

## JUVENILE JUSTICE CONCERNS HIGH AT INTAKE AND DECREASE WITH SERVICE FROM YAP

Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP) provides wraparound services to youth whose involvement with the Juvenile Justice system has put them at risk of being removed from their home and community. The YAP model provides direct service staff, who are called Advocates, to provide intensive community-based services that stabilize young people and allow them to remain with their families in their own communities. YAP focuses on connections to positive community resources that will endure after YAP services have ended. This strengths based approach is designed to prevent the child from being institutionalized in criminogenic environments that have negative impacts on social, emotional, and behavioral development. YAP services include individual service planning that addresses the needs of the youth and family by building positive interpersonal relationships, improving educational and employment skills, improving emotional well-being and strengthening positive support systems.

YAP has partnered with the University of Maryland Division of Services Research in an effort to use empirical data to drive service delivery. YAP uses the KIDnet software developed by the University of Maryland to collect and track outcomes. For this analysis, YAP used KIDnet to implement the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment to identify areas to focus service delivery and to measure change over time. The analysis focused on 369 youth in YAP’s Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Maryland’s programs who were referred for juvenile justice involvement. The CANS is a widely accepted measure that is used both nationally and internationally as a valid and reliable tool to identify areas of need in a child’s life and to track functional outcomes.

### REDUCTION IN JUVENILE JUSTICE CONCERNS

As expected, youth scores indicating problems were highest at intake on the Juvenile Justice scale of the CANS. In this scale, youth are rated on the seriousness of delinquent or criminal behavior, history, planning, community safety, peer influences, parental influences and environmental influences. As indicated by the table below, juvenile justice problems were significantly reduced during the time that the youth received YAP services. After 3 months of YAP services, the average youth score indicates that problems were less than half of their original entry score and at 6 months, these scores were reduced another one-third of the previous mark. Improvement in average scores, identified in the table below, were statically significant.

Institutionalization of youth in the juvenile justice system carries exorbitant costs to society. The results of this analysis are exciting and important to the mission of improving the quality of life for all children and families.

