The Youth and Family Centers (YFC) began formally offering behavioral health services to students in the Dallas Independent School District in 1995. In 2008-2009 the Youth and Family Center Evaluation investigated the question of whether the YFC had an effect upon the Dallas Independent School District’s (Dallas ISD) students’ involvement with academic intervention or disciplinary programs as measured by student involvement in Student Support Team Stage I, II or III referrals to these programs. Evaluators consulted the Dallas ISD student, eNCORE and disciplinary data bases to evaluate the question. The evaluation also used a qualitative survey to examine the level of YFC operational compliance in line with the Youth and Family Centers 2007-2008 Procedural Manual. Additionally, the number of YFC services delivered, program growth, and characteristics of YFC students and staff were addressed in the evaluation.

Staff Overview

The YFC program employed 68 staff members in 2008-2009. Staff included support and administrative personnel (25), full-time professional employees (15), and part-time permanent staff (28). The part-time staff mostly consisted of therapy providers providing mental health services to students and their families in the evening hours. All but seven staffers were assigned duties at one of the YFC service delivery centers. The seven staffers assigned to the program office provided administrative and leadership services in support of the service delivery centers.

YFC staff’s educational attainment was heavily weighted towards the master degree, with 45 of 68 staffers holding the MA degree. Most of these were therapists providing services to students and their family. Some 15 support staff were high school graduates, many with some college, but without a degree. Four staffers held a Ph.D. degree and four held bachelor degrees.

Client Characteristics

Youth and Family program office records and the Dallas Independent School District’s student databases were consulted to develop data concerning the characteristics of YFC Clients. The YFC program served a total of 3,244 district students during the 2008-2009 school year. YFC demographics closely matched districtwide demographics in terms of ethnicity for Hispanics (62.5% YFC vs. 67.1% districtwide) and African Americans (28.7% YFC vs. 27.0% districtwide).

YFC clients were less likely to be Talented and Gifted program participants (6.4% YFC vs. 7.5% districtwide, but were just as likely to be low socio-economic status (SES) or limited-English proficient (LEP) as their non-client peers (85.1% YFC vs. 87.1% districtwide for low SES and 32.2% for YFC vs. 35.4% district wide for LEP). YFC clients were more heavily distributed in Prekindergarten and Grade 1 through Grade 9 than in Early Childhood, Kindergarten, and Grade 10 through Grade 12. This distribution mirrored the general district population and the proportional differences in student distribution throughout the grades between YFC clients and the general district population never achieved a difference of even 4 percent. The largest difference (-3.66%) occurred at Grade 11, followed by -3.35 percent in Grade 10 and -3.01 percent in Grade 12.

Fall 2008 YFC Survey Results

The Fall 2008 Youth and Family Centers Interview Instrument asked participants to answer questions regarding current Center operational practices to determine the level of Center operational compliance in line with operational policies and procedures outlined in the Youth and Family Centers 2007-2008 Procedure Manual (YFCPM).

Analysis of survey results revealed 1) varying YFC operational practices from Center to Center and 2) procedures and guidelines outlined in the
YFCPM may be too restrictive, too generalized, or silent on issues; which may have served as a barrier to uniform YFC operational compliance.

**YFC Program Growth**

Table 1 presents the number of students served and the number of visits for psycho-social services from the 2004-2005 school year through the 2008-2009 school year. Data for the 2006-2007 school year were not available.

Table 1: Number of YFC Clients and Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Number of Visits</th>
<th>Mean Number of Visits/Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>4,211</td>
<td>24,838</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>3,388</td>
<td>20,469</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>3,599</td>
<td>28,690</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>3,244</td>
<td>26,969</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Disciplinary Referral Characteristics**

The academic and disciplinary referral system, called the Student Support Services, at Dallas ISD was a three stage process. Stage I involved classroom-level minor academic and disciplinary interventions identified and administered in the classroom by the teacher. Stage II involved more serious school-level interventions recommended and approved by the SST. Stage III interventions involved the most serious academic or disciplinary interventions, and may have included removal from the classroom and reassignment to an Alternative Learning Center.

**Hypothesis Building**

During the 2008-2009 school year, 40,798 students received at least one referral for intervention services provided through the Student Support Services discipline system. Eight percent of students in the discipline system were YFC clients. Overall, 33.2 percent of YFC clients received interventions that were Stage I, 4.9 percent were Stage II, and 37 percent were Stage III. The questions then became, were Stage I referrals likely to receive fewer subsequent Stage II or Stage III referrals, suggestive of the efficacy of early intervention, and were YFC clients distinguished in any way from other Stage I students? Table 2 displays the 2008-2009 YFC client and discipline system population.

Table 2: YFC Client and Discipline System Population* (n=40,798)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YFC Client</th>
<th>Stage I</th>
<th>Stage II</th>
<th>Stage III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3,244</td>
<td>18,114</td>
<td>1,629</td>
<td>24,518</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Students may appear in more than one discipline system category at one time.

**Regression Findings Summary**

Something associated with being African American or male (regardless of ethnicity) was not controlled in the models developed for this evaluation, and remained a statistically significant factor in determining how many Stage II and Stage III referrals a student received. Older students were more likely to receive increased Stage II and III referrals than younger students in these data. LEP students were less likely to garner more referrals. Special Education status conferred no additional risk of referral beyond Stage I, and TAG students were statistically less likely to be referred. Students receiving a Stage I referral from any source, or those students that became YFC clients, either on their own or via an SST Stage I referral, were also less likely to garner Stage II and III referrals. Being a YFC client proved beneficial to students regardless of the risk factors they faced.

**Recommendations**

Recommendations for the Youth and Family Centers’ program improvement include (1) Youth and Family administration, Center Managers, clinicians, and non-clinical staff conducting a review of the 2007-2008 Youth and Family Centers Procedural Manual in an effort to expand or narrow procedural guidelines to better guide Center operational practices, create written procedures for significant Center operations that are not currently addressed in the YFCPM, and identify and address barriers to Center operational compliance and (2) undertaking studies to determine additional services or interventions that would be most beneficial in meeting the mental health needs of clients that are male (regardless of ethnicity) and African American.

For more information, see EA09-143-2, at http://www.dallasisd.org/inside_disd/depts/evala
cct/index.htm