

Youth Empowered Solutions (YES!)

Evaluation Report for Grant Years 1-4

Executive Summary

HIGHLIGHTS

YES! focuses on improving support for transition-aged **youth and young adults** (age 16-25) who are experiencing, or are at risk for experiencing **mental health and substance use challenges**.

YES! SITE LOCATIONS:

- Jefferson County YES!
- Outagamie County YES!

YES! SITES HAVE...

182 Participants Served

1,054 Mental Health Screenings

4,791 Individuals Contacted via Outreach

75%+ Participant Satisfaction with Services

9.3 Average Months of YES! Enrollment

YES! PARTICIPANTS SAY...

"YES! provided me with constant support to help me manage my daily mental health symptoms. I was provided alternative options to going to the hospital, including going to peer run respite services. YES! also helped me develop skills for independent living."

Youth Empowered Solutions (YES!), administered by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), is funded by the Now is the Time - Healthy Transitions Grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The YES! grant is a five-year grant that began on October 1, 2014, and the two YES! local sites began admitting youth and young adult participants in late March 2015. DHS contracted with the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI) to conduct the program and grant evaluation.

Wisconsin's Comprehensive Community Services (CCS) program provides the programmatic structure and funding source, while the YES! model informs supporters and direct service providers about respectful, appealing, and effective ways of walking alongside young people as they work through life's challenges during this transitional time. This framework emphasizes outreach, engagement, and participants' goals.

This Executive Summary provides a brief overview of YES! implementation and provides a summary of the outcomes of youth and young adults who participated in YES! services during Years 1-4 of the grant, including all data collected through September 30, 2018. For more information, please see the full YES! Evaluation Report for Grant Years 1-4.

AT ADMISSION (BASELINE):

- **83%** of participants **reported prior experiences of violence or trauma** ($N = 171$)
- **64%** of participants **reported at least one prior psychiatric inpatient stay** ($N = 112$)
- **49%** of participants **reported at least one prior suicide attempt** ($N = 112$)

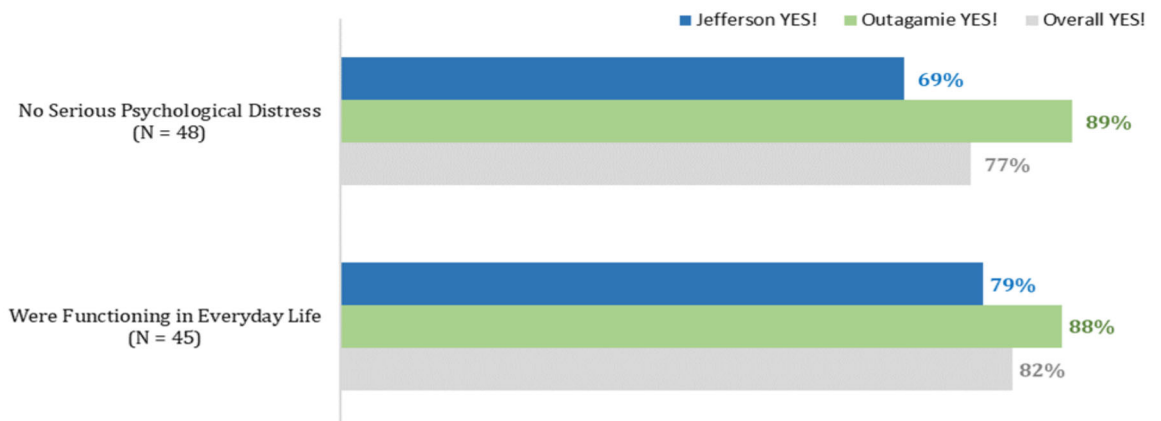
AT SIX-MONTH FOLLOW-UP:

- **62%** of participants **reported a decrease in psychological distress symptoms** ($N = 89$)
- **57%** of participants **reported improvement in functioning in everyday life** ($N = 79$)
- **51%** of participants **reported increased social connectivity** ($N = 80$)

AT DISCHARGE:

- **82%** of participants **reported improvement in functioning in everyday life** ($N = 45$)
- **77%** of participants **reported a decrease in psychological distress symptoms** ($N = 48$)
- **58%** of participants **reported increased social connectivity** ($N = 45$)
- **33%** of participants **reported an increase in housing stability** ($N = 49$)

Figure 1: Percent of Participants Experiencing Positive Outcomes in Mental Health Symptoms at Discharge from YES!



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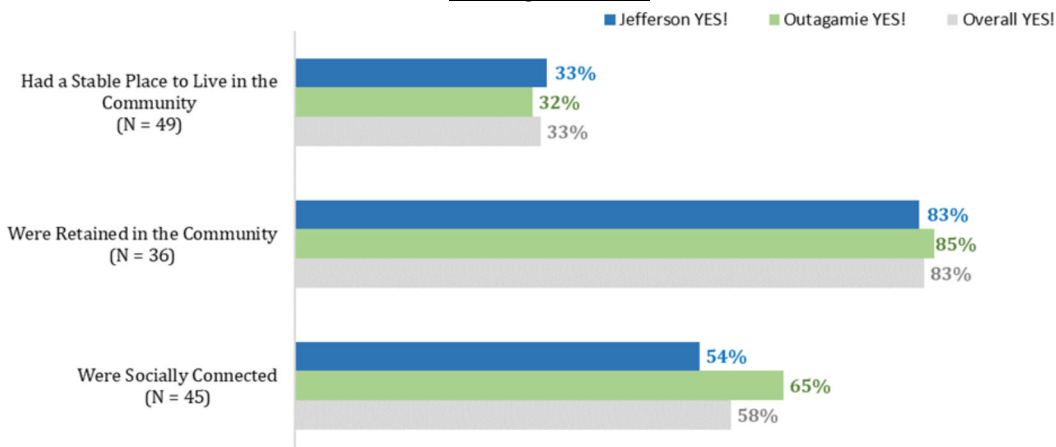
Evaluation Report for Grant Years 1-4

Executive Summary (continued)

OVERALL, THE RESULTS SUGGEST:

- YES! sites are effectively providing comprehensive mental health screening and treatment services using developmentally appropriate, evidence-based techniques for youth and young adults.
- YES! sites provide a variety of supportive services to address mental health challenges while also assisting with barriers to housing, employment, transportation, and education.
- YES! participants who have completed services report improved functioning, lowered psychological distress symptoms, more stable housing, increased social connectivity, sustained or improved health, and a variety of other positive changes.
- As a result of the YES! grant, several new organizational partnerships have been created at the local- and state-levels.
- YES! participants are highly satisfied with the services they receive while involved with YES!
- YES! Transition Facilitators utilize person-driven planning to focus on what the youth and young adults want to work on at any time. Flexibility is key when working with this age group.

Figure 2: Percent of Participants Experiencing Positive Outcomes in Housing and Community Involvement at Discharge from YES!



During the first four years of the grant, YES! has **successfully implemented program activities and services**. YES! is having a positive impact on the youth and young adults who receive services. As shown in Figures 1 and 2, based on a review of participant outcomes, YES! participants have experienced positive changes after participating in YES! services.

YES! Transition Facilitators working with YES! participants have **focused their efforts toward meaningful engagement**. This has been achieved through hosting activities within the community, providing a longer process to build rapport before a participant enrolls in services, and focusing on person-driven planning. YES! Youth Coordinators have been hired at each of the sites and at the state-level. The local sites agree that the Youth Coordinators have increased the inclusion of youth voice throughout their programs.

YES! has **already exceeded some of the goals outlined in the original grant application to SAMHSA**. For example, in the original application, YES! promised to provide outreach contacts to 1,008 individuals over the five-year period. YES! has reached over four times as many people (4,791 individuals) in the first four years of implementation.

During Year 4, with a focus on project dissemination, **YES! staff participated in a variety of outreach activities** with many local and statewide stakeholders. These outreach activities provided stakeholders with information about YES! and highlighted many of the themes that are an integral part of the YES! grant. During Year 4, YES! staff:

- Hosted a two-day Now is the Time Conference to improve supports for Wisconsin's youth and young adults with 350 statewide workforce members;
- Hosted five two-day Now is the Time Regional Trainings with 288 workforce members throughout the state;
- Presented to area professionals at several statewide conferences to increase awareness about the YES! model and best practices for working with youth and young adults;
- Collaborated with local schools to conduct trainings on best practices for working with youth and young adults and to provide students with mindfulness techniques;
- Hosted a variety of activities and skill-building events for youth and young adults that were planned and organized by youth and young adults; and
- Hosted the Young Adult Workgroup of Wisconsin with young adult members from across the state.