

# San Mateo Probation

Acknowledge Alliance Annual Evaluation

Fiscal Year 2017-2018



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## Program Description

Acknowledge Alliance is a community-based mental health provider located in the city of Mountain View. The mission of Acknowledge Alliance is to help children and adolescents develop their capacity to rebound from hardship and adversity to become competent adults. Acknowledge Alliance fosters resilience and the building of trusting relationships, thereby empowering youth to realize their fullest potential.

San Mateo County Juvenile Probation Department (Probation) funds two of Acknowledge Alliance's programs:

- The Court and Community School Counseling Program
- The Transition Program

Throughout the academic year, the Court and Community School Counseling Program provides onsite mental health counseling to youth attending San Mateo County Court and Community Schools. Many youth attending Court and Community Schools must participate in counseling as part of their diversion contract or formal probation terms. Completing Acknowledge Alliance's services fulfills the counseling requirement for youth on diversion or formal probation. The program's goals include increasing student abilities to express emotions constructively, making positive choices and actions, relieving stress, developing a trusting relationship with their counselor, and showing an increase in self-awareness and self-esteem. The program also aims to prevent delinquency, improve school attendance, reduce recidivism, and improve anger management skills for its participating students.

The Court and Community School Counseling Program is structured to provide specialized individual and group counseling sessions held weekly. They provide opportunities for students to explore experiences, relationships, and feelings in a safe and confidential setting. The aim is for students to gain insight into their self-destructive behaviors, learn more effective forms of self-advocacy, and develop techniques to address and cope with traumas and pressures in their lives, creating the necessary resiliency skills for lasting change. Sessions are led by graduate student interns in clinical psychology who participate in weekly clinical trainings and are regularly supervised by licensed, experienced therapists.

Similar to the Court and Community School program, Acknowledge Alliance offers the Transition Program to provide a continuation of counseling services to students who are returning to district high schools from the Court and Community Schools. In fiscal year (FY) 2011-12, Acknowledge Alliance operated successful transition programs in two public schools. They added two more schools in FY 2013-14, and now serve students in all five Sequoia Union High School District Comprehensive High Schools, including Redwood High School. The program includes direct hand off from therapists at the San Mateo County Court and Community Schools to staff providing individual and group therapy in the district high schools, pre-enrollment into parent meetings at the district high schools, and close collaboration between Acknowledge Alliance counselors and district high school staff to ensure a smooth transition and necessary follow-through. Acknowledge Alliance also provides counseling to 9th and 10th grade students in the Aspirations program who have

been identified as students at high risk of school failure in their transition to high school, as well as counseling to students with alternative to suspension and expulsion contracts.

## Programmatic Challenges in Fiscal Year 2017-18

Several programmatic challenges emerged during FY 2017-18 that impacted Acknowledge Alliance's outcomes. In the current fiscal year, program staff reported a lower level of enrollment in Court and Community Schools, due to an attempt to reduce expulsions at the district high schools. This resulted in a slightly lower number of youth served at Gateway Community School than in years past. Transportation issues continued to pose challenges for some youth to consistently attend their counseling appointments at Gateway, and attendance at the district high schools varied by student absence or tardies, although program staff tried to be flexible in making time to see youth once they did arrive at school.

Acknowledge Alliance experienced additional challenges pertaining to program operations. Acknowledge Alliance staff continued to work with the Court Schools to improve notification of when youth leave Court schools and transition back into District High Schools to identify youth for the Transition Program in a timely manner. In addition, there was limited private space available for confidential counseling in juvenile hall and at each of the district schools, which prevented the program from being able to place more therapists and see more students during the year (even though school staff at juvenile hall and in the district requested more therapy hours for their students). Finally, Gateway youth transitioning back to the San Mateo Union High School District have not received Transition Program counseling services because the District has not obtained access to funding to bring Acknowledge Alliance services into their schools.

## Evaluation Methods

Programs funded by Probation monitor their programs and report client, service, and outcome data to the department and its evaluator, Applied Survey Research (ASR). The methods and tools used to collect these data are described below.

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

**Risk Factors:** Grantee programs used two assessments, the Juvenile Assessment and Intervention System (**JAIS**) and the Child Adolescent Needs and Strengths (**CANS**) assessment, to provide a standard measure of risk, life functioning, and areas of need for all clients:

- **JAIS:** The Juvenile Assessment and Intervention System (JAIS) is a risk, strengths, and needs assessment tool designed to assist workers to effectively and efficiently supervise youth, both in institutional settings and in the community. The tool has been validated across ethnic and gender groups. The JAIS consists of a brief prescreen assessment known as the JAIS Boys Risk or JAIS Girls Risk, administered in addition to the full assessment and reassessment components. Probation has elected to administer the JAIS Risk assessments to provide an initial indicator of recidivism risk. The JAIS Girls Risk consists of eight items and the JAIS Boys Risk consists of ten items; each assessment yields an overall risk level of low, moderate, or high.
- **CANS:** The Child Adolescent Needs and Strengths assessment, also known as the CANS, is a multi-purpose tool developed for children's services to support decision-making in determining level of care and service planning, to facilitate quality improvement initiatives, and to allow for the monitoring of outcomes. The CANS consists of multiple items scored on a 4-point scale of 0-3, with a score of 2 or 3 indicating an actionable need. The assessment is grouped into the following stand-alone modules: Risk Behaviors, Strengths, Behavioral/Emotional Needs, and Trauma. Each grantee completes a different set of CANS modules according to the makeup of their client groups.

**Outcomes:** Like all Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) funded programs, Acknowledge Alliance collects data for a number of justice-related outcomes for program participants. Probation has elected to report these outcomes at 180 days post-entry; the reference group reflects the past year's cohort of program participants. In FY 2017-18, Acknowledge Alliance collected the following outcome measures:

- Arrests
- Detentions
- Probation violations

- Probation completions
- Court-ordered restitution completion
- Court-ordered community service completion.

In addition to the required justice-related outcomes, Acknowledge Alliance also collected two program-specific outcome measures to track progress toward helping its clients express their emotions constructively and make positive choices for themselves.

Acknowledge Alliance also administers The Children’s Global Assessment Functioning (GAF) pre- and post-tests to measure the psychological, social, and school functioning of its clients.

**Evidence-Based Practices:** JJCPA-funded programs are encouraged to follow evidence-based practices. In 2012, ASR conducted an evaluation and concluded that funded programs were using a variety of carefully-crafted practices to respond to the needs of their clients, but that those practices spanned the range of what is considered evidence-based.

Although the use of evidence-based practices was not emphasized in Probation’s 2016-2020 Local Action Plan, there is an underlying assumption that funded programs are providing services to youth that are aligned with evidence-based models.

To augment Probation’s knowledge of which programs are being implemented by funded partners, ASR requested each funded program provide a catalogue of their practices in FY 2017-18. ASR then ran the catalogued practices through a number of clearinghouses to determine whether the practices were:<sup>1</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> For the full list of evidence-based practice clearinghouses used to evaluate programs, please see the JJCPA/JPCF Comprehensive Report for fiscal year 2017-18.

## Evaluation Findings

### Fiscal Year 2017-18 Highlights

- Acknowledge Alliance served 172 clients this year, a 6% increase from the last fiscal year. This trend is consistent with the small increase in the number of clients served since FY 2012-13. Of note, there was a 33% increase in the average number of hours spent with each youth compared to FY 2016-17.
- Acknowledge Alliance served clients across the risk spectrum: 58% scored Low, 27% scored Moderate, and 15% scored High on the JAIS Boys Risk or JAIS Girls Risk assessment.
- The CANS results showed that 95% of the 150 respondents had three or more actionable needs at baseline.
- There was a substantial increase in the percent of clients who were 'chronically absent' (i.e., missed 10% or more of school days, both excused and unexcused absences, including suspensions).
- A greater number of clients had additional risk indicators at entry than in FY 2016-17: 28% had a drug or alcohol problem, 58% had an attendance problem, and 53% were expelled or suspended in the past year.
- The number of arrests for a new law violation decreased since FY 2016-17.

### Profile of Clients Served

In FY 2017-18, Acknowledge Alliance served 172 youth, 99% of whom had demographic data available. A majority (62%) of clients were male with an average age of 16.1 years. Nearly three-quarters (74%) identified as Latino/Hispanic, with 10% identifying as African American/Black, and 6% as White/Caucasian.

The 172 youth served over FY 2017-18 spent an average of 3.57 months in the program and received 11.81 hours of services. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of services rendered were for individual counseling, and 12% for group counseling.

*Table 1. Client Services*

CLIENT SERVICES	FY 12-13	FY 13-14	FY 14-15	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18
Number of clients served	144	158	151	151	162	172
Average number of hours served	10.6	12.0	9.4	13.6	8.9	11.8
Average time in the program (months)	4.3	3.7	4.0	3.5	4.3	3.6

For each youth in their program, Acknowledge Alliance evaluated certain risk indicators upon entry, including if the client had a drug or alcohol problem, a school attendance problem, and whether they had been suspended or expelled from school in the past year. More than one-quarter (28%) of clients in FY 2017-18 had an alcohol or drug problem at entry, an increase from 17% in FY 2016-17. Those clients entering with an attendance problem (58%) and those suspended or expelled in the past year (53%) also increased over FY 2016-17.

Table 2. Client Risk Indicators at Program Entry

RISK INDICATORS	FY 12-13	FY 13-14	FY 14-15	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18
Alcohol or drug problem	Data not collected in prior fiscal years			8%	17%	28%
Attendance problem	37%	49%	36%	41%	48%	58%
Suspension/expulsion in past year	63%	72%	56%	47%	48%	53%

n=72

## Risk Indicators

In FY 2017-18, Acknowledge Alliance served clients across the criminogenic risk spectrum. Of the 148 participants assessed with the JAIS Boys Risk or JAIS Girls Risk, 58% had a low criminogenic risk level, 27% had a moderate criminogenic risk level, and 15% had a high criminogenic risk level.

Table 3. JAIS Risk Levels

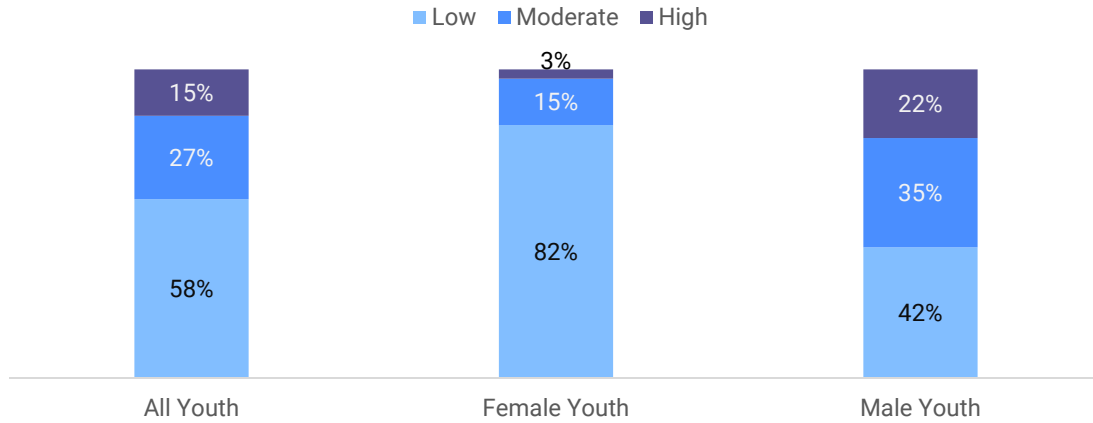
JAIS RISK LEVELS	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18
Low	44%	62%	58%
Moderate	34%	24%	27%
High	21%	14%	15%

n=148



When disaggregated by sex, more male youth had moderate and high criminogenic risk levels (57%) compared to female youth (18%).

Figure 1. Criminogenic Risk Level by Sex

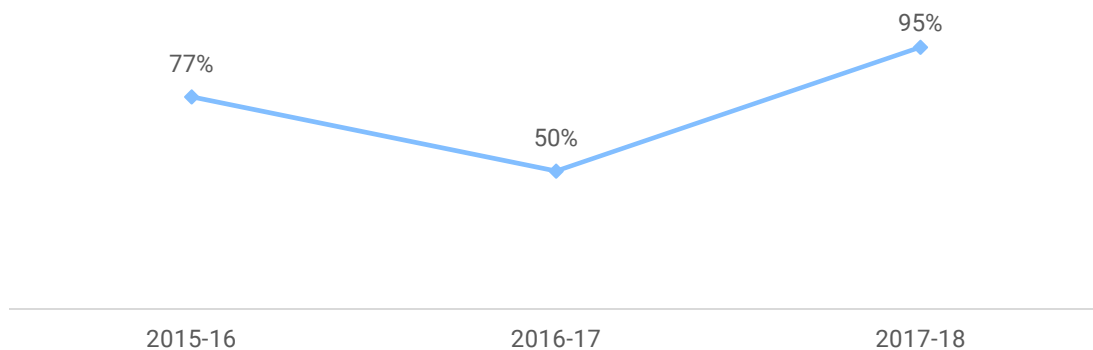


All Youth n=148; Male Youth n=88; Female Youth n=60  
 Note: Percentages may not total to 100 due to rounding.

## Functioning and Service Needs

Baseline data was gathered from 87% of Acknowledge Alliance youth on six CANS modules. Ninety-five percent (95%) of these youth had actionable needs on three or more items, a substantial increase from 50% of clients in FY 2016-17. The increase in the percent of youth with three or more actionable needs at baseline may be partially explained by increases in risk factors among youth at entry: there was an 11% increase in youth with an alcohol or drug problem over the previous year, a 10% increase in those with an attendance problem, and a 5% increase in those who had been suspended/expelled in the past year. Another factor may be the decrease in the average time youth spent in the program: in FY 2016-17, youth spent an average of 4.3 months in the program, which decreased to an average of 3.6 months in the program in FY 2017-18.

Figure 2. Percent of Clients with 3 or More Actionable Needs at Baseline

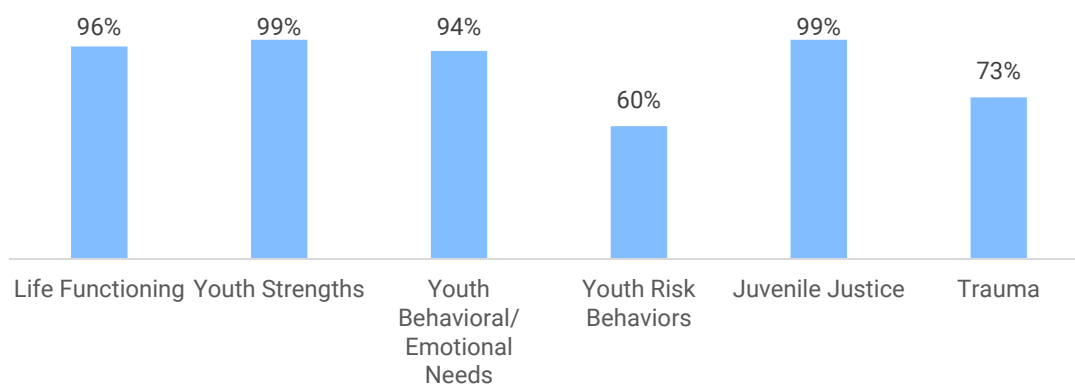


n=150

Figure 3 presents the percentage of all clients with at least one actionable need who were administered a baseline CANS assessment. A high number of youth had actionable needs across most of the CANS domains: Youth Strengths (99%), Juvenile Justice (99%), Life Functioning (96%), Youth Behavioral/Emotional Needs (94%), and Trauma (73%).

Nearly all (99%) youth had actionable needs on the Youth Strengths module, indicating that participating youth lack important internal (e.g., resilience, optimism), social (e.g., family strengths/support, relationship permanence), and community (e.g., community connection, educational setting) resources and supports. Nearly all (99%) respondents also reported actionable needs on the Juvenile Justice module, highlighting the need for supports and resources that discourage delinquent behavior. The Life Functioning module, which assesses how youth function across individual, family, peer, school, and community realms, also had a high percentage of youth with actionable needs (96%). Similarly, 94% of clients had an actionable need on the Youth Behavioral/Emotional Needs module, which indicates the need for supporting healthy behaviors and emotional health among clients. Seventy-three percent (73%) of youth also had actionable needs on the Trauma module, indicating the need for helping youth cope with abuse, neglect, and/or trauma.

*Figure 3. Percent of Clients with at least One Moderate or Significant Need by CANS Module at Baseline*



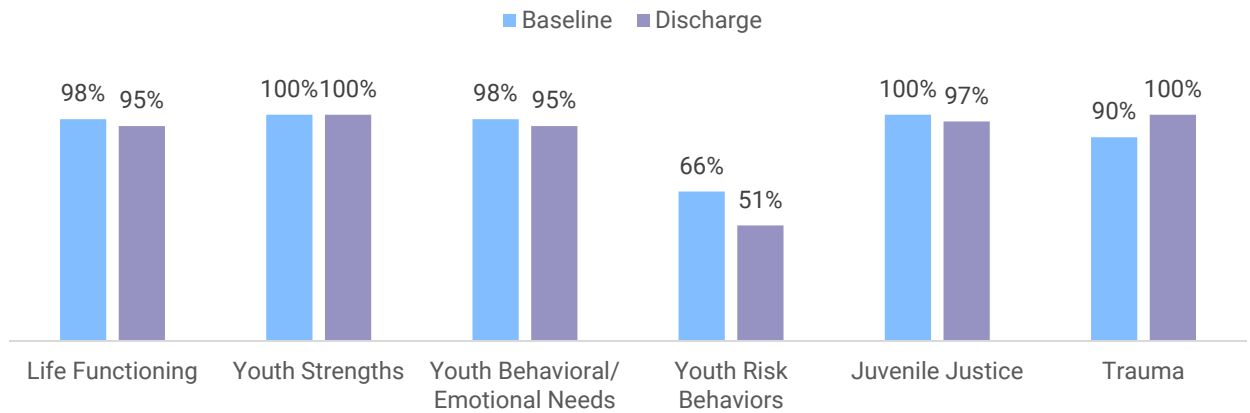
*Life Functioning n=150; Youth Strengths n=150; Youth Behavioral/Emotional Needs n=150; Youth Risk Behaviors n=150; Juvenile Justice n=71; Trauma n=150*

Figure 4 shows the percent of clients with at least one actionable need at baseline and at discharge. Only data from clients with matching baseline and discharge assessments were included in the analysis to reflect the change in the number of youth with actionable needs over time with greater accuracy. It is notable that the number of matching assessments varied by module.

The results show a 3% decrease from baseline to discharge on the Life Functioning, Youth Behavioral/Emotional Needs, and Juvenile Justice modules, with a 15% decrease in the number of youth with actionable needs on the Youth Risk Behaviors module from baseline to discharge. All (100%) youth reported at least one actionable need at baseline and at discharge on the Youth Strengths module, and there was a 10% increase in the number of youth with actionable needs from baseline to discharge on the Trauma module. These

results indicate that while youth needs are being met in ways that sustain or improve outcomes related to life functioning, behavioral/emotional health, juvenile justice, and risk behaviors, greater attention should be paid to helping youth cope with abuse, neglect, and trauma, and increasing internal and social assets. However, it is important to note that an increase in needs does not necessarily indicate that youth are experiencing negative outcomes; youth may feel more comfortable communicating openly with staff about their needs or additional needs arise during youth tenure in the program.

Figure 4. Percent of Clients with Baseline and Discharge Assessments who reported at least One Moderate or Significant Need on CANS Modules.



*Life Functioning n=59; Youth Strengths n=59; Youth Behavioral/Emotional Needs n=59; Youth Risk Behaviors n=59; Juvenile Justice n=30; Trauma n=49*

While 150 baseline assessments were provided for Acknowledge Alliance youth, matching baseline and discharge assessment data were only available for 39% of these youth. In order to understand how to more effectively address the needs of all youth served by Acknowledge Alliance, attention should be paid to ensuring that baseline and discharge CANS assessments are provided for every youth on all required modules.

## Justice Outcomes

The table below presents justice-related outcomes for 40 youth whose six month post-entry evaluation milestone occurred in FY 2016-17. As shown, rates for arrests for a new law violation decreased to 13% in FY2017-18, while youth who were detained or violated their probation stayed relatively constant.<sup>2</sup>

Table 4. Justice Outcomes

JUSTICE OUTCOMES	FY 12-13	FY 13-14	FY 14-15	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18
Arrests for a new law violation	25%	20%	19%	9%	22%	13%
Detentions	32%	38%	27%	13%	26%	28%
Probation violations	36%	22%	38%	15%	17%	18%
Completed court-ordered probation	14%	17%	4%	2%	13%	36%
Completed court-ordered restitution	19%	44%	25%	0%	N/A	0%
Completed court-ordered community service	25%	27%	11%	14%	100%	30%

*FY 17-18: Arrests for a new law violation n=40; Incarcerations n=40; Probation violations n=22; Completed court-ordered probation n=22; Completed court-ordered restitution n=1; Completed court-ordered community service n=10*

<sup>2</sup> While the results show that there was a decrease in the number of youth completing court-ordered community service, the population required to complete community service was low, which can result in unstable numbers year-over-year. In FY 2017-18, only one youth was required to complete court-ordered restitution, but had not completed it by their six-month post entry evaluation.

## Program Specific Outcomes

Acknowledge Alliance tracks two important factors in youth success: school attendance and absenteeism. The percentage of school days attended during the clients' intervention period decreased 4% to 82% in FY 2017-18 from 86% in FY 2016-17. A substantial increase in the percent of clients who were 'chronically absent' (i.e., missed 10% or more of school days, both excused and unexcused absences, including suspensions) also occurred, which is a risk factor known to significantly predict delinquency and a key early warning indicator of students likely to drop out of high school.<sup>3</sup>

Table 5. Program-Specific Outcomes

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC OUTCOMES	FY 12-13	FY 13-14	FY 14-15	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18
Percentage of school days attended	88%	89%	90%	85%	86%	82%
Chronically absent clients	Data not collected in prior fiscal years			46%	35%	58%

n=40

In addition to the CANS assessment, Acknowledge Alliance staff and interns measure progress made by each client using the Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF) scale. The GAF is a 100-point scale used by mental health clinicians to measure psychological, social, and school functioning for children ages 6 to 17. The children's version of the GAF was adapted from the Adult Global Assessment of Functioning scale, and is a valid and reliable tool for rating a child's general level of functioning on a health-to-illness continuum. With guidance and oversight from their clinical supervisors, Court and Community School Program interns determined GAF scores at baseline and discharge for clients who had been seen more than three times.

<sup>3</sup> Please refer to the 2016-2020 Local Action Plan for a list of risk factors identified in the literature and for a list of needs to be addressed by Local Action Plan strategies.

The GAF was administered to clients in both the Court and Community Schools Program and the Transition Program. As seen in Table 6, Court and Community Schools Program clients had a 10% increase in GAF scores from pre- to post-test, indicating an improvement in psychological, social, and school functioning.

Table 6. Court and Community Schools Program GAF Pre- and Post-Test Scores by School

COURT AND COMMUNITY SCHOOL	PRE-TEST MEAN GAF SCORES	POST-TEST MEAN GAF SCORES	PERCENT CHANGE FROM PRE- TO POST-TEST
Gateway	46.3	52.0	12.3%
Hillcrest	45.1	47.6	5.6%
<b>TOTAL COURT AND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PROGRAM</b>	<b>45.8</b>	<b>50.2</b>	<b>10.0%</b>

n=132

Note: Acknowledge Alliance provided aggregate GAF data in FY 2017-18.

Likewise, Transition Program clients also had a noteworthy increase from pre- to post-test, with 13% showing improvements in life functioning.

Table 7. Transition Program GAF Pre- and Post-Test Scores by School

TRANSITION PROGRAM SCHOOL	PRE-TEST MEAN GAF SCORES	POST-TEST MEAN GAF SCORES	PERCENT CHANGE FROM PRE- TO POST-TEST
Carlmont	55.2	60.3	9.2%
Menlo-Atherton	51.4	57.9	12.7%
Redwood	51.4	58.9	14.5%
Sequoia	65.6	73.8	12.4%
Woodside	54.8	62.1	13.3%
<b>TOTAL TRANSITION PROGRAM</b>	<b>55.0</b>	<b>62.3</b>	<b>13.0%</b>

n=110

Note: Acknowledge Alliance provided aggregate GAF data in FY 2017-18.

In addition to measuring their clients' progress with GAF scores, Acknowledge Alliance set two additional program goals for their Court and Community School Program and Transition Program over the course of the fiscal year: 1) improvement in expressing emotions constructively, and 2) increase in youth making positive choices for themselves.

Acknowledge Alliance exceeded their performance measure targets for both programs in reporting that counseling helped youth to make positive choices for themselves (see Table below). Both programs fell short in their goal to have youth report that counseling helped them express their emotions constructively, although by a small deficit in both cases.

Table 8. Performance Measures

PERFORMANCE MEASURE	FY 2017-18 TARGET	FY 2017-18 RESULTS
<b>Court and Community Schools Program</b>		
Percent of youth in the Court and Community Schools Program who report that counseling helped them to express their emotions constructively	90%	<b>87%</b>
Percent of youth in the Court and Community Schools Program who report that counseling helped them to make positive choices for themselves	69%	<b>83%</b>
<b>Transition Program</b>		
Percent of youth in the Transition Program who report that counseling helped them to express their emotions constructively	90%	<b>86%</b>
Percent of youth in the Transition Program who report that counseling helped them to make positive choices for themselves	69%	<b>81%</b>

## Evidence-Based Practices

In FY 2017-18, funded programs were asked to provide the practices and curricula employed in their programs. ASR then evaluated the given programs to determine whether they were evidence-based or promising practices through a thorough search of evidence-based practice clearinghouses. The table below details the practices that Acknowledge Alliance utilizes in their programs.

Table 9. Evidence-Based Practices

PRACTICE	PRACTICE IMPLEMENTATION	RATING
<b>Psychodynamic Psychotherapy</b>	Weekly hour long individual and group therapy sessions (no time limit – clients may attend as long as is needed)	Evidence-based practice according to empirical evidence <sup>4</sup>
<b>Trauma-Informed Practice</b>	Therapists are trained in understanding the impact of complex trauma on youth, and effective ways to address this as an integral part of the therapy	Evidence-based practice according to SAMHSA <sup>5</sup>
<b>Cultural Sensitivity</b>	Therapists are trained to explore and factor in cultural influences and norms in their work with clients	Although cultural sensitivity is not recognized as an evidence-based or promising practice on its own, it is recognized as an important factor for Social-Emotional learning in school-age environments <sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Shedler, J. (2010). *American Psychological Association 0003-066X/10/*. Vol. 65, No. 2, 98 –109 DOI: 10.1037/a0018378. <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/amp-65-2-98.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> SAMHSA's *Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach* (2014), p10. Pub ID#: SMA14-4884.) <https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA14-4884/SMA14-4884.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Barnes, T.; McCallops, K. (2018). *The Importance of Cultural Competence in Teaching Social and Emotional Skills*. Retrieved from <http://rwjf-newconnections.org/blog/importance-of-cultural-competence-in-teaching-social-and-emotional-skills/>



## Client Story

Each year, staff at funded programs provide a client story to help illustrate the effect of services on their clients. The following is the client story provided by Acknowledge Alliance for FY 2017-18 to help illustrate an example of gains made in weekly therapy.

<b>Name of client</b>	Mario (pseudonym)
<b>Age and gender</b>	17, male
<b>Reason for referral</b>	Mario was referred by the juvenile hall's special education teacher for exhibiting symptoms of depression. Prior to entry into our program, he was given a PTSD diagnosis and a 504-educational plan.
<b>Client's behavior, affect, and appearance when they first started in the program</b>	<p>Mario entered the therapy space (a small, concrete room) with a warm smile. He wore glasses and his thick, curly hair grazed his shoulders.</p> <p>Mario presented with considerable anxiety surrounding his pending trial. His mood ranged from overwhelmed with sadness to moments of optimism about his trial and future. In our early sessions, Mario maintained an anxious smile throughout each therapy hour. He was enthusiastic and motivated to begin therapy.</p>
<b>Activity engagement and consistency</b>	When we began our work, Mario was voluntarily in protective custody (PC), which means he was kept separate from all of the other adolescents on his unit. He did all of his schoolwork in his cell, he ate alone, he had virtually no contact with other youth. Because he was in PC, Mario was unable to participate in the various programs the hall offers, such as exercise groups, yoga, and Mind Body Awareness.
<b>Client's behavior, affect, and appearance toward the end of the program</b>	In our three months of weekly therapy together, Mario exhibited tremendous changes in his behaviors, affect, and understanding of himself. Behaviorally, he asked to be taken out of PC, and excelled in the general programming and classes. He enthusiastically participated in yoga, exercise groups, and maintained the highest GPA in the juvenile hall. In his free time, Mario worked on educational packets to gain high school credits, journaled, and wrote poetry.
<b>What the client learned as a result of the program</b>	In our second to last session together, Mario asked me if I'd heard the story of the Golden Buddha. I hadn't. Mario explained that there was once a group of monks trying to move a giant clay Buddha, when one monk noticed a small crack in the clay. The monk discovered that just beneath the cracked clay exterior, the Buddha was made of gold. Together the monks chiseled the hardened clay away until the Buddha emanated a golden glow. "I sort of feel like that Buddha statue," Mario told me.

	<p>Through our work together, Mario learned that he can be seen in a relationship. Through our therapeutic relationship, he found that he can show all parts of himself (the 'good' and 'bad'), and still be cared for. He began to find that he doesn't have to get rid of the darkness, the heavy parts of his identity, to feel the other parts of himself.</p>
<p><b>What the client is doing differently in their life now as a result of the program</b></p>	<p>Mario is able to think about himself in a more comprehensive way. He is beginning to hold shades of gray - softening the line between black and white in his thinking. He is finding that, like all of us, he holds both darkness and light, and that the things he's been through have been a part of what's built his strength, courage, and capacity for insight and inner exploration.</p>
<p><b>The value of the program in the client's words</b></p>	<p>Mario expressed that in our sessions, he felt smart. He felt like he could be himself. He could talk about things that he couldn't talk about anywhere else - from his ambivalence about getting released to the details of the gang violence perpetrated against him. In telling me the tale of the Golden Buddha, he expressed that this program allowed him to access his own golden interior.</p>