Deadly Families Evaluation Summary September 2020

Acknowledgements

The Deadly Families program is delivered on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. The evaluator expresses their deep gratitude for the opportunity to work and live on this land and pays their respects to Aboriginal Elders past, present and emerging.

For-Purpose Evaluations would like to thank the participants of Deadly Families who were so open and forthright in the telling of their stories. We also extend our appreciation to the Deadly Connections team. The team provided essential insights into the experiences of Aboriginal people caught in the justice and child protection systems of NSW and the challenges of delivering support in this complex world.

This evaluation was commissioned by Deadly Connections as a part of the organisation's continuous improvement plan. The data collection and analysis for this report was completed by For-Purpose Evaluations.

For a copy of the complete Deadly Families Evaluation Report, or more information please contact:

For-Purpose Evaluations

eleanor@fpe.org.au

Deadly Connections

info@deadlyconnections.org.au

Deadly Families Evaluation Summary September 2020

Transforming Justice. Transforming Lives. Transforming Communities.

Deadly Connections is an Aboriginal owned and community led not-for-profit organisation. Their aim is to break the cycle of disadvantage and trauma experienced by Aboriginal people. And, to directly address the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the child protection and justice system/s. Deadly Families is a culturally responsive, early intervention and prevention program for Aboriginal parents. It is designed to target risk factors associated with child protection notifications and interventions.

Deadly Connections commissioned For-Purpose Evaluations to evaluate the Deadly Families program over a period of 3 months in 2020. This evaluation forms the first of a series of internal and external reflective projects begin undertaken by the organisation to establish a culture of continuous improvement and clear outcomes accountability. In this spirit, the findings reflect both the success and the lessons learned from the first 12 months of service delivery. The evaluation has also identified several positive early outcomes and the following key findings.

> **The Facts:** First Nations people account for **23%** of the prison population, **40%** of the children and young people in out of home care and **3.5%** of the total population in NSW. (ABS, 2020)

Key Findings of the Evaluation

- Deepened trust and engagement with culturally responsive services
- Increased agency and confidence of Aboriginal people when navigating social service system/s
- Empowered Aboriginal people (women in particular) to know their rights, to advocate for themselves and their family's cultural needs

The findings echo the established literature[1] that advocates for the increased presence of Aboriginal owned and led organisations in the community sector.

Deepened trust and engagement: participant experience

"I thought I just needed practical help. But I needed someone to be there for me. I needed courage. I needed love and care. That's what Deadly Families gave me."

"They supported me better than any other organisation that I have ever been with. More progress in a short period than I have ever made. It was amazing."

"The rapport was better. I didn't feel let down the same way I have been with others."

"Standing up for me. Right beside me, and sometimes in front of me - when I need."

[1] The Family is Culture Report (2019) offers several references to this literature.

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78% of participants rated their experience as positive. With the primary reason being, that they felt culturally safe with the service.

52% increase in participants attendance of planned appointments, **51%** increase in answering calls, **36%** reduction in rescheduling appointments.

Aboriginal agency, empowerment, and confidence

89% of participants attributed their increased feelings of confidence, empowerment, and knowledge of their rights to the support of Deadly Families. Only one participant expressed that she felt Deadly Families did not support her effectively to engage with DCJ.

"They [Deadly Families] have increased my knowledge and trust in the Department. I have a case plan for baby. I wouldn't be speaking with them [DCJ] at all without them. I am doing what I need to do now."

"I have all the knowledge now. I know how to ask questions. Deadly Families showed me how. Gave me lots of ideas of how to get what we need. Tips and tricks of it. Helped me understand it all. Gave me insight and knowledge."

Culturally safe and responsive service delivery

Providing a culturally safe and responsive service for Aboriginal people is the corner stone of the Deadly Families program. That Deadly Connections is as Aboriginal owned and led organisation was significant for most participants interviewed. The Aboriginality of both the organisation and their support staff appeared to have a considerable impact on many of the participants', trust, engagement, rapport, confidence, and comfort when accessing the service.

"Is it important to you that Deadly Connections is an Aboriginal owned organisation?"

"Very important. So much more comfortable. Black people helping black people. Good will inside. They understand more, they understand more [because] they have lived experience – they understand hardship."

"You just feel comfortable. You're speaking with your mob. You're safe."

"Different to white organisations. The black ones are on the same level as you. You don't feel put down underneath."

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Is the Deadly Families program cost effective?

Given the program is only now coming to the end of its first 12 months of implementation, it is too soon to infer causation or even correlation between all the care placements of the children and the intervention of Deadly Families. Furthermore, the current data collection processes and management systems for this new and evolving program are not yet rigorous or consistent enough to lend themselves to a thorough cost benefit analysis.

However, analysis of available data on the cost of OOHC in NSW, the program funding and the early outcomes data affords confidence in the program's potential to be exceptionally good value for money.

Estimated annual savings with current funding

$80, 469. 40

Estimated return on investment after 12months

$1.02 for every $1 spent

Early Outcomes

The most notable outcomes from the past 12 months were the successful intervention in the planned removal of two new-born babies. Deadly Family's culturally responsive service supported the mothers to; work closely with DCJ to address concerns, secure safe and stable housing, re-connect them with their communities and informal support networks and in one case to leave her violent partner. These interventions were sighted as the primary reason that the babies were not removed at birth.

31% decrease in complaints from DCJ that clients are uncontactable

43% decrease in the number of DCJ reports of neglect or abuse

44% increase in participants connection to culture, language, and country

55% increase in safe relationships and 42% increase in pro-social connections

56% increase in clients' positive parenting interactions and a 51% increased in a demonstrated commitment to achieving restoration of children

55% of the interviewees agreed that the Deadly Families support increased their skills in identifying if a person was safe for them and their families

Deadly Families Evaluation Summary September 2020

Lessons Learned: reflections on 12 months of service delivery

Analysis of client exit reasons found that 50% of clients support needs were satisfactorily met upon service completion. In the cases when the person's file was closed before identified support needs were met it was found that the client was uncontactable and/or the worker was unable to provide meaningful support due to acute mental health or AOD barriers. This speaks to a possible need for clearer eligibility guidelines for referrers. However, in order to remain culturally responsive to the diverse needs of Aboriginal people in the community, Deadly Families has intentionally kept eligibility requirements flexible. The Participant Agreement was implemented as alternative and less restrictive process to ensure participants are making an informed decision when they embark on the Deadly Families journey. The Participant Agreement was developed response to several referrals for people who were not engaging or who had significant barriers to accessing the service. It outlines the rights and responsibilities of both the participants and the service. It is discussed and signed by staff members and participants at the commencement of service. Its implementation is also intended to reduce incomplete case closures.

The large majority of participants found the Aboriginal status of the organisation a comforting and equalising factor. Furthermore, the emergence of Deadly Connections as an organisation "for the community by the community" is foundational to its purpose. However, there were some participants who indicated that the Aboriginality of Deadly Connections was a barrier for them. One interviewee commented that she found the racial focus of the service 'too intense'. Another participant raised concerns about confidentiality because of the staffs' close connection to her community. This is a common challenge for Aboriginal community led organisations. The careful balance Aboriginal staff must strike to protect both professional and personal relationships when they hold multiple roles within a community is ever changing. This is a sensitive and complex area to navigate for a young program. Deadly Connections is incorporating different cultural perspectives into confidentiality policies to assist staff to understand their responsibilities in maintaining confidentiality in community.

Given the rapid growth of participant numbers, the current client management system and data collection methods are agreed to be unsustainable. Deadly Connections is seeking funding for the implementation of a secure client management system. Staff are acutely aware that the disparate nature of the record keeping, data collection and storage presents challenge for continuity of service.

Recommendations

The primary recommendation of this evaluation is that the Deadly Families funding be continued and increased. This will enable the continuation of this vital community service.

Further recommendations are:

- Maintain the current culturally responsive practice approach
- Clarify the service purpose and outcomes
- Seek additional funding to invest in a client management system
- Implement structured formal client feedback processes throughout the service delivery
- Seek additional funding to secure a stable part/full time work force
- Review and provide staff training on culturally responsive privacy and confidentiality policies

DEADLY FAMILIES EVALUATION REPORT 2020

SEPTEMBER 29

For-Purpose Evaluations
Authored by: Eleanor Booth

Contents

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This evaluation was commissioned by Deadly Connections as a part of the organisation's continuous improvement plan. The data collection and analysis for this report was completed by For-Purpose Evaluations. Consent has not been provided by either party for the recreation or redistribution of part or all of this material.

For more information contact:

For-Purpose Evaluations
eleanor@fpe.org.au

Deadly Connections
info@deadlyconnections.org.au

Executive Summary

Deadly Connections is an Aboriginal owned and community led, not-for-profit organisation. Their aim is to break the cycle of disadvantage and trauma experienced by Aboriginal people. And, to directly address the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the child protection and justice system/s. Deadly Families is a culturally responsive, early intervention and prevention program for Aboriginal parents. It is designed to target risk factors associated with child protection notifications and interventions. Deadly Families aims to develop the capacity of parents, strengthen cultural connections, improve their parenting and life skills, promote positive outcomes for participants and their families and encourage healthy, connected, strong, safe relationships with their children. This is done through individualised, holistic, cultural and social support to actively assist both men and women who are:

- At risk of having children removed from the family to out of home care OR
- Who have children are already removed from the family & placed in out of home care AND
- Seeking to reduce the risk of removal of their children OR re-establishing contact and/or reunification with their children

Deadly Connections commissioned For-Purpose Evaluations to evaluate the Deadly Families program over a period of 3 months in 2020. This evaluation forms the first of a series of internal and external reflective projects begin undertaken by the organisation to establish a culture of continuous improvement and clear outcomes accountability. In this spirit, the findings reflect the success the lessons learned from the first 12 months of service delivery. The evaluation has also identified several positive early outcomes and the following key findings.

Key Findings

- Increased agency and confidence of Aboriginal people when navigating social services system/s
- Deepened trust and engagement with culturally responsive services
- The empowerment of Aboriginal people (women in particular) to know their rights and to advocate for themselves and their family's cultural needs

The findings echo the established literature[1] that advocates for the increased presence of Aboriginal owned and led organisations in the community sector.

Recommendations

The primary recommendation of this evaluation is that the Deadly Families funding be continued and increased to enable the continuation of this vital community service. Further recommendations are:

- Maintain the current culturally responsive practice approach
- Clarify the service purpose and outcomes
- Seek additional funding to invest in a client management system
- Implement a structured formal client feedback processes throughout service delivery
- Seek additional funding to secure a stable part/full time work force
- Review and provide staff training on culturally responsive privacy and confidentiality policies

[1] The Family is Culture Report (2019) offers many examples of said literature.

This Evaluation

Purpose

The primary purpose of this evaluation was to contribute to the continuous improvement of the Deadly Families program. The findings and recommendations of this evaluation will be used to make improvements to organisational processes that will enhance the program. Another purpose of this evaluation was to provide insights into the *absolute* (rather than relative) value of the Deadly Families project. The evaluation is summative, in that it looks back to determine the overall value of the project to date with regards to the participants, the community and the funders.

Ethics, privacy, and confidentiality

Given this project was undertaken with the aim of internal continuous improvement, formal ethics approval was not sought. Ethical considerations were made throughout. All participant and staff data has been deidentified in both the evaluation report and the evaluation data sets. All primary data was obtained via voluntary interviews at the beginning of which confidentiality and anonymity was explained. All data collection was undertaken by either the evaluator or Deadly Connections staff.

A note on Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS). IDS is the right of Indigenous peoples to govern the collection, ownership, and application of data about their community, peoples, lands, and resources. IDS is built around the central principles of; the rights of Indigenous people and nations over data about them, regardless of where it is held and by whom; the right of Indigenous people to decide what data is used to make decisions related to them, and the right of Indigenous people not to participate in data processes that are not consistent with the central principles of IDS. For-Purpose Evaluations asserts an uncompromising commitment to adhere to the central principles of IDS during this evaluation and in any future work with Indigenous people, communities, and country.

Evaluation Questions

1. What differences has Deadly Families made in the lives of the participants?
2. How important is it for participants that Deadly Families is an Aboriginal owned and led program?
3. Is the Deadly Families program cost effective?

Methodology

The evaluation took a collaborative approach, combining independent evaluation practices with internal expertise and reflections. Deadly Connections employs majority Aboriginal people. It also employs people with lived experience of the justice and child protection system, both Aboriginal

and non-aboriginal. The involvement of Aboriginal people and people with lived experience in designing the methodology ensured the evaluation was undertaken in a culturally responsive way. Significant consideration was taken when developing the data collection methods. These considerations include; workshopping the evaluation plan with Aboriginal staff to ensure culturally safe language and methods were used, ensuring the principles of IDS were adhered to throughout and utilising Aboriginal (or Aboriginal sponsored) staff to collect the data.

The Deadly Families program works with Aboriginal families to address deeply personal challenges. Challenges that are born from complex inter-generational trauma**,** colonisation, systemic racism and oppression. As such, the early outcomes identified by the project are best viewed from a long-term generational perspective. The evaluation process began by undertaking outcomes mapping supported by the stages of change model. This involved reviewing the initial identified outcomes of the project and identifying those where research supported a causal link between a short-term outcomes and longer-term impacts for Aboriginal families and communities. For example, acceptance that alcohol and other drug (AOD) use negatively impacts the family's functioning is likely to contribute to reduced AOD use in the long-term.

A mixed-methods approach to gather both quantitative and qualitative data.

The data collection methods included:

- analysis of client records[2]
- semi-structured participant interviews (n=9)
- standardised staff observations reports (n=12)
- collection of staff and participant stories

The staff observation report collected quantitative data on a participant's relative improvement across several support areas. Staff were asked to rate the extent to which they observed an *increase or decrease* of the identified behavior, against the base line of the person's presentation at the beginning of the service. For example, "increased discussions about the need for positive behavioral change" or "decrease in rescheduling appointments". These professional observations were used to measure a rate of *change* not a rate of occurrence. These ratings were then aggregated to get a program level score.

It is acknowledged that Deadly Connections intends to complete a more comprehensive Social Return on Investment (SROI) assessment on the program in the future. This evaluation has been able to calculate potential quarterly savings and simple potential return on investment using some early outcomes data. Our approach was informed by Lawton, Hamilton and Jackson (2020) as per their evaluation of the Aboriginal Family Planning Circle based in Western Sydney, published in the Evaluation Journal of Australasia. We began by comparing the quarterly cost of the program with

[2] Client records included documents such as; letters from DCJ, medical and psychological assessments, intake and referral forms, risk assessments and staff case notes. Where data was not available conservative figures have been used.

the quarterly cost of out of home care (OOHC) in NSW. From here we determined the quarterly cost of both retention and removal. We then extrapolated this figure to a year by multiplying it by 365. This figure was then used to complete the estimated return on investment calculation below.

(# successful DF interventions in the year X estimated yearly cost of OOHC) – Total Funding = Total Savings

Total Saving ÷ Total Funding = Financial Return on Investment

It is acknowledged that this process is limited and oversimplifies the complexity of both the situation the data. These specific limitations are discussed in more detail in the Key Findings section of this report.

Limitations

- As a result of the short time frame it was not possible to seek out and interview participants who were no longer in contact with the service. This resulted in 41% of total participants being interviewed. A larger sample size would have provided more possible analysis and depth in the findings.
- The program is still in its implementation stage and has recently undergone some staffing changes. This, along with the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, impacted the consistency of data collection processes for the program. This evaluation consolidates a mix of handwritten and electronic records.
- The COVID-19 outbreak in March had a significant impact on both the service delivery and the evaluation. Service was disrupted and delivered either over the phone or in physical distance between March – May. Restrictions in NSW eased in May but continue to impact service delivery today. All the interviewees who received service between March – August agreed that COVID-19 had impacted their support in some way. It is important to note that this may be a factor in their experience and description of the service. The evaluation data collection took place in July - August. The interviews took place over the phone due to physical distancing requirements not being possible in the Deadly Connections office and it being deemed to high risk for the interviewer to attend the participant's housing alone. The short evaluation time frame also influenced the decision to conduct the interviews over the phone.

Who participates in Deadly Families?

- The project has received 25 referrals since its commencement in September 2019
- 88% of referrals were accepted, with 22 individuals receiving service
- 3 referrals were not accepted due to staff being unable to contact the client, or because the client lived out of the service area
- 77% of participants were female (17) and 23% were male (5)

- 75% of participants received 3-6months of service
- Over half of the referrals were made by DCJ Caseworkers. The remainder were received from Aboriginal Legal Service, Aboriginal Medical Centre, and Corrections NSW. There were two self-referrals made.

Referral numbers by support domain

All 25 referrals received included multiple identified support domains. For the purposes of this analysis advocacy / legal refers to all support provided to engage with Department of Communities and Justice and/or court appearances. Below is the number of times a support domain was identified in a referral as a percentage of the total referral number. This provides insight into the types of support required by participants of Deadly Families. This analysis shows that the top four support needs for clients were advocacy, mental health housing and family supports. Fewer referrals were made for AOD, social and cultural, physical health and financial or material aid.

Advocacy / Legal	Alcohol & Other Drugs	Family Support	Housing	Social & Cultural	Mental Health	Physical Health	Financial & Material Aid
68%	36%	48%	52%	40%	52%	20%	24%

Key Findings

What difference/s has Deadly Families made in the lives of the participants?

Participants' experience of the support

Of the nine participants interviewed 78% (7) reported an overall positive experience with Deadly Families. There was one participant who reported a negative experience and one who described her experience as 'neither good nor bad'. When asked, 'what is/was the best thing about the program?' Responses included,

- flexibility
- cultural safety
- warm, loving, and supportive
- commitment to the client
- feeling listened to
- a realistic approach to goal setting

The staff's expertise, availability, Aboriginality and lived experience were also mentioned as some of the best things about the program. In response to the question, 'what is/was the worst thing about the program?' participants offered that the service was at times disorganized, inconsistent,

overly idealistic and on one occasion had limited regard to participant privacy. Three participants commented that their support experience was better than previous services they had experienced.

They supported me better than any other organisation that I have ever been with. More progress in a short period than I have ever made. It was amazing.

The other services, sometimes you think they are on the side of the system. They [Deadly Families] listen to you more, they listen carefully to you. Not like the others.

The rapport was better. I didn't feel let down the same way I have been with others.

The positive experience of participants is supported by the data in the staff observation reports. The staff recorded a 52% increase in participants' reliable attendance of planned appointments, a 51% increase in answering calls or other forms of contact and a 36% reduction in rescheduling appointments at the last minute. This is coupled with a 53% increase in participants meaningfully discussing the need for positive behavioral change with their worker. These increases are measured against a base line of the participants presentation and behaviour upon commencing the program.

To discover how people progressed through the program, the 22 people who have been or are currently being serviced by Deadly Families were separated into five 'client status' categories. These categories are described in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2.

Status Category	Clients in Category	Description of Status Category
Engaged	27% (6)	The person is currently receiving support.
Successfully Completed	23% (5)	The person's file is closed because their support needs have been met and individual goals are complete.
Custody	13% (3)	The person is in custody, which impacts the DF support optoins
Transitioned	9% (2)	The person has been transitioned from DF to a more appropriate service and remains a client of Deadly Connections.
Closed	27% (6)	The person's file is closed before identified support needs were met. This is usually necessary because the client is; uncontactable and/or the worker are unable to provide meaningful support due to acute mental health or AOD barriers.

Of the clients who have been exited from DF, it is an even split between those that were closed (7), and those that were completed (5) or transitioned (2). This means that 50% of clients support needs were satisfactorily met or are being met more effectively in a more appropriate program. This speaks to a possible need for clearer eligibility guidelines at the point of referral. However, in order

to remain culturally responsive to the diverse needs of Aboriginal people in the community, Deadly Families has intentionally kept eligibility requirements flexible. The Participant Agreement was implemented as alternative and less restrictive process to ensure clients are making an informed decision when they embark on the Deadly Families journey. The Participant Agreement was developed response to several referrals for people who were not engaging or who had significant barriers to accessing the service. The Participant Agreement outlines the rights and responsibilities of both the participants and the service. It is discussed and signed by staff members and participants at the commencement of service. Its implementation is also intended to reduce incomplete case closures.

Aboriginal agency, empowerment and confidence

The increased confidence of participants when engaging with Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) and other statutory bodies is one of the key findings of this evaluation. All the participants interviewed spoke about feeling disempowered and disenfranchised by DCJ. Participants reflected that they felt their Aboriginality was central to what they perceived to be unjust, unfair, and discriminatory treatment by DCJ. While not all participants were referred with an identified advocacy support need, almost all recognised that this was something the Deadly Families program provided them with. 89% of participants attributed their increased feelings of confidence, empowerment, and knowledge of their rights to the support provided by Deadly Families. Only one participant expressed that she felt Deadly Families did not support her effectively to engage with DCJ.

The comments below provide insight into the participants' overwhelmingly positive experience in this domain.

Deadly Families made me feel comfortable and confident to talk with them [DCJ]. I trusted Deadly to have my back and to represent my wishes.

I'm a people pleaser my worker empowered me, reminded me of my voice. She always took me back to the basics of my rights.

I am 100% more confident in dealing with the Department. I was being belittled and bullied before they [Deadly Families] came onto my case. The fact that I didn't have to speak with them [DCJ] directly made engaging with them was easy.

They [Deadly Families] have increased my knowledge and trust in the Department. I have a case plan for baby. I wouldn't be speaking with them [DCJ] at all without them. I am doing what I need to do now.

I needed help dealing with the Department for the cultural safety for my niece. Deadly Families gave [DCJ] alternatives for how to connect her with her Aboriginality. They are more open with helping now.

I have all the knowledge now. I know how to ask questions. Deadly Families showed me how. Gave me lots of ideas of how to get what we need. Tips and tricks of it. Helped me understand it all. Gave me insight and knowledge.

I'm only one person and they [DCJ] are big and have so many loop-holes. My assumption was that they would have to do the right thing. I would feel defeated and she [Deadly Families worker] was always there for me.

Early Outcomes

The most notable outcomes from the past 12 months were the successful intervention in the planned removal of two new-born babies. Deadly Family's culturally responsive service supported the mothers to; work closely with DCJ to address concerns, secure safe and stable housing, re-connect them with their communities and informal support networks and in one case to leave her violent partner. These interventions were sighted as the primary reason that the babies were not removed at birth.

In addition, Deadly Families participants appear to have achieved several early outcomes. These figures are taken from aggregating client file data and staff observation reports.

- Staff observed a 43% decrease in the number of reports of neglect or abuse across the program, with two mothers achieving a complete cessation of reports and successfully having their DCJ files closed due to their being no more concerns for their children's welfare
- There has been a 31% decrease in complaints from DCJ that clients are uncontactable
- Staff have recorded a 56% increase in clients' positive parenting interactions and a 51% increased in a demonstrated commitment to achieving restoration of children

A notable observed outcome for participants was an increase in the number of reliable and safe people to call on during a time of crisis. Deadly Connections staff observed a 55% increase in safe connections for their participants over the first 3 months of service. This is supported by an observed 42% increase in pro-social connections and a 44% increase in participants connection to culture, language, and country. 55% (5) of the interviewees agreed that the Deadly Families support increased their skills in identifying if a person was safe for them and their families.

How important is it for participants that Deadly Families is an Aboriginal owned and led program?

Culturally safe and responsive service delivery

Providing a culturally safe and responsive service for Aboriginal people is the corner stone of the Deadly Families program. That Deadly Connections is as Aboriginal owned and community led organisation was significant for most participants interviewed. The Aboriginality of both the organisation and their support staff appeared to have a considerable impact on many of the participants', trust, engagement, rapport, confidence, and comfort when accessing the service.

Majority of participants responded positively to the question; "Is it important to you that Deadly Connections is an Aboriginal owned organisation?"

It's so different dealing with an Aboriginal service. Non-Aboriginal service is so hard. They don't understand that sometimes you don't want to talk. They don't understand family and what you take on and why. I don't think I would have stayed if they weren't Aboriginal – I would have left them a long time ago.

Different to white organisations. The black ones are on the same level as you. You don't feel put down underneath.

Very important. So much more comfortable. Black people helping black people. Good will inside. They understand more, they understand more [because] they have lived experience – they understand hardship.

You just feel comfortable. You're speaking with your mob. You're safe.

There is mutual respect and knowledge between you and the service.

The large majority of participants found the Aboriginal status of the organisation a comforting and equalising factor. Furthermore, the emergence of Deadly Connections as an organisation "for the community by the community" is foundational to its purpose. However, there were some participants who indicated that the Aboriginality of Deadly Connections was a barrier for them. One interviewee commented that she found the racial focus of the service 'too intense'. Another participant raised concerns about confidentiality because of the staffs' close connection to her community. This is a common challenge for Aboriginal community led organisations. The careful balance Aboriginal staff must strike to protect both professional and personal relationships when they hold multiple roles within a community is ever changing. This is a sensitive and complex area to navigate for any program. Deadly Connections is working to incorporate different cultural perspectives into confidentiality policies to assist staff to understand their responsibilities in maintaining confidentiality in community.

Interviewee responses differed slightly when asked; 'Is it important that your case worker is Aboriginal?' With only half of the participants indicating that this was an important factor. When asked 'what qualities do you value in your worker?' Interviewees were more likely to indicate that experience and knowledge of the system was important. Or that the worker was reliable and supportive. Two participants indicated that they thought their workers' lived experience potentially contributed to hostility in meetings with department officials and staff.

Conversely, several others commented that they felt Deadly Families staff were willing to fight for them, go into bat for them and not give up on them. Participants felt more courage, and confidence when their Deadly Families worker was with them in DCJ meetings.

When you go up against a system, knowing someone was with me behind me no matter what – you start to challenge things.

She really fought for me, as if I was her own family. She never let me down.

Standing up for me. Right beside me and sometimes in front of me when I need.

The differing participant experiences of the advocacy approach of Deadly Families speaks to the challenge many Aboriginal community led organisations face when aligning staff's values and practice, community expectations and a participant's individual preferences. It is necessary to note here that there have been staffing changes since the program commenced and some of the participants comments about their worker, both positive and negative, are attributed to previous employees. Further to this the limited funding of the project has led to the staff being on casual contracts. This has presented difficulties for staff consistency and recruitment. This will be discussed in more detail in the recommendations.

Is the Deadly Families program cost effective?

Given the program is only now coming to the end of its first 12 months of implementation, it is too soon to infer causation or even correlation between all the care placements of the children and the intervention of Deadly Families. Furthermore, the current data collection processes and management systems for this new and evolving program are not yet rigorous or consistent enough to lend themselves to a thorough cost benefit analysis. However, some analysis of available data on the cost of OOHC, the program funding amount, the number of clients and two successful interventions in the removal of babies at birth, affords confidence in the potential for the program to be exceptionally good value for money.

A limitation of the analysis below is that it does not consider the indirect costs of OOHC. For example court costs, or the supports provided to the parents and relatives of the child. Nor does this analysis account for the costs incurred by DCJ for the non-residential out-of-home care services that are in still provided to the children who reside with their parents or primary care giver.

According to the Australian Government Productivity Commission (AGPC) Report on Government Services 2019, the number of children and young people in statutory OOHC was 16 884 as at 30 June 2019 (point in time). Of these 40% or 6 754 were Aboriginal or Torres Straight Islander children and young people[3]. According to the AGPC, the children and young people in NSW spent 6 202 037 nights in OOHC, at a cost of $218.08 per night.[4] The total real expenditure of OOHC services in NSW is over $1.35 billion a year. The NSW Government has not provided a real expenditure per child figure to the AGPC. Victoria has provided a real expenditure figure of $374 640 per child in residential care services. For comparison Victoria's per night cost is $193.06 and the number of children in OOHC as at 30 June 2019 was 8 490.

The total funding for the Deadly Families program is $78, 729. This figure does not separate out salaries, brokerage, and overheads. It is recommended that this level of detail is included for the future SROI. The program commenced in September 2019 and has supported 22 people for an average of 3months each. It has approximately 1.2 full time equivalent staff. There are 43 children, that are known to Deadly Families, associated with the 22 participants. With 22 participants in the first year, it cost $3 578 to service one client for 12 months. This equates to $9.80 per client per day. It is important to note here that one client or parent is likely to have more than one child. This means the cost per child is lower than $9.80 per day.

The table below indicates the care arrangements for the children at the time the data was collected in October 2020.

Non-relative or residential out of home care	Relative or kin out of home care	In care of parents or primary carer	Care restored to parent or primary carer
18% (8)	37% (14)	44% (21)	0

Given the limitations of both the data and the time frame of this evaluation, the figures below should not be viewed as a comprehensive cost benefit analysis. They have been included to provide insight and high-level estimates of the *possible* savings the Deadly Families program so far and into the future.

[3]As at June 30 2019 there were 19 934 children in OOHC and other supported placements, of these 39% of 7 790 were Aboriginal and/or Torres Straight Islander.

[4] These data need to be interpreted with care because they do not represent and cannot be interpreted as unit cost measures. Expenditure per child in care at 30 June overstates the cost per child because significantly more children are in care during a year than at a point in time. In addition, these data do not reflect the length of time that a child spends in care.

Quarterly cost per Deadly Families participant[5]

(per client cost X 3 months = quarterly cost per DF participant
$9.80 x 91.25 = $894.25

Estimated quarterly cost per child in OOHC in NSW

(OOHC cost per night X 3 months = quarterly cost of OOHC per child
$218.08 x 91.25 = $19 899.80

Quarterly cost of parent/s or carer retaining custody of children

# of successful DF interventions per quarter X quarterly cost per DF participant = quarterly cost of retention
2 children x $894.25 = $ 1788.50

Quarterly cost of the removal of children and placement into OOHC

# of successful DF interventions per quarter X quarterly cost of OOHC per child = cost of removal
2 children x $19 899.80 = $39 799.60

Potential saving per quarter

quarterly cost of removal - quarterly cost of retention = quarterly savings
$39 799.60 - $1788.50 = $38 011.10

Estimated Forecast Return on Investment

(# successful DF interventions in the year X yearly cost of OOHC) – Total Funding = Total Savings
(2 x $ 79 599.2) - $78 729 = $80 469.4

Total Saving ÷ Total Funding = Financial Return on Investment
$80 469.4 ÷ $78 729 = $1.02

The successful intervention for the two children used as an example in this analysis occurred during the data collection period of this evaluation. Unfortunately, one of the two children was taken into OOHC approx. 12 weeks after their birth. Hence the use of quarterly timeframes and the claim of estimated forecast rather than actual savings. This estimated forecast indicates that with Deadly Families current performance, DCJ could save a possible $38 011.10 in a quarter. With improved

[5] For future calculations: First quarter, Q1: 1 January – 31 March (90 days or 91 days in leap years) Second quarter, Q2: 1 April – 30 June (91 days) Third quarter, Q3: 1 July – 30 September (92 days) Fourth quarter, Q4: 1 October – 31 December (92 days)

performance this could be a possible $80 469.40 in the year. This equates to return of $1.02 for every funded or donated dollar. It is likely, given the organisation's commitment to outcomes accountability that Deadly Families will continually improve its performance in this area. Meaning more Aboriginal children and young people will remain in and even return to the care of their parents. This in turn will increase the community savings and the return on investment figures.

Recommendations

The primary recommendation of this evaluation is that Deadly Families funding bee continued to and increased. A continuation of funding will provide the opportunity for the organisation to continue its essential work for Aboriginal people and families. Work that after only 12 months has achieved several early positive outcomes for participants and their communities. The further recommendations in this report are made in the spirit of continuous improvement and outcomes accountability. Continued funding will provide the opportunity for Deadly Connections to ensure vulnerable Aboriginal people receive the compassionate, effective and best practice service to which they are entitled.

Further Recommendations

Maintain the current culturally safe practice approach
Several clients commented that they appreciated the 'safe', 'down to earth', 'approachable' and 'real' practice of the workers. This is emerging as a point of difference for Deadly Connections compared with other providers. This organisational value should be cultivated and encouraged.

Clarify the service purpose and outcomes
Currently there are 20 service outcomes listed in the Business Case. If the program could focus on fewer more specific outcomes it could enhance the specialty service areas and improve outcomes tracking.

Seek additional funding to invest in a client management system
Given the rapid growth of participant numbers, the current client management system and data collection methods are agreed to be unsustainable. Deadly Connections is seeking funding for the implementation of a secure client management system. Staff are acutely aware that the disparate nature of the record keeping, data collection and storage presents challenge for continuity of service and poses a privacy concern. A database for client data entry and storage is highly recommended.

Review and provide staff training on culturally responsive privacy and confidentiality policies
Include a clause in each policy that specifically outlines how staff should respond when they have personal relationships or interactions with the client or the client's associates.

Seek funding to secure a stable part/full time work force

Due to limited funding it has been necessary to casualise of the Deadly Families work force. While it is noted that current staff are providing an excellent service, this casualisation has led to challenges in the recruitment and retention of experienced qualified professionals who are able to secure full and part time contracts elsewhere. It has also impacted the consistency of service for participants. Securing funding that makes it possible to stabilize the workforce would benefit the entire program.

Implement formal client feedback processes throughout service delivery
To continue to provide a high-quality service it can be helpful to offer clients an opportunity to provide anonymous feedback at intervals throughout the support period. A short electronic survey or conversation with someone they trust can be ways of doing this.

Additional Considerations

Streamline recruitment practices and develop a staff training module based on client feedback
Given the intimacy of the Deadly Families program a significant factor in a participant's experience and success is the skill level of and relationship with their worker. Recruiting against a criteria can eliminate staff changes as a factor in differing participant outcomes overtime. When there is consistency within your staffing group staff changes are less likely to be the differentiating factor in a participants' outcomes.

Offer DCJ knowledge workshops for communities and other providers
The deep knowledge of the Deadly Families (and Connections) staff is a valuable resource that could benefit the sector more broadly. The staff's knowledge and advocacy in this area is a primary contributor to the key finding, "The empowerment of Aboriginal people (women in particular) to know their rights and to advocate for themselves and their family's cultural needs". Harnessing and offering this knowledge as a distinct 'product' or program of Deadly Connection has the potential to improve community understanding and experiences as well as contribute to the improved practice of the sector.

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THE PINKERTON PAPERS

JANUARY 2017

Credible Messenger Mentoring For Justice-Involved Youth

BY RUBEN AUSTRIA AND JULIE PETERSON[1]

Dedicated to Tyrell Govan and Kevin Ortiz, mentoring program participants who died far too soon.

TO REACH AND ENGAGE young people has long been the quest of youth justice interventions. We write this paper as strong advocates for credible messenger mentoring— an approach with great promise not only to disrupt the tragic spiral of incarceration and recidivism that traps so many young people but also to strengthen communities disproportionately impacted by mass incarceration.

What is credible messenger mentoring? It is a transformative group mentoring intervention for young adults in the justice system. At its heart, men and women who were themselves justice-involved are hired to engage young people on their own terms in structured and intentional relationships. Transformative mentoring relies on the hiring of credible messengers as paid mentors. Because mentors share — and have overcome —similar experiences, including involvement in the justice system, young people find them trustworthy and far more persuasive than motivational speakers or even the best-intentioned social workers.

Transformative mentoring with credible messengers has been able to successfully reach young people who were disconnected from education and employment and not otherwise inclined to participate in positive youth programming. At its best, it helps young people change their attitudes and behaviors and ultimately go on to become mentors themselves.

Credible messenger mentoring delivers benefits all around.

Young people receive guidance from believable sources, opportunities to form healthy relationships in safe, supportive environments, and tools to replace negative attitudes and behaviors with productive practices and relationships.

Mentors gain opportunities for employment and professional development. They experience a deepening of their personal commitment to transformation and growth. Group-based mentoring provides an antidote for the burnout common in social services.

Communities are strengthened by the positive, round the clock presence of mentors and supportive caring peers. Long after program hours, pro-social messages and behaviors are modeled on the street, in parks and all too often at funerals and memorials. Significantly, credible messenger mentoring channels financial resources directly into the pockets of those most impacted by incarceration.

Public safety is enhanced as recidivism declines and young people who are disconnected from education and employment find the hope and support they need to resist the lure of the streets, thrive and help others. Credible messenger mentoring also facilitates the development of strengths-based relationships between staff and clients served by government and social service agencies.

Overview

CREDIBLE MESSENGER MENTORING is an idea whose time is coming. New York City has made striking investments in it for young people who reside in neighborhoods plagued by violence, trauma, gang involvement, substance abuse, poverty, homelessness and chronic illness. At the 2011 launch of the Young Men's Initiative, the New York City Department of Probation (DOP) created Arches Transformative Mentoring, a curriculum-based group mentoring intervention using paid credible messenger mentors.[2] **Preliminary research on Arches indicates a notable 50 percent decrease in felony arrests for those in the program.**[3] Drawing on this success, the New York City Mayor's Office secured on-going funding for Arches in the City budget and expanded the Arches model into public housing for at-risk youth in a program called "Next Steps." An Arches Alumni Academy for Advancement (4As) operated by Community Connections for Youth trains Arches graduates who are interested in becoming mentors themselves. And a new Institute for Transformative Mentoring at the New School provides structured professional training for credible messengers employed in social service agencies.

Credible messenger mentoring is taking off in other parts of the country as well. San Diego, Chicago and South Carolina are consulting with Community Connections for Youth. Significantly, the District of Columbia Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, D.C.'s cabinet-level juvenile justice agency, made a multi-million dollar investment in credible messenger mentoring for court-involved young people in the District.

In this paper, we seek to explain what credible messenger mentoring is and why it is so effective at engaging some of the most hard to engage youth. We explore its history as a youth justice intervention and review contemporary research. We draw on our experiences and share what we have learned. And we take a closer look at the original Arches model. Our goal is to create a common vocabulary for practitioners, researchers and policymakers and to make clear that credible messenger mentoring is a just, effective and cost-effective approach to youth justice that shows promise for communities large and small.

What is Credible Messenger Mentoring?

CREDIBLE MESSENGER MENTORING is first and foremost a group intervention. Attachment to a pro-social peer group, led by credible messengers, facilitates attitudinal and behavioral change. Well-facilitated groups that challenge criminal and antisocial thinking have a powerful effect on reducing recidivism.[4] Credible messenger mentoring groups amplify that impact. Not only do young people benefit from having their thinking challenged by trained and trustworthy mentors, they in turn begin to challenge and hold each other accountable. While the majority of group participants have delinquent or criminal backgrounds, the group itself is a pro-social peer support network where youth remind and encourage one another to maintain their commitment to positive behavior.[5]

In the world of court-involved young people, mentors who come from the same communities and have shared similar experiences have an especially powerful role to play. They have a superior ability to connect with youth who are most disconnected and most resistant to traditional programs. They build trust faster and inspire confidence more quickly than other professionals because they have survived the difficulties that young people are up against. They have figured out how to live the life they are urging young people to adopt. Credible messengers — people who are recognized and validated by a community — can spread a message of hope and change to young people who trust them.

The effective credible messenger mentor is much more than a crisis-responder or an inspirational speaker who delivers a stirring message and moves on. They are trained and paid to develop authentic long-term relationships with young people. They stay connected, serving as real and present guides as youth navigate the difficult path of life change. They offer firsthand wisdom about down-to-earth challenges youth face, such as breaking away from a gang or navigating a job search with a felony on your record.

Credible messenger mentors become adept at meeting youth where they are and skilled in the delivery of their message. Trained in the art of facilitation, mentors learn how to motivate youth by drawing out what is within rather than merely imposing information from without. In a nurturing pro-social environment, they help youth focus on changes in cognition and behavior that precede the ability to make progress in education and employment.

Why It Makes Sense

WHILE CREDIBLE MESSENGER mentoring is not a substitute for education, employment, housing, or substance abuse treatment, investing in it makes good policy sense. Credible messenger mentoring is an important component in a process of growth and healing, providing young people with the motivation to take ownership of their lives and to thrive. It gives young people a mechanism for the accountability and provides the support they need to stick with their individual plans for change. Credible messenger mentoring pays a healthy return on investment in everything from public safety and fiscal saving to strengthened neighborhoods.

New Messengers, New Messages

YOUNG PEOPLE OF COLOR in impoverished communities grow up being bombarded with a dispiriting message: "You are dangerous; you are violent; you are criminal; you are going to wind up dead or in jail." At times, adults deliver the message explicitly when they accuse young people of being "up to no good." It is also conveyed in body language when people shrink back in fear or clutch their property tighter when they see a group of young people on the street. Public policy reinforces the theme when schools invest in metal detectors, police officers outnumber guidance counselors, and government spends millions of dollars more on youth incarceration than positive youth development. Peers who have internalized the message drive it home further by championing criminal and antisocial lifestyles. When young people hear this message over and over again, it is no surprise they begin to repeat it to themselves.

Young people ensnared in the justice system often fail to engage with services and opportunities. For many, neither threats of punishment nor appeals to opportunity make an impact. What takes hold is a kind of "institutionalized oppositional culture," a reaction to a history of prejudice and discrimination that makes meaningful participation in social and civic institutions problematic, if not impossible.[6] Despite their hopes and dreams, many young people find their aspirations overwhelmed by these negative messages.

Young people desperately need to hear a different message. They need to hear that they were created with purpose, that success remains a possibility, and that they have the power to live with dignity, meaning, and hope. They need to hear that yesterday's mistakes do not have to define tomorrow's opportunities, that there are ways for them to earn money that do not put them at risk of a prison sentence, and that they can experience strength and power without

resorting to violence. Above all, they need to know that it is possible to live a life where they are overcoming their weaknesses, fulfilling their dreams, loving their friends and families, and giving back to their communities. Although they were once defined as the problem, they must come to believe that they can be part of the solution.

Even dedicated youth advocates, justice system stakeholders and social service providers have trouble communicating these messages to young people who are involved in justice systems. The problem is not the *message*; the young person simply has a hard time identifying with the *messenger*. For many young people whose life stories are full of abuse, neglect and punishment, the thought process works like this: "That may work for you. But you have no idea of what it is like to be me or what I face every day. What works in your world just doesn't work in mine." The problem is compounded when the messenger — often a well-meaning counselor, teacher or law enforcement officer — is an obvious beneficiary of race, class and educational privileges that the young person has never experienced.

Credible messengers are frequently able to motivate young people where other professionals have tried and failed. They are often the first people that young people turn to when circumstances seems too strange or difficult and are the people capable of conveying that change is indeed necessary and possible. Being credible allows the young person to better hear the mentor's message. Young people are provided with the motivation, support and accountability they need to take ownership of their lives.

Creating A Positive Social Environment

REPEATED INTERVENTIONS ARE often needed to help young adults give up criminal activity and strengthen their attachment to education, employment and community. Research shows that young people involved in the justice system require ongoing positive community-based supports in order to desist from crime and to thrive.[7] Few programs today aim to create safe and welcoming spaces for young people disconnected from school and work. These youth do not feel comfortable in many neighborhood programs. Individualized services, even when they are culturally competent and strengths-based, still fail to provide the sense of community and belonging that young people need. Group-based credible messenger mentoring fills that gap.

Transforming attitudes and behaviors is not easy. Daily practice and reinforcement are necessary in order for people to put their best feet forward and continue doing the next right thing. A community of mutual support helps young people break the patterns of behavior — personal, familial and cultural — that hold them back and helps to replace them with alternative practices and relationships. The mentoring process encourages the mentees and the mentors to form and maintain healthy relationships. It is the combination of knowledge and fellowship that holds transformative power. Through group-based credible messenger mentoring, young people learn, many for the first time, how to stay in control of their thinking and actions. They experience the power of a supportive community and learn to form networks that buttress their own sense of worth and of hope.

Strengthening Mentors and Communities

CREDIBLE MESSENGER MENTORS are not volunteers. They are paid professionals who receive salaries, benefits and training to enhance their professional development. Through mentoring, credible messengers experience a deepening of their own commitment to transformation and growth, personally and professionally. The training mentors receive —in facilitation, cognitive behavioral therapy, positive youth development, restorative practice and more — is foundational and applicable to various career paths. Many participants in the Arches Transformative Mentoring program have gone on to full-time employment in the social service sector. As one mentor noted, "Becoming a mentor is a learning experience. You learn to grow within yourself as you are encouraging others to grow."[8]

Many youth justice interventions never really take root in high crime neighborhoods because they are carried out largely by staff at institutions external to the communities they serve. Hiring credible messengers living in the same neighborhoods creates the potential for ongoing contact and continuous reinforcement. Mentors serve as brokers to connect young people to pro-social activities, community-minded adults, and informal community supports such as neighborhood associations, faith-based organizations and civic groups. In these settings, community leaders are not just telling young people to stop doing wrong but are developing authentic relationships that provide actual opportunities to do right.

Beyond simply a social service intervention, credible messenger mentoring is good public policy. It addresses the crisis of mass incarceration, especially as it affects low-income communities of color. And used wisely, it strengthens the capacity of communities to rebuild the positive support networks that have been weakened by economic decay and hyper-punitive criminal justice policies.

Transforming Agency Culture

CREDIBLE MESSENGER MENTORING humanizes clients for front-line and managerial staff at government and social service agencies. As agency staff have increasing occasion to interact positively with young people and their mentors, their own capacity for empathy and respect deepens. They come to view the people they are charged to serve and supervise through a strengths-based lens, which has the potential to change the culture of an agency.

Moreover, group-based credible messenger mentoring models provide an antidote to the burnout that is all too common in the social service sector. Confronted by the multiple risk factors in the young people they serve, an individual professional can quickly become overwhelmed by needs ranging from housing, education, and employment to mental health, family crises and substance abuse.

In a group mentoring model, mentors are not expected to "fix" young people, nor are they tasked with meeting every need. Instead, credible messenger mentors create a group framework in which mentees are empowered to find their own solutions. Credible messengers share strategies they have used to overcome similar challenges and encourage youth to stay on the path to transformation. Peers support one another. When the issues facing individual youth seem daunting, purposeful case conferencing among mentors generates practical responses that are collectively decided upon. The more credible messengers work as a team, the less prone they are to burnout. As they consider issues in a group setting, the group itself becomes the engine of support, guidance, and transformation.

Putting Justice Reinvestment Into Practice

AT ITS CORE, credible messenger mentoring is a justice reinvestment strategy. Hiring credible messengers as mentors directs financial resources to the neighborhoods harmed by incarceration and economic devastation. Many justice reinvestment strategies merely recycle money around different law enforcement entities, moving monies from state prisons to county jails or from correction officers to probation officers. At best, justice reinvestment reroutes monies formerly spent on incarceration to deliver social services in highly impacted communities. Rarely does it help remedy the very deficits that cycle people through the justice system. Credible messenger mentoring puts resources directly into the pockets of those most impacted by incarceration.

The Roots of a Transformative idea

THE CONCEPT OF the credible messenger is not new. There are multiple examples demonstrating the power of deploying an individual who has overcome similar challenges to serve as a mentor to one who is currently going through the same struggle. The Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) movement was built on peer-to-peer support among recovering alcoholics.[9] The Veterans Administration recognized the power of using wounded veterans as outreach and peer support for returning soldiers suffering from life-changing injuries.[10] The mental health and substance abuse fields have increasingly made use of peer navigators to assist individuals in their recovery from addiction and behavioral health challenges.[11] In all these instances, assistance from survivors with shared experience is recognized as a valuable service and has grown from its origins as volunteer-based and informal to include professionalized, credentialed positions such as Certified Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC) and Behavioral Health Peer Navigator.

Similarly, formerly incarcerated community members have mentored young people for decades. The term "OG" for "Original Gangster" is commonly applied to neighborhood elders. Mostly men, some of these OG's experienced a spiritual or religious transformation while incarcerated and emerged from prison with an evangelist's zeal to save others. Malcolm X, who in his autobiography describes this prison awakening, is perhaps the most famous example. Others, like former Black Panther Eddie Ellis were already politically active prior to incarceration and dedicated their time in prison to teaching and mentoring fellow prisoners. While incarcerated in New York State's Green Haven prison in the 1980's, Ellis even used the term "credible messenger" to forecast a movement of formerly incarcerated individuals returning to their neighborhoods to reach a generation of young people whose elders had been lost to incarceration.

Yet while other peer support movements have been embraced for decades, the concept of using formerly incarcerated community members to support their peers has been slower to catch on. When it comes to the mass incarceration of black and brown men, the stigma and the social distance created by race, class, and criminalization may have made it harder for traditional social services to recognize the value of hiring formerly incarcerated people. Criminologists used to warn of the danger of socializing between people with criminal backgrounds. As a result, many parole and probation departments explicitly prohibit formerly incarcerated men and women from contact with their peers. Traditional mentoring models also tend to screen out applicants with a criminal record. And while there is ample academic research on the power of peer support in other fields, there is a dearth of academic literature on credible messenger mentoring as a criminal or juvenile justice intervention.

Nonetheless, a community movement to connect credible messengers to young people began in the 1990s. In the midst of the crack epidemic and the ensuing crack-down on crime, grassroots faith and neighborhood leaders — including many who had formerly been incarcerated or gang-involved — worked to engage young people the systems could not reach. In the mid to late 1990s, groups such as the Mentoring Center in Oakland, California, the Alliance of Concerned Men in Washington D.C., Friends of Island Academy in New York City, and the Ten Point Coalition in Boston, Massachusetts mobilized credible messengers to engage young people at highest risk for crime, violence, and incarceration. Most of these movements — community-driven and volunteer — existed under the radar of government, philanthropy and academia. Over the last 15 years, however, several formal evaluations have brought the power of credible messenger mentoring into the national spotlight.

In 1998, Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), with support from the Ford Foundation and the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), launched the National Faith-Based Initiative for High Risk Youth as a research demonstration. Based on the work of Reverend Eugene Rivers and the Boston Ten Point Coalition, the Initiative mobilized congregations in high-crime neighborhoods to engage and mentor system-involved youth. Faith leaders who had once been gang-involved played a central role in deterring youth from crime and violence. During the Initiative, juvenile violent crime rates continued to fall around the nation. While research on the Initiative did not measure recidivism rates, it clearly showed that grassroots faith and neighborhood organizations were effective at engaging young

people who had previously been deemed unreachable.

In 2005, P/PV, this time with support from the U.S. Departments of Labor and Justice and the Annie E. Casey and Ford foundations, invested in a national employment-focused prisoner re-entry initiative called "Ready 4 Work."[12] The project operated in 17 sites around the country, six of which served juveniles, and provided mentoring and workforce development programming to people returning to the community after incarceration. The research showed that the recidivism rates for Ready 4 Work participants were lower than Bureau of Justice Statistics baselines.[13]

Several of the organizations in the Ready 4 Work demonstration, such as Exodus Transitional Community in New York, were already hiring formerly incarcerated men and women to mentor those recently released from prison. Other sites chose to recruit formerly incarcerated individuals to help participants navigate challenges unique to returning prisoners. The research found that mentors who had been incarcerated were in a better position to support their court-involved mentees.[14] It also found that participants who engaged with mentors were almost twice as likely to find jobs and 56 percent more likely to remain employed compared to those who did not have a mentor.

Several other programs that emphasize relationships between credible messengers and system-involved youth have completed or are undergoing evaluation.[15] Roca, Inc., a Boston-based youth-serving organization, has developed a model targeting high-risk youth that seeks to keep them out of the justice system and move them into employment. While Roca identifies relentless outreach, programming, and engaged institutions as key components, it points to relationships as the primary vehicle for change:

> *"The underlying theory behind the High Risk Youth Intervention Model is that people change in relationships — that change comes about within the context of mutuality, shared experience, and a sense of responsibility not only to oneself but to another. Roca engages young people in relationships for the purpose of change. These relationships are called transformational relationships."*[16]

Roca is currently two years into a five-year Pay for Success Initiative using social innovation bonds to serve approximately 1,000 high-risk young men in Boston, Springfield, and surrounding communities.[17] The evaluation will measure reduction in future incarceration with a randomized controlled trial evaluation and has a target of a 45 percent reduction in recidivism for program participants. In the second year of the initiative, Roca reports that out of 659 high-risk young men served, 84 percent were still actively engaged in the program. Of those retained in the program for 24 months or longer, 98 percent had no new incarcerations, 93 percent had no new arrests, 88 percent had no new technical violations of probation or parole, and 92 percent retained employment for at least 90 days.[18]

Community Connections for Youth (CCFY) is a South Bronx-based organization that has built its approach around mentors who are credible messengers. In 2010, CCFY launched a research demonstration project that contracted faith and neighborhood organizations staffed by credible messengers to serve youth who had been arrested as a diversion from court involvement. After a three-year evaluation by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, the data showed that youth served by the Initiative were 33 percent less likely to have been re-arrested than their counterparts in a balanced comparison group.[19] Furthermore, the evaluation showed that youth remained engaged in relationships and programming with community organizations well beyond the duration of their mandated time in the program. The researchers identified the strength of relationships with local neighborhood residents, many of whom were formerly system-involved, as a key strength of the initiative.

Youth Advocate Programs (YAP), Inc. is a national youth-serving organization that matches young people in the juvenile justice system with advocates/mentors as an alternative to incarceration. YAP hires individuals from the same neighborhoods as the youth they serve, many of whom are formerly system-involved. A 2014 evaluation of the YAP program by John Jay found that 86 percent of youth referred to YAP remained free of arrest, and 93 percent remained in the community at the time of their discharge from YAP.[20] Furthermore, youth who participated in YAP were more likely to remain in the community and less likely to go into secure placement in the year following their discharge from the program, especially if they remained in YAP for more than 120 days.[21] In 2012, the NYC Department of Probation launched a mentoring initiative based on the YAP model called AIM (Advocate, Intervene, Mentor) and required that contracted agencies hire mentors/advocates who would be "credible messengers" for youth in their communities.[22]

Through the first decade of the new millennium, several cities embraced the practice of mobilizing credible messengers — mainly formerly incarcerated gang members — as "violence interrupters" to prevent retaliatory violence as part of a public health approach to gun violence. The model, known both as "CURE Violence" and "Ceasefire," has been evaluated in several cities including Baltimore, Chicago, and New York City and has demonstrated statistically significant reductions in violence. In Baltimore, a U.S. Center for Disease Control and Johns Hopkins University evaluation showed statistically significant reductions of killings (up to 56 percent) and shootings (up to 44 percent) in all four program sites.[23] In Chicago, a U.S. National Institute of Justice and Northwestern University evaluation found statistically significant results across seven communities, reductions in shootings and killings of 41 percent and 73 percent, reductions in shooting hot spots of up to 40 percent, and the elimination of retaliation killings in five of eight communities.[24] In New York City, an evaluation by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Center of Court Innovation showed that CURE Violence sites showed a 20 percent reduction in shootings in the target communities as compared to control group. A qualitative evaluation by the University of Chicago reported that neighborhood residents (both clients and non-clients) de-

scribed Ceasefire as a "credible community asset primarily due to the staff's cultural capital of a similar life experience as high-risk residents (i.e. "They lived the life I live") and strong familial and community social connections."[25]

CURE Violence and other Ceasefire models began as street outreach and crisis response interventions without a formal mentoring component. However, in recent years, the need of young people for authentic relationships and a positive peer culture has resulted in the creation of more structured and formal mentoring component. In 2007, the Office of Neighborhood Safety was created in Richmond, California to address gun violence. A mentoring component called Operation Peacemaker Fellowship was added to the Ceasefire strategy to provide intensive credible messenger mentoring for gang members who had already been arrested on gun charges. A 2015 evaluation demonstrated dramatic reductions in shootings and homicides for Richmond as a whole, and reduced recidivism and improved life outcomes for the gang members who participated.[26]

Where does credible messenger mentoring live in the academic discourse on youth justice? The studies cited above evaluate specific programs and have not been brought together under an intellectual framework of credible messenger mentoring. Part of the reason for the absence of scholarly research may be that youth justice research has traditionally been grounded within the field of criminology. As Laub and Sampson point out, criminology has been historically focused on why some people *start* offending.[27] Present-day youth justice interventions are more focused on the risk factors that contribute to *persistent* offending and strategies to address the criminogenic needs of high-risk youth.[28]

In recent years, scholars and practitioners have sought to push the discussion of youth justice interventions beyond its criminological origins. A growing number are questioning whether excessive focus on punishment and treatment eclipses a broader understanding of adolescent development and protective factors. Young people in the justice system, they argue, need authentic relational support from pro-social adults and peers as well as opportunities to participate in healthy community. They advocate for a positive youth development framework to inform juvenile justice interventions.[29]

Much of this framing can be found in the seminal work: "Positive Youth Justice: Framing Justice Interventions Using the Concepts of Positive Youth Development"[30] In this article, the authors theorize on how the core concepts of positive youth development can be applied towards youth in the juvenile justice system:

> *All justice-involved youth, even those who require some of these specialized treatments, need basic supports and opportunities if they are to avoid future criminality and learn to lead positive, productive adult lives. Where should justice authorities turn to design such interventions? We suggest that PYD could be an effective framework for designing general interventions for young offenders. A positive youth development framework would encourage youth justice systems to focus on protective factors as well as risk factors, strengths as well as problems, and broader efforts to facilitate successful transitions to adulthood for justice-involved youth.*[31]

The authors draw from Social Learning Theory[32] and Social Control (Attachment) Theory[33] to argue that just as youth learn delinquent behavior from anti-social peers, they learn pro-social behavior from positive peer groups. Forming social bonds with positive community members can also help deter delinquent youth from antisocial behavior.

In other words, youth are less attracted to criminal behavior when they are involved with others, learning useful skills, being rewarded for using those skills, enjoying strong relationships and forming attachments, and earning the respect of their communities. As these social bonds become internal, they build social control, which deters individuals from committing unlawful acts.[34]

The positive youth justice framework argues that isolating and controlling delinquent youth is counterproductive. Instead, youth justice interventions should seek to deepen their attachments to pro-social adults, peers, and community members, in settings where they can meaningfully contribute to community development and gain skills that prepare them for adulthood. Credible messenger mentors are precisely those pro-social peers and adults with whom the young participants can relate and trust.

What We Have Learned

A POSITIVE YOUTH JUSTICE framework may be the starting point to develop a theoretical basis for credible messenger mentoring. We hope this paper will inspire scholarly interest for this important work. With credible messenger mentoring programs growing across the country, we thought it not too early to take note of what we have learned and to take a closer look in particular at the key elements of the Arches Transformative Mentoring model.

Credible Messenger Mentoring Works

YOUNG PEOPLE CAUGHT by the gravitational pull of the streets repeatedly attest that the experience represents their first connection to a positive force in their lives. In the Arches transformative mentoring program many young people stay engaged long after the stipend has ended and they have completed the program. Participants repeatedly ask for more, not only for themselves but for their family and friends who are not on probation and hence ineligible for the Department of Probation program. Once young people have been mentored by credible messengers, many express an overwhelming desire is to give back and mentor others. This has a multiplier effect. It grows the mentors as well as the youth.

Credible messenger mentoring unlocks a process by which young people in the justice system are not only deterred from crime and anti-social behavior, but develop into positive community-builders in relationship with respected pro-social peers and adults. Young people are encouraged and supported as they extract themselves from

harmful lifestyles and give back to their communities in ways that build the next generation of leadership.

Building Pathways Takes Time

PROVIDING GUIDANCE AND support for young people as they transform their lives and become engaged in education, employment and community takes time, often many years. We must design and fund programs with ladders of opportunity and without end dates so that young people, once they engage, have built-in pathways to grow within an organization. Supportive employment is one of the best ways to help grow young people. And employers are more likely to hire a young person if that person has the support of a mentor.

Mentoring Creates Job Opportunities

YOUNG ADULTS WHO have experienced the transformative power of credible messenger mentoring express an overwhelming desire to learn to mentor others. While these young people need additional training and support to become peer-mentors in their own right, above all, they need immediate opportunities for positive engagement, service and employment. As Saj Rahman, founding director of the Arches Alumni Academy for Advancement, notes, "I can bring a young person to personal transformation, but without employment opportunities, I cannot keep him there."

Peer-mentoring is a perfect next step. Young people, once supported, are hungry to give back and help others. Their strengths as credible messengers are readily accessible to them. They are able to employ their prime assets in service to others. And the mentor training they receive is foundational. It helps them grow and develop professionally with tools that can be employed in any future career. Hiring young people as credible messenger mentors helps the youth being mentored and it also helps the mentors maintain and deepen their commitment to personal and professional growth and development.

The Arches Alumni Academy for Advancement (4As) is one vehicle to train and employ young people as peer mentors. Funding has allowed the 4As to add another step in the employment ladder, placing young people who have worked as 4As peer-mentors as Youth Fellows in social services agencies. More opportunities are needed.

Employment Barriers Remain

ONE OF THE MAJOR challenges to implementing credible messenger mentoring for youth in the justice system is the prevalence of policies that prohibit the employment of persons with felony convictions. Sometimes these barriers reflect the policy efforts of individual youth-serving agencies to screen out persons with criminal convictions as part of their child protection policy. Often the barriers are structural. Government contracting guidelines and insurers can explicitly prohibit the hiring of individuals with criminal convictions. These barriers grow out of an overly broad definition of who presents a risk to children. Certainly, screening out sexual predators and person convicted of crimes against children is essential. Yet many phenomenal credible messengers have served time, paid their debt to society and are genuinely transformed. Barring these individuals from working with young people who are about to make or are making the same mistakes is perhaps a greater risk, since these credible messengers may be the only ones to whom these young people will listen.

The employment of persons with felonies as credible messengers presents an even deeper philosophical challenge to some. Peer mentors have been employed in substance abuse treatment and mental health services because social service providers recognize that "cultural insiders" often have a superior ability to reach difficult-to-engage populations. In the context of the justice system, "tough on crime" philosophies and practices have influenced some justice system professionals in the opposite direction. They view anyone with a criminal conviction through a lens that casts them as a permanent threat to public safety. This "good" vs. "bad" or "us vs. them" paradigm prevents some justice system professionals from seeing formerly incarcerated individuals as a valuable resource for working with youth.

In an effort to both change the culture and facilitate the hiring of people with criminal histories, New York City has passed legislation and implemented "ban-the-box" strategies that prohibit government and private employers from asking about a person's criminal conviction until a formal offer of employment has been made. But there remains much work to be done to eliminate structural and philosophical barriers to employment.

The Risks are Manageable

THERE IS A LEVEL of risk inherent in credible messenger mentoring, as the individuals most qualified to reach young people have already experienced the same pressures and temptations that young people face. Mentors who are struggling financially may face temptations to earn money illegally. Mentors who live in the neighborhoods where they once engaged in violence and illegal activity may find themselves challenged by old rivals who do not believe their transformation is genuine. Mentors may face harassment from police, parole or probation officers who also do not believe they have changed their ways. For some, the experience of being incarcerated leaves lasting trauma that can affect relationships with supervisors and co-workers and can make people hypersensitive to criticism or suspicious of authority. For others, a deficit in formal education and employment leaves them underdeveloped in understanding workplace culture and professional relationships.

All of these factors can make hiring credible messengers seem like an "unsafe" decision for traditional employers, and the more risk-averse would rather not deal with these dynamics. Instances of credible messenger mentors reverting to past criminal behavior (or never having truly abandoned a criminal lifestyle) are few and far between. We see less than stellar behavior in all professions. While it does happen, we must ask: What risk is greater — the

risk of employing a highly effective mentor who has some rough edges and may relapse or the risk of operating programs that are ineffective when it comes to engaging the highest-risk youth because they refuse to hire the most effective mentors?

Thankfully there are best practices that help mitigate the risk of hiring people with criminal backgrounds.

Careful Hiring is Essential

HIRING CREDIBLE MESSENGERS as mentors is best done through a screening process that draws heavily on community validation. References and recommendations from community leaders, clergy, neighborhood residents, young people and others who can testify to the individual's transformation and current integrity should weigh more heavily than the individual's past criminal record or their education and employment history. Some programs check with local law enforcement to determine whether the applicant is suspected to still be involved with criminal activity. Often, the best people to screen aspiring mentors are credible messengers themselves. They often have the ability to discern who is authentically committed to the work. Credible messengers also have a strong vested interest in ensuring the integrity of the work and will not vouch for individuals who have not demonstrated authenticity. The point here is that the work of hiring credible messengers goes beyond the job of a human resources manager and must extend into the community.

Professional Training Hones Skills

INVESTING IN THE ongoing training and professional development of mentors is a central component of credible messenger mentoring models. Many social services agencies hire individuals who are already educated, trained and certified via professional degrees and social service experience and then try to help them become culturally competent to serve youth who are high-risk and system-involved. Credible messenger mentoring takes a different approach. Credible messenger mentoring hires community insiders who are already culturally competent, and then trains them to make sure they have the necessary skills in critical areas of youth development, group facilitation and mentoring. These two paradigms need not be in opposition to one another. It would be a mistake to simply discard all clinical staff and replace them entirely with credible messengers. Yet it is just as much a mistake to think that clinical staff can do the job of credible messenger mentors. The best credible messenger mentoring models include healthy and respectful collaboration between clinical staff and mentors where both parties value what the other brings to the table.

Because credible messengers have not necessarily had the benefit of uninterrupted education and structured professional development, on-the-job training is essential. It is important that credible messengers have access to ongoing personal and professional development to sharpen their skills, promote growth and accountability, and ensure fidelity to best practices in the field. It also helps build organizational and community capacity in the targeted neighborhoods that serve justice-involved young adults.

One important reason to invest in professional development for credible messengers is the multiplication effect that it has on the field as a whole. When done right, credible messenger mentoring produces not only mentees who move from antisocial to pro-social lifestyles, but who also develop a strong inclination towards paying forward what they received. The "Each One Teach One" philosophy embedded in credible messenger mentoring produces mentees who aspire to become mentors, and already have experiential knowledge of what it means to walk with someone through the journey of mental, spiritual and emotional transformation. Mentees quickly develop a strong desire to mentor other youth and younger peers to support them in facing some of the same struggles they have faced. However, these mentees are equally in need of training and professional development, perhaps even more because of their youth. Investing in the professional development of employed and aspiring credible messenger mentors — and providing avenues for paid employment — elevates the work from a mere social service model to a movement for community transformation. The new Institute for Transformative Mentoring at the New School in New York City is an effort to offer structured professional development to credible messengers employed in the social service sector.

Thoughtful Supervision Leads to Success

REGULAR, STRUCTURED, THOUGHTFUL supervision is a must for any social service personnel, and credible messenger mentors are no different. This is not to suggest that credible messengers need heavier supervision or closer monitoring, but rather that the practice of paying attention to the work, assessing strengths and weaknesses, working with each individual on areas of professional development and developing strong supportive relationships between mentors and supervisors is essential for success. One credible messenger mentoring program has each employee, starting with the supervisor, regularly share their self-assessment with their team and receive feedback. This practice ensures that all mentors are continually engaged in the process of growth, change, and self-awareness.

In addition to formal supervision, credible messengers benefit greatly from coaching from a trusted and respected advisor. The best credible messenger mentor programs often have a credible messenger who is considered an "elder" by his or her peers. This individual, while not necessarily endowed with positional authority, has the moral and spiritual gravitas to hold other mentors accountable, correct them when they are wrong, guide them through challenging situations and help them deal with personal challenges that may influence their work. Credible messengers can have access to an elder, a coach, or a mentor of their own to work through these challenges.

One of the best practices for credible messenger mentoring is to conduct most, if not all, programmatic and

management practices in a group setting where mentors are coached, guided, encouraged and corrected as part of a team-based culture where there is shared accountability and support. The team-based approach to supervision, planning, self-assessment, and conflict resolution is often superior to an individualized approach.

Conclusion

TRANSFORMATIVE MENTORING USING credible messengers as paid mentors is a movement with potential to transform people, communities, nonprofit organizations and government agencies. It is justice reinvestment in practice. Credible messenger mentoring has great potential to reverse the damage wrought by decades of investment in punitive criminal justice policies and disinvestment in positive community resources. The opportunities for its replication and expansion are tremendous. Open questions to consider as the movement expands include the engagement of families and the development of peer mentoring. The efficacy of various curricula, including cognitive behavioral, restorative, trauma-informed and social justice leadership, remains to be explored. As evidenced by My Brother's Keeper, society is exploring ways to invest in young men of color, especially those impacted by crime. This model meets young adults where they are and allows them to capitalize and transform what might be perceived as weakness — justice-involvement — into strength.

An Example of Credible Messenger Mentoring in New York City: Arches Transformative Mentoring

Arches Transformative Mentoring was designed to serve young people whose needs go far beyond traditional mentoring. Companionship, confidence-building and typical academic, social and career guidance are simply not enough to help young adults end involvement with the criminal justice system. At the onset of the program, nineteen not-for-profit organizations across New York City received contracts to deliver Arches in targeted neighborhoods.

The Arches model draws on principles of effective mentoring programs. It includes (1) group meetings that encourage participants to become an important support system for each other; (2) a curriculum based on cognitive behavioral principles; (3) delivered by paid credible messengers who are available for mentoring, support, advice, and guidance; (4) a hot meal at every session, shared between mentors and mentees; (5) project coordinators to supervise and case conference with mentors and liaison with contracting agencies; (6) incorporation of positive youth development values, principles and practices; (7) participant stipends; and (8) training and technical assistance for mentors. The focus is on the achievement of relational and developmental outcomes –the ability to seek help in a crisis, get along with others, show up on time, and handle a job interview – that prepare young people to succeed at education, work, and civic participation.

The following sections describe essential components of the Arches Transformative Mentoring model:

Paid Staff and a Group Process

In each Arches Transformative Mentoring group, a team of five mentors, paid a minimum of $15.00 per hour, deliver a cognitive behavioral curriculum to a group of twenty young adults twice a week for at least six months. A hot meal is served at each session, where mentors and participants break bread together. Each session lasts approximately one and a half hours. Participants who complete the six month program can choose to continue with the group for additional sessions. The groups are open and on-going: new participants are able to join existing groups at specified entry points (e.g., the first week of each month).

A key feature of the Arches Transformative Mentoring groups is the creation of a safe space and establishment of behavioral norms that keep all participants feeling safe and respected when they are in the program. The program is designed to retain participants even when they display negative attitudes and behaviors, not to expel or reject them during the intervention period.

In addition to the two weekly group sessions, Arches mentors are available to meet one-on-one with the young adults during the week, usually before and after group sessions. Mentors are also available by phone for support, advice and guidance. Arches project coordinators administer the program, supervise, coach and case conference with the mentors, and communicate with contracting agencies.

A Cognitive Behavioral Curriculum

Cognitive behavioral therapy works to help people solve current problems and change unhelpful thinking and behavior. Arches groups employ the evidence-based cognitive behavioral curriculum, "Interactive Journaling," developed by The Change Companies.[35] The curriculum uses workbooks that provide guided questions for exploring topics such as healthy relationships, handling difficult feelings, good communication, and responsible behavior. The curriculum is age-appropriate, suitable for use by young adult populations and requires only a third grade reading level. It is iterative, so young people can join the groups at any stage in a cycle.

Participant Stipends

Resources are provided to support participating young adults. In addition to hot food and subway fare at each session, a cash stipend of $700.00 is available for each young adult participating in an Arches program. Payments are distributed at pre-determined intervals (e.g.; $150 after one month, $200 after three months and $350 after six months) based on attendance. Program stipends, even in small amounts, can be powerful incentives to participate and to avoid criminal behavior. As one Arches participant put it: "If I know I'm getting that $50 check next week, that's enough to stop me from going out and doing something that I usually do to get money that could get me arrested."

Mentor Professional Development

Training and technical assistance is a key component of the Arches model. Mentors are trained in a variety of areas, including delivery of the cognitive behavioral curriculum; meeting facilitation; positive youth development; motivational interviewing; restorative practice; and gang awareness. Because mentors are often the first point of contact in critical situations, they also receive training in the basics of psychological first aid, mandated reporter obligations, mental health emergencies, and ethics and boundaries in the helping professions.

Organizations delivering Arches are provided assistance on quality control, program implementation and organizational development to ensure success. A learning community comprised of Arches mentors meets regularly in an open forum to share best practices, lessons learned, and implementation challenges that help improve work with youth. Because credible messengers frequently need to continue to work through issues related to their own incarceration and justice-involvement – including recovering from trauma, reintegrating into society, overcoming a felony conviction – mentor support groups have become a valuable part of the model.

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RESEARCH REPORT

Arches Transformative Mentoring Program

An Implementation and Impact Evaluation in New York City

Mathew Lynch *Nan Marie Astone* *Juan Collazos* *Micaela Lipman*
Sino Esthappan
February 2018

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The Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity (NYC Opportunity) fights the cycle of poverty in New York City through innovative programs that build human capital and improve financial security. Launched by the Office of the Mayor in 2006, NYC Opportunity works with both City agencies and the federal government to implement successful anti-poverty initiatives in New York and partner cities across the United States. Among NYC Opportunity's greatest successes have been the creation of the Office of Financial Empowerment, SaveUSA, CUNY ASAP, Jobs-Plus, and a more accurate measure of poverty. Several of NYC Opportunity's initiatives have been incorporated into the Young Men's Initiative, a comprehensive and expansive program designed to address disparities between young African-American and Latino men and their peers.

Contents

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NYC Opportunity Response to Urban Institute Evaluation of Arches Transformative Mentoring

February 2018

The Arches Transformative Mentoring program (Arches) advances New York City's commitment to maintain public safety through community-based programming that supports personal development as a mechanism to avoid future criminal activity. Through a combination of credible messenger mentoring and an evidence-based curriculum, *Arches reduces one-year felony reconviction by over two-thirds and reduces two-year felony reconviction by over half*. These findings demonstrate the promise of combining an evidence-based curriculum and credible messenger mentoring to achieve recidivism reduction.

This evaluation report reflects the findings of a qualitative and impact evaluation of Arches, a group mentoring program serving young adult probation clients ages 16 to 24. Arches uses an evidence-based interactive journaling curriculum centered on cognitive behavioral principles, delivered by mentors with backgrounds similar to those of their mentees, known as "credible messengers," direct service professionals with backgrounds similar to the populations they serve, often including prior criminal justice system involvement. Launched in 2012 as part of the NYC Young Men's Initiative (YMI) and with private funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies and oversight from the Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity (NYC Opportunity), Arches is managed by the NYC Department of Probation (DOP) and currently operates with City funding at 13 sites across the five boroughs.

The evaluation was conducted using a matched comparison group to assess the impact of Arches on participant outcomes, including recidivism reduction; to explore participant and staff experiences in and attitudes toward the program; to identify practices associated with successful programmatic operation and positive outcomes; and to develop recommendations for program enhancement.

The evaluation finds that Arches participants are significantly less likely to be reconvicted of a crime. Relative to their peers, felony reconviction rates among Arches participants are 69 percent lower 12 months after beginning probation and 57 percent lower 24 months after beginning probation. This impact is driven largely by reductions among participants under age 18. The evaluation also indicates the program helps participants achieve improvement in self-perception and relationships with others.

Pre- and post-assessment show gains in key attitudinal and behavioral indicators, including emotion regulation and future orientation. Qualitative findings show that participants report very close and supportive relationships with mentors, attributed to mentors' status as credible messengers, their 24/7 availability for one-on-one mentoring, and a "family atmosphere" within the program.

The report presents several recommendations to enhance the Arches program model and capitalize on its success, including better tailoring the content of the curriculum to reflect the lived experience of the participant population, increasing the frequency and length of programming to support participant engagement, and introducing wraparound and aftercare services. The report highlights the potential for expanded collaboration across Arches providers to improve knowledge sharing and adoption of best practices, as well as enhanced partnerships between Arches providers and other young adult programming to supplement service delivery and grow community awareness of the program. The report also calls for expanded mentor supports, including opportunities for full-time employment and advanced training.

This evaluation confirms that Arches is an impactful program with demonstrated ability to reduce participant recidivism and great promise to produce sustainable attitudinal and behavioral change for justice system-involved young adults. New York City has already formalized its commitment to Arches through the new allocation of City funding to sustain the program following the completion of Bloomberg Philanthropies grant funding. Additionally, as part of the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice has launched the Next STEPS program, a modified version of Arches targeted to serve young adults at risk of justice-system involvement who reside in select high-crime New York City Housing Authority developments.

NYC Opportunity is working with DOP to carefully consider the programmatic recommendations presented in this report and work with providers to determine program improvements. Moreover, the findings from this evaluation will inform NYC Opportunity and YMI work related to the development of new young adult justice programming and policy. Finally, NYC Opportunity will partner with DOP in the broad dissemination of this research to support Arches program replication in other jurisdictions and to advance the implementation of impactful, evidence-based programming for justice system-involved young adults.

Parker Krasney
Assistant Director of Programs and Partnerships

David Berman
Director of Programs and Evaluation

Executive Summary

The Arches Transformative Mentoring program (Arches) is a New York City-based group mentoring intervention that serves young people ages 16 to 24 who are on probation. With funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies, Arches was launched in 2012 as a component of the New York City Young Men's Initiative, a public-private municipal strategy to reduce inequities between young men of color and their white peers in the areas of education, employment, health, and justice. It is part of a larger effort to establish a strong and comprehensive community-based continuum of care for justice-involved young people.

Arches is administered by the New York City Department of Probation (DOP), one of the largest community corrections agencies in the nation. DOP determines whether juveniles are eligible for diversion from prosecution and provides community supervision for some 25,000 adults and juveniles. DOP has implemented several initiatives designed to strengthen communities and improve outcomes for justice-involved young people and their families. The Neighborhood Opportunity Network (NeON) is a citywide network of community-based DOP offices that partner with other agencies, schools, businesses, nonprofits, community- and faith-based organizations, and local residents in the seven neighborhoods of New York City where large concentrations of people on probation reside. At NeONs, people on probation can meet with their probation officers and receive a wide range of services, such as High School Equivalency classes, employment preparation, mentoring, health care, and literacy programs, and participate in arts and sports activities. Many of these programs and resources are also available to other community residents at no cost.

The Arches program model delivers intensive group mentoring sessions using an Interactive Journaling (IJ) curriculum based on cognitive behavioral therapy principles. Arches mentors are "credible messengers," people with backgrounds and characteristics similar to the populations they serve, who develop robust relationships with program participants built upon authentic shared experiences and understanding. Mentors are trained to facilitate group mentoring sessions and are expected to be available for additional one-on-one meetings with mentees, using motivational interviewing in both contexts. Participants typically take 6–12 months to complete the program, which consists of 48 group sessions and four IJ course books. Arches is based on the idea that credible messengers are best positioned to engage the young people who are hardest to reach.

From November 2015 to June 2017, the Urban Institute (Urban) conducted an implementation and impact evaluation of Arches. The implementation evaluation collected qualitative data from several

sources, including focus groups with Arches participants and alumni; in-depth interviews with program directors, mentors, DOP staff, and various other stakeholders; and direct observation of programming. These data were entered into a qualitative data analysis software package and analyzed to discern important themes.

For the impact evaluation, Urban used a quasi-experimental design to examine rearrests and reconvictions for 279 Arches participants compared with a group of 682 young people who began probation at approximately the same time but who did not participate in Arches. Treatment cases (i.e., Arches participants) were matched to one or more comparison group cases using a technique called propensity score matching, and outcomes are compared in this matched sample.

Results of the implementation evaluation suggest that Arches has several strengths:

- Management of the program by DOP was viewed favorably in stakeholder interviews.
- Stakeholders generally believed that different Arches sites had positive relationships with each other.
- Mentees reported very close relationships with their mentors and appreciated that mentors had backgrounds similar to their own and were available at any time, day or night.
- Program stakeholders reported that the training and technical assistance provided to the mentors was of high quality.
- Individual Arches sites innovated on program components, for example, adding a restorative justice circle approach in addition to the IJ course books.

The results of the impact evaluation indicate that Arches was generally successful:

- Arches participants were less likely to be reconvicted of a crime than members of the comparison group.
    - » In the matched sample, 1.8 percent of participants were reconvicted within 12 months of beginning probation versus 5.9 percent of the comparison group.[1]
    - » Twenty-four months after beginning probation, 6.2 percent of participants had been reconvicted versus 14.3 percent of the matched comparison group.[2]
    - » At both 12 and 24 months, the comparison group had more than double the percentage of felony reconvictions than the Arches group.[3]
- There is evidence that Arches was particularly successful for participants ages 17 and younger.[4]

- At 12 months, the comparison group had significantly higher rates of any arrest and any reconviction.
- At 24 months, the comparison group had significantly higher rates of felony arrest, any reconviction, and felony reconviction.

Both evaluations highlighted the strengths of Arches, but stakeholders also identified several ways to improve the program:

- Interviewees noted that the referral process into Arches was complicated by poor communication with probation officers, whose referrals program sites depend on to achieve adequate enrollment.
- Most interviewees said that a six-month program was not long enough.
- Direct observation of group mentoring sessions suggests that mentors could be more proficient in facilitation. Many interviewees also said the mentor training should be expanded to put more emphasis on developing group facilitation skills.
- Stakeholders identified strengths and limitations of the curriculum, noting that it is designed for the convenience of people in detention settings, not for people on probation whose attendance may be inconsistent. A curriculum that takes into consideration the fluidity of a probation population through an iterative application of session materials may be more effective.
- Although a performance measurement strategy was in place, stakeholders questioned whether that strategy is suited to maximally monitor and improve site-specific performance in the future.

Based on the impact and implementation evaluations, we make the following recommendations to further improve this already successful program:

- Increase focus on mechanisms that support consistent application of services across all sites.
- Incorporate trauma-informed principles and crisis intervention strategies into training modules for mentors.
- Tailor IJ curriculum to align with the real-world experiences, resources, and expectations of participants.
- Support mentors through increased training and opportunities for full-time employment and advanced education.

- Expand program length, alumni engagement, and aftercare services for participants to better address positive youth development outcomes.
- Create additional opportunities to collaborate between Arches sites.
- Incorporate site-specific program data into day-to-day decisionmaking and institute new data collection practices to improve group facilitation.
- Increase community engagement and collaboration with local youth-supported organizations.
- Increase funding (e.g., more full-time mentors per site) and operational capacity (e.g., expanded wraparound services).

Introduction

From November 2015 to March 2017, the Urban Institute (Urban) conducted an evaluation of the Arches Transformative Mentoring program (Arches) by request of the Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity's (NYC Opportunity). With funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies, Arches was launched in 2012 as a component of the New York City Young Men's Initiative (YMI). Arches serves youth and young adults ages 16 to 24 who are on probation and seeks to reduce recidivism and increase education and workforce engagement by strengthening their problem-solving and social skills. Together, approximately 7,500 youth and young adults make up nearly one-third of New York City's overall probation population. Arches uses an intensive group mentoring model centered on cognitive behavioral therapy principles and an evidence-based Interactive Journaling (IJ) curriculum, Forward Thinking. Arches mentors are "credible messengers," people with backgrounds and characteristics similar to the populations they serve, who develop robust relationships with program participants built on authentic shared experiences and understanding. Mentors are trained to facilitate group mentoring sessions and are expected to be available for additional one-on-one meetings with mentees, using motivational interviewing in both contexts.

Urban conducted a comprehensive, multimethod implementation and impact evaluation of Arches. Staff and stakeholder interviews, a review of program materials and activities, and youth focus groups informed the implementation evaluation, which identified program strengths, barriers to success, and best practices. The impact evaluation used a rigorous, quasi-experimental design, drawing on NYC Department of Probation (DOP) and New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) data, to answer critical questions about the program's effectiveness.

This report examines the implementation of the Arches program through a sample of 8 of the 18 original program sites across all five boroughs of New York City and presents findings of its impact on youth and young adults on probation.[5] Specifically, this report is meant to provide the reader with (1) an overview of the extant literature on topics related to mentoring, positive youth development, and the role that Arches could fill in this space; (2) an in-depth examination of the implementation of Arches through the eyes of program staff, participants, and stakeholders; (3) impact evaluation findings that assess the effectiveness of Arches in reducing recidivism and other criminal justice outcomes; and (4) recommendations to promote best practices and address barriers to success moving forward.

Review of the Literature

Mentoring can help young people develop social and emotional skills, strengthen their cognitive functions, and work toward positive identity development (Aos et al. 2004; Dubois et al. 2011; Rhodes and DuBois 2008; Rhodes et al. 2006). A meta-analysis of 73 evaluations of mentoring programs found they had positive impacts on behavioral, socioemotional, and academic outcomes (DuBois et al. 2011). Studies consistently find that participation in mentoring programs is associated with better school attendance, increased social competence, lower levels of aggression, improved ability to complete schoolwork, and a greater willingness to participate in college preparatory activities/courses and pursue higher education (Bernier, Larose, and Tarabulsy 2005; Soucy and Larose 2000; Tolan et al. 2008). Strengths-based mentoring in particular, which focuses on identifying and building on someone's strengths rather than their deficits (Resiliency Initiatives 2010), supports youth resiliency and decreases the likelihood of criminal justice involvement, drug and alcohol use, and violence (Grossman and Garry 1997; Hurd, Zimmerman, and Reischl 2011; Matz 2014).

Mentoring may be particularly useful for justice-involved youth, who, when returning to their communities after incarceration, face significant barriers to getting the support they need to avoid subsequent contact with the justice system (Liberman and Fontaine 2015; Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino, and Guckenberg 2013). Youth often return to their communities with a multitude of experiences that may affect their post release success (Mears and Travis 2004). Further, the varied communities they live in play a key role in altering their reentry pathways. Most incarcerated youth come from and return to communities with concentrated disadvantage, with high crime rates and limited opportunities for education and employment (Spencer and Jones-Walker 2004; Sullivan 2004). Some of these youth commit even more crimes after being incarcerated (Mulvey, Schubert, and Chassin), though data on recidivism is inconsistently measured and reported across states (CSG Justice Center 2014).

Evidence shows that mentoring can reduce recidivism for justice-involved youth (Jolliffe and Farrington 2008; Tolan et al. 2008). Jolliffe and Farrington's rapid evidence assessment of 49 studies, 1 of which examined group mentoring, revealed 18 studies that showed small or moderate effects on reoffending.[6] However, results varied significantly depending on the methodological rigor, and high-quality studies did not show significant effects. A 2012 study that identified best practices for serving justice-involved youth based on 13 sites across the country noted that decreases in youth recidivism were attributed to close partnerships between probation officers (POs) and mentors; housing mentoring staff in the court; engaging youth in prosocial relationships, activities, and leadership capacities; and involving a diverse community to demonstrate its commitment to youth (Miller et al.

2012). Mentoring also appears to work better when mentor and mentee meet more frequently and for longer sessions (Jolliffe and Farrington 2008).

Mentoring works best when it occurs simultaneously with other interventions. Methods like IJ have been found to reduce recidivism among adults (Proctor, Hoffman, and Allison 2012).[7] Interactive Journaling, trademarked by The Change Companies, is designed to help people identify the bridge between their substance dependence and criminal activities and enable them to seek treatment of their own accord.[8] The IJ curriculum is rooted in principles such as motivational enhancement therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) that work in tandem to equip participants with the necessary tools to reflect on their choices, identify and accept barriers to their success, and pave a path toward a more rewarding life.

Motivational Enhancement Therapy

Motivational enhancement therapy is a person-centered approach to therapy that focuses on transforming attitudes toward change, particularly for people who engage in and know the implications of self-destructive behaviors but show little desire to change them (Miller et al. 1992). It was first conceived as a treatment intervention in 1993 during a randomized clinical trial of treatment options for people addicted to alcohol and resulted in long-term reductions in alcohol consumption (Miller et al. 1992; Project MATCH Research Group 1997). Rather than guiding participants through recovery, motivational enhancement therapy focuses on using their own motivational strategies toward action. It is rooted in principles of motivational psychology and employs motivational interviewing techniques, a goal-oriented counseling style developed by William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick that involves a holistic assessment of a persons' behaviors and systematic feedback based on the findings (Miller 1983). Motivational enhancement therapy involves engagement, eliciting thoughts about change, and evoking motivation for positive change.

Motivational interviewing was first used in the corrections field in the 1990s by the National Institute of Corrections' Evidence-based Practices Model (Thigpen 2010) and has since been applied in various criminal justice settings to enable positive change for justice-involved people and facilitate recidivism reduction (McMurran 2002; Miller 1999). One study that examined the impact of an offending-focused motivational interviewing intervention in 58 incarcerated males in New Zealand found that people who received motivational interviewing were significantly less likely to be reconvicted (21 percent) and reincarcerated than those who received standard treatment. The

treatment group also had a longer mean length of time for reconviction and reincarceration (Anstiss, Polaschek, and Wilson 2011).

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

A form of psychotherapy, CBT is a short-term, traditional variety of treatments commonly referred to as "talk therapy" (McGuire 1996). Therapists are capable of tailoring CBT interventions to fit individual needs but generally follow a practical approach to treatment that consists of several short, semi-structured, "problem-oriented" conversations with a trained therapist in a confidential setting. The theoretical foundation of CBT is the cognitive model, or the idea that reactions are influenced more by a person's perception of a situation—automatic thoughts—than the situation itself (McGuire 1996). People are taught to identify their own inaccurate or negative thinking and how to challenge and modify those thoughts.[9] CBT encourages recognition of the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Pearson et al. 2002) and, by extension, how to perceive difficult situations with clarity and react more effectively.[10]

Research has consistently confirmed the efficacy of CBT in treating a wide range of psychiatric disorders (Butler et al. 2006). Its focus on problem-solving and stress management can also be beneficial for people without a mental health condition. A breadth of research establishes CBT as an effective strategy to reduce adult and juvenile recidivism, particularly when it includes anger management and interpersonal problem-solving components (Landenberger and Lipsey 2006). One study used a retrospective quasi-experimental design to evaluate the impact of a CBT program on recidivism for 4,101 women released from prison in Minnesota and found the program had a positive effect on rearrest (14 percent less than the comparison group) and reconviction (13 percent less than the comparison group) but no significant effect on new offense incarceration or technical violation revocation (Duwe and Clark 2015). One study examining the effectiveness of CBT-based IJ in jails found that males who used the journal had significantly lower recidivism rates than the comparison group 12 months after release (Proctor, Hoffman, and Allison 2012).

Although IJ has seemingly prompted change in various adult contexts, there is a dearth of research assessing its use with youth on probation. With IJ woven into the fabric of its programmatic approach, Arches presents a unique opportunity to contribute to the research on mentoring interventions broadly and to explore key program characteristics that make mentoring effective for justice-involved youth.

Gaps Remain

Despite the abundance of research supporting mentoring programs for justice-involved youth, the literature has considerable gaps that limit our knowledge and ability to make them more effective. Although studies have looked at impact, they have not looked at the characteristics that make programs most effective for specific groups (Darling et al. 2006; Larson 2006). Given the numerous ways that justice involvement can inhibit a successful transition from youth to adulthood, it is more pressing than ever to examine mentoring programs with empirically sound, rigorous evaluations that identify best practices that can be employed to meet youth's needs.

Background on Arches

In January 2012, DOP, in collaboration with NYC Opportunity, YMI, and the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, released a request for applications seeking qualified, local, community-based organizations to implement Arches. The initiative was branded as a "transformative mentoring intervention" and would target six New York City communities: Bedford Stuyvesant, Brownsville, East New York, Jamaica, Harlem, and the South Bronx. Although this request for applications marked the birth of Arches, various developments helped bring this initiative to life.

Momentum Toward Community-Based Support for Youth Involved in the New York City Justice System

In late 2010, the Dispositional Reform Steering Committee, subsequently known as the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee, was created to plan a locally operated system of care that could better serve young people involved in the New York City justice system.[11] The committee identified three priorities for a more effective juvenile justice system in the city:

1. Promote public safety and reduce recidivism by developing a stronger and more comprehensive continuum of community-based intervention of graduated intensity and varied approaches.
2. Develop a safe and effective continuum of residential services within New York City that works with youth and families to ensure a smooth transition back to the community.
3. Ensure that all youth have access to quality educational services that help them achieve significant academic progress (New York ACS/DOP 2012).

The Young Men's Initiative

Concurrently, and in alignment with these priorities, YMI was launched in August 2011 to help breach the education, health, employment, and justice inequities between young black and Latino men and their white peers. It sought to address these gaps by supporting their professional, educational, and personal goals through multiple comprehensive programs and services designed to improve access to mentoring, education, employment, and civic and community education opportunities. In 2016, Mayor Bill de Blasio increased the city's investment in YMI and expanded its focus to include greater emphasis

on youth in schools while making explicit its geographic priority areas (Astone, Katz, and Gelatt 2014). NYC Opportunity, created in 2006 to develop innovative initiatives to reduce poverty in New York City, is responsible for overseeing the implementation and evaluation of many YMI programs.[12]

The Neighborhood Opportunity Network

In December 2011, DOP launched the Neighborhood Opportunity Network (NeON). NeONs are community-based DOP offices that support medium- and high-risk people on probation based on principles of community justice and justice reinvestment (McGarry, Yaroni, and Addie 2014). NeONs bring POs and resources into the targeted communities to improve and facilitate access to services for people on probation, with the aim of improving their outcomes generally and reducing criminal justice system involvement in particular. Each NeON partners with other city agencies, schools, businesses, nonprofits, community- and faith-based organizations, and local residents in the seven neighborhoods of New York City that have historically faced great socioeconomic challenges and where large concentrations of people on probation reside.

At NeONs, people on probation can meet with their probation officers and receive a wide range of services, such as High School Equivalency classes, employment preparation, mentoring, health care, and literacy programs, and participate in arts and sports activities. Many of these programs and resources are also available to other community residents at no cost. Each NeON also has a stakeholder group that helps make decisions regarding community-facing programs and services.

Implementation of Arches

Urban utilized qualitative evaluation methods to document the implementation of Arches. The evaluation sought to identify best practices associated with successful program operations (as well as challenges that inhibit program performance) and synthesize lessons learned across sites into concrete recommendations that may enhance program success in the future. The following sections outline the purpose and goals of the implementation evaluation and present the study's analytic strategy and descriptions of the implementation research questions, study population, site selection, site visits, and data organization and analysis plan.

Purpose and Goals

To better understand the arc of Arches participation and how it occurs within the milestones of participants' lives, researchers examined a range of participant, staff, and stakeholder experiences. To do so, Urban incorporated staff and stakeholder interviews, youth focus groups, field observations, and a review of program materials to identify program strengths, barriers to success, and best practices.

The primary goals of the implementation evaluation were to answer the following research questions:

1. How is Arches implemented?
2. How is Arches perceived by key stakeholders?
3. What lessons were learned for the future of Arches?

Analytic Strategy

To address the study's three process evaluation research questions, Urban researchers used several qualitative strategies.

Research Question 1: Implementation

To better understand what the Arches model was meant to look like in practice, Urban researchers asked about the primary components of the Arches model as they were originally scoped and how these components were communicated to sites, mentors, and participants. Urban researchers also sought to

better understand the fidelity with which the Arches model was implemented across sites and identify which key components were consistent across sites. Urban qualitatively examined these constructs through the use of participant focus groups, interviews with program stakeholders (e.g., program coordinators, mentors, etc.) from each site in the sample, and observations of group mentoring sessions and use of the IJ curriculum.

Research Question 2: Perceptions

To assess how Arches was experienced by those engaged in the day-to-day application and receipt of program activities, Urban researchers investigated participant and stakeholder perceptions of the program. During stakeholder interviews, researchers asked if their opinions of the Arches program had changed over time, their grounds for deeming the program a success, **and how they defined overall program effectiveness**. Focus groups with program participants asked about their initial perceptions of the program, the social and emotional ways Arches impacted or changed their behaviors, and the influence of program components (e.g., Interactive Journaling, group mentoring, etc.) and program stakeholders (e.g., mentors, POs, etc.) on their decisionmaking.

Research Question 3: Lessons Learned

To examine how Arches could better address participant and stakeholder needs and determine how best to use program resources and assets to achieve positive youth outcomes, Urban probed on the strengths and limitations of the Arches program and solicited suggestions for an ideal program design to address issues facing youth and young adults on probation. Through stakeholder interviews and program participant focus groups, researchers sought to better understand (1) how they define success for the Arches program, (2) the best practices associated with program performance and operations, and (3) the challenges that inhibited successful program outcomes. Finally, researchers also searched for unique and promising practices implemented in different Arches sites that were considered successful.

Study Population

The implementation evaluation focused on the range of stakeholders who play an active role in Arches, including program participants, provider staff, technical assistance and training staff, and overall/cross-site management staff (e.g., DOP, NYC Opportunity, etc.). Participants currently or previously enrolled

in the program who could speak to their personal experiences were a key resource. Since launching in April 2012, Arches has enrolled more than 2,300 New York City youth and young adults; youth serving an adult probation sentence were voluntarily referred to Arches by DOP staff.

Additional populations included Arches mentors and program coordinators who engaged in day-to-day activities with youth participants, as well as a comprehensive range of program stakeholders who could speak to background and macro-level issues with the program—specifically stakeholders from NYC Opportunity, DOP, the technical assistance and training provider Community Connections for Youth (CCFY), and former Arches staff.

Site Selection

At the start of the evaluation, November 2015, Arches was operating in 18 sites across all five boroughs of New York City. This was reduced to 13 sites during the early phases of the evaluation as the program transitioned from its initial funding (provided by Bloomberg Philanthropies as part of YMI) to DOP city tax levy funding. Stakeholder interviews revealed that the primary reason for the reduction was geographic redistribution of sites, as DOP and site-specific data revealed that, in most sites, the average number of participants enrolled on a yearly basis was below the estimated admission capacity. DOP strategically consolidated Arches programming into two NYC boroughs while maintaining access to services for youth.

To better understand the scope of Arches, Urban selected a subset of sites for an in-depth examination of program activities. Specifically, Urban identified a random (stratified) sample of 8 of the original 18 total Arches sites. Sample stratification was based on location (i.e., city borough and whether the site was in a NeON or non-NeON neighborhood.[13] The study population included various adult stakeholders involved in implementing and executing the Arches program, as well as youth[14] (ages 16 and 17) and young adults (ages 18 to 24) currently or previously enrolled in the Arches program at one of the eight sites.

Arches Site Visits

In two-person teams, researchers conducted a series of four in-person visits to each of the eight sites. Site visits occurred over a six-week period in March and April 2016 and consisted of at least two days of

evaluation activities. The research team conducted initial phone interviews with each site's program coordinator to review site visit objectives, schedules, and activities.

Researchers observed program activities and conducted semi-structured staff interviews and focus groups with program participants and alumni. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with Arches stakeholders not connected to specific Arches sites (e.g., DOP, NYC Opportunity, and technical assistance provider staff).

Organization and Analysis of Implementation Data

Urban researchers used several data organization techniques for qualitative data collection and analyses. Verbatim notes were taken during all focus groups and interviews, and most were also audio-recorded to ensure accurate note-taking. Urban obtained active written consent from each interviewee to participate in the study and to be recorded.

For analysis, researchers developed a coding scheme to align with (1) *a priori* constructs used to develop the interview and focus group protocols and (2) general themes gleaned during the interviews and focus groups. Urban used qualitative codes to systematically classify the information obtained from interviews and focus groups to support a rigorous subjective analysis meant to "identify key themes and patterns" (Hsieh and Shannon 2005; Zhang and Wildermuth 2017). Researchers used a topic-based coding process to classify similar themes across responses and to analyze patterns associated with the implementation of Arches across sites. Urban coded all interview and focus group transcripts in NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis software.[15] Researchers assessed coding consistency before coding interview and focus group text.[16] The research team then thoroughly analyzed all qualitative data through text, coding, and word frequency queries in NVivo. Urban synthesized the findings of these analyses to distill key lessons learned and develop recommendations for program improvement.

How Was Arches Implemented in NYC?

The following sections describe how Arches was implemented across the eight program sites in the sample. Specifically, they provide a roadmap of the *expectations* behind the Arches model, as well as the fidelity with which it was implemented *in practice*. Box 1 outlines the Arches program model.

BOX 1

Summary of the Arches Program Model

- Participants are between the ages of 16 to 24, are justice involved, and are currently serving a probation sentence on supervised probation in New York City.
- **Arches' group process** includes 2 one-hour group mentoring sessions per week (48 total over six months). Mentors and program coordinators facilitate a discussion of IJ curriculum and encourage participants to build a support system for each other, fostering a family-like environment that includes mentors and program coordinators.
- The Forward Thinking **Interactive Journaling Curriculum,** designed by The Change Companies, is an evidence-based workbook series that helps justice-involved youth make "positive changes to their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors." Sessions include Individual Change Plan, Responsible Behavior, Relationships and Communication, Family, and Handling Difficult Feelings. The IJ curriculum is based on CBT principles, is delivered by culturally appropriate mentors in group mentoring sessions, and incorporates **positive youth development** principles. In addition to attending 48 mentoring sessions, participants must complete all four journals to graduate.
- Sites employ a staffing structure that includes one full-time **program coordinator** that organizes program activities (e.g., group mentoring sessions, trips, training, etc.), supervises and conducts case conferencing with mentors, and acts as a liaison with DOP. Sites employ three to four **mentors** (one full-time lead mentor and two to three part-time mentors). Mentors are available to participants 24/7 for support, advice, and guidance. Mentors also help facilitate group mentoring sessions, one-on-one mentoring, and referrals to other services.
- Probation officers act as the primary referral source for all Arches participants. Officers provide one-on-one engagement and **case management** to Arches participants, coordinating referrals to additional services such as training, programming, and so on.
- Training and technical assistance is provided to all Arches sites by Community Connections for Youth, a New York City-based nonprofit organization. Training includes mandatory orientation (e.g., group facilitation), and follow-up in-service trainings (e.g., conflict resolution). On-site directed technical assistance and directed feedback to sites through observations of program activities is also provided.
- Participants are provided with up to $800 in **stipends,** distributed via debit card, for attendance and completion of all 48 IJ sessions. Program coordinators send weekly attendance updates to DOP to create accountability and process stipend payments. All sites were also required to provide **group meals** to participants.

This information comes from interviews with Community Connections for Youth, DOP, and Arches program staff. Items in bold are considered the seven core components of Arches.

Urban's implementation **roadmap** includes a description of

- participating organizations;
- program goals;
- the outreach, recruitment, and retention of participants;
- the seven core program components;
- program schedules;
- relationships with DOP; and
- training and technical assistance.

Participating Organizations and Neighborhood Characteristics

Arches sites span the five boroughs of New York City. They are centrally situated in communities, as one DOP stakeholder put it, "[where] people feel safe getting there [and] the atmosphere is a safe space where you don't feel you are going to be rejected." Arches emphasizes neutral locations, where participants feel physically safe when traveling, and organizations known for providing support to community members. Despite some striking differences across sites, there are also common threads that weave together the demographic characteristics of Arches neighborhoods.

Table 1 shows the very different demographic characteristics of the eight neighborhoods Urban visited. The neighborhoods vary in their racial and ethnic makeup: neighborhoods two and four are majority Hispanic, while neighborhoods one, three and seven are majority non-Hispanic black. The others have substantial Hispanic and non-Hispanic black populations, with only one (neighborhood eight) being truly diverse. Evaluation neighborhoods had higher than average unemployment rates but vary in terms of education and income. In neighborhoods six, seven, and eight, residents are more highly educated than in others. More than half the children in neighborhoods one, two, and four live in low-income households, while the median income in neighborhoods three and eight is over $40,000 per year. In sum, the Arches sites Urban visited vary widely in terms of the neighborhoods they serve.

TABLE 1

Arches Neighborhood Characteristics

	Neighborhoods								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	NYC
Race/ethnicity									
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	17.3%	67.0%	22.7%	62.2%	38.6%	49.5%	23.9%	30.0%	28.8%
Non-Hispanic white	1.0%	2.8%	2.3%	1.9%	3.8%	8.3%	8.1%	26.6%	32.7%
Non-Hispanic black	79.7%	28.6%	71.0%	24.4%	19.6%	35.4%	62.0%	35.9%	22.6%
Non-Hispanic other	2.0%	1.7%	4.1%	11.5%	38.1%	6.8%	6.1%	7.5%	15.9%
Education									
High school graduate or higher	73.3%	56.9%	78.2%	60.0%	66.5%	69.0%	78.5%	82.8%	80.1%
Bachelor's degree or higher	10.1%	9.5%	18.1%	10.7%	18.4%	22.6%	29.4%	28.5%	35.0%
Employment									
Age 16 or older in labor force	52.6%	56.5%	64.1%	58.8%	66.2%	51.9%	60.9%	59.5%	63.4%
Age 16 or older in labor force who are unemployed	7.9%	9.9%	10.9%	8.7%	9.6%	6.6%	9.9%	6.9%	6.5%
Income and benefits									
Median household income	$25,252	$22,076	$40,019	$30,338	$40,209	$25,101	$34,123	$44,774	$52,737
Households with SSI	12.8%	20.1%	8.5%	12.0%	8.4%	16.3%	10.5%	8.8%	7.8%
Household with cash public assistance income	8.1%	11.2%	7.0%	9.7%	5.7%	7.9%	6.7%	8.3%	4.2%
Households with SNAP benefits in the past 12 months	42.1%	55.3%	28.2%	42.2%	27.1%	31.3%	27.8%	27.3%	20.4%
Families in poverty	35.6%	38.9%	22.9%	36.0%	21.1%	34.4%	25.3%	23.5%	17.5%
People under age 18 in household in poverty	50.8%	56.7%	33.4%	50.4%	33.5%	48.5%	36.5%	38.4%	29.7%

Source: Data obtained in December 2015 from the NYC Census FactFinder Database.
Notes: NYC = New York City, SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SSI = Supplemental Security Income.

The following sections detail the implementation of Arches program components through the examination of stakeholder interviews, participant focus groups, and program observations. They also provide context on the background of each program component and how site-specific components and role-based insights address each.

Arches Goals and Expectations

There was resounding agreement among stakeholders that reducing justice system involvement is at the core of the Arches program and that positive attitudinal and behavioral changes are necessary to accomplish the program's goals. However, priorities for achieving participant goals varied from site to site and according to the role stakeholders played at each Arches site. Interviews with **administrative stakeholders** (i.e., DOP (including POs), NYC Opportunity, YMI, and CCFY) tended to focus on objectives associated with reducing recidivism. As one administrative stakeholder indicated, "Ultimately, for both [NYC Opportunity] and the funder, recidivism is a key [outcome] measure."

Another administrative stakeholder agreed, indicating that "for almost any program we do in the justice space, *reduction of recidivism* is the primary goal." Administrative stakeholders suggested that reducing recidivism is also important to program staff, but because of nuances across organizations, "their milestones might be [achieved] differently."

BOX 2

Arches Interviews and Focus Groups

- Conducted **program stakeholder** interviews at eight Arches sites.
  - Lead mentors at five sites and mentors at six sites (14 total).
  - Program coordinators at six sites and directors at three sites.
- Conducted **12 administrative stakeholder** interviews.
- Conducted **program participant** focus groups at seven of eight Arches sites.
  - Focus groups ranged from two to seven youth and young adult participants.
  - Alumni were present in two focus groups alongside current participants.

Program (site-specific) stakeholders (e.g., program directors, program coordinator, and mentors) tended to emphasize goals specific to developing positive relationships in the program and in the broader local community. *Program directors* oversee the operations of multiple programs, including Arches, for a community organization. *Program coordinators* oversee Arches program operations and day-to-day scheduling. *Lead mentors* are typically tasked with running group mentoring sessions and

providing support to 3–4 part-time mentors. Program stakeholders also refer Arches participants to additional supportive services during the program and after completion. Indeed, program stakeholders acknowledged that reducing recidivism is a goal of the program but prioritized relationship-specific goals.

Arches sites focus on improving the relationships that program participants have within their networks. Sites work to create family-like environments where participants establish a trusting relationship with their mentors. Mentor relationships are meant to support positive reinforcement and youth development. Program stakeholders emphasized that, in addition to mentors, peers also serve as positive role models for each other.

Across sites, mentors emphasized the need for safe environments that *foster relationship building* and viewed this as the first step to influencing participant behavior. Mentors often described themselves as a bridge between participants and external stakeholders perceived as authority figures (e.g., POs). In addition to providing direct support, mentors also help participants access additional resources and wraparound services, in many cases acting in a case management role. Mentors often make referrals to other New York City programs (consistent with the individual needs of participants) for additional services (e.g., work readiness, housing, individual therapy, etc.), though referrals were inconsistently provided across sites.

Among the goals mentors most frequently suggested for their mentees were positive changes in thinking and behavior, future employment opportunities and services, and positive relationships with others. Participants described how the support of mentors helped them take steps toward achieving personal goals and emphasized that this process reinforces a positive relationship with their mentors.

Arches' goal is to get [participants] focused; [mentors] don't want us to take the same path that they went through. Every time, the conversation is to [put] yourself in a different situation, to change your mindset.
—Program participant

Administrative and program stakeholder goals tend to align with participants' own goals. Focus groups revealed that program participants overwhelmingly view the goal of Arches as keeping youth from "getting into trouble" through "changing the way we think." Youth participants shed light on the

program's ability to address their decisionmaking process through an increased focus on "thinking before action." Across sites, the evaluation found that youth are guided to concentrate on social connections through improved communication skills and humility and by motivating them to function as positive role models for their peers.

Participant Outreach

Recruitment and Referrals to Arches

Arches is administered and overseen by DOP, and participants are enrolled in program services through direct referrals from their probation officers, who they continue to meet with while in the program. Before submitting a program referral, a PO conducts an individual action plan[17] to create milestones for education, work, and community involvement.[18] If the youth is enrolled in Arches, their individual action plan is reinforced through group and individual mentoring program activities. Although POs take various factors into consideration when making a referral, administrative stakeholders noted that the program's mentoring component is particularly appealing.

Interviews with program and administrative stakeholders indicated that the program's recruitment process is influenced by the relationships that POs have with Arches program sites. Specifically, program stakeholders indicated that sites often directly pursued referrals from POs through outings, introductory meetings, and appreciation meals. Sites that built stronger and more consistent relationships with POs tended to receive more referrals.

Administrative stakeholders indicated that a PO's willingness to refer potential participants to an Arches program site may be based on their previous interactions and relationships with the site, the client's readiness, and to a lesser degree, outcomes of participants previously referred to the program. Administrative stakeholders revealed that, in certain cases, POs consider safety issues for the client. An administrative stakeholder highlighted that if, for example, they were aware that current participants at a program site were affiliated with a particular gang, they would not refer a client from a rival gang because it could put people at risk. Participant focus groups also recognized that neighborhood issues such as a gang presence can create safety concerns and may negatively impact a participant's willingness to attend a program site or activity outside of a program's location.

Considering the reliance on PO referrals, the inflow of participants is also highly influenced by the climate in the probation office. Changes to DOP staff and leadership and the rollout of new DOP policies

and practices can affect referrals. As one program stakeholder described, "Because [Arches sites] can only receive mentees through probation, if there is upheaval in the probation office, this can reduce the flow of participants. …[There was] a dip in participants in late 2015 which has only recently abated."

Arches program stakeholders also indicated that although most sites were set up with a participant capacity of 20, intended to yield 40 program completions per year, many have not been able to reach that level of enrollment. Program stakeholders see this as problematic because many young people in their communities need mentoring services. In many cases, however, these young people do not meet the criteria for enrollment because they are not on probation, are too old, or live outside of the program's service area.

Some Arches participants said their friends and family members also have benefited from its services because they invited them to take part—albeit informally—in the program. Some mentors encourage participants to invite their friends. By nature of its design, the program skews heavily male, and some female participants noted that the curriculum—or its application—seems geared more toward male participants. However, at least one participant told us, "Arches has open arms to everybody." Urban did not directly observe the program's cross-site women's group but recognizes a potential gap in services related to the unique issues facing young women on probation.

Lastly, although program attendance and completion is not a mandatory component of participants' probation requirements, one program stakeholder indicated that "some participants experience it as a mandated program." Although POs may have simply suggested Arches to them, some felt mandated to attend.

Retaining Arches Participants

Arches participants must attend 48 sessions to "graduate" from the program. Although this can be accomplished in six months if they attend all sessions in order, it often takes longer. Generally, participants who miss five sessions are dismissed under the current program model, but program staff acknowledged that participants may experience various challenges that force them to miss sessions. In many cases, program staff encourage these participants to continue, with some allowed to reenroll.

TABLE 2

Completion and Attendance Rates of Eight Evaluation Sites

Provider (borough)	Completed program	Dismissed from program	Completed program	Attendance in group sessions
Site 1 (Bronx)	4	7	36.4%	42.0%
Site 2 (Bronx)	7	6	53.8%	36.8%
Site 3 (Bronx)	0	9	0.0%	42.9%
Site 4 (Brooklyn)	7	0	100.0%	38.9%
Site 5 (Manhattan)	9	20	31.0%	30.4%
Site 6 (Manhattan)	13	8	61.9%	48.8%
Site 7 (Staten Island)	3	7	30.0%	26.9%
Site 8 (Queens)	12	11	52.2%	25.6%

Source: Analysis completed by the New York City Department of Probation and reviewed by authors.
Note: Sites 3 and 4 (0 and 100 percent completion rate, respectively) had comparatively small enrollment numbers because of program phasing when examined for the evaluation. Reported enrollment period from January 2013 to December 2014.

Retention varies across sites (see table 2 for completion and attendance rates in evaluation sites), but focus groups and interviews suggest that a consistent factor in retention is the experience participants have with the curriculum. The content of the curriculum is not always appealing to participants, with one saying, "I decided to leave early because I felt like it [program curriculum] was getting boring. It wasn't like anything new." It was suggested that engaging new participants during the early phases of the program, when much of the engagement is structured in the curriculum, is essential to sustaining their participation. Access to program components (e.g., hot meals, stipends, etc.) can provide the necessary foundation for an innovative application of the curriculum to take hold.

I think [program participants] come into the site guarded, skeptical, cynical. But then there is a hot meal, there is a MetroCard, and a stipend. They are going to keep coming back and eventually something is going to click.
—Administrative stakeholder

Other factors that affect participant retention include the time of the year, their relationships with mentors, and their access to additional services. It was suggested that attendance at some Arches sites shrinks during the summer, presumably because there are other activities for youth to engage in.[19] Program participants indicated that more opportunities to travel to off-site activities during the summer

could provide increased incentive to attend and would align with the interests of participants. Participants at various Arches sites said their one-on-one relationships with mentors motivate them to maintain regular attendance. Employment and job readiness programming, often accessed through program site connections and referrals, can also create opportunities for continued participation and engagement.

Arches Program Components

The Arches program model consists of seven core elements (see box 1 on page 12) meant to "achieve developmental outcomes that prepare young people to succeed at education, work, and civic participation."[20] In addition to short-term outcomes focused on behavioral and attitudinal changes, the program targets long-term outcomes related to "education, employment, and self-sufficient living in addition to the cessation of criminal activity."

People familiar with Arches implementation across program sites overwhelmingly considered its welcoming and family-like environment as one of the most important components contributing to successful youth outcomes. In addition to the core components, all sites in the sample offered hot meals to participants and helped them develop positive one-on-one relationships with program staff and their peers.

In the following section, stakeholder interviews, participant focus groups, and program observations shed light on the origin of Arches' *core program components* and how each component was implemented within and across sites. The discussion is focused on *best practices* and *barriers to implementation* to develop recommendations to "lift up" and enhance youth development for Arches participants.

Group Mentoring Process and Organization

Arches was implemented to function as a group mentoring model, in which group process and facilitation are important factors to success. Group mentoring occurs twice a week in open and ongoing groups where, according to the 2012 Arches request for applications, "new participants are able to join existing groups at specified entry points (e.g., first week of each month)."[21] In practice, this seemed to be the ideal method for integrating new participants, although there were instances where participants were added outside of the specified entry points. Generally, group mentoring sets Arches apart from other programs in that the members are "trying to help each other." Group mentoring produces a positive learning environment, and for many, motivation to stay off the streets.

Although it takes time for new participants to feel comfortable opening up to the group, participants and program stakeholders said that the family atmosphere and the mentor-driven focus on group process that emphasizes the safety and support of participants make it easier to engage.

[For Arches to succeed], the mentors must be credible messengers. It must be a safe place, consistently and reliably available, have a no-eject policy (no one can fail or get thrown out in general), a belief that participants can succeed.
—Program stakeholder

To support program stakeholders charged with implementing a positive group experience, mandatory trainings on group facilitation techniques are provided during program orientation. DOP contracts CCFY, to train and provide ongoing technical assistance to Arches mentors, program directors, and program coordinators on IJ curriculum and group facilitation. CCFY also offers periodic in-service trainings on topics such as gang awareness, conflict resolution, and so on. CCFY provides 28 hours of mandatory orientation training: two full days of IJ training and one full day of orientation where trainers provide context on the foundation of Arches. CCFY also conducts observations of program activities and provides feedback on facilitation.

Program stakeholders considered group discussions, which are designed to help identify and trigger critical thinking in youth participants, to be very important. Often, mentors sought to have youth "own the group" while they merely facilitated group discussion and modified it to their needs in real time. However, our group observations showed inconsistent application of principles associated with positive group facilitation and process. Additionally, although initial group facilitation training was widely viewed as successful, mentors and program coordinators indicated a need for continued training that reinforces group facilitation and supports positive group process. The following subsections summarize the team's observations (see box 3) of group process across sites.

BOX 3

Arches Group Mentoring Observations

- Conducted at eight Arches program sites.
- Included 61 total youth and young adult participants.
- Ranged between 5 and 12 participants per site.
- Alumni were included at three of eight sites.
- Included 24 total mentors.

Observing the Group Mentoring Process

SITE-SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

At all eight evaluation sites, group mentoring sessions consisted of a hot meal, a recap of the previous session, icebreakers, an introduction to the current session, activities that included journaling and motivational interview techniques, a recap of the key session takeaways, and an introduction to next week's session. In certain instances, facilitators would deviate from the model without providing introductions or establishing the session's objectives. Urban also observed that certain group facilitators struggled to effectively manage group participation, and others did not provide observations or conclusions that reflected the group's goals. Regardless of inconsistencies in group process, all sessions lasted the allotted time, attempted to cover topics related to IJ curriculum, and transitioned smoothly between activities.

GROUP MENTOR FACILITATION

Arches group facilitation training materials specify that the IJ curriculum should be supplemented by motivational interviewing techniques with an emphasis on open-ended questions, reflective listening, and affirmations. This was further reinforced through CCFY facilitation training courses and materials (e.g., the Keeping It Flowing training worksheet), which specify that the best facilitators "are not those who give the most impressive performance during sessions" but those who can "step back" to foster and manage organic group conversation.

Urban observed that a limited number of mentors used motivational interviewing techniques effectively (e.g., reflective listening, avoiding direct argument, etc.). Some mentors appeared to have

difficulty facilitating "cohesive, organic conversations" between peers, and some focused heavily on personal anecdotes. Urban also observed mentors in nearly half the sites using "but" statements rather than "I" statements. "I" statements are an oft-used technique in CBT and focus on a person's thoughts and feelings and reducing blame, whereas "but" statements tend to minimize responsibility and circumstances expressed previously. Similarly, some mentors spoke for a majority of the allotted time and conducted sessions in a lecture format, neglecting participant engagement techniques.

In other cases, program coordinators and mentors appeared to rely on previous counseling experiences and training to supplement their Arches facilitation training with cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, and aggression replacement therapy techniques. Evaluators inquired into the backgrounds of program coordinators and mentors and found some had prior experience and training in advanced counseling techniques. Although not all mentors could fully replicate these skills, most recognized the need for and benefits of additional training and requested opportunities for peer learning, role-playing, and coaching.

PROGRAM COORDINATOR ENGAGEMENT

Arches training materials do not describe a clear role for program coordinators during group mentoring sessions, but they were often present and engaged with mentors and participants. However, Urban observed little consistency in the roles they fulfilled. In some instances, they provided group facilitation support to mentors. Some were trained as counselors or social workers and sat in on entire group sessions, regularly provided feedback, displayed active listening, set ground rules, and checked in with quieter participants. Others entered the room for short intervals, supplementing the mentors by providing examples and tying the discussion back to the larger Arches curriculum.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Urban observed varying levels of youth participation in the group mentoring sessions. It was common for youth to take a few minutes at the beginning of sessions to settle down, and the use of phones was frequently a distraction despite most groups prohibiting phones. In some sessions, participants often left the room to take phone calls. Some facilitators were able to facilitate engagement by regularly asking for a show of hands, calling on each member to participate, and allowing them to organically explore pertinent topics. The groups varied in how often youth volunteered their participation or stories. Positive participation was often correlated with facilitators who successfully produced effective group process techniques, including group problem-solving, brainstorming, and modeling. Many groups opened with icebreakers to prompt a high level of participant engagement early on. Some facilitators also used humor to diminish side chatter and redirect energy back into a productive conversation.

In groups grounded in effective facilitation techniques, journaling drew a very high level of engagement and participants volunteered to read their answers. These groups often wove IJ materials into the entire group discussion instead of making it a stand-alone activity. However, some youth immediately became disengaged when facilitators directed the session to journaling.

In a focus group that spoke directly to participant engagement, one participant under age 18 mentioned that he would feel more engaged if workshops and group discussions were targeted to younger members. Others agreed broadly that modifications to the curriculum were needed to reflect nuanced issues that young people face in New York City, such as gangs, gender identity, and so on. Interviews with program stakeholders revealed that there is room (and a perceived need from DOP leadership) to expand Arches to include participants as young as 12 years old, lending credence to the need for a curriculum that focuses on younger members.[22]

ALUMNI PARTICIPATION

Urban observed that alumni engagement in current group mentoring sessions varied across sites. Some sites did not include alumni at all, but others actively called on alumni to serve as credible messengers, to provide reflective validation of the program through their own progress, and to encourage current participants. In two sites, mentors directly introduced alumni to share their experiences, which focused discussions on pre- and post-graduation topics. In both instances, participants remained extremely focused on the alumni sharing their stories and asked questions related to their own situations (e.g., what it is like being employed, how the program prepared them for their post-Arches life, etc.). One site completely integrated alumni into the group, embracing a no-discharge policy and treating alumni the same as current participants. However, alumni did not receive all program components, such as stipends. In the groups observed, active integration of alumni provided a positive model for behavior, and this practice could be operationalized formally across all Arches sites.

Interactive Journaling Curriculum

Developed by The Change Companies, IJ is an evidence-based curriculum used to assess a person's "readiness to change" through "strategies that lead an individual successfully through the process of change, action, and maintenance of prosocial behavior" (Proctor, Hoffman, and Allison 2012). IJ is employed by all Arches program sites. Journaling usually occurs once a week and focuses on topics associated with anger management and communication skills. It is an essential component of the Arches

program, and participants are required to complete four journals to graduate.[23] Topics are selected at the beginning of each week by site teams and are based on what is pertinent to the group discussion.

Participants said that mentors who have little to talk about in group sessions rely more heavily on the IJ curriculum, and they viewed mentors who rarely used it more positively. Participants said journal topics can sometimes be repetitive but are nonetheless relatable and conducive to conversation. However, they considered filling out the journals tedious and said it often reminded them of school. Some participants said they would prefer more time discussing journaling topics and less time completing the journals.

Mentors and program coordinators agreed that the IJ curriculum is reminiscent of a school curriculum, making Arches less appealing than it could be. To some, the content itself does not appear to be relevant to the youth it is intended to serve. In some instances, youth could not see themselves in the examples provided and wished the curriculum was more interactive, although this may be a function of group facilitation and not content.

The IJ curriculum [was previously] used in detention centers, so the language is for people in facilities. [It] could be enhanced if it focused on issues young people were dealing with in the community.
—Program stakeholder

Mentors also acknowledged that group facilitation can vary significantly based on the facilitator. In some cases, the IJ course books are used as a guide to tailor discussion; sometimes they are not used at all. One group used local news articles to introduce topics of community engagement, and another discussed current events associated with national politics. In part, this may be the result of skepticism some mentors expressed regarding the effectiveness of following the curriculum very closely. "I don't believe that IJ [is] the connection to these young people," one said. "It takes a person to teach them how to apply these lessons. But they are helpful for outlining important topics or flagging topics." In other cases, sites acknowledged that program participants simply are not fond of IJ and felt compelled to compromise to make the content more appealing.

In a community, to make kids come who had other things to do—hang out with girlfriends, parties, especially in the summertime—you have to make your group appealing. I'd suggest finding a video, article, clip from a movie—something to make it dynamic. If we were going to talk about a subject based on the curriculum, I'd put a video on a SMART Board, and once everyone's talking, we'd pull out the books.
—Program stakeholder

During the implementation evaluation, Urban observed a wide range of fidelity to the program model. Some mentors strayed quite a bit from the curriculum and focused on unrelated topics seemingly inconsistent with the facilitator guides provided with the Forward Thinking workbooks.

One group did not use the journals at all and instead relied on a restorative justice approach. Interviews revealed this to be standard practice. Other groups did not always rely on the journals but used them briefly to guide a conversation or to cite examples. In contrast, one group relied heavily on the journal, encouraging each participant to read their writing aloud and carrying out a role-playing exercise from the course book. As noted previously, journal use resulted in a broad range of engagement. Some youth were very engaged and would sit, writing and reflecting, then volunteering to share with the group.

Mentors

Arches mentors overwhelmingly viewed themselves as agents of change for participants' thinking. Mentors are in charge of building rapport with youth, teaching them how to interact with law enforcement, filling gaps in services to reduce recidivism, and serving as a bridge between participants, POs, and families. Mentors serve as a voice for youth and are available 24/7. A lead mentor is responsible for managing mentorship at each site.

Program participants and stakeholders alike acknowledged the importance of mentors as credible messengers. Program staff and participants described mentors as "being able to relate to youth," often through similar backgrounds and experiences. The definition of a credible messenger varied by site, and recruitment of mentors depended on program leadership beliefs. In some instances, mentors were hired because of their extensive group facilitation and counseling skills and previous experience working with

justice-involved youth. Mentors were often formerly justice involved, from the same neighborhood as participants, and had been engaged in similar services previously.

For some mentors, this is their first job, and various factors motivated them to pursue that role with Arches. Some grew up in the neighborhoods where they work and are familiar with the challenges participants face. Others are not from the neighborhood but are still able relate to youth through their shared experiences. Still others experienced mentoring in prison. Even if mentors had previously not been justice involved, it was important that they could empathize with the experiences of the young people in the program and respond to their needs in a culturally sensitive manner.

[Of the mentors] I hired initially, one had done 10 years [in prison]; another might have sold drugs but never went to jail and instead went to a conversion program. …One of my mentors was a therapist; another was a woman who grew up in foster care. …If a kid came up with an issue, we had our little mod squad address it.
—Program stakeholder

Besides empathy, there are other important factors that make a mentor a credible messenger. Without explicitly using the term, participants described a credible messenger as someone who is trustworthy, honest, caring, and available. Program staff members seemed to agree. Mentors acknowledged the importance of gaining the trust of participants, noting that if they are not comfortable sharing the barriers they face, mentors cannot help them address those barriers. Culturally sensitive mentors with similar backgrounds and experiences as youth have been shown to develop closer relationships (Liang and Rhodes 2007; Liang and West 2007) and achieve positive youth development outcomes (DuBois and Silverthorn 2005).

Often, mentors' connections to the community, through relationships with other community organizations (e.g., work readiness programs) and local businesses (e.g., barber shops, food/clothing pantry, etc.), become essential to tackling the challenges youth face. Relationships in the community provided additional resources for Arches sites, in the form of discounted hot meals, local tickets for outings, and so on, that otherwise would not have been available.

Connecting youth to the resources they need is important, but as a program stakeholder mentioned, "Sometimes, it's just listening that is needed. Being a good listener is part of being a good mentor." This is consistent with the literature on effective mentoring relationships (Jones, Rhine, and Bratton 2002). The need for mentors to provide active listening can arise at odd hours, and the availability of mentors during and outside of work hours was consistently emphasized as a strength of the Arches program, partly because participant engagement is generally unpredictable.

One-on-one mentoring, although not a primary component of Arches, is integrated by sites in several ways. Program stakeholders revealed that mentors engage with youth participants outside of official program activities, including one-on-one meetings to discuss issues not otherwise addressed in group mentoring sessions (e.g., family, additional services, etc.). These sessions help build rapport with program staff, provide additional CBT, and allow for individual attention on goal planning and attainment. One-on-one mentoring sessions were not consistently implemented at each site but were viewed favorably by mentors and participants.

Youth described their mentors in a positive light, emphasizing their belief that their mentors unconditionally care for them, challenge them to think differently, and understand that "changes don't happen overnight." Whatever their driving forces, mentors consistently said they want to make a positive difference in the lives of program participants but need more resources to do so (e.g., full-time mentoring positions with increased pay, increased funding for mentor education, cross-site mentor engagement opportunities, etc.).

Several Arches and DOP stakeholders indicated that mentors are often underpaid for the extensive work they do. Mentors receive an hourly wage during official hours, but their work extends beyond the nine to five schedule. Full- and part-time mentors both work on-call around the clock and participate in and facilitate various youth programming activities. Budget constraints often require part-time mentors to obtain other jobs and can lead to high rates of turnover, which in turn negatively affects youth outcomes. Mentor consistency and the frequency and length of interactions can positively affect youth outcomes (Bruce and Bridgeland 2014; DuBois et al. 2002). This speaks to a broader issue: when mentors face other competing demands that limit their availability, their relationships with youth can be negatively affected.

Program Coordinators

Program coordinators oversee the administrative aspects of Arches. As such, they serve as liaisons with DOP and manage mentors, often discussing program activities, youth participants, and challenges to successful program implementation.

[Program coordinators' roles include] overall administration—supervising mentors, communication with the probation department, all daily operations, assisting young people, writing reports, enrolling clients…managing the group sessions and one-on-one sessions with mentors and mentees, making sure stipend payments were submitted on time.
—Program stakeholder

Program coordinators also help program participants with their résumés and connect them with job opportunities. This is facilitated by their familiarity with the communities they serve, and some may know or have worked with Arches participants before the program's inception. Program coordinators may have had similar upbringings as the youth they serve, positioning them as additional credible messengers. Some program coordinators consider building relationships with everyone in the program to be major component of their job, and this provides a certain comfort level that, in turn, informs how they operate.

Positive Youth Development

Arches uses a positive youth development model (Lerner et al. 2005). Positive youth development is an approach that emphasizes a young person's strengths and sources of resilience rather than focusing on their risks and the prevention of problem behavior. People and organizations that use a positive youth development approach not only seek to capitalize on young people's intrinsic assets but also explicitly seek to develop general skills (such as the five C's: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring) that will serve them well in many domains of life (Bowers et al. 2010). Program participants overwhelmingly agreed that Arches has accomplished some of this positive development and said they are now more social with their friends and family. Observations suggest that Arches sites have "features

of positive development settings" where young people can discover and build on their strengths (Arnold, Nott, and Meinhold 2012).

The program is meant to create a family environment where youth can practice positive prosocial skills to create better lives for themselves, their families, and their communities (Butts, Bazemore, and Meroe 2010). Participants indicated that the program helps them feel empowered to take better control of their emotions. In the words of one participant, "They help you learn certain things you shouldn't do and certain places—like there's a time for everything. The way you carry yourself, it's different." Participants also mentioned that Arches had connected them with employment and education opportunities that align with their strengths. Referrals through program sites tend to depend on the community organization's capacity and connections to partners. Service referrals, however, are not an official part of the program site's responsibilities and instead fall under the case management services of DOP and individual POs.

Program stakeholders said that mentors can use a structured screening tool during the intake process to help identify additional participant needs.[24] Mentors often try to link youth to services in the community that the site cannot provide. The capacity of each community organization housing an Arches program helps determine how much it focuses on "service referrals." Organizations with high capacity (i.e., large staff, additional internal services internally) tend to seek direct referrals independent of DOP staff.

Internal referrals directly from community organizations seem to be most beneficial to Arches participants because program staff members have more intimate knowledge of their needs and strengths. Organizations with less capacity to facilitate service referrals directly could benefit from more collaboration with DOP when referring participants to services. Additionally, Arches' wide web of service providers could be used to create cross-site referral opportunities.

They do other programs here: résumé, look for jobs. I can come to [a mentor] when I need a job. He'll get in the computer and look for a long term, short term. He got me a paid internship. You talk to them and let them know what you want to do and then they have the connection. The person in the next office will send out opportunities.
—Program participant

Arches program developers incorporated a comprehensive and developmentally appropriate positive youth development framework into the program's curriculum to promote successful outcomes. Upon entry, and again before graduation, participants complete pre- and post-test self-assessments examining changes in youth development through the Positive Youth Development Index (Butts, Bazemore, and Meroe 2010). Participant results, detailed in table 6, show an improvement in both the overall and subscale measures of the Positive Youth Development Index among Arches participants.

Case Management and Engagement with Probation Officers

In collaboration with program staff, POs provide case management services and additional support to participants through service referrals. Although program staff seemed to focus on program-specific service referrals (e.g., education, employment, training, etc.), POs focused on referrals to specialized services (e.g., therapeutic, housing, and family services). Coordination between POs and Arches staff could be improved through an increased focus on wraparound services for participants approaching graduation.

Additional factors helped further strengthen the relationship between DOP and Arches sites. Some POs work in DOP offices near program sites, making probation and mentoring services conveniently situated; this is particularly true in NeON sites. One site instituted an open-door policy between program staff and POs, allowing them to openly communicate and collaborate on addressing participants' issues while being mindful of confidentiality.

POs also check in with mentors, although how often and to what extent varies by site and relationship, and may request their insight before deciding whether to file a violation of probation with the courts.

Oftentimes, when a PO wants to [file a violation of probation], they will check with the mentor first—good relationships. We invite POs to awards nights. We try to involve the POs. They tell mentees to use [them], not abuse, and they try to strengthen relationships between youth and POs.
—Program stakeholder

Some program participants view POs as role models who positively impact their lives. Still, they admitted that, unlike their relationships with mentors, they are more cautious about what information they share with their POs. One said, "There are things you can go to your mentor [about] that you can't with your PO." Several program stakeholders said they viewed the role of the mentor as filling a gap for Arches participants that POs could not. Although a clear designation of roles was evident, there are opportunities for program staff and POs to overlap support services for participants.

Participant Stipends

Arches provides participants with cash stipends that total up to $800 for attending all group mentoring sessions. DOP administers a centralized stipend system used by all providers to manage stipend payments. Debit cards are distributed by program providers to each participant shortly after they enroll in the program. Stipends are then electronically loaded to the cards on a biweekly basis, and Arches program staff members enter participants' weekly attendance into the DOP online system. Program stakeholders and participants from all sites felt the stipends were too low to ensure attendance, and for participants with additional responsibilities (e.g., family support), stipends were not enough of an incentive to attend sessions.

Participants were also provided with MetroCards after each group mentoring session. MetroCards, along with the hot meals that precede sessions, served as positive reinforcement while limiting barriers to attendance.

Arches Planning

Program Hours and Group Mentoring Schedule

Although hours of operation varied across sites, participants were required to attend two one-hour group mentoring sessions per week. Participants were divided on this time commitment: some believed it was not enough while others thought the commitment was too much. Many agreed on a need for more flexibility in group meeting times. This was addressed by the 24/7 availability of Arches staff members, and participants cited this as a strength of the program.

We have to have the door open 24 hours a day. I don't mean physically, but each and every one of [the participants] has my number. This is about you having access to somebody. You have that linkage to somebody. [We] want to make sure that is always present.
—Program stakeholder

Generally, lead mentors organize each site's calendar of events, including group sessions and outings. Regular check-ins between mentors and program coordinators help keep program staff up to date on program developments, participant needs, and internal staff support.

Program Length, Transition Planning, and Graduation

Arches is intended as a six-month program, but most participants who successfully graduate take longer, often up to a year, to do so. Participation is commonly extended because of semiregular attendance of the required 48 sessions, and it is important to note that the curriculum was often applied in a linear fashion. Participants who do not attend sessions do not have the opportunity to obtain the IJ skills from a particular module for another six months. Generally, program participants and stakeholders said they wished the program was longer because it can take weeks or months for participants to buy in to the program. Some emphasized incongruence between the needs of the participants and the program's capacity to fulfill.

It's ridiculous to think someone can change behaviors in six months after it took 16 to 18 or more years to develop.
—Program stakeholder

Although the literature supports the possibility of behavior change in children involved in group mentoring interventions in as little as 12 weeks (Jent and Niec 2009), stakeholders emphasized that a one-size-fits-all approach to a program timeline is limited in its ability to address the individual needs of

youth and young adults (those ages 16 to 24). Participants and stakeholders also recognized the need for additional resources in the areas of employment, education, and so on leading up to and immediately following graduation. However, access to these wraparound resources varied across sites because of differences in the external resources and programming organizations use. Program stakeholders indicated a need for systematic access to wraparound services for participants and alumni to help them successfully transition out of the program.

Stakeholders insisted that a more practicable capacity for transition planning is needed, one in which all Arches sites would have access to referrals for wraparound services beyond their own capacity. Although jobs and education were discussed as primary needs for participants and sought-after wraparound destinations, several program sites looked to transition graduates into the Arches Alumni Academy for Advancement to keep them involved in Arches programming.[25]

DOP Oversight

The DOP Arches program manager oversees the day-to-day administration of Arches across all sites. The program manager serves as a liaison between DOP and the sites, often providing guidance for POs on how to make referrals into the program. The program manger also serves in a data management capacity, overseeing data reporting and ensuring that sites use DOP Connect, its program data management system, properly. This involves familiarizing sites with DOP Connect, providing tips for efficient use of the system, troubleshooting issues, and ensuring that program rosters are updated. The program manager also hosts monthly coordinating meetings, where Arches administration presents site representatives with programing content and technical assistance.

The DOP program manager coordinates monthly site visits, which rotate in purpose between the observation of group sessions and administrative visits. During group session visits, the program manager speaks with sites to gauge their progress in working toward the goals of Arches and to identify their needs and determine how DOP can provide support. Administrative visits focus on the review of sites' use of DOP Connect and technical assistance related to the system. DOP also provides advice on a range of site management topics, including case management, motivating attendance, and serving as a liaison to foster cross-site learning. DOP administrators follow up with assessments on what worked, what did not, and what tools program coordinators could look to for improvement.

DOP stakeholders confirmed that POs forge and maintain strong relationships with Arches sites. They are invited to attend trips and graduation ceremonies, invest significant time with program staff,

and work with staff on helping youth build good community relationships. Their model practices are informed by robust and highly interactive training and technical assistance that helps them develop relationships with site stakeholders and mentors.

DOP stakeholders noted some issues with the Arches model, particularly how the IJ curriculum limits a mentor's ability to engage with youth in a way that attends to their development. They worried that the curriculum mimics schoolwork and that other, more interactive and community-minded activities could guide youth just as well. One said, "We believe young people thrive and grow through real relationships, not necessarily models or tools." Another stakeholder, however, said that although the IJ course books may not be the perfect vehicle for addressing participants' needs, "its ability to be modified as the program progressed" (through DOP guidance and technical assistance) is its strength.

Opportunities for Training

CCYF conducts Arches-specific trainings for facilitating and overseeing the program's core components. New program staff receive introductory training courses on group facilitation, mentoring, and icebreakers, as well as follow-up training opportunities and on-site training assistance. The initial training provides information about the scope of Arches programming and how to work with young people, including cognitive behavioral therapy and motivational interviewing—both core components of the IJ curriculum.

Although CCFY trainings were intended to encompass the range of skills needed for Arches programming, several stakeholders suggested ways to improve them. One stakeholder felt it would be useful to coordinate a retreat for mentors to connect with one another and see things from another perspective, noting that opportunities for cross-site mentor connection are currently limited, which restricts the potential for collaborative problem-solving. Interviewees also said they would like to see trainings that cover a wider range of topics, including the ethics of mentoring, trauma-informed care, mental health concerns, youth engagement, and conflict de-escalation. Respondents would like to see some training expanded to better address issues related to gang awareness and identification, restorative justice circles, and so on, although these are already provided in the form of follow-up trainings.

Transition in Funding

Initially, there was skepticism on behalf of DOP stakeholders regarding the implementation of Arches. The program's launch coincided with a cultural change at DOP, including the appointment of a new commissioner, a significant shift away from a law enforcement approach for people on probation toward an emphasis on supportive services, and the introduction of adolescent-only caseloads for POs. Over time, POs came to see that Arches was providing their clients with options other than traditional probation. Although a transition in the New York City mayor's office occurred at the end of 2013, Arches was not affected in its programing or operations because of its private funding source. Through the years, the program has built community partnerships and trust. Phase 1 of the Arches program was privately funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies as a pilot program under YMI with 15 program sites. Phase 2 of Arches, which was also funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies, grew the program to 20 sites (though this was reduced to 18 sites before the evaluation period). In early 2016, in anticipation of the end of the Bloomberg Philanthropies grant period, DOP submitted a funding request to the New York City Office of Management and Budget and was provided with new city tax levy funding to launch new provider contracts.

As of July, 2016 (during the evaluation period), the city tax levy allocation assumed the ongoing funding responsibility for a consolidation of Arches sites.[26] As a result, the evaluation findings can provide context for improvements to the implementation of the program to better serve youth and young adult participants.

Impact of Arches

Urban researchers used a quasi-experimental design to assess the impact of the Arches program. Urban used propensity score matching methods (described in detail in the appendix) to assess the differences between Arches participants and a comparison group of youth and young adults on probation not involved with the program. The evaluation sought to address several key research questions:

- How does participation in Arches affect youth and young adult criminal justice outcomes related to ***recidivism*** (defined as rearrests or reconvictions)?
  - How do ***age***, ***gender***, and ***risk level*** affect Arches participants' rates of recidivism?
- How does participation in Arches affect youth and young adults' ***positive youth development***?
  - How does Arches curriculum affect participants' perception of self, their behaviors, and their relationships with others?

Treatment and Comparison Groups

The *treatment group* consisted of young people ages 16 to 24 who were referred to any Arches site (i.e., not just the eight that were the focus of the implementation evaluation) between January 2013 and October 2014. To be in the treatment group, a young person had to be currently serving a probation sentence and had to live in one of the neighborhoods that Arches targeted, both Arches enrollment criteria.

The *comparison group* consisted of young people ages 16 to 24 also serving a probation sentence in New York City but who were not referred to the program because they did not come from communities with Arches sites. For the comparison group, a person's probation sentence had to begin between January 2013 and December 2014.

Data

The study sample was assembled by combining data from three sources: DOP Connect, Caseload Explorer (DOP's supervision case management system), and the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (see the appendix).[27] The total number of cases in the merged database is 961 (279 treatment and 682 comparison).

Variables

Outcomes

To measure the impact of Arches, Urban focused on eight recidivism outcomes:

- *Any arrest* within the first 12 or 24 months after probation begins.
- *Any felony arrest* within 12 or 24 months after probation begins.
- *Any reconviction* within 12 or 24 months after probation begins.
- *Any felony reconviction* within 12 or 24 months after probation begins.

Table 3 provides the distributions of these outcomes by treatment status. It shows that Arches participants were more likely than members of the comparison group to be rearrested but less likely to be reconvicted.

TABLE 3

Outcomes by Treatment, Pre-Match Sample (*n* = 961)

	Arches *N* = 279 (%)	Comparison *N* = 682 (%)
Arrest within 12 Months	58.4	50.3*
Felony arrest within 12 months	26.5	25.4
Arrest within 24 months	74.2	66.7*
Felony arrest within 24 months	41.9	40.0
Reconviction within 12 months	19.4	23.3
Felony reconviction within 12 months	1.8	5.0*
Reconviction within 24 months	29.0	36.1*
Felony reconviction within 24 months	6.5	10.7*

Source: Analysis completed by the New York City Department of Probation and reviewed by the authors.
* $p < 0.05$.

Other Variables

In models, Urban used several background demographic factors of the youth and young adults from before they began probation. These included *age*, *race/ethnicity* (non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, Hispanic of any race, or other), *education* (less than high school, high school grad/GED, or some postsecondary), *employment status* (employed, unemployed), and *borough of residence* (Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, or Staten Island).

Another variable used was an indicator of the *seriousness* of the original offense: Class I (A and B felonies, violent and nonviolent, and violent C felonies), Class II (nonviolent C felonies and violent D felonies), Class III (nonviolent D felonies, all E felonies, misdemeanor assault, and misdemeanor weapons possession), and Class IV (all other A misdemeanors and all B misdemeanors).

Each youth and young adult on probation was assessed a "risk level" score on the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R) screening instrument. The LSI-R produces a quantitative indicator of people on probation's attributes that helps identify the services they may need and their likelihood of recidivism (Andrews, Bonta, and Wormith 2006). However, the LSI-R was still being phased into use during the project period, and as a result, data gathering for this indicator occurred slowly and was ultimately incomplete—216 cases are missing a risk level score.[28]

The distributions of these variables for the treatment and comparison groups are found in table 4. All differences between the treatment and comparison groups listed in the table were statistically significant. The table shows that, relative to the comparison group, Arches participants were more likely to be black and less educated, less likely to be employed (at intake), more likely to have committed a serious offense, more likely to be scored as high risk on the LSI-R, and more likely to be from Manhattan, Queens, or Staten Island. These differences in the unmatched sample underscore the need for a propensity score analysis because Arches participants appear to be at higher risk than the comparison cases overall. Therefore, it is important to make sure we are comparing Arches participants with comparison group members who are at similar risk.

TABLE 4

Variables in the Analysis by Treatment Group

	Arches	Comparison
Mean age at start of probation	19.0	20.1
Standard deviation	2.3	2.4
Male (%)	86.5	85.3
Race/ethnicity (%)		
Non-Hispanic white	0.7	6.0
Non-Hispanic black	75.6	56.7
Hispanic	17.9	26.1
Other	4.0	9.1
Missing	1.8	2.1
Education (%)		
Less than high school	73.5	61.1
High school graduate or GED	17.9	19.8
Some postsecondary	2.5	7.5
Missing	6.1	11.6
Employed at intake (%)	20.8	28.3
Seriousness of offense (%)		
Most serious	35.1	24.2
More serious	8.6	12.9
Less serious	32.3	34.0
Least serious	18.3	21.6
Missing	5.7	7.3
Risk level (%)		
Low	6.8	5.4
Medium	52.3	54.4
High/highest	22.9	15.8
LSI-R not completed	17.9	24.3
Borough (%)		
Brooklyn	21.1	43.7
The Bronx	34.4	25.1
Manhattan	24.4	13.5
Queens	12.5	17.6
Staten Island	7.5	0.1

Source: Analysis completed by the New York City Department of Probation and reviewed by the authors.

Methods

For the impact evaluation, Urban and DOP researchers used propensity score matching. Matching techniques of all kinds attempt to overcome potential biases caused by selection into the treatment group by comparing treatment and comparison cases that are matched on observed characteristics or covariates. Originally proposed in the 1980s (Rosenbaum and Rubin 1983), propensity score matching is now widely used (Morgan and Harding 2006).

The technique assigns each case a "propensity" (or probability of being assigned) to be in the treatment group. One then compares the outcomes a sample of treatment and comparison cases with the same distribution of propensities to be in the treatment group by including, for each treatment, comparisons with a similar propensity to be in the treatment group. The appendix provides details about various specifications used for the propensity score analysis, as well as details of these analyses and diagnostics for the models.

Impact Evaluation Results

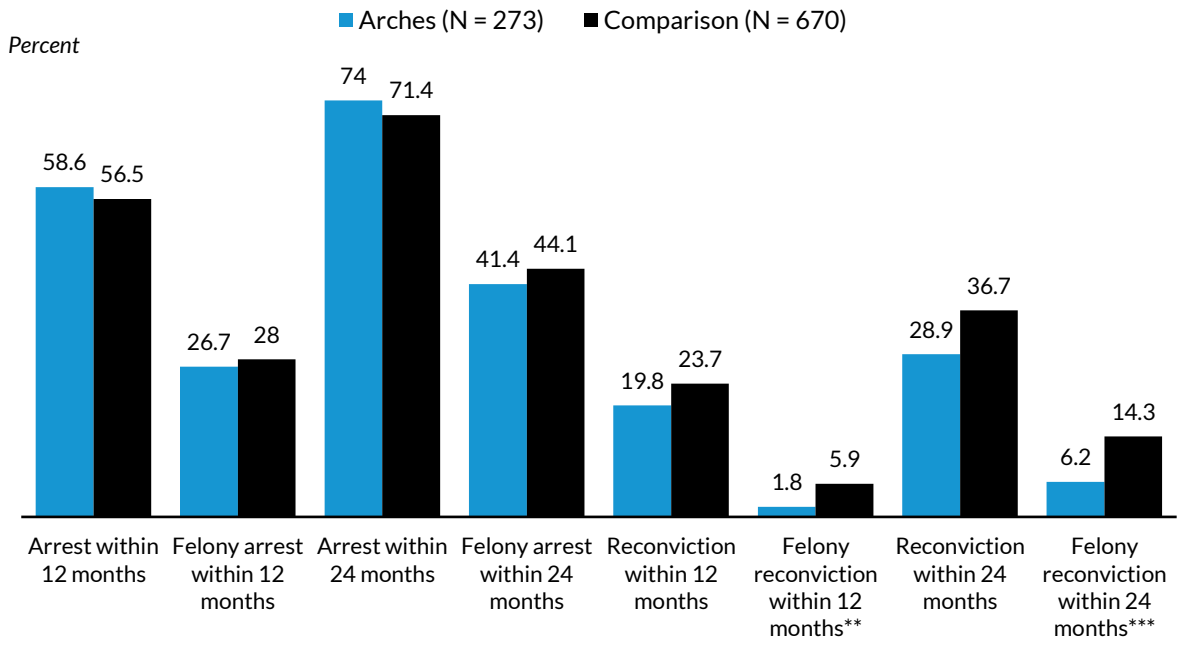
Treatment Effect

The comparison of this matched sample is displayed in figure 1. The comparison group had more than double the percentage of felony reconvictions (within 12 and 24 months) than the Arches group, and this difference was statistically significant at both 12 ($p < 0.01$) and 24 ($p < 0.001$) months. Differences between the Arches group and the comparison group in arrests, shown in table 3, disappear when the higher level of risk faced by Arches participants is taken into account.[29]

FIGURE 1

Outcomes by Treatment

Match sample (n = 943)



Source: Analysis completed by New York City Department of Probation and reviewed by the authors.
**p = 0.01; ***p = 0.001

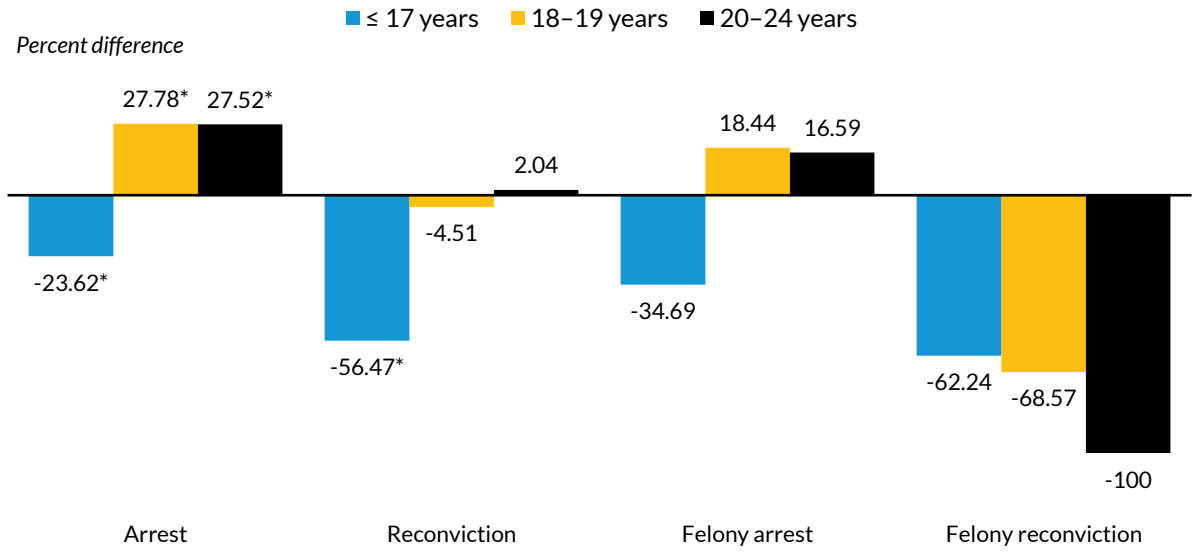
Urban also separately examined the effect of the treatment for participants of different genders, ages, and risk levels. There were no differences in effects by gender or risk level. The results (for the matched sample) of the treatment effects by age show that the treatment worked better for young people who were under the age of 18 at the start of the program. At both 12 and 24 months, the comparison group had significantly higher rates of reconviction than Arches participants. At 12 months, the comparison group also had significantly higher rates of arrest (felony arrests also were marginally significant at p = .051). At 24 months, the comparison group had significantly higher rates of felony arrest and reconviction (see figures 2 and 3).

Arches worked better for youths who were under the age of 18 at the start of the program.

FIGURE 2

Differences in 12-Month Group Outcomes by Age

Difference between Arches group and comparison group

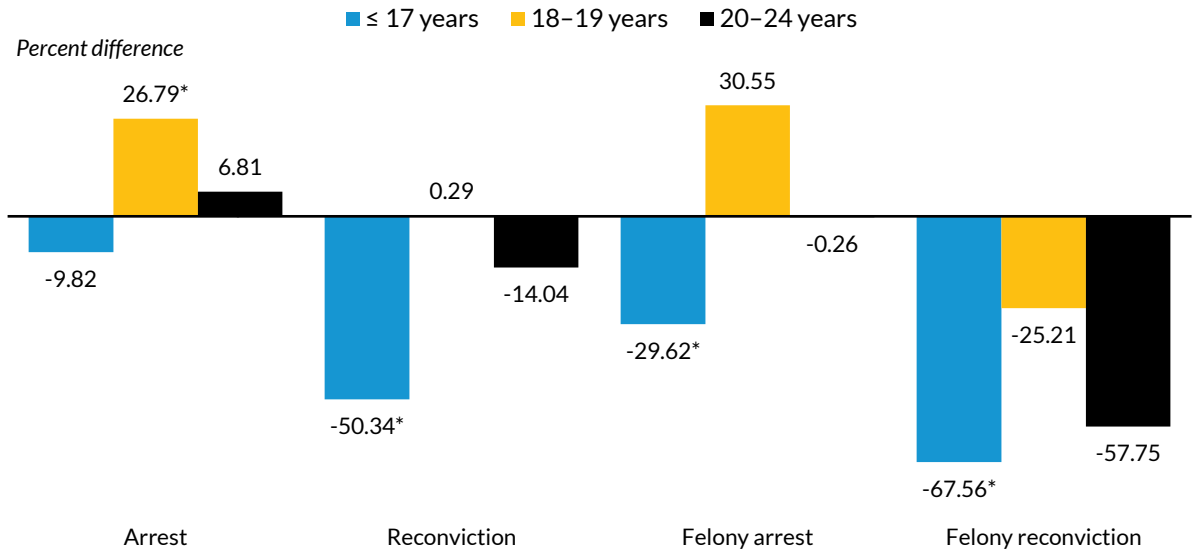


Source: Analysis completed by New York City Department of Probation and reviewed by the authors.
*$p < 0.05$

FIGURE 3

Differences in 24-Month Group Outcomes by Age

Difference between Arches group and comparison group



Source: Analysis completed by New York City Department of Probation and reviewed by the authors.
*$p < 0.05$

Differences that are statistically significant are indicated with asterisks. Although several of the differences between Arches participants and the comparison group were statistically significant for people under the age of 18, there were few statistically significant differences among the older age groups, and those that are significant are not in the expected direction (i.e., Arches participants fared worse than the comparison group).

There were several relationships approaching statistical significance at $p < 0.10$ (not reported in figures 2 and 3), but because of small sample sizes, they only marginally approached significance. The comparison group had higher rates of felony reconviction within 12 months than Arches participants; among 16- and 17-year-olds ($p = 0.106$), 18- and 19-year-olds ($p = 0.101$), and 20–24-year-olds ($p = 0.095$). Note that the study was not set up to look at differences by age, and future evaluations should examine these differences.

Within-Group Effect

Within the treatment group, Urban looked at different components of the Arches program and how they were associated with positive youth development and curriculum-based outcomes. Specifically, Urban examined the time from when a person entered probation until they enrolled in Arches, time spent in the program, whether the Arches program was in a NeON neighborhood, and whether the participant completed the curriculum. Urban also looked at pre- and post-test scores on two indicators that may measure the influence of the program on the participants' perception of self and relationships with others.

Table 5 shows a comparison between Arches participants in NeON neighborhoods and those in other neighborhoods. The findings are mixed, but there is little evidence of different rates of recidivism among Arches participants attending sites in NeON neighborhoods, and none of the differences are statistically significant. The table also shows that Arches participants who completed the curriculum had lower levels of recidivism across all eight outcomes than those who did not. Four of these differences—any felony arrest (12 and 24 months), any reconviction within 12 months, and any felony reconviction within 12 months—were statistically significant. To address the potential confounding effect of in-program rearrests, additional analyses were conducted excluding all in-program rearrests and using program end dates to calculate 12-month post-program rearrest and reconviction rate outcomes for all Arches participants.[30] Differences in rates between program graduates and nongraduates remained in the same direction (for 12-month outcomes) as reported in table 5, but were not statistically significant. The results may suggest a dose-response effect of the Arches program, with

participants who got "more" of the program doing better. One must bear in mind, however, that the Arches participants who completed the curriculum might be systematically different from those who did not (i.e., more motivated), and this could be causing the observed dose-response relationship.

TABLE 5

Differences in Outcomes among Arches Participants, by NeON Neighborhood and Curriculum Completion

	Arches NeOn (%)	Arches non-NeOn (%)	Completed curriculum (%)	Did not complete curriculum (%)
Arrest within 12 months	58.3	58.6	55.6	60.6
Felony arrest within 12 months	25.5	28.7	**20.2**	**31.6**
Arrest within 24 months	74.0	74.7	68.5	78.7
Felony arrest within 24 months	39.1	48.3	**29.8**	**51.6**
Reconviction within 12 months	21.4	14.9	**13.7**	**23.9**
Felony reconviction within 12 months	1.6	2.3	0.0	3.2
Reconviction within 24 months	29.2	28.7	**23.4**	**33.5**
Felony reconviction within 24 months	5.7	8.0	4.0	8.4

Source: Analysis completed by the New York City Department of Probation and reviewed by the authors.
Notes: Bold indicates that a difference is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. Completing the Arches curriculum is defined as completing all four interactive journals and attending 48 group mentoring sessions.

The Positive Youth Development Index was developed by Arnold and colleagues (2012) to capture a young person's status with respect to the five C's of positive youth development (Lerner et al. 2005). In addition to developing the index, Arnold and colleagues used confirmatory factor analysis and concluded that the index has face validity. Arches administered the short version of the index to participants before and afte their participation in the program. The Positive Youth Development Index portion of table 6 shows that the post-program scores on this index were higher than the pre-program scores and that this difference is statistically significant.

The IJ curriculum comes with other suggested instruments to test for improvement in the cognitive attributes it is meant to improve. As in the case of the Positive Youth Development Index, there was a statistically significant increase in these measures over time, suggesting a positive effect on participants' perceptions of their behavior and relationships with others.

TABLE 6

Pre- and Post-Test Scores for Arches Participants

Positive Youth Development Index and Interactive Journal assessments

	Pre-test	Post-test
Overall Positive Youth Development Index Short version	98.7	107.3**
Subscales		
Prosocial values	2.9	3.2
Future orientation	3.3	3.4
Emotional regulation	3.0	3.2
Personal standards	3.3	3.5
Adult support	2.9	3.0
Friendship	2.7	2.9
Contribution	2.9	3.1
Interactive Journals self-assessment	81.6	87.8**
Subscales		
Attitudes	3.3	3.5
Knowledge	3.2	3.4
Skills	3.1	3.3
Mentoring	3.3	3.5

Source: Analysis completed by the New York City Department of Probation and reviewed by the authors.
Notes: For the Positive Youth Development Index Short Version, a paired samples t-test revealed significant difference in the self-assessment score across subscales between pre-test (M = 98.7, SD = 19.3) and post-test (M = 107.3, SD = 16.0), t(45) = -2.82, p = 0.004** For the Interactive Journal self-assessment, a paired samples t-test revealed significant difference in the self-assessment score across subscales between pre-test (M = 81.6, SD = 12.5) and post-test (M = 87.8, SD = 13.5), t(45) = -2.99, p = 0.002**

In the matched sample, 1.8 percent of Arches participants had been reconvicted within 12 months of beginning probation versus 5.9 percent of the comparison group, an **approximately 69 percent difference**. Twenty-four months after beginning probation, 6.2 percent of Arches participants had been reconvicted versus 14.3 percent of the comparison group, an **approximately 57 percent difference**.

Arches participants were less likely than the comparison group to be reconvicted of a felony.

These differences were statistically significant and quantitatively very large. The results were robust with respect to various specifications of the propensity score analysis (see appendix A). Although it appeared that Arches participants were more likely to be rearrested when compared without matching, these differences seem to be caused by the program deliberately selecting high-risk people on probation and disappeared when comparing the matched sample, which paired Arches participants

with comparison participants with similar risk levels. This finding underscores the need for very rigorous evaluation of programs that target high-risk populations; by the very nature of that risk, they are likely to experience worse outcomes and should be compared to people of equal risk.

Although both the implementation and impact evaluation components showed the strengths of the Arches program, stakeholders identified several ways to improve the program. The following section broadly outlines best practices and lessons learned to inform our recommendations to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Arches program.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Through the synthesis of stakeholder interviews, participant focus groups, and program observations and an analysis of administrative program data, Urban has developed a set of recommendations to *sustain* and *promote* effective practices and *enhance* the program in areas that currently present barriers to positive youth development.

Best Practices

1. **Culture and fit.** Arches has a *family atmosphere* that fosters trust, communication, and support that can lead to changes in the thoughts and behaviors of participants. This atmosphere also translates to positive interactions with family and friends outside of the program and opportunities for participants to create stronger relationships with the support systems in their lives while reassessing negative relationships. Stakeholders and participants indicated that the program *fit* its target population of high-risk youth and young adults on probation. The family-style support "does not dismiss [high-risk] people" and instead works with them.
2. **Mentoring and credible messengers.** Arches fosters deep connections between participants and mentors through group mentoring sessions and one-on-one meetings, which both participants and stakeholders view favorably. At several Arches sites, participants emphasized that mentoring affects how they interact with others, fostering positive relationships, stronger social interactions, and improved self-confidence. Some participants also said that mentoring helped them learn about professionalism.
    - **Credible messengers** are often people who grew up in similar environments and, as a result, know firsthand the "pitfalls, traps that many young people go through." Participants indicated the importance of having mentors who they could see themselves in and who were available 24/7.
3. **Changing the mindset of participants.** One of the primary goals of Arches emphasized in the curriculum and in group mentoring discussions is the importance of changing participants' perceptions of and cognitive responses to stress and conflict and challenging those perceptions and responses when appropriate.
4. **Peer support and influence.** In a few sites, mentors were able to facilitate peer exchanges between participants that created opportunities to hear about successes and failures from

other current members and program alumni. The idea of introducing "credible alumni" also lent credence to the power that peer exchanges and role models had in changing participants' thoughts. Peer relationships that grew out of the group mentoring model were viewed favorably by participants and stakeholders across sites.

5. **Fluid structure and schedule.** Many sites allow participants to join at any time without feeling "behind." This fluid nature of the program's structure and schedule, though variable across sites, allows for mentors and other program stakeholders to meet each participant where they are. In early stages, the focus is on gaining their trust. Later, staff seek to teach and mirror positive cognitive skills that can lead to positive youth development outcomes.

    » Focus groups revealed that the schedule keeps participants occupied during the week and engaging in new opportunities that "helped keep [me] out of trouble…especially in the summer."
    » There also seems to be **flexibility in assigning mentors** to program participants that produces positive outcomes. Some programs do not assign each participant to one mentor and instead provide group mentorship, which allows participants to identify the mentor with whom they feel most comfortable.

6. **CCFY training and support.** Although there were varied responses about the sustained effects of training, generally the training topics and, in some sites, on-site support and technical assistance were viewed favorably. Some staff wanted increased training opportunities, including on-site coaching, and expanded topics, including trauma-informed skills. Observations revealed that an increased emphasis on facilitation skills and cognitive behavioral techniques would be beneficial, as expertise on these subjects varied significantly across sites. In a few sites, positive references to and observations of the use of restorative justice circles provided opportunities for a group process that may lead to positive youth development.
7. **Community connections.** One administrative stakeholder suggested, "Arches is a bridge that connects the community back with the people." The level of connection between Arches and other community organizations varied by site, but program staff and participants valued them where they existed.
8. **Proximity to NeONs.** In some cases, basing POs in NeON offices made it easier to report probation conditions for Arches participants, helped build relationships between program stakeholders and POs overseeing referrals, and increased access to additional services provided through NeON community offices (e.g., employment and academic support, health

care, etc.). Still, we found no difference in Arches program outcomes for those programs operating in NeON neighborhoods.

Barriers to Implementation

1. **Fidelity and fit of CBT curriculum.** The IJ curriculum is a key component of the Arches model, and observations, interviews, and focus groups in all eight sites revealed significant variations in the use of journals and application of IJ principles.
    - » The IJ curriculum, Forward Thinking, was developed for use with adults in correctional settings. Although interview and focus group members confirmed that its topics were relevant, how these topics were presented often seemed out of touch with the probation population. Stakeholders made numerous recommendations to modify the curriculum specifically for youth and young adults on probation in New York City.
2. **Role of alumni.** Although other programs exist for Arches alumni (the Arches Alumni Academy for Advancement), interviews and focus groups with program stakeholders and participants revealed a desire for more direct involvement from alumni in current Arches groups. In mentoring groups that included alumni, discussions often turned to goal planning, with alumni talking about their trajectory through Arches and beyond.
3. **Group facilitation skills.** There was significant variation in group facilitation skills across sites. Within sites, there were also considerable skill gaps between mentors. Interviews revealed that people see a need for an increased focus on educating and training mentors on group facilitation.
    - » **Trauma-informed skills.** Interviews with program stakeholders indicated that many Arches participants have trauma that surfaces during group and one-on-one mentoring sessions. Stakeholders believed mentors would benefit from training on techniques and skills that are appropriate for youth who have experienced trauma.
4. **Site referrals.** Referrals to the Arches program are driven by DOP and, more specifically, POs who supervise youth who may benefit from group mentoring. Sites indicated that although their relationships with POs are generally positive, poor communication can make sustaining enrollment targets difficult.

5. **Arches program length.** The Arches program is meant to provide group mentoring services to youth and young adults on probation over six months, but many participants take longer to graduate. People in our interviews and focus groups consistently described the length of the program as too short and the number of program days per week (two) as too few. Many program stakeholders said participants often need time to feel comfortable in the program and that some who do not attend regularly would be better served by an extended program length.
6. **Cross-site collaboration.** Program stakeholders indicated that there are limited opportunities to collaborate with other Arches sites.
7. **Part-time mentor benefits.** Across all sites, program stakeholders indicated that a part-time status for some mentors was not consistent with the realities of their job, which can include requests for 24/7 availability and duties that extend beyond the weekly schedule of group mentoring activities. Interviews revealed high rates of turnover among mentors. There was similar sentiment among administrative stakeholder groups (e.g., DOP, NYC Opportunity, etc.) on the need for increased support for mentors.
    - » Some stakeholders also cited more education opportunities for mentors as a way to improve their capacity to carry out their Arches responsibility and expand their future job prospects.
8. **Wraparound services.** Sites differ drastically in their capacity to connect graduates to services such as education, work, and so on and to accommodate additional services needed by current participants, such as housing.
9. **Site funding.** One of the most consistent barriers identified through interviews with program stakeholders was the limited funds available to support program activities, currently just $170,800 per site. References were made to budgetary constraints impacting off-site trips and learning opportunities and placing limits on access to quality hot meals and adequate stipends offered to participants.

Recommendations

1. **Increase focus on mechanisms that support consistent application of services across all sites.** The evaluation documented that execution of the program's key components, including the application of the IJ curriculum and facilitation of group mentoring sessions, was inconsistent across sites. Although service delivery was unique from site to site, it would be ideal to develop

mechanisms that support consistent application of services across sites. Such mechanisms may include site-to-site learning and in-person observation, increased coaching for group facilitators, and the application of site-specific data collection (e.g., participant feedback) to inform group activities.

2. **Incorporate trauma-informed principles and crisis intervention strategies into training modules.** With cognitive behavioral and motivational enhancement principles at the center of the curriculum, an increased focus on trauma principles may provide program stakeholders with tools for managing individual and group trauma that may arise during mentoring sessions. Training through Arches' TA provider, CCFY, may be an ideal application of trauma and crisis techniques for program stakeholders.
3. **Tailor IJ curriculum to align with the real-world experiences, resources, and expectations of participants.** The IJ curriculum was originally developed for adult males incarcerated in state and federal prisons. Although the current format is meant to fit the Arches population of youth and young adults, interviews and focus groups suggested adapting the curriculum to specifically fit New York City youth and young adults on probation may make it more effective. To do so, DOP could put together working groups of Arches participants, alumni, and program stakeholders to provide feedback on ways to improve the curriculum so that it better reflects the day-to-day issues faced by participants.
4. **Provide support to mentors through increased training, opportunities for full-time employment, and advanced education opportunities.** Through conversations with program stakeholders, it became evident that providing internal and external options to support mentors' further education and training and extending full-time employment to more mentors could decrease staff turnover and provide participants with a more highly skilled and consistent staff.
5. **Expand program length to accommodate increased alumni engagement and aftercare services for participants to better address positive youth development outcomes.** Literature suggests that high-frequency engagement between mentors and mentees can help reduce recidivism. Increasing the number of program days per week, and thus the engagement between mentors and participants, may better align with more positive recidivism outcomes. Expanding the program beyond six months also provides more opportunities for participant engagement (buy-in takes time) and learning, increased focus on aftercare and wraparound services, and greater emphasis on positive youth outcomes. Expanding the program with an official alumni engagement component would provide more positive peer role models for participants to learn from.

6. **Create opportunities for cross-site collaboration**. At all levels, stakeholder interviews consistently suggested that expanding opportunities for peer-to-peer, cross-site learning between mentors and program coordinators would benefit participants. Stakeholders recommended creating more frequent opportunities to share knowledge and troubleshoot similar challenges across sites. Formalized cross-site collaboration could also expand access to wraparound services once participants graduate.
7. **Incorporate site-specific program data into day-to-day decision making and new data collection opportunities to improve group facilitation.** Site-specific monthly reports are developed through the DOP Connect database and provide information on attendance, admissions, and site narratives. Data collection could include participant and mentor-to-mentor feedback following group sessions. Participant feedback could be collected at weekly intervals through self-administered satisfaction surveys (on paper or through a tablet/web app).
8. **Increase community engagement and collaboration with local, youth-supported partner organizations.** Greater collaboration with local organizations could help supplement program funding through mutually supportive youth services (e.g., youth work opportunities) and may indirectly increase community awareness and foster a positive image of the program.
9. **Expand access to group mentoring services for younger participants (those under 16 years old).** Arches was shown to work better for younger participants (those 16 and 17 years old). Additionally, stakeholder interviews indicated service gaps exist for youth under age 16.
10. **Arches works.** Keep it going.

Conclusions

In the current evaluation of the Arches Transformative Mentoring program, Urban Institute researchers examined the implementation and impact of the group mentoring program on youth and young adults in New York City. In line with key administrative programming goals, Arches reduced recidivism among participants when compared to a comparison group of youth and young adults on probation. The evaluation also yielded positive results for its youngest participants (those ages 16 and 17) when compared to young adults (those ages 18 and older), providing opportunities for Arches to address perceived service gaps by offering group mentoring to youth 16 years of age and younger.

For program graduates, Arches led to increased positive youth development outcomes.

These results are generally consistent with the literature on youth behavior changes and group mentoring and open the door for opportunities to refine (and expand) the program's services in New York City. Since 2013, DOP has pursued strategies to improve public safety and address the nuanced risks and needs of youth and young adults on probation. By focusing on evidence-based policies and practices meant to "do more good," DOP has stressed the use of validated risk assessment tools and strengths-based approaches to juvenile justice (New York City Department of Probation 2013). The development of the Young Men's Initiative, meant to address disparities in the criminal justice system for youth and young men of color, supports the building of positive relationships, which Arches has been successful in implementing.

Parallel to Arches and other New York City youth-based initiatives, New York State has also undergone a transformation in how it addresses justice-involved youth and young adults. Until recently, New York remained one of two states that enforced a minimum age of criminal responsibility of 16 years old; this is set to change in October 2018 and will provide criminal justice actors with more opportunity to pursue youth-specific programming. In line with this evaluation's findings and ongoing research on brain development in young people, DOP may look to expand the services it offers to youth under the age of 16.

The current evaluation of Arches also provides context for the national narrative on strategies for engaging justice-involved youth and young adults. With structured mentoring programs yielding promising research, an emphasis on mentoring has continued to guide juvenile-justice funding nationwide. Since 2015, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has invested in mentor programming to address youth reentry and diversion through a focus on positive youth decision making and recidivism reduction. Arches, a structured group mentoring program, aligns with these initiatives to address justice-involved youth's reentry and diversion needs (e.g., incorporating formal wraparound and alumni services) while increasing public safety.

Overall, program participants, as well as administrative and program stakeholders, expressed strong support for the expansion of Arches and, more importantly, suggested ways it can better meet the needs of participants. It is important to note that although the evaluation revealed that Arches works, for youth and young adults in New York City, implementation matters. Looking for ways to

improve implementation of cognitive behavioral principles (via cross-site learning and training opportunities), tailor the curriculum to better address local youth and young adult issues, and incorporate site-specific data into day-to-day decision making may help improve youth outcomes. Through the lessons learned, barriers to implementation, and recommendations described above, Urban has provided a roadmap for the city to enhance and potentially replicate the Arches program going forward.

Appendix. Impact Data Collection Strategies

Data Continued

The data for the impact evaluation came from three sources. The first, DOP Connect, contains information on Arches participants. This information consists of data on program participation, such as attendance and scores on attitudinal and psychological scales that the program administered during intake and after graduation.

The second data source, Caseload Explorer, contains information on all people on probation in New York City, including but not limited to Arches participants. These data contain basic information on people such as demographic characteristics and important dates including the beginning of their probation and dates of subsequent arrests or violations while on probation.

The third source is a database from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services that contains data on arrests and convictions for all people arrested in the state. These data were important because DOP only has data on arrests that take place while someone is on probation, and it was important for the evaluation to take into account behavior of people on probation outside that. These data are not available to DOP as a matter of course, and DOP needed to petition DCJS for post-probation arrest data for Arches participants and the comparison group. This application was made on May 8, 2016, and was approved around October 1, 2016.The data were sent by DCJS on November 3, 2016 and were merged with program data on November 21, 2016.

Methods Continued

The Arches program did not have an embedded randomized comparison trial. In a randomized comparison trial, people eligible for the program are randomly assigned to the treatment group or a comparison group. Randomization should ensure that participants in the treatment and comparison groups are indistinguishable from each other with respect to observed or even unobserved characteristics at the time of randomization. Under these conditions, it is therefore possible to attribute any difference between the comparison and treatment groups to the treatment itself.

Due to the absence of a randomized comparison trial, Urban adopted a quasi-experimental design for the impact evaluation. The comparison group, as explained above, consisted of people who began probation at the same time as the Arches group. We know there are systematic differences between those who began probation during the year 2013 and were assigned to Arches and those who were not assigned. This is because the program's referral protocols included recommending young people at very high risk of recidivism (as indicated by a high LSI-R score) and young people from particular neighborhoods. Table 4 shows that this targeting was effective.

Propensity score matching consists of assigning each case a "propensity" to be in the treatment group. This is done by using a regression (usually a logistic regression or probit regression), where the outcome is membership in the treatment group. From this regression, it is possible to calculate the predicted probability that a case—either treatment or comparison—is in the treatment group. There are several ways to match the propensity scores of treatment and comparison groups, Urban used "nearest neighbor" matching, which matched a comparison group member to a treatment group member if their propensity score was within 0.01 of the treatment case.

One compares the outcomes in a sample of treatment and comparison cases with the same distribution of propensities to be in the treatment group by including, for each treatment, comparison cases with a similar propensity to be in the treatment group. Urban used three different models for this analysis. Because there was such a high level of missing data, especially for risk level scores, we needed to check the robustness of our model to different ways of dealing with missing data. In the first analysis (reported in the main body of the report), we kept all 961 cases in the analysis and made "missing" a valid category for all variables in the regression analysis that predicted the propensity score (see the estimates associated with "missing" in the second column of appendix A.1). This approach, referred to as model 1, avoids the danger that the cases with missing data are somehow different from the others. If they were, this might bias the results.

TABLE A.1

Outcomes by Treatment and Matched Comparison Sample by Model

	Arches	Comparison
Model 1 (*n* = 943)	***N* = 273**	***N* = 670**
Arrest within 12 months	58.6	56.5
Felony arrest within 12 months	26.7	28.0
Arrest within 24 months	74.0	71.4
Felony arrest within 24 months	41.4	44.1
Reconviction within 12 months	19.8	23.7
Felony reconviction within 12 months	1.8**	5.9**
Reconviction within 24 months	28.9	36.7
Felony reconviction within 24 months	6.2***	14.3***
Model 2 (*n* = 810)	***N* = 246**	***N* = 536**
Arrest within 12 months	59.8	55.9
Felony arrest within 12 months	26.0	27.3
Arrest within 24 months	76.0	74.7
Felony arrest within 24 months	41.5	44.6
Reconviction within 12 months	19.5	23.3
Felony reconviction within 12 months	1.2**	6.0**
Reconviction within 24 months	29.7	37.0
Felony reconviction within 24 months	6.1***	14.0***
Model 3 (*n* = 571)	***N* = 195**	***N* = 376**
Arrest within 12 months	61.0	56.8
Felony arrest within 12 months	25.6	30.2
Arrest within 24 months	77.4	74.7
Felony arrest within 24 months	43.1	47.2
Reconviction within 12 months	21.0	25.6
Felony reconviction within 12 months	1.5*	5.7*
Reconviction within 24 months	31.3	38.2
Felony reconviction within 24 months	6.7**	14.7**

Source: Analysis completed by the New York City Department of Probation and reviewed by the authors.
*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.

Urban then ran the propensity score analysis including all the cases that were missing risk level scores but eliminating cases missing on any other variable. This is referred to as model 2. The missing data on this variable was more troubling than on the others for two reasons. First, a person's score on this variable affected whether he or she was assigned to Arches. Second, it is the variable with the most missing data.

Finally, we ran the propensity score analysis deleting cases that were missing on any variable in the analysis. This is referred to as model 3.

Table A.2 shows the regressions that calculate the propensity scores for the three models. This table contains estimates of probit coefficients from models regressing whether or not a case was in the treatment group on the variables in table 4. The estimates of the coefficients are similar across models,

indicating that the propensity score prediction equation was quite robust across different specifications. Across models, age, race/ethnicity, risk level, and borough of residence were all significant predictors of whether a case was in the treatment group.

TABLE A.2

Probit of Treatment on Background Variables

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age at start of probation	-0.11***	-0.10***	-0.12***
Male	0.00	-0.02	0.13
Race/ethnicity (ref = non-Hispanic black)			
Non-Hispanic white	-1.26***	-1.17**	-1.57***
Hispanic	-0.41***	-0.41***	-0.40**
Other	-0.64***	-0.49*	-0.47*
Missing	-0.11		
Education (ref = less than high school)			
High school grad or GED	0.07	0.16	0.12
Some postsecondary	-0.40	-0.51	-0.71*
Missing	-0.44		
Employed at intake	-0.07	-0.09	-0.09
Seriousness of offence (ref = least serious)			
Most serious	0.12	0.11	0.13
More serious	-0.09	-0.10	-0.26
Less serious	0.03	0.02	0.03
Missing	0.09		
Risk (ref = medium)			
Low	0.16	0.19	0.20
High/highest	0.33***	0.39**	0.40**
LSI-R not completed	-0.14	-0.13	
Borough (ref = Brooklyn/The Bronx)			
Manhattan/Queens/Staten Island	0.41***	0.37***	0.36**
Constant	1.57	1.50**	1.62**
Cases	961	810	622

Source: Analysis completed by the New York City Department of Probation and reviewed by the authors.
*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.

There are several diagnostic tools one can use to evaluate the quality of the propensity score analysis. One is the number of treatment cases that need to be dropped from the analysis because there is no comparison case with as high a propensity to be in the treatment group. Another diagnostic is the assessment of how balanced the treatment and matched comparison samples are after matching. To evaluate this, one can calculate the amount of bias (with respect to the variables in the prediction regression) in the matched comparison sample. Bias of 5 percent is the usual cut point. One can also use t-tests to determine whether the treatment and matched comparison samples are different with respect to a particular variable. Table A.3 contains a summary of these diagnostics for the three models.

TABLE A.3

Diagnostics on Propensity Score Analysis by Model

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Treatment cases eliminated	6	2	7
Mean bias	3.7	3	2.9
Significant differences between treatment and comparison on background variables	0	0	0

Source: Analysis completed by the New York City Department of Probation and reviewed by the authors.
$^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{***}p < 0.001$.

All three models do very well. There are only six, two and seven treatment cases eliminated from the analysis because there were no comparison cases with a sufficiently high propensity to match. The overall bias is below 5 percent in all cases, and there were no significant t-tests indicating that the treatment and matched comparison samples were different with respect to any of the predictors.

The results of the propensity score analysis are also quite robust. In table A.1, we present a comparison between the treatment group and the matched samples for all three models. In all three cases, these tabulations indicate that the treatment had a salutatory effect on felony reconvictions within both 12 and 24 months. The apparent differences (from table 3) in arrests do not persist when the people being compared are more similar.

Notes

1. Statistically significant at $p < 0.01$.
2. Statistically significant at $p < 0.001$.
3. 12 and 24 months were statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.
4. Statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.
5. Sample refers to the selection of sites for the implementation evaluation component.
6. Rapid evidence assessment is a method, similar to a systematic review, for identifying and synthesizing evidence from research studies on a particular topic. Rapid evidence assessments differ from systematic reviews in the use of a rapid (restricted time frame) search application that may limit the identification of certain studies, for example, those that are unpublished.
7. Steven L. Proctor, Caleb J. Corwin, Norman G. Hoffman, and Steve Allison, "A Tool to Engage Jail Inmates," *Addiction Professional*, January 1, 2009, https://www.addictionpro.com/article/tool-engage-jail-inmates.
8. Proctor, Corwin, Hoffman, and Allison, "A Tool to Engage Jail Inmates."
9. "Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: Overview," Mayo Clinic, accessed August 4, 2017, http://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/cognitive-behavioral-therapy/home/ovc-20186868.
10. Mayo Clinic, "Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: Overview."
11. The Steering Committee was composed of representatives from the NYC Family Court, the NYC Mayor's Office, the NYC Law Department, The Legal Aid Society, the NYC Police Department, the New York City Council, the NYC Administration for Children's Services, the NYC Department of Probation, the NYC Department of Education, the Office of the NYC Criminal Justice Coordinator, the NYC Health and Hospital Corporation, and members of the advocacy community.
12. City of New York, "Mayor Bloomberg, Deputy Mayor Gibbs, and Probation Commissioner Schiraldi Launch first Neighborhood Opportunity Network—Neon—A Central Element of Young Men's Initiative," news release, December 8, 2011, http://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/432-11/mayor-bloomberg-deputy-mayor-gibbs-probation-commissioner-schiraldi-launch-first-neighborhood.
13. In 2011, DOP implemented the Neighborhood Opportunity Network (NeON), opening the first of what would become seven NeONs in New York neighborhoods (these overlapped with eventual Arches sites), colocating with community-based organizations to better engage people on probation.
14. New York State's age of criminal responsibility is currently 16, and the state automatically prosecutes all 16- and 17-year-olds as adults. Beginning in October 2018, the state will begin phasing in a raised age of criminal responsibility to 18 years of age for all 16- and 17-year-olds charged with misdemeanors and some felonies.
15. NVivo is computer-assisted qualitative data software that "aides researchers in the search for an accurate and transparent picture of the data whilst also providing an audit of the data analysis process" (Walsh 2002). While time intensive in the coding and analysis of qualitative data, NVivo's organizational capacity to provide an accurate portrayal of interview and focus group themes makes it ideal for applying to the range of qualitative activities to glean themes across sites, stakeholders, and topics related to this evaluation.
16. Before coding all interviews and focus groups, coding consistency was assessed across coders. Coded interviews were reviewed for code stripe consistency—comparing coding results across multiple coders—and NVivo's coding comparison queries—examining interrater reliability—were reviewed for agreement. High levels of intercoder agreement were obtained across two randomly selected interviews for all coders.

17. Individual action plans, negotiated by probation officers and their clients, are an essential part of the city's new model of probation for all clients. The plans are individualized and transparent probation agreements with specific goals and conditions that match the interests and needs of and challenges facing each probation client. See City of New York, Department of Probation, "Arches: A Transformative Mentoring Intervention," RFA 78112ARCHESRFA, issued January 19, 2012, http://www.nyc.gov/html/prob/downloads/pdf/arches_rfa_01192012_3.pdf.
18. The seven individual action plan domains include housing, education, workforce development, healthy relationships with a positive adult, antisocial/criminal thinking, behavioral health, and additional services and support. See City of New York, Department of Probation, "Arches: A Transformative Mentoring Intervention."
19. Arches participants have access to and are encouraged to attend a number of summer programs, including the Department of Youth and Community Development's Summer Youth Employment Program.
20. City of New York, Department of Probation, "Arches: A Transformative Mentoring Intervention."
21. City of New York, Department of Probation, "Arches: A Transformative Mentoring Intervention."
22. DOP's Advocate, Intervene, Mentor program, a court-mandated alternative-to-placement program (i.e., not accessible to any/all juveniles on probation) incorporates credible messengers into an individual mentoring program serving youth on probation between ages 13 and 18.
23. Program completion is defined as having attended 48 sessions and completing four journals. However, DOP did not discretely track completion of journals until July 2016.
24. Assessment practices vary by site, and providers are not required to use an assessment tool; no tool is prescribed for the Arches program.
25. The Arches Alumni Academy for Advancement program is a youth leadership initiative (privately funded and operating independently of DOP and Arches) for Arches graduates who, by virtue of their prior experience with the justice system and their desire to give back to their communities, are credible messengers for their peers and for younger youth (see Community Connections for Youth's website at https://cc-fy.org/project/4as/). The Arches Alumni Academy for Advancement offers graduates the opportunity to develop leadership and mentoring skills and could serve as a natural extension to programming and a potential bridge to education and employment opportunities.
26. The program shrank from 18 to 13 sites, which was feasible because the program sites had not been operating at capacity.
27. Arches alumni who participated in the Arches Alumni Academy for Advancement program were not included in the sample for this analysis.
28. Currently, DOP assesses probationers for risk at intake and every subsequent six months. In this analysis, Urban used their initial scores.
29. Police make arrests in NeON neighborhoods 15 percent more often than they do in non-NeON neighborhoods. According to NYC Open Data, in 2010, NeON neighborhoods consisted of 1.9 million people, for which 24,652 arrests were made. Non-NeON neighborhoods consisted of 6.6 million people, for which 75,122 arrests were made the same year. "New York City Population by Community Districts," NYC Open Data, accessed October 6, 2017, https://data.cityofnewyork.us/City-Government/New-York-City-Population-By-Community-Districts/xi7c-iiu2.
30. Arrest data for Arches participants do not go far enough to calculate 24-month rates.

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About the Authors

Mathew Lynch is a research associate in the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center with extensive experience in program evaluation, collecting, processing, and analyzing qualitative and quantitative program data. At Urban, he has worked on research projects that include youth programming, reentry, treatment alternatives and diversion, and police technology.

Nan Marie Astone is a senior fellow in the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population at the Urban Institute, which she joined in 2013 after serving 24 years on the faculty of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. She is a demographer with expertise on reproductive health, the family, adolescence, and the transition to adulthood.

Juan Collazos is a former research associate who worked in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center at the Urban Institute. He worked on several program evaluations and outcome and performance measurement projects concerning community development and revitalization, neighborhoods and youth development, and financial education.

Micaela Lipman is a research assistant in the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population. Before moving to Washington, DC, she worked in academia and the nonprofit sector to explore creative solutions where food policy, economic equality, and community organizing meet. She has worked on county-level projects with food policy councils, regional projects in upstate New York, and international projects while studying abroad in Uganda and Rwanda.

Sino Esthappan is a research assistant in the Justice Policy Center, where he works on research and evaluation projects related to the justice system's impact on youth and communities affected by violence. His aim is to help uncover meaningful and actionable findings for policy stakeholders, practitioners, and the broader field.

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