



Altarum

Ruth Ellis Center – Juvenile Justice Mental Health/Delinquency Prevention Grant: Final Evaluation Report

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Executive Summary

The Altarum Institute provided technical assistance and evaluation support to the Ruth Ellis Center (REC) as they implemented a Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act Title II Grant intervention¹, awarded by the state of Michigan, Michigan Committee on Juvenile Justice. The objective of REC's intervention was to provide art therapy based on the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework to at-risk LGBTQ+ youth in Wayne County, Michigan. The goal of the art therapy program was to encourage healthy self-expression and skill building to reduce the likelihood of negative interactions with the juvenile justice system. Altarum worked with REC throughout the grant period to support program maintenance, data collection, and evaluate impact. The following report outlines the program's approach and the final evaluation results.

Project Overview

The objective of REC's intervention was to provide art therapy to LGBTQ+ youth in Wayne County, Michigan to encourage healthy practices and coping strategies for emotional and mental health concerns or crises. Each cohort of youth participating in the program learned specific coping strategies and worked together to learn how to identify their own emotional triggers and ways to improve their emotional response to protect their mental health. The evaluation aimed to show the positive impact this program has on participating youth through quantifiable changes in Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS) and Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI 2) assessment scores. Qualitative satisfaction data from the youth participating in the program and their families and/or caregivers was used to further demonstrate program impact.

Evaluation Methodology

Throughout the grant period, from February 2022 through September 2023, data was collected on pre- and post-program MAYSI-2 and CAFAS assessment scores, program satisfaction, participant demographics, and community partnerships. The grant evaluation compared pre- and post-program assessment scores, satisfaction data, and demographic information to assess the impact of the intervention on participating youth and their families. The evaluation also assessed the scope of community connections made throughout the program to highlight the impact these partnerships had on the art therapy program development and number of referrals made. The results of the evaluation highlight the impact of participation in the art therapy program on youth mental health, risk factors, and reducing the likelihood of engaging with the juvenile justice system.

Results

The evaluation results showed a decrease in MAYSI-2 and CAFAS assessment scores of youth as a result of participating in the art therapy program. Further analysis of demographic data shows the grantee was successful in serving Black and Brown and LGBTQ+ youth in the community who are disproportionately affected because of their identities and associated stigmas.

Conclusion

Data showing improvements in youth mental health risk factors and positive testimonials from families participating in the art therapy program serve as evidence of the program's ability to build skills and improve their mental health which may reduce the likelihood of negative interactions with the juvenile justice system.

¹ The OJJDP Title II Formula Grants Program provides funding to support state and local efforts to plan, establish, operate, coordinate, and evaluate policies and projects, directly or through grants and contracts with public and private agencies for the development of more effective education, training, research, prevention, diversion, treatment, and rehabilitation programs in the area of juvenile delinquency as well as juvenile justice system improvement efforts.

Background and Introduction

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and the Michigan Committee on Juvenile Justice (MCJJ) administers the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Title II Formula Grants Program to support local efforts to prevent and address juvenile delinquency as well as improve the juvenile justice system. MDHHS and MCJJ contracted with Altarum Institute (Altarum) to provide technical assistance (TA) and evaluation support to Title II grant recipients.

In 2022, MDHHS and MCJJ selected Ruth Ellis Center (REC) as one of the Title II program grantees and funded the establishment and implementation of an Art Therapy intervention program. The intervention was designed to provide art therapy based on the Positive Youth Development (PYD) curriculum² to at-risk LGBTQ+ youth in Wayne County, Michigan. The goal of the REC's art therapy intervention was to encourage healthy self-expression and skill building to reduce the likelihood of negative interactions with the juvenile justice system. Altarum worked with REC's grant team throughout the grant period to support them in establishing the project's outputs and outcomes and using those to track and measure the intervention's progress toward meeting their intended objectives and goals. The following report details the grantee's intervention, Altarum's evaluation activities throughout the grant period of February 2022 – September 2023 and the evaluation findings.

Program Background

REC services are designed to benefit male, female, trans-identifying and non-binary, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), and LGBTQ+ young people (13-30 years old) within Wayne County, Michigan. National data within the last five years documents that 30% to 40% of all young people in the juvenile justice, child welfare, and homeless systems of care identify as LGBTQ+. They are substantially over-represented in systems of care and their Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Expression (SOGIE) are nearly always invisible or ignored in the service array offered to them. As a result of intersectional oppression and stigma, LGBTQ+ youth, especially Black and Brown youth³, experience high rates of overall criminalization, that results in harmful marginalization, trauma, and falling through the service cracks.

Research suggests that art therapy programs can provide at-risk and justice-involved youth with a safe and engaging way to express their feelings, manage emotional and behavioral problems, cope with trauma and victimization, develop skills, and improve strengths⁴. Combining art with therapy influences the social and emotional functioning of at-risk juveniles while also positively bringing together the community by forming trusting relationships. Recognizing the need to address the barriers to wellness for at-risk youth in their community, the REC designed an intervention with Title II grant funding from MDHHS to improve youth mental health and prevent delinquency through art therapy.

Program Description

REC's intervention for the grant focused on all young people, with an emphasis on LGBTQ+ youth, who may benefit from the utilization of self-expression and skill-building through art therapy to reduce the likelihood of entering into or returning to the juvenile justice system. The art therapy intervention conducted baseline assessments to identify risk factors for youth involvement with law enforcement and the juvenile justice system using the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument –

² [Positive Youth Development \(PYD\)](#) is both a philosophy and a programmatic approach for supporting healthy, productive, and engaged youth as they grow into adulthood. The PYD approach rests on the idea that youth with more developmental assets are more likely to enjoy academic success, have greater economic prospects, be more civically engaged, and be healthier in the long term.

³ The 2021 Trevor Project survey on LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health reports that half of all LGBTQ+ youth of color reported discrimination based on their race/ethnicity in the past year, including 67% of Black LGBTQ+ youth. GSA Network reports that LGBTQ+ youth of color experience high rates of discipline disparities and school push-out that escalate entry into the school-to-prison pipeline.

⁴ Arts-Based Programs and Arts Therapies for At-Risk, Justice-Involved, and Traumatized Youths. Literature Review: A product of the Model Programs Guide. Last Updated May 2021. Available at <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/model-programs-guide/literature-reviews/arts-based-programs-and-arts-therapies-risk-justice-involved-and-traumatized#d5si57>

Second Version (MAYSI-2)⁵ assessment and the Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS)⁶. Other risk factors that were identified through the program's intake assessment process include socio-economic status (SES), school truancy, environmental risk factors (access to weapons, gang activity, other family members who are already involved with juvenile justice or the courts), and SOGIE. These assessments were conducted at the end of the program's 6-7 week intervention to show change over the course of the intervention.

The objective of REC's intervention was to provide art therapy to LGBTQ+ youth in Wayne County, Michigan to encourage healthy practices and coping strategies to improve their mental health. REC's art therapy curriculum was based on the Positive Youth Development framework (PYD) that emphasizes a youth's strengths over risk factors to assist with a positive transition into adulthood. The PYD framework focuses on the 5 C's to build strengths and protective factors for youth: Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Compassion. The REC program curriculum combined the PYD framework with the benefits of art therapy to provide a creative outlet for expression, identity exploration, self-reflection, empower change, emotional awareness, empathy for self and others, and community healing. The program focused on their own 6 C's, adding "Caring" to the PYD curriculum: Connection, Character, Competence, Confidence, Caring and Compassion. The anticipated benefits of art therapy groups included increased protective factors, decreased "risky behaviors", improved school success, successful transition into adulthood, improved social and emotional outcomes, increased contributions to the community, and decreased depression symptoms.

REC's art therapy programming was geared toward strengthening prosocial behaviors through group art therapy, open art studio, 1:1 art therapy, and collaborations with artists/resources in the community. Each cohort of youth participating in the program learned specific coping strategies and worked together to learn how to identify their own emotional triggers and ways to improve their emotional response to protect their mental health. For this grant, the REC art therapist intern worked with their Registered Art Therapist (ATR) to provide art therapy services to at-risk youth in the Wayne County community. These team members served as the foundation of this program. Throughout the grant period (February 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023), they provided a total of 6 art therapy cohorts to 24 participants, with each cohort lasting 6-7 weeks.

One key development in programming included the addition of field trips for the youth to gain in-person experiences with local artists and resources in the community, such as attending the Detroit Institute of Arts. These excursions served as an opportunity for the youth to gain additional experiences outside of their art therapy group sessions to see how art can support emotional expression in day-to-day life. The incorporation of these field trips into the curriculum aimed to create a lasting impact of the lessons learned in the group sessions that could persist beyond the 7-week curriculum.

The art therapy program's skilled professional counselors were successful at creating a space and opportunity for youth to use art as a conduit to help connect with their emotions, identify barriers and facilitators in their lives, and tap into the creative problem-solving and ability to innovate. The evaluation was designed to show the positive impact this program had on participating youth and their families and/or caregivers through changes in youths' assessment and screening scores pre- and post-intervention and results from satisfaction feedback surveys of youth and family members.

⁵ The Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument – Second Version (MAYSI-2) is a brief behavioral health screening tool designed especially for juvenile justice programs and facilities. It identifies youths 12 through 17 years old who may have important, pressing behavioral health needs. Its primary use is in juvenile probation, diversion programs, and intake in juvenile detention or corrections.

⁶ The Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS; Hodges, 2000a; 2000b), assesses the degree of impairment in youth with emotional, behavioral, psychiatric, or substance use problems.

Evaluation

Beginning in February 2022, Altarum worked with the REC grant team to collaboratively design and implement a plan to assist in meeting their grant requirements. The plan outlined the evaluation goals and activities, key questions, overall design, inputs, process and outcome measures, and procedures for data collection, analysis, and reporting. The Altarum team worked regularly with the REC grant team to aggregate data together for the evaluation to assess program impact.

Data Collection

Across the grant period, REC submitted data at the end of each cohort to Altarum. Included in the data collection efforts were MAYSI-2 and CAFAS assessments pre- and post-scores, demographic data on participating youth, satisfaction survey results from youth and families/caregivers, and partnerships and engagements REC made with organizations and artists in the local community. These metrics were collected longitudinally throughout the grant period to assess the impact of the program on participating youth and the scope of community partnerships established and maintained throughout the program.

Methodology

The grant evaluation aimed to show the impact of participation in the art therapy program on youth mental health risk factors that are linked to likelihood of involvement with the juvenile justice system, program satisfaction, and the extent that leveraging community resources and relationships can improve program effectiveness.

MAYSI and CAFAS Score Evaluation

A total of 26 MAYSI-2 and CAFAS pre-scores and 24 post-scores were collected and reported. Two individuals left the program without completing the entire curriculum, resulting in a sample size of 24 for the evaluation. The Altarum evaluation team compared average pre- and post-program MAYSI-2 and CAFAS assessment scores for a total of 24 youth participants across the six art therapy cohorts.

Statistical tests and analyses were conducted to show any improvement in assessment scores after participating in the art therapy program. To compare all participants' pre- and post-scores, a paired sample t-test was conducted to compare the means and evaluate statistical significance or relationships. Changes in assessment scores were broken down across demographic data to assess the scope and impact of the program on the target populations. The means and standard deviation were calculated to inform the distribution of scores across different demographics. Additionally, analysis of variance tests was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the means of these groups or any statistically significant relationships.

Satisfaction Survey Evaluation

All youth who participated in the art therapy program and their parents or caregivers were administered a satisfaction survey at the completion of each six-week cohort. The survey was administered by the grantee and results were reported to the Altarum evaluation team throughout the grant period. A total of 11 youth surveys and seven parent/caregiver surveys were evaluated across the six art therapy cohorts. The Altarum team summarized the level of satisfaction reported by youth participants and their parents or caregivers. A coding system was developed and assigned to non-numerical survey data for structuring and interpretation into quantitative results. Averages of the responses were calculated to assess overall levels of programmatic satisfaction. "Other Comments" collected from the survey included quotes from participating youth or parents/caregivers on their experience with the program and are included in the qualitative results.

Community Connections Evaluation

The grant evaluation assessed the scope of community partnerships made by the REC to highlight the extent these relationships impacted the art therapy curriculum development and referral sources. A summary of the partnerships and referral sources was prepared, including the type of

activity conducted, frequency, and with what entity or individual(s) it occurred to highlight the breadth of community connections made to improve the program's effectiveness in establishing community ties.

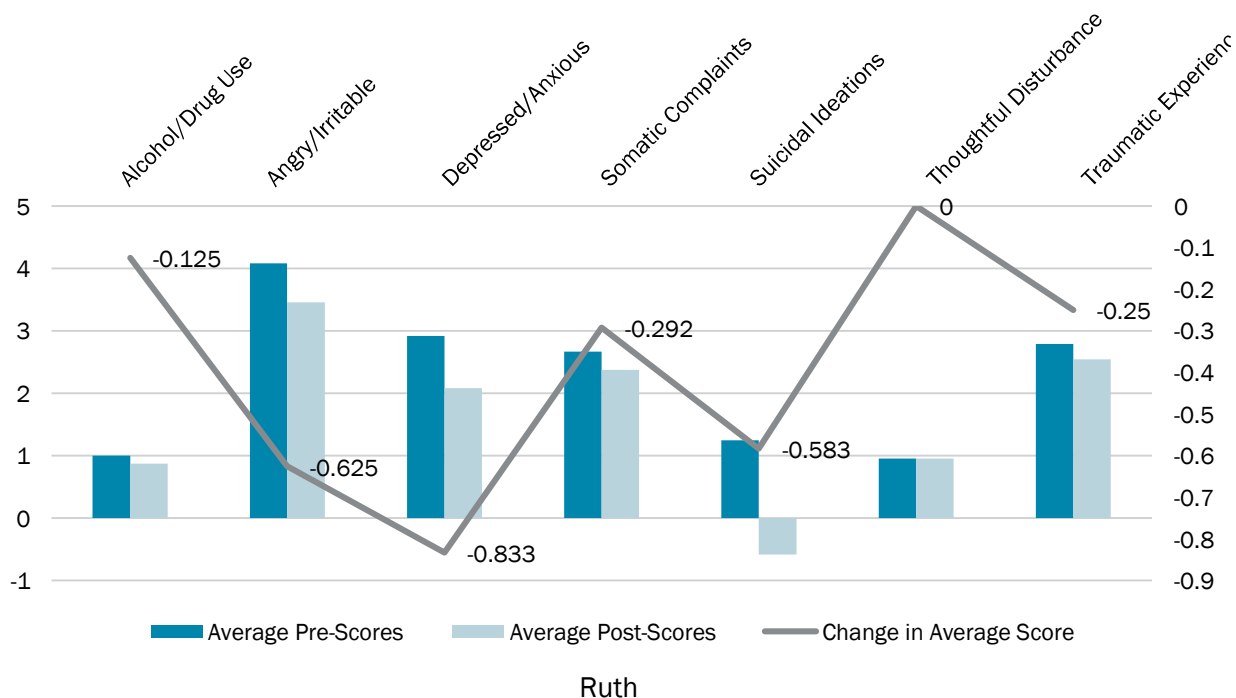
Results

This section includes the key findings generated from the Altarum evaluation team's analysis of available data regarding the program's implementation and outcomes achieved during the grant across the six art therapy cohorts conducted.

Improvement in MAYSI-2

A total of 24 MAYSI-2 pre- and post-screening scores were captured for youth participants. Average pre- and post-program MAYSI-2 scores were compared across all youth to assess for any changes as a result of participation in the art therapy program. **Figure 1**, below, illustrates the average pre- and post-intervention scores across each subscale of the screening and the overall average change in score which is reflected by the grey line. All areas saw a decrease in average score, except for Thoughtful Disturbance, which saw no change and remained as the lowest score across all domains. This could suggest that this risk factor may not be as relevant with the population and thus less impacted by the intervention, but further investigation would be required. Youth saw the biggest improvement in Depression/Anxiety, decreasing from 2.9 to 2.1, a change of almost 1 point. These scores indicate that the administration of art therapy to youth at risk for a petition can help with mental health outcomes measured by the MAYSI-2 assessment.

Figure 1. Average MAYSI-2 Pre- and Post-scores of Participating Youth



A more detailed breakdown of the average pre- and post-scores can be found below in **Table 1**. The chart includes the average pre- and post-scores, graphed above, but also outlines the number of youths who experienced positive, negative, or no change in their score for each screening subscale. In four areas (Anger/Irritability, Depressed/Anxious, Somatic Complaints, Suicidal Ideations) more than half the youth experienced positive changes. Of the subscales where youth did not experience any positive change, there was only two instances of a negative change, one related to a traumatic experience and the other with alcohol or drug use. This further supports the program efficacy in improving mental health outcomes and reducing engagement with risky behaviors that may cause

engagement with the juvenile justice system.

Table 1. Average Pre- and Post-Scores and Count of Youth with Change per Domain

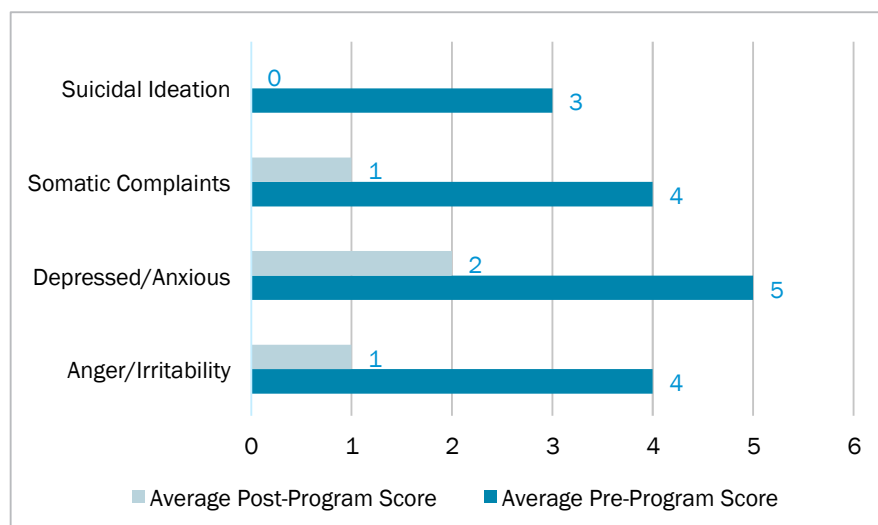
MAYSI-2 Subscales	Average Pre-Score	Average Post-Score	# Youth With Negative Change	# Youth With Positive Change	# Youth with No Change
Alcohol/Drug Use	1	0.875	1	1	22
Anger/Irritability	4.083	3.458	0	14	10
Depressed/Anxious	2.917	2.083	0	14	10
Somatic Complaints	2.667	2.375	0	14	10
Suicidal Ideations	1.25	-0.583	0	13	11
Thought Disturbance	0.958	0.958	0	0	24
Traumatic Experiences	2.792	2.542	1	0	23

Figure 2 shows the results of a paired sample t-test to assess statistical significance between participants' pre- and post-MAYSI-2 scores. The mean changes were calculated and compared to produce significance values that help determine the strength of relationship between the intervention and outcomes. The calculated significance ($p=0.018$, $p=0.035$) were less than the standard level (0.05) for this test, indicating there is a positive, strong relationship between engagement with art therapy and improved MAYSI-2 screening scores, demonstrating the interventions effectiveness in producing positive outcomes.

Figure 2. T-Test Results Youth Participants' MAYSI-2 Pre- and Post-scores

Paired Samples Test										
		Paired Differences					Significance			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Initial - Final	8.75000	19.18163	3.91543	Lower	Upper				
					.65031	16.84969	2.235	23	.018	.035

Figure 3. Average Change in MAYSI-2 of Black or African American Youth with Score Improvements



Of the 24 youth who completed the program, a total of 10 youth, or 42% of participants, experienced improvements in their MAYSI-2 scores. Youth in the program who were Black or African American experienced the most change, accounting for 90% of the improved MAYSI-2 scores. Outlined in **Figure 3**, these youth averaged a decrease of 3 points in the subscales of

Anger/Irritability, Depression/Anxiety, Somatic Complaints, and Suicidal Ideation. The graph focuses on Black and Brown youth as they are the target population for the grantee’s intervention, however their initiative extends to support all BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth in the community. While nine of the participating youth who saw positive changes were Black or African American, the remaining one (10%) of improved scores were Asian American and saw an average decrease of 1.5 points in the Anger/Irritability and Depression/Anxiety subscales.

The overall decrease in MAYSI-2 scores across cohort data post-program illustrates a positive relationship between participation in the art therapy intervention and improvement in youth behavioral health problems. Additionally, demographic data exemplifies the intervention’s efficacy in targeting underserved or marginalized youth populations in the community, including those who are BIPOC. These positive behavioral changes among youth after participating in the art therapy program suggest the intervention was successful in helping youth to gain healthy coping strategies and protective behaviors to reduce the likelihood of entering or returning to the juvenile justice system.

Figure 4. Statistical Analysis of Youth MAYSI-2 Scores by Race

Race	Report		
		Initial	Final
African American	Mean	75.8333	65.0000
	N	12	12
	Std. Deviation	38.48455	30.30152
Asian American	Mean	90.0000	77.5000
	N	4	4
	Std. Deviation	11.54701	20.61553
Biracial	Mean	70.0000	70.0000
	N	2	2
	Std. Deviation	.00000	.00000
Middle Eastern	Mean	57.5000	50.0000
	N	4	4
	Std. Deviation	15.00000	.00000
White	Mean	.0000	.0000
	N	2	2
	Std. Deviation	.00000	.00000
Total	Mean	68.3333	59.5833
	N	24	24
	Std. Deviation	35.95488	29.99698

In **Figure 4**, average means of both pre- and post- scores were calculated. The large standard deviations across all race variables and the entire population indicates there is a higher rate of variability in scores. Analysis shows that the scores are more widely distributed from the means, indicating less reliable data. This shows that there is a weak relationship between race and the level with which youth scored at. These results are impeded by a small sample size, it is recommended additional data be collected for further evaluation.

Furthermore, a one-way ANOVA test was conducted to determine if there is statistical significance between the groups and intervention. The results of this analysis can be seen in **Figure 5**. The larger the Kruskal-Wallis value the more statistical significance there is. Since the value is 2.015 there is insufficient evidence to say that there is a statistically significant difference between MAYSI-2 scores when analyzed across race. For both analyses, statistical significance may be impacted by the small sample size of youth participants and

further evaluation is recommended in the future with increased participation.

Figure 5. One-way ANOVA Test of MAYSI-2 Pre- and Post-scores

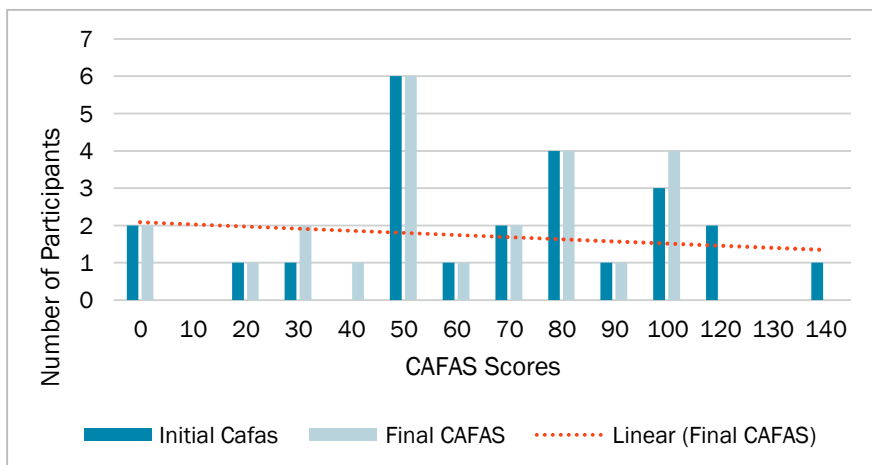
Test Statistics ^{a,b}	
	change
Kruskal-Wallis H	2.015
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.733

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable:
Race

Improvement in CAFAS

A total of 24 pre- and post-scores from the CAFAS assessment were collected. The average initial score for participating youth was 68.3 was found, which decreased to an average final score of 59.6 following participation in the REC art therapy program. This indicates an overall average 8.75-point decrease in CAFAS scores from those who participated in the program. **Figure 6** shows

Figure 6. Changes in CAFAS Pre- and Post-scores for Youth Participants



the summative change in CAFAS scores for youth after participating in the art therapy program. The linear trendlines show the average dispersion of post-scores when compared to pre-score averages. A total of eight youth, or 33%, showed a positive change in CAFAS scores after participating in the program.

Individual changes in pre- and post-program CAFAS scores for the eight participants who experienced improved positive changes are reflected in **Figure 7**, below. With the exception of one individual, all the participants represented experienced a decrease of 20 points or more, which represents a clinically significant change for care planning. The substantial decrease in scores demonstrates the program’s efficacy in providing positive outcomes to youth in the community who have or may engage with the juvenile justice system.

Figure 7. CAFAS Pre- and Post-scores for Youth Participants with Positive Changes

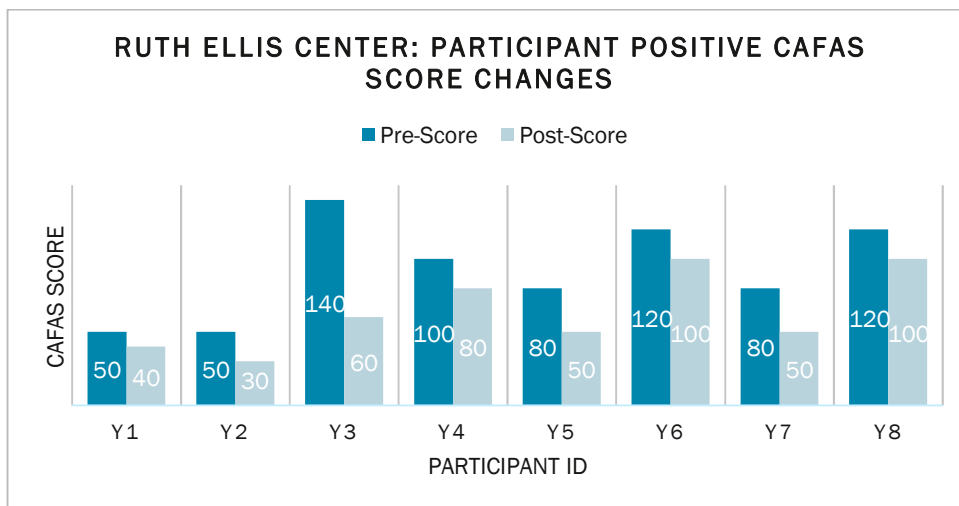


Figure 8 shows the results of a paired sample t-test to assess statistical significance between participants’ pre- and post-CAFAS scores. The mean changes were calculated and compared to produce significance values that help determine the strength of relationship between the intervention and outcomes. The calculated significance ($p=0.018$, $p=0.035$) were less than the standard level (0.05) for this test, indicating there is a positive, strong relationship between engagement with art therapy and improved CAFAS screening scores. This result demonstrates the intervention’s effectiveness in producing positive outcomes.

Figure 8. T-Test Results Youth Participants' CAFAS Pre- and Post-Scores

		Paired Differences							Significance	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Initial - Final	8.75000	19.18163	3.91543	Lower	Upper				
					.65031	16.84969	2.235	23	.018	.035

		N	Correlation	Significance	
				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Initial & Final	24	.846	<.001	<.001

Figure 9. Race of Participating Youth

The program largely served minority youth in the community who are at an increased risk of marginalization and criminalization, especially BIPOC youth. **Figure 9** shows the breakdown of participants by race. Changes in CAFAS scores by race of youth participating in the program were assessed to determine whether there were differences between racial and ethnic groups.

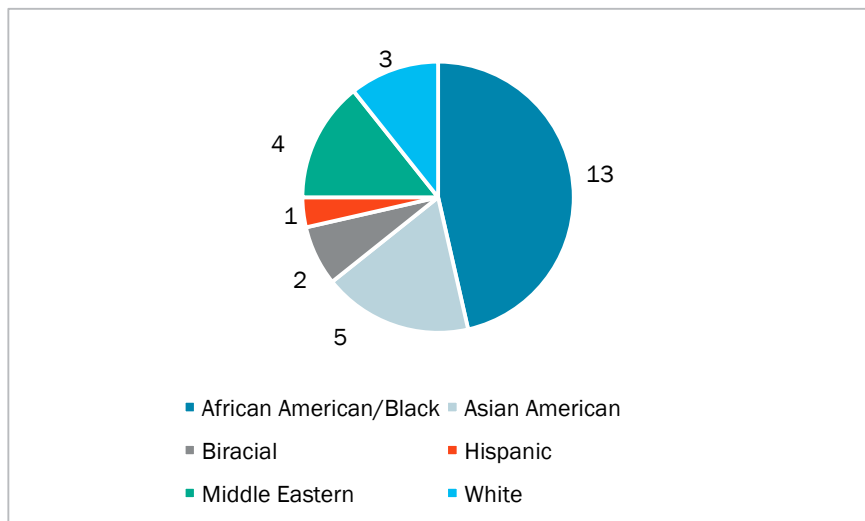
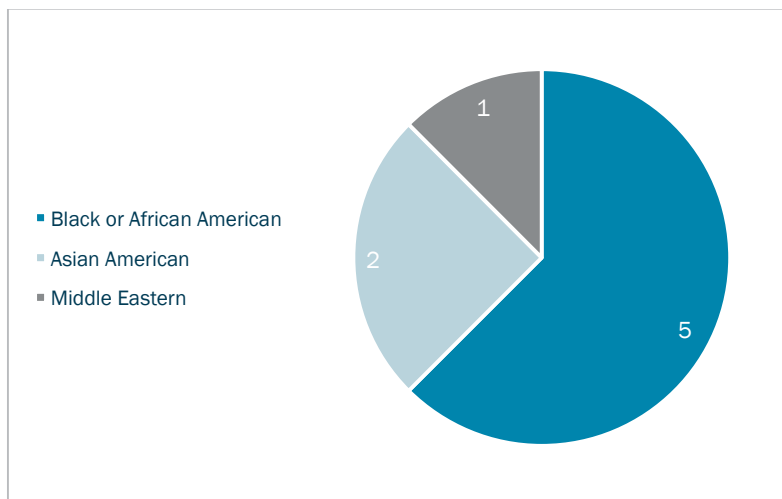


Figure 10. Race of Participating Youth with Positive CAFAS Change



As previously stated, eight participants showed improved CAFAS scores as a result of the program. As shown in **Figure 10**, 62.5% of the individuals with improved scores were Black or African American, 25% Asian American, and 12.5% were Middle Eastern. These participants saw an average decrease of 28.75 points after participating in the program. The individuals with improved scores demonstrate the programs efficacy in serving BIPOC youth within the community.

Figure 11. Analysis of Youth CAFAS Scores by Race

Race		Pre-Score	Post-Score
Asian	Mean	76.6667	93.3333
	N	3	3
American	Std. Deviation	25.16611	11.54701
	N	13	13
African	Mean	66.1538	76.1538
	N	13	13
American	Std. Deviation	29.30826	36.86427
	N	4	4
Middle	Mean	50.0000	57.5000
	N	4	4
Eastern	Std. Deviation	.00000	15.00000
	N	2	2
Biracial	Mean	70.0000	70.0000
	N	2	2
White	Std. Deviation	.00000	.00000
	N	2	2
Total	Mean	59.5833	68.3333
	N	24	24
Total	Std. Deviation	29.99698	35.95488

The average means and standard deviations of both CAFAS pre- and post-intervention scores were calculated, illustrated in **Figure 11**. The large standard deviations across all race variables the entire population indicates there is a high rate of variability in scores. Analysis shows that the scores are more widely distributed from the means, indicating less reliable data. This shows that there is a weak relationship between race and the level with which youth scored at. These results are impeded by a small sample size, it is recommended additional data be collected for further evaluation.

A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to determine if there is statistical significance between the groups and intervention. The results of this analysis can be seen in **Figure**

12. The larger the Kruskal-Wallis value the more statistical significance there is. Since the value is 2.924 there is insufficient evidence to say that there is a statistically significant difference between CAFAS scores and. For both analyses, statistical significance may be impacted by the small sample size of youth participants and further evaluation is recommended in the future with increased participation. Despite the weak relationship, this data still suggests the art therapy intervention was successful in improving the daily functioning, as measured by the CAFAS assessment, of at-risk Black and Brown youth that may reduce their likelihood of interacting with the criminal justice system.

Figure 13. One-way ANOVA Test of CAFAS Pre- and Post-scores

Test Statistics^{a,b}

VAR00005

Kruskal-Wallis H	2.924
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.571

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable: VAR00001

Additionally, a one-way ANOVA test was conducted to determine if there is statistical significance between the groups and intervention. The results of this analysis can be seen in **Figure 13**. The larger the Kruskal-Wallis value the more statistical significance there is. Since the value is 2.924

there is insufficient evidence to say that there is a statistically significant difference between CAFAS scores when analyzed across race. For both analyses, statistical significance may be impacted by the small sample size of youth participants and further evaluation is recommended in the future with increased participation.

Program Satisfaction Evaluation

Youth Surveys

All youth who participated in the art therapy program were administered a satisfaction survey at the completion of each 6-week cohort. A total of 11 surveys were collected across all six cohorts and shared for analysis. Comprised of 13 statement questions, the survey assesses their program satisfaction through a three-point scale, 'Agree' (2), 'Disagree' (0), or 'Not Sure' (1), leaving room for comments. Participants were asked about facilitation, personal learning, and overall experience. Responses were overwhelmingly positive, with 100% of those surveyed sharing they learned something from the program. All youth reported to have learned skills related to the curriculum's 6 C's (Connection, Character, Competence, Confidence, Caring and Compassion), further demonstrating the program's success in enhancing these strengths and protective factors for participating youth. Additionally, all youth reported comfortability and facilitator satisfaction, overall program satisfaction, and likelihood of recommending to others. The overall high level of satisfaction and skills gained from participants demonstrates the intervention's ability to connect with high-risk youth and create programming that meets and supports their unique needs.

Parents/Caregivers Surveys

Caregivers of youth participating in art therapy were also asked to complete a brief satisfaction survey at the completion of the 6-week program. A total of 7 surveys were collected across the cohorts and shared for analyses. Comprised of 12 questions, the survey assesses their satisfaction through 'Agree' (2), 'Disagree' (0), or 'Not Sure' (1), leaving room for comments. The responses were overwhelmingly positive, with almost all statements receiving 'Agree' for most statements. Caregivers also had the opportunity to leave comments at the conclusion of the survey, sharing positive statements, which can be found below in the Qualitative Feedback section. The high level of satisfaction reported by the caregivers further exemplifies the intervention's efficacy in improving youth mental health and providing a safe space for families.

Qualitative Program Feedback

To complement the quantitative data, the REC grant team also collected qualitative data on participant experiences during the art therapy program to gain a deeper understanding of the benefits of the group for both youth and parents/caregivers. Qualitative data in the form of quotes was collected through youth and parent/caregiver surveys as well as from the art therapists regarding participants' experiences with the program. The youth and parents/caregivers' surveys included an open-ended "Other Comments" item inviting participants to provide additional feedback on the program. A total of two youth provided an additional comment and four parents or caregivers responded. The open-ended comments were very positive from both youth and parents/caregivers, expressing their satisfaction with the program. One youth from Cohort 1 shared the following comment, "I am very happy here. I look forward to coming to program again.". A caregiver from Cohort 4 shared, "Extremely happy and grateful my child has ha[d] these experiences". A complete list of comments provided by program participants from surveys and additional qualitative information collected by the REC grant team from each cohort are provided in **Appendix A, B, and C.**

"Drawing at home is helping me manage my anxiety."

- Youth Art Therapy Participant

"This is really great, her having something positive to look forward to. She has been coming home excited about it, which is a change for her."

- Caregiver of Youth Art Therapy Participant

Establish Community Connections

Throughout the grant period, REC put in extensive effort to establish community connections with organizations and artists in their local area. These relationships allowed them to expand their referral sources, add field trips to places in the community into the program curriculum, establish connections to community artists, and improve each cohort design. Over the course of the grant, REC was able to strengthen their relationships with Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network and Juvenile Mental Health Court exemplified by the growing number of referrals over time. **Table 2.** below lists all the connections and number of contacts REC tracked throughout the grant period that had a positive effect on youth experiences with the program.

Table 2. Community Connections with Local Organizations and Artists

Activity	Count	Details
Outreach Conducted to Community Artist	13	<i>Karianne Spens-Hanna, Marte Marini, Tony Whitfield, BakPak Durden, Kelle Pasch (Art Therapist/artist), Ijania Cortez (mural artist), Ashinique Soney-Wesaw (artist), Marte Marini, Sabrina Nelson, Nina Caruso, Brandi Butler, Hailey Saterstad, Ashinique Soney-Wesaw</i>
Outreach Conducted to Community Organization	6	<i>Detroit Institute of Arts, Insight Healing and Wellness, Youth Arts Alliance, Neighborhood Art School, Detroit Public School LGBTQ+ Liaison, University Prep Art and Design Middle High School, Michigan Renaissance Festival</i>
Outreach Conducted to Community Agency	13	<i>Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network, Macomb County Community Mental Health, Juvenile Mental Health Court, Development Centers (2), The Children's Center, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Job Corps, Black Family Development (2), Detroit Public School Community District</i>
Partnerships Established with Community Artist	10	<i>Karianne Spens-Hanna, Tony Whitfield, BakPak Durden, Kalle Pasch, Ashinique Soney-Wesaw, Marte Marini, Sabrina Nelson, Nina Caruso, Hailey Saterstad, Ashinique Soney-Wesaw</i>
Partnerships Established with Community Organization	5	<i>Detroit Institute of Arts, Insight Healing and Wellness, Neighborhood Art School, Detroit Public School LGBTQ+ Liaison (2)</i>
Partnerships Established with Community Agency	11	<i>Juvenile Mental Health Court, Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network, Development Centers, The Children's Center, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Job Corps, Black Family Development (2), Detroit Public School Community District</i>
Referrals from Community Partner to Art Therapy	14	<i>Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network (3), referral from private practice (1), Job Corps (9), Black Family Development (1)</i>
Referrals from Community Partner to REC Program	12	<i>Juvenile Mental Health Court (2), Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network (4), Job Corp (3), Black Family Development (2), Development Centers</i>

Data Limitations

The study has some limitations. The primary data barrier was a small sample size at the grant's conclusion. The data set provided by the grantee was large enough to conduct preliminary analysis, however, it was not large enough to quantify any statistically significant results. Further collection of data would need to be done longitudinally in order to obtain a larger sample size for evaluation.

Program Challenges

There were many challenges and barriers faced by families participating in the art therapy program. Transportation and time constraints were the most difficult and consistent challenges reported by families throughout the program. Some families did not have transportation available, or their work

hours did not align with the scheduled group meeting time. REC addressed these challenges by adjusting the time of the group sessions to be from 5:00-7:00 PM, to better align with work schedules. Other families were not able to commit to the two hours of time to attend the groups, resulting in some youth participants not being able to complete the program. The REC grant team collaborated with the REC's Family Support Services department to address some of the identified barriers to attending the program. REC's Parent Support Partner, who is also the parent of an LGBTQ+ youth, provided a support group for parents and caregivers during the time that their youth were attending the art therapy group. This allowed for parents and caregivers to find value and benefit from being at REC while their youth was participating in the group sessions and increased willingness to attend. The parent groups occurred at the same time as art therapy to align youth and parent schedules best. This change helped with parents getting their kids to group and then having an activity themselves, resulting in increased participation and consistency of attendance.

Due to the efforts to establish relationships across the community, REC was successful in getting referrals to the art therapy program through their partnership with Job Corps. However, there were many challenges with participation for the youth from these referrals. There were challenges with timing, conflicting timing with Job Corps programming, and the challenges with the process of obtaining parental consent. Even with these challenges, the strong relationships the REC art therapy team established and maintained with Job Corps and the REC Family Support Services department throughout the grant program were critical in order to be receptive to and respond to these challenges to successful participation in the program for a portion of youth and their families.

Recommendations

REC's service delivery followed an evidence-based curriculum and demonstrated a positive impact to participating youth. To continue and sustain this program, the Altarum team would recommend establishing additional relationships across the community. This could allow for increased participation of youth in need and potentially lead to formal partnerships and agreements to continue the program funding, allowing ongoing service delivery. While REC has multiple areas of service delivery as an organization, there could be potential to work with new partners to supplement funding for this program. Continued community engagement and establishment of formal relationships could allow for this program to remain available to youth in the community as well as potentially expand the program and broaden its reach. Data collection efforts should continue, which would enable REC to conduct additional analyses with larger sample sizes to show proven impact. This in turn could further strengthen partnerships across community organizations and provide evidence for sustained or enhanced funding.

Conclusion

Funding from the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act Title II Grant allowed the REC to provide an art therapy program for marginalized youth at-risk of interacting with the juvenile justice system in Wayne County, Michigan. The art therapy program was successful in establishing a therapeutic space by hiring skilled professional counselors to use art as a conduit to help youth connect with their emotions and build coping strategies and other skills to protect their mental health. Results from the evaluation showed a decrease in average MAYSI-2 assessment scores and CAFAS scores for youth after participating in the art therapy program. This data illustrates a positive relationship between participation in the art therapy intervention and improvements in youth behavioral health risk factors that are likely to reduce the likelihood of interacting with the juvenile justice system. Satisfaction data showed detailed examples of the positive impact to youth and families participating in the grant program. Further, the relationships established through this grant period will allow for ongoing growth of REC's art therapy programming and broadening the reach they can have into the community to help youth in need. While there were challenges experienced, the grant team was able to adjust to issues and address barriers to participation from cohort to cohort – improving their ability to deliver this positive program to more youth that could benefit from the

curriculum and skill-building activities.



Appendix A: Art Therapy Feedback

Submitted by Ruth Ellis Center grant lead.

A youth's mother shared "this is really great, her having something positive to look forward to. She has been coming home excited about it, which is a change for her."

Participants are taking initiative in facilitating the conversation around group agreements.

While drawing a rainbow on her nametag a youth asked questions about attending pride festivals. She was excited to have a safe place to ask questions about the LGBTQ community and it helped her bond with other group participants and the facilitators.

Participants stated that they "enjoy making art and find it soothing."

A youth said, "drawing at home is helping me manage my anxiety"

A youth who is participating for the second time is demonstrating increased confidence and communication skills.

Appendix B: Art Therapy Feedback, Continued

Submitted by Ruth Ellis Center grant lead.

Cohort	Quote
C3 Youth	I just realized that I am more patient with my art than I am with myself. I should really be more patient with myself and take a moment to think before I react.
C3 Youth	I've never done anything like this group before
C3 Youth	Caring is also about caring for yourself. You should do things that make you feel happy
C3 Youth	I painted an eye that looks like mine because it represents my culture and my culture is important to me
C3 Youth	I usually get upset when things don't turn out like I think they will, but this is different
C3 Youth	Confidence is something that grows
C3 Youth	I've always wanted to express myself with glitter and I never got the chance to. This just feels like me!
C3 Youth	Connection feels different than being by yourself. There're things that can come up that you weren't thinking about and you get to talk about things more
C2 Caregiver	This is really great, her having something positive to look forward to. She has been coming home excited about it, which is a change for her.
C2 Therapist	Participants are taking initiative in facilitating the conversation around group agreements
C2 Therapist	While drawing a rainbow on her nametag a youth asked questions about attending pride festivals. She was excited to have a safe place to ask questions about the LGBTQ community and it helped her bond with other group participants and the facilitators
C2 Youth	Drawing at home is helping me manage my anxiety
C2 Youth	Enjoy making art and find it soothing
C2 Therapist	A youth who is participating for the second time is demonstrating increased confidence and communication skills
C1 Youth	I am very happy here. I look forward to coming to this program again.
C1 Caregiver	Very impressive. I love that my child has something to look forward to each week.
C3 Caregiver	Felt safe inside the building.
C3 Caregiver	Please give more grant money, very much appreciated!
C4 Caregiver	Extremely happy and grateful my child has [had] these experiences

Appendix C: Art Therapy Feedback, Cohort 2 by Week

Submitted by Ruth Ellis Center grant lead.



Week 1 - CONNECTION

The youth demonstrated connection right away by talking freely about common interests and LGBTQ+ topics. The youth who knew more or had more experience jumped in to make others feel accepted.

Week 2 - CHARACTER

A youth who identified his strengths as "self-aware" and "willing to help others" demonstrated them when he communicated to the facilitators that he was starting to feel anxious and what kind of support he needed and when he shared his skills with braiding with the group in order to help them learn.



Week 3 •

COMPETENCE

A youth expressed feeling unsure about an art project because the medium was difficult to control. After trying it, he shared that he was surprised that he was able to complete the project and enjoyed it although at times it was challenging.

Week 4 – CONFIDENCE

When making “strength sticks” the youth collectively agreed to display pride flags on their artwork to celebrate their identities.



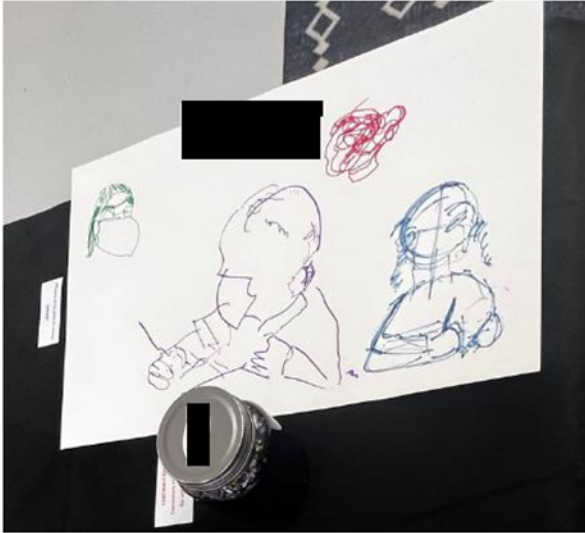
Week 5 – CARING

The youth created a group weave during which they demonstrated patience and understanding that each of them have a different style and work at different paces.

Week 6 – CONTRIBUTION

One of the youth who found sensory bottles calming provided one sensory bottle to each youth in their favorite color in order to make sure that everyone in group had a coping skill in front of them and that they felt included.





Highlight 1

The youth participated in blind contour drawing during which they paired up and looked in each other's eyes while drawing each other. This presented a challenge for the group to work through as prolonged eye contact can be vulnerable and triggering. One of the youth experienced symptoms of anxiety during the activity and the group successfully navigated it.

Highlight 2 Parents contributed to a group project on the last day and discussed things they were thankful for. This was the most engaged parents have been in the group so far.

