

The Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP™):

Service Score Results: Baseline

Name of Program and Service: Neighborhood First Program, INC. Neighborhood First Intensive Mentoring and Monitoring, Social Skills Training

Cohort Total: 11

SPEP ID: 46

Selected Timeframe: 5/1/2013 – 9/1/2014

Date(s) of Interview(s): 10/29/2014 and 11/21/2014

Lead County & SPEP Team Representatives: Bucks County, William Batty, Lisa Freese & Heather Perry

Person Preparing Report: William Batty & Heather Perry

Description of Service: *This should include a **brief** overview of the service within the context of the program, the location and if community based or residential. Indicate the type of youth referred, how the service is delivered, the purpose of service and any other **relevant** information to help the reader understand the SPEP service type classification. (350 character limit)*

Neighborhood First “was created to provide corrective measures for area youth as a structured alternative prior to juvenile incarceration, fines, and school expulsion.” Neighborhood First includes two program tracks. Track 1 is Mentoring and Monitoring, which “provides intensive monitoring, counseling and support to Bristol area youth during the critical hours after school.” This track includes the Neighborhood First Intensive Mentoring and Monitoring Program (NFIMMP) and the Neighborhood First ASCEND (Assessing Skills, Competencies, Education via Networking and Development) Program. Track 2 is labeled “Prevention and Intervention” and provides “outreach in the community for at risk youth who are reluctant to seek assistance elsewhere.” The focus of this report is NFIMMP. The Bucks County Children and Youth Social Services Agency (C&Y) and Bucks County Juvenile Probation Department (JPO) make referrals to NFIMMP. Referrals include delinquent and non-delinquent males and females between the ages of 13 and 18. The number of referrals from C&Y are capped at 12 and the number of referrals from JPO are capped at 13. Neighborhood First employs 4 staff members who deliver the service. These staff members are identified as “Youth Advocates.” Juveniles are assigned a “Youth Advocate.” Walt Mims was the supervisor for “Youth Advocates” but was promoted to Executive Director on or about 10/30/14. Mr. Mims described himself as the bridge between the juvenile and assigned staff member. Juveniles are assigned to a “Youth Advocate” based on consulting with the referral source and identifying the juvenile’s needs, gender, age, and personality traits. When looking at the descriptions provided for Track 2 programming, words such as “safe environment and safe haven” are found. The written overview about NFIMMP provided at the onsite visit/meeting indicates that NFIMMP provides structured intensive supervision during high risk times (after school, evenings and weekends). Also, NFIMMP provided a daily schedule at the onsite visit/meeting and it depicts a structured environment for youth during high risk times. These documents coupled with Track 2 descriptors indicate that the core of Neighborhood First programming is providing a structured and safe environment for youth. Activities listed in the NFIMMP schedule that may be considered as a service for the SPEP are homework time, individual sessions on Friday and Life Skills Group. The focus of this report is the Life Skills Group.

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 Earned: 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 and supervision, and how drift from service delivery is addressed.

Total Points Earned: 5 Total Points Possible: 20

3. **Amount of Service:** Score was derived from examination of weeks and hours each youth in the cohort received 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.

Points received for Duration or Number of Weeks: 4

Points received for Dosage or Number of Hours: 2

Total Points Earned: 6 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.

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

3 youth in the cohort are High or Very High YLS Risk Level for a total of 8 points

Total Points Earned: 18 Total Points Possible: 25

Basic SPEP™ Score: 49 total points awarded out of 100 points. Compares service to any other type of SPEP therapeutic service. (eg: 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: 58% This percentage compares the service to the same service types found in the research. (eg: 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 local juvenile court. The recommendations for this service included in the feedback report are:

The program could improve its capacity for recidivism reduction through:

1. Utilizing the existing agency documents/resources to create written protocol/manual
 - Describe the social skills training service type and how it is to be delivered
 - Utilize social skills topics included in available resources and develop lessons for those topics that incorporate teaching, modeling, practicing and feedback
 - Document that the manual/protocols are being utilized or referenced during service delivery
 - Review/update manual/protocols regularly and document review/update
 - Identify a target population best suited for service type and include it in manual/protocols.
2. Enhancing staff training
 - Train service delivery staff and supervisor to deliver the service and document it
 - Provide booster/refresher/ongoing service type specific training for service delivery staff and document it.
 - Collaborate with probation department to train staff in YLS
3. Enhancing staff supervision
 - Focus on service delivery staff's adherence and quality of service delivery at individual and staff meetings and document these efforts
 - Provide written feedback to those delivering the service about their delivery beyond a yearly written performance
 - Complete performance evaluations in a consistent manner.
4. Enhancing response to drift
 - Responses to drift should be more specific for service type and delivery
 - Collect data about the service and utilize data to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the service
5. Attaining targeted dosage and risk level served
 - Collaborate with probation department to meet targeted dosage requirement for mentoring service type and increase referrals of moderate/high risk juvenile and decrease low risk referrals

The Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP™):

Service Score Results: Reassessment

Name of Program and Service: Neighborhood First Intensive Mentoring and Monitoring Life Skills Group

Cohort Total: 17 SPEP ID: 46-T02

Selected Timeframe: Feb. 17, 2016-Apr. 3, 2018

Date(s) of Interview(s): May 1, 2018

Lead County & SPEP Team Representatives: Nick Caramenico, Bucks Co., & Heather Perry, EPISCenter

Person Preparing Report: Nick Caramenico, Bucks Co., & Heather Perry, EPISCenter

Description of Service: *This should include a **brief** overview of the service within the context of the program, the location and if community based or residential. Indicate the type of youth referred, how the service is delivered, the purpose of service and any other **relevant** information to help the reader understand the SPEP service type classification. (350 character limit)*

Neighborhood First Inc. was established on October 1, 2001. Before it was incorporated on December 4, 2003, its “mother” agency was Today Inc. James T. Wells was its founder and Executive Director until October 2014. Mr. Wells’ vision was to “address the needs of youth who often fell through the cracks in the juvenile justice system.” Neighborhood First “was created to provide corrective measures for area youth (Bensalem Township, Bristol Borough, Bristol Township, and Morrisville Borough) as a structured alternative to juvenile incarceration, fines, and school expulsion.” Neighborhood First’s mission is written on their website as follows:

1. “To provide mentoring, monitoring and guidance to neighborhood youth, and
2. To promote positive goals and the means to achieve them by teaching skills necessary to become productive adults.”

Neighborhood First includes two program tracks as described in the Neighborhood First Brochure and on its website. Track 1 is labeled Mentoring and Monitoring. This track “provides intensive monitoring, counseling and support to Bristol area youth during the critical hours after school. The track also addresses the need for juvenile probation placement alternatives.” This track includes the Neighborhood First Intensive Mentoring and Monitoring Program (NFIMMP). Track 2 is labeled “Prevention and Intervention.” This track provides “outreach in the community for at risk youth who are reluctant to seek assistance elsewhere.” School districts, Bucks County Children and Youth Social Service Agency, and the minor judiciary are referral agents to the programs. This track includes programs such as: Bucket Drumming Corps, H.A.V.E.N. (Homework, Athletics, Values, and Education Network), Wearable Arts, and T.A.G. (Teen Awareness Group). Three out of four of the Track 2 programs include safe haven, safe environment and structure during high risk time periods in their description.

The focus of this report is the Neighborhood First Intensive Mentoring and Monitoring Program (NFIMMP) listed in Track 1. The Bucks County Children and Youth Social Services Agency (C&Y) and Bucks County Juvenile Probation Department (JPO) make referrals to NFIMMP. Referrals include delinquent and non-delinquent males and females between the ages of 13 and 18. The number of referrals from C&Y are capped at 12 and the number of referrals from JPO are capped at 13. The program typically serves around 8 youth but it varies. Neighborhood First employs 4 staff members who deliver the service. These staff members are identified as “Youth Advocates.”

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? n/a

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 Earned: 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 and supervision, and how drift from service delivery is addressed.

Total Points Earned: 10 Total Points Possible: 20

3. **Amount of Service:** Score was derived from examination of weeks and hours each youth in the cohort received 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.

Points received for Duration or Number of Weeks: 2

Points received for Dosage or Number of Hours: 2

Total Points Earned: 4 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.

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

7 youth in the cohort are High or Very High YLS Risk Level for a total of 13 points

Total Points Earned: 25 Total Points Possible: 25

Basic SPEP™ Score: 59 total points awarded out of 100 points. Compares service to any other type of SPEP therapeutic service. (eg: 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: 70% This percentage compares the service to the same service types found in the research. (eg: 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 local juvenile court. The recommendations for this service included in the feedback report are:

The Neighborhood First Intensive Mentoring and Monitoring Life Skills Group program scored a 59 for the Basic Score and a 70% Program Optimization Percentage. It is classified as a Group 3 Social Skills Training service type. These scores represent an increase from the baseline findings of the initial SPEP™ scoring results. It should be noted that the Amount of Service score decreased slightly from the baseline score, however the risk level of the youth served is on average, higher than the risk level of youth being served in a community based setting. The program could increase its impact on recidivism reduction and competency development by:

1. Quality of Service Delivery: a. Written Protocol: i. Documenting an annual review of the manual. ii. Utilizing the manual as a training tool during staff meetings. iii. Document the sections of the manual reviewed during staff meetings. b. Staff Training: i. Continue to document training topics that are offered to staff by Director or outside presenter. ii. Continue to document training dates, hours, and staff that attended. iii. Continue to educate Youth Advocates and supervisor on the YLS, Case Plan and other JJSES topics. c. Response to Drift: i. Begin to utilize staff performance evaluations on a regular basis during the year. ii. Review the evaluation with the staff member and provide them with a copy if requested.
2. Amount of Service: a. Continuing to collaborate with the probation department to ensure that each juvenile reaches a minimum of 16 weeks of service and 24 contact hours.
3. Risk Level: a. Continuing to collaborate with the probation department to ensure that moderate and high-risk juveniles are being referred to the program and that low risk referrals are being diverted from treatment. b. Ensure YLS data and the youth's Case Plan is included in the referral packet from the probation department. c. Utilize the YLS and Case Plan information provided by the probation department to track the YLS domains and competency development areas being addressed by the program.