

# THE YOUTH AND FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER (YFRC) SHELBY COUNTY, TN

## Process Evaluation

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# 1 | Executive Summary

## *Introduction*

From 2021-2023, a team from the University of Memphis worked with the Division of Community Services to conduct a process evaluation of the new Youth and Family Resource Center (YFRC), formally known as the Youth Assessment Center (YAC). The goal of this evaluation is to provide information regarding the implementation of the center, explore possible impacts of the implementation plan, and to provide recommendations for improvements moving forward. In partnership with the National Assessment Center Association (NAC), the YFRC has developed a logic model with several short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes. Although this model has been applied to centers across the country, none have undergone a process evaluation. Therefore, we will use these outcomes to guide our evaluation questions.

## *Methods*

This process evaluation is a case-study design because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the ways in which the implementation process has occurred, and any possible outcomes related to program implementation. This in-depth understanding of how the YFRC functions during its pilot phase will provide insight into any changes the YFRC should make moving forward. If it is ultimately determined there was no impact of the YFRC on diverting youth and reducing youth justice contact, a process evaluation will provide diagnostic value by identifying if this was due to implementation failure (e.g., intended services not provided) or theory failure (e.g., the program was implemented correctly but failed to produce the expected effects). We draw from data across multiple sources including data from the YFRC, a youth and caregiver feedback survey, interviews with the YFRC Advisory board and staff, a community survey, observations within the YFRC, a survey administered to clients after participating in programs at the YFRC, and a content analysis of local news media.

The full report chronicles the development of the YFRC by providing a timeline depicting the first attempt at an assessment center within Shelby County, followed by the new attempt after partnering with the NAC. Additionally, we aim to answer the following questions:

1. [How many youths are referred to the center and how many received services?](#)
2. [What are the demographics of those youth who are referred to the center?](#)
3. [Are members of the target population aware of the center?](#)
4. [Are the intended targets receiving services?](#)
5. [Are staffing and resources sufficient to meet demand?](#)
6. [Is the service provider list adequate for the needs of those who are referred to the center?](#)
7. [Is the center well-organized and does it communicate effectively with service providers?](#)
8. [Are participants satisfied with their involvement in the YFRC?](#)
9. [Is there support for the YFRC from law enforcement, the community, and youth?](#)
10. [What barriers/obstacles are present according to law enforcement, the community, and youth?](#)

## **Results**

In general, we find that the implementation of services at the YFRC has been both beneficial to many clients yet also full of challenges, obstacles, and barriers. In total, 434 unique, eligible youth were referred to the YFRC during FY 2023, with 256 (59%) youth receiving a screening. Of these youth, 92 were determined to have serious needs and were recommended for ongoing services, and 71 were successfully enrolled in those services. Thus, around three out of four (77%) of youth with serious needs were connected to services to address those needs. A subsequent outcome evaluation is needed to determine the success of these referrals. In total, 59% of all cases referred to the YFRC were screened; however, 41% of cases did not follow through with a screening and plans were not developed for these youth.

During the first nine months of operation, all referred youth received a full assessment as opposed to a brief screening to determine if the comprehensive assessment was needed. This led to the creation of a waitlist which subsequently slowed down and ultimately halted referrals from law enforcement. However, after a restructuring of leadership and policies at the YFRC, the screening and assessment process was streamlined, and the center is now operating as intended.

Additional barriers faced by the center revolve around general operations (e.g., finding appropriate staffing), law enforcement training (e.g., developing clear guidelines), connecting with families (e.g., unable to contact via phone or families face transportation issues), and community buy-in (e.g., many community members

are still unaware of the center or have a misunderstanding of what the YFRC is capable of).

## ***Recommendations Moving Forward***

In light of these findings, we draw the following conclusions and recommendations:

### **WHAT IS WORKING**

- 1. YFRC serves as a single point of contact for families and connects them with services and support systems.*
- 2. A total of 463 referrals and 257 screenings during the first year of operation represents a significant improvement over the original Youth Assessment Center.*
- 3. Youth report satisfaction with staff and services at the YFRC.*
- 4. Leadership has identified key issues during the initial phase of the YFRC and has taken steps to improve the screening and assessment process.*

### **AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT**

- 5. Need to follow NAC's recommendations for using an initial broad-based screening tool to identify whether more in-depth assessment is needed.*
- 6. Address staffing and organizational issues as needed.*
- 7. Provide consistent training across law enforcement precincts.*
- 8. Ensure the privacy of youth and families who participate in screenings or activities at the YFRC.*
- 9. Increase community awareness of the YFRC.*
- 10. Develop strategies to make sure all data are being collected.*

### **CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

- 11. Develop the use of mobile screening and/or satellite locations.*
- 12. Address transportation issues among families who want to receive services.*
- 13. Consider the role of net-widening as it relates to justice-system contact.*

## 2 | Introduction

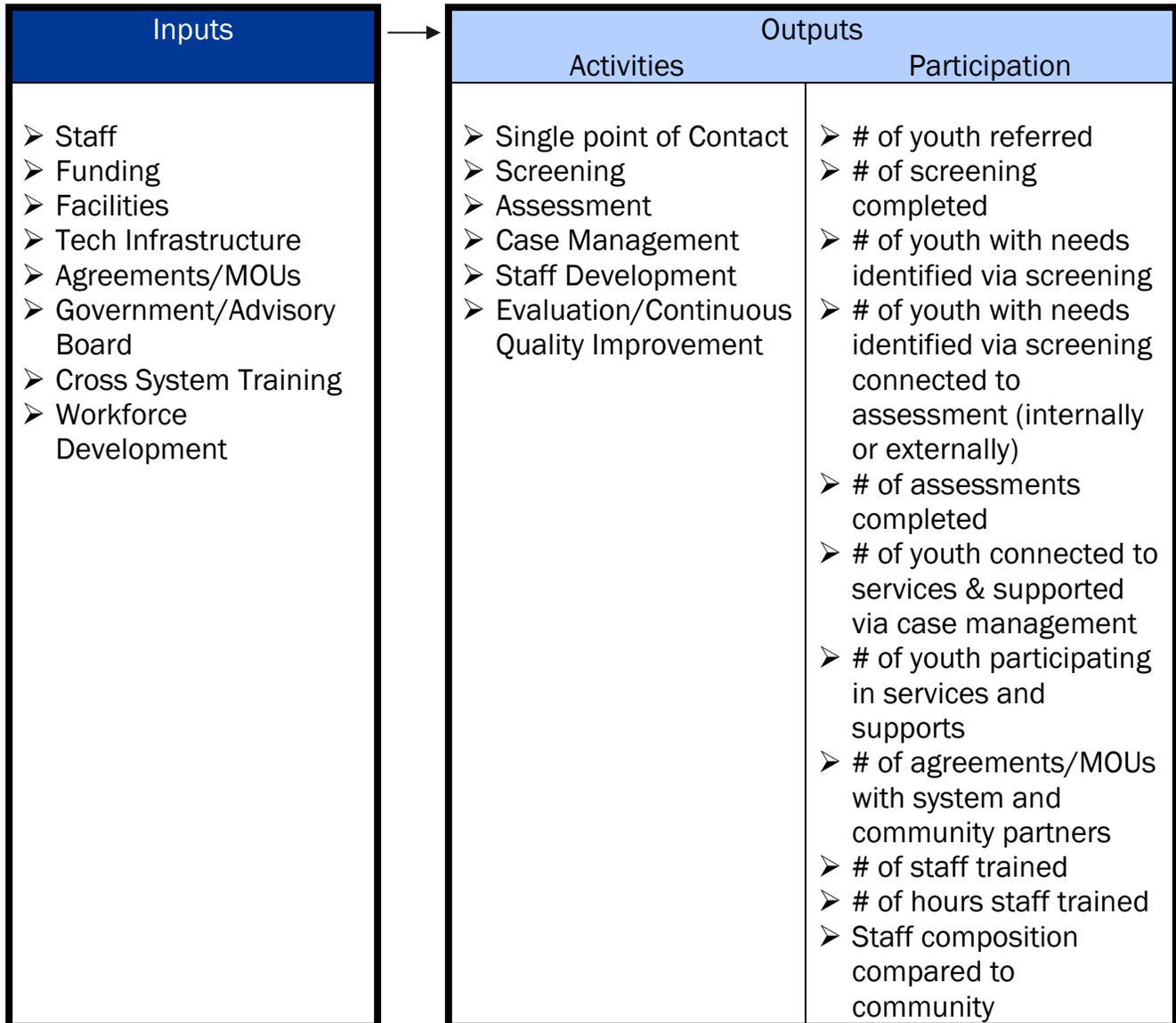
In 2016, a coordinated effort facilitated by the Shelby County Division of Community Services aimed to develop an assessment center with the primary goal of diverting youth from the juvenile justice system. The original pilot, which lasted from 2018-2020, served fewer than 100 youth and was deemed “unsuccessful” by the Shelby County Director of Community Services. During this time, the National Assessment Center Association (NAC) was created and sought to provide technical assistance, information, and training for current and future assessment centers around the country. In 2021, the NAC developed a common framework with guiding principles, and the Division of Community Services began working with the NAC to redesign the center in Shelby County. This new model adopts several practices recommended by the NAC that were not formally utilized, including the need for the center to be a neutral entity that serves as bridge to services and support from multiple agencies. The full logic model developed by the NAC is depicted in Figure 1.

In 2021, a team from the University of Memphis (UofM) began working with the Division of Community Services to conduct a process evaluation of the new center. The goal of this evaluation is to provide the director with information regarding the implementation of the center, explore possible impacts of the implementation plan, and to provide recommendations for improvements moving forward. This in-depth understanding of how the center functions during its pilot phase will provide insight into any changes the YFRC should make moving forward. If it is ultimately determined there was no impact of the center on diverting youth and reducing youth justice contact, our results can provide diagnostic value by identifying if this was due to implementation failure (e.g., intended services not provided) or theory failure (e.g., program was implemented correctly but failed to produce expected effects). The evaluation is led by Dr. Tim McCuddy, an assistant professor in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the UofM.

The new YFRC originally identified three main goals: (1) To divert as many youths as possible, consistent with public safety, from entering or going deeper into the juvenile justice system, through early intervention, comprehensive assessment, and referral to supportive services and positive strategies tailored to address each youth and family’s individual needs; (2) To increase effectiveness in the use of limited community resources through increased integration, enhanced accountability, and the elimination of duplication of effort; and (3) To serve as a resource and facilitate

better relationships between youth, law enforcement, agencies serving youth, families, and the community

**Figure 1. Assessment Center Logic Model\***



\*Full model includes additional outcomes related to impact

In general, there are two key questions that guide a process evaluation: (1) whether a program is reaching the appropriate target population, and (2) whether its service delivery and support functions are consistent with program design specification or other appropriate standards. Although this research will not measure the impact of the center, we will be able to address the following questions that align with the newly established goals:

1. How many youths are referred to the center and how many received services?
2. What are the demographics of those youth who are referred to the center?
3. Are members of the target population aware of the center?
4. Are the intended targets receiving services?
5. Are staffing and resources sufficient to meet demand?
6. Is the service provider list adequate for the needs of those who are referred to the center?
7. Is the center well-organized and does it communicate effectively with service providers?
8. Are participants satisfied with their involvement in the YFRC?
9. Is there support for the YFRC from law enforcement, the community, and youth?
10. What barriers/obstacles are present according to law enforcement, the community, and youth?

In the next section, we provide a detailed overview of the timeline of both the original Youth Assessment Center followed by the revised Youth and Family Resource Center. Next, we answer the 10 core research questions using data from multiple sources. Finally, we provide recommendations for moving forward that are informed by our findings.

### 3 | Methods/Data

Data for the process evaluation came from a variety of sources. Specifically, we use the following information to answer the 10 core research questions.

- **YFRC Data:** A data sharing agreement is in place that provides the evaluation team access to de-identified information regarding the youth who have received screenings/assessments at the center.
- **Youth Feedback Survey:** Youth are asked to complete a short survey when they leave the center during their initial visit. This survey includes four questions related to their experiences and satisfaction with the center, along with open-ended questions asking what was liked most/least and what could be done differently. In addition to these questions which were provided by the NAC, the evaluation team added 7 questions asking about feelings of safety inside/outside of the center as well as any issues with transportation, location, and communication. A total of 92 participants completed the survey. Unfortunately, the additional 7 questions to the survey were not added when it was first administered, meaning this information is missing from youth who were referred during the first 6 months of operation. Only 45 complete surveys were obtained, which is around 49% of those who submitted a survey. Additionally, youth were asked to take the survey on their phones on the way home from the YFRC. Since this was not part of the paperwork completed at the YFRC, we believe this contributed to a low response rate. In total we have complete data on 10% of all youth referred to the YFRC, which corresponds to 18% of all youth screened during the study period.
- **Caregiver Feedback Survey:** Caregivers who brought youth to the YFRC were also asked to complete a short survey upon leaving the center. The same set of questions that appeared in the youth feedback survey also appeared in this survey. A total of 86 caregivers completed the survey; however only 41 (48%) contain information on all survey items due to the same issue described in the Youth Feedback Survey.

- **Observations within the Center:** From February 2023 through April 2023, research team members made regular visits to the YFRC to observe what was happening in the center. Research team members would normally sit quietly and take notes on what they observed. A total of 10 observations were conducted.
- **Community Survey:** On March 25, 2023, a research team of 6 people canvassed the Raleigh neighborhood in the area immediately surrounding the YFRC for approximately 5 hours. The research team talked with residents, provided them with the list of YFRC goals, and asked them to fill out a 9-question survey about the YFRC. The survey included 5 Likert-scale type questions inquiring about topics such as whether they knew about the center, whether they had experience at the center, and how they felt about the center. These questions were followed by 3 open-ended response questions where residents could list the barriers/obstacles they saw at the YFRC, what they would like to change about the YFRC, and any other thoughts about the YFRC. A total of 33 people completed the survey.
- **Interviews with the YFRC Advisory Board:** During the summer of 2022, a qualitative researcher from the evaluation team invited all 13 members of the YFRC Advisory Board to complete a 1:1 Zoom or in-person interview where Advisory Board members were asked, using a semi-structured interview guide, about the strengths and challenges of the YFRC. Eight Advisory Board members opted to participate. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes in length with the average being 50 minutes. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. They were then coded using NVIVO software.
- **Media Analysis:** The research team reviewed all mentions of the YAC and YFRC in local published news media (i.e., The Commercial Appeal and Daily Memphian) as well as local broadcast news agencies (i.e., WREG, WMCTV, Fox 13, ABC 24). A total of 28 articles were reviewed.
- **Interviews with the YFRC Staff:** Between March and June of 2023, a qualitative researcher interviewed 4 staff members at the center including: 2 Mental Health Service Coordinators, whose title where officially changed to

Youth Advocates, 2 Leadership position holders within the Shelby County government: the Director of Community Services with Shelby County and the Deputy Director of Community Service with Shelby County. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. They were then coded using NVIVO software. One staff member was interviewed twice, once when the YFRC was under the direction of the former executive director, and once more after the Deputy Director of Community Services filled in as interim director of the YFRC. This second interview is referred to as the “post-transition interview.”

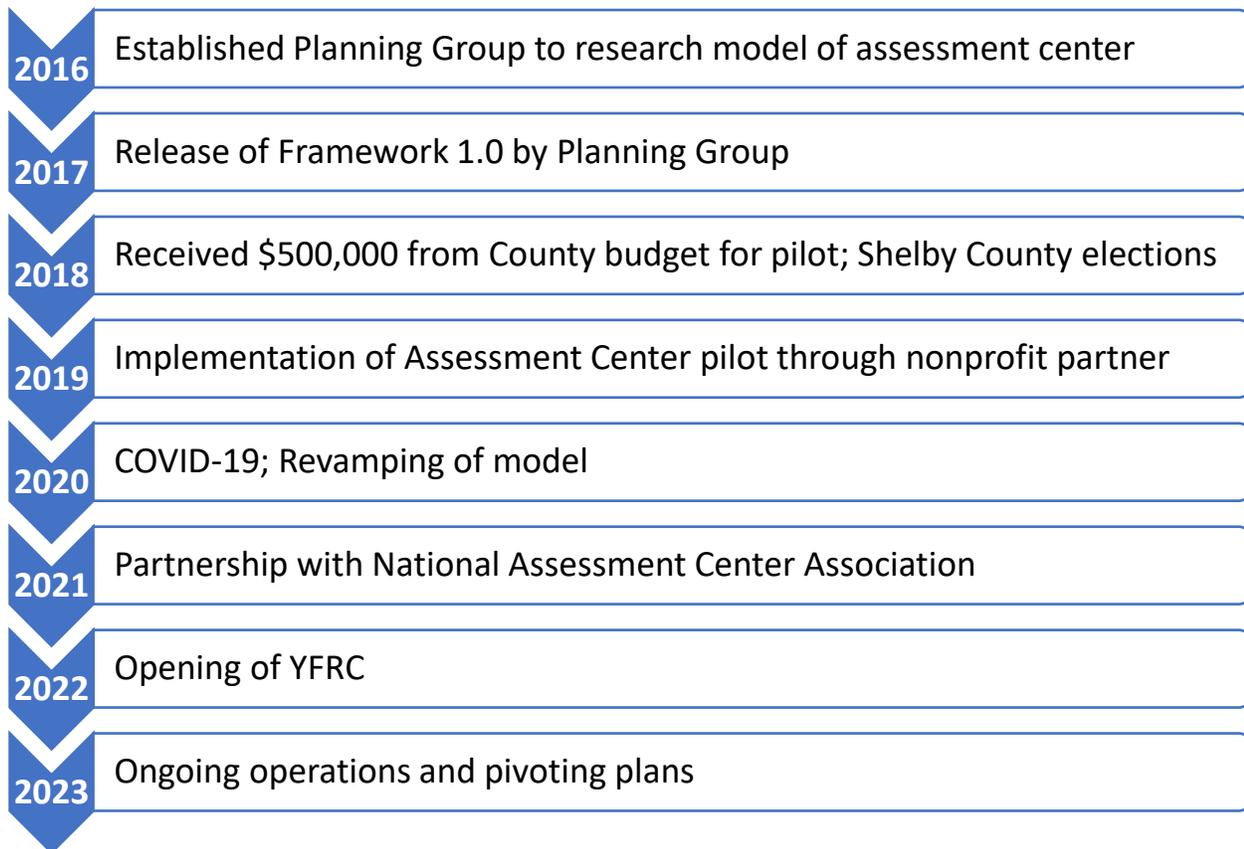
**Interviews with the YFRC Leadership.** In June 2023, two final interviews were completed separately with the director and deputy director of the Division of Community Services. One interview was in-person while the other was conducted via zoom. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim.

**Program Feedback Surveys:** To capture input from participants in various programs being offered at the YFRC, a survey was provided that asked questions related to knowledge, skills, empowerment, accessibility, and encouragement. YFRC staff chose to only administer this three times during the study period, capturing information from only 10 respondents. Nine of the respondents were part of mentoring services, and one respondent was part of psychological testing. These were completed in January 2023 on the 3rd, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 24<sup>th</sup>.

- **Notes from Regular Meetings with YFRC Staff:** Over the course of the process evaluation, the YFRC staff met approximately 1-3 times per month with the research team. Topics covered in these meetings included current policies/procedures within the center, current barriers and strengths within the center, and developments within the process evaluation. The research team took detailed notes at each of these meetings. At the end of the process evaluation, all notes were re-read by three members of the research team and then synthesized to provide notable information for the process evaluation.
- **Law Enforcement Surveys.** The research team was unable to coordinate with the Memphis Police Department to gather officer input related to the YFRC. This is largely attributed to changing personnel at the YFRC and difficulty in

coordinating a time to meet with all parties involved. The evaluation plan called for interviews with law enforcement to capture their level of support and training for the YFRC, in addition to how they use their discretion to refer youth to the YFRC. After multiple attempts at coordinating the interviews, it was decided to pivot to conduct a survey, which would take less time away from the officers. The research team was scheduled to attend training at the Austin Peay Precinct in April 2023, with the intent of discussing additional data collection. This training was cancelled when the executive director was terminated, and no other training courses were scheduled during the study period.

## 4 | Timeline of the YFRC



The above timeline provides a preliminary understanding of the evolution of the YFRC since 2016. On the following pages, we chronicle these years with added detail and specific events.

2016

## Established Planning Group to research model of assessment center

In 2016, Dorcas Young Griffin, Shelby County Director of Community Services, led a team to develop a youth program with the goal of diverting youth from the juvenile justice system. They began researching how other cities have implemented similar programming and began planning the Memphis version which was to be named the Youth Assessment Center (YAC).

Key notes on the development of the YAC:

- At the time, there were not any common frameworks, principles, or associations coordinating assessment centers that existed across the country.
- The Miami model of the 1990s was one model that the group heavily researched. In this model, youth who committed any type of offense were brought to a clearinghouse where they would all receive screening and/or assessment. However, this created issues because the city did not have the capacity to do this. This information was taken seriously by the Memphis YAC planning group.

2017

## Release of Framework 1.0 by Planning Group

In 2017, the YAC planning group released a preliminary plan regarding the operations of the YAC. This plan can be found here:  
<https://www.shelbycountyttn.gov/DocumentCenter/View/32391/Shelby-County-Youth-Assessment-Resouce-Center-Framework-October-2017-Version-docx?bidId=>

Key aspects of YAC would include:

- Voluntary referrals: Youth would have a choice of whether they would go to the new program.
- Referral center for services: YAC would not be a stop on the way to juvenile justice, but rather a referral center for social services.

- Eligible offenses: Based on evidence that other cities had been unsuccessful when they tried to implement this for all youth committing offenses, the YAC would focus on only a small number of possible offenses. This would allow the program to work with more limited resources and be a voluntary program.

#### Media Coverage in 2017:

- The Commercial Appeal published 7 articles during the month of October. They generally reported informative details of the YAC, as well as expressed optimism for the future of the center and the families they would serve. Most concerns expressed were regarding accountability and fair treatment of youth.

2018

Received \$500,000 from County budget for pilot; Shelby County elections

In 2018, the YAC received \$500,000 from Shelby County to pilot the operations of the YAC. The YAC also partnered with the University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC) to provide services. All funding went directly to UTHSC since they were providing screenings, assessments, and the services.

#### Key events of 2018 include:

- Shelby County and UTHSC signed a contract to work together on the development of the YAC.
- The plan was for law enforcement to drive youth to the YAC.
- Because of political shifts in 2018, the contract was not officially signed until December of that year.

#### Media Coverage in 2018:

- The Commercial Appeal and The Daily Memphian both published 1 article during the month of December. Both articles are primarily informational, reporting funding and coordination with the UTHSC. There were still some concerns with fair treatment, with a new concern being that the center would not be open 24/7. The Daily Memphian article in particular called for intended procedures and policies to be made public as soon as possible.

2019

## Implementation of Assessment Center pilot through nonprofit partner

In May 2019, the YAC officially opened at UTHSC. The first part of the year was needed to remodel space for the YAC. Additionally, there was confusion on the roles within the center and what they entailed, so there were noted difficulties in creating policies and procedures.

Key events of 2019 include:

- Law enforcement officers were driving the youth to the UTHSC in the backseat of police cars with handcuffs on.
- UTHSC personnel took issue with the need to handcuff youth on their way to receive services and told law enforcement they would not receive youth in handcuffs.
- Law enforcement would not comply and then began driving youth directly to the police station instead of the YAC.
- Shelby County personnel wanted screenings/assessments completed in a neutral area (that was not associated with law enforcement or services), but they did not have such area to be able to do so.
- Approximately 60 youth were referred to the center during an 18-month period. It is unclear how many of these youth received services.

Media Coverage in 2019:

- The Daily Memphian published 1 article during the month of August. The primary goal of the article was to clear up any confusion and concerns the community may have had over the “Juvenile Assessment Center.”

2020

## COVID-19; Revamping of model

In 2020, though the county commission had money in the budget to keep things moving forward, the pandemic led to a change in focus. The county YAC personnel used the time to revamp the model and address the concerns of the prior year. YAC

personnel decided that the first attempt had been a failure. Possible reasons cited for this failure included:

- The first attempted pilot of the proposed framework was created without the benefit of common guiding principles.
- The expectation was that the work would be directly operated by a nonprofit, with Shelby County monitoring a contract with the nonprofit (but that did not pan out as planned).
- There was an expectation that the nonprofit would coordinate and deliver services (but that removes the ability to have neutrality).

Key events of 2020 include:

- YAC decided to partner with the NAC which had been created in 2019.
- Following advice from NAC, YAC prioritized finding a new site that was neutral from both law enforcement and social services.
- The City of Memphis allocated the former Raleigh Library to become the new site.
- The YAC received an additional \$500,000 from the county to continue developing/implementing the program. They used the money to renovate the building and to pay staff to conduct assessments.

Media Coverage in 2020:

- The Daily Memphian published 2 articles in February and 1 article in May. The Commercial Appeal published 2 articles in October. Fox 13 News also published 1 article in the month of October. The media tone became more critical this year, with complaints regarding the speed and efficiency of providing services to children, the lack of cooperation between the center and the Memphis Police Department (MPD). There was a general call for clarification.

2021

Partnership with National Assessment Center Association

In 2021, the NAC released a common framework with guiding principles. This framework can be found here: <https://www.nacassociation.org/the-assessment->

center-framework. Utilizing this framework based on evidence-based practices, a new assessment center was created. To avoid confusion, the name was changed to the “Youth and Family Resource Center” (YFRC). The new plans for the YFRC had the same general goal of youth diversion, but was different from the YAC in the following ways:

- It would be uniquely designed for Shelby County but use the NAC common framework and principles to base the center’s operation.
- The center would be operated directly by the Division of Community Services.
- The Division would directly provide the services that it is best equipped to offer, which are 1) designing a system of referral, 2) screening, 3) assessment, 4) development of individualized plan and 5) follow-up.
- As neutrality is important to ensure that youth and families get the right set of services for their unique case, the service plan would incorporate direct services from external providers.
- All youth and families who were to contact the center would not necessarily be screened or assessed or have a plan developed by center staff but could receive information about service provider partners.
- Anyone could refer youth to the center, be it the community, MPD, the school, or families.

#### Media Coverage in 2021:

- The Daily Memphian published 1 article in June. It recognized that the YAC was not as it had hoped to be, with a focus on how the YFRC would be operated differently. The article also acknowledged that many hoped the center would be open 24/7 but that there simply was not enough funding for such operations at the moment.

#### Director Position:

- Renae Milton was hired as the director of the YFRC from September 2021 to November 2021. She came into the position with a history of working closely with youth in Philadelphia, PA. Ms. Milton’s tenure as director was a brief one due to a lack of leadership experience and a lack of vision and initiative that aligned with the YFRC.

2022

## Opening of YFRC

In 2022, the YFRC officially opened in the Raleigh neighborhood. The goal was originally to open in July of 2021, but efforts were slowed due to renovations and supply chain issues.

Key events of this year include:

- January 2022 –
  - The County Mayor made the decision to have the YFRC executive director be a mayoral appointed position.
  - James Nelson was identified as a potential candidate to serve as executive director but was never officially appointed to the position. Interviews with staff revealed no identifiable reasons as to why Nelson never stepped into the position, though it was speculated during weekly meetings with the YFRC staff that his hiring fell through due to not residing within county boundaries.
  - The Commercial Appeal published an article highlighting Mayor Strickland’s Annual Address, with an emphasis on the YFRC in need of more resources.
- February 2022 –
  - The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MPD and YFRC was delayed as negotiations were underway with the city and law enforcement.
  - The YFRC was implementing a contract with the University of Memphis Social Work Department to help provide services to youth.
- March 2022 –
  - Tamika Davis, LCSW, appointed as new YFRC executive director.
  - The YFRC received funding through various outside sources to cover case management and executive director positions.
  - WREG published an article that highlights MPD training to utilize the YFRC as a tool and re-introduces the center and its goals to the public.
- April 2022 –
  - YFRC officially began completing youth assessments. The first assessment came from a walk-in.

- The MOU was finalized with MPD. The finalized list of referable offenses includes simple assault, criminal trespass, disorderly conduct, gambling, minor possession of tobacco, minor possession of alcohol, simple possession or causal exchange, possession of drug paraphernalia, possession without lawful prescription, theft of property/shoplifting, unlawful possession of controlled substance, vandalism.
- May 2022 –
  - The first law enforcement training occurred, led by Tamika Davis. Note: there is no documented information of what this training entailed, the content of the training, the number of police officers who were trained, or the purpose of the training.
  - The Daily Memphian published 2 articles celebrating the renovations that the center was undergoing as well as highlighting some of the resources that will be available at the YFRC.
- June 2022 –
  - June 16<sup>th</sup> was the Grand Opening where the mayor did a ceremonial ribbon cutting and media outlets were invited to document the occasion.
  - In attempts to ensure safety in and around the location of the center, a security guard was hired.
  - The local Memphis ABC published an article to garner some attention towards the new YFRC.
- July 2022 –
  - Tamika Davis conducted another law enforcement training. The only details she documented were that it was “systematic” and “strategic.” After several attempts by the research team to gain access to the manual or protocol used to conduct these trainings, the team was finally made aware that Mrs. Davis had no formal manuscript or training guide for the training
- August – December – 2022
  - Continued assessments totaling approximately 100 by the end of the calendar year.
  - The Commercial Appeal and Fox 13 News each published an article. The Commercial Appeal article referenced the YFRC as a potential

resource for MPD to enforce curfew on youth. The Fox 13 News article was an anecdotal story of a client who had benefited from the center.

2023

### Ongoing operations and pivoting plans

As the YFRC continued operations, it became clear that there was a backlog and youth were not receiving services in a timely manner. By March, approximately 192 youth had been assessed, however, of the 192 youth, 100 youth were placed on a waitlist after having been referred to the center but not having received services. The need for such a list was one of many indicators highlighting the inadequateness of the current procedures. As a result, the Deputy Division Director of Communities Service stepped in to assist with the overall and day-to-day operations. However, it soon became clear to both the Director of the Division of Community Services and Deputy Division Director that protocols needed to be revamped entirely so that youth could receive services in a more timely and efficient manner. Furthermore, law enforcement training needed to be conducted in a more systematic and documented way. On March 30<sup>th</sup>, the then executive director of the center was let go in order to forge a path for a better future for YFRC. After the removal of the director of the center, the Deputy Division Director (acting as interim Director of the YFRC) realized that under the former director's direction, the center had not been following the proper protocol for screening and assessment. Rather than screening first and then assessing, if necessary, all youth being referred were immediately assessed. This is part of what was contributing to the backlog.

On April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the Deputy Division Director and acting interim director of the center led a meeting with all YFRC staff where they mapped out a future for the YFRC which would include three branches: the Assessment Center, Mental Health Coordination, and SAMSHA System of Care. The Assessment Center branch of the YFRC would be characterized by a single point of contact, a screening assessment, and connection with community. These efforts are still ongoing.

As a main priority, YFRC staff immediately began working to contact, screen, and assess all youth who had been referred to the center. As of June 30<sup>th</sup>, the executive

director position had not been filled, although the waitlist had been eliminated and staff reported smoother operations under the interim director.

#### Media Coverage in 2023 (YTD):

- The Commercial Appeal published one article in January and both The Daily Memphian and Fox 13 News published one article each in March. The Commercial Appeal article was another anecdotal success story. The Daily Memphian article was a mention of how the YFRC should broaden its scope and availability, while the Fox 13 article was meant to inform the public that the YFRC is offering some youth mental health and mentoring services.

## 5 | Process Evaluation Questions

Our process evaluation sought to answer 10 specific questions as designated at the beginning of the evaluation. These questions were aimed to assess the implementation and roll-out of the YFRC during FY 2023. In the following pages, we delve specifically into each question and its answers.

### Question #1: How many youths are referred to the center and how many received services?

The Logic Model (Figure 1) provides several outputs that overlap with this first research question. Using **YFRC Data**, the table below provides general data on participants of the YFRC from up until June 30, 2023.

# of (eligible) youth referred	434
# of (unique) screenings completed	256
# of youth with needs identified via screening	94
# of youth with needs identified via screening connected to assessment (internally or externally)	---
# of assessments completed	141
# of youth connected to services	92
# of youth participating in services and supports	71
# of agreements/MOUs with system and community partners	6

**Referrals.** A total of 463 referrals were sent to the YFRC in FY 2023. Of these, 8 were referred twice (1.7%). Of the 455 unique youth, 21 were not eligible to be seen due to one of four reasons: 1) they were outside of the client range (12 to 17 years old), 2) they had multiple summons, or 3) they had a summons with an ineligible offense. As such, there are 434 unique clients served out of the 463 referrals.

Data were gathered on offense type from 396 referrals. This was not required information until May 2023, so information is missing on around 14% of referrals. The most common offense was simple assault (46%) followed by theft of property (13%) and unlawful possession of a controlled substance (12%). Other common offenses include vandalism (7%), disorderly conduct (6%), curfew violations (4%) and criminal trespass (4%). There were single referrals for resisting detention, tobacco possession, weapon possession on school property, sexual battery, and truancy. Additionally, 4% of referrals included multiple offenses.

During the first year of operation, referrals came from four different precincts. Most were from The Austin Peay precinct (42%), followed by Raines (32%), Ridgeway (13%), and Crump (12%).

A vast majority of referrals (91%) come from law enforcement, with about 3% coming from parents/guardians and 3% coming from schools. The remaining referrals came from Juvenile Court, the public defender's office, self-referrals, and the news (all less than 1% of cases).

**Screenings.** A total of 257 screenings were completed among 256 youth, but it is important to note how the process varied over time. The NAC recommends initial screenings to determine if full assessments are needed. However, the YFRC initially completed full CANS assessments on all referred youth. The process was revised on May 1, 2023, where an abbreviated CANS screening is now first used to determine if a more comprehensive assessment is needed. Prior to this change, 141 youth received a "screening" via the full assessment tool. From May 1 to June 30, 2013, 116 youth received the abbreviated screening. The duplicate screening involves a single case where a client received the abbreviated screening followed by the more comprehensive assessment tool. In total, 256 unique youth received screenings.

There were 178 youth who were eligible for a referral who did not complete a screening. This corresponds to 41% of all referred youth. Among these cases, 90 (50%) were unable to be contacted after three attempts over a one-week

period, 57 (32%) scheduled screenings and the caregiver did not show up, 20 (11%) caregivers denied services, and in 9 cases (5%) contact was made but no screening was scheduled. There are two active clients whom the YFRC are working with currently.

There were 6 instances where existing clients received a summons after being enrolled in services. Rather than conduct another screening, the action plan was revised with additional activities.

When considering the *total number of unique youths referred to the YFRC*, we find that 21% of all eligible referred youth were unable to be contacted, in 13% of cases contact was made but there was no follow-through, and about 5% of families refused services. In total, these issues contributed to 41% of all referrals never receiving a screening.

**(Serious) Needs Identified.** Action plans were developed for all 256 youth who were screened, and 94 youth were determined to have more serious needs. The level of seriousness is determined by the CANS assessment, where at least two domains of need were reported for these 94 youth.

**Connecting Screening and Assessment:** This information is unavailable due to the lack of initial screenings used for the first 141 youth referred to the YFRC. However, a total of 29 youth (6.7% of referred youth; 11% of screened youth) were referred for psychological testing

**Assessments Completed.** A total of 141 assessments were completed. Due to the confusion over the screening and assessment process, only the abbreviated screening tool has been used since March 2023.

**Youth Connected to Services.** A total of 92 high-risk youths were connected to a service. All youth and families are provided resources via their action plan.

**Youth Participating in Services.** A total of 71 high-risk youths were enrolled in services. Of those enrolled, 38 were enrolled in at least one service with 33 enrolled in multiple services. A total of 21 youth refused services due to being ineligible according to the provider, the provider was unable to contact the

family, or there is no information reported since this is not a required field in the form. As whole, the YFRC was successful in connecting 77% of high-risk youth with services; however, 23% of these youth remain unconnected. As it relates to total youth screened by the YFRC, around 36% of cases were deemed high-risk. This corresponds to around 21% of all unique youth referred to the YFRC.

**MOUs and Agreements.** The YFRC has over 160 programs and services as part of its system of referral and collaboration partners. Additionally, six contracts exist between the YFRC and the Memphis Police Department, the University of Memphis Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, the University of Memphis SMART Center, GAME Changers, Behavioral Science Consulting, and a local therapist.

#### **Question #2: What are the demographics of those youth who are referred to the center?**

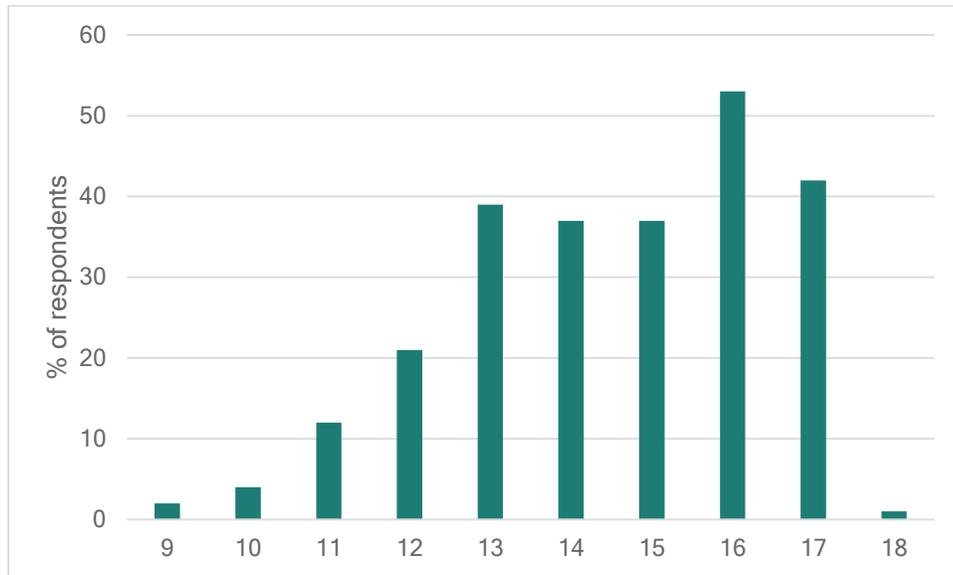
Of the referrals that reported to the YFRC for screening, 59% identified as male, 37% identified as female, 2% identified as non-binary, and 3% did not report their gender.

Around 95% of all screened referrals identified as African American/Black, with 1% identifying as White. Information on race was not recorded in 4% of cases, with 1% reporting “other” as their race.

The average age for a screened referral was 14.5, with a modal age of 16 (21% of all cases). Ages ranged from 9 to 18 years old. Around 16% of all screened referrals were for youth ages 9-12.

The demographics of youth referred to the YFRC but not screened are largely similar, although these youth are more likely to be female (48%) and slightly older (14.7).

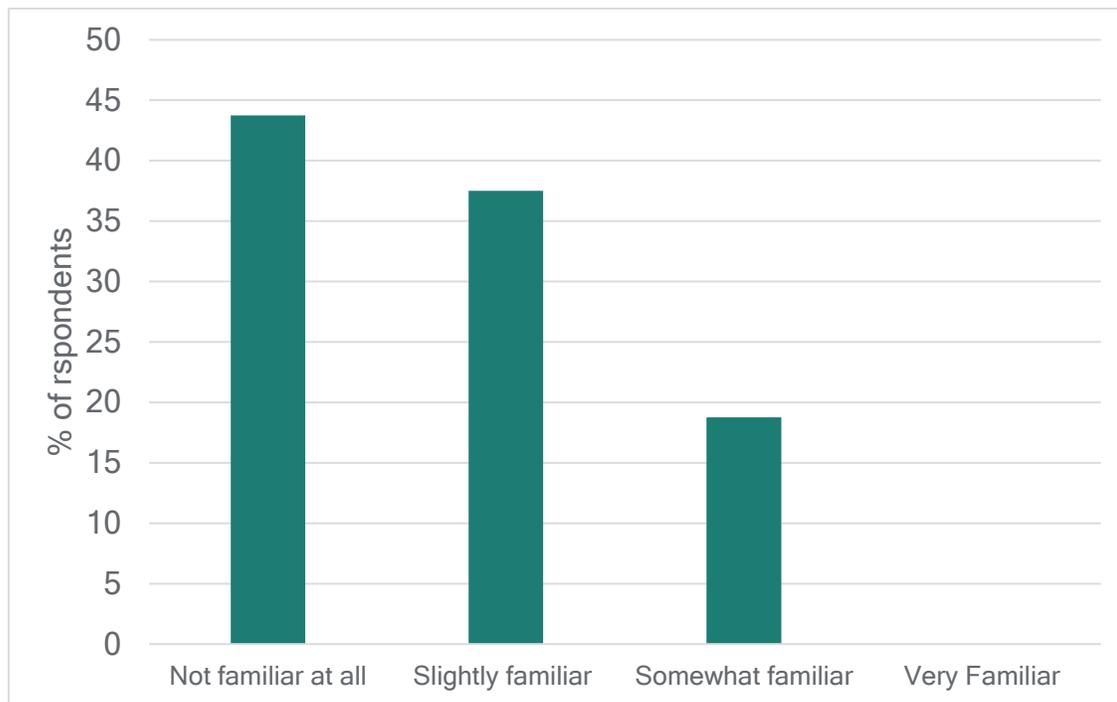
Figure 2. Age Distribution among Screened Referrals



These results must be interpreted with caution, as we only have data on 59% of youth who were referred to the YFRC. We do not have demographic information on the 41% of youth who never received a screening.

### Question #3: Are members of the target population aware of the center?

Figure 3. How Familiar Are you with the YFRC?



Using the **Community Survey**, Respondents were first asked “How familiar are you with the Youth and Family Resource Center (YFRC)?” As depicted in Figure 3, just under half (44%) of respondents report not being familiar at all with the YFRC. Around 38% report being slightly familiar, while 19% reported being somewhat familiar. No respondents indicated they were very familiar with the center.

It appears there is limited awareness of the YFRC among residents in the community immediately surrounding the center. Given how the NAC emphasizes community engagement, we feel this is an area in need of improvement.

### Question #4: Are the intended targets receiving services?

Given the restructuring of the YFRC, it is difficult to ascertain if intended targets are receiving services. Around 41% of all referrals do not engage with the YFRC, thus we cannot determine the level of need among these youth.

Of the 256 youth who were referred and screened, it appears they are receiving services appropriate to their needs.

The development of a waitlist, which grew to over 100 cases, raises concerns about the timeliness of services. It was reported in some instances youth spent more than a month waiting to be connected to services. Since the waitlist has been eliminated, this should not be a concern moving forward.

#### **Question #5: Are staffing and resources sufficient to meet demand?**

On the **Caregiver Feedback** survey, caregivers were asked, “Were there any issues getting in touch with the center to set up your appointment?” Only 2 out of the 41 caregivers (4.9%) who responded to this question did so affirmatively. The other caregivers (95.1%) all reported no issues with setting up the appointments.

According to **Notes from Regular Meetings with YFRC Staff**, staffing and resources were largely insufficient in the following ways:

1. Finding an adequate executive director to run the YFRC has been a challenge. In early 2022, multiple attempts were made to find a qualified candidate. In late March of 2022, Tamika Davis was hired, but after one year in the position, she was let go due to multiple concerns involving the operations at the YFRC, including the development of a waitlist that resulted in a pause in referrals from MPD. Specifically, she was unable to systematically train law enforcement, establish connections with local secondary schools, efficiently manage youth referrals to the center, and efficiently connect youth with services. While there are many examples where she was successful in these areas, there were over 100 youth on a waitlist at the time of her termination.
2. The previous executive director demonstrated an inability to clearly communicate with the research team, which placed significant strain on the evaluation process. Attempts to withhold information, a lack of transparency in protocol, and the canceling and last-minute rescheduling of meetings proved to be a severe hindrance to the

research team's ability to accurately evaluate the program. Other noted issues included not administering program feedback surveys, not adjusting the youth feedback survey in a timely manner which resulted in half of all cases missing information on key items of interest, and the lack of follow through with connecting the research team to law enforcement to observe training and collect data.

3. There was some controversy with the original appointment of the executive director among the Advisory Board because the appointment went contrary to the by-laws. According to the by-laws, the Advisory Board was supposed to vet individuals and submit names to the mayor who could then choose to appoint people from the Advisory Board's recommendations. However, the Advisory Board was not consulted prior to the appointment.
4. In early 2023, the YFRC was receiving far more referrals than they could handle and by March of that year, there were approximately 100 youth on a waitlist. The executive director cited this as being due to insufficient staffing to handle connecting youth with services. She therefore decided to halt new assessments within the center in favor of focusing on youth who had already been assessed. She cited staffing issues as the reason for the large waitlist. However, when the executive director was let go, it became apparent that she was not following the proper screening/assessment protocol and perhaps the issue was not an insufficient number of staff, but rather the staff were not following the efficient protocol advised by NAC. All youth were receiving assessments, but protocol dictated a shorter screening first to determine if a more detailed assessment was needed.
5. There was a noted lack of law enforcement training during the study period. As described in more detail in the next section related to organization, the former executive director completed all trainings herself and reported lack of personnel as a barrier to developing training guidelines. No data was collected on the number of officers trained within precincts that were referring youth to the YFRC. When asked directly, the executive director was unable to provide this information.

It is important to note that the discovery of the waitlist was made by the research team during a random visit for **Observations within the Center**. The executive director informed the researchers that they were overwhelmed and had around 60 individuals on a waitlist. Prior to this discovery, no process or system had been put into place for such a waitlist. During a follow-up meeting between the evaluation team and YFRC personnel, the executive director disclosed there were not enough staff to get through the list and reported the waitlist number to be 50 and said the evaluation team was mistaken and she did not know where the number 60 came from. Upon review of the researchers' notes, two separate members recorded hearing the director say there were 60 youth on the waitlist. Regardless of this initial discrepancy, the waitlist soon grew to around 100. During this time, the center informed certain precincts to stop sending referrals to the YFRC.

Upon learning of the waitlist, the research team made repeated visits to the YFRC. The notes from **Observations within the Center** reveal that while it is clear from the executive director that the center is busy and understaffed, after the discovery of the waitlist, there were occasions where long stretches occurred where staff were talking about non-work related matters, playing on their phone, and rearranging fake plants. While this could demonstrate a disconnect between the assertion of work-to-staff ratio and the productivity of employees, it is unclear what efforts were being made to revise the process versus work through the waitlist. These external observations do not capture work by other staff who are not visible in the main area of the YFRC.

**Interviews with the YFRC Staff** - Youth Advocates (formally Mental Health Service Coordinators), the staff responsible for performing assessments and ultimately adding and removing youth from the waiting list, showed no system in place for removing youth from the waiting list. Data shows the waiting list was the result of improper preparation and procedural short sights related to processing new referrals, a lack of staff to process youth in a timely manner, and the underestimation of volume and traffic of daily referrals. In post-transition interviews, Youth Advocates discussed how many issues were resolved post-transition and they felt much more confident in their ability to process youth in an efficient manner thereby decreasing the waitlist. The

Youth Advocates previously identified the lack of staff as one of the contributing factors in the creation of the waitlist.

The concerns over staffing were reported before the center opened. According to the **Interviews with the YFRC Advisory Board**, over one third of the board (38%) reported staffing as the biggest challenge facing the center. When asked what they would do if they had unlimited resources to support the YFRC, half of the board (50%) reported they would hire more staff.

The **Interviews with the YFRC Leadership** perspective on the need for more staff differed from the pre-transition thoughts of the Youth Advocates. According to one of the interviewees, what's most important at this moment is building infrastructure, processes, and capacity. There was an expressed concern in refining the entire operation before adding more staff and taking on more youth. One interviewee stated the belief that staff has all it needs to be effective, citing training and the reformation of the organization's structure as foundational elements of successfully filling their role. Additional procedures were implemented in place to assist staff with effective communication with resource providers and community members.

#### **Question #6: Is the service provider list adequate for the needs of those who are referred to the center?**

The **Interviews with the YFRC Advisory Board** revealed some concern from the board that staffing would impact the use of services. For example, 38% of the board indicated that issues procuring resources and partnerships are tied with staffing, and more people are needed to better connect youth with services.

The **Interviews with the YFRC Staff** - Youth Advocates initially showed concern for the small number of service providers on the list. There was an expressed desire to add more, as there was knowledge of more organizations in the Raleigh area that could be of service to YFRC and the youth they service. There was an expressed concern about the lack of networking on behalf of the YFRC. In the post-transition interviews, one Youth Advocate expressed

satisfaction with the additions to the service providers list, identifying roughly 20 resources readily at hand for consistent use. Conversely, according to the Interviews with the YFRC leadership, there are over 160 resources available within the center's database. This raises questions as to whether staff are fully aware of all available resources. However, this could reflect a difference in interpretation as it relates to the entirety of services compared to those more suitable to high-risk youth.

According to the **Program Feedback Survey**, around 80% of respondents reported feeling that the session gave them more knowledge than they had prior coming into the program, and about 60% reported feeling empowered by the session. When asked what they liked most, about 30% reported they liked being able to talk and have someone listen to them. When asked if they were interested in participating in programs in the future, around 30% reported they were not interested. When asked how things could be improved, most reported there was nothing to improve, while some commented on wanting more activities. One respondent noted they would like to participate in programs related to grief. Additionally, one respondent indicated they were placed with someone they got into a fight with and would like to not be placed with them in the future.

#### **Question #7: Is the center well-organized and does it communicate effectively with service providers?**

According to **Notes from Regular Meetings with YFRC Staff**, there were issues with how well-organized the YFRC operated as follows:

1. Though the former executive director (Tamika Davis) reported conducting a total of five law enforcement training courses, there is no documentation explaining what happened within those training sessions. The executive director did not use PowerPoint or notes or any other type of strategy to prepare for the meetings. She also did not take any notes regarding the number of officers who came to the training, what topics were covered within the training, or anything else that came up within the training. We were told "feel good" stories were shared to encourage officers to refer youth to the YFRC.

2. After the executive director was let go, the Director of the Division of Community Services and Deputy Division Director realized that the referred youth were not being screened and assessed. Rather, they were all being assessed with no prior screening taking place (which was contrary to protocol). Upon this discovery in April 2023, immediate steps were taken to create a separate screening process.
3. Before assessments started in 2022, as a research team, we put together a youth feedback survey for YFRC staff to give to each youth as they finished their assessment at the YFRC. Although the executive director said they were utilizing this youth feedback survey, they did not start fully implementing it with all questions that should have been utilized until December 2023.
4. The list of referable offenses from MPD changed several times over the history of the YFRC. This could have potentially created confusion with law enforcement. Even after the MOU was in place, the former executive director made unsuccessful efforts to expand the list.

The **Observations within the Center** generally demonstrate that the day-to-day operations are well-organized, although there were concerns noted about the open discussion of personal information. In three instances where visitors came to the YFRC while the evaluation team was present, they could overhear sensitive information being discussed between the staff and visitors. The most serious case of concern (February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023) involved the executive director openly discussing with a client their personal situation. She was observed blaming the lack of YFRC staff for why she was directly handling the case.

According to the **Youth Feedback Survey**, 9% of youth reported they experienced issues with getting in touch with someone at the YFRC.

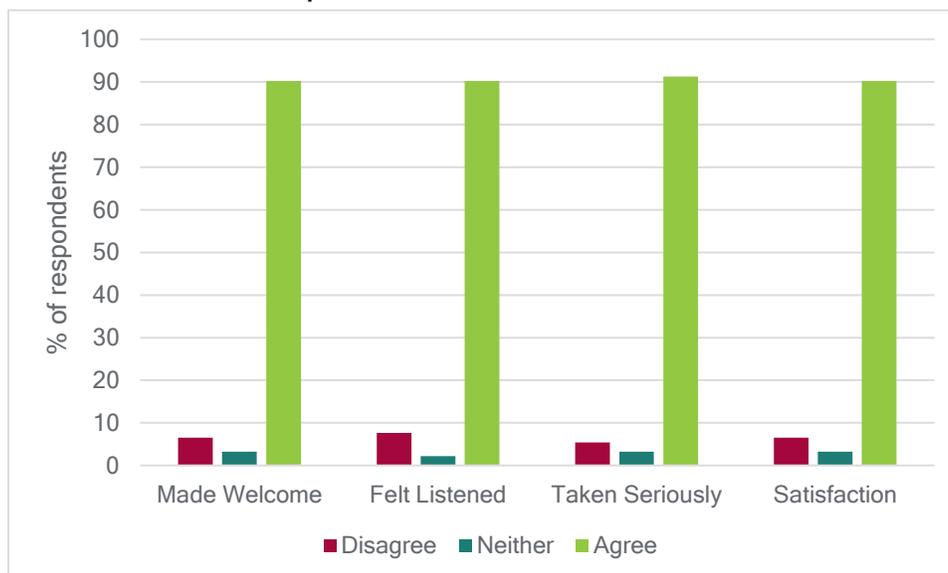
In pre-transition **Interviews with the YFRC Staff**, Youth Advocates (formally Mental Health Service Coordinators) expressed concern with the leadership of the director of the center. One staff stated the need for further leadership

training, stating the need for improvement in communication, delegation, and supervision. In post-transition interviews, they discussed significant changes in structure, culture, processes and procedures. Staff are now trained together, allowing other staff members to assist Youth Advocates in some of the YFRC duties. Weekly staff meetings have been set up, allowing staff members to present problematic cases and other issues and receive assistance and suggestions from the group. The intake process, used to screen youth, has been reduced from approximately 7 to 2 forms. There were noted improvements in attitude among the staff.

These sentiments about the most recent director of the center were reaffirmed in **Interview with the YFRC Leadership**, who while acknowledging the benefits of additional staff, stated before money is invested in hiring new staff, there was a need to focus on the tedious things like “putting things on paper” and “sharing and understanding and vision” would have increased the overall success of the center. The termination of the former executive director was likely an attempt to address these concerns, and immediate steps were indeed taken to correct issues related to screening and the waitlist.

#### Question #8: Are participants satisfied with their involvement in the YFRC?

Figure 4. Youth Perceptions and Satisfaction

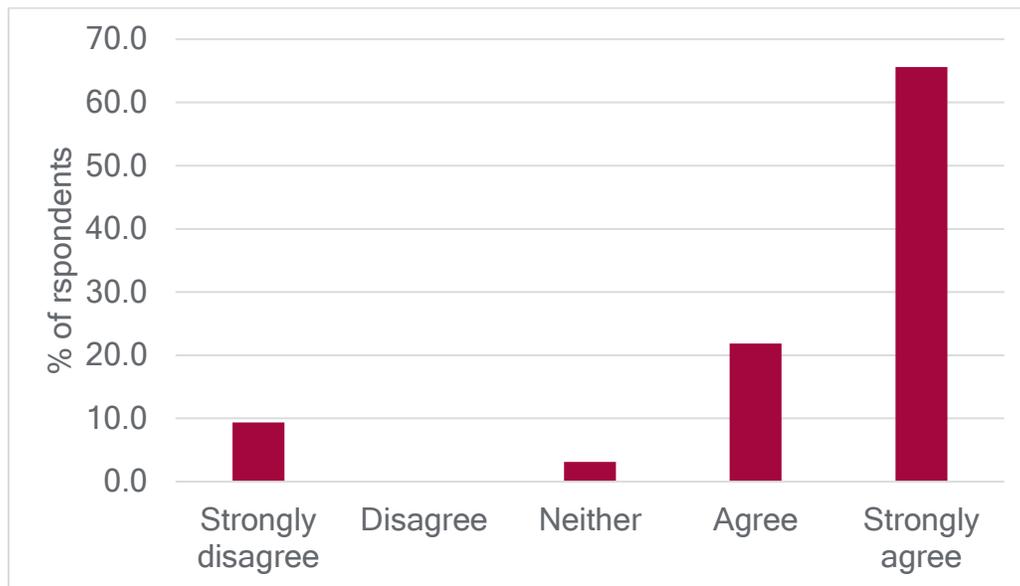


Using the **Youth Feedback Survey**, respondents were asked how much they agree with the following statements 1) Youth and Family Resource Center staff tried to make me feel welcome while I was here, 2) I felt like Youth and Family Resource Center staff listened to me, 3) I felt like my thoughts and feelings were taken seriously, and 4) Overall, I was satisfied with how today went at the Youth and Family Resource Center. As can be seen in Figure 4, at least (90%) of respondents agree with all four items, with about 5% disagreeing with all four. We conclude that during their initial visit, it appears a vast majority of participants were satisfied with their involvement in the YFRC. Even though one individual mentioned that the process took a long time, four respondents emphasized that the speed of the process was what they liked most about the center. One participant stated that they did not understand certain questions they were asked during the CANS assessment and one participant said they would like to change how the center looked.

What the youth liked most about their time at the center garnered the most feedback. The largest proportion of responses emphasized how they felt heard, that they had someone to talk to, that the staff were incredibly caring and kind, and that the youth's concerns and situations were taken seriously. LaShonta Carver and Jeremiah Berry (both Youth Advocates (formerly Mental Health Service Coordinators) were both mentioned in a positive light on numerous occasions. A handful of respondents stated that they liked the activities/entertainment and furniture of the center the best.

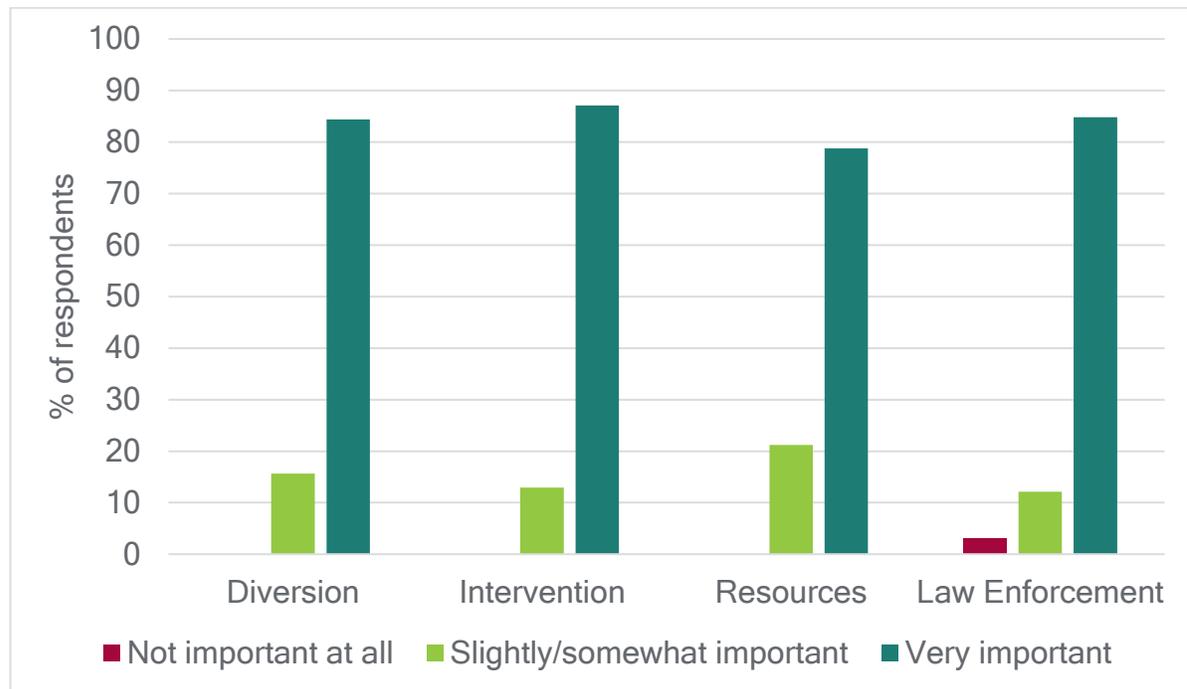
Question #9: Is there support for the YFRC from law enforcement, the community, and youth?

Figure 5. Is a Resource Center like this Needed in Your Community?



Using the **Community Survey**, respondents were asked “How much do you agree or disagree that a resource center like this is needed in your community?” As shown in Figure 5, most respondents (88%) reported they agreed (22%) or strongly agreed (66%) that a resource center like this was needed. Around 9% of respondents strongly disagreed that a center like this was needed.

Figure 5. How important are the following goals?



Respondents of the **Community Survey** were also asked a series of four questions that began “How important is it to you that this center works to \_\_\_\_\_” with each of the YFRC goals listed to fill in the question. The YFRC goals include divert as many youth as possible from entering the juvenile justice system (diversion); provide tailored early intervention, comprehensive assessment, and referrals to support services (intervention); increase the effectiveness of limited community resources (resources); and facilitate better relationships with law enforcement, agencies serving youth, and their families (law enforcement). As depicted in Figure 5, around 80% of respondents thought each of the goals were very important. Although the differences are minimal, more respondents thought diversion was very important (84%) relative to the other goals. The only goal reported as not being important at all (3%) was related to facilitating better relationships with law enforcement. The mean for the scale items ranged from a low of 3.76 (resources and law enforcement) to a high of 3.81 on a 4-point scale. These differences are not statistically significant.

The advisory board was also asked to weigh in as it relates to support for the goals of the center. According to the **Interviews with the YFRC Advisory Board**,

around half indicated the current goals are adequate and exactly as they should be. When directly asked, all members stated diverting youth from the justice system as a main goal, while 88% reported providing youth services as an additional main goal. Although not a specific goal, around 38% of the board reported the need for youth and families to be self-sufficient in order for them to be successful in reducing involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Since the first mention of the center in 2017 in the **Media Content Analysis**, there has been a general media portrayal of hope that the YFRC would provide much needed community resources and cohesion to youth and families who need it the most. This positive outlook is contrasted against the criticisms of the juvenile court system, particularly within Shelby County, and the desire for alternative means of handling juvenile delinquency. However, over the years there is a continuing sense of confusion from the media on the exact purpose, procedures, and effectiveness of the center. See Appendix A for full content analysis of all 28 articles.

Due to issues with scheduling data collection from law enforcement, we were unable to assess support from local officers.

#### **Question #10: What barriers/obstacles are present according to law enforcement, the community, and youth?**

On the **Community Survey**, Community members expressed a general lack of understanding of the center and stated that was both a major obstacle the YFRC needed to overcome as well as something they would change if they had the ability to. A few respondents wanted to be more involved with the center, to help support the work that is going on there. One especially valuable input to the question of “what kind of barriers or obstacles are present at the YFRC” is that the operating hours are not ideal. Most youth should be in school during business hours, thus reducing the effectiveness of the center.

According to the **Youth Feedback Survey**, 13% of youth reported that the location of the YFRC was not convenient for them and 9% experienced issues with transportation to the YFRC. When asked to explain their response, four

youth reported that it was “too far” although no one provided specific information when asked to explain. We saw a similar pattern in the **Caregiver Feedback Survey**. Out of the caregivers who responded to questions about location convenience and transportation, around 5% reported having issues with transportation and around 15% reported that the center was not conveniently located.

The **Youth Feedback Survey** also revealed that about 11% of youth indicated they do not feel safe inside the YFRC. In terms of the immediate area surrounding the YFRC, around 20% reported they do not feel safe.

According to the **Interviews with the YFRC Advisory Board**, limited staffing emerged as the largest barrier to the YFRC. When asked what they would do with unlimited resources, around a quarter members (25%) reported they want the YFRC to be a one-stop shop where all resources can be available under one roof (which does not align with the recommendations of the NAC, where the center should refer youth to outside services). This same percentage stated the need to expand and replicate the program to other areas of the city. Additionally, 38% of members reported that the YFRC needs more publicity so the community is aware of the center and can help refer youth as needed. This is echoed by canvassing the immediate area surrounding the resource center, which showed that few residents were familiar with the center and its mission. For example, the research team encountered a student in the Criminology program and a police officer from the Raleigh precinct, both of whom lived walking distance from the center. Neither of these individuals knew of the center and its purpose.

Using data from the **Media Content Analysis**, the greatest concerns mentioned throughout the media reporting are that the center is not open 24/7 and that youth within the inner city will not be receiving the help they need. Despite these concerns, the view of the center and what it represents is overall positive, albeit there is a call for more public knowledge and community involvement. The center is recognized as a start in the right direction, and that even if progress is slower than originally foreseen in 2017 and 2018, any work in helping youth and their families is better than sending them through the “revolving door” of the juvenile court system. To help bolster the public

image of the center, two success stories have been published within the last two years, as well as a showcasing of all the remodeling the center has overgone.

Additional barriers revolved around issues with the former executive director, lack of clarity of law enforcement trainings, and effectively seeing clients without the development of a lengthy waitlist and waiting period for youth (for details on these challenges, see questions 5 and 7 above).

We were unable to determine barriers according to officers due to lack of data collection from the local precinct.

## 6 | Recommendations Moving Forward

Considering the answers to the 10 core questions, the research team has highlighted what is currently working well at the YFRC in addition to areas of improvement that should help guide future directions. We also provide considerations for expanding the YFRC in the future.

### WHAT IS WORKING

- 1. YFRC serves as a single point of contact for families and connects them with services and support systems.*
- 2. A total of 463 referrals and 257 screenings during the first year of operation represents a significant improvement over the original Youth Assessment Center.*
- 3. Youth report satisfaction with staff and services at the YFRC*
- 4. Leadership has identified key issues during the initial phase of the YFRC and has taken steps to improve the screening and assessment process.*

### AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

- 5. Need to follow NAC's recommendations for using an initial broad-based screening tool to identify whether more in-depth assessment is needed.*

The lack of initial screenings is what largely contributed to the waitlist, which halted referrals from law enforcement in the spring of 2023. In April 2023, screening tools were developed, and by the end of the study period the waitlist was eliminated. Continued monitoring of this process is strongly recommended to ensure it is efficient in processing youth through the YFRC.

- 6. Address staffing and organizational issues as needed.*

Several issues related to staffing were identified as part of the evaluation. This was a noted concern before the YFRC opened, and was the reason given by the original executive director when processes and procedures were not followed or were created with little planning (e.g., the training of law enforcement). However, since the removal of the former executive director, the waitlist has been eliminated and staff have reported having greater confidence in their ability to screen and assess youth. Although it was suggested the number of staff was inefficient, it is quite possible staff were not used effectively and efficiently. Additional data will need to be collected as the YFRC continues to revise policies and procedures.

There were noted instances where it appeared the YFRC was not well-organized during this initial phase. The development of a waitlist, lack of clear training, failure to collect data, and failure to utilize screenings when this is a vital part of the process all demonstrate areas in need of improvement. Many of these issues appear to overlap with concerns related to staffing.

#### ***7. Provide consistent training across law enforcement precincts.***

All existing law enforcement training related to the YFRC was at the discretion of the previous executive director, who was unable to provide information on how many officers were trained or what material was covered during those training courses. It is important that guidelines be developed so that training can be consistent among all officers across precincts. The research team noted confusion among YFRC staff in April 2023 as it relates to the use of paper vs electronic referral documents. This process is currently being revised, and it is recommended the same training be given to all officers.

**8. *Ensure the privacy of youth and families who participate in screenings or activities at the YFRC.***

It was noted during observations that sensitive information was discussed openly at the YFRC. We encourage staff to ensure the privacy of all youth and families at the center.

**9. *Increase community awareness of the YFRC.***

Although there appears to be support for the YFRC in general, our preliminary results demonstrate that few respondents were aware of the YFRC and its goals. However, it should be emphasized that during the initial phase, the center was not at capacity to serve youth beyond the referral sources of law enforcement and local schools. As the process is streamlined, we encourage the YFRC to increase community awareness. The community has the potential to function as a resource for the center, but this requires a strengthening of bonds between the YFRC and the local community. A failure to do so may result in the continued disconnect from the community or the attachment of negative associations and stigmas involving the police.

**10. *Develop strategies to make sure all data are being collected.***

Missing data is a concern throughout this process evaluation. For example, we have complete data on about 10% of all youth referred to the YFRC, and only 10 respondents completed the program feedback survey across three different dates. We were unable to gather data from law enforcement directly, which reduces our ability to understand buy-in and how officers will use their discretion when referring youth to the YFRC.

Luckily, the YFRC staff have taken action to address these issues. For example, the Youth Feedback Survey can now be completed either on a tablet or paper at the YFRC, as opposed to taking it on a mobile device after leaving the center. This should ensure a higher response rate on all items of interest. Additionally, no law enforcement training was

completed between April and June of 2023 since policies and procedure at the YFRC were being revised. We recommend the YFRC staff obtain input from officers during training to help them refine the referral process.

Additionally, 41% of all referrals never received a screening. It is unclear what happened to these youth, but the current policies state that their summons should be sent to Juvenile Court, which would be standard operating practice had the youth not been referred to the YFRC.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

### ***11. Develop the use of mobile screening and/or satellite locations.***

A small number of youth and families (10-15%) reported concerns with transportation or the location of the YFRC. It is important to note this statistic reflects information among those who were able to physically go to the center. Given that 41% of all youth who were referred to the YFRC did not follow up with YFRC staff, strategies should be developed to increase access to the YFRC among those who do not participate.

The use of mobile screening via satellite locations or virtual tele-screening could help facilitate access to services among those with transportation barriers. One goal of the YFRC is to connect youth and families to services, and physically going to the YFRC may not be needed in all situations. Additionally, the hours of operation are prohibitive for a small number of caretakers who completed the survey. Given the financial restraints on opening another physical building, we encourage the YFRC to explore cost-saving alternatives involving mobile or electronic screenings and/or assessments.

### ***12. Address transportation issues among families who want to receive services.***

Inevitably transportation issues will prevent some youth from receiving services, with 10% of those who were screened reported having issues with transportation. Caution should be taken with interpreting these

results since youth could be referred to across the city, although the Raleigh area was specifically targeted during the initial referral period. It is unclear how much of the reported transportation issues are related to geographical proximity compared to lack of access to a vehicle. Importantly, no data were collected among those who were unable to attend, meaning this a conservative estimate.

In addition to new strategies mentioned above related to mobile screening, another possible solution would be to provide reimbursement for rideshare services such as Uber and Lyft, which would be able to directly transport youth and their caregivers from their home to the YFRC. If the need is high, another solution could be to hire a staff member with the sole responsibility of providing transportation.

### **13. Consider the role of net-widening as it relates to justice-system contact.**

A common concern with prevention and early intervention programs among criminologists is the concept of net widening, which is when these efforts have the unintended consequence of increasing formal justice involvement, rather than the desired goal of reducing formal processing. Typically, this is discussed within the context of status offenses, where low-risk offenders may receive harsher sanctions as a result of their summons to Juvenile Court as opposed to more informal mechanisms through officer discretion. For example, if there was a surplus of referrals for minor possession of alcohol and tobacco, and these youth never followed through with their screening, this could lead to an influx of summons for minor offenses.

Although we do not have information on those referrals who did not contact the YFRC or follow through with their appointment, it appears that most of the offenses would lead to a summons given their severity. Most referrals were for assault (46%) followed by theft of property (13%). However, about 20% of referrals were for disorderly conduct, vandalism, curfew violations, and criminal trespass. A more thorough examination of case processing is needed to determine if more juvenile summons are issued for less serious offenses over time.

## 7 | Appendix A. Content Analysis of Local Media Coverage of the YFRC

### Timeline of Media Coverage

- 2017-2018:
  - Pilot released.
  - General introductory material: goals, potential locations, and emphasis on separate from court
  - Negative remarks aimed at Juvenile Court, not YAC.
  - Juvenile Court Judge Michael frequently cited pleading for change.
  - General optimism about the YAC
  - DA Weirich authors several articles. Focus mostly on the center being a way to get a quicker solution which she emphasizes is a big part of the solution.
  - Major concerns revolve around fair treatment and accountability.
- 2018-2019
  - Review of commissioner decisions regarding funding for the center
  - Continues to get the opinions and statements from big names in the community (e.g., Sheriff Bonner).
- 2019-2020
  - Not nearly as much material from our major news sources like Commercial Appeal and Daily Memphian
  - Cosmetic article about the center being welcoming and the wording of the name being important.
- 2020-2021
  - Some pushbacks about the progression of the center
  - General confusion about the center and operating procedures
  - Lots of talk about the decision to not allow law enforcement to transport youth in handcuffs.
- 2021-2022
  - Clearing up the confusion about the differences between the first version (YAC) and the new version (YFRC)
  - Some focus on addressing mistakes of the previous center.
- 2022-2023
  - Almost a re-pilot era, introducing the new center/goals/etc.
  - Commissioners and prominent members still in general approval of the center
  - Limited information on the progress of the center.

## FULL CONTENT ANALYSIS OF YFRC<sup>1</sup> COVERAGE

October 17, 2017 (The Commercial Appeal)

Fretland, K. (2017, October 17). *Officials release concept for Juvenile Assessment Center for Memphis, Shelby County*. The Commercial Appeal. Retrieved September 8, 2022, from <https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/news/courts/2017/10/17/juvenile-assessment-center-memphis-shelby-county/770228001/>

- (+) YFRC: Mentions quotes from the “report”, potentially the initial reporting of the YFRC. Specifically, describing resources and clears the air about what kind of offenders will be diverted (non-violent, low-level offenders).
- (-) YFRC: No negative comments about YFRC. Simply mentions the center’s emphasis on not being associated with court buildings.

General Themes: The article really serves as an introduction to the YFRC when it was first being pioneered. Katie Fretland touches briefly on the goals of the center and potential locations, specifically mentioning that the professionals working to develop the center all agree that it would most effective if it was independent from a court building. This article is not opinion based and mainly covers the initial pilot proposal of the YFRC (YAS at the time).

October 20, 2017 (The Commercial Appeal)

Waters, D. (2017, October 25). *Can Shelby County provide justice and mercy for Juvenile Offenders?* The Commercial Appeal. Retrieved September 8, 2022, from <https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/news/columnists/david-waters/2017/10/20/can-shelby-county-provide-justice-and-mercy-juvenile-offenders/771092001/>

- (+) YFRC: Says the YFRC could completely transform the mismanagement of the current Shelby County juvenile system. Calls for a change in current juvenile justice practices, implies YFRC could be that change.

<sup>1</sup> Early articles referred to the center by its original name (Youth Assessment Center) as well as the name given to the Miami center from which this one was based (Juvenile Assessment Center). Therefore, YFRC, YAC, and JAC are used interchangeably throughout the analysis.

(-) YFRC: Not necessarily negative about YFRC, but negatives about the juvenile system as a whole: Mentions the growing concerns about the juvenile justice system since it has been in operation. Concerns about children receiving the “worst of both worlds” when dealing with juvenile courts and programs. Cites “agreement” between local court and USDOJ which states the court systems have failed to protect children but specifically African American children.

General Themes: Covers concerns about the Shelby County juvenile justice system, specifically citing the systematic injustice done against Black children in Memphis. The article covers the brief opinions of Amy Weirich, Bill Gibbons and more who speculate what the YFRC could do for the community. Makes hypothetical questions for the reader regarding the potential of juvenile justice reform and its capabilities.

**October 20, 2017** (The Commercial Appeal)

Michael, D. (2017, October 20). *Judge Michael: Changing how we assess juvenile crime, justice*. The Commercial Appeal. Retrieved September 8, 2022, from <https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2017/10/20/judge-michael-changing-how-we-assess-juvenile-crime-justice/773733001/>

(+) YFRC: Judge Michael pleads for change and suggests a YAC could be the change needed. He cites successful YAC programs and says they can reduce juvenile delinquency and provide services. He and his team speculate that the YAC could “break the cycle” and help prepare “productive citizens”. He also cites the potential funds and time that can be saved for patrolmen who would otherwise have to spend extended time bringing juvenile offenders to detention facilities. The center would hold children accountable and in an according manner, not a “slap on the wrist”.

(-) YFRC: Some juvenile offenders who were brought to the center would still have to enter the court system.

General Themes: The article written by Juvenile Court Judge, Dan Michael, is an opinion-based article with Judge Michael establishing his support of the center and citing current successful operations of similar centers. He covers the basic model, outlining the steps to divert juveniles to a YFRC and how it might be helpful in establishing less crime and more productive members of society, he says.

### October 20, 2017 (The Commercial Appeal)

Weirich, A. (2017, October 20). *Weirich: Helping youth in crisis sooner, better*. The Commercial Appeal. Retrieved September 8, 2022, from <https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2017/10/20/weirich-helping-youth-crisis-sooner-better/773748001/>

(+) YFRC: DA Amy Weirich calls the YFRC “the first step” in doing better for children and victims. She says the YFRC could provide a community response which would come sooner and be stronger than the alternative. Fewer citizens will be victimized and few families experiencing great “turmoil”.

(-) YFRC: Weirich had nothing negative to say about the efforts or start-up of the YFRC

General Themes: Weirich starts her guest column by citing three instances involving children in dire need of assistance from the courts or other government programs. She suggests that the YFRC could be that assistance that the public is yearning for. She specifically details how a center could help deliver quick responses and resources to those hurting for community intervention.

### October 20, 2017 (The Commercial Appeal)

Gibbons, B. (2017, October 20). *Gibbons: Reducing juvenile crime, salvaging young lives*. The Commercial Appeal. Retrieved September 8, 2022, from <https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2017/10/20/gibbons-reducing-juvenile-crime-salvaging-young-lives/773762001/>

(+) YFRC: Bill Gibbons references the potential success of the YFRC when he says, “we believe can work for our community”. The community will be in a better place to assess and meet needs.

(-) YFRC: It will require a big investment.

General Themes: Bill Gibbons cites a recent crime in his neighborhood in which a child was the perpetrator in a robbery. He talks about his thought process after hearing of such incident. The child must have been truant or suspended and this surely isn't their first offense. Violent charges against juveniles are up significantly and almost half of those

being charged are repeat offenders. He primarily focuses on reducing recidivism and reduction of violence. Gibbons says he wants to center to also be a volunteer opportunity for community members.

#### October 20, 2017 (The Commercial Appeal)

Stewart, A. J. (2017, October 20). *Stewart: Juvenile justice begins with diagnosis and treatment*. The Commercial Appeal. Retrieved September 8, 2022, from <https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2017/10/20/stewart-juvenile-justice-begins-diagnosis-and-treatment/773757001/>

(+) YFRC: Altha Stewart cites that research shows lower risk youth are better served by non-residential facilities that are in the community, also cheaper than alternatives. Stewart cites the YFRC as a way to implement education and research we have acquired and help to reduce the number of minors who ever reach the juvenile justice system. They reference the pros of personalized rehabilitation, helping the youth based on their specific needs.

(-) YFRC: Stewart has nothing negative to say about the YFRC at this time.

General Themes: Altha Stewart cites the tremendous risk numerous minors have of entering the Juvenile Justice System. She recognizes the system's flaws and failures and specifically believes children will do better if not removed from their homes (when possible). Altha Stewart believes the YFRC is a good start to reaching the goals for delinquent juveniles. She cites the many positives that the center can bring. Specifically, saving money, producing better attendance in schools and positively influencing family stability.

#### October 26, 2017 (The Commercial Appeal)

Powell, B. (2017, October 26). *My concerns about a juvenile assessment center*. The Commercial Appeal. Retrieved September 8, 2022, from <https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2017/10/26/my-concerns-juvenile-assessment-center/797997001/>

(+) YFRC: Bill Powell says the YFRC could be a good step forward and a good resource connection.

(-) YFRC: Powell brings up several concerns about the outcome if there are not “proper safeguards”, ranging from an increase in juveniles without adequate legal representation as well as an increase in the racial disparities of the juvenile court system. He says when a treatment center, like the YFRC, aims to treat both assessment and treatment, their goals can often contradict. He cites the OJJDP’s eval of the center and goes into detail about the many concerns from the eval (threat to Due Process, Net Widening and Racial Disparity). He wonders about the “freedom” of the youth brought to the center and if youth will be prosecuted for not pursuing services. Powell cites a similar center in Minneapolis where suburban children were not brought to the center and says that bringing minority youth into the center for resources could actually decrease fair treatment across racial lines.

General Themes: Bill Powell is one of the first to speak about the concerns of the YFRC. He is mainly concerned with fair treatment and holding the justice system accountable. He recognizes that, done correctly, the center could be a vital steppingstone in the walk towards adequate treatment of youth. However, his concerns seem to outweigh his hope. He even argues that the YFRC could make things worse.

### December 3, 2018 (The Commercial Appeal)

Burgess, K. (2018, December 4). *Shelby County Commission approves contract for Juvenile Assessment Center*. The Commercial Appeal. Retrieved September 7, 2022, from <https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/news/2018/12/03/shelby-county-commission-juvenile-assessment-center/2197543002/>

(+) YFRC: The center was approved unanimously by the Shelby County Commissioners. One commissioner had some reservations at first but was settled once talking with Altha Stewart regarding community policing and advisory board concerns.

(-) YFRC: Commissioner Sawyer had some initial concerns (not detailed). The article re-visits Bill Powell’s concerns.

General Themes: YFRC gets funding approval. The short article mainly focuses on the approval of the Shelby County Commissioner Board. The author, Katherine Burgess, briefly covers the thoughts of one commissioner, Tami Sawyer. Burgess also references material and thoughts from Bill Powell and Dorcas Young-Griffin. The article is mostly informational.

**December 16, 2018** (The Daily Memphian)

Jones, Y. (2018, December 16). *Pilot program aims to keep kids out of juvenile justice system - Memphis local, sports, Business & Food News: Daily Memphian*. Memphis Local, Sports, Business & Food News | Daily Memphian. Retrieved September 7, 2022, from <https://dailymemphian.com/article/1826/Pilot-program-aims-to-keep-kids-out-of-juvenile-justice-system>

(+) YFRC: Quotes Tami Sawyer as she calls the center potentially “beneficial”. Yolanda Jones says there has been a cry out for a center similar to the one that is being proposed. Dr. Stewart also says the center has been a long time coming, she has a professional experience list, as cited in the article. Floyd Bonner is also referenced in his optimism and excitement for the center, especially after visiting similar facilities and hearing about their dramatic decrease in juvenile arrests. Commissioner Morrison says he was not surprised his fellow commissioners voted in favor of funding the center after they heard the proposal in its entirety. He hopes the YFRC will be a step in the right direction and will help keep youth out of the system. The commissioner chairman, Van Turner, says the center is worth a shot and that he hopes it’s a success. Shelby County Mayor, Lee Harris, applauds the approval of the center, specifically calling it a “place that law enforcement can use instead of arresting young men and sending them to court”. He and Judge Dan Michael have been pushing the center forward with their support. Harris says it’s important to divert these kids from a criminal record.

(-) YFRC: Quotes Sawyer’s initial hesitations based on the original proposal for the center. The current funding allotment does not allow the center to be open 24/7. Cites Powell and his hesitations; Powell wonders where the funding will come from, what the services are and potential detainment of children who choose to decline services. Powell also worries the “inner city” children will be more likely to be “swept up” as a result of the center. He wants to see police and procedural information.

General Themes: The article is the Daily Memphian’s debut to discussing the YFRC. It is mostly a compilation of quotes and references from prominent figures in the community. Jones focuses heavily on the recent approval of funding for the center and how the “big names” in the Memphis community are reacting to such funding approval.

**August 18, 2019** (The Daily Memphian)

Moore, L. A. (2019, August 18). *Curtains to rise on Shelby County Youth Advocacy Center - Memphis Local, sports, Business & Food News: Daily Memphian*. Memphis Local, Sports, Business & Food News | Daily Memphian. Retrieved September 7, 2022, from <https://dailymemphian.com/article/6865/Curtains-to-rise-on-Shelby-County-Youth-Advocacy-Center>

(+) YFRC: Linda Moore, author, calls the newly renovated space “contemporary and welcoming”. She quotes Mayor Harris as he praises the center, calling it “an important milestone” and speaks on his hope that the center will help children receive the rehabilitative push they need. Altha Stewart comments on the smart move to open such a center in light of the recent discriminatory issues and DOJ visit in Memphis. Harris also assures people the center is not a way to “lock up” more children.

(-) YFRC: “Juvenile Assessment Center” as a name brought a negative connotation that “suggested folks were getting jacked up”. There were attacks on the use of “juvenile” and “assessment”.

General Themes: The article means to further introduce the community to the YFRC right before its (then) scheduled opening. It quotes many key organizers and supporters of the community, as well as addresses concerns from the public regarding name wording and potential for the center to become just another place to lock children up.

#### February 24, 2020 (The Daily Memphian)

Dries, B. (2020, February 24). *Juvenile assessment center hits a snag - Memphis local, sports, Business & Food News: Daily Memphian*. Memphis Local, Sports, Business & Food News | Daily Memphian. Retrieved September 7, 2022, from <https://dailymemphian.com/article/10909/juvenile-assessment-center-hits-a-snag>

(+) YFRC: Nothing specifically positive to say about the YFRC.

(-) YFRC: Amy Weirich says the center is not progressing like originally expected. The main concern being how quickly a child can get to the center after receiving the referral. Weirich criticizes the center’s decision to prohibit transport from law enforcement officers. She

believes the turnaround is not quick enough and the children aren't getting care as soon as they should be.

General Themes: The article, although not written by Weirich, focuses heavily on her concerns for the center and the time it is taking juveniles to receive care. There is a comparison between years of juvenile violent crime and the percentage of juveniles being transferred to adult courts. Specifically, Bill Dries compares Memphis and Nashville and looks at the uptick in youth violent crime after the DOJ left in 2019.

**February 24, 2020** (The Daily Memphian)

Dries, B. (2020, February 24). *Strickland calls for Juvenile Assessment Center to 'get it done'* - Memphis local, sports, Business & Food News: Daily Memphian. Memphis Local, Sports, Business & Food News | Daily Memphian. Retrieved September 7, 2022, from <https://dailymemphian.com/article/10932/strickland-juvenile-assessment-center-weirich>

(+) YFRC: Generally unbiased article

(-) YFRC: Mayor Strickland says the confusion needs to be cleared up.

General Themes: The article by Bill Dries is relatively short and focuses mostly on some quotes from Weirich, who is concerned about the piling summons. She is worried about the weeks in between the initial summons and the actual center/court date.

**May 18, 2020** (The Daily Memphian)

Jones, Y. (2020, May 18). *Shelby County Youth Advocacy Center Could Lose County funding*. Memphis Local, Sports, Business & Food News | Daily Memphian. Retrieved September 7, 2022, from <https://dailymemphian.com/article/14049/shelby-county-youth-advocacy-center-altha-stewart-uthsc>

(+) YFRC: Weirich calls the center a “start”, she refers to it essentially as a steppingstone to the ideal model. The center will move forward, even if funding is no longer available to them.

(-) YFRC: Funding is questionable considering the Advocacy Coalitions questions about Center's operational plan. First mention of the issue of requirement of police personnel to transport youth in handcuffs.

General Themes: The issue of funding has become a problem for the YFRC now that their one-year contract (500,000) is coming to expire. There were some discrepancies in the calculations when deciding how much would need to be taxed on the county citizens. They were undertaxed, now the question is: raise taxes or cut funding? Weirich still supports the center, Mayor Strickland says no matter the direction, do something and Stewart says they will continue to trek on even if their budget contract is not extended.

### October 5, 2020 (The Commercial Appeal)

Weirich, A. (2021, August 6). *Memphis' youth need immediate intervention, for their good and for the community: Opinion*. The Commercial Appeal. Retrieved September 8, 2022, from <https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/opinion/2020/10/05/memphis-juvenile-youth-need-immediate-intervention/3624253001/>

(+) YFRC: A YFRC could save victims and lessen crime.

(-) YFRC: The original center in UTHSC failed because they did not want to allow law enforcement to bring juveniles to the location at the campus.

General Themes: Weirich begins with an example of youth crime. She also has a general demand for immediate help, she does not want there to be delayed intervention. In general, Weirich is calling for quicker action.

### October 6, 2020 (The Commercial Appeal)

Poe, R. (2020, October 6). *The 901: Why Shelby County needs a juvenile assessment center - and burned \$500k trying to get one*. The Commercial Appeal. Retrieved September 8, 2022, from <https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/news/local/the-901/2020/10/06/shelby-countys-catch-and-release-approach-juveniles-isnt-working-901/3634597001/>

(+) YFRC: "Immediate and evidence-based intervention" says Weirich. Author says students need this center amongst the pandemic taking away so much (after school care, in person classes, etc.)

(-) YFRC: Handcuffing issue brought up again, briefly. The UTHSC's version of the center is criticized for only assessing <100 with \$500,000

General Themes: Unfortunately, a 16-year-old boy was killed while trying to steal an SUV in Memphis. He had reportedly had four previous interactions with juvenile court, and this served as a call to action for this article entry. A lot of the article focused on the effects of the pandemic and what resources have been taken away from children. The YFRC will hopefully begin to replace that void. Only about half the article is about the YFRC.

#### October 8, 2020 (Fox 13 News)

Garriss, K. (2020, October 8). More teens committing violent crimes, DA wants to see more immediate intervention. Fox 13 News. Retrieved May 9, 2023, from [https://www.fox13memphis.com/news/more-teens-committing-violent-crimes-da-wants-to-see-more-immediate-intervention/article\\_bd058559-2795-5786-bc2a-d42afaa9637b.html](https://www.fox13memphis.com/news/more-teens-committing-violent-crimes-da-wants-to-see-more-immediate-intervention/article_bd058559-2795-5786-bc2a-d42afaa9637b.html)

(+) YFRC: Noted that the “Youth Assessment Center” was partnered with the UT Health Science Center for six months to provide youth with counseling and other social services.

(-) YFRC: The program is referenced to help fewer than 100 families in the time it was operational, paired with the concern of rising violent crime rates amongst youth. Dr. Altha Stewart stated that they had “thousands of referrals” who needed other services, which is a stark contrast against the number of referenced families serviced.

General Themes: There is a general feeling of frustration in the article by both the author and those interviewed for the article. A sense that there has not been enough done to help the community.

#### June 6, 2021 (The Daily Memphian)

Jones, Y. (2021, June 6). *Youth Assessment Center set to open in Raleigh*. Memphis Local, Sports, Business & Food News | Daily Memphian. Retrieved September 7, 2022, from <https://dailymemphian.com/article/22356/shelby-county-youth-assessment-center-raleigh>

(+) YFRC: Griffin-Young says it will not be a place for law enforcement to just drop kids off, instead they must have referrals. The referral will not turn into a summons if the child fulfills requirements, and the center is

willing to help with transport. Commissioner Brooks says he wants the center to receive all the support it needs to serve the youth.

(-) YFRC: Griffin admits the 2018 effort was “not as effective as we hoped”

General Themes: The article mainly focuses on Young-Griffin clearing the differences in plans from the old unsuccessful center to the new one. She says they recognize their mistakes and are working to address them and turn out a better outcome in the new center at the old Raleigh Library. She also speaks on the limitations: they are only accepting referrals from 2 schools now and one law enforcement jurisdiction, also they don't have the funding to be open 24 hours currently.

**January 26, 2022** (The Commercial Appeal)

Hardiman, S. (2022, January 26). *Memphis is 'still recovering - but strong': 4 takeaways from Strickland's annual address*. The Commercial Appeal. Retrieved September 8, 2022, from <https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/news/2022/01/26/memphis-mayor-strickland-state-city-speech-takeaways/9209661002/>

(+) YFRC: Mayor Strickland calls for more resources for the YFRC

(-) YFRC: Nothing negative about the YFRC

General Themes: The article is not necessarily about the YFRC, more about general points from Mayor Strickland's Annual Address. He does address violent crime and specially talks about juvenile court being a “revolving door” even worse off than 201 Poplar, he says. He calls for more resources to be given to juvenile facilities and programs, specifically the YFRC.

**March 31, 2022** (WREG)

Gertler, J. (2022, April 8). *County hopes new youth center in Raleigh can curb juvenile violence*. WREG.com. Retrieved October 18, 2022, from <https://wreg.com/news/investigations/county-hopes-new-youth-center-in-raleigh-can-curb-juvenile-violence/>

YFRC (+): Quotes Cedrick Grey, calling the center a place for support/a lighthouse. Working on training for MPD to identify those who would

benefit from referral. Diversion from juvenile justice system would save taxpayer money.

YFRC (-): Nothing negative about the center.

General Themes: The article credits Mayor Harris with the center's openings. It is essentially re-introducing the center and its goals. It reviews how a child can be referred and what offenses are qualifiable. The article also provides statistics for readers to illustrate just how severe juvenile crime is in the Shelby County area.

**May 6, 2022** (The Daily Memphian)

Baker, J. (2022, May 6). *Youth Center serves as 'single stop' for juvenile offenders*. Memphis Local, Sports, Business & Food News | Daily Memphian. Retrieved September 7, 2022, from <https://dailymemphian.com/article/28417/shelby-county-youth-and-family-resource-center-cedrick-gray>

(+) YFRC: Julia Baker calls the newly renovated space inviting and not “institutional”. Cedrick Gray calls it an “environment where youth felt comfortable, and they feel safe – psychologically safe.” Young-Griffins says they “hope we’ve got a good model going” for this 2<sup>nd</sup> attempt at the program when she is asked about the new center. The article refers to resources like ACT test training and job placement. Communities are going to feel a higher level of public safety and reallocation of tax dollars with the YFRC succeeding.

(-) YFRC: References the failed 1<sup>st</sup> attempt

General Themes: The article discusses the evidence for the successful outcome of a YFRC and addresses the moves made to secure the new location for the 2<sup>nd</sup> attempt at the YFRC. Briefly mentioned was a school program that is in some of the MSCS, School House Adjustment Program Enterprise (S.H.A.P.E), which is implemented to help lower the number of kids going to juvenile court. The article also outlines the offenses eligible for referral to the program. Cedrick Gray discusses a lot of his hopes for the program and what he expects will come out of a successful center.

## May 7, 2022 (The Daily Memphian)

Dries, B. (2022, May 10). *What it took to make a diversion of children away from Juvenile Court a reality*. Memphis Local, Sports, Business & Food News | Daily Memphian. Retrieved September 7, 2022, from <https://dailymemphian.com/article/28640/behind-the-headlines-diversion-children-away-from-juvenile-court>

(+) YFRC: Weirich says having the center open and operating is better than the opposite, there are some things to iron out but being open is best. Jerri Green calls the center “new and groundbreaking” and raves about the approach.

(-) YFRC: Addresses the handcuff argument and how long it took to come to a consensus (4 years). Weirich did not think that a referral was effective as she thought immediate help was necessary.

General Themes: The article by Bill Dries was a general summary of opinions and goals of the center from the voices of main “players” in the game of juvenile justice. Specifically, it covered a number of people who had been on “Behind the Headlines” talk show recently, like Weirich and Gray. The recap is generally positive with a few critics about minor things. All parties agree we need the center, the minute details regarding the methods differ depending on who you ask.

## June 20, 2022 (Local Memphis ABC)

Brown, J. (2022, June 20). *Youth and family resource center opens in Raleigh as jail prevention measure for juveniles*. localmemphis.com. Retrieved October 18, 2022, from <https://www.localmemphis.com/article/news/community/youth-and-family-resource-center-jail-alternative/522-397922d7-705a-47bf-bfd4-5ce8246a645a>

(+) YFRC: Commissioners say the center will provide “appropriate interventions” for youth.

(-) YFRC: Nothing negative about the YFRC.

General Themes: The short story reiterates the support from commissioners for the YFRC. It also credits the YFRC to Dorcas Young-Griffin and the Crime Commission Board.

### September 28, 2022 (The Commercial Appeal)

Finton, L. (2022, September 28). *'A lot of details to be worked out' in curfew enforcement, Memphis mayor says*. The Commercial Appeal. Retrieved May 9, 2023, from <https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/news/2022/09/28/memphis-mayor-jim-strickland-says-details-need-worked-out-to-enforce-1996-child-curfewlaw/69524910007/>

(+) YFRC: Mayor references “Juvenile Assessment Center” as a tool to enforce youth curfew.

(-) YFRC: Mayor is uncertain of the business hours of the YFRC. “[...]the] youth assessment center, which is open, I think, generally in business hours.” Mayor Strickland also noted that it would be ideal to open the center during the evening hours; “it probably would be better and financially more feasible.”

General Themes: The article mostly focuses on a potential curfew to be enacted against youth in Memphis, though references the YFRC as a vital resource for enforcing this curfew. There are concerns for operating hours of the center.

### November 18, 2022 (Fox 13 News)

Dillon, D. (2022, November 18). *Youth and family resource center works to reduce crime in Shelby County*. Fox 13 News. Retrieved February 21, 2023, from [https://www.fox13memphis.com/news/youth-and-family-resource-center-works-to-reduce-crime-in-shelby-county/article\\_194c6755-7e16-585f-be9c-41e1ac47d349.html](https://www.fox13memphis.com/news/youth-and-family-resource-center-works-to-reduce-crime-in-shelby-county/article_194c6755-7e16-585f-be9c-41e1ac47d349.html)

(+) YFRC: Jennifer Lee says resources at the center helped her turn her life around.

(-) YFRC: Nothing negative about the YFRC

General Themes: The article is a very brief story about the experience of Jennifer Lee who credits the center with changing her life. There is a brief quote from Davis and then some information about how to refer.

**January 25, 2023** (The Commercial Appeal)

Staff, T. C. A. (2023, January 25). *Shelby County Government's youth and Family Resource Center aims to invest in the Youth*. Youth and Family Resource Center. Retrieved April 18, 2023, from <https://www.commercialappeal.com/picture-gallery/news/2023/01/25/youth-and-family-resource-center/11087925002/>

This is just a picture gallery with some short explanation about the center under each image

**January 26, 2023** (The Commercial Appeal)

Burgess, K. (2023, January 31). *At the youth and Family Resource Center, kids find alternatives to the justice system*. The Commercial Appeal. Retrieved February 21, 2023, from <https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/news/local/2023/01/26/shelby-county-program-aims-to-divert-kids-from-juvenile-justice-system/69791634007/>

(+) YFRC: The article starts with a “success story” of a boy who benefitted from services at the YFRC. Mother reports that son confided in staff and mother found strength in the center after the loss of her husband. Burgess says the location is good considering people can walk to the center, citing a mother who walked with her son because she did not have a license. Mother interviewed said the staff was wonderful and acted as a liaison with the school. Davis reports that 10% of youth involved in the system are regressing. Mother reports the center helped take a burden off her.

(-) YFRC: Davis does seem to be defending that 10% regression

General Themes: The article includes quotes from a lot of the key elements of the system. We heard from a principal, LT. Ross, Tamika Davis, J. Berry, and Dorcas Young Griffin about how the center is interacting with the community they are respectively involved in. The article pulls a lot from a success story of Lee Payne’s son, Payne was a mother struggling with getting her son resources- she speaks very highly of the work from the center.

**March 3, 2023** (The Daily Memphian)

Baker, J. (2023, March 3). *Bill Gibbons and Buddy Chapman discuss policing and crime on 'Behind the Headlines'*. The Daily Memphian. Retrieved May 9, 2023, from <https://dailymemphian.com/article/34583/bill-gibbons-and-buddy-chapman-talk-crime-on-behind-the-headlines>

(+) YFRC: N/A

(-) YFRC: Bill Gibbons believes YFRC should accept juveniles from the entire city, with the center changing their hours to 24/7.

General Themes: An expressed desire for increased accessibility and scope for the YFRC.

### March 16, 2023 (Fox 13 News)

FOX13 Memphis News Staff (2023, March 16). *Shelby County resource center offers mental health services for youth*. Fox 13 News. Retrieved May 9, 2023, from [https://www.fox13memphis.com/news/shelby-county-resource-center-offers-mental-health-services-for-youth/article\\_d4b69358-c434-11ed-956b-879550b0a308.html](https://www.fox13memphis.com/news/shelby-county-resource-center-offers-mental-health-services-for-youth/article_d4b69358-c434-11ed-956b-879550b0a308.html)

(+) YFRC: Article mentions that YFRC is now offering mental health and mentoring for youth ages 13-17.

(-) YFRC: N/A

General Themes: Article provides general information on the YFRC such as contact, location, and hours. Helpful for increasing public knowledge of center.

## Appendix B. Advisory Board Interview Analysis

### Coding

Assigned interview participants a number ranging from 1 to 8 in order to protect privacy and ensure confidentiality.

Identifier	Interview Date
#1	4/1/22
#2	3/25/22
#3	3/25/22
#4	7/22/22
#5	4/14/22
#6	3/28/22
#7	4/15/22
#8	3/31/22

Variables	Respondent ID								# of Interviews
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Activities			x		x				2
Adjudication	x								1
Assessment	x	x	x			x			4
Behavior	x	x		x		x		x	5
Building	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	7
Challenges	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	8
Communication	x	x	x			x		x	5
Community	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	7
Crime	x				x	x			3
Detention	x			x		x			3
Diversion				x					1
Education	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	7
Enforcement					x	x		x	3
Environment			x			x		x	3
Family	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	8
Incarceration		x			x				5
Initiatives	x	x			x	x			4
Measurables	x		x			x		x	4
Mentality	x	x		x	x	x		x	6

Opportunities		x			x		x	x	4
Pandemic						x		x	2
Partnerships	x		x		x				3
Police	x	x			x	x	x	x	6
Programs	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	8
Referrals	x	x		x		x	x	x	6
Resources	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	8
School	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		7
Services	x		x	x	x	x	x		6
Skills		x	x			x	x		4
Staffing			x			x		x	3
Students	x				x		x		3
Trauma		x		x					2
<b># of Variables</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>18</b>	

## Data Synthesis

### *Area Familiarity?*

- Of those interviewed, 50% were familiar with the area prior to joining the advisory board.
- Only one board member grew up in the area.

### *Why did you join?*

- Making a difference and/or having an impact on the community was the most common answer. More than half of the participants (5 of 8 participants) stated this as one of their reasons for joining.
- Providing input and connections was the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest response with 50% of participants feeling like they offered value and benefits to the board.
- 3 of the 8 participants stated that they enjoyed working with kids as the reason they joined the board.

### *Biggest Challenges Facing the Resource Center?*

- 37.5% of the participants mentioned that lack of staffing was a concern.
- Issues procuring resources and partnerships were tied with staffing as most stated with 3 out of 8 participants citing these as the biggest challenges for the center.
- 25% of the participants noted that clarity of purpose and vision is the biggest challenge.

- Likewise, 25% of the participants felt that community buy-in and acceptance is the concerning issue.

#### *What is Main Goal?*

- All of the participants reported the main goal was offsetting crime and diverting youth from the justice system.
- 87.50% of the participants stated that providing individuals with resources was a main goal of the resource center.
- Only 2 of the 8 participants felt that assisting families was the goal of the resource center.

#### *What Should the Main Goal Be?*

- Half of the individuals interviewed felt that main goal of the center is exactly what it should be.
- 25% of the participants felt an additional main goal should be to collect measurement, data, and analytic driven. Or to produce statistics that are measurable.

#### *Success in their Eyes?*

- Half of the participants felt that in order to consider the center a success there needs to be some form of measurable results.
- 37.5% of the individuals stated that youth and families needed to be self-sufficient in order to deem the center a success.
- 25% of those interviewed stated that family testimonies and success stories are needed to gauge the center's success.

#### *Most Useful?*

- Half of the interviewed individuals felt that the assessment aspect of the center was the most useful.
- 25% felt that the building (ascetics) was the most useful aspect of the center.

#### *How can the Center Better Address Issues in the Community?*

- Half of the participants felt that the center could address community issues by identifying problems in the area.
- Half of the participants stated by just being visible, the center can address issues in the community.
- 37.5% of the individuals felt that providing support and resources is how the center could address issues in the community.

*Unlimited Resources?*

- Half of the participants stated that if given unlimited resources, they would hire staff.
- 25% of the participants stated that with unlimited resources, they would make the center a one-stop shop, making any and all resources available under one roof.
- 25% of those interviewed stated that they would replicate the program and expand to other areas of the city with unlimited resources.

*Additional Thoughts?*

- The only consistent response found in among request for additional thoughts were from 3 out of 8 participants who felt that it was important that the center receive more publicity. That word needs to get out about who the center is and what they do there.