

# **An Evaluation of Juvenile Offenders Placed at Rite of Passage**

**The Criminal and Juvenile Justice Consortium  
College of Social Work  
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# INTRODUCTION

## Study purpose

At the request of Rite of Passage (ROP), the Criminal and Juvenile Justice Consortium (CJJC) at the University of Utah contracted with ROP to conduct an analysis of offenders who were placed in this program from the State of Utah. The current report presents the findings of this analysis. This report builds upon CJJC's previous evaluation of juvenile offenders sent to out of state placements by the Division of Youth Corrections, which was conducted in 2000. ( A copy of the final report from that evaluation, "Out-of-State Placement for Juvenile Offenders: Final Report" can be obtained from CJJC).

The current evaluation is limited to offenders who have been placed at ROP by the Utah Division of Youth Corrections. The research design involved a more comprehensive dataset than was available for the previous study in order to provide ROP with a more detailed and comprehensive view of the effect the services it provides has on rehabilitating juvenile offenders. In addition to analyzing outcome data, the evaluators collected data on the services provided by ROP to individual offenders. Interviews conducted with ROP offenders were also analyzed.

This additional data allowed for a more detailed analysis. The researchers were able to not only look at the differential re-offense rates between juvenile offenders placed at ROP and in community placements in Utah, the effect of specific programming elements on re-offense was examined. The end goal of this effort is to provide information that can be used to show program effectiveness and also provide a guide to what elements of the programming appear to be most effective.

## Utah Out-of-State Placements

Over the past ten years, the Utah State Division of Youth Corrections has contracted with six residential institutions for out-of-state placements, including Clarinda Academy and Forrest Ridge, both located in Iowa, Glen Mills School in Pennsylvania, Rite of Passage in Nevada, Tarkio Academy in Missouri, and Vision Quest in Arizona. Rite of Passage has received an increasing percentage of the offenders placed out-of-state by Utah.

ROP program is a large, long-term residential treatment program that employs a Positive Peer Culture (PPC) model. This type of approach was explored in detail in the "Out-of-State Placement for Juvenile Offenders: Final Report" (see Appendix A). It is important to note that PPC is the most common modality of group treatment used for delinquent youth across the nation. It has also been observed that, "Despite the popularity of this approach for treating juveniles, there are very few studies that look at the effectiveness of this method, especially as it relates to the eventual adjustment of offender back to community



life” (Kapp, 2000, p.177). In light of this fact, the evaluators hope the results of this study will provide policy direction to both ROP and the Utah Division of Youth Corrections.

# Overview of Methods

A brief summary of the methodological approach employed is given here. For the interested reader, Appendix A provides more detailed information on the data sources and methods of analysis used. Evaluation researchers have advocated the use of wide-ranging and flexible methods of inquiry when conducting program evaluations (Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer, 1994). It also has been argued that the quantitative data available in most juvenile corrections information systems allows for only the most general effects to be elucidated, such as recidivism rates (Mears, 1998). The success of a program cannot be fully understood using current information systems. Gathering case file and qualitative data (e.g. interviews) to supplement quantitative data allows for the development of a more comprehensive picture of the impact that ROP has on juvenile offenders. In light of the above, the current evaluation employed a mixed methods approach. Quantitative measures of re-offense and commitment rates were combined with programming data obtained from case files and analyses of qualitative interviews with ROP staff and youth to evaluate the effect of placement at ROP.

## Analysis of Re-offense

Rates of re-offense were compared between offenders placed at ROP and those placed into community placement and secure care in Utah. Data was collected for the 22 months following the date of the sentence to the specific placement. A follow-up period of this length has been found on average to account for 68% of all re-offenses originating after the sentencing date (Redondo, Sanchez-Meca, and Garrido, 1999). It should be noted that as the follow-up period began at the time of sentencing, many offenders were in some type of restrictive setting for a portion of the follow-up period. Consequently, re-offense rates are lower than would be expected if the offender were free of any type of supervision during the entire 22- month period.

Only the most serious charge during a single calendar day, termed an episode, was recorded when tabulating the number of re-offenses during the follow-up period. Measuring re-offense in this manner allowed for a longer follow-up period while still taking into account that not all charges lead to conviction. Technical violations were excluded.

With the permission of the Utah Division of Youth Corrections, official court and corrections data was gathered on all offender placed in the care of ROP since the beginning of their Utah contract in March of 1999 until May of 2001. Demographic, prior charges, days under any type of court or corrections supervision, and re-offense data were gathered on these offenders. Rite of Passage placements were then compared with offenders sentenced to secure care, as Utah policymakers intended out-of-state placements to be used as an alternative for this sanction. In addition, offenders sent to ROP were also compared with a sample of community placement offenders, as this group most

closely resembled out-of-state offenders in terms of offending history and demographics. Offenders placed into ROP after a secure care placement were excluded from the analysis as these offenders would confound examination of the effectiveness of out-of-state treatment as an alternative to secure care.

### Analysis of ROP Programming

The data already gathered on offender characteristics and re-offense from the CJJC's previous study on all Utah out-of-state placements was combined with the Rite of Passage case file data to examine the outcomes of placement at Rite of Passage. Case file data was used to examine which aspects of the programming at Rite of Passage appear to have the largest effects on re-offense.

The researchers attempted to collect information on the following variables:

- Length of Stay
- Status at program exit
- Academic achievement (8<sup>th</sup> grade proficiency and GED status)
- Vocational achievement (certified in vocation or not, type of vocation)
- Demonstrated behavioral change
- Participation in treatment groups- type and number of sessions (life skills, gang intervention, anger management, victim empathy, substance abuse, parenting skills)

These variables were entered in using the same categories that Rite of Passage uses. To facilitate analysis of the differential effects program components have on re-offense, the variables were then collapsed into the following categories: Program Status at Exit, Demonstrated Behavior Change, Participation in Counseling, School Achievement, Number and Type of Vocation(s), and Level of Athletic Participation.

### Analysis of Offenders and Staff Experiences with the ROP Program

Promotional materials, staff training materials, and written information given to offenders was collected from ROP. DYC audits were also obtained. These documents and a site visit were used to orient the researchers to the ROP program.

The database of qualitative interviews collected during the previous study, "Out-of-State Placement for Juvenile Offenders," was reanalyzed looking at the results for ROP offenders and staff. Qualitative interviews were held with 5 staff during the site visit. Seventeen interviews were conducted with juveniles who were either currently at ROP (8 offenders) or had been at ROP (9 offenders). Interviews with ROP staff focused on the type of program they provided and their experiences in working with offenders from Utah. Offenders interviews focused on their experience while placed and, when applicable, their experience re-integrating into their Utah community.

# RESULTS

## What type of offender is placed at ROP?

To answer how ROP offenders compared with those in community placement and secure care in Utah, demographic and offending characteristics of these offenders were examined. More minority offenders were placed in ROP than in Community

**Table 1 Sample Characteristics of Offenders Placed in ROP, Community Placement, and Secure Care**

Variable	Community Placement	ROP	Secure Facility
Race Caucasian	68%	51%	60%
Minority	32%	49%	40%
Age at First Offense (in years)	11.6	11.9	11.7
Age at Start of Placement (in Years)	15.7	16.5	16.1
Number of Prior Offenses	10.1	10.5	13.6

Placement or Secure Care. ROP offenders began their court involvement at roughly the same time as offenders in Community Placement or Secure Care. However, offenders sent to ROP were slightly older than their counterparts in Community Placement. The total number of prior offense episodes for ROP offenders was more similar to offenders placed in Community Placement.

## What type of program do offenders placed at ROP receive?

### The Positive Peer Culture Approach

ROP uses a program philosophy modeled on the Positive Peer Culture approach to the treatment of delinquent behavior. A review of the Positive Peer Culture and related research is provided in “Out-of-State Placement for Juvenile Offenders: Final Report” located in Appendix A.

### Other Services Received at an Out-of-State Placement

While ROP employs a PPC approach towards behavior management, it is not the sole intervention of this program. Educational and vocational training, athletics, chemical dependency education and treatment, family contact, and restitution hours are also provided.

## What are the experiences of offenders who have been at ROP?

Offenders sent to ROP were asked how they perceived differences between ROP and the in-state programs in which they had been placed. The questions were designed to assess the differences in treatment philosophies between the two types of placement. With an average of eight placements these offenders had a wide array of experiences to draw upon.

ROP offenders consistently identified similar patterns of differences between their Utah and out-of-state placement experiences. Table 2 presents the most common themes found starting with those most frequently expressed.

Clear differences in treatment focus are apparent between offenders sentenced to in-state programs versus ROP. In-state programs are perceived to be oriented towards psychological treatment, whereas, ROP is perceived to have a

<b>Table 2 Offender Reported Differences in Focus of In-State and ROP Programs*</b>		
<b>In-State Program</b>	<b>Other Out-of-State Programs^</b>	<b>ROP</b>
Psychological Treatment	Educational and Vocational Training	Educational Training
“Lock-up”	Athletics and Physical Exertion	Athletics and Physical Exertion
Educational	Group Treatment (e.g., PPC, GGI)	Highly Structured Environment & Strict Discipline
Behavioral Change	Behavioral Change	
Rehabilitative Proctor Care		
Sports		

\* Beginning with those most frequently mentioned

^ This includes four other out-of-state programs with which the Utah Division of Youth Corrections has contracts

stronger focus on educational achievement and vocational training. ROP offenders perceived the main focus to be on Education, Athletics, and Discipline that included physical exertion. One offender described the education at ROP by stating, “Then you've got school. They [have] really, really high standards on your schooling.”

Another ROP offender made a comparison between his experience at ROP and secure care by stating, “You're locked up [in secure care]. You don't really do much. And [ROP] it's like a school.”

In defining Utah programs as psychologically oriented and ROP as more discipline based, one ROP offender illustrated his recognition of this difference by explaining how a previous strategy he used in Utah “acting crazy,” didn't work at ROP. He recalled, “I didn't get that far... I tried to act like I was crazy and that didn't work. And I told them I was going to kill myself and that didn't work either.... Most [in-state] programs lose it totally when you say stuff like that, but here, I tried.”

ROP was also perceived to be more disciplinarian in their approach than other out-of-state or Utah programs. One offender stated this difference as, “If you mess up, you're like, if the unit's messing up, they'll make you, you know, work out or whatever ...there's different consequences... Like in Utah, you don't do none of that. They'll just,

you know, you go to bed early or something..." Some staff at ROP perceived a psychological approach as an ineffective approach because it was "soft" or "enabled the youth" by providing excuses for their delinquent actions. Conversely, the approach taken by ROP, one focused on discipline and accountability, was viewed by several staff as "what these kids really need" in order to change.

Youth reported a highly structured environment at all programs, however, the first stage of ROP, located in an wilderness style desert camp, was most commonly viewed in this manner. Offender placed in ROP characterized this stage of the program as relying heavily on strict discipline. One offender stated, "Some of the programs in Utah don't even come close to this program. Like in the desert, you have to walk [with your hands] at your side or whatever, and if you mess up, you get pushups. Kind of like a boot camp."

Surprisingly, although the staff in all out-of-state programs, including ROP, most commonly identified PPC as the component that distinguished their program from ones available in Utah, the juveniles themselves believed there was a stronger focus on educational achievement and sports, than on PPC.

This finding notwithstanding, because ROP states that it employs a type of PPC and Utah programs do not employ this type of treatment, ROP offenders were asked about their perceptions of PPC. PPC was originally conceptualized as a treatment to help delinquent youth learn to care about their peers and become resistant towards negative peer pressure. It would be expected that offender's perceptions of their experience in a PPC program would reflect these goals to some extent. However, as congruent with past research (Kapp, 2000), the current study found the offenders focused almost exclusively on negative peer confrontations when speaking of their experience with PPC. Other aspects of PPC, such as learning pro-social behavior, caring about others, or taking personal responsibility were rarely mentioned. One offender summed up his view of PPC by stating, "They try to, you know, they got the Positive Peer Culture here, but that, to me, that's like, you know, just a big front that everybody puts on."

The developers of PPC intended confrontations of negative behavior to reinforce a pro-social program environment, develop caring concern for others, and increase personal responsibility (Brendtro & Ness, 1992). However, almost all of the offenders at ROP or the other out-of-state programs with which Utah contracts perceived the act of confronting other youth as a means to gain power and not to as an expression of concern or method of maintaining a pro-social atmosphere. One offender stated his view succinctly, stating simply, "You confront to hurt, not to help."

Some youth pointed out that confrontation was easily co-opted for use as a tool to gain power, and hurt other youth because the truthfulness of the confronting youth's claims are usually not questioned by staff and cannot be questioned by the confronted youth. One ROP offender pointed this out by saying, "...some people will like try to play games with your program, and like, if they have a high status and they don't like you, they could like put your program in jeopardy, like as in, like if you're not really doing anything, but they don't like you, they could come to your group, and tell your staff, and the staff will believe him, 'cause you don't, you have to accept [his accusations whether they are] right [or] wrong. That's what we're supposed to do... they just tell us that if we don't accept, we got to go to [time out]." This type of

disingenuous confrontation was perceived to be common and not easily detected by staff.

While group accountability has been discouraged by PPC advocates, several ROP program participants reported being held accountable for the actions of their peers. Offenders reported that group accountability exacerbated aggression towards other program participants. Concerning this offender, “[Confrontation] causes a lot of tension among the youth, however they are not allowed to fight. They get revenge through [more confrontations].” Given that many offenders perceived that their peers confronted negative behavior not out of caring concern but to gain status or power over their peers, several offenders believed the PPC approach had negative effects on them.

In summary, offenders placed in ROP reported this program to be qualitatively different from those they had experienced in Utah. The offenders reported ROP to have the strongest focus on educational achievement, athletics and discipline. Utah programs were reported to have a stronger focus on psychological treatment and simply “being locked up.” Most offender’s experience with PPC appears to be largely negative.

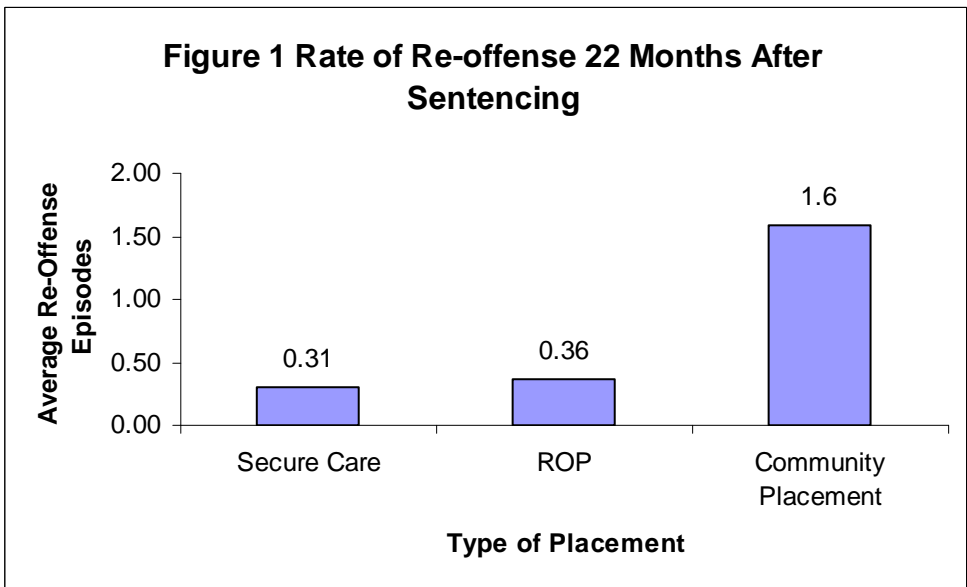
The intended positive effects of PPC, such as caring concern for others, were not experienced by most from ROP. This appears to be due to the fact that many offenders perceive peer confrontations of negative behavior to be co-opted into a means to increase status and power over other youth.

## **How does the rate of re-offense compare for offenders sent to ROP, Community Placement or Secure Care?**

The re-offense rates of secure care and community placement offenders were compared with ROP offenders. It was assumed that if ROP placements were a valid alternative to secure care, offender sent to this type of placement should have equal or lower rates of re-offense. Offenders placed in ROP were also compared with those placed in community placements as previous analyses showed that the offenders in both of these sanctions were similar in many respects and ROP has been used as an alternative to Community Placement.

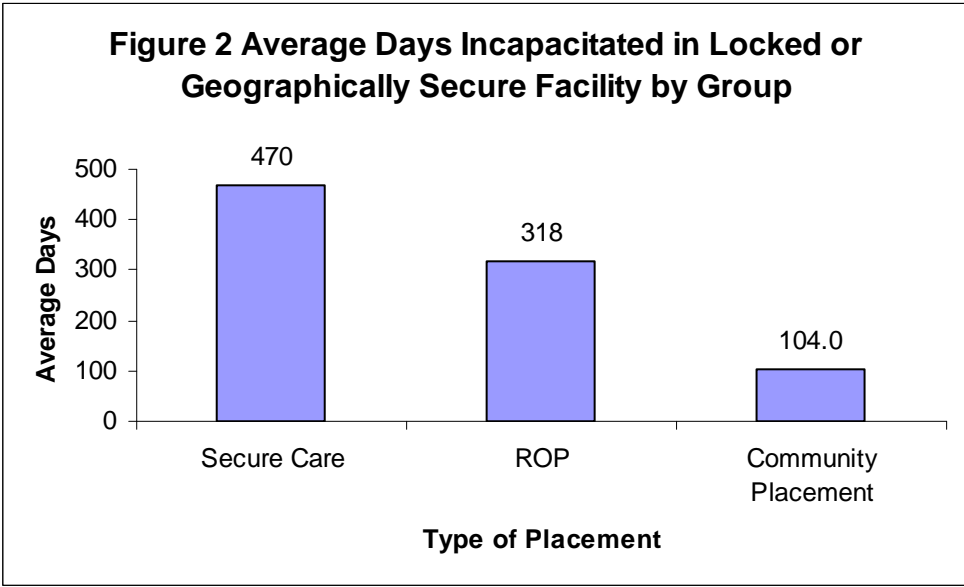
A sample of offenders placed from 1995 to 2001 was selected for each group. The number of offenders in each group was as follows: ROP = 62, Community Placement = 338, and Secure Care = 239. The comparison offender groups, those sent to community placement or secure care, were selected randomly from each correctional region in Utah, (8% from Region 1, 81% from Region 2, 11% from Region 3), so that the geographical composition of the groups was similar. It should be noted that 12 ROP offenders were excluded from analysis due to missing data on either the JIS or the case files.

A statistical method called regression analysis was used to predict re-offense. This test can be run so as to take into account the pre-existing differences between the offender in each type of placement, such as number of prior offenses. As shown below, it is then possible to create a picture of how the type of placement and other important factors influence rates of re-offense. Two regressions were conducted, the first comparing ROP to secure care placements; the second comparing ROP to community placements.



As shown in Figure 1, offenders placed in ROP did not have significantly more offenses during the 22 months following the start of their placement than those sent to secure care. However, ROP offenders had significantly fewer offenses than those sentenced to community placement. It should be kept in mind that rates of offending are low in part because a conservative measure of re-offense was used, i.e., an episode system where only the most serious charge on a calendar day was counted as a re-offense.

In addition, the 22-month follow-up period includes time spent in a placement as well as time in the community. This is an important concept to keep in mind when examining the difference in rates of re-offense as, in this study, time spent removed from the community is the most influential factor on re-offense rates. The average number of days spent in a locked or geographically secure facility during the follow-up period varied significantly depending on the type of placement received an offender initially received. Given this fact, it is difficult to separate the effects of being placed into ROP with the effects of being removed from the community for a longer period of



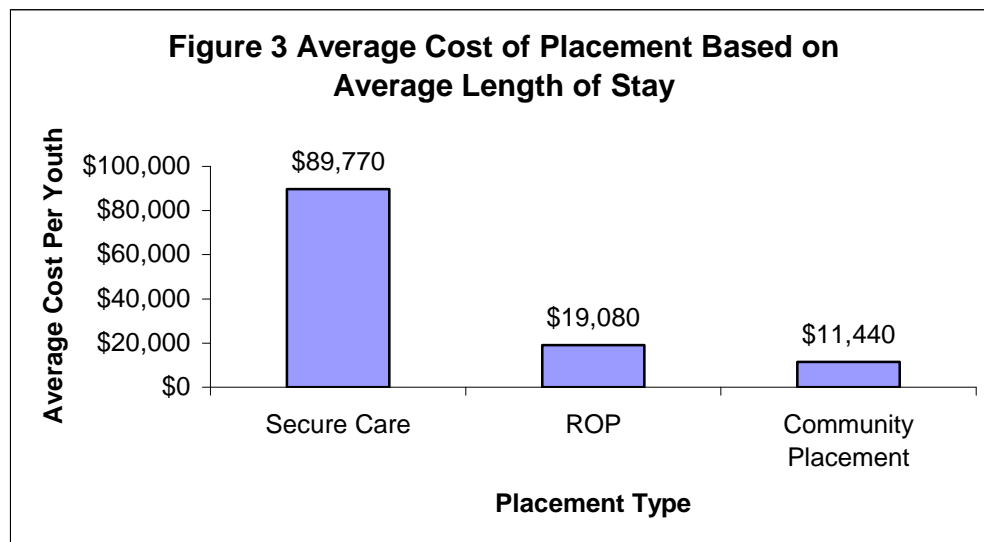
time. As Figure 2 shows, community placement offenders spent one-third as long removed from the community (104 days) than ROP placed offenders. However, ROP



offenders spent less time removed from the community than secure care offenders.

Several other factors were more predictive of re-offense than the type of placement an offender received when ROP offenders were compared with community placement offenders. The number of prior offenses, age at the start of the placement, and days incapacitated in secure detention are more influential on rates of re-offense than the type of placement an offender received. Because no significant difference in re-offense rates between offenders placed at ROP and in secure care was found other predictors of re-offense were not compared for these groups. It is important to note that roughly equal rates of re-offense between ROP and secure care offenders was obtained even though ROP offenders spent, on average, approximately one-half as many days removed from the community in the follow-up period.

In addition to considering the re-offense rate of offenders in a given placement, the average cost is of importance to administrators working with limited funds. Figure 3 provides the average cost of each type of placement based upon the average time spent in the program (see Figure 2) and the current daily cost of each placement. The



daily rate for ROP was computed using only the cost to the State of Utah (\$60/day) as the program is eligible for Medicaid funding. The total daily rate for ROP placements from Utah is \$117. The daily rate for community placement and secure care at the time of the study was calculated at \$117 and \$162 respectively.

Examining the Figures 1-3, it can be seen that secure care offenders have equal re-offense episode rates as those placed in ROP (.31 vs .36). However, although there was no difference in re-offense, secure care is more costly (\$89,770 vs \$19,080) and the offenders averaged more time incapacitated during the 22-month period following sentencing than ROP placements (470 vs 318 days). Offenders in community placements have a higher rate of re-offense than ROP offenders (1.6 vs .36), but they also have lower average placement costs (\$11,440 vs 19,080).

In summary, the current analysis shows that re-offense rates for offenders placed at ROP are equal to those who are sent to a secure care facility. While ROP offenders have a lower rate of re-offense than community placement offenders, this finding is in part a function of these offenders being in a placement three times longer than

offenders placed into community placements. Reduced levels of offending for ROP offenders when compared to community placement offenders might be due simply to the longer period of time ROP offenders were removed from the community during the follow-up period.

## What are the program outcomes for ROP offenders?

While rates of re-offense are arguably the most salient, the services provided by a program are meant to be the causative agents in changing the lives of juvenile offenders. ROP collects a wide range of data in a standardized format that enables statistical analysis of the program variables that might influence rates of re-offense. Unfortunately, due to missing data not all program variables that ROP gathers were amenable to analysis. The following tables (Table 3 and 4) show those variables that were analyzed. Several variables, namely “Level of Program Success” and “Participation in Counseling” are composite variables created by summing across multiple individual staff ratings.

<b>Table 3 Staff Ratings of Program Outcomes for ROP Offenders</b>					
<b>Reason for Exit</b>		<b>Demonstrated Behavior Change*</b>		<b>Participation in Counseling and Treatment</b>	
Completed Program	48%	Excellent	3%	Insightful	2%
Failed Program	23%	Very Good	13%	Cooperative/Actively Participates	48%
Pulled by Probation Officer	28%	Satisfactory	35%	Passive Participation/Superficial	37%
Other	1%	Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory	34%	Disruptive	5%
		Not Available	5%	Not Available	8%
			10%		

\* Rating is the average of the sum of individual program ratings at exit from program. These ratings cover the offenders interactions with staff and peers, acknowledgement of reason for placement, displays accountability, and actively participates in treatment.

**Table 4 Academic, Vocational and Athletic Outcomes of ROP Offenders**

Educational Achievement		Number of Vocations Certified		Type of Vocation Chosen	Athletic Participation		
Less than 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Equivalence	10%	None	13%	Applied technology, Computers, Computer Application	29%	Excellent	6%
				Construction, Construction trades, Drafting, Fabrication, Manufacturing, Welding	41%		
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Equivalence	19%	One	76%	Community Service, EMT, Fire Science	11%	Satisfactory	61%
				Automotive or Transportation technology	4%		
GED or High School Diploma	71%	Two or more	11%	Culinary Arts	2%	Unsatisfactory	2%
				Facilities Maintenance	2%		
				Not Available	13%		

A regression analysis was conducted to identify what program variables were most influential on rates of re-offense. This analysis included length of stay in addition to the variables listed in the preceding tables (Tables 3 and 4). No single variable or combination of variables was found to be statistically significant predictors of re-offense. While it is possible that the program elements do not influence re-offense rates, it is more probable that a larger number of offenders with more complete data are needed in order to detect the differential effects of the services provided by ROP.

## What Leads to Success or Failure after an ROP Placement?

This section provides a look at the effectiveness of ROP from the viewpoint of the offenders sent to this program. Analysis of interviews of offenders sent to all out-of-state programs that Utah contracts with showed that success after an out-of-state placement is dependent upon the offender:

- Making the decision to change his or her behavior;
- Using certain program elements to increase the ability to change; and
- Having a supportive structure after program release that bolsters motivation for change and allows application of the skills learned at the program.

The discussion of this model is given below. It should be noted that although

ROP is the only program that Utah contracts with that provides aftercare, the data from these efforts was not complete enough for analysis. Therefore, the evaluators used the qualitative interviews for ROP. The ROP offenders showed a similar pattern as their peers who were placed out-of-state at other facilities, therefore, quotes are included from offenders who were placed in other programs in order to illustrate the model.

### Decision to Change

The most common reason provided by the offenders interviewed for success or failure was personal will. When asked how they had avoided or not avoided another placement these offenders viewed their behavior as a choice. Offender who had been successful upon release characterized this as a decision of “taking responsibility” for their actions. As one offender put it, “The environment I live in now is positive. But, I mean, I don't say it changed me. I think I changed myself cause that's all that's in everybody, if you want to change.”

Obviously this youth's, or any other's, view of their change process is subjective. The language used reflects that used by PPC, i.e. “taking responsibility” and “living in a positive environment.” It is possible that some offenders were assisted in making a positive change by PPC interventions but were not cognizant of this influence. Most importantly for the current discussion, the youth, in their view, need to make a conscious decision before other programming elements will help.

The period before making the decision to change their behavior for several youth was described as one of increasing insight where the offender realized for the first time they had a choice towards criminal behavior. One youth recalled this period by stating, “Cause before I don't think about choices, I just do it... If, you know, somebody comes up to me now, I sit there and think about it. Should I do it? You know, I actually think about it.”

In contrast, many youth who failed to avoid another placement characterized this decision as simply, “I didn't want to change.” One offender expressed this quite directly when asked, “Why weren't you able to stay out of another placement?” The offender responded simply, “Did not want to.” Another youth who responded almost identically to the previous youth added, “No program is going to help you 'til you're ready.” Unlike their successful counterparts, these offender apparently see no reason to change.

*Interviewer:* “What was the main reason [you didn't stay out]?”

*Youth:* “Just didn't see any reason to stop being in trouble. Just thought it was going to be worth it.”

### Program Elements Increase the Ability to Change

In addition to making a choice to change their criminal behavior, various aspects of ROP were perceived by the offenders placed there as providing critical skills that help them create a new direction. Overwhelmingly, educational

and vocational training are considered to be most helpful. The offender provided various reasons why this training was helpful. For example, one offender speaking about how furthering his education helped him stated, “ ‘Cause it helped me to focus more. When I was out, I never really went to school. I was always locked up, going to the lower educational schools and stuff, so, since I been [at ROP], I've caught up almost to my class, and I'm ready to graduate this year. And when I came [to ROP], I only had five credits. I'm going to graduate this year when I get out [of the program]. I'll only need like a credit and a half, two credits.”

Another offenders stated, “Oh, I think the thing that's good about [out-of-state placements] is they made you go to school, so you know, I got my GED and got a certificate for EMT and everything, but if I had been on the streets, I don't think I would have went to school.”

The next most helpful aspect was participation in athletics. Several youth also believed program strictness and caring staff had helped them to change.

### Supportive Structure after Program Release

It is apparent from interviews with youth who have returned from ROP that making a decision to change and increasing skills such as educational and vocational abilities are necessary but not sufficient factors to maintain change after release. Many offenders found reintegration into their communities to be a very difficult process. During this transition it became very easy to return to past criminal activity. It is important to note that DYC has implemented an aftercare program during 2003. The current interviews were conducted before this program was put in place.

The magnitude of this difficulty was evident when offenders were asked how it felt coming back to Utah and what aftercare they received during this time. Some offenders reported limited aftercare in the form of monthly contacts and employment or educational assistance. Among offenders who reported receiving some type of aftercare from DYC, monitoring by their case manager was the most common activity.

Overall, it appears that the offenders interviewed received no intensive structured aftercare program from either DYC or ROP. While ROP administrative staff pointed out that aftercare contracts could be negotiated with DYC, it appears that the division policy has been to have case managers implement an individualized program in cases where an offender is determined to need aftercare.

The lack of an intensive, structured aftercare program has detrimental effects on many offenders. Past research has found that offender's in-program gains evaporate quickly upon release without appropriate aftercare support. The offenders interviewed for the current study support these results. Many offenders appeared to have bought into the program to a large extent and came back to Utah motivated “to avoid another placement.” After being back in the state for several months, many offenders reported, “slipping back into my past ways.” According to their report, it was difficult to re-enter the environment from which they had come. The difficulty of re-entry into the community was increased without a supportive structure as explained by the following offender.

“[My DYC case manager and out-of-state program] could do more, cause I just spent, all together I was locked up three and a half years. That's

three and a half years that I lost and you know, now I'm supposed to just re-adapt. And I think that the first little while I did good... then all of a sudden I just got thrown out there again where I had nothing. My family was there, but they weren't... The only thing I had was a girl that I thought I, that I was in love with, but you know, that led me to losing scholarships and everything else cause I had to fend for myself.”

Another offender drew a contrast between the intensive structure he was under while in the program with his experience upon release stating, “It was difficult [after the programs] because I was so used to, like, if I was doing something bad, someone would point it out to me, ‘You're doing this bad.’” For this and similar offender, their newly found freedom appeared to be confusing and difficult to handle.



## Discussion of Results

The current analysis shows that re-offense rates for offenders placed in ROP are similar to those who are sent to a secure care facility and lower than those who are sent to a community placement. These findings regarding community placements are influenced by the longer period of incapacitation that ROP offenders average. Based upon the average length of time in the program, an ROP placement costs less than a secure care placement with no increases in re-offense rates.

Interviews with the offenders placed in ROP and other out-of-state programs illuminated several strategies that would reduce re-offending after release. Offenders interviewed for this study point to three factors required for an intervention to be successful in changing criminal behavior including the following:

- Making a decision to change
- Using program components, particularly educational and vocational training
- Participating in aftercare that bolsters motivation to continue using new behaviors and allows implementation of skills learned at the program

These three aspects are considered below in terms of how they might be used by DYC and ROP to increase the effectiveness of these programs. Several additional policy recommendations are also explored.

### Decision to Change

As reported, many offenders stated that making a willful decision to change was a necessary foundational factor in changing their delinquent behavior. While personal will is not a topic that juvenile justice practitioners overtly focus on when planning programs and services, many practitioners implicitly recognize this fact. Further, as some youth pointed out, until a juvenile is open to change, program interventions are often successfully resisted. Over the past decade, efforts to formally develop interventions designed to increase motivation to change have been used to combat several chronic behavioral and mental health problems (Prochaska, Diclemente, & Norcross, 1992). Intentional efforts to increase an offender's motivation to change using similar strategies could increase the effectiveness of subsequent programming.

Research has also shown that development of a caring relationship is vital to engaging a person in the process of change (Gaston, 1990). If offenders feel themselves to be in danger due to the abuse of peer confronting as a means for gaining status over or getting even with other program participants, the effectiveness of ROP will likely diminish. Proponents of PPC approaches have found that "mature" programs are characterized by lower rates of confrontation (Brendtro & Ness, 1992).

As the decision to change appears to be preceded by a period of insight into the consequences of delinquent behavior, interventions designed to bring out



such an awareness would be beneficial. A review of effective juvenile interventions found that the most effective programs for incarcerated youth were those that provided interpersonal skills and insight into their own behavior (Lipsey, 1992).

### Program Skills

PPC program proponents state that offenders in these types of programs are successful because they learn skills such as pro-social behavior and taking responsibility. However, program participants in this study perceived educational and vocational training as more helpful in successfully adapting to life after program release.

This finding notwithstanding, many youth reported buying into the philosophy of PPC. These offenders reported leaving the program with a desire to avoid future illegal activity. It is possible that the value of PPC lies in using it as a method to increase the will to change and that other program elements, such as educational and vocational training, provide the skills necessary to continue behavior changes after program release.

Additionally adding interventions that increase both family contact and insight into family issues would be helpful. Many youth interviewed for this study noted that family is a powerful force on success or failure rates. This finding is not new. As Zimpfer (1992) has noted in a review of the literature on group treatment approaches for juvenile delinquents, as early as 1972 researchers have asserted that programs which attempt to provide delinquents with a new pro-social referent group are likely to fail if no effort is made to deal with the family from which the offender comes. Maintaining family ties while in a placement and establishing favorable family situations upon release are essential for positive reentry and reduced recidivism (Wright & Wright, 1994; Katsiyannis & Archwamety, 1997). Given this feedback, some PPC programs have initiated discussion of family of origin issues in the group process hour (Lee, 1995).

### Aftercare

This study shows that many offenders find transition from ROP to their former environment too difficult to successfully accomplish on their own. Without intensive aftercare, the value of a long-term out-of-state placement is dubious. A recent review by the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2001) argues, "Knowing how difficult it is for all individuals to make major changes in complex behavior patterns, it should not be surprising that juvenile offenders may need assistance if they are to avoid re-offending. Even for those who received appropriate treatment programs while incarcerated, change may be difficult to maintain when they return to their old environment" (p. 194).

Structured reintegration programs can help maintain in-program gains (Altschuler & Armstrong, 1998). Offenders placed at ROP would likely have better success if an intensive, structured re-integration plan was implemented for every program participant. Aftercare should begin while an offender is in the placement by developing an aftercare plan, one that relates to the known risk and protective factors for re-offense (Altschuler & Armstrong, 1998).

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## Appendix A- Methods

Evaluation researchers have advocated the use of wide-ranging and flexible methods of inquiry when conducting an impact evaluation (Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer, 1994). It has also been argued that the quantitative data available in most juvenile systems allows elucidation of only the most general effects, such as recidivism rates (Mears, 1998). The success of a program cannot be fully understood using current information systems. Gathering qualitative data to supplement quantitative data allows for the development of a more comprehensive picture of the impact of the ROP program. In light of the above, the current evaluation employed a mixed methods approach. Quantitative measures of re-offense and commitment rates were combined with analysis of qualitative interviews, program and DYC documents, and case files.

### Quantitative Data Gathering and Analysis

Using the Juvenile Information System database, demographic, prior charges, days under any type of court or corrections supervision, and re-offense data were gathered on all offenders receiving an out-of-state placement to ROP since March 1999.

ROP placed offenders were then compared with a stratified, random sample of secure care offenders as policymakers intended out-of-state placements to be used as an alternative for this sanction and of community placement offenders as this group closely resembled ROP offenders in terms of offending history and demographics and has been used as an alternative to community placements. Offenders placed after secure care were excluded from the ROP group as these offenders would confound examination of the effects of out-of-state treatment as an alternative to secure care. The samples were stratified by year and DYC region in proportions equal to the ROP offender group in order to increase comparability across groups.

Two stepwise, linear regression analyses were then run using first the ROP placement vs. community placement groups and then the ROP placement vs. the secure care groups to predict rates of re-offense after program release. The number of charges was calculated using an episode system where only the most serious offense in a calendar day was recorded as a new offense. The follow-up period was 22 months from the date of placement. A follow-up period of this length has been found on average to account for 68% of re-offense in studies with longer follow-up periods (Redondo, Sanchez-Meca, and Garrido, 1999). Group differences were accounted for on the following variables: race, age at start of placement, age at first offense, prior offenses and days incapacitated. Previous research has shown that age at first conviction and number of prior offenses has been shown to predict re-offense (Farrington & Hawkins, 1991; Hawkins & Catalano, 1992; OJJDP, 1995). Age at program start is important to control for as older offenders have less opportunity time during

which an offense may be committed before leaving the juvenile system. Days incapacitated is also important take into account for the same reason, that is offenders who spent more time in a placement have less opportunity time to commit additional offenses.

Days incapacitated were accounted for by calculating the number of days during the follow-up period during which an offender was in secure detention, observation and assessment, or at a placement.

Variables were entered into the model in the following order: Block 1- Pre-offenses, Block 2- race Block 3- age at start of placement and age at first offense; Block 3- Days incapacitated; Block 4 Placement Group, e.g. ROP, community placement or secure care.

### Qualitative Data Gathering and Analysis

#### *Interviews*

During a site visit, the evaluators asked to interview 4 to 6 ROP staff that would be willing to speak about the program. Two types of staff were sought for interviews: a) those who has worked with Utah youth and/or case managers. b) a cross section of staff including admissions, treatment and program directors and line staff. In addition, several interviews were requested from specific staff that the evaluators, after informal interaction, believed would broaden the range of viewpoints sampled. This approach, called relevant sampling (Miles and Huberman, 1994), appeared to work well in gathering comprehensive information about ROP by allowing staff to showcase their program and allowing the evaluators to ensure the picture presented by staff interviewees was an accurate depiction of the current program.

In addition to adult interviews, 17 interviews were obtained from the 74 juvenile offenders who were either currently at ROP (8 youth) or had been placed in at ROP after March, 1999 and could be located in Utah (5 youth in a placement and 4 not under any supervision).

Informed consent and assent was obtained from all participants. Interviews were audio recorded with the exception of two offenders in the State Prison in Draper, Utah where tape recording is not allowed. In these cases, written notes were taken. Four research assistants conducted all of the interviews.

Interviewers were provided with a question template, however, not all offenders were asked all questions. The primary purpose of interviewing offenders was because the researchers believe their perspectives, while often overlooked, can be quite informative for understanding program impacts. Given this rationale, the interviewers encouraged the youth to talk about the most important elements of their experience. Interviewers were asked to have the youth elaborate on topics that appeared to hold the most significance for them. This approach appears to have produced interesting, and at times, surprising results.

Two professional transcriptionists transcribed all interviews. Interviews were analyzed with Atlas-ti 4.2, a qualitative computer software program, using a Grounded Theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1988). This type of analysis is conducted by classifying responses into themes that comprehensively represent all offenders' responses to every question. The themes are then analyzed in terms of their relation to

other themes resulting in families of themes that are related in terms of topic. This process is reiterated until an overall structure is created that captures the offender's experiences as told during the interviews. Direct quotations, when used, have been edited for clarity and to remove identifying information.

### *Casefiles*

The case files of all youth placed at ROP were collected during the site visit. Information was obtained from a total of 74 case files. The researchers attempted to collect information on the following variables: Length of Stay, status at program completion, academic achievement (8<sup>th</sup> grade proficiency and GED status), vocational achievement (certified in vocation or not, type of vocation), demonstrated behavioral change and participation in treatment groups- type and number of sessions (life skills, gang intervention, anger management, victim empathy, substance abuse, parenting skills). These variables were entered in using the same categories that Rite of Passage uses. To facilitate analysis of the differential effects program components have on re-offense, the variables were then collapsed into the following categories: Program Status at Exit, Demonstrated Behavior Change, Participation in Counseling, School Achievement, Number and Type of Vocation(s), Level of Athletic Participation. Information from these variables was rated by two research assistants. The degree of agreement between raters was assessed using Cohen's Kappa and found to be sufficient ranging from .79 to .77.

### *Program Documents*

Promotional materials, staff training materials, and written information given to offenders was collected from ROP. DYC audits of each program were also obtained. These documents were used to orient the researchers and inform preliminary analyses.



# Appendix B- Interview protocols

## Interview for ROP Offenders

We are trying to understand what your experience was like when you were placed out of Utah so that the court and corrections can understand what the out-of-state programs are like for kids. So, I would like to know about your experience at the programs (and also what happened when you came back to Utah). Remember, I do not work for the court system and so your answers are confidential, which means your probation officer, judge or parents will not be told what you tell me.

*What is your ethnic (race) background?*

### **GENDER?**

Male or Female

Situation that lead to placement

**NUMBER OF PLACEMENTS** \_\_\_\_\_

*What happened that lead to you being placed out of state?  
Why in their eyes did they get sent.*

*How did leaving the state seem?*

Experience at program

Go over experience at each program if more than one placement  
Focus on experience at program, curriculum and treatment philosophy

*What kind of program is this?*

*Describe what you did during a normal average day?  
Be detailed, e.g. so you woke up and then what...*

*What aspects of the program helped you?  
Helped the youth either at the program*

*What do you think/feel about the program? the staff?  
How were you treated in the program?  
Interactions with staff (negative authoritarian, friendly mentor)*

*Did anyone make a significant impact on you there?  
Staff, other youth*

*How was it being with youth from other states? What did you think of the other kids there?  
More hard core or less*

*How did the program differ from ones that you have been in Utah?  
This is an important question! We are looking for a rationale on why these programs are be used.  
Have the youth give concrete examples of differences or similarities naming the program in Utah.*

*If you were a case manager would you send a kid to this program?*



Experience after coming back to Utah

*Did you complete the program?*

*How long have you been back?*

*Are you currently being seen by a case manager or someone from the court/corrections?*

*What have you had to do since coming back from the program?*

We are looking for aftercare components e.g. programs/supervision. Need to have youth define aftercare experience in terms of programs involved with, type and frequency of contact and length so that is may be categorized into excellent, good, poor, etc...

*Have you had contact with anyone from the out-of-state program? Who? What kind of contact?*

*What has coming back been like?*

*Is it difficult? How?*

*How did the program prepare you for coming home?*

Does the program have an aftercare component

For youth currently in a placement

*What lead to you getting placed again?*

*Why weren=t you able to stay out of another placement?*

For youth not-currently in a placement

*Why were you able to stay out of another placement?*

*What helped you to succeed?*

**Interviewer Observations**

**SUMMARIZE YOUR MAIN THOUGHTS FROM THE INTERVIEW:**

**WHAT STRUCK YOU THE MOST?**

**WERE THERE ANY UNUSUAL OCCURRENCES/PROBLEMS?**

**OTHER PERSONS PRESENT? YES NO**

**WHO AND WHY?**

## Interview for ROP Staff

Record for the tape date, time, interviewer, initials of participant and position

What do you do here at \_\_\_\_\_?

What kind of relationship do you have with the youth? What is the ideal relationship?

What kind of youth is ideal for your program?

What would exclude a youth from your program?

What kind of youth do you typically get from Utah?

In your program's view, what makes the youth better?

How do you define a successful outcome?

What do you see as the most difficult part a youth faces when trying to become successful?

How do you handle non-compliant youth (those who refuse to go along with the program)?

What does your program provide that a youth wouldn't receive in Utah?  
... wouldn't receive from other programs?

What does your program provide to youth in the following areas of need?

### Accountability

- Responsibility for behavior
- take action to repair harm

### Competency Development

- Vocational Skills
- Education
- Social Skills
- Decision making
- Citizenship
- Health/Recreation
- (Strengths based)

### Community Protection

- Family involvement
- Victims
- Mental Health
- Substance Abuse

How were these programs chosen?

Why were these programs chosen?

How do you decide what services a youth will receive?

How is aftercare handled?

How is it to work with the Utah juvenile justice system? Utah youth?

Are there any reoccurring problems?

Considering the following four statements, what is the order of their importance for the youth with whom you work?

1                      -----                      4  
Least Important                      Most Important

- \_\_\_ The youth I see need psychotherapy or psychotherapeutic medication.
- \_\_\_ The youth I see need educational or vocational training.
- \_\_\_ The youth I see need to be held responsible for their actions.
- \_\_\_ The public needs to be protected from the youth I see.

Is there another major area that the youth you see need help with that isn't covered by the statements above?

If yes, what?

How could the effectiveness of your program be increased?

**Interviewer Observations**

**SUMMARIZE YOUR MAIN THOUGHTS FROM THE INTERVIEW:  
WHAT STRUCK YOU THE MOST?**

**WERE THERE ANY UNUSUAL OCCURRENCES/PROBLEMS?**

**OTHER PERSONS PRESENT? YES NO  
WHO AND WHY?**

# Appendix C- Rite of Passage Variable List Dictionary

**Data sources-** Exit Report, Admissions Form, **Educational Records, Bruce Piercy aftercare records-** **Bolded variables** were used in analysis. *Italicized variables* either were not available or were missing in too many records that analysis was precluded.

<b>Variable Name</b>	<b>Rules for Coding</b>
Last Name	Last Name of Client
First Name	First Name of Client
Middle Initial	Middle Initial of Client
DOB	Date of Birth
Exit Report	X means exit report was received; blank if no exit report
Quarterly Report	X means quarterly report received; blank if no quarterly
Date of Quarterly	Date of quarterly report
Admissions Form	X means admissions form received; blank if no admission form
Entry Date	Date of entry into ROP
Exit Date	Date of exit from ROP
<b>LOS</b>	Exit Date – Entry Date
<b>exit</b>	Reason for exit: 1=Completion, 2= Failure, 3= P.O. pull, 4= Other
<b>Program Status</b>	1=ATC Intern, 2=ATC Ram, 3=ATC Rookie, 4=Block R, 5=exit report, 6=intern, 7=SSA Intern, 8=phase 3 program, 9=program failure, 10=program graduate, 11=P.O. pull, 12=progression, 13=quarterly report, 14=Ram, 15=Ram Intern, 16=rookie, 17=RTC phase 3
<b>tx_sum</b>	Tx Acknowledges + Tx Displays + Tx Actively + Tx Peer + Tx Staff + Tx Participation
Tx- Acknowledges	1= Unsatisfactory, 2 = Needs Improvement, 3 = Satisfactory, 4 = Very Good, 5 = Excellent
Tx- Displays	1= Unsatisfactory, 2 = Needs Improvement, 3 = Satisfactory, 4 = Very Good, 5 = Excellent
Tx- Actively	1= Unsatisfactory, 2 = Needs Improvement, 3 = Satisfactory, 4 = Very Good, 5 = Excellent
Tx- Peer	1= Unsatisfactory, 2 = Needs Improvement, 3 = Satisfactory, 4 = Very Good, 5 = Excellent
Tx- Staff	1= Unsatisfactory, 2 = Needs Improvement, 3 = Satisfactory, 4 = Very Good, 5 = Excellent
Tx- Participation	1= Unsatisfactory, 2 = Needs Improvement, 3 = Satisfactory, 4 = Very Good, 5 = Excellent
<b>cx_sum</b>	Ind Cx-Participation + Grp Cx- Participation
Ind Cx- Participation	1 = Disruptive, 2 = Passive Participation/Superficial, 3 = Cooperative/Actively Participates, 4 = Insightful
Grp Cx- Participation	1 = Disruptive, 2 = Passive Participation/Superficial, 3 = Cooperative/Actively Participates, 4 = Insightful
sch_ach	0= no 8 <sup>th</sup> grade proficiency, 1=8 <sup>th</sup> grade proficiency, 2= GED

8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Proficiency	0= does have 8 <sup>th</sup> grade proficiency; 1=no 8 <sup>th</sup> grade proficiency
GED	0=does have GED; 1=do not have GED
<i>High School Grad</i>	0=graduate; 1=did not graduate
Credits Earned @ ROP	# of academic credits earned during stay
<i>WRAT pre-score</i>	<i>WRAT pre-score</i>
<i>WRAT post-score</i>	<i>WRAT post-score</i>
<b>Voc. Type I</b>	0=N/A, 1=applied technology, computer application, computers; 2=construction, construction trades, drafting, fabrication, manufacturing, welding; 3=community service, EMT, fire science; 4=automotive technology, transportation technologies; 5=culinary arts; 6=facilities maintenance
Voc. Type II	Same codes as Voc. Type I
Voc Type III	Same codes as Voc. Type I
<b>num_voc</b>	Total number of vocations for the student
Voc. Certificates	Highest level of certificates received
<i>Voc. Hours</i>	<i>Number of vocational hours completed</i>
Contacts/Fam/Face	0=0 visits, 1=1-2 visits, 2=3-5 visits, 3=6 or more visits, 4=weekly visits
Contacts/Fam/Tel	0=0 calls, 1=1-5 calls, 2=6-10 calls, 3=11-15 calls, 4=16 or more calls, 5=weekly calls
<b>ath_par</b>	1= Unsatisfactory, 2 = Needs Improvement, 3 = Satisfactory, 4 = Very Good, 5 = Excellent
<i>Tx class 1</i>	<i>Name of Class</i>
<i>Tx class 1 Completion</i>	<i>0= completed; 1= did not complete</i>
<i>Tx class 2</i>	<i>Name of Class</i>
<i>Tx class 2 Completion</i>	<i>0= completed; 1= did not complete</i>
<i>Tx class 3</i>	<i>Name of Class</i>
<i>Tx class 3 Completion</i>	<i>0= completed; 1= did not complete</i>
<i>Tx class 4</i>	<i>Name of Class</i>
<i>Tx class 4 Completion</i>	<i>0= completed; 1= did not complete</i>
<i>Aftercare/Parenting Class</i>	<i># of classes attended (0-4)</i>
<i>Aftercare Face to Face Contacts</i>	<i># of face to face contacts</i>
<i>Aftercare Employment/School Status</i>	<i>1= Employed full time; 2= Employed part-time; 3= Enrolled; 4= Enlisted (preliminary)</i>
<i>Aftercare Additional Services</i>	...