

SAN MATEO COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT

MIND BODY AWARENESS PROJECT
ANNUAL EVALUATION

2020 - 2021



About the Researcher

Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a nonprofit social research firm dedicated to helping people build better communities by collecting meaningful data, facilitating information-based planning, and developing custom strategies. The firm was founded on the principle that community improvement, initiative sustainability, and program success are closely tied to assessment needs, evaluation of community goals, and development of appropriate responses.

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Program Description

Mind Body Awareness (MBA) staff offer once-a-week 90-minute classes at the Youth Services Center - Juvenile Hall (YSC-JH). The MBA program covers a 10-module curriculum that emphasizes mindfulness, basic goodness, impulse regulation, emotional intelligence, self-compassion, trauma and core beliefs, forgiveness, empathy, belonging, and rites of passage. The program is delivered in eight-week cycles, and the topics are driven by the needs of the group and the curriculum. One or two highly skilled instructors and interns teach MBA classes, and they are provided with clinical supervision weekly. Youths are assigned approximately 30 minutes per week to complete individual work outside of class to bolster their mindfulness education through listening to audio tracks, meditation, and practicing mindfulness exercises.

Programmatic Challenges in Fiscal Year 2020-21

Shelter in Place (SIP) presented challenges for the MBA program. The program transitioned from in-person group sessions to virtual group sessions. Initially, MBA tried virtual group sessions, but it was not effective due to the small youth population. The program did not have enough new participants to stay for a full eight-week session and complete the entire program. Later, the program transitioned to individual sessions, which were slightly more effective. The transition to in-person sessions demonstrated the same challenges, such as a small population. MBA also faced difficulties holding staff training due to the SIP order.

Evaluation Methods

MBA programs are funded by San Mateo County Juvenile Probation's (Probation) Youthful Offender Block Grant (YOBG). MBA monitors programs and then reports client, service, and outcome data to Probation and its evaluator, Applied Survey Research (ASR). The methods and tools used to collect this data are:

Participants and Services: Grantee programs collected demographic data (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) and service data (e.g., type of services, hours of services, etc.) for individual participants. Program staff entered these data into their own data systems prior to transferring the data to ASR for analysis.

Outcomes: MBA also collected three program-specific outcome measures to track progress toward the goal of improving each youth's outcomes:

- Percentage of youths who report improved emotional regulation, self-control, and stress reduction
- Percentage of staff who report improved general behavior in the hall
- Percentage of youths who report greater self-esteem, self-compassion, and empathy

Evidence-Based Practices: YOBG-funded programs are encouraged to follow evidence-based practices. To augment Probation's knowledge of which programs are implemented by funded partners, each funded program provided a catalog of its practices. After receiving this information, ASR runs any new cataloged practices reported through several clearinghouses to determine whether the practices were:

- Evidence-based theory or premise
- Evidence-based model, shown by multiple experimental or quasi-experimental studies to be effective
- Evidence-based practices, or modalities shown to promote positive outcomes
- Evidence-based tools, or instruments that have been validated (concurrent and predictive)

Evaluation Findings

FY 2020-21 Highlights

- Eleven youths were served this fiscal year, with an average of 3.8 months in the program and 17.7 hours spent per youth.
- MBA met its target for the fiscal year on two out of the three performance measures.

Profile of Youths Served

During FY 2020-21, MBA served 11 youths, who spent 3.8 months in the program and had 17.7 hours of service on average (Table 1). Over one-third (36%) of youths served identified as Hispanic/Latino, 18% identified as White/Caucasian, 18% identified as Black/African American, 18% identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 9% identified as Other. Eighty-two percent (82%) of youths self-identified as male, 18% self-identified as female, and 0% as transgender/other, and the average age of youths was 17.1 years old.

Table 1. MBA Youth Services

YOUTH SERVICES	FY 20-21
Youths Served	11
Average Hours Served	17.7
Average Time in Program (Months)	3.8

Program-Specific Outcomes

MBA met its target for FY 2020-21 on two out of three performance measures (Table 2). Ninety percent (90%) of youths reported improved emotional regulation, self-control, and stress reduction. In addition, 85% of youths reported greater self-esteem, self-compassion, and empathy. Sixty percent (60%) of staff reported improved general behavior in the YSC-JH which is short of 80% targeted goal.

Table 2. Program Specific Outcomes

PERFORMANCE MEASURES	FY 20-21 TARGET	FY 20-21 RESULTS
Percent of youths who reported improved emotional regulation, self-control, and stress reduction	80%	90%
Percent of staff who report improved general behavior in the hall	80%	60%
Percent of youths who report greater self-esteem, self-compassion, and empathy	80%	85%

Evidence-Based Practices

In FY 2020-21, YOBG programs were asked to provide the practices and curricula employed in their programs. ASR then evaluated the cataloged programs to determine whether they were evidence-based or promising practices by running them through several evidence-based practice clearinghouses. Table 3 details the practices and curricula that MBA used in its programs.

Table 3. Evidence-Based Practices

PRACTICE	IMPLEMENTATION	RATING
Trauma-Informed Practice	Therapists are trained in understanding the impact of complex trauma on youths and effective ways to address this as an integral part of the therapy. MBA programming holds a trauma-informed approach.	Evidence-based practice according to SAMHSA. ¹
Mindfulness-Based Interventions	Learn basic stress reduction techniques through meditation, and help address impulsivity and self-awareness.	Evidence-based model according to empirical evidence. ²
Empathy-Building Exercises	Build a sense of community and belonging with participants and compassion for self and others.	Emerging practice not yet rated for evidence-base.
Emotional Intelligence	Learn how to be aware of and engage difficult emotions like anger and grief.	Although not recognized as an evidence-based or promising practice on its own, many promising programs for adolescents feature increasing emotional intelligence ³
Communication Skills	Learn the use of non-violent communication and mindful communication.	Although not recognized as an evidence-based or promising practice on its own, many promising programs for anger reduction feature increasing communication skills. ⁴

¹ SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration). (2014). SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, p10. Pub ID#: SMA14-4884. <https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA14-4884/SMA14-4884.pdf>

² Hofmann, S. G., & Gómez, A. F. (2017). Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Anxiety and Depression. *The Psychiatric clinics of North America*, 40(4), 739–749. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psc.2017.08.008>

³ California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare. (2019, November). *keepin' it REAL (kiR)*. Retrieved from [https://www.cebc4cw.org/program/keepin-it-real-kiR/#:~:text=keepin%20it%20REAL%20\(kiR\)%20Middle%20School%20Program%20is%20a,such%20as%20drug%20refusal%20efficacy](https://www.cebc4cw.org/program/keepin-it-real-kiR/#:~:text=keepin%20it%20REAL%20(kiR)%20Middle%20School%20Program%20is%20a,such%20as%20drug%20refusal%20efficacy)

⁴ Reilly, P.M., & Shopshire, M.S. (2019). *Anger Management for Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health Clients: A Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Manual*. SAMHSA Publication No. PEP19-02-01-001. https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/anger_management_manual_508_compliant.pdf

Client Story

Each year, staff at funded programs provide client stories to help illustrate the effect of services on their clients. Table 4 shows a client story provided by MBA for FY 2020-21.

Table 4. Client Success Story

Name of Client	Hayley
Age and Gender	16, female
Reason for Referral	The client was referred by staff. The youth came to an introduction session and chose to attend sessions on her own.
Client’s Behavior, Affect, and Appearance When They First Started in the Program	Initially, Hayley had major issues with staff and other clients in the unit. She struggled with aggression, anxiety during sleep hours, and bullying other clients. She did not have good relations with staff members and shut down instead of communicating her emotions. She was highly reactive outside of class. In class, she liked to “talk things out” but would dismiss conversations that required her to be introspective.
Activity Engagement and Consistency	Hayley attended individual mindfulness sessions each week. She never missed a session. She engaged in mindfulness exercises for homework 50% of the time on her own.
Client’s Behavior, Affect, and Appearance Toward the End of the Program	Toward the end of her program, Hayley initiated questions about mindfulness concepts. She was able to identify and express how her emotions were related to her body senses, thoughts, and actions. Instead of being reactive, she learned to communicate with staff and ask for space during a breakdown. During one breakdown, she asked the staff if she could see her mindfulness facilitator earlier to help her navigate through a trigger. During her last session, she expressed gratitude and communicated her emotions to a staff member with whom she did not get along.
What the Client Learned as a Result of the Program	She learned about Trauma Resilient Tools and Education – the impact of stress on human bodies and how her body is a telling tool to help let her know how she feels. She learned self-awareness and self-regulation tools.
What the Client is Doing Differently in Their Life Now as a Result of the Program	Hayley self-reported improved emotional regulation, self-regulation, self-control, and stress reduction. She is using mindfulness-based interventions, such as breathing exercises before anxiety-filled moments or nights when she can't sleep. She demonstrates improved communication skills. She asks for a break when she feels worked up or names how she is feeling.
The Value of the Program in the Client’s Words	"This class taught me how to listen to my body and take some time before I react to things. It's helping me to stay calm and breathe instead of getting worked up over something that I can't control. I feel like I can go home and be good this time. I can make my room a space that helps me stay calm, so I don't get mad at the people at my house. I can go outside for a walk instead of holding it all in."