that have demonstrated outcomes of reducing reoffending; and, probation officers have been trained in motivational interviewing techniques, as well as other services that benefit court-involved youth.

Juveniles between the ages of ten and eighteen are referred to the department for allegedly committing delinquent offenses. Police departments are the primary referral source. Juveniles are properly assessed to determine what risk the juvenile poses to the community and what areas of their lives need to be addressed to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. The outcome of each case is determined by the unique circumstances of each juvenile's life. A probation officer's recommendation takes into consideration the strengths and weaknesses in the following areas: family and peer relationships, behaviors in the home and community, drug and alcohol use, mental health, attitude, and educational or employment status. These findings assist the probation officer in recommending the type of probation supervision, the specific conditions of that supervision and in establishing a case plan with the cooperation of the juvenile and family. The case plan is intended to address those areas of a juvenile's life that are likely to contribute to reoffending.

Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department offers the following in house groups: Forward Thinking Journal Series, Keep It Direct and Simple Series, Girls Circle, Young Offenders Program, Thinking for a Change, ADAPT, Retail Theft and the Victim and Community Awareness Curriculum.

The focus of this report is the Forward Thinking Journal (FTJ) Group. The Forward Thinking Journal Series developed by The Change Companies® is a cognitive behavioral series that uses evidence-based strategies to assist youth in the juvenile justice system in making positive changes to their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Applying the information presented in the Interactive Journals to their own lives helps participants achieve their goals for responsible living. The groups are intended for both male and female youth ages 13 and older, based on individual needs as identified through the YLS. There are 9 journals that can be used individually or in a group format. They are: 1. What Got Me Here, 2. Individual Change Plan, 3. Responsible Behavior, 4. Substance Using Behaviors, 5. Family, 6. Reentry Planning, 7. Relationships and Communication, 8. Handling Difficult Feelings, and 9. Victim Awareness. The common theme of each journal is to encourage participants to take ownership of their choices as well as impress upon them that positive, life-lasting changes are possible. Facilitators can choose to run the group once or twice per week for approximately 2 hours. Within the group setting, Handling Difficult Feelings and Responsible Behavior are the only journals addressed currently, as they typically meet the needs of most youth. Responsible Behavior helps participants learn the connection between situations, self-talk, and feelings and how they relate to behavior and choices. Handling Difficult Feelings helps participants learn the connection between difficult feelings and irresponsible behavior and to develop coping strategies for these feelings. Probation officers may work with youth individually on other journals in the series.

The four characteristics of a service found to be the most strongly related to reducing recidivism:

1. **SPEP™ Service Type:** Social Skills Training

Based on the meta-analysis, is there a qualifying supplemental service? No

If so, what is the Service Type? There is no qualifying supplemental service

Was the supplemental service provided? N/A Total Points Possible for this Service Type: 20

Total Points Received: 20 Total Points Possible: 35

2. **Quality of Service:** Research has shown that programs that deliver service with high quality are more likely to have a positive impact on recidivism reduction. Monitoring of quality is defined by existence of written protocol, staff training, staff supervision, and how drift from service delivery is addressed.

Total Points Received: 5 Total Points Possible: 20

3. Amount of Service: Score was derived by calculating the total number of weeks and hours received by each youth in the service. The amount of service is measured by the target amounts of service for the SPEP™ service categorization. Each SPEP™ service type has varying amounts of duration and dosage. Youth should receive the targeted amounts to have the greatest impact on recidivism reduction. Targeted duration and dosage for this service is 16 weeks, 24 hours.

<u>0</u>	youth in the cohort of <u>24</u>	received the targeted Duration or Number of Weeks for a total	<u>0</u>	points
<u>0</u>	youth in the cohort of <u>24</u>	of received the targeted Dosage or Number of Hours for a total of	<u>0</u>	points

Total Points Received: 0 **Total Points Possible:** 20

4. Youth Risk Level: The risk level score is compiled by calculating the total % of youth that score above low risk, and the total % of youth who score above moderate risk to reoffend based on the results of the YLS. The Risk Levels of Youth admitted to the service were: 4 low risk, 19 moderate risk, 1 , high risk, and 0 very high risk.

<u>20</u>	youth in the cohort of <u>24</u>	are Moderate, High, Very High YLS Risk Level for a total of	<u>7</u>	points
<u>1</u>	youth in the cohort of <u>24</u>	are High or Very High YLS Risk Level for a total of	<u>0</u>	points

Total Points Received: 7 **Total Points Possible:** 25

Basic SPEP™ Score: 32 total points received out of 100 points. Compares service to any other type of SPEP™ therapeutic service. (e.g. individual counseling compared to cognitive behavioral therapy, social skills training, mentoring, etc.)

Note: Services with scores greater than or equal to 50 show the service is having a positive impact on recidivism reduction.

Program Optimization Percentage: 38% This percentage compares the service to the same service types found in the research. (e.g. individual counseling compared to all other individual counseling services included in the research.)

The SPEP™ and Performance Improvement

The intended use of the SPEP™ is to optimize the effectiveness of reducing recidivism among juvenile offenders. The service could improve its capacity for recidivism reduction by addressing the following recommendations:

1. Regarding Quality of Service Delivery:
 - a. Written Protocol:
 - i. Include in the manual, any dates of revisions or review for updates.
 - b. Staff Training:
 - i. Juvenile probation officers and supervisors delivering Forward Thinking Journal Group should attend a 90 minute web-based training and a telephone orientation offered through The Change Companies®.
 - ii. Documentation of completed training/orientation should be placed in the personnel file.
 - iii. Reach out to The Change Companies® to inquire about booster training or consider creating booster training in house.
 - c. Staff Supervision:
 - i. Supervisors or a trained designee should routinely monitor the delivery of Forward Thinking and provide documentation of the monitoring.
 - ii. In addition to verbal feedback, those delivering Forward Thinking Journal Group should receive written feedback based on the group observation.
 - iii. Performance reviews should specifically address the delivery of Forward Thinking Journal Group.
 - d. Organizational Response to Drift:
 - i. Create a written policy to address departure from delivery of the group, based on the developer training/orientation and provide documentation when they are utilized.
 - ii. Include specific steps in the policy to address drift, such as co-delivering the service with an experienced facilitator, additional observation of a trained person delivering the service, training and more frequent direct observation to provide verbal and written feedback.
 - iii. Utilize the pre- and post-tests as well as the feedback mentioned in “ii” to routinely assess the fidelity and quality of the delivery of Forward Thinking.
 - iv. Consider a data collection process to evaluate or adapt service delivery when necessary. This could include percentage of youth completing the service upon referral, percentage of youth that reoffended following completion of the service, etc.
2. Regarding Amount of Service:
 - a. Duration: Through internal discussions, consider ways to increase the number of weeks of the group to 16.
 - b. Dosage: 24 hours can be accomplished through additional group discussion on each journal, homework assignments, etc.
3. Regarding Risk Level of Youth Served:
 - a. Continue to focus delivery of the service on moderate to very high risk youth, including low risk youth only if a need is identified through the YLS.