

Sports for Juvenile Justice

Formative Evaluation for Pilot Year [FY 2013]



"It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men."

-Frederick Douglass

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THE OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME RESOURCE CENTER

The **Out-of-School Time Resource Center (OSTRC)** is part of the University of Pennsylvania’s School of Social Policy and Practice. As a resource center, the OSTRC promotes youth achievement by supporting staff and programs that serve children and youth. For nearly a decade, the OSTRC has engaged in research regarding promising practices in OST professional development, OST professionalism and professional identity, and evaluation frameworks for OST programs, workshops, and conferences.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Summary of Findings

Grounded in a theory of change that stresses the importance of mentors in reducing recidivism and sports as a form of positive youth development, Sports for Juvenile Justices (SJJ) is a collaborative initiative that places at-risk youth, who have already been adjudicated in court, into local sports-based youth programs. SJJ's participating institutional partners are: Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative (PYSC); the U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Pennsylvania; First Judicial District of Pennsylvania Court of Common Pleas, Family Court - Juvenile Division; CustomEd; NorthEast Treatment Center (NET); and the Out-of-School Time Resource Center (OSTRC).

Charged with conducting an evaluation for SJJ, the Out-of-School Time Resource Center (OSTRC) sought to address two key research questions:

- What factors limited the effectiveness of Sports for Juvenile Justice during its pilot year?
- How can Sports for Juvenile Justice be improved moving forward?

To best answer these two questions, the OSTRC chose to conduct a formative evaluation. A formative evaluation "is a judgment of the strengths and weaknesses of [a program] in its developing stages, for the purpose of revising [programming] to improve its effectiveness...."¹ They not only provide rich data on how programs are administered and what areas are successful or in need of further improvement, but also provide a way to measure a program's value while key activities are *forming*. Given that SJJ just completed its inaugural pilot year (July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013) with learning curve intention, a summative or outcomes-oriented evaluation would be less appropriate at such an early stage in the program's life cycle.

The findings from this formative evaluation indicate that the main factors that limited SJJ's effectiveness were: 1) lack of incentives for the youth to attend programming consistently, and 2) difficulty in traveling to program sites. Moving forward, SJJ has addressed these key limitations: youth participants are now court-mandated into diversionary programs which have joined the SJJ collaborative and are providing transportation to and from SJJ sites. These particular changes also addressed administration challenges that SJJ faced when it admitted participants and collected program data. Given all these factors, the pilot year was successful in that SJJ was able

¹ Tessmer, M. (2005). Planning and conducting formative evaluations: Improving the quality of education and training. Routledge: Oxon. p. 11.

to both identify the main hurdles that hindered the effectiveness of programming, as well as implement solutions that addressed those problems.

Description of the Problem

A recently published study by the Council on Crime and Justice found that juvenile offenders who did *not* go on to re-offend as adults identified that the juvenile justice system alone had minimal effects on changing their lifestyles. Instead, they noted that structures such as filial and familial support, the formation of intimate mentor relationships, and positive peer affiliations served as the key catalysts for change.² While these findings are seemingly intuitive, they reflect many important yet increasingly challenging issues that are currently faced by this population.

As a city, Philadelphia's crime rate in 2009 was 225.4% higher than the violent crime rate in the rest of Pennsylvania, a state whose rates already surpass the national average rate for violent crimes.³ To put that statistic in perspective, the violent crime rate for the city was 188.34% higher than the national average,⁴ which makes Philadelphia the 15th most dangerous metropolitan city in the nation.⁵ Furthermore, the number of delinquency cases processed by juvenile courts in the city increased by 30% between 1985 and 2009.⁶ While these statistics tend to paint a rather bleak picture of the city, it should be noted that there are also trends that indicate success being. For instance, the number of petitions and dockets processed by the Philadelphia Family Court has steadily decreased by more than 50% since 2003 - from a high of 10,000 to last years' docket count of 4,057.⁷ Considering that research shows such a strong association between involvement in adolescent delinquency and involvement in adult criminality, this increase in the number of juvenile delinquency cases highlights that in order to alleviate adult criminal activity in the future, addressing juvenile crime is a critical avenue that needs further focus.

² Council on Crime and Justice. (2006). The Juvenile offender study: A retrospective analysis of youth offenders who stop offending as adults. Retrieved from <http://www.crimeandjustice.org/researchReports/Youth%20Offenders%20Who%20Stop%20Offending%20as%20Adults.pdf>

³ City Rating. (2009). Philadelphia crime rate report (Pennsylvania). Retrieved from <http://www.cityrating.com/crime-statistics/pennsylvania/philadelphia.html>

⁴ City Rating. (2009). Philadelphia crime rate report (Pennsylvania). Retrieved from <http://www.cityrating.com/crime-statistics/pennsylvania/philadelphia.html>

⁵ Greenburg, Z.O. (2009). America's most dangerous cities. Retrieved from http://www.forbes.com/2009/04/23/most-dangerous-cities-lifestyle-real-estate-dangerous-american-cities_slide_2.html

⁶ Kalist, D. E. & Lee, D. Y. (2009). Measuring and analyzing juvenile recidivism in rural and urban Pennsylvania. Retrieved June 3, 2013 from http://www.rural.palegislature.us/Juvenile_Recidivism09.pdf

⁷ Masciantonio, Stephen - Intake Supervisor at JJSC.. (2013, August 29). Electronic Mail.

Why Address this Problem Now?

These startling statistics, coupled with the fact that Philadelphia has one of the highest incarceration rates in the nation and continues to see increases in incarceration and correction costs, illustrate that more attention should be focused on providing youth with additional support systems.⁸ As Frederick Douglass poignantly stated, “it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men” and fortunately, various local stakeholders are ready and willing to collaborate on effective ways to build stronger children.⁹ This evaluation report chronicles the efforts of Sports for Juvenile Justice (SJJ), a collaborative initiative in Philadelphia that seeks to divert at-risk juveniles from further contact with the justice system. The Out-of-School Time Resource Center (OSTRC) conducted a formative evaluation following the program’s pilot year (July 1, 2012-June 30, 2013). The following report presents a description of SJJ, the program’s limitations, and how it has addressed these limitations with forward thinking.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Sports for Juvenile Justice

As a pilot program in its infancy (the pilot year began on July 1, 2012 and ended on June 30, 2013), SJJ is a collaborative initiative that seeks to place at-risk youth, who have already been adjudicated in court, into local sports-based youth programs. SJJ is unique because not only is its theory of change grounded in research that stresses the importance of mentors in reducing recidivism and utilizing sports as a form of positive youth development, but it has selected partners from different fields that are devoted to solving the incarceration crisis by building a community of strong children. During the pilot year, SJJ’s participating institutional partners were: Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative (PYSC); the U.S. Attorney’s Office, Eastern District of Pennsylvania; the Philadelphia Juvenile Probation Department; CustomEd; NorthEast Treatment Center (NET); and the Out-of-School Time Resource Center (OSTRC).

Given that the Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative (PYSC) is a pioneer in the country, and augments the impact of local non-profit organizations that offer character-building and life skills training to under-resourced youth through the use of sports, PYSC was an initial partner in SJJ. Founded in 2009, PYSC was created “as a means of

⁸ Petteruti, A. & Walsh, N. (2008). Jailing communities: The impact of jail expansion and effective public safety strategies. Justice Policy Institute. Retrieved from http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/08-04_rep_jailingcommunities_ac.pdf

⁹ Edelman, M.W. (2010). Coming Together to Dismantle the Cradle to Prison Pipeline in Massachusetts: A Half-Day Summit of Community, Faith and Policy Leaders. *Harvard Law School*. Retrieved from http://www.law.harvard.edu/news/2010/06/28_edelman.html

uniting and providing resources for the city's many youth sports organizations, particularly those aimed at underserved youth populations."¹⁰ Since its creation approximately four years ago, PYSC now boasts 27 member organizations that promote positive youth development through the use of sports such as: cycling, golf, hockey, horseback riding, lacrosse, soccer, squash, tennis, and wrestling. At the onset of SJJ programming, several PYSC organizations elected to participate in SJJ, with the understanding that adjudicated juveniles would be referred by their probation officers and placed into their respective PYSC organizations and programs.¹¹ The six PYSC organizations that participated in SJJ during the pilot year were:

- *Beat the Streets*, an organization that “fosters the holistic development of student-athletes” through wrestling¹²;
- *Black Women in Sports Foundation*, which facilitates “the involvement of women of color in every aspect of sport” through hands-on development¹³;
- *The First Tee of Philadelphia*, which seeks to “instill life-enhancing values and promote healthy choices through the game of golf”¹⁴;
- *LEAPS*, an organization that enriches “the lives of youth through lacrosse and education”¹⁵;
- *Philadelphia City Rowing*, whose mission is to empower local youth through the sport of rowing¹⁶,
- *SquashSmarts*, a program which “combines the sport of Squash with academic tutoring and mentoring”.¹⁷

As organizations with longstanding traditions of mentoring and empowering at-risk youth from various Philadelphia neighborhoods, the aforementioned PYSC organizations elected to participate in SJJ in part because of their ability to offer character-building training coupled with healthy physical development.

SJJ would not be as effective if not for the collaborative support of the U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Pennsylvania that coordinated the law enforcement involvement in the program and sponsored an intensive professional development workshop on the “Healing Power of Sports” in providing trauma

¹⁰ Artiles, L. (2012). Networking and development for stronger youth services: The Philadelphia youth sports collaborative. Retrieved from

<http://www.sp2.upenn.edu/ostrc/pysc/projects/documents/PYSCREPORT10-12.pdf>

¹¹ Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative. (2010). Retrieved from <http://www.sp2.upenn.edu/ostrc/pysc/>

¹² Beat the Streets Philadelphia. (2012). Retrieved from <http://www.btsphilly.org/default.aspx>

¹³ Black Women in Sports Foundation (2012). Retrieved from <http://www.blackwomeninsport.org/>

¹⁴ The First Tee of Philadelphia. (2012). Retrieved from

<http://www.thefirstteeofphiladelphia.org/Club/Scripts/Home/home.asp>

¹⁵ LEAPS. (2012). Retrieved from <http://leapslax.org/>

¹⁶ Philadelphia City Rowing. (2012). Retrieved from <http://www.philadelphiacityrowing.org/>

¹⁷ SquashSmarts. (2012). Retrieved from <http://www.squashsmarts.org/>

informed programming for all partners. The Philadelphia Juvenile Probation Department was also an integral SJJ partner that initially provided access to the participating juvenile youth population and referred youth into PYSC organizations following several meetings with their probation officers. As a nonprofit organization that “designs and implements extraordinary programs and experiences that solve challenges in education, training, and outreach for a variety of organizations”, CustomEd provided the necessary administrative support for SJJ.¹⁸

NorthEast Treatment Centers (NET) was included as a collaborative partner towards the end of the pilot year, as SJJ sought to creatively address certain programming challenges. NET is a non-profit organization that offers a range of behavioral health and social services to adults, adolescents, children, and families in the Greater Philadelphia region.¹⁹ SJJ’s final institutional partner during the pilot year was the Out-of-School Time Resource Center (OSTRC), a non-profit center that is part of the University of Pennsylvania’s School of Social Policy and Practice. The OSTRC promotes youth achievement by “supporting staff and programs that serve children and youth”²⁰ As a partner in the SJJ initiative, the OSTRC conducted a formative evaluation of the SJJ program at the culmination of the pilot year.

Sports for Juvenile Justice as a Solution

Research has shown numerous ways in which sports positively impact youth development and that the juvenile justice system alone has limited effectiveness in preventing juvenile offenders from re-offending. SJJ’s programming during the pilot year sought to incorporate empirically successful strategies by introducing intimate mentor relationships and positive peer affiliations into the adjudication process. With this approach, the pilot program was focused mainly on ensuring that participating youth were heartily involved in their respective PYSC organizational activities in order to increase the likelihood of positive youth development. The enumerated goals for SJJ were for youth to:

- Gain access to possible mentors through their assigned PYSC program
- Benefit from positive peer affiliations with other participants in the programs
- Punctually attend all assigned programs and activities on a consistent basis
- Actively participate in all agreed upon activities
- Adhere to rules, regulations, and policies of their respective programs
- Avoid further contact with the juvenile justice system.

¹⁸ CustomEd. (2013). Mission & Background. Retrieved from <http://customed.org/index/about-2/about/>

¹⁹ NorthEast Treatment Centers. (2013). Serving Adults, Adolescents, Children, and Families. Retrieved from <http://netcenters.org/>

²⁰ Out-of-School Time Resource Center. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.sp2.upenn.edu/ostrc/index.html>

During the pilot year (July 1, 2012-June 30, 2013), the Philadelphia Juvenile Probation Department fulfilled an integral role in this initiative. Probation Officers served as mediators who assigned adjudicated youths into participating PYSC organizations based on criteria such as the youth's personal history, criminal record, and individual interest. In addition, probation officers determined these assignments using the philosophical practice of Balance and Restorative Justice (BARJ), which are community safety, accountability, and competency development principles that focus on making the community, youth, and victim whole. The values behind the BARJ principles are:

- When an individual commits an offense, the offender incurs an obligation to individual victims and the community.
- Offenders who enter the Juvenile Justice System should be more capable when they leave, than when they entered.
- The Juvenile Justice System has a responsibility to protect the public from juveniles in the system.

Once the youth were placed into programs at their respective PYSC organizations, they were expected to not only attend the programs on a consistent basis but to actively participate in designated activities throughout the duration of their tenure.

PILOT YEAR

Formative Evaluation

Pilot programs are often carried out on a small scale in an attempt to determine the feasibility of the project, to avoid money being wasted on an inadequately designed project, and to determine the dosage and duration of an intervention. An important goal of pilot programs is to define the optimal intervention and the most efficient process by which to implement it. As a new initiative with multiple institutional partners, SJJ was piloted to identify: its feasibility; its capacity to provide transformative programming; and any unforeseen factors that might impede its long-term impact.

As the evaluator of SJJ's pilot year, the OSTRC conducted a formative evaluation that sought to answer the following research questions:

- What factors limited the effectiveness of SJJ during its pilot year?
- How can SJJ be improved moving forward?

All data and information contained in this formative evaluation report cover the program period beginning with operations on July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2013. The methodology the OSTRC used to compile the data and information reported consisted

of document review and participant observations at several SJJ administrative meetings. The archival review included all program documents such as contracts, reports, program logs, correspondence, invoices, and meeting minutes received from PYSC, the Philadelphia Juvenile Probation Department, CustomEd, and NET. These sources and documents contained both quantitative and qualitative data on topics such as: how effectively SJJ was being implemented, the number of participants in SJJ, demographics of youth participants, etc. Once all relevant information was collected, the OSTRC research team used *Microsoft Excel* software to collate, sort, organize, and analyze the data.

The key findings proved to be informative in answering the guiding research questions for they not only helped define the scope of the program, but also highlighted limitations and challenges in how the program was implemented during the pilot year. As is expected with new collaborations featuring multiple partners, SJJ initially faced several challenges administering and implementing programming. At the onset, SJJ included the following institutional partners: 6 PYSC organizations (Beat the Streets, Black Women in Sports Foundation, the First Tee of Philadelphia, LEAPS, Philadelphia City Rowing, and SquashSmarts); the U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Pennsylvania; Philadelphia Juvenile Probation Department; CustomEd; and the OSTRC. By the end of the pilot year, SJJ included NET as an additional institutional partner, in an attempt to address some of its primary implementation challenges.

Key Limitations

As part of the formative evaluation, the OSTRC collated, sorted, and analyzed various relevant data; these aggregate figures were important because they highlighted several key challenges and limitations. The first limitation was that working with this population of adjudicated juveniles was particularly arduous and taxing, especially when attendance and participation in SJJ was not court-mandated. This was especially evident from the SJJ logs submitted by CustomEd, Philadelphia Juvenile Probation Department, and PYSC which often described how repeated follow-up efforts were made to enroll a single participant. For instance, one log chronicled how despite more than thirty contacts with one female youth and her family, the youth ultimately failed to continue participating in SJJ. Unfortunately, this example was not an isolated scenario; but rather a pattern which ultimately highlighted that youth were not likely to participate in SJJ unless there was strong incentive, such as court-mandated attendance.

Notwithstanding the amount of work it took to enroll youth in SJJ and their reluctance to voluntarily attend SJJ programming since there were initially no penalties for dropping out, several youth cited lack of transportation as another major barrier to

regular attendance. While this might sound like yet another excuse to add to the litany of reasons given for cancelled appointments, unreturned phone calls, and unexplained absences, certain youth faced a real problem accessing convenient and inexpensive modes of transportation. Some studies go as far as to cite “transportation as the most significant challenge confronted by school-based afterschool programs, especially those serving the most under-resourced youth.”²¹ Furthermore, studies explain that not only do transportation issues highlight spatial mismatches between program locations and their target populations, but they also are further “complicated in cities because of safety concerns.”²²

The final area of concern in SJJ programming during the pilot year was the issue of variations and coordination in data collection. Since SJJ is a collaborative initiative involving several self-sustaining institutional partners, it is understandable that the often cited challenges of coordination were present during the pilot year. Given the number of collaborative partners, the diversity of fields represented, and the partners’ individual data collection systems, the OSTRC was faced with the added challenge of collating program data from all participating partners and reconciling the various metrics. While there was certainly enough information to address the goals and research questions for this formative evaluation, in order to begin measuring outcomes in the future, the OSTRC needs a systemic model of collecting participant information.

MOVING FORWARD

Addressing Key Limitations

Pilot projects are often used to test the administration and implementation of programming in order to determine the feasibility of the project, to gain potentially valuable insight, and to ascertain what adjustments need to be made moving forward. Depending on the nature of the intervention and the program’s life cycle, pilot projects can range from a few weeks or months to several years for large scale or national level programs. As previously mentioned this evaluation had two overarching research questions:

- What factors limited the effectiveness of SJJ during its pilot year?
- How can SJJ be improved moving forward?

²¹ Searson, A. (2012). Improving transportation access to non-traditional athletic youth development programs: Addressing the transportation challenges of the Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative. Retrieved from <http://www.sp2.upenn.edu/ostrc/pysc/projects/documents/PYSCTransportation.pdf>. p 4-5

²² Searson, A. (2012). Improving transportation access to non-traditional athletic youth development programs: Addressing the transportation challenges of the Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative. Retrieved from <http://www.sp2.upenn.edu/ostrc/pysc/projects/documents/PYSCTransportation.pdf>. p 5

During SJJ's pilot year, three main limitations were identified:

- Youth participants were unmotivated to participate in a program that was not mandated by the court.
- Transportation to and from programming was often challenging.
- The data collected by the different institutional partners was not housed in a central system.

With as much as can be said for SJJ's challenges, it is important to stress how reflective, persistent, and dedicated the institutional partners were to ensure that the program was ultimately successful in serving this population of under-resourced and at-risk youth. As the pilot year drew to an end, several significant administrative meetings were held to discuss how to address the three aforementioned limitations moving forward. These meetings resulted in a few significant programmatic changes -- beginning with the addition of NorthEast Treatment Centers (NET) as an institutional partner.

NET is a non-profit organization that offers a range of behavioral health and social services to adults, adolescents, children, and families in the Greater Philadelphia region.²³ As part of SJJ, NET's court-mandated outpatient recovery program requires a NET staff member to transport youth to their assigned SJJ program. By including NET, an organization that is court mandated and provides free transportation to youth, SJJ remedied the two main challenges identified during the pilot year. To address the third limitation of a lack of a central data-housing system, CustomEd created an interactive online account via *Dropbox* to provide all partners with access to uniform Registration, Incident, and Discharge Forms. CustomEd also included instructions for filling out these forms to help curtail confusion. In addition, NET is charged with filing and distributing weekly reports of their attendance roster. Listed below are some descriptive figures and aggregate numbers of participation in SJJ's pilot year.

²³ NorthEast Treatment Centers. (2013). Serving Adults, Adolescents, Children, and Families. Retrieved from <http://netcenters.org/>

Description	Count
Number of Youth Referred to SJJ	65
Number of Youth that Participated in SJJ	9
Number of Individual Contacts with Youth	293
Average Contacts per Participating Youth	26
Average Age of all SJJ Youth	14
Range of the Age of SJJ Youth	11-18
Number of Participants in Police District 22	4

Table 2: Aggregate numbers of participation in Sports for Juvenile Justice from July 1, 2012-June 30, 2013.

CONCLUSION

Is SJJ a Success or Failure?

The question of whether or not SJJ will ultimately be considered a success or failure is yet to be determined. This formative evaluation shows that the collaborative is dedicated to working with this at-risk population of youth and able to address program limitations in a timely, innovative, and collaborative fashion. While future evaluations will focus on youth development and recidivism outcomes as measures of success, two anecdotal indicators of this program's merit are that SJJ has received local attention in the press and was recently awarded the "Best New Project" Award at the 2013 Beyond Sports Conference.

Daily News Columnist, Ronnie Polaneczky [recently published an article](#) on Luis Cruz, an SJJ participant during the pilot year. In her piece, Polaneczky described how at the young age of 11, while crawling along a ceiling duct inside Taylor Elementary School, Cruz "could hear cops and dogs running through the halls below, looking for him and the three other boys who had broken into the place to steal computers."²⁴ As Cruz explained, "'I was hanging out with the wrong kids before,' who 'peer-pressured'

²⁴ Polaneczky, R. (2012). Turning a life around - playing squash. Retrieved from http://articles.philly.com/2012-11-16/news/35135770_1_juvenile-offenders-youth-programs-sports-groups.

him into the school break-in, he says. "I didn't want them to think I was afraid."²⁵ Since he had never been in trouble with the law prior to this incident, Cruz was placed into SJJ partner organization SquashSmarts, as a component of his delayed adjudication. Cruz's transformation since participating in SJJ has not gone unnoticed. As his mother, Virgenmina Criton expressed through tears of gratefulness, "He comes home on time now.... He treats us with respect. The way he was behaving before is not how we raised him. We were so worried."²⁶

Although Luis Cruz's story is an anecdotal indicator of SJJ's merit, another gauge that hints at the program's success is that SJJ recently won the "Best New Project" Award for the 2013 Beyond Sport Conference. The "Best New Project" Award is "for new organizations, projects, and initiatives that have been operational for less than two years and have shown true innovation in exploring new ways to use sport for social change." The "Best New Project" award includes a cash prize of \$10,000; access to Beyond Sport's network of international sports organizations; and a customized package of global business mentoring. As the only program representing the United States in this category, SJJ was chosen from more than 400 entries in 125 countries. Having beat impressive programs from countries such as the United Kingdom and Brazil, indicates that SJJ intends to heed Frederick Douglass' advice to "build strong children" - and the world is noticing.

²⁵ Polaneczky, R. (2012). Turning a life around - playing squash. Retrieved from http://articles.philly.com/2012-11-16/news/35135770_1_juvenile-offenders-youth-programs-sports-groups

²⁶ Polaneczky, R. (2012). Turning a life around - playing squash. Retrieved from http://articles.philly.com/2012-11-16/news/35135770_1_juvenile-offenders-youth-programs-sports-groups

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