



Applying CYFERNet Resources to Evaluate Youth Outcomes

A Tribal Juvenile Delinquent Prevention Program

Due to the high juvenile incarceration rates in a largely rural Western State, as well as the high rates of delinquency on a local Indian reservation, project “Succeed” was collaboratively developed between Cooperative Extension and the local Elk Valley Tribal Council. A needs assessment revealed the need for additional services for local tribal youth; this mirrored the national trends in juvenile delinquency on reservations. Additionally, OJJDP research on tribal youth indicated that “although violent crime rates have been declining throughout the Nation, they continue to rise in Indian Country....”

Contributing to this problem was the extreme isolation of the tribal community. A meandering two-lane blacktop road connecting the tribe to the nearest community (100 miles away) is the only means of access to the reservation. During winter, even minor storms are sufficient to close the road, thus totally cutting off access in or out. Due to such isolation, local staff were hired and trained to teach the program at the reservation.

During the pilot phase of the program it was discovered that of the numerous reasons youth were referred to the program, drug and alcohol use was common to most referrals. Thus, it was decided that an emphasis on drug and alcohol prevention taught with a culturally appropriate perspective would need to be an important part of the curriculum. While current statistics regarding the prevalence of juvenile delinquency on the Elk Valley reservation were difficult to summarize, one fatal accident on the reservation in late May 2000 involving 3 youth who stole a car and were drinking and driving punctuated the need for this program.

Program Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Reduce recidivism among first-time offender tribal youth

Goal 2: Reduce alcohol and other drug use

Objective 1: Promote self and social responsibility

Objective 2: Promote more effective decision-making skills

Objective 3: Enhance anger management and conflict resolution skills



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THE PROGRAM

Project “Succeed” is a federally funded program designed to teach teens skills that will help them get out of the juvenile justice system and become productive members of the community. The main thrust of the program focuses on enhancing youth’s basic social and interpersonal skills of positive communication, problem solving, decision-making, self-responsibility, conflict resolution, goal setting and aspiration building. Parents/guardians enhance their parenting skills through parenting classes that teach the adults some of the same skills the youth are learning so that those skills can be reinforced at home. The program works with small groups of 10 to 12 non-violent juvenile offenders who are referred by the tribal court and have the ability to function within group settings. Sexual or violent offenders are deemed inappropriate for the program. It is an after-school program and is conducted three times per week over an eight-week period. The tribal instructors hired to teach the youth and parenting components of the program have adapted the life skills curriculum to include culturally relevant activities.

EVALUATION PLAN

Program collaborators began by reviewing the literature related to delinquency, conflict resolution, decision-making, and substance use (see <http://ag.arizona.edu/fcr/fs/nowg/ythindexintro.html>), as well as the Community-Based Project Evaluation Guide (see <http://ag.arizona.edu/fcr/fs/cyfar/evalgde.htm>) on the CYFERNet resource web pages. In addition, general evaluation information, posted on the CYFERNet site proved extremely useful to the development of the evaluation plan of the project (see <http://www.CYFERNet.org/evaluation.html>).

Based on the information obtained from these resources, a comprehensive evaluation plan was developed. Only the youth and parent evaluation components of the program are discussed here. For the youth component, a standardized Locus of Control measure and the use of a portfolio technique was selected. In addition, the Tribal Council agreed to track arrest and recidivism rates for the reservation. For the parenting component, a short pre/post inventory was given to parents to rate their child’s behaviors/attitudes and assess their own parenting skills.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM...

“We actually got to sit there and speak our minds...without like someone sitting there saying ‘you know that’s wrong, that’s wrong, it shouldn’t be that’...You know we got to say what we felt and no one gives you crap about saying it. I’d sit there with kids that are basically all our age, and just talk about their problems and stuff like that and I liked that.”...program participant, aged 16.

“I used to have problems with my sister wearing my clothes and stuff. We talked about it and now it just, she just doesn’t do it anymore...I approached her. I told her we need to talk,...that I would rather her ask than just take...I give the program credit for helping me learn to be able to do that.”....program participant aged 15.

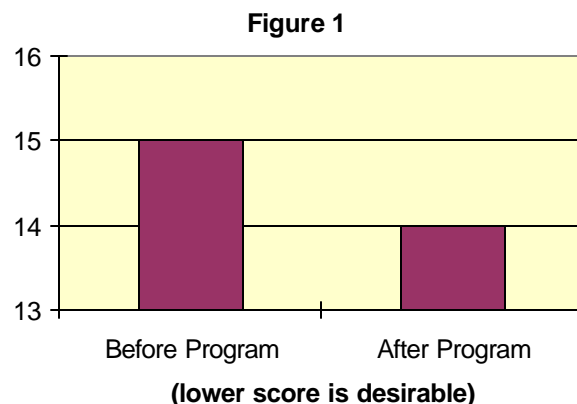
“I wasn’t sure the program would be successful at first, but Extension really made an effort to work with the tribe, listen to our concerns, and make it appropriate for our youth. We’ve really seen a reduction of kids getting deeper into trouble since the program started.”....Tribal Leader.

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KEY EVALUATION RESULTS: Youth

Locus of Control

Juvenile offenders completed the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control instrument as a pretest before the 24-session program began and as a posttest at the end of the program. Locus of Control measures the perception of connection between actions and outcomes. For example, a juvenile with the desired internal locus of control (lower score) believes that luck has little to do with getting a good grade in school. The 40-item questionnaire is a standardized test. As shown in Figure 1, the mean pretest score on the Locus of Control for project 'Success' participants was 14.51. Their mean score on the posttest was 13.59. Although these findings were not statistically significant, the lower score on the posttest is desirable as it indicates more internal control or growth in the area of self-responsibility.

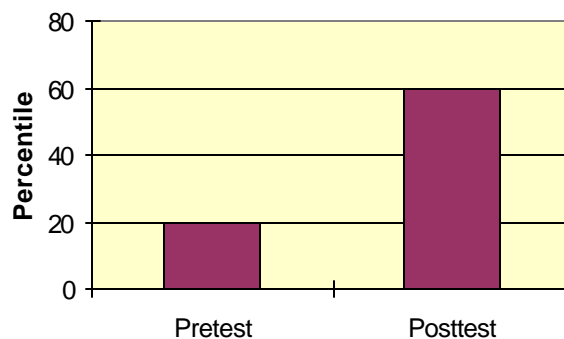


Portfolios

Additional program evaluation data were collected from the portfolios that youth completed during the program. Portfolios showed youth development in the skill areas taught by program staff (see <http://ag.arizona.edu/fcr/fs/cyfar/Portfo%7E3.htm> for more information of portfolio assessment techniques). The portfolio scores were based upon a 100-point continuum. Throughout the 24 sessions, youth completed portfolio tasks demonstrating their abilities in positive conflict resolution; enhanced communication skills; increased cooperative behaviors; decreased aggression; enhanced understanding of alcohol/drug effects; and increased school performance and involvement. Youth self-evaluations also were included in the portfolio, as well as completed interactive parent postcards. Each week youth wrote to a parent/guardian, and the parent/guardian wrote back regarding family progress in the areas mentioned above.

Portfolios were scored using a continuum of behaviors constructed for this project developed by project staff, Cooperative Extension faculty, and selected parents and teachers from the community. The continuum ranged from 0 to 100. For descriptive purposes, the continuum was divided into four levels. Beginning level portfolio scores ranged from -10 to +15. Emerging level portfolio scores ranged from 16 to 45. Developing level portfolio scores ranged from 46 to 75. Maturing level portfolio scores ranged from 76 to 100. A score of 100 indicates that the juvenile was able to demonstrate mastery of all skills taught in the project. Figure 2 shows the statistically significant portfolio results for the youth in project "Success." Mean portfolio scores were 21 (emerging) on the pretest activities and 61 (developing) on the posttest activities.

Figure 2: Portfolio Scores for Juveniles Before and After the Program



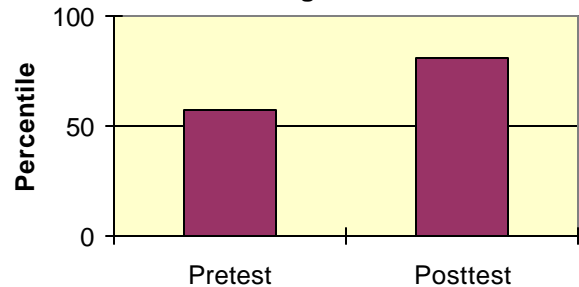
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The average developing level project graduate demonstrated a mastery of skills in seven areas. Those seven skill areas were: (1) use of “I” statements; (2) ability to ask for help from others; (3) positive communication techniques; (4) ability to revisit negative behaviors and propose alternatives without prompting; (5) shows remorse and can say “I’m sorry”; (6) knows steps to reach long-term goals; and (7) understands consequences of alcohol/drug use.

Parents

An evaluation instrument was used by parents/guardians to rate their children’s behavior changes. Parents reported the changes in behavior they observed in their child before and after the program. Scores are based upon 100 as a perfect score and 0 as the lowest score. The average parent/guardian rating of juveniles’ behavior before the program was 57. After the program, the average parent’s rating climbed to 81—a statistically significant finding (Figure 3).

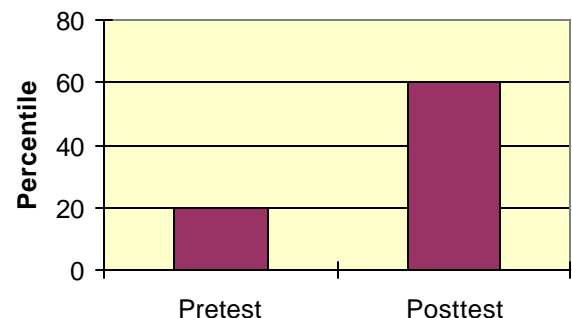
Figure 3: Parent Rating of Juvenile Behavior Before and After the Program



In addition to reporting on their children’s behavior, parents also completed a pre and post survey of knowledge/skills they gained in the program’s parent component. The parent survey was administered at the end of parent training. Parents were asked to think back to the start of the program and rate their parenting knowledge about helping youth develop positive skills. Then, they rated their knowledge/skills at the end of the program.

The parents rated their own skills in six different areas that were directly tied to the objectives of the parent component (e.g. awareness of the strengths and resources they bring to parenting; skills in praising and encouraging their children; and use of positive communication and constructive conflict resolution skills). These results are shown in Figure 4 as a composite score. Parents noted an increase in knowledge and parenting skills of 19 points between the pre- and posttest—this result was significant at the .05 statistical level.

Figure 4: Parent Knowledge Before and After the Program



REPORTING EVALUATION RESULTS

The results of this prevention program for youth on the Elk Valley Indian Reservation helped document the success of the program. A report of the evaluation results was presented (with an accompanying PowerPoint presentation) to the Tribal Council and the State Office of Juvenile Probation and Parole. One of the key results for community leaders and funders was the documentation that youth arrests and recidivism had dropped since the program began. The program is currently being expanded to include a larger number of youth and families in Elk Valley, and follow-up activities have been developed, including a parent support group. Grant funding is in place until 2002. A new grant to expand the program has been submitted. This funding is expected to be in place before the current grant expires. Due to the initial evaluation results, several neighboring reservations have expressed interest in the program and a pilot project has begun at one other tribal site.

ABOUT THE NOWG WEBSITE AND OTHER RESOURCES

The Youth National Outcome Work Group (NOWG) was formed to develop evaluation resources for youth programs. Group members recognized that the majority of Extension youth programs are focused on either enhancing social competency or reducing risk behavior. Thus, the [Youth-NOWG](#) developed web based resources, categorized according to competency and risk program outcome indicators. The [NOWG web site](#) provides selected information to community-based program developers, evaluators, and researchers relating to community, family, adolescent, and children community-based programs and evaluation. Among the information available are selected bibliographies, measurements and scales, evaluation guides, and links to related sites.

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NOTE: The program described in this bulletin is modeled after the "MAGIC" program developed by Nevada Extension Specialists. To purchase the MAGIC curriculum or learn more about the program, please contact Marilyn Smith at msmith@agnt1.ag.unr.edu.

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