

The Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP™):

Service Score Results: Baseline

SPEP™ ID and Time: 0314-T01

Agency Name: Abraxas Youth and Family Services

Program Name: Abraxas Academy

Service Name: Habitual Offender (HO) Group

Cohort Total: 19

Timeframe of Selected Cohort: March 1, 2020 - February 28, 2021

Referral County(s): Bedford (2); Berks (2); Bradford (2); Bucks (1); Delaware (3); Erie (4);

Lackawanna (1); Lehigh (1); Luzerne (2); Westmoreland (1)

Date(s) of Interview(s): Dec 3, 2020 & April 20, 2021

Lead County: Berks

Probation Representative(s): Ryan Alena, Probation Officer, Berks County Juvenile Probation

EPIS Representative: Lisa Freese

Description of Service:

Abraxas Academy provides intensive treatment to adolescents and their families who are experiencing severe emotional, behavioral, psychological, educational and social problems. Clients must be court adjudicated males between the age of 14-18. Youth must be in 9th grade, level of violence as a factor, dramatically high risk for suicidal behavior, especially recent attempts. Psychotic features will also be reviewed. IQ of 70 or higher. The Abraxas Academy has two secure residential programs, the Habitual Offenders Program and the Sexual Offenders Program.

The Habitual Offenders Program uses a comprehensive approach in providing treatment services to the residents. This is achieved through trauma informed cognitive behavioral therapy with a strong emphasis on functional behavior assessment and behavioral modification. The program milieu and curriculum utilize the principles of BARJ, an anger and emotional curriculum intertwined, Applied Behavioral Analysis and a cognitive distortions component. Treatment emphasis is placed on identifying and correcting potentially harmful patterns of thought, improving social skills, teaching problem solving skills and developing an awareness of the community and victim, while altering target pro-social and maladaptive behaviors.

There are 3 treatment tracks that are provided for youth; 3-months, 6-months, 10-months. The track is a collaborative decision made by Abraxas Academy, referring Juvenile Probation Department, and the Courts. Youth are afforded all treatment modalities but depending on the track, delivery and dosage amounts of the service will vary.

This report will focus on Abraxas Academy's Habitual Offender (HO) Group. This locally developed curriculum began in 2013. Known as "On Track: Overcoming Life's Hurdles," it is offered to all residents and consists of six core groups. Courses are instructed by Masters' level clinicians and include programs entitled, "Clarification and Orientation", "Thinking Errors", and "Patterns". Along with those topics, "Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ)" and "Relapse Prevention Planning (RPP)", are also parts of the curriculum. As residents near discharge, they cooperate with "Building Blocks" which revisits individual needs and circumstances surrounding their initial placement. Although the HO Group is designed around a 6-month timeframe, Abraxas Academy delivers the service in three different tracks based upon individual need, risk level, and length of placement. Students within the 3-month track receive an abbreviated syllabus, consisting of selected strongpoints, and are separated from the 6- and 10-month residents. While the 6-month and 10-month tracks are instructed together and receive the entire curriculum, those assigned to the 6-month program are afforded more individualized attention based upon their need to satisfy their material in a shortened timeframe. Students contained within the 10-month track programs have the ability to repeat groups or complete remedial exercises given their extended time at the facility. Regardless of whether students are in the 6-month or 10-month tracks, they are required to complete a certain amount of sessions before advancing to the next course. Promotions are based upon posttests as well as their ability to present material in a teach-back fashion. The subject matter is considered a fundamental requirement for discharge and included in the facilities behavioral management system. Students are provided with incentives and/or sanctions based upon their level of investment in the service. Those who perform well are rewarded with privileges while residents who misbehave or fall short of expectations are required to repeat the group.

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

1. **SPEP™ Service Type:** Group Counseling

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:** 30

Total Points Received: 30 **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: 20 **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 contact hours. Youth should receive the targeted amounts to have the greatest impact on recidivism reduction.

Points received for Duration or Number of Weeks: 0
Points received for Contact Hours or Number of Hours: 0

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.

19 youth in the cohort are Moderate, High, Very High YLS Risk Level for a total of youth 12 points
6 in the cohort are High or Very High YLS Risk Level for a total of 10 points

Total Points Received: 22 Total Points Possible: 25

Basic SPEP™ Score: 72 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: 76% 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. Recommendations for performance improvement are included in the service Feedback Report, and these recommendations are the focus of the Performance Improvement Plan, a shared responsibility of the service provider and the juvenile probation department.

The service could improve its capacity for recidivism reduction by addressing the following recommendations:

1. Regarding Quality of Service Delivery:

a. Staff Training:

- i. Develop a specialized training for clinicians specific to the HO Group and document that they receive
- ii. Develop a booster training specific to the HO group and document when the training occurs.

b. Staff Supervision:

- i. Develop a formal policy to reflect observation of the HO Group at pre-determined timeframes.

c. Organizational Response to Drift:

- i. Formulate an overarching discipline policy with progressive steps to ensure fidelity and staff performance.
- ii. Explore ways to utilize the captured data to enhance the service.

2. Regarding Amount of Service:

- a. Collaborate with juvenile probation departments to consider the targeted duration (24 weeks) of the group when determining which track the youth will receive.

- b. Explore ways to increase dosage for residents receiving the HO Group.

3. Regarding Risk Level of Youth Served:

- a. Continue collaborating with juvenile probation departments to ensure the most appropriate referrals are being received.